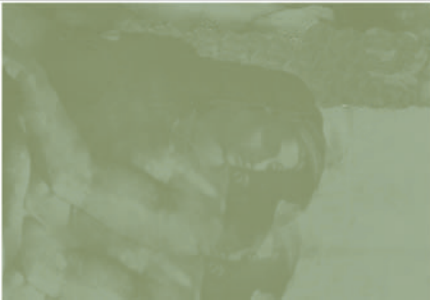


...al mundo de sepe nun me alite  
...la proa negra por q' no prearibe  
...el mi a proa sospirando me ferne  
...fanda lo dice aguda do te porne  
...diena folajeta a de ay sto des repue  
...pe bie no alungo nun mas aketue  
...rotas me dno fns lo a preambidos  
...ay no preambidos rotua ay lugtu pms  
...ay munes ams preamb no al  
...de tu no ay dars ay du pto lo aqms  
...dina al varda ptoctio no mtpodv  
...al vol pto amozv i sua pte pto  
...a me de rskent de ay dno dno  
...al q' falle diene a del a de dno  
...e tallo may apuestu de ptof amozpnt  
...pneal am lo pto pla dntera a fopozv  
...pms a mesum folajeta dno qn  
...no qn a fesuena amos de roda ex qn  
...mull dno a dno de ay dno  
...mou de juencas  
...mlm  
...re a mi dno  
...dno



# ARTS & HUMANITIES

## *Through the Eras*



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*Through the Eras*

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Ancient Egypt

2675–332 B.C.E

*Edward Bleiberg, Editor*

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## Arts and Humanities Through The Eras: Ancient Egypt (2675 B.C.E.–332 B.C.E.)

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# CONTENTS

ABOUT THE BOOK . . . . .	ix	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
CONTRIBUTORS . . . . .	xi	Amenhotep, Son of Hapu . . . . .	59
ERA OVERVIEW . . . . .	xiii	Hemiunu, Son of Nefermaat . . . . .	59
CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD EVENTS . . . . .	xvii	Imhotep . . . . .	60
CHAPTER 1: ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN		Ineni . . . . .	60
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	Senenmut, Son of Ramose . . . . .	60
OVERVIEW . . . . .	4	Sety I . . . . .	61
TOPICS IN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN		DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	61
Earliest Temples and Tombs . . . . .	6	CHAPTER 2: DANCE	
Pyramid Complexes . . . . .	9	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	64
The North-South Pyramid Complex:		OVERVIEW . . . . .	65
King Djoser's Complex at Saqqara . . . . .	11	TOPICS IN DANCE	
The First True Pyramids . . . . .	14	Preconceptions about Dance . . . . .	66
Fourth-Dynasty Architecture and History . . . . .	20	Dance in Visual Art . . . . .	66
Architecture of the Fifth and Sixth		Costumes and Fashion in Dance . . . . .	68
Dynasties . . . . .	29	The Dancers . . . . .	69
Mastaba Tombs of the Old Kingdom . . . . .	34	Funeral Dances . . . . .	73
Domestic Architecture in the Old Kingdom . . . . .	36	Muu-Dancers . . . . .	76
Transition to the Middle Kingdom . . . . .	37	The Iba-Dance and Heby-Dance . . . . .	79
The Pyramids of the Middle Kingdom . . . . .	39	Cult Dances . . . . .	81
Rock-Cut Tombs of the Middle Kingdom . . . . .	42	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
A Planned Town of the Middle Kingdom:		Horihotep . . . . .	81
Kahun . . . . .	44	Khnumhotep . . . . .	82
New Kingdom Temples . . . . .	45	Watekhethor . . . . .	82
Thebes and the Estate of Amun . . . . .	49	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	82
Egyptian Construction Technology . . . . .	52	CHAPTER 3: FASHION	
		IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	86
		OVERVIEW . . . . .	88

TOPICS IN FASHION	
Cloth Production . . . . .	88
Clothing . . . . .	91
Hairstyles . . . . .	97
Crowns . . . . .	100
Jewelry and Amulets . . . . .	105
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Irer . . . . .	109
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	110
CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE	
IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . .	112
OVERVIEW. . . . .	114
TOPICS IN LITERATURE	
Egyptian Writing and Language . . . . .	115
Egyptian Writing Materials and Publishing. . . . .	118
The Author . . . . .	121
The Idea of Genre in Middle Egyptian Literature . . . . .	123
The Literature of Moral Values . . . . .	126
Pessimistic Literature. . . . .	128
Story of Sinuhe . . . . .	130
Emergence of New Kingdom Literature. . . . .	131
Demotic Literature . . . . .	138
The Egyptian Literary Canon. . . . .	141
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Khaemwase . . . . .	148
Ptahhotep . . . . .	148
Wenamun . . . . .	149
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	149
CHAPTER 5: MUSIC	
IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . .	152
OVERVIEW. . . . .	154
TOPICS IN MUSIC	
Musical Instruments . . . . .	155
Musical Notation . . . . .	159
Work Songs. . . . .	160
Male and Female Musicians in the Old Kingdom . . . . .	164
A Musical Bureau in the Old Kingdom. . . . .	165
Banquet Music during the New Kingdom . . . . .	166
The Office of Chantress . . . . .	168
The Social Status of Musicians . . . . .	168
Musical Deities. . . . .	170
Music During the Reigns of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. . . . .	172
The Blind Solo Harpist and His Song. . . . .	174
Erotic Music . . . . .	178
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Amenemhab. . . . .	179
Iti. . . . .	179
Neferhotep, Son of Henu . . . . .	179
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	180
CHAPTER 6: PHILOSOPHY	
IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . .	182
OVERVIEW. . . . .	184
TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY	
Maat. . . . .	185
Cosmogony: The Origin of the World . . . . .	187
Teaching Philosophy. . . . .	190
Secret Knowledge . . . . .	193
Astrology . . . . .	198
Alchemy . . . . .	199
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Ankhsheshonqi. . . . .	201
Any. . . . .	201
Hordjedef . . . . .	201
Merykare. . . . .	202
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	202
CHAPTER 7: RELIGION	
IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . .	206
OVERVIEW. . . . .	208
TOPICS IN RELIGION	
The Gods . . . . .	210
Egyptian Myths . . . . .	214
Myth of Osiris . . . . .	217
Myths of Horus, Seth, and Amun. . . . .	218
Theology. . . . .	220
Animals in Egyptian Religion. . . . .	221
The King. . . . .	224
Kingship Rituals. . . . .	225
Temple Architecture and Symbolism. . . . .	227
Temple Ritual . . . . .	230
Temple Personnel. . . . .	232
Personal Religion . . . . .	233
Ethics . . . . .	235
Magic in Egyptian Religion . . . . .	237
Funerary Beliefs and Practices. . . . .	239
The Egyptian Afterlife. . . . .	244
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Akhenaten . . . . .	247
Amenhotep, Son of Hapu . . . . .	248
Imhotep . . . . .	248
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	249

CHAPTER 8: THEATER	
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	252
OVERVIEW . . . . .	253
TOPICS IN THEATER	
Defining Theater . . . . .	253
Spoken Drama . . . . .	254
The Osirian Khoiak Festival Drama . . . . .	260
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Emhab . . . . .	261
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	262
CHAPTER 9: VISUAL ARTS	
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	264
OVERVIEW . . . . .	266
TOPICS IN VISUAL ARTS	
Interpreting Egyptian Art . . . . .	269
Grid Systems in Visual Art . . . . .	271
Earliest Egyptian Art . . . . .	272
Narmer Palette . . . . .	274
Early Dynastic Period Art . . . . .	276
The Old Kingdom . . . . .	280
The Middle Kingdom . . . . .	289
The New Kingdom . . . . .	293
Late Period . . . . .	308
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Nefertiti . . . . .	309
Senenmut . . . . .	309
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	310
GLOSSARY . . . . .	311
FURTHER REFERENCES . . . . .	315
MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES . . . . .	321
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	323
INDEX . . . . .	325



## ABOUT THE BOOK

**SEEING HISTORY FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE.** An education in history involves more than facts concerning the rise and fall of kings, the conquest of lands, and the major battles fought between nations. While these events are pivotal to the study of any time period, the cultural aspects are of equal value in understanding the development of societies. Various forms of literature, the philosophical ideas developed, and even the type of clothes worn in a particular era provide important clues about the values of a society, and when these arts and humanities are studied in conjunction with political and historical events a more complete picture of that society is revealed. This inter-disciplinary approach to studying history is at the heart of the *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* project. Patterned in its organization after the successful *American Decades*, *American Eras*, and *World Eras* products, this reference work aims to expose the reader to an in-depth perspective on a particular era in history through the study of nine different arts and humanities topics:

- Architecture and Design
- Dance
- Fashion
- Literature
- Music
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Theater
- Visual Arts

Although treated in separate chapters, the connections between these topics are highlighted both in the text and through the use of “See Also” references to give the reader a broad perspective on the culture of the time period. Readers can learn about the impact of religion on literature; explore the close relationships between dance, music, and theater; and see parallel movements in architecture and visual arts. The development of each of these fields is discussed within the context of important historical events so that the reader can see history from a different angle. This angle is unique to this reference work. Most history books about a particular time period only give a passing glance to the arts and humanities in an effort to give the broadest historical treatment possible. Those reference books that do cover the arts and humanities tend to cover only one of them, generally across multiple time periods, making it difficult to draw connections between disciplines and limiting the perspective of the discipline’s impact on a specific era. In *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* each of the nine disciplines is given substantial treatment in individual chapters, and the focus on one era ensures that the analysis will be thorough.

**AUDIENCE AND ORGANIZATION.** *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* is designed to meet the needs of both the beginning and the advanced history student. The material is written by subject experts and covers a vast array of concepts and masterworks, yet these concepts are built “from the ground up” so that a reader with little or no background in history can follow them. Technical terms and other definitions appear both in the



text and in the glossary, and the background of historical events is also provided. The organization of the volume facilitates learning at all levels by presenting information in a variety of ways. Each chapter is organized according to the following structure:

- Chronology covering the important events in that discipline during that era
- Brief overview of the development of that discipline at the time
- Topics that highlight the movements, schools of thought, and masterworks that characterize the discipline during that era
- Biographies of significant people in that discipline
- Documentary sources contemporary to the time period

This structure facilitates comparative analysis, both between disciplines and also between volumes of *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*, each of which covers a different era. In addition, readers can access additional research opportunities by looking at the “Further References” and “Media and Online Sources” that appear at the back of the volume. While every effort was made to include only those online sources that are connected to institutions such as museums and universities, the web-

sites are subject to change and may become obsolete in the future.

**PRIMARY DOCUMENTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.** In an effort to provide the most in-depth perspective possible, *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* also includes numerous primary documents from the time period, offering a first-hand account of the culture from the people who lived in it. Letters, poems, essays, epitaphs, and songs are just some of the multitude of document types included in this volume, all of which illuminate some aspect of the discipline being discussed. The text is further enhanced by 150 illustrations, maps, and line drawings that bring a visual dimension to the learning experience.

**CONTACT INFORMATION.** The editors welcome your comments and suggestions for enhancing and improving *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*. Please mail comments or suggestions to:

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## ERA OVERVIEW

**PROBLEM OF EVIDENCE.** In a series devoted to the arts and humanities of different cultures and time periods, ancient Egypt may not seem like a ready candidate for study. Whereas more modern cultures have vast amounts of cultural evidence, from written records to art to examples of clothing, musical instruments, and architecture, artifacts from ancient Egypt are largely limited to that which could survive for millennia—largely stone reliefs, several partial structures such as pyramids and temples, and those items preserved in tombs that eluded grave robbers. While there is no doubt that ancient Egypt had a thriving culture that included the major disciplines of the arts and humanities, the evidence for its existence has largely been destroyed by the sands of time, and modern Egyptologists must piece together an understanding of that culture from the relatively small amount of evidence that is left. The paucity of surviving material has limited scholars' ability to speak conclusively about many areas of Egyptian life; indeed, there is some doubt as to whether one of the major disciplines—theater—existed at all, and the discipline of philosophy is so closely tied to that of religion that it is problematic to separate the two into separate disciplines. Nevertheless, close readings of texts and close examination of artistic evidence allows Egyptologists to describe many aspects of the arts and humanities in Egyptian culture. Scholars can study music, for example, by examining the words to songs, representations of musical ensembles on tomb walls, and archaeological examples of musical instruments. Egyptologists can study fashion by comparing artistic representations to archaeological examples of

cloth. In every aspect of the arts and humanities, the Egyptians left some record of their activities.

**THE DOMINANCE OF RELIGION.** Egyptian religion dominated almost every aspect of the arts and humanities in Egyptian culture. Stone buildings, the best-preserved structures, were always religious structures such as temples or tombs. Knowledge of dance and music that survives through representations on tomb and temple walls are parts of religious rituals or funerals. Many of the literary genres, such as hymns, served a religious purpose. Even writers of secular literature assume the immediate presence of the gods in a way not present in modern writing. The visual arts also served religion in decorating tombs and temples but also through the belief that representation was a way of ensuring that a ritual was performed. Finally, it is nearly impossible to separate religion and philosophy, so fundamental was religion to the Egyptian point of view.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF ART.** Visual art assumes an added importance in the study of Egypt. Often artistic evidence survived when no other evidence is available to study some aspect of the arts and humanities. Egyptologists study dance, music, fashion, and many aspects of religion through examining sculpture, relief, and paintings preserved from tombs and temples. Artists, for example, carefully reproduced all the known steps of the funeral dance in tombs. The composition of Egyptian musical ensembles is known only from representations on tomb and temple walls. Since very few Egyptian fashions are cut and sewn, the correct way to wrap a piece of material around the body can only be seen in

sculpture. Finally, the order of rituals and the relationship between the gods and their sacred animals are just two aspects of religion that can be studied through art. Without Egyptian art, scholars would not know anything about many of these subjects. Yet interpreting the evidence of visual art is not always straightforward. The Egyptian conventions used in art lead scholars to interpret rather than merely report on what they see in visual art.

**WRITING.** The Egyptians were probably the first to invent writing, perhaps as early as 3500 B.C.E. This tremendous innovation, the ability to represent language graphically, allowed for accurate communication across time and space and led to a revolution in intellectual history. For the first time, it was possible to send words and thoughts formulated in one place hundreds or thousands of miles away. It was also possible to build on an intellectual heritage and accurately remember the words uttered by ancestors generations before. The Egyptians themselves recognized the importance of this accomplishment. As with anything truly important, they attributed the invention of writing to the gods. Hieroglyphs were to the Egyptians the “words of the gods.” Thoth, the ibis-headed scribe of the gods, was patron for all human scribes. The Egyptians also recognized that writing had shifted the balance of power in their society. Although physical labor still had great value in Egyptian society, a new kind of power emerged with writing and the existence of the scribal class. For scribes, as the Egyptians were fond of saying, were really the people in control of everything. Certainly the scribal class played a key role in preserving ancient Egyptian heritage, for it is largely through their writings that modern scholars are able to judge and understand Egyptian accomplishments. These writings provide important evidence not only of the literature of the time, but also about the religious ceremonies and beliefs, the role of music, and even dance steps. The writings that accompany artistic representations of Egyptian life are invaluable in deciphering this visual evidence, casting a stronger light on the shadowy world of ancient Egyptian culture.

**LINGUISTS.** Though all Egyptologists study the Egyptian language, philologists specialize in this field. In general Egyptian philologists are familiar with the five historical dialects of Egyptian and the four ways of writing those dialects. The dialects divide the language into five historical periods closely mirroring the time when each of them was the spoken language. They include Old Egyptian, Middle Egyptian, Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic. Very roughly they represent the spoken language of the Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, New

Kingdom, Late Period, and Graeco-Roman Period. The earliest four dialects were written with hieroglyphic signs and hieratic signs, a simplified, cursive writing system. Demotic had its own writing system based on hieratic while Coptic was written with the Greek alphabet. Philologists study the grammatical systems of the dialects and are generally less interested in the writing system itself. They very often specialize in one or more of the dialects. Paleographers and epigraphers, on the other hand, specialize in the writing systems themselves. Paleographers study handwriting such as is generally found on papyrus and on limestone ostraca. Epigraphers, in contrast, are generally interested in the carved and painted hieroglyphs found on temple and tomb walls. Paleographers and epigraphers make texts available through publication for philologists to study. Historians of ancient Egypt are trained primarily as philologists.

**ARCHAEOLOGISTS.** Though most philologists have spent some time studying objects, archaeologists specialize in this field. A large number of specialties among archaeologists have developed in Egyptian archaeology in the years since World War II. Traditionally archaeologists studied only art and architecture. These fields remain vital and continue to make progress as new methods of analysis emerge. Other scholars concentrate on less glamorous objects such as ceramics, tools, and human, animal, and plant remains. These objects are important for understanding daily life and the lives of those ancient people who could not write. As is generally true in history, post-World War II scholars have tried to learn about all classes in the ancient world rather than concentrating only on the elite. Some archaeologists prefer to work in the field, excavating new objects for study. Others study the existing collections of Egyptian artifacts found in museums and other private and public collections. Most are involved in studying a combination of the two, both newly excavated objects and those already in collections.

**THE PROBLEM OF DATES.** The study of history generally deals in absolute dates, in which events are linked with concrete years and follow a specific chronology. Such methodology is more problematic when discussing ancient history, however, given the absence of precise dating systems. Ancient Egyptians used a chronology of rulers when referencing time periods, referring to events as happening in the reign of a particular king rather than in a particular year or range of years. Egyptologists have attempted to marry this rather vague dating system with actual ranges of years, but there is much disagreement regarding the exact dates of rulers' reigns or the length of certain periods of history. The disagreements that used

to separate interpretations by over 1,000 years have now narrowed to 10- to 25-year differences in dates assigned to key kings such as Ahmose, Amenhotep III, and Ramesses II. Even so, many Egyptologists refer to events as occurring in “the reign of King X” rather than in an absolute year. This allows scholars to ignore small differences in absolute dates when discussing some historical issue. Every attempt has been made to include both the name of a period or reign as well as dates when describing an event. This will allow readers to connect the information in this volume with other books about ancient Egypt. The absolute dates used in this volume were refined by the American Egyptologist William J. Murnane. They were published in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* in 1995 and have been adopted by many scholars. Readers might notice that a different set of dates is used in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* published in 2001. Conflicting sets of dates stem from different ways of interpreting the data. Egyptologists generally accept that there will be minor differences of opinion on the absolute dates of ancient Egyptian history.

**PERIODS OF HISTORY.** Egyptologists today use a scheme of periods that can be traced to the historian Manetho who lived in Egypt in the second century B.C.E. Manetho worked from Egyptian texts to develop thirty dynasties of Egyptian kings. Manetho’s work remains the framework for all current chronologies of ancient Egypt. In modern times Egyptologists have grouped the dynasties into larger periods. Recent discoveries in Abydos in central Egypt have established the existence of a royal dynasty predating the First Dynasty. It has been called Dynasty 0 for convenience. Otherwise, the period before Dynasty One has been called the Predynastic Period. Dynasties One and Two are called the Archaic or Early Dynastic Period. Dynasties Three to Six form the Old Kingdom. Dynasties Seven to Ten, a period of decentralization, are called the First Intermediate Period. That period is followed by the Middle Kingdom, Dynasties Eleven to Thirteen. Dynasties Fourteen to Seventeen, when the west Semitic people called the Hyksos ruled Lower Egypt, are called the Hyksos Period and/or the Second Intermediate Period. From Dynasties Eighteen to Twenty, when Egypt was an international power, the period is called the New Kingdom. Sub-periods of the New Kingdom are the Amarna Period, when the religious radical Akhenaten ruled, and the Ramesside Period—Dynasties Nineteen and Twenty—when kings who claimed descent from Ramesses I ruled. The Third Intermediate Period includes Dynasties Twenty-one to Twenty-five. It is followed by the Late Period, Dynasties Twenty-six to Thirty. Within the Late

Period are the Saite Period (Dynasty Twenty-six) and the Persian Period (Dynasty Twenty-seven). Finally, the Ptolemaic Period follows Alexander the Great’s conquest of Egypt after 332 B.C.E. when kings and queens were descended from Alexander’s general named Ptolemy. The Roman Period follows Cleopatra VII’s defeat at Actium by the future Roman emperor Octavian.

**SPELLING.** The spelling of kings’ names and of places in ancient Egypt also presents a problem for modern writers. The Egyptians wrote only the consonants in their language, leaving modern scholars to pursue different theories of how to add the vowels to names. The result is a variety of naming systems that can be confusing to the lay reader. Many scholars have avoided this problem by following the spellings of ancient Greek historians in reproducing the names of Egyptian kings. Thus Khufu, the Fourth-dynasty king who built the Great Pyramid, is known as Cheops, following the Greek pronunciation, in some books. This volume uses spellings based on the ancient Egyptian rather than ancient Greek, drawn specifically from the spellings established in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*.

**EGYPTOLOGY AND EGYPTOSOPHY.** This volume is a work of Egyptology. Egyptology is a modern academic discipline that grew directly from Jean-François Champollion’s work on the Rosetta Stone. In 1822 Champollion published *A Letter to M. Dacier*. This letter was actually a scholarly article explaining that ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs formed a writing system that was basically phonetic and represented an ancient, but perfectly ordinary, human language. Reading this language would allow scholars to study ancient Egyptian words and to gain knowledge of this ancient culture using ordinary historical methods. Champollion’s discovery was judged at the time, and in the following years to today, against a nearly 2,000-year tradition that the Egyptologist Erik Hornung called Egyptosophy. Egyptosophy regards ancient Egypt as the source of all wisdom and arcane knowledge. Egyptosophists are not a unified group, but rather among them are people who hold a variety of views about ancient Egypt. These views include the belief that the Egyptians invented usable astrology, alchemy, and magic. Among Egyptosophists are also people who believe that they have access to “hidden” Egyptian knowledge. This alternative tradition also includes the work of Rosicrucians, Freemasons, the late eighteenth-century German Romantics, nineteenth-century Theosophists, Anthroposophists, and a wide variety of Internet content providers. None of these groups and individuals rely on knowledge of the ancient Egyptian language—the Egyptians’ own words—for their insights into Egyptian

culture. For that reason they represent a different kind of interest in ancient Egypt from Egyptology's concerns, and their views are thus not included in this volume except when they have relevance to our understanding of Egyptian beliefs.

**PRIMARY TEXTS.** This volume's authors have based their interpretations on primary texts, the ancient Egyptians' own words. The chapters contain many extracts from Egyptian texts to allow readers to form their own judgments of the interpretations offered here. These texts more than adequately demonstrate the incredible accomplishments of Egyptian culture from earliest times.

**CURRENT THINKING.** This volume also has tried to reflect current thinking on a wide variety of issues in Egyptology. The authors have tried to synthesize the major arguments in the field but to offer the most widely accepted views for the reader. As is true in most fields of history, the range of questions asked of the data is much broader than would have been true fifty years ago.

Great advances have been made in our understanding of the lives of ancient Egyptians outside of the elite since World War II. The fact that this volume is dedicated to the Egyptians' cultural life exclusively shows the differences from former times in the kinds of questions scholars ask today. This approach has led to a fuller and more sophisticated understanding of ancient Egypt.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.** This volume has benefited from the work of many people. I thank Stephen Thompson for his work on religion and William H. Peck for his crucial role as reader. Rebecca Parks has labored long and hard to bring the manuscript into conformity with the series' requirements. I thank her for her work and her patience. As always, I cannot express adequately my appreciation for the love and support I receive from my wife and son while I am working on time-consuming projects.

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Brooklyn, New York*



# CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD EVENTS

*By Edward Bleiberg*

*All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).*

4400–3100 The Predynastic Period occurs in Egypt. Nothing is known of historical events during this time.

3200–3100 Dynasty 0 occurs. During this dynasty, an unknown number of kings including King Scorpion and King Narmer lay the foundations for the central government of a united Egypt.

3100–2800 The Egyptian First Dynasty consists of nine known rulers whose capital was perhaps in Abydos in central Egypt. Contemporary city-states include Nineveh in Northern Mesopotamia (Iraq), Troy in Anatolia (Turkey), and Ebla in Syria.

2800–2675 The Egyptian Second Dynasty includes five kings. The last of them, Khasekhemwy, was the subject of the first known seated statue of an Egyptian king.

2675–2170 The Egyptian Old Kingdom is established and provides central government from the capital city of Memphis.

A fully developed writing system and literature in the Sumerian language emerges in Mesopotamia, and includes the first law codes and anonymous poetry. Political organization is by city-states.

The *Ram and Tree* offering stand and *Bull's Head from a Harp* are created in the city of Ur.

2675–2625 The Egyptian Third Dynasty includes five kings. Djoser, builder of the Step Pyramid in Saqqara and subject of a life-size seated statue, is second king of the dynasty.

2625–2500 Egypt's Fourth Dynasty includes seven kings. The most famous are Khufu, builder of the Great Pyramid at Giza, as well as his son and grandson; Khafre, builder of the Great Sphinx; and Menkaure.

2500–1800 Early Minoan II culture flourishes along areas of the Aegean and Mediterranean seas. It is characterized by the earliest stone vessels, jewelry, copper daggers, imported obsidian, and textile manufacture.

2500–2200 Early Helladic II culture flourishes on the Greek mainland.

2500–2350 Egypt's Fifth Dynasty consists of eight kings. The first "Overseer of Upper Egypt" is established to deliver taxes to the court at Memphis. A second vizier for Lower Egypt is established. The first provincial governors called "nomarchs" take office.

- Ebla, a city-state in Syria, develops a writing system.
- The First Dynasty of Lagash, a leading Mesopotamian city-state, flourishes.
- Native peoples populate permanent settlements on the Pacific coast of South America along the Andes mountain range.
- 2500 Early Kerma culture (Kingdom of Yeram) flourishes in Nubia. It is characterized by black and brown pottery with incised decorations found in oval-shaped burials with stone superstructures.
- 2350–2150 The Awan Dynasty of the Old Elamite Period flourishes on the Iranian Plateau.
- 2350–2170 Egypt’s Sixth Dynasty includes five rulers. Egypt is involved in military or trade operations in Nubia.
- 2350–2193 The empire of Akkad is founded by Sargon in Mesopotamia. He organizes the military, conquers much of the Euphrates River region, and establishes trade with areas such as the Indus Valley, Crete, and the Persian Gulf. The first known published poet, Enkheduanna, daughter of Sargon, writes “Hymn to Inanna,” dedicated to the goddess of love and war. The bronze sculpture “Head of an Akkadian Ruler,” possibly a representation of Sargon, is created in Nineveh.
- The Victory Stele of Naram-Sin*, commemorating the victory of Sargon’s son over a mountain tribe, is carved in Mesopotamia.
- 2338–2298 In the reign of the Egyptian king Merenre Pepi I, the general Weni organizes an army to fight the Bedouin in the Sinai.
- 2200 People who can be identified as “Greeks” arrive on the Greek mainland during the Bronze Age, establishing the the Early Helladic III Period.
- 2193–2100 The Gutians, tribesmen from the north-eastern mountains, invade and settle in North Mesopotamia and end the Akkadian empire.
- 2150 Gudea becomes governor of Lagash, a leading Sumerian city-state in Mesopotamia. A series of statues of Gudea are carved.
- 2130–1980 The First Intermediate Period in Egypt includes the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, and part of the Eleventh Dynasties. Egypt lacks a strong central government, and local governors control the provinces.
- 2112–2004 The Third Dynasty of Ur flourishes. Ur becomes the leading Sumerian city-state. The earliest version of the Gilgamesh Epic known in the Sumerian language is written, and the Ziggurat of Ur, a three-stepped brick pyramid-like structure, is built.
- 2100–1900 The Shimaskhi Dynasty of the Old Elamite Period flourishes on the Iranian Plateau.
- 2081–2008 During the first half of the Egyptian Eleventh Dynasty four kings reign as local princes at Thebes.
- 2008–1938 Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II founds the Middle Kingdom by conquering Lower Egypt and reunifying the country. He is followed by Mentuhotep III and Mentuhotep IV.
- 2004 Amorites, a Canaanite people from the mountainous northern Jordan River region, invade Mesopotamia and end the Sumerian city-states.
- 2000 Amorites sack Ebla, the city-state in Syria, and establish their temple and a palace in the city.
- 2000–1500 An Indo-European people called the Hittites arrive in Anatolia. They establish a Middle Bronze Age city-state culture known as the Hittite Old Kingdom.
- 2000–1550 Palaces and cities are established on Crete during the Middle Minoan Period. The earliest Greek writing, called Linear A and B, is developed in the Aegean area and on islands in the region.
- 1945–1938 The Eleventh-dynasty Egyptian king Nebtawyre Mentuhotep IV builds the



- first Egyptian forts to house garrisons in Nubia.
- 1938–1759 The Egyptian Twelfth Dynasty includes eight rulers who solidify central rule from Thebes. Senwosret I builds more forts in Nubia and occupies it, spreading Egyptian culture southward. The first extant laws concerning forced labor are compiled in papyrus records of the Great Enclosure, a prison.
- 1980–1630 The earliest alphabetic writing in Semitic languages occurs.
- 1950–1759 Independent city-states are established in Anatolia.
- 1900–1500 The Sukkalmakh Dynasty (ebartids) of the Old Elamite Period flourishes on the Iranian Plateau.
- 1900–1650 A new culture (designated C group IIA), characterized by rectangular burials with superstructures and clay figurines, flourishes in Nubia.
- 1900 The Assyrian trading colony of Kanash (modern Kültepe in Turkey) is active in Anatolia.
- Middle Helladic Period flourishes on the mainland of Greece. It is characterized by pottery with a soapy texture.
- 1894 The Old Babylonian Period, a time when several city-states vie for power, begins in Mesopotamia. The earliest known flood narrative appears in the poem *The Atrakbasis*, composed in the Akkadian language.
- 1836–1818 In the reign of Senwosret III provincial governors are absorbed into the central government. Local administrative councils answer directly to the central government. More forts are built in Nubia.
- 1813 Shamshi-Adad I, an Amorite king, conquers Ashur (Assyria).
- 1792–1750 The Babylonian king Hammurabi issues a written law code in Mesopotamia and has it carved on a stele.
- 1759–1630 The early Thirteenth Dynasty rules Egypt and gradually loses control of the Lower Egypt to the Hyksos, an Amorite people.
- 1700–1550 A new group of people (designated as Classic C II B), characterized by massive tumuli with chapels over graves and the use of pottery, figurines, and cattle skulls as grave offerings, flourishes in Nubia.
- 1630–1539 At least thirteen kings of the later Thirteenth Dynasty rule contemporaneously with the Fourteenth Dynasty in Lower Egypt. These kings are Amorites, a Semitic-speaking group. About fifteen local kings rule Upper Egypt and are called the Seventeenth Dynasty.
- 1630–1523 The Egyptian Fifteenth and Sixteenth Dynasties, foreign rulers called Hyksos, rule Lower Egypt.
- 1595–1158 The Kassite Dynasty takes control of Mesopotamia and ends the city-state period. The Kassites establish their capital at Babylon. The kingdom is a center of architectural and artistic achievements, and becomes known for trade and science.
- 1595 The Hittite king Murshili I conquers parts of Syria and captures Babylon, ending the Old Babylonian Period.
- 1550 The Indo-Iranian Mitanni Empire emerges in northern Mesopotamia and competes with Egypt for control of Syria.
- A Late Bronze Age Minoan artist creates the *Octopus Vase*, an example of the dark-on-light pottery painting in the Marine Style. The Minoans also construct the Palace of Minos on the island of Crete.
- 1543 The Seventeenth-dynasty king Kamose initiates a war to expel the Hyksos from Lower Egypt.
- 1539–1075 The Egyptian New Kingdom consists of the Eighteenth (fifteen rulers), Nineteenth (eight rulers), and Twentieth Dynasties (ten rulers) and marks the period of its greatest prosperity. Egypt conquers its eastern neighbors as far as the Euphrates River and its southern neighbors as far as

- the fourth cataract of the Nile River in modern Sudan.
- The Late Helladic (or Mycenaean) Period flourishes on the Greek mainland. Several fortified population centers emerge, burial circles are constructed, and graves are filled with luxury items in gold.
- 1539–1292 Kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty create three new offices to administer Nubia: King’s Son of Kush (viceroys) and Overseer of Southern Lands; Deputy of Wawat; and Deputy of Kush. They also establish the Office of Overseer of Northern Lands for administration of the Levantine possessions. The Office of Vizier divides into two separate offices for Upper and Lower Egypt.
- 1539–1513 The first Eighteenth-dynasty king Ahmose drives the Hyksos out of Egypt.
- 1530 Ugarit flourishes as a city-state on the coast of Syria. Its merchants trade with Cyprus and Greece, and its artists develop literature.
- 1478–1458 Hatshepsut, regent for Thutmose III, reigns as co-king.
- 1456 Thutmose III defeats a coalition of city-states at Megiddo.
- 1450 Hittite king Tudkahlia I defeats the Asuwa people of Asia Minor.
- 1400–1200 The Lion Gate is built in Hattusas (modern Bogazkale) in Anatolia, a Hittite religious center that was known as the City of Temples.
- 1400 Minoan civilization declines in the Aegean.
- 1390–1353 Amenhotep III makes the first attempt since the Old Kingdom to present the king as a god, perhaps as part of a political response to increased economic power of the temples. Marriage alliances with Mitanni are continued.
- 1353–1336 Akhenaten counters increasing political power of the temples by creating a new religion based at a new capital city in Amarna.
- 1332–1322 Tutankhamun reverses Akhenaten’s policies and restores the cult of Amun.
- 1322 Tutankhamun’s widow requests that the Hittite king send her a husband; her prospective groom is murdered on the way to Egypt.
- 1274 Troops of Ramesses II fight those of the Hittite king Muwattalli II at Qadesh in Syria.
- 1250 An Elamite ziggurat is built in honor of the bull-god Inshushinak at Dur Untash on the Iranian Plateau.
- The Lion Gate, a tomb portal of limestone and masonry in a Mycenaean citadel and the Treasury of Atreus, a fifty-foot domed masonry tomb, are built at Mycenae.
- 1245 Ramesses II signs a treaty with the Hittite king Khattushili III. The two kingdoms agree to divide disputed lands, and the Egyptian king takes a Hittite princess as a wife.
- 1200–759 A Dark Age descends in the regions around the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. Linear B writing disappears and there are few surviving records.
- 1200–1000 An early Iron Age archaeological culture emerges in Syria-Palestine.
- 1200 The Sea Peoples, ancestors of the Philistines, destroy the Hittite Empire in Anatolia and initiate a Dark Age in the region. Ugarit experiences a decline of power, as do the city-states of Syria-Palestine.
- The Aramaeans migrate out of the Arabian peninsula and arrive in Syria-Palestine, where they establish many centers, including the city of Damascus.
- 1187–1156 Ramesses III, the last significant king of the New Kingdom, repulses an invasion of the Sea Peoples and settles them in Canaan. An attempt to assassinate him is thwarted.
- 1183 Troy, a city-state in northwest Asia Minor situated not far from the Dardanelles, is destroyed by the Greeks.

- 1158–1027 The Second Dynasty of Isin, an ancient city located in southern Mesopotamia, is established by Marduk-kabit-ahheshu.
- 1150 The Olmec of southern Mexico, living along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, begin carving large stone heads, some as tall as nine feet, that appear to wear helmets. The Olmec also produce beautiful pottery and jewelry.
- 1115–1077 Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser I defeats the Mushki and the small Hurrian states of southern Armenia. He spreads Assyrian power into the lands around the Mediterranean Sea and fights against Babylonia, eventually plundering the capital.
- 1075–945 The Twenty-first Dynasty with a capital at Tanis in the Delta includes seven rulers. The first ruler, Smendes, sends the official of the god Amun named Wenamun to Lebanon to purchase wood for a boat for the god and meets numerous difficulties that may illustrate Egypt's decline in the world at this time.
- 1074–1057 King Ashur-bel-kala of Assyria, the son of Tiglath-pileser I, continues Assyrian warfare against the Aramaeans and Babylonians, although his empire is unstable.
- 1050–1032 Ashurnasirpal I, the brother of Ashur-bel-kala and new king, fights defensive actions against the enemies of Assyria.
- 1025 The Greek Geometric Period produces art based on geometric patterns on vases. They also produce bronze statues of human figures composed of triangles and rectangles.
- 1000–612 The Neo-Assyrian empire controls Mesopotamia.
- 1000 Saul, the first king of the United Monarchy of Israel and Judah, defends his lands against the Philistines. He is killed at the battle of Mount Gilboa.
- 1000–960 David, who succeeds Saul as king of the United Monarchy, conquers Jerusalem.
- 960–932 Solomon, the son of Bathsheba and David, becomes king of the United Monarchy of Israel and Judah. He makes Palestine a trading center and constructs the Temple of Jerusalem.
- 945–712 Ten rulers control Lower Egypt from the Delta city of Bubastis.
- 932–911 Jeroboam I of Israel, who had plotted against Solomon and Rehoboam, returns from exile and becomes king of the northern tribes. He makes his capital in Shechem in northern Israel.
- 931–915 Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, becomes king of Judah only to see Jeroboam withdraw the northern tribes. He then faces an invasion by the Egyptians.
- 915–913 Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, becomes the second king of Judah.
- 913–873 Asa, the son of Abijah, becomes king of Judah and purges his country of opposing religious cults.
- 911–910 Nadab, the son of Jeroboam I, becomes king of Israel.
- 910–887 Upon Nadab's death, Baasha becomes king of Israel and attacks Judah.
- 900–331 Syria-Palestine is in the sphere of influence of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. The Napatan kings, named for the city in Sudan where the Egyptian governors ruled, control Nubia.
- 887–886 Elah, the son of Baasha, rules over Israel until he is assassinated in a palace coup d'état.
- 886–875 After defeating a rival claimant to the throne, Omri becomes the king of Israel. The Moabites, a people living around the Dead Sea, are subjugated.
- 886 Zimri, one of the generals who killed Elah, takes over the leadership of Israel.
- 883–859 The Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II rules Mesopotamia, reestablishing the former supremacy of the empire. He makes his

- capital at Nimrud on the east bank of the Tigris River. Assyrian artists create the Lion Hunt relief which depicts archers in a horse-drawn chariot.
- 875–854 King Ahab of Israel, the son of Omri, restores alliances with Judah and other local rivals. His forces defeat an Assyrian incursion at Karkar, but he dies the following year fighting Damascus.
- 873–849 Jehoshaphat succeeds his father, Asa, as king of Judah. Allied with Israel, his troops fight against the Syrians.
- 858–824 King Shalmaneser III of Assyria rules Mesopotamia. His troops conquer the Hittites and Damascus, fight against the forces of Israel at Karkar, and defeat the opposition at Tyre and Sidon.
- 854–853 Ahab's son, Ahaziah, serves as king of Israel. His troops are unable to defeat a revolt in Moab.
- 853–842 Jehoram (or Jeram), another of Ahab's sons, succeeds Ahaziah as king of Israel. With Judean aid his troops defeat the Moabite opposition.
- 842 Ahaziah, son of Jeram, becomes king of Judah. Jehu, an army commander, kills Jehoram and takes the throne of Israel. He also kills Ahaziah and destroys the royal family, making Athaliah the queen of Judah. Jehu wages war against Damascus but is subservient to the Assyrians and tries to eliminate all followers of the god Baal.
- 838–712 The Egyptian Twenty-third Dynasty includes rival rulers in Thebes and in the north of Egypt.
- 836–797 Joash leads a revolt against Athaliah; he ascends the throne after her assassination.
- 823–811 Assyrian king Shamshi-Adad V rules in Mesopotamia. He wages war against Urartu, an emerging Armenian civilization.
- 815–799 Jehoahas succeeds his father, Jehu, as king of Israel.
- 810–783 Adad-Nirari III of Assyria serves as king of Mesopotamia. His troops will fight against the peoples to the west of his empire.
- 800 The Urartu in Anatolia are defeated by the Assyrians. The Olmec city of La Venta is established, becoming the most important center of Mesoamerican culture in Central America for almost four hundred years.
- 799–784 Jehoash succeeds his father, Jehoahas, as king of Israel.
- 797–769 Jehoash's son, Amaziah, serves as king of Judah. He defeats the Edomites, who occupy the hilly lands south of the Dead Sea in modern Jordan in 798 B.C.E. The Israelites capture and assassinate him.
- 784–744 Jeroboam II succeeds Jehoash as king of Israel. He restores the traditional borders of Israel and captures Damascus.
- 776 The earliest known recorded observation of a solar eclipse is documented by the Chinese.
- 769–741 Azariah, son of Amaziah, enjoys a prosperous reign as king of Judah. His troops defeat the Philistines. Despite his military success, the Hebrew prophets Amos and Hosea warn of an eventual downfall due to corruption.
- Greek colonists expand into Italy and Sicily.
- 760–747 King Kashta of Kush, one in a line of hereditary Egyptianized Nubian rulers, conquers and rules Upper Egypt. He founds the Twenty-fifth Dynasty that will rule Egypt until 664 B.C.E. His rule marks the beginning of nearly continuous foreign rule in Egypt until 1952 C.E.
- 753 Rome is founded by Romulus, leading to the development of a monarchy in Italy. The first king and religious leader traditionally is Numa Pompilius who ascends the throne in 715 B.C.E.
- 750 A Neo-Hittite state emerges in Anatolia.
- 750–550 The Archaic Period occurs in Greece. Greeks colonize Sicily, Italy, and the Ionian coast.

- 747–716 King Piye of Kush controls Nubia and Egypt. two winged bulls with human (male) faces.
- 744 Zechariah succeeds Jeroboam II as king of Israel. He is assassinated by Shallum, who in turn is killed by Menachem, who ascends the throne and rules until 735 B.C.E. 721 The Elamite king Humbanigash and the Babylonian king Merodach-baladan attack Sargon II of Assyria at Der.
- 744–727 Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria rules Mesopotamia. In 743 B.C.E. he attacks the Urarteans at Arpad. He then turns his attention in 739 B.C.E. to the west, forcing Judah and Israel to submit to his authority. 720 The Chinese build a canal connecting the Huai and Yellow Rivers.
- 743–642 The Neo-Elamite Period, in which the Elamites meddle in Babylonian affairs, occurs on the Iranian plateau. 716–702 King Shabako of Kush rules in Nubia and in Egypt.
- 741–726 King Jotham and King Ahaz of Judah serve as co-regents in Syria-Palestine. 714 The Assyrian king Sargon II defeats Urartu. His forces break the alliance of the southern Palestinian states with Egypt in 712 B.C.E.
- 735 The Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III sends his forces against Urartu again. 710 Babylonian king Merodach-baladan revolts against the Assyrian king Sargon II but is defeated and forced into exile. He returns in 703 B.C.E. to reclaim the throne but is again defeated by the Assyrians.
- 734–731 Pekahiah, son of King Menachem, serves as king of Israel. Ahaz of Judah rejects an alliance with Israel and seeks support of the Assyrians. Pekah reigns as king of Israel and invades Judah in an attempt to force it into an alliance against Assyria. He dies in a conspiracy and is replaced by Hosea, who is backed by the Assyrians. 704–681 Sennacherib of Assyria rules in Mesopotamia.
- 731 The Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III is forced to return home to put down a revolt in Babylon, completed in 728 B.C.E. 702–690 King Shitbitqu of Kush rules both Nubia and Egypt.
- 726–697 King Hezekiah of Judah rules while under control of the Assyrians. He rebels unsuccessfully at least twice. 700 Celtic peoples begin settling in the Iberian Peninsula.
- 725 King Hosea of Israel rebels against the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V, who invades in response. 697–642 King Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, rules Judah.
- 722 Sargon II, son of Shalmaneser V, removes Israelites to captivity in Mesopotamia. 690–664 King Taharqo of Kush rules in Nubia and Egypt.
- 721–705 The Assyrian king Sargon II builds the Gate of the Citadel at Khorsabad in Mesopotamia. The giant carvings depict 690 Phrygia, a Thracian city-state in Asia Minor along the Black Sea, is attacked by the Cimmerians, a people who occupy most of the Crimea.
- 680–669 Sennacherib's son, Esarhaddon, becomes king of Assyria. He conquers Babylon, razes the Phoenician city of Sidon, and incorporates Egypt into his empire after capturing Memphis.
- 675 Lydia, a city-state in western Anatolia, rises in power. The Lydians are credited with inventing coins.

- 668–627 Ashurbanipal follows Esarhaddon as Assyrian king. He defeats the Elamites, destroying their capital at Susa in 639 B.C.E.
- 664–653 King Tanwetamani of Kush rules in Nubia.
- 664–525 Libyans found the Twenty-sixth Dynasty and expel Assyrians from Egypt.
- 660 The Persian prophet Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism, is born.
- 658 Lydian, Ionian, and Carian mercenaries join the Egyptians in their fight against the Assyrians.
- 653–643 King Atlanersa of Kush rules Nubia.
- 653 The Median king Phraortes, who conquered many of the peoples in the region, is killed in battle against the Assyrians.
- 650–590 A series of leaders known as “lawgivers” rule in Greece.
- 650 The carved limestone relief “Dying Lion,” depicting the feline being pierced by three arrows, is carved in Nineveh.
- 643–623 King Senkamanisken of Kush reigns in Nubia.
- 642 Ancus Martius becomes king of Rome. A bridge is built over the Tiber River in Rome.
- 640 King Amon has a short reign in Judah, assassinated by his officers after two years. King Josiah of Judah reclaims the provinces of Samaria, Gilead, and Galilee from the Assyrians, who are experiencing domestic upheaval after Ashurbanipal’s death. Josiah is assassinated by the Egyptian king Necho II at Megiddo.
- 626 Scythians, nomadic warriors from eastern Europe (Ukraine and Russia), invade Syria and Palestine.
- 625 The Chaldean Dynasty is established in Mesopotamia by Nabopolassar who consolidates power in the empire. This dynasty rules until 539 B.C.E.
- 612 The Scythians, Medes, and Babylonians capture and destroy the Assyrian city of Nineveh, and also conquer Urartu. Assyrians attempt to ally with Egypt to defeat the coalition.
- 609 King Jehoahaz of Judah fights Syrian and Israelite attacks on Jerusalem by turning to Assyria for help.
- 609–598 Josiah’s son Jehoiakim serves as the king of Judah after Jehoahaz is deposed by the Assyrians.
- 605 Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylon after defeating the Egyptian army led by Necho II of Egypt at Carchemish. He remains in power until 562 B.C.E.
- 600 A Phoenician fleet sails around Africa.
- 598 Jehoiachin becomes king of Judah and faces an invasion launched by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The Babylonians conquer Jerusalem for the first time.
- 598–587 Nebuchadnezzar places Zedekiah on the throne of Judah. He is taken to Babylon as a captive after a failed revolt.
- 593–568 Aspalta becomes the first Meroitic king of Nubia.
- 590 The Greek tyrant Cleisthenes of Sicyon founds the Pythian Games in honor of the god Apollo. By 582 B.C.E. the games are held every four years.
- 587–586 Jerusalem is conquered again by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the city walls razed. Judah is destroyed as a nation and the Babylonian Exile begins.
- 578 Rome joins the Latin League.
- 575 The fifteen-meter high glazed brick Ishtar gate, one of eight portals into Babylon, is built by Nebuchadnezzar.
- 573 Nebuchadnezzar captures the port city of Tyre after a thirteen-year siege.
- 568–555 King Aramatelqo of Meroe rules over Nubia.

- 563 Siddhartha Gautama, founder of Buddhism, is born in Kapilavastu in present-day Nepal.
- 560 Croesus of Lydia controls Asia Minor. The Athenian statesman and lawgiver Solon dies.
- 559–530 Cyrus the Great becomes king of Persia and establishes the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire which lasts until 330 B.C.E.
- 556 Nabonidus becomes king of Babylon and allies with Cyrus of Anshan, a small kingdom north of Babylon, against the Medes.
- 555–542 King Malonqen of Merore rules in Nubia.
- 551 The Chinese philosopher Confucius (K'ung Fu-tzu) is born.
- 550 Persia expands into Anatolia under the direction of Cyrus the Great. Within five years most of the Greek cities of Asia Minor provide tribute to the Persians.
- Celts expand into the British Isles and Ireland.
- 547 Cyrus the Great conquers Lydia.
- 542–538 King Analmaaye of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 540 Mahavira (Vardhamana), the Indian religious ruler and founder of Jainism, is born.
- 539 The Babylonian Exile ends when Cyrus the Great captures Babylon. Persia rules over Israel and Judah and dominates Mesopotamia.
- 538 Cyrus the Great issues an edict to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.
- 538–519 King Amani-natake-lebte of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 534 The Romans build the Temple of Juno.
- 533 Cyrus the Great conquers the Indus Valley and creates a province (satrapy).
- 529 Cambyses II becomes Persian king upon the death of Cyrus the Great in a battle against the Massagetae.
- 525 Cambyses II conquers Egypt. The Persians rule Egypt until 404 B.C.E.
- 522 Darius I becomes Persian king and quells revolts. He divides the empire into 22 provinces and completes a canal from the Nile River to the Red Sea.
- 519–510 King Karkamani of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 510–487 King Amaniastabarqo of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 509 The Roman Republic is founded. Lucius Junius Brutus and Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus are the first consuls. The Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus is built on the Capitoline Hill in Rome.
- 506 Rome and Carthage sign a non-interference treaty.
- 500–323 The Greek classical period on the Greek mainland marks a golden age for Greece during this period.
- 500 Ionian Greek city-states revolt against Persia.
- Bantu peoples of Africa begin migrating throughout the continent. The Nok civilization of West Africa (Nigeria) flourishes.
- 496 The Romans defeat the Latins at the Battle of Lake Regillus and become the leading power in Italy.
- 494 Roman plebeians force political reform and additional rights from the patrician class.
- 490 Darius II reasserts control of Macedonia but Athens defeats the Persian Empire at the Battle of Marathon, blocking further expansion.
- 487–468 Siaspiqa of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 486 Roman consul Spurius Cassius Vecellinius, who had brokered a peace between the Romans and the Latin League in 493 B.C.E., is accused of trying to make himself the king of Rome after he tries to change agrarian laws to favor the plebeian

- class. He is condemned and executed. Xerxes I (the Great) becomes king of Persia following the death of his father Darius I. He maintains Persian control over Egypt and Babylonia.
- 485 Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, a Roman consul and farmer, is declared dictator by his people in order to lead an army against the Aequi who have besieged a force led by Lucius Minucius Esquilus Augurinus. When Cincinnatus triumphs, he steps down from the position and returns to his farm.
- 484 The Greek dramatist Aeschylus wins his first prize in the competition for tragedy at Athens.
- Herodotus is born. His great work on the Greek-Persian wars leads to his reputation as the father of history.
- 470 The teachings of Confucius, known as the Analects, are collected by his disciples.
- 468–463 King Nasakhma of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 465–423 Artaxerxes I, son of Xerxes the Great, becomes Persian king after killing his father's assassin.
- 463–435 King Maloiebamani of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 457–445 Ezra is Persian governor of Judah.
- 451 The Twelve Tables, the basis of Roman law, are codified.
- 449 Athens and Persia negotiate the Peace of Callias.
- 447 Pericles begins building the Parthenon in Athens.
- 445–425 Nehemiah is Persian governor of Judah. He rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem.
- 435–431 King Talakhamani of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 431–404 Athens and Sparta fight the Peloponnesian War on the Greek mainland.
- 431–405 King Irike-Amanote of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 425 The Romans conclude a peace treaty with the Veii.
- 423–404 The Greek general Thucydides writes the history of the Peloponnesian War.
- 423–405 Xerxes II rules Persia.
- 410 The Gauls, Celtic tribes living in the German regions of Europe, begin migrations across the Alps into Italy.
- 409 Troops from the North African city-state of Carthage capture Sicily from its Greek colonizers. The Carthaginians are forced out in 406 because of a plague and make peace in 405 B.C.E.
- 405–404 Baskakeren of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 404–369 Harsiyotef of Meroe rules Nubia.
- 404–399 Amyrtaeus of Sais leads the Egyptian Twenty-eighth Dynasty.
- 404 Artaxerxes II follows his father Darius II as king of Persia. The Egyptian king Amyrtaeus drives Persians from Egypt.
- 399–381 Three kings rule successively as the Egyptian Twenty-ninth Dynasty.
- 390 Gauls defeat the Romans at the Battle of Allia but they fail to conquer the city of Rome.
- 381–343 Three kings from Sebennytyos rule as the Egyptian Thirtieth Dynasty.
- 381 Cyprus submits to the Persians.
- 371 Chinese philosopher Meng-tzu, son of Confucius, is born. The Spartan king Cleobrotus is killed in battle with the Thebans.
- 367 Romans fight the Gauls.
- 359–336 Philip II becomes king of Macedon and conquers mainland Greece.
- 358 Artaxerxes III Ochus becomes king of Persia.
- 356 The first parts of the defensive fortifications, which will become the Great Wall, are constructed by the Chinese in an attempt to block invasions by the Huns.



- 353–340 The Noba occupy Kush and replace the kingdom of Meroe.
- 343–341 Rome is involved in the First Samnite War, gaining for Rome control of northern Campania.
- 343–332 Three Persian rulers lead the Second Persian Domination of Egypt.
- 340 Roman consul Titus Manlius Imperiosus Torquatus defeats the Latins in Campania and then again at Trifanum. The Latin League is disbanded and the former allies are made dependent partners in the expanding Roman empire.
- 340–335 King Nastasen of Meroe rules over Nubia.
- 336 Philip of Macedon is assassinated, and his son Alexander the Great ascends the throne.
- 335 Darius III ascends the Persian throne.
- 334 Alexander the Great defeats the Persians at the Granicus river and conquers Anatolia. His armies then capture the Phoenician cities, except for Tyre, on their way to Egypt.
- 332 Alexander the Great conquers Egypt.

1  
chapter one

# ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

Edward Bleiberg

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	4	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		Burial Tombs and Temples at Abydos . . . . .	8
Earliest Temples and Tombs . . . . .	6	Buildings of Dynasty Three . . . . .	10
Pyramid Complexes . . . . .	9	<i>Herodotus on the Cruelty of Khufu</i> (account of the building of the Giza pyramid complex) . . . . .	24
The North-South Pyramid Complex: King Djoser's Complex at Saqqara . . . . .	11	Pyramid Complexes of the Later Fourth Dynasty . . . . .	25
The First True Pyramids . . . . .	14	<i>A Ritual Speech to Unite with the Sun God</i> (speech carved into the sarcophagus chamber of a king) . . . . .	33
Fourth-Dynasty Architecture and History . . . . .	20	<i>Letters to the Dead</i> (letters from a son to his deceased parents) . . . . .	35
Architecture of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties . . . . .	29	<i>Herodotus on the Labyrinth</i> (excerpt from the earliest known description of Egypt by a foreigner) . . . . .	41
Mastaba Tombs of the Old Kingdom . . . . .	34	<i>Khnumhotep Builds Himself a Tomb</i> (inscriptions by Khnumhotep found inside his own tomb) . . . . .	43
Domestic Architecture in the Old Kingdom . . . . .	36	<i>Praise of Thebes</i> (anonymously written text illustrating Egyptian thinking about towns) . . . . .	49
Transition to the Middle Kingdom . . . . .	37	<i>A Quarry Inscription from the Middle Kingdom</i> (a high official's record of his own accomplishments) . . . . .	53
The Pyramids of the Middle Kingdom . . . . .	39	<i>Pliny's Description of Loading an Obelisk on a Ship</i> (The Roman author Pliny's description of Egyptian moving methods of heavy materials) . . . . .	59
Rock-Cut Tombs of the Middle Kingdom . . . . .	42		
A Planned Town of the Middle Kingdom: Kahun . . . . .	44		
New Kingdom Temples . . . . .	45		
Thebes and the Estate of Amun . . . . .	49		
Egyptian Construction Technology . . . . .	52		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Amenhotep, Son of Hapu . . . . .	59		
Hemiuunu, Son of Nefermaat . . . . .	59		
Imhotep . . . . .	60		
Ineni . . . . .	60		
Senenmut, Son of Ramose . . . . .	60		
Sety I . . . . .	61		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	61		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Architecture and Design*

*All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).*

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| <p>3800–2298 The earliest Egyptians bury their dead in oval pits in the desert and include pots, tools, and weapons.</p> <p>3100–2800 The artists of the First Dynasty demonstrate a knowledge of uniform measurements called the cubit, palm, and finger.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Kings build seven mud brick enclosures at Abydos that are the first combination tombs and temples.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Egyptians add superstructures to pit tombs creating the first <i>mastabas</i>, tombs that resemble a large mud brick bench.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Architects use granite in door jambs for the first time.</p> <p>2675–2625 The first preserved stone architecture built by King Djoser under Imhotep’s supervision is constructed at Saqqara.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The first known architectural use of drills is in evidence at Djoser’s construction at Saqqara.</p> <p>2625–2585 King Sneferu’s architects are unsuccessful in their attempts to build the first true pyramids, including structures at Meidum and Dahshur.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Architects building Mastaba 17 at Meidum, an early example of a noble’s tomb, construct battered (inclined) walls.</p> <p>2585–2560 King Khufu’s architect Hemiunu builds the Great Pyramid at Giza, the largest pyramid</p> | <p>ever constructed. King Khufu’s builders move 2,700,000 cubic meters (95,350,000 cubic feet) of stone, as engineering techniques allow for the routine moving of stone blocks up to sixty tons in weight.</p> <p>Mastaba tombs are made of stone rather than the mud brick of earlier dynasties.</p> <p>2585–2510 King Khafre builds his pyramid complex, including the Great Sphinx, the second pyramid complex at Giza. The valley temples from this complex are the best-preserved temples from the Fourth Dynasty.</p> <p>2560–2555 King Djedefre (a.k.a. Redjedef) begins his pyramid complex at Abu Roash. It will remain unfinished, probably due to his early death.</p> <p>2532–2510 King Menkaure builds his smaller pyramid complex, the third and final complex at Giza.</p> <p>2508–2500 King Shepseskaf abandons Giza as the traditional resting place of kings to build his Mastabat el Fara’un in Abu Sir, returning to Djoser’s earliest tomb type.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Tool marks at the Mastabat el Fara’un demonstrate that builders used saws to trim joins in masonry.</p> <p>2500–2485 King Userkaf returns to Saqqara and builds a pyramid complex aligned with Djoser’s complex.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">King Userkaf builds the first sun temple dedicated to Re in Abu Sir.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Architects begin to construct mastaba tombs with increasingly complicated interior chapels.</p> <p>2485–2472 King Sahure builds the first of the standard Fifth- and Sixth-dynasty pyramid complexes at Abu Sir.</p> <p>2371–2350 King Unas includes the first known Pyramid Texts (spells recited during the royal funeral) carved inside his pyramid at Saqqara.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Skilled craftsmen working for King Unas work on statues in the quarry.</p> |
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- 2008–1938 Nebhepetre Mentuhotep builds a tomb and temple at Deir el Bahri based on Theban temple types.
- Egyptian workers at Nebhepetre Mentuhotep's temple at Deir el Bahri use benchmarks (permanent markers for the starting point) while surveying.
- The Egyptians first use sandstone in construction.
- 1957 The vizier (prime minister) Amenemhet, serving King Mentuhotep III, leads one of the earliest quarrying expeditions into the eastern desert.
- 1938–1759 Twelfth-dynasty kings build pyramid complexes based on earlier traditions of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, but later build complexes based on the Third-dynasty tradition of Djoser.
- Pictorial evidence from the time shows the Egyptians hauling heavy loads on sledges, which are sled-like devices used on sand.
- 1938–1909 King Amenemhet I builds a pyramid complex at Lisht based on earlier traditions of the Fourth through Sixth Dynasties.
- 1919–1875 King Senwosret I builds a pyramid complex at Lisht with an internal stone skeleton, like a scaffold meant to support the structure, an innovation that failed.
- The workmen of King Senwosret I routinely haul blocks twice as big as the blocks at the Great Pyramid.
- 1836–1818 King Senwosret III builds a pyramid complex at Dahshur based on Djoser's Third-dynasty complex at Saqqara.
- King Senwosret III builds an additional temple at Abydos where he is actually buried, reviving an early tradition from the First Dynasty in which the tomb is placed in Abydos in central Egypt rather than the area near Memphis.
- 1818–1772 King Amenemhet III builds a traditional pyramid complex at Dahshur and the Labyrinth at Hawara which follows the style of Djoser's pyramid complex at Saqqara.
- 1539–1292 Egyptian builders transport sandstone from Upper Egyptian quarries for use in Lower Egypt at Memphis.
- The obelisk in the granite quarries of Aswan is begun and later abandoned because it cracked during the attempt to cut it from the bedrock.
- 1479–1425 Paintings from the tomb of the high official Rekhmire depict construction workers, including masons and brick makers.
- 1426–1400 King Amenhotep II restores the temple at Giza for the first time in the New Kingdom.
- 1400–1390 King Thutmose IV restores the temple at the Great Sphinx for the second time in two generations.
- 1390–1352 King Amenhotep III begins work on the Luxor Temple dedicated to the god Amun and the royal *ka* (soul).
- 1292–1190 The first documented use of the *shaduf*—a pole with a basket at one end and a weight that makes it easy to raise the basket at the other end—is shown in a tomb painting. A shaduf could have been used to lift construction loads as well as water.
- 1290–1279 King Sety I commissions a votive model of the temple he will build at Heliopolis, as a gift for the god.
- Egyptians routinely move stone blocks weighing up to 1,000 tons, more than ten times as heavy as the blocks moved during the Old Kingdom.
- 1156–1150 King Ramesses IV commissions a presentation plan of his tomb in the Valley of the Kings. The plan is now found in the Turin Museum where it is known as Papyrus Turin 1885.
- The Abbott Papyrus, now stored in the British Museum, describes tomb robberies and demonstrates that the Egyptian word *mer* (“pyramid”) means any kind of tomb.

## OVERVIEW

### *of Architecture and Design*

**EGYPTIAN BUILDING TYPES.** Ancient Egyptian architecture falls into three categories: buildings for the living, buildings for the dead, and buildings for religious rites, i.e. temples, chapels, and shrines. The surviving architectural examples of Egypt's ancient past are from the latter two categories and are some of the most recognizable structures in the world. The Great Pyramid of Giza, for example, is one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and one of the premier tourist attractions in Egypt today. The pyramids were tombs specifically created to be the homes of deceased kings in the afterlife, and were part of larger complexes that functioned to serve the dead king in the afterlife. These tombs include the vast pyramid complexes built for kings from the Third Dynasty until the end of the Middle Kingdom when the Egyptians abandoned pyramid building (2675–1630 B.C.E.). Kings were not the only ones to have homes in the afterlife; Egypt's elite class of individuals also built tombs called *mastabas* as permanent homes for themselves after death. The Egyptians first built mastabas for the earliest king in the First and Second Dynasties and continued to build them in Lower Egypt (northern Egypt) until the end of ancient Egyptian history (3500–30 B.C.E.) for the elite class. By the Sixth Dynasty and throughout the remainder of ancient Egyptian history, Egyptian nobles in Middle (central) Egypt and Upper (southern) Egypt carved tombs directly into the mountains that border the Nile river valley. During the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) the Egyptians buried kings in rock-cut tombs in the Valley of the Kings near modern Luxor and worshipped the deceased kings as gods in temples built just for that purpose.

**EGYPTIAN BELIEFS.** Egyptians believed their king was the incarnation of the god Horus on earth. According to the myth, Horus was a falcon, born to the god Osiris and his wife, Isis. When Osiris died he became the king of the dead. In the same way, the Egyptians believed that when the king died he became Osiris and

ruled in the next world. The king's son on earth was then the new Horus. These beliefs help explain the nature of Egyptian tombs for kings. Tombs were the place where Horus became Osiris and people on earth had access to the deceased king. Egyptian belief in the afterlife was so powerful that they only used permanent building materials, such as stone, for buildings that needed to last eternally. Buildings for the living, then, made use of the relatively impermanent material of mud brick; even the king's palace was made of mud brick. The Egyptians also developed stone architecture for gods' houses which Egyptologists call temples.

**ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIETY.** Architecture plays a pivotal role in understanding ancient Egyptian society. In the earliest periods and as late as the end of the Old Kingdom (3500–2170 B.C.E.), architecture provides scholars with the majority of the evidence for such an analysis because so little else from the culture survived. Relying on architecture for our understanding of a culture means that only a limited range of questions can be reliably answered. Architecture can, for example, be a good indicator of where a society allocates resources. In addition, the enormous effort required to build the Great Pyramid reveals something about the government's ability to direct and organize society's energies. Changes and continuity in architectural plans also suggest developments in religion and perhaps politics. Scholars, however, have often challenged the reliability of interpretations of religion based solely on architectural changes. When texts survive to supplement the knowledge derived from architecture, a much fuller picture can emerge. This is the case for the rock-cut tombs and the temples built for kings and gods in the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). In this time period the texts and sculptural reliefs on the interior walls of these structures supplement our understanding of the function that the rooms served and better define when important religious changes occurred. Finally, architecture provides one of the best categories of evidence for examining a society's approach to technology. Although technologically simple when compared to modern cultures, Egypt's structural accomplishments with such simple tools once inspired theories that Egyptian monuments were actually the work of aliens. Scholars have proven, however, that such supernatural or extraterrestrial explanations are unnecessary.

**RESOURCE ALLOCATION.** For nearly 3,000 years the Egyptians devoted an enormous percentage of their society's efforts and energy to monumental stone architecture. Only agriculture exceeded architecture for sheer manpower and time needed. At the start of the

twenty-first century, it is difficult to imagine both the impact that Egyptian architecture made on Europeans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who were astounded by the Egyptians' accomplishments, and the difficulty of producing massive stone buildings when it is so common today. It was only in the twentieth century that architects routinely designed buildings similar in size to ancient Egyptian buildings. Unlike modern construction projects that engage a significant number of society's workers but not a majority, most able-bodied Egyptians spent some time on construction projects during a lifetime of work. The Egyptian government organized the general population into either four or five rotating work groups known individually as a *za* that Egyptologists translate with the Greek word *phyle*. These phylae produced hundreds of thousands of cubic feet of stone walls, roofs, and foundations in nearly every generation. The Egyptian government also imported hundreds of boatloads of timber from Lebanon and directed craftsmen to produce tools, including stone axes, bronze chisels and saws, and wooden mallets. Engineers designed and built wooden sledges thirty meters (98.4 feet) long and huge boats that hauled several hundred tons of stone. Workmen dragged containers of sand and Nile mud to construction sites to make bricks. At the same time, the bureaucracy organized thousands of people to do the actual construction work and hundreds more who trained, fed, and clothed the workers. Egyptian architecture represents not only the highest design principles but also an astounding degree of cooperation, organization, and control for an early society. All of these organizational feats added to the Egyptians' high reputation as engineers and architects among ancient peoples, a reputation that the Egyptians retain today. Moreover, the ability of the Egyptian government to control people's actions suggests the degree of legitimacy it enjoyed as well as its power to coerce people into performing difficult and dangerous tasks for long periods of time.

**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE.** Egyptian society, including architecture, was far from stagnant, though some scholars have seen conservatism as its main feature. Perhaps a fairer description of Egyptian society would emphasize a fondness for continuity coupled with an ability to meet shifting circumstances with creative solutions. These solutions often transformed new buildings in subtle ways. Certainly the period from the beginning of architecture about 3500 B.C.E. to the end of the Old Kingdom about 2170 B.C.E. was extremely creative. During this time period the Egyptians developed a vocabulary of architectural forms and plans that included the

mastaba tomb and two different plans for pyramid complexes. They also developed the first sun temples dedicated to the chief god of the Egyptian pantheon at that time, Re. There was, however, tremendous variation in the plans of individual buildings and complexes. These subtle shifts have become the basis for interpreting the relationship between Egyptian architecture and its religion and politics. Yet almost all the buildings from this time period can be classified into one of four types: mastabas, north/south pyramid complexes, east/west pyramid complexes, and sun temples.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF STONE.** Even among the different types of plans and buildings, there is a unity in the way that Egyptians approached stone as a material. This unity of approach supplies the clearest evidence for Egyptian conservatism in design. One of the most distinctive features of Egyptian design was the designer's insistence on translating mud brick architecture into stone, reproducing parts of buildings originally fashioned from wood, reeds, woven mats, and mud brick in stone buildings during all periods. Egyptian artisans carved stone elements to resemble building elements originally constructed from such lightweight and perishable materials. In fact, the major features of Egyptian architectural style originated in techniques more at home in these lighter architectural materials. Egyptian builders constructed battered walls at varying angles to duplicate the mud brick construction, and imitated the original reed material in their construction of the concave Egyptian cornice that projects from the tops of walls. Woven mats originally functioned as screen walls to separate the holiest part of the building from the public eye, and could be used in combination with wood to create false doors. The relatively small number of architectural forms combined with this approach to stone is one reason why the variety of Egyptian expression is sometimes muted in comparison with the more overwhelming sense of continuity conveyed by Egyptian buildings.

**INTERPRETATION WITHOUT TEXTS.** Because of the emphasis on continuity in Egyptian design, there is a temptation to interpret any variation in plan or location from one generation to the next as indicative of a larger cultural change. Thus Egyptologists ask why King Shepseskaf, the son of the builder of the third pyramid at Giza, never built a pyramid for himself, choosing instead to build a tomb based on the older royal tradition of building a mastaba. Clearly this change appears to be a reflection of some important change in either religious or political policy. Either Shepseskaf desired a return to an earlier attitude toward the office of king, or economic

conditions made it impossible for him to build as his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had done. Perhaps some combination of religious and political forces was the cause, but without any corroborating evidence from texts, it is impossible to correctly interpret the king's actions. This lack of evidence points toward the fragility of some interpretations of Old Kingdom history based solely on architecture.

**INTERPRETATION WITH TEXTS.** Scholars were not wholly without texts, however. Written evidence and surviving decoration on the walls of a building add greatly to the reliability of interpretations of Egyptian buildings. In general Egyptologists accept that the decoration of a room in a temple or the inscriptions on the walls describe or explain the function of a room. Thus relief sculptures on the walls of a room that depict the king performing a series of ritual actions can reliably be interpreted as an illustration of what occurred in the room. The spells of the *Pyramid Texts* inscribed on the walls of late Fifth- and Sixth-dynasty pyramids are thought to have been recited on that spot. The existence of additional contemporary texts written on papyrus or limestone chips called *ostraca* adds even more to our general knowledge. The evidence used to interpret the use of buildings increases considerably for the New Kingdom compared to the earlier periods. For example, a comparison of written descriptions of the king's position in the world dating to the New Kingdom with the decoration of palaces, also built in the New Kingdom, shows how the same ideas had expression in two different mediums.

**THE FUNCTIONS OF BUILDINGS.** Earlier scholars of Egyptology could be overly influenced by their own preconceptions when they assigned functions to ancient buildings. This tendency was especially true in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when archaeologists tried to understand the buildings they had excavated without any corroborating evidence from texts. Early scholars concluded, for example, that buildings with high, paneled surrounding walls that date to the Predynastic Period (4400–3100 B.C.E.) were forts, even though they had no comparative material or extensive textual evidence to support such a theory. New interpretations, based on expanded comparative material, suggest that they were actually part of the kings' burials. The term "mortuary temples," used to describe the section of pyramid complexes built in the Old and Middle Kingdoms (2675–1630 B.C.E.), stems from the false supposition that their sole function concerned the burial rites of the king, which reflected a modern Western focus on the funeral ceremony and burial. Scholars now

understand these buildings as being important to the kings' continued life in the next world as the center of an eternal cult to honor the deceased king. These buildings are now called pyramid temples, describing their proximity to the pyramid rather than a definite function.

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF EGYPTIAN TECHNOLOGY.** In the 2,000-year history of Western interest in ancient Egypt, often the occult, the supernatural, and even the extraterrestrial have been proposed as explanations for certain phenomena. Nowhere is this more evident than in the interpretation of architecture. Many of these non-scientific explanations of ancient Egyptian accomplishments center on the construction of the pyramids. Many of these interpreters look only at the three pyramids at Giza built by kings Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure between 2585 and 2510 B.C.E. The enormous size and astounding precision with which these buildings were constructed not only arouse a sense of wonder, but have also suggested to many that the simple technology available to the Egyptians would not have sufficed to produce these buildings. A careful consideration of pyramid building from its origins in the time of King Djoser (2675–2654 B.C.E.) to the end of royal pyramid building at the close of the Middle Kingdom about 1630 B.C.E., shows a natural progression and even a learning curve. The earliest buildings contained mistakes. Subsequent buildings were sturdier because of innovations made in response to previous mistakes. Some innovations failed and were not repeated in later buildings. At the same time, the Egyptians learned to move increasingly heavier loads as their technology improved from the Old Kingdom to the New Kingdom. It is even possible to chart the progress in this one field of endeavor that is often ascribed in popular literature to knowledge obtained from space aliens. A study of the technological aspects of Egyptian building reveals much about their approach to problem solving.

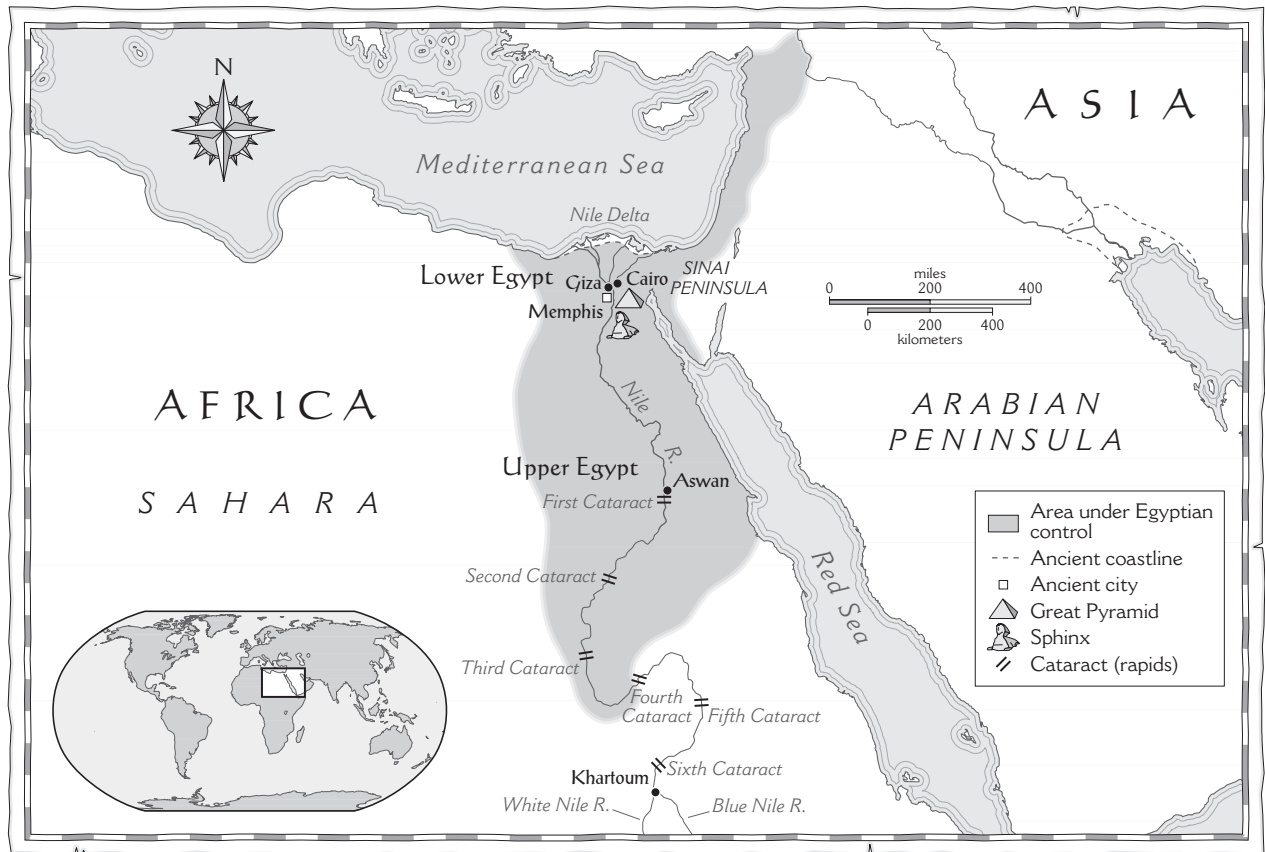
## TOPICS

### *in Architecture and Design*

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#### EARLIEST TEMPLES AND TOMBS

**FIRST STRUCTURES.** The earliest temples and tombs built in Egypt are in Abydos in Middle Egypt. Egyptologists have been aware of these structures since the late 1890s. In the roughly 100 years that Egyptol-



Map of ancient Egypt. XNR PRODUCTIONS, INC. THE GALE GROUP. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ogists have discussed these sites, there were differing opinions on whether they were temples, tombs, or forts. Other discussions of them suggested that some of these buildings were *cenotaphs*, structures built only to honor certain kings but not to house their burials. Most recently scholars have realized that these buildings represent the earliest royal tombs—located in the section of Abydos called in Arabic *Umm el Gaab* (“Mother of Pots”)—and the earliest cult temples dedicated to deceased kings, located in the section of Abydos called in Arabic *Kom es-Sultan* (“Mound of the Ruler”) about two kilometers from the tombs. Moreover, the two sets of buildings can be divided into pairs that resemble later funeral complexes consisting of a burial and a temple where the deceased king was eternally worshipped.

**EARLY EXCAVATION.** One of the first archaeologists to work in Egypt, the Englishman W. M. F. Petrie (1843–1942), excavated some of the earliest temples and tombs. Petrie worked all over Egypt, but during 1899–1900 and 1902–1903, he concentrated his efforts on a site in Middle Egypt called Abydos. Several villages

are now resident at the site formerly known as Abydos, including the village of Kom es Sultan and the village of Umm el Gaab. Petrie worked first in the village of Umm el Gaab, then two years later at the village of Kom es Sultan. At Umm el Gaab Petrie found and identified the cemetery of kings of the First and Second Dynasties (3100–2675 B.C.E.). The underground portion of these tombs was lined with wood protected by a surrounding wall of mud brick. Some of the twelve known burials had more than one room, and some were lined with green *faience* tiles—an early glazed material. In later eras such tiles resembled bundles of reeds that formed the earliest sorts of temporary buildings built by the Egyptians. Many Egyptologists assume that the Egyptians used these tiles in a similar way at the Umm el Gaab burials. Builders probably intended the entire underground burial to reproduce the king’s house on earth so that he would have a home in the next world. Thus this pattern of designing the burial after houses on earth began with the very earliest royal tombs. Above ground was a platform, built of brick. The platform was marked by a *stèle* (an upright slab of stone), that was inscribed with the king’s name. Similar but smaller tombs designed for

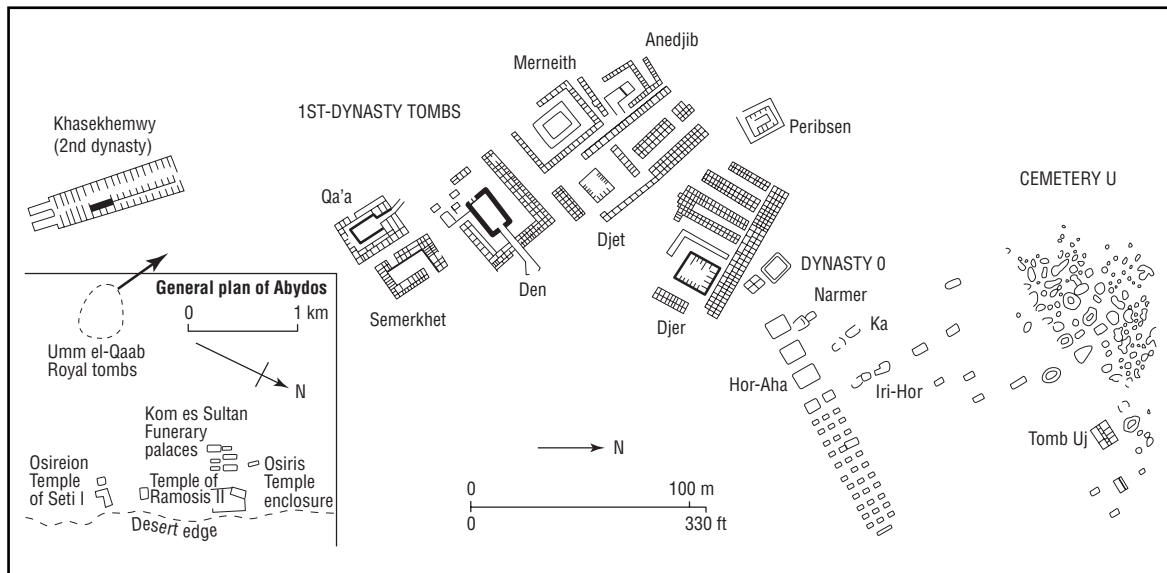


## BURIAL Tombs and Temples at Abydos

In 1899–1900 W. M. F. Petrie excavated the royal tombs of the first and second dynasties at Umm el Gaab, a section of the ancient Egyptian town called Abydos. In 1902–1903 he worked at Kom es Sultan about two kilometers from Umm el Gaab. There he found the temple enclosures that were a part of the royal funeral complexes. When he first discovered the thickly walled buildings at Kom es Sultan, however, Petrie identified them as

forts and did not recognize the connections between the Umm el Gaab and Kom es Sultan buildings. Subsequent research identified the buildings that Petrie identified as forts as the first temples, gathering places for the gods. The following map shows the locations of various Abydos burial tombs with corresponding names of the kings that are buried there, along with the location of the Kom es Sultan temples.

**SOURCE:** Dieter Arnold, "Royal Cult Complexes of the Old and Middle Kingdoms," in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*. Ed. Byron E. Shafer (Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997): 40.



Plan of royal tombs at Abydos. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

the king's courtiers were located around the king's tomb. This practice marks the beginning of a tradition of including the king's courtiers' tombs on the same site that continued through the next thousand years.

**TOMBS IN SAQQARA.** From 1936 to 1956, the English archaeologist Walter B. Emery excavated large First-dynasty mastaba tombs at Saqqara in northern Egypt (Lower Egypt). These tombs contained many grave goods including jars labeled as the king's property. These labels led Emery to identify these Saqqara mastabas as the real tombs of the First-dynasty kings since he believed that the tombs discovered by Petrie at Umm el Gaab were *cenotaphs*, memorials to the kings that never contained burials. After considerable debate, most Egyptologists believe that the Saqqara tombs belonged to high officials of the First Dynasty while the

actual kings' tombs were located in Abydos at Umm el Gaab. Even so, some books and articles written during the mid-twentieth century continue to refer to Saqqara as the burial place of First-dynasty kings.

**FUNERARY ENCLOSURES ("FORTS") AT KOM ES SULTAN.** Petrie worked his second season at Abydos in 1902–1903 at the area known as Kom es Sultan. There he found the mud brick foundations of five buildings with huge mud brick walls. The walls were up to eleven meters (36 feet) tall and were roughly 65 by 122 meters (213 by 400 feet) long. Petrie believed that these massive walls and large enclosed spaces could only be intended as forts. These structures were built completely above ground and had no underground chambers such as were found at the tombs of Umm el Gaab. The patterned, mud brick walls were laid in what Egypt-

tologists later came to call the “palace façade” pattern. This pattern was repeated throughout ancient Egyptian history, both in buildings and in representation in relief and on statues, and led Egyptologists to arrive at a better understanding of the function of these enclosures. The Egyptians used the walled enclosure with panels, called the palace façade motif, in hieroglyphic writing contemporary with the earliest temples discussed here. A drawing of this motif surrounded the names of buildings the Egyptians called the “fortress of the gods” in hieroglyphic writing. Egyptologists believe that this writing connects the names to the buildings found at Kom es Sultan in Abydos. The buildings were given names such as “Thrones of the Gods” and “Procession of the Gods” which suggests that the Egyptians thought of these buildings as places where the gods gathered. The Egyptians called these gods the “Followers of Horus.” Because the king himself was the incarnation of the god Horus the “Followers of Horus” were local gods from the provinces who gathered at the Fortress of the Gods to deliver taxes. The design of the surviving buildings indicates that this process would continue for the king even after he had died and gone to the next world.

**FORTRESS OF THE GODS.** It is possible to generalize about the architecture of the Fortress of the Gods from the archaeological remains at Kom es Sultan in Abydos and the hieroglyphic writings of the names of these buildings. Located on the west bank of the Nile River, the building’s entrance faced the river, suggesting that the gods arrived in boats sailing on a canal that led to the enclosure. Support for this theory comes from the discovery of boats buried along the east side of the enclosure of King Khasekhemwy (fifth king of Dynasty 2, before 2675 B.C.E.) near Abydos. The other architectural feature inside the enclosure was a mound of sand. This mound may be the remains of the platform where the king, as the god Horus, reviewed the assembled gods. These enclosures are prominent remains from the First and Second Dynasties. They diminish in importance during later periods, but still were built as late as the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). Scholars constructed this new interpretation of the buildings at Umm el Gaab and Kom es Sultan based on knowledge of later buildings. The pyramid complexes built by kings in the Third through Sixth Dynasties contained both a burial and either one or two temples intended for preserving the cult of the deceased king. Increased knowledge of these later structures during the early twentieth century allowed archaeologists to reexamine the buildings at Abydos.

Based on knowledge of the basic functions of buildings in the later pyramid complexes, archaeologists have discovered parallel uses for the pairs of buildings that First- and Second-dynasty kings constructed in Abydos.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Temple Architecture and Symbolism*

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## PYRAMID COMPLEXES

**PART OF A WHOLE.** The pyramid is the most widely known Egyptian architectural structure. Yet the pyramid itself is only part of a much larger complex. Egyptian kings built pyramid complexes during a distinct time period. During the Old and Middle Kingdoms (2675–1630 B.C.E.) most, but not all, kings built pyramids as tombs. There are approximately 47 pyramid complexes that Egyptologists have identified from this period. This does not include the pyramids built in the Sudan by Nubian kings at a later time, because they were part of a separate tradition over 1,000 years after the Egyptians stopped building pyramids.

**PYRAMID COMPLEX TYPES.** Egyptologists recognize two major types of pyramid complexes. In the older type, the main axis of the complex was oriented north and south. This orientation associates the complex with the Egyptian belief that the northern stars represented the gods in the next world. The stars were the physical expression of the belief that the deceased king became Osiris, king of the dead, and that his son on earth was the god Horus who ruled after him. Often the pyramid in the north/south complex was a step pyramid. In such cases many Egyptologists believe the step pyramid represented a staircase to the stars. The second type of pyramid complex has a main axis that runs east and west and reflects a different belief system regarding the afterlife. This orientation associates the complex with the

## BUILDINGS of Dynasty Three

King Djoser’s Saqqara complex is the earliest well-preserved stone architecture from ancient Egypt. Other than the remnants of foundations and even some walls which have survived, almost nothing is known about these buildings or the people who built them. Listed be-

low are the names of surviving pyramid complexes, the kings that most likely built them, the type of pyramid they likely represented, and where the remains were located or where the pyramid was most likely built based on ancient record. They are listed in chronological order by reigning king. Absolute dates for these kings and their buildings still remain unknown. Scholars had named the pyramid complexes after the kings that most likely built them since the ancient names for these buildings are not preserved.

King/Pyramid Name	Pyramid Type	Location
Nebka (Horus Sannakht)	Unknown	Unknown
Djoser (Horus Netjerykeht)	Step Pyramid	Saqqara
Djoserteti (Horus Sekhemkeht)	Buried Pyramid	Saqqara
Hours Khaba	Layer Pyramid	Zawiyet el-Aryan
Huni (Horus Qahedjet)	Unknown	Unknown

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course of the sun and the sun-god, Re. In this Egyptian belief system, Re rode in a boat that traveled across the daytime sky from east to west and then traveled in the land of the dead at night, emerging in the east again in the morning. The deceased king joined Re in his journey in the boat, called a *solar barque*. There was no real opposition between people who believed in one or the other of these two myths. In fact, many Egyptians believed that both myths were true. Ancient Egyptians often had divergent explanations or beliefs they held as equally valid. This multiplicity of solutions presents problems today when the inclination is to seek for a simple and exclusive answer to a question. Though these ideas explain individual pyramid complexes, Egyptologists still do not understand why a king would choose to build a north/south rather than an east/west pyramid complex or vice versa. Often Egyptologists try to explain the choice between the two kinds of complexes as a choice in emphasizing one myth of the afterlife over the other.

**PARTS OF A PYRAMID COMPLEX.** Both north/south pyramid complexes and east/west pyramid complexes have similar elements. They included the pyramid itself, sites for performing daily rituals, and subsidiary burials. Almost every pyramid complex had unique features in addition to these common features. The meaning of these features is almost never clear. The pyramid itself is the most important common element in a pyramid complex. Egyptians first built step pyramids (pyramids constructed in layers that decreased in size at higher

elevations) in the Third Dynasty and built mostly true pyramids (pyramids with smooth sides) beginning in the Fourth Dynasty and later. Besides the difference in outward appearance, there are major differences between the interiors of step pyramids and true pyramids. The step pyramids included ritual areas and storage in addition to a burial chamber inside them. True pyramids sometimes included ritual sites and limited storage areas, but emphasized the burial chamber. The Egyptians observed rituals in pyramid complexes with true pyramids at temples built near the pyramid and at the entrance to the complex in the valley. The Egyptians added temples to the newer, true pyramids that they built beginning in the Fourth Dynasty. Often they built a temple adjacent to the pyramid, known today as a pyramid temple. They also built a temple in the valley below the pyramid that served as an entrance to the complex. Egyptologists call these temples “valley temples.” Scholars continue to debate the purpose of these buildings. Older interpretations suggest that the pyramid temple was the site of the funeral and was not used after the king’s burial. Most recent scholarship suggests that the pyramid temple, like the valley temple, was the site of continuing rituals that the Egyptians planned for eternity. Pyramid complexes also included burials for other royal family members. No real proof exists as to who was buried in these subsidiary burials, though Egyptologists often call them “queen’s burials.” They often take the form of small pyramids and vary greatly in number from one complex to another. Recently scholars have suggested that subsidiary burial sites were meant to accommodate different parts of the

king's soul. These parts would include the *ka*, the *ba*, the *akh*, and the mummy itself. The *ka* was the part of a king's soul that was passed from one king to another and that designated an individual as the true Horus. The *ba* was the part of the soul that traveled between this world and the next, conveying offerings to the deceased in the next world. The *akh* represented the transformation of the earthly individual into a divine individual that could dwell in the next world. The mummy served as a home for the *ba* when it was on earth. The pyramid, pyramid temple, and subsidiary burials occupied a space on the plateau that rises above the Nile river valley on the west side. The Egyptians built the valley temple in the valley at the edge of the desert where the agricultural land ended. A covered, stone causeway connected the valley temple with the rest of the pyramid complex.

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### THE NORTH-SOUTH PYRAMID COMPLEX: KING DJOSER'S COMPLEX AT SAQQARA

**EVIDENCE.** King Djoser's complex at Saqqara is the first example of a north/south oriented pyramid complex, built in the Third Dynasty (2675–2625 B.C.E.). This predominant orientation alternated throughout the Old and Middle Kingdoms (2675–1630 B.C.E.) with a pyramid complex that was oriented east/west. A good example of this second type of orientation is the Great Pyramid of Giza, built about 100 years after Djoser's Saqqara complex. While the north/south orientation is primarily associated with the eternal gods the Egyptians recognized in the circumpolar stars that never disappeared, the east/west orientation is primarily associated with the sun-god Re. The alternation between north/south and east/west orientations for pyramid complexes has thus been interpreted to have a religious dimension. Further, Djoser's pyramid complex reveals that the split between Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) Egypt can be traced back to the Third Dynasty, a split that is more fully established in later times by texts. Though the Egyptians had already been reading and writing for hundreds of years before the construction of Djoser's complex, there are few surviving extended texts from this period. Thus a seemingly obvious political fact

such as the early establishment of the importance of Upper and Lower Egypt can only be established in the Third Dynasty by architecture. Finally, evidence for the celebration of the religious-political Jubilee (*sed*) Festival can be established from the architecture of Djoser's complex. Buildings that Egyptologists know to be used mainly for such a festival were located on the east side of the complex.

**FIRST WELL-PRESERVED STONE BUILDING.** King Djoser's complex at Saqqara is the earliest preserved example of stone architecture in Egypt. The Egyptian archaeologist Nabil Swelim has convincingly argued that it represents an early culmination of stone architecture. While archeologists are aware of the existence of foundations from earlier buildings, Djoser's complex is the first stone building in Egypt whose architect is known: Imhotep. A large-scale stone wall—277 by 544 meters (908 by 1,784 feet)—surrounds the complex. The wall was built in the palace façade motif with panels and with the addition of towers at intervals around the entire wall. Unlike the earlier enclosures of the First and Second Dynasties, Djoser's wall surrounded extensive architecture as well as large courtyards. The buildings inside Djoser's complex included a monumental entranceway, step pyramid, a series of buildings designed as a backdrop for the king's Jubilee Festival (*sed*-festival), two model palaces, and a model of an Upper Egyptian-style tomb.

**SYMBOLIC, NON-FUNCTIONAL BUILDINGS.** Imhotep designed four areas of symbolic, non-functional buildings in Djoser's complex in Saqqara: the Pavilion of the North, the Pavilion of the South, the South Tomb, and the Jubilee Festival Courtyard. These buildings are full-size models rather than functional buildings. Builders constructed only the exterior façade of the building, like a stage set. It was not possible to enter any of these buildings, though some of them had doors carved in stone. French archaeologist Jean-Phillipe Lauer, the excavator of the complex, believes that the non-functional buildings were for the use of the king's *ka*, or spirit, in the afterlife. Some evidence suggests that workers purposely buried the non-functional buildings soon after construction, though it is not clear why.

**FUNCTIONAL BUILDINGS.** While it is readily apparent which elements of the tomb were not functional, it is not as easy to determine which elements of the complex were in use. The northern end of the enclosure is still unexcavated, leaving scholars in doubt as to how it was used, and the ruined state of the complex likewise hinders an accurate perspective. Lauer argued that the

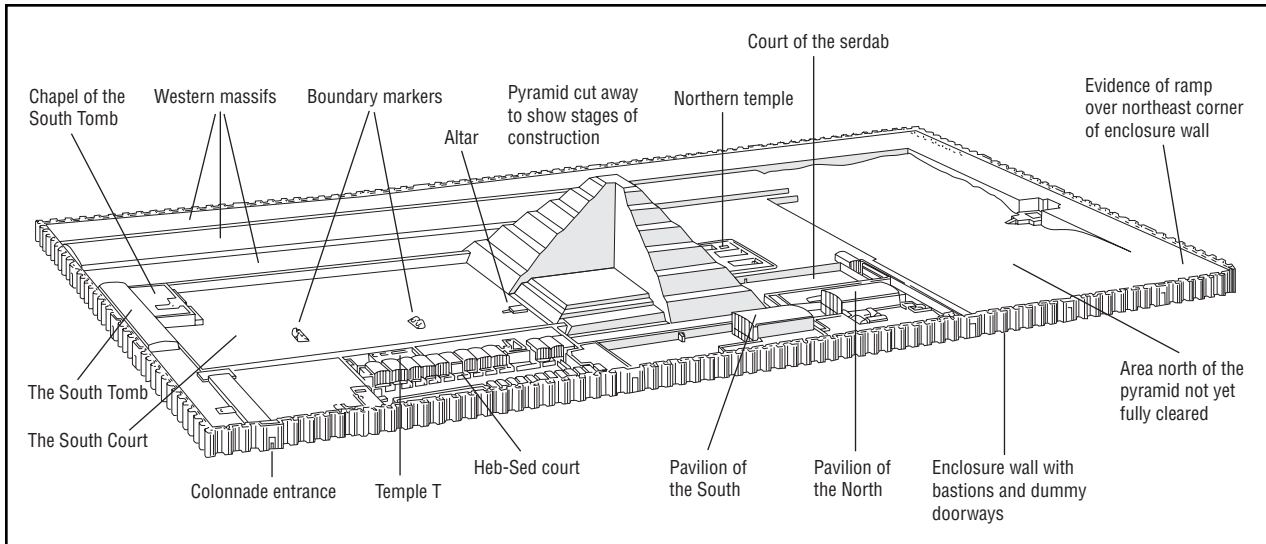


Diagram of Djoser's Step Pyramid complex. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

functional elements in the complex were the entrance at the southeast corner of the enclosure, the pyramid which served as a tomb for Djoser, and the Northern temple used for the funeral service. The American archeologist Mark Lehner suggested that it is more likely that Djoser's funeral procession entered the building over the still-existing ramp at the northeast corner than through the functional entranceway at the southeast. None of the passageways that lead from the southeast entrance to the northern temple are wider than one meter (39 inches), so a funeral procession through the complex would be very difficult. The functional entrance way to Djoser's complex is located at the southeast corner of the enclosure wall. This location parallels similar functional entrances in the southeast corners of the enclosures that kings of the First and Second Dynasties built at Abydos. Djoser's entranceway, however, was built of stone carved to imitate a building built of reeds and wood. A monumental doorway leads to a hallway surrounded on both sides with engaged columns attached to the sidewalls painted green and carved to resemble columns made from bundles of reeds. The limestone roof is painted brown and carved to resemble logs. Clearly this entranceway imitates the type of ritual buildings that Egyptians built of these light materials previous to the Third Dynasty.

**THE STEP PYRAMID.** The pyramid itself stands slightly off-center in the complex toward the south. It reaches sixty meters (167 feet) in height in six layers and is the only Egyptian pyramid that has a rectangular base rather than a square base. Lauer interpreted the construction history as a series of additions. The first stage

of the building was a square mastaba built in stone. Roughly every three years of Djoser's nineteen-year reign, workers added an additional layer. Lauer and German archaeologist Dieter Arnold have interpreted the expansions as gradual, reflecting emerging ideas about the king's future in the afterlife. The German Egyptologist Rainer Stadelmann, on the other hand, believes that Imhotep planned the step pyramid shape from the beginning. In any case, the shape represented a staircase to the northern stars. These stars represented the god Osiris because they never disappear as do stars in other parts of the heavens. Thus they are eternal, like Osiris. Beneath the Step Pyramid at Djoser's complex are over 400 rooms connected by tunnels. The total length of the rooms and tunnels combined is 5.7 kilometers (3.5 miles). The rooms include the king's burial chamber and a palace to serve as the home for the king's spirit. The king's burial chamber was accessed through a vertical shaft in the pyramid that was seven meters (22.9 feet) on each side and reached a depth of 28 meters (91.8 feet), lined entirely in granite. At the bottom of the shaft was a burial chamber lined with four courses of granite blocks. After the burial, workers lowered a 3.5-ton granite block to block the shaft and prevent future access by robbers. The palace for the king's spirit, located under the east wall of the pyramid, was lined with limestone and decorated with relief sculptures. Other areas were lined with faience tiles arranged to imitate mats made of reeds. The storage rooms were on the east side of the pyramid and housed over forty thousand jars, some inscribed with Djoser's name, but many more made in earlier times for other kings. Some scholars be-

lieve that many of these stored materials came from earlier tombs that had been removed from the Saqqara plateau to make room for Djoser's complex. Nevertheless, the great wealth stored in the pyramid demonstrates both the opulence of the king's life on earth and in the next world.

**JUBILEE FESTIVAL (SED) COURT.** The Jubilee Festival (*sed*) Court at Djoser's complex was conceived as a space where the king's ka—royal spirit—could celebrate the Jubilee Festival for eternity. Egyptian kings celebrated the Jubilee Festival (*sed*) after roughly thirty years of rule and then every two years thereafter as long as the king lived. During the festival, the gods of the *nomes* (Egyptian provinces) visited the king in the form of statues to pledge loyalty to him. The details of the ritual remain unknown. The kings of the First Dynasty celebrated this festival, both in life and in the afterlife at the so-called forts of Kom es Sultan at Abydos. There is evidence that kings continued to celebrate this festival in every period of Egyptian history, but Djoser's courtyard is the only three-dimensional representation of the physical setting of the festival. The Jubilee Festival Court contains non-functional buildings in two rows that face each other across an open space. These buildings housed the spirits of the visiting gods, probably in the form of statues, during the festival. The dummy non-functional buildings, built of stone, are only façades. The stone is carved to resemble buildings built of woven mats, bundles of reeds, and logs. In some cases doorways carved in stone appear to be open, but it is impossible to enter any of the buildings. At the south end of the open space is a platform reached by steps. This platform supported the royal thrones, one for Lower Egypt and one for Upper Egypt. There the king celebrated the end of the ceremony wherein the gods officially reconfirmed him as king. Since only the spirits of the deceased king and the gods used this space, the American archaeologist Mark Lehner suggested that workers buried it in sand soon after its construction, though the reason for this is unknown. While living, the king probably celebrated this festival at the royal palace.

**PAVILION OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH.** Two of the non-functional buildings at Djoser's complex represent the palaces of Upper and Lower Egypt. They are called the Pavilion of the North and the Pavilion of the South. They are located near the northeast corner of the pyramid, not far from the mortuary temple. The two buildings face each other across an open courtyard. Lauer suggested that the two buildings symbolically represent the palaces Djoser maintained in life as



Seated statue of Imhotep. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 08.480.24, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the king of Upper Egypt and the king of Lower Egypt. Both buildings are only façades and may have been buried along with all the dummy buildings in the complex after completion. These buildings attest to the earliest political division in Egyptian thinking, the division between Upper and Lower Egypt. The Egyptians often called their country "The Two Lands" (*tawy*) in reference to this division. The king was actually regarded as a king of two different places that were combined in his person.

**THE SOUTH TOMB.** The South Tomb at Djoser's complex is located against the center of the south



Funeral complex of Djoser's pyramid in Saqqara. The building on the left is a reconstructed entrance to the complex. © RICHARD T. NOWITZ/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY CORBIS CORPORATION.

enclosure wall. Below the building are structures similar to the burial structures under the pyramid, including the vertical shaft leading to the burial chamber and an underground palace decorated with limestone relief sculptures and faience tiles. The vertical shaft in the south tomb replicates the dimensions of the vertical shaft in the pyramid, but the burial vault is so small that it is unclear what could have been buried there. It was only 1.6 by 1.6 meters (5.2 by 5.2 feet) square with a height of 1.3 meters (4.2 feet). Egyptologists have suggested that it could represent the burial of the king's ka in the form of a statue, the burial of the royal placenta, the burial of the royal crowns, or that it symbolically represented the burial of the king of Upper Egypt. Before this time, the Egyptians buried the king in Abydos in Upper Egypt (southern Egypt). Some Egyptologists believe that the south tomb was a reference to this Egyptian tradition, now abandoned. The many possible explanations stem from the fact that so little evidence remains to be interpreted. Egyptologists may never know definitively why such great effort was expended to build the South Tomb.

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### THE FIRST TRUE PYRAMIDS

**MAJOR CHANGES.** The royal funeral complexes of the Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.) exhibit three major changes from Djoser's previously built complex at Saqqara. First, the step pyramid of Dynasty Three evolved to become the true pyramids of Dynasties Four through Twelve (2625–1759 B.C.E.). The second ma-



The Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara. © CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

major change was the rotation from a north/south orientation at Djoser's complex in Saqqara to an east/west orientation beginning with King Sneferu's pyramid complex at Meidum. Finally, the third major change was the development of a place in the complex specifically for an ongoing ritual on Earth that would continue long after the king's death. These developments reflected important changes in Egyptian thinking about the king's afterlife and in Egyptian religion. During the Fourth Dynasty, the cult of the sun-god Re rose to prominence, displacing earlier associations of the king with the god Horus, son of the king of the afterlife, Osiris. By the time of King Khufu, builder of the Great Pyramid at Giza, the king's title was the Son of Re. This new emphasis explains all three major changes in the king's pyramid complex. The step pyramid shape was a reference to the ladder the king climbed to reach the stars at night in the afterlife. The true pyramid, however, was a symbol of the sun-god Re. The north/south orientation found at Djoser's complex emphasized the importance of the northern night sky and its fixed stars. The east/west orientation of the Fourth-dynasty pyramids emphasized the course of the sun from east to west.

Finally, the ritual installation implies that the purpose of funeral complexes had changed between the Third and Fourth Dynasties. Whereas the Third-dynasty non-functional buildings and subterranean palaces were stage sets built for the king's ka to continue its life, the Fourth-dynasty complexes tied together this world with the next, creating an institution that required constant input from this world in order to sustain order in both this world and the next. This input was made and received at the pyramid complexes in the form of a ritual performed there to energize the pyramid as a place where the king's ba-spirit merged into the daily cycle of birth, death, and rebirth of the sun.

**STANDARD BUILDINGS.** In addition to the pyramid itself, Fourth-dynasty pyramid complexes also included a temple attached to the east side of the pyramid called both the pyramid temple and the mortuary temple in Egyptological literature. There are also often subsidiary pyramids near the main pyramid known as the queen's pyramids. The pyramid temple is connected to another temple located further to the east by a covered causeway. The eastern temple is usually called a valley temple because in most cases it is located in the Nile Valley while





The Meidum Pyramid. CHRISTINE OSBORNE/CORBIS.

the pyramid, subsidiary pyramids, and pyramid temple are located on the higher desert plateau. Even though there were no standardized plans for complexes until the Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 B.C.E.), these elements are present in all of the pyramid complexes constructed during the Fourth Dynasty.

**KING SNEFERU’S THREE PYRAMIDS.** King Sneferu, first king of the Fourth Dynasty, came to the throne approximately 2625 B.C.E. During the first fifteen years of his reign until about 2610 B.C.E. Sneferu’s workmen constructed the Meidum Pyramid, located at Meidum, south of modern Cairo on the west bank of the Nile River. Though earlier scholars identified the Meidum Pyramid as the work of Sneferu’s father, King Huni (before 2625 B.C.E.), new evidence has emerged to indicate that the name of the Meidum Pyramid in ancient times was *Djed Sneferu*—“Sneferu Endures.” Thus it is most likely that Sneferu built this pyramid. In the second fifteen years of his reign, Sneferu built two more pyramids at Dahshur. These pyramids are called the Bent Pyramid and the North Pyramid (also known as the Red Pyramid). Sneferu also built a smaller pyramid in Seila,

further south. This smaller pyramid followed in the tradition of King Huni, his father. He built perhaps five smaller pyramids located throughout Egypt rather than just one large pyramid.

**SNEFERU’S MEIDUM COMPLEX.** The German archaeologist Rainer Stadelmann believed that Sneferu built his Meidum complex in two stages. The first stage began when he first rose to power. The second stage occurred during Sneferu’s last years when he was living farther north in Dahshur. Stadelmann believed that originally the central core of the pyramid was a step pyramid, because the construction of this inner core resembled earlier construction completed during the Third Dynasty in which the builders used a series of inward-leaning layers of masonry rather than regular courses. Rather than place each new course of stone on top of the previous course and attempt to level the new course, the builders purposely tried to direct the pressure from each new course of stone toward the center of the pyramid on a diagonal rather than straight down. The builders hoped this would make the pyramid more stable. Yet the appearance of this step pyramid is not

completely understood. Sneferu converted the pyramid into a true pyramid shape near the end of his reign, about Year 28 or 29 (2597–2596 B.C.E.). The structure, in turn, changed dramatically when the site functioned as a rock quarry during the Middle Ages, resulting in the destruction of several layers. Sheikh Abu Mohammed Abdallah described the Meidum pyramid as having five layers when he saw it between 1117 and 1119 C.E. In 1737, the Swedish traveler Frederick Louis Norden saw only three layers, as is visible today. During this 620-year period, a large amount of stone must have been removed from the site. Recent attempts at reconstructing the original appearance of the pyramid suggest it had up to eight layers. Moreover, at some time in antiquity the outer casing that Sneferu had added to turn the earlier step pyramid into a true pyramid collapsed. Recent excavations revealed that this collapse probably occurred after construction had been completed at Meidum. Earlier commentators speculated that the collapse had occurred during construction and in fact had led to the abandonment of the monument. The absence of evidence such as workmen's corpses or of Fourth-dynasty tools found in the rubble surrounding the pyramid's core makes this theory unlikely. The timing of the collapse is important. If it occurred in the middle of construction, subsequent construction technique changes should be seen as a response to the collapse. If, on the other hand, the collapse occurred much later, as is now believed, then the collapse has no direct bearing on decisions that engineers made at Sneferu's two later pyramids.

**INTERIOR OF THE MEIDUM PYRAMID.** The interior of the Meidum pyramid set the new precedent for configuring the burial. Rather than a vertical shaft as was found in Djoser's dynasty-three pyramid, at Meidum the entrance to the burial came from the north face of the pyramid. A descending passage, 58 meters long and 0.84 meters by 1.65 meters (190 by 2.7 by 5.4 feet), led down to two small rooms. At the end of the second room, a vertical shaft led up to a burial chamber 5.9 by 2.65 by 5.05 meters (19.3 by 8.6 by 16.5 feet). Corbelled blocks—blocks placed on top of each other but projecting slightly over the edge of the lower course from two sides to eventually meet at the ceiling—formed the roof of the chamber. This is the first known example of this early form of arch in Egypt, though it remains incomplete. The remains of cedar logs found in the shaft leading to the burial chamber may have been pieces of a wooden coffin, although no sarcophagus was found. W. M. F. Petrie, the English archaeologist who first excavated at Meidum, did find pieces of a wooden coffin in

a plain style. The change in the entrance to the burial chamber from a vertical shaft to a descending passage is difficult to interpret. It could have been a technical improvement making it easier to bring the sarcophagus into the burial. On the other hand, such drastic changes are often a change in symbolism that reflects a real change in belief. It is not possible to determine conclusively which kind of change is at work in this instance.

**OTHER ELEMENTS AT MEIDUM.** The other elements found at the Meidum Pyramid demonstrate its value as a bridge between past and future pyramid styles. The subsidiary pyramid south of the main pyramid perhaps had the same function as the South Tomb at Djoser's complex in Saqqara, though that function is not fully understood. Looking to the future, a small altar on the east side of the main pyramid, with two blank, unfinished steles, is a precursor of the pyramid temples built later in Dynasty Four at Dahshur and more elaborately at Giza by Sneferu's son and grandsons. A covered causeway, another common feature of later pyramid complexes, connected Sneferu's Meidum pyramid to the valley, but not to any known temple. Only mud brick walls were found at the valley end of the causeway showing that the valley temple was never completed in stone as Egyptologists would expect if Sneferu himself had completed the structure.

**SNEFERU'S BENT PYRAMID AT DAHSHUR.** In the fifteenth year of King Sneferu's reign (2610 B.C.E.), he abandoned his building project at the Meidum Pyramid and moved his court 25 miles north to Dahshur. At this point in his reign, the Meidum Pyramid was still a step pyramid, more similar in shape to Djoser's pyramid at Saqqara than to the true pyramids built later. The move to Dahshur indicates a break with the step-pyramid style in an effort to create a true pyramid. The builders' first attempt was the pyramid that Egyptologists call the Bent Pyramid. Step pyramids slope at approximately 78 degrees on each face. A true pyramid like the Great Pyramid at Giza has faces that slope at 53 degrees. The faces of the lower section of the Bent Pyramid were first constructed with a slope at sixty degrees, but this slope was too steep to form a true pyramid that could be supported adequately. At some point in the construction, the builders added more stone to the lower levels and reduced the slope to 54 degrees, 27 minutes, in order to support the inner core. As work proceeded, further structural problems emerged that forced the builders to reduce the angle of slope even further to 43 degrees on the upper half of the pyramid. This reduction accounts for the distinct bend in the shape of this pyramid. The base measures 188 meters (617 feet) and is 105 meters (345



Bent Pyramid at Dahshur. YANN ARTHUS-BERTAND/CORBIS.

feet) high. It is thus substantially larger than Djoser's Step Pyramid or the Meidum Pyramid. The interior of the Bent Pyramid is unique because it has two passageways: one beginning on the north side and one beginning on the west side. The northern entrance, like the northern entrance at Meidum, slopes downward. It continues for 74 meters (242.7 feet) until it reaches the center of the pyramid. A vertical shaft then leads to a burial chamber that measures 6.3 by 4.96 meters (20.6 by 16.2 feet). The corbelled ceiling is seventeen meters (55.7 feet) above the floor of the chamber. The second, western entrance slopes downward for 65 meters (213.2 feet). It leads to a second corbelled chamber 7.97 by 5.26 meters (26.1 by 17.2 feet) with a ceiling height of 16.5 meters (54.1 feet). This chamber is in reality directly above the chamber reached from the northern entrance. Some time later, workers created a rough tunnel through the masonry to connect the two chambers. No clear explanation exists to explain the presence of two entrances. Speculation, though, has focused on the western entrance as a reflection of a second burial known from earliest times at Abydos. The western orientation of the second passage could also somehow connect with the cult of Osiris, king of the dead, with whom the king's essence traditionally unites at death. Thus in this view,

the Bent Pyramid's internal plan could refer symbolically both to the idea of the king uniting with the circumpolar stars and to the idea that the king unites with Osiris in death. The small chapel on the eastern side of the pyramid would be a link to the king's role as Son of Re, the sun god. The chapel at the Bent Pyramid parallels the chapel at the Meidum Pyramid by its position on the east side. These two chapels are also similar because they consist of only an altar and two steles. Later in the Fourth Dynasty, a much more elaborate pyramid temple would be included on the east side of the pyramid. Rainer Stadelmann, however, disputed a real connection between the purpose of these chapels and the later temples. He posited the theory that the construction of these chapels occurred when it became clear that Sneferu would not be buried either at Meidum nor at the Bent Pyramid. The subsidiary pyramid located south of the Bent Pyramid demonstrates that the builders had learned from their experience with the Bent Pyramid. The angle of slope resembles the 53 degree angle at Khufu's Great Pyramid at Giza. The construction method also avoided some of the errors associated with the Bent Pyramid. Horizontal layers of masonry now replaced the inward-sloping blocks that made the Bent Pyramid so unstable. It paralleled the subsidiary pyramid at Meidum and perhaps somehow reflected the same purpose as the South Tomb at Djoser's complex in Saqqara. Thus it could have been used to bury a statue or somehow refer to the second tombs for each king known from the First Dynasty at Abydos.

#### THE PYRAMID COMPLEX AT THE BENT PYRAMID.

The pyramid complex at the Bent Pyramid includes a chapel on the east side and a covered limestone causeway that leads to a second small temple to the east. These features parallel some of the previous construction at Meidum and also suggest parallels with later construction at Giza. The chapel at the Bent Pyramid is quite similar to the chapel at the Meidum Pyramid. They both consist of ten-meter (32.8-foot) tall steles and an offering table. At the Bent Pyramid, the steles are decorated with images of King Sneferu seated above the palace façade motif. The pyramid complex is linked to the eastern temple by a 210-meter (688.9-foot) limestone-covered causeway. Though the eastern temple is not actually located in the valley, it seems also to be a precursor to the eastern valley temples built later in the Fourth Dynasty. The temple was a stone building, 27 by 48 meters (88.5 by 157.4 feet). It had an open court with a pillared portico and six statue shrines at the rear. For this reason the German archaeologist Dieter Arnold called it a "statue temple" of the king.



Aerial view of the North (Red) Pyramid of Sneferu at Dahshur. YANN ARTHUS-BERTAND/CORBIS.

Sneferu's statue temple included depictions of the king in the crowns of Upper Egypt, Lower Egypt, and the Double Crown which combines the two, thus representing all of the king's political roles. In addition, there are relief sculptures on the walls of the temple that depict the king accompanied by the gods and performing ceremonies. In the entrance the *nomes* (provinces) are depicted delivering goods to the king brought from the entire country. Part of the temple's great importance is that it contained the first known royal relief sculptures meant to be seen above ground. The Bent Pyramid Complex thus represents a transitional stage between Djoser's earlier complex in Saqqara and the later complexes at Giza.

**SNEFERU'S NORTH PYRAMID COMPLEX AT DAHSHUR.** Egyptologists' knowledge of King Sneferu's North Pyramid Complex at Dahshur benefits greatly from the fact that excavations there began in the 1980s when excavation techniques allowed for the recovery of much greater detail. Its excavator, Rainer Stadelmann, for example, found inscriptions in the rubble of the North Pyramid Complex that allowed him to demonstrate that the construction began in Sneferu's thirtieth

year, the same year that the subsidiary pyramid at the Bent Pyramid complex was completed. Evidence from inscriptions also established that workers completed thirty courses of stone during four years of labor on the North Pyramid. The North Pyramid (also called the Red Pyramid) was the third large-scale pyramid started by King Sneferu's workers. The base sides measure 220 meters (722 feet) and the height reaches 105 meters (345 feet). The angle of slope is quite low at 43 degrees, 22 minutes. This pyramid is thus 32 meters (104.9 feet) longer on each base side than the Bent Pyramid, but reaches approximately the same height. The interior of the North Pyramid is simpler than the Bent Pyramid. One entrance only descends from the northern face for 62.63 meters (205.4 feet). It reaches two rooms of 3.65 by 8.36 meters (11.9 by 27.4 feet) with corbelled ceilings. A short passage leads to the burial chamber that was 4.18 by 8.55 meters (13.7 by 28 feet) with a ceiling height of 14.67 meters (48.1 feet). Though human remains were found in the burial chamber, it cannot be determined that they were part of Sneferu's mummy. The North Pyramid Complex includes the first real pyramid temple on the east face of the

pyramid, though it was completed in mud brick rather than stone. Stadelmann traced the plan of this building, which included both the pillared court and the statue sanctuary that were part of King Khufu's pyramid temple attached to the Great Pyramid at Giza in the next reign. There was perhaps also a causeway built of mud brick, though excavation has failed to reveal this feature. At the end of the causeway was a town, rather than the expected temple, where archaeologists discovered a stele of Dynasty Six (reign of Pepi I, 2338–2298 B.C.E.). The construction of both the pyramid temple and the causeway in mud brick suggests that workers finished these features quickly after Sneferu's death. Perhaps that is also the reason that this complex lacks a subsidiary pyramid and a valley temple. Or perhaps the Bent Pyramid, with its eastern statue temple, served the same function for Sneferu as the later Valley Temple built by his son, King Khufu, would later serve at the Great Pyramid of Giza.

**RELIGION DRIVING TECHNOLOGY.** Sneferu's three pyramids are a testament to the way that religious innovation drove the development of Egyptian technology. The decision to abandon step pyramid building, which was already well understood, for the uncertain technology required for a true pyramid was a major diversion of resources. Egyptian engineers had to experiment and innovate because of a religious idea. This idea, as nearly as can be understood today, was to emphasize in the pyramid complex the ascendance of the god Re in religious thinking. This ascendance required that the king be buried in a true pyramid rather than a step pyramid. This innovation required three attempts at large-scale pyramid building. The details are lost to us, but the implications for the power of a religious idea in Egyptian society are significant.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Early Dynastic Period Art*

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## FOURTH-DYNASTY ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY

**THE PYRAMIDS OF GIZA.** The Pyramids of Giza are among the world's most famous architectural monuments. In ancient times the Greeks included the Great Pyramid among the Seven Wonders of the World. The Egyptians themselves took an interest in the pyramids, restoring the adjacent buildings as late as 1,000 years after they were originally built. Yet in spite of the tremendous awe and curiosity that the pyramids inspire, they are limited sources for the writing of history. The pyramids attest that the Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.) must have been a period of strong central government, religious vitality, and technological innovation. Yet the details of these historical trends must be derived from the physical remains of buildings rather than from written texts. In the Fourth Dynasty the Egyptians had not yet started inscribing extended biographical texts in their tombs, a practice of the Sixth Dynasty 300–400 years later, that provides historical details in the later period. None of the extensive records that scholars believe once existed about the administration of the pyramids in the Fourth Dynasty have survived into modern times. None of the records that the Egyptians maintained for their own knowledge of their history have survived except for records of a much later period. Thus nearly everything that can be inferred in modern times about the Fourth Dynasty stems from modern knowledge of the pyramids at Giza, except for very limited information from short inscriptions in nobles' tombs. A careful look at the plans and details of each building is necessary in order to reconstruct the history of this period. The only supplementary material comes from the Greek historian Herodotus who visited the pyramids in the middle of the fifth century B.C.E.

**THE GIZA PLATEAU.** Three kings built the most famous pyramid complexes in Egyptian history on the Giza plateau during the years 2585 to 2510 B.C.E. Khufu (in Greek, Cheops), his son Khafre (in Greek, Chephren), and his grandson Menkaure (in Greek, Mycerinus) established funeral monuments that rank among the great architectural accomplishments of ancient times. As the American archaeologist Mark Lehner observed, the coordination of the designs of the three separate monuments is one of the most impressive aspects of ancient planning and engineering. Each of the pyramids is nearly perfectly oriented to the cardinal points—north, south, east, and west—of the compass. The southwest corners of all three pyramids align perfectly, forming a straight line that runs northwest to southeast. The alignment between the west face of Khufu's pyramid and Khafre's



The Great Pyramid at Giza. PHOTOGRAPH BY SUSAN D. ROCK. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

pyramid temple's east façade is repeated with the west face of Khafre's pyramid and the east façade of Menkaure's pyramid temple. Moreover, the south side of the Great Sphinx aligns perfectly with the south face of Khafre's pyramid. This evidence of mathematical sophistication in addition to the enormous size of the monuments has continued to impress visitors to Egypt since the Greek historian Herodotus visited them in the fifth century B.C.E.

**THE GREAT PYRAMID OF KHUFU.** The Great Pyramid measures 230.33 meters (756 feet) on each side and reached a height of 146.59 meters (481 feet). It was taller than any building constructed by humans anywhere in the world before the twentieth century C.E. The Great Pyramid of Khufu's enormous size has led the German archaeologist Rainer Stadelmann to question if ancient records claiming that Khufu ruled 23 years could be accurate. Even if Khufu ruled thirty years, one average-size stone block would need to be placed every two or three minutes of a ten-hour workday every day of the reign. This "average block" is often said to be about 2.5 tons. Yet the largest blocks at the bottom of the Great Pyramid weighed up to fifteen tons while some of the re-

lieving stones inside the pyramid weigh from fifty to eighty tons each. During that ten-hour day, 230 cubic meters (8,122 cubic feet) of stone would be set in place at his pyramid, causeway, two temples, subsidiary pyramid, queen's pyramids, or officials' mastaba tombs. Over the course of his reign, workers built 2,700,000 cubic meters (95,350,000 cubic feet) of stone architecture. These statistics continue to inspire awe at the ancient Egyptians' accomplishments with such simple tools. The construction techniques reveal that the Egyptian builders had learned well the lessons derived from construction at Meidum and Dahshur during the reign of Khufu's father, Sneferu. The level platform for a base and the laying of stone blocks in horizontal rows rather than inverted layers proved to be a much more stable building technique than those used at the Meidum Pyramid or the Bent Pyramid of Dahshur. There was a clear evolution from the Meidum Pyramid to the Great Pyramid in technique. This evolution demonstrates the Egyptian ability to learn from previous errors. They were not so conservative in their thinking that they could not benefit from experience. The interior of Khufu's Great Pyramid contains three chambers reached by a series of three



The Giza pyramid complex. PHOTOGRAPH BY ARLENE KEVONIAN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

passages. The Swiss Egyptologist Ludwig Borchardt explained the existence of three chambers in 1911 as changes in the plan made to fool tomb robbers. In the late twentieth century Egyptologists have found other possible explanations for the existence of the three chambers, though they have retained the early, sometimes erroneous, names for them. The lowest chamber, called the Subterranean Chamber, is carved directly into the bedrock—the solid surface beneath the desert sand—and reached by the 58.5-meter (191.9-foot) Descending Passage that originates in the north face of the pyramid. The planed dimensions of the Subterranean Chamber were 14 by 7.2 meters (45.9 by 23.6 feet) and 5.3 meters (17.3 feet) high—a huge, high-ceilinged chamber—though it was never finished. Borchardt thought that the workers constructed the Subterranean Chamber first, but then abandoned it as the original tomb chamber and left it unfinished. Stadelmann, on the other hand, surmised

that the unfinished nature of the chamber suggested that it had been last, its construction permanently interrupted by Khufu's death. Stadelmann believed the Subterranean Chamber represented the underworld. The so-called Queen's Chamber gained its name from early Arab explorers to the pyramid, and could be reached by the Ascending Passage that diverges from the Descending Passage. The Queen's Chamber is located in the center of the pyramid directly on the east/west axis. This chamber is 5.8 by 5.3 meters (19 by 17.3 feet) with a ceiling six meters (19.6 feet) above its floor—another high-ceilinged room. The Queen's Chamber contains a corbelled niche 4.7 meters high (15.4 feet). Here, Lehner suggested, was the site of a ka-statue representing the king's soul. The actual burial was in the King's Chamber. This chamber—the largest, with the highest ceiling—was 10.6 by 5.2 meters (34.7 by 17 feet) with a ceiling 5.8 meters (28.5 feet) above its floor. It is reached

through the Ascending Passage from which it is possible to proceed through the Grand Gallery, which is 46.7 by 2.1 meters (153.2 by 6.8 feet) with a height of 8.7 meters (28.5 feet). The King's Chamber is lined in red granite and also contains the king's red-granite sarcophagus. W. M. F. Petrie, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English archaeologist, observed that the sarcophagus is too wide to have fit through the present door, which suggests that it was placed in the King's Chamber before the masonry for the higher levels of the pyramid were put in place. This fact led Lehner to conclude that this chamber must have always been planned as the burial chamber or at least that was already the plan at this stage of construction. The other unusual elements of the interior of this pyramid are the so-called airshafts that extend from the Queen's Chamber to the south and from the King's Chamber to the south and north. Scholars interpret these shafts as symbolically allowing Khufu to merge with both the northern, circumpolar stars and the stars of the constellation Orion in the south. This interpretation of the "airshafts" shows how religious ideas can be inferred from architectural details. Here it seems the overall east/west orientation associated with the sun-god Re combines with the north/south orientation associated with the gods of the nighttime sky. It is important to remember that the associations of east/west with Re and north/south with the circumpolar stars are also inferred from later documents dating to the Sixth Dynasty. Thus the architecture provides possible confirmation that ideas documented in later dynasties were actually present in the Fourth Dynasty. The Egyptian archaeologist Zahi Hawass located the foundations of the subsidiary pyramid at the southeast corner of the Great Pyramid in the 1990s. It probably represented a parallel to such subsidiary pyramids at Meidum, the Bent Pyramid, and the North Pyramid of Dahshur, though each of these subsidiary pyramids occupies a slightly different location in relation to the main pyramid. The southeast corner is important to the plans of many pyramid complexes. For Djoser's Saqqara complex, it is the location of the only true door into the complex. The southeast corner is also often used in pyramid complexes to house the ka-statue of the king or to symbolize the ancient custom of a southern tomb in Abydos in a northern necropolis. The three Queen's Pyramids on the east side of the Great Pyramid of Khufu were each approximately one-fifth the size of the Great Pyramid. They each contained burial chambers reached from passages that began on the north side of the pyramid and then turned to the west. Each of the Queen's Pyramids had a chapel where offerings could be made to the occupant. The most northern of the three pyramids is thought to belong to Hetepheres, Khufu's

mother. The middle queen's pyramid might have belonged to Queen Meritetes who lived during the reigns of Sneferu, Khufu, and his son Khafre. She is also thought to be the mother of Kawab, a son of Khufu buried in the mastaba tomb directly east of this queen's pyramid, but not the mother of the two sons of Khufu who ascended to the throne—Djedefre and Khafre. The third Queen's Pyramid belonged to Queen Henutsen, another of Khufu's queens, according to an inscription carved nearly two thousand years later at the chapel attached to it. The prominence of these queens' burials suggested the existence of a matriarchal system in Egyptian history to nineteenth-century anthropologists, although modern Egyptologists have since abandoned the theory as being difficult to support with concrete evidence. Part of the theory's fragility rests on interpreting these buildings which cannot even be definitively proven to have belonged to queens. Only foundations and part of the basalt paving stones of Khufu's Pyramid Temple remain. Yet archaeologists have calculated that it measured 52.5 meters by 40 meters (171.9 by 131.2 feet). The building contained a large courtyard surrounded by pillars. Three rows of pillars separated this courtyard from a smaller broad room containing cult statues. A door separated the broad room and the courtyard also. This general layout featuring a courtyard, a group of pillars without real structural purpose, and a room for statues remained the basic outline for all Egyptian tomb chapels for the 2,000 years following the construction of Khufu's Pyramid Temple. Builders decorated parts of this temple with relief sculpture, including a procession of estates and Jubilee Festival (*sed*) rituals. This decoration associates the pyramid temple with Sneferu's statue temple at the Bent Pyramid and the Jubilee Festival (*sed*) Court built by Djoser at the Step Pyramid Complex in Saqqara. Only the most tantalizing ruins of the causeway and Valley Temple of Khufu's Great Pyramid remain. Like Sneferu's causeway, Khufu's causeway must have been covered with relief sculpture. These sculptures might have been the ones described by Herodotus when he visited Giza in the mid-fifth century B.C.E. Hawass discovered the foundations of the Valley Temple forty meters (131 feet) below the Giza Plateau, but the ruins have yielded few clues about the original structure.

**DJEDEFRE'S INAUGURATION OF A PYRAMID COMPLEX AT ABU ROASH.** King Djedefre (2560–2555 B.C.E.) was Khufu's first son to follow him to the throne. If Djedefre's brother King Khafre and nephew King Menkaure—the next two kings—had not chosen to build at Giza and align their monuments with those built by Khufu, Djedefre's decision to build at Abu Roash



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HERODOTUS ON THE CRUELTY OF KHUFU**

**INTRODUCTION:** Herodotus (484–430 B.C.E.), the ancient Greek historian, visited the Pyramids at Giza about 450 B.C.E. Thus they were already 2,000 years old when he arrived as a tourist. Herodotus' account of the building of the Giza pyramid complex emphasizes the cruelty of King Khufu (called "Cheops," the Greek name for "Khufu") in forcing the whole population to work only for him and to ignore all other gods.

**SOURCE:** Herodotus, *The History*. Trans. David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): 185–186.

would not have seemed unusual. After all, his grandfather, King Sneferu, built his funeral monuments in two new sites, Meidum and Dahshur, and his father Khufu inaugurated the new site at Giza. Yet our knowledge of what followed Djedefre's reign has led some scholars to suggest that Khufu's sons were in conflict. The only evidence for this conflict is the fact that Djedefre inaugurated a new site for his funeral complex and that his

brother and nephew returned to Giza when they became kings. Proponents of the theory that Khufu's sons quarreled have still not made a convincing case. In fact there is evidence that Djedefre completed his father Khufu's burial and that any destruction found at Djedefre's monuments at Abu Roash occurred 2,000 years after his successor Khafre came to the throne. Djedefre's nephew Menkaure left a statue at Abu Roash that suggests that he honored his uncle's memory, though no later king completed the pyramid. The pyramid of Djedefre at Abu Roash would have resembled the Meidum Pyramid built by his grandfather Sneferu if it had been completed. The angle of slope would have been 52 degrees. The base length was 106.2 meters (348 feet), thus less than half of Khufu's 230.33 meters (756 feet) of base length at the Great Pyramid. Though only twenty courses were completed, the projected height was about 67 meters (220 feet). Compared to Khufu's 146.59 meters (481 feet), Djedefre's monument was also much shorter. The pyramid itself had an entrance on the north side that led 49 meters (160.76 feet) to an interior pit measuring 21 by 9 meters (68.8 by 29.5 feet) and twenty meters (65.6 feet) deep. A pyramid temple's location—on the east side, but closer to the northeast corner than to the southeast corner—did not follow Khufu's model of centering the pyramid temple on the east face of the pyramid. The building's completion in mud brick indicates that workers finished it quickly, probably after the sudden death of Djedefre. The subsidiary pyramid's location—opposite the southwest corner of the pyramid rather than on the southeast as at the Great Pyramid—is similar in placement to Djoser's South Tomb at Saqqara. The architect's plan for a very long causeway from the north side of the pyramid to the valley was not completed. It would have been 1,700 meters (5,577 feet) long had it been completed.

**KHAFRE'S PYRAMID AT GIZA.** King Khafre, son of King Khufu and brother of the previous king Djedefre, decided to build a funeral complex at Giza that paralleled and aligned with his father's complex at Giza. The pyramid itself is smaller than the Great Pyramid, but appears equally as tall because of its placement on a section of the Giza plateau ten meters (33 feet) higher than the base of the Great Pyramid. Khafre's pyramid is 215 meters (705 feet) on each side of the base, about fifteen meters (56 feet) shorter per side than the Great Pyramid. Its height is 143.5 meters (471 feet), 3.09 meters (10 feet) shorter than the Great Pyramid. Khafre's pyramid preserves the outer casing of Tura limestone on the upper levels that once covered the entire pyramid. The interior of the pyramid contains two descending passages

## PYRAMID

### Complexes of the Later Fourth Dynasty

The table below lists different pyramid complexes from the later Fourth Dynasty built by various kings, the type of pyramid they likely represented, and where the remains were located or where the pyramid was most likely

built based on ancient record. They are listed in chronological order by reigning king. Absolute dates for these kings and their buildings still remain unknown. Scholars named these pyramid complexes after the kings that most likely built them with the location name as a signifier since the ancient names for these buildings are not preserved.

**SOURCE:** Dieter Arnold, "Royal Cult Complexes of the Old and Middle Kingdoms," in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*. Ed. Byron E. Shafer (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997): 58–59.

King	Pyramid	Location
Sneferu	Meidum pyramid	Meidum
Sneferu	Bent pyramid	Dahshur
Sneferu	Red or North pyramid	Dahshur
Khufu	Great pyramid	Giza
Djedefre (aka Radjedf)	Abu Roash pyramid	Abu Roash
Khafre	Second pyramid	Giza
Menkaure	Third pyramid	Giza
Nebka	Unknown	Zawiyet el-Aryan
Shepseskaf	Mastabat el Fara'un pyramid	Saqqara

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that begin on the north face of the pyramid. The lower passage begins at ground level. It leads to a subsidiary chamber 10.41 by 3.12 meters (34.1 by 10.2 feet) with a ceiling 2.61 meters (8.5 feet) above the floor. The chamber's location below ground level has led to its comparison to Khufu's Subterranean Chamber or Queen's Chamber. American archaeologist Mark Lehner associated it with a statue chamber. The passage continues beyond the chamber and ascends to meet the other, higher descending passage. The passages merge and continue to the burial chamber, a 14.14 by 5-meter (46.3 by 16.4-foot) room with a ceiling 6.83 meters (22.4 feet) above the floor. This chamber contains a black granite sarcophagus. When the Italian explorer Giovanni Belzoni entered the chamber in 1818, he found the lid on the floor and the sarcophagus empty except for some bones belonging to a bull. The German archaeologist Rainer Stadelmann suggested that tomb robbers in antiquity had left the bones in the sarcophagus, though to what purpose is unknown. Khafre's subsidiary pyramid was located in the center of the south side of his pyramid. Only the foundations remain along with the underground portion of the building. One of two descending passages began outside the actual outline of the pyramid and descended into the bedrock. This passage led to a dead end that contained a niche located on the central axis of the pyramid. Archaeologists discovered pieces of wood inside the niche that, when reassembled, formed

a divine booth, a distinctive structure the Egyptians used to house statues. In relief sculptures found in the tomb of Khufu's granddaughter, Queen Meresankh, a divine booth is depicted holding a statue of this queen. The existence of an actual divine booth in the subsidiary pyramid of Khafre adds weight to the theory that these smaller pyramids housed the burial of a statue. Scholars used this evidence to associate all of the subsidiary pyramids found at Fourth-dynasty pyramid complexes with the South Tomb in Djoser's Step Pyramid complex in Saqqara. Khafre's pyramid temple and valley temple are the best-preserved of the Giza temples. They also have been fully excavated, thus making modern knowledge of them much more complete. The pyramid temple contains the five parts that became the standard in the later pyramid complexes: the entrance hall, the broad columned court, a group of five niches for statues of the king associated with the king's five official names, a group of five storage chambers associated with the five phyles (rotating groups of workers who ran the temple), and an inner sanctuary with a pair of steles and a false door. The material for this 56 by 111-meter (183.7 by 364.1-foot) building consisted of limestone megaliths cased with either granite or Egyptian alabaster (calcite). It is likely that the complex included many statues, probably removed during the New Kingdom by Ramesses II (1279–1213 B.C.E.) for other royal projects.

**STATUE NICHES FOR THE NAMES OF THE KING.**

The equation of five statue niches in the pyramid temple with the five names of the king presents a good example of the way that architecture confirms the presence of later historical phenomena in the Fourth Dynasty. It is certain that by the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.) each Egyptian king had five official names and titles. Parts of each of them are known as early as the First Dynasty, yet they are not attested all together as one official name until the Twelfth Dynasty. The names were associated with different deities, including Horus, the two goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet, the Horus of Gold (another form of Horus), the king's birth name (called the *praenomen*) associated with the king as he incorporates in his person both Upper and Lower Egypt, and finally the name that proclaimed the king to be the son of Re. The five niches strongly suggest that the official names were grouped together into the official titles of the king in the Fourth Dynasty, roughly 600 years before textual evidence exists. Yet this "fact" remains an inference from architecture. No actual examples of the five official titles of the king from the Fourth Dynasty are known.

**FIVE STORAGE CHAMBERS.** Most Egyptians living during the Old Kingdom were members of one of the five *za*, called a *phyle* in English. A phyle was a group of workers assigned for one-fifth of the year to work for the state. The work included construction and any other kind of service that a temple needed. The evidence for the existence of the phyles comes in its fullest form from the *Abu Sir Papyri*, a daily journal of workers' activities at the pyramid of King Neferirkare written in the Fifth Dynasty (2472–2462 B.C.E.). Supplementary written evidence for the existence of the phyles is found at the Great Pyramid. The names of the different phyles were written on individual blocks. Scholars believe that the supervising scribe wrote the name of the phyle responsible for moving the block on it. Because there were five phyles, scholars infer that each of the five storerooms in the pyramid temple belonged to one of the phyles.

**THE VALLEY TEMPLE OF KHAFRE'S GIZA COMPLEX.** Khafre's valley temple, like his pyramid temple, is the best-preserved valley temple in Giza. It measures 44.6 by 44.5 meters (146.3 by 145.9 feet) and fronted on the dock of a canal excavated by the Egyptian archaeologist Zahi Hawass in 1995. Like the pyramid temple, its construction material consisted of monolithic limestone blocks cased in either granite or Egyptian alabaster (calcite). The valley temple contained 23 statues of King Khafre, including the famous statue of him with the Horus falcon hovering on his shoulders, now in the Cairo

Museum. Herbert Ricke and Siegfried Schott, early twentieth-century German Egyptologists, believed that the statues were critical to a ritual repeated daily that lasted 24 hours of every day. Dieter Arnold, the German archaeologist, suggested that the valley temple relates to the now 500-year-old tradition of a site in the funerary complex where the deceased king could receive the statues of visiting gods as a continuation of the Jubilee Festival (*sed*) in the next world. Egyptologists have largely abandoned Ricke's older theory that the pyramid temple and pyramid functioned only for the funeral service.

**THE GREAT SPHINX.** Though the Great Sphinx is actually a work of sculpture rather than architecture, it is integral to the architectural plan of Khafre's pyramid complex at Giza. It was the first truly colossal work of sculpture created by the Egyptians. The body is 22 times larger than a real lion, which it represents. The carved human face of the Great Sphinx is thirty times larger than an average man's face. The face hovers twenty meters (66 feet) above the ground. The lion's body combined with the king's head was an important symbol of the king's ability to protect the country from its enemies. In front of the Great Sphinx stood a temple that might not have been completed in Khafre's time. Part of the difficulty in interpreting its original meaning is that both King Amenhotep II (1426–1400 B.C.E.) and King Thutmose IV (1400–1390 B.C.E.) restored it during the New Kingdom. All of the inscriptions date to this later period, leaving no textual evidence contemporary with the original building of the structure. Ricke, however, interpreted Amenhotep II's building with 24 columns as a place for sun worship with each column representing an hour of the day. The New Kingdom association of the Great Sphinx with the sun-god Reharakhty ("Re-Horus on the Horizons") adds to the possibility that Ricke had the correct interpretation of the building. Mark Lehner added to the argument the observation that on the day of the summer solstice, the shadows of the sphinx and pyramids merge to form the hieroglyphs used to write Reharakhty's name. This fact suggests that the name was original to the Old Kingdom and not a New Kingdom addition.

**MENKAURE'S PYRAMID COMPLEX AT GIZA.** King Menkaure, son of King Khafre and grandson of King Khufu, built the third pyramid at Giza. It is the smallest of the three kings' pyramids, but the most completely preserved. Its base dimensions are 102.2 by 104.6 meters (335 by 343 feet). It is thus roughly 103 meters (around 414 feet) shorter on each side than Khufu's Great Pyramid. Menkaure's pyramid is 65 meters (213.3 feet) high, 81 meters (around 268 feet) shorter than the



Archeologists uncover what they believe is the world's oldest paved canal beside the Giza sphinx and the Chepren pyramid in Giza, Egypt. © AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS, INC. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Great Pyramid. Menkaure's pyramid thus represents less than one-quarter of the area of the Great Pyramid and only one-tenth of the mass. Lehner speculated that the reduction in size stemmed from the reduced amount of space then available in Giza after the construction of the first two pyramids rather than an indication of diminished importance. The more elaborate decoration of Menkaure's pyramid and valley temples, along with an apparent increased attention to their complexity and size, supports this theory, as does the greater use of granite in Menkaure's temple—a more expensive building material than the limestone used in the other two Giza pyramid complexes. A single tunnel that begins on the north face of the pyramid allows access to the interior of the tomb. The tunnel—1.05 meters wide and 1.2 meters (3.4 by 3.9 feet) high—descends 31.7 meters (102 feet) to a paneled chamber. The chamber—3.63 by 3.16 meters (11.9 by 10.3 feet)—has walls carved with the false door motif. The false door represents the first return of internal decoration of a pyramid since the time of Djoser, over 100 years earlier. A horizontal chamber leads from

the paneled chamber to an antechamber (an outer room that serves as an entrance to the main room) measuring 14.2 by 3.84 meters (46.5 by 12.5 feet) with a ceiling 4.87 meters (15.9 feet) above the floor. A short ascending tunnel was abandoned in antiquity, but a descending tunnel from the antechamber leads to the burial chamber. A small room on the right of the passage before reaching the burial chamber may have been for storage. The burial chamber is 6.59 by 2.62 meters (21.6 by 8.5 feet) with a ceiling 3.43 meters (11.2 feet) above the floor. In the granite-lined burial chamber the English explorer Richard H. W. Vyse found the sarcophagus in 1837. He shipped it to England in 1838, but it was lost at sea in a storm between Malta and Spain and was never recovered. In addition to the sarcophagus, Vyse found a wooden coffin dating to Dynasty 26 but inscribed with Menkaure's name. This wood coffin was roughly 2,000 years younger than the pyramid. In addition, human bones dating to the Christian period in Egypt were in the upper chamber. This evidence of activity of such varied periods indicates that access to the pyramid after the



The Great Sphinx, the first colossal work of sculpture created by the Egyptians and integral to the architectural plan of the Giza pyramids. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Old Kingdom was more frequent than Egyptologists once suspected. South of the main pyramid, Menkaure's workers built three small pyramids. Two were either never finished or were intended to be step pyramids. The third small pyramid might originally have been planned as a subsidiary pyramid for the king's ka (soul). The presence of a granite sarcophagus in it suggests, however, that it was also used as a queen's pyramid because such coffins were used to bury mummies rather than a ka-statue. All three pyramids had mud brick chapels attached. Menkaure's son, King Shepseskaf, completed his pyramid temple and causeway in mud brick after his death, although apparently the intention was to finish it in limestone covered with granite. The decoration intended for the pyramid temple was the paneled palace façade motif, customary for at least 400 years in royal funeral complexes. This decoration links Menkaure's Pyramid Temple to the earlier royal enclosures in Abydos. On the wall facing the east face of the pyramid, the builders erected a false door and placed a statue of Menkaure striding forward in front of it. This arrange-

ment recalls similar false doors with statues in contemporary mastaba tombs built for the king's extended family. The causeway was incomplete. The mortuary temple was built at the mouth of the wadi (a dry river bed) formerly used to bring construction materials from the Giza quarry. The American archaeologist Mark Lehner observed that the plan to block this wadi suggests that the builders did not intend to use the quarry again, which indicates that Menkaure's valley temple was the last major construction at Giza. Though the builders completed the limestone foundations of the temple, King Shepseskaf completed the building in mud brick. George Reisner, the German excavator of the temple, established that squatters moved into it soon after its completion. The squatters stored the sculpture completed for the temple in storage facilities, leaving them to be discovered in the early twentieth century. Reisner's careful excavation allows Egyptologists to determine that the squatters lived in the temple for many generations, at least through the Sixth Dynasty, roughly 210 years after Menkaure's death.

**FUNERAL COMPLEX OF SHEPSESKAF.** King Shepseskaf chose a tomb type entirely different from his royal ancestors. He erected a tomb at Saqqara, returning to the royal cemetery that had been used roughly 150 years earlier by King Djoser. The tomb, called in Arabic the *Mastabat el-Fara'un* (Mastaba of the Pharaoh), was a gigantic structure shaped like a contemporary nobleman's mastaba—a building that is rectangular in profile—rather than like a royal pyramid. Though Egyptologists agree that this sudden change represented an important shift in policy, the actual meaning of that shift cannot be established with the information currently available. The Mastabat el Fara'un is 99.6 by 74.44 meters (327 by 244 feet). The two sidewalls slope at seventy degrees and are joined by a vaulted ceiling. The bottom course is granite but the remainder of the building used limestone. A descending corridor inside leads 20.95 meters (69 feet) to a chamber and a further passage to an antechamber. Another short passage with a side room with statue niches slopes downward to the burial chamber with false vaulting carved into the ceiling. Inside the burial chamber was a stone sarcophagus similar to the one made for Shepseskaf's father, Menkaure. This sarcophagus type, the room with statue niches, and the false vaulting in the burial chamber are the major similarities between Shepseskaf's tomb and that of his father. These features will perhaps be significant if scholars draw any conclusion as to why Shepseskaf chose to change royal burial customs so dramatically. The German archaeologist Dieter Arnold emphasized the similarities the structure shares with the

palace of the living king. The paneling of the lowest course of the mastaba suggests the palace façade of the living king. This emphasis on the living king also suggests that there might have been reliefs showing the food offerings made to the king after his death in the temple built on the east side of the mastaba and in the unexcavated valley temple. This theme was already important for noblemen's tombs in this period. If this interpretation is true, it would suggest that Shepseskaf conceived himself as more human than previous kings had claimed to be.

**HISTORICAL QUESTIONS.** The pyramid complexes built at Giza in the Fourth Dynasty illustrate the advantages and disadvantages historians face when using architecture as the major source for information about a historical time period. Historians concentrate on the change and continuity in plans and techniques found among the Fourth-dynasty complexes and both their precursors and successors. Sometimes it is easier to identify a major change than it is to understand what the change meant. Both Djedefre and Shepseskaf chose to build funerary monuments outside of Giza, a surprising development in light of Khafre and Menkaure's decisions to build at Giza. Though Djedefre's choice to build outside Giza would initially seem to parallel his grandfather's and father's own decisions to build funeral monuments in new sites, it has struck some historians as aberrant. They have even seen it as evidence of a feud among the Fourth-dynasty princes. Djedefre's brother and successor, Khafre, chose to build near his father's pyramid and even to make connections between the plans of the two complexes. Khafre's son and successor, Menkaure, followed in his father's footsteps, but Menkaure's son, Shepseskaf, behaved in a most unusual way by both abandoning Giza for Saqqara and, what's more, building a giant mastaba rather than a pyramid. The real significance of these events cannot be determined in any definitive way. Yet other historical inferences, supported by textual evidence, seem to help us understand where the Fourth Dynasty was located in a long tradition. For example, it is possible to understand the use of five statue niches in Khafre's pyramid temple as placing the tradition of five official royal titles squarely into the Fourth Dynasty. Direct textual evidence for the use of the five official names for the king does not otherwise exist in this period, but only much later. The existence of five separate storage rooms can also be explained as evidence for the independence of the five phyles that worked to maintain the temple.

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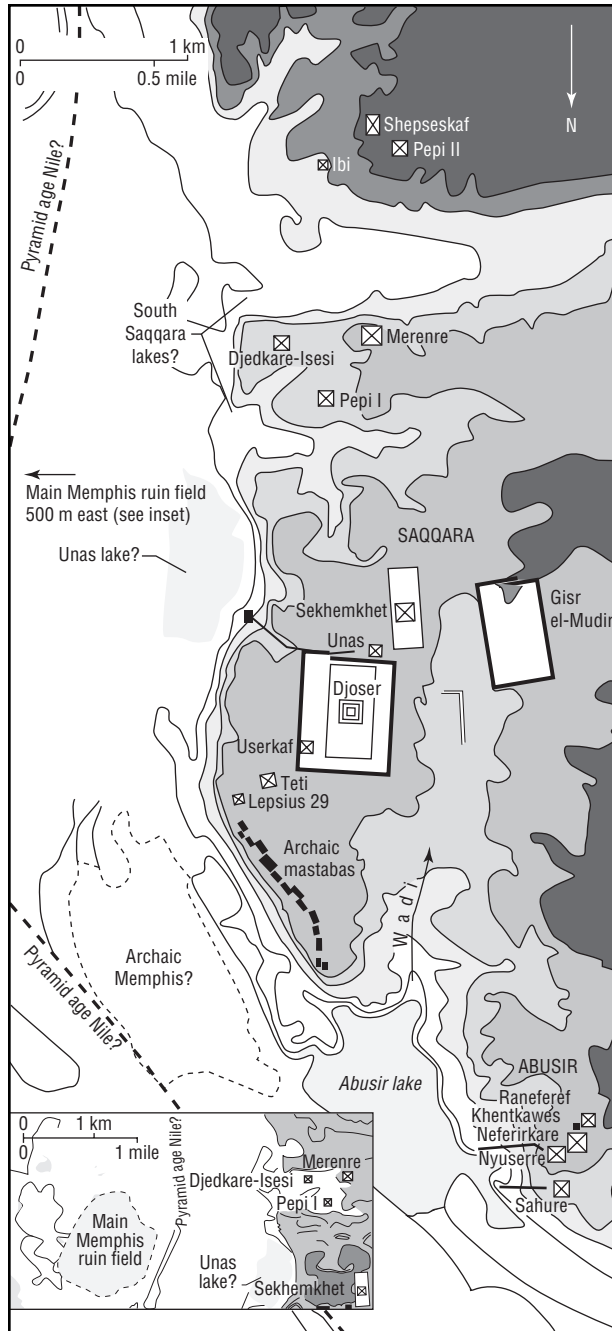
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## ARCHITECTURE OF THE FIFTH AND SIXTH DYNASTIES

**STANDARDIZATION AND NEW LOCATIONS.** During the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, architects followed a standard plan for the royal pyramid complex. The experimentation of the examining Fourth-dynasty pyramid complexes came to an end. Kings also chose a new site called Abu Sir for their complexes after Userkaf initially built his complex at Saqqara, the site of Djoser's Third-dynasty complex. Finally, kings of this era drastically reduced resources directed to pyramid building from the Fourth Dynasty. Instead, they diverted some resources to sun temples dedicated to the god, Re. The meaning of these trends must be inferred without much help from other kinds of evidence. In general, Egyptologists believe that kings now directed more resources toward temples for the god Re and away from their own pyramid complexes because the kings themselves had lost status in their society in comparison with Fourth-dynasty kings.

**THE PYRAMID COMPLEX OF USERKAF AT SAQQARA.** Userkaf (2500–2485 B.C.E.), the first king of the Fifth Dynasty, built his pyramid complex at Saqqara, aligning it with the northeast corner of Djoser's complex built in the Third Dynasty (2675–2625 B.C.E.). The 49-meter (161-foot) tall pyramid with base sides of 73.3 meters (240 feet) was smaller than Djoser's step pyramid, being eleven meters (35.5 feet) shorter in height and 48 meters (157 feet) shorter on a side. In addition to being smaller, Userkaf's pyramid was not as well constructed. Workers laid the core haphazardly before casing it in limestone, and the core subsequently collapsed when workers removed the casing for other purposes in later times. Inside, the pyramid has a north entrance leading to a descending passage 18.5 meters (61 feet) long. This passage led to an antechamber 4.14 meters long by 3.12 meters (13.5 by 10.2 feet) wide. Another horizontal passage exiting from the right side led to the burial

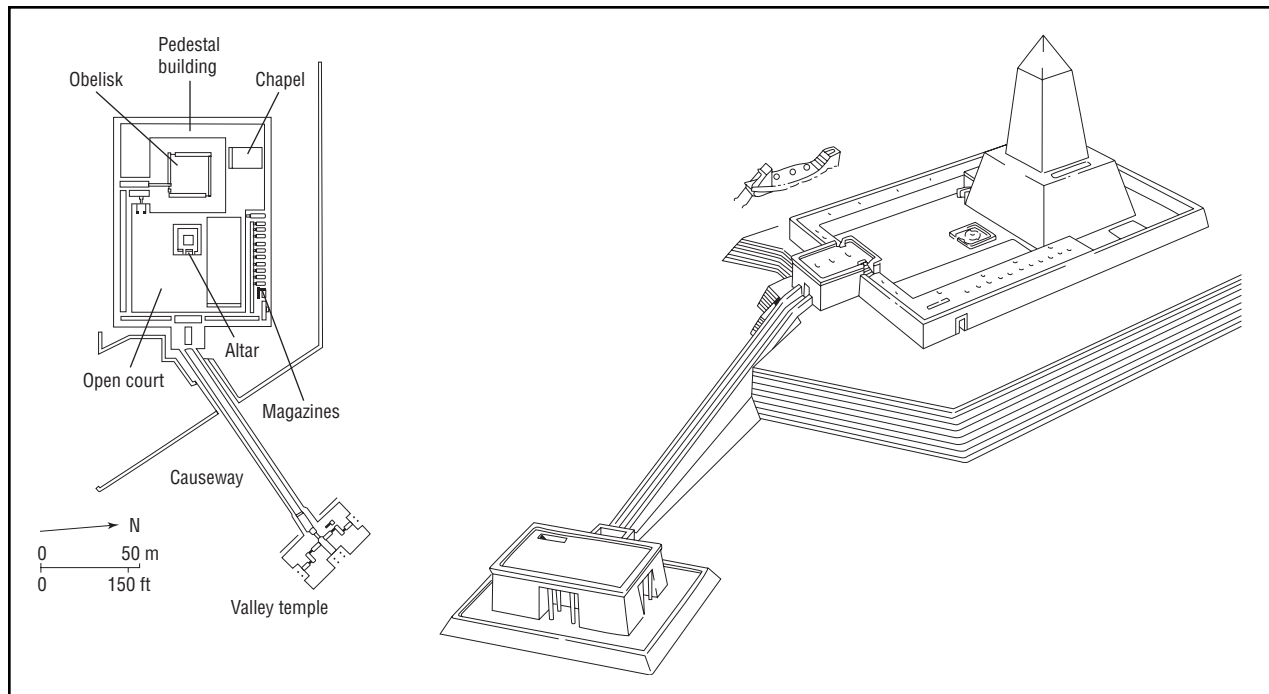


Plan of Saqqara and Abu Sir. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

chamber, 7.87 meters long and 3.13 meters wide (25.8 by 10.2 feet). A passage to the left led to a storage area. The arrangement of the buildings associated with Userkaf's pyramid resembles Djoser's Third-dynasty pyramid complex much more than the complex at Giza built only two generations previously. The pyramid temple is located on the south side of the pyramid. A small offering chapel remains on the east side of the pyramid,

the side reserved for the pyramid temple in the Fourth Dynasty at Giza. The pyramid temple contains niches for the statue cult, but they are oriented to the south wall of the temple, away from the pyramid rather than toward it as had been the case in Giza. The subsidiary pyramid is located at the southwest corner of the main pyramid rather than on the east or southeast as at Giza. At least two interpretations have been offered for this change in plan. The Egyptian archaeologist Nabil Swelim observed that Userkaf's pyramid would not fit at the northeast corner of Djoser's complex unless the pyramid temple was moved to the south side. He regards this layout as the result of practical problems. The alternative explanation connects the role that the sun-god Re played in the beliefs of the kings of the Fifth Dynasty with this change in plan. According to this explanation, Re became much more important to the Fifth-dynasty kings. This importance can be deduced from their efforts to build the first temples for this god and from some much later literary evidence linking Userkaf and his successors with Re. Thus the pyramid temple's placement at the south side of the pyramid ensured that it had an unobstructed view of the sun. The German archaeologist Dieter Arnold has further observed, however, that beginning with the time of Djoser and then Sneferu, Old Kingdom kings alternated between building a temple complex oriented north/south (the Djoser type) and complexes oriented east/west (the Meidum type). Without further evidence it will never be clear which of these explanations is closer to the truth. Another important point to consider is the relationship between the kings of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties. The kings of the Fifth Dynasty seem to represent a new family in that they were not direct descendants of Shepseskaf, the last king of the Fourth Dynasty. In *Papyrus Westcar*, a story written nearly 900 years after these events, the writer claims that Userkaf's father was the sun-god, Re, not a human. If this papyrus reflects an older tradition original to the Fifth Dynasty, perhaps Userkaf built his pyramid in Saqqara to associate himself with the earlier king, Djoser, whose pyramid complex was nearby. This tradition also helps explain Userkaf's sun temple at Abu Sir.

**USERKAF'S SUN TEMPLE AT ABU SIR.** Old Kingdom documents mention six sun temples dating to each of the six kings of the Fifth Dynasty. The oldest of the temples is Userkaf's sun temple at Abu Sir. The only other one to be discovered and excavated is the sun temple built by Nyuserre, the fifth king of the dynasty (ruled 2455–2425 B.C.E.). Userkaf's sun temple represents the first known effort of an Egyptian king to build a temple other than his own funerary monument. Userkaf built



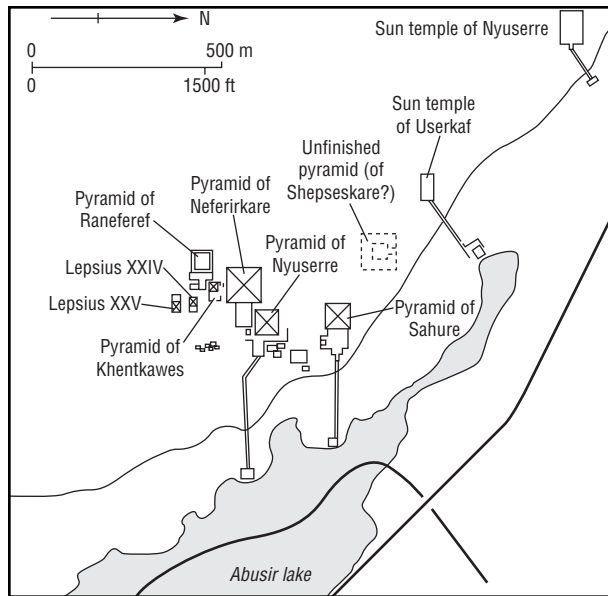
Nyuserre's sun temple. A simulacrum of a barque is docked off the southeast corner. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

his sun temple in Abu Sir, a site that would later be utilized for pyramid complexes and sun temples by other Fifth-dynasty kings. Userkaf's sun temple also represents the first clear example of a temple built and then rebuilt by subsequent kings, a common theme in the later architectural history of Egypt. Both Neferirkare, the third king of the dynasty, and Nyuserre added to the temple. The name of this temple, *Nekhen Re* (The Stronghold of Re), associates it with early temple enclosures at the town called Nekhen (Stronghold) in Middle Egypt. The excavator, Herbert Ricke, believed that the first building stage of the temple contained the same key elements as the earlier Stronghold: a rectangular enclosure and a central mound of sand. Neferirkare added an obelisk with altars in front of it in the second building phase. Thus this sun temple contained the first-known example of this typically Egyptian form. Phases three and four, built by Nyuserre, included five benches. Ricke thought the benches were platforms where priests placed offerings to the god. He discovered a stele inside one of the benches inscribed with the name of the "Great Phyle," one of the five groups of priests and workers responsible for work at the temple on a rotating basis. It is possible that the five benches represented each of these five groups, though archaeologists found no other steles. A causeway linked the sun temple with a valley temple. Nyuserre may have constructed the valley temple during the fourth phase of

building, or he may have rebuilt an original building of Userkaf's complex.

**PYRAMIDS AT ABU SIR.** The Fifth-dynasty kings—Sahure (2485–2472 B.C.E.), Neferirkare Kakai (2472–2462 B.C.E.), Shepseskare (2462–2455 B.C.E.), Reneferef (2462–2455 B.C.E.), and Nyuserre (2455–2425 B.C.E.)—built their pyramids at Abu Sir, just north of Saqqara. Though the first king of the Fifth Dynasty, Userkaf, built his pyramid complex in Saqqara, he initiated construction at Abu Sir by building his sun temple on this new site. Sahure, second king of Dynasty 5 who ruled 2485–2472 B.C.E., built a pyramid with base sides 78.75 meters (258 feet) long and 47 meters (154 feet) high. It was thus 151.25 meters (498 feet) shorter on a side and 99 meters (327 feet) lower than Khufu's Great Pyramid at Giza. Instead of a gigantic pyramid, Sahure concentrated his efforts on decorating the complex with relief sculpture. The interior of the pyramid was also much simpler than the complicated system of passages that builders provided for the pyramids of the Fourth Dynasty. An entrance on the north side led to a 1.27 by 1.87-meter (4.1 by 6.1-foot) passage that ran on a level plane for approximately 162.4 meters (533 feet). The amount of rubble still in the passage makes precise measurements impossible. The passage led to a burial chamber measuring 12.6 meters (41.3 feet) by 3.15 meters (10.3 feet). This simple T-shaped interior resembles





Map of Abu Sir. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

the interior of a nobleman's tomb, suggesting that Sahure regarded himself more like other high officials than did the kings of the Fourth Dynasty who claimed to be gods. The architect's plan for Sahure's pyramid complex became the standard for nine of the known complexes of the following Fifth and Sixth Dynasties. Arnold suggested that this phenomenon resulted from the work of a series of architects who had inherited the office of King's Architect for many generations, though it is just as likely that this model served the needs of a long line of kings while they experimented with the sun temples, a new area of focus.

**THE STANDARD PYRAMID TEMPLE.** Architects positioned the standard pyramid temple on the east side of the pyramid, and included a vaulted entrance hall decorated with relief sculpture. This covered hall led to an open courtyard allowing the architect to exploit the contrast between the darkness of the hall and the bright sunlight of the court. This contrast, alternating light and darkness, was a basic tool of all Egyptian architecture. Relief sculpture also decorated the walls of the courtyard depicting the king protecting Egypt from enemies. Another hall led to a room decorated with scenes from the Jubilee Festival (*sed*). The relief there showed the gods of Upper and Lower Egypt greeting the king and confirming his right to rule the country. This room offers evidence that the Jubilee Festival depicted in it continued at the king's burial complex as it had been known beginning with the Jubilee Festival (*sed*) courtyard in the funerary complex of Djoser in the Third Dynasty

(2675–2625 B.C.E.). The rear of the pyramid temple held five niches for the five statues of the king and an offering place. The five statues of the king probably represented each of the five standard names that a king took at his coronation. The pyramid temple's plan thus reflects an Egyptian's idea of the proper evidence that a king had ruled legitimately in the eyes of the gods and also a listing of his functions through the use of sculptural relief.

#### THE STANDARD CAUSEWAY AND VALLEY TEMPLE.

The standard causeway connected the upper pyramid temple and the lower valley temple. In the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, remains of relief sculpture lined the walls of the causeway. Artists represented two basic subjects. First they showed the king protecting the whole complex from Egypt's human enemies and taming nature. Second, they showed humans on earth supplying the complex with food from all over Egypt. The architect used three different stones in the valley temple, probably with color symbolism in mind. The floor was black basalt, referring to the black mud of Egypt's fertile valley. The *dado* (the lower part of the wall) was red granite, a reference either to the surrounding desert or a punning allusion to holiness, since the Egyptian words for "red" and "holy" sounded alike. Finally, the upper walls were white Tura limestone, decorated with a carved and painted relief depicting the king defeating his enemies. The building served as an entrance to the whole complex and stood as a statement of the basic order of the Egyptian world.

**USES OF THE PYRAMID COMPLEX.** The pyramid complexes were primarily tombs for the kings. Yet Egyptologists have long abandoned the German Egyptologist Herbert Ricke's theory that the buildings of the complex were solely for the funeral. The discovery of the *Abu Sir Papyri*, the records of Neferirkare's pyramid complex subsequent to the king's death, provides evidence of the numerous activities that continued in the complex after the burial. The *Pyramid Texts* found inside the pyramids beginning with the reign of Unas (2371–2350 B.C.E.) also inform us about the rituals which continued in the pyramid complex, in the Egyptian ideal, for eternity. There were at least two offering services for the king every day—one in the morning and one in the evening. Other rituals centered on the five statues of the king found in the five niches of the pyramid temple. At least three of these statues depicted the king as the god Osiris, king of the dead. The ritual included feeding, cleaning, and clothing the deceased king. Priests then received the food used in the ritual as part of their salary. When they were not attending to their deceased king, priests and

a PRIMARY SOURCE document

### A RITUAL SPEECH TO UNITE WITH THE SUN GOD

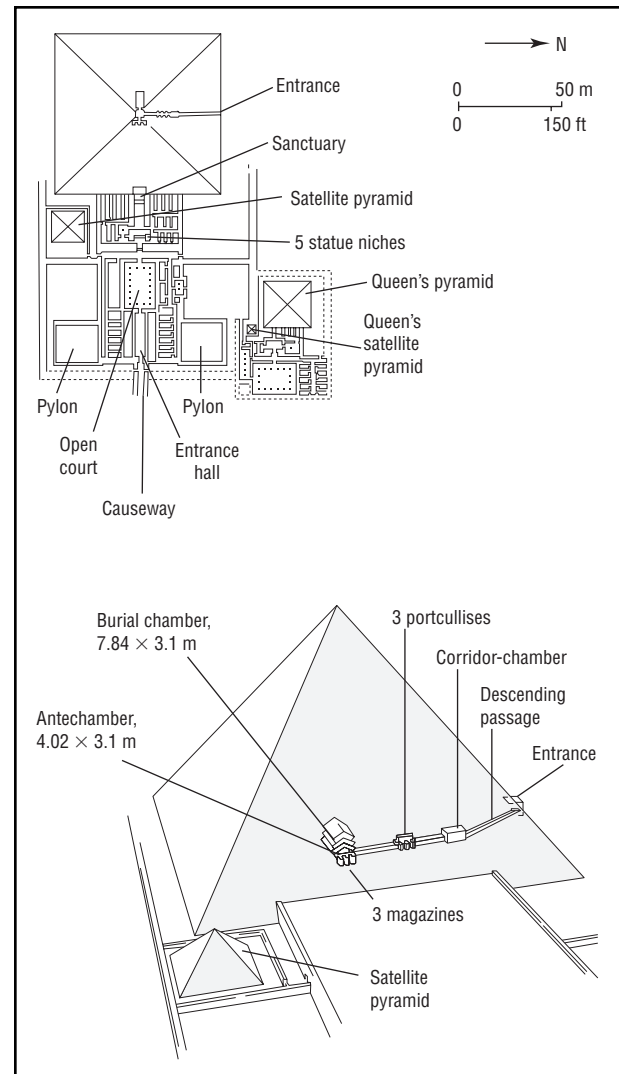
**INTRODUCTION:** The *Pyramid Texts* were carved inside the sarcophagus chambers of the pyramids beginning in the reign of King Unas (2371–2350 B.C.E.). These ritual speeches, according to Egyptian religious belief, helped the deceased king unify with the sun god, his father. In this example the king unites with Re-Atum, a form of the sun-god, Re, merged with the creator god, Atum.

Re-Atum, this Unas comes to you,  
 A spirit indestructible  
 Who lays claim to the place of the four pillars!  
 Your son comes to you, this Unas comes to you,  
 May you cross the sky united in the dark,  
 May you rise in lightland, the place in which you  
 shine!  
 Seth, Nephthys, go proclaim to Upper Egypt's gods  
 And their spirits:  
 "This Unas comes, a spirit indestructible,  
 If he wishes you to die, you will die,  
 If he wishes you to live, you will live!"

**SOURCE:** "The king joins the sun god," in *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*. Vol. 1 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973): 30–31.

administrators engaged in other tasks, including astronomical observations to determine the proper day for celebrating festivals and the administrative tasks associated with delivering, storing, and disbursing large amounts of commodities that arrived at the complex on a regular basis. These goods included food and clothing used during the rituals. The pyramid complexes of the Old Kingdom were probably very busy places rather than just tombs. Some of the complexes operated for much longer periods than others. The cult of Khufu at the Great Pyramid, for example, continued with its own priests as late as the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664–525 B.C.E.) over 2,000 years after the building of the complex.

**EVENTS AND TRENDS.** Architecture allows Egyptologists to follow general trends in the history of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties. The rise of the sun-god Re's importance seems to co-exist with a lowered status of the king himself, compared to Fourth-dynasty kings. This observation depends on the fact that royal pyramids of



The Djedkare-Isesi temple from above as well as a side profile showing the pyramid, the satellite pyramid, as well as the sanctuary and entrance hall. **CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.**

the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties were so much smaller than the Fourth-dynasty pyramids. Khufu's Great Pyramid required ten times more stone to build than Nefirkare's pyramid, built in the Fifth Dynasty. Considering that Fifth-dynasty building methods were also more economical because they used some fill rather than being solid stone as the Fourth-dynasty pyramids were, it is even more striking that Fifth- and Sixth-dynasty kings spent fewer resources on themselves than Fourth-dynasty kings had done. Because Egyptologists lack other records to supplement this picture, the actual events that led to this change cannot be examined. It is not clear, for example, whether there were fewer resources to spend on the king because of wars or famines, or whether the

change was solely due to an altered ideology. These questions await further evidence before real answers can be offered.

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### MASTABA TOMBS OF THE OLD KINGDOM

**HOUSE FOR ETERNITY.** The mastaba tomb's name comes from the Arabic word meaning "bench," for its resemblance to a mud brick bench sitting on the desert sand. Such benches are often located in front of houses. One name that the ancient Egyptians gave to tombs was *per djet*, "house of eternity." The Egyptians thought of the tomb as one of the places in which their souls would live after they died. The soul divisions included the *ba* that could travel between the mummy and the next world, the *ka* that could inhabit a statue of a deceased person, and the *akh* that was transformed in the tomb into a spirit that could live in the next world. Not only did the *ba* and the *ka* spend time with the mummy and the statue of the deceased in the tomb, but also supplies that a person would need in the next life were stored in the tomb, just as there were storage facilities in a house. A deceased person could even receive mail at the tomb just as mail could be delivered to a person in this life. In fact all the functions that a person performed in life—sleeping, eating, dressing, receiving friends—were performed in the tomb by the deceased.

**EARLIEST EGYPTIAN TOMBS.** In the very earliest periods, Egyptians buried their dead in oval-shaped pits in the desert. From the Nagada I Period (3800–3500 B.C.E.), grave goods such as pots, tools, and weapons were included in the grave along with the body. These graves were unmarked, but the grave goods show that from the earliest period the Egyptians believed that people needed supplies to take with them to the next world. In the Nagada II Period (3500–3300 B.C.E.), the Egyptians dug

more rectangular pits for graves and sometimes lined them with basket-work, reed matting, or wood. These simple linings were the precursors of coffins. It was only during the first two dynasties (3100–2675 B.C.E.) that the Egyptians began to build superstructures over pit graves called mastabas. At first they built them of mud brick, but later switched to stone. The type remained the basic burial architecture for the region around Memphis used by the wealthy into 3100 B.C.E. and later.

**MASTABAS OF DYNASTIES ONE, TWO, AND THREE.** The mastabas built during the First and Second Dynasties were decorated with the palace façade motif derived from the enclosure wall of the contemporary royal palace as well as the funerary enclosures of kings in this period. First-dynasty mastabas had plastered and painted exteriors, though this feature apparently did not continue into the Second Dynasty. Though the first mastabas had storage chambers, storage moved to the substructure during the course of the First Dynasty. A staircase led to these storage chambers and the burial chamber. The mastaba became a solid brick block with retaining walls and a rubble core. On the east side of the mastaba, architects placed two offering niches where the living could make offerings. Later, architects built exterior chapels on the east side of the tomb, in addition to interior chapels shaped like a corridor, and cruciform chapels on the interior. The living used all of these places to make offerings to the dead. Yet, no definite progression of these types can currently be deduced. They continued into the Third Dynasty as the typical burial for the wealthy, even as kings began to build step pyramids.

**FOURTH-DYNASTY MASTABAS.** At the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.), mud brick continued to be the main construction material of mastabas with some elements such as lintels—the top element of a doorway that rests on the sides of the doorway called jambs—made of stone. By the time Khufu built the Great Pyramid, however, all of the surrounding mastaba tombs were limestone. Probably this change is due to the fact that these mastabas belonged to the very richest non-royal people. Most of them were at least relatives of the royal family and held high office in the bureaucracy. The mastaba itself was mostly solid with a corridor that led to two chapels on the east side, built over shafts excavated into the bedrock. The shaft extended to the roof of the mastaba that gave the only access to it and to the burial chamber. At the bottom of the shaft a tunnel extending to the west led to the burial chamber. A stone sarcophagus, decorated with the palace façade motif similar to the older superstructures, rested in a niche in the west wall. A canopic chest—the name given to the con-

tainer holding the mummified lungs, liver, stomach, and intestines—lay buried in a niche either on the south or southeast wall. Egyptians employed elaborate measures to thwart tomb robbers, such as filling the tunnel with rubble after the burial or inserting large blocking stones. These precautions were largely unsuccessful. Nearly all of the Old Kingdom mastabas were robbed in antiquity.

**FIFTH- AND SIXTH-DYNASTY MASTABAS.** The superstructure of Fifth- and Sixth-dynasty mastabas (2500–2170 B.C.E.) was more complex than the earlier, solid-core mastabas. Designers now included interior chapels in the superstructure. These chapels were often L-shaped, though cruciform (cross-shaped) chapels also existed. The overall size of these chapels was only a tiny part of the solid core of the structure. Very wealthy people began to include interior chapels with multiple rooms sometimes connected by columned halls near the end of the Fifth Dynasty and beginning of the Sixth Dynasty. More and more, the mastaba began to resemble a nobleman's house. Stairs to the roof from the interior of the mastaba allowed access to the burial shaft that continued to be accessed there. The burial shaft extended through the mastaba core then continued into the bedrock. A tunnel led west to the burial chamber. In the burial chambers of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties designers buried the deceased in a pit excavated into the bedrock, and placed a stone lid over the pit after the mummy's burial.

**THE FALSE DOOR.** The structure in mastaba tombs known as the false door is a stylized model of a door. It combines an offering place, door jambs, a lintel, and a stela, each carved from stone, though some Third-dynasty examples are wood. The name of the deceased was inscribed on each element, along with his or her titles. If there were two false doors in the western interior wall of the mastaba, the southern one was inscribed for the deceased tomb owner while the northern one was inscribed for his wife. The stela above the false door was often decorated with an image of the deceased at the symbolic funerary meal as well as images of the deceased's family performing rituals that ensured continued life in the next world. The false door, according to Egyptian belief, allowed the ka (soul) of the deceased to travel between the world of the living and the world of the dead and deliver food offerings to the deceased, one of the ka's main functions after death.

**OPPOSING TRENDS.** It is striking that Fifth- and Sixth-dynasty mastabas are so much bigger and more elaborate than Fourth-dynasty mastabas. This trend is exactly the opposite of the changes from Fourth to Fifth- and Sixth-dynasty royal pyramids, which became smaller

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

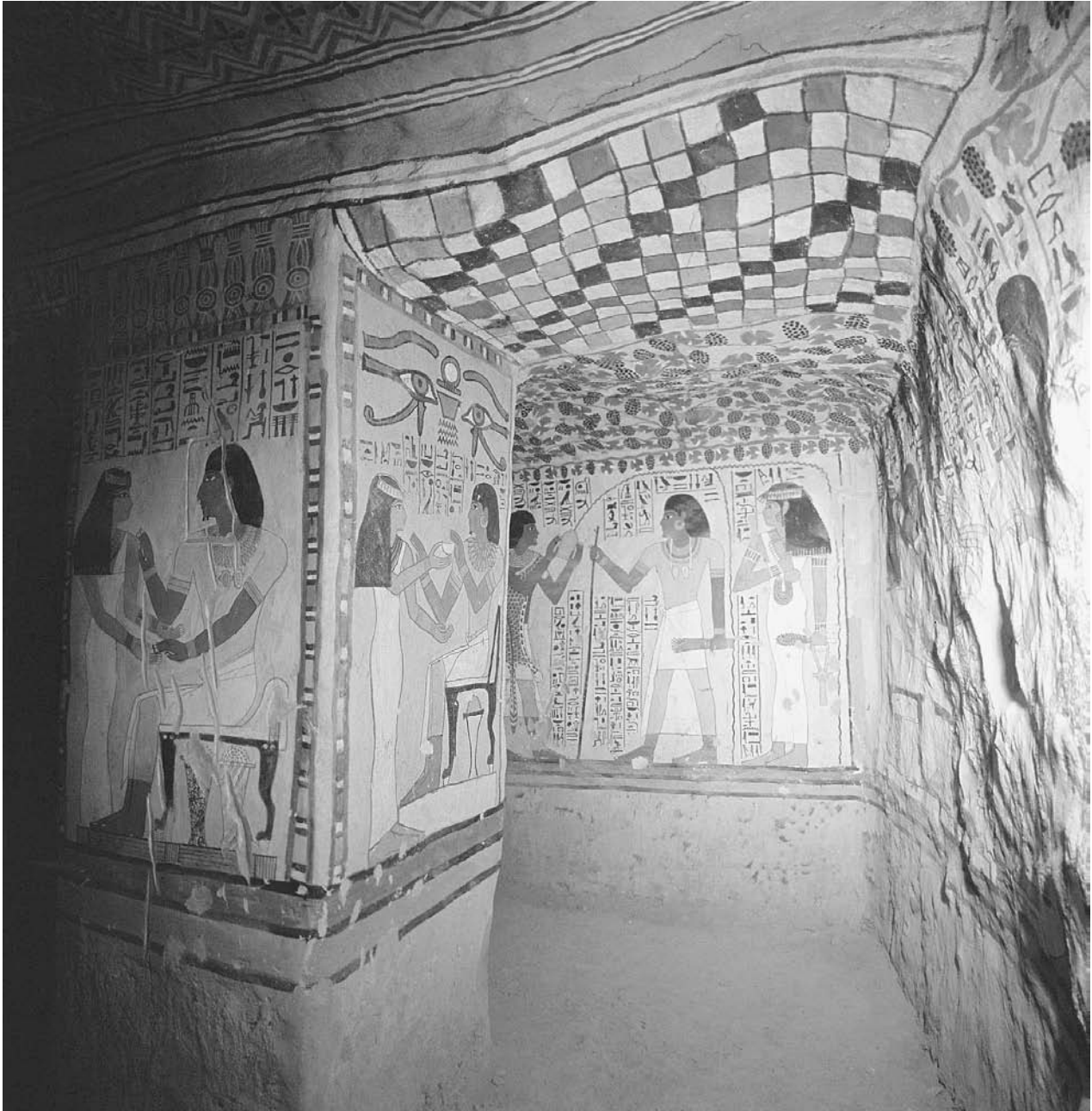
**LETTERS TO THE DEAD**

**INTRODUCTION:** The tomb was a deceased person's house for eternity. Not only did the deceased eat, drink, dress, and sleep in the tomb, but also he or she could receive mail there. The following two letters were deposited at the tomb of Inherhenmet at Kaw, a site in Middle Egypt. In it, the living son, Shepsi, asks his deceased father, Inherhenmet, and mother, Iy, to intervene in a dispute with his brother, Sebkhoteb, who is also dead. According to the texts, this brother had caused the living son to lose his land on earth. Shepsi suggested that his parents bring a lawsuit against his brother to restore the land to him, especially considering all the things he had done for his father, his mother, and even his deceased brother. It is unknown how the results of the suit would be communicated to Shepsi.

It is Shepsi who speaks to his father, Inherhenmet. This is a reminder of your journey to the prison, to the place where Son's son Hotpui was, when you brought the foreleg of an ox, and when I came with Newayof, and when you said, "Welcome, you two! Sit and eat meat!" Am I being injured in your presence by my brother, without having done or said anything? (And yet) I buried him, I brought him from ..., I placed him among the fellow-owners of his tomb, although he owed me thirty gallons of barley [and other commodities]. He has done this against me wrongfully, since you said to me, "All my property is vested in you, Shepsi." Look, all my fields have been taken away! ... Litigate with him since your scribes are with you in one city ...

It is Shepsi who speaks to his mother Iy. This is a reminder of the fact that you did say to me, "Bring me quails that I may eat them," and I brought to you seven quails, and you ate them. Am I being injured before you, the children being very discontent with me? Who will then pour water for you [make sacrifices for you]? Oh may you judge between me and Sebkhoteb! I brought him from another town ... and gave him his burial clothing. Why does he work against me without my having said or done anything?

**SOURCE:** "Letter From Shepsi to his father Inherhenmet," adapted from Alan H. Gardiner and Kurt Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1928): 4–5.



Painted burial chamber of a nobleman in Thebes. © ROGER WOOD/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

over the same time period. These trends suggest again that resources were increasingly directed away from the royal pyramid and instead to other goals during the course of the Old Kingdom.

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## DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN THE OLD KINGDOM

**PLANNED TOWNS.** Archaeologists have discovered only a few Old Kingdom towns, all of which are located adjacent to or in Old Kingdom pyramid complexes. The towns demonstrate both the problems that the central government faced in maintaining pyramid complexes and also the way the original function of many buildings was quickly lost as squatters occupied buildings. The

pyramid town at Abu Sir was located along the south and east walls of the pyramid temple of King Neferirkare (2472–2462 B.C.E.). Against an inner enclosure wall, there were nine mud brick houses in a row running south and southeast with a tenth house at the northeast corner of the temple. These houses were home to the scribes of the *Abu Sir Papyri*, the only ancient evidence of the day-to-day function of the pyramid complexes. Given the number of people mentioned in the *Abu Sir Papyri* lists of rations, there was probably another town, not yet discovered by modern archeologists, somewhere nearby. This pyramid temple/pyramid town demonstrates one of the basic problems which all states or institutions face when constructing large buildings: maintenance. The hastily finished columns of the forecourt were originally wood. Termites apparently destroyed the wooden columns fairly soon after completion, and haphazard repairs replaced the wood with less attractive mud brick supports. This kind of repair was probably typical given the administrators' diminishing resources and increasing responsibilities. By the end of the Old Kingdom, there were twenty pyramid complexes to maintain. It is clear from the treatment they received that the Old Kingdom state had no policy for maintaining historic buildings. It was not until the New Kingdom that kings began to replace mud brick structures in temples in the towns with stone construction. For example, Ramesses II's son Khaemwase tried to restore some of the important Old Kingdom buildings in the Memphis area.

**CHANGING THE FUNCTION OF BUILDINGS.** The pyramid town at the valley temple of Menkaure shows even more clearly the course of events at Old Kingdom pyramid complexes as old temple endowments could no longer support the original intentions of the builders. Since the valley temple of Menkaure is today too ruined to allow meaningful views of the original intentions of the builder, it is useful to imagine the valley temple of Khafre, his immediate predecessor, as the prototype of the original intentions of the builder. We will then follow the history of Menkaure's valley temple as it changed from a holy site to a village. Today's visitor to the valley temple of Khafre at Giza can see the massive walls of white limestone which create an overwhelming sense of peace and majesty, as must have been originally intended. At Menkaure's valley temple the statuary which had been prepared for the building would have added even more to the atmosphere, but the walls were left unfinished after Menkaure's premature death. His successor, Shepseskaf, finished the building in mud brick, which must have reduced the majestic effect considerably. Gradually workmen transformed the temple into a

fortified mud brick village. Some 300 years after the temple's original completion, it would have been unrecognizable to its builders. In the village, by the Sixth Dynasty, an additional entranceway supported by two columns had been constructed which led to a vestibule with four columns supporting the roof. A right turn then led to the main courtyard, now filled with mud brick houses and granaries. In modern times, archaeologists discovered the famous statues of Menkaure now in the Boston and in the Cairo museums in the rooms originally designed for supply storage. At some point during the Old Kingdom, a flood caused some damage to the building. The repairs to that damage led to the remodeling of the building for the temple's new use as a village rather than a temple. The restorations were, in fact, a formal recognition of the new use of the building. Eschewing use of the old sanctuary, workers set up a small shrine in a room with four columns. Four statues of Menkaure were set up there on an altar made from an old worn slab of alabaster set up on two upright stones. In order to reach this makeshift sanctuary, the priest would walk through a mud brick village. All of the associated archaeological material in this village suggest that squatters built it and lived in it during Dynasty Six. A decree of Pepi II found in the inner gateway suggests that this village would have been a normal town in this later period. This situation was certainly very far from Menkaure's and even his successor Shepseskaf's intentions for the building.

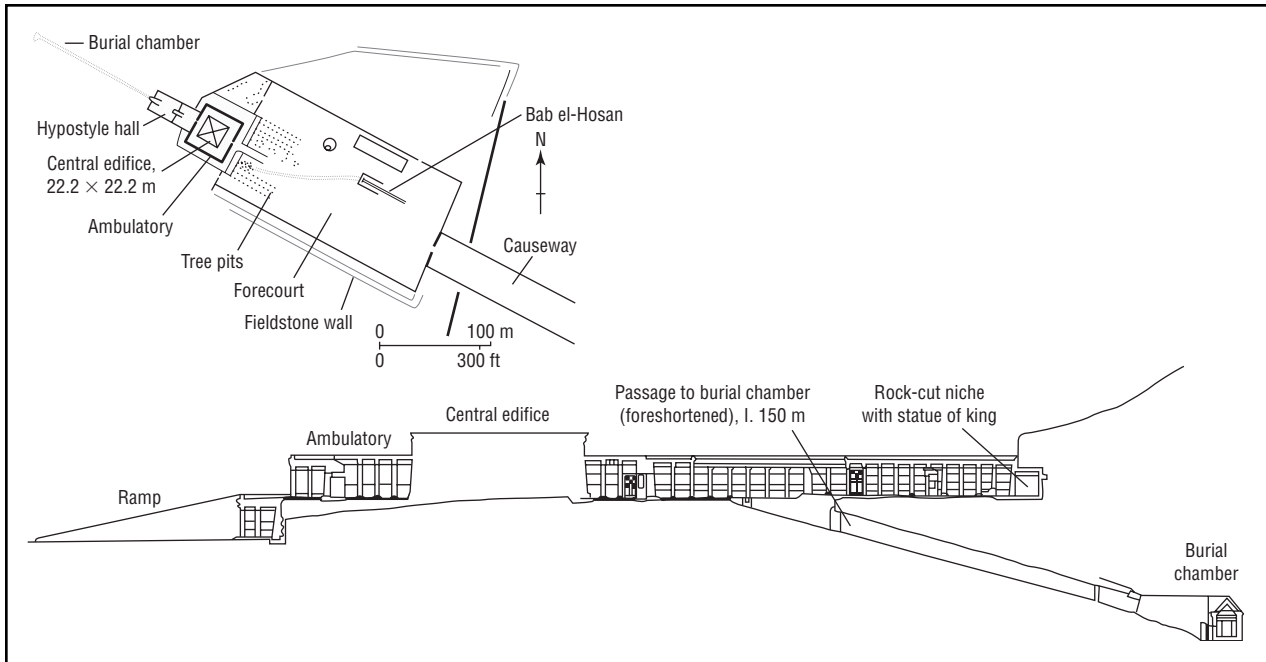
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### TRANSITION TO THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

**NEBHEPETRE MENTUHOTEP.** Between the end of Dynasty 6 (2170 B.C.E.) and the inauguration of the Middle Kingdom in the Mid-eleventh Dynasty (2040 B.C.E.) royal architecture did not exist because the central government had collapsed. Egypt was ruled by provincial officials. Royal architecture in the Middle Kingdom begins again with King Nebhepetre Mentuhotep, the founder of the Middle Kingdom. Nebhepetre Mentuhotep was among the most famous kings in ancient Egyptian history. He reestablished the central government of Egypt after the First Intermediate Period (the period without central government from 2130–2040 B.C.E.), and ushered in a unified period now called the Middle Kingdom about 2040 B.C.E. Kings for the next 1,000 years claimed



Mentuhotep's tomb complex. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

Nebhepetre Mentuhotep as an ancestor because they believed it helped them establish their own legitimacy to rule Egypt.

#### MENTUHOTEP'S FUNERARY TEMPLE AND TOMB.

The funerary temple for Mentuhotep was unlike those built by his predecessors in ruling Egypt, the kings of the Old Kingdom who built pyramid complexes. Instead Nebhepetre Mentuhotep built a temple and tomb based on local traditions in Thebes, the area where he was born. For reasons unknown, only Hatshepsut, the queen who ruled approximately 500 years after him, imitated his temple. The major architecture during his reign was his tomb and temple built in Deir el Bahri on the west bank of the Nile opposite modern Luxor. This region is also known as Thebes. Deir el Bahri is surrounded by cliffs that mark the beginning of the Sahara. The tomb itself was carved out of the mountain. Directly at the base of the mountain, Mentuhotep's builders constructed a T-shaped platform with the longer part of the "T" extending from the mountain and the wider part of the "T" stretching north and south. Priests could access the platform by a long causeway that formed the entrance to the building. Approaching from the causeway, the priest would reach an area called the central edifice, 22.2 meters (72.8 feet) square. A columned ambulatory (a sheltered walkway) surrounded a central core that has been reconstructed in three different ways. The original excavator, Swiss archaeologist Edouard Naville, recon-

structed the now destroyed central core as a pyramid. He knew that the *Abbott Papyrus*, written hundreds of years after this temple's construction, described this building as a *mer*, the ancient Egyptian word for pyramid. The German archaeologist Dieter Arnold, however, restudied the blocks from the temple in the 1970s and demonstrated that the walls of the central edifice were not strong enough to support a pyramid as a central core. Arnold argued that the word *mer* during the time of the writing of the *Abbott Papyrus* meant only "tomb," and no longer meant "pyramid" exclusively, and reconstructed a cube on the central edifice. The German archaeologist Rainer Stadelmann subsequently suggested that a mound was built on the central edifice. This mound would be a reference to the sand mounds found in the most ancient Egyptian funerary structures at Abydos. This reconstruction, though, is purely hypothetical. Behind the ambulatory is a hypostyle hall, literally a room filled with columns. This room contained eighty octagonal columns leading to a rock-cut niche containing a statue of the king. The king appears to stride directly out of the mountain. A tunnel cut in the bedrock leads to the burial chamber.

**OTHER ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS.** The royal tomb itself is cut into the mountain. A tunnel 44.9 meters (147 feet) under the mountain and 150 meters (492 feet) long leads to a granite-lined vault. An alabaster shrine, surrounded by basalt, filled the burial chamber,

and probably contained the king's mummy in a wooden sarcophagus. A garden surrounded the causeway that led up to the central edifice. The designer planted 53 tamarisk trees and a large sycamore fig in the garden. Twelve statues of Mentuhotep dressed as Osiris, the king of the dead, faced the east. At some point the statues were decapitated though it is not known why. The English Egyptologist Howard Carter, who later discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun, excavated the Secondary Tomb after a horse stumbled over it. The tomb thus gained the name *Bab el-Hosan* ("Gate of the Horse"). There Carter found a forecourt and open trench enclosed with mud brick leading to a tunnel. A statue of Mentuhotep wrapped in linen as if it were a mummy lay in a chamber at the end of the tunnel. The Bab el-Hosan probably represented the same kind of secondary royal burial known as early as the First Dynasty. These secondary or subsidiary burials formed a part of the early complexes in Abydos and in Old Kingdom Pyramid complexes.

**UNIQUE STRUCTURE.** The funerary temple built by Nebhepetre Mentuhotep is difficult for Egyptologists to understand. The building has nearly no precedents and no successors. This originality, which modern people prize, was unusual in ancient Egypt. Later kings would return to imitating the pyramid complexes of the Old Kingdom. The lack of similar buildings makes it impossible to restore the damaged parts with any certainty.

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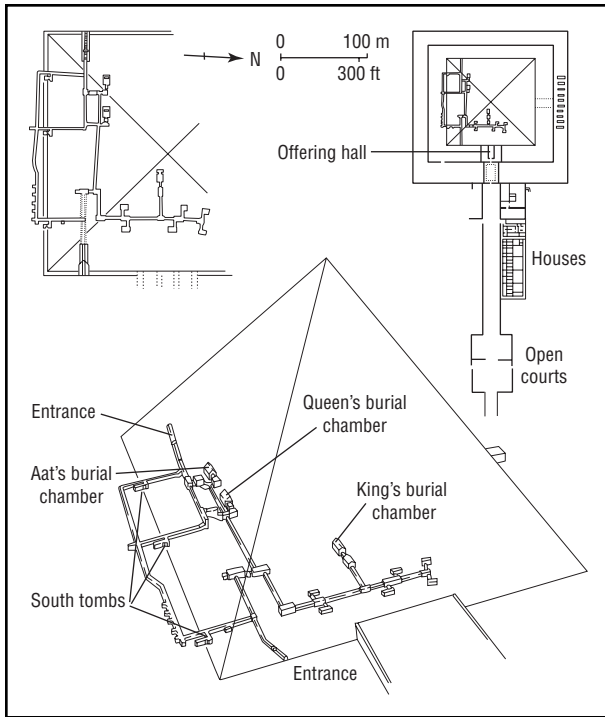
## THE PYRAMIDS OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

**REVIVAL OF OLD KINGDOM TRADITIONS.** Amenemhet I (c. 1938–1909 B.C.E.) and Senwosret I (c. 1919–1875 B.C.E.), the first two kings of the Twelfth Dynasty, built pyramid complexes in the area near Memphis which revived the traditions of pyramid building

practiced in Dynasties Four to Six (2625–2170 B.C.E.) and signaled a return to the Old Kingdom capital in the north. Yet it is clear that kings devoted fewer resources to pyramid building at the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.) than had been allocated for the projects built in the Old Kingdom. Little remains of these relatively poorly built complexes. Innovative building techniques used for these structures appear to be attempts to substitute sand fill or mud brick for solid masonry construction. As a result of these new, cheaper techniques, little remains of the Twelfth-dynasty royal pyramid complexes. The pyramids built by the later kings of the Twelfth Dynasty—Amenemhet II (1876–1842 B.C.E.), Senwosret II (1844–1837 B.C.E.), Senwosret III (c. 1836–1818 B.C.E.), and Amenemhet III (1818–1772 B.C.E.)—reflect attempts to introduce new elements to the pyramid complex imported from Theban traditions. They also revived traditions of pyramid building from the time of Djoser (2675–2625 B.C.E.). These changes suggest that both Senwosret III and Amenemhet III had reconceived their roles as kings in a way that recalled traditions preceding the dominance of the sun cults of the Fourth through Sixth Dynasties. The details of these changes are unfortunately lost because these buildings are also very poorly preserved.

**AMENEMHET I'S PYRAMID AT LISHT.** When Amenemhet I (1938–1909 B.C.E.) moved the Egyptian capital back to the Memphis area from Thebes, he established a new town called *Itj-tawy* ("Seizer of the Two Lands"). No one has yet discovered the location of Itj-tawy, though it likely was close to Lisht, the site of Amenemhet I's pyramid. Though Amenemhet I used the form of Old Kingdom pyramids, his building techniques differed greatly. The core of his pyramid included limestone blocks, mud brick, sand, debris, and relief sculpture that had been removed from Khufu's temples at Giza. Some Egyptologists believe that Khufu's relief was included to provide a spiritual connection to the earlier king. The pyramid complex of Amenemhet I resembled the standard Old Kingdom pyramid complex. Though poorly preserved today, it included a pyramid temple, causeway, and valley temple. Though the lack of preservation hinders extensive architectural commentary, some Theban features are noteworthy. The causeway was open to the sky, more similar to Nebhepetre Mentuhotep's causeway at Deir el Bahri than to Khufu's roofed causeway in Giza. In addition, the architect placed the pyramid temple on a terrace slightly below the pyramid, not unlike the terraced plan of contemporary Theban tombs such as Nebhepetre Mentuhotep's funeral





Amenemhet III's Dahshur pyramid. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

temple. It is possible that Amenemhet I thought of these features as customary since he also originated in the Theban area.

**THE PYRAMID OF SENWOSRET I AT LISHT.** Today the pyramid of Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.) is a 23-meter (75-foot) high mound of mud brick. Originally the pyramid was 105 meters (344 feet) square at the base and 61.26 meters (201 feet) high. The Great Pyramid was more than twice as high and twice as wide at the base than Senwosret's pyramid, but the smaller size is similar to the pyramids built in the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties. The construction of Senwosret's pyramid was innovative, but represents a wrong turn in construction techniques. Senwosret's builders constructed an internal skeleton made from limestone walls to form a pyramid. They filled the skeleton with roughly shaped stones. They then faced the pyramid with fine limestone blocks that were joined with wooden cramps, similar to clamps that held two stones together. These cramps probably weakened the overall structure rather than strengthened it since the wood buckled under the weight of the stone. The interior burial chamber of the pyramid is under the water table and has not been explored in modern times. The entrance was from the north, similar to traditional pyramid complexes built in the Old Kingdom. The major elements of an Old King-

dom pyramid complex were present in this Middle Kingdom complex, including a subsidiary pyramid located at the southeast corner of the main pyramid, a pyramid temple on the east side of the pyramid (though little of it remains today except for piles of mud brick), and a closed causeway leading to a valley temple which has not yet been discovered. The causeway contained at least eight complete statues of Senwosret I dressed as Osiris, the divine king of the dead. The statues on the south side of the causeway wore the White Crown of Upper Egypt (southern Egypt) while the statues on the north side wore the Red Crown of Lower Egypt (northern Egypt). The complex also included nine queen's pyramids. Queen Neferu, Senwosret's wife, occupied the first. A second was the burial place of Princess Itayket, the king's daughter.

**THE PYRAMID COMPLEX OF SENWOSRET III.** Senwosret III (1836–1818 B.C.E.) built his pyramid complex at Dahshur, the site first occupied by King Sneferu at the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty (2626–2585 B.C.E.). Yet Senwosret III did not imitate Sneferu's plan that led to the Fourth-dynasty type pyramid complex. Instead Senwosret III began the revival of Djoser's Third-dynasty type funeral monument with a dominating north/south axis. He built a "true" pyramid 105 meters (345 feet) square and 78 meters (256 feet) high that contrasts with Djoser's step pyramid. Yet, the arrangement of the parts of the complex follow Djoser's pattern while incorporating some of the Twelfth-dynasty features of pyramid complexes. The entrance passage on the west side is a marked change from previous pyramid entrances, which were located on the north side. A chapel located on the north side of the pyramid perhaps reflects the older tradition, as does a small temple located on the east side of the pyramid. Seven queen's pyramids remind the viewer of the nine queen's pyramids built by Senwosret I at his pyramid complex at Lisht. These more traditional structures were built early in the reign. Sometime later in the reign, Senwosret III added the south temple and a paneled enclosure wall with an entrance at the southeast corner. Though the large south temple was destroyed, perhaps sometime in the New Kingdom, enough decoration remains to suggest that it was the location of the Jubilee Festival (*sed*). Again, these elements recall Djoser's complex at Saqqara.

**SENWOSRET III'S ABYDOS TOMB.** Not only did Senwosret III revive architectural elements of Djoser's Third-dynasty pyramid complex, he also revived First- and Second-dynasty practice by building a tomb in Abydos, the traditional cult center for the god Osiris. The

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HERODOTUS ON THE LABYRINTH**

**INTRODUCTION:** Herodotus (484–430 B.C.E.), the fifth-century B.C.E. Greek historian, visited Egypt about 450 B.C.E. and wrote the earliest description of the country by a foreigner. His description of the Labyrinth is the earliest of six ancient Greek and Roman impressions recorded.

**SOURCE:** Herodotus, *The History*. Trans. by David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): 196–197.

German archaeologist Dorteia Arnold suggested that his actual burial took place in the now-destroyed temple the king built in the south. If true, it would demonstrate that kings of the Twelfth Dynasty were ultimately more comfortable with older, Upper Egyptian customs than they were with the customs of the Old Kingdom kings who ruled in the Fourth through Sixth Dynasties. Senwosret III and his son Amenemhet III, in fact, bridge very ancient traditions with the future customs which return royal burials to Upper (southern) Egypt during the New Kingdom.

**AMENEMHET III'S TWO PYRAMID COMPLEXES.** Amenemhet III (1818–1772 B.C.E.) built a traditional, Old Kingdom pyramid complex at Dahshur in the first part of his 46-year reign. In the second part of his reign he built a second pyramid complex at Hawara, near the entrance to the Faiyum basin. This second pyramid complex followed the predominately north/south orientation first used by Djoser in the Third Dynasty. As the American archaeologist Mark Lehner observed, Amenemhet III was the last great pyramid builder, but he followed the design of Djoser, the first great pyramid builder, bringing the history of pyramid complexes in Egypt full circle. The pyramid that Amenemhet III built at Dahshur resembles only a tower of mud brick today. Originally, each side measured 105 meters (344 feet) with a height of 75 me-

ters (246 feet). Thus it resembled the pyramid of Senwosret I but slightly shorter. The pyramid had a mud brick core faced with Tura limestone. Two entrances—one from the east, one from the west—led into a complicated series of chambers and tunnels. The interior of this pyramid recalls Djoser's step pyramid more than any of the simple Old Kingdom interior structures. This pyramid has a ka-chapel, six other small chapels, and burial chambers for two queens. By the fifteenth year of the king's reign (1803 B.C.E.) some of the interior rooms began to collapse. According to Lehner, the foundation of the pyramid was too close to the groundwater, making the earth too soft to support the weight of the building. Also there were too many rooms inside the pyramid with unsupported roofs. It is likely that when the builders realized their mistake they quickly finished the rooms in mud brick. A new pyramid complex at Hawara eventually held Amenemhet III's burial. Amenemhet III's pyramid at Hawara was nearly the same size as his pyramid at Dahshur. Again the pyramid was 105 meters (344 feet) on each side. This pyramid was 58 meters (190 feet) tall, a full seventeen meters (56 feet) shorter than the Dahshur pyramid. Clearly the builders at Hawara reduced the angle of the pyramid—resulting in a lower height—in order to avoid the problems they had faced with the Dahshur pyramid. They also greatly reduced the number of interior chambers and tunnels. The burial chamber had only

a single entrance from the south, with the southern entrance recalling the general north/south orientation of the building, as was the design of Djoser's pyramid complex at Saqqara. In general Amenemhet III followed the pattern of Djoser's pyramid complex when he built at Hawara. The Hawara complex was 385 by 158 meters (1,263 by 518 feet) with the length oriented north/south. The pyramid temple was south of the pyramid, completely unlike the eastern pyramid temples found during the Old Kingdom. The entrance to the walled complex was at the southeast corner, again mirroring Djoser's choice at Saqqara. The pyramid temple was so vast that ancient Greek and Roman tourists called it the Labyrinth, comparing it to the legendary Labyrinth of Minos in Crete. Today Amenemhet III's building has almost entirely disappeared, the result of quarrying in later times. Only the descriptions left by the Greek and Roman authors Herodotus (484–430 B.C.E.), Manetho (third century B.C.E.), Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.E.), Strabo (64 B.C.E.–19 C.E.), Pliny (23–79 C.E.), and Pomponius Mela (first century C.E.) allow modern scholars to analyze its meaning. Herodotus thought the Labyrinth surpassed the pyramids in the wonder it inspired. Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Pliny all disagree on the number of rooms and courts in the building, but they all imply that each of the administrative districts of Egypt (nomes) and/or each of the regional gods had a courtyard and room within the Labyrinth. German archaeologist Dieter Arnold recognized that these authors were describing a very large version of Djoser's Jubilee Festival (*sed*) courtyard. Here too, each of the nome gods of Egypt was represented with its own small temple or chapel. Clearly Amenemhet III's pyramid temple represented this very ancient tradition of providing a Jubilee Festival courtyard where the king could celebrate in the next world.

**DRAWING ON TRADITION.** The kings of the Twelfth Dynasty drew on all of the previous traditions of pyramid building for their new structures. They were clearly aware of Djoser's pyramid complex in Saqqara, the standard Old Kingdom pyramid complex; Nebhepetre Mentuhotep's funerary temple; and even the most ancient royal burials at Abydos. Yet they seem to be unaware of the construction techniques practiced by their predecessors. Twelfth-dynasty builders continued to experiment, but never successfully built buildings as sturdy as those built in the Old Kingdom. Moreover, it is never entirely clear what they hoped to accomplish by imitating one ancient tradition after another. Without supporting textual evidence, it might never be possible to do more than recognize the references that each Twelfth-dynasty king made to the past.

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## ROCK-CUT TOMBS OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

**LOCATION, PLANS, AND POLITICAL POWER.** One indication of the central government's control over its officials in ancient Egypt was the location and plan of official's tombs. At times when the central government exercised strong control over the provinces, officials wanted to be buried near the king. This was clearly the case in the Old Kingdom when cities of the dead surrounded the pyramids. These Old Kingdom mastabas were gifts from the king to his top officials. In general their plans were similar since they were all built in the same place by the same people. In contrast, during the early Middle Kingdom, provincial officials preferred to locate their tombs in their home provinces. *Nomarchs*, the officials who ruled the 42 Egyptian provinces that Egyptologists call *nomes*, established their own cities of the dead that included many local officials. This tradition of local burial began in the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.), a time when the absence of a central government caused the individual nomes to behave as independent entities. Even with the reestablishment of strong central government in the Twelfth Dynasty, nomarchs who lived during the first four reigns of the period (1938–1837 B.C.E.) preferred burial in their hometowns rather than in Itj-tawy, the national capital. Furthermore, in the Middle Kingdom, local variations in tomb plans were common. Local traditions, especially of rock-cut tombs, grew in Beni Hasan, Bersheh, and Asyut, among other places. Then in the reign of Senwosret III (1836–1818 B.C.E.), the burial of provincial officials returned to the area around the king's pyramid in relatively similar mastaba tombs. Egyptologists regard this change as evidence that the king had reasserted his authority over the provinces. A comparison of three

provincial tombs demonstrates how Egyptologists have analyzed this situation: the tomb of Amenemhet at Beni Hasan, the tomb of Djehutyhotep at Bersheh, and the tomb of Hepdjefa I at Asyut—all built in the early Twelfth Dynasty.

**THE TOMB OF AMENEMHET AT BENI HASAN.** Beni Hasan in Middle Egypt is 23 miles south of the modern city of Minya on the east bank of the Nile. Eight of the 39 tombs excavated in the mountains belonged to a succession of men who held the title “Great Overlord of the Oryx Nome,” the ancient name of Beni Hasan. Amenemhet was Great Overlord, or nomarch, during the reign of Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.). The pathway to his tomb led up the mountain from the cultivated plain in the river valley to a court cut directly into the bedrock of the mountain. The face of the mountain itself was smoothed to form a façade. The façade is supported by two columns, also cut from the mountain itself. The columns are octagonal and support an architrave, the series of beams that columns support. The architrave carries a cornice, a projecting moulding that imitates the ends of rafters made of wood, though carved in stone. The columns taper to the top and carry an abacus, a plain slab of stone balanced between the top of the columns and the bottom of the architrave, while standing on a wide base. The abacus helps to distribute the weight of the architrave over the column. The base also supports the column and spreads its weight on the floor. Though built more than 1,500 years earlier, the columns and architrave resemble classical Greek architecture. The visitor would then pass between the columns into a square room cut into the mountain. The roof of this room is supported by four columns, each with sixteen sides. The columns support two architraves that run from the front to the back of the room. The architraves appear to support three vaults. The vaults spring from the two sidewalls to the architraves on the two columns and another vault between the columns. The columns, architraves, and vaults all were carved from the stone of the mountain. Centered in the rear is a niche containing a statue of Amenemhet, also carved from the mountain itself. Paintings illustrating daily life in the Oryx nome and military training decorate the sidewalls.

**THE TOMB OF DJEHEUTYHOTEP AT BERSHEH.** Bersheh is on the east bank of the Nile opposite Mallawi, a modern town in central Egypt. In ancient times it was in the Hare Nome. Djehutyhotep was the Great Overlord of the Hare Nome during the reigns of Amenemhet II through the time of Senwosret III (1844–1818 B.C.E.). His tomb reflects a local tradition of rock-cut tombs that

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**KHNUMHOTEP BUILDS HIMSELF A TOMB**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Twelfth-dynasty monarch of the Oryx nome, modern Beni Hasan, Khnumhotep, left a long biographical inscription on the walls of his tomb. In the inscription he described the rebuilding of his father’s tomb as his first act. He also described his pride in building a tomb for himself.

[On his father’s tomb] I restored it and its riches in everything. I perpetuated the name of my father and I restored his ka-temple [i.e., his tomb]. I followed my statues to the temple. I presented to them their offerings of bread, beer, cool water, and wine, and meat offerings which were assigned to the ka-priest and I endowed him with fields and workers. I commanded invocation offerings of beef and fowl at every festival of the necropolis. ... Now as for any ka-priest or anyone who will disturb it, he can no longer exist! His son does not exist in his place! ... My chief dignity was the embellishing for myself of a tomb, that a man might imitate what his father did. My father had made for himself a ka-temple in Mer-nofret, made from stone of Anu, in order to perpetuate his name forever and that he might be distinguished forever, his name living in the mouth of the people and enduring in the mouth of the living, upon his tomb of the necropolis and in his splendid house of eternity and his place of eternity.

*Translation by Edward Bleiberg.*

began in the First Intermediate Period. The court of the tomb stood before a façade cut from the mountain. Two round columns carved at the top to imitate palm leaves supported the entrance to the tomb that is behind the columns and leads upward to a rectangular room. Against the middle of the rear wall are three steps leading up to a shrine that once held a statue. The painted walls depict scenes of daily life, including a famous painting of workmen dragging a colossal statue of Djehutyhotep. The shape and numbers of columns, shapes of the rooms, and arrangement of the shrine differ from the contemporary tomb of Amenemhet at Beni Hasan, indicating that the two traditions of rock-cut tombs developed separately.

**THE TOMB OF HEPDJEFA I AT ASYUT.** Asyut is located on the west bank of the Nile at a bend in the river that flows east to west. In ancient times it was the capital of the Lycopolite Nome. The Great Overlords of

the Lycopolite Nome built their tombs in their hometowns from the end of the Sixth Dynasty until the middle of the Twelfth Dynasty. Hepdjefa I lived in the time of King Senwosret I and was also a contemporary of Amenemhet of Beni Hasan. Hepdjefa, who lived the farthest away from the seat of central power in Itj-tawy, built for himself the largest tomb known from the Middle Kingdom. It contains seven rooms cut into the mountain along a central axis. A wide passageway leads from a forecourt to a wide rectangular chamber. The rectangular chamber has three doors on the back wall. Two of the doors, located on the sides, lead to small rectangular rooms. The third door, located in the center of the back wall at the top of two steps, leads to another long hall that splits into a U-shaped room. Finally a smaller hallway located in the center of the “U” leads to a small square room. The front rooms contain inscriptions, notably the contract Hepdjefa made with his priests to continue his cult for eternity. The only scenes are in the back shrine. Here low reliefs depict scenes of sacrifice.

**LOCAL TRADITIONS AND CENTRAL POWER.** In the generations following these three nomarchs, high officials were once again buried around the king’s pyramid. The tombs at a central location were once again uniform in plan. This contrast with the earlier period is very suggestive for historians. The plans and decorations at the tombs of Amenemhet, Djeheutyhotep and Hepdjefa I clearly developed independently. Amenemhet and Djeheutyhotep developed tombs with a small number of rooms. Amenemhet’s tomb utilized a colonnade in the front and four columns in the interior room. Djeheutyhotep used only two columns in the front, but they were carved to resemble palms while Amenemhet’s columns were carved with geometric facets. Hepdjefa’s tomb was even more elaborate with seven rooms, but no columns at all. Decoration also differed. Amenemhet gave much space to depicting military training. Djeheutyhotep emphasized his colossal statue. Hepdjefa recorded an inscription. This variety, especially when it disappears in the reign of Senwosret III, suggests that the nomarchs were also much more independent politically. Thus architecture can be extremely informative about the political history of Egypt.

#### SOURCES

Alexander Badawy, *A History of Egyptian Architecture: The First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, and the Second Intermediate Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

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## A PLANNED TOWN OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM: KAHUN

**PYRAMID TOWN FOR SENWOSRET II’S CULT.** In 1889 the English archaeologist W. M. F. Petrie, the founder of scientific archaeology in Egypt, excavated the pyramid town he called Kahun. The town was located just over one kilometer from the valley temple of Senwosret II’s pyramid complex at Lahun. The Egyptians built the town to house the priests, administrative personnel, and workers who maintained the cult of Senwosret II at the pyramid after his death. The texts found here reveal that the town’s name was originally *Hotep-Senwosret*, “Senwosret is Satisfied.” The town’s urban planning reveals the extent of social stratification in this period and the failure of planning to meet everyone’s needs.

**THE TOWN’S FUNCTION.** Beyond proximity to the pyramid complex of Senwosret II, the texts found in the town reveal its function. One group of texts deals almost exclusively with the administration of the pyramid complex. A second group, which has never fully been published, deals with a wider circle of people. Some of the documents deal with places outside Kahun, even including construction at a project in the reign of Amenemhet III, 50-75 years after the town’s founding.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE TOWN.** The town was square, roughly 384 meters by 335 meters. The streets run north/south and east/west in a grid pattern, aligned both with the cardinal points of the compass and the pyramid complex of Senwosret II. Such a grid pattern could only be the result of advance planning. One main street on the north side of the town runs east/west with ten large houses on it that Petrie called mansions. One of the mansions is located on the highest point in town, an area Petrie called the acropolis. On the west side of the town, closest to the pyramid complex, there were 220 small houses. The small houses were located on streets that ran east/west. Each of these streets ran into a wider north/south street that led to the gate nearest the valley temple. The town’s plan clearly reveals two social classes living in separate quarters.

**ELITE HOUSES.** The large houses built for the elite were 2,520 square meters (27,125 square feet)—huge houses in any time or place. A staircase carved into the bedrock led from street level to the house on the acropolis. The house itself appears similar to the other large houses on the street, but Petrie believed this house belonged to the mayor because of its position. All the elite houses were rectangular in shape with internal divisions

that were also a series of rectangles. The archaeologist Barry Kemp has compared the house plans at Kahun with contemporary models of houses found in tombs. He found that the focus of the house was a central courtyard that often contained a pool and garden. The walls surrounding the court were plastered and painted in black, blue, yellow, and white. A portico at one end of the courtyard had wooden columns, also brightly painted. Even the flat roof of the portico was painted blue with gold stars on the underside. From the courtyard, it was easy to reach a reception room, the equivalent of an American living room. This room usually had four columns supporting the roof. Arranged around the reception room were bedrooms with built-in platforms for beds in alcoves. Arranged around the bedrooms were additional, smaller courtyards that allowed light and air into them. The house also had workrooms and granaries to store grain. The models show that these workrooms included a bakery, brewery, cattle shed, and butchering area. These houses provided a lot of space and privacy to the members of the elite class at Kahun.

**SMALL HOUSES.** The small houses contained about 120 square meters (1,291 square feet). According to the surviving texts, the people who lived there were manual laborers, soldiers, low-level scribes, doorkeepers for the temple, and singers and dancers of both sexes for the temple. The houses themselves have no regular plan, though they are all basically rectangular in outline and also in the internal divisions. The English archaeologist Barry Kemp suggests that the residents remodeled an original standard plan to suit each family's needs. A series of census documents for the town provides a glimpse of who lived in these houses and the function of these dwellings. The soldier Hori, his wife Shepset, and their son Sneferu originally occupied one house. At some point Shepset's mother and five sisters joined the household, raising the number of residents from three to nine. By the time Sneferu was an adult, his mother, grandmother, and three aunts lived in the house with him. This fluctuation shows the likelihood that the residents made internal adjustments to the plan to accommodate larger and smaller numbers of people living in them at different times.

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Alexander Badawy, *A History of Egyptian Architecture: The First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, and the Second Intermediate Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

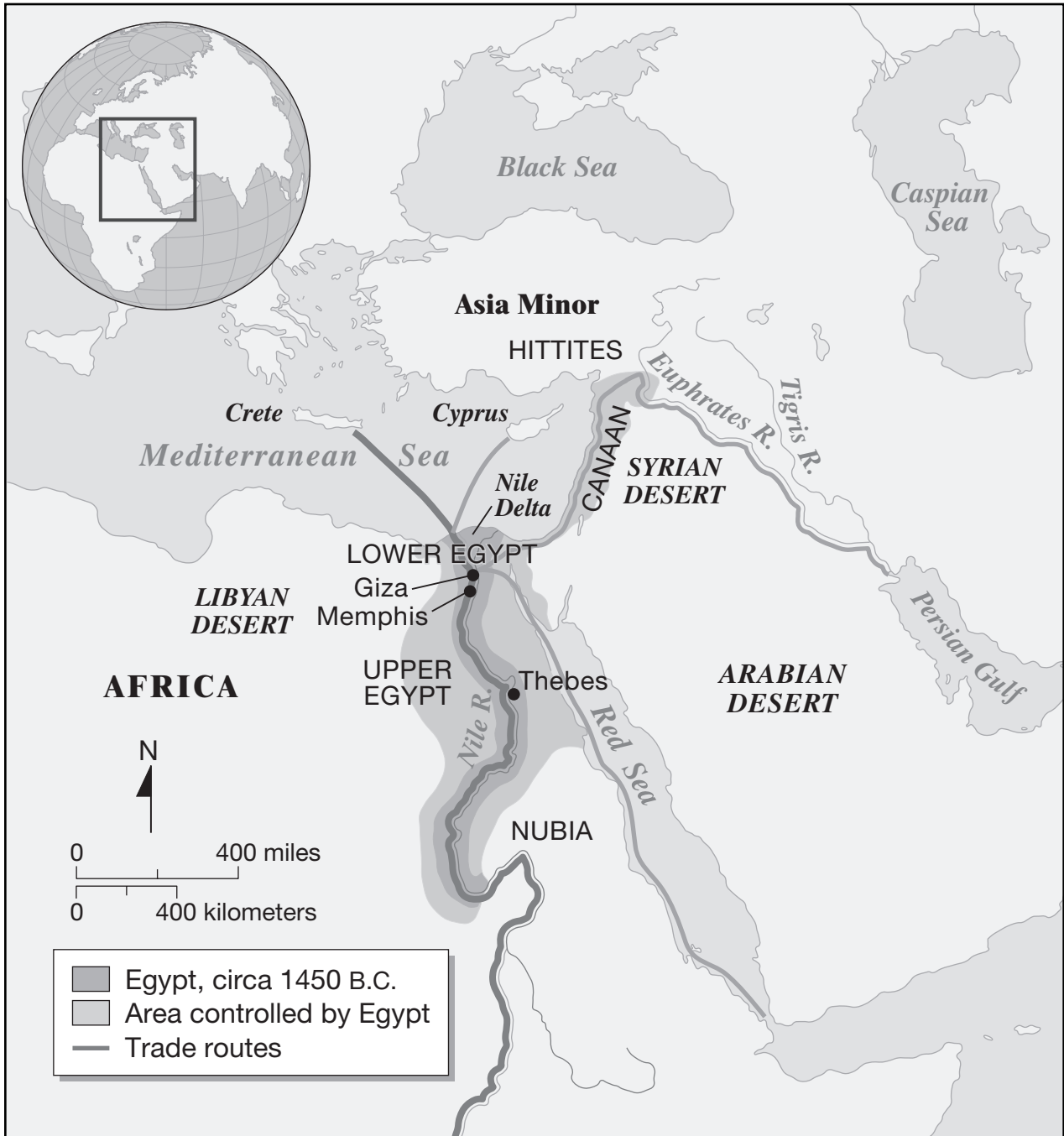
Barry Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

## NEW KINGDOM TEMPLES

**NEW KINGDOM.** The New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) was the period of Egypt's greatest geographical extent. At the end of the Middle Kingdom (about 1630 B.C.E.), a Semitic-speaking ethnic group ruled the eastern delta, closest to the Sinai Desert and the northern portion of Egypt. Whether a conquest or gradual infiltration of peoples, this group called the Hyksos (from the Egyptian term *heka-hasut*, meaning “rulers of foreign countries”) ruled the northern portion of the country. The New Kingdom commenced when a series of princes who ruled in Thebes in Upper (southern) Egypt drove the Hyksos out of Egyptian territory. They eventually ruled a united Egypt and expanded their rule to Syria in the northwest and well into the modern Sudan in the south. Taxes coming from these regions made Egypt the richest country in the Mediterranean world at the time and led to increased investments in architecture.

**CLASSIFICATION.** Since the nineteenth century, Egyptologists have classified New Kingdom temples as either a cult temple for a god or a mortuary temple for the deceased king. The false perception of the god's temple as a place where the Egyptians celebrated a permanently established cult and the mortuary temples as a place to hold a funeral fostered this division. Egyptologists such as Gerhard Haeney, Dieter Arnold, and Alexander Badawy recognized that, from an Egyptian perspective, the so-called mortuary temple is a specific kind of permanent cult temple. In the mortuary temple, the deceased king is one of the minor gods worshipped in a cult primarily devoted to Amun, the chief god of the Egyptian pantheon during the New Kingdom. The cult continued in a mortuary temple long beyond the day of the king's funeral. The architectural plans for gods' temples and mortuary temples are very similar. The major difference between the two stems from the numerous additions kings made to gods' temples over long periods of time. While kings often added to gods' temples—obscuring their original plans—temples that included a deceased king's cult usually had no major additions. Thus in the following analysis of New Kingdom temples the royal mortuary temple will be treated as a specific kind of god's temple rather than a completely different sort of temple altogether.

**TYPICAL GOD'S TEMPLE.** A god's temple was his house, i.e. his dwelling place. The most common ancient Egyptian words for “temple” were *per* (house), or *hout* (mansion, estate). Beginning in the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1292 B.C.E.), temple architects developed a standard plan that resembled the three-part plans of ordinary



Egypt, c. 1450 B.C.E. XNR PRODUCTIONS INC. GALE RESEARCH.

houses and of royal palaces: the forecourt, the public room, and the private rooms. Multiple additions made to important temples like Amun's temple at Karnak often obscure the original plan. Thus the "standard plan" does not really refer to any one temple but to the necessary component parts, and is a useful tool for analyzing individual temples. The three parts of the standard temple plan are an open forecourt leading to a shrine

called the *pronaos*, the public room known as the *hypostyle hall*, and the private rooms which in a temple are called the *naos* or shrine. The forecourt in a temple parallels the courtyard immediately beyond the gateway in an Egyptian house. The *pronaos* in a temple parallels the typical vestibule in a house, while the *hypostyle hall* is usually shaped as a broad hall, wider than it is long. These are parallel to similarly shaped public rooms in a house. The



Model of a temple. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 49.183, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

naos, or shrine, housed the statue of the god and parallels the private bedrooms belonging to the family in a typical Egyptian house. In a temple, the architect also emphasized the dramatic contrasts of light and dark between the public rooms and private rooms. In addition, the floor gently rose as a visitor proceeded from the entrance to the naos, creating a sense that the visitor ascended from the secular sphere outside the temple to the heavenly sphere of the god in the naos. A mud brick wall surrounding the entire temple, called the *temenos wall*, contributed to the sense of separation from the secular world inside the temple.

**THE ENTRANCE TO A STANDARD TEMPLE.** Egyptologists call the entrance to a standard temple the *pylon*. The pylon often stands at the end of a processional way lined with sphinxes. Often colossal statues of the

king, both seated and standing, were positioned in front of the pylon. The pylon itself was divided into two towers and a lower, central doorway. The towers are rectangular with sloping sides. The ascending edges of the towers are decorated with torus—a semi-circular or three-quarter circular molding. The top edges of the towers are decorated with a cavetto cornice—a concave or hollow molding. Both types of molding suggest the origins of the pylon tower in the wood, mat, and reed structures built during the Predynastic Period. The tower was often several stories high and contained a staircase inside. The doorway itself was lower than the towers and decorated with a winged sun disk. The door was usually wood with occasional metal covering. The pylon was most often built of stone, though archaeological remains of mud brick pylons are known. Artists decorated pylons with scenes of the king protecting Egypt from its



enemies. Cedar flagpoles were positioned in front of the pylon, often in niches cut into the tower structure. These flagpoles were taller than the pylon tower and supported banners that identified the temple. In Egyptian the pylon was called the *bekhen*. Egyptian texts describe the pylon as the “luminous mountain horizon of heaven.” The shape of the pylon resembles the hieroglyph that depicts two mountain peaks with the sun rising between them. The sun in the case of the temple pylon is the god striding out of the temple doorway. This symbolism was particularly appropriate for deities associated with the sun such as Amun, Re, and Atum, though the entrances to all temples took the form of pylons.

**THE FORECOURT IN THE STANDARD TEMPLE PLAN.** The forecourt—known in Egyptian as *weba*—stands immediately behind the pylon in the standard temple plan. It was normally rectangular, the same width as the hypostyle hall behind it. In some temples the forecourt contains an altar for offerings. Rows of columns support a roof for a portico running on four sides of the forecourt. A ramp in the center of the back wall leads the visitor into the hypostyle hall. The forecourt was part of the public area where the common people observed the procession of the god, a major part of temple ritual. There also the people could see relief scenes carved on the sidewalls that depict the king in both historical and religious activities. Historical activities might include leading the army to victory, while religious scenes showed the king worshipping the gods. The sunny central court served to set up the contrast between dark and light as the visitor proceeded through the dark gateway into the light of the courtyard.

**THE HYPOSTYLE HALL IN THE STANDARD TEMPLE.** Egyptologists gave the Egyptian *wadjit* the name “hypostyle hall.” This name is a Greek word meaning “full of columns” since it contains many more columns than is needed to support the roof. The hypostyle hall is wider than it is long. The central axis of the building passes through its middle aisle. At least in the Rameside Period (1292–1075 B.C.E.), the columns along the central aisle are taller than the columns on the sides of the building. This allows for a roof that is higher in the center than on the sides. The gap between the roof resting on the taller columns and the roof resting on the shorter columns, covered by a stone grill, allowed diffused light to enter the building. This arrangement is called a *clerestory*. The internal decoration of the hypostyle hall depicts the king making offerings to various gods. In some hypostyle halls there were divisions among the “hall of appearance,” “hall of offering,” and “intermediate hall.” These names suggest but do not entirely

explain the use of the hypostyle hall. The “appearance” of the god was a ritual where certain people could see the god’s statue. The offerings were the opportunity to feed the god.

**THE SANCTUARY IN THE STANDARD TEMPLE PLAN.** Just as the back rooms of an Egyptian house were the private family rooms, the back of an Egyptian temple is the sanctuary (*naos*)—the private rooms where the god sleeps, dresses, and washes. The god, in this case, was a statue, often made from precious metal. Only the high priests entered this room to assist the god in his daily routine. In some cases the private rooms also included a storage area for the god’s *barque*, a boat that priests used to transport the god in procession. Often there were multiple sanctuaries in a temple to accommodate the worship of multiple gods in one temple.

**PURIFICATION FACILITIES.** Temples often included a “pure court” used to slaughter animals for sacrifice and an artificial lake where the priests washed. In some rituals the lake was also used for the god’s ritual voyages. The lakes were sometimes shaped like a “U” that enclosed part of the temple or were rectangular.

**TEMPLE ORIENTATION IN THE NEW KINGDOM.** The determination of temple orientation is much more complex in the New Kingdom than in the Old and Middle Kingdoms. Old and Middle Kingdom temples’ orientation falls into two groups. The so-called Djoser type favored a north/south axis. The Meidum type favored an east/west axis. Research conducted by Alexander Badawy, the Egyptian Egyptologist, shows that New Kingdom temples’ orientation stemmed from their relationship to the Nile River or the local canal that led from the Nile to the temple entrance. The temple axis seems always to have been perpendicular to the Nile or the canal. Thus temples’ orientation seems to shift from place to place with the meanders of the river. This is the reason that archaeologists refer to “local north,” when describing a particular building, a concept that corresponds with the direction that the river flows downstream.

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Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2000).

SEE ALSO *Religion: Temple Architecture and Symbolism*

## THEBES AND THE ESTATE OF AMUN

**NAME AND LOCATION OF THEBES.** Thebes, located on the east and west banks of the Nile River around modern Luxor, was known as *Waset* in Egyptian, capital of the fourth Upper Egyptian nome (province). The Greeks called it Thebes, identifying it with one of their own cities after they conquered Egypt in the fourth century B.C.E. Some scholars believe that the name Thebes was a Greek pronunciation of Egyptian *ta-ipet*, meaning “The Harem,” that Egyptians used to describe the Luxor temple. In addition to the Luxor temple, the Karnak temple, the temple of Medinet Habu, and the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahri form the major monuments that scholars have identified as the Estate of Amun during the New Kingdom. Each of them played an important role in the major festivals of the god Amun, chief of the Egyptian pantheon.

**KARNAK TEMPLE: AMUN’S HOME.** The Karnak temple was the god Amun’s home. It is the largest Egyptian temple ever built. It stands inside an enclosure wall that surrounds 16,000 square meters (172,222 square feet). Scholars have worked to excavate and record Karnak since the late nineteenth century and still have not nearly completed this task. The kings of the Twelfth Dynasty built the first structure on the site, but the present plan originates in the Eighteenth-dynasty remodeling of the site. At this time the government evacuated and leveled the whole town surrounding Karnak to provide a platform for the new temple. Essentially the plan established a temple perpendicular to the river with an axis that ran east/west. The kings of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties continued to expand the temple, adding a north/south axis. In total there are ten pylons at Karnak, reflecting the numerous additions to the building continuing into the second century C.E. Within the temple complex are precincts dedicated to the god’s wife, Mut, and their son, Khonsu. There are also smaller chapels dedicated to Egypt’s other important gods, including Montu, the war god; Osiris, king of the dead; and Ptah, the chief god of Egypt’s northern capital, Memphis. The mass of the people went to the eastern gate of the temple where the shrine of “Amun of the Hearing Ear” allowed ordinary people to approach the god with requests. Royal statues in the temple and at least two festival temples dedicated to the royal ancestors emphasized the connection between Amun and the king. Egyptian religion was clearly part of Egyptian politics. North of the main temple was an additional temple dedicated to the war-god, Montu. South of the main structures was the Tem-

### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

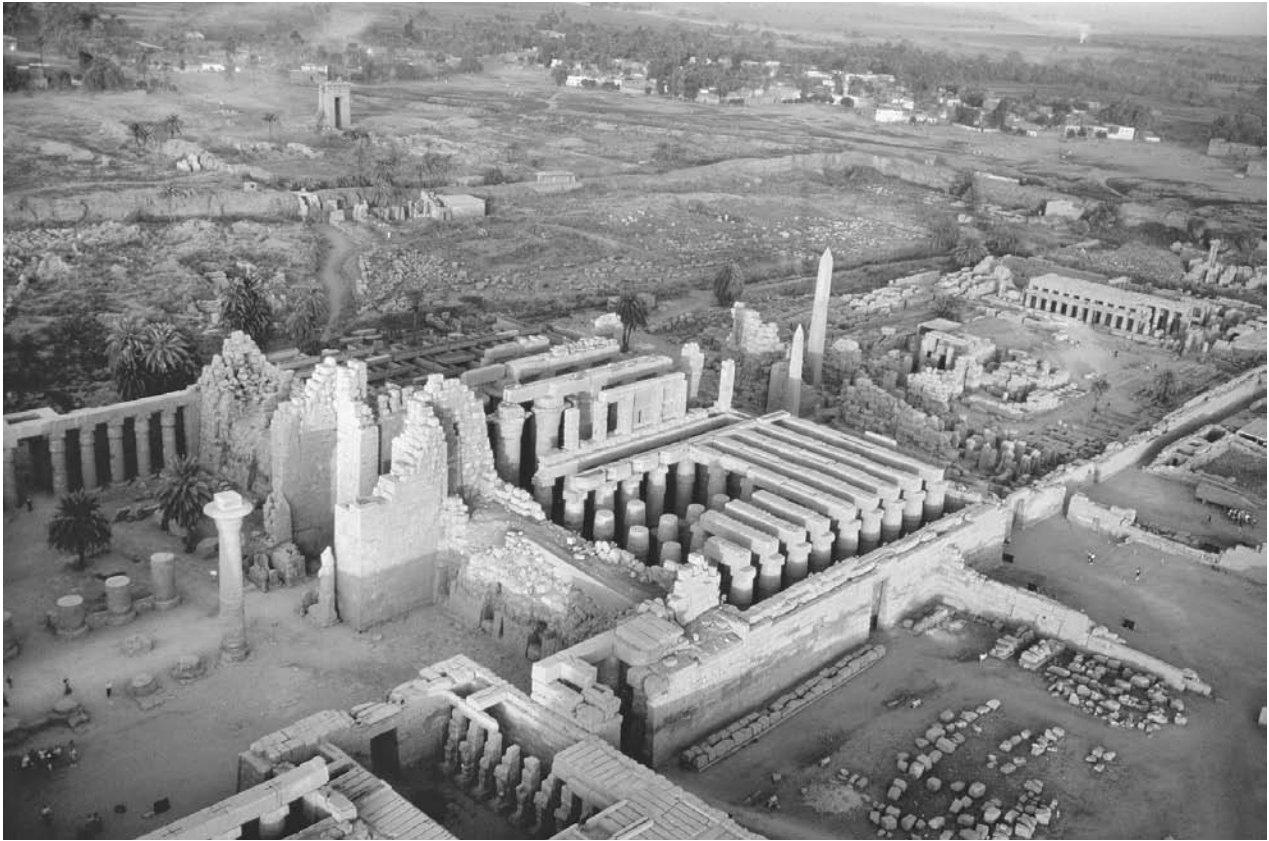
#### PRAISE OF THEBES

**INTRODUCTION:** The following anonymously written text, composed during the Nineteenth Dynasty (1292–1190 B.C.E.), illustrates Egyptian thinking about towns. It is preserved on a papyrus now in the Royal Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, The Netherlands.

Thebes is the pattern for every city. Both water and earth were within her from the beginning of time. There came the sands to furnish land, to create her ground as a mound when the earth came into being. And so mankind also came into being within her, with the propose of founding every city in her proper name. For all are called “City” after the example of Thebes.

**SOURCE:** Charles F. Nims, *Thebes of the Pharaohs: Pattern for Every City* (London: Elek Books, 1965): 69. Text revised by Edward Bleiberg.

ple of Mut, the mother goddess. Though the temple as a whole was dedicated to the chief god of the Egyptian pantheon, Amun (also called Amun-Re), one of the most important buildings in it was the “Festival Hall of Thutmose III.” At the entrance to the building stand four colossal statues of Thutmose III dressed and posed as the god Osiris. These statues established for the ancient viewer the connection between the temple and the office of king. Osiris was the first king of Egypt, according to Egyptian myth. When he died, his son Horus became rightful king while Osiris became king of the dead. All living kings of Egypt identified themselves as Horus while the deceased king was Osiris. Inside this limestone building, the columns resembled the poles of a military tent, recalling Thutmose III’s numerous military expeditions. Recalling these expeditions also emphasized the king’s role as Egypt’s protector. The decoration of the interior also established the king’s role as ruler of the universe. Relief sculpture includes a series of scenes depicting the underworld god Sokar, the solar god Re, the procreative form of the god Amun, the Jubilee Festival called *sed*, and the king’s ancestors. Re and Sokar associated the king with all that is above and below the earth. The procreative Amun helped the king assure the fertility of the earth. The Jubilee Festival—perhaps the most ancient of all Egyptian festivals as was demonstrated in the architectural layout of the Step Pyramid complex at Saqqara—renewed the king’s power in a



Aerial view of Great Temple of Amun in Karnak. © YANN ARTHUS-BERTRAND/CORBIS.

perpetual cycle. Finally, the king's ancestors helped to establish him as the "correct" Horus in a succession of Osiris and Horus who ruled the underworld and Egypt throughout eternity. This building, along with another festival hall built by Amenhotep II but now destroyed, shows the close connection between worship of Amun at this temple and the legitimacy of the king.

**PROCESSIONS AND PROCESSIONAL WAYS.** The four major temples of the Estate of Amun—Karnak, Luxor, Medinet Habu, and Deir el Bahri—were linked in ancient times by processional ways and axis alignments designed for the celebration of processional festivals. A processional way is a road, permanently decorated for use in a formal parade. Axis alignment refers to the practice of building two distant structures on the same axis so that one imaginary straight line would pass through the center of both buildings. One processional way ran from Karnak to Luxor, about three kilometers (1.86 miles) both on the east bank of the river. Karnak's east/west axis was aligned with Deir el Bahri's east/west axis across the river. Luxor and Medinet Habu were also aligned with each other across the river. The main festivals celebrated at these temples featured the god's pro-

cession from Karnak to Luxor (Feast of Opet), from Luxor to Medinet Habu (Feast of Amunemopet), and from Karnak to Deir el Bahri (Feast of the Valley). The stone-paved processional routes passed through a series of pylons in Karnak. Lines of sphinxes stood on both sides of the street. Along the way were small, formal shrines that provided a place for the priests carrying the god's barque, a ceremonial boat, to rest on a stone pedestal. The route from Karnak led south to Khonsu's temple, Mut's temple, and to the Luxor temple. The most important of these processional festivals was the Feast of Opet.

**FEAST OF OPET.** The Feast of Opet took place annually in late August during the New Kingdom. On the Egyptian calendar this was the second month of the season of inundation when the Nile flooded. In the reign of Hatshepsut the festival lasted eleven days, but by the time of Ramesses III it lasted 27 days. In Hatshepsut's time the festival procession proceeded along the north/south axis of the temple, exited the south gate, and followed the processional way to the Luxor temple. The priests paused six times at stations where they could support the barque on a stand in a sacred booth. Amun's



The columned court of the temple of Luxor. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

barque was accompanied by soldiers, dancers, and singers who provided part of the spectacle of the procession. In Ramesses III's time the temples distributed to the people 11,341 loaves of bread, 85 cakes, and 385 jars of beer during each day of the festival. During Hatshepsut's reign the procession returned to Karnak from Luxor by water, sailing on the Nile.

**LUXOR TEMPLE: WOMEN'S QUARTERS OF AMUN'S ESTATE.** The present Luxor temple, built by Amenhotep III and expanded by Rameses II, represented the women's quarters in Amun's estate. The Egyptians called it *ta-ipet*, "the harem." During the Opet Festival, the Egyptians celebrated the divine birth of the king at this location. This divine birth provided a religious explanation for how the king could be both a human and the genetic son of the god Amun. The Egyptians visualized the genetic relationship literally, as attested in reliefs from both Deir el Bahri and the Luxor temple. They believed that the spirit of Amun inhabited the king's human father at the moment of conception, an act ritually recreated in the Luxor temple by the king with a living woman, probably the queen, annually during the Opet Festival. Moreover, the act of conception, in Egyptian thought, conveyed a spirit called the royal ka into the

fetus of the unborn king. Amun created the royal ka as part of his essence that gave the child possessing the royal ka a legitimate right to rule Egypt. The festival also re-infused the royal ka in the living king. This festival was the main purpose of the inner rooms of the Luxor temple. The king was part of the god's procession from Karnak to Luxor. The king then entered the inner rooms at the temple and mystically re-enacted both his own conception and his rejuvenation by absorbing the royal ka. Perhaps the best illustration of the way this helped the king is found in King Horemheb's coronation at Luxor. Horemheb was the second general to become king at the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty after the last royal heir, Tutankhamun, died. Horemheb merged his coronation with the Festival of Opet, infusing his originally non-royal self with the royal ka, and thus becoming the legitimate king.

**LINKING EAST AND WEST THEBES.** In general, Amun's living quarters were on the east bank of the Nile at Thebes. On the west bank of the river, associated with the land of the dead, lived other forms of Amun inhabited by the spirits of deceased kings. All of the Eighteenth-dynasty kings built temples on the west bank that Egyptologists have called mortuary temples. In reality

these temples were residences for forms of Amun that would eventually merge with each of the deceased kings. The two most important locations for these temples were Deir el Bahri and Medinet Habu. Deir el Bahri was the site of the Eleventh-dynasty temple of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep and of Hatshepsut. Medinet Habu was the site of Ramesses III's mortuary temple built in the Twentieth Dynasty, but was also recognized as the location of a mound where the gods had created the earth. The Festival of the Valley connected Karnak and Deir el Bahri. The Festival of Amunemopet connected Luxor and Medinet Habu with a procession between them.

**DEIR EL BAHRI AND THE FEAST OF THE VALLEY.** Nebhepetre Mentuhotep built the first mortuary temple in Deir el Bahri in the Eleventh Dynasty, but in the Eighteenth Dynasty the more important temple was the mortuary temple constructed by Hatshepsut. This unique building, based on Nebhepetre Mentuhotep's neighboring structure, consisted of three terraces connected by two ramps. On the two lower levels are colonnades opposite walls illustrating important events from Hatshepsut's reign. These relief sculptures include the hauling of obelisks from Aswan for the Karnak temple, Hatshepsut's divine birth, and the expedition to Punt (probably in Ethiopia) to bring back incense for Amun. This terrace also holds shrines for Hathor, the goddess of the necropolis, and for Anubis, the god of mummification. The third and highest terrace supported a temple for Amun and for Hatshepsut. This temple was the focus of Amun's annual trip from Karnak to Deir el Bahri to celebrate the Festival of the Valley. During the Festival of the Valley, Amun, his wife Mut, and their son Khonsu visited the deceased kings of Egypt and his incarnation living in Deir el Bahri called Amun Holy of Holies. The images of the gods were ferried across the river in a special barque and then carried from the west bank of the river to the temple. After the reign of Hatshepsut, the statues spent the night in the temple of the reigning king. The procession returned to Karnak the next day. On this occasion many Egyptian families also visited their family tomb, often having a meal there.

**MEDINET HABU AND THE FESTIVAL OF AMUNEMOPET.** Ramesses III built the large temple at Medinet Habu that stands on the site today for himself as Amun-United-with-Eternity. Earlier in the time of Thutmose III, there was a temple of the "True Mound of the West" on this site. The mound refers to the place where the god first created the world. By linking the mound to the west, the intention is to affirm that this first creation would continue in the west, the land of the

dead. The god Amunemopet, meaning "Amun who is in the Opet" (i.e. the Luxor temple), traveled weekly from the Luxor temple to Medinet Habu to visit the mound temple. This is the final link between the temples of the east and west bank. The statue of the god traveled by barque across the river, then either by a canal or on a road to the Medinet Habu temple. This feast also called for distributions of food and drink to the population.

**THE PROCESSIONAL PERIMETER OF THE ESTATE OF AMUN.** The processional routes from Karnak to Luxor, from Karnak to Deir el Bahri with detours to the temples associated with various kings' cults, and from Luxor to Medinet Habu form a rectangle on the map that delineates the Estate of Amun. The festivals and their processions tie together the major monuments of Thebes and allow for a unitary overview of the sacred places. The individual buildings, however, also functioned as independent units. They each owned and administered land that ultimately provided the upkeep for each building. There seems to be no administrative or economic connection between the different religious units of the Estate of Amun. This fact points to a certain decentralization in the New Kingdom in administration which is not apparent in other periods of Egyptian history.

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## EGYPTIAN CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY

**QUARRYING AND TRANSPORTING STONE.** The ancient Egyptians are widely recognized as great engineers, but are also thought to be extremely conservative. There is a real contradiction in these two views. Part of the Egyptians' greatness included the ability to improvise solutions to technical problems. Innovations allowed the Egyptians to develop new quarrying tools and to increase the weight of stones they hauled over time. Large numbers of people had to be involved in quarrying and transporting stone, which was a dangerous endeavor. The description of a quarrying expedition in the inscription of Amenemhet from the reign of Men-



Model rocker. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 02.226, GIFT OF THE EGYPT EXPLORATION FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

tuhotep III emphasizes this reality in that the leader counts among his major accomplishments the fact that the entire crew returned safely to Egypt. This success is associated with miracles, but clearly the Egyptians' careful study of the technical side of quarrying should receive much of the credit. For example, the Egyptians developed methods for quarrying both hard and soft stones.

**CHISELS AND AXES.** There was a development in tools during the roughly 2,300 years from the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.) to the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.) as is evident in the different marks the chisels or axes left in different time periods. In the earlier period—the Old and Middle Kingdom—the marks are irregular lines that all curve in one direction. Rosemarie Klemm, a German geologist who extensively studied ancient Egyptian quarries, suggested that these lines are compatible with the soft copper chisels discovered by archaeologists in Egypt, but Dieter Arnold, the German archaeologist, posited that these lines were more likely the marks of stone axes or picks. Early in the New King-

dom the lines left by tools in quarries are longer than those lines made during the Old and Middle Kingdoms. These New Kingdom lines also alternate in direction in a type of herringbone pattern, unlike the earlier lines which all curve in the same direction. R. Klemm suggested these patterns match the harder bronze chisels which had already been in use in Egypt for other purposes since the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.). Arnold again refuted Klemm's chisel theory and attributed the marks to stone picks or axes. In Ramesside times and later (1292–1075 B.C.E.), the lines left by the tools changed yet again, this time as closely set together lines, longer than the marks made in previous times but again all curving in the same direction. These lines suggested to Arnold the use of a pick-like instrument made of stone since the only bronze chisel in use during this time period was shaped like a bar. Marks that match the bar chisel are commonly found in rock-cut tombs; apparently the builders used the tool to cut a tunnel that they formed into a tomb, rather than to cut blocks for building. Arnold's suggestion would mean that only the tunneling tool is currently known from archaeological



Wooden tools from the 18th-dynasty tomb of the royal architect Kha at Deir el-Medina. GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS.

examples. The stone axe or pick that Arnold suggested as a quarrying tool has not yet been recognized in the archaeological record.

**TRANSPORTING BUILDING MATERIALS.** The Egyptians transported stone through both human and animal power. A basic understanding of physics and balance allowed Egyptian workmen to lift and lower heavy loads using, in different periods, pulleys, wedges, ramps, and construction roads. The use of the shaduf in the Rameside Period to raise water demonstrates that the Egyptians understood the basic physics of lifting heavy weights. Measuring from the beginning of Egyptian history through the New Kingdom, engineers moved increasingly larger stone loads through innovation. Many Egyptian relief sculptures depict men carrying sand, gravel, mud, bricks, timber, and even small stones over long distances from their source near the river to construction sites. Men carried bricks or single small blocks

of stone on their shoulders or in slings attached to poles. In the tomb of Rekhmire (reign of Thutmose III, 1479–1425 B.C.E.) drawings depict workmen hauling three bricks on each side in carrying slings. Groups of men also carried bricks and stones in handbarrows with handles on four sides. The oldest known handbarrow dates to Dynasty 3 (2675–2625 B.C.E.). Donkeys still haul building materials in Egypt in the early twenty-first century, carrying up to 100 kilograms (220 pounds) for short distances.

**HEAVY LOADS.** The Egyptians moved extremely heavy weights beginning as early as the reign of Khufu (2585–2560 B.C.E.) in the Old Kingdom. Some of the heaviest blocks moved by the Egyptians include stones from the Great Pyramid weighing up to sixty tons and spanning as much as eight meters (26 feet) in width. By the reign of Ramesses II (1279–1213 B.C.E.) the Egyptians regularly moved colossal statues weighing up to

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A QUARRY INSCRIPTION FROM THE MIDDLE KINGDOM**

**INTRODUCTION:** Opening a quarry was an official event often commemorated with steles at the quarry. Leaders of quarrying expeditions were high officials who proudly left records of their accomplishments in long inscriptions. Amenemhet, one such official, led an expedition to the Wadi Hammamat during the reign of Mentuhotep III in 1957 B.C.E. and left the following record. Because he shares a name with the next king, Amenemhet I, many scholars have identified him with the first king of Dynasty 12. The section head within was not resident in the original document.

Year two, month two of the Inundation season, Day fifteen of the Horus Nebtawy, the Two Ladies, Nebtawy, the Horus of Gold, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebtawyre, the Son of Re, Mentuhotep, living forever. His Majesty commanded the erection of this stela for his father, (the god) Min, the Lord of the Hill Country in this noble, primeval mountain. (Min is) one who is foremost of place in the land of the Horizon Dwellers and the palace of the god. (He is) one who offers life in the sacred nest of Horus with which this god is content. (This mountain) is his pure place of enjoyment which is over the hill countries and god's country in order that his (Min's) soul might be satisfied. (Min is) one who is honored by gods, that being what the king who is on the Great Throne does. (The king) is one who is foremost of thrones and one who is enduring of monuments, a beneficent god, the lord of joy, one who is greatly feared and one who is great in love, one who is heir of Horus in his Two Lands, one whom Isis—the divine mother of Min and one great of magic—had reared for the kingship of Horus of the Two Banks, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, living like Re forever. (He) says: I caused that Amenemhet—a nobleman, mayor, vizier, and one whom the king trusts—go forth together with an expedition of ten thousand men from the southern nomes of Upper Egypt and the frontier of Oxyrhynchus in order to bring to me a noble, costly, and pure stone which is in this mountain—whose excellence Min made—to be a sarcophagus, an eternal remembrance that will be a monument in the temples of Upper Egypt. (I sent him) just as a king sends the chief of the Two Lands in order to bring to him his desire from the hill country of Father Min. He made it as a monument for his father Min of Coptus, the lord of the hill country and chief of the tribesmen that he might make many great offerings, living like Re forever.

Day 27. The cover of this sarcophagus descended, a block of four cubits by eight cubits by two cubits (2.10 x

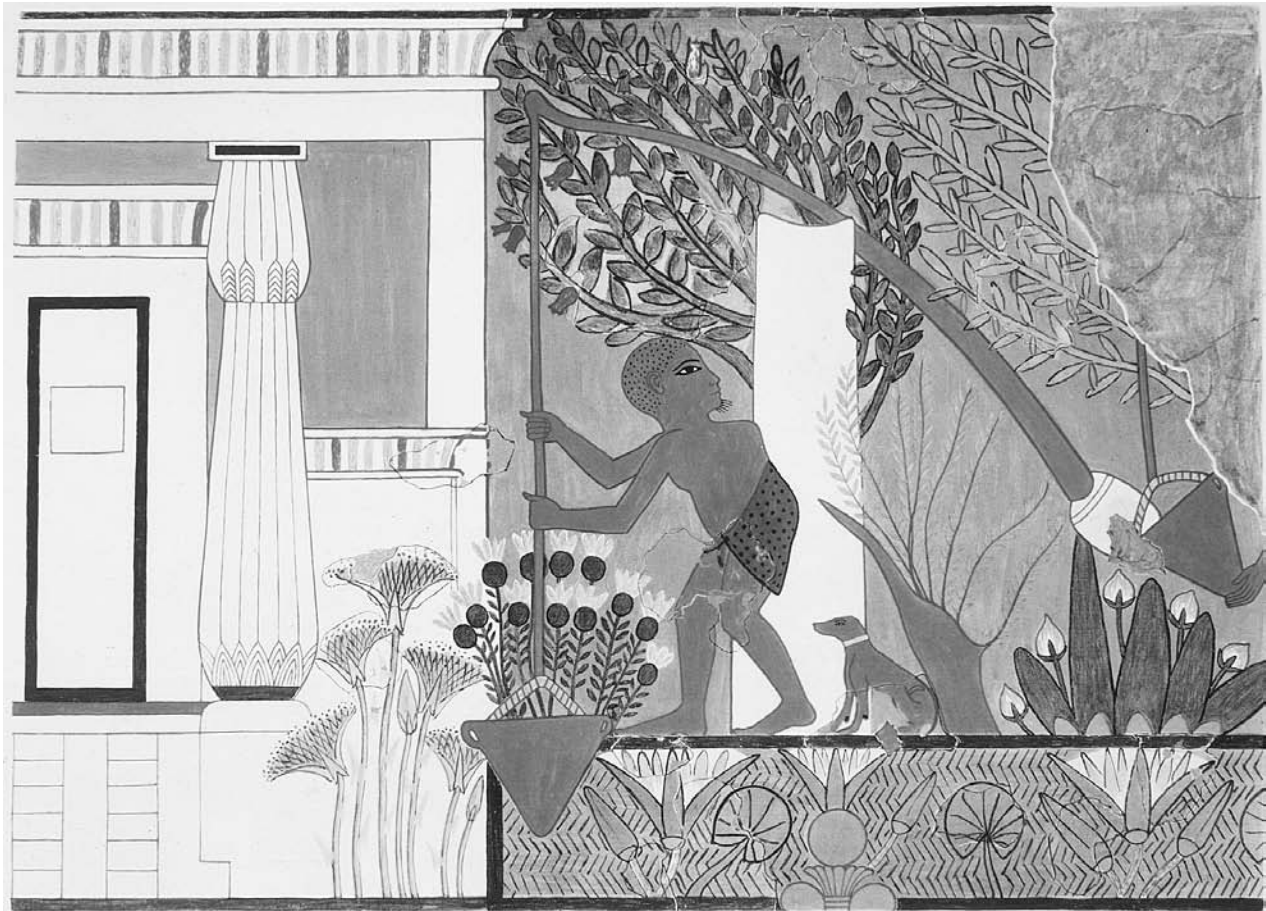
4.20 x 1.05 meters; 6.8 x 16.5 x 3.4 feet), that being what came from the work. Three calves were slaughtered and goats were slaughtered and incense was burned. Now an expedition of three thousand sailors from the nomes of Lower Egypt followed it in peace to Egypt.

**The Same Expedition: The Commander's Record**

Nebtawyre, living forever, Regnal Year Two, Month Two of Inundation, Day Fifteen: A royal mission which the noble, count, mayor, vizier, judge, King's-confidant, Overseer of Works, Great One in his Office, Great One in his Nobility, Foremost one of Place in the House of His lord, Inspector of Magistrates, Chief of the Six Great Ones, Judge of Nobles and Commoners, Judge of Sun Folk, One to Whom the Great Ones Come Bowing and the Whole Land is Prone, One Whose Lord Promoted his Rank, One Who Enters His (the king's) Heart, Overseer of the Door of Upper Egypt, One Who Controlled for Him Millions of Commoners in order to do for him his heart's desire concerning his monuments which endure on earth, Great One of the King of Upper Egypt, Great One of the King of Lower Egypt, Controller of the Mansions of the Crown of Lower Egypt, Priest of Herakleopolis being the One who Stretches the Cord, One who Judges Without Partiality, Overseer of all Upper Egypt, One to Whom Everything is Reported, One Who Controls the Affairs of the Lord of the Two Lands, One Who Sets his Heart on a Royal Commission, Inspector of Inspectors, Controller of Overseers, Vizier of Horus in His Appearance, Amenemhet says: My Lord—may he live, prosper, be healthy—the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Nebtawyre sent me as a god sends his (own) limb in order to establish his monuments in this land. He chose me in front of his town while I was honored before his entourage. Now then, His Majesty commanded a procession to this noble foreign country, an expedition together with the best men of the whole land—stone masons, craftsmen, stone cutters, carvers, outline scribes, metal workers, goldsmiths, treasurers of the Palace of every department of the treasury, every rank of the palace being gathered under my control. I made the hill country as a river, the high valley as a water way. I brought a sarcophagus—an eternal remembrance, enduring forever—to him. Never did anything like it descend from the hill country since the time of the gods. The expedition returned without a loss, no man perished. The troops did not turn back. A donkey did not die. There was no deficiency of the craftsmen. I brought it about for the Majesty of the Lord as a Spirit, while Min acted for him, in as much as he loved him. And that his soul might endure on the Great Throne in the Kingship of Horus. What he did was a greater thing. I am his servant of his heart, one who did all which he praises every day.

*Translated by Edward Bleiberg.*





This painting of *The Watering of Plants in a Garden with Help of a Shaduf* from the tomb of the sculptor Ipui is the only existing illustration showing the use of this lever. BILDARCHIV PRESUSSICHER KULTURBESITZ/ART RESOURCE NY.

1,000 tons. In almost every period of Egyptian history, there is ample evidence that engineers devised methods of moving massive stones long distances. The gradual increase in the weight of construction-use stones from Khufu's time to Ramesses II's time suggests that Egyptian engineers continued to improve their methods for moving stone. Thus in the Middle Kingdom the engineers of Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.) and Amenemhet III (1818–1772 B.C.E.) devised methods of moving blocks twice as large as Khufu's Great Pyramid blocks. The kings of the early Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1400 B.C.E.) moved blocks three times heavier than the blocks moved in the Middle Kingdom. Amenhotep III's (1390–1352 B.C.E.) engineers doubled the weight of construction-use blocks yet again over the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty, only to be topped by Ramesses II's engineers, who moved blocks thirty percent larger than those moved at the end of Dynasty Eighteen. Ramesses II's reign seems to mark the end of these gains. Yet kings of the Late Period such as Psamtik II (595–589

B.C.E.) and Amasis (570–526 B.C.E.) moved large-scale monuments weighing as much as 580 tons. The Roman historian Pliny (23–79 C.E.) provided the best description of the transporting of an ancient Egyptian obelisk. According to Pliny, workmen dug a canal from the river to the resting spot of the obelisk, actually tunneling under the obelisk, allowing the ends of it to rest on either bank of the canal. Two vessels traveled up the canal loaded with blocks of stone double the weight of the obelisk, causing the boats to submerge slightly. They then stopped under the obelisk and removed the stones from the boats. Free from the weight of the stones, the boats rose in the water until the obelisk balanced between them. Though long-distance hauling of heavy loads was primarily by boat, transportation from the quarry to the boat and from the boat to the building site forced the Egyptians to develop methods for overland hauling of heavy loads. A relief sculpture in the tomb of Djehutyhotep dating to Dynasty Twelve (1938–1759 B.C.E.) at Bersheh in Middle Egypt depicts the Egypt-



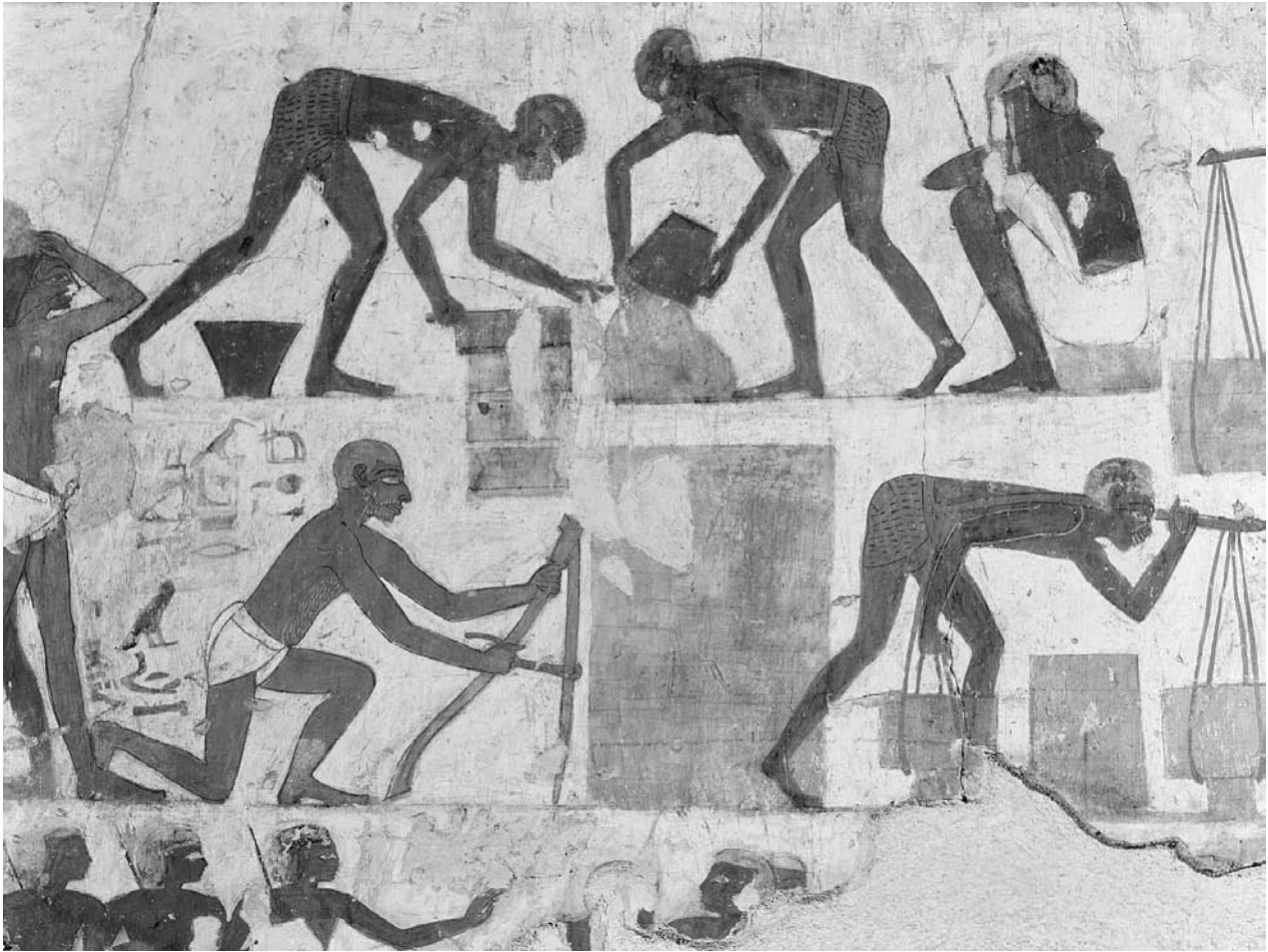
A 42-meter long unfinished obelisk still in the granite quarry at Aswan. © YANN ARTHUS-BERTRAND/CORBIS.

tians using rollers on skid poles and sledges as tools to enable very large numbers of men to pull the block or statue by ropes fastened around the stone. Liquid poured on the sand or on a construction road made the surface more slippery and allowed the sledge to move more easily.

**ROLLERS ON SKID POLES.** Egyptian rollers were made from sycamore, a locally grown tree. The archaeological examples that have been excavated are short, with rounded ends and approximately ten centimeters (3.9 inches) wide. The rollers work best on skid poles—a track made of parallel beams. The skid poles keep the rollers moving in the right direction. Such skid poles have been found at the entrances to pyramid corridors where builders used them to roll the closing block into position. For very heavy loads such as obelisks, whole tree trunks were used as rollers.

**SLEDGES.** Sledges are known both from archaeological examples and from relief sculptures that show

sledges transporting heavy stone columns and more frequently, funerary goods such as shrines and coffins. Of the examples of sledges found in archaeological contexts, the largest was found near the pyramid of Senwosret III at Dahshur. It is 4.2 meters long and 0.9 meters wide (13.7 by 2.95 feet). The runners are twelve by twenty centimeters (4.7 by 7.8 inches). Four cross beams connect the runners using tongue and groove construction to join them. In tongue and groove construction, all the beams have slotted holes where ropes were attached. A smaller sledge from the time of Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.), found at Lisht, measures 1.73 by 0.78 meters (5.6 by 2.5 feet). It only has two cross beams but also additional round poles mounted in front of one cross beam and behind the other cross beam. These poles were probably used to attach ropes. The relief representations of sledges show them transporting stone statues, coffins, canopic boxes, and shrines used in tombs. The scene from the causeway of Unas shows sledges transporting granite columns and architraves. These columns are known to be six meters (19.6 feet) long. Thus it seems



Builders making mud brick and constructing a wall. Painting from the tomb of Rekhmire, vizier under Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, Valley of the Nobles at Qurna, 18th Dynasty. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

likely that they were transported on sledges at least seven meters (22.9 feet) long. The most famous transport scene depicts a colossal alabaster statue of Djehutyhotep on a sledge hauled by 172 men. The men are depicted in four different registers (divisions of the scene by a series of parallel lines), suggesting that they were divided into four columns of workers. Arnold estimated that the statue was seven meters (22.9 feet) high and weighed 58 tons. Another scene from the reign of Ahmose shows three bulls hauling a block that weighed about five tons on a sledge. Finally a scene depicting the transport of Hatshepsut's 320-ton obelisk found at her temple in Deir el Bahri shows a sledge that must have been 31 meters (101.7 feet) long, probably constructed from whole tree trunks. A sledge could not carry a heavy load over a soft surface such as sand, so the Egyptians prepared paths with limestone chip surfaces, possibly covered with mud. Many representations of sledges show a man pouring water on the road surface in front of the sledge. Henri Chevrier,

the French archaeologist, conducted experiments on using an Egyptian sledge in modern times and showed that six men easily moved a 4.8-ton stone over a wet mud surface.

**ROPES.** Ropes were essential for almost all construction operations, particularly for hauling stone blocks. Egyptian ropes were made of dom palmfibers, reed, flax grass, sparto grass, halfa grass, or papyrus. The largest archaeological examples of ropes were 20.3 centimeters in circumference and 6.35 centimeters in diameter (7.9 by 2.5 inches). Literary evidence suggests that ropes of 525 to 735 meters (1,722 to 2,411 feet) were manufactured in special cases to move especially heavy loads.

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Mark Lehner, *The Complete Pyramids* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997).

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***PLINY'S DESCRIPTION OF LOADING AN OBELISK ON A SHIP**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Egyptians left no descriptions of the way they moved heavy pieces of stone. The best evidence of Egyptian methods comes from the Roman author Pliny the Elder who visited Egypt in the first century C.E. and observed the following.

**SOURCE:** Pliny, *Natural History*. Vol. X. Trans. D. E. Eichholz (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962): 56.

the first stage of the Luxor temple, and the king's mortuary temple in western Thebes, the largest ever built. After his death, Amenhotep son of Hapu was deified and considered a healing god.

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**HEMIUNU, SON OF NEFERMAAT**

fl. Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.)

*Priest*

*Architect*

**ROYAL CONNECTIONS.** Hemiunu was the son of Nefermaat, a son of King Sneferu. He was thus grandson of one king and nephew of King Khufu, patron of the Great Pyramid at Giza. As a member of the royal family he reached many high offices. The list of his achievements is recorded on his statue, currently located in Hildesheim, Germany. They include,

Member of the elite, high official, vizier, king's seal bearer, attendant of Nekhen, and spokesman of every resident of Pe, priest of Bastet, priest of Shesmetet, priest of the Ram of Mendes, Keeper of the Apis Bull, Keeper of the White Bull, whom his lord loves, elder of the palace, high priest of Thoth, whom his lord loves, courtier, Overseer of Royal Scribes, priest of the Panther Goddess, Director of Music of the South and North, Overseer of All Construction Projects of the King, king's [grand-]son of his own body ...

The last title listed, and perhaps the most important title he held, allows Egyptologists to determine that he was the architect and construction supervisor for the Great Pyramid and of all the mastaba tombs located at Giza. His own large mastaba tomb and magnificent statues suggest the extent of the rewards King Khufu gave Hemiunu in return for this work. As is true with so many other important individuals who lived in ancient Egypt, little detail of his life can be added.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

*in Architecture and Design*

**AMENHOTEP, SON OF HAPU**

Late in the reign of Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.)—Early in the reign of Tutankhamun (1332–1322 B.C.E.)

*Scribe*

*Chief of the King's Works*

**COMMONER TO COURTIER.** Amenhotep son of Hapu was born in the Nile delta late in the reign of Thutmose III. His father, Hapu, was a commoner. Amenhotep's first known official position was royal scribe. He was thus an embodiment of the Egyptian belief that education was the key to moving up in society. Eventually, he became Chief of All the King's Works in the reign of Amenhotep III (1390–1352 B.C.E.). In this position he supervised enormous building projects. These projects included additions at the Karnak temple,

Hermann Junker, "Giza I: Die Mastabas der IV. Dynastie auf dem Westfriedhof" *Denkschrift der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 69 (1929): 153–157.

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## IMHOTEP

fl. Dynasty 3 (2675–2625 B.C.E.)

*High Priest of Heliopolis*  
*Architect*

**ARCHITECT AND PRIEST.** Little is recorded of Imhotep's personal life. Even the date of his birth and death remain unknown, though he lived during the Third-dynasty reign of King Djoser (2675–2654 B.C.E.). He certainly reached the highest stratum of society, acting as both High Priest of Re at Heliopolis and the architect for King Djoser's Step Pyramid Complex at Saqqara. Even these facts come from much later sources. According to Manetho, the third-century B.C.E. historian, Imhotep built the first stone building—the Step Pyramid complex. The inscription that mentions his name on a statue of Djoser confirms his high position. The next information about Imhotep after the statue inscription comes 1,000 years later from a papyrus now in the Turin Museum, which calls Imhotep a patron of scribes. In addition, he was already described as son of the god Ptah, the god of the capital city, Memphis. After 664 B.C.E., Egyptians made numerous bronze statuettes of Imhotep. They described him as a teacher, physician, and god. The Greek rulers of Egypt after 332 B.C.E. associated Imhotep with Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine.

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## INENI

Late Dynasty 17 (1630–1539 B.C.E.)—Early Dynasty 18 (1539–1425 B.C.E.)

*High Government Official*  
*Superintendent of Royal Buildings*

**VARIED RESPONSIBILITIES.** Ineni held important offices in the administration of Egypt beginning with the reign of King Amenhotep I (1514–1493 B.C.E.) and ending in the reign of Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.). He held the titles Superintendent of the Granaries, Superintendent of Workmen in the Karnak

Treasuries, Superintendent of the Royal Buildings, and Mayor of Thebes. His career probably stretched from late in Amenhotep I's reign to early in Thutmose III's reign, a period encompassing over twenty years. He was active in overseeing the excavation of the first tomb in the Valley of the Kings, belonging to Thutmose I (1493–1481 B.C.E.). He must also have been involved in building Hatshepsut's temple in Deir el Bahri, though the architect for that tomb was Senenmut, a younger colleague. Ineni's own tomb was badly destroyed in antiquity. His autobiography carved on the wall and his statues were all defaced, perhaps by enemies. The most unusual feature of his tomb is the prevalence of trees both in paintings and lists. Over 394 sycamore, acacia, and palm trees of different varieties were painted and listed in hieroglyphs in the tomb, a feature unknown in other tombs.

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## SENENMUT, SON OF RAMOSE

fl. early Dynasty 18 (reign of Hatshepsut, 1478–1458 B.C.E.)

*Government Official*  
*Architect*

**FROM COMMONER TO THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD.** Senenmut was probably born in Armant, a town north of modern Luxor. His parents, Ramose and Hatnofer, were commoners, so it is unclear how Senenmut joined the upper administration. He may first have achieved recognition as a scribe since he became tutor to the royal princess Neferura during the reign of Thutmose II (1481–1479 B.C.E.). By the end of this reign he served as steward of estates both for the princess and her mother, Queen Hatshepsut. His connection with Hatshepsut clearly led to his prominence. When Hatshepsut began to perform the functions normally performed by a male king on the death of her husband (1478–1458 B.C.E.), Senenmut first served as leader of a quarrying expedition to bring obelisks back to the temple at Karnak. He also achieved increasingly higher offices at the chief god Amun's temple. One of his 25 statues names him as architect at Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir el Bahri.

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## SETY I

Late Dynasty 18 (1316? B.C.E.–1279 B.C.E.)

*King*

*Patron of Architecture*

**PERSONAL LIFE.** Sety I was the second king of Dynasty 19. He ruled from 1290 B.C.E. to 1279 B.C.E. His father was Ramesses I, the founder of the dynasty. His son was Ramesses II, who was even more famous than his father as a builder. Sety's reign is important to the history of Egyptian architecture, however, because the model of the Heliopolis temple gateway that he commissioned is the only surviving architectural model from ancient Egypt.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL.** The model is a large rectangular block of reddish-brown quartzite. The dimensions of the base are 28 by 87.5 by 112 centimeters (11 by 34 by 44 inches). The top of the base is cut back to create a platform for the temple. Ten steps lead up to the platform. The top of the model was carved with ten recesses that originally contained the elements that represented the building and statuary in front of the building. Three sides of the model are carved with scenes of Sety I and inscriptions that describe the king making offerings to the Egyptian sun gods named Atum and Horakhty. The king is represented twice on the front and three times each on the sides of the model. The inscriptions also reveal that the recesses originally held models of the pylons, doors, flagstaves and obelisks of the holy of holies of Atum's temple, probably at Heliopolis, but possibly another temple of Atum at Tell el Yeudiah, the spot where the model was discovered about 1880. The inscriptions also describe the materials used to make the elements of the model. The pylon was white crystalline limestone. The doors were described as bronze, but were probably wood overlaid with bronze. The flagstaves were *mesdet*-stone, but usually real flagstaves were made from cedar trees. The model obelisks were carved from greywacke, a highly prized Egyptian stone that was quarried in the Wadi Hammamat. Actual obelisks were carved from red granite, as is Sety's actual obelisk from Heliopolis now located in Rome. The shapes of the recesses

make clear where each of the elements would have been set. There are also additional recesses in the model that are not described in the inscriptions but can easily be reconstructed from knowledge of actual Egyptian temples. The long recesses behind the pylon towers held the walls of the building. The square recesses in front of the tower held standing statues of Sety I. The four remaining recesses shaped like rectangles with one short side replaced by an arc accommodate the shape of a sphinx. There are recesses to hold four sphinxes that here represent the processional way of the temple, commonly decorated in actual temples with long rows of sphinxes. The temple is approached by a stairway. This arrangement is known in temples from Amarna which predate the model by fifty to seventy years. The stairs suggest that the temple was built on a hill, just as the temple at Heliopolis was. This hill was called the "High Sand" and represented the first hill to emerge from the water at the beginning of time. On this hill the god Atum created the world, according to Egyptian belief.

**PURPOSE OF THE MODEL.** The precious materials used to create this model suggest that its purpose was not as an architect's model, but may have been part of a religious ritual called "To Present the House to Its Lord." This ritual is the last in a series of five rituals that the Egyptian king performed to dedicate a new building. The rituals included "Stretching the Cord" (surveying the site), Spraying Natron (purification of the site), Cutting a Trench (digging the foundation), Striking a Brick (taking the first mud brick from its mould), and finally when the building was complete, Presenting the House to Its Lord. Such models are represented in reliefs of this ritual at Esna, Edfu, and at Kawa.

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*in Architecture and Design*

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Anonymous, *Praise of Thebes* (c. 1292–1190 B.C.E.)—This poem, preserved on a papyrus in the Royal Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, The Netherlands, describes the splendors of the New Kingdom capital.

Anonymous, *Pyramid Texts* (reign of Unas, c. 2371–2350 B.C.E.)—These ritual speeches, carved inside pyramids beginning in the reign of Unas, helped the deceased king unify with the sun god, his father, according to Egyptian religious belief.

Hemiuunu, *Great Pyramid of Khufu*—Largest and best known pyramid, built in the Fourth Dynasty.

Herodotus, *The Histories* (c. 440 B.C.E.)—The first book of history by the Greek “Father of History” describes major monuments he saw in Egypt. Though often fanciful, it remains a valuable source for information on Egyptian monuments now in ruins.

Imhotep, *Step Pyramid of Djoser*—First preserved stone monument in ancient Egypt.

Khnumhotep, *Autobiography of Khnumhotep* (c. 1857 B.C.E.)—This autobiography describes Khnumhotep’s

activities restoring his father’s tomb and building a tomb for himself.

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* (c. 77 C.E.)—This Roman writer described the geography of Egypt, including wonders of architecture and building techniques he observed while visiting in the first century.

Senenmut, *Temple of Hatshepsut*—Part of the Estate of Amun, on the west bank of Thebes, opposite modern Luxor. The terraced temple was a major achievement of Egyptian architecture.

Shepsi, son of Inherhenmet, *Letters to the Dead* (Old Kingdom, c. 2675–2170 B.C.E.)—These letters deposited in tombs illustrate the Egyptian belief that the dead participated actively in the life of the living and the tomb was the place the living and dead could meet.

*Temple of Amun at Karnak*—Largest and most important temple for the chief deity of the New Kingdom, located in the Estate of Amun on the east bank at Thebes (modern Luxor). The temple includes over 200 acres of buildings built from the Middle Kingdom to the Ptolemaic Period.

## chapter two

# DANCE

Edward Bleiberg

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	64	<i>A Prince Sends the Khener to a Funeral</i> (dancers are sent to participate in a royal funeral) . . . . .	71
OVERVIEW . . . . .	65	<i>Story of a Khener</i> (tale of deities disguised as dancers) . . . . .	71
TOPICS		<i>Thanks for a Gift of a Dancing Pygmy</i> (inscription on the tomb of a man who gifted a young king with a pygmy) . . . . .	72
Preconceptions about Dance . . . . .	66	<i>Dance Captions from the Tomb of</i> <i>Watetkhethor</i> (text accompanying dancing figures drawn on the inside of a tomb) . . . . .	74
Dance in Visual Art . . . . .	66	<i>The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys</i> (directions for performing a funerary dance) . . . . .	75
Costumes and Fashion in Dance . . . . .	68	<i>Liturgy of Washing</i> (liturgy from the <i>Pyramid Texts</i> meant to be recited through dance) . . . . .	75
The Dancers . . . . .	69	<i>Ferrymen in a Funeral Procession Text</i> (Funerary text displaying the words spoken during the performance of muu-dancers) . . . . .	77
Funeral Dances . . . . .	73	<i>Muu-Dancers as Four Royal Crowns</i> ( <i>Pyramid</i> <i>Text</i> translation of words spoken during Muu dance of crown personification) . . . . .	78
Muu-Dancers . . . . .	76		
The Iba-Dance and Heby-Dance . . . . .	79		
Cult Dances . . . . .	81		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Horihotep . . . . .	81		
Khnumhotep . . . . .	82		
Watetkhethor . . . . .	82		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	82		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
<i>The Wiseman Any on Dance</i> (excerpt from the wisdom texts concerning the value of song and dance to the gods) . . . . .	66		



## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Dance*

*All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).*

- |           |  |           |   |
|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| 3500–3300 | Statuettes and paintings on pots buried in graves represent dancers performing a funeral dance, the earliest known representations of such dances. Ostriches are depicted dancing in the desert. | 2350–2338 | Princess Watetkhethor commissions artists to decorate one entire wall of her tomb with the funeral dance, including details of its execution.       |
| 2500–2170 | More Old Kingdom tombs include scenes of dance. Tombs of the high officials Ti and Kagemni include scenes of dancing monkeys.  | 2338–2298 | The Pyramid Texts carved in Pepy I’s pyramid include the liturgy for the king to perform the “Dance of the God” while imitating a pygmy.            |
| 2415–2371 | Traders bring an African pygmy to dance in Egypt in the reign of Djedkare Isesy.   | 2286      | The boy king, Pepi II, sends a royal decree to his expedition leader, Harkhuf, thanking him for the gift of a dancing pygmy.                        |
| 2371–2350 | First example of Pyramid Text 310 which priests recite or sing during the <i>muu</i> -dance at the beginning of a funeral.   | 1844–1837 | A list written on papyrus enumerates twelve dancers’ names and the many festivals where they perform.   |
| 2350–2170 | The funeral priest Khnumhotep describes dancing the <i>heby</i> -dance in an inscription on his statue.  | 1539–1075 | Artists regularly depict dancers in scenes of funerary banquets.  |
|           |  | 1539–1514 | A hymn dedicated to King Ahmose refers to ostriches dancing in the desert.  |
|           |  | 1352–1336 | Dancing ostriches are depicted in King Akhenaten’s tomb.  |
|           |  | 945–712   | Horihotep serves as chief dancer of the goddess Bastet, a little-known title that suggests increased interest in dancing as part of divine worship. |
|           |  | 381–343   | Pawenhatef dances the <i>heby</i> -dance for the cult of the Apis bull.   |

## OVERVIEW of Dance

**DEFINITION.** Dance, at its most basic, is rhythmic body movement, often performed to music. In modern society dance can be an art form, recreation, or religious expression. Professional dancers entertain through ballet, modern dance, tap, and a variety of other art forms, while non-professionals dance at celebrations such as weddings or for fun at discos and clubs. In ancient Egypt, however, dance mostly served a ritual purpose at funerals or in ceremonies for the gods and was limited to professional dancers. One papyrus from the reign of King Senwosret II (1844–1837 B.C.E.) listed monthly dance performances incorporated into the New Moon, Half Moon and Full Moon festivals. Dancers performed annually at the Night of Welcoming the Flood Festival when the Nile rose; the Festival of the Five Days Between the Years during the New Year Festival; the Festival of Sokar, the sun god; the Festival of Hathor, the goddess of music, dance, and love; and many other festivals. The common scenes of dancers performing at banquets in New Kingdom tombs were probably also religious rituals, though the banquets initially appear to be social occasions with the dancers apparently entertaining the guests. Egyptians viewed social dancing, however, with suspicion. In one Late Period text, for example, “dancing in the desert” is synonymous with laziness. Non-professional dancing was virtually unknown in ancient Egyptian society.

**SOURCES.** Scholars depend on scenes carved on tomb and temple walls to learn about Egyptian dance. A few ancient texts refer directly to dance, but the most useful texts for this study are the captions in tomb illustrations of dances and the liturgy recited during funerals. Both of these sources present difficulties in interpretation, however. Egyptian artists followed conventions for representing motion which differ greatly from the perspective drawings used in Western society since the Renaissance. Moreover, artists often chose a few characteristic poses to illustrate a dance, omitting important links between steps, because they only in-

tended to represent enough of the dance to make it magically effective for the tomb owner. They never intended these illustrations to be used as a manual for learning the dances. All dance in Egypt seems to be programmatic, always representing or symbolizing something beyond the gestures of the dance itself, although scholars cannot always decipher the dance’s meaning. Yet the purpose and meaning of the dance and the accompanying captions must have been clear to most Egyptians.

**DANCERS.** Most dancers were professionals who were members of the *khener*—an organization that could be a bureau in an institution or could function independently as a troupe. Institutional kheners were attached to temples, tombs, towns, and royal or other wealthy households. In some cases, the sons and daughters of the deceased performed the ritual dances at funerals. Dwarfs, or more likely pygmies, performed certain dances called the Dance of the God. They also performed with the khener during funerals. The Egyptians also represented animals such as monkeys and ostriches dancing.

**SEGREGATED DANCING.** Depictions of dance show that men and women danced separately. Either a male or female couple performed the couples funeral dance called *tjeref*. Since the dancers impersonated the deceased in this dance, male tomb owners depicted male *tjeref*-dancers in their tombs while female tomb owners showed female *tjeref*-dancers in their tombs. Men performed another funeral dance called the *muu*-dance for both men and women because the *muu*-dancers represented ferry-men who guided the funeral processions of both men and women. Women generally performed the dance called *iba*, also part of the funeral ritual. Men acted as *muu*-dancers for deceased men and women acted as *muu*-dancers for deceased women. The dances thus were closely linked to the dancer’s gender.

**MUSIC.** Dancers performed funeral dances and cult dances for the gods accompanied by percussion. The most common percussion “instrument” was hand clapping, and musicians used specially carved wooden clappers to increase the volume of this sound. Musicians also played the *sistrum* and the *menat*—two different kinds of ritual rattles—during the cult dances performed before the gods. Dancers at banquets sometimes accompanied themselves on the lute or danced to the harp. Women performed with woodwinds on very rare occasions at funeral banquets depicted in New Kingdom tombs.

**COSTUMES.** Dancers often wore specialized costumes, jewelry, and headgear tailored to a specific dance.

The muu-dancers, for example, wore a hat that never appeared in other contexts. Female dancers sometimes wore a ponytail weighted at the end with a ceramic disk or ball. Young male and female dancers often performed nude or wearing only a belt around the hips. Adult dancers wore fewer clothes than most Egyptians, though in some cases dancers wore “street clothes.” In any case, Egyptians in general felt comfortable with minimal clothing.

**IMPORTANCE.** The Egyptians integrated dance into many aspects of their religious observance. At times, dance, as ambiguous as its meaning might be to modern observers, is the only evidence for certain religious beliefs in the earlier periods of Egyptian history. Scholars have historically underrated dance’s importance in Egyptian culture.

## TOPICS *in Dance*

### PRECONCEPTIONS ABOUT DANCE

**EARLIER MISUNDERSTANDINGS.** Nineteenth-century Egyptologists hindered accurate interpretations of ancient Egyptian dance by imposing their own value systems on the evidence. The lack of clothing in Egyptian dance caused scholars to think of Egyptian dance as lewd, and thus they turned to more seemly subjects for study. These scholars also mistranslated the word “khener”—an Egyptian word meaning “musical bureau”—as “harem.” They assumed that there was a connection between the word for musical bureau and the word for women’s quarters (harem) because of the similarity of the hieroglyphic writing of the two different words. This misconception added to scholars’ difficulties in dealing with Egyptian dance. Moreover, Western scholars did not make an immediate connection between dance and religious ritual because Western culture does not generally maintain the tradition of sacred dance that was common to biblical religion. The absence of dance in the church, synagogue, or mosque traditions found in the West made scholars tentative in accepting dance as integral to ancient Egyptian culture.

**RECENT SCHOLARSHIP.** Recently scholars have recognized the important role dance played in Egyptian funerals and cult ritual. They note, for example, that the ancient text called “The Wisdom of Any” ranks dance along with food, clothing, and incense as essential to divine worship. Some scholars have now studied different words for dance in ancient Egyptian and recorded dance

#### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

#### THE WISEMAN ANY ON DANCE

**INTRODUCTION:** Egyptologists have given the name “wisdom texts” to a genre of Egyptian texts that dispense advice and explain the nature of the world. The “Wisdom of Any” was written in the late New Kingdom and touches on many aspects of life. In this passage Any discusses man’s relationship to the gods, which includes a mention of the importance of song and dance to the gods.

Observe the feast of your god,  
And repeat its season,  
God is angry if it is neglected. ...

It will extol the might of the god.  
Song, dance, incense are his foods,  
Receiving prostrations is his wealth;  
The god does it to magnify his name.

**SOURCE:** “Ani,” in *The New Kingdom*. Vol. 2 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976): 136.

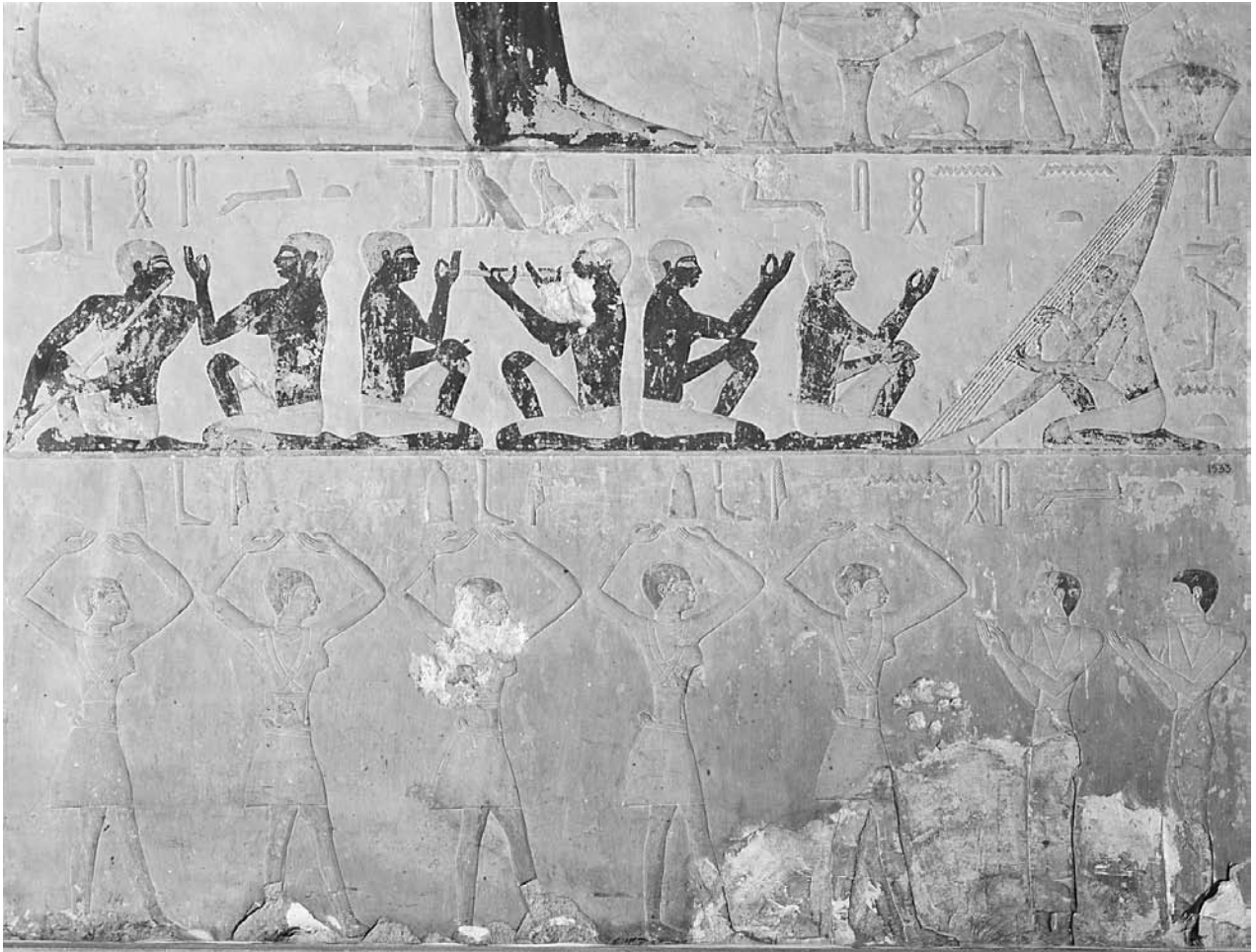
scenes in tombs and temples. Additional data, along with less prudish attitudes toward dance, will eventually result in a better understanding of this phenomenon.

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### DANCE IN VISUAL ART

**DRAWN FIGURES.** The great majority of the evidence for dance in ancient Egypt comes from visual art. As early as the Nagada II Period (3500–3300 B.C.E.), sculptures and paintings on pots represented dancers. In the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties (2500–2170 B.C.E.), relief sculpture in mastaba tombs included scenes of dance. The artists who decorated many New Kingdom Theban tombs (1539–1075 B.C.E.) included dancers in banquet scenes. When artists represented dancers, the rules, or canon, of Egyptian art used to depict the tomb owner and his or



Dancers and musicians. Painted limestone relief from the Tomb of Nenkhefka in Saqqara, 5th Dynasty. © SCALA/ART RESOURCE, NY.

her family did not apply for the following reason. The canon for artistic representation was in place because the deceased and his or her family needed to be depicted in a very specific way in order to activate the magic that transported them to the next world. Dancers depicted in the tomb, however, were not being transported to the next world, and so could be represented more freely in drawings than the deceased. Thus, there is a great difference between representations of dancers in the act of performing and the canonical representation of the human form. The canonical Egyptian representation of a human in two dimensions requires the head in profile with the eye represented frontally, as if the viewer saw the whole head from the side but the eye from the front. The artists depicted the shoulders from the front, but the figure seems to twist at the waist so that the legs and feet are again in profile. Additionally, artists used hieratic scale, meaning that size indicated importance rather than the visual reality of the relative size of human beings. In the canon, finally, there was little use of overlap and no simulation of visual depth

as practiced in most of Western art. These rules, if observed, would have made representations of dance impossible since the rules exclude motion and emphasize timelessness. Thus artists experimented with a number of techniques to represent dancers in the act of performing.

**REPRESENTING DANCERS.** Dancers could be represented differently from the tomb owner and his or her family because the dancers were not the figures whose eternal life was guaranteed through this tomb. Thus artists represented dancers in a manner closer to true profile than the figures allowable under the official canon. They also developed methods for showing dancers beside, in front of, and behind each other using overlap. Often, artists elongated arms to allow them to reach to the other side of a group of partners.

**CHOOSING POSES.** Artists also chose characteristic poses in order to represent a dance. Wall space limited the number of steps and figures that artists could include from one dance. For example, in the relatively small tomb



Jar with river scene. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 09.889.400, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



Pear-shaped pot with flamingo decoration, showing the flamingo dance. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 07.447.402, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

of *Iy-mery*, six dancing figures represent parts of the same dance that artists portrayed with 31 figures in the very large tomb of *Watetkhethor*. *Iy-mery*'s artists had much less wall space, so they found ways to condense and abbreviate the action. *Watetkhethor*'s very large tomb accommodated a more detailed portrayal of the dance. During the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, artists first represented these characteristic movements from each dance in the order they were executed. This technique was the beginning of narrative in Egyptian visual art.

**TEXTUAL SOURCES.** The Egyptians left inscriptions in relief scenes and the texts of funeral liturgies that further explain the meaning and significance of dance. The captions that sculptors carved in relief scenes are extremely abbreviated. Often only two- or three-word sentence fragments stood for a whole sentence that was part of a well-known song. Unfortunately, modern scholars cannot always make sense of these highly abbreviated inscriptions. Sometimes, though, scholars have connected the words in the captions to fuller texts in the liturgy of the Pyramid Texts, carved in the royal pyramids of King *Unas* and the kings of the Sixth Dynasty, and Coffin Texts, the rituals written on the inside of many Middle Kingdom coffins. These two sets of spells recited during a funeral often can illuminate both the captions and thus the meaning and significance of dance steps or even entire dances.

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## COSTUMES AND FASHION IN DANCE

**CLOTHING.** During the Old Kingdom, women normally wore long dresses with straps over the shoulders. The hems of such dresses hung just above the ankles. Dancers wore this costume while performing the mirror dance in the tomb of the prime minister, *Mereruka*. Singers and clappers accompanying dances also often wore this costume in scenes of all periods. However, the Old Kingdom dress fit snugly and obstructed free movement. This garment could only accommodate dances performed with short steps that avoided raising the legs. During more vigorous dances, female performers wore a short kilt cut at an angle in the front. A belt often hung down from the waist. This belt was long enough so that its movement would accentuate the dancer's movements. The Old Kingdom dress continued in popularity for everyday wear and for singers during the Middle Kingdom, but dancers mostly wore the short kilt, probably because Middle Kingdom dances were more lively and athletic than Old Kingdom dances. During the New Kingdom, the typical woman's dress added a cloak with either broad or narrow sleeves. The dress under the cloak often included a belt. Both the cloak and the dress were often pleated. Dancers wore both the narrow- and broad-

sleeved cloak sometimes wearing a belt over the cloak. Many New Kingdom female dancers wore only a belt, performing in the nude. The Egyptians exhibited few inhibitions about displaying the female body. Since a funeral reenacted the steps leading to re-birth, the Egyptians regarded funerals, in part, as containing erotic elements that would lead to conception and birth into the afterlife. Children were also depicted as dancing nude. Most representations of pre-pubescent boys and girls in all situations reveal a lack of clothing. Girls often danced wearing a belt to emphasize the movement of the hips, just as modern Middle-Eastern dancers tie scarves around their hips. Egyptians felt no embarrassment at young children dancing, playing, or living with minimal clothing. Most Egyptian men wore kilts as their normal "street clothes" as well as for dancing. Sometimes men added a belt with a suspended panel to the front of the kilt. The belt sometimes also had fringes attached. These elements would have emphasized their movements by enlarging them. Men's costumes for dance exhibit little change over long stretches of time.

**HAIRSTYLES.** In the Old Kingdom, women wore their hair short. Representations of women with long hair usually include visual clues that they were wearing wigs. Egyptologists call the long wig the tripartite hairstyle. The hairdresser arranged the hair of the wig in three sections with one section over each shoulder and the central mass of hair down the back. Dancers sometimes wore this style, and it was common for singers. Other dancers wore their natural hair very close-cropped in a style resembling men's hairstyles. Some scholars believe that women represented with short hair were wearing a close-fitting cap. The third typical hairstyle for women dancers was a ponytail weighted at the end with a disk or ball. In many representations this disk is painted reddish-orange, the same color as the sun. This element thus might relate to the cult of the sun-god, Re. Middle Kingdom female dancers also wore this ponytail with a disk-shaped weight. Others wore three pigtailed, though this style was less common. New Kingdom women were subject to more quickly changing styles. Though both the close-cropped style and the tripartite hairstyle continued in popularity, women also wore wigs that entirely enveloped their backs, shoulders, and chests, and dancers sometimes imitated this fashion. Some female dancers wore complicated hairstyles that scholars believe came from Nubia, in the modern Sudan, just south of Egypt. Perhaps some of these changes from the earlier periods resulted from artists' increased interest in representing this kind of detail. When men danced, they normally wore their hair in a close-cropped short style. They might

also wear a tight-fitting cap. The only specialized headgear that men wore for the dance was the tall, crown-like muu-hat. This distinctive headgear identified the muu-dancer with ferrymen who conducted boats through Egypt's canals, and revealed their function in the dance as conductors of the funeral procession from place to place. The muu-hat was made from woven reeds and was rather tall and cone-shaped. Though rare, representations of men wearing ponytails with the disk-shaped weight more commonly worn by female dancers do exist. This style possibly associated the dance with the cult of the sun-god, Re.

**ACCESSORIES.** Women's accessories emphasized parts of their bodies important to the dance. Bracelets and armlets drew attention to their arms and large gold earrings brought focus to the head. The same was true of the headbands and fragrant cones that women wore on their heads as a perfume. Finally, many women wore straps crossed over the chest and back as part of the dance costume. The only accessories that male dancers wore were bracelets and collars. While the precious metals worn on the wrists and around the neck served to draw the viewer's attention, this jewelry was similar to what men wore in other situations and so was not particularly significant to the dance costume.

**SCHOLARS' REACTIONS.** Western scholars in the past have often expressed discomfort with the relatively revealing costumes that Egyptian dancers wore. They were reacting, in part, to the issue of public nudity, but also to the real presence of erotic intent that was integral to Egyptian funerals. Egyptian funerals led the deceased to rebirth into the afterlife. The Egyptians believed that this rebirth required a sexual conception resembling conception and birth into this world. Revealing clothing paired with movement played an obvious role in this process.

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SEE ALSO *Fashion: Clothing*

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## THE DANCERS

**PROFESSIONAL BUREAU.** Most dancers were women who belonged to the bureau called the *khener*. A smaller number of men were also *khener* members.



Female dancer. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 07.447.505, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

The khener was a bureau within other institutions, including the royal palace, a temple, a town, or the household or the tomb of a wealthy individual. Many earlier scholars confused the khener with a “harem,” the Turkish word for women’s quarters that housed wives and concubines in a polygamous society. Because so many of the members of the khener were women who entertained men, these scholars assumed that khener members also had sexual relations with the head of the household or tomb owner. Current scholarship considers the members of the khener to be professional musicians and dancers who had no other intimate personal relationship with the head of the household. According to ancient inscriptions, these musicians and dancers “refresh[ed] the heart” of their master. Many inscriptions make clear that this refreshment came only in the form of music and dance. There were many female overseers of the khener

recorded in inscriptions, and they were often singers. One Amarna period relief sculpture in a tomb depicts the women’s quarters where both musicians and dancers rehearse together, though admittedly this is a unique representation. Oddly enough, only a few male professional dancers recorded inscriptions. They include Khnumhotep, who was also a priest of the king’s funerary cult, and Horihotep who served in the cult of Bastet. In at least one case, the male dancers portrayed in a tomb were sons of the deceased. The major evidence for the khener comes from captions to tomb scenes. Egyptologists thus make use of a passage in *Papyrus Westcar* to establish an understanding of the way the khener worked. The papyrus contains the story of Rudeddet, a woman who bore triplets destined to become kings. In the story, the midwives are goddesses disguised as traveling musicians and dancers. The text specifically calls them a khener, which suggests that a khener of traveling musicians and dancers was unremarkable, a good disguise. In the story they traveled freely and received wages in grain for their services. There is no other evidence that musicians and dancers also normally worked as midwives. However, the god Bes was associated both with music and dance in the cult of Hathor and with protecting a mother in childbirth. It is hard to know if this story represents a broader reality, but the limited evidence available has encouraged Egyptologists to use this story to the greatest extent possible.

**FOREIGN DANCERS.** Many scholars have identified dancers in Egypt as foreigners, particularly in the New Kingdom, when Egypt had extended contact with neighboring regions. Scholars recognize these foreign dancers by their clothing and hairstyles and in some texts by their names. One Middle Kingdom papyrus from the reign of Senwosret II (1844–1837 B.C.E.) contains a list of twelve singers and dancers who performed at the king’s funerary temple. Five of the dancers had Semitic names, while two had Nubian names. One dancer definitely had an Egyptian name, but four other names are too damaged to read. Even if all of the damaged names were Egyptian in this case, only 41 percent of these musicians and dancers would be Egyptian. It is impossible to know how representative these figures are for Egyptian dancers and musicians in general, but it does seem significant that foreign dancers and musicians could be incorporated into the khener of this important religious institution. This situation suggests that foreigners were certainly welcome to participate in this aspect of Egyptian society. On the other hand, some relief scenes in temples represent only Egyptian women of elite status performing in the god’s cult.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A PRINCE SENDS THE KHENER TO A FUNERAL**

**INTRODUCTION:** The cycle of stories that Egyptologists refer to as the *Pedubastis Stories* contains a local prince's response to the call for participants in a funeral for a deceased king. This prince instructs his son to send the khener of the town, the musicians and dancers, to help with the funeral.

My son, Pemu, go and see to ... the troops of the eastern country, have them prepared with their girdles and myrrh, with the temple officials, masters of ceremony and dancers, who frequent the embalming rooms. Let them sail by boat to Per Osiris, let them convey the deceased body of Osiris, the King Jenharrou to the anointing room, have him embalmed and buried and arrange a beautiful, grand funeral for him such as is being prepared for Hapi and Merwer, the king of the gods.

**SOURCE:** Irena Lexová, *Ancient Egyptian Dances* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2000): 67–68.

**DANCING DWARFS.** Egyptian artists often represented a dwarf dancing alongside the female troupe of dancers in funerals and in cult scenes in temples. The Egyptians distinguished among different physiological conditions that led to dwarfism. These conditions include achondroplasia, a pathological condition, and pygmies, who exhibit a natural adaptation to their environment. Egyptians had different words to distinguish between different kinds of dwarfs. Yet, both kinds of dwarfs became associated with the sun god, Re, and with the god Bes, associated with music and childbirth. Thus dwarfs were important in dance.

**PYGMIES.** Traders brought an African pygmy to dance in Egypt in the reign of Djedkare Isesi (2415–2371 B.C.E.). Pygmies were apparently highly prized dancers in the royal courts, as evidenced by an inscription carved on the tomb of the nobleman Harkhuf near Aswan, who had delivered a pygmy to King Pepi II (2288–2194 B.C.E.). The carving is a royal decree expressing both gratitude and excitement that Harkhuf had delivered a dancing pygmy who could perform the “dances of the god.” The inscription described the pygmy's origin as the “Land of the Horizon-Dwellers,” suggesting that he had come from the farthest reaches of the earth. The god whose dance the pygmy could per-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***STORY OF A KHENER**

**INTRODUCTION:** The majority of music and dance bureaus, known as “kheners,” were attached to temples, tombs, towns, or the homes of wealthy individuals. The Papyrus Westcar contains a story in which a group of goddesses—Isis, Nephthys, Meskhenet, and Heket—and the god Khnum disguised themselves as a traveling khener and acted as midwives and servant to the birth of triplets who would later become kings. The fact that deities saw nothing shameful in disguising themselves as dancers suggests that dancers in ancient Egypt enjoyed high status.

On one of those days Rudeddet felt the pangs and her labor was difficult. Then said the majesty of Re, lord of Sakhbu, to Isis, Nephthys, Meskhenet, Heket, and Khnum: “Please go, deliver Rudeddet of the three children who are in her womb, who will assume this beneficent office in this whole land. They will build your temples. They will supply your altars. They will furnish your libations. They will make your offerings abundant!”

These gods set out, having changed their appearance to dancing girls [i.e., a khener], with Khnum as their porter. When they reached the house of Rawoser, they found him standing with his loincloth upside down. They held out to him their necklaces and sistra [ceremonial rattles]. He said to them: “My ladies, look, it is the woman who is in pain; her labor is difficult.” They said; “Let us see her. We understand childbirth.” He said to them: “Come in!” They went in to Rudeddet. They locked the room behind themselves and her.

**SOURCE:** “The Birth of the Royal Children,” in *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*. Vol. 1 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973): 220.

form was probably the sun god, Re. The *Pyramid Texts*, carved in the pyramid of King Pepi I (2338–2298 B.C.E.) mentions these divine dances where the king himself imitated a pygmy for the benefit of the god.

**DWARFS IN THE HEBY-DANCE.** Two dwarfs who lived in widely separated periods danced the heby-dance. Khnumhotep, who lived in the Sixth Dynasty (2350–2170 B.C.E.), and Pawenhatet, who lived in the Thirtieth Dynasty (381–343 B.C.E.), are both spoken of in



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THANKS FOR A GIFT OF A DANCING PYGMY**

**INTRODUCTION:** In approximately 2286 B.C.E., the eight-year-old King Pepi II received a gift of a dancing pygmy from his expedition leader Harkhuf. Harkhuf recorded in his tomb the thank-you note that the king sent him. The note reveals the role of African pygmies in ancient Egyptian dance. The young king tells Harkhuf that the pygmy will dance for the soul of the king's predecessor, Neferkare. It seems that the king also eagerly awaits the pygmy's arrival for his own enjoyment.

The King's own seal: Year 2, third month of the first season, day 15.

The King's decree to the Sole companion, Lector-priest, Chief of scouts, Harkhuf.

Notice has been taken of this dispatch of yours which you made for the King at the Palace, to let one know that you have come down in safety from Yam with the army that was with you. You have said in this dispatch of yours that you have brought all kinds of great and beautiful gifts, which Hathor, mistress of Imaau, has given to the ka of King Neferkare, who lives forever. You have said in this dispatch of yours that you have brought a pygmy of the god's dances from the land of the horizon-dwellers, like the pygmy whom the god's seal-bearer Bawereded brought from Punt in the time of King Isesi. You have said to my majesty that his like has never been brought by anyone who did Yam previously.

Truly you know how to do what your lord loves and praises. Truly you spend day and night planning to do what your lord loves, praises, and commands. His majesty

will provide you many worthy honors for the benefit of your son's son for all time, so that all people will say, when they hear what my majesty did for you, "Does anything equal what was done for the sole companion Harkhuf when he came down from Yam, on account of the vigilance he showed in doing what his lord loved, praised, and commanded?"

Come north to the residence at once! Hurry and bring with you this pygmy whom you brought from the land of the horizon-dwellers live, hale, and healthy, for the dances of the god, to gladden the heart, to delight the heart of King Neferkare who lives forever! When he goes down with you into the ship, get worthy men to be around him on deck, lest he fall into the water! When he lies down at night, get worthy men to lie around him in his tent. Inspect ten times at night! My majesty desires to see this pygmy more than the gifts of the mine-land and of Punt!

When you arrive at the residence and this pygmy is with you live, hale, and healthy, my majesty will do great things for you, more than was done for the god's seal-bearer Bawereded in the time of King Isesi, in accordance with my majesty's wish to see this pygmy. Orders have been brought to the chief of the new towns and the companion, overseer of priests to command that supplies be furnished from what is under the charge of each from every storage depot and every temple that has not been exempted.

**SOURCE:** King Pepi II, in *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*. Vol. 1 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973): 26–27.

inscriptions as dancing the heby-dance for the cult of the Apis bull. This cult worshipped the bull in his lifetime and performed a special funeral for him. Dancing the heby-dance in his funeral was a particular honor.

**DANCING ANIMALS.** The Egyptians depicted both monkeys and ostriches dancing. Dancing monkeys comprised part of the Egyptian tradition that depicted animals in human pursuits. Artists included these depictions in the Old Kingdom tombs of the high officials Ti and Kagemeni. Monkeys may have been linked with pygmies, perhaps because both monkeys and pygmies had their origins in the far south of Africa, the area Egyptians called "God's Land," which gave them special access to the divine. A New Kingdom sketch depicted a monkey dancing with a Nubian dressed in a non-

Egyptian costume of a red, leather kilt with a feather in his hair. Monkeys also danced with Egyptian dancing girls in the New Kingdom. One sketch shows a monkey dancing on a ship. Scholars consider many of these scenes to be satirical. They depict an upside-down world where animals wait on each other as servants. These scenes reverse normal preconceptions, for example, by showing a cat serving a mouse. Yet, dance scenes with monkeys might represent actual performances that included animals. The Egyptians believed that ostriches danced in the wild. They called the violent movements with outstretched wings that ostriches do at sunrise an *iba*, the same word they used for human dancing. Modern ornithologists also have observed this behavior and independently called it a dance. The Egyptians spoke directly of the ostrich dance in a hymn to King Ahmose

(1539–1514 B.C.E.). They also represented the ostrich dance in the tomb of King Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.) and at the funeral temple of Ramesses III (1187–1156 B.C.E.) at Medinet Habu. The painting of ostriches on Nagada II period (3500–3300 B.C.E.) pots near a dancing woman might also represent the ostrich dance. The Egyptians understood the ostrich dance to be part of general jubilation on earth at the rising of the sun-god Re. All creation, in Egyptian belief, rejoiced daily at sunrise. The ostrich was one animal that directly expressed its joy through dance.

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SEE ALSO *Music: A Musical Bureau in the Old Kingdom*

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#### FUNERAL DANCES

**LONG TRADITION.** The tradition of a funeral dance in Egypt probably began in the Nagada II Period, as early as 3500 B.C.E. Evidence of funeral dances continued into the Thirtieth Dynasty more than 3,000 years later. Yet these dances are not well understood today. Many problems in understanding the dances stem from the way that the evidence is preserved. The evidence comes mostly from paintings and relief sculptures that have severely abbreviated the dance steps in order to fit a representative number of steps on the limited wall space in a tomb. The liturgy of the funeral service can supplement modern understanding of the dances, but the best way to understand the dances is to see how they fit with the parts of the funeral service, a ritual which lasted for many days.

**FUNERAL RITUAL.** The funeral dance portrayed the five major parts of an Egyptian funeral. The separate sections included:

1. The deceased's journey from East to West across the sky with the sun god Re,
2. The deceased's arrival in the West under the protection of the *matjerut*-priestess,
3. The deceased's rebirth and washing the newborn in the House of Purification,
4. Animating the newborn through a ritual called "opening the mouth," led by a panther-skin clad priest, and judging the deceased's previous life in the House of Embalment,
5. Depositing the mummy in the tomb, called "reception in the West."

Dancers portrayed each segment of the funeral, but not every tomb included every part of the dance on its walls. During the Old Kingdom, for example, there are 76 tombs that illustrate some part of the funeral dance, either with the depiction of the funeral procession or as part of the funeral meal. The fullest depiction of the dance comes from the tomb of Princess Watetkhethor, daughter of King Teti (2350–2338 B.C.E.) and wife of his prime minister, Mereruka. In this very large tomb comprising six separate rooms, the princess commissioned one wall depicting the funeral dance. This large amount of space contrasts greatly with the usual amount of space allotted to dance scenes in other tombs. In the princess's tomb, 31 figures comprise the fullest known illustration of the funeral dance. Yet other tomb reliefs concentrated on and expanded particular parts of the dance found in this tomb. Thus scholars can only achieve a full understanding of the dance by combining information from various tombs.

**COUPLES DANCE.** Two couples perform the funeral dance. In eight different Old Kingdom tombs belonging to men, two groups of men impersonate the deceased while female dancers simultaneously perform the *iba*-dance. In Princess Watetkhethor's tomb, however, the two couples are women, indicating that the gender of the dancers in the couples dance is determined by the gender of the deceased. In the tombs belonging to men, the tomb owner sits at an offering table while the performers execute the steps. In the princess's tomb, she sits in a carrying chair and observes it.

**BEGINNING.** Artists depicted the dance scene in the Tomb of Watetkhethor using registers, a device for organizing the space in a picture by creating a series of parallel groundlines within the picture. The dancers in the first register of Watetkhethor's *tjeref* dance perform the opening movements of the dance. These movements were called the *muu*-dance. Artists in other tombs expanded this section with more detail, allowing scholars to determine that the *muu*-dance represented the beginning of the funeral where the deceased symbolically crossed the heavens in the sun-god's boat. The dancers

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***DANCE CAPTIONS FROM THE TOMB OF WATETKHETHOR**

**INTRODUCTION:** These captions add an abbreviated explanation to the drawing of 31 figures executing the tjeref dance in the Tomb of Watetkhethor in Saqqara. Watetkhethor was a royal princess, daughter of King Teti (2350–2338 B.C.E.) and wife of the prime minister, Mereruka. Watetkhethor was also a priestess of Hathor—a goddess associated with dance—which might explain why she devoted one whole wall of her tomb to a dance scene. The *khener*, a professional music and dance troupe, performed the tjeref dance at the end of the funeral. The dance recapitulated the major components of the funeral. The captions give some clues as to the relationship between the dance and a funeral, but are very abbreviated due to the limitations of space on the wall. They are divided by horizontal lines into five spaces called registers.

**Register One**

"I am clapping; I am clapping; Hey! A quick crossing; Hey! The movement is hidden; Hey! The movement is golden."

**Register Two**

Hey! The *matjerut*-priestess is in charge of it; She comes, she comes; Tenet is the *matjerut*-priestess. Hey! The beautiful one is taken ... by?; Hey! I unite (with you); Hey! All pavilions (of/and) the audience hall;"

**Register Three**

"Hey! You praise the Festival of Birth; Quick, quick; It is the same thing; O, Quartet, come and pull; Hey, the secrets of the harem; Hey, recitation of the private rooms; Hey, a gesture of supplication."

**Register Five**

"May she give the arm ... may she give the secret ... tomb; Go people of ..."

**SOURCE:** Jonathan Van Lepp, "The Dance Scene of Watetkhethor: An Art Historical Approach to the Role of Dance in Old Kingdom Funerary Ritual" (master's thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1987): 44. Text modified by Edward Bleiberg.

associated with Osiris, the god of the Afterlife. The Egyptians believed that a pilgrimage to Buto was the first stage of the journey to the land of the dead. Finally, the muu-dancers pulled the sledge—a sled that travels on sand—containing the mummy, the canopic jars used to store the mummified organs, and the tekenu—the placenta of the deceased. The text of the first register refers to the Egyptians' wish for a quick passage across the sky, the hidden movements of the funeral, and the pulling of the sledge. The text also alludes to gold at this point, which probably refers to the sun and its journey across the sky, which the deceased joined. The Egyptologist Jonathan Van Lepp suggests convincingly that the movement accompanying this caption is a gesture that allows the dancers to form the hieroglyphic sign for gold. This attempt to imitate writing through movement is also used in modern Egyptian folk dance where the dancers imitate Arabic calligraphy in their poses. The dancers use this technique in other parts of the dance.

**ARRIVAL.** Register two symbolizes the deceased arriving on the west bank of the Nile river, the land traditionally viewed as the necropolis or "city of the dead." Here the text asks the funeral priestess called the *matjerut* to protect the ka statue that will act as a home for the soul. The dancers form a circle that represents the circuit the sun follows through the sky of the living and under the earth in the land of the dead.

**REBIRTH.** Register three depicts the festival of rebirth that priests celebrated at the House of Purification. They probably recited "The Lamentations of Isis and Nephys" at this point in the funeral, a secret text mourning the death and anticipating the rebirth of Osiris, god of the dead. The inscription suggests that this portion of the funeral was kept secret from the majority of the participants. Only the priests were admitted to the House of Purification. The ceremony consisted of symbolically washing the newly born spirit with water. Pyramid Texts 2063a to 2067b, a liturgy of washing, seems to describe this process. In this part of the ceremony, the Egyptians expressed their belief that birth and death are nearly equivalent. The inscription calls this the "secrets of the harem" or the women's quarters. These secrets include the mystery of birth and thus also the mystery of rebirth into the next world. The Egyptians viewed this part of the ceremony as the rebirth into the afterlife and thus an intimate part of the world of women. The dancers form the hieroglyph for *akhet*, the "horizon," which symbolizes the daily rebirth and death of the sun. The greeting to the "quartet," which follows in the inscription, refers to the four sons

who performed the muu-dance impersonated the guardians at the entrance to the land of the dead and the ferrymen who conducted the boat carrying the sarcophagus to the land of the dead. The muu-dance further represented the symbolic journey to Buto, a city

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE LAMENTATIONS OF ISIS AND NEPHTHYS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Scholars have associated “The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys” with the secret rituals mentioned in the captions of Princess Wasetkhethor’s funerary dance. This text consists of a series of prayers for the rebirth of the Osiris, the god of the dead. Since each deceased person was equated with Osiris, praying for his revival was the same as directly praying for an individual. The following extract describes how the text should be recited. These directions also inform us about the dancers’ movements.

Now when this is recited the place is to be completely secluded, not seen and not heard by anyone except the chief lector-priest and the *setem*-priest. One shall bring two women with beautiful bodies. They shall be made to sit on the ground at the main portal of the Hall of Appearings. On their arms shall be written the names of Isis and Nephthys. Jars of faience filled with water shall be placed in their right hands, offering loaves made in Memphis in their left hands, and their faces shall be bowed. To be done in the third hour of the day, also in the eighth hour of the day. You shall not be slack in reciting this book in the hour of festival.

**SOURCE:** Miriam Lichtheim, *The Late Period*. Vol. 3 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976): 120.

of Horus, the demi-gods that convey the reborn from the House of Purification to the House of Embalment. The inscription asks them to come and pull, explicit directions to take the funeral procession and the mummy to the next stop in the funeral: the House of Embalment.

**HOUSE OF EMBALMENT.** Register four depicts in movement the time that the funeral procession spent in the House of Embalment. Now that the deceased was reborn, the priests performed the ritual that protected the mummy so that it had the potential to live forever. The *setem*-priest performing this ritual wore a panther skin so the inscription refers to seeing a panther, a direct reference to the priest performing the ritual. Then the judges of the afterlife gave their verdict, judging that the deceased had lived a just life and would be admitted to the afterlife. The dancers in the relief make quiet, re-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LITURGY OF WASHING**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Egyptians believed that the funeral service led to rebirth in the next world. Thus they thought both birth and death required the same washing ritual. The following liturgy comes from the *Pyramid Texts*, the royal funeral liturgy. It describes washing the “newly reborn” deceased. In this translation, the term “NN” refers to the places where the priest would insert the name of the deceased. These words would be ritually enacted through the dance.

The Water of Life which is in heaven comes,  
The Water of Life which is on earth comes.  
Heaven burns for you,  
Earth trembles for you before the god’s birth.  
It seizes the body of NN.  
Oh NN, pure water kisses your feet.  
It is from Atum,  
Which the phallus of Shu made,  
Brought forth from the vulva of Tefenet.  
They have arrived and brought to you pure water  
from their father.  
It purifies you, you are incensed ...  
The libation is poured to the outside of this NN.

**SOURCE:** Jonathan Van Lepp, “The Dance Scene of Wasetkhethor: An Art Historical Approach to the Role of Dance in Old Kingdom Funerary Ritual” (master’s thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1987): 61.

spectful gestures to the judges of the dead and speak of *maat*, the standard of justice the judges use to reach a verdict about the dead. The inscription speaks of granting millions of years to the deceased, a standard phrase for awarding eternal life. The mystery of birth was now complete. The dancers then enacted a pulling gesture according to the instructions of the inscription. These words and actions represent the conducting of the deceased into the tomb.

**AT THE TOMB.** Register five depicts the final transformation of the deceased into a *ba*-soul. According to Egyptian belief, the *ba* traveled between the land of the dead and the tomb in this world. The *ba* delivered the food offered at the tomb to the deceased in the next world. One dancer represented the transformation into the *ba* by gestures while the second dancer performed the adoration gesture, celebrating that the deceased now existed as an ethereal being in the next world. The next

dancers form the *hewet* hieroglyph, used to write the name of the tomb and indicating the resting place for the mummy. Finally, dancers offered their arms, impersonating the Goddess of the West who “extends her arms toward the deceased in peace” according to the funerary wishes found in many tombs. The dancers have now reenacted the entire funeral in movement.

**COSTUME.** Both men and women wore very similar costumes while performing this dance: a short kilt cut at an angle with a long belt hanging down in front. Both men and women wore a band of cloth wrapped across the chest without any other shirt or blouse. Men wore their hair close-cropped, but women wore a long ponytail with a red disk attached at the end. The color of the disk, sometimes called a ball, associated it with the disk of the sun. The dance thus has some association with cult of Re.

**IMPORTANCE.** The tjeref-dance thus recapitulated the entire funeral. Scholars believe that the dancers performed it at the entrance to the tomb at the conclusion of the funeral. Such a performance would reflect the Egyptians’ use of magical redundancy. The Egyptians performed the ritual, performed it again through the dance, and performed it a third time by representing it on the walls of the tomb. Thus they could guarantee that the proper rituals were celebrated and the deceased would continue to live in the next life.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Funerary Beliefs and Practices*

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#### MUU-DANCERS

**FUNERAL PROCESSION.** The muu-dancers performed in people’s private funerals in the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, a period lasting about 1,500 years. The muu-dancers performed throughout the funeral. Representing the muu-dancers in tomb drawings was a popular choice for tomb owners, more popular than representing the whole funeral ritual as Princess Watetkhethor chose to do. Scholars do not know why this scene was represented so often. Artists represented in

tombs the muu-dancers’ performance at four different stages of the funeral procession. The muu-dancers greeted the funeral procession at the “Hall of the Muu” where the dancers lived at the edge of the necropolis. They danced while priests loaded the sarcophagus onto the funerary barge at the ritual site called “Sais,” associated with the town of Sais in the delta. They danced a greeting to the sledge carrying the sarcophagus at the ritual site in the necropolis called the “Gates of Buto,” and associated with the town of Buto, also in the delta. Finally, at an unknown place in the necropolis, the dancers were the reception committee for the sledge bearing the canopic jars and *tekenu*—the containers for the viscera of the deceased and the still unidentified portion of the corpse, or perhaps the placenta, of the deceased that the Egyptians also placed in the tomb. The sites where the muu-dancers performed illustrate the itinerary that the funeral procession followed, allowing Egyptologists to reconstruct parts of the typical funeral.

**DISTINCTIVE COSTUME.** Muu-dancers usually wore a distinctive costume that made them easily identifiable. They wore a headdress made from a plant, probably papyrus stems. The headdress resembled a wreath wrapped around their heads. Rising from this wreath was a woven, cone-shaped structure that came to a point, then flared at the end. The headdress resembled but was not exactly the same as the king’s White Crown. During the New Kingdom, scribes sometimes identified the images of muu-dancers only with captions rather than showing them wearing the distinctive headgear. In these cases the muu-dancers appear only as male dancers.

**IDENTITY CRISIS.** The most vexing question about the muu-dancers remains an explanation of their identity and thus their symbolic meaning. Earlier Egyptologists have explained the symbolism of the muu-dancers by equating them with other, known semi-divine beings. These beings include the gods of the necropolis who transported the deceased; the Souls of Buto who received the deceased; the Sons of Horus who rode in the barque (sun-boat) with deceased kings and the sun-god, Re; and the most recently proposed and most convincing suggestion, ferrymen who guided the deceased from the beginning of the funeral procession to the entrance of the tomb. In the earlier twentieth century, the Egyptologist E. Brunner-Traut thought the muu-dancers represented gods of the necropolis who transported the newly dead into their world. This interpretation built on earlier ideas advanced by the Egyptologist H. Junker. Junker tried to identify the muu-dancers with the “Souls of Buto,” who were described in the *Pyramid Texts* as the beings that received the dead into the next world. He also believed

that the “Souls of Buto” were deceased kings. Though it is true that the “Souls of Buto” had some role in welcoming the deceased into the next world, no texts actually equate the “Souls of Buto” with the muu-dancers. Rather the muu-dancers danced at the ritual point, called the Gates of Buto. Advances in understanding the *Pyramid Texts* demonstrate that the muu-dancers performed a different ritual function from the “Souls of Buto” during the funeral procession.

**EVIDENCE FROM TEXTS AND IMAGES.** The Egyptologist H. Altenmüller identified six places where the muu-dancers were active in the funerary procession, combining the evidence of texts and representations. This itinerary of the muu-dancers corresponds with the funeral procession’s itinerary. The muu-dancers began their role in the funeral from the “Hall of the Muu.” They were present as the deceased journeyed westward toward the land of the dead and then journeyed to Sais, a pilgrimage that was ritually re-enacted during the funeral. They attended the procession of the sarcophagus on a sledge, the separate procession of the canopic jars and tekenu on a sledge, and at the tekenu ritual. Artists represented the parts of this procession in paintings and relief sculpture in Old, Middle, and New Kingdom tombs, establishing that this ritual was part of the funeral for over 1,500 years. Though it must have evolved and changed over time, the muu-dance was a very long-lived ritual.

**HALL OF THE MUU-DANCERS.** Artists also represented the setting of the Hall of the Muu-Dancers in tomb paintings and relief sculptures. The Hall sat in a vegetable garden at the edge of the necropolis. When the funerary procession reached the Hall of the Muu-Dancers, the priests called for the dancers to join the procession. In the paintings and reliefs, the caption for this event is, “The Coming of the Muu-dancers.” The dancers, standing in pairs, executed a step, crossing one foot over the other with their arms raised to hip-level. In some representations they say, “She has nodded her head” while they dance, perhaps singing. The Egyptologist E. Brunner-Traut explained this phrase to mean that the Goddess of the West—the goddess of the necropolis—had approved the deceased’s entry into the necropolis. The muu-dancers’ first important role then was to welcome the deceased to the necropolis with their dance.

**PYRAMID TEXT 310.** Egyptologists have gained further understanding of the muu-dancers from the *Pyramid Texts*. These texts were the ritual that priests recited at royal funerals beginning no later than the reign of King Unas (2371–2350 B.C.E.). Something similar be-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**FERRYMEN IN A FUNERAL PROCESSION TEXT**

**INTRODUCTION:** The following funeral procession text associated the deceased with the god Atum and thus magically protected him or her from enemies. It then addressed two ferrymen called “Whose-Face-is-on-his-Front” and “Whose-Face-is-on-his-Back.” These two ferrymen most likely are represented by the paired muu-dancers.

If [Name of the Deceased] is enchanted, so will Atum be enchanted!

If [Name of the Deceased] is attacked, so will Atum be attacked!

If [Name of the Deceased] is struck, so will Atum be struck!

If [Name of the Deceased] is repelled, so will Atum be repelled!

[Name of the Deceased] is Horus.

[Name of the Deceased] has come after his father.

[Name of the Deceased] has come after Osiris.

Oh, you, Whose-Face-is-on-his-Front!

Oh, you, Whose-Face-is-on-his-Back!

Bring these things to [Name of the Deceased].

(Speech of the Ferryman)

“Which Ferry should I bring to you, oh, [Name of the Deceased]?”

(Answer)

“Bring to [Name of the Deceased] (the ferry named) “It flies up and lets itself down!”

*Translated by Edward Bleiberg.*

came part of the beginning of all elite funerals somewhat later. H. Altenmüller correlated *Pyramid Texts* 306 through 310 with New Kingdom scenes of the *tekenu* and canopic jar procession. Artists divided the scenes into five parts, including the bringing of the tekenu, a censuring, the bringing of the canopic jars, the bearing of the papyrus stocks, and the dance of the muu-dancers. These five scenes correlate with the five *Pyramid Texts*. In *Pyramid Text* 310, the spell identifies the deceased with the god Atum. According to the text, if enemies enchanted, opposed, struck, or repelled the deceased, it would be no more effective than to do the same to the god Atum. The text then associated the deceased with the god Horus. As Horus he asks the two ferrymen—Whose-Face-is-on-his-Front and Whose-Face-is-on-his-Back—to bring the ferry boat called “It flies up and lets itself down” to him. Thus in this text the pair of

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MUU-DANCERS AS FOUR ROYAL CROWNS**

**INTRODUCTION:** In this *Pyramid Text* the deceased appeared before the personifications of four royal crowns. A priest greeted these beings on behalf of the deceased. The deceased was called Horus, a god who was also the king and whose damaged and healed eye became the symbol for healing and rebirth. By making this connection between the deceased and Horus, the priest enlisted the personifications of the royal crowns in the rebirth into the next world. It is likely that the muu-dancers became personifications of the crowns at this point in their dance. Various connections within the pyramid texts associated groups of four with the muu-dancers who appeared as two pairs.

The gates of the horizon are open, the door-bolts  
are shoved back.  
He [the deceased] has come to you, Oh *net*-crown!  
He [the deceased] has come to you, Oh  
*neseRET*-crown!  
He [the deceased] has come to you, Oh  
*weret*-crown!  
He [the deceased] has come to you, Oh *weret*-  
*hekaw*-crown,  
While he is pure for you and while he fears you.  
May you be satisfied with him!  
May you be satisfied with his purity!  
May you be satisfied with his word, that he might  
say to you,  
"How beautiful is your face, when you are satisfied,  
when you are new and young. A god has created  
you, the father of the gods!"  
He [the deceased] has come to you, oh *weret*-  
*hekaw*-crown!  
He is Horus, who has strived to protect his eye, oh  
*weret-hekaw*-crown.

*Translated by Edward Bleiberg.*

muu-dancers are ferrymen whose job was to transport the tekenu and the canopic jars.

**PERSONIFIED AS CROWNS.** H. Altenmüller connected *Pyramid Text 220* with scenes in tombs of the muu-dancers before the Gates of Buto. The four personifications of crowns named in *Pyramid Text 220* were probably the same four beings addressed in *Pyramid Text 310* where they were called ferrymen. In the spell, the crowns were not symbols of royal power. Rather they were personified as beings that wore crowns, each with a beautiful face. The fact that these beings had a face at all, and could also feel

satisfaction and appear both new and young, indicates that the spell was addressing beings rather than crowns themselves. The three statements about them in the text referred to their outer form, physical circumstances, and descent from gods. H. Altenmüller associated these four beings with the two pairs of muu-dancers in tomb scenes. As gatekeepers at the gates of the horizon, they played a similar role to the ferrymen of *Pyramid Text 310*; they facilitated transport of the deceased to the afterlife. Furthermore, Altenmüller showed through connections with other spells that this horizon gate is located in the east, making it the beginning of the sun-god Re's journey from east to west. Thus the evidence from the *Pyramid Texts* connects the muu-dancers with the transport of the deceased from the east—the land of the living—to the west—the land of the dead—through their dance. This transportation involves the god's boat, a place easily associated with the ferrymen muu-dancers. *Pyramid Text* spells 220 and 310 thus establish that the muu-dancers represented ferrymen. This connection is clear because of comparisons between the scenes in tombs of the Old Kingdom and the role the texts played in the burial ritual. In *Pyramid Text 220*, the dancers represented ferrymen who double as border guards on the east side of heaven and who were personifications of the Lower Egyptian crowns. These crowns were also associated with ferrymen in *Pyramid Text 1214a*.

**PLANTS.** Egyptian thought conceived of a heavenly world filled with canals and ferrymen from experience of life on earth. These ferrymen, in both realms, wore plants and wreaths as clothing. Numerous depictions of boats in tombs show that the crewmembers decorated themselves with braided plants, placed in their hair. The papyrus-stem headdress worn by the muu-dancers thus connects them further with boats and ferries.

**STATUE PROCESSIONS.** Another connection between ferrymen and muu-dancers can be found in statue processions. In Old Kingdom tombs, there are scenes that depict processions of statues guarded by muu-dancers. Inscriptions in these scenes compare the processions to a trip by boat. The dancers in the processions thus perform the same guardian function during funerals as the dancers perform in the statue processions.

**SONS OF HORUS.** The muu-dancers probably were fused with the Sons of Horus, the spirits who were directly connected to the canopic jars that held the viscera of the deceased. The Sons of Horus helped convey the funerary procession in the land of the dead. The Sons of Horus were also ferrymen and border guards, further connecting them to the muu-dancers.



Canopic jars of Neskhons, 21st Dynasty. The wooden lids of these jars represent the four Sons of Horus, four minor gods who protected the organs that they contained: the falcon-headed Qebhsenuf (intestines), the jackal-headed Duamutef (the stomach), the baboon-headed Hapy (the lungs), and the human-headed Imsety (the liver). © THE BRITISH MUSEUM/TOPHAM-HIP/THE IMAGE WORKS.

**ANCESTORS.** The muu-dancers might also have represented the deceased's ancestors. The muu-dancers were clearly part of a large group called the "Followers of Re." This group rode in the sun-god Re's boat that carried the sun from east to west in this world during the day and conveyed the sun through the land of the dead at night. Membership in the "Followers of Re" was available to all high officials after their death. The muu-dancers represented all the dead ancestors of the deceased that rode in the sun-god's boat. This connection between the deceased's ancestors and the muu-dancers also explains a line from *The Story of Sinuhe*. In the letter that the king wrote to Sinuhe inviting him to return to Egypt from the Levant, the king said, "The Dance of the Weary-ones will be performed at the entrance to your tomb." The "weary-ones" was another name for all the deceased's ancestors. The dancers at the tomb entrance certainly included the muu-dancers. Thus the muu-dancers and the ancestors can easily be equated.

**CHANGE.** Muu-dancers were a feature of Egyptian funerals for at least 1,500 years from the Old Kingdom through the New Kingdom. It is possible, though, that the muu-dancers were replaced by dancing dwarfs by the Twentieth Dynasty. The Egyptian national epic, *The Story of Sinuhe*, was recopied from its composition in the Middle Kingdom through the end of Egyptian history. A copy made near the time of composition is quoted as saying, "The Dance of the Weary-ones will be performed at the entrance to your tomb." The word for weary-ones



The Egyptian god Bes, god of dance, music, and pleasure. Stele in the temenos at Dendera. © 2003 CHARLES WALKER/TOPFOTO/THE IMAGE WORKS.

in Egyptian is *neniu*. In a Twentieth-dynasty copy of the same text it reads, "The dance of the dwarfs will be performed for you at the entrance to your tomb." The word "dwarfs" in Egyptian is *nemiu*. Perhaps by the Twentieth Dynasty, the dwarf-god Bes joined the funeral procession. Bes was both a god of birth and re-birth as well as a dwarf. Thus Egyptian traditions could easily assimilate him into the funeral procession.

#### SOURCES

Hartwig Altenmüller, "Zur Frage der *MWW*," *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 2 (1975): 1–37.

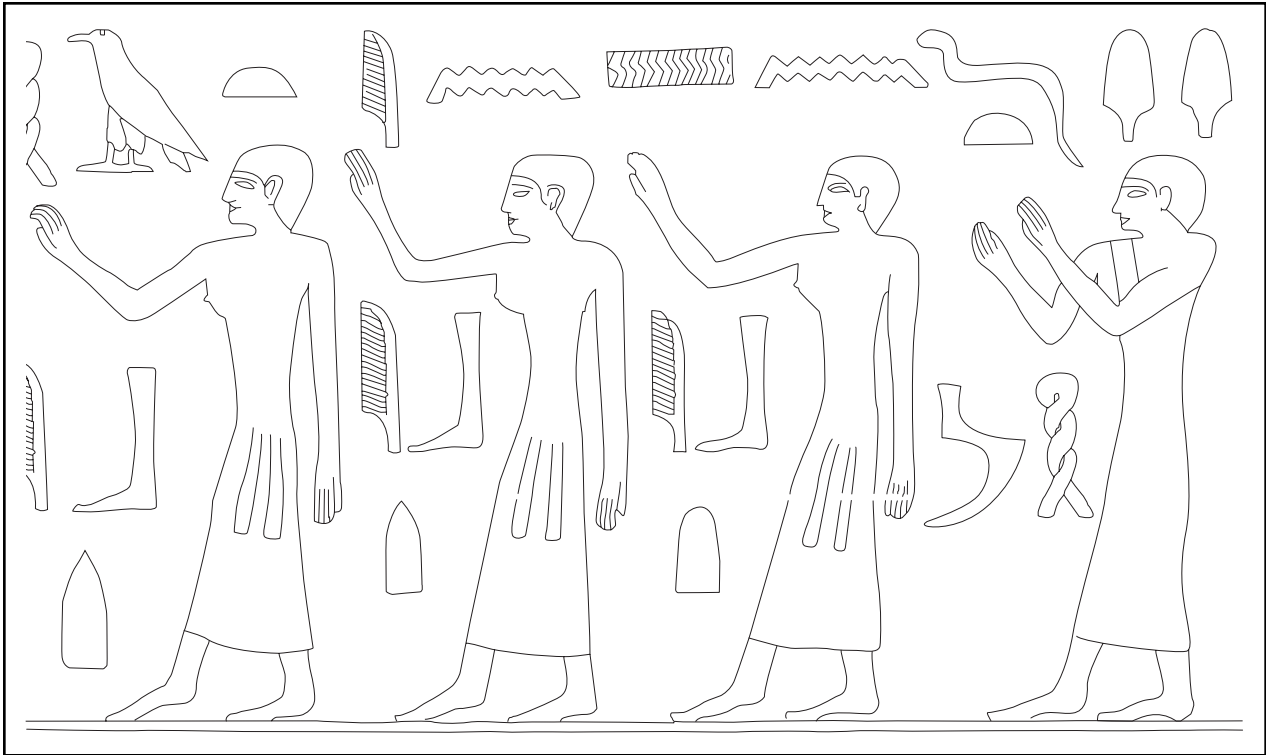
Emma Brunner-Traut, *Der Tanz im Alten Ägypten* (Glückstadt, Germany: J.J. Augustin, 1938).

SEE ALSO *Religion: Funerary Beliefs and Practices*

#### THE IBA-DANCE AND HEBY-DANCE

**LIFE AND DEATH.** The *iba*-dance and the *heby*-dance are two different names for the same dance. Old and Middle Kingdom artists used the word *iba* in captions to scenes depicting it, while New Kingdom scribes used *heby* in the same context. Artists portrayed the *iba*-dance and the *heby*-dance in tombs, suggesting they had some meaning for the deceased in the next life. Yet they portrayed the dancers performing while people ate meals, a quintessential part of daily life on earth. During the Old Kingdom, the tomb scenes show the deceased eating, often with a spouse. New Kingdom scenes portray a banquet with many guests in addition to the deceased and close family members both eating and watching the dance. Thus it seems likely that the Egyptians watched





Drawing of Iba dance from the tomb of Qar, Giza. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

iba- and heby-dances while eating on earth and also expected to see them again after death. Nevertheless, the cultic connections between the dance and ritual are so close it is unlikely that these dances are truly secular.

**DESCRIPTION.** Women danced the iba and heby, usually for men or a couple in the Old and Middle Kingdoms and for a larger group of men and women in the New Kingdom. The characteristic steps included arms raised above the head and joined to form a diamond shape. In a second step, the dancers raised the right hand in greeting as the left hand and arm pointed straight down. At the same time, both heels were raised from the ground, so that the dancers were resting only on their toes. The next step included raising the left hand and arm until it was parallel with the ground and simultaneously raising the left foot above the ground with the sole of the foot parallel to the ground. In tombs outside the capital regions of Memphis and Thebes, the dances included more lively and athletic steps that appear quite acrobatic. The dancers formed a bridge by leaning backward until the hands and head reached the ground. In the New Kingdom, the dancers sometimes played the lute as they danced in a more lively manner.

**COSTUME.** The women performing this dance during the Old and Middle Kingdoms wore a short skirt that

ended just above the knees. They sometimes wore a band of cloth that encircled the neck and crossed between the breasts and over the back. Sometimes the women wore a headdress of lotus flowers. This costume was certainly less modest than the typical Old Kingdom dress for women. Women of all classes normally wore tight-fitting long dresses with straps over the shoulders and a V-neck; the singers and clappers are distinguished from the dancers by their wearing of this more traditional clothing. The short skirt clearly allowed the dancers to move more freely than they would while wearing the typical street clothes. Some scholars have suggested that this costume indicates the dancers were foreigners. Though foreigners could be members of the dance troupe, there is no evidence to support the belief that foreigners or foreign dress dominated Egyptian dance.

**IN PROCESSION.** In at least one case during the Old Kingdom, a tomb displays dancers doing the iba dance in a funeral procession rather than during a meal. The women dancing in the tomb of Akhethotep raise their arms to form a diamond shape with the hands apart. Perhaps this scene is a clue that the iba actually was a part of the tjeref funeral dance. The nature of the evidence makes it difficult to know exactly how these dances fit together.

## SOURCES

Emma Brunner-Traut, *Der Tanz in alten Ägyptischen nach bildlichen und inschriftlichen Zeugnissen* (Glückstadt, Germany: J. J. Augustin, 1938).

## CULT DANCES

**WORSHIP.** Cult dances were essential to worshipping the gods in Egypt. Just as the gods required food, clothing, and incense, they expected dances to be performed periodically at festivals. These dances are less studied than the dances associated with the funeral, perhaps because the scenes of these dances are less available for study in publications, requiring further research. The Egyptians worshipped Hathor, Amun, and Osiris with dance, along with other gods.

**LEAPING HATHOR DANCE.** The goddess Hathor had many connections to dance and music. Scribes included inscriptions naming Hathor in depictions of a leaping dance and an acrobatic dance. In the leaping dance, a girl in a short skirt danced while swinging a mirror and a staff that she raised in her hand. Mirrors often depicted Hathor on the handle as an expression of her connection to female beauty. Two musicians surrounded her. They wore long dresses and manipulated the same two objects. A third girl dancing in a circle around the others also lifted a mirror and staff with another gesture. All the dancers wore the ponytail with disk hairstyle that associated the dancers with the sun-god Re. A very abbreviated text mentions Hathor, but it is too brief to allow translation.

**ACROBATIC HATHOR DANCE.** In the tomb of Ankhmahor from Dynasty Six, artists depicted five women performing a distinctive acrobatic step. They raised one leg at a steep angle, while they leaned far back, dangling their ponytail with the disk weight on to the ground. They balanced on one foot, flat on the ground. They wore a short skirt with a band of cloth descending from the belt to below the hem and anklets. The accompanying inscription mentions Hathor, but is too abbreviated to translate. The artists included singers who clapped and kept time for the dancers. In New Kingdom representations of this dance, the singers held the *menat*, a percussion instrument also associated with Hathor.

**OTHER CULT DANCES.** Blocks from a chapel built by Hatshepsut (1478–1458 B.C.E.) at the Karnak Temple depict dancers in a procession during the Feast of the Valley and the Feast of Opet. These two festivals were the god Amun's main annual festivals. The Feast of the Valley included a procession between the god's home in Kar-



Statuette of a female acrobatic dancer. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 13.1024, GIFT OF THE EGYPT EXPLORATION FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

nak and the temples of deceased kings across the Nile river. The Opet Festival included a procession from Karnak to Luxor, the temple that represented the god's harem. The dancers in both festival processions performed an acrobatic dance. Its major movement was the bridge where the dancers leaned back until their arms supported them. Characteristically for this dance, their hair surrounded their upper bodies. The women wore only long skirts and their hair was loose. The musicians played the sistrum and menat, two different kinds of ritual rattles. Both the sistrum and menat link the dance to Hathor, whose image was often included on these instruments.

## SOURCES

Emma Brunner-Traut, *Der Tanz in alten Ägyptischen nach bildlichen und inschriftlichen Zeugnissen* (Glückstadt, Germany: J. J. Augustin, 1938).

SEE ALSO *Music: Musical Deities*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Dance*

### HORIHOTEP

fl. Twenty-second Dynasty (c. 945–712 B.C.E.)

*Chief Dancer of Bastet*

**PRIEST AND DANCER.** Horihotep lived some time during the Twenty-second Dynasty. Only a small, pyramid-shaped stone, roughly 22 inches tall, that once

capped the façade of his tomb, attests to his life. His title, Chief Dancer of Bastet, suggests that this goddess required dance to be part of her regular worship. The title also suggests that male dancers might have had a greater role in temple worship than was obvious from other evidence available for study. The mystery of who Hori-hotep was and what exactly he did can only be solved with further discoveries of chief dancers of gods.

#### SOURCES

Jan Quaegebeur and Agnes Rammant-Peeters, "Pyramidion d'un danseur de Bastet," *Studio Paulo Naster Oblata* (Leuven, Belgium: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1982): 179–205.

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### KHNUMHOTEP

fl. Sixth Dynasty (c. 2350–2170 B.C.E.)

*Overseer of Ka-priests*

**PRIEST AND DANCER.** Khnumhotep left only a statue with inscriptions to mark his life on earth. The statue depicts a man who was a dwarf. He reached a mid-level managerial position as an overseer of ka-priests, the priests who perform the daily ritual for the deceased. Dwarfs were never the object of prejudice in Egyptian society. In fact, Egyptians associated dwarfs with the sun god, Re, and the god of dance and childbirth, Bes. In the inscription carved on Khnumhotep's statue, he speaks of dancing in the funerals of two sacred bulls. Sacred bulls, associated with the funeral god Osiris, were buried in special tombs in Saqqara. These dance performances must have been high points of Khnumhotep's career because he specifically mentions them. Khnumhotep is one of a very few male dancers known by name from ancient Egypt.

#### SOURCES

Ola el-Aguízy, "Dwarfs and Pygmies in Ancient Egypt," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 71 (1987): 53–60.

Auguste Mariette, *Les mastabas de l'ancien empire* (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1889): 435b.

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### WATETKHETHOR

Before the reign of King Teti (c. 2350–2338 B.C.E.)—The reign of King Pepi I (c. 2338–2298 B.C.E.)

*Princess*

*Priestess of Hathor*

**KING'S DAUGHTER.** Watetkhethor Sheshat was born sometime before the reign of her father, King Teti.

She descended from the family that ruled Egypt during the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties. She married the prime minister, Mereruka, who served her father. They had a son and a daughter. She served as a priestess of the goddess Hathor, which perhaps explains her interest in dance, since Hathor was the goddess most associated with sacred dance in Egypt. Watetkhethor's tomb, which was attached to her husband's tomb, contained six rooms. This large mastaba-tomb had considerably more wall space than ordinary tombs. Watetkhethor commissioned an artist to decorate one wall with a depiction of the tjeref dance. The artist divided the wall into six registers that contain 31 different female figures performing the dance, step by step. Members of the *kheneret*, the organization of professional dancers, performed the tjeref dance at the conclusion of a funeral. The dance contained allusions to each of the major components of a funeral. Watetkhethor's scene of the tjeref dance is the most complete account of this important Egyptian dance.

#### SOURCES

P. Duell, *The Mastaba of Mereruka*. 2 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938).

Jonathan Van Lepp, "The Dance Scene of Watetkhethor: An Art Historical Approach to the Role of Dance in the Old Kingdom Funerary Ritual." Unpublished master's thesis (Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, 1987).

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Dance*

Any, *The Wisdom of Any* (c. 1539–1075 B.C.E.)—A book of instructions on living properly, composed in the New Kingdom, that claims the gods require dance as an offering along with food, drink, and incense.

Anonymous, *The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys* (after 332 B.C.E.)—This addition to a copy of the *Book of the Dead* contains instructions for how dancers should perform parts of the funeral dance.

Anonymous, *Papyrus Westcar* (before 1630 B.C.E.)—The only description of a dance and music bureau in context, it describes gods and goddesses disguised as singers and dancers who act as midwives.

Anonymous, *Pyramid Texts* (at least the reign of Teti, c. 2350–2338 B.C.E.)—Several of the spells refer to the dances performed during the funeral procession.

Pepi II, *Thank-you Note to Harkhuf* (c. 2286 B.C.E.)—  
Recorded on the recipient's tomb wall, King Pepi II  
thanks Harkhuf for bringing to him a dancing pygmy  
from central Africa to perform dances for the gods.

Watetkhethor, *Tomb Relief of Funeral Dance* (c. 2350–2338  
B.C.E.)—Princess Watetkhethor ordered this most com-  
plete depiction of the parts of the funeral dance for her  
tomb.

chapter **3** three

FASHION

*Edward Bleiberg*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	86	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	88	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>Letter from Irer to her Master</i> (Irer faces difficulties managing her master's weaving shop) . . . . .	89
Cloth Production . . . . .	88	<i>A Carpenter's Correspondence</i> (thanks are given for payments of clothing and other goods). . . . .	90
Clothing . . . . .	91	Men's Wardrobes: Continuity and Change . . . . .	93
Hairstyles. . . . .	97	Women's Wardrobes: Continuity and Change . . . . .	96
Crowns . . . . .	100	Semi-Precious Stones—Imported and Local . . . . .	107
Jewelry and Amulets . . . . .	105		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Irer . . . . .	109		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	110		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Fashion*

*All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).*

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| <p>5000 Archaeological evidence that flax grew in Egypt suggests that linen fabric was available at this early date. Flax was originally an import to Egypt, perhaps from Syria.</p> <p>4400–4000 The first Egyptian depiction of a horizontal loom for making linen comes from this period.</p> <p>3100–2675 An ivory statuette depicts a king wearing a patterned cloak.</p> <p>3100–2800 Kings wear both the White and Red Crowns, symbols of rule over Upper and Lower Egypt.</p> <p>King Narmer wears the earliest known archaic wraparound kilt. The style persists into the New Kingdom for both men and women.</p> <p>Kings begin to wear the striped Nemes kerchief and the Uraeus snake over the forehead.</p> <p>A brown shirt from this time period, excavated from Tarkan, shows the first evidence of dyed clothing.</p> <p>2675–2170 Men wear both close-cropped natural hairstyles and shoulder-length wigs covering the ears.</p> <p>Women wear short natural hairstyles and the tripartite wig.</p> <p>Kings wear at least nine different crowns in the coronation ceremony. These crowns persist until the Ptolemaic period.</p> | <p>2675–2625 Third-dynasty evidence shows women wearing sleeveless v-necked dresses, a style that persists into the New Kingdom.</p> <p>King Djoser first wears the Nemes kerchief.</p> <p>2625–2585 A shirt excavated from the reign of King Sneferu shows evidence of the use of red dye.</p> <p>The first evidence of the bead-net dress for women dates from this time period.</p> <p>2500–2350 Fifth-dynasty artistic evidence shows workmen wearing aprons without other clothing. This practice continues in the Middle Kingdom.</p> <p>2485–2472 King Sahure is the first king to wear the Atef crown, most likely a crown referring to the king's strength.</p> <p>2350–2170 Royal women first wear the Uraeus snake above their foreheads.</p> <p>2008–1938 An Eleventh-dynasty letter written by a scribe named Nakht mentions long-distance shipping of cloth.</p> <p>Women first wear the v-necked dress with sleeves, a style that persists into the New Kingdom.</p> <p>The first evidence of the full-length and the short bag tunic, a style that persists into the New Kingdom, dates from this period.</p> <p>Officials begin wearing shawls and cloaks.</p> <p>Men wear shoulder-length wigs with hair tucked behind the ears.</p> |
|---|--|

- Royal women begin to wear the Hathoric wig.
- 1938–1759 Twelfth-dynasty evidence shows hunters wearing protective codpieces.
- 1844–1837 During the reign of King Senwosret II, small-scale home spinning and weaving workshops begin to appear.
- 1759–1630 A Thirteenth-dynasty papyrus, now in the Brooklyn Museum, lists twenty female weavers who specialized in different kinds of cloth.
- 1630–1539 Kings first wear the Blue Crown, the everyday crown of kings in the New Kingdom.
- 1539–1075 Women first wear the complex wrap-around dress, supplanting the simple wraparound dress.
- New Kingdom evidence that soldiers, sailors, and craftsmen wore leather loin-cloths to protect linen loin-cloths dates from this period.
- Women first wear the enveloping wig.
- Men begin to wear more elaborate hairstyles.
- 1539–1514 Royal women first wear a double Uraeus in the reign of King Ahmose.
- 1514–1493 Curved ram's horns, a symbol of the god Amun, become a regular element of the king's crowns during the reign of Amenhotep I.
- 1479–1425 Textual evidence from the tomb of the vizier Rekhmire names a large number of different grades of linen.
- 1478–1458 The tomb of princess Hatneferet and vizier Ramose contains large numbers of examples of upper-class, non-royal clothing.
- 1400–1390 King Thutmose IV is the first king to combine the Red and White crowns with the Nemes kerchief.
- 1390–1352 The queen's crowns in the reign of Amenhotep III adopt a cirlet of Uraeus-snakes as a base.
- 1352–1332 Unisex hairstyles called the Nubian wig and the rounded wig are worn during the reign of Akhenaten and Nefertiti.
- Nefertiti is the first queen to wear the Cap Crown, worn by kings since the Old Kingdom.
- 1332–1322 King Tutankhamun's tomb contains hundreds of examples of clothing.
- 1292–1075 Very long wigs—waist length for women and shoulder length for men—become fashionable.
- Priests begin shaving their heads.
- 760–656 Egyptian rulers from the Sudan adopt a double Uraeus formerly only worn by women.
- 332–30 Ptolemaic queens begin wearing a triple Uraeus.

## OVERVIEW *of Fashion*

**IMPORTANCE OF CLOTHING.** In ancient Egypt cloth was one of the major commodities, along with bread and beer, used in place of money in barter transactions. Cloth making was a labor-intensive activity before the invention of mechanical spinning machines and looms, so it was not uncommon for the average person to have only one or two sets of clothing to last them through the years. Thus the amount of clothing a person owned was a key indicator of status and wealth among the Egyptians. For example, the tomb of King Tutankhamun (r. 1332–1322 B.C.E.) contained hundreds of garments. But even upper-class, non-royal tombs included cloth. The tomb of princess Hatneferet and vizier (high-ranking government official) Ramose, who died during the reign of Hatshepsut (1478–1458 B.C.E.), contained 76 sheets, one old shirt, eighteen shawls, fourteen sheets of linen, and shrouds, in addition to vast quantities of other clothing. The clothing scholar Gillian Eastwood-Vogelsang speculated that the clothing in tombs could have been equivalent in worth to gold to this ancient society, and was often a motivating factor for tomb robbers.

**EVIDENCE FROM ART.** The evidence that can be gleaned from art about ancient Egyptian clothing is distorted by artistic conventions, though it is useful for discovering the way clothing was worn and how it changed over time. Artists were often conservative in their depictions of the deceased, showing people in older fashions that they might rarely have worn in life in order to preserve art's magical function in tomb decoration. Artists also neglected to depict the changes from work clothes to home clothes for workers. There is no indication in art that different clothes were worn in different seasons and at different times of day. Tomb owners, in general, were always depicted in their best clothing in tomb scenes. Furthermore, scholars sometimes disagree on how to interpret the clothing worn in a work of art. For example, a statue of a First-dynasty king depicts the king wearing a cloak that can be described as embroidered, quilted, or knitted. Each of these terms implies a different technique and suggests

different degrees of sophistication in the production of clothing. Comparing archaeological examples of clothing to art, it seems to be true that Egyptian fashion changed slowly. The New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) was one brief period during ancient Egyptian history when paintings depict changes in fashion. However, from the Predynastic (beginning in 4400 B.C.E.) to the Ptolemaic Period (ending in 30 B.C.E.) basic everyday wear did not appear to change significantly. In the archaeological record, Egypt displays a surprising lack of class-consciousness in clothing styles. Evidence shows that King Tutankhamun dressed similarly to his subjects. The bag tunic, for example, was a common garment for both kings and commoners, though there were considerable differences in the quality of fabrics. In art, however, priests and kings wear occupational clothing while performing their duties.

**TYPES AND ADORNMENTS.** Egyptian clothing is divided into two main categories. One category—wraparound clothing—used a length of cloth that the wearer draped on the body. The second category—cut-to-shape garments—were either triangular or rectangular pieces of cloth with sewn edges. These categories are difficult to recognize in the archaeological record. Wraparound clothing found in tombs often resembles bedsheets. Only careful examination of fold marks reveals the way large pieces of textiles were actually used. Garments cut-to-shape that archaeologists have discovered in tombs are easy to recognize yet are not often represented in the artistic record. Headgear such as crowns and kerchiefs and jewelry were as equally important as clothing in ancient Egyptian fashion. These adornments often conveyed a message through symbolism and magically protected the wearer. Crowns and kerchiefs identified kings and the particular purpose of a statue or relief. Often, for example, a pair of royal statues depicted the king with the red crown of Lower Egypt and the white crown of Upper Egypt. This pair of statues would then convey the message that the king ruled the whole country. Jewelry could be a means of displaying wealth but also protected the wearer. Amulets worn suspended from chains around the neck were a major source of divine protection in daily life for an Egyptian.

## TOPICS *in Fashion*

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### CLOTH PRODUCTION

**LINEN.** Linen was the most popular cloth for ancient Egyptian clothing. There are rare examples of both



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LETTER FROM IRER TO HER MASTER**

**INTRODUCTION:** Weaving shops were frequently part of a household in ancient Egypt. The following letter concerns difficulties that the woman responsible for supervising the weavers faces without adequate food supplies for payment. In this letter, Irer blames her master directly for her problems. Moreover, she has additional responsibilities to serve as a priestess at a temple. The letter illustrates the difficulties in administering a household weaving shop. The letter writer observes certain conventions of Egyptian epistles. Because Irer writes to her social superior, she calls herself “your humble servant” and calls the recipient, “the lord I.p.h.” The initials indicate the ancient Egyptian formula, “may he live, may he prosper, may he be healthy” that follows any mention of such a social superior in writing. Words in square brackets are restored in this somewhat tattered papyrus. When followed by a question mark, it is a best-guess as to what the text originally said.

What the lady of the house Irer sends:

This is a communication to the lord, I.p.h., to the effect that all business affairs of the lord, I.p.h., are prosperous and flourishing wherever they are. In the favor of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Khakheperre (Senwosret II), the deceased, and of all the gods as [I, your humble servant, desire]!

[It is] a communication to the lord, I.p.h., about this neglectfulness on the part of the lord, I.p.h. Are you all safe [and sound? The women weavers(?)] are left abandoned, thinking they won't get food provisions inasmuch as not any news of you has been heard. It is good if [the lord, I.p.h.] takes note.

This is a communication to the lord, I.p.h., about those slave-women who are here unable to weave clothes. Your presence [is demanded(?)] by those who work at(?) the warp-threads so as to be guided(?). I, your humble servant, couldn't come myself owing to the fact that I, your humble servant, entered the temple on the twentieth day of the month to serve as *wab*-priestess for the month(?). [So] may the lord, I.p.h., bring them (food supplies?) with him. It is a case of paying attention to that other(?) woman Heremhab when coming [for the(?)] Asiatic. the lord, I.p.h., should spend sometime here since [not] any clothes [have been made] while my attention is being directed to the temple, and the warp-threads are set up on the loom without its being possible to weave them.

This is a communication for the lord, I.p.h. It is good if the lord, I.p.h. takes note.

Address: the lord, I.p.h., Good luck(?)! [from the lady of the house Irer].

**SOURCE:** “Letter from the lady of the house Irer to her Master,” in *Letters from Ancient Egypt*. Ed. Edward F. Wente (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990): 82–83.

sheep's and goat's wool garments and of palm fiber clothing found in the archaeological record. But Egyptians of all ranks and classes wore various grades of linen clothing in all periods. The flax plant (*Linum usitatissimum*) was the source of Egyptian linen. There is good evidence that flax grew in Egypt as early as 5000 B.C.E., but flax was not native to Egypt and might have originally been imported from Syria. The flax plant matures in three months from seed to flower. After its blue flowers died, the Egyptians pulled the plant from the ground rather than using a sickle to harvest it. The dead flowers are the source of the seeds and they remained part of the plant until the whole stock dried. Then the cultivator removed the seeds either by hand or using a tool called a rippling comb. The seeds were planted for the next crop. Workers then retted the plant by alternately wetting it and drying it in the sunlight. The retting process loosened the fibers inside the plant stem. Preparation for spinning the fibers included washing, drying, beating, and combing. The plant fiber then would be turned into thread by spinning it. The Egyptians used hand spindles

consisting of a stick used for a shaft and a whorl that acted as a weight to stretch the fiber and kept the spindle moving at a constant pace. Spinning twisted the fibers of the flax stem together to form a longer piece of thread. Spinning also included a process called attenuation that fully extended the fiber. Twisting then added to its strength. Finally the spinner wound the thread onto a shaft. The resulting linen thread was both strong and elastic.

**WEAVING.** Weavers used spun thread to make cloth. They removed spun thread from the spindle once it was finished and strung it on a loom, forming the warp. The warp was the system of parallel threads kept under tension on a loom. The weft is the system of threads passed over and under the warp to form cloth. Egyptians used both horizontal and vertical looms to weave. Horizontal looms rested on the ground with the warp stretched between two beams. Pegs in the ground held the beams in place. A predynastic tomb (before 4000 B.C.E.) in Badari, a village in Upper Egypt, contained a representation on a bowl of a horizontal ground loom. Vertical looms

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A CARPENTER'S CORRESPONDENCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Clothing was an essential element in a person's pay if he or she was too poor to have servants who could weave cloth. This letter written by a carpenter in the reign of Ramesses V (1150–1145 B.C.E.) illustrates the way ordinary Egyptians thought of clothing as payment.

The carpenter Maanakhtef greets the carpenter Kenkikhopeshef: In life, prosperity and health and in the favor of Amon-Re, King of the Gods! To wit:

I have reached Hu (Hu-Sekhem). Both Amenmose and Pahemnetjer as well have taken very good care of me in the way of bread, beer, ointment, and clothing. As soon as my letter reaches you, you shall send me a wooden door as well as a cubit stick. Then shall Amon give to you. Farewell!

**SOURCE:** Maanakhtef, "Letter to Kenkikhopeshef," in *Letters from Ancient Egypt*. Ed. Edward F. Wente (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 167.

leaned against walls. An upper beam could rest on limestone blocks set up against house walls. Such looms could be up to five meters (sixteen feet) high, allowing for long pieces of cloth. Each loom supported the four main patterns of weaving in ancient Egypt. The simplest form was balanced tabby, where there are an equal number of warp and weft threads per square centimeter or inch. The Egyptians also wove faced tabby weaves. These weaves include either more warp (warp-faced) or more weft (weft-faced) threads per square centimeter or inch of fabric. They also made tapestry weaves, a process where the warp and weft were different colors. Often in tapestry, a weft thread did not reach from one end of the warp to the other, but was interwoven in the place where the color was needed to form a pattern. Known tapestry from tombs seems restricted to the royal sources. Though not a separate weave, the Egyptians also added loops of threads to the warp in a process called weft-looping. The resulting cloth resembles modern towels. The Egyptians used weft-looping to create delicate patterns.

**LINEN QUALITIES.** The Egyptians had names for several different qualities of linen. An inscription in the tomb of Rekhmire, a vizier in the time of Thutmose III (r. 1479–1425 B.C.E.), refers to royal linen, bleached linen, fine linen, and close-woven linen, among other types. Some archaeological examples of linen also have

symbols on them in ink that Egyptologists believe refer to the quality of the material. Differences in quality refer to fineness of the cloth. Some examples from the tomb of Tutankhamun are nearly transparent. Thus artistic representations of "see-through" costumes are likely to be accurate. Another quality that set certain linens apart was color. By the First Dynasty (3100–2800 B.C.E.) the Egyptians used brown thread to weave cloth. Excavators found red cloth fragments at Meidum, the site of Sneferu's pyramid (2625–2585 B.C.E.). In the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) colored cloth is even more common. The Egyptians used both ocher and plant material to make dye. Ocher is an iron oxide (the technical name of rust) mixed with clay. Naturally occurring ocher is yellow, but heating it transforms the color to red. Thus ocher could be used to produce either yellow or red cloth. A number of Egyptian plants could also produce red dye. These include madder root (*Rubia tinctorum*), safflower (*Carthamus tinctorum*), henna (*Lawsonia alba* or *L. inermis*), and alkanet (*Anchusa tinctoria*). Blue dyes also came from plants. The Egyptians probably made it from woad (*Isatis tinctorum*), which is found in Egypt. Yellow dye came from safflower and pomegranate (*Punica granatum*). Imported dyes found in Egyptian textiles include indigotin that creates blue, and alizarin that creates red. These dyes, much like the flax plant, most likely originated in Syria, and the Egyptians imported them. Thus textiles other than natural linen color must have been relatively expensive and available only to the wealthy.

**TEXTILE WORKSHOPS.** The vast majority of textile workers in ancient Egypt were women. Representation of weavers, laundresses, and even the flax harvest depict women doing this work. Yet the supervisors were all men. The exception to this division of labor was the male weavers who operated the vertical looms. Women dominated horizontal weaving while men were responsible for the heavier vertical looms. Regardless of who worked the looms, almost every sort of Egyptian home had spinning and weaving workshops. Small houses in the village at Kahun in Middle Egypt, dating to the time of Senwosret II (r. 1844–1837 B.C.E.) and later, were production sites for small-scale spinning and weaving. The larger the household, the more women would be assigned to textile workshops. Nobles' estates, royal palaces, harems, and temples (gods' houses) also contained workshops staffed by large groups of women. Among the papyri that refer to cloth are two examples from the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.). In *Cairo Papyrus* 91061, a man named Nakht wrote to a man named Aau that the weavers had finished a bolt of cloth and that he had

sent it already. This papyrus thus suggests that cloth was shipped long distances within Egypt. A list of 38 servants in *Papyrus Brooklyn* 35.1446 includes twenty weavers. This list suggests through the titles that weavers could specialize in particular kinds of cloth. From these papyri, many scholars have also concluded that cloth played an important economic role in Egyptian life. Egyptians needed cloth for their own clothing but also used it as an offering to the gods. From archeological evidence, it can be seen that cloth could also be used to pay wages in-kind. Cloth was produced both in private domestic settings and in large institutions such as palaces and temples and was a vital cog in ancient Egyptian economy.

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#### CLOTHING

**EVIDENCE.** Two kinds of evidence survive for modern scholars to study ancient Egypt clothing. The Egyptians included complete wardrobes for the deceased in their tombs to wear in the next world. Thus it is possible to study garments that were folded for storage in the tomb. Many Egyptian garments, however, were not constructed like modern Western clothing, but rather were simply squares, rectangles, and triangles of cloth or leather that were arranged on the body in different styles and foldings. Thus some garments such as elaborately folded dresses or kilts can only be understood through the second kind of evidence available: a careful study of artistic representations. Yet this evidence is often problematic in itself. Artists who worked in two dimensions presented combined perspectives on a garment, including, for example, both a side view and a front view in the same representation, as was the convention for representing the human face in two dimensions, and these often left the viewer without a clear view of the shape of a garment. Three-dimensional works of art are thus more helpful in understanding the shape of a garment, though not all the details of the folds would be obvious even from the best statues. Furthermore, certain artistic conventions forced artists to

represent clothing as tight-fitting when it is clear from the archaeological evidence that dresses, for example, were usually worn looser—otherwise walking would have been impossible. Furthermore, in art, especially from tombs and temples, people wear only their best clothing even in situations that seem incongruous for such finery. Senedjem and his wife, two Nineteenth-dynasty (1307–1196 B.C.E.) tomb owners, are represented in their tomb plowing in their most elaborate clothing. Everyday wear thus can only be observed from the wardrobes left in tombs for the deceased to wear in the afterlife. For these reasons scholars have tried to combine the archaeological evidence of tomb wardrobes with artistic evidence to achieve a fuller understanding of ancient Egyptian clothing.

**LOINCLOTHS.** The loincloth was most likely a universal item of clothing in ancient Egypt. Tutankhamun's tomb contained fifty loincloths, and workmen also wore them, as is seen in tomb paintings. Loincloths were made from both cloth and leather, though leather loincloths had a specialized use. The cloth loincloths, worn by both women and men, consisted of two triangular pieces of linen sewn together to form a larger triangle with three equal sides. The top and sides were hemmed and strings were attached at either corner of the top. The strings allowed the wearer to tie the loincloth around the waist with the cloth covering the wearer's buttocks. Some representations of workmen suggest that some men did not bother to make additional ties in the garment, leaving the front open. Others tucked the tip of the garment in the front of the waist after pulling it between the legs. Some people added a sash that tied at the waist. The major differences between the loincloths of royals and the loincloths of workmen were in the quality of the cloth and the stitching. Tutankhamun's loincloths were soft and silky linen while workmen's loincloths were more sturdy and coarser. The stitching in Tutankhamun's loincloths was more delicate with smaller stitches than those found in ordinary people's loincloths. Men began wearing leather loincloths starting in the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). Soldiers, sailors, craftsmen, and servants wore them to protect their linen loincloths while they worked. Yet they were also found in tombs belonging to kings, officials, and Nubian mercenaries. The burials that Egyptologists call pan graves, long associated with Nubians, often include mummies wearing leather loincloths. Leather loincloths consisted of one piece of hide, usually thought to be gazelle skin. The hide resembled a mesh because the leather worker cut either slits or diamond-shaped holes in it. Some



Nykara (center) wears a short kilt with a pleated apron. His wife wears a tight v-neck dress that almost surely was an artistic convention rather than a real fashion. Their son is naked, the common way of representing children. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 49.215, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

examples are either patched or uncut over the area that would cover the buttocks. The garment also had ties that were part of the hide rather than added as in linen loincloths. Many of the archaeological examples of leather loincloths have connections to Nubia. There are examples of leather loincloths from Nubia in the collections of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. For this reason most scholars believe that this fashion originated in modern-day Sudan.

**APRONS.** Aprons are cloth strips hanging from a belt or sash that wrapped around the wearer's waist. Upper-class Egyptians wore aprons over or under other garments such as kilts while aprons could be a workman's only garment while he performed certain labors. In the Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 B.C.E.) there are tomb representations of men capturing a bull and

slaughtering a bull wearing only such aprons. Men wore an apron with a short kilt. This apron was shaped like a four-sided piece of cloth with a half-circle of cloth added to the bottom. Tomb reliefs include representations of these aprons in the Sixth Dynasty (2350–2170 B.C.E.) and again during the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.). By the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.), men had a wider choice of clothing types to wear with a pointed apron. Some men represented in Old and Middle Kingdom reliefs and paintings wear a triangular apron over their kilts. Artists represent the apron as a triangle that rose above the kilt in the front. One point was tucked into the waistband while one side of the triangle hung parallel to the hem of the kilt. The artistic emphasis on this item of clothing and the fact that the pleats of the triangle normally run in a different direction from the pleats of the kilt have led many scholars to believe that it is a separate item of clothing. Others have suggested that the triangle of cloth is actually the end of the kilt tied in some elaborate manner. Since no archaeological examples of the triangular apron have been recognized, it is not possible to determine whether it is a separate item of clothing or not.

**KILTS.** Kilts were wraparound garments that men wore to cover all or part of the lower half of the body and legs, and were worn throughout ancient Egyptian history. Only a very small number of archaeological examples of kilts are available for study. There are, however, nearly countless examples of men wearing kilts in Egyptian art. The length of the kilts varies greatly. It is likely that the length varied with economic and social status. Cloth was expensive and so poorer people tended to wear clothing with less material. The standard wraparound kilt probably consisted of a rectangular piece of linen wrapped around the waist. The ends were often inserted into a sash worn around the waist. The ends of the sash sometimes visibly hung from the waist and over the front of the kilt. Men often wore two kilts over one another. In this case one kilt was pleated while the other was flat. Some kilts also included decorations such as fringes, tassels, and pleats. During the New Kingdom, two additional kilt styles came into fashion. The sash kilts were one piece of cloth that were gathered and then tied in the front without a separate sash. The ends of the cloth hung in the front and were arranged in elaborate decorative patterns of folds. Typically they appear to cover part of the small of the back in addition to the buttocks. Sash kilts could be worn alone or in combination with bag tunics. The sash kilt could also bear fringe decoration on the edge. The scalloped-edge kilts

## MEN'S Wardrobes: Continuity and Change

The following chart demonstrates continuity and change in men's wardrobes in the Old, Middle, and New

Garment	Old Kingdom	Middle Kingdom	New Kingdom
Cloth loincloth	X	X	X
Leather loincloth		X	X
Short wraparound kilt	X	X	X
Long wraparound kilt		X	X
Sash kilt			X
Bag tunic			X
Long, narrow apron	X	X	X
Triangular apron		X	X
Sashes and straps	X	X	X
Long cloak	X	X	X
Short cloak			X
Shawl	X	X	X

SOURCE: Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Pharaonic Egyptian Clothing* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

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Kingdoms. Many innovations occurred in the Middle Kingdom and continued into the New Kingdom. New Kingdom dress was the most various and elaborate.

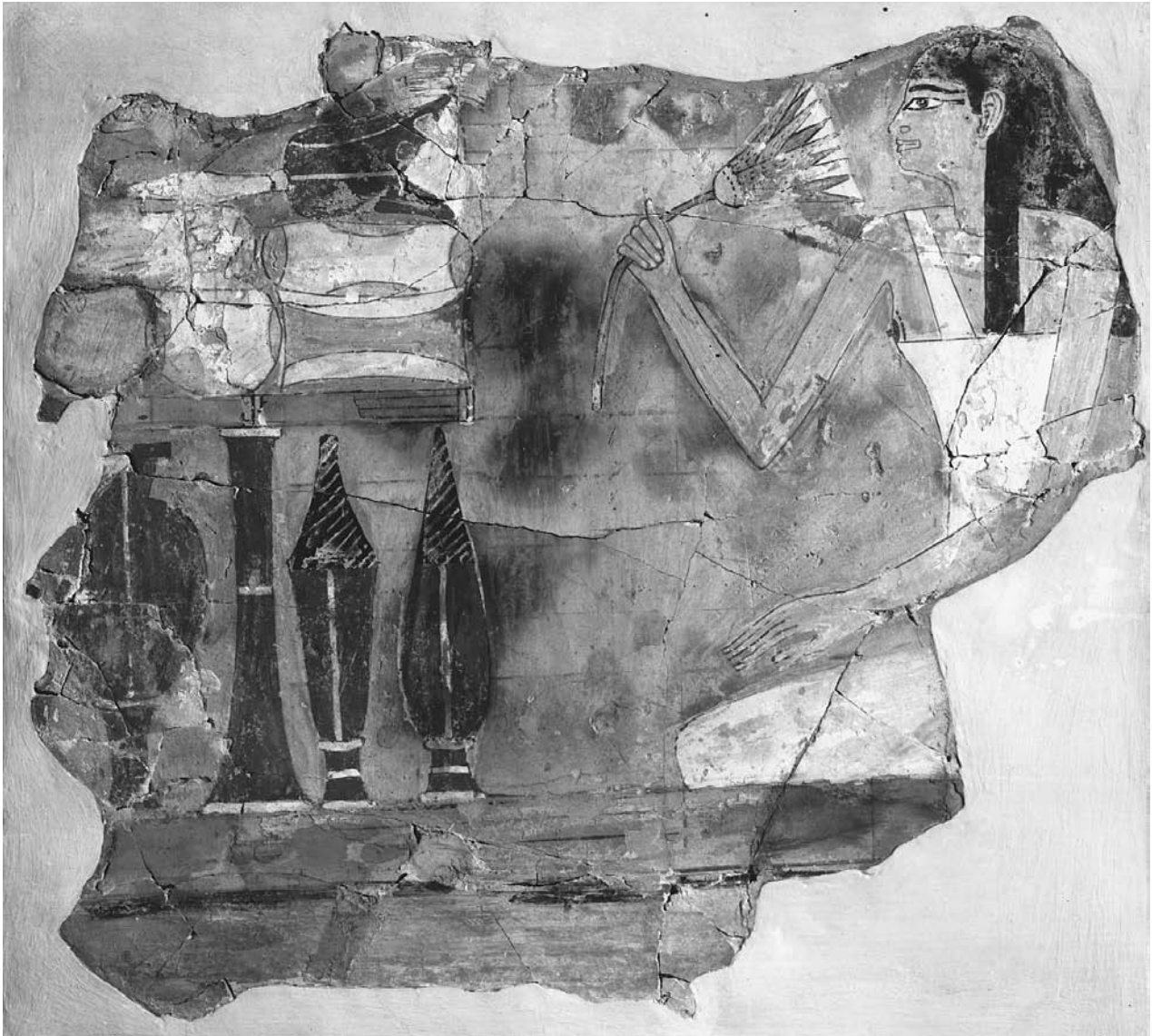
SOURCE: Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Pharaonic Egyptian Clothing* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1993).

were worn in combination with bag tunics and triangular aprons. Scalloped-edge kilts, as their name implies, were characterized by a cloth with vertically gathered large folds that resemble a scallop when worn. Women did not wear kilts, but could be depicted in art wearing skirts. The length of skirts seems to depend on social status and access to cloth. Poorer women wore shorter skirts out of economic necessity. In general, however, women wore dresses more commonly than skirts in ancient Egypt.

**ARCHAIC WRAPAROUND.** Both men and women could wear the archaic wraparound. The wearer could tie together two corners of a rectangular piece of cloth, placing the knot on the chest just below one shoulder and the opposite arm passed through the circle now formed by the top edge of the cloth. Kings, laborers, and fishermen could wear this garment with a sash. King Narmer (thirty-first century B.C.E.) wears it on the Narmer Palette with additional aprons and a bull's tail. But workmen depicted in Old Kingdom tombs also wore a simpler but similar garment. Men continued to wear the archaic wraparound through the Old Kingdom until about the twenty-first century B.C.E. In the Middle Kingdom (2003–1630 B.C.E.) and New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) only gods wore the archaic wraparound. Gods' fashions were inherently more conserva-

tive than the clothing of the living. Women wore a long version of the archaic wraparound. Surprisingly, only female servants wore it, and it continued into the Middle Kingdom.

**DRESSES.** Dresses were women's clothing consisting of a section fit close to the upper body and a skirt that was either flowing or tight. Women of all social classes wore dresses as their most common garment. The clothing scholar Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood recognized three basic ancient Egyptian dresses: the wraparound dress, the v-necked dress, and the bead-net dress. A wraparound dress consisted of one large piece of fabric that was wrapped around a woman's body in various ways. The fabric was not cut to shape. The wraparound dress could include or omit shoulder straps. In the archaeological record, it is easy to confuse a wraparound dress with bed linen. They are both rectangular in shape. But careful examination of both folds and wear marks on certain cloth rectangles reveals that they were indeed dresses rather than bed sheets. In the archaeological examples of these dresses, the rectangle of cloth measures about two meters by one meter (six feet by three feet). The cloth is finished on four sides with hems. The cloth was wrapped two to three times around the body depending on both the length of the cloth and the wearer's body. The top line of this dress could be worn



Fragment of a tomb painting with seated woman with lotus in one-strap dress. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 05.390, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

either over or under the breasts, depending on the amount of material available and the task the wearer performed. Often women wore either single or double straps with the wraparound dress. The straps covered part of the torso. There was a wide variation in the way the straps were worn. Women wore either one or two straps, arranged either across the body or hanging straight from the shoulder. The straps also varied in width from broad to narrow. These straps were probably decorative but might have served some practical purpose. Vogelsang-Eastwood suggested they were neither pinned nor sewn to the wraparound dress. The majority of wraparound dresses both in art and from archaeology are white.

**SHEATHES AND COMPLEX DRESSES.** Many art historians have claimed that the most common dress that ancient Egyptian women wore was a sheath with either one or two straps. Vogelsang-Eastwood argued convincingly that this sheath is actually a wraparound with straps. She doubted the reality of the sheath dress because there are no archaeological examples of it among the twenty known dresses from ancient Egypt and because no woman's grave has contained the pins that would have attached the straps to a sheath. Moreover, many scholars have commented that the sheath dress would have been difficult to wear while performing the tasks portrayed in tomb and temple paintings and reliefs. Kneeling, bending, and walking would have been

impossible if women wore a sheath that was as tight as artists portray. Thus the art historian Gay Robins suggested that the tight sheath was only an artistic convention and not a real dress. A more accepted dress form by art historians was the complex wraparound dress. Artists first depicted women wearing the complex wraparound dress during the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). Women created these dresses from large cloth rectangles wrapped in various decorative manners. Sometimes a second, smaller length of cloth secured the garment in place as a sash. The wearer could drape the cloth over one or both shoulders, wrap it around the lower part of the body, and tuck it into itself at the waist. Other versions of the dress included knotting the cloth under the breast. The dresses could be pleated or plain. Women at all social levels wore the complex wraparound dress.

**V-NECKED AND BEADED DRESSES.** V-necked dresses were tailored and cut to shape. Some examples have sleeves, while others are sleeveless. The sleeveless v-necked dress first appears in the Third Dynasty (2675–2625 B.C.E.) and continues into the New Kingdom. Both royal women and upper-class women wore this dress. There are some examples with pleats, though pleating is less common than plain examples. V-necked dresses with sleeves survive in the archaeological record in greater numbers than sleeveless v-necked dresses. The seamstress made the bodice and sleeves from two pieces of cloth that she attached to a large rectangle of cloth that formed the skirt. Archaeologists have discovered examples of these dresses dating from the First to Eleventh Dynasties (3100–1938 B.C.E.), proving their popularity for at least 1,200 years. Yet artists never seem to represent such dresses in the artistic record. This evidence provides a caution concerning the reliability of tomb and temple representations to provide a complete picture for modern scholars. Bead-net dresses were often worn over V-neck dresses as well as wraparound dresses and were constructed in geometric patterns. Two archaeological examples date to the Old Kingdom. The beads are cylinders of blue or green faience threaded into a diamond pattern. In the artistic evidence the bead-net dresses are worn over a wraparound dress. In art the bead-net dresses are fairly common in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, but decline in number during the New Kingdom.

**BAG TUNICS.** Both men and women wore bag tunics. They could wear them either full-length or half-length. Though the full-length bag tunic superficially resembled the modern Egyptian galabiyah due to its shirt-like nature, the bag tunic differs from the modern costume because male and female galabiyahs are



The Lady Tjepu wears a complex wraparound dress that became fashionable in the New Kingdom. More complex and luxurious fashions reflect the wealth of the period. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 65.197, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

constructed in entirely different ways. Bag tunics for men and women, however, were both made from a single piece of cloth, folded, and then sewn together on two sides, leaving holes for the arms. The bottom was left open. A key-hole shaped opening was cut in the shorter side to allow the wearer to pull it over the head. The ends and the openings were hemmed. Some bag tunics were made from heavy material while others were from fine material, and people of all stations owned both kinds. Vogelsang-Eastwood and others suggested that the differences in weight represent summer and winter wear. Some bag tunics were also decorated. They could have fringe, bead work, gold or faience sequins, applied patterns, or embroidery. The full-length bag tunic first appeared in the Middle Kingdom and

## WOMEN'S Wardrobes: Continuity and Change

Women's wardrobes were very conservative in ancient Egypt. Old and Middle Kingdom wardrobes were

nearly identical. New, more elaborate fashions became popular in the New Kingdom.

**SOURCE:** Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Pharaonic Egyptian Clothing* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1993).

Garment	Old Kingdom	Middle Kingdom	New Kingdom
Cloth loincloth	X	X	X
Skirts, various lengths	X	X	X
Simple wraparound dress	X	X	X
Complex wraparound dress			X
V-necked dress		X	
Bag tunic			X
Bead-net dress	X		
Sashes and straps	X	X	X
Long cloak	X	X	X
Shawl	X	X	X

**SOURCE:** Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Pharaonic Egyptian Clothing* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

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became widespread in the New Kingdom. While both men and women wore the full-length bag tunic, only men wore the short bag tunic. This garment was identical to the long bag tunic, differing only in its length. The existing archaeological examples of short bag tunics date to the Eleventh Dynasty (2081–1938 B.C.E.) and to the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). They vary in length from seventy to ninety-three centimeters (27.5 to 36.6 inches). Mainly workmen wore these garments that seem to replace the archaic wraparound worn during the Predynastic Period and the Old Kingdom. These changes suggest that the Egyptians increasingly wore sewn garments during the transition to the New Kingdom.

**SHAWLS AND CLOAKS.** Shawls and cloaks are similar because people wore them over other garments. In Egypt, shawls and cloaks were both fashioned from oblong, square, or rectangular pieces of cloth. Scholars have paid little attention to archaeological examples of shawls. Of nineteen shawls that Howard Carter, the archaeologist, mentioned in his notes on the tomb of Tutankhamun, scholars have had access to only one fine linen example. Carter, however, discovered it wrapped around the neck of a statue of the jackal god Anubis. Thus it is not clear that this is an example of human clothing. In tomb and temple reliefs, some officials in the Middle Kingdom wore pleated shawls. But the majority of representations of shawls are worn by foreign

musicians during the reign of Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.). Cloaks were similar to blankets, a large oblong, square, or rectangular piece of cloth worn for warmth. People could either wrap them around the body or knot them at the shoulder. No archaeological examples have been recognized, but artists often depicted people wearing cloaks. Normally wraparound cloaks were worn over both shoulders and held together with the hands, especially in Old Kingdom examples. In some Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom examples in art, the cloak passes over only one shoulder and is wrapped tightly around the body. More active people, such as hunters and chariot drivers, wore knotted cloaks. The difference in whether an Egyptian wore a wraparound or knotted cloak seems to depend on whether his/her hands needed to be free. Thus the wraparound cloak was worn when a person could hold the cloak closed, while active people whose hands were otherwise occupied knotted their cloaks.

**ACCESSORIES.** There were three types of accessories that could be added to most types of clothing: sashes, straps, and codpieces. Sashes differed from belts because they were made from cloth rather than leather. Sashes were an important element in ancient Egyptian clothing and were commonly illustrated in depictions of men and women. Surviving examples of sashes from archaeological contexts are made from rope or tasseled cloth. In general the cloth sashes had hemmed edges





Cloaked official. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 62.77.1, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

and tassels at the ends. Sashes could be very wide, varying between five and sixteen centimeters (two to six inches). Sashes also varied by economic status. The cheapest sashes must have been ropes that workmen wore. Some soldiers in relief scenes wear broad cloth sashes that hang down from the waist in the front. They could be placed so that they covered the top of the kilt or beneath the top edge of the kilt. Scholars have not studied sash placement but it is possible that certain fashions predominated in different times. The most variety, as is often the case, is visible in representations from the New Kingdom. Women rarely wore sashes in artistic representations. Like sashes, it was men who commonly wore either single or double straps that extended from the shoulder to the opposite hip. The straps could be either one or two pieces of cloth. Both high officials and workmen could wear such straps, though they appear most commonly worn by officials. Women wore separate straps while dancing or doing strenuous work in the fields, but straps were not common for women except in these special circumstances. The codpiece was an accessory only worn by men and usually was used for protection. Several battle scenes dating to the Middle Kingdom show men wearing a separate garment over the genital area. The American

Egyptologist H. G. Fischer suggested that it is a codpiece or penis sheath that originated in Nubia. The Egyptian officials Ukhhotep and Senbi wore similar garments on a hunting expedition in a relief of Dynasty Twelve (1938–1759 B.C.E.).

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SEE ALSO *Dance: Costumes and Fashion in Dance; Music: Banquet Music during the New Kingdom; Visual Arts: Interpreting Egyptian Art*

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#### HAIRSTYLES

**USE OF WIGS.** Most scholars believe that some ancient Egyptian men and women often wore wigs regardless of the style of their natural hair. The more elaborate styles that artists represented for upper-class men and women were almost certainly wigs. Representations of rich women often include a fringe of natural hair at the forehead, under a wig, leading scholars to believe that it was a sign of wealth and status to wear a wig and that vanity had little to do with it. Most scholars assume that all people above a certain station were depicted with wigs on, yet it is not always clear whether the style in a statue, relief, or painting is a wig or is natural hair.

**MEN'S HAIRSTYLES.** During the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.), men wore both a close-cropped style and a shoulder-length style. The shorter style probably represents natural hair cut close to the skull. The wearer swept the hair back in wings, covering the ears, when wearing the shoulder-length style. Men also wore moustaches and sometimes a goatee in this period. Working men wore their natural hair cropped closely. Only workmen were ever depicted with gray hair or with male-pattern baldness. This difference between richer and poorer men in statues, reliefs, and paintings reflects a wider convention of portraying upper-class tomb owners in an idealized manner, at the most attractive point in their lives. The major distinction between men's hairstyles of the Old and Middle Kingdoms (2008–1630 B.C.E.) was in the shoulder-length style. Often in the Middle Kingdom men tucked their hair behind the ears when wearing shoulder-length hair in contrast to the covered ears of the Old Kingdom. This feature of the hairstyle probably relates to the fashion for large, protruding ears during this



Relief of hairdresser Inu. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 51.231, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

period. Men also wore wigs pushed farther forward than they had during the Old Kingdom, indicating that a low forehead was considered attractive in this period. While early in the New Kingdom, men continued to wear the same styles that had been popular in the Middle Kingdom, men's styles became more elaborate around the reign of Amenhotep II (1426–1400 B.C.E.). Artists portrayed a hairstyle with two different styles of curls: one in triangular-shaped wings, or lappets, at the side of the head and one down the back. Scholars sometimes call it the lappet wig because of these overhanging folds of hair. These details made hairstyles appear more complex and suggest that men paid more attention to their hair in this period of relative peace and prosperity.

**WOMEN'S HAIRSTYLES.** Women also could wear either a short or a long hairstyle in the Old Kingdom. The ideal was heavy ringlets that could just frame the face, or a longer wig that included hanks of hair over each shoulder and down the back. Scholars call this style "tripartite" because the wearer divided her hair into three sections. Tripartite hairstyles could be shoulder-length or longer. Often a fringe of natural hair was displayed over the forehead when wearing a tripartite wig. Almost all women wore the same styles regardless of class. During the Middle Kingdom, women

added short, curled wigs to the possibilities for coiffure. Royal women also began wearing the so-called Hathoric wig, named for the goddess Hathor. This style resembled the way Hathor wore her hair when depicted on the capital of an architectural column. The thick, wavy hair came forward over the shoulder and curled, sometimes around a ball. Natural hair remained visible down the woman's back. At the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1292 B.C.E.), royal women continued to wear the Hathoric wig and the now ancient tripartite wigs. When human women wore this style in depictions, the artists decorated it with additional rows of horizontal ringlets. Goddesses, however, wore their hair in the most conservative fashion, recalling the Old Kingdom style. Upper-class women also added a full-length style called enveloping. Rather than dividing the hair into three parts as in the tripartite wig, an enveloping style presented the hair as a continuous mass enclosing both shoulders and the back. In the Eighteenth Dynasty, enveloping styles generally reached the shoulder blades. Women's hair was a component of their sexual allure. Images of young women on cosmetic articles such as mirrors or the objects called cosmetic spoons, have especially elaborate hairstyles. In *The Story of Two Brothers*, written in the Ramesside Period (1292–1075 B.C.E.), the scent of a woman's hair prompts a man to kill her husband because he desires



Relief of Amunmose in New Kingdom hairstyle. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 65.196, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

her so greatly. The scent of a god's hair also helps identify him.

**UNISEX STYLES.** During the reign of Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.) men and women could wear nearly identical styles. The most popular unisex style was the Nubian wig. This hairstyle consisted of tapering rows of tight ringlets in layers. Such hairstyles can be found in sub-Saharan Africa in modern times and most likely derived from hairstyles in Sudan (ancient Nubia) during the New Kingdom. Another Nubian style worn in New Kingdom Egypt was the rounded wig. This wig hung in ringlets to the nape of the neck. Both men and women wore the Nubian wig and the rounded wig. Moreover, both royalty and commoners wore these styles. The royal wearers had more complex wigs, but basically the styles were the same for all. These styles, however, were abandoned at the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty. During the Ramesside Period (Nineteenth and

Twentieth Dynasties, 1292–1075 B.C.E.), long hair was the defining stylistic characteristic. Men continued to wear the lappet wig, and women still wore enveloping and even tripartite wigs. But now men's hair could reach below the shoulders. Women's hair could reach their waists.

**SHAVED HAIRSTYLES.** Both male and female children could wear the so-called "side lock of youth." In this style, most of the head was shaved, except for a long tuft of hair gathered at one side and usually plaited. This style also associated the child with certain gods who played the role of a child within a divine family. In many periods of Egyptian history priests shaved their heads, and perhaps other parts of their bodies, to achieve ritual purity. Especially in the Ramesside period, artists depicted processions of bald priests carrying the god's boat or performing other ritual actions.



Seated goddess in tripartite wig. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.594E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

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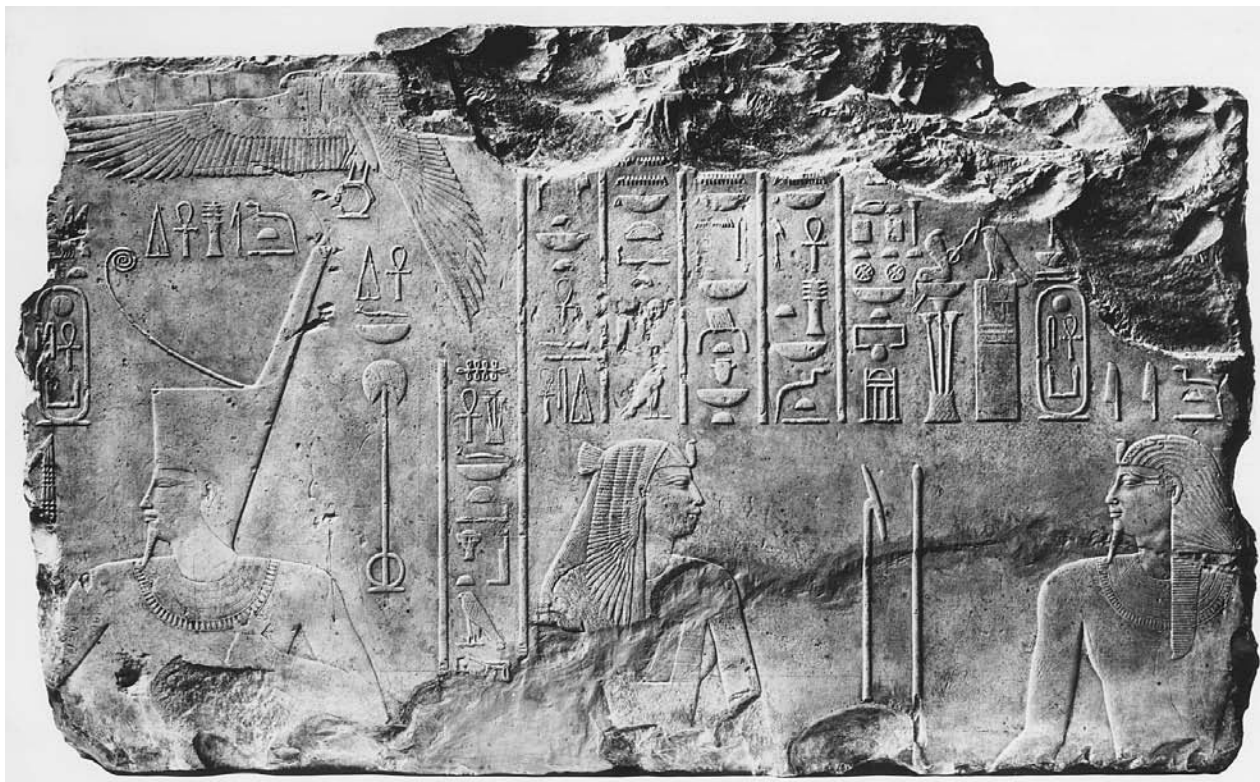
## CROWNS

### CONNECTION BETWEEN DEITIES AND ROYALTY.

Royalty in ancient Egypt wore crowns that connected them to the gods. In almost every artistic depiction of the gods, the gods can be seen wearing a crown that identifies them with some sort of aspect of nature or power.

When a king or a queen wore a crown that was similar to the depicted crown of the deity, they were connecting themselves with power and the protection of that god or goddess. Kings, queens, and princesses also wore crowns that identified their rank and function, while also enhancing the wearer's appearance and status by association with precious materials and by making the wearer to appear physically taller. A very limited selection of archaeological examples of crowns has survived into modern times. These examples include only circlets and some kerchiefs. The circlets were crafted from gold, silver, and gemstones. Thus precious materials worn by the deities and the royal family enhanced and demonstrated their high status. Moreover, precious materials associated royalty with the divine. Gods, in Egyptian belief, had skin made from gold. Thus the addition of a gold element to a human's headgear suggested a close connection with the divine. Additionally, reliefs and sculpture portray royal and divine crowns that were very tall. These tall crowns often included feathers that made the wearer appear taller and allowed him or her to dominate a scene. This height also connected the wearer to the divine by being closer to the heavens; one text described Queen Hatshepsut's crown "piercing the heavens." Along with height, some accessories on crowns also linked the wearer with the divine. The solar disk, for example, was often a central element of a crown and associated the wearer with the sun god, Re. The Uraeus-snake (cobra) was also often part of the crown and symbolized the sun god's eye. The god's eye represented the fire and radiance of the sun that consumed potential enemies. The Uraeus thus represented divine protection for the wearer.

**URAEUS.** The number of Uraeus snakes on a crown can often help an Egyptologist determine its date. In the earliest periods, kings wore the Uraeus attached to a stripped kerchief called the Nemes. Egyptian kings wore the Nemes with Uraeus and the Uraeus on a circlet from the First Dynasty through the Sixth Dynasty (3100–2170 B.C.E.), but in this period did not wear it with the tall crowns. During the Sixth Dynasty (2350–2170 B.C.E.) royal women also began to wear the Uraeus. At the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty in the reign of Ahmose (1539–1514 B.C.E.), royal women started wearing a double Uraeus as part of their crowns. These snakes wore miniature versions of the king's primary crowns—the Red Crown and the White Crown—on their heads. Sometimes the double Uraeus flanks a vulture's head on the female crowns. This combination represented the goddesses Wadjet and Nekhbet who were symbols of Upper and Lower Egypt. When a deceased king wore the double Uraeus, however, it represented the goddesses Isis



Relief of Mentuhotep III, showing queen in vulture headdress, king in Red Crown and Neme. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.16E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

and Nephthys, the chief mourners for the king. During the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (760–656 B.C.E.), rulers from Sudan (ancient Kush) adopted the double Uraeus as part of their cap-like crown. Women's crowns also included the Uraeus with the head of a gazelle or ibis. By the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.) queens adopted triple Uraeus adornments to their crowns. Finally, some tall crowns adopted in the reign of Amenhotep III (1390–1352 B.C.E.) incorporated a base made from multiple Uraeus snakes. Amenhotep III's son, Akhenaten, adopted this base as a circlet and wore Uraeus snakes around some of his crowns. The expansion of the importance of the Uraeus correlated with the importance of the sun god, especially during the reign of Akhenaten. The Uraeus was thus a basic element of royal crowns in all periods, but was used in a variety of ways.

**ANIMAL AND PLANT ELEMENTS.** Some crowns incorporated elements in shapes derived from other animal's bodies. These features also associate the wearer with the god who had an association with that animal. Thus falcon feathers on the crown associated the king with the falcon god Horus. The curved ram's horn, a symbol of the god Amun, became part of the royal crown as early as the reign of Amenhotep I (1514–1493 B.C.E.) and as-

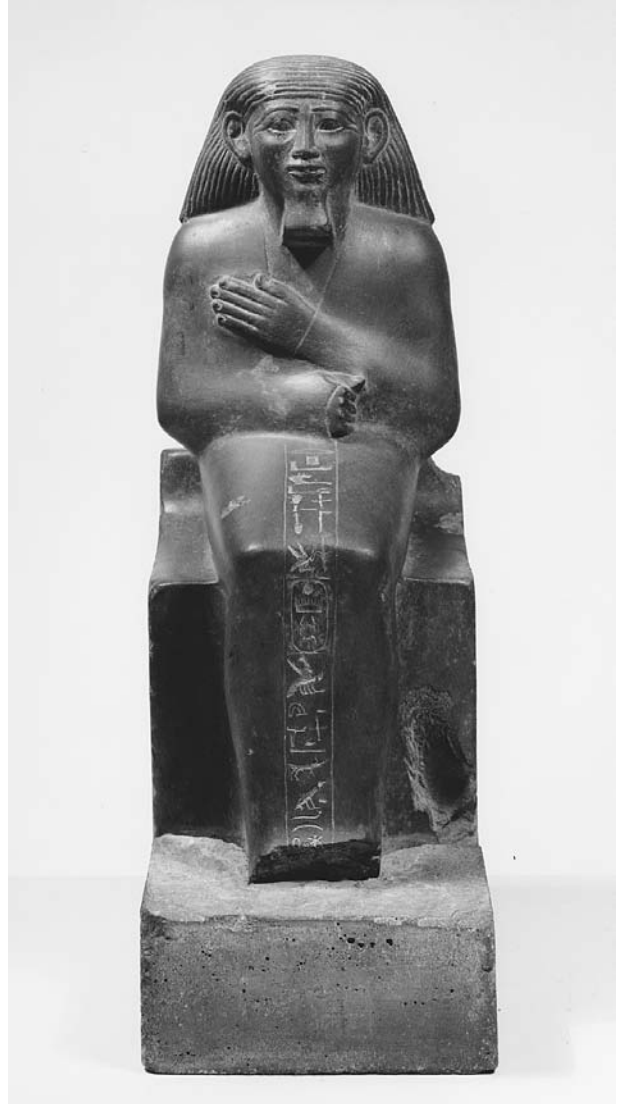
sociated the king with the chief of the Egyptian pantheon during the New Kingdom. Some crowns were woven from reeds or were made from other materials in the shape of plant elements. Some crowns worn by queens and princesses incorporate plant elements that suggest youthful beauty. Some kings' crowns and even the crowns worn by the muu-dancers during funeral dances were made from reeds.

**RED AND WHITE CROWNS.** At least as early as the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.), kings wore nine different crowns. These crowns probably represented different aspects of the king's office. Similar crowns appeared in the coronation of Hatshepsut (1478–1458 B.C.E.) and of Ptolemy V (209–180 B.C.E.). Thus kings separated by thousands of years wore essentially the same crowns. The most commonly represented crowns were the White Crown, Red Crown, and Double Crown. The Red Crown and White Crown were the oldest crowns that Egyptian kings wore. Kings wore them from at least Dynasty 0 in the Predynastic Period (3200–3100 B.C.E.) and continued to wear them until the end of ancient Egyptian history. The Red Crown took its name from the oldest Egyptian name for the crown, *desheret* ("red thing"). By the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.), Egyptians



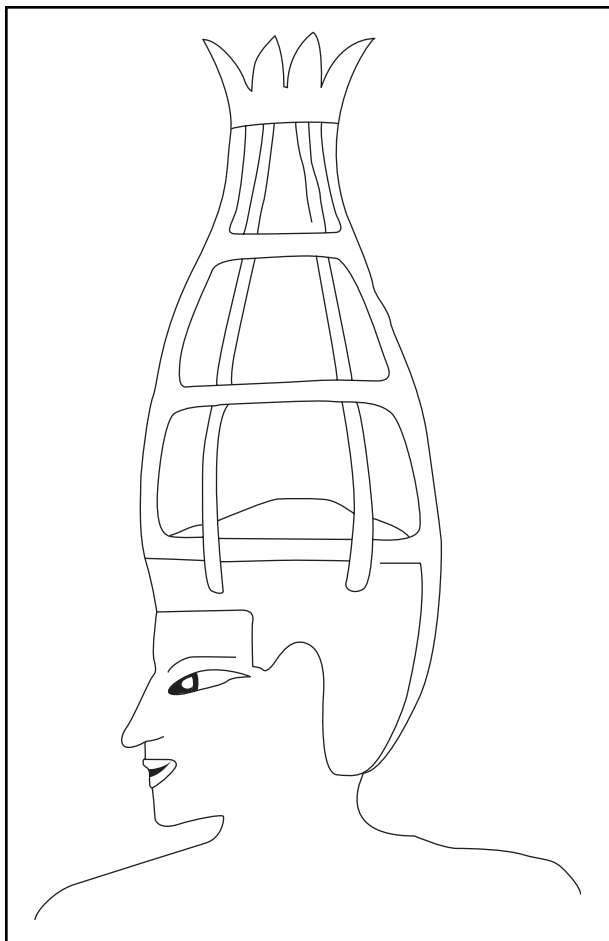
This king wears a nemes kerchief with a uraeus snake over his forehead. This style was restricted to kings and was popular from earliest to latest times in Egyptian history. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 16.169, GIFT OF EVANGELINE WILBOUR BLASHFIELD, THEODORA WILBOUR, AND VICTOR WILBOUR HONORING THE WISHES OF THEIR MOTHER, CHARLOTTE BEEBE WILBOUR AS A MEMORIAL TO THEIR FATHER, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

called the Red Crown the *net*—the Egyptian name of the goddess Neith. The Red Crown identified the king as ruler of Lower (northern) Egypt. The White Crown takes its name from the Egyptian *hedjet* (“white thing”). The White Crown designated the king as ruler of Upper Egypt. These crowns might have been made from leather or fabric. The *Pyramid Texts* include references to the Red Crown and White Crown where their colors associated them with planets and stars. From the earliest periods until the reign of Thutmose IV (1400–1390 B.C.E.) the Red Crown and White Crown were worn alone or combined in the Double Crown. By Thutmose IV’s reign, the Red Crown or White Crown could be worn over a Nemes kerchief. This trend continued through the subsequent Ramesside Period (1292–1075 B.C.E.) when the Red Crown or White Crown always was worn with additional elements.



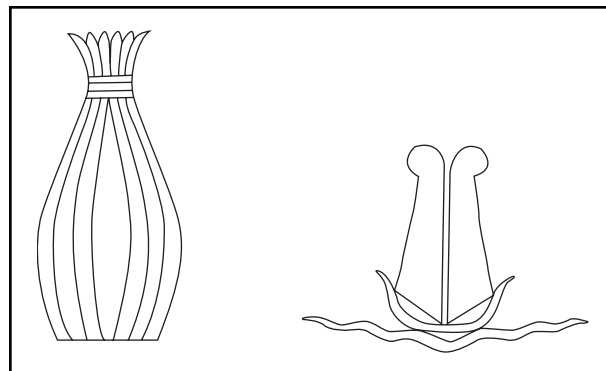
Ahmoose, also known as Ruru. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 61.196, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**DOUBLE CROWNS.** The name “Double Crown” is a modern construction. The Egyptians called the Double Crown *pas sekhemty* (“the two powerful ones”). The king wore the Double Crown to symbolize his rule over both Upper and Lower Egypt. Gods associated with kingship also wore the Double Crown. The god Horus wore it because each king was a living manifestation of this god. The god Atum wore the double crown to emphasize his cosmic rule. The goddess Mut wore the Double Crown over a vulture cap. Because Mut was the divine mother and a consort of the chief god Amun, her headgear stressed her connection to the king. The Double Feather Crown, called *shuty* (“two feathers”), was nearly always worn in combination with



A muu-dancer's crown was made from reeds. Muu-dancers performed in the funeral procession, acting out the deceased's journey from this world to the afterlife. **CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.**

another crown. The major elements of the Double Feather Crown are two tall feathers, from either an ostrich or falcon, and the horns of a ram and a cow. The first king known to wear this crown was Sneferu (r. 2625–2585 B.C.E.), and kings continued to wear it until the end of ancient Egyptian history. The crown originated in Lower Egypt in the town called Busiris and was worn by its local god named Andjety. Busiris later was the Lower Egyptian home for the god Osiris who also sometimes wore feathers. The chief god of the pantheon Amun, the fertility god Min, and the war god Montu all also wore the Double Feather Crown. Their characteristics might have been conveyed to the king when he wore the crown. The Double Feather Crown sometimes included Uraeus snakes and sun disks. The king wore this crown during one segment of the coronation. The Double Feather Crown could also be worn with the Atef Crown.



On the left, a crown made of reeds might be the ancestor of the king's White Crown, symbol of the king of Upper (southern) Egypt. On the right, the Atef crown consists of two tall feathers, cow horns, and ram horns. The king wore this crown when performing temple rituals. **CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.**

**ATEF CROWN.** The Atef Crown combined a cone-shaped central element that resembles the White Crown with the Double Feather Crown. Sahure (r. 2485–2472 B.C.E.) was the first king known to wear the Atef Crown, and it continued in use until the end of ancient Egyptian history. The god of the afterlife, Osiris, as well as the ram god Herishef, the royal god Horus, and the sun god Re all were depicted wearing an Atef Crown. In the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.), the Atef Crown also bore a sun disk and Uraeus snakes. Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.) also added the fruit of the *ished*-tree (probably the persea tree) to the crown, associating it with the eastern horizon where this tree grows. The meaning of the word “atef” in Egyptian remains in dispute. It might mean “his might” or “his majesty.”

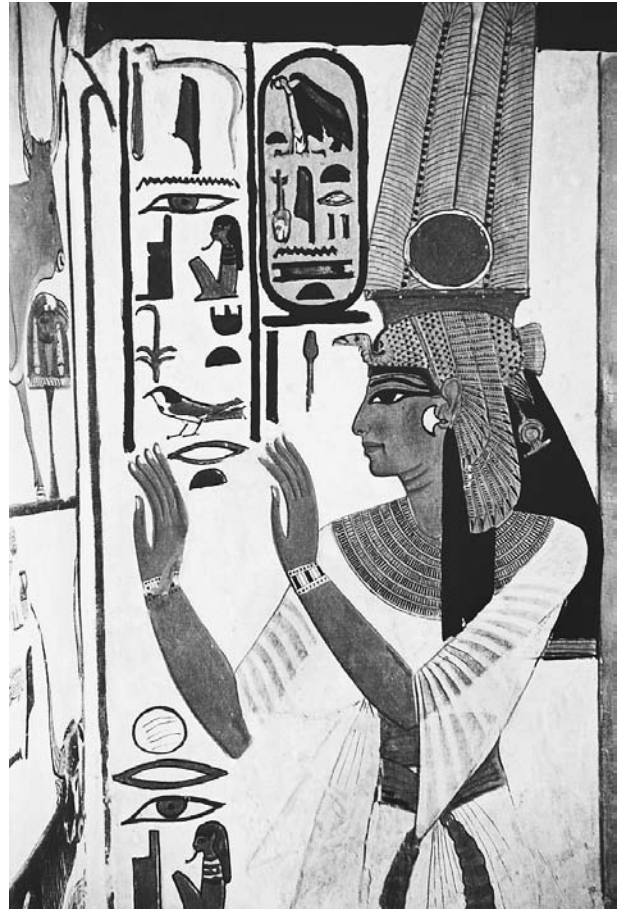
**KERCHIEFS.** The blue and gold striped cloth arranged as a kerchief on the king's head and called the Nemes is also very ancient. The earliest known representation was part of a statue of King Djoser (r. 2675–2654 B.C.E.). The Nemes is included in the emblem of the royal ka (spirit) called the Standard of the Ka. The Nemes' association with the royal ka suggests that the Nemes somehow represents kingship itself. By the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1292 B.C.E.), the Nemes covered the king's head while he wore other crowns on top of it. The king also wore the Nemes when he appeared as a sphinx, such as at the Great Sphinx of Giza, or when he appeared as the falcon god Horus. The Khat Kerchief and the related Afnet Kerchief may be the funerary equivalent of the Nemes. The pairs of statues that guard New Kingdom royal tombs wear the Khat and Afnet Kerchiefs. Tutankhamun's mummy is also depicted wearing the Khat. The goddesses of mourning,



Head of a king in a double crown. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.1489E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Isis and Nephthys, also wore the Khat. This strong representation among funerary goods suggests that the Khat and Afnet aided in rejuvenation after death.

**CAP CROWN.** The Cap Crown first appeared in the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.). Circles or horizontal lines decorate the cap crown in most representations. It is blue or gold in representations that include color. The preserved Cap Crown that Tutankhamun's mummy (1332–1322 B.C.E.) wore, in contrast, was white and decorated with blue faïence and gold beads. The king often wore the Cap Crown when performing religious rituals. Queen Nefertiti, wife of Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.), also wore the Cap Crown. Kushite kings of the



Queen Nefertari wearing the vulture headdress, modius, a sun disk, and two tall feathers. © CHRISTEL GERSTENBERG/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Twenty-fifth Dynasty (760–656 B.C.E.) wore a Cap Crown with a double Uraeus snake. The color of the Cap Crown and the circle decoration relates it to the Blue Crown. The Blue Crown, called the *kheperesh* in Egyptian, first appeared in the Second Intermediate Period (1630–1539 B.C.E.). It shares both the color and circle pattern with the older Cap Crown, and thus some Egyptologists believe they are related. The Blue Crown is most likely the crown that the king wore most often while performing his duties in life during the New Kingdom. Because the king also wears this crown while riding in a war chariot, the crown is sometimes called a war crown, though this is probably an error. The crown represents action, both in peace and in war. When combined with the Nemes, however, it represents a deceased king.

**WOMEN'S CROWNS.** Fewer crowns were available to royal women than to men, and they are slightly better understood. Female crowns relate clearly to god-





Temple relief of Ramesses II, wearing the Blue and Atef Crowns, and the goddess Anat. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 54.67, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

esses and wearing them associated the queen or princess with the characteristics of the related goddess. The oldest known female crown is the Vulture Cap. The vulture was the sacred animal of the goddess Nekhbet of Upper Egypt. The hieroglyph of a vulture was the writing of the word “mother,” and thus the mother goddess Mut wore the Vulture Cap, too. The Vulture Cap thus associated the queen with Nekhbet and stressed her role as mother of the next king. Fertility and motherhood were also symbolized by cow horns added to the queen’s wig, a symbol of the goddess Hathor. Royal women after the Sixth Dynasty could wear the Uraeus snake, a solar symbol associated with the eye of the god Re. Since the Egyptians recognized the eye as the Lower Egyptian goddess Wadjet, wearing the Vulture Cap (Nekhbet) with the Uraeus (Wadjet) could symbolize the union of Upper and Lower Egypt. When queens wore tall feathers, they were meant to represent the eastern and western horizons. The feathers thus also connected the crown to the cult of Re who rose and set on the horizon as the sun. The base for the feathers was interpreted as the marsh of Khemmis, the place where the goddess Isis raised her child Horus, the infant king. Thus the crown could combine symbolism from both solar religion and funerary religion.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Kingship Rituals*

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#### JEWELRY AND AMULETS

**PROTECTION.** Archaeology has provided many examples of Egyptian jewelry for study. Upper-class Egyptian men and women wore jewelry and considered it essential for being fully dressed. Jewelry served to protect people, according to Egyptian thought. The areas most in need of protection were the head, neck, arms, wrists, fingers, waist, and ankles. Thus hairpins, necklaces, armbands, bracelets, finger-rings, decorative girdles, and ankle bracelets all became popular as a means of protecting vulnerable areas. Unlike modern jewelers, who normally use casting to shape their products, Egyptian jewelers more often hammered sheet metal, then cut, shaped, crimped, and soldered it to



Late image of Nefertiti. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 35.1999, GIFT OF THE EGYPT EXPLORATION SOCIETY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

make settings for stones. Jewelers also hand-wrought wires for chains. Often tomb jewelry was inexpensively gilded wood or steatite (soapstone) rather than solid gold. Only the wealthiest Egyptians could afford to bury solid-gold objects. People who could not afford jewelry made from precious metals and semi-precious stones but who still desired the protection it could give used flowers, seeds, and shells for personal adornment. The most popular inexpensive substitute material was faience. Faience is made from fired sand with a glaze made of soda-lime-silicate. Jewelers could make faience jewelry in molds. Thus faience could imitate nearly any shape. It also could be colored in a wide variety of shades from white to green to blue. Many scholars believe that, though inexpensive, faience was also popu-

lar because of its dramatic transformation from sand as a raw material to a glittering colored surface.

**SYMBOLISM.** Many items of Egyptian jewelry were symbolic as well as expressions of wealth and status. The Egyptians thought that the gods' flesh was gold and their bones were silver. Thus these two precious metals associated the wearer with the divine. Colorful semi-precious stones could also represent various ideas through symbolism. Red stones represented powers such as the sun. Green represented regeneration and growth, important for the symbolism of rebirth into the next world. Deep blue represented the heavens and the waters of the Nile. Royal jewelry beginning in the Old Kingdom had a standard red/green/blue pattern that tied together the most important concepts through symbolism.

## SEMI-PRECIOUS Stones—Imported and Local

The Egyptians used a wide variety of imported and local semi-precious stones in their jewelry. The following lists show the range of colorful stones available for the ancient jeweler to set. Jewelry also helps to establish wide-ranging trade networks available to the Egyptians.

### Local Stones

Amazonite  
Amethyst  
Banded Agate  
Calcite  
Carnelian  
Emerald

Fluospar  
Green feldspar  
Hematite  
Jasper  
Malachite  
Olivine  
Peridot  
Porphyry  
Rock crystal  
Serpentine

### Imported Semi-Precious Stones

Lapis lazuli, Afghanistan  
Turquoise, Sinai  
Obsidian, Iran

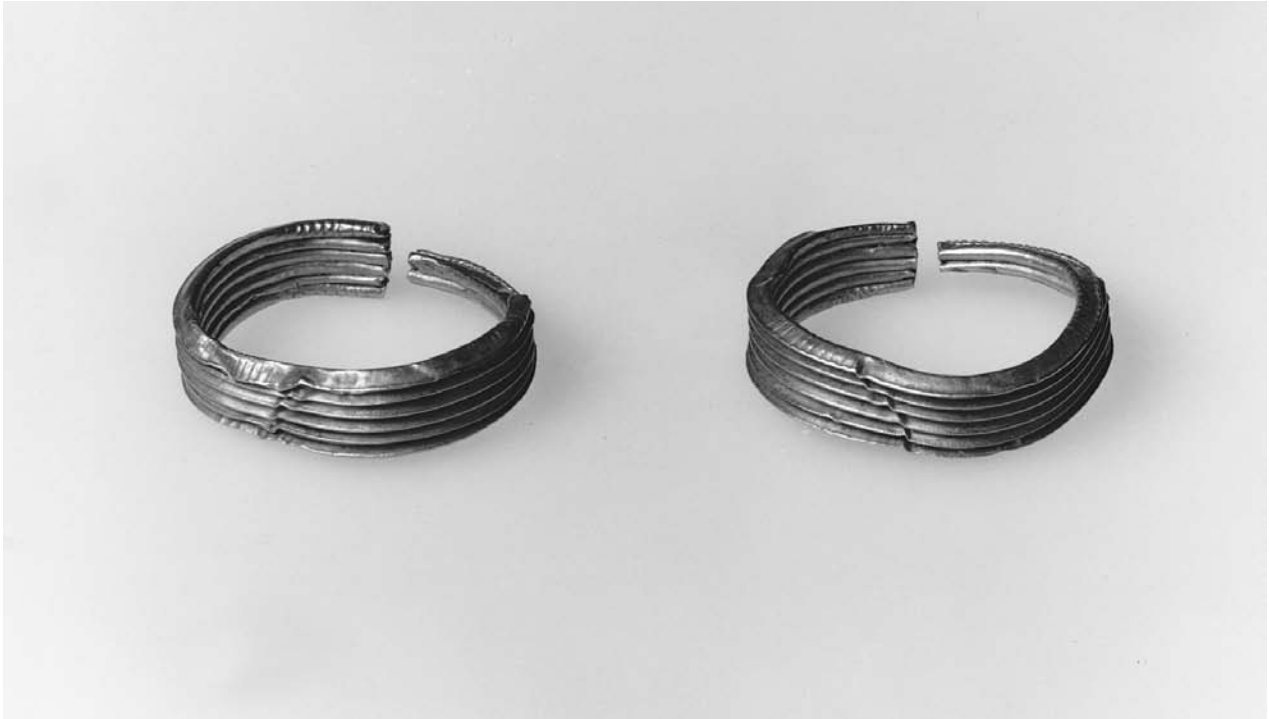
**BOATMAN’S CIRCLLET.** The Egyptians called the first known head ornaments worn both by men and women the boatman’s circllet. Originally it was a headband made of woven reeds that kept a boatman’s hair in place while he worked. Wealthy women such as Seneb-tisi who lived in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.) had a gold head circllet imitating the boatman’s headband. Princess Khnumet, also of the Twelfth Dynasty, was buried in a headband of gold imitating the reeds of a boatman’s circllet but with additional blue, red, and green stones to represent flowers.

**DIADEMS.** A headband or circllet becomes a diadem when a royal person wears it. Gold headbands with added Uraeus-snake or vulture were worn by queens in the Twelfth Dynasty. Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet wore a diadem with fifteen inlaid roundels, papyrus flowers, and a Uraeus-snake. A royal woman of the Eighteenth Dynasty wore such a diadem with a gazelle rather than a Uraeus, a sign she was a secondary queen.

**WIG DECORATIONS.** Burials of the Twelfth and Eighteenth Dynasties also have revealed wig decorations. Seneb-tisi, a woman who lived in the Twelfth Dynasty included gold rosettes spaced at regular intervals on her wig. Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet wore short gold tubes threaded on the hair of her wig. One of the royal women from the Eighteenth Dynasty wore a head covering of gold rosettes strung between beads over her wig.

**RINGS AND EARRINGS.** Finger rings of gold, silver, bronze, copper, or faience often incorporated hieroglyphic signs, especially signs for words that signified characteristics Egyptians prized. Thus jewelers made rings from the ankh (life) hieroglyphs along with signs for eternal existence, healing, protection, and stability. One popular ring form was a bezel or base for a scarab beetle with an inscription on the bottom. Often the inscription was the name of a king, a deity, or a wish for health. Unlike rings, which were standard jewelry long before 2000 B.C.E., ear ornaments joined Egyptian jewelry in the Second Intermediate Period (1630–1539 B.C.E.) and did not become popular until the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). Popular styles included hoops, pendants, studs, and plugs. Both men and women wore earrings, though kings did not wear them in representations, even though several royal mummies have pierced ears. Earrings were included among Tutankhamun’s treasures, but the mummy did not wear earrings even though he had pierced ears and wore many other kinds of jewelry. This is a puzzling contradiction.

**BEADED COLLARS.** In Egypt’s long history there were several trends or fads in jewelry. But the longest-lived item was the beaded collar. There were two types of beaded collars worn by men, women, and deities. They included the *wesekh* (“broad”) collar and the *shenu* (“encircling”) collar. The *wesekh* collar consisted of several rows of upright tube-shaped beads, strung close together. The bottom row used pendants shaped like a beetle, a



Pair of corrugated hoops. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 72.123A-B, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

symbol of eternal life, or a simple drop-shaped bead. The shenu collar used similar tube-shaped beads in alternating segments strung vertically and horizontally. Both collars were symmetrical, a general characteristic of Egyptian jewelry. They both also used the larger beads in the center and gradually reduce the size of the beads toward the edges, as well as terminals to gather the stringing of the beads. Finally they both used counterweights worn toward the back that relieved the weight of the necklace on the neck. The menat or counterweight also made it possible for the beaded collar to lie properly at the neck. The menat thus became a symbol of stability.

**PECTORALS.** Simple beads on a string around the neck developed into both collars and chest ornaments called pectorals. A pectoral is a piece of jewelry that hangs over the chest. The first pectorals were pendants with the name of the king inscribed on them. They were made from precious metals often inlaid with semi-precious stones. Some examples were shaped like a shrine with the king's name in a cartouche in the center. In the New Kingdom, pectorals often substituted a scarab for the king's name. The scarab beetle was a symbol of the sun-god. These scarab-beetle pectorals were worn only by mummies, not living people.

**ARM/LEG ORNAMENTS.** The Egyptians wore armlets on their upper arms and bracelets on their fore-

arms and anklets around their ankles. Both men and women wore armlets, bracelets, and anklets. All three could be either flexible or rigid. The flexible armlets, bracelets, and anklets were made from beads, while the rigid type is called a bangle, made from elephant ivory or precious metal. Bracelets were popular in both the Old and Middle Kingdoms. Armlets came into fashion only in the New Kingdom. Among the most famous sets of bracelets were the thirteen worn by Tutankhamun's mummy. They were made from gold with inlays of precious stones. They included protective symbolism such as the vulture, the Eye of Horus that could represent healing, and the scarab beetle representing the sun god. Anklets are indistinguishable from bracelets. They can be either made from beads or can be rigid bangles made with a hinge. It would not be possible to pass a rigid bangle over the entire foot to reach the ankle. Thus they were made with hinges that allowed them to open. There are many representations of men and women wearing anklets, but they can only be recognized when a mummy is wearing one. Tutankhamun's anklet, for example, looks exactly like a bracelet. Yet because it was discovered around his ankle, its true purpose is known.

**JEWELERS.** Jewelers were represented in tomb paintings, relief, and on stelae. Tomb representations



Single strand necklace with flower pendants. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 48.66.44, GIFT OF MRS. LAWRENCE COOLIDGE AND MRS. ROBERT WOODS BLISS, AND THE CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

of jewelers show them at work at work benches and using their tools. In the tomb of the Sixth-dynasty (2350–2170 B.C.E.) prime minister Mereruka, people who weigh precious metals then melt them are represented with gold workers and bead stringers. Several dwarves work as jewelers in this scene, a common phenomenon. Dwarves had an association with Ptah, the patron god of craftsmen. But also it is possible that the small hands of dwarves were an asset in working with jewelry. In the New Kingdom, the best representation of jewelers is in the tomb of another prime minister named Rekhmire (reign of Thutmose III, 1479–1425 B.C.E.). Here men are represented drilling stone beads and stringing them as if they were in an assembly line. Stelae include the names of jewelry workers and imply that they were at least middle-class workers.

#### SOURCES

Cyril Aldred, *Jewels of the Pharaohs* (New York: Praeger, 1971).

Carol Andrews, *Ancient Egyptian Jewelry* (London: British Museum, 1990).

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Fashion*

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### IRER

fl. Dynasty Twelve (1938–1759 B.C.E.)

*Priestess  
Overseer*

**HOUSEHOLD MANAGER.** Irer lived in a town attached to the pyramid of Senwosret II (r. 1844–1837 B.C.E.) called Hotep-Senwosret. Irer was responsible for managing a household during the owner's absence on business. She also had responsibilities as a priestess in the temple dedicated to the deceased Senwosret II. In a letter

she wrote to the owner, she complains that she was unable to supervise the weaver's workshop attached to the household because of her responsibilities as a priestess. Irer's tone in the letter fluctuates between the subservience of an employee and annoyance that the owner is not fulfilling his responsibilities. She uses the standard formula, calling herself "your humble servant" and referring to the owner as "the lord, l.p.h." The initials refer to the Egyptian expression, "may he live, may he prosper, and may he be healthy," that follows each mention of a superior in writing. Yet Irer is straightforward in complaining that she cannot supervise the weavers properly if food supplies do not arrive from her master. Irer's letter demonstrates the way that household weaving shops were managed.

#### SOURCES

Edward F. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990): 82–83.

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Fashion*

Anonymous, *Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446* (c. Dynasty Thirteenth, 1759–1630 B.C.E.)—This papyrus is a list of servants that includes twenty weavers who each specialized in a particular kind of cloth.

Irer, *Letter to her Master* (c. 1844–1837 B.C.E.)—This letter describes a woman's trouble supervising a home weaving workshop while the master is absent on business.

Nakht, *Cairo Papyrus 91061* (c. 2008–1938 B.C.E.)—This scribe's letter confirms the existence of home workshops for spinning and weaving cloth, and that cloth was sent long distances.

chapter four

LITERATURE

Edward Bleiberg

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	112	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	114	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS			
Egyptian Writing and Language . . . . .	115	<i>Immortality of Writers: Anonymity and Fame</i> (an author claims that literary fame is the best way to achieve immortality) . . . . .	122
Egyptian Writing Materials and Publishing . . . . .	118	<i>Combining Literary Genres</i> (excerpt from <i>The Teachings of Amenemhet</i> ) . . . . .	124
The Author . . . . .	121	<i>Moral Declarations from the Autobiography of Nefer-seshem-re</i> (Nefer-seshem-re comments on social obligation) . . . . .	127
The Idea of Genre in Middle Egyptian Literature . . . . .	123	<i>Sinuhe: A Man Who Changed</i> (excerpt from <i>The Story of Sinuhe</i> ) . . . . .	131
The Literature of Moral Values . . . . .	126	<i>Hymn to the Sun God</i> (the most complete account of the myth of Osiris) . . . . .	134
Pessimistic Literature . . . . .	128	<i>Uncertain Doom</i> (excerpt from <i>The Doomed Prince</i> ) . . . . .	142
Story of Sinuhe . . . . .	130	<i>Teachings of Ptahhotep—Practical and Wise</i> (practical and lofty wisdom from Ptahhotep) . . . . .	144
Emergence of New Kingdom Literature . . . . .	131		
Demotic Literature . . . . .	138		
The Egyptian Literary Canon . . . . .	141		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Khaemwase . . . . .	148		
Ptahhotep . . . . .	148		
Wenamun . . . . .	149		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	149		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS in Literature

All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).

- 3300–3000 The earliest hieroglyphic writing emerges in the town of Abydos in Middle Egypt. This pre-dates the earliest Sumerian writing in Mesopotamia by about 300 years.
- 2625–2170 Old Egyptian, the oldest known stage of the ancient Egyptian language, is written in hieroglyphs and hieratic, a cursive writing system based on hieroglyphs.
- The first Egyptian literature includes the *Pyramid Texts*, the funeral service for the king carved on the interior walls of the pyramids of kings and autobiographies of noblemen carved on the walls of their tombs.
- 2625–2532 The earliest autobiographical inscriptions suggest that a man achieves self-worth by fulfilling responsibilities to his father.
- 2532–2425 Autobiographies of the late Fourth and the Fifth Dynasties portray a man's self-worth as being based on his relationship with the king.
- 2500–2350 Autobiographies of the Fifth Dynasty reveal that the Egyptians believed goodness was innate.
- 2065–1957 Egyptian noblemen revive the ideal of royal service as the theme of autobiography, an idea that had disappeared at the end of the Old Kingdom.
- 2008 The literary theme of the overcoming of political chaos by a strong king appears in the new literature of pessimism, a literature that contrasts earthly reality with Egyptian ideals.
- 2008–1630 Middle Egyptian, the classical stage of the ancient Egyptian language used to compose poetry and prose for nearly 1,500 years, is also the spoken language.
- 1938–1759 New literary genres appear including narrative, teachings, and discourses.
- 1919–1875 *The Story of Sinuhe*, Egypt's great national epic poem is probably composed during this time.
- 1543–1539 The *Kamose Stela*, the oldest known historical account, is composed; the genre will grow in importance during the New Kingdom.
- 1539–1075 Late Egyptian, the language of a number of sophisticated prose stories, is also the spoken language.
- Autobiography grows less important as a form than it was in the earlier period and is published on statues rather than on tomb walls.
- Hymns emerge as an important literary form.
- 1479–1425 The *Annals of Thutmose III*, carved on the wall of the Temple of Amun at Karnak, directs readers to a leather roll in the library for the full version of the text, indicating that fuller versions of some texts existed in other media.
- A poem praising the city of Thebes is the only known Eighteenth-dynasty verse, contrasting with numerous poems of earlier and later periods.
- 1478–1458 Queen Hatshepsut publishes an historical account of her expedition to the land of Punt in Ethiopia, a very early description of a foreign country.
- 1390–1352 King Amenhotep III uses large faience scarabs to publish and distribute decrees and information, one way of producing multiple copies of a text with molds.



- 1352–1332 The king Akhenaten publishes the *Hymn to the Aten*, the first known literary work in Late Egyptian. Late Egyptian will become increasingly important for literature.
- 1292–1190 There is an apparent sudden flowering of a new narrative literature in Late Egyptian vernacular.
- 664 The Demotic language and script begin to be used in speech and literature by most Egyptians.
- 332 Alexander the Great, a Macedonian Greek, conquers Egypt and brings the Greek language to Egypt as the language of the ruling class.
- 196 The decree of Ptolemy VI exempting priests in Memphis from certain taxes is carved on a stela in Egyptian and Greek that will later be known as the Rosetta Stone, the key to recovering the ancient Egyptian language in modern times.

## OVERVIEW *of Literature*

**LONG TRADITION.** Ancient Egyptian authors produced literature for a 2,500-year period, making it one of the longest continuous literary traditions in world history. Ancient Egyptian literature began as hieroglyphic autobiographical accounts on the tomb walls of kings and nobles, and developed on papyrus, wooden tablets, and limestone chips over the centuries into several recognizable genres, including poetry, historical accounts, teachings, and stories. Despite its rich tradition, however, ancient Egyptian literature has not received the scholarly attention given to other ancient writings, such as those in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. While scholars have been able to develop accurate translations and methods for uncovering the underlying meaning of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew texts since the fifteenth century, the study of Egyptian texts is a relatively new field, begun in the nineteenth century. And while the literature of ancient Greece and Rome as well as Hebrew texts like the Old Testament of the Bible are considered landmarks of world literature, ancient Egyptian literature is still an obscure branch of world literary tradition with virtually no readership beyond the Egyptologist community.

**LOSS AND RECOVERY.** The reason scholarship of ancient Egyptian literature has lagged so far behind that of other ancient writings stems from the difficulties of translating the language. From the late fifth century C.E. until 1822, the ancient Egyptian language was lost, largely due to changes in the language brought about by the conquering of Egypt by foreign nations: first the Greeks in 332 B.C.E., and then the Arabs in 642 C.E. Though Coptic, the last developmental stage of ancient Egyptian, continued to be spoken as the language of prayer for Egyptian Christians, the official government language in Egypt was Greek after Alexander the Great conquered the country in the fourth century B.C.E. Three centuries later, Egypt underwent another dramatic language shift when the conquering Arabs introduced the Arabic language and the Islamic religion to the nation. Now twice removed from their ancient tongue, Egyptians were no longer able to de-

cipher ancient texts; these writings remained unknown for centuries until the first modern Egyptologist, J.-F. Champollion cracked the code of hieroglyphics on the Rosetta Stone in 1822. This translation did not remove all the barriers to the study of literature, however, as ancient Egyptian literature comprises texts written in five dialects and six different scripts. More translations would have to follow, slowly building on the Rosetta-Stone translation.

**NOT MUCH EVIDENCE.** The problem of translation was not the only barrier to the study of ancient Egyptian literature, however. The surviving texts of what may be truly classified as literature include only about fifty examples, most in fragmented condition. The absence of inscribed dates and authors' names makes it difficult for scholars to pin down dates of composition, particularly when the surviving work is actually a copy of a text written in a much earlier period. The difficulty is compounded when, as is often the case, the setting of a text is historical. Many Twelfth-dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.) authors, for example, set their texts in the Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.), which confused many late nineteenth-century scholars into believing that certain Middle Kingdom texts represented works from the Old Kingdom. Though these texts can now be sorted into approximate time periods, the absolute order in which they were written has not yet been established.

**LIMITED INTERPRETATIONS.** The lack of a complete body of works poses additional problems to scholarly interpretation of ancient Egyptian literature. Few texts are complete; some lack beginnings, others the middle, still others the end of the text. These fragments only provide clues to major themes, and the absence of a “big picture” can skew modern perspective. The problem of interpretation looms larger when scholars look beyond individual texts and attempt to draw conclusions on the basis of the larger body of surviving works. For example, there are dozens of copies of *The Story of Sinuhe* preserved while there is only one copy of *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, perhaps because *Sinuhe* was a model copied by students. If scholars could be certain that this ratio accurately reflected the body of Egyptian literature as a whole as opposed to that which survived, they could draw the conclusion that *Sinuhe* was much more important than *Shipwrecked Sailor* in Egyptian culture. It is not clear, however, whether the survival of a greater number of *Sinuhe* texts is an accident of preservation or whether there were more copies around to survive. A similar problem exists with apparent gaps in literary production. In the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.), for example, there are many important narratives dating to the Nineteenth Dynasty (1292–1190 B.C.E.) and no narratives dating to the equally important Eighteenth

Dynasty (1539–1292 B.C.E.). Should scholars conclude that narratives were unimportant in the Eighteenth Dynasty or that by the accidents of discovery, the texts written then have not survived or not yet been discovered? Such problems have no immediate solution.

**TYPES OF LITERATURE.** Subject matter is one key to understanding the types of ancient Egyptian literature. Autobiography is the oldest subject, beginning in the Old Kingdom. Autobiographies are recorded in tombs and include prayers for offerings along with events from the deceased tomb-owner's life. In general, they include many stereotyped statements that demonstrate that the author had lived his life according to Egyptian principles of justice. Advice was the next most popular subject for Egyptian authors. Modern scholars have called these texts "wisdom," though they mostly deal with practical tips on careers and interacting with superiors. Wisdom could also include information about the nature of the moral life. Another subject was the gap between moral values and reality. This literature, called pessimistic, emerged at the end of the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.), after a time of political chaos. The pessimistic literature represents the values of the ruling class and laments their loss of power during the period of political decentralization. Morality, indeed, is associated with the restoration of an Egyptian central government. Narratives emerged in both poetry and prose in the Middle Kingdom and were even more popular in the Nineteenth Dynasty and in the Late Period. Middle Kingdom narratives include the epic poem that deals with the adventures of a man named Sinuhe and the experience of a shipwrecked sailor, narrated in prose. New Kingdom and Late Period narratives seem more concerned with the gods' activities, though authors composed them in the contemporary speech of the people rather than the classical language. Modern knowledge of ancient love poetry is confined to the Nineteenth Dynasty, though this too seems an accident of discovery. The love poems are especially appealing because their interests and concerns seem so contemporary: a young girl yearns for a glimpse of her boyfriend while he spends time with his friends, or a boy plots to surprise his girlfriend while she lingers at the river.

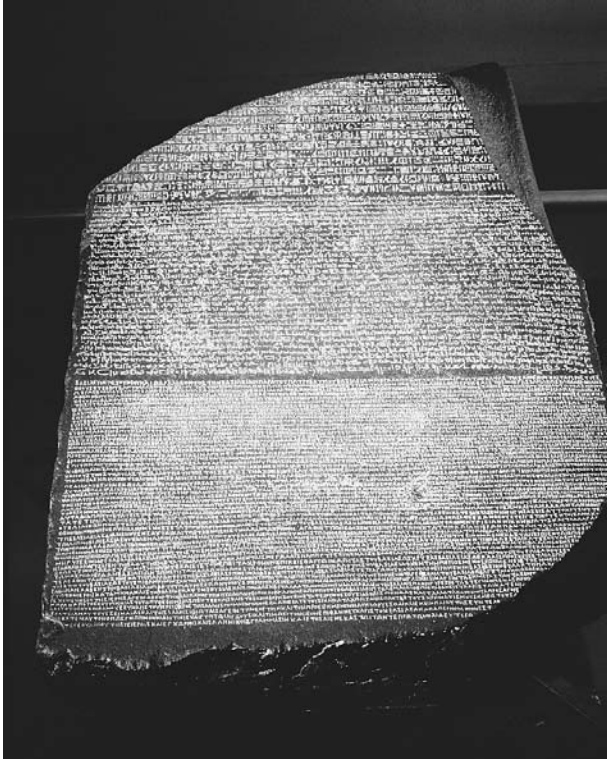
## TOPICS *in Literature*

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### EGYPTIAN WRITING AND LANGUAGE

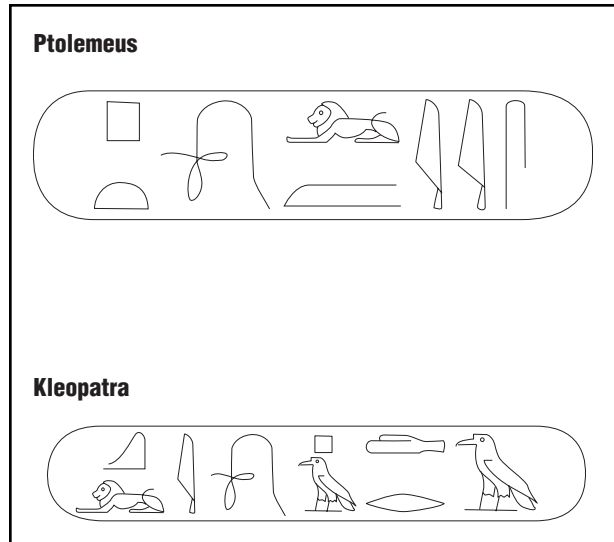
**BIRTH AND LOSS.** The earliest evidence for writing the Egyptian language in hieroglyphs dates to about 3300

B.C.E. During the 1990s, the archaeologist Gunter Dreyer discovered the earliest known inscriptions, a group of seals bearing the names of early Egyptian kings who reigned from 3300 B.C.E. to about 3100 B.C.E., in the town of Abydos, located in central Egypt. Dreyer's discoveries newly suggest that Egyptian was the first written language in the eastern Mediterranean, pre-dating Sumerian, the next oldest written language, whose writing system was invented in what is now modern Iraq about 3000 B.C.E. Hieroglyphs and more cursive forms of Egyptian writing called hieratic and demotic continued in use in Egypt for nearly 3,500 years. The *Pyramid Texts*, the funeral liturgy found in royal pyramids in the late Fifth and early Sixth Dynasties, and the autobiographies found in tombs of the same period (2500–2170 B.C.E.) constitute the first known Egyptian literature. In contrast to the vague date and unknown scribes of the first inscriptions, the last known Egyptian inscription written in hieroglyphs includes a date equivalent to 24 August 394 C.E. and the name of the scribe, Nesmeterakhem, son of Nesmeter, who composed it and carved it on a wall at the Temple of Isis in Philae on Egypt's southern border. By this time, Macedonian Greeks ruled Egypt following Alexander the Great's conquest of the country in 332 B.C.E. Greek had become the official language of the Egyptian government with Alexander's conquest, though ordinary Egyptians continued to speak and write their own language. Yet the ruling class, even among Egyptians, began to speak and write Greek because this language was now the key to power and success. Approximately 100 years after the last hieroglyphic inscription at Philae, an Egyptian named Horapollo who lived in Alexandria wrote a book in Greek called *The Hieroglyphics of the Egyptian*, completely mischaracterizing the hieroglyphic writing system. Horapollo probably based his description of hieroglyphs on lists he found in the Library of Alexandria. He had access to some accurate facts about the meaning of particular hieroglyphic signs, but he did not know that most of the hieroglyphic signs had phonetic values and that the hieroglyphs were a means of writing ordinary language. He wrote instead that hieroglyphs were pictures that could convey philosophical ideas to readers who were initiated in their mysteries. Horapollo's ideas derived from neo-Platonism, a Greek philosophical school current during his lifetime that stressed the role of contemplation in achieving knowledge. Horapollo believed that hieroglyphs were an object of contemplation and thus a source and expression of knowledge. Horapollo's book led early European scholars astray for the 403 years between his book's modern publication in Italy in 1419 and French scholar J.-F. Champollion's decipherment of hieroglyphs in 1822.



The Rosetta Stone, on which the same text was written in two forms of ancient Egyptian, hieroglyphic and demotic, as well as Greek. Discovery of the stone led to the decipherment of the demotic and hieroglyphic script in 1822. THE ART ARCHIVE/BRITISH MUSEUM/DAGLI ORTI.

**DECIPHERING HIEROGLYPHS.** In 1822 Champollion became the first modern person to read Egyptian hieroglyphs. He based his study of hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone, a tri-lingual inscription bearing a date equivalent to 27 March 196 B.C.E. It is a decree issued by King Ptolemy VI, exempting the priests of Memphis from certain taxes, and recorded in Greek, Egyptian hieroglyphic, and in Egyptian Demotic, a cursive writing system derived from hieroglyphic. Champollion began his work with the assumption that the hieroglyphs represented the same text as the Greek. Since European scholars had never lost the ability to read ancient Greek, Champollion understood the contents of that section of the inscription with little difficulty. Champollion may have been aware of an English scholar named Thomas Young, whose private work on hieroglyphs, written in 1819 but never published, suggested that the ovals with hieroglyphic signs inside them carved on the Rosetta Stone were a phonetic writing of King Ptolemy VI's name. Champollion assigned sounds to the signs that represented Ptolemy's name by relying on the Greek text. He then compared the text in Greek and Egyptian hieroglyphs on the Bankes' Obelisk, a monument brought



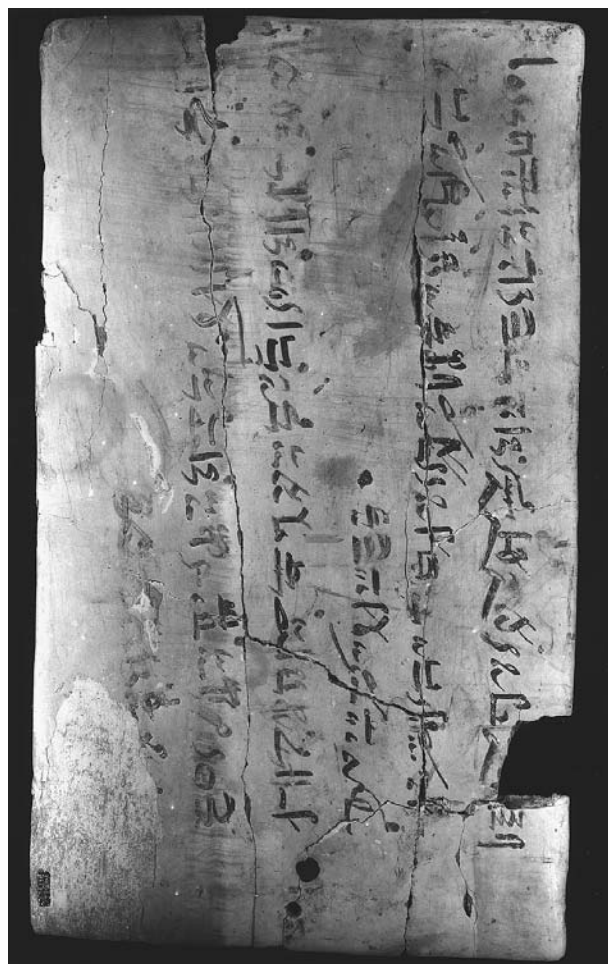
Hieroglyphic and Greek writings of the names of Ptolemy and Cleopatra. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

to England from southern Egypt in the early nineteenth century. This monument exhibited a Greek inscription with the name Cleopatra and a hieroglyphic inscription that included an oval with signs inside it. Taking the sounds "p," "t," "o," "l," and "e" that are common to both Ptolemy and Cleopatra's names, Champollion made a comparison between the two groups of hieroglyphic signs. He found that the expected hieroglyphic sign was in a predictable place. The same sign was present to write "p," the first sound in Ptolemy and the fifth sound in Cleopatra, in the first and fifth position of the writing of their names. The same expectations were met for the sounds "t," "o," "l," and "e." This comparison demonstrated that hieroglyphs were phonetic, not mystical, philosophical symbols. Using these known signs as equivalents for known sounds, Champollion was quickly able to identify the hieroglyphic writings of the names of many of the Roman emperors who ruled Egypt after Octavian (later the Roman emperor Augustus) conquered the country in 31 B.C.E. He used his knowledge of Coptic, the last stage of the Egyptian language written with Greek letters, to further identify the meanings of Egyptian words written in hieroglyphics. Subsequent scholarly work since Champollion's discovery has resulted in a nearly complete understanding of the Egyptian language, its grammar, and its place among the languages of the world.

**DIALECTS OF EGYPTIAN.** Egyptologists have discovered five different dialects of the Egyptian language, all of which had literature. A dialect is a variety of language distinguished by features of vocabulary, gram-

mar, and pronunciation from other varieties, but constituting together with them a single language. Some dialects are associated with different regions of a country. Other dialects, as is true with Egyptian, are separated by time. A more familiar example of this phenomenon is the language of the medieval English poems *Beowulf* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. They were composed in dialects of English, but are nearly incomprehensible to modern English speakers. Yet the languages of these poems are still the natural ancestors of our modern language. In the same way, the dialects of Egyptian—called Old Egyptian, Middle Egyptian, Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic—each grew out of the previous dialectical stage of the language and represent different time periods. There must also have been regional dialects that scholars cannot recognize from the written evidence. Of the dialects preserved on papyrus, stone, and other writing materials, the oldest is Old Egyptian, used to compose the *Pyramid Texts* and the autobiographies found in Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.) tombs. Middle Egyptian, spoken during the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.) was Egypt's most important dialect. It was the classical language used to compose poetry and prose for 1,500 years after Egyptians stopped speaking it as their day-to-day language. Late Egyptian was the day-to-day speech of the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) and was favored by authors of popular tales. Demotic, used in speech by Egyptians during the Late Period through the Roman Period (664 B.C.E.–395 C.E.) was a vehicle for popular literature and business deals. At the same time that Demotic predominated among the Egyptian-speaking populace, the ruling class spoke Greek. Finally Coptic, written with the Greek alphabet and some additional characters used to convey sounds not found in Greek, is the last stage of the Egyptian language, emerging in the first century C.E. Egyptian Christians still use it as the language of prayer. Egyptians began speaking Arabic after the Moslem conquest of their country in 641 C.E.

**LANGUAGE FAMILY.** The ancient Egyptian dialects form one language and one language family called Hamito-Semitic or Afro-Asiatic. A language family normally groups together languages with similar vocabulary and grammar. English, for example, is a branch of the Indo-European language family with close connections to both German and French. The Egyptian language's close connections are with languages now spoken in other parts of Africa and in the Near East. Among the many African languages related to Egyptian are Berber, spoken in North Africa; Wolof, spoken in West Africa;



Scribe's exercise board with Hieratic text. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 16.119, GIFT OF EVANGELINE WILBOUR BLASHFIELD, THEODORA WILBOUR, AND VICTOR WILBOUR HONORING THE WISHES OF THEIR MOTHER, CHARLOTTE BEEBE WILBOUR AS A MEMORIAL TO THEIR FATHER, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

and Bedja, spoken in Eritrea in East Africa. Egyptian also shares similarities with the vocabulary and grammar of the Semitic languages including Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew. These connections illustrate that Egypt was always a bridge between the African continent and western Asia.

**EGYPTIAN SCRIPTS.** Hieroglyphs are the most easily recognized ancient Egyptian script, but were not the most commonly used. Hieratic, a cursive writing system based on hieroglyphs, was the most commonly used Egyptian script from the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.) to the beginning of the Late Period about 664 B.C.E. Scribes used cursive hieroglyphs, a writing of hieroglyphs that included fewer interior details in each sign, for writing the *Book of the Dead*. During the Late Period, scribes developed the Demotic writing system, a

cursive writing system that does not correspond sign-for-sign with either hieratic or hieroglyphic writings of words. It is by far the most difficult writing system for modern scholars to master. Finally, the Coptic alphabet emerged with Christianity in Egypt during the first century C.E. The Coptic alphabet uses the 24-letter Greek alphabet plus seven signs from Demotic to represent sounds that do not exist in Greek but are needed to write Egyptian.

**LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.** Compared to other ancient languages such as Greek, Latin, or Hebrew which were never lost, Egyptian is a newcomer to the scholarly scene. Though scholars have made great strides in understanding Egyptian since Champollion's initial accomplishment, translations of Egyptian literature have not yet established the Egyptian achievement in modern consciousness alongside their ancient neighbors in Greece, Rome, and Judea. Yet Egyptian literature included great works whose continuing study will eventually establish it among the world's great literary accomplishments.

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Richard Parkinson, *Cracking Codes: The Rosetta Stone and Decipherment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

SEE ALSO *Philosophy: Secret Knowledge*

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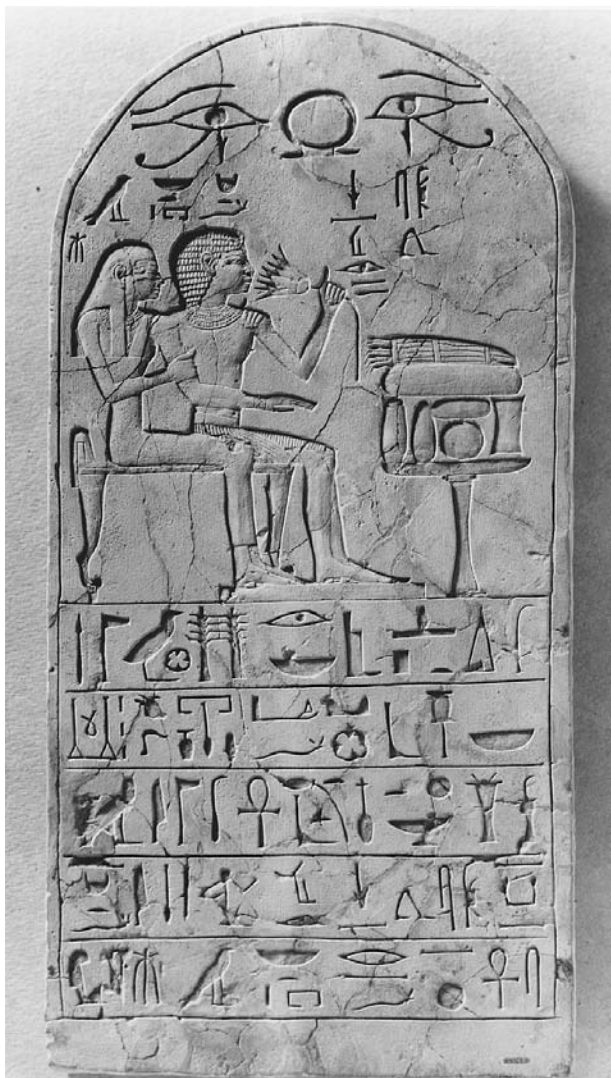
## EGYPTIAN WRITING MATERIALS AND PUBLISHING

**MEDIUM AND MESSAGE.** The Egyptians normally used a particular kind of writing surface for particular purposes. Papyrus, the most famous of Egyptian inventions, was not the most commonly used writing surface. Papyrus was relatively expensive but very durable so scribes used it for important texts that had to last a long time. Works of poetry, letters, and *Books of the Dead* preserved for eternity in tombs were normally written on papyrus using cursive hieroglyphs or hieratic and later Demotic or Coptic. Scribes made *ostraca* (singular: *ostrakon*) from large pieces of broken pots or from limestone chips. Ostraca were much cheaper and more plentiful than papyrus. Scribes used them to practice writing, nearly always in hieratic, but also for letters, contracts, and receipts. Students practiced writing literary texts on ostraca. Archaeologists have recovered thousands of ostraca on limestone from the artists' village at



"Marriage Scarab" of Amunhotep III and Queen Tiye. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.475E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Deir el-Medina, one of the few places where large numbers of literate, but relatively poorer people lived. Scribes also prepared wooden boards with a plaster surface to practice writing in hieratic. Some scholars believe these boards served as a display text, a kind of writing sample that could be used when a scribe wanted to find work. They preserve literary texts. Scribes also used leather as a writing surface, but very few examples have survived into modern times. Yet inscriptions on stone that are normally abbreviated sometimes include the information that the full text was written on leather and stored in the library. Tomb walls provided a writing surface for prayers, captions to sculptural reliefs, and, by the Sixth Dynasty, for extended biographies written either by or for the deceased. Many scholars view these biographies as the first literature in Egypt written with aesthetic values in mind. Temple walls provided a surface for kings to publish long inscriptions that proclaimed royal success in military matters or to describe rituals. *Stelae* (singular: *stela*)—upright, inscribed slabs of stone—provided a surface for writing prayers, historical accounts, and royal decrees. The Egyptians placed them in tombs, memorial chapels, and in tem-



Stela of Senres and Hormose. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 07.420, MUSEUM COLLECTION FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ples of the gods. Tomb and temple walls and stelae preserve the most extensive inscriptions written with hieroglyphs. Scarabs—small images of beetles carved from stone or molded in faience with a smooth underside that could serve as a writing surface—also preserve kings' names and, rarely, preserve extended historical texts. The faience scarabs were created in molds and constitute one means of publishing multiple copies other than writing copies by hand.

**MULTIPLE COPIES.** Some Egyptian works of literature still exist in multiple copies. Other works exist in only one sometimes heavily damaged copy. Scholars who hope to establish the popularity or importance of a particular work in ancient times are frustrated by the accidents of discovery and preservation that result in



Limestone statue of a scribe, seated with a papyrus scroll. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

knowing dozens of partial copies of the *The Story of Sinuhe* but only one copy of *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, two works of Middle Egyptian literature. Multiple copies both complicate and facilitate the establishment of the true text of a particular work. There are almost always small variations in spelling and even word choice in different copies of the same work. With *Sinuhe*, many of these variations stem from the time period when the text was written. *Sinuhe* was a classic, composed and copied by scribes in the Middle Kingdom but still studied in the New Kingdom and Late Period. Sometimes multiple copies help modern scholars learn the meaning of the text. But other times, poorly written and spelled student copies frustrate and mislead modern scholars. Multiple copies can also complicate the determination of a text's date of composition.

**DATE OF COMPOSITION.** Scholars must attempt to distinguish between the date of composition and the date of a copy of a work of literature. The date of composition refers to the time when the author created the work. The date of the copy refers to the dates of copies made for the publication and dissemination of a work of literature, sometimes many years after the date of composition. It is not always easy to determine the date of



Ancient Egyptian scarabs. THE ART ARCHIVE/EGYPTIAN MUSEUM TURIN/DAGLI ORTI.

composition. For example, an anonymous author composed the text known as *The Teachings of Ptahhotep* in the Middle Kingdom (2008 to after 1630 B.C.E.) using as the narrator a vizier who lived in the reign of King Djedkare Isesy (2415–2371 B.C.E.) during the Old Kingdom, approximately 400 years before the text was composed. Only one known copy of the text dates to the Middle Kingdom, the time of composition. The three other copies known to scholars all date to the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) about 500 years after the composition and one thousand years after the setting found in the text. When scholars first examined the text, they assumed that Ptahhotep himself composed it in the Old Kingdom. In the late twentieth century, as scholars learned more about the differences between the dialects of the Old Kingdom (Old Egyptian) and the Middle Kingdom (Middle Egyptian) they realized that the language in the text mostly reflects the way scribes talked and composed in Middle Egyptian rather than Old Egyptian. This study resulted in reassigning the text to a composition date in the Middle Kingdom. Copies reveal their dates through the handwriting on them. The study of handwriting, called paleography, reveals that scribes used particular letter forms in particular periods.

Paleographers compare the forms of particular signs found in dated copies to undated copies to establish the date of a copy. In general, scholars agree more often on the date of a copy than they do on the date of composition for particular texts. Dating texts, naturally, is central to any understanding of the history of Egyptian literature.

**TITLES OF WORKS.** The Egyptians probably referred to literary works by the first line, using it as a title. Today scholars assign a name to Egyptian texts, but there is no authority that can impose one standard title on each text. Thus in different books it is possible to see *The Tale of Sinuhe*, *The Story of Sinuhe*, or even just *Sinuhe* used as the title of the Egyptians' great national epic poem. In this book, the titles for the texts are listed in the section on the Egyptian literary canon near the end of the chapter. There are also some examples found in ancient literature that refer to the "Book of Sinuhe" using the word for "papyrus roll."

#### SOURCES

Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Vol. I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).



Richard Parkenson and Stephen Quirke, *Papyrus* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1995).

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## THE AUTHOR

**DETERMINING THE AUTHOR.** Nearly all Egyptian works of literature are anonymous. Even in works of wisdom or teaching attributed to famous sages of the past, it is never clear to modern readers whether or not the “I” of a first person text is the actual author or whether the attribution to a famous sage is a literary device that adds value to the advice given in the text. Though authors are difficult to name, it is still possible to detect the voice of a real author behind many kinds of stories and texts. The best method for finding the voice of an author, suggested by the French Egyptologist Phillipe Derchain, is to compare two or more texts that relate similar information. Yet even when there is only one version of a text, it is possible to appreciate the author’s voice.

**NARRATOR AND AUTHOR.** Literary critics distinguish between the “I” of a first-person narrative, called the narrator, and the author of the text. In Egyptian literature, modern scholars have often supposed that the author was either the person named as the “I” in the text or that the author was the scribe who wrote down an oral tradition. For example, Egyptologists once identified the author of the text called *The Teachings of Ptah-hotep* with a vizier who lived during the reign of King Djedkare Isesy (2415–2371 B.C.E.) during the Old Kingdom, approximately 400 years before the text was composed in the Twelfth Dynasty. This attribution, in Egyptian thought, made the text more important. Modern culture attaches such importance to knowing the author that it seems unimaginable that the person who composed the text would attribute it to the long-dead vizier. Sometimes Egyptologists have thought that the author of the text was the scribe who wrote it down or who owned it. Such is the case with the poem composed about the Nineteenth-dynasty Battle of Qadesh. Older Egyptologists thought that Pentawer, the scribe who wrote it down and possibly owned the papyrus, was the author. Derchain suggested that even the Egyptians became confused about this practice in the New Kingdom. In the Ramesside text known as *Papyrus Chester Beatty*, eight famous authors of the past are praised. Among them is Ptahhotep, who almost certainly did not write the text that Ramesside readers had available. In the end, the anonymity of the majority of Egyptian authors is similar to the anonymity of almost all Egyptian artists.

**AUTHOR’S ROLE.** One way to assess the author’s role, suggested by Derchain, is to compare the way that different writers described similar experiences. Derchain analyzed three Middle Kingdom stela (upright slabs of stone with inscriptions), that each commemorate a different writer’s pilgrimage to Abydos, the city sacred to the god Osiris. The three authors are Sehetepibre, Iyhernefert, and Mentuhotep. All three came from families wealthy enough to ensure that they were literate. They also had access to libraries and archives and were familiar with Egyptian literature. As authors, they each chose different aspects of the pilgrimage to emphasize in their accounts. Sehetepibre emphasized his loyalty to the king and the way that the pilgrimage demonstrated that loyalty. Iyhernefert wrote about the ritual of Osiris that he observed and attended when he went to Abydos. Mentuhotep’s account supplements Iyhernefert’s account of the ritual, but he also included information on his own earlier career and more epithets about himself. His account is the most literary of the three. Its style is the most sophisticated, and he makes more references to other Egyptian literature in his account. This higher style confirms his contention that he worked in the library of a temple and might be considered more of an intellectual than the other two authors. Sehetepibre and Iyhernefert write more like the bureaucrats they were. But beyond style, each author chose to include different details of the pilgrimage. When combined with stylistic decisions, these choices are what distinguish them as authors.

**FICTION AUTHOR.** Another example of a story whose author had a distinctive voice was the anonymous writer of *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*. Alan Gardiner, the English Egyptologist, suggested in the early twentieth century that this story was a tale, written down from an oral storyteller’s recitation. Derchain and others have realized that the story is too sophisticated, especially in its literary allusions, to be merely a popular story. In fact, it probably contains veiled references to the struggle for power which followed the death of Ramesses III (1156 B.C.E.) and continued in the reign of Ramesses IV (c. 1156–1150 B.C.E.). Some scholars have suggested that the story celebrates the accession of Ramesses IV in the same way European kings used to commission operas for their coronations. The story has a definite point of view and that in itself suggests that there was a real author, though his name is not known.

**WARS OF THUTMOSE III.** Another case study for an examination of authors’ voices concerns two works of literature on the wars of Thutmose III (1479–1425

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***IMMORTALITY OF WRITERS: ANONYMITY AND FAME**

**INTRODUCTION:** The majority of Egyptian authors were anonymous. Yet certain authors of teachings and of the pessimistic literature who wrote in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.) were acclaimed by an anonymous author of the Ramesside period (1292–1070 B.C.E.), six or seven hundred years later. This Ramesside author asserted that literary fame was more important, and even more reliable, than the immortality granted through building a tomb. Indeed, this later author seems unaware that at least one of his heroes, Ptahhotep, did not even write the work attributed to him. Instead, a Twelfth-dynasty author attributed a work to Ptahhotep, who lived in the Fifth Dynasty, in order to make the work more important. A scribe copied this text onto columns two and three of a papyrus now known as *Papyrus Chester Beatty IV*.

If you but do this, you are versed in writings.  
As to those learned scribes,  
Of the time that came after the gods,  
They who foretold the future,  
Their names have become everlasting,  
While they departed, having finished their lives,  
And all their kin are forgotten.

They did not make for themselves tombs of copper,  
With stelae of metal from heaven.  
They knew not how to leave heirs,  
Children [of theirs] to pronounce their names;  
They made heirs for themselves of books,  
Of Instructions they had composed.

They gave themselves [the scroll as lector]-priest,  
The writing-board as loving-son.  
Instructions are their tombs,  
The reed pen is their child,  
The stone-surface their wife.  
People great and small  
Are given them as children,  
For the scribe, he is their leader.

Their portals and mansions have crumbled,  
Their *ka*-servants are [gone];  
Their tombstones are covered with soil,

Their graves are forgotten.  
Their name is pronounced over their books,  
Which they made while they had being;  
Good is the memory of their makers,  
It is for ever and all time!

Be a scribe, take it to heart,  
That your name become as theirs.  
Better is a book than a graven stela,  
Than a solid [tomb-enclosure].  
They act as chapels and tombs  
In the heart of him who speaks their name;  
Surely useful in the graveyard  
Is a name in people's mouth!

Man decays, his corpse is dust,  
All his kin have perished;  
But a book makes him remembered  
Through the mouth of its reciter.  
Better is a book than a well-built house,  
Than tomb-chapels in the west;  
Better than a solid mansion,  
Than a stela in the temple!

Is there one here like Hardedef?  
Is there another like Imhotep?  
None of our kin is like Neferti,  
Or Khety, the foremost among them.  
I give you the name of Ptah-emdjehuty,  
Of Khakheperre-sonb.  
Is there another like Ptahhotep,  
Or the equal of Kaires?  
Those sages who foretold the future,  
What came from their mouth occurred;  
It is found as [their] pronouncement,  
It is written in their books.  
The children of others are given to them  
To be heirs as their own children.  
They hid their magic from the masses,  
It is read in their Instructions.  
Death made their names forgotten  
But books made them remembered!

**SOURCE:** "The Immortality of Writers," in *The New Kingdom*. Vol. 2 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976): 176–177.

B.C.E.). The differences between the two accounts of his wars—*The Annals* and *The Gebel Barkal Stele* (named after the place where it was found)—illustrate how two different authors approached similar subject matter. Scribes carved *The Annals* on the walls of the Karnak Temple, just north of modern Luxor, in an in-

ner court. The author remarks in the text that he based it on extracts from the journal that military scribes kept while the campaigns were in progress. In addition to lists of places that the army subdued, the most remarkable segment is the description of the council of war preceding the Battle of Megiddo (1458 B.C.E.). The

scene is common to a genre that Egyptologists call the *Königsnovelle*, or the “King’s Story,” in which the king’s bravery, cunning, and wisdom are emphasized. In this instance, the officers advise the king against proceeding to the battle along a narrow path, fearing an ambush. In imploring the king to take the army along a longer, safer route, they speak to the king in a way that would be impossible for mere officers in actuality, suggesting that the author took some liberties in describing the event in order to underline the king’s valor. Derchain recognizes this liberty as a mark of a particular author. This material, however, is completely omitted from *The Gebel Barkal Stele*, a text that another scribe wrote based on the same sources. The stele also recounts the highlights of the reign. Though the author includes the Battle of Megiddo, he fails to mention the council of war. The author narrates the stele in the first person, using the king as narrator. The language is hyperbolic and triumphant. The profits of the war are its first concern. Unlike the more factual presentation of *The Annals*, the king is presented as an orator and a man of destiny who stands above the crowd, indicating the purely political intentions of the text. Perhaps the author of *The Gebel Barkal Stele* wrote for a different audience from the one envisioned by the author of *The Annals*. Based on the differing depictions of the same historical event, scholars can conclude that the author of *The Annals* was an historian, while the author of the *Gebel Barkal Stele* was a rhetorician and poet. These two texts reveal how authors shaped the material, even though they were anonymous. All Egyptian authors left some mark on the texts that they composed. Even when a work is a compilation of stereotyped claims, the author’s importance is clear in the way he chooses, combines, and emphasizes the information he conveys.

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### THE IDEA OF GENRE IN MIDDLE EGYPTIAN LITERATURE

**IMPORTANCE.** Understanding Middle Egyptian genres is central to any understanding of ancient Egyptian literature. The literature created during the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.) in the Middle

Egyptian dialect, the spoken language of this period, was the classical literature of ancient Egypt. Egyptians continued to read, study, and enjoy it through the New Kingdom into the Late Period—essentially the full extent of subsequent ancient Egyptian history. In modern times, a genre refers to a type of literature. Each genre has a formal pattern known to readers and authors and is related to the culture surrounding it. Egyptian authors and readers had no idea of modern literary genres like the novel, epic, tragedy, or comedy. These European literary genres derive from theories developed by the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) who lived 1,500 years after authors composed in Middle Egyptian. The Egyptians did have their own categories of literature, however. It is important to remember that such systems of classification belong to a particular culture. There are no universal classification systems in literature, but the idea of genre does exist across cultures. Knowledge of genre is important because it influences judgments of quality. When modern readers try to appreciate ancient Egyptian literature, a particular work seems deficient because the rules and expectations held by the original readers and authors are not clear. For example, *The Shipwrecked Sailor* has been compared to a modern short story. Yet it lacks the clear motivations and characterizations that a modern reader might expect in this modern genre. Modern readers, thus, judge by rules unknown to the original readers and authors. It is thus important to define ancient Egyptian genres that the original readers from the culture would have recognized intuitively. If modern readers are to understand an ancient literature they must understand the expectations the original readers had when they read. Indeed, the author shaped narratives while writing to conform to the original reader’s expectations.

**DISCOVERING ANCIENT GENRES.** Egyptologists have recognized certain patterns in Egyptian literary works and then grouped works by type to establish ancient genres. These patterns sometimes can be recognized in the contents. For example, Egyptologists group together narratives that tell a story, teachings that give advice, or poetry that describes emotions. They also group works by linguistic forms. These forms include formulae—exact wordings repeated from work to work—or patterns—such as the thought couplet where the same thought is expressed twice in different words. Another criterion for distinguishing genres is the social setting. Some works describe only royalty or commoners or priests. Scholars consider all of these factors when identifying genres.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***COMBINING LITERARY GENRES**

**INTRODUCTION:** *The Teachings of Amenemhet* begins as a typical Middle Kingdom teaching, even using the genre name in its first line. Yet it includes among its subjects the traditional advice found in teachings, autobiographical information, and elements of the pessimistic literature. The text is also unusual because Amenemhet addresses his son from beyond the grave while most teachings are set in this world only. Yet this text provides a good sample of many types of ancient Egyptian literature.

**THE SAMPLE.** It is very difficult to judge the representative nature of a sample of surviving ancient Egyptian literature. Often scholars cannot know if a work that has survived had a wide audience or whether ancient readers thought it represented the highest quality. When a work survives in many copies from different historical periods, it seems safe to assume that the Egyptians considered it important. But with works surviving in one copy near its time of composition, it is harder to judge.

**TITLES AND GENRE.** The Egyptians used the first line of the text as its title. Some titles provide the name of the genre. For example, the genre name *seboyet* (“teaching”) often occurs in the phrase “Beginning of the teaching which [narrator’s name] made” that is the title of the text. The German Egyptologist Siegfried Schott made a catalog of ancient Egyptian book titles that provide some genre names. Unfortunately, many preserved

texts do not preserve the beginning. Of 33 works from the Middle Kingdom, only fifteen are complete. The three most common genres are narratives, teachings, and discourses.

**NARRATIVES.** No Egyptian word bears the same meaning as the English word “narrative,” but certain texts definitely tell a story. These narratives include the prose text *The Shipwrecked Sailor* and the verse epic *The Story of Sinuhe*. Each of these stories appears to the modern reader to have a moral. *The Shipwrecked Sailor* counsels against despair, while *Sinuhe* urges the reader to depend on the king’s mercy. All of the known Egyptian narratives lack titles. Some narratives begin with words best translated “There was once,” a formula similar to the modern English “Once upon a time.” But there is no reason to think that this could be the name of the genre or the name of the work.

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**SOURCE:** R. B. Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Middle Kingdom Writings* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): 49–52.

**TEACHING.** The genre called *seboyet* in Egyptian is best translated with the word “teaching.” Many Egyptologists formerly called these documents “Wisdom Texts,” creating an artificial parallel with the books of the Hebrew Bible that are classified in this way including Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. Egyptian teachings deal with the nature of the ideal life. Of the three broad genres that Egyptologists have identified, the teaching is the most coherent. It has an Egyptian name, assuring modern scholars that the Egyptians also recognized this form as a genre. The texts labeled as teachings also have a common form, theme, and style. Egyptologists divide the teachings into two subgroups: royal and private. For example, the advice given in *The Teachings of Amenemhet* or *The Teachings for Merykare* describe a king’s ideal life whereas the advice found in *The Teachings of a Man for his Son* centers on the life of

a private person. Both types consist of descriptions of the proper response for very specific situations. For example, in many private teachings, the author includes the proper way to behave when a nobleman speaks or the right way to behave at the dinner table. Kings receive advice on specific matters of state or in handling underlings.

**DISCOURSE.** A second kind of wisdom is the discourse. A discourse includes meditations known in Egyptian as *medjet* (“pronouncement”) or *tjesu* (“utterance”). These discourses are often laments such as the *Complaints of Khakheperre-sonb* or the *Prophecy of Neferty*. In both texts the speaker contrasts an ideal past with the degraded present. In *Neferty*—the one complete example with an ending—there is also a future restoration of the ideal past attributed to King Amenemhet I. Another group of texts that considers similar content is

the dialogue. In the *Dialogue of a Man with His Ba*, for example, two speakers debate the effectiveness of preparations for the afterlife.

**OTHER TEXTS.** Some known texts fall outside of this scheme of genres. They include a description of the king performing athletic feats and an account of fishermen performing their tasks. Both are discourses, but are otherwise not well understood. Neither one seems pessimistic like the other laments in dialogue form. These positive dialogues might have been an important genre themselves. In addition, they are difficult to understand because they are very fragmentary and preserved in only one copy each. Thus it is difficult to predict the events described in them, and to classify them.

**MIXTURES.** Some texts preserve a combination of genres. *Sinuhe*, for example, includes narrative, hymns, and a letter. *The Eloquent Peasant* includes discourse within a narrative frame. These mixtures suggest that the modern understanding of ancient genres is incomplete.

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### THE LITERATURE OF MORAL VALUES

**FIRST LITERATURE.** Egyptian noblemen recorded the earliest Egyptian literature in tomb inscriptions called autobiographies. They composed them in the first person and included some details of the author's own life. The real purpose of these texts is to demonstrate that the author lived a moral life. Thus the texts illustrate Egyptian ideas of morality. These texts are also the first attempts at extended narrative. Previous to these autobiographies, Egyptians wrote only short inscriptions, usually captions to tomb scenes carved in relief describing the action or identifying the participants. The autobiographies include three topics: protection of the tomb, major events in the tomb owner's life, and a moral self-portrait. These three areas correspond to ideas of self-esteem, interconnectedness with others, and recognition that the world is governed by an ideal of justice called *maat*. *Maat* is the ideal that each author demonstrates was the basis for his life. It is the most important concept in Egyptian thought embodying correct conduct in

the world and in man's relations with the king and with the gods.

**THE IDEA OF THE PERSON.** Miriam Lichtheim, the American Egyptologist, traced the development of claims of self-worth among Egyptian noblemen as recorded in their tombs. She found a progression from self-esteem based on fulfilling filial responsibilities, to a reliance on the king's regard as the source for self-worth, and finally to the development of an objective standard called "*maat*" to measure self-worth. The short statements carved in Fourth-dynasty mastaba-tombs mostly state that a son fulfilled his duty to his father and that the tomb owner never did anything wrong. For example, Ihy, a nobleman of the early Fourth Dynasty, informs visitors to his tomb in an inscription, "I made this for my father, when he had gone to the West [the land of the dead], upon the good way on which the honored ones go." Another writer, the King's Companion Sefetjwa wrote in his tomb inscription, "I never did an evil thing against anyone." Lichtheim argued that such statements are the first literary works that make the claim for an individual's moral identity. They record a sense of self based on filial duty and relationships with other people. By the end of the Fourth Dynasty in the reign of King Menkaure (2532–2510 B.C.E.) the prime minister Ptahshepses carved in his tomb short inscriptions that described his life and its importance in terms of his relationship with the reigning king. In captions to separate reliefs, Ptahshepses lists the reasons why he was important. He specifically mentions that he attended school with King Menkaure's children. Ptahshepses describes in the next caption that he reached adulthood in the reign of the next king, Shepseskaf (2508–2500 B.C.E.). Ptahshepses' marriage to a daughter of an unnamed king follows in the caption to the next adjacent relief scene. A fourth scene and inscription describe Ptahshepses' claim that he worked as an administrator for King Userkaf (2500–2485 B.C.E.). In the scene corresponding to the period when he worked for Neferirkare Kakai (2472–2462 B.C.E.), Ptahshepses mentions that the king accorded him a special honor: Ptahshepses could kiss the king's foot rather than the ground directly in front of the king's foot when he greeted the king. These statements demonstrate that Ptahshepses' self-worth was based on the king's high regard for him. Ptahshepses worked for a total of seven kings, including Sahure (2485–2472 B.C.E.), Shepseskare (2462–2455 B.C.E.) and Reneferef (c. 2462–2455 B.C.E.), before dying in the reign of Nyuserre (c. 2455–2425 B.C.E.). He thus lived about sixty years. Another nobleman named Rawer who lived in the time of Neferirkare Kakai, and thus was a

contemporary of Ptahshepses, also described an example of this king's high regard for him. One day, according to the tomb inscription, Rauer stood next to the king on a boat sailing on the Nile. The king unintentionally struck Rauer with the royal scepter, probably due to the movement of the boat. The king apologized and ordered that his apology be described in Rauer's tomb. Both the king and the nobleman regarded this apology as a special mark of favor. The king accorded a certain dignity to his official by apologizing. By the late Fifth Dynasty (about 2350 B.C.E.) noblemen began to claim in their tomb inscriptions that the tomb owner followed *maat*, a quality that the king both liked and required. This is a subtle shift from the idea that all self-esteem comes from the king's favor. Now man's right behavior is the direct source of self-esteem. This view prevailed throughout subsequent Egyptian literature.

**GOODNESS IS INNATE.** Fifth-dynasty nobles also began to express in their autobiographies the idea that goodness was innate. They used the expression "since birth" to make this claim. Thus Werhu, a priest of the cult of King Menkaure, could write in his tomb, "I never let anyone spend the night angry with me about a thing since my birth." Likewise the Sixth-dynasty nobleman Metjetji could claim, "Never did I make anyone unhappy since my birth." Such statements continued through the First Intermediate Period (Dynasty Seven through the first part of Dynasty Eleven, 2130–2008 B.C.E.). By the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.), when noblemen serving kings were again writing autobiographies to place on stelae (upright pieces of stone), they described knowledge and skills as innate since birth. But during the later Old Kingdom (Dynasties Five and Six), noblemen described only good qualities as innately part of a person's character. Lichtheim observed that the same progression from qualities to skills and knowledge being innate was also true of the king, but such statements were first made in regard to nobles. Egyptians also believed that one could be evil at birth. The Twelfth-dynasty text attributed to the Old Kingdom prime minister Ptahhotep speaks of "one whose guilt was fated in the womb." But the Egyptians also understood that instruction could bring out the best in people. Thus they recognized that both nature and nurture played a role in the way a person behaved. By the Nineteenth Dynasty (1292–1190 B.C.E.), the wise man Any wrote that a person could choose between good and bad impulses that are both innate.

**SIDING WITH GOOD.** As early as the Fourth Dynasty nobles declared in their autobiographies that they always sided with the good. The Sixth-dynasty architect

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**MORAL DECLARATIONS FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF NEFER-SESHEM-RE**

**INTRODUCTION:** From the Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.) to the Sixth Dynasty (2350–2170 B.C.E.), the basis of autobiographies' claims to the moral life depend on changing grounds. The earliest autobiographies speak only of fulfilling obligations to the immediate family, especially the father. Subsequently, obedience to the king becomes the highest moral value. Finally, in the Sixth Dynasty, men like Nefer-seshem-re claim a much broader understanding of social obligations that constitute the basis for moral action.

I have gone from my town,  
I have descended from my nome,  
Having done Maat for its lord,  
Having contented him with what he loves.

I spoke truly [using the word *ma'a*], I did right [using the related word *ma'at*],  
I spoke the good [using the word *nefer*], I repeated the good [*nefer*],  
I grasped what was best [using the phrase that literally means "I seized" and the form *tep-nefer*, the abstract idea of goodness],  
for I wanted the good for people [using the phrase that literally means "I desired the good (*nefer*) for all people in general].

I judged two trial partners so as to content them,  
I saved the weak from one stronger than he as best I could;  
I gave bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked,  
I landed one who was boatless.

I buried him who had no son [to do it for him],  
I made a ferry for him who had none;  
I respected my father,  
I pleased my mother,  
I brought up their children.

**SOURCE:** "Autobiography of Nefer-seshem-re," in *Moral Values in Ancient Egypt*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Fribourg, Switzerland: University Press, 1997): 12.

Nekhebu makes this claim in its most developed form when he wrote, "I am one who speaks the good, and repeats the good. I never said an evil thing against anyone." Nekhebu speaks here of avoiding speaking ill of others. But the Egyptians also assumed other definitions of the good by the Eleventh Dynasty (2008–1938

B.C.E.). The good includes good character and kindness according to *The Teachings for Merykare*, *The Teachings of Ptahhotep*, and *The Teachings of a Man for his Son*. All of these texts remark that good character will be remembered in the future, while evil men are forgotten. Good character is even more important than good deeds. The stela of a man named Mentuhotep makes this point: “A man’s good character is better than doing a thousand deeds. People’s testimony is the saying on the lips of commoners. His goodness is a man’s monument. The evil-natured [one] is forgotten.”

**BASIS FOR THE FUTURE.** The earliest autobiographies inscribed on tomb walls in the Old Kingdom and on stelae during the Middle Kingdom served scribes as the basis for composing both narratives and teachings during the Middle Kingdom. They represent Egyptian authors’ first experiments with defining justice and the good. In later narratives, authors both illustrated these moral traits and established with the instructional literature the best teachings to nurture both the good and the just within a young man’s character.

**TJETJI AND TRANSITIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY.** Tjetji’s autobiography reflects traditions of the late Old Kingdom and anticipates the best of Dynasty 11. It serves as an excellent example of the way autobiographies changed from the previous time period while still carrying the tradition forward. It is carved on a stela that is divided into three unequal fields. At the top is a fourteen-line, horizontal, autobiographical inscription reading right to left. The lower left portion depicts Tjetji facing right, in high raised relief, with two members of his staff; a small figure presents offerings before him. The lower right field is an elaborate, five-line, vertical offering prayer listing wishes for the afterlife. Tjetji’s autobiography revives an Old Kingdom literary tradition nearly 200 years after its disappearance. In Tjetji’s era, autobiographies typically praise provincial leaders’ efforts on behalf of their provinces. But Tjetji, a court official, returns to an Old Kingdom theme: the ideal of service to the king. He makes constant reference to his success at carrying out the king’s wishes. This ideal continued to dominate subsequent autobiographies written during the Middle Kingdom. Tjetji recounts his service as Overseer of the Seal Bearers of the King to Wahankh Intef II (2065–2016 B.C.E.) and Nakht-neb-tep-nefer Intef III (2016–2008 B.C.E.), establishing for historians the order of these kings. Tjetji also describes the borders of the Theban kingdom just before the reunification of Egypt under Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II (2008–1957 B.C.E.). These borders stretch from Elephantine in the south to Abydos in the north. The text is limited in length by the

size of the stela, unlike later, extended autobiographies carved on tomb walls. Yet Tjetji’s use of the Egyptian language is striking and eloquent. Ronald J. Leprohon, the Canadian Egyptologist, suggested that this elaborate language, structured in tight grammatical patterns, derives from the deceased’s own efforts to attain the ancient Egyptian ideal of “perfect speech.” Tjetji’s stela clearly demonstrates the high standards of language that had been established in Thebes before political unification with Lower Egypt. These standards and their connection to the previous period of political unity perhaps point toward the early Eleventh Dynasty’s conscious political plans for reunifying the country.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: Maat; Religion: The King*

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#### PESSIMISTIC LITERATURE

**REFLECTING ON CHAOS.** The exact cause of the collapse of the central government at the end of the Old Kingdom between 2170 and 2130 B.C.E. remains the subject of debate. Nevertheless, it is clear that the central government located in Memphis gradually surrendered its control to local rulers of the provinces during this forty-year period. From 2130 to about 2003 B.C.E., Egypt experienced decentralized, local government with each province ruled separately by local noble families. This is the period Egyptologists call the First Intermediate Period. When Mentuhotep II restored the central government about 2008 B.C.E., the newly re-established central bureaucracy, composed of the literate class, generated a literature sometimes called the literature of pessimism. The theme of these works, mostly composed in the early Twelfth Dynasty, is a reproach or accusation against the gods for allowing chaotic conditions between the end of the Old Kingdom and the establishment of the Middle Kingdom. The texts include laments about the insecure state of society and nature, and assert the hopelessness of discussing these problems. In general, the



authors wrestle with the problem that reality does not match the Egyptian ideal of justice. The list of texts included with the pessimistic literature comprises *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*, *The Complaints of Khakheperre-sonb*, *The Dialogue of a Man with his Ba*, *The Eloquent Peasant*, *The Teachings for Merykare*, *The Prophecy of Neferty*, and *The Teachings of Amenemhet*. These seven texts, all written during the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.), form a group unified by theme, if not a distinct literary genre. They thus reflect an intellectual position which was probably widely held among the literate class during this time period. They shared a fear of two things: disrespect for traditional wisdom and the loneliness of the individual without an ordered society. At least some of the authors of these texts recommended trust in the king and his government as the only antidote to these severe social problems. No authors are known and the exact order and date of composition remains difficult to ascertain. Yet they all share important themes: accusations against the gods, the insecure state of the world, and, by contrast, the nature of a secure world.

**INSECURE WORLD.** An insecure world serves as the setting for the seven works of pessimistic literature. Each author describes the world slightly differently, but they all touch on similar ills that they find in it. First, they acknowledge a threat to or loss of important political, economic, and religious institutions that leads to chaos. The threatened institutions include an effective king who controls an operating government and administers swift justice, a functioning economy, proper religion, and a permanent funerary cult. The *Teachings of Amenemhet*, for example, begins by narrating the assassination of a king by his trusted advisors. In the *Teachings for Merykare*, a king either colludes in grave robbing or is powerless to stop it. False friends threaten both Amenemhet and Merykare. The result of ineffectively functioning kings is a chaotic world defined by abandoned fields, empty granaries, and hungry people and animals. Trade breaks down because robbers stalk the highways while corrupt officials act arbitrarily; local rulers fight each other, fomenting civil war. According to the German Egyptologist Elke Blumenthal, the authors of *Ipuwer*, *Neferty*, and *Khakheperre-sonb* regard all of these circumstances as equally important, with none assigned more weight than another. None of the authors specifically diagnose the cause to be a weak or ineffective king because no author is willing to state unequivocally that the king is responsible for chaos in the world. Yet the implication can easily be read between the lines of the text. Thus the author seems to say that a weak king is just another circumstance on the same level as the preva-

lence of hunger, robbers, and corrupt officials. No author willingly condemns the king's weakness.

**GODS BETRAYED.** The king was responsible in Egyptian ideology for guaranteeing the integrity of divine rituals, both for the gods and for the dead. Yet in spite of lengthy descriptions of inadequately supplied temples, desecrated altars, the destruction of the sun-god Re's temple at Heliopolis, the expulsion of priests, the profanation of holy texts—all apparently everyday occurrences in this group of texts—none of the authors of the pessimistic literature even mention the king's role as protector of order. The king also guaranteed that the mortuary cult would be effective, according to Egyptian belief. Even though the king supplied financial help with burial only to high-level officials, funeral prayers all assume that the king will provide offerings for everyone throughout all time. Yet the pessimistic literature portrays kings' cults as defiled. The rabble disturbs the king's mummy in its tomb or during the embalming and throws it in the river. Yet even the current king is not directly blamed in the literature. No author is willing to charge the king directly with responsibility for chaos and disorder, even though this clearly is the implication of the author's words.

**ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE GODS.** The roots of the world's troubles include ungrateful royal advisors, the king's weakness, and men's greed. Yet no author can specifically accuse the king of weakness. *The Admonitions of Ipuwer* suggests that there is a being responsible for this state of affairs: the creator god Atum. Atum never recognized people's capacity for evil and never inhibited people's attempts to be evil, according to the narrator. From this idea grew the accusations against the gods found mixed with complaints about chaos among men in the pessimistic literature. The god is both guilty and withdrawn from the world. Not only has the god allowed injustice, but also has become unjust himself by betraying the very justice he created. Neferty goes even farther than Ipuwer, claiming, "Creation is as if it were never created. Re should begin creation anew." Yet this view was not universal among Egyptians. In *Coffin Text 1130*, a text commonly inscribed on Middle Kingdom coffins, the sun-god Re describes four acts of creation that he performed in the world. He made the wind so people could breathe. He made the Nile flood to benefit both the humble and the great. He also claims that he created all people to be the same. He never told anyone to act in an evil way. Thus acting in an evil way contradicts the gods' wishes. Finally, Re claims that people were created to carry out the mortuary cult. This text thus shows that there was a debate about mankind's nature and

whether men were inherently evil because of the gods or were themselves responsible for their actions. The origin of evil and the degree to which humans' actions are fated occupy much of the pessimistic literature.

**THE SECURE WORLD.** The debate over the origin of evil and human fate can also continue within a single work. Thus descriptions of the secure world can also be found within works that accuse the gods of creating evil. *The Prophecy of Neferty* is structured as a series of antithetical statements contrasting the evil world of the First Intermediate Period with the better world to come during the Twelfth Dynasty. Rebellion will end, foreign enemies will be subdued, people will celebrate, and the king will restore justice. The contemporary literary texts called "teachings" also provide a method for subduing evil through practicing justice. *The Teachings for Merykare* discusses how a king can act to create a better world for all. Merykare receives advice on how to handle each class of people including officials, soldiers, rebels, and criminals. His father in the text urges reliance on tradition, the daily divine cult, and the mortuary cult in order to foster justice. Even the very pessimistic *The Teachings of Amenemhet* seems to anticipate better from the reign of his son Senwosret I in his teachings. The author of *The Eloquent Peasant* is also able to describe a world with justice, appropriate punishments, and the merciful treatment of the weak that is all part of the Egyptian idea of justice. In *The Dialogue of a Man with his Ba*, the next world contains many of the elements of justice that are missing in the world of the living, including properly provisioned temples and punishment of evildoers.

**IMPORTANT THEMES.** The pessimistic literature shows that the Egyptians contemplated many of basic problems facing mankind. They were particularly concerned with the origin of evil, the proper way to combat evil, and the proper way to promote justice in an insecure world.

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#### STORY OF SINUHE

**IMPORTANCE.** *The Story of Sinuhe* survives in many manuscripts, suggesting that the Egyptians considered it

among their most important literary works. The oldest manuscripts date to the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.), also the time of the story's setting. There are also more than twenty New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) copies and even a Late Period copy (664–332 B.C.E.). This large number of copies surviving in all major periods is due to the fact that scribe schools required scribes to copy this text as part of scribal training. Yet, the fact that so many scribes worked on copying *Sinuhe* suggests that it was also studied in all time periods. It is thus a work of literature that connected the Egyptian literate class for 2,000 years. The text also includes variations on many literary genres. Overall, it is structured to resemble an autobiography and is narrated in the first person. Unlike a tomb autobiography, however, *Sinuhe's* life goes astray rather than meeting the ideal as in the standard biography. It also includes songs, monologues, and even a letter.

**CONTEXT.** Though *Sinuhe* was an important point of reference for all literate Egyptians, it also provides an important window into the Twelfth Dynasty, the time when it was written. The story deals briefly with the assassination of King Amenemhet I (1938–1909 B.C.E.) and the accession of his son King Senwosret I who had co-ruled with him since 1919 B.C.E. The story emphasizes Senwosret's mercy to *Sinuhe*. This has led scholars to believe that the story provided propagandistic support for this king. The story also reveals Egyptian attitudes toward foreigners in the period directly preceding an actual foreign domination of Egypt by the Hyksos. Thus it has great importance for helping scholars understand Egyptian attitudes toward foreigners before the Hyksos. More recent study has emphasized the high literary quality found in the text. All of these elements combine to make *Sinuhe* important both in its own time and to scholars today.

**THE STORY.** *The Story of Sinuhe* narrates the adventures of a nobleman who served Queen Neferu, daughter of Amenemhet I (1938–1909 B.C.E.) and wife of Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.). When the story opens, *Sinuhe* is on a military campaign in Libya with Senwosret I, son of the reigning king Amenemhet I. The news of Amenemhet I's assassination reaches the army and *Sinuhe* panics, fearing that Egypt will fall into turmoil. He is particularly worried that his close connections to the royal family will jeopardize his own life should Senwosret I be denied his legitimate claim to the throne. He decides to flee Egypt, traveling across Egypt's eastern border into the lands beyond. In his haste to leave, however, he does not pack sufficient provisions and nearly dies of thirst in the desert. A bedouin chief

rescues him, and Sinuhe is able to reach the town of Byblos in modern Lebanon, eventually settling in Upper Retenu in modern Syria. There he meets a local ruler named Amunenshi, who gives him his daughter in marriage and land in a place called Yaa. Sinuhe prospers in Yaa, has children, and successfully leads Amunenshi's army against other tribes. Near the end of his life, however, he decides he wants to return to Egypt for burial. He sends a letter to the king, and the benevolent Senwosret I welcomes him back to Egypt with full honors despite his cowardly flight years before. Senwosret I arranges for Sinuhe's burial in Egypt, and the final verses describe Sinuhe's tomb and his final contented days in Egypt waiting for death.

**TRANSFORMATION.** John L. Foster, the American Egyptologist, analyzed Sinuhe's personal development from his loss of status when he fled from Egypt to his eventual restoration to his rightful place in Egyptian society. Foster demonstrated that the real interest of the story for modern readers is in Sinuhe's personal development. It is one suggestion that perhaps helps modern readers understand the story's appeal to ancient readers. At the start of the story Sinuhe is a coward who deserts his king out of fear of losing his own life. His action nearly costs him his life, but he is rescued by a bedouin chief, a man whom Sinuhe would never have recognized as an equal earlier in his life. When Sinuhe meets Amunenshi, he feigns ignorance of his reasons for leaving Egypt, claiming that it was the act of a god. The real turning point in Sinuhe's life comes when an unnamed "hero" challenges him to single combat. Though Sinuhe is smaller, he successfully overcomes the hero through physical courage. This scene witnesses Sinuhe's transformation from the coward who abandoned Senwosret to an effective agent himself. Sinuhe recognizes the change himself in the poem he recites after his victory over the hero. In the poem, Sinuhe remembers the story of his life and contrasts his cowardly escape from Egypt with his current situation as a conqueror. With his transformation from cowardly nobleman to victorious hero now complete, Sinuhe is ready to return to his homeland.

**THE GOODNESS OF THE KING.** Senwosret's response to Sinuhe's request to return to Egypt indicates that this story served a political purpose. The king readily forgives Sinuhe for his disloyalty and welcomes him with open arms, restoring him completely to his former status. Most commentators have seen the king's forgiveness of Sinuhe as the central purpose of the story. As propaganda, the story established Senwosret's goodness and loyalty to those who remained loyal to him. But Foster's analysis, which stresses Sinuhe's development,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**SINUHE: A MAN WHO CHANGED**

**INTRODUCTION:** *The Story of Sinuhe* begins with an act of cowardice when the protagonist flees the scene upon learning of the death of King Amenemhet. Sinuhe's situation changes when he summons the courage to fight a local hero in his new home in the East. The following extract is the poem he recites after his victory in which he recognizes the changes that he has experienced.

A fugitive flees from his neighborhood,  
But my fame will be in the Residence [i.e.,  
Senwosret's palace].  
One who should guard creeps off in hunger,  
But I, I give bread to my neighbor;  
A man leaves his own land in nakedness,  
I am one bright in fine linen;  
A man runs (himself) for lack of his messenger,  
I am one rich in servants.  
Good is my home, and wide my domain,  
[But] what I remember is in the palace.

**SOURCE:** John L. Foster, *Thought Couplets in "The Tale of Sinuhe"* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 1993): 50–51.

demonstrates that this epic was also a close look at individual psychology. The story depicts Sinuhe's development, starting with his removal from his own society to full restoration as a nobleman. Sinuhe moves from disgrace, to renewal, to forgiveness. In the course of this development he also passes from ignorance of his own motives to self-awareness and acknowledgement of his own responsibilities. Not only does he learn to take responsibility for his actions but he also ponders man's proper relationship to the temporal powers of the world.

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**EMERGENCE OF NEW KINGDOM LITERATURE**

**PUZZLE.** Egyptian literature of the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) presents a puzzle for scholars.

Looking at the evidence that survives, no original narrative fiction or teachings date to the first historical division of the New Kingdom, called the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1292 B.C.E.). Most of the texts copied at this time seem to have been composed in the Twelfth Dynasty hundreds of years earlier. Historical narratives on temple walls might be an innovation of this time. There is also meager evidence of poetry. The second part of the New Kingdom (Dynasties Nineteen and Twenty, 1292–1075 B.C.E.), in contrast, seems to abound with new literary genres including narratives in a new colloquial dialect, love poetry, and new manuals of advice in the old tradition. Egyptologists question whether the surviving evidence that creates the picture outlined here is truly indicative of how events occurred. They note in connection with this situation the enormous creativity found in the visual arts during the Eighteenth Dynasty. They question whether scribes of the Eighteenth Dynasty ceased to create new fiction and composed only historical texts and hymns. Perhaps the accidents of discovery have created a false picture of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.** The golden age of Egyptian literature coincided with the end of the Twelfth Dynasty in 1759 B.C.E. when the reign of Queen Sobeknefru came to a close. The Thirteenth Dynasty ushered in a time of conflict that had split the country in two by 1630 B.C.E. The divided nation was ruled by Semitic-speaking foreigners called the Hyksos in the north and Theban princes in the south until 1539 B.C.E. when Theban princes drove the Hyksos out of Egypt. The Theban prince Ahmose (1539–1514 B.C.E.) founded the Eighteenth Dynasty of the New Kingdom, the period of greatest geographical power of the ancient Egyptian state. The New Kingdom included three dynasties—the Eighteenth (1539–1292 B.C.E.), led by descendants of Ahmose; the Nineteenth (1292–1190 B.C.E.), ruled by descendants of a certain General Ramesses which included Ramesses the Great; and the Twentieth (1190–1075 B.C.E.), led by a new family which continued to use the Ramesses name even though they were probably unrelated. Although Egypt was again unified, this period of Egyptian history was not without its share of upheaval; in the Eighteenth Dynasty, King Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.) introduced religious reforms in a period known to modern scholarship as the “Amarna Period,” in which he proclaimed a new religion that excluded the traditional gods. His successor, King Tutankhamun, restored the traditional gods about four years after Akhenaten died, and subsequent Nineteenth- and Twentieth-dynasty kings continued in this

old tradition. These historical events perhaps were a major influence on the composition of literature during the New Kingdom. In the early years of this period, scribes reached back to the historical precedents of the Middle Kingdom for an authentically Egyptian mode of expression after years of foreign domination. However, as the New Kingdom kings provided a more stable state over the course of time, authors expressed a new Egyptian self-confidence through creating new forms of literature.

**COPIED FROM THE MIDDLE KINGDOM.** The Middle Kingdom’s literary achievements in prose and verse narrative fiction were not duplicated in the Eighteenth Dynasty, and scholars question whether scribes from this dynasty composed new works of literature of the type and intent of those written in the Middle Kingdom. Many surviving texts from this dynasty are generally copies of works from the Middle Kingdom, acknowledged even then to be Egypt’s classical age of literature. At least one Eighteenth-dynasty copy of *The Story of Sinuhe*, the great epic poem composed in the Twelfth Dynasty, is known. The earliest preserved manuscripts of the Twelfth Dynasty works *The Teachings for Merykare*, *The Prophecy of Neferty*, *The Teachings of Amenemhet*, and *The Instruction of Khety* also date to the Eighteenth Dynasty.

**ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS.** Scholars have proposed three possible genres where Eighteenth-dynasty scribes could have broken new ground: historical texts, love poetry, and advice. The earliest preserved historical narratives date to this period. These works include *The Kamose Stele*, *The Annals of Thutmose III*, and *The Gebel Barkal Stele*. It is unclear whether there were Twelfth-dynasty texts of this type. Love poetry is well known from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. One text from the Eighteenth Dynasty might anticipate the later work, though it is a description of the city of Thebes. Finally, two manuals of advice might date to the Eighteenth Dynasty, though the only manuscripts date to the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. These texts are known as *The Teachings of Any* and *The Teachings of Amenemope*.

**HISTORICAL WRITING.** Eighteenth-dynasty scribes produced historical narratives that might represent an original literary genre. *The Kamose Stele* is considered to be a work of literature because it narrates a story, but this text has a stronger affinity with historical literature than with classical, fictional narrative. This text, though, certainly dates to the early Eighteenth Dynasty because it is preserved on a dated stela (an upright, inscribed slab of stone). It tells the story of Kamose’s war to expel the

Hyksos from Egypt. This was the first stage of driving these foreign rulers out of the country. Scribes working for Hatshepsut (1478–1458 B.C.E.) produced narrative inscriptions that described her birth and also the expedition to the land of Punt (modern Ethiopia) that she commissioned. They are found along with sculptural relief at her temple in Deir el Bahri. *The Annals of Thutmose III*, carved on the walls of the Karnak Temple, present a narrative of battles, tactics, and booty that seems to be a new kind of writing. Some scholars suggest that there was a Middle Kingdom tradition for such texts, though the evidence is meager. There is a fragmentary Twelfth-dynasty inscription from Memphis published in the reign of Amenemhet II (1876–1842 B.C.E.) that might represent the precedent for Thutmose III's inscription. There is also an Eighteenth-dynasty manuscript called *The Berlin Leather Roll* (because it is written on leather and preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin) that might be a New Kingdom copy of an historical inscription written in the Twelfth Dynasty during the reign of Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.). Some scholars, however, have argued that this text was an Eighteenth-dynasty forgery, designed to serve as a precedent for similar New Kingdom texts. This argument assumes that scribes were not free to invent new forms in the Eighteenth Dynasty and had to create a precedent from the age of the classics in order to write new kinds of works.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHIES.** Eighteenth-dynasty autobiographies have not been closely studied, but they seem to be less central to the literature of the Eighteenth Dynasty than they were in the Old and Middle Kingdoms. Nobles published these autobiographies in their tombs, as was done in the Old Kingdom, and on statues, which was an innovation. There are no autobiographies on stelae, a practice typical in the Middle Kingdom. The personal subject matter in these autobiographies often concentrates on military exploits or on religious subjects. Later in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties the autobiographies are entirely religious rather than narratives of personal experience. For some unknown reason, officials no longer considered these personal experiences to be important.

**HYMNS.** Hymns were also a new creation in the New Kingdom. They were published mostly in tombs of nobles and bureaucrats, two of the social classes that could afford elaborate Egyptian burials. Most of the hymns are unique copies, suggesting that perhaps the tomb owner composed them for his own use. Hymns seem to be the literary form used to develop religious debates in writing. *The Great Hymn to Osiris*, for example, recorded on

the *Stela of Amenmose*, gives the most complete account in Egyptian of the myth of Osiris. It helps establish the cities where the god had temples, describes Osiris' relationship with other gods, and associates the deceased king with the god. *The Hymns to the Sun God*, recorded on the stela of Suti and Hor, argues through its multiple stanzas the primacy of the sun as a god. It lists the sun's multiple names such as Amun, Harakhti, Re, Khepri, and Aten. It makes the argument that all of these gods are the equivalent of Amun. It was only during the Amarna Period of the Eighteenth Dynasty (1352–1332 B.C.E.), a period of tremendous religious upheaval, that hymns utilized the language of common everyday speech, a dialect called Late Egyptian. Late Egyptian represented the spoken language as it had evolved during the hundreds of years since the end of the Middle Kingdom. The classical texts of the Twelfth Dynasty were written in Middle Egyptian, the spoken language of that period. Now once again scribes were using everyday speech to create new works of literature. Some scholars suggest that Akhenaten understood the use of the colloquial language as a way to conform with maat or right conduct. The Egyptians themselves provide no explanation for this change.

**TWO LANGUAGES.** Whether or not Eighteenth-dynasty scribes created new literature, they were familiar with both the classical language of Middle Egyptian and the spoken language called Late Egyptian. In the historical work *The Annals of Thutmose III*, the author wrote in Middle Egyptian, though there are clues in certain word choices and grammatical forms that he was a Late Egyptian speaker. By the Nineteenth Dynasty, at least one scribe living in Deir el-Medina in Upper Egypt owned a library that contained texts in both Middle and Late Egyptian. Numerous examples of Nineteenth-dynasty student copies of classics such as *Sinuhe* demonstrate that students used copying as one way to learn the older language. From the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Dynasty, highly literate scribes must have known how to read the classical and the modern language.

**INNOVATION.** The preserved record of New Kingdom literature certainly creates the impression that the early Nineteenth Dynasty witnessed a sudden literary revolution. New forms including love poetry, narrative fiction, and occasional pieces appear, written in Late Egyptian. Scribes also wrote works following older forms such as teachings, but composed in everyday speech rather than the classical Middle Egyptian dialect. Still, it remains difficult to know whether there really was a revolution or if such texts existed in the Eighteenth Dynasty but did not survive into modern times.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HYMN TO THE SUN GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:** Hymns comprise the best known new literary form during the first half of the New Kingdom (Eighteenth Dynasty, 1539–1292 B.C.E.). Egyptians used hymns as the literary form that explored religious debates in writing. *The Great Hymn to Osiris*, for example, recorded on the *Stela of Amenmose*, gives the most complete account in Egyptian of the myth of Osiris. It helps establish the cities where the god had temples, describes Osiris's relationship with other gods, and associates the deceased king with the god.

I

Turn your face gentle upon us, Osiris!  
 Lord of the life eternal, king of the gods,  
 Unnumbered the names of his protean nature,  
 Holy his manifold visible forms,  
     hidden his rites in the temples.  
 First in Busiris is he, that noble spirit,  
     Splendid his wealth in Letopolis,  
 Hailed in the ancestral home of Andjeti,  
     Finely provided in Heliopolis;  
 God who remembers still  
     Down in the halls where men must speak true,  
 Heart of the inexpressible mystery,  
     Lord of regions under the earth,  
 Worshipped in the white-walled Memphis, power that  
     raises the sun,  
     Whose earthly form rests in Heracleopolis;  
 Long echo his chants in the Pomegranate nome  
     Where the sacred tree sprang, a perch for his soul;  
 Who dwells in the high Hermopolitan temple,  
     Most awful god in Hypselis,  
 Lord of forever, first in Abydos,  
     Yet far off his throne in the red land of death.  
 His tale endures in the mouths of men;  
     God of the elder time,  
 Belonging to all mankind—  
     He gave earth food,  
 Finest of the Great Nine,  
     Most fruitful among the divinities.

II

It was for him chaos poured forth its waters  
 And the north wind drove upstream;  
 Sky would make breeze for his nostrils  
     That thereby his heart might find peace;  
 For his sake green things grew, and the  
     Good earth would bring forth its riches.

Sky and its stars obeyed him,  
     For him the great gates of heaven stood  
     open;  
 Praise of him thundered down southern skies,  
     He was adored under northern heavens;  
 The circling, unfaltering stars  
     Wheeled near his watchful eye,  
 And the weary ones, who sink below seeing—  
     With them was his very dwelling.

III

And he went forth in peace  
     Bearing the mace of Earth, his father,  
     And the Nine Great Gods gave worship;  
 Those in the underdark kissed ground,  
     Grateful dead in the desert bowed,  
 Gone generations joyed when they saw him,  
     Those seated Beyond stood in awe,  
 And the Two Lands united worshipped him,  
     Welcomed the advent of majesty.  
 Lordly leader, first of the eminent,  
     Whose kingdom endures to eternity—  
 His rule made kingship distinguished;  
     Power for good of the godhead,  
 Gracious and kind,  
     Whom to see is to love.  
 He made the nations revere him, that mankind  
     might  
     Lift up his name before all they offered him;  
 Rememberer of whatever was, whether in heaven or  
     earth,  
     His mind entire in the land of forgetting;  
 Unending the shouts and the dancing at festival—  
     rites for him of rejoicing  
     done by Two Lands with one will.

IV

First-ranked of his brothers, the gods,  
     Noblest of the Great Nine,  
 He made order the length of the Riverbank,  
     Set a son at last on his throne,  
 Pride of his father, Geb,  
     Beloved of Nut, his mother.  
 With strength of the leopard he threw down the  
     rebel,  
     With powerful arm slew his opponent,  
     Put fear on his fallen enemy,  
 Reached the far borders of evil, uprooted,  
     Unflinching, set foot on his foe.  
 He inherited earth from his father,  
     Earned the Two Lands as their king.

## V

For when Geb saw how perfect he was, he gave over his throne,

Gave him to guide the world to good fortune;  
And this earth he delivered into his care—  
Its waters, its air, its pastures and forage,  
All of its walking creatures,  
What leaps into flight or flutters down,  
Its creepers and crawlers,  
And the wild desert things—  
All given as his to the son of Sky;  
And the Two Lands approved the succession.

## VI

And he rose splendid, ascended the seat of his father in glory,

Like Rê when he shines from horizon;  
He put dawn on the blank face of darkness,  
Igniting the sun with his double plume;  
And he flooded the Two Lands with well-being  
Like the Sun-disk rising at day.  
His gleaming crown pierced heaven,  
Became a brother to stars.  
And he lived and ruled, a pattern for deity—  
Good king governing well—  
Praised and admired by greatest gods  
While lesser divinities loved.

## VII

His sister served as shield and defender,  
Beat off the enemies,  
Ended unspeakable mischief by power of her spell,  
Golden-tongued goddess  
(her voice shall not fail),  
Skilled to command,  
Beneficent Isis,  
Who rescued her brother.  
Who searched for him  
And would not surrender to weariness,  
Wandered this earth bent with anguish,  
Restless until she had found him.  
And she made him shade with her feathers,  
Brought air by fanning her wings,  
Performed the rites of his resurrection,  
Moored, married, made breathe her brother,  
Put life in the slackened limbs  
Of the good god whose heart had grown weary.  
And she took to herself his seed, grew big with the heritor,  
Suckled and taught the child apart  
(his refuge not to be known),

Presented him, with his arm grown hardy,  
At Court in the broad hall of Geb.

## VIII

And the Nine Great Gods were glad:  
"Welcome, Horus, son of Osiris!  
Whose heart shall endure, whose cry shall find justice,  
Son of Isis and heir of Osiris!"  
Assembled for him the Tribunal of Truth—  
Nine Gods and the Lord of the Universe—  
Oh, the Lords of Truth, they gathered within there,  
the Untempted by Evil took seats in Geb's hall  
To offer the legacy to its just owner  
And the kingship to whom it belonged.  
And they found it was Horus, his voice spoke true:  
And they gave him the realm of his father.

## IX

And he went forth bearing the mace of Geb;  
And he took the scepter of the Two Banks;  
And the crown stood firm on his head.  
Allotted to him was earth, to be his possession,  
Heaven and earth alike put under his care;  
Entrusted to him mankind—  
Nobles, and commons, and Sunfolk;  
And the dear land of Egypt,  
The islands set in the northern sea,  
Whatever the sun's disk circles—  
All these were given his governing—  
And the good north wind, and the River, the flood,  
The plants men eat, and all that grows green.  
And Nepri, Lord of the Risen Grain, he helped him  
To nurture fruits of the vital earth  
So that Horus might bring on abundance,  
Give it as gift to the nations.  
And all mankind grew happy, hearts warmed,  
Thoughts danced, and each face saw joy.

## X

And they all gave thanks for his kindness:  
"How sweet is the love of him, way we;  
His charm, it has ravished the heart.  
Great is the love for him in every person!"  
And they offered this song for the son of Isis:  
His antagonist is down for his wrongdoing,  
Since evil injures the mischief maker;  
He who was hot to cause trouble,

(continued)

**HYMN TO THE SUN GOD** (*continued*)

His deed recoils upon him  
 As Horus, son of Isis,  
 Who for him rescued his father:  
     Hallowed be, and exalted, his name!  
 Majesty, it has taken its throne,  
     Egypt's splendor is sure under law;  
 The highroad is safe, bypaths lie beckoning—  
     How ordered the banks of the River!  
 Wrongdoing, it weakens,  
     Injustice shall all pass away!  
 Earth lives in peace under its Lord,  
     Ma'at, Lady Truth, stands firm for her  
     master,  
     Man turns his back upon evil.

## XI

Hale be your heart, Osiris,  
 You who were truly good,  
     For the son of Isis has taken the  
     crown!  
 Adjudged to him is his father's kingdom  
     Down in the broad hall of Geb.  
 Rê it was uttered this; Thoth wrote it down:  
     And the Grand Tribunal concurred.  
 Osiris, your father decreed in your favor!  
     All he said has been faithfully done.

**SOURCE:** "Hymn to Osiris," in *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. John L. Foster (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001): 103–109.

**POLITICAL FICTION.** At least two stories written in the Nineteenth Dynasty are set in the reign of the Eighteenth-dynasty king Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.), at least 200 years before the time of composition. *The Taking of Joppa* and *The Story of a Military Expedition of Thutmose III into Syria* both assume this period was a golden age of Egyptian military prowess. In *The Taking of Joppa*, Egyptian soldiers sneak over the town walls using baskets, a theme anticipating the Greek story of the Trojan Horse and tales of Ali Baba and the forty thieves. Such stories suggest the Nineteenth-dynasty policy that restored values associated with Egypt's rulers before the time of Akhenaten and the Amarna period. Military values which had received less attention during the Amarna period once again rank high in authors' estimation.

**OTHER NARRATIVES.** Other narratives in Late Egyptian occur outside of time, when the gods still walked the earth. *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* recounts a series of struggles between these gods as they compete to follow Osiris as rightful king of the living. Horus, Osiris' son, faces many difficulties in his fight against his uncle Seth, brother of Osiris. Horus eventually triumphs with the aid of his mother Isis, the goddess of magic. *The Doomed Prince* also contains elements associated with the myth of Osiris and does not occur in a recognizable historical period. It also considers questions of the nature of fate. Because the papyrus lacks an ending, it is not clear whether or not the prince is able to escape the doom mentioned in the story's modern title. *The Story of Two Brothers* contains an episode strongly reminiscent of the biblical story of Potiphar's wife found in Genesis of the Bible. In both stories, a

handsome young man suffers for refusing to betray his master with the master's wife. The wife turns on the young man, accusing him of rape. This episode serves as the mechanism for subsequent adventures in the story. All of these stories exist in unique manuscripts on papyrus. This circumstance raises questions of how widely known such literature was among Egyptians. Some scholars have suggested that this literature also circulated orally and that it is the manuscripts that are exceptional.

**LOVE POETRY.** About fifty love poems composed during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties represent a unique aspect of New Kingdom literature. Though an Eighteenth-dynasty poem about the author's love of the city of Thebes might represent a precedent for these poems, they otherwise seem the sole examples of personal lyric. They are unusual in the ancient world because they are completely secular. While Twelfth- and Eighteenth-dynasty authors had composed verse hymns and prayers or praise of the king, these love songs concern the affairs of ordinary men and women. The songs are usually twenty to thirty lines long. The translator John L. Foster has described the broad range of emotion they summon, including tenderness, romance, and joy. They hint at both elevated, pure love and at physical passion. They also capture familiar situations: the young woman surprised at meeting her lover unexpectedly, or a young couple sitting together in the garden. They include a young lover cataloging his girlfriend's charms and a young woman trying to sleep but distracted by thoughts of her boyfriend. Both male and female voices speak in the poems, but it is not clear that there were





Egyptian hieroglyphs which read “given life, stability, power, and health,” Temple of Amun, Ancient Thebes, modern-day Karnak, near Luxor. FORTEAN PICTURE LIBRARY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

both male and female authors. The love poems represent a rare window into the emotions of ancient people.

**CLASSICAL ALLUSIONS.** One Twentieth-dynasty teaching, a form known from the Twelfth Dynasty, contains quotations from much older texts. *The Instruction of Menna for his Son* quotes the Twelfth-dynasty texts *The Shipwrecked Sailor* and *Eloquent Peasant*. Though the text is written in Late Egyptian, the author must have believed his audience could appreciate such an elevated literary technique.

**FICTIONAL NON-FICTION.** The last two known Late Egyptian stories take a non-fictional genre—the government report and the letter—and use it as a basis for telling a fictional story. *The Report of Wenamun* and the *Tale of Woe* both were composed late in the Twentieth Dynasty, based on the language used and the setting the author describes. Yet they are known in unique

manuscripts of the Twenty-second Dynasty (945–712 B.C.E.). The language in both documents is the most colloquial Late Egyptian found in any narrative. It most closely reproduces everyday speech and avoids any literary flourishes. Both stories recount unhappy experiences and reflect the government’s failures as the New Kingdom collapsed and central government once again retreated. Both stories, however, reflect a cultural vibrancy that demonstrates that political strength and flourishing artistic movements do not always overlap.

**REMAINING QUESTIONS.** This picture of New Kingdom literature remains unconvincing for many Egyptologists. Most scholars would expect that Eighteenth-dynasty writers would both copy Twelfth-dynasty predecessors and create new literature in that tradition. Yet there is no evidence that Eighteenth-dynasty authors wrote in the traditional genres of their predecessors. There is no Eighteenth-dynasty equivalent of Old Kingdom tomb

biographies, Middle Kingdom stela, fictional narratives such as *The Shipwrecked Sailor* and *Sinuhe*, pessimistic studies of chaos, or even advice manuals. In a tradition-bound culture like ancient Egypt, it seems impossible that these genres were not carried forward. Yet the evidence that does survive hints that Eighteenth-dynasty authors developed a new historical literature and created new hymns as a literary genre. This picture is even less convincing because of the hypothetical rebirth of narrative fiction in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. These later writers created many variations on fictional writing that discussed politics, the gods, and used bureaucratic genres to create fictional non-fiction. Only the discovery of new manuscripts can solve the mystery of this gap in Egyptian literary history.

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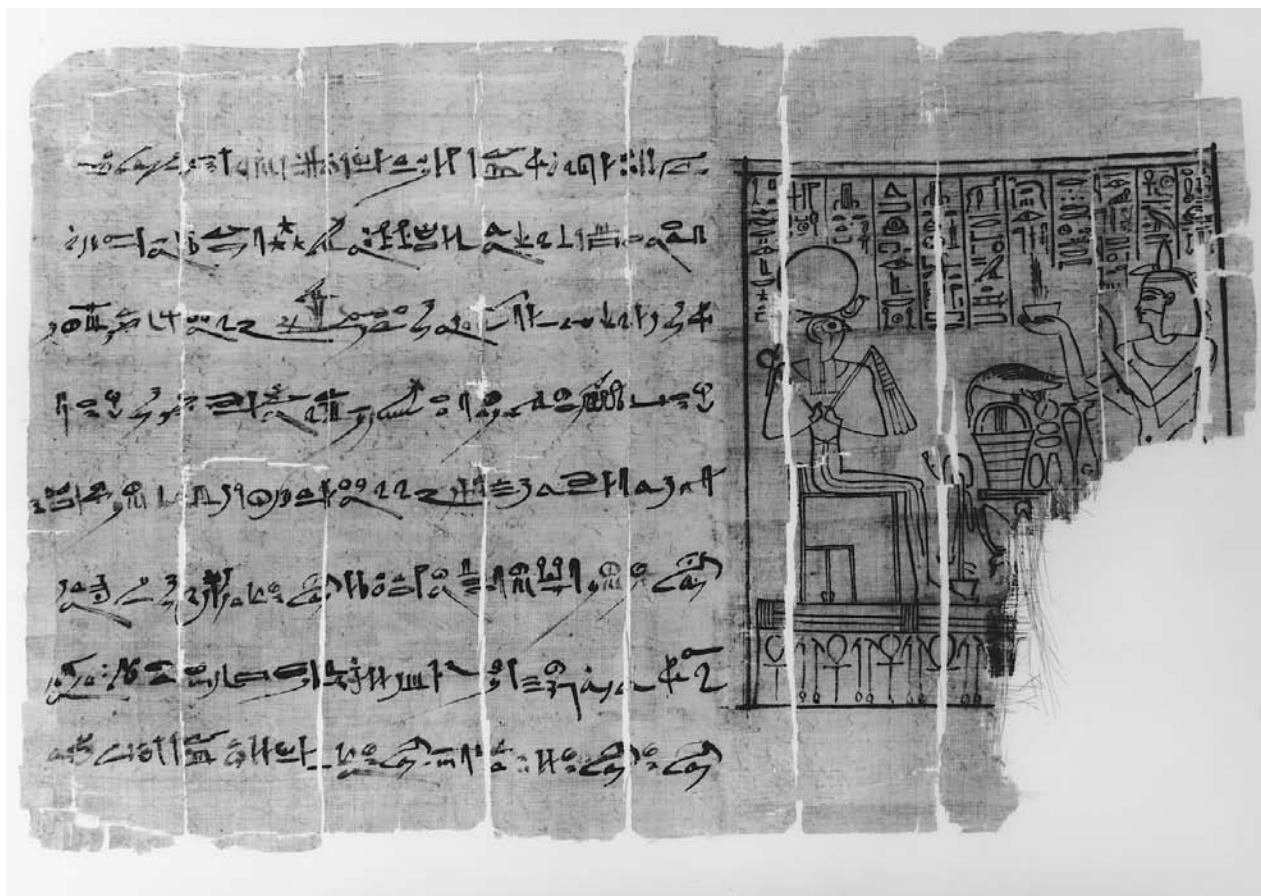
#### DEMOTIC LITERATURE

**DEFINITION.** The word "Demotic" refers to both the natural developmental stage of the Egyptian language in the Late Period (664–332 B.C.E.), Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.), and Roman Period (30 B.C.E.–395 C.E.), as well as a new script. The script developed from a highly cursive form of hieratic, the cursive form of hieroglyphs. This even more cursive hieratic appeared in Memphis toward the end of the New Kingdom (1075 B.C.E.). In the seventh century B.C.E., there is some evidence that scribes deliberately modified the script for writing legal contracts and documents. These changes were related to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty's reorganization of the government. Demotic, however, was not actually used to record literature until the fourth century B.C.E. Scribes used Demotic under the native Egyptian government and subsequent Greek and Roman governments.

**DIFFICULTY.** Most Egyptologists find Demotic more difficult to learn than the earlier forms of the Egyptian language. This difficulty has influenced the study of Demotic literature and has to some extent kept the study of Demotic literature separate from the earlier literature written in Old, Middle, and Late Egyptian. Additionally, many early twentieth-century Egyptologists considered the period when Demotic was used as a period of decline. The fact that this period coincided with the classical age of Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. reinforced this perception of Egypt as a backwater. Most later twentieth and early twenty-first century scholars, however, view Egypt of this period as a mature civilization that both reflected its ancient past and created new and vital means of expression.

**GENRES.** A genre refers to a type of literature. Each genre has a formal pattern known to readers and authors and is related to the culture surrounding it. Egyptian authors in the time when Demotic was written might have had more familiarity with the ancestors of modern genres. Modern, Western literary genres derive from theories developed by the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.). Demotic literature comes from the time when Greeks ruled Egypt. Yet Demotic literature, still written in the Egyptian language, seems not to have imitated Greek genre. The genres of Demotic literature are not clearly understood. *The Petition of Petiese* is the story of the wrongs committed against one family. It seems to date to the reign of the Persian king Darius I (521–486 B.C.E.) who ruled Egypt at this time. The text does not follow exactly the form of petitions known from actual court archives. It is both too long and it includes hymns along with the legalistic material. There is also a mixture of genres in the text called *The Demotic Chronicle*. The text contains a series of oracles that the distinguished English scholar of Demotic W. John Tait called "baffling." The action takes place in the reign of Teos (365–362 B.C.E.), though the date of composition is probably in the later fourth or early third century B.C.E., nearly 100 years later. The text appears to be a critique of Egyptian kings. Some scholars view it as an attack on the Greek (Ptolemaic) kings of Egypt, though not all agree. The text depends on word play, an important literary device common in the long Egyptian tradition but not so common in Demotic literature in general.

**AUDIENCE.** The intended audience for Demotic is an important issue because for most of the time Demotic literature was composed the language of government was Greek. Literate Egyptians still knew hieratic and hieroglyphic which they used for religious texts like the *Book*



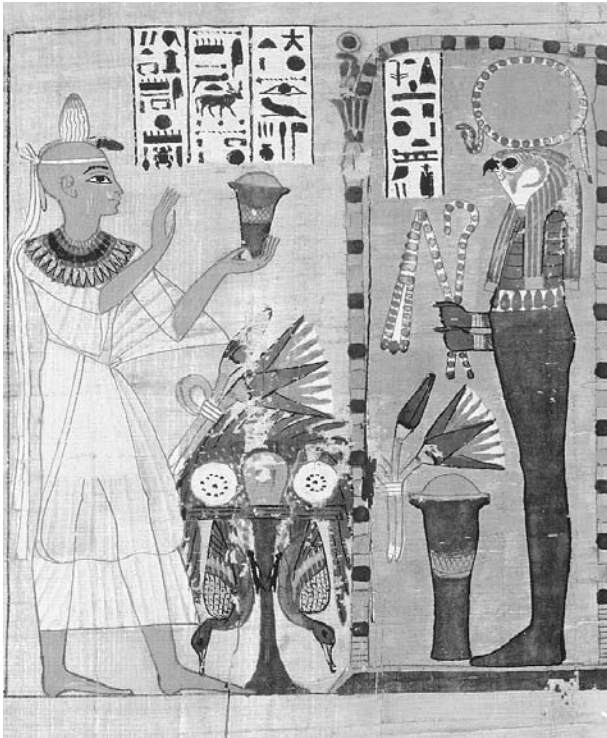
Vignette from a Book of the Dead. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.1826E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

*of the Dead*. A few rare Demotic copies of the *Book of the Dead* exist, but traditional texts were still written in the old language. The new contemporary script and language seems to be used mostly for business, government, and narratives after Alexander the Great conquered the country in 332 B.C.E. Scholars assume that the royal court had little interest in Demotic literature and the audience was lower-level Egyptian scribes and priests. This group constituted the native Egyptian literate elite. After the arrival of the Romans, there is at least one archive that included both Demotic and Greek manuscripts, indicating that native Egyptians had an interest in both languages. Additionally there is the literature called Graeco-Egyptian. These texts might represent Greek translations of Demotic and Greek literature set in Egypt for the Greek-speaking Egyptians. This evidence suggests that the majority of Greeks in Egypt did not read Demotic even if they could speak it.

**RANGE OF MATERIALS.** Most of the Demotic literary papyri now known to scholars were excavated between 1964 and 1973 in North Saqqara. The texts date

from Saite (Dynasty Twenty-six, 664–525 B.C.E.) to Roman times (30 B.C.E.–395 C.E.). Included in this group of papyri are stories, teachings, satire, prophecy, astrology, magic, and medical texts. Very few of these texts have been studied beyond identifying their basic context. In fact, the sudden rise in the number of known Demotic texts in the late twentieth century will inevitably revolutionize scholarly ideas about the period. The majority of these texts are narratives.

**EARLIEST NARRATIVES.** The fragmentary preservation of the earliest narratives found in Saqqara makes it difficult to reconstruct any stories. One papyrus seems to contain several stories within stories. They include the sufferings of a priest and of a young couple. Another Saqqara papyrus deals with a villain who kidnaps Pharaoh. The goddess Hathor then guides a hero who finds the king through the use of a horse. Another story tells of a magician making wax figures. A group of Ptolemaic stories (332–30 B.C.E.) set in the reign of King Amasis (570–526 B.C.E.) begins with the king drinking so much wine that he becomes drunk. The next day,



Deceased Making an Offering Before Horus, illustration from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

plagued by a hangover, the king asks for stories to divert him while he recovers. Here again it is difficult to understand these stories as other than criticism of the current regime, set in the earlier period.

**ORAL TRADITION.** Earlier twentieth-century scholars attempted to connect Demotic literature with oral tradition, assuming that the nature of the stories was popular rather than a part of high culture. Yet it is hard to make the connection between oral tradition and Demotic literature. In favor of the theory is the large number of catch phrases repeated throughout a text, reminiscent of a device used by storytellers in many cultures. Additionally, some stories include extended repetition of paragraphs in different places, another common oral storytelling technique. Yet, these stories are prose, and most oral traditions are verse in the ancient world.

**CYCLES.** Many stories are found in groups in the same papyrus and center on one character who lived in the distant past. For example, there is a cycle concerning a character called Setna Khaemwas, who was historically the fourth son of Ramesses II (1279–1213 B.C.E.). Setna stories all involve the use of magic. Many of the stories involve Setna and the ghost of a magician from former times. Another cycle centers on the character



Ostracon with Demotic inscription. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.1821E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

called Inaros and the members of his family. Inaros stories center on military exploits, perhaps set in the time of a King Petubastis of Dynasty Twenty-three (838–712 B.C.E.). In any case, the stories resemble the earlier tradition of historical rather than contemporary settings.

**TEACHINGS.** Scholars have known two long texts belonging to the genre the Egyptians called *seboyet*, or “teachings,” since the nineteenth century. One text is known as *Papyrus Insinger*, the other as *The Teachings of Ankhsheshonqi*. *Papyrus Insinger* is named after J. H. Insinger, a Dutch museum patron who purchased the text for the Royal Museum of Antiquities in Leiden in the Netherlands. The beginning is lost. A scribe copied this manuscript in the first century C.E., but the author composed it up to 300 years earlier. A second copy of the text in the Ny Carlsberg Museum in Copenhagen demonstrates that there were multiple copies. Both *Ankhsheshonqi* and *Insinger* consist of one-line sentences. *Insinger’s* author, however, grouped the sentences into themes and chapters which he numbered, while the arrangement of *Ankhsheshonqi* is less clear. The theme in both texts is that there is a good and a bad way to live. Yet living by the good is no guarantee of success in life. These texts admit, unlike earlier teachings in Egypt, that sometimes the wicked prosper. Yet the texts counsel that the wise man does not judge his life so much by results as he does by his morality and piety. The wicked, how-

ever, are always punished ultimately. The author of *In-singer* believed that there was an all-embracing moral order in the world which governed nature and human existence. The *Ankhshehshonqi* manuscript dates to about the first century B.C.E., but the date of composition remains a matter of debate. Certainly, though, the structure of *Ankhshehshonqi* relates it to earlier teachings. It begins with the story of a man who inadvertently learns that his friend is involved in a plot against the Pharaoh's life. This man is jailed when the plot is discovered, but avoids execution. He writes this instruction for the good of his son. The format of the advice is single sentences on how to act. As was true in the earlier *Teachings*, the advice is pragmatic and humorous. It remains utilitarian rather than lofty and moralistic.

**CONTINUATION.** Demotic literature remains a fertile but as yet nearly untilled field for literary research. An unknown number of individual papyri remain to be studied in the future. Most have not been published even in the form of photographs. It is likely that these texts hold the answer to many of the questions that remain about Egyptian literature. They are especially important, on the one hand, because they are the last stage of a 3,000-year old literary tradition. But they also, on the other hand, represent the only stage of Egyptian literature written while the Egyptians were in close contact with a foreign culture, the Greeks and Romans. Since Greek and Roman writers are the ancestors of Western authors, it will be fascinating to learn how Egyptian and classical literature interacted with and perhaps influenced each other.

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### THE EGYPTIAN LITERARY CANON

**DEFINITION.** A literary canon is a group or body of related literary works, often sanctioned by an authority. Though modern canons of literature have traditionally been set by universities or other official bodies, there is no authoritative body that scholars know today from ancient Egypt that would have designated an Egyptian literary canon. In fact, for ancient Egypt the canon consists of the works that have survived into modern times. New works can still emerge as they are discovered in museum

storerooms and through archaeology. Many papyri collected in the nineteenth century remain unread in Egyptian, European, and American museums. A slow and painstaking process of study and publication gradually has added works to the Egyptian canon. At this time, scholars cannot know whether or not modern knowledge of Egyptian literature contains important gaps or if it is nearly complete.

**ADMONITIONS OF IPUWER.** Egyptologists have disagreed on when the author first created *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*. The composition date probably falls in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.) based on the language used, though the setting is the First Intermediate Period (2130–2003 B.C.E.), a time of social chaos. The only manuscript is a long papyrus now in Leiden, The Netherlands. It dates to the Nineteenth Dynasty (1292–1190 B.C.E.), demonstrating the long-standing popularity of descriptions of national chaos followed by resolution by a strong king. The author describes terrible social disorders including rebellion and death. He longs for the social order that only the king can provide.

**ASTARTE AND THE SEA.** This story, composed in the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1292 B.C.E.), may be a direct translation of a Canaanite story. One papyrus in New York preserves it. The story describes how the goddess Astarte defeated a sea-monster called Yam with the help of the god Seth. The story demonstrates that the Egyptians were familiar with foreign literature during this period.

**COMPLAINTS OF KHAKHEPERRE-SONB.** The narrator of the *Complaints* bears a name that honors Senwosret II (1844–1837 B.C.E.), using his throne name plus the phrase "may he live!". The author must have written it during this reign. The only copy dates to the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1292 B.C.E.), preserved on a writing board in London, showing the continued popularity of pessimistic descriptions of national chaos in Egyptian literature hundreds of years later. Since this author lived in a peaceful time, it is difficult to know whether he had a political purpose in writing this text or whether it is a strictly literary enterprise.

**CONTENTINGS OF HORUS AND SETH.** This Rameside (1292–1075 B.C.E.) story, preserved in one papyrus in Dublin, describes the long court battle between the falcon-god Horus and his uncle, the god Seth, over who should inherit the throne from Osiris, Egypt's mythical first king. Eighteen courtroom sessions are interrupted by four trials of ritual combat. In the end, the court of

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***UNCERTAIN DOOM**

**INTRODUCTION:** *The Doomed Prince* contains elements associated with the myth of Osiris and does not occur in a recognizable historical period. Additionally, sections of dialogue repeat verbatim in the text. These elements are typical of the new style of narrative composed in the Nineteenth Dynasty (1292–1190 B.C.E.). The author also considers the nature of fate. Because the papyrus lacks an ending, it is not clear whether or not the prince is able to escape the doom mentioned in the story's modern title. The story occupies four columns on the back (*verso*) of Papyrus Harris 500. The numbers in parentheses give the column and line numbers.

(4,1) It is said, there once was a king to whom no son had been born. [After a time his majesty] begged a son for himself from the gods of his domain, and they decreed that one should be born to him. That night he slept with his wife and she [became] pregnant. When she had completed the months of childbearing, a son was born.

Then came the Hathors to determine a fate for him. They said: "He will die through the crocodile, or the snake, or the dog." When the people who were with the child heard (it), they reported it to his majesty. Then his majesty's heart became very very sad. His majesty had [a house] of stone built [for him] upon the desert, supplied with people and with every good thing of the palace, and the child was not to go outdoors.

Now when the boy had grown, he went up to his roof, and he saw a greyhound following a man who was walking on the road. He said to his servant, who was beside him, "What is it that is walking behind the man who is coming along the road?" He told him: "It is a greyhound." The boy said to him: "Have one like it brought to me." Then the servant went and reported (4,10) it to his majesty. His majesty said: "Bring him a little puppy, [so that] his heart [will not] grieve." So they brought him a greyhound.

Now when many days had passed and the boy was fully grown in all his body, he sent to his father saying: "To what purpose is my sitting here? I am committed to Fate. Let me go, that I may act according to my heart, until the god does what is in his heart." Then a chariot was harnessed for him, equipped [with] (5,1) all sorts of weapons, and [a servant was given him] as an attendant. He was ferried over to the eastern shore and was told "Go wherever you wish," and his greyhound was with him. He went northward across the desert, following his heart and living on the best of all the desert game.

He reached the Prince of Nahrin. Now the Prince of Nahrin had no children except one daughter. For her a house had been built whose window was seventy cubits away from the ground. He had sent for all the sons of all the princes of Khor and told them: "He who reaches the window of my daughter, his wife she shall be." Now when many days had passed and they were at their daily pursuit, the youth passed by them. Then they took the youth to their house. They washed him; they gave fodder to his team. They did everything for the youth. They anointed him; they bandaged his feet; they (5,10) gave food to his attendant. And they said to him by way of conversation: "Whence have you come, you good youth?" He said to them: "I am the son of an officer of the land of Egypt. My mother died; my father took another wife, a stepmother. She came to hate me, and I went away, fleeing from her." Then they embraced him and kissed him on [all his body].

[Now when many days had passed], he said to the sons: "What is this you are doing [here?]" They said: "For three [months] now we are here passing (6,1) the time [in leaping. For he] who reaches [the] window of the daughter of the Prince of Nahrin [will] get her as [wife]." [He] said to them: "If only my feet did [not] hurt, I would go leaping with you." They went leaping in their daily manner, while the youth stood at a distance watching, and the gaze of the daughter of the Prince of Nahrin was upon him.

Now when many days had passed, the youth came to leap with the sons of the princes. He leaped, he

gods awards Horus the throne as the rightful heir of Osiris. The story seems somewhat satirical and possibly reflects political events in the Nineteenth or Twentieth Dynasty.

**THE DESTRUCTION OF MANKIND.** This story is part of a larger work called *The Book of the Heavenly Cow*. The oldest copy known today was inscribed in the tomb of King Tutankhamun (1332–1322 B.C.E.), and scribes also inscribed it in five other royal tombs of the

New Kingdom. The last known copy was in the tomb of Ramesses VI (1145–1137 B.C.E.). Thus all the copies date to the New Kingdom, but the language is Middle Egyptian, the vernacular of the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.). Scholars disagree about whether an author composed it in the Middle Kingdom or if it is an original work of the New Kingdom. The story describes the sun-god Re becoming tired of humanity's wickedness. Re sends his daughter Sakhmet, a lioness

reached the window of the daughter of the Prince of Nahrin. She kissed him, she embraced him on all his body. One went to inform her father and told him: "One man has reached the window of your daughter." Then the Prince questioned him saying: "Which prince's son?" They said to him: "The son of an officer who came fleeing from Egypt, away from his stepmother." Thereupon (6,10) the Prince of Nahrin became exceedingly angry. He said: "Am I to give my daughter to this fugitive from Egypt? Make him go away!"

They went and told him: "Go back where you came from!" But the daughter held him, and she swore by the god saying; "As Pre-Harakhti lives, if he is taken from me, I shall not eat, I shall not drink, I shall die right away!" The messenger went and reported to her father every (word) that she had said. And her (father) sent men to slay him on the spot. But the daughter said to (them): "As Pre lives, if they slay him, when the sun sets I shall be dead. I will not live an hour longer than he!"

They [went] to tell her father. Then her (7,1) [father had] the [youth brought] before him [together with] his daughter. And when [the youth stood before him] his dignity impressed the Prince. He embraced him, he kissed him on all his body; he said to him: "Tell me about yourself, for now you are my son." He said to him: "I am the son of an officer of the land of Egypt. My mother died; my father took another wife. She came to hate me; I left fleeing from her." Then he gave him his daughter as a wife. He gave him a house and fields as well as cattle and all sorts of good things.

Now when many days had passed, the youth said to his wife: "I am given over to three fates: the crocodile, the snake, the dog." Then she said to him: "Have the dog that follows you killed." He said to her: "What foolishness! I will not let my dog be killed, whom I raised when it was a puppy." So she began to watch her husband very much and did not let him go out alone.

Now on the day on which the youth had left Egypt in his wandering, the crocodile, (7,10) his fate [had fol-

lowed him] ———. It came to be opposite him in the vil- lage in which the youth was, [and it dwelled in] the lake. But there was a demon in it. The demon did not let the crocodile come out; nor did the crocodile let the demon come out to stroll about. As soon as the sun rose [they] stood and fought each other every day for three months now.

And when more days had passed, the youth sat down to a feastday in his house. Then when night had come, the youth lay down on his bed, and sleep over- whelmed his body. Then (8,1) his wife filled a [bowl] with [wine] and another bowl with beer. Thereupon a [snake] came out [of its] hole to bite the youth. But his wife was sitting beside him, not sleeping. [She placed the bowls before] the snake. It drank, it became drunk, it lay down on its back. Then [the woman had] it hacked to pieces with her axe. They woke her husband ———. She said to him: "Look, your god has given one of your fates into your hand. He will protect [you from the others also]." [Then he] made an offering to Pre, praising him and extolling his might every day.

Now when many days had passed, the youth went out for a pleasure stroll on his estate. [His wife] did not go out [with him], but his dog was following him. Then his dog began to speak [saying: "I am your fate]." There- upon he ran before it. He reached the lake. He descended into [the water in flight from the] dog. Then the crocodile [seized] him and carried him off to where the demon was. [But he was gone. The] crocodile said to the youth: "I am your fate that has come after you. But [for three months] now I have been fighting with the demon. Now look, I shall release you. If my [enemy returns] to fight [you shall] help me to kill the demon. For if you see the ——— the crocodile." Now when it dawned and the next day had come, [the demon] returned ———.

**SOURCE:** "The Doomed Prince," in *The New Kingdom*. Vol. 2 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): 200–203.

goddess, to destroy mankind. After some time, Re changes his mind. In order to stop Sakhmet, he floods the world with beer dyed red to resemble blood. Sakhmet drinks the beer, becomes drunk, and ceases her destruc- tion. The story echoes the Hebrew Bible's account of Noah and the flood, especially in the deity's decision to destroy mankind because of its wickedness and in the use of a flood and drunkenness as key elements in the story.

**DIALOGUE OF A MAN WITH HIS BA.** This Middle Egyptian dialect text is preserved on one papyrus now in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. The grammar and word choice found in the document suggest a date of composi- tion in the early Twelfth Dynasty, shortly after 1938 B.C.E. The substance of the text is a discussion between a man and a part of his soul, called the *ba* in Egyptian. The man argues that traditional funeral arrangements meant to en- sure a happy afterlife are useless. His *ba* tries to reassure

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***TEACHINGS OF PTAHHOTEP—PRACTICAL AND WISE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The *Teachings of Ptahhotep* incorporates many of the elements found in the Egyptian literary genre called teachings. The author set the frame story in the past and attributed his own words to a great man from history. He combined in one document both practical and lofty wisdom. For example, proper household arrangements receive as much attention as the importance of following divine law. Finally, he follows the standard of “perfect speech,” the Egyptian belief in the power of well-crafted prose.

him that this is untrue. It is not clear who wins this debate. The text surprises modern readers since it suggests that not all Egyptians believed the traditional reassurances that the afterlife was a continuation of life on earth.

**THE ELOQUENT PEASANT.** The author composed *The Eloquent Peasant* late in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.) but set the story earlier in the reign of a King Nebkaure, perhaps the king of this name who reigned in the Ninth or Tenth Dynasty (2130–1980 B.C.E.). In the introductory story, an of-

ficial robs a peasant on his way to market. The peasant protests to the official’s superior. Though the superior intends to rule in favor of the peasant, he insists that the peasant return to orate on justice many days in a row because the peasant is so eloquent. The text plays both on the meaning of justice and the Egyptian love of oratory. The four papyrus copies of this text, now in Berlin and in London, all date to the Middle Kingdom. There is no proof that readers of the later periods knew this text.



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**SOURCE:** "Teachings of Ptahhotep," in *Voices from Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Middle Kingdom Writings*. Ed. R. B. Parkinson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): 65–70.

**THE DOOMED PRINCE.** The author composed this story early in the Nineteenth Dynasty. One papyrus, now in London, preserves it. In the story, a fictional prince is fated at birth to die either through an attack by a snake, a dog, or a crocodile. The prince grows to adulthood in a protected palace. He then travels to western Asia and marries a princess. One day his dog tries to attack him, but he escapes. Then a crocodile carries the prince away to witness a fight with a demon. The papyrus breaks off with the crocodile requesting help from

the prince in his fight with the demon. The ending is unknown.

**THE TEACHINGS OF AMENEMHET.** The author of this text composed it during the reign of Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.) but after 1909 B.C.E. The narrator is the deceased King Amenemhet I (1938–1909 B.C.E.), speaking from beyond the grave. Some scholars believe the author was a certain Akhtoy. All the manuscripts date to the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). The primary manuscripts are long papyri in the Egyptian Museum in

Berlin and in the British Museum in London. There are also many fragments, a copy on a leather roll, three wooden tablets and over 100 ostraca (copies on potsherds and limestone chips). This text must have been one of the most widely read of ancient Egyptian compositions since so many copies exist. In the text, King Amenemhet I advises King Senwosret I not to trust anyone. Amenemhet suggests that he was assassinated in spite of his good deeds throughout his life. The discourse is surprisingly pessimistic.

**THE TEACHINGS OF PTAHHOTEP.** The author of *The Teachings of Ptahhotep* composed it during the Middle Kingdom, probably during the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.). The author set the text during the reign of King Djedkare Isesy (2415–2371 B.C.E.) during the Old Kingdom, approximately 400 years before his own time. Scribes continued to copy the text into the Nineteenth Dynasty (1292–1190 B.C.E.). Four copies on papyrus have survived to modern times along with five ostraca and a wooden writing board. This evidence suggests that this text was widely read for over 600 years in ancient Egyptian schools. The author composed 37 maxims, including both rules of conduct and proverbs. The theme throughout the text is the proper conduct that will lead to success in life. The narrator, Ptahhotep, argues that following these maxims will result both in success and in justice. Yet many of the maxims strike a modern reader as banal; one rule, for example, suggests that at the dinner table it is best to wait to serve yourself until after your boss is served.

**TEACHINGS FOR MERYKARE.** This text might have been composed during the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.), perhaps by a king, the father of King Merykare (exact dates unknown). Yet the only copies of the text date to the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties (1539–1075 B.C.E.). The copies include three papyri now in St. Petersburg and Moscow in Russia, and in Copenhagen in Denmark. An ostrakon (a copy on a limestone chip) now in the Cairo Museum originated in the artists' village of Deir el-Medina. Though the text seems to include advice from a king to his son, more middle-class Egyptians took an interest in that advice as much as 800 years later. The narrator discusses the best ways for a king to win the hearts of his followers, stressing the importance of justice in his dealings with all.

**KHUFU AND THE MAGICIANS.** The late Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.) author of *Khufu and the Magicians* set the story in the time of the builder of the Great Pyramid, King Khufu (2585–2560 B.C.E.). Only one manuscript, written during the Hyksos Period

(1630–1539 B.C.E.), preserves the story. It is now in Berlin. The story describes a contest conducted among Khufu's sons. Each tries to tell a story that will relieve the king's boredom. The stories all involve miracles performed by magicians. The last story, however, describes the miraculous birth of triplets who were the kings of the Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 B.C.E.). Such a story would seem to have a political meaning. Yet it is difficult to understand how the events described here relate to the period when the story was actually written.

**NEFERKARE AND THE GENERAL SISENE.** The Middle Kingdom author set this story in the reign of Pepy I (2338–2298 B.C.E.), though it was written approximately 400 years later. There are two manuscripts: one on papyrus, now in Paris, and an ostrakon in Chicago. Using Pepy's throne name, Neferkare, the story describes the king visiting one of his generals late at night, sneaking into the general's house through a window. Because both manuscripts are very fragmentary, it is not clear what the author meant to portray. Some scholars have understood the text to describe furtive homosexual activity.

**PROPHECY OF NEFERTY.** The author set *The Prophecy of Neferty* during the reign of King Khufu (2585–2560 B.C.E.) during the Fourth Dynasty. Yet the author probably lived in the reign of King Amenemhet I (1938–1909 B.C.E.) nearly 650 years later. In the text, Neferty explains the future that Egypt will experience. First, the country will fall into chaos, the period that Egyptologists call the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.). Then, King Amenemhet I will save Egypt and reunite it. Clearly the author lived during Amenemhet's reign and was adding to the literature that glorified the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.). Yet all the copies known today—a papyrus in St. Petersburg in Russia, writing tablets in Cairo and in London, and twenty ostraca—originate during the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). This New Kingdom interest in the Twelfth Dynasty reflects the way the kings of this period used the past to legitimate their own rule.

**THE QUARREL OF APOPHIS AND SEQENENRE.** The author of this early Nineteenth-dynasty narrative (1292–1190 B.C.E.) set the story during the reigns of the Hyksos king Apophis and the Theban prince Seqenenre about 1543 B.C.E. At this time the foreign kings called the Hyksos controlled the north and Theban princes controlled southern Egypt. The story describes the quarrel between these two rulers that led to the war between them. Eventually the historic Theban princes expelled the Hyksos from Egypt. In this story, preserved on one manuscript now in London, Apophis

complains to Seqenenre in a letter that a Theban hippopotamus is bellowing so loudly that it disturbs his sleep in the town of Avaris. Since Thebes and Avaris were 500 miles apart, it seems that Apophis' claim was meant as an insult or a taunt. The meaning of this story for readers living 250 years later, when the story was composed, is unclear.

**THE REPORT OF WENAMUN.** The author of *The Report of Wenamun* set the text in the time of King Smendes (1075–1049 B.C.E.) in the Twenty-first Dynasty, just after the close of the New Kingdom. The one papyrus manuscript, now in Moscow, is roughly contemporary with the setting of the story. The story, written in the style of a bureaucratic report, describes Wenamun's journey to Byblos, in modern Syria, to purchase wood for a new boat for the god Amun. One disaster follows another as pirates steal Wenamun's money and the prince of Byblos mistreats him. At the end of the papyrus, Wenamun flees to Cyprus where he is apparently sheltered by the local queen. The end of the story is not preserved. Scholars disagree about whether the story is fictional or reflects the historical situation in Smendes' time. Arguments for the former focus on the fact that the misfortune Wenamun reports never was included in other bureaucratic reports. *Wenamun* would be a rare fictional narrative if it was actually set in the same period as the time of its composition, since most ancient Egyptian fiction is set in time periods centuries before their date of composition. The difficulty in categorizing the text adds to its interest.

**SATIRE ON THE TRADES.** The grammar and word choice found in *The Satire on the Trades* indicate that an author composed it in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.), but all the manuscripts known in modern times date to the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). The manuscripts include four papyri preserved in both London and New York, two wooden boards in Paris, and nearly 100 ostraca on potsherds and limestone chips in Cairo. The large number of copies demonstrates that the text was well-known and popular hundreds of years after it was written. In the introductory story, a man from the northern-most provinces is bringing his son to school in the capital city, Memphis. As they travel by boat, the father explains to the son that only a scribe can have a happy life. He describes all other occupations in both derogatory and satirical terms. Because the father who narrates the text bears the name Dua-khety, some scholars call him the author.

**THE SHIPWRECKED SAILOR.** The author composed this story in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759

B.C.E.) and set it on a mythical island. Only one Twelfth-dynasty papyrus manuscript, now in Moscow, survives. In the story, a sailor attempts to comfort his ship's captain with a story. He describes how he was shipwrecked on an island and saved according to the prophecy of a gigantic snake who lived there. The snake also tells a story-within-the-story to the sailor. In the end, the captain tells the sailor that this story is no comfort at all. The meaning of the story and its multiple layers of narrative continues to be problematic. Some scholars have regarded it as an adventure tale, comparing it to *Sinbad the Sailor*. Others have recognized religious teachings, especially in the story that the snake tells.

**THE STORY OF SINUHE.** The author composed *The Story of Sinuhe* during the Twelfth Dynasty, probably during the reign of Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.). Six papyrus manuscripts written shortly after Senwosret's reign preserve the text. The two earliest copies are now in Berlin. There are also numerous ostraca both on potsherds and on limestone chips. Many of these ostraca date to the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) but at least one is as late as the seventh century B.C.E. The text's wide distribution throughout Egyptian history demonstrates the importance of *Sinuhe* in Egyptian culture. The story recounts a nobleman's flight into western Asia when he believes he has been accused of a crime. He has many adventures and marries a bedouin woman, but eventually returns to Egypt at the end of his life. This return and offer of forgiveness from King Senwosret I was the real theme of the story because it emphasized the king's mercy. Yet the story was immensely popular and important throughout ancient Egyptian history.

**THE TAKING OF JOPPA.** The story's Nineteenth-dynasty author (1292–1190 B.C.E.) set it during the reign of King Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.), 200–300 years earlier. Only one manuscript, now in London, preserves the story of General Djeheuty capturing the town of Joppa, in modern Israel. The Egyptian army hides in baskets attached to donkeys in a caravan to enter the walled city. The story reflects a more general interest in Thutmose III's reign popular during the early Nineteenth Dynasty.

**THE STORY OF TWO BROTHERS.** In this Nineteenth-dynasty story, preserved on one papyrus in London, a woman makes sexual advances to her brother-in-law, Bata. When he rejects her advances, she tells her husband that Bata raped her. Bata's brother confronts him with his wife's charges and Bata responds by castrating himself. Bata then undergoes several changes in form, most importantly when

he transforms into a bull. The story is probably an account of the origins of the bull-god, Bata.

**TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD.** The Nineteenth-dynasty story *Truth and Falsehood*, preserved on one papyrus in London, describes a dispute between two brothers with these obviously allegorical names. Truth accuses Falsehood of stealing his dagger. Falsehood convinces a court consisting of the nine major gods that this charge is untrue. The court blinds Truth as punishment for the charge. Truth's son, however, eventually avenges him by arguing before the same court that Falsehood has stolen the son's ox. When the son wins this case, Falsehood is punished and Truth is compensated for his previous unjust conviction.

#### SOURCES

- Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973–1980).  
William K. Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972).

SEE ALSO *Philosophy: Teaching Philosophy; Religion: Magic in Egyptian Religion*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Literature*

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### KHAEMWASE

Early Nineteenth Dynasty (about 1290–1279 B.C.E.)–Nineteenth Dynasty (before 1213 B.C.E.)

*Prince*  
*Priest*

**FOURTH SON.** Khaemwase was the fourth son of Ramesses II and the second son of Queen Istnofret, a secondary wife. He thus held high rank among Ramesses' 115 children. Khaemwase was probably born while his grandfather, Sety I, was still king (1290–1279 B.C.E.). As a boy of about five, he accompanied his father on military campaigns in Lower Nubia to the south of Egypt. He also followed his father to war as a teenager. But Khaemwase had interests other than war.

**PRIEST.** Khaemwase became a priest of the god Ptah in Memphis when he was in his twenties, in Year 16 of his father's reign, about 1263 B.C.E. Among his first duties as priest was to supervise the burial of the Apis bull. The Apis bull was an animal born with particular mark-

ings and considered especially sacred to the god Ptah. There was only one Apis bull at a time. Khaemwase supervised the bull's burial in 1263 B.C.E. and again in Year 30 of his father's reign, about 1249 B.C.E. For later bulls, he built a special burial-place called the Serapeum. This new burial place developed over time into an extensive building full of hallways and chambers leading in multiple directions like a maze. The building was in use for nearly one thousand years until King Nectanebo built a new burial place for the Apis bull. But knowledge of the Serapeum and Khaemwase's role in it continued to fascinate readers during the time when Demotic literature flourished. The fact that Khaemwase was also buried in the Serapeum must have added to popular interest in him later.

**FICTIONAL KHAEMWASE.** A thousand years after his death, Khaemwase was the main character in two important Demotic stories. In *Khaemwase and Naneferkaptah*, Khaemwase steals a magic book from Naneferkaptah, the man charged by the god Ptah to guard it. After an attempt to win the book in a game, Khaemwase ran away with it. Ghosts then pursued him, he lost his good name, and finally his father Ramesses II convinced him to return the book. In *Khaemwase and his son Si-Osiri*, Khaemwase and his wife's much desired, long-awaited son turns out to be a magical spirit. As a boy he is a skilled magician. Later in life during a contest with another magician, Si-Osiri disappears. Finally, Khaemwase's real son is born. These lively tales preserve detailed legends, perhaps inspired or at least sustained by knowledge of the Serapeum.

#### SOURCES

- K. A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1982).

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### PTAHHOTEP

fl. Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 B.C.E.)

*Statesman*  
*Prime minister*

**PRIME MINISTER.** At least five men during the Fifth Dynasty bearing the name Ptahhotep served as prime minister. They were probably related, but the relationships among these men are unclear. Somehow, the name of these viziers was associated with an important teaching, *The Teachings of Ptahhotep*, composed in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.), approximately 600 years later. Though most Egyptian literature is anonymous, when an author is named, the relationship is often fic-

tional. Because the name Ptahhotep bore great prestige among later generations, the author hoped that Ptahhotep's prestige would attach to his work of literature. Composed of 37 maxims, the rules of conduct and proverbs aim to present the reader with the proper conduct that will lead to success in life. The narrator, Ptahhotep, argues that following these maxims will result both in success and in justice. The success and importance of the work is evident in the fact that it was still being copied in the Nineteenth Dynasty, and was probably used in ancient Egyptian schools.

#### SOURCES

Elke Blumenthal, "Ptahhotep und der 'Stab des Alters,'" in *Form und Mass: Beiträge zur Literatur, Sprache und Kunst des alten Ägypten: Festschrift für Gerhard Fecht zum 65. Geburtstag am 6. February 1987*. Ed. J. Osing (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrasowitz, 1987): 84–97.

Henry G. Fischer, *Varia* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976): 82.

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#### WENAMUN

Twentieth Dynasty (1190–1075 B.C.E.)—Twenty-first Dynasty (1075–945 B.C.E.)

*Elder of the Portal of (the god) Amun*  
Envoy

**MERCHANT.** Wenamun's personal history is unknown. In fact, it is difficult to ascertain whether he was an historical or fictional figure. The document called *The Report of Wenamun*, a papyrus now in Moscow, is written to resemble a bureaucratic report on a mission to a foreign country. Yet the level of detail and the negative information included in it is never otherwise found in ancient Egyptian non-fiction. Wenamun travels to Byblos, a town in modern Lebanon, to buy wood for the ceremonial ship of the god Amun. En route, robbers steal Wenamun's money. He continues to Byblos, but the king of Byblos has no interest in trading with a man without money, even if he represents the god. Finally, after many tribulations, Wenamun is forced to flee and he reaches Cyprus. Here the papyrus ends, before the story is concluded. Egyptologists disagree on how to judge this mixture of a non-fiction form with what is usually fictional content. In any case Wenamun's report undoubtedly reflects the state of affairs at the close of the New Kingdom when Egypt had lost control of its possessions in the Near East.

#### SOURCES

Erik Hornung, *Sinuhe und Wenamun: Zwei ägyptische Wanderer* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1995).

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Literature*

*Complaints of Khakheperre-sonb* (c. reign of Senwosret II, 1844–1837 B.C.E.)—This example of the pessimistic literature contrasts reality with the Egyptian ideal of justice.

*The Doomed Prince* (c. 1292–1075 B.C.E.)—This narrative concerns a young prince who attempts to escape fate. Because the papyrus breaks off, it is not clear if he succeeds.

*Horus and Seth* (c. 1292–1075 B.C.E.)—In this story, two gods sue each other in a court of the gods to determine who is the rightful heir to the throne. It may be a satire of the process of succession and the political machinations of the many sons of either Ramesses II or Ramesses III.

*The Immortality of Writers* (c. 1292–1075 B.C.E.)—This verse description claims that writing is more important a monument to the author than his tomb.

*Prophecy of Neferty* (c. Twelfth Dynasty, 1938–1909 B.C.E.)—This pessimistic work of prophecy is set in the Old Kingdom but was written in the Middle Kingdom. Neferty tells King Khufu of the troubles to come and Egypt's salvation by King Amenemhet I.

*The Report of Wenamun* (c. 1075–1049 B.C.E.)—This narrative, styled as a bureaucratic report, describes an ill-fated expedition to buy wood for a new ship for the god Amun.

*The Shipwrecked Sailor* (c. Twelfth Dynasty, 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—This narrative about a sailor who attempts to comfort his captain about the failure of their expedition contains stories within the story.

*The Story of Sinuhe* (c. reign of Senwosret I, 1908–1875 B.C.E.)—Egypt's great national epic shows the mercy of the king and the ability of one man to transform himself.

*The Story of Two Brothers* (c. 1292–1075 B.C.E.)—This narrative describes the origin of the god Bata but also reflects parallels with the Hebrew Bible story of Joseph.

*The Teachings of Amenemhet I* (c. 1909–1875 B.C.E.)—This work provides advice on how to rule, reportedly given by the king Amenemhet I to his son.

*Teachings of Ptahhotep* (c. Twelfth Dynasty, 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—This work of moral and practical advice was attributed to the prime minister Ptahhotep, although it was actually written several centuries after his lifetime.

chapter **5** five

MUSIC

*Edward Bleiberg*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	152	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	154	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		Egyptian Musical Instruments . . . . .	155
Musical Instruments . . . . .	155	Playing Tutankhamun's Trumpets . . . . .	159
Musical Notation . . . . .	159	<i>The Story Behind the Song</i> (excerpt from	
Work Songs . . . . .	160	<i>The Story of Two Brothers</i> upon which	
Male and Female Musicians in the Old		a popular song was based) . . . . .	163
Kingdom . . . . .	164	<i>Songs from Paheri's Tomb</i> (songs found	
A Musical Bureau in the Old Kingdom . . . . .	165	copied in separate geographical locations	
Banquet Music during the New Kingdom . . . . .	166	in Upper Egypt) . . . . .	163
The Office of Chantress . . . . .	168	<i>Sinuhe Welcomed Home with Music</i>	
The Social Status of Musicians . . . . .	168	(conclusion to <i>The Story of Sinuhe</i> ) . . . . .	169
Musical Deities . . . . .	170	<i>Apuleius of Madaurus: A Roman View of</i>	
Music During the Reigns of Akhenaten		<i>Egyptian Music</i> (excerpt from the novel	
and Nefertiti . . . . .	172	<i>Metamorphoses</i> concerning the role of	
The Blind Solo Harpist and His Song . . . . .	174	music) . . . . .	171
Erotic Music . . . . .	178	<i>The Hymn to the Aten</i> (praising Aten with	
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		credit for all creation) . . . . .	172
Amenemhab . . . . .	179	<i>Harpist Songs</i> (harpists' songs commenting	
Iti . . . . .	179	on the afterlife) . . . . .	177
Neferhotep, Son of Henu . . . . .	179	<i>The Song from the Tomb of King Intef</i> (song	
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	180	urging people to enjoy life on Earth) . . . . .	178

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Music*

*All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).*

2675–2170 Tomb carvings record the earliest representations of singing and clapping, the first percussion instrument. Carvings also depict female musicians shaking the *menat*, a rattle/necklace used in worship.

Egyptian ensembles first use the flute-like *mat* and the clarinet-like *memet*. Both solo and ensemble musicians begin to use the arched harp.

Carvings show singers making hand gestures. Scholars conjecture that such gestures might serve to signal particular notes to the musicians or represent spontaneous feeling.

Evidence from tomb carvings suggests that Egyptians may have used music to flush animals from the marsh during hunting.

A tomb carving of the song “Bata Mutilates Himself” provides the first record of an Egyptian song, also known from *The Story of Two Brothers* recorded on papyrus.

The sistrum—a rattle-like instrument—is used to accompany dance and to worship the goddess Hathor.

Gender distinctions in instruments relegate men to the playing of flutes and oboes, while women play percussion. This segregation is not universal in music, however, as both men and women play harps and sing.

Evidence suggests the existence of women called *heset*, or “singer,” who chant the ritual for the gods.

Tomb-wall carvings reveal that female harpists in the Old Kingdom were almost universally the relatives of the deceased tomb owner and not professional musicians. Other carvings demonstrate that male musicians can be members of the elite class.

2625–2500 Carvings in the tomb of Debhen show male and female musicians playing in one ensemble.

2500–2350 Earliest representation of professional singer and harpist is recorded in a tomb.

2350–2338 A tomb drawing of the prime minister, Mereruka, shows him sitting on his bed while his wife, Watetkhethor, plays the harp for him; the interplay of a bedroom scene with music suggests the erotic associations of music in ancient Egyptian society.

2008–1630 Egyptians develop barrel-shaped drums made from tree trunks and ceramic drums with animal skin covers. In addition, they import the thin lyre from Syria as well as the thick lyre.

Owners of stelae (inscribed slabs of stone) at Abydos claim to be musicians in their tomb carvings, suggesting that the office of musician enjoyed elite status in Ancient Egypt.

Tomb and stelae owners include harpists’ songs in their tomb carvings which express their views of the afterlife.

1539–1075 The oboe-like *wedjeny* replaces the clarinet used during the Old and Middle Kingdoms.

Egyptians import the angular harp from Mesopotamia and use it alongside the native arched-shape harp.

Another Mesopotamian import, the lute, becomes popular.

The thin lyre gains popularity.

The title *shemayet*, or “musician,” is used for women who chant the ritual for the gods, though the meaning of the change in title from *heset* in the Old Kingdom is not clear.

Tomb inscriptions indicate that musicians are more likely to be professionals than they were in the earlier periods.

1539–1292 The standard ensemble for banquet music develops. It includes a harp, a lute, a double oboe, and a lyre.

1479–1425 Examples of work songs are carved in the tomb of the nobleman Paheri.

The clothing style for female musicians switches from the traditional sheath dress to a wide variety of gowns, beaded girdles, and hair decorations.

1352–1332 Temple depictions of male musicians show them playing the lute and lyre, instruments played only by women in other periods. These scenes reflect a general trend toward the breaking down of barriers between the sexes in general during the reign of Akhenaten.

The giant lyre, imported from Mesopotamia, becomes popular.

Royal princesses play the sistrum—a sacred rattle—for the god Aten, demonstrating the increased status of the king’s daughters in this reign.

1332–1322 Trumpets are first used as military instruments for communication on the battlefield.

Ivory clappers inscribed with the names of Queen Tiye and Princess Merytaten are included in the king’s tomb, demonstrating the role of royal women in musical life.

1292–1075 Drawings depict solo harpists as fat and bald, indicating that they were wealthy and pure.

The *Turin Erotic Papyrus* shows musical instruments in scenes of sexual intercourse, suggesting the importance of the art form to Egyptian notions of eroticism.

332 The only evidence of musical notation in Ancient Egyptian culture comes from a statue created after this date of a harpist and a scribe recording the harpist’s song.



## OVERVIEW *of Music*

**IRRETRIEVABLE LOSS.** Music is sound organized in time. All humans naturally make music, and most societies throughout history organized sound in a way that we would call music. To judge by the popularity of scenes of music making in Egyptian tombs, temples, and a few houses, the Egyptians loved music. Yet of all Egyptian arts, music is the most difficult to reconstruct. Neither the sounds of melodies nor rhythms are recoverable, and scholars have yet to uncover evidence that would allow them to reconstruct the sounds made by the musical instruments represented by ancient artists or discovered by modern archaeologists. The Egyptians never described their music in the texts that they wrote, though there are some references to music and musicians in Egyptian literature. The Greeks, who admired Egyptian music along with other aspects of this culture, described only the last stages of Egyptian history; even these descriptions can be inaccurate or based on misconceptions stemming from the Greeks' projections of their own ideas of music on a foreign culture. The absence of musical notation from ancient Egyptian culture—a surprising reality given the fact that Egyptians were among the first to write words—means the sound of Egyptian music is irretrievably lost to modern ears.

**VALUE OF STUDYING EGYPTIAN MUSIC.** Nevertheless, a study of the surviving evidence of a vibrant Egyptian musical culture is still valuable. Archaeological examples of musical instruments; numerous representations in relief, painting, or sculpture of musicians and music making; and occasional references to music in Egyptian literature serve as the basis for a study of Egyptian musical life. In addition, the lyrics to songs, many of which the Egyptians recorded in tombs and papyrus, make it possible to imagine musical forms, even if the sounds cannot be reconstructed. Egyptian music spanned both the secular and religious arenas, including temple life, work situations, leisure time activities such as banquets, and even Egyptian sexuality. As such, a care-

ful study of music yields clues into the workings and values of this ancient society, illuminating such disparate topics as gender and class issues, institutional organization, professionalization of some activities, and foreign relations, in addition to such religious issues as the role of deities in musical life and the insights about the afterlife provided through the study of lyrics.

**SECULAR ISSUES AND MUSIC.** The nature of archaeological evidence largely prevents scholars from examining ancient Egyptian society outside of a religious context. Most of what is known about this culture comes from the remains of temples and tombs, both of which are religious structures. Therefore, the representations of Egyptian secular life depicted in tomb drawings and carvings serve a greater religious purpose that can make it difficult to draw accurate conclusions. Egyptians selected as topics for their tomb drawings the best from life on earth in order to perpetuate a better version of earthly life in the next world. A tomb depiction of field laborers singing happily about the success and joy inherent in their work, for example, is by no means an accurate depiction of the drudgery of Egyptian agricultural life but an idealized one for the next life from the standpoint of the well-to-do. Aside from the evidence of archaeological examples of musical instruments, all that can be known about Egyptian music comes from representations in either temples or tombs. Yet there is no reason to doubt that the types of songs recorded in these tomb scenes greatly differed from earthly reality. Tomb carvings of Egyptian banquets show musical ensembles performing for elegantly dressed men and women as they dined. While such a carving conveys a wish for food and entertainment in the next world, it is reasonable to assume that the general structure of a banquet with music reflects the banquets Egyptians knew on earth. A study of music also enables scholars to study Egyptian eroticism. The Egyptians, like other peoples, considered music an aphrodisiac. Numerous scenes in a papyrus preserved at the Egyptian Museum in Turin, Italy, depict impassioned couples with musical instruments nearby. A close examination of the musicians themselves in tomb and temple scenes can illuminate gender and class issues. The association of women and men with particular instruments in segregated ensembles hints at Egyptian gender relations, and a study of Egyptian bureaucratic titles associated with music allows scholars to learn about the institutional organizations associated with music. For example, it is clear that a musical bureau called the *khener* was responsible for organizing and performing music at both secular and religious events. Finally, it is possible to ob-

serve the extent of Egyptian contact with foreign cultures by examining the import of both foreign musical instruments and musicians into Egypt. Foreign musicians, for example, played at the court of Akhenaten, king of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The study of Egyptian music thus relates to numerous secular issues in Egyptian history.

**RELIGIOUS ISSUES AND MUSIC HISTORY.** The study of Egyptian music also illuminates strictly religious issues. The role of deities in musical life illustrates that some Egyptian deities could be associated with music without actually being a “god of” music. For example, in most periods a representation of the goddess Hathor’s head tops the sistrum, a sacred rattle played in the worship of all gods, and her temple at Dendera had columns designed to resemble the instrument. Despite the close association with music, however, Hathor did not function as a muse of music in the pantheon. Music was, however, essential to worship. The Egyptian sage Any claimed that playing music for a god was as important for his/her worship as food and incense. The lyrics from Egyptian songs are also very telling in the deciphering of Egyptian religious beliefs. A study of the lyrics of the harpists’ songs carved in tombs and on stelae (standing stone slabs with inscriptions) indicates that the Egyptians used music to consider the nature of life after death in a non-ritual setting, giving voice to both their fears and their hopes for the next world. In this way, the study of Egyptian music adds immeasurably to an understanding of Egyptian culture, even though the actual sound of music from ancient Egypt is lost.

## TOPICS *in Music*

### MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

**SACRED AND SECULAR EVIDENCE.** The evidence for ancient Egyptian music comes exclusively from surviving religious structures such as temples and tombs, which limits scholarly understanding of this art form to its role within religious life. Relief sculptures and paintings created by artists for the walls of tombs and temples, as well as a few actual instruments found in tombs, are all that is left of Egypt’s musical tradition. The scenes carved in temples provide unambiguous evidence for music in religious life, but the scenes on the walls of tombs present considerable difficulties for in-

## EGYPTIAN Musical Instruments

The following list describes various musical instruments from ancient Egypt, including the Egyptian name (when known), the modern equivalent, and a brief description.

Egyptian Name	Modern Equivalent	Description
?	Clappers	Ivory or wood
Menat	Rattle	Part of a necklace
Sekhem or Sesshet	Sistrum (rattle)	Ritual use
?	Finger Cymbal	Ritual use
?	Barrel Drum	Military use for marching or signaling
Ser	Frame drum	Tambourine without shakers
?	Harp	Native Egyptina, arched
?	Harp	Imported from Mesopotamia, angled
Gengenty	Lute	Syrian import
Dadjaret or kinnarum	Thin Lyre	Syrian import, c. 1900 B.C.E.
?	Thick Lyre	Foreign import
?	Giant Lyre	Canaanite import
Mat	Flute	Used for entertainment
Memet	Clarinet	Single reed, Old and New Kingdom only
Wedjeny	Oboe	Double reed; invented in the New Kingdom
Sheneb	Trumpet	Military use only; made of metal

terpretation because the tomb drawings served a very specific purpose in the Egyptian belief system regarding the rebirth of the dead. Scenes in tombs were meant to ensure through magical means that the deceased would be reborn into the afterlife and that the good things in this life could be made available magically in the next life. Egyptians particularly relied on scenes with erotic content to aid in the process of rebirth because they believed that sexual energy had the religious

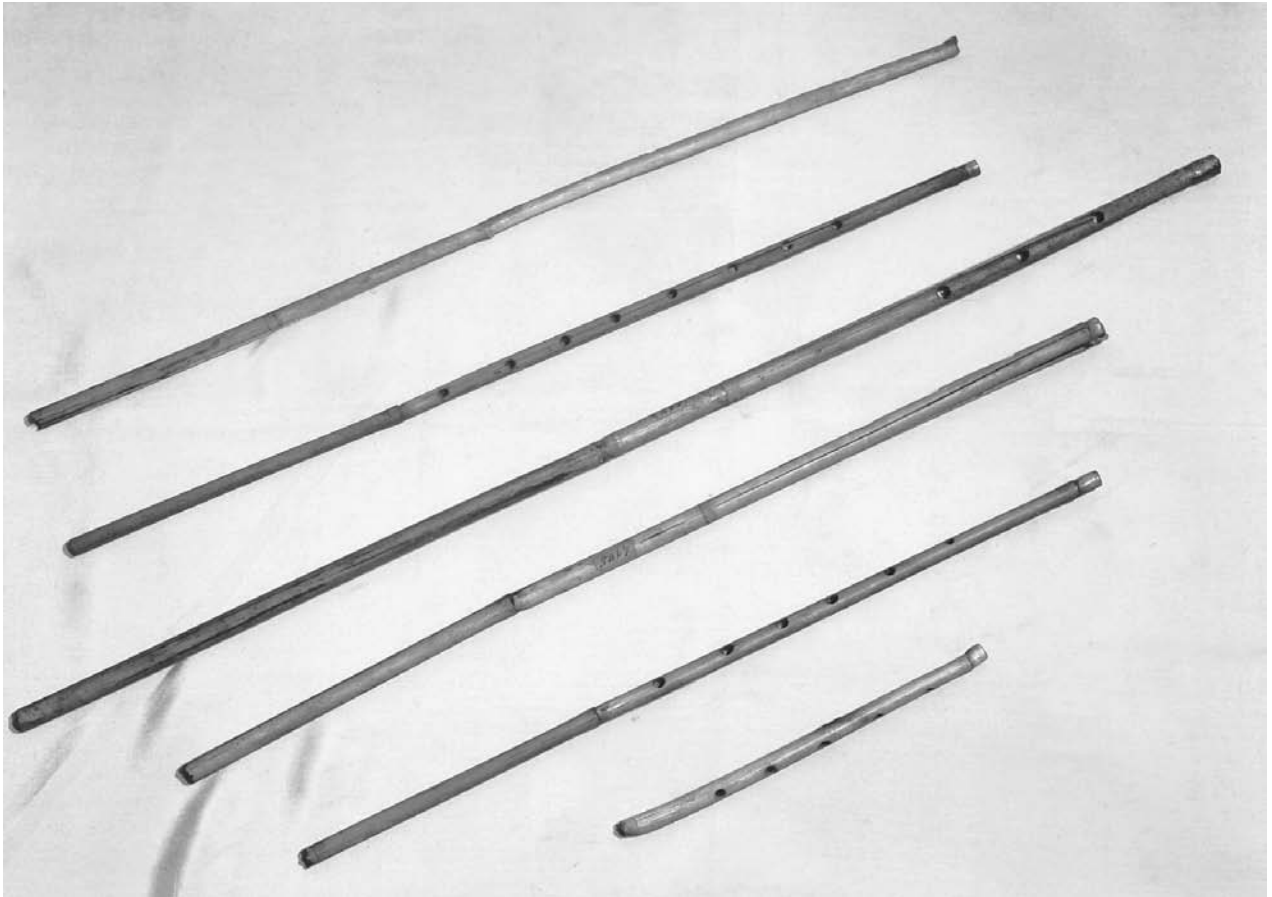


Two views of a limestone statuette of a drummer from the Fifth or Sixth Dynasty (2494–2181 B.C.E.). THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

purpose of duplicating the sexual act that began the first birth so that one could be “reconceived” into the next life. Thus, the tomb scenes of parties involving men and women drinking wine while music entertains them aided the rebirth of the dead by their erotically charged content. While it is reasonable to conclude from these drawings that music served an important and pleasurable purpose in ancient Egyptian society, the magical purpose of these drawings presents only indirect evidence for how music truly functioned outside of a religious context.

**TYPES OF INSTRUMENTS.** The Egyptians used percussion, wind, and stringed instruments as well as the human voice to make music. Musicians played clappers as well as sistra and menats—two kinds of sacred rattles—in cult ceremonies. Harps also functioned in a religious context by accompanying songs about life and death. Other stringed instruments, such as lutes, joined

with woodwinds for entertainment at parties, demonstrating the more secular nature of these instruments. Evidence for these instruments comes from both archaeological finds of actual instruments and the relief sculptures and paintings found on tomb and temple walls. Some instruments are indigenous, but Egypt also participated in a wider musical culture, importing many instruments from the Near East over time. Egyptian music gained from foreign imports in greater measure during the New Kingdom, when Egyptian political fortunes expanded the area of rule to include other cultures and their musical traditions. The Egyptians, for example, imported the Mesopotamian harp, though they never abandoned their native instruments. During the reign of Akhenaten, foreign musicians dressed in distinctive flounced gowns played the giant harp at court. Two musicians played this instrument simultaneously, suggesting that they played notes together in harmony.



Ancient Egyptian flutes. © SEF/ART RESOURCE, NY.

**PERCUSSION.** The first percussion instrument in Egypt was probably the human hands in the act of clapping. The Egyptians depicted singers clapping in Old Kingdom tombs and called clapping *mech*. Beyond the clapping of singers, Egyptians developed an instrument to mimic human clapping; archeologists have recovered many examples of ivory clappers shaped like arms and sometimes ending in representations of human hands. Smaller clappers, called finger cymbals, were also part of the Egyptian percussion repertoire. Even jewelry could function as a percussion instrument; female singers wore or held the *menat*, a counter-weight for a necklace, and shook it so that its beads made a musical noise. Ancient Egyptians also had barrel-shaped drums made from tree trunks covered with hide in the Middle Kingdom, although these were primarily used for military purposes, both for marching and signaling. A ceramic drum covered with animal skin also came into use in the Middle Kingdom. A tambourine-like instrument called the *ser* was a hoop with a skin stretched across it, though the absence of the metal shakers found around the edge of a modern tambourine makes the term “frame drum”

more suitable than “tambourine.” The sistrum, a rattle used almost exclusively by women in worship, did resemble a tambourine in its use of pierced metal disks suspended from rods to make noise.

**WIND INSTRUMENTS.** The Egyptians played four wind instruments, each translated into English by the name of a modern instrument. The *mat* is a flute with a wedge on the mouthpiece. It was held across the musician’s body. The *memet* consisted of two tubes lashed together. This instrument resembles a modern Egyptian folk clarinet with a single reed. Almost exclusively used during the Old and Middle Kingdom, it disappeared with the invention of the *wedjeny* in the New Kingdom. The *wedjeny* consisted of two diverging tubes and resembled the ancient Greek *aulos*, a double reeded instrument. Egyptologists thus call it an oboe in English. Unlike these wind instruments, which were made from stalks of reeds, the trumpet was made of metal. The trumpets discovered in Tutankhamun’s tomb, for example, were made from silver and bronze with mouthpieces of gold and silver. Like the barrel-



Flutist with a singer snapping his fingers. Painted limestone relief from the Tomb of Nenkhefka, Saqqara. Fifth Dynasty. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE NY.

shaped drum, trumpets were military instruments used for communication on the battlefield and during marching.

**STRINGED INSTRUMENTS: HARPS.** Egyptians played several kinds of stringed instruments, including two types of harps, three types of lyres, and the lute. There are many different subdivisions of the harp types, but basically they are either arched—an indigenous Egyptian type—or angular—an import from Mesopotamia. The arched harp, the most popular in Egypt in all periods, was a curved rod inserted in a sound box. A collar in the shape of a ring attached the strings to the top of the rod, which were stretched to a rib in contact with the sound box. Each string had its own collar that allowed for tuning. Egyptian arched harps had six to ten strings, but since each string on a harp had only one pitch, Egyptian harp music made melodies with a very

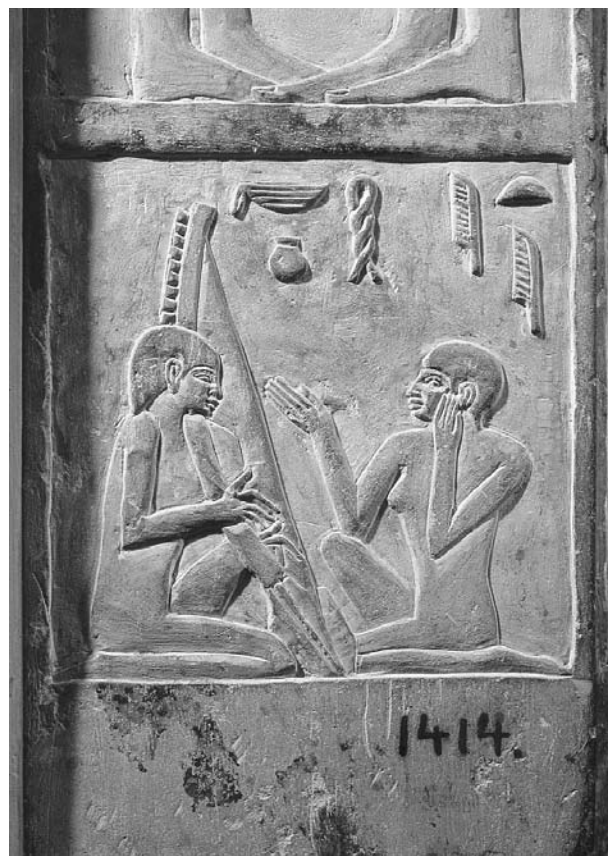
limited number of pitches. The shovel-shaped arched harp used during the Old and Middle Kingdoms came in a variety of sizes, which allowed for different tonal ranges, the smaller harps making higher pitches than the larger harps. Scholars conjecture that since harp music accompanied singing, the harp sizes may have complemented particular voices. The angular harp in use in Mesopotamia by 1900 B.C.E. did not entirely replace the arch-shaped harp in Egypt until nearly 900 B.C.E. The major difference between arched- and angular-shaped harps was the construction and the number of strings. In an angular harp, the rib was inserted into the sound box rather than being parallel to it as with the arched harp. Moreover, the angular harp has between 21 and 29 strings. Thus, the angular harp can produce between double and triple the number of pitches of an arched harp. The Egyptians clearly were reluctant to expand the pitch range of their music since they resisted

## PLAYING Tutankhamun's Trumpets

The poor state of preservation of most ancient Egyptian instruments made of wood or reeds makes it impossible to attempt to play them. But trumpet players have attempted to sound the trumpets of Tutankhamun, made from bronze and silver, at least three times during the twentieth century C.E. In 1933, Percival Robson Kirby played the trumpets without a modern mouthpiece. He found that it played only one note: one that corresponded with a tone between C and C-sharp. In 1939 James Tappern played the Tutankhamun trumpets with a modern mouthpiece as if they were modern instruments. In 1941, a final attempt was made to play the trumpet as an ancient player would have. Again only one note could be sounded. This one note must have been the original sound the trumpet made.

adopting the angular harp. During the first millennium, however, the angular harp was popular in Egypt since it continues to be represented in reliefs of the period.

**STRINGED INSTRUMENTS: LYRES AND LUTES.** The three types of lyres that the Egyptians used are distinguished today as thin, thick, and giant. The thin lyre originated in Syria around 2500 B.C.E. and appeared in Egypt by 1900 B.C.E. Yet the thin lyre was not really popular until the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1075 B.C.E.), nearly 500 years later, as evidenced by the fact that artists represented it more often in tombs. The thin lyre might have been called the *djadjat*, but was better known in the New Kingdom by its Semitic name: the *kinnarum*. Egyptians considered it a low-status alternative to the harp since the musicians playing it appear in the tombs of poorer people. The thick lyre was larger and had more strings than a thin lyre. The thick lyre first appeared in the Middle Kingdom (2008 to after 1630 B.C.E.) in Egypt and lasted until the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.). The giant lyre is best known from the Amarna Period (1352–1336 B.C.E.). Curiously, depictions of musicians playing the giant lyre always portray them as dressed in the fashion of Canaanites, though no archaeological evidence of the giant lyre is known from Canaan. Another cross-cultural connection is evident in the Egyptian importation of the *gengenty*, a lute from the Near East. Though known in Mesopotamia about 2000 B.C.E., it only became popular in Egypt



Depiction of Iti (right), the first known professional singer in ancient Egypt, singing with a harpist. Relief on the false door of the tomb of Nikawre, Fifth Dynasty. WERNER FORMAN/ART RESOURCE NY.

during the New Kingdom. Lutes in Egypt were the exclusive domain of women.

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## MUSICAL NOTATION

**WRITTEN NOTATION.** The Egyptians developed a sophisticated writing system as early as 3500 B.C.E., and likewise developed music from the earliest periods of their history. They did not, however, apparently combine their talents in writing and music to create a system of music notation as did their neighbors. The Egyptians must have been aware that their neighbors in Syria had a system for the transcription of musical



This statue shows the only known musical notation from ancient Egypt. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 58.34, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

notes at least by 1500 B.C.E., as did the Greeks by the first millennium B.C.E. Yet scholars have not identified any musical notation in a written form in Egypt until after the Greeks had conquered the land about 322 B.C.E. Even then, there is only one possible example of musical notation, discovered on a statue depicting a woman playing a harp while a man sits before her with a writing board. On the board is a series of horizontal lines with longer and shorter vertical lines attached to it. The lack of comparative material hampered musicologists' efforts to interpret the notation. The only other possible evidence of ancient notation comes from ninth-century C.E. Coptic manuscripts that may reflect an earlier native Egyptian system of musical notation. The Coptic Church (the Egyptian Christian Church) does preserve some memories of ancient Egyptian customs, but it is impossible to prove that the Coptic system of notation that post-dates the Old Kingdom by

thousands of years preserves an older form of musical notation.

**HAND GESTURES.** Scholars conjecture that the hand gestures made by singers indicated pitches to the harpists or wind players that accompanied them. If true, the representations of singers—called “chironomists,” or “one who makes signs using the hands” in Greek—especially on Old Kingdom tomb walls, preserve evidence that instrumentalists could be led in particular songs. Scholars have tried to find a correlation between the hand gestures that singers made and the note or pitch that a harpist or clarinet player played in numerous representations in Old Kingdom tombs without much success. Other scholars have argued that these hand gestures were spontaneous expressions accompanying singing. There is some evidence that gestures were a critical component of a musical performance; the word for singing in Egyptian, *hesi*, uses the final hieroglyphic sign for an arm, which might indicate that singing is done as much with hands as it is with the voice. As with many issues relating to the role of music in Egypt, there is not enough evidence to draw a firm conclusion.

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#### WORK SONGS

**EVIDENCE.** Tomb and building drawings present us with evidence that Egyptian laborers integrated music with their labor, although such evidence is fraught with barriers to interpretation. For instance, the pictorial combination of music and labor is an uncommon theme in Egyptian art so it is difficult to draw conclusions based on comparison. The songs themselves throw up barriers to a greater application to Egyptian life since the meaning of the words that accompany the image does not clearly relate to the work being depicted. Neither is it possible to determine whether the songs preserved on tomb walls represent songs that workmen actually sang in the fields or whether the songs represent only the



Two views of a limestone statuette of a harpist from the Fifth or Sixth Dynasty (2494–2181 B.C.E.). THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

hopes of the elite who paid for the tombs. Tomb walls, after all, depicted an idealized version of life on earth to ensure the continuation of such a life in the next world, particularly as it related to the growing and harvesting of crops which would provide the necessary food for the dead tomb owner in the next life. Yet there is enough evidence to show that workmen eased their labor through song. There is also evidence to suggest that musical instruments aided in hunting as a method to flush game out of bushes.

**AGRICULTURAL CALL AND RESPONSE SONGS.** Agriculture was the basis of the Egyptian economy, and agricultural workers made up the majority of the population. Evidence for this agricultural activity and the songs sung during the workday is preserved on the walls of tombs. One Old Kingdom song preserves a call and response routine such as those that are still sung by Egyptian workers on archaeological excavations during the course of the work. This song, sung during planting season, begins with a leader singing “O West! Where is

Bata, Bata of the West?” A chorus or perhaps another individual responds, “Bata is in the water with the fish. He speaks with the *phragos*-fish and converses with the *oxyrhynchus*-fish.” The song refers directly to *The Story of Two Brothers* that is preserved from a Nineteenth-dynasty papyrus (1292–1190 B.C.E.), nearly 1,200 years later. Though the manuscript dates later, the presence of the song in an earlier tomb suggests the story is older than the only known manuscript. Bata was a god who died but returned three times, first in the form of a pine tree, then a bull, and then a persea tree. The *phragos*-fish in *The Story of Two Brothers* helped with Bata’s rebirth by swallowing and thus preserving his phallus after he mutilated himself to prove he was telling the truth in a dispute with his brother Anubis. The Greek writer Plutarch assigned the same function to the *oxyrhynchus*-fish in the myth of Osiris, another god who died only to be reborn. The song thus suggests that Bata and Osiris are related. This story also emphasized for the Egyptians that the crops that die at the end of the season would





Stele depicting the harpist of Amon, Djedkhonsouiofankh, before the god Horus, Third Intermediate Period. © REUNION DES MUSEES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE, NY.

be reborn through the planting of seed. Both fish thus reinforced the meaning of the song both as appropriate for the planting season and for the hopes of the tomb owner to be reborn in the next world. This song is preserved in six different tombs in Saqqara, demonstrating its common usage.

**HARVEST SONGS IN PAHERI'S TOMB.** Yet another call and response song from an Old Kingdom tomb represents workers encouraging each other through compliments while working in the barley field. Two groups of workers are singing similar songs while a flute player accompanies them. In the first group the leader sings "Where is the one skilled at his job?" The worker next to him responds "It is I!" A second leader sings, "Where is the hard-working man? Come to me!" The second worker sings, "It is I. I am dancing." Through these compliments, boasts, and jokes the workers encourage themselves and each other to continue working. To judge by modern usage on archaeological excavations, such call and response songs were repeated with varying rhythms throughout the workday. Sometimes they are improvised, commenting on particular events of the workday.

The harvest song in the tomb of Paheri is explicitly labeled a "part song." The carving shows eight men harvesting barley with sickles while they sing. The first two lines describe the day, emphasizing that it is cool because of the northern breeze. The third and fourth lines emphasize that the workers and nature both cooperate to make the harvest go smoothly. Again this song depicts an ideal world where both workers and nature cooperate to ensure food for the deceased. It is not possible to know whether the song was actually sung or only expresses the deceased tomb owner's wishes.

**PLOWING AND HOEING SONGS.** The plowing and hoeing songs are known from two New Kingdom tombs in Upper Egypt. The words of the songs seem to divide into call and response sequences. The layout of the text and the accompanying illustrations make it a little difficult to determine the correct order of the verses. The relief carving shows four men dragging the plow—a job normally performed by oxen—an old man steadying the plow, and a young man sowing seed. All of the figures face left. Further to the left are four figures hoeing, the next step in the process of planting the seed. These four hoeing figures face right. The words of the song appear directly above each group of figures. Egyptian hieroglyphic writing can also face either left or right and can also begin on the right side going to the left or vice versa, unlike English writing, which can only begin on the left and run to the right. It is thus easy to associate the lines of text with the proper group of figures because of this characteristic of Egyptian writing. The order of the lines, however, is unclear. It might be that the songs were an endless sequence of call and response so the slight confusion in the layout of the words might be a reflection of the fact that these songs have no real beginning or end. These songs emphasize the positive and show the stake that the workers have in the success of the crop, even though they work for a nobleman. The second plowing song in the tomb of Paheri is written above a group of workers sowing seed and plowing with oxen. A leader stands behind one of the plows with his own columns of text arranged near him. The arrangement of text and image here is clearer to modern eyes. The leader sings, "Hurry, the front guides the cattle. Look! The mayor stands watching." The three men and the boy near the cattle reply, "A beautiful day is a cool one when the cattle drag (the plow). The sky does our desire while we work for the nobleman." Such a song reveals the main purpose for depicting these scenes in a tomb in the first place; by depicting the sequence of growing crops and eager workers, the deceased ensures that he will have adequate food supplies in the next world.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE STORY BEHIND THE SONG**

**INTRODUCTION:** The lyrics to a song about the god Bata recorded in the Tomb of Paheri are from a story called *The Story of Two Brothers*. In this tale, a child named Bata came to live with his older brother Anubis and Anubis' wife. As Bata matured into a young man, Anubis' wife made sexual advances toward him, which he repulsed. In revenge, Anubis' wife told her husband that Bata had tried to seduce her. Anubis determined to kill Bata, but the young man escaped. In the following passage, Bata confronts his brother Anubis across a river filled with crocodiles.

Then the youth rebuked his elder brother saying: "What is your coming after me to kill me wrongfully, without having listened to my words? For I am yet your young brother, and you are like a father to me, and your wife is like a mother to me. Is it not so that when I was sent to fetch seed for us your wife said to me: 'Come, let us spend an hour lying together'? But look, it has been turned about for you into another thing." Then he let him know all that had happened between him and his wife. And he swore by Pre-Harakhti, saying: "As to your coming to kill me wrongfully, you carried your spear on the testimony of a filthy whore!" Then he took a reed knife, cut off his phallus, and threw it into the water; and the catfish swallowed it. And he grew weak and became feeble. And his elder brother became very sick at heart and stood weeping for him loudly. He could not cross over to where his brother was on account of the crocodiles.

**SOURCE:** "The Story of the Two Brothers," in *The New Kingdom*. Vol. 2 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976): 206.

**HUNTING.** In addition to agricultural work, music appears to have played a role in the hunting of game. Three scenes, each carved in different time periods, seem to depict servants flushing game with music. Yet it is not clear if the servants are just making noise to scare away birds, perhaps from crops, or if they are indeed flushing game. Furthermore, the scenes do not clearly demonstrate whether the servants are making music or are just making noise. The three examples come from an Old Kingdom tomb, from a block from a building in Tell el Amarna, and from a Roman period relief. The Old Kingdom tomb scene shows a small boat steered through the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SONGS FROM PAHERI'S TOMB**

**INTRODUCTION:** These songs were preserved in the tomb of Paheri of El Kab. Another partial copy of these songs is painted on the walls of the Tomb of Wensu in Thebes. Both of these sites are in Upper Egypt. It is difficult to determine whether these songs spread to other parts of Egypt, but it is significant that at least some songs were repeated in different places and at different times. This phenomenon suggests some continuity in knowledge of Egyptian music.

*The Plowing Song*

We do (it).  
Look! Do not fear for the fields! They are very good!  
How good is what you say, my boy!  
A good year is free from trouble.  
All the fields are healthy. The calves are the best!

*The Hoeing Song*

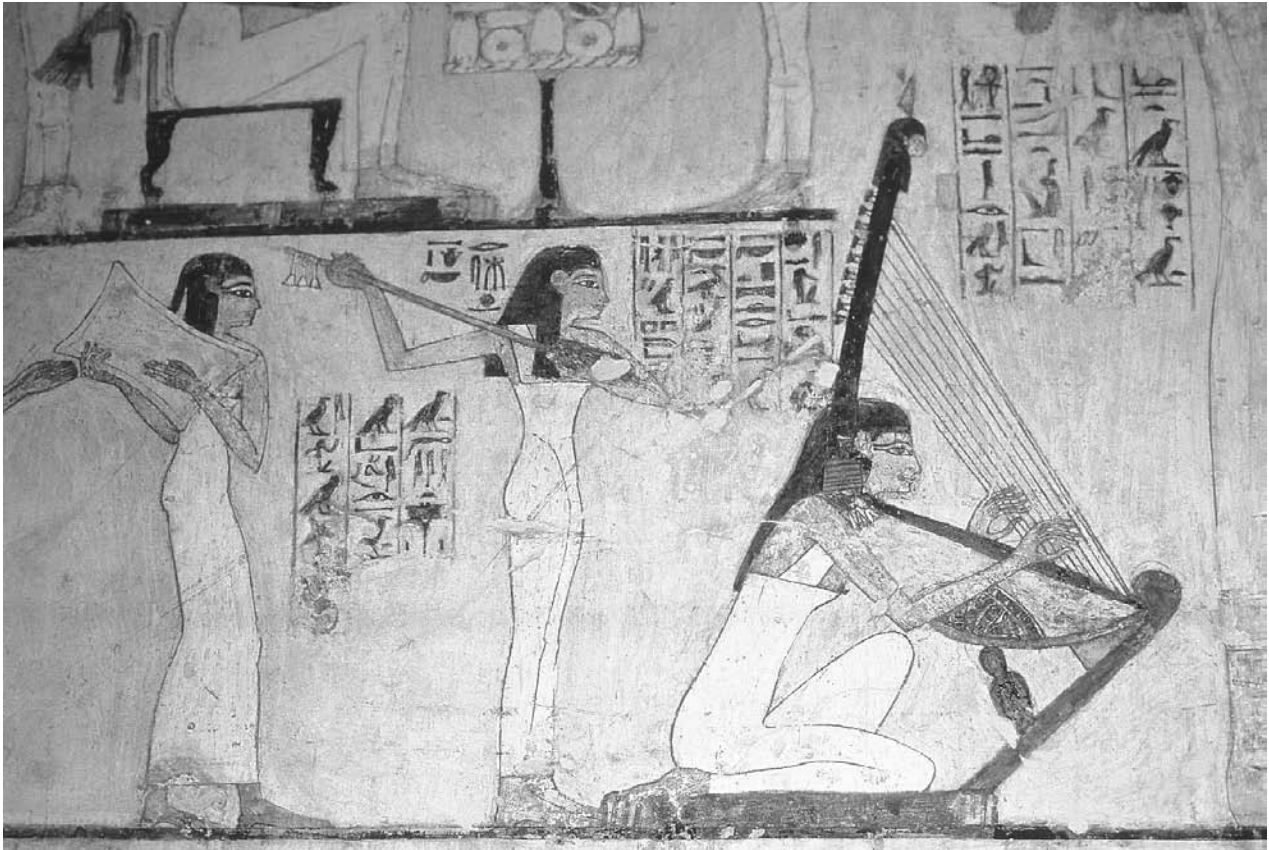
I shall do more than my work for the nobleman!  
My friend, hurry up with the work, and let us finish  
in good time.

*The Harvest Song*

A part song:  
This fine day goes forth on the Land.  
The northern breeze has risen.  
The sky does our desire.  
Our work binds our desires.

*Translated by Edward Bleiberg.*

marsh by an oarsman and helmsman. Two other men stand in the boat. A boy holds two bird decoys with one hand while the other hand holds a tube on which the boy is blowing. Since not all of the tube is preserved, it is not possible to say for certain that it is a trumpet whose noise or song would flush out the game in the marsh, but the presence of decoys certainly suggests hunting given evidence of their use in the New Kingdom. In the Amarna relief only one stone block is preserved. On the left side, a woman holds a tambourine. There is also the figure of a second woman and a boy with up-raised arms. On the right side is a tree with one bird either alighting or flying off, startled by the tambourine. Again it is unclear whether there is a connection with hunting, though the bird's pose is similar to other New Kingdom



Women playing the harp, lute, and tambourine. Wallpainting. Nineteenth Dynasty. WERNER FORMAN/ART RESOURCE NY.

hunting scenes. A third Roman period relief shows women beating tambourines to scare birds out of the undergrowth. Such scenes suggest possibilities for the use of music in hunting that cannot be fully confirmed with the present state of the evidence.

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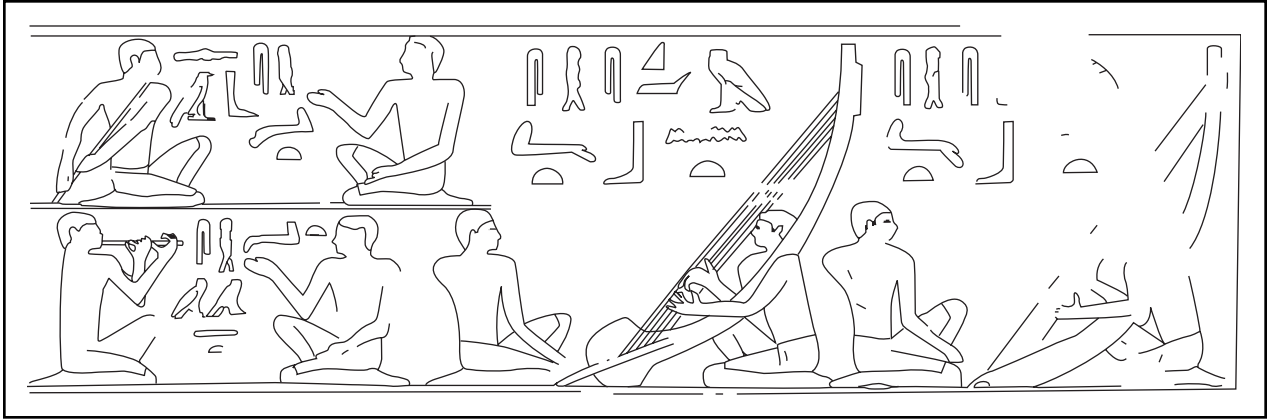
Lisa Manniche, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1991).

#### MALE AND FEMALE MUSICIANS IN THE OLD KINGDOM

**GENDER DISTINCTIONS.** Men and women both worked as musicians during the Old Kingdom. While some instruments—such as the harp and certain forms of percussion—could be played by either men or women, other instruments were gender-designated. Only men

played single and double flutes and oboes, while women played the shoulder harp, frame drums, clap sticks, and the sistrum. Singing, another musical expression open to either sex, was so fundamental to almost every performance that the instrumentalists functioned either as accompanists to other singers or to themselves if they were singing. The singers and the instrumentalists were largely professionals, though there is evidence that women entertained members of their family as amateur musicians. In the Sixth Dynasty, for example, a tomb drawing shows the high official Mereruka and his wife Watetkhethor lounging on a bed while she played the harp. In other tombs there are examples of wives, daughters, or granddaughters of the deceased playing the harp for the deceased. The first known professional singer, named Iti, performed with the harpist Heknut during the Fifth Dynasty according to a depiction of the pair on the tomb of Nikawre in Saqqara. Since they do not appear to be relatives of Nikawre, Egyptologists assume that they were professionals.

**ENSEMBLES.** Though all-male ensembles predominated in the Old Kingdom, all-female and mixed-gender ensembles are represented in tomb scenes of music mak-



Depictions of Egyptian musicians in the tomb of Iymery. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

ing. This conclusion is based on an interpretation of two different Egyptian artistic conventions. Relief sculptures and paintings in tombs are divided into registers. Each register can represent a different place, or in some cases the upper register can be read as located behind the lower register. In most Old Kingdom examples the male and female members of the ensemble are located in different registers. Yet, in the tomb of Queen Mersyankh III, the tomb owner herself is located in both registers, identifiable by her representation as a figure two times larger than the other figures in the relief. This placement of the queen suggests that the male ensemble members in the top register and the female singers in the lower register are understood as playing and singing together. The same is true of the dancers, also located in the lower register. The dancers and singers are probably closer to the tomb owner, while the all-male ensemble of two harps, a flute, and an oboe are behind the dancers and singers. A similar scene in the tomb of Debhen at Giza also uses the artistic device of the tomb owner spanning all the registers to signal that here five registers should be read as one behind the other, the topmost at the back. This scene includes two harps, two oboes, a flute and two male singers in the top register. The second register includes four female dancers and three female singers. These examples both come from the Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.). By the end of the Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 B.C.E.), in the tomb of Iymery, a scene shows female dancers and singers together with a male harpist, a male singer, and a male oboe player in the same register. Another musical scene in the tomb, however, separates four female singers and nine female dancers from a male ensemble made up of a flute, an oboe, two harps, and four male singers in different registers. Thus it is likely that the separation of male and female musicians in tomb scenes was more of an artis-

tic convention than evidence that male and female musicians played separately. The grouping of men and women into separate groups may have been a division borne more of their association with particular instruments than a division based on gender. Perhaps the true separation is between the strings (harps), winds, and lower-voiced male singers in the back, and the higher-voiced female singers and percussion section in the front of the ensemble.

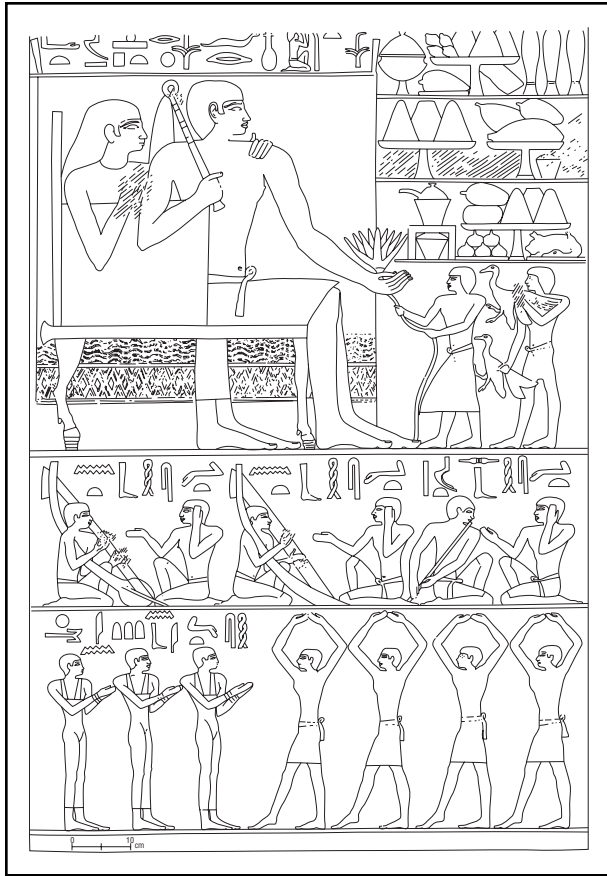
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### A MUSICAL BUREAU IN THE OLD KINGDOM

**KHENER.** The Egyptians used the word *khener* to refer to a troupe of professional singers and dancers organized through a bureau. Earlier Egyptologists misunderstood the *khener* to be specifically attached to the harem because tomb drawings always depicted female singers and dancers entertaining a man in his private quarters. This erroneous identification stemmed from historians' misunderstanding of Islamic customs in the Middle East and Victorian preconceptions about male/female relationships in ancient times. Victorian scholars were often embarrassed by ancient behavior that they considered lewd in their own time. European scholars also condemned their contemporaries in Islamic countries that practiced polygamy. In reality, many institutions



Drawing of a musical scene with musicians and dancers, from the tomb of Nefer. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

had a khener, including the royal palace, the funerary estates that supported a king's cult after he died, and the temples of the goddesses Bat and Hathor, and the gods Wepwawet and Horus-Iunmutef. Many titles found in tombs show that women were usually the supervisors of the khener, which is one indication of the degree of freedom enjoyed by women in ancient Egypt. Because the titles change in Egyptian according to whether the office holder was male or female, it is clear that the Overseer of the Khener and the Inspector of the Khener were women in most cases. There is also an example of a male Overseer of the King's Khener. The evidence for the khener comes almost entirely from scenes on the walls of tombs and temples. Thus it is not clear if all the possible performance venues for the khener are represented in the evidence. The khener is often depicted entertaining the deceased in a tomb while he eats from the offering table. This could imply that the khener entertained at meals during life on earth. Other evidence that the khener entertained at secular functions includes some titles held by khener members. A member of the

khener could also be the "overseer of all the entertainments of the secrets of the palace," or the "overseer of all the fine entertainments of the king," or the "overseer of the singing of the palace." Some singers of the khener are even described as those whose singing "rejoice the heart of the king with beautiful songs and fulfill every wish of the king by their beautiful singing." The khener also played for religious ceremonies. It is depicted in funeral processions and performing in front of the tomb during funerals. Specific kheners were also attached to temples of Hathor, Bat, Wepwawet, and Horus Iunmutef. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the khener was exclusively religious.

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SEE ALSO *Dance: The Dancers*

## BANQUET MUSIC DURING THE NEW KINGDOM

**STANDARD ENSEMBLE.** In the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) a standard ensemble developed for playing at banquets. These banquets are depicted on tomb walls and are a frequent component of tomb decoration, especially during the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1292 B.C.E.). Though the depictions in the tombs are connected with the tomb's function of providing the necessities for the deceased to be reborn into the next world, still the banquet scenes also represent real banquets held in this world. Music was always included at these banquets. The standard ensemble included a harp, a lute, a double oboe, and sometimes a lyre. These instruments were played by both men and women either in mixed groups or in all-women bands. These bands seem to replace the Old Kingdom entertainers who played a single harp.

**NEW LIVELINESS.** The depictions of musicians at banquets during the New Kingdom are considerably livelier than depictions carved during the Old Kingdom. It is possible to attribute part of this change to developments in art style that allowed New Kingdom artists more freedom in depicting people. Yet even the poses of the musicians have changed. In the Old Kingdom,



Depiction of musicians at a banquet. Mural from the tomb of Rekhmire, vizier under Thutmose III and Amenophis II, Eighteenth Dynasty. The woman on the left is playing a double-reeded wind instrument while the woman on the right plucks a stringed instrument. © ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY.

musicians at banquets were seated and separated from the dancers. New Kingdom scenes depict standing musicians who tap their feet in time to the music. They often stand near the dancers rather than being separated into a different register. Their fingers seem to move over the strings and some even sway in time to the music. All of these changes suggest that New Kingdom music at banquets was much livelier than the music played in earlier times.

**MUSICIANS' CLOTHING AT NEW KINGDOM BANQUETS.** Female musicians dressed in a much greater variety of clothing during the New Kingdom than they did during the Old Kingdom. In the Old Kingdom, female musicians wore a tight sheath dress with straps. This outfit, in fact, was commonly worn by almost all women during the Old Kingdom, including nobles and goddesses. The greater variety of dress types available in the

New Kingdom was exploited by musicians, too. In the earlier representations from the time of Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.), some female musicians are depicted in the old style of sheath dress. The harpist and lute player in the tomb of Rekhmire, for example, both wear this older attire as do the harpist and double oboe player in the tomb of Amenemhet. Yet in the contemporary tomb of Wah, a lute player and an oboe player each wear loose-fitting, transparent gowns with only a girdle of beads around the waist. It is difficult to determine if this instance of nudity indicates lower social status. They also wear headbands and a single lotus flower over the forehead. In the tomb of Djoserkaresoneb, decorated during the reign of Thutmose IV (1400–1390 B.C.E.), four female musicians are depicted playing the harp, lute, double oboe, and lyre. The harpist wears a white linen dress with a striped shawl that is knotted at the waist to hold

it in place. The lute player wears only jewelry, including a broad collar made of beads, bracelets, armlets, and a girdle around her waist. The double oboe player wears an elaborate New Kingdom dress made of transparent fabric. Finally, the lyre player wears the traditional sheath dress. In the nearly contemporary tomb of Nakht the band consists of only a harpist, lute player, and double oboe player. The harpist and double oboe player are dressed similarly in white linen sheaths with overlying cloaks made from a transparent fabric. The lute player is once again nearly naked wearing only a broad collar, bracelets, armlets, and a girdle around her waist. All three women wear garlands of flowers in their hair including a lotus flower positioned over the forehead. They also wear the typical cones of scented fat on top of their wigs. This cone melted during the course of the evening, providing a sweet scent. It seems likely from these examples that there was a great deal of variety in the performers' dress during the Eighteenth Dynasty. Female musicians in the New Kingdom often performed at parties nude, wearing only jewelry, or wearing very sheer clothing that revealed the body. Many scholars have interpreted this custom as evidence that these women belonged to a lower social class. Yet Egyptian women of all classes wore clothing that was appropriate to the warm climate and that emphasized the female form. Elite women wore diaphanous gowns even when portrayed praying to the gods. Ancient Egyptians appeared to be very comfortable with nudity and did not consider it a mark of low status.

**MALE MUSICIANS.** Male musicians wore street clothes typical of any Egyptian man. In the earliest periods they wore the typical kilt that all men wore. By the New Kingdom, men added a tunic to their dress clothing and sometimes wore a pleated shawl.

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SEE ALSO *Fashion: Clothing*

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## THE OFFICE OF CHANTRESS

**TWO ANCIENT TITLES.** Two ancient Egyptian titles refer to women who chanted the ritual for gods and goddesses. They participated in the daily ritual and in

special festival liturgies. In the daily ritual, singers "woke" the deity in the morning and sang the god to sleep in the evening. Their titles are *heset*, literally "singer," and *shemayet*, literally "musician." Since most of the evidence for "singers" and for "musicians" comes from titles on coffins, it is nearly impossible to determine the difference between the two titles. The title "singer" appeared earlier, first known from the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.). The title "musician" is better documented from the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). The titles nearly always associate the woman who holds it with a particular deity, including Isis, Mut, Osiris, Montu, and Amun. These titles are united in translation under the name "chantress."

**ORGANIZATION OF THE CHANTRESSES.** The women who served as chantresses generally came from the upper class, and even queens belonged to the most important group of chantresses: those who served the god Amun, king of the gods. The chantress accompanied her singing with a sistrum. This sacred rattle was closely associated with the goddess Hathor, whose symbol often appeared as decoration on it. Many representations of the queens and princesses show them holding the sistrum while they chant for the god. Queen Nefertiti was described as "one who pacifies the god with a sweet voice and whose two hands carry the sistra." Organized into four groups known as *phyle*, the chantresses served in rotation at the temple over the course of the year. The role of chantress was an honored one in Egyptian society with the chief of each phyle reporting directly to the High Priest of the temple in which the phyle served. The chantress was less a professional musician than a priestess who recited or chanted the liturgy before the statues of the god.

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## THE SOCIAL STATUS OF MUSICIANS

**MODERN SCHOLARLY BIAS.** Scholars from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries differed widely in their hypotheses regarding the status of musicians in ancient Egypt. This difficulty stems, in large part, from

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SINUHE WELCOMED HOME WITH MUSIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** *The Story of Sinuhe* was the most important literary work from ancient Egypt. It is an epic poem that describes Sinuhe's flight from Egypt to the Levant after the assassination of Amenemhet I. Sinuhe left because he mistakenly believed he had been implicated in the plot against the king. During his absence, Sinuhe lived with a bedouin tribe. He dressed like a bedouin even for his fearful return to Egypt at the king's invitation. At the end of the poem, King Senwosret I welcomed Sinuhe back to Egypt. Music and song were integral to Sinuhe's formal welcome as the royal princesses sang, accompanied by sistra.

Thereupon, they brought in the Royal Family;  
And then his Majesty said to the Queen,  
"Look, it is Sinuhe,  
come as a Bedouin created by the Asiatics!"  
so that she gave a very great cry,  
the royal children [joining in] with a single shriek.  
Then they said before his Majesty,  
"Truly, it is not he, our sovereign Lord?"  
Then his Majesty replied, "Truly, it is he."  
So then they brought out their necklaces,  
With their scepters and their sistra in their hands.  
Then they presented them to his Majesty;

"Your state is more than beautiful, King,  
who bears the insignia of the Lady of Heaven.  
The Golden Goddess offers life to your nostrils,  
The Lady of the Stars protects you;  
The White Crown goes north, and the Red Crown goes  
south;  
And what has been joined unites in the utterance of your  
Majesty;  
Success is given from your brow.  
You have delivered the poor man from evil,  
Having propitiated Re, Lord of the Two Lands;  
Praises to you, as to the Mistress of Us All!  
Loosen your bow, lay aside your arrow,  
Give breath to him who is in suffocation!  
Give to us this fine thing  
In favor of the foreign chieftain, Son of the Northwind,  
The foreign Bowman born in [our] beloved land.  
He has made a flight for fear of you,  
He has fled the land in terror of you.  
[Yet] there should be no blanching of the face which  
looks upon you,  
no fear in the eye which gazes at you."  
Then his Majesty said, "He shall not fear henceforth ...

**SOURCE:** "The Tale of Sinuhe," in *Thought Couplets in "The Tale of Sinuhe."* Trans. John L. Foster (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 1993): 60–61.

their projections of the modern status of musicians—particularly female musicians—onto an ancient culture. For example, scholars assigned to female musicians of ancient Egypt the same class associations that they knew in Europe and America. One Victorian scholar suggested that only non-elite women became professional musicians. A mid-twentieth century scholar, on the other hand, suggested that young, elite girls learned to play the harp in ancient Egypt much as upper-class ladies in America learned to play the piano. Others suggested that musicians held a place of honor but were also slaves, a statement that has no basis in the evidence. In fact, there is no evidence that explicitly comments on the social status of musicians, although evidence from tomb drawings suggests that musicians and singers throughout ancient Egyptian history enjoyed elite status in their society.

**OLD KINGDOM STATUS.** In the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.), tomb drawings indicate that there was no professional class of female musicians, but there was an amateur class of high-status women who played for the men of the household. Women playing the harp in tomb representations were nearly always family mem-

bers of the deceased. They include a daughter in the tomb of Idu and the tomb owner's wife in the tombs of Pepi at Meir and of Mereruka at Saqqara. The latter is significant in that Mereruka's wife was specifically identified with her name, Watetkhehor. The Egyptians attached great importance to the preservation of personal names in a tomb, because the purpose of a tomb was to ensure the survival of the tomb owner's name for eternity. When an additional name appeared in a tomb, even the name of a wife, the Egyptians considered this to be an honor. Further evidence that these family members were relatively high status comes from the tomb of Pepi of Meir. His wife, depicted as a harp player, also bore the title "King's Companion," a recognition of her high status at court. There is some evidence to support the theory that men could be professional musicians; the male singer Khufwy-ankh enjoyed high status at court. He was a singer, Overseer of Singers, and flutist who owned a tomb in Giza near the Great Pyramid. Both the location of the tomb near such an important structure and the fact that a musician could own a tomb at all is an indication of his high social status. Clearly the Old Kingdom evidence supports the idea that elite men and



women learned to play music and that music was a part of elite society.

**MIDDLE KINGDOM STATUS.** In the Middle Kingdom, the evidence for musicians is sparser than in other periods. Yet there are examples of musicians among the elite, or at least the class that obtained stelae for monuments in Abydos and even among princesses. The high official Seba-shesu boasted in his tomb that he trained ten musicians. Stelae from Abydos belonging to Nefer-hotep, Renseneb, and Sathathor were decorated with artistic renderings of musicians. If these prominent men and women included musicians on monuments intended to honor their own memories, musicians must not have been considered shameful. In literature there are examples of both princesses and goddesses taking on the role of musician. The daughters of Senwosret I in *The Story of Sinuhe* played the sistrum and sang in honor of Sinuhe's return to Egypt. In the late Middle Kingdom story contained in *Papyrus Westcar*, a group of goddesses and a god disguised themselves as professional musicians, indicating that there was nothing reprehensible about being a musician.

**NEW KINGDOM STATUS.** There is more evidence to support a growing class of professional musicians in the New Kingdom (1539–1070 B.C.E.), as indicated by the presence of musicians with no relationship to the deceased on tomb walls. There is also more evidence of the elite status enjoyed by musicians in both literature and tomb drawings. A passage in *Papyrus Anastasi IV*, for example, expresses the disappointment of the parents of a man who has become a drunk, a lout, and a customer of prostitutes; they suggest that this is not the behavior they expected from him since he is a highly trained musician. The high status of the chantress in the New Kingdom—which sometimes included queens who chanted the ritual for the god—also suggests that musical training was an elite trait. Singers served the gods and succeeded each other as the office passed from one generation to the next in elite families. For example, the female family members of Rekhmire, a vizier of the king, were nearly all musicians. Thus it seems likely that there was no shame in being a musician in the New Kingdom.

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## MUSICAL DEITIES

**HATHOR AND IHY.** The Egyptians associated the deities Hathor, her son Ihy, Bes, Isis, and Osiris with music. Egyptians honored the goddess Hathor and her son Ihy at her temple in Dendera as the deity of the sistrum and the *menat*, rattles played primarily by women during worship of the gods. Hathor's temple in Dendera has a roof supported by columns shaped like sistra. One of the sanctuaries in the temple is known as the "shrine of the sistrum." In the crypts below the temple there are relief sculptures of sistra that were specially decorated and part of the temple's treasure. Hathor's son, Ihy, also was depicted in the Dendera temple playing the sistrum.

**BES.** The god Bes has associations with music in the temple and in the home. In the temple of Philae in southern Egypt, relief sculptures of Bes depict him playing the harp, playing the frame drum, and dancing in honor of Hathor. In the home Bes was associated with childbirth. The combination of the two areas—music and childbirth—explains why the goddesses who act as midwives in the story found in *Papyrus Westcar* disguised themselves as musicians. Furthermore some musicians in New Kingdom paintings bear a tattoo of the god Bes.

**ISIS AND OSIRIS.** Isis and Osiris had no real connection with music according to Egyptian traditions. Yet Greek and Roman traditions about Egypt closely associated them with Egyptian music. By the time that Greek philosophers and historians like Plato (427–347 B.C.E.) took an interest in Egyptian music, Isis and Hathor had merged in the minds of many people. Thus as the religion of Isis and Osiris spread across the Mediterranean Sea, Isis took with her some of Hathor's associations with music, along with the reputation given to her by Plato—that she had established all the forms of Egyptian music. In Apuleius' Latin novel *Metamorphoses*, written in the second century C.E., Isis transforms the hero Lucius from an ass or donkey back into a man with the use of a sistrum. The Greek writer Plutarch (45–125 C.E.) recorded that Osiris ruled the world by the power of his reason and his music. In reality, the Egyptians themselves called Osiris the Lord of Silence and forbade music during his worship except during one joyous ceremony called the Raising of the Djed Pillar. Plutarch also preserved the tradition that the trumpet could not be played at Osiris' temple at Busiris because its sound reminded the god of his evil brother, Seth, sometimes represented as an unidentified animal who could make a similar sound.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**APULEIUS OF MADAURUS: A ROMAN VIEW OF EGYPTIAN MUSIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Egyptians themselves did not write about music. Many Greek and Roman writers, however, commented on Egyptian music, including the Roman novelist, Apuleius of Madaurus. In his novel *Metamorphoses*, written in Latin in the second century C.E., the hero Lucius is magically transformed into an ass, then magically returned to his original form through worship of the Egyptian goddess, Isis. The goddess appears to him and promises her aid in transforming him back to human form. Music and musical instruments play a role both in the worship of Isis and in the transformation. In this passage Lucius hears the answer to his prayers to Isis.

When I had thus poured out my prayers, adding pitiable wailings, sleep again spread over my wilting spirit and overpowered me on that same sandy bed. I had scarcely settled down when lo! from the middle of the sea a face divine arose, showing above the waves a countenance which even gods must admire; and then gradually the radiant image of the whole body, when the brine had been shaken off, seemed to stand before me. I will try to communicate to you her wonderful appearance ...

First, her abundant, long hair, gently curled over her divine neck or loosely spread, streamed down softly ... The things she carried were of quite varied kind. For in her right hand she bore a bronze rattle in which a few rods in the middle, thrust across a thin sheet of metal that was curved like a belt, emitted a tinkling sound when the arm made three quivering jolts. From the left hand there hung a golden vessel ... Such was the great goddess who, breathing the blessed fragrance of Arabia, deigned to address me with divine voice.

"Lo, I am with you, Lucius, moved by your prayers, I who am the mother of the universe, the mistress of all the elements, the first off-spring of time, the highest of deities, the queen of the dead, foremost of heavenly beings. ...

"I am here taking pity on your ills; I am here to give aide and solace. Cease then from tears and wailings, set aside your sadness; there is now dawning for you, through my providence, the day of salvation. For this reason pay careful heed to these commands of mine. The day which will follow the coming night has been dedicated to me by eternal religious sanction. Then, when the storms of winter have been calmed, and the wild waves of the sea have been stilled, my priests are wont to vow a new barque to the now navigable sea and offer it as first-fruits of a new year's navigation. You should

await that sacred rite with a mind neither anxious nor profane.

"For at my suggestion a priest in the very midst of the moving procession will carry a crown of roses attached to the sistrum in his right hand. Without delay, therefore, push through the crowds and eagerly join the procession relying on my favour; then get close to the priest and gently, as if you meant to kiss his hand, pluck off the roses with your mouth and forthwith cast off the hide of that vile beast that has long since been hateful to me. ... You shall live indeed a happy man, you shall live full of glory in my protection. ..."

Thus did the revered oracle come to an end, and the unvanquished deity withdrew into her own being.

While these amusing delights of the people were appearing all over the place, the procession proper of the Saviour Goddess was on its way ... Then came the charming music of many instruments, and the sound of pipe and flute in the sweetest melodies. They were followed by a delightful choir of the most select youths, radiant in snow-white festal tunics; they repeated a captivating song which a skilled poet had written for music with the aid of the Goddesses of Song, and the theme of this from time to time contained musical preludes to the solemn vows to come. There came also flautists dedicated to great Sarapis, who repeated through a reed, held sideways towards the right ear, a tune traditional to the temple and its deity; and there were many shouting out, "Keep the way clear for the holy procession!"

And behold! here come to me the promised blessings of the most helpful goddess and a priest approaches bringing with him my destiny and my very salvation. He was equipped as the divine promise had foretold, carrying in his right hand a sistrum intended for the goddess, and a crown for me—and assuredly the crown was most fitting, since after enduring so many and so great toils and passing through so many dangers, by the providence of the mighty goddess I was now overcoming Fortune that had buffeted me so cruelly. ...

First my scruffy bristles fell off, then my rough hide became thin and the fat belly subsided, while the soles of my feet now ended in toes instead of hoofs and the hands were no longer feet, doing their work now in my upright posture. My lofty neck contracted, my mouth and head became round; my huge ears regained their former slenderness and my rock-like molars returned to human scale; and my tail, my chief torment of old, was non-existent!

**SOURCE:** "Apuleius of Madaurus," in *The Isis Book (Metamorphoses, Book XI)*. Trans. J. Gwyn Griffiths (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1975): 73, 75, 77, 81, and 85.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE HYMN TO THE ATEN**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Hymn to the Aten is attributed to King Akhenaten. In this hymn Aten receives credit for all creation, and this extract specifically includes music as part of Aten's ritual.

**SOURCE:** "Akhenaten," in *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt*. Trans. Lisa Manniche (London: British Museum Press, 1991): 93.

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SEE ALSO *Dance: Cult Dances; Religion: Myth of Osiris*

**MUSIC DURING THE REIGNS OF AKHENATEN AND NEFERTITI**

**RICH MUSICAL DOCUMENTATION.** The reigns of Akhenaten and Nefertiti spanned only seventeen years from 1352 to 1336 B.C.E. Yet Akhenaten's artists decorated the palace, tombs, and temples with many scenes of music making. This brief period witnessed a dramatic change in Egyptian religion. Akhenaten abandoned the worship of Amun, the King of the Gods, and substituted the god Aten, the physical disk of the sun. He closed Amun's temples and moved the royal court from homes in Thebes and Memphis to a new city at the site of Tell el Amarna. Thus this period is called the Amarna Period and includes the reign

of Tutankhamun, who restored the religion of Amun and returned the royal court to Thebes. The richness and diversity of the scenes of music-making demonstrate some key trends in music during this time. Many scenes show Akhenaten's six daughters playing the sistrum and menat—two sacred rattles used in worship—suggesting that the royal daughters had a prominent role in the musical life of Aten's cult. Also, the presence of foreign musicians at court in drawings demonstrates the cosmopolitan nature of Akhenaten's reign. The foreign musicians may have accompanied foreign wives to court, though the evidence that Nefertiti, his primary wife, was a foreigner is not conclusive.

**MUSIC AT THE PALACE WOMEN'S QUARTERS.** A scene from a tomb in Amarna representing the women's quarters at the palace of Akhenaten and Nefertiti at Amarna includes many musical instruments. The scene shows six different rooms. In one room, musicians manning a harp, lyre, and lute play for a woman who is singing and perhaps dancing. In a second room, a woman dressed in foreign clothing dances to a harp player and another instrumentalist whose image is too damaged to interpret. Four other rooms appear to be for instrument storage. Included in them are lutes, lyres, and the giant harp imported from Mesopotamia in this time period. Akhenaten's many wives and daughters clearly spent some of their time at home playing music. Notably the instruments shown in their domestic quarters are not the same instruments that they played in religious settings. In the temples they played mostly the sistrum, an instrument not depicted in this private, domestic scene.

**SISTRUM PLAYING IN THE AMARNA PERIOD.** During the Amarna Period the royal daughters and the queen played the sistrum for the Aten rather than Hathor. Though Hathor had been the main deity associated with sistrum playing in traditional Egyptian religion, her worship was not practiced during the Amarna Period. Thus the two sistra found in the tomb of Tutankhamun and the sistrum depicted on a block from an Amarna building omit the normal decoration with Hathor's head. Instead the sistra from this period have simple handles shaped like papyrus plants. The rattle disks themselves are housed on snake-shaped rods. Perhaps the sound of the sistrum was associated with the cobra who protects the royal family.

**CLAPPERS.** Included among the treasures buried with Tutankhamun were a pair of ivory clappers. Amarna artists depicted men playing clappers during



Two unnamed princesses playing sistrum. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 35.2000, GIFT OF THE EGYPT EXPLORATION FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

processions. Yet the clappers found in Tutankhamun's tomb were inscribed with the names of women: Queen Tiye, Akhenaten's mother, and Merytaten, his eldest daughter. These instruments were carved to end in human hands recalling through their shape the arms and hands that Amarna artists gave to the sun disk.

**AMARNA PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS.** Amarna professional musicians included native Egyptian women and men as well as foreign men. The foreign women playing instruments in the women's quarters of the palace show them playing privately for themselves. Many representations of foreign musicians are damaged, however. Since clothing worn especially by Syrian male and female musicians was so similar, it may be that some scenes that do not preserve the head have been misinterpreted as men rather than women. At present it is not possible to know for certain.

**FEMALE MUSICIANS.** In the Amarna Period, including Tutankhamun's reign (1352–1322 B.C.E.), female musicians played in the same combination of

instruments often found earlier in the Eighteenth Dynasty (from 1539–1352 B.C.E.). The biggest difference is that the strings are sometimes doubled in number during the Amarna Period. Thus while earlier groups consisted of a harp, a lyre, a lute, and an oboe, the Amarna ensembles have two harps, two lutes, and two lyres and sometimes omit the oboe altogether. The detailed reliefs also show a waisted lute (narrowing in the middle of each side) that anticipates the shape of the modern guitar.

**MALE MUSICIANS IN THE AMARNA PERIOD.** Amarna artists depicted male musicians only during the first four years of Akhenaten's reign in buildings at Karnak. Neither the tombs nor temples of Amarna itself depict male musicians. At Karnak the male musicians wear blindfolds while they play. Their heads are shaved and they wear both short kilts and the longer, calf-length kilt. These characteristics connect them with the priesthood in other time periods, though officially Akhenaten himself was the only priest of the Aten. Male musicians at Akhenaten's Karnak temples



Pair of clappers in the form of human hands. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 49.58.1-2, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

played the harp, lute, and lyre. Usually these instruments were only played by women in other contexts. In fact the harp, lute, lyre, and oboe ensemble was the typical female band that played at earlier Eighteenth-dynasty banquets. This combination of instruments, lacking only the oboe, reflects a general Amarna Period tendency to break down barriers between the sexes. Queen Nefertiti, for example, took on typically male activities such as ceremonially smiting Egypt's enemies at the temple in Karnak. The other male ensemble during this period is composed of a large group of men—up to seventeen—chanting and clapping to the rhythm of a barrel-shaped drum. This drum was primarily a military instrument in other time periods. These scenes also occur only at Karnak during Akhenaten's reign.

**FOREIGN MUSICIANS DURING THE AMARNA PERIOD.** Male foreign musicians who played in Akhenaten's temples in Karnak are identified by their unusual clothing and instruments. They wore conical hats and long kilts with three flounces. They also wore blindfolds. They played both the giant lyre and the hand-held lyre. Two musicians played the giant lyre at the same time. This lyre was taller than the musicians. They each stood on one side of it and seem from the relief sculptures to have played at the same time. There were more strings on a giant lyre than on the smaller, hand-held lyre. These additional strings suggest either that the giant lyre had a greater range of notes than a hand-held lyre or that the two musicians played strings tuned to the same note simultaneously. If both played the same note, this would increase the volume of the

sound. These musicians and their instrument were unique to the Karnak temples of the Amarna period. Even the tombs of this period did not depict the giant lyre.

**MUSIC IN THE CULT OF THE ATEN.** The cult of the Aten, Akhenaten's new religion, included music in the palace that honored the king as the earthly embodiment of the god. In the "Great Hymn to the Aten" the author made a specific connection between offering food to the Aten and music. Food offerings were the god's meal. The god consumed the spirit of the food while priests or even the royal family acting as priests consumed the physical food. While everyone ate, music played. The relief sculptures from the temples at Karnak suggest that lyres and even lutes were included in these offering ceremonies in addition to the more traditional sistra played throughout Egyptian history during ritual chanting.

#### SOURCES

Lisa Manniche, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1991).

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## THE BLIND SOLO HARPIST AND HIS SONG

**MUSICAL GENRE AND ARTISTIC CONVENTION.** As early as 1768 when James Bruce discovered the tomb of Ramesses III, Westerners have been aware of the idea of the blind harpist in Egyptian art. Bruce discovered two images of a blind harpist who sang about death in the tomb. Bruce had discovered what proved to be a very common theme in Egyptian art. At least 47 tombs in the Theban necropolis depict blind harp players. This motif decorated tombs of nobles and royalty. The blind harpist entertained at banquets but sang of death and life after death. It was only in the mid-twentieth century that M. Lichtheim conducted a full study of the blind harpists' songs. The songs reveal the history of Egyptian attitudes toward death and the afterlife, although the convention of the blind or blindfolded harpist remains an intriguing mystery.

**EARLIEST BLIND HARPISTS' SONGS.** The blind harpists' songs were carved on tomb walls and on stelae in the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. Their lyrics discuss the nature of death and the afterlife but are not necessarily part of the funeral ritual. Because their purpose was contemplative rather than ritual words to effect the transformation from this world to the next, the authors of these lyrics contem-

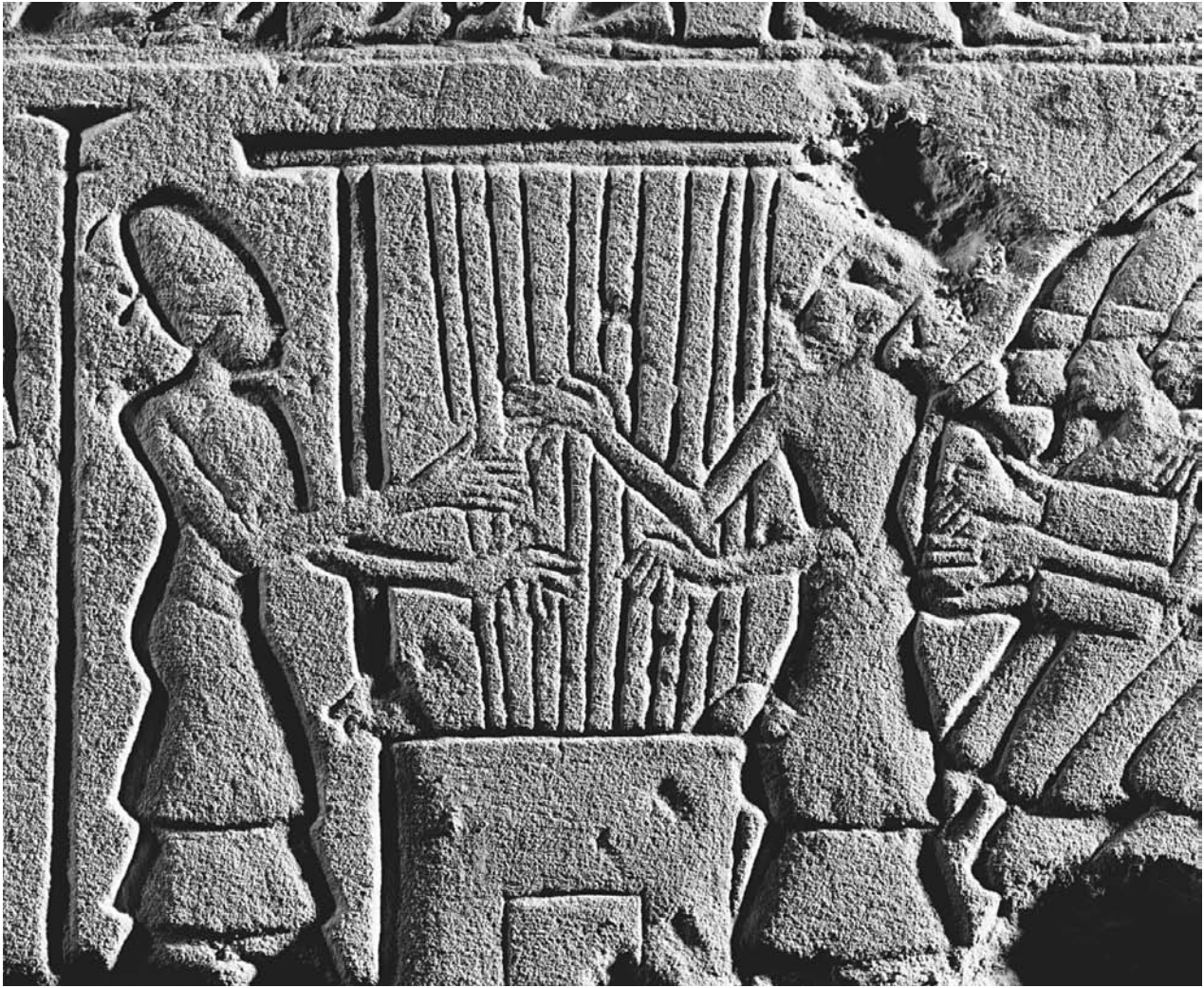


Relief with female musicians. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 68.150.1, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

plated death on a broader level. The earliest blind harpists' songs reassure the deceased that the tomb is a joyful place and that the dead are happy. Such is the point made by the blind harpist Neferhotep, son of Henu, on the stele of Iki, now in the Leiden Museum. The blind harpist Tjeniaa gave an even more elaborate description of the joys of the tomb on a stela carved for Nebankh, now in the Cairo Museum. Tjeniaa assured Nebankh that his tomb itself was well-built and eternal, that it would always be filled with food for his spirit, and that his ka-soul would always be comfortable there. It is clear that this sort of song fits well with the other inscriptions associated with Egyptian tombs. The positive words uttered or sung about the deceased's future after death were part of the ritual that assured the word's truth.

**THE SONG FROM THE TOMB OF KING INTEF.** There are two copies of a blind harpist's song that the scribe attributed to a certain King Intef. One copy is part of *Papyrus Harris 500* in the British Museum. A scribe copied the song on this papyrus during the Ramesside Period (1292–1075 B.C.E.). The second copy was made slightly earlier. It is carved in the tomb of Paatenemheb, an official who died at the beginning of the Amarna Period (1352–1336 B.C.E.). The best-

known kings named Intef lived at least 650 years before Paatenemheb was buried. They include Intef I (2075–2065 B.C.E.), Intef II (2065–2016 B.C.E.), and Intef III (2016–2008 B.C.E.) of the Eleventh Dynasty. A less-well known king, Intef V (after 1630 B.C.E.), might also have been the author. Nevertheless, aside from the Amarna text and Ramesside papyrus, there are no copies of the song from the period when a king named Intef ruled. Nevertheless, the language of the copies is classical Middle Egyptian, the dialect spoken during the earlier period. Thus M. Lichtheim believes that the true time of composition must have been in the Middle Kingdom. The song suggests that not all the assurances about the joys of the afterlife can be trusted. The author suggests that no one on earth knows for sure what will happen in the land of the dead, and thus it is important to enjoy life here. He urges everyone to dress well, wear soothing oils, and have fun. Death is inevitable, he says, but that is no reason not to enjoy life. The answer to this critical approach is found in a New Kingdom tomb of a priest named Neferhotep who was buried in Thebes. Neferhotep claims that in spite of the "old songs" which urge that life on earth must be enjoyed to the hilt, the land of the dead holds even more joys. It is fascinating to know that among Egyptians



Musicians from Egypt and abroad. Relief from the Akhenaten temple project in Karnak, 1350 B.C.E. New Kingdom. ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE NY.

there was room for disagreement and doubt about basic beliefs.

**THE BLIND SOLO HARPIST.** Representations of the blind solo harpist in the Ramesside Period perhaps developed from Eighteenth-dynasty tomb representations of musical ensembles at banquets. The characteristics of the male blind harpists found in these tombs resemble the blind solo harpists found in Ramesside tombs. Egyptian artists represented the blind solo harpist as wealthy. As a fat man he was interpreted as well fed and thus had access to greater resources than the average person. He was also well dressed in a linen garment with a shawl. The blind solo harpist was also bald, a characteristic that associated him with priests who shaved their heads to achieve ritual purity. He was often, though not always, represented with impaired vi-

sion, a fact that led to his usual designation by Egyptologists as blind. However, L. Manniche estimates that only one-quarter of the known representations of the blind solo harpist were shown with unusual eyes. These unusual eyes are generally interpreted as blindness or visual impairment. Blindness can be represented in one of four ways. First, a normal eye can be represented without an iris. Second, the eye could be shown as a slit with an iris. Third, the slit-shaped eye could have no iris. Fourth, only the upper curve of the eye can be shown, without any further representation of the eye. Manniche, however, observes that in cases where the iris appears to be omitted in the carving, it might have been painted in the original state. Moreover, even the slit eyes might only represent closed eyes. Thus it is not altogether certain that the blind solo harpist was represented as blind.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HARPIST SONGS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The earlier examples of the harpists' song stress the good to come in the afterlife. These two examples of harpists' songs were carved in the Middle Kingdom.

*Song of Neferhotep*

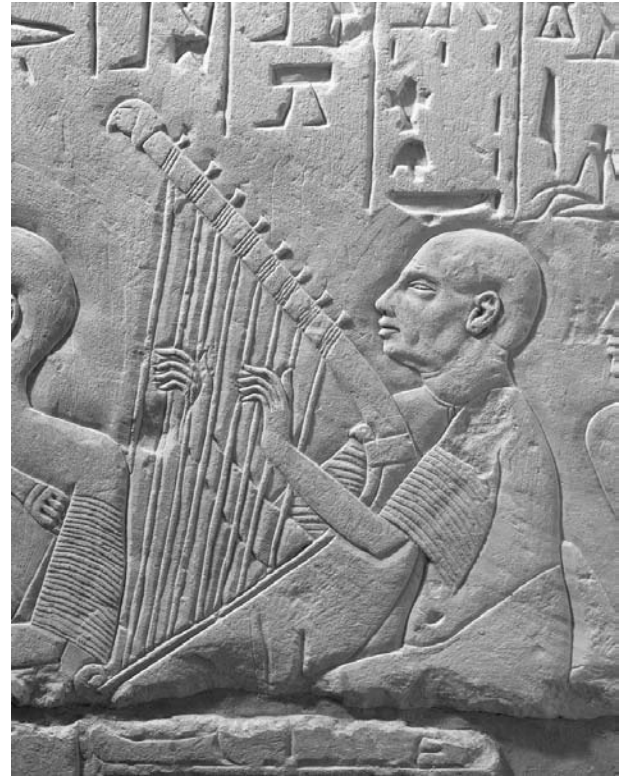
This is the song:  
O Tomb, you were built for festivity,  
You were founded for happiness!  
The singer Neferhotep, born of Henu.

*Song of Tjeniaa for Nebankh*

The singer Tjeniaa says:  
How firm you are in your seat of eternity,  
Your monument of everlastingness!  
It is filled with offerings of food,  
It contains every good thing.  
Your ka is with you,  
It does not leave you,  
O Royal Seal-bearer, Great Steward, Nebankh!  
Yours is the sweet breath of the northwind!  
So says his singer who keeps his name alive,  
The honorable singer Tjeniaa, whom he loved,  
Who sings to his ka every day.

**SOURCE:** "Song of Neferhotep" and "Song of Tjeniaa for Nebankh," in *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*. Vol. 1 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973): 194.

**SYMBOLIC BLINDNESS.** Because there is some doubt about whether so-called blind solo harpists were truly blind, L. Manniche has suggested that many harpists were represented with symbolic blindness. She observes that large numbers of musicians represented at the palace in Amarna were wearing blindfolds when they played. She describes this condition as temporary lack of sight. One of her strongest arguments concerns the tomb of Raia, a musician who lived in the Rameside Period. When represented in his tomb playing the harp for the god, Raia's visible eye was depicted as only a slit. In his other representations, his eye appears to be normal. Perhaps, Manniche argues, his blindness was symbolic, only present when he sat playing for the god.



Blind harpist, detail of relief. Nineteenth Dynasty, New Kingdom. © ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY.

**DOUBTS AND PUZZLES.** The tomb of Raia represents a puzzle about the harpist's blindness. The harpist is represented with a slit eye while he plays, but a normal eye in other parts of the tomb. If he was truly blind in life, perhaps Raia's representations with normal eyes represented a wish for total health in the next world. On the other hand, perhaps Raia was not blind at all nor even intended to be represented as blind while playing his harp before the god. Perhaps all of the so-called blind harpists are only closing their eyes with emotion while they sing. A look at the so-called blind harpist reveals both ancient Egyptian doubts about the next life and a puzzle about artistic representation. The songs the harpists sing both affirm that the next life is a happy one and offer doubts that there is any other happiness but life on earth. The eyes of the harpist, represented in a variety of ways, either show the harpist as blind or as an emotion-filled singer, closing his eyes in the grip of his feelings while chanting for the god.

**SOURCES**

Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE SONG FROM THE TOMB OF KING INTEF**

**INTRODUCTION:** This song is preserved in two New Kingdom documents. It is known from a tomb from early in the reign of Amenhotep IV, later called Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.). It is also known from a Ramesside (1292–1075 B.C.E.) papyrus called *Papyrus Harris 500*, now in the British Museum. The text, however, states that it was written in the reign of King Intef who would have lived in the Middle Kingdom, perhaps 800 to 1,000 years earlier. The language of the text is consistent with this claim. This song urges people to enjoy life on earth since it is not certain what will follow.

Song which is in the tomb of King Intef, the justified, in front of the singer with the harp.  
He is happy, this good prince!  
Death is a kindly fate.  
A generation passes,  
Another stays,  
Since the time of the ancestors.  
The gods who were before rest in their tombs,  
Blessed nobles too are buried in their tombs.  
(Yet) those who built tombs,  
Their places are gone,  
What has become of them?  
I have heard the words of Imhotep and Hardedef,  
Whose sayings are recited whole.  
What of their places?

Their walls have crumbled,  
Their places are gone,  
As though they had never been!  
None comes from there,  
To tell of their state,  
To tell of their needs,  
To calm our hearts,  
Until we go where they have gone!  
Hence rejoice in your heart!  
Forgetfulness profits you,  
Follow your heart as long as you live!  
Put myrrh on your head,  
Dress in fine linen,  
Anoint yourself with oils fit for a god.  
Heap up your joys,  
Let your heart not sink!  
Follow your heart and your happiness,  
Do your things on earth as your heart commands!  
When there comes to you that day of mourning,  
The Weary-hearted hears not their mourning,  
Wailing saves no man from the pit!  
Make holiday,  
Do not weary of it!  
Lo, none is allowed to take his goods with him,  
Lo, none who departs comes back again!

**SOURCE:** "Songs and Hymns," in *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*. Vol. 1 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973): 196–197.

Lisa Manniche, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1991).

**EROTIC MUSIC**

**NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE.** In artistic renderings of erotic scenes, the Egyptians placed musical instruments such as the lute, oboe, and lyre near to couples engaged in sexual intercourse. In some cases it appears that the female musician holds her instrument in one hand during intercourse. At the natural level, the connection between music and physical love may represent a more universal belief in the power of music to inspire love-making, but there is also a spiritual significance to the inclusion of instruments in erotic drawings. Egyptians incorporated physical love into the religion of rebirth into the next world, and to that end included numerous erotic symbols in their tomb decorations. Music's role in aiding this sacred act, then, en-

dows it with powerful meaning and importance. The most famous examples are found in the *Turin Erotic Papyrus*, a series of drawings representing couples in various sexual positions. Many scholars who have remarked on these scenes believe they represent a brothel. A famous example of the erotic power of harp music is found in the tomb of Mereruka, the prime minister of King Teti (2350–2338 B.C.E.). His large tomb at Saqqara contains a relief sculpture of him sitting on his bed with his wife Watetkhethor, who plays the harp while Mereruka reclines holding a fly whisk, the mark of a high official. Other, nearby scenes show the couple preparing for bed with special ointments and new hairstyles. The scene's erotic force, the Egyptians believed, ensured fertility and rebirth into the next world, and the harp music functioned as a critical component of the ritual.

**SOURCES**

Lisa Manniche, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1991).

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Music*

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### AMENEMHAB MAHU

fl. during the reign of Amenhotep III (1390–1352 B.C.E.)

*Chief of Singers of Amun*  
*Singer of the Noble Harp of Amun*

**EARLY BELIEVER IN SUN RELIGION.** As is true with most ancient Egyptian individuals, little is known of Amenemhab's personal life. He lived during the reign of Amenhotep III, the father of Akhenaten. Akhenaten was the first king to radically alter Egyptian religion by proclaiming that only the sun should be worshipped as the god Aten. Amenemhab anticipated Akhenaten's beliefs with the song he sang about the sun-god Re. Amenemhab must have been an important member of Amenhotep III's court. He traveled with the king to foreign countries, according to his inscription. Perhaps he knew the young Akhenaten and even influenced the prince's beliefs. In a stela, Amenemhab speaks of the sun as the creator god, an idea that was part of Akhenaten's religion. Amenemhab must have been an important individual, but little is known about the details of his life.

#### SOURCES

Charles Kuentz, "Une Stèle d'un chef de chanteurs," in *Revue d'études égyptologiques dédiées à la mémoire de Jean-François Champollion* (Paris: E. Champion, 1922): 601–610.

Lisa Manniche, *Music and Musicians in a Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1991).

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### ITI

fl. during Dynasty 5 (2500–2350 B.C.E.)

*Singer*

**FIRST KNOWN PROFESSIONAL SINGER.** Iti is the earliest known professional singer whose name is preserved from ancient Egypt. Her name appears along with her accompanist, Hekenu, a harpist, represented in a relief sculpture on the false door of the tomb of the judge and priest, Nikawre, and his wife, Ihat, at Saqqara. In the relief, Iti sits on the ground facing Hekenu. Her right hand makes a gesture toward the harpist. Her left hand

is raised to her ear, a common way for Egyptian artists to represent singers. In fact this hand-to-ear gesture is often used by many Egyptian singers today. Iti wears the typical Old Kingdom sheath dress that was worn by all classes of women in this period. Her hair is cropped short and she is not wearing a wig as would the tomb owner's wife. A hieroglyphic caption gives her name and no other information. Egyptians considered including a person's name in a tomb to be an honor, especially if the person was not a family member. If Iti had been a family member, her relationship would have been included. Thus Egyptologists believe that she was a professional singer who was honored with a portrait in the tomb, rather than a member of Nikawre's family. In spite of her prominence, almost nothing else is known about her.

#### SOURCES

Lisa Manniche, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1991).

Emily Teeter, "Female Musicians in Pharaonic Egypt," in *Rediscovering the Muses in Women's Musical Traditions*. Ed. Kimberly Marshall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

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### NEFERHOTEP, SON OF HENU

fl. during the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.)

*Singer*  
*Harpist*

**HARPIST AND SINGER.** Neferhotep, son of Henu, was one of the earliest known singer/harpists from ancient Egypt. His portrait and his song were included on the stela of a man named Iki. On the stela, Iki is seated before an offering table while his wife stands behind him. Neferhotep plays on the other side of the table. He kneels next to his harp as he plays. He is portrayed with the rolls of fat Egyptian artists depicted in portraits of wealthy people. He also wears his hair very closely cropped. His eyes are slits, suggesting either that he is blind or that his eyes are squeezed closed with emotion. Neferhotep's song is recorded in four short columns of hieroglyphs carved in front of him. In the song Neferhotep praises life in the tomb after death.

#### SOURCES

Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

Lisa Manniche, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1991).

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Music*

Akhenaten, *Hymn to the Aten* (c. 1352 B.C.E.)—This hymn describes the use of music in religious ritual.

Anonymous, *The Story of Sinuhe* (c. Twelfth Dynasty, 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—Egypt’s national epic includes a scene of musical welcome when Sinuhe returns from his journey to the Levant.

Anonymous, *Songs from Paberi’s Tomb* (c. early Eighteenth Dynasty, 1539–1425 B.C.E.)—A series of agricultural work songs recorded in this tomb.

Anonymous, *Song from the Tomb of King Intef* (c. early Eleventh Dynasty (?), 2075–2008 B.C.E.)—Song sung

to harp accompaniment that stresses enjoying this life since the next life is uncertain.

Anonymous, *Story of Two Brothers* (c. Ramesside Period, 1292–1075 B.C.E.)—This story contains the episode “Bata Mutilates Himself,” which explains in detail the events recounted in the lyrics to the “Shepherd’s Song.”

Apuleius (Lucius [?] Apuleius), *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass* (c. 155 C.E.)—This novel, the only Roman one that has survived intact, includes the famous story describing an Egyptian religious procession with music.

Neferhotep, *Song of Neferhotep for Iki* (c. Twelfth Dynasty, 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—Song sung to harp accompaniment that stresses the joys of the afterlife.

Tjeniaa, *Song of Tjeniaa for Nebankh* (c. Twelfth Dynasty, 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—Song sung to harp accompaniment that stresses the joys of the afterlife.

chapter six

# PHILOSOPHY

*Edward Bleiberg*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	182	Hordjedef . . . . .	201
OVERVIEW . . . . .	184	Merykare . . . . .	202
TOPICS		DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	202
Maat . . . . .	185	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY	
Cosmogony: The Origin of the World . . . . .	187	DOCUMENTS	
Teaching Philosophy . . . . .	190	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
Secret Knowledge . . . . .	193	<i>The Meaning of Maat</i> (excerpt from the	
Astrology . . . . .	198	<i>Eloquent Peasant</i> concerning truth and	
Alchemy . . . . .	199	justice) . . . . .	193
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		Egyptian Magic . . . . .	194
Ankhsheshonqi . . . . .	201	Hermes Trismegistus . . . . .	195
Any . . . . .	201	Herodotus: Prime Source . . . . .	197

## IMPORTANT EVENTS in Philosophy

All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).

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| <p>2625–2585 King Sneferu is the first Egyptian king to call himself “Possessor of Maat,” stressing his role in maintaining justice in the world.</p> <p>2500–2350 The first Egyptian tomb biographies in the Fifth Dynasty state that the deceased gave charity to the unfortunate in the name of <i>maat</i> (“right conduct”).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The first allusions to Egyptian ideas about the creation of the world are contained in the <i>Pyramid Texts</i>, the royal funeral ritual.</p> <p>1938–1759 In the Twelfth Dynasty a series of teachings describe maat. Most of these teachings are attributed to famous men of the past such as the Fifth-dynasty prime minister, Ptahhotep.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The <i>Coffin Texts</i>—spells found on Middle Kingdom coffins—use maat to ensure admission to the afterlife. They also make the connection between the creation of humans and the god’s tears.</p> <p>1919–1875 <i>The Teachings of Amenemhet I</i> are composed during the reign of his son Senwosret I. Scholars acknowledge this text as the earliest royal philosophical teaching, and is notable for its cynicism regarding the loyalty of others.</p> <p>1539–1075 In the New Kingdom, kings regularly perform the ritual of presenting maat to the gods as a way of ensuring justice in the world.</p> | <p>1478–1458 Hatshepsut takes the throne name Maat-ka-re, which emphasizes that she is the embodiment of the idea “The soul of the sun god Re is Justice.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Hatshepsut celebrates her coronation in the Temple of Maat, the first time the temple is used for this purpose.</p> <p>1390–1352 King Amenhotep III chooses a throne name, Neb-maat-Re, that stresses that he is “The Possessor of the Justice of Re.”</p> <p>1352–1336 Akhenaten and Nefertiti use the presentation of <i>maat</i> (“right conduct”) to their god Aten as the primary ritual.</p> <p>1332–1322 The first known text of the <i>Book of the Heavenly Cow</i> describes the ideal world before death entered it. This text comes from the tomb of Tutankhamun.</p> <p>1319–1292 King Horemheb creates Egypt’s first known written law code that sanctions punishment in the name of maat.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Egyptian god Thoth is first called the “one who knows mysteries,” establishing the Egyptian basis for the Greek idea that Thoth presided over secret wisdom.</p> <p>1290–1279 King Sety I takes the throne name Men-maat-Re, which means “The Justice of Re is firm.”</p> <p>1126–1108 A picture of jackals towing the god’s boat is substituted for the normal phonetic</p> |
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writing of the verb “to tow” in Ramesses’ IX tomb. Such intellectual puzzles may have spawned the Greek idea that all hieroglyphs are symbolic rather than phonetic, leading to the idea that hieroglyphs express only philosophical concepts.

1075–945 Amulets made in the Twenty-first Dynasty are the first evidence that the stars could effect activities on earth and are perhaps a reflection of early astrology.

874–830 Armbands from the tomb of Osorkon II depict the stars as protectors of the king, perhaps an early form of astrology.

760–525 The God’s Wife of Amun, the chief priestess, takes responsibility for presenting maat to the gods in the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties.

716–702 The only copy of the *Memphite Theology* that describes how Ptah created the world from words is carved in stone during the reign of King Shabaka.

525–404 The Greek historian Herodotus begins the tradition of describing the Egyptians in Book Two of his collection, *The Histories*. Greek interpretations of Egyptian society will become the basis for Western understanding until 1822 when Champollion deciphers hieroglyphs.

An Egyptian text first calls the god Thoth “very, very, very great” anticipating the Greek name for him “Trismegistus” meaning “thrice great.” The Greeks will consider Hermes Trismegistus to be the source of Egyptian philosophy.

381–362 A shrine from the reign of Nectanebo I contains an inscription suggesting the stars can effect wind and water and cause illness and sudden death. This is early evidence for Egyptian belief in astrology.

305–30 The Egyptians compose and carve on the walls of temples their first connected accounts of the creation of the world.

Egyptian scribes invent intellectual puzzles in hieroglyphs such as writing an entire hymn with only the crocodile sign. Such puzzles will mislead the Greeks into believing that hieroglyphs are completely symbolic rather than phonetic and ultimately convinced the Greeks that hieroglyphs only could express philosophical ideas.

Egyptian astrologers are active at the royal court, suggesting to the Greeks that astrology was an ancient Egyptian belief.

The Babylonian zodiac brought to Egypt at this time becomes a part of astrology.

## OVERVIEW *of Philosophy*

**CATEGORIES.** Philosophy was originally a Greek category of knowledge. It sought the answers to questions concerning the nature of knowledge itself (metaphysics), the core of goodness (ethics), and the essence of beauty (aesthetics). Greek philosophers also raised questions about politics and methods of persuasion (rhetoric). Only some of these questions have relevance to Egyptian categories of thought. Though the Greeks credited the Egyptians with the beginnings of philosophy, the Greeks often interpreted Egyptian data to yield thoughts similar to their own, causing modern scholars to wonder about the true nature of Egyptian philosophy.

**EGYPTIAN CONCERNS.** Egyptian philosophers were intensely concerned with questions of proper conduct and justice. Many Egyptian texts advise the reader on how to act properly. Egyptian philosophers did not discuss the nature of knowledge in itself but they did have opinions on the proper way to teach justice. Egyptian thinkers did not write about the political system, but some pessimistic literature considered the results when there is no legitimate king. A few documents also contain advice for princes who someday would be kings. Methods of persuasion, as in Greek rhetoric, were not an Egyptian concern. It is from these basic ideas that scholars have built a true structure of Egyptian philosophy and have deciphered Egyptian thoughts on certain standard philosophical questions.

**ATTRIBUTES.** The three main attributes that all Egyptian philosophies share are flexibility, pragmatism, and attention to emotion. The Egyptologist Erik Hornung stressed that Egyptian answers to philosophical questions were flexible. He asserted that the Egyptians never offered final and definitive answers to philosophical questions. Rather Egyptian philosophies tended to be pluralistic, offering, for example, several possible explanations for the origins of the world that were all equally true. Hornung believed that the Egyptians knew there was no single answer to a question, hence Egyptian thought avoided stressing one cause to the detriment

of another. Egyptians did not believe in absolutes. Egyptian philosophy is also pragmatic. Egyptian teachings considered concrete life situations without generalizing to abstract laws. The Egyptian notion of *maat* (“justice”) stressed solutions to real-life problems. Abstract thought was not as important as finding a practical solution to a specific problem. The wisdom that older men offered to their children spoke directly to specific situations they expected would occur in the course of any career or life. Finally, Egyptian thought recognized the lure of emotion, but advised against submitting to transitory feelings. It might seem odd to modern Western cultures that the Egyptians believed that the heart was the organ of thought. Yet Egyptian philosophers advised that the silent man who ignored his emotions and who thought before he acted was the ideal. The opposite of the silent man was the heated man, one who immediately submitted to his emotions without giving adequate thought to his actions. Much of Egyptian philosophy counseled against impulsive action without thought.

**RELIGION.** It is difficult to separate Egyptian philosophical ideas from religion. *Maat* stood at the center of all Egyptian life, including both philosophy and religion. *Maat* itself was a goddess and in some periods had a temple. *Maat* was also part of the god’s food, a way of stating that all the gods’ survival depended on *maat*’s existence. Establishing *maat* also was essential to the world’s creation by a god. When the god created order from chaos, the god established *maat*. In the same way, the king maintained *maat* in the world and thus kept chaos from overcoming the Egyptian way of life. Finally, individuals obeyed the king and thus established *maat* in the world. A person’s success in life completely depended on following and creating *maat*. Thus religion, politics, and philosophical concerns were bound in an intricate web of concepts.

**MISUNDERSTANDINGS.** The ancient Greeks were the first people from a Western culture to write about the ancient Egyptians, beginning in the fifth century B.C.E. Greek perceptions of Egypt dominated Western understanding of the culture, especially before J.-F. Champollion deciphered hieroglyphs in 1822 C.E. Because the Egyptian pictorial language was unavailable to Western scholars for hundreds of years, Egyptologists were completely dependent on Greek and later Roman writers to form an opinion of Egyptian culture. Even after modern Egyptology allowed the ancient Egyptians to speak for themselves, Greek notions continued to influence modern perceptions of Egyptian philosophy. Nowhere is this more obvious than in modern approaches to Egyptian thought, science, and spirituality. Many mod-

ern people still credit the Egyptians with secret knowledge, both technical and spiritual. Many believe that the Egyptians perfected astrology and alchemy. These ideas stem directly from ancient Greek notions of Egyptian thought. The popularity and survival of such ideas into the twenty-first century C.E. is a testament to the power of Greek writing and its constant repetition. In fact, some Greek ideas have a basis in certain Egyptian traditions, but the interpretations of those traditions are purely Greek.

## TOPICS *in Philosophy*

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### MAAT

**ORDER.** The Egyptian philosophical view of existence was based on the idea that all existence was either orderly or chaotic. Order was called *maat* while chaos was called *isfet*. Maat encompassed the physical world, political conditions, and ethical conduct. In the physical world maat meant that the sun rose and set in a regular pattern. Maat also meant that the Nile flooded Egypt on a regular schedule and provided fertility to agricultural fields. In politics, maat meant that the true king sat on the throne and ensured order within Egypt. In Egyptian thought, maat depended on correct personal conduct. In fact correct personal conduct ensured loyalty to the king, which, in turn, supported an orderly physical world. For individuals, maat also meant telling the truth, and dealing fairly with others in addition to obedience to authority. Ultimately an individual who supported maat through his actions could enter the afterlife as a reward.

**KING'S ROLE.** The king's primary duty was to maintain maat in the world. If the king behaved correctly, the physical world behaved in a predictable way. This was important due to the Egyptians' dependence on crops and the food and clothing they provided. The king's conduct could affect the regular rising and setting of the sun, necessary for crop growth. The fertility of the soil was the result of the annual Nile flood that deposited rich new silt on Egypt's fields annually. The Egyptians believed that the height of the flood and the subsequent success of the crops depended on the king performing maat. The individual's primary duty was to obey the king. In fact obeying the king allowed him to perform maat, and thus maintain order in the physical world. This world view led to an extremely stable political structure.

**RITUAL.** In the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) kings performed the ritual of presenting maat to other gods as a means of stressing that they had maintained maat in their actions. Maat was personified as a seated goddess who wore a feather in her hair. A depiction of a feather was one way of writing the word "maat" in hieroglyphs. Hatshepsut (1478–1458 B.C.E.) was most likely the first ruler to depict herself presenting a statuette of maat to the gods. Large numbers of representations of the presentation of maat to the gods date to the reign of Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.) when it appeared to be the major ritual act that the king and the queen performed. During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (1292–1075 B.C.E.), temples often displayed relief scenes showing the king offering maat to the gods. The priestess called the God's Wife of Amun performed this function in the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties (760–525 B.C.E.). The ritual served to legitimize kings in the eyes of the ruled. It was a physical expression of the king's obligation to uphold maat in the world.

**ROYAL NAMES.** Many kings took throne names that included maat or epithets, self-descriptions included with a name, that claimed they were possessors of maat. The earliest use of the epithet "possessor of maat" was most likely Sneferu of the Fourth Dynasty (r. 2625–2585 B.C.E.). In the New Kingdom Hatshepsut (1478–1458 B.C.E.) took the throne name Maat-ka-re, "the soul of Re is maat." Amenhotep III (1390–1352 B.C.E.) called himself Neb-maat-re, "Possessor of the maat of Re." Sety I (1290–1279 B.C.E.) took the throne name Men-maat-re, "the maat of Re is firm." All of these names are attempts to associate the king with maat. These kings also presented their own names to the gods as way of cementing the association between the king and maat.

**THE DEITY.** As a deity, Maat was the daughter of the sun god Re. She also constituted Re's eye, making her integral to the god's body. The other gods claimed to "live on Maat," meaning that they ate Maat to sustain themselves. Maat was thus a food offering for all of the gods. The scribal god Thoth was often paired with Maat, showing their close connection. Before the New Kingdom, there was no temple dedicated to the goddess Maat. The first known temple was in Karnak and was in use in Hatshepsut's time. In texts there are references to a temple of Maat in Memphis, Egypt's political capital, and in Deir el-Medina, the workman's village across the river from modern Luxor. Hatshepsut's coronation took place in the temple dedicated to Maat. In the late Twentieth Dynasty there is some evidence that criminal investigations took place at the temple of Maat. There is also some evidence that there were priests of Maat and





Small statuette of the goddess Maat, seated on a shrine.  
 BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.561E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR  
 FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

an overseer of the domain of Maat. The existence of these officials suggests that the temple held land and other resources. There are few examples in art of Maat accepting offerings. This would be the usual Egyptian way of indicating that Maat's cult possessed resources on earth as did other gods.

**LEGAL JUSTICE.** Justice, a tenet of any philosophical system, was also part of the right order that maat guaranteed. The prime minister, whose job included dispensing justice, was a priest of Maat. The law code of King Horemheb (1319–1292 B.C.E.), inscribed on a stele standing in front of the tenth pylon at the Karnak Temple, ordained punishments in the name of Maat. Court decisions also found one party to be “the one who is performing maat,” and therefore the innocent party. Maat also meant protecting the weak. Tomb autobiographies that describe the deceased's life as the pursuit of maat usually claim that he performed acts of charity for the impoverished, including distribution of food, drink, and clothing. Any official was expected to do justice by conforming to maat.

**TEACHING MAAT.** A written definition of maat in Egyptian texts has not survived. Yet surviving texts do describe the ideal life of living through maat in a series of texts scholars call instructions. Instructions exist from the Middle Kingdom (2008–1540 B.C.E.) through the Roman Period (332 B.C.E.–395 C.E.). The earlier texts stress guidelines for correct behavior in specific situations. They could include the proper way to behave on the street, in a public dispute, when appearing before a magistrate, as a houseguest, or as the head of a household. Maat also dictated proper relations with a wife, superiors, friends, and servants. In instructions formulated for princes, political advice also took the form of how to conform to maat. The Egyptians typically concentrated on specific situations rather than formulating broader guidelines.

**ACTIVE PURSUIT.** Though obeying authority was integral to maat, not all forms of maat were passive. The instructions recognize that individuals must pursue maat actively. Otherwise the forces of chaos could overwhelm the world. Chaos, according to the pessimistic literature written following the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.), had temporarily triumphed between the Old and Middle Kingdoms when there was no strong central government. Only with active effort can chaos be contained according to these texts.

**DOUBT.** In the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (1292–1075 B.C.E.) some writers doubted whether humans had any control over maat. In the *Instruction of*

Any, the author linked maat with the god's capricious will. The *Teachings of Amenemope* calls maat the god's burden. Amenemope suggests that the gods give maat without any clear explanation of why some receive it and others do not. Yet even these two authors stress that humans must try to follow maat.

**MAAT AND AFTERLIFE.** If an individual lived according to maat, access to the afterlife was assured. In *Coffin Texts* Spell 816, a ritual for ensuring entry to the next life utilizes the power of maat. Maat also is integral to *Book of the Dead* Chapter 125. In this chapter the deceased describes in detail the actions he took and avoided in order to comply with maat. The illustrations for this chapter include weighing the deceased's heart against the symbol of maat. If the two are in balance, the deceased is able to enter the afterlife. Maat also played a role in uniting the deceased with the sun god Re, another goal for all Egyptians. Many hymns recorded in New Kingdom tombs stress the association of maat and Re. The Egyptians ultimately associated maat with the cemetery itself. It came to be called the "Place of Maat."

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SEE ALSO *Literature: The Literature of Moral Values; Religion: The King*

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## COSMOGONY: THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

**SEP TEPI.** Much of philosophy as well as religion focuses on theories of creation. Egyptians described the world's origin with the phrase, *sep tepi* ("the first time"). This phrase suggests that creation was not a single isolated event. Instead they saw it as an event that was endlessly repeated, though it had had one original enactment. The Egyptologist Erik Hornung suggested that this vision of creation allowed the Egyptians to conceive the world as repeatedly new and that this was a source of their personal creativity.

**ACCOUNTS.** In the early periods of their history, the Egyptians did not write one connected account that described creation. At the end of their history, in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods (332 B.C.E.–395 C.E.),

some accounts were carved on the walls of temples. In the Pharaonic period (3000–332 B.C.E.), the Egyptians left only isolated statements and allusions to a creation myth. Many of these allusions speak of the separation of the earth and sky as the primal event that occurred in *sep tepi*. But the Egyptians had more than one explanation for how the earth came to be. In one version the god Atum used his own seed to create the world. In a second account, the god Ptah used speech to create everything.

**BEFORE CREATION.** The Egyptians conceived of a time before creation. According to allusions in the *Pyramid Texts*, the funeral ritual carved inside late Fifth- and in Sixth-dynasty royal pyramids (2371–2194 B.C.E.), before creation all was a watery darkness. The blend of darkness and water was the essence of the unformed, chaotic state before creation. It was also the opposite of creation, distinguishing the previous times through the lack of the things that now exist. The period before creation was defined by its lack of gods, people, heaven, earth, day, and night. There was neither life nor death. When the *Pyramid Texts* state that even strife did not yet exist, it refers to the on-going mythical battle between the legitimate heir to the throne, Horus, and his evil uncle, Seth.

**EMERGENCE.** Somehow from the watery darkness, a hill of mud emerged. This hill provided a resting place for the creator. The Egyptians based this hill on the reality of the way that the earth emerged from the annual flood. Firm ground separated from the watery mass and created a place where the god could work. Here the god separated into four pairs of divinities including primeval flood, the hidden ones, endlessness, and the undifferentiated ones. The sun then emerged from these beings. The first sunrise signaled the beginning of creation. Many Egyptian symbols refer to this emergence on a hill. The pyramid shape is a model of the hill but also points toward the sun. The lotus blossom that floats on the water comes to symbolize the birth of the sun god. A cow goddess can also emerge from the water with the sun between her horns. The best-known form of this goddess is Hathor. All these symbols were another way for the Egyptians to state that emergence was the beginning of creation.

**CREATOR GODS.** The creator god took numerous forms. It could assume the form of a bird, a human, or a snake. The god could be a *benu*-bird, a heron sometimes associated with the Greek phoenix. This bird's shriek signaled that the sun would hatch from an egg the bird had laid. The bird was also the first living creator to alight on the mound that emerged after the dark



Standing mummiform statuette of Ptah. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 08.480.25, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

water subsided. In human form the creator was Atum, Ptah, Re, Neith, or Khnum. Atum's name means "undifferentiated." There are several versions of how Atum created the world, but all deal with a body fluid he emitted in order to create. He would either spit, cough, or masturbate to produce seed. From Atum's moisture the first sexually differentiated couple, a divine pair called Shu and Tefnut, came into being. They are unique in not being the offspring of a couple. The *Coffin Texts* affirm that Shu was not formed in an egg, like other be-

ings. The first couple created through sexual procreation were Geb and Nut, the son and daughter of Shu and Tefnut. The following generations included the gods Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. This group of nine deities formed the Ennead of the city of Heliopolis. Ptah, also known as Ptah-Tatenen, was the local god of Memphis. Ptah used language to create. First he thought of what the world should be, then said it out loud in order to create it. The text called the Memphite Theology—dating roughly to 716–702 B.C.E., though scholars once thought it had been copied from an Old Kingdom (2625–2170 B.C.E.) text—describes the process. The sun god Re was also a creator. In the *Pyramid Texts*, the sun god creates through planning and speech as did Ptah. However, he adds the concept of magic power to animate his planning and speech. The texts describe Re's relationship with these three powers by saying that they travel in his boat with him. The goddess Neith created the world through seven statements. These statements were later called the seven-fold laugh of the creator god. Neith's connection to creation seems to come from her relationship to a cow goddess called Mehetweret. This cow emerged from the watery darkness with the sun lodged between her horns. The Egyptians also associated this cow with the goddess Hathor. Finally, Neith could be a scarab beetle, another source of creation. Later the Egyptians identified the scarab with Khepri, a form of the morning sun. Neith thus lost her primary connection with creation through the increased importance of Hathor and Khepri in the later periods. Yet it appears that early in Egyptian thought, she was an important figure in creation of the world. Khnum was a ram-headed god worshipped at temples in Esna and in Elephantine, both in Upper (southern) Egypt. As a creator, Khnum worked with his hands to create mankind, the primal egg from which the sun hatched, and the earth itself. He fashioned all of these things on a potter's wheel. In some versions, Ptah performed these same tasks on a potter's wheel after he had planned and spoken creation.

**UNIFIED SYSTEM.** For many years Egyptologists have tried to organize all of this information about creation into a coherent whole. They have suggested that certain traditions were local and believed only at certain temples. They have tried to organize these stories chronologically, seeing some as more primitive than others and proposing that the sophisticated versions evolved from the primitive stories. The Egyptologist Erik Hornung suggested, on the contrary, that the Egyptians saw each of these stories as mutually re-enforcing, adding detail and complexity rather than contradicting each other. No story was dogma that excluded the possibilities of an-

other story. Yet he has identified certain common themes found in all the stories.

**THEMES.** The creator gods all share certain characteristics that are themes of the story. All the creators are self-created and pre-date sexual differentiation. All the creators were what the Egyptians called, *kheper djesej*, “what came to exist by itself.” A hymn to the god Amun suggests a male creator “formed his egg himself.” These creators acted as both father and mother in the process of self-producing. But Hornung stressed that this individual was able to reproduce so that many now exist. The important point is that one became many. The *Coffin Texts* refer to Atum and the time when “he gave birth to Shu and Tefnut in Heliopolis, when he was one and became three.” Diversity, in other words, grows out of a unity. In a New Kingdom hymn, Atum is “the one who begat his begetter, who engendered his mother, who created his own hand.” Here both of the prime characteristics of the creator are in evidence. The creator is an individual who creates the many alone.

**IMAGE.** The Egyptian image that summarizes the story of creation also makes clear that the Egyptians saw creation as a movement from the one to the many. In the Egyptian language, a distinction was made among singular (one), dual (two), and plural (three or more). Thus three represents the many. In the images of the separation of earth and sky, three gods are pictured. The sky goddess Nut hovers above the earth god Geb. Between them, separating earth and sky is Shu, the god of air. Thus, once the primal unity separates, it becomes three, the symbol for many.

**CREATING HUMANS.** In many creation stories, the creator made humans from tears. The initial relationship between divine tears and humans is in the sound of the words that describe them. Tears in Egyptian are *remy*. People in Egyptian are *remetj*. Thus the connection is based on a pun. But Erik Hornung believed the connection is even deeper than the word play. He suggested that humanity sprang from a blurring of the god’s vision. The *Coffin Texts* suggest that “humans belong to the blindness behind” the creator god.

**EARLIEST WORLD.** In the earliest world, according to Egyptian belief, the sun god Re served as king. When Re was king, the sun never set and people had access to the sun at all times. The fact that there was no night meant that there was no death. The Egyptians thought people lost this perfect sun-filled world through the aging process. In the *Book of the Celestial Cow*, the author explains that the youthful freshness of the world eventually faded. The sun god himself grew old. As he aged,



Stela with image of Seth. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 16.580.187, GIFT OF EVANGELINE WILBOUR BLASHFIELD, THEODORA WILBOUR, AND VICTOR WILBOUR HONORING THE WISHES OF THEIR MOTHER, CHARLOTTE BEEBE WILBOUR AS A MEMORIAL TO THEIR FATHER, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the sun god’s power began to fail and he lost control. As control waned, forces of opposition challenged the sun god. Humans devised attacks against Re and thus they were punished. At first Re sent his eye, a ball of fire, to destroy mankind. In the end Re allowed a remnant of people to live. However, Re also retreated from the world riding on the celestial cow and forced people to live in a much less ideal world. For one thing, it was now dark. When humans tried to survive in the dark, they turned against each other. This strife among humans caused the other gods to retreat from the earth. Osiris took charge of the new land of the dead, which was lit during the nighttime hours by the sun. On earth war and violence become part of humanity’s fate. Only in death could people regain the perfect world in the presence of the gods. This early myth of the god Re gave the Egyptians the philosophical idea of renewal. Renewal was only possible through the cycling of the sun. Thus every sunrise represented a new creation and renewal of the earth. Every sunset represented the death of the day. Sunrise was a time for rejoicing. Sunset suggested that though the sun disappeared into the land of the dead, it would



Standing mummiform statuette of Osiris. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 08.480.27, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

return and recreate the world anew the next day. This is similar in many ways to later philosophical ideas of redemption and reconciliation.

**RETURN TO ONE.** The Egyptians feared the possibility that the world would return to one watery darkness. The *Book of the Celestial Cow* details the efforts of man and god to keep the sky from collapsing into the earth. If the sky and earth reunited, the original watery darkness would be restored. Chaos would then rule, and human life would be impossible. Yet the Egyptians believed that eventually the world would end and the watery darkness would return. In the Egyptian end of time, a snake will emerge when the sky collapses into the earth and recreates watery darkness. The snake will return to the chaos where he originated. Though Egyptian expressions of belief in the end of time are rare, they give symmetry to Egyptian beliefs about the beginning. Thus Egyptian ideas of creation falls naturally into a series of cycles. Though creation's "first time" was an important, pristine event, the Egyptians believed that creation would repeat infinitely, making it possible to have an endless cycle of rebirth and death.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Egyptian Myths*

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#### TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

**TYPES OF TEXT.** Egyptologists have identified ancient texts that teach the Egyptian idea of philosophy. These texts divide into more than one ancient literary type. Many of them are instructions, identified in Egyptian with the word *seboyet*. But other texts that discuss philosophy include complaints, prophecies, and testaments. Some scholars refer to these texts as a group as "didactic literature," the literature the Egyptians used to teach philosophy. Many of the texts identified as didactic literature combine more than one literary type within them. *The Eloquent Peasant*, for example, begins as the story of a farmer bringing his crops to market. He encounters a corrupt official who attempts to rob the farmer. The majority of the text is a series of orations on the nature of *maat* ("right conduct"). These orations amount to a treatise on the nature of *maat*. The narrative or frame story enhances the treatise by giving a concrete example of what happens when *maat* is ignored.

Both the frame and the treatise mutually reinforce each other and thus the reader learns more about the nature of maat. Additionally, the orations themselves amount to an example of Egyptian rhetoric.

**AUTHORS.** Teachings are the only Egyptian literary category that regularly names the author. The named author might not actually be the person who wrote the text, however. For example, the text attributed to Ptahhotep of the Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 B.C.E.) was likely written in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.). Yet copies of teachings, no matter when they were written or re-copied, maintain a connection with an author. By the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.), authors associated with teachings were the classic writers. Men whose names were attached to teachings such as Ptahhotep, Hordjedef, Khety, Ipuwer, and Neferty were named in a New Kingdom document as immortals. The New Kingdom text claims that their writings are better guarantees of immortality than their tombs.

**RIGHT ORDER.** The central subject of all the didactic literature is the nature of maat. The teachings describe specific cases that allow a person to live according to maat. The complaints and prophecies describe the world that lacks maat. The absence of maat is the central cause of disorder, injustice, and social ruin. The farmer in *The Eloquent Peasant* compares his own situation with the presence and absence of maat. Royal teachings, written for princes, also discuss the political implications of adhering to maat.

**FRAME STORIES.** Most of the teachings have frame stories. These stories introduce the dramatic situation where usually a father speaks to his son or all his children so that he can explain the nature of maat. Often the father is an old and famous person who has reached the end of his career. He clearly states that he wants to share the knowledge he has gained in the course of a long life. In *The Teachings of Ptahhotep* the speaker is the prime minister of King Djedkare Isesy (2415–2371 B.C.E.), though the text was probably actually composed by someone else nearly 500 years later. In the frame story, Ptahhotep asks the king's permission to share his knowledge. The king's agreement indicated to an ancient Egyptian that the knowledge and philosophy contained in the text was important and should be shared with the sons of all officials. Many other teachings specifically describe the speaker talking to his own son or children.

**WISE MEN.** The frame stories help scholars determine who could be a wise man or philosopher in Egyptian thought. Ptahhotep was a prime minister, the highest political office available to a commoner. A New Kingdom

instruction names Amenemope, who held a title placing him in charge of agriculture for all Egypt. Thus he was also a very high official. Much of his advice centers on agriculture. These men derive their authority from success in their careers. They also speak about the way to gain success in public life. Their concerns include the proper way to debate and how to behave at important social events. They enumerate different ways of pleasing a superior and generally how to get ahead in life. But other texts name only “a man” as the speaker. In this case where the father may not have been as great a success as Ptahhotep or Amenemope, he tells his son that loyalty to the king is the best way to advance in life.

**DEVELOPMENT.** The earlier texts such as *Ptahhotep* speak mostly of practical tips for advancement and equate these tips with maat. The *Teachings of Amenemope*, which dates to the New Kingdom, additionally includes many examples of moral behavior. Yet it is not clear that this change in subject matter is a true example of development. So few texts have been preserved from antiquity that it is not fair to say that the moral dimension was lacking in the earlier period. Perhaps texts similar to *Amenemope* existed in the earlier period but have not survived. Yet it is clear that *Amenemope* includes virtues not discussed by Ptahhotep. It integrates wider human experience into the text and promotes a way of life rather than just isolated behaviors.

**IDEAL MAN.** Much of the didactic literature describes an ideal man that the Egyptians called the *ger* (“silent man”). The opposite type was the *shemem* (“heated man”). The silent man is not only silent, however. His silence comes when he thinks before he reacts. He is thoughtful, temperate, and judicious. He reflects before answering a “heated man,” a man ruled by his emotions. The contrast between the silent man and the heated man is most fully developed in *Amenemope*. The silent man is truthful, honest, straightforward, open, respectful, circumspect, diligent, generous, caring, and sympathetic. Amenemope compares him to a tree growing in the sunlight that flourishes in the garden. He contrasts this tree with the heated man, a tree planted in dark. Without sunlight, he withers and dies. The gardeners remove him and burn him on the rubbish heap. Here it is clear that the silent man earns eternal life for his virtues, while the heated man cannot achieve the afterlife.

**THE TEACHINGS OF PTAHHOTEP.** The didactic literature includes a wide variety of texts, though the majority of them are teachings. *The Teachings of Ptahhotep* is the most complete of any ancient Egyptian philosophical

teaching. Thus it is the standard of comparison. The frame story depicts the prime minister, Ptahhotep, requesting and receiving the king's permission to share his wisdom. In the course of the request Ptahhotep speaks of old age and its frailties. But attaining old age also allows Ptahhotep to attain wisdom. He then states 37 maxims that summarize his understanding of maat. He stresses the proper conduct needed for success. He also enumerates the qualities a successful man needs: honesty, judiciousness, respect for superiors, and moderation. Then Ptahhotep speaks of the good son, one who is obedient. His obedience leads him to imitate his father and eventually become a wise man himself.

**TEACHINGS OF ANY.** Any's teachings date to either the Eighteenth or Nineteenth Dynasty. Any's title is not included in the text and he concentrates more on personal life than official life. He gives his son, Khonshotep, advice on marriage, managing a household, and living a virtuous life. In an unusual twist, Khonshotep answers his father at the end of the text and suggests he might not be able to reach his father's high standards.

**THE TEACHINGS OF AMENEMOPE.** In his teachings, Amenemope identifies himself as a high official of the department of agriculture. He addresses his words to his youngest son Horem-maakheru. Amenemope grounds his description of living a life according to maat in religious belief, making his reasoning seem familiar to modern readers. He emphasizes that his son should follow the "way of truth" as he pursues his career. He also closely examines the differences between the "silent man" and the "heated man," or the controlled man versus the emotional man.

**THE TEACHINGS FOR MERYKARE.** Merykare was a king of the Tenth Dynasty (2130–1980 B.C.E.) and his teaching is set in his father's reign in the town of Herakleopolis where the family lived. This family was a major opponent of the Theban family that eventually reunited Egypt during the Eleventh Dynasty (2008 and 1980 B.C.E.). Surprisingly, the text was recopied during the New Kingdom when another Theban family ruled Egypt after reuniting and establishing a central government. Only the New Kingdom copies of the text remain. The text includes advice on good government, historical speculation, and a testament where the king describes his own life to his son. It ends with a hymn to the creator god Atum. It is unclear whether this text is truly useful for constructing a history and philosophy of the Tenth Dynasty. It is also unclear why later Egyptians took an interest in Merykare's father's advice.

**THE TEACHINGS OF AMENEMHET.** The narrator of *The Teachings of Amenemhet* is Amenemhet I

(1938–1909 B.C.E.). Yet he speaks after his own death to his son Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.). Amenemhet gives Senwosret advice on ruling Egypt, especially in view of his own difficulties. Amenemhet was assassinated, probably by his own courtiers. Amenemhet tells Senwosret not to trust anyone. He also justifies his own policies. In the end Amenemhet reassures Senwosret that his spirit will help his son rule.

**THE TEACHINGS OF SEHETEPIBRE.** *The Teachings of Sehetepibre* survives in several versions from the Twelfth and Eighteenth Dynasties. As a whole it is also known as the *Loyalist Teachings*, though one early stela names the speaker as Sehetepibre. The narrator tells his children to be loyal to the king and heaps praises upon him. The second part provides advice on managing servants. Together, the two parts of the text discuss giving and receiving loyalty.

**THE TEACHINGS OF KHETY.** From the Eighteenth Dynasty, *The Teachings of Khety* is a defense of education narrated by Khety for the benefit of his son Pepi. Khety describes the occupations that people without education perform and stresses their discomforts. He contrasts the fate of the uneducated with scribes who have an education. The scribe, Khety points out to Pepi, is everyone's boss. Thus, Pepi should study hard at scribe school, be a success, and follow the wisdom of the ancestors.

**THE ADMONITIONS OF IPUWER.** *The Admonitions of Ipuwer* laments the chaos the narrator sees around him. The setting is most likely the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.), though most modern commentators believe the author composed it in the Twelfth Dynasty (1939–1759 B.C.E.). Ipuwer speaks at length of chaotic social conditions, especially that the formerly poor have replaced the rich in power. Since the text lacks both a beginning and an ending, it is difficult to know Ipuwer's predictions or conclusions.

**THE ELOQUENT PEASANT.** *The Eloquent Peasant* tells a story but also contains a treatise on the nature of maat. The story concerns the unjust arrest of a farmer traveling to market with his goods. The evil official who arrests him for trespassing allows the farmer to appear in court nine times to defend himself. The nine orations that the farmer makes are eloquent discussions of the nature of maat. They are both rhetorically complex and elegant in their language. In the end, the king rewards the farmer for his eloquence with full restitution of his goods.

**THE COMPLAINTS OF KHAKHEPERRE-SONB.** The narrator of *The Complaints of Khakheperre-sonb* finds social conditions intolerable. Yet he spends nearly half

the text describing his efforts to find adequate language to describe this low point in history. Oddly, the text was composed in the Twelfth Dynasty, a period of social stability. The only copy dates to Dynasty 18, another period of relative stability. Perhaps this text constitutes criticism of the current regime, though it is not specific enough to have meaning for the modern reader. It fits well in the Egyptian tradition of laments for the lack of order.

**THE DIALOGUE OF A MAN WITH HIS BA.** *The Dialogue of a Man with His Ba* is a discussion between a man and his own soul. The man argues that life is not worth living and that traditional funeral rites are useless. His soul responds that people must live their whole natural lives and that following his death he will reap his reward. The end of the text is not preserved, so it is unclear how the discussion ends.

**THE PROPHECY OF NEFERTY.** In *The Prophecy of Neferty*, the prophet Neferty describes to the Fourth-dynasty king Sneferu (2625–2585 B.C.E.) the horrors of the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.). Neferty also knows that these horrors will end with the appearance of Amenemhet I (1938–1909 B.C.E.). Thus most scholars believe the text was composed in Amenemhet's reign. The discussion of disorder argues that the lack of maat is the cause of social chaos. When the proper king arises, maat is automatically restored.

**FRAGMENTED TEACHINGS.** Several other teachings exist in fragments. One such fragment is *The Teachings of Hordjedef*, referred to by one New Kingdom text as a classic. Not enough of the text survives to translate its maxims, although a surviving frame story places the action in the Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.). Another work known principally by its frame story rather than by its maxims is *The Teachings of Kagemni*. Only the conclusion survives, but the frame story places it in the reigns of Huni (Third Dynasty, before 2625 B.C.E.) and Sneferu (2625–2585 B.C.E.) though this is the setting and not the time of composition. While less is known regarding the speaker, setting, or time period, *The Teachings of a Man for his Son* is written in the language of the Middle Kingdom and includes maxims typical of the teachings and statements about loyalty to the king.

**CONFIDENCE.** The large number of texts that discuss maat and promote ways of recognizing it attest to Egyptian confidence that the young can learn maat and the philosophies behind it. Tremendous effort was expended to define, teach, and propagate this core value in Egyptian life.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**THE MEANING OF MAAT**

**INTRODUCTION:** In *The Eloquent Peasant*, a corrupt official frames a farmer passing through his territory and seizes his goods. The farmer appears in court nine times to demand his property. His orations amount to a treatise on the meaning of *maat*, the Egyptian concept of right conduct. In the sixth oration, the farmer equates right conduct with truth, with reducing evil in the world, and with finding the right balance.

Now this farmer came to petition a sixth time saying,  
"Oh Overseer, my lord."

The one who lessens falsehood creates truth.

The one who creates the good, reduces evil.

As surfeit's coming removes hunger,

Clothing removes nakedness.

As the sky is calm after a storm,

Warming all who shiver;

As a fire cooks that which is raw,

As water satisfies thirst.

Now look.

The judge is a robber,

The one who makes peace makes grief.

He who should soothe makes sore.

However, the cheater reduces justice.

Justice rightly filled neither is too little or too much.

**SOURCE:** Friedrich Vogelsang and Alan Gardiner, *Die Klagen des Bauren* (Leipzig, Germany: J. C. Hinrich, 1908). Translated by Edward Bleiberg.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: The Egyptian Literary Canon*

**SECRET KNOWLEDGE**

**GREEK BELIEFS.** Ancient Egypt's neighbors in Greece wrote of their belief that Egyptian priests and magicians possessed secret knowledge. Greek belief in Egyptian secret knowledge is one strand of Greek philosophy that contributed to the modern belief that the Egyptians perfected mysticism, astrology, and magic.





The Egyptian god Thoth in the form of a baboon, protecting a royal scribe. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

Because of this Greek belief, a wide variety of modern truth seekers have looked to the Egyptians for inspiration. They include the freemasons, Rosicrucians, theosophists, anthroposophists, and Afrocentrists. These groups share a belief that the Egyptians both created the first civilization and that their knowledge has only recently been rediscovered by modern science. Many of these modern groups also believe that Egyptian spiritual knowledge far exceeded the knowledge that can be gleaned from the surface of hieroglyphic texts. Though most nineteenth and twentieth century C.E. Egyptologists rejected this approach to Egyptian culture, a scientific, rationalist, and text-based study of Egyptian spiritualism has recently added Egyptological knowledge to the mix of data on Egyptian secret knowledge. The Egyptologists Jan Assmann and Erik Hornung made important contributions to this debate, finding the roots of the idea of secret knowledge in Egyptian society itself.

**THOTH.** In the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.) the Egyptians regarded the god Thoth as a violent deity who helped the king defeat enemies. But in the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.) the Egyptians identified Thoth as the author of *The Book of the Two Ways*, a text that described the afterlife. All preserved copies of this text come from the town of Hermopolis in central Egypt. There the local deity was Thoth and thus he received credit for this first statement of knowledge of the next life. The *Coffin Texts*—spells inscribed on Middle Kingdom coffins—refer to the “divine books of Thoth” and to this god as the “lord of wisdom.” In the New King-

## EGYPTIAN Magic

The story of Setne Khamwas was written in the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.). It tells the story of the struggle between Setne Khamwas and the magician Naneferkaptah for possession of a book of magic written by the god Thoth. Naneferkaptah had taken the book with him to his grave. Setne Khamwas then stole it from the tomb. This story and perhaps others like it no longer preserved possibly shaped the Greek view of the Egyptians as great magicians. The story stresses that mankind has access to magic, but only the gods know the ultimate secrets of life. When Setne attempts to learn through magic more details about the afterlife than should be available to people on earth, his children die. The gods punish him for trying to know too much. Because Setne was exploring a book said to be written by Thoth, it connects with Greek ideas that Egyptian magic stems from the god they believed was Thoth’s equivalent in their own culture, Hermes Trismegistus. Greek writers regularly misinterpreted Egyptian stories to create a philosophy called Hermeticism that they believed was Egyptian, but in fact was a Greek misinterpretation of Egyptian culture.

dom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) Thoth continued to develop as a god of culture and invention. The Egyptians regarded Thoth as the author of many sacred writings. In the *Book of the Dead*—spells meant to guide the deceased to the next life—the deceased identified himself with Thoth and claimed that knowledge justified his entrance to the afterlife. Thoth was regularly the other gods’ scribe, responsible for divine documents, letters, and decrees. The Egyptians now described Thoth as “lord of divine words,” that is, the hieroglyphic writing system. Thoth became responsible for regulating the calendar and measuring time. At the judgment of the dead, Thoth recorded the final verdict for each individual. In general, Thoth was increasingly viewed as the god who controlled knowledge and the recording of knowledge, and hence was also the ruler of philosophy.

**THOTH AND AKHENATEN.** Though King Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.) banned the worship of all gods except for Aten, the disc of the sun, his new capital at Amarna was located in Thoth’s home province. Perhaps for that reason, a statue now excavated in Amarna shows a scribe sitting at Thoth’s feet recording his wisdom. The

artist who created the famous bust of Nefertiti also found at Amarna was named Thutmose, “Thoth is born.” This name had been common earlier in the Eighteenth Dynasty, but it is striking that the name was tolerated at Amarna. Perhaps this indicates that even in Amarna, Thoth’s connection to wisdom and philosophy was recognized.

**THOTH AFTER AMARNA.** Immediately after the Amarna Period with the restoration of the old gods, Thoth assumed an important place. King Horemheb (1319–1292 B.C.E.) recorded a *Hymn to Thoth* that called the god “one who knows the mysteries” and gave him responsibility for informing the sun god of all that occurred on earth. King Ramesses IV spoke in an inscription of his ability to read the writings of Thoth and that he learned about Osiris from Thoth’s books located in the temple library. Thoth thus continued to grow in his role as the source of knowledge and philosophy.

**THOTH IN THE LATE PERIOD.** In the Late Period (664–332 B.C.E.), Thoth became the god responsible for magic. Thoth helped deceased people enter the next world by writing letters of recommendation for them. According to Late Period belief, Thoth also wrote a new guide to the land of the dead called *The Book of Breathings* with the help of the goddess Isis. Thoth’s stature continued to grow with a new epithet, “twice great,” first known from the reign of King Apries (589–570 B.C.E.). By the time of Darius I (521–486 B.C.E.), Thoth’s epithet increased his greatness to “very, very, very great.” The Greeks later identified Thoth with their own god, Hermes, whom they gave the epithet “Trismegistus” or “thrice great.” In Greek belief, Hermes Trismegistus was a major source of ancient Egyptian secret knowledge. It seems likely that at least the tradition of Thoth as the keeper of secret knowledge had Egyptian roots in the Late Period.

**HIEROGLYPHS.** The Egyptians believed that Thoth invented hieroglyphic writing. The nature of Egyptian picture writing also played a role in Greek beliefs about the supposed secret knowledge and philosophy contained in these writings. Hieroglyphic writing was basically phonetic with each picture standing for a sound or group of sounds. Yet the final picture in each word had no sound but rather stood for a category. For example, the picture of walking legs at the end of the phonetic writing for the verb “to go” placed it in the category “verbs of motion.” Thus on one level these signs, called determinatives, could bear a symbolic meaning. Some signs such as a billowing sail for “breath” or “air,” a flamingo for “red,” a taut bow string for “strong,” and an egg for “within” thus lent themselves to extended symbolic meanings.

## HERMES Trismegistus

The Greek historian Herodotus first identified the Greek god Hermes with the Egyptian god Thoth. Thoth was the god responsible for writing, knowledge, and the calendar. By the Egyptian Late Period (664–332 B.C.E.), Thoth was already called “very, very, very great.” In Greek he therefore came to be known as Hermes Trismegistus—Thrice Great Hermes.

A large group of texts were attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. These writings came to be known as Hermeticism. There remains much debate about how many of these texts are actually ancient. Many of them may well be fifteenth-century forgeries. Others may date to the fifth century C.E. They include descriptions of astrology, magic, and various myths of the origins of the world. Hermeticism is a major source for various spiritual interpretations of ancient Egyptian philosophy. Hermeticism is based on the writings of the Greek philosopher Plato. Hermeticism develops arguments about the beginnings of the world based on allegory rather than on direct observation of the world. Explanations are based on spiritual similarities rather than physical characteristics.

**SCRIBE’S PUZZLES.** Beginning in the New Kingdom, scribes invented scholarly puzzles with hieroglyphs as a form of intellectual entertainment. They used whole pictures with new phonetic values that would amaze other scribes by their creativity. A picture of jackals towing the god’s boat in the tomb of Ramesses IX (1126–1108 B.C.E.) substitutes for the old and simple phonetic writing of the verb “to tow.” Or the verb “to vanquish” which could easily be written and recognized with a phonetic writing, instead was written with a king smiting the heads of foreign enemies. These intellectual games became increasingly popular in the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.) when Greek-speaking kings ruled Egypt. At the temple in the town of Esna in Upper (southern) Egypt, a scribe wrote a hymn to Khnum, a ram god, writing only ram signs that could each be read with a different phonetic value and thus could represent different words. Another hymn was written entirely with crocodile signs that had seven different phonetic values. At this temple, there were 143 different ways of writing the god Khnum’s name. The name of the god Osiris could be written 73 different ways. These games then led



Statue of Isis holding the child Horus. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.938E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

to the Greek belief that hieroglyphs were only to be interpreted symbolically rather than phonetically.

**HIEROGLYPHIC SYMBOLS.** By the fifth century C.E. the Egyptians had stopped writing hieroglyphic inscriptions. But the Greek writer Horapollon, who lived in Egypt, wrote a book called *The Hieroglyphs* that attempted to explain the symbolic meanings of Egyptian writing. Even when Horapollon knew the correct phonetic reading of a hieroglyph, he gave a symbolic explanation for it. For example, the picture of the Egyptian hare has the meaning “to open” because the Egyptian word for “hare” and the Egyptian word for “to open” share the same consonants. But Horapollon had a different explanation. He claimed that the Egyptians wrote the verb “to open” with a hare because hares sleep with their eyes open. He also claimed that the vulture represents the word “mother” in hieroglyphs because there are no male vultures. Egyptologists understand that the word for vulture and the word for mother shared the same consonants. Thus Horapollon set the stage for

Greek and later Roman authors to apply a completely symbolic approach to reading hieroglyphs. And this symbolic approach supported the idea that hieroglyphs contained mystical knowledge and philosophical secrets rather than being an ordinary symbol system for representing language. Horapollon eliminated the boundary between hieroglyph and symbol. This boundary was not restored until the nineteenth century C.E. when J.-F. Champollion read the Rosetta Stone and deciphered hieroglyphs for the first time in modern history.

**CULTS.** In ancient Greek cults, initiation was the norm. Initiation consisted of secret rites, ceremonies, ordeals, or instructions used to allow a member to enter a sect or secret society, usually one that held a certain philosophy about Egyptian life and the gods. The Greeks assumed that Egyptian cults also had initiation. The mysteries of Osiris of Abydos are the most frequently cited example of initiation in the Greek sense. Yet the festival route in Abydos, as with festival routes in other Egyptian towns, points to a public ceremony with processions to public shrines, singing, dancing, and general rejoicing as integral to the festival. As late as 200 C.E. the Christian writer Minucius Felix knew that the Abydos festival was public rather than private. Egyptologists believe the festival is a re-enactment of the myths associated with Osiris, his wife Isis, and their son Horus. The vast numbers of people involved in the Festival of Opet in Karnak also shows that it is unlikely that these festivals were secret initiations. Yet the Greeks developed their own cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis that incorporated typically Greek religious ritual, including initiation. There were three degrees of initiation. The person who wished to join the cult had to experience a symbolic death, confront the gods, and pass through all the elements. The most important part of the ceremony allowed the initiate to view the sun at midnight. This vision allowed the initiate to escape man’s fate and overcome death eternally.

**DISTINCTIONS.** The Egyptologist Erik Hornung suggested an Egyptian basis for the ideas behind initiation into the Greek cult of Isis. The ceremony suggests the Egyptian myth of the sun’s journey at night. The sun, according to Egyptian belief, entered the land of the dead after it set on this earth. Thus a person who was symbolically dead and in the land of the dead would see the sun at midnight and would have overcome death. Yet there was an important difference between Egyptian and Greek belief. The Egyptians believed that the dead eternally viewed the sun at night in an endless cycle. The Greeks believed that the initiate was released from fate and was no longer imprisoned in this

world, even before death. A second important distinction between Greek and Egyptian ideas was the way knowledge of the gods could be acquired. In the Greek cult of Isis, knowledge of the goddess and release from fate was achieved through the mystical trial of symbolic death and the revelation of viewing the sun at midnight. The Egyptians, however, stressed study as the means of knowing truth. The Egyptian wisdom texts repeat many times that studying with the philosophers would lead to knowledge of *maat* ("right order"). The Egyptians also stressed the importance of learning to read and studying the words of philosophers as the means of enlightenment. There is no evidence that the Egyptians believed in mystical revelation of knowledge in the Greek sense.

**THE FALL.** Many secret Greek cults were based on the premise that humanity had fallen from a previous paradise. According to these beliefs, people needed the cults to be saved and thus regain access to paradise. It is possible that later Egyptian ideas communicated to the Greeks originated with *The Book of the Heavenly Cow*. This text first appears in the reign of Tutankhamun (1332–1322 B.C.E.) after the Amarna Period (1352–1332 B.C.E.), when the Egyptians had briefly worshipped only the sun disc, the Aten. In this Egyptian version of mankind's fall, man's original state allowed people to have access to the sun's light at all times. There was no night that separated people on earth from the sun's rays. Yet humans rebelled against the sun god. At first the sun god tried to kill all people by sending his fiery eye against humanity. In the end, a small group was saved, but they were punished by having less access to the sun's rays than they did previously. Now the sun retreated on the back of the Heavenly Cow. Thus the Egyptians also believed that an original paradise had been lost. Strife and death entered the world through people's rebelliousness. These ideas continued into later texts such as are found in the temple of the town of Esna. The Esna texts were written at the same time as Greeks dominated Egypt. Thus these Greek ideas might have found some inspiration in Egyptian ideas.

**EGYPTIAN BASIS.** Thus there does seem to be an Egyptian basis for many ideas propagated by the ancient Greeks about Egyptian spiritual knowledge. Clearly, however, the Greeks interpreted much of what they saw in ancient Egypt to conform with their own ideas of spirituality, philosophy, and secret knowledge. Though there was an Egyptian basis for many Greek ideas about ancient Egypt, the Greeks' distinctive interpretation led to many modern views of Egypt as the land of mystery, spiritualism, and secret knowledge.

## HERODOTUS: Prime Source

Herodotus was a Greek historian who lived in the fifth century B.C.E. His nine-book exploration of the causes of the war between Persia and Greece in the fifth century led him to write about Egypt and its role in the Persian Empire. His study of Egypt is broad, investigating the antiquity of Egyptian civilization, the geography of Egypt, the Nile and its behavior, and Egyptian manners and customs, especially religion. Herodotus took a special interest in anything he found to be astonishing about Egyptian culture. For example, he expressed his wonder at the Egyptians' architectural achievements, describing buildings that modern people also found to be marvels, such as the pyramids. Yet he claims that King Khufu financed the building of the pyramids through his daughter's acts of prostitution, a rather astonishing assertion. He also stressed Egypt's invention of some aspect of culture, especially when he thought that the Egyptians had invented some aspect of Greek culture. He assumed that anything the Egyptians invented that resembled Greek culture began first in Egypt, and then traveled to Greece. His work was repeated by Greek and then Roman writers for centuries, leading to many false ideas about Egypt and its relationship to the classical Greek and Roman world. Perhaps the most important of these ideas was his equation of Egyptian and Greek deities. Herodotus was the first to equate the Egyptian god of writing, Thoth, with the Greek god Hermes. This equation eventually led to the Greek creation Hermes Trismegistus or Thrice Great Hermes, a mythical figure that the Greeks credited with the invention of astrology and alchemy, and the Egyptians credited with the invention of writing. Out of these ideas grew the false impression that hieroglyphs were symbols of philosophical ideas rather than representations of ordinary language like other writing systems. This idea resulted in centuries of misunderstanding until J.-F. Champollion deciphered hieroglyphs in 1822. The Greek vision of the Egyptians allowed many commentators who followed to invent theories about the Egyptians with no basis in empirical reality.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: Egyptian Writing and Language*

## ASTROLOGY

**INFLUENCE OF STARS.** The ancient Greeks and Romans believed that the Egyptians invented astrology. Astrology is the divination of the supposed influences of the stars and planets on human activity and events on earth by their positions and aspects. Though the Egyptians indeed studied the stars, the belief that the stars influenced events on earth was probably a later development and not a major part of Egyptian philosophy. Yet it is clear that at varying points in Egyptian history, they did believe in power of the stars in terms of protection and future knowledge. It was Greek and Roman interpretations of these beliefs that created the field of modern-day astrology.

**KNOWLEDGE OF STARS.** In *Pyramid Text* 1583, dating to the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.), the king after his death becomes a star in the sky among the gods. Yet this set of spells for a royal funeral stresses the role of the daytime sky and the sun over the stars in the royal afterlife. As Egyptian thought about the afterlife developed, the sun took the most prominent place and was the only celestial body found in the next world. The sun's journey at night lighted the next world, according to Egyptian belief. Yet the Egyptians surely took some interest in the nighttime sky, especially to calculate the calendar and help measure time. During the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.) and the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.) some coffins include star charts that the Egyptians used to calculate the dates for celebrating holidays. In the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.), star ceilings were painted in some tombs and temples. Senenmut, a high official in the reign of Hatshepsut (1478–1458 B.C.E.), had the Egyptian constellations painted on the ceiling of his tomb. The Ramesseum, a temple built by Ramesses II (1279–1213 B.C.E.) for his continued worship after his death, portrays the god Thoth at the center of the star ceiling. The stars' role in establishing the calendar led to Thoth's depiction here. Thoth was the god responsible for both time and for fixing the calendar. There are also scattered references in the New Kingdom to worshipping stars. In the *Book of the Dead* Chapter 135, an illustration shows the deceased praying before a blue nighttime sky filled with stars. The same scene is included on the walls at the tomb of Senedjem in Deir el-Medina (reign of Ramesses II, 1292–1213 B.C.E.). A stele in a museum in Hanover, Germany, shows Thoth as the moon god worshipped with two goddesses with stars on their heads. The text speaks of the moon and the stars of the sky. Yet none of these texts mention any influence the stars could have on life on earth. The planets had names for-

mulated with the name of the god Horus. Yet even these names only appear in lists and never seem to play a role in religion.

**DECANS.** The decans were 36 stars whose rising marked a night hour equivalent to forty minutes on the modern clock. Every ten days a different star marked the beginning of the night. The principal star was Sirius, already an important marker for the beginning of the New Year. All the decans disappear from the sky for seventy days then first return to view just before sunrise. This is called a star's helical rising. Each star's rising pinpointed the start of a new ten-day week on the civil calendar. Three of these weeks formed one month. After the star reappeared, it joined the others that were visible. At any one time there were eighteen visible stars. They were spaced in eighteen one-hour intervals across the sky. This system created a clock consisting of eighteen hours at night equivalent to the modern 12 hours. This system developed during the Middle Kingdom. Because the decans disappeared and reappeared on a regular basis, the Egyptians identified them as symbols of death and regeneration. In the New Kingdom, the king's funeral temples included lists of the decans. Some officials' tombs in the Ramesside Period (1292–1075 B.C.E.) included the decans on the ceiling. In the tomb of Ramesses VI (1145–1137 B.C.E.) the decans are represented worshipping the regenerating sun. Yet in the Twenty-first Dynasty (1075–945 B.C.E.) some officials believed it necessary to wear amulets to protect them from dangers caused by the decans. These amulets seem to represent a sudden change in attitude toward the stars.

**PROTECTORS.** The Egyptians recognized that a dangerous power could be either a threat or a protector. Though the Twenty-first Dynasty amulets suggest the decans are a threat to people, by the reign of Osorkon II (874–835/30 B.C.E.) there is evidence that the decans' power had been harnessed to protect the king. Two armbands from Osorkon II's tomb depict the decans with the gods Osiris, Horus, Thoth, Isis, and Nephthys. The decans are snakes with lion's heads who now protect the king. This is due to the belief that the goddess Sakhmet had control of the decans in this period. Sakhmet was a lion-headed goddess responsible for sending illness to people but also capable of curing illness. Thus Sakhmet also has a clear connection with fate, as is further supported by the inscriptions on the armbands. The decans also appear on protective amulets and necklaces in this period. By wearing this jewelry, a person could claim their protection.

**EXPANDING INFLUENCE.** By the reign of Darius I (524–486 B.C.E.), the decans appear on the temple of

Hibis in the Kharga Oasis. They also appear on a shrine of Nectanebo I (381–362 B.C.E.) and a chapel of Ptolemy VIII (ruled 170–163 and 145–116 B.C.E.). Though widely spaced in time, these monuments show that the decans continued to expand their influence. The shrine of Nectanebo I includes inscriptions that claim the decans can affect wind and water, bring fertility to the fields, and cause illness and sudden death. The decans also influenced specific parts of the body, an idea that would later receive much elaboration.

**LATER VIEWS.** The first millennium B.C.E. Egyptian view that the decans could influence certain phenomena on earth, including specific parts of the human body, was incorporated into heretical early Christian texts found at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt. The *Apocryphon of John* includes ancient Egyptian names along with Greek and Semitic names. It also connects the decans and some constellations with influence over different parts of the body. A Coptic text also from Nag Hammadi describes the decans as many-faced demons associated with both death and the devil. These texts combined a Greek idea of fate and a theory of how an individual's pre-assigned fate could be avoided. In Greek magical texts, the god Sarapis can help an individual avoid his fate through reciting the proper spell. This fate was assigned by the stars. Yet only one small part of this theory descends from ancient Egyptian sources, the decans and their ability to influence events on earth.

**ASTROLOGERS.** Two known Egyptian astrologers were active in the second century B.C.E. during the reigns of Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VIII. One was Harchebis who claimed to know the mysteries of the stars and the mysteries of snakes. He also claimed in an inscription on his statue that he had observed the heavens, especially the planet Venus. The priest Petosiris claimed to be the author of an astrological handbook. Petosiris traced his own sources to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664–525 B.C.E.), though it is not clear how reliable this information is. Thus the real origin of Egyptian astrology probably was in this mixed society, depending on both Egyptian and Greek sources for its information.

**ZODIAC.** The zodiac certainly played a role in later Egyptian star study, yet it only became known in Egypt in the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.). The first zodiac in Egypt was carved in the temple located in Esna built in the reigns of Ptolemy III and Ptolemy IV (246–205 B.C.E.). The origin of this zodiac was most probably Babylon. It contains Babylonian forms of some signs such as the goat-fish for Capricorn, a two-headed winged horse for Sagittarius, a maiden with ears of wheat, and a crab to represent Cancer. Other signs were Egyptian-



Large hawk free-standing, wearing the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 05.394, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ized such as Aquarius as a Nile god. Some scholars have attempted to identify the whole zodiac with Egyptian symbols. But Erik Hornung suggested that the symbols became more Egyptian the longer they were used in Egypt. The origin appears to be Babylonian.

**ROMAN EGYPT.** After the Roman conquest of Egypt (30 B.C.E.), astrology became even more popular. The emperor Augustus forbade private consultations with astrologers in 11 C.E., a sign that they had become increasingly common. Yet Augustus issued coins with his own zodiacal sign. The emperor Tiberius (r. 14–37 C.E.) took a great interest in astrology and executed those whose horoscope indicated they could be emperors. Egyptian astrologers were popular at the emperor Nero's court (r. 54–68 C.E.). Nero appointed the astrologer Balbillus a prefect of Egypt from 55 to 59 C.E. All of this activity must have played a role in Egypt's reputation for expertise in astrology. Yet it was relatively late in Egyptian history and had little to do with classical Pharaonic civilization.

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## ALCHEMY

**DEFINITION.** Those who practiced alchemy claimed it was a science and speculative philosophy which aimed to change base metals into gold, discover a universal cure for disease, and prolong life indefinitely. The earliest alchemical texts claim an origin in ancient Egypt. In fact, the oldest known alchemical text was written by Zosimus of Panopolis, who lived in the fourth century C.E. in a town in central Egypt now known as Akhmim. Zosimus claimed as his sources Persian and Jewish writers in addition to certain Egyptians named Peteese, Phimenas, and Pebechius. The best identified of his Egyptian sources was Bolus of Mendes who lived in the third century B.C.E. In addition to these claims for the Egyptian origins of alchemy, a text called *Physika kai Mystika* written by Pseudo-Democritus claims that alchemy was taught in Egyptian temples. He even attempted to derive the word "alchemy" from one of the ancient Egyptian names of the country, Kemi.

**GREEK SOURCES.** The Egyptologist François Dumas believed that Ptolemaic Egypt would have been an intellectual milieu that would be conducive to the development of alchemy. Yet all early texts about alchemy, even when they have origins in Egypt, were written in Greek. The Greek sources, however, claim Egyptian origins and refer to the Egyptian gods Isis, Osiris, and Horus. They even claim that Khufu (2585–2560 B.C.E.), a king of the Fourth Dynasty who built the Great Pyramid, wrote an alchemical work.

**STONE.** Dumas' claims for an Egyptian origin for alchemy are based on Egyptian views of stone and stone's relationship with alchemy. The proper use of the philosopher's stone was for alchemists the key to reaching their goals. Alchemists believed that this imaginary stone, properly used, could transmute base metals into gold. Dumas notes that the Egyptians understood stone to be dynamic. In *Pyramid Text* 513—a spell from an Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.) royal funeral—lapis lazuli grows like a plant. In the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.) an expedition leader to the Sinai commented on the constantly changing color of turquoise. The Egyp-

tians believed that the weather could change the color of turquoise and that the best color was only available in the cool months. In an inscription at Abu Simbel carved in the reign of Ramesses II (1279–1213 B.C.E.) the god Ptah describes how mountains actively bring forth stone monuments and the deserts create precious stones. This view of stone as dynamic rather than inert is basic to alchemy.

**HOUSE OF GOLD.** The Egyptologist Phillippe Derchain connected the "House of Gold," a section of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera, with the origins of alchemy. The room was used to prepare cultic instruments. The god in charge of this room was Thoth—whom the Greeks associated with Hermes—who was the god of knowledge and philosophy. The king was represented on the doorway of the room with the epithet "Son of Thoth." Part of the mystery performed while making the cultic material here symbolically transformed grain into gold. Derchain believed that the border between symbolism and later alchemy that sought to transform materials into gold was still maintained here.

**HORUS OF EDFU.** The temple of Horus in the town of Edfu also dates to the Ptolemaic Period. The walls of the treasury of this temple depicts mountains offering gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, turquoise, jasper, carnelian, hematite, and other semi-precious stones. The ointments prepared at this temple for use in the ritual utilized these materials. They were prepared over long periods, with particular actions required on each day. The description of the preparations closely resembles alchemy with repeated heating and cooling of these stones in order to create something different. These second-century B.C.E. activities might be the origins of Egyptian alchemy.

**ARABIC TRADITION.** Two texts in Arabic highlight the connection between alchemy and Egyptian cult. They are the *Risalat as-Sirr* (Circular Letter of Mystery) and the *Ar Risala al-falakiya al kubra* (Great Circular Letter of the Spheres). In the Arabic tradition, alchemy was the science of the temples, and Egyptian temples were the places where its secrets were located. Zosimus had previously associated the hieroglyphs on temple walls with the secrets that Hermes and the Egyptian priests knew. The *Risalat as-Sirr* maintains that it too came from a temple in Akhmim. It had been hidden under a slab of marble in the crypt of a woman, perhaps a reference to the Egyptian goddess Isis. This text places its own finding in the ninth century C.E. The *Ar Risala al-falakiya al kubra* claims for itself a find spot under a statue of Isis-Hathor in the temple located in Dendera. It claims that Hermes wrote it at the instruction of Osiris. Both texts seem to have origins in the Ptolemaic Period,

though such stories are similar to ancient Egyptian lore. The *Book of the Dead* in one tradition was discovered under a statue of Thoth. Thus it is possible that the Arabic tradition preserves some knowledge of Egyptian practice.

**EGYPT'S HEIRS.** Thus ancient Egypt's heirs, both Greek and Arabic speaking, practiced alchemy. They attempted to connect this practice to Pharaonic knowledge with varying degrees of success. It is possible that both traditions preserve some aspects of Egyptian thought though it is not clear that alchemy truly was an Egyptian area of knowledge or philosophy.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Magic in Egyptian Religion*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Philosophy*

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### ANKHSHESHONQI

fl. Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.)

*Writer of aphorisms*

**LESSONS TO HIS SON.** Ankhsheshonqi was a priest of the sun god Re at the god's temple in Heliopolis who, according to ancient Egyptian history, was implicated in a plot to assassinate the pharaoh. Although not a direct participant, he was thrown into prison for his failure to report the plot, which involved his childhood friend, Harsiese, who was also the pharaoh's chief physician. While in prison he wrote a teaching for his son. Ankhsheshonqi's teaching differs from earlier teachings because it consists of individual aphorisms. Though several of these sayings might deal with the same subject, they do not follow one another in any understandable sequence as was true in the earlier periods. Some scholars have tried to connect this work to the biblical book of Proverbs.

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### ANY

Unknown, before 1539 B.C.E.–Unknown, after 1514 B.C.E.

*Scribe of the Palace of Queen Ahmes-Nefertari*

**WROTE TEACHING TO SON.** Nothing is known of Any's early life. He was a commoner who had an opportunity to gain an education and became a scribe. He must have married and had at least one son who grew to adulthood, whose name was Khonshotep. Any's highest title was "Scribe of the Palace of Ahmes-Nefertari." Thus he was an official who reached the lower end of the royal bureaucracy. This office was a significant enough accomplishment to allow him to write a teaching for his son. Any's teaching combines traditional material with two innovations. Previous to Any's time, only teachings of the highest officials survive. As a minor official, Any offers advice to his son that will help him in the lower offices that he can expect to attain. There is no aristocratic pretension in Any's advice. Second, Any's son answers him at the end of the teaching. Khonshotep is skeptical about whether he can follow his father's advice. He suggests it is too difficult for him. This section of the text leads to the possibility that the teaching will fail in spite of Any's best efforts. Such a proposition was never previously discussed in Egyptian philosophical literature.

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### HORDJEDEF

fl. Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.)

*Prince  
Author*

**A PRINCE AND A TEACHER.** Hordjedef was a son of King Khufu who reigned 2585–2560 B.C.E. His mastaba tomb was never finished, but was located near his father's tomb, the Great Pyramid. Hordjedef had at



least one son named Au-ib-re to whom he wrote a teaching. As an author, Hordjedef is credited as being a teacher and a great storyteller. He is the narrator of a story in the collection called *Khufu and the Magicians*. In his teaching, Hordjedef concentrates on the importance of starting a family and preparing a proper burial. Unfortunately, very little of the text of his instruction survives. The copies that do survive, however, date from the New Kingdom, at least one thousand years after he originally composed the text. In the Ramesside Period (1292–1075 B.C.E.) he was remembered as one of the great authors of the past.

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## MERYKARE

fl. during the Tenth Dynasty (2130–180 B.C.E.)

### King

**ROYAL TEACHINGS.** Merykare was king during the Tenth Dynasty, a period of which little is known. He is named in the tomb of Khety—a provincial governor—where it is clear that Merykare fought the Theban family that eventually united Egypt in the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.). Merykare must have been quite prominent in his own time. He might have had a pyramid at Saqqara, the site of many important Old Kingdom pyramids. A text known only from New Kingdom copies claims to be a teaching written by Merykare's father, whose name is not preserved, when Merykare was a prince. If the text truly was composed in the Tenth Dynasty, it is the oldest royal teaching from ancient Egypt. Merykare's father gives him advice on being a king in the text. He also enumerates his own mistakes during his reign. Perhaps these mistakes are the reason that the text was still studied in the New Kingdom. The Theban kings of the Middle and the New Kingdom must have considered Merykare and his father hostile to them. Yet his teachings were preserved.

### SOURCES

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### *in Philosophy*

Anonymous, *The Dialogue of a Man with His Ba* (c. 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—This philosophical text describes a man debating suicide with his own soul. It gives a clear indication of Egyptian belief in a soul and the consequences of suicide. The text breaks off before the end so the result is not clear.

Anonymous, *The Eloquent Peasant* (c. 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—In this philosophical study, a corrupt official falsely imprisons a farmer. The farmer's pleas for justice amount to a treatise on *maat* ("right conduct").

Anonymous, *Teachings for Merykare* (c. 2130–180 B.C.E.)—An unnamed king writes advice for his son, the future king Merykare of the Tenth Dynasty. Perhaps the oldest of the royal instructions, it is directed to the enemy of the Theban family that reunited Egypt in the Middle Kingdom.

Anonymous, *The Teachings of a Man for his Son* (c. 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—A man of lower station advises his son to be loyal to the king in order to succeed in life. It is one of the Egyptian philosophical texts that deals with issues of loyalty and the importance of the king to his people.

Attributed to Amenemhet I, *The Teachings of Amenemhet* (c. 1919–1875 B.C.E.)—Probably composed in the reign of Senwosret I, the ghost of Amenemhet I advises his son not to trust any courtiers. This is a good example of a royal philosophical teaching.

Attributed to Amenemope, *The Teachings of Amenemope* (c. 1539–1075 B.C.E.)—Amenemope, a high agricultural official, advises his son in this philosophical text on pursuing the way of truth as well as career advice.

Attributed to Any, *The Teachings of Any* (c. 1539–1975 B.C.E.)—Any, a low-level scribe, gives his son advice on marriage, managing a household, and the virtuous life. This is the first example of philosophical teachings that came from a person who was not royalty and not of high office.

Attributed to Hordjedef, *Teachings of Hordjedef* (c. 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—Written in the Twelfth Dynasty but set in the Fourth Dynasty, Hordjedef offers practical advice for career advancement. It is clearly a philosophical teaching text, but not enough of the maxims included in it survive to be clear on the message it holds.

Attributed to Ipuwer, *The Admonitions of Ipuwer* (c. 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—Written in the Twelfth Dynasty but set in the preceding First Intermediate Period, the author

laments the social chaos around him. This is one of the Egyptian pessimistic writings and points to the philosophical idea of the existence being either ordered or chaotic.

Attributed to Kagemni, *The Teachings of Kagemni* (c. 1938–1759 C.E.)—Set in the reign of the Third-dynasty king Huni but probably composed in the Twelfth Dynasty, only the end of this advice survives. Much like *The Teachings of Hordjedef*, this text is clearly philosophical, but its tenets are unknown.

Attributed to Khakheperre-sonb, *The Complaints of Khakheperre-sonb* (c. 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—Written in the Twelfth Dynasty, the author laments social conditions but mostly speaks of the difficulty of finding the right words to describe the situation. This is one of the few surviving examples of Egyptian complaint literature and speaks on the Egyptian philosophy of order as a necessary tenet to a proper society.

Attributed to Khety, *The Teachings of Khety* (c. 1938–1759 C.E.)—This Twelfth-dynasty text stresses the value of

education. It is one of the only surviving texts to speak philosophically about education as a matter of pleasure instead of as a necessity.

Attributed to Neferty, *The Prophecy of Neferty* (c. 1938–1909 B.C.E.)—Probably composed in the reign of Amenemhet I, the prophecy is set in the reign of Sneferu nearly 700 years earlier. The text describes a period of anarchy followed by peace restored by Amenemhet I. This text is philosophically concerned not only with the necessity of order, but of the connection between the king and maat.

Attributed to Ptahhotep, *The Teachings of Ptahhotep* (c. 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—Written in the Twelfth Dynasty but set in the Fifth Dynasty, the prime minister shares his wisdom gleaned from a long career. This is the most complete ancient Egyptian teaching to survive and is the best example of a royal teaching.

Attributed to Sehetepibre, *The Teachings of Sehetepibre* (c. 1938–1759 B.C.E.)—This philosophical text stresses loyalty to the king as the primary way of establishing justice in the world.

7  
chapter seven

# RELIGION

*Stephen E. Thompson*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	206	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	208	Akhenaten . . . . .	247
TOPICS		Amenhotep, son of Hapu. . . . .	248
The Gods . . . . .	210	Imhotep. . . . .	248
Egyptian Myths . . . . .	214	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	249
Myth of Osiris . . . . .	217	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY	
Myths of Horus, Seth, and Amun. . . . .	218	DOCUMENTS	
Theology . . . . .	220	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
Animals in Egyptian Religion . . . . .	221	<i>Evil in Instruction for Merykare</i> (excerpt	
The King . . . . .	224	from <i>Instruction for Merykare</i> concerning	
Kingship Rituals . . . . .	225	creation) . . . . .	221
Temple Architecture and Symbolism. . . . .	227	<i>Clement of Alexandria on Egyptian Religion</i>	
Temple Ritual . . . . .	230	(a Christian theologian comments on	
Temple Personnel . . . . .	232	Egyptian paganism). . . . .	222
Personal Religion . . . . .	233	<i>Two Stele Describing Funerary Rites</i>	
Ethics . . . . .	235	(description of ritualistic funerary	
Magic in Egyptian Religion . . . . .	237	rites) . . . . .	243
Funerary Beliefs and Practices. . . . .	239		
The Egyptian Afterlife. . . . .	244		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Religion*

*All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).*

- |           |   |           |  |
|-----------|---|-----------|--|
| 3800–2298 | The first Egyptians bury their dead in oval pits in the desert and include pots, tools, and weapons, presumably for the use of the dead in the afterlife.   | 2371–2350 | In the reign of King Unas the <i>Pyramid Texts</i> are first inscribed on the interior of a royal pyramid. These texts probably represent the funeral ritual for a king and are a guide to entering the afterlife.           |
| 2585      | King Sneferu completes construction of the first true pyramid in ancient Egypt, suggesting the rise of the cult of the sun-god Re.  | 2170      | The first example of <i>Coffin Texts</i> are written. These texts offer a funeral ritual for non-royal people that is similar to the ritual found in the <i>Pyramid Texts</i> for kings for the first time.                  |
| 2585–2560 | King Khufu completes the Great Pyramid on the Giza plateau, the first stage of the massive complex of three pyramids, multiple temples, and the Great Sphinx, all representing the cult of Re's importance in Egyptian funerary religion. | 2130–1980 | The serpent demon Apophis, who threatens the sun god Re in the afterlife, is first mentioned in texts.   |
| 2560–2555 | King Redjedef is the first to call himself "Son of Re" in texts, a title that will continue for kings throughout ancient Egyptian history.  | 1938–1759 | Widespread use of the <i>Coffin Texts</i> by the common people in their burials indicates the importance of the cult of Osiris in the afterlife expectations of both kings and common people.                                |
| 2555–2532 | King Khafre builds the second pyramid at Giza and completes the Great Sphinx, probably an image of the sun-god Re in the form Re-Horus-on-the-two-horizons (Rehorakhty).  |           | The god Amun rises to prominence as kings from the town of Thebes, Amun's home, come to rule Egypt.  |
| 2532–2510 | King Menkaure completes the third pyramid at Giza and brings the building program to a close.   | 1919–1875 | King Senwosret I builds the White Chapel, the first evidence of building activity at the Karnak Temple, the main cult center of the god Amun which will continue in importance through the rest of ancient Egyptian history. |
| 2500–2350 | Kings build sun temples to honor the god Re in addition to building pyramids for their own burial. The sun temples absorb a considerable amount of royal resources formerly spent on pyramid building.                                    | 1630–1539 | The first examples of the <i>Book of the Dead</i> are written. This guidebook to the afterlife remains important in the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.) and in the Late Period through the Roman Period (664 B.C.E.–395 C.E.).  |
|           |   | 1493–1481 | Thutmose I is the first king to be buried in the Valley of the Kings and to include in his tomb the funerary text <i>Amduat</i> ("What is in the Underworld").   |
|           |   | 1479–1425 | King Thutmose III's tomb contains the first complete copy of the <i>Amduat</i> , the text fully describing the underworld.   |

- An oracle indicates Thutmose III is the legitimate king to follow Thutmose II, the first known use of oracles in ancient Egypt.
- 1478–1458 Hatshepsut, a female king ruling with the child-king Thutmose III, describes her conception through the agency of the god Amun at her temple in Deir el Bahri.
- 1390–1353 The first known burial of the Apis bull, a temple animal worshipped as an incarnation of the god Ptah, occurs during this time.
- King Amenhotep III disassembles the White Chapel at Karnak built by King Senwosret I (1919–1875 B.C.E.) to expand the Temple of Amun in Karnak.
- King Amunhotep III takes the title “The Dazzling Disk of the Sun,” a step toward identifying the king with the sun itself.
- 1353–1336 Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten), with his wife Nefertiti, decrees the worship of the sun disk (Aten) and the closing of all other temples in Egypt. He moves the religious capital to modern Amarna (Akhetaten) in Middle Egypt from the traditional capital in Thebes, home of the god Amun.
- 1332–1322 King Tutankhamun returns the religious capital to Thebes and reopens the temples of other gods throughout Egypt.
- Tutankhamun is buried with the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, part of a number of new royal funeral texts that are popular until the end of the New Kingdom.
- 1322–1319 King Ay includes the *Book of Gates* in his tomb, a new description of the afterlife.
- 1292–1075 Non-royal Egyptians are first shown in tombs praying and making offerings at chapels. Some scholars believe this came in response to the religious upheaval of Akhenaten’s time (1353–1336 B.C.E.).
- 1075–945 Priests of the god Amun at Thebes control Upper and Middle Egypt as the central government declines.
- 1075–954 The priest of the god Amun is buried with the *Amduat* (“What is in the Underworld”), an honor previously restricted to kings.
- 716–702 During the reign of King Shabaka, a copy of the text known as the *Memphite Theology* is inscribed on stone. This creation story stresses creation through speech, not unlike descriptions of creation that will later appear in the biblical books of Genesis and the Gospel of John.
- 664–525 A revision of the *Book of the Dead* becomes newly popular.
- Animal mummification increases greatly and continues to the end of ancient Egyptian history.
- Cult guilds that worship one god become popular among non-royal people.

## OVERVIEW of Religion

**DEFINITION.** The ancient Egyptians had no word for religion. For them, religion was not a separate category of thought requiring an approach different from that used when discussing philosophy, science, or any other topic. Therefore, the first step in any study of Egyptian religion is to decide what religion is and then examine the Egyptian record for data relating to this definition. Attempts to define religion as a phenomenon are numerous, and no universal definition has been agreed on. The definition used here will follow that of Melford Spiro, who suggested that religion is an “institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings.”

**COMPONENTS.** This definition consists of three main components. First, religion is an institution. Only social groups practice religion. In other words, a person cannot have a religion of one. An individual can have his or her own beliefs, but for those beliefs to be called a religion a wider group must practice them. Egyptian religion could be practiced in the formal setting of the massive state temples, with their extensive holdings of land, buildings, and personnel, or in the privacy of an Egyptian home. Second, religion assumes the existence of “culturally postulated superhuman beings,” beings we may call gods, demons, or spirits. The Egyptians believed these beings were able to influence the lives of human beings, either for good or bad. The ancient Egyptian term for these beings was *netjer*. Third, religion includes the interaction between people and these superhuman beings. These interactions can take two forms: people engage in activities that they think please the superhuman beings, such as behaving morally and ethically, carrying out prescribed rituals, and participating in festivals; and people engage in activities for the purpose of influencing the superhuman beings. They urge the superhuman beings to act on behalf of a particular individual or cease acting against that individual. They can also urge similar requests for a group. These activities include prayers, sacrifices, or votive offerings.

**MEANING OF NETJER.** The Egyptian word that is translated into English as “god” is *netjer*. This word is written with a hieroglyph resembling a yellow flag on a green flagpole. The etymology of the word “netjer” is uncertain. We know it corresponds roughly to the word “god” because in the Ptolemaic period (332–30 B.C.E.) of Egyptian history, bilingual decrees in Greek and Egyptian translate the Egyptian *netjer* with the Greek word for god, *theos*. A detailed examination of Egyptian texts reveals that the word *netjer* has a far wider frame of reference than the English “god.” The word could also refer to the Egyptian king, certain living animals, and to dead people or animals. The one thing every entity referred to as “netjer” had in common was that it was the object of a ritual, or received some sort of offerings during a ritual. When viewed in this light, there are five classes of beings that the Egyptians called “netjer.” First are those beings modern-day theologians would call gods. They were created as *netjer* from the beginning, and did not acquire the status at a later date. For them, ritual served to maintain and preserve their status as gods, much as food allows a person to maintain the status of a living being. These beings received daily rituals and offerings in the temples and shrines throughout Egypt. Next are those beings that acquired the status of *netjer* through undergoing a ritual at some time after their birth. These entities fall into two categories: those who undergo a ritual and therefore become a *netjer* while living, and those who become a *netjer* after death. In the first category are the kings of Egypt and certain sacred animals. The king, at his accession, underwent a coronation ritual and as a result acquired the status of *netjer*. In addition to the king, the Egyptians viewed certain animals as being special manifestations of particular gods, usually based on the presence of special markings or characteristics. These animals also underwent a ritual which inducted them into the category of *netjer* and made them instruments through which a particular god could make his presence manifest. The last category of beings that were considered to be *netjer* is those beings that underwent a ritual, and hence became *netjer*, after death. The funerary ritual had the effect of turning every deceased Egyptian for whom it was practiced into a *netjer*. The dead person would become an *akh*, the Egyptian word for a glorified spirit, and would be the recipient of offerings of food and drink from his family members. Finally, animals belonging to particular species that were kept at Egyptian temples would be mummified and buried at death, conferring on them the status of *netjer*.

**CHARACTERISTICS.** Ancient Egyptian religion has certain characteristics that differ from what most West-

ern observers would call religion in several ways. Unlike Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the Egyptian religion was not a founded religion. In other words there is no single individual such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, or Mohammed who received credit for founding Egyptian religion. The exception is Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.), who founded the cult of the Aten. Furthermore, Egyptian religion is not scriptural. There is no set of writings thought to be revealed by the gods to mankind explicating the tenets of Egyptian religion. This does not mean that the Egyptians did not have religious texts, for they most certainly did. But these writings never achieved the status of a canon against which all else could be judged. There was no doctrine for people to believe, and no creeds to which people had to agree. Egyptian religion was greatly influenced by the natural world. The Egyptians did not worship nature, but it was through nature that they gained their knowledge of the gods. The landscape, plants, and animals could all have religious significance. The Nile River and the scorching Egyptian sun played prominent roles in Egyptian theology.

**MULTIPLICITY OF APPROACHES.** One of the most striking characteristics of Egyptian religion to the modern student is what has been termed the “multiplicity of approaches.” The Egyptians did not seek a single explanation for phenomena or events. Rather, the same phenomenon could have several different, and to us mutually exclusive, explanations. There were several different explanations for the creation of the world that ascribed creation to different gods. The same phenomenon could be described through several different symbols. For example, the Egyptians imagined the sky as a cow with stars adorning her belly, as a body of water on which the sun-god sailed in his boat, as a woman’s body stretched out over the earth, and as a roof or canopy, all at the same time.

**SPOKEN WORDS AND NAMES.** Another feature of Egyptian religion was the importance of the spoken word and names. Words were not simply vibrations of sounds or collections of letters; they possessed power. The Egyptians did not believe that similarities in sound between words were coincidental, but rather revealed essential information about the relationship between the entities. Just as individuals like the king or vizier (high government official) could accomplish things by speaking orders, the speaking of words could bring about concrete events. Reading the offering formula on behalf of a deceased relative provided him with the commodities needed in the afterlife. Names referred to the essence of a person or deity, and manipulation of an entity’s name granted control over the entity. In order to bring about

the destruction of an enemy, his name could be written on a clay bowl or anthropomorphic figurine. The writer could then smash the bowl or the figurine. This action ensured the enemy’s destruction. Knowing the true name of a god granted one power over the god. The names of gods became the building blocks for expanding knowledge of the deities, and the more names a god had the more aspects his being possessed.

**EVIDENCE.** When studying Egyptian religion, scholars must always keep in mind that most interpretations are based on evidence spread out over more than 3,000 years of history. The main source of information about Egyptian religion is the abundant written material that has been preserved. The first written evidence for Egyptian religion comes from the period of Dynasty 0 (3200–3100 B.C.E.) and the Early Dynastic Period (3100–2675 B.C.E.). This evidence is in the form of names of individuals that include a god’s name as an element. Names such as “he whom Khnum has saved,” or “he whom Anubis has created” or “she whom Neith loves” give scholars the first indication of which gods the Egyptians worshipped, and the types of actions and relationships people expected from their gods. Labels and clay seals used to close jars also preserve brief texts that give evidence for temples in ancient Egypt. The texts occasionally indicate that the commodities in the containers were destined for, or came from, a particular temple.

**TEXTS.** The texts that the Egyptians buried with their dead to aid them in making a successful transition to the afterlife are an extremely important source of information on the Egyptian gods and their doings. The earliest of these texts, and in fact the oldest religious texts known anywhere in the world, are found on the walls of the pyramids of the last king of the Fifth Dynasty, Unas (2371–2350 B.C.E.), and in the pyramids of the Sixth-dynasty kings (2350–2170 B.C.E.) and even some of their queens. Because of their location Egyptologists call them *Pyramid Texts*. These texts were initially the exclusive prerogative of royalty. Towards the end of the Old Kingdom a new type of funerary text appeared among the high officials of the bureaucracy. These texts became more frequent during the Middle Kingdom, and are found mainly on the walls of wooden coffins, and therefore are called *Coffin Texts*. At the end of the Middle Kingdom, funerary spells written on papyri and buried with the deceased or painted on tomb walls replaced the *Coffin Texts*. The Egyptian title of these spells was “The Book of Going Forth by Day.” Once introduced, these texts continued in use until the end of the Roman period of Egyptian history. In 1842 the German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius published a Ptolemaic

period papyrus of these texts, and coined the name *Totenbuch*, which in English is *Book of the Dead*, and that is how these texts have been known ever since.

**NEW KINGDOM.** In addition to the *Book of the Dead*, the New Kingdom pharaohs included in their tombs a new type of funerary text, which scholars call underworld books. These books described the nightly journey of the sun through the underworld, and it was a goal of the dead pharaoh to join the sun god on this voyage. Scholars include several different compositions among the underworld books. The most important are the *Amduat*, the *Book of Gates*, the *Book of Caverns*, and the *Book of the Earth*. A similar category of text is found in tombs after the Amarna period, which scholars call books of the sky. These texts represent the sun's voyage as a passage along the body of the sky-goddess Nut. During the day, the sun passes along her body, and at night it is swallowed by Nut, passes through her internally until dawn, when the sun is reborn between her thighs. The compositions known as the *Book of Nut*, *Book of Day*, and *Book of Night* belong to this genre of text.

**LITERATURE.** Funerary texts are not the only source of knowledge on Egyptian religion. Egyptian literature is replete with references to the gods and to people's interactions with them. Hymns and prayers are commonly found carved on tomb walls and on stelae (carved stone slabs) set up as monuments to the king, memorials to the deceased, or as votive offerings to the gods. Private letters, contracts, royal decrees, and medical texts, while not "religious" in purpose, all contain references to the gods and preserve important information on Egyptian religion. Instructional texts, used to train scribes, contain advice on how to live a life pleasing to the gods. Magical spells are an important source for some of the myths of the gods. Fortunately for modern scholarship, the ancient Egyptians covered the walls of their temples with texts and scenes relating to the activities which went on inside these massive buildings. The best-preserved temples are also the latest (Ptolemaic and Roman periods), and caution must be exercised when using these late sources to throw light on earlier religious practices.

**ARTIFACTS.** The practice of burying goods with the deceased has preserved important artifacts relating to Egyptian religion. Earliest evidence for Egyptian religion comes from the burials of people and animals during the Predynastic period (4500–3100 B.C.E.). The fact that people at this early stage were buried with grave goods and foodstuffs indicates a belief in some sort of life after death. Human figurines of clay and ivory included in some of the burials may represent deities, but this is

uncertain. The number of animal burials discovered from this period may indicate that the Egyptians already worshipped divine powers in animal form. Excavations at the New Kingdom town sites of Amarna and Deir el-Medina have revealed important information about the personal religious practices of their inhabitants, and about the types of shrines at which these practices were carried out.

## TOPICS in Religion

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### THE GODS

**CHARACTERISTICS.** For the Egyptians, the gods represented the powers of nature conceived as personalized beings. They helped to explain the world, how it came into existence, why it continued to exist, and why events occurred as they did. The Egyptian gods had many characteristics that distinguish them from the Western conception of "god." Egyptian gods had a beginning; they did not always exist. Egyptian texts speak of a time when the gods did not yet exist. The creator god (of whom there are several) is unique in that he (or she, in one instance) creates himself; the other gods were born to mothers and fathers. This brings up another characteristic of Egyptian gods: they have gender, male and female. Some are said to go through a childhood and grow to maturity. Not only did the Egyptian gods grow up, they grew old, and even died. An Egyptian deity could be killed, as when Seth killed his brother Osiris, or they could simply grow old and die. Every day, the Egyptians visualized the setting sun as an old man near death. The Ibis-headed god Thoth determined the life spans of both men and the gods. Egyptian texts even make references to the tombs of the gods, and one late text even mentions an entire graveyard of gods.

**LIMITATIONS.** Egyptian gods had other limitations as well. The Egyptians did not consider them to be omnipotent. Most gods and goddesses had power only within certain closely defined areas, such as a particular town, nome (province), or region of the world. Egyptians had a term that meant "local gods," meaning the gods of any particular locality. When an Egyptian traveler was in another part of Egypt, or in another country such as Nubia, he would pray to the local gods to protect him. Egyptian gods were not considered omniscient; they did not know everything. The story of Isis and Re, in which Isis concocts a plan to learn Re's secret name



and therefore gain power over him, demonstrates that Isis was ignorant of Re's name, and that Re was ignorant of Isis's plan, because he falls into her trap.

**NAMES.** The Egyptian gods did not have well-defined personalities. A few stories provide insight into the characters of Osiris, Isis, Seth, Horus, Re, Hathor, and a few other deities, but most of what is known of the gods comes from their names and iconography. An Egyptian god could have more than one name, and the more powerful the god, the more names he could have. A name was not merely a label but was part of the god's personality, and it revealed something about him. Almost all of the gods' names can be translated, and generally denote a characteristic feature or function of the god. Examples include Amun (the Hidden One), the invisible god of the air; Khonsu (The Traveler), the moon god; and Wepwawet (Opener of the Ways), the jackal guide of the deceased. Some names tell of the god's origin, such as the snake goddess Nekhbet, whose name means "she of Nekheb," modern el-Kab, a town in southern Upper Egypt.

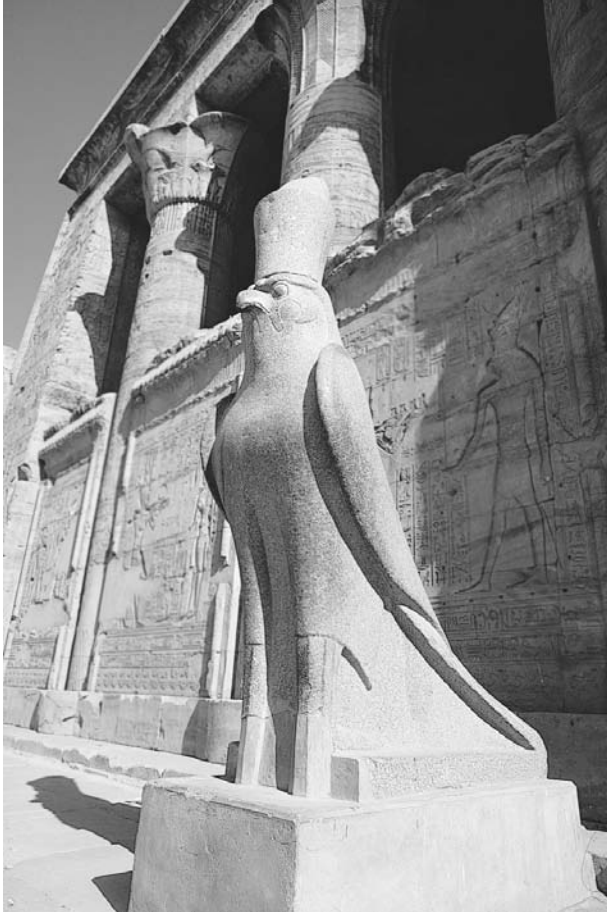
**GROUPINGS.** The Egyptians grouped their deities together using several different numerical schemas. The simplest grouping was in pairs, usually of a god and goddess, although pairs of the same sex did exist (Isis and Nephthys; Horus and Seth). The most common method of organizing deities was based on the triad, usually consisting of a god, a goddess, and their offspring. There are many examples of such triads in Egyptian religion: Osiris (god), Isis (goddess), and Horus (offspring); Amun (god), Mut (goddess), and Khonsu (offspring); and Ptah (god), Sakhmet (goddess), and Nefertem (offspring). Triads could also consist of a god and two goddesses—for example, Osiris (god), Isis (goddess), and Nephthys (goddess); or Khnum (god), Satis (goddess), and Anukis (goddess). There were also all-male triads—such as Ptah, Sokar, and Osiris (who were worshipped at Memphis)—and all-female triads—Qadesh, Astarte, and Anat (all foreign deities introduced into Egypt). In one grouping, the goddess Qadesh was matched with two gods, Reshep, and Min. These numerical groupings could grow larger, as with the Ogdoad (grouping of eight pairs of gods) and the Ennead (grouping of nine gods). An Ennead could simply refer to the genealogical classification of gods, and was not limited to only nine members; some Enneads had as few as seven members, while others could have as many as fifteen.

**SYNCRETISM.** There was an additional method of associating deities that is difficult for modern students of Egyptian religion to comprehend. The Egyptians could combine two or more gods into a single god. This

phenomenon has been called syncretism by scholars, and gave rise to the compound names such as Amun-Re. What occurred with the god Amun-Re was the merging of Amun and Re to form a new god, Amun-Re. The gods Amun and Re continued to have separate existences, however; where there were once two gods, Amun and Re, there were now three, Amun, Re, and Amun-Re. Generally, the second name in the pairing was the older god. Syncretism was a way for one deity to extend his sphere of action and influence. In a compound deity consisting of two components, the first name is the individual, while the second indicates the role that the deity is fulfilling. For example, Khnum-Re fulfills the role as life-giver—powers associated with Khnum—and is also seen as a sustainer—powers associated with Re. The number of such combinations a deity could enter into was not limited; in addition to Amun-Re scholars have found Sobek-Re, and from the *Pyramid Texts*, Re-Atum. Syncretism was not limited to two deities; examples of combinations of three (Ptah-Sokar-Osiris) and even four (Harmakis-Kheper-Re-Amun) occurred. In each instance a new deity possessing all the powers and attributes of the individual constituents was formed, while each individual deity retained its own unique existence and influence. A striking example of this was found at the Great Temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel, where the sanctuaries dedicated to the gods Amun-Re, Re-Horakhty, and Ptah were found. Re occurred simultaneously in two different syncretistic combinations in this sanctuary.

**ICONOGRAPHY.** Just as a god could have many different names, each revealing something about the nature of the deity, so could a god be depicted in many different ways. Egyptian gods could be shown as fully human, fully animal, or—perhaps most familiar to even the most casual student of ancient Egypt—in a hybrid form combining both human and animal elements. When creating images of their gods, the Egyptians were not attempting to depict the god as he really was, but rather their goal was to communicate something essential about the god's nature.

**ANIMAL FORM.** The earliest evidence for the depiction of Egyptian gods seems to indicate that in the prehistoric period (before 3100 B.C.E.) the Egyptians worshipped divine powers in animal form. Around the beginning of the Dynastic period (after 3100 B.C.E.), powers that had been worshipped as deities came to be represented in human form. Towards the end of the Second Dynasty (2675 B.C.E.) the method of depicting Egyptian deities that was to become so commonplace is first in evidence. On cylinder seal impressions from King



Large sculpture of the god Horus as a falcon with the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, outside his temple, at Edfu on Nile, between Aswan and Luxor. PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Peribsen (fourth king of the Second Dynasty) gods in human form are depicted with animal heads, in this case the god Seth with the head of a hawk. Once these different methods of representing the deities made their appearance, they continued to coexist with the other forms; one form did not replace another. The same god could be represented using all three methods of purely human, purely animal, or animal-human hybrid. The goddess Hathor could be shown as a woman, as a cow's head on a woman's body, or simply as a cow.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF DEPICTIONS.** If the same deity could be represented in several different forms, it is obvious that not all of these depictions could represent the actual appearance of the deity. In fact, none of these depictions represented the "true" form of the deity; this form was forever hidden to man, just as the true name of the deity was a closely guarded secret. The task for the modern student of ancient Egyptian religion is to at-

tempt to discern what meanings were intended by the different methods of representation of the Egyptian deities. An animal head on a human body revealed certain characteristics or attributes of the deity. Unfortunately, the symbolism intended by the use of particular animals is not clearly understood. A human head combined with an animal's body seems to indicate the acquisition or possession of divine aspects by humans. For example, the human headed ba-bird represented the ability of a deceased individual to freely move about and transform himself into different forms. That classic Egyptian symbol, the sphinx, which placed a human head on a lion's body, represented the royal power of the individual. A sphinx was not solely human-headed; it could take the head of several different animals, each representing a particular deity. A ram-headed sphinx represented the royal power of the god Amun-Re. A falcon-headed sphinx indicated the royal power of the god Horus, while a sphinx with the head of a hawk represented the same for Seth. Each mixed figure, whether it be human head with animal body or animal head with human body, represented a theological statement in iconographic form about the Egyptian god.

**ACCOUTREMENTS OF THE GODS.** The items the gods and goddesses were shown wearing or carrying also contributed information regarding their characteristics. The double crown of kingship was worn by several deities, including Atum, Horus, and even Seth. The Hathor-crown, consisting of cow horns with a sun-disk in the middle, was worn by goddesses known for their motherly nature, such as Hathor, Isis, and Renenutet. A deity shown wearing a crown with a sun-disk incorporated into it was thought to have some sort of relationship to the sun-god. Deities could also be shown wearing an identifying hieroglyph as a headdress. The goddess Isis, for example, often wore the throne-sign that was the hieroglyph for her name on her head. Deities could be shown carrying the ankh-symbol, representing their power to bestow life. Gods could be shown carrying a *was*-scepter, indicating their dominion and control, while goddesses often carried the *wadj*-staff, representing fertility and renewal in nature. The goddess Taweret, the protector of women in childbirth, was shown carrying a large *sa*-amulet, representing protection. Even the color associated with the gods was significant. Amun, the king of the gods during the New Kingdom, was shown with blue skin, possibly representing the color of the sky. Osiris, Anubis, Isis, and various demons could be shown with black skin, indicating their association with the underworld and the afterlife. Osiris could also be depicted with a green face, an allusion to his powers

of revival associated with fertility. The aggressive and hostile Seth was shown with red skin, the color of the rising and setting sun.

**PERSONIFICATIONS.** Some Egyptian deities fall into the category of personifications, that is, deities who embody some characteristic or trait. The names of these deities are also found as nouns having a non-personal meaning. Examples of personifications include Amun (*imn*, also the word for “hidden”) and Gereh (*gereh*, also the word for “darkness”). Many types of things could be personified, including geographical locations (such as names of nomes or temples); time, including the seasons (such as *Renpet* for “Spring”); directions (including *Imenet* for “West” and *Iabt* for “East”); emotions (such as *Hetepet* for “peace”); products (such as *Nepri* for “corn” or *Nub* for “gold”); and various activities (such as *Tayt* for “weaving”). Personifying such entities allowed them to be depicted or described as interacting with other entities, including the other gods, and living or dead individuals. Major personifications include the goddess Maat for Truth and Order, the god Heka for magic, and Hapy, for the personified inundation of the Nile. A particularly important category of personification includes gods of birth and destiny and deities who protected women during childbirth such as Bes and Taweret.

**DEMONS.** For the ancient Egyptians, “demons” were not considered evil. In fact, the Egyptians did not have the dichotomy between good and evil found in Western thought. They distinguished between those things that upheld order (*maat*), and those that did not (*isfet*). The real dichotomy for the Egyptians was between being and non-being, that is, those things which belonged to the created world, *Maat*, and that which belonged to the uncreated world of chaos, called *Nun*. Demons belonged to chaos. They were thought to inhabit those areas that the Egyptians associated with chaos, such as deserts, foreign places, water, night, and darkness. Demons were not able to receive the light of the sun, either because they were blind or had an “evil eye.” They did not speak in comprehensible language, but in incomprehensible howling. They had a foul smell and ate excrement. Demons were never the focus of a cult, which distinguishes them from gods who were thought to be responsible for various calamities. Demons could take many forms, including a crocodile, snake, ass, jackal/dog, bull, or cat. They were frequently shown brandishing knives. They had fearsome names such as “Slaughterer,” “Fighter,” “Rebel,” or “Black-faced One.” Demons inhabited liminal areas, or were particularly dangerous at liminal times. They were particularly feared

during times of transition, such as the five days added at the end of the 360-day year of the Egyptian calendar, called the epagomenal days. They inhabited bodies of water, and were responsible for causing disease. The underworld teemed with demons that punished those who did not make the successful transition to the next life. They guarded the various gates of the underworld that the deceased had to pass, and if the dead did not know their names, they put their fearsome knives to use. Major demons included Apophis, the snake demon who threatens creation by attempting to stop the sun in its path, and Ammemet, “She who devours the dead.” This goddess had a composite form, consisting of a crocodile’s head, the forepart of a lion or leopard, and the hindquarters of a hippopotamus. She sat near the scales of justice, and gobbled up the heart of the unfortunate deceased individual who did not meet the requirements of justice, represented by the goddess *Maat*.

**FOREIGN GODS.** Throughout their history, the Egyptians added several foreign deities to their pantheon. During the Old and Middle Kingdoms, only one foreign god—the Nubian god *Dedun*—entered the Egyptian pantheon. Beginning with the Second Intermediate Period, there were several Syro-Palestinian deities worshipped in Egypt. There are several possible explanations for their appearance. The Hyksos brought their Asiatic deities with them when they entered Egypt, and identified them with Egyptian deities, such as *Baal* with *Seth*, and *Anat* with *Hathor*. Also, Egyptian traders and soldiers who went abroad brought back the gods they encountered on their travels. It was common for people to pray to the gods of the lands in which they were, and gods were thought to be portable. If an individual felt that a particular god had been beneficial to him, then he may have brought that god back with him to Egypt. During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties, the Egyptians brought back many prisoners of war from their campaigns in Syria-Palestine, and these people would have brought their gods back with them.

**MEMPHIS AND MAJOR FOREIGN GODS.** Memphis, the political capital of Egypt, was a major center of the worship of foreign gods in Egypt. Among the significant foreign gods found in Egypt are *Reshep*, a Semitic god of plague and lightning who was thought to live in a valley south of Memphis. He was frequently associated with the Theban god *Montu*. At *Deir el-Medina* he was considered a healer god, the patron of good health and honesty. The Semitic god *Baal* appeared in two guises. The first was *Baal of Sapan*, a mountain in north Syria, who was honored as a protective deity of sailors and had his cult place at *Peru-nefer*, the harbor of Memphis. The

second was Baal the storm god associated with the Egyptian god, Seth. Three important foreign goddesses appeared in Egypt. They included Astarte also called Ishtar, a goddess associated with healing, love, and war often depicted on horseback. Egyptians also worshipped the foreign war goddess Anat and the Syrian goddess Qadesh, associated with sexuality and fertility.

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## EGYPTIAN MYTHS

**STORIES.** Myths are stories that have a beginning, middle, and end, and which describe the activities of superhuman beings. Prior to the New Kingdom, myths are scarce in Egyptian texts, but allusions to myths are numerous. The reasons for this are uncertain, but it is probably related to the types of text that have survived to modern times. Allusions to the activities of the gods are found in texts whose purpose is to provide for the successful transition of the dead into the afterlife or texts which accompany ritual activities. For these purposes, allusions to the doings of the gods are sufficient. Prior to the New Kingdom, Egyptian myths may only have been transmitted orally.

**CREATION MYTHS.** While mythic narratives do not appear in the Egyptian records until the New Kingdom, the frequent allusions to the activities of the gods found in the *Pyramid Texts* and *Coffin Texts* allow scholars to reconstruct a fairly comprehensive and consistent view of the earliest Egyptian stories about the gods. One of the most important categories of myth for the Egyptians was creation stories. The Egyptians believed that for existence to continue, it had to be continually recreated at each dawn, at each full moon, or each New Year. One part of the process of this recreation was to recall the first time of creation. Characteristically the Egyptians did not have only one creation account, but the creation of the universe was ascribed to several gods, and even a goddess. These creation accounts are named after the location where the creator god had a major temple.

**ATUM.** The earliest of all creation accounts is associated with the god Atum at Iunu (*Heliopolis* in Greek, the biblical *On*), which scholars call the Heliopolitan Cosmogony. A cosmogony is a story of how the world came to exist. In this version of creation, the universe is originally an infinite, dark, watery expanse called *Nun* or *Nuu*. Within this watery expanse, the god Atum essentially creates himself, and looks about for a place to stand. One tradition states that Atum stood on Mehetweret, a goddess in the form of a cow representing a solid emerging from the waters. According to another tradition Atum stood on the primeval hill located at Iunu, an image deriving from the emergence of land after the annual Nile flood recedes. After finding a place to stand, Atum masturbates with his hand (personified as the goddess *Iusaas*, "she who comes and grows"), and from his semen produces the first pair of gods, Shu (male) and Tefnut (female). The name Shu means void or emptiness. The meaning of Tefnut is uncertain; one tradition may associate her with moisture.

**BIRTH OF MANKIND.** After Atum created them, Shu and Tefnut become separated from him in the dark expanse of Nun. Atum, finding himself alone again, sends out his eye to find his missing children. While his eye is away, Atum creates another eye to take its place. When the eye returns with Shu and Tefnut, it becomes angry at its replacement. Atum then puts the eye on his forehead, where it becomes the protective, fire-spitting Uraeus snake found on the headdress of Egyptian kings and gods. A late tradition connects this event with the creation of mankind. When the eye returned with Shu and Tefnut, Atum became so happy he wept, and from his *remet* ("tears"), *remetj* ("mankind") came into being.

**FATHER EARTH.** Shu and Tefnut mate and give birth to the god Geb and the goddess Nut. Geb represents dry land, while his sister-wife Nut is the sky. Originally, Geb and Nut are locked in an embrace, and Geb impregnates Nut. A significant event in the creative process occurs when Shu separates Geb from Nut, thereby creating a space in which life can take place, a bubble in the expanse of Nun. This act is represented as Shu standing on a prone Geb while lifting the arching body of Nut high overhead. Shu represents the air and light separating the earth from the sky. A late text explains why Shu separated Geb and Nut; apparently they were quarreling because Nut kept swallowing her own children, that is, every morning the stars disappeared. Shu stepped in to stop the quarreling. One important aspect of this myth is the gender of the earth and sky. In most societies the earth was thought of as female (mother earth) and the sky as male. In Egypt, this im-



Papyrus drawing of the separation of the Sky and Earth. Shu, the god of air, stands on the prone Geb, the god of the earth, while lifting Nut, the goddess of the sky, overhead. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE, NY.

agery is reversed. This reversal was probably due to the source of moisture in Egypt. In most places the land depends on rainfall, seen as the semen of the sky god, for fertility. In Egypt, the fertility of the land did not depend on rainfall, which was scarce in Egypt, but rather on the rising floodwaters of the Nile. Since the earth was considered to be the source of these waters, it would follow that the earth was male.

**THREAT OF EXISTENCE.** Another important aspect to this myth is the precariousness of the continued existence of the world. All life as the Egyptians knew it took place within the bubble created by the bodies of Geb and Nut separated by Shu. This bubble existed within the vast realm of chaos, Nun. At any point, the sky could come crashing down on the earth, obliterating all life and returning everything to Nun. Magical spells threatened to cause this to come about if the practitioner did not gain what he desired. Rituals were carried out in Egyptian temples in order to prevent this watery chaos—represented by the serpent Apophis—from overcoming Re—the sun god. In one passage in the *Book of the Dead*, Atum, in dialogue with Osiris, says that one day “this land will return to Nun, to the flood, like it was before.”

**HELIOPOLITAN ENNEAD.** Geb and Nut eventually give birth to two gods, Osiris and Seth, and two goddesses, Isis and Nephthys. Osiris and Isis give birth to the god Horus. The myths surrounding these deities belong to the funerary mythology. The birth of these gods completes the Heliopolitan Ennead, or group of nine gods: Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. Horus, the tenth member of the Ennead, is a later addition.

**HERMOPOLIS CREATION STORY.** Another version of the creation story is associated with the town of Hermopolis, modern Ashmounein in Middle Egypt. This account centered on the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, or group of eight gods. These deities were grouped in pairs of male-female gods with three constant pairs: Nun and Naunet (primeval water, formlessness), Heh and Hehet (spaciousness), and Kek and Keket (darkness). The identity of the fourth pair varies in different texts. At times it is Tenem and Tenemet (confusion and gloom). It can also be Gereh and Gerehet (completion) or Niu and Niut (void). Eventually, the god Amun and his female counterpart Amaunet, representing concealment, become the customary fourth pair in the Ogdoad. The gods of the Ogdoad all represented characteristics of the chaos that existed before creation. A late tradition associates the origin of these gods with Amun’s main city, Thebes. The serpent god Kematef, “he who accomplishes his time” had a son, another snake god, Irta “he who makes the land.” Irta traveled from Thebes to Hermopolis, where he created the Ogdoad. Another late tradition describes Thoth as the creator of the Ogdoad. The gods of the Ogdoad were depicted as frog-headed (male) and snake-headed (female) humans.

**CREATION OF THE SUN.** When the primeval hill, called the *iu neserer* (“island of flame”), arises out of chaos, the Ogdoad comes together and creates the sun on this hill. Building inscriptions tell us that there was once a shrine called the “island of flame” at Hermopolis, but its location has yet to be determined. The Ogdoad was said to create the sun in two ways. One tradition says that the Ogdoad came together and created an egg on the primeval hill. The goose that laid this egg, called the Great Cackler, came to be associated with

Amun. Amun can occasionally be found depicted on stelae from Deir el-Medina as a goose, at times accompanied by eggs. An inscription from the tomb of Petosiris, dated to the fourth century B.C.E., claims that the shell of this egg was buried at Hermopolis.

**LAKE OF ORIGIN.** Another version of the creation of the sun arose during the Ptolemaic Period. In this account, the sun emerges from the opening blossom of a lotus. The male members of the Ogdoad were said to have placed their semen in the waters of Nun. This semen traveled to a vegetable ovary called *benen*, which was also the name of the temple to Khonsu at Thebes. In the hieroglyphic script, *benen* is represented as an egg. This egg is the contribution of the female members of the Ogdoad. The place where the egg was fertilized was called the “lake of origin.” From the *benen*, a lotus sprouts, and takes root on the island of flame. When the lotus blossom opens, the sun rises, depicted as a child sitting inside the flower. The association of the lotus blossom and the sun arises from the fact that the Egyptian blue lotus sinks underwater at night, and rises and opens at daylight.

**DEATH OF THE GODS.** The remainder of the cosmology is not detailed. The sun-god created the gods from his mouth, mankind from his tears, and cattle from his limbs. After the Ogdoad completed their work of creation, either by creating the egg or lotus blossom, they traveled to Thebes, where they died. They were buried at Medinet Habu, Edfu, and Esna. At these locations they were the recipients of a funerary cult.

**MEMPHITE THEOLOGY.** Another cosmogony, called the Memphite Theology, is preserved in only one text, known as the *Shabaka Stone*, after the Twenty-fifth Dynasty king who had it carved. Because of the archaic nature of the writing and language, scholars thought that this text originated in the early Old Kingdom. Subsequent studies have shown that the text cannot be earlier than the New Kingdom, perhaps dating to the reign of Ramesses II. One scholar even suggested that the text should be dated to the time of the copy, that is, to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. Such a discrepancy in assigning a date to the text arises from the fact that Egyptian scribes would copy and re-copy religious texts for hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of years. The existence of only one copy of a text makes it difficult to be certain when the text originated. For example, some Ptolemaic funerary papyri contain examples of *Pyramid Texts*, and if it were not for copies from the Old Kingdom pyramids it would be impossible to determine how old these texts really were. Another problem in dating texts is that the

Egyptians would deliberately write in an archaic style and attribute a text to an ancient author to lend the text an aura of antiquity, and therefore enhance its authority.

**PTAH.** The main actor in the Memphite Theology was the god Ptah. Ptah was originally a patron god of craftsmen and artisans. By the New Kingdom he had increased in importance to become a universal creator god. Hymns call him the father of the fathers of all the gods, possibly a reference to the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, who were called the fathers of the gods. Hymns further describe him as the one who carries Nut and lifts up Geb, equating him with Shu. Ptah is said to have brought about creation by first planning it in his mind—literally the heart—and then by speaking the name of everything and calling it into existence. The Memphite Theology has received considerable attention because it is similar to the Judeo-Christian tradition of creation through speaking seen in the biblical description of creation in Genesis and the opening of the Gospel of John, in which the creative word is emphasized rather than the physical methods of creation employed by the other Egyptian creator gods.

**ESNA COSMOGONY.** The final cosmogony to be discussed merits mention because, unlike the other creation accounts examined so far, the creator in the Esna Cosmogony is not a god, but the goddess Neith. This cosmogony is found on the walls of the Temple of Khnum at Esna and dates to the period of the Roman emperor Trajan (98–117 C.E.). This creation story borrows significantly from earlier accounts. Neith is the first being to emerge from Nun. She changes herself into a cow, and then a *lates*-fish, also known as Lake Victoria perch. These images derive from the cult of Neith. She was worshipped in the form of a cow and *lates*-fish at Esna. Neith creates a place for herself to stand, and then turns herself back into a cow. She pronounces thirty names, which become thirty gods to help her in the process of creation. These gods are said to be *hemem* (“ignorant”), and they then transform themselves into the *hemem* (“Hermopolitan”) Ogdoad. The story thus rests on a word play between two words that sounded similar but had different meanings. Neith then creates the sun-god through producing an excrescence from her body and placing it in an egg, which hatches as Re, the sun, who promptly takes the name of Amun. Amun then continues the act of creation through emanations from his body, creating the *netjeru* (“gods”) from his saliva, and *remetj* (“mankind”) from his *remt* (“tears”). This explanation demonstrates the Egyptian belief that puns reveal some basic, underlying truth.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: Cosmogony: The Origin of the World*

## MYTH OF OSIRIS

**ORIGIN.** An important series of myths involved the god Osiris. Osiris played an important role in Egyptian mythology as the god of the underworld and judge of the dead. As a *chthonic* ("earth") deity, he also became associated with the fertility of the earth. Osiris first appears in Egyptian texts at the end of the Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 B.C.E.), when he is mentioned in both inscriptions in private mastabas (tombs) and in the *Pyramid Texts* found in Unas' pyramid. His name was written with the hieroglyph of an eye surmounting a throne, and this combination has given rise to much speculation as to the origin and meaning of the name Osiris. At this point, there is no agreement about the significance of the name or its spelling. The simplest etymology would connect his name to the Egyptian word *weser*, meaning "mighty," making Osiris the "mighty one."

**FERTILITY AND THE UNDERWORLD.** Osiris was not originally viewed in a positive light. He may have been the god of the unsuccessful dead, that is, those who did not ascend to the sky to become a star or gain a spot in Re's barque (sailing vessel). Osiris seems to have originally been thought of in the form of a dog, based on a *Pyramid Text* passage which states that the king has the face of a jackal, like Osiris. Osiris quickly lost this form, however, and his earliest depictions show him as a mummy-form human with his hands protruding from the mummy bandages and gripping the symbols of kingship, the crook and flail. He is frequently shown wearing the white crown of Upper Egypt, or the Atef-crown. His face and hands are often painted green, representing his association with fertility, or black, a color associated with the underworld.

**ASSOCIATION WITH DEAD KINGS.** Whatever Osiris' origin, the *Pyramid Texts* show that by the end of the Fifth Dynasty (2350 B.C.E.) the dead king was identified with Osiris. These texts frequently refer to the dead king as the Osiris N (representing the name of the dead king). As such, the king had gone from being the king of Egypt to being the king of the underworld. In these texts, the first allusions to the myth of Osiris are found, which are not recorded in narrative form until the first century C.E., when the Greek writer Plutarch recorded the myth. In this version, Osiris was a king of Egypt who was murdered by his jealous brother Seth. How this takes place is uncertain. Some texts refer to Osiris as being "thrown down" in the town of Nedyet in the land of Gehesty, while others refer to Osiris being drowned in the water of Djat. There may also be references to the dismemberment of Osiris. In the Greek version, Seth throws a banquet, and offers an exquisitely carved chest to whoever can fit inside it. When Osiris climbs into the chest, Seth slams it shut, seals it with molten lead, and throws it into the Nile. From there, it makes its way along the currents to the shores of Lebanon, where it becomes enfolded in the trunk of a tree, which is used as a column of a temple by the king of Lebanon.

**FIRST MUMMY.** All versions of the myth include the search and discovery of Osiris' body. There are some indications in the *Pyramid Texts* that his father Geb found Osiris' body. Most commonly, however, his sister-wife Isis and sister Nephthys discover the body of Osiris. They are able to restore the body to life just long enough to allow Osiris to impregnate Isis with his son and heir, Horus. In later versions of the myth, the god Anubis transforms the corpse of Osiris into the first mummy, and he serves as the prototype of the treatment all deceased Egyptians wished to receive. According to the Greek version of the story, Isis leaves the chest containing the body of Osiris in Buto while she attends to her newborn child. Seth discovers the chest, becomes enraged, and dismembers the body of Osiris, scattering the pieces throughout Egypt. Isis finds each part and buries it. This provides an explanation for the numerous tombs of Osiris found up and down the Nile. Osiris then assumes his permanent position as ruler of the underworld.

**CULT.** The major cult center of Osiris was Abydos. Originally, this city was the cult-center of the jackal-god of the dead Khentimentiu, "foremost of the Westerners" (i.e., the dead). During the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, however, Khentimentiu became assimilated with Osiris. Beginning in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759



Depiction of Osiris, the ancient Egyptian god of the underworld, inside a tomb located in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor, Egypt.  
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B.C.E.), his temple at Kom el-Sultan was taken over by Osiris. Also in the Twelfth Dynasty, the First-dynasty (3100–2800 B.C.E.) mastaba of King Djet in Abydos was mistakenly interpreted as the tomb of Osiris. Every year, Abydos was the site of a huge festival during which a dramatic presentation of the myth of Osiris took place. In order to participate vicariously in this festival, kings would build *cenotaphs* (“false tomb memorials”) for themselves at Abydos. Along the festival route, private individuals erected small chapels for themselves. These chapels, called *mahat*, could contain a small stele or statue of the owner. This object would become the conduit through which the individual could magically share in the bounty of the festival.

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SEE ALSO *Music: Musical Deities; Theater: The Osirian Khoiak Festival Drama*

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### MYTHS OF HORUS, SETH, AND AMUN

**HORUS THE SKY GOD.** Horus, in the form of a falcon, or falcon-headed human, is one of the oldest gods of the Egyptian pantheon. He was the god of the sky, whose right eye was associated with the sun, and whose left eye was the moon. A First-dynasty (3100–2800 B.C.E.) comb found in a tomb shows the sky as the two wings of a bird, probably Horus. Horus was also associated with the king, and from the First Dynasty onwards one of the king’s names was preceded by the Horus fal-



con, making the king the earthly embodiment of the cosmic Horus.

**BATTLE WITH SETH.** In the earliest version of the myths surrounding Horus, he was involved in a struggle with his brother, Seth, for the throne of Egypt. This is apparently a reflection of the political situation in which the city of Hierakonpolis (a major cult center for Horus) gradually expanded and engulfed the town of Nagada (ancient Ombos), a center of Seth-worship. This version of the myth must be reconstructed from allusions in the *Pyramid Texts*. For unstated reasons, Seth attacks Horus, and a violent struggle ensues. Horus loses an eye, and Seth loses his testicles. Eventually, the missing pieces are restored to their rightful owners, and the two gods go before a tribunal of the gods of the Heliopolitan Ennead, with either Geb or Atum presiding. The verdict of this tribunal is that Horus is the rightful ruler of Egypt, because he is the older of the two.

**SON OF OSIRIS.** With the entrance of the god Osiris into the Egyptian pantheon, the protagonists in the myth shift roles. When Osiris becomes equated with the dead king, the living king, Horus, comes to be thought of as the son of Osiris, since the dead king was usually the father of the living ruler. The conflict between Horus and Seth then shifts to become a conflict between Osiris and Seth, and serves to explain why Osiris is dead. He was killed by his brother Seth. Horus then assumes the role of a son avenging the wrong done to his father and fighting for his rightful inheritance, which in this instance is the throne of Egypt. Horus also takes on two aspects: Horus the elder, ruler of Egypt, and Horus the Child (Greek, Harpokrates), the son of Osiris and Isis. Hence, the purpose of the trial before the gods serves two purposes: the need to punish Seth for the murder of Osiris as well as the need to determine who should inherit the kingdom of Egypt from Osiris.

**BATTLE FOR INHERITANCE.** The New Kingdom story “The Contendings of Horus and Seth” is a narrative detailing the events which take place during the trial of Horus and Seth before Atum and the gods of the Ennead. Unlike earlier myths, this one leaves out the issue of Seth killing Osiris and deals strictly with the issue of inheritance. Each god has his supporters, and the tribunal’s judgement sways first one way, and then the other. The gods appear to be petty, petulant bickerers who cannot make up their minds. Finally, Seth suggests a contest between the two. They are to transform themselves into hippopotamuses to see who can stay submerged underwater the longest. Due to Isis’s interference, first on one side and then the other, the

contest is indecisive. Seth then commits a sexual assault against Horus, intending to call forth his semen from Horus’ body in the presence of the judges, thereby demonstrating his superiority over Horus. Again, Seth’s efforts are thwarted by Isis, who rids Horus of Seth’s semen, and tricks Seth into unwittingly ingesting Horus’ semen. Finally, in desperation, Seth suggests the two gods build and race boats of stone, with the winner being declared the rightful heir. Seth proceeds to build a boat of stone, while Horus builds his boat of pine wood plastered over with gypsum to give it the appearance of stone. When the race begins, Seth’s boat sinks while Horus’ continues on the course. Seth transforms himself into a hippopotamus and scuttles Horus’ boat. Again, there is no clear winner. Finally, the judges decide to write a letter to Osiris, and ask who he would have as his heir. Osiris chooses Horus, who becomes the ruler of all Egypt. Since in this myth Seth is not guilty of killing his father, he is given the consolation prize of being sent to live in the sky with Re, where he becomes the god of storms and thunder.

**POISONED CHILD.** Another series of stories relate the events of Horus’ childhood. After Isis finds herself pregnant by Osiris, Re-Atum suggests she hide this fact from Seth, lest he try to destroy the infant Horus. When Horus is born, Isis hides him in the marsh at Khemmis. Isis leaves the infant alone while she goes in search of food. When she returns, she finds the baby weak and unable to suckle. A local wise woman diagnoses the child as suffering from a poisonous sting, either of a scorpion or snake. Isis cries out for help, and the sound of her anguish brings even Re in his solar barque to a stop. The god Thoth arrives to aid Isis, and recites spells which remove the poison from the child. Texts describing such events in the life of the infant Horus were carved on stone stelae known as *cippi*. These stelae depicted the infant Horus standing on the backs of crocodiles, grasping snakes, scorpions, and other dangerous animals by the tails. Water poured over the stele was thought to absorb the power of the spells, and was drunk by those seeking a cure for snake bite or scorpion sting.

**AMUN, HIDDEN ONE.** Amun, whose name means “the hidden one,” was originally associated with the area of Thebes. When Theban families rose to prominence and became the rulers of all Egypt, first in the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.) and again in the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1292 B.C.E.), Amun’s power and influence also increased. As the Eighteenth-dynasty kings expanded Egypt’s empire into Asia, they attributed their successes to Amun’s blessings, and rewarded

his priesthood accordingly. Eventually, Amun, joined with Re to form the god Amun-Re, rose to become the state god of Egypt, known as Amun-Re, king of the gods, lord of the thrones of the two lands. During the Third Intermediate Period (1075–656 B.C.E.), the priesthood of Amun at Thebes became the virtual rulers of southern Egypt, and one of the most important priestly offices was that of God's Wife of Amun.

**SELF-BIRTHING GOD OF AIR.** Egyptian artists usually depicted Amun as a human wearing a cap adorned with two tall, multi-colored feathers. His skin is blue, perhaps related to Amun's association with the wind and air. His principle cult center was at Karnak, where he was worshipped in conjunction with his consort Mut, a goddess representing motherhood, and their son Khonsu, whose name means "the wanderer" and represents the moon. Amun was associated with the ram and goose. In the Hermopolitan cosmogony, Amun is one of the sixteen gods representing the state of the world before creation. Egyptologists gave it this name because it is thought to have originated in Hermopolis, before being transferred to Thebes. The gods of this cosmogony form an Ogdoad, or group of eight pairs of deities. This group includes Nu(n) and Naunet (representing the primeval water and formlessness), Huh and Huhet (spaciousness), Kek and Keket (darkness), and Amun and Amaunet (concealment). Another tradition describes how Amun, in his form of Kematef (a serpent deity), fathers the Ogdoad. This idea of Amun being his own progenitor, and therefore having no creator, is also encountered in the form of Amun Kamutef, "Amun, bull of his mother." This epithet states that Amun was his own father. Amun was closely associated with kingship. Reliefs from New Kingdom temples describe a myth in which Amun falls in love with the queen of Egypt. He visits her in the guise of her current husband, the reigning king, and fathers the next king of Egypt. When the child is born, Amun acknowledges his paternity, and presents the child to the gods as the future king of Egypt.

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## THEOLOGY

**DEEDS OF THE CREATOR GOD.** According to Egyptian mythology, the gods were responsible for the creation and sustaining of the world and everything in it. One question that needed to be worked out, however, was the nature of the gods' continuing relationships with their creations, particularly man. In the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.) text known as the *Teachings for Merykare*, the king's father explains the creator god's actions on behalf of man. After establishing order by vanquishing chaos (described as the "water monster"), the god provides breath and light for his children. For food, he provides them with plants, cattle, fowl, and fish. The creator god continues to take an interest in his creation, and every day he watches them as he sails through the sky. When they are sad, he takes notice. In order to aid his children, the god provided them with rulers to protect the weak, and perhaps most importantly, with *heka* ("magic") "to ward off the blow of events."

**EVIL.** But if the gods created the world, and outfitted it for the benefit of man, how is it that it contains elements which are inimical to man? Here scholars encounter the Egyptian view of theodicy, how to account for the presence of evil in a world created by the gods. In the Egyptian view, *isfet* ("evil") was not the creation of the gods. Evil resulted from the actions of mankind. Egyptian texts contain several references to a rebellion by mankind. In the text from the time of Merykare it is said that the creator god "slew his foes, reduced his children when they thought of making rebellion." In a passage from the Middle Kingdom *Coffin Texts* Spell 1130, the creator god states that "I made every man like his fellow, but I did not command that they do evil. It is their hearts that disobey what I have said."

**BOOK OF THE HEAVENLY COW.** More references to a rebellion of mankind find mythological expression in the New Kingdom composition known as the *Book of the Heavenly Cow*. This text appeared first in the tomb of Tutankhamun (1332–1322 B.C.E.), and thereafter in several royal tombs of the New Kingdom. The text states that at one time Re ruled as king over gods and men. When Re grew old, mankind began to plot against him. Re summoned the other gods to a meeting to discuss his response to mankind's actions. In the story, Nun advises Re to send his fiery eye (Hathor) to destroy those who plotted against him. Hathor undertakes her task with rel-

ish, and kills those conspirators who had fled into the desert. Before Hathor can complete the job of destroying mankind, Re has a change of heart. He concocts a plan to get Hathor drunk on what she thinks is human blood, and in her altered state she fails to continue in her destructive work. Re preserves mankind, but as a result of their rebellion he withdraws to the sky on the back of his daughter, Nut, the sky, who takes the form of a cow.

**FATE.** The ancient Egyptians believed that at birth, a person's name, profession, length of life, and time and manner of death were assigned by a god or goddess. Some texts describe the manner of death of an individual as decreed by deities referred to as the Seven Hathors. In *The Doomed Prince*, the Seven Hathors attend the birth of a prince, and decree that he shall die by means of a crocodile, a snake, or dog. In *The Story of Two Brothers*, the Seven Hathors attend the creation of a wife for one of the brothers, Bata, and decree that she shall die through execution by means of a knife. In the Middle Kingdom *Khufu and the Magicians*, Re sends the goddess Meskhenet to attend the birth of his three children, and to decree that each will in turn assume the kingship of all Egypt. Other deities involved with determining a person's fate include the goddess Shay, the personification of fate who was thought of as allotting a person's length of life and manner of death, and Renenet, the goddess of harvest and fertility. Renenet could assume the form of a woman suckling a child or of a serpent, and was thought of as assigning those physical aspects of a person that seem to be beyond an individual's control, such as height, weight, complexion, and even material goods and prosperity. Gods were also thought to control fate, and Amun, Khnum, and Horus were each said to assign an individual's fate. In a text known as *A Calendar of Lucky and Unlucky Days*, a particular date is listed as being lucky or unlucky based on mythological events which were thought to have occurred on that date. Some dates contain a notation that assigns a particular fate to anyone born on that date. Anyone born on day three of the first month of Akhet would die by a crocodile, while anyone born on day six of the second month would die on account of drunkenness. Day five preserves a particularly interesting fate; one born on that date was fated to die "of copulation." The extent to which one's decreed fate was unalterable is uncertain. In *The Doomed Prince* mentioned above, the flow of the narrative seems to suggest that the prince will eventually escape his three ordained fates, but since the end of the papyrus is missing, this conclusion cannot be certain.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**EVIL IN INSTRUCTION FOR MERYKARE**

**INTRODUCTION:** *The Teachings for Merykare* primarily discusses the king's obligations to his people. In one digression, however, the author describes both creation and the way that evil entered the world through mankind's rebellion against the gods.

Well tended is mankind—god's cattle,  
He made sky and earth for their sake,  
He subdued the water monster,  
He made breath for their noses to live.  
They are his images, who came from his body,  
He shines in the sky for their sake;  
He made for them plants and cattle,  
Fowl and fish to feed them.  
He slew his foes, reduced his children,  
When they thought of making rebellion.  
He makes daylight for their sake,  
He sails by to see them.  
He has built his shrine around them,  
When they weep he hears.  
He made for them rulers in the egg,  
Leaders to raise the back of the weak.  
He made for them magic as weapons  
To ward off the blow of events.

**SOURCE:** "Instruction for Merykare," in *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*. Vol. 1 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973): 106.

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**ANIMALS IN EGYPTIAN RELIGION**

**SIGNIFICANCE.** Animals played an important role in Egyptian religion. Most of the Egyptian gods could at times be depicted either as an animal or as an animal-headed

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA ON EGYPTIAN RELIGION**

**INTRODUCTION:** Clement of Alexandria (died 215 C.E.) was an early Christian theologian. He wrote about Egyptian religion to discredit it for the Christian faithful living in Egypt in his own time when Egyptian paganism still thrived. Yet it is possible to derive some facts about the Egyptian cult from his writings in spite of his prejudices.

The temples [of the Egyptians] sparkle with gold, silver and mat gold and flash with colored stones from India and Ethiopia. The sanctuaries are overshadowed by cloths studded with gold. If, however, you enter the interior of the enclosure, hastening towards the sight of the almighty, and look for the statue residing in the temple, and if a [priest] or another celebrant, after having solemnly looked round the sanctuary, singing a song in the language of the Egyptians, draws back the curtain a little to show the god, he will make us laugh aloud about the object of worship. For we shall not find the god for whom we have been looking inside, the god towards whom we have hastened, but a cat or a crocodile, or a native snake or a similar animal, which should not be in a temple, but in a cleft or a den or on a dung heap. The god of the Egyptians appears on a purple couch as a wallowing animal.

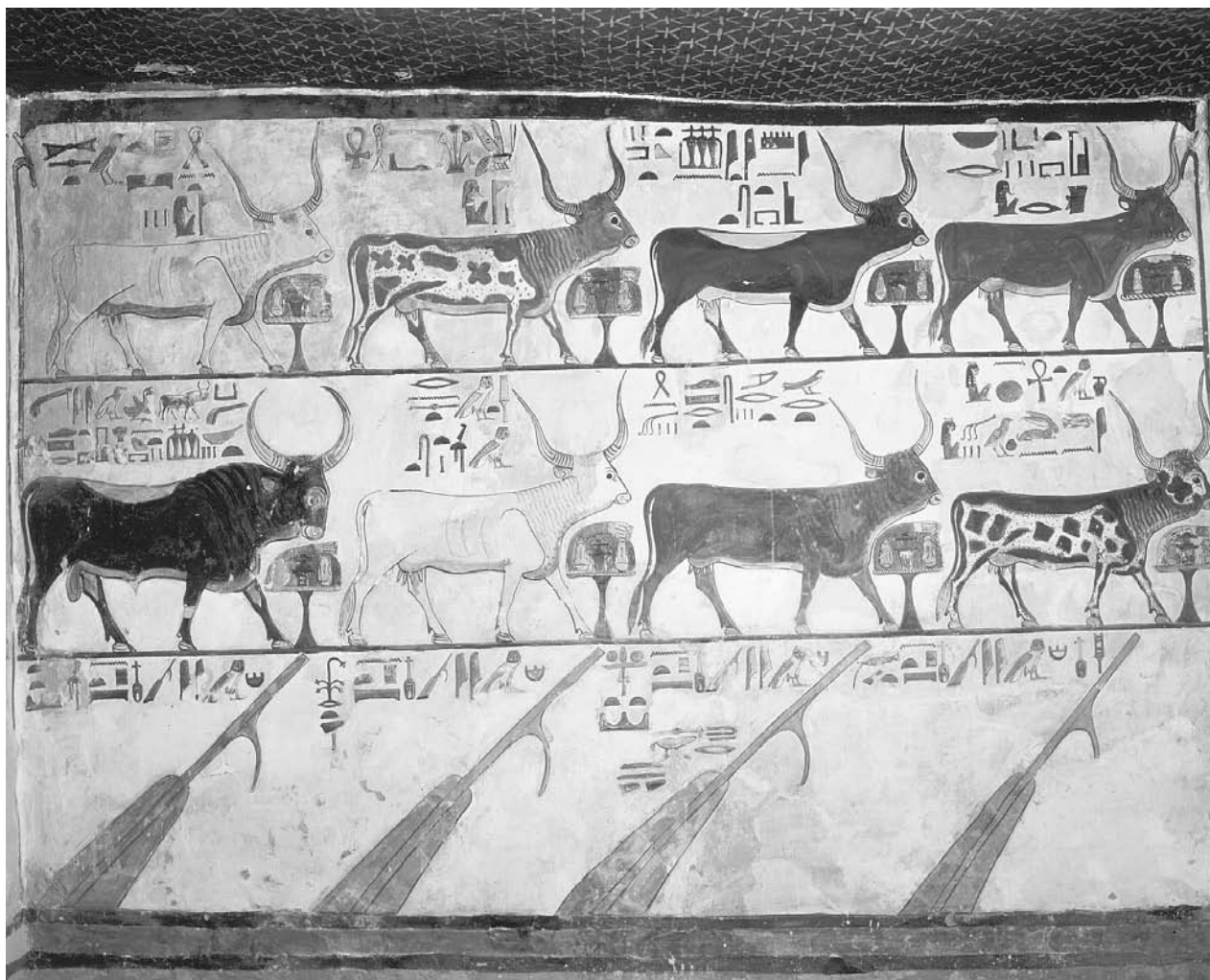
**SOURCE:** "The Cult of the Ibis in the Graeco-Roman Period," in *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*. Ed. M. J. Vermaseren. Trans. K. A. D. Smelik (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1979): 225–226.

human. Since the Egyptians apprehended their gods through the natural world, it is not surprising to find that animals were viewed as manifestations of the divine. Several theories have been suggested as to why this was the case. The American scholar Henri Frankfort suggested that it was the apparently unchanging nature of the animals that impressed the Egyptians. From generation to generation, humans exhibit changes in appearance, while animals appear the same. An important element in Egyptian theology was that the perfect pattern of existence had been established by the gods at the time of creation, called the *sep tepi*, "the first time," and it was important that this pattern be maintained. Animals would seem to have been more successful than man at maintaining their form established at the first time. The German Egyptologist Hellmut Brunner suggested

alternatively that it was the animals' possession of superhuman powers, such as flight, speed, stealth, heightened senses, and strength that made the Egyptians perceive them as beings through whom the gods were manifest. One thing is certain: the Egyptians did not see a wide gulf separating gods and humans from the animals. The creative powers of the mind and tongue were thought to be operative in the gods, mankind, and animals equally. A hymn to Amun states that he cares even for worms, fleas, mice in their holes, and insects. The First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.) nomarch Henqu states that not only did he give bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked in his nome, but he also provided the jackals of the mountains and the birds of the sky with food, putting good deeds towards humans and animals on the same level. Given the close association between animals and the gods, it is not surprising that animals could be worshipped, not as gods but as the means through which the gods manifested themselves, much as a statue was worshipped as a vehicle through which the god was manifest. This distinction was lost on the Greeks, who, when they encountered Egyptian religion, thought the Egyptians were worshipping the animals as their gods, as the ancient Greek author Clement of Alexandria (died 215 C.E.) described.

**SACREDNESS.** Evidence for the veneration of animals dates back to the fourth millennium B.C.E. Predynastic burials of gazelles, dogs, cattle, monkeys and rams have been found at the villages of Badari and Nagada in southern Egypt, and Maadi and Heliopolis in northern Egypt. The care taken in the burial of these animals, and the fact that they were buried with grave goods, is considered to be evidence for a cult of sacred animals in Egypt at this early date. The earliest mention of a particular sacred animal, the Apis bull, dates to the reign of Aha, the first king of the First Dynasty (3100–2800 B.C.E.). During the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664–525 B.C.E.) the cult of sacred animals received renewed emphasis, perhaps an expression of a resurgence of Egyptian nationalism after Kushite rule in the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (760–665 B.C.E.). Animal cults reached their acme during the rest of the Late Period (664–332 B.C.E.) and Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.). Most of the large animal necropolises date to the latter period.

**CLASSIFICATION OF SACRED ANIMALS.** There were three types of sacred animal in ancient Egypt. One type is the temple animal. These animals performed the same function as cult statues, and were considered vessels through which the gods could make their wills manifest. These animals lived in or near a temple and were distinguished by special markings. For example, the Apis



The seven celestial cows and one sacred bull, painted limestone relief in the tomb of Nefertari, chief royal wife of Ramesses II from her tomb in the Valley of the Queens at Thebes, 19th Dynasty. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

bull, who lived at Memphis, was a bull with a white triangle on its forehead, a crescent moon on its chest and another on its flanks, and double hairs, black and white, in its tail. The Apis bull was thought to be the *ba*, or manifestation, of the god Ptah. At certain times of day the bull was released into a courtyard where worshippers would gather to see him and receive oracles. People could put a yes-or-no question to the bull, and the answer was received when the bull entered one of two stables. When the bull died, there was a time of widespread mourning, and an elaborate embalming and burial ceremony was performed. The Apis bull was buried in a stone sarcophagus in a mausoleum known as the Serapeum at Saqqara. The search for the new Apis bull then began. Other examples of such temple animals include the Mnevis bull at the Temple of Atum-Re at Heliopolis, the Buchis bull of the Temple of Montu at Hermonthis,

the ram at the Temple of Osiris-Re at Mendes, and the ram of the Temple of Khnum at Elephantine.

**SAME SPECIES.** The second type of sacred animals were animals that belong to the same species as the temple animal. These animals were not thought to be special manifestations of particular gods, but because the god or goddess could appear in the guise of one of these animals, others of the same species were considered dear to the god. Large numbers of these animals could be kept near a temple. At Saqqara there was an extensive complex of buildings dedicated to the care of flocks of ibises associated with Thoth, falcons associated with Horus, and cats associated with Bast. Such large collections of animals served as the source of the enormous number of animal mummies that have been preserved. Sacred animal necropolises throughout Egypt contain literally millions of mummified animal burials. In addition to the

ibis necropolis at Saqqara, there are necropolises for cats at Bubastis; rams at Elephantine; crocodiles, snakes, falcons, and ibises at Kom Ombo; and ibises and falcons at Abydos. Other animals that were buried include sheep, dogs, baboons, jackals, fish of several species, shrews, scorpions, and scarab beetles. The main difference between temple animals and animals of the same species is there was only one temple animal at a time; the temple animal received a cult, while these animals did not, and the mortuary services for the temple animals were much more elaborate.

**MUMMIES AS VOTIVE OFFERINGS.** The reason for the mummification and burial of such enormous numbers of animals in ancient Egypt is related to their association with the gods. People who visited the various temples during festival periods were anxious to make an offering to the god in an attempt to earn his blessing. One acceptable votive offering was the mummified remains of an animal associated with the god. A prayer inscribed on a jar containing an Ibis mummy asked Thoth to be benevolent towards the woman who had embalmed his sacred animal. Of course, most such offerings took place during festivals. In order to ensure a plentiful supply of animals for pilgrims, the priests were not adverse to hastening the death of an animal. At this point, the extent of this practice is uncertain. The one population of animal mummy that has been systematically studied is cats. An examination of their mummies at the British Museum reveals that the majority of them died either at two or four months old, or between nine and twelve months. The average lifespan of a cat should have been around twelve years. In addition, a common cause of death among the cats was a dislocation of the cervical vertebrae, which could be the result of violently twisting the head of an animal until its neck broke. Other cat mummies show evidence of head trauma from a blow. Apparently the sacredness of these animals to the gods did not prevent the priests from doing what was necessary to supply a pilgrim with a mummified animal.

**PRIVATE ANIMALS.** The third type of sacred animals were members of the same species as the temple animal which were kept in private homes as representatives of the gods. For example, snakes, cats, or dogs were often kept in homes and buried at their deaths. This practice is analogous to the construction of household shrines to allow for domestic worship.

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## THE KING

**DIVINE STATUS.** The king of Egypt was the only living person who possessed the status of a *netjer* ("god"). He could be called "the good god," the "great god," or simply "god." Because of the king's special status, he could serve as the link between the world of the gods and men. The king was the only mortal who could directly approach the gods. The temples throughout Egypt show only the king performing the rituals. This was a polite fiction, because in reality the king commissioned the priests to act in his stead. The king's "divinity" (for lack of a better word—"netjer-hood" would be more appropriate, but is too cumbersome), however, is different from that of the gods. The king's divinity was an acquired status, bestowed when he ascended the throne. Beginning with his coronation, and extending throughout his reign, the king participated in rituals designed to reinforce and strengthen his divine status.

**DESCRIPTIONS.** The Egyptians had many ways of describing the king's unique nature. He could be called a god, the son of a god, the image of a god, or he was described as like a god. For example, one text describes Merneptah (r. 1213–1204 B.C.E.) as "the good god that lives on Maat ... son of Kheperi [a form of the sun], descendant of the Bull of Heliopolis [probably a reference to Amun, Re, or Atum], ... born of Isis." A text describes Redjedef (r. 2560–2555 B.C.E.), the third king of the Fourth Dynasty and the successor of Khufu, as the first king to be called the Son of Re. From this point on, every king has a "Son of Re" name, usually his birth name, which was one of the king's two names enclosed in a cartouche (an oval or oblong figure enclosing the king's names). This king's status as the son of a god is explained in the text called *Khufu and the Magicians*, where the first allusion to the myth of the king's divine birth are found. The text contains references to Ruddedet, the wife of a priest of Re, who was impregnated by Re himself. She gave birth to triplets who grew up to be the first three kings of the Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 B.C.E.). Later, in the Eighteenth Dynasty, Hatshepsut (r. 1478–1458 B.C.E.) had a set of reliefs carved in her temple at Deir el Bahri depicting the myth of her divine birth. The myth relates that the god Amun, in the guise of her father Thutmosis I, visited her mother one night. As a result of their union, Hatshepsut was conceived. The myth of the divine birth of the king was not confined to only Re

and Amun. An inscription from the time of Ramesses II (1279–1213 B.C.E.) states that Ptah engendered the king in his form of Banebdjed, a ram god.

**HORUS.** The king could be equated with any number of deities when he was said to be fulfilling the function of those gods. From the earliest periods of Egyptian history, the king was thought to be the embodiment of the ancient sky god Horus. Amenemhet I (r. 1938–1909 B.C.E.) is described as “driving out evil when he appears like Atum.” Sesostri III (1836–1818 B.C.E.) was described as Sekhmet, a fierce lion goddess representing the fiery heat of the sun, when attacking the enemies who trespassed on the borders of Egypt. The *Loyalist Inscription* describes King Amenemhet III (r. 1818–1772 B.C.E.) as Sia (goddess of perception), Re, Khnum, Bastet, Hapi, Montu, and Sakhmet. Here the king was not the incarnation of these deities, but equating the king with these gods described his roles as warrior (Montu), provider (Hapi), protector (Sakhmet), and father figure (Khnum).

**FOUR PURPOSES.** According to an Egyptian text that scholars call *The King as Sun Priest*, Re established kingship in Egypt for four purposes: “judging men, for making gods content, for creating truth (maat), and for destroying evil (isfet).” The first of these duties, judging men, refers to the king’s civil duties as the source of law and justice. The second, making the gods content, refers to the king’s responsibility to see to it that temples to the gods were built and maintained throughout Egypt, and that in them the gods received the necessary offerings and the required rituals were performed. The third and fourth duties, creating maat and destroying isfet, go together. Maat has been translated as truth, order, justice, or righteousness. It refers to the order established by the gods at creation, when a space was established in the chaos of Nun for life to take place. It refers to the natural order as well as to the social order, and embraces the concepts of duty, responsibility, social justice, and ethical behavior. It was the way the Egyptians thought things ought to be. It was the king’s responsibility to ensure that maat was preserved and that its opposite, isfet (evil, disorder, injustice) was overcome. One of the king’s most important duties was to present maat, represented as a small figure of the seated goddess with her legs drawn up, to the gods in their temples daily. In this way, the king reaffirmed that he was fulfilling his duty of preserving maat.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: The Literature of Moral Values; Philosophy: Maat*

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## KINGSHIP RITUALS

**FORMAL TITULARY.** The king acquired and maintained his divinity through a series of rituals. The first such ritual the king participated in was his coronation, called in Egyptian *khai*, which means “to arise” and was also used to describe the sun’s rising. At this time, the five elements of the king’s formal titulary were announced: a Horus name, representing the king as the earthly embodiment of the sky-god Horus; a “Two Ladies” name (the two ladies being the goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet, the two protective goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt); the Golden Horus (or simply the Gold) name, the exact significance of which is uncertain; his throne name, assumed at accession, which was preceded by the title “King of Upper and Lower Egypt”; and the birth name which, beginning in the Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.), was compounded with the title “son of Re.” It is the throne name and birth name that were surrounded by a cartouche (an oval or oblong figure that held the king’s names).

**OPET FESTIVAL.** Once inducted into office, the king participated in rituals designed to maintain and renew his divine status. Once a year he traveled to Thebes to participate in the Opet festival at the temple of Luxor. During this festival, which began on the fifteenth or nineteenth day of the second month of the first season known as Akhet (Inundation), the king participated in a procession from Karnak to Luxor temple, where some of the rituals of the coronation were reenacted. The purpose of these rituals was to renew or restore the king’s royal *ka* (spirit) and reconfirm his right to rule. Each Egyptian possessed a *ka*, which can roughly be translated “life force.” This was a separate entity that was thought to inhabit the body. The *ka* was transmitted from parent to child, and embodied the procreative power. The *ka* represented a bridge between the physical world and the world of the spirit. At his coronation, the king had received the royal *ka*, the same *ka* possessed by all the previous kings of Egypt. It was possession of this *ka* that rendered the king divine. As the vessel of the royal *ka*, some kings had temples dedicated to their worship built during their lifetimes. Amenhotep III (r. 1390–1352 B.C.E.) erected temples to himself at Soleb, Sedeinga, and

Sesebi. Tutankhamun (r. 1332–1322 B.C.E.) did the same at Kawa and Faras. Ramesses II (r. 1279–1213 B.C.E.) built temples to his own divine form at Gerf Hussein, es-Sebua, ed-Derr and most famously, Abu Simbel. In these temples, the king could even be shown worshipping himself. The king really was not worshipping himself, but the royal ka of which he was only the vessel.

**SED FESTIVAL.** After about thirty years on the throne, the king participated in a festival designed to restore his flagging powers. This event, called the Sed festival, was named for a very ancient jackal god named Sed. It could be held wherever the king chose. Generally, the festival would be held near the capital. Amenhotep I (1514–1493 B.C.E.) and Amenhotep III (1390–1352 B.C.E.) of the Eighteenth Dynasty held their Sed festivals at Karnak; Ramesses II (1279–1213 B.C.E.) celebrated a Sed festival at the city of Pi-Rameses in the Delta. The exact elements of the Sed festival are uncertain, and the available evidence indicates that the rituals underwent changes over the course of Egyptian history. The two major aspects of the Sed festival remained fairly constant. First, the king sat on two thrones in succession, first wearing the crown of Upper Egypt and then the crown of Lower Egypt. He then paid a visit to each of the provincial gods in their shrines, which had been built for this occasion. Next he ascended the throne to receive visits from these same gods. The king then performed a ritual race or dance in which he strode across a field, crossing it along the two axes formed by the cardinal points. This activity took place between two territorial cairns (piles of stones serving as a memorial markers) designated respectively as the southern and northern boundary markers. During this circuit, the king wore alternately the two crowns of Egypt, a shendyt kilt that was a royal symbol, and carried a flail—a symbol of royal rule—and a document container containing the deed to Egypt. The ritual of crossing the field was intended to symbolize the king’s seizing possession of Egypt.

**REJUVENATION.** The result of completing the Sed festival was the rejuvenation of the king. An inscription from the temple of Sety I (1290–1279 B.C.E.) at Abydos stated of the king that “you experience renewal again, you begin to flourish ... as a young infant. You become young again year after year. ... You are born again by renewing Sed festivals. All life comes to your nostrils. You are sovereign of the whole land forever.” After completing his first Sed festival, the king could celebrate subsequent festivals at intervals of two to three years. Amenhotep III celebrated three such festivals, while Ramesses II held fourteen.

**NEW YEAR.** The third major festival associated with the king was the New Year’s festival. This festival began

on the last five days of the year, called epagomenal days, because they were added by the Egyptians to their 360-day calendar to bring the year up to 365 days. The festival lasted until about the ninth day of the first month. The festival had three main purposes: protect the king from the ills and dangers which were thought to threaten creation during the five epagomenal days, renew royal power for the coming year, and purify the king and Egypt from the miasmal effects of the end of the year and of the misdeeds of the past year. There were two main parts to the festival: the Ceremony of the Great Throne, and the Rites of the Adoration of Horus who bestows the Heritage.

**CEREMONY OF THE GREAT THRONE.** During the Ceremony of the Great Throne the king was purified, dressed in new garments, provided with amulets of protection such as the ankh-sign (for life), and anointed nine times as a means of protection. After the last anointing, the following statement is given: “Pharaoh is a god among gods, he is come into being at the head of the Ennead, he has become great in the heaven and eminent in the horizon. Pharaoh is one of the victors who causes Re to triumph over Apophis; he is without wrongdoing, and his obstacles are dispelled.” This last line is a quotation from *Book of the Dead* spell 125, the so-called “negative confession” in which the deceased denies any wrongdoing. In a hymn to Isis from the temple at Philae (third century B.C.E.), there is the following inscription: “the evils of the past year that had adhered to [the king] have been repelled. His evils of this year are destroyed. His back is turned to them. ... He has not done anything abominable toward the god of his town. He has not committed any evil. Nothing will be counted against him among the assessors and the scribes of the Two Lands [Egypt].” Here the king is essentially performing two functions: he is making amends for the past wrongdoings by himself, and by extension, the people of Egypt. As a result, the king can claim ritual purity and innocence. The king can claim that he has fulfilled the divine commission to uphold Maat and destroy wrongdoing (isfet), and as a result, he and the people of Egypt are entitled to the blessings and favors of the gods.

**rites of the Adoration of Horus.** In the Rites of the Adoration of Horus, the king participated in a series of events that renewed his powers through recalling the coronation. The king spent a night in a chapel in the temple (which temple was not significant) during which he received a scepter and had four seals placed on his head, two with the name of Geb, one with Neith, and the other with Maat. The next morning, when the king appeared from the chapel, two birds were sent out



as messengers to proclaim the king's dominion. The king then engaged in the symbolic massacre of Egypt's enemies by cutting off the tops of seven papyrus stalks. Next the king made offerings to all the deceased former kings of Egypt. This last act was related to the concept of the royal ka encountered in the Opet festival. Each king, by virtue of the fact that he was endowed with the royal ka at his coronation, was thought to be a direct descendant of all the previous kings of Egypt. One responsibility of possessing this ka was that of providing for the king's deceased predecessors. In ancient Egypt, one way for the eldest son to ensure his right to the primacy of inheritance was to provide for the burial and continued funerary offerings of his father. By providing his deceased predecessors with the necessary offerings, the king confirmed his right to inherit the throne.

**IMPORTANCE.** As can be seen from this brief description of the coronation, Opet festival, Sed festival, and the New Year festival, the maintenance of the king's divine status was of great importance in the royal ideology of Egypt. An acquired status can be lost. In order to prevent this from happening, the king participated in several rituals intended to reinforce his divinity and relationship to the royal ka. The king's divinity was essential to the well-being of the country, because without his status of netjer the king could not meet the needs of the gods, nor successfully intercede with the gods on behalf of the Egyptian people. If this happened, all sorts of calamities could be expected. After the Amarna Period (1352–1332 B.C.E.), during which the traditional gods and their temples were neglected, we are told that “the land was topsy-turvy, and the gods turned their backs upon this land.” So it was vitally important to the well-being of Egypt that the king's status as netjer be constantly maintained.

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SEE ALSO *Fashion: Crowns*

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## TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE AND SYMBOLISM

**GOD'S HOUSE.** One of the king's duties was to build and maintain temples throughout Egypt. The

Egyptian word for temple meant “god's house,” and temples were designed to be the earthly dwellings of the gods. As such, they included all the elements necessary to provide for the care and feeding of the gods. To meet the needs of the gods a temple needed to control an extensive network of land, livestock, and personnel. All of the elements necessary to conduct the business of the temple were referred to as the *er-per*, or temple estate. There were two main classes of temple in ancient Egypt: the cult temple and the mortuary temple, called by the Egyptians the “House of Millions of Years.” The cult temple had as its main purpose to carry out the worship of a particular deity or deities. The mortuary temple was built by the reigning king in order to carry out his cult while living, and to provide for his mortuary cult after he died. Since much that went on in cult temples had to do with the king, and the “houses of millions of years” could have areas dedicated to the cults of the gods, it has been suggested that the difference between the two was a matter of primary focus, the cult temple having as its primary focus the carrying out of the cult of a god, and a mortuary temple having as its primary focus the carrying out of the cult of the divine king, but not to the exclusion of the cults of other gods.

**BUILDING MATERIALS.** For information on the layout of Egyptian temples modern scholars depend primarily on the large stone temples dating from the New Kingdom until the Roman Period (1539 B.C.E.–395 C.E.). The earliest temples in Egypt were built of perishable materials such as mud brick or reeds. For information on these early structures, scholars rely on archaeological evidence combined with images found on labels, pottery, and other materials. The earliest religious structures built of stone were those intended for King Djoser's (r. 2675–2654 B.C.E.) cult at Saqqara. The use of stone in cult temples did not begin until the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.), and the only surviving non-royal cultic structures from the Middle Kingdom are the White Chapel of Sesostris I (r. 1919–1875 B.C.E.) at Karnak and the small temple dedicated to Sobek, Horus, and Ernutet built by Amenemhet III (r. 1818–1772 B.C.E.) and Amenemhet IV (r. 1773–1763 B.C.E.) at Medinet Maadi. The White Chapel was dedicated to Amun at Karnak, and served as a place for the priests to rest the barque (sailing vessel) of Amun when the god was out in procession. The only reason the White Chapel stands is because it was disassembled and used as fill in the Third Pylon of Amenhotep III at Karnak. When archaeologists discovered the blocks during the twentieth century C.E., they carefully reassembled them.

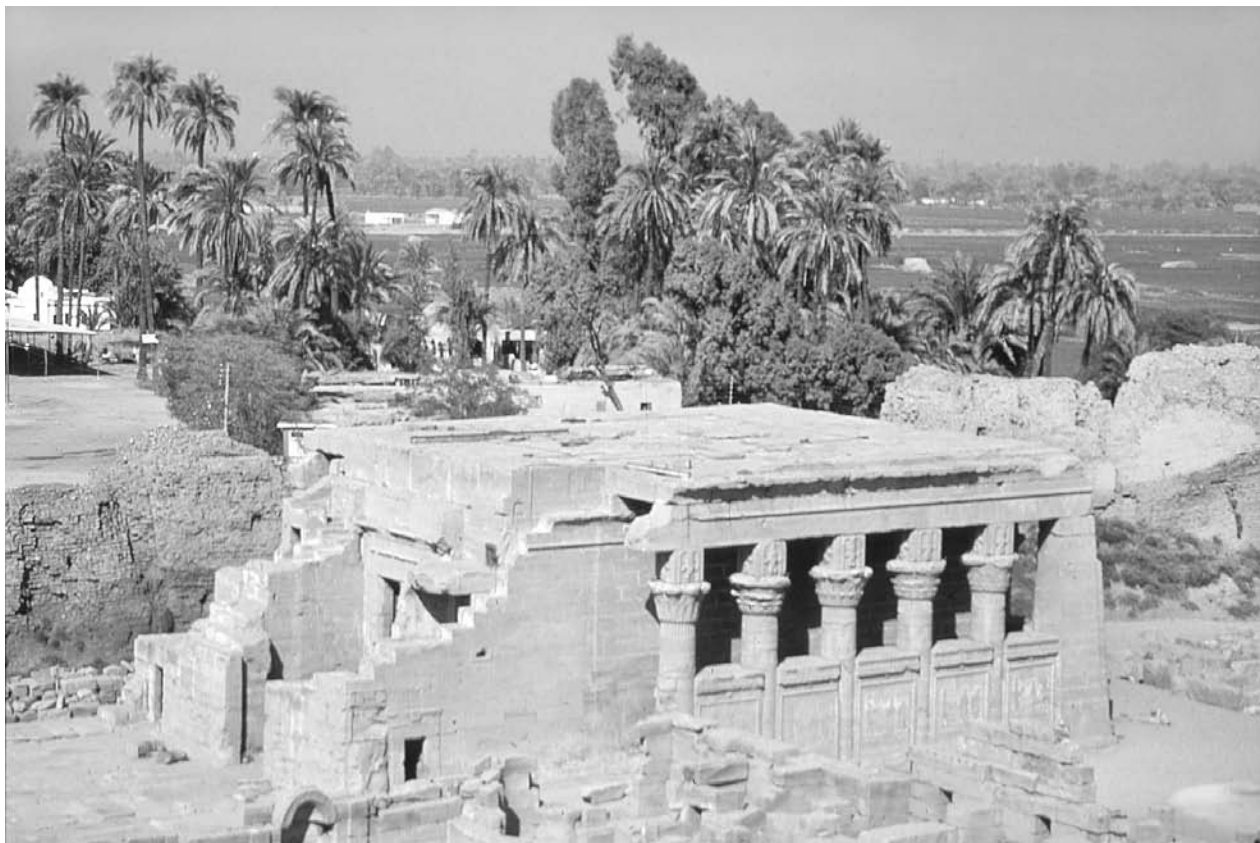
**TEMPLE COMPLEX.** The main elements of a temple complex were fairly standard throughout Egypt. The temple area was segregated from profane space by a large brick wall, called a temenos. Entrance into the complex was gained through a gateway called a pylon. The pylon was a pair of high trapezoidal towers flanking a doorway, one on each side of the road leading up to the temple. The only limit on the number of pylons a temple could have was the space available and the resources that the king wanted to expend. Some temple complexes, such as the temple of Amun at Karnak, had ten pylons. For hundreds of years, successive kings would add a pylon to the temple. In front of pylons, tall poles with pendants were raised. Generally four such poles were in front of each pylon, although Karnak had eight. Colossal statues of the king or obelisks could also be set up in front of the pylon. These colossal statues could serve as focal points for the worship of the king. Obelisks were tapering shafts topped with a pyramid-shaped stone called a pyramidion. They were usually made of pink granite, and the pyramidion could be plated in gold. As such, they served as solar symbols, and the pyramidion was perhaps the first and last part of the temple to receive the sun's rays.

**GOD'S ROAD.** The road to the temple, leading through the pylons, was called the "god's road." This was the path the god took when he left his temple in procession during festivals. Beginning with the reign of Hatshepsut (1478–1458 B.C.E.), this path could be lined with small sphinxes. Smaller gateways, called propylons, could also be built along this pathway. As one passed through the last pylon, one entered the forecourt of the temple, called the "court of the multitude." This open courtyard was as far as the general public could go. Here devotees could gather to participate in the public aspects of temple festivals. Individuals who received the king's permission could erect statues of themselves within this courtyard. These statues, serving as proxy for the deceased donor, allowed the donor to continually enjoy the god's presence and to participate in the offerings donated to the temple.

**INTERIOR DESIGN.** Passing through the forecourt, one entered the hypostyle hall, called the "fore-hall" or the "great court." This room was filled with gigantic columns spaced close together. The columns took the form of plants such as palm trees, bundles of papyrus, or lotus stalks, with capitals of papyrus umbels or lotus blossoms (open or closed). The hypostyle hall gave way to the offering chamber, a room containing many small tables and stands set up to receive the offerings for the gods. Next was the barque shrine, a room that included a large

platform intended to support the god's boat when not in use. Egyptian gods generally traveled by boat when they left their temples. These boats were carried on the backs of priests and contained a small shrine to house the portable image of the god. Leaving the barque shrine one enters the inner shrine of the temple, the room that housed the god's image. As the visitor proceeded from the hypostyle deeper into the temple, the ceiling became progressively lower, and the floor rose slightly. As a result, the main sanctuary of the temple was the highest point on the ground floor. This room had a low roof and was usually totally dark. It contained a small shrine, called a naos, which contained the image of the god. This image could be made of wood, stone, or gold, and has been estimated to be approximately twenty inches high. This image was the focus of the daily temple ritual. Since more than one deity could be worshipped in a temple, there was usually more than one sanctuary. The hypostyle hall, the offering chamber, the barque shrine, and the inner temple room lay along the main axis of the temple, usually oriented east-west. In addition, a temple had subsidiary rooms used for the various functions necessary to the cult. There could be a laboratory, where incense and ointments were prepared; a treasury where sacred vessels were kept; and a room through which libations entered the temple, sometimes called a Nile room.

**HOUSE OF LIFE.** The temple proper was often surrounded by auxiliary buildings such as storehouses, granaries, kitchens, administrative offices, workshops and studios for the manufacture and repair of statues and furniture used in the temple, and dwellings for the priests. One such building was called the "House of Life." This structure served as the place where texts were studied, copied, and assembled. Priests in the House of Life would prepare the texts that the lector priests would read during the daily temple ceremony. Papyri containing spells for protection for the living and for the dead (*Book of the Dead*) were also composed there. Medical textbooks and astronomical information were also compiled and copied in the House of Life. Temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods (332 B.C.E.–395 C.E.) could include a building that the French Egyptologist J.-F. Champollion called a "mammisi," meaning birth house, and a sanatorium. A mammisi depicted the events surrounding the conception and birth of a god's offspring, such as Ihy, son of Horus and Hathor (found at Dendera). A sanatorium was a building to which the sick could be brought to seek healing from the gods or medical treatment from the priests. Here pilgrims could practice incubation, in which they would spend the night in hopes of receiving a dream detailing the cure for their



The Mammisi, or Birth House, in Dendera. PHOTOGRAPH BY CORY LANGLEY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

illness or the answer to their problem. A central courtyard of the sanatorium could contain statues covered with magical healing texts, and water poured over these texts was thought to become charged with their power, and was used for drinking or bathing.

**SACRED LAKE.** Within the temenos of each temple was a sacred lake, usually rectangular, filled with groundwater. This water was thought to originate in Nun, the cosmic water of creation, and it served several purposes. The king and priests would purify themselves in the sacred lake before performing rituals in the temple. This water also served to purify the sacred vessels used in the ceremonies, and was a source of water for libations poured out before the gods. Even the fish in the lake were considered important, and one of the sins the king denied when making his denial of guilt at the New Year's festival was that he had poached fish from the sacred lakes.

**MODEL OF THE COSMOS.** The architectural design of the temple was intended to represent a scale model of the cosmos, the created world. The bricks of the temenos wall were not laid in straight lines, but in undulating rows, giving the effect of a wave. This wall represented

Nun, the primordial water surrounding the created universe. The temple itself could be called an *akhet* ("horizon"), and represented the place where this world and the world of the gods and the deceased came together. The pylons could also be called *akhet*, and represented the mountains between which the sun rose and set. The two portions of the pylon could also be called Isis and Nephthys or the two Meret goddesses, who were thought to lift the sun out of Nun daily. The pylons could be decorated with scenes of the king smiting his enemies in battle, or engaging in hunting expeditions, all activities that the Egyptians associated with the role of the king as the champion against chaos and guarantor of order. Similar scenes could be carved on the outer walls of the temple, and served to protect the temple from the evil forces of chaos. The floor of the temple was also associated with Nun's waters, and the large papyrus-shaped columns of the hypostyle hall seemed to grow out of this water. The bases of these columns and interior walls of the temple were frequently decorated with scenes of aquatic plants, papyrus plants, and lilies, as if growing out of the floor of the temple. The ceiling of the temple could be decorated with stars or astronomical texts,

or with winged sun disks or vultures, all elements belonging to the sky. The sanctuary containing the god's image was thought of as both the akhet, the place from which the sun god appeared, and as the sky. The priest opening the shrine each morning was said to "open the doors of heaven." The steadily rising floor had the effect of rendering the sanctuary the highest point within the temple. As such, it represented the primeval hill, the first land to emerge from the waters of Nun on which creation began.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: Earliest Temples and Tombs*; *Architecture: New Kingdom Temples*

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### TEMPLE RITUAL

**ENSURING PROSPERITY.** Fortunately for the modern scholar, the Egyptians decorated the walls and ceilings of their temples with scenes and texts relating to the activities which went on in the temples. A few papyri relating to the temple rituals have also survived, and by putting the two together, scholars have been able to draw a fairly detailed picture of the rituals that went on within the temple. These rituals fall into two main categories: those which were intended to satisfy the god's needs, conducted on a daily basis; and those representing the god's function, either cosmic or political. These were the festivals celebrated during particular times of the year. The Egyptians believed that the well-being of Egypt was dependent on their continued performance of temple rituals. The *Papyrus Jumilhac* states that "if the gifts are poor on its [the sanctuary's] tables, then the same thing will happen in the entire country; life will be poor for the living. If the gifts are multiplied in this place, then abundance will happen throughout the entire country, and every belly will be filled with grain."

**CARING FOR THE GOD.** The focus of the daily temple ritual was the care and feeding of the god, mediated through the divine image in the naos. This ritual took essentially the same form in every temple in Egypt. It derived from the ritual for the sun god Re at Heliopolis, and represented the rebirth of the sun each morning. At a later date, elements of Osirian belief were incorporated into the ritual, and it also came to symbolize the restoration and revivification of the dismembered body

of Osiris. For the purposes of the ritual, the cult-statue was identified as both Re and Osiris. Modern information regarding the sequence of events of this ritual comes from two main sources: temple reliefs that show the king performing the various rituals of the ceremony, and papyri that list the rituals and the hymns which accompany them. Analysis of these various sources has allowed scholars to reconstruct the likely sequence of events of this ritual. Since all of the sources are not in agreement as to the order of events, scholarly reconstructions differ, depending on which source is taken as a guide.

**COLORED CLOTHS.** Before dawn, two priests filled containers with water from the sacred well of the temple and replenished all the libation vessels of the temple. Priests were busy in the temple kitchens preparing offerings for the gods. The main officiating priest went to "the house of the morning" where he was ceremonially purified, dressed, given a light meal, and prepared to conduct the morning ceremony. The priest approached the shrine containing the god's image, and as the sun rose the bolt was drawn back and the door opened. Since only the king was able to confront the god, the officiating priest declared that "it is the king who has sent me to see the god." Once he had opened the doors to the shrine, the priest prostrated himself before the image. The next step was a ritual purification of the chapel with water and incense in preparation for removing the image from its shrine. At this point, the priest presented a small figure of the goddess Maat to the statue, which symbolized the proper order established for the world at creation. The image was then removed from its shrine, and the clothing and ointment that had been placed on the image the previous day were removed. Priests then placed the deity's image on a pile of clean sand and purified the shrine with water and incense. Next, a priest applied green and black eye paint to the image and anointed it with several oils. A priest dressed the god in four colored cloths: white, green, blue, and red. The white and red cloths protected the god from his enemies, the blue hid his face, and the green ensured his health. The priest then presented the god with various objects such as his crowns, scepter, crook, flail, and collar. Next he anointed the god's face, scattered sand around the chapel, and replaced the cult image in the shrine and bolted and sealed the door. Finally the priest performed the final purifications and exited the sanctuary dragging a broom behind him to obliterate his footprints.

**BREAKFAST.** At some point during the morning ritual, the offering ritual took place. The purpose of this ritual was to provide the god with his "breakfast." Some reconstructions of the ritual have it occurring before the

final purification of the chapel in preparation for replacing the statue in the shrine, while others would have the offering ritual take place before the undressing and dressing of the statue. In this ritual, the offerings that had been prepared that morning by the priests were presented to the god. Although an enormous meal was prepared for the god consisting of meat, bread, cakes, beer, milk, honey, vegetables, and fruit, only a small part of this repast was actually placed before the statue. An offering formula listing the various items of the offering was recited by the priest, and incense was burned and libations made to purify and sanctify the offerings. Since the god did not actually consume the offerings, but simply partook of their essence, they could be shared with the other deities in the temple. The offerings were also used in the ritual of the royal ancestors, in which the king made offerings to all of his predecessors in office, often depicted in the form of a list of their names. After this ritual, the offerings could then be made to the statues of other individuals found in the temple, and finally they became the property of the priests, who received a share based on their rank in the priestly hierarchy. This reuse of the offerings until they were finally consumed by the priests was called the “reversion of offerings” and was one way in which the priests were compensated for their work.

**THREATS TO EXISTENCE.** This morning ritual was the main ritual of the day, but less elaborate ceremonies were also held at noon and in the evening. During these rituals, the doors of the sanctuary housing the god’s statue were not opened. These rituals consisted primarily of pouring water libations and burning incense before the shrines of the gods. In addition to these offering rituals, certain protective rituals were conducted in the temples throughout the day and night in order to repel the threats to existence, frequently thought of in terms of Seth, the murderer of Osiris, or Apophis, the serpent who tried to stop the daily voyage of Re and thereby bring an end to creation. Singers sang hymns during the twelve hours of the day and night to protect Re from Apophis and keep the solar barque moving along on its voyage. Artists created images of enemies from wax or clay and then destroyed them, thereby bringing about the enemies’ destruction through magic.

**FESTIVALS.** In addition to their daily rituals, temples also celebrated a number of festivals throughout the year. For example, during the reign of Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.), the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak celebrated 54 festival days. Ramesses III’s (r. 1187–1156 B.C.E.) temple at Medinet Habu celebrated sixty festival days. Festivals could last from one to twenty-seven days,

and involved large expenditures of food and drink for those participating in or observing the festival. Work records from the village of Deir el-Medina indicate that workers were frequently given days off to allow them to participate in many festivals. During the festival of Sokar, the authorities distributed 3,694 loaves of bread, 410 cakes, and 905 jars of beer. Important festivals included New Year’s Day; the festival of Osiris at Abydos, during which the “mysteries” of this god were celebrated; the festival of Hathor, during which the goddess would visit the royal cult complex, as did the god Sokar during his festival; and the Festival of the Coronation of the Sacred Falcon at Edfu. The Beautiful Festival of the Valley was an important occasion during which Amun-Re traveled from Karnak to the temple at Deir el Bahri and visited the royal cult complexes on the west bank of the Nile, particularly that of the reigning king. This was also an occasion for people to visit the tombs of their relatives, where they observed an all-night vigil and shared a feast among themselves and their deceased relatives.

**BARQUE SHRINES.** The focus of a festival was the gods in their barque (sailing vessel) shrines. Egyptian gods always traveled in boats, either in real boats when traveling by water, or in barque shrines, carried over land on the shoulders of priests. Festivals could involve the procession of the god in his boat within the temple, or the god could leave the temple to visit another deity. These shrines were carried along processional avenues, often lined with sphinxes. At intervals, small altars were built which were essentially open-ended buildings that contained a station on which the priests could rest the barque. When the porters rested, priests performed fumigations and libations and sang hymns to the god in its boat. Such festivals and processions provided most people with their greatest access to the gods, since the furthest most people were admitted into the temples was the open forecourt. Scholars have long thought that the shrine in the barque containing the god’s image was closed during the procession, hiding the god’s image from onlookers. Recently, one scholar suggested that the doors of the barque shrine were open during such travels, since numerous texts describe the desire of people to see the image of a god during a procession. Egyptians believed that beholding the image of a god during a procession could heal an individual from illness.

**ORACLES.** It was during such festival processions that people could approach the gods seeking an oracle. The first clear evidence for oracles occurs in the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.). The English Egyptologist John Baines, however, argued that evidence for the existence of oracles occurs much earlier, perhaps as early



A barque bearing a statue of Queen Mutemwia in the guise of the goddess Mut. Discovered in the floor of the main sanctuary at Karnak, this barque would have been carried by the priests as the god's mode of transportation between temples. © THE BRITISH MUSEUM/TOPHAM-HIP/THE IMAGE WORKS.

as the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.). During processions, people could approach the god with a yes-or-no question written on small flakes of limestone or on ostraca that would be placed before the god. Surviving examples of such questions include “Is it he who has stolen this mat?”, “Shall Seti be appointed as priest?”, and “Is this calf good so that I may accept it?” The movement of the barque-shrine as it was carried on the shoulders of the priests indicated the answer, forward for affirmative, backwards for negative.

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#### TEMPLE PERSONNEL

**STAFF.** In view of the numerous activities which went on daily in an Egyptian temple, it should come as no surprise that a large staff of priests, priestesses, and other support staff was necessary for the efficient functioning of the temple. For example, the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak employed 81,322 men, while the temple at Heliopolis employed 12,963, and the temple at Memphis a paltry 3,079. Technically, only the king could officiate in the cult before the gods. He was the high priest of all the gods and goddesses of Egypt. In actual practice, the king delegated this responsibility to the priesthoods of the various gods throughout Egypt. Many priestly appointments came directly from the king. Some priestly appointments could be made by local adminis-

trators. Frequently, priestly offices could be inherited. Yet priests could also hold civil offices in addition to their priesthoods.

**PRIESTLY FUNCTIONS.** There were two main classes of priests. The higher class of priest was the *hem-netjer*, “god’s servant.” These priests functioned in the cult before the god’s statue. The Greeks translated *hem-netjer* as “prophet,” an equation that derived from the priests’ role in interpreting oracles. The lower class of priests was the *wabu*, or “pure ones.” They carried the god’s barque (sailing vessel); poured water for the various libations required during the temple service; oversaw craftsmen, artisans, or scribes; or served as craftsmen themselves, making such sacred objects as the gods’ sandals. In addition to these two priestly titles, there was a third, the *it-netjer*, or “god’s father.” It has been suggested that the title “god’s father” was given to senior *wab* priests who had reached the level of prophet but were not yet formally inducted into that office. One of the *it-netjer*’s functions seems to have been to walk in front of the god’s image when it was in procession and sprinkle water on the ground in order to purify the path.

**PURITY.** Inherent in one of the Egyptian words for priest is the concept of purity. Priests were required to maintain a status of ritual purity while serving in their office. Priests attained and maintained such purity through several means. During the Ramesside Period (1292–1075 B.C.E.), priests had to bathe in the sacred lake of a temple three times a day; the ancient Greek historian Herodotus (fifth century B.C.E.) wrote that in his day priests bathed twice a day and twice during the night. Priests had to cleanse their mouths with natron (a salt-like substance) dissolved in water, and remove all hair from their bodies. Herodotus wrote that they shaved their whole bodies every third day. Furthermore they were circumcised. They also had to abstain from sexual activity for several days before entering their service as priests and during the period of their service. While serving in the temple, they were not allowed to wear wool, and were required to wear white sandals. Priests had to observe certain food taboos, which differed from nome (province) to nome. For example, in the Third Upper Egyptian nome, eating fish was forbidden, and in the Sixth Upper Egyptian nome, honey could not be eaten.

**GANGS OF THE SERVICE.** Priests were divided into four groups, called “gangs of the service,” to which the Greeks gave the name “phyles.” Each phyle served one lunar month in rotation, so that during the year each gang served for a total of three months, with three

months off between each month of service. This free time allowed individuals to hold priesthoods in several temples. The chief priests of a temple were designated by ordinal numbers; the high priest of the temple was called the first prophet, the next most senior priest was the second prophet, followed by a third and a fourth prophet. The high priests of some gods bore special titles. The high priest of Ptah was called “he who is great at directing the crafts.” The high priest of Re was “he who is great at seeing.” The high priest of Thoth was called “the arbitrator between the two,” while the high priest of Khnum was called the “modeler of limbs.” These titles derive from the various spheres of influence or mythological roles these gods played.

**SPECIALISTS.** In addition to these classes of priests, there were also priestly specialists. The *hery-heb* (“he who carries the festival roll”) was responsible for reading the hymns and spells which accompanied many of the rituals in the temple. The *sesb per-ankh* (“scribe of the house of life”) was responsible for copying the papyri used in temple and funerary rituals. Women also played a role in the temple priesthood. During the Old Kingdom, women of high social station could hold the office of priestess (*hemet-netjer*) of Hathor or of Neith. Prior to era of the New Kingdom, women served as priestesses in the cult of a god, but only rarely, due to the fact that women had numerous other duties in the culture and were not allowed to hold any job that would detract from these duties. Only select women who never married and dedicated themselves to a life of religion were allowed to serve the cult of a god. This changed in the era of the New Kingdom with the introduction of a professional class of priests, members of which gained title and property. Since women could hold no titles nor own property in ancient Egypt, they were no longer able to serve in the role of priestess. Instead they served mainly as musicians, singers, and dancers in the temple.

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#### PERSONAL RELIGION

**EVIDENCE.** Personal piety is not uniformly attested throughout Egyptian history. Before the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.), it is very rare to find a private person depicted on a stele (etched slab of stone) worshipping a deity. Old Kingdom tomb biographies tended to

stress the service the tomb owner had performed for the king, and any mention of his deeds for the gods is largely absent. During the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.) the first indications of the belief in divinities that would intervene in the lives of individuals can be found on stelae and inside tombs. Such references are few, however, and seem to be outside the norm of general religious experience. Beginning in the New Kingdom, however, the evidence indicates a much greater emphasis on an individual's personal relationship with the gods, and the gods' actions on behalf of the individual. Evidence for such personal piety becomes abundant during the Ramesside period (1292–1075 B.C.E.), and it has been suggested that this is a reaction to the religious upheaval which took place in Egypt during the Amarna period.

**ENCOUNTERING THE GODS.** A primary locus for the individual's encounter with the gods was the temple. While most of the temple activities were closed to the public, there were occasions when the gods appeared publicly. During festivals, when the gods left their temples in processions, people had the opportunity to present the gods with questions and receive oracular responses. In addition, there were places set aside within the temple complex where people could approach the gods with their prayers. At the rear of some temples, directly behind the sanctuary of the temple, could be found a chapel of the "hearing ear." This could vary between an elaborate chapel to a simple niche with a statue of the main god of a temple, or even only a pair of carved ears, representing the god's ability to hear prayers. There were also places in the gates of the temenos wall (the wall surrounding a temple) where people could make prayers and offering to the gods. The south gate of the temenos wall at Edfu was described as "the standing place of those who have and those who have not, in order to pray for life from the lord of life." Even the relief images of the gods in the accessible parts of the temple could become the focus of prayers and offerings. Some of these figures show evidence that, at one time, structures were built around some reliefs, forming small shrines, with a shelf for offerings and at times a curtain to conceal the relief.

**PURPOSES.** People would visit a temple for three main purposes: prayer, sacrifice, and dedication of votive offerings. Prayers were generally delivered orally, and began with a low bow, called "kissing the ground." The petitioner would then kneel or stand, with arms raised, to praise the deity and make their requests. Fortunately, visitors sometimes carved their prayers into the temple as graffiti, which preserved evidence of the types of things people prayed for. People could pray to receive the favor of the gods, or to be loved by their gods. Other requests

included the opportunity to go on pilgrimages, to avoid evil-doing, to receive the material necessities of life, good health, and a long lifetime of the ideal 110 years. One man left a prayer for potency and a good wife as a companion. Another left a request that he gain favor in the eyes of a certain female singer in the temple of Amun. Letters written by officials of the Ramesside period away on business to their family members back in Egypt made requests for prayers to be offered on their behalf. One such official, Dhutmose, instructed his family and servants to "please call upon Amun to bring me back, for I have been ill since I arrived north and am not in my normal state. Don't set your minds to anything else. As soon as my letter reaches you, you shall go to the forecourt of Amun of the Thrones of the Two Lands, taking the little children along with you and coax him and tell him to keep me safe."

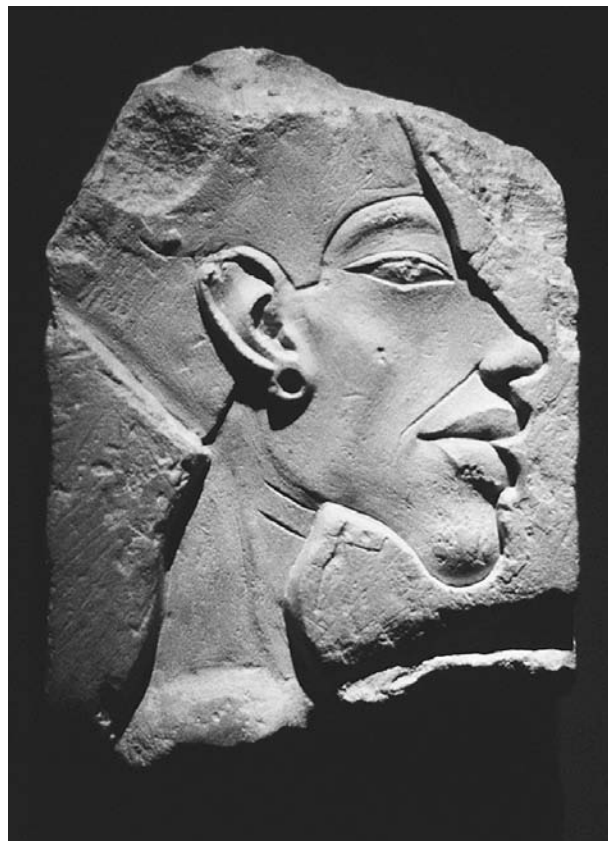
**OFFERINGS.** Worshipers did not approach their gods empty-handed. When they visited the temples to offer prayers, they frequently brought sacrifices along as an inducement to the god to grant their requests. Common sacrifices included libations of wine, beer, milk, or water. The presentation of bread, fruit or flowers, or the burning of incense or foodstuffs was also common. Most temple visitors brought their offerings with them, but they could also acquire them at the temple. A more permanent type of offering was the votive offering, a permanent memorial of a prayer to a deity. Votives could include stelae, showing the petitioner praising the god, model ears, or stelae with images of ears, intended to induce the deity to hear the petitioner's prayers. Other types of offerings included model phalluses, intended to gain fertility for the donor, or small images of deities or cult objects used in the temples.

**PUBLIC CHAPELS.** Temples were not the only location at which the worship of the gods occurred. The site of Deir el-Medina has preserved the remains of public chapels dedicated to the gods. These chapels show a fairly consistent design. They consisted of an open forecourt leading to a roofed hall, often with one or two pillars, with benches along each side wall. On the benches were seats, seven along one side of the hall, five along the other. Some seats from these chapels were inscribed with the names of individuals. This may indicate that participation in worship in the chapel was by subscription. Some scholars have used these inscriptions at Deir el-Medina to prove the existence of "cult guilds," in which individuals would enter into a legal contract to band together in the worship of a particular deity. There is written evidence of these guilds in the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664–525 B.C.E.), but as yet no written evidence of such societies has turned up for New Kingdom Egypt or for the Deir el-Medina. Moving



from the open forecourt, the Deir el-Medina gave way to a small room, called the pronaos, which led to a series of one to three sanctuaries for cult statues, or more probably, stelae (carved or inscribed stone slabs or pillars), to the gods of the shrine. Around the sides of these rooms were subsidiary service rooms or rooms in which the guardian of the chapel could live. The priests who served these chapels were also the workmen who lived at Deir el-Medina and served part-time in the chapel. The chapels were places where worshippers could go to make prayers and offerings, and to receive oracles.

**DOMESTIC SHRINES.** Houses at Amarna, the capital during the reign of Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.), have preserved evidence of domestic shrines. These shrines were located in the garden, surrounded by trees and separated from the rest of the garden by a wall. They consisted of a sloping flight of stairs leading up to a platform, on which was a walled room containing an altar of brick or limestone. Found within these shrines were statues of Akhenaten and his family, or stelae showing the royal family worshipping the Aten. Evidence of domestic shrines can also be found at Deir el-Medina, where the hills around the town are dotted with over fifty tiny shrines arranged in rough rows. These shrines consisted of a few rough stones, arranged to form a back, floor, two sides, and a roof. Sometimes stones marked off a miniature forecourt. Inside each shrine was originally a small stele, commemorating its donor's dedication to his gods. Additionally, there were places set aside within the house itself where people could worship their gods. The walls of a house could contain niches in which could be placed a stele of a god. Such niches could be fitted with a wooden door, and could be found in any room of the house. Deities particularly popular in such house shrines were Meretseger (protective goddess of the Theban necropolis), Renenutet (goddess of harvest), Sobek (crocodile-god), Amun, Taweret (goddess who protected women during childbirth), and Hathor (mother-goddess). In addition to the gods, stelae depicting deceased relatives or anthropoid busts of such relatives were erected and served as the recipients of offerings. Deceased relatives were worshipped as *akh aper* ("effective spirits") and were thought to be able to influence the lives of their living relatives. The nature of the cult carried on in these private venues is not well known. From the images on the stelae, it seems that offerings of incense, food, and libations were made to the gods. The ritual involved in these offerings, or their frequency, is unknown. One suggestion is that a smaller, less elaborate version of the daily temple ritual may have been celebrated, but this is just conjecture.



Portrait of Akhenaten, limestone relief sculpture fragment of the New Kingdom. © VANNI ARCHIVE/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

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## ETHICS

**RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW.** For the ancient Egyptians the matter of ethics was firmly grounded in their religious world view, so much so that one scholar has written that "in the Egyptian's terms, morality and religion

can hardly be separated.” At the basis of all moral and ethical behavior in ancient Egypt was the concept of maat, which was also an essential element of kingship. It was every Egyptian’s duty to conduct his or her life in accordance with maat (truth), and to avoid committing deeds considered *isfet* (“wrongdoing”) or *gereget* (“falsehood”), the opposite of maat. In this way, the continued existence and prosperity of Egypt was assured. Our main source of knowledge concerning what behavior was in accordance with maat is the instruction literature from ancient Egypt. These texts, similar to the biblical book of Proverbs, date from the Old Kingdom to the Roman Period (2675 B.C.E.–395 C.E.), and were used as exercises for student scribes. They are portrayed as books of practical wisdom written by famous sages in which they distilled their lifetime of experience concerning which actions were and were not in accordance with maat. Living a life in accordance with the principles of maat was not only good for Egypt, but also good for the individual, and the instruction texts assured the individual that living a life based on maat was the path to success.

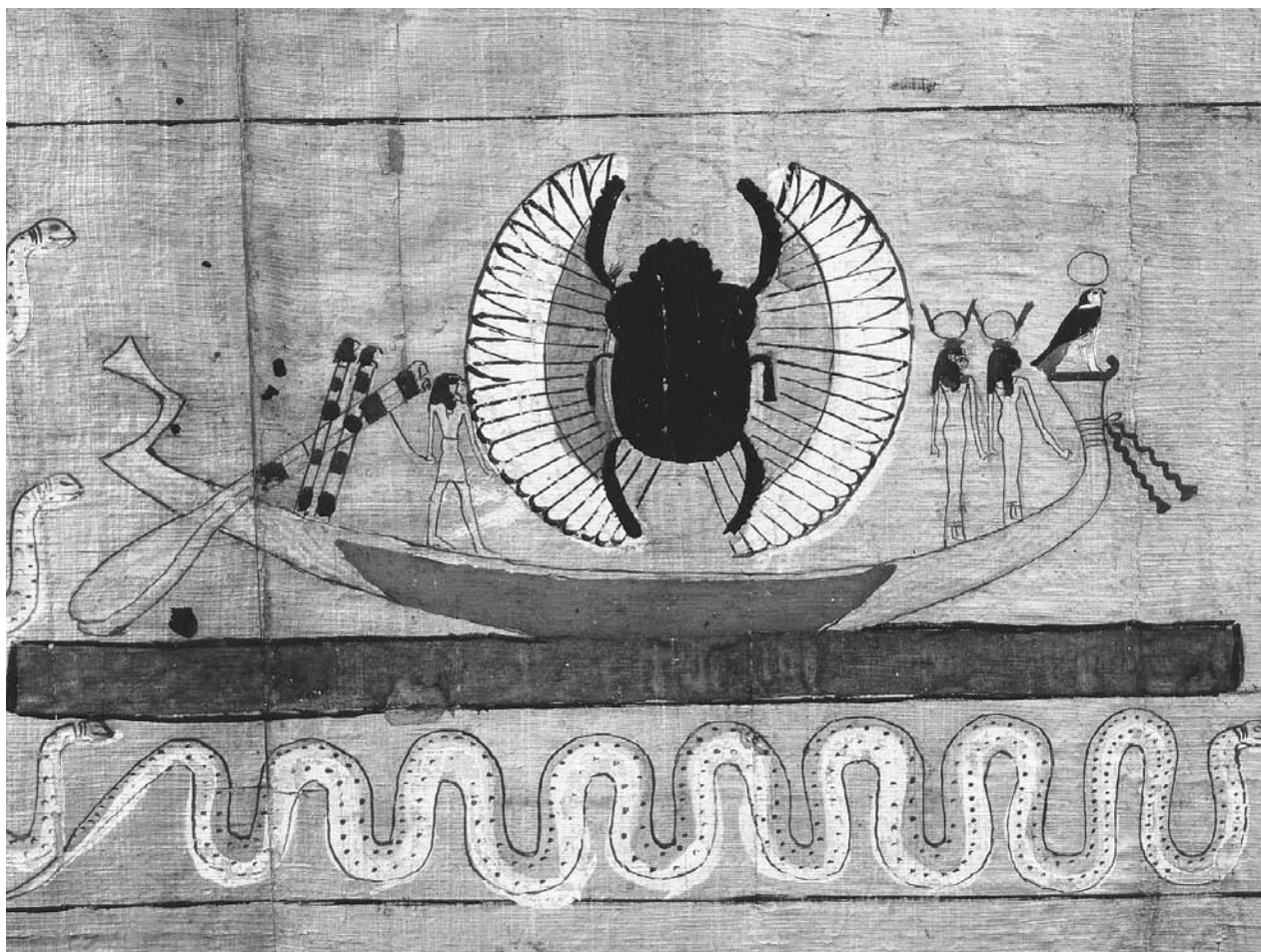
**JUDGMENT AFTER DEATH.** Maat was not only good for the living, but was also beneficial to a person after death. In *The Eloquent Peasant*, the peasant exhorts his audience (and the reader) to “speak maat, do maat, for it is great; it is important; it is everlasting; its usefulness will be discovered; it will lead (a person) to a blessed state (after death).” The ancient Egyptians believed in a post-mortem judgment of the individual, symbolized as the weighing of his or her heart against the feather, a writing of the word maat. The earliest hints of such a judgment appear in the *Pyramid Texts* (2371–2194 B.C.E.), but the first certain reference of a post-mortem ethical judgment is found in the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.) text known as the *Teachings for Merykare*, where reads “a man survives after death, and his deeds are laid before him in a heap.” In the *Coffin Texts*, it is the balance of Re which weighs the individual against maat. The idea of post-mortem judgment reaches its peak during the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) in the *Book of the Dead*, Spell 125. This spell is accompanied by an elaborate scene, showing Osiris presiding over the weighing of the heart of the deceased against the feather of maat, while the 42 judges watch. The god Thoth is present to assure the accuracy of the balance, and to record the results. Standing nearby is the demon Amemet, who swallows the dead. He gobbles up the heart which fails to measure up to maat, assuring the eternal destruction of the sinner.

**NEGATIVE CONFESSION.** In order to prevent the deceased from suffering this fate, the scene was accompanied by a text that scholars call the *Negative Confession*. This spell consists of two long lists of denials of wrongdoing by the deceased. One list is spoken before Osiris, the other before the 42 assessor demons/judges. A study of the lists reveals the types of activities the Egyptians believed were contrary to maat. Deeds found in the lists include blasphemy, thievery, murder, damaging offerings to the temples, being dishonest in weights and measures, and stealing cattle from the temple herds. Sexual sins such as adultery, pederasty, ejaculation, and copulation (when in violation of purity regulations) also turn up. Less physical offenses include coveting, lying, sulking, “prattling,” and boasting.

**HEAVY BURDEN.** The negative confession placed a heavy burden on an Egyptian wishing to live a life in accordance with maat. The question has been raised as to what extent the list of offenses in the confession served as a guide to daily life. The purpose of the *Book of the Dead* was to provide the deceased with safe passage to the afterlife, and by including spell 125 the deceased purchased for himself absolution of his sins. In view of the fact that living a life in accordance with maat was thought to lead to success, and that the declarations of innocence were not made only after death, but by the king during the New Year’s ceremony and by priests entering temples to perform their duties, it is probable that the lists did serve as a general code of conduct for at least some Egyptians.

**GODS’ DISPLEASURE.** But what happened when someone committed an offense against maat and against the gods? The gods showed their displeasure with an individual by means of a *baw* (“curse”). A person under the curse of a god could be described as being, as in this Rameside inscription, “... the abomination of men. The sun does not rise in his presence, while the inundation does not flow for him. He is a mouse surprised by the inundation; he cannot find a place to rest himself. He is a bird caught by the wings by the hand of man; he finds no means of flying away.” One sinner, Neferabu, admits in his stele that he swore falsely by Ptah, and as a result he was made to see darkness by day. He described his condition as that of “the dogs of the street.” The occasion for dedicating the stele was apparently Neferabu’s release from Ptah’s “doghouse.” Other deeds which are recorded as bringing about a manifestation of the gods’ displeasure are stealing, lying, and the most common offense, committed by the hapless Neferabu, swearing a false oath in a god’s name.

**APPEASEMENT.** Once under a manifestation of a god, a person had to appease the offended deity to have the



Detail of papyrus of Book of the Dead of Hirweben showing a winged scarab being transported on a solar barque. From Thebes, 21st Dynasty. THE ART ARCHIVE/EGYPTIAN MUSEUM OF CAIRO/DAGLI ORTI.

manifestation removed. This involved confession, as on Neferabu's stele, making offerings of incense, and perhaps dedicating a votive stele to the god recording praise to the god and promising that the infraction will not occur again. There were occasions, however, when a person fell under the manifestation of a god without knowing what the offense was. In that case, the Egyptian could consult a "wise woman" in his village. One New Kingdom ostrakon (inscribed potsherd) from Deir el-Medina records the visit of an unnamed individual to the wise woman who told him "the manifestation of Ptah is with you" because of an oath sworn by his wife. How exactly a wise woman arrived at her information is not recorded. Demotic texts from the Ptolemaic and Roman period record various methods of divination, but whether they were practiced as early as the New Kingdom is unknown.

**REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT.** The ancient Egyptians had several inducements to live a life in accordance with maat. Those who attended school were taught that

the path to success lay in keeping maat. The reward for living a life according to the principles of maat was a pleasant existence in the next life. Finally, those who chose to violate the norms of maat stood in danger of incurring the wrath of an offended god, which could result in blindness or any number of other misfortunes.

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#### MAGIC IN EGYPTIAN RELIGION

**DEFINITIONS.** The English word "magic" is the accepted translation of the Egyptian word "heka." The extent to which the two terms are synonymous, however,

has been a subject of much discussion. The English term “magic” tends to carry pejorative connotations that the Egyptian term does not. Frequently “magic” has been opposed to “religion,” the one seen as somehow a debased form of the other. At various times, scholars have seen magic as unauthorized, abnormal, illegal, or as deviant behavior. None of these connotations is present in the Egyptian term. The association of “magic” with “heka” is not an invention of modern scholars, however. Coptic, the last stage of the Egyptian language, written with the Greek alphabet, used the equivalent of heka to translate the Greek terms for magic or magician.

**ORIGIN.** The Egyptian *Coffin Texts* state that the creator god Atum created *heka* (“magic”) first of all his creations in order to protect all he had ordained. In the *Teachings for Merykare*, the king is told that the god had created magic as a weapon for mankind to ward off the blows of events. In view of these Egyptian statements regarding the purpose of magic, Egyptologists have tended to focus on the protective nature of heka in trying to define it. One such definition involves Egyptian heka as actions involving human contact with supernatural/divine powers in order to exploit these powers to deal with specific, unforeseen events. Such events include sickness, scorpion sting, snakebite, safety during childbirth, and threats from a living or dead enemy, evil spirit, or demon. Certain times, such as nighttime during sleep, and the end of the year, were considered particularly dangerous, and required the use of magic as a means of protection. Magic could also be used to induce love.

**PRACTITIONERS.** Practicing magic in ancient Egypt required reliance on the written word, so magicians had to be literate. Most magicians belonged to the ranks of the priesthood, and bore titles such as “Prophet of Heka,” “Chief of Secrets,” or “Lector Priest.” The manuals necessary for the practice of magic, consisting of compilations of spells and instructions on their use, were composed, compiled, and stored in the temple scriptorium called the “House of Life.” While most magicians would have been men, texts from the workmen’s village at Deir el-Medina preserve mention of a “wise woman” who may have functioned as a seer.

**MAGICIANS IN LITERATURE.** Egyptian literature does preserve accounts of famous fictional magicians and their incredible deeds. In *Khufu and the Magicians*, the Old Kingdom king Khufu (2585–2560 B.C.E.) is entertained by his sons with tales of the deeds of great magicians. The lector priest Webaoner was said to have fashioned a crocodile out of wax and brought it to life in order to avenge himself on the townsman who had

cuckolded him. The magician Djadjaemonkh performed a feat that would later be duplicated by the biblical Moses when he recited a magic spell to part the waters of a lake. In the Egyptian’s case he performed this feat so that one of the female rowers of the king’s boat could retrieve a pendant she had dropped overboard. The magician Djedi was able to reattach a severed head through the use of a spell. When the king, anxious to see such a fantastic deed, asked for a prisoner to be brought as a test subject, Djedi refused, preferring to perform his feat on a goose rather than a human.

**METHODS OF THE MAGICIAN.** These literary tales serve to highlight the methods used by the magician. The primary tool of the magician was the magic spell. These spells frequently associated the problem at hand with an event or element in the divine world in order to bring about the desired result. A sufferer from scorpion bite would be equated with the infant Horus, who had suffered and been saved from a similar fate. Spells to hasten childbirth equated the mother with Isis, and the infant with Horus. Such spells could be recited over the sufferer, but there were other ways in which a person could make use of a written text. Healing stelae known as *cippi* had their surfaces covered with magical images and texts and were set up in temples, houses, or tombs. Frequently such stelae were accompanied by basins, and individuals availed themselves of the power of the texts and images by pouring water over the stela and then drinking it. Yet another way of ingesting the power of the written word was by washing off the ink of an inscribed papyrus in a liquid such as water or beer and drinking it or by licking the ink off an inscribed object.

**MANIPULATION OF OBJECTS.** In addition to written spells, objects also played a role in Egyptian magical practices. Protective wands made of ivory and decorated with images of deities wielding knives served to protect women during childbirth. The names of enemies could be inscribed on images of bound captives known as excretion figures or on red pottery and then smashed to bring about the destruction of the enumerated enemies. Images of such enemies could also be drawn on the sockets of doorposts, on the bottoms of sandals, or on footstools, so that every step or opening of a door caused the enemy to suffer. As in the story of Webaoner, figurines of animals could be fashioned out of wax in order to accompany a spell. A spell against scorpions involved the fashioning of a scorpion of clay, and another required the creation of a wax cat, presumably an enemy of the scorpion. From the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, a spell for the summoning of Thoth involved the creation of a wax baboon.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: The Egyptian Literary Canon; Philosophy: Alchemy*

**FUNERARY BELIEFS AND PRACTICES**

**MISCONCEPTION.** So much of modern knowledge of the ancient Egyptians derives from material recovered from tombs that the misconception that the Egyptians were obsessed with death is common. We are indeed fortunate that the Egyptians decorated their tombs with scenes of daily life, that they included objects from everyday life in their burials, and that they buried their dead with texts of all types, from funerary texts intended to smooth the transition into the next life for the deceased, to literary and even administrative texts. Since the Egyptians buried their dead in the desert west of the Nile, avoiding wasting the scarce arable land, arid conditions have preserved this wealth of material.

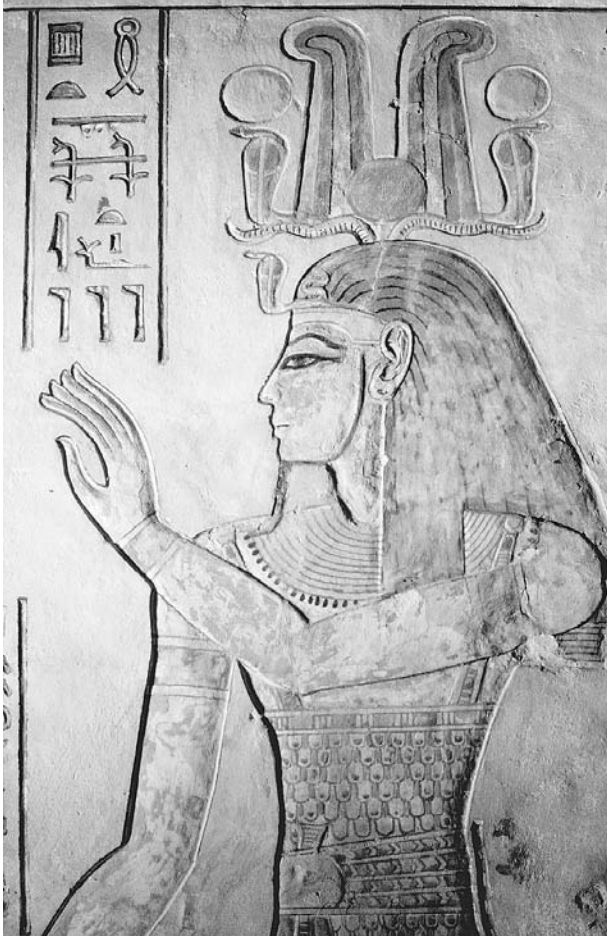
**THE KA.** The ancient Egyptians viewed the individual as the sum of component parts, some of which came into existence at birth and coexisted with the individual throughout life, while others came into existence only at death. The Egyptians were not consistent in their description of these different entities, and it is not always possible to distinguish them clearly from each other. In Egyptian mythology, Khnum the potter god was responsible for the physical creation of the individual. Contemporaneous with the molding of the body, the god also fashioned a double for a person, called a ka. The ka is the life force, the difference between a living and a dead person. It was transmitted from parent to child, and represented that aspect of the deceased individual that was capable of making use of the numerous offerings of food and drink. Prayers accompanying offerings or taking the place of offerings were frequently addressed to the ka of the deceased. A statue of the deceased could serve as an image of the ka, and was placed in the tomb as insurance against the destruction of the body. In the event that occurred, the statue could serve as a stand-in and conduit to transfer the benefits of the offerings to the deceased.

**THE BA.** After death, the mummified body was placed in the tomb, where it was meant to stay for all

eternity. In order to allow the deceased to leave the tomb and visit the world of the living and the gods, another element of the individual was necessary. This was called the ba. The ba was frequently depicted as a jaribu stork, occasionally with a human head. At death, the ba was said to fly away from the deceased. This separation was not permanent, however, since the ba must return to the mummy every night. The image of a person's separation from his ba came to be used as a description for the condition brought about by drunkenness, or the losing of one's wits in a stressful situation. The ba provided the deceased with two necessary capabilities: movement, signified by the wings of the ba-bird, and transformation. In order to make the transition to the next life, avoiding the pitfalls that awaited, the deceased often found it useful to transform him or herself into different forms. Spells in the *Book of the Dead* transformed the deceased into a falcon, lotus, snake, crocodile, or swallow, just to name a few of the forms assumed by the deceased. The ba also provided the dead with the ability to continue to enjoy sexual activity beyond the grave.

**THE AKH.** A third aspect of the deceased individual was the *akh*, frequently translated as glorified or effective spirit. This was the aspect of an individual that achieved a glorified and exalted status in the next life. It was the spirit that could get things done, as shown by the letters preserved between living Egyptians and their dead relatives. These letters were written on papyrus or in bowls that would have contained offerings to entice the deceased to grant their requests. The letters could ask the dead to cease troubling the living, or to intercede with other spirits in the afterlife on behalf of the living to either bring about or cease a certain activity.

**TOMBS.** An important aspect of preparing for the afterlife was the construction of the tomb. Tombs could take many forms, including the elaborate pyramid complexes of the Old Kingdom kings; rectangular, box-like constructions called mastabas; and tombs cut deep into the rock, known most famously from the Valley of the Kings. The construction of the tomb began as soon as a man had the means to do so. The *Instruction of Prince Hardjedef* gives this advice: "When you prosper, found your household, take a hearty wife, a son will be born to you. ... Make good your dwelling in the graveyard, make worthy your station in the West [another euphemism for the land of the dead]." Whatever its form, the tomb had two main purposes: to house the body and to provide a place where the cult of the deceased could be carried out. This cult took the form of regular offerings and special rituals carried out during particular festivals. The two main parts of the tomb correspond to



Painted relief of a god, in Egyptian tomb, Valley of the Kings, Luxor, Egypt. © BOJAN BRECELJ/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

these two functions. The burial chamber, usually located below ground, housed and protected the body. Above ground was the superstructure, the chapel, which served as the public part of the tomb and was accessible to priests and visitors.

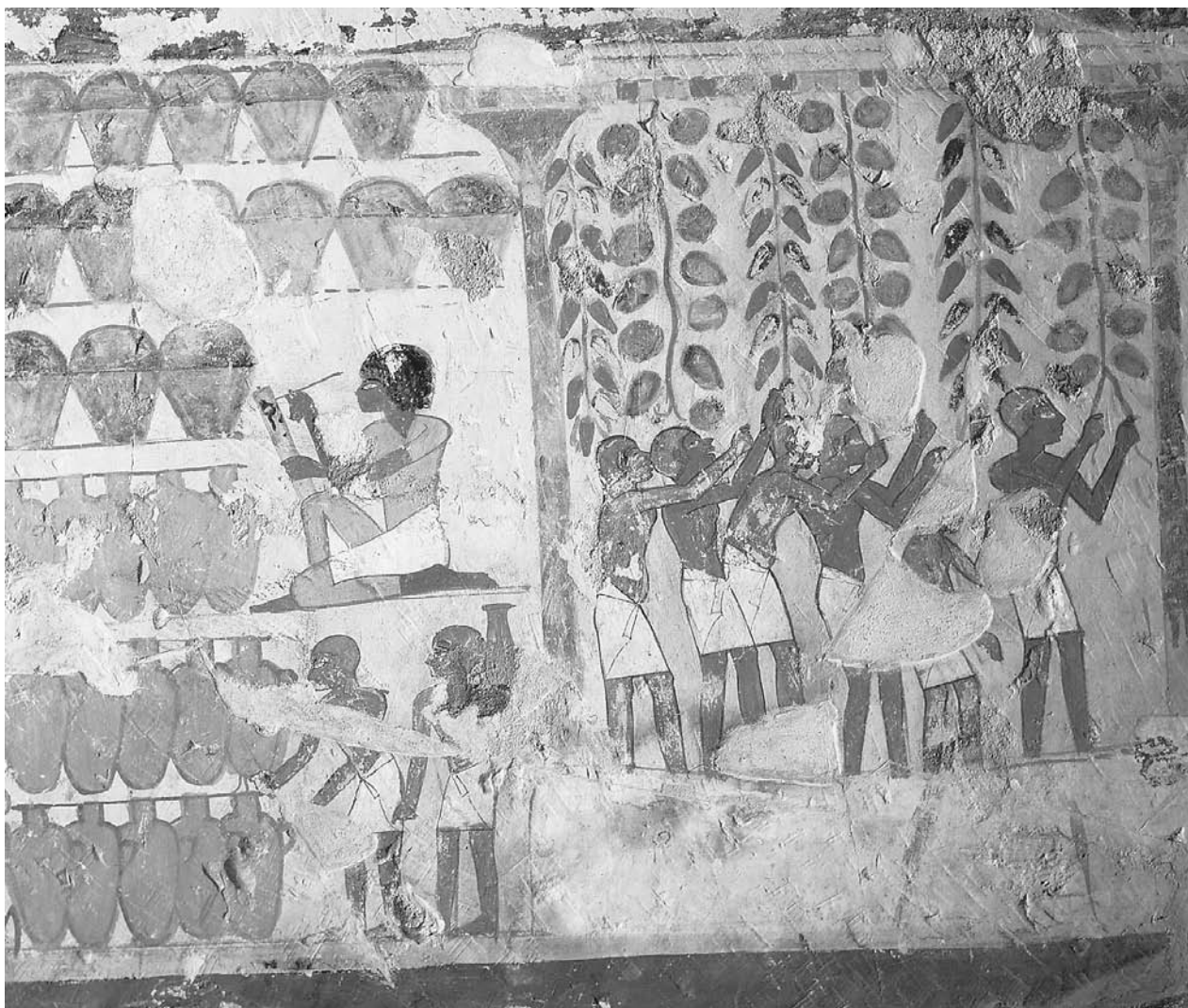
**BURIAL CHAMBER.** The burial chamber frequently contained the equipment necessary for a proper burial and a pleasant afterlife. Inside the burial chamber was the coffin, four canopic jars (containing the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines, which were removed at mummification), shawabti figures (figurines designed to act as stand-ins whenever the deceased was called upon to do any work in the afterlife), amulets, and texts. Objects of daily life that were thought necessary for the comfort of the deceased were also included in the burial chamber. These objects included food containers, furniture, tools, games, clothing, and any other object the deceased could have used. The walls of the burial chamber could

be left plain, or be decorated with scenes from daily life, offering scenes, or scenes of the deceased in the afterlife.

**CHAPEL.** The chapel could also take different forms. It could be as simple as a stele erected above the burial; wealthier individuals could have a chapel of many rooms, usually—but not necessarily—above the burial chamber. The focal point of the chapel was a stele called a “false door” by Egyptologists, since it represented a door carved in stone. This door, usually located directly above the burial chamber, was thought to be the place where the *ba* of the deceased could leave and enter the burial chamber. In front of the door could be found a stone table on which offerings could be left. The sides of the door were frequently engraved with the text of the offering formula, and it was thought that if any passersby would stop and recite the formula on behalf of the deceased, he would be magically provided with nourishment.

**CHAPEL DECORATIONS.** The walls of the chapel could be decorated with many types of scenes. Some scenes depicted activities associated with agriculture, such as plowing, planting, and harvesting of crops, and the herding of animals. Scenes showing the processing of foodstuffs include those of brewing beer and making bread. Scenes of daily life include such activities as fishing and fowling, boating and boat-jousting matches, and the manufacturing of goods such as jewelry, chairs, beds, coffins, pottery, or cloth. Other tombs have representations of the funeral procession with mourners. During the First Intermediate Period, chapel walls were rarely decorated with such scenes. Rather, small wooden models depicting the same types of activities were included in the burials. The purpose of the scenes and models was the same: to ensure the deceased a steady supply of those goods he would need in the afterlife.

**MUMMY.** The focus of all this effort and activity was the mummy (embalmed remains) of the deceased. The English word derives from the Persian word *mumia*, meaning pitch or bitumen. The word was used at least since the Renaissance to describe the embalmed remains of the Egyptians because they appeared to be covered with pitch. The practice of mummification may have arisen because of the natural drying property of the Egyptian sand. The earliest Egyptian burials, from the Predynastic Period, were simply shallow pits on the desert’s edge. The heat combined with the sand served to dry out the body’s tissues before they could decompose, leaving a considerably lifelike appearance. With the introduction of more elaborate tombs, however, the body was no longer buried in the sand, and as a result quickly decomposed. Consequently, various attempts



Scenes of agricultural life and food preparation, such as this fresco showing the treading on the grapes in a wine vat and the counting of wine jars, often decorated tomb walls as a way of magically providing for the deceased in the afterlife. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI. CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY CORBIS CORPORATION.

were made to preserve the body. The mythological justification for the process of mummification derives from the myth of the god Osiris. After Osiris had been dismembered by his brother Seth, Isis traveled throughout Egypt gathering up the pieces of his body. The god of embalming, Anubis, then reassembled the pieces and rejuvenated the body of Osiris to allow him to sire a son with Isis. Each deceased Egyptian was thought to become an Osiris, and by reenacting the same mummification process, to gain renewed life, as Osiris did.

**METHODS OF MUMMIFICATION.** The earliest example of mummification dates to the Fourth-dynasty (2675–2500 B.C.E.) burial of Queen Hetepheres, the wife of Sneferu (2625–2585 B.C.E.) and mother of

Khufu. Throughout Egyptian history, several different methods of mummification were used, depending on what the deceased or his family could afford. An elaborate mummification could have proceeded along the following lines. First, the corpse was taken to the *Per-Nefer*, the House of Mummification, where it was placed on the embalming table. This table was supposed to resemble the one on which Osiris had been placed after his death. The table is frequently shown with lion's feet. Next, the brain was removed through the nose and thrown away. The Egyptians did not recognize the significance of the brain, and thought it of no use. The embalmer, known as the *ut*-priest, made a cut in the left side of the abdomen of the mummy and removed the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines. The organs were



Heart scarab amulet of Ptahemheb. The amulet was placed in the mummy bandages above the human heart to prevent the heart from testifying against its owner in the underworld. Nineteenth Dynasty. THE ART ARCHIVE/BRITISH MUSEUM/JACQUELINE HYDE.

wrapped separately and each one was placed in its own jar. These jars were buried in the tomb with the mummy, often in a special chest. At times, the heart was removed and carefully wrapped and returned to its place. At other times, it was simply left in place. Near the heart the embalmer could place a “heart scarab,” an amulet containing a protective spell. The body cavity was packed with linen and other stuffing material. The body was packed and covered with dry natron, a salt-like compound used to dry out the body. This process took about forty days, after which the natron was removed and the body cavity was packed with linen bags of sawdust or myrrh soaked in resin. Then the abdominal incision was sewn shut. Priests rubbed the body with a mixture of cedar oil, wax, natron, and gum, and sprinkled it with spices. They smeared the skin with molten resin which, when hardened, kept moisture out of the body. The last step was wrapping the body with linen. This could involve the use of hundreds of yards of linen. Beginning in the

Thirtieth Dynasty (381–343 B.C.E.), scribes wrote texts from the *Book of the Dead* on some of the mummy bandages. During the wrapping process, priests included amulets on the mummy to protect it. Throughout the whole process, priests recited the appropriate incantations at each stage of the mummification. Some of these spells have been preserved on papyri. For example, after anointing the head of the mummy with good quality resin, the embalming priest was to recite the following: “Ho, Osiris N [N represents the name of the deceased], resin which came forth from Punt is on you in order to make your odor agreeable as the divine scent. The efflux which comes forth from Re is on you in order to make [your odor] agreeable in the broad hall of the Two Truths.” According to the Greek historian Herodotus (fifth century B.C.E.) the process of making a mummy took seventy days, this number deriving from the number of days the star Sirius was invisible. In actuality, the mummification could last anywhere from thirty to over



200 days. Once the mummy was completed, the funeral could begin.

**FUNERAL PROCESSION.** The funeral began when the coffin of the deceased left his house. It could be carried by pallbearers or drawn on a sledge. The family of the deceased accompanied the procession, and they were said to be in a state of mourning. Tomb scenes show these individuals pulling at their hair, throwing dust on their heads, and collapsing from grief. Men and women mourned separately, men outside, and women inside the home. Two women fulfilled the roles of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys, who mourned for Osiris. The wife of the deceased usually took the part of Isis. Also present were the embalmer, lector priest, and the Sem-priest. Since most Egyptians lived on the east bank of the Nile, and most cemeteries were located on the west bank, a trip to the necropolis required travel by water. The west was also the location of the land of the dead, since the sun set in the west. When the procession reached the river, the mourners placed the coffin on a barge and towed it to the *wabet*, the “place of purification” on the west bank of the Nile. In the *wabet*, various rituals of purification were carried out. From there, they again placed the coffin on a sledge which was drawn by oxen to the tomb.

**OPENING OF THE MOUTH.** At the tomb the Sem-priest purified the deceased, and the lector-priest performed the Opening of the Mouth ritual. The Opening of the Mouth ritual restored the vital faculties which the deceased had lost, and allowed him to make use of the funerary offerings. This ritual derived from the statue workshops of Memphis, and was originally used to animate statues of the gods after they were complete. Through a series of ritual passes made with an adze (a cutting tool), the priest opened the eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth of the deceased, restoring his or her senses and faculties. Priests recited glorification spells in order to help the deceased transform into a glorified akh. The offering ritual involved the presentation of food, drink, incense, and many other goods before the false door of the tomb. The text stresses that the deceased has his own heart. This was essential, since in the final judgment before Osiris it was the deceased’s heart that the gods weighed in the balance against the feather of maat. If the heart failed to measure up to maat, it and the deceased would be devoured by the demon Ammit. This is why the heart was often carefully wrapped and replaced in the chest cavity of the mummy. The heart scarab frequently placed inside the chest was engraved with a spell to prevent the heart from opposing the deceased in the tribunal before Osiris. Completion of the rites of mum-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**TWO STELE DESCRIBING FUNERARY RITES**

**INTRODUCTION:** Two stele from the New Kingdom preserve a description of the funerary rites. They come from the tombs of Amenemhet in Thebes and the joint tomb of Djeheuty and Intef. This is a rare Egyptian description of a ritual.

A goodly burial arrives in peace after 70 days have been completed in your embalming house. [You] are placed on a bier pulled by four sound bulls, the path being sprinkled with milk until you reach the door of your tomb. Your grandchildren are assembled together weeping with loving hearts. Your mouth is opened by the lector priest; you are purified by the Sem-priest. Horus has adjusted your mouth for you; he has opened your eyes and ears for you. Your flesh and bones are complete (as) that which belongs to you. The spells of glorification are recited for you. The offering ritual is performed for you. Your own heart is with you, the one you had upon earth. You have arrived in your former appearance, as on the day in which you were born. Your beloved son is presented to you while the attendants give reverence. You enter the land which the king provides, into the area of the West. It is done for you as was done for the ancestors. The Muu dancers come to you rejoicing.

*Translated by Stephen Thompson.*

mification and burial are what allowed the deceased to acquire the status of *netjer*, divine being.

**FUNERARY FOUNDATIONS.** We have seen that at burial the deceased was the recipient of offerings of food and drink. The need for such sustenance lasted far beyond the funeral, however. In order to ensure that he would have a steady supply of offerings to support him in the afterlife, an Egyptian would endow a foundation with land or with the income from a priestly office that he held. Usually, this endowment went to the eldest son of the deceased, called his “beloved son” on the condition that some of the income from the endowment went to provide offerings for the deceased. Such individuals functioned as “ka-priests” for the deceased. Such offices could be bequeathed to descendants of the ka priest for generations. During the New Kingdom, an individual who had royal permission could set up a statue of himself in the temple precincts, and through the intermediary of this statue share in the prayers and offerings which went on in the temple.



Relief carving depicting mourners at a funeral and table of food offerings, Eighteenth or Nineteenth Dynasty. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

**FAMILY MEMORIALS.** Although the dead were buried in the necropolis, they did not cease to form part of an Egyptian's family. During certain religious festivals, the dead received special offerings. During the New Kingdom, at the "Feast of the Valley," families would cross over to the west bank of the Nile to visit the tombs of their relatives, and hold picnics within their chapels. Within the home, busts of deceased relatives as "effective spirits" could be set up, and were the focal point of prayers and offerings. According to Egyptian thought, the deceased still influenced the lives of the living, hence the necessity to make sure that their needs were satisfied.

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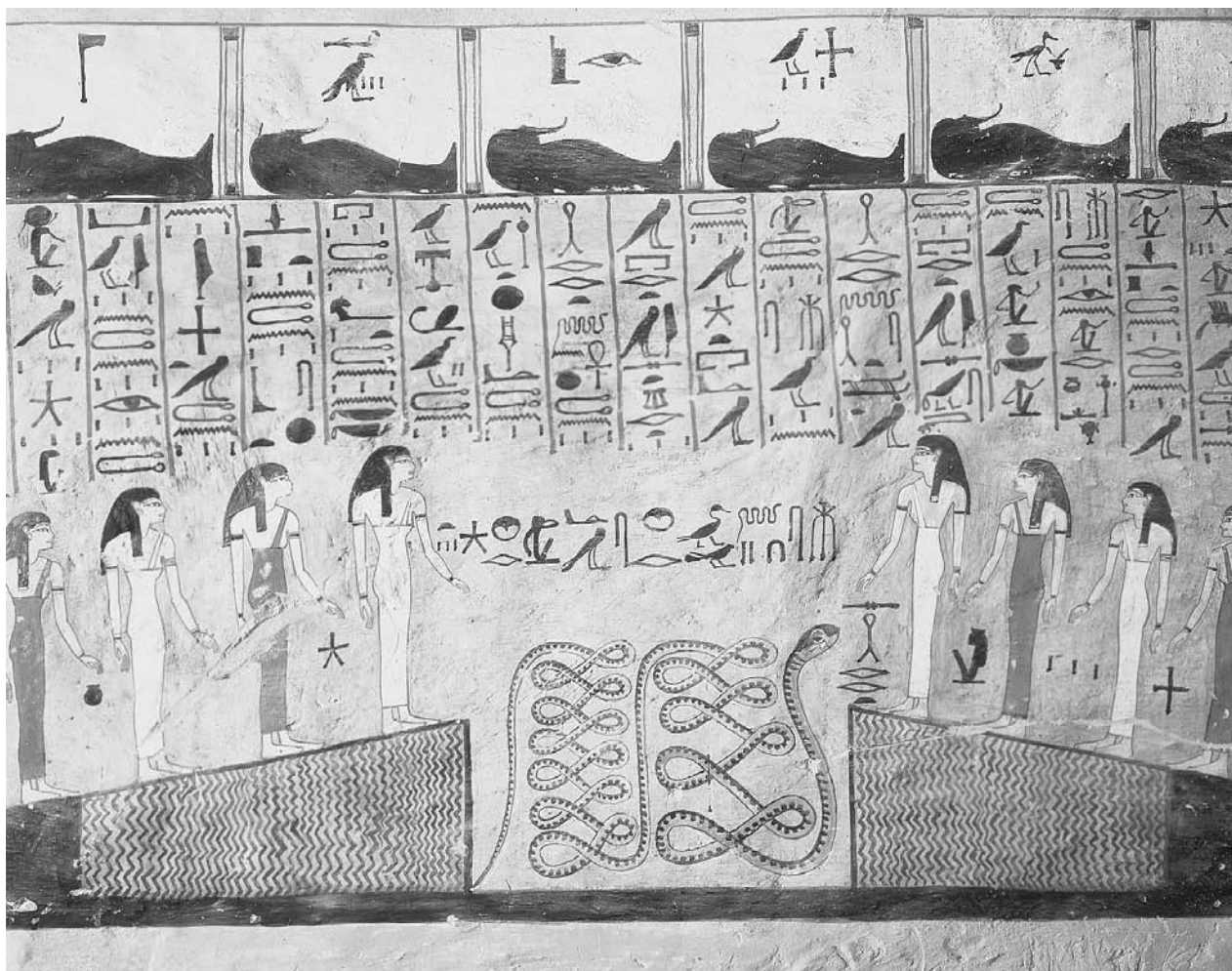
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SEE ALSO *Dance: Muu-Dancers; Dance: Funeral Dances*

## THE EGYPTIAN AFTERLIFE

**DESTINATIONS OF THE KING.** Information concerning the Egyptian ideas of the hereafter comes from the texts buried with the dead and the illustrations found on tomb walls. As with so much in Egyptian religion, there was no single destination, but a multiplicity of destinations, all of which an Egyptian wished to reach after death. The earliest postmortem destination was celestial, and in the *Pyramid Texts* it was the deceased king's goal to ascend to the sky to live as a star among the circumpolar stars which never set. In Spell 1455 and 1456, the king states "I am a star which illuminates the sky; I mount up to the god that I may be protected, for the sky will not be devoid of me and this earth will not be devoid of me for ever. I live beside you, you gods of the Lower Sky, the Imperishable Stars. ..." In addition to ascending to the sky as a star, an Old Kingdom pharaoh also wished to ascend to the sky to assume a seat in the barque (sailing vessel) of the sun-god Re. Re was thought to travel throughout the sky in his solar barque by day, and through the underworld at night. By taking a seat in the solar barque, the deceased king was allowed to participate in the eternal, rejuvenating voyage of the sun. Yet another destination for the deceased king was the underworld kingdom of Osiris. Osiris, after his death at the hands of his brother Seth, became the ruler of the Egyptian underworld. As a result of undergoing the ritual of mummification and burial, the dead king becomes identified with Osiris, and as such became the ruler of the underworld.

**PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS.** After death, the private Egyptian expected to continue to enjoy a life very much like that which he had experienced on earth, judging from the types of burial goods included in the tombs, and the scenes found on tomb walls. Towards the end of the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.), however, the formerly exclusively royal prerogatives of the afterlife became available to private individuals as well. During the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.) and



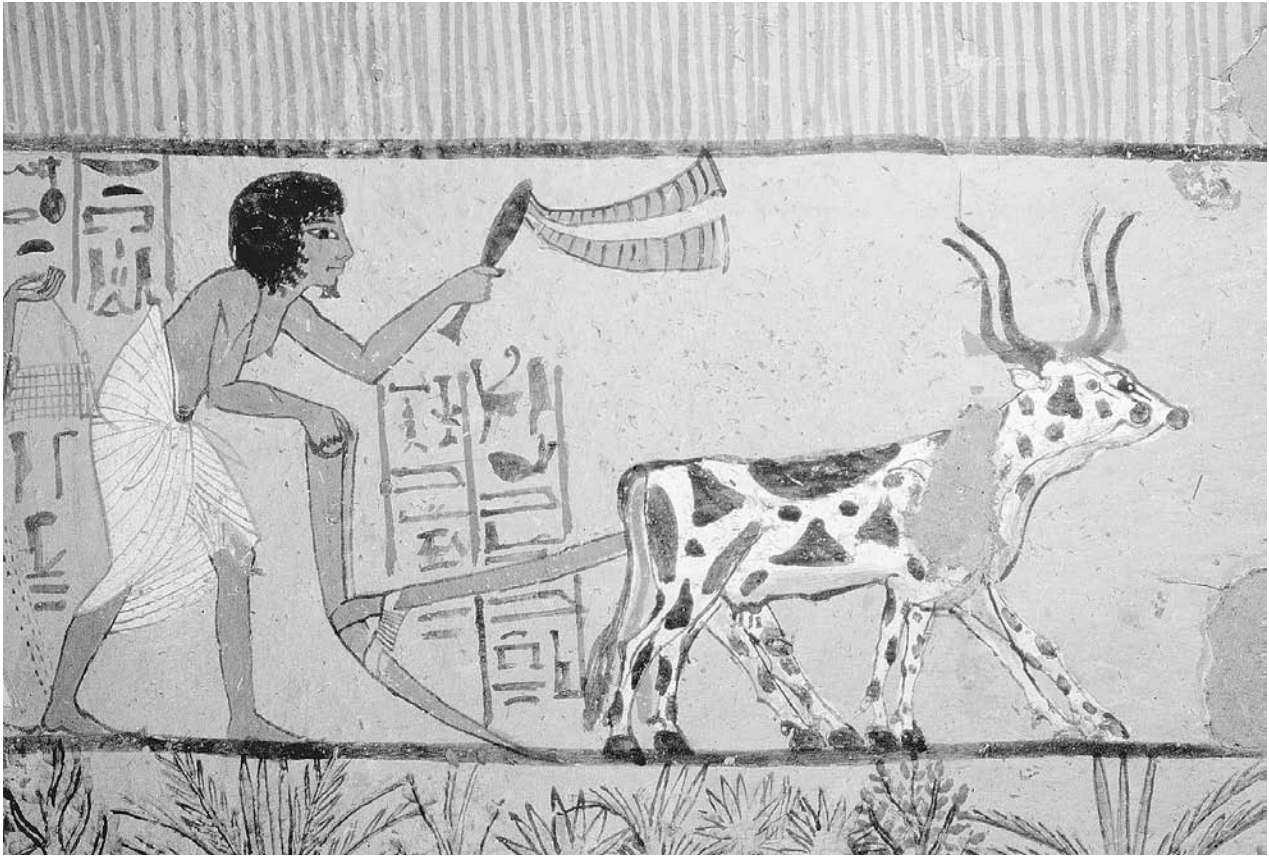
An illustration of one of the entrances to the Egyptian afterlife, from the *Book of Portals*. The soul had to know the proper spell to get past the snake. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.), the idea of a post-mortem life in the underworld realm of Osiris became more prominent, but was not the exclusive goal of the deceased. The New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) *Book of the Dead* placed even more emphasis on the Osirian hereafter.

**DANGEROUS JOURNEY.** The journey to the realm of Osiris was fraught with danger. The paths of the underworld were guarded by knife-wielding demons that lay in wait for the unprepared dead. At times these demons guarded gates through which the deceased had to pass. In addition, these gates could be guarded by encircling walls of flame. During the New Kingdom, the number of gates through which the dead had to pass was variously given as seven (*Book of the Dead* Spell 147) or twenty-one (*Book of the Dead* Spells 145 and 146). The key to safely negotiating these dangers was a knowledge of the names of the demons and obstacles which one was

likely to encounter. Knowing their names rendered them unable to harm the deceased. Such knowledge was available in the texts buried with the deceased.

**FIELD OF REEDS.** After finally reaching the Hall of Osiris, the deceased had to undergo the final judgment and the weighing of his heart against the feather of maat (truth) in the presence of Osiris and the 42 judges of the afterlife. If the applicant passed successfully, he was admitted to the paradise of Osiris, referred to as the “Field of Reeds” or “Field of Offerings.” This realm was modeled on Egypt itself. The land was crisscrossed by irrigation canals, and the deceased was responsible for such agricultural tasks as plowing, sowing, and reaping. Since this was paradise, the fruits of such labor were much greater. Wheat was said to grow to a height of five cubits (2.29 meters), with ears two cubits (.91 meters) in length. Barley grew seven cubits (3.2 meters) high, with ears of three cubits (1.37 meters). In order to avoid performing



Depiction in a tomb of the tomb owner performing certain tasks in the Field of Reeds in the company of the gods. © BOJAN BRECELJ/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

such backbreaking labor personally, the well-prepared Egyptian was buried with a number of shawabti-figurines, which responded for him or her when the deceased was called on to do manual labor in the afterlife.

**BEGINNING OF A NEW DAY.** Although the idea of spending the afterlife in the company of Osiris was prominent in the *Book of the Dead*, the idea of spending eternity in the solar barque (sailing vessel) with Re had not disappeared. Beginning with the Eighteenth-dynasty tomb of Thutmose I (r. 1493–1481 B.C.E.), a new type of funerary text made its appearance, the so-called *Underworld Books*. Included in this category are such works as the *Amduat* (“That Which is in the Underworld”), the *Book of Gates*, the *Book of Caverns*, and the *Book of the Earth*. These works describe the sun’s journey through the underworld, which begins at sunset and concludes with the sun’s rise from the waters of Nun, rejuvenated and ready to begin a new day. The underworld was divided into twelve sections, corresponding to the twelve hours of the night. During this time, Re, as the sun, bestows his life-giving rays on the dead who inhabit the underworld. Re travels through the underworld in his

barque that sails on the waters of Nun, the primeval ocean. At times, hostile creatures try to stop the barque, but due to the efforts of Re’s entourage, they fail. At sunrise, Re successfully completes his journey through the underworld, bringing life and light to its inhabitants, including Osiris, and begins the new day rejuvenated.

**THE DAMNED.** Not all the dead, however, were allowed to share in the life-giving rays of the sun during the night. The lowest level of the underworld was reserved for the damned, those who had not successfully passed the final judgment. These unfortunate individuals become identified with the enemies of Osiris and Re, and are consigned to the *Hetemit* (“Place of Destruction”). There they suffer decapitation and dismemberment, including removal of the genitals and heart. They are suspended upside down, with their severed heads between their feet. Other scenes show them being boiled in cauldrons heated by fire-breathing snakes, or being incinerated directly by such serpents. They are doomed to spend eternity submerged in the “Lake of Fire.” Perhaps worst of all, not only are their bodies subject to torture and destruction, but so are their *bas*. Scenes from the under-

world depict the bas of the condemned dead, represented by the ba-bird hieroglyph, being boiled in cauldrons. Through these means these unfortunate Egyptians, whose crimes are not known, were consigned to oblivion.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Religion*

### AKHENATEN

Before 1352 B.C.E.–1366 B.C.E.

*King*

*Founder of a New Religion*

**BEGINNINGS.** Akhenaten was the second son of King Amenhotep III (r. 1390–1352 B.C.E.) of the Eighteenth Dynasty and his wife Tiye. When his older brother Thutmose died young, Akhenaten became the crown prince. It is possible that Akhenaten served for a time as co-regent (co-king) with his father, but the evidence for a co-regency is disputed. When his father died around 1352 B.C.E., he ascended to the throne as Amenhotep IV. He was married to the beautiful Nefertiti, as his Great Royal Wife. She may have been his cousin, although this is uncertain. He was also married to a woman named Kiya, who may have been a Mitannian princess from a region north of modern Iraq. With Nefertiti, Akhenaten had six daughters, three of whom died in infancy. It is also possible that he was the father of Tutankhamun (born Tutankhaten), but, as with so much from this period of Egyptian history, the evidence is inconclusive.

**ATEN.** In the fifth year of his reign, the king signaled a new religious direction for his kingdom by changing his name to Akhenaten, "He who is effective for the Aten." "Aten" was the Egyptian word for the physical disk of the sun. In the same year, the king began construction of a new capital for Egypt. At a vacant

site in Middle Egypt he built the city of Akhetaten, "the horizon of the sun-disk." In the sixth year of his reign, Akhenaten moved his family and administration into his new capital.

**NEW RELIGION.** Akhenaten introduced a new religion to Egypt. Akhenaten worshipped only one god, the light that was in the sun. This light was believed to grant the world life, and to keep it alive. This new god was depicted as a sun disk emanating rays that ended in hands. These hands were frequently directed towards Akhenaten and his family, and could be shown offering the breath of life, symbolized by ankh-signs, to their noses. In order to worship the Aten, Akhenaten had a new type of temple constructed, reminiscent of the sun temples of the Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 B.C.E.), nearly 1,000 years earlier. These temples consisted of a series of open courts oriented towards the east, centering on an altar. Such temples were built at Thebes, Memphis, Heliopolis, and of course, Akhetaten. In these temples, even the doorways had broken lintels, to allow the sun's rays to reach all parts of the temple.

**ROYAL FAMILY.** While Akhenaten and his family worshipped the Aten, the people of Egypt, especially those living at Akhetaten, were to worship the royal family. Akhenaten was considered to be the son of the Aten, and it was through him that the Egyptians were to worship the sun. Egyptian homes at Akhetaten contained stelae (carved or inscribed slabs of stone) showing the royal family worshipping the Aten. These stelae served as the focal point of the cult of the Aten within their homes. One official, Panehsy, praised Akhenaten as "my god, who built me, who determined good for me, who made me come into being and gave me bread."

**AFTERLIFE.** Even the traditional conception of the afterlife underwent a drastic change. No longer did the dead live on in the underworld in the company of Osiris, or journey through the sky in the barque of Re. Essentially there was no longer a world of the beyond. Both the living and the ba-spirits of the dead continued to live here on earth, under the sun's rays. At sunrise, the bas of the justified dead traveled to the Great Temple of the Aten in Akhetaten to receive the sun's life-giving rays and to participate in the offerings made to Aten in his temple. Justification no longer meant being found innocent in the tribunal of Osiris, but was a status reserved for those who were loyal to the king during life. Akhenaten, as Aten's sole representative on earth, was the dispenser of provisions to the dead.

**AMUN.** Not only did Akhenaten promote the worship of a new deity, he went so far as to close down the

temples to the other gods of Egypt, particularly the temples of Amun. Also in his fifth year, Akhenaten sent workmen throughout Egypt to remove the names of Amun, his consort Mut, and even the plural term “gods” from the monuments of Egypt. Akhenaten referred to the Aten as a god of whom “there is no other but him.” Aten had no consort, no children (other than Akhenaten), and no opponent. Akhenaten may have been the world’s first monotheist. After his death, however, Tutankhamun soon restored the full Egyptian pantheon. Akhenaten’s revolution was short-lived and unsuccessful.

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### AMENHOTEP, SON OF HAPU

1479 B.C.E.–1353 B.C.E.

*Royal Scribe*  
*Priest*  
*Overseer*

**SPECIAL STATUS.** Amenhotep, son of Hapu, was born during the reign of pharaoh Thutmose III in the town of Athribis, in the Delta. His father was Hapu, and his mother was Itu. As a young man, he attended the temple school and learned “the words of Thoth” (hieroglyphs). Amenhotep served as an official under King Amenhotep III (r. 1390–1352 B.C.E.) of the Eighteenth Dynasty. He was first appointed as a royal scribe and priest in the temple of Horus-Khentikheti. He was later promoted to the office of “Scribe of Recruits,” where he was responsible for organizing the manpower of Egypt for the king. From there he rose to the position of “Overseer of all the works of the King.” In this position he was responsible for the construction of the king’s temples at Soleb and Karnak, and for the monumental statues of the king set up at Thebes. As a reward for his services, Amenhotep was allowed to erect statues of himself throughout the processional way in the temple of Karnak. There, he could serve as an intermediary between visitors to the temple and the gods worshipped therein.

**REVERED AFTER DEATH.** When he died, he was buried at Qurnet Murai on the west bank of the Nile across from Thebes, near his king’s funerary temple. He was even given the honor of having his own funerary

temple, built near that of his sovereign. From there, the cult of Amenhotep, son of Hapu, grew in renown until he was revered as a local saint at Thebes. A Twenty-sixth-dynasty (664–525 B.C.E.) statue of Amenhotep dedicated by Merit-Neith, daughter of Pharaoh Psammetichus I (664–610 B.C.E.), asks him to heal her of an unnamed affliction of the eyes. By the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.), Amenhotep had entered the pantheon of the gods, and was revered as a god of wisdom and a healer, with major cult centers at Deir el Bahri and Deir el-Medina.

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### IMHOTEP

Unknown–c. 2600 B.C.E.

*Vizier*

**DIVINITY.** The Egyptian term *netjer* could be applied to a range of entities. In addition to gods, the word could be applied to the king, certain animals, and the dead. Egyptians venerated their deceased ancestors as in some sense divine. There are a few individuals in Egyptian history whose divinity grew to exceed the bounds of their own families, and who eventually came to have a place in the pantheon of Egyptian gods. Two such individuals are Imhotep and Amenhotep, son of Hapu, who both gained the title of *netjer* in Egyptian writing.

**OFFICES.** Imhotep served as a vizier (high government official) and architect under King Djoser of the Third Dynasty. He also held the offices of high priest of Re at Heliopolis, and the chief of sculptors and makers of stone vessels. He is credited with designing the king’s step pyramid complex at Saqqara, and therefore with inventing monumental construction in stone. He outlived his patron, and his name is found in a graffito on the enclosure wall of an unfinished pyramid started during the reign of Sekhemkhet, the successor of Djoser. Imhotep perhaps died around 2600 B.C.E.

**CULT.** Imhotep disappears from view until the New Kingdom. Texts from this period credit him as one of the great sages of Egypt, who authored a collection of

proverbs, unfortunately now lost, but revered for their wisdom. Imhotep was considered to be a patron of scribes and intellectuals. Scribes would frequently pour out a water libation to him from their water-pots before beginning to write. By the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664–525 B.C.E.), Imhotep was considered to be the son of the god Ptah and Khereduanekh, his natural mother. Later on, Imhotep was given a wife, Renpet-neferet. Eventually a sanctuary in honor of Imhotep was built at Saqqara. Here in the area of Memphis, Imhotep was considered to be a god with special powers of healing. He was thought to be able to grant requests for wives and children. By the time of Roman domination of Egypt (30 B.C.E.–395 C.E.), the cult of Imhotep had spread throughout Egypt. In addition to being a god of healing and wisdom, Imhotep acquired a reputation as a famous astrologer, and was thought to have the power to bring fertility to the earth.

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- Anonymous, *Book of the Heavenly Cow* (c. 1322 B.C.E.)—First found in the tomb of King Tutankhamun, this work is one of a series of descriptions of the underworld composed in the New Kingdom.
- Anonymous, *Coffin Texts* (c. 2130 B.C.E.)—This funeral text found written on the interiors of non-royal people's coffins includes protective spells for parts of the body and other information necessary for the deceased to enter the afterlife. They are popular throughout the Middle Kingdom.
- Anonymous, *Contendings of Horus and Seth* (c. 1279 B.C.E. or slightly later)—This is an account of these two gods' struggle to inherit the throne from the first mythical king Osiris.
- Anonymous, *Esna Cosmogony* (c. 97 C.E.)—This is the only Egyptian creation story that claims a goddess, Neith, created the world. Other creation myths in Egypt credit creation to male gods.
- Anonymous, *Khufu and the Magicians* (c. 1630 B.C.E. or slightly later)—This story describes a succession of professional magicians demonstrating their abilities for King Khufu. The story shows one idea of the Egyptian concept of magic.
- Anonymous, *Memphite Theology* (c. 716 B.C.E.)—This version of the Egyptian creation myth stresses creation through the spoken word and is reminiscent of the biblical creations in Genesis and the Gospel of John.
- Anonymous, *Pyramid Texts* (c. 2371 B.C.E.)—This is a royal funeral ritual inscribed on the interior walls of the pyramids of the end of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties.
- Anonymous, *Tale of the Doomed Prince* (c. 1292 B.C.E. or slightly later)—This is a story of a prince whose fate is set at his birth and who attempts to avoid it. The end of the story is missing and so it is not clear if he succeeds or not.
- Clement of Alexandria, *Title* (c. third century C.E.)—This later description of Egyptian gods shows a misunderstanding of the role of statues in Egyptian religion.
- Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris* (c. first to second centuries C.E.)—This Greek recounting of the story of Isis and Osiris is the only connected narrative of this myth from ancient times.
- Anonymous, *Amduat* (c. 1493 B.C.E.)—"What is in the Underworld," a description of the afterlife first found in the tombs of kings beginning with Thuthmosis I, is one of a series of underworld books composed in the New Kingdom.
- Anonymous, *Book of Caverns* (c. 1292 B.C.E.)—This work is one of a number of descriptions of the underworld composed for the use of kings in the Ramesside Period (1292–1075 B.C.E.).
- Anonymous, *Book of the Dead* (c. 1539 B.C.E.)—Called in Egyptian, the "Book of Going Forth by Day," these texts written on papyrus became popular in the New Kingdom and in the Late Period as guides to the afterlife. They are included in tombs for the use of the deceased.

chapter 8 eight

THEATER

Edward Bleiberg

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	252	<i>Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus Scene 3: A Typical Scene</i> (evidence that the <i>Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus</i> consisted of scenes following a pattern) . . . . .	255
OVERVIEW . . . . .	253	<i>The Shabaka Stone: The First Identified Drama</i> (dramatic text from the Fifth or Sixth Dynasty) . . . . .	256
TOPICS		<i>Drama and Ritual in the Coffin Texts</i> ( <i>Coffin Text Spell 148</i> concerning the birth of Horus). . . . .	257
Defining Theater . . . . .	253	<i>Seeking Drama</i> (excerpt from the <i>Book of the Dead</i> ) . . . . .	258
Spoken Drama . . . . .	254	<i>Misidentification in The Biography of Emhab</i> (excerpt from the <i>Biography of Emhab</i> ) . . . . .	259
The Osirian Khoiak Festival Drama . . . . .	260		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Emhab . . . . .	261		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	262		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			



## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Theater*

*All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).*

- 2500–2170 One of the earliest composed dramas, concerning the battle between the gods Horus and Seth, may have been written during this time period. The text is preserved only on the *Shabaka Stone* which dates to this king's reign (716–702 B.C.E.).
- 2130–2008 The *Coffin Texts*, which may have been dramatized, are composed during this time. The possible dramatic texts concern the goddess Isis' conception of her son Horus.
- 1919–1875 The *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus*, identified as a drama by the Egyptologist Kurt Sethe, is composed during the reign of Senwosret I. This text contains the burial ritual for a king and the coronation of the new king at the end of his father's funeral.
- 1836–1818 The earliest account of the *Osirian Drama of Khoiak* is composed. This ritual drama relating the story of the death and resurrection of the god Osiris is the best example of an Egyptian drama.
- 1539–1075 The *Book of the Dead*, which the Egyptologist Emile Drioton believed was dramatized, is composed. The texts contain spells which enabled the deceased to enter the next world.
- 1187–1156 The Festival Calendar carved at the temple of Medinet Habu includes the performance of several scenes from the *Osirian Drama of Khoiak* among the events on the calendar. This text helps to determine the proper order of the scenes of the play over the month of Khoiak.
- 381–362 The *Metternich Stele*, which Egyptologist Emile Drioton believed was a drama, is carved. The text concerns the goddess Isis' ability to cure scorpion stings and snake bites.
- 332–30 The *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind*, named for its first European owners, is written. It concerns a battle between the god Thoth and the demon-snake Apophis, and may have been a drama.
- The *Triumph of Horus*, a drama carved on the walls of the temple at Edfu in Upper Egypt, is performed. The drama concerns the conflict between the gods Horus and Seth and their claims to be the legitimate king.

## OVERVIEW *of Theater*

**EXISTENCE OF THEATER.** The primary question in a discussion of ancient Egyptian theater is whether or not it existed at all. Theater in modern American culture is primarily a mode of entertainment, though it can examine political, religious, or social topics. Actors perform theater on a stage, speaking dialogue. If ancient Egyptian culture had included a similar sort of drama, they would have had words for “actor,” “theater,” and “performance.” Yet all of these words are lacking in the Egyptian language. Theater buildings did exist in Egypt during the time period when the Greeks and then the Romans had conquered the country (after 332 B.C.E.), but Greek dramas and Roman comedies were undoubtedly performed in these theaters rather than native Egyptian drama. If Egyptian theater did exist, it must have taken a form different from theater in Greek and subsequent Western cultures.

**THE STUDY OF EGYPTIAN THEATER.** At least three early twentieth-century Egyptologists claimed to have identified ancient Egyptian dramas similar in form to ancient Greek drama: Kurt Sethe (1869–1934), Emile Drioton (1889–1962), and Herbert Fairman (1907–1982). Though Sethe, Drioton, and Fairman represent three successive generations of Egyptologists, they shared a common desire to represent ancient Egyptian culture as the equal of ancient Greek culture. For them, this equality meant that Egyptian culture had all of the same cultural institutions as the Greeks. Thus they sought to identify the mythology that would have been represented in Egyptian drama and further sought the dialogue for drama in surviving Egyptian texts. All three men were great scholars whose command of the ancient Egyptian language and numerous other contributions to Egyptology won them the respect of their colleagues and of Egyptologists living today. For this reason, their misguided search for a Greek-style drama in Egyptian culture has remained a part of Egyptological literature.

**REDEFINING THEATER.** Louis Boctor Mikhail, a Swedish Egyptologist, published a study of Egyptian

theater in 1983. By redefining theater in Egypt as a ritual drama that was present in the festival of Osiris held during the month of Khoiak (mid-September to mid-October), Mikhail was able to analyze a particular kind of Egyptian theater. This theater was an element of Egyptian temple ritual, took place over many days, and incorporated priests and puppet-like statues as actors. Various locations within the temple served as the stage. Only by accepting Mikhail’s definition of drama is it possible to discuss theater in ancient Egypt.

## TOPICS *in Theater*

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### DEFINING THEATER

**FEW CLUES REMAIN.** Egyptian theater has been a mystery to modern scholars. The fact that the Egyptians had no words equivalent to the English words “theater,” “actor,” or “stage,” leads many scholars to believe that Egypt had no theater, as theater is understood in modern times. Yet Egyptologists (experts who have made a special study of Egyptian culture) have recognized that while there is no vocabulary pointing to theater, there are certain ancient Egyptian texts that are dramatic in nature. Many dialogues between gods and kings have survived and much of the music that was recorded on stone walls or papyrus is accompanied by illustrations of people in dramatic poses. There is also a recorded history of Egyptian priests impersonating different gods during ceremonies and festivals. If theater did exist in ancient Egypt it would have occurred during the various festivals held throughout the year, as it mainly did in ancient Greece and Rome in the later centuries before the common era. Even if theater was performed during festival periods, however, Egyptologists concede that it may have lacked many of the major components found in modern theater including entertainment value, professional actors, a stage, action and even an audience since many of the activities considered to be theater took place in small temple areas.

**NOT ENTERTAINMENT.** It is clear that if Egyptian theater existed, it did not serve as an independent form of entertainment. Instead it functioned within religious rituals as either a teaching method or as an offering to the gods. This type of theater is similar to the function theater played in various other cultures of this time period such as the Japanese Noh drama that took stories from religious myths and presented them both for religious

edification and for education. This designation puts Egyptian theater in contrast to more Western civilizations, such as Greece which developed theater as an independent institution from religion, education, or government, even though these institutions were still heavily influential in determining dramatic content.

**NO ACTORS.** Because theater was not separate from the institution of religion in Egypt, there were no professional actors or acting troupes. Instead, it was the religious class that performed all acting duties. While priests and, on the rare occasion, priestesses were the main performers in theater rituals, statues also played a large role in the dramatic telling of stories. The best-known example of how these actors and statues functioned in a theater production comes from a surviving Osirian drama most likely performed in the cult center at Abydos. The statues used to represent gods were usually made of stone and thought to be small based on remains that have been found. For instance, the figures of the gods Henty-imentyu and Sokar were approximately 22 inches tall. The coffin for the god Osiris used in the drama was about the same length, suggesting that the figure of Osiris used in the drama was also small. Lesser gods, such as a small hippopotamus that was used to represent the god Seth in the Osiris play, were rendered not in stone, but in bread. Priests also represented gods in this drama and they wore masks that allowed them to impersonate the gods and provide a narrative by reciting a ritual. Priestesses mimed the parts of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys, who performed a mourning ritual. Some reliefs that allude to the Osiris drama indicate that the king, for whom all theater would be performed, would sometimes portray himself during performances. A variety of archaeological and textual materials have revealed many of these details of the Osirian Khoiak festival.

**NO STAGE.** Since all theater was related to religious rituals and festivals, Egyptian dramatic presentations took place at various venues within a temple. Chapels at the god Osiris' temple in Abydos bore names related to different scenes in the drama and were perhaps the venues for the performances of these different scenes. The priests, however, often presented other scenes on the temple lake within the sanctuary, and at specific stations on the processional way to different temple locations. Hence, there was no necessity for a central theater in ancient Egypt due to the fact that religious rites were mobile.

**NO ACTION.** Based on the surviving texts thought to be dramatic in nature, action was most often reported rather than performed. The characters were often statues and thus could not be manipulated to perform actions.

Furthermore, the course of the story was never a surprise to the audience. The dramatic presentation was instead the reenactment of a ritual that was most likely performed yearly and would be familiar to all in attendance. While there was little action during Egyptian drama, there were various different elements during a performance that told the story of a myth within the context of a temple ritual. These included song, dance, instrumental music, pantomime, and dialogue.

**EVALUATING PERFORMANCES.** Though comparisons with ancient Greek or with modern drama can clarify the differences between modern expectations and Egyptian reality, those expectations cannot be used to define or evaluate Egyptian theater. Since all of the stories were centered around the religious rituals which were taken from the myths surrounding the god Osiris, his wife Isis, their son Horus, and Osiris' brother Seth, there was most likely very little originality in the performances. There would not have been one ritual that was more highly favored than any other due to the fact that each ritual honored a different god. Hence, unlike festivals in other cultures where theater was judged and prizes awarded, the Egyptians saw theater more as a necessity and not worth the fanfare.

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#### SPOKEN DRAMA

**DETERMINING TEXTS.** Though Egyptologists generally agree that some Egyptian texts were dramatic, there is little agreement on which texts fall into this category. The most commonly identified drama is the *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus*, but there are other texts thought by some Egyptologists to constitute dramas, including the *Shabaka Stone*, parts of the *Coffin Texts*, parts of the *Book of the Dead*, the *Metternich Stele*, the *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind*, the *Louvre Papyrus 3129*, and the Horus Myth carved on the walls of the Edfu temple. The lack of agreement on which texts constitute drama leads to difficulties in studying drama as a distinct class of text. The following reviews the evidence that these texts represent dialogue and stage directions for dramatic presentations.

**DRAMATIC RAMESSEUM PAPYRUS.** The *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus* received its name from its first editor, Kurt Sethe, the distinguished German Egyptologist

who worked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The English archaeologist James Edward Quibell discovered the papyrus in a tomb near a temple built by Ramesses II, called the Ramesseum, in 1896. The text most probably dates to the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.). The text describes the coronation of Senwosret I, the second king of the Twelfth Dynasty (1919–1875 B.C.E.). The ceremony portrayed in the text is probably even older than Senwosret I's reign. The funeral ceremony for Senwosret's father, Amenemhet I, begins the text. The culmination of the funeral is Senwosret's coronation.

**STRUCTURE OF THE RAMESSEUM PAPYRUS.** The structure of any Egyptian text must be interpreted by the modern reader. The Egyptians used no punctuation. Thus sentence and paragraph division is sometimes a matter of opinion, though usually no Egyptologist disputes the order in which the lines are read. Sethe believed that the author of the Ramesseum Papyrus had divided it into scenes. Each scene included stage directions, provided as a narrative. The actor's dialogue followed the narrative. The narrative, according to Sethe, describes the actions that the actors perform. It begins with the phrase "what happened was ...," but often the second sentence in the narrative is a comment on the religious meaning of the action in the previous sentence. Thus such stage directions would also include religious interpretation. The dialogue always begins with the Egyptian formula, "Words spoken by ...," found often at the beginning of Egyptian prayers and magic spells. Sethe called the third section of each scene "scenic marks." The scribe wrote these marks horizontally, in contrast to the vertical columns of the dialogue. The first scenic mark included either the name of a god, the name of a ritual object, a ritual theme, or a ritual action. The second scenic mark gave an earthly equivalent of the divine antecedent in the first mark. The third scenic mark was the name of a place, an action, or a person. The scenic marks seem also to interpret the preceding action and dialogue.

**VIGNETTES.** "Vignette" is the name Egyptologists give to the illustrations found in a papyrus manuscript. Sethe noted that the vignettes included in the *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus* do not relate directly to the texts. Sometimes the vignette combined more than one scene. At other times, the vignette bears no clear relationship to the words found near it in the papyrus. Hence, Sethe concluded that the vignettes were used only for reading the text, not for performing it. This situation is similar to that found in illustrated examples of the *Book of the Dead*.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**DRAMATIC RAMESSEUM PAPYRUS SCENE 3:  
A TYPICAL SCENE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The German Egyptologist Kurt Sethe believed that the *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus* consisted of scenes composed in a regular pattern. The scenes began with stage directions. These directions began with the phrase, "It happened that ..." The following sentence was an interpretation of the religious meaning of the stage directions. Then the formula "words spoken by ..." followed with the dialogue. Finally, the scenic marks included the names of gods, actions, or places. The following scene, which Sethe numbered three follows this pattern.

It happened that the royal bull burnt-offering was made. Horus is the one who is angry and his eye takes when the (falcon) with the great breast of Thoth comes and when the one who empties the eye during the making of the burnt-offering of all sacrificial cattle. Words spoken by Isis to Thoth: "Your lips are those which have done it." Thoth. Making the burnt-offering and chaining the sacrificial cattle for the first time. Words spoken by Isis to Thoth. "Open your mouth again." Thoth. Slaughtering of the sacrificial cattle.

*Translated by Edward Bleiberg.*

**OTHER THEORIES ON THE RAMESSEUM PAPYRUS.** Sethe was not the final word on the *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus*. Two Egyptologists working in Germany during the 1960s and 1970s believed that the currently known copy of the Ramesseum Papyrus included both the original script as well as comments made after the composition of the script. According to these scholars, the comments are part of the interpretive comments found in the second sentence of Sethe's narrative stage directions and in the scenic marks. They believed this commentary to be religious in nature and evidence that the Ramesseum Papyrus was a religious ritual. Even Sethe implied such a conclusion because he referred to it as a festival play and emphasized its ceremonial character. Other Egyptologists have debated the proper order of the scenes. Egyptian writing on papyrus is most often arranged right to left. Indeed the individual lines of the Ramesseum Papyrus are arranged in this typical fashion. Some Egyptologists, however, have attempted to arrange the scenes from left to right, while reading the individual lines from right to left. This sort of arrangement is not otherwise known in Egyptian texts. The motivation

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE SHABAKA STONE: THE FIRST IDENTIFIED DRAMA**

**INTRODUCTION:** *The Shabaka Stone* was among the first texts which the German Egyptologist Kurt Sethe identified as drama. The text includes both narratives that Sethe understood as stage directions and speeches by the gods that Sethe viewed as dialogue. The major themes of the drama include the battle between Horus and Seth to inherit the right to be king from Osiris and the unity of Horus, the rightful king with the god Ptah. The text was either composed in the Fifth or Sixth Dynasty (2500–2170 B.C.E.) and recopied in King Shabaka's time (716–702 B.C.E.) or composed during Shabaka's time and attributed to ancient history to increase its importance.

This writing was copied out anew by his majesty in the House of his father Ptah-South-of-his-Wall, for his majesty found it to be a work of the ancestors which was worm-eaten, so that it could not be understood from beginning to end. His majesty copied it anew so that it became better than it had been before, in order that his name might endure and his monument last in the House of his father Ptah-South-of-his-Wall throughout eternity, as a work done by the Son of Re [Shabaka] for his father Ptah-Tatenen, so that he might live forever ...

[Geb, lord of the gods, commanded] that the Nine Gods gather to him. He judged between Horus and Seth; he ended their quarrel. He made Seth king of Upper Egypt in the land of Upper Egypt, up to the place in which he was born, which is Su. And Geb made Horus king of Lower Egypt in the land of Lower Egypt, up to the place in which his father was drowned which is "Division-of-

the-Two-Lands." Thus Horus stood over one region, and Seth stood over one region. They made peace over the Two Lands at Ayan. That was the division of the Two Lands.

Geb's words to Seth: "Go to the place in which you were born." Seth: Upper Egypt. Geb's words to Horus: "Go to the place in which your father was drowned." Horus: Lower Egypt. Geb's words to Horus and Seth: "I have separated you."—Lower and Upper Egypt.

Then it seemed wrong to Geb that the portion of Horus was like the portion of Seth. So Geb gave to Horus his inheritance, for he is the son of his firstborn son.

Geb's words to the Nine Gods: "I have appointed Horus, the firstborn." Geb's words to the Nine Gods: "Him alone, Horus, the inheritance." Geb's words to the Nine Gods: "To this heir, Horus, my inheritance." Geb's words to the Nine Gods: "To the son of my son, Horus, the Jackal of Upper Egypt—" Geb's words to the Nine Gods: "The firstborn, Horus, the Opener-of-the-ways." Geb's words to the Nine Gods: "The son who was born—Horus, on the Birthday of the Opener-of-the-ways" ...

Reed and papyrus were placed on the double door of the House of Ptah. That means Horus and Seth, pacified and united. They fraternized so as to cease quarreling in whatever place they might be, being united in the House of Ptah, the "Balance of the Two Lands" in which Upper and Lower Egypt had been weighed.

**SOURCE:** "The Shabaka Stone," in *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*. Vol. 1 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Trans. Miriam Lichtheim (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973): 52–53.

for rearranging the scenes was to make their order more closely resemble the order of some relief sculptures carved in the Tomb of Kheruef, an official of King Amenhotep III (1390–1352 B.C.E.), nearly 550 years after the date of the papyrus. Though the scenes in Kheruef's tomb contain some of the same subject matter as the *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus*, no scholar has been able to convincingly argue that the order of the scenes in the papyrus should be read in the same order as the relief scenes.

**SHABAKA STONE.** Sethe's second example of an Egyptian drama was the *Shabaka Stone*. Egyptologists named this inscribed black slab of slate after King Shabaka (716–702 B.C.E.) who ordered that it be carved. The inscription begins with the note that it is a copy of a papyrus that was written "in the time of the ancestors." Some problems in understanding the text stem from the

fact that millers used the *Shabaka Stone* as part of a millstone at some time. Many parts of the center of the inscription are so worn away that they are illegible. Furthermore, Egyptologists continue to question the true date of this text. The first commentators thought it was a Fifth- or Sixth-dynasty text which would date it to approximately 2500–2170 B.C.E. These scholars saw similarities between the language used in the *Shabaka Stone* and the *Pyramid Texts*, known to be written at that time. Others believe that scribes in the time of Shabaka purposely created a text that sounded old to validate current theological ideas and imply these ideas had an ancient pedigree.

**DEBATE OVER TEXT.** When Sethe studied the text of the *Shabaka Stone*, he concluded it was a drama, expanding on the ideas of his teacher, Adolf Erman. He

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***DRAMA AND RITUAL IN THE COFFIN TEXTS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The French Egyptologist Emile Drioton regarded *Coffin Text Spell 148* as the written evidence for a drama involving the goddess Isis, her child Horus, and the father of the gods, Geb. Scribes wrote *Coffin Texts* on the interiors of Egyptian coffins beginning in the First Intermediate Period (2130–2008 B.C.E.) and throughout the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.); Egyptologists understand them as part of the funerary ritual. The narrative in Drioton's opinion constitutes stage directions while the speeches represent dialogue. This spell refers to the gods' reaction when Isis learns that she has become pregnant posthumously with Osiris' child. The child Horus was destined to become the next legitimate king of Egypt. This story is basic to the political legitimacy of each Egyptian king. It remains doubtful whether this text was enacted as a ritual drama.

The lightning flash strikes, the gods are afraid, Isis wakes pregnant with the seed of her brother Osiris. She is uplifted, (even she) the widow, and her heart is glad with the seed of her brother Osiris. She says: "O you gods, I am Isis, the sister of Osiris, who wept for the father of the gods, (even) Osiris who judged the slaughterings of the Two Lands. His seed is within my womb, I have moulded the shape of the god within the egg as my son who is at the head of the Ennead. What he shall rule is this land, the heritage of his (grand-)father Geb, what he shall say is concerning his father, what he shall kill is Seth the enemy of his father Osiris. Come, you gods, protect him within my womb, for he is known in your hearts. He is your lord, this god who is in his egg, blue-haired of form, lord of the gods, and great and beautiful are the vanes of the two blue plumes."

"Oh!" says Atum, "guard your heart, O woman!"

"How do you know? He is the god, lord and heir of the Ennead, who made you within the egg. I am Isis, one more spirit-like and august than the gods; the god is within this womb of mine and he is the seed of Osiris."

Then says Atum: "You are pregnant and you are hidden, O girl! You will give birth, being pregnant for the gods, seeing that(?) he is the seed of Osiris. May that villain who slew his father not come, lest he break the egg in its early stages, for the Great-of-Magic will guard against him."

Thus says Isis: "Hear this, you gods, which Atum, Lord of the Mansion of the Sacred Images, has said. He has decreed for me protection for my son within my womb, he has knit together an entourage about him within this womb of mine, for he knows that he is the heir of Osiris, and a guard over the Falcon who is in this womb of mine has been set by Atum, Lord of the gods. Go up on earth, that I may give you praise. The retainers of your father Osiris will serve you, I will make your name, for you have reached the horizon, having passed by the battlements of the Mansion of Him whose name is hidden. Strength has gone up within my flesh, power has reached into my flesh, power has reached...."

"... who conveys the Sunshine-god, and he has prepared his own place, being seated at the head of the gods in the entourage of the Releaser(?)."

"O Falcon, my son Horus, dwell in this land of your father Osiris in this your name of Falcon who is on the battlements of the Mansion of Him whose name is hidden. I ask that you shall be always in the suite of Re of the horizon in the prow of the primeval bark for ever and ever" ...

Isis goes down to the Releaser(?) who brings Horus, for Isis has asked that he may be the Releaser(?) as the leader of eternity.

"See Horus, you gods! I am Horus, the Falcon who is on the battlements of the Mansion of Him whose name is hidden. My flight aloft has reached the horizon, I have overpassed the gods of the sky, I have made my position more prominent than that of the Primeval Ones. The Contender has not attained my first flight, my place is far from Seth, the enemy of my father Osiris. I have used the roads of eternity to the dawn, I go up in my flight, and there is no god who can do what I have done. I am aggressive against the enemy of my father Osiris, he having been set under my sandals in this my name of ... I am Horus, born of Isis, whose protection was made within the egg; the fiery blast of your mouth does not attack me, and what you may say against me does not reach me, I am Horus, more distant of place than men or gods; I am Horus son of Isis."

**SOURCE:** "Spell 148," in *Spells 1–354*. Vol. I of *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*. Trans. Raymond O. Faulkner (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, Ltd., 1973): 125–126.

came to this conclusion based on the existence of dialogues through which the gods give speeches and others reply. Again he used the formula "words spoken by ..." to recognize the dialogue. The text also contains some free spaces and squares that Sethe believed divided the

text. Other commentary on the *Shabaka Stone*, however, has suggested that the gods' dialogue only reinforces ideas in a philosophical treatise. The major themes of the text concern the gods Horus and Seth quarreling over which is the rightful heir to Osiris, the first Egyptian

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SEEKING DRAMA**

**INTRODUCTION:** The French Egyptologist Emile Drioton sought Egyptian drama in the rituals of the *Book of the Dead*. Though Chapter 39 has speeches that appear to be dramatic, it is more likely that they were recited in rituals that ensured that the deceased was admitted into the next world.

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**SOURCE:** "Chapter for Repelling a Rerek-snake in the God's Domain," in *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*. Trans. Raymond O. Faulkner (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994): 104.

king. Horus, son of Osiris, and Seth, brother of Osiris, each claim to be the next legitimate king. The god Geb judges between them, first giving Horus the north and Seth the south, then finally proclaiming the whole inheritance belongs to Horus. Much of this plot is also known from the Ramesside story, the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*. But in the *Shabaka Stone* the story then places the god Ptah as the chief of the gods. The author describes Ptah as the ultimate creator god who created the world from speech. Memphis, Ptah's home city, is further declared the proper capital of all Egypt. Hence,

many commentators regard these themes as strictly political and religious and do not regard it as a ritual drama.

**COFFIN TEXTS.** Scribes wrote the *Coffin Texts* on the inside of coffins, beginning in the First Intermediate Period and throughout the Middle Kingdom (2130–1630 B.C.E.). There are many different spells, mostly concerned with the deceased gaining admittance to the next world. The French Egyptologist Emile Drioton believed that spells 148, 162, and 312 represented extracts from dramas. Though few Egyptologists today accept this view, these spells represent dramatic dialogues and monologues

that offer a view of the drama inherent in certain religious rituals for the Egyptians.

**COFFIN TEXT 148.** Much of Drioton's conjecture comes from the dialogue between the deities Isis, Atum, and Horus in *Coffin Text 148*. According to Drioton, the text begins with a title and the stage directions that Isis awakes, pregnant. She then speaks, describing in outline the conflict between Osiris, her husband, and Seth, his brother. She proclaims that the child within her womb, Horus, will become the next king. Atum first questions her knowledge, but then agrees to protect her after she insists that this child belongs to Osiris. Isis repeats Atum's assurances and describes Horus. Horus himself then gives a speech to the gods, claiming his right to the throne. The action thus is magical and not clearly logical. The inherent drama from this text comes from the audience already knowing the story and making other connections to mythological tales while hearing this recitation. The speeches thus belong to the realm of ritual and could possibly have been acted out by priests during the ritual.

**BOOK OF THE DEAD 39.** The *Book of the Dead* contains spells designed to enable the owner to enter the afterlife. They replaced coffin texts during the New Kingdom and through the end of pagan Egyptian religion (1539 B.C.E. to the second century C.E.). Some of these spells, such as the one contained in Chapter 39, also resembled drama to Drioton. Chapter 39 bears the title "Repelling a Rerek-snake in the God's Domain," and it contains long speeches made by the god Re and an unnamed speaker, and short speeches made by the deities Geb, Hathor, and Nut. Again the situation is heavily dialogue-based. It concerns saving the god Re from the attacks of a snake. Again the text resembles a typical Egyptian ritual, but unlike the *Coffin Texts*, there is no clear evidence of stage directions or the intention to stage the recitation of these speeches.

**METTERNICH STELE.** The Metternich Stele received its modern name because it was once in the collection of the early nineteenth-century Austrian prince Klemens von Metternich. An artist carved the stele (a slab with an inscribed or sculpted surface) in the reign of Nectanebo I (381–362 B.C.E.) during the final native Egyptian dynasty. Most Egyptologists today consider the stele a *cippus*, a magical device used to protect the owner from snake bites and scorpion stings. Drioton, however, regarded the story carved on the stele as a drama. The text describes the rescue by the goddess Isis of a rich woman's son from a scorpion bite, and her subsequent curing of her own son, Horus, with the help of the gods when he is poisoned. Though Drioton understood the narrative

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**MISIDENTIFICATION IN THE BIOGRAPHY OF EMHAB**

**INTRODUCTION:** Emile Drioton's desire to discover ancient Egyptian drama in some texts also led him to search among Egyptian texts for people who had been actors. Drioton translated the Biography of Emhab in a way that implied that Emhab had been an itinerant actor, rather than a drummer in the Egyptian military. Drioton translated a word that means "followed" as "tour" and a word that means "utterance" to mean "declaim" and thus could interpret the text to mean that Emhab was an actor. Jaroslav Černý, the Czech Egyptologist, retranslated the Biography of Emhab according to standardized meanings of the words and discovered that Emhab was a military drummer.

A boon which the king gives (to) Osiris, lord of Busiris, the great god, lord of Abydos, that he may give invocation-offerings consisting of bread and beer, oxen and fowl, to the spirit of the hereditary noble and favoured count Emhab, called Tamereru, repeating life. He says: I am one who followed his lord in his movements and one who did not fail in (any) utterance which he said. I put all strength and suppleness in (my) two hands. It was said to Hetinet: "Come! He will fight with you in endurance." I beat him with fingers seven thousand (times) in endurance. (I) spent year 3 beating drum every day. I gave satisfaction to my lord in all his affairs, (for) he is now a god, while I am (only) a ruler. He killed and I let live. I reached Miu without counting all foreign countries, while I followed him day and night, and I reached Auaris. My lord acquired Gemishena for Lower Egyptian barley and one pot full of choice oil ...

**SOURCE:** Jaroslav Černý, "The Stela of Emhab from Tell Edfu," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Kairo* 24 (1969): 89.

as stage directions and the magic spells as dialogue, no other Egyptologist accepts this interpretation.

**RETURN OF SETH.** Drioton draws the drama *The Return of Seth* from the Louvre Papyrus 3129 and the British Museum Papyrus 10252. The Louvre papyrus dates to the Ptolemaic period (332–30 B.C.E.) while the British Museum papyrus dates to the reign of Nectanebo I (381–362 B.C.E.). These texts describe the god Seth's return from banishment after losing his battles with the god Horus. These battles resume upon his return. This story relates to the narrative in the *Shabaka Stone* and,



like the *Shabaka Stone*, it has a mix of dialogue and narrative. Yet no other Egyptologist recognizes these texts as drama.

**PAPYRUS BREMNER-RHIND.** Drioton also recognized a drama in *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind*. A scribe wrote this papyrus during the Ptolemaic period (332–30 B.C.E.). The story concerns a battle between the god Thoth and the demon-snake Apophis. The papyrus contains neither stage directions nor the formula that introduces speech, the criteria Drioton used to identify drama in other texts. Hence the *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind* is the least convincing of Drioton's examples.

**FAIRMAN'S DRAMAS.** The English Egyptologist H. W. Fairman believed that the best evidence for drama in ancient Egypt came from the texts and relief sculptures carved on the walls of the temple at Edfu. These texts and reliefs date to the Ptolemaic period (332–30 B.C.E.) and concern the conflict between Horus and Seth. At Edfu, Seth takes the form of a hippopotamus, a theme found also in the Ramesside story that considers the same topic. Fairman advanced the discussion of drama in Egypt by showing concrete proof that drama was most likely connected to a festival. From the reliefs he identified musical instruments included in the performance as well as a chorus of singers and dancers. Fairman also believed that the king participated in the performance from the evidence of the reliefs. Most Egyptologists accepted Fairman's analysis of the scenes as accurate. The question still remains as to whether it represents only a festival ritual or whether that ritual can be identified as a drama.

#### SOURCES

Hartwig Altenmüller, "Zur Lesung und Deutung des dramatischen Ramesseum Papyrus," in *Jaarbericht van Het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux* VI (1967): 421–442.

Emile Drioton, "Le théâtre dans l'ancienne Égypte," in *Revue de la Société d'Histoire du Théâtre* VI (1954): 7–45.

H. W. Fairman, *The Triumph of Horus* (London: Batsford, 1974).

Kurt Sethe, *Dramatische Texte zu altägyptische Mysteryenspiel* (Leipzig, Germany: J. C. Heinrichs Verlag, 1928).

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## THE OSIRIAN KHOIAK FESTIVAL DRAMA

**OSIRIS MYTH.** The Egyptologist Louis B. Mikhail argued that the ritual associated with the god Osiris, performed during the Egyptian month Khoiak (mid-September to mid-October) was the best example of a

festival drama known to modern scholars. The subject of the drama was the struggle between Osiris and his brother Seth, Osiris' death, and his resurrection. The festival itself lasted for ten days, culminating with Osiris' resurrection at the end of the month that paralleled with the planting of new crops at the beginning of the agricultural year.

**THE STORY.** No one Egyptian text narrates the story of Osiris' life, death, and resurrection, but the outline of the story can be reconstructed. The good King Osiris ruled Egypt with his devoted wife Isis, a great magician. Osiris' brother, Seth, was jealous and believed he should be the king. Seth murdered Osiris—in this version through drowning—and dismembered his body into sixteen pieces that he scattered around Egypt. Isis gathered together the pieces of Osiris' body and reanimated his body so that they could conceive a child, the next legitimate king, named Horus. Osiris proceeded to the next world where he ruled over the dead. This story and its various elements were dramatized in the Osirian Khoiak Festival.

**SOURCES.** In order to reconstruct the Osirian Khoiak Festival ritual drama, Mikhail drew on festival calendars inscribed on temple walls, texts on stele, reliefs in temples, and archaeological remains such as the statues of Osiris used in the performance. One problem with these sources is that they originate from widely different time periods. The oldest material dates to the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.) while the newest sources date to the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 B.C.E.). The sources thus would also reflect variations in the importance of the different parts of the festival at temples widely separated both in time and space. Thus it is not really possible to understand fully the development of the festival, but only to reconstruct it in broad outline.

**FESTIVAL CALENDARS.** Mikhail drew on festival calendars from temples at Medinet Habu, Edfu, Dendera, and Esna. All these temples are located in Upper (southern) Egypt. They date as early as the time of Ramesses III (1187–1156 B.C.E.) and as late as the end of the Ptolemaic Period (30 B.C.E.). Mikhail reconstructed the scenes of the play that took place between the twenty-first and thirtieth of Khoiak. Each day witnessed a particular festival scene that included purifications, processions, feasts, and erection of obelisks and pillars that symbolized Osiris' resurrection.

**PREPARATIONS.** Different texts supply different kinds of information about the festival drama. Inscriptions at the Temple of Isis at Dendera supply information about preparations for the festival between the twelfth and twentieth of Khoiak before the festival be-

gan in earnest. These preparations include creating the figures used in the drama. The figures represent the gods Sokar and Khenty-imentyu, two forms of the god Osiris. Priests buried these figures so they could resurrect them later in the festival. It was also necessary to create and decorate a coffin for Osiris and to create a shroud. These preparations also took place on designated days between the fifteenth and twentieth of the month.

**ACTIONS.** The Dendera texts also record specific ceremonies that took place during the festival drama. On the sixteenth of the month the god Horus, in the form of a crocodile, conveyed Osiris' body to the temple from the water. It is possible that crocodile mummies, known from many temples, actually portrayed Horus at this point in the drama. The priests then held a procession that included the gods Sokar and Anubis, other gods with their emblems, and the obelisk tops called benben stones. They traveled through the temple and the necropolis. This procession marked the divine transformation of Osiris' body. On the twenty-second of the month, 34 boats bearing different gods participated in the search for the drowned remains of Osiris. They searched on the sacred lake within the temple. The boats were small, about 63.5 centimeters (25 inches) long. Though the measurements of the statues of the gods on the boats are not recorded, clearly the statues were also fairly small. It is not clear why the gods continue to search for Osiris if Horus had already conveyed his body to the temple on the sixteenth. Perhaps this ceremony is a kind of flashback. On the twenty-fourth of the month, the figures of Sokar and Khenty-imentyu were shrouded and the procession of the sixteenth was repeated. This time the procession preceded the burial of Osiris' body. On the thirtieth Sokar and Khenty-imentyu were buried under a persea tree.

**DETAILS.** The overall dramatic qualities of the play cannot be determined from the existing source materials, but certain details emerge. The drama took place over at least ten days and the priests performed only certain episodes on each day. The actors played different gods, but the main character, Osiris, was played by a small statue. The drama thus proceeded as interactions among human actors (priests), statues, in one case possibly a crocodile mummy, and small props such as boats. Thus dialogue was probably much less important than it is in modern drama.

**MASKS AND PROPS.** Reliefs on the roof of the Dendera temple illustrate scenes from the Osirian Khoiak drama. The reliefs portray a priest wearing a jackal mask, designating him as the god Anubis. Another priest wears a falcon mask, indicating that he plays the god Horus.

Actual jackal masks are known from archaeological evidence. The small statues seem to be made from gold, silver, or wood. They are both props and characters in the drama. Archaeological examples of the Osiris statues are known. They were hollow, made from bitumen, resin, and natron and filled with barley seeds. The seeds sprouted, symbolizing Osiris' resurrection.

#### SOURCES

- E. Chassinat, *Le mystère d'Osiris au mois de Khoiak* (Cairo: L'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1966–1968).  
 Louis Boctor Mikhail, *Dramatic Aspects of the Osirian Khoiak Festival* (Uppsala, Sweden: Institute of Egyptology, Uppsala University, 1983).

SEE ALSO *Religion: Myth of Osiris*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Theater*

### EMHAB

Unknown in the Second Intermediate Period (1630–1539 B.C.E.)—Unknown in the early Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1514 B.C.E.)

*Nobleman*  
*Drummer*

**MISUNDERSTOOD.** Emhab was active during the reign of King Kamose (1543–1539 B.C.E.) probably as a military drummer. Misinterpretations of some common Egyptian words in his biography led to his mistakenly being called an itinerant actor in Egyptological literature by Egyptologist Emile Drioton. He probably accompanied Kamose on a military expedition to Nubia in 1540 B.C.E. It was in the description in Emhab's biography of drumming that Drioton found the announcements of a theatrical presentation. He also translated the common word for travel to imply that Emhab was undertaking a theatrical tour. Finally, Drioton understood a common word for speaking as declamation, making it into a theatrical term.

#### SOURCES

- Jaroslav Černý, "The Stela of Emhab from Tell Edfu," in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Kairo* 24 (1969): 87–92.  
 Emile Drioton, "Le théâtre égyptien dans l'ancienne Egypte," in *Revue de la Société d'Histoire du Théâtre* 6 (1954): 7–45.

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Theater*

Anonymous, *Book of the Dead Chapter 39* (c. 1539–1075 B.C.E.)—The rituals found in the Book of the Dead were used as part of the funeral ritual to help the deceased enter the land of the dead. The Egyptologist Emile Drioton interpreted it as part of a ritual drama.

Anonymous, *Coffin Text 148* (c. 2130–1630 B.C.E.)—This ritual text was intended to help the deceased enter the land of the dead. The Egyptologist Emile Drioton interpreted it as part of a ritual drama.

Anonymous, *Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus* (c. 1842 B.C.E.)—This text contains both a funeral ceremony for the deceased king Amenemhet I and the coronation ceremony for his son Senwosret I. The first editor of the text, Kurt Sethe, understood it as a drama.

Anonymous, *Shabaka Stone* (c. 2500–2170 or 716–702 B.C.E.)—The text dates either to the Old Kingdom or to the reign of Shabaka, when the only preserved copy was carved on basalt. Kurt Sethe thought it was an Old Kingdom drama.

Emhab, *Biography of Emhab* (c. 1543–1539 B.C.E.)—This biography of a soldier who served in the reign of King Kamose was interpreted to be the biography of an actor by the Egyptologist Emile Drioton.

chapter nine

VISUAL ARTS

Edward Bleiberg

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	264	Senenmut . . . . .	309
OVERVIEW . . . . .	266	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	310
TOPICS		SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
Interpreting Egyptian Art. . . . .	269	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
Grid Systems in Visual Art. . . . .	271	Art Terminology. . . . .	269
Earliest Egyptian Art. . . . .	272	Birds in Coffin Text 62. . . . .	271
Narmer Palette. . . . .	274	Fish as Symbols in Tomb Paintings. . . . .	271
Early Dynastic Period Art . . . . .	276	<i>Rare Written Evidence of Egyptian Art</i>	
The Old Kingdom . . . . .	280	(narrative explaining a change in the style of Egyptian sculpture) . . . . .	300
The Middle Kingdom . . . . .	289	Tutankhamun's Tomb. . . . .	307
The New Kingdom. . . . .	293	Collecting Egyptian Art. . . . .	308
Late Period . . . . .	308		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Nefertiti. . . . .	309		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Visual Arts*

*All dates in this chronology are approximations (c.) and occur before the common era (B.C.E.).*

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| <p>3800–3500 Earliest fired pottery is decorated with a red body and a black rim.</p> <p>3500–3300 Egyptian artists draw and model from clay and carve the earliest Egyptian human figures.</p> <p>3300–3100 Artists carve first animals in relief in ivory.</p> <p>3200–3100 Narmer Palette is the first Egyptian relief that follows the classic Egyptian style. It represents a stylistic break with pre-historic Egyptian art.</p> <p>3100–2675 Egyptian artists formulate the basic strategies for their works of art that remain in use for nearly 3,000 years.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The Stela of Wadj is an example of one of the first uses of combined perspective to represent a building from both the top view and the front view.</p> <p>2800–2675 The statues of King Khasekhemwy represent one of the first attempts to portray a seated king, a common subject for later Egyptian artists.</p> <p>2675–2170 Old Kingdom artists use guidelines to compose two-dimensional scenes. This system is the source of the grid that will be used in the Middle Kingdom.</p> <p>2675–2625 Egyptian artists produce one of the first images of a standing male figure, probably a deity.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The statue of Ankhwa is one of the first figures of a seated official.</p> | <p style="padding-left: 20px;">A head of a king is one of the first colossal statues known from ancient Egypt.</p> <p>2675–2654 Egyptian artists produce the earliest known life-size image of a king, King Djoser seated on a throne.</p> <p>2625–2585 A statue of Rahotep, the son of King Sneferu, and his wife, Nofret, is among the first seated pair statues, a typical Egyptian pose.</p> <p>2555–2532 A series of diorite statues of King Khafre represent a high point in sculptural production.</p> <p>2532–2510 A standing statue of King Menkaure and Queen Kha-merer-nebu II is among the earliest standing statues of a male and female figure.</p> <p>2350–2170 A second style in Egyptian art emerges that emphasizes expressiveness and portrays the human figure as more elongated and thinner than previously.</p> <p>2338–2298 A seated statue of Pepi I represents the clear use of a statue as a hieroglyph.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">A statue of Pepi I kneeling is an early example of a royal pose that shows the king making an offering to a god.</p> <p>2288–2194 A statue of Queen Ankh-nes-meryre II and her son King Pepi II reveals innovative use of Egyptian traditions.</p> <p>2081–2003 Artists compose scenes with eighteen-square grids, a system that allows them to enlarge figures and still control proportions.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Evidence for regional styles around Thebes and Memphis shows that Egyptian artists had some freedom to develop local ways of making art.</p> <p>2008–1957 A seated statue of King Nebhepetre Mentuhotep is among the earliest images of the distinctive Theban style.</p> <p>1957–1945 Artists of the reign of Mentuhotep III strive to combine Theban and Memphis style.</p> |
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- 1938–1759 Artists of the Twelfth Dynasty revive the Memphite style of the Old Kingdom.
- Block statues become a very popular way of depicting high officials with a cube for the body and only the head, hands, and feet carved.
- Cloaked seated figures become a popular way of depicting officials.
- 1539–1292 Artists re-plot the grid for composing figures, changing the proportions of human figures, making them longer and more elegant. The reason for this change is not understood.
- 1539–1425 Artists revive stylistic elements of the Twelfth Dynasty in an attempt to restore and refer to the glory of this earlier time.
- Some paintings of this period are difficult to distinguish from Eleventh-dynasty work.
- 1478–1458 Artists strive to adapt traditional forms to represent the female king Hatshepsut.
- The high official Senenmut has at least 25 statues and some of them provide innovations used by later officials.
- Artists portray new historical subjects such as the Expedition to Punt in Hatshepsut's temple in Deir el Bahri.
- 1390–1352 More statues of Amenhotep III survive than there are for any other Eighteenth-dynasty king. Amenhotep III is depicted with innovative body types, not restricted to the athlete-king.
- Officials are depicted living a more luxurious life than previously.
- 1352–1336 Radical changes in style—including the depiction of more expressions and emotions—are related to a change in Egyptian religion.
- 1332–1322 Art of the reign of Tutankhamun is well-documented because of the discovery of his unlooted tomb in 1922.
- 1292–1075 Artists of the Ramesside Period revive some early Eighteenth-dynasty styles, avoiding the Amarna style used in the reign of Akhenaten.
- 1075–332 Art of the first millennium in Egypt reflects revival of older styles and an interest in copying older works. Egyptologists call this tendency archaism.
- 1075–656 Artists revive Eighteenth-dynasty subjects and style in such detail that it is sometimes difficult to recognize art of this later period called the Third Intermediate Period.
- 760–656 Artists revise the grid for composing figures using twenty-one squares rather than eighteen squares per figure as previously. This new system results in longer-waisted figures than previously drawn.
- Artists copy and imitate many works of the Middle Kingdom.
- 664–525 Egyptian artists copy and imitate the art of the Old Kingdom during the Saite period.
- 525–404 Egyptian artists add details from Persian art while the Persians dominate Egypt.
- 381–343 Artists rely on New Kingdom models during this last period of native rule before modern times.

## OVERVIEW *of Visual Arts*

**ANCIENT VIEW OF ART.** The ancient Egyptians had no word that was an equivalent for “visual art,” though they clearly created many objects that modern people recognize as art. In the modern world, art is the product of an individual’s creative expression. But this view of art is bound to modern, Western culture. An ancient Egyptian artist would not have understood the value of individual originality. For the Egyptian artist, the creator god Ptah had ordained the proper form for representing the world in both two- and three-dimensional art. According to Egyptian myth, these forms had existed since the time that Ptah created everything in the world at the beginning of time. The artist’s task was to approximate Ptah’s pre-ordained pattern as closely as possible. Egyptian artists could be creative within the confines of the patterns that Ptah had created, but the patterns could not be ignored. Thus the basic representation of a man in two dimensions could not change. But within the basic pattern there was room for artists to exercise creativity in the details.

**NATURALISM.** Egyptian art mirrors an idealized vision of nature. The art was more or less naturalistic in different periods of Egyptian history, but this naturalism was always restrained within a certain idealism and stylization. The most common Egyptian subject is humanity and all of its activities. Though modern audiences tend to think of colossal Egyptian sculpture as the norm, most statues were rather small. They were usually less than life-size. Relief sculpture of people was usually about twelve to eighteen inches tall (30.4 to 45.7 centimeters). Humanity almost always exists in Egyptian art in an ordered and rational universe. This order is especially apparent in the common scenes of family groups, religious rites, and even in daily activities. Though historical scenes sometimes included the chaos of battle, these scenes are meant to stand in contrast to the orderly, idealized world that the Egyptians believed was governed by *maat* (“correct order”).

**EGYPTIAN WORLD.** The Egyptians viewed the world as a box. The natural world had two axes: the Nile, which ran from south to north, and the sun, which ran the axis from east to west. The sky itself was a canopy supported by poles at either side. The earth was a flat floor beneath the canopy. Egyptians reproduced this worldview in two-dimensional painting and relief. The artist composed scenes in rectangular registers with a clear base on which humans stood and a clear dividing line between what was above and below them.

**MOVEMENT.** The Egyptian artist had no interest in capturing a transitory moment as did classical Greek and Roman artists. The Egyptian artist aimed to capture an eternal and idealized vision of humans that would be valid for all time. Especially in portraiture, the Egyptian artist tried to create a static world. The artists had no interest in depicting motion or emotion as the important elements in a composition. Though a particular pose might signal walking or even running, Egyptian artists had no interest in depicting the illusion of movement in visual art.

**INTEGRATION OF VIEWS AND SYMBOLISM.** The pattern that the Egyptians believed that Ptah had created for two-dimensional art integrated more than one view of each object or person. In an Egyptian architectural drawing, the building could be represented as a façade or front view with the plan view attached above it. A hieroglyphic label in the middle of the plan could then identify the specific building that the artist intended to represent. When artists represented people, a similar system for integrating views was nearly always followed. The head was in profile, but the whole eye was visible. This defied visual reality; it would be impossible in life. Both shoulders were visible as if the artist drew from the front, but the torso twisted unnaturally so that a side view of the hips and legs was visible. This representation was a symbol of a man, not an attempt to present visual reality. This style of drawing relates art to hieroglyphs. Each drawing, just as was true for each hieroglyph, was an easily recognizable symbol of the object that the artist wanted to represent. The shapes of most objects in Egyptian drawing also closely resemble the hieroglyph used for writing the word for that object in Egyptian. Perhaps the same need for clear outlines to make hieroglyphs instantly recognizable influenced artists to standardize the outline of most types of figures. This standard outline allows the viewer to “read” a drawing in the sense that each outline symbolizes something already defined in advance. The artist’s dependence on a pre-ordained outline for figures and objects led to a stable iconography or symbolic representation. For example, a child nearly

always posed with a forefinger to the mouth, the tongue extended, and wore a side lock of hair. These three features instantly identified the figure as a child, no matter how big or small the figure was in relation to the other figures around him or her. Egyptian artists extensively used conventions like this for particular classes of people and objects. Each drawing represented a type. Men were always either very slender or extremely corpulent. These two variations represented youthful vigor or a later stage of maturity and wealth. Women were nearly always represented as slender and elegant. These women were thus young and fertile. Artists also exaggerated foreigners' ethnic characteristics, showing the ways that they differed from the typical Egyptian. Artists often drew workers with more naturalism, showing deformities and age.

**LABELS.** The Egyptian work of art often functioned similarly to hieroglyphs. Labels in hieroglyphs often specified the person's name or the particular type of object that the artist had represented. These labels clarify not just that the artist had drawn a man, but which particular man the artist intended to show by including his name. The image itself often acts as the final hieroglyph in the writing of a word, just as each hieroglyphic word has a final sign that places the work in a class of objects. The image is integral to the writing.

**MAGIC.** Many commentators stress a connection in Egypt between sympathetic magic and artistic representation. Sympathetic magic postulates that an image can hold the power of the object it represents. Yet the Egyptians never wrote their thoughts on this subject. Modern scholars have found clues pointing to the idea that the Egyptians believed that images could possess powers. One of the best clues is the occasional tendency to draw the snake that represents the letter "f" in hieroglyphs with a break in the middle of its body or a knife stuck in its back when it is needed to write a word in a tomb or on a coffin. Scholars explain this break as a means to prevent the snake from having hostile power. Ancient defacing of works of art, especially the eyes and noses of figures, also suggests that ancient enemies attempted to control the powers of the deceased by destroying significant portions of the deceased's face.

**ARTISTS' NAMES.** Only a few artists from ancient Egypt are known by name. Signatures were rare. Yet the hierarchy of the artists can be deduced by titles preserved in Egyptian documents and in relief scenes that depict artists' workshops. These scenes often depict a supervisor who perhaps was the overall designer for a project. Possibly the High Priest of Ptah served as the master craftsman for the king in the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.). A younger royal son often held this office. Other

titles such as "Master of the King's Works" and "Chief of Sculptors" suggest that Egyptian society organized artists in a very hierarchical manner. Such organizations were common in nearly every aspect of life. In the New Kingdom (1538–1075 B.C.E.) even more information on the social structure of the royal artists at the Valley of the Kings is preserved. The men who decorated the royal tombs were divided into two crews, each with its own leadership. In theory, at least, each crew was responsible for decorating one side of the tomb.

**INSTITUTIONS.** Most artists worked directly for an institution. Scholars assume that the royal workshop could command the best artists. Others worked for the temples or perhaps for the households of individual officials. The artists thus worked under the supervision of royal or upper-class managers for the palace, the temple, or an official. The artist's profession often passed from father to son. The methods employed seem to change very little over 3,000 years, but it is clear that the carving tools improved from the original copper chisels in the Old Kingdom, to the bronze chisels in the New Kingdom, and finally the iron tools made in the Late Period (664 B.C.E. and later).

**SPECIALIZATION.** Managers divided individual art projects into stages that specialists executed, at least in the ideal. Whether actual work proceeded in an organized fashion is difficult to demonstrate from the unfinished tomb walls that are the only modern evidence for the process. After masons smoothed the wall surface of a tomb or temple, outline artists sketched the scene in black ink. The chief designers made red corrections. Sculptors then carved the scene, following the guidelines made in the drawing. Plaster workers then prepared the surface with a thin coat of plaster, following the outline of the carved relief. The plaster provided a surface for painters who applied the color. In three-dimensional sculpture there might also be a goldsmith who added gilding or a lapidary who added inlay of semi-precious stones, often for the eyes of a statue.

**MATERIALS.** Egyptian artists worked with materials naturally available in Egypt and with imported wood and stone. The quintessential Egyptian material seems to be stone because it is best preserved from antiquity. But it is important to remember that wood and metal were just as important to the artist in Egypt, even though fewer such objects have survived. Wood is clearly more fragile than stone while precious metals were often melted and reused in antiquity.

**STONE.** Egyptian artists worked in both hard and soft stones. In addition to easily available limestone granite and basalt, Egyptian artists used slightly more



rare hard stone materials such as diorite, quartzite, greywacke, and Egyptian alabaster, a form of calcite. The sculptor heated the surface of the stone before working. The heat allowed artists to use the flint drill effectively on the hard surface. In the Late Period with the introduction of iron punches, artists could pulverize the surface of hard stone, then shape and smooth it with other stones. The pulverized surface could be polished with quartzite sand. There are also documented cases where an element could be added or perhaps reattached with dowels if it broke. The two most widely used soft stones were sandstone and limestone, which was widely available in the area near Memphis. The most famous limestone quarry was at Tura, east of modern Cairo. Limestone was the whitest and considered the best for building. It is relatively easy to cut in blocks from the quarry bed. The blocks could then serve as the starting point for sculpture. It appears likely that many sculptors' workshops were located near to the quarry to at least allow the sculptor to shape a sculpture roughly before moving it closer to its final destination. This practice made it unnecessary to transport any heavier blocks than necessary.

**WOOD.** Artists used wood for statues, decorative panels, doors, and shrines. They executed the initial rough work with saws and axes. An adze (cutting tool) and chisel could be used to shape the statue. Artists would often smooth wood surfaces with abrasives before and after they were done sculpting. But much of the surface of a wooden statue was covered with plaster and then the artists applied color. Wood sculptures often reached the highest quality because the materials were imported and expensive. Only the best artists were trusted with these precious materials. Cedar came from Lebanon and ebony from Somalia beginning in the earliest periods. Native acacia and sycamore fig could sometimes be pieced together to form the surface of cheaper statues. Neither of these local Egyptian woods were as good for sculpture as the imported cedar and ebony. However, the addition of plaster and paint often disguised the poor quality of the native wood.

**METAL.** The Egyptians also created metal statues from copper and bronze. There are two known examples of royal hammered copper statues from the Sixth Dynasty and one royal example from the Twelfth Dynasty. Others must have existed but did not survive. But cast bronze was by far the more common metal statue type. Thousands of cast bronze statues have been preserved from ancient Egypt. Egyptian artists had invented the lost wax method for casting by the Old Kingdom. They demonstrated great skill in nearly every period. First the artist created a model in bee's wax. He then covered the model

with clay and left holes open. The clay and wax were heated until the wax melted and ran out the holes and the clay hardened. Bronze, silver, or gold could then be heated until it was a liquid and poured through the holes in the clay which was now a mould or negative image of the bee's wax model. The clay mould could be removed carefully for reuse. The metal sculpture was usually polished as part of its final preparation.

**GRIDS.** Grids are a system of horizontal and vertical lines dividing a work of art into regular units. Egyptian artists used grids to create sculpture in two and three dimensions. After the mason had smoothed the stone surface, the artist could apply the grid with a taut piece of string dipped in paint or chalk dust. The grid divided the stone into equally spaced units. In different periods, the proportions of units used for the head, torso, and legs changed, creating differing body proportions. The outline artist worked from the grid, knowing the number of units necessary for each body part. The grid allowed artists to keep the various parts of the body in proportion and to enlarge images over vast areas of wall space.

**RELIEF TYPES.** Egyptian artists worked in both sunk relief and raised relief. In sunk relief the artist chiseled an outline into the stone and modeled a surface that lay beneath the surface of the stone. In raised relief, the background was carved away leaving a modeled subject raised above the surface of the stone. The Egyptians preferred sunk relief in strong sunlight. With sunk relief, the sun could not create as many shadows as in raised relief. Sunk relief provided a sharper image in bright sun. Raised relief, which requires greater skill to execute, generally was used for interiors. Here low light could emphasize the sculptural forms by allowing them to cast shadows. The Egyptians plastered and painted both raised and sunk relief. They could also use plaster to repair the surface of a tomb or temple wall and occasionally modeled features from plaster.

**COLORS.** Egyptian artists used a variety of colors including yellow, red, brown, white, blue, and green. The earth tones were made from natural pigments tinted with white. Blue came from a copper-based frit or from copper calcium tetra-silicate. Yellow and blue combined to make green. All colors were mixed in water-soluble gum. Artists applied color with almost no shading, only flat areas of color. Most objects were colored naturally. Herbage was green; mud was black. Water was blue; linen garments were white. When the Egyptians added color to human flesh, however, symbolism often dominated. Though Egyptian men and women must have had similar flesh tones, men are often painted red while women are painted yellow. The red associates men with the sun-god

Re. The yellow associates women with the goddesses who had gold skin. Foreigners such as Nubians had black skin while Asiatics from the modern Middle East had yellow skin. In the New Kingdom artists experimented with different background colors. In the early Eighteenth Dynasty they used light gray and occasionally yellow backgrounds. Later in the Eighteenth Dynasty (1550–1295 B.C.E.) the backgrounds were white. Ramesside artists of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties used yellow backgrounds primarily.

## TOPICS *in Visual Arts*

### INTERPRETING EGYPTIAN ART

**REFLECTION.** Art represents the world. But in ancient Egypt, art reflected a very particular worldview. Egyptian art reflected an idealized world and ignored any part of the world that did not fit the ideal. Egyptian art also incorporated certain fictions in order to express a larger truth. For example, Egyptian temple art always showed the king presiding over rituals. Since in reality it was impossible for the king to simultaneously lead every temple ritual in every temple, every day, priests usually substituted for him. Yet such scenes express a larger truth that the king was the only true intermediary with the gods according to Egyptian thought. Though modern viewers cannot always take Egyptian art at face value, it is possible to discover Egyptian conceptions of the perfect world in their art.

**GENDER DIFFERENCES.** One approach to understanding Egyptian art might be to question its purpose. The main purpose of Egyptian art was to serve the needs of the elite, especially the king and his retainers, both in this life and the next. Thus it might be that many scenes can be interpreted both as what they depict, but also as a way of sending a message to those whose support the king required. The representation of males and females in New Kingdom Egyptian tombs is a clear case where the artist conveys a message other than visual reality. In the typical New Kingdom tomb painting, relief, or statue, males are dressed in kilts with perhaps a shirt, while women wear tight-fitting sheath dresses, probably made from a single piece of cloth wrapped around the body. Yet archaeological examples of ancient Egyptian clothing demonstrate that the most common garment was a bag tunic. This outfit was basically a linen bag with sleeves that fit very loosely. Both men and women wore

### ART Terminology

Historians of Egyptian art use the traditional art history terminology in a slightly different manner from historians of the art of other eras. The following definitions help the reader understand these differences.

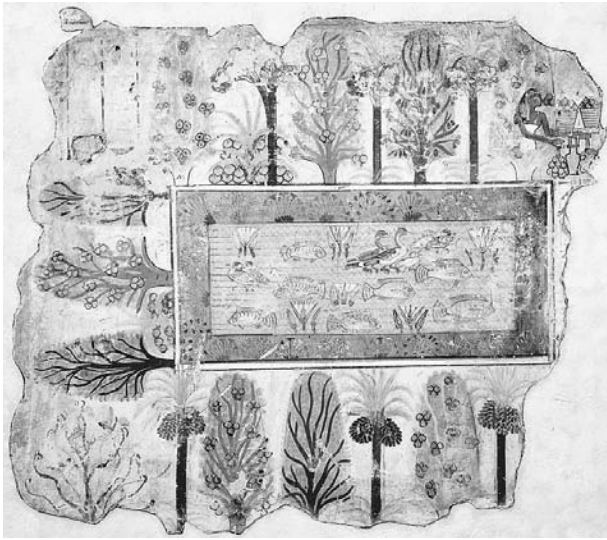
**Artist:** Egyptian artists are anonymous. In Egyptian society, artists were craftsmen, usually working in large groups together on a project. There is no concept of the individual genius making art in ancient Egypt.

**Iconography:** Iconography refers to symbols in art. Egyptian iconography allows a work of art to be read. Since Egyptian writing was recorded in pictures (hieroglyphs), Egyptian art lends itself to a very sophisticated iconography that can be clearly understood.

**Patron:** The patron traditionally commissions a work of art. He or she is the benefactor who pays the artist. In ancient Egypt, the patron is nearly always the state. Even individual tomb owners credit the king as the person who gave the tomb to the deceased as a gift. Thus Egyptian art always follows the official line. There are no rebellious artists commenting on society in Egyptian art.

**Style:** Style in art refers to the way the work is made. Egyptian style is largely uniform for three thousand years. Differences in Egyptian style are subtle and require training to understand and notice them. An artist's training in Egypt led him to attempt to follow the rules of style with little deviation. There is little recognizable difference between the work of two Egyptian artists living in the same time period. This situation especially contrasts with the modern world where individual style is valued.

it. In art, however, men wear an outfit that suggests freedom of movement while a woman's garment suggests restricted movement. Even without archaeological evidence, the typical female garment depicted in art could never match reality. The dresses are so impossibly tight that a woman could not move, sit, or walk. The real intention behind this representation is to reveal the woman's body. These dresses clearly reveal the overall female form and the pubic triangle. Since the difference between everyday Egyptian reality and the presentation of people in art differ so radically, there must have been a reason for the difference.



A fragment of a wall painting found in the tomb of Nebamun in Thebes showing a pool full of ducks, lotus flowers, and tilapia fish. These symbols, particularly the tilapia fish, are rich symbols of rebirth and new life. © THE BRITISH MUSEUM/ TOPHAM-HIP/THE IMAGE WORKS.

**ROLE OF MEN.** Men are generally active rather than passive in tomb representations. In Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom tombs, the deceased reaches for offerings at the offering table or inspects agricultural laborers or workshops under his control. Artists also often depicted men hunting birds or fishing. They wear loose clothing and are quintessentially the active principal in life. These roles correspond to an Egyptian view of men actively winning a place for themselves in the afterlife.

**ROLE OF WOMEN.** The importance of women in Egyptian society is often conveyed in artwork found in temples and tombs. The role of the woman in Egypt was that of life-giver and supporter. Hence, the emphasis in art was on their role as mothers. Because of this, women were often depicted wearing little or no clothing. The artist's intention was not to portray eroticism but rather to symbolize reproduction—all people come into the world without clothing, and hence the idea of nudity is connected to that of birth. Due to their connection with birth, women are most often found depicted on tombs, for the Egyptians considered the tomb a means to rebirth into the next world. Yet women represented in tombs could also hold other meanings. When labeled with their name in hieroglyphs, a figure of a woman could represent an individual wife, daughter, or cousin. Many women represented in one tomb could be a means for a man to emphasize his wealth. Both these roles would be important to the deceased in addition to the overall conception of women as the source of rebirth.

**DAILY LIFE.** In conjunction with how women and men were portrayed individually, much can be learned from the different scenes that artists chose to portray. Daily life scenes of craftsmen and of peasants engaged in agricultural tasks had a deeper meaning than the tasks portrayed. These scenes functioned at a literal level, but also represent a way of structuring life. Artists chose some activities to represent status and wealth in tombs while other activities were left out of art altogether. This selection was purposeful. Craftsmen and peasants were always portrayed at their most productive for the benefit of the owner of the art. Though Egyptologists depend on these scenes for knowledge of all kinds about ancient Egypt, artists had no interest nor intention of providing an illustrated guide to Egyptian life when they decorated temples and tombs. Rather agricultural scenes of peasants working in the fields stress the owner's status and distinction in the physical world. They also provide a permanent supply of provisions for the next world. In addition, they function symbolically to depict the passage of the seasons of the year and thus the continuation of life for the deceased spirit. The flax harvest painted in a tomb suggests an abundance of linen clothing for the deceased. Scenes of manufacturing jewelry guarantee that the tomb owner will have jewelry in the next world.

**FISHING AND FOWLING.** Scenes of fishing and fowling (bird hunting) in the marsh with the tomb owner and his family in attendance are one of the most common scene types in Egyptian tombs and households. Yet it seems unlikely that these scenes depict only a family outing. Scenes of a nobleman fishing or hunting birds are very ancient, beginning in the Old Kingdom. Both kings and officials included them in their tombs. Usually the male figure actively fishes with a harpoon or hunts birds with a boomerang-like throw-stick. His wife is at his side and usually a child accompanies the family. They are all dressed in their most elaborate linen clothing. Often they are in a small papyrus boat. Their clothing is clearly too elaborate for the activity that engages them. The clothing, thus, must reveal their status rather than a true picture of the way they would dress for a day of fishing or hunting. Additionally, the boat is both too small and too unstable to be the sort of boat used for a family outing. A child could easily capsize it. The boat, the most archaic type of woven papyrus boat, has symbolic meaning of transition and togetherness. The Egyptologist Gay Robins speculated that scenes of fishing and bird hunting represent the deceased as Osiris. In *Coffin Text* 62, Osiris claims he will have thousands of birds available in the next world. Whenever Osiris hunts with a throw-stick, a thousand birds will fall. Since

## BIRDS in Coffin Text 62

Many Egyptian tombs contain scenes of the deceased hunting birds. Usually such scenes include the deceased, his wife, and one child. These scenes probably can be explained by examining *Coffin Text 62*. The *Coffin Texts* are spells recited as part of the funeral ceremony. Scribes recorded them on the interior of wooden coffins during the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.). *Coffin Text 62* contains the god Horus's description of the next world. Horus is speaking to his father Osiris, the king of the dead: "Waterfowl will come to you in the thousands, lying on your path; you throw your throw-stick at them and it means a thousand are fallen at the sound of its wind." When bird hunting is included in the decoration of a tomb, the deceased is associated with the god Osiris, the desire of every Egyptian.

each deceased Egyptian hoped to be assimilated to the god Osiris, king of the dead, such scenes in tombs suggest another means of expressing the same hope for obtaining thousands of birds to eat. Moreover, when a man dominates wildlife he also makes order from chaos in Egyptian thought. This is the role that both the king and Osiris play. Thus the deceased further identifies with Osiris by bringing order to the natural world. Fishing also represents a man dominating nature and thus bringing order to the world. But fishing for the tilapia fish also relates to rebirth. The tilapia fish accompanies the solar barque of Re in the underworld. The tilapia is a symbol of fertility and rebirth because the female carries its fertilized eggs in its mouth. When the eggs hatch, it appears that the offspring are born live from the mother's mouth. In *Book of the Dead* Chapter 15, the deceased is assured that while in the god's barque he will see the tilapia fish. This means that he will experience the rebirth each Egyptian desired into the next world. Thus scenes of family outings in the marshes represent much more than a picnic. These scenes convey ideas about rebirth into the next world by associating the deceased with the god Osiris.

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## FISH as Symbols in Tomb Paintings

Many Egyptian tombs contain scenes of the deceased harpooning tilapia fish. They depict the deceased, his wife, and a child in a papyrus boat. The tomb owner stands with a harpoon in one hand that has a tilapia fish on the end of it. These scenes can be explained by the reference to the tilapia fish in Chapter 15 of the *Book of the Dead*, the papyrus scroll Egyptians started including in their tombs during the New Kingdom (1538–1075 B.C.E.): "You will be summoned into the sun-god's Day-Barque ... You will see the tilapia completely, in the stream of blue."

In Chapter 15, seeing a tilapia fish while in the barque of the sun-god Re is an indication of rebirth. The female tilapia carries her fertilized eggs in her mouth during gestation. At birth, it appears that the offspring swim alive from their mother's mouth. The Egyptians thus regarded the tilapia as a symbol of fertility.

*für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 94 (1967): 139–150.

SEE ALSO *Fashion: Clothing*

## GRID SYSTEMS IN VISUAL ART

**EVIDENCE FOR GRIDS.** Grids were used to control the proportions of two-dimensional relief sculpture and to line up the sides, back, and front of sculpture in the round. Grids are often preserved in unfinished relief sculpture or in paintings where a finished layer of paint has fallen off to reveal the underlying grid. These remains of grids have provided the data to study how Egyptian artists worked. In the earliest examples from the Old Kingdom, Egyptian artists used a system of eight horizontal guidelines and one vertical line bisecting the figure through the ear rather than a complete grid. Grids marked eighteen horizontal units for each figure and also fourteen vertical lines spaced at the same distance as the horizontals. Thus the grid formed a series of squares. Grids are first preserved from Dynasty 11 (2125–1991 B.C.E.) and continue for nearly 2,000 years into the Roman period.

**OLD KINGDOM GUIDELINES.** Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.) guidelines allowed the artist to divide

the figure in half and/or in thirds. A line at the lower border of the buttocks divided the figure in half. Lines at the elbow and the knee divided the figure into thirds. Artists drew additional lines at the top of the head, at the junction of the hairline and forehead, at the point where the neck and shoulders meet, at the armpit, and at the calf. The base line of the register marked the bottom of the figure's foot. The proportions that were maintained made the distance from the bottom of the foot to the neck and shoulder line equal to eight-ninths of the figure's height. The distance from the bottom of the foot to the armpit was four-fifths of the figure's total height. This series of proportions gave figures their uniformity and most likely aided artists in drawing a figure on a large scale.

**GRIDS IN THE MIDDLE KINGDOM.** Grids of squares probably developed from guidelines. Grids were certainly in use by the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.). Eighteen squares separated the hairline from the bottom of the foot in the Middle Kingdom grid. Various body parts also fell on regular grid lines. For example, the meeting point of the neck and shoulders was at horizontal sixteen, the elbow at horizontal nine six squares wide, similar in proportion to Old Kingdom figures. Females were more slender with shoulders between four and five squares wide.

**GRIDS IN THE NEW KINGDOM.** The proportions of figures changed in the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty (1550–1295 B.C.E.), becoming more elongated. The small of the back rose from gridline eleven to gridline twelve, making the leg longer in proportion to the body. At the same time, the width of the shoulders was reduced from six squares to five squares. This reduction also made the figure more elongated and graceful in the New Kingdom (1538–1075 B.C.E.) than it was previously.

**LATE PERIOD GRID.** Egyptian artists of the first millennium B.C.E. used a grid with twenty-one horizontal lines rather than the eighteen lines used previously. Though the exact time when the transition from eighteen to twenty-one squares was made is unknown, artists of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (730–661 B.C.E.) were surely using the twenty-one square grid to lay out relief sculpture. The new grid squares were thus five-sixths of the old grid squares. In the new system the following correspondences were made. Line twenty-one passed through the root of the nose and upper eyelid. Line twenty passed through the mouth. Line nineteen passed through the junction of the neck and shoulders. Line thirteen passed through the small of the back. Line eleven passed near the lower buttocks. Line seven passed

through at the top of the knee. Line zero, the baseline, passed through the sole of the foot. The result of these changes was a slight change in the proportions of the figure. The knees, small of the back, and buttocks are all lower than in figures drawn on the Late Period grids than in the Middle and New Kingdom grids. Thus the torso and upper leg appear longer in proportion to the body as a whole in the Late Period than in the Middle and New Kingdom. This change is clear in figures until the end of ancient Egyptian history. However, the meaning of this change is not clear. The art historian Erik Iverson suggested that the grid changed to accommodate a new measuring system that used a shorter unit of measurement. The Egyptologist Gay Robins convincingly argued that the Late Period system used the same measuring system but regularized the grid to make calculations easier. In the early system the arm length was five grid squares. This distance was the hypothetical value of one cubit. A cubit was divided into six palms. A five-square arm thus equaled grid squares one and one-fifth palm wide and long. The new Late Period grid square used an arm length that was six squares long. Thus in the Late Period grid square each square was equal to the measurement one palm. All calculations would be simpler using grid squares equivalent to one palm rather than equivalent to one and one-fifth palm.

**INGENIOUS TECHNIQUE.** The grid was an ingenious and simple way to maintain proper proportions for figures no matter how large or small they were reproduced. Artists could maintain the same proportions for a sculpture only twelve inches tall as in sixty-foot tall sculptures in front of temples. This technique is also one element in the tendency of one work of Egyptian art to resemble all others.

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#### EARLIEST EGYPTIAN ART

**STYLISTIC BREAK.** The earliest Egyptian art, created during the pre-dynastic period (4400–3100 B.C.E.), exhibits a coherent style that does not continue into historical, dynastic times (after 3100 B.C.E.). All of this art comes from graves that belonged to non-elite, non-governmental people. The objects created for these tombs might be considered folk art. The earliest art is handcrafted pottery with a surface ripple that potters created by running a comb over the surface. This pot-

tery was made during the Badarian period (4400–3800 B.C.E.), named after the village of Badari where archaeologists first found it. The English archaeologist W. M. F. Petrie discovered a nearly complete sequence of objects for the subsequent period at the village of Nagada in southern (upper) Egypt. Thus Egyptologists refer to the different chronological stages of this art as Nagada I (3800–3500 B.C.E.), Nagada II (3500–3300 B.C.E.), and Nagada III (3300–3100 B.C.E.). Nagada III overlaps with Dynasty 0 (3200–3100 B.C.E.), a newly identified period when Egyptian kingship first appears. One very common object of Nagada I is a ceramic jar or cup made from a red polished clay with a black rim. Egyptologists call it black-topped red ware. The black color often extends to the middle of the jar. Potters built these jars by hand with a coil of clay. The potter smoothed the coils once the pot was built. The potter then fired the pot upside-down, producing the black rim. These pots first appear in Nagada I and continue into Nagada II. The emphasis on abstract decoration, though often beautiful, is not typical of Egyptian art in the historical period after 3100 B.C.E. This distinction, however, cannot be used to argue convincingly that a different group of people inhabited Egypt after the historical artistic style emerged.

**ANIMAL PALETTES.** Artists made some of the most interesting early figures during Nagada II and III. Some figures were animal-shaped palettes resembling fish, turtles, and birds. These were often made from schist, a very commonly used stone in this period. Egyptians used these palettes to grind galena, a naturally occurring mineral, into eye-liner called kohl. Kohl both emphasized the eyes and possibly protected them from the glare of the sun. The Egyptians also believed it protected the eyes from disease. Some of the shapes of these palettes, such as the fish, represent symbols of fertility and rebirth. The tilapia-fish, for example, carries its fertilized eggs in its mouth. It thus appears that the offspring are born alive from the mouth rather than hatched from eggs. The Egyptians thus included the tilapia among their fertility symbols.

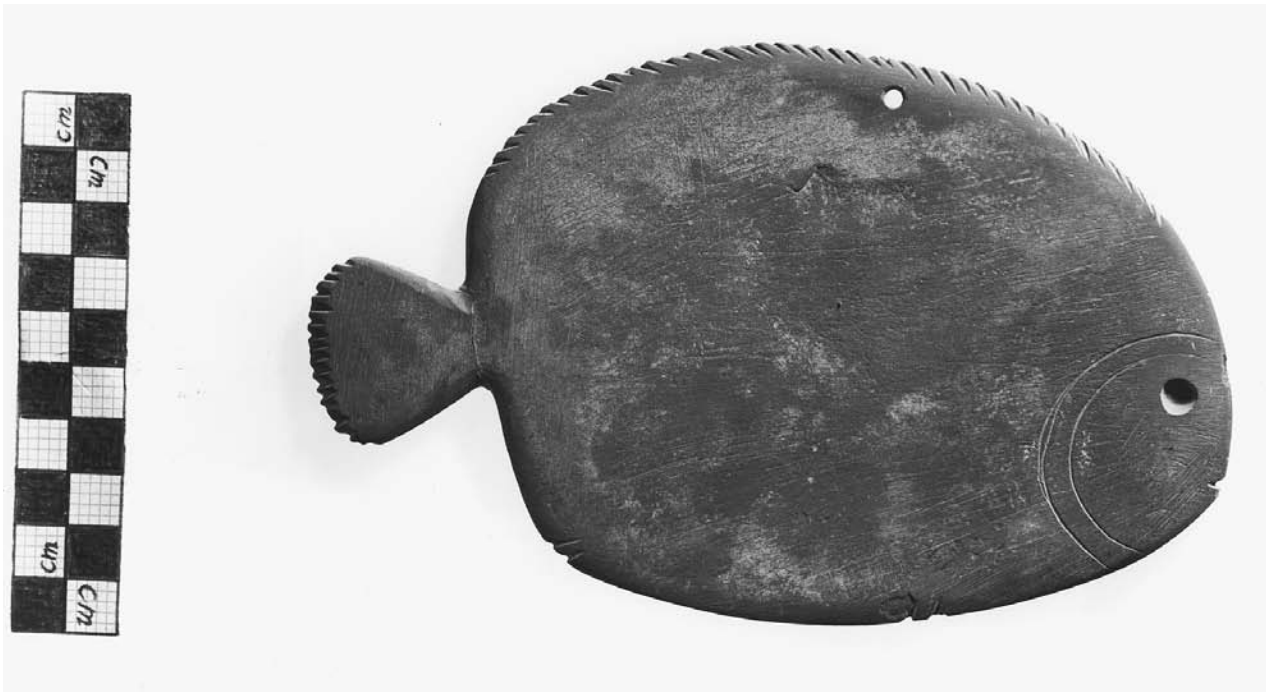
**HUMAN FIGURES.** Sculptors in Nagada II and III also concerned themselves with human figures. Among the first human figures were the female figurines that the archaeologist Henri de Morgan discovered in the village of Ma'mariya in 1907. Found in graves, her face appears beak-like. She wears only a long white skirt that covers her legs completely. Her bare arms extend upward in a graceful curving motion. Though these figurines are among the most famous pre-historic sculptures from ancient Egypt, it is impossible to determine with certainty whether the figure represents a priestess, a mourner, or



Black top vase. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 09.889.557, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

a dancer. Furthermore, it is completely unknowable whether she is a goddess or a human. The generally abstract style used in this sculpture, with each part of the body reduced to a simple organic outline, does not continue into the historical period. Yet very similar female figures occur painted on pottery contemporary with the figurines. The female figures painted on pots are prominent in river scenes that include a boat with two cabins, two male figures, and palm fronds on the shore. Some examples depict mountains beyond the riverbank abstracted to triangles. The female figure is the largest element in the composition, suggesting, as was true in historic times, that she was the most important figure. The figures, boat, palms, and mountains are in red paint on a light buff clay, typical of the Nagada II period. Though the abstract style is not typical of the later period, subject matter such as river scenes were popular throughout ancient Egyptian history. If this is indeed a religious scene, it would be an early example of a common Egyptian subject for art.

**ANIMAL RELIEF CARVING.** Animal relief carving on ivory began at the end of the pre-dynastic period. One fine example of a knife handle, carved from elephant ivory, includes 227 individual animals. Not only are most of the species identifiable, but also the sculptor arranged the animals so that they are facing in the same



Fish-shaped palette. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 07.447.611, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

direction in ten horizontal rows. These rows suggest the first hint of the compositional device called a “register” in historic Egyptian art. A true register includes a ground line that gives the figures a place to stand. Here the sculptor only arranges the animals without providing a ground line. Yet the attention he pays to depicting the animals in a recognizable form along with the organized composition hints at the future of Egyptian art.

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### NARMER PALETTE

**COMMEMORATION.** The Narmer Palette commemorated King Narmer’s victory over ten enemies of Egypt some time during Dynasty 0 (3200–3100 B.C.E.). Though scholars disagree on the precise details, the narrative would have been clear to viewers contemporary with Narmer. The Narmer Palette also represented a turning point in artists’ experiments with carving in relief on stone. It is the earliest known example of the mature Egyptian style. It exhibits all of the major char-

acteristics of the Egyptian relief style that artists used for the remainder of ancient Egyptian history, over 3,000 years. It thus represents a break with a 1,400-year old tradition of art-making during the pre-dynastic period. Moreover, its subject matter—the triumphant king—remained an important theme throughout ancient Egyptian history.

**COMPOSITION.** The composition of the Narmer Palette, the manner that different figures and objects are arranged in the picture, utilized baselines and registers. Baselines are horizontal lines at set intervals across the entire area that is decorated. The baselines create a frame for the action in each register. They give each figure a place to stand. The sequence of actions in a narrative is also clear and logical because of the baselines and registers. The obverse (front) of the palette shows Narmer defeating his enemy in the central register. His sandal bearer accompanies him as he strikes the enemy on the head with a mace. The god Horus, depicted as a falcon, symbolically restrains the enemy as the god perches on the flowers that represented Lower (northern) Egypt. In the bottom register, defeated enemies either flee Narmer or lie prone. On the reverse, a bull representing Narmer attacks a city in the bottom register. In the center, two servants restrain an animal that is part leopard and part snake. A third register depicts Narmer inspecting the enemy dead who lie with their severed heads between their legs.



Back of the Narmer Palette, showing scenes of a triumphant Narmer. In the bottom register, he is a bull attacking a city; in the top register he inspects the headless bodies of his dead enemies; and the middle register shows two servants restraining fantastic beasts who represent Upper and Lower Egypt. THE ART ARCHIVE/EGYPTIAN MUSEUM CAIRO/DAGLI ORTI.



Front of the Narmer Palette, showing Narmer with upraised mace, defeating an enemy. This is a pose of the king which became traditional in Egyptian art. THE ART ARCHIVE/EGYPTIAN MUSEUM CAIRO/DAGLI ORTI.

**FIGURE STYLE.** The figures of Narmer and the other individuals were carved in the typical Egyptian style, integrating more than one perspective into one representation of a figure. The viewer “sees” a figure from more than one angle at the same time. The head was carved in profile, as if the viewer sees it from the side. Yet the eye was carved frontally, as if the figure and viewer are face to face. The shoulders were also carved frontally, but the torso, legs and feet are shown in profile. It is physically impossible to see this combination of body parts in reality. However, the artist’s aim was not to present visual reality but rather an idea of what a person is. Thus Egyptian style is described as conceptual rather than visual because it meant to convey a concept or an idea rather than an image.

**CANON OF PROPORTIONS.** The Narmer Palette also used a canon of proportions for the figures. The proportions of each figure were standardized in Egyptian art so that every figure could be plotted on an imaginary grid. Actual grids only survive from Dynasty 11 (2081–1938

B.C.E.) and later. Yet this figure has proportions similar to later representations. In a standing figure, such as Narmer found on the obverse, the grid would have contained eighteen equal units from the top of the head to the bottom of the foot. Particular body parts were then plotted on the grid in a regular way. Counting from the bottom of the representation, the knee fell on grid line six, the lower buttocks on line nine, the small of the back on line eleven, the elbow on line twelve, and the junction of the neck and shoulders on line sixteen. The hairline was on line eighteen. The same ratio of body parts would have applied to Narmer’s standard bearer. The individual units would have been smaller in this case since the overall figure is about one-quarter the size of Narmer. This standardized ratio of body parts gave uniformity to Egyptian representations of people. Seated representations used a grid of 14 squares.

**HIERATIC SCALE.** Though individual bodies all had similar proportions, the scale of figures varied widely even within one register. On the reverse of the palette



in the second register, Narmer was portrayed double the size of his sandal bearer and prime minister. The standard bearers are half the size of the sandal bearer and prime minister. The scale of any one person was based on his or her importance in society rather than actual size. This method of depicting figures is called “hieratic scale.”

**ICONOGRAPHY.** The Narmer Palette uses standard iconography for the king for the first time that we know of in Egyptian history. On the obverse the king wears the cone-shaped White Crown of Upper Egypt. He also wears a bull’s tail and a false beard that were associated only with the king. On the reverse the king wears a similar costume, but this time with the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. Many commentators have associated the wearing of each crown on the palette with the unification of Egypt about 3,000 B.C.E.

**HIEROGLYPHIC LABELS.** Narmer’s name appears in hieroglyphic writing at the top of both sides of the palette. It is also written in front of his face on the reverse. Hieroglyphic labels also identify the sandal bearer and the prime minister. These labels personalize these images, which otherwise could represent any king, prime minister, or sandal bearer. Hieroglyphic labels were a standard feature of Egyptian art.

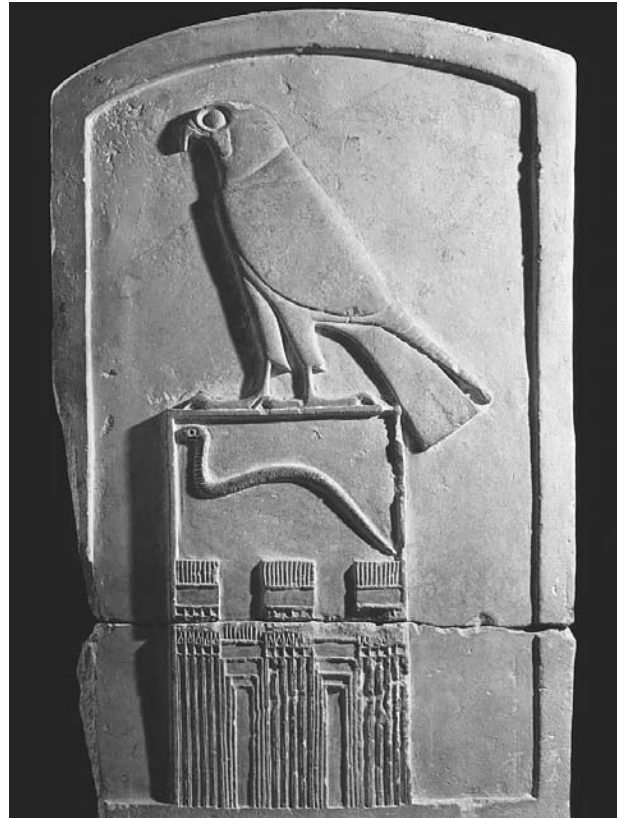
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### EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD ART

**FORMULATED LONG-STANDING STRATEGIES.** During the Early Dynastic period (3100–2675 B.C.E.) and the Third Dynasty (2675–2625 B.C.E.), Egyptian artists formulated basic strategies for their works of art that their descendants continued to utilize for the next 3,000 years. Objects such as stelae with relief carving, seated statues of kings, standing deities, and seated private officials assumed a form in art that remained quite static. Yet Egyptologists notice significant differences in style and in the details that distinguish this period from later works of art. Continuity and change of this sort is a defining characteristic of Egyptian art.

**STELA OF WADJ.** King Wadj, who ruled Egypt some time in mid-Dynasty One (3100–2800 B.C.E.), erected two stelae in front of his tomb in Abydos in middle Egypt. The stelae marked the place where worshippers made offerings after the king’s burial. The relief on the two stelae emphasizes the centrality of the king to Egypt-



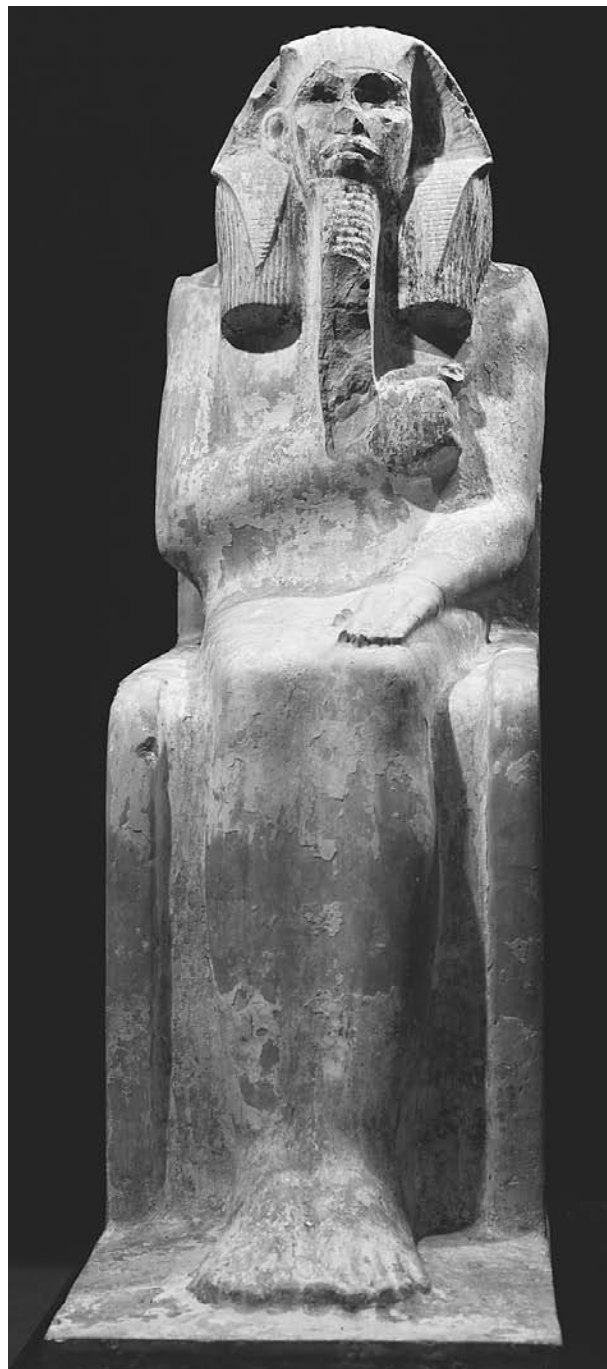
The Stela of Wadj. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE DU LOUVRE PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

ian society and the king’s link with the gods. In the relief, a falcon, the hieroglyphic writing of the god Horus’s name, perches on a rectangle. Within the rectangle is an image of a cobra, the hieroglyphic writing of Wadj’s name. Below the snake and completing the rectangle are three tall towers with niches forming the gateway to Wadj’s palace, called a *serekh*. Conceptually this composition conveyed that when Wadj was in his palace, he was the earthly incarnation of the god Horus. This theme would be constant in Egyptian art, though later artists found other ways to portray this idea. Here the artist used the fact that hieroglyphs are pictures to portray this idea in a clear but also beautiful way.

**MULTIPLE VIEWS.** Wadj’s stela also illustrates the Egyptian method of portraying multiple views of both animals and buildings in two-dimensional art. Though the Horus falcon is in profile, his tail twists unnaturally into a top view to reveal the square tail that helps a viewer identify him. The artist also combined a frontal view of the palace façade, a profile of the cobra, and a top view of the rectangular plan of the palace into one continuous whole. Thus the artist can portray all of the important identifying criteria of an object with one relief.

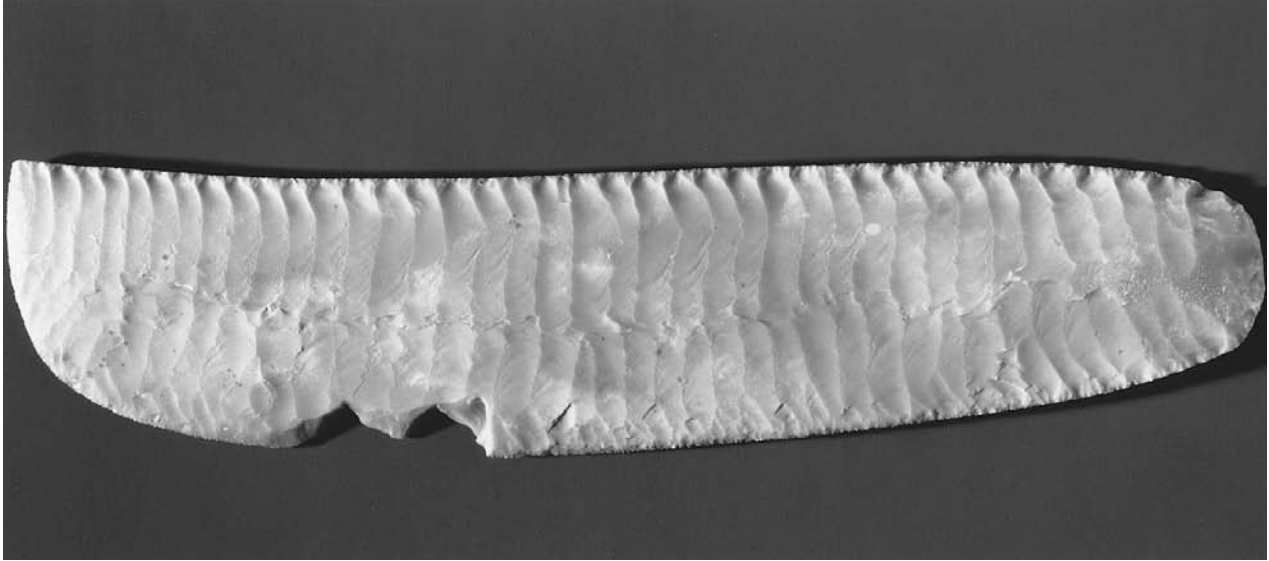
**SEATED KING.** Two limestone statues representing King Khasekhemwy, the last king of the Second Dynasty (2800–2675 B.C.E.), are among the first statues of a seated king. This standard theme in Egyptian art varied only in the details for nearly 3,000 years. Khasekhemwy sits on a simple chair-like throne with a low back. He wears the tall, conical White Crown that proclaims the king's power over Upper (southern) Egypt. He also wears a cloak that Egyptologists can associate with the *heb-sed*, the royal jubilee festival. The king looks straight ahead, establishing that the frontal view of the statue was the main view. The king's left arm crosses his abdomen, while his hand holds the cloak closed. The right arm extends from his waist to his knee on the right thigh, the hand in a fist. Perhaps the hand originally held a scepter or some other indication of the Khasekhemwy's royal status. This arrangement does not conform with later statues. In most later royal, seated statues, the king's left hand reaches toward offerings. This detail indicates that this statue was carved before the conventions became rigid. The king's feet rest on the base in front of the chair. Near his feet the artist carved Khasekhemwy's name in hieroglyphs oriented toward the figure of the king, rather than to the viewer. This arrangement is found on other early statues, though later the hieroglyphs will be oriented to the viewer, making them more legible. On the front and sides of the base of the statue in sunk relief is a representation of defeated enemies. The enemies are naked and arranged in awkward, prone positions. The artist carved the number 47,209 near some prisoners wearing lotus flowers on their heads. The lotus is the traditional symbol of Lower Egypt. Clearly the statue refers to a war or series of battles in which the king defeated this large number of enemies, perhaps from Lower Egypt.

**DJOSER.** A seated statue of King Djoser of the Third Dynasty (2675–2625 B.C.E.) is one of the first known life-size images of a king. Archaeologists discovered it in a shrine at the base of his pyramid. Ancient artists positioned the statue so that it faced a blank wall with two holes carved through it at the statue's eye level. Priests could thus view the statue through the wall, and the statue could see the offerings brought to it. Djoser wears a heavy wig that divides the hair into three parts. Since gods also wear this hairstyle, it identifies Djoser as fully assimilated to divinity and thus already deceased. Over the wig, Djoser wears an early form of the Nemes kerchief, the blue and gold striped cloth restricted to kings. By the Fourth Dynasty (2625–2500 B.C.E.), the period subsequent to Djoser's time, the Nemes will fully cover the king's hair. Here the lappets of the Nemes rest on the



Seated statue of Djoser (Zoser) in Cairo Museum. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

hair but do not cover it completely. Djoser also wears the same *heb-sed* cloak that his predecessor Khasekhemwy wore in his statue. Yet the position of Djoser's hands reverses the hands in Khasekhemwy's sculpture. Here the king's right hand holds the cloak closed while his left arm is placed on his lap. The hand is flat and rests in this statue on his lap. Similar representations of kings



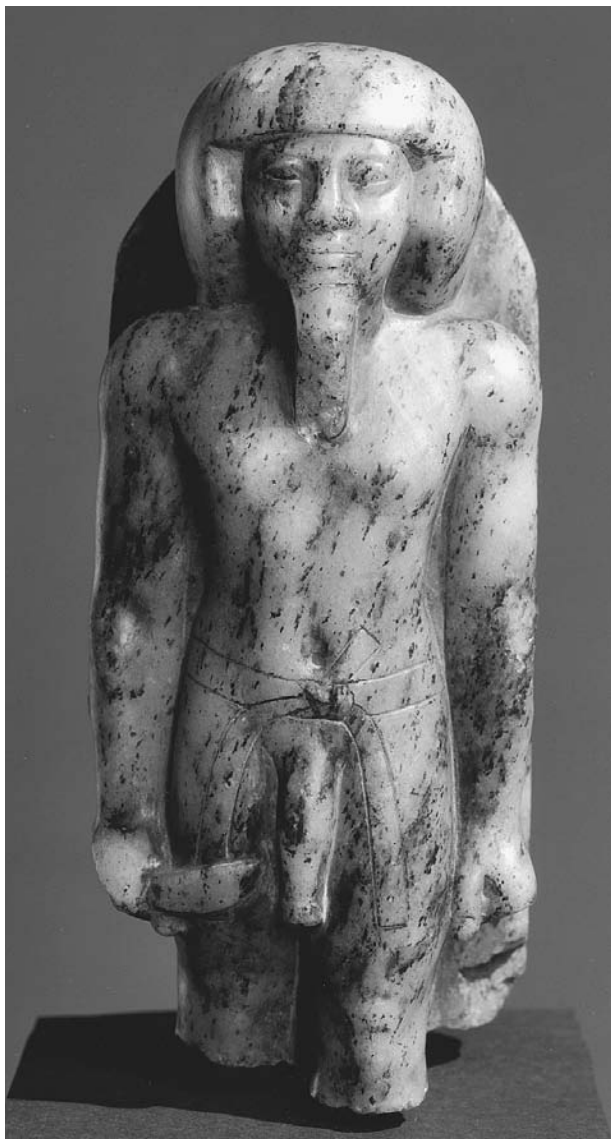
Large knife. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 09.889.119, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

in relief show that this gesture should be read as the king reaching for offerings with his left hand. The Egyptian sculptor did not leave negative space between the arm and the lap for fear of creating a weak point in the sculpture. In general, Egyptian sculptors in stone preferred to preserve the shape of the stone block overall and not to free the limbs from the block. Djoser's throne closely resembles the low-backed chair that Khasekhemwy occupies in his sculpture. The inscription on the base gives Djoser's throne name, Netjery-khet. The carving is oriented toward the viewer. Though Djoser's statue shares characteristics with Khasekhemwy's statue, the position of the hands and the inscription's orientation point toward the commonly observed conventions of subsequent Egyptian history.

**DEITY.** A Third-dynasty (2675–2625 B.C.E.) statue of a deity is among the earliest preserved freestanding statues of a god from ancient Egypt. The god wears a rounded, short wig. The facial characteristics found here resemble other Third-dynasty figures. The artist paid little attention to the eyes, but carved a prominent nose and full lips with rounded corners. The god wears a long divine beard. The shoulders are broad and the artist has modeled the chest and arms to suggest musculature. In his right hand, the god holds a broad, flat knife that associates him with the god Onuris. This god also can be associated with the penis sheath that he wears here. This statue thus is another early example of the way that artists could communicate the identity of a figure through attributes, a system that Egyptologists call iconography. Onuris stands with this left leg forward, a pose meant to suggest walking

forward. Egyptian standing male figures conventionally depict the left leg forward. In spite of the facial features which connect this statue to the earlier periods, the pose, torso, and use of attributes such as the knife look forward to the broader conventions of Egyptian art.

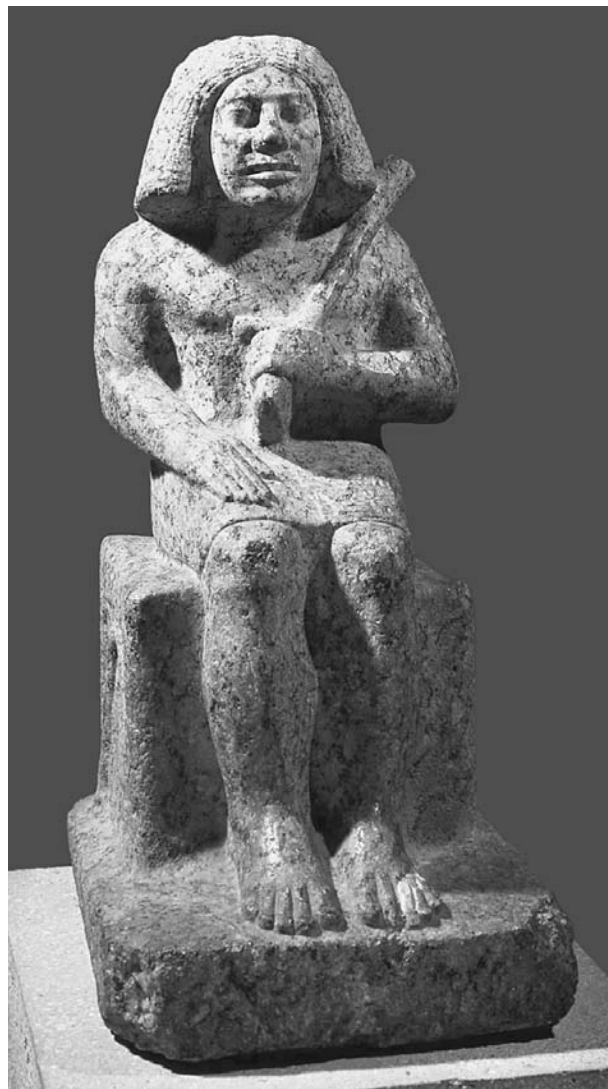
**ANKHWA.** The seated statue of the Ankhwa represents a shipwright whose name Egyptologists formerly read as “Bedjmes.” Bedjmes, a reading of the word for shipwright, was formerly thought to be his name. This statue represents a standard Egyptian type, the seated official. But it also exhibits features related both to the subsequent standardization of the type and other features which do not become part of the standard. Ankhwa sits on a stool without a back. On the sides of the statue, the sculptor carved in relief the curved braces that held the stool together. This feature of Ankhwa's statue will disappear in subsequent periods and thus is indicative of the Third-dynasty date. The other feature of Ankhwa's statue that is typical of earlier statues is the positioning of the hands. Ankhwa reaches for offerings with his right hand while his left hand holds the adze, a symbol of his profession. Later such statues of officials will depict the left hand reaching and the right hand holding an attribute that refers to the subject's profession. These distinctions, though very small, are important for deducing the date of statues in Egypt. The style of the statue places it firmly in the Third Dynasty. The face displays eyes with only the upper lid carved. In contrast the mouth is portrayed in more detail with broad lips with rounded corners. The head is large and attached almost directly to the torso with short neck. The artist here was avoiding a possible



Statuette of a male deity. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 58.192, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

weak point in the sculpture. Finally, the artist carved the inscription on Ankhwa's lap rather than on the base as would become more typical in later periods.

**COLOSSAL HEAD OF A KING.** A colossal head of a king without inscription to identify it is closely related to the art of the Third Dynasty. The head is larger than life-size, measuring over 21 inches in height and made of red granite. The king wears the white crown. The shape of the crown, especially the depiction of the tabs around the ears resembles the shape of the crown in the seated statue of Khasekhemwy. This king's eyes are also carved in a manner that resembles the eyes on the standing statue of Onuris and Ankhwa. Only the upper lid is



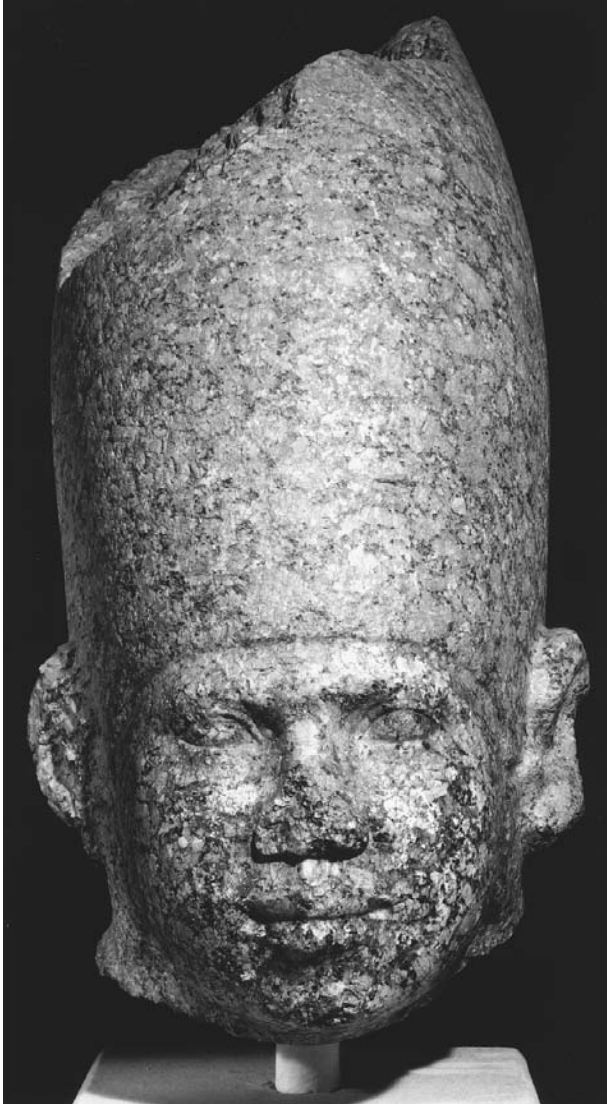
Statue of Ankhwa, the ship-builder. © THE BRITISH MUSEUM/TOPHAM-HIP/THE IMAGE WORKS.

carved. The lips are broad and curved at the ends. These facial features also recall Onuris and Akhwa and suggest that the king's head also dates to the Third Dynasty. Enough of the line of the cloak is preserved at the statue's neck to suggest that the king wore the heb-sed cloak as seen in Khasekhemwy's and Djoser's statues. This statue is also a good example of the way Egyptian artists used monumentality, overwhelming size, to stress the king's power to the viewer.

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Head of a king. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 46.167, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

SEE ALSO *Architecture: The North/South Pyramid Complex: King Djoser's Complex at Saqqara*

## THE OLD KINGDOM

**HIGH POINT.** Egyptian art of the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.) reached a high point of accomplishment which scholars often associate with a strong central government. Clearly the royal workshop had the means to command the best artists and supply them with the most costly materials. Though political weakness or strength does not necessarily determine the quality of the art of the times, the Old Kingdom was certainly a period when political strength and artistic accomplish-

ment overlapped. The art created in this period portrays the king, the bureaucracy, and the workers according to a set of conventions developed in this period and followed throughout ancient Egyptian history.

**KHAFRE.** The statue of King Khafre (2555–2532 B.C.E.) portrays the builder of the second pyramid at Giza and patron of the Great Sphinx. The statue illustrates the intersection of skilled craftsmanship and rare materials resulting in superior work. It also exemplifies Old Kingdom artists' approach to portraying the king as an all-powerful, godlike ruler. The statue is one of several of this king from his mortuary temple, attached to his pyramid. The sculptor carved this statue from diorite, a very hard stone that takes a high polish. Though the gray-green color of the stone would have been disguised by the paint Egyptian artists added to statues, the stone's quality allowed the sculptor to model details in a way that would not have been possible in a softer stone. Moreover, the Egyptians imported this diorite from Nubia, making it rare and expensive. This statue is also an early example of the standard interpretation of the seated king as a conventional subject. Khafre sits on a lion throne, a royal chair with legs carved to resemble lions. The side panels of the chair display the hieroglyphic sign that proclaims that Upper and Lower Egypt are united into a single political entity. Other seated statues of Khafre include the unification motif, but not on lion thrones. The king wears the Nemes kerchief—the blue and gold striped cloth restricted to kings—with a Uraeus—the figure of the sacred serpent, an emblem of sovereignty depicted on headdresses—also standard for seated, royal statues. The king wears a square beard, indicative that the statue represents him in life rather than associating him with Osiris through the beard that curves upward at the end. Perched on the king's back is a Horus falcon, representing the god protecting the king with his wings. The falcon on the king's back might be compared to relief sculptures of the king with a falcon hovering above him. This, indeed, might be the way that the artist intended for viewers to interpret the falcon, indicating that the king is the living Horus on earth. The artist has sensitively modeled the king's face with wide open eyes, a broad nose, philtrum, and sensitive lips. The artist has also exploited the quality of the stone to carve the king's broad shoulders, muscular arms, and modeled chest. The king reaches for offerings in the now standard way with his left hand and probably held some object associated with his office in his right hand. The hieroglyphs carved on the statue base are oriented to the viewer and identify the king by name following the standard convention. Overall, the statue conveys a sense of



Statue of Khafre, wearing the nemes headcloth and false beard, with the falcon of the god Horus protecting him. THE ART ARCHIVE/EGYPTIAN MUSEUM CAIRO/DAGLI ORTI.

overwhelming power and majesty both through the skillful carving and forceful presentation of the king.

**PEPI I.** The calcite seated statue of Pepi I (2338–2298 B.C.E.) recalls the seated statue of Khafre but also demonstrates the kinds of changes which occurred in art between the earlier king's reign and the Sixth Dynasty (2345–2181 B.C.E.). Few other statues from Egypt so clearly read like a hieroglyph as does this one. The king sits on a throne that is shaped exactly like the hieroglyph for the word throne. He wears the white crown that identifies him as the king of Upper Egypt. He also wears a cloak that scholars recognize as the same costume the king wears during the heb-sed (jubilee). The king's arms cross his chest and he holds the crook and flail. These two objects identify the king with the god Osiris. An inscription on the base identifies the king and is oriented to the viewer. Perched on the back of the throne is the falcon that represents the god Horus. The bird's pose recalls the profile view of the falcon in two dimensions found on the Stela of Wadj. Just as was true on Wadj's stela, beneath the falcon the king's name is written within a serekh. The back of the statue thus stresses the living king's association with the god Horus on earth. The



Small seated statuette of Pepi I with Horus falcon. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 39.120, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

king's facial features differ from Khafre's face. His eyebrows are broad, arch over his eye, and extend back toward the ears. The cosmetic line, the representation of the kohl applied like eyeliner that encircles the king's eye, also extends parallel to the eyebrow toward the ear. The king's lips are thick, and the mouth is shaped in an oval without any pointed corners. The small scale of this sculpture allowed the artist to carve the negative space of the legs, freeing them from the block.

**PEPI I KNEELING.** A small schist statue of Pepi I kneeling is an example of another typical Egyptian royal statue type. It portrays the king kneeling and holding a jar in each hand. The king is making a liquid offering to a god. This statue is the oldest complete example of a royal kneeling statue, but there is a fragment of a similar statue from the reign of Khafre known to Egyptologists. The king wears a Nemes kerchief. A Uraeus, probably fashioned from precious materials, once filled the hole over the king's forehead. The king also wears a shendjet kilt, a garment worn only by kings that thus helps to identify him. His facial features are typical of



Kneeling statuette of Pepi I. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 39.121, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the Sixth Dynasty. The broad but gently arched eyebrow extends nearly to the ear. The eye, like many statues in ancient Egypt, is made from precious materials and inlaid. The pupil is obsidian, while the white is calcite. These materials are held in place by a copper armature that represents the cosmetic line around the eye. The cosmetic line then extends in stone toward the ear, running parallel to the eyebrow. The nose and cheeks are full. The philtrum is modeled. The king's mouth has broad lips and is shaped like an oval, without corners. The king's torso and arms are elongated, not as muscular as Khafre's body. This body type represents a second style in Egyptian art, identified by the art historian Edna R. Russmann. It contrasts with the more muscular and robust body of Khafre, for example, portrayed earlier and later in Egyptian history. This second style seems more expressive, and Egyptologists believe its source was religious. In common with the seated statue of Pepi I, the negative space between the arms and the king's torso is carved. Again this is probably due to the small scale of this work.

**ANKH-NES-MERYRE II AND PEPI II.** The calcite statue of Queen Ankh-nes-meryre II and her son Pepi II (2288–2194 B.C.E.) reveals further Sixth-dynasty innovations in royal sculpture while still relying on ancient conventions. The statue portrays a small, adult-looking king sitting on the lap of a woman who is much larger. The fact that Pepi II ascended the Egyptian throne at the age of six explains the difference in size between the figures. Taken alone, the small statue of the king resembles most seated royal figures. The king wears a Nemes kerchief and Uraeus over his forehead. He also wears a shendjet kilt, another symbol of royalty. The king's left hand reaches for offerings in a conventional way, while his right hand holds a piece of linen, an offering he has already accepted. The sculptor placed this conventional statue at a ninety degree angle to a seated statue of the queen. The queen sits on a low-backed throne. She wears the vulture-headdress that indicates her status as a royal woman. The vulture further identifies her as the royal mother since this bird is also the hieroglyph for the word "mother." The hole above her forehead probably once held a vulture head in some precious material. She also wears the tri-partite hairstyle, a traditional style for both women and goddesses. She wears a tight fitting dress with straps that pass over her breasts. Both the king and queen bear similar, Sixth-dynasty facial characteristics including the broad eyebrow, long cosmetic line, and oval-shaped mouth with no corners. Though most Egyptian statues are frontal, meant to be viewed from only one direction, clearly this statue has two fronts. But the queen here must be the major figure because she is so much larger than the king. Usually in Egyptian art, the king appears to be the smaller figure only in the presence of a deity. Thus many Egyptologists understand this statue to represent the king and his mother in the guise of the goddess Isis caring for her child Horus, the divine manifestation of the living king. Here the mythological interpretation most probably overlaps with reality since the six-year-old Pepi must have relied on his mother to rule Egypt during his minority.

**STANDING ROYAL SCULPTURE.** The standing sculpture of King Menkaure and Queen Kha-merer-nebu II is a masterpiece of Egyptian sculpture and illustrates the Egyptian conventions for representing a standing king and queen. The sculpture is just under life size, 54¾ inches tall. The sculptor used greywacke, a hard gray stone that the Egyptians prized. The archaeologist George Reisner discovered the statue in 1910 in the valley temple of this king's pyramid at Giza. This sculpture clearly illustrates the main conventions of Egyptian



Statuette of Queen Ankhnes-meryre II and her son Pepi II. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 39.119, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

standing royal sculpture. The sculptor placed Menkaure on the viewer's left and the queen on the right. The ancient viewer would have recognized immediately that Menkaure was the more important figure of this pair. The viewer's left is always the place of honor in Egyptian representations. The king and queen were also conventionally dressed to communicate their rank in Egyptian society. Menkaure wears the Nemes kerchief, worn only by the king. This headdress was made from cloth, folded to form triangular shapes framing the king's face. Two lappets hang from the triangles over the king's chest. The back of the cloth was twisted around a braid of hair. Though the headdress covered most of the king's hair and head, his sideburns and ears are visible. In examples where the artist used color, the Nemes is striped blue and gold. The king also wears a rectangular false beard. The false beard was leather, attached by straps that would have tied under the Nemes. This beard, worn only by

the king, contrasts with the longer beard that ended in an upward twist worn only by the gods. The king's chest is bare. He wears a distinctive kilt called the shendjet, worn only by kings. The kilt features a belt and a flap that was placed centrally between his legs. The king holds a cylinder in each hand, usually identified as a document case. The case held the deed to Egypt, thought to be in the king's possession. This statue also shows some conventions of representing the male figure used for both nobles and kings. The king strides forward on his left leg, a pose typical for all standing, male Egyptian statues. The traces of red paint on the king's ears, face, and neck show that the skin was originally painted red-ochre. This was the conventional male skin color in statuary, probably associating the deceased king or nobleman with the sun god Re. The statue of Queen Kha-merer-nebu II also exhibits the conventions for presenting women in Egyptian sculpture. Unlike kings, queens did not have their own conventions separate from other noblewomen. The queen's wig is divided into three hanks, two draped over her shoulders and one flowing down her back. There is a central part. The queen's natural hair is visible on her forehead and at the sideburns, another common convention. The queen wears a long, form-fitting dress. The fabric appears to be stretched so tightly that it reveals her breasts, navel, the pubic triangle, and knees. Yet the length is quite modest with a hem visible just above the ankles. The queen's arms are arranged conventionally with one arm passing across the back of the king and the hand appearing at his waist. The queen's other hand passes across her own abdomen and rests on the king's arm. This pose indicated the queen's dependence on the king for her position in society. In pair statues that show men who were dependent upon their wives for their status, the men embrace the women.

**STYLE AND MOTION.** The conventions of Egyptian art make it easy to stress the similarity of Egyptian sculptures to each other in the Old Kingdom. Yet details of the style of sculptures such as the Menkaure statue often make it possible to identify specific royal figures such as the king. All of his sculptures show distinctive facial features. His face has full cheeks. His eyes bulge slightly. The chin is knobby while the nose is bulbous. His wife resembles him, probably because the king's face in any reign became the ideal of beauty. In almost every period, everyone seems to resemble the reigning king. Another aspect of style that remained constant through much of Old Kingdom art was the purposeful avoidance of portraying motion. Unlike ancient Greek sculptors, Egyptian sculptors aimed for a timelessness that excluded the transience of motion. Thus even though Menkaure and





Seated statues of Rahotep and his wife Nofret. SCALA/ART RESOURCE NY.

Kha-merer-nebu II were portrayed walking, the sculptor did not attempt to depict the weight shift in the hips and the stretch of the muscles that would create the illusion that the statue could move. This attitude toward depicting motion is a fundamental difference between ancient Egyptian and Greek art.

**STRUCTURAL SUPPORTS AND INSCRIPTIONS.** Egyptian sculptors relied on back pillars and the avoidance of negative space to support their sculptures. The back pillar in standing sculptures, such as the Menkaure statue, forms a slab that reaches to the shoulders of the figures. In statues of individuals, enough of the block of the stone was removed so that the back pillar would cover only the spine of the figure. In some cases, the entire back of the figures disappears into the remaining block of the stone. The negative space, the area between the arms and torso or between the legs was not carved. Unlike most sculptures of the Old Kingdom, the statue of Menkaure lacks the inscription that is usually found on the base and on the back pillar. Instead the artist relies on the idea that Menkaure can be identified from his facial features and the find spot of the statue in a temple built by Menkaure. The absence of an inscription indicates that

the statue was not finished. Finished sculpture almost always included a hieroglyphic inscription that identified the subject.

**RAHOTEP AND NOFRET.** Rahotep was a king's son who lived early in the Fourth Dynasty (2615–2492 B.C.E.). He was probably a son of King Sneferu and the brother of Khufu, builder of the Great Pyramid. His wife, Nofret, held the title “One Whom the King Knows,” indicative of her high rank. Statues of this couple were discovered in their tomb in 1871 C.E. Because the paint on these statues is fully preserved, they reveal the pristine, original appearance of Egyptian sculpture. They are fully painted. The colors are almost surely symbolic. Rahotep's skin is painted a dark red derived from ocher. This color associates the deceased Rahotep with the sun god. Nofret's skin is painted yellow/gold, symbolically linking her skin with a goddess's skin. An alternative, frequent suggestion for the difference in skin tones between men and women is that men spend more time in the sun than did women in ancient Egypt, and so they were portrayed as lighter in color. This explanation, however, assumes that Egyptian artists fixed on this one detail as important enough to include visually in a sculpture. Since Egyptian art is largely conceptual, conveying ideas rather than visual reality, it seems likely that the color is symbolic rather than a representation of visual reality. The eyes on both statues are inlaid rather than carved from the same stone as the rest of the statue. The sculptor carved the eyes from rock crystal with a flat back. On the back, the iris and white have been added in paint. A hole drilled in the center, also painted black, represents the pupil. The front was highly polished, resembling the cornea of a living eye. The crystal was surrounded with a metal frame and placed in the socket carved in the statue. The effect is amazingly life-like. These crystal eyes must have been quite valuable in ancient times. They are only rarely preserved in statues, usually the loot of ancient tomb robbers who often left a statue behind without the eyes. The seated statue was also a common pose for high officials. These statues are very early examples, thus they do not preserve the later conventional hand gestures. Rahotep and Nofret both place the right arm across the chest. He holds the right hand in a fist while she lays it flat against her body. Rahotep's left arm stretches on his lap toward his knee. The left hand is positioned as if it held some insignia of his office. Her left arm and hand are hidden behind her cloak. Later in the Old Kingdom, both men and women will reach forward with the left arm for offerings in the conventional pose for three-dimensional sculpture.



Standing statue of Ity-sen. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.365, GIFT OF EVANGELINE WILBOUR BLASHFIELD, THEODORA WILBOUR, AND VICTOR WILBOUR HONORING THE WISHES OF THEIR MOTHER, CHARLOTTE BEEBE WILBOUR AS A MEMORIAL TO THEIR FATHER, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



Statue of a family group. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.17E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



Three statues of Metjetji. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 50.77, 51.1, 53.222, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**PORTRAYALS OF OFFICIALS.** In addition to royalty, another large class of Egyptian sculpture portrays the officials who ran both the secular and religious institutions. These men and women were often younger sons and daughters of the royal family in the Fourth Dynasty, but later in the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties included self-made commoners who somehow developed a relationship with the king and thus rose in society. Egyptian artists developed a set of conventions for portraying these officials during the Old Kingdom. The standing statue of Ity-sen is an excellent example of the conventions for a standing statue of an official. Originally it was part of a group of three figures. Ity-sen stands with both arms at his sides. His hands hold peg-like objects that might represent offerings of cloth. His left leg strides forward, indicating that Ity-sen is walking forward to receive his offerings. His upper body is youthful with careful modeling of the pectoral muscles and the clavicle. He wears a simple kilt with a pleated apron. The muscles around the knee are modeled as well as the bones of the knee. The overall effect is a youthful and vibrant man in the prime of life. This effect was the artist's usual intention. Statues like this functioned as containers for the deceased's soul and allowed the deceased to continue life after death eternally young.

**GROUP STATUE.** A family group of statues which represents an official, possibly named Irukaptah, his wife, and son, illustrates Egyptian use of hieratic scale—size based on importance—in three-dimensional sculpture. Irukaptah is a conventional standing male official roughly three times larger in scale than his wife and son. This difference in scale points to the Egyptian convention that the main figure of a group can be presented on a completely different, larger scale than the less important figures. Irukaptah wears a heavy but short wig. His facial features suggest a date in the Fifth Dynasty. His eyebrows are straight, and his eyes are wide open. There is no cosmetic line. Though the nose is damaged, it is still possible to see that the sculptor carefully modeled the area where the nose met the cheeks. His mouth is set in a somber expression with carefully modeled lips that end in a point. He has a strong, rounded chin. The upper body is carefully modeled with a clavicle, pectoral muscles, and a groove that runs through the center of the abdomen to the navel. The muscles of the shoulders and arms are also carefully modeled. Irukaptah wears a simple wraparound kilt with a pleated apron. His legs display careful modeling of the knees and the muscles surrounding them. His wife kneels at his left. She wears a short wig that reveals some of her natural hair at the forehead. She wears a tight dress that reveals her youthful breasts and also the pubic triangle. She crosses her left arm over her abdomen and holds Irukaptah's left calf with her left hand. Irukaptah's son stands on his right. The portrayal of the son follows Egyptian conventions for representing a child. His hair is gathered in a side lock that curls at the end. He holds his right hand up with his index finger pointing to his mouth. He is also nude. These conventions would have conveyed to the viewer that the subject is a child, even though he is larger than his mother. Though the expected inscription was never carved on this statue, the conventions of scale, dress, and pose make it easy to interpret.

**SECOND STYLE.** Three wooden statues of Metjetji illustrate both the conceptual nature of Egyptian sculpture and the emergence of a second style in Egyptian art in the later Old Kingdom. Though all three statues bear inscriptions identifying the subject as Metjetji, a high official of the late Fifth or early Sixth Dynasty, the facial features are not at all similar. Egyptian artists individualized a statue by adding a person's name in hieroglyphs to the base or on the statue itself. The facial characteristics normally resembled the king's face, the living god on earth. With such a "portrait" an official could merge his personality with that of the god and enter into the afterlife. Thus the three statues, though different in appearance, represent only the concept of the man Metjetji.



Relief of Akhety-hotep. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 57.178, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

The three statues also represent the emergence of a second style in addition to the idea of the youthful and idealized standing male figure. The three statues seem to portray Metjetji at different stages of his life. The statue of Metjetji holding a walking staff is most like other conventional images in style. It resembles, for example, the standing statue of Ity-sen in basic conception. The statue depicting Metjetji in the most conventional pose with both arms at his sides also begins to exhibit characteristics of the second style. The figure is much less robust looking. His arms, torso, and legs are elongated. His body is slimmer and less muscular. The facial features are more exaggerated and less idealized than in the more conventional style of Egyptian art. Finally, the statue with the open palm pose is very much more elongated and expressive in its facial features. Some scholars have considered it an individualized portrait. The face, arms, torso, and legs are even more attenuated and slender than in the previous example. From the Sixth Dynasty until the end of ancient Egyptian history, artists used the idealized, traditional style alongside the attenuated second style in



A wooden statue of the dignitary Ka-aper. His corpulence was a sign of wealth in the Old Kingdom. © ROGER WOOD/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

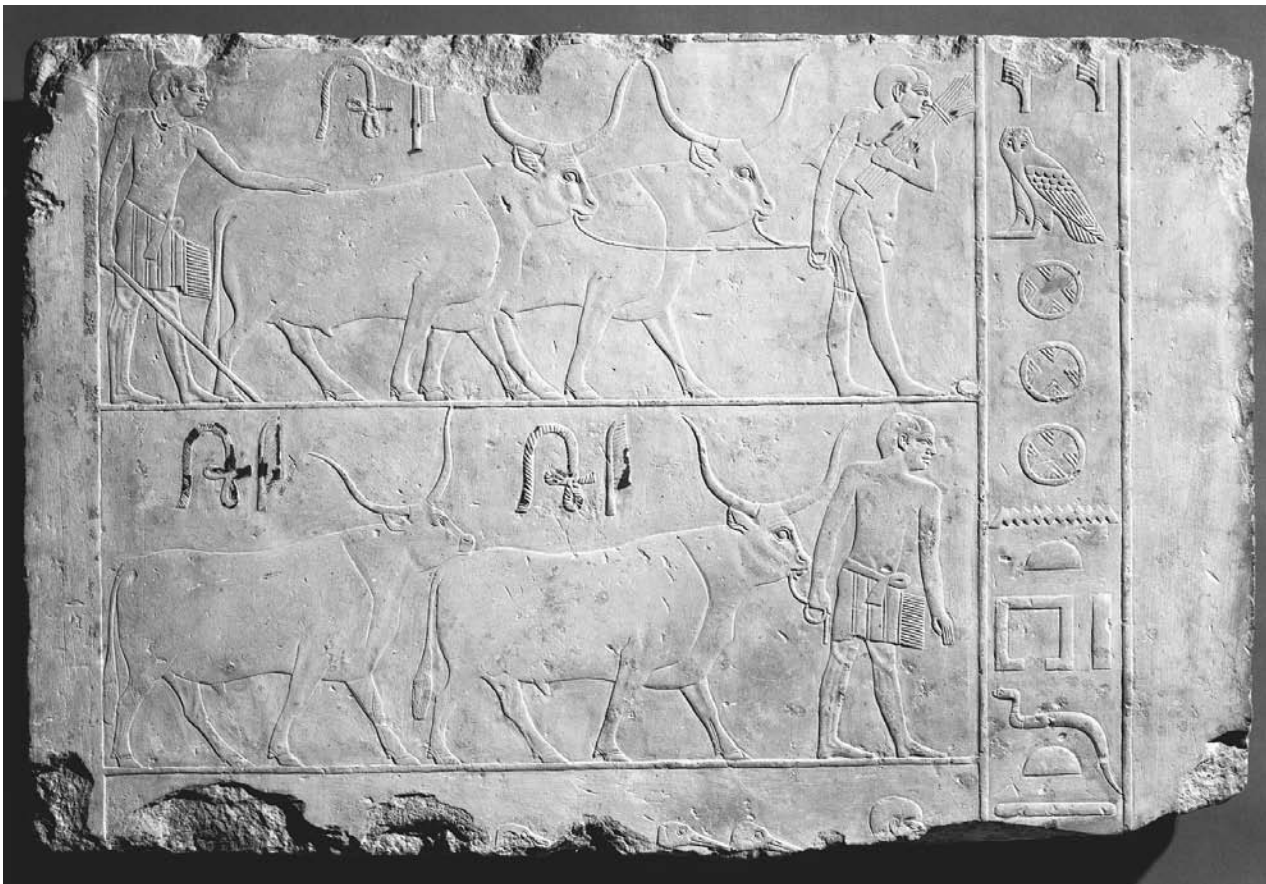
certain period. Many scholars have suggested that the motivation behind the development of this second style was religious. Yet the details of how and why it developed have not been explained.



Offering scene of Setjau. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 37.34E, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**RELIEFS OF OFFICIALS.** Old Kingdom artists carved reliefs of officials on their tombs' walls. These representations were also conventionalized, using standard poses for standing and seated officials. Reliefs could be either raised or sunk, depending on placement in the tomb. In raised reliefs, the artist cuts away the background, leaving behind an image raised above the surface of the stone. Sunk reliefs cut the image below the surface of the stone. Raised relief in Egypt was most effective in dark interior spaces where it caught the diffused light. Sunk relief was more visible in bright, outdoor spaces where the intense light of the Egyptian sun was brightest. All relief was painted.

**STANDING POSE IN RELIEFS.** A relief of the official Akhety-hotep is a conventional standing figure of an official. Akhety-hotep stands with a staff in his left hand and a scepter in his right hand. The staff is a simple, tall walking stick which only men of authority carried. The scepter is also a hieroglyph for the word "power." The fact that Akhety-hotep holds this scepter conveys the basic message that he is a high official. The pose portrays Akhety-hotep's face in profile with a frontal view



Relief of men presenting oxen. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 49.62, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

of his eye. His shoulders seem to twist to a frontal view while his torso violently twists back to a profile. Only his nipple remains in the frontal view. From his waist to his feet, the view of Akhety-hotep is in profile. The artist, however, has given him two left feet, also a convention of Egyptian relief. Both feet display the arch and the big toe as closest to the viewer. This view should only be possible of the left foot. Finally, the hieroglyphs directly in front of his face spell his name, thereby individualizing this conventional image as one particular official. In fact the image of Akhety-hotep is properly a hieroglyph. In hieroglyphic writing, the final sign in a name is an image of a man or of an official if a man had achieved that status. Thus the image acts as the final hieroglyph in the writing of his name.

**SEATED OFFICIAL IN RELIEF.** The relief of Setjau illustrates a typical offering scene with a seated official. Reliefs of seated officials before an offering table were placed above the false door in a mastaba tomb. Here the priests offered food, drink, cosmetics, ointments, ritual oils, and clothes to the deceased during the ritual. This relief depicts Setjau receiving these gifts that he needs in the afterlife while sitting on a stool carved with animal legs. Even through the damage, it is possible to see that his face is in profile, except for the eye that the artist has carved frontally. The shoulders twist to a frontal view while the torso, legs, and feet are in a profile view. Setjau holds a ritual object in his clasped left hand. His right arm reaches forward with an open hand touching the offerings on the table. This gesture suggests he has received the offerings that the priests made. This hand, as is commonly the case, appears to be a left hand too, though it is attached to the right arm, nearer to the viewer. The thumb is at the bottom rather than the top, the place the viewer would expect it if this relief were a version of visual reality. Setjau is surrounded by hieroglyphs. The top horizontal line contains his titles and name, individualizing this conventional image. The hieroglyphs around the offering table enumerate the offerings that Setjau can expect to receive for eternity.

**WORKERS.** Workers appear in scenes of farm life and manufacturing in Old Kingdom tombs. In the relief called Men Presenting Cattle it is clear that the same conventions governing portrayals of kings and officials did not apply for agricultural workers, or indeed any workers in Egyptian society. The three workers are all balding, not anything like the idealized kings and officials. Though the basic conventions can be found in Egyptian representations of workers, the man at the upper right side of this relief might represent a comic view of workers. This man is balding and nude. In gen-

eral Egyptian artists only portrayed nudity for the children of the upper classes. Rather than having an idealized body, this man displays a pot-belly. Moreover, his right foot is forward as he walks rather than the conventional left foot. Though such a detail might seem minor, viewed against a background of hundreds of examples from Egyptian art, this is a major deviation from the conventions. Egyptian artists could exercise much more freedom in their depictions of workers than they could when portraying kings and officials. This freedom also stems, in part, from the fact that the scenes of daily life required more complicated poses in order to depict certain actions.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: Fourth-Dynasty Architecture and History*

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## THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

**NEW TRENDS.** The visual art of the Middle Kingdom (2008–1630 B.C.E.) displays both regional styles and development through time. The art created during the Eleventh Dynasty (2008–1938 B.C.E.) displays a distinct style that originated in Thebes, the home of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep, the king who reunified Egypt and founded the Middle Kingdom. In the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.), Memphis was once more the Egyptian capital. Artists drew inspiration from Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.) models found in this area. They reestablished this older art as the official style. Yet they also continued to develop within this older tradition. Representations of kings remained the most common and most important subject for Egyptian artists during the Middle Kingdom. Statues of kings conveniently illustrate the regional differences in Egyptian art during the Middle Kingdom as well as developments through time.

**NEBHEPETRE MENTUHOTEP.** King Nebhepetre Mentuhotep (2008–1957 B.C.E.) reunited Egypt after nearly 150 years when local princes ruled small provinces after the collapse of the Sixth Dynasty (c. 2170 B.C.E.). Mentuhotep's family had been the local princes of Thebes,



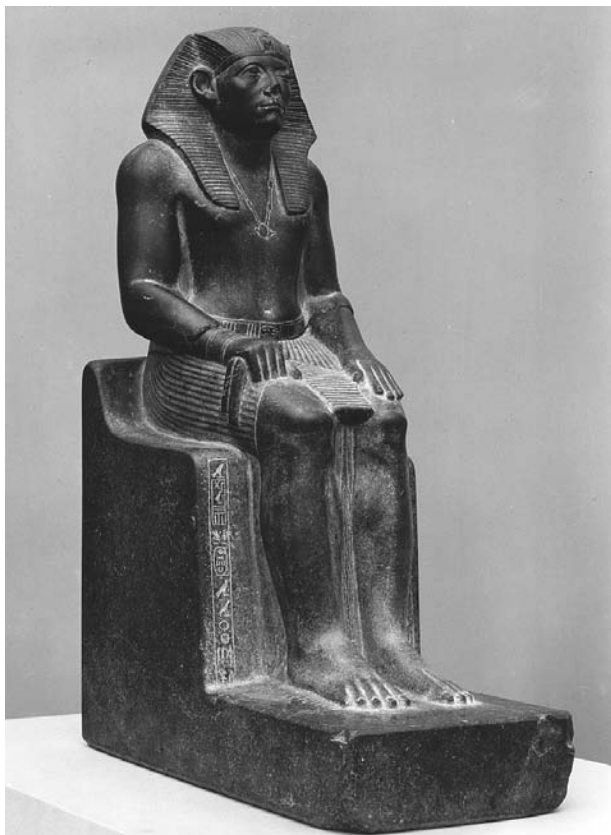
Sandstone head of Mentuhotep. SCALA/ART RESOURCE NY.

the area now occupied by Luxor in Upper (southern) Egypt. By conquering Lower Egypt, Mentuhotep established the Eleventh Dynasty and the Middle Kingdom. The artists working at Thebes had a distinctive style in both sculpture and relief. This style became the official style of the Eleventh-dynasty kings. Though it drew on traditional symbols and poses already developed in the Old Kingdom, the way these symbols and poses were carved was distinctive. The sandstone head of Mentuhotep is a good example of how these artists worked. This head comes from a statue discovered in the king's mortuary temple at Deir el Bahri. The king wears the tall white crown, an ancient symbol that proclaimed that he ruled Upper Egypt. Other statues from the same site portray the king in the red crown, the symbol of ruling Lower Egypt. Thus by this series of statues, the king communicated the reestablishment of central rule of all Egypt by one king. Mentuhotep also wears the Uraeus snake. This is an early example in which the Uraeus was combined with the white crown. The snake protects the king by attacking his enemies. In the Old Kingdom,

kings conventionally wore the Uraeus with the Nemes kerchief—the blue and gold striped cloth restricted to kings. Thus this is a new combination. This statue also preserves the red paint used for male skin in Egyptian art. Red associates the king with the sun god Re and probably also with the idea of the sacred. The ancient Egyptian words for sacred and for red contain the same consonants (dj-s-r) and thus red skin for a king was a visual pun for the word sacred. The facial features found in this statue are also typical of the Eleventh-dynasty style. The eyebrows extend in a flat line over the eye and then continue back toward the ear. The lower inner corner of the eye dips downward while the eye is wide open. The cosmetic line extends toward the ear parallel to the eyebrow. Though the nose of the statue has been damaged, the accentuation of the muscles at the base of the nose is clear. There is a sharp ridge around the mouth consisting of broad lips. The edges of the lips form a flat line meeting the cheek. All these characteristics are typical of Eleventh-dynasty sculpture and distinguish it from the more idealizing features of Old Kingdom kings.

**ROYAL RELIEFS.** Royal reliefs in the Eleventh Dynasty also display a distinctive style and high quality. A good example of this type of carving comes from Nebhepetre Mentuhotep's mortuary temple. In the section devoted to Queen Neferu, his wife, there is a scene of hairdressers preparing her coiffure. One fragment represents the hairdresser Inu curling the queen's hair or wig. Inu's representation is personalized through the inscription with her name just to the right of her face. Otherwise she bears the facial features found in typical Eleventh-dynasty relief in the Theban style. Her long, flat eyebrow and flaring, extended cosmetic line place her firmly in this tradition. She also displays the artist's interest in the intersection of the nostrils and the cheeks, the broad lips with a ridge around the mouth, and the vertical line marking the corner of the mouth. Finally, the oblique placement of the ear and the emphasis on long, active fingers all are part of the Theban style. After Nebhepetre Mentuhotep's reign and the unification of Egypt, artists combined the Theban and Memphis styles to create a new synthesis.

**MENTUHOTEP III.** A relief of Mentuhotep III and the goddess Iunyt, wife of the war god Montu, shows the gradual combination of the Theban and Memphis styles. In this reign, Theban artists would have traveled to Memphis and seen the art of the Old Kingdom in places like Giza and Saqqara. Two representations of the king are included. On the left he wears the red crown of Lower Egypt. On the right he wears the Nemes kerchief with a Uraeus. The goddess wears the vulture head-



Senwosret III. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 52.1, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

dress that associates her with maternity. In style, the synthesis between Theban and Memphis traditions are clearest in the eye and the ear. The eyebrow and cosmetic line are still extended and ribbon-like. But the eyeball itself seems to swell behind the eyelid in a more life-like way than was found in earlier Theban work. This is a clear Memphis influence. The ear also is placed more naturally than in other Eleventh-dynasty relief. The lips remain broad but do not end as bluntly at the corners. This relief points toward the revival of the Memphis style during the Twelfth Dynasty.

**TWELFTH DYNASTY.** Kings of the Twelfth Dynasty (1938–1759 B.C.E.) restored the capital to the area around Memphis in Lower Egypt. Their artists also resided in the new capital. Artists now had direct access to the Old Kingdom cemeteries of Giza and Saqqara and others for inspiration. The results of this inspiration are clear in royal statues of this period. The seated king, in a style reminiscent of the Fourth-dynasty statue of Khafre from his mortuary temple, once again was a common subject. A black granite statue of Senwosret III follows this ancient pattern while also drawing on artists' new



Head from a female sphinx. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 56.85, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

interest in portraying the subject's inner life. The king sits on a low-backed throne with his arms resting on his lap. The left hand is open and reaches for offerings. The right hand is curled in a fist and holds a piece of linen, a common offering. The king wears the Nemes kerchief with a Uraeus protecting him, the conventional headgear for a seated royal statue. The heart-shaped pendant that the king wears suspended from a chain around his neck is typical of Middle Kingdom jewelry. The king also wears the pleated shendjet kilt so often seen in seated royal statues. Finally the king wears an animal tail that is visible between his legs, carved in relief on the block of the throne. The king's thick legs and feet rest on top of nine bows that represent the weapons of Egypt's traditional enemies. With the king's feet on top of them, the enemies are disarmed and rendered harmless. The king's torso also recalls the idealized and muscular bodies of Old Kingdom kings. The artist has carefully rendered the pectoral muscles, the groove over the abdomen to the navel, and the muscles of the arms. Once again the king represents Egypt's strong and idealized protector. Yet the king's face, as is true of many sculptures of Senwosret III, suggests an attempt at conveying the king's psychological state. Many commentators have suggested that the carefully carved bags under the king's





Block statue of Senwosret-Senbefny. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 39.602, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

eyes, the drawn muscles of the cheeks, and the drooping corners of the king's mouth suggest the heavy burden borne by kings who take proper care of their people. The large, protruding ears, though possibly a family characteristic, might also signify that the king hears his people's prayers. This tradition is found in the literature of the period. The inscription carved on the front of the throne identifies the king and is oriented to the viewer as in classic Old Kingdom royal statues.

**PRINCESS.** The artists of the Twelfth Dynasty also produced extremely high quality and innovative work. A head of a princess carved from chlorite exemplifies the highest standards of Egyptian art and a new convention, the female sphinx. Even in its damaged condition the head reveals the expressiveness that Egyptian artists could achieve while working within strict conventions. The planes of the face are modeled so delicately that the youthful freshness of the sitter becomes obvious. The princess wears a heavy wig that reveals some of her natural hair above the forehead in the conventional way. A small Uraeus over the forehead indicates that she is royalty. The eyebrows arch over the eye and extend back toward the ear. The eyes were once inset, undoubtedly



Statue of a cloaked official. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 41.83, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

made from precious materials. The nose is damaged but the expressive lips are carved with great subtlety. The chin, though repaired in antiquity, is also extremely delicate.

**BLOCK STATUE.** Block statues possibly began in the Old Kingdom but became very popular in the Middle Kingdom. They represent an individual squatting on the ground, usually wearing a cloak. The pose is common today among Egyptians. It is not unusual to see workers squatting on the back of their heels during a break. The artist preserves the shape of the original stone block with only the head emerging from the top and the feet revealed at the front. In the case of the block statue of Senwosret-Senbefny, the subject's wife is presented on a small scale between his feet. Senwosret-Senbefny wears a wig tucked behind his large, protruding ears. His face resembles the king, Senwosret III for whom he was

named, though he is only a “steward of the reckoning of the cattle.” The eyebrow ridge is carved without detailed carving of the eyebrows themselves. Perhaps originally the artist added them in paint. The eyes are placed squarely in the face. The nose is flat with carefully modeled muscles joining it to the cheeks. The mouth with its slight downturn at the ends greatly resembles Senwosret III. The chin with its short, square beard rests on his hands. The feet are much less carefully modeled, appearing thick and clumsy. The block shape of the statue creates additional space for inscriptions. The fact that the funerary god Ptah-Sokar is named in the inscription suggests that this statue came from Senwosret-Senbefy’s tomb.

**CLOAKED FIGURES.** Late in the Twelfth Dynasty artists started to represent officials in full-length cloaks. They could be seated on chairs or on the ground. “Statuette of a Cloaked Official” is an example of a seated male figure in full-length cloak. The subject’s body is entirely draped. Only his hands, ankles, and feet emerge from the cloak. Scholars have speculated about the meaning of this popular new way of portraying officials. The contrast between the carefully modeled face and the stark cloak might have had visual appeal for artists. The cloak might also echo the mummy bandages that totally wrap the god Osiris and thus help to equate the deceased official with the god. The cloak is also the garment associated with the king’s jubilee (*heb-sed*). When artists portray a deceased official wearing such a cloak, it might imply rejuvenation for the deceased.

**FEMALE FIGURES.** Female figures in the Middle Kingdom resemble Old Kingdom models yet illustrate the Egyptian artist’s tendency to give all people the king’s features. A female figure in the Brooklyn Museum depicts a woman in a tight, v-necked dress and a tri-partite hairstyle. Both of these features resemble Old Kingdom styles. Yet her face reflects the conventions for portraying the king’s face and head in the Twelfth Dynasty. She has the same very large ears as the kings of this period. Her eyebrows are relatively straight over wide-open eyes. Her nose is broad and her lips are rounded at the end.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: Transition to the Middle Kingdom; Architecture: The Pyramids of the Middle Kingdom*

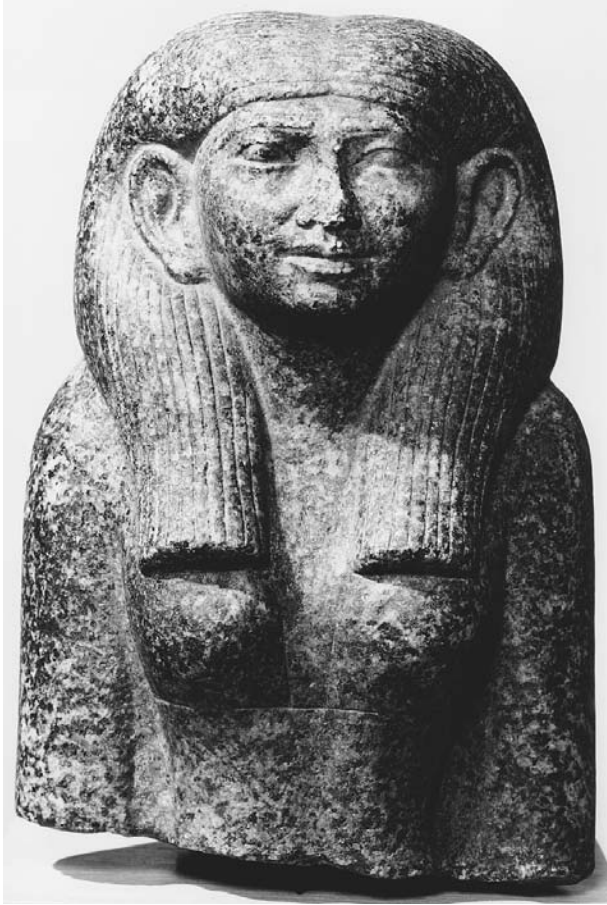
## THE NEW KINGDOM

**VARIETY.** Egyptian art of the New Kingdom (1538–1075 B.C.E.) displays a wide variety of styles within the established artistic tradition, by this point nearly 2,000 years old. The New Kingdom includes the classical images of the warrior pharaoh Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.) but also the androgynous king, Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.). It includes relief based on Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.) models along with more fluid depictions of both people and places. The variation in size runs from the colossal to the minute. Impassive royal sculptures from the early Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1425 B.C.E.) contrast with Amarna period (1352–1332 B.C.E.) scenes that seem to represent a loving royal family. Art of the New Kingdom reflects a serious change in Egyptian perceptions of the world from the beginning to the end of the period.

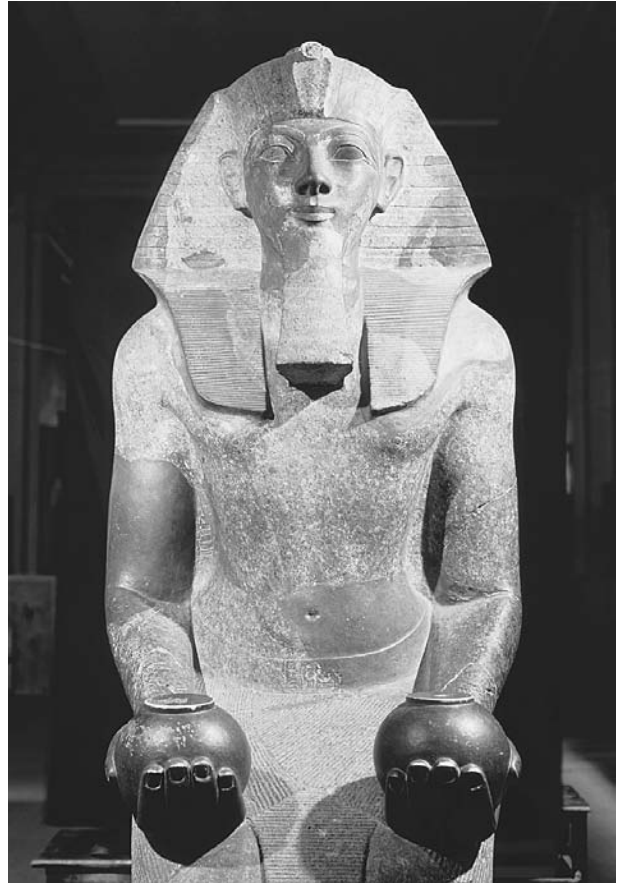
**HYKSOS.** The Hyksos, a Semitic-speaking ethnic group that ruled northern Egypt from approximately 1630 to 1523 B.C.E., caused a radical change in the way Egyptians thought about the world and Egypt’s place in it. The first kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty drove the Hyksos out of Egypt and chased them into the area now known as the Middle East as far as modern-day Iraq. Even after Egyptian victory, kings continued at first to feel vulnerable to the outside world’s designs on their country. The kings created a professional army for the first time in Egypt’s history. This army was a response to Egypt’s new view that broader organization and professionalism was now necessary in public life in order to combat the threat from outside. The civil service was also revived outside the old hereditary nobility, probably copying a Middle Kingdom reform. The military victories celebrated by Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.) brought to a close the first stage of New Kingdom history and its associated art.

**COMFORT AND LUXURY.** Beginning with the reign of Thutmose IV (1400–1390 B.C.E.) Egyptian art reflects the comfort and luxury that came with Egyptian victory over its rivals both in both Asia and in Africa. Egyptian artists’ contact with the outside world yielded an interest in the vitality of other cultures rather than the pure rejection the Egyptians offered to the Hyksos. A new optimism about their own place in the world allowed Egyptians to appreciate their neighbors in a way that had not been available when the Hyksos were thought to be a threat.

**EARLIEST NEW KINGDOM.** The earliest art of the Eighteenth Dynasty found inspiration in early models both of the Old and Middle Kingdoms. Clearly artists



Head and torso of a noblewoman. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 59.1, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

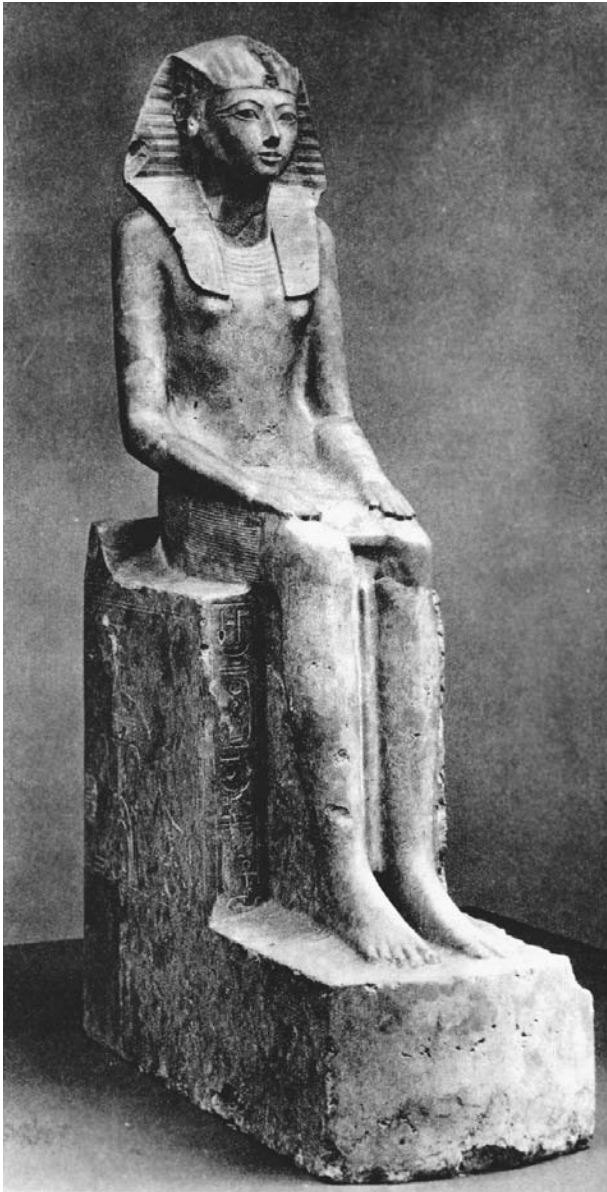


Statue of Queen Hatshepsut holding vases of "Nou" offering. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE NY.

depended on models that they found around Thebes, the traditional home of the new royal family that had reunited Egypt and driven out the Hyksos. A head of King Ahmose in a private collection shows the first king of the Eighteenth Dynasty in a white crown with the Uraeus-snake. This head is so similar to Eleventh-dynasty royal sculpture that only the inscription which identifies the king as Ahmose makes it absolutely clear that it was carved in the Eighteenth Dynasty. The carving of the eye depicts it as wide open but slanting toward the middle of the face. This same slant can be found in statues of Mentuhotep II and Senwosret I. Ahmose's eye also bulges naturalistically. It looks three-dimensional because of the grooves around the eyeball that separate them from the lids. The iris and pupil were represented by concentric circles, a technique that began in the Eleventh Dynasty. The cosmetic line is horizontal and long, extending from the corner of the eye to the ear tabs of the crown. The face is broad with full, high, rounded cheeks. The sickle-shaped mouth might be an individual characteristic that truly represented Ahmose's mouth. It is not a feature

found in Middle Kingdom sculpture. In sum, this sculpture of Ahmose closely resembles statues of Mentuhotep II, nearly five hundred years older. Clearly, artists were turning to traditions that for them were already ancient to reestablish an artistic style for the Egyptian state now newly liberated from foreign domination.

**HATSHEPSUT.** Hatshepsut came to the throne of Egypt in 1478 B.C.E. Officially, she ruled jointly with Thutmose III who had ascended to the throne as a child one year earlier. Hatshepsut was the chief wife of Thutmose II, Thutmose III's father. But Thutmose III was not her son. Thutmose III's mother was Isis, a secondary queen of Thutmose II. Though the details of Hatshepsut's rise to power remain unclear, she certainly presented herself as the ruler until her death in 1458 B.C.E. Only then did Thutmose III assume independent rule of the country. Statues of Hatshepsut in the guise of the ruling king created a challenge for Egyptian sculptors. The traditional image of the king was an athletic male figure that protected Egypt from its enemies. Artists had to develop



Seated statue of a youthful Hatshepsut, queen of ancient Egypt. © CORBIS-BETTMANN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ways of presenting Hatshepsut as a female king, but still convey the same message of strength that Egyptians expected in representations of their ruler. One solution was to present Hatshepsut in traditional royal poses, regardless of her gender. Thus one statue of Hatshepsut shows her as a seated king comparable to the seated statues of Khafre made in the Fourth Dynasty or of Senwosret III made in the Twelfth Dynasty. Hatshepsut's torso is more slender than her royal predecessors, but she sits on a similar throne in a Nemes kerchief and wears the same shendjet kilt. A statue in Cairo shows Hatshepsut kneeling with two jars, the same pose that Pepi I took in one



Kneeling statue of Senenmut. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 67.68, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

statuette. Again she wears the Nemes kerchief and the shendjet kilt. When she wore traditional clothing or posed in a traditional manner, she evoked for ancient viewers the timeless traditions of royalty. Hatshepsut's artists also portrayed her as a sphinx. This tradition had been popular in the Twelfth Dynasty and helped artists avoid the difficulties of portraying her body since they needed only to show her face attached to a lion's body. Hatshepsut's face was characterized by arched eyebrows that gave her a slightly surprised facial expression. Her eye dipped slightly at the inner corner. A flat, long cosmetic line that she often wore resembles her Eleventh-dynasty predecessors. Her nose was aquiline, and she pursed her lips in most of her statues. These facial characteristics were repeated in statues of Thutmose III, her co-ruler and later the sole ruler after her death. Since it is clear that they were not related by blood, it is significant that artists presented both of them with a nearly identical face. Though one or another facial characteristic might have



Relief showing the expedition to the Land of Punt, on the wall of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

actually been recognizable on Hatshepsut's face, this portrait represented an ideal king rather than an individual. Many of the individual characteristics portrayed in the face were similar to rulers of the distant past who also were not blood relations. Rather, by repeating certain characteristics the artist conveyed the clear message

that this particular ruler was part of a line of legitimate rulers who protected Egypt from its enemies.

**SENENMUT.** Senenmut was a powerful official during Hatshepsut's reign. He served both as prime minister and a high official of the god Amun, the chief god of the Egyptian pantheon. Thus he was able to commis-

sion at least 25 statues of himself. They represent a great variety of poses, demonstrating that artists in this reign began to exercise their creativity in the statues they made of officials as well as coping with the artistic problems created by portraying a female queen. They showed Senenmut with Hatshepsut's young daughter, Neferure, on his lap. This statue imitates the poses assumed by Queen Ankhnes-meryre II and Pepi II in one statuette. Artists also created a cube statue of Senenmut that included Neferure's head emerging from the top of the cube. The Brooklyn Senenmut comes from a temple of the god Montu. Senenmut kneels, holding a divine symbol. The symbol includes a sun disk enclosed in cow horns, a cobra, and a pair of human arms ending in flat hands that face the viewer. This symbol probably is a hieroglyphic writing of Hatshepsut's name. Thus Senenmut is offering her name to the god Montu. This is one of the earliest temple statues that portray a non-royal individual making such an important offering to a god. Previously only a king would be shown in such a pose. Senenmut's face is nearly identical to Hatshepsut's face, though again they were not relatives. His eyebrows are arched in the typical manner for this period. His eyes dip slightly at the inner corner. His nose curves slightly in an aquiline shape. His lips are pursed. Officials wanted to be represented with faces that resembled the royal portrait because they hoped to become divine, as the king was, in the next world. A statue's face in the guise of the king helped an official achieve this goal.

**AHMOSE-RURU.** Other officials commissioned traditional statues during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. Ahmose-Ruru, who lived in Thutmose III's reign, commissioned a statue in a cloak, a style that had been popular in the Twelfth Dynasty. For example, the "Statuette of a Cloaked Official" from the earlier period shows a very similar pose. Here Ahmose-Ruru sits on a block-like throne. Only his hands and feet emerge from the garment. His left hand rests on the right side of his chest. His right hand is curved into a fist and rests on his lap. The hands seem too large for his body. An inscription down the center of his cloak identifies him as a high official. His face, however, resembles his ruler's face or his fellow official Senenmut's face. The arched eyebrows are a defining characteristic of the period. His eye also dips slightly at the inner corner. He wears a long cosmetic line that parallels the end of his eyebrows. His nose is aquiline and his lips are pursed. Ahmose-Ruru also wears the short, square, chin beard worn by high officials. This face places the statue squarely in the early Eighteenth Dynasty, but it is also clearly inspired by the traditions of the Middle Kingdom.



Amenhotep III in blue crown. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 48.28, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



Standing statuette of Lady Tuty. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 54.187, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**RELIEF SCULPTURE.** Relief sculpture of the early Eighteenth Dynasty followed Middle Kingdom models yet changed certain proportions in a way that makes it possible to recognize them as products of the later period. The Funerary Stela of Senres, for example, depicts the deceased Senres with his wife Hormes, seated before an offering table. The pose dates to the Old Kingdom. Senres' short hairstyle with rows of curls and his ear at an odd angle are based on Middle Kingdom models. Hormes wears a simple hairstyle that divides her hair into three sections arranged over the back and on either side in the front. This so-called tri-partite hairstyle is very ancient, dating at least to the Old Kingdom. He wears a simple wraparound kilt with an apron. She wears the sheath dress with a strap. Their faces also reflect Middle Kingdom models. The forms of their mouths, with squared ends, particularly are reminiscent of earlier periods. The proportions of their bodies, however, place the stela firmly in the Eighteenth Dynasty. Their torsos are long and slender as are their arms. These characteristics are typical of the later period.

**NEW SUBJECTS.** Hatshepsut's Mortuary Temple at Deir el Bahri contains relief with innovative subject matter created in the same style that recalls the Middle Kingdom. Hatshepsut ordered an expedition to Punt (modern Somalia) to bring back incense that the Egyptians used in religious rituals. In her temple, the various stages of the expedition were illustrated in a series of reliefs. They include scenes of sailing on the Red Sea, arrival in Punt, the people of Punt, the unusual housing elevated on stilts, cutting trees that produced incense, and potting them to return to Egypt. Artists must have accompanied the expedition where they recorded many details that found their way into the reliefs. This is the earliest preserved example of an historical subject in Egyptian art. Such historical reliefs were later included in temple decoration, though the subject matter in the later temples was war.

**EARLY NEW KINGDOM PAINTING.** Painting revived in the early Eighteenth Dynasty along with the other visual arts. During the previous Hyksos period, there are no good examples of painting. Artists drew inspiration from the Middle Kingdom in painting just as they had in sculpture and relief. A fragment called *Painting of a Woman* represents the difficulties in distinguishing Middle Kingdom painting from early Eighteenth-dynasty examples. A woman kneels before a table holding a lotus flower. She wears her hair in the tri-partite style and wears a wraparound dress with one strap. Only the details of her face help in dating this fragment. Like many Middle Kingdom faces, she wears an extended cosmetic

line that parallels her eyebrow. Her mouth, outlined in red, is square at the corner rather than round. Her ear tilts at an odd angle, also a Middle Kingdom characteristic. Yet her eye is quite elongated, as is her mouth. These characteristics make it more similar to early Eighteenth-dynasty paintings. Yet the dependence on the earlier models is clear.

**LATER EIGHTEENTH DYNASTY PAINTING.** By the reign of Thutmose IV (1400–1390 B.C.E.) painting style had changed and new subjects were introduced. By this point Egyptian artists knew the work of Middle Eastern and Minoan Greek artists from increased trade contacts following the wars of Thutmose III. The drawing is now more fluid than the stiff and slightly archaic drawing found in the early New Kingdom. Artists began to expand the color palette to include more colors. The difference from the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty is clear in the depiction of female musicians. The musicians in the tomb of Rekhmire from the reign of Thutmose III are fully clothed. The artist made no attempt at depicting movement. In contrast the musicians in the tombs Nebamun play for two nude dancing girls. The dancers strike exotic poses reaching into the air and bending at the waist. Their feet hover in the air as they dance to the music. Artists also attempted to use more impressionistic brush strokes rather than flat areas of color as they had previously. The more lively drawing and additional colors applied in a rapid way create a noticeable change in painting style.

**AMENHOTEP III.** By the time that Amenhotep III ascended the throne in 1390 B.C.E., his immediate ancestors had extended Egypt's borders into Iraq and south through Sudan. The country was richer than ever before because of the expanded tax base. The art created in Amenhotep III's time reflects a much richer and more peaceful society than the art of the early Eighteenth Dynasty. More statues of Amenhotep III survive from ancient times than any other king of the Eighteenth Dynasty. They range in size from the Colossoi of Memnon, over sixty feet tall, to an exquisite wooden statuette only ten inches high. The large preserved production from this reign means that there are statues in many different stones. They include red and black granite, quartzite, limestone, and sandstone. The art historian Betsy Bryan differentiated a number of different styles of portraying Amenhotep III's face that are related to the material. For example, quartzite is a very hard stone that takes a high polish. In a quartzite statue of Amenhotep III, the artist used different degrees of polish as a technique to differentiate different textures in the crown, the skin, and the hair. The eyebrows are fairly rough in comparison to the



Pair statue of Nebsen and Nebet-ta. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 40.523, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

skin near the eye. This skin is very highly polished to indicate the smoothness of this skin. The cheeks, where the king would have had a beard, are rougher than the skin near the eye, but not so rough as the eyebrows. These contrasts indicate a sophistication about working the stone that did not exist in previous reigns. Artists also exploited differences in the degree of polish in granite statues that they could also polish to a high shine.

**BODY TYPES.** Statues of Amenhotep III also display a variety of body types. Some statues portray the traditional athletic royal body that emphasizes the king's role as Egypt's protector. Other statues, such as statuettes made from wood, might represent an older king. His body is fleshy and slack. His pectoral muscles sag, almost resembling female breasts. His belly is rounded and puffy. This representation of a royal body might symbolize the king's wealth. But some scholars understand



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**RARE WRITTEN EVIDENCE OF EGYPTIAN ART**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Inscription of Bak, chief sculptor of King Akhenaten, represents rare inscripational evidence for art. Bak carved this inscription in the granite quarry near Aswan. A relief shows Bak's father, named Men, seated before a statue of Amenhotep III while Bak himself offers at an altar. At Bak's side is King Akhenaten before his god, the Aten. In this inscription, Bak claims that Akhenaten himself instructed the sculptor in the new style used during the Amarna period. This is rare evidence of how such an official change took place.

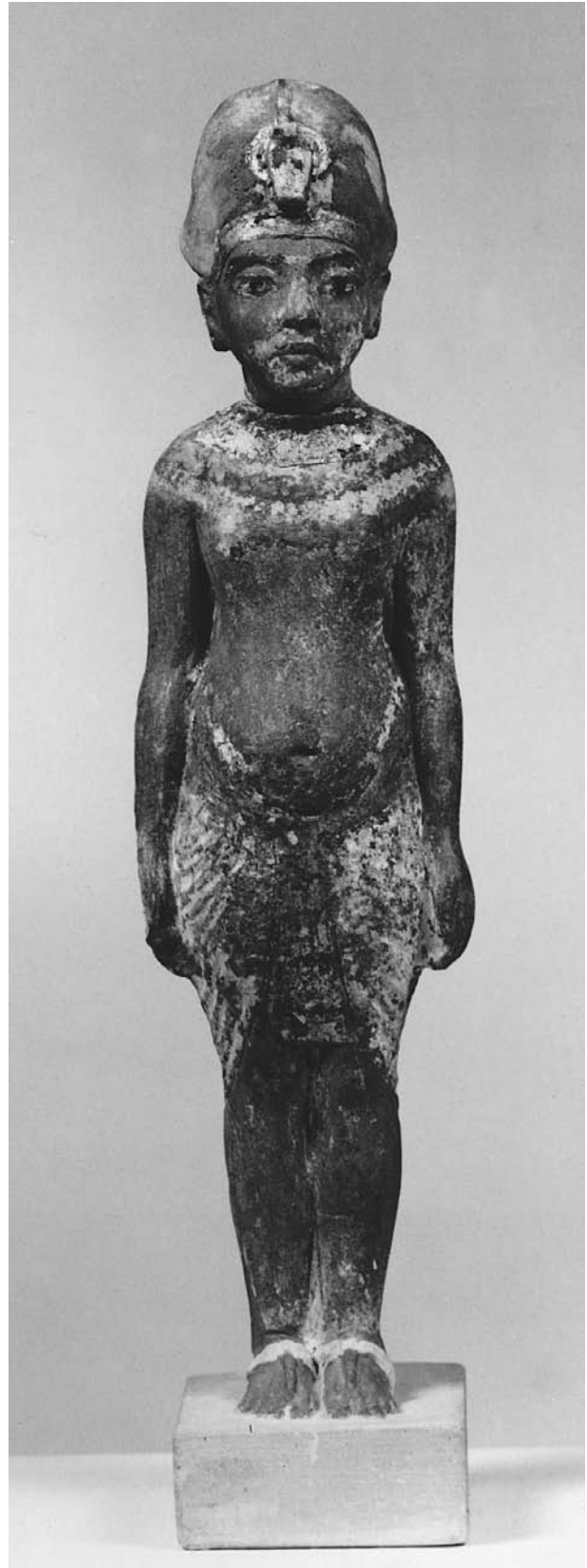
*Above Men:* Offering every good and pure thing, consisting of bread, beer, long-horned oxen, [short-horned cattle], fowl, and all sorts of fine vegetables by the overseer of works projects in the Red Mountain, the chief sculptor in the big and important monuments of the king, Men, son of Baimyu. ...

*Above Bak:* Giving adoration to the lord of the Two Lands and kissing the ground to Waenre by the overseer of works projects in the Red Mountain, a disciple whom his Person [a way of referring to the king] himself instructed, chief of sculptors in the big and important monuments of the king in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten, Bak, the son of the chief of sculptors Men and born to the housewife Ry of Heliopolis.

**SOURCE:** William J. Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995): 129.

this version of a royal body as feminized. The meaning of this feminized body would, however, not be negative as it might be in modern eyes. Instead the Egyptian artist could be stressing the king's role in guaranteeing the country's fertility. The king's breast-like pectorals and nearly pregnant abdomen suggest common Egyptian symbols for rebirth and plenty. This version of the king's body would also send an important positive message to ancient Egyptian viewers.

**PRIVATE PEOPLE.** Increasing wealth throughout Egypt and the resulting opulence during Amenhotep III's reign is clear in art that represents non-royal officials during this period. A pair statue representing the officials Nebsen and Nebet-ta and a tomb painting representing a lady named Tjepu both demonstrate that artists portrayed these members of the elite with increasing numbers of luxury goods. Nebsen was a scribe



Akhenaten. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 29.34, GIFT OF THE EGYPT EXPLORATION SOCIETY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



The Wilbour Plaque. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 16.48, GIFT OF EVANGELINE WILBOUR BLASHFIELD, THEODORA WILBOUR, AND VICTOR WILBOUR HONORING THE WISHES OF THEIR MOTHER, CHARLOTTE BEEBE WILBOUR, AS A MEMORIAL TO THEIR FATHER, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

of the royal treasury. His wife, Nebet-ta, was a singer in the cult of the goddess Isis. In the statue that their son commissioned for them, they are portrayed sitting on a high-backed chair. Nebet-ta wears the elaborate enveloping wig that had become fashionable in this time period. It completely enfold her shoulders and reaches the upper part of her breasts. She wears a broad collar and bracelets on her wrists. She appears to be wearing a tight dress that reveals her breasts and navel. The pubic triangle is hidden because she is seated with her knees together. Nebsen also wears an elaborate wig that reaches his shoulders. He wears a broad collar and armlets that encircle his biceps. He also wears a wraparound kilt. His chest is fleshy and corpulent, suggesting his wealth and high position in society. Inscriptions on both people elaborate their names and titles for the viewer. Though both of these individuals lived in the reign of Thutmose III, their son commissioned this statue in the current

style during his own lifetime. When compared with the pair statue of Rahotep and Nofret made during the Fourth Dynasty, it is clear that the later New Kingdom artists strove to emphasize the sitter's wealth. Rahotep and Nofret were a prince and princess, yet they do not wear wigs, clothing, or jewelry nearly as elaborate as these non-royal officials wore. Even though both statues share the same pose, the style of the later periods called for a different emphasis. The tendency is noticeable in the painting of Tjepu that comes from her son's tomb. Tjepu stands making a gesture of adoration with her right hand and holding a menat, a piece of jewelry that could double as a musical instrument in her left hand. She wears on top of her wig a scented wax cone that Egyptians of this period wore as deodorant and perfume. Her wig is also adorned with a closed lotus flower and a colorful headband. The wig itself is long and envelops her near shoulder. Due to the conventions of Egyptian art in



Bust of Nefertiti. © FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

two dimensions, the far shoulder is uncovered, though in reality this hairstyle would have covered both shoulders. She wears an elaborate and colorful broad collar, armbands, and bracelets made from gold, turquoise, and jasper. She also wears a complex linen dress with a shawl. Her coiffure, jewelry, and clothing all convey a message of plenty that seems integral to Amenhotep III's reign. A wooden statue of the Lady Tuty further illustrates the opulence found in Egyptian representations of private people of this period. The wood itself is ebony, a very high-priced material imported from Somalia. The cosmetic cone on her head and her disk earrings are fashioned from gold. She wears an elaborate complex wrap-around dress with many pleats. All of these images reflect the wealth of the time period.

**NON-ROYAL FACES.** As in other periods of Egyptian history, non-royal officials were portrayed with the same facial characteristics as the monarch. The eyebrow arches more gently than in the early Eighteenth Dynasty. The eye is almond-shaped and tilts toward the center of the face. The nose is straight and slightly bulbous at the end, and the cheeks are full. The mouth has full lips with a slight overbite. The chin is round. Viewers can easily distinguish this face from the early Eighteenth Dynasty. But the principle that people could identify themselves

in the afterlife with royalty and thus deities remained true in the later Eighteenth Dynasty.

**AMARNA PERIOD.** Amenhotep III's son ascended the throne in 1352 B.C.E. as Amenhotep ("Amun is satisfied") IV. But by 1347 B.C.E., five years later, he called himself Akhenaten ("Spirit of the sun disk"). His new name was only a small part of the religious and artistic revolution that he inaugurated. It was the most distinct eleven years in 3,000 years of Egyptian artistic history. As Akhenaten, he banned the worship of all gods except Aten, the physical disk of the sun. He closed Egypt's traditional temples and built new temples first at Karnak, and later at a new city in central Egypt in a place now called Tell el Amarna. The modern name of this place gives its name to this period in Egyptian history. Since Akhenaten built so many new buildings, there remain many fragments of sculptural relief and sculpture that once decorated Akhenaten's new construction. This art is distinctive in style and subject matter.

**THE KING.** Images of Akhenaten never match the traditional ideal of the athletic young man who protects Egypt from its enemies. Instead, representations of Akhenaten portray him with elongated and thin features. His face is extremely long and narrow with a pronounced chin. His arms are also elongated and skinny rather than muscular. Often his clavicle protrudes through his skin. His chest is flabby and the abdomen is puffy. Very often his hips are wide rather than the traditional slim-hipped figure presented by other kings. Indeed, Akhenaten's form resembles a feminine rather than a masculine ideal. Perhaps this ideal originated in his father's reign with images like the wooden statuette of Amenhotep III. Yet the elongation is much more pronounced in images of Akhenaten. The Wilbour Plaque shows the king in two dimensions where the exaggeration of his portrayals is even clearer. Here the king wears a traditional Uraeus snake over his forehead with a cloth headdress called the afnet. He has only an eyebrow ridge rather than a fully carved eyebrow. His eye is almond-shaped and deeply slanted toward the center. The extreme length of his face is clear in the very long, straight nose. His full lips slant downward at the corners. The chin is strongly pointed. Akhenaten's ear is very naturalistic and includes the slit for earrings. He also has a long arched neck with two grooves. These grooves are characteristic of the period. The king's face contrasts strongly with the normally round, full-cheeked Egyptian ideal in periods before and after the Amarna period.

**NEFERTITI.** Queen Nefertiti faces Akhenaten on the Wilbour Plaque. She also has an extremely long and narrow face, paralleling many of the characteristics of



Stela of Akhenaten (left) and his wife Nefertiti holding their children and blessed by the Aten, the sun god, c. 1345 B.C.E. Displays of familial intimacy such as is shown here were unique to the Amarna period. © RUGGERO VANNI/CORBIS.

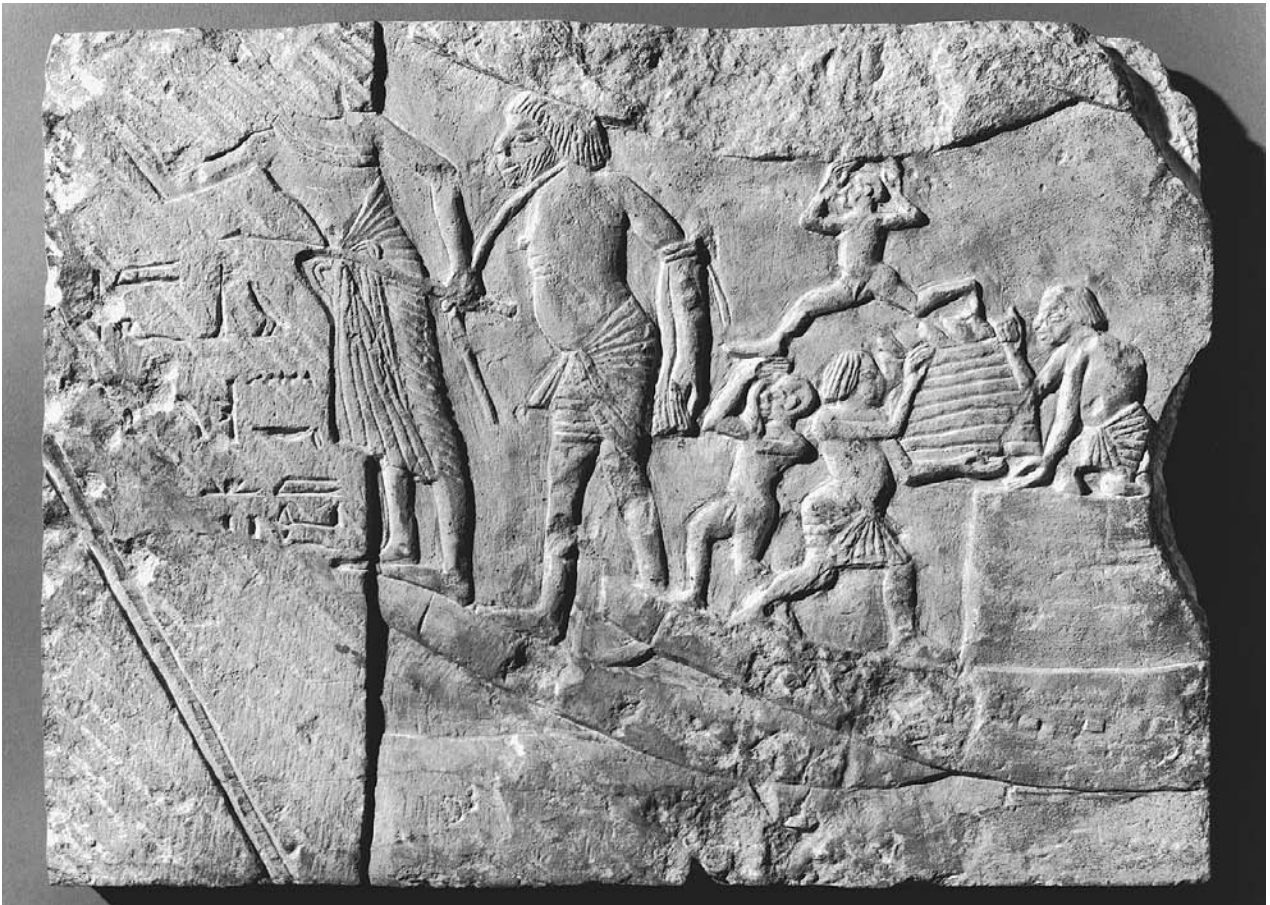
her husband's face. Her face is distinguished from his by being slightly less long and with a slightly less pronounced chin. There is also a groove carved from the outside corner of her nose extending on the diagonal that distinguishes her face from his. Her long neck has one groove in contrast to his two grooves. Nefertiti wears a Uraeus and cap with a diadem. The Uraeus is one of a few normally masculine characteristics this queen bears. In a relief from Akhenaten's palace, the queen wears the Nubian hairstyle, normally reserved for male soldiers. She also wears the Uraeus snake over her forehead. Her almond-shaped eyes dip toward her nose that is quite long. Her full lips turn downward at the end. Her neck is long and graceful with two grooves. Of course the most famous image of Nefertiti is the plaster bust now in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. Its long and elegant lines are often compared to a modern fashion model. Yet its ideal of slim elegance could not be farther from the traditional Egyptian view of the ideal woman. Usually women are portrayed with round, full faces and few

angles. The reversal of typical male and female roles during the Amarna Period remains one of its most intriguing characteristics.

**PRINCESSES.** Another unusual feature of Amarna Period art is its many representations of Akhenaten and Nefertiti's six daughters. They are often included in scenes portraying rituals dedicated to the Aten. In a relief from a chapel in the palace, two princesses play the sistrum in their most elegant linen dresses. The facial characteristics in these reliefs are extremely exaggerated, a fact that places them at the beginning of the period. Another image of a princess depicts her pressing her lips to her mother's lips. Though called a kiss, it is a very rare representation of such an act in Egyptian art. The princess is portrayed as a child with a shaved head and the typical side lock that children wear. She also wears a flat, disk shape-earring. Such scenes of intimacy and familial feeling are extremely rare in Egyptian art in general but are much more common during the Amarna Period.



Nefertiti and daughter ("The Kiss"). BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 60.197.8, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



Harbor Scene. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 48.112, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



In the later Eighteenth Dynasty officials added scenes from their lives. Here, General Horemheb depicts soldiers he commanded. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 32.103, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**LATE EIGHTEENTH-DYNASTY RELIEF.** Tomb relief in the late Eighteenth Dynasty included unusual subject matter sometimes related to the tomb owner's profession. The exquisitely carved soldiers from the tomb of Horemheb illustrate men he commanded while he was a general in the army. The varied faces and body types of this row of men indicates a certain freedom in the representation of common people. A harbor scene from an unknown tomb of the late Eighteenth Dynasty shows a harbor scene with a bound prisoner descending the gang plank of a boat. Such scenes that depict the varied activities in a town perhaps were an outgrowth of the Amarna period's willingness to explore new subject matter. This tendency ended with the Ramesside Period which followed.

**END OF AMARNA.** The Amarna Period ended nearly as suddenly as it began. The details remain murky, however. After Akhenaten's death, he was followed briefly by King Smenkare and then King Tutankhaten. Tutankhaten changed his name to Tutankhamun and restored the traditional gods of Egypt. He also restored the traditional capital at Thebes and abandoned Amarna. Yet Tutankhamun is much better known as the owner of the only royal tomb of this period to be discovered nearly intact. Thousands of works of art found in his tomb reflect both the influence of the Amarna Period and movement back toward more traditional Egyptian art. Tutankhamun's painted chest, for example, preserves a war scene with the king attacking Egypt's enemies with a bow and arrow while he rides in his chariot. Battle



Linen chest of Tutankhamun, showing the king in his chariot, riding into battle and defeating his enemies of the North and South. THE ART ARCHIVE/EGYPTIAN MUSEUM CAIRO/DAGLI ORTI.

scenes of this sort represent a return to the king's traditional role as Egypt's protector.

**RAMESSIDE PERIOD.** In 1292 B.C.E., General Ramesses ascended the throne and founded the Nineteenth Dynasty. The royal family of the Eighteenth Dynasty had died out with Tutankhamun. Until 1075 B.C.E. through the Twentieth Dynasty, kings reverted to the old ideal. Kings such as Ramesses II created vast amounts of art that both looked back to the early Eighteenth Dynasty for inspiration but also bore the influences of more recent Egyptian art. A relief depicting Ramesses II combines features of kings such as Thutmose III with Amarna details. The king wears a Nemes kherchief with a Uraeus snake over his forehead. His eyebrow arches similar to early Eighteenth-dynasty models. His eye is wide but still tilts slightly toward his nose, much as was true of Amenhotep III's sculpture. Yet the cosmetic line is long and parallel to the extension of the

eyebrow as found at the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty. His nose is slightly aquiline. His sensitively carved lips curve down slightly, reminding the viewer of the Amarna period. Yet the chin is round. Though his neck is muscular it still has the grooves carved in it that first appeared in the Amarna period. Thus through a combination of characteristics, Ramesses II's artists created an image of the king that provided some continuity with the recent past but still recalled the glorious early Eighteenth Dynasty and its warrior kings. This message must have been reassuring to his contemporaries who had witnessed many violent changes in policy during their lives.

**TOMB OF SENEDJEM.** The paintings found in tombs during the Ramesside period differ from Eighteenth Dynasty and earlier tombs because the subject matter is more clearly religious. Rather than scenes of fishing and fowling that must be interpreted to find their religious meaning, Ramesside artists portrayed the next world

## TUTANKHAMUN'S Tomb

The English archaeologist Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. The subsequent publicity made Tutankhamun one of the most famous of ancient Egyptian pharaohs. This king was little known before his tomb was discovered. Ironically, the tomb itself has not yet been fully studied eight decades after its discovery.

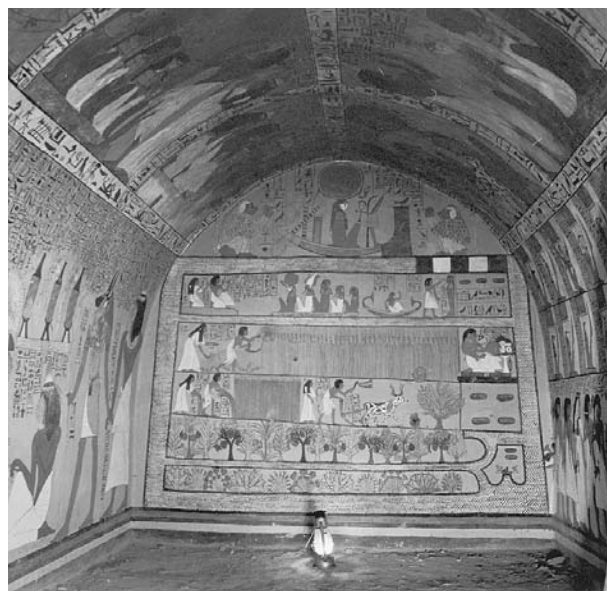
Tutankhamun came to the throne as a child and ruled roughly ten years from 1332 to 1322 B.C.E. He officially presided over the god Amun's return to power after King Akhenaten (1352–1336) attempted to suppress the worship of all gods except the Aten (sun disk). Tutankhamun's inscription restoring Amun's temples provides evidence of this important event.

The tomb's discovery was the single most spectacular and most highly publicized event in Egyptian archaeology of the twentieth century. So far, it remains the only unlooted pharaoh's tomb from the Valley of Kings known today. As a result, unlike the rest of the royal tombs that were robbed and emptied in antiquity, thousands of objects were discovered still neatly packed in their ancient wrappings and boxes. Three major traveling exhibitions of artifacts from the tomb to Europe, Great Britain, and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century added to this king's fame. Yet scholars have studied only a handful of objects from the tomb. These include the thrones and the sarcophagus (coffin). Interestingly, these objects once belonged to the king's predecessor, Smenkare, who ruled less than three years. The splendor and wealth of the tomb revealed in the exhibitions makes Tutankhamun a figure of fascination for many.

with its gods neatly arranged in rows. The god Osiris, king of the dead, is the first image the visitor to Senedjem's tomb would see on entering it. To the left the visitor would see Senedjem and his wife Iyeferti worshipping thirteen gods of the underworld arranged in two rows. They include Osiris at the head of the top row and Ra at the head of the lower row. Above them are two images of the jackal god Anubis, guarding the entrance to the tomb. On the end wall to the visitor's right is a scene of Senedjem and Iyeferti harvesting flax in the next world. Dressed in their best clothing, they plow and then harvest the flax that they can later use to make linen clothing. The text included in the scene comes from



Relief of Ramesses II. BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, 11.670, MUSEUM COLLECTION FUND. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



A chamber in the tomb of Senedjem. The painting on the end wall depicts him and his wife performing ritual acts of plowing, sowing, and reaping crops in the Field of Reeds. © WERNER FORMAN/ART RESOURCE, NY.

the Book of the Dead where the deceased are promised the ability to plow, reap, eat, drink, and copulate in the next world. The scene is another way of guaranteeing that Senedjem and Iyeferti will have a successful afterlife.



**SOURCES**

Ariel Kozloff and Betsy Bryan, *Egypt's Dazzling Sun* (Cleveland: Cleveland Art Museum, 1992).

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**LATE PERIOD**

**HEIR.** The Late Period of Egyptian history from the end of the New Kingdom (1075 B.C.E.) to the beginning of Greek domination (332 B.C.E.) was heir to over 2,500 years of nearly continuous artistic production. This long native tradition also interacted with foreign influences during times of Egyptian political weakness. Kushites from the Sudan, Libyans, Persians, and Greeks all influenced artistic production in Egypt at this time. One of the most salient characteristics of Late Period visual art is archaism. In visual art, Egyptologists define archaism as a deliberate attempt to reproduce a style of sculpture, painting, or relief from an earlier historical period. Archaism requires a conscious and purposeful effort to imitate particular styles or scenes. It is a much more literal borrowing than adopting aspects of a style. Artists of the early Eighteenth Dynasty borrowed from the Middle Kingdom, but they did not copy whole scenes. Ramesside artists revived aspects of early Eighteenth-dynasty style, but art historians can distinguish a statue of Ramesses II from a statue of Thutmose III. In the Late Period, however, scholars face greater difficulties in distinguishing old and more recent works. Though there are isolated examples of archaism in the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, in the Late Period archaism is often a fundamental aspect of the visual arts.

**THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD.** The Third Intermediate Period (1075–656 B.C.E.) followed the New Kingdom and witnessed political instability. Kings looked to Eighteenth-dynasty (1537–1292 B.C.E.) models for inspiration for their artists, probably in an effort to link themselves to this glorious era. Some works from this period copy works of Thutmose III's time (1479–1425 B.C.E.) so carefully that scholars have trouble distinguishing the two periods. A gold statuette of Amun that once belonged to the Carnarvon Collection fooled the Egyptologist Howard Carter into identifying it as the work of Thutmose III's artists. The art historian Cyril Aldred showed, however, that it dates to the Twenty-second Dynasty (945–712 B.C.E.) over five hundred years later. Some other works from this period echo art from the Old and Middle Kingdom. Only the smallest details have allowed experts to recognize the differences between original works of the earlier period and copies from the Third Intermediate Period.

## COLLECTING Egyptian Art

The ancient Romans were among the first to collect Egyptian art. The emperor Hadrian (ruled 117–138 C.E.) brought art from Egypt to his country villa in Tivoli, Italy. He built a model of the Nile and arranged Egyptian statues around for his pleasure. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many English and European aristocrats continued the tradition of collecting Egyptian art along with the art of Greece and Rome.

The late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries witnessed the birth of public collections of Egyptian art in Europe and Britain. The great American public collections went on view in the twentieth century in New York, Brooklyn, and Boston. The British Museum in London, the Louvre in Paris, and the Egyptian Museum in Berlin were among the early and important public collections. The greatest of all public collections is the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. These collections inspired scholars to study Egyptian art and create the field of Egyptology.

In the early twenty-first century, both private and public collectors face pressure and even censure because of the political conditions prevailing when these collections were formed. Between 332 B.C.E. and 1952 C.E., foreigners ruled Egypt. Thus the period when Egyptian collections were formed corresponds to the period when Egypt was under foreign rule. The present government of Egypt has sought restoration of key monuments to Egypt that left the country while it was under foreign rule. Yet the legal and ethical issues involved are complex. There are no easy answers to questions raised by the long years of collecting and current Egyptian aspirations.

**KUSHITE ART.** The Kushite kings of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (760–656 B.C.E.) originated in Sudan. They sought to identify themselves with kings of earlier periods through their art. They modeled many sculptures on work produced during the late Middle Kingdom (1938–1630 B.C.E.). In fact scholars still dispute which works rightly should be assigned to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty and which are products of the Middle Kingdom. The tomb of the high official Harwa, certainly built in this time period, demonstrates considerable copying from the Old Kingdom (2675–2170 B.C.E.). Much of the original Old Kingdom material was in the northern capital in Memphis, but Harwa's artists reproduced it for his tomb in Thebes.

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Visual Arts*

**SAITE PERIOD.** The Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664–525 B.C.E.), called the Saite Period because of its king's origins in the town of Sais in the Delta, looked for inspiration in the New Kingdom once again. A remarkable tomb belonging to the governor of Upper Egypt, Montuemhet, spans both the end of the Kushite Period and the beginning of the Saite Period. This tomb contains elements from the Kushite Period imitating the Old Kingdom as well as Saite Period work imitating the New Kingdom. The Theban tomb of a man named Ibi that dates to this period was highly influenced by the Memphite tomb of a man with the same name who lived in the Old Kingdom. Later in the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, artists drew on New Kingdom models for inspiration.

**PERSIAN PERIOD AND THIRTIETH DYNASTY.** The Persians conquered Egypt in 525 B.C.E. Artists blended Persian artistic traditions with traditional Egyptian art. A statue of the Treasurer of the god Ptah, Ptahhotep, blends typical Egyptian elements with Persian details. The frontality, back pillar, and stance that Ptahhotep assumes in the statue all date back thousands of years in Egyptian history. Yet Ptahhotep wears a Near Eastern costume consisting of a shawl and high-waisted kilt that would be more at home in Persia than Egypt. He also wears a Persian necklace ending in typically Persian mountain-goat shaped forms. Under the necklace, he wears a typical Egyptian chest ornament. In statues such as this, artists were able to accommodate foreign tastes but also rely on Egyptian models. The Thirtieth Dynasty (381–343 B.C.E.) was the last period of native Egyptian rule in antiquity. Artists of this period relied on New Kingdom models. The tomb of the official Zanofer incorporates a blind harpist and female offering bearers that would be at home in the Eighteenth Dynasty.

**DISPUTES.** This brief survey of Late Period art only scratches the surface of the complications that remain to be studied. Scholars still dispute many of the details, sometimes unable to agree on whether key works belong to the earlier or later periods. In spite of considerable progress in the last forty years, much work remains to be done to provide an understanding of this period.

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### NEFERTITI

Unknown–Unknown near the end of the reign of Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.)

#### *Queen*

**CHIEF QUEEN.** Nefertiti's parents are not known. Scholars assume she was born to a high-ranking family. She first appears in history already the wife of Akhenaten and with him worshipping the Aten. By the fourth year of Akhenaten's reign about 1348, Nefertiti was the subject of a series of extraordinary reliefs in the new temples that the king built in Karnak. Here Nefertiti behaves like a king, smiting Egypt's enemies with a mace. Nefertiti's face in representations of her worshipping with the king and their six daughters is indistinguishable from the king's face. Nefertiti also wore other kingly symbols in art depicting her. She wore the Uraeus snake over her forehead and also wore several different crowns. In one relief she wore the Nubian hairstyle usually worn by male soldiers. Artists also depicted Nefertiti receiving life with an ankh sign from the god Aten. The only other person who held this honor was the king. All of these royal representations provide the only evidence for understanding her role in history.

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### SENMENMUT

Unknown–1466 B.C.E.

#### *Chief Steward of the god Amun*

**HIGH RANKING COMMONER.** Senenmut was the son of Ramose and Hatnofer, who were commoners. Several of his earliest titles link him to the town of Armant, perhaps his birthplace. His career probably began in the reign of Thutmose II (1481–1479 B.C.E.) when he became the tutor of Princess Neferure, daughter of the king and his chief wife, Hatshepsut. When Thutmose II died, he was succeeded by his son Thutmose III,

a child. One year later Hatshepsut declared herself co-king. Senenmut's relationship with the princess must have helped him secure new positions with the new co-king. He held many positions, the most important being Chief Steward of the god Amun. In the course of his career, he was an important patron of the visual arts. His two tombs are unusual because artists decorated them with the *Book of the Dead*, an unusual practice for non-royal officials in the Eighteenth Dynasty. He also commissioned at least 25 statues, many of unusual types. His statues with Princess Neferure draw on the tradition of the Old Kingdom statue of Ankhnes-meryre II and Pepi II. A cube statue of Senenmut depicts the princess's head emerging from the top. Senenmut was also the first commoner to commission statues depicting him making offerings, formerly a royal pose. For example, one statue depicts him offering Hatshepsut's name in the form of a royal standard to the god Montu. In fact scholars' interpretations of Senenmut's role in history depend on his tomb depictions, his statues, and the inscriptions on them. Many scholars have speculated that his relationship with Hatshepsut might have been romantic since his works of art suggest he had privileges denied to most commoners. These theories remain unsupported speculation. Senenmut disappeared from history in Year Sixteen of Hatshepsut's reign. His end remains unknown other than his death date of 1466 B.C.E.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

*No written documentary sources survive from ancient Egypt to discuss the visual arts. Listed here are some major monuments of the visual arts from ancient Egypt that represent "firsts" or high aesthetic achievements. Since artists were anonymous, no listing is included for the artist.*

*Colossal Head of King, BMA 54.3 (c. 2625 B.C.E.)*—This head may be the oldest known over life-size head of a king, coming from what must have been one of the earliest colossal statues in Egyptian history.

*Female Figurine, BMA 07.447.505 (c. 3500–3300 B.C.E.)*—This figurine of a woman with a beak-like face is one of the earliest figures of a human.

*Kneeling Statue of Pepi I, BMA 39.121 (c. 2338–2298 B.C.E.)*—This early example of a statue of a kneeling king making an offering is a type that continued to be made for 3,000 years.

*Narmer Palette (c. 3100 B.C.E.)*—This is the first known Egyptian work of art to follow typical Egyptian style.

*Seated Statue of King Djoser (c. 2675–2625 B.C.E.)*—King Djoser commissioned the first known life-size statue of himself.

*Seated Statue of King Khasekhemwy (c. 2800–2675 B.C.E.)*—King Khasekhemwy commissioned the first known seated statue of a king, a type that continued to be made for over 3,000 years.

*Seated Statue of Pepi I (c. 2338–2298 B.C.E.)*—This is an early example of a statue that reads like a hieroglyph, taking the images and treating them as hieroglyphic signs.

*Statue of a Deity, BMA 58.192 (c. 2575–2625 B.C.E.)*—This statue of a deity is the first known standing statue of a god, showing the pose of striding forward with the left leg for the first time. This pose will be standard for 3,000 years.

*Statue of Ankhwa (c. 2575–2625 B.C.E.)*—The shipwright Ankhwa commissioned the first known seated statue of an official from ancient Egypt.

*Statue of Khafre (c. 2555–2532 B.C.E.)*—This statue first captures the most basic expression of the Egyptian attitude toward the king as the strong, athletic, and serene protector of the country.

*Statue of Menkaure and Khamererneby (c. 2532–2510 B.C.E.)*—This masterpiece of Old Kingdom art shows a royal pair statue.

*Statue of Rahotep and Nofret (c. 2585–2560 B.C.E.)*—This early pair statue showing a husband and wife retains all of its original paint, illustrating the colorful Egyptian ideal for statuary.

*Stele of King Djet (c. 3100–2800 B.C.E.)*—Djet's stele is an early example of combined perspective, showing both a top and side view of the same object combined into one image.



## GLOSSARY

**Abacus:** Square, flat upper part of a column that connects the capital of the column to the architrave.

**Afnet:** A cloth head covering.

**Akh:** The glorified spirit of a deceased person entitled to offerings from his family members.

**Amarna:** City on the east bank of the Nile midway between Thebes and Memphis built circa 1353–1336 B.C.E. Called Akhetaten, “Horizon of the Aten,” it was the capital of Egypt during the reign of Akhenaten.

**Amarna Period:** The reign of Akhenaten (1353–1336 B.C.E.) centered at the capital city of Amarna.

**Amun:** God of the air, “the hidden one.”

**Amun-Re:** Chief state god of the New Kingdom and later.

**Ankh:** Hieroglyphic sign that means “life.”

**Anubis:** God of the cemetery, represented by a jackal or a man with the head of a jackal.

**Architrave:** Horizontal structural member that connects the columns and door frames to one another. Also carries roof.

**Aten:** A deity represented by the disc of the sun; also the cult promoted by Akhenaten (1353–1336 B.C.E.).

**Atum:** The creator god who sat on the “first” hill and created the world. This hill is often represented in Egyptian buildings by a mound of sand or sand foundations.

**Ba:** Soul of the deceased that was the manifestation of the person that could travel between the afterlife and the mummy. It took the form of a bird.

**Barque:** A small ship propelled either with oars or sails.

**Batter:** A receding upward slope of the outer face of a structure.

**Battered walls:** Walls with a slope at the edges.

**Bench marks:** Surveyor’s levels marked on the ground.

**Cataracts:** The six rapids in the Nile River between Aswan and Khartoum.

**Cavetto cornice:** Concave Egyptian cornice.

**Chantress:** A woman responsible for the music used in the rituals at the major temples. She usually earned a salary independent of her husband or father.

**Clerestory:** An outside wall of a room or building that rises above an adjoining roof and contains windows.

**Coptic:** An Egyptian alphabetic script based on the Greek alphabet, with additional letters derived from Demotic signs.

**Corbelled blocks:** Stones arranged so that each projects beyond the front face of the stone below, reducing the span over a room.

**Cornice:** Molded projection on the top of a building façade, usually hollow in Egypt.

**Cramp:** Dovetail-shaped clamp that connects two stones.

**Cubits:** Egyptian unit of measurement equal to 21 inches.

**Dado:** Lower part of an interior wall.

**Deir el-Medina:** A New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) village in the hills of western Thebes occupied by workmen who decorated the royal tombs.

**Delta:** The mouth of the Nile River in Lower Egypt. In antiquity, it consisted of seven major branches and was the site of several important ports and cult centers.

**Demotic:** An Egyptian script developed around 650 B.C.E. that was more cursive than hieratic.

**Desheret:** The Red Land; desert.

**Divine Adoratrice of Amun:** *See God's Wife of Amun.*

**Divine Booth:** A shrine where a statue of a god was kept.

**Dynasty:** A powerful group or family that ruled Egypt for a period of time. Egyptian history is divided into thirty dynasties.

**Electrum:** A mixture of silver and gold.

**Ennead:** A grouping of nine gods.

**Faiyum:** A depression or low area in north-central Egypt.

**False door:** A stone or wood door that does not open. False doors were offering places. A statue of the deceased was usually placed behind the false door but would have been inaccessible.

**First Intermediate Period:** The era of Egyptian history from 2130 to 1980 B.C.E. when the central government had collapsed and local governors ruled the various provinces.

**God's Wife of Amun:** Chief priestess from the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) to the Late Period (664–332 B.C.E.); later called the Divine Adoratrice of Amun.

**Graffito:** (plural: *graffiti*) Writing on a wall.

**Graywacke:** A hard gray sandstone, composed of quartz and feldspar, that Egyptian sculptors used. In Egyptian, *bekhen-stone*.

**Hathor:** Goddess of love and music, usually represented as a cow or a cow-headed woman.

**Heb-sed:** Jubilee Festival that a king celebrates after he ruled thirty years. The festival renews the king's powers.

**Hieratic:** A cursive script closely based on hieroglyphic writing.

**Hieroglyph:** A pictorial script used by ancient Egyptians from approximately 3100 B.C.E. until 395 B.C.E.

**Hittites:** A people living in Anatolia. Between 1400 and 1200 B.C.E. they contested with Egypt for control of Syria.

**Horus:** God of the sky in the form of a falcon, son of Osiris and Isis, nephew of Seth.

**Hyksos:** "Rulers of the Foreign Lands," probably Amorites, Semitic-speaking people who ruled Lower Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period (1630–1539 B.C.E.).

**Inclination:** *See Batter.*

**Isfet:** Evil, disorder, injustice or wrongdoing. The opposite of Maat.

**Isis:** The goddess associated with the king's throne and great magician, wife of Osiris and mother of Horus. She raised Horus after Osiris' death until he could claim the throne as legitimate king.

**Ka:** Life force, part of the soul.

**Karnak:** City on the east bank of the Nile River in Upper (southern) Egypt. The northern section of ancient Thebes. The site of the Great Temple of the god Amun.

**Kemet:** "The Black Land," cultivated land along the Nile River.

**Khat:** A kind of cloth head covering.

**Kinnarum:** A type of lyre popular in the Near East and Egypt.

**Late Period:** An era of Egyptian history from 664–332 B.C.E. when Egypt was dominated by foreigners including Libyans, Kushites, Assyrians, and Persians.

**Leveling Lines:** Surveyor's levels marked on a wall.

**Lintel:** Horizontal member of a door frame, connecting two jambs.

**Lower Egypt:** Northern Egypt, which is lower in altitude than southern Egypt. It is also called the Delta.

**Luxor:** City on the east bank of the Nile in Upper (southern) Egypt. Site of a temple constructed by Amenhotep III and Ramesses II.

**Maat:** The concept of right conduct and right order approved by the gods. The opposite of Isfet.

**Mastaba:** Bench-shaped tomb that was commonly constructed for the elite. The first pyramid was six mastabas piled on top of each other.

- Memphis:** City in Lower (northern) Egypt, traditional political capital of Egypt since the beginning of the First Dynasty (3000–2800 B.C.E.). In the city there is the Temple of Ptah. The pyramids of Giza and Saqqara are nearby.
- Middle Kingdom:** The period of Egyptian history from 2080 to 1630 B.C.E. characterized by a strong central government at Memphis.
- Migdol:** A small square tower used in fortified positions.
- Naos:** An inner room in a temple where the statue of the god was located.
- Nemes:** A royal kerchief worn only by the king.
- Netjer:** “God”; a term used to refer to a deceased king becoming Osiris, the divine king of the dead.
- Netjer Nefer:** “Good God” or “Perfect Youthful God”; a term used to describe the king as the god Amun’s junior partner.
- New Kingdom:** The period of Egyptian history from 1539–1075 B.C.E. characterized by territorial expansion as far as Mesopotamia and Nubia.
- Nile River:** The longest river in the world (4,160 miles long) flowing northward from Uganda, to Sudan and Egypt.
- Nomarch:** A local governor of a nome.
- Nome:** Administrative province.
- Nubia:** Sudan and the southern portion of Egypt.
- Obelisk:** Single block of tapering stone that ends in a point and represents a form of the sun god.
- Ogdoad:** A grouping of eight gods in four pairs.
- Old Kingdom:** The period of Egyptian history from 2675 to 2130 B.C.E. characterized by strong central government and building of massive pyramids.
- Opet Festival:** An annual event at Thebes to celebrate a king’s reign.
- Osiris:** King of the afterlife, father of Horus, husband of Isis, brother of Seth.
- Ostrakon:** (plural: *ostraca*) A broken piece of pottery or limestone chip with writing or drawing on it.
- Palace façade:** A paneled motif used on the front of the earliest mud brick palace but used on tombs and sarcophagi to create royal associations for the deceased.
- Papyrus:** A material used by the Egyptians as a writing surface made from the pressed pith of the papyrus plant.
- Pharaoh:** “The Great House”; the term used to describe the ruler of ancient Egypt from the reign of Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.) in the Eighteenth Dynasty and onward.
- Phyle:** A group of workers who serve the temple or state on a rotating basis, alternating with other phyles. Five existed in the Old Kingdom (Great Phyle, Eastern Phyle, Green Phyle, Little Phyle, and Perfection Phyle). A phyle’s name probably referred to its protective deity. The phyles served in rotation, each working for part of the year. By the New Kingdom the system had been reorganized.
- Plumb bob:** A string with a weight at one end used to determine that a wall is level vertically.
- Portcullis:** Large stone used to block an entryway to a tomb.
- Predynastic Period:** Egyptian history before Dynasty 0.
- Pronaos:** Antechamber to the inner room (naos) of a temple.
- Ptah:** Creator god and maker of all things; a patron of craftsmen and sculptors.
- Ptolemaic Period:** The era of Egyptian history from 332 to 30 B.C.E. when the descendants of the Macedonian general Ptolemy ruled Egypt.
- Punt:** Present-day Ethiopia, Somalia, or Djibouti.
- Putlog:** A beam used to support a rope used to lower heavy loads inside a shaft.
- Putlog hole:** The hole in a wall used to support a putlog.
- Pylon:** Tower in the shape of a cut-off pyramid, used as the entrance to a temple or tomb.
- Ramesside Period:** An era during the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.E.) when eleven kings named Ramesses ruled Egypt (1292–1075 B.C.E.).
- Re:** Sun god, major royal deity beginning in the Fifth Dynasty.
- Roman Period:** Period of Roman rule of Egypt beginning in 30 B.C.E. and ending in 395 C.E.
- Sarcophagus:** (plural: *sarcophagi*) A stone coffin.
- Sed-Festival:** Jubilee festival celebrated by king after the first thirty years of a reign and at fixed periods afterwards.

**Set Square:** A-shaped device for finding ninety-degree angles.

**Skid poles:** A track made of parallel beams used to transport heavy materials.

**Sledge:** A sled used on sand for transporting heavy loads.

**Stela:** (plural: *stelae*) Upright piece of stone with inscription.

**Torus molding:** Semi-circular or three-quarter circular molding along the edge of a building.

**Votive object:** Object used as a gift to the gods or to a deceased person.



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## MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES

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### GENERAL

The British Museum: Ancient Egypt (<http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/>)—The British Museum's website on ancient Egypt. The site includes a section on writing that shows examples of hieroglyphs and information about where and when writing was used. The Shabaka Stone, on which is preserved what may have been the earliest Egyptian drama, is also featured on the site, but the term Shabako must be used in the search instead of Shabaka.

Brooklyn Museum of Art ([http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/visit/permanent\\_collections/ancient-egypt/](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/visit/permanent_collections/ancient-egypt/))—This site examines the reconstruction of an Old Kingdom mastaba as well as other aspects of Egyptian art and language such as using statues in Brooklyn to explore statue types and a tomb relief to explore Egyptian depictions of the human form and information on reading a stele.

The Coptic Museum (<http://www.sis.gov.eg/egyptinf/culture/html/copt001.htm>)—The website of the Coptic Museum in Cairo includes many illustrations of clothing.

Egypt: A New Look at an Ancient Culture (<http://www.upenn.edu/museum/Exhibits/egyptintro.html>)—This site, based on the Egyptian collection of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia, includes online exhibits of many aspects of Egyptian culture, including daily life, writing, funerary practices, and gods and goddesses. The site also has a section on several of the University of Pennsylvania's Egyptian excavations.

Egyptian Museum (<http://www.egyptianmuseum.gov.eg/>)—The Egyptian Museum in Cairo's website includes a virtual tour of the museum, which houses thousands of artifacts from various tomb sites and includes jewelry, art, and sculpture, among other things. The museum is also home to nearly 2,000 objects from Tutankhamun's tomb, and there is a link that allows the site visitor to view samples from the Tutankhamun exhibit.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art ([http://www.metmuseum.org/works\\_of\\_art/department.asp?dep=10](http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/department.asp?dep=10))—The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Introduction to Egypt site includes 50 artifacts featured from the museum's collection in approximate chronological order. There are links to exhibits and special web resources for learning about Egyptian art and culture.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Explore Ancient Egypt (<http://www.mfa.org/egypt/>)—The *Explore Ancient Egypt* website of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, includes many illustrations of clothing, a section on hieroglyphs and information on excavating Egyptian art, scenes of daily life, and Egyptian artistic style.

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### ARCHITECTURE

*David Macaulay's World of Ancient Engineering: Pyramid*, PBS, 2000—Excellent animated graphics demonstrate methods used while building the pyramids.

The Giza Plateau Mapping Project (<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/PROJ/GIZ/Giza.html>)—This website from the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago contains

the most recent research on the pyramids at Giza, the Sphinx, and the ancient towns near the pyramids.

NOVA Online, *Mysteries of the Nile* (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/egypt/textindex.html>)—This website explores major architectural sites of the Old Kingdom and New Kingdom including Giza, Karnak, and Luxor.

Theban Mapping Project (<http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/>)—The project's website records major monuments of the west bank of the Nile at Thebes, including tombs and temples. It also includes an atlas of the Valley of the Kings.

*This Old Pyramid*, WGBH Boston, 1992—Archaeologist Mark Lehner builds a pyramid using ancient techniques.

Virtual Kahun (<http://kahun.man.ac.uk>)—This site contains a virtual reconstruction of the Middle Kingdom town of Kahun based on the collections of The Manchester Museum and The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology.

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## DANCE AND MUSIC

Washington State University ([http://salc.wsu.edu/fair\\_f01/FS20/mdpage.htm](http://salc.wsu.edu/fair_f01/FS20/mdpage.htm))—A brief but accurate description of dance and music in ancient Egypt with photographs of instruments and dancers.

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## VISUAL ARTS

Ashmolean Museum, *A. C. Mace's Account of the Opening of Tutankhamun's Burial Chamber* (<http://www.ashmol.ox.ac.uk/gri/4maceope.html>)—A. C. Mace was present at the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb. This site posts his diary from the period when he observed the opening of the tomb in 1922. The diary describes in detail the artifacts and artwork found within the tomb. Tutankhamun's tomb was the major discovery in Egypt of the twentieth century. It remains one of two intact royal tombs ever discovered in Egypt and the only one from the New Kingdom.



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ARTS & HUMANITIES  
*Through the Eras*

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*Through the Eras*

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Ancient Greece  
and Rome  
1200 B.C.E.—476 C.E.

*James Allan Evans, Editor*

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## Arts and Humanities Through The Eras: Ancient Greece and Rome (1200 B.C.E.–476 C.E.)

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# CONTENTS

ABOUT THE BOOK . . . . .	ix	OVERVIEW . . . . .	46
CONTRIBUTORS . . . . .	xi	TOPICS IN DANCE	
ERA OVERVIEW . . . . .	xiii	Dance in Prehistoric Greece . . . . .	48
CHRONOLOGY OF		War Dances . . . . .	52
WORLD EVENTS . . . . .	xv	Women's Choruses . . . . .	57
CHAPTER 1: ARCHITECTURE		The Dithyramb . . . . .	57
AND DESIGN		Folk Dances . . . . .	60
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	Dance in the Theater . . . . .	63
OVERVIEW . . . . .	4	Dionysian Dance . . . . .	66
TOPICS IN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN		Professional Dancers . . . . .	69
Surviving Sources . . . . .	5	Dance in Rome . . . . .	70
Minoan and Mycenaean Architecture . . . . .	8	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Greek Architecture . . . . .	12	Arion . . . . .	75
Etruscan Architecture . . . . .	24	Bathyllus and Pylades . . . . .	76
Roman Architecture . . . . .	25	Memphius . . . . .	76
The Late Antique . . . . .	38	Theodora . . . . .	77
Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture . . . . .	39	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	78
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		CHAPTER 3: FASHION	
Hadrian . . . . .	40	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	80
Pausanias . . . . .	40	OVERVIEW . . . . .	82
Plutarch . . . . .	41	TOPICS IN FASHION	
Suetonius . . . . .	41	Fashion in the Minoan Period . . . . .	84
Vitruvius . . . . .	41	Garments in Classical Greece . . . . .	86
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	42	The Toga . . . . .	92
CHAPTER 2: DANCE		The Textiles of the Greek and Roman	
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	44	World . . . . .	98
		Dressing to Impress in Greece and Rome . . . . .	102
		The Dress of Roman Women . . . . .	106
		The Apparel of the Soldier . . . . .	109

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Alcibiades . . . . . 113  
 Constantius II . . . . . 114  
 Diogenes . . . . . 115

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 115

CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE

IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . . 118

OVERVIEW. . . . . 120

TOPICS IN LITERATURE

The Age of Homeric Epic . . . . . 122  
 The Boeotian School of Epic . . . . . 126  
 The Age of Lyric Poetry . . . . . 128  
 Poets for Hire . . . . . 131  
 Herodotus, the Father of History . . . . . 133  
 Thucydides . . . . . 136  
 History after Thucydides . . . . . 137  
 Greek Comedy . . . . . 138  
 Greek Tragedy . . . . . 144  
 The Art of Public Speaking in Greece . . . . . 154  
 Greek Literature after Alexander the  
     Great . . . . . 155  
 Roman Theater . . . . . 157  
 Latin Poetry Before the Augustan Age . . . . . 160  
 Latin Prose Writers Before the Augustan  
     Age . . . . . 162  
 The Golden Age of Latin Literature  
     Under Augustus. . . . . 164  
 Latin Literature of the Silver Age . . . . . 169  
 Greek Literature of the Imperial Age . . . . . 172

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Aeschylus . . . . . 175  
 Cato . . . . . 175  
 Thucydides . . . . . 176  
 Vergil . . . . . 177

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 178

CHAPTER 5: MUSIC

IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . . 182

OVERVIEW. . . . . 187

TOPICS IN MUSIC

Musical Instruments . . . . . 189  
 Music in Greek Life . . . . . 198  
 Music Education . . . . . 210  
 Music in Roman Life . . . . . 212  
 Women in Ancient Music . . . . . 216  
 Music Theory. . . . . 219

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Aristoxenus . . . . . 228

Pindar . . . . . 229  
 Claudius Ptolemy . . . . . 230  
 Pythagoras . . . . . 230  
 Sappho . . . . . 231

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 231

CHAPTER 6: PHILOSOPHY

IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . . 234

OVERVIEW. . . . . 237

TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY

Beginnings of Greek Philosophy . . . . . 240  
 Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans . . . . . 240  
 Xenophanes, Heraclitus, and Parmenides . . . . . 242  
 Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and the Atomists . . . . . 245  
 The Atomic Theory . . . . . 247  
 The Sophists . . . . . 248  
 Socrates . . . . . 250  
 Plato . . . . . 254  
 Aristotle. . . . . 260  
 The Stoics . . . . . 264  
 Other Philosophies in the Hellenistic  
     World . . . . . 266  
 Epicurus . . . . . 269  
 Neoplatonism. . . . . 272

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Aristotle. . . . . 273  
 Epictetus . . . . . 275  
 Epicurus . . . . . 275  
 Plato . . . . . 276  
 Plotinus. . . . . 277  
 Thales . . . . . 278  
 Zeno of Citium . . . . . 279

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 280

CHAPTER 7: RELIGION

IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . . 282

OVERVIEW. . . . . 285

TOPICS IN RELIGION

The Religion of Minoan Crete during  
     the Bronze Age . . . . . 287  
 The Early Greeks on Mainland Greece . . . . . 291  
 The Dark Ages . . . . . 292  
 The Gods of Olympus . . . . . 294  
 Other Gods Beyond the Twelve . . . . . 307  
 The Underworld and its Inhabitants . . . . . 309  
 Heroes and Demigods . . . . . 312  
 Heracles, the Super-Hero . . . . . 314  
 Discovering the Will of the Gods:  
     Oracles and Divination. . . . . 316

Worshipping the Gods: Sacrifices and Temples . . . . .	320	Sophocles. . . . .	382
The Religion of Early Rome. . . . .	323	Terence . . . . .	382
The Religion of the Roman Republic . . . . .	325	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	383
The Worship of the Roman Gods. . . . .	328	CHAPTER 9: VISUAL ARTS	
Immigrant Religions: the Arrival of New Cults from the East . . . . .	331	IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . .	386
The Rise of Christianity . . . . .	335	OVERVIEW. . . . .	390
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		TOPICS IN VISUAL ARTS	
Constantine . . . . .	338	Pottery in the Bronze Age . . . . .	392
Homer . . . . .	339	The Early Pottery of Greece. . . . .	394
Numa Pompilius . . . . .	340	The Dominance of Athens. . . . .	397
St. Paul . . . . .	340	Hellenistic and Roman Pottery. . . . .	402
Socrates . . . . .	342	Sculpture in Archaic Greece. . . . .	404
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	342	Sculpture of the Classical Period. . . . .	410
CHAPTER 8: THEATER		The Hellenistic Period. . . . .	420
IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . .	346	Roman Sculpture . . . . .	425
OVERVIEW. . . . .	349	Greek Painting . . . . .	429
TOPICS IN THEATER		Roman Painting . . . . .	435
Origins of Greek Theater. . . . .	351	Portraits. . . . .	439
Festivals and Theaters . . . . .	352	Mosaics . . . . .	444
Types of Greek Drama . . . . .	357	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
The Beginning of Roman Theater. . . . .	366	Apelles. . . . .	449
Roman Theaters, Playwrights, and Actors . . . . .	367	Exekias . . . . .	450
Other Types of Roman Theater . . . . .	372	Lysippus . . . . .	451
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		Phidias . . . . .	452
Aristophanes. . . . .	375	Polygnotus. . . . .	453
Euripides . . . . .	376	Praxiteles . . . . .	454
Livius Andronicus. . . . .	377	Zeuxis . . . . .	455
Lycoris . . . . .	377	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	455
Menander . . . . .	378	GLOSSARY . . . . .	457
Gnaeus Naevius . . . . .	379	FURTHER REFERENCES. . . . .	475
Nero . . . . .	379	MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES . . . . .	483
Titus Maccius Plautus . . . . .	380	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	487
Quintus Roscius Gallus . . . . .	381	INDEX . . . . .	489
Seneca the Younger. . . . .	381		



## ABOUT THE BOOK

**SEEING HISTORY FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE.** An education in history involves more than facts concerning the rise and fall of kings, the conquest of lands, and the major battles fought between nations. While these events are pivotal to the study of any time period, the cultural aspects are of equal value in understanding the development of societies. Various forms of literature, the philosophical ideas developed, and even the type of clothes worn in a particular era provide important clues about the values of a society, and when these arts and humanities are studied in conjunction with political and historical events a more complete picture of that society is revealed. This inter-disciplinary approach to studying history is at the heart of the *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* project. Patterned in its organization after the successful *American Decades*, *American Eras*, and *World Eras* products, this reference work aims to expose the reader to an in-depth perspective on a particular era in history through the study of nine different arts and humanities topics:

- Architecture and Design
- Dance
- Fashion
- Literature
- Music
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Theater
- Visual Arts

Although treated in separate chapters, the connections between these topics are highlighted both in the text and through the use of “See Also” references to give the reader a broad perspective on the culture of the time period. Readers can learn about the impact of religion on literature; explore the close relationships between dance, music, and theater; and see parallel movements in architecture and visual arts. The development of each of these fields is discussed within the context of important historical events so that the reader can see history from a different angle. This angle is unique to this reference work. Most history books about a particular time period only give a passing glance to the arts and humanities in an effort to give the broadest historical treatment possible. Those reference books that do cover the arts and humanities tend to cover only one of them, generally across multiple time periods, making it difficult to draw connections between disciplines and limiting the perspective of the discipline’s impact on a specific era. In *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* each of the nine disciplines is given substantial treatment in individual chapters, and the focus on one era ensures that the analysis will be thorough.

**AUDIENCE AND ORGANIZATION.** *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* is designed to meet the needs of both the beginning and the advanced history student. The material is written by subject experts and covers a vast array of concepts and masterworks, yet these concepts are built “from the ground up” so that a reader with little or no background in history can follow them. Technical terms and other definitions appear both in the



text and in the glossary, and the background of historical events is also provided. The organization of the volume facilitates learning at all levels by presenting information in a variety of ways. Each chapter is organized according to the following structure:

- Chronology covering the important events in that discipline during that era
- Brief overview of the development of that discipline at the time
- Topics that highlight the movements, schools of thought, and masterworks that characterize the discipline during that era
- Biographies of significant people in that discipline
- Documentary sources contemporary to the time period

This structure facilitates comparative analysis, both between disciplines and also between volumes of *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*, each of which covers a different era. In addition, readers can access additional research opportunities by looking at the “Further References” and “Media and Online Sources” that appear at the back of the volume. While every effort was made to include only those online sources that are connected to institutions such as museums and universities, the web-

sites are subject to change and may become obsolete in the future.

**PRIMARY DOCUMENTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.** In an effort to provide the most in-depth perspective possible, *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* also includes numerous primary documents from the time period, offering a first-hand account of the culture from the people who lived in it. Letters, poems, essays, epitaphs, and songs are just some of the multitude of document types included in this volume, all of which illuminate some aspect of the discipline being discussed. The text is further enhanced by 150 illustrations, maps, and line drawings that bring a visual dimension to the learning experience.

**CONTACT INFORMATION.** The editors welcome your comments and suggestions for enhancing and improving *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*. Please mail comments or suggestions to:

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## ERA OVERVIEW

**THE BEGINNINGS.** The history of Greece and Rome spans more than 2,000 years, from the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations of prehistory to the beginnings of the Byzantine Empire which carried on the language and culture of Greece, though now within an environment permeated by Christianity. The history falls into periods that are more or less well-defined. There was the Bronze Age: the era of the Minoan civilization on the island of Crete and the Mycenaean civilization on the mainland. Then, for reasons modern historians do not understand, there followed an age of upheaval and invasion affecting the whole eastern Mediterranean. Raiders who came to loot and burn reached even Egypt, where Egyptian sources recorded their attacks and called them “Peoples of the Sea.” In Greece, the years following 1200 B.C.E. are marked by destruction and migrations. Refugees from Greece made their way to the western coast of Asia Minor and the offshore islands where they founded settlements which grew into flourishing cities.

**COLLAPSE AND RECOVERY.** What followed the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization was a period known as the “Dark Ages,” for little is known about it except what the archaeological remains reveal. Yet it was a period when the characteristic political structure of Greece developed: the *polis*, or city-state, an urban center with a defensible citadel called an acropolis—the name means merely “the city on the hill”—which was surrounded by the territory of the city-state. A large *polis* such as Athens grew by amalgamating a number of small states until all of the region known as Attica became the territory of Athens. Another development was the invention of the

Greek alphabet which used letters borrowed from Phoenicia, and still another was the beginnings of literature, as story-tellers and oral bards spun tales about the gods, and about the men and women who lived in the Mycenaean period, which now belonged to the misty past.

**THE ARCHAIC PERIOD.** The “Dark Ages” slipped easily into the archaic period which ended in turn as the sixth century B.C.E. gave way to the fifth. Poets now wrote down their poetry and thinkers began to speculate about the nature of the universe. The twelve Ionian cities that had been founded on the west coast of Asia Minor and the Dodecanese Islands became brilliant centers of Greek culture. In one of them, Miletus, Greek philosophy was born with thinkers such as Thales, Anaximandros, and Anaximenes, and in another, Ephesos, the temple to Artemis, built in the Ionic style, was the largest temple in the Greek world. Towards the end of the period, the Greek cities of the eastern Aegean region fell under the rule, first of the Lydian Empire centered at Sardis, and second of the Persians, who overthrew the last Lydian king, Croesus, in 546 B.C.E. Persian power was advancing, and the historical event that marked the close of the archaic age and ushered in the classical period was the invasion of Greece by the Persian Empire in 490–479 B.C.E. and its defeat.

**THE CLASSICAL PERIOD.** The coalition of Greeks that turned back the Persian offensive was led by Sparta, but it was the Athenian fleet that made victory possible, and Athens entered the classical period with new confidence. Athens’ government was democratic, and its culture aroused the admiration even of its enemies. And

Athens did have many enemies, for it dominated the Aegean Sea with its fleet and, guided by the policies of an imperialist statesman named Pericles, transformed an alliance created for defense against renewed Persian aggression into an empire that paid it tribute. The tribute financed a building program that made Athens the most beautiful city in Greece. The last two decades of the fifth century B.C.E. were consumed by a war between imperial Athens and an alliance led by Sparta, and Athens lost. The brief golden age was over, although the classical period continued until Alexander the Great changed the face of the Greek world with a series of military campaigns that radically expanded Greece's territory.

**THE HELLENISTIC AGE.** Alexander's conquests ushered in the Hellenistic world. Alexander's generals carved out kingdoms for themselves and welcomed Greek immigrants. Royal capitals such as Antioch, Pergamum, and Alexandria rivaled Athens as centers of culture. In Alexandria, the kings of Egypt built a great library and made it a think-tank for Greek intellectuals. But in the west, Rome was expanding. Its chief rival, Carthage, had been humbled by the end of the third century B.C.E. and in the following years, the Romans moved into the eastern Mediterranean. The last Hellenistic kingdom to fall to Rome was Egypt, and in 30 B.C.E. Cleopatra, the last monarch descended from one of Alexander's generals, committed suicide.

**THE ROMAN REPUBLIC.** Rome's history falls into two eras: the republican period, when it grew from a

small city near the mouth of the Tiber River to dominate the Mediterranean, and the imperial period, when emperors ruled a vast region stretching from Britain in the west to Syria and Iraq in the east. The Roman republic was founded traditionally in 509 B.C.E. when a dynasty of Etruscan kings was expelled, and their place taken by elected magistrates called consuls. The republic expanded, first dominating Latium, the Latin-speaking area around Rome, and then extending its rule into Italy and beyond Italy into the lands bordering the Mediterranean. As Rome extended its rule, it extended its citizenship until finally in 212 C.E., long after republican government had given way to emperors, everyone in the Roman Empire became citizens of Rome.

**THE ROMAN IMPERIAL PERIOD.** As the empire expanded, the incompetence of the narrow ruling class that dominated republican government brought about its downfall, and in 30 B.C.E., Octavian, the adoptive son of Julius Caesar, made himself master of Rome and set about establishing a new government structure. It preserved the trappings of the republic, but put power firmly in the hands of the *imperator*, or commander-in-chief. Octavian took the title "Augustus" which would be conferred on his successors too, and the empire enjoyed more than two centuries of prosperity before the tide changed against it. Yet the last emperor in the west abdicated only in 476 C.E., and in the east, an emperor continued to rule in Constantinople until the Turks captured the city in 1453.



# CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD EVENTS

*By James Allan Evans, Michael S. Allen, and Patricia D. Rankine*

- c. 2000 B.C.E. Greek-speaking people migrate into Greece.
- c. 1900 B.C.E. During the Proto-Palatial period of –c. 1700 B.C.E. Minoan Civilization on Crete, great palaces are built at a number of sites, principally Knossos, Mallia, and Phaistos.
- c. 1700 B.C.E. This is the Neo-Palatial period on Crete –c. 1450 B.C.E. when Minoan civilization reaches its height, and it ends with another destruction of the palaces.
- c. 1600 B.C.E. A new dynasty at Mycenae on mainland Greece begins to bury their dead in shaft graves with rich offerings, and Mycenae gives its name to the civilization which now develops on mainland Greece.
- c. 1450 B.C.E. The palace at Knossos on Crete is re-inhabited by Greek-speaking people.
- c. 1450 B.C.E. The Mycenaean civilization is at its –c. 1200 B.C.E. height; its trading ships ply the eastern Mediterranean and reach Sicily and Italy.
- c. 1250 B.C.E. The Mycenaean Greeks attack Troy and destroy it.
- c. 1200 B.C.E. The Mycenaean palaces fall victim to –c. 1150 B.C.E. raids by the “Peoples of the Sea.”
- c. 1150 B.C.E. New migrants appear in Greece. –c. 1000 B.C.E.
- Greece emerges from this period with Dorians in control of the eastern Peloponnesos, Crete, and the southwest portion of Asia Minor, including Rhodes; the Ionians in control of Attica, the island of Euboea and the western central coastline of Asia Minor including the offshore island; and the Aeolians in control of Lesbos and a portion of the northern Asia Minor coastline.
- 950 B.C.E. Vases are decorated with geometric patterns with circles, straight lines, meanders, and we find abstract representation in sculpture. This is known as the Geometric Period. –700 B.C.E.
- c. 900 B.C.E. Sparta is founded when four villages of Dorian Greeks in the Eurotas valley, Limnai, Mesoa, Kynosura, and Pitane unite to form a single settlement. The original inhabitants of the region are made helots, that is, serfs.
- 814 B.C.E. The Phoenician city of Tyre founds Carthage in modern Tunisia.
- c. 800 B.C.E. The Indian Aryans continue their expansion on the Asian subcontinent, –c. 550 B.C.E. settling westward along the Gangetic

- plain. During this period the first of the *Upanishads*, the chief mystical and philosophical scriptures of Hinduism, are composed.
- 798 B.C.E. The kingdom of Israel, led by Joash, wars with the Aramaean armies of Ben Hadad II, recovering territories formerly lost to Hazael of Damascus; Judah, including its capital at Jerusalem, subsequently falls to Joash as well, losing its independence.
- 782 B.C.E.
- 776 B.C.E. The Olympic Games are founded, and we have a record of the victors from this date up to 217 C.E.
- 770 B.C.E. The Chou relocate their capital to Loyang, marking the beginning of the Eastern Chou Dynasty.
- 753 B.C.E. According to traditional sources, the city of Rome is founded by Romulus, the son of a princess of Alba Longa and the god Mars.
- c. 750 B.C.E. The Greeks expand throughout the Mediterranean in this period, founding colonies in Sicily, southern Italy, southern France, eastern Spain, Libya, the north Aegean, and the Black Sea region.
- 550 B.C.E.
- 743 B.C.E. Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria launches his first major campaign against neighboring states to the west, besieging the Urartean allies at Arpad.
- c. 740 B.C.E. Sparta under king Theopompus conquers Messenia, almost doubling her size and reducing the Messenians to helots.
- c. 720 B.C.E.
- 731 B.C.E. Revolution breaks out in Babylon; Tiglath-pileser III returns from his western campaign in order to put it down.
- 722 B.C.E. Samaria falls to Assyria; Shalmaneser V is succeeded by his son, Sargon II, at whose orders thousands of Israelites are taken as captives into Mesopotamia.
- c. 720 B.C.E. In China the Hung Kou (Great Ditch) is constructed, connecting a tributary of the Huai to the Yellow River.
- 709 B.C.E. Sargon II of Assyria sends Merodach-baladan into exile, declaring himself king in his place.
- c. 700 B.C.E. After a lengthy and indecisive siege of Jerusalem, Hezekiah agrees to pay tribute to Sennacherib; Sidon and Tyre likewise submit to vassalage under Assyria.
- Celtic peoples begin to settle in Spain.
- c. 681 B.C.E. Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son and heir, puts down a rebellion instigated by one of his brothers, who had murdered their father. Esarhaddon becomes king of Assyria.
- 668 B.C.E. Assurbanipal succeeds Esarhaddon as king of Assyria; a patron of Assyrian and Babylonian culture, he compiles a vast library of tablets chronicling literature, history, science, and religion.
- 663 B.C.E. Assyria captures Thebes, defeating Tanu-atamun and putting an end to Ethiopian power in Egypt. Psammetichus I becomes Pharaoh of the new dynasty; looking back to Old Kingdom Egypt for his model, he initiates what is known as the Saite Revival, a renaissance in religion, art, and literature.
- c. 660 B.C.E. The Messenians attempt to throw off their Spartan overlords with help from neighboring Achaea, Elis, and Argos. Sparta represses the revolt only with difficulty and thereafter develops into a militaristic state in order to maintain her domination of her helots.
- c. 640 B.C.E.
- 657 B.C.E. Cypselus makes himself “tyrant” (dictator) of Corinth, driving out the aristocratic clan of the Bacchiads that had controlled the government of Corinth. The tyranny of Cypselus and his descendants lasts until 580 B.C.E.
- 642 B.C.E. According to tradition, Ancus Martius becomes king of Rome; during his reign he constructs a bridge over the Tiber River.
- c. 624 B.C.E. Draco draws up the first written law code of Athens.

- c. 616 B.C.E. Tarquinius Priscus, the first in a line of Etruscan rulers, becomes king in Rome; the Cloaca Maxima (a canal through Rome), the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, and the Circus Maximus (an arena for chariot racing) are all built under his reign.
- 611 B.C.E. Nabopolassar leads his armies against Harran, where Assurballit II had been trying to muster his Assyrian forces; however, with his Median allies absent, Nabopolassar is unable to capture the Assyrian fortress.
- 609 B.C.E. The remaining Assyrian armies, allied with Egypt, attempt to recapture Harran, but without success. Neko II succeeds Psammetichus I in Egypt and leads his armies north to aid Assyria.
- 608 B.C.E. On his march north, Neko II meets Josiah of Judah at Megiddo. Josiah is killed and Judah conquered, but the Egyptian army is prevented from reaching their Assyrian allies in time to save them from defeat.
- 597 B.C.E. The Babylonian armies besiege Jerusalem. When it falls, after nearly three months, thousands of Israelites are taken captive to Babylon.
- 594 B.C.E. Solon is appointed sole archon to make necessary economic and constitutional reforms, and lays the foundations for the later Athenian democracy.
- 586 B.C.E. Jerusalem falls to Nebuchadnezzar, who razes the city and takes away captive to Babylon a second wave of Jews. This defeat marks the end of Judah as a nation.
- 578 B.C.E. Rome, under the reign of Servius Tullius, enters the Latin League.
- 560 B.C.E. Pisistratus makes his first of three attempts to make himself tyrant of Athens.
- 559 B.C.E. Cyrus the Great ascends to power in Anshan, in what will later be known as Persia.
- c. 551 B.C.E. Confucius is born.
- c. 550 B.C.E. Celtic tribes begin to settle throughout Ireland, Scotland, and England.
- Lao-tzu, traditionally the author of the *Tao Te Ching* and founder of Taoism, flourishes in China.
- 547 B.C.E. Cyrus II of the Achaemenid royal house of the Persians, who were vassals of the Medes, overthrows the king of the Medes, Astyaages, and unites the Medes and Persians under his rule.
- 547 B.C.E. Cyrus, king of Persia, overthrows Croesus, king of Lydia, and absorbs the Greek cities on the coastline of Asia Minor into his empire.
- 546 B.C.E. Pisistratus finally succeeds in making himself tyrant of Athens and when he dies in 527 B.C.E. his son Hippias takes over as tyrant.
- 539 B.C.E. Cyrus the Great takes the city of Babylon, and the Jews in exile are released from their captivity.
- 534 B.C.E. Pisistratus establishes the great festival of the City Dionysia in Athens. Thespis from the deme—that is, the village—of Icaria wins first prize in the tragedy contest.
- 533 B.C.E. Cyrus the Great enters India, exacting tribute from cities in the Indus River Valley. He establishes, according to Herodotus, what will become the twentieth of the Persian satrapies, or provinces, in Gandhara.
- 520 B.C.E. The Jewish Temple at Jerusalem is rebuilt at the insistence of the prophet Haggai.
- 510 B.C.E. A new temple of Apollo is completed at Delphi, with a help of a generous donation from the Athenian family of the Alcmaeonidae, who thus gain the favor of Delphi.
- Roman tradition dates the exile of Tarquinius *Superbus* (“Tarquin the Proud”), the last king of Rome, to this year. Two elected consuls replace the king as the chief magistrates of the Roman state.



- Sparta, at the urging of the Delphic oracle, forces the tyrant Hippias out of Athens.
- 509 B.C.E. The Roman republic is founded, according to traditional histories; Lucius Junius Brutus and Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus (Lucretia's husband) are made consuls. The Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus is constructed on the Capitoline Hill.
- 509 B.C.E. Under the leadership of Cleisthenes, who belongs to the family of the Alcmaeonidae, Athens establishes a form of democratic government based on equality before the law.
- 507 B.C.E.
- 508 B.C.E. A contest in dithyrambic song and dance is established at the City Dionysia in Athens as distinct from tragedy, which had now developed into a dramatic presentation.
- c. 500 B.C.E. The Bantu peoples of Africa begin their migrations.
- Iron is introduced in China.
- The Nok culture of West Africa begins to flourish.
- A revolt against Persian rule breaks out in Ionia, led by Aristagoras of Miletus, and Athens and Eretria send help to the rebels.
- 496 B.C.E. The Roman dictator Postumius defeats the Latins at the battle of Lake Regillus. The Latin armies had been led by Lars Porsenna, allied with Tarquinius Superbus, the exiled king of Rome.
- 494 B.C.E. The Ionian rebel fleet is crushed by the Persian navy at the Battle of Lade, and the embers of the revolt are quickly extinguished.
- 490 B.C.E. The Athenians, with the help of their little neighbor Plataea, defeat a Persian expeditionary force led by Datis and Artaphrenes at the Battle of Marathon.
- 480 B.C.E. Xerxes I of Persia is defeated by the Greek navy at Salamis.
- The Celtic tribes that had earlier spread through the British Isles in small numbers now begin to arrive en masse.
- 479 B.C.E. The Persian army led by Mardonius is defeated at the Battle of Plataea and in the same year, the Persian fleet is wiped out at the Battle of Mycale.
- 477 B.C.E. The Delian League is formed under the leadership of Athens to counter any future Persian expansionism.
- 472 B.C.E. The tragic poet Aeschylus produces *The Persians*, which is the earliest tragedy that has survived.
- c. 450 B.C.E. Rome gets her first written law code, the Law of the Twelve Tables.
- 449 B.C.E. Hostilities with Persia cease, but Athens forces the Delian League allies to continue paying their annual tribute to the League treasury which Athens now uses to finance the Periclean building program.
- 447 B.C.E. Work begins on the Temple of Athena *Parthenos* (the Parthenon) on the Acropolis of Athens.
- 445 B.C.E. Athens concludes a Thirty-Years Peace with Sparta which recognizes Spartan hegemony in the Peloponnesos, and Athens and Sparta each pledge not to interfere in the other's sphere of influence.
- 444 B.C.E. Chinese mathematicians accurately calculate the length of the year at 365<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> days.
- 443 B.C.E. After the ostracism—exile for a ten-year term—of his last serious political opponent, Thucydides the son of Melesias, Pericles holds unchallenged power in Athens, being elected year after year to the committee of ten generals. His imperialist policy puts Athens on a collision course with Sparta.
- 429 B.C.E.
- 437 B.C.E. Construction of the monumental entrance to the Athenian Acropolis (the "Propylaea") begins and it is completed five years later.
- 432 B.C.E. The Parthenon is completed and dedicated in Athens.
- 431 B.C.E. The Peloponnesian War breaks out between Athens and the Spartan alliance.

- Euripides' tragedy, the *Medea*, is staged in Athens.
- 430 B.C.E. Plague breaks out in Athens, and within four years a third of the population, including Pericles, dies.
- 427 B.C.E. The philosopher Plato is born.
- 425 B.C.E. The Athenian comic poet Aristophanes produces his *Acharnians*, an anti-war comedy which is the earliest of his surviving plays.
- 421 B.C.E. The Fifty-Year Peace known as the "Peace of Nicias" after the Athenian who negotiated it, is concluded between Athens and Sparta, restoring the *status quo ante*.
- Building begins on the temple on the Athenian Acropolis known as the Erechtheum.
- 415 B.C.E. Athens embarks on a great expedition to Sicily which is utterly destroyed two years later.
- 413 B.C.E. In the last phase of the Peloponnesian War, Sparta occupies Decelea on Athenian territory and uses it as a base to lay waste Athenian territory and to encourage slaves to run away.
- Persia supplies Sparta with subsidies to build a fleet to challenge the Athenian navy.
- 411 B.C.E. Athens introduces an oligarchic government to replace its democracy, but the Athenian navy refuses to accept the new constitution and the democracy is restored within the year.
- c. 410 B.C.E. Celtic tribes later known to the Romans as Gauls begin their southward migration across the Alps.
- 409 B.C.E. In Sicily, the Carthaginians launch an offensive and destroy the cities of Selinus and Himera.
- 406 B.C.E. Athens wins her last victory of the war over the Spartan fleet at the Arginusae islands, but she puts the commanders of her fleet to death for failing to rescue shipwrecked crews.
- The tragic poets Sophocles and Euripides both die in this year.
- 405 B.C.E. In Sicily, the Carthaginians conquer Acragas, modern Agrigento, and advance on Syracuse. The Greek cities unite under the tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius I, and resist the Carthaginian advance.
- The Spartan fleet under Lysander captures the Athenian fleet at Aegospotami (Goat's River).
- 404 B.C.E. Athens capitulates and Sparta takes over the Athenian Empire except for the Greek cities on the coastline of Asia Minor which are returned to Persia.
- Sparta controls the cities in her empire by setting up pro-Spartan oligarchic governments in them, which were supported by garrisons under Spartan governors called *harmosts*.
- 403 B.C.E. Thrasybulus restores democracy in Athens with the acquiescence of the Spartan king Pausanias.
- 401 B.C.E. On the death of the king of Persia, Darius II, his son Artaxerxes II succeeds to the throne but his younger brother Cyrus rebels, recruits an army including ten thousand Greek mercenaries under a Spartan commander, Clearchus, and advances into the heart of Mesopotamia as far as Cunaxa, where Cyrus is killed in battle with Artaxerxes. The Greek mercenary force retreats north to the Black Sea coast under the leadership of the Athenian Xenophon.
- 399 B.C.E. Socrates is condemned to death on a charge of corrupting the Athenian youth and introducing new gods.
- 399 B.C.E. Sparta renews war against Persia to free the Ionian cities but with limited success.
- 394 B.C.E.
- 396 B.C.E. In Italy, Rome, after a war of ten years, conquers and destroys the city of Veii, further up the Tiber River from Rome,

- which had blocked Rome's northward expansion.
- 395 B.C.E. A coalition of Athens, Corinth, Thebes, and Argos, subsidized by Persia, fights Sparta and, in 394, a Spartan fleet is defeated off the island of Cnidus by a Persian fleet led by the Athenian Conon who then sails to Athens and rebuilds the fortifications which had been destroyed at the end of the Peloponnesian War.
- 387 B.C.E.
- In the same year, Sparta defeats an anti-Spartan coalition at Coronea and, faced with signs that Athenian power is reviving, Persia and Sparta settle their differences.
- 390 B.C.E. The Romans are defeated by Gallic invaders, led by the Brennus, at the battle of Allia. The city of Rome is subsequently besieged, and only the Capitol does not fall. Following the conquest of the Gauls, the Latins and the Hernici end their alliance with Rome.
- 387 B.C.E. In Italy, Rome is sacked by a tribe of Gauls (Celts) who besiege the Capitol and withdraw with much booty only after receiving ransom.
- Athens and Sparta sign a peace mediated by the Persian king—hence it is called the “King’s Peace” or the “Peace of Antalcidas” after the Spartan admiral who was the chief negotiator. Persia keeps control of the Greek cities in Asia Minor but guarantees the freedom of the rest of the Greek cities.
- 386 B.C.E. Plato founds the Academy in Athens where he is to teach for the rest of his life.
- 382 B.C.E. In a surprise attack, Sparta occupies the Cadmeia, that is, the acropolis of Thebes, and places a garrison there.
- c. 380 B.C.E. In Rome, after the sack by the Gauls, a fortification wall—the so-called Servian wall—is erected around the Seven Hills which make up the core of the city.
- 379 B.C.E. A troop of young Thebans surprises the Spartan garrison on the Cadmeia and overpowers it, and war between Thebes and Sparta follows.
- Thebes, led by Pelopidas and Epaminondas, aims at uniting all Boeotia under her leadership.
- 377 B.C.E. Athens establishes a new naval alliance of sixty autonomous members designed to resist Spartan imperialism.
- 371 B.C.E. Sparta and Athens sign a general peace, but Thebes will not sign for the terms of the peace would force her to undo the unification of Boeotia. Sparta therefore orders King Cleombrotus who had an army in Boeotia to attack Thebes, and the Theban army under Epaminondas inflicts a disastrous defeat on the Spartans at the battle of Leuctra.
- 371 B.C.E. Thebes, under the leadership of Pelopidas and Epaminondas, is the chief military power in Greece.
- 362 B.C.E.
- A Theban army frees Messenia from Spartan control, thereby depriving Sparta of half its territory.
- 367 B.C.E. The young Aristotle comes to Athens and becomes a pupil of the philosopher Plato. He remains a member of Plato’s Academy for twenty years until Plato’s death.
- 362 B.C.E. Thebes defeats a Spartan-Athenian alliance at the Battle of Mantinea, but the Theban statesman and military genius Epaminondas is killed in the battle.
- 359 B.C.E. Philip II becomes king of Macedon on his brother’s death.
- 358 B.C.E. In Italy, the Samnites, a warlike Italic people in south-central Italy, expand their territory to the western coast of Italy and form a league.
- 356 B.C.E. To defend against the Huns, China constructs its first wall along its borders; along with others to be built later, it will serve as part of the Great Wall.
- 347 B.C.E. Plato dies and is succeeded as head of the Academy by Speusippus, the son of Plato’s sister.

- 343 B.C.E. In Italy, war—the so-called First Samnite War—breaks out between Rome and the Samnites, an Italic people in south-central Italy, sparked by an alliance which Rome made with Capua. The war ends with a compromise peace.
- 341 B.C.E.
- 342 B.C.E. Aristotle goes to Macedon as tutor to the young Alexander the Great, son of king Philip II of Macedon.
- 340 B.C.E. The Latin League, a coalition of cities in Latium allied to Rome, attempts to end the alliance and Rome, with Samnite help, crushes their separatist revolt, dissolves the Latin League and instead makes separate alliances with the individual Latin cities.
- 338 B.C.E.
- 339 B.C.E. Chuang-tzu, a major interpreter of Taoism and celebrated literary stylist, flourishes in China.
- 329 B.C.E.
- 338 B.C.E. At Chaeronea in Greece, Philip of Macedon defeats the combined armies of Athens and Thebes. Thebes is punished severely; Athens gets lighter terms.
- 337 B.C.E. The League of Corinth is formed under Philip of Macedon's patronage. The League names Philip leader and supreme general, guarantees autonomy to all cities, and resolves to make war on Persia to avenge the Persian invasion of Greece in 480 B.C.E.
- 336 B.C.E. Philip is assassinated, and his son Alexander the Great becomes king.
- 335 B.C.E. Thebes revolts from Macedon on hearing of Philip's death, and is vanquished by Alexander, who enslaves the citizens of Thebes and destroys the city, sparing only the house of the poet Pindar.
- Aristotle returns to Athens and founds the Lyceum where he spends the next eighteen years teaching, writing, and doing research.
- 334 B.C.E. Alexander launches his campaign against the Persian Empire, defeating the Persian satraps of Asia Minor at the Granicus River in May, and following up his victory by capturing the Greek cities along the Asia Minor coast, and then striking east through Caria, and Phrygia to Cilicia. He replaces the Persian satraps with Macedonian officers to rule the conquered territory.
- 333 B.C.E. Alexander defeats the Persian king Darius III Codomannus at the Battle of Issus. Refusing an offer of peace from Darius, he proceeds with the conquest of Syria.
- 332 B.C.E. Alexander takes the Phoenician city of Tyre after a seven-month siege, and then thrusts down the Mediterranean coast to Egypt where he passes the winter. While there, he visits the shrine of Zeus Ammon at the Siwa Oasis, where the high priest greets him as the son of Zeus.
- 331 B.C.E. Antipater, whom Alexander had left behind as his deputy in Macedonia, suppresses a revolt of Sparta in Greece.
- Alexander defeats Darius III at the Battle of Gaugamela, and forces him to flee the battlefield.
- The satrap of Babylon, Mazaeus, surrenders and joins Alexander, who seizes the Persian treasure in Babylon and Susa.
- Alexander the Great founds the city of Alexandria in Egypt.
- 330 B.C.E. Alexander captures and burns the Persian ceremonial capital of Persepolis, thus marking the completion of the panhellenic campaign to avenge Xerxes' invasion of Greece in 480 B.C.E.
- 330 B.C.E. Alexander pursues Darius who is taken prisoner by the satrap Bessus, and catches up to him too late to prevent his murder by Bessus, who now assumes the title of king.
- 329 B.C.E.
- Alexander proclaims himself the successor to the Achaemenid royal line of Persia.
- One of Alexander's generals, Philotas, is implicated, probably wrongly, in a supposed conspiracy against Alexander and is executed; as a precaution, Alexander also

- orders the death of Philotas' father, Parmenio, who had served under Alexander's father, Philip of Macedon.
- 329 B.C.E. Alexander conquers eastern Iran.  
Bessus is captured and executed.
- 328 B.C.E. Alexander campaigns in Sogdiana where he meets and marries Roxane, the daughter of a Sogdian baron.  
  
Alexander introduces Persian court ceremonial, including *proskynesis*, that is, kowtowing before the king, which the Macedonians and Greeks in his retinue oppose.
- 327 B.C.E. The so-called "Pages Conspiracy" is suppressed and Alexander's court historian, Callisthenes, the nephew of Aristotle, is put to death.  
  
Alexander pushes on through modern Afghanistan towards India.
- 327 B.C.E. Alexander the Great invades India.  
–325 B.C.E.
- 326 B.C.E. In Italy, a second war breaks out between Rome and the Samnites.  
  
Alexander defeats the Indian rajah Porus at the Hydaspes River in northern India, and then pushes on until a mutiny on the Hyphasis River forces him to turn back. He fights his way down the mouth of the Indus River where he builds a fleet, and embarking part of his army on it, sends it back along the coast to the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers while he himself leads the bulk of his army through the desert regions of Gedrosia and Carmania to Persepolis.
- 324 B.C.E. At Susa, Alexander pushes ahead with a plan to create a mixed Macedonian-Persian elite by marrying eighty of his officers to Asian women and arranging the marriages of ten thousand of his soldiers to Asians—he himself marries the daughter of Darius III.
- After a mutiny at Opis, Alexander reorganizes the empire, giving Persians and Macedonians equal rights.
- Currency is standardized throughout the empire, thus laying the basis for the great expansion of the economy in the Hellenistic world.
- 323 B.C.E. Alexander dies at Babylon on the eve of setting out on a new expedition. Perdicas, to whom Alexander gave his signet ring on his deathbed, becomes regent and guardian of the kings: Alexander's half brother, Arrhidaeus, and Alexander's son, as yet unborn—Roxane is pregnant when Alexander dies.  
  
Alexander's generals—the so-called *Diadochoi* (Successors)—carve out domains for themselves: Antipater, who was left to rule Macedonia in Alexander's absence, takes Macedonia and Greece, Antigonus the One-Eyed takes Phrygia and Lycia, Ptolemy Egypt and Lysimachus Thrace, while Eumenes, Alexander's secretary, throws his support behind Perdicas.
- On learning of Alexander's death, Greece tries to throw off the Macedonian yoke in the so-called Lamian War, but the insurrection is crushed by Antipater. The Athenian democracy is suppressed, the anti-Macedonian leaders are killed, and Demosthenes commits suicide to avoid capture.
- 321 B.C.E. In the Second Samnite War, Rome suffers a humiliating reverse at the Caudine Forks but does not accept defeat.  
  
The *Via Appia* (Appian Way) is constructed south from Rome as a supply-line for the Roman army.
- 320 B.C.E. In the spring, Perdicas marches with an army against Egypt to dislodge Ptolemy, but is killed by his own troops as he attempts to cross the Nile Delta.  
  
The *Diadochoi* hold a conference at Triparadeisos ("Three Parks") in Syria.

- Antipater replaces Perdiccas as guardian of the kings, Ptolemy is left in Egypt, Antigonus the One-Eyed, with Antipater's son Cassander on his staff, is put in command of the Macedonian forces in Asia with the assignment of eliminating Eumenes, and Seleucus gets the satrapy of Babylon.
- 317 B.C.E. Alexander the Great's mother Olympias invades Macedon with an army from Epirus to defend Alexander IV, the son of Alexander and Roxane, and executes Philip Arrhidaeus, his wife Eurydice, and about a hundred of their supporters.
- Cassander invades Macedon to dislodge Olympias.
- 317 B.C.E. Cassander appoints the Aristotelian philosopher, Demetrius of Phalerum, to rule Athens as his deputy. When he is driven out by Demetrius Poliorcetes, he goes to Egypt where he advises Ptolemy on the establishment of the Great Library of Alexandria.
- 307 B.C.E.
- 316 B.C.E. Eumenes is forced back into the eastern satrapies, fights an indecisive battle at Paraetacene, and in its aftermath, is betrayed to Antigonus and executed.
- 316 B.C.E. Antigonus the One-Eyed, now in control of Asia after the death of Eumenes, and his son, Demetrius Poliorcetes (Besieger of Cities), make a bid to take over Alexander's empire.
- 301 B.C.E.
- 312 B.C.E. Ptolemy of Egypt, to counter the ambitions of Antigonus the One-Eyed, reinstalls Seleucus as satrap of Babylon.
- The Seleucid dynasty counts this date as Year One of the Seleucid era which continues to be used in the Middle East long after the dynasty falls.
- 307 B.C.E. Demetrius, son of Antigonus the One-Eyed, attempts to capture Rhodes—the siege gives him his sobriquet “Poliorcetes” (Besieger of Cities) because of the siege engines that he and his engineers designed to breach the Rhodian defenses.
- To commemorate their victory, the Rhodians build the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.
- 304 B.C.E. Rome emerges victorious from the long, hard-fought Second Samnite War, and annexes Campania, the region between Rome and Naples, thus preventing further expansion of the Samnite League.
- 301 B.C.E. Lysimachus, Cassander and Seleucus eliminate Antigonus the One-Eyed at the Battle of Ipsos, though Demetrius Poliorcetes escapes. Four Hellenistic kingdoms result: Macedon under Cassander, Thrace and Asia Minor under Lysimachus, Egypt and Palestine under Ptolemy, and the Persian heartlands and northern Syria under Seleucus.
- 298 B.C.E. In Italy, the Third Samnite War breaks out. Rome faces a coalition of Samnites, Etruscans, Celts, Sabines, Lucanians, and Umbrians.
- 297 B.C.E. In Macedon, Cassander dies, and his death is followed by disorder as Pyrrhus of Epirus, Demetrius Poliorcetes, as well as Cassander's own sons make bids for the throne of Macedon.
- 295 B.C.E. In Italy, Rome wins a victory over a coalition of Etruscans and the Celts at the Battle of Sentinum, and the Etruscans make a separate peace with Rome.
- 290 B.C.E. Rome makes peace with the Samnites who are now required to serve in Rome's army.
- 286 B.C.E. In Greece, Lysimachus adds Macedon to his kingdom.
- 285 B.C.E. Rome secures control of central Italy by defeating the Celtic tribe of the Senones.
- 282 B.C.E.
- 282 B.C.E. War breaks out between Rome and the Greek city of Tarentum, modern Taranto, when Rome encroaches on Tarentum's sphere of influence.
- 281 B.C.E. In Asia Minor, Seleucus defeats Lysimachus at the Battle of Corupedion and takes over his realm, including Macedon.

- 280 B.C.E. Tarentum brings Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, with an army of mercenaries into Italy where he defeats the Romans at the battle of Heraclea.
- Seleucus is assassinated by Ptolemy the Thunderbolt, a renegade son of king Ptolemy I of Egypt. Ptolemy becomes king of Macedon while Seleucus' son Antiochus inherits his father's realm in Asia.
- 279 B.C.E. A horde of Celts, otherwise known as Gauls, invade Macedon, defeating and killing Ptolemy the Thunderbolt, thus leaving Macedon without a king. The Celtic horde pushes down into Greece, bypassing Thermopylae and making for Delphi, but are stopped by the guerilla resistance of the Aetolian League in north-west Greece.
- In Italy, Pyrrhus of Epirus inflicts a second defeat on the Romans at Ausculum, where his heavy casualties give rise to the aphorism "Pyrrhic Victory," a victory that is as costly as a defeat. The Roman senate refuses Pyrrhus' offer of peace.
- 278 B.C.E. Pyrrhus campaigns against the Carthaginians in Sicily in the employ of the Greek cities. He forces the Carthaginians back into their fortress at Lilybaeum, modern Marsala, but cannot take it, and his ambition to create a Sicilian kingdom for himself is thwarted by the Greek cities.
- 278 B.C.E. A horde of Celts is brought into Asia Minor by Nicomedes of Bithynia who hopes to use them against Seleucus' heir, Antiochus I, so as to secure the independence of the Bithynian kingdom in north-west Asia Minor. The Celts (or Gauls) soon become a menace to Greek Ionia.
- 275 B.C.E. King Antiochus I, the son of Seleucus, defeats the Celts in the "Battle of the Elephants," so-called because Antiochus used an elephant corps in his army, but then Antiochus shifts his attention to war with King Ptolemy II of Egypt, and the credit for keeping the Celtic raids in check goes to Philetaerus, a eunuch whom Lysimachus left in charge of his treasure in the citadel of Pergamum, but after Lysimachus' death begins to act independently.
- Pyrrhus returns to Italy with a depleted army and is defeated by the Romans at Beneventum, after which he returns to Greece.
- 274 B.C.E. Antigonus Gonatas, son of Demetrius Poliorcetes, on the strength of a defeat which he inflicts on the Celts at the Dardanelles, occupies the vacant throne of Macedon where the Antigonid dynasty will rule until the last king, Perseus, is dethroned by the Romans in 167 B.C.E.
- 272 B.C.E. Tarentum surrenders to Rome and the Greek cities of southern Italy become allies of Rome.
- 264 B.C.E. The First Punic War begins, pitting Carthage against Rome. The two powers fight for control of colonies on the island of Sicily.
- 263 B.C.E. In Asia Minor, Eumenes I, the nephew and successor of Philetaerus, inherits the rule of Pergamum, nominally as a governor of King Ptolemy II of Egypt.
- 260 B.C.E. Antiochus II regains much of the territories in Asia Minor lost by Antiochus I, during the Second Syrian War against Ptolemy II of Egypt. Pergamum remains independent.
- 260 B.C.E. Rome wins a naval battle over the Carthaginian fleet off Mylae in northeast Sicily, using a grappling-iron called the *corvus* which allowed the Romans to use boarding tactics effectively against the Carthaginian ships.
- 256 B.C.E. The Romans win another naval victory off Cape Ecnomus in southern Sicily, and then make a landing in Africa and defeat the Carthaginians.
- Xanthippus, a mercenary soldier from Sparta, reorganizes the Carthaginian army and defeats the Romans at the Battle of Tunis the next year and forces its surrender.

- The Chou dynasty in China ends. The Chou is the longest dynasty in Chinese history, lasting for 771 years.
- 251 B.C.E. Aratus of Sicyon adds Sicyon to the Achaean Confederacy. He is an aggressive general of the Confederacy and later adds such city-states as Megalapolis (235) and Argos (229).
- 250 B.C.E. A newly-built Roman fleet is victorious at Panormus, modern Palermo, but is defeated next year at Drepanum, modern Trapani.
- In Bactria (eastern Iran), Greeks whose ancestors had been settled there by Alexander the Great acclaim their general Diodotus as king. The kingdom lasts more than a century, though in its final years it splits into two kingdoms under rival kings.
- 246 B.C.E. The Third Syrian War is fought between  
–241 B.C.E. Ptolemy III (Euergetes) of Egypt and the Seleucid king Seleucus II, who had replaced Antiochus II.
- 241 B.C.E. Attalus I succeeds Eumenes I of Pergamum. For refusing tribute to the Galatians, he is given the name Soter (“Savior”). Under Attalus, Pergamum becomes an important power and is pivotal to Roman politics in Greece and Asia Minor.
- Hamilcar Barca is defeated by the Romans at the Aegates Islands. The First Punic War ends.
- 238 B.C.E. Carthaginian mercenaries on Sardinia who are in revolt appeal for assistance to Rome, which forces Carthage to cede her the island.
- 237 B.C.E. Carthage, under the leadership of Hamilcar Barca, begins to expand her empire in Spain. Hamilcar Barca, accompanied by his ten-year-old son, Hannibal, conquers southern and eastern Spain. The new Punic outposts in the region challenge Roman hegemony.
- 232 B.C.E. Ashoka, the Buddhist monarch of the Maurya empire in India, dies.
- 227 B.C.E. Rome unites Sardinia with Corsica to form her second province.
- 226 B.C.E. Hasdrubal, the successor of his father-in-law of Hamilcar Barca as Carthaginian commander in Spain, makes a treaty with Rome agreeing not to expand north of the Ebro River, but Rome follows this by making an alliance with Saguntum south of the Ebro.
- 223 B.C.E. Antiochus III (the Great) begins his rule over the Seleucid kingdom. He expands the dynasty to Armenia, and he regains Parthia and Bactria.
- 221 B.C.E. Hasdrubal is murdered, and Hamilcar Barca’s eldest son Hannibal becomes Carthaginian commander in Spain.
- 219 B.C.E. Hannibal captures Saguntum, an ally of Rome. Rome demands that Carthage relinquish Saguntum and surrender Hannibal to them, and when Carthage refuses, declares war.
- 218 B.C.E. The Second Punic War begins. Hannibal crosses the Pyrenees mountains, marches through southern France and over the Alps into Italy with 50,000 men, 9,000 cavalry, and 37 war-elephants. In the autumn he defeats the consul Publius Cornelius Scipio at the Ticinus River in the foothills of the Alps. The other consul joins Scipio and both are defeated at the Trebia River in December.
- 217 B.C.E. Hannibal defeats the consul Gaius Flaminius at Lake Trasimene. Quintus Fabius Maximus is appointed dictator for a six-month term and avoids battle with Hannibal.
- 216 B.C.E. At Cannae, Hannibal inflicts a disastrous defeat on the Romans, led by the consuls of the year, after which Rome adopts more cautious tactics, avoiding battle with Hannibal.
- 215 B.C.E. In the aftermath of Rome’s defeat at Cannae, King Philip V of Macedon makes an alliance with Hannibal, and to stymie Philip, Rome makes an alliance with the



- Aetolian League and initiates the First Macedonian War between Rome and Macedon.
- In Sicily, Rome's old ally King Hiero of Syracuse dies, and under his successor Syracuse goes over to Carthage.
- Led by the consul Marcellus, Rome lays siege to Syracuse, which defends itself with war engines designed by Archimedes who is living in Syracuse.
- 214 B.C.E. The First Macedonian War begins with Philip V's attack on Messene.
- Construction of the Great Wall of China begins when smaller, pre-existing frontier walls are linked together and strengthened. The purpose of the wall is to keep out the Hsiung-nu, nomads from the north of China (Mongolia).
- 212 B.C.E. Syracuse is captured and, in the sack that follows, Archimedes is killed.
- Carthage abandons Sicily.
- 207 B.C.E. Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal brings reinforcements for Hannibal across the Alps, but is defeated and killed at the Metaurus River in northeast Italy.
- 206 B.C.E. The Romans under the young Publius Cornelius Scipio win control of Spain.
- Hannibal's youngest brother Mago takes the Carthaginian fleet from Spain to Genoa to urge the Celts and Ligurians in northern Italy to rise against Rome.
- 205 B.C.E. Scipio returns from Spain and is elected consul.
- Philip V of Macedon and Rome make peace, the so-called "Peace of Phoenice," Rome having withdrawn her troops from Greece two years before.
- 204 B.C.E. Scipio leads an army to Africa, forcing Carthage to seek peace. Peace negotiations lead to Hannibal's recall from Italy.
- 202 B.C.E. Peace negotiations having broken down, there is a decisive battle between the Romans led by Scipio and the Carthaginians led by Hannibal at Zama, where the Carthaginians are beaten. Rome imposes a huge indemnity as part of the peace terms.
- 201 B.C.E. The Second Punic War ends. Carthage signs a treaty with Rome, surrendering its navy and its territories in Spain.
- 200 B.C.E. King Antiochus III defeats the army of King Ptolemy V of Egypt at the Battle of Panion and annexes southern Syria and Palestine which had hitherto belonged to Egypt. Jerusalem now falls under Seleucid rule.
- Rome, having received appeals from Pergamum, Rhodes, and Athens against Philip V's expansionism, sends an army and navy to Greece, thus beginning the Second Macedonian War.
- Volcanic islands in the South Pacific are settled by seafaring peoples emigrating from Southeast Asia.
- The Hopewell culture begins to emerge in central North America in what will become the states of Ohio and Illinois; this society is characterized by mound-building.
- 197 B.C.E. A Roman army under Titus Quinctius Flamininus advances into Thessaly and at the battle of Cynoscephalae defeats Philip V, who is made to retreat to his own kingdom, pay an indemnity and surrender all his fleet except for six ships.
- 196 B.C.E. At the Isthmian Games, Flamininus proclaims that all the Greek cities should be free, and two years later Roman troops leave Greece.
- 192 B.C.E. War breaks out with the Seleucid king Antiochus III, who is decisively defeated two years later at Magnesia south of Pergamum in Asia Minor.
- 188 B.C.E. The Peace of Apamea imposes stiff terms on Antiochus III, thus starting the decline of the Seleucid empire, and Rome is now mistress of the eastern Mediterranean.

- c. 185 B.C.E. The Sungas replace the Mauryas as the ruling empire in India. Pusyamitra becomes the first Sunga ruler and returns India from Buddhism to orthodox Hindu.
- 175 B.C.E. Antiochus IV *Epiphanes* (“God made Manifest”) becomes king of the Seleucid empire and attempts to halt its decline. His effort to have himself recognized as divine and receive sacrifice as a god leads to a rebellion of conservative Jews in Judeaea, known as the “Maccabean Revolt” after its leader, Judas Maccabaeus.
- 171 B.C.E. The Third Macedonian War begins between Rome and Perseus, son of Philip V, king of Macedon.
- 168 B.C.E. After some initial setbacks, Lucius Aemilius Paulus defeats Perseus at the Battle of Pydna. Perseus is taken as a prisoner to Rome and the kingdom of Macedonia is dissolved. Polybius of Megalopolis is one of one thousand hostages from the Achaean League brought to Rome, and while there he composes his *Universal History* in 39 books.
- 164 B.C.E. The Maccabees reconsecrate the temple in Jerusalem. The event is from this date commemorated as Hanukkah.
- Antiochus IV dies.
- 149 B.C.E. A third war breaks out between Rome and Carthage.
- 149 B.C.E. An anti-Roman revolt breaks out in Macedonia and after it is suppressed, Macedon becomes a Roman province in 146 B.C.E.
- 148 B.C.E.
- 146 B.C.E. A Roman army under Publius Scipio Aemilianus captures Carthage and destroys it.
- Rome suppresses a revolt of the Achaean League in Greece and destroys the city of Corinth. The territories of the Achaean League are annexed, and Rome makes Greece into a Roman province named Achaia.
- 141 B.C.E. A period of Jewish independence in Judeaea begins. Simon Maccabaeus becomes high priest after the murder of his brother Jonathan.
- Han Wu-ti is emperor in China. He is an innovator in education, economics, and defense. He introduces a public granary to China and makes innovations to the cavalry.
- 136 B.C.E. A slave revolt breaks out in Sicily led by a Syrian slave, Eunus, who is captured after Enna and Tauromenium, two centers of the revolt, fall to Rome. An estimated twenty thousand slaves are crucified.
- 132 B.C.E.
- 133 B.C.E. Attalus III, the last king of Pergamum, dies and bequeaths his kingdom to Rome. Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus is elected as tribune (an annual office) and attempts a land reform to settle poor Roman citizens on small farms, and the royal treasure of Pergamum is used to pay the costs of this measure. While attempting to secure his election to a second term as tribune, which his opponents claimed was unconstitutional, Gracchus is killed.
- 130 B.C.E. An anti-Roman revolt is suppressed in Pergamum which its last king had bequeathed to Rome, and Pergamum is organized as the Roman province of Asia.
- 129 B.C.E. The death of Antiochus VII marks the end of Seleucid power in the eastern region. The Parthians are left as the major power east of Babylon.
- 123 B.C.E. Gaius Gracchus, Tiberius’ younger brother, renews the land reform started by Tiberius, but loses voter support when he attempts to extend citizenship to Rome’s allies. When Gracchus’ party occupies the Aventine Hill, the senate declares martial law, Gracchus’ supporters are slain, and Gracchus has his slave kill him.
- 122 B.C.E.
- 112 B.C.E. The Jugurthine War in Numidia brings the incompetence of the senatorial government in Rome into sharp focus. Jugurtha is finally defeated by Marius in 106 B.C.E. and next year surrenders to Lucius Cornelius Sulla.
- 105 B.C.E.
- 113 B.C.E. The Cimbri and Teutones migrate from Jutland into Gaul (modern France) and three times defeat the Roman armies they encounter. There is panic in Rome, and
- 101 B.C.E.

- Marius returns from Africa, is elected consul and is re-elected to successive consulships until 100 B.C.E. He reforms the Roman army so that it is no longer recruited from property owners but rather from the landless proletariat who expect to be settled on small farms when they are demobilized.
- 102 B.C.E. Marius with his reformed army defeats the Teutones at Aquae Sextiae (modern Aix-en-Provence) in southern France.
- c. 100 B.C.E. The Belgae, a Gallic people, arrive in Britain.
- The city of Teotihuacán, twenty-five miles from modern Mexico City, emerges as a major commercial center; it is the home of the Pyramid of the Moon and Pyramid of the Sun, the latter being the largest building in pre-Columbian America.
- 91 B.C.E. A tribune, Marcus Livius Drusus, proposes reviving the Gracchan land reform and extending Roman citizenship to Rome's Italian allies, but is assassinated.
- 91 B.C.E. Drusus' assassination triggers a revolt of Rome's Italian allies, who were eager for citizen rights and are now bitterly disappointed. They form an independent federation of their own, and the civil war that results ends only when Rome concedes them citizenship.
- 89 B.C.E.
- 88 B.C.E. Mithridates VI attacks the Roman province of Asia, and urges the Greeks to rebel against the hated Roman officials and taxation agents. Eighty thousand Romans in Asia Minor are killed in the massacre that results. The Roman senate places Sulla in charge of the war against Mithridates, but the popular assembly transfers the command to Marius. Sulla marches with his army on Rome, drives out Marius' supporters, reestablishes the rule of the senate and then leaves to conduct the war against Mithridates.
- 87 B.C.E. Once Sulla is gone, Marius with his supporters returns to Rome, massacres his political opponents, and is elected consul for the seventh time.
- 87 B.C.E. In Greece, Sulla besieges and captures Athens, which had supported Mithridates, and after the capture many Greek works of art are shipped to Rome.
- 86 B.C.E.
- Plato's Academy closes down.
- 86 B.C.E. Marius dies shortly after taking up his seventh consulship.
- Sulla defeats Mithridates' army at Chaeronea in Greece, and again next year at Orchomenos.
- 83 B.C.E. Sulla returns to Italy and destroys the Marian supporters and their allies, the Samnites and Lucanians, next year at the Battle of the Colline Gate, one of Rome's city gates.
- 82 B.C.E. Sulla, assuming the office of dictator, draws up a list of enemies to be killed, including ninety senators and two thousand six hundred equestrians, and then reforms the constitution, placing control of the Roman government in the hands of the senate which is dominated by a tight group of old Roman families.
- 79 B.C.E.
- c. 80 B.C.E. Invaders from Central Asia begin to spread throughout the Indus River valley. Chinese silk increasingly becomes a major luxury import to wealthy provinces such as Roman Egypt.
- 79 B.C.E. Sulla resigns the dictatorship voluntarily and dies a year later.
- 78 B.C.E. On Sulla's death, one of the consuls of the year, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus attempts to undo Sulla's constitutional reforms, and when he turns to armed rebellion, the senate grants one of Sulla's young officers, Gnaeus Pompeius (Pompey), extraordinary powers to suppress him.
- 77 B.C.E. Pompey persuades the senate to grant him a special command to suppress an insurrection in Spain led by one of Marius' former officers, Quintus Sertorius, which Pompey accomplishes after Sertorius is betrayed and assassinated.
- 71 B.C.E.

- 74 B.C.E. War with Mithridates VI, king of Pontus, having broken out again, a former supporter of Sulla, Lucius Licinius Lucullus, is sent to suppress it and is initially very successful.
- 73 B.C.E. A gladiator, Spartacus leads an uprising of slaves in Italy. The revolt is suppressed by Marcus Licinius Crassus, and the remnants of the slave army are wiped out by Pompey who encounters them as he returns to Italy from Spain.
- 70 B.C.E. Pompey and Crassus, both successful commanders with armies to support them, demand the consulship and once they are elected consuls, they dismantle Sulla's constitutional reforms.
- The Roman poet Vergil is born in the village of Andes near Mantua in the province of Cisalpine Gaul.
- 68 B.C.E. Pompey is given an extraordinary command to repress piracy in the eastern Mediterranean which he does efficiently within six months.
- 66 B.C.E. Pompey is sent to replace Lucullus, defeats Mithridates, conquers most of Asia Minor and advances down the Mediterranean coast as far as the border of Egypt. He takes Jerusalem and enters the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temple, thereby earning the hatred of the Jews.
- 63 B.C.E. Marcus Tullius Cicero, famous as a statesman, orator, and author of works on philosophy and politics, is one of the two consuls of the year, and during his consulship, suppresses a conspiracy led by Lucius Sergius Catilina.
- 60 B.C.E. Pompey, Crassus, and Julius Caesar form the so-called "First Triumvirate," an unofficial three-man coalition to further their several political goals.
- 59 B.C.E. With the support of the First Triumvirate, Julius Caesar is elected consul with a die-hard senatorial, Bibulus, as his colleague. Caesar carries out Pompey's political agenda and is himself granted rule of the provinces of Cisalpine Gaul (Italy north of the Rubicon River), Narbonese Gaul (southern France), and Illyricum (modern Croatia and Serbia) for a five-year term.
- 58 B.C.E. Caesar conquers all of Gaul (modern France) and crosses the English Channel twice to make probe into Britain.
- 56 B.C.E. Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus renew their political coalition, agreeing that Pompey and Crassus will both be consuls for the next year and then be given provincial governorships, while Caesar would rule Gaul for an additional five years. Pompey marries Caesar's daughter Julia to cement the alliance.
- 55 B.C.E. Pompey and Crassus hold the consulship, and then Pompey is made governor (pro-consul) of Spain for a five-year term, and Crassus of Syria, where he plans to win military laurels by attacking the Parthians. Pompey remains in Rome and governs Spain with legates who act as his representative.
- Britain faces a Roman invasion under Caesar.
- 52 B.C.E. Because of the gang warfare in Rome, Pompey is elected consul with no colleague to keep law and order, and at the end of his term, he is granted the governorship of Spain for five more years.
- 51 B.C.E. Uxellodunum becomes the last town in Gaul to succumb to Caesar. The Roman wars against Gaul end.
- 49 B.C.E. The Roman senate, having refused to accept Caesar's request to be allowed to stand for the consulship *in absentia*, thus allowing him to avoid prosecution for illegal acts during his consulship, decrees that Caesar must resign his command, and commissions Pompey to defend the republic. Caesar crosses the Rubicon River separating the province of Cisalpine Gaul from Italy, and heads for Rome, while Pompey evacuates Italy for Greece. Rather than follow Pompey, Caesar goes to Spain and smashes Pompey's armies there within six months.

- 48 B.C.E. Caesar defeats Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalus in Greece. Pompey flees to Egypt where he is put to death by the boy king Ptolemy XIII on the advice of his ministers who thought that thus they would win Caesar's favor.

Caesar comes to Egypt in pursuit of Pompey, where he makes the young princess Cleopatra his mistress and becomes embroiled in a war with Ptolemy XIII and the Alexandrians.

- 47 B.C.E. Cleopatra gives birth to a son by Julius Caesar: Ptolemy Caesar, commonly known as "Caesarion" (Little Caesar).

Having established Cleopatra on the throne of Egypt, Julius Caesar goes to Asia Minor, defeats Pharnaces, the son of Mithridates VI and a supporter of Pompey, at Zela (Zila in north-central Turkey) and sends dispatch to Roman senate reading, *Veni, vidi, vici* ("I came, I saw, I conquered").

Caesar lands in Africa to suppress Pompey's supporters who had rallied there for a last-ditch effort to "save the republic."

- 46 B.C.E. Caesar smashes the Pompeian resistance in Africa at the Battle of Thapsus.

Caesar returns to Italy, becomes dictator for ten years, introduces a number of reforms including the Julian Calendar which fixes the year at 365 days with an extra day every four years, and in November leaves for Spain to suppress resistance led by Pompey's sons.

- 45 B.C.E. At Munda southeast of Seville in Spain, Caesar defeats the last resistance of the Pompeians.

- 44 B.C.E. Julius Caesar is assassinated by a cabal of senators led by Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus.

Octavian, the great-nephew of Julius Caesar whom Caesar had adopted and made his heir in his will, arrives in Rome to take up his inheritance.

Burebistas of Dacia is assassinated; his empire is divided into several kingdoms.

- 43 B.C.E. The Roman poet Ovid is born at Sulmo, about ninety miles from Rome.

The "Second Triumvirate" of Mark Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus is set up, and the proscriptions begin the next day—a list of political enemies, including Marcus Tullius Cicero, is drawn up, and they are liquidated.

- 42 B.C.E. Brutus and Cassius, Caesar's assassins, are defeated in two separate battles at Philippi in northern Greece.

- 41 B.C.E. At Tarsus in Asia Minor, Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, meets Mark Antony, who accepts her invitation to spend the winter with her at Alexandria.

- 37 B.C.E. Herod the Great, with Roman support,  
–34 B.C.E. rules Judaea. Herod promotes the spread of Hellenism throughout the province, which spawns opposition among his subjects, particularly the Pharisees.

- 36 B.C.E. Sextus Pompeius, Pompey's last surviving son, is defeated in the naval battle of Naulochus and is driven from southern Italy and Sicily.

Octavian demotes Lepidus after he makes a power grab.

- c. 35 B.C.E. A system of writing is introduced in Guatemala in Central America.

- 31 B.C.E. Octavian defeats Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium.

- 30 B.C.E. Octavian enters Alexandria as a conqueror. Antony has already committed suicide, and Cleopatra takes poison to avoid being taken in triumph to Rome.

- 29 B.C.E. Octavian returns to Rome and holds a triple triumph.

- 27 B.C.E. Octavian, the heir of Julius Caesar, reaches an agreement with the Roman senate to share power with it. Octavian continues to hold the office of consul each year, but he can claim to have restored the republic, and the senate bestows on him the title "Augustus"—the "Revered One"—which all subsequent emperors take.

- 23 B.C.E. Augustus resigns from the consulship in mid-year—thereafter he is consul only twice more. Instead, he is granted tribunician power (*tribunicia potestas*) which gives him the powers that a tribune in the republic once wielded, including a blanket right of veto.
- 16 B.C.E. The Provinces of Spain and Gaul are re-organized under the Roman emperor Augustus. The emperor subdivides Hispania Ulterior into Baetica (Andalusia) and Lusitania.
- 13 B.C.E.
- 14 C.E. The emperor Augustus dies and is succeeded by his stepson, Tiberius.
- 9 C.E. Wang Mang rules China. As with his predecessors, the issues that affect his reign are economic (the resistance of wealthy landowners that leads to famine) and military (continued struggles against the Hsiung-nu in the north).
- 23 C.E.
- c. 30 C.E. The crucifixion of the Jewish leader Jesus of Nazareth occurs.
- c. 33 C.E.
- 37 C.E. Tiberius dies and is succeeded by Gaius Caligula whose ancestry can be traced back to Augustus Caesar through Augustus' daughter, Julia.
- 41 C.E. Gaius Caligula is assassinated by the praetorian guard which puts Caligula's uncle, Claudius, on the throne.
- c. 45 C.E. St. Paul begins his missionary work to bring Christianity to non-Jewish communities throughout Europe.
- 54 C.E. Claudius dies, according to rumor poisoned by his fourth wife, Julia Agrippina, who engineers the accession of Nero, her son by a previous marriage, shoving aside Claudius' own son, Britannicus.
- 64 C.E. A great fire destroys half of Rome. Nero seizes the opportunity to build his palace known as the *Domus Aurea* (Golden House) on the area cleared by the fire.
- St. Paul is executed in Rome. The persecution of members of the Christian sect under the Roman Empire begins.
- 66 C.E. The “Zealot” party (Jewish nationalists) lead a revolt in Judaea against Rome.
- 68 C.E. Vindex, the governor of Gallia Lugdunensis, revolts and puts forward Servius Sulpicius Galba, governor of Hispania Tarraconensis, as his candidate to replace Nero. Vindex's revolt is suppressed but the senate and the praetorian guard in Rome accept Galba as emperor. Nero flees and commits suicide.
- 68 C.E. After three men, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, succeed each other quickly, Vespasian, general in charge of suppressing the revolt in Judaea, wins the throne. It becomes painfully clear to all that the Roman army can make and unmake emperors.
- 69 C.E.
- 69 B.C.E. Natives besiege the German town of Colonia Ulpia Traiana (Xanten); Mainz also revolts.
- 70 C.E. Vespasian's son, Titus, who has taken over command of the Roman army in Judaea, captures Jerusalem and destroys the Temple. The booty from Jerusalem is brought to Rome and placed in the new Forum of Peace which Vespasian constructs.
- 78 C.E. As a governor of Britain, the Roman general Gnaeus Iulius Agricola advances into Scotland.
- The Saka era begins in India. Many scholars favor this date for the beginning of the reign of Kaniska, the Buddhist king responsible for having protected the Kushans from Chinese sovereignty.
- 79 C.E. Vespasian dies and his son Titus, who had already been made co-emperor, succeeds him.
- Mt. Vesuvius, near the Bay of Naples in central Italy, erupts and buries Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Oplontis under lava and ash.
- 81 C.E. On the death of Titus, his younger brother Domitian becomes emperor.
- 96 C.E. Domitian is assassinated by members of his own household, including his wife

- Domitia. The Roman senate chooses as his successor an elderly senator named Marcus Cocceius Nerva.
- 97 C.E. Faced with the threat of revolt by the praetorian guard, Nerva adopts the governor of Upper Germany, Trajan (Marcus Ulpius Traianus), and makes him co-emperor.
- 98 C.E. Trajan succeeds Nerva as emperor.
- c. 100 C.E. Traders from Indonesia sail along the coast of Africa, possibly leaving settlers on Madagascar.
- The Funan, a Hindu people that first emerge in Southeast Asia, occupy the Mekong Delta region of present-day Vietnam, as well as portions of Cambodia and Thailand. They trade with both India and China.
- The Anasazi people begin to develop their culture in the deserts of southwest North America. They make baskets, grow corn, and build adobe structures.
- 105 C.E. Trajan makes a second campaign into  
–106 C.E. Dacia and annexes Dacia as a Roman province.
- 117 C.E. Trajan dies and on his deathbed adopts Hadrian.
- 122 C.E. Hadrian's Wall, a frontier rampart running  
–128 C.E. from Wallsend-on-Tyne to Bowness-on-Solway, is built to protect Roman Britain from incursions from the north.
- 138 C.E. Hadrian dies having adopted Antoninus Pius as his successor, who in turn adopts Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus at Hadrian's insistence.
- Evidence of the presence of Moors (or Muslims) appears in Dacia; they occupy the city of Racari.
- c. 150 C.E. The Goths migrate to the region north of  
–c. 200 C.E. the Black Sea; previous migrations brought them from southern Scandinavia to the area around the Vistula River.
- 161 C.E. Antoninus Pius dies after a long, peaceful reign and is succeeded by Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus who is co-emperor until 169 C.E.
- 165 C.E. Seleucia is destroyed by Gaius Avidius  
–166 C.E. Cassius of Rome. The fall of the city ends a major commercial center in Babylonia; Mesopotamia becomes a Roman protectorate.
- 166 C.E. Pestilence, brought back to Rome by the troops of Lucius Verus who had been campaigning in the east, sweeps the empire.
- German tribes cross the Danube frontier and penetrate the empire as far as northern Italy.
- 180 C.E. Marcus Aurelius dies in camp at Vienna while campaigning on the Danube frontier against barbarian tribes known as the Marcomanni and the Quadi and is succeeded by his eighteen-year old son, Commodus.
- 184 C.E. The Romans are forced to cede the frontier in Scotland. The Roman frontier in Britain now extends only to Hadrian's Wall.
- The rebellion of the Yellow Turbans begins against the Han dynasty in China. The peasant revolt is quelled within six years by Ts'ao Ts'ao.
- 193 C.E. After Commodus' assassination, there is a period of civil war, ending with Septimius Severus seizing power.
- The siege of Byzantium begins, lasting about two years. The city supported general Pescennius Niger's revolt against the Roman ruler Septimius Severus.
- 211 C.E. Severus dies while campaigning in Britain, and is succeeded by his sons, Caracalla (co-emperor since 198) and Geta (co-emperor since 209). In 210, Caracalla murders Geta.
- 212 C.E. The emperor Caracalla extends Roman citizenship to all Roman provincials.
- 226 C.E. The Sassanians overthrow the Parthian dynasty in Iran. The Parthian empire had covered a great expanse, extending during

- one period from Iberia (east of the Black Sea) to the Persian Gulf.
- 235 C.E. The Severan dynasty comes to an end with the murder of the emperor Alexander Severus, and fifty years of military anarchy follow.
- 248 C.E. The Goths invade the Balkan city of Moesia and murder the Roman emperor Gaius Messius Quintus Decius (251); they later sack Nicaea and Nicomedia and raid the Ionian cities.
- 249 C.E. In order to extirpate Christianity, the emperor Decius issues an edict ordering all citizens to sacrifice to the gods and get a certificate proving they had done so. The order lapses after Decius' death in 251 C.E.
- c. 250 C.E. The Mayan classical period begins in Mexico and Central America; the dedication of monuments for astrology and mathematics distinguishes this era.
- 254 C.E. Barbarian attacks in Upper Germany result in the withdrawal of many Roman troops.
- 257 C.E. The Franks, a coalition of Germanic tribes, invade Lower Germany.
- 284 C.E. Diocletian becomes emperor and reforms the government of the empire, appointing Maximian as co-Augustus, ruling the western empire while Diocletian himself ruled in the east, and then appointing as Caesars Galerius (in the east) and Constantius Chlorus (in the west).
- 287 C.E. Marcus Aurelius Mausaeus Carausius, a former Roman admiral, takes Britain and northern Gaul and declares himself emperor.
- c. 301 C.E. Christianity becomes the state religion of Armenia, making it the oldest Christian civilization.
- 303 C.E. Diocletian issues an edict authorizing general persecution of the Christians, which continues to be carried out vigorously in the east by Diocletian's successor, Galerius, but less vigorously in the west.
- 305 C.E. Diocletian and Maximian retire, and Galerius becomes senior Augustus in place of Diocletian and Constantius Chlorus junior Augustus in the west.
- 306 C.E. Constantius Chlorus dies at York in Roman Britain and his troops proclaim his son Constantine emperor in his father's place.
- 311 C.E. Galerius, Augustus in the east, calls off the persecution of the Christians and dies shortly thereafter.
- 312 C.E. Constantine defeats Maxentius, the son of Maximian who had seized control of Italy, at the Milvian Bridge outside Rome. On the eve of the battle he converts to Christianity, and once in control of Rome, he builds his first Christian church, the basilica of St. John Lateran.
- 313 C.E. Constantine and Licinius, now emperors in the east, agree to allow the Christians freedom of religion (the so-called "Edict of Milan").
- The Edict of Toleration of Christian Worship is passed in Trier, Germany.
- 317 C.E. The Eastern Chin dynasty begins in China. The rule will eventually succumb to ongoing attacks from the north.
- 320 C.E. Candra Gupta I rules in India. He controls the center of the country by the time of his death, establishing a power base from the Ganges to the coast of Bengal.
- St. Pachomius establishes the first cenobitic community in Egypt.
- 324 C.E. Constantine unites the empire by defeating Licinius, the Augustus of the east.
- Byzantium becomes the foundation site of Constantinople, the Roman capital on the Danubian frontier.
- 330 C.E. Constantine dedicates his new capital, Constantinople, present-day Istanbul.
- 337 C.E. Constantine dies and is succeeded by his three sons, Constantine II (337–340), Constans (337–350) and Constantius II (337–361).



- 354 C.E. Aurelius Augustinus (St. Augustine) is born; he becomes one of the most important authors of the early Catholic Church. His works include *Confessions* (circa 400), *De doctrina Christiana* (On the Christian Doctrine, 397–428), *De trinitate* (On the Trinity, 400–416), and *De civitate Dei* (On the City of God, 413–426).
- 331 C.E. The reign of the last pagan emperor, Julian  
–363 C.E. who is killed while making a disastrous expedition against the Persian Empire.
- 370 C.E. The Huns expel the Ostrogoths from Ukraine. The Ostrogoths are a division of the Goths, who earlier migrated from Scandinavia to the region south of the Vistula River.
- 378 C.E. A Roman army, led by the emperor Valens, is destroyed by the Goths at Adrianople in Thrace.
- 382 C.E. The emperor Theodosius I settles Goths within the empire as federate troops; they are not assimilated into the Roman army but serve under their own chieftains as allies (*foederati*) of the Roman Empire.
- 395 C.E. On the death of the emperor Theodosius, the empire is divided between his two sons, with Honorius ruling in the west and his elder brother, Arcadius, ruling in the east.
- c. 400 C.E. The first settlers, sailing from the Polynesian islands, arrive in Hawaii.
- Pelagius, the British Christian writer, is active during this period. He spends some years in Rome, but the political unrest there leads him to Africa and Palestine; Pelagius's exhortation to Demetrias is called the first British literature.
- The Olmec civilization in Central America ends.
- 406 C.E. The Germanic Vandals occupy the Rhine  
–407 C.E. region after the Huns drive them westward; the nomadic Alans of Russia are also driven to Gaul by the Huns. This expulsion marks the end of Roman rule in Gaul.
- 410 C.E. The city of Rome is captured and sacked by a horde of Visigoths led by Alaric.
- Britain is abandoned by the Roman Empire. The Saxons and other Germanic peoples become more prevalent; Celtic culture also spreads.
- Alaric dies.
- 429 C.E. The Vandals enter North Africa and over the next ten years take over the Roman provinces there.
- 441 C.E. Attila leads the Huns against the Eastern  
–443 C.E. Roman Empire; they destroy such cities as Naissus in Moesia.
- 451 C.E. The Huns are defeated in Gaul by a Roman force, along with the Visigoths, at the Catalaunian plains.
- The Council of Chalcedon establishes the doctrine of diophysitism, the idea that Christ is both human and divine; the council declares any other doctrine heresy.
- The Persians defeat the Armenians at the Battle of Avarayr. The Zoroastrian faith replaces Christianity as the official religion in this region.
- 476 C.E. Odoacer the German deposes Romulus Augustulus in Rome; the Ostrogoths soon establish an empire in Italy. Gaiseric, the king of Vandals and the Alans, who had captured Rome eleven years earlier, dies the following year.
- The last Roman emperor in the west, Romulus Augustulus, is deposed.
- 490 C.E. The Ostrogoths under their king, Theodoric, invade Italy and establish the Ostrogothic kingdom which lasts until 554.
- 527 C.E. The emperor Justinian reigns in Constantinople and directs a campaign to recover  
–565 C.E. North Africa, Italy, and part of Spain for the empire.

1  
chapter one

# ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

William H. Peck

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	4	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>The Ruins of Mycenae</i> (Pausanias explains the history behind the ruins of Mycenae) . . . . .	12
Surviving Sources . . . . .	5	<i>Pausanias Describes the Parthenon</i> (Pausanias explains the historical and mythological significance of the Parthenon's ornamentation). . . . .	18
Minoan and Mycenaean Architecture . . . . .	8	City Planning Was Not Invented Only by the Greeks. . . . .	26
Greek Architecture . . . . .	12	<i>The Education of the Architect</i> (Vitruvius describes the education required of a Roman architect) . . . . .	27
Etruscan Architecture . . . . .	24	<i>The Emperor Augustus Changes the Face of Rome</i> (Seutonius comments on the architectural legacy of Emperor Augustus) . . . . .	28
Roman Architecture . . . . .	25	<i>Nero Builds a "Golden House"</i> (Suetonius tells the story of Nero's luxurious palace). . . . .	30
The Late Antique . . . . .	38	<i>Bathing Establishments on a Grand Scale</i> (ancient commentary on the grandeur of Rome's public works) . . . . .	34
Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture . . . . .	39		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Hadrian. . . . .	40		
Pausanias . . . . .	40		
Plutarch. . . . .	41		
Suetonius. . . . .	41		
Vitruvius . . . . .	41		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	42		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Architecture and Design*

- c. 3000 B.C.E. The beginning of the Hellenic civilization in the Greek mainland includes the construction of some early structures for domestic and public use.
- c. 2000 B.C.E. The first attempts at more carefully designed architecture take place in Greece.
- c. 2000 B.C.E. The inhabitants of Crete are influenced through their contacts with other peoples of the eastern Mediterranean to attempt larger and more complete buildings.
- c. 2000 B.C.E. The Minoan Palace Culture in Crete flourishes; this architecture is known for its arrangement of buildings around a central court, varying levels connected by small staircases, and monumental entrances.
- c. 1600 B.C.E. The development of the Mycenaean Palace Culture spreads through parts of mainland Greece. This architecture is influenced by the Minoan Palace Culture but has more logical ground-plans and are built as fortifications.
- c. 1450 B.C.E. The palaces of Crete are destroyed, probably by invaders from mainland Greece.
- c. 1300 B.C.E. The “Treasury of Atreus” at Mycenae is constructed. It is an almost perfectly preserved example of the “tholos” tomb type.
- c. 1250 B.C.E. The Lion Gate at Mycenae, one of the few Mycenaean monuments that would have been visible to later Greek travelers, is built.
- c. 1100 B.C.E. At this date or a little earlier a wholesale destruction of palaces and citadels takes place. About four centuries of confusion and poverty ensue, later called by some scholars the “Dark Ages” of Greece.
- c. 800 B.C.E. Early Greek temples are first constructed using pre-Doric designs.
- c. 700 B.C.E.
- c. 580 B.C.E. The Temple of Artemis at Corfu and the Temple of Hera at Olympia are constructed. These temples are the oldest known examples of archaic Doric architecture.
- c. 550 B.C.E. The Temple of Apollo at Corinth and the Basilica at Paestum are completed. They are the best known surviving examples of purely Doric-style temples.
- c. 490 B.C.E. The Temple of Aphaia at Aegina is completed. It is the first temple to meld the Doric and Ionic styles.
- c. 447 B.C.E. The Parthenon at Athens is constructed. It is the best surviving example of a Doric temple with Ionic elements.
- c. 432 B.C.E.
- c. 437 B.C.E. The Propylaea at Athens is constructed. It is one of the only surviving monumental entrance structures.
- c. 432 B.C.E.
- c. 421 B.C.E. The Erechtheum at Athens is constructed. It is the only temple of importance to be constructed fully in the Ionic style.
- c. 405 B.C.E.
- c. 350 B.C.E. Construction begins on the theater at Epidaurus, one of the best preserved Greek theaters.
- c. 170 B.C.E. Construction of the Temple of Olympian Zeus at Athens is begun and will not end until the second century C.E. It is one of the most balanced examples of Doric architecture to incorporate the Corinthian style.

- c. 150 B.C.E. The Stoa of Attalus, a public meeting place with shops in the Agora at Athens, is constructed around this date. It is a typical example of a building designed for practical use and commerce.
- c. 100 B.C.E. The Temple of Fortuna Virilis is constructed in Rome, incorporating Greek and Etruscan design elements.
- c. 40 B.C.E. The Tower of the Winds at Athens is constructed. It is the first truly Roman structure built in Greece.
- c. 27 B.C.E. The Pantheon in Rome is begun by Agrippa but it is not completed until the reign of the emperor Hadrian in the second century.
- c. 16 B.C.E. The Pont du Gard aqueduct is constructed. It is admired for its functionality in carrying water as well as its architectural properties such as its proportionate arches and varied heights.
- c. 13 B.C.E. The Maison Carrée at Nîmes is constructed. It is the best surviving example of the blending of the Greek and Etruscan designs used in Augustan architecture.
- c. 64 C.E. Nero's Golden House is completed. It combines every architectural technique known at the time, including a revolutionary revolving dome.
- c. 70 C.E. The Colosseum in Rome is completed, an unprecedented four-story structure. It was created using pioneering architectural tools such as arches, columns, and mechanical elements such as pulleys and elevators.
- c. 79 C.E. The destruction of Pompeii by the eruption of Vesuvius preserves Roman architecture for future generations.
- c. 81 C.E. The Arch of Titus at Rome is completed. It is the best surviving example of a gateway arch.
- c. 111 C.E. The construction of Trajan's Forum, –c. 114 C.E. the largest of the imperial forums, occurs during this time.
- c. 113 C.E. Trajan's Column in his forum at Rome is dedicated. This marks the first column to serve as a burial place as well as a remembrance marker.
- c. 125 C.E. The Pantheon at Rome is constructed. –c. 128 C.E. It is a good surviving example of the Roman use of concrete to create domes and rotundas.
- c. 135 C.E. Hadrian's villa at Tivoli is completed. It is a rare architectural complex that incorporated landscape into the design of various buildings.
- c. 211 C.E. The Baths of Caracalla at Rome are constructed, one of the best surviving large bathhouses. It shows the extravagance that architectural designs began to include such as swimming pools, baths, and game rooms.
- c. 217 C.E. The Palace of Diocletian at Spalato is constructed, taking cues of architectural decadence from Persian designs.
- c. 300 C.E. The Basilica of Maxentius at Rome is constructed. It is one of the most important monuments in classical antiquity and one of the first Christian structures in Rome.
- c. 313 C.E. The Basilica of Constantine at Trier in northern Gaul is completed. It is the last of the great civilian basilicas constructed before the style was adopted fully by religious structures.
- c. 312 C.E. The Arch of Constantine at Rome is constructed, marking the regular use of the Roman Corinthian style as well. –c. 315 C.E. The arch is also the best surviving example of a triumphal arch.
- c. 532 C.E. The Hagia Sophia at Constantinople is constructed. It is the greatest example of Byzantine architecture. –c. 537 C.E.

## OVERVIEW *of Architecture and Design*

### **THE HERITAGE OF CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE.**

The architecture of Greece, Etruria, and Rome is one of the most important parts of the Western world's heritage from the time of antiquity. Forms and traditions that were developed in ancient Greece and its colonies, with the addition of the influence of Etruscan traditions, were augmented by the innovations of Roman architects and engineers. These have inspired and molded the architectural forms of Europe and the United States as well as all of the cultures touched by them. The traditions of classical architecture have persisted well into the twentieth century, only to be replaced in part by the advent of modern materials and building techniques. The models for banks, railroad stations, and other public buildings were for many years the temples of the Greeks and the bath complexes of the Romans.

**SOURCES AND EVIDENCE.** The sources of knowledge available to modern scholars for a study of the architecture of the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans consist mainly of four types. The most obvious type of evidence are the ancient buildings still preserved in whole or in part, although there are very few structures that fit this category. Examples include the Pantheon in Rome and the Maison Carrée in Nîmes, France. The second body of material comes from the excavation of ancient sites and the remains of destroyed buildings. This evidence provides the additional possibility of reconstructing something of the appearance of monuments no longer preserved, and it also provides much of the modern knowledge about domestic architecture, the construction of houses and dwellings. For the third source one may turn to the writings of a limited number of ancient Greek and Roman authors who have preserved some descriptions of the appearance of buildings as well as the methods of construction or the architectural theories employed. To these three sources can be added the representation of monuments and buildings on coins and other works of art. These can provide some idea of the appearance of structures that disappeared long ago.

**BUILDING MATERIALS.** The materials employed by ancient architects were generally simple and somewhat limited by the technology of the time. In the earliest periods unbaked mud brick and plaster were employed, with the addition of wood for roofing material. The development of stone architecture was slow at first, dependant on the metal technology necessary to facilitate quarrying and dressing the material. The employment of stone was first restricted to important structures, mainly cult temples. The principal building technique consisted of a horizontal member supported on two vertical uprights. Even the uses of this simple form were limited by the technical ability to place stone elements at great height. As knowledge of the bearing strength of stone became better understood, buildings could assume larger proportions. At the same time the decoration of buildings progressed as the artistic qualities of architecture were developed and modified. Complex architectural elements employing the use of arches and vaulting and the advanced utilization of brick and concrete were relatively late innovations made mainly during the period of the Roman Empire. These advances allowed for larger structures capable of enclosing vast spaces.

**MINOAN AND MYCENAEAN CULTURE.** The earliest record of designed structures in Greece come from the remains of the palaces on the island of Crete, built by the Minoan civilization between 1700 B.C.E. and 1200 B.C.E. It is necessary to mention them if only because they represent a significant architectural tradition of distant memory in the Aegean area, representing a level of development to which the later Greek architects would later return. The multileveled complexes of these palaces with upper floors supported by columns and walls decorated with fresco painting reached a level of utilitarian design and sophistication not matched in the ancient world. The Minoans were followed by the Mycenaean civilization of the Greek mainland that made significant advances during its last phase (c. 1400–1100 B.C.E.). Massive stone architecture for citadels, temples, and tombs became typical, but this tradition was not continued during the so-called “Dark Age” of Greece (c. 1200–800 B.C.E.). Much of the knowledge of architectural achievement and technical advances was lost and had to be reinvented after a period of almost 400 years.

**GREEK ARCHITECTURE.** The early beginnings of traditional Greek architecture can only be demonstrated by very slim evidence. This includes the excavated remains of a building termed a *megaron* at the site of Theion in Aetolia in Greece dating to around 1000 B.C.E. Terra-cotta models of similar buildings from two centuries later provide additional evidence for the impor-

tance of the form. The *megaron* consisted of a single room or hall with an open end and a porch supported by two columns. Buildings of this type were probably more an official meeting hall than a religious building but the arrangement anticipates the general layout of later formal temple design. At the end of the seventh century B.C.E. the two most important arrangements or “orders” of Greek architecture had begun to evolve. The Doric and the Ionic orders take their names from the two dialects of Greek generally spoken on the mainland and in Asia Minor. As architectural styles the Doric developed earlier but the two orders were used concurrently throughout Greece and the colonies. The ground plan of temples from this time was still a simple arrangement consisting of a long room with a porch supported by columns. Some decoration in relief sculpture was added and statues of cult deities were in evidence. By 600 B.C.E. the emerging form of the Greek temple can be demonstrated in the remains of the Temple of Hera at Olympia. This temple also provides clear evidence of the transition from wood architecture to stone. By the early sixth century, around 570, the formal elements of arrangement and decoration had been standardized. The result, as exemplified by the Temple of Zeus, also at Olympia, was an example of impressive and logical design. After the destruction of the Acropolis in Athens by the Persians early in the fifth century, the Parthenon was erected from 447 to 439. Dedicated to Athena, it stands as the epitome of classical architecture and the culmination of a development of architectural design which transformed simple utilitarian structures into artistically realized and awe-inspiring monuments. The architecture of the Hellenistic Period (330–146 B.C.E.) employed variations and elaborations on the developed forms of the classical architecture of the fifth and fourth centuries but maintained standards of proportion and design while striving for more dramatic and impressive effect.

**ETRUSCAN ARCHITECTURE.** Etruscan architecture began to develop at about the same time as early Greek architecture. The Etruscans, mainly in north-west Italy, were in contact with the Greeks and were a formative influence on the Romans. The evidence for the architecture of the Etruscans consists mainly of the remains of their temples and tombs. The tomb was often an underground chamber or chambers sometimes marked by a tumulus or mound. The typical temple form contained a chamber with a deep porch, usually elevated on a platform with steps leading to it. Much of the preserved decoration from Etruscan temples was made of molded and painted terra cotta rather than the carved stone favored by the Greeks. Etruscan forms such as the raised temple

and the circular tumulus were an influence on the architecture of the following Roman period.

**CLASSICAL AND BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE.** In many respects the Romans continued in the traditions of the Greek architects but they were also influenced by the Etruscans. The singular innovations of the Romans were the more general use of the arch and the development of the vault and the dome. These forms were made possible by the employment of building techniques that employed concrete, a material taken for granted in modern times, but one only exploited widely toward the end of the Roman Republic. The theaters, arenas, bridges, baths and aqueducts of the Romans represent an era of engineering advancement almost unparalleled in the history of the world. The advancements in engineering and construction techniques made during the late Roman Republic and the early empire were carried on after Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire. This was evident mainly in the use of the basilica form—originally a secular administrative building type—for church architectural design, but also in the use of vaulted and domed techniques for the construction of church forms which became increasingly more elaborate. When the emperor Constantine transferred the capital to Constantinople the state fostered this development of monumental structures dedicated to the new religion.

**CONCLUSION.** The architecture of the classical world began simply, to satisfy basic human needs. It was based on practical considerations and restricted by limited technical skills. Its evolution in the Greek homeland and colonies can be traced for over 700 years in the development of a style that is still inspirational today. The complexity of architectural production under the Romans remains one of the great building achievements of history culminating in the religious architecture of the Byzantine Empire. This development of architectural form covered a span of about 1,500 years, a period in which much of the lasting vocabulary of Western architectural design was invented and perfected.

## TOPICS *in Architecture and Design*

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### SURVIVING SOURCES

**LOSS OF EVIDENCE.** The architecture of ancient Greece and Rome never completely disappeared. Many

examples of buildings or the remains of them have always been visible or have been easily rediscovered, particularly in the Greek mainland and in Italy. However, the remains of classical antiquity can be found throughout the lands of the Mediterranean, the Aegean, North Africa, and the Middle East. Such remains were not always respected and preserved. It is all too obvious that ancient buildings were reused for different purposes than for those for which they were originally intended, often necessitating structural or decorative changes. As an example, in Syracuse, in Sicily, it is possible to see the original columns of a temple imbedded in the wall of the later church that utilized the original site. Marble and sandstone could very easily be reused, and limestone was often burned for the lime it contained. Decorative columns were taken away and pressed into service in later churches and mosques. Metal fittings and other decorative elements were regularly stripped from buildings to be melted down. Many dedication inscriptions in metal lettering have disappeared as a result of this practice.

**REDISCOVERY IN THE RENAISSANCE.** In the late fourteenth century artists and architects, principally in the cities of Italy including Rome and Florence, began to take a new interest in the art and architecture that surrounded them. It was an important part of the general reawakening or “rebirth” of interest in classical antiquity at the time that included all aspects of ancient learning. Scholars, artists, and architects began to investigate the ancient remains, study and copy the preserved decorations, and analyze the proportions of the monuments. The result of this newly developed field of study was an attempt to imitate the art and architecture of antiquity, regarded as a perfected art worthy to serve as models for their time. The writing of Vitruvius was taken very seriously as the guide to proper application of the rules of ancient architecture, disregarding the fact that his work was limited by his own time and experience to a short time in ancient Roman history. However, the revived interest in classical architecture was mainly limited to Roman rather than Greek examples because of the nature of the remains available. This was not a simple copying of Roman buildings but an attempt to understand the elements, systems of proportion, and decorative devices, in order to use them in ways suitable to their own time. Architects such as Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and Michelozzo Michelozzi (c. 1396–1472) were among the leaders and innovators in the newly developed style, but it was with artist-architects like Bramante, Michelangelo, and Palladio that it reached its highest expressions.

**THE CLASSICAL REVIVAL.** The Renaissance architecture of Italy had considerable influence on the later developments in France and England, but a revived interest in ancient architecture was also kindled by the discovery and excavation of ancient remains such as the buried city of Pompeii in the mid-eighteenth century. The ancient monuments of Athens were also studied and published, as were the structures of Palmyra, a city in the Syrian desert. The Panthéon in Paris, designed by Jacques Germain Soufflot (1709–1780), modeled on the ancient Roman building in Rome, is a good example of this revived interest. Many products of this reuse of ancient principals and ideas exist throughout Europe. One outstanding example is the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, designed by Karl Gotfried Langhans (1733–1808) and built at the end of the eighteenth century. It was clearly modeled after a structure in Athens, although some details have been changed. For the classical revival in America, one of the outstanding names is that of Thomas Jefferson. He believed that Roman architecture was best suited for the important buildings of the new American republic, and he applied his direct knowledge of ancient remains and his theories to a number of projects including the Virginia State Capitol. Greek forms were also employed by other architects in the young country, as in the design of the Bank of the United States in Philadelphia. The architect, William Strickland (1787–1854), used the Parthenon in Athens for his model and inspiration. The ideals of classical architecture have persisted, almost to the present day. Many important buildings have been designed with the models of ancient Greece and Rome in mind. This is such an integral part of the development of American architecture that it almost goes unnoticed today because the forms are so familiar to us.

**EXISTING BUILDINGS.** The architectural remains of the Greek and Roman world survive in varied stages of preservation in a number of places around the Mediterranean basin. Some Roman examples, such as the Maison Carrée at Nîmes in France, dedicated early in the first century, or the Pantheon in Rome, a construction largely of the second century, still stand much as they were built in antiquity. These attest to the methods used in their construction but also to the respect shown them when they were later utilized as Christian churches. By contrast, major monuments such as the Parthenon on the Acropolis at Athens were not so well treated and are evidence to that neglect. The Parthenon had been used as a church, a mosque, and then for the storage of gunpowder. It was partly destroyed when an explosion of an ammunition cache blasted out much of one side of the structure in 1687. Except for that accident, it might be

one of the best-preserved Greek temples in the modern world. Not many examples of Greek and Roman architecture have survived even this well, although there are many lesser-known remains outside of Greece and Italy that add to modern knowledge.

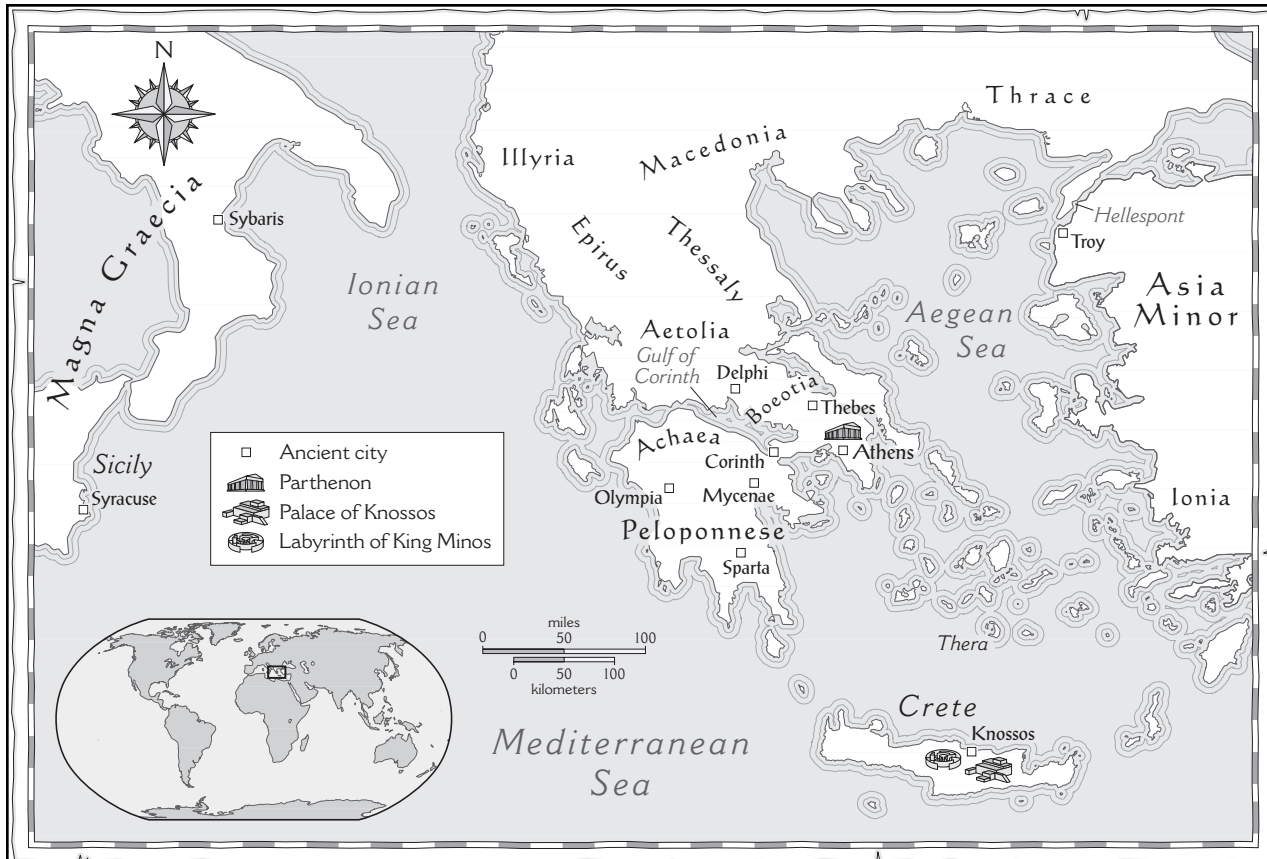
**SURVIVING GREEK ARCHITECTURE.** The ancient buildings of Greece are justly famous and include some examples, such as the Parthenon, with the complex of buildings on the Athenian Acropolis, and the temple called the Theseum, also in Athens, that give modern scholars some idea of the appearance of the ancient buildings. Throughout the country are the remains of structures in various stages of preservation. With some monuments, such as the great temple at Olympia, the appearance of the building has only been determined by excavation of the site, extensive study, and reconstruction on paper. With others, where only a few columns might remain upright, the plan of the structure can still be determined from the remains of stone foundations. The most significant examples of Greek architecture away from the Greek mainland are to be found in southern Italy, Sicily, and the western coast of Turkey (East Greece). To study the evolution of early Greek architecture the temples at Paestum, south of Naples, and at various sites on the island of Sicily, including Selinute and Agrigento, provide essential supplementary evidence. By chance of preservation, these more nearly complete or re-constructible examples exist in what were the colonies of the Greek city-states. When the Greeks colonized southern Italy and Sicily they brought their architects and artists and imported their own traditions of art and design. For most constructions they simply used local materials. By contrast, the great temple of Diana at Ephesus, in what is now western Turkey, survived as only the foundation platform; still providing enough evidence for some idea of the appearance of what must have been one of the great buildings of antiquity.

**SURVIVING ETRUSCAN AND ROMAN ARCHITECTURE.** The preserved architecture of the Etruscans is limited to tombs, of which thousands have been found. Etruscan tombs were generally underground structures containing several chambers or rooms. Some of the architectural detail incorporated in the decoration suggests that the tombs were meant to imitate temple and house architecture but few examples of domestic and religious structures have actually been preserved. There are town walls composed of roughly hewn stone which can be dated to the time of the Etruscans but the actual style of buildings can only be reconstructed from the evidence obtained from excavations. In contrast, the evidence for the evolution of Roman architecture during the Republic

and the empire is extensive and a variety of structures are preserved in whole or in part. In addition to famous structures such as the Pantheon and Maison Carrée, there are many monuments in the city of Rome and in the Italian peninsula that give a vivid picture of the variety of Roman building. These include temples and tombs, palaces and theaters, and an assortment of public structures including aqueducts, bridges, bath complexes, markets, administrative buildings and the like. Probably the most familiar examples are the amphitheaters and ceremonial arches, exemplified by the Colosseum and the Arch of Constantine in Rome. However, the cities of Ostia, the seaport of Rome, and the two cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, preserved by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, also provide considerable evidence of town planning, layout, and development. Other evidence exists outside of Italy as well. As the Roman Empire grew, the colonies sustained building projects that have left many partly or completely preserved examples. To mention only a few areas, in the colonies of North Africa, whole ancient cities have been preserved, only to be recovered by excavation. In such places the remains of civic centers, religious and political monuments, and domestic complexes have been found. Throughout Europe, notably in France and Spain, amphitheaters, bridges, and aqueducts attest to the skill of Roman architects and engineers.

**LITERARY AND OTHER EVIDENCE.** For Greek architecture and construction methods there is considerable inscriptional evidence preserved. In this material architects are named; contracts for quarrying, transportation of material, and actual construction are itemized and the wages of various class of workmen are detailed. Modern scholars are also fortunate that professional Roman architect Vitruvius Pollio, writing in the time of the emperor Augustus, left an extensive and detailed discussion of the techniques of ancient architecture that has been preserved. He was a practicing architect and military engineer with a knowledge that was both theoretical and practical. In his work *De Architectura* (On Architecture) he discussed numerous subjects, ranging from the types and characteristics of building material employed during the early empire, to the placement of buildings in respect to the natural environment. His viewpoint was one that looked back at classical Greek architecture as a model to imitate but he also left valuable information about the nature of Etruscan buildings. What he wrote about methods of construction and materials, as well as the rules of proportion employed in architectural design, is very valuable to an understanding of ancient architecture. Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus) also wrote about the





Map showing Ancient Greece and Crete, the cities of Delphi, Thebes, Athens, Corinth, Mycenae, Olympia, Sparta, Troy, Knossos, important monuments, the Parthenon, Palace of Knossos, Labyrinth of King Minos. XNR PRODUCTIONS, INC. THE GALE GROUP. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

use of metals and stone in architecture in his encyclopedic *Natural History*. In addition, many ancient authors or travelers described the buildings they saw. Probably the most important of these was the Greek traveler, Pausanias. He left invaluable descriptions of what impressed him when he visited the important cities of Greece in the second century C.E. In addition to inscriptions and literary descriptions, there are countless examples of the representation of buildings or parts of them on coins, in wall painting, pottery decoration, and even terra cotta models. These often depict structures or monuments that no longer exist and convey supplementary information that can be used to fill out our knowledge of ancient architecture.

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**MINOAN AND MYCENAEAN ARCHITECTURE**

**CULTURAL BACKGROUND.** Before the flowering of the classic Greek architectural style in the mainland there were two important periods of development in building that had come before. The Minoan (c. 2600–1100 B.C.E.) and Mycenaean (c. 2800–1100 B.C.E.) civilizations flourished in the island of Crete and in mainland Greece for close to 2,000 years. Many of their accomplishments in art and architecture were unknown to the Greeks of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. but some memory of their accomplishments was preserved in mythology and epic poetry such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer, and some archeological traces of their structures survived. The Minoans are known to modern



A light well in the Minoan palace at Phaestus in Crete. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

scholars by the modern name given to them derived from the mythical king Minos who was said in mythology to have a great palace at Knossos in Crete. They were an island people and seafarers who traded widely in the eastern Mediterranean and came into contact with the cultures of Egypt and the Near East. Undoubtedly they knew something of the monumental buildings erected by the peoples of Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley and may have been influenced by them. Fortresses and temples, however, were not an important part of their building concerns. The island location of the culture provided some defense against invaders and marauders so the art of fortification and fortress building was not especially developed. The idea of building shrines or temples to the gods had also not developed to any great extent. Hence the most important examples of Minoan architecture were the result of a highly developed style of complex palace design. What is known of the remains of the palace architecture of the Minoans, as evidenced by palaces such as the one at Knossos, have been revealed by excavation and reconstruction.

**MINOAN ARCHITECTURE: KNOSSOS.** In Crete the bare remains of the ground plans of simple houses from

the late prehistoric period have been uncovered, but it was not until the excavation of the palace of Minos at Knossos by Sir Arthur Evans that the complexity and something of the development of Minoan architecture was known. The palace—most likely built between 1600 and 1500 B.C.E.—is essentially a governmental administrative center and a royal residence combined. Arranged around a large central courtyard were dozens of rooms, chambers, small courts, halls, and storerooms. The maze-like arrangement of these elements may have even been the inspiration for the myth of the fabled labyrinth. The building was unusual in that it was several stories high with the upper floors supported by columns. The shape of these architectural elements has been debated but there is considerable evidence to show that the columns were tapered in a manner that was the reverse of the normal shape in later Greek architecture; they were larger at the top and gradually smaller at the bottom. Staircases and light wells provided access and air circulation for this complex building. The walls of the palace were decorated with fresco painting (painting done on the wet plaster) as well as modeled plaster reliefs. Both the complexity of the structure, built over a long period with many changes and additions, and the colorful decoration attest to a



View across the courtyard of the Minoan palace at Phaestus in Crete. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

highly developed civilization with considerable wealth and material resources at its command.

**OTHER MINOAN ARCHITECTURE.** Although the Minoan civilization is best known today from the partly reconstructed ruins of the palace at Knossos, many other remains of this culture exist on the island of Crete. The principal evidence is to be found at Phaestus, Mallia, and Hagia Triada. The final stage of the palace structure at Phaestus in the south of the island is characterized by a more regular plan. Although not symmetrical in its layout it appears to adhere to an almost rectangular grid. One of the important features of the palace is an open court, or peristyle, with columns around it. This seems to anticipate one of the main features of the typical Greek house of a thousand years later but it is probably only an example of a design solution for interior space that might have developed anywhere. The palace at Mallia, on the north coast east of Knossos, is distinguished by a large court with many small rooms leading from it in a confusing arrangement that appears not to have been carefully planned in advance. There is some thought that the maze of rooms supported an upper story where the arrangement of space may have been more formal. Due

to the terrain, the small palace (or villa) at Haiga Triada on the south coast was laid out without a central courtyard in an “L”-shaped plan. This suggests that architects of the Minoan period were adaptable to the local situation in their design for large administration buildings and domestic quarters.

**MYCENAEAN ARCHITECTURE.** The Mycenaean peoples—named after Mycena, the most prominent city on mainland Greece at this time—ushered in a new attitude toward architecture and building. The Mycenaeans were a dominating culture and soon expanded from the mainland of Greece into the Greek isles, overcoming the Minoans of Crete by 1400 B.C.E. and, being a mainland culture, began building compact citadels and fortresses protected by massive walls instead of large sprawling palace complexes. The citadels at Mycenae and at Tiryns have many common features, including an orderly and compact ground plan, encircling fortress walls, and rooms that were used for administrative purposes as well as residential. The interior walls were of stone with upper parts in sun-dried brick. Interior supporting columns were of wood, floors of plaster or gypsum, and ornamentation in plaster as well as some



The Lion Gate at Mycenae, Greece, so-called from the sculpture on the limestone slab above the lintel block, showing two lions with their feet resting on an altar. © CHRIS HELLIER/CORBIS.

carved stone. The “megaron” form, basically a long hall used for assembly, is an important element in Mycenaean architecture. It is this general form that is thought by some to be the basis that later Greek temple design took as a starting point. The other major architectural achievement of the Mycenaeans was the Tholos tomb. Originally these were thought to be treasuries or storehouses for valuables, but they are now generally believed to be the tombs of Mycenaean rulers. The tholos tomb was a circular, underground, stone structure with an interior rising to a point. The stone construction was accomplished with the corbelled system where each higher row of stones overlaps or projects farther into space. When a corbelled dome or arch is trimmed or cut to a curve, it is virtually impossible to determine that it is not based on a true arch. The “Treasury of Atreus” at Mycenae (1300–1250 B.C.E.) is a prime example of the tholos type of tomb. It was approached by a straight passage of about 35 meters cut into the hillside. The main entrance doorway was decorated with half columns in green stone with other facing elements in red stone. These were carved with decorations of spi-

rals, chevrons, rosettes, and other geometric designs. The massive size of some of the stones, particularly one of the lintels, which has been estimated at over 100 tons, indicates a level of experience and an organizational ability that made it possible to shape, move, and handle extraordinary construction elements. This ability to work in large stone, also seen in the construction of the citadels, is thought by some scholars to be related to the work of the contemporary Hittites in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). At Pylos in the southwest the remains of a palace has been found. It is a complex, somewhat resembling Minoan architecture, with courts, rooms, stairways and storage areas. There was an original megaron but it is not central to the plan. Two phases of construction can be seen with an expansion that became the more important part of the building. In the latter phase there is a larger and more formal megaron with a central hearth and four columns that once supported a four-sided balcony. This large audience hall was decorated with fresco paintings and mosaic floor in a lavish manner that indicates the wealth and power of the rulers of Pylos.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE RUINS OF MYCENAE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In the second century C.E. the Greek traveler Pausanias, who can only be described as an antiquarian—a person who studies ancient remains—left an account of the sights he saw and tried to give historical explanations for them. His descriptions of the monuments of Greece are an invaluable source and reference. He often describes the way a temple area was decorated and he gives the names of the artists who were responsible for the sculpture, as well as the architects. His historical explanations of events are sometimes a little fanciful, but they were based on the knowledge of history available to him in his time. As an example, his description of the citadel of Mycenae and its gate decorated with lions illustrates the fact that the remains of a period in Greek history of over a thousand years earlier were still visible and were still identified with the people who made them.

It was jealousy which caused the Argives to destroy Mycenae. For at the time of the Persian invasion the Ar-

gives made no move, but the Mycenaean sent eighty men to Thermopylae who shared in the achievement of the Lacedaemonians. This eagerness for distinction brought ruin upon them by exasperating the Argives. There still remain, however, parts of the city wall, including the gate, upon which stand lions. These, too, are said to be the work of the Cyclopes, who made for Proetus the wall at Tiryns. In the ruins of Mycenae is a fountain called Persea; there are also underground chambers of Atreus and his children, in which were stored their treasures. There is the grave of Atreus, along with the graves of such as returned with Agamemnon from Troy, and were murdered by Aegisthus after he had given them a banquet. As for the tomb of Cassandra, it is claimed by the Lacedaemonians who dwell around Amyclae. Agamemnon has his tomb, and so has Eurymedon the charioteer, while another is shared by Teledamus and Pelops, twin sons, they say, of Cassandra, whom while yet babies Aegisthus slew after their parents.

**SOURCE:** Pausanias, *Description of Greece*. Trans. W. H. S. Jones (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918): 331.

**THE DARK AGES.** The centers of Mycenaean strength were destroyed from around the beginning of the eleventh century B.C.E. as the Dorians began to invade Greece. Like any invading culture, the Dorians brought their own cultural styles, and the Mycenaean and Minoan influences began to be suppressed. Many historians have termed this the “dark ages” of Greek history, for the Dorians did little to advance any of the cultural aspects of the society, and architecture, which would take on mainly Doric traditions by the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E., remained mainly in the Mycenaean style during this time. By the time that the Greek culture began to construct its famous temples and structures of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., many of the architectural designs of the Mycenaean and Minoans had been lost, but many were the basic elements for what is considered by many scholars to be classical Greek architecture.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: The Early Greeks on Mainland Greece*

**GREEK ARCHITECTURE**

**GREEK BUILDING TECHNIQUES.** Almost all major Greek architecture employed the simple “post and lintel” system. In this method of building, two or more uprights—columns, piers, or walls—support horizontal members of a length limited by the strength of stone able to support its own weight. The “post” is the upright structural part and the “lintel” is the bridging element meant to span openings or support the roofing of the building. The Greeks became proficient in this style of construction as they developed methods of quarrying stone and the transportation and the handling of large stone masses. Ingenious devices were invented for the lifting and hoisting of building materials. From inscriptions we know that the pulley, a device now taken for granted, was used with wooden lifting structures. These primitive cranes had two, three, or four legs, depending on the situation and the weight demands. Systems were developed for lifting stone that employed rope rigging to lift while levers and crowbars were used for placement. These devices seem self-evident today, but in their time they represented technological advances over the ancient technique of moving stone to a height on sleds and ramps. Timbers were used to support and form the structure of the roofing that was usually covered with tile. In domestic architecture, dwellings, shops, and other utilitarian buildings, construction was much simpler. It



The Treasury (Storehouse) of the Athenians at Delphi, Greece, built after the victory of the Athenians over the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C.E. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

usually consisted of walls of fired or unfired brick laid on rough stone foundations. The tools employed for most architectural work were simple, yet they represent the state of technology of the period. Architects and engineers used cords for measuring, with squares, plumb bobs, and levels to maintain the accuracy of the construction. Masons employed hammers, axes, files, and chisels to work the stone. Iron tools were adequate to shape marble and limestone.

**EARLIEST TEMPLES.** The history of Greek architecture is essentially the history of the development of the Greek temple. In the Bronze Age and the periods of Minoan and Mycenaean strength in Crete and mainland Greece, the temple was not the principal place of worship of the gods. A dwelling place or cult center for the deity was not defined by an elaborate structure so the importance that was to be placed on temple building signaled a new and different attitude to worship. One important consideration must still be remembered. The temple in Greek culture was not a building to accommodate groups of worshipers. It was the house of the god or goddess with a statue of the deity and perhaps

some additional rooms that functioned as treasuries, but the rites and sacrifices made to the god were carried out on an altar in front of the temple. The earliest examples of temples of the Greek age can only be deduced from archaeological evidence. There are pottery models of single-room structures with peaked roofs dating to the eighth century B.C.E. that give some indication of early temple design. The idea of surrounding a temple structure with one or more rows of columns seems to have been a purely Greek invention. In other ancient cultures, particularly in Egypt, columns were mainly used on the interior of temples, sometimes in great profusion. In Greek architecture the exposed column was one of the most characteristic elements. Probably the earliest rectangular temple with a colonnade surrounding it for which there is evidence is the temple to the goddess Hera on the island of Samos. It has been dated to the late eighth century B.C.E. At this stage the columns were of wood set on bases of stone. The temple was rebuilt in the seventh century B.C.E., made slightly larger, and modifications were made that brought it closer to the



Ruins of the Temple of Hera at Olympia, Greece, dating from the beginning of the 6th century B.C.E. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

eventual proportion and design of temples of the classic age.

**EARLY DORIC STYLE.** About 580 B.C.E. a Doric-style temple was built to the goddess Artemis on the island of Corfu, just off the northwest coast of mainland Greece. Although it has been completely dismantled, enough of the limestone blocks have been found to furnish evidence to suggest its size—about 77 feet wide and about twice that in length. Enough of the pediment—the triangular space at the end under the double-pitched roof—was recovered to show that it had been decorated with carving in relief, representing a gorgon and a battle between gods and giants. This is the one of the earliest examples of pedimental sculpture that can be determined. Around the same time a temple was built to the goddess Hera at Olympia. Only the superstructure has been preserved but it was possible to deduce that it had sixteen columns on the side and six at the ends, the corner columns counted twice. The columns had no separate base but rested on the top step of the platform. Columns of the type called Doric were fluted—carved with a series of shallow vertical chan-

nels—and tapered toward the top. The capital, or top of the column, consisted of a curved pad-like part with a square block above. The plan of the temple at Olympia includes a pronaos, cella, and the first known example of the opisthodomus. The cella was the central hall or sanctuary of the temple, and the pronaos was the small anteroom in front of it. The opisthodomus is a small porch at the back of the cella. There were two rows of columns inside to support the roof and evidence that there had been engaged columns as well, attached to the sidewalls. This temple originally had columns in wood that were only gradually replaced in stone. As a result they are of several different periods and styles from the sixth century B.C.E. to Roman times. In the second century C.E. Pausanias noted one wooden column still standing which had not been replaced. The walls of this temple were of sun-dried brick laid on a stone foundation. The architrave or base for the roof structure that bridged the columns was apparently of wood, and the roof itself was covered in terra cotta tiles. A large limestone base was found inside the cella, probably for the cult statue of the goddess or a



Temple of Hera at Paestum in Italy. Built in the mid-sixth century B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

double statue of Hera and Zeus. This early temple is important not only for its layout and proportions but also for the evidence it gives of temples originally built with wooden elements being replaced by more durable stone construction. In the Doric order the frieze—the horizontal band above the architrave—was decorated with a pattern of alternating *triglyphs* and *metopes*. The triglyph is a single block with its face carved to resemble three vertical bars; the metope is a rectangular slab that may be plain but may also be decorated with painting or relief sculpture. It is thought by some that the design of the triglyph was a memory of the beam-ends in wooden architecture, but this explanation is not accepted by all architectural historians. The temple of Apollo at Corinth, dated to about 540 B.C.E., is the only example of a sixth-century mainland temple with some columns still standing. Each column is a monolith—carved from a single block—standing about 21 feet high, made of a porous limestone originally fin-

ished with a coat of stucco. There were six columns on the end and fifteen on each side, making the length two and a half times the width. The platform under the colonnades rose in a slight convex curve. This is the earliest example known where this adjustment was made to correct the optical illusion that makes the base line appear to be curved. The interior of this temple was divided into two chambers back to back, each entered from its own porch. Other preserved examples of sixth-century Doric architecture can be found in the Greek colonies of Sicily and southern Italy. To fully appreciate the early development of the Doric style it is necessary to examine some of these. Three well-preserved temples at Paestum, south of Naples, include one to Hera from the mid-sixth century. It has long been known as the “Basilica” and is still referred to by that name in some publications. All of the peripteral colonnade is still standing and the architrave is still in place, but the walls are completely gone. There were nine





Temple E, probably dedicated to Hera, in Selinunte, Sicily. Begun early sixth century B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/DALGI ORTI.

columns at each end and eighteen on a side. This is somewhat unusual with an uneven number on the façade dividing it in half. The cella contained a central row of columns that were the same size as the colonnade. A feature of this early stage in the development of the Doric order is that the columns in this temple were radically tapered from bottom to top so they gave a springy or elastic appearance to the structure.

**EARLY IONIC ARCHITECTURE.** The Doric and Ionic architectural orders have a number of differences but the main one is the placement, shape, and proportion of the columns. The Doric column sits directly on the platform of the temple; the Ionic has a base, usually composed of several elements that may even contain carved decoration. As compared to the simpler Doric capital the Ionic capital has a pair volutes—spiral- or scroll-shaped ornaments—that may suggest construction in other materials than stone and also reflect the influence of cultures from western Asia or Egypt. The Ionic column is generally thinner in proportion to its height than the Doric,

and Ionic temples generally only have two steps where the Doric has three. Two temples built about the same time in the mid-sixth century are examples of the early Ionic-style and are also among the first large-scale temple buildings in Greek architecture. One of these was a second temple dedicated to Hera on the island of Samos and the other to Artemis at Ephesus in east Greece—now the west coast of Turkey. The temple at Ephesus was partially paid for by King Croesus of Lydia, whose wealth became proverbial—“rich as Croesus.” At Ephesus the temple to Artemis had a double colonnade with 21 columns on a side measuring almost 360 feet. This massive building was built of marble with a wooden roof covered with terra cotta tiles. Some of the lower column drums were decorated with relief carving. The temple to Hera at Samos also had a double colonnade and faced east, as was the normal orientation of Greek temples. The temple to Artemis, by contrast, faced west. This may have been influenced by an earlier shrine on the site at Ephesus. A later temple on the Samos site, begun around



Exterior view of Parthenon on Athenian Acropolis from the east. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

530 B.C.E., was the largest Greek temple of which modern scholars have knowledge. It measured 179 by 365 feet and had columns that were 63 feet high. The columns themselves were of limestone, but their capitals and bases were of marble, probably to conserve the valuable marble.

**FIFTH CENTURY TEMPLES.** In the fifth century B.C.E., the refinement of the relationship of architectural elements and proportions were effectively resolved resulting in the “classic” look of Greek temple architecture. The ideal relationship of the numbers of columns—ends to side—was resolved at six to thirteen. Marble came into prominence as the major building stone, replacing limestone where it was available. An important example of the developing refinement from sixth into fifth-century B.C.E. architecture is the one dedicated to the goddess Aphaia on the island of Aegina, southwest of Athens. A good deal of it has survived, including some of the pedimental sculpture, enabling reliable restoration to be realized. Its position on a hilltop is a reminder that the site of a Greek temple was often chosen for its commanding height and view of the sea or surrounding landscape. The temple had six by twelve columns, not yet the ideal relationship of six to thirteen

to come. The interior of the cella in this temple had two rows of smaller columns that supported a second, smaller, row above. This two-story interior colonnade was not unique and can be found in some other temples. Its purpose was to help support the roof construction. Since it was not thought proper for interior columns to be taller than those on the exterior the solution was to have two superimposed levels of smaller columns to reach the height between floor and roof. This arrangement can also be seen in the temple of Hera (once thought to be dedicated to Poseidon) at Paestum in southern Italy. This temple, probably the best example of a Greek-style temple preserved, was also built between the beginning and the middle of the fifth century. The exterior decoration of the temple at Aegina included marble roof tiles on the edge of the roof, water spouts in the shape of lions’ heads, antefixes shaped like palmettes, and a considerable amount of colored detail. Although there is some debate about the amount of decorative color used in Greek architecture, many examples of painted surfaces have been found preserved, giving considerable support to the idea that these structures were not the stark light color of marble or limestone, as they exist today.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***PAUSANIAS DESCRIBES THE PARTHENON**

**INTRODUCTION:** Often it is the description written by a traveler in ancient times that gives us a real impression of how the monuments looked in their own time. When Pausanias, the Greek traveler and historian, visited Athens in the second century C.E. and climbed to the top of the Acropolis, he saw the Parthenon in what must have been near its original condition. As was usual with his writing, he tried to identify the subjects of the decoration and explain their historical or mythological significance.

As you enter the temple that they name the Parthenon, all the sculptures you see on what is called the pediment refer to the birth of Athena, those on the rear pediment represent the contest for the land between Athena and Poseidon. The statue itself is made of ivory and gold. On the middle of her helmet is placed a likeness of the Sphinx—the tale of the Sphinx I will give when I come to my description of Boeotia—and on either

side of the helmet are griffins in relief. These griffins, Aristeas of Proconnesus says in his poem, fight for the gold with the Arimaspi beyond the Issedones. The gold which the griffins guard, he says, comes out of the earth; the Arimaspi are men all born with one eye; griffins are beasts like lions, but with the beak and wings of an eagle. I will say no more about the griffins. The statue of Athena is upright, with a tunic reaching to the feet, and on her breast the head of Medusa is worked in ivory. She holds a statue of Victory about four cubits high, and in the other hand a spear; at her feet lies a shield and near the spear is a serpent. This serpent would be Erichthonius. On the pedestal is the birth of Pandora in relief. Hesiod and others have sung how this Pandora was the first woman; before Pandora was born there was as yet no womankind. The only portrait statue I remember seeing here is one of the emperor Hadrian, and at the entrance one of Iphicrates, who accomplished many remarkable achievements.

**SOURCE:** Pausanias, *Description of Greece*. Trans. W. H. S. Jones (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918): 23, 25.

**THE ACROPOLIS.** The buildings on the Acropolis—literally “high city”—at Athens had a long history extending back into Mycenaean times. The oldest temple of the goddess Athena on the site can be traced back at least to the seventh century B.C.E. Originally a fortified stronghold, the limestone plateau high above the city remained the center of worship for the patron goddess with her main altar after its military importance had diminished. At the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E. the Athenians began a building project to replace the old temple and construct a new propylon—entrance gate—to the sanctuary. This plan was interrupted by the Persian invasion and the destruction and sack of the Acropolis in 480 B.C.E. It was not until after the mid-century that the plans for a new temple for the city goddess were carried out. Modern scholars know this new temple as the Parthenon, so named because it was dedicated to a special aspect of the goddess as Athena Parthenos—Athena the maiden or Athena the virgin. Her cult center eventually contained several important buildings in addition to the main temple. These are the Propylaea or entryway to the Acropolis, the temple of Athena Nike or Victory, and the Erechtheum, a building intended to organize several cults in one structure.

**THE PARTHENON.** Under the leadership of Pericles the old building plan of the 480s was revived at the mid-century. The architects of the new temple to Athena were

Ictinus and Callicrates. The cult image for the temple was the work of Phidias, who probably also created the decorative program for the whole building and is traditionally thought to have been the overall director of the works. The temple was begun in 447 and dedicated in 438 but the sculptural decoration was not completely finished until 432. The building was used in later times as a Byzantine church, a Catholic church, and a Muslim mosque. In 1678 an explosion of gunpowder stored in the cella destroyed much of the center of the temple that had been in a good state of preservation up to that time. In the period 1801–1803 the English collector, Lord Elgin, received permission from the Turkish officials to remove some of the sculpture—the so-called *Elgin Marbles* now in the British Museum (and the source of controversy with the present Greek government). These included some of the pedimental figures and most of the relief frieze that are considered among the most important examples of fifth-century B.C.E. Greek art. The building itself was constructed of Pentelic marble on a limestone foundation that partly covered that of the earlier temple. Some of the column drums from the ruined temple were found in good condition and used in the new one, dictating the size of the columns—34 and one-fourth feet high—but not the overall proportion. The Parthenon has eight columns on the ends and seventeen on the sides because it is somewhat wider in pro-



A view of the Acropolis of Athens from the southwest showing the Propylaea (monumental entrance). COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

portion than had been the rule. It is possible that this extra width was planned to accommodate the interior view of the extraordinary colossal gold and ivory statue of Athena in the cella. The plan included the peripteral colonnade, front and rear porches with six columns, and a chamber behind the cella that may have served as the treasury. The cella had a two-story colonnade on the sides and back, presumably for viewing the Athena statue. By the mid-fifth century Greek architects had achieved a level of design with a refinement and a harmony of proportion that has seldom been equaled. This was done over time by trial and error, taking advantage of technological advances in building and by considerable experimentation with the visual effects of size, shape, and relationships. Visual refinements were made to correct optical illusions. Thus the main horizontal elements in the facade of the building—the platform *stylobate* and the superstructure *entablature*—were gently curved downward from the center. The columns and walls lean slightly inward. The columns taper toward the top in a slight curve *entasis* and even the depth of the column

fluting is less deep at the top. The Doric column of the fifth century B.C.E. has been greatly refined from its predecessor of a hundred years before, and its curved profile is much more subtle. Many scholars have seen this as an incorporation of Ionic aspects into the Doric style. Much has been said about the ideal mathematical proportions that were developed by Greek architects in order to define the visual relationships of building parts. In the Parthenon a number of examples of this principal at work can be seen. The ration of width to length of the temple is 9:4; the space between the columns to their diameter has the same relationship, 9:4, and this can be seen in other aspects of the building as well. The use of simple repeated ratios and geometric relationships imposed a visual order and harmony and resulted in an architectural masterpiece.

**THE PROPYLAEA.** The Propylaea was the grand ceremonial gateway and entrance to the precinct of the Acropolis. It replaced an earlier structure as the Parthenon had replaced an earlier temple. It was the work of the architect Mnesicles, and it was begun in 437



The Erechtheum in Athens; the view from the east. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

B.C.E., after the construction of the Parthenon was finished and work on it was halted in 432 B.C.E. The Propylaea was entirely of marble and took five years to build but was never completely finished according to plan. In addition to the grand gateway with a wide central passage it had porches with six columns on the outer side and inside and was to have two large rooms flanking the doorway. One of these rooms was described by Pausanias as a “picture gallery” but it has also been suggested that this was a formal dining room. The building was built entirely of costly marble and on such a large scale that some of the ceiling beams had to span a distance of eighteen feet. As a consequence of this size, these have been estimated as weighing over eleven tons. This ability to handle large weight at a height indicates a well-developed system of construction techniques.

**THE TEMPLE OF NIKE AND THE ERECHTHEUM.** High to the right of the Propylaea a small temple was begun about five years after work on the ceremonial gateway was suspended. This compact structure was dedicated to Athena Nike—goddess of victory. It was designed in the Ionic style with four slender columns at each end. The cella was entered between two piers or square pillars which were connected to the side walls by bronze lattice screens. A carved frieze representing the Greeks battling the Persians decorated all four sides of the entablature, an element more typical in the Ionic

than in the Doric style. The pediment above had carved figures, as can be determined by attachments, and a sculpted parapet on three sides was added later. Another important building on the Acropolis in the Ionic style is the Erechtheum. It takes its name from Erechtheus, a legendary king of Athens, whose palace may have been thought to have once stood on that location. Begun in 421 and finished in 405, it is probably the most unusual structure in the precinct because of its irregular plan. This was perhaps the result of a need to bring together several shrines or cult places. There were three inner chambers and three porches or porticoes of different sizes and on different levels. On the south side the porch had six caryatids—architectural supports in the shape of human figures—supporting the entablature instead of columns. These famous female statues have been removed to the protection of a museum and replaced with copies. One of the important lessons to be learned from the Erechtheum is the fact that Greek architects were able to adapt to the needs of an unusual situation.

**THE TEMPLE OF OLYMPIAN ZEUS.** To the southeast of the Acropolis in Athens a large temple dedicated to Olympian Zeus was begun around 520 B.C.E., but it was left unfinished and only the platform was used in its completion at a much later time. Under Antiochus IV, king of Syria, work was resumed on the tem-



The Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens, begun in the sixth century B.C.E. but finished by the emperor Hadrian (117–138 C.E.). COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

ple in the second century B.C.E. but it was not finally finished until 131 C.E. in the time of the Roman emperor Hadrian. It is thought that it was originally planned in the Doric style but when it was completed it was with elements of the Corinthian order including elaborate floral Corinthian capitals. The original plan included a double row of columns in the peripteral colonnade with a third row at each end. This was probably influenced by other early temples on a large scale like that of Hera at Ephesus. The Temple of Olympian Zeus was one of the largest in Athens, measuring 135 by 353.5 feet with columns that were 57 feet high. Its completion hundreds of years after it was started was probably a result of the emperor Hadrian's admiration for Greek culture.

**THE GREEK THEATER.** Although the temple form is the most important architectural type in Greek history, there are a number of other kinds of structures to consider. In addition to the temple there were many other types of public buildings, monuments, altars, and tombs that should be mentioned. The theater was perhaps the second most typical expression of Greek archi-

tectural design. All festivals, athletic contests, and dramatic presentations were held out of doors. Originally even the Assembly of the citizens of Athens was held in the open air on the sloping rocky outcrop known as the Pnyx. This allowed the participants to see and hear the speakers who were at a lower level. It follows that the performances held in honor of the god Dionysus would be held in a hollow where the audience could be seated on the sloping hillside. In the history of the Greek drama most theaters were constructed where they could take advantage of the natural hillside. The beginnings of the drama were in choral dances so the most important area of the theater was the circular *orchestra* which literally means “dancing place.” The body of the auditorium or *theatron* consisted of a semicircular arrangement of gently sloping stone rows of seats. As the idea of the dramatic theater developed and the number of actors was increased, it became necessary to provide a stage with a backing of some sort. This was called the *skene* and it provided a sounding board to help project the voices of the actors as well as to provide some rudimentary scenery. The idea of the theater as a special building



Hellenistic theater at Kourion in Cyprus. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

seems to have developed at the end of the sixth century and the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E., but one of the earliest still in evidence is the theater of Dionysus on the southern slope of the Acropolis. It was later changed or modified when it went through a number of rebuildings during the fourth century and the Roman Imperial period. One of the best-preserved examples of a theater is at Epidaurus on the east coast of southern Greece. According to Pausanias, the architect of this theater was Polykleitos the Younger. It was constructed around 350 when the essential elements of theater design had been formalized. The auditorium, which has a shape slightly more than a semicircle, is cut into the hillside. The stone seats are divided into wedge-shaped blocks or sections with a horizontal passageway separating the lower from the upper part, which is steeper and has higher seats. The design of the seats even provides some leg space beneath to allow the spectators to make room for people passing in front of them. The lowest seats were for special attendees and had backs and arm rests. In some theaters these seats for dignitaries were almost throne-like with elaborately carved decoration. There was presumably an altar in the center of the or-

chestra, as evidenced by a stone base found in place. The stage building must have been a tall one, again to judge from the remaining foundations. This theater could accommodate an estimated twelve to fifteen thousand people, seated in relative comfort and with apparent ease of entrance and exit. The design of Greek theaters changed somewhat to accommodate other types of dramatic presentations when they were developed but the basic parts remained the same and were standard throughout the Greek world.

**BUILDINGS WITH A SPECIAL PURPOSE.** One of the most important buildings in the daily life of the Greeks was the *stoa*, a one or two-storied structure with a long colonnade that could include shops and serve also as an informal meeting place. The stoa of Attalus in the Agora (open marketplace) at Athens has been reconstructed from the archaeological evidence and serves as a good example of the type. Such colonnaded buildings provided protection from the elements for the public in their daily activities and as a result they were to be found in religious complexes as well as marketplaces. Other public buildings were specifically designed as meeting places for the civic councils, assembly halls for a particular cult, and



Interior view of the Stoa of Attalus in the ancient agora of Athens, Greece. Originally built as a gift of King Attalus II of Pergamum (159–138 B.C.E.). PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

even informal spaces for social clubs. Functional buildings included fountain houses where people would go to fill their water jars. These are often illustrated in Greek vase painting. One special type of building was the clock tower. The only surviving example is the so-called “Tower of the Winds” preserved in Athens. Built in the first century B.C.E., it is an octagonal (eight-sided) building with carved reliefs depicting personifications of the winds at the top of each side. In addition to space for a water clock and reservoir there were sundials mounted on the sides and a wind vane was mounted on the top.

**HOUSES AND CITY PLANNING.** The typical Greek house answered the need for an enclosed space offering privacy and protection. The normal plan of the living space centered on an open court with a peristyle or verandas. A number of examples have been excavated, and they generally follow the same arrangement that consisted of an entrance hall with a small room to one side, a central courtyard with rooms of various sizes fronting on it. These houses were generally of one story and laid out in a square plan, with mud brick walls on a stone or

rubble foundation. The floors in special areas, such as the dining room, could be decorated with mosaics. The dining room was also often provided with platforms for the reclining diners. Bathrooms were sometimes paved and provided with terra-cotta tubs, but other sanitary facilities have seldom been found in excavation. The doors of houses were of wood and from representations in vase painting modern scholars know that they were decorated with metal studs. The regular arrangement of dwellings in an orderly city plan became popular in the early fifth century B.C.E. Greek cities were laid out with provision for public meeting and trading places (the agora or public square), and cult centers and sanctuaries where the temples and shrines were located. The cities were typically surrounded by a protective wall, with towers, moats, and defensible gates. Such fortifications were the result of the need to guard against attack and to assure a sense of security.

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The *Horologion*, known as the “Tower of the Winds,” in Athens, Greece, which served as sundial, water-clock, and weather-vane (built 2nd–1st century B.C.E.). THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

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SEE ALSO *Fashion: Garments in Classical Greece; Religion: The Gods of Olympus; Religion: Worshipping the Gods: Sacrifices and Temples*

## ETRUSCAN ARCHITECTURE

**BACKGROUND.** The study of Etruscan architecture is principally the study of tomb design because the greatest body of evidence preserved consists of subterranean tombs. The examination of architectural types such as temples and other public structures cannot be based on standing buildings, as is possible with the Greek or Roman material. It is necessary to rely on archaeological finds, which consist mainly of foundations and the remains of building parts. However, the descriptions of ancient authors, particularly Vitruvius, supplement modern knowledge. His *De Architectura* (On Architecture) is a particularly useful reference because, among other topics, he describes his understanding of the basic rules for the design and construction of Etruscan

temples and their sites. It always has to be remembered that Vitruvius wrote in the late first century B.C.E. and had a desire to explain and employ classical styles in the work of his own time. He was a practicing architect and had a practical knowledge of materials, working techniques, and other areas of knowledge—such as site planning—that were part of the necessary education of the architect. His motives and the time in which he wrote, at the beginning of the reign of August Caesar, influenced his attitudes. Since he was one of the few ancient authors whose writing on architecture was preserved, he was very much respected in the Renaissance. Architects of that time turned to his work for the clearest explanation of ancient styles and techniques available to them.

**MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES.** In the earliest beginnings, Etruscan architecture employed the crude wattle and daub technique, a method of construction employing bundled sticks with an overlay of mud. It is clear, from the evidence of tomb decoration that imitates living structures, that timber work was employed by the early sixth century B.C.E. in the construction of houses. From other evidence it can be seen that the Etruscans employed tufa blocks and ashlar masonry in foundations, buildings, and walls. “Tufa” is a porous volcanic rock common in Italy, and “ashlar” describes large, squared stones. Mud brick and half-timber construction on stone foundations was also practiced, a technique that used wood for framing and unbaked brick to fill the spaces between the frames. Mud brick and wood were the main materials of temple wall construction throughout most of Etruscan history. The lack of plentiful physical evidence available for an understanding of temple architecture can be attributed in part to the perishable nature of the material employed.

**THE ETRUSCAN TEMPLE.** Our principal knowledge of Etruscan temple architecture comes from Vitruvius who described in great detail their layout and construction as he understood them. In addition to the scant archaeological evidence and the literary sources for temple planning and construction, there are also imitations of temples found in tombs and on tomb facades and miniature copies used as votive gifts. The Etruscan-style temple, also called the Italo-Etruscan temple, had a form of its own that resisted the growing influence of Greek architecture. The Etruscan temple was more open in plan than the Greek, in part influenced by the need for observation of natural phenomena such as the flight of birds in divination. The material of the Etruscan temple never changed in the way that Greek construction did where wooden ele-

ments were later superseded by stone. The materials in Etruria remained wood on a stone foundation with considerable use of terracotta for decorative elements and roof tiling. One of the standard ground plans seems to have been a simple structure with a cella divided into three parts which has been interpreted as a provision for the worship of a triad of gods (Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva). There are also examples of ground plans preserved that have one or two rooms, depending on the number of deities worshipped in a particular locality. The main body of the temple opened on a porch supported by columns. The temple usually was raised on a podium or platform approached by a flight of stairs. The raised platform and stairs remained a characteristic of later Roman temple architecture in contrast to the Greek preference for closer visual relationship with the ground plane.

**ETRUSCAN TOMBS.** The earliest Etruscan burials were essentially of two types: pit burial containing an urn with the ashes of the deceased, or a trench burial for the remains. Around 700 B.C.E. more developed tombs began to appear. These were also of two general types. One of these was a chamber-tomb type somewhat similar in design to the tholos tombs of the Mycenaeans, with a domed or “bee-hive” shape constructed of corbelled masonry. The shape varied and could be round or square. Side rooms provided space for the remains of other family members or personal belongings. This type of tomb could accommodate the sarcophagi of the deceased as well as some tomb furniture and personal possessions. The mound, or tumulus, that covered this type became a characteristic element of the landscape and made the location of the tomb clearly visible. Around the year 400 B.C.E. cremations of the dead became a more regular practice and the architecture of tombs gradually underwent a change. Instead of the constructed stone chamber covered with a mound, the tomb was cut into the rock or tufa hillside. Imitations of wooden architectural elements were carved on the façade and in the interior of the tombs. Instead of space for sarcophagi, shelves for cinerary urns were provided to accommodate the cremated remains of several family members. The wall decoration of tombs of both types included relief carving and painting. The subject matter of Etruscan tomb painting included the funerary banquet as well as scenes from Greek mythology.

**CITY PLANNING AND DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE.** Etruscan towns and cities were situated to take advantage of water supply and defensive positions, as were most early communities in the ancient world. Access to the sea was important but most settlements were far

enough inland to offer some protection against sea raiders. City walls for defense did not seem an important part of town planning if the choice of the site offered enough security. An ancient tradition credits the Etruscans with the invention of the type of city plan where streets intersect at right angles forming a north-south east-west grid. Although this system of city planning became very popular with the Romans, there is not yet enough evidence to prove that it was an Etruscan innovation in the Italian mainland. Etruscan houses of the early seventh century B.C.E. tended to be oval in plan and were placed to take advantage of the terrain, not according to a grid plan. These houses were of the wattle and daub type of construction with a thatched roof. Rectangular houses begin to appear around the middle of the seventh century. These were built on a stone foundation with wooden framing and unbaked mud brick. Gradually house plans developed from a broad layout with an entrance vestibule and a few rooms to one with a long entrance corridor leading to a courtyard surrounded by several rooms. This type of house with an interior courtyard was carried on in later Roman dwellings with an atrium, a larger and more formal central court.

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## ROMAN ARCHITECTURE

**BACKGROUND.** Roman architecture is essentially a hybrid composed of elements inherited from the Etruscans combined with the outside influences of the Greeks. As an example, the native Etruscan building traditions can be recognized in the early substructures of the Capitoline Temple in Rome. With archaeological evidence of this kind supplemented by ancient descriptions this temple can be identified as the type described by Vitruvius as typically Etruscan, consisting basically of a wide structure with a deep porch supported by columns. By contrast, the Temple of Apollo at Pompeii, probably built in the late second century B.C.E., is a typical example of a temple that exhibits Greek influence in its plan. Etruscan and early Roman art and architecture were very much influenced by the advances made by the Greeks, particularly by the structures built in the Greek

## CITY

## Planning Was Not Invented Only by the Greeks

It seems that there was an almost universal need among peoples throughout history to impose some order on their communities by the use of an overall plan where the local terrain allowed. This orderly design of towns and cities can be seen in many parts of the ancient world in cultures as distinct as ancient China and Egypt. Leopold Arnaud, a distinguished professor of architecture, in an essay titled "Social Organization and the City Plan" explained that it would be wrong to credit only the Greeks with the invention of city planning. He said that the idea of a rectangular pattern for town planning is very ancient. The origins of the system might have developed from the method of plowing a field or laying out a military camp but it was a practical arrangement and the idea could have developed independently in many different places.

In Egypt, during the Old Kingdom (2175–2134 B.C.E.), the streets of the City of the Dead at the foot of the Great Pyramid at Giza were laid out on a grid pattern with streets intersecting at right angles. This probably imitated

and resembled the arrangement used in cities for the living. There are other examples of city planning in Egypt recovered by archaeological excavation that show this pattern to have continued throughout Egyptian history.

The plan attributed to the Greeks did not develop until late in their history during the time of Alexander the Great and his successors in the Hellenistic Period (Late fourth through late first centuries B.C.E.). This does not mean to suggest that the Greeks learned city planning from the Egyptians but simply that the same kind of organization was seen to be practical in both cultures.

The Roman town plan was similar to that developed by the Greeks and may owe some debt to them. In a Roman community the two main thoroughfares were called the *cardo*, which ran north and south, and the *decumanus*, east and west. Other streets ran parallel to the *cardo* and *decumanus* creating a regular system of city blocks.

Large cities like Rome and Athens, however, were not planned according to any organized scheme. They had simply grown and expanded from small settlements over a long history. Attempts were made at various times in both cities to bring some order to their plans but without overall success in either case.

colonies in southern Italy and Sicily. However, the contributions made by Rome to the development of architectural design were eventually of a different character. The development of new materials and techniques made possible revolutionary advances in the creation of monumental structures and especially in the treatment of interior architectural spaces. Greek building, whether in wood or stone, relied heavily on the post and lintel system—uprights supporting a cross bar—resulting in a style that created a strong horizontal sense of stability and solidity. The exterior of a Greek temple generally presented a carefully planned and orderly arrangement of its parts as seen from all views but the interior space was a less important consideration. With the development of concrete as a building material from the second century B.C.E. Roman architects and engineers were free to experiment with building on a colossal scale, enclosing large interior spaces and creating an architectural style that was basically new and extremely inventive.

**ROMAN BUILDING TECHNIQUES.** Building in stone as practiced by the Greeks required skilled stonecutters and masons, the help of engineers and riggers to carry out the actual construction, and little more. Some carpentry was necessary for the wood beams to carry the roof, and tile setters were needed to finish its covering.

By contrast, the newly developed techniques of the Romans required a larger range of specialists for the greatly expanded building program. Since concrete is initially a liquid, its use requires the cooperation of skilled carpenters to build scaffolds and forms, in addition to masons for some of the stone elements such as foundations and door frames, brick and tile layers for parts of the construction and the roof, plumbers for drainage systems, plasterers and painters for finished work, and artists/decorators for wall paintings and mosaic floors. In ancient Rome the need for this variety of skills resulted in the development of specialized working groups or guilds that could provide the necessary training and the continuity of experience. The initial use of concrete by the Romans may have grown out of a type of packed mud construction, but it more probably developed from the use of clay to bond courses of brick or stone. Once the discovery was made that rubble fragments of stone could be bonded together by pouring a liquid mortar over them, the natural next step was to build forms of wood that would retain the mortar until it hardened. Basically, Roman mortar was comprised of lime, and the best lime mortar used volcanic ash as an aggregate. Casting structural elements from concrete rather than carving them out of stone gave Roman architects the freedom

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE EDUCATION OF THE ARCHITECT**

**INTRODUCTION:** The only Roman technical work on the art and science of ancient architecture was written by Vitruvius Polio, who lived during the reign of the emperor Augustus. In *The Ten Books on Architecture*, he gives detailed treatments of such subjects as town planning, styles of architecture, building materials, and methods of construction. Since he was a practicing architect in addition to being a learned man, the information he left is especially valuable, not only for the study of Greek and Roman architecture but for the descriptions he provides of the Etruscan architecture that no longer exists. Vitruvius' work has also been described as a practical guide to becoming a Roman architect. In this section he lists what sort of education an architect should have.

1. The architect should be equipped with knowledge of many branches of study and varied kinds of learning, for it is by his judgment that all work done by the other arts is put to test. This knowledge is the child of practice and theory. Practice is the continuous and regular exercise of employment where manual work is done with any necessary material according to the design of a drawing. Theory, on the other hand, is the ability to demonstrate and explain the productions of dexterity on the principles of proportion.

2. It follows, therefore, that architects who have aimed at acquiring manual skill without scholarship have never been able to reach a position of authority to correspond to their pains, while those who relied only upon theories and scholarship were obviously hunting the shadow, not the substance. But those who have a thorough knowledge of both, like men armed at all points, have the sooner attained their object and carried authority with them.

3. In all matters, but particularly in architecture, there are these two points: —the thing signified, and that

which gives it its significance. That which is signified is the subject of which we may be speaking; and that which gives significance is a demonstration on scientific principles. It appears, then, that one who professes himself an architect should be well versed in both directions. He ought, therefore, to be both naturally gifted and amenable to instruction. Neither natural ability without instruction nor instruction without natural ability can make the perfect artist. Let him be educated, skillful with the pencil, instructed in geometry, know much history, have followed the philosophers with attention, understand music, have some knowledge of medicine, know the opinions of the jurists, and be acquainted with astronomy and the theory of the heavens.

4. The reasons for all this are as follows. An architect should be an educated man so as to leave a more lasting remembrance in his treatises. Secondly, he must have a knowledge of drawing so that he can readily make sketches to show the appearance of the work which he proposes. Geometry, also, is of much assistance in architecture, and in particular it teaches us the use of the rule and compasses, by which especially we acquire readiness in making plans for buildings in their grounds, and rightly apply the square, the level, and the plummet. By means of optics, again, the light in buildings can be drawn from fixed quarters of the sky. It is true that it is by arithmetic that the total cost of buildings is calculated and measurements are computed, but difficult questions involving symmetry are solved by means of geometrical theories and methods.

5. A wide knowledge of history is requisite because, among the ornamental parts of an architect's design for a work, there are many the underlying idea of whose employment he should be able to explain to inquirers.

**SOURCE:** Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*. Trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914): 5–6.

to create more complex shapes, achieve greater heights, and span wider spaces. Although the arch, vault, and dome were known in other ancient cultures, it was not until the Romans developed the use of cast concrete that their full potential was realized and exploited.

**EARLY ROMAN ARCHITECTURE.** The Romans retained many ideas about building from their Etruscan predecessors, but they also absorbed some of the ideas of the Greeks that were passed on to them by the Etruscans. Houses for the cults of the gods were obviously important in both cultures. The designs of those cult places or temples in Greece and Etruria varied, but the

first Roman temples were modeled more on Etruscan prototypes. Unlike the Greek temples that had a noble solidity about them, the Etruscan and early Roman temples suggested an openness as well as a sense of mystery. The early temple to Jupiter in Rome, the *Capitolium*, of the late sixth century B.C.E. was certainly built in the Etruscan style but on a grand scale, to judge from the foundations and some of the blocks that still survive. In following the Etruscan pattern it rested on a high platform or podium, had a broad porch supported by pillars, and a cella divided into three cult chambers. It was approached only from the front up a broad stairway that

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE EMPEROR AUGUSTUS CHANGES THE FACE OF ROME**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Etruscans built a great deal of their structures from perishable mud brick, including not only private dwellings but also temples and other public buildings. As Roman civilization developed and Rome became a great power in the Mediterranean world, it was only natural that important structures be constructed of more lasting and attractive materials. Not only was marble more durable, but it was also more beautiful. In his life of the emperor Augustus, Suetonius, the Roman historian, credits the emperor with leaving his mark on Rome.

**SOURCE:** Suetonius, *The Divine Augustus*, in *The Art of Rome, c. 753 B.C.–337 A.D., Sources and Documents*. Ed. J. J. Pollitt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966): 104.

suggested the change from ordinary life to the precinct of a god or gods. Later Roman temples would retain these characteristics—the design emphasis on the front porch and the raised podium, reached by an imposing flight of stairs.

**ROMAN TOWN PLANNING.** Where it was possible, Roman towns and cities were laid out on a system of streets intersecting at right angles, a type of layout also used for Roman military camps. It is thought that this system may have been inherited from Etruscan town planning, but some Greek cities had also used a grid and it is difficult to prove the exact derivation of the Roman plan. In the Roman system the main north-south street was called the *cardo* and the main east-west street the *decumanus*. These two streets were always wider than others and acted as the axes of the plan. Near their crossing in the center of a town were located the forum, the major temples, the main ceremonial and administrative buildings, and other structures central to the life of the community such as the major bathing establishments. In urban town planning some elements were standard and necessary to Roman life. The most obvious necessity was a type of dwelling which in Roman usage could range from a humble structure to a great palace. The provision of clean water for consumption and bathing was probably the next most important consideration—hence the emphasis on developing methods of transporting water over great distances such as the Roman aqueduct. The need for structures devoted to religion and the worship of the gods engendered a large variety of temple designs. The commemoration of military victories or the glorification of emperors and commanders was satisfied

by the erection of monuments, columns, and arches, and the entertainment of the people was provided for by a well-developed system of theaters and arenas. The final necessary architectural form was the tomb structures for the burial of the dead.

**THE ROMAN HOUSE.** In the nearly 200 years of the Roman Republic—from 200 to 27 B.C.E.—a number of standard architectural forms developed. One of these, most typically associated with Roman architectural style, was the house form. Like its Greek predecessors, the Roman house looked in on itself. The exterior fronting on a street was not decorated and had only the main entrance door and possibly a few windows, although they were not a prominent feature of the design. The ground plan was often symmetrical and balanced. Beyond the entrance vestibule was the *atrium*: the central court with an opening in the roof, usually with a pool in the center where rainwater would collect. Around the atrium were the living rooms and bedrooms. Passing through the atrium one entered the *tablinum*, a formal room for entertaining visitors. Next to the tablinum was the *triclinium*—the dining room. In a more elaborate house there might be a further peristyle or open court and even an interior garden with more rooms leading off from it. This basic plan could be made more complex depending on the wealth, rank, and position of the owner. Country villas of the Republican Period, such as the Villa of the Papyri at Pompeii of the first century B.C.E. were already extremely elaborate and costly. The basic house plan with atrium and peristyle became the basis to which were added subsidiary wings and separate buildings, gardens, and pools, depending on the size of the household

and the number of family members, servants, and slaves. By contrast to the standard plans, in commercial centers such as Ostia, the port of Rome, there are still preserved examples of apartment houses. These buildings were four or five stories high and arranged in blocks. The ground floor was regularly occupied by shops, and the individual apartments were often provided with a private staircase. The city of Ostia provides an excellent example of city planning intended to accommodate a large population in a limited space while still furnishing the necessary services for a comfortable existence.

**PALACES AND VILLAS.** During the time of the Roman Empire the power and wealth of the emperor was often expressed by the construction of an elaborate palace. After the great fire of 64 C.E. which destroyed a considerable section of central Rome, the emperor Nero had a sumptuous palace—the *Domus Aurea* or “Golden House”—built for himself modeled on the lines of a sprawling country villa complete with gardens and an artificial lake. Although much of it was later destroyed, there is enough preserved (supplemented by the descriptions left by Roman historians) to give some idea of its design and decoration. One of the surviving parts consists of a large octagonal room with a domed ceiling and smaller rooms radiating from it. The design of the room is radical enough for a villa or a palace but when these remains are taken together with ancient descriptions that describe walls covered with gold and ivory it is possible to imagine the rich impression such a palace would have presented and why it was called the “Golden House.” The villa constructed by the emperor Hadrian at Tivoli around 135 C.E. was more a collection of buildings and accessory parts than a country house with a unified plan. It contained two principal living areas, bathing establishments, at least three theaters, and a stadium, reflecting pools, gardens, and other structures, some of which cannot be easily explained. Because Hadrian was a great traveler he named parts of his “villa” after places he had visited such as the “Canopus” after a city in Egypt. Many of the architectural advances that had been made by the Romans in the use of concrete and vaulting were incorporated in parts of Hadrian’s villa. A strong contrast to Hadrian’s villa, and even to the Golden House of Nero, is the palace plan of the emperor Diocletian at Spalato (Split in the former Yugoslavia), built in the early fourth century C.E. This palace complex was surrounded by a wall with towers and gates. Inside it was laid out like a military camp with two main streets. In addition to residential quarters and rooms for formal audiences, the palace contained a temple (probably dedicated to Jupiter) and a



Scale model of ancient Rome in the Museo della Civiltà. In the center, the Colosseum is shown, and above it, the Temple of Venus and Roma designed by the emperor Hadrian. © ARALDO DE LUCA/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

tomb prepared in advance for Diocletian. Piazza Armerina in a valley in central Sicily is the site of another palatial villa that may be contemporary with the palace at Spalato, but the owner has not been conclusively identified. In many ways its plan resembles that of Hadrian’s villa because it is a loosely organized assemblage of colonnaded courts, audience halls, and residential areas. Two aspects of the villa make it unusually interesting. It is situated in a remote area in the center of the island, suggesting a retreat or vacation place. The well-preserved floors are covered with decorative mosaics of exceptional appeal. There are hunting scenes with the capture of exotic animals, probably for the arena, scenes of the chariot race in the circus, and even images of lightly clad female athletes at their exercise. A distinguished person, who is probably the owner of the villa, is represented with his attendants. The quality of these mosaic “paintings” has led some to argue that the villa at Piazza Armerina was also an imperial residence.

**AQUEDUCTS.** As the power of Rome increased and urban centers grew in size, one of the most important

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***NERO BUILDS A "GOLDEN HOUSE"**

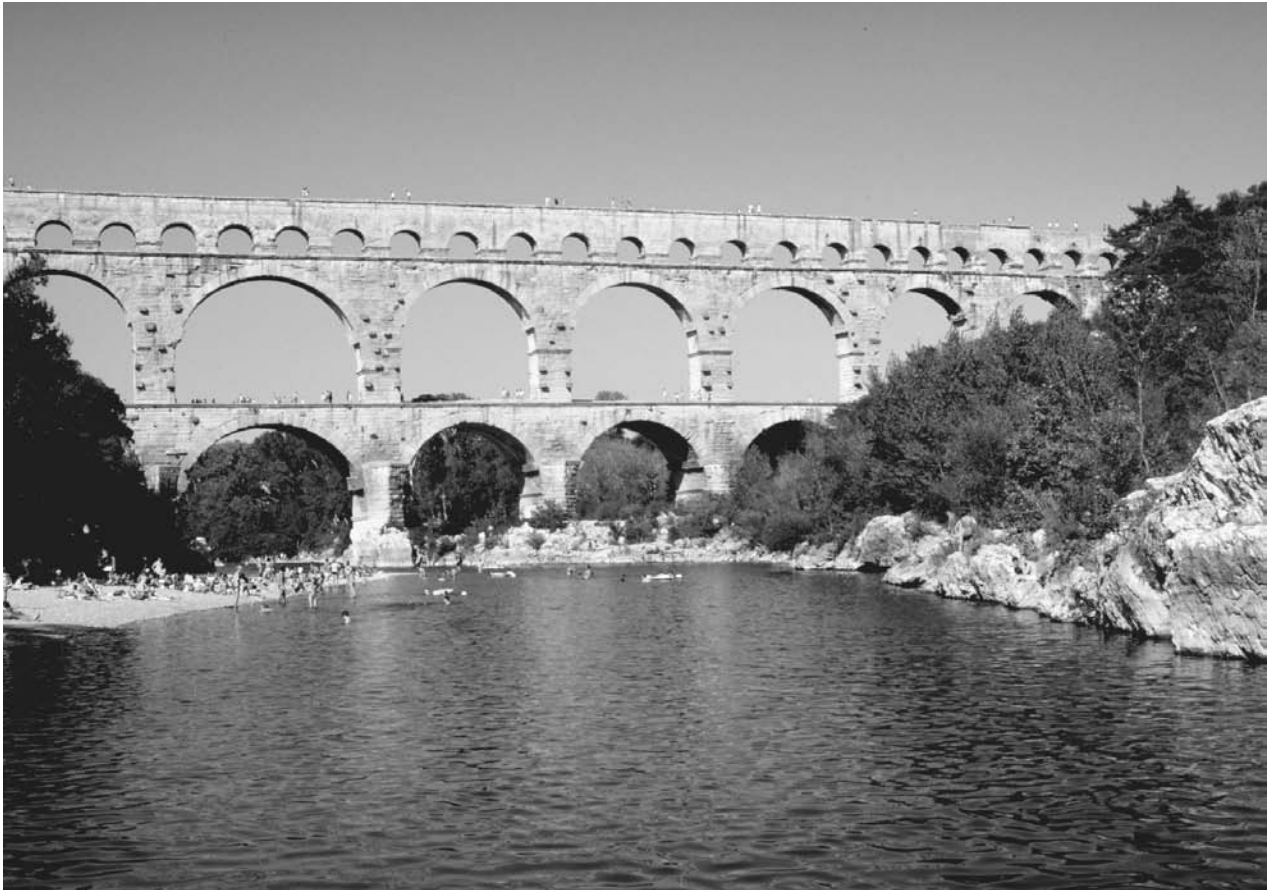
**INTRODUCTION:** Nero's reputation in popular history characterizes him as the emperor who "fiddled while Rome burned." The great fire of Rome certainly gave him the opportunity to construct a palace in one of the areas devastated by the fire, but it was also a section of the city occupying considerable space where ordinary Romans had lived. Nero spared himself no luxury. Where crowded tenements had housed a large population, he designed for himself a spacious dwelling with gardens and pools for his own pleasure. Some of this building still exists. Other parts of it were destroyed and later structures built over it. The Roman historian, Suetonius, tells the story.

**SOURCE:** Suetonius, *Nero*, in *The Art of Rome*, c. 753 B.C.–337 A.D., *Sources and Documents*. Ed. J. J. Pollitt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966): 143.

general considerations for the public good was the importance of a supply of fresh water. Roman engineers became especially adept at constructing the stone conduits, often many miles in length, which brought water from springs high in hilly terrain into the cities. Since they were exceptionally well built, remains of these remarkable structures can still be found, not only in the vicinity of Rome itself, but also in locations that were once

a part of the widespread empire, as at Segovia in Spain or in Tunisia in North Africa. One Tunisian aqueduct ran from Zaghouan, the site of an important spring in the south of the country, for 45 miles to reach ancient Carthage on the seacoast. It was constructed so well that many sections of it still stand. The more familiar and probably more typical example of aqueduct construction is the one represented by a section called the Pont du Gard that bridges the Gardon river at Nîmes in France. Constructed between 20 and 16 B.C.E., the complete aqueduct ran for 31 miles with a downward grade calculated at 1 in 3000. The part that bridged the river is one of the most visible examples of Roman aqueduct building—standing almost 300 yards long and 160 feet high. The structure is in three levels with arches of smaller size in the top course to carry the water conduit. One of the chief ancient sources on the construction and maintenance of Roman aqueducts is a work by Sextus Julius Frontinus, an administrator and tactician, who wrote a treatise on the water supply of Rome in the first century C.E.

**TEMPLES.** The typical Roman temple, mainly derived from an Etruscan prototype, is well exemplified by the so-called temple of Fortuna Virilis on the Tiber in Rome. Built in the latter half of the second century B.C.E., it has a façade of four Ionic columns in Greek style plus two on each side of the porch, known as the *prodomus*. The columns on the sides of the cella—the main hall or sanctuary—are not free standing but are “engaged”—they appear to project from the wall and are actually parts of it. This use of engaged columns is a characteristic that can be seen in many Roman temples. A good comparison is the Maison Carrée at Nîmes, one of the best preserved examples of temple architecture from the time of the emperor Augustus in the late first century B.C.E. It is larger than the temple of Fortuna Virilis, with six columns at the front and back and eleven on a side, eight of which are engaged. The capitals are of a more elaborate Corinthian style—fluted columns with flowered capitals—but otherwise a comparison of these two temples shows that it is really only the size of the building that is different. The basic elements of raised podium, steps, and deep porch are the same. By contrast, near the temple of Fortuna Virilis in Rome is a round temple that is much more Greek in spirit. The podium is stepped all round and not just in front. The twenty Corinthian columns make a circular colonnade surrounding a circular cella. This building is difficult to date but it demonstrates the fact that temples in Greek style could coexist with those in a more Italian tradition and that temples with a special purpose



Pont du Gard, an aqueduct at Nîmes, France, built before the fifth century C.E. It was the highest bridge structure in the Roman world. NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY COLLECTION/PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

could assume special shapes. A further example of the variety possible in Roman temple plans is the Pantheon in Rome, one of the best-preserved buildings from classical antiquity. The translation of the name signifies that this structure was meant as a temple to all the gods. Its preservation is due to the fact that it was converted into a Christian church by the seventh century C.E. The Pantheon is unusual because it has rectangular porch with a round interior, a traditional temple façade with an innovative inner space. Much of the structure can be dated to the time of the emperor Hadrian in the early second century C.E. but there has been considerable discussion as to the dating of the whole temple. The sixteen Corinthian columns that support the porch are granite shafts 38 feet high, an engineering accomplishment in its own right. The proportion of the “rotunda” is mathematically harmonious because the height of the interior is the same as the diameter of the interior. The construction of the main part of the building relies on an elaborate system of relieving arches within the walls to help distribute the weight vertically. In addition, the

concrete of each ascending level of the walls was purposely made with progressively lighter materials. The architects and engineers of the Pantheon worked together to produce what is not only one of the best preserved, but also one of the most beautiful buildings from Roman times.

**BASILICAS AND BATHS.** Two types of construction that best exemplify the Roman architectural achievements of inventive use of concrete as a material and the enclosure of large spaces are the basilica and the bathing establishment. Both of these types were places of public assembly. A basilica can be defined simply as a large hall used for civic and administrative purposes capable of accommodating large crowds. The Roman bath was also often a large and complex structure built on a grand scale. The Basilica of Maxentius in Rome, built in the fourth century C.E. is a good example of the size and complexity a civic building could attain. In size it was larger than a football field—213 by 328 feet—with a large central space covered by enormous vaults. On



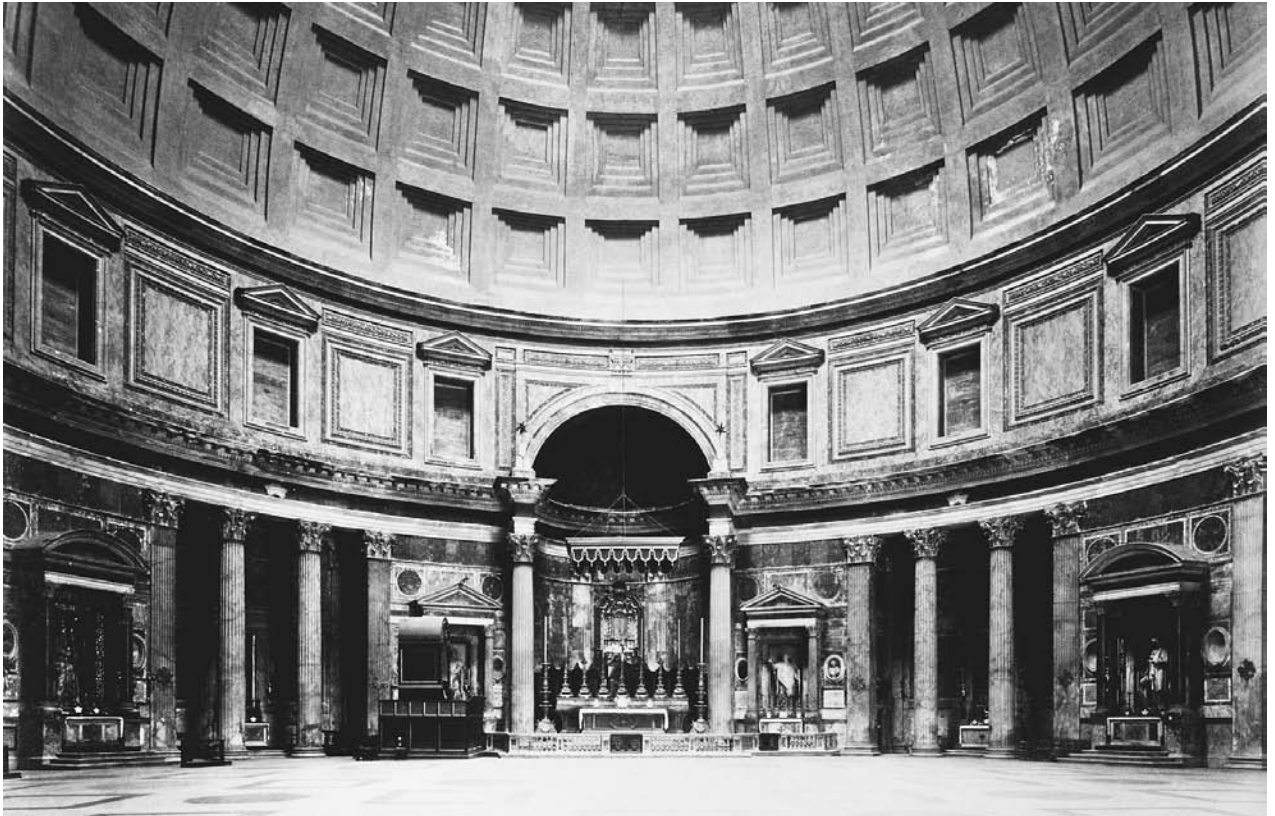


The Maison Carrée in Nîmes, France. ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

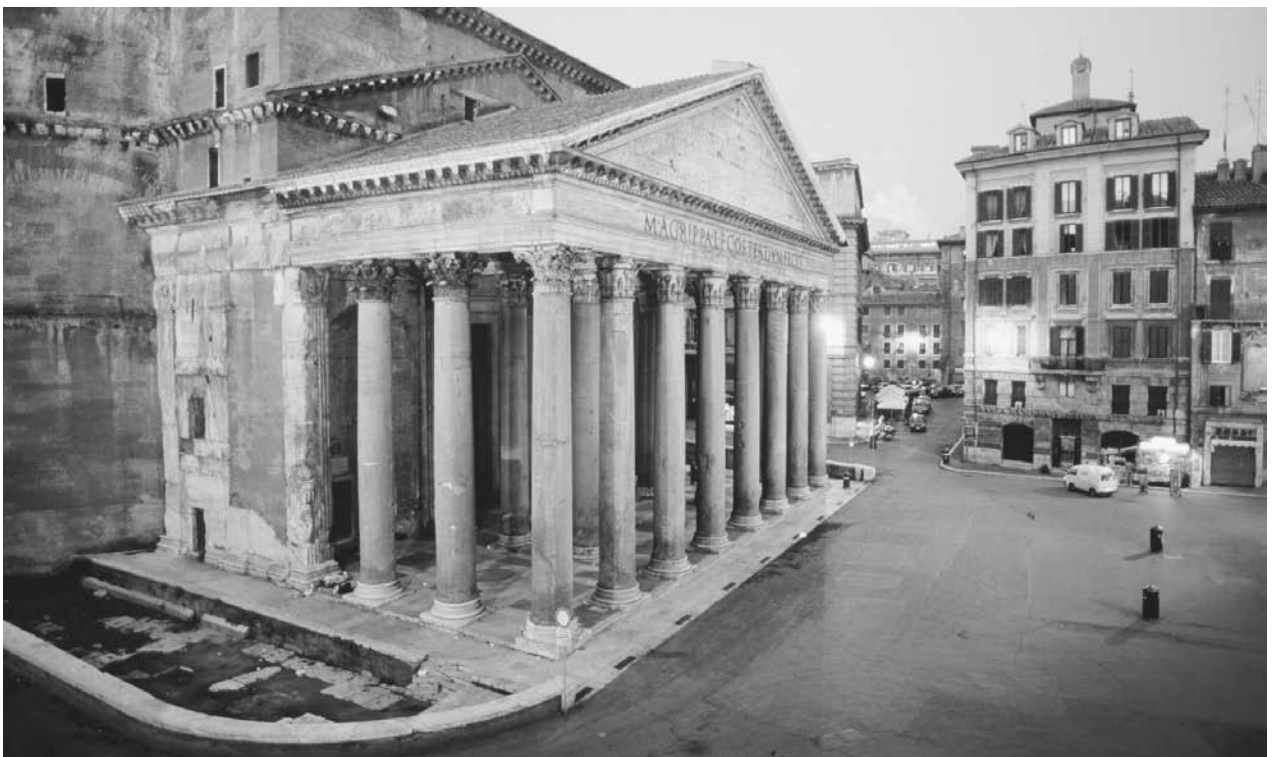
either side of this were three large bays. This reflects the plan of the later basilica form used in Christian churches made up of a high central aisle with two lower side aisles. The building was finished by the emperor Constantine so the structure is sometimes referred to with his name rather than that of Maxentius. One side of this basilica still stands as a vivid example of the size and scale of late Roman architecture. Compared to the basilica the Roman bathing establishment could be far more complex. Early in the third century C.E. the emperor Caracalla completed an enormous public bath that had been begun by his father, Septimius Severus. The Baths of Caracalla were meant as a form of imperial propaganda, built for the public good at great expense, reflecting the emperor's desire to appear as a concerned ruler. Whatever Caracalla's motives, the ruins of his baths survive as another example of construction on a grand scale, with the main building alone measuring over 800 feet wide. There were three essential parts of any Roman public bath: the *frigidarium*,

the *tepidarium*, and the *caldarium*, a series of rooms that got progressively hotter. The standard method of heating baths employed a system of *hypocausts*, conduits for steam or hot water beneath the floor. In the Baths of Caracalla, as in many large bathing establishments, in addition to the changing rooms and rooms for washing there were also areas for exercise and games, swimming pools, gardens, libraries, and other social areas. The visit to the baths was an important part of a Roman's social life and it was well provided for here. The scale of Caracalla's baths can only be compared in modern times to grand structures such as large train stations and public libraries.

**THEATERS AND ARENAS.** The Roman theater was significantly different in its construction from the type developed by the Greeks. Although Greek and Roman theaters appear to be very similar, all they really had in common was that they both had areas for the dancers or actors and provided seating for the spectators. The



Interior of the Pantheon, Rome, completed 125–128 C.E. © MICHAEL MASLAN HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



The Pantheon in Rome, dating to the reign of the emperor Hadrian, showing the portico in front. © VINCE STREANO/CORBIS.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**BATHING ESTABLISHMENTS ON A GRAND SCALE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Roman baths were far more than the word “bath” suggests. The elaborate structures provided in every Roman city for bathing were also social centers—places of recreation and sport. Almost as important, they provided an opportunity for the ruler or an important official to make a show of generosity for the populace. If the emperor wanted to express his interest and concern for his subjects he could do so by building important public buildings such as markets and baths. After the Roman engineers and architects had developed methods of spanning large interior spaces it was only natural that such techniques would be used in grand building plans as part of imperial propaganda. The Baths of Caracalla, which even in ruins is one of the most imposing buildings in Rome, stands as evidence of this. In the *Historia Augusta*, a collection of imperial biographies written during the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, the possible method of the construction of the baths is discussed.

**SOURCE:** *Historia Augusta, Antoninus Caracalla*, in *The Art of Rome, c. 753 B.C.–337 A.D., Sources and Documents*. Ed. J. J. Pollitt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966): 196.



Imaginative drawing of the interior of the Thermae (Baths) of Caracalla, the most splendid of the imperial baths at Rome, built 212–217 C.E. with huge, vaulted rooms and an intricate heating system. © UPI/CORBIS-BETTMANN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

auditorium of the Greek theater was more than a half circle in plan where the Roman type was almost always a semicircle. The orchestra in the Greek theater was the focus of much of the action but the stage with an elaborate permanent backdrop of complex design—the

*scaena*—was the place where the Roman drama was acted. The theater at Aspendus in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), built in the second century C.E. is a prime example of the developed and elaborate nature of the Roman type. The auditorium has a diameter of over 300 feet and the elevated stage is over twenty feet deep. It is estimated that this building could accommodate over 7,000 people. Such construction on a large scale attests to the importance of the theater in Roman life. In many respects the amphitheater for gladiatorial and other games was just as important. One of the most visible and imposing monuments in Rome is the Flavian Amphitheater, better known as the Colosseum, but it is only the best known example of a type that was built in many parts of the empire. The Colosseum was begun by Vespasian and finished by his sons Titus and Domitian between 70 and 80 C.E. It occupied the site of Nero’s Golden House and gave back to the people a



Aerial view of the interior of the Flavian Amphitheater in Rome, popularly known as the Colosseum, inaugurated in 80 c.e. with a festival lasting 100 days. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

part of the city he had occupied for himself. The Colosseum was a masterpiece of construction supported on an interlocking structure of passages, stairways, and ramps, all necessary and carefully planned for the movement of forty-five to fifty thousand spectators. Below the arena level was a subterranean maze of corridors, storerooms, and cages to accommodate prisoners and wild animals. The exterior decoration reflected the debt to Greek practice by using columns of the Doric order on the ground floor, Ionic on the second, Corinthian on the third, and engaged Corinthian pilasters for the fourth tier. There was also a system of awnings to provide some shade from the bright Roman sun. Amphitheaters similar to the Colosseum were built throughout the empire—at Pompeii and Verona in Italy, Nîmes and Arles in France, and El Djem in southern Tunisia, to name just a few. The arena in El Djem, which held only about 30,000 spectators, is one of the

best-preserved examples partly because it is now in a sparsely populated part of the country. Preserved Roman theaters and amphitheaters stand today as vivid reminders of the popular entertainments enjoyed by the Roman people and provided for them by the emperors. As examples of a highly developed engineering and architectural tradition they nevertheless call to mind the dramatic and comic literature of the Roman stage as well as the often bloody spectacles of the arena.

**MONUMENTS.** The Romans were especially fond of commemorating their achievements in war by the celebration of a “triumph”—a victory procession voted by the Senate—and the erection of a monumental triumphal arch. A typical example is the Arch of Titus at the east end of the Roman Forum. It celebrates his victory in the Jewish war of 70 c.e. and the two large relief carvings on the interior illustrate the victory procession. On one Titus is shown in his chariot



Column of Trajan in Rome. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

accompanied by the goddess Roma and a winged victory. On the other the victorious soldiers carry the booty from the Temple at Jerusalem, including a giant menorah, the seven-branched candlestick. An example of a monumental arch commemorating an event that was not a military triumph is the arch erected by Trajan at Benevento south of Rome. On this arch, dated 14–17 C.E. Trajan is shown distributing food to the poor of the city. The arch is also decorated with images of victories and the seasons, and also with some later additions that include the young Hadrian, stressing his relationship to Trajan. Not all arches commemorate a special event. Some mark the entrance to a city, to a forum, a market, or even the end of a bridge, and some serve only as civic decoration. A type of monument comparable to the “triumphal” arch is the commemorative column. The Column of Trajan in the forum he constructed memorializes his two wars against the Dacians in a band of relief carving that slowly spirals to the top of its 125 feet. Constructed of drums carved from marble that weigh an estimated forty tons, the shaft con-



Arch of Trajan at Benevento, Italy, marking the terminus of the Via Traiana. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

tains a spiral staircase of 185 steps as well as a tomb chamber for the ashes of the emperor. It is a documentary in stone with a mixture of stock scenes of the emperor addressing his troops and carefully detailed views of the Roman army at war where even the insignia of the various units have been faithfully reproduced. Its aim was to emphasize the nobility of the emperor and the character of the Roman army. The Column of Trajan is one of the most successful examples of narrative in Roman art even though the higher parts are almost impossible to appreciate. Commemorative arches and columns such as this one and the later Column of Marcus Aurelius reveal a great deal about the Roman desire to commemorate important events and military campaigns. They acted as decoration and focus to the cityscape and served as visible reminders of the might of the Roman Empire.

**BURIAL OF THE DEAD.** Like the Etruscans before them, the Romans practiced both cremation and inhumation. The purpose of the tomb was twofold: to protect the remains and commemorate the dead. Tombs could take a variety of forms as different as a simple square box, a cylindrical structure resembling a tumulus, a tower, and even a pyramid depending on the social position of the deceased and the local custom. In one case the tomb of a baker was designed to look like an oven; in another, the tomb of Cestius on the Appian way, the shape is pyramidal for reasons that have



Arch of Titus in the Roman Forum, erected in 81 C.E. to commemorate the victory of the emperors Vespasian and Titus in the Judaean War (70 C.E.). FRANCIS G. MAYOR/CORBIS.

not been explained. The tomb of the emperor Augustus was a cylindrical monument, 280 feet in diameter, built in the Campus Martius just outside of Rome. It was constructed of several layers with a circular colonnade at the second stage. The emperor's intention was to make his tomb a monument to the Julian family, and he had the ashes of other members of the family collected to be entombed with him. A little more than a hundred years later Hadrian also had his tomb designed as a large cylindrical building, perhaps in imitation of Augustus. The tomb of Augustus had been filled with the remains of Nerva, the last to be deposited in it. Trajan's ashes, in a break with tradition, were entombed in his column, so Hadrian was actually building a mausoleum for the continued use of the imperial family and it was used as such until the burial of Caracalla. Hadrian's tomb is now known as the Castel Sant'Angelo and by the sixth century it was used as a fortress. Its decorative elements were lost long ago and in one

account sculpture was hurled from its heights as missiles. This was the fate shared by many of the monuments of Rome. Buildings were robbed of their stone to be reused in new construction. The Pantheon was converted into a Christian church and towers were added to it which have since been removed. The Arch of Titus was incorporated into the wall of a medieval fortress, and the Roman Forum became an area where animals were sent to graze.

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Arch of Constantine in Rome, built by the Roman senate to commemorate Constantine's victory at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 311 C.E. TRAVELSITE/DAGLI ORTI.

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## THE LATE ANTIQUE

**THE ARCH OF CONSTANTINE.** With the accession of Constantine in the early fourth century C.E. architecture entered a stage of transition from traditional Roman forms to those used in Christian Byzantine buildings, a period given the convenient designation of "Late Antique." The Arch of Constantine, from this time, is one of the most visible monuments in Rome. It is situated near the Colosseum, and in some aspects it is a prime example of a continued respect for tradition. Its general design, with three arched entrances, is very like the Arch of Septimius Severus at the west end of the forum, built about a hundred years earlier. The main difference between the two monuments is that the sculptural decoration of Constantine's arch is in several different styles. Some of the reliefs represent him and are in the style of his time, others have been reused from the time of Hadrian and others. It is almost as if a con-

venient model was used and available decorations were pressed into service without regard for their stylistic relationships. Side by side, the realistic representations of the time of Hadrian and the more stylized figures of the period in which the arch was built can be seen.

**THE BASILICA FORM.** The term "basilica" simply designates a hall used for assemblies and meetings. In Roman use this usually meant a civic building with administrative purposes. The Basilica of Maxentius in the Roman Forum was an example of the type carried to its most elaborate design with side bays and vaulted ceilings. The more typical form was of a much simpler design. As an example, at Trier on the Moselle River in northern Gaul the emperor Constantine completed a vast palace complex begun by his father. This included residences, a large bath establishment, a circus, warehouses, and other structures. One of the most significant buildings for the history of architecture, included in it

is the audience hall or basilica, much of it still preserved. It was a simple plan—a large rectangular hall 95 by 190 feet with a semicircular *apse*—a curved recess usually at the end of a building as it is here. Before entry to the main hall was a transverse crossing, fore-hall, or *narthex*, and a portico or vestibule. To add some width without resorting to vaulting over aisles on both sides of the nave, as the central hall was known, the ceilings of the side aisles were lower. This gave an opportunity to include windows in the side walls of the nave, helping to light the interior. As the Christian church developed from the secular Roman form for civic use, the architectural parts served to focus the attention of the worshipper on the ceremony. This was accomplished with the single direction of the tunnel-like space ending in the apse aided by the rhythmic repetition of the columns on either side. Examples of this form can be found in the plan for the old St. Peter's Basilica in Rome or in fifth century C.E. churches such as Santa Maria Maggiore and Santa Sabina, also in Rome. The great space-enclosing forms exemplified in structures like the Roman baths were not completely forgotten. The Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, built under Justinian in the mid-sixth century, preserves the basic basilica plan, but on a scale and with the use of an elaborate system of domes that it is almost unrecognizable as such. What Hagia Sophia shows us is the continuation of Roman values in an architectural tradition that produced monumental results, but it was in the service of the Christian faith and not the Roman state.

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### EARLY CHRISTIAN AND BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE

**THE EARLY CHRISTIAN BASILICA.** When the emperor Constantine recognized Christianity as the official state religion early in the fourth century, Christians were able to practice their faith openly. Whereas before they had met in secret in the catacombs and in other

non-public places, they were now free to act as an organized and recognized cult. The first Christian meeting places were private houses and it was only when the religious ritual became more formalized that a special building was needed. It was probably to divorce themselves from the old religions that the forms of the “pagan” Greek and Roman temples were not utilized for Christian worship. The long rectangular form of the civil basilica was easily adapted for this use, although some changes had to be made. The basilica was basically a meeting house where large groups could be accommodated to conduct business and carry on other civil functions, although some changes had to be made to the form for its new religious purpose. The normal civic basilica had its entrance on one side, and this was altered to accommodate the interior orientation and direction necessary in the church. One of the best examples of an early Christian basilica was the original Church of St. Peter in Rome. It was erected by order of the emperor Constantine on the site of the Circus of Nero where the apostle Peter was martyred. Its construction was begun in 324 C.E. but it was destroyed at the end of the fifteenth century to make room for a later church. There is considerable evidence in drawings and plans to indicate its design. Its general layout included an atrium, a large open courtyard that the participants passed through to enter the body of the church. Although the main meeting hall followed the general plan of the civil basilica, the addition of the atrium recalled the form of the private houses originally used for worship. In the Church of St. Peter a large central aisle known as the nave was flanked on each side by two parallel side aisles. Only the largest churches had five aisles; it was more typical to have a large central nave with only two side aisles. The focus of the religious ritual was at the altar at the far end from the entrance, exactly like the arrangement in most Christian churches even today. While the exterior and interior walls and columns were of stone, the roof over the nave and side aisles was of wood. This was a pattern followed in most early Christian churches of the basilica type, disregarding the use of stone or brick vaulting in favor of economical and easily constructed wooden roofing. The form that had been designed as a meeting place to accommodate large crowds for the conduct of business and government affairs used throughout the Roman world had evolved into the standard for a place of Christian worship. The pattern established by the first Church of St. Peter was followed in many early churches. A typical example is the Church of Santa Sabina in Rome, begun in 425. Its arrangement follows the basilica pattern with the addition of a half dome over the apse, the semicircular niche at the end of the



nave. In it, as in many early churches, the columns supporting the side walls of the nave were taken from earlier buildings. In some cases the reuse of such building elements was done without any concern for their style or order. Mosaics were used extensively for decoration on the façade, in the interior on the side walls and in the apse. These enlivened the interior with color and reflected light but they also served as informative and devotional illustrations of scripture.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BYZANTINE CHURCH.

The city known in antiquity as Byzantium was re-founded by Constantine as the “New Rome” in 333 C.E. At the breakup of the Roman Empire by the successors of Constantine in 335 it became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire with the new name of Constantinople. The development of church architectural style in the east, while serving the same purposes as in the west, took on somewhat different form. There are a number of reasons suggested to explain the difference, including the scarcity of wood for the roofing, resulting in a return to the arches and vaulting developed by Roman architects. Although this may be part of the explanation, it is more likely that the church architecture in the east—Byzantium—was the result of a combination of local traditions of construction and the influence of Eastern (Persian) architecture. While Roman architects had been comfortable with the design of round buildings such as the Parthenon that could be roofed with a dome, Byzantine architects were faced the problem of a circular dome resting on a square or rectangular building. This problem could be solved in two ways: by the use of *squinches* or by *pendentives*. The squinch uses an octagonal arrangement formed by bridging the corners with a lintel or an arch. The pendentive uses a second dome form from which sections have been removed leaving a circular base supported by four triangular sections resting on four piers. Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, which essentially follows the layout of a basilica, is an example of the use of domes supported by pendentives. One variation of a plan popular in the east was a central arrangement in a circular or octagonal building, as can be seen in the Church of San Vitale in northwest Italy, constructed between 526 and 547. The central arrangement or circular form never became popular in the west except for baptisteries and other special purposes. The separate architectural traditions of east and west continued into modern times and are still evident in the differences between modern churches of the Greek Orthodox rite and those of the more Western tradition.

#### SOURCES

John Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964).

Jean Lasuss, *The Early Christian and Byzantine World* (London: Paul Hamlin, 1967).

David Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Art* (Harmondsworth, England: Pelican Books, 1968).

SEE ALSO *Religion: The Rise of Christianity*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Architecture and Design*

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### HADRIAN

76 C.E.–138 C.E.

*Emperor*

**PATRON OF MONUMENTS.** Publius Aelius Hadrianus (Hadrian) was emperor from 117 to 38 C.E. He became the ward of the emperor Trajan at his father's death. He held a number of important military and civic posts including the governorship of Syria until Trajan's death in 117. Trajan had designated Hadrian as his successor on his deathbed. An important aspect of Hadrian's reign was his extensive travel throughout the Roman Empire, literally from one end (Britain) to the other (Syria). His reasons for years of travel combined the need for inspection tours and a desire to show himself as the ruler to the far-flung provinces. His importance to the architectural history of Rome includes the completion of the Pantheon in Rome, the temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens, his imposing tomb in Rome (the Castel San Angelo), and his imperial villa at Tivoli.

#### SOURCES

Michael Grant, “Hadrian,” in *The Roman Emperors* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985).

J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Greece 1400–31 B.C.* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965): ix–x.

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### PAUSANIAS

Middle to late second century C.E.—Late second century C.E.

*Antiquarian  
Traveler*

**GREEK TRAVELER.** Traveler and antiquarian Pausanias left an extensive account of the parts of Greece he

visited in his book *Descriptions of Greece*, including detailed descriptions of numerous monuments and buildings. The book also discussed the history of the site described as well as some of the local customs, systems of worship, and local myths. His accounts read very much like a modern guidebook. He was very interested in sanctuaries, tombs, and statues and wrote lengthy sections on Attica, Megara, Argolis, Laconia, Messenia, Elis, Olympia, Achaia, Arcadia, Boeotia, Phocis, and Delphi. He also took care in describing scenes of notable battles, and historic and artistic monuments. He was selective about what he described and omitted, calling attention to what he found important in the realms of architecture, culture, and art. Often Pausanias is the only surviving source for the original appearance of a temple or a sanctuary, at least as it appeared in his time. Little else is known about the man except that he probably was a native of Lydia and the time he lived and wrote can only be inferred from internal evidence in his text.

#### SOURCES

- Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*. 2 vols. Trans. by Peter Levi (New York: Viking/Penguin, 1984).  
 J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Greece 1400–31 B.C.* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965): ix–x.

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#### PLUTARCH

c. 50 C.E.–c. 120 C.E.

*Priest*  
*Antiquarian*  
*Biographer*

**GREEK BIOGRAPHER.** Plutarch was a man from a distinguished Greek family with considerable influence in governing circles. For the last thirty years of his life he was a priest in a temple at Delphi. He was also a prolific writer who used his works to influence greater cooperation between Greece and Rome. His body of writings includes philosophical, rhetorical, and antiquarian works, but he is best known for his *Lives* of famous men. He arranged the biographies in parallel pairs: for example, he portrays the Greek and Roman orators Demosthenes and Cicero side-by-side for contrast and comparison. Some of the biographies are particularly informative about architectural projects. Plutarch's life of Pericles is a prime source for detailed information on his building projects on the Acropolis at Athens. It includes lists of the types of craftsmen employed, the names of the architects of the various buildings, and even the fact that the sculptor Phidias was the general overseer of the

work. His accounts add life to the historical record through the medium of biography.

#### SOURCES

- N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 848–849.

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#### SUETONIUS

c. 69 C.E.–c. 140 C.E.

*Scholar*  
*Civil servant*

**CAESAR BIOGRAPHER.** Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus had a distinguished career in the Roman imperial civil service and was most likely secretary to the emperor Hadrian. He was a scholarly man, recognized for his qualities by Pliny the Younger and others. His *Lives of the Caesars* is a history consisting of twelve biographies from Julius Caesar to Domitian, but it is also a valuable source for information about the buildings erected during their reigns. His work is particularly useful as a source of information on architecture that no longer exists.

#### SOURCES

- N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 1020.

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#### VITRUVIUS

fl. first century B.C.E.

*Architect*  
*Military engineer*

**WROTE ARCHITECTURAL HANDBOOK.** Vitruvius was a Roman architect and engineer who lived and worked during the early part of the reign of the emperor Augustus. Aside from his architectural achievements, his major work was a treatise titled *De architectura* (On Architecture). This was based on his own experience as well as on works written by other (mainly Greek) architects. The contents of this handbook includes chapters on town planning, architecture in general and the qualifications of the architect, building materials, temples, civic buildings, domestic buildings, pavements and plaster work, water supplies, measurement and geometry, and machines. His work is especially valuable because it reflects his practical experience and for the careful analysis he provided of the

architectural orders and the standards of proportion. His description of “Tuscan” temple design contributes to modern knowledge of the appearance of lost Etruscan architecture. The sections on materials and construction methods are particularly useful to an understanding of ancient building techniques. Besides his written work and buildings attributed to his design, little else is known of Vitruvius.

#### SOURCES

N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 1130.

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Architecture and Design*

Pausanias, *Description of Greece* (second century C.E.)—Pausanias traveled extensively in the Mediterranean world and was a keen observer of the places he visited. In his account of his travels through Greece he gives a brief sketch of the history and the layout of the important cities, but it is his detailed description of many of the important architectural monuments—temples, shrines, treasuries, and other public buildings—that has proved

to be one of the most valuable sources for the history of Greek architecture. His travels in Greece included most of the major cities such as Athens, Olympia, and Delphi.

Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus), *Natural History* (first century C.E.)—Pliny’s compendium of facts included a discussion of building materials and construction as well as the techniques of the artists and decorators of major architectural works.

Suetonius (Gaius Paulinus Suetonius), *History of the Caesars* (second century C.E.)—Suetonius’ account of the lives of the twelve Caesars from Julius Caesar to Domitian contains descriptive material about the buildings and monuments of Rome. Often he describes works which no longer exist or gives a description of them—if they are in ruins—as they existed in his time.

Vitruvius (Vitruvius Pollio), *On Architecture* (end of the first century B.C.E.—beginning of the first century C.E.)—Vitruvius’ work on architecture is the single extant source written by a professional architect of the time that has survived to modern times. In it he deals with virtually every aspect of the craft as it was then understood, including architectural history, style, site design, and construction. His section on the education of the architect is especially interesting because it outlines the various areas of knowledge and expertise for which an architect was responsible.

## chapter two

# DANCE

James Allan Evans

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	44	<i>Dancing in Plato's Ideal State</i> (Plato describes the characteristic movements of war dances) . . . . .	53
OVERVIEW . . . . .	46	<i>War Dances of the Greeks</i> (Xenophon describes several war dances performed by armored soldiers) . . . . .	55
TOPICS		<i>Curetes and Corybantes</i> (Lucretius describes the ritual dance of the Corybantes) . . . . .	56
Dance in Prehistoric Greece . . . . .	48	<i>Aeschylus Reinvents the Tragic Dance</i> (Athenaeus comments on the dance innovations introduced by Aeschylus) . . . . .	63
War Dances . . . . .	52	<i>The Importance of Gesture</i> (excerpt from Quintilian's discussion of useful gestures for an orator) . . . . .	64
Women's Choruses . . . . .	57	<i>The Ecstasy of the Maenads</i> (Euripides writes of the ritual dance and madness of the maenads) . . . . .	68
The Dithyramb . . . . .	57	<i>A Dancer Entertains at a Banquet in Athens</i> (Xenophon describes the dancers performing at a banquet attended by Socrates) . . . . .	70
Folk Dances . . . . .	60	<i>Death of a Roman Impresario</i> (inscription marking the grave of a third century dance master) . . . . .	72
Dance in the Theater . . . . .	63	<i>Lucian of Samosata Argues the Virtues of the Pantomime Dance</i> (Lucian contrasts pantomime with contemporary tragedy) . . . . .	73
Dionysian Dance . . . . .	66	<i>The Pantomime Dancer, Pylades</i> (Macrobius recalls Pylades, who revolutionized pantomime during the reign of Augustus) . . . . .	74
Professional Dancers . . . . .	69		
Dance in Rome . . . . .	70		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Arion . . . . .	75		
Bathyllus and Pylades . . . . .	76		
Memphius . . . . .	76		
Theodora . . . . .	77		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	78		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
<i>The Minoans Were Famous Dancers</i> (Homer describes the shield Hephaestus fashioned with its depiction of Minoan dances) . . . . .	49		
<i>Theseus Dances the Geranos</i> (an excerpt from Plutarch's biography of Theseus) . . . . .	50		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS

### *in Dance*

- c. 1500 B.C.E. A small steatite (black soapstone) vase found at Hagia Traiada on Crete dated from this time period shows a harvest dance carved in relief.
- c. 1300 B.C.E. A small earthenware figurine found at Palaikastro on Crete from this time period shows women dancing in a circle around a lyre-player.
- 544 B.C.E. The “Festival of the Naked Boys” is organized in Sparta where Spartan youths as well as older men dance naked in the marketplace and sing hymns in honor of the dead who fell at the Battle of Thyrea, fought with Sparta’s northern neighbor, Argos.
- 534 B.C.E. The Festival of the City Dionysia is established in Athens by the tyrant Pisis-tratus in which Thespis wins first prize for his “tragedy”—a dithyramb (choral song) where he impersonates the main character himself.
- 508 B.C.E. At the City Dionysia, a separate contest for dithyrambic song and dance is established.
- 501 B.C.E. A day of comedy is added to the three days of tragedy at the festival of the City Dionysia in Athens. The characteristic dance of comedy, the *kordax*, is considered vulgar if danced offstage.
- 486 B.C.E. Comedy is produced for the City Dionysia in the same way as tragedy: the chief magistrate of the state called the “archon” assigns a “choregus” to each comedy production, who defrays the cost and oversees the training of the 24 dancers in the chorus.
- 423 B.C.E. Aristophanes in his comedy *The Clouds* attacks the new experiments in song and dance that are being introduced to the Athenian stage at this time.
- 364 B.C.E. Rome is smitten by plague, and to placate divine wrath, the Romans introduce Etruscan dancers who put on performances of dancing in the Etruscan style, without singing or miming of the song.
- 334 B.C.E. The playwright Lysicrates erects his choregic monument which still stands in Athens to commemorate the victory of his chorus in a dithyrambic contest of 335–334 B.C.E.
- c. 300 B.C.E. A guild of Dionysiac artists—actors, musicians, and dancers—is formed in Athens.
- 279 B.C.E. Soon after this date, the guild of Dionysiac artists of Athens have their rights to unhindered travel in Greece confirmed by the Amphictionic League, a league of states centered at Delphi which supervises the governance of the temple-state of Delphi.
- 240 B.C.E. Lucius Livius Andronicus of Tarentum produces his first dramatic presentation in Rome, which includes songs accompanied by interpretative dance.
- c. 200 B.C.E. Dancing becomes a social accomplishment in Rome, and upper-class parents begin to send their sons and daughters to dancing school.
- c. 150 B.C.E. In Rome, general Scipio Aemilianus Africanus attempts to close down the dancing schools.
- c. 22 B.C.E. The famous pantomime Pylades, a protégé and probably an ex-slave of the emperor Augustus, introduces a new type of pantomime dance into Rome.

- 2 C.E. The *Sebasta*, games of the Greek type, are founded at Naples to rival the great festivals of Greece such as the Olympic, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian Games. Sometime shortly after the emperor Augustus' death in 14 C.E. contests in pantomime dancing are added to the Games, along with other contests in the arts of the theater.
- 23 C.E. The emperor Tiberius bans all pantomimes from Rome because of the disturbances that pantomime performances cause in the theaters. They are not allowed to return to Rome until Gaius Caligula becomes emperor in 37 C.E.
- 162 C.E. The emperor Lucius Verus brings back to Rome the famous pantomime dancer Apolaustus, known as "Memphius," from his military campaigns in the east.
- c. 525 C.E. Theodora, a former pantomime dancer in Constantinople, marries Justinian. They will become emperor and empress of the Roman Empire in 527.

## OVERVIEW of Dance

**THE REALM OF TERPSICHORE.** Dance belonged to what the Greeks called *mousike*, the arts of the Nine Muses, the daughters of Zeus. Four of them—Polyhymnia, Calliope, Euterpe, and Erato—gave poets inspiration; Melpomene presided over the theater of tragedy, and Thalia, the theater of laughter; Urania marked the movements of the stars and planets; and Clio preserved the memories and myths of the past. Chief of them all, however, was Terpsichore, sovereign of the dance. Dance had a place in festivals, religious rituals, productions in the theater, entertainment at banquets, education of the young, and military training. The sway of Terpsichore extended over all movements of the body, including acrobatics, and in particular, gestures of the hands and arms—what the Greeks called *kheironomia*. Modern knowledge of ancient dance comes from widely scattered sources: paintings on vases, inscriptions carved on stone, and references in Greek and Latin writings. Most of the information comes from the period of the Roman Empire, when many of the ancient dances, if they were still danced, were much changed. The names of a number of ancient Greek and Roman dances, and the traditions attached to them, are known, but there are informational gaps in this knowledge. One example is the *Gymnopaideia* (“Dance of the Naked Boys”) which was danced every year in the marketplace of ancient Sparta. There is record that the dancers were naked, yet this information also shows that men as well as boys took part in the dance, leaving open to interpretation both the meaning of the dance as well as the title. Another example is the *geranos* (“Crane Dance”) which was performed on the sacred island of Delos. While it is clear from records that this was a dance closely tied to religion, there is no indication what, if anything, the dance had to do with cranes or birds of any sort. The most well known example is that of the “tragic chorus” which danced and sang in Greek tragedies. While much is not known of the origins of many Greek dances and traditions, their influence in numerous different realms, from religion to literature to fashion, is evident.

**ORIGINS.** The purpose of dance in Greek and Roman society is similar to the role that dance played in almost every early culture in which dance was tied directly to the rites of religion. Dancing commemorated the changing of the seasons, life and death, social solidarity, and the connection between humanity and the unseen powers that affected human existence. If a tribe depended on hunting wild beasts for its food, the hunters might dress in animal skins and dance for the success of the hunt. Since religious ritual was intensely conservative, dances where the dancers impersonated animals continued to be performed long after the society depended for its food more on its harvests than it did in the hunt. Following the domestication of plants and animals, another type of dance came into being: the community danced on threshing floors after the harvest, thus expressing not merely its pleasure that the crops were gathered in, but also the hope that next year’s crops would be bountiful. Dances performed in spring festivals where the dancers made great leaps into the air were intended to encourage the fertility of the fields. Then, too, there were dances to celebrate weddings, war dances intended to keep warriors in peak physical condition, and some dances that served as a release from the pressures and restrictions of the workaday world. Once dance moved into the theater, it evolved into spectacle. In the Roman Empire, dance competed with gladiatorial games and chariot races for audiences’ interest, and famous dancers went on tour, playing in provincial theaters found in towns of any size in the Roman Empire.

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF CRETE.** The earliest description of a dance comes from Homer’s description of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*, on which the blacksmith god Hephaestus portrayed two dance scenes. One is a dance of the grape-harvesters as they pick the grapes for the vintage. The other is a dance that specifically recalls Minoan Crete, a prehistoric civilization found on an island off of mainland Greece. The dance was performed on a dancing floor similar to the one that belonged to Ariadne, daughter of Minos of Crete. Homer’s reference to dance in the *Iliad* indicates that the Greeks recognized Crete’s contribution to dance, which included the *hyporchema*, a lively dance of song, pantomime, and instrumental music played on the lyre or the *aulos*. The *geranos*—the “Crane Dance”—also came from Crete. According to legend, the dance was brought to the sacred island of Delos by the Athenian hero Theseus on his way back from Cnossus where he had killed the Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull monster that was kept in a maze-like building called the “Labyrinth.” The *geranos* continued to be danced on Delos at a festival held every July.

**THE DANCE AS RELIGIOUS RITE.** It would not be incorrect to state that all Greek dance had a connection with religion, for dances took place at festivals which were held in honor of one god or another. There were some dances, however, that were vital to specific religious rites. The Great Mother goddess, Cybele, whose center of worship was in Phrygia in western Asia Minor on the fringe of the Greek world, was attended by eunuch priests called Corybantes who performed ecstatic dances as part of her ritual. Better known, however, is the dance of the maenads, where female devotees of the wine-god Dionysus danced wild dances or *orgia* in paroxysms of temporary madness, during which they might capture wild animals and tear them limb from limb. They are frequently shown on Greek vases as attendants of Dionysus. In many Greek states, congregations of women assembled in mid-winter every other year, journeying up even snow-covered mountainsides to dance their “orgies” in honor of Dionysus.

**THE MANY VARIETIES OF GREEK DANCE.** Apart from the maenads, Greek literature mentions many varieties of dance. There was the Pyrrhic dance, a war dance that imitated combat between warriors. It was the national dance of Sparta, a militaristic state, but similar dances took place elsewhere in the ancient world, including a very early dance in Rome begun, according to tradition, by Rome’s founder, Romulus. The *Herakeio* was a dance of women in honor of the goddess Hera, and the *epilinos* was a dance performed while treading grapes during the harvest in honor of Dionysus, the god of wine. The dance performed by the chorus in the production of a Greek tragedy was the *emmeleia*. It was a dignified dance, whereas the dance of Greek comedy, the *kordax*, was not. The satyr plays staged at the close of a day of three tragedies during a festival included the *sikin-nis*, in which the dancers were costumed as satyrs. The *partheneia* (“dance of virgins”), was a chorus of ten or eleven girls who were eligible for marriage, whereas the *himenaios* was a wedding dance, danced by the bride with her mother and some friends. The *hormos* was a dance of men and women who formed a chain, and the young man who led the chain displayed his skill at dance and, incidentally, his abilities as a warrior. The *hyporchema* which came from Crete, was a combination of pantomime and dance, and it was performed by boys and girls who sang to musical accompaniment as they danced.

**THE DITHYRAMB.** The dithyramb was a choral song and dance performed in honor of Dionysus. According to Aristotle’s essay, *The Art of Poetry*, Greek tragedy began with the dithyramb because the chorus told a story

from myth with song and dance. About 600 B.C.E. a famous artist of the dithyramb, Arion, whose patron was the tyrant or dictator of Corinth, Periander, gave it a definite form. Its development into tragedy began in Athens when the festival known as the “City Dionysia” was founded, and a leader of the dithyramb, Thespis, took a solo part. Tragedy, however, did not displace dithyrambs at the City Dionysia, for in 508 B.C.E. dithyrambs were given their own place in the festival. They were staged at other festivals as well; in fact, the theater of Dionysus in Athens was used more often for dithyrambs than it was for tragedy and comedy.

**DANCE AS A PROFESSION.** Most professional dancers remained nameless in ancient Greece. They were for the most part slaves, owned by the master of a troupe. In the *Banquet* of Xenophon, which describes a banquet attended by Socrates in 421 B.C.E., the owner of a troupe from Syracuse in Sicily provides dancers to entertain the banqueters. It would have been considered disgraceful for an Athenian citizen to own a troupe of dancers, but this master was an alien, and hence not bound by Athenian conventions. There was also interpretative dancing by professionals in Greece although little is known about it. One story relates the performance by the tragic actor Neoptolemus of the myth of Cinyras, the king of Cyprus who founded the cult of Aphrodite there and unwittingly committed incest with his own daughter who gave birth to Adonis. Presumably it was a performance of song and dance, a forerunner of the Roman pantomime.

**PANTOMIME.** Pantomime is supposed to have been introduced into Rome in 22 B.C.E. by the artist Pylades and his rival Bathyllus. Mime performances and songs were performed on the Roman stage earlier than 22 B.C.E., but Pylades and Bathyllus introduced a new kind of interpretative dance that became wildly popular. Pylades and the pantomime artists after him danced while an assistant recited the story, and a small orchestra provided the music. Emperors had their favorite pantomimes: Augustus backed Pylades while his minister of public relations, Maecenas, was Bathyllus’ patron; Gaius Caligula (r. 37–41 C.E.) doted on Mnestic, and Lucius Verus (r. 161–180 C.E.) was an aficionado of Memphius, who supposedly taught the philosophy of Pythagoras with his dance. Unlike mimes, pantomime artists were usually men who impersonated characters by using masks, and a swift change of mask allowed them to switch quickly from one character to another whenever the script demanded it. They were, however, masks with closed mouths, not the open-mouthed masks of theatrical dramas. There were also dances in mimes, which were skits involving unmasked actors who were occasionally



women. Galeria Copiola, for instance, was remembered because she performed her first dance on stage in 82 B.C.E. and her last in 9 C.E., at the age of 104. By the time of the later Roman Empire, pantomime and mime were intermingled, and women danced roles on stage taken from mythology. The empress Theodora, the wife of the emperor Justinian (r. 527–565 C.E.) was a pantomime actress before she met her future husband. The skit for which she was best known told the myth of the rape of Leda by the god Zeus disguised as a swan. Theodora's choreography was simple, for though she was a talented comedienne, she was not a skillful dancer. She took off all her clothes except for the girdle around her groin that the law required, and reclined on stage while an attendant sprinkled her with grain. A gaggle of geese then waddled on stage and ate the grain off of her body. Although the Roman Empire was largely Christianized by Theodora's day, the Christian church's disapproval of the theater failed to eradicate the staging of ancient myths.

## TOPICS *in Dance*

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### DANCE IN PREHISTORIC GREECE

**MINOAN CRETE.** The Bronze-Age civilizations of Greece bear labels applied to them in modern times. The Minoan civilization on Crete, which flourished from 2000 to shortly before 1400 B.C.E., was a non-Greek culture with an indecipherable language likely linked to contemporary societies in Asia Minor. The Mycenaean civilization on mainland Greece developed a few centuries after the Minoan civilization began and ended at about the same time. Its name comes from the first site of its discovery: Mycenae, the legendary capital of Agamemnon who led the Greek coalition in the Trojan War. Since the initial archeological discoveries, at Mycenae in the 1870s and on Crete at the so-called Palace of Minos at Knossos at the start of the twentieth century, archaeologists and historians have discovered a great deal of information about these Bronze-Age cultures. For instance, at a Minoan site in eastern Crete, Palaikastro, archeologists discovered a primitive figurine made of earthenware, portraying women dancing in a circle in the center of which stood a man playing a lyre. Found with the figurine were six clay birds. The figurine dates to after 1400 B.C.E. when Greek-speaking immigrants from mainland Greece had already invaded the island,

and it is the earliest portrayal that has survived of a musician playing the lyre, surrounded by dancers in a circle. Harvesting was a time for dance on Crete; as evidenced by the so-called "Harvester Vase"—a small vase of black soapstone showing a procession of harvesters, which was discovered at Hagia Triadha on Crete. The "Harvester Vase" gives scholars a glimpse of a harvest dance performed on Crete around 1500 B.C.E. The vase shows harvesters striding along, four abreast, singing and lifting their knees high with every step. They carry long objects over their shoulders that have been identified as flails or winnows, tools used to separate grain. The lead harvester is a man who shakes a *sistrum*, a kind of rattle used in Egyptian religious ceremonies, and appears to be singing heartily. Another Cretan dance ceremony is shown on a gold seal-ring, discovered in tombs dating to the fifteenth century B.C.E. at Vapheio close to Sparta in Greece. The seal-ring depicts a woman dancing under a tree wearing the fashionable court dress worn by ladies in the Palace of Minos on Crete. To her right a youth leaps to pluck either fruit or a flower from the tree. While visual references are clues to dance in ancient Cretan civilization, the best evidence of the tradition of dance comes not from archaeology, but from Greek literature centuries later.

**THE EVIDENCE OF LITERATURE.** One of the first literary texts dealing with the Cretan tradition of dance after the collapse of the Bronze-Age civilization came from the poets of the island of Lesbos. One poem, from seventh century B.C.E., attributed to either Sappho or Alcaeus, reads "Once upon a time the girls of Crete / were wont to dance in harmony like this / their soft foot beats circling the fair altar. ..." Other examples of the reputed Cretan dance rituals came from the Homeric epics the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The *Iliad* tells how the blacksmith god Hephaestus made new armor for the hero Achilles so that he could rejoin the battle after his best friend, Patroclus, was killed while wearing Achilles' armor. The shield that Hephaestus made showed scenes from the everyday life of early Greece, at peace or war, and among them were two dance scenes. One portrayed a dance as the grapes were harvested from the vineyard, which is reminiscent of the "Harvester Vase." The other depicted a dance on a dancing floor that Homer explicitly likens to one which the legendary craftsman Daedalus built at Knossos for Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos of Crete. The *Odyssey* tells how the hero Odysseus in his wanderings reached the island of Phaeacia. Phaeacia, ruled by a generous king and a wise queen, is thought to be based on folk memories of the world of ancient Crete, though the *Odyssey* was written at least six

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE MINOANS WERE FAMOUS DANCERS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Homer's *Iliad* reflects the tradition that the Minoans in Bronze Age Crete were famous dancers. The passage quoted here describes how the blacksmith god, Hephaestus, made new armor for Achilles, for Achilles had loaned his armor to his friend Patroclus who was killed by the Trojan hero Hector. The shield that Hephaestus fashioned was a work of art. On it he depicted scenes from Greek life, including two dance scenes, one of which specifically recalls the dances that were once held at the Palace of Minos in Knossos. The first scene is of a vintage dance where youths, both men and women, dance as they harvest the grapes, while in their midst a boy plays the lyre and sings the Linus-song, which is a dirge that marked not joy but sadness. Perhaps here it was a lament for the passing of the summer and the advent of winter. The second dance scene, which is described below, showed boys with daggers and girls wearing garlands on their heads. Both are dressed in their best clothes—the men have rubbed theirs with olive oil to make them gleam—and they perform an intricate dance, first forming a circle and dancing a round dance, and then reforming into two ranks which moved to meet each other. In the middle of the circle were two gymnasts or tumblers, who performed somersaults and made great leaps into the air. This sort of acrobatic dance was considered a Cretan specialty. Homer makes the point that this was like the dances that were danced at Knossos in

Crete, on the dancing floor of Ariadne, who in Greek mythology, was the daughter of King Minos of Crete. Homer is recalling the tradition that Minoan Crete, where a pre-Greek civilization reached its height in 1700–1450 B.C.E., was famous for dancing.

Also did the glorious lame god depict a dancing floor like unto that which once upon a time, Daedalus fashioned for Ariadne of the lovely tresses in broad Knossos. On it were youths dancing, and maidens whom it would cost many oxen to wed, their hands holding one another's wrists. The maidens were clad in fine linen, and the youths had well-woven doublets faintly glistening with olive oil. Fair garlands the maidens wore, and the youths had daggers of gold hanging from silver baldrics. And now they would dance round in a circle, light and deftly on their feet, as when a potter sits by his potter's wheel which fits neatly between his hands and tries it out, to see whether it spins smoothly; and then they would form into lines and move quickly to meet each other. A large crowd stood joyously round about the lovely dancing-floor, [and among them a god-like minstrel was making music on his lyre], and in the midst of the dancers, leading their dance steps were two acrobats swooping and doing somersaults.

**SOURCE:** Homer, *The Iliad*, ix, 689–709. Trans. Andrew Lang, Walter Leaf, and Ernest Myers (London: Macmillan, 1911). Text revised by James Allan Evans.

centuries after the peak of the Minoan civilization. King Alcinous of Phaeacia had five sons and they all need clean clothes to wear at dances. Alcinous' daughter, Nausicaa, took the laundry to the seashore where she met Odysseus and directed him to her father's palace. There he attended a banquet where the Phaeacians displayed their special skill at dancing. The dancing floor was swept clean, the minstrel took his place in the center of the floor with his lyre, and the young dancers performed in a circle around him. Then two dancers showed off their expertise at dancing with a ball. The one threw the ball into the air; the other leaped up and caught it before his feet touched the ground. Then they danced, the one throwing the ball to the other, who caught it and threw it back. From this example, it appears that ancient Cretan dance covered a broad range of movement: juggling, turning somersaults, and making gestures with arms and hands. It was all part of *mousike*, the arts sacred to the muses of dance, music, and poetry.

**THE GERANOS DANCE.** One dance that originated on Crete was the *geranos*. Many scholars originally trans-

lated *geranos* as the Greek word for “crane,” creating speculation that the *geranos* was a dance where performers imitated the flight of cranes, or costumed themselves as cranes. Animal and bird dances of this variety were well known in Greek culture. However, from portrayals of the *geranos* that have been discovered on pottery, it is clear that the dancers did not costume themselves as cranes. One attempt to explain the title of the dance suggests that the dance merely simulated the migratory flight of the cranes. A more widely accepted theory suggests that the word *geranos* was mistranslated as “crane.” Rather it is derived from a word meaning “to wind” in Indo-European, the ancient language from which most modern European languages were derived. This idea of winding is backed up by visual representations of the *geranos* that show dancers with joined hands forming a row that wound back and forth, sometimes even reversing direction, as if it was making its way through a maze. Many scholars began to speculate that the *geranos* was a “winding dance,” meant to represent a snake, and was done in rituals to honor a great serpent such as a python. There is archaeological evidence for

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THESEUS DANCES THE GERANOS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The lifetime of Plutarch of Chaeronea stretched from the forties of the first century C.E. into the reign of Hadrian (117–138 C.E.) He is best known for his *Parallel Lives* which matched biographies of eminent Greeks with eminent Romans. He devoted one biography to the hero Theseus, and in the excerpt below, he describes how the dance called the “Crane” came to Crete. Dicearchus, whom Plutarch cites as a source, was a pupil of Aristotle.

On his way back from Crete, Theseus touched at Delos. There, when he had sacrificed to Apollo and dedicated in his temple the statue of Aphrodite which he had received from Ariadne, he and the Athenian youths with him executed a dance, which they say is still performed by the people of Delos, and which consists of a series of serpentine figures danced in regular time and representing the winding passages of the Labyrinth. The Delians call this kind of dance the Crane, according to Dicearchus, and Theseus danced it round the altar known as the Keraton, which is made of horns all taken from the left side of the head. They also say that Theseus founded games at Delos and that he began there the practice of giving a palm to the victors.

**SOURCE:** Plutarch, “Theseus,” in *The Rise and Fall of Athens; Nine Greek Lives by Plutarch*. Trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1960): 27.

rituals involving snakes in Minoan Crete, and Greek mythology relates that Apollo killed a sacred python which was worshipped at Delphi when he took over the shrine and made it his own.

**MYTHICAL ORIGIN.** Another possible origin for the geranos comes from Greek mythology. According to one myth, King Minos of Crete forced Athens to send him tribute every year of seven youths and maidens who would be fed to the Minotaur, a half-human and half-bull monster who was kept in the Labyrinth, a maze of winding paths and corridors, at Knossos. Whether the Labyrinth was a building, or an open-air area, or even a dancing floor, as one scholar suggested, is not clear. The hero Theseus, the son of the king of Athens, insisted on going to Knossos as one of the seven youths to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, and once there, he killed the Minotaur and escaped the twists and turns of the

Labyrinth by following a cord which the daughter of Minos, Ariadne, had given him. On his way back to Athens, Theseus stopped at the sacred island of Delos, where he and the rest of the young Athenian youths who had escaped with him danced the geranos. This scene from the myth is depicted on the François Vase, a famous vase painted in black-figure style, named after the excavator who discovered it in an Etruscan grave in Italy in the early part of the nineteenth century. On one side of the vase, under the rim, Theseus and his companions are shown disembarking from the boat, and forming a row of dancers, hands joined, alternating by gender. The dancers then wound back and forth to commemorate the twists and turns that they faced in the Labyrinth. Records exist showing the geranos was performed yearly on the island of Delos around a horned altar, similar to those found in the Palace of Minos on Crete, lending even more credence to the theory that the geranos was Cretan in origin.

**THE GERANOS IN THE CLASSICAL PERIOD.** Regardless of the origin of the geranos, it continued to be danced on the sacred island of Delos into the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The dancers were both male and female and they formed a sort of chorus line with a leader at each end who were known as *geranoulkoi* (“ones that pull the crane”). Some inscriptions from Delos survive which furnish other evidence about the dance. It was usually performed during a festival held in the month which the Greeks called *Hekatombaion*—equivalent to July on the modern calendar—and it was danced at night by the light of lamps and torches. The inscriptions show payments for torches, wicks for lamps, and olive oil to fuel the lamps. They also show that the dancers were paid ten drachmas each, not a small sum when a stonemason might make between one and two drachmas a day. The inscriptions also state that the dancers were supplied with branches, which were tokens of victory, and ropes or cords which the dancers carried, props that point back to the Labyrinth myth. Because the geranos was danced at night, it was most likely part of rituals that were performed to honor the deities of the Underworld, the *chthonic* (“earth”) deities. Some scholars believed this is further proof that the geranos was a ritual snake dance, for snakes were creatures of the Underworld. The geranos survived into the early Roman period of Greek history, but was no longer performed after the first century B.C.E.

**OTHER ANCIENT DANCES.** There were other dances as well that the Greeks thought originated from Crete. One was the *hyporchema*, a lively choral hymn sung to the god Apollo which included interpretative

dancing. The *paean* was also attributed to Crete; it was a hymn of supplication to Apollo similar to the *hyporchema*. When festivals and sacrifices to Apollo were held on the sacred island of Delos, choirs of boys danced and sang both the *hyporchema* and the *paean* to the accompaniment of the *aulos*, a woodwind instrument similar to an oboe, and the lyre. The *nomoi*, poems telling the adventures of heroes or gods, which also had a Cretan origin, were sung to the music of the lyre or the double-*aulos*. In early Greece, the *nomoi* were only accompanied by a series of gestures, but later versions included dance steps as well. Dances that involved men bearing their arms—originally war dances—were widespread in the Greek world, but the traditional war dance of Sparta, known as the *pyrrhike* or “Pyrrhic Dance,” had a Cretan origin. A Spartan myth surrounding the founder of the Spartan constitution, Lycurgus, told of Lycurgus’s desire for dances that befitted a society of warriors and so he persuaded a musician and choreographer named Thaletas to come from Crete and instruct the Spartans in song and dance. Thaletas of Crete was an historical figure: he was a musician and teacher of dance who was known to have practiced his profession in Sparta in the seventh century B.C.E. He may have given new shape to *pyrrhic* dance in Sparta, but records show that Sparta had the *pyrrhike* warrior dance long before Thaletas arrived there. Because of their widespread influence, the Cretans deserved the reputation for dancing that they had among the ancient Greeks. Long after the Minoan civilization on Crete receded into the shadows of mythology, the tradition of their ancient dances continued.

**THE PAEAN AND THE HYPORCHEMA.** The *paean* was named for a ritual shout of worshipers invoking the god Apollo: “ie ie paian.” It was a rhythmic cry accompanied by a dance: three short syllables followed by a long, or in musical notation, three quarter notes followed by a half note. This rhythmic beat came to be known as the “*paean*.” The *paean* was sung to drive out pestilence or celebrate victory, though it probably began as a hymn to Apollo. *Paeans* were also sung and danced to Artemis and Ares, and also to Poseidon in his capacity as “Earth-Shaker,” the god of the earthquake. Fragments survive of more than 22 *paeans* written by Pindar, providing scholars with evidence that these dances and songs were part of religious rituals. Sometimes confused with the *paean*, the *hyporchema* also played an important role in religious ceremonies. The choir singing the *hyporchema* was divided into two sections: one sang without dancing, or if it danced, it used a simple dance-step, whereas the other did not sing, but instead danced an interpretative dance adapted to the text of the song. It used a

rhythm similar to the *paean*, though the *hyporchema* seems to have been the livelier of the two. Sometimes the term “*hyporchema*” simply means a lively dance when mentioned in literature.

**ANIMAL DANCES.** Another type of dance with prehistoric roots was the animal dance, where the dancers wore animal masks, or even impersonated wild animals without wearing masks. One animal dance was performed at Brauron outside Athens at a shrine to Artemis. During the Brauronia festival held every four years, girls between the ages of five and ten danced a dance of little bears. The founding legend for the Brauronia told that a band of Athenian youths killed a bear at Brauron, thus provoking the anger of Artemis who sent a plague; the Brauronia with its choral dances of young girls expiated the sacrilege. Another animal dance focused on bulls. A Greek vase in the British Museum depicts in black silhouette three dancers who wear bull masks, the tails of bulls, and hoof-like coverings on their hands. This scene is reminiscent of the legend of the Minotaur who was kept by King Minos in the Labyrinth at Knossos on Crete. Further proof of bull dances comes from the Palace of Minos where a fresco depicts acrobats, both male and female, leaping over the back of a charging bull in graceful somersaults. The Greeks would have considered acrobatic stunts like this a form of dance, and on Crete, the tradition of acrobatic dancing lived on into later periods. Greek literature makes mention of owl dances—the owl was sacred to Athena—and a wine jug in the British Museum shows two dancers costumed as birds dancing as a piper plays the *aulos*. Another piece of archaeological evidence for animal dances comes from the sanctuary of the goddess known as *Despoina* at Lycosura, in the mountainous region of Arcadia. *Despoina* is not a proper name; it means “Mistress,” or “Lady” and probably this goddess was a manifestation of the ancient goddess called the “Mistress of the Wild Animals,” who was honored with animal dances. A broken piece of marble carved in low relief on the colossal statue of *Despoina* at Lycosura shows ornamental motifs such as eagles, thunderbolts, and girls riding on dolphins. Also included is a group of female dancers wearing animal masks. Several wear masks portraying rams’ heads; at least one wears a horse’s head. More evidence comes from finds near an altar on the slope above the temple of *Despoina*. Some exploratory digging turned up a large number of earthenware figurines of dancers wearing animal heads that were buried there. Lycosura was visited in the second century C.E. by the Greek traveler Pausanias who described what was left of it in his day, and noted that it was the oldest of all the cities on earth, leading scholars

to believe that the worship of the “Mistress” with her animal dances was an ancient rite that was still recognized in later Greek periods.

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#### WAR DANCES

**THE PYRRHIKE.** The most famous war dance in ancient Greece was the *pyrrhike* which became the national dance of Sparta, and persisted there long after Greece became a province of the Roman Empire and similar war dances had died out in other cities. The Greeks had several stories that accounted for the name of the pyrrhic dance. One said that it was invented by a Spartan called Pyrrhicus, though an alternative version claimed that Pyrrhicus was a Cretan. Another story connected the

dance with the son of the hero Achilles, who bore two names: Pyrrhus as well as Neoptolemus. After Achilles was killed in battle at Troy, Pyrrhus came to Troy to take his father’s place, and his greatest exploit was killing Eurypylus, leader of a force of Hittites that had come to help the Trojans. After he slew Eurypylus, he performed an exultant victory dance, and from his dance the pyrrhike took its name. The pyrrhike and many other war dances were common among the peoples in the Greek world, as well as in neighboring countries between the tenth and seventh centuries B.C.E. Dancing had a practical purpose in the warfare of early Greece when warriors often fought in single combat, and nimble feet made the difference between a warrior dodging the spear that his foe hurled at him, and being impaled by it. In Homer’s *Iliad*, the Trojan prince Hector tells the Greek hero Ajax that he is not frightened by him, for he knows the steps of the “deadly dance of Ares,” the god of war. By the mid-seventh century B.C.E., however, the complexion of war had changed. Battles became contests between two battle lines of heavily-armed infantrymen called “hoplites,” and a good hoplite did not dodge or dance; rather, he stood firmly in his place in the battle line and shoved the enemy that faced him with his shield and thrust at him with his spear. Dance ceased to be an important part of military training, except in Sparta, which maintained its militaristic traditions long after it ceased to be a military power. By the end of the second century C.E. the pyrrhike was performed only in Sparta, where boys were still trained to dance it from the age of five. Yet the pyrrhike remained the dance most often portrayed in war sculptures and vase paintings.

**ACCESSORY TO MILITARY TRAINING.** Spartan education, which was intended only for the warrior elite that controlled the state, aimed to produce superb soldiers, physically fit and skilled at handling arms. *Hoplomachia* (weapons training) between men was an important part of a warrior’s education, and it resembled a type of dance. When the philosopher Plato discussed the pyrrhic dance in the *Laws*, he described it as part of the *hoplomachia*. However, as pyrrhic dance developed in Sparta, youths who were being hardened for battle would first have their training session where they practiced their skill with the weapons of war, and then when it was over, they danced. A piper played the *aulos*, which had a timbre not unlike bagpipes, and the young warriors formed a line and danced to a quick, light dance step. While they danced, they sang songs which were composed by musicians who worked in Sparta in the seventh century B.C.E. such as Thaletas, who was credited with organizing the *Gymnopaïdai* (a

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***DANCING IN PLATO'S IDEAL STATE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In Plato's old age, he returned to the subject of his most famous work, the *Republic*, and tried once again to outline what the government and society of an ideal state should be. The result is the *Laws*, Plato's last attempt to frame a utopia. It is to be a city-state named Magnesia, of precisely 5,040 citizens, plus slaves and some resident aliens whose sojourn in Magnesia will be limited to twenty years. The education of the citizens is important. Plato deals with the type of literature to which youth should be exposed, the kind of music they should hear and what sort of physical training they should have. The topic of physical training brings him to dancing, which he divides into two classes, the reputable and the disreputable, and reputable dancing can in turn be divided into two classes, war dances, and dances of peace. The following passage deals with war dances, that is, pyrrhic dances.

So let's accept what we've said so far as an adequate statement of what wrestling can do for a man. The proper term for most of the other movements that can be executed by the body as a whole is "dancing." Two varieties, the decent and the disreputable, have to be distinguished. The first is a representation of the movements of graceful people, and the aim is to create an effect of grandeur; the second imitates the movements of unsightly people and tries to present them in an unattractive light. Both have two subdivisions. The first subdivision of the decent kind represents handsome, courageous soldiers locked in the violent struggles of war; the second portrays a man of temperate character enjoying moderate pleasures in a state of prosperity, and the natural name for this is "dance of peace." The dance of war differs fundamentally from the

dance of peace, and the correct name for it will be the "Pyrrhic." It depicts the motions executed to avoid blows and shots of all kinds (dodging, retreating, jumping into the air, crouching); and it also tried to represent the opposite kind of motion, the more aggressive postures adopted when shooting arrows and discharging javelins and delivering various kinds of blows. In these dances, which portray fine physiques and noble characters, the correct posture is maintained if the body is kept erect in a state of vigorous tension, with the limbs extended nearly straight. A posture with the opposite characteristics we reject as *not* correct. As for the dance of peace, the point we have to watch in every chorus performer is this: how successfully—or how disastrously—does he keep up the fine style of dancing to be expected from men who've been brought up under good laws? This means we'd better distinguish the dubious style of dancing from the style we may accept without question. So can we define the two? Where should the line be drawn between them? "Bacchic" dances and the like, which (the dancers allege) are a "representation" of drunken persons they call Nymphs and Pans and Sileni and Satyrs, and which are performed during "purifications" and "initiations," are something of a problem; taken as a group they cannot be termed either "dances of peace" or "dances of war," and indeed they resist all attempts to label them. The best procedure, I think, is to treat them as separate from "war-dances" and "dances of peace," and put them in a category of their own which a statesman may ignore as outside his province. That will entitle us to leave them on one side and get back to dances of peace and war, both of which undeniably deserve our attention.

**SOURCE:** Plato, "Dancing," in *The Laws*. Trans. Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin, 1970): 307–308.

Spartan festival). Hence, the pyrrhic dance was most likely not part of the weapons training, but was done to enhance the nimbleness of the warriors.

**CHANGED TO PANTOMIME.** Another literary source for information about the development of the pyrrhic dance came from an author named Athenaeus who wrote a discursive work at the end of the second century C.E. called *Learned Men at a Banquet*. In it, Athenaeus imagines banqueters displaying their knowledge on a host of subjects, including dance. According to the *Learned Men at a Banquet*, the Spartans, who had a penchant for war, still trained armor-clad boys from the age of five in the pyrrhic dance in the second century C.E. The dance, however, was no longer truly a war dance by this time. Athenaeus described it as a kind of Dionysiac pan-

tomime—the dancers performed an interpretative dance that related various myths of the god Dionysus, including his expedition to India and his return to his native state of Thebes. By the time that Athenaeus lived, pyrrhic dances were staged for Roman tourists, and in fact, pyrrhic dancers sometimes performed at Rome to amuse the crowd in the public games as a prelude to the deadlier entertainments offered by gladiatorial games and wild beast fights. Julius Caesar staged pyrrhic dancing at Rome, and so did the emperors Caligula, Nero, and Hadrian. The North African rhetorician and philosopher, Apuleius of Madauros (c.123–c. 190 C.E.), whose novel, the *Metamorphoses*, or the *Golden Ass*, is the only Latin novel to survive in its entirety, described a typical dance entertainment staged in the amphitheater at



Young Athenian males performing the pyrrhic dance. A marble relief from Athens, 4th century B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/ACROPOLIS MUSEUM ATHENS/DAGLI ORTI.

Corinth in his own day. First there was a pyrrhic dance, performed by boys and girls, beautifully costumed, then there was a pantomime—a ballet on the “Judgement of Paris” in which the young Trojan prince Paris judges a beauty contest of goddesses—and finally, the *pièce de résistance*, a convicted murderess torn apart by wild beasts.

**THE GYMNOPAIDIAI.** Another famous war dance of Sparta was one performed for the *Gymnopaïdiai*, which scholars first translated as “Festival of the Naked Youths.” The central feature of the festival, usually held in the heat of the Spartan midsummer in honor of the god Apollo, was a dance contest in which contestants danced naked. The contest was not just restricted to young boys, however, but was divided into three groups that were graded according to age: retired warriors too old for active service, warriors of military age, and youths still too young to serve in the army. Many scholars have

come to believe that the word *Gymnopaïdiai* should be translated as the “Festival of Unarmed Dancing,” for instead of wearing armor, as did the dancers of the pyrrhike, the dancers of the *Gymnopaïdiai* wore nothing at all. The dancers pantomimed scenes from wrestling and boxing matches, but at all times, their feet moved in time to the music. As they danced, they sang songs by Thaletas and by another musician, Alcman, who plied his trade in Sparta about the same time.

**ARMED DANCES OUTSIDE SPARTA.** The pyrrhike may have been the national dance of Sparta where it was part of the regular exercise of warriors keeping themselves in good physical condition for battle, but it was found elsewhere in the Greek world as well. In Sparta, the pyrrhic dance was sacred to the divine twins, Castor and Polydeuces, whom the Romans knew as Pollux. In Athens, the pyrrhic dance honored the warrior goddess

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***WAR DANCES OF THE GREEKS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Xenophon (ca. 430–ca. 354 B.C.E.) was a disciple of Socrates who—against Socrates’ advice—joined a force of soldiers of fortune who were recruited by the younger brother of King Artaxerxes II of Persia, Cyrus, who plotted to overthrow Artaxerxes and make himself king. But in the decisive battle fought at Cunaxa in Mesopotamia, Cyrus was killed and his Asian supporters melted away, leaving the force of Greek mercenary soldiers to find their way home. To make matters worse, the Persians invited the Greek officers to a parley and killed them, thinking that the Greek troops would be helpless without their leaders. But the troops chose new officers, one of them Xenophon himself and they made their way north to the Black Sea, and from there the survivors disbanded to find new employers. When they reached Paphlagonia in Asia Minor, the ruler of Paphlagonia sent envoys to the Greek officers, who gave them a dinner, and the various ethnic groups in the little Greek army entertained them with war dances, with the dancers bearing arms. The Paphlagonian visitors were surprised that all the dancers wore armor as they danced, whereupon a dancing girl was brought on, who performed the “Pyrrhic” dance, a Spartan war dance named in honor of the hero Achilles’ son, Pyrrhus, otherwise known as Neoptolemus. The Paphlagonians were even more impressed. They wondered if the Greek women fought in battle side by side with the men, and the Greeks replied in jest that it was their women who had routed the king of Persia, Artaxerxes II. Xenophon describes the scene in a vivid passage in his *Anabasis (The March into the Interior)*, which tells the story of how the ten thousand mercenary soldiers that Prince Cyrus recruited from among the Greeks and their neighbors—for not all the recruits were Greeks—marched into the interior of the Middle East and returned again.

After we had poured wine on the ground to honor the gods, and had sung a hymn, first two Thracians stood up and began to dance in full armor to the sound of the pipe, making nimble leaps high into the air as they wielded their sabers. Finally one of them struck the other, and everyone thought the man was mortally wounded. His fall was artfully done, I suppose. The other man stripped him of his armor as the Paphlagonians howled, and made his

exit, singing a Thracian war song known as the “Sitacles.” The other Thracians bore the fallen dancer away, as if he were dead. But he had been not at all hurt. Next some Aenianians and Magnesians got to their feet and danced the dance called the *Karpaia*, wearing their armor. The dance was like this: One man is driving his oxen as he sows a field, his arms laid at his side, and he casts frequent glances around him like a person who is afraid. A robber approaches, and when the sower sees him, he grabs his arms and goes to meet him and fights to save his team of oxen. These soldiers did this to the rhythm of the reed pipe. And at last the robber ties up the man and takes off the oxen. But sometimes the owner of the oxen trusses up the robber. When that happens, he yokes him beside his oxen with his hands tied behind his back and drives off. Then a Mysian came on with a light leather shield in each hand. And at one moment he danced, pantomiming a battle against two opponents. Then he wielded his shields as if he were fighting a single opponent. Then he would whirl around and do somersaults, still holding his shields. So it was a fine sight to see. Finally he danced the “Persian dance”—clashing his shields together, he would crouch down and then leap up. He did all this keeping time to the music of the pipe. Then the Mantineans and some others from region of Arcadia came forward, wearing the finest armor they had, and they performed a drill to a tune with a marching tempo played on the pipe, and they sang a warrior hymn. And they danced in the same way as they did in the processions with which they honored the gods. And as the Paphlagonians looked on, they thought it odd that all the dances were performed wearing arms. A Mysian who saw that they were amazed, retorted by persuading one of the Arcadians who had acquired a dancing girl to dress her in the finest costume he could, fit her with a light shield and bring her on to give a graceful performance of the “Pyrrhic” dance. Thereupon there was a roar of applause, and the Paphlagonians asked if the Greek women also fought side by side with their men. The Greeks answered that these were the very women who had routed the king from his camp.

**SOURCE:** Xenophon, *Anabasis*. Book 6 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998): 466–470. Translated by James Allan Evans.

Athena, the patron goddess of Athens. It was part of the ceremony of the annual Panathenaic festival that was held in honor of Athena, as well as the Great Panathenaic festival when non-Athenians were allowed to compete in the athletic events. The dancers were called *pyrrhichists* and they were chosen from among the *ephebes* (youths over eighteen years of age). Several relief sculptures have

survived that portray the Athenian pyrrhic dance. One shows youths, naked except for helmets, shields, and swords, dancing a light dance-step; another shows them in a chorus line, presenting their shields. Their training for the festival was financed in the same way as dramatic productions; a well-to-do citizen was chosen as *choregus* (“leader of the chorus”) and he paid the costs and had



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CURETES AND CORYBANTES**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Curetes and the Corybantes had one thing in common: both danced wild ritual dances, but they should not be confused. According to legend, the dance of the Curetes was taught them by the Rhea, a Mother Goddess who belonged to the generation of the Titans, and it was first danced to protect Rhea's infant son, Zeus. When Zeus was born his mother spirited him to a cave on Mt. Dicte on Crete to save him from his father Cronus who would have swallowed him as he had swallowed his other children to prevent their birth, and around his hiding place, the Curetes danced their frenzied dance with great leaps and clashing weapons. In the classical period, the Curetes were a Cretan tribe who performed a ritual dance on the sacred island of Delos, an ancient dance similar to the one which the Roman priests known as the Salii performed. The Corybantes were priests of the great Mother Goddess Cybele, whose center of worship was Pessinus in Phrygia in western Asia Minor, where the most sacred object in her cult center was a black stone which embodied the divinity of the goddess. The cult of Cybele and her young lover Attis, a god of vegetation, was brought to Rome in 205–204 B.C.E., and a temple was built to her on the Palatine Hill, one of Rome's seven hills, but until the reign of the emperor Claudius (41–54 C.E.) she was confined to her temple and served only by eunuch priests who were immigrants from the east, for her rites and the ecstatic dancing of her devotees shocked the Romans. In the following passage, Lucretius, writing in the first century C.E., describes a procession of Corybantes, whom he claims the Greeks called "Phrygian Curetes," and compares them to the Cretan Curetes, understandably, for both performed wild dances in the service of a Mother Goddess. Since Lucretius wrote in Latin, he gives the gods their Latin names: Cronus is Saturn and Zeus is Jove or Jupiter.

Various nations hail her [Cybele] with time-honored ceremony as our Lady of Ida. To bear her company they appoint a Phrygian retinue, because they claim that crops were first created within the bounds of Phrygia and spread thence throughout the whole earth. They give her eunuchs as attendant priests, to signify that those who have defied their mother's will and shown ingratitude to their father must be counted unworthy to bring forth living children into the sunlit world. A thunder of drums attends her, tight-stretched and pounded by palms, and a clash of hollow cymbals; hoarse-throated horns bray their deep warning, and the pierced flute thrills every heart with Phrygian strains. Weapons are carried before her, symbolic of rabid frenzy, to chasten the thankless and profane hearts of the rabble with dread of her divinity. So, when first she is escorted into some great city and mutely enriches mortals with wordless benediction, hay strew her path all along the route with a lavish largesse of copper and silver and shadow the Mother and her retinue with a snow of roses. Next an armed band, whom the Greeks call Phrygian Curetes, joust together and join in rhythmic dances, merry with blood and nodding their heads to set their terrifying crests aflutter. They call to mind those Curetes of Dicte, who once upon a time in Crete, as the story goes, drowned the wailing of the infant Jove by dancing with swift feet, an armed band of boys around a boy, and rhythmically clashing bronze on bronze, lest Saturn should seize and crush him in his jaws and deal his mother's heart a wound that would not heal.

**SOURCE:** Lucretius, "Movements and Shapes of Atoms," in *On the Nature of the Universe*. Trans. Ronald Latham (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1951): 78–79.

general oversight of the production. Crete was another source of war dances, the best known of which was the dance of the Curetes. It had a legendary origin: when the mother goddess Rhea gave birth to the infant Zeus, she hid him in Crete in a cave on Mt. Dicte to save him from his father Cronus, and the Curetes performed their dance, which Rhea had taught them, to camouflage his hiding place. They whirled about their shields and banged them with their swords as they made great leaps into the air. This performance was a primitive ritual connected with the cult of Zeus on Crete, which was quite unlike the cult of Zeus on mainland Greece, for the Cretans believed that their Zeus died and was reborn with the seasons. The dance of the Curetes marked his rebirth. In the ancient world, the Greeks and Roman saw a connection between the dance of the Curetes and the

frenzied dance performed by the Corybantes, the priests of the Great Mother, Cybele, the ancient goddess of Phrygia in western Asia Minor, and there may be this much connection: both rituals went back to an ancient fertility religion. The dance of the Curetes, however, was not a dance of priests like the dance of the Corybantes, but of warriors, though neither dance seems to have had much in common with the pyrrhic dance.

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## WOMEN’S CHORUSES

**THREE CATEGORIES.** Women’s choruses can be divided into three categories: girls before the age of puberty; unmarried girls, called variously *parthenoi* or *korai* or *nymphai*; and married women. The most evidence survives on the *parthenoi*, a Greek word that many scholars have translated as “virgins,” yet literary evidence points to this word meaning “women who have not yet given birth.” The size of the *parthenoi* chorus might vary, but most were composed of ten members. A *parthenoi* chorus was often portrayed on Greek vases; one vase, found in the marketplace of ancient Athens and dating to the beginning of the seventh century B.C.E., shows ten young women, all dressed in white, holding hands, their heads turned upwards as if they were singing and dancing. Another vase, a mixing-bowl for wine—the Greeks drank their wine mixed with water—which was made in Athens in the mid-fifth century B.C.E., shows ten young women holding hands and an eleventh woman playing a pipe. Similar choruses of young men existed between 800 and 350 B.C.E., but Greek artists preferred to portray choruses of women in most forms of art.

**PARTHENEIA.** *Partheneia* were the songs and dances maidens performed in their choruses. One of the first poets of choral lyrics, Alcman, was famous for the *partheneion* that he wrote for Spartan girls in the second half of the seventh century B.C.E. A papyrus copy of this *partheneion* was found in the nineteenth century C.E., and many scholars have used this as a starting point for knowl-

edge of the *parthenoi*. The lyrics of the *partheneion* indicate that it was danced to and sung by a chorus of ten girls who were related to each other, and included a *Agido* (“leader of the music”) and a *Hagesichora* (“leader of the dance”). According to literary records, it was most often performed at sunrise in competition with another chorus. There is no clue as to what the dance was like, nor how intricate the dance steps may have been, except that the meter that he used in his poetry was generally simple.

**THE CARYATIS.** The Caryatis was another type of dance, the origins of which are found in Caryae in Spartan territory. The goddess Artemis had a statue and a sanctuary there at which the young girls of the area (known as “caryatids”) performed a traditional dance every year in honor of the goddess. Much of the knowledge of this dance comes from a description written by Pausanias, a Greek traveler of the second century C.E. whose guidebook for Greece is the classical archaeologist’s Bible, but additional information comes from various art forms, including a statue group of three caryatids that was excavated from Delphi in the nineteenth century C.E. The dance was a spirited jig, with many whirled and pirouettes. In the statue discovered at Delphi, one caryatid is shown with a tambourine, another with castanets. Their usual dress was a light knee-length *chiton* (“tunic”) and on their heads they wore a *kalathos*—a vase-shaped basket wreathed with leaves from palms or rose bushes. The dance was so famous that the dancers were immortalized not only in art but also in architecture. The term “caryatid” is a description of a column that has been sculpted to resemble a Caryatis dancer—the most famous examples are to be found in the “Porch of the Maidens” attached to the temple known as the Erechtheion on the Athenian acropolis. Many column capitals (tops of columns) took on the description of “kalathos” because they so resembled the headdress of the Caryatis dancers.

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## THE DITHYRAMB

**BEGINNINGS.** Among the scraps of poetry that have survived by the seventh-century B.C.E. lyric poet



Monument erected by Lysicrates in Athens to commemorate the victory of a chorus of boys in the dithyramb contest of 334 B.C.E. for which he was choregus. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

Archilochus of Paros, one describes the poet's ability to start the *dithyramb* ("graceful round of song") of the lord Dionysus, when wine has loosened his mind. This is the first time that the word *dithyramb* appears in surviving Greek literature, though scholars are certain that Archilochus was not the first Greek to use it. The dithyramb was a song and dance in honor of Dionysus at festivals where much wine was drunk. The Greeks themselves did not know how the dithyramb developed. Several Greek states claimed it as their invention, yet it most likely developed among the Dorians who lived in the Peloponnesos south of the Isthmus of Corinth.

**CONTRIBUTION OF ARION.** In Herodotus's *Histories* (c. 425 B.C.E.) there is an account of the creation of the dithyramb. During the years 627–587 B.C.E., the city of Corinth was ruled by a tyrant called Periander, and at his court was Arion, the most distinguished musician of his day. It was he who Herodotus credits with the cre-

ation of the dithyramb. He also wrote that Arion coined the term *dithyramb* and instructed choirs in Corinth how to perform it. There were choruses of song and dance in honor of gods and heroes before Arion created dithyrambs; in Corinth's neighbor to the west, Sicyon, there were "tragic choruses" performed every year in honor of Sicyon's legendary king, Adrastus, and they were very ancient. Modern scholars suspect that the word *dithyramb* itself was not Greek, and an ancient form of the dithyramb may have predated the immigration of Greek-speaking people into Greece. Under Arion's direction, however, the dithyramb was probably given form and structure—henceforth it would be sung by a regular choir, and it would tell a story. The dithyrambs performed before Arion were most likely an undisciplined performance of song and dance where the dancers improvised folksongs about the heroes of old. Arion added music that he composed, and choreography, and probably it was he who established the traditional size of the dithyrambic chorus at fifty dancers. Hence, Arion is most often credited by modern scholars as the inventor of the classical Greek dithyramb.

**NEW DIRECTION.** Thespis was the leader of a dithyrambic chorus in the Athenian village of Icaria, and during the early 530s B.C.E., he made an innovation in the production of the dithyramb which had far-reaching consequences. When his choir performed at the local festival in Dionysus' honor, he took a solo part. Before Thespis, the choir sang a story from the Heroic Age of Greek mythology, and danced to the accompaniment of a piper. Thespis, however, stepped forward and assumed the role of the hero, singing antiphonally with his choir in a kind of musical dialogue, all the while gesturing with his hands to add to the drama of the tale. Then, in 534 B.C.E., the tyrant of Athens, Pisistratus, established the great festival of the City Dionysia. The villages outside the city of Athens had celebrated festivals honoring Dionysus long before this time, but now the city of Athens itself had a festival that overshadowed them. During the festival a contest was held in which dithyrambs were performed, usually with a dancing chorus responding to a soloist who also sang and danced. Thespis's innovation made dithyrambs very popular during these festivals, but it also created an offshoot, tragic plays, which in the generation after Thespis threatened to overtake the dithyramb's popularity.

**CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT.** The evolution of the dithyramb continued in the late sixth century B.C.E. Around 525 B.C.E., after the death of the tyrant Pisistratus, a lyricist named Lasus came to Athens to enjoy the patronage of Pisistratus' younger son, Hipparchus.

Following Arion's example, he standardized the number of choristers in the dithyrambic chorus in Athens at fifty, and they sang to the accompaniment of several pipers playing the *aulos*, not just one. It was thanks to Lasus that a separate contest for dithyrads was established in Athens at the festival of the City Dionysia in 508 B.C.E. The first winner of the contest was Hypodocus of Chalcis, and while his works have been lost, his background has become important to scholars. Hypodocus was not a native of Athens but the neighboring state of Chalcis on the island of Euboea, proving that dithyrambic poets were not merely a phenomenon of mainland Greece and that these poets traveled from state to state, practicing their profession.

**ATHENIAN PRODUCERS.** The date of the first dithyrambic contest at the festival of the City Dionysia is significant. Athens had driven out the tyrant Hippias and adopted a democratic constitution which established ten new "tribes," political groups into which all citizens were divided according to a complicated formula that made certain that every tribe contained citizens from the three regions of Attica: the city of Athens itself, the interior of Attica where people lived in country villages, and the coastal region. At the City Dionysia festival, every tribe was expected to present two dithyrads: one performed by boys and the other by men. The citizen who produced these dithyrads in each tribe was a well-to-do man who was chosen as *choregus* (leader of the chorus), and his duty was to pay the poet who wrote the dithyramb and the music for it, the choreographer who taught the chorus their dance steps, and the musician who played the double-reed instrument called the *aulos*, as well as outfitting the fifty singers and dancers who performed the dithyramb. It was no light expense, but the choregus whose choir won received as a prize a tripod, which was a kettle on three legs, the equivalent of a cup given nowadays to a winning football or hockey team, and he would build a monument to display it. There was a street in Athens called the "Street of the Tripods" which once was lined with choregic monuments that displayed tripods won for dithyrads, tragedies, or comedies, each set up by the proud choregus whose production had won the prize. The name of the street survives to the present day, but all the choregic monuments are lost, save one built by a choregus named Lysicrates in 334 B.C.E. when his chorus won the prize for the best dithyramb.

**THE DITHYRAMBIC DANCE.** Dithyrads were popular in Athens and soon they were staged in other festivals as well as the City Dionysia. The performance of the dithyrads, however, seemed to be similar re-

gardless of the location. The dithyrambic choir entered the theater with a solemn march, and then sang as they moved around the orchestra, now dancing in a circle counterclockwise and then reversing and dancing clockwise. The music and the poetry were most likely more important than the dance. The performers accompanied their song with gestures that must have been something like the stylized gestures of the dances of India. Having finished their song, the dithyrambic choir moved out of the theater to a dance step, possibly a march. As the fifth century B.C.E. wore on, the dithyramb evolved towards a less austere and more emotional performance. A fragment of a dithyramb by the poet Pindar, better known for his "Victory Odes," describes a frenzied dance, accompanied by tambourines and castanets, which belonged to the rites of the god Dionysus. The dancers toss their heads and shout, and a dancer representing Zeus shakes his thunderbolt. The type of music also changed; the dignified, simple Phrygian mode was replaced by elaborate flourishes and trills. A dithyrambist named Cinesias who lived in the later fifth century and early fourth century B.C.E. was responsible for some of these changes. What is known of him comes mostly from his critics who did not like his innovations, but scholars see that the dance of the dithyrads under his direction became a great deal more lively. The comic poet Aristophanes, who was no admirer of Cinesias' innovations, poked fun at Cinesias' pyrrhic dances. In his comedy, *The Clouds*, Aristophanes jibes that clouds have a particular fondness for writers of dithyrads, such as Cinesias, because their feet never touch the ground and they are always prating about clouds. Aristophanes was apparently referring to a dithyrambic dance that had a great deal of leaping and vaulting, and, on the basis of Aristophanes' remarks, some scholars have speculated that Cinesias must have actually introduced pyrrhic dances or something similar into his dithyrads.

**LATER HISTORY.** The majority of information that survives on dithyrads comes from Athens, but it is clear from fragments of evidence that dithyrads spread to many parts of mainland Greece. They took place at Delphi, where the theater overlooking the temple of Apollo is largely intact except for the stage building, and at the festival of Apollo at Delos. At Epidaurus, the cult center of the medicine god Asclepius, dithyrads were performed in the athletic and dramatic festival that was held there every four years. By the second century B.C.E. however, the dithyrads had given way to more tragic and comedic performances, and few records of their performances exist.



View of the theater in Delphi, Greece, where dithyramps were performed. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

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## FOLK DANCES.

**DANCES OF EVERYDAY LIFE.** "Anyone who cannot sing and dance in a chorus is uneducated," stated Plato in the *Laws*, which is a blunt reminder that dance was part of Greek education. Dances played a large role in everyday life. They belonged to folk tradition, and they

often had a religious or semi-religious basis. Mourners danced at funerals. They can be seen on vase-paintings, in long rows with hands placed on top of their heads in a gesture of grief. There were also wedding dances. There was no wedding ceremony as there is in the Christian church, but after the families of the bride and groom had worked out the details of the marriage agreement, a chorus of young men and women escorted the bride and groom to the groom's house with dance and song. There were usually two choirs—one of men and the other of women—and since the dance was performed by torchlight, it presumably took place after nightfall. Dances marked the change of seasons, particularly spring with its flowers and the return of the birds, for the Greeks did not understand the migration of birds and their reappearance each spring must have seemed almost magical. There was a folk dance called the "Flowers," where the dancers divided into two groups, and as they performed, one group chanted, "Where are my roses? Where are my violets? Where is my lovely parsley?" and the other group replied, "Here are your roses. Here are your violets. Here is your lovely parsley." There were also folk dances like farandoles, where men and women danced together,

hand in hand, forming a chain. A young man led the chain, performing dance movements suitable for a virile young male, and following him was a girl performing modest dance steps proper for a decent young woman. When banquets were given, there might be dancing entertainment, and already in the fifth century B.C.E. a well-to-do man who gave a banquet might hire professional dancers. In early Greece, however, dancing was still amateur, and it was the guests themselves who danced.

**FOLK DANCING IN SPARTA IN HONOR OF ORTHIA.** In the fifth century B.C.E., Sparta was a militaristic state which valued prowess on the battlefield above all else. Compared to contemporary Athens, it was a smaller, less advanced community. Yet two centuries earlier, it was a center of dance and music, which attracted famous musicians and choreographers such as Alcman, Terpander, and Thaletas. Folk dances, however, were no concern of these professionals, and consequently we are ill-informed about them. For one type of folk dance, where the dancers wore masks, there is only archaeological evidence. About 700 B.C.E., a primitive temple was built in Sparta by the banks of the river Eurotas and dedicated to the goddess Orthia—or to Artemis Orthia, for by the classical period, Artemis had half-assimilated Orthia, though Orthia's ancient cult remained largely unchanged. A hundred years or so after the temple was built, it was destroyed by a flood of the river, which sealed the temple ruins under a thick layer of sand. The temple was rebuilt about 550 B.C.E. and then a second disaster, a raid by a barbarian tribe called the Heruls in 267 C.E., once again sealed in its remains below a layer of rubble. In the late third century C.E., after the sanctuary was restored, a small semi-circular theater was built to seat tourists who came to Sparta to witness Spartan youths being flogged, sometimes to death, which was part of the ritual of Orthia's cult. The result of these vicissitudes was that the votive offerings made to Orthia, and other remains having to do with the ceremonies at the sanctuary as well, got some protection from the depredations of time, and were preserved for archaeologists to discover in the twentieth century C.E. The finds show that there were ancient folk dances by masked dancers at the shrine of Orthia—ritual dances to begin with, but then evolving into simple folk dances as time erased the reasons for the rituals. Pipes for playing dance tunes, made of animal bones, were found, inscribed with dedications to Orthia, but the most distinctive feature of the deposits was a series of masks made of terracotta. They are reproductions of masks made of wood which were actually used in dances, but wood rots in the damp

earth, and the Spartans preferred to dedicate masks made of more durable material. The dedications started at the end of the seventh century B.C.E., but the great bulk of them belong to the next century. The masks are fearsome things, which makes it likely that the dances performed in Orthia's sanctuary were originally apotropaic—that is, they were danced to drive away the malevolent unseen powers that send plague or crop failure. The masks must have become eventually like Halloween masks, which once upon a time protected against the spirits that prowled the earth on All Hallows Eve, but lost their ritual meaning as time went on. It is uncertain how long these dances continued in honor of Orthia, as ancient literary sources yield no information about them.

**THE DANCE OF HIPPOCLEIDES.** Before dancing became professionalized, the performance of solo folk dances was an accomplishment of the well-bred young Greek, and a man who disgraced himself on the dance floor besmirched his character. Damon of Athens, a music teacher of the fifth century B.C.E. who counted Socrates among his pupils, asserted that song and dance arose from the movements of the soul: noble dances gave proof of noble souls and ignoble souls were reflected in vulgar dances. The historian Herodotus, who published his *History* about 425 B.C.E., relates a story which demonstrates how dance revealed an ignoble character of a man, and also illustrates the sort of dancing entertainment one might have found in the banquet halls of leading men in archaic Greece, when wine flowed freely and guests made merry. The story focused on Cleisthenes, tyrant in the early sixth century B.C.E. of Sicyon, Corinth's western neighbor. He desired to find a suitable husband for his daughter, Agariste, so he made a proclamation at the Olympic Games that any young man who thought himself worthy to be his son-in-law should come to Sicyon to enjoy his hospitality for a year and after he had observed all of them carefully he would choose one to be his daughter's husband. A small battalion of suitors arrived at Sicyon, and Cleisthenes watched them closely, noting their athletic ability and general decorum. The young aristocrat Hippocleides of Athens headed his preferred list. When the time came to announce the winner, Cleisthenes first entertained all the suitors at a banquet, and after the banquet was over, the suitors competed in *mousike*—song, dancing, and poetry—as well as public speaking. Hippocleides excelled, surpassing all the other suitors, and he would have won Agariste except that he got drunk. When it was his turn to dance, he ordered the pipe-player to play the *emmeleia*, a type of dance that choreographers used for Greek tragedy; but Cleisthenes lived before the age of tragedy,

and the emmeleia was probably not a graceful or sophisticated dance during this period. Cleisthenes was not pleased by Hippocleides, but he said nothing. Then Hippocleides had a table brought in, stood on it, and performed a few Spartan jigs followed by Athenian ones. Jigs, much like emmeleia, were considered low-class dances at the time, yet Cleisthenes still said nothing. Then Hippocleides stood on his head and gestured with his legs, in mocking of an acrobatic dance, a sign of great disrespect, for it would have normally been performed by someone much below the station of Hippocleides. At this point Cleisthenes could contain himself no longer, exclaiming, "Hippocleides! You have danced away your bride!" Hippocleides replied, "What does Hippocleides care?" which did nothing to change Cleisthenes' estimate of his character. Much learned effort has gone into attempts to identify the dances that Hippocleides performed. The Spartan jig may have been something like the *Gymnopaideia*, which Spartan boys and men performed naked, in which case Hippocleides stripped to dance it. As for the Athenian dance that came next, it may have been the *kordax*, the dance associated with Old Comedy in Athens, with high kicks, somersaults, and twists. Hippocleides' retort to Cleisthenes, "What does Hippocleides care?" became a proverb, meaning "So what?", and the general verdict of Greece was that Hippocleides was a foolish young man whose drunken dance cost him a good marriage, although he was undoubtedly admired for his dedication to the dance.

**THE FOLK FESTIVALS HONORING VICTORIOUS ATHLETES.** Greek athletes who won victories in the great athletic contests of Greece—the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, or Isthmian Games—received only wreaths to wear on their heads as prizes, but when they returned home, they could expect a great deal more. Sometimes a section of the circuit wall was temporarily demolished to allow them to enter the city without having to go through the city gates. They might receive meals at public expense in the town hall for the rest of their lives, which was a great honor. If they themselves were well-to-do or came from a prominent family, they could commission a poet to produce a victory ode. It could be a lucrative commission, particularly if the victors belonged to one of the great ruling families in Greek Sicily. The sound and spectacle of a public performance by a great poet is something that a modern reader of classical literature can capture only by relying on his imagination, for the music that accompanied it is largely lost and early Greek authors took dance for granted and only rarely mentioned it. Sometimes a note in passing by an ancient writer allows modern readers to conjure up a picture of

what the spectacle must have been like in these folk festivals where the citizens of the victorious athlete's hometown gathered to celebrate his victory. Famous poets such as Pindar, Simonides, and Bacchylides appeared in theaters, magnificently costumed, playing a *kithara*, the ancestor of the guitar though it is usually translated as "lyre," and surrounded by dancers. The opening lines of the victory ode which Pindar wrote for Hieron of Aetna in Sicily, whose chariot was victorious in the chariot-race in the Pythian Games held at Delphi, gives an example of a typical poetic opening:

O lyre of gold, Apollo's prized possession, shared by the Muses with their violet crowns, you the dancers heed as they start the revelry; your notes direct the singers when to lead the dance whenever the quivering strings give forth the first notes of the prelude.

With these words, Pindar cued the dancers to begin as he swept his hand over the strings of his *kithara* and produced the opening notes of his ode. For the fee that a poet charged for a victory ode—in Pindar's case they were high—the poet not only wrote the poetry, he also choreographed the dance, trained the dancers, and wrote the music. Like all such poetry, it was written for a special occasion, to be presented before a specific audience. Pindar's victory ode for Hiero—called his *First Pythian*—was performed before a large, patriotic audience in Hiero's hometown of Aetna, and then performed again on other occasions, as long as the citizens of Aetna were willing to listen to praise of Hiero.

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## DANCE IN THE THEATER

**DIONYSIAN FESTIVALS.** In Athens, there were three days of tragedies and satyr plays, and one day of comedy produced at the great festivals of the City Dionysia in March and the Lenaeon Festival in January. In addition there were the festivals of Rural Dionysia, held in honor of Dionysus outside Athens in the towns and villages of the countryside each December. The rural festival in Piraeus, the port town of Athens, was particularly famous. The difference was, however, that whereas new plays were presented at the festivals in Athens, the Rural Dionysia festivals generally had older more familiar plays. Tragedy, comedy, and satyr plays each had its own dances. The main dance associated with tragedy was the *emmeleia*, a term which covered a number of dance patterns and postures. The dance of the satyr plays was the *sikinnis*, performed by men costumed as satyrs, with pointed ears, snub noses and the tails of goats or horses. The dance of comedy was the *kordax*, noted for its obscene gestures. The *kordax* was acceptable in the theater, but in everyday life no decent person danced it unless he was drunk. Evidence for these dances of the theater comes partly from careful study of the plays that have survived, from art and sculpture, and from references in literature, many of them scattered through writings belonging to the period of the Roman Empire, when the staple of the theater was the pantomime.

**TRAGEDY AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF AESCHYLUS.** The tragic poet Aeschylus was a great innovator in drama production in the first half of the fifth century B.C.E. He was one of the first playwrights to produce his own material. He was also the first playwright to use two speaking actors, and when Sophocles introduced a third actor, he followed suit. He may not have been the first to use painted scenery, but his scene painter was the first to experiment with perspective. Moreover he took great care to work out appropriate dances for the chorus in his tragedies. Other tragic poets, it seems, used professional choreographers. Aeschylus did his own choreography, and did it so well that he was remembered as the first choreographer to train his dancers in *schemata*—the poses, postures, and gestures appropriate to the words and music that they sang. Though seven tragedies of Aeschylus have survived and the words that his choruses sang can be studied, little about the melodies or the dances that accompanied the words is known.

**THEORIES.** Writing in the fourth century B.C.E., the philosopher, musical theorist, and an alumnus of Aristotle's Lyceum Aristoxenus of Tarentum wrote that there were three important elements to choral lyric: poetry,

### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

#### **AESCHYLUS REINVENTS THE TRAGIC DANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Athenaeus of Naucratis in Egypt, who lived at the end of the second century C.E., wrote a long, discursive work titled the *Deipnosophistae* or "Clever Men at Dinner." It pretends to recreate the table talk of a banquet where twenty-four learned men discourse on all manner of subjects. Cooking is a favorite topic, but the conversation includes some discussion of dancing. In fact, Athenaeus is a major source for our knowledge of ancient dance, for his reading was vast and he could quote authors who are now only names. Here he comments on Aeschylus' dance innovations in the production of tragedies in Athens of the early fifth century B.C.E. The mention of the *Phrygians* in the excerpt below refers to a tragedy of Aeschylus, now lost, which dealt with the myth of the Trojan War.

Aeschylus, too, besides inventing that magnificence and dignity of costume which the Hierophants and Torchbearers (of the Eleusinian Mysteries) emulate when they put on their vestments, also originated many dance-figures and assigned them to the members of his choruses. For Chameleon says that Aeschylus was the first to give poses to his choruses, employing no dance instructors, but working out for himself the figures of the dance, and in general taking upon himself the entire management of the piece. At any rate, it seems that he acted in his own plays. For Aristophanes, certainly (and among the comic poets one may find credible information about the tragedians) makes Aeschylus say of himself, "It was I who gave new dance designs to the choruses." And again: "I know about his Phrygians, for I was in the audience when they came to help Priam ransom his son who was dead. They made many gestures and poses, this way and that way and the other. ..."

**SOURCE:** Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*. Vol. 1. Trans. Charles Burton Gulick (London, England: Heinemann; New York: Putnam, 1927): 93–95. Text modified by James Allan Evans.

song, and dancing. All three of these aspects shared a common rhythm, which meant that the meter a tragic poet used for the odes sung by the chorus should identify something about the dancing which accompanied the music and the poetry. For instance, if the poet used a marching rhythm for the entrance of the chorus into the orchestra of the theater, the chorus most likely marched in step; if he used a more lyrical measure, the



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE IMPORTANCE OF GESTURE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Quintilian was a famous teacher of oratory in Rome of the first century C.E. who was appointed to a salaried professorship of rhetoric by the emperor Vespasian (69–79 C.E.). After he retired, he wrote a book on oratory, the *Institutio Oratoria*, which covered everything an orator should know, and among the topics was the proper use of gestures. Quintilian was discussing oratory, not dancing in the theater, but nonetheless the gestures that an orator used to communicate his meaning were, for the most part, the same gestures that a dancer in the theater might use, and hence Quintilian is an important witness to the science of *kheironomia*. The following quotation is an excerpt from a much longer passage on useful gestures for the orator.

The following short gestures are also employed: the hand may be slightly hollowed as it is when persons are making a vow, and then moved slightly to and fro, the shoulders swaying gently in unison: this is adapted to passages where we speak with restraint and almost with timidity. Wonder is best expressed as follows: the hand turns slightly upwards and the fingers are brought in to the palm, one after the other, beginning with the little finger; the hand is then opened and turned round by a reversal of this motion. There are various methods of expressing interrogation, but as a rule, we do so by a turn of the hand, the arrangement of the fingers being indifferent. If the tip of the first finger touches the middle of the right-hand edge of the thumbnail, the other fingers being relaxed, we shall have a elegant gesture well suited to express approval, to state facts and to mark off the points we are making. There is another similar gesture with three fingers folded which the Greeks nowadays use a great deal, now with the right hand and now with the left, to round off their arguments point by point. A rather gentle movement of the hand expresses a promise or assent, a swifter movement urges action and sometimes expresses commendation. There is also the well-known gesture of rapidly opening and closing the hand to press home what we are saying, but it is a common gesture rather than an artistic one.

**SOURCE:** Quintilian, "Delivery Gesture and Dress," in *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*. Vol. IV. Trans. H. E. Butler (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1922): 297–299.

chorus danced into the theater. There were tragedies, too, where the chorus was already in the theater when the action began, and in that case, presumably the fifteen choristers filed into the orchestra and took their positions quietly before the play started. By examining the meter of the poetry, scholars can make an educated guess as to whether the choreography was lively or sedate. If a *kommos* ("dirge") was sung, the chorus presumably made gestures of mourning, for the literal meaning of the word *kommos* is "beating," as in "beating the breast," which was a gesture of grief. By and large, however, the *schemata*, the poses of the dancers and the figures of the dance, is unknown. One aspect of dance that only survived in Greek art work was called the *kheironomia*—the art of gesture with the hands. Numerous vases and sculptures show dancers making common gestures such as the hand bent upwards—the hand is outstretched and the fingers are bent backwards, away from the palm. The hand itself could be held in many positions such as the palm down, palm turned towards the dancer's body, and hand before the dancer's face, and each position signified a different meaning. The Greeks and Romans both considered gesture a significant instrument of communication, one that orators, for instance, had to master, and hence it was also an important element of dance. Telestes, a dancer whom Aeschylus used, was so great a master of communicating with his arms and hands that he could dance the whole of Aeschylus' tragedy, *Seven Against Thebes*, making the meaning clear by his gestures and dance figures. *Kheironomia* can still be seen in Oriental dances, such as the ritual dances of Cambodia, but overall it has fallen out of the Western dance tradition.

**THE CHORUS BEFORE AESCHYLUS.** Aeschylus put tragic dance on a new footing by inventing new *schemata* ("choreography") for the dance company, including the twists, kicks, and other poses that the dancers performed, but dance was an important part of tragedy before the fifth century B.C.E. as well. The dithyramb from which tragedy developed had choruses of fifty choristers, and presumably the tragedy with which Thespis won first prize at the City Dionysia of 534 B.C.E. had a chorus of that number. At some point the chorus was reduced to fifteen choristers; it was most likely reduced to twelve first and then later increased by three, although the reasons for this are unknown. Early poets such as Thespis, Pratinas, Cratinus, and Phrynichus were all dancing instructors as well as tragedians. By the first decades of the fifth century B.C.E. there was already a small corps of trained dancers available for theater productions—semi-professionals, but some of them immensely talented. There were both artistic and economic reasons for re-

ducing the size of the tragic chorus. The choregus—the citizen who paid the costs of production—must have preferred a chorus of fifteen to one of fifty because it was less expensive, and the tragic poet preferred it because fifteen well-trained dancers could perform the complicated choreography which he arranged better than amateurs, no matter how talented they were. Before Aeschylus, dance appeared relatively undisciplined. This can be seen in Aristophanes' comedy, the *Wasps*, where the old man Philocleon gets drunk and performs the old dances of Thespis and Phrynichus. They are dances with leaps and whirls and high kicks. This is nothing prim and proper about them. Students of ancient dance have found this evidence troubling, for it seems to indicate that early tragedy, as it developed from the dithyramb, was accompanied by dances that were much less orderly and decorous than they were after Aeschylus' reforms. Scholars typically have not valued the evidence from Aristophanes' work, for he was a writer of comedies and therefore may have exaggerated the old-fashioned dances of early tragedy for comic effect. Yet there would be no point to Aristophanes' joke if the early tragedies before Aeschylus were not remembered for their lively dances, which were perhaps amateurish but very vigorous. Due to this supposition, polished, well-choreographed dances of Greek tragedy in the classical period do not precede Aeschylus.

**THE DANCE OF COMEDY.** Comedy and satyr plays both have their origins in the revels that were danced and sung in honor of the Dionysus, the god of wine. The word "comedy" must be connected with the Greek word *komos*, meaning a "band of merry-makers"—revelers who sang and jested as they danced through the streets. Where and how comedy took form as a theatrical presentation is much disputed, but in Athens it became an official part of the City Dionysia in 486 B.C.E. and it soon developed its own conventions. What is known about "Old Comedy" is based largely on nine of the eleven surviving plays of Aristophanes which were produced during the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.E.). His last two plays, produced after the war was over, belong to "Middle Comedy"—a term which was coined in the Hellenistic period after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E. to label the transition between "Old Comedy" and the situation comedies of the "New Comedy," where the chorus provided interludes of dance and song between the acts, but played no role in the play itself. The size of the chorus grew smaller; at a performance in Delphi in 276 B.C.E. it was made up of just seven choristers, and a century later, a comedy performed on the island of Delos had only four.

**THE STRUCTURE OF OLD COMEDY.** "Old Comedy" plays had a six-part structure. First there was the prologue where the protagonist outlined the plot, usually centered around an extravagant and impractical solution to some current problem. Next came the *parodos*, or entry of a chorus of 24 imaginatively costumed dancers. Then came the *agon*, the contest or debate, where the protagonist defended his brilliant solution against objections from opponents and always won. Then came the *parabasis* ("digression") where the chorus addressed the audience directly with song and dance, and vented the spleen of the comic poet against various prominent citizens. The song and dance of the parabasis contained one long sentence called the *pnigos* ("choker") because it was to be uttered all in one breath, and the actors whose breath control allowed them to perform it perfectly could expect numerous applause. A number of farcical scenes followed, separated by song and dance performed by the chorus. Finally the merry *exodus*, a scene of rejoicing usually leading up to a banquet or wedding, was staged. The chorus exited dancing. A good example of the use of dance in comedy can be seen in the final scene of Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* (The Women in the Assembly). Praxagora, the leader of a coup of women who promulgate a new constitution, witnesses her husband Blepyrus entering with a group of dancing girls, on his way to a banquet to celebrate the new constitution. The chorus leader orders the dancing girls to dance, and Blepyrus to lead off with a fine old Cretan-style jig, and chorus, dancing girls, and Blepyrus all exit to the beat of the music.

**THE KORDAX.** In the parabasis of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, produced in 423 B.C.E., the leader of the chorus told the audience that this was a modest play: there would be no *kordax* dance in it. The label *kordax* did not refer to all the dances in comedy, but to a particular dance, which was performed solo—at least in the sense that the dancers performed it independently, not as members of a chorus line coordinating their movements. It was a suggestive dance, like the "bumps" and "grinds" of dancers in modern-day burlesque theater. The *kordax*-dancer rotated his buttocks and abdomen, sometimes bending forward at the hips. The dancer might also hop, as if his feet were tied together, or leap into the air, or simply wiggle suggestively. Leaps and whirls of all kinds were part of a *kordax* performance, and it was performed to the music of the *aulos* which must have had a timbre rather like the bagpipes. Proper people did not dance the *kordax*. The philosopher Plato thought it should be banned from the ideal state which he described in his *Laws*.

**THE SATYRS' DANCES.** The dance that was characteristic of the satyr play was the *sikinnis*—a dance which was sometimes used in comedy as well. The originator of the satyr play was a dramatist named Pratinas of Phlius, who presented plays in Athens at the start of the fifth century B.C.E. It was a lively dance, with much horseplay, rapid movements, and expressive gestures, many of them obscene. Two satyr plays have survived, including one by Euripides that includes a *sikinnis*. Euripides' *Cyclops* is a burlesque of the tale of Odysseus in the cave of the Cyclops that is told in the *Odyssey* of Homer. In *Cyclops*, old Silenus comes on stage, and having introduced the play, summons the chorus of satyrs. He refers to their entrance as a *sikinnis* and so presumably they dance on stage. The satyrs have been captured by the Cyclops, Polyphemus, and made to tend his flocks, and when they enter, dancing, they drag on sheep and goats, though whether these animals are real or imaginary is impossible to judge. However, the chorus of satyrs in *Cyclops* only plays a secondary role, and the text gives little hint as to what the choreography was like. The role of Odysseus, however, has several solos accompanied by interpretative dance that gave splendid scope to the actor who played the role to display his talents.

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#### DIONYSIAN DANCE

**ECSTATIC DANCE.** Dance and song were a part of every religious festival, but in some, dance was an instrument with which the dancer could achieve a closer communion with divinity by entering into a state of rapture. The violent whirls and leaps of the dance brought the dancer into a state of ecstasy. The goddess Cybele, known as the Great Mother, whose cult center was in Phrygia in western Asia Minor, was attended by eunuch priests called Corybantes, devotees of the goddess who castrated themselves with flint knives after dancing to the accompaniment of cymbals and castanets until they attained a state of utter rapture. Among the twelve Olympian gods and goddesses of Greece, the nearest counterpart of Cybele was Demeter, who presided over the fertility of the earth, and the dances performed in her honor were generally full of lively movements. In the ancient festival of the Thesmophoria, which the women of Athens held over a period of three days, one dance that was performed was the *oklasma*. During the *oklasma* a dancer crouched down, with her knees on the earth, and then swiftly leaped up as high as she could from her crouching position, trying to reach the perfect image of the god to achieve rapture. It was the god of wine, Dionysus, who presided over the ecstatic dances that are best known. Dionysus was accompanied by a *thiasos*—a company that parades through the streets singing and dancing—and the *thiasos* of Dionysus was made up of maenads (frenzied women) and satyrs. Dionysus and his *thiasos* were frequent subjects for Athenian vase painters working in the black-figure and red-figure techniques.

**DEFINING THE MAENADS.** The maenads were female devotees of Dionysus who went up into the mountains and there engaged in a frenzied, ecstatic dance in honor of the god of wine. Sometimes they caught wild animals and tore them limb from limb with their bare hands and ate the animals' raw flesh. The myth of Dionysus relates that he was born in Thebes, the chief city in Boeotia, the region of Greece northwest of the city-state of Athens. His father was Zeus and his mother was Semele, daughter of King Cadmus of Thebes, who was destroyed by Hera's jealous hatred. Once Dionysus was fully grown, he made a campaign into India that lasted two years and then returned in triumph to introduce his new religion. For historians of religion, there is much about the Dionysiac cult that is hard to understand. Dionysus was a latecomer to Greek religion, as the myths about him seem to suggest, for he was not originally one of the Twelve Olympian Gods, and when he was added to the list, he displaced Hestia, the goddess of the hearth.

He was worshipped in the Mycenaean period, for his name appears on the Linear B tablets found in the so-called “Palace of Nestor” at Pylos, which was destroyed in 1200 B.C.E. Apparently dance was an important part of his cult. On Keos a prehistoric temple has been found, which was erected in the fifteenth century B.C.E., and continued in use for a thousand years. In it were the remains of twenty terracotta statues, all of them women, shown with their breasts bared and their hands resting on their hips, resembling Dionysian dancers. An inscription on a votive offering found in the excavation and dating to early classical times identifies Dionysus as the lord of this sanctuary. The terracotta dancers indicate that dance was an important part of the rites practiced in reverence to Dionysus, and scholars have suggested that these dancers were also priestesses of the cult of Dionysus.

**MAENADS IN THE CLASSICAL WORLD.** Diodorus of Sicily, a Greek historian who wrote in the mid-first century B.C.E., noted that in Boeotia and other parts of Greece, as well as in Thrace, which stretched into modern Bulgaria and Romania, sacrifices were held every second year in Dionysus’ honor to commemorate his triumphal return from India. Consequently, in many Greek cities, every other year, bands of women gathered for rites that honored Dionysus. Diodorus called these bands of women *baccheia* and the rites they performed *orgia* (“frenzied dances”). These women of the *baccheia* included not only unmarried girls but also respected married women. The *baccheia* danced to the music of the tambourine and the reed pipe known as the *aulos*, and as they danced they flung their heads back and raised the cry “*euhoi*” that sounded like “*ev-hi*.” Evidence from literature and from temple inscriptions show that biennial festivals of this sort took place in a number of cities, such as Delphi, Thebes—which claimed to be Dionysus’ birthplace—Rhodes, and Pergamum, as well as Mytilene on the island of Lesbos. As part of the festival, which always took place in midwinter, women would climb a nearby mountain and there, during the night, they would dance an *oreibasia*—a dance or procession in the mountains. The rite involved real hardship and sometimes danger. Plutarch, a writer in the second century C.E., reported that at Delphi, for instance, a group of women were cut off by a snowstorm at the top of Mt. Parnassus and a rescue party had to be sent out to bring them down the slopes.

**THE EVIDENCE OF EURIPIDES’ BACCHAE.** The most graphic description that exists of the maenads comes from Euripides’ play, the *Bacchae* or the *Bacchantes*, as the title is sometimes translated. It was written at the end of Euripides’ life, while he spent the years 408–406 B.C.E.



Roman relief of maenads or bacchantes dancing around a votive altar, from the 3rd century C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO NAZIONALE TERME ROME/DAGLI ORTI.

in Macedon, and the play was not produced in Athens until after his death. The plot tells how Dionysus returned to his birthplace, Thebes, and there his new religion encountered resistance as it did at a number of places in Greece. Dionysus brought with him a *thiasos* of maenads from Phrygia in Asia Minor, who formed the chorus of the play, and they danced into the theater orchestra to the music of the *aulos* and the tambourine. The Dionysiac rite is taking hold of the city. Pentheus, king of Thebes, who had been away, arrives back home to find maenads dancing on Mt. Cithaeron, and in the middle of each group, a wine bowl added to the general intoxication. Pentheus’ own mother Agavé has joined the maenads. Pentheus vows to put an end to this madness. A herdsman arrives to describe the wild dance of the maenads that he and his fellow herdsman have witnessed on the slopes of Mt. Cithaeron. Pentheus is persuaded by a stranger who is the god Dionysus in disguise to go to see the maenads himself, and when the maenads discover him, they tear him to pieces. In the final scene, Pentheus’ mother Agavé enters, frenzied and blood-stained, bearing Pentheus’ head, which she imagines is a lion’s cub. She has killed her own son in her madness, and as her mind clears, she is overcome with horror. Dionysus has brought tragedy on the royal house of Thebes.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE ECSTASY OF THE MAENADS**

**INTRODUCTION:** According to Diodorus of Sicily, an historian who wrote a *Universal History* in Greek in the reign of the emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), the god Dionysus made an expedition to India and after two years, he returned with a great deal of booty, and he was, so the story goes, the first Greek to celebrate a triumph seated on an elephant. To commemorate his return, the Greeks who lived in the region of Boeotia, where Dionysus was born, and other Greeks as well, made sacrifices to him every second year, and in some of the Greek cities, both married and unmarried women would go up into the mountainsides and act the role of maenads, women who were Dionysus' companions. We see them in Greek art, dancing rapturous dances and carrying the *thyrsos*: a wand wreathed with ivy and vine-leaves and with a pine cone on top. The classic description of the madness of the maenads is found in Euripides' *Bacchae*, which tells the myth of how Dionysus returned to Thebes in Boeotia where he was born and the mother of the king Pentheus and her sisters joined his throng of maenads. Pentheus, however, resisted the new cult, and when a herdsman pasturing his cattle on the mountainside brought him a report of how the maenads, including his own mother, Agavé, were dancing madly on Mt. Cithaeron, he determined to go and see them himself. They discover him and tear him apart, and in the final scene, Agavé comes on stage bearing the bloody head of her son whom she and her sisters, Autonoe and Ino, had torn apart, thinking he was a lion's cub. The excerpt quoted below is from the speech of the messenger who reports the madness of the maenads to Pentheus.

Our herds of pasturing cattle had just begun to ascend the steep to the ridge, at the hour when the sun shoots forth his rays to warm the earth. I saw three bands of women dancers; Autonoe was leader of the first choir, your mother Agavé of the second, and Ino of the third. They all lay in the sleep of exhaustion. Some were reclining with their backs against branches of fir, others had flung themselves at random on the ground on leaves of oak. ...

Then your mother rose up in the midst of the bacchants and called upon them to bestir their limbs from sleep when she heard the lowing of the horned cattle. The women then cast the heavy sleep from their eyes and sprang upright, a sight of wondrous comeliness. There were young women and old women and maids yet unmarried. First they let their hair fly loose about their shoulders and tucked up their fawnskins, those whose fastenings had become unloosed, and girt the speckled skins about them with serpents that licked their cheek. Others held gazelles in their arms, or the untamed whelps of wolves, feeding them with white milk. These were young mothers who had left their infants behind and still had their breasts swollen with milk. Then they put on ivy wreaths and crowns of oak and flowering morning glory. One took her thyrsus and struck it against a rock, and there sprang from it a liquid stream of water. Another struck her thyrsus upon the ground and the god sent up a fountain of wine for her. Those that had a desire for snowy milk scraped the earth with the tips of their fingers, and had rich store of milk. From the wands of ivy there dripped sweet streams of honey. If you had been there to see, you would have approached with prayers the god whom you now revile. ...

[The herdsman then told how he and his comrades tried to capture the maenads, and then found themselves in danger.]

We fled and escaped a rending at the bacchants' hands. But, with naked, unarmed, hands, the women attacked the heifers that were grazing on the grass. You could see one holding wide the legs of a well-fed calf which bellowed and bellowed. Others rent heifers apart. You could see the ribs and cloven hooves tossed here and there, and pieces smeared with gore hanging from the firs, dripping blood.

**SOURCE:** Euripides, *The Bacchants*, in *Ten Plays by Euripides*. Trans. Moses Hadas and John McLean (New York: Bantam Books, 1981): 296–297.

**THE DANCE OF THE MAENADS IN HISTORICAL TIMES.** Euripides' *Bacchae* has haunted the study of the maenads' dance, and the speech of the herdsman that describes it is a classic account. It appears, however, that in most places where the biennial festival of Dionysus was celebrated, the rites of the maenads were not spontaneous explosions of dancing. They cannot be compared with the outbursts of dancing madness that affected communities in Europe from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, when people danced until they dropped. Nor was it the same as the tarantella, the

whirling dance for couples from south Italy, danced to six/eight time, which was thought to be a cure for a nervous disorder known as tarantism. Rather the orgia seem to have been carefully regulated, and they were restricted to certain groups. The women who danced in the orgia played the role of maenads briefly and then returned to their everyday existence, which for many of them must have been humdrum. The maenads' dance in Euripides' *Bacchae*, culminating in the tearing apart of a victim, is mad and primitive, and Dionysus is a ruthless god, but to judge from the number of repre-

sentations in Greek art it was a dance that haunted the Greek imagination.

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### PROFESSIONAL DANCERS

**DEFINING PROFESSIONALS.** The dividing line between the amateur and the professional dancer in ancient Greek society is not an easy one to draw. The first tragedian, Thespis, was not only a dancer but he also taught dance, and so did all the early tragic poets. Sophocles received instruction from Lamprus, a famous teacher of dance and music who was also well-known for his abstinence from wine, which was unusual among the practitioners of *mousike*—music, dance, and poetry. Even the tragic poet Aeschylus, who did his own choreography, used the services of a dancing master. Yet even though choristers and dancing masters might be paid, they were considered non-professional. The fifty men who sang and danced the dithyrambs in Athens did not dance full-time, meaning they had other occupations that represented their primary work and so were not considered professional dancers. Dancers who entertained at banquets fell into a very different social category. Professional dancers and musicians were available for hire, and typically had a low social status. By the late sixth century B.C.E., contemporary literature tells of professional *auletrides* ("flute-girls"), except that their instrument was not the demure flute but a reed instrument which was the ancestor of the oboe. There were training schools for auletrides, but it was not their skill with the aulos that was their greatest attraction to audiences. They were also courtesans and prostitutes; by the fourth century B.C.E., the word *auletris* was almost a synonym for a cheap prostitute. Hiring dancers for entertainment at the lavish banquets given by wealthy hosts was a common occurrence in the Greco-Roman world. The Roman writer Pliny the Younger, who lived under the emperors Domitian (r. 81–96 C.E.) and Trajan (r. 98–117 C.E.), wrote to a friend, chiding

him for failing to come to a banquet that Pliny had given, and listing the delights he had missed, among them dancing girls from Cadiz in Spain. Xenophon, Socrates' disciple, described a symposium that Socrates attended where the entertainment was provided by a troupe of dancers and musicians headed by a Syracusan dancing-master who hired them out. Both the musicians and dancers described in the accounts of Pliny and Xenophon were most likely slaves. Among the entertainments that they offered was a sword dance performed by a female acrobat, and a mime telling the myth of Dionysus and Ariadne, danced by a girl and a handsome boy. Both of these dancers would not only perform for their dance master, but would also share his bed. The life of professional dancers was harsh and, except for a lucky few, they were at the bottom of the social scale.

**THE DIONYSIAC GUILDS.** Sometime very early in the third century B.C.E., the actors, dancers, and musicians in Athens formed a *synodos* ("guild"). It may not have been the first such association, for there is some reason to think that the earliest actors' guild was formed in Hellenistic Egypt, where it was imposed on the actors by the government. In any case, the Athenian guild was the first in mainland Greece, and it was soon followed by the Isthmian guild centered in Corinth, and by others, until there were six in all, including one for the Greek cities in southern Italy and Sicily. They engaged in an astonishing range of activities: they exchanged gifts and honors with cities and kings, they secured tax-exemptions and front row seats in the theater for their members, and organized festivals. Travel in the Hellenistic world was insecure, for the numerous poor had turned to robbery, and the roads were infested with highwaymen and the sea-lanes with pirates. Hence the guilds negotiated the right to *asylia*—the right of safe passage from city to city. The rights of the Athenian guild were recognized officially after 274 B.C.E. by the Amphictionic League, an inter-state organization based at Delphi which was the association closest to a "United Nations" that Hellenistic Greece knew. The Dionysiac troupes of professional artists moved from place to place, and even small towns built stone theaters. In addition to theaters, they built *odeons*—music halls with roofs so that a rainstorm need not interrupt a performance. Pericles built one in Athens during the fifth century B.C.E.; it was a square building with its roof supported by a forest of columns, but later odeons look like small theaters with roofs that must have been made of wood. Their interiors were too dark for productions of tragedy and comedy, but lamps could provide enough lighting for music and dance. The music hall at Pompeii in southern Italy,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A DANCER ENTERTAINS AT A BANQUET IN ATHENS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The *Symposium* by Xenophon describes a banquet attended by Socrates which took place just after the athletic festival of the Great Panathenaea of 421 B.C.E., which the wealthy Athenian Callias gave for his boyfriend and his father, to celebrate the boy's victory in the wrestling match. Xenophon wrote his *Symposium* some forty years after it was held, and so it is not likely that it is a completely accurate account, though he claims to have attended the banquet himself. However, his account is of the entertainment offered by a troupe of musicians and dancers belonging to an unnamed master from Syracuse in Sicily. The performers were probably slaves, and their master probably a *pornoboskos*, or pimp, who hired out the performers for entertainment and sexual favors when his customers demanded it.

When the tables had been taken away and the guests had poured a libation and sung a hymn, a man from Syracuse came in to provide some merry-making. He had with him a girl skilled at playing the pipes, and a dancing girl, one of those who could perform amazing acrobatic stunts, as well as a very handsome boy who was a gifted player of the *kithara* and a brilliant dancer. The Syracusan master of the troupe made money showing them off. Now the girl pipe-player played a piece to the guests, and the boy played his *kithara* and everyone agreed that both had given a satisfactory performance

The conversation in the room then continues until Socrates points out that the dancing girl is ready to perform.

Thereupon the girl who played the pipes began to play a tune, and a boy who attended the dancer handed her hoops up to the number of twelve. The dancer took them and as she danced, she threw them spinning round into the air, making note of just how high she had to throw them so as to catch them in regular rhythm.

As Socrates watched the performance, he remarked that it showed that women were in no way inferior to men, and hence any of the banqueters who had wives should not hesitate to educate them. Socrates was asked immediately why, then, he did not practice what he preached on his own wife, Xanthippe, who was notoriously bad-tempered, and Socrates replied that horsemen practiced their skill on spirited horses, not on docile ones. Then the banqueters turned their attention back to the acrobatic dancer.

Next there was a hoop brought in and set in the middle of a circle of upright swords. Then the dancer turned somersaults over these swords into the hoop and then out in the opposite direction. The onlookers were worried that she might suffer some mishap, but she carried out this performance, boldly, suffering no harm.

**SOURCE:** Xenophon, *Symposium*. 2.1-11. Translated by James Allan Evans.

which was built just after 80 B.C.E., has the design of a small Roman theater, with a low, narrow stage, and the groove in the stage where the curtain wound down can still be seen.

**THE POPULARITY OF THE DIONYSIAC ARTISTS.** The first century and a half after the death of Alexander the Great (323 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), the city of Rome had a large population of under-employed or unemployed, and Augustus knew how important it was to keep the mob happy. There is a story reported of Augustus which told that in 17 B.C.E., when some citizens were irritated at the strict morality laws which Augustus promulgated, he allowed the officials in charge of the festivals to spend three times the amount on them authorized by the treasury, and permitted the popular dancer Pylades to return to Rome, even though he earlier had been banished for sedition. He did chide Pylades for his noisy rivalry with the dancer Bathyllus, however, to which Pylades replied that if the people spent their time with dancers it was Augustus who gained. Pylades recognized the value

of dance in diverting the attention of the mob from the failings of the government.

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**DANCE IN ROME**

**THE INFLUENCE OF ETRURIA.** The city of Rome in 364 B.C.E. was suffering from a plague. Believing the plague to be the result of the anger of the gods, the Ro-



Wall painting from a tomb at Ruvo di Puglia, Italy, showing a funeral dance. © MIMMO JODICE/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

mans brought in Etruscan dancers in an effort to appease the gods and gain some relief from the plague's devastation. The Etruscans danced to the music of the *aulos*, the precursor to the oboe, without any songs or gestures, but their graceful movements entranced the Romans, who began to imitate them. There is much about the Etruscans which is still a mystery—the riddle of their language has not yet been solved—but in the ancient world, they were known for their love of luxury, to which the paintings found in their tombs of the magnificence of their festivals and banquets can attest. In one tomb, the *Tomba dei Cacciatori* (Tomb of the Huntsmen), men dance in the open air, most of them nude except for a loincloth. They are shown separated from each other by trees or shrubs, dancing wildly to the music of the double-aulos. In another tomb, the *Tomba delle leonesse* (Tomb of the Lionesses), a naked man is shown dancing opposite a scantily-clad woman. On opposite walls of the *Tomba del Triclinio* (Tomb of the Dining Couch), there are two groups of five dancers each, alternating in gender. In one corner, a musician plays the double-aulos, and in the other, a man plays the lyre. Another tomb shows a man apparently dancing in armor to the music of the aulos. Like the Greeks, the Etruscans knew the *pyrrhike* ("war dance") or something like it.

**ROMAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS DANCE.** Roman character had a strong ascetic streak. The Etruscans may have introduced Romans to the dance, but it retained the reputation of a foreign import for years after. Plato may have said that a man who did not know how to dance was uneducated, but Plato was a Greek, and his Roman contemporaries would have thought the senti-

ment ridiculous. The art of the dance did eventually come to Rome along with the rest of Greek culture, but for the Romans, dancing always remained entertainment. It was never part of a Roman's formal education. By the end of the third century B.C.E., upper-class Romans did start to send their children to dancing-masters for lessons, and in the first half of the second century B.C.E., while Greece itself was falling under Roman domination, Greek dancers, most of them probably brought to Rome as slaves and then freed, set up dancing-schools. From the Roman perspective, the creation of dancing schools gave dance a status far beyond that of mere entertainment, and its possibilities for the corruption of character led to a backlash against this art form. In the middle of the second century B.C.E., Scipio Aemilianus, a Roman aristocrat who generally admired Greek culture, moved to close the schools down, but his success was short-term at best. Yet Scipio's view of dance persisted in Roman culture into the first century B.C.E.: it was permissible for Romans to know how to dance, but knowing how to dance expertly was a symptom of depravity.

**NATIVE DANCES OF ROME.** Nonetheless there were dances native to early Rome. One called the *bellicrepa* was supposedly instituted by Rome's founder, Romulus, and was a dance in armor performed by warriors drawn up in battle ranks. The cult of the god Mars *Ultor* ("Avenger") involved dances by armed men, and on a number of surviving medals and gems, as well as one bronze statuette, there are representations of Mars dancing. There were also ancient priestly brotherhoods with





"The Dancing School," detail of red-figure vase, 5th-century B.C.E., Greece. Teacher is playing the double-aulos; a kithara hangs on the wall in the background. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO PROVINCIALE SIGISMONDO/CASTROMEDIANO LECCE/DAGLI ORTI.

ritual dancers. The best-known are the Salians, priests of Mars *Gradivus* ("Marches Forth to War") who, according to tradition, were established by Romulus' successor as king of Rome, Numa. They wore helmets and breastplates over embroidered tunics, and they carried swords and the sacred shields of Mars. To the music of trumpets they paraded through the city of Rome, making stops at places hallowed by religion, and there performing the Salian dance. They shuffled from left to right, then from right to left, and all the while they beat the earth with their feet and made leaps into the air as they beat their shields. The Roman historian Livy mentions another ancient dance performed to propitiate Juno in 207 B.C.E., during the long and difficult Second Carthaginian War. Twenty-seven young girls made their way to the forum while singing a hymn, and there they took hold of a rope and danced with it through the streets on their way to the temple of Juno. Ancient rope dances were also found in Greece; a fragment of a Mycenaean fresco shows men wearing donkey-headed masks in procession carrying a rope.

**INTRODUCTION OF PANTOMIME.** The historian Zosimus, who wrote in Greek in the reign of the em-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**DEATH OF A ROMAN IMPRESARIO**

**INTRODUCTION:** Excavations which took place under St. Peter's basilica in the Vatican in the 1950s have turned up an ancient cemetery which was once on the Vatican hill before the emperor Constantine built a church there over the tomb of St. Peter. Numerous mausoleums, burial urns and inscriptions marking the graves of the dead have been found there, among them the one quoted below. Aurelius Nemesius was evidently the master of a troupe of pantomime dancers. The date of the inscription is uncertain but sometime in the third century C.E. is likely.

To Aurelius Nemesius, spouse most dear and well-deserving, who lived 53 years 9 months 11 days, who won the highest praise for his art served as master of chorus, dance and pantomime. To him his wife Aurelia Eutychiane has dedicated and erected [this stone].

**SOURCE:** "Tombstone of an Impresario," in *The Empire*. Vol. 2 of *Roman Civilization: Selected Readings*. Ed. Naph-tali Lewis and Meyer Reinhold (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990): 145.

peror Theodosius II (408–450 C.E.) on the decline of Rome from the time of the first emperor Augustus (r. 27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) to his own day, has little to say about Augustus, but he does note an important development in dance that occurred during Augustus' reign.

In those days the pantomime dance was introduced, which did not exist earlier. Pylades and Bathyllus were the first to introduce it, though there are other reasons too for the many evils that have survived up to the present day.

Zosimus was still a pagan writing at a time when the pagan religion had become a small minority in a largely Christian empire, but he reflected the old-fashioned belief that the decline of Rome was caused by moral decay, and dancing was a symptom of decay. The old Roman attitude towards dance died hard. Pliny the Younger, a writer of elegant letters in the later first century C.E., commented in one of his letters on the death of an eighty-year old woman, Ummidia Quadratilla, who owned a troupe of pantomime dancers, and enjoyed their performances more than was proper for a woman of her social station. She did not allow her grandson to see them—to that extent she remained faithful to the old

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA ARGUES THE VIRTUES OF THE PANTOMIME DANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Lucian of Samosata in Syria who lived in the second century C.E. wrote essays and dialogues often from the viewpoint of a satirist, but his dialogue on dancing is a serious vindication of the pantomime. He imagines that a fan of pantomimes is talking with a Cynic philosopher who scoffs at them, but is eventually won over. The dialogue was probably written in Antioch in the years 162–165 C.E. when the emperor Lucius Verus, until his death in 168 the colleague of Marcus Aurelius, and an aficionado of pantomimes, was in Antioch ostensibly leading a campaign but actually enjoying the delights of the city. In this passage, Lucian compares the pantomime to contemporary productions of tragedy.

As far as tragedy is concerned, let us form our first opinion of its character from its outward appearance. What a repulsive and at the same time frightful spectacle is a man tricked out to disproportionate stature, mounted upon high clogs, wearing a mask that reaches up above his head, with a mouth that is set in a vast yawn as if he meant to swallow up the spectators! I forebear to speak

of pads for the breasts and pads for the paunch to make himself look obese so that his body will not be too slender in proportion to his height. Then, inside the costume is the actor himself shouting his lines, bending forwards and backwards, sometimes even singing the poetry, and—this is really shameful—making a song out of his misfortunes.

[*Lucian gives some examples of ridiculous tragic performances, and then contrasts them with pantomime.*]

On the other hand, there is no need for me to say that the dancer is seemly and becoming, for it is clear to everyone who is not blind. The mask itself is very attractive and suitable to the theme of the dramatic presentation. Its mouth is not wide open like the masks of tragedy and comedy, but closed, for the pantomime artist has many actors to take the speaking parts for him. In the past, to be sure, the pantomime artists did both sing and dance. But when their panting as they danced interfered with their singing, it seemed better that others should sing for them.

**SOURCE:** Lucian, "The Dance," in *Lucian*. Vol. 5. Trans. A. M. Harmon (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936): 239–243. Text modified by James Allan Evans.

Roman view that dance corrupted the youth. Since Quadratilla was enormously wealthy, she could afford to have her pantomime troupe put on private performances for her own entertainment, but by that time Rome had permanent theaters built of stone—the first of them opened in 55 B.C.E., long after many towns in Italy had them—and it was pantomime dance rather than tragedy and comedy that filled them.

**ANTECEDENTS OF PANTOMIME.** Before pantomime was invented, there was mime. In Greece, a mime was a short dramatic skit that could be sung and danced on stage. The banquet which Socrates attended after the Great Panathenaic festival of 421 B.C.E., which Xenophon described in his *Symposium*, was entertained by a mime in which two dancers performed the story of Dionysus and Ariadne. Ariadne, daughter of King Minos of Crete, helped Theseus escape the Minotaur and accompanied him on his homeward voyage as far as the island of Naxos where he deserted her, and Dionysus arrived to make her his bride. This mime seems to have had at least some of the features of the later pantomime. The subject was a tale from mythology, which was the stock-in-trade of pantomime. Mimes came to Rome in the third century B.C.E., where they became very popular, and they covered a wide range of subjects. Women

regularly appeared in them as *mimae* ("mime actresses") as well as men. One popular feature of the festival known as the *Floralia* (Flower Festival) was a mime in which *mimae* appeared naked. The masses loved mimes, and Roman emperors favored them. The emperor Domitian (r. 82–96 C.E.) catered to the bloodthirsty taste of the Roman public by ordering a genuine crucifixion inserted into a mime. Troupes of mime artists, some owned by impresarios who were mime performers themselves, toured the towns and cities of the empire, and played in the local theaters at festivals which well-to-do local citizens financed to advertise their public spirit. By the time of the late Roman Empire, it was hard to distinguish between mime and pantomime, and the Christian church frowned on both of them. In 22 B.C.E., however, two pantomime artists, Pylades and Bathyllus, invented the Roman pantomime, and whatever its antecedents, it was recognized as something new.

**DESCRIBING PANTOMIME.** Pantomime created a new kind of dance performance by marrying three arts: song, music, and mime. Song and dance had been part of Roman theatrical productions ever since the first playwright, Livius Andronicus, produced plays in Rome. Livius Andronicus had lost his voice singing, and his audience allowed him to mime the songs while a boy sang

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE PANTOMIME DANCER, PYLADES**

**INTRODUCTION:** Macrobius, the author of the *Saturnalia* from which this excerpt is taken, lived at the end of the fourth century C.E., and we know little about him, except that he was not a native of Italy—he may have come from Africa. However he was deeply attached to the traditions and literature of ancient Rome at a time when they were under threat. In his *Saturnalia*, he imagines the leaders of Roman society of his day, many of them still pagans or at least sympathetic to paganism, gathered for the festival of the Saturnalia in December, and their conversation ranges over various antiquarian topics, such as dancing, indigestion, and drunkenness, among others. In the passage quoted below, Macrobius looks back four centuries before his own day to Pylades, the dancer who, along with Bathyllus, revolutionized the pantomime in the reign of the emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.).

Having once begun to talk about the stage, I must not omit to mention Pylades, a famous actor in the time of Augustus, and his pupil Hylas, who proceeded under his instruction to become his equal and his rival. On the question of the respective merits of these two actors popular opinion was divided. Hylas one day was performing a dramatic dance the closing theme of which was *The Great Agamemnon*, and by his gestures he represented his subject as a man of mighty stature. This was more than Pylades could stand, and from his seat in the pit he shouted, "You are making him merely tall, not great." The populace then made Pylades perform the same dance himself, and, when he came to the point at which he had

found fault with the other's performance, he gave the representation of a man deep in thought, on the ground that nothing became a great commander better than to take thought for all.

On another occasion, when Hylas was dancing *Oedipus*, Pylades criticized him for moving with more assurance than a blind man could have shown, by calling out: "You are using your eyes."

Once, when Pylades had come on to dance *Hercules the Madman*, some of the spectators thought that he was not keeping to action suited to the stage. Whereupon he took off his mask and turned on his critics with the words: "Fools, my dancing is intended to represent a madman." It was in this play too, the *Hercules Furens*, that he shot arrows at the spectators. And when, in the course of playing the same part in a command performance at a banquet given by Augustus, he bent his bow and discharged arrows, the Emperor showed no annoyance at receiving the same treatment from the actor as had the populace of Rome.

He was said to have introduced a new and elegant style of dancing in place of the clumsy fashion popular in the time of our ancestors, and when asked by Augustus what contribution he had made to the art of dancing, he replied, in the words of Homer,

The sound of flutes and pipes, and the voices of men.—*Iliad* 10.13.

**SOURCE:** Macrobius, *The Saturnalia*. Trans. Percival Vaughan Davies (New York and London, England: Columbia University Press, 1969): 183–184.

for him. In pantomime, song was provided by a choir, not a solo performer. The piercing notes of the double-aulos had provided the music in the past, but Pylades added more instruments. Pantomime musicians soon developed into an orchestra, with musicians playing the aulos, the panpipes, cymbals, *kithara* (a kind of lyre), the lyre, and the trumpet. The conductor of the choir marked out the beat with a *scabellum* ("iron shoe")—a clapper with a sound-box which could be worked with the foot. While the choir sang and the orchestra played, the pantomime artist mimed the plot of the drama. He used masks, but unlike the masks used by a tragic or comic actor which had a gaping mouth to allow the actor's voice to project, the pantomime masks had closed mouths, for the *pantomimus* ("pantomime actor") did not speak. Behind him stood an assistant who might be an actor with a speaking part, but he also gave the pan-

tomimus help when needed—when the pantomimus switched roles, he changed masks, and a little assistance was sometimes necessary. The favorite plots of pantomimes were taken from mythology and the audiences were familiar with them.

**THE GREAT PLAYERS.** Two great pantomimi were associated with the invention of the new pantomime: Pylades, an ex-slave of the emperor Augustus, and Bathyllus, an ex-slave of Augustus' minister of public relations, Maecenas, who also supported a stable of writers. They may have cooperated in the introduction of this new entertainment around 22 B.C.E. The performances of Bathyllus were more joyous and light-hearted performances than those of Pylades, and his dances were livelier. Pylades created the tragic pantomime: a spectacle with choir, full orchestra, scenery, and even a second pantomimus when the plot demanded it. Both Pylades and

Bathyllus had enthusiastic supporters who sometimes fought pitched battles in the streets. The emperor Augustus even banished Pylades from Rome for a period but relented and allowed him to return in 17 B.C.E. at a time when the emperor's popularity was sagging. For the Roman masses, the recall of Pylades made up for other measures that were unpopular.

**THE STARS.** The rivalry between the stars of the pantomime was intense. Pylades quarreled not only with Bathyllus, but also with a pupil of his, Hylas, whose talent on stage challenged his master's. Pylades became wealthy. He owned his own troupe of pantomimes and in 2 B.C.E. he financed a festival himself, though by that time he was too old to perform, and sat in the audience. The emperor Nero, who had ambitions as a pantomime dancer himself, killed a *pantomimus* named Paris because he thought him a rival. The names of great pantomime dancers lived on, for later dancers assumed them, hoping to inherit some of their fame. There was a Paris in Nero's reign, another in the reign of Domitian (81–96 C.E.) and another in the reign of Lucius Verus (161–169 C.E.), co-emperor with Marcus Aurelius. Five pantomime dancers with the name of Pylades can be traced, and six with the name of Apolaustus. By the time of the fourth century C.E., women were dancing in pantomimes. They had always played in mimes, and the distinction between the two was breaking down. In the sixth century C.E. the empress Theodora (527–548) was a pantomime dancer in her youth in Constantinople, which was by then a Christian city, and respectable women could not attend the theater. Yet once Theodora became empress, she did not forget her old friends in the theater. They were welcome as her guests in the imperial palace, and she arranged good marriages for their daughters.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

### *in Dance*

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#### ARION

c. 650 B.C.E.–c. 590 B.C.E.

*Musician*  
*Choreographer*

**THE FAME OF ARION.** Arion was a master of *mousike*—dancing, poetry, and music—whose major period of activity was in the last half of the seventh century B.C.E. His fame has lived on, although none of his poetry has survived. He was a native of Methymna, a city-state on the island of Lesbos off the west coast of Turkey, but he spent much of his life at Corinth, where his patron was the tyrant Periander. During Periander's forty-year reign, Corinth was a brilliant center of art and culture, and among the artists attracted to his court was Arion.

**ARION AND THE DITHYRAMB.** The dithyramb was a choral hymn, accompanied with dance, that was sung in honor of the god of wine Dionysus, and exactly what the music and dance were like before Arion is unknown. Arion's contribution was to give the dithyrambic choir a fresh organization. He was responsible for setting the number of choristers at fifty, and he himself composed dithyrambs and taught choirs in Corinth to perform them. Oxen were prizes given to the winning choirs, and the sacrifice of the prize oxen was part of the festival. From Corinth, the dithyramb was brought to Athens where its development is connected with an equally shadowy figure, Lasus of Hermione who was born around 548–547 B.C.E. Aristotle claimed that Greek tragic drama developed from the dithyramb.

**ARION AND THE DOLPHIN.** Arion was almost more famous for his adventure with a dolphin than for his contributions to dance and music. The story goes that he took a sabbatical from Periander's court and made a tour of the Greek cities in Italy and Sicily, where he made a great deal of money. When it was time to return to Greece, he chose a Corinthian vessel for the voyage because he trusted the Corinthians more than any others.

The sailors knew that he had a good deal of money, however, and they plotted to take it and throw Arion overboard. Arion begged them to take his money but spare his life, and when he could not persuade them, he asked to be allowed to stand on the ship's poop and sing one last song before he died. The sailors agreed, and Arion put on his costume that he wore when he performed and sang a song, and then leaped into the sea, where a dolphin picked him up and carried him on its back to land. Once he got there, he made his way, still in his costume, to Periander's court. Later, the sailors arrived back in Corinth and reported to Periander that Arion was still safe and sound in Italy. They got an unpleasant shock when Periander confronted them with Arion. It was said that Arion was given a helping hand by the god Apollo, who was the god of the lyre and to whom dolphins were sacred. The Greeks believed that Apollo helped musicians in distress, and saw to it that Arion's would-be murderers were punished. After this account of Arion, there is no further reference other than a mention of his death around 590 B.C.E.

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### BATHYLLUS AND PYLADES

Mid-first century B.C.E.—Early first century C.E.

#### *Pantomime dancers*

**INTRODUCTION OF THE PANTOMIME.** The introduction of the pantomime into Rome is credited to two dancers, Bathyllus and Pylades. Bathyllus was a native of Alexandria in Egypt and nothing is known about his early life. Somehow he became the slave of Maecenas, the minister of public relations for the Roman emperor Augustus (r. 27 B.C.E.—14 C.E.), the nephew and heir of Julius Caesar. Maecenas freed him and became his patron. Pylades who came from Cilicia in Asia Minor, was an ex-slave of the emperor Augustus himself. The two

dancers were rivals, and their fans often clashed in street riots, so much so that Augustus banished Pylades from Rome for a short period. Both men had students, and one student of Pylades, Hylas, became his master's rival. Bathyllus was famous for his comic pantomimes, whereas Pylades specialized in serious or tragic themes taken from Greek myth.

**THE NEW PANTOMIME.** Information about Bathyllus and Pylades is sparse, but it is clear that they introduced into Italy a new kind of dance which combined features from the dance of the Old Comedy of classical Greece known as the *kordax*, the more dignified dance of tragedy known as the *emmeleia*, and the dance of the satyr play called the *sikinnis*. In fact, Pylades wrote a treatise on dancing. Bathyllus' performances were more light-hearted. One ancient author compared his dance to the *hyporchema*, which was a lively choral song and dance, although the similarity was with the spirit and joyousness of the *hyporchema* as there were no choral dances in pantomime. Bathyllus is also supposed to have introduced the *Memphian* dance, which involved matching every muscle in the dancer's body to the rhythm of the music, and dealt with serious themes. One ancient source mentioned performances of tragedy by Bathyllus and comedy by Pylades, and so they may have poached on each other's territory occasionally. The date of death for either Bathyllus or Pylades is not known, though in 2 B.C.E., Pylades produced and financed a festival, but did not give a performance himself because he was too old. Bathyllus was probably older than Pylades and so he had ceased dancing about the same time or earlier, though some dancers had very long careers on the stage.

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### MEMPHIUS

Mid-second century C.E.—Early third century C.E.

#### *Pantomime artist*

**BACKGROUND.** Memphius—also known as Apolaustus—was a famous pantomime artist in the reign of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–180 C.E.), and a great favorite of Lucius Verus, who was Marcus' co-emperor for the first seven and a half years of his reign. When

Verus returned from a campaign against the Parthians, he brought with him actors from Syria, one of whom was a slave, Agrippus, whom Verus and Marcus Aurelius freed. Thus Agrippus acquired the name “Lucius Aurelius” from his patrons, and in addition, he had two nicknames, his stage name “Apolaustus,” and “Memphius” (“pantomime from Memphis”). Memphis in Egypt may have been where he first won fame as a pantomime artist, or it might refer to the kind of dance that he made his specialty, for there was a *Memphian* dance where the dancer moved every muscle in his body as he performed. The first dancer to introduce the Memphian dance to Rome was Bathyllus from Alexandria in Egypt, who belonged to the reign of the emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.). As for the name “Apolaustus,” it was a favorite nickname for pantomime artists; in fact there already was an ex-slave named “Lucius Aelius Aurelius Apolaustus” who belonged to the imperial household before Memphius arrived in Rome. Presumably he also was a pantomime artist, and had the misfortune of being put to death by the emperor Commodus, the son of Marcus Aurelius, in 189 C.E. Memphius, however, was still alive in 199 C.E. when he is mentioned in an inscription.

**PANTOMIME OF PYTHAGORAS.** One pantomime which won Memphius fame was his exposition of the philosophy of Pythagoras in dance. Pythagoras was known for his theory of numbers, but in the second century C.E. he was best known for his doctrine of transmigration of souls. Since Memphius followed in the tradition of Bathyllus, whose performances were more light-hearted than those of Pylades, presumably Memphius’ presentation of Pythagorean wisdom was not particularly serious.

**CAREER AFTER LUCIUS VERUS.** As long as Lucius Verus was still alive, Memphius was probably part of the entourage of actors, pantomime artists, and jugglers that belonged to his household. But Marcus Aurelius had no taste for Verus’ pastimes, and Memphius must have forged a career of his own. He had his own *grex*—a troupe of musicians and supporting dancers—who performed in Rome and throughout Italy where every respectable town had its own theater. He was acclaimed as the “outstanding actor of his day.” His death date is unknown but he was still performing at the end of the second century C.E.

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## THEODORA

c. 500 C.E.–548 C.E.

*Pantomime artist*  
*Empress*

**DAUGHTER OF A BEAR-KEEPER.** The woman who would one day become empress of the Roman Empire was born as one of three daughters of the bear-keeper for the Green faction, the company which produced the chariot races and the amusements in the theaters of Constantinople. Her father died while Theodora and her sisters were still very young, and Theodora’s mother quickly married again, anticipating that her new husband would take over her former husband’s job. Her plan was thwarted, however, when the head ballet-master of the Green faction, who possessed the right to choose a new bear-keeper, was bribed into choosing another candidate. The change in fortunes left Theodora’s little family destitute, but Theodora’s mother was persistent in securing her young daughters’ futures. She dressed them as suppliants and placed them before the section of seats in the Constantinople Hippodrome that belonged to the fans of the Greens and begged for compassion. Although the Greens paid no heed, the Blue fans did take pity on the little family and gave Theodora’s stepfather the job of bear-keeper for their faction.

**TOOK TO THE STAGE.** As soon as they were old enough, Theodora and her sisters took to the stage. Her older sister, Comito, soon became a star, and Theodora’s first role was as an attendant for Comito, carrying a little stool for her where Comito might rest briefly between dances. Theodora herself did not shine as a dancer. She did, however, make a name for herself as an interpreter of myths, and one that particularly pleased the audience was her pantomime of *Leda and the Swan*, which told the myth of how Leda, the mother of Helen of Troy, was raped as she took a bath by the god Zeus, who disguised himself as a swan. Like most actresses and dancers on the Roman stage, she practiced prostitution, and during this period of her life, she had an illegitimate daughter. One of her lovers, who had purchased a provincial governorship for himself, took her with him to his province in modern Libya. They soon quarreled, however, and when the governor discarded Theodora she was left to her own resources.

**CONVERSION.** Theodora made her way to Alexandria, which was full of refugees from religious persecution. At this time, the Christian church was split by a dispute over the nature of Christ. The Catholics held that Christ had both a human and a divine nature as set forth in the Chalcedonian Creed, whereas their op-

ponents believed that Christ's divine nature was dominant; some argued that it even subsumed Christ's human nature. When Justin I became emperor in 518 C.E., he initiated a persecution of the anti-Chalcedonians everywhere in the empire except Egypt, and hence the anti-Chalcedonians fled to Alexandria. Theodora came in contact with them there and was converted to their creed. She then made her way to Antioch, modern Antakya in Turkey, and there a dancer named Macedonia, belonging to the Blue faction's troupe, befriended her. Macedonia had a second career; in addition to being a dancer, she was a secret agent for Justinian, the emperor's nephew, and it was probably thanks to her that Theodora met Justinian. They fell in love, and even though it was illegal for an upper-class Roman to marry an actress, Justinian persuaded Emperor Justin to promulgate a law to allow the wedding to take place. Once Justin died in 527 C.E., Justinian and Theodora became emperor and empress.

**EMPRESS.** Theodora did not forget her old friends of the theater once she became empress. Dancing girls with names like Chrysomallo and Indaro were welcome in the palace. Justinian also passed a number of laws that made it easier for actors to give up their careers if they wished and to marry upper-class citizens. In fact, Theodora found suitable husbands for the daughters of some of her old friends. She was Justinian's partner in power, and in theological disputes she did not hesitate to intervene on behalf of the anti-Catholics. Justinian favored the Catholics but he had enormous respect for Theodora's intelligence. The Assyrian and Coptic churches in the Near East and Egypt hold Theodora in high regard, and reject the story that she was an ex-actress. Yet the evidence that she had a career as a dancer on the stage before she met Justinian seems to be sound. She died of cancer in 548 C.E.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Dance*

- Aeschylus, *Suppliants* (462 B.C.E.)—The tragedy, the *Suppliants* by Aeschylus is the best surviving example of a drama that depends on the interpretative dancing of the chorus for its impact which in this instance, could have numbered as many as fifty instead of the usual fifteen members.
- Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* (popularly known as “The Golden Ass,” c. 180 C.E.)—The “Golden Ass,” the only Latin novel to survive in its entirety, at Book 10.29–34, contains a description of a dance and pantomime production staged in Corinth.
- Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* (“The Learned Men at a Banquet,” c. 200 C.E.)—The *Deipnosophistae*, written in Greek by Athenaeus from Naucratis in Egypt, is an imaginary symposium where learned men discuss all manner of topics, and in both the first and fourteenth books, their topics include dancing. Athenaeus is a major source for modern knowledge of ancient dance.
- Homer, *Iliad* (c. 750 B.C.E.)—The eighteenth book of Homer's *Iliad* contains an *ekphrasis*, or detailed description, of a scene from everyday life in Greece, in which is a word picture of young men and women dancing on a dancing floor like that which was made for Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, at Knossos in Minoan Crete.
- Lucian of Samosata, *Peri Orcheseos* (“On the Dance,” c. 165 C.E.)—Lucian, author of some eighty pieces, most of them in dialogue form, wrote a dialogue on pantomime dancing in which he imagines a fan of the pantomime winning over a Cynic philosopher who had condemned it.
- Xenophon, *Anabasis* (“The Expedition into the Interior,” c. 360 B.C.E.)—The Athenian, Xenophon, in his youth a disciple of Socrates, accompanied Prince Cyrus of Persia on his attempt to overthrow his older brother, King Artaxerxes II. The *Anabasis*, which describes Cyrus' ill-fated expedition and the return home of his force of ten thousand mercenaries, contains a description of folk dancing by the various ethnic groups that made up the force. Xenophon's *Symposium* is another source for ancient dance for it describes professional dancers who provided entertainment at a banquet which Socrates attended.

chapter **3** three

# FASHION

*James Allan Evans*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	80	<i>The Importance of the Toga</i> (Livy describes the role of the toga when transacting public business) . . . . .	94
OVERVIEW . . . . .	82	<i>The Costume of the Emperor Augustus</i> (John the Lydian describes the various styles of dress worn by Augustus) . . . . .	98
TOPICS		<i>The Making of Linen</i> (Pliny explains the processing of flax to extract the linen fiber). . . . .	99
Fashion in the Minoan Period . . . . .	84	<i>The Unusual Dress of the Emperor Gaius Caligula</i> (Suetonius describes Caligula's singular style of fashion) . . . . .	100
Garments in Classical Greece . . . . .	86	<i>Coan Silk</i> (Aristotle describes the origin of Coan silk) . . . . .	101
The Toga . . . . .	92	<i>Thucydides on Athenian Fashions</i> (Thucydides comments on changing Greek fashions). . . . .	103
The Textiles of the Greek and Roman World . . . . .	98	<i>New Fashions from Persia</i> (a play by Aristophanes reflects the influence of Persian fashion) . . . . .	104
Dressing to Impress in Greece and Rome. . . . .	102	<i>Effeminate Dress</i> (Gellius relates the criticism of men who wore long-sleeved tunics). . . . .	105
The Dress of Roman Women. . . . .	106	<i>Epitaphs of a Dressmaker and a Hairdresser</i> (epitaphs of two slaves of wealthy Roman women). . . . .	107
The Apparel of the Soldier. . . . .	109	<i>Alluring Dress in Augustan Rome</i> (Ovid offers fashion advice for women) . . . . .	108
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Alcibiades . . . . .	113		
Constantius II . . . . .	114		
Diogenes . . . . .	115		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	115		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
<i>The Adoption of the Ionian Chiton</i> (Herodotus describes how a military defeat impacted Athenian fashion) . . . . .	89		



## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Fashion*

- c. 1700 B.C.E. In Minoan Crete of the Neopalatial Period frescoes show women wearing short jackets which left their breasts bare and a bell-shaped skirt falling from a girdle at the waist. Men, when not shown nude, wear a kind of short double-apron covering their genitalia.
- c. 1450 B.C.E.
- c. 1200 B.C.E. The safety pin appears in Greece, which indicates that women are already wearing the *peplos* which is fastened at the shoulders by safety pins called *peronai*.
- c. 600 B.C.E. Towards the end of the Early Archaic Period, the Ionian *chiton* becomes popular in Athens, displacing the simpler Dorian *chiton*, or *peplos*, which remains the standard women's dress in Sparta and other Dorian states.
- 594 B.C.E. Solon, the chief magistrate (in Greek *archon*) of Athens, creates a law that forbids women to wear more than three garments when attending funerals or festivals. This is an attempt to curb the overly elaborate fashions introduced into Athens along with the Ionian *chiton*.
- 490 B.C.E. Persia makes an abortive attempt to conquer Greece, and in the aftermath of the Persian War there is a shift in favor of simpler fashion and away from elaborate fashions associated with Persia.
- 479 B.C.E.
- In Athens, the *peplos* comes back in style.
- c. 430 B.C.E. In Athens, Persian fashions come into favor again among wealthy citizens.
- 336 B.C.E. Macedonian king Alexander the Great begins his campaign which results in the conquest of the Persian Empire, opening up the Middle East to the Greeks and exposing them to Persian fashions.
- 330 B.C.E. The last king of Persia of the Archaemenid dynasty, Darius III Codomannus, is deposed and killed, and Alexander claims to be his successor. He begins to adopt Persian dress, which provokes an antagonistic reaction among his Macedonian troops who think that he is deserting the traditions of their homeland.
- 323 B.C.E. Alexander the Great dies at Babylon. His generals carve kingdoms out of his conquered territory, the capitals of which become leaders in fashion (Pella in the kingdom of Macedonia; Antioch and Seleucia-on-the-Tigris of the Seleucid kingdom, and Alexandria in the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt).
- 205 B.C.E. Publius Scipio the Younger, a rising general in the second war between Rome and Carthage, dons Greek clothing in preference to the Roman toga, thereby setting the style for members of the Roman ruling class who were attracted to Greek fashions.
- 189 B.C.E. Sometime after this date a luxury fabric called "Attalic" is marketed in Rome. The "Attalic" fabric is gold-embroidered cloth produced in workshops owned by Attalus II, king of Pergamum in Asia Minor, with needlework by Phrygian embroiderers who are famous for their skill in working with gold thread.
- 80 B.C.E. Julius Caesar, who will become Rome's most famous general and politician, is noted as being the "boy with loose clothes" by the dictator Sulla because Caesar wore a tunic with fringed wrist-length sleeves under his purple-striped toga and a loosely tied belt.
- 79 B.C.E.
- 13 B.C.E. In Rome, the foundation stone is laid for the "Altar of Peace" erected by the

- Roman Senate in the Campus Martius (Field of Mars). The south frieze of the altar shows the imperial family—save the emperor Augustus himself—in procession, and is an illustration of the new style of draping the Roman toga in the Augustan period.
- 37 C.E. The emperor Gaius Caligula introduces  
–41 C.E. fashions borrowed from oriental monarchies into the imperial court at Rome along with divine kingship.
- c. 90 C.E. A portrait is sculpted of an unknown Roman woman, now in the Capitoline Museum in Rome, which shows an elaborate hairdo with the hair swept up high over her forehead in tight curls. The coiffeur is a wig which can be removed from the head and replaced with a wig of another style.
- 117 C.E. The Roman emperor Hadrian who  
–138 C.E. ruled during these years prefers Greek style, and is shown wearing a garment that looks very similar to the Greek *himation*, or overcloak.
- 284 C.E. The emperor Diocletian institutes  
–305 C.E. changes to the imperial office, and among other reforms, introduces elaborate, bejeweled costume for the imperial court.
- 324 C.E. The emperor Constantine designs the imperial insignia as a jeweled diadem, that is a cloth band encrusted with pearls tied around the head with a knot at the back and the ends dangling down.
- 547 C.E. The Church of San Vitale in Ravenna (Italy) with mosaics showing Justinian (emperor 527–565 C.E.) and Theodora (empress 527–548 C.E.) is dedicated. The mosaics give a vivid portrayal of the fashion of the imperial court in the sixth century, at a time when the Byzantine court was placing more emphasis on court ceremonial.

## OVERVIEW of Fashion

**THE CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN.** In the twenty-first century, fashions in clothing and hairstyles are temporary trends largely influenced by the media and fashion designers. Fashions can change quickly—usually with the introduction of seasonal clothing lines by designers—and make use of a variety of natural and synthetic fabrics. The presence of fashion trends, however, does not negate the reality that fashion can also be a highly individualized expression, with each person deciding on a personal level what clothes to wear. This modern concept of fashion stands in stark contrast to fashion in the world of the Greeks and Romans where there was little change in clothing trends, no fashion designers, and only a few fabrics available for use. Furthermore, clothing functioned as a societal tool to highlight the rigorous social and gender classifications of these ancient societies. One's clothing denoted a particular status in life rather than an expression of individuality; for example, women commonly dressed according to their marital status, with young girls donning outfits which differed from the clothing of married women. Even hairstyles provided tell-tale clues as to whether a woman was married or not, and the scandalous behavior of an adulteress or prostitute earned her an outfit that branded her as surely as Hester Prynne's scarlet letter 'A' in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* in nineteenth-century America. Men were no less exempt from such blatant labels with generals, politicians, soldiers, young boys, and slaves each wearing a distinctive outfit that marked their station.

**FABRICS.** Wool and linen were the primary fabrics from as far back as the Minoan/Mycenaean period; cotton also existed, though it did not come into common use until the Roman period. Hemp also was used for fabric in Thrace, in modern Bulgaria and north-east Greece, but in the rest of the Greco-Roman world, hemp was valued more for rope than for fabric. Greece had a silk industry of its own based on the island of Cos, which used fibers unravelled from the cocoons of a local moth,

the *Pachypassa otus*. Its output was small, however, and probably inferior to silk from China, a luxury fabric that only the wealthy could afford. Greeks and Romans valued silk so highly that they sometimes unraveled silk cloth and re-wove it with linen thread so as to stretch its use. In the sixth century C.E. the Byzantine Empire under the emperor Justinian (527–565 C.E.) acquired silkworm eggs, which were smuggled out of China, and founded its own silk industry. Greeks and Romans also made use of leather and fur. Agamemnon, legendary leader of the Greek coalition in the Trojan War, was said to wear a lion's skin, and his brother Menelaus had a leopard's skin, which presumably would have been an import from Egypt. The vast majority of Greeks and Romans, however, had clothing made of wool and linen.

**ATHLETIC APPAREL—OR THE LACK OF IT.** In the heat of summer, Greek men probably wore as little as decency permitted, for unlike the civilizations of the Near East, Greek culture seems to have gloried in naked flesh. In gymnasiums, men stripped naked to exercise and wrestle (the very word *gymnos* means “nude” in Greek). In Sparta, a major city in Greece, the women likewise trained in the nude. Nudity had not always been in style; in early Greece, before the seventh century B.C.E., men wore loincloths, but legend has it that the style changed after a runner named Orsippos of Megara won his race at the Olympic Games after pulling off his loincloth in mid-race. Thereafter athletes competed naked at the Olympic Games and the practice spread to the rest of Greece.

**STANDARD APPAREL IN GREECE AND ROME.** The standard types of garments, both in Greece and Rome, had one characteristic in common: they required a minimum of sewing. While the Greeks' neighbors in Asia Minor, the Phrygians, were famous for their embroidery—particularly fine embroidery with gold thread—the Greeks themselves apparently did not emulate this specialized needlework. The Greek needle was much less refined than the modern needle; in fact, the Greek word for “needle”—*raphis*—is found infrequently in Greek writings, suggesting that needlework played a poor second to weaving among the domestic accomplishments of Greek women. The Greeks and Romans had buttons and ties, and they had safety pins called *peronai* in Greek and *fibulae* in Latin, and these sometimes took the form of elaborate brooches. The two common types of garment in Greece—the *chiton* (tunic) and the *himation* (cloak)—were both rectangular pieces of cloth which were draped over the body. The same was true of the Roman *toga*. The original meaning of the word “toga” seems to have been “coverlet,” and in early Rome it was

simply a piece of woolen homespun cloth, worn during the day to keep the wearer warm, and taken off and used as a light blanket at night. The shape of the toga is a matter of dispute; some ancient authors called it a semi-circular piece of cloth, but it was probably closer to a semi-ellipse than a true semi-circle. It was originally a humble peasant dress, but it became the standard costume of a Roman citizen, and a number of variations developed. For instance, one style which the Romans borrowed from the Etruscans, neighbors they conquered in the third century B.C.E., was the short toga, decorated with rich embroidery and dyed purple or a multi-colored combination of purple, white, and scarlet. It was worn by the members of the ancient priestly college in Rome known as the *Salii*, the leaping priests of Mars, who celebrated the festivals of Mars in March and October with ritual dances. The costume of a Roman priest offering sacrifice to the gods was simply a toga with a cowl that covered the head. (Sacrifices performed *Romano ritu*, in the Roman fashion, required the head to be covered—*capite velato*—whereas those performed *Graeco ritu*, in the Greek fashion, left the head uncovered.) Roman senators and members of municipal councils in the cities of the empire wore togas when they transacted state business, and as long as there were municipal councils in the Roman Empire, there were still occasions when men wore togas. Dress in Rome denoted status. The toga with a broad purple stripe signaled that the wearer was a senator, whereas the narrow purple stripe showed that the wearer belonged to the class below the senatorial class known as the *equites*. This group began as Rome's equestrian order in the early days of the empire, from which came the Roman cavalry, but later it became simply a census group. For a married woman the proper costume was a *stola*—a shawl with which she could cover her head when she went outdoors, where it was improper to be seen with head uncovered. Persons inappropriately dressed would encounter the scorn of society and sometimes even legal penalties.

**MILITARY DRESS.** Military dress was practical and evolved as fighting styles changed from one-on-one battles to structured military formations. The warrior of ancient Greece, for example, was generally a foot soldier who fought as an individual for his own glory; the horsehair crest he wore on his helmet was a challenge to his enemy. This type of warrior gave way to the *hoplite*, a heavily armed infantryman with helmet, breastplate, greaves (which protected the lower legs), and a triangular metal plate called a *mitra* to protect his groin. The hoplite fought in a battle formation, eight rows deep, and standing foot-to-foot, with their round shields on the left arms and holding their spears in their right hands.

In camp, a hoplite wore a military cloak; the cloaks worn by the Spartan hoplites were red, the color of blood. The Roman soldier was also equipped for battle with helmet, chain mail (later replaced by a breastplate), an army boot called a *caliga* for his feet (hence the childhood nickname of the emperor Gaius, “Caligula” or “little boot”), and a cloak called a *sagum* which left his arms bare. The *sagum* was a practical garment; it was recommended for farm laborers in inclement weather by a Roman writer on agriculture named Columella. The Roman Army had workshops for arms and armor, and sometimes these state-owned and operated factories produced clothing for the troops as well.

**ORNAMENTS AND COSMETICS.** Although their clothing fashions changed little, the Greeks and Romans had a sense of style. The market for perfumes was lively, and hairstyles differed from place to place. Spartan hoplites wore their hair long and they groomed it carefully. Elsewhere, Greek men wore their hair short after reaching adulthood. After the time of Alexander the Great, who died in 323 B.C.E., Greek men shaved off their beards, and the fashion took hold in Rome in the third century B.C.E. Beards came back into style with the emperor Hadrian (117–135 C.E.). Lucius Verus, who was co-emperor briefly with Marcus Aurelius, was said to have used gold dust to give his beard a fashionable yellow sheen. The hairstyles of Roman women were often elaborate, and dyes were used to get the fashionable blonde color. Wigs hid bald heads or thinning hair, and a wig with hair supplied by a German woman from across the Rhine frontier was a safer way of becoming a blonde than using a strong dye which could damage the hair.

**CHANGES IN LATE ANTIQUITY.** As the empire moved from a period of invasions, plague, and short-lived emperors in the third century C.E. into the more stable fourth century, fashions, at least in the upper classes, grew more elaborate. By the end of the fourth century, Chinese silk became all the rage among the elite. The imperial court loved jewels, particularly pearls. Clothing marked status. The long embroidered robes of noblemen and noble ladies fitted their station in life, while the middle class was satisfied with costumes only slightly simpler. Priests of the Christian Church were distinguished by their vestments, typically adaptations of Roman garments. The robes of the nobles and the vestments of the priests were a far cry from the costume of the peasant who wore a type of *sagum* or a *cucullus*—a cape with a cowl to protect the head—or the barbarians, who wore trousers. Yet the toga retained its cachet as the correct dress of a *togatus*, or a Roman citizen. Archaeologists have found a sculptor's yard near Rome that was

still producing statues in the fourth century C.E. which were impeccably clad in togas, with sockets to attach the interchangeable portrait heads. The presence of such statues does not mean there was continued widespread use of the toga in this period; the Roman rank and file had long since abandoned the toga for more practical fashions, many borrowed from the so-called barbarian world.

## TOPICS *in Fashion*

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### FASHION IN THE MINOAN PERIOD

**EVIDENCE.** The history of Greek fashion extends all the way back to the Bronze Age to the Minoan culture on the island of Crete off the Greek mainland. Evidence for the clothing worn in Minoan Crete comes mainly from the frescoes that decorated the walls of the palaces, and from Minoan statuettes found on the island. The clothes and fabrics of this time period have long since disintegrated with time, although at the site of Mochlos in northeast Crete, a find of linen has been reported from a tomb dating to the Pre-Palatial Period (3500–1900 B.C.E.). It was probably an import from Egypt, but it does show that linen was known and used on Crete before the Minoan civilization burst upon the stage of history at the start of the second millennium B.C.E. Egypt also provides evidence for Minoan fashion. At Thebes, the capital of Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty, wall paintings from five tombs of high-ranking officials dating to the early years of the dynasty show foreigners from the Aegean area bringing tribute to the pharaoh. One of these tombs, dating to the mid-fifteenth century B.C.E. within the Neopalatial or “New Palace” period on Crete (1700–1450 B.C.E.), belonged to Rekhmire, a vizier (high executive officer) of the pharaoh Thutmose III, and in it, these Aegean people are labeled “Princes of the Land of Keftiu,” that is, Crete. The artists who did these paintings of the envoys from Crete clearly made an effort to show their costumes accurately.

**MEN’S CLOTHING.** The basic garment for men was a loincloth tucked around the waist and held in place by a belt or girdle. The styles of loincloth varied with place and time; some styles seem to have been in fashion in particular regions. The loincloth might be worn as a kilt, hanging freely from the waist, or it might be tucked in under the groin, making it into something like a pair of shorts. In fact, by sewing the flaps of the loincloth, front

and back, together under the groin, it evolves into a pair of shorts. This is a style found at Mycenae where a bronze dagger has been unearthed portraying a lion hunt on its blade, inlaid in gold. The scene shows men wearing shorts fastened under the groin. Above the waist, men normally wore nothing, as in Egypt. When cooler weather necessitated additional covering for warmth, there were furs and the skins of wild animals which could be worn as cloaks.

**KILTS AND CODPIECES.** A codpiece is defined as a flap appended to the front of tight breeches worn by men in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but the term serves to describe a feature of men’s dress in Minoan Crete. In early representations it is shown as a straight, narrow flap sometimes worn with a belt alone and no loincloth under it. In the Neo-Palatial Period (1700–1450 B.C.E.), it is commonly shown as a wide flap worn over a short, stiff kilt which was slit at the sides to expose the thighs and upturned at the back rather like a duck’s tail. After 1500 B.C.E., however, the codpiece apparently went out of fashion to be replaced by long kilts, held up by a girdle or, as time went on, with a wide belt; sometimes a large, beaded tassel replaced the codpiece. The paintings of the “Keftiu” from the tomb of Rekhmire at Egyptian Thebes provide evidence for the change in style. The paintings show Cretans (inhabitants of the island of Crete) wearing long kilts without codpieces, but recent cleanings of these paintings revealed that the costume of the Cretans had been altered not long after the pictures were originally painted. The Cretans as they were originally depicted had short stiff kilts with codpieces. Scholars presume that the Egyptians altered the paintings after they became aware that fashions in Crete had changed to bring the costumes up-to-date.

**WOMEN’S CLOTHING.** In the Protopalatial Period (1900–1700 B.C.E.), women wore long skirts with girdles circling the waist twice and tied, with their ends hanging down in front. Bodices left the breasts bare and the costumes had collars which rose to a high peak at the back of the neck. In the early Protopalatial period women wore what look like cloaks made from a semi-circular swatch of what was probably woolen cloth, though scholars have suggested it might be leather. A sash was put around the waist and knotted in front. Holes were cut for the arms, the breasts were bare and at the back of the neck was a high collar. As time went on, skirts became more elaborate. In paintings, they are often shown with flounces, and when women appear in court ceremonies, their skirts display intricate woven patterns that required skillful weaving. Minoan women, if they could afford it, clearly gave a great deal of care to

their wardrobes. One feature of the dress of Minoan women from the Neopalatial period (1700–1450 B.C.E.) is an elaborate belt—sometimes padded, sometimes apparently made of metal—which covers the midriff where the bodice joins the skirt. There is also evidence for a patterned apron falling from the belt not only at the front but at the back as well. It looks, in fact, as if it was modeled on the loincloth worn by the men. In the last period of the Minoan civilization on Crete (after 1450 B.C.E.), and also in the Mycenaean civilization on the mainland which was heavily influenced by Minoan style, pictures show women wearing flounced floor-length skirts woven in elaborate patterns, and apparently cut so that the bottom of the skirt dips in the center, both in front and rear. It is not entirely clear if these representations accurately depict the clothing; it has been suggested that the artists who painted women wearing skirts of this sort were merely trying to show divided skirts, or alternatively that this was their way of portraying the movement of long skirts as women walked. There is no doubt, however, that Cretan women who took part in the life in the palaces wore elaborately woven costumes in bright colors—and no doubt they were expensive. Yet only a small percentage of women could have afforded court dress and it is difficult to determine what ordinary women wore since they were not typically the subjects of palace frescoes. There is, however, an ivory seal found at Knossos that shows a girl wearing a jumper hanging loosely without a belt from the shoulders to the knees. The skirt is short, but still appears to have stylish flounces. The seal is under some suspicion as a forgery, but if it is genuine it is evidence for short skirts among the ordinary women of Minoan Crete.

**FOOTWEAR AND CAPS.** The Minoans went barefoot in religious ceremonies and probably in their private houses, but when footwear was necessary, they had boots and sandals. The Greek word for “sandal” (*sandalon*) is of pre-Greek origin and may go back to Minoan times, before Greek-speakers reached Crete. Boots and sandals are often shown with upturned toes. As for headgear, the common type was a wide, flat cap for men, whereas women, at least in the Proto-Palatial period (before 1700 B.C.E.), are shown with high pointed hats like Phrygian caps which had high peaks folded over so that the peak pointed frontwards. After this period, there is evidence of a great variety of headgear for women, but much of this evidence comes from paintings showing religious ceremonies. It is a matter of conjecture whether women wore similar headgear in secular settings.

**JEWELRY.** Both men and women wore a variety of jewelry that included armlets, bracelets on the wrists,



Minoan woman or goddess called La Parisienne: fragment of a fresco from palace at Knossos, Crete. In the Heraklion Museum, Crete. © ROGER WOOD/CORBIS.

necklaces, anklets, and a great variety of earrings, using gold, silver, copper, bronze, and semi-precious stones. The jewelers were remarkably skillful. They had the technical expertise to make filigree work which requires hard soldering of small gold or silver wires. They also produced enormously delicate granulated work where minute grains of gold are soldered to a gold or silver backing. They had mastered the technique of inlaying with stones or paste, and making repoussé work, where a design is embossed on a thin sheet of metal by pressure from behind, thus producing the design in relief on one side of the sheet and the same design beaten up from the underside on the other. French excavators discovered one of the most remarkable examples of the Minoan jewelers' craft at the tomb at Mallia on the northern coast of Crete and now in the Heraklion Museum. It is a pendant in the form of a bee, designed and executed with great skill.

**FABRICS.** As in classical Greece, the staple fabric in Minoan Crete was wool. A large portion of the written

tablets found at Knossos record flocks of sheep, and they may have been kept for their wool. Minoans also used linen; they probably first imported it from Egypt, but may have produced their own linen at a later time. Mycenaean Greece, which borrowed its style from Minoan Crete, definitely produced linen, for the written texts from Pylos in southwest Greece, dating to about 1200 B.C.E., refer to growing flax in the region. Minoans wove fabric on upright looms of the type used in later Greece, and though no loom has survived—they were made of wood and all have long since rotted away—at one Minoan house at Ayia Varvara on Crete, a stone with two rectangular holes cut into it was found in the women's quarters; archaeologists suspect it may have held the upright posts of a loom. Primitive though these vertical looms seem to be, a look at the clothing of Minoan women shows that they could produce intricate designs.

**DYES.** Linen is difficult to dye, and so linen garments often were left white. Wool, however, takes pigments well, and vegetable dyes were commonly used to tint it. Minoans almost certainly imported the dried leaves of the henna plant from Egypt to make red dye, and the addition of natron (sodium carbonate)—another product from Egypt—turned the henna dye yellow. Alkanet, a deep red dye made from the roots of a variety of plants, was another way to color fabrics, as was a purple dye made from the shellfish known as the murex; heaps of crushed murex shells have been found at coastal sites on eastern Crete like Palaikastro and are good evidence of purple dye manufacture there in the Proto-Palatial and Neo-Palatial Periods.

**PERFUMES.** There is good documentary evidence for a perfume industry on Crete and on mainland Greece in the Bronze Age, prior to 1100 B.C.E. The palace at Pylos on the southwest coast of mainland Greece overlooking the Bay of Navarino, which was destroyed by fire suddenly about 1200 B.C.E., has yielded a cache of clay tablets written in “Linear B” script, which is an early form of Greek, and they give details about perfume manufacture carried on under the direction of the palace bureaucracy. “Linear B” is a label given this script by modern archaeologists to distinguish it from “Linear A” which is found on Crete and is not Greek. The Pylos tablets give the names of four perfume makers employed by the palace to make perfume. There is also evidence for perfume manufacture from Knossos on Crete and Mycenae on the mainland. Ancient peoples of this area made perfume by transferring scent to oil, most commonly olive oil. Although olive oil does not take a scent well, the boiling of aromatic leaves and heavy-scented flowers with the oil resulted in an acceptable result for

the upper classes in the Minoan and Mycenaean world. It is likely that both men and women made use of perfumes.

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## GARMENTS IN CLASSICAL GREECE

**PROBLEMS WITH TERMS.** The terms for Greek clothing types can be confusing, all the more so because the Greeks themselves sometimes used them carelessly. The carelessness is understandable, for every piece of clothing in ancient Greece, whether for men or women, consisted of a rectangle of cloth. The difference was in the size of the cloth and how it was draped over the body. To add to the confusion, Greek styles were adopted by the Romans. Rome's national costume was the toga, but in the third century B.C.E. Rome extended her rule to the Greek cities in what was called “Magna Graecia” (Great Greece) in southern Italy, and the more that the Romans learned of Greek culture, including fashion, the more they were fascinated by it. The Roman Publius Scipio Africanus, who was responsible for the defeat of Hannibal at the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C.E., was among the Roman leaders who adopted Greek fashion over the Roman toga. The confusion arises from the fact that the Romans adapted Greek fashion to their own, so it is not always easy to find exact Greek equivalents for Roman costumes. The toga, too, seems to have started its long history simply as a rectangular piece of cloth—the shape it had when it came off the loom.

**DORIANS VERSUS IONIANS.** The Dorians were Greeks who migrated into the Peloponnesos—that is, the area of Greece south of the Isthmus of Corinth—after 1150 B.C.E. when the Mycenaean civilization was foundering, and they founded a number of states, notably Sparta in southeast Greece, and Argos to the north of it. The Dorians favored physical fitness and simplicity in their everyday life, and Dorian fashions reflected

it. The Spartans in particular were famous for their austerity. The Dorians liked plain fashions that allowed the body free movement. The Greeks whom the Dorians displaced fled to Athens and from there, they set out for the western coastline of modern Turkey and the offshore islands, where they founded twelve cities which grew and prospered. This was Ionian Greece: twelve cities joined together in a loosely organized league, and though there were more Greek foundations on the coastline of Turkey and the islands than the twelve Ionian cities, it was Ionia that set the style. Ionian fashions reflected the affluent, comfortable, and luxurious life which the Ionians enjoyed, and though the Ionian cities lost their independence by the mid-sixth century B.C.E., they continued to thrive. The types of costume worn by both the Dorians and the Ionians were the same, but whereas the Dorians preferred simple styling and lack of embellishment, the Ionians favored more elaborate fashions and fine fabrics. In the fifth century B.C.E., however, the Ionian cities fell under the domination of Athens and they lost their preeminence as style setters.

**GREEK CLOTHING TERMS.** The basic item of clothing was the *chiton*, which was a tunic. If it was short, it might be called a *chitoniskos*, which means a “little tunic,” and if it lacked sleeves, which was generally the case, it was called an *exomis*, which means a “sleeveless garment.” There were some tunics with sleeves, which Romans with a conservative mindset considered a mark of oriental luxury, though in fact, Rome’s greatest general and politician, Julius Caesar, wore one. The variety of terms becomes more confusing with the Dorian *chiton* which is, in fact, a *peplos* (a simple rectangle of cloth folded and hung from the shoulders). The epic poem *Iliad*, written by the Greek poet Homer, described the heroes who fought at Troy as wearing a cloak over the tunic which was called a *chlaina*, or sometimes a *pharos*; strictly speaking, they were not quite the same, for the *pharos* was a larger garment. In fact, Homer used the word *pharos* for any large piece of cloth, including a ship’s sail or a funeral shroud. The *chlaina* seems to have been a general term for any heavy woolen cloak worn in cold weather. In the classical period, the word usually refers to the cloak called the *himation*, an outer garment worn by both men and women. The Romans used the Latin word *pallium* for *himation*, and regarded it as a peculiarly Greek costume, to such a degree that comedies staged in Roman theaters that were adapted from Greek plays were called *fabulae palliatae*—scenarios played in Greek dress. Another popular cloak was the *chlamys*. It was an oblong swatch of cloth that made almost a perfect square when it was doubled. The *peplos*, also called



A man wearing a pallium. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

the Dorian *chiton*, was a rectangle of cloth folded over at the top and then doubled and draped over the body, and held in place with safety pins or brooches at the shoulders. The overfold or *apotygma* at the top of the garment could hang down as far as the waist. It was probably the earliest Greek dress for women, and it was capable of many variations.

**THE CHITON.** The Greek word *chiton* translates as *tunica* in Latin, from which the English word “tunic” is derived. It was a shirt worn directly over the body, sometimes as an undergarment. There is evidence of prototypes in the Minoan period, but it is in the sub-Mycenaean period (after 1200 B.C.E.), about the same time as the *perone* or safety pin appears in Greece, that men began wearing a short, sleeveless tunic recognizable as the *chiton* worn by the warriors in Homer’s *Iliad*. The word *chiton* has Eastern origins, for it is related to a Semitic word that refers to linen cloth; this evidence suggests that the earliest chitons were linen garments, though later they are often woolen. Chitons





Man wearing a short chiton. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.



Woman wearing a long chiton. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

came in a great variety of styles. Young men and those regularly involved in physical activity preferred a short chiton which left the legs bare. If the skirt of the chiton was too long, the wearer pulled it up and let it hang over his belt in a fold known as a *kolpos*. A warrior wore a chiton as an undergarment beneath the cuirass (a piece of armor that protected his torso). A passage in *Iliad* illustrates the use of a chiton in a description of how the warrior goddess Athena put on her armor: first she took off her *peplos*, which was a woman's dress, and pulled on a chiton as an undergarment between her cuirass and her skin. Those individuals who are not as active, such as older men, men of high rank, and professional musicians, might wear a chiton long, reaching to the ankles, and over it they would wear a cloak such as the *chlaina* or the *pharos*. Both the short and the long chiton were prevalent all over the ancient Greek world.

**THE IONIAN CHITON.** About 600 B.C.E., the end of what art historians call the "Early Archaic Period," draped statues of women wearing chitons that reach the

feet, leaving only the toes bare, began to appear. There are good early examples from Ionia, where several seated statues have been found lining the Sacred Way to the temple of Apollo at Didyma. The so-called *kore*-statues of young girls (in Greek: *korai*) found in Athens in the debris from the Persian sack of the Acropolis in 480 B.C.E. also provide models of the chitons worn by women in the Middle and Late Archaic periods. Made of fine linen, they fell in regular folds to the feet, and over them a woman would wear a shawl or a cloak like the *himation* or the *chlaina*. The evidence of the sculpture suggests that the Ionian chiton came into style in Athens about 600 B.C.E., replacing the *peplos* or Dorian chiton, as it was sometimes called. The historian Herodotus, writing in the second half of the fifth century B.C.E., explained the replacement of the *peplos* in Athens as the result of a violent incident, the accuracy of which cannot be verified. According to Herodotus, in the early seventh century B.C.E. the Athenians made an attack on the island of Aegina in the Saronic Gulf. It failed, and only one survivor of the Athenian expeditionary force re-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE ADOPTION OF THE IONIAN CHITON**

**INTRODUCTION:** Towards the end of the seventh century B.C.E. the ornate Ionian *chiton* came into fashion among Athenian women. Unlike the *peplos* or Dorian *chiton*, as it was sometimes called, the Ionian *chiton* did not need safety pins. According to Athenian tradition, the fashion changed following a gruesome incident involving the lone survivor of a disastrous Athenian military expedition against Athens' bitter rival, Aegina. When the man returned to Athens with the bad news, the widows of the lost soldiers killed him with the weapons most readily accessible to them: the pins in their clothing. Thereafter, the fashion for Athenian women changed to a style that did not require pins. The incident was reported by the historian Herodotus writing in the second half of the fifth century B.C.E.

The Argives and Aeginetans agree in this account, and the Athenians, too, admit that only one of their men returned to Attica alive: the only point of dispute is the occasion of his escape, the Argives saying that he got away after they had destroyed the rest of the Athenian force, the Athenians claiming that the whole thing was an act of God. Even the sole survivor soon came to a bad end; for when he reached Athens with a report of the disaster, the wives of the other men who had gone with him

to Aegina, in grief and anger that he alone should have escaped, crowded round him and thrust the brooches, which they used for fastening their dresses, into his flesh, each one, as she struck, asking him where her husband was. So he perished, and the Athenians were more horrified at his fate than at the defeat of their troops in Aegina. The only way they could punish their women for the dreadful thing they had done was to make them adopt Ionian dress; previously Athenian women had worn Dorian dress, very similar to the fashion in Corinth; now they were made to change to linen tunics to prevent them from wearing brooches. Actually this kind of dress is not originally Ionian, but Carian, for in ancient times all the women in Greece wore the costume now known as Dorian. But the Argives and Aeginetans passed a law that in both their countries brooch-pins should be made half as long again as they used to be, and that brooches should be the principal things offered by women in the shrines of these two deities; also, nothing from Attica was to be taken to the temple, not even pottery, and thenceforward only drinking vessels made in the country should be used. From that time to the present day the women of Argos and Aegina have worn brooches with longer pins than in the past—all because of the quarrel with Athens.

**SOURCE:** Herodotus, *Histories*. Rev. ed. Trans. Aubrey de Sélin-court (London: Penguin Books, 1972): 309–310.

turned to Athens. Upon his return, the widows of the men lost at Aegina mobbed him and stabbed him with the safety pins from their Dorian chitons in grief and anger that he alone should have survived. The Athenians were so shocked by this murder that they passed a law forbidding women to wear the Dorian chitons which were fastened at the shoulders with safety pins, and instead ruled that they should wear the Ionian chiton, which was sewn and did not use the safety pins that could become lethal weapons. The Aeginetans continued to use safety pins, however, as did the Argives who had helped the Aeginetans defeat the Athenians; in fact, Herodotus claimed that they adopted safety pins with even longer shafts which were more lethal.

**REACTION AGAINST DORIAN DRESS.** Even if the incident really happened, it was probably not a singular event that prompted the change to Ionian style for women's clothing. The Aeginetans and the Argives were both Dorians, speaking the Dorian dialect of Greek, whereas the Athenians were Ionians and by adopting the fashions of the Ionian Greeks in Asia Minor whose cities were flourishing at this time, the women were making a

political statement. Later, when Ionia was conquered by Persia after 546 B.C.E., the Athenians tended to look down on the Ionians because they were no longer free men and their sumptuous fashions seemed to signal a willingness to be subjects of the Persian king; in the Greek mind, anything Persian was associated with luxury and opulent living. But at the beginning of the seventh century B.C.E., Ionia was the cultural leader of Greece. Men in Athens wore Ionian chitons as well, and Thucydides, a younger contemporary of Herodotus, remarks that the older Athenians of his day still wore them. But the Persian Wars in the first quarter of the fifth century B.C.E. ushered in a taste for simpler fashions in Athens; in Dorian Greece, the Dorian chiton had never gone out of style. In the new postwar world, the elaborate Ionian chiton was considered a mark of oriental luxury and soft living. It suggested the Persian way of life.

**FASHIONS IN CHITONS.** The *peplos* came into style again in Athens after the Persian Wars, but it did not displace the chiton. In fact, chiton and peplos existed side by side throughout the fifth century B.C.E., borrowing features from each other. The *kandys*, a chiton



Man wearing a himation. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.



Woman wearing a himation. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

with long sleeves worn over longer chiton became fashionable for free women during the century. Sleeves were considered exotic; the Persians wore them, and in the last quarter of the fifth century, fashionable Athenians developed a taste for styles with a touch of Persian opulence to them. Also during the same century there are examples of a short tunic reaching to the waist that is worn over the chiton. It is probably what was called the *chitoniskos*, or “little chiton,” and it seems to have been made from a heavier fabric than the chiton itself and is often richly decorated. Men in the classical period abandoned the Ionian chiton, as Thucydides pointed out, but it continued to be used by priests, charioteers, singers, musicians, and actors. The short, sleeveless chiton remained in style for physically active men. For ceremonial occasions, however, the *himation* became the costume of choice.

**THE HIMATION.** The *himation* was an essential outer garment for both women and men. It was simply an oblong woolen shawl of generous dimensions. There were various ways of draping it around the body. A

woman, for instance, might drape it under the right arm and pin or tie it at the left shoulder. In colder weather she could drape her upper body with it and draw it over the head like a cowl. Sometimes, however, she used a separate piece of cloth to cover her head, with one end falling down over the *himation*. A man threw his *himation* around his body from left to right, confining his arms; in fact, it was the mark of a gentleman not to extend an arm outside his himation. Wearing one’s himation with grace was a mark of social standing in the community and it cannot always have been an easy achievement, for the himation was generally worn without fasteners like buttons or safety pins, and the wearer must have sometimes used his hands that were hidden by his himation to hold it in place. It was far too awkward a garment for a working man, who generally wore a chiton without sleeves called an *exomis*. In fact, wearing a himation signaled that the wearer did not have to do physical labor. Politicians and philosophers liked it, and in portrait sculpture, it had some of the same connotations as the Roman toga, which it somewhat re-

sembled. It showed that the wearer was not a member of the common people, and it was a fine garment to wear when delivering a lecture or a public speech.

**THE PEPLOS.** The peplos was a woman's costume consisting of an oblong swatch of woolen cloth. The cloth was first folded horizontally so that the top quarter was turned back, and then it was doubled by folding it from top to bottom. What resulted was a piece of cloth doubled over to form a square, with an overfold called an *apotygma* in Greek on the upper edge. It sheathed the body of the wearer, and was fastened at each shoulder by safety pins or buttons so that it hung free. On the right side, the peplos hung open, and one might catch glimpses of the woman's body as she moved. Young women in the Greek city of Sparta liked this style, but women elsewhere usually wore a belt or girdle at the waist to keep the side of the peplos closed and thereby preserve the wearer's modesty. The open side of the peplos might also be pinned together; in Homer's *Odyssey*, one of the suitors trying to win the favor of Penelope, Odysseus' wife, presented her with a peplos that had twelve gold pins. Since it needed only two pins, or at best four, to fasten it at the shoulders, presumably the rest were used to pin up the open side.

**THE ORIGIN OF THE PEPLOS.** The peplos was not a Mycenaean costume, and probably it arrived in Greece about the same time as the safety pin—that is, in the sub-Mycenaean period (after 1200 B.C.E.), after the citadels of the Mycenaean civilization had fallen and the great palaces destroyed. The Dorian newcomers may have brought the peplos with them, for they migrated into Greece in the sub-Mycenaean period, and so the name “Dorian chiton” which was sometimes applied to the peplos, may be justified. It was, however, worn in early Athens also until the end of the Early Archaic Period, about 600 B.C.E., when women switched to the Ionian chiton. With the reaction in Athens against frills and frippery after the Persian War, the peplos came back into fashion. In Sparta and the rest of Dorian Greece, the Ionian chiton never displaced the peplos. As the Greek language evolved, the word “peplos” acquired a wider meaning and applied to a variety of costumes. There was, however, one instance where the word “peplos” continued to mean a simple, old-fashioned piece of woolen cloth folded to form a woman's dress. Every four years, at the Great Panathenaea festival in Athens, the women of the city presented the goddess Athena with a new robe that they had woven. They used it to dress the ancient wooden statue of Athena *Polias*—that is, Athena, Guardian of the City—the most sacred cult statue in Athens, which was kept in the temple known



Woman wearing a peplos. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

as the Erechtheion. The robe was a peplos and the pattern did not change.

**PEPLOS TYPES.** Styles change with time and the peplos was no exception. From the classical period of the fifth century B.C.E. on, we must distinguish between the peplos worn without an undergarment, known as the *peplos endyma*, and the peplos worn over a chiton, the *peplos epiblema*. The girdle in early examples of the peplos simply encircled the waist, but with the skirt above it tucked up so as to form a loose fold. The *apotygma*, or overfold, which at first was short, grew in length until it reached the hips. In statues and relief sculptures of the fourth century B.C.E., the overfold is sometimes shown falling freely, but more often as time went on it was held in place by the girdle. The *peplos epiblema* that was worn over a chiton developed a number of variations. Sometimes the skirt came down to the ankles and only a glimpse of the chiton underneath can be seen at the bottom. Sometimes the peplos came down no further than the knees, and the chiton was shown covering the lower legs. Some



A man wearing a chlamys and on his head, the hat known as a causia. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

statuettes of Athena show her wearing a peplos with an overfold that has pleats of unequal length, and sometimes the peplos is shown pinned only at the right shoulder with the overfold pinned along the right arm to form a kind of short sleeve. It is hard to distinguish this kind of peplos from the Ionian himation. In fact, the Greek authors themselves used the terms for their clothes more indiscriminately as we move into the fourth century B.C.E.

**THE CHLAMYS.** The *chlamys* was a garment of non-Greek people in northern Greece, the Thessalians and the Macedonians. In fact, the chlamys, along with the *petasos* or *causia* (a hat with a brim), was the national costume of Macedonia. The distinctive items of costume worn by foreigners from the north when they are depicted on Greek monuments were the chlamys, the causia, the *alopekis* (a fox-skin cap), and the *embades* (boots that came part way up the calf of the leg). A Macedonian nobleman signaled his standing by wearing a purple chlamys and causia, and Alexander the Great, the king of Macedonia who conquered the Persian Empire, made the

chlamys his customary dress. The chlamys was a swatch of cloth that was more or less rectangular with three straight sides and the fourth side concave. It was worn by putting it around the shoulders, straight edge up, and fastening it at the base of the neck, so that its folds fell down as far as the knees. The chlamys might also be fastened at the rear, leaving the wearer's back and buttocks bare. The two ends of the concave side formed points hanging down on either side, and were often compared to wings. Upon its introduction into Greece, it became the usual costume for horsemen. It appears on the Panathenaic frieze from the Parthenon in Athens, where young *ephebes* (youths undergoing their military training) are shown wearing it as they gallop in the wake of the procession or prepare to mount their horses. In the Greek city of Sparta, the chlamys became the costume of choice for the Spartiates, the military elite that ruled Laconia. It was not adopted by the Romans, but the Romans had a number of military cloaks which were similar, such as the *paludamentum*, the *abolla*, and the *sagum*. The *trabea* worn by the members of the equestrian order in Rome when they paraded on horseback in honor of Castor and Pollux seems to have been a similar garment. The chlamys, however, lasted into the Byzantine period. In the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna (Italy) there is a mosaic of the empress Theodora (527–548 C.E.) who is shown wearing a chlamys as part of her imperial regalia.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: Greek Architecture*

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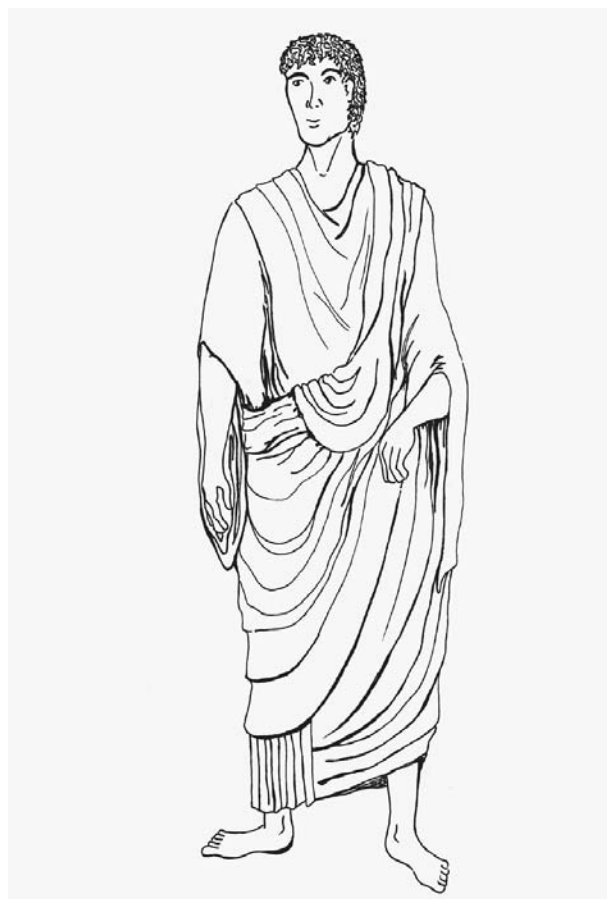
#### THE TOGA

**NATIONAL COSTUME OF ROME.** The toga was the national costume of the Romans. The Roman people

were the *gens togata*—the “people that wear the toga.” In his epic poem, the *Aeneid* the Roman poet Vergil used the term with pride to refer to the *populus Romanus*, that is, the “Roman People.” Aliens—persons who were not Roman citizens—and Roman exiles were forbidden to wear it. It seems, however, that the law which forbade non-Romans to wear the toga was not universally enforced, for the provinces of Cisalpine Gaul and Transalpine Gaul were called, unofficially, *Gallia togata*—that is, “Gaul where the toga is worn”—which indicates that Romanized provincials sometimes wore the toga even before they received the citizenship. There was a tradition that the toga came to Rome from Etruria, the region of modern Tuscany in Italy which was inhabited by people the Romans called Etruscans and the Greeks *Tyrrhenoi*, who seem to have been immigrants from Asia Minor around 1000 B.C.E. Their underground tombs were decorated with wall paintings which show men wearing a short toga, though it is by no means the same as the Roman version of the same garment. The Roman toga probably began as a simple piece of woolen cloth which was worn with no undergarment and fastened in place with a safety pin, called in Latin a *fibula*. The name comes from the Latin verb, *tegere*, which means “to cover.” The toga was a coverlet, used to cover a person’s body by day and his or her bed at night. In the early period, women wore it as well as men. The Roman men even wore it to battle in the early days of Rome.

**THE CINCTUS GABINUS.** In some rituals which were connected with warfare—such as opening the Gates of Janus, which the Romans threw open whenever they embarked on a war—they girded up their togas in what was called the *cinctus Gabinus*. They took the corners of their togas, threw them over the left shoulder, wound it under the right arm and around the chest, thus making their togas into garments that did not impede their movement. The origin of this curious custom was explained by the story of the ancient enmity between Rome and the town of Gabii, which dated back to the time before the last Roman king was expelled in 510 B.C.E. The Romans used the *cinctus Gabinus* when they fought Gabii. The 193 centuries, or battalions, of the early Roman citizen army were divided into five classes according to wealth, and only the first class could afford full body armor. A Roman in the lowest class in those far-off days tied up his toga around his waist so that his arms were free to wield a weapon, and went into battle to fight as best he could. His toga gave him little protection, but it was better than nothing.

**DEVELOPMENT.** Gradually, the toga grew more elaborate, and its usage became more restricted. Women



The toga of the type worn in the early first century C.E. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

replaced it with the *stola*, a long upper garment which became the conventional dress of a married woman. Soldiers gave it up for a more convenient cloak called the *sagum*. Even so, right up to the end of the republican period in the first century B.C.E. and even into the imperial period that followed it, togas were sometimes issued to Roman armies in winter camp. By that time, however, the toga had lost its military role and became a costume of peacetime and a symbol of citizenship. In Rome, a citizen was expected to wear his toga in public. The emperor Augustus (ruled 27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) forbade citizens entry to the Roman Forum or to the circus if they were without togas. Outside, Rome, however, citizens quickly adopted foreign costumes which could be put on and taken off easily; the toga as it developed became so elaborate that a Roman needed help to put it on. Even in Rome itself, Greek fashions became increasingly popular in the first century C.E., and the toga was reserved more and more for official functions. Women abandoned it early, except for women who were courtesans or were found guilty of adultery. The *stola*

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TOGA**

**INTRODUCTION:** The toga was the national dress of the Roman citizen. In fact, Romans were sometimes called simply the “togati” (the “men who wear togas”), and when dramas about Roman citizens were produced in the theater, they were called *fabulae togatae*, as distinct from dramas involving Greek characters which were called *fabulae palliatae*. Roman senators wore togas when they transacted public business, as did the members of the municipal councils of other cities in the Roman Empire even in the fourth and fifth centuries c.e. The following passage from the Roman history of Livy, who lived in the reign of the emperor Augustus, illustrates the importance of wearing the toga to conduct public business. In 458 B.C.E., the Roman republic faced possible disaster. Rome’s enemies, the Aequi, had cut off a consular army led by one of the consuls, Lucius Minucius. In this crisis, the Roman senate decided to appoint Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus as dictator; the dictatorship in Rome was a six-month appointment that was made only in an emergency when the state was under threat and a strong leader was needed. Cincinnatus had a small farm across the Tiber from Rome, and he was working on his land when a deputation from the senate came to invite him to Rome. Prior to delivering the senate’s invitation, the deputation asked Cincinnatus to put on his toga. Cincinnatus accepted the dictatorship, defeated the Aequi and, the crisis over, laid down the office after holding it for only fifteen days. Here Livy described the meeting of the deputation from the senate and Cincinnatus.

Now I would solicit the particular attention of those numerous people who imagine that money is everything in this world, and that rank and ability are inseparable from wealth: let them observe that Cincinnatus, the one man in whom Rome placed all her hope of survival, was at that moment working a little three-acre farm (now known as the Quinctian meadows) west of the Tiber, just opposite the spot where the shipyards are today. A mission from the city found him at work on the land—digging a ditch, maybe, or ploughing. Greetings were exchanged, and he was asked—with a prayer for God’s blessing on himself and his country—to put on his toga and hear the Senate’s instructions. This naturally surprised him, and asking if all were well, he told his wife Racilia to run to their cottage and fetch his toga. The toga was brought, and wiping the grimy sweat from his hands and face, he put it on; at once the envoys from the city saluted him, with congratulations, as Dictator, invited him to enter Rome, and informed him of the terrible danger of Minucius’ army. A state vessel was waiting for him on the river, and on the city bank he was welcomed by his three sons who had come to meet him, then by other kinsmen and friends, and finally by nearly the whole body of senators.

**SOURCE:** Livy, *The Early History of Rome*. Trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1960): 213.

which married women wore was denied to them, for it was the mark of the respectable Roman *matrona*—a woman who was properly married.

**RITE OF PASSAGE.** In many cultures, a young man’s transition from boyhood to manhood is marked by what is called a “rite of passage.” In Rome, the rite of passage involved changing from the toga of adolescence to the toga of a man. A Roman youth of free birth wore the *toga praetexta*, a toga with a band of purple woven along the edge of the garment. Under it, he wore a tunic which had two purple woven stripes which extended from his shoulders to the hemline, and around his neck he wore a locket called a *bullae* which might be made of gold, silver, bronze, or even leather. When the youth came of age, he exchanged the *toga praetexta* for the *toga virilis*, the man’s toga, which was all white, the natural color of the wool. In the early days of Rome, well down into the second century B.C.E., a youth gave up the *toga praetexta* at age sixteen. Later, the ceremony often took place at the end of the youth’s fifteenth year. There were exceptions: the emperor Tiberius would not allow the future

emperor Caligula to assume the *toga virilis* until his twentieth year, and the future emperor Nero assumed it at age fourteen. The *toga praetexta* was also worn by important state officials, and the fact that children wore it as well was perhaps a recognition of the vulnerability and, at the same time, the importance of childhood. Children were as important to the future of the state as the men who held prestigious magistracies. The ceremony in which a young man gave up the *toga praetexta* usually took place during the festival of Bacchus known as the *Liberalia* on 16 March. The night before, the boy took off his *toga praetexta* and put on a white tunic to sleep in; this tunic was known as the *tunica recta* (the “straight tunic”), so-called because it was woven on the old-fashioned upright loom. The ceremony started the next morning with a sacrifice offered to the *Lares*, the household gods of the family. The boy dedicated his *toga praetexta* to the *Lares* and along with it, his *bullae*, the locket containing the amulet or charm which he wore around his neck as a boy to ward off evil influences and protect him in the vulnerable years of childhood. It was

rather like a modern good luck charm except that Roman society really did believe in the “Evil Eye” and assorted malign influences so hex signs to ward them off were more significant than good luck charms are in modern times. It also marked the wearer as the child of a freeborn Roman citizen. The young man then put on his new toga. It was the *toga pura*, which did not mean that it was “pure,” but rather that it was not dyed, i.e. it was the natural color of the wool. This was the “toga of a man,” the so-called *toga virile*. It signified that he was now an adult male. His family and friends escorted him in his new *toga virile* to the forum where they presented him to the Roman people, the *populus Romanus*, who would henceforth regard him as one of their members. The young man then went to the Capitoline Hill, and in the Temple of Jupiter he offered sacrifice to the gods of the state, the divine triad Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva. He was not yet of an age to begin a public career, but old enough to take an interest in public affairs and learn from his elders how to conduct the business of the state. He had crossed the divide between vulnerable youth and manhood.

**TOGAS FOR GIRLS.** Girls also wore the *toga praetexta*, but they gave it up at age twelve upon reaching puberty. From then on until marriage, girls wore a *palla*, or mantle. A girl over twelve is shown wearing a *palla* on the south relief of the “Altar of Peace” in Rome which the Roman senate commissioned in 13 B.C.E.; it can still be seen reconstructed in modern Rome, on the bank of the Tiber River. Unlike the toga, it was a rectangular swatch of cloth, but on the “Altar of Peace” it is shown folded over the girl’s body in a manner so similar to a toga that it might be mistaken for one, except that its squared lower border gives it away.

**THE SHAPE OF THE TOGA.** The toga was simply a piece of cloth that was folded and wrapped around the body. In the early days of Rome, when the cloth was a piece of woolen homespun, it probably kept the shape that it had when it came off the loom: rectangular. The evidence from ancient authors, scanty though it is, indicates that the toga was a semi-circular piece of cloth with one straight edge, and when a purple stripe was woven along the edge—a wide one (*latus clavus*) for senators and a narrow one (*angustus clavus*) for members of the equestrian class—it could have been woven only along the straight edge. There have been many modern attempts to reproduce the sort of toga of the monuments and it seems likely that it was not a piece of cloth that was a true semi-circle, but rather that it was half an ellipse with one straight edge that was broad enough to allow the purple stripes to be woven parallel to it. Conservative though



Imperial Procession (detail from the Ara Pacis Augustae), showing members of the imperial family in procession at the dedication of this altar which commemorates the pacification of Spain and Gaul by Emperor Augustus, begun 13, dedicated 9 B.C.E.  
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the Romans were, the toga styles changed over time; the toga of the late empire bore a general resemblance to the toga of the Roman republic, but it was not the same garment. Yet stone-cutters in the late empire turned out toga-clad figures for official statues of emperors and public officials which were erected across the empire.

**HOW THE TOGA WAS WORN.** The toga of republican Rome, in its simplest form, was thrown over the left shoulder, drawn across the back and under the right arm and then thrown back again over the left shoulder so that there was an oblique fold across the chest. The right shoulder and arm were left unencumbered, but not bare, for a man would wear a tunic under his toga. There is a statue in the Archeological Museum in Florence, Italy, known as *Il Arringatore* (The Orator) which shows the kind of toga that might have been worn in the second century or the beginning of the first century B.C.E. The skirt does not reach the feet, and along its lower edge there is what seems to be a row of embroidery. The toga that Roman politicians Cicero or Julius Caesar might have worn in the last days of the Roman Republic,





Man wearing short republican toga, c. 100 B.C.E. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

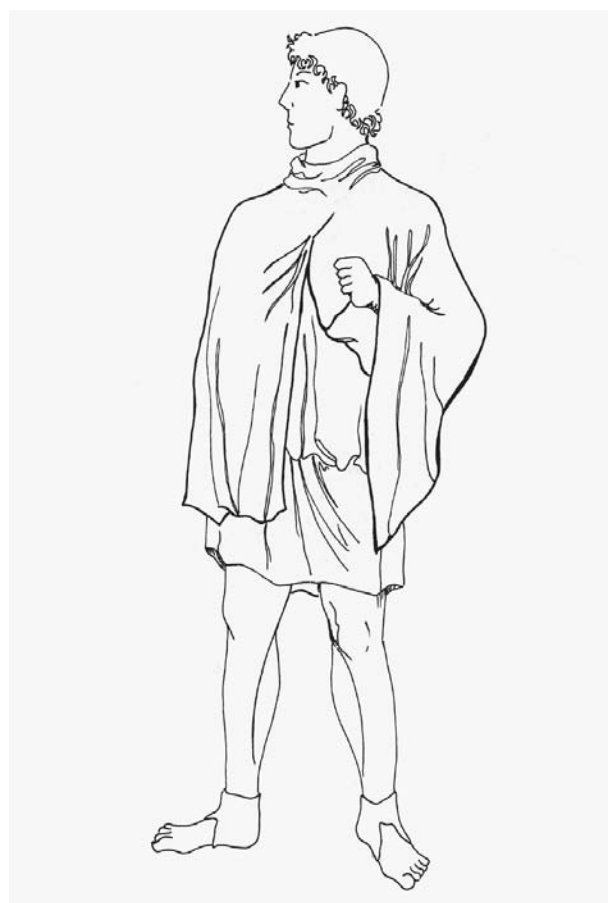
however, covered both shoulders. Under the Roman emperors, togas became elaborate with folds carefully arranged. The toga of the imperial period had two added features: an overfold of cloth called a *sinus* that ran diagonally across the chest, and a clump of drapery called an *umbo* that was a sort of decorative knot made by pulling up the folds on the left side in order to hold the drapery together. Apparel this elaborate cannot have been easy to put on or take off. The proper arrangement of the folds of the toga was a mark of elegance, and there were slaves trained to do the task, called *vestiplici* if they were male slaves, or *vestiplicae* if they were women. If a Roman magistrate was to officiate at a ceremony in imperial Rome where a toga must be worn, his slaves might have to sit up the night before to prepare the pleats and folds by squeezing them with tongs. The *sinus* in particular needed care, for in some portrayals of toga-clad figures it hangs loosely but elegantly across the chest and almost touches the ground. The toga which began as a practical piece of clothing ended up as an elaborate ceremonial costume.

**THE LACERNA.** Since the toga gave poor protection against inclement weather, the Romans adopted a hoodless woolen outer cloak which was popular in the army: the *lacerna*. It was worn over the toga and was open at the side, leaving the arms free. The Romans fastened it with a brooch or buckle on the right shoulder so it could be tossed back over the shoulder. It was dark colored when it was used as a military cape, but when it was adopted as civilian dress, it was often made of bright colors and lighter cloth, particularly for upper-class men and women. In cold weather, the spectators in the amphitheater or theater who were wearing togas needed their *lacernae* to keep warm.

**TYPES OF TOGA.** Togas were made of wool—a light woolen fabric for summer and a heavier one for winter wear. Unless they were dyed, they remained the natural color of the wool, which was off-white, though given the absence of good laundry facilities, many of the togas worn in Rome must have been a rather dirty grey. It was important for a citizen who presented himself as a candidate for office to have a pure-white toga, and he would use chalk to give his toga the requisite color—hence, the Latin word for “candidate” (*candidatus*) came from the word for “white” (*candidus*). The *toga praetexta* worn by children and by state officials had a purple border. So did the togas worn by senators and men of the equestrian order. Senators had a wide purple border (the *latus clavus* or “laticlave”) to mark their status, whereas men of the equestrian order, the so-called *equites* or “horsemen” whose minimum income requirement was less than half a senator’s, had a narrow stripe. The *equites* by the second century B.C.E. were men of property who stayed away from a career in politics; they included in their ranks businessmen and tax farmers—that is, private entrepreneurs who contracted with the government to collect taxes. A variety of toga with stripes known as the *trabea* was worn by the *Flamen Dialis* and the *Flamen Martialis*, the high priests of Jupiter and of Mars, and also by the augurs, the priestly officials who took the auspices, but it is unclear how the stripes were arranged. A toga called the *trabea* was also worn by men of the equestrian order who paraded on horseback in the festival of Castor and Pollux (Rome’s legendary founders) to commemorate the semi-mythical Battle of Lake Regillus. Their *trabea*, however, seems to have been a short mantle like the Greek *chlamys*. It was the distinctive costume of the *equites*, for when Roman theaters staged comedies where the characters were citizens of the equestrian order, they were known as *comoediae trabeatae*—comedies where the actors are costumed in *trabeae*. Dark-colored togas were worn as a sign of mourning. This type of toga was known as the *toga*

*pulla*: the “dark-colored toga.” A *pullum* was a garment dyed dark-grey. A toga known as the *toga picta*, or *trabea triumphalis*, was decorated with patterns and must have taken great skill to weave; it was worn in the period of the Roman Republic by generals returning from a victorious campaign who were granted the right of holding a triumph. The triumphant general paraded his spoils and captives through the streets of Rome, and finally made his way along the Sacred Road (*Via Sacra*) through the Roman Forum to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. In the rear of the procession came the general himself in a chariot, wearing a *toga picta*. The general did not actually own this toga, for these togas were kept among the treasures of Jupiter, and brought out only on special occasions. Under the Roman Empire, however, triumphs were reserved for the emperor, and the first emperor, Augustus, made the *toga picta* his official costume.

**THE END OF THE TOGA.** Juvenal, the Roman satirist who probably wrote in the first quarter of the second century C.E., wrote in his third satire that throughout most of Italy no man was seen in a toga until the day he died, when he was laid out in one. When shows were staged in the country theaters on holidays, everyone, magistrates included, wore a plain white tunic. Yet the toga remained the proper ceremonial garment until the fourth century C.E. as evidenced by developments from Roman sculpture. A relief sculpture of Marcus Aurelius, emperor from 161–180 C.E., which was re-used on the Arch of Constantine in Rome, shows a figure wearing a short toga which comes only to the knees; another panel of the same emperor, now in the Conservatori Museum in Rome, shows a person with a similar short toga, who is playing the reed pipe known as the *aulos*. It has been suggested that this short toga was the toga of the Roman common man, but the absence of such figures in art makes it difficult to come to a conclusion. Marcus Aurelius’ predecessor, Hadrian, appears in one statue wearing a toga that resembled a Greek *himation*. Hadrian was a lover of Greek culture, which may account for his toga in the Greek style, but the fashion did not endure for long. In the third century C.E. a new style developed with a broad fold running from under the right arm across the chest and over the left shoulder, giving the appearance of a baldric, or sash running diagonally across the chest. This was the “banded toga” and a man needed the help of a valet to put it on. It was not a costume for everyday wear. Sometimes it seems that the bands were held in place with concealed stitching. Difficult though it might be to put on, the banded toga remained popular through the fourth century as ceremonial garb. As we reach the fifth century, a toga-clad statue of a consul in the Capitoline



A man wearing a lacerna (a soldier’s cloak). CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

Museum in Rome shows the final stage of the toga’s evolution. The statue dates to about 400 C.E., and it portrays a man wearing a tunic with short sleeves over a long-sleeved tunic. Over that he wears a toga with a long *sinus* in front, which the magistrate had to hold up with his left arm to prevent it dragging on the ground. This was clearly a purely ceremonial costume for it did not allow the wearer to move freely. By the time the toga reached the end of its long history, it had become unfitted for physical movement. Nonetheless it was not without an offspring. It mutated into the vestment of a Roman Catholic priest which is known as a *stola*—not to be confused with the costume of a Roman married woman which was known by the same name.

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*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE COSTUME OF THE EMPEROR AUGUSTUS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The author known as John the Lydian lived in the reign of the emperor Justinian (527–565 C.E.), and worked in the imperial bureaucracy in Constantinople for forty years. Three of his works survive, the best known titled *De Magistratibus* (On the Offices of the State), *De Ostentis* (On Omens), and *De Mensibus* (On the Months) which collected information about the ancient Roman religious calendar and the various festivals which had their dates set by the calendar. In his *On the Offices of the State* he describes the costumes worn by various officials, and the passage below describes the dress of the emperor Augustus. John lived five centuries after Augustus' death, and no doubt he confused the costume of Augustus to some extent with the costumes of later emperors; the outer cloak of Augustus, for instance, was not made of silk, but silk was regularly used for the apparel of later emperors, and jewel-encrusted garments were a feature of imperial apparel in the later Roman Empire. John reports correctly that Augustus was high priest of Rome (*pontifex maximus*)—he became high priest in 12 B.C.E. after the death of the previous incumbent, and all his successors until the emperor Gratian (367–383 C.E.) held the office after him. The word *pontifex* does mean “bridge-builder”—John is correct on that score—and the reason is that when Rome was still pagan, it was believed that every river had a divine spirit of its own that would be offended if a priest failed to perform the prescribed rites when it was yoked by a bridge connecting its two banks.

In time of peace he [Augustus] used to wear the garb of a *pontifex*—the name stands for chief priest, connected with bridges—of purple reaching to the feet, priestly, ornamented with gold, and a cloak likewise of

purple, which had pleats of gold at its extremities. He used to cover his head for the reasons which I gave in the treatise *On the Months* which I have written. For the wars he wore the *paludamenta*—these are scarlet mantles of double thickness spun from top-quality raw silk, caught up at the shoulders by a golden brooch inset with precious stones. We call this a *fibula* as Italians do, but people in the palace even nowadays speak of it, with a sort of special term, as a *cornucopia*. At festivals he would wear the *limbus*—this is a purple cloak which covers the body down to the feet, with a Meander pattern; on the shoulders it has a brilliant spray of *tabulamenta*—that is, material woven into piping—and a *paragauda* embroidered with the golden letter *gamma* [in other words a tunic with little figures like the Greek letter “gamma” embroidered on it]. From the border at the feet and the bottom end of the garment, on both sides these little figures trick out the tunic with gold to form a letter *gamma*. In the senate he would wear a mantle of purple (of course) and, at the edge of the border near the person who wore it, it was bedecked with squares outlined in pure gold—the court functionaries call these squares *segmenta*, meaning “gold embroidery on the hemline,” whereas the man on the street calls embroideries of this sort on the mantles of private individuals *sementa*. This mantle is called *bracteolate* (covered with gold plaques), *gemosa* (encrusted with precious stones), and *lanceolate* (ornamented with embroidered spear-heads). He also wore the rest of the emperor's official regalia, concerning which I resume a detailed description to be excessive. ...

**SOURCE:** John the Lydian, *De Magistratibus*, in *Bureaucracy in Traditional Society: Romano-Byzantine Bureaucracies Viewed from Within*. Trans. by T. F. Carney (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1971): 44. Text modified by James Allan Evans.

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## THE TEXTILES OF THE GREEK AND ROMAN WORLD

**WOOL.** Sheep were all-purpose animals in the Greco-Roman world. They provided sheepskins which peasants used as cloaks, wool for cloth, mutton to sup-

plement the Greek diet, and milk for making cheese. In ancient Greece and Rome, wool fabric had the added advantage that, unlike linen, it was easy to dye. In addition, wool in its natural state came in a variety of colors depending on the breed of sheep. Latin had words to describe the various hues: *albus* meant “white,” *niger* “dark brown” or “black,” *coracinus* “deep black,” and *fuscus* “brown with a tinge of red.” There was also a color of wool called *pullus* that came from sheep in south Italy, and also from Liguria, a region in the north-west of the peninsula. *Pullus* was evidently brownish-black, and it was a color associated with mourning. In the Po River valley in northern Italy, a breed of sheep was developed which produced a fine white wool that could be woven into a gossamer-like fabric. If a man or woman preferred an artificial color, however, there

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE MAKING OF LINEN**

**INTRODUCTION:** The *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder, who died in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E., is the chief source for information on how linen thread was produced from flax. In the section of his *Natural History* from which this excerpt is taken, Pliny discussed various fabrics made from plants, including esparto grass, and—surprisingly—asbestos, which he thought was a plant found in the deserts of Egypt. Pliny thought that the best “linen” was made from it, but in second place was the fabric made from the fine flax grown in Elis in Greece. The passage below describes the processing of flax in order to extract the linen fiber.

With us the ripeness of flax is ascertained by two indications, the swelling of the seed or its assuming a yellowish color. It is then plucked up and tied together in little bundles each about the size of a handful, hung up in the sun to dry for one day with the roots turned upward, and then for five more days with the heads of the bundles turned inward towards each other so that the seed may fall in the middle. Linseed makes a potent medicine; it is also popular in a rustic porridge with an extremely sweet taste, made in Italy north of the Po, but now for a long

time only used in sacrifices. When the wheat harvest is over the actual stalks of the flax are plunged in water that has been left to get warm in the sun, and a weight is put on them to press them down, as flax floats very readily. The outer coat becoming looser is a sign that they are completely soaked, and they are again dried in the sun, turned head downwards as before, and afterwards when thoroughly dry they are pounded on a stone with a tow-hammer. The part that was nearest the skin is called oakum—it is flax of an inferior quality, and mostly more fit for lampwicks; nevertheless this too is combed with iron spikes until all the outer skin is scraped off. The pith has several grades of whiteness and softness, and the discarded skin is useful for heating ovens and furnaces. There is an art of combing out and separating flax; it is a fair amount for fifteen ... [here the text is defective] ... to be carded out from fifty pounds' weight of bundles; and spinning flax is a respectable occupation even for men. Then it is polished in the thread a second time, after being soaked in water and repeatedly beaten out against a stone, and it is woven into fabric and then again beaten with clubs, as it is always better for rough treatment.

**SOURCE:** Pliny, *Natural History*. Books XVII–XIX. Vol. V. Trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950): 431, 433.

were a large variety of dyes available; in Rome, legend claimed that Numa, the second king of Rome after Romulus, established the guild of dyers. The legend is not likely to be true, but certainly the guild had an ancient history.

**LINEN.** Linen was made from the domesticated flax plant which was developed early in the Mediterranean world from the wild flax for its fiber and the oil from its seeds. Linen was used in the Bronze Age, prior to 1100 B.C.E., both in the Minoan period on Crete and the Mycenaean period on the mainland. The tablets found in the so-called “Palace of Nestor” at Pylos in Greece show that flax was cultivated in the south-west Peloponnesos before 1200 B.C.E., and in the later classical period, Elis in the north-west Peloponnesos was well known for its fine linen. In the Hellenistic period after Alexander the Great, Egypt produced linen with a high reputation, but by the Roman period, the big centers of production had moved to Syria and Palestine. In the west, the linen of the Po Valley had a good reputation, as did the linen from the coastal areas of southeast Spain. Linen was used not only for dress, but also fishermen’s nets, sails for ships, and the awnings in the theaters and

amphitheaters that protected spectators from the sun; awnings were also made from cotton since it dried quickly, or a fabric that was half cotton, half linen was woven for use as canopies.

**COTTON.** Cotton was an imported fabric. It first appeared in India, where it has turned up on archaeological sites in the Indus River valley, dating to the early second millennium B.C.E. By the Hellenistic period, from the third to first centuries B.C.E., it had spread to Upper Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia, evidently following the trade route between east Africa and India. Greek and Roman authors seemed to think that cotton was grown on trees; the Roman poet Vergil in his *Georgics*, for instance, refers to the cotton trees of Nubia. Very likely this was not a mistake as many modern scholars believe. Cotton nowadays is grown on a bush with the botanical name *Gossypium herbaceum*, but there is also a cotton tree, *Gossypium arboretum*, and quite possibly it was the source of the cotton fiber that the Greeks and Romans knew.

**SILK.** True silk comes from the domesticated mulberry silkworm which extrudes a silk fiber to make its cocoon. In the reign of the emperor Justinian (527–565

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE UNUSUAL DRESS OF THE EMPEROR GAIUS CALIGULA**

**INTRODUCTION:** Gaius Caligula, the great-grandson of the emperor Augustus, became emperor himself in 37 C.E., largely on the basis of his distinguished ancestry. In his four years as the emperor, he proved to be a terrible ruler, and was apparently mentally disturbed; he was assassinated before he could harm the empire. His general appearance was unfortunate: he was tall with a poor physique, spindling legs and a thin neck, and his body was very hairy except for his head which was almost completely bald. In place of the simplicity of dress which his two predecessors as emperors—Augustus and Tiberius—had favored, Caligula introduced elaborate styles which were considered borrowings from the orient and were associated, in Roman minds, with divine kingship. In fact, it has been argued that there was method in Caligula's madness; he was trying to introduce absolute monarchy with all its trappings and took his cues from royal courts such as Cleopatra's in Egypt. Three centuries later, Caligula's dress would not have been considered particularly odd in

the imperial court. The passage below comes from the biographer of the first Caesars, Suetonius.

Caligula paid no attention to traditional or current fashions in his dress; ignoring male conventions and even human decencies. Often he made public appearances in a cloak covered with embroidery and encrusted with precious stones, a long-sleeved tunic and bracelets; or in silk (which men were forbidden by law to wear) or even in a woman's robe; and came shod sometimes with slippers, sometimes with buskins, sometimes with military boots, sometimes with women's shoes. Occasionally he affected a golden beard and carried Jupiter's thunderbolt, Neptune's trident, or Mercury's serpent-twined staff in his hand. He even dressed up as Venus and, long before his expedition, wore the uniform of a triumphant general, often embellished with the breastplate which he had stolen from Alexander the Great's tomb at Alexandria.

**SOURCE:** Suetonius, "Gaius Caligula," in *The Twelve Caesars*. Trans. Robert Graves (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1957): 175.

C.E.) silkworm eggs were smuggled into the Roman Empire and became the foundation of the Byzantine silk industry. Prior to that development, all silk was imported. There have been finds of silk in Europe that date before Emperor Augustus, but silk was rare before the Augustan period when trade with India opened up. It was a luxury fabric; silk swatches were sometimes unraveled and the silk thread rewoven with fine linen in order to make it go twice as far and bring down the price. The emperor Caligula (37–41 C.E.) wore a silk toga, and the emperor Elagabalus (218–222 C.E.) insisted on a new silk garment every day. The historian Ammianus Marcellinus, a Greek writing in Latin at the end of the fourth century C.E., remarked that the wearing of silk—once confined to the imperial court—had become widespread among upper-class Romans. In 408 C.E., when the Visigothic chieftain Alaric was holding Rome to ransom, he demanded among other items, 4,000 silk tunics for his men. The chief trade route that brought silk into Mediterranean markets shipped it from China to Indian ports where Persian merchants bought it, carried it up to the head of the Persian Gulf, and then transported it by caravan to the ports of entry into the Roman Empire on the Euphrates River. The transit trade enriched Persia, which made the Roman imperial government unhappy, and it tried to develop alternative routes. The problem was not solved until the Byzantine Empire developed its own silk industry.

**COAN SILK.** Not all silk in the Greek world came from China. On the island of Cos—which is more famous for the great doctor Hippocrates of Cos who established a medical school there—there was a thriving silk industry which used silk from the cocoon of an indigenous moth. The chief ancient sources for information on this industry are Aristotle and Pliny the Elder, who agreed that the technique of extracting silk fiber from the cocoon of this moth was discovered by a woman named Pamphile. Both men and women wove Coan silk, which was unusual in Greece where weaving was considered women's work. But the output of the Coan silk industry cannot have been great, for Cos is a small island, and probably its silk was inferior to Chinese silk. China supplied a demand which Cos could not fill.

**WEAVING.** Women did the weaving in ancient Greece. The Greek historian Herodotus who visited Egypt in the mid-fifth century B.C.E. noticed that in Egypt men worked at looms, and he remarked on the difference between Egyptian and Greek custom. In Greece, the housewife was in charge of weaving cloth for the household. The Greek historian Xenophon commented on the importance of the wifely duty of weaving in his treatise on household management, *Oeconomicus*. In that work, he described a dialogue between his mentor, Socrates, and the wise Athenian

Ischomachus, during which Ischomachus highlighted the importance of his young wife being the preeminent weaver in the household. Not all weaving was done in the home, however. Fine fabrics in particular required professional weaving, and specialty firms existed in classical Athens as early as the later fifth century B.C.E. There is evidence of an establishment that specialized in the *chlamys* (a short cloak) and another whose specialty was the *chlanis*, which was a cloak for the upper body like the *chlaina*, but made of finer fabric. In Italy, the fine white woolen cloth produced in the north, in the Po Valley, called for skillful weaving, and factories established there used highly trained slaves for the weaving. From the first century C.E. well-to-do women had more to do with their spare time than to stand at the loom working alongside their female slaves, though the empress Livia, the third and last wife of Augustus, tried to set an example of the antique womanly virtue that her husband promoted by working at the loom. In the towns and cities of the Roman Empire in the Augustan Age, however, there were already shops that sold ready-made clothes both for freemen and slaves.

**THE CREATION OF FABRIC.** Despite evidence of ready-made clothes, the vast majority of people in ancient Greece and Rome had to make not only their own clothes, but their own yarns and fabrics as well. The process of making fabric was long and labor-intensive. After the shearing of the sheep in the spring, the women washed the wool and pulled apart the matted fibers with their fingers. Then they carded it, separating the fibers with a comb, and rubbed it until they produced a mass of tow, or combed wool, kneeling as they did so on a kind of terra-cotta kneeling pad and propping their feet on a stool called an *onos*, or donkey. At this point they dyed the wool unless the finished cloth was intended to be the natural color of the wool. The wool next had to be spun, but the spinning wheel had not yet been invented; the woman responsible for spinning, known as the spinster, used a distaff and spindle to twist the yarn. The spinster wound the tow on the distaff, pulled out a length of it and secured it to the spindle that she held in her left hand. A weight called a spindle whorl was tied to the bottom of the spindle. It held the length of tow taut and once the spindle was set spinning, it twisted tow into yarn. The spinster continued to feed tow from the distaff into the growing length of yarn until the spindle reached the floor. Then she wound the yarn around the spindle and the process started over again. Once she spun a full skein of thread, she took it off the spindle and placed it in the wool basket. The

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**COAN SILK**

**INTRODUCTION:** Chinese silk was much prized, but it had to be imported at great expense until the reign of the emperor Justinian (527–565 C.E.) when silkworm eggs were smuggled into the Byzantine Empire, and the white mulberry tree (*Morus alba*)—the silkworm’s food plant—was introduced about the same time. On the island of Cos, however, there was a caterpillar whose cocoon could be unraveled to yield a silk thread. Silk from Cos was famous for its lightness and transparency, though the production must have been small. The passage below is from Aristotle’s *Historia Animalium* (Research Notes on Living Creatures). Pliny the Elder also describes the making of Coan silk in his *Natural History*, and both authors attribute the invention to a woman named Pamphile, the daughter of Plateus. It has also been suggested that Coan silk was known as far back as the Minoan period.

From one particular large grub, which has as it were horns, and in other respects differs from grubs in general, there comes, by a metamorphosis of the grub, first a caterpillar, then the cocoon, then the *necydalus*; and the creature passes through all these transformations within six months. A class of women unwind and reel off the cocoons of these creatures, and afterwards weave a fabric with the threads thus unwound; a Coan woman of the name of Pamphile, daughter of Plateus, being credited with the first invention of this fabric.

**SOURCE:** Aristotle, *Historia Animalium*, Book V. Vol. IV of *The Works of Aristotle*. Trans. D’arcy Wentworth Thompson (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1910): 551b.

strength and the texture of the thread depended on the speed of the spindle as it turned. Once the yarn had been created, it could be woven into fabric on a loom. In ancient Greece there were two types of loom. One was a small, easily transportable loom used to produce girdles and relatively narrow swatches of cloth, and the weaver could sit as she worked at it. The other was the old-fashioned large, vertical loom used to weave the swatches of cloth that would become tunics or cloaks. This was the upright loom on which was woven the Roman *tunica recta* which a youth wore when he came of age and put on the “toga of a man” (*toga virilis*). The threads of the warp hung downwards from the top of the loom and were held taut by loom-weights. The weavers sang as they worked. Homer in the *Odyssey*

described the nymph Calypso, who kept Odysseus prisoner until the gods commanded her to let him return home to Ithaca, as a weaver who sang at her loom. The witch Circe from the same literary work also sang as she weaved. The drudgery of working a loom was not necessarily conducive to joyful songs, however. Weaving was hard work, and it is more than likely that the female slaves who toiled at the loom sang sad songs.

**PATTERNED CLOTH.** In 1972, a *kore*—that is a statue of a woman, fully clothed—and a *kouros*—a nude male figure—were excavated at a cemetery near Merenda outside Athens. On the base of the *kore* statue was an inscription which read, “Grave of Phrasikleia. I shall forever be called *kore*. The gods have given me this name instead of marriage.” Phrasikleia had died before her marriage, and thus she would always be called a maiden (*kore*), never a married woman. More remarkable than this inscription, however, was the preserved original paint on the statue. Art historians knew that the Greeks painted their statues, but on those that have survived, the paint has disappeared or has faded almost to nothing. The paint on Phrasikleia’s *chiton* shows swastikas, which were considered good-luck signs at this time, and rosettes on the front of it, and four-pointed stars and various flowers on the back. The predominant colors are red, black, and yellow. Clearly this was a patterned wedding dress in bright colors for a marriage that never happened. At one time, it was thought that Greek weavers with their warp-weighted looms could not produce patterned cloth; when Greek authors mentioned decorated robes, scholars assumed this to mean that they were embroidered—decoration had been sewn on *after* the fabric had been woven. But Phrasikleia’s *chiton* proves that they were quite capable of making cloth with colorful patterns. The *peplos* which the women of Athens presented to Athena at every Great Panathenaea festival must have been a patterned weave of the same sort, and Athens was not the only place that regularly presented its guardian goddess with a new dress. In Elis in the northwest Peloponnesos, a *peplos* on which sixteen women had toiled was presented at regular intervals to Hera who was the guardian goddess of the state. Homer’s *Iliad* related that Helen of Troy wove a battle scene in color in her spare time. Helen was no different from other Greek housewives in this one respect: she, too, was skilled at the loom.

**DYE.** Excavations at a Roman fort at Vindolanda, which is near Hadrian’s Wall in Britain, have recovered various fragments of textiles and fifty of them were analyzed. The analysis revealed that eight of them had been dyed, and in all cases a red dye was used that came from

the root of the madder plant (*Rubia tinctorum*). The Romans had various dyes, and madder red was one of the cheapest. Among the expensive dyes were the various shades of purple made from the murex shellfish. A cheaper, counterfeit purple could be obtained by combining madder red in the right proportions with indigo, which was imported from India. *Coccinus*, a brilliant scarlet made from the kermes, a scale insect, was in high demand as a luxury dye. It originated in Asia, but Spain also developed a lucrative kermes industry. Other dyes were a strong green with a blue tinge (*prasinus*), a fairly bright red (*russeus*), and dark blue (*venetus*). Dyes, however, were not much use without mordants to fix the colors. Ancient mordants included alum from wood ash or even human urine and natron—sodium carbonate, or washing soda, which was dug from natron pits in Egypt. To fix the color, dyers dipped the wool in the mordant before it was put in the dye vat and heated.

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## DRESSING TO IMPRESS IN GREECE AND ROME

**COLOR IN GREEK AND ROMAN APPAREL.** A visitor to ancient Greece or Rome would have been impressed by the bright colors of the clothing that the people wore, particularly the women. On this point, the Greek and Roman art that has survived tends to give a false picture. The marble statues were originally painted

using wax-based paints, but it is very rare to find a statue now with traces of the original colors. The bronze statues have almost all disappeared long ago, melted down in the medieval period for their metal. The pictures on Greek vases of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E., when Athenian black-figured and red-figured vases were in style, present a record of changing fashions, but the vase painter was limited by the colors of his medium. In fact, Greek and Roman garments were far more colorful than most people realize. Weavers could produce elaborately patterned cloth. The *peplos* that was presented every four years to the goddess Athena at the Great Panathenaea festival was a masterpiece of design. It was woven by the women of Athens in a public building in the city where space was set aside for the loom, and the style of the garment did not change, but there was room for innovation in the pattern of the cloth.

**THE EAST GREEKS.** The Greeks always looked on the fashions of the Orient, particularly Persia, with admiration mixed with disapproval and contempt. On the one hand, the elaborate fashions associated with Persia signaled soft living and effeminacy; the Greek admiration for the well-muscled naked body was not to be found in Persia. On the other hand, Oriental fashions were enormously attractive for anyone who wanted his dress to signal his wealth and his cosmopolitan culture. East Greece—the Greek foundations in Asia Minor and Cyprus—was always an avenue for contact with the civilizations of the Orient. The collapse of the Mycenaean civilization had been followed by a period of migrations when three waves of migrants from Greece founded cities on the coastline of Asia Minor and the Dodecanese islands. The most important of these new foundations were made by Greeks speaking the Ionian dialect, and so East Greeks are often referred to as “Ionian,” though there were also Aeolian and Dorian foundations, established by Greeks whose dialects were Aeolian or Dorian. These Ionian cities were cheek-by-jowl with the Lydian Empire, and the last Lydian king, Croesus, subdued those that were on the mainland while the cities on the offshore islands were protected by their fleets. In 546 B.C.E. Croesus in turn fell victim to a new empire builder, Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire. The Ionian cities that had belonged to the Lydian Empire fell under Persian control. Persia was not content with the Greek cities on the Asia Minor coastline. Little by little it took over the cities on the offshore islands, and from Asia, it moved into Europe and by 512 B.C.E. it controlled the region to the north of the Aegean Sea. Yet Persia’s rule was relatively light. Ionian culture continued as before, and Ionian fashions, influenced by Lydia

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**THUCYDIDES ON ATHENIAN FASHIONS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Athenian historian Thucydides, who composed his *History of the Peloponnesian War* near the end of the fifth century B.C.E., devoted a section in his introduction to the developments which had taken place in Greece in the Archaic Period (700–480 B.C.E.) and earlier, and he notes the change in fashion that had taken place in Greek clothing. He claims that the Athenians had taken the lead. It is more likely that it was the cities in Ionia that took the lead, but the surviving evidence does not allow us to contradict Thucydides with any confidence.

The Athenians were the first to give up the habit of carrying weapons and to adopt a way of living that was more relaxed and more luxurious. In fact, the elder men of the rich families who had these luxurious tastes only recently gave up wearing linen undergarments [chitons] and tying their hair behind their heads in a knot fastened with a clasp of golden grasshoppers: the same fashions spread to their kinsmen in Ionia, and lasted there among the old men for some time. It was the Spartans who first began to dress simply and in accordance with our modern taste, with the rich leading a life that was as much as possible like the life of the ordinary people. They, too, were the first to play games naked, to take off their clothes openly, and to rub themselves down with olive oil after their exercise. In ancient times, even at the Olympic Games, athletes used to wear coverings for their loins, and indeed this practice was still in existence not very many years ago. Even today, many foreigners, especially in Asia, wear these loincloths for boxing matches and wrestling bouts. Indeed, one could point to a number of other instances where the manners of the ancient Hellenic world are very similar to the manners of foreigners today.

**SOURCE:** Thucydides, “Introduction,” in *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Rex Warner (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1954): 38–39.

and then by Persia, were elaborate and ornate. Ionia became a conduit for Persian style to pass to Greece, particularly to Athens, which the Ionians regarded as their mother city. In the first two decades of the fifth century B.C.E., Persia made an attempt to conquer Greece which resulted in Persia’s defeat and her retreat from the region of the Aegean Sea. The elaborate fashions associated with the Orient went out of style in Athens which



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### NEW FASHIONS FROM PERSIA

**INTRODUCTION:** During the last quarter of the fifth century B.C.E., Persian fashions were on the rise in Athens, though not without the usual conflict between the old and new styles that mirrored the conflict between the old traditions and the new ways. In his play *The Wasps* (performed in 422 B.C.E.), Aristophanes highlights both of these conflicts in an exchange between a son and his father during which the son, Anticleon, attempts to convince his father, Procleon, to trade in his plain brown jurymen's coat for the significantly fancier styles from Persia—in this case a *kaunakes* or a *persis*. The two men's clothes (as well as their names) in this instance also reflect their political convictions; Cleon was a political leader intensely disliked by the wealthy Athenians who wore the latest fashions, but the masses supported him.

**Procleon:** What is it you want me to do?

**Anticleon:** Take off that shabby old cloak and throw this gown over your shoulders.

**Procleon:** Lot of good having sons and bringing them up, if all they can do is try and suffocate you!

**Anticleon:** Come along, get it on, and don't talk so much.

**Procleon:** In the name of all the gods, what is this horrible thing?

**Anticleon:** It's a Persian gown: some people call it a full-waister.

**Procleon:** I thought it must be one of those goatskin things from the country.

**Anticleon:** You *would*. Now if you'd ever been to Sardis, you'd have known what it was; but it seems you don't.

**Procleon:** I most certainly don't. Looks to me like one of Morychus' fancy wrappings.

**Anticleon:** No, these are woven in Ecbatana.

**Procleon:** What from? Tripe?

**Anticleon:** Really, you're hopeless! Don't you realize that this is an extremely expensive Persian weave—why, at least sixty pounds of wool must have gone to the making of this.

**SOURCE:** Aristophanes, *The Wasps*. Trans. David Barrett (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1964): 80–81.

opted for a more sober, austere appearance, though older, more conservative men continued to wear Ionic chitons with their many pleats and do up their hair with pins made in the shape of grasshoppers. Ionia won its independence from Persia after Xerxes' debacle in Greece, but then it fell under the domination of Athens. Ionia had the reputation of being a place where life was soft and easy, and the scientific view of the day held that soft living made men with soft muscles who were no good on the battlefield. Hard living made hard men, and as the Greeks saw it, it was the toughness of their foot soldiers and the free men who rowed their warships that won them victory over Persia. Simple clothing and toughness went hand in hand. The fact that Ionia won its freedom from Persia only to lose it to the Athenian Empire seemed to prove that Ionia, with its love for Persian-style fripperies, was not fit to defend its liberty. The reaction against Persian fashion did not last, however. Active warfare between the Athenian Empire and Persia ended in 450 B.C.E., and peaceful contacts between Athens and Persia resumed.

**PERSIAN FASHION IN ATHENS.** By the last quarter of the fifth century, Athenians demonstrated a fondness for Persian styles again. New items of dress appear with telltale names. The fine wool cloak called a *syria* must have been inspired by Syrian fashion. These cloaks may even have been imports from Syria. There was a kind of women's shoes called *persikai*. One of Plato's dialogues refers to wealthy people who wore "Persian belts"; the dialogue is fictitious, but Plato imagines it taking place before 415 B.C.E., and it is probable that some rich Athenians of that time were wearing expensive belts probably imported from Persia. Another garment of the late fifth century B.C.E. was the *kaunakes*, also known as the *persis*—a name which betrays its origin. It seems to have been a heavy cloak with little woolen tufts. Chitons with sleeves—another Persian innovation—also appear. Vase paintings depict examples of the *chitoniskos cheiridotos*—that is, the short patterned chiton with sleeves—worn over a long chiton. The short chiton might have fringes at the bottom, and fringes were considered Lydian, or at least, oriental. Another Persian garment which the Greeks adopted was the *kandys*, an outer garment with sleeves, dyed purple, and fastened at the shoulders. The wearer used his *kandys* to keep his arms warm, even though the sleeves were too long to be of practical use and were sewn up at the end. In the Persian court, these sleeves served to protect the king from assassination since men with their arms in the long sleeves of their *kandys* could not wield an assassin's knife.

**THE SYMBOLISM OF THE SLEEVE.** Sleeves were not new to ancient Greece. Musicians wore long chitons with sleeves when they performed at public festivals, but the sumptuous costumes of musicians were not everyday dress. The policemen who patrolled the streets of Athens also wore tunics with sleeves and trousers, but these public servants were actually Scythian slaves owned by the state, and they wore their native costume. Sleeves were thought to be a peculiar mark of Persian fashion, but they won acceptance, for on the sculptured frieze from the Parthenon in Athens (carved in the 430s B.C.E.) some of the young horsemen in the parade are shown wearing short chitons with sleeves. It looks as if some well-to-do young Athenians had adopted the latest Persian-style fashions. Yet when sleeves reached Rome, they were considered effeminate. A passage in Vergil's epic, the *Aeneid*, demonstrates the prevailing Roman attitude towards this fashion. In the passage, a native Italian (representing the Romans) opposes a settlement of foreign Trojans in Italy by hurling insults at their leader, Aeneas; among the insults are derisive comments on their wearing of sleeves, which the Italian disparaged as unmanly. Aeneas had come from Troy, which was in Asia, and hence the Trojans were Asians and wore Persian costume. In the *Aeneid*, the Trojans have to abandon their Asian way of life before they win a place for themselves in Italy. It must not have been a complete abandonment, however, since Julius Caesar's biographer, Suetonius, reported that the purple-striped senatorial tunic which Julius Caesar wore under his toga had sleeves with fringes.

**THE PARASOL.** Parasols were known in the Mycenaean world but they drop out of the picture in the Dark Ages of Greece. They reappear on vase paintings in the later sixth century B.C.E. as part of a well-to-do woman's costume, though they were apparently not exclusively used by women. The lyric poet Anacreon, who enjoyed the patronage of a tyrant of Samos until Persia captured the island in 522 B.C.E., used his poetry to criticize a fellow named Artemon who wore gold earrings and held an ivory sun umbrella, "as ladylike as you please!" In Athens, the parasol became a status symbol for the freeborn woman. In Athens of the fifth century B.C.E. there was a sharp distinction between the citizens and the *metics*, or resident aliens. After the middle of the century, when the statesman Pericles passed a law that barred everyone from citizenship whose parents were not both Athenian citizens themselves, it was impossible for a metic to become a citizen. So the Athenian citizen body became an elite group that prevented outsiders from entering. The parasol marked the division. There was a law dating perhaps to about the same time as Pericles'

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**EFFEMINATE DRESS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Latin writer Aulus Gellius was a well-to-do Roman who received the standard education in rhetoric in Rome and then went to Athens to study philosophy. It was his custom to jot down notes of things that seemed worth remembering whenever he read a book in Latin or Greek, and during a winter that he spent at a country-place outside Athens, he began to assemble them into a collection which he later published as *Noctes Atticae* (Attic Nights). He wrote during the reigns of the emperor Antoninus Pius (138–161 C.E.) and his successor, Marcus Aurelius (161–180 C.E.). In the excerpt below, he relates the criticism of the second-century B.C.E. Roman Publius Scipio Africanus regarding the effeminate dress of his countryman Sulpicius Gallus, who wore long-sleeved tunics. Long sleeves were considered Persian finery, and not proper clothing for a tough virile Roman in the second century B.C.E.

For a man to wear tunics coming below the arms and as far as the wrists, and almost to the fingers, was considered unbecoming in Rome and all Latium. Such tunics our countrymen called by the Greek name *chiridotae* (long-sleeved), and they thought that for women—and only women—a long and full-flowing garment was not unbecoming to harm their arms and legs from view. But Roman men at first wore the toga by itself, without tunics; later they had close, short tunics ending below the shoulders, the kind that the Greeks call *exomides* (sleeveless). Habituated to this older fashion, Publius Africanus, son of Paulus, a man gifted with all worthy arts and every virtue, among many other things with which he reproached Publius Sulpicius Gallus, an effeminate man, included this also, that he wore tunics which covered his whole hands. Scipio's words are these: "For one who perfumes himself every day and dresses before a mirror, whose eyebrows are trimmed, who walks abroad with beard plucked out and thighs made smooth, who at banquets, though a young man, has reclined in a long-sleeved tunic on the inner side of the couch with a lover, who is fond not only of wine but of men—does anyone doubt that he does what wantons commonly do?"

**SOURCE:** Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*. Vol. 2 of 3 vols. Trans. John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927): 57, 59. Text modified by James Allan Evans.

citizenship law that required the daughters of metics to carry parasols and stools for the daughters of citizens in the Panathenaic procession. The parasol was not merely a shield from the sun; it was a status symbol.

**PERSIAN FASHION IN ROME.** “I detest Persian frippery, boy,” wrote the poet Horace as the first line of one of his *Odes*. Horace claimed to like the simple life. He lived under the emperor Augustus and enjoyed the generous patronage of one of Augustus’ ministers, Maecenas, so he expressed the official view about luxury in dress and in life generally. This view of Persian fashion was not merely a matter of taste, but a cunning example of propaganda reminiscent of the Greeks’ abandonment of Persian fashion following their military conflicts with Persia. Augustus had begun his political career as the teen-aged great-nephew and adopted heir of the powerful Roman politician, Julius Caesar; following Caesar’s assassination, Augustus had to defeat Mark Antony and Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, before he could become master of the empire. His propaganda portrayed Cleopatra as the paradigm of oriental luxury that extended to her clothes. Augustus presented himself as the champion of Roman traditions in clothes as in everything else. Yet Romans who could afford it liked rich dress. The longest fragment of a novel written by Petronius in the reign of the emperor Nero (54–68 B.C.E.) describes a banquet given by a wealthy former slave named Trimalchio who liked to show off his wealth. He made a grand entrance to the banquet chamber on a litter, wearing a bright scarlet cloak and a tasselled napkin with a broad purple stripe in imitation of the senatorial stripe around his neck that, as a freedman, he could not legally wear. He wore rings on his fingers and on his right arm was a gold armlet and another of ivory with a gleaming metal clasp. Clothes signaled a message, and the message of Trimalchio’s costume was that he had “made it.”

**PERSIAN COSTUME IN THE LATE EMPIRE.** By the time of the late Roman Empire, the costume of the imperial court under Diocletian (284–305 C.E.) and Constantine (324–337 C.E.) borrowed heavily from Persian fashion. Constantine began to wear a diadem decorated with pearls as a symbol of his autocratic power. Costume borrowed from the Persian court signaled the emperor’s authority in late antiquity. Persia furnished a large share of the trappings of the imperial court as the Roman Empire evolved into the Byzantine Empire.

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## THE DRESS OF ROMAN WOMEN

**A GIRL’S DRESS.** Freeborn girls, that is, girls whose parents were not slaves, wore the same costume as freeborn boys: a toga worn over a tunic. The toga was the *toga praetexta* with a purple border that had to be made of wool. The purple border was, at least in origin, apotropaic—that is, it protected the wearer against the Evil Eye or other unseen dangers that might attack a child. She would wear her hair carefully combed, braided and tied with a single band of wool cloth called in Latin a *vitta*, or in English, a “fillet.” The fillet was probably white and it signified purity. A boy would also wear a *bullula* or a locket, which contained an amulet—that is a charm which was worn to ward off evil spirits or miasmas that might infect him—but it seems that girls did not wear them. Few sculptures have survived of young Roman girls wearing the *toga praetexta* but those that have do not show bullas. However, a girl might wear a necklace of some sort which could have served the same purpose as an amulet. Once a girl reached puberty, she put off her *toga praetexta* and dedicated it to the goddess “Fortuna Virginalis”—Venus in her capacity as the guardian goddess of young maidens. This was the signal that she was now ready for marriage.

**THE COSTUME OF THE ROMAN BRIDE.** On the night before her wedding day, a bride put on the *tunica recta*, so called because it was woven on the ancient upright loom which weavers had abandoned for regular cloth manufacture. The rite of marriage demanded that a bride weave her tunic of white wool on the upright loom, as well as her hairnet, which was dyed yellowish-orange, the color of flame. On her wedding day, the fillets in her hair as well as her hairnet would signal her chastity, in Latin, her *pudor*. Around her tunic she put a belt made of the wool of a ewe—a female sheep. The belt was knotted in a knot that her husband would undo when they went to the marriage bed together. Then the bride put on the marriage veil that was dyed yellowish-red. It would protect her from evil spirits as she made the journey from her father’s house to her husband’s, or, in ritual terms, when she left the protection of the Lares (household gods) of her own family to the Lares of her husband. Her new husband gave her fire and wa-



Roman woman wearing a stola. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

ter as she entered his house, and she placed a coin on the little altar of her husband's Lares that would be in a niche in a wall near the entrance. If she was moving to a new district of the city, she would place another coin on the altar of the Lar of the district, the *Lares compitales*.

**THE MARRIED WOMAN.** The standard dress of the Roman *matrona*—that is, a married woman—was the *stola*. It was a dress held to the shoulders by straps; it hung to the feet and resembled a modern slip, except that the skirt was fuller and fell in distinctive folds called *rugae*. Over her shoulders and covering her head was a cloak called a *palla*. Proper Roman women wore their head covered and the repercussions of neglecting this element of fashion could be severe. In the second century B.C.E. a Roman called Sulpicius Gallus who was consul in 166 B.C.E. divorced his wife because she had left the house with her head unveiled. A Roman woman's hair also signaled her status as a married woman; her hair should be carefully dressed and bound with fillets. The

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**EPITAPHS OF A DRESSMAKER AND A HAIRDRESSER**

**INTRODUCTION:** Wealthy women in Rome had their own hairdressers and dressmakers who generally were slaves. Dressmakers and hairdressers were at the beck and call of mistresses who could be demanding. A mistress who found her *coiffeur* unsatisfactory would not hesitate to beat her slave. Many slaves who died left no trace of their existence, except for perhaps a tombstone erected by a friend or fellow slave. The epitaphs on the two tombstones that are cited below are, first, for a dressmaker named Italia and, second, for a hairdresser named Psamate. Note how young they were when they died; Italia was twenty and Psamate only nineteen.

To Italia, dressmaker of Cocceia Phyllis. She lived twenty years. Acastus, her fellow slave, paid for this tombstone because she was poor.

Psamate, hairdresser of Furia, lived nineteen years. Mithrodates, the baker of Flaccus Thorius, set up this tombstone.

**SOURCE:** Jo-Ann Shelton, "Working Women," in *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 303–304.

*stola* and the fillets that tied up her hair would remain the costume of a chaste married woman throughout her life.

**DISGRACED WOMEN.** In the same way that clothing demonstrated the purity of the young Roman girl and the fidelity of the Roman wife, adulteresses and prostitutes also wore distinctive clothes. If a husband divorced his wife because she had an affair with another man, she would wear a plain white toga; she no longer had the right to wear a *stola*. The proper costume for a prostitute was also a toga. This particular way of branding impure women seems to have relaxed as time went on. Juvenal, the sour satirist of Roman life who lived in the second century C.E., claimed that a virtuous woman was hard to find in Rome of his day and yet nobody wore the toga.

**THE WIDOW.** If a woman's husband died, she took off her *stola* and replaced it with a *ricinium*, a word derived from the Latin verb meaning "to throw back." The *ricinium* was a shawl made of a square piece of cloth

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ALLURING DRESS IN AUGUSTAN ROME**

**INTRODUCTION:** Ovid's "Ars Amatoria" (The Art of Love), is a witty manual on the art of seduction, published in 2 B.C.E. In the passage below, Ovid instructs women how to dress their hair, as well as how to dress stylishly within a budget. Purple dye was expensive and highly prized, but there were other, cheaper dyes that were equally effective. He ends with a purely imaginary illustration taken from myth: Briseis, whom Achilles and Agamemnon quarreled over in Homer's *Iliad*, was a blonde who wore black, and the Trojan hero Hector's wife was a brunette and wore white.

**SOURCE:** Ovid, "The Art of Love III," in *The Love Poems*. Trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 131–133.

which a woman folded and then threw back half of it apparently over her shoulder. Wearing it was a sign of mourning and thus it was probably dark-colored, made from wool that was naturally dark. The widow wore the *ricinium* for the year prescribed for mourning. She may have continued to wear it longer if she did not remarry, but this cannot be proven conclusively.

**THE UNMARRIED WOMAN.** Roman marriages were generally arranged. Fathers found proper husbands for their daughters. Romantic love sometimes upset their plans, and it is significant that the god who caused young men and women to fall in love was Cupid, the son of Venus, who shot poisoned arrows at his victims. In other words, romantic love was a poison that caused youths and maidens to neglect their duty to their families and seek improper unions. There were probably not a large number of unmarried women in ancient Rome. In Roman law, an unmarried woman and a widow were considered the same, but it is not clear that they dressed the

same. Neither is it clear what the appropriate costume was for a woman who was divorced for reasons other than adultery, particularly in an era when some Roman men married and divorced for political advantage. It is understood, however, that the costumes prescribed for women belonged to the customs of early Rome known as the *mos maiorum* by the Romans—the way of life of our ancestors. While the Romans revered the ways of their ancestors, they did not always adhere to them religiously, so the guidelines for what women in different stations of life should wear may not have been closely followed.

**THE LATEST STYLE.** Though fashions changed much more slowly in ancient Greece and Rome than nowadays, it was important to keep up to date. Well-to-do Roman women had their own dressmakers and hairdressers, who were generally slaves; if they did not satisfy the whims of their mistresses, they could be flogged. Evidence for hairstyles comes from portrait sculpture and

painting. In the sixth century B.C.E. in Greece, both young men and young girls had their hair done in elaborate coiffeurs, to judge from the so-called *kouros* and *kore* sculptures—that is, freestanding statues showing nude young men and clothed young women which were erected in the archaic period. The marcelling (crimping of the hair into rows of waves) and plaiting of their hair must have taken hours of primping. In the classical period hairstyles became simpler. In Rome in the Augustan period, the emperor Augustus set the style with short hair combed forward on his forehead, and his wife Livia is shown with her hair parted in the middle and marcelled. By the end of the first century tight curls piled up on top of the head was the fashion. Hair dyes turned brunettes blonde, which was the most fashionable color. Sometimes the results were disastrous; the Latin poet Ovid wrote a poem of commiseration to his girlfriend who had lost her hair as a result of using harsh hair dyes.

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### THE APPAREL OF THE SOLDIER

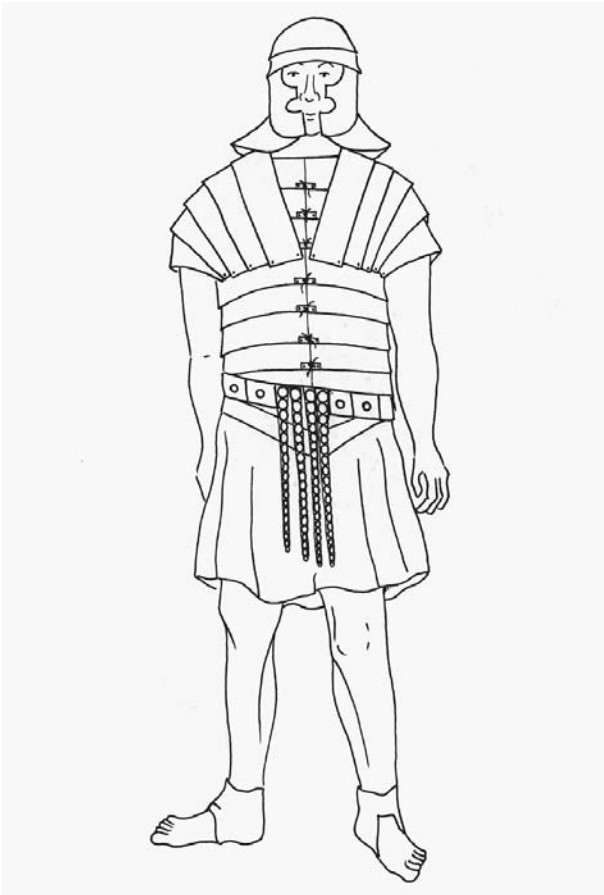
**MILITARY ARMOR IN EARLY GREECE.** Armor evolved over the long period of Greek and Roman history, but the requirements remained standard. Armor had to protect the soldier’s body, it had to allow him free movement of his arms and legs and it had to please the eye. Some of the earliest examples of military garb are from the late Mycenaean period; a vase called the “Warrior Vase” shows soldiers marching in column. They wear helmets and short kilts with tassels leaving their legs bare, and they carry “Figure-8” shields—shields which are pinched in at the middle so that when the soldier held it in front of him to protect his body, he could still use his arms to ward off the enemy. The warriors described in Homer’s *Iliad* who fought in the Trojan War wore similar armor, except that most of them were



4th-century B.C.E. bone tablets with figures of soldiers in armor carrying shield and spear from a necropolis at Columbella just south of Palestrina outside Rome. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO DI VILLA GIULIA ROME/DAGLI ORTI.

described as having round shields. Their armor allowed them to run in case the spears they threw at their enemies failed to hit the mark.

**THE HOPLITE.** As the Greek Dark Ages came to an end, the warrior of the sort found in Homer’s *Iliad* gave way to a heavily-armed infantryman known as the hoplite. He wore a helmet, a metal corselet with metal shoulder pieces, and a triangular plate called a *mitra* to protect his groin. His legs below the knee were protected by greaves, which was armor shaped like the lower leg and fastened behind the calf. Under his corselet he wore a linen tunic and below his waist he had a kind of pleated leather kilt which gave his lower body some protection. He seems to have gone barefoot, for he is represented in art generally without shoes. He got his name “hoplite” from his large, round shield, called a *hoplon*. He fought in formation, drawn up in eight ranks, so that his shield on his left arm protected the right side of the hoplite beside him, while his own right side was protected by the



Roman soldier in armor of type known as “lorica segmentata” that was first introduced in the 1st century C.E. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

hoplite on his other side. As long as the formation—known as a *phalanx*—remained unbroken, a hoplite army could avoid heavy casualties. It was a different matter if the *phalanx* broke. The hoplite was not a nimble soldier since running in full hoplite armor was not easy. Apparently when the Athenian hoplites defeated the Persians at the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C.E., it was the first time that a hoplite army charged on the run. By the fourth century B.C.E., the Greeks discovered how effective the lightly-armed soldier called the “peltast” could be against hoplites, particularly in rough country which was ill-suited to hoplite tactics. The “peltast” carried a *pelte*, small, light shield of leather without a rim which did not impede his movements; if a hoplite had to run for his life, the best he could do was to throw away his shield and that was considered a great disgrace. Nonetheless Greek armies continued to use the *phalanx*. Philip II of Macedon (ruled 359–336 B.C.E.), the father of Alexander the Great, revamped it, making it larger and arming the troops with pikes about 13 feet long. This

was the battle formation which Alexander used in the two great battles where he defeated the Persian king Darius Codomannus and conquered the Persian Empire.

**THE ROMAN ARMY.** The army that dominated the battlefields of the ancient world for the longest period was the army of Rome. In the early days of the Roman republic, it was a citizen army. A consul who set out on a campaign—Rome elected two consuls each year who served both as the principal magistrates of the state and as its commanders-in-chief—would conscript troops from the census list of those eligible to serve, who were owners of property. By the end of the second century B.C.E., Rome was in desperate need of more recruits, and a soldier named Marius, who would hold the consulship seven times during his life, opened the rank of the army to all volunteers. The next big change was made by the emperor Augustus who established a citizen army, made up of legionary soldiers who were citizens, and auxiliary troops who were not citizens and were paid somewhat less. We find their armor depicted on sculpture; Trajan’s Column in Rome is particularly useful, for it shows the campaigns of the emperor Trajan in Dacia, modern Rumania. Sometimes fragments of a soldier’s equipment are turned up by the archaeologist’s spade, or found by accident.

**MAIL ARMOR.** Roman soldiers in the Republic wore chain mail shirts, and they were not phased out until the first century C.E. Mail was made by interlocking one iron ring with four others. Making a corselet of mail required a great deal of skill and patience, but once made, it needed little maintenance. The iron rings rubbing against each other kept the mail shirt clean. The small farmers who formed the backbone of Rome’s armies in the early republic probably wore mail that they inherited from their fathers or grandfathers. Shirts of mail in republican times to the first century B.C.E. reached the mid-thigh; in the early imperial period from the time of the emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), they came to just below the waist, but the soldier got added protection from leather strips called *pteruges* at the shoulders and around the hips. Chain mail left something to be desired, for though it shielded a man against the slash of a sword, it was poor protection against an arrow or the thrust of a dagger. The arrow did not need to pierce the armor to kill, for it could force the rings of the mail shirt into the wound, causing infection, and the results could be fatal.

**SCALE ARMOR.** Scale armor was made from bronze or iron plates of various sizes which were connected in rows and then overlapped like the tiles of a roof. The

finished product looked like fish scales—hence the name. It was cheaper to make than chain mail, and it gave better protection. Its disadvantage was that it was more difficult to put on and take off. In times of relative calm, the soldiers could rely on each other for help putting on their armor, but whenever a detachment was caught by a surprise attack, some of the troops might not succeed in putting on their armor in time to meet the onslaught of the enemy. Scale armor had been standard equipment for the Persian army long before Rome adopted it, for when Herodotus described in his *Histories* the army with which King Xerxes invaded Greece in 480 B.C.E., he reported that the Persian troops wore felt hats called tiaras, patterned tunics with sleeves, and coats of mail like fish scales. This type of armor remained popular in the East both in Parthia, Rome's enemy on the eastern frontier in the time of the emperor Augustus, and among the Sassanid Persians who took over the Parthian realm in the third century C.E. The Persians used cavalry with both riders and horses armed head-to-toe in scale armor, looking like medieval knights except that the horsemen rode without stirrups. The Romans were always quick to borrow good ideas, and adopted scale armor for themselves, both for infantry and heavy cavalry.

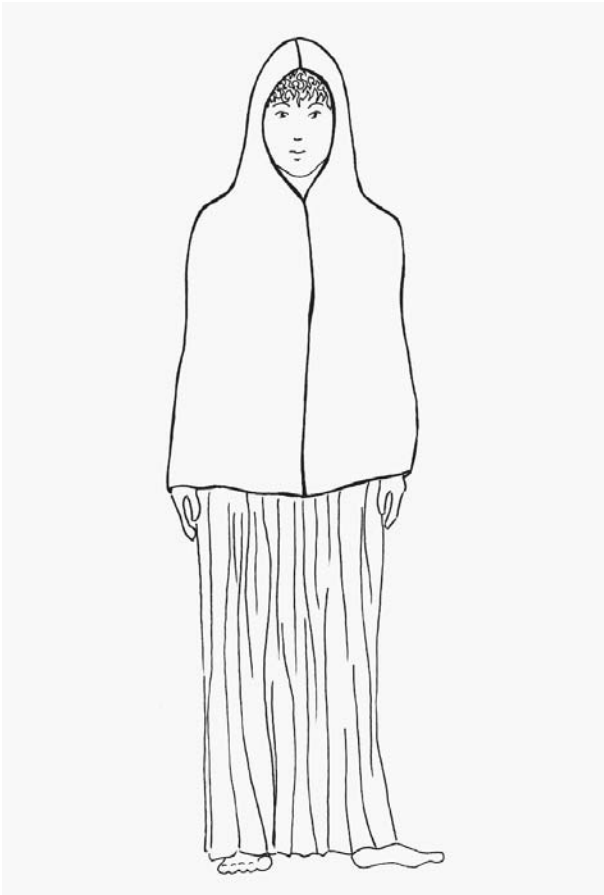
**PLATE ARMOR (LORICA SEGMENTATA).** A corselet made of metal strips—called in Latin a *lorica segmentata*—is the type most often associated with the Roman soldier. It is the armor of choice for movie directors who film cinematic epics about ancient Rome. It was invented in the early first century C.E. and one theory is that it was introduced after a military disaster of 9 C.E. when three Roman legions were annihilated in the Teutoburg Forest in Germany. Excavations at a site identified as the scene of the disaster, however, have uncovered fragments of an early form of *lorica segmentata*, which shows that some of the Roman legionary troops who lost their lives in the Teutoburg Forest were, in fact, wearing a corselet of metal strips. So the invention was not the result of the disaster, though its speedy adoption may have been. The cuirass protecting the chest and diaphragm had overlapping girth straps and curved shoulder plates that provided good protection. The disadvantage was its fastenings: the soldier held the armor on his body with hook and strap fasteners that were never entirely satisfactory. Moreover the soldier's sweat as he fought degraded the leather straps that held the metal plates in place, and the resulting damage might require expensive repairs. The initial cost of making this type of cuirass, however, was less than for chain mail or scale armor. It has been generally believed that the cuirass of metal strips attached to a leather backing became more or less standard for



The Augustus of Primaporta, marble copy of a bronze sculpture of Caesar Augustus addressing his soldiers, holding out his right hand, wearing a breastplate with mythological and historic scenes in low relief, Roman, early empire, c. 20 B.C.E. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the Roman legionary soldier from the second quarter of the first century C.E. until the third century C.E. when it was abandoned. This theory is difficult to prove, however, on the evidence of the ancient monuments and of archaeology. The Column still standing in the center of Rome which depicts the campaigns of the emperor Trajan (98–117 C.E.) into Dacia (modern Rumania) shows legionary soldiers wearing the *lorica segmentata*. It seems to have been standard equipment for the regular troops, where as the auxiliary troops—non-citizens recruited from the Roman provinces—wore other types such as mail shirts. But most of the fittings for the *lorica segmentata* cuirasses which archaeologists have discovered are from Roman forts that were held by auxiliary troops, not by the Roman legions. Moreover, although the Column of Trajan in Rome shows the *lorica segmentata* as the standard armor of the legionary soldier, there is another monument commemorating Trajan's Dacian campaign—a *tropaeum* or “Victory Memorial” erected at Adamklissi in Rumania—and there both the Roman





A man wearing a cucullus (a hooded outer garment). CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

legionaries and the auxiliaries wear scale armor. The Adamklissi monument was sculpted by artists who were close to the battlefront and knew what both the Romans and the Dacians really wore in battle. The sculptors who carved the great spiral on Trajan's Column showing the Dacian campaign in a continuous frieze worked in Rome. They knew merely what the legionary soldier was supposed to wear—not what he did wear.

**THE "MUSCLED CUIRASS."** The "muscle cuirass" which encased the torso and showed the pectoral and stomach muscles underneath, was developed in the Hellenistic world, and the emperor Augustus made it a popular type for imperial sculpture. One of the most famous statues of Augustus, the Prima Porta statue, shows him in a warrior's uniform with a muscle cuirass that sculpted the musculature of his abdomen. Augustus is portrayed with the physique of an athlete—in fact, his body has the proportions which the classical sculptor Polykleitos used for his nude figures of athletes—and his breastplate follows the contours of the well-developed

pectoral and stomach muscles which the onlooker is to assume were underneath it. (In fact, Augustus did not have an athlete's physique; he was not an impressive physical specimen.) Statues of torsos encased in armor plate of this sort have been found all over the empire, often headless, for the heads were sculpted separately and fitted to the base of the neck. It was a favorite type for statues of emperors. In fact, archeologists have not found a single example of an actual Roman "muscle cuirass," though there are examples surviving from the Hellenistic period. This suggests that in the Roman period, the muscle cuirass was parade armor, more popular with sculptors than it was on the battlefield. The Roman sculptors show two types: one with a high waist which would be suitable for a horseback rider, and the other coming further down the hips with a curved extension at the bottom that would not be very suitable for a cavalryman. These cuirasses were fastened at the sides with hinges or rings that were tied together.

**HELMETS.** The helmet of the early Roman legionary soldier was an inverted hemispherical bowl with cheek pieces. Large numbers of these helmets were found in a region of northern Italy called Montefortino, and so nowadays it is called the *Montefortino* helmet. A cheaper alternative to the *Montefortino* was the *Coolus* type which had a neck guard to protect the back of the neck. Both types were borrowed from the Celts, with whom the Romans fought many battles from 387 B.C.E. when a horde of Celts sacked Rome, down to the end of the second century B.C.E. The Romans romanized them by adding crests, which at first were made of feathers fitted to a knob on the crown of the helmet, but by the end of the first century B.C.E. they were made of horsehair, either red or black. In the Civil War period of the first century B.C.E. new types of helmets appeared made of iron rather than bronze, with distinctive cheek guards, embossed eyebrows and ribbing at the rear of the helmet. The crest was no longer fixed to a knob but to a crest holder on top of the helmet. Crests were ornamental, and may have been worn into battle in the early imperial period, but the troops shown on Trajan's Column did not wear crests. The helmet continued to develop to give the wearer increased protection until by the third century C.E., the head was almost completely encased.

**KEEPING WARM.** Roman armies operated in varied climates, from the chilly wet weather at Hadrian's Wall in Britain to the Euphrates River in modern Iraq. Keeping cool in hot weather was a genuine problem. Troops clad in mail armor operating on the eastern frontier were known as *clibanarii*, a word which comes from *clibanus*, meaning "oven." In other words, in hot weather, mail-

clad troops baked. In colder climates, however, the soldier had a variety of cloaks to keep him warm. The sleeveless cloak of variable length called the *paenula* was made of heavy wool cloth, leather, or sometimes fur. It varied in length, and sometimes had a hood. It survives as the *chasuble*, a sleeveless vestment worn by priests who are saying Mass. Another item of clothing that was taken over as a vestment of the church was the *dalmatica*, so called because it was woven from the wool of sheep from Dalmatia (the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea). It was a long tunic with long, wide sleeves which came into fashion in the second century C.E. The *cucullus* was a close-fitting cape with a peaked hood which extended to the waist. It gave protection against rain and cold. If it were open in front, it would have to be held together by a fastener of some sort, but if it was closed in front—as some of them were—it would have to be put on over the head, like a poncho. The *lacerna* was a cloak first worn by the troops which became popular among civilians because it was a practical overgarment for the toga. The *sagum* was a short military cloak of rough wool which Rome borrowed from the Gauls, and it became so popular with the soldiers that “putting on the *sagum*” was an idiom for going to war. It was probably no more than a rectangle of heavy cloth draped over the shoulders and tied under the chin. The *paludamentum* was a military cloak for the general. It was woven from purple wool, and though the size could vary, nine feet long and five feet wide is a good estimate of its size. When it is shown in sculpture, it is held at the right shoulder by a round brooch and then is thrown back so that the general’s—or emperor’s—muscle cuirass can be shown. It was a garment for parades, not for campaigning in the field.

**KEEPING THE LEGS WARM.** The opinion shared by both Greeks and Romans was that trousers were barbarian dress. The Gauls wore them. They were called *bracae* in Latin, a word related to the English word “breeches.” Vergil in his *Aeneid* called them “the barbarian coverings of the legs.” In the days of the Roman republic, the province of Transalpine Gaul—that is, Gaul beyond the Alps—had the unofficial name of “Gallia bracata”: Gaul where the people wear trousers. On the other hand, Cisalpine Gaul—Gaul south of the Alps, that is, the Po Valley of Italy which had been colonized by Gauls in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E.—was “Gallia togata”: the Gaul where togas were worn. If Roman soldiers disparaged trousers as barbaric, they did deign to wear stockings. At Vindolanda, one of the forts along Hadrian’s Wall in the United Kingdom, a cache of Roman writing tablets contained a letter from a Ro-

man soldier thanking a friend or relative for the gift of a pair of socks and underpants. Socks, often brightly colored, were also worn by civilians. The emperor Augustus himself, who was not robust, liked warm stockings. In the fourth century C.E. paintings and mosaics show a new type of leg covering, which seems to be a strip of cloth wrapped around the lower legs like the puttees worn by soldiers in the First World War. Presumably the soldier also wore socks in his military boots. The Roman prejudice against trousers was not universal; the soldiers recruited from non-citizen provincials who served in the Roman forces for 25 years and received citizenship when they were discharged did apparently wear trousers.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

*in Fashion*

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#### ALCIBIADES

c. 450 B.C.E.–404 B.C.E.

*Politician*

**CREATING THE RIGHT IMPRESSION.** Public figures in Greece often dressed to create an impression, and none more so than Alcibiades, the Athenian general who assumed the leadership of the extreme democrats in Athens in 420 B.C.E. and contributed as much as anyone to the Athenian defeat in the Peloponnesian War which ended in 404 B.C.E. with the surrender of Athens to Sparta and her allies. Alcibiades intended for his fashions and his

private life to attract notice as a member of the “smart set” in Athens, a group typically condemned by conservative Athenians as having no respect for principles or tradition. Plutarch (c. 46—later than 120 C.E.), in a short biography of Alcibiades, compared his shrewdness as a statesman with the profligacy of his private life.

But with all these words and deeds, and with all this sagacity and eloquence, he mingled exorbitant luxury and wantonness, in his eating and drinking and dissolute living; wore long purple robes like a woman which dragged after him as he went through the market-place; caused the planks of his trireme to be cut away, so that he might lie more softly, his bed not being placed on the boards but upon girths.

Alcibiades took great care of his appearance; he refused to learn to play the *aulos*—the reed woodwind often mistakenly called a “flute”—because a person playing it had to screw up his face so much that it looked ugly. Alcibiades considered the lyre to be a far more becoming instrument, particularly since one could still talk and sing while playing the lyre.

Alcibiades promoted the ill-fated Athenian expedition against Sicily (415–413 B.C.E.) which ended in complete disaster. Alcibiades himself was recalled from Sicily in 415 B.C.E. to face a charge of sacrilege; not daring to face an Athenian court, he deserted to Sparta. Once there, he adopted the austere Spartan way of life, abandoning his expensive mantle of Milesian wool. He took cold baths and exercised regularly, naked, like the Spartans. Then when he wore out his welcome at Sparta, he transferred his services to Persia, and adopted Persian dress and the Persian way of life. Finally he answered a call from the sailors of the Athenian fleet to lead them and he became an Athenian general once again until his fleet suffered a defeat by Sparta. He was not personally responsible for the defeat, but nonetheless he lost his command and did not dare return to Athens. Athens surrendered in 404 B.C.E., and after the surrender, Alcibiades was assassinated at the instigation of Sparta out of the belief that Athens would never acquiesce in her defeat as long as Alcibiades was alive.

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## CONSTANTIUS II

317 C.E.–361 C.E.

*Roman emperor*

**DRESSING FOR THE IMPERIAL OFFICE.** Roman emperors, from the first emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) onwards, had always sought to maintain the dignity and prestige of their office with their dress and their deportment, but from the end of the third century C.E. their efforts to set themselves apart from ordinary citizens became more pronounced. One of the most striking descriptions of this period of an emperor on public display concerns Constantius II, who inherited the empire along with his two brothers, Constantine II and Constans, after the death of his father, Constantine I, in 337 C.E. Upon the deaths of his brothers in 340 and 350, respectively, he became ruler of the whole empire. In 357 C.E. Constantius II visited Rome for the first time, and his ceremonial entrance into the city is described vividly by the last great classical historian to write in Latin, Ammianus Marcellinus. The emperor rode, seated in a golden coach studded with precious stones. Before him were attendants with banners in the shape of dragons billowing in the wind, tied to the tips of golden, jewel-studded lances. On both sides of his coach were soldiers with shields, plumed helmets, and gleaming breastplates, and along with them in the parade were corps of cavalrymen wearing armor made of thin plates of steel that covered their bodies. Constantius II stared straight ahead, not acknowledging the cheers, though when he passed under a gateway he stooped slightly as if he were too tall to fit under it, thought he was, in fact, a rather short man. He did not spit or blow his nose; instead he remained motionless, even when his coach jolted over a bump in the road. He attempted to appear superhuman.

**REFLECTS CHANGE IN STATUS.** While the Roman Empire was still pagan, Roman emperors had been considered divine, and loyal subjects sacrificed to them. But after Constantine I, all the Roman emperors save one were Christian, and their relationship to the divine world had to change. The emperors became the deputies on earth of God in Heaven, and as such, they had to adopt a style and deportment that fitted this new Christian concept of the imperial office. The “advent” or ceremonial entrance of Constantius II into Rome in 357 C.E. is a vivid illustration of this new fashion in practice.

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## DIOGENES

c. 400 B.C.E.—c. 325 B.C.E.

### *Philosopher*

**FASHION FOR A PHILOSOPHER.** Philosophers did not always dress according to convention. Empedocles (c. 493–c. 433 B.C.E.)—best known for defining the four elements of earth, air, fire and water—wore sandals with soles of bronze. Socrates went barefoot in all weather. But the philosopher who made a cult of shunning all luxury was Diogenes of Sinope, who founded the Cynic school of philosophy (though some credited its foundation to a disciple of Socrates named Antisthenes, whom Diogenes considered his teacher). Diogenes was exiled from Sinope on the south shore of the Black Sea, some said because either he or his father was the city's mint master and minted coins that were adulterated with base metal. He came to Athens and soon made a reputation as a man who rejected all conventions. He maintained that a person would attain happiness by satisfying his needs in the simplest possible way.

**INSULTED THOSE IN FINERY.** There were various stories told about his rude remarks to persons dressed in finery whom he met. A young man who was splendidly attired asked him some questions, and Diogenes said he would not answer until he discovered if his questioner was a man or a woman. He told a man who gave himself airs because he was wearing a lion's skin not to disgrace the garb of nature. When he saw a youth dressing himself with care so as to look neat and handsome, he told him that if he was beautifying himself to impress men, he was to be pitied, and if for women, he was immoral. His rudeness earned him the nickname "dog" (in Greek, *kyon*), from which comes the word "cynic"; hence his followers were called "Cynics."

**NOT A FORMAL SCHOOL.** The Cynics were never organized into a formal school of philosophy, but like the "hippies" of the 1960s and the 1970s in America, every Cynic chose his own philosophy. The common thread amongst Cynics was a love of the simple life and disdain for fine clothes and all possessions. Although the Cynic sect faded out in the second and first centuries B.C.E., it revived in the first century C.E., and Rome was full of Cynic beggar philosophers whose shabby clothes proclaimed their calling. Like Diogenes, they exercised the right of free speech, and their open criticism of the

emperors frequently earned them banishment from Rome.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Fashion*

Author unknown, *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (c. 100 C.E.)—The unknown author of this mariner's handbook was familiar with trade along the sea routes from the Red Sea ports to India, and among the commodities that came to the Roman Empire from the east were Indian cotton, raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloth and "mallow cloth" or jute, a rough fiber used nowadays for gunny sacks.

Herodotus, *The Histories* (c. 425 B.C.E.)—The main subject of *The Histories* is the Persian War of 480–479 B.C.E. when Persia attempted to invade Greece, but Herodotus tells why the Athenian women abandoned the Dorian *peplos* for the Ionian linen *chiton* in the last years of the sixth century B.C.E.—it was because the Athenian women used the safety-pins that fastened the *peplos* at the shoulders to stab a man to death.

Ovid, *The Art of Love* (c. 1 C.E.)—Ovid's manual in poetry of how to win the love of women contains a wealth of information about the fashions of Rome in the reign of the emperor Augustus.

Phaidimos, *Peplos Kore* (about 530 B.C.E.)—This statue of a girl dedicated in the sanctuary of Athena on the Acropolis of Athens and discovered when the Acropolis was excavated in the late nineteenth century, shows a simple Dorian *peplos* of the style worn by Athenian women in the mid-sixth century B.C.E.

Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus), *Natural History* (c. 79 C.E.)—This great ragbag of information was still being revised when Pliny died in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E. It contains a good deal of information about cloth-making and dying in Italy of the first century C.E.

Plutarch, *Life of Alexander the Great* (after 100 C.E.)—Plutarch's collection of biographies titled the *Parallel*

*Lives* includes a life of Alexander the Great that relates his attraction to Asian costumes—he did not go so far as to adopt trousers, a sleeved vest or the pointed cap called the “tiara,” but he adopted other fashions from Persia, and this greatly displeased his fellow Macedonians.

Sculptor Unknown, *Kore* from Acropolis of Athens wearing Ionian *chiton* and over it, a *himation* (c. 510 B.C.E.)—This statue of a young girl was dedicated on the Acropolis of Athens near the end of the sixth century B.C.E. and her dress illustrates the change of fashion in the two decades or so since the *Peplos Kore* was dedicated. This girl wears a colorful linen *chiton* under a draped woolen *himation* with an edge which shows how skillfully cloth-makers could weave patterned material.

Tertullian (Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus), *De Pallio* (“On my Cloak”; 209 C.E.)—Tertullian, a doughty defender of Christianity, here writes in a light-hearted vein. He has been upbraided for abandoning his Roma toga for a *pallium*, a Greek cloak favored by philosophers and here he explains why.

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (c. 400 B.C.E.)—Thucydides’ subject was the war between the Athenian empire and the Spartan alliance (431–404 B.C.E.) but he prefaces it with a discussion of the economic and social progress of Greece in the archaic period. Among the topics which he touches upon is “Fashion”; the Athenians, he claims, were the first to adopt luxurious “Ionian” linen garments whereas the Spartans used the simpler styles which in Thucydides’ own day became the preferred fashion in Greece.

Titus Livius, *Ab urbe condita libri cxlii* (“History of Rome from its Foundation, 142 Books”; 39 B.C.E.—17 C.E.)—A passage of Livy’s *History* (34.1) describes a demonstration in Rome by women for the repeal of a law passed twenty years before in the aftermath of the disastrous Roman defeat by Hannibal at Cannae which restricted expensive and luxurious fashions. The women continued to demonstrate until the law was repealed.

Vegetius (Flavius Vegetius Renatus), *De Re Militari* (“On the Military Arts”; c. 390 C.E.)—Vegetius’ subject is the art and science of war, but one section of his first book deals with the history of arms and armor.

chapter four

LITERATURE

James Allan Evans

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	118	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	120	Aeschylus . . . . .	175
TOPICS		Cato . . . . .	175
The Age of Homeric Epic . . . . .	122	Thucydides . . . . .	176
The Boeotian School of Epic . . . . .	126	Vergil . . . . .	177
The Age of Lyric Poetry . . . . .	128	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	178
Poets for Hire. . . . .	131	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY	
Herodotus, the Father of History . . . . .	133	DOCUMENTS	
Thucydides . . . . .	136	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
History after Thucydides . . . . .	137	<i>A Love Poem of Sappho</i> (Sappho writes of her	
Greek Comedy . . . . .	138	longing for another woman). . . . .	130
Greek Tragedy . . . . .	144	<i>Aristotle on Tragedy and Comedy</i> (Aristotle	
The Art of Public Speaking in Greece . . . . .	154	discusses the six elements of tragedy). . . . .	145
Greek Literature after Alexander the Great . . . . .	155	<i>Antigone's Speech in Defense of Conscience</i> . . . . .	148
Roman Theater . . . . .	157	The Great Library at Alexandria . . . . .	156
Latin Poetry Before the Augustan Age . . . . .	160	<i>Lucretius and the Atomic Theory</i> (Lucretius	
Latin Prose Writers Before the Augustan		asserts that nothing can be created out	
Age . . . . .	162	of nothing) . . . . .	161
The Golden Age of Latin Literature Under		<i>Vergil's Proclamation of Rome's Mission</i>	
Augustus . . . . .	164	(Vergil writes of Rome's mission to	
Latin Literature of the Silver Age . . . . .	169	govern the world) . . . . .	166
Greek Literature of the Imperial Age . . . . .	172	<i>Horace on Patriotism</i> (Horace's poem praises	
		commitment to the empire) . . . . .	168

## IMPORTANT EVENTS in Literature

- c. 725 B.C.E. Homer's epic poems *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- c. 675 B.C.E. are written down.
- c. 700 B.C.E. Hesiod writes the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*.
- c. 650 B.C.E. Archilochos of Paros wins a reputation for his iambic and elegiac poetry.
- c. 620 B.C.E. The lyric poet Alcaeus of Lesbos is born.
- c. 612 B.C.E. The poetess Sappho of Lesbos is born.
- 535 B.C.E. A dramatic competition is held in Athens for the first time.
- 534 B.C.E. Thespis of Icaria, the first tragedian to appear as an actor and take a solo role apart from the chorus, wins a prize for tragedy in the dramatic competition in Athens.
- 518 B.C.E. The lyric poet Pindar is born.
- c. 493 B.C.E. The Athenian tragic poet Phrynichus produces *The Capture of Miletus* on the fall of Miletus to the Persians in 494 B.C.E. and is fined for reminding the Athenians too clearly of the misfortunes of their friends.
- 472 B.C.E. Aeschylus produces his play *The Persians*.
- 468 B.C.E. Sophocles wins his first victory in the writing of tragic plays, defeating Aeschylus.
- 467 B.C.E. Aeschylus produces his *Seven Against Thebes*, the last play of a trilogy on the Oedipus legend.
- 462 B.C.E. Aeschylus produces his play *Suppliants*.
- 458 B.C.E. Aeschylus produces his trilogy, the *Oresteia*, consisting of the *Agamemnon*, the *Choephoroe*, and the *Eumenides*, all of which have survived; a satyr play, the *Proteus*, is lost.
- 456 B.C.E. Aeschylus dies at Gela in Sicily.
- 455 B.C.E. Euripides makes his first appearance in a tragic contest with a set of three tragedies and one satyr play, placing third—that is, last.
- c. 442 B.C.E. Sophocles produces his tragedy, the *Antigone*.
- 438 B.C.E. Euripides produces his play *Alcestis* which has a happy ending and is substituted for a satyr play in his tetralogy.
- 425 B.C.E. Aristophanes produces his play *Acharnians*, the earliest example of Old Comedy to survive.
- 405 B.C.E. Euripides dies only a few months after Sophocles.
- 322 B.C.E. The orator Demosthenes dies, taking poison to avoid capture by the Macedonians.
- 305 B.C.E. Callimachus is born. He will become a librarian at the great library at Alexandria and a poet typical of the Alexandrian school, writing for a small but well-educated group of readers.
- 293 B.C.E. Menander, the Athenian playwright who was the greatest master of New Comedy, dies before reaching the age of fifty.
- c. 270 B.C.E. Gnaeus Naevius, author of the Latin epic *The War against Carthage* and the inventor of the Roman historical play, is born.
- 240 B.C.E. The first play, a Latin adaptation of a Greek tragedy by Livius Andronicus, is produced in Rome at the Harvest Festival (*ludi Romani*).

- 239 B.C.E. The Roman poet Quintus Ennius is born. He will write the *Annals*, eighteen books of epic poetry written in the dactylic hexameter borrowed from Greek epic poetry.
- 205 B.C.E. Plautus produces his play *Miles Gloriosus* in Rome.
- 166 B.C.E. Terence produces his first play, the *Andria* (Woman of Andros).
- 106 B.C.E. Rome's greatest orator, Marcus Tullius Cicero, is born in the Italian town of Arpinum (modern Arpino). In addition to his speeches, Cicero would write dialogues on philosophy, rhetoric and religion, and a large corpus of his private letters also survives.
- c. 84 B.C.E. The poet Catullus is born at Verona.
- 70 B.C.E. Cicero prosecutes the politician Verres for maladministration in Sicily. After trial, Cicero publishes his speeches against Verres under the title *Verrine Orations*.
- 63 B.C.E. Cicero is consul and delivers his four Catiline orations, exposing the conspiracy of Catiline.
- Vergil is born near Mantua in what was at that time the Roman province of Cisalpine Gaul.
- 59 B.C.E. The Roman historian Livy (Titus Livius) is born. He will write a history of Rome from its foundation.
- 44 B.C.E. Cicero delivers fourteen speeches known as his "Philippics" attacking Mark Antony, Julius Caesar's adjutant who attempted to seize power after Caesar's assassination. His criticism of Mark Antony results in his execution at the end of 43 B.C.E.
- 43 B.C.E. Ovid is born at Sulmo, modern Sulmona about 90 miles (150 kilometers) east of Rome.
- c. 42 B.C.E. Vergil joins the circle of Maecenas, the wealthy public relations minister of Julius Caesar's heir and adoptive son, Octavian, who would become the emperor Augustus. At the urging of Maecenas he writes his *Georgics*, a didactic poem in four books on husbandry, between 37 and 29 B.C.E.
- 30 B.C.E. Horace publishes his *Epodes*, adapting the iambics of Archilochus to Latin.
- 23 B.C.E. Horace publishes the first three books of his *Carmina*, that is, his songs.
- 19 B.C.E. Vergil dies, leaving his epic poem the *Aeneid* unfinished. Nonetheless the *Aeneid* would become the national epic of the Roman Empire.
- c. 13 B.C.E. Horace publishes the fourth book of his *Carmina*.
- c. 17 C.E. Columella (Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella), the writer of a treatise on husbandry, is born.
- 37 C.E. Flavius Josephus is born. He will write the *Antiquities of the Jews* and the *Jewish War*, an account of the insurrection in Judaea which broke out in 66 B.C.E.
- c. 56 C.E. The historian Cornelius Tacitus is born. He will write the *Annales*, covering the history of the Julio-Claudian emperors from Tiberius to Nero, and the *History* which continued it from the Year of the Four Emperors, 68 C.E.
- c. 65 C.E. Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus), nephew of Pliny the Elder, is born. He will write the *Letters of Pliny* and a panegyric (a formal oration) in praise of the emperor Trajan.
- 65 C.E. The epic poet Lucan is implicated in a conspiracy against the emperor Nero and forced to commit suicide.
- c. 66 C.E. Petronius Arbiter, author of the Latin novel *Satyricon*, commits suicide after being accused on a trumped-up charge of treason against the emperor Nero.
- 79 C.E. Pliny the Elder, author of the *Natural History*, dies in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.



## OVERVIEW *of Literature*

**KEY DATES.** A general survey of literature in the world of ancient Greece and Rome takes us from the eighth century B.C.E. to the sixth century C.E., a span of nearly 1,400 years. Greek literature began with the development of the Greek alphabet in the eighth century B.C.E. that became the basis of the Latin alphabet still used by the romance languages. Greek literature then spawned Roman (Latin) literature as the Romans fell under the influence of Greek culture; the conventional date for the beginning of Latin literature is 240 B.C.E. when the Greek ex-slave Livius Andronicus translated the Greek poet Homer's *Odyssey* into Latin. The unofficial end of Greco-Roman literature can be linked to the closing of the Neoplatonic Academy in Athens in 529 C.E., which marks the end of Athens as a center for the teaching of Greek philosophy and the traditions of the pagan world. While this is a convenient marker for the end of the Greco-Roman literary tradition, the literary and philosophic traditions of the pre-Christian Greco-Roman world did not come to such an abrupt end. Moreover, the output of Christian literature in Greek and Latin was not affected by the closure of the Academy in Athens.

**THE HEROIC AGE.** In the years prior to 1100 B.C.E. there was a Bronze Age civilization in Greece which scholars labelled "Mycenaean" after its most important center, Mycenae, in the Argolid region south of the Isthmus of Corinth. The Mycenaeans were descended from Greek-speaking migrants who entered Greece shortly after 2000 B.C.E., but their civilization started to flower around 1600 B.C.E. thanks to contacts with Egypt, the Near East, and, in particular, with the "Minoan" civilization on Crete. Five hundred years later, this Mycenaean civilization came to an end, overwhelmed by unknown invaders who left a trail of destruction all over the eastern Mediterranean. Yet, as this civilization receded into the misty past, it left behind the literary heritage of an heroic age. The Greeks told stories of mythical heroes such as Hercules, the superman of Greek mythology; Jason and his

Argonauts who sailed in quest of the Golden Fleece; and Oedipus, king of Thebes in central Greece who was fated to kill his own father and marry his mother. Greek literature began with oral bards who sang poems about the exploits of such heroes in the banquet halls of aristocrats, or at the religious festivals. The most famous of these myths was the tale of the Trojan war in which the Greeks laid siege to the city of Troy in order to reclaim the kidnapped wife of a Greek king. The epic tale of famous warriors and scheming gods told in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* may have been based on an actual event; the ruins of Troy have been found in the northwest corner of Asia Minor near the entrance to the Hellespont. The myth of Troy provided material for Greek poetry and drama throughout the great period of Greek literature.

**HOMER AND EPIC POETRY.** The written literature of Greece begins with Homer. We have no concrete information about his identity. The legend that he was blind might be true but it cannot be proved. The two epics attributed to him, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* both take their subject matter from the Trojan War myths, but they differ greatly in tone and temper. The *Iliad* describes how the hero Achilles made the quest for glory his all-important aim, while the *Odyssey* relates a story of survival as the Greek hero Odysseus endures a journey of ten years before returning home from the war. The Homeric poems were not unique in their subject matter. Other poets told stories of the heroes, and some fragments of their epics still exist. But out of the great crop of heroic poetry only the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have survived complete. At the same time, there was another school of epic which catered to a less aristocratic audience, and its great representative was Hesiod.

**OTHER POETIC FORMS.** The epic soon had to share the limelight with other genres of poetry, such as elegiac, iambic, and personal and choral lyric. Elegiac poetry may first have been used for war poems, for its earliest masters wrote of the glory and horrors of warfare, but it became the favorite vehicle for expressions of love and pleasure thanks to an early master of elegy, Mimnermus of Colophon, the first hedonist in Western literature. The foremost master of iambic poetry was Archilochus of Paros, a lighthearted cynic who attacked the ideals of chivalry and heroism in battle. Lyric poetry dealt with personal feelings: political animosities, the pleasure of wine, and love. Alcaeus of Lesbos was a master of personal lyric, that is, songs meant to be sung at private gatherings of like-minded people; the greatest of the lyric artists, Sappho, also of Lesbos, wrote of love and marriage with an intensity which no later poet would match.

**THE CHORAL ODE.** Moving from the sixth into the fifth century B.C.E., two masters of a different type of lyric arose to popularity: Simonides of Ceos and Pindar. The first pioneered the *epinikion*, a victory ode sung by a choir in honor of a winner in one of the great athletic contests. Simonides was also famous for the epigrams he wrote for the monuments of the Greek warriors who died in the Persian Wars (490–479 B.C.E.), and recently a long papyrus fragment of his poem on the Battle of Plataea (479 B.C.E.) has been discovered. Pindar wrote a variety of poetry, but what has survived are his victory odes for the prize winners at the great athletic games. His style was elevated, with many allusions to Greek myths familiar to his listeners. Bacchylides, the third writer of choral lyrics who deserves mention, struck a different tone. His style was straightforward and simple. He marks the end of the great age of choral lyric.

**DRAMA.** The fifth century B.C.E. was the great age of drama, and the chief patron was Athens. There were two dramatic festivals, held in honor of Dionysus, the god of drama: the City Dionysia in March and the Lenaean festival in January. Comedies were presented on the second day of the festival, followed by three full days of tragedies—one day for each tragic poet who had been assigned a chorus by the archon, the chief magistrate of Athens. Each day three tragedies would be produced, followed by a burlesque called a satyr play, and at the end, the audience would judge which tragedian won. The costs of production were paid by wealthy citizens who were expected to defray them as their civic duty. The vast majority of these comedies and tragedies have been lost, but there is still a representative number by the playwrights whom the Greeks themselves judged the best: Aristophanes for comedy, and Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides for tragedy. Tragedies continued to be written after the fifth century B.C.E. but the heyday of the genre was over, and with the conquest of Greece by Alexander the Great's father, Philip, the classical age of literature came to an end. A century after Aristophanes, a new dramatist, Menander, produced comedies in Athens that gave a new look to the stage. Menander's comedies took their plots from domestic life. The political lampoons and bawdy jokes of Aristophanic comedy disappeared; the "New Comedy" of Menander and his rivals belonged to a new political climate, when writers had to be more cautious about what they wrote.

**THE WRITERS OF HISTORY.** Herodotus, whose *Histories* were published about 425 B.C.E., was the first Western historian who did not merely record what

events happened; he asked why they happened. His search for the reason why Persia invaded Greece led him to examine the mainsprings of Persian imperialism. Thucydides, a younger contemporary of Herodotus, chose to write on more current history: the great war between Athens and Sparta (431–404 B.C.E.), and he left his work unfinished. His history was an accurate year-by-year analysis of the war, and it is a splendid study of war psychosis. Time has been unkind to the successors of Herodotus and Thucydides, such as Theopompus and Ephorus who wrote in the fourth century B.C.E., and the historians who wrote about Alexander the Great, of whom there is only secondhand knowledge. In the second century B.C.E. Greece produced another great historian, Polybius, whose subject was the rise of Rome.

**THE HELLENISTIC AGE.** In the Hellenistic Age, after Alexander the Great's death, Alexander's generals founded kingdoms which self-consciously cultivated Greek culture. In Egypt, the Ptolemaic kings built a great library at their capital, Alexandria, and made it a center of literary culture. The writers and researchers who worked there wrote for a restricted audience, for the Greeks were a minority in Egypt and the Egyptians preferred their own native culture. The leading Alexandrian poet was Callimachus, who was greatly admired though his surviving poetry seems dry to modern readers. Two other Alexandrians wrote more engaging material; Apollonius of Rhodes and Theocritus. Apollonius wrote an epic poem on the quest of Jason for the Golden Fleece, which reads more like a romantic novel than a heroic epic. While Theocritus wrote many kinds of poetry, his fame rests on his bucolic idylls: pastoral poetry full of yearning for the countryside and the life lived there. The power of Greek culture influenced even the mighty Rome, which conquered the flourishing Greek cities in southern Italy and Sicily in the third century B.C.E. Contrary to most trends of war in which the conquered culture is subsumed into that of the conqueror, Greek culture became preeminent in Rome after Greece's defeat. The Latin poet Horace commented on this phenomenon in saying, "When Greece was captured, she took captive her rough conqueror." Latin literature begins with a Greek, Livius Andronicus. He came to Rome as a slave, was freed, and became a teacher, and then an actor and stage-manager. His translation of the *Odyssey* from Greek into the Roman language of Latin marks the beginning of Latin literature. The Roman ruling class fully embraced Greek literature, and there was soon a cultivated circle that learned to speak Greek and engaged Greek culture. The

Romans valued the Greek culture and language so much that the first Roman historians wrote in Greek rather than Latin.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF LATIN LITERATURE.** The Romans did not long shun their native language, quickly developing literature in Latin. A younger contemporary of Livius Andronicus, Plautus, translated and modified plays from the Greek “New Comedy” for Roman tastes. Ennius wrote an epic on the history of Rome, adapting the Homeric meter to Latin. The hard-boiled Roman statesman, Cato the Elder, wrote the first history of Rome in Latin in the second century B.C.E., and in the next century, there was a flowering of Latin literature: Julius Caesar described his conquests in unadorned prose, Cicero was famous both for his oratory and his philosophic works that introduced Greek ideas into a Latin context, and the poetry of Catullus marked a new wave when poets broke free of the conventions of the past. The Golden Age of Latin literature came with the next generation, under the emperor Augustus, whose minister of culture, Maecenas, gathered about him a circle of poets. He had an ulterior motive besides his support of culture: Augustus wanted literature to serve the interests of his new regime. He wanted his achievements celebrated in poetry, and the poet Vergil rose to the challenge. He did not write an epic on Augustus, but instead chose for his subject the Trojan hero, Aeneas, whom Augustus claimed as his ultimate ancestor. Although another Trojan hero, Hector, overshadows Aeneas in Homer’s *Iliad*, Aeneas was the hero who survived the fall of Troy; long before Vergil wrote his *Aeneid*, the Romans had claimed him as the warrior who came to Latium and founded the royal line to which Rome’s founder, Romulus, belonged. Vergil wove Greek and Latin mythology into the fabric of his great epic, and he added a new episode: a romance between Aeneas and Dido, queen of Carthage, which ends with Aeneas deserting Dido at the command of Jupiter, who has destined him to lay the foundation of the Roman Empire. Latin literature had a second great period in the first century B.C.E., with writers such as the historian Tacitus, the biographer Suetonius, the satirist Juvenal, and the novelist Petronius producing major works. Literary production continued, but the spark of genius did not reappear until the late empire, with the soldier-historian Ammianus Marcellinus and a crop of other authors in both Latin and Greek who continued to write in the classical tradition. At the same time there was a flowering of Christian literature in both languages: hymns, ecclesiastical histories, and chronicles which bring us to the threshold of the Middle Ages.

## TOPICS in Literature

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### THE AGE OF HOMERIC EPIC

**THE EMERGENCE OF THE CITY-STATE.** The word “city-state” is a translation of the Greek word *polis* from which we derive the word “politics.” It was the political unit that arose out of the ruins of the Mycenaean world, and had a social and economic structure closer to that of Babylon and ancient Egypt than to the later world of classical Greece. The palaces where the Mycenaean *wanaktes*—a word meaning something like “god-kings”—had their seats were also bureaucratic centers where clerks kept records and dispatched memoranda to lower-ranking officials. Among them were the headmen of the various villages with the title *pa-si-reu*, a word that evolves into the classical Greek *basileus*, a king with a legitimate claim to the throne based on heredity and the favor of the gods. When the Mycenaean civilization was destroyed in the century of upheavals and migrations after 1200 B.C.E., the *wanaktes* and their palaces were swept away, and the need for writing disappeared along with them. Yet the *basileis* with their little domains endured, and once life in Greece became more secure again after 1000 B.C.E., these little baronies emerged as self-governing political units. It was in the halls of these little kings that bards improvised tales of the heroes that would eventually become the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

**THE WORLD OF HOMER.** Homer’s reputation as Greece’s greatest epic poet rests on two famous works attributed to him: *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which focus on a legendary war between Greece and Troy known as the “Trojan War” and its aftermath. While these works have been studied over centuries to modern times, details of the life of Homer are sketchy at best. Greek sculptors made portraits of him that can be easily recognized by their blind eyes and beetling brow, but they are imaginative creations rather than a true representation of his appearance. Several cities claimed to be his birthplace. The two with the best claims were Chios, one of the Dodecanese islands off the Turkish coast, and Smyrna, an important Greek settlement on the west coast of Asia Minor. Both were Ionian cities founded during the “Dark Ages” of Greece by refugees who were displaced by a wave of migrants into the Peloponnesos after the collapse of the Mycenaean world. Homer’s dialect of Greek is mostly Ionic, though his Greek was not the Greek of the streets; it was “epic Greek,” the language

used by epic poets. We do not know exactly when he lived. It is clear from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that the Trojan War took place long before they were written, in an age when men were mightier than in the contemporary world. Yet, since the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were written down, it follows that Homer could write, or else dictated to someone who could. Thus we must date him *after* the Greeks borrowed the north Semitic alphabet from the Phoenicians and adapted it to their own use, adding vowels which the Phoenician alphabet lacked. When the adaptation occurred is much disputed, but the general consensus dates it not long after 800 B.C.E. So a Homer who knew how to write could have lived as early as the first half of the eighth century B.C.E., but hardly earlier. For the latest date, the *terminus ante quem* as it is called, a fragment of a vase found on the island of Ischia off the coast of Naples provides a clue. An inscription in verse on the vase fragment refers to a cup belonging to the hero Nestor which is described in the *Iliad*, and the vase is dated to before 700 B.C.E. Therefore, the epic must have been written before this vase was made. This date allows scholars to pinpoint the period between 725 and 675 B.C.E. as the time when the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were written down.

**PERFORMANCE OF THE EPIC POET.** The poems of Homer were composed in an age when oral bards sang poems to the accompaniment of the lyre, with the epic composed like music written in half and quarter notes; a long syllable equals a half note and a short syllable a quarter note. The stress accents found in medieval and modern poetry did not exist in this poetry, which was written to be sung, but there were pitch accents; almost every word had a pitch accent where the voice went up or down. The music of the lyre—an instrument with strings which the bard plucked as he sang—provided a melodic background. As he sang, dancers might perform to the music, but both the music and dance were subordinated to the spoken word. The poems of Homer must have started out as songs that were sung by bards but at some point they were committed to writing. Schoolboys learned them and committed portions of them to memory. They were recited at religious festivals. They had an influence on the language of Greece similar to the effect that the English translation of the King James Bible of 1611 had on the English language. The Homeric poems not only mark the beginning of Greek literature; their influence is felt in all aspects of Greek culture.

**THE TROJAN WAR.** The legend of the Trojan War probably has an historical basis, for there is archaeological evidence that around 1250 B.C.E. a fortified city

came to a violent end on the site which Greek tradition identified as Troy. So there was once a war that ended with the capture of Troy, but the story relayed in Homer's telling of the Trojan War is an imaginative one that includes the involvement of the gods. In fact, the conflict begins with the gods when a beauty contest between the goddesses Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite takes an ugly turn. Having chosen a mortal prince from Troy named Paris to judge who was the most beautiful, each goddess attempts to bribe the young man to select her, and Paris chooses Aphrodite on the basis of her promise to give him the most beautiful woman in the world. Unfortunately, the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, is already the wife of a Spartan (Greek) king named Menelaus, so Paris' abduction of her to Troy prompts the Greeks to muster a fleet in pursuit of her under the leadership of the high king of Greece, Agamemnon. The bloody conflict at Troy lasts ten years, and finally ends when the Greeks trick the Trojans into opening up the gates of the city to a large wooden horse concealing Greek warriors inside. These warriors then open the gates to the rest of the Greek army, allowing for the sacking of Troy. The Trojan warriors were slain and the women sold into slavery, though there were myths that some Trojans escaped; some aristocratic Roman families were to claim descent from Trojan heroes.

**THE NOSTOI.** The return home of the Greek victors after the war spawned a number of other myths of the type known as *nostoi*, the Greek word for "returns home." The most famous *nostos* was the tale of Odysseus, who spent ten years trying to reach his island of Ithaca, the subject of Homer's *Odyssey*. The Trojan War left a powerful imprint on the Greek imagination, perhaps because—if the date of 1250 B.C.E. is more or less correct—it was the last great venture of the Greek Bronze Age before the Mycenaean civilization fell. The myths about it were worked and reworked by Greek poets and dramatists. Not only the Trojan War itself, but the *nostoi* provided the raw material for the earliest Greek literature of Greece, and from Greece the tales of the Trojan War passed to Rome, where the family of the Iulii, which produced Julius Caesar, claimed descent from the Trojan hero Aeneas. Thus the Trojan War would contribute to the self-definition of both the Greeks and the Romans.

**THE ILIAD.** One of the reasons the *Iliad* has stood the test of time is that it is much more than a story about a war. In epic format, Homer provides keen psychological portraits of the heroes involved on both sides of the conflict. Central to the story is the figure of Achilles, the

leader of the Myrmidons and the greatest warrior on the Greek side. He is practically invincible on the battlefield because his immersion in the River Styx as a baby prevents him from being wounded anywhere on his body except for his heel—the one part that the water had not touched. He is the paradigm of the doomed hero who knows that death awaits him if he continues to fight at Troy, yet his desire for glory in battle consumes him. His status as Greece's best warrior sets him up for conflict with the army's leader, Agamemnon, and when the two have a dispute over the distribution of the spoils of war, Achilles allows the affront to his ego to negate his duty in battle and he refuses to fight against the Trojans. His decision has terrible consequences for both himself personally and the Greek military cause. Without Achilles in battle, the tide of the war turns in the Trojans' favor and several key leaders of the Greek side are wounded, including Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Odysseus. Achilles—though he will not return to battle himself—loans his armor to his friend Patroclus and allows him to lead the Myrmidons into battle, where Patroclus is killed by the Trojan hero, Hector. Once Achilles learns of Patroclus' death he returns to battle, and avenges Patroclus' death by killing Hector. He then buries his friend with funeral rites that are splendid, almost barbaric. Although Achilles is portrayed as a merciless warrior in battle, Homer humanizes him with a display of compassion when Hector's father, old King Priam, visits Achilles under cover of night to ransom the body of his son. Achilles is moved by pity, both for Priam and for his own father, Peleus, for his mother has warned him that if he returns to battle, his own death would soon follow Hector's. He accepts the ransom and sends Priam safely back to Troy and the *Iliad* ends with Hector's funeral. Throughout the story, Homer leaves no doubt that the Greek heroes are better warriors than the Trojans, and yet he is surprisingly sympathetic to Troy. The most sympathetic character in the story is the Trojan hero Hector. He is a great warrior but he does not love war. He fights to defend Troy, but he knows that Troy is doomed and his wife and son face a perilous future. Hector's last farewell to them is the most moving passage in the *Iliad*. He is hopelessly outclassed when he meets Achilles in their final duel; yet his honor as a warrior prevents him from retreating behind the city walls. This resolve to fight in the face of certain death is part of a general theme of the glory of battle that is present throughout the epic. The characters are judged on the basis of their fighting skills and their courage, and those who continue to fight even though they know the hard fate ahead of them (such as Hector and Achilles) are given the most accolades.

**THE ODYSSEY.** The *Odyssey* is the story of one of the Greek heroes at Troy, Odysseus, as he attempts to sail home from the war. A series of misfortunes turns the journey into a ten-year ordeal, and a combination of good fortune and craftiness saves him from several perilous situations. A tale of wandering that takes place over many years is not easy to relate, for it can lapse into a sprawling chronological account. To avoid that, Homer uses a "flashback" technique in which Odysseus relates most of his own story as a series of episodes, each episode relating some fresh peril he endured on his journey. When the story begins, Odysseus is near the end of his travels as he tells his story to an audience of Phaeacians who have given him temporary refuge in their land on his way home. His tales of encounters with fantastic creatures and his experiences in strange lands amaze them. Among his adventures, he outwitted the one-eyed giant, Polyphemus (the Cyclops); he sailed between the two monsters Scylla and Charybdis; he subdued the witch-goddess Circe; and he was the captive lover of the nymph Calypso for seven years. Although he had started home from Troy with a fleet of twelve ships, he alone reached Ithaca, his homeland. Each new adventure resulted in the loss of crew members. In the land of the Lotus-Eaters, some ate the fruit of the lotus plant that made them forget their home, and Odysseus had to force them back on his ships. Others were eaten by the giant Cyclops while captive in his cave. The cannibal Laestrygonians destroyed all his ships save only for Odysseus' own vessel. The witch Circe turned Odysseus' men into pigs, and Odysseus saved them only with the help of the god Hermes. Finally Odysseus was once again caught by a storm. Zeus struck his vessel with lightning and flung his men overboard, and Odysseus alone survived, clinging to the wreckage and drifting nine days at sea until he reached Calypso's island. Moved by his story, the Phaeacians return him to his kingdom of Ithaca where Odysseus discovers that suitors ambitious for the hand of his wife Penelope have overrun his manor house. Although Odysseus' long absence has led many to presume he is dead, Penelope has managed to keep her suitors at bay through a clever ruse; she promises to select a husband after she has finished weaving a burial shroud for Odysseus' father, Laertes, but every night she undoes her work of the day before. The suitors eventually discover the deception and increase pressure on her to choose one of them. It is at this point that Odysseus returns home, disguised as a beggar. Since she can no longer use the burial shroud as an excuse to put off marriage, Penelope has produced a new tryout for the suitors: she announces that she will choose as her husband whoever wins an archery contest with Odysseus' bow. Her choice will fall

on whoever can string the great bow and shoot an arrow through twelve axes. None of the suitors can so much as string the bow, much less shoot an arrow with it, but Odysseus easily accomplishes the feat, and then slaughters all the suitors. Penelope, however, is not yet completely convinced that Odysseus is her long-lost husband, and she puts him to one final test: she orders a servant to move her marriage bed outside the bedroom for Odysseus to sleep on. Only Odysseus and Penelope know that the order is impossible to carry out since the bed is anchored to a tree stump; so when Odysseus reveals that he knows the secret of the bed, Penelope knows him to be her husband. Odysseus has regained his kingdom.

**CUNNING OVER STRENGTH.** While much of the *Iliad* focuses on the battle strength of warriors, the *Odyssey* exalts cunning over brute strength. Time and again, Odysseus is described as a crafty man, and he frequently escapes the dangerous passages of his journey by using his wits to overcome the superior strength of his adversaries. On more than one occasion he assumes a disguise or masks his identity to gain the upper hand, such as was the case in his confrontation with the suitors. The encounter with the Cyclops is a particularly good example of Odysseus' use of his wits to overcome a seemingly impossible situation; Odysseus and his men are trapped in the cave of the Cyclops Polyphemus, a one-eyed giant cannibal shepherd who was the son Poseidon, god of the sea. They face certain death since only Polyphemus can roll back the boulder blocking the entrance to the cave, which he does only to let his sheep out of the cave each morning and bring them back each night for safekeeping. Physically, Odysseus can do nothing, but he uses his wiles to get the giant drunk. When Polyphemus asks Odysseus his name, Odysseus replies that his name is "Noman." After the giant falls into a drunken sleep, the men put out his eye with a sharpened pole; he cries for help from the other Cyclopes, but they assume that a god must have caused his misfortune when he tells them that "Noman" ("No man") put out his eye. With Polyphemus at a disadvantage because of his blindness, Odysseus and his men make their escape from the cave by lashing themselves to the bellies of Polyphemus' sheep as he lets them out in the morning. The blind Cyclops runs his hand over the backs of the sheep to make sure no one is riding them to freedom, but he fails to perceive the men underneath. As Odysseus is pulling away in his ship, he cannot resist shouting back to the Cyclops his true name, which allows the giant to pray to his father Poseidon for vengeance on Odysseus. Poseidon sends a storm to blow the ships off-course and

Odysseus becomes subject to a curse: that he will not return home or, if he does, he will be long delayed, alone, and find trouble in his house.

**TEMPTATION AND ENDURANCE.** Odysseus' inability to resist revealing his identity to the Cyclops provides an example of another dominant theme of the work: the danger of temptation. Odysseus' pride at having outwitted the Cyclops tempts him to tell the Cyclops his name, though his men urge him to be cautious. In fact, when Odysseus found the Cyclops' cave, his men urged him to steal some cheeses and lambs and be off back to their ships, but Odysseus is tempted by a thirst for knowledge: he wants to see who owns this cave, and waits for the Cyclops to return home. In the Land of the Lotus-eaters, the temptation is to give up and forget about their goal of returning home, and Odysseus, no matter what he must endure, remains determined to return: he forces his men back onto their boats. When Odysseus sails past the reefs where the Sirens—half-women, half-bird creatures—sang their seductive songs that lured sailors to their deaths on the rocks, he saves his men from temptation by ordering them to plug their ears, while he himself, tempted by his thirst for knowledge, has himself tied to the mast, thereby allowing him to hear the Sirens' melody and survive. Following the Cyclops incident, Odysseus obtains from Aeolus, the lord of the winds, a magic bag that imprisons all the winds save the one that will waft his ships safely home, and he forbids his men to open it. Ithaca is already in sight when the crew, suspicious that Odysseus is keeping treasure from them in the sack, disobey orders and yield to the temptation to open the sack when Odysseus falls asleep. The winds are released, and a storm blows Odysseus back to the land of Aeolus, who refuses angrily to give him another sack. On the Isle of the Sun God, Hyperion, Odysseus' men are warned solemnly not to touch Hyperion's cattle, but they are driven by hunger, and yield to the temptation to slaughter some of them when Odysseus is away. Hyperion, the Sun God is so angry that he threatens to cease shining in the sky if Zeus does not avenge him, and Zeus agrees to destroy Odysseus' ship with a thunderbolt. Odysseus alone endures, never abandoning his goal of returning home.

**THE EPIC CYCLE.** There were other epics as well which filled in the story of the Trojan War. One, titled the *Cypria*, described how Paris abducted the wife of Menelaus, Helen, and brought her to Troy. It seems to have been composed almost as early as the *Iliad*, and some Greeks attributed it wrongly to Homer. Another titled the *Aethiopis* told how a king of Ethiopia named Memnon came to aid Troy and was killed by Achilles,

who in turn died from an arrow wound in his vulnerable heel. The *Little Iliad* and the *Sack of Troy* told how Troy fell, and there was a group of poems called the *Nostoi* (*The Returns*) which related the experiences of heroes other than Odysseus as they voyaged home from Troy. These poems survived into the second century C.E., for they were still being quoted by later authors, but they seem to have been lost in the upheavals of the third century C.E. There were epics as well which dealt with subjects other than Troy. One told the story of Oedipus of Thebes, who killed his father and married his mother, and there were several poems on Heracles. There were many other epics besides the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but those two poems were by far the most popular and were recited most often at religious festivals. One other poem, the *Margites* should be mentioned, too, for even as shrewd a critic as Aristotle thought that Homer wrote it. It was a mock epic, a burlesque which related the misfortunes of a stupid fellow named Margites. A surviving fragment relates his misadventures on his wedding night, and if Homer wrote it, he must have used it to give his audience some belly laughs after they had their fill of the Trojan legends. One short mock epic has survived, *The Battle of the Frogs and the Mice*, which describes in heroic style a battle between a corps of frogs and a regiment of mice. The banqueting halls of the aristocrats in the early city-states of Greece clearly enjoyed their comic moments.

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## THE BOEOTIAN SCHOOL OF EPIC

**HESIOD.** It is customary to speak of Homer and Hesiod in the same breath, but, in fact, the two poets lived in different worlds and produced markedly different poetry. Both belonged to eighth century B.C.E., but Hesiod reflected a different style of life. He grew up in the poor village of Ascra in Boeotia, a district of central Greece bordering on Athenian territory. The Athenians considered the Boeotians rather stupid, and, compared to Athens, Boeotia was a cultural backwater. Despite this reputation, about the same time as bards in Ionia were singing heroic lays about the Trojan War, poets in Boeotia were composing poetry on more down-to-earth subjects. There must have been a fair number of poets, but all that survives of their works are three poems attributed to Hesiod: the *Theogony*, the *Works and Days*, and a rather poor piece titled *The Shield of Heracles*, which few think is really Hesiod's composition.

**THE THEOGONY.** The *Theogony*, or *The Generations of the Gods*, is the first effort by a Greek to write a systematic theology. Hesiod begins by invoking the nine Muses who taught him the art of poetry while he was shepherding his flock on Mt. Helicon. The Muses, the daughters of Zeus who knew how to speak the truth when they wanted to, inspired him to sing of "things to come and things that were before."

"Hail, daughters of Zeus! Give me sweet song  
To celebrate the holy race of gods  
Who live forever, sons of starry Heaven  
And Earth, and gloomy night, and salty Sea."

*Dorothea Wender, trans., Hesiod and Theognis  
(Penguin Classics): 26.*

Hesiod began with Chaos, the formless matter which was the earliest state of the universe, out of which appeared Earth and Tartarus, Night and Erebus, which in the *Theogony* was a mythical being. Earth produced *Ouranos* (Heaven), and from the sexual union of Earth and Heaven arose the race of Titans. The Titan Kronos, with the connivance of Mother Earth, castrated Heaven and thrust him up into the sky. But Kronos feared that his children would overthrow him just as he overthrew his father, and he swallowed the infants as his wife Rhea bore them. Rhea tricked him, however, by giving him a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes to swallow instead of her last-born child. When that child, who was Zeus, reached manhood, he overthrew Kronos and forced him to vomit up the children he had swallowed. Thus the generation of Zeus took control.

**THE EASTERN CONNECTION.** It is difficult to discern whether Hesiod was repeating traditional wisdom about the gods in his *Theogony* or whether it sprang from his own fertile brain. Certainly, the Near East had creation stories before Hesiod wrote; one that Hesiod might have known at second- or third-hand was the Babylonian Creation epic, the *Enuma elis* of which over 900 verses survive. The story of how Cronus castrated *Ouranos* has a parallel among the myths of the Hittites whose empire dominated central Asia Minor until the raids and invasions which ended the Mycenaean civilization after 1200 B.C.E. destroyed it as well; the Hittites, in turn, borrowed it from a people called the Hurrians, pre-Semitic inhabitants of Syria. The Hittite tale told that Kumarbi, the equivalent of Cronus, bit off the genitals of the Sky-God Anu. Folktale motifs can travel from culture to culture with surprising ease, but they change as they travel, and by the time the Near Eastern creation myths reached Boeotia, they had taken on a different complexion. Yet the cultural influence of the Near East was felt even in Hesiod's isolated little community. In the *Works and Days*, he tells the Near Eastern myth of the Ages of Man, but with a change to make it fit Greek common wisdom: the Oriental version has four ages corresponding to the four metals, Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron, but Hesiod adds a fifth age before the Age of Iron—the heroic age—thus creating space in the history of mankind for the heroes who, as all Greeks knew, lived before the present age. It seems unlikely that Hesiod was the first Greek to use myths from the Near East, for Greek contacts with Syria go back to Mycenaean times. Yet much of the theology in the *Theogony* was Hesiod's own creation.

**THE WORKS AND DAYS.** In Hesiod's second poem, we hear the genuine voice of a peasant farmer. Hesiod's father had left Aeolian Cyme, fleeing from poverty, and had come to the town of Askra near Mt. Helicon, which Hesiod characterized as "harsh in winter, comfortless in summer, not really good at any time of year." Hesiod's brother Perses had cheated Hesiod in the division of their father's estate, and then had squandered his portion. He then attempted to acquire more of his brother's share by dishonest means, bribing the corrupt aristocrats who dispensed justice in the city-states. The *Works and Days* is Hesiod's advice to Perses. It tells him how to farm, when to marry, what sort of slaves to have, which days are lucky and so on. The sixth day of the month, for instance, was not a lucky time for girls to be born, but it was a good day for castrating kids and lambs, and for the birth of boys, though boys born on that day will be given to lies and flattery. Other admonitions included one always to wash one's hands before pouring libations

to the gods, and another to wash one's hands in a stream before crossing it. This "wisdom literature" is typical of ancient Egypt, but the advice Hesiod gives is rooted in the soil of Boeotia. He had a strong sense of justice, and he had a message for crooked judges:

You lords, take notice of this punishment  
The deathless gods are never far way;  
They mark the crooked judges who grind down  
Their fellow-men and do not fear the gods,  
Three times ten thousand watchers-over-men,  
Immortal, roam the fertile earth for Zeus,  
Clothed in a mist, they visit every land  
And keep a watch on law-suits and on crimes,  
One of them is the virgin, born of Zeus,  
Justice, revered by all the Olympian gods.

*Dorothea Wender, trans., Hesiod and Theognis (Penguin Classics): 66–67.*

Hesiod's suggestion that Zeus is the enforcer of fair play differs from Homer's amoral version of the god.

**CORINNA.** Boeotia continued to produce poets after Hesiod, though none wrote in the epic tradition. Nearly two centuries after Hesiod, one of the greatest Greek lyric poets, Pindar, was born there, near the chief Boeotian city of Thebes. An older contemporary of Pindar, a poetess named Corinna, wrote lyrical narrative poems on Boeotian subjects for a circle of women friends. A papyrus fragment from Egypt preserves substantial remains of two of her poems. In one she describes a contest in song between Mt. Helicon, or more precisely, the god Helicon, and Mt. Cithaeron. Helicon was Hesiod's mountain where the Muses appeared to him and taught him to sing, and Mt. Cithaeron was closer to Corinna's *polis* of Tanagra. The gods judge whether Hesiod's Helicon or Corinna's Cithaeron has sung the better poem.

The Muses told the high gods then  
each to deposit his ballot stone  
secretly in the gold gleaming  
urns. Together the gods rose up.  
Cithaeron won more of the votes.  
At once Hermes, with a great cry,  
announced him, how he had gained success  
he longed for, and the blessed gods  
with garlands crowned him, so that his heart  
was happy.

*Richmond Lattimore, Greek Lyrics (University of Chicago Press): 52.*

Mt. Helicon was a sore loser. The poem may have been Corinna's declaration of independence from the Hesiodic epic school of poetry.



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 THE AGE OF LYRIC POETRY

**THE CHANGING GREEK WORLD.** In the years after 700 B.C.E. the Greek world underwent social and economic change. The *poleis*, or city-states, now emerged fully from the so-called "Dark Ages" which had followed the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization. They began to send out colonies; about 770 B.C.E., the leading cities on the island of Euboea—Eretria and Chalcis—established a trading post on the island of Ischia off the coast of Naples. About twenty years later, Chalcis—her partnership with Eretria dissolved into enmity—planted a colony on the Italian mainland, at Cumae. It was the first of a host of colonies, and within the next two and a half centuries, Greek settlements—each of them a nascent city-state—appeared in Italy, Sicily, southern France, north-eastern Spain, as well as the north Aegean and the shore of the Black Sea. The eastern Mediterranean coast and Egypt were not open to colonization but even there the Greeks established a trading post at al-Mina in modern Lebanon; in Egypt, the pharaohs of the twenty-sixth dynasty allowed them to build a post at Naucratis at the mouth of the Nile. Egyptian culture came as a revelation to the Greeks; by the mid-seventh century B.C.E., Greek sculptors were carving nude male figures in poses borrowed from Egyptian sculpture. In the pottery workshops of Corinth, potters produced vases with oriental motifs taken from Asian metalwork, and their fine Protocorinthian ware found export markets all over the eastern Mediterranean as well as in Italy and Sicily. The *poleis* began to build freestanding temples; the earliest have an apse or semi-circular wall at the end, but by the latter part of the seventh century B.C.E., the canonical Greek temple-plan had been born. This was an age of revolution, in which the rule of the "lords," the injustice of which Hesiod had attacked, was swept away and replaced by dictatorships, which the Greeks called "tyrannies." It was against this background that the age of lyric poetry arose.

**DEFINING LYRIC POETRY.** Lyric poetry is poetry sung to the lyre, but that in itself was not a new devel-

opment since epic poetry also had lyre accompaniment. The great lyric poets, beginning with Archilochus, belong to the exuberant seventh and sixth centuries when Greece moved from the "Dark Ages" to the great classical period of Greek culture. Lyric is commonly divided into three types of poetry: melic, elegiac, and iambic. Their boundaries are indistinct. "Melic" means "for song," and can include everything from party songs to choral cantatas. Elegies were sung, too, but they are defined by their meter, the elegiac couplet. Although it uses an iambic meter, poetry that is classified as iambic relates more to its subject matter which is ludicrous, abusive, or sometimes off-color. Not all lyric poetry was sung to the music of the lyre. Mimnermus of Colophon was accompanied by a girl playing the *aulos*, a remote ancestor of the oboe. Choral cantatas might be accompanied by both the *aulos* and the lyre, of which there were several models.

**THE WAR POETS.** Elegiac poetry is most often thought to express emotions, such as love or sorrow, but there was a group of poets which used the elegiac couplet for patriotic themes. The seventh century B.C.E. was not a period of peace in the Greek world. In the so-called "Dark Ages" which followed the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization, Greeks had migrated to the west coast of Asia Minor and the offshore islands and founded settlements there, which flourished, but were always under threat from the non-Greeks in the interior of Asia Minor. One elegiac poet who used his talent to arouse the Greeks to defend themselves was Callinus of Ephesus. Ephesus was one of the twelve cities of Ionia, founded by Greeks speaking the Ionian dialect who fled from the ruins of the Mycenaean world first to Athens, and then from Athens across the Aegean Sea to Asia Minor. Ephesus' was in the forefront of Greek cultural development in the early to mid-seventh century. Yet it was a time of war. Anatolia, the plateau of central Asia Minor, was under attack by nomadic migrants, and the sole elegy of Callinus that has survived is an appeal for courage in the battle.

How long will you lie idle? When will you young men take courage? Don't our neighbors make you feel ashamed, so much at ease?

**TYRTAEUS, SPARTA'S WAR POET.** A generation later in Sparta across the Aegean Sea, Tyrtaeus used elegiac poetry for a similar purpose. The Spartan state had been founded by Dorian immigrants, the last of the migrants to arrive in Greece after the collapse of the Mycenaean world. They spoke their own dialect of Greek, though Dorian is not much closer to Ionic Greek than Spanish is to Italian. The Spartan immigrants conquered the natives of the Eurotas River valley and reduced them

to helots, serfs who worked the land and gave their overlords half their crop. Sparta prospered and its growing population of Spartiates, Sparta's landowning class, required more estates. To procure more land, Sparta conquered her neighbor to the west, Messenia, in the early seventh century and made the Messenians her helots. But towards the end of the seventh century, the Messenians rebelled. Tyrtaeus' poetry aroused the Spartan resolve to vanquish them. He recalled how Sparta had conquered Messenia in the first place, and reminded his listeners of the glory of battle.

... our sovereign Theopompus, whom the gods did love,  
 through whom we took Messene's broad dance-  
 grounds,  
 Messene good to plough, and good to plant for fruit.  
 To conquer her they fought full nineteen years. ...

For it is fine to die in the front line,  
 a brave man fighting for his fatherland  
 and the most painful fate's to leave one's town  
 and fertile farmlands for a beggar's life.

*M. L. West, trans., Greek Lyric Poetry (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1993): 23.*

**MIMNERMUS IN DEFENSE OF SMYRNA.** The elegiac poet Mimnermus of Smyrna also wrote war poetry. Smyrna was one of the earliest Greek settlements in Asia Minor, but she was under attack by the neighboring empire of Lydia, and about 600 B.C.E. she lost the struggle and was destroyed. Mimnermus' patriotic efforts were unavailing.

**ARCHILOCHUS.** The Greeks themselves ranked Archilochus with Homer and Hesiod as the greatest poets of early Greece, but unfortunately little of his poetry has survived as evidence of his genius. He was the illegitimate offspring of a noble from Paros (an island in the Aegean Sea), and a slave from Thrace. He made his living as a mercenary soldier, but did not hold to the soldier's code of honor. In one of his poems he freely admitted his cowardice in a battle with a Thracian tribe called the Saians:

Some Saian sports my splendid shield:  
 I had to leave it in a wood,  
 but saved my skin. Well, I don't care.  
 I'll get another just as good.

*M. L. West, trans., Greek Lyric Poetry (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1993): 14.*

Archilochus was famous for the invective with which he attacked his enemies, particularly Lycambes, who had two daughters, one of whom, Neobule, was the object of Archilochus' lust.



The lyric poet Sappho of Lesbos. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

I wish I had as sure a chance of fingering Neobule—  
 the workman falling to his task—and pressing  
 tum to tummy  
 and thighs to thighs. ...

*M. L. West, Greek Lyric Poetry, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1993): 6.*

Lycambes did not fancy Archilochus as a son-in-law, and Archilochus' verse lampooned him and his two daughters so viciously that, according to the legend, they hanged themselves. Much of his surviving poetry reflects his observations on current events: bristling attacks on his enemies, banter with friends, mournful lyrics for men lost at sea, scorn for dandies. In his description of a good soldier—"A shortish sort of chap, who's bandy-looking round the shins,/he's my ideal, one full of guts, and steady on his pins"—he may have been describing himself.

**THE CHORAL LYRIC.** Choral lyric was poetry sung by choirs that danced as they sang, usually accompanied by a musician. Sparta, for all its emphasis on militarism in the seventh century B.C.E., was also a center of music and dancing. The first great composer and virtuoso on the type of lyre known as the *kithara*, Terpander of Lesbos, worked there, as did Alcman, who wrote choral works sung by choirs of girls. One long fragment of a choral song survives, preserved on a papyrus fragment found in Egypt. It is a *parthenion*, a song sung by young girls to the accompaniment of the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A LOVE POEM OF SAPPHO**

**INTRODUCTION:** Sappho, who lived in the city of Mytilene on Lesbos, was famous for her short lyrics, written in well-articulated stanzas. The poem below expresses Sappho's longing for a girl who is leaving her group to get married. It is particularly famous both for its open expression of love from one woman to another, as well as its existence in both the original Greek and a Latin translation by the Roman poet Catullus.

**SOURCE:** Sappho of Lesbos, "Invocation to Aphrodite," in *Greek Lyrics*. 2nd ed. Trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960): 39–40.

*aulos*—this one sung by a choir of ten. Choral lyric was also popular in the Greek cities of Sicily and southern Italy, where the first poet of note whose name we know was Stesichorus who came from Himera, not far from present-day Palermo. The most famous composer of choral lyric was Sappho of Lesbos, who is usually classified as a melic poet because her songs express personal feelings. A group of girls and unmarried women, it seems, met regularly with Sappho in a school, the "home of the disciples of the Muses," as Sappho called it in a fragment of her poetry that has survived—it may have been her own house—where they sang and learned to play musical instruments. Sometimes they sang in public at weddings and religious ceremonies; her group of students was called a *thiasos*, which means something like a "religious club." Sappho was a music teacher and choreographer, and her chorals often gave voice to her personal feelings.

**POETRY AS THE PERSONAL VOICE.** Poetry gave voice to the personal emotions—usually relating to love, politics and patriotism—of the lyric poets and their circles. For Sappho of Lesbos, it was love that was an all-consuming passion. She expressed her attachment to some of the girls she taught with an intensity that has made "lesbian" a byword for women who are homosexual lovers, although Sappho herself was married and had a daughter. Love between male youths and older, married men was accepted in Greek society, and Sappho merely represented the other side of the coin in expressing romantic attachments between women. The world of her contemporary, Alcaeus of Lesbos, was markedly different. He lived during a time of civil conflict on Lesbos, particularly in its leading *polis*, Mytilene, where tyrants challenged the rule of the aristocrats, and the aristocrats fought back. Alcaeus used to be best known for his political songs, his *Stasiotika*, as they were called from the Greek for "civil strife," *stasis*. They were songs of political commitment. The aristocrats formed political societies to defend their interests, and when they had their common meals, they sang songs such as Alcaeus wrote. In the last century, however, papyri have been found in the sands of Egypt with poems that show another side of Alcaeus' genius. He also wrote hymns to the gods, love poems, and poems on mythological themes. The individual voice of the poet can be heard in the works of Sappho and Alcaeus, but Mimnermus of Smyrna, too, whose war poems have already been noted, deserves a second mention as a poet of love. The editors at the great library at Alexandria in the Hellenistic Period made an anthology of his poetry titled the *Nanno* after the name of a courtesan. Mimnermus also looked on death with apprehension; dread of the ills of old age was another of his favorite themes.

**POETRY IN AID OF POLITICS.** The age of prose had not yet arrived, and when men expressed their political views in writing, they used poetry which they could recite at public gatherings. One political poet who belonged to the *polis* of Megara was Theognis. Megara is squeezed between Corinth on the south and Athens on the north, and in the last decades of the seventh century B.C.E., the winds of change that were toppling aristocratic governments elsewhere affected Megara, as well. Theognis was an aristocrat who apparently lost his land and became an exile. His poetry reflects a bitter cynicism about the state of society where good people can be plunged into poverty. Some of his elegies are addressed to a friend called Cyrnus, and they are not all political: some give advice, some reflect on the faithlessness of friends, and others are love poems. However, the

body of literature attributed to Theognis that has survived was not all written by him, and it projects a blurred image of Theognis himself. In a political poem attributed to him he says that no land on earth loves a tyrant, and in another non-political one, that he has no interest except high-class life and the culture of the intellect—so he wants to continue enjoying the lyre and dance and song. The social pressures that threatened the political power of the aristocratic landowners in Megara were felt as well in her larger neighbor, the city-state of Athens. There, too, the rival political factions recognized the danger of a tyranny if there were no reforms, and tried to forestall it. They turned to Solon, a poet, merchant, and aristocrat by pedigree if not by political inclination, and by common consent, he became sole ruler, or “archon,” of Athens for a year in 594–593 B.C.E. with a mandate to make political and economic changes. He used poetry to defend his reforms, which were an effort to find a middle ground between the extremists on the left and on the right. He was no great poet, and he was not the originator of Athenian democracy, but two centuries later Athenians—particularly those whose politics were conservative—looked back at him as the founder of an ideal constitution.

**THE AGE OF TYRANTS.** The Age of Tyrants in archaic Greece was a transitional period between the early *polis* ruled by aristocrats whose power was based on the possession of land and long pedigrees, and the classical *polis* where government was more broadly based. Tyrants—in the modern world they would be called dictators—seized power by force and sometimes bequeathed it to their children and even grandchildren, and though the tyrannies left a bad reputation behind them, they were not all bad. Some tyrants were patrons of poetry. A tyrant of Corinth, Periander (ruled about 625–585 B.C.E.) gave profitable hospitality to a famous lyricist, Arion, but none of his work survives. Across the Aegean Sea at Samos, the tyrant Polycrates patronized Ibycus from Rhegium, modern Reggio on the toe of Italy, until he was unseated by the Persians in 522 B.C.E. The choral lyrics of Ibycus carried on the tradition of Stesichorus, but he was equally famous for his love poems. Anacreon, possibly the music teacher of Polycrates, also wrote well-crafted poetry: exquisite songs about the delights of wine and love. When Polycrates fell, Anacreon, along with Ibycus, moved to Athens, where Hipparchus, the younger brother of the tyrant Hippias, gathered about him a number of poets. Hippias was driven from Athens in 510 B.C.E., and as the Age of Tyrants came to an end so did their patronage of literature. One poet, Simonides of Ceos from the court of Hipparchus,

made the transition into the new period when professional poets would sell their services and make a living as literary entrepreneurs. He had a nephew named Bacchylides who would be equally entrepreneurial, if not the equal of his uncle in poetic inspiration.

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#### POETS FOR HIRE

**THE END OF ARCHAIC GREECE.** The Persian Wars, from 490 to 479 B.C.E. marked the end of the archaic age. The Persian Empire had been slowly pushing westwards. It captured the Greek cities on the western coast of Asia Minor shortly after 546 B.C.E. In 513 B.C.E. King Darius led a Persian army across the Bosphorus into Europe and captured Thrace, the region south of the Danube River. But what turned Persia's attention to mainland Greece was the Ionian Revolt—a revolt of the Greek cities on the Asia Minor coast and the offshore islands which started in the Ionian city of Miletus in 500 and spread all along the coast and even to Cyprus. Athens sent the rebels help in the first year of the revolt and then withdrew it, but her one-year intervention was enough to rouse Persian resentment. A Persian expeditionary force landed on the plain of Marathon north of Athens in 490 B.C.E., planning to take Athens and establish a Persian bridgehead in Greece. But in a battle that gave Athens a new sense of pride and accomplishment, the Athenian citizen army defeated the Persian force. Ten years later, the Persians attacked again, this time with a great land and naval force, and once again the contribution of Athens to the alliance of Greek states that swore to resist Persia was crucial, for Athens had built a navy in the years after Marathon, and the

decisive battle that stopped the Persian onslaught was a naval victory fought off the island of Salamis within sight of Athens. Athens emerged from the Persian War as a center of power in the Greek world, strong enough to challenge the old dominant power, Sparta. In the next half-century, she would acquire an empire, and become the cultural center of Greece. The Persian War ushered in the classical period, which is considered the time when the Greek cultural achievement reached its height, and Athens led the way.

**POETS OF THE PERSIAN WAR.** The poets Simonides, Pindar, and Bacchylides all had one thing in common: their lives were bisected by the Persian Wars. This fact places them within the transitional period between the archaic and classical ages. Simonides was born early enough to enjoy the patronage of Hipparchus, who was the brother of Hippias, the tyrant of Athens. Hipparchus was assassinated in 514 B.C.E. Four years later, Hippias was driven into exile at the court of the Persian king Darius. Simonides wrote the epitaph for the 300 brave Spartans who died defending the Pass of Thermopylae against the Persians in 480 B.C.E.: "Stranger, report to the Spartans that here we lie, obedient to their commands." All three lived on into a different post-war world. There were still tyrants in Sicily, but in Greece itself the Age of the Tyrants passed on to be replaced in their patronage by the many wealthy Greeks willing to pay money for a poem, including hymns, dirges, songs sung in the service of Dionysus called *dithyrambs*, and the songs for choruses of girls called *partheneia*. One best-selling commodity was a praise poem in honor of a victory at one of the four great athletic contests of Greece. The victor or his friends would commission a *epinikion* (victory ode) which originally was a simple song of welcome, but Simonides developed it into an art form. The contract probably specified the length of the poem and what should be included. It might or might not require the poet to train the chorus to perform the ode. For his services, the poet charged a fee. Simonides in particular had a reputation for being expensive.

**SIMONIDES.** Simonides came from the little island of Ceos but he developed an international reputation as a poet, and used it to market himself. Only fragments of his work survive, but they include victory odes, chants that were called "paeans," dirges, epigrams, and various lyric poems. His subject matter was not limited to mythology, but also included the Persian War. He wrote a poem on the naval battle at Artemisium in 480 B.C.E., a defeat for the Greeks which they followed up later in the year with a great victory off the island of Salamis. The few surviving fragments of the poem indicate that

it is a choral lyric. Recently a papyrus from Egypt has turned up an elegiac poem on the Battle of Plataea, where the Persian army was destroyed in 479 B.C.E. His dirges, or laments for the dead called *threnoi*, were also famous. Their simple pathos had no equal in Greek poetry, and more than four centuries later, the Roman poet Catullus used the phrase "sadder than the tears of Simonides" to describe his sorrow at a friend's coldness.

**PINDAR.** Pindar, born in 518 B.C.E. near Thebes in Boeotia, was one of the poets whose towering eminence was recognized by the Greeks in his lifetime, though he must be judged by the four books of his victory odes, plus fragments of his other poetry that have survived. He got his first commission at the age of twenty to write an ode in honor of Hippokleas of Thessaly, the winner in the boys' double footrace at the Pythian Games. He lived on, greatly honored, until his death around 438 B.C.E. His language is brilliant, and his allusions often obscure to the modern reader, although they were less so to his contemporaries. The structure of his victory odes is precise: first comes the naming in which the victor is named along with his home city and his patron; next comes the central feature which narrates a myth that in some way reflects on the victor's success; and then the conclusion returns to the victor and his community, which basks in his reflected glory. The ode was sung at a victory celebration for the athlete, but it is not clear how it was staged; perhaps a single choral leader sang the poem while the chorus danced behind him. Pindar was the greatest poet from Boeotia, which had already produced Hesiod and Pindar's older contemporary, Corinna. His reputation was such that in the following century Alexander the Great's destruction of Thebes spared only one house: the one which had belonged to Pindar.

**BACCHYLIDES.** Little more than the name of Bacchylides, the nephew of Simonides of Ceos, was known until 1896, when the British Museum acquired what remained of two papyrus rolls containing poems of Bacchylides, which had been found in a grave. One roll contained victory odes, the other six dithyrambs. He competed with Pindar for commissions, apparently not without success. In 476 B.C.E., both he and Pindar wrote victory odes for Hiero, tyrant of Syracuse in Sicily, for a victory at Olympia in the horse race, but in 468 B.C.E. when Hiero won a victory in the chariot race at Olympia, he commissioned Bacchylides for the victory ode and passed over Pindar. Bacchylides' surviving dithyrambs have some of the quality of ballads, for they relate episodes excerpted from Greek mythology with twists to the plot that probably come from Bacchylides' own imagination. Their charm lies in his skill as a narrator.

He gives the impression of a capable rather than a great poet, who practiced his craft competently, and the opinion of the ancient Greek critics that he was no equal of Pindar is not unfair.

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## HERODOTUS, THE FATHER OF HISTORY

**EMERGENCE OF HISTORY.** About 425 B.C.E., Herodotus published his *History* with the proem (introductory sentence):

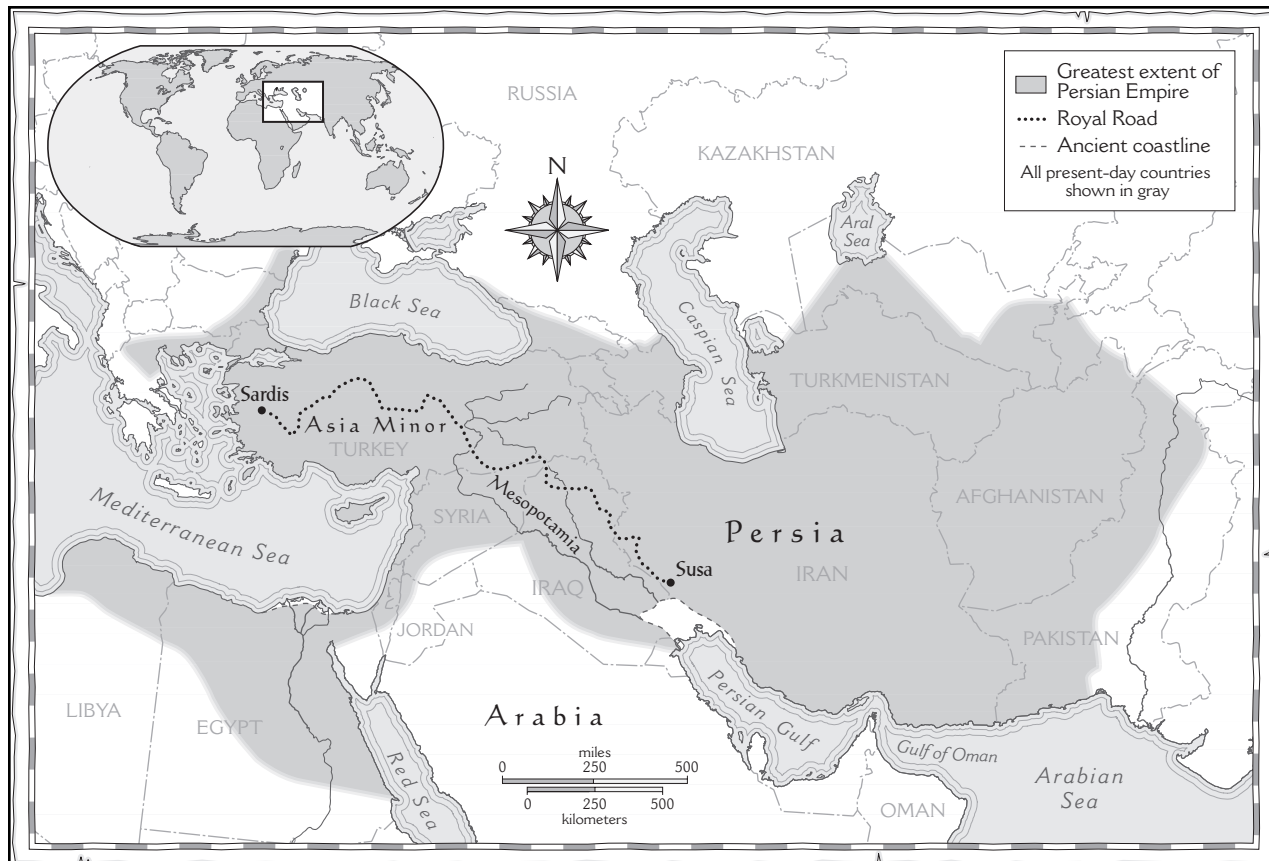
This is the publication of the research of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which I have produced so that what men have done might not become dim with the passage of time, and that the great and marvelous achievements, some the doing of the Greeks, others done by the Persians, might not lack renown, and *in particular to show whose fault it was that they fought one another.* [Italics added.]

Herodotus states his subject at the beginning: the Persian Empire's invasion of the Greek city-states which began with the Persian takeover of the cities on the coast of Asia Minor and the offshore islands in the years following 546 B.C.E. and ending in 479 B.C.E. with the annihilation of the Persian army in the Battle of Plataea. Herodotus did not produce a mere chronicle of events as past historians had done, however. He had two purposes in mind. One was a purpose that he shared with the epic poets: to keep alive the memory of the heroic deeds and achievements of the men of old. The other was to examine the cause of the conflict, and cause could not be dissociated from blame. Who, or what was to blame for the great war between Persia and Greece? Finding the answer to that question would be the object of Herodotus' research, for his word for "research" was *historie*, which after Herodotus would acquire a new sense. *Historie*, as it was spelled in the Ionic dialect that

Herodotus used, or *historia* in the Greek spoken on the streets of Athens, would become the word for "history" in the modern sense. It would be a search for causes and developments, and not merely a record of facts.

**BACKGROUND.** Herodotus was born in Halicarnassus, modern Bodrum in Turkey, shortly before 480 B.C.E. Halicarnassus had been founded by settlers from the little Greek *polis* of Troezen in the Peloponnesos, and they were Dorians, speaking the Dorian dialect that they shared with Sparta. By Herodotus' day, the Ionic dialect had taken over, and in addition, Halicarnassus had a substantial population of Carians, non-Greeks from southwest Asia Minor who had been partially assimilated into Greek culture. The ruling dynasty of Halicarnassus was Carian, and in 480 B.C.E., when King Xerxes of Persia launched his invasion of Greece, the sovereign of Halicarnassus was Queen Artemisia, and when Xerxes conscripted naval contingents from his subject cities, Artemisia led Halicarnassus' fleet in person. Herodotus treats her with admiration in his *History*, but while he was still a young man, he was involved in a revolt against Artemisia's grandson, Lygdamis, along with his uncle, Panyassis, a poet who had tried to revive the epic and succeeded well enough to be ranked with Homer by some Greek critics. Panyassis lost his life, and Herodotus fled Halicarnassus. His exile turned him into an historian.

**TRAVELS.** Herodotus was now an alien wherever he went, for a Greek was born a citizen of a *polis*, and only under exceptional circumstances could he acquire a new citizenship. Eventually, when a new city called Thurii was founded in southern Italy, Herodotus was able to enroll on its citizenship list, and so ended his life as "Herodotus of Thurii," not "Herodotus of Halicarnassus." Probably the first sentence of his *History* identified him as "Herodotus of Thurii," but later editors amended it to "Herodotus of Halicarnassus." Regardless of the title of his origin, his *History* indicates that Herodotus was restless and traveled extensively. He visited Egypt at least once and interviewed Egyptian priests. He went to Babylon. He got as far north as the Ukraine where the Scythians lived and interviewed a Carian who was an agent for the Scythian king in the trade between the Greeks and the Scythians. He visited both Sparta and Athens, and some scholars believe that he became a friend of the leading Athenian politician of the time, Pericles, and tapped the traditions of Pericles' family for information; there is no hard evidence to support this theory, however. At some point he acquired a reputation as a *logios*, that is, an oral performer who did not chant poetry accompanied by music but recited prose. A late source which may



Map showing greatest extent of the Persian Empire. Herodotus chronicled the expansion of the Persian Empire and its conflicts with Greece in his *History*. XNR PRODUCTIONS, INC. THE GALE GROUP.

be trustworthy reports that Herodotus went to Olympia while the Olympic Games were in progress, and there set up his tent and gave recitations to all who would listen. There are stories of other visits to Greek cities, too. Athens liked his performance, and paid him handsomely, but he was not allowed to talk to the young men of Thebes in Boeotia. Thebes sided with the Persians in the Persian Wars and probably disliked being reminded of their lack of patriotism, and, in fact, Herodotus treated Thebes with a marked lack of sympathy in his *History*.

**HERODOTUS' PLAN: THE PRELIMINARIES.** The *History* is a long, sprawling work, full of digressions. Long after Herodotus' death, the scholars at the Alexandrian Library where the kings of Egypt supported a research institute, divided the *History* into nine books, named after the Nine Muses, but that is an artificial division, though a convenient one. Herodotus simply follows the course of Asian aggression upon the Greek world with the result that the subject of *History* becomes a study of imperialism and the resistance to oriental imperialism. The east was the home of a succession of em-

pires, culminating in the Persian Empire, whereas Greece was the home of free city-states. Herodotus began with the first Asian to subdue Greek cities and make them pay tribute: Croesus, king of Lydia. He conquered the Ionian cities on the western fringe of Asia Minor. He was in turn conquered by Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, and all the Greek cities on the east side of the Aegean Sea—whether Ionian, Dorian or Aeolian—passed to Persian control. Then Herodotus followed the course of Persian expansion as Cyrus conquered Babylon, and his successor, Cambyses, took over Egypt. As the Persian juggernaut acquired new subjects, Herodotus digressed to describe what they were like. King Darius, who succeeded Cambyses, crossed the Bosphorus into Europe, and the region between the Aegean Sea and the Danube fell under Persian dominion. So far, Persian expansion was driven by imperialism, but it was the Greeks themselves, specifically Athens, and Eretria on the island of Euboea, that provoked the Persian invasion of mainland Greece. At the start of the fifth century B.C.E. Ionia rebelled against the Persian yoke, and Athens and Eretria both sent assistance to the rebels. Darius took re-

venge in 490 B.C.E. by sending an expeditionary force across the Aegean Sea against Athens and Eretria. Eretria fell within a week, and the Persians then landed at Marathon north of Athens, intending to march on the city with their infantry and cavalry. The Athenians were outnumbered, but they adopted the daring tactic of lengthening their battle-line to match the Persian line by thinning its center and reinforcing its wings. They hoped to rout the Persian wings and then wheel in on the flanks of the Persian center, where it was vulnerable to attack. It was a desperate tactic: the Athenian center broke, but the Athenian wings swept aside the Persians facing them and closed in on the Persian flanks. After a stiff fight, the Persians fled. In spite of their fearsome reputation, they were not invincible, for the charge of the heavily-armed infantry—the hoplites—of Athens vanquished the Persian army, cavalry and all.

**THE STRUGGLE FOR GREECE.** Vengeance and counter-vengeance was a motive for action in history, as Herodotus saw it, but Darius died before exacting revenge on the Greeks for this defeat. The hawks in his court managed to persuade his son, Xerxes, to carry on his father's plans for Greece, although he is counseled against rash action by his uncle, Artabanus. At decisive moments like this, Herodotus often brought on a wise adviser, who almost invariably counseled against rash action. While initially heeding his uncle's advice, Xerxes decided to proceed with the invasion on the strength of a vision which appeared to him twice in a dream, telling him that he had to attack Greece or be brought low. Herodotus suggests in this that Persian imperialism had developed its own momentum, and no mere king could stop it without paying a heavy penalty. Xerxes conscripted a great army and navy and, crossing the Hellespont on pontoon bridges, made his way through northern Greece, while in Greece itself, under Sparta's leadership those states willing to resist joined in an alliance and planned for defense. They attempted to hold back the Persians at the Pass of Thermopylae, where the space between Mt. Kallidromos and the sea is so narrow that in places only a single cart could get through; at the same time, a Greek naval contingent tried to hold back the Persian fleet off Artemisium at the northern tip of the island of Euboea. But a traitor betrayed the Greeks defending Thermopylae and an elderly Spartan king, Leonidas, and his royal bodyguard of 300 hoplites died fighting there so that the rest of his army could get away. The Persians advanced, burning Athens. But the Athenian general Themistocles persuaded the Greek fleet to make a stand at the island of Salamis, and there the overconfident Persian navy was so badly mauled that it with-

drew from the western Aegean Sea. Xerxes himself departed from Greece at the end of the campaigning season but he left behind a smaller but more efficient force under an able general, Mardonius, who captured Athens once again and burned it. But at Plataea in southern Boeotia, a Greek army commanded by the Spartan Pausanias, regent for Leonidas' underage son, utterly defeated Mardonius, and at the same time—some said on the same day—a Greek fleet destroyed a Persian fleet at Mycale on the coast of Ionia. Thus Persian imperialism reached its climax and began its long recession.

**SEEKING A REASON.** Herodotus states in his introduction that one of his aims was to show why the Greeks and Persians fought a war. Who or what was at fault? Herodotus never tells us explicitly the reason why, but he allows the reader to infer a great deal. Vengeance was a motive for historical action—one power wronged another and the power that is wronged seeks vengeance. Vengeance is a force that maintains limits and balance. If something harms the balance of nature, then something else will take vengeance and thereby restore the balance. Persia, by pushing the boundaries of its empire beyond Asia and aiming at world domination harmed the natural balance between the continents, and the two very different ways of life. But it is also clear that some force beyond the motive of vengeance pushed the Persian Empire into its ill-fated attempt to conquer Greece. Persia, under the rule of a despot, had adopted expansionism as a way of life, and when it invaded Greece, it encountered a people whose way of life embraced individual freedom. Two ways of life fought for dominance in the Persian War, as Herodotus saw it, and Greece's victory demonstrated the importance of liberty. If we seek themes in Herodotus' *History*, two stand out: that imperialism drives empires on to overexpansion, and that individual freedom makes braver soldiers than does despotic government.

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## THUCYDIDES

**THE LONELY HISTORIAN.** Thucydides occupies a lonely place in the pantheon of historians. He is regarded as one of the world's greatest, yet he had no followers to mimic his sort of history. His plan was to write an accurate history of the Peloponnesian War, the struggle that divided the Greek world at the end of fifth century B.C.E., stretching over the years 431 to 404 B.C.E. He intended to produce a "possession for all time" which future generations might consult if they found themselves in situations resembling the Peloponnesian War. Unlike Herodotus, he did not write with a pleasant, readable style. He was austere and distant, treating the war like a doctor observing a sick patient. This was the period when the medical school on the island of Cos, founded by the great diagnostician Hippocrates, was collecting descriptions of diseases so that doctors could make correct diagnoses, and Thucydides was influenced by the approach of this medical school. Among ancient Greek critics, Herodotus had a reputation—which he did not deserve—as a teller of tall tales, whereas Thucydides had the reputation of a truthful reporter of what actually happened, which he did not entirely deserve, either. His bias can be readily seen in his admiration of the Athenian democracy under Pericles, which was not truly a democracy, for Pericles dominated politics to such a degree that the democracy was really the rule of one man. The historian's admiration of Pericles did not extend to his successor, Cleon, the son of a leather-maker who was a favorite of the masses in the Athenian assembly. In reality, Cleon was a better administrator than Thucydides admits in his writings, but Thucydides favored Cleon's rival, Nicias, a conservative man who feared the gods but whose incompetence nearly brought Athens to her knees. For the most part, however, Thucydides played the part of an unprejudiced reporter very well.

**THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR.** The so-called Peloponnesian War, which lasted from 431 to 404 B.C.E., was fought between Athens on one side, which had built up an empire in the years following the Persian War, and Sparta, which headed an alliance of states centered in the Peloponnesos, the region of Greece south of the Isthmus of Corinth. There was a brief break after the first ten years of war, which are sometimes called the "Archid-

damian War" after the Spartan king Archidamus who commanded the Peloponnesian forces in the early years of the war. The Archidamian War ended with a peace treaty which was never accepted by some of Sparta's allies, and during the brief period when hostilities ceased, Athens launched an expedition against Sicily with the intention of extending her imperial reach there, and her expeditionary force was completely destroyed in 413 B.C.E. In the final years of the war Persia intervened, and supplied Sparta with a subsidy with which to build a Spartan fleet, and when the war ended with the surrender of Athens, Sparta and Persia divided the Athenian Empire between them. The slogan of Sparta and her allies when the war began was "Liberation for the Greeks"—that is, liberation from the Athenian Empire—but at the war's end, the slogan was forgotten.

**THE DOWNFALL OF ATHENS.** Thucydides began his history with the causes of the Peloponnesian War. The underlying cause was the fear which Sparta and her allies had of Athenian imperialism, though Thucydides pinpointed three immediate causes. First, Athens became embroiled in a struggle between Corinth, a member the Spartan alliance, and Corinth's former colony, Corcyra (Corfu, nowadays called Kerkyra), and Corinth appealed to her allies. Second, a tributary state of the Athenian Empire, Potidaea, rebelled against Athens and Corinth sent help to Potidaea. Finally, Athens placed an embargo on trade with her neighbor Megara, which was a Spartan ally. Pericles had a strategy to win the war for Athens that capitalized on her strength. Athens had a powerful fleet made up of galleys called *triremes*, rowed by well-trained crews of Athenian citizens. On land, however, she was no match for Sparta and her allies, and so when the Spartan-led army invaded Athenian territory, the Athenians evacuated their farms and took refuge behind their great city walls. Long walls fortified the road between Athens and her port of Piraeus so that Athens could access the sea and use her fleet to make commando raids on Peloponnesian territory. This would be a war of attrition—each side would try to wear the other down—and Pericles believed that Athens would last longer than Sparta. But an unexpected event upset his calculations. In the second year of the war, the Athenians were smitten by a plague described by Thucydides in clinical detail. Pericles himself took ill, recovered, but died shortly afterwards. The first ten years of war ended with a peace treaty in 421 B.C.E., but the result was to exchange a hot war for a cold one. Athens, ever ambitious to expand her empire, dispatched an expedition to the neutral territory of Sicily in 415 B.C.E., in the hopes of conquering its leading city, Syracuse. To Thucydides,

who was familiar with the plots of the tragedies staged in Athenian theater, the Sicilian expedition must have seemed like a protagonist's act of arrogance preceding his downfall in a tragic drama. The attempt to conquer Syracuse failed, and Athens lost all the ships and men she had dispatched to Sicily. The powerful prose of Thucydides' description of the last, desperate battle in the harbor of Syracuse provokes our emotions because it is outwardly unemotional. The Athenians, having lost their best warships and troops, were in desperate straits, bankrupt, and facing revolts in their empire, but they did not give up. For reasons unknown, when Thucydides reached 411 B.C.E. in his narrative, he broke off in mid-sentence and left his history unfinished. It may have been sudden death; he was reportedly drowned at sea. All that is certain is that he clearly knew that the war ended with the defeat of Athens, and he intended to finish the story.

**CONTINUING THUCYDIDES.** More than one author endeavored to continue Thucydides' work. Two historians, Theopompus and Cratinus, individually took up the story where Thucydides broke off, and they continued until 394 B.C.E., ten years past the year of Athens' defeat. Athens by 394 B.C.E. was about to rise again, and thus the tragic vision of Thucydides is given a happy ending. A scrap of papyrus discovered in 1906 at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt has some 900 lines of a continuation that was clearly written by an able historian, and many scholars attribute it to Cratinus. The lack of concrete evidence to support this supposition, however, forces the more generic authorship of "The Oxyrhynchus Historian," or the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*. The one continuation that we do have, the *Hellenica*, was written by Xenophon, a onetime disciple of the philosopher Socrates. The *Hellenica* of Xenophon took up Greek history where Thucydides left off and continued it to 362 B.C.E. None of those who continued the work of Thucydides, as far as we know, brought their histories to a close with the Athenians' capitulation to Sparta in 404 B.C.E.

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## HISTORY AFTER THUCYDIDES

**XENOPHON.** The fourth century had many historians, but only a small portion of their output remains. The author with the best survival record is Xenophon, an Athenian of good family and a member of Socrates' circle. Against Socrates' advice he joined a corps of Greek mercenaries in the army which Cyrus, the younger brother of the Persian king, mustered in 401 B.C.E. to usurp the throne. The expedition was a disaster, but Xenophon led them safely out to the Black Sea coast, and from there they dispersed to seek other employers. Xenophon himself took service with the Spartans. Athens exiled him shortly after Socrates' death—he would return to Athens only in 365 B.C.E.—and he lived on a estate granted him by Sparta for much of his banishment until the upheavals after Sparta's defeat at Leuctra in 372 B.C.E. forced him to move. He wrote on subjects ranging from the Spartan constitution to training horses, but he is best known for his memoirs of Socrates (the *Memorabilia*); his *Anabasis* or "March Up Country," which tells the story of the failed attempt of prince Cyrus, younger brother of King Artaxerxes II of Persia, to seize the Persian throne; and his *Hellenica*, which continues Thucydides' history to the Battle of Mantinea in 362 B.C.E. Xenophon is an easy author to read, and among his other claims to fame is his introduction of a new literary genre: the historical novel. His "Education of Cyrus" (*Cyropaedia*) is a fictional account of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire. It is a bad novel, full of moralizing and not much read nowadays, but it is a groundbreaking venture into historical romance.

**THE LOST HISTORIANS.** Many historians were writing in the fourth century B.C.E. but their works have not survived. We know them because they were quoted by later writers, or were used by later writers as sources for their own histories—or in some cases, because papyrus fragments have turned up in the sands of Egypt that contain remnants of their works. One of the most prominent was Theopompus of Chios, who wrote an exceedingly long history on Alexander the Great's father, Philip II of Macedon. It was innovative in that it focused on only one personality, whom Theopompus represented as the greatest man that Europe had produced. Another historian of high reputation was Ephorus of Kyme who produced what became the standard history of Greece: a universal history of Greece from the Dorian invasion to his own day. Some of what he wrote has survived at second hand because his history was used as a source by another universal historian who wrote in the first century B.C.E., Diodorus the Sicilian, and we still have Diodorus' history. Diodorus based his history of the world on other authors as well as Ephorus, but Ephorus was a favorite source for him to



Imaginative engraving of Xenophon, one of the modern sources for information on the life of Socrates. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

copy. Alexander the Great's conquests produced a body of historical writings, but none of it survived except as sources for the work of other Greek and Roman historians such as Plutarch and Arrian, both of whom wrote in Greek, and Curtius Rufus in Latin—all of these date to the period of the Roman Empire. Greece in the fourth century B.C.E. also developed a taste for local chronicles; the chronicles of Athens were known as *Atthides*, or "Chronicles of Attica," and two of its notable authors were Androtion and Philochorus. There is also an historian of the second century B.C.E., Polybius of Megalopolis (208–126 B.C.E.), who was exiled from Greece to Rome, where he wrote a history of Rome in forty books beginning with the first war between Rome and Carthage (265–241 B.C.E.). About a third of it survives. He is a major source for information on Rome's war with Hannibal. A dry writer, he is nonetheless reliable, and he was a shrewd observer of the rising power of Rome.

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## GREEK COMEDY

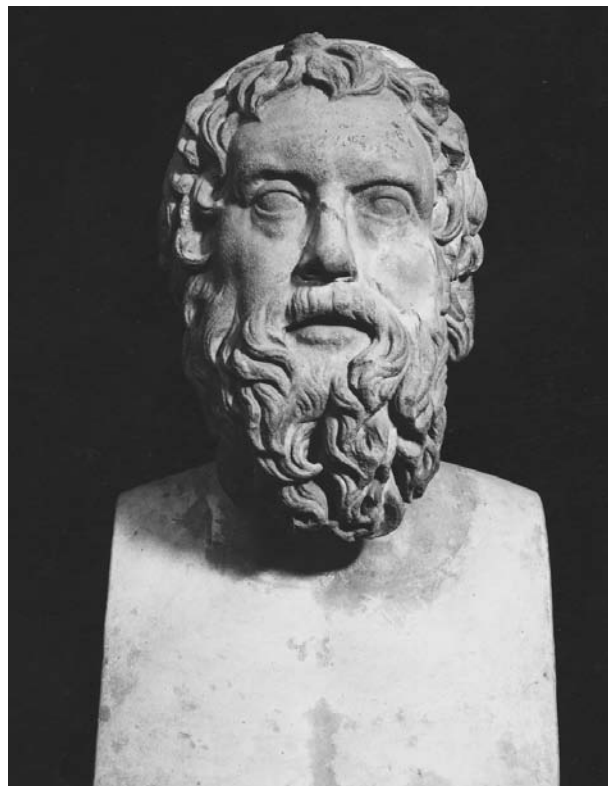
**BEGINNINGS.** The early history of comedy is unclear, remarked Aristotle in his *On the Art of Poetry*, because no one took it seriously. The *polis* of Megara which was sandwiched between Corinth and Athens claimed to have invented it, as did Sicily, which produced a writer of farces, Epicharmus, who was patronized by the tyrants of Syracuse Gelon (485–478 B.C.E.) and his successor Hiero (478–467 B.C.E.). Little of his work survives, though there is enough to make us regret its loss. He wrote burlesques of myths: one play called *Hebe's Wedding* was set in Olympus and parodied the marriage of Heracles to Hebe. Deified though he might be, Heracles was still portrayed much as he was in the comic theater: a muscle-bound lout who gobbled up his food, and drank until he was drunk. Another type of comedy that Epicharmus wrote dealt with contemporary life and introduced stock characters (that is, characters with trademark roles such as the clever slave, the boastful soldier, and the love-sick youth), and a third type that he wrote played with arguments between non-human abstractions—for instance, one seems to have hinged on a debate between women's logic and men's logic. The plays of Epicharmus had no chorus, unlike the comedies produced in Athens, though there was musical accompaniment. Farces were clearly popular in Sicily and "Magna Graecia," as the Greek settlements in southern Italy were called, for the local potters used scenes from the comic theater as vase paintings. These farces look forward to the New Comedy which would displace the Old Comedy of Aristophanes on the Athenian stage more than a century later.

**ATHENIAN OLD COMEDY.** Old Comedy was an Athenian theatrical development with topical allusions to Athenian politics, and its acceptance as an art form dates from either 488–487 or 487–486 B.C.E., when the archon—that is, the chief magistrate of Athens who gave his name to the year—was made responsible for providing a chorus for a day for five comedies to be produced at the City Dionysia festival each spring in the modern month of March. Shortly before 440 B.C.E. a day of comedies was included in the other great festival of

Dionysus where dramas were presented, the Lenaea festival in January. We also know that in the fourth century B.C.E. comedies were produced at the Rural Dionysia, which were festivals in the country districts of Athens called “demes,” and it is likely that comedies were produced there earlier, too, given the physical evidence of theaters in some of these demes. Until the ascendance of Aristophanes there are only a few names and a handful of fragments from the comic poets of this era, including Cratinus—old, and notorious for his wine consumption, but still writing when Aristophanes began his career—and Eupolis, who was a worthy rival of Aristophanes and popular in his day, for he was often quoted. Other comic playwrights such as Crates, Pherecrates, Hermippus, Phrynichus, Teleclides, Ameipsias, Theopompus, and Plato—not to be confused with the philosopher Plato—are hardly more than names attached to titles of lost comedies. The eleven plays of Aristophanes are all that remains of Greek Old Comedy, and they owe their survival to the fact that Aristophanes became popular as assigned reading for Greek schoolboys of the second century C.E.

**ARISTOPHANES’ BACKGROUND.** The approximate dates of Aristophanes’ lifetime—450–385 B.C.E.—place him in one of the most turbulent periods of Athenian politics. He was a boy in the Periclean Age, when the politician Pericles dominated Athens. Pericles’ authority was based on his dominance of the popular assembly, the *ekklesia*, where all male citizens could vote. As a well-connected, wealthy man, Pericles was able to dominate the assembly so long as he followed popular policies, which he did. He took an imperialist approach to Athens’ neighbors, which led to the creation of an Athenian Empire profitable enough to finance a splendid building program in Athens. It also led to the Peloponnesian War with Sparta and her allies. Nine of Aristophanes’ plays were written in wartime and they belong to the period that followed the death of Pericles in the autumn of 429 B.C.E. The great man proved irreplaceable and, under the stress of war, the fissures in the body politic of Athens began to appear.

**THE FIRST PLAYS.** Aristophanes’ first comedy was *The Banqueters*, produced in 427 B.C.E., which won second prize at the City Dionysia, followed the next year by *The Babylonians*. Although *The Babylonians* won first prize, it also earned him the wrath of the politician Cleon, who successfully prosecuted him for anti-Athenian propaganda. The reason for the inflammatory nature of the work is lost in history since neither of these plays survived. His next play, the *Acharnians*, was produced at the Lenaea festival in January, 425 B.C.E. A year later at the



Bust of the Athenian comic poet Aristophanes. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

same festival he produced the *Knights*, and in 423 B.C.E. he produced the *Clouds*, a burlesque of Socrates which only won third prize. Aristophanes was bitterly disappointed; the *Acharnians* and the *Knights* both won first prizes, and since the number of comedies had been reduced from five to three during the Peloponnesian War as an economic measure, that meant that the *Clouds* took last place. Aristophanes set about rewriting it, and at least some of the surviving text is from this second edition, which was never staged. In 422 B.C.E. his play the *Wasps* won second prize, and the next year, when Athens and Sparta signed a peace treaty, Aristophanes staged his comedy *Peace* and again won second prize.

**FORMULA FOR OLD COMEDY.** The structure of the comic play was already established by Aristophanes’ heyday. First there was a *prologue* during which the leading character has a bright idea which gets the plot underway. Then comes the *parodos*: the entry of the chorus of 24 men wearing masks and fantastic costumes. Next is the *agon*: a debate between one character who supports the bright idea of the prologue, and an opponent who always loses. Then follows the *parabasis* where the chorus comes forward and sings to the spectators directly. The parabasis gave the comic poet an opportunity to

voice his views on the present state of affairs. Next comes the *episodes* where the bright idea is put into practice, sometimes with comic results, after which comes the *exodus*, which concludes the play on merry note: a marriage, or a banquet, or some happy occasion. This was not a hard-and-fast formula. The *Acharnians* has two episodes, the *Knights* three, and the *Clouds* two agons. The last two plays of Aristophanes lack a parabasis, but by the time they were produced, Old Comedy had given way to Middle Comedy, which did without the parabasis. It belonged to an age which preferred not to hear the personal views of comic poets.

**THE ACHARNIANS.** One of Aristophanes' first plays, *The Acharnian* is a play whose theme is the foolishness of war-mongering. The Acharnians of the title of this play were citizens of the deme (constituency) of Acharnae, war hawks who made their living making charcoal. The Peloponnesian War was beginning its sixth year when this play was produced. The citizens from the countryside were suffering great hardship, for they had to evacuate their farms when the Spartan allied force invaded Attica—as it did each year when the crops were ripe—and find shelter behind the walls of Athens. Pestilence aggravated their suffering; the great plague was at its most severe in the second year of the war but it lingered on for three more years. The setting of the *Acharnians* is the Pnyx in Athens where the people assembled for meetings of the *ekklesia*. Dicaeopolis, a decent citizen, recounts his woes as he waits for the assembly to convene. When it does, Amphitheus proposes peace negotiations with Sparta but is silenced. Disgusted, Dicaeopolis recruits Amphitheus to negotiate a private truce for him with Sparta, and he returns from Sparta to offer Dicaeopolis three possibilities: a truce for five, ten, or thirty years. Dicaeopolis chooses a thirty-year peace and exits. On comes the chorus of peace-hating Acharnians, searching for the man who dared conclude a truce with Sparta. When Dicaeopolis returns, they hurl stones at him, and to save himself, he runs to the house of the tragic poet Euripides, whose works were famous for their pitiable heroes. Euripides gives Dicaeopolis a tattered costume to wear, and with his Euripidean props, Dicaeopolis delivers a clever parody of a Euripidean speech in his defense, reviewing the causes of the war and absolving Sparta. The sympathies of the chorus are divided, and the war hawks call in an ally, Lamachus, a well-known hawk. Lamachus comes on stage, magnificent in full armor, but Dicaeopolis' arguments demolish him. Dicaeopolis proclaims the end of all war boycotts. The chorus then advances stage front and sings the parabasis directly to the audience, the subject of

which is the virtues of Aristophanes. Following two more episodes, Lamachus is ordered off to a battle, and the play concludes with Lamachus returning wounded from war, and Dicaeopolis returning drunk from a feast, with a courtesan on each arm. In the final scene, Dicaeopolis roisters and Lamachus groans, and the foolishness of war-mongering is made apparent to all.

**THE KNIGHTS.** The *Knights* was an attack on Cleon, the chief war hawk and the darling of the Athenian common man. The year before, the Athenians had defeated Sparta on Sphacteria, an island at the north end of the Bay of Navarino, where they had marooned a Spartan force, including 120 of their elite Spartiates, and forced it to surrender. Cleon was given the credit, which, in part, he deserved, though Aristophanes thought not. In the *Knights*, Demos is a good old man who is easily gulled, and his new slave, a tanner from Paphlagonia, has him under his thumb to the despair of two other slaves, Demosthenes and Nicias. Each character represented a real-life person: the Paphlagonian was Cleon, thinly-disguised; the two other slaves were the Athenian generals, Demosthenes and Nicias; and the old man Demos represented the Athenian people, for whom the Greek word was *demos*. Demosthenes and Nicias depose the Paphlagonian by putting forward an even greater rascal than he, a sausage seller who outbids the Paphlagonian for Demos' favor and is revealed as a statesman whose real name is Agoracritus, meaning "Choice of the Agora." In the exodus, Agoracritus announces that he has rejuvenated Demos into a young, vigorous, and highly-sexed man.

**THE CLOUDS.** The butt of Aristophanes' railery in the *Clouds* is Socrates, who is portrayed in the play as the proprietor of a *phrontisterion*, a think-tank combined with a school for Athenian youth. The plot centers on Strepsiades, an elderly Athenian, and his ne'er-do-well son, Pheidippides. Pheidippides' passion for chariot racing has landed him deeply in debt, and Strepsiades is afraid that his son's creditors will pursue him. To avoid the creditors, he decides to enroll his son in Socrates' school that teaches debaters how to make weaker arguments appear the better. Pheidippides refuses to go, so Strepsiades enrolls himself. Socrates' attempt to teach poor old Strepsiades is a nice piece of buffoonery, but the upshot is that Strepsiades is expelled for stupidity and insists that his son enroll or leave home. Pheidippides is instructed by two teachers at the think-tank, Just Cause, who teaches the old-fashioned virtues, and Unjust Cause, who teaches how to find loopholes in the laws. They quarrel about the purposes of education. Unjust Cause wins on a technicality and takes over Phei-

dippides' training. He makes such splendid progress that he is able to justify beating his father. Strepsiades realizes that the new learning that Socrates represents has ruined his son and burns down Socrates' institute.

**THE WASPS.** A citizen in Athens had the right to a trial before his fellow citizens, and in practice that meant that he was tried before a large jury of from 100 plus one jurymen to 500 plus one, who listened to the arguments of both the plaintiff and the defendant and then voted on the verdict. A jurymen's pay was small. Yet for elderly citizens, jury service was both a welcome income supplement and also entertainment. Yet because many took jury duty as entertainment, it was often seen by many as a useless system of judgement. In *Wasps*, a farce on the jury system, there is a clash of wills between the old man Philocleon (Cleon-lover) and his son Bdelycleon (Cleon-hater). The chorus of jurymen, who are costumed as hornets, summon Philocleon to join them at jury duty, but Bdelycleon has his father locked in the house. After an argument, Bdelycleon convinces his father that jurymen are only tools in the hands of self-seeking demagogues, and promises Philocleon that he will feed him and let him play at holding trials at home if he gives up his addiction to jury duty. Then in a parody of a court case, Philocleon tries the dog Labes for stealing cheese; Bdelycleon argues for the dog so well that Philocleon acquits it. When Philocleon realizes his error—he has never voted “Not Guilty” before—he swoons and is taken off stage. Two episodes follow: in the first, Bdelycleon, on his way to a banquet with Philocleon, instructs him how to behave like an Athenian gentleman; and in the second, Philocleon returns with a piper from the banquet, very drunk, and holding with one arm a nude girl. As Philocleon tries to make love to the girl, Bdelycleon manhandles him into his house.

**THE PEACE.** When the *Peace* was produced, Cleon was dead, as was the chief Spartan war hawk, Brasidas. Both had died in the same battle, at Amphipolis in northern Greece. For Athens the battle was disastrous, but in both Athens and Sparta, parties supporting peace were left in control, and during the year 421 B.C.E., a peace treaty was signed. In the *Peace*, an Athenian citizen Trygaeus flies to Heaven astride a dung-beetle where he learns that the Olympian gods have moved away in disgust at the warring Greeks and have left War and Tumult in charge of their palace. War has thrown Peace into a pit and piled stones on her. Trygaeus, with the help of a chorus of Greek farmers and laborers, frees Peace, along with Harvest and Diplomacy, two women whom Trygaeus brings with him when he returns to earth. Trygaeus prepares a wedding feast where a sooth-

sayer appears, prophesying that the war cannot be stopped. In the *Exodus*, there appears a group that is hard hit by the peace: manufacturers of armor, trumpet makers, and the like. They try to unload surplus arms and armor on Trygaeus, but he will have none of it. He drives them off and the feast begins.

**THE BIRDS.** The play the *Birds* is a good-natured spoof on the “castles in the air” that some Athenians were building as they imagined their triumph in taking over Sicily in the late fifth century B.C.E. The castles in the air would soon implode. In 415 B.C.E. Athens dispatched a great armada to Sicily, and two years later, the fleet was completely destroyed in a fruitless effort to take the city of Syracuse. When the *Birds* was produced, however, the Athenians still nursed hopes of winning an empire in Sicily that would make Athens the superpower in the Greek world. In the play, two Athenian adventurers, Pisthetaurus and Euelpides, convince birds to build a new city, to be called Cloudcuckooland, in the sky between Earth and Heaven. Cloudcuckooland cuts the gods off from the smoke rising from human sacrifices, and the gods are forced to seek a peace treaty with the birds. Pisthetaurus and Basileia (meaning “kingship”) are to wed, and they exit the stage, flying off to Zeus' palace to take it over.

**THE LYSISTRATA.** In the year 411 B.C.E., following the disastrous Sicilian expedition, many of the wealthier, more conservative Athenians lost confidence in the Athenian democracy's conduct of the war. The *Lysistrata* is Aristophanes' plea for peace. Lysistrata is an Athenian housewife who is sick of war. Women in Athens were traditionally shut out of government, but Lysistrata's disgust with male bumbling causes her to lead a women's revolt to seize the Athenian government and end the war. The women agree to deny their husbands sex until they make peace, while at the same time making themselves as alluring as possible in order to set their husbands' hormones raging. They seize the Acropolis, where the Parthenon housed the state treasury. The revolution spreads to Sparta, where the women banish their husbands until peace is made. Finally in the third episode, envoys arrive from Sparta to sue for peace, and everyone calls on Lysistrata. She appears on stage bearing a statue of the goddess Reconciliation, and she makes a speech on the worth of women and the value of Panhellenism, when all the Greeks band together, rather than fight each other. The play ends with the Athenians and the Spartans feasting and dancing.

**THESMOPHORIAZUSAE.** *Thesmophoriazusae* (Women Celebrating the Thesmophoria) is a spoof on Euripides,

whose tragedies were controversial—he had the reputation of being a woman-hater because he did not idealize women in his plays. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the women of Athens have decided to put Euripides to death for his insults to the female sex. Euripides, along with his father-in-law, Mnesilochus, come to the tragic poet Agathon to ask for help. Agathon was famous in real-life for his effeminacy and for inventing plots for his plays rather than taking them from mythology. When Agathon consents to see his visitors, he appears lolling on his bed, surrounded by feminine toilet articles. He refuses to help but consents to lend Euripides some women's clothing so Mnesilochus can wear them when he meets the women at the Thesmophorion, the temple of Demeter where the women's religious festival known as the Thesmophoria is held. Finding them denouncing Euripides, he undertakes his defense, arguing that women are much worse than Euripides depicted them. He infuriates the women into attacking him, and then is exposed as a man by a well-known pederast, Clisthenes, who is also dressed as a woman. Then Euripides' himself attempts to save Mnesilochus, using various dramatic devices from his own plays, and finally he succeeds in rescuing his father-in-law with a tried-and-true method: he disguises himself as a procuress—that is, a female pimp—and comes on stage with two girls. They distract the policeman who is holding Mnesilochus, allowing Euripides to release Mnesilochus.

**THE FROGS.** In 405 B.C.E. the Peloponnesian War was nearing its end, but the radical democrats in Athens still did not want peace. The deaths of Sophocles and Euripides the year before lent a bittersweet tone to the *Frogs*. In the play the god Dionysus, patron of the Athenian stage, descends into the Underworld to bring back his favorite playwright, Euripides, for no tragedians still alive were as ingenious as he was. In the Underworld, there is a contest between Aeschylus, who was long dead, and Euripides, the new arrival in the Underworld. The worth of the poets is decided by bringing out a scale and putting a verse from one of the plays of each contestant into the balance and seeing which verse weighs more. Aeschylus wins in three trials, for his verses express weighty ideas whereas Euripides is an intellectual lightweight by comparison. When Dionysus decides in Aeschylus' favor, however, Euripides reminds him that it was to bring him back that Dionysus descended into the Underworld in the first place. Dionysus replies with a famous quotation from Euripides' tragedy the *Hippolytus* which struck the Athenians as the height of sophistry when it was first uttered on the stage: "My tongue has sworn. My heart remains unsworn." The play

ends with a feast, and Hades, the Lord of Death, sends Aeschylus back to Athens with messages for some Athenian individuals who were still alive that he wanted to see them soon. The *Frogs* is the last surviving example of Old Comedy, and it is Aristophanes at his most brilliant.

**THE ECCLESIAZUSAE.** Following the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War, Old Comedy diminished in popularity. It had flourished under the freewheeling democracy of fifth-century Athens, but after the war, the political atmosphere changed even though the democracy was restored after a group of disgruntled right-wingers known as the "Thirty Tyrants" seized power and set up a short-lived oligarchic government. The *Ecclesiazusae* (Women in the Assembly, produced in 391 B.C.E.) and *Plutus* (388 B.C.E.), the last surviving play of Aristophanes, belong to Middle Comedy. Middle Comedy differs from Old Comedy in that the parabasis is omitted, the chorus is less important, and the pointed attacks on Athenian politicians are absent. The butt of Aristophanes' satire, *Ecclesiazusae*, is Plato's *Republic*. While it is unclear whether the *Republic* had been published at the time of the production of *Ecclesiazusae*, Plato's lectures had been propagating his ideas, and the idea of an ideal society without private property of the sort lampooned by Aristophanes in his play was familiar to Aristophanes' audience. In the play, the women of Athens, led by Praxagora, dress themselves in their husbands' clothing, go early to the *ekklelesia*—that is, the assembly which held ultimate power in the Athenian democracy—and establish a new constitution in which everything is held in common, even women. The episodes that follow are commentaries on the new order. Praxagora's husband Blepyrus is delighted at his wife's initiative because he looks forward to a life of laziness. Another citizen wants to share in the benefits of the new order without contributing anything. A handsome young man wants to sleep with a lovely courtesan, but the law requires him to satisfy a couple old crones first who drag him off to enjoy his sexual prowess. The play ends with a communal feast. The moral of the play is that an ideal society needs ideal citizens to make it work, and none were to be found in Athens.

**THE PLUTUS.** One of the darker comedies of Aristophanes, *Plutus* reminded audiences that a certain amount of injustice may be necessary to make the economy function. In this play, a blind old man in rags comes on stage, followed by Chremylus and his slave, Cario. Chremylus has been told by the Delphic oracle to follow the first man he met after leaving the temple, and it turned out to be this blind old man. Chremylus and Cario ask the old man who he is, and reluctantly he tells them that he

is Plutus, the god of wealth whom Zeus, jealous as ever of mankind, has struck blind. Chremylus decides to cure Plutus of his blindness, and takes Plutus into his house. Chremylus' friend, Blepsidemus, agrees to help restore Plutus' sight in exchange for a share of the wealth granted by Plutus. They take him to the temple of Asclepius, the god of healing, but are interrupted by a horrifying woman, the goddess Poverty. She and Chremylus debate whether Poverty or Plutus, the god of wealth, benefits mankind more. Chremylus argues that if Plutus could see, he would reward only the good, and hence eventually everyone would become good. Poverty counters that if this happened, no one would want to work. Chremylus wins the argument, and a miraculous cure restores Plutus' sight. Then we see the results—good and bad—of giving rewards only to good and deserving persons. Not everyone is delighted with this new dispensation. A Just Man comes on stage. He is happy. An Informer enters. He is ruined. An old woman, dressed as a young girl, comes to tell Plutus that her gigolo has deserted her. Hermes arrives to report that humans are no longer making sacrifices and the gods are starving. A priest of Zeus reports that he is starving, too, and he deserts to the new god, Plutus. Then Plutus himself comes on stage, followed by the old woman that has lost her gigolo. She is assured that he will return to her. The play ends with a procession to the Acropolis to install Plutus and begin his reign.

**MIDDLE COMEDY.** Between Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War in 404 B.C.E. and 321 B.C.E.—the probable date when Menander produced his first comedy *Anger*—comedy underwent an enormous change. The audience became more solidly middle-class as the poor could no longer afford to go to the theater. The emphasis of the plays switched from politics to courtesans, food, and sex. The chorus merely provided interludes of song and dance instead of being part of the action. Though we have the names of some fifty authors, and the titles of over 700 comedies, no Middle Comedy survived, except for the last two plays of Aristophanes. The titles range from *The Birth of Aphrodite*, evidently a burlesque of mythology—send-ups of myths were popular in Middle Comedy—to *The Stolen Girl* which sounds like a situation comedy. Characters from the fringes of polite society appear again and again as stock characters: the professional courtesan who sometimes has a heart of gold, the clever slave, the braggart soldier, and the sponger who survives by truckling to rich friends. These are international character types with panhellenic appeal, meaning they could belong to any Greek city, not just Athens. In fact, many of the playwrights pro-



Imaginative portrait of Menander, the foremost playwright of the New Comedy. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

ducing Middle Comedy in Athens were not Athenian citizens.

**THE UNEARTHING OF MENANDER.** Until the beginning of the twentieth century the only known examples of New Comedy came from second-hand adaptations of Greek plays by the Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence for the Roman stage. These adaptations provided some flavor of the New Comedy playwrights Menander, Diphilus, Philemon, and Apollodorus. In 1905 a papyrus-codex—that is, a papyrus document bound like a modern book—was found in Egypt at Aphroditopolis, modern Kom Esqawh. It contains large parts of Menander's *Girl from Samos*, *The Rape of the Locks* and the *Arbitration*, plus fragments of two other plays. A little more than fifty years later, a papyrus containing the full text of the *Dyskolos* (The Man with a Bad Temper), more fragments of the *Girl from Samos*, and half of a play titled *The Shield* came to light. Since then, other papyrus fragments have been discovered—one, as recently as 2003, yielding 200 lines of an unspecified play—but the *Dyskolos* is the only complete play to be discovered.



**THE DYSKOLOS.** The *Dyskolos* was first produced at the Lenaea festival in Athens in 316 B.C.E. It is an early play of Menander, a lightweight situation drama without the stock characters typical of New Comedy. In the play, Knemon, a misanthropic man, marries a widow with one son, Gorgias, by a previous marriage. They have a daughter, but Knemon's wife, unable to bear his bad temper, leaves him and he lives as a virtual hermit on his farm. Sostratus falls in love with the daughter and asks for her hand in marriage. Knemon refuses, but after he falls down a well and is rescued by Sostratus he becomes a changed man. He is reconciled with his wife and agrees to give his daughter to Sostratus to marry. In addition, he marries Gorgias to Sostratus' sister.

**INFLUENCE OF NEW COMEDY.** New Comedy set the style for Greek theater after Alexander the Great, from the third century B.C.E. onwards. Numerous theatrical festivals sprouted in cities everywhere, and troupes of professional actors traveled from place to place, staging their plays. From Greece, the New Comedy went to Rome where the playwrights Plautus and Terence crafted plays on the New Comedy model. While the Old Comedy plays of Aristophanes were tied to one place and one time, the New Comedy had universal appeal.

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## GREEK TRAGEDY

**BEGINNINGS.** The evidence for the origins of tragic drama is ambiguous. The name itself is odd, for *tragoidia* means the "song of the male goat," or perhaps a "song

for a male goat" and attempts to explain its meaning have been ingenious but never quite successful. The Roman poet Horace, a contemporary of the emperor Augustus, thought that "tragedy" got its name because the prize for the best tragedy was a goat, but this is unlikely. One fact, however, is not disputed: tragedy was intimately connected with the cult of Dionysus, and Aristotle stated that it developed from the dithyramb, a choral song in honor of Dionysus. The great age of Greek tragedy began in Athens when the tyrant Pisistratus established the festival of the City Dionysia about 536 B.C.E. where dithyrambs were presented by amateur choristers. Pisistratus hoped to use the festival to raise the profile of Athens. After he died in 527 B.C.E., his sons Hippias—who succeeded him as tyrant—and Hipparchus—who became a quasi Minister of Culture—continued his policy until Hipparchus was assassinated and Hippias was ousted from power four years later in 510 B.C.E. At the City Dionysia of 534 B.C.E., or at least between 536 and 533, the chorus leader Thespis from the village of Icaria took a solo part in his dithyramb, thus introducing an actor who played a role in the story. Tragedy, as Aristotle pointed out, was the representation of an action worthy of attention, and once there was an actor, there could be an imitation of the action, though the chorus still sang the story line. We know almost nothing about Thespis except his father's name, Themon, and that he had a pupil named Phrynichus who lived well into the fifth century B.C.E. By then the great age of tragedy had arrived, dominated by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

**AGE OF TRAGEDY.** The great age of tragedy was short. It began with Thespis, but the first surviving tragedy is Aeschylus' *Persians*, performed in 472 B.C.E. It ends with the deaths of Sophocles and Euripides just before the Athenian defeat in the Peloponnesian War. Other surviving plays include seven plays of Aeschylus, seven of Sophocles plus a satyr play (the *Trackers*), and seventeen of Euripides plus a satyr play (the *Cyclops*). There is also the *Rhesus*, the shortest Greek tragedy we have, which may be by Euripides. Other tragedians whose work is now lost include Phrynichus, Choerilus and Pratinas—all of whom wrote before Aeschylus—and the sons of Phrynichus and Pratinas who belonged to the generation of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Aeschylus' son Euphorion also presented tragedies.

**TRAGEDY BEFORE AESCHYLUS.** Aeschylus was the first playwright to add a second speaking actor, and Sophocles added a third. Prior to Aeschylus, when there was only one actor, the chorus must have played a very important role in unfolding the plot of the drama. One

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ARISTOTLE ON TRAGEDY AND COMEDY**

**INTRODUCTION:** The eminent Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) wrote on the subject of tragedy in his *Poetics*, along with a great many other subjects. In the excerpt below, he discusses the key components of tragedy.

Tragedy, then, is a representation of an action that is worth serious attention, complete in itself and of some amplitude; in language enriched by a variety of artistic devices appropriate to the several parts of the play; presented in the form of action, not narration; by means of pity and fear bringing about a purgation of such emotions. By language that is enriched I refer to language possessing rhythm, and music or song; and by artistic devices appropriate to the several parts I mean that some are produced by the medium of verse alone, and others again with the help of song.

Now since the representation is carried out by men performing the actions, it follows, in the first place, that spectacle is an essential part of tragedy, and secondly that there must be song and diction, these being the medium of representation. By diction I mean here the arrangement

of the verses; song is a term whose sense is obvious to everyone.

In tragedy it is action that is imitated, and this action is brought about by agents who necessarily display certain distinctive qualities both of character and of thought, according to which we also define the nature of the actions. Thought and character are, then, the two natural causes of actions, and it is on them that all men depend for success or failure. The representation of the action is the plot of the tragedy; for the ordered arrangement of the incidents is what I mean by plot. Character, on the other hand, is what enables us to define the nature of the participants, and thought comes out in what they say when they are proving a point or expressing an opinion.

Necessarily, then, every tragedy has six constituents which will determine its quality. They are plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song. Of these, two represent the media in which the action is represented, one involves the manner of representation, and three are connected with the objects of the representation; beyond them nothing further is required.

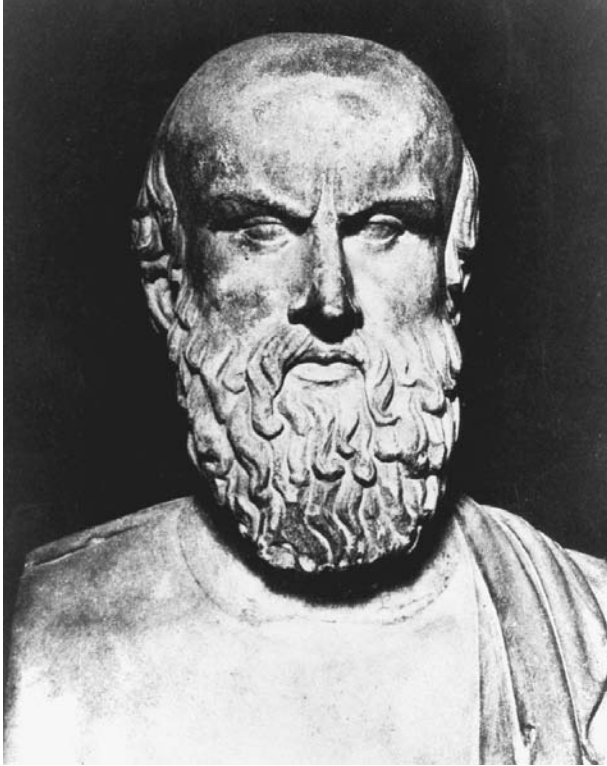
**SOURCE:** Aristotle, "On the Art of Poetry," in *Classical Literary Criticism*. Trans. T. S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1965): 38–39.

of Aeschylus' tragedies, the *Suppliants*, conforms to this pattern. At one time, scholars believed it was produced even before the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C.E., where Aeschylus fought the Persian invaders as an infantryman on the Athenian battle line, but among the great cache of papyri discovered at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt there is a small fragment which upset the early date for the *Suppliants*. It now seems likely that it was produced at the City Dionysia of 462 B.C.E. The late date of *Suppliants* shows that Aeschylus did not feel the need to follow the newest fashions on stage.

**THE PERSIANS.** In 480 B.C.E. the Persian Empire launched a great invasion of Greece by land and sea, led by King Xerxes himself, and it ended in utter defeat. The turning point was the Greek victory at Salamis, and the Athenians had some right to claim the victory as theirs, for though the admiral of the allied Greek fleet was a Spartan, the Athenian navy was by far the largest contingent. *The Persians* is an imaginary portrayal of the impact of the Persian defeat on the Persians themselves. The play is set in the Persian capital of Susa and used a chorus of Persian councilors, magnificent in their costumes. Xerxes' mother, Atossa, reports a troubling dream

and receives comfort from the chorus. A messenger arrives with news of the defeat of the Persian fleet. His description of the naval battle at Salamis was masterful and must have made Athenian hearts swell with pride. Atossa takes offerings to the tomb of Darius, the wise old king who was Xerxes' father, and the ghost of Darius arises. He describes how the power and wealth of the Persian Empire has blinded the foolish Xerxes, and he utters prophecies of doom. Finally Xerxes comes onstage, his royal robes in tatters, and the drama ends with a lamentation sung antiphonally by Xerxes and the Chorus. This was patriotic drama of a high order, yet it does not disparage the Persians; except for Xerxes himself, all the Persian characters are dignified and noble. Yet the theme was a familiar one: man, blinded by his pride and his greatness, suffers an unexpected overthrow.

**THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES.** The *Seven Against Thebes* was the last and only surviving play from a trilogy which dealt with the curse of the royal house of Thebes. The story provided Sophocles with the material for three great tragedies, the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the *Antigone*, and the *Oedipus at Colonus*. According to the story, Laius, king of Thebes, is befriended in exile by



Imaginative portrait of the tragic poet Aeschylus. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Pelops, but falls in love with his benefactor's son, Chrysippus, and kidnaps him; the deed brings a curse upon Laius and his family in which his son is destined to kill him. In the lost second play of this trilogy, *Oedipus*, Laius is indeed killed by his son, Oedipus. The curse extends to Oedipus' own sons, Polynices and Eteocles, when they reach adulthood and agree to share the rule of Thebes between them, each reigning in alternate years. While Polynices rules for his year and resigns, Eteocles does not hold to the agreement, refusing to step down following his year of rule. To regain the throne, Polynices gathers an army led by seven heroes, one for each of the seven gates of Thebes, and lays siege to the city. It is at the start of this siege that *Seven Against Thebes* begins. The seven heroes in Polynices' army each lead an attack on their assigned gate, which are, in turn, defended by six champions selected by Eteocles; he himself defends the gate assaulted by his brother Polynices. While the subject matter of the play is action-packed and violent, the Greek audiences did not see any of the battle, which raged offstage, while onstage the chorus sang of the fearful curse that hangs over the royal house of Thebes. A messenger informs the audience of the result of the conflict; the city has been saved but Eteocles and Polynices killed each other, which causes the chorus to

sing a lamentation. The message of the play is highly fatalistic, suggesting that nothing can avert a fate that is destined to be.

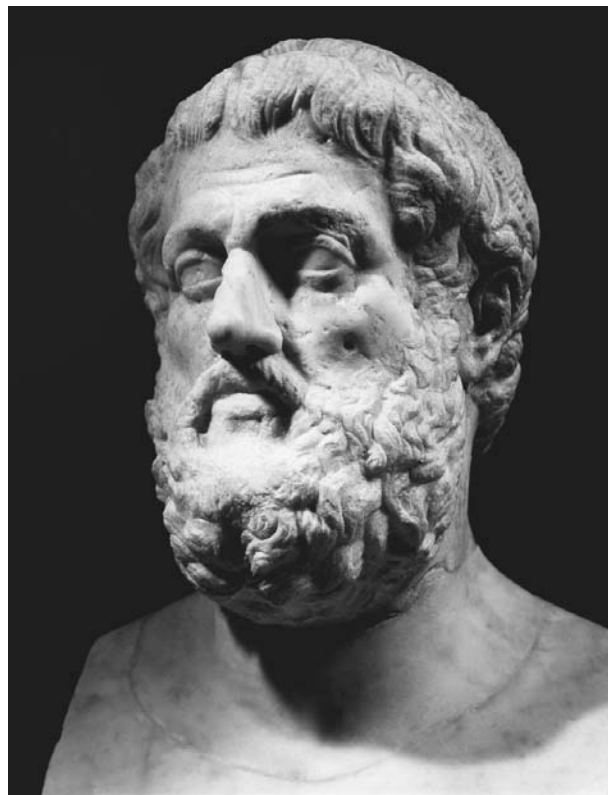
**THE SUPPLIANT WOMEN.** The *Suppliant Women* belongs to a trilogy of three tragedies which modern critics call the *Danaid Trilogy* for the sake of convenience. Only the first play of the trilogy, *Suppliant Women* survives, but we know the titles of the two plays that followed it: the *Egyptians* and the *Danaids* (the "Daughters of Danaus"). The myth on which the play is based was familiar to the Athenians: the fifty sons of Aegyptus (meaning "Egypt") force the fifty daughters of Aegyptus' brother Danaus (meaning "Greek") to marry them, and the daughters flee from Egypt with their father to seek refuge in Argos, their ancestral home. At the beginning of the play, the daughters are in Argos, pleading for sanctuary (thus, they are the "suppliant women" of the title) from Pelasgos, king of Argos. At the risk of war with Egypt, Pelasgos and the Argive people agree to give them sanctuary and defy the pursuing sons of Aegyptus. The fifty daughters act as the chorus in this play, although presumably represented by twelve singers, the standard size of tragic choruses. After thwarting the Egyptians, Danaus gives his daughters some fatherly counsel: be obedient to your father's instruction. The full weight of this advice is borne out in the last two plays of the trilogy, now lost, in which the sons of Aegyptus succeed in marrying the daughters of Danaus, and Danaus instructs his daughters to kill their husbands on their wedding nights. All of them do so except for Hypermestra, the one daughter who fell in love with her Egyptian husband Lynceus; she obeys the claims of love rather than her father. A fragment of the last play of the trilogy survives: a speech of Aphrodite, goddess of love, which praises love as the generative principle of the universe.

**THE ORESTEIA.** The *Oresteia* is the only complete surviving trilogy of Aeschylus, consisting of the *Agamemnon*, the *Libation Bearers*, and the *Eumenides*. The trilogy is about a blood feud coming under the rule of law. A hero of the Trojan War, Agamemnon, had sacrificed his own daughter prior to leaving for the war in order to secure favorable winds for the journey. This act sparked a chain reaction of revenge killings when Agamemnon is slain by his wife, Clytaemnestra, and her lover upon his return from Troy and his son Orestes then kills the murderous couple. Orestes is morally polluted by his matricide and is pursued by the Furies until he stands trial in Athens before the ancient Council of the Areopagus. The Council had only recently been stripped of most of its power when the *Oresteia* was produced, but still served

as a court for homicide cases. The Furies argue that Orestes must pay the penalty for matricide according to the law of blood feud. The gods become involved, with Athena presiding as a judge, and Apollo speaking for the defense. The jurors are evenly divided, so Athena casts the deciding vote. She rules that because the murder of a father outweighs the murder of a mother, Orestes was not in the wrong to punish his mother with death for killing his father. The decision implies the replacement of a matriarchal society by a patriarchal one, though whether or not that is the hidden meaning of this play can be endlessly debated. At any rate, the Furies are outraged, but Athena offers them a place in her city as kindly spirits, checking crime under her new dispensation. The Furies accept and become “Kindly Goddesses” under the new rule of law that replaces the law of an “eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

**PROMETHEUS BOUND.** *Prometheus Bound* is considered to be Aeschylus’ last play. The story re-tells the myth of Prometheus, a Titan who incurs the wrath of Zeus because he secretly gave the gift of fire to mortal men whom Zeus despised and would have replaced with a more perfect race if he had had his way. For his rebellion against Zeus, Prometheus was condemned to be eternally chained to a rock and to have his liver eaten by an eagle each day. Prometheus’ immortality as a Titan assured the unending torture of his punishment since his liver would grow anew each day, only to be eaten again by the eagle. The drama ends with an earthquake—how the “special effects” department of the day accomplished it is a matter of conjecture—and Prometheus and his rock sink below ground while the chorus flees. Prometheus remains a man of principle in the face of overwhelming power. This ending cuts off the myth, but we know that the trilogy had two more plays and ended with peace between Zeus and Prometheus. The supremacy of Zeus is recognized, but so also is the right of human race to exist and live under the rule of law, free from violence.

**SOPHOCLES.** During his long life which stretched from about 496 to about 406 B.C.E., Sophocles wrote 123 dramas, of which seven survive along with an incomplete satyr play which was discovered on a papyrus. This abbreviated catalog of his work only hints at his development as a playwright. By all accounts, he was well born, handsome, and pious, and he took an active role in public life. He introduced the convention of a third actor in tragedy productions early in his career (previous tragedies had only two actors with a chorus), and Aeschylus soon followed his lead by including three actors in his *Oresteia*. Sophocles also introduced scenery of some



Imaginative portrait of Sophocles. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

sort. The recurring theme of his tragedies is the suffering of men and women—sometimes suffering they bring on themselves by flaws in their characters, or suffering that results from being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**AJAX.** The *Ajax*, which most scholars consider to be the earliest Sophoclean tragedy, centers on the legend of Ajax’s suicide. According to Homer’s *Iliad*, the hero Ajax was, after Achilles, the toughest warrior in the Greek army fighting at Troy. Following the death of Achilles, there is a contest to see who is the most valuable hero in the Greek army, and thus worthy to inherit his armor. Ajax loses the competition to fellow warrior Odysseus and goes mad with disappointment. In his madness, he attacks what he believes to be the Greek camp and at the start of the play is gloating over his supposed slaughter of Odysseus and two of the Greek champions, Agamemnon and Menelaus. When he recovers his sanity he realizes that instead of the Greek camp, he has attacked a flock of sheep, and he is so overcome by shame that he commits suicide. His death was dishonorable, and thus the issue arises of what sort of burial Ajax should have. His half-brother Teucer is determined to see him honorably buried, but Menelaus and Agamemnon for-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ANTIGONE'S SPEECH IN DEFENSE OF CONSCIENCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In Sophocles' tragedy, *Antigone*, there is a clash between the conscience of the individual and the demands of the state. The title character, Antigone, is on trial for burying her brother Polynices contrary to the decree of Creon, the king of Thebes, who ordered that he be left unburied because he led an invasion of Thebes. The burial rite, which could consist of as little as spreading some handfuls of earth on the corpse, allowed the dead person's ghost to enter the House of Hades. In war, there was regularly a truce after a battle to allow each side to bury its own dead. A dead soldier's family would be shocked and distressed if he was allowed to lie unburied. However, there was no such obligation to bury the enemy dead, and Creon regarded Polynices as an enemy. For Antigone, however, Polynices is her brother, regardless of what he has done, and her conscience demands that she bury him. In this speech, Antigone defies Creon, defending her right to obey her own conscience rather than the law of the state. From a modern perspective, Antigone's obedience to her conscience is admirable, but in ancient Greece her actions violate the treasured Greek maxims of "Nothing in excess" and "Moderation in all things." Both Antigone and Creon represent immoderate, inflexible viewpoints, and their immoderation leads to the destruction of Antigone; Creon's son, Haemon, who was betrothed to Antigone; and Creon's wife, who commits suicide. The play ends with Creon bowed down with grief.

**Creon:** Did you know the order forbidding such an act?

**Antigone:** I knew it, naturally. It was plain enough.

**Creon:** And yet you dared to contravene it?

**Antigone:** Yes.

That order did not come from God. Justice  
That dwells with the gods below, knows no  
such law.

I did not think your edicts strong enough  
To overrule the unwritten unalterable laws  
Of God and heaven, you being only a man.  
They are not of yesterday or to-day, but  
everlasting,

Though where they came from, none of us  
can tell.

Guilty of their transgression before God

I cannot be, for any man on earth.

I knew that I should have to die, of course,

With or without your order. If it be soon,

So much the better. Living in daily torment

As I do, who would not be glad to die?

This punishment will not be any pain.

Only if I had let my mother's son

Lie there unburied, then I could not have  
borne it.

This I can bear. Does that seem foolish to  
you?

Or is it you that are foolish to judge me so?

**SOURCE:** Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *The Theban Plays*. Trans. E. V. Rieu (London: Penguin Classics, 1947): 138–139.

bid it, for it was Ajax's intention to slaughter them, even though he had not succeeded. The quarrel is settled when Odysseus successfully argues that grudges should be forgotten. There is a magnificent array of characters here: Ajax, completely absorbed in his own grievances; Menelaus and Agamemnon, both mean, small-minded men; and Odysseus, who allows his intelligence to override any rancor he might feel and realizes that statesmanship requires magnanimity. The *Ajax* demonstrates the worth of true statesmanship.

**ANTIGONE.** *Antigone* is a dark play with a troubling message. The attack on Thebes dramatized in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* is over, and the two warring brothers, Polynices and Eteocles, are dead. Creon, the new king of Thebes, orders that Polynices remain unburied because he died as a traitor attacking his homeland. Polynices' sister, Antigone, disobeys, however, and gives Polynices' body formal interment—that is, she spreads earth on his corpse. She defies Creon in a magnificent speech, vindicating her

right to place divine laws above the man-made rules of a state. Creon condemns her to be shut up alive in a vault for her disobedience, but when the seer Teiresias warns him that the city is polluted by Polynices' unburied corpse, he reluctantly repents and goes to release Antigone. He is too late, however, as she has hanged herself. His son Haemon, who was betrothed to Antigone, kills himself, as does Creon's queen when she discovers what has happened. Creon leaves the stage a broken man. Two stubborn persons have clashed: the one, Creon, defending a state's right to enforce its laws, and the other, Antigone, defending the individual's right to follow her conscience. Both follow their agendas and both suffer, though Antigone achieves a degree of martyrdom. Yet there are no clear winners in this contest of wills, and the message of the play seems to be that one person's refusal to see another's point of view can bring calamity on both of them.

**OEDIPUS TYRANNUS.** In his *Oedipus Tyrannus* Sophocles returns to the myth of the curse that hung

over the royal house of Thebes, but the setting is a generation before *Antigone*. A plague has smitten Thebes and an oracle from Delphi reveals that the cause is moral pollution: the murderer of Laius who ruled Thebes before Oedipus is still unpunished. The Athenians in the audience knew from the myth on which the play is based that the murderer is Oedipus himself, a fact of which he is ignorant because he did not realize that the man he had killed, Laius, was his father. He compounded his crime by marrying Laius' widow, Jocasta, not knowing she was his own mother. In his ignorance, Oedipus calls on everyone to tell him what information they have about the crime and lays a curse on the killer and anyone who shelters him. He sends for the blind seer Teiresias for insight. Teiresias is at first unwilling to say what he knows, but Oedipus' badgering makes him angry and he tells Oedipus plainly enough that he is his father's murderer and his mother's husband. Oedipus does not believe him. He suspects that Teiresias is a tool of Creon, his wife's brother, who wants to depose him. Jocasta assures Oedipus that he need not fear oracles, citing as proof of their unreliability the fact that an oracle had warned Laius, her former husband, that his son would kill him. She, like Oedipus, bases her confidence on ignorance, for she believes that Laius was killed by robbers while on a journey. Jocasta's effort to reassure him has the opposite effect, for Oedipus had been told by the same Delphic oracle that he was fated to kill his father and marry his mother, and he now suspects the truth. This is what was called *peripeteia*—a thrust in one direction which results in the opposite of what was expected. Then Oedipus learns that the man he had presumed to be his father, Polybus of Corinth, has died—and not by Oedipus' hand; Oedipus is relieved, believing the oracle to be wrong. The truth is then revealed that Polybus was not actually his father, and that spurs Oedipus to discover the whole truth. His wife/mother Jocasta is actually the first to realize the awful truth and in horror, hangs herself. When Oedipus understands the horrible truth himself and sees Jocasta's lifeless body, he gouges out his eyes to shut out the light. The *Oedipus Tyrannus* is the most famous Greek tragedy for two reasons. First there is its structure: the action is compressed, one scene follows logically upon the scene that comes before it, and Sophocles' use of dramatic irony, for which he was famous, heightens the tension until we reach the final resolution. But the second reason for its fame is the multiple messages it projects. It appears to be a drama of fate; Oedipus is doomed to kill his father and marry his mother and though he takes steps to avoid his destiny, he cannot. But on the other hand it is Oedipus' determination to investigate Laius'

death and discover the cause of the plague which leads to the revelation of the awful truth, so he is inadvertently responsible for his own downfall. Finally this is a play that has attracted psychologists. Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology argued that it expressed a young male's subconscious desire to kill his father and take over as his mother's mate—a primitive longing that is suppressed because it is taboo in civilized society. Freud labelled this suppressed lust the "Oedipus Complex," although this psychological angle had probably not occurred to Sophocles when he wrote the play. Central to his drama is the horror with which Greeks regarded patricide and incest.

**THREE LATER TRAGEDIES.** The three tragedies titled the *Electra*, the *Women of Trachis*, and the *Philoctetes* do not build the same tension as Sophocles' masterpiece, but they are good pieces of theater. The *Electra* uses the same myth as Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* but the general tenor is vastly different. Whereas Aeschylus' version shows Orestes' murder of his mother as a terrible crime in that he is pursued by the Furies, in the *Electra*, Orestes' matricide of Clytaemnestra is just recompense for her crime of murdering Agamemnon. The title character is Orestes' sister, and she lives a life consumed by thirst for revenge for she is devoted to her father's memory, and lives in hope that her brother Orestes will come home and kill Clytaemnestra and her lover. But Sophocles presents no great issues as Aeschylus did in his handling of the same myth. Sophocles' characters are ordinary people caught in an extraordinary situation. The *Women of Trachis* dramatizes the myth of Heracles' death. Heracles has captured the city of Oechalia, and his servant Lichas brings the captives from Oechalia to Heracles' home in Trachis, including Iole whose beauty is conspicuous. Heracles' wife, Deianeira, is a good woman by the standards of the day, but when Lichas blurts out that Iole is Heracles' new wife she believes that she is losing her husband's love. She sends Heracles a garment anointed with a love potion, not realizing that the love potion is poisonous. Heracles puts on the garment, and it burns into his flesh. Deianeira's son Hyllus curses her for having caused his father's death, and Deianeira hangs herself. Heracles is brought onstage, asleep, but soon awakes in horrible pain. He learns the truth about Deianeira from Hyllus and gives orders for his funeral pyre on Mt. Oeta. The *Philoctetes* centers on the conflict between two characters, Neoptolemus, the young, honorable son of Achilles, and the older and craftier Odysseus. The hero Philoctetes, who possesses the bow of Heracles, had been abandoned on a desert island by the Greek army on its way to Troy because he suffered

from an incurable ulcer, caused by a snakebite. The Greeks learn, however, that they cannot take Troy unless they possess the bow of Heracles, which Philoctetes owns. Neoptolemus and Odysseus travel to Philoctetes' island, and Neoptolemus reluctantly agrees to go along with a trick that Odysseus proposes to get the bow from Philoctetes and then abandon him again. But once Neoptolemus gets the bow, Philoctetes' despair moves him so greatly that he returns it over Odysseus' protests. The play concludes with an epiphany of Heracles who commands Philoctetes to sail to Troy where Asclepius will heal him. The ending is unusual for Sophocles for it involves a *deus ex machina*, that is, a god—in this case, Heracles—lowered in a basket on to the stage by a rope attached to a derrick crane to set matters right. Thus the resolution of the drama does not develop from the plot, but rather is brought about by divine intervention.

**THE OEDIPUS AT COLONUS.** The last and longest surviving play of Sophocles is about Oedipus' death and apotheosis—that is, his acceptance among the gods. It also is a play that requires four actors; Sophocles, who introduced the innovation of using three speaking actors early in his career, expands it here to include a fourth. Oedipus—now old, blind, and destitute, and cared for in his exile by his daughter, Antigone—reaches Colonus just outside Athens, Sophocles' own home village. He recognizes the precinct of the Venerable Goddesses there as the place where he is destined to die. His daughter Ismene arrives and tells him that his son Polynices is about to attack Thebes, and Creon wants Oedipus back, for he has been told that his presence in Thebes will save the city. Theseus, king of Athens, accepts Oedipus as an inhabitant of Athens. Creon arrives and tries to persuade Oedipus to come and live just outside the borders of Thebes and when Oedipus refuses, his attendants attempt to drag off Antigone and Ismene, only to be thwarted by Theseus. Then Polynices arrives and pleads for Oedipus' help. Oedipus listens to what he has to say, and replies with a solemn curse. A thunderclap warns Oedipus that his time is near. He sends for Theseus again and together they go offstage. A messenger arrives to report that Oedipus has vanished. Only Theseus knows what has happened and his knowledge is the preserve of the kings of Athens. This play was probably written only shortly before Sophocles' own death in 406 B.C.E.

**EURIPIDES.** For Euripides, the last of the triad of great classical tragedians, what was important in drama was character. He probed the deeper feelings of his heroes and heroines. Not for him were the great questions of fate, and the nature of justice. Instead he placed the

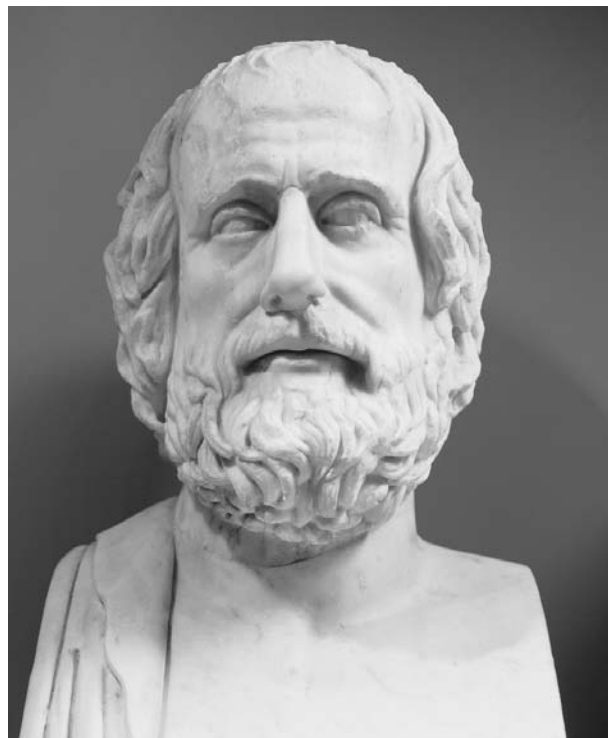
persona of a hero or heroine under stress to explore how they would react. The fact that he often used heroines may have been the reason for his reputation as a woman-hater among contemporaries. In his greatest play, *Medea*, produced in 431 B.C.E., the first year of the Peloponnesian War, he shows a woman terribly wronged by her husband getting revenge. The myth was well known: the hero Jason had sailed to Colchis on a quest for the Golden Fleece, and got it only with the help of the Colchian princess, Medea, whom he takes with him to Greece. When the play opens, Jason and Medea have settled in Corinth. Jason has become a comfortable member of Corinthian society and his foreign wife, Medea, has become an embarrassment, especially now that Jason has an opportunity to marry the king's daughter. Jason, the complete egocentric, reasons with Medea that it is better for all concerned that he should discard her and make this advantageous marriage. Medea sees things differently. She destroys the king's daughter and the king along with her, then kills her children and departs in a fiery chariot sent by her grandfather, the Sun-God. The drama ends with supernatural intervention: the sort of conclusion that Euripides liked and for which he was criticized.

**THE ALCESTIS.** Eighteen dramas of Euripides survive, including one satyr play, the *Cyclops*, and one drama, the *Alcestis*, produced in 438 B.C.E. and which took the place of a satyr play as the fourth drama of a tetralogy. It is not a tragedy. Instead it points forward to the New Comedy which Menander wrote a century later when Euripides was the tragedian whose dramas were revived most frequently. The story of the *Alcestis* is a folktale with the following pattern: a man learns that he must die at a certain time unless someone else will die in his stead. In Euripides' play, Admetus, king of Pherae in Thessaly, who possesses all the conventional virtues, is the man who learns his doom, and tries to find someone to assume it. His parents refuse because they want to have the last years of their lives for themselves. His wife Alcestis, however, agrees to die in his place. Admetus accepts his wife's sacrifice, realizing after he has done so that he has been less than gallant. He is prepared to live on, however, forgetting all the virtuous resolutions he has made to salve his conscience. Alcestis is rescued from death by the hero Heracles, who wrestles with Thanatos, the god of death, to bring her back to life. The characters are brilliantly drawn, particularly Heracles, who is depicted as having a gargantuan appetite for food and drink. The later development of Heracles' character as a roisterer owes much to Euripides. The play ends happily, though a modern reader may

think that Admetus will have some explaining to do when he next talks to his wife.

**THE CRUELTY OF PASSION.** The *Hippolytus*, produced in 428 B.C.E., shows a woman stressed by passion and a man obsessed by virtue. Phaedra, the young wife of Theseus, falls desperately in love with her stepson, Hippolytus, whose love is the outdoor life and is not interested in sex. Phaedra's nurse offers to act as her go-between and proposition Hippolytus. Hippolytus reacts with disgust, and Phaedra, overcome with shame, kills herself, leaving a note for Theseus that accused Hippolytus of improper advances. Furiously jealous, Theseus invokes his father Poseidon to punish his son, and Poseidon sends a sea-monster that terrifies the horses of Hippolytus' chariot so that they bolt. Hippolytus is thrown from the chariot and mortally wounded. Theseus learns the truth of his son's innocence, and the two are reconciled just before Hippolytus dies. Phaedra is destroyed by her longing for sexual love, whereas what destroys Hippolytus is his obsession for chastity. The *Hecuba*, produced three years later than the *Hippolytus*, shows another woman under stress, this time because of the catastrophe of defeat. Troy has fallen, Hecuba, the wife of Troy's king, has been enslaved, and has seen her daughter Polyxena sacrificed to the ghost of Achilles. Now she learns of the murder of her last son, Polydorus, who had been entrusted to Priam's ally, the Thracian king Polymestor, to keep safe. Once Polymestor learns of Troy's fall, he kills Polydorus and casts his body into the sea. Calamity transforms Hecuba from a fallen queen into a bereaved mother thirsting for revenge. She makes a desperate appeal to the victor Agamemnon, and, having won his cooperation, she entices Polymestor into her tent, where she and her women kill his two sons before his eyes and blind him. The play ends with Polymestor relegated to a desert island, and the old queen departing to bury her dead.

**WAR PROPAGANDA.** The popularity of the Athenian theater stretched beyond Athens itself, even in the midst of the bitter Peloponnesian War, which divided Greece into two warring camps, each eager to justify itself. Many of Euripides' plays that were written during the war had a message for the two combatants, and Sparta and Delphi (a Spartan ally) tend to come off badly. It is stretching the truth to call these plays war propaganda, for Athens did not purposely mobilize her tragic poets to produce plays favorable to her aims. Nevertheless the *Andromache* does seem to have been inspired by some Spartan atrocity that took place in the early years of the war, and an ancient commentator in Euripides reports that it was not produced in Athens. The



Bust of the Athenian tragic poet Euripides. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS.

question of where, then, the play was produced allows for two possibilities: one was Sparta's neighbor Argos, where Athens wanted to stir up anti-Spartan feeling; the other was the kingdom of Epirus in northwest Greece where there was a young king who had been educated in Athens. The plot deals with the aftermath of the Trojan War. When the spoils of Troy were divided, Hector's captive wife Andromache went to Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, also called Pyrrhus, whom the kings of Epirus claimed as their ancestor, and she goes home with him and bears him a son. When the play opens, the daughter of Menelaus and Helen, Hermione, has married Neoptolemus, and Andromache is no longer welcome in Neoptolemus' household. Menelaus, who is presented as a typical Spartan—cruel, faithless, and a blusterer into the bargain—wants to kill Andromache and her child in cold blood while Neoptolemus is absent in Delphi. She is saved by the intervention of Neoptolemus' aged grandfather, Peleus. Then crushing news arrives; Neoptolemus has been ambushed at Delphi and killed by a gang of armed men who acted under the orders of Orestes, another Spartan. The Delphians, whose partiality for Sparta in the Peloponnesian War was no secret, are shown as a treacherous lot in the *Andromache*. The *Children of Heracles* is even more clearly anti-Spartan. The Dorians claimed to be Heraclids—that is,



descendants of Heracles—and the Spartans were quintessentially Dorian. Heracles' children and his mother, Alcmena, take refuge from his old enemy Eurystheus at Marathon in Athenian territory. Eurystheus is captured and the vengeful Alcmena insists that he be put to death. Before he dies, he promises the Athenians that if they give him honorable burial, he will be their friend when the ungrateful descendants of the Heraclids—that is, the Dorians—invade, a clear reference to the Peloponnesian War when the Spartans led an invading army into Attica to destroy the crops in the early years of the war. The *Suppliants*, which is equally anti-Spartan, ends with an oath of Adrastus of Argos never to invade Athenian territory and to hinder any enemies who did. In 420 B.C.E., Athens and Argos negotiated an alliance, and the oath of Adrastus sounds like a reference to it. However, a few years later, in 415 B.C.E., when Euripides' *Trojan Women* was presented in March at the City Dionysia, on the eve of the departure of the disastrous Sicilian expedition, it is the brutality of war that weighed on Euripides. Only the year before, an Athenian force had taken the little island of Melos in the Aegean Sea and massacred the men and sold the women and children into slavery. The *Trojan Women* portrays the misery of the women captured when Troy fell, but Euripides takes one liberty with traditional mythology: he has Hecuba indict Helen so eloquently as a war criminal that Menelaus decides to execute her when he gets home to Sparta, even though the long war at Troy had been fought to return her to him, her rightful husband.

**THE HERACLES.** In the Renaissance this play was called the *Hercules Furens* ("The Madness of Heracles"). In the play, Lycus has made himself tyrant of Thebes and is about to kill Heracles' wife, Megara, and his children. Heracles arrives in the nick of time to save his family and kill Lycus. Then his enemy, the goddess Hera, inflicts Heracles with madness, and he kills his wife and children. When the fit of madness leaves him, he falls asleep, only to awaken to the news of what he has done. But Theseus, whom Heracles had rescued from Hades, comforts his friend and offers him asylum in Athens. There is no reliable date for this play, but 414 B.C.E., when the Athenians still had high hopes of their Sicilian expedition, is a good possibility.

**HAPPY ENDINGS.** Euripides did not always end his plays in tragedy. *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, the *Ion*, and *Helen* all have happy endings. The first exploits the myth of Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigeneia, whom Agamemnon sacrificed to the gods so that they would grant favorable winds for the Greek fleet to sail from Aulis against Troy. An alternative version of the myth

had the goddess Artemis rescuing Iphigeneia at the last moment and carrying her to Tauris to be her priestess there. While in Tauris, she recognizes her brother, Orestes, and his friend, who are captives of the Taurians. She plots to save them from the Taurians, and does so with the goddess Athena's aid. The second non-tragedy, the *Ion*, has a plot of the sort we find in the New Comedy in which a child conceived by rape is exposed to die only to be saved and reunited years later with the parents. In this play, Ion is the child of a rape perpetrated by the god Apollo on the wronged heroine, Creusa, the daughter of King Erechtheus of Athens. Fearing the wrath of her parents, Creusa secretly exposes Ion to the elements and leaves him to die, but Apollo takes the infant to his temple at Delphi, where he becomes a pious temple servant knowing little of the wicked outside world. When the play begins, Creusa and her husband Xuthus arrive at Delphi to consult the oracle regarding their inability to conceive a child, and their arrival at the temple in which Ion serves threatens to expose the truth about Ion's parentage. The oracle—to save Apollo's reputation—tries to foist Ion off on Xuthus, and Creusa, fearful for her own future with an unwanted stepson in her house (not realizing he is her actual son), tries to kill Ion. The plot is discovered and Ion and the Delphians are about the stone Creusa to death, when the aged priestess of Apollo who has reared Ion arrives with the cradle and clothes that he wore when she first received him, and Creusa recognizes them as belonging to her abandoned son. Everything is resolved with some help from Athena, who explains that she has come in Apollo's place because Apollo is too ashamed to own up to the rape of Creusa. Apollo is portrayed as an ordinary politician who has been caught in a sex scandal and tries what in modern times would be termed a "coverup." The message is that organized religion can claim no special privileges when it comes to moral standards. The *Helen* exploits an alternative myth about Helen of Troy that was invented by the Sicilian poet Stesichorus. Paris did not take Helen to Troy. Instead his ship was driven by contrary winds to Egypt where Helen remained and only an ectoplasmic facsimile of Helen went to Troy. On the way back home from the war at Troy, Menelaus is wrecked on the shores of Egypt and is amazed to find Helen living there. The facsimile that he took from Troy simply evaporates. This fantastic drama ends with Menelaus and Helen escaping from Egypt, where the king had the unpleasant custom of killing all Greeks who reached his shore. There is nothing tragic about the *Helen*. The myth that it relates is simply a nice story with comic elements.

**FOUR MELODRAMAS.** With the *Electra*, produced about 413 B.C.E., and the *Orestes* (408 B.C.E.) Euripides turned to the familiar theme of vengeance for Agamemnon's murder. In the *Electra*, neither Electra nor Orestes are quite sane. Euripides' addition to the legend is Electra's marriage to a decent farmer; her mother Clytaemnestra has given her to a man of low standing to prevent her bearing children of a status high enough to embarrass the royal house of Mycenae. Despite her marriage, Electra remains a virgin. Electra and her brother Orestes plot the assassination of Clytaemnestra for killing their father, Agamemnon, and carry out the deed ruthlessly. Their mood then changes to hysterical remorse. But Castor and Polydeuces, brothers of Clytaemnestra and now divine beings themselves, appear and sort things out: Orestes is to go to Athens, his friend Pylades is to marry Electra, and as for the matricide, it can be blamed on Apollo. In the *Orestes* we have an array of unpleasant characters: Orestes, who is mad; Electra, whose only redeeming quality is her devotion to her brother; Menelaus; Helen; her daughter Hermione; old Tyndareus, who is Helen's father; and faithful Pylades. Electra and Orestes are condemned to death for killing Clytaemnestra but are granted the privilege of committing suicide instead. Thereupon they plot to kill Helen, who mysteriously disappears, and so they seize Hermione as a hostage to force Menelaus to intervene. Menelaus finds Orestes with a knife at Hermione's throat while Electra and Pylades set fire to the palace. Apollo intervenes and explains that everything has happened for the best. The *Phoenician Women* is a long play about the sons of Oedipus who died fighting each other at Thebes. Jocasta—who is still alive in spite of her suicide at the end of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*—tries to stop the duel between Polynices and Eteocles but reaches them too late and kills herself over their corpses. *Iphigeneia at Aulis* was a play that Euripides never finished but someone supplied the missing parts and it was produced after his death. It tells the story of Iphigeneia's sacrifice and the text stops with a messenger arriving to report it. The characterization is splendid. Agamemnon is irresolute, and terribly distressed at the thought of sacrificing Iphigeneia to get favorable winds to sail to Troy, but his army is mad for battle. For Menelaus, what is important is getting on with the war. Clytaemnestra has brought Iphigeneia to Aulis because Agamemnon sent her a deceitful message that he wanted to marry her to Achilles. Achilles comes out of the plot as an honorable warrior. Angry at having his name misused, he is prepared to defend Iphigeneia. But then Iphigeneia herself volunteers to die as her patriotic duty, and Achilles departs, promising to defend her if she changes her mind.

**THE BACCHAE.** Either in 408 B.C.E. or early the following year, Euripides left Athens for the court of King Archelaus of Macedon and it was there that he produced the *Bacchae*, his last drama, and it is generally acknowledged as a masterpiece. The story comes from a legend of Thebes telling how Pentheus, the grandson of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes, resisted the coming of the god Dionysus (also known as Bacchus) and suffered for it. Dionysus himself explains the situation in the prologue to the play: he has returned to the city where he was born and his mother's sisters, including Pentheus' mother Agave, hesitated at first, but then were overcome by Bacchic frenzy and are now on Mt. Cithaeron, where he is on his way to join them. Then two old men, Cadmus and Teiresias, come on stage. They too are going to join Dionysus' votaries, and Pentheus fails to stop them. Then a servant arrives with a mysterious prisoner who is never identified, but when Pentheus shuts him up in the palace stables, the palace collapses as if hit by an earthquake and the stranger emerges and faces Pentheus' threats with serene confidence. A messenger arrives with a report of the astonishing revelry of the women on the mountain, and the stranger persuades Pentheus to disguise himself and go and witness it. Soon after Pentheus leaves the stage, the news arrives that the women have caught him and torn him to pieces. Then Agave arrives, still under the spell of her frenzy and carrying what she thinks is a lion's head. It is actually the head of Pentheus. Cadmus brings her to her senses and she breaks into lamentations that Dionysus cuts short by reappearing and justifying his vengeance on unbelievers; much of his speech has been lost. The play has raised many questions. Did Euripides attack the religion of Dionysus or defend it? Who was the mysterious stranger whom Pentheus tried to imprison? One thing at least is certain: Euripides, whose attitude toward conventional religion was often marked with cynicism, here acknowledges its terrifying power. Pentheus' mother, Agave, who loses herself in the wild ecstasy of the Dionysiac cult becomes a tragic figure—a mother who has killed a son she loves. Dionysus himself does not hesitate to be ruthless if ruthlessness helps the spread of his religion. The message seems to be that mass religion is a force to be reckoned with.

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## THE ART OF PUBLIC SPEAKING IN GREECE

**BEGINNINGS.** Greece admired a good public speaker who could put forward his point of view effectively in an assembly of men, or conduct a case in the law courts. Tradition has it that public speaking as an art was cultivated first in Syracuse in Sicily in the years before the middle of the fifth century B.C.E. Syracuse had been ruled by tyrants and a great deal of litigation followed their overthrow, necessitating the oratorical skills of numerous people in court. The art reportedly first came as an import from Sicily into Athens in 527 B.C.E. While he was in Athens on a diplomatic visit, the rhetorical skills of Gorgias of Sicily captivated the Athenians. Gorgias went on to become a famous Sophist—that is, a teacher who taught the skills necessary for public speaking—and he was known for the high tuition fees he charged. Athenians were willing to pay the fees, however, because public speaking was a valuable skill in Athens, not only for a politician addressing the assembly, but in the courts as well, for neither the plaintiffs nor the defendants in trials could hire lawyers to speak for them. The best they could do was to hire a speechwriter, or a “logographer,” as they were called. Speechwriting thus became a profitable profession—one that was particularly attractive for orators such as Lysias who were resident aliens in Athens and therefore could not themselves speak in the courts or the assembly. The pioneer speechwriter was the Sophist Antiphon, (c. 480–411 B.C.E.). Antiphon first gave advice to citizens who were entangled in litigation, but about 430 B.C.E. he began to write speeches for others to memorize and deliver. He spoke only once for himself. He was tried for treason in 411 B.C.E. and wrote out a speech in his own defense. His speech failed—Antiphon was executed—but he set a trend. After him orators would write down and publish speeches they delivered themselves in the courts or, more rarely, in the assem-

bly. Oratory was in full flower by the time Aristotle wrote a treatise on rhetoric, which he divided into three types: forensic, for the courts; deliberative, for delivering in the assembly; and epideictic, for a special occasion such as a funeral.

**THE TEN ORATORS.** In the great age of oratory from about 420 to 320 B.C.E., Athens saw or heard many orators and logographers, but only ten of these were selected for study by ancient scholars. Sometimes speeches by unknown orators have been preserved because it was thought—wrongly—that they were written by one of the Ten. Of the sixty speeches ascribed to the great orator Demosthenes, only about half of them are genuine. The Ten Orators were Antiphon and Andocides, whose careers belonged to the fifth century B.C.E.; Demosthenes and his rival Aeschines; Dinarchus and Lysias, both of them resident aliens in Athens; Isaeus whose forte seems to have been probate law for all eleven of his surviving speeches deal with inheritance; Lycurgus, better known as an Athenian statesman, who is represented by only one speech; Hyperides, who like Demosthenes opposed Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great for which the Macedonians sentenced both him and Demosthenes to death in 322 B.C.E.; and Isocrates, who might have been unhappy to find himself included among the Ten Orators, for he considered himself a philosopher and an educator rather than a public speaker. Two of these stand out, both for their ability and reputation, and the number of their speeches that have survived.

**ISOCRATES.** The end of the Peloponnesian War in 404 B.C.E. was followed by political turmoil and Isocrates was apparently on the wrong side since he lost the family estate. Isocrates first tried logography as a way to make a living, but then turned to teaching, first on the island of Chios, and then, from not long before 387 B.C.E. until his death in 338 B.C.E. at the age of 98 in Athens, where students flocked to his school from all over the Greek world. His alumni included two important historians of the fourth century B.C.E., Ephorus and Theopompus. Greece in Isocrates’ day was divided into warring camps; not only did the old powers of Athens, Sparta, and Thebes vie for hegemony, but there were new rising powers such as Thessaly and Macedon. Isocrates was not a public orator. His orations are really political pamphlets, but they reveal a consistent political aim. Isocrates advocated an alliance, or perhaps a federation of the states which would turn Greek energies from fighting each other within Greece to combating the Persian Empire, which had recovered control of the Greek cities in Asia Minor at the end of the Peloponnesian War. In his *Panegyricus*, dating to 380 B.C.E., he

advocated an alliance headed by the old enemies, Sparta and Athens, which would liberate the Asian Greek cities. In 346 B.C.E. Isocrates, now aged ninety, addressed an open letter to Philip of Macedon urging him to head a pan-Hellenic alliance which would attack Persia. In 339 B.C.E., he published his last long work, the *Panathenaicus*, an elaborate eulogy of Athens. Though he never mentions Philip by name, it seems clear that he still saw Philip as the champion of Greece. The following year, Philip defeated Athens and Thebes on the battlefield of Chaeronea, and Isocrates' last work is an epistle to Philip written after the battle, still urging a campaign against Persia.

**DEMOSTHENES.** Demosthenes is notable for two reasons. First, as an Athenian statesman he passionately opposed the imperialist ambitions of Philip II of Macedon, whose son, Alexander the Great, would continue his father's policies and transform the world of Greece with the conquest of Persia. For that reason, some historians have hailed Demosthenes as the courageous defender of Athenian freedom and democracy, while others have condemned him as a dead-end politician mired in the past. Second, he brought the art of oratory to new heights—a conclusion few would dispute. His masterpiece was his speech *On the Crown* in defense of Ctesiphon, one of his supporters who was charged with illegally proposing to honor Demosthenes. The combined armies of Athens and Thebes had been defeated in 338 B.C.E. at the Battle of Chaeronea, and it was the anti-Macedonian policies which Demosthenes urged upon the Athenians that led to the disaster. Yet two years after the defeat, Ctesiphon, one of Demosthenes' supporters put forward a motion in the assembly that Demosthenes be awarded a golden crown for his services at the upcoming festival of Dionysus. The time and place for the award violated the law, and Demosthenes' rival and bitter enemy Aeschines charged Ctesiphon for the proposal, as a way to attack his real enemy, Demosthenes. The case did not come to trial until 330 B.C.E. Demosthenes rose to address the jury after the jury had been listening all forenoon to Aeschines' argument that this extraordinary honor which Ctesiphon had proposed for Demosthenes could not be justified by a great service he had done the state, for the anti-Macedonian policy which he had promoted had ended in disaster. In a brilliant piece of sophistry, Demosthenes disregarded the legal questions and focused on slandering his accuser. He regaled the jury with a malicious caricature of Aeschines' parents, who were very ordinary folk, and finally he attacked Aeschines himself, suggesting that it was Aeschines who was really responsible for the disaster at

the Battle of Chaeronea, which was a perversion of the truth. He ended with a prayer to the gods to keep the state safe. The speech is a brilliant example of making the worse argument appear the better. Demosthenes died following an anti-Macedonian uprising in Greece in 323 B.C.E. The tough old Macedonian general Antipater crushed the revolt in Athens, and Demosthenes tried to escape retribution by fleeing to the island of Calauria. He sought asylum in a temple, but he took poison when it was clear that Antipater's men intended to drag him from his sanctuary.

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## GREEK LITERATURE AFTER ALEXANDER THE GREAT

**A CHANGED WORLD.** When Alexander the Great died in Babylon in 323 B.C.E. he left the Greek world irrevocably changed. The centers of Greek culture moved away from the old city-states of Greece to the capitals of the new Hellenistic kingdoms that were centers of wealth and power. Athens held its own in the field of culture, but it was an exception. Egypt emerged as a magnet for the Greeks. On Alexander's death, one of his shrewder generals, Ptolemy, secured Egypt as his province and established himself at Alexandria. Alexander's young son was killed in 310 B.C.E., and in 305 B.C.E., after there was no longer any pretense of unity in the empire Alexander had conquered, Ptolemy declared himself king. Ptolemy wanted to make Alexandria a hub of Greek culture, for the Greeks lived side-by-side with native Egyptians who had an ancient culture of their own, and there was remarkably little cross-fertilization. At some point before he died, Ptolemy started the Great Library of Alexandria, and his son, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who ruled 285–247 B.C.E., continued the work. The kingdom of Pergamum, which was founded in Asia Minor in 263 B.C.E., also established a library, and Alexandria did not

## THE Great Library at Alexandria

The library at Alexandria, the capital of the kingdom founded by Ptolemy in Egypt, was a legendary institution in ancient times. Estimates of the size of its collection varied wildly—between 70,000 and 700,000 books—but any number within that range is impressive in a time when all books had to be copied by hand. Though it was not the first public library nor the only one, it was for about two centuries the most influential literary and scientific center in the Hellenistic Age.

Ptolemy I first founded the Museum (*Mouseion*) of Alexandria in 280 B.C.E. The English word “museum” is not an accurate translation of the Greek *mouseion*, which means a “home for the Muses” who were worshipped in the Museum of Alexandria. The Museum was part of the royal palace, and it was a gathering place for scholars, literary figures, scientists, and artists, with a common dining room and apparently living quarters. Attached to the Museum was the Great Library or Palace Library, which may also have been founded by Ptolemy I, but his son Ptolemy II can take credit for expanding the collection. Literary texts of the classical authors were edited there, and standard texts produced; one author who benefited from this scholarly work was Homer, whose *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were

edited by the Alexandrian scholar Aristarchus of Samos, whose text is the one that has survived to modern times.

The question of what happened to the Library is a controversial one. Julius Caesar, who spent the winter of 48–47 B.C.E. in Alexandria with the young princess Cleopatra, got involved in the power struggle between her and her brother, and in the process books in the harbor region of the city were burned. Some scholars date the end of the Library to this time. But once Cleopatra became queen of Egypt, she continued to collect books; her lover Mark Antony gave her the collection from the old royal library of Pergamum which once was the second largest library in the Mediterranean world. Certainly the palace library continued to survive long into Roman times, and there is no reliable evidence for the date of its destruction. The emperors Caracalla (198–217 C.E.), Aurelian (270–275 C.E.) and Diocletian (284–305 C.E.) all did significant damage in Alexandria and some lay the blame on one or other of them for the library’s downfall. A late legend says that the Arabs burned the collection when they captured Alexandria in 642 C.E. However, what destroyed the library was probably neglect. Papyrus scrolls grew old and brittle. In late antiquity, worn-out scrolls should have been replaced by *codices*—volumes bound like modern books—but there was no money to defray the costs. The greatest enemy of the collection in the old Palace Library was probably the natural decaying process.

look kindly on this rival; the Ptolemies cut off Pergamum’s supplies of papyrus but Pergamum developed parchment as a substitute. Alexandria never surrendered its supremacy to the Pergamene library, which was neglected after Rome acquired Pergamum in 133 B.C.E., and terminated when Mark Antony gave its collection to Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemies, for the Alexandrian library in the period 40–33 B.C.E. The dynastic capitals of Antioch in Syria and Pella in Macedon also boasted substantial libraries.

**THE ALEXANDRIANS.** Alexandria took the lead in literary development. It fostered a hothouse culture with no roots in the native Egyptian way of life. The literature produced there was not intended for the masses, for the masses did not speak Greek. There was some attempt at crossover between Greek and Egyptian traditions; an Egyptian priest, Manetho, in the reign of Ptolemy I wrote a history of Egypt in Greek, using Egyptian records, but it was not widely read. Alexandrian poetry was written for an elite Greek-speaking public, and it was meant to be read, not performed. Much learning was prized, and didactic poetry—that is, poetry written to instruct—was in vogue. One poet, Aratus of Soloi,

enjoyed tremendous acclaim for writing a book on astronomy in verse. His information is all second-hand, for he was not an astronomer himself, and his work has little appeal for a modern reader. Another didactic poet of the same sort was Nicander of Colophon, who wrote a poetic work on venomous reptiles and insects, and another on poisons and their antidotes. Poets liked learned and obscure references. A good example is Lycophron, who belonged to the Pleias, a group of seven poets named after the Pleides constellation. Although none of the tragic dramas written by the Pleias survived, one poem by Lycophron, the *Alexandra*, did. It purports to be a long prophecy of Priam of Troy’s daughter Alexandra, better known as Cassandra, who was fated to foresee the future and be disbelieved when she foretold it. Lycophron’s Greek is peppered with words that are found nowhere else in surviving Greek literature.

**GREEK POETIC INFLUENCE.** Alexandria produced three poets who influenced Latin literature: Callimachus, Apollonius of Rhodes, and Theocritus. Callimachus was a librarian at the Alexandrian library and wrote a catalogue of books for it. He wrote a variety of poetry, in-

cluding six surviving hymns written in iambs in imitation of Hipponax of Colophon, who lived in the mid-sixth century B.C.E. He also wrote a poem titled the "Aitia" (Origins), which sets forth the origins of a series of local customs, and a short narrative poem titled the "Hekale" which modern scholars have called an "epyllion" or "little epic"; the word is not found in antiquity. Callimachus believed that the long narrative poem was dead. There was no place for long epic poems anymore in the Hellenistic world. Apollonius was the second chief librarian at Alexandria, after Zenodotus, who was the first; if that information is accurate, it must have exacerbated his rivalry with Callimachus who seems to have been passed over for promotion in favor of a man who was about five years younger. Apollonius set out to prove Callimachus' stricture on epic poetry wrong, and wrote an epic in four books, the *Argonautica*, on the quest of Jason and the Argonauts for the Golden Fleece. It is not entirely successful. Jason is less than heroic. Medea, the princess of Colchis who helps Jason obtain the Golden Fleece, is the prototype of the romantic heroine who meets challenges that daunt men. She was to have many descendants in literature, including Dido in Vergil's *Aeneid*, and Scarlett O'Hara in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. Theocritus has two claims to fame as a poet. First, he revived the mime as a poetic form. These were short dramatic dialogues on subjects taken from everyday life. The genre originated in Syracuse, which was Theocritus' hometown. Second, he was the inventor of pastoral poetry that purports to be poetry of the countryside—songs sung by shepherds as they watched their flocks. He wrote first in Syracuse, but he got little encouragement or patronage from the tyrant of Syracuse, Hiero II, and he moved to the island of Cos and then to Alexandria, which proved more profitable. His *Idylls* were short mimes that gave a snapshot of contemporary life. They are sometimes shepherds or herdsmen who converse or dispute—hence the name "pastoral" from the Latin word *pastor* for "shepherd"—or a girl who tries to recall her lover with a love charm, or two housewives of Alexandria who visit the royal palace that has been opened to the public for the festival of Adonis. He was to have a host of imitators both in ancient and modern times.

#### GREEK LITERATURE UNDER THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

Greek authors continued to write after the Roman Empire conquered the eastern Mediterranean, though the Hellenistic kings who had patronized them no longer existed. The historian and geographer Strabo, of partly Asian descent, born about 63 B.C.E., wrote a work called *Historical Sketches* which is lost, and *Geography* which has survived. It describes the known world starting in

the west with Gaul and Britain, moving eastwards until it reaches the Orient and India, and concluding with Africa. In historical writing, the Hellenistic age produced one historian of first rank, Polybius of Megalopolis, who was taken to Rome as a hostage in 167 B.C.E. He used his enforced stay to study Rome's language, customs, and history. He wrote a *Universal History* in forty books on the period 220–144 B.C.E. The first five books have survived complete, dealing with the Second Carthaginian War, when Rome encountered a general of genius, Hannibal. Of the remainder of Polybius' history we have only fragments. In the next century, another Greek, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, came to Rome about 30 B.C.E., taught rhetoric there some 22 years, and wrote a history of Rome called the *Roman Antiquities*. As might be expected, his history is rhetorical and not a great deal of use as a reliable source for Rome's past. In the reign of the emperor Augustus, another Greek, Diodorus of Sicily, attempted a universal history, beginning with the Trojan War and bringing his world history to 59 B.C.E. The writer who enjoyed the greatest fame in the modern world is Plutarch of Chaeronea, born about 46 C.E. and living on until 120 C.E. He wrote a large number of essays collected under the general title, the *Moralia*, but his claim to fame is his *Parallel Lives*, which placed biographies of famous Greeks side-by-side with that of famous Romans. Plutarch had many admirers in the modern period. Among writers who have mined him for raw material was William Shakespeare, who used him for *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*.

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#### ROMAN THEATER

**BEGINNINGS.** The Roman historian Livy, writing of the years 364–363 B.C.E., related that there was plague

in Rome. Since neither human remedies nor prayers to the gods abated the plague, the Romans introduced musical shows in the hopes of entertaining them. Etruscan dancers were brought in who danced to a piper's tune. Rome already had a comic tradition; at the harvest home festival or other occasions such as weddings "Fescennine songs" were sung: rough abusive verses chanted antiphonally in improvised repartee. On occasion they were composed in the native Latin meter known as "Saturnian"; the Saturnian line consisted of a group of seven syllables, followed by a group of six syllables with a break between them. No one thought crude jokes to be incompatible with solemn ceremonies; even a victorious general celebrating a triumph might hear his soldiers chant Fescennine verses as his procession made its way through the streets of Rome to the temple of Jupiter. One example chanted by Julius Caesar's soldiers chanted about their revered leader as he proceeded through the streets is translated as "City dwellers, lock up your wives / we're bringing in the bald lecher." Livy reports that the young Romans who saw the Etruscan dancers in the plague year began to imitate them and add improvised, bawdy repartee like Fescennine verses known as *satura*, or "medleys." There was much suggestive joking and mockery, but no plot worth mention. Fescennine verses were not the only influence, however. The Samnites in Campania between Rome and Naples, who spoke an Italic dialect called Oscan and hence are often known as Oscans, had a taste for slapstick farce with stock characters. When these were introduced into Rome they were called *Atellanae* after a town in Campania called Atella with which the Romans connected them. Like Punch and Judy shows, the characters were fixed by tradition. There was a clown named Maccus, a simple fellow named Pappus, a fat boy named Bucco, and the hunchback Dossenus. With their buffoonery and their exaggerated masks, they enjoyed a mass appeal that Latin adaptations of Greek plays never had.

**GREEK INFLUENCE.** The actual staging of dramatic productions in Rome of the sort popular in Greece began with Livius Andronicus, whose translation of Homer's *Odyssey* into Latin marks the beginning of Latin literature. He began to produce plays with plots. He produced a play translated from the Greek at the Roman Harvest Festival called the *Ludi Romani* in 240 B.C.E. which was a milestone in Roman theater for it seems to have been the first time a play was staged in Rome. He wrote more tragedy than comedy, and though he was no great literary figure, he was a pioneer as Rome's first playwright. Naevius, who came after him, was more at home with comedy than tragedy—not that he wrote original

plays, for all his comedies were taken from the Greek New Comedy. He did invent a new type of play which was not borrowed from Greece: the historical drama, or, in Latin, the *fabula praetexta*. The name came from the toga with a purple border called the *toga praetexta* worn by Roman magistrates, because the dramas dealt with figures of the Roman past. After Naevius, historical drama had a very modest success. Some plays dealt with the early history of Rome—Ennius wrote a *Rape of the Sabine Women*—and others with the victories of generals who were still alive or only recently dead. Ennius had a nephew, Pacuvius, born in 220 B.C.E., who arrived in Rome as a young man and made a name for himself both as a poet and a painter. His forte was tragedy on Greek subjects—*fabulae cothurnatae*, so-called from the special elevated boots called *cothurni* which tragic actors wore. We know the titles of thirty tragedies that he wrote, but none survive. The same fate awaited the plays of a more significant tragedian, Accius, who overlapped Pacuvius in 130 B.C.E. when each of them produced a drama: Pacuvius was eighty years old and at the end of his career, and Accius, aged thirty, was making his debut. With Accius, the popularity of the *fabula cothurnata* reached its height, and in later years, Romans looked back on the second half of the second century B.C.E. as the Golden Age of Tragedy. Only fragments of the plays survive, however.

**ROMAN COMEDY.** Roman comedy fared better. We have 27 comedies, more or less complete, all adaptations from Greek New Comedy. They are *fabulae palliatae*, that is, dramas with Greek characters who were costumed in a type of Greek cloak (*pallium*) much favored by Greek philosophers. Twenty-one of these comedies are by "Titus Maccius Plautus," about whom there is little reliable information. He supposedly came to Rome from Umbria where he was born, worked for a while in the theater business, tried his hand at trade, lost his money, and had to work at a mill where he used his spare time to write plays. He died in 184 B.C.E. The remaining eight are by Publius Terentius Afer, who was born in Carthage and brought as a boy slave to Rome by a senator who was so taken with the lad that he gave him a good education and freed him. Before he was 25, he produced six plays. He then left Rome for Greece, never to return. Various reports were told about his death, but they agree that he was carrying a large number of new plays in his baggage—translations from the Greek—that were lost with him.

**PLAUTUS.** It is impossible to judge how much Plautus adapted his Greek originals for Roman taste, but his plays ostensibly have Greek settings such as Athens or

Epidamnus. While they could be any city, much of the slapstick must come from the *Atellanae*, the popular Atellan farces. Plautus used the stock characters of the New Comedy but he put his own mark on them. His courtesans are not always sweet and alluring; in the *Truculentus* a ruthless courtesan brings her lovers to ruin. One favorite character type that Plautus developed brilliantly was the clever slave. He also reintroduced song into comedy. There had been songs in Old Comedy but they had fallen by the wayside. Plautus found that the Roman audience liked musical comedy and inserted songs more and more as time went on. The *Boastful Soldier*, which was an early play, has no songs; the *Brothers Menaechmus*, which is later, has five. His dialogue is racy but not dirty, for the Romans were still puritanical, and as the plots of Plautus' comedies unfolded onstage, many Romans must have reflected that such things happened in Greece but never in Rome, and found satisfaction in the sense of moral superiority.

**THE BRAGGART SOLDIER.** The "Braggart Soldier" of the title is a stock character, the mercenary soldier who is all bombast and self-advertisement. In this case, the soldier of the title has the mouth-filling name of Pyrgopolynices. A young Athenian, Pleusicles, is madly in love with a courtesan Philocomasium, but while he is away from Athens on official business, the soldier abducts her to Ephesus. Pleusicles' clever slave, Palaestrio, sets off to tell his master what happened, but he is captured by pirates. Coincidentally, they present him to Pyrgopolynices. Palaestrio gets a letter to Pleusicles summoning him to Ephesus. Pleusicles arrives and lodges at a friend of his father's, who lives next door to the soldier. The clever slave Palaestrio arranges an elaborate hoax to make the soldier believe the wife of a wealthy old gentleman has fallen desperately in love with him. The wife is actually a courtesan who plays the role that Palaestrio has assigned her, and the old man is the friend of Pleusicles' father. The soldier readily gives up Philocomasium for his new love, but he is caught red-handed attempting adultery, given a sound beating, and threatened with castration. The old man relents when Pyrgopolynices swears never to seek revenge for the beating he received.

**THE BROTHERS MENAECHEMUS.** *The Brothers Menaechmus* is a comedy of mistaken identities; it was adapted and elaborated by Shakespeare in his *Comedy of Errors*. Identical twins were born to a Sicilian merchant from Syracuse. One twin, Menaechmus, was kidnapped and his father died of grief. Thereupon the grandfather of the remaining twin renamed him Menaechmus to commemorate his lost brother. Thus we have Menaech-

mus I and Menaechmus II, identical siblings. Menaechmus I, the boy who had been kidnapped, was taken to Epidamnus by his abductor, who, it turned out, had no son, and so he adopted Menaechmus I and made him heir to his enormous fortune. When the play opens, Menaechmus II has come to Epidamnus in search of his twin; this is the sixth year he has been searching. Menaechmus I is having an affair with a courtesan, Erotium. Erotium mistakes Menaechmus II for Menaechmus I, and Menaechmus II goes along with the error; he has lunch with Erotium and enjoys her favors. The deception results in all manner of confusion so that when Menaechmus I returns to the stage he encounters a jealous wife, an irritated mistress, and a father-in-law who thinks he's insane. He escapes being dragged off to a doctor, a fate worse than death, by the intervention of Menaechmus II's slave. Finally the two Menaechmuses meet and sort things out. The drama comes with an assortment of stock characters: a parasite, an alluring courtesan, and a silly doctor. It is Plautus' only comedy of errors, and when Shakespeare adapted it, he doubled the scope for mistaken identities by having not one set of identical twins but two.

**TERENCE.** All six plays that Terence wrote have survived, which is a remarkable tribute to his staying power through the Middle Ages. His comedies did not have the popular appeal that Plautus' plays did, for they lacked his "comic power" as one ancient critic said. They were, however, well-constructed, polished dramas written in the sort of Latin that one could hold up to schoolboys as a model. His first play, the *Woman of Andros* (*Andria*) produced in 166 B.C.E., was based on two of Menander's plays, and uses stock characters with originality: there is the typical lovesick young man, but he wants to marry a young woman of good family, not a courtesan. The strict fathers are presented with sympathy, and the clever slave is more than a mere trickster. The plot is as follows: Simo has betrothed his son Pamphilus to Philumena, daughter of Chremes. But Pamphilus loves Glycerium, an orphan, whereas his friend Charinus wants to marry Philumena. The two fathers negotiate; the clever slave Davus orchestrates the action and everything is resolved when Glycerium turns out to be Chremes' daughter and also to have borne a child to Pamphilus. Pamphilus marries Glycerium and Charinus marries Philumena. The year after the *Woman of Andros*, Terence produced his *Mother-in-Law* but it failed at its first production. Then came the *Self-Punisher* and the *Eunuch* and in the same year as the *Eunuch*, the *Phormio*. His last play was the *Adelphi* (*The Brothers*) which many critics consider his best. In that play, there are two sets



of brothers. One set is elderly with contrasting characters: Micio who lives in Athens and is easy-going, and Demea, a farmer outside Athens who is frugal. Micio has no son of his own and adopts one of Demea's two sons. Thus we have a second set of brothers: one brought up virtuously by his father and the other indulgently by his adoptive father who is also his uncle. The plot centers about the attempt of Micio's adoptive son to kidnap a harp-playing girl for his virtuous brother. The plot is resolved when Demea is converted to a more indulgent attitude, his son keeps his harpist, and Micio's adoptive son gets married.

**THEATER AFTER TERENCE.** The accidents of survival make it appear that dramatic genius dried up after Terence. In fact, theater continued to be popular. While Terence was writing comedies that were purely Greek in everything except the language, other playwrights were putting Roman characters on stage. These were called *fabulae togatae*, that is, dramas in togas, in contrast to the *fabulae palliatae* where the characters wore Greek fashions. Their success was modest. Crowds were more attracted to mime and Atellan farce.

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## LATIN POETRY BEFORE THE AUGUSTAN AGE

**LATIN EPIC POETRY.** The Latin epic begins in 240 B.C.E. with Livius Andronicus, a Greek from Tarentum, modern Taranto on the south coast of Italy, which had been founded as the Greek colony of Taras and fell into Roman hands after Rome's war with Pyrrhus. Andronicus was brought to Rome as a slave and was acquired

by a member of one of Rome's great Roman families, the Livii, who freed him because he tutored his owner's children so well. He continued to teach once he was a freedman and desired to develop a teaching model similar to that of the Greeks. Greek children learned from the Greek epic poet Homer, but Rome had nothing similar and so Andronicus translated one of Homer's most famous works, the *Odyssey*, into Latin, using the only rhythm native to Rome, the Saturnian verse. He became a professional poet and playwright, writing a hymn to the gods to win their favor during Rome's war with Hannibal. In recognition of his craft, Rome allowed him to found a guild of writers and actors with its headquarters in the temple of Minerva on the Aventine Hill. But he was best remembered for his translation of the *Odyssey* which was still a vital part of Roman education when the Augustan poet Horace was a boy in the mid-first century B.C.E.

**NAEVIUS AND ENNIUS.** The next step in the development of the Latin epic was taken by Gnaeus Naevius. He fought in Rome's first war against Carthage, which ended in 241 B.C.E., and he wrote a history of it in poetry. Like Andronicus, he used the Saturnian meter. His work is lost, but we do know that he traced the enmity of Rome and Carthage to their foundations, and brought in the story of Dido and Aeneas, as Vergil was to do later in his epic, the *Aeneid*. With Quintus Ennius, (239–169 B.C.E.) the Latin epic took a giant step forward. He came from a town in Calabria, and he knew Oscan, the language of the Samnites, as well as Latin and Greek, and he produced adaptations of Greek dramas for the Roman stage. His great work was his *Annales*, a poem on the history of Rome from the beginning. Unlike Naevius, he adapted the meter of Homer, the dactylic hexameter, to his verse. It was an important step as all later writers of Latin epic would follow his example and use hexameter verse.

**TITUS LUCRETIVUS CARUS.** Lucretius (94–55 B.C.E.) stands apart as one of the finest didactic (from the Greek *didaskhein*, "to teach") poets who ever wrote in any language. The early Greek Presocratic (before Socrates) philosophers had written in poetry, but poetry had given way to prose as a medium for philosophy even before Plato popularized the dialogue form. Didactic poetry was revived in Alexandria, but none of the poets working in the cultural hothouse surrounding the Alexandrian Library ever reached the height that Lucretius did. He was a convert to Epicureanism, which taught that all things are made up of atoms and void and that when human beings die, their atoms dissolve and there is no afterlife. Epicureanism did not deny that the gods existed, but it

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LUCRETIUS AND THE ATOMIC THEORY**

**INTRODUCTION:** Lucretius (c. 94–55 B.C.E.), a Roman poet, attempted to explain the atomic theory of the universe expounded by the Greek philosophers Democritus and Leucippus in his great poem *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things). The theory argued that since all matter is made of atoms and void, death is simply a dissolution of atoms, and no one need fear it. In the following passage he begins his explanation of creation with the principle that nothing can be created out of nothing. The translation into prose gives little hint of Lucretius' poetic genius, but it is a clear exposition of his ideas.

This dread and darkness of the mind cannot be dispelled by the sunbeams, the shining shafts of day, but only by an understanding of the outward form and inner workings of nature. In tackling this theme, our starting-point will be this principle: *Nothing can ever be created by divine power out of nothing.* The reason why all mortals are so gripped by fear is that they see all sorts of

things happening on the earth and in the sky with no discernible cause, and these they attribute to the will of a god. Accordingly, when we have seen that nothing can be created out of nothing, we shall then have a clearer picture of the path ahead, the problem of how things are created and occasioned without the aid of the gods.

First then, if things were made out of nothing, any species could spring from any source and nothing would require seed. Men could arise from the sea and scaly fish from the earth, and birds could be hatched out of the sky. Cattle and other domestic animals and every kind of wild beast, multiplying indiscriminately, would occupy cultivated and wastelands alike. The same fruits would not grow constantly on the same trees, but they would keep changing: any tree might bear any fruit. If each species were not composed of its own generative bodies, why should each be born always of the same kind of mother?

**SOURCE:** Lucretius, "Matter and Space," in *On the Nature of the Universe*. Trans. R. E. Latham (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1951): 31–32.

relegated them to a region far removed from life on earth. The advantage of Epicureanism was that it removed all fear of death, or so Lucretius believed. Lucretius deserves honorable mention among the philosophers, but he also should be recognized as a great poet, for he wrote with verve and skill, and great passion for his subject. He describes matter and void, and the shapes and movements of the atoms in void, he explains how life and sensation came to exist and plants and animals evolved more or less by chance and then reproduced, and what the gods were, for they were also atoms and void, and he ends with a powerful description of a plague epidemic which breaks off suddenly; clearly the poem is unfinished and must have been published after Lucretius' death.

**CATULLUS.** Thanks to the fortunate discovery of a manuscript in the early fourteenth century, we have 116 poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus of varying lengths, and they reveal a poet of genius. He belonged to a new wave of poets in the first half of the first century B.C.E. who looked to writers in Alexandria for their inspiration. They followed in the footsteps of an unconventional poet named Laevius who, in the 90s B.C.E., wrote love poetry expressing personal feelings. The orator Cicero, who disdained them, called them the *neoterici* (the newer writers or "the new wave"), and the name has stuck; modern critics call them the "neoterics." Catullus is the only one whose work has survived. His poems express his pas-

sionate love for a woman he called Lesbia and the emotional rollercoaster he endured as his love turned bitter. Shed of her alias, Lesbia was actually Clodia, a brilliant woman who was the sister of a political firebrand in Rome, Publius Clodius, and Catullus can only have been a minor figure in the group of influential powerbrokers she gathered about her. But Catullus wrote more than love poetry. Taking his cues from Callimachus and the Alexandrians, he tried his hand at an *epyllion*, or short epic, and he translated one of Callimachus' most famous poems, the *Lock of Berenice*. Sappho also influenced him; he translated a poem of hers imitating the Sapphic stanza. But it is his lyrics expressing his ill-fated love for Lesbia that have made him famous.

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## LATIN PROSE WRITERS BEFORE THE AUGUSTAN AGE

**WRITERS BEFORE CICERO.** Roman historical traditions shaped the Roman people; from early times, the *pontifex maximus* (high priest) of Rome kept a record on a whitewashed board of the magistrates for each year and any notable events. The first true historian of Rome, Fabius Pictor, wrote in Greek rather than Latin. His history, written during the desperate war with Hannibal the Carthaginian, was intended to encourage pro-Roman sympathies in Greece. Marcus Porcius Cato (234–149 B.C.E.) was the first author and statesman who made a point of using Latin in his writing. He was a considerable orator, and in his old age he wrote a history titled the *Origines* on the origins not only of Rome but neighboring towns as well. All that survives of his writing is a treatise on agriculture that leaves the impression that he was a hard-boiled but pious farmer. After him, there is no prose author of note until Cicero and Julius Caesar in the middle decades of the first century B.C.E.

**MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO.** The facts of Cicero's life can be given briefly. He was born in 106 B.C.E. in the small town of Arpinum (modern Arpino). At age sixteen he was attached to a well-known barrister of the day, Quintus Mucius Scaevola, to win his *entrée* into the Roman legal industry. At eighteen he began his compulsory military service. He served under the father of Julius Caesar's rival, Pompey, which he always thought gave him a special link with Pompey. For the next few years he studied rhetoric and philosophy in Rome and made his court debut in 81 B.C.E. This was the period of Sulla's dictatorship, and Cicero made himself a marked man by successfully defending a man who had incurred the enmity of one of Sulla's minions, Chrysogonus. Cicero thought it prudent to retire to Greece for further study following this case and only returned to Rome after Sulla's death in 78 B.C.E. His first great triumph in court was in 70 B.C.E. when he impeached Gaius Verres for his corrupt governorship of Sicily. Verres went into voluntary exile before he was sentenced, and the Sicilian provincials who were his victims got no restitution. To win the case, Cicero had defeated the best lawyer of the day, Hortensius, and his reputation was made. He rose to be consul in 63 B.C.E. even though he was a "new man"—that is, no one in his family had been consul before—and during his year in office, he suppressed the conspiracy of Catiline and put the conspirators to death without trial, which was illegal. For that he was exiled in 58 B.C.E. and was allowed to return only after he made it clear that he would not make waves for

the political triumvirate of Pompey, Crassus, and Julius Caesar who were manipulating politics behind the scenes at this time. When Caesar started the civil war in 49 B.C.E. by crossing the Rubicon River which marked the boundary between his province of Cisalpine Gaul and Italy, Cicero, after some hesitation, joined the senatorial group led by Pompey, who were Caesar's enemies. After the defeat of Pompey's army during the next year at the battle of Pharsalus, Cicero returned to Italy. He was not one of the conspirators who murdered Caesar on the Ides of March (15 March) 44 B.C.E., but there is little doubt that he approved, and in the immediate aftermath, he tried to arouse the senate to suppress Mark Antony's efforts to take over. He thought—wrongly—that he could use Julius Caesar's grandnephew Octavian, whom Caesar had adopted in his will, against Mark Antony, and then discard him when he was no longer necessary. Events turned out otherwise; Octavian joined Antony and another of Caesar's officers, Lepidus, in a second triumvirate of power brokers, and when this second triumvirate drew up its list of enemies to be proscribed in November, 43 B.C.E., Antony insisted that Cicero be included. He was killed by Antony's troops and his head nailed to the rostra, or speaker's platform in the Roman Forum where Cicero had often spoken.

**CICERO'S LETTERS.** The sheer bulk of Cicero's works is impressive. He bequeathed to posterity private letters, public speeches—some delivered in the law courts, others in the senate or before a public assembly—treatises on rhetoric, and dialogues on philosophy that had an enormous influence even though he was not, by any means, an original philosopher. His letters were written to his friends and family members, including his younger brother Quintus and his close friend and confidante, Titus Pomponius Atticus, a wealthy businessman and financier who stayed out of politics and survived the civil wars. The letters reveal the private Cicero, who differed from his public persona. Lawyers at this time in ancient Rome did not charge their clients fees, for the pretence was maintained that lawyers were above such considerations. They did, however, expect gifts and legacies from their clients, and Cicero's income was such that he could maintain a large number of country villas, although his lifestyle was not particularly extravagant for men of his class by the standards of the day. Cicero's letters give a rare glimpse of the private life of a Roman statesman as the Roman republic slid into civil war.

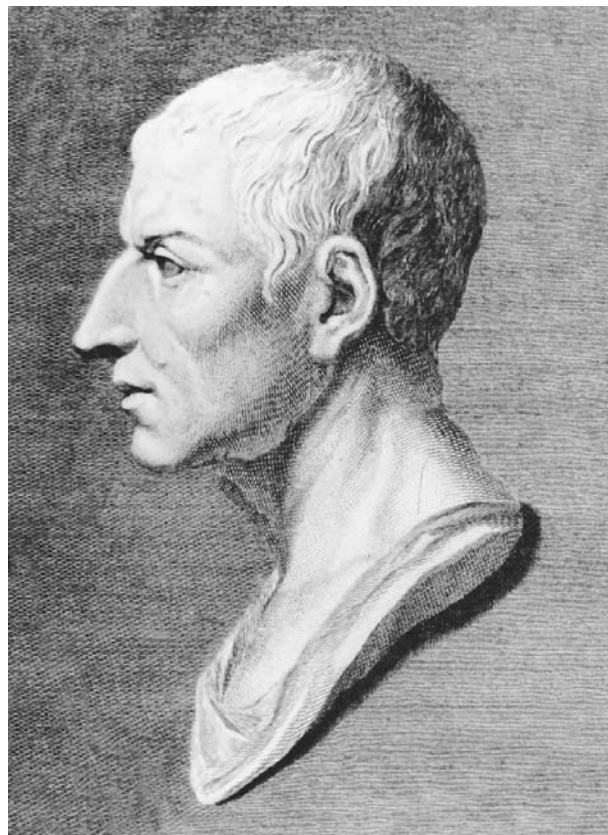
**CICERO'S SPEECHES.** Of Cicero's orations delivered in the Roman senate or public forums, his most famous are his four speeches against Catiline and his *Philippics*,

speeches attacking Mark Antony, of which the first was delivered in the senate on 2 September, 44 B.C.E. and the second—his most famous—actually published as a pamphlet though it was in the form of a speech. The Catilinarian orations were delivered in the year of Cicero's consulship, 63 B.C.E. How serious a threat Catiline was to constitutional government is a matter for dispute—certainly Cicero exaggerated. Cicero's speeches delivered in the law courts throw a lurid light on Roman public life. His *Verrine Orations* against the corrupt governor of Sicily, Verres, who was tried in 70 B.C.E., were published after the case; they had not actually been delivered in court, for Verres went into voluntary exile first. Another great speech on behalf of a thuggish gang leader, Milo, in 52 B.C.E. was not delivered in court either. Cicero lost the case, but made up for it by publishing the version he would have given, but failed to do so because he was unnerved by Pompey's soldiers ringing the court. Other speeches give splendid vignettes of Roman life. One, "In Defense of Cluentius," is a murder case in an Italian town. Another, "In Defense of Caelius" throws a sidelight on Catullus' love affair with Lesbia, for Caelius was an ex-lover of Clodia, who seems to have been the Lesbia of Catullus in real-life. Caelius had had an affair with Clodia, and when he abandoned her, she charged him with an attempt to poison her. Cicero's defense of Caelius gives him a chance to dwell on the *demi-monde* of Rome, and Clodia's private life in particular.

#### RHETORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL TREATISES.

Cicero was an eclectic philosopher who wrote philosophic dialogues during a period of his life when the alliance of the power brokers Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus, known as the First Triumvirate, sidelined him from politics. Of his works on rhetoric, his *Brutus* is interesting for its discussion of the development of oratory in Greece and Rome, which leads up to a description of his own development. Cicero followed it with his *Orator*, which makes the case that the true orator must be a master of all styles: the simple, the somewhat florid, and the grand. Cicero is a major source for modern knowledge of oratory in the Roman republic.

**OTHER NOTABLE WRITERS OF PROSE.** Gaius Julius Caesar is better known as a world conqueror, but he was also an author. His claim to fame in the latter arena is his *Commentaries on the Gallic War* and *Civil War*. His Latin style is unlike any other writer's, except for his imitators. He was writing a "commentary," not a "history" of his conquest of Gaul and the civil war that followed it; a "commentary" purported to be a first draft which would later be fitted out with literary adornments. Cae-



Cicero, profile portrait, engraving. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

sar was writing for propaganda purposes, but he reads like a good war correspondent. His bias is apparent but not blatantly so. One of his officers, Aulus Hirtius, added an eighth book to the *Gallic War* and continued Caesar's *Civil War* with a work in a style that copies Caesar's, the *Alexandrine War*. It is the source for the affair between the young Cleopatra of Egypt and Julius Caesar. Another supporter of Caesar with a more eloquent style was Sallust (Gaius Sallustius Crispus) who wrote a *History*, now lost, monographs on the Conspiracy of Catiline in 63 B.C.E., and the war with Jugurtha in north Africa at the end of the second century B.C.E. which was won by Marius, Caesar's uncle by marriage. In the second of these, Marius comes off very well. In his monograph on Catiline's Conspiracy, Cicero's role pales beside those of Julius Caesar and Cato the Younger. Cicero is portrayed as a decent but lightweight politician, but Cato represents the severe righteousness of an extreme right-wing statesman while Caesar has the makings of a beneficent ruler. Finally, there was an extraordinarily productive writer, Marcus Terentius Varro, of whose many works only one survives complete: a dialogue on buying and running a farm. Another writer worthy of mention is Cornelius Nepos, whose *Book about Excellent Leaders of Foreign*

*Peoples*—22 of them, all Greeks except for two Carthaginians and one Persian—was written in straightforward but rather dull Latin prose.

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## THE GOLDEN AGE OF LATIN LITERATURE UNDER AUGUSTUS

**NEW CLIMATE OF OPINION.** The civil war—which started when Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon River in 49 B.C.E. and ended when Caesar’s heir, Octavian, defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E.—ended the era of literature of the late republic and started the Augustan Age. The poet Horace fought as a staff officer (tribune) in the army of Brutus and Cassius, but he was no diehard defender of the Roman republic. He returned to Italy after the defeat of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42 B.C.E., and made his peace with the new regime. The poet Tibullus personally had no taste for war, as he tells us in two poems which celebrate the victories of his patron Messala, and Propertius preferred to write about the love of his life whom he called Cynthia—her real name was Hostia and she was a beautiful courtesan—but since he belonged to the circle of writers who were supported by Augustus’ unofficial minister of propaganda, Maecenas, he was called upon to eulogize Augustus’ exploits and excused himself as gracefully as he could. Vergil, the greatest of the Augustan writers, had no hankering for the old Roman republic, having seen first-hand how it misruled the provinces, for he was born in one. Ovid was born the year after Julius Caesar was murdered and never knew the free-wheeling days of the republic when writers could write what they pleased, but he learned that an author under the principate—as Augustus’ regime was called—failed at his peril to respect certain limits to his freedom. When Ovid was about fifty years old, Augustus exiled

him to Tomis on the Black Sea in modern Rumania. Augustus’ successor, Tiberius, did not recall him and he died there. The reasons for his exile are obscure, but one of them may have been a playful poem he wrote titled *The Art of Love* which is a witty poetic instruction manual on how to seduce women.

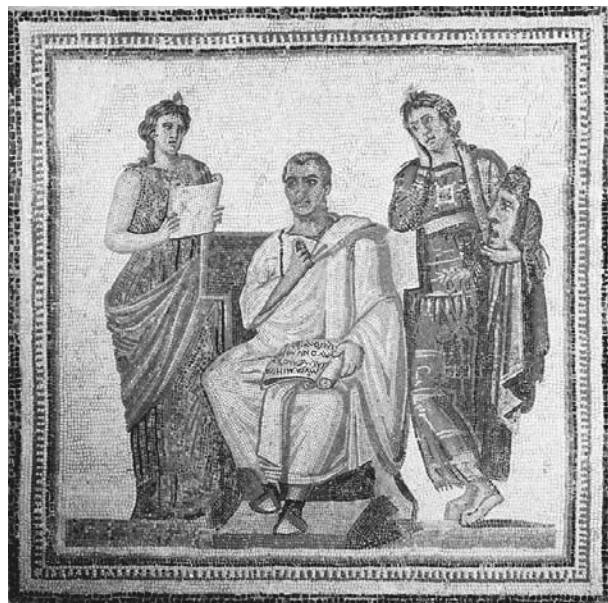
**VERGIL’S ECLOGUES.** A group of minor poems have survived which have been considered Vergil’s early works, and one of them, the *Culex* (*The Gnat*) is an epyllion worthy of Vergil. The poem describes how a shepherd is wakened from a nap by a mosquito, which he kills only to discover that a venomous snake is about to strike him; the mosquito had sacrificed its life to warn him in time. Some scholars accept the *Culex* as Vergilian, but the earliest works that are certainly written by him are his *Bucolics* (Poems of the Countryside), otherwise known as his *Eclogues* (Select Poems). There are ten of them, and two—the first and the ninth—have been thought to be autobiographic, for they deal with the land confiscations after the Battle of Philippi, when Octavian expropriated land in the region of Cremona and Mantua to settle demobilized soldiers. Vergil’s family estate was expropriated and the first *Eclogue* tells how a freedman, Tityrus, had his little farm restored to him. There are problems with this interpretation, and it is more probable that Vergil’s intent in both his first and ninth *Eclogues* was to make known the disruption and injustice caused by the land expropriations. The fourth poem, the so-called “Messianic” *Eclogue* hails the expected birth of a child who will usher in a new age. The identity of this child has been much disputed, and later Christian commentators interpreted the poem as a prophecy of Christ’s birth. It could be a child expected by Octavian; when *Eclogue* Four was written in 40 B.C.E. he was still married to his second wife Scribonia by whom he had his only child, a daughter Julia. But if so, the child whose birth Vergil foretold was never born. In the *Eclogues*, the influence of Theocritus is clear, but it was Vergil who invented Arcadia—not the Arcadia in central Greece but an imaginary Arcadia where shepherds and cowherds sang and loved and lived a life far removed from the turmoil of the city. In the literary tradition of Europe, it was Vergil, not Theocritus, who invented pastoral poetry.

**THE GEORGICS.** The *Georgics* (On Land Cultivation) is a didactic poem written at the behest of Maecenas who gathered about him a cluster of writers and tried to harness their talents for the benefit of Octavian. Restoring agriculture in Italy after civil war was a vital concern, and though the *Georgics* is the most polished verse that Vergil ever produced, it is propaganda. It also brought didactic poetry to a new height. The subject of

the first book is the crops and the signs for good and bad weather. The second discusses vineyards and olive orchards, the third stockbreeding, the last beekeeping. Vergil worked on the poem for seven years and somehow manages to make plain passages about plowing, planting, and beekeeping interesting.

**ROME'S NATIONAL EPIC.** Augustus wanted a heroic poem, an epic that could be compared without apology to the Greek poet Homer, whose *Iliad* and *Odyssey* overshadowed the works of Roman poets. Of the prominent Roman poets of the day, only Vergil answered the call, producing the *Aeneid*. It has been justly admired from its own time to the present day. Even while it was being written, the poet Propertius wrote that “something greater than the *Iliad* is being created”—a favorable review even before the publication date. It soon became the national epic of Rome, the Latin answer to Homer. It tells the story of the Trojan hero Aeneas, who escaped from the sack of Troy and arrived in Italy, bringing with him his household gods and winning a space in Latium for himself and his descendants. The Romans were familiar with the myth. Aeneas' son Ascanius founded Alba Longa, the royal houses of which spawned Romulus, founder of Rome. Old Roman families called themselves “Trojan-born,” which was the equivalent of claiming ancestors that came over on the *Mayflower*. Julius Caesar's family, the Iulii, made the claim, and the emperor Augustus was Caesar's great-nephew and his adoptive son. Julian tradition told that Aeneas had a son, Iulus, who was the first ascendant of the family. Vergil identifies Iulus with Ascanius by claiming that Iulus was Ascanius' other name. Thus Augustus was a descendant of Aeneas, and the story of Aeneas shed a glow of legitimacy over the emperor and his dynasty. Aeneas' struggle to establish his Trojans in Latium paralleled Augustus' struggle to bring peace and prosperity to the empire after the generation of civil war that destroyed the old Roman republic.

**THE AENEID.** For the first half of the *Aeneid*, Vergil took Homer's *Odyssey* as his model and the *Iliad* for the second half, purposely inviting comparisons. For instance, the character of Aeneas is a warrior from the Trojan War who must endure a long and troubled journey following the end of the war, much like the character of Odysseus from the *Odyssey*. Unlike Odysseus, however, Aeneas is actually fleeing his home, having fought on the side of the Trojans. With a ship full of survivors, including his son and his father, he flees Troy for Italy, where it is his destiny to found Rome. The reality of his destiny does not procure for him an easy passage, however; a tempest tosses Aeneas' little fleet up on the shores



Mosaic c. 3rd century C.E., “Vergil writing the *Aeneid*, inspired by two muses,” in the Bardo Museum in Tunis, Tunisia. Clio, the muse of storytelling, holding a manuscript, is on Vergil's left, and Melpomene, the muse of tragedy, holding a mask, is on the right. © ROGER WOOD/CORBIS.

of Carthage, which has just been founded by queen Dido. Dido welcomes Aeneas and his Trojans and gives them a royal banquet, which parallels Odysseus' landing on the shore of Phaeacia and his welcome by the Phaeacian king and queen. As with the banquet scene in the *Odyssey*, Vergil related what had happened previous to the Trojans' landing at Carthage as a “flashback” sequence in which Aeneas relates to the Carthaginians the fall of Troy, including the famous story of how the Greeks finally penetrated the city walls. The Greeks had built a large wooden horse, left it outside the city gates, and then pretended to depart for home. The Trojans were told by a Greek pretending to be an escaped slave that the horse was a gift from the gods and if they took it within the city walls, their city would never be taken. Tricked by his story, the Trojans did indeed take the horse into their city, not knowing that contained in its hollow belly was a group of Greek soldiers waiting for nightfall to open the gates for the Greek forces outside. That night the Greek forces came out of hiding and sacked the city. So famous is this tale that the “Trojan Horse” has become an enduring symbol for trickery and duplicity. The Trojans fought with the courage of despair, but when resistance proved futile, Aeneas followed the orders of the gods to leave. The story of how he hoisted his crippled father Anchises on to his shoulder and escaped from Troy was already famous in Rome.

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**VERGIL'S PROCLAMATION OF ROME'S MISSION**

**INTRODUCTION:** Literature in ancient Rome often served the purpose of the state as propaganda. In 30 B.C.E., the Roman poet Vergil began his epic work *The Aeneid* in response to the emperor Augustus' call for a poem to glorify his regime that could be compared without embarrassment with the works of the Greek poet Homer: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Using those texts as models, Vergil related the story of the founding of Rome, using the Trojan hero Aeneas as its legendary founder. Although still unfinished at the time of Vergil's death in 19 B.C.E., the work became Rome's national epic, glorifying the Roman Empire's establishment by the "blood, sweat and tears" of Rome's ancestors. In Book 6 of *The Aeneid*, Vergil relates the story of the descent of Aeneas into the Underworld where he meets the ghost of his father Anchises who shows him the souls of Romans yet to be born. As Anchises concludes this pageant of Rome's history, he proclaims the unique mission of the Roman Empire in the following lines.

Others, I do not doubt it, will beat bronze into figures that breathe more softly. Others will draw living likenesses out of marble. Others will plead cases better or describe with their rod the courses of the stars across the sky and predict their risings. Your task, Roman, and do not forget it, will be to govern the peoples of the world with your empire. These will be your arts—and to impose a settled pattern upon peace, to pardon the defeated and war down the proud.

**SOURCE:** Vergil, *The Aeneid*. Book 6. Trans. David West (London: Penguin Classics, 1990): 159.

Aeneas got away safely with his father, his little son Ascanius, and his household gods, but his wife Creusa was lost. Aeneas returned to Troy to seek her, but her ghost told him to be on his way—a new home awaited him in Italy. Like Odysseus, Aeneas endured hardship and loss during his journey by sea; he lost his father in Sicily, and a storm blew them onto the shore of Carthage in Africa. As with Odysseus and the Phaeacians, Dido and her people are moved by the sad tale of Aeneas and the Trojans, and the two peoples appear prepared to settle down together. Dido and Aeneas begin an affair, but the gods perceive the romance as a threat to Aeneas' destiny and order him to leave Carthage for Italy; the plot develop-

ment closely resembles the gods' ordering of the nymph Calypso to release her lover, Odysseus, so he can return home. Neither of these powerful female characters wanted to let go of their lovers, and Dido stages a dramatic suicide at Aeneas' departure by building a funeral pyre for herself out of Aeneas' discarded possessions and killing herself in its fires. Dido's death is evidence of a Roman belief that romantic love was a poison which disrupted betrothals and family alliances; in Rome, marriage was a business deal worked out by the parents of the bride and groom, and among well-born Romans it involved property. Love induced irrational behavior and led to unsuitable marriages. Aeneas' rejection of his lover is also evidence of the Roman emphasis on duty over emotional ties; Aeneas is devoted to duty—the usual epithet that Vergil applies to him is *pius* which means more than its English derivative "pious." It means god-fearing, dutiful, and even compassionate.

**DESTINY IN ITALY.** While Aeneas did not lose nearly as many fellow travelers as Odysseus, he is forced to leave behind the women of his party in Sicily after the travel-weary women set fire to the ships in an attempt to prevent their leaving the island. Thus the Trojan settlers in Italy will be men only, which means that they will have to find Italian women for their mates. Aeneas is aware that their settlement in Italy will necessitate another war similar to the Trojan War, but he sees it as his destiny to be on the winning side this time when he visits the Underworld and sees the ghosts of the future builders of Rome. The last six books describe the fight in Italy between the native Rutulians and the immigrant Trojans, and Vergil switches his narrative model to the *Iliad*. Aeneas arrives at the future site of Rome, and there meets King Latinus who has been told by an oracle to marry his daughter Lavinia to someone who is not a native of the country. Although the king is amenable to Lavinia's marriage to Aeneas, the queen, Amata, is not; she favors the prince of the Rutulians, Turnus, and the rivalry between Turnus and Aeneas sparks a war between the two peoples. After much bloodshed, the war is decided by hand-to-hand combat between the two suitors in which Aeneas kills Turnus.

**ASSESSMENT OF A GREAT POEM.** Vergil's *Aeneid* became the national epic of the Roman Empire. The poet drew from various literary influences for his creation, particularly Homer. Vergil also drew upon the *Argonautica* of the Hellenistic poet Apollonius of Rhodes. Vergil's Dido owes something to Apollonius' Medea. Vergil was conversant with Alexandrian poetry; his *Eclogues* draw their inspiration from Theocritus and the *Aeneid* also draws inspiration from Alexandria even

though its model was Homer. Finally there was Ennius, Rome's first epic poet to use the dactylic hexameter from whom Vergil borrowed heavily for his knowledge of primitive Italy. The *Aeneid* no doubt celebrates the Roman Empire, Augustus' contribution to it, and the courage and self-sacrificing toil of Rome's founders. Yet he also pities the people trampled underfoot by Rome's growth to power. Turnus and Dido both engage our sympathies, whereas Aeneas can be remarkably brutal, and his epithet *pius* (dutiful) is a trifle chilling. In the end, it is clear that the Trojans will be assimilated. Aeneas has brought his gods from Troy and plans them to be the gods of Rome, but the god Jupiter makes it clear that he will decide what gods the Romans will worship. Aeneas, who is an Asian immigrant, will start the historical process that results in the Roman Empire, but he will lose his native culture, and his descendants will be purely Italian.

**HORACE.** Quintus Horatius Flaccus was the son of an ex-slave who saw to it that his son received a good education in Rome and then managed to send him to Athens. These were the heady days after Julius Caesar's assassination, and Horace was caught up in the enthusiasm among the Romans studying in Athens for the republican cause and joined the army raised by Marcus Brutus, the assassin of Julius Caesar. The defeat of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi understandably quenched his enthusiasm, so he returned to Italy, got a low-paying clerical post in the government, and began writing. Some of his *Epodes*, belong to this period. They got their name from their meter which the Greek lyric poet Archilochus had invented, for almost all of them have a long line followed by a shorter one, for which the technical name was an *epoide* (after-song). Sometime before the Battle of Actium he was introduced to Octavian's minister in charge of molding public opinion, Maecenas, and his poverty-stricken days came to an end. It was Maecenas who suggested that he put together a collection of his *Epodes*. About 35 B.C.E. he brought out a collection of satires, or as he titled them, *sermones* which can be translated not inaccurately as "chitchat." He was also experimenting with something new: an attempt to use the meters of the Lesbian poets Alcaeus and Sappho. Although the poet Catullus had tried his hand at the Sapphic stanza, Horace could claim to be original because his subject matter was his own. The first three books of his *Odes*—or as he called them, his *carmina* (songs)—took seven years to compose, and they were published about 23 B.C.E. He followed them up with his *Epistles*, so called because they purport to be versified letters to various recipients. He addressed one to his farm man-

ager,' for Maecenas had given him a farm in Sabine country not far from Rome. Horace advised his manager to be content with what he had. The emperor Augustus, who liked Horace and wrote him frequently, urged him to write more in praise of the imperial house, and in response he added a fourth book to his *Odes* and also produced a long hymn for the Secular Games of 17 B.C.E. The Games were not "secular" in the modern sense, for the word comes from the Latin *saeculum*, meaning "century," so "Centennial Celebrations" might be a better way of describing the festivities of that year. The hymn is called the *Carmen Saeculare* and it is not Horace at his best. Horace wrote another long poem which is famous: the third book of his *Epistles* which is taken up entirely with his *Ars Poetica* (The Art of Poetry). It is a nice example of didactic poetry but its content is not original, for Horace followed a treatise written by a Hellenistic author, Neoptolemus of Parion.

**PROPERTIUS, TIBULLUS, AND SULPICIA.** Propertius, Tibullus, and Sulpicia all wrote love poems addressed to specific individuals whom they claim as objects of their devotion. Propertius addressed his poems to Cynthia and Tibullus to Delia. Sulpicia was a woman and the lover whom she addressed is a man, but otherwise she follows the conventions of this genre of poetry. Propertius belonged to Maecenas' circle, but Tibullus had another patron, Messalla. Both wrote in elegiac couplets that had been used for centuries in Greek literature and brought into Latin in the Augustan age. The pioneer of the genre was a friend of Vergil, Gaius Cornelius Gallus, who wrote four books of elegies to a mime actress whom he calls Lycoris; in real life, her name was Cytheris and she had a number of lovers, including Mark Antony. Gallus became prefect of Egypt, where he proved too independent for Augustus' regime; the Roman senate tried and condemned him, and he committed suicide. His political disgrace eclipsed his poetry. Tibullus left two books of elegies. In the first he addresses Delia, and in the second, a woman he called Nemesis. In Messalla's circle there was also a poetess, Sulpicia, probably Messalla's niece, who wrote six short poems addressed to a man whom she calls Cerinthus. They are little gems of frank passion. A more productive poet than either of these was Sextus Propertius, whose love was a woman he calls Cynthia. Maecenas noticed his little book of 22 elegies titled *Cynthia* and took him into his circle. Like the other poets in Maecenas' stable, Propertius was urged to help popularize the principate (the constitutional settlement of Augustus), but his heart was really with love poetry. Propertius is the most interesting of these writers of love elegies if we take the vicissitudes of his love-affair at face



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HORACE ON PATRIOTISM**

**INTRODUCTION:** Horace (65–8 B.C.E.) owed the comfortable life that he led to his patron, Maecenas, whose gifts to him included a small estate outside Rome—his “Sabine Farm” made famous by his poetry. But Maecenas was a friend and close advisor of the emperor Augustus, and in return for his generosity Maecenas—and Augustus, too—expected Horace to support the aims of the empire, one of which was to rekindle patriotism and morality among the Romans. This excerpt is from one of Horace’s *Odes* written to please his patron. Some phrases from it are famous, such as *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* (“Sweet and fitting it is to die for your fatherland” or, as the translation printed below expresses it, “The glorious and the decent way of dying is for one’s country”), which has been inscribed on countless cenotaphs for the war dead. Equally famous is the metaphor that concludes the poem, that Vengeance or Punishment, though she be lame, seldom gives up her pursuit of a man.

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**SOURCE:** Horace, *Odes*. Book III. Trans. James Michie (New York: Modern Library, 2002): 119, 121.

value. But we must not be too quick to infer autobiographical details from their poetry, for they were writing within well-defined conventions. Sincerity was not considered a virtue in Latin poetry, and when a poet claims to be dying of love, he may be expressing only a conventional emotion that was demanded by his art form. Sulpicia’s poetry differs only in one way: usually women were the object of male desire in elegiac love poetry, but Sulpicia presents herself as a woman who desires a partner as much as any man does.

**OVID.** Ovid was truly a man of letters. Sophisticated and technically brilliant, he wrote poetry effortlessly. Although not wealthy, he was sufficiently well-to-do to dispense with a patron and he remained outside the circles of Maecenas and Messalla. He began as an elegiac poet of love. His collection known as the *Amores* (Love Affairs) follows the examples of Tibullus and Propertius, for they tell of romantic encounters, but whereas the loves of those two writers probably existed, Ovid’s lover, Corinna, probably did not exist outside literature. While

he was writing the *Amores* he was working on a more ambitious work, the *Heroides* (Heroines), letters in verse by women of mythology addressed to their husbands or lovers. Among others, he imagines Dido writing to Aeneas, Ariadne writing Theseus from Naxos where he had abandoned her, and Medea writing Jason after she has learned of his plans to jilt her and marry the king of Corinth’s daughter. Ovid then turned to didactic poetry, but his subject was not a respectable one like agriculture. Ovid wrote the *Art of Love* in three books, the first two instructing men in the art of seduction and the third showing women who planned to be courtesans how to make the most profit from their husbands. He followed this up with a fourth book, the *Remedium Amoris*, on how to fall out of love. Ovid’s greatest work is undoubtedly his *Metamorphoses* (Changes of Shape). No one believed in the ancient legends anymore, but they were still subject matter for literature, and Ovid decided to string them together on the common theme of changes of shape. He retells myths that told how heroes and heroines changed their shapes, like Actaeon who was

changed into a stag, or Alkyone who was changed into the halcyon bird. The resulting epic is a tapestry of myth, told with wit and all the tricks that an author versed in rhetoric could muster. Then came his exile. Augustus relegated him to Tomis, modern Costanza in Rumania, for reasons unknown. He burned his *Metamorphoses*, but fortunately copies were already in circulation and so it survived, though unfinished. Exile did not break Ovid, though he never saw his beloved Rome again. He wrote five books of *Tristia* (Poems of Sorrow)—the first book was complete before he reached Tomis. He continued these with his *Letters from Pontus*, “Pontus” was the name for the Black Sea. He wrote *Ibis*, an attack on an imaginary figure which was probably written as a psychological release, and a poem on the fish in the Black Sea. The major work of his exile was the *Fasti*, a versified Roman calendar of religious festivals. Ovid finished the first six months of the year and may have hoped that his interest in Roman religion would soften Augustus’ heart. If that was his intent, he must have been disappointed in the result. Ovid died in exile.

**LIVY.** The Augustan age had one prose writer of distinction, Titus Livius, known in English by the name Livy, who wrote a history of Rome from its foundation to his own day in 142 books. He was the type of historian who wrote to edify his readers, and the characters of his history were either heroes or villains. The most wholesome outcome of knowing history, he told his readers, was to have examples of every type of conduct so that a person could choose models to imitate with foreknowledge of what the results of their choices would be. He was not a careful researcher, but he had historians to consult who have been lost long ago, and that gives his work real value for the historian of the Roman republic. His history extends to the Roman triumph over the last king of Macedon, Perseus, in 167 B.C.E. His style is smooth and his characterization vivid, but his panorama of the Roman past is not an example of historical accuracy.

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## LATIN LITERATURE OF THE SILVER AGE

**WRITERS BEFORE THE DEATH OF NERO.** The name “Silver Age Latin” as applied to the literature that follows the “Golden Age” under Augustus reflects the judgement of generations of scholars. Writers of the Silver Age valued rhetorical skill and literary ornaments, and produced a style that was quite unlike ordinary human speech. Contemporary writers in Greek moved in the other direction; they were Atticists, that is, they revived the style and even the dialect of the best classical authors of Greece. Their example did not rub off on their Latin counterparts. Still, the sheer bulk of their writing is impressive. One poet, Marcus Manilius, wrote a didactic poem in five books on astrology. Calpurnius Siculus wrote pastoral poetry that was heavily dependent on Vergil’s *Eclogues*. An ex-soldier, Velleius Paterculus, who served under the future emperor Tiberius, wrote a history of Rome in two books, and when he comes to his own period, he is a good historical source. Valerius Maximus collected nine books of sayings and anecdotes under the title *Notable Doings and Sayings*, and Phaedrus versified Aesop’s fable.

**SENECA.** Lucius Annaeus Seneca’s family came from Roman Spain, and his father was a rhetorician known as Seneca the Elder to distinguish him from his son. The reputation of the elder Seneca stems from a collection written in his old age of anecdotes about rhetoricians he had known. The younger Seneca is known for his philosophic treatises—he was a Stoic who failed to practice

what he preached—four prose works—one of which is a funny but cruel essay on the distaste with which the gods received the dead emperor Claudius when he entered their company after being decreed divine by the Roman senate—and nine tragedies. The tragedies were based on Greek originals except for the *Thyestes*, which told how the father of Agamemnon and Menelaus, Atreus, fed Thyestes his own children. The work allowed Seneca to give free rein to his love for blood and gore. He reworked Euripides' *Medea* and made Medea into a bloodthirsty witch. His *Phaedra* reworks Euripides' *Hippolytus* and gives Phaedra nymphomaniac tendencies and makes Hippolytus a woman-hater. It is generally agreed that these plays were intended for public readings before select audiences, not for production in large theaters for the masses, whose taste was for interpretative dancing and mimes. Seneca's plays appealed only to the educated elite who were familiar with the Golden Age of tragedy in Athens of the fifth century B.C.E.

**COLUMELLA.** Lucius Junius Columella, like Seneca, came from Spain, but his interests were very different. After a career in the Roman army, he acquired an estate in Latium outside Rome, and devoted himself to agriculture. His *De Re Rustica* (On Husbandry) is a treatise on scientific farming. It gives a picture of the countryside of central Italy in his own day, with its growing number of country houses for wealthy Romans, and its absentee landowners. His cure for the decline of farming in Italy was hard work, personal supervision, and mastery of the science of agriculture.

**GAIUS PETRONIUS.** The novel as a literary form was becoming popular in Greece in the early imperial period, and Petronius chose to use it for what he called the *Saturae*—the “Mixed Bag” of writing. It is now known as the *Satyricon*. It is picaresque novel (relating to the adventures of rovers) but instead of the hero and heroine of the Greek novels who have a series of wild adventures as they roved from place to place, Petronius has a rascal named Encolpius and a cheeky boy named Giton. Only fragments remain, but one sizeable portion, describing a banquet given by a wealthy ex-slave named Trimalchio, is a masterpiece. The banquet was an orgy of feeding, and Trimalchio takes vulgarity to astonishing heights. Petronius was a favorite of the emperor Nero and invented revels for that pleasure-loving emperor until court intrigue destroyed him and he committed suicide with elegance and irony, as befitted a man of his talents.

**MARCUS ANNAEUS LUCANUS.** The fame of Lucan, who was Seneca the Younger's nephew, rests on one work: his epic poem on the civil war between Caesar and the senatorial party led by Pompey. Its name, the

*Pharsalia*, comes from the decisive battle fought in Greece at Pharsalus, modern Farsala in Thessaly, where Pompey's army was defeated. Lucan's style is somewhat artificial but he is a smooth versifier. His sympathies were with Pompey and the republican form of government that Pompey defended. All of this fitted the popularized Stoic philosopher of the day that looked back with nostalgia at the republic which died in the civil war. Lucan died young. He was implicated in a plot against Nero, and died by bleeding to death, reciting some of his own verses on death by bleeding as he breathed his last.

**PERSIUS.** Little is known about Aulus Persius Flaccus, except that he left a collection of six satires and died young. The first was on the decay of literary taste, the second on the vanity of riches, the third on idleness, the fourth on self-knowledge, the fifth on true liberty, and the sixth on how to use wealth properly. His poetry is crammed with allusions to contemporary life. His fourth satire, for instance, urges a popular statesman named Alcibiades to examine his soul and pay no attention to public adulation. There was an Alcibiades who was an Athenian politician of the fifth century B.C.E., but perhaps the “Alcibiades” whom Persius has in mind is the emperor Nero. Persius' style is not easy to read. He is not for the beginning Latin student. But his small output reveals an interesting talent.

**THE SILVER AGE AFTER THE EMPEROR NERO.** Whatever the emperor Nero's faults may have been, he was an aesthete who was sensitive to culture, and his death in 68 C.E. did not improve the lot of the literary artist. The Flavian dynasty—the emperors Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian who replaced the Julio-Claudian clan to which the emperors from Augustus to Nero belonged—was from Sabine peasant stock. The Flavians were sensitive about their lack of background, and Domitian in particular was a menacing presence who inspired fear. With Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius (who died in 180 B.C.E.) there was greater freedom, but there was a comfortable mediocrity about the age, and it was not until the fourth century C.E. that there was a renewed outburst of literary talent. Still, the period did not lack for writers. Silius Italicus was one such figure; his primary position was as an informer under Nero, passing on information about potential enemies of the regime, although he later cleaned up his reputation by earning praise for his administration of the province of Asia. He wrote an epic titled the *Punica* on Rome's wars with Carthage, which were called the “Punic Wars” after the Latin word for Carthaginian: *Poenus*. The meters are correct but as poetry it is second-rate. He likes to put his learning on display, and the result is more tire-

some than impressive. Papinius Statius who wrote under Domitian whom he was careful to flatter, left five books of *Silvae*—miscellaneous poems on various subjects—and two epics, the second unfinished. The first epic was *Thebaid* and covered the legends of Thebes: how Oedipus killed his father, how his sons fought over the throne and killed each other, and how Creon succeeded to the throne. The poem reflects the taste of the day for romanticism through the inclusion of slaughter, exaggerated passions, and high-flown sentiment. The second epic, the *Achilleis* retells the myth of how Achilles' mother Thetis tried to save her son from being conscripted to fight in the Trojan War by dressing him as a woman and hiding him among girls at the court of the king of Scyros. Statius wrote 1127 lines on this subject, but he died before he could write more. Valerius Flaccus wrote an epic on the legend of Jason and the Golden Fleece, taking as his model the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes. Quintilian, the son and grandson of rhetoricians, is known for his *Education of an Orator*. His perfect orator was Cicero, and he concluded that all developments since Cicero's day had brought oratory downhill. Martial was a master of the epigram: the short poem that ends with a sharp, stinging quip. He took his subjects from contemporary life, throwing an interesting sidelight on it. Suetonius, secretary to the emperor Hadrian, wrote biographies in straightforward Latin, and one collection has survived entire: his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* from Julius Caesar to Domitian. A little later than Suetonius, another author wrote the only novel in either Greek or Latin worthy of comparison with Petronius' *Satyricon*: Apuleius, whose tale, *Metamorphosis*, better known as *The Golden Ass*, tells how the hero Lucius dabbled in magic and managed to transform himself into a donkey. We have another work of Apuleius, too, for he married a wealthy widow and her relatives brought him to trial on a charge of winning her affections by magic. Apuleius' *Apology* is the speech he gave in his own defense before a court in Sabratha, in modern Libya. Of all the authors belonging to these somewhat tarnished last years of the Silver Age, there are three that should detain us: Juvenal, Pliny the Younger, and the historian Tacitus, for they were first-rate practitioners of their genre of literature.

**JUVENAL.** Juvenal was a bitter man. Life in Rome had not treated him well, to judge from his poetry, and after the emperor Domitian died and the pall of fear lifted, Juvenal wrote satires—sixteen of them—attacking the wickedness of contemporary life. He disliked women, all immigrants from the east—especially Jews, with Greeks a close second—avarice, the miserly rich, and the horrors of living in the shoddily built apartment houses

of Rome. He attacked scoundrels by name, though he only picked on already-dead scoundrels to avoid retribution. He is the source of the aphorism that the Roman mob cared only about bread and circuses. He accepted the dictum of the Stoic philosophers that all transgressions were equal and hence he indicted the emperor Nero both for murdering his mother and for writing bad poetry as if they were sins of equal magnitude. He was himself a good poet who wrote vigorous hexameter lines.

**PLINY THE YOUNGER.** The reputation of Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus—the full name of Pliny the Younger—might have been overwhelmed by that of his uncle, Pliny the Elder, an encyclopedia writer who died in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E., except that the only surviving work of the elder Pliny is his *Natural History*, which is a mine of information but not casual reading. Pliny the Younger is known for his collection of pleasant letters written, ostensibly, to various contemporaries, including the historian Tacitus to whom he addressed an eyewitness account of the eruption of Vesuvius. The last book of his collected letters is correspondence between him and the emperor Trajan, for Trajan sent Pliny to the province of Bithynia in Asia Minor about 110 C.E. to correct maladministration there. Among the matters for consultation with Trajan was a cell of Christians whom he found. Pliny wanted to know the legal status of Christianity and Trajan replied that it was outlawed, though he warned against any witch hunt. For historians of Christianity, this is an important morsel of evidence; it defines the attitude of the Roman state towards Christianity in the second century C.E.

**TACITUS.** Cornelius Tacitus wrote five works: a dialogue on orators, evidently his first; a biography of his father-in-law, Agricola; an essay on Germany, the *Germania*; and his two greatest works, his *Histories* and his *Annals*. The first is a discussion of orators of the past, giving top marks to Cicero. Agricola governed Roman Britain under Domitian and hence Tacitus' biography adds significantly to knowledge about Britain in the years after its conquest under the emperor Claudius. The *Histories* begin with the turbulence after Nero's death when there were four emperors in the year 68 C.E., and it breaks off two years later. The rest is lost. The *Annals* also survives in mutilated condition; Tacitus begins with the emperor Tiberius, but the reign of Caligula is lost. Even so, Tacitus' account of Claudius and Nero is splendid. Tacitus knew firsthand the misery of Rome under the tyrant Domitian and when he describes these early emperors, he sees them as forerunners of Domitian. His powers of description were superb, and he is the last great Latin historian until the fourth century C.E. when

Ammianus Marcellinus takes Tacitus as his model and produces a history which compares well with any other in Latin, though Ammianus was a Greek and presumably Latin was his second language.

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### GREEK LITERATURE OF THE IMPERIAL AGE

**CHANGED CONDITIONS.** When Queen Cleopatra of Egypt committed suicide in 30 B.C.E., the last independent Hellenistic monarchy disappeared and all the eastern Mediterranean was under Roman rule. In place of the Hellenistic kings there were Roman governors whose language of administration was Latin. Yet Roman rule was light. On the local level, cities governed the people. Every Roman province contained a number of cities, some of them very old, some dating back to a foundation by a Hellenistic king or even Alexander the Great himself. Alexandria in Egypt was not the only city that Alexander founded; the Middle East was dotted with cities with the name "Alexandria" which claimed Alexander as founder. The Roman governor made his headquarters in the most important city in his province, and he was chiefly interested in law and order, and seeing to it that taxes were paid; but within limits, the cities were left to govern themselves. The governors cultivated the local elites and kept the loyalty of the well-to-do property owners, who were glad of the protection of an empire that safeguarded their economic interests, but at the same time they looked back with pride at the Golden Age of Greece and its great literary achievements. The literature of Greece under the Roman Empire reflected this vision: pride in the past, and support for the Roman Empire, or at least acquiescence to it. Rome would not tolerate anything that smacked of sedition.

**CLASSICISM.** The taste of the new imperial age ushered in by the emperor Augustus was classical. That is,

it looked back to the classical period of Greece (480–330 B.C.E.) for its models. The taste is reflected both in the visual arts of the Roman Empire and the literary taste. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek teacher of rhetoric who settled in Rome about 30 B.C.E., expressed the same view in the various treatises on literary style which he produced; his *On Ancient Orators* defends the Athenian or "Attic" style of oratory exemplified by Demosthenes and rejects the ornate "Asiatic" style which replaced the Attic style in the Hellenistic period. We find the same taste for the past in the essays of two important essayists of the period, Plutarch and Lucian.

**PLUTARCH.** Plutarch (c. 40–c. 120 C.E.) is best known for his *Parallel Lives*: paired biographical essays of Greeks and Romans where Plutarch puts the life of a famous Greek side-by-side with a Roman whose career was in some ways similar, and follows each pair with a comparison. As well as his *Parallel Lives* we have a great collection of essays grouped under the title *Moralia*—"Moral Essays" where the adjective "moral" means "based on general observation of people." Their subjects range far and wide: religion, music, philosophy, superstition (which Plutarch hated), love, and divine justice. He was typical of Greeks who were happy to cooperate with their Roman rulers, but were still proud Greeks. Lucian, (c. 117–after 180 C.E.), born in Samosata, now the village of Samsat in Syria, tried a legal career before turning to lecturing, travelling widely over the empire giving public lectures. When he was about forty, he settled in Athens and wrote satirical essays which laughed at the lives and beliefs of conventional Greeks and Romans. Then, as old age began to close in on him, he accepted a job on the staff of the governor of Egypt, thereby joining the "Establishment" that had been the butt of his humor. His favorite literary forms were dialogues and epistles; the first was borrowed from the theater and also from the dialogues of Plato, and the epistle pretended to be a letter addressed to someone: thus his essay on a charlatan, Alexander of Abonoteichos, takes the form of a letter addressed to one Celsus. Alexander invented a religion centered on a god named Glycon who was incarnate in a large, tame snake that was fitted with an artificial head with a speaking tube so that the snake could give prophecies and answer questions, rather like the Wizard of Oz. Lucian ends his epistle with the hope that it may help the general reader by shattering his illusions and confirming any sensible ideas he might have.

**LUCIAN.** Lucian was educated under a system heavily influenced by a literary movement known as the "Second Sophistic." It taught that an author should model his content and style on the best Greek authors of the

past, and the most obvious way to do this was to use many quotations and allusions to these authors. It also placed great value on rhetorical exercises, and the chief “Sophists” of the movement were orators who gave declamations, often before large audiences that thronged to hear them perform in theaters or music halls (called “odeons”) or other public buildings. The movement got its designation “Second Sophistic” from its memorialist, Philostratus, who belonged to a literary family on the island of Lemnos. Philostratus gave the literary renaissance that he chronicled in his *Lives of the Sophists* the name “Second Sophistic.” Philostratus’ “Sophists” were polished, cultivated orators who were to be distinguished from the sophists of the classical period in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. They were men like Dio of Prusa, nicknamed *Chrysostomos* (“Golden-Mouthed”) who lived about 40–110 C.E., Aelius Aristides (117–189 B.C.E.), and Maximus of Tyre (c. 125–185 C.E.). Their repertory of speeches celebrated both the power and the beneficence of Rome, and at the same time the glorious past of Greece. Nowadays their sociological content is more interesting than their literary excellence. Aelius Aristides, for instance, wrote a panegyric in praise of Rome that shared its power with the ruling classes among the subject peoples that it ruled by granting them Roman citizenship as a reward for cooperation. Aristides gives us a window into the psychology of Greece under Roman rule.

**THE NOVEL.** Writing romantic novels did not begin with the “Second Sophistic” but this was the period of its great development. In fact, Dio of Prusa included a novella in one of his orations. The other novels we have are *Chaereas and Callirhoe* by Chariton, *An Ephesian Tale* by Xenophon, *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius, *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus, and the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus. The authors are only names to us. The plots are full of voyages and adventures with pirates, shipwrecks, and premature burials, and the characters live in a world where everything is governed by chance, but apart from that, they show considerable variation. Chariton’s romance, which could date as early as the first century B.C.E. is a historical novel; Chariton places it after the Athenian expedition to Sicily (415–434 B.C.E.) which took place in the Peloponnesian War and ended in disaster at Syracuse. His heroine Callirhoe is the daughter of Hermocrates, the Syracusan leader of the resistance against Athens. *Daphnis and Chloe* is the story of a shepherd, Daphnis, and his love, Chloe, who, like characters in a Greek New Comedy, turn out to be children of well-to-do parents. There are religious overtones to these novels. Xenophon’s *Ephesian Tale* celebrates the cult of Artemis of Ephesus and Heliodorus celebrates the

cult of the Sun-God, known in Rome as *Sol Invictus*. In this respect they resemble Apuleius’ Latin novel known as *The Golden Ass* which is a better novel than any of them. It need not surprise us that some of the Christian apocryphal gospels as well as stories of Christian saints borrow features from the novel.

**THE ACCEPTANCE OF ROMAN RULE.** The underlying theme of the historians who wrote in Greek was acceptance of Roman rule, and recognition of the benefits that it brought to its subjects. The same Dionysius of Halicarnassus who wrote *On Ancient Orators* also wrote a history of early Rome titled *Roman Antiquities* which covered the period from Rome’s beginnings to where Polybius began his history with Rome’s first war with Carthage (265–241 B.C.E.). His aim was to celebrate Rome’s empire and also to prove a special relationship between Greece and Rome by proving that Rome’s origin was Greek. Flavius Josephus (37–100 C.E.), a Jew who took part in the rebellion of Judaea against Rome that broke out in 66 C.E. but went over to the Roman side in 67 C.E., wrote the history of the revolt in his *Jewish War*, a work in seven books written in the tradition of the great classical historians Herodotus and Thucydides. His aims in writing, he tells the reader, were to remind the victors in the war of the valor of the men they conquered, and also to console the Jews who were vanquished and urge them to reflect on their failed revolt. Josephus wrote one other major work, his *Antiquities of the Jews* on Jewish history, as well as a tract titled *Against Apion* which is a reply to an anti-Semitic tract written by someone called Apion who is otherwise unknown. Josephus accepted Roman rule, but he remained proud of his Jewish heritage. The Egyptian Apion, who was born at the end of the first century C.E. emphasized the benefits of Roman rule in his Roman history. He was not an original researcher—he was a civil servant dabbling in history—but his organization was an effort at a new approach. He wrote a history of Rome’s conquests, people by people and region by region. He did not completely abandon the annalistic technique whereby the historian presents the pageant of the past year by year, but he made an effort to deal with Rome’s wars of conquest as separate military operations.

**ARRIAN.** Arrian, or Flavius Arrianus, to give him his full name, was a governor of Cappadocia in Asia Minor under the emperor Hadrian (117–138 C.E.) where he defeated an invasion by an Iranian tribe known as the Alans in 134 C.E. He was a disciple of the philosopher Epictetus, and like Xenophon with Socrates, he preserved his teachings. His major work that survives is his *Anabasis* which borrows its title from Xenophon’s *Anaba-*

sis ("The March Up Country"), but Arrian's "March" is the story of Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire (334–323 B.C.E.). He based his history on the memoir written by Ptolemy, Alexander's general who became king of Egypt and founded the Ptolemaic dynasty that ended with the suicide of Cleopatra in 30 B.C.E., supplementing Ptolemy when necessary with the memoir of Aristobulus who had been a Greek technician with Alexander's army. Arrian's account is a sober narrative, and a valuable source for the military campaign of Alexander, for the historians contemporary with him have survived only in fragments.

**CASSIUS DIO.** Cassius Dio deserves special notice, for he is an important source for Roman history. He was born in Iznik in modern Turkey, ancient Nicaea, the son of a consul, in 163 or 164 C.E., and he himself would become a consul and a provincial governor under the emperor Septimius Severus (193–211 C.E.). He started to write in the reign of Caracalla (211–217 C.E.), one of the most odious emperors of Rome. His history, starting with Rome's beginning and continuing to 229 B.C.E. was a tremendous work that took ten years to prepare and twelve to write. Part of it has survived, and for the missing portions, we have digests written by later writers in the Byzantine period. For the reign of Augustus, the first emperor of Rome (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), the account of Cassius Dio is the fullest that we have.

**THE CHRISTIAN WRITERS.** Although still in its infancy in the first century C.E., Christianity began to produce its own literature almost as soon as its founder, Jesus, was crucified in 33 C.E. The earliest writings were letters exchanged between the disciples of Jesus and converts that were later compiled as the New Testament of the Bible. As the persecution of the Christian church intensified, other writings commemorated martyrdoms. One of the earliest examples is a group of seven letters composed by Bishop Ignatius of Antioch who, in his old age, was taken to Rome to be put to death sometime in the reign of the emperor Trajan (98–117 C.E.). Guarded by ten Roman soldiers, whom he describes in one letter as "ten leopards," he travelled across modern Turkey to Smyrna (modern Izmir), where he composed letters to the Christian communities nearby, and from there he proceeded to the Hellespont where he embarked on a ship for Rome. The custodian of Ignatius' letters was the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, who was burned to death at the age of 86 in the arena at Smyrna in 156 C.E.; the story of his martyrdom survives in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions. Apologies, that is, defenses of the Christian faith appear in the second century C.E.; one of the first, notable for its conciliatory tone, was by Justin

the Martyr, who was born in Shechem (modern Nablus in Israel). His apologies are lucid explanations of Christianity for the non-Christian; his *First Apology*, written about 150 C.E. is addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius, and his *Dialogue with Trypho* reports a discussion with a Jewish rabbi which ends on a note of mutual tolerance and respect. By the third century C.E. Christian theology was borrowing from the Greek philosophers. The most brilliant theologian of the period was Origen (185–254 C.E.), who learned philosophy in Alexandria where a fellow pupil was Plotinus, the founder of Neo-Platonism, the mystical interpretation of Plato which was to be the last great school of pagan philosophy. After teaching for a period in Alexandria, Origen moved to Caesarea in Palestine where he produced, among other works, the first critical edition of the Old Testament. During the brief but violent persecution of the Christians under the emperor Decius (249–251 C.E.), Origen was tortured, and never recovered from the ordeal. Later Christian churchmen decided that Origen had married Greek philosophy a little too closely with Christianity, and judged him heretical. The same fate befell the greatest of the Latin theologians, Tertullian, who was born in Carthage in North Africa about 155 C.E., converted to Christianity about age forty, and then abandoned Catholicism for the heresy of Montanism, which was founded by a Christian in Phrygia (in western Turkey) who claimed to have a new revelation vouchsafed him by the Holy Spirit. Tertullian wrote over thirty treatises on all aspects of life, from women's fashions to sports in the arena. But the great age of Latin theology came in the fourth and fifth centuries C.E., after the empire became Christian, with men such as St. Augustine and St. Jerome.

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# SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

*in Literature*

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## AESCHYLUS

c. 525 B.C.E.—c. 456 B.C.E.

*Poet*

**EARLY YEARS.** The tragic poet Aeschylus was born in Eleusis—now a suburb of Athens—in 525 or 524 B.C.E. and died at Gela in Sicily 68 years later. The dates of his life place him squarely in the formative period of the golden age of Greek classical culture. When he was born, Athens was ruled by a tyrant named Hippias, but following Hippias' exile in 510 B.C.E., Athens opted for a constitutional government in which political power was vested in a popular assembly where all citizens could vote. Aeschylus' formative period therefore coincided with Athens' development as a democracy. Aeschylus presented his first tragedies in the seventieth Olympiad—that is, the period between the seventieth and seventy-first Olympic Games, which puts the date between 499 and 496 B.C.E. In 490 B.C.E. Aeschylus fought at Marathon where the Athenians defeated a Persian expeditionary force that landed there, and he lost a brother in the battle. Ten years later, Aeschylus was in the thick of the naval battle off the island of Salamis where the allied Greeks defeated the Persian fleet. These experiences with the Persians in battle inspired his production of *The Persians* in 472 B.C.E. as the second of a trilogy of tragedies; the first was titled *Phineus* and the third *Glaucus Potnieus*. There was no apparent connection between the three dramas, and the satyr play which was the last play in Aeschylus' production—*Prometheus the Firebearer*—must have been a burlesque of the myth that told how Prometheus gave fire to mankind. *The Persians* differed from the other plays by Aeschylus produced on the same day because its subject was taken from contemporary history, and it was a patriotic tribute to the courage of Athens.

**AESCHYLUS AND SICILY.** A few years after Salamis, Aeschylus left Athens for Sicily, where the tyrant of Syracuse, Hiero, had founded a new city, Aetna, and wanted Aeschylus to celebrate the foundation with a drama. Aeschylus' play, *The Women of Aetna*, does not seem to have been a regular tragedy so much as a pageant honoring the new city; a couple surviving scraps of papyrus provide an inkling of what it was like. Aeschylus was

back in Athens again in 468 B.C.E. when he took part in the tragic contest and was defeated by a new tragic poet, Sophocles, who made his debut this year. The following year Aeschylus won with a trilogy on the tragic figure of Oedipus, who was fated to kill his father and marry his mother. One of these tragedies survives: the *Seven Against Thebes*, which chronicles the conflict between Oedipus' sons. In 458 B.C.E. he produced his masterpiece, the *Oresteia*, the only complete trilogy to survive, consisting of three tragedies: the *Agamemnon*, the *Libation-Bearers*, and the *Furies*. Shortly afterwards, he left Athens again for Sicily for reasons unknown. He may have been out of sympathy with some of the political developments in Athens. In any case, he died at Gela in Sicily around 456 B.C.E. According to legend, Aeschylus died when an eagle flying overhead mistook his bald head for a rock and dropped a tortoise on him to break the shell. The story is not quite credible but it supplies a piquant ending for a great tragedian. The epitaph on his monument at Gela which, according to tradition, he wrote himself, mentioned with pride that he fought in the battle of Marathon against the Persians, but omits any reference to his success as tragic poet.

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## CATO

234 B.C.E.—149 B.C.E.

*Historian*

**POLITICS.** Cato was the author of the first surviving Latin prose work, and the first Roman historian to write a history of Rome in Latin. He was born at Tusculum near modern Frascati in the hills around Rome in 234 B.C.E., and spent his early years on a small farm in the country where he worked in the fields alongside the farm laborers. At seventeen, he joined the Roman army and served in the long war against the Carthaginian Hannibal which Rome did not win until 202 B.C.E. He settled in Rome about 208 B.C.E. and began his political career four years later, reaching the coveted post of consul in 195



B.C.E. He remained in many ways a small-town Italian, loyal to his native customs and shocked at the “philhellenism”—passion and imitation of everything Greek—that infected the circle centered around Scipio Africanus, the conqueror of Hannibal, and his brother Lucius Scipio. The Scipionic circle admired Greek culture and wanted to introduce it into Rome. In Cato’s eyes, the Greek way of life meant abandoning the frugality, self-discipline, and honesty that made up the Roman ideal. In 187 B.C.E. Cato managed to destroy Scipio Africanus’ political career and won election as censor in 184 B.C.E. He continued to dominate Roman politics until his death three years before the final destruction of Carthage, which Cato advocated strenuously in his last years.

**CATO’S WRITINGS.** What survives of Cato’s writing is an essay *On Agriculture* which sets forth precepts for good farming. Cato was a man who feared the gods, but he was hard-fisted and unsentimental. For instance, he advised getting rid of old slaves who could no longer do their share of work. This is the oldest surviving Latin prose. Cato also wrote a history of Rome, the *Origines*, which he began writing about 172 B.C.E. It dealt not only with the early history of Rome but also with the origins of neighboring Italian towns—hence its title “Origins.” Earlier Romans wrote histories of Rome, beginning with Fabius Pictor who wrote his history in Greek for Greek readers, but Cato was the first to write in Latin. He was also famous in his day as an orator. There is some irony to the fact that it was Cato who brought the epic poet Ennius to Rome where he became a prime mover in introducing Greek culture, and in fact, Cato in his old age, did start to study Greek himself.

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## THUCYDIDES

c. 460 B.C.E.–c. 400 B.C.E.

*Historian*

**ONE OF GREECE’S GREATEST HISTORIANS.** Thucydides, who wrote a history of the Peloponnesian War between the two power blocs led by Athens and by Sparta (431–404 B.C.E.), is considered by most scholars to be the greatest historian that Greece produced, though some would give first place to his earlier contemporary, Herodotus. Yet we are not well-informed about his life.

What we know about him comes from the sparse autobiographical scraps he includes in his *History* and a brief, unreliable *Life* written by someone called Marcellinus. From these sources we can infer a birthdate and date of his death, which was probably sudden and unexpected, for his *History* breaks off in mid-sentence in the winter of 411 B.C.E. He belonged to the upper crust in Athens, and his family had an interest in a mine in Thrace which brought him a regular income. When plague smote Athens in 430 B.C.E. he took ill, but recovered and used the experience to write a clinical description of the disease. In 424 B.C.E., he was elected one of the ten generals whom the Athenians chose each year, and thanks in part to his failure of leadership, the strategic city of Amphipolis in northern Greece fell to Sparta. He was exiled from Athens for his nonsuccess, and remained in exile until the war between Athens and Sparta ended. Though his exile removed him from Athens, it gave him a better opportunity to collect information from the rest of Greece. His standards for source evaluation were high—if he did not witness an event himself, he sought reliable eyewitnesses. He lived to see the end of the war, but he left his work unfinished, and parts of it unrevised. The circumstances of his death are unknown. He was, however, buried in the family vault of the Athenian statesman Cimon who was Pericles’ conservative rival at the start of Pericles’ career. Despite his familial association with the anti-Periclean camp, he became a supporter of Pericles in his mature years because he admired his ability to hold the radical elements of the Athenian democracy in check.

**WROTE ON THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR.** Thucydides states in the introduction to his *History* that he realized at the start of the Peloponnesian War that it would be the greatest war that Greece had ever known, surpassing the Trojan War and the war against Persia. Both the adversaries were at the height of their power, and before the war ended, it involved both Sicily and Persia. Yet the war was to prove that unexpected events could upset the best plans. The plague that smote Athens in 430 B.C.E. sapped her strength. The great Athenian leader, Pericles, took ill, and though he survived the immediate onset of the plague, he died of its aftereffects in 429 B.C.E. Thucydides recognized his death as a turning point in Athens’ fortunes, for none of the politicians who followed him enjoyed the broad measure of support that he did. In fact, there is a subtle anti-democratic bias in Thucydides’ *History*; he clearly doubted the ability of a government to conduct war wisely when an assembly of all the citizens made the decisions, as was the case in Athens. Yet he admired the indomitable spirit of Athens.

After the Athenians suffered a disastrous loss of their entire expeditionary force in Sicily in 413 B.C.E. in their campaign to conquer Syracuse (modern Siracusa), they still fought on, and might still have won if Persia had not supplied Sparta with the funds to build a fleet. Thucydides clearly intended to finish the story, but his *History* ends abruptly in 411 B.C.E. Various reasons have been suggested to explain why the *History* is incomplete, but the most likely one is that he died suddenly. Someone took the unfinished work and published it after Thucydides' death. It is a profound study of war and the effect of the stress of war upon civil society. There are also overtones of tragedy to it. Like a protagonist (chief player) in a Greek tragedy, the Athenian democracy entered the war, overconfident, and was brought low by a number of ill-considered moves. Yet the workings of fate also lurked behind the defeat of Athens. Not even the best-laid plans could have foreseen the plague and the death of Pericles.

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#### VERGIL

70 B.C.E.–19 B.C.E.

*Poet*

**THE MAKING OF THE POET.** Vergil was born in 70 B.C.E. at Andes, probably modern Pietole, in the valley of the River Po in northern Italy. Vergil was born a provincial, for at the time of his birth, the Po Valley was still the province of Cisalpine Gaul (that is, Gaul south of the Alps) which included the whole region as far south as the Rubicon River. Roman citizenship was extended to Vergil's native region only in 49 B.C.E. Seven years later, Cisalpine Gaul was incorporated into Italy. His father was a small landowner who made money by beekeeping, and was able to send his son to Cremona, then to Milan and finally Rome to learn rhetoric and train as a lawyer, but he appeared only once in court and decided that it was not for him. Instead he went to Naples

and joined a school of philosophy run by the Epicurean, Siro. He may already have been writing poetry, for there is a group of poems—fourteen of them short and five longer works—attributed to him from this time period, but modern students of Vergil doubt that he was the author.

**THE ECGLOGUES AND THE GEORGICS.** In 42 B.C.E., disaster struck Vergil's family. Troops were demobilized after Caesar's assassins were defeated at the Battle of Philippi and in order to find land for settling them, farms in the Po Valley were confiscated, among them the landholdings of Vergil's family. They may have been restored, however, since the first of Vergil's pastoral poems known as the *Eclogues*, a conversation between the shepherds Meliboeus and Tityrus—speaking, perhaps for Vergil himself—refers to a restoration. Vergil's didactic poem on the art of husbandry, the *Georgics*—the title comes from the Greek word for farming—was written between 36 and 29 B.C.E. in honor of Vergil's patron and friend, Maecenas, but it loses no opportunity to praise the emperor Augustus. Vergil, who had been born a provincial, felt no nostalgia for the old Roman republic which had misgoverned the Roman provinces and he appreciated the achievement of Augustus who sought to establish law, order, and good government in Italy and the empire.

**THE AENEID.** Augustus wanted an epic in praise of himself, and Vergil undertook the task. He chose the Trojan hero Aeneas as his subject, for the Julian family to which Augustus belonged claimed Aeneas as its forebear. Vergil spent the last ten years of his life writing the *Aeneid*. In 19 B.C.E. he set out for Greece, intending to spend three years traveling in Greece and Asia and completing the *Aeneid*, and to immerse himself in philosophy for the remainder of his life. But in Athens he met the emperor Augustus and was persuaded to return to Italy with him. He fell ill on the journey and was brought back to Italy only to die in Brundisium (modern Brindisi), the favorite harbor for ships crossing the Adriatic Sea from Greece. Vergil had asked his literary executors Varius and Tucca to burn his unfinished *Aeneid* but Augustus ordered them to ignore this instruction and instead to publish the poem in its unfinished state. In places, the poem shows some lack of finish, but time has vindicated Augustus' command. The *Aeneid* became the national epic of the Roman Empire. The character of Aeneas, a Trojan warrior who fought against the Greeks in the legendary Trojan War, escapes from Troy after it is sacked; he endures many hardships in a journey which eventually takes him to pre-Roman Italy, where he lays the foundation for the future greatness of Rome. The

fact that Vergil highlights Aeneas' "foreignness" in the work is curious; he began writing the *Aeneid* only a year after the Battle of Actium, portrayed in Augustus' propaganda as a victory of Italian values over the effete east, represented by Cleopatra. Yet Aeneas is an Asian himself, and the epic ends with his pitiless slaying of Turnus, the leader of the Italian resistance to his invasion. Yet the final settlement, which is approved by Jupiter, ordains that the Asian Trojans will be assimilated. They will give up their language and adopt Latin, and even the gods of Rome will bear Jupiter's mark of approval. They will not be Trojan gods. Aeneas and his Trojan followers do not found a new Troy in Italy. Instead they set an example of assimilation to the idea of Rome for the various nationalities that will later make up the Roman citizen body.

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Aeschylus, *Oresteia* (525–456 B.C.E.)—The *Oresteia* is made up of three tragic plays: the *Agamemnon*, the *Choephoroe* and the *Eumenides*. It is the only complete trilogy of Greek tragedies to survive from antiquity, and its theme is vengeance and counter-vengeance concerning a blood feud within the family of Agamemnon.

Alcaeus of Lesbos (c. 620–after 580 B.C.E.)—Alcaeus was a lyric poet who wrote songs generally for solo performance: drinking-songs, hymns to the gods, love lyrics, and poems on contemporary politics. Only fragments of his works survive.

Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica* (c. 260–247 B.C.E.)—This work is an epic poem on the story of Jason and his quest for the Golden Fleece, written in a period when long epics were out of style.

Aristophanes, *The Clouds* (423 B.C.E.)—Written in the "Old Comedy" style of playwriting, *The Clouds* avoids the political themes of other Athenian plays and instead satirizes Socrates and the education that he offered the Athenian youth.

Cornelius Tacitus, *Histories* (after 96 C.E., *Annals* (after 115 C.E.))—The *Histories* and the *Annals* together, when complete, covered the history of the first century C.E. from the perspective of a Roman who thought that liberty had perished along with the republic which Julius Caesar overthrew.

Demosthenes, *On the Crown* (330 B.C.E.)—This speech was delivered in a court of law as Demosthenes' defense of his anti-Macedonian political policies of the previous 25 years. Written down and published, it is considered to be the masterpiece of the greatest Athenian orator of the fourth century B.C.E.

Euripides, *Medea* (431 B.C.E.)—This tragic play is famous for its psychological insight in its portrayal of a woman who has suffered wrong.

Herodotus of Halicarnassus, *The Histories* (c. 425 B.C.E.)—This work of history, covering the rise of the Persian Empire and its clash with Greece in 480–479 B.C.E., earned Herodotus the title "Father of History."

Hesiod, *Works and Days* (c. 700 B.C.E.)—Hesiod's *Works and Days* gives insight into the life of a small farmer in early Greece.

Homer, the *Iliad* (c. 700 B.C.E.)—This epic centering on an incident in the Trojan War represents the culmination of the epic oral tradition in Greece. Also attributed to Homer was the *Odyssey*, the tale of how the hero Odysseus returned home after the Trojan War.

Petronius Arbitrator, *Satyricon* (c. 60–65 B.C.E.)—An elegant voluptuary at the emperor Nero's court, Petronius wrote a long novel which is unique in Latin literature—nothing like it exists in Greek literature—which recounts the adventures of three young rascals in southern Italy. Fragments survive, including a long description of a feast given by a rich freedman, Trimalchio.

Pindar, *Epinician Odes* ("Victory Odes") (518–438 B.C.E.)—These lyric poems, written to commemorate athletic victories at the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean or Isthmian Games, are the only ones to have survived complete from the many Pindar wrote.

Publius Vergilius Maro, *Aeneid* (30–19 B.C.E.)—Generally considered Rome's greatest poet, Vergil's masterpiece is the *Aeneid*, which tells the story of how the Trojan

hero Aeneas escaped from Troy, landed in Italy, and founded the royal line that would eventually produce Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome.

Quintus Ennius, *The Annals* (c. 170 B.C.E.)—Playwright, satirist and epic poet, Ennius introduced the Greek meter used by Homer, the dactylic hexameter into Latin in his epic, *Annals* which told the history of Rome in verse up to 171 B.C.E., the year before his death.

Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace), *Epodes* (41–31 B.C.E.)—Sappho was the head of a *thiasos* (sisterhood) which honored Aphrodite and the nine Muses. One complete poem and fragments of others now survive of the seven books of her collected poems.

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (c. 429–425 B.C.E.)—This tragic play was considered by Aristotle to be a model Greek tragedy.

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (c. 400 B.C.E.)—This clinical account of the war between the Athenian Empire and the Spartan coalition (431–404 B.C.E.) broke off in mid-sentence in the year 411, probably interrupted by Thucydides' death.

Titus Livius, *History of Rome from its Foundation* (c. 28 B.C.E.–17 C.E.)—Livy's *History*, composed in 142 books, is a monumental work covering the rise of Rome from its foundation to 9 B.C.E. when the emperor Augustus' stepson, Drusus, died. Only thirty-five books have survived.

Titus Lucretius Carus, *The Nature of Things* (65–55 B.C.E.)—This unfinished epic poem expounded the theory that the universe is made up of atoms and void, and therefore men and women do not need to fear death, for it is only a dissolution of the atoms that make up the human body and soul.

# 5 chapter five

## MUSIC

Nancy Sultan

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	182	<i>The Invention of the Lyre</i> (Hermes creates the lyre from a tortoise shell) . . . . .	202
OVERVIEW . . . . .	187	<i>Saved for the Sake of Euripides' Hymns</i> (Plutarch recalls how Athenian prisoners were saved by Euripides' songs) . . . . .	205
TOPICS		<i>Orestes</i> (Euripides' text is one of the earliest examples of ancient Greek music) . . . . .	206
Musical Instruments . . . . .	189	<i>Plato on Musical Innovation</i> (Plato describes the music that is beneficial to moral education) . . . . .	208
Music in Greek Life . . . . .	198	<i>Grave Stele of Seikilos</i> (tombstone's text includes patterns of composition described by later theorists) . . . . .	209
Music Education . . . . .	210	<i>Domitian and the Festival for Capitoline Jupiter</i> (Suetonius discusses a festival of music founded by Domitian) . . . . .	215
Music in Roman Life . . . . .	212	<i>Just One of the Girls</i> (Plutarch describes Clodius' plan to dress like a female lyre player) . . . . .	217
Women in Ancient Music . . . . .	216	<i>Helen's Ritual Lament</i> (Euripides portrays the musical power of the ritual lament) . . . . .	219
Music Theory . . . . .	219	<i>Criticizing the Harmonikoi</i> (Aristoxenus argues that music must be judged empirically, by the senses) . . . . .	220
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>Aristotle on Music</i> (Aristotle discusses the influence of music on the soul) . . . . .	221
Aristoxenus . . . . .	228	<i>Alypian Notation Tables</i> (examples of Greek musical notation) . . . . .	222
Pindar . . . . .	229		
Claudius Ptolemy . . . . .	230		
Pythagoras . . . . .	230		
Sappho . . . . .	231		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	231		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
<i>A Pipers' Strike in Ancient Rome</i> (Livy describes the inventive solution to a tibicine pipers' strike) . . . . .	195		
<i>Odysseus Praises Song</i> (in <i>The Odyssey</i> , Odysseus praises the songs of Demodokos) . . . . .	200		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS in Music

- c. 2800 B.C.E. –c. 1100 B.C.E. During the Aegean Bronze Age, musicians and musical instruments are depicted in frescoes, on vases and seal stones, and in sculpture. Fragments of lyres, pipes, percussion instruments, and triton horns survive from this period.
- c. 2200 B.C.E. Figurines from the Cycladic Islands depict Bronze-Age Aegean musicians holding the frame harp, the *aulos* (reed pipe), and the *syrix* (pan-pipe).
- c. 1490 B.C.E. A Bronze-Age painted sarcophagus from Ayia Triada, Crete, illustrates musicians playing the *phorminx* (lyre) and *aulos* during a ritual sacrifice.
- c. 1100 B.C.E. A miniature bronze votive *kithara* (lyre) from the Sanctuary of Apollo at Amyklai (near Sparta) is the earliest representation of the type that would become popular in the classical period (480–323 B.C.E.).
- c. 800 B.C.E. –c. 700 B.C.E. During the Early Archaic Period, the Homeric epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Homeric Hymns, and the poet Hesiod describe musicians, instruments, and musical contexts. Phemios and Demodokos, two of Homer's *aoidoi* (professional bards), perform at the palaces of Odysseus and the Phaiakians in the *Odyssey*.
- c. 750 B.C.E. –c. 550 B.C.E. Greeks colonize southern Italy and eastern Sicily; musicians, poets, and composers bring Greek musical culture to Syracuse and other cities in Magna Graecia.
- c. 676 B.C.E. –c. 673 B.C.E. Music schools are established in Sparta by Terpander of Lesbos and Thaletas of Gortyn.
- The virtuoso composer and *kitharode* Terpander wins the musical competition at the first Karneia festival of Apollo and four successive victories at the Pythian Games.
- c. 654 B.C.E. –c. 611 B.C.E. Lyric poet Alcman lives in Sparta and composes his *Partheneia* (“Maiden’s Dance”).
- The island of Lesbos becomes a second music center.
- c. 628 B.C.E. –c. 625 B.C.E. Arion of Lesbos teaches the Corinthian choirs to perform the dithyramb (male choral dance), which he invented. The tragic chorus is said to have developed from his type of dithyramb.
- c. 612 B.C.E. The most famous female poet, Sappho, is born on Lesbos. At her hometown of Mytilene she composes lyrical songs, usually monodies and choral dances, and is the leader of a circle of girls and young women; the *barbitos* (a low-pitched lyre) and other instruments accompany the music.
- c. 632 B.C.E. –c. 556 B.C.E. The composer Stesichorus (born Teisias) sets up the first tragic chorus and is known for his use of the *Harmateios nomos* (“Chariot melody”) and the *Nomos of Athena* in the Phrygian mode, which tells the story of the birth of Athena in full armor from the head of Zeus.
- c. 625 B.C.E. –c. 585 B.C.E. The dithyramb (male choral dance) is invented by kitharode Arion of Lesbos during the time of the tyrant Periander at Corinth.
- c. 600 B.C.E. –c. 500 B.C.E. Tyrants reform festivals, and attract talented musicians to their cities: at Corinth, Periander supports Arion, who creates the dithyramb; at Sicyon, Cleisthenes ends performances of rhapsodes and paves the way for classical tragedy; and Pisistratus institutes the festival of the City Dionysia in Athens,

- a central feature of which are dithyrambic, tragic, and comic contests.
- Thespis produces the first tragedy in Athens by adding a speaker to interact with the chorus.
- Under Hipparchus, Pisistratus' son, the poets Anacreon, Lasus of Hermione, and Simonides flourish. Hipparchus develops the rhapsodes' competition at the Great Panathenaea into an organized serial performance of the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.
- 586 B.C.E. New contests for *aulodes* and *auletes* are added at the Pythian Games. The *aulode* Echembrotus of Arcadia wins a bronze tripod cauldron.
- The *aulete* (piper) Sakadas of Argos wins a prize at the music contest at the Pythian Games. He will win prizes at the next two Games, and become known for his *Pythikos nomos* ("Pythian Composition") in which he interprets the defeat of the serpent Pytho by Apollo at Delphi.
- Argos becomes a center of musical excellence.
- 574 B.C.E. Pythocritus of Sicyon wins six Pythian victories on the aulos.  
–554 B.C.E.
- c. 560 B.C.E. The philosopher, mathematician, and scientist Pythagoras is born. He later founds a school at Croton where he and his followers study acoustical and musical phenomena.
- 566 B.C.E. The Panathenaea festival at Athens is reorganized on a grander scale and includes music competitions for rhapsodes, kitharodes, aulodes, and auletes.
- 558 B.C.E. Unaccompanied kithara-playing is added to the Pythian music competition. Age-laus of Tegea is the first victor.
- c. 520 B.C.E. The east-Greek poet Anacreon's presence in Athens prompts a series of vase-paintings that depict Ionian influence
- in Athenian music. In one image a singer holds a *barbitos* (an Ionian-style lyre) with Anacreon's name on it.
- 518 B.C.E. The poet Pindar, the most celebrated of all lyric poets of ancient Greece, is born near Thebes in Boeotia (d. 438). He is most famous for his epinikian odes composed for victors at the four athletic games: Pythian, Nemean, Isthmian, and Olympic.
- c. 508 B.C.E. Lasus introduces the dithyrambic competition in Athens.
- c. 500 B.C.E. Democratic Athens is the center of all intellectual and cultural activity in Greece. In this city, tragedians Aeschylus, Phrynichus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Agathon produce their dramas in the theater of Dionysus during the City Dionysia; comic playwright Aristophanes lampoons Athenian politics and culture; and poets Lasus, Simonides, Bacchylides, Pindar, Melanippides, Timotheus, Philoxenus, and Cinesias compose dithyrambs for Athenian choruses and so-called "New Music."
- 478 B.C.E. Hieron, tyrant of Syracuse in Sicily, makes his city a haven for artists, poets, and musicians from all over Greece. His hospitality toward Pindar is so appreciated that the poet composes a eulogy for him.  
–467 B.C.E.
- c. 475 B.C.E. The first concert hall in the Western world—the Odeion—is commissioned by the Athenian statesman Themistocles for musical contests held during the Great Panathenaea. It stands in the Athenian marketplace.
- 474 B.C.E. Hieron defeats the Etruscans at Cumae and begins his rule at Syracuse, during which time he entertains Aeschylus, Pindar, and other Greek artists and musicians.
- c. 470 B.C.E. The Etruscans build the so-called "Tomb of the Leopards" and "Tomb of the Triclinium" in Tarquinia, northern Italy, and paint the walls with a

- funerary banquet scene featuring men and women dancing to the music of the *aulos* (reed pipe) and a six-stringed *chelys* (tortoise-shell) lyre.
- c. 450 B.C.E. Several different forms of harp begin to appear in Athenian vase-paintings, although it was a familiar instrument to Anacreon before this time.
- c. 435 B.C.E. The noted dithyrambist Philoxenus of Cythera is born. His most famous work will be the *Cyclops* (also called *Polyphemus and Galatea*).
- 443 B.C.E. Damon, one of the greatest intellects of his time, publishes an essay in which he argues that musical modes and rhythms are intimately connected with ethical qualities, and the state should concern itself with the regulation of music and music education. His ideas influence Plato's and Aristotle's attitudes regarding the *ethos* of music in their discussion of music education.
- c. 430 B.C.E.
- c. 427 B.C.E. The philosopher Plato is born. He will discuss the character and role of music in many of his works, most notably in the *Timaeus*, *Republic*, and *Laws*.
- c. 420 B.C.E. The musician Timotheus of Miletus beats his teacher, the eminent Phrynis, in a music competition. Several hundred lines of his kitharodic composition *Persians* survive, along with an epilogue containing prayers to Apollo and a manifesto praising his own talent and originality.
- 416 B.C.E. The tragedian and composer Agathon wins first place in the dramatic contest at the Lenaea in Athens. He is later satirized by Aristophanes in his *Thesmophoriazousae* but treated with much affection in Plato's *Symposium*.
- 410 B.C.E. The witty kitharist Stratoniceus of Athens is active, along with a host of other virtuoso performers whose showmanship captivates audiences, including Chrysgonus, hired to pipe the rowing stroke for the naval general Alcibiades' crew;
- the aulete Pronomus of Thebes, shown on a vase (in the Museo Nazionale in Naples) playing before a crowd of actors, wearing an ornate robe and a garland on his head; and Antigeneidas, another aulete from Thebes, described by the writer Apuleius as a "honey-sweet melodizer of every word and a practiced player of every mode" (*Flor.* 4).
- 402 B.C.E. Kitharodes, the most popular with the crowds, win the largest prizes at major competitions; the list of prizes includes: a gold crown weighing 85 drachmas, a crown worth 1,000 silver drachmas, and 500 drachmas in cash; other kitharode prizes are worth 700, 600, 400, and 300 drachmas, respectively. There are two prizes for aulodes (300 and 100 drachmas) and three for kitharists.
- c. 400 B.C.E. Alexander the Great's five-day wedding celebration in Susa features entertainment by a rhapsode, three psilokitharists, two kitharodes, two aulodes, five auletes (who played the Terpandrian *Pythikos nomos*) and then accompanied choruses, three tragic and three comic actors, and a harpist.
- c. 300 B.C.E.
- 392 B.C.E. Aristophanes produces his last surviving comedies *Ecclesiazusae* (Women in the Assembly) and *Plutus* (Wealth), in which the part of the chorus has been much reduced and is no longer written by the playwright; instead of choral lyrics, the word "KHOROU" ("interlude by chorus") appears. Solo song and piping continue as central musical elements in the play.
- 388 B.C.E.
- 343 B.C.E. Aristotle discusses the character and purpose of music in his *Politics* and *Problems*. The music theorist Aristoxenus becomes one of his prize pupils.
- c. 333 B.C.E. Aristoxenus is a pupil of Aristotle in Athens and writes many books and essays, the most influential of which are the *Harmonika stoikheia* (Harmonic Elements) and *Rhythmika stoikheia* (Rhythmic Elements).



- 319 B.C.E. The boy's chorus of the Cecropid tribe wins the dithyramb contest at the Great Dionysia in Athens with a rendition of Timotheus' composition *Elpenor*.
- 316 B.C.E. *Dyskolos* (Grouch), the one complete surviving play of comic writer Menander, is produced; it features four choral interludes indicated by the word "KHOROU" between the five acts. At line 879 a stage direction "the aulos-player plays" and a change in rhythm indicates additional musical content.
- 311 B.C.E. Roman censor Appius Claudius Caecus deprives the Etruscan artists' guild (*collegium*) the right to dine at the public expense in the Temple of Jupiter after performing at the religious festivals; they protest by marching out of Rome to Tibur (eighteen miles away), and eventually win back their free dinners.
- c. 300 B.C.E. New dramatic and musical competitions are added to the Nemean and Isthmian Games.
- c. 200 B.C.E. Kitharode Nicocles of Tarentum records his victories at the Pythian and Isthmian Games, Great Panathenaea, the Lenaea (in a dithyramb), the Hecatombaia, the Helieia, and royal festivals in Macedonia and Alexandria.
- Artists come together in several cities in Greece, Alexandria, and Sicily to form professional organizations known as *technitai Dionysou* (Artists of Dionysus), which formed guilds (*koina*, or later *synodoi*). They provide musicians, composers, conductors, and teachers for religious festivals and secular events.
- 290 B.C.E. The *technitai* ("artists guild") forms in –280 Athens to produce shows in various cities. The rival Isthmian-Nemean guild is established in the north-east Peloponnese; both establish relations with Delphi.
- c. 270 B.C.E. Ktesibios of Alexandria invents the pneumatic pump and the water-organ (Greek *hydraulis*).
- 235 B.C.E. A major artists' guild appears in Teos, which serves Ionia and the Hellespont.
- 211 B.C.E. The Isthmian-Nemean guild is invited to participate in several festivals, including the festival of the Muses at Thespieae, at Thebes, on the island of Delos, and around the Peloponnese.
- 205 B.C.E. Kitharode Pylades of Megalopolis performs Timotheus' *Persians* at the Nemean Games.
- c. 200 B.C.E. New music is performed alongside –c. 100 B.C.E. revivals of old standards and selections from fifth-century tragic poets, especially Euripides.
- c. 194 B.C.E. Satyrus of Samos, a famous aulete, wins the prize, and gives an encore performance selected from Euripides' tragedy *Bacchae*.
- 191 B.C.E. Plautus produces his comedy *Pseudolus* (The Cheat), which, like many of his other plays, integrates polymetric *cantica* (solo songs) accompanied by different types of *tibiae* (reed pipe) and instrumental pipe music into the plot, along with musical interludes between scenes.
- 170 B.C.E. Meneceles, an envoy from Teos, –150 B.C.E. performs works of Timotheus and Polyidus at Knossos and Priansos, Crete.
- 163 B.C.E. Terence produces his comedy *Heautontimoroumenos* (The Self-Tormentor), the structure of which depends completely on musical accompaniment by a *tibicen* (reed player).
- 127 B.C.E. Members of the Athenian guild participate in the Pythaid religious pilgrimage from Athens to Delphi. The group consists of epic and dramatic poets, rhapsodes, actors, instrumentalists, singers, and, in 127, a large choir to sing the paean to Apollo; the notated music of the paeans composed for this occasion by kitharist Limenius and singer Athenaeus is inscribed on the wall of the Treasury of the Athenians.

- 118 B.C.E. The Delphians honor two musicians from Arcadia who trained boys' choruses to perform bits from the "old poets."
- 90 B.C.E. A Cretan organist named Antipatros awes his audience at Delphi; he is awarded prizes at the Pythian Games and earns civic honors for himself and his descendants.
- c. 27 B.C.E. The Roman architect Vitruvius dies. In Book Five of his work *De architectura* he discusses acoustics in relation to the design of the theater auditorium, and translates the works of Greek music theorist Aristoxenus into Latin, explaining the system of *harmonia* (tetrachord system) to his Roman readers.
- 26 B.C.E. Vergil composes his epic for Augustus, the *Aeneid*, in which he describes a type of Phrygian *aulos* and other musical instruments and contexts.
- 19 B.C.E.
- 22 B.C.E. Pylas of Cilicia introduces pantomime in Rome, which consists of re-creations in performance by solo dancers of scenes from myth and history; musical accompaniment is provided by a chorus and orchestra of pipes, lyres, and percussion instruments.
- 17 B.C.E. The Latin poet Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* is performed by a choir of 27 girls and 27 boys; commissioned by the emperor Augustus for Rome's Centennial Games, it is the only known poem of Horace's to have been set to music.
- 54 C.E. Nero, a seventeen-year old art enthusiast who sings, acts, and plays the *kithara* and the organ, becomes emperor of Rome.
- 79 C.E. Vesuvius erupts and buries Pompeii and Herculaneum, preserving a number of frescoes with musical scenes.
- c. 100 C.E. The Roman orator Quintilian dies. In his work *Institutio oratoria*, he discusses music as part of his instructions on how to properly train an orator.
- 117 C.E. Hadrian becomes emperor of Rome after the death of Trajan. A very cultured man who was heavily influenced by Greek ideals, he employed a Cretan *kitharode* named Mesomedes to compose hymns; several fragments with musical notation survive in medieval manuscripts.
- c. 127 C.E. Astronomer and mathematician Claudius Ptolemy is writing in Alexandria. Among his many books is the *Harmonika*, a systematic treatment of the mathematical theory of harmony.
- 148 C.E.
- c. 200 C.E. Gladiators fight to the accompaniment of an organist, trumpeters, and hornblowers. The organ also is used in religious festivals.
- c. 300 C.E.
- c. 250 C.E. Two important music theorists are publishing their works: Aristides Quintilianus, *De musica* (Greek title *peri mousikes*); and Gaudentius, *Harmonica introductio* (Greek *Harmonike eisagoge*).
- c. 350 C.E.
- c. 300 C.E. Alypius, a younger contemporary of Aristides Quintilianus, compiles his *Introductio musica*, which contains the most complete record of the notational symbols.
- 384 C.E. The emperor Carinus organizes a concert in Rome with a hundred trumpet players, a hundred horn players, and two hundred *tibicens* (reed-pipe players).
- 387 C.E. Augustine, Latin philosopher and distinguished church father, writes *De musica*, in which he discusses meter and versification. Ten years later he ponders the ethics of music in church in his autobiographical *Confessions* (397–400), asking whether the worshipper should be moved by the singing, or the song itself.
- 389 C.E.

## OVERVIEW of Music

**THE ROOT OF WESTERN MUSIC.** The modern word “music,” and indeed most of the terms and concepts associated with music—melody, harmony, symphony, orchestra, chorus, ode, hymn, paean, and rhythm, for example—are Greek. Western music is rooted in the Greek concept of *mousike technē*, “the craft of the Muses.” The term *mousike* referred to poetry and dance as well as music, thus all three are linked in Greek culture. Although the Greeks themselves were influenced by Near Eastern, Anatolian, and Egyptian musical traditions, it is the poets, philosophers, and theorists of Greece whose musical writings had the most profound influence on later cultures; the Romans followed the lead of the Greeks, as did the early Christians.

**VITAL PART OF ANCIENT LIFE.** Art and archaeological evidence, literature, theoretical writings, and a few surviving fragments of musical compositions all demonstrate that music was a vital part of public, private, sacred, and secular life in ancient Greece and Rome. Choral dance and song, theatrical and solo performance, and musical competitions filled the calendar year. Ordinary men and women sang as they performed their everyday chores of weaving, making wine, or harvesting grain; professional bards and virtuosos performed for a living to small groups at parties as well as to large audiences at festivals. Music was, however, not solely for entertainment. Because of its connection with the gods, especially the Muses—goddesses who, according to the Archaic Greek poets Homer and Hesiod, legitimize and validate the truth of myths—music itself was considered divine; it played a central role in Greek and Roman religion, which can best be described as polytheistic, employing a combination of myth (sacred storytelling) and ceremonial rituals. Music was an integral part of all important ceremonial rites of passage in Greek and Roman culture: birth, coming of age, wedding, death, and funeral.

**EARLY DEVELOPMENT.** Music was already very much a part of social and religious life in prehistoric

Greece. As early as the third millennium B.C.E., musicians playing instruments such as the harp, the *aulos* (double-reed pipe), and the *syrinx* (a type of flute) are depicted in art, most notably marble and ivory figurines found in graves. By the second millennium, the so-called Mycenaean Period, many of the instruments that were popular later in Greek and Roman history—the *phorminx* (lyre), *sistrum* (rattle), and *triton* (trumpet)—had already made their appearance. Singers and musical instruments again appear in the two most important poems of the eighth century B.C.E., Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These heroic epics provided the musical link between the Mycenaean and the Archaic period of Greece, for the professional bards described in the poems still sung to the accompaniment of the *phorminx*. A century later, the lyric poets Terpander and Archilochus sung Homeric poetry to a more elaborate lyre—the *kithara*—and other solo performers—the *rhapsodoi*—recited the poems at festivals without any musical accompaniment at all.

**MUSIC EDUCATION.** Music education came to be considered by the Greek and Roman writers as essential for civilized people as mathematics and athletics. The earliest music schools are said to have been established in the town of Sparta in southern Greece sometime between the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. by the musicians Terpander of Lesbos, Thaletas of Gortyn, and Sacadas of Argos. Terpander, perhaps the most famous *kitharode* (kithara-player), organized and won the first major music competition in Sparta; he is one of the earliest known musical masters, credited also with adding strings to the *kithara*, composing, and perfecting composition and performance techniques for a variety of instruments. He is also said to have invented the categories of *nomoi* (tunes, melodies, laws, customs) used by poets to classify types of songs in a singer’s repertory and to refer to specific melodic compositions, either for a particular instrument (kitharodic), a composer (the Terpanorean), or even a deity. The word *nomos* was originally used to refer to unique melodies or types of tunes attached to a particular region or village; each *nomos* thus maintained unique characteristics.

**CENTERS FOR MUSIC.** Between the seventh to the sixth centuries B.C.E., the island of Lesbos, near the coast of ancient Asia Minor (now Turkey), became another center of music and poetry in Greece. The poets from Lesbos, most notably Alcaeus and Sappho, were influenced by melodic forms from Lydia and Phrygia in the East, and their musical compositions had an Eastern flavor. Together with the *dithyramb*, a ritual choral dance in honor of Dionysus, solo virtuoso playing and

accompaniment to song or recitation was occurring with ever-increasing popularity. By the fifth century B.C.E., the democratic city of Athens was the most powerful *polis* (city-state) in Greece, and had become the center of Greek intellectual and cultural life. During the classical period (480–323 B.C.E.) in Greek history, competitions formed a part of the Olympian, Nemean, Pythian (at Delphi), and Isthmian (near Corinth) festivals, and poets, including the renowned poet Pindar, composed *epinikia* for the victors—elaborate lyric poems of praise—to be sung by a chorus with musical accompaniment. The playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides produced their dramas, or *tragoidia* (tragedies), in the amphitheater of Dionysus at the foot of the Acropolis as part of the City Festival of Dionysus. Music, especially choral dance and song, played a central role in the tradition of Greek theater, which included not only tragedy, but also comedy and “satyr plays” (satire); indeed the words for “tragedy” and “comedy”—*tragoidos* and *komoidos*—both contain the word for “song,” *oidos*.

**INNOVATIONS.** New types of musical genres and innovations continued to emerge in the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. Especially popular were performances by solo virtuosos—*rhapsodoi* and *tragodoi*—who sang or recited Homeric epic, lyric, or dramatic poetry, often to the musical accompaniment of a band. Perhaps the most important contribution to music in the late third century was the invention of the *hydraulis* (water-organ) by the engineer Ktesibios. Originally designed as a mechanical water pump, the *hydraulis* became a popular musical instrument in Rome and later in the Christian church. The modern pipe organ derives from this early mechanical hydraulic machine.

**ROMAN MUSIC.** The Romans, ever practical, were not very original when it came to music. Aside from some indigenous Etruscan ritual songs and musical instruments, the Romans generally looked to the Greeks for instruction and inspiration. It is safe to say that once Greece becomes part of the Roman Empire in the third century B.C.E., it becomes difficult to distinguish Greek from Roman musical expression. Roman musical instruments, such as the popular *tibia* (a version of the Greek *aulos*), the *fistula* (pan-pipe), and even the true flute, were variations on Greek instrument types. The Greek *kithara* remained the most popular instrument in Rome, and was enlarged in size. As in Greece, military music played a central role in Roman life. A wide variety of wind instruments blared in marching bands: *kerata* (cow horns), *salpinges* (ivory or bronze trumpets), *cornu* (circular horn), and *tuba* (brass tuba). Although the Romans adopted, and then adapted, Greek forms of

epic, lyric, tragedy, and comedy, very little is known about the role that music played in their versions. The comedies of Plautus and Terence in the second century B.C.E. featured a spoken, rather than sung version of the Greek chorus, and included the *canticum*, a scene enacted in sing-song manner to the accompaniment of the tibia. Mime and pantomime were invented and added to the repertoire in the Roman Period, around the first century B.C.E., and the Roman architect and engineer Vitruvius improved the acoustics in theaters with his theory of sound waves.

**MUSIC AND PHILOSOPHY.** In Greek and Roman religion, the myths of heroes and gods not only featured music and musical competitions, but also explained the origin of certain melodies, rhythms, and instruments. The Greeks and Romans believed that music had an effect on moral behavior, and writings from the time period demonstrate a concern that certain types of music might lead young people down the wrong path. The gods Apollo and Dionysus (Roman Bacchus) represented complementary aspects of the human psyche, and thus were especially important in the philosophy of music education. Early Greek philosophers and theorists—especially Damon, Plato, and Aristotle—carefully examined the aesthetic, ethical, and moral qualities of different types of melodies and rhythms. The mathematician Pythagoras (c. 560–470 B.C.E.), who also studied melodies and rhythms, is said to have invented what is now called “acoustic theory” in teaching that the same numerical laws that governed the universe also governed music and, by extension, the soul.

**MUSIC COMPOSITION.** There are countless references to music, musicians, and musical forms in Greek and Roman literature and art. Between 23 and 51 actual notated musical compositions survive, depending on the definition of “composition.” They exist on papyrus, on stone, and in manuscripts. Many are fragmentary, and most date from the relatively late periods between the third century B.C.E. and the fourth century C.E. The texts include hymns and paens to divinities, lines of poetry and drama, and choral song. It is difficult, but not impossible, to read these compositions. Sometime in the fifth century B.C.E., the Greeks developed the science of acoustic theory, the tetrachord scale system, and musical terminology, which served as the foundations for the composition, performance, and the study of music in later periods. Although very little of what modern scholars would call “music theory” proper has survived, a few theoretical works assist in interpreting the surviving fragments. These theoretical treatises and handbooks span a period of about 800 years, from the earliest—Aristox-

enus (c. 375–320 B.C.E.)—to the latest—Alypius (c. 450 C.E.). These works explain and describe musical systems, genres of melody, tunings, *tonoi* (scales), and rhythm, and discuss various philosophical problems in music, such as ethics, and the proper use of music in education. The application of these in composition and performance may be unclear, but the surviving ancient theoretical corpus (especially the Aristoxenian tradition) does a remarkable job of constructing discrete categories for dissecting the phenomena of music, categories still used to some extent in modern musical analysis.

**MUSICAL NOTATION.** Ancient Greek and Roman music was composed and transmitted aurally, without the need for writing, but a standard alphabetic form of musical notation was in limited use by the mid-third century B.C.E. In the surviving musical examples, these notation symbols are placed over the words of the song, probably to indicate the melody, but sometimes they are interspersed between passages of text, to indicate a passage for instruments. There are also a few notated passages without any text. Most of the modern knowledge about notation is found in the tables of Alypius, a music theorist of the late fourth or fifth century C.E. who wrote down the names of all the notes and notation symbols for the two-octave scale, or “Greater Perfect System” in fifteen *tonoi* (“keys”). Notation was clearly used by professionals only. Music was primarily an oral tradition even into the latest periods, passed on from grandparent to child, master to pupil. In the same way that Gregorian Chant was derived from an oral tradition, and remained primarily that through the medieval period, Greek and Roman music thrived for centuries without the aid of written notation or theory.

**CONNECTION TO POETRY.** Ancient Greek music was primarily monophonic—melody without harmony or counterpoint. By the seventh century B.C.E., composers such as Archilochus were employing heterophony (instrumental or singer embellishment), modulation, mixed rhythms, and combining text with music. It is probable that music was improvised, not thoroughly composed. The Greeks used the word *melos* for a simple “song,” either vocal or instrumental, while the Romans used *carmina*; in its “perfect form,” the *teleion melos*, ancient Greek and Roman music was always associated with poetry and dancing. The melody and rhythm of the music was intimately connected with the rhythm of the poetic meter.

**UNDERSTANDING MUSIC FROM SURVIVING EVIDENCE.** Taken together, the theoretical writings, literary and artistic representation, and archaeological evidence

provide a reliable, if imperfect, understanding of music in Greek and Roman life. Musicologists have used the tables of Alypius and other theorists to transcribe surviving compositions into Western notation; ethnographers and acoustic scientists have reconstructed instruments based on surviving artifacts, descriptions in literature, and images in art; and recordings have been made of surviving compositions using these instruments, all in an attempt to recreate the sound of Greek and Roman music.

## TOPICS in Music

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### MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

**THE VOICE.** The human voice was the first and the most central of musical instruments in Greek and Roman life. Ordinary people sang while they plowed fields, harvested grain, worked wool, made wine, and tended children. There were drinking songs, hymns to the gods and heroes, laments, and wedding songs. Victors at the athletic games were awarded a song of praise; paeans rallied troops for battle. Singers competed for prizes in solo and choral song. One of the earliest depictions of singing is found on a Bronze-Age black steatite vase from Crete, dating to the second millennium B.C.E.: a group of three singers, heads thrown back and mouths open in song, march together with a group of harvesters; a *sistrum* (shaker) player keeps the beat. The first surviving reference to singing in literature comes from the *Odyssey* where the goddess Circe sang in a sweet voice as she worked at her loom. Singers were commonly portrayed on Greek vase-paintings from the sixth century B.C.E.; some paintings represent the sound emitting from the mouth in the form of little “o’s.” Epic lyric poetry was sung or recited, often to the accompaniment of musical instruments, and the few examples of surviving written music show that the poetry that would be sung was important enough to be written down even if the piece was for a solo instrument. Language itself glorified the voice as an important instrument as well. In his work *De Anima*, the philosopher Aristotle distinguished *phone* (“voice”) from *psophos* (“sound”) by noting that only animals with souls have a true voice. The Greek adjective *ligys*, or *ligyros*, was most often applied to the voice when it was tuneful, clean, and pure, like a nightingale.

**STRINGS.** Chordophones (stringed instruments) were the most basic and arguably the most important of



Drawing of a figure playing the lyre. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

the musical instruments in ancient Greece. They included four types of lyre, a variety of harps, psalteria (zithers), and, after the fourth century B.C.E., a lute-like instrument called the *pandouros*. The Romans preferred the wind instruments, but the lyre appeared in Etruscan art and continued to be popular with soloists throughout the Roman period. Ancient scholars and lexicographers, such as Pollux and Athenaeus (second century C.E.), listed and discussed the different types of lyres and harps, providing important information about their construction, tuning, and usage. In music education, Plato, Aristotle, and the later music theorists advocated the use of simple, traditional tunes on the lyre.

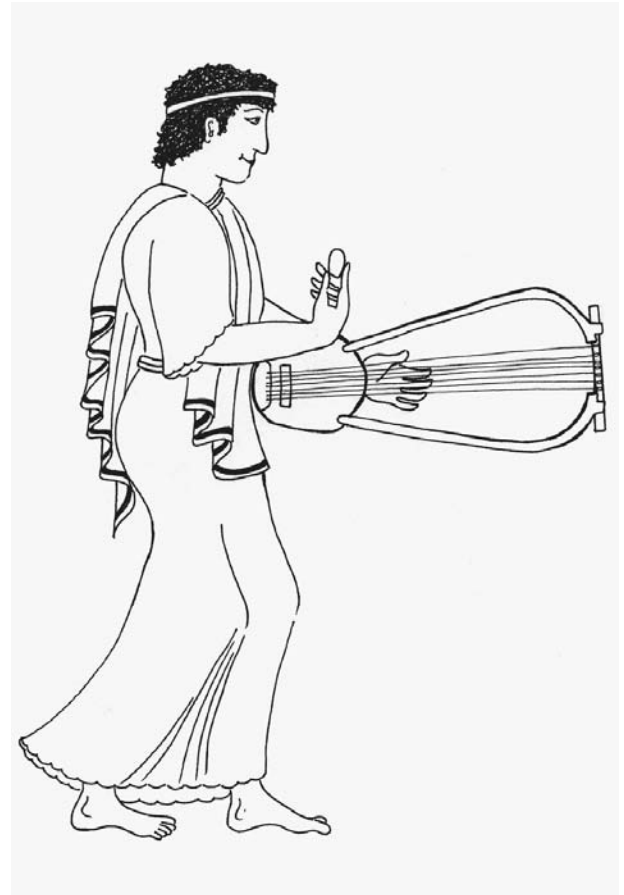
**THE LYRE.** Musicians used the lyre to accompany the singing of sacred hymns, as well as epic and lyric poetry, and it became the preferred instrument of solo virtuoso performers. People of all ages played the lyre for their own personal pleasure, in musical contests, at ritual ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, and at parties and festivals. In Greek myth the lyre was asso-

ciated with the Muses, Hermes, Apollo, Dionysus, and Orpheus. According to the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, the god Hermes fashioned the first lyre from the shell of a *chelys* (tortoise). Archaeology shows that the earliest lyres appeared in ancient Palestine and Sumeria in the third millennium B.C.E., and most likely entered Greece through trade with the Mycenaean during the Bronze Age. Earliest depictions of the Greek lyre in action come from Mycenaean Greek settlements of the second millennium, where archaeologists have found painted frescoes and sculptures depicting lyre players and women's circle dances. Lyre-players appear on Mycenaean engraved rings and seals. The Greek word for "lyre"—*lura*—refers to the family of chordophones with strings of equal length. There are four main types of lyre: the *chelys*, *barbitos*, *phorminx*, and *kithara*, each having its own particular shape, size, tuning, and social function. Basic construction consisted of a soundbox (tortoise shell or wood), to which arms and a crossbar were attached; gut strings were attached by a knot to the chordotonon (a small board on the bottom of the sound-box), passed over the bridge, and were attached to the crossbar at the top of the instrument. The number of strings varied from five to nine, with seven being the norm from the Archaic Period onward. The player could stand, sit, or walk while strumming or plucking the strings with a bone plectrum (pick). A lyre-strap helped the musician to hold the instrument in place against the chest.

**TYPES OF LYRES.** The *chelys* and the *barbitos* were small and lightweight; their bowl-shaped soundboxes did not amplify sound with much volume. They were played by amateur musicians, used for music lessons, and were preferred by the lyric poets such as Sappho for smaller, indoor group performances. Although the ancients attribute the invention of the *barbitos* to the Greek musician and poet Terpander, it is not a Greek word and most likely came to Greece from Asia Minor. The most accomplished musicians desired bigger wooden-soundbox lyres: the *phorminx* and the *kithara*. There are numerous literary and artistic references to these being more professional instruments. In Homer's *Odyssey*, two *aidoi* (professional bards) named Demodokos and Phemios perform songs of the epic cycle to the accompaniment of the *phorminx* before an audience eager to applaud "that song which is the latest to circulate among men." In the *Iliad*, the Achaean fighter Achilles sat in his tent singing "the glory of heroes" as he strummed a beautiful *phorminx* "made by an artist, with a silver bridge and a clear lovely tone" (9.185–188). Vase paintings often showed the *phorminx* with a decorative eye



Drawing of a figure playing the kithara. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.



Drawing of a figure playing the barbitos. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

on the soundbox, a feature that always distinguished it from its close relative, the kithara. In the classical period (480–323 B.C.E.), the phorminx came to be associated primarily with the cult worship of Dionysus, and the kithara was increasingly the preferred instrument for competition and virtuoso performance; it could be paired with the *aulos* (double-reed pipe) in ensemble playing. Its large wooden soundbox gave the kithara a powerful sound that made it suitable for playing outdoors, for example, during the Panathenaia (national festival of Athena) in Athens; two *kitharodes* (kithara-players), dressed in fancy costumes, are depicted marching in the Panathenaic procession on the frieze of the Parthenon temple.

**KITHARODES.** The names of several famous Greek kitharodes are known. Terpander was one of the earliest and best-known composers and performers on the instrument in the Archaic Period, while Philoxenus of Kythera and Timotheus of Miletus were the most famous in the classical period (480–323 B.C.E.). Timo-

theus claimed to have invented “eleven-stroke meters and rhythms”; this may mean that he added strings in order to embellish the melody of a song with intricate rhythmic ornamentation. Fame had its downside, however; great kitharodes were sometimes lampooned in Athenian comedies. Two famous kitharodes in Greek myth are Orpheus and Thamyris, both from Thrace. Orpheus was said to have charmed even the rocks with his playing, and Thamyris boasted that he played better than the Muses. Both died violently, but were compensated with cult worship after death. Orpheus gained the gift of prophecy, while a special type of kithara was named after Thamyris.

**THE HARP.** The harp, an instrument that was used by the Sumerians and the Egyptians in the fourth millennium B.C.E., first appeared in the Greek world during the Bronze Age about a thousand years later; a number of marble figurines from tombs in the Cycladic Islands represent the triangular harp in the arms of seated male musicians; no strings are indicated in the



Detail of a red-figure Apulian vase from southern Italy, showing Apollo playing the kithara. THE ART ARCHIVE/BIBLIOTHÈQUE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.



Drawing of a figure playing the lute. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

statues, but a contemporary seal impression shows four. Later versions had twenty to forty strings, and were thus called “many-stringed” instruments. Harps varied in size, and appear in three basic shapes: arched, triangular, and C-shaped. Among the many names for the instrument are: *pektis*, *trigonon*, *psalterion*, *magadis*, and *sambyke*. The harp falls into the category of a psalter because it was normally played with the fingers of both hands without the aid of a plectrum (pick). The frame was of wood, and a soundbox was located at the base. Strings of unequal length were stretched from the base to the top of the harp, following the curve of the frame, and tuning pegs were either located on the base or at the top, depending on the type of harp. The Bronze-Age Greek harper figurines were all male, but by the fifth century B.C.E. harps—especially the trigonon, sambyke, pektis, and magadis—were most often described as women’s instruments; they were shown in vase-paintings as being played exclusively by women, generally in the context of a wedding or a *symposium* (men’s drinking party) together in ensemble with the aulos and the chelys. Since it was associated primarily with the feminine, and especially sensual or erotic entertainment, Plato did not consider the harp to be

an appropriate instrument for educational purposes. Professional women harpists—known as *psaltriaí* or *sambykai*—scandalized conservative Romans when they first played there.

**THE LUTE.** There was limited use for the lute in Greece and Rome, although the instrument was known in Mesopotamia as early as the third millennium B.C.E., and in Egypt soon thereafter. The name *pandouros* (“lute”) may derive from the Sumerian *pan-tur* (“little bow”). In both Egypt and the Mediterranean, the lute was another instrument primarily played by women. It is not known in Greece before the Alexandrian Period of the mid-fourth century B.C.E., when the *pandouros* appears in the arms of a group of female terracotta figurines. The instrument is also held by one of the Muses in a well-known pedestal relief sculpture on a temple to the goddess Leto built in the same century. The fourth-century comic poet Anaxilas alludes to a lute in his play *The Lyre-Maker*. It is possible that the instrument, which resembles a small guitar or a banjo, came into Greece





Greek Cycladic marble figure of a harpist from 2500 B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/NATIONAL ARCHEOLOGICAL MUSEUM ATHENS/DAGLI ORTI.

during Alexander the Great's military campaigns in Persia. Constructed of wood, the pandourous consisted of a pear or triangular-shaped soundbox from which projected a fretted neck of varying length. A cord around the shoulders served as a lute-strap. Gut strings were stretched from the bottom of the soundbox to the tuning pegs on the head. The players could either sit or stand, and strummed with their right hand while fretting with their left. The number of strings varied from one to four. The theorist Pollux included the pandourous with the *trichordos* ("three-stringed") lyres, and it is likely that this very simple chordophone was also used by the Pythagoreans for acoustic research.

**WINDS.** The wind instruments—reeds, pipes, horns, and flutes—were important in ancient Greek and Roman music from the earliest periods, especially the double-reed instrument known as the *aulos*. In fact, the *aulos* appears more often in vase paintings and fresco art than any other instrument, despite the opinion of Plato and Aristotle that the instrument was not appropriate for education. Wind instruments were used in a variety of contexts: *salpinges* ("brass trumpets") and *kerata*



Drawing of a figure playing the harp. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

("horns") accompanied military processions as well as public spectacle. The Roman cavalry thundered to the sound of the *lituus* ("trumpet"); brass ensembles featured the *cornu* ("horn") and the *bucina* ("tuba"). Triton-shells were used as trumpets (or, perhaps, megaphones) by ordinary people and children; they were often imitated in stone or faience. The *aulos* was used to accompany small and large groups of singers during religious festivals, banquets, and parties, and could be played while dancing. The *aulos* was essential during the ecstatic cult worship of the gods Dionysus (Roman Bacchus) and Cybele; it is often shown being played by satyrs and silenes (oversexed woodland creatures associated with the ecstatic cult of Dionysus), and Aristotle commented that the *aulos* could arouse wild and dangerous passion. Pan-pipes (Greek *syringes*, Roman *fistula*) were played by shepherds and herdsmen. Along with iconographical and literary evidence, a good number of actual wind instruments have been recovered by archaeologists, so that scholars have a good idea of how many of them were manufactured, tuned, and played.

**THE AULOS.** The aulos was not a flute, but a single- or double-reed instrument, comparable to the oboe. Thinner than an oboe and often much longer, the aulos was usually played in pairs, one held in each hand. It commonly consisted of five parts: the *glotta* (mouth-piece), in which a reed of varying materials was housed; a three-part resonator consisting of two bulb- or oval-shaped resonators called the *holmos* and the *hupholmion*; the *bombyx* (main resonator), constructed in sections; and the *trupemata* (finger-holes). The pipe could be made of reed, ivory, bone, wood, or metal, and could be straight or have a curved bell. In vase-paintings from the sixth century B.C.E., the instrument was frequently shown strapped to the musician's face with a *phorbeia* ("halter"). The aulos (plural, *auloi*) was carried in a *sybene* ("bag"), and the reeds in a *glottokomeion* ("reed-carrier"), when not in use. In the classical period (480–323 B.C.E.) the aulos normally had five finger-holes, with one located on the bottom of the pipe for the thumb. In later Greek and Roman auloi, the holes could be covered by rotatable bands. The theorist Aristoxenus listed five sizes of auloi from highest to lowest in pitch: *parthenikoi* ("for girls," soprano), *paidikoi* ("for boys," treble), *kitharisterioi* ("for lyre-players," tenor), *teleioi* ("complete," baritone), and *hyperteleioi* ("more complete," bass).

**ORIGINS OF THE AULOS.** The writer Pollux noted a number of so-called "ethnic species" of auloi coming from Phrygia, Libya, Egypt, Thebes, and Scythia, each with its own peculiarities. The Greeks desired to claim the aulos as their own instrument and not a foreign import, thus some myths credit Athena with creating the aulos, or its music, while other stories say that a virtuoso player named Pronomos of Thebes (late fifth century B.C.E.) invented the two-pipe arrangement. In fact, the aulos was played in pairs in Mesopotamia, Babylonia, and Egypt from the third–second millennia B.C.E. and is attested in early Bronze-Age Aegean art. The earliest example of an *aulete* (aulos-player) in Greece is a marble figurine from the Cycladic island of Keros (c. 2200 B.C.E.). Myth and history are intertwined regarding the invention of the aulos. Two Greek myths, often re-told well into the fifth century B.C.E., credit the Phrygian satyr Marsyas or the goddess Athena with inventing the instrument. Pollux places the origin of the aulos in Phrygia, noting that there was a Phrygian type of aulos, the *elymos aulos*, used in the celebration of the Phrygian goddess Cybele. Plutarch (first century C.E.) related a famous and often illustrated Greek myth of the Phrygian satyr Marsyas, whose father Hyagnis was said to have invented both the aulos and the first tune for it: "The Great

Mother's aulos tune" (a reference to the goddess Cybele). Hyagnis taught the tune to his impish son, who in turn taught a certain real-life musician named Olympos. Pindar (fifth century B.C.E.) claimed in his twelfth *Pythian* ode that Athena created the *pamphonon melos* ("all-sounding song") of the aulos "in order to imitate the shrieking cry of the Gorgon." In his *De cohibenda ira*, Plutarch gives another account of the story in which Marsyas, watching Athena play the aulos, ridiculed the way her cheeks puffed out when she blew notes; the goddess, mortified, threw the instrument away. Marsyas then invented the *phorbeia* ("cheek-halter") to control the movement of the mouth and cheek. In yet another version, Athena, displeased with the aulos, passed the instrument on to Apollo.

**THE AULOS IN PERFORMANCE.** Numerous artistic and literary references show the aulos being used. On the famous painted Bronze-Age sarcophagus from Ayia Triada from Crete (c. 1490 B.C.E.), a male aulete plays during the occasion of an animal sacrifice; a phorminx player performs on the opposite side. Auloi are again paired with the phorminx in the *Odyssey* on Achilles' shield, accompanying dancing at a wedding. The aulos was often played in ensemble with lyres and harps. It accompanied the *dithyramb* (choral dance) and most other types of choral and lyric performance. Deemed appropriate for both happy and sad occasions, the aulos was played at funerals. Auloi were the instruments that accompanied dancing and singing during the Eastern ecstatic worship of Dionysus, Cybele, and Orpheus. Prostitute women auletes entertained men at drinking-parties, and the instrument is often depicted in erotic scenes on vase-paintings.

**THE SOUND OF THE AULOS.** There were three basic modal systems, or scales, associated with the aulos: Dorian, Lydian, and Phrygian, but several dozen types were categorized by pitch range. Accomplished auletes could play an impressive array of scales and pitches by employing techniques such as half-holing, cross-fingering, and over-blowing; by playing two auloi at once, the aulete could combine scales. Different tones and timbres were also accomplished by adjusting the tonguing of the reed and embouchure (lip position) on the mouthpiece. Different writers described the sound of the aulos as screeching, buzzing, sweet-breathed, pure-toned, wailing, enticing, orgiastic, and lamenting. Plato and Aristotle considered complex melodies employing more than one mode or scale to be disruptive to the soul; Plato banned the aulos from his ideal city in the *Republic* because it was a "pan-harmonic" instrument.

**THE ROMAN TIBIA.** The Roman *tibia* (plural *tibiae*) was a pipe of reed or bone, equivalent to the Greek au-

los. The Roman writer Varro said the same thing about the tibia as the Greek philosophers did about the aulos: its tones were complex, and could have an ecstatic affect on the soul. As in Greece, the reed pipe was played during the worship of deities such as Cybele, Bacchus (Greek Dionysus), and Isis, all of whom are connected with fertility, fecundity, and rebirth. The tibia was also used to accompany different kinds of solo theatrical performance, such as mime, pantomime, and farce, often in ensemble with lyres and percussion. Solo *tibicen* (“tibia-players”) would introduce tragedies, and according to Cicero, the audience could often identify a drama by the first few notes. The tibia is ubiquitous in Roman mosaics and paintings depicting scenes from Roman comedy. Tibicen would play instrumental pieces or accompany songs between the acts. The tibia was indispensable in the comedies of Terence and Plautus as the accompaniment to certain polymetric scenes of dialogue called *cantica*; the playwrights would direct the tibia to play, or to be silent, depending on the desired effect in the scene, and the tibicen would engage sometimes in the action. Stage directions in the comedies of Terence indicate which type of tibia were required: *tibiae pares* (“pipes of equal length”), *tibiae impares* (“pipes of unequal length,” probably an octave difference), and *tibiae sarranae* (“Phoenician tibiae”). The tibia musician who composed for Terence may have also served as musical director.

**THE FLUTE AND PAN-PIPE.** The aulos has often been translated as “flute,” but this is incorrect. The true flute has no reed, and is played by blowing transversely across the blow-hole while holding the instrument horizontally to the side. Most types of auloi were reed instruments played in pairs and held in front of the musician, like an oboe or bassoon. One type of aulos, however, might have been played like the modern flute: the *plagiaulos* (Greek) or *obliqua tibia* (Latin). Like the other auloi, the *plagiaulos* was not Greek in origin, but came from Lydia, Phrygia, or, according to Pollux and Athenaeus (late second century C.E.), Libya. The flute is rare, and does not appear in Greece before the third century B.C.E. Two surviving *plagiauloi* are housed in the British Museum; both feature a small bust of a bacchante (worshipper of Bacchus) on one end. Both the *plagiaulos* and the *syrinx* (“pan-pipes”) were pastoral instruments, played by shepherds and herdsmen for simple enjoyment. There are more artistic and literary references to the *syrinx* than there are to the flute. While there are no surviving Bronze-Age examples of the *syrinx*, it is depicted in the *Iliad* (eighth century B.C.E.) on the shield of Achilles, in the hands of happy shepherds. The so-called “François Vase” (circa 575 B.C.E.) features a Muse

### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

#### A PIPERS' STRIKE IN ANCIENT ROME

**INTRODUCTION:** The *tibicines* were musicians in Rome who played the *tibia*, originally a pipe made of bone with three or four finger-holes; as time went on, it became a double-pipe reed instrument like the Greek *aulos*. The guild of tibicines held a festival every year on the Ides of June (15 June) when they wore masks and fancy dress—sometimes women's clothing. The festival commemorated a strike of the tibicines in 311 B.C.E., which is described in the following passage of Livy. The story shows how important a role that the guild of pipe-players had in Roman sacrificial rites.

I should have omitted an episode of the same year as being scarcely worth mentioning did it not seem to concern religious duties. The pipe-players (*tibicines*) were angry at having been forbidden by the last censors to hold their feast in the temple of Jupiter, according to ancient custom, and marched off to Tibur in a body, with the result that there was no one in the city to play the pipes at sacrifices. The Senate was seized with pious misgivings about the incident, and sent delegates to Tibur to request the citizens to do their best to return the men to Rome. The Tiburtines courteously promised to do so and first summoned the pipers to their senate-house and urged them to return to Rome. Then, when they found that persuasion achieved nothing, they dealt with the men by a ruse nicely in tune with their nature. On a public holiday various citizens invited parties of pipers to their homes on the pretext of celebrating the feast with music, and sent them to sleep by plying them with wine, for which men of their kind are generally greedy. In that condition they dumped them, heavily asleep, in cart and carried them off to Rome. The carts were left in the Forum and the pipers knew nothing until daylight surprised them there, still very drunk. The people quickly gathered round them and prevailed on them to stay. They were given permission on three days a year to roam the city in fancy dress, making music and enjoying the license which is now customary, and those of them who played pipes at sacrifices had their right to hold a feast in the temple restored.

**SOURCE:** Livy, *Rome and Italy*. Books VI–X of *The History of Rome from its Foundation*. Trans. Betty Radice (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1982): 259.



A Greek relief sculpture of a woman playing the double aulos, on the Ludovisi throne, from about 450 B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO NAZIONALE TERME ROME/DAGLI ORTI.



Drawing of a figure playing the double-aulos. CREATED BY CECILY EVANS. THE GALE GROUP.

playing the syrinx at the mythical wedding of Peleus and Thetis, but the instrument is most widely associated with pastoral poetry of the third century B.C.E. Although Plato bans the aulos from his ideal state in *The Republic*, he allows herdsmen in the country to have their simple *syringes*. In Greek myth, the god Hermes is credited with inventing the syrinx; it is the instrument commonly associated with Hermes' son, Pan, god of shepherds—hence the term “pan-pipe.” Later writers suggest other origins, including Pollux who associates it with the Celts and unnamed “islanders in the ocean.” The term *syrinx* (Latin *fistula*) was used to designate both a single-pipe whistle and also a group of five to seven equal-length pipes, tied together, and plugged with wax at graduated intervals to form a scale. The musician holds the instrument upright beneath the mouth and blows across the pipes as one would a bottle. Later versions include a rank of different-length pipes tied together, or pipes with holes bored into them to effect the desired pitch.

**THE ORGAN.** The idea behind the syrinx—that scales could be created by blowing air across the opening of pipes—was expanded by Greek engineers in Egypt during the Hellenistic Period (fourth century B.C.E.). Athenaeus, writing in the late second century C.E., cred-

its an Alexandrian mechanic named Ktesibios with the invention of the *hydraulis* (“water organ”), which used a hydraulic pump to create a continuous supply of air to ranks of pipes. The Roman architect Vitruvius (late first century B.C.E.) later described how “stops” were used to close off air from entire rows of pipes in order to alter the pitch. Hero of Alexandria, an engineer writing 100 years later, explained in detail how the hydraulic machine of Ktesibios worked in his book *Pneumatika*. A complex mechanical organ, the *hydraulis* was not commonly played, but there is an inscription from the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi that praises the *hydraulist* Antipatros for winning a musical competition in 90 B.C.E.

**THE TRUMPET.** Several different types of horns were played by the Greeks and Romans. The ivory or more often bronze *salpinx* (“trumpet”) was primarily a battle instrument, used to send signals; it also appeared in ritual and ceremonial contexts, especially in the Roman period, where it was called a *tuba* and often made of brass or iron. The blast of the trumpet was used to



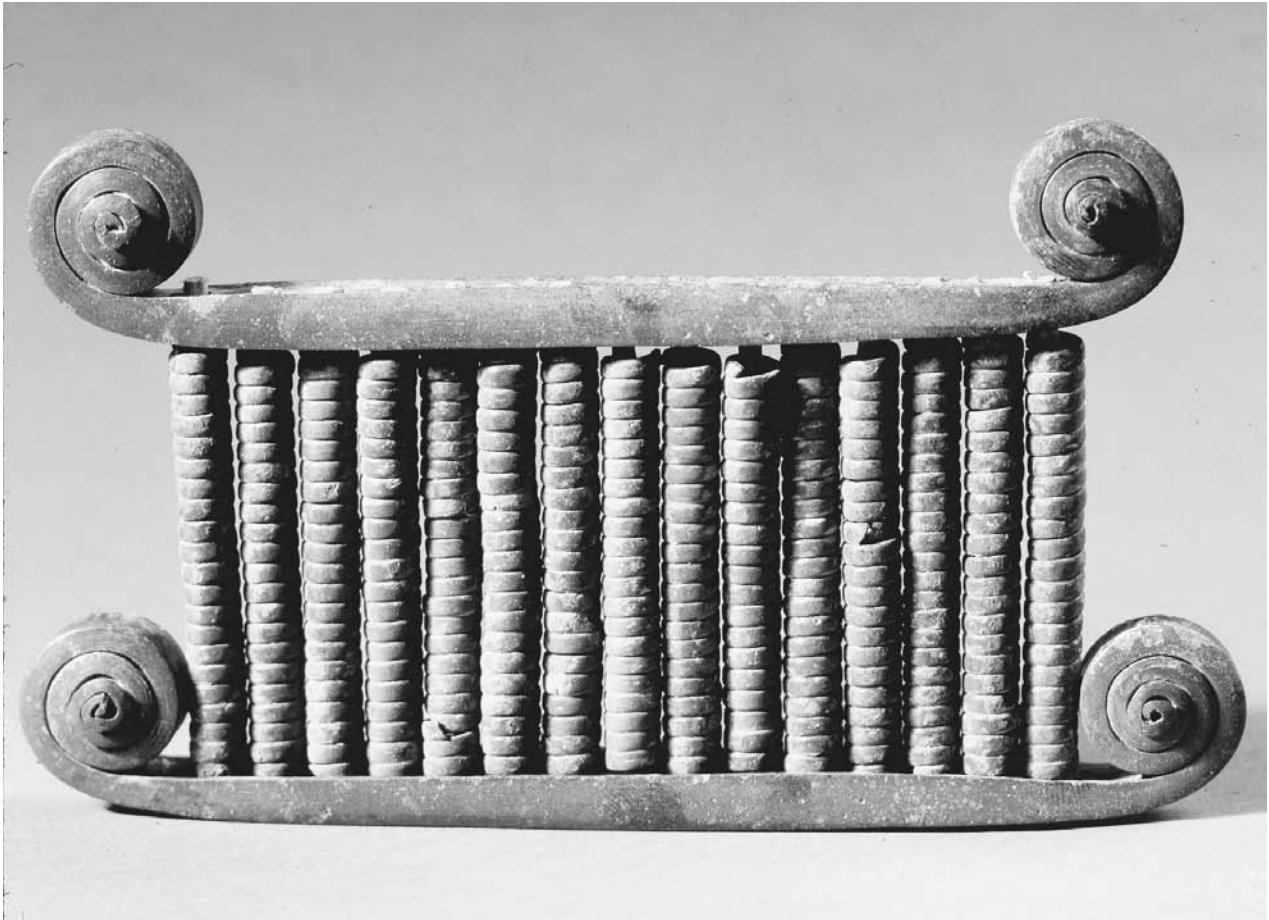
Roman water organ found at Aquincum, Hungary. COURTESY OF THE AQUINCUMI MUZEUM.

call people to assembly and start races. Most writers claim the salpinx to be of Etruscan (Italian) origin, but the instrument is comparable to both Mesopotamian and Egyptian trumpets. It consisted of a long, thin, tube, which could be straight or curved, with a funnel or orchid-shaped bell at the end. The *glotta* (“mouthpiece”) was made of bone. In his *De Musica*, the Roman theorist Aristides Quintilianus (third–fourth century C.E.) described the salpinx as a “warlike and terrifying instrument” that the Roman army employed to move troops by playing “codes through music.” Human and divine *salpinges* (players of the salpinx) were frequently depicted in vase paintings; on a fifth-century B.C.E. cup by the painter Epiktetos, a saytr holds a salpinx in one hand, a shield in his right, and plays while running; a *phorbeia* (“halter,” also used by dancing auletes) holds the mouthpiece to his lips.

**HORNS.** Animal and sea-shell horns were commonly used throughout the Mediterranean and the Near East

from the earliest periods. In Greek myth, triton and conch shell horns were the instruments played by sea deities such as Nereids and Tritons. The *keras* (“cow-horn”), often baked to produce a clearer tone, was used together with the much louder salpinx to signal troops in battle. In Rome, military horns and trumpets, including the tuba, *bucina* (shaped like a bull-horn), and the circular *cornu* were featured in concerts given by large choral groups and orchestras.

**PERCUSSION.** Percussion instruments included the *sistrum* (“rattle”), *krotala* (“castanets”), *kumbala* (“finger-cymbals”), *tympanon* (“drum”), *kymbalon* (“cymbal”), and the *kroupalon* (Latin *scabellum*), a wooden or metal tap worn on a shoe used to keep time. The *rhombos* (“bull-roarer”) could be classified as either a percussion or a wind instrument. It consisted of a piece of wood attached to a string, which made a rumbling sound when whirled above the head. Sistra—metal or clay-and-wood rattles—were popular in Egypt and throughout the Mediterranean. They appeared in Bronze-Age art of the second millennium B.C.E., and many actual sistra survive—over twenty were found at Pompeii. Evidence shows that percussion instruments—notably large, one-sided drums (*rhoptra* and *tympana*) and perhaps clappers—were used by the Parthians, ancient people of Iran and Afghanistan, to terrify the enemy in battle. In Greece and Rome, percussion instruments were rather used predominately by women to accent rhythm of dance and poetic meter in the cult worship of Dionysus, Cybele, Pan, and Aphrodite, deities associated with fertility, fecundity, and sexuality. Women devotees of Dionysus, called *maenads*, are frequently depicted in vase-paintings dancing while striking small hand-held tympana with their palms. In his comedy *Lysistrata*, the fifth-century B.C.E. playwright Aristophanes suggested that women playing the tympana during the worship of Pan and Aphrodite could create quite a ruckus. Women also played the *krotala*, a pair of bar-shaped wooden or metal clappers, hinged at one end, and played with each hand, like castanets; a commonly depicted duet includes a female *krotala*-player and a male aulete, both dancing wildly. *Krotala* are also depicted as being played by satyrs, over-sexed mythical creatures associated with Dionysus. *Kumbala* (finger-cymbals) are also associated principally with female worshippers of Dionysus. These are small, round clappers made of wood, shell, or clay, which produced a higher tone than *krotala*. Many examples can be found in museums. A pair of *kumbala* from the fifth or fourth century B.C.E. in the British Museum is inscribed with the owner’s name. The *sistrum* (rattle or shaker) was also a woman’s instrument. A ladder-shaped



Greek bronze sistrum (musical instrument), 6th century B.C.E. from the Macchiabate necropolis, Francavilla Maritima, Italy. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO DELLA SIBARITIDE SIBARI/DAGLI ORTI.

wooden version, labelled by Pollux as a *psithyra*, is regularly depicted hanging on the wall in a woman's room or in a woman's hands in Greek vase-paintings from Apulia in southern Italy.

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#### MUSIC IN GREEK LIFE

**INTEGRATED INTO EVERY PART OF SOCIETY.** Music was undeniably prevalent in all parts of Greek society. It was featured prominently in weddings, funerals, and other social events, during military campaigns, and most notably during festivals. Music was appropriate for all situations, whether they were family or community events. Once a musical performance had begun, it was common for neighbors, friends, and even strangers passing by to take part in some of the activities that included music. Music was also the central entertainment at *symposia*, private drinking parties held after dinner in the men's area of the house. Almost all types of these musical events have been preserved, either in the artwork or literature that has survived from the era, giving clues to modern scholars about the scope of music in Greek life.

**EPIC POETRY.** One of the earliest examples of music being performed in public was when it accompanied the performance of epic poetry. The eighth-century



A mosaic showing dancers from a villa found in Argos, Greece, 4th–5th century C.E. The woman plays the cymbals. THE ART ARCHIVE/ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM ARGOS/DAGLI ORTI.

B.C.E. Homeric epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the earliest written examples of myths performed in poetic form; they represent a tradition reaching back at least to the second millennium B.C.E. Originally sung to the accompaniment of the *phorminx* (lyre), the Homeric epic was composed in stichic form, meaning that many lines were repeated in the same meter. In the case of Homeric epic, this meter was dactylic hexameter, which consisted of a combination of the dactyl (– U U) and spondee (– –). The melody was simple and conservative. In antiquity the transmission of epic poetry was accomplished through oral rather than written means; the poet trained his pupil, and they traveled from city to city, singing in music competitions and at the homes of patrons, always tailoring their performance to their audience.

**PERFORMANCE OF EPIC POETRY.** The epics themselves include many references to their own performance

style: Demodokos and Phemios, two *ainoidoi* (professional bards), sing and play selections of epic poetry before large audiences at banquets in the royal courts of kings Odysseus and Nestor. In the *Odyssey* Book Two, Odysseus' son Telemachus praises Phemios for delivering the “newest song to circulate.” Amateur musicians would also attempt a few lines of epic, as the poem illustrates: the Achaean warrior Achilles, on a break from battle, plays his phorminx and sings “the glorious deeds of fighting heroes” for his friend Patroclus in Book Nine of the *Iliad*. From the sixth century forward, epic poetry was performed by *rhapsodes*, professional bards who recited selections of Homeric poetry at music competitions during religious celebrations, such as the Epidaurus festival of Asclepius, the god of healing who appeared as a mortal doctor in the *Iliad*. In Athens, during the Great Panathenaea held every four years in honor of Athena,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ODYSSEUS PRAISES SONG**

**INTRODUCTION:** The earliest literary allusions to music are found in the *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, the eighth century B.C.E. Archaic epic poems attributed to Homer. The subject of these poems—the Trojan War and its aftermath—refer back to a much earlier time: the Aegean Bronze Age (Mycenean Period) of the second millennium, when *aidoi* (bards) entertained at the courts of ancient princes with songs of heroes, accompanied by the *phorminx* (a type of lyre). In this excerpt from *The Odyssey* Book Nine, the hero Odysseus praises as “the crown of life” the good food and songs of the bard Demodokos, provided for his pleasure by his host, Alcinous, king of Phaiacia.

**SOURCE:** Homer, *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1997): 211.

groups of rhapsodes were organized to perform the complete *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

**MUSIC IN THE MILITARY.** Another early use for music was its necessity on the battlefield. The *aulete* (piper) was an essential timekeeper for rowers on Greek warships and for soldiers on the march. Bards and musicians entertained sailors and infantrymen while on campaign, keeping their spirits up. Marching songs were played on the *salpinx* (“trumpet”), which was also used to signal and direct troop movement in battle. The paean was sung during battle to rally troops, as the playwright Aeschylus wrote in his tragedy *The Persians*: “O Children of Greece, come! Free the fatherland, free your chil-

dren, your wives, the shrines of your ancestral gods, the tombs of your ancestors! Now the struggle is for all!” The Spartans, noted for their military prowess, used several different types of marching song and rhythms which, according to Plutarch in his *Instituta Laconica*, made the soldiers brave and fearless of death. The seventh-century B.C.E. poet Tyrtaeus used one of the marching meters known as the *embateria* when he urged the Spartan troops to march on, shield and spear in hand, with no thought for their lives, sparing no one.

**EPINIKIAN POETRY.** Athletic contests were held every four years during the Olympian, Pythian (at Delphi), Nemean, and Isthmian Funeral Games, during which music was often heard and was often used as a prize of sorts. Modern Olympic games descended from such celebratory festivals, which featured many of the same events, including boxing, running, wrestling, horse racing, and pentathlon. Athletes from all over Greece would participate, and the victor of a competition was rewarded with prizes. After the competition, a grand homecoming celebration was held for the winners, and an elaborate poem, known as the *epinikion*, would be composed and performed especially for the individual. The poet, who was paid handsomely, extolled the victor and his family, and contextualized his accomplishment by comparing his effort to the struggle of a mythic hero or god. The poem could be performed again on the anniversary of a victory. Epinikia were composed for choral performance and, as the poems themselves reflect, were enhanced with dance accompanied by the *phorminx* (lyre) or *aulos* (reed). The best-preserved epinikian poems of the late sixth–early fifth centuries B.C.E. are those of Pindar, from Boeotia. Four books of Pindar’s epinikia—one for each of the major Games—survive; many can be assigned to specific festivals and victors. Pindar’s first Pythian Ode was composed for a certain Hieron of Aetna, winner of the chariot race in 470 B.C.E. Pindar also wrote poems for war heroes and musicians; his twelfth Pythian Ode, written for Midas of Acragas on the occasion of back-to-back victories on the aulos, contains a reference to the invention of a “many-headed” melody for the aulos by the goddess Athena. Pindar was well respected in antiquity for his brilliant use of imagery and metaphor, lyric meter, and musicality. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a first-century B.C.E. theorist, praised Pindar’s “archaic and austere” beauty, and the range of his modal systems.

**PUBLIC FESTIVALS.** Much like the Olympics, music was used in numerous other festivals, and many festivals had musical competitions that replaced the athletic competitions that were familiar to Olympians. The ear-



liest evidence that music was part of public festivals in Greek life comes from the Bronze-Age settlement of Ayia Triada on the island of Crete (c. 1490 B.C.E.); a fresco and a stone sarcophagus depict musicians playing the phorminx and the aulos during a procession and a ritual sacrifice. Public festivals in honor of the gods filled the Greek calendar, and each region of Greece had its own particular ceremonial traditions; these came at yearly or longer intervals, and could last from one to seven days. Choral and solo songs, dance, and poetry were central parts of all festival events. The three main features of public religious festivals were the procession, the animal sacrifice, and the feast. The *prosodion* (“processional hymn”) was sung to the accompaniment of the aulos while people paraded to altars and temples; when they arrived at their destination, the *prosodion* was sung to the *kithara* (type of lyre). Larger, more important celebrations, such as the City Dionysia and the Great Panathenaea at Athens, the Pythian festival at Delphi, and the Karneia at Sparta, included dramatic, poetic, and/or musical competitions.

**CHORAL SONG.** The festival procession generally included the *dithyramb*, a male choral dance with musical accompaniment, *hymnoi* (“hymns”), and the *paean* (a song of exhortation sung and shouted by men and boys in unison). Originally associated with the ecstatic worship of Dionysus, the god of “altered consciousness,” the dithyramb was passionate and tumultuous, a revelry that celebrated masculine sexual power and fecundity. The seventh-century B.C.E. poet Archilochus proclaimed that he knew how to lead the dithyramb, the beautiful song of lord Dionysus, when infused with wine. Later, the dithyramb became institutionalized, and the City Dionysia in Athens featured organized performances by close to two dozen dithyrambic choruses of fifty men and boys each; dressed in costume, often crowned with ivy, they sang and danced under the direction of the *khoregos* (teacher, or leader of the chorus) to the accompaniment of the aulos. The names of a number of *khoregoi* (dithyrambic poets) and *auletes* (double-reed players) were inscribed on monuments. Pindar, Simonides, and Bacchylides, poets of the early fifth century B.C.E., were famous composers of dithyrambic choral song; the historian Herodotus named Arion as the person who first categorized the dithyrambs in Corinth, and after the fifth century B.C.E., Timotheus of Miletus and Philoxenus were credited with adding more complex rhythms and melodies to the dithyramb through modulation and modification of the aulos.

**HYMNS.** Often during the beginning and end of festivals, *hymnoi* were sung as a sign of thanks for prosper-

ity. *Hymnoi* (“hymns”) were songs of praise to gods. These could be brief accolades to gods during a procession or short introductions to paeans or epic poems. Hymns were composed by the lyric poets Archilochus, Alcaeus, Sappho, Pindar, and Bacchylides in the sixth–fifth centuries B.C.E., but the earliest hymns were part of an oral tradition. The Homeric Hymns—so named because they were composed in the same meter, dactylic hexameter, as the epic poems of Homer—were a literary genre performed by professional bards during a religious festival. These were long, elaborate, and detailed biographies of divinities that explained the particular god’s origin, sphere of influence in society, and sites of worship. Thirty-three are preserved. The Homeric Hymn to Hermes includes a description of how the god invented the first lyre out of a *chelys* (“tortoise shell”). Aphrodite’s Hymn relates how the goddess fell in love with the mortal hero Anchises, and bore his son—the Trojan prince Aeneas—whose descendents would later found Rome. One of the longest and most elaborate of the Homeric Hymns is the Hymn to Demeter, the goddess of grain and agriculture. Her hymn describes how Demeter’s daughter, Kore, came to be known as Persephone, the wife of Hades, god of the Underworld; the story in the hymn contains many symbols and cryptic references to the popular mystery cult of Demeter, which was held in a large sanctuary in the town of Eleusis, near Athens.

**THE PAEAN.** The paean, a versatile form of song that could be sung on a variety of public and private occasions, was especially important during the festivals of the gods Apollo and Artemis, twin children of Leto. Many paeans were composed by musicians and poets to honor Apollo as the Oracle of Delphi. Two were inscribed on the wall of the Treasury of the Athenians at Delphi, complete with musical notation. Dating to the second century B.C.E., the 33 preserved lines of the first paean praise the glory of Apollo with sacrifice and music of the *kithara* (lyre) and the *lotus* (a type of reed pipe), and relates the myth of how Apollo became the prophet of Delphi by slaying Python, the serpent who guarded the prophetic tripod. Paeans also served as a holy song performed by soloists or choruses during the Panathenaea, a great festival of Athena held every four years in Athens; the Hyakinthia at Sparta; and other festivals honoring the major divinities. They could also function as a prayer of deliverance or thanksgiving.

**GIRLS’ CHORAL SONGS.** Men were not the only ones to perform at festivals. Girls received training in choral music and dance from a young age; before the seventh century B.C.E., this was the only “formal” edu-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE INVENTION OF THE LYRE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The anonymous “Homeric Hymns,” devotional songs in honor of a divinity, were performed as preludes to the recitation or singing of the Homeric epics, usually as part of a contest during a religious festival. “Hymn to the God Hermes” describes the birth of this trickster god, and relates several of his many powers and accomplishments; his first feat soon after birth is to invent the lyre from a tortoise-shell (*chelys*); he then sings a song while striking the lyre with a plectron, improvising “such as young men do at the time of feasts when they taught and mock each other” (presumably in musical competitions). The chelys-lyre must have been introduced into Greece during the Bronze Age; it is depicted in art from the second millennium B.C.E.

**SOURCE:** Homer, *The Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, in *The Homeric Hymns*. Trans. Apostolos N. Athanassakis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976): 31–32.

cation open to girls. From the fifth century onwards, vase-paintings show women teaching girls to dance or play an instrument. Many vase-paintings depict girls and young women dressed in long, modest costumes, holding hands while dancing together in a line or a circle. Choruses of girls and women performed at family occasions such as weddings, but were also a feature of public festivals. Many famous poets, including Pindar, Simonides, and Bacchylides, composed *partheneia* (“maiden’s choral dances”) for public performance. In one of the best preserved of the *partheneia*, composed by seventh-century B.C.E. Spartan poet Alcman, two girls are singled out as the most charming and lovely leaders of ten girls dancing to honor the Dawn Goddess. Choruses of young women joined men in singing paean and dancing on the Acropolis all night at the beginning of the Panathenaea. At Thebes, girls danced at night during the worship of the Mother of the Gods.

**MUSIC COMPETITIONS.** Four major Funeral Games—multi-day festivals held to commemorate a region’s ancestral king—provided opportunities for athletes as well as musicians to compete for prizes. From

the end of the eighth century B.C.E. musicians arrived from all over the Mediterranean to participate in festival contests. Instrumental competitions were instituted in the first quarter of the sixth century; competitors included instrumentalists on the concert lyre (*kitharists*) and the double-reed pipe (*auletes*); poets, who performed to accompaniment (*kitharodes* and *aulodes*); and the *rhapsode*, a professional bard who performed selections from the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and other epic poetry, introduced by a hymn. Vase-paintings depict these competitors standing on a small stage before a judge.

**THE VICTORS.** In his poem *Works and Days*, Hesiod, a shepherd-poet roughly contemporary with Homer (c. 700 B.C.E.), described how he won a tripod with handles, which he dedicated to the Muses, for his performance of a hymn at the Games of Amphidamas in Chalcis (654–652 B.C.E.). The names of many winners are known, some of them women: a kitharode named Polygnota of Thebes won a crown and 500 drachmas for her performance during the Pythian Games, according to a second-century B.C.E. inscription from Delphi. Two among the male victors stand out: Terpander of Lesbos



An engraving copied from a Greek red-figure vase shows a musical competition. A standing woman tunes her lyre, and a seated woman plays the double aulos. THE ART ARCHIVE/BIBLIOTHÈQUE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

and Timotheus of Miletos. Terpander was a celebrated musician of the early Archaic Period (seventh century B.C.E.), and was maligned in a comedy by Phercrates for singing too many notes. It is said that while Terpander increased the number of strings on the kithara to seven, Timotheus added four more; an anecdote relates that Timotheus was exiled from Sparta for using too many strings on his kithara during the music competition at the Karnean Festival there.

**GREEK THEATER.** The festival of the Great Dionysia, held in Athens in March, was the most important dramatic competition in Greece. Instituted in the mid-sixth century B.C.E. by Peisistratus, the festival lasted five days and featured three tragedies, three satyr plays, five comedies, and two dithyrambs. The Dionysia honored the god Dionysus as *Eleutherios* (“The Liberator”), and the plays were performed in the large, open-air theater dedicated to the god at the foot of the Acropolis. Here, tragedians, of whom the most famous are Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and comic playwrights—Aristophanes is the best known—produced their spectacular and timeless productions before thou-

sands of spectators; adaptations and revivals of these plays continue to be staged today. The tragedies were serious re-enactments of well-known myths, such as the murder of Agamemnon, commander of the Achaean forces at Troy, by his deceitful wife Clytemnestra, or the downfall of the Theban hero Oedipus, who unwittingly killed his father and married his mother. The playwright was free, within reason, to interpret these myths through plot and action, which combined spoken dialogue between two to three actors, and choral song. All the parts were played by men or boys. The earliest surviving tragedy, produced by Aeschylus in 472 B.C.E., is unique in not drawing its plot from a myth; it treats an historical event: the bloody sea battle that had occurred at Salamis only eight years before between the Greek and Persian fleets.

**THE CHORUS.** The most important musical element of Greek tragedy and comedy was the chorus. Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, states that tragedy evolved from the *dithyramb*, the young men’s choral dance originally performed in honor of Dionysus. He adds that the tragic chorus employed melody, rhythm, and meter in combi-



An aulos player backstage with Greek actors, from a Roman mosaic. THE ART ARCHIVE/ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM NAPLES/DAGLI ORTI.

nations composed by the tragedian, who also choreographed and trained the chorus. Each playwright entering the competition was assigned a chorus of twelve to fifteen teenage boys, and a *khoregos* (“chorus-leader”). The boys were citizens of Athens, until the fourth century B.C.E., when professional singer-dancers were chosen. Aristotle explained that choral performance consisted of three basic parts: the *parados* (entrance song); the *stasimon*, sung while standing in the orchestra (literally “dancing place”); and the *kommos*, an antiphonal lament exchanged between the chorus and the actors. Musical accompaniment was provided by an *aulete*, a player of the double-reed pipe. In the classical period (480–323 B.C.E.), the chorus was assigned a character role; they played the part of elder statesmen, old men, slave-women, sailors, even supernatural beings, and shared in the action of the plot. Their function was to provide background for the story, interpret the action of the plot for the audience, and provide

a moralizing element. Like the actors, the choral members wore masks, and their musical performance was enhanced by the use of dance and gesture.

**MUSIC IN COMEDY.** In the fifth century B.C.E. “Old Comedy” of Aristophanes, the chorus was 24 in number—twice the size of the tragic chorus. The group played the part of humans, but also birds, frogs, clouds, and other whimsical characters whose primary purpose was to entertain. Vase-painters illustrated the fantastic costumes of these choruses. Contemporary popular music, such as love songs, were part of the repertory, sung and danced to the accompaniment of the *aulete*. Several of Aristophanes’ comedies featured a *parabasis*, during which the chorus would step forward and address the audience directly, speaking on behalf of the playwright. A musical celebration, often comic, marked the end of many comedies. Aristophanes’ play *Wasps* ended

with a type of ribald can-can danced by men, called the *kordax*. In his last surviving comedies, produced at the beginning of the fourth century, the role of the chorus was reduced. The poetry of the choral odes apparently were no longer written by the poet and included in the text; the word *KHOROU* (“Choral Song”) was simply written in near the end of the play or between acts to indicate the performance of a song that was not necessarily connected with the story of the play. Aristotle referred negatively to the use of such interludes, which he called *embolima*. In the “New Comedy” of the fourth century—of which only one entire play, Menander’s *Dyskolos*, survives—no choral odes were written; instead, the word “KHOROU” occurs between the acts. The play itself, like the tragedies and comedies before it, does refer to music and the performances of the aulete, which confirms that music was always part of Greek theater in one form or another.

#### MUSICAL INNOVATIONS OF THE PLAYWRIGHTS.

Thanks to a comedy by Aristophanes called *Frogs*, it is possible to know a bit about how the poetry and music of the great tragedians of the fifth century B.C.E. was perceived by other artists. In the late fifth century, when *Frogs* was produced, the great playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were all deceased; in the play, the god Dionysus goes to the Underworld to fetch the best of the three back to earth. A contest is arranged, during which Aeschylus and Euripides ridicule each other’s language, meter, and music. Euripides labels Aeschylus as repetitive and monotonous, while Aeschylus charges Euripides with employing the base songs of prostitutes, foreign music, laments, and dance-hall music. Aeschylus boasts that his musical style fits his lofty, heroic subject matter; Euripides brags that his realism makes the audience think. In the end of the play, Aeschylus wins the contest, but leaves his Underworld throne to Sophocles, whom Aristophanes chose not to mock (perhaps because he had only just died). In his comedy *Peace*, Aristophanes praised the songs of Sophocles, which contained a variety of modes and more complex rhythms than those of Aeschylus.

**THE “MODERN” PLAYWRIGHTS.** The most innovative poets of the classical tragedians were Euripides and Agathon. The music of Euripides was so popular abroad that it was said to have saved the lives of some Athenian sailors and prisoners of war: Plutarch related that when the Athenian forces were defeated at Syracuse by the Sicilians, their captors freed anyone who could sing any songs of Euripides. Unlike their predecessors, Euripides and Agathon employed the chromatic genus of scale, which resulted in more notes and a wider range.

#### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

#### SAVED FOR THE SAKE OF EURIPIDES’ HYMNS

**INTRODUCTION:** One source for the popularity of Euripides’ plays is an anecdote related by Plutarch (second century C.E.) in his biography of the Athenian commander Nicias, who had led a fateful military expedition against the city of Syracuse, Sicily, between 415–413 B.C.E. The Athenians were defeated by the Syracusans in 413; Nicias was killed, and the Athenian prisoners were held in a stone quarry; some of them survived, Plutarch said, by entertaining their Sicilian captors with snatches of Euripides.

**SOURCE:** *Plutarch’s Lives*. Vol. III. Trans. Bernadette Perrin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967): 307, 309.

Although other playwrights sometimes used women’s ritual laments in their choral odes, no one made better use of this genre of song than Euripides. Almost every one of his plays contains a lament, considered to be one of the most powerful and effective of the performance genres. It is telling that of all the music composed by the major playwrights, only Euripides’ survives, on two scraps of papyrus dating from the early third century B.C.E. The first comes from his play *Orestes*, originally

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**ORESTES**

**INTRODUCTION:** One of the most famous of a group of musical fragments found written on mummy papyri is the so-called Vienna G 2315, which contains seven lines of a choral ode from the tragedy *Orestes* by Euripides. The myth of Orestes—the Argive prince who murdered his mother Clytemnestra to avenge the death of his father, King Agamemnon, whom Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus had killed—belonged to the Homeric tradition and was retold in several tragedies. The surviving fragment captures lines 338–344 of an ode sung by the chorus in the role of Argive maidens, who have seen Orestes, covered in his

mother’s blood, driven mad by the Furies, divine avengers of matricide. The chorus describes the horror of the murder and its aftermath. If this piece represents the actual music composed by Euripides over 100 years prior to the date of the papyrus (still an open question), it is among the earliest authentic examples of ancient Greek music. The center lines of text only are preserved; both vocal and instrumental notation are present, as well as rhythmic and time signs that reveal an expressive dochmiac beat (UUU–U–). The notes indicate the enharmonic or chromatic Lydian scale, mixed with one diatonic. If this fragment does not represent the actual music of Euripides, it is very much in his style: ancient writers remarked on Euripides’ use of the chromatic genera of scale, his varied textual rhythms, reduplication of syllables, and repetition of words for emotional effect, all of which are present in the fragment.

**Song from Euripides’ *Orestes***

**TEXT OF THE PAPYRUS VIENNA G2315 FROM EURIPIDES’ *ORESTES***

**TRANSLATION FROM THE GREEK TEXT**

[κατολοφυρομαι] 339

] Π Π C ρ φ π [

1 [κατολο]φυρομαι ἄματερος[αιμασας] 339–338

] ζ ι ζ ε Δ [

2 [οσαναβ]ακχευει ἄομεγα[κολβοου] 338–340

] Π Π C ι ζ [

3 [μονιμο]σεμβροτοις ἄανα[δελαιφος] 340–341

] C P Π C P ἄ φ C – [

4 [ωωστι]σακατουθ ο α [c]τινα[ξασδα] 342

] φ π P Π ? [

5 [μωων]κατεκλυσεν) τ ο δ [εινων] 343

] ζ ι ζ [

6 [πονωων] τ ο ωωσποντ[ουουλα] 343

] ρ ḡ P Z Π φ [

7 [βροικολεθριοι] ἄ [c]ε ν κ [vμασιν] 344

...I grieve...

1 I grieve...your mother's blood  
2 which drives you raving mad/Great prosperity  
3–4 Is not secure among mortals/like a sail  
4–5 of a swift, light, ship some divine power, shaking,  
6 inundated by the terrible works of the sea  
7 in furious destructive waves...

[continued]

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produced at the Great Dionysia in 408 B.C.E., and the second from *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Despite the fragmentary condition of the examples, it is possible to recognize Euripides’ style: the use of chromatic lines, alteration of poetic meter, and reduplication of syllables. Agathon, the youngest of the playwrights, won his first competition in 416 B.C.E. when Euripides was sixty; he is credited with introducing new dithyrambic modes and the performance choral music that was not connected to the subject of the tragedy. The music of both Agathon and Euripides was influenced by “modern” tendencies to-

ward multiple notes, complex scales, and modulation, their melodic complexity described as *anatretos* (“bored-through like an ant-hill”). The choral poet Melanippides of Melos, writing at the end of the fifth century, was considered a pioneer of “modern” music in his use of many-noted *anabolai*, instrumental preludes to a dithyrambic performance. By the fourth century, the *embolima* (“interlude”) replaced the traditional choral ode in tragedy, as it did in comedy. The tragedian would no longer write his own choral odes as an integral part of the plot and action.

**Song from Euripides' *Orestes* (CONTINUED)**

**SONG FROM *ORESTES* IN MODERN NOTATION**

1 κα - το - λο - φύ - ρο - μαι μα - τέ - ρος αἶ - μα cās,

2 ό c'ά - να - βακ - χεύ - ει. ό μέ - γας ὄλ - βος οὐ

3 μό - νι - μος ἐμ - βρο - τοῖς ἀ - νὰ δὲ λαῖ - φος ὡς

4 τις ἀ - κά - του θο - ᾶς τι - νά - ξας δαί - μων

5-6 κα - τέ - κλυ - γεν δει - νῶν πό - νων ὡς πόν - τουου

7 λά - βροις ὀ - λε - θρί - οι - ςιν ἐν κύ - μα - ςιν

**COMPETITIONS AFTER THE CLASSICAL PERIOD.**

Agathon was, for all points and purposes, the last of the great classical tragedians. From the fourth century forward, solo arias and “star performances” became the most popular, and the *tragodos*, a virtuoso performer, would sing and mime new material or selections from the great tragedies of the fifth century to instrumental accompaniment. Musical compositions were now being written down for professional use, and a few texts have survived (two of them being perhaps the fragments of Euripides mentioned above). More musical competitions were

added to existing festivals, and the number of festivals increased, as inscriptions attest. In 279 B.C.E. a new festival called the *Soteria* was established at Delphi, in gratitude to Apollo “The Savior” for his divine help in defeating the Galatians, who had attacked Apollo’s sanctuary there. Royal festivals were now held in Macedonia, northern Greece, and Alexandria, in Egypt. Professional guilds, established at the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E., were now sending their musicians, poets, and actors from all over Greece to these competitions. The rise of the virtuoso singer and instrumen-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**PLATO ON MUSICAL INNOVATION**

**INTRODUCTION:** In Plato's *Republic* Book Three, Socrates argues that certain types of *harmonia* (system of scales) and rhythms are more appropriate than others for lyric poetry and song; too much "sweet, soft, and plaintive tunes" will corrupt the soul and make men weak. He also warns against innovations in music that are "counter to the established order"; simple melodies and tunes are best for the purposes of moral education.

**SOURCE:** Plato, *The Republic*. Trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1992): 87, 89.

talist was alarming to more than a few people. In the *Republic* and the *Laws*, Plato argued that the sound of complex rhythms and melodies are harmful to the soul, in the way that "new" musical styles over the years like jazz, rock, and most recently, hip-hop and rap music have been considered a threat to social harmony and stability. Plato and other writers complained that music with "too many notes" was vulgar and/or womanish.

**WEDDINGS.** While music was often used at very large social events, it was also used for smaller, personal purposes as well. A popular subject for painters, poets, and playwrights, the wedding was a time for paeans, choral song and dance, women's ululation, and music of the lyre and the pipe. The wedding procession of the bride to the groom's house was an occasion for grand

merrymaking. One of the earliest descriptions of a wedding march appears as a scene on Achilles' new shield in *Iliad* Book Eighteen; the bride is carried on a mule-drawn wagon through the town by torchlight while young men whirl and dance to the aulos and the phorminx, and the *hymenaeum* ("wedding song") rings loud. The *hymenaeum* was sung during the wedding proper; it was strophic, and often contained a refrain calling upon the god of marriage: "Hymen, Hymenaei!" The song wished the couple harmony, prosperity, and love. Another wedding song, the *epithalamion*, was performed by a group of unmarried men and women at the door of the wedding chamber. This bittersweet song signaled the transition from child to adult, virgin to married person. Some of the same themes and metaphors featured in the epithalamion—marriage as a journey, the danger of separation from parents—also appeared in funerary laments. In one of her many poignant wedding songs, Sappho of Lesbos wrote a dialogue between the bride and her virginity:

**Bride:** Maidenhood, maidenhood, where have you gone and left me?

**Maidenhood:** No more will I come back to you, no more will I come back.

**FUNERALS.** Funerary scenes depicted on vases from the ninth century B.C.E. forward indicate that large, public funerals were expected for important people, and music was an important element. For nine days mourning took place privately, in the house, but on the tenth day the public burial would occur. Whenever the body was conveyed to or from the house, the mourners followed the bier, displaying their grief by weeping, tearing their hair, scratching their faces, and rending their clothes. The most important public funeral rite was the lament, performed over the body by kinswomen and professional mourners. The two terms commonly used in literary texts for "ritual lament"—*threnos* and *goos*—both represented vocalizations that combined inarticulate cries with swaying movements and antiphonal poetic song, often described in tragedy and poetry as "un-lyred" and "un-danced" hymns, in reference to their sobriety. Vase-paintings show auletes performing at funerals, and later writers such as Josephus and Cicero refer to the hiring of up to ten professional auletes for large funerals. The *goos* may have been a more private, informal and extempore lament. In Homeric epic the word *threnos* was used for the formal laments by goddesses for dead heroes; it could also refer to the lament of professional mourners. In Athenian tragedy, the *threnos* was delivered during the *kommos*, an antiphonal song of lament between the actors and the chorus. The earliest literary lament occurs



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**GRAVE STELE OF SEIKILOS**

**INTRODUCTION:** A grave stele (tombstone) dating to the second century C.E. was unearthed in Tralleis, Turkey, during the building of a railway sometime in the late 1800s. The artifact was first published by Sir William Ramsay in 1883, but the public was largely unaware of the object until it was purchased by the National Museum in Copenhagen, and made public in a 1967 lecture by J. Raasted. It is now on display in the National Museum in Copenhagen. The column is inscribed with thirteen lines of Greek text, in-

cluding an epitaph and an epigram with musical notation. After the little song, the owner signed his name "Seikilos, Son of Euter." The last line, "He lives," may indicate that Seikilos made the monument during his lifetime. Musical notation, in the diatonic lastian *tonos* (scale) according to the tables of Alypius, is inscribed over the words to the epigram: one note for each syllable, with the exception of a few words that carry a short melisma of two or three notes over a syllable. The meter of the song is iambic dimeter, and rhythmical marks present above the vocal notation clarify the duration of notes. The well-balanced melody confirms patterns of composition described later by theorists Cleonides and Aristides Quintilianus.

**Seikilos Funeral Epitaph**

**TEXT OF THE SEIKILOS FUNERAL EPITAPH**

1 εικωνηλιθος	6 ο̄ κονζη̄ς φαῑνου	12 σεικιλοσευτερ(που)
2 ειμι·τιθησιμε	7 κ̄ ῑ ζ̄ κ̄ ο̄	13 ζ̄η [
3 σεικιλοσενθα	7 μηδενολωσεν	
4 μνημηραθανατου	8 λυπουπροσολι-	
5 σημαπολυχρονιον	8 λυπουπροσολι-	
	9 ῑ κ̄ ῑ κ̄ ο̄ φ̄	
	9 γονεστιτοζην	
	10 κ̄ ο̄ ῑ ζ̄	
	10 τοτελοσοχρο-	
	11 κ̄ ο̄ κ̄ ο̄ χ̄	
	11 νοσαπαιτει	

**TRANSLATION FROM THE GREEK TEXT**

**Epitaph**  
 1 I am a stone image.  
 2-3 Seikilos put me here  
 4-5 A mark of eternal remembrance for all time

**Epigram with musical notation**  
 6 "As long as you live, shine;  
 7-8 Do not be sad at all.  
 9 Life is for a little while;  
 10-11 Time demands its toll."

**Signature**  
 12 Seikilos, Son of Euterpes  
 13 He lives

**SONG FROM THE SEIKILOS EPITAPH IN MODERN NOTATION**

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in Book Twenty-Four of the *Iliad*, when the Trojan prince Hector is mourned by three kinswomen: his mother Hecuba, wife Andromache, and sister-in-law Helen. No music or dancing is indicated, but the poetry of the laments is very powerful in using the discourse of grief to praise and to blame. So effective were laments in raising the level of emotion in the crowd that the sixth-century B.C.E. Athenian lawgiver Solon banned women's public performance of the threnos, and many fifth-century B.C.E. texts indicate that the practice of women's laments was perceived as politically threatening. Plato was adamantly opposed to women's public laments, calling them irrational feminine expressions of grief; in the *Laws*, he states that the ideal lawgiver would prohibit public outcries at funeral processions. In later periods, an epigram—a simple, often plaintive or melancholy verse—might be inscribed on the tombstone. The only surviving funerary epigram with musical notation was found inscribed on the grave monument of a certain Seikilos, dating to the first century C.E.

**THE SYMPOSIUM.** The *symposion* (literally a “drinking together”) was an important social gathering for Athenian aristocrats from the fifth century B.C.E. forward. The party took place in the men's quarter of a private home; the wife and children remained upstairs. The guests, reclining on couches, ate, drank diluted wine out of large cups, conversed about silly or even serious matters, played games, and caroused. The entertainment was often provided by professional actors or singers and *hetairai*, high-class prostitutes who could sing, dance, and play the aulos. The guests themselves might play the lyre and sing their own renditions of well-studied lyric and elegiac poets of a century before: Alcaeus, Anacron, Stesichorus, Archilochus, and Theognis, to name but a few. *Skolia* (“drinking songs”) were satirical ditties, freely constructed, sung under the influence of wine by any guest who was handed a myrtle branch in turn. The skolia of the poet Anacreon were quite popular; he was considered one of the best of the Ionian (East-Greek) poets of the late sixth century. Athenaeus, in his *Deipnosophistae* (second–third century C.E.), listed 25 skolia and discussed their style. The symposium was a popular subject for vase-painters, who filled their scenes with fantasy mixed with reality. In his *Symposium*, Plato staged a philosophic dialogue during a drinking party. In an unlikely scenario, the characters decided not to drink wine to excess and to let the piper go home so that they could have a serious philosophical discussion on the “Nature of Love.” It might have been a boring night, had Socrates' friend Alcibiades not crashed the party and brought some raucous merriment to the evening.

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## MUSIC EDUCATION

**METHODS OF TRAINING.** Formal music education is known in Athens from the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E. Before this, people interested in learning to sing or play an instrument could study informally under someone else, or even teach themselves. A professional bard would train a talented pupil in return for lodging, food, and clothes. Repertoire and technique were passed down orally and by rote; it is unlikely that there was any tradition of teaching pupils how to read music. The large choral groups, which performed at public festivals, did require organized training by a chorus-leader (*khoregos*), who may also have taught participants to read the poetry. From the seventh to sixth centuries B.C.E., there were active music centers at Sparta, where Alcman composed his *partheneia* (girls' choral dances), and on the island of Lesbos, where Sappho set up choruses for girls. In Sparta, part of a young boy's military training included learning how to dance and sing paeans while wearing armor.

**SCHOOLS.** Instruction in music and letters generally took place in the teacher's home, but professional music schools were established in the late eighth to seventh centuries B.C.E. by Terpander and Thaletas at Sparta. After the fourth century B.C.E., professional training was offered by a Guild or Academy school, where students from all over the Greek world would study choral and instrumental composition. Girls and boys both received an education, and some girls became professional musicians. Many vase-paintings from Athens depict a typical day in school, which included music, letters, mathematics, and physical education. A famous cup, painted by Douris in the early fifth century, illustrates this in particularly fine detail: a *kitharistes*



A red-figure kylix in Berlin by the Douris painter showing a music school. 5th century B.C.E. ART RESOURCE.

(“lyre-teacher”) is facing his student; both hold the *chelys* (tortoise-shell lyre). Other lyres hang on the wall above their heads. To their right, a seated *grammatistes* (“grammar-teacher”) holds a scroll with verse written on it, which his pupil recites while standing stiffly at attention. A bearded *paidagogos*, a slave in charge of the boys, watches the lessons. On the other side of the cup, one student prepares to sing while his teacher plays the *aulos* (double-reed pipe); nearby, another teacher writes on a wax tablet for his pupil.

**THE EFFECT OF MUSIC.** Greek philosophers, theorists, and even the poets themselves generally agreed that music had a profound effect on a person’s character, and for that reason the types of music taught in school should be carefully chosen. As a rule, simple traditional styles were preferred by educators—complex, foreign (not Greek), styles were not. The lyre, associated with Apollo and Orpheus, was favored over the pipe, which accompanied wild ecstatic worship of Dionysus. Homeric poetry or selections of tragic choral odes were preferable to other genres of songs. Pythagoras, a mathematician of the late sixth–early fifth centuries B.C.E., believed that sounds and rhythms, which are ordered by numbers, exemplified and corresponded to the harmony

of the cosmos. This is further explained through the Greek word for music theory, *harmonics*, which contains the Indo-European root *-ar*, meaning “to join, fit together, be in synchrony.” According to Pythagoras, the consonances of a fourth, fifth, and octave were models of harmony. His inquiries into the science of sound and relative numbers began what would later be known as “acoustic theory.”

**ETHOS.** The music teacher Damon, building on the ideas of Pythagoras a generation later, taught that each musical genre had its own character, or *ethos*, which affects human thought and behavior. For boys, rhythms and melodic forms should be chosen for their masculine qualities; girls should learn music that taught modesty and restraint. The chromatic genera of scales were considered effeminate, while the enharmonic promoted courage and manliness. Damon’s focus on the ethical qualities of music in turn influenced those who followed, including Plato, Aristotle, and the Roman writer Varo. All of these writers exhibit a conservative desire to label, categorize, select, and even censor certain types of melodic forms. In the *Laws* and *Republic*, Plato considered only two *harmoniai* (modal scales) acceptable for the purposes of education: the Dorian and Phrygian. Aristotle was a bit more lenient, admitting that all types of music have

their place, even the baser sorts. Not all philosophers adhered to the doctrine of *ethos*; the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers of the third–second centuries B.C.E., for example, attacked the notion that music had any permanent effect on the soul. Philodemus, an Epicurean, wrote a treatise entitled *On Music* in which he argued that poetry had power, but music itself was simply pleasurable. Despite those who would contradict the Pythagorean notion that music was linked to cosmic harmony and therefore had the ability to influence the soul, the idea would not go away. After the first century C.E. the doctrine of *ethos* was adopted and adapted by Ptolemy and Aristides Quintilianus (third–fourth century C.E.), who supported earlier arguments that traditional, rational, masculine melodic forms must be used for education, but others could be used for different purposes.

**GUILDS.** Professional guilds of artists and musicians, known as the *Dionysou Technitai* (Artisans of Dionysus), were created in Athens and in Teos (north-west Asia Minor, now Turkey) by the beginning of the third century B.C.E. In his *Deipnosophistae*, the lexicographer Athenaeus included solo instrumentalists such as kitharists and auletes, as well as poets, actors, singers, and composers as members of guilds operating under a group of officers headed by a priest of Dionysus. They provided performers, directors, and composers for any occasion, and handled payment contracts. In this way, the *Dionysou Technitai* was comparable to a musician's union. Such guilds also functioned as schools offering training in singing, musical instrument instruction, and lessons in the writing of rhythm and melody. The guild schools may have kept a library of written compositions, but none have survived.

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## MUSIC IN ROMAN LIFE

**PRODUCT OF MANY INFLUENCES.** The surviving evidence indicates that Roman musical culture was not unique and new, but rather a product of many external

influences, most notably Etruscan and Greek. Long before Latin became the official language, and Rome the seat of a great empire, there were native peoples in Italy who spoke their own—as yet undeciphered—languages and, no doubt, enjoyed their own musical traditions; virtually nothing is known about them. The Greeks interacted with many of these cultures and exerted a profound influence. Imported Greek pottery, some of which dates as early as 1000 B.C.E., has been found by archaeologists in the northern regions of Etruria, Latium, and Umbria, along the Tiber River in central Italy, and in Campania in the south. During the course of the eighth century B.C.E., Greeks emigrated in large numbers to southern Italy and Sicily, where they founded permanent colonies. Greek musicians, composers, actors, and poets who had been living and working in Italy eventually found their way to Rome, where their musical ideas, traditions, and practices were accepted by most, if not all the citizens. The native Italian traditions were not completely supplanted by the Greek, but they are not well understood; only a few fragments of early Latin *carmina* (songs, poems) from Rome and Latium survive; these were monodic or choral, and included ritual song (e.g. *Carmen Fratrum*), epic-historical poetry (*Carmen convivialia*)—which were accompanied by the *tibia* (the Latin version of the Greek *aulos*)—triumphal songs (*carmina triumphalia*), and funeral laments (*neniae*). The Romans enjoyed musical concerts, solo performances, and theatrical productions that were, for the most part, versions of Greek or native Italian genres. With few exceptions, the Romans adopted Etruscan, Near Eastern, and Greek lyres, double-reed pipes, and percussion instruments. In fact, after Rome conquered Greece and brought the entire country into the empire in the second half of the second century B.C.E., the pervasive Hellenizing (Greek) presence provoked some heavy criticism from Latin writers and even lawmakers; Juvenal and Cicero both condemned the excessive Hellenizing of Roman culture, and Roman censors issued edicts limiting the performances of Greek virtuosi and the use of Greek instruments.

**THE ETRUSCAN HERITAGE.** The Etruscans were a people who dominated the area of Etruria and Latium in northern Italy before Rome emerged as the central power. Archaeologists have discovered a large number of imported Greek vases in Etruscan tombs, proving that they had a thriving trade with the Greeks from at least the fifth century B.C.E., perhaps earlier. The fresco art in some of the tombs also indicates Greek influence. One grave, the so-called Tomb of the Leopards in Tarquinia, contains a fresco depicting two musicians. One plays the *tibia* (double-reed pipe) known in Greece as the *aulos*;

the other plays a lyre that resembles the Greek *chelys* (tortoise-shell lyre). Even after Roman rule was firmly established, the Etruscans had much influence on Roman religious practices and the music involved. Many, if not most, of the state musicians hired to play for Roman religious and other state festivals were Etruscans who belonged to a *collegium* (“artist guild”) in Rome.

**ETRUSCAN INSTRUMENTS.** The Etruscans played instruments that were comparable to Greek versions, but also others which seem to be unique to them, and they paired instruments that were not played together in Greece. In a relief on a bronze Etruscan *situla* (“bucket”) dating to the late sixth century B.C.E. a musician playing an unusual m-shaped harp (or lyre) is paired with a player of the *fistula* (“pan-pipes”); the two musicians, both wearing wide-brimmed hats, sit facing each other in a formal concert pose. In Greece, the pan-pipe (*syrix*) was rather a pastoral instrument used primarily by shepherds or for outdoor revels. If an illustration on an Etruscan cinerary urn dating to the late second century B.C.E. can be trusted, the Etruscan *obliqua tibia* was a pipe that may have been played more like a flute than an oboe, comparable to the mysterious Greek *plagiaulos*. The player in the scene on the urn seems to hold the tibia horizontally out to his right like a modern flautist; the placement of his lips transversely across the mouthpiece on the top of the pipe and his cross-fingering of the holes suggests that the instrument was more like a flute than a reed. This type of pipe was shown in Roman art well past the third century C.E. Curved horns used by the Etruscans and later adopted by the Romans include the *lituus*, *bucina*, and *cornu*, and were more comparable to the Greek *tuba*, a straight trumpet, than the Greek *salpinx*. Both the *salpinx* and the *tuba* were referred to as “Etruscan” by Greek and Latin writers, but the Greek *salpinx* was almost exclusively a military instrument, whereas the Etruscans and Romans also played their trumpets and horns in concerts, sometimes in ensemble with the *tibia* (“pipe”) and *kithara* (“lyre”).

**GREEK INFLUENCE.** The Greek influence in Italy did not begin with the Etruscans in the north, but in the south, as early as the late eighth century B.C.E., when large numbers of Dorian Greeks moving west from the Peloponnese colonized southern Italy and eastern Sicily. Many Italian and Sicilian Greeks became very wealthy in their new land, especially those living in the Sicilian city of Syracuse. Unlike Athens, which by the fifth century B.C.E. had established a democracy, the political system of Syracuse was a type of monarchy called a “tyranny.” These tyrants took power by force, but once established, they could be very generous to the Greek ar-

tisans, musicians, and poets whom they admired; the fifth-century B.C.E. Greek poet Pindar and playwright Aeschylus were among those who received lavish hospitality at the court of the tyrant Hieron in Syracuse. The largest cities in Italy and Sicily boasted open-air theaters comparable to the most majestic amphitheaters in Greece (such as Epidauros). Greek influence on Roman culture became more evident after the First Punic War, during the course of the third century B.C.E., when contact between the Roman people and the Greeks in southern Italy increased. Musical instruments that were popular in Greece—pipes, lyres, horns, rattles—were also played in Rome, albeit in different forms and combinations. The Romans imitated Greek literary and dramatic forms; they adopted and adapted Greek architecture. Wealthy Latins hired Greek teachers and doctors. Greek gods and heroes of myth received Latin names, but were worshipped in comparable ways. By the time the Roman army took Corinth in 146 B.C.E. and brought the whole country of Greece into their empire, the Roman people had already long been captured by Greek culture.

**ROMAN THEATER.** As in Greece, dramatic dance and song in ancient Italy were central to the various rites and rituals performed to appease or praise the gods. Many early dances were improvised, and accompanied by the tibia—the most popular wind instrument for dancers in both Italy and Greece. The Latin historian Livy related that in 364 B.C.E. Etruscan *ludiones* (“pantomimists”) were called upon to save Rome from a plague by dancing to a special melody played by a *tibicen* (“piper”). The Romans adapted this Etruscan dance and added a rhythmically varied song; the new compositions were called *saturnae* (satire). Scenes on vases from Apulia, a region on the coast of southern Italy, show that a popular form of entertainment in the Greek colonies in Italy after the mid-fourth century B.C.E. was the travelling troupe of tragic jesters called *phlyakes*, who performed satires and burlesque on a portable stage, with music provided by an *aulete* (“piper”). The Romans adopted Greek forms of epic, lyric, tragedy, and comedy, and music continued to play an important role, although very little is known about its melodies or characteristics. No musical compositions from Roman theater survive. In the third century, Roman theatrical productions favored revivals of fifth- and fourth-century B.C.E. Greek playwrights, especially Euripides, Aristophanes, and New Comedy writers Menander and Philemon; the first writer/composer with a Roman name—Livius Andronicus—was actually a Greek slave brought from Tarentum to Rome and later freed. His Latin successors included the playwrights Ennius, Plautus, Terence, and others, who flourished into the second

century B.C.E. These Roman writers translated Greek original plays into Latin, and enjoyed a good deal of poetic license, changing names, mixing scenes, and rearranging the plots in a technique known as *contaminatio*; they also sometimes turned spoken dialogue from the Greek original into song.

**ROMAN COMEDY.** The comedies of Plautus (250–184 B.C.E.) and Terence (a generation later) were among the most popular in Rome at least until the end of the first century B.C.E. Their plays, like those of their Greek predecessors Menander and Aristophanes, were full of ribald and often obscene humor. Male actors played all the parts—even the “girlfriends” in the bawdy love stories. Roman comedy featured the *canticum*, a scene enacted in sing-song manner to the accompaniment of the tibia which would alternate with the *deverbia* (recited portions). Choral song, which was so central to Greek tragedy, probably played less of a role in Roman theater; the orchestra space, used by the chorus in Greek theater as the dancing place, served as an area for reserved seating in Rome. Solo virtuosity was highly prized in Rome, and the tibicen often introduced a tragic or comic performance with an easily recognizable tune composed specifically for that show. The tibicen also interacted with the actors and the audience during a performance. Production data has survived that lists the names of actors, dates of production, and the name of the festivals, along with some information about the original music composed for the plays. Different kinds of tibia were assigned to each actor in a comedy: “equal pipes” were designated for the “Girl from Andros,” while the character of “Phormio” required “unequal pipes” (possibly an octave apart).

**OTHER THEATRICAL FORMS.** After Terence and his generation of playwrights, comedy and tragedy became less prominent in Rome, but a new theater of Pompeii was opened in 55 B.C.E., and the old plays were performed during the Funeral Games for Julius Caesar after his assassination in 44 B.C.E. Mime and pantomime, developed from Etruscan forms, were popular in the Roman repertoire around the first century B.C.E.; the mime was a re-enactment of real or mythical stories performed using speech, dance, and movement, sometimes with the accompaniment of the tibia. Pantomimes might include choral and orchestral music using a variety of instruments: tibiae and other types of pipes, kitharae (lyres), cymbals, and a percussion instrument played with the foot called the *scabella*. Solo comic and tragic actors—*comoeni* and *tragoedi*—were in big demand; the comic Roscius and dramatic actor Aesopus were celebrities in Rome. Suetonius, the biographer of the first twelve Ro-

man emperors, related that the cruel and perverted emperor Nero was, ironically, an accomplished *kitharode* who also performed in costume, on stage, along with the professional actors.

**LATIN POETRY.** While the verses of the famous first-century B.C.E. Latin poets Catullus and Horace contain many allusions to music and the musical instruments of the Greek poets, there is no evidence to suggest that Latin lyric was actually performed to the accompaniment of the lyre, as Greek lyric poetry was. Horace did compose a publicly performed poem in Sapphic meter for chorus, to be sung by two groups of 27 girls and boys. Commissioned by the emperor Augustus for the Centennial Games in 17 B.C.E., no evidence for the music survives. The Latin poet Vergil, working under the patronage of the emperor Augustus, composed the Roman national epic the *Aeneid* using the same meter as Homer—dactylic hexameter—and employing the themes of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, yet this poem was not sung, nor was it performed to the accompaniment of the lyre, as Homeric epic had been in the Archaic Period.

**ROMAN FEMALE POETS AND MUSICIANS.** With few exceptions, there were no Latin female poets comparable to Sappho or Nossis of Greece. Male poets, such as Propertius and Ovid, mentioned the names of Roman female writers in their works, but the actual poems of only one Latin woman—Sulpicia (31 B.C.E.–14 C.E.)—survive. Six of Sulpicia’s elegies exist, totalling only forty lines. She was probably the niece of her patron, Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus, a historian who also supported other elegiac poets, including Ovid and Tibullus. Although Sulpicia used to good effect the stylistics common during the reign of Augustus—couplets, alliteration, and assonance—she did not allude to music in her poetry, and her poems were meant to be recited, not sung. Some Roman women studied music seriously from an early age, and made a name for themselves as professional dancers, singers, and *kitharists* (lyre-players); girls as young as nine or ten might perform in public, as Phoebe Vocontia did, in Rome. According to her tombstone (imperial period), Phoebe was an *emboliaria*, a performer during the interludes in the theater. “Learned in all the arts,” she died at age twelve. Another inscription on a tomb dating to the imperial period reads: “To the gods of the dead. Gaius Cornelius Neritus made this for himself and for Auxesis the kitharist, the best wife.” Female performers were paid a living wage for their craft. A papyrus from Philadelphia in Egypt dating to 206 C.E. records that a castanet-dancer by the name of Isidora was offered the following payment for a six-day wedding-gig at a gentleman’s home: thirty-six drachmas per day, four



A Roman mosaic showing one musician playing the water organ and another playing the curved trumpet known as the "cornu." THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

artabas of grain, and twenty double loaves of bread. In addition, the writer offered to keep all her cloaks and gold jewelry safe, and to provide two donkeys for her round-trip journey. According to Roman law, the social status of actors and actresses was low, although female actresses were admired nonetheless. The actress Bassilla, called "the tenth Muse" by her admirers, "won fame in many towns and cities for her various accomplishments in plays, mimes, choruses, and dances," according to her third-century C.E. epitaph from the theater at Aquileia.

**MUSIC AND THE EMPERORS.** A rich and diverse musical climate existed in Rome during the imperial period; talented actors, instrumentalists, singers, and dancers poured into the city from all corners of the empire, including Egypt, Syria, and Spain. The emperors enjoyed musical entertainment while they dined, and many were fine musicians themselves. Theatrical performances in the amphitheaters were well-attended throughout the imperial period. During the time of Nero, the mechanical *syrinx* (water-organ) gained in popularity. This early pipe organ, said to have been invented in the third century B.C.E. by Ktesibios in Alexandria, Egypt, was loud; it was designed for use in Roman am-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**DOMITIAN AND THE FESTIVAL FOR CAPITOLINE JUPITER**

**INTRODUCTION:** According to the biographer Suetonius, Domitian, son of the emperor Vespasian, began his reign in 81 c.e. by promoting festivals and religious celebrations; he also erected many public buildings, including the Colosseum, where he staged spectacles; he may have been popular with the people, but the senate grew to despise him, and he was assassinated in 96 c.e.

Domitian presented many extravagant entertainments in the Colosseum and the Circus ... In honour of Capitoline Jupiter he founded a festival of music, horsemanship, and gymnastics, to be held every five years, and awarded far more prizes than is customary nowadays. The festival included Latin and Greek public-speaking contests, competitions for choral singing to the lyre and for lyre-playing alone, besides the usual solo singing to lyre accompaniment. ... When presiding at these functions he wore buskins, a purple Greek robe, and a gold crown engraved with the images of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.

**SOURCE:** Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*. Trans. Robert Graves (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1978): 297–298.

phitheaters, where it could be heard in the back rows. A mosaic from a Roman villa in Germany dating to the third century C.E., shows a pipe-organ with about 29 pipes set upon an altar-shaped wooden base. Despite a lack of detail in the illustration, it appears that the instrument could have played a complete two-octave scale in several different keys. Nero, who spoke Greek and learned to play the kithara from a Greek virtuoso named Terpnos, instituted and participated in musical competitions. The emperor Vespasian hired Terpnos, another kitharode named Diodorus, and the tragoedus Apollinaris to perform at the reopening of the theater of Marcellus. Hadrian, a talented musician, was the patron of the Cretan kitharode Mesomedes; fourteen or fifteen poems by Mesomedes survive, several with musical notation. Large concert performances by choral groups and orchestras were a feature of both secular occasions and religious festivals. Horns such as the tuba, lituus, bucina, and cornu—normally used in the military—were played in ensembles. Rome was host to a number of foreign religious cults; the music associated with these contained



Roman cornu, a curved trumpet. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

foreign melodies. During the worship of Cybele and Bacchus, music of the Phrygian *elymoi* (reed pipes of unequal length, one of which featured a curved bell at the end) joined with melodies and dances from Egypt.

**MILITARY MUSIC.** As in Greece, military music played a central role in Roman life. A wide variety of wind instruments blared in marching bands and were used for signalling military maneuvers in battle: *kerata* (cow horns), the *salpinx* and *lituus* (ivory or bronze trumpets), *cornu* (circular horn), and *tuba* (brass tuba). The Etruscans employed these horns as early as the fourth century B.C.E., and they remained popular for more than 500 years—well into the late imperial period (fourth century C.E.). A bonafide *lituus* was found by archaeologists in the town of Caera (modern Cervetri) not too far from Rome. It consists of a 63 inch-long tube with no keys or valves; it would have been blown a bit like a bugle but had a lower tone. The *bucina* and *cornu*, originally cow horns but the latter crafted of bronze or other lightweight metal, curved around the player like a modern sousaphone. The *tuba*, a straight trumpet with a flared bell, had a higher and more striking tone than the *lituus*. Horns such as these, which were used by the Greeks ex-

clusively as military instruments, were also played in concerts, at weddings, and in funeral processions by the Etruscans and Romans.

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## WOMEN IN ANCIENT MUSIC

**WOMEN IN SOCIETY.** Ancient Greece and Rome were patriarchal societies; men dominated the social and



political sphere. Women's lives were bound to the men in their families and to a system of government that denied women an equal voice in public life. The general rule that women should neither be seen nor heard was enforced into the Christian era and beyond. Most of what is known about Greek and Roman women in music comes not from the women themselves, but from the men who wrote about them, and the male artists who depicted them in vase- and wall-painting. Only if a woman gained enough of a reputation (good or bad) to warrant attention was her name made known. The family was considered the most important unit in ancient Greece and Rome, and women were the center of family life; they played an important role in family religion, and presided over all rites of passage from birth to death. The ceremonies connected with these rites gave women an opportunity to sing, dance, and play music in public. Women also participated in the large state religious festivals, and some became professional poets and musicians. Despite the scant evidence for women writers, poets, and musicians, there is enough to indicate that women did make names for themselves in music, while amateurs enjoyed playing for their own pleasure.

**PARTICIPATION.** In the Greek Bronze Age, Greek women must have sang and probably played instruments, but they are not represented doing so. Mycenaean art of the second millennium B.C.E. depicts only men playing the *phorminx* ("lyre") and the *aulos* ("double-reed pipe"). As a rule, men and women led separate lives in ancient Greece and Rome. Women normally stayed close to home and tended to domestic affairs, while the men spent time working at their profession or in the public gathering places of the city. Even the private homes were divided into male and female spaces. A vase from a grave in Italy shows a group of women dancing and playing a variety of instruments for each other in the privacy of their quarters. They also entertained each other and listened to music while working wool, baking bread, or nursing children. *Hetairai*, often highly educated and musically trained prostitute-musicians, entertained men at *symposia* (drinking parties). Some religious rites and ceremonies were open only to women, especially those connected with fertility, and evidence shows that both Greek and Roman women sang and played musical instruments during these rites.

**INSTRUMENTS FOR WOMEN.** Although both men and women could be professional musicians, certain instruments were thought to be more appropriate for one gender or the other. Since men marched in military parades and moved about more freely in public generally, the horns and the larger lyres were appropriate to them.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**JUST ONE OF THE GIRLS**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Life of Caesar*, the writer Plutarch (second century C.E.) related a humorous story in which a young man named Clodius tried to sneak into the women's sacred rite of the *Bona Dea* (Good Goddess—associated with Dionysus) by dressing as a female lyre-player.

Rome, 62 B.C.E.: Publius Clodius was in love with Julius Caesar's wife Pompeia, but a close watch was kept on the women's apartment, and Aurelia, Caesar's mother, made it difficult for the lovers to meet. During the festival of the 'Good Goddess', it is customary for the men to leave the house; the wife takes over and decorates for the festival. Most of the rites are celebrated at night, and with great amounts of festivity in the revels and music as well. The evening when Pompeia was celebrating this ritual, Clodius snuck into the house dressed like a young woman lyre-player. As he was walking around he met one of Aurelia's attendants, who asked him to play with her, as one woman might with another. When he refused, she dragged him before the others, asked who he was, and where he came from. His voice gave him away, and Aurelia, calling a halt to the rites, had Clodius thrown out of the house. Clodius was duly indicted by the senate for sacrilege, but later acquitted. Caesar immediately divorced Pompeia, saying that a wife of his "must be above suspicion."

**SOURCE:** Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, in *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook in Translation*. Eds. M. Lefkowitz and M. Fant (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982): 292–293.

Women and girls played the smaller lyres, the harp, and the *aulos* (reed pipe). The wife of Ktesibios, the inventor of the organ, may have given concerts on it. *Hetairai* were hired to play the *aulos* and *chelys* (a type of lyre) at men's drinking parties, while *psaltriaai* (literally "pluckers") played the harp at parties for women; certain melodies and instruments, such as the *aulos*, lute, and *chelys*, were associated with erotic love. The *barbitos* (another type of lyre), the *pektis* (a type of harp), and the Lydian harp were popular instruments for women, and after the fourth century B.C.E., the lute-like *trichordos* or *pandouros* appeared in the arms of women. The *tympanos* (drum), *kymbala* (cymbals), and other percussion instruments were most often played by female worshippers

of Dionysus, the Great Mother, and other deities connected to fertility and fecundity.

**FEMALE POETS.** It was the job of the *pythia*, priestess of Apollo at the Oracle in Delphi, to interpret the divine prophecy of Apollo for the pilgrim, and she did so by chanting the god's words in hexameter verse. While this chanting is not proper poetry, it is one indicator that women had a powerful poetic voice in ancient Greece, even though Homer's professional bards were men, not women. Between the sixth and the third centuries B.C.E., however, some of the most famous female poets and musicians make their entrance. None came from Athens, perhaps because women's lives were much more restricted there than in other places. All were highly educated and well-to-do. Sappho, born around 612 B.C.E. on the island of Lesbos, is the most famous of a group of women poets whose work survives: Korinna, Erinna, Nossis, and Anyte. Sappho's poetry was autobiographical, personal, and often erotic. She wrote passionately about the power of Aphrodite, the Muses, and the Graces. She was an innovative poet, setting the rhythms of her native Aeolic dialect of Greek to new melodies; her form of lyric monody (solo singing), which has been called by scholars the "Sapphic stanza," was meant to be sung to musical accompaniment. Sappho is depicted in vase-painting holding the *barbitos*, and she mentions lyre and harp-playing in her poetry. In addition to monody, Sappho also wrote compositions for choral performance. Fragments of her *partheneia* (maiden-songs) and *epithalamia* (wedding-songs) survive, albeit without musical notation. Her choral works were performed by separate groups of dancing young men and women. Admired not only by her contemporary male poets, but generations of poets coming after, Sappho was a vivid portrayer of women's emotions:

Once again that loosener of limbs, Love,  
bittersweet and inescapable, crawling thing,  
seizes me.

Very little is known about the other Greek women poets and only small fragments of their poems survive. The traveler Pausanias (second century C.E.) reported that Korinna of Boeotia beat Pindar—a very important male lyric poet of the fifth century B.C.E.—more than once in poetry competitions. Praxilla, another fifth-century poet, was famous for her *solia* ("drinking-songs"). Of Roman women poets almost nothing is known, despite the fact that in Rome women's social status was better than in Greece. Sulpicia (first century B.C.E.) was the only Latin female poet whose work survives to any degree, because it was included in a book of poems by Tibullus, a male friend.

**TYPES OF MUSIC FOR WOMEN.** In his *Republic* and *Laws*, the philosopher Plato prescribed different melodies and rhythms to men and women according to the nature of each gender. Specifically, men should make "masculine" music, and women, music that is "orderly and moderate." Plato and Aristotle wrote that both girls and boys should be taught *mousike*, the broad term for "music" that included song, dance, and instrument playing. Plato recommended three years of training on the lyre beginning at age thirteen. These philosophers insisted that there were two types of women musicians: respectable and shameful. In the fourth century B.C.E., education was more available to women than it had been in earlier times, and now a sharp distinction was made between the unsavory *hetairai* (prostitute-musicians) and other female musicians who had been taught by reputable music teachers from a very young age and were paid to perform concert music during public festivals. An inscription from 186 B.C.E. recognized Polygnota, a Theban, for her *kithara* performance and recitations during the Pythian Games in honor of the god Apollo at Delphi. It notes that she received a crown and 500 drachmas in payment. Roman female musicians also performed during religious festivals. In Rome and many parts of the Roman Empire, female musicians, singers, and dancers performed every November during the three-day festival of the goddess Isis, who had a temple in Rome despite being an Egyptian deity. The performance involved actors playing the parts of Isis and Nephthys in the mystery plays celebrating the death and resurrection of Osiris. In Roman Egypt, female entertainers were paid quite handsomely. A third-century C.E. papyrus from Philadelphia in Egypt contains a letter in which the services of three castanet-dancers were requested, presumably for a wedding feast. Payment was set at 36 drachmas per day, plus four artabas of grain and twenty double loaves of bread.

**WOMEN'S RITUAL LAMENTS.** In ancient Greece, women generally did not have a public platform in which to express their opinions and sentiments. Ritual lamentation—public mourning for the dead during a funeral—provided women a protected medium to address publicly issues of social importance. Ritual laments were performed by an inner circle of women close to the body of the deceased, and combined weeping and wailing with poetic song and stylized movement. During a ritual lament, women were free to say whatever they felt, no matter how explosive or threatening; in the epic poem the *Aeneid* by the Roman poet Vergil, the mother of a dead soldier criticizes the war so vehemently in her lament that the men are ordered to drag her away be-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HELEN'S RITUAL LAMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:** The musically gifted tragic playwright Euripides was especially attracted to women's melodic forms, most notably the ritual lament. In his play *Helen*, produced in 412 B.C.E., Euripides captured vividly the power of the musicality of the lament form, with its antiphonal response ("songs to answer songs"), its melancholic sound ("lyre-less elegy"), and the combination of weeping with song ("choirs to sing with my wailings").

**SOURCE:** Euripides, *Helen*, in *Greek Musical Writings I: The Musician and His Art*. Ed. Andrew Barker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984): 67–68.

fore she disheartens the troops. There were three categories of laments: the *threnos*, the *goos*, and the *kommos*. The *threnos* was a composed dirge performed, for example, by goddesses in Homeric epic and formal laments of a female chorus in Greek drama. The *goos*, a more frequent term, referred to the improvised discordant weeping performed by kinswomen and close friends of the deceased. The *kommos* was specific to tragedy. Aristotle in his *Poetics* defined the *kommos* as an antiphonal song of lament between an actor and the female chorus, which was one of the most visually compelling exhibitions of

physical and psychological pain. In Greek tragedy, ritual laments were often called "lyre-less" or "undanced" to illustrate their harsh discordance and lack of joy. Euripides, an accomplished composer and playwright of the fifth century B.C.E., often wrote laments into his plays. In his musical tragedy *Helen*, the queen of Sparta laments her role in the destruction of Troy, wishing that the Sirens could accompany her mourning with the Libyan harp, the syrinx, with lyres, and with tears of their own to match her own "suffering for suffering, care for care, antiphonal chorus to match" the lament (164–166). The so-called Berlin Papyrus (second or third century C.E.) preserves a notated fragment of a dramatic vocal lament on the death of the hero Ajax that appears to be set at the register of the female voice. Traditionally in Greek and Roman theater men played all the roles, but this fragment suggests that a female singer, perhaps playing the role of Ajax's grieving wife Tecmessa, performed the lament. The Dorian mode, the same melodic system used by the lyric poets, in love songs, and in paeans, was commonly used for formal laments.

**SOURCES**

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- Jane McIntosh Snyder, *The Woman and the Lyre: Women Writers in Classical Greece and Rome* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989).
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**MUSIC THEORY**

**OVERVIEW OF SOURCES.** The study of ancient Greek and Roman music depends on a wide variety of sources: iconographic, literary, and archaeological. Musical scenes, depicted in vase-paintings and frescos, in sculptural decoration and figurines, and on coins and gems, provide one piece of the puzzle. An iconographic

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CRITICIZING THE HARMONIKOI**

**INTRODUCTION:** Aristoxenus criticized earlier authors, whom he called *Harmonikoi* (Harmonicists), for paying too much attention to mathematical ratios in their determination of scales and intervals; he argued that these should be judged by sense-perception. The trained ear, he claimed, detects the unique functional quality of sounds; in his view, the dynamic context of music must be judged empirically, not by measuring sizes of intervals or naming notes.

The essence and order of harmony depend not upon any of the properties of instruments ... neither the *auloi* nor any other instrument will supply a foundation for the principles of harmony. There is a certain marvellous order which belongs to the nature of harmony in general; in this order every instrument, to the best of its ability, participates under the direction of that faculty of sense-perception on which they, as well as everything else in music, finally depend. To suppose, because one sees day by day the finger-holes the same and the strings at the same tension, that one will find in these harmony with its permanence and eternally immutable order—this is sheer folly. For as there is no harmony in the strings save that which the cunning of the hand confers upon them, so is there none in the finger-holes save what has been introduced by the same agency. That no instrument is self-tuned, and that the harmonizing of it is the prerogative of the sense-perception is obvious, and requires no proof.

**SOURCE:** Aristoxenus, *The Harmonics of Aristoxenus*. Trans. H. S. Macran (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902): 187–198. Reprinted in *Source Readings in Music History: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Ed. Oliver Strunk (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965): 31–32.

image may show the placement of a musician's hands or mouth on an instrument, and the number of strings on a lyre, or holes in a pipe; the relative size of an instrument and the material used to construct it may, in some cases, be reasonably determined by examining an image; a guess—but no more than that—can then be made regarding pitch, tone, and volume. Images may show which instruments are played in ensemble, by whom, and on what occasion. Ancient poets, historians, lexicographers, philosophers, and theorists—most of them Greek—add much more to modern understanding of the scientific principles of music and the role that mu-

sic played in society and culture. The archaeological discovery of actual musical compositions, carved into stone or written on papyrus manuscripts, and bonafide musical instruments recovered from excavated settlements and graves can confirm or contradict what has been deduced from written and iconographical sources. Finally, comparative studies of the musical traditions of other cultures that either influenced or were influenced by Greece and Rome have contributed much to the overall understanding of ancient Greek and Roman music.

**WRITTEN SOURCES.** The earliest written sources on music are descriptions of musical instruments, performances, and musical forms in the epics of Homer (eighth century B.C.E.); in the poetry of Sappho, Alcaeus, Alcman, Pindar, and others (seventh–fifth centuries B.C.E.); and in Athenian tragedy and comedy composed during the fifth century B.C.E. by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes. Historians, mythographers, and scholars writing after the fifth century ascribed the invention of musical instruments and melodic forms to divinities or to innovative musicians, composers, and singers. During the late sixth–early fourth centuries, the philosophical schools of Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle were established; they influenced all later scientific and theoretical thought about music. The best application of Aristotelian science to music is the work of Aristoxenus. Born in Calabria, Italy, around 370 B.C.E., Aristoxenus studied in Athens with the Pythagorean school and was the star pupil of Aristotle. Aristoxenus is said to have written 453 essays on various subjects, but the majority of his writing has survived only in bits and pieces quoted by other authors. Two substantial theoretical works on music by Aristoxenus—*Harmonika* and *Rhythmika*—highly influenced later theorists. The mathematical approach to harmony of the Pythagoreans is best preserved in a fourth-century B.C.E. anonymous treatise sometimes (erroneously) attributed to Euclid, known as the *Sectio canonis* (“Division of the Kanon”). The title referred to the Pythagorean method of using a *kanon* (“ruler”) to mathematically measure pitches of notes based on string length. The Alexandrian astronomer Claudius Ptolemy supported this approach to acoustics in his *Harmonika*. In the first century C.E., the Roman architect Vitruvius contributed to acoustical science by applying the principle of sound waves to the design of a theater auditorium. Vitruvius translated the *Harmonika* of Aristoxenus into Latin, apologizing to his readers for the lack of Latin equivalents for many of the Greek technical terms used in music theory. Much information about musical life is also found in many non-theoretical works: Athenaeus of Crete (c. 200 C.E.) wrote a dialogue on the Greek *sym-*

*posium* called the *Deipnosophistai*, in which he named, described, and defined 25 *skolia* (drinking songs), along with their performance techniques; his contemporary, a lexicographer named Pollux, compiled technical terms, discussed the species of *aulos* (reed pipe) and types of horn (especially the *salpinx*), and described the Greek theater and structure of comedy in his lexicon, the *Onomasticon*.

**ARISTOXENUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS.** The *Harmonika* and *Rhythmika* of Aristoxenus were two of the most influential treatises on music. Especially important were his discussions and explanations of intervals, tetrachords, and the systems of *harmoniai*. He identified elements of melody and the three genera of tetrachord: diatonic, enharmonic, and chromatic. A number of important philosophical, theoretical, and historical works composed between the second and the fifth centuries C.E. restate and expand on the work of Aristoxenus, including Cleonides' *Harmonica introductio*, Ps.-Plutarch's *De musica*, Gaudentius' *Harmonika*, Alypius' *Introductio musica*, and Aristides Quintilianus' *De musica*. These works provide valuable explanations of the Greek musical system, including notation, melody, rhythm, scales, modulation, consonance and dissonance, and scientific problems of acoustics. Later, during the Byzantine Period (tenth–twelfth centuries C.E.), material on music based on the earlier work of Aristoxenus and Aristides was transmitted in manuscripts. One important such collection is the so-called *Anonymus Bellermanni*, published by F. Bellermann in 1841 C.E., which contains the sole surviving description of rhythmic notation.

**SCALE AND TUNING.** As early as the seventh century B.C.E. accomplished *kitharodes* and *aulodes* (musicians who sing while playing their instruments) were teaching others to play and sing; they must have developed a vocabulary of terms to explain technique, and demonstrated techniques on their instruments. Their students learned by imitation and practice. From the fifth century B.C.E. to the fourth century C.E. (and even later), the Greeks used the term *harmonikoi* to designate the teachers, scientists, and philosophers whom they considered knowledgeable about music theory; the study of the basic building blocks of music (notes, intervals, scales, genera, *tonoi*, modulation, melodic patterns) was known as “Harmonics.” The word *harmonia* was originally used in Homeric poetry to mean “joint, connection,” so the modern word “harmony” is literally a “fitting together” of notes. The earliest use of *harmonia* as a specific musical term occurs in a poetic fragment of Lasus of Hermione, an innovative *kitharode* (a singer-lyre-player) working as a professional composer in Athens in the late sixth–early fifth centuries B.C.E. The line reads: “I sing of Demeter

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### ARISTOTLE ON MUSIC

**INTRODUCTION:** In Books VII and VIII of the *Politics* Aristotle considered the construction of the ideal state with special focus on education and the arts. He argued Plato's notion that music is more than amusement; it affects the soul. Since young people (and mankind, generally) are encouraged to imitate what they see and hear, the character and quality of all melodies and musical styles must be carefully examined before they are selected for educational purposes.

There is the natural distinction between the modes, which cause different reactions in the hearers, who are not all moved in the same way with respect to each. For example, men are inclined to be mournful and solemn when they listen to that which is called Mixo-Lydian; but they are in a more relaxed frame of mind when they listen to others, for example the looser modes. A particularly equable feeling, midway between these, is produced, I think, only by the Dorian mode, while the Phrygian puts men into a frenzy of excitement.

...Music has indeed the power to induce a certain character of soul, and if it can do that, then clearly it must be applied to education, and the young must be educated in it.

**SOURCE:** Aristotle, *The Politics*. Trans. T. A. Sinclair (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1981): 466.

and of Kore, wife of Klymenos, intoning the sweet hymn on the low-roaring Aeolian *harmonia*.” By the time of Lasus, a *harmonia* came to represent an entire complex, including text, rhythm and meter, tuning, scale, and melody, associated with a specific geographical region: Aeolian, Phrygian, Dorian, Lydian, Ionian.

**CHARACTER OF HARMONIAI.** The precise nature of the regional (or tribal) *harmonia* is not known. Plato, in the *Republic*, defines the character of two varieties of the Lydian *harmonia* as “mournful,” the Ionian and Lydian generally as “good for drinking parties,” the Dorian as “manly,” and the Phrygian as “inspiring enthusiasm.” In the *Politics*, Aristotle—who was sometimes at odds with his teacher Plato on the character of the various *harmoniai*—agreed that the Dorian was the “most grave, and most suitable for education”; he described the Lydian as “suitable for young children,” but was of the opinion

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**ALYPIAN NOTATION TABLES**

**INTRODUCTION:** The musical notation used for the fifteen transposition scales, or *tonoi* (literally “position of the voice”), are preserved in the notational tables included by the theorist Alypius in his *Introductio musicae* (fourth–fifth cen-

tury C.E.). It was his intention to represent the fifteen *tonoi* extending over the range of three octaves and a tone, complete with vocal and instrumental notation in each of the three genera of scale: diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic. In the composite table below, the ethnic names of the *tonoi* are listed along the left side, in low and high forms. At the top, are the names of the notes, and their tetrachord position. The musical staff represents the conventional approximation of the pitches in each scale.

**The Alypian Table of All Notes (and Scales)**

	Hypaton		Meson			Synemmenon			Diezeugmenon			Hyperbolaeon			
Tonus	Proslambanomenos Hypate	Parypate Lichanos chro. diat.	Hypate	Parypate Lichanos chro. diat.	Mese	Tritie chro. diat.	Paranete chro. diat.	Nete	Paramese	Tritie chro. diat.	Paranete chro. diat.	Nete	Tritie chro. diat.	Paranete chro. diat.	Nete
hyper-lydian	Φ	Π	Ι	Θ	Η	Λ	Μ	Θ	Υ	Ι	Ο	Η	Γ	Λ	Ζ
hyper-aeolian	Χ	Π	Κ	Ι	Η	Λ	Ο	Θ	Υ	Κ	Ι	Η	Ζ	Α	Β
hyper-phrygian	Ω	Π	Μ	Λ	Κ	Η	Γ	Β	Α	Ζ	Υ	Κ	Ι	Η	Ζ
hyper-istian	Γ	Π	Ο	Ξ	Ν	Ι	Ζ	Ε	Δ	Α	Υ	Κ	Ι	Η	Ζ
hyper-dorian	Δ	Π	Ο	Ξ	Ν	Ι	Ζ	Ε	Δ	Α	Υ	Κ	Ι	Η	Ζ

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that the Phrygian harmonia, played on the aulos during the ecstatic worship of Dionysus, was too emotional for use in school. Certain harmonia, such as the so-called “tense Lydian,” were more suitable for women, while the

“slack” Ionian and Lydian were softer and easier to sing. The Greek poets sometimes expressed a preference for one or the other of the harmonia. The fifth-century poet Pindar praised the Dorian as being the most dignified, and

**The Alypian Table of All Notes (and Scales) [CONTINUED]**

Tonus	Hypaton		Meson				Synemmenon			Diezeugmenon			Hyperbolaeon										
	Proslambanomenos	Hypate	Parypate	Lichanos	chro. diat.	Hypate	Parypate	Lichanos	chro. diat.	Mese	Trite	Paranete	chro. diat.	Nete	Paramese	Trite	Paranete	chro. diat.	Nete				
lydian																							
	Ζ <sup>1</sup>	Τ <sup>2</sup>	Ρ <sup>3</sup>	Υ <sup>19</sup>	Φ	ϸ <sup>5</sup>	Π <sup>6</sup>	Μ <sup>7</sup>	Ι <sup>8</sup>		Θ <sup>9</sup>	Η <sup>21</sup>	Γ <sup>10</sup>	Λ <sup>11</sup>	Ζ <sup>12</sup>	Ε <sup>13</sup>	Δ <sup>22</sup>	Υ <sup>14</sup>	Θ <sup>15</sup>	Υ <sup>16</sup>	Λ <sup>23</sup>	Μ <sup>17</sup>	Ι <sup>18</sup>
	Γ	Λ	Ε	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ		ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ
aeolian																							
	Η	Δ	Γ	Υ	Χ	Τ	ϸ	Π	Ο	Κ		Ι	Η	Α	Η	Ζ	Δ	Α	Θ	Υ	Ο	Κ	
	Ε	Γ	Ε	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ		ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ
phrygian																							
	-	Ζ	ϸ	Ω	Φ	Τ	Π	Μ			Λ	Κ	Η	Γ	Ι	Θ	Η	Γ	Υ	ϸ	Λ	Μ	
	Ε	Γ	Ε	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ		ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ
iasian																							
	Η	Ζ	Υ	Χ	Φ	Τ	ϸ	Ο			Ξ	Ν	Ι	Ζ	Κ	Ι	Η	Ζ	Α	Υ	ϸ	Ο	
	Ε	Γ	Ε	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ		ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ
dorian																							
	Ι	-	Θ	Υ	Ω	Ψ	Χ	Τ	Π			Ο	Ν	Κ	Η	Μ	Λ	Κ	Η	Γ	Β	Α	ϸ
	Ε	Ε	Ε	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ		ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ	ϸ

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used the Lydian in several of his *epinikian* odes (praising athletes). Composers of the *dithyramb* (choral dance), such as Alcman, employed the Phrygian. The Mixolydian and Dorian were used in tragedy. Perhaps the clearest de-

finition of the harmoniai is to be found in the third–fourth century C.E. work *De musica*, by theorist Aristides Quintilianus. He listed the notes of six *harmoniai*, adding that there were other tetrachordal divisions

**The Alypian Table of All Notes (and Scales) [CONTINUED]**

Tonus	Proslambanomenos	Hypaton			Meson			Synemmenon			Diezeugmenon			Hyperbolaeon									
	Hypate	Parhypate	Lichanos chro. diat.	Hypate	Parhypate	Lichanos chro. diat.	Mese	Trite	Paranete chro. diat.	Nete	Paramese	Trite	Paranete chro. diat.	Nete	Trite	Paranete chro. diat.	Nete						
hypo-lydian	ϩ	Μ	Υ	(ϫ)	[Ζ]	Γ	Ρ	(Υ)	[Φ]	ϸ	Π	(Π)	Μ	Ι	Ο	Ξ	(Ν)	[Ι]	Ζ	Ε	(Δ)	[Υ]	Θ
hypo-aolian	ϩ	Μ	Υ	(ϫ)	[Ζ]	Γ	Ρ	(Υ)	[Φ]	ϸ	Π	(Π)	Ο	Κ	Π	(Ν)	[Κ]	Η	Ζ	(Δ)	[Α]	*	
hypo-phrygian	ϩ	Μ	Υ	(ϫ)	[Ζ]	Γ	Ρ	(Υ)	[Φ]	ϸ	Π	(Π)	Μ	Ι	Θ	(Η)	[Γ]	Υ					
hypo-iaastian	ϩ	Μ	Υ	(ϫ)	[Ζ]	Γ	Ρ	(Υ)	[Φ]	ϸ	Π	(Π)	Ο	Κ	Τ	(Π)	[Θ]	Κ	Ι	(Η)	[Ζ]	Α	
hypo-dorian	ϩ	Μ	Υ	(ϫ)	[Ζ]	Γ	Ρ	(Υ)	[Φ]	ϸ	Π	(Π)	Ο	Κ	Φ	Υ	(Τ)	[Π]	Μ	Λ	(Κ)	[Η]	Γ

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SOURCE: K. von Jan, *Musici Scriptores Graeci: Aristoteles, Euclides, Nicomachus, Bacchius, Gaudentius, Alypius, et Melodiarum Veterum Quidquid, Exstat. Anexae sunt Tabulae.* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1895).

used by “the most ancient people” (likely referring to the fifth century B.C.E.): ‘Tense’ Lydian and Ionian (spanning less than an octave); Phrygian, Lydian, and Mixolydian (spanning an octave); and Dorian (spanning an octave and a tone). He explained that each of these harmoniai had its own particular set of intervallic relationships, forming the so-called “Octave Species.”

**THE PERFECT SYSTEMS.** The tetrachord—four contiguous notes forming a perfect fourth—was the basic

building block of the ancient Greek musical scale. A connected series of conjunct or disjunct tetrachords formed the so-called *systema teleion* (“perfect system”), first mentioned by Aristoxenus, but defined and explained in the handbooks of Aristides Quintilianus, Cleonides, and other theorists. A conjunct tetrachord is formed when the last note of one tetrachord coincides with the first note of the next; disjunction occurs when two tetrachords are separated by the interval of a tone. Two conjunct tetrachords constitute the *heptachordon* (seven-note system).



Since a fourth plus a tone equalled a fifth, a pair of disjunct tetrachords was, in effect, a fourth and a fifth, making up an octave. A pair of conjunct tetrachords, with an additional tone at either top or bottom, likewise made up an octave (a fourth plus a fifth, or vice versa). The steps within the tetrachords were all either larger or smaller than a tone. The names of the eight notes of the octave refer to the seven strings on the lyre, plus one—the lowest—added later: *hypate* (“the principal”) was the farthest from the player’s body, *parhypate* (“next to *hypate*”), *lichanos* (“touched by the index finger”), *mese* (the “middle”), *paramese* (“next to *mese*”), *trite* (the “third” from the highest), *paranete* (“next to *nete*”), and *nete* (the “last”).

#### THE GREATER AND LESSER PERFECT SYSTEMS.

Two “perfect systems” were described by the theorists. According to Aristides, the *systema teleion elatton* (“lesser perfect system”) consisted of three conjunct tetrachords plus the *proslambanomenos*, an “added lowest tone” before the *hypate*. Four conjunct tetrachords separated by a tone of disjunction, plus the *proslambanomenos*, constituted the *systema teleion meizon* (“greater perfect system”). Played together in succession, the two perfect systems were called the *systema teleion ametabolon* (“perfect immutable system”). Despite a number of theoretical treatises and handbooks that describe and explain the theory of these systems, their application in performance and the sound of the music resulting from their use remains unclear.

**TRANSPOSITION KEYS.** Aristoxenus used the terms *tonoi* to refer to “positions of the voice.” Later, Cleonides defined *tonos* or *tropos* as note, an interval, a position of the voice, and pitch. Difficulties arise because writers did not always distinguish *tonos* from *harmonia*; Aristoxenus said that the *harmonikoi* were already associating the “octave-species” with the *harmoniai*, and Ptolemy applied the term *tonoi* to the “octave species,” which were explained as “transposition keys” used to solve the problem of different vocal ranges in choral groups. Cleonides attributed thirteen *tonoi* to Aristoxenus; Aristides Quintilianus observed that the “younger theorists” added two additional *tonoi*, for a total of fifteen, which were preserved in the notational tables of Alypius. The *tonoi* were manifested in three genera: diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic; each *tonos* began on a pitch that was a semitone apart from the next, and was built using a series of tetrachords (four contiguous notes forming a perfect fourth). The five middle *tonoi* carried the same regional names as the *harmoniai*: Lydian, Aeolian, Phrygian, Iastian, and Dorian. The highest five *tonoi* carried the prefix *hyper* (e.g. Hyperlydian), the five lower, *hypo* (e.g. Hypodorian).

**METER AND RHYTHM.** In English, meter (or accentuation) is determined by the stress placed on a syllable. In the tongue-twister “Péter piper picked a péck of pickled péppers” correct pronunciation requires that the stress be placed on the first syllable of every word; this stress dictates the rhythm of the line, and any deviation would ruin the beat. Ancient Greek meter was not based on stress, but on pitch; a rise in the musical pitch of the voice determined the meter. Ancient scholars devised a system of written accents to explain the pronunciation: the *oxytone* (“acute”) accent signified the raising of a pitch, the *barytone* (“grave”) marked a lowered or canceled pitch (used exclusively at the end of a word), and the *perispomenon* (“circumflex”) indicated a combination of up and down pitches on one syllable. The metrical patterns of Greek and Latin song and speech were based on long and short syllables. The ancient metricians explained that the value of one long syllable (–) equaled two shorts (U U). In many poetic meters these two quantities were interchangeable. Aristotle, Aristoxenus, and other writers on rhythm assigned proportional ratios of long and short syllables to each unit (called a “foot”): – U U (dactyl) = 1:1; – – (spondee) = 1:1; U – (iambus) = 1:2; – U U U (paeon) = 2:3; and so forth. The 2:1 ratio predominated, and variations were few. Time was kept by tapping the foot: “up” or “lift” was denoted by the word *arsis*, while “down” or “step” was called *thesis*. Each measure (or “foot”) of poetry was divided into “up” and “down” segments. Ancient songwriters were bound to the metrical types available to them, and until the middle of the fifth century, the meter simply dictated the rhythm of the verse. From the time of Timotheus of Miletus (c. 450–360 B.C.E.) was the elegiac couplet, a stanza composed of a dactylic hexameter followed by – UU – UU – | – UU – UU – ||. Iambic (U –) was generally combined into the so-called metron U – U – seen in many variants. A common pattern was the iambic trimeter U – U – U – U – U – U –; the first iambic formed the thesis (down-beat), and the second, the arsis (up-beat). Many variations on this rhythm existed, and it was popular in spoken verse as well as lyric poetry, tragedy, and comedy. If the first two note-values of the metron were transposed (– UU–), a so-called choriamb was created. The opposite of iambic is the “tripping” rhythm trochaic (– U – U) which, when played in sequence, always ended its metron with a rest (– U – X). The paeonic rhythms (– U– or – UUU or UUUUU)—also called Cretic—played in quintuple time, were used in serious hymns and war chants, as well as light music of dances; they were favored by certain lyric poets and tragedians. The comic playwright Aristophanes frequently employed the paeonic, which could be alternated

with trochaic meters. Among the fragments of ancient Greek musical compositions that survive, two Delphic paeans dating to the second century B.C.E. reveal extensive musical notation almost entirely in paeonic rhythm. The latest extant example of the use of paeonic rhythm is a poem by the composer Mesomedes (patronized by the emperor Hadrian), which shows three new ways of combining the longs and shorts. Thus, the paeonic rhythm evolved from two variants in the seventh century B.C.E. to seven by the second century C.E. The five-syllable Dochmiac (U– – U–) was a diverse and irregular patterned rhythm, and may have been a combination of iambic, anapestic, and paeonic forms. There is no evidence of its use before the fifth century, but it was popular in tragedy, especially in highly charged scenes in Euripides' plays, where it comprised long strings of many short notes in succession. The Ionic rhythm (UU— UU—), first used by the lyric poets Sappho and Alcaeus of Lesbos in the sixth century B.C.E., continued to be popular in all song genres from the tragic chorus to hymns and love songs. Many variations of this rhythm were possible. The so-called Aeolic meter was commonly used by Sappho and Alcaeus, and by other poets between the sixth–fourth centuries B.C.E. This rhythm is characterized by the coexistence of single and paired short notes beginning with a free or undefined series of shorts or longs: the most common was ××– U U – U –.

**MELODY.** A thorough treatment by Aristoxenus on melody has not survived, but in his *Harmonika*, he made a distinction between the melody of speech and that of music; melodic speech was based on word-accents, while musical melody moved by definite intervals of greater pitch variation. Very early traditional vocal melodies were simple, constrained by the pattern of long and short syllables in the meter of the verse, and the small number of strings on the lyre or holes in the pipe. Modulation (moving from one key to another) and heterophony (when strings of the lyre sound one melody while the singer sings another) were not commonly practiced. This began to change in the seventh century B.C.E., when poets, such as Archilochus, introduced the combination of differing genera of rhythms, the mixture of spoken text with instrumental accompaniment and singing, and an instrumental accompaniment that did not follow the melodic line in unison. By the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., virtuoso composers and performers expanded and modified their instruments and performance techniques: more strings were added to the lyre, vocal range widened, and use of the chromatic genus of scale added more notes. Melodic ornamentation and melisma (two or more notes sung to a single syllable) occurred on important words

(like the names of mythical gods or heroes), and words of songs no longer matched the melody note-for-note. In the *Laws*, Plato criticized both melodic and rhythmic heterophony as too complex and unsettling to be used in music education. Some Latin writers, such as Cicero, also maligned the melodic complexity of “modern” music, and pined for the old, simple tunes of yore. Nevertheless, the florid style continued to be popular throughout the Roman period, as musical compositions preserved on papyri from the second and third centuries C.E. attest.

**FORM OF MELODY.** Aristides Quintilianus wrote that before a lyre-player began a song, he would select a register of the voice, decide upon the structure of the scale, the genus, and the key, and consider the style of melody. Two terms were used for “melody, song, composition” in Greek: *melos* and *nomos*. The Greeks defined *melos* simply as “tune,” but more completely as an art form that comprised notes, melody, rhythm, and text. The term *nomos* (law, custom) was used by poets generally to label a type of song or melodic composition—from the song of birds to the songs in a musician's repertoire. Professional musicians and theorists used the term *nomos* more narrowly to identify: (1) a specific melody used for an occasion (e.g. a sacrifice or a funeral); (2) a composition for the kithara (lyre) or aulos (reed pipe); (3) a song for a divinity; (4) a type of ethnic song or melody (e.g. Aeolian); (5) a song named for a composer (e.g. Terpandran); or, (6) a class of song-types, such as lullaby, choral song, etc. The oldest *nomos*, the so-called *kitharodikos*, was a solo song for the lyre-player, said to have been invented by Terpander in the seventh century B.C.E. One of the more famous was the instrumental *nomos Pythikos* (“Pythic Composition”) composed for the aulos in the early sixth century, either by Timosthenes or Sacadas; the first-century C.E. writer Strabo described this piece as a *melos* which narrated the mythic battle between Apollo and the serpent Python in five distinct parts, or movements. The composition itself does not survive, but according to Strabo it was performed by an orchestra of winds and lyres, each movement employing a different type of melody and rhythm to illustrate the story through music.

**ACOUSTICS.** The science of acoustics began in the late sixth century B.C.E. with Pythagoras and his followers. They developed mathematical theories about the laws and principles governing the universe, and extended those to music and the concept of the soul. The primary interests of the Pythagoreans were metaphysical and cosmological, but they were intrigued by the problem of defining musical pitch and the relationship between intervals, which they tried to gauge using a monochord—a single string stretched over a board—and other devices.

The Pythagoreans held that there was a mathematical relationship between lengths of vibrating string and harmonious sounds, which could be measured using a ruler. According to ancient theorists, the first to apply mathematical principles to musical sound were Hippasus of Metapontum, a Pythagorean, or his contemporary, Lasus of Hermione, a virtuoso kitharode, instructor of dithyrambic choruses, and theorist. They were said to have discovered the 2:1 ratio between two sounds at the interval of the octave, 3:2 between interval of the fifth, and 4:3 between the interval of a fourth; Hippasus demonstrated this phenomenon using bronze discs of equal diameter, but different thicknesses, while Lasus, filling vessels with different amounts of liquid, struck them. The consonances of a fourth, fifth, and octave became models of *harmonia*, the “fitting together” of two sounds. A contemporary of Plato, the eminent Pythagorean mathematician Archytas (most of whose own work is lost), noted that a sound can only be produced by an impact of two bodies in motion. Sound, he said, was always created this way, but it was not always audible. He explained that the differences of pitch between sounds depended on the force and speed of the impact. Archytas divided the tetrachord system into harmonic ratios in an attempt to determine which numbers are concordant and why. Another work that is reminiscent of Archytas’ acoustic theory, but goes further, is a short anonymous treatise called the *Sectio canonis* (“Division of the Monochord”), sometimes erroneously attributed to Euclid. The author of this treatise adds to Archytas’ idea that force and speed determine pitch by supposing that some movements are more closely packed, causing notes of higher pitch, while other notes are more widely spaced, creating notes of lower pitch. The quantification of pitch is perhaps the most advanced of the Pythagorean contributions to acoustic theory. No school of thought on acoustics was beyond criticism, however. Aristotle’s pupil Aristoxenus (fourth century B.C.E.), whose interest in music was more philosophical than scientific, claimed that mathematical calculation of the relationship between sounds and the measure of intervals was not sufficient to explain musical phenomena or to indicate the characteristics of musical composition. He emphasized in his *Harmonika* that in order to understand music, the listener needs ear, intellect, and memory; for him, sense perception was vital to judging dynamic musical phenomena. Claudius Ptolemy (second century C.E.), who clearly inclined towards Pythagorean mathematics in his explanations, examined critically both the Pythagorean and Aristoxenian definitions of tuning systems, sound, pitch, and consonance in his *Harmonika*, noting the strengths and weaknesses of each ap-

proach. One of antiquity’s finest astronomers, Ptolemy took a scientific approach to the study of music, and held—as did the Pythagoreans—that the principles of harmonic order were mathematical. The Romans, who were ambitious construction engineers, were aided by the application of Greek acoustic theory in the design of their theater auditoria. Vitruvius, a late first-century B.C.E. Roman architect who translated the work of the Greek theorists into Latin, showed an impressive understanding of acoustics when he described a system of resonators that would improve the sound quality in the small and large theater auditorium. He also discussed the importance of using the right materials: wooden structures resonated sound waves more readily than marble or concrete, which did not vibrate in sympathy; he therefore recommended that bronze jars be added to stone-built auditoria to improve the acoustics.

**MUSICAL NOTATION.** The system of musical notation that was standard for professional use by the mid-third century B.C.E. and seen in all the extant compositions from the earliest (third century B.C.E.) to the latest (third century C.E.) is best represented in the tables of Alypius (fourth–fifth centuries C.E.). He originally mapped each of the fifteen *tonoi* (transposition keys or modes) over three octaves and a tone and in three genera—diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic—showing the separate and distinct alphabetic symbols used for vocal (*leksis*) and instrumental (*krousis*) music. The enharmonic tables are incomplete, and essentially duplicate the chromatic symbols. Vocal notation employed the 24 letters of the standard Ionic Greek alphabet, with some letters altered and inverted. In the fragments the notation always appears above the text. Instrumental notation matched or was derived from letters in sixth–fifth century B.C.E. local Greek scripts, and appears to have been in use before vocal notation. Some rhythmic values were defined using additional signs; the sole surviving description of rhythmic notation, found in the Byzantine *Anonymus Bellermanni* treatise, includes five types of signs: duration, ligation, articulation, division, and rest. Aristoxenus mentioned the existence of musical and metrical notation in his *Harmonika*, but scoffs at its use. He remarked that simply having the ability to notate a meter or melody did not prove a person’s ability to understand its nature. Aristoxenus insisted that notation could not be the goal of harmonic science, and evidence shows that the tradition of music in ancient Greece and Rome remained oral, not written, regardless of the existence of a notational system.

**THE MUSICAL DOCUMENTS.** Music in ancient Greece and Rome was an oral tradition; songs, melodies,

and even complex compositions were learned by ear. Aristoxenus believed that notation was unimportant, and went so far as to dismiss it as useless for the understanding of music. Although a system of notation was well-established by the third century B.C.E., it was used only by a handful of professionals for a very long time; the Roman orator Quintilian (first century C.E.) omitted notation from his list of recommended readings for music education. Yet, a number of notated compositions survive in medieval manuscripts, papyri, and in stone inscriptions. Although a few pieces were already known and transcribed in the sixteenth century, most of the surviving music was not known or studied prior to the nineteenth century. Today, a respectable corpus of approximately sixty genuine fragments has so far been compiled; newly discovered notated pieces are being published on a regular basis. In the most recent century, a number of papyri have been recovered from mummy cartonnage dating to the Ptolemaic period in Egypt (third–second century B.C.E.) that contain snatches of notated music. The extant collection of fragments, which date from the fifth century B.C.E. to the fourth century C.E., is conveniently transcribed and explained (but not translated) in the *Documents of Ancient Greek Music*, edited by Egert Pöhlmann and Martin L. West. The corpus contains four fragments from the classical period (480–323 B.C.E.), fifteen of the late classical to early Hellenistic periods, three Late Hellenistic inscriptions from sanctuaries, and 39 fragments from the Roman period.

**TYPES OF DOCUMENTS.** Numerous different types of documents exist that show modern scholars different facets of the musical world. From the fifth century B.C.E., examples include a broken clay knee-guard for sewing, located in the Eleusis Museum, which was decorated with a painting of Amazons, one of whom was blowing a trumpet (Greek letters were painted between her body and the trumpet to imitate the sound of the trumpet-call.); remarks on the melody of Euripides, with an example from his tragedy *Orestes*, in the work *De compositione verborum* by Dionysius of Halicarnassus; and two papyrus fragments with notated music of Euripides' *Orestes* and *Iphigeneia in Aulis*. Late fifth century–third century B.C.E. compositions include fragments on papyri of unknown tragedy, and a hexameter hymn inscribed in stone discovered in the precinct of the healing god Asclepius at Epidauros. Examples from the second century B.C.E. include two substantial paeans (to Athenaïos and Limenios), inscribed on the south outer wall to the Athenian Treasury at Delphi, and the so-called “Hymn to the Carian god Sinuri” in two block fragments, published in 1945 C.E., but now missing. The last, and largest, group of extant musical documents comes from the Roman period: the grave stele of

Seikilos; several compositions by the emperor Hadrian's court musician Mesomedes of Crete; six Lydian instrumental pieces; a number of excerpts from tragedies and other hymns or paeans, lyric, and instrumental pieces of unknown origin; a selection from Menander's comedy *Perikeiromene* with some curious notation; and a Christian hymn to the Trinity, written around the end of the third century C.E. on the back of a list of grain deliveries from the first half of the century. Two examples of notated music provide a general idea of the type of fragments available for study in the collection: seven lines from the tragedy *Orestes* by Euripides (presented on a papyrus of the third century B.C.E.); and an epigram on the grave stele of Seikilos (second century C.E.).

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Music*

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### ARISTOXENUS

c. 370 B.C.E.–c. 304 B.C.E.

*Philosopher*  
*Music theorist*

**MOST IMPORTANT FIGURE IN MUSIC THEORY.**  
Known in antiquity as *o mousikos* (“the Musician”), Aris-

toxenus was born in Calabria, at Tarentum, Italy, around 370 B.C.E., and died in Athens around 304 B.C.E. He was the son of Mnesias, a musician from Tarentum, and studied music first with his father, and later with Lamprus of Erythrai in Mantinea, and the Pythagorean philosopher Xenophilus of Chalkis. Finally, he came to the Lyceum in Athens, and became a star pupil of Aristotle. According to the Byzantine lexicographer Suda, Aristoxenus was expecting to be named Aristotle's successor at the Lyceum, and was angry when his colleague Theophrastus was chosen instead. A prolific writer, Aristoxenus was said to have produced 453 essays and books on music, philosophy, history, and education. Unfortunately, nearly all of his works are lost, though some useful fragments are preserved in Plutarch, Athenaeus, and others.

**THEORIES.** Details of Aristoxenus' theoretical explanations of intervals, tetrachords, and the *sustema* (systems) of scales are found in the later works of Cleonides, Aristides Quintilianus, Gaudentius, and Bacchius. The Roman architect Vitruvius translated his works into Latin. The two most substantial and influential of Aristoxenus' books on music are *Harmonika stoikheia* (Harmonic Elements) and *Rhythmika stoikheia* (Elements of Rhythm). His explanation of *tonoi* (keys) influenced all later thought; he taught that all melodic scales are constructed of tetrachords (four contiguous notes forming a perfect fourth), which are either conjunct or disjunct, and if disjunct separated by a tone. His primary interest was to account for every kind of modulation, which he determined constituted a note, interval, or tetrachord common to two keys. He regarded the fourth and the fifth, not the octave, as the primary intervallic or scalar components of music and music theory.

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## PINDAR

c. 518 B.C.E.–c. 443 B.C.E.

*Poet*

**COMPOSER OF VICTORY ODES.** The poet Pindar was born in Thebes around 518 B.C.E., but traveled widely and was well-connected; he was hosted by, and wrote a

number of poems for, Hieron, tyrant of Syracuse, in Sicily, whom he considered a champion of Greek civilization. He was also friendly with various aristocratic families on the island of Aigina, near Athens, and wrote eleven odes for Aiginetan athletic victors. Roughly contemporary with the tragedian Aeschylus, Pindar was a prolific poet; he composed choral odes, hymns, paean, dithyrambs, processions, *partheneia* (maiden-songs), laments, and more, all intended for public performance; only his *epinikian*, or victory, odes have survived almost intact. These odes commemorated the victory of competitors in the four major athletic games held regularly in Greece: the Olympian, at Pisa in Elis, sacred to Zeus; the Pythian, at Pytho (Delphi), sacred to Apollo; the Isthmian, at the Isthmus of Corinth, sacred to Poseidon; and the Nemean, at Nemea in the Peloponnese, sacred to Zeus. These festivals are also known as Funeral Games, because each celebrates the life of a mythological hero considered by the locals of the region as their ancient king.

**FORM OF THE ODES.** When a victory was won, the winner (or his family, or a wealthy friend) commissioned Pindar to write an ode to be performed for the winner by a chorus of men or boys, trained to sing and dance, some time after the event. The contract stipulated that certain details about the victor be included; thus the odes often include specific allusions to the winner, his family, and his ancestors. Certain particulars must be included: the victor's name, type of competition and place with some allusion to the divinity associated with that area, and one or more myths of heroes that elevated the victor to heroic status himself. Despite the required elements, many passages in Pindar's poems seem personal and moralizing. The poetic structure consisted of triads of two identical stanzas, called "strophe" and "antistrophe." A few odes, called "monostrophic," contain no triads, but a series of identical stanzas. The poems were not always sung by the whole chorus; solo parts could be performed by chorus leaders, accompanied by the *kithara* and *phorminx* (types of lyres) and the *auloi* (reed pipes). Though the melodies are lost, Pindar often referred to his own music in his poems, mentioning specific melodies and modes by name; in his only surviving ode written for a victorious musician—Pythian Twelve—Pindar credits Athena with the invention of the composition played by the victor, Midas, on the *aulos*. He employed a wide variety of complex meters, which give a sense of his rhythms. He praised his art frequently in his poems, referring to his hymns as "honey-voiced," his odes as "a mix of pale honey with milk, and a liquid shining is on the mixture, a draught of song blown on Aeolian *auloi*."

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**CLAUDIUS PTOLEMY**

c. 108 C.E.–c. 165 C.E.

*Mathematician*  
*Music theorist*  
*Astronomer*

**CRITIQUED CURRENT THEORIES.** The *Harmonika* of Claudius Ptolemy is considered to be second only to Aristoxenus in importance to the understanding of Greek music theory. A well-respected geographer, astronomer, and mathematician, Ptolemy was born at Pelusium, Egypt, around 108 C.E., and died near Alexandria around 165 C.E. The lexicographer Suda says that he lived during the reign of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–180 C.E.); he worked in the cities Canopus and Alexandria, writing many scientific books; he is one of the founders of the field of astronomy. In the three books of the *Harmonika*, Ptolemy employed Pythagorean mathematical concepts in his explanation of tuning systems, sound, pitch, and consonance, but he carefully critiqued both the Pythagorean and Aristoxenian definitions, noting the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. He agreed with the Aristoxenian principle that the purpose of keys is to bring the different segments of the “Greater Perfect System” (different species of octave, each with its own particular character) into the most comfortable vocal register. He regarded the pitches forming the interval of an octave as homophones, and therefore functionally identical.

**DEVELOPED OWN THEORIES.** In Book II, Ptolemy developed his own theory of the *tonoi* (keys or scales), restructuring them to demonstrate his belief that the only perfect scale was one that contained all the species of the basic consonances. Thus, for Ptolemy, the octave was not a perfect scale, as “previous scholars” had asserted. Ptolemy’s book is full of impressive theoretical details (he must have had access to the great library at Alexandria); yet, the metaphysical view of music, expounded

by both the Pythagoreans and the followers of Aristotle, is evident; the book’s overall design treats music as a model for higher universal order and understanding.

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**PYTHAGORAS**

c. 580 B.C.E.–c. 500 B.C.E.

*Philosopher*  
*Scientist*  
*Mathematician*

**STUDIED MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE, AND PHILOSOPHY.** Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchus, was born in Samos in the mid-sixth century B.C.E., and was said to have died as a refugee in Metapontum, Italy. One of the most influential figures in Greek intellectual history, Pythagoras was both a philosopher of religion and a scientist, yet very little is known about the man himself; there are no written records. It is therefore impossible to tell how much of the Pythagorean tradition in mathematics, music, and science can be traced back to the man himself and his early followers, called Pythagoreans. As a philosopher, Pythagoras is said to have introduced the “doctrine of transmigration of souls”; as a mathematician, Pythagoras is credited with, among other discoveries, the “Pythagorean Theorem” in geometry.

**DISCOVERED MUSICAL CONSONANCES.** He also discovered the musical consonances, represented by the mathematical ratios of 2:1, 3:2, and 4:3 (the octave, perfect fifth, and perfect fourth). According to Pythagoras, the consonances of a fourth, fifth, and octave were models of *harmonia* (harmony); sounds and rhythms, which were ordered by numbers, exemplified and corresponded to the fitting-together (harmony) of the cosmos. Thus, the ratios, which were displayed in the *tetractys* (an equilateral triangle composed of ten dots), carried religious, as well as scientific, significance for early followers. The scientific application of Pythagorean mathematics appears early, in the *Sectio Canonis* (Division of the Canon), dating to fourth–third century B.C.E., and the acoustic notions of the Pythagoreans—that the same numerical laws that governed the universe also governed music and, by

extension, the soul—profoundly influenced Plato, Aristotle, and the later Greek and Latin music theorists. The treatment of Pythagorean theories of consonance and harmonics in the *Manuale harmonices* of Nicomachus (fl. 100–150 C.E.) and the *Harmonika* of Claudius Ptolemy (fl. 127–148 C.E.) represents the persistence of the Pythagorean tradition in later Greek music theory.

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## SAPPHO

c. 625 B.C.E.–c. 570 B.C.E.

*Lyric poet*

**LEADER IN MUSIC FOR YOUNG WOMEN.** Sappho was one of the most important lyric poets of the Archaic Period (sixth century B.C.E.). Little is known about her life, and only a small portion of her large output of work survives. She was born at Mytilene (or Eresus) on the island of Lesbos around 625 B.C.E. The ancient historian Strabo said that she was a contemporary of Alcaeus, another well-respected poet from Lesbos; a vase-painting, dating to about 480, depicts the two poets standing together, both holding the *barbitos* (low-pitched lyre) in their hands. The names of Sappho's family are known; she was married to wealthy Cercolas of Andros, and had a daughter, Cleis. Her family may have led a dangerously active political life, because Sappho mentioned exile in one of her poems, and a marble inscription reported that she spent her exile in Sicily sometime between 604–596. Over the centuries Sappho has been described as a school leader, chorus organizer, and a leader of a *thiasos* (a group of young women devoted to Aphrodite and the Muses), but the evidence for these occupations is scant. The most important information about Sappho comes from her poetry. She wrote choral poetry as well as monodic songs, and *epithalamia* (“wedding songs”). The subject of her poetry was young women; she wrote for them, and about them, in often erotic style, describing women's desires, passions, loves, and anguish. Like many other lyric poets, Sappho composed choruses for young girls, *parthenoi*,

and most likely trained her chorus and accompanied them on the lyre during their public performance. Her work was considered so valuable that the Alexandrians made collection of her poems in nine books, which survived through most of the Hellenistic and Roman periods; parts were still directly known in Byzantium in the twelfth century C.E. In the books, her poems are arranged by meter. She composed in dactylic pentameter, hexameter, mixed meter, and a type of meter that is named for her: the Sapphic stanza. The fragments of her poems reveal language that is witty, passionate, and melodious; “Fragment One,” Sappho's only complete poem, was admired by Dionysius of Halicarnassus for her melodic use of vowels and consonants, sense of euphony, and charm. Other readers emphasized the atmosphere of magic and incantation, the exotic settings, and the musicality of her lyrics.

#### SOURCES

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- Jane McIntosh Snyder, *The Woman and the Lyre: Women Writers in Classical Greece and Rome* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989).
- Eva Stehle Stigers, “Sappho's Private World,” in *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*. Ed. Helene Foley (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1981): 45–61.

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Music*

- Alypius, *Introductio musica* (Introduction to Music; fourth–fifth century C.E.)—This treatise on music theory, in three books, contains interesting material not found elsewhere, some of which may go back to the school of Damon. Based partly on Aristoxenus, and influenced by the Pythagoreans and Neo-Platonists, it contains some unique rhythmic and harmonic doctrines.
- Aristotle, *Politics, Poetics, and Problems* (c. 384–322 B.C.E.)—In these philosophical works, Aristotle analyzes the role of music in a civilized community, including the nature and function of different musical and poetic

forms and the production, perception, and properties of sound.

Aristoxenus, *Harmonika stoikheia* (Harmonic Elements); 375/360–320 B.C.E.)—This treatise was one of the most influential theoretical works on music in antiquity, known only today through a series of fragments and excerpts. It focused on the tetrachord system, *tonoi* (scales), and intervals, and formed the basis for the later technical “Aristoxenian” theorists.

Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* (The Learned Banquet; c. 192 C.E.)—The only extant work of this author describes, in fifteen books, the variety of the symposium (banquet) form, and includes a classification of drinking songs (*skolia*), and other types of musical entertainment.

Augustine, *De musica* (On Music; 387–389 C.E.)—In this work, the early Christian theologian follows the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions in applying the theory of ratios to verses of Latin poetry to argue that numbers and ratios allow the mind to transcend the sensual reality of sound, and rise to a knowledge of rational truth.

Bacchius Geron, *Eisagoge tekhnēs mousikēs* (Introduction to the Art of Music; third–fourth century C.E.)—This small but complex Aristoxenian handbook on music presents theory through a series of simple questions and answers.

Cleonides, *Eisagoge harmonike* (Introduction to Harmonics; second century C.E.)—This is the clearest and most concise summary of the technical details of Aristoxenus’ *Harmonika*.

Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Harmonikon enkhiridion* (Manual of Harmonics; fl. 100–150 C.E.)—This Pythagorean ap-

proach to harmonic theory uses material drawn from Aristoxenus and attempts to link the foundations of musical harmony to the principles of the universe. It is the only handbook of harmonics to have survived complete from the period between the *Sectio Canonis* and Ptolemy.

Plato, *Republic*, *Laws*, and *Timaeus* (c. 429–347 B.C.E.)—In these philosophical dialogues, Plato discusses the character (*ethos*) of music, and its role in moral education; he also deals with the Pythagorean analysis of musical structures, and the mathematical science of harmonics.

Plutarch [Pseudo], *De musica* (On Music; c. 50–120 C.E.)—Attributed to Plutarch, but generally agreed not to be written by him (hence, *pseudo*), this work, stylistically modeled on Plato’s *Symposium*, is a useful compilation of writings on music from the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E., notably the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Aristoxenus.

Claudius Ptolemy, *Harmonika* (Harmonics; fl. 127–148 C.E.)—This treatise is one of the most valuable systematic treatments of the mathematical theory of harmony, in three books; it includes a critical review and analysis of the Pythagorean and Aristoxenian theoretical models.

*Sectio Canonis* (Division of the Canon; fourth–third century B.C.E.)—This anonymous treatise, once erroneously attributed to Euclid, applies Pythagorean mathematics to many musical topics.

Theon of Smyrna, *ton kata to mathematikon kbresimon eis ten Platonos anagnosin* (On Mathematics Useful for the Understanding of Plato; fl. 115–140 C.E.)—This one surviving treatise is a type of Platonic handbook in three major sections: on arithmetic, on music, and on astronomy, which provides a summary of the Pythagorean and neo-Platonic harmonic theory.



chapter six

PHILOSOPHY

James Allan Evans

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	234	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	237	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>Aristotle on the Pythagoreans</i> (Aristotle describes the theories of the Pythagoreans) . . . . .	241
Beginnings of Greek Philosophy . . . . .	240	<i>Heraclitus the Misanthrope</i> (Diogenes Laertius describes Heraclitus' contempt for the Ephesians) . . . . .	243
Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans . . . . .	240	<i>Protagoras: The First Professional Teacher</i> (Diogenes Laertius explains the relativistic thought of Protagoras) . . . . .	249
Xenophanes, Heraclitus, and Parmenides . . . . .	242	<i>Socrates Recruits Xenophon</i> (Diogenes Laertius describes how Socrates recruited the disciple Xenophon) . . . . .	252
Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and the Atomists . . . . .	245	<i>Socrates' Domestic Life</i> (Diogenes Laertius relates several anecdotes from Socrates' marriage) . . . . .	253
The Atomic Theory . . . . .	247	Plato's Theory of Forms . . . . .	257
The Sophists . . . . .	248	<i>The Position of Women in Plato's Ideal State</i> (Plato considers the place of women in the public life of a state) . . . . .	259
Socrates . . . . .	250	Aristotle as a Biologist . . . . .	263
Plato . . . . .	254	<i>Marcus Aurelius on the Soul</i> (Marcus Aurelius discusses the properties of the rational soul) . . . . .	265
Aristotle . . . . .	260	<i>Diogenes Laertius on the Scholarch Arcesilaus</i> (Diogenes Laertius comments on the sceptic Arcesilaus) . . . . .	267
The Stoics . . . . .	264	<i>Diogenes the Cynic</i> (several examples of the wit of Diogenes) . . . . .	268
Other Philosophies in the Hellenistic World . . . . .	266	<i>The Maxims of Epicurus</i> (Diogenes Laertius shares ten maxims for a happy life by Epicurus) . . . . .	271
Epicurus . . . . .	269		
Neoplatonism . . . . .	272		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Aristotle . . . . .	273		
Epictetus . . . . .	275		
Epicurus . . . . .	275		
Plato . . . . .	276		
Plotinus . . . . .	277		
Thales . . . . .	278		
Zeno of Citium . . . . .	279		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	280		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Philosophy*

- 585 B.C.E. Greek natural philosophy begins with Thales of Miletus who held that water was the underlying substance of everything in the world.
- c. 546 B.C.E. Anaximander of Miletus (born 610 B.C.E.) writes the first Greek treatise in prose, setting forth his view that the origin of all things was the “Boundless” or the “Infinite” which he considered divine. He also speculates that the underlying substance of everything is air which becomes fire when rarefied and earth when condensed.
- 545 B.C.E. Greek philosopher Xenophanes of Colophon goes into exile and eventually settles in Elea, modern Velia, in southern Italy. He is the precursor of the Eleatic school of philosophy.
- 532 B.C.E. Polycrates becomes tyrant (dictator) of Samos; to escape his tyranny, Pythagoras leaves Samos and emigrates to Croton in southern Italy where he founds a society that is both a scientific school and a religious community.
- c. 515 B.C.E. Parmenides of Elea, a rigorous logician who argued that the real universe is without beginning or end, is born.
- c. 500 B.C.E. Heraclitus of Ephesus envisions the universe as a conflict of opposites which an eternal Justice holds in check. He develops a theory that Eternal Fire gave rise to all things.
- c. 493 B.C.E. Empedocles of Acragas in Sicily who  
–c. 433 B.C.E. lives in this period posits a universe in
- the shape of a sphere within which are four “roots,” or elements: fire, air, water, and earth. He believes that Love brings these elements together in an unending cycle in order to create, whereas Strife drives them apart in order to destroy.
- c. 490 B.C.E. Zeno of Elea, a pupil and friend of Parmenides, is born. He will become famous for the riddles he uses to refute the theories of opponents of the Eleatic School, as the followers of Parmenides are called.
- c. 480 B.C.E. Anaxagoras of Clazomenae comes to Athens where he remains for thirty years. He is the first philosopher to reside in Athens, beginning a long philosophical tradition in the city.
- c. 460 B.C.E. Democritus of Abdera, who lives in this period, puts forward the Atomic Theory which he adopts from his lesser-known master, Leucippus of Miletus.
- c. 370 B.C.E.
- 427 B.C.E. The philosopher Plato is born in Athens.
- c. 400 B.C.E. Diogenes of Sinope, also known as the “dog” (*kyon*), is born. He will become the founder of the Cynic sect.
- 399 B.C.E. Socrates is condemned to death on a charge of impiety by a court in Athens.
- 388 B.C.E. Plato meets the Pythagorean philosopher Archytas, ruler of Tarentum, and Dioynysius I, the tyrant of Syracuse. He also befriends Dionysius’ brother-in-law, Dion.
- 387 B.C.E.
- c. 386 B.C.E. Plato founds the Academy in Athens where he is to teach for the rest of his life.
- 367 B.C.E. Dionysius I dies, and his successor, Dion, invites Plato to Syracuse to instruct the young Dionysius II in philosophy and the art of ruling.
- 366 B.C.E. Plato is an uneasy guest of Dionysius  
–365 B.C.E. II, who exiles Dion and allows Plato to leave only after he promises to return.

- 361 B.C.E. Plato yields to a pressing invitation from Dionysius II to return to Syracuse, but Dionysius' interest in philosophy proves a passing fancy and after a year he allows Plato to return home.
- 357 B.C.E. Dion, whom Dionysius II had driven into exile, returns with an armed force, ousts Dionysius II, and takes control of the government of Syracuse.
- 354 B.C.E. Dion is assassinated. Dion's friends appeal to Plato and in response he writes his "Seventh Letter," advising them on how to frame a new constitution for Syracuse.
- 347 B.C.E. Plato dies and his nephew Speusippus succeeds him as head of the Academy.
- Aristotle leaves the Academy, perhaps out of disappointment that he did not succeed Plato, and goes to live at Assos in the Troad (the region around Troy) under the protection of Hermias of Atarneus who had taken advantage of the weakness of the Persian Empire to carve out a little independent kingdom for himself.
- 345 B.C.E. Hermias is captured and killed by the Persians. Aristotle leaves Assos for Mytilene on Lesbos where he carries on research in biology.
- 342 B.C.E. Aristotle undertakes the education of Alexander, the son and heir of Philip II, king of Macedon.
- 335 B.C.E. Aristotle returns to Athens, where he leases buildings outside the city and founds his school, the Lyceum.
- c. 325 B.C.E. Diogenes of Sinope, the founder of the Cynic School, dies and is succeeded by Crates as the chief Cynic.
- 323 B.C.E. Alexander the Great dies in Babylon, and when news of his death reaches Athens, there is a violent outbreak of anti-Macedonian sentiment. Aristotle whose friendship with Alexander, his former pupil, is well known, finds himself under attack.
- 322 B.C.E. Aristotle leaves Athens for Chalcis on the island of Euboea to escape a charge of impiety that is brought against him, and he dies there in the fall of the year. He leaves his papers to Theophrastus who succeeds him as head of the Lyceum.
- c. 317 B.C.E. Zeno of Citium in Cyprus comes to Athens and attaches himself to the Cynic philosopher Crates, Diogenes' successor.
- 306 B.C.E. Epicurus moves to Athens and buys a house and a garden, where he founds a school known as the *kepos* (the "Garden"); he lives there for the rest of his life and expounds Epicurean doctrine.
- 301 B.C.E. Zeno of Citium begins to give lectures at the *stoa poikile* (Painted Stoa) in Athens, thus founding the school of philosophy known as Stoicism.
- c. 269 B.C.E. The Academy founded by Plato enters a new phase, the "New Academy," under Arcesilaus, who interprets Platonism as scepticism and argues that since true knowledge is impossible, the best course is to suspend judgement.
- c. 144 B.C.E. The Stoic philosopher Panaetius comes to Rome and joins the circle of Roman *philhellenes* (lovers of all things Greek) gathered about Publius Scipio Aemilianus. He introduces the philosophy of Stoicism into Rome where it becomes the philosophy of choice for the Roman upper classes.
- 129 B.C.E. Panaetius becomes the head of the Stoa in Athens, initiating the development of the school known as the "Middle Stoa."
- 54 B.C.E. Marcus Tullius Cicero in Rome produces his *De Republica* (On the State), which proposes a constitution for a well-governed state.

- 52 B.C.E. Cicero starts to write his *De Legibus* (On the Laws), in which he discusses the Stoic idea of divinely sanctioned law based on reason.
- 45 B.C.E. Cicero begins to produce a series of books on philosophy, covering subjects such as perception, immortality, the problem of pain, the possibility of divination, determinism and the concrete application of moral principles.
- c. 5 B.C.E. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, author of several philosophic dialogues including the incomplete *De vita beata* (On the Happy Life) which expounds the Stoic theory of happiness, is born.
- c. 55 C.E. The Stoic philosopher Epictetus is born. His *Discourses* and *Enchiridion* (Handbook) will be two of the primary sources for information on Stoicism in modern times due to the fact that most other Stoic writings did not survive.
- 161 C.E. Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius ascends to power. His work, the *Meditations*, is the last great surviving statement of Stoic philosophy.
- 204 C.E. Plotinus, founder of Neoplatonism, is born in Egypt.
- c. 250 C.E. The Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblichus is born. He will subordinate philosophy into theurgy (“god-working”), which sought to connect the philosopher with divine power by oracles, magic, and mysticism.
- 270 C.E. Plotinus, who is suffering from a disfiguring disease which is probably leprosy, dies in Rome.
- 412 C.E. Proclus, who will become *diadochos* (head and Plato’s successor) of the Neoplatonic Academy in Athens, is born. The school will develop a pagan theology based on the philosophy of Plotinus and Plato under Proclus’ leadership.
- 529 C.E. The emperor Justinian closes down the Neoplatonic Academy in Athens as part of his policy of suppressing paganism.

## OVERVIEW of Philosophy

**SCANT EVIDENCE.** Greek philosophy has survived only in tantalizing fragments. The works of only one philosopher, Plato, have survived in their entirety. Much of Aristotle has been lost, and the scientific and philosophic treatises that have survived were not written for publication. Socrates who lived in Athens in the fifth century B.C.E., wrote nothing, although he gave Greek philosophy a new direction. Modern knowledge of him is dependent on two very different disciples, Plato and Xenophon, and a burlesque of his teachings by the comic poet, Aristophanes. The works of the philosophers before Socrates, the so-called “Presocratics” who speculated about the nature of the universe, are all lost. They are known by reputation, and by fragments of what they wrote, which are mostly quotations by later writers. One late writer in particular, Diogenes Laertius, wrote a work that is indispensable to modern knowledge of ancient Greek philosophy: *A History of Philosophy, or on the Lives, Opinions and Maxims of Famous Philosophers*, dating to the third century C.E. This work, plus the surviving fragments from the actual writings, provide enough information to recreate the thought of these Greek thinkers with some confidence and to demonstrate their importance. They began the long progression of speculation and philosophic thought that was continued in medieval and modern Europe as well as the world of Islam, and has now become the dominant intellectual tradition everywhere. In reconstructing the thought-world of the Greek philosophers, however, there is a strong temptation to “fill in the blanks” in such a way as to render their ideas too modern. Ancient criticism of the conventional Greek religion, for instance, should not be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that the author was irreligious or an atheist. They belonged to the background of their own day, and this was particularly true when they approached favorite subjects of speculation, such as the nature of the ideal state, and the character and education of the ideal ruler. Yet the contribution of Greek thought has been enormous: in the history of science it made the first steps towards the modern scien-

tific method, and in the fields of ethics and politics it is the underpinning of modern speculation.

**THE BEGINNINGS IN IONIA.** Greek philosophy began with speculation in the region of Ionia about the nature of the physical world. Miletus, located on the south-west coastline of modern Turkey, was the most important of the Ionian cities and it was there that Thales—an engineer, astronomer, mathematician, and a statesman, as well as a natural philosopher—had the intuition that a single substance underlay everything in the world that can be perceived with the senses. His hypothesis was that this substance was water. His disciple, Anaximander, suggested instead that it was something that he called the *apeiron*—the “Infinite” (or “Indefinite”)—a substance without boundaries. His follower, Anaximenes, in turn suggested that the underlying substance was *aer* (air), but with substance and weight. There was no place for traditional Greek religion in the theories of these Milesian thinkers, though it would be inaccurate to call them atheists. There is no denying, however, that their ideas challenged traditional religion with its anthropomorphic gods such as Zeus and his wife Hera, because they pinpointed natural causes for the physical world. A poet named Xenophanes from Colophon, a city neighboring Miletus asserted that the gods of the poets Homer and Hesiod were unsatisfactory as explanations of how creation happened. There is, he asserted, one supreme deity who never moves but who knows all and controls everything without effort by his thought.

**THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE.** Heraclitus of Ephesus, who was prominent around 500 B.C.E., continued in the footsteps of the Milesians. His underlying substance was not water or air, but fire. All things in the world, he argued, come into being in exchange for fire, in the same way as one buys goods in exchange for gold coin. The cause of movement in the world is the conflict of opposites that is controlled by eternal Justice. Conflict, therefore, is a creative force by which everything is constantly changing. The result of this constant state of impermanence is the only knowledge that matters—in fact, the only knowledge that is possible—is self-knowledge. Wisdom consists of comprehending the *logos*, by which Heraclitus seems to mean the rationale that underlies nature.

**THE RUTHLESS LOGIC OF PARMENIDES.** The Milesians and their followers all assumed that the universe was made of matter. Matter was the stuff from which everything was made. Thales’ hypothesis was that this stuff was water, and Anaximenes suggested a substance like air, but whatever it was, it had weight and substance. Even the fire of Heraclitus was matter. It

remained for Parmenides to point out the logical consequences of this assumption. Parmenides, who lived in the Greek colony of Elea (modern Velia) in southern Italy in the first half of the fifth century B.C.E., argued that everything is matter. He believed there could be no movement in the universe, for an object that moves must have empty space into which it can move, and there was no empty space. “What exists,” he pointed out, is all matter, and “what does not exist” is nothing. There is no such thing as “nothing” so space containing nothing cannot exist. Parmenides founded the Eleatic School on this theory, and argued that the perceived movement in the universe was a deception of human senses. According to Parmenides, no true knowledge can be gained from sensory perception.

**THE ATOMIC THEORY.** The challenge of Parmenides never received a completely satisfactory answer. One philosopher, Empedocles, argued that there were four elements—air, earth, fire, and water—that moved through each other through pores like the holes in sponges, always impelled by the alternating forces of Desire and Hate, that is, attraction and repulsion. But two thinkers developed another hypothesis that sounds almost modern. Leucippus and his follower Democritus argued that the universe was made up of atoms and void. The atoms were tiny particles of matter, like our molecules, which moved about in a void like the specks of dust (or “motes”) that can be seen moving in a sunbeam. Atoms had a skin like velcro, and so when they collided, they stuck together, thus forming the objects that we see about us. Trees, animals, even people, were all made of tightly packed atoms. Yet the atomic theory could remain only an hypothesis. There was no way of proving it, and “void,” which was nothingness, continued to seem illogical to many philosophers.

**THE SOPHISTS.** The Sophists mark a new departure in Greek philosophy. They were itinerant teachers who appeared upon the scene to meet a demand for higher education. Education had been an aristocratic preserve in archaic Greece—a young man of good family learned the rudiments of reading and writing. He learned and sometimes memorized the poems of the epic poet Homer, and might also learn how to play the lyre and perhaps some basic arithmetic. In the fifth century B.C.E. this education expanded to include speech making, particularly before the law courts and public assemblies. The itinerant teachers claimed to be able to impart that type of knowledge, and the art of “sophistry” came to be centered in Athens. Although none of the early Sophists were from that city, most of them spent some time there and gave lectures for which they charged fees. In their

teachings and speeches, the Sophists turned philosophy from an examination of the workings of the physical universe to issues of ethics and behavior, including the nature of goodness and justice.

**SOCRATES.** The Sophists provided the intellectual matrix which produced Socrates in Athens in the fifth century B.C.E. Socrates was born in Athens; his father was a stonecutter and his mother a midwife. He was sufficiently well-to-do, allowing him to fight in the Athenian army as a *hoplite*—a heavily-armed infantryman who had to have the wherewithal to supply his own armor. He was at first attracted to the theories of Anaxagoras, a philosopher who continued in the Milesian tradition, arguing that the source of creation was *Nous* (“Mind” or “Intelligence”), but Socrates soon found Anaxagoras’ theories unsatisfying because they could not be applied to everyday life. Socrates turned to ethical questions. He could be seen almost everyday in the public places in Athens, walking barefoot and conversing with people he encountered. He accosted Athenians who thought they knew how to define what was right or wrong, and cross-examined them. The conversations ended often with Socrates’ interlocutor discomfited and annoyed. Yet Socrates attracted large numbers of followers who appreciated his sharp mind. Sometimes they were only ambitious young men who wanted to improve their skill at argument, but among them were genuine disciples, and much of modern knowledge about Socrates comes from two of them: Plato and Xenophon. Xenophon was a voluminous writer who wrote a memoir on Socrates called the *Memorabilia* which provides valuable information about Socrates’ everyday life. Plato was a great philosopher in his own right, and in his many works Socrates acted as the spokesman for Plato’s ideas.

**PLATO.** Socrates was put to death in 399 B.C.E. on charges of atheism and corrupting the young, and after his execution, many of his disciples—Plato among them—left Athens for the safety of the neighboring state of Megara. Plato did not stay there long. He traveled, did a couple stints of service in the Athenian army, and wrote his early dialogues. In 390 B.C.E. he visited southern Italy and then Sicily, where he met the powerful tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius I, who soon tired of him and sent him back to Athens. Once there, he founded a school on the outskirts of Athens in a park sacred to the hero Academus, from whom the “Academy” got its name. It was intended as a school for statesmen, for Plato was deeply concerned about good government where true justice can exist, and his best-known work is his *Republic*, an ideal utopia where government is in the hands of “Guardians” who are trained in philosophy. On

Plato's death, his nephew Speusippus assumed the headship of the Academy, and it continued to be an intellectual force, though it wandered from Plato's teachings as time went on and became skeptical about the possibility of men acquiring true knowledge. Among the students at the Academy was a young man from Macedonia, Aristotle, who studied there for twenty years. He left when Plato died, and did not return to Athens until 335 B.C.E. During his absence from Athens, he lived for a period at the court of the Philip II, king of Macedonia, and he tutored Philip's son, Alexander, who would a few years later change the course of Greek history by conquering the Persian Empire and pushing his victorious army as far as India. Philip was assassinated in 336 B.C.E.; Alexander became king in his stead, and Aristotle returned to Athens to found the Lyceum.

**THE LYCEUM.** The Lyceum was a research institute, a product of Aristotle's wide-ranging mind. His interests included everything from the dialogues he wrote while a student at the Academy to his groundbreaking treatise on animals—a product of his biology research conducted after his departure from Athens. In the Lyceum he gave lectures, both to his students and to the public, and his surviving works seem to have been notes that he used to prepare his lectures. Those most admired nowadays are his *Ethics* and his *Metaphysics*. In the latter he analyzes the theories of the philosophers who came before him, and he is an important source for modern knowledge of the Presocratics. As much as Aristotle admired Plato, he disagreed fundamentally with him, particularly on the question of perception. Aristotle believed that the senses could provide reliable information about the world.

**EPICUREANS.** After Alexander the Great's conquests, two great philosophers settled in Athens and attracted students. One was Epicurus, who bought a house with a garden in which he formed a community with his students, both male and female. The aim of the Epicureans was happiness—not sensuous enjoyment, but a happiness based on contentment with one's situation. The watchword of the Epicureans was *lathe biosas*, which means "Live without attracting notice," and the "Garden," as Epicurus' school was called, was a retreat from the vicissitudes of life. Fear of death was banished, for Epicurus borrowed the atomic theory and used it to show that the body and soul were both made of atoms which would dissolve upon death. There was no afterlife and hence no reason to fear any tortures in the Underworld.

**STOICISM.** Stoicism was the philosophical belief that combined the philosophies of the Cynics—those who valued all things natural—and the Academics—those

who saw wisdom and knowledge as the key to a perfect society. Stoicism heavily favored the natural world, wanting to enjoy all the things that life had to offer, but believed that this natural world must be tempered by a rational mind. The Stoics believed that institutions such as government, religion, and law were unnecessary if everyone in a society could reach complete rationality (which the Stoics believed should be the goal of every society). Stoicism's founder, Zeno of Citium, lectured in the *stoa poikile* (Painted Stoa) which stood at the southern edge of the marketplace of Athens, and it was from this spot that Stoicism derived its name. In the second century B.C.E. Stoicism became the dominant philosophy of the Hellenistic world and the Roman Empire. In 144 B.C.E. the Stoic Panaetius came to Rome and joined the Scipionic circle, a group of Roman philhellenes who gathered about the statesman Scipio Aemilianus. These Roman aristocrats became enamored of Stoic doctrines, and Stoicism became the philosophy of choice of the Roman elite. The last great surviving Stoic work is the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher-emperor who died in 180 C.E.

**CICERO.** The Romans never took philosophy very seriously. Young men might have dabbled in it as part of their education, but once they entered the workaday world, they turned to more practical matters. Typical was Seneca the Younger (c. 3 B.C.E.–65 C.E., the emperor Nero's tutor whom Nero forced to commit suicide when he outgrew his tutelage; on his essays he advocated the precepts of Stoicism and in his own life followed none of them. Still, Rome produced one exceptional student of philosophy: Marcus Tullius Cicero. Cicero (106–42 B.C.E.) was a man of many talents. He was a lawyer and a statesman as well as an accomplished orator, the greatest that Rome produced. He often wrote on political science and rhetoric, and also tried his hand at poetry, but was not as successful. Near the end of his life, beginning in March of 45 B.C.E., he produced a remarkable series of books on various aspects of philosophy. These included works on immortality, perception, Stoic logic, the problem of pain, the possibility of divination, and others. He wrote partly for self-comfort, for his beloved daughter Tullia had just died. He was not an original philosopher, and he tended to pick and choose his philosophies—that is to say, he was an eclectic. If he had any preference, it was for the Sceptics, who denied the possibility of knowledge, though Cicero leaned towards the branch of Scepticism that allowed likelihood, meaning that there were likely or probable truths. Yet most of all, Cicero shows the attitude of a well-read Roman towards philosophy. It was a personal thing, a comfort in time of stress.

**THE NEOPLATONISTS.** The last progeny of Greek philosophy was the Neoplatonic School, founded by an Egyptian, Plotinus, who moved to Rome in the middle of the third century C.E. His starting point was Plato, who had written in his *Republic* of what he called the “Good.” For Plotinus, the “Good” was the “One,” and between the “One” and the world of material objects there were three levels of reality: the world-intelligence, the world-soul, and nature. With Plotinus, philosophy began to move into the field of theology, and his followers went even further. Neoplatonism rejuvenated the Academy in Athens that claimed to go back to Plato’s Academy, and in this Neoplatonic Academy, pagan philosophy made its last stand. It was closed down by imperial decree in 529 C.E.

## TOPICS in Philosophy

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### BEGINNINGS OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY

**MILETUS.** Greek philosophy began in a city-state on the coast of south-west Turkey: Miletus, which claimed that it was founded by a city on Crete called Milatos—probably Mallia on the north coast of Crete—in the Minoan period. If so, the Minoan foundation did not survive the catastrophe that overtook the Bronze Age civilization about 1200 B.C.E., and Miletus was refounded by Ionian Greeks during the age of migrations in the eleventh century B.C.E. The city prospered, and civic life was as turbulent as it was in most city-states in the Early Archaic Period of the seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E. Around 600 B.C.E., Miletus’ independence was threatened by her neighbor, the Lydian Empire. The city of Lydia was ruled by a strongman—a “tyrant” as the Greeks called such men—named Thrasylbulus, and he led the resistance to Alyattes, king of Lydia, who harried the Milesians for eleven years. In the end Alyattes made peace and alliance with them but soon had to turn his attention to his eastern frontier where he faced the aggressive empire of the Medes who had destroyed the Assyrian Empire with some help from Babylon and were now expanding into Asia Minor. In 585 or 584 B.C.E., the Lydian and Median armies met at the frontier of Lydia, the Halys River which flows into the Black Sea. Just as they were on the verge of battle, there was an eclipse of the sun. A young man from Miletus, Thales, who was there among the Milesian allies supporting Alyattes, was said to have foretold the eclipse. Modern scholars find this story hard to believe, but it is clear that this man

would be the founder of Greek natural philosophy—that is, speculation about nature and the natural causes of what occurs in the cosmos.

**THALES, ANAXIMANDER, AND ANAXIMENES.** Thales believed that everything in the world is made of matter which might take various forms, be it solid, liquid or gas. The one matter that he knew could appear in all these forms was water. If heat was applied to ice, it became water, and heat applied to water produced steam that in turn could condense and return to water. Thales’ disciple Anaximander carried Thales’ speculation a step further. He suggested that the substance underlying all natural phenomena was not water but rather something that he called the *apeiron*—the “Infinite” (or “Indefinite”)—matter that had no boundary. He argued that the world was a cylinder with a flat top that provided men with living space. It floated freely in space, equally distant from all things, and thus without any need of support. Anaximander’s thoughts were daring and almost modern, but his follower Anaximenes abandoned his concept of the *apeiron* and suggested instead that the primary substance of the universe was *aer*—the Greek word for “air.” It is clear that Anaximenes’ *aer* is more than mere “air,” however. Rather, it is a kind of mist out of which denser substances are formed by condensation, much as felt can be made from wool by the process of felting. For Anaximenes, *aer* was a material substance. Unlike the *apeiron* of Anaximander, it could be defined, and later natural philosophers who argued that the universe was constructed of matter looked back on Anaximenes as the last great thinker of the Milesian School who brought the speculation that Thales began to its natural conclusion.

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### PYTHAGORAS AND THE PYTHAGOREANS

**THE LIFE OF PYTHAGORAS.** Pythagoras, perhaps best known for his theorem on triangle angles and



lengths, left behind him a great reputation as not only a mathematician, but also as a philosopher and cult figure. Yet he is an indistinct personality, veiled in the shadows of legends that grew up around him. He was born on the island of Samos off the coast of modern Turkey in the first half of the sixth century B.C.E. and he was the son of an engraver of gemstones. In 532 B.C.E. a Samian named Polycrates seized control of the government of Samos and established himself as a tyrant. Polycrates maintained a splendid court and ruled like a pirate king, living on the fringe of the Persian Empire which would eventually, around 517 B.C.E., overthrow him, but during his heyday no cargo ship in the southern Aegean Sea was safe from his marauding warships. Pythagoras, it is reported, left Samos to escape Polycrates' dissolute court, and emigrated to southern Italy, to the Greek city of Croton, modern Croton. The Greeks had founded a number of colonies in the region: not only Croton, but also Sybaris, Locri, Metapontum, and Rhegium. These colonies battled each other for the rich farmland of the area; when Pythagoras reached Croton, it had just suffered a defeat at the hands of its smaller neighbor, Locri. The rich Crotoniates, humiliated by their defeat, were ready for Pythagoras' austere teachings. He gathered about him a brotherhood of Pythagoreans who were both scientists and mystics with secret doctrines and curious taboos; Pythagoreans wore white clothes to worship the gods and avoided eating beans, to name only two of the taboos that governed their lives. The Pythagorean circle soon dominated the aristocratic ruling class in Croton. The Pythagorean brotherhood became a force in the politics of the Greek cities in southern Italy until there was a violent reaction against their high-handed oligarchic rule that aroused strong resentment. Pythagoreans were massacred, and Pythagoras himself had to flee. He went to neighboring Metapontum where he died in exile. Pythagoreans remained active in southern Italy, continuing their scientific inquiries. It was a Pythagorean in the first half of the fourth century B.C.E., Archytas of Tarentum, who was recognized in the Greek world as the founder of mechanics, the branch of physics that deals with motion.

#### THE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS OF PYTHAGORAS.

Pythagoras introduced a new vision of the fate of human beings after death: the doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul from one body to another. The traditional religion of the Greeks which is reflected in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer taught that humans differed from the gods in that human life was short, whereas the gods never died. Pythagoras taught that the soul was reborn after death and went through

#### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

#### ARISTOTLE ON THE PYTHAGOREANS

**INTRODUCTION:** Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* gives a summary of the doctrines of the philosophers who were active before his time. When he reaches the Pythagoreans, he emphasizes their fascination with mathematics, which seemed to hold the key to the secrets of the universe. He describes their researches as follows.

**SOURCE:** Aristotle, *Metaphysics, Books I-IX*. Book I. Trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996): 33.

a cycle of rebirths until it attained the immortality that hitherto only the gods enjoyed. The details of Pythagoras' original doctrine cannot be recovered now, for later philosophers added their own insights. The question of whether there was a set number of rebirths that the soul had to experience before it reached a blessed state was answered by the poet Pindar, for instance, who wrote that if a soul avoided injustice for three lives, it would attain a marvelous existence in the Isles of the Blessed. Philosophers differed on whether the transmigrating soul was the same soul that governed a person's sentience and activity during his lifetime; Plato thought it was, but the philosopher Empedocles thought that it was not the *psyche* (soul) that transmigrated but the *daimon* (spirit). The

doctrine of transmigration that Pythagoras taught his followers pioneered a new field of speculation about life after death. Not everyone was impressed. Pythagoras' contemporary, the poet and philosopher Xenophanes, mocked the doctrine with a story in which Pythagoras urges a man to stop beating his dog, recognizing in the dog's yelps of pain the soul of a dead friend.

**THE COSMOLOGY OF PYTHAGORAS.** Pythagoras' theory of the nature of the universe—his cosmology—was influenced by the Milesian philosophers, Anaximander and Anaximenes. Anaximander's "Infinite" and Anaximenes' "Limitless Air" corresponded to what Pythagoras called the "Dark," which is cold, dense, without light, and without boundaries. Yet "Light" also exists, the opposite of the limitless "Dark," and it has form and thus it has limits, for without limits, matter is by definition formless. Portions of the limitless "Dark" are attracted to the "Light" where they receive form and limit. The Pythagoreans conceived of the "Light" as a living, breathing thing, and from the portions of the "Dark" which "Light" breathes in, the celestial bodies are formed. The celestial bodies numbered ten, and they revolved from east to west around a central fire. The sun reflects light from the central fire and thus provides Earth with light and warmth. Thus the cosmos consists of the central fire, Earth, the moon, the sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and counter-earth which seems to serve no other purpose than to make the number of heavenly bodies total ten, which the Pythagoreans considered a sacred number. At the very limit of the cosmos were the fixed stars. Except for these fixed stars, the heavenly bodies moved around the central fire, and since moving objects can produce sound, Pythagoras assumed that *harmonia* existed in the universe. *Harmonia* was the word for the octave-system of music he developed according to mathematical ratios. Hence, arose the Pythagorean theory of the "music of the spheres," though it is not at all certain that Pythagoras himself thought of the heavenly bodies as spheres.

**THE NEOPYTHAGOREANS.** Pythagoras came to be regarded as the archetypal philosopher by the end of the fourth century B.C.E., and the followers of Plato and Aristotle absorbed many of his ideas. But his reputation was such that there appeared forged documents attributed to him from the third century B.C.E. onwards, and their numbers grew in the first century B.C.E. when a sect which modern scholars call the "Neopythagoreans" was founded. Neopythagorean doctrine owes more to Plato than Pythagoras. The Neopythagoreans built up a cult around Pythagoras so that he became a legendary semi-divine sage whom the pagans in the Christian era

put forward as a rival for Christ. It is not always easy to separate the Neopythagorean sage from the semi-legendary but nonetheless historical figure of Pythagoras.

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#### XENOPHANES, HERACLITUS, AND PARMENIDES

**XENOPHANES OF COLOPHON.** Xenophanes was one of the first philosophers to promote monotheism in Greece, and was the founder of Eleatic philosophy—the belief that above everything in the world there is an unchanging, everlasting "One." He did not define this "One" in his own writings, but many of his later followers, such as Plato and Aristotle, would attempt to steer this concept towards a belief in one God, contrary to the Greek belief of many different gods. Xenophanes was a native of Colophon, a city on the western fringe of Asia Minor, which he left when it was conquered by Persia about 546 B.C.E. He would spend the rest of his life traveling the Greek world. He had a close connection with Elea, modern Velia in southwest Italy, which was founded by Ionian Greeks fleeing the Persian conquest. Xenophanes was an accomplished writer whose influence was immense in the intellectual world of the western Greeks, among the Greek cities in Sicily and southern Italy. He criticized Homer and Hesiod for their portrayal of the gods. They were wrong, Xenophanes asserted, to show the gods in human form with human

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HERACLITUS THE MISANTHROPE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Heraclitus of Ephesus, famous as the site of the great Temple of Artemis which was considered one of the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World,” was famous for his disdain of the masses and his cryptic utterances about the nature of the universe. He was a descendant of Androcles, the founder of Ephesus and as such inherited the title *basileus* (king), which denoted a civic priesthood rather than a political office, but he rejected it. Diogenes Laertius, writing in the third century c.e., preserves stories about him which illustrate his contempt for his fellow Ephesians as well as the thinkers and the poets—including Homer—who were his predecessors or his contemporaries.

Heraclitus was possessed of a haughty and arrogant character, as is clear from his writings, where he says, “Great learning does not make for intelligence; if it did, it would have instructed Hesiod, and Pythagoras, and likewise Xenophanes and Hecataeus. For the only piece of real wisdom is to know the *logos* (the intelligence that sustains human laws) which will by itself govern everything on every occasion. He used to say, too, that Homer ought to be expelled from the contest (for wisdom) and Archilochus as well. He also used to say, “It is more necessary to extinguish arrogance than to put out fire.” Another of his sayings was, “People should defend their law as much as their city walls.” He also upbraided the Eph-

esians for having banished his companion, Hermodorus, saying, “The Ephesians deserve to have all their young men put to death and those who are adolescents exiled from the city, for they have banished Hermodorus, the best man among them, saying, ‘Let no one of us be outstanding, and if there be such a person, let him go to another city and another person.’”

When he was requested to make laws for the Ephesians, he refused, because the city was already immersed in a thoroughly bad constitution. He withdrew to the temple of Artemis with his children and began to play dice, and when the Ephesians all flocked around him, he said, “You wretches! What are you gaping at? Isn’t better to do this than to meddle in public affairs in your company?”

Finally he became a complete misanthrope, and spent his time roaming the mountainsides, living off plants and grasses, and as a result, he developed dropsy (a build-up of fluid in the cells of the body). So he returned to the city and asked the doctors a riddle: could they produce a dry season after wet weather? But they did not understand him, and so he shut himself up in a cow stable, and covered himself with manure, hoping to make the excess of fluid evaporate from him by the warmth this produced. But this treatment did him no good, and he died, having lived for seventy years.

**SOURCE:** Diogenes Laertius, “Heraclitus of Ephesus,” in *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Trans. C. D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853): 376–377.

faults, though it was natural to do so; oxen and lions, if they had hands, would draw their gods as oxen and lions. Xenophanes taught instead that there was a single supreme divine being who, without moving, controlled the universe through his intellect. Xenophanes had a gift for observation that not all Greek intellectuals shared. He found seashells and fossilized sea-creatures in rocks and inferred that there was once a time when the sea covered the land, and hence the earth must have been subject to periods of flooding and drying out. He may even have written a treatise on the subject.

**THE ETERNAL FIRE OF HERACLITUS.** Heraclitus of Ephesus was inspired by Xenophanes’ idea of an everlasting unchanging “One,” but like many philosophers of his time did not think this “One” was a being or a person, but was instead a basic material that was transformed in some way into other kinds of material. Thales of Miletus had pinpointed water as that basic material and Anaximenes had thought it was air; Heraclitus chose fire. Fire, he claimed, was an infinite mass which was

eternal—no divine power created it—and it was kindled and extinguished according to fixed measures. The kindling and quenching of fire maintained the world order. Heraclitus came to this conclusion after observing how flames, flickering in constant motion, transformed wood into ashes and smoke, and yet the fire maintained its own identity as fire. Once it was quenched, it could be rekindled. Like fire, Heraclitus’ universe was subject to constant change. Everything was in constant motion. One famous saying of Heraclitus was that a person cannot step twice into the same river, for new water is constantly being carried past him by the flow of the stream, and hence the river is never entirely the same from one minute to the next. Yet, like fire, the river itself continues to exist.

**THE UNITY OF OPPOSITES.** Heraclitus’ teachings were notoriously obscure, but he was identified in the ancient world with a number of doctrines. One doctrine maintained that the world was in a state of continual flux; his saying, “Everything flows,” made the universe

akin to a moving stream. He also believed in the unity of opposites: things that seem to be opposites are actually aspects of the same thing. This unity is demonstrated in the seeming opposites of “heat” and “cold” which are interdependent: “cold” is the absence of “heat.” Once the continual flux that never ceases in the world removes “heat,” we have “cold.” “What is cool becomes warm and what is warm becomes cool,” Heraclitus wrote. So the young and the old are aspects of the same, and so are the living and the dead, for the one becomes the other. One of Heraclitus’ axioms reads, “The road up and the road down are the same”—meaning there is a single road with two-way traffic. It is the tension between opposites that allows living things to exist, just as the string of a lyre will sound the correct note when it is placed under the right degree of tension by drawing it in opposite directions. This interaction of opposites, which Heraclitus identified as strife, is a creative force, and this belief probably explains one strange assertion of his: “War is the father of all and king of all.” Everything is created and passes away through strife between opposing forces. The world is a mass of conflicting tensions but, at the same time, these contrary forces are bound together by a strict unity. The strife between them results in a sort of balance which Heraclitus identified as justice, and justice maintains order—hence Heraclitus asserted that the sun would keep its allotted course in the heavens, for otherwise the Furies, the agents of Justice, would punish it. The unity of opposites is the central feature of the *logos* that Heraclitus proclaimed.

**THE LOGOS.** Many of Heraclitus’s views on the *logos* are attributed to his study of Xenophanes. *Logos* is a word with many meanings. It means “word”—not “word” in the strictly grammatical sense, but rather “word” as a vehicle expressing thought, and so it comes to mean the thought itself. It is the wisdom of the mind expressed in speech. For Heraclitus, the word *logos* seems to have expressed the Intelligence that directs the manifold changes in the world. It was both willing and unwilling to be called Zeus, according to one of Heraclitus’ cryptic utterances. The *logos* that Heraclitus proclaimed would continue to haunt philosophy and theology as well. In the early Christian era, some thinkers considered Heraclitus a Christian before his time because of his emphasis on *logos*, a Christian synonym for Jesus Christ derived from the opening verse of the Gospel of St. John: “In the Beginning was the *Logos* (the Word) and the *Logos* was with God and the *Logos* was God.” In the Roman period, the Stoic philosophers embraced Heraclitus because his doctrine of eternal fire that was alternatively kindled and quenched seemed to fit their

belief that the world passed through cycles, each of which ended in fiery destruction. Yet Heraclitus was neither a proto-Stoic nor a proto-Christian, though his eccentric lifestyle and his oracular utterances mark him out as almost as much a religious teacher as a natural scientist.

**PARMENIDES OF ELEA.** While Xenophanes and Heraclitus furthered the idea of the everlasting element that underlies all things, it was Parmenides, born in Elea about 515 B.C.E., who brought the line of speculation that began with Thales and Anaximander to its logical conclusion. All the Ionian philosophers who speculated about nature took for granted that there was a primary substance such as water, air, or fire that could take different forms. They left no place for nothingness. The Greeks had no symbol for “zero.” “Nothing” was something that could not be defined or expressed; the opposite of “that which exists” is “that which does not exist.” Parmenides pointed out the consequences of this line of thought. In the first place, “that which exists” cannot have been created for if it were, it would have to be created out of either something or nothing. Nothing does not exist and so “that which exists” cannot not have been created out of it. Nor can it have been created out of something, for the only “something” is “that which exists.” Nor can anything else besides “what exists” be created, for there is no empty space where such creation could take place. Parmenides refuted all accounts of creation with a simple principle that could not be contradicted: “Out of nothing there is nothing created.”

**THE UNIVERSE OF PARMENIDES.** Thus for Parmenides “that which exists” is matter that is continuous and indivisible, and therefore the universe must be a continuous, indivisible *plenum*, that is, a space filled with matter. The plenum cannot move, for if it did, it would have to move into empty space—a vacuum, the opposite of a plenum—and empty space is “nothingness,” which does not exist. The plenum must be finite, with definite boundaries, and spherical, for matter cannot have direction, and that can be true only in a sphere. Within the plenum there can be no movement, for if an object moves, then there must be some empty space into which it can move, and there is no empty space. So the evidence of our eyes that tells us that things in the world that we see *do* move must be an illusion. The messages that our senses send to our brain about the nature of the world must be wrong. The alternative would be to believe that the underlying assumption of all the philosophers from Thales to Heraclitus—that the world of the senses was made from some basic matter such as water, air, or even the “boundless” of Anaximander—had to be wrong.

**ZENO'S RIDDLES.** Zeno, born around 495 B.C.E. was a favorite of Parmenides, and he made it his business to drive home the logical conclusion of the Eleatic school of philosophy that motion was a mere illusion. The paradoxes by which he drove home the logic of the Eleatics were famous. One was the paradox of the arrow that is shot from a bow. The arrow must either be moving in the place where it is or where it is not, and it cannot be moving in the place where it is, or it would not be there. Nor can it be moving in a place where it is not, for it is not there. Therefore the moving arrow is stationary. To put it another way, the apparent motion of the arrow is like a moving picture, which is actually a succession of still pictures that are fed rapidly through a projector and produce the illusion of motion. In fact, at every point in its trajectory, the arrow is actually at rest and what is at rest at every point is not moving. Zeno used this deduction as proof that Parmenides was right: there is no motion. The Greek philosophers had no solution to this paradox, and the modern world had to wait until Sir Isaac Newton discovered differential calculus before Zeno's error could be discovered. Another famous paradox proposed by Zeno was that of Achilles, a legendary Greek hero, and the Tortoise. Achilles and a tortoise run a race, and the tortoise has a head start. Achilles cannot overtake the tortoise, for when he reaches the point where the tortoise started, it has already moved on to further point, and when Achilles reaches that point, the tortoise has already moved further on, and so on through an infinite series which has no end. There is no final term to this infinite series and so Achilles can never pass through the final term. Yet here, Zeno's logic ultimately proved itself faulty, for it is a fair question to ask why, if there is no final term, does Achilles need to pass through it? It cannot be necessary for Achilles to pass through a non-existent final term to overtake the tortoise. Yet the relentless logic of the Eleatic philosophers was hard to counter.

**MELISSUS OF SAMOS.** One of the major flaws in the universe of Parmenides was the idea of a plenum with a finite boundary. If there was nothing whatsoever beyond the boundary, what happened if a person went to the outer edge of the universe, kicked a hole through its skin, and thrust his foot into nothingness, which does not exist? Melissus of Samos, who lived in the mid-fifth century B.C.E. and was the last member of the Eleatic School, attempted an answer. He defended the basic doctrine of the Eleatics, but proposed a plenum without a finite boundary, so that the universe was infinite. So no one could kick a hole through the boundary of the universe, for there was no boundary. Yet there was still no place

for movement. Melissus had to deny that the senses could yield us true knowledge, for the intelligence that our eyes report to our brains indicates that there are bodies in motion in the world about us. The Eleatics denied real existence to the "phenomena"—that is, to the objects that appear to us as actual—and any thinker who wanted to save the phenomena had to devise an argument that countered their uncompromising logic.

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## EMPEDOCLES, ANAXAGORAS, AND THE ATOMISTS

**THE IDEA OF FOUR ELEMENTS.** Empedocles attempted to find an escape from the logical conclusions of the Eleatic philosophers. Born in the early fifth century B.C.E. in Sicily, Empedocles took on many roles before becoming a philosopher. For a short time he was a politician, and then he turned his attention to educating people on the topics of medicine and religion. When he embarked on his own study of philosophy, he held two very important views. First, he abandoned the accepted belief that all philosophers had held since Thales: that all matter was derived from a single underlying substance. Instead he theorized that the world, as it is known, is due to the mixing and separation of four elements: earth, air,

fire, and water, which Empedocles called “roots.” Second, he accounted for the blending and the separation of the elements by theorizing the existence of two different forces that blend and separate called Love and Strife—attraction and repulsion. The first caused the elements to blend together and created the physical world, whereas Strife forced the elements apart and caused destruction.

**LOVE AND STRIFE.** Empedocles compared the blending of the elements to what a painter does when he mixes his basic colors: by combining his colors, he produces new tints. So in the universe, which Empedocles, like Parmenides, imagined as a sphere, the elements are mixed together by the attractive force of Love in their proper ratios to form concrete objects; human bones, for instance, were two parts water, four parts fire, and two parts earth. This blending of the elements results in genesis and growth in the world of the senses, whereas the separation of the elements results in death, destruction, and decay. Strife is on the outside of the sphere but in due time it penetrates it, driving Love towards the center of the sphere. Gradually the four elements separate from each other. Death and decay occurs. Then the opposite process begins: Love, which has been driven into the center of the sphere, begins to expand, driving out Strife. This never-ending cycle is like the flux and reflux of blood from the heart, or the action of breathing air into the lungs and then expelling it. All the objects that can be seen are unstable compounds. Blending the elements brings about genesis and the creation of new things, and the dissolution of the mixture of elements brings about their decay.

**THE PROBLEM OF MOTION.** Empedocles still had to explain how this blending of the elements took place. The process implies movement, and Empedocles accepted Parmenides’ concept of a sphere as a plenum in which there was no movement for lack of space in which to move. Empedocles explained that there were “pores” in the elements that allowed them to move together and coalesce. The Greek for “pores” is *poroi*, passageways, like the holes in a sponge. These “pores” provided passageways so that the elements could move into each other and create unstable compounds, and then move apart and destroy them as the endless cycle of cosmic change.

**ANAXAGORAS OF CLAZOMENAE.** Anaxagoras, a contemporary of Empedocles, took up Empedocles’ theory of blending elements and completed it by describing what caused motion in these elements. Anaxagoras, born in Clazomenae in the early fifth century B.C.E., was a man of privilege from a wealthy background. He gave up a good deal of his possessions and lands to study sci-

ence and philosophy, to the point that he left Clazomenae after 470 B.C.E. and settled in Athens. He stayed there for some forty years until he was driven into exile on a charge of impiety. Much like Empedocles, Anaxagoras asserted that the Greeks were wrong to speak of genesis and destruction; instead they should call genesis a “blending together,” and destruction “decomposition.” Empedocles spoke of “elements” whereas Anaxagoras spoke of “seeds.” His “seeds,” however, were not the same as Empedocles’ “roots.” Rather, they were themselves compounds, each with a fixed shape, color, and taste, and each containing a fixed number of *dynameis*—the word means “powers” or “capabilities.” The ration of *dynameis* within each seed is a fixed amount, and they tend to exist in pair of opposites, such as hot *dynameis* coupled with cold ones, heavy with light ones, and moist with dry ones. A stone is made up of seeds with more heavy *dynameis* than light ones and more dry than moist ones—hence its solidity. Every seed has a portion of everything within it, no matter how minutely it may be divided.

**THE POWER OF “MIND.”** Anaxagoras realized that his theory of “seeds” was incomplete. He still needed a source of motion that allowed this blending and uncoupling of the “seeds.” Anaxagoras, however went a step beyond Empedocles and created a force called the *Nous* (Mind), which served as the source of knowledge for the human intelligence. It was not an incorporeal force, however, but a kind of unmixed fluid that did not have portions of other things in it. It coupled the “seeds” and uncoupled them by setting them in rotation. That is, “Mind” established a kind of vortex which began in the center of the “seed” and then spread further and further, evidently somewhat like the ripples that a stone thrown into a tranquil lake produces on the surface of the water. Anaxagoras did not expand further on his concept of the *Nous*, and this left future philosophers dissatisfied with the theory. Although initially attracted to Anaxagoras’ philosophy in his youth, Socrates complained that Anaxagoras thought of “Mind” simply as a mechanical device to get motion started in his universe, and once that was done, he had no further use for it.

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## THE ATOMIC THEORY

### ESCAPING THE LOGIC OF THE ELEATIC SCHOOL.

Both Empedocles and Anaxagoras attempted to evade the ruthless logic of Parmenides and the Eleatic School of philosophers who argued that there are two opposites, “that which exists,” which is matter, and “that which does not exist,” which obviously does not exist. Since the world is composed of matter which does exist, it fills all the available space. Thus there can be no motion, for motion implies that there is empty space into which an object in motion can move, and there is no empty space. Parmenides’ follower, Zeno, proved to his own satisfaction that an arrow in flight only appears to move. In actuality, at any given point in its apparent flight, it is at rest. To escape from this logic, someone had to produce a theory to prove that empty space was not the same thing as the Eleatic’s “that which does not exist.” The philosopher who provided the necessary leap of imagination to get over this Eleatic idea was Leucippus of Miletus, the same city that fathered Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes who had started the long tradition of Greek speculation about the nature of the universe. Unlike his predecessors, he is a shadowy figure, overshadowed by his more famous follower Democritus to such an extent that some Greeks even denied his existence. He was recognized, however, by such philosopher greats as Aristotle, who headed the school known as the Lyceum in Athens of the fourth century B.C.E., and his successor Theophrastus. Both men referred to Leucippus as the author of a work on the atomic theory titled the *Great World System*, although other philosophers—notably Epicurus (342–271 B.C.E.) and his followers—attributed this theory to Leucippus’ pupil, Democritus of Abdera. Although Democritus was a prolific writer, none of his works survive to the present day.

### THE ATOMS OF LEUCIPPUS AND DEMOCRITUS.

Leucippus and Democritus conceived of particles of matter called “atoms” which moved through space like the flecks of dust that can be seen moving in a sunbeam. Some were large, some small, and some might be smooth and round and others might have an irregular shape. The

atoms moved through void. Parmenides had argued that the universe was a plenum filled with matter, and there was nothing else, but Leucippus and Democritus argued that the opposite of a plenum—a vacuum—also existed. Each atom, however, which was so small as to be invisible, was itself a plenum, and could not be split. Atoms were *atoma somata* (bodies that cannot be divided). The atoms were perpetually spinning, like the “seeds” of Anaxagoras, and as they collided some stuck together while others were forced apart. Small, perfect atoms gravitated towards the outside of the universe and formed the dome of the sky, whereas heavier atoms gravitated towards the center and formed earth. The concept of weight and its opposite, lightness, was something the Greeks did not understand, for the force of gravity had not yet been defined. Leucippus explained that weight resulted from the size of the atoms and their combinations, but neither he nor Democritus seemed to have thought weight very important and they never committed the error that Aristotle made later, of arguing for the existence of absolute weight. Epicurus later assigned different weights to the atoms, and argued that the heavier atoms moved at a different speed than the lighter ones. For Leucippus and Democritus, weight was a relative thing and the atoms moved at random. But they collided, and from their collisions they formed the groups of atoms that make up every object in this world, including human beings. The atomists saw an analogy in the letters of the alphabet. Each letter is a separate symbol with its own form, but when arranged together in various ways they form words. So the various arrangements of the atoms form different objects in the same way as the different arrangements of letters make different words. It was taken for granted that the atoms would always keep moving unless something intervened to make them stop.

**THE PROBLEM OF THE SOUL.** The atomic theory of Leucippus and Democritus assumed that the soul, too, was made up of atoms and void. Soul atoms were round and very mobile, and the atomists argued that there was also a fiery quality about them. Fire-atoms exist in the universe, but had no influence on how material things move; men breathed them into their bodies, at which point they formed an aggregate of fiery atoms known as the soul, and on death, it dissolved. This theory hearkened back to the old Greek belief that the soul—the *psyche*—was the breath of life which departed from the body at death. According to the atomic theory, the soul that is composed of atoms leaves the body when the last breath is drawn and returns to mingle with the fire-atoms of the universe. There is no place in this theory for any

belief in the immortality of the soul. Yet the soul that is within every living person endows him with his intellect and his senses and even governs the motion of his limbs. The senses allow humans to see, hear, and taste, for objects project images of themselves as emanations, and these are received by the soul. Animals apparently did not have souls of this sort, though they, too, breathed in air and exhaled it, and in fact, the concept of the soul according to the atomic theory seems to involve a good deal of inconsistency.

**DEMOCRITUS THE MORALIST.** Democritus wrote on a remarkable number of subjects, including mathematics, and among them was a theory of ethics which he fitted to his atomic philosophy. One treatise titled *On Cheerfulness* began with a warning against restless activity. Freedom from disturbance, he wrote, is what brings about human happiness. Cheerfulness is the ultimate good and it is a state in which the soul lives tranquilly, without being disturbed by any fear or superstition. Here we find a new conception of life for a person, not as a part of a social order such as a city, but rather as an individual. Human happiness was the sum total of all feelings that give pleasure—not just vulgar pleasures, though Democritus did not rule them out, but also pleasures in the beautiful. His thoughts about the gods are difficult to discern; one surviving fragment of his writings refers to them as providers to mankind of all that is good, and another fragment mentions them as images that approach human beings to impart knowledge of the future and of the divine. On morals, he was no relativist. As far as he was concerned, there was one standard of morality for everyone:

The same things are good and true for all mankind,  
but some men take delight in some things and others  
in others.

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## THE SOPHISTS

**A SHIFT IN EMPHASIS.** The scientific philosophers, from Thales to Democritus, had done their best to understand the nature of the world with remarkable achievement. The intuition of Leucippus and Democritus—that the universe was created of atoms and void—was a remarkable one, but the Greeks lacked the scientific equipment to make it anything more than an hypothesis. In the classical period (480–323 B.C.E.), philosophy sought new areas of speculation. In Athens, Socrates was a pivotal figure, so much so that the natural philosophers, from Thales to Democritus, are lumped together under the label, "Presocratics." Yet the way for Socrates was prepared by a group of thinkers and teachers called Sophists. The Greek word *sophistes*, from which the word "sophist" is derived, means a "master of one's craft," and it has a secondary meaning of "one who is expert in practical wisdom." Experts in classical Greece always suffered from a degree of prejudice—the American slang word "egghead" is a good translation of *sophistes*. But it was not until the fourth century B.C.E. that the word "sophist" carried distinct overtones of disdain, and Socrates' disciple, the philosopher Plato, must bear much of the responsibility for that development. Plato was at pains to show that Socrates was not a Sophist, though some of his contemporaries clearly thought that he was. Socrates had disciples, but Plato claimed that he never charged tuition fees whereas the Sophists did.

**THE DEMAND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.** The Sophists appeared at a time when the old aristocratic prejudices of archaic Greece were breaking down all over the Greek world. The age of the Sophists seems to have begun outside Athens, and it gave rise to a cadre of international experts who, like the lyric poets in archaic Greece, roved from city to city in search of students willing to pay the tuition fees they charged. In the aristocratic thought-world of archaic Greece, *arete*, a word which combines the meanings of "virtue" and "valor," was an innate quality. So far as there was an educational program, it consisted of poetry—particularly the poems of Homer—music, training in arms, and following the examples of one's elders. This sort of education was incomplete in classical Greece, however, where individuals needed to be skilled in presenting cases in court; in the public assemblies, competence in public speaking paid dividends. The Sophists claimed to be able to teach the skills necessary for success. They asserted that they could make their disciples proficient in rhetoric and the verbal skills to make a weak case appear stronger than it really was. From teaching men how to be good at something like rhetoric, the claim to teach men goodness it-



self required no great leap of the imagination. One of the learned men who approached these broader questions was Protagoras, the first Sophist to charge tuition fees, who came from Abdera in northern Greece not far from the border with modern Turkey. He was an itinerant teacher who spent most of his life traveling; he visited Sicily and he came to Athens at least twice. During one of these times in Athens he was threatened by a conservative Athenian named Pythodorus with a charge of impiety, and he made a timely departure. His books were publicly burned, but Protagoras' reputation outside Athens no doubt resulted in the survival of copies of his books elsewhere in the Greek world.

**THE TEACHINGS OF PROTAGORAS.** Conservative pious Athenians had good reason to be shocked by Protagoras' books, which he presented during public readings. An early work titled *On the Gods*, which was his first book to be read in public, began with the memorable sentence:

Of the gods, I can know nothing, neither that they are nor that they are not, nor how they are shaped if at all. Many things prevent such knowledge—the uncertainty of the question and the shortness of human life.

With these few words, Protagoras turned his back on the gods to whom the Greeks sacrificed all over the Greek world, though it cannot be said for certain that he was an out-and-out atheist. His outline for the proper education of a politician was laid out in a book titled *Truth, or Refutations* which began with a sentence that became famous as the summary of his philosophy:

Man [or "a man"] is the measure of all things, of things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not.

In the context of its time, this passage may have been a protest against the Eleatic school of philosophy, particularly Parmenides, who argued that existence as men perceive it is not at all what it actually is. Protagoras' rejoinder to the Eleatics was that as things exist *for me*, that is what they are for me, and as they exist for you, that is what they are for you. In other words, each person has a right to trust his own senses. Yet there is little doubt that Protagoras carried over this relativist view into judgments of value as well. The inference was that there was no such thing as absolute justice or absolute goodness; rather they were matters of personal judgment. Thus Protagoras held that one could argue equally well for or against any proposition; whether or not the proposition had some merit was of no consequence since all opinions were equally true. Some opinions, however, could be better than others even if they were not more

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**PROTAGORAS: THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL TEACHER**

**INTRODUCTION:** Protagoras of Abdera (circa 485–circa 415 B.C.E.) was the first professional sophist to offer instruction for a fee, and he died a wealthy man. He was clearly a man of recognized integrity who was generally respected, for when Athens founded the colony of Thurii on the Gulf of Taranto in Italy in 444 B.C.E., the Athenian statesman Pericles appointed him to draw up a code of laws for the new foundation. He upheld a doctrine of relativism—the sentence that introduced a work of his, “Man is the measure of all things” was famous and was taken to mean that every person has his own criterion for what is good and true. Thus truth existed in the eye of the beholder and everything could be true for in the opinion of someone. The following selections comes from the *Lives* of the ancient philosophers, a compilation by Diogenes Laertius who probably lived in the first half of the third century C.E.

Protagoras was the first person to declare that in every subject for debate, there were two sides which were the exact opposite of each other, and he used to use this debating procedure in his arguments, being the first person to do so. He started a book of his with this introductory sentence:

Man is the measure of all things, of the existence of things that are and the non-existence of things that are not.

He used to say, too, that the soul was merely sensory perception, as Plato says in the *Theaetetus*, and that everything was true. Also, he introduces another of his treatises this way:

Concerning the gods, I cannot know for certain if they exist or if they do not. For there are many things that prevent one from knowing, especially the uncertainty of the subject and the shortness of human life.

Because of this sentence that began his treatise, he was banished by the Athenians, who burned his books in the market-place.

**SOURCE:** Diogenes Laertius, “The Life of Protagoras,” in *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Trans. C. D. Yonge (London: Henry Bohn, 1853): 397–398. Text modified by James Allan Evans.

true; that, at least, is what Plato suggested in his dialogue, the *Theaetetus*, as Protagoras' meaning, and it is very close to that of a modern pragmatist.

**GORGAS OF LEONTINI.** Like Protagoras, Gorgias of Leontini found the conclusions of the Eleatic philosophers impossible to accept. But unlike Protagoras, whose reaction was to affirm that it was right for every person to decide for himself what was true, Gorgias maintained that there was no truth at all. Gorgias was from the Sicilian city of Leontini and he came to Athens in 427 B.C.E. as an envoy for his native city. His skill at public speaking made a great impression on the Athenian public. He introduced Athens to methods of persuasion that had been developed in Sicily, and his influence on Athenian literature and prose style was enormous. During his time in Athens he studied and presented his own brand of philosophy. One of his works *On Nature, or What Does Not Exist*, attempted to show that there is nothing; even if there is something, we cannot know it, and even if we could know it, we cannot communicate our knowledge to anyone else. This sort of nihilism would seem to lead to the conclusion that there is no right or wrong, but Gorgias did not go so far. Others did, however; in the first book of Plato's *Republic*, an Athenian named Thrasymachus maintains that there is no "Right" at all, and what we call "Right" is only what is advantageous for the more powerful person who can force weaker persons to accept it as lawful and binding simply because he is more powerful. Thrasymachus was a teacher of rhetoric in Athens when Gorgias visited Athens, and though the *Republic* of Plato was written more than a generation later, Plato probably reported accurately the conclusions that some of Gorgias' disciples drew from his teachings.

**PRODICUS OF CEOS AND HIPPIAS OF ELIS.** Prodicus was a contemporary with Democritus and Gorgias, and was a disciple of Protagoras. Originally from Iulis on the island of Ceos, he was a popular public servant who eventually was sent to Athens as an ambassador. After a time, he also took up the study of philosophy and soon had opened his own school of Rhetoric. By the late fifth century B.C.E., he was giving expensive lecture-courses which seem to have emphasized linguistics. His particular specialization was the exact meaning of synonyms. His studies in religion focused on the personalization of natural objects as the creation for the need for organized religion, that man needed to understand how nature related to him personally and not how he worked in conjunction with nature. This defied many of the ideas that man was the center of the universe and that all things were created by the gods to serve man. Many

of these ideas were noted in his most famous work *The Choice of Heracles*, a work that is no longer available but is often cited by later philosophers. Prodicus was put to death for his ideas on religion and was accused of corrupting the youth of Athens. Another contemporary Sophist was Hippias, who belonged to a school of teachers that believed that the educated man was master of everything. Once he visited the Olympic Games wearing a purple cloak, and boasted that he made everything he wore, including the ring on his finger. He dabbled in all the recognized branches of learning—grammar, rhetoric, geometry, mathematics, and music—and he also tried his hand at literature: epic poetry, tragedy, chronicles, and so on. He made profitable lecture tours, traveling from city to city; in one of the Platonic dialogues he boasts to Socrates that he had just given a very successful series of lectures in Sparta, where his subject was genealogies, which was one of the few categories of learning that were to Spartan taste. One of his works was a list of the victors at the Olympic Games, starting in 776 B.C.E. Hippias' work is lost but it served as one source for a later list drawn up in the early third century C.E., and it is the basis for the chronology of archaic Greece.

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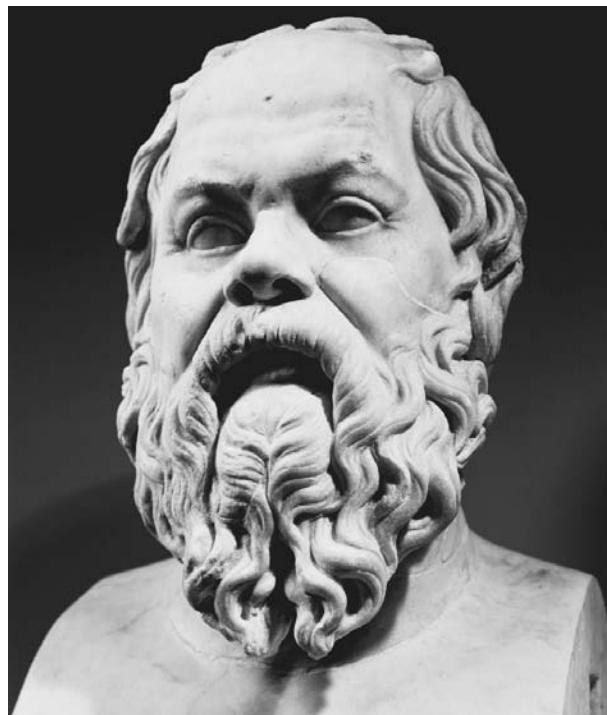
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#### SOCRATES

**CONSTRUCTING SOCRATES.** Often called the "father of philosophy," Socrates (470–399 B.C.E.) is known to modern readers only through the written works of other philosophers and historians. It is unclear whether Socrates himself ever wrote down any of his philosoph-

ical views, but it is certain that any of his works that were created have since been lost. Fortunately, a good deal was written about Socrates both before and after his death. The main source of the philosophical viewpoints of Socrates comes from his disciple Plato, who first recorded the dialogues of Socrates and later used the persona of Socrates in his writing to promote his own philosophy. Three of Plato's most famous dialogues—the *Apology*, the *Crito* and the *Phaedo*—recreate Socrates' last days before he was put to death on charges of impiety and corrupting the young. All three works focus on different areas of philosophy: the *Phaedo* discuss death, life, and the morality of suicide; the *Apology* constructs a defense of philosophy in general and an attack on the Sophists' way of thinking; and the *Crito* focuses on justice and issues of good versus evil even in the face of injustice. In Plato's earlier dialogues, such as the *Apology* and the *Euthyphro*, Socrates appears as a personality in his own right, but in later works, such as the *Republic*—Plato's dialogue that has had the greatest influence of anything he wrote—Socrates has become a spokesman for Plato's own philosophy. Yet the personality of Socrates recognized by modern scholars as most authentic is Socrates as portrayed by Plato. Numerous other accounts of Socrates—such as the comical character Socrates in Aristophanes' play *Clouds* and the day-to-day advisor that appears in the works of the historian Xenophon—survive, yet these accounts are considered to be minor sources in comparison to Plato.

**THE IDENTITY OF SOCRATES.** Socrates was probably born in Athens in the spring of 468 B.C.E., and he lived there all his life. He was reportedly the son of a stonemason and a midwife, and he had three sons of his own—two of whom were still small children at the time of his death. His wife Xanthippe was famously ill-tempered; stories about Socrates, recorded in the works of Xenophon, include episodes of public fights between the two which often included acts of violence. (Despite the marital discord, Plato's dialogue the *Phaedo* describes a tearful Xanthippe leaving Socrates' prison cell the day before his death in 399 B.C.E., indicating the presence of genuine feelings between the two.) Socrates was a contemporary of the Sophists, and talked and argued with many of them, but the Sophists were itinerant teachers who charged tuition fees, whereas Socrates never left Athens and did not charge his disciples tuition. He originally was attracted to the doctrine of Anaxagoras, and tradition made him a pupil of Anaxagoras' disciple, Archelaus, who kept a school in Athens; after Archelaus left Athens, Socrates probably took over as headmaster of the school. For the last twenty or 25 years of his life,



Marble bust of Socrates. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

he was a familiar figure on the Athenian scene, always barefoot, discussing and debating the important questions of philosophy.

**SOCRATES' MISSION.** Socrates' mission in life was to expose the lack of wisdom in the world, a purpose that had its origins in a statement by the oracle of Apollo at Delphi that there was no one wiser than Socrates. According to Plato's *Apology* Socrates did not believe the oracle, for he did not consider himself wise, so he began a quest to prove that the oracle was wrong. He encountered a man with a reputation for wisdom—Socrates did not name him—and after questioning him, he concluded that though many people, including the man himself, considered him wise, he really was not. He then examined another man who was considered wise, with the same result. He tried the politicians, then the poets and finally the skilled craftsmen, and concluded that though they might possess expertise in their own area, they were not truly wise, though they thought they were. These investigations did not make Socrates popular, as he readily admitted. Finally Socrates concluded that what the oracle meant was that he was not wise, for real wisdom belonged to God, but that he recognized his lack of wisdom and this self-recognition was what impressed the oracle. So Socrates made it his mission to seek out persons who thought they were wise and to prove to them

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SOCRATES RECRUITS XENOPHON**

**INTRODUCTION:** Philosophers in ancient Greece attracted disciples who desired to learn their ideas. Such was the popularity of some philosophers that they established schools to facilitate the teaching of their students, sometimes charging fees for their educational services. According to ancient sources, the eminent philosopher Socrates did not charge tuition fees to his disciples, although he did actively recruit promising young men. The following excerpt from *History of Philosophy, or On the Lives, Opinions and Apophthegms of Famous Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius, who wrote in the first half of the third century C.E., provides a glimpse into the recruitment of Xenophon by Socrates as one of his disciples.

Xenophon, son of Gryllus, was an Athenian citizen and came from the "deme" (borough) of Erchia. He was a man of great decency, and handsome beyond anyone's imagination.

The story goes that Socrates encountered him in a narrow lane, and put his stick across it, barring him from getting past, and he asked him where men might find a market where foodstuffs necessary for life were sold. When Xenophon replied, Socrates asked him again where men could find goodness and virtue. Xenophon did not know, and so Socrates said, "Follow me, then, and find out." So from that time on, Xenophon became a disciple of Socrates.

Xenophon was the first person who took down dialogues as they occurred, and made them available to the public, calling them *Memorabilia*. He was also the first man to write a history of philosophers.

**SOURCE:** Diogenes Laertius, "Life of Xenophon," in *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Trans. C. D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853): 75.

that they were not. It was a mission that made him many enemies.

**WHAT DID SOCRATES BELIEVE?** With the exception of the comic poet Aristophanes who mocked Socrates in his comedy, the *Clouds*, produced in 423 B.C.E., all the authors who wrote about Socrates did so after his death, and if he had any clear and coherent body of doctrine, we can discern it only dimly now. He was a traditionalist in religion insofar as he held that gods do exist and promote the welfare of mortals, and that they communicate their wishes by oracles, dreams, and other

similar methods. On the other hand, he thought that all conventional beliefs needed rigorous examination, and hence he was a severe critic of Greek religion as it was practiced in the Athens that he knew. He claimed to possess a kind of inner self—a *daimonion* (spirit)—which guided him and warned him at times against an action he was contemplating, but nowhere do we have any explanation of what this *daimonion* was. He was a master of dialectic—that is, the art of investigating or debating the truth of general opinions—and his great contributions to dialectic were definition and inductive logic. He held that before any opinion can be debated, it has to be carefully defined so that there is a basis for argument. Then the argument can proceed by induction—that is, drawing general conclusions from particular facts or examples—and thus the definition can be tested and examined. Socrates was a masterful critic of irrational thought, but his philosophy is less clear since Plato used him as a mouthpiece for his own thought. It is impossible to distinguish between the philosophies of Socrates and Plato in Plato's writings. In Plato's *Seventh Letter*, so-called because it is the seventh in a collection of thirteen letters attributed to him, he calls Socrates the wisest and most just man of his day, but the historical Socrates emerges from the mists of the past as a great personality and a master of rational argument rather than as the teacher of a philosophical system.

**SOCRATES AS A REBEL.** Socrates was a magnet for the bright, well-to-do young men of Athens who honed their debating techniques by matching their wits with his own. Some of these pupils used the skills they learned in ways that Socrates did not intend, however, and it led to serious charges against the philosopher. It cannot be denied that Socrates taught his Athenian disciples to question the basis of the democratic constitution of Athens. The underlying assumption of democracy as it was practiced in Athens was not that all men were born equal, but that every man was capable of performing the functions that public office required, provided that he was honest. It was not necessary to have professional training to hold a government post. Hence citizens were chosen by lot to hold important public offices; the chief exceptions were the ten generals who commanded the army and navy, who were elected each year. Socrates was fond of pointing out that a person would go to a cobbler skilled at shoemaking to have his shoes made, or to a doctor trained in medicine if he was ill, but if he wanted someone to hold high office in the state, he chose a man on the street. Socrates' logic was sound enough, but its inevitable conclusion was that cities should be governed by officials with training in government. That principle lay behind the work for which his disciple Plato is best

known, the *Republic*, which outlines an ideal constitution for a state where those that govern are trained in the art of governing. The same theme lay behind most of the speculation about the art of government in the ancient world after Socrates. Among philosophers, democracy had, at best, lukewarm defenders. It can be argued that Socrates was the intellectual great-grandfather of the totalitarian governments of the twentieth century, but it was the unintended consequence of his teaching.

**THE EXECUTION OF SOCRATES.** In 399 B.C.E., Socrates was brought to trial on a charge of heresy—not believing in the gods in which the other Greeks believed—and of corrupting the young. These charges against Socrates were less about morality and more likely the result of a political upheaval in Athens following Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War five years earlier. Socrates was known to associate with men who had seized power after the war and launched a reign of terror on Athens before the democratic process could be reinstated. Socrates was also a good friend of Alcibiades, a politician who many blamed for the loss of the Peloponnesian war. Socrates was arrested and tried before 501 jurymen and, like all Athenians arraigned before the lawcourts, he was given the opportunity to speak in his own defense; no defendant could hire a lawyer to speak for him. Socrates' defense is the basis of Plato's *Apology*, which may be an accurate reconstruction of what Socrates actually did say, for Plato witnessed the trial. Though Plato portrays Socrates as speaking eloquently and convincingly to the jury, he was found guilty and sentenced to death. He was confined to the state prison until the day came for him to drink the hemlock-juice, a poison made from a weed of the carrot family that the Athenians used to execute malefactors. His last words were a reminder to his friends that he owed the sacrifice of a rooster to Asclepius, the god of healing, implying, perhaps, that death was a cure for life.

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCRATES.** Many of Greece's famous philosophers had their roots in Socrates. Antisthenes (c. 455–360 B.C.E.), considered the founder of the Cynic sect, was a devoted follower, and he in turn influenced Diogenes of Sinope, the most famous of the Cynics. Antisthenes taught that happiness was based on virtue, and virtue is based on knowledge and consequently can be taught. Aristippus of Cyrene, famous for his love of luxury, was a companion of Socrates. He was considered the forefather of the Cyrenaic school of philosophy that taught that the pleasures of the senses were the chief end of life. The Cyrenaics were to influence the Epicureans, one of the important schools of thought

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**SOCRATES' DOMESTIC LIFE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Although revered as one of the greatest Greek philosophers, Socrates had a tempestuous domestic life with his wife Xanthippe, by whom he had a son named Lamprocles. Xanthippe seems to have found Socrates an exasperating husband, and she did not hesitate to voice her frustration with Socrates in public or to attack him physically. In the passage below, Diogenes Laertius, writing in the early third century C.E., describes scenes from Socrates' domestic life.

Socrates once said to Xanthippe, who scolded him and then threw a pot of water over him, "Didn't I say that Xanthippe was thundering just now, and there would soon be a downpour?"

When Alcibiades said to him, "Xanthippe's shrewish moods are intolerable!", he replied, "Yet I'm used to it, just as I would be if I were always hearing the screech of a pulley—and you yourself put up with the noise of geese honking." "Yes," replied Alcibiades, "but they bring me eggs and goslings." "Well, yes, so they do," replied Socrates, "and Xanthippe brings me children."

Once when Xanthippe assaulted him in the market-place and ripped off his cloak, his friends urged him to ward her off with his fists. "Yes, by Zeus," said he, "and while we are pummeling each other, you can all cry out, "Good jab, Socrates! Nice blow, Xanthippe!"

He used to say that a man should live with a recalcitrant woman in the same way as men handle violent-tempered horses, and when they have mastered them, managing every other sort of horse is effortless. "Thus," he said, "after managing Xanthippe, I will find it a simple matter to live with any other woman."

**SOURCE:** Diogenes Laertius, "Socrates," in *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Trans. C. D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853): 70–71.

in the Greek world after Alexander the Great. Euclides of Megara, another of Socrates' pupils, established a school of philosophy in Megara on the Isthmus of Corinth, between Athens and Corinth, where he tried to combine the teaching of Socrates on ethics with the doctrine of Parmenides on the nature of the universe. Greatest of all Socrates' pupils, however, was Plato whose

works had a lasting influence on the intellectual traditions of the world.

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## PLATO

**SOCRATES' DISCIPLE.** Plato (429–347 B.C.E.) was not yet thirty years old when Socrates was put to death in 399 B.C.E., and though the date of their first meeting is unknown, Socrates must already have been a middle-aged man when the two first became acquainted. The meeting of the two changed Plato's life. He belonged to a distinguished Athenian family, and he was educated in music and gymnastics like other youths of his class. According to one tradition, he was a budding poet in his youth and had already written some tragedies, but he burned them all after he met Socrates. In the *Seventh Letter*, which he wrote in his old age, he reflected on the hopes of his youth. He planned to enter public life, and had an opportunity to do so in the immediate aftermath of the Peloponnesian War when a cadre of reformers overthrew the democratic constitution and took control. They were led by thirty men with absolute powers, some of them Plato's relatives—the leader of the "Thirty," Critias, was his mother's cousin—and they invited him to join them. Plato was at first favorably impressed: he

was young, and imagined that these reformers would establish a just state, but instead, they rapidly earned the title of the "Thirty Tyrants" by which they are known in the history books, and Plato soon realized that the democratic constitution which they had overthrown had been a very precious thing. One action in particular appalled him: the "Thirty Tyrants" tried to implicate Socrates in their crimes, but he refused and risked his life by doing so. When the "Thirty Tyrants" were overthrown, the restored democracy acted with restraint—Plato gave it credit for that—but "certain powerful persons" brought Socrates to trial on a charge of impiety. He was found guilty and put to death, and in the aftermath, many of Socrates' acquaintances, Plato among them, feared reprisals and fled from Athens to Eucleides in neighboring Megara. Plato did not stay there long. He served in the Athenian army in 395 and 394 B.C.E. and the rest of the time he spent traveling and writing. Giving dates to Plato's dialogues is no easy task, but it is generally agreed that his early dialogues belong to this period.

**PLATO'S TRIP TO SICILY.** It was probably in 388 B.C.E. that he visited southern Italy first, and then Sicily. In southern Italy he met the Pythagorean philosopher Archytas who had been elected ruler of Tarentum, modern Taranto. Thanks to Archytas, there was a revival of Pythagoreanism in southern Italy, and he made a deep impression on Plato. The two men became friends. From southern Italy Plato went to Syracuse in Sicily where Dionysius the Elder was at the height of his power. Dionysius had enjoyed a brilliant career; at the age of 25, he had been elected general of Syracuse with full authority at a time when Carthage seemed on the verge of conquering the whole island, and he had driven back the Carthaginians and made Syracuse one of the leading cities in the Greek world. Yet by the time Plato reached Syracuse, the brilliant young savior of Greek Sicily had become a tyrant, and Plato's portrayal of the typical tyrant found in his *Republic* owes a great deal to his experience with Dionysius. Dionysius had Plato removed by ship and put ashore on the island of Aegina that was at war with Athens at the time, and Plato might have been sold as a prisoner of war except that a friend from Cyrene ransomed him. During Plato's sojourn in Syracuse, he met Dionysius' brother-in-law, Dion, and was deeply impressed by him. In Dion, Plato recognized a man of similar ideals, and he believed he could be a potential ruler of an ideal state.

**THE FOUNDING OF THE ACADEMY.** Upon Plato's return to Athens, he founded his school known as the "Academy" because it occupied a park a half an hour's

walk outside the Dipylon, one of the city gates which was sacred to the guardian spirit Academus. There, under the sacred olive trees, Plato rented a gymnasium in which he started to teach, but he soon bought a parcel of land nearby which was given the name “Academy.” Little is known about the actual teaching in the Academy, but there seems to have been a regular curriculum for the students who enrolled, and mathematics was an important part of it. One anecdote held that over the Academy’s main gate was a sign that read: “No one shall enter who knows no geometry.” The Academy was a magnet for the intelligentsia of Greece, among them pioneers in mathematics, the most important of whom was Eudoxus of Cnidus who arrived in 367 B.C.E. at the age of 23 and stayed to attend Plato’s lectures. Aristotle arrived at the Academy at the age of seventeen and remained there for twenty years. It should always be remembered that the dialogues of Plato do not give us the full picture of Plato’s thought. Some aspects he transmitted orally and never committed to writing, and among these subjects were his last words on the so-called “Theory of Forms.” Thanks to the witness of Aristotle, we know that before he died, Plato lectured on one important aspect of Creation: how the ideal Forms were originally generated by the “One,” which was a divine entity, or, put simply, God. He never committed this to writing, for he did not completely trust writing as a satisfactory mode of communication.

**PLATO RETURNS TO SICILY.** In 367 B.C.E., the tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius the Elder, died and was succeeded by his son, Dionysius II. His father had allowed him no experience in politics, but he was a talented young man, eager to learn, and it seemed to his uncle Dion that here was an opportunity to apply Plato’s political ideas to Syracuse. He wrote Plato, inviting him urgently to come, and in 366 B.C.E. Plato arrived to a gratifying welcome. The atmosphere soon changed, however, as court intrigues aroused Dionysius’ suspicions of Dion, and he sent him into exile. He did not allow Plato to leave until 365 B.C.E. and then only after a promise from Plato to return. Four years later, he did return, urged by Dion, who hoped that Plato could persuade Dionysius to recall him, but this time things turned out worse than before, and Plato got permission to leave Syracuse only thanks to the intervention of his friend Archytas of Tarentum. Dion now prepared for war. In 357 B.C.E., he captured Syracuse, forced Dionysius out and ruled for four years himself. Well-meaning though he was, he was tactless and authoritarian, and in 354, he was assassinated by a former supporter. Dion’s friends now appealed to Plato again, and Plato replied with two



Plato shown as a typical philosopher. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

letters, the *Seventh* and *Eighth* in a collection of thirteen that are attributed to Plato. These two are thought to be genuine, though suspicion hangs over the other eleven. Plato died at the age of 81, some seven years after Dion.

**PLATO’S WRITINGS.** All Plato’s works (apart from the letters) are written as dialogues where he himself does not appear. The one possible exception is his last work, the *Laws*, where one of the interlocutors is an anonymous Athenian, who is almost certainly Plato himself. The result is that there is an elusive quality to Plato’s thought, as if he was attempting to establish a mode of thinking as much as a systematic philosophy, and that is particularly true of his early dialogues. During his time as Socrates’ disciple, he focused on issues of virtue and morality, and the importance of education and training, which interested Socrates himself in his last years. That seems clear from the dialogues that Plato produced in the aftermath of Socrates’ death, which was the catalyst that prompted him to write. Then, having recovered from the immediate shock of Socrates’ execution, Plato began to turn his attention to questions of law and government, writing his most famous text, the *Republic*, in response to his distaste for the sort of governments that he saw in contemporary



Roman mosaic of the 1st century C.E. called the “School of Philosophy” because it shows various famous philosophers in discussion. THE ART ARCHIVE/ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM NAPLES/DAGLI ORTI.

Greece. He also wrote on metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics during his study of philosophy, but it was the nature of the just society, governed according to the principles of philosophy, that continued to occupy him. His last work, left unfinished at his death in 347 B.C.E., was the *Laws* in which the topic returns to that of the *Republic*: the constitution of a truly just state.

**THE EARLY PERIOD.** The exact order in which Plato wrote his works is not known, and assigning dates is impossible, but the dialogues can be divided into three periods: early, middle, and late. The early writings deal mainly with the teachings of Socrates in the form of dialogues. The “dialogue” seems to have been a literary form that Plato invented, borrowing it from the theater, and he used it effectively to demolish preconceived notions. One of Socrates’ main concerns is *arete*, the word that is always translated as “virtue,” even though there is no word in English that is an exact translation: *arete* means “courage” and “excellence” quite as much as “moral virtue.” The main doctrine that Socrates puts forward in almost all of the early dialogues is that this virtue is knowledge, and thus it can be taught. He does not say what knowledge is, but he does assert that no one willingly does wrong, and hence wrongdoing is a mark of ignorance. In a typical dialogue of this early period, Socrates poses a question in the form, “What is X?” For instance, what is justice? When he is offered

various examples of justice, he replies that he does not want examples, he wants to know what justice is, in and of itself. Since such questions typically cannot be answered in a satisfactory way the dialogues tend to conclude on a negative note. It is not until the dialogues of Plato’s middle period—where Socrates becomes a mouthpiece for Plato’s own thought—that an attempt is made to provide positive doctrine.

**THE DIALOGUES OF THE MIDDLE PERIOD.** The dialogues of the middle period include works like the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, and Plato’s greatest work, the *Republic*, which describes a utopia ruled by right principles. In these works Plato’s philosophy began to provide definite answers to the philosophical questions his master had pessimistically concluded were unanswerable. It is in these dialogues of Plato’s middle period that the “Theory of Forms” is elaborated, most explicitly in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*. In textbooks, the “Theory of Forms” is sometimes called the “Theory of Ideas” which is misleading, for the “Ideas” are not ideas in the modern sense; rather the word simply transliterates the Greek *idea* which means “form.” Plato argued that these “Forms” are not mere intellectual concepts; they have an existence of their own. They are changeless and divine and among them, the form of the “Good” has a unique status. They exist separate from the things of the visible world that are imperfect copies of them, and knowledge of the “Forms” is therefore true knowledge and not mere opinion, which is fallible and changeable and easily influenced by persuasion. Thus true knowledge can exist. This is Plato’s answer to Protagoras’ dictum, “Man is the measure of all things,” which taught that all things are relative. At the same time, his logic led him to the conclusion that the “Forms” are true reality; what we see in the visible world about us is only the appearance of reality.

**THE FLAWS IN THE “THEORY OF FORMS.”** There were many bright students at the Academy, and they must have made Plato aware that his “Theory of Forms” was anything but watertight. The dialogue titled the *Parmenides* tests the theory. We cannot assign a date to it, but it is a later work, written some years after the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*, and it is a remarkable example of self-criticism. Plato imagines his half-brother Antiphon recalling a conversation that the young Socrates had once had with Parmenides and his follower Zeno. Plato pictures Parmenides, the founder of the Eleatic school of philosophy, as an old man when this imaginary conversation took place, but his logic was as ruthless as ever. Socrates expounds the theory that there are ideal “Forms” of justice, beauty, and goodness, which belonged to the



## PLATO'S Theory of Forms

### The Dilemma of Knowledge

The “Theory of Forms” (in Greek *ideai*—hence the Theory of Forms is sometimes referred to as the “Theory of Ideas”) was Plato’s attempt to understand how knowledge exists. Heraclitus had claimed that the world was constantly changing. Everything is impermanent and hence it is impossible to know anything, since all things change even while one thinks about them. Parmenides had given another explanation: he taught that *what is* must be eternal and changeless and only *what is* can be known. The conclusion of both schools of thought was that the evidence of the senses was not reliable. Yet Plato’s intuition told him that knowledge was possible. Socrates had been sure of it, for the world without the possibility of knowledge made only nonsense. The “Theory of Forms” was a way out of this dilemma and whether it was a conception of Socrates or one which Plato himself conceived, we cannot know. In the *Phaedo*, the dialogue which Plato sets in the prison where Socrates was awaiting death, Socrates, in his final hours before he drank the hemlock, discoursed on the immortality of the soul, and he refers to the “Theory of Forms” as an hypothesis with which his disciples were familiar. However the *Phaedo* was written long after Socrates’ death, and probably Plato was attributing a theory of his own to his master.

### Knowledge of the Forms

How does one recognize that a chair is a chair, even though many kinds of chairs exist? It is because the chairs

which we see all partake of the ideal form of a chair which our souls recognize. How can we recognize Goodness? It is because an ideal form of “Goodness” exists which our souls recognize. These ideal forms are not mere conceptions. Plato would argue that they really did exist in an invisible world, the world from which the soul came and where it will return after it leaves the body at death. A soul knew the ideal chair before it was imprisoned in the body, and when a person sees a chair, he remembers the ideal form of the chair, and knows the chair in the visible world because it comprehends that it partakes of the form in the invisible world. Thus knowledge is a process of recollection.

### The Forms as Causes

In the *Phaedo*, Plato explains that what makes an object beautiful is because of the presence in it, or the association with it of absolute Beauty—the form of Beauty that exists in the invisible world. Therefore it is the form of Beauty that makes things in the visible world beautiful, and therefore the Forms are the causes of existence. They make objects be what they are. Aristotle was to object that even if we assume that Forms exist, things which partake of these Forms cannot come into being unless there is something to impart motion. In fact, Aristotle could not accept Plato’s view that Forms existed outside of the visible world. For him, form and the visible object that partook of the form could not be separated from each other. All substances consist of two parts, matter and form, Aristotle insisted. You cannot chop up a bronze statue into two parts, its bronze and its shape.

realm of true existence, though he is not prepared to assert that there are “Forms” of mud and dirt; he cannot say that absolutely everything has a “Form.” Yet he defends the core of his theory: great things are great because they partake of the Form of Greatness, and beautiful things partake of the Form of Beauty, and so on. Parmenides objects. Does the beautiful object that we see partake of *all* the Form of Beauty or just part of it? If it partakes of only part of it, then the “Form” must be divisible, and if all of it, then the “Form” must be in many places at once. How does the object we see partake of a Form? If a beautiful object partakes of the Form of Beauty, then the object and the Form are similar and we must posit another Form that embraces the beautiful object and the Form of Beauty. Socrates suggests that the Forms are only thoughts or concepts, but Parmenides replies that concepts must be of something. There can be no concepts of nothing. Yet we cannot know the

Forms, which are absolute, for our knowledge is not absolute, and if God’s knowledge is absolute, then He cannot know us. The *Parmenides* concludes on an unsatisfactory note. Socrates does not abandon his “Theory of Forms” but Parmenides tells him that he needs more training in philosophy. Parmenides’ objections are not always cogent, but the dialogue bearing his name seems to show that Plato knew what the weaknesses were in his hypothesis. For Plato, the Forms were timeless entities, which—since they are timeless—cannot have been created. At the Creation, God could create the world of appearances, but he could not create the timeless Forms, for they already existed. Both Plato and Parmenides could agree that the world that we see about us is the world of appearances, not reality. Yet it is fair to ask why, if an appearance really does appear, it is not part of reality? For if appearances do *not really* appear, why bother about them? As Aristotle was to realize, Plato’s distinction

between the Forms—which are real—and appearances—which are not—was a stumbling block.

**THE REPUBLIC.** Plato wrote three dialogues on ideal constitutions: the *Republic*, the *Statesman*, and the *Laws*, his last work which he left unrevised. It is the *Republic* which is justly considered his greatest work, though its influence on the world of politics has not been entirely wholesome. The *Republic* has helped to form the intellectual background for many non-democratic governments, both communist and fascist. To understand Plato's notions of government, it is important to consider the actual types of government that a Greek such as Plato encountered in his contemporary world. Plato lists them in the eighth book of the *Republic*: Timarchy, Oligarchy, Democracy, and Tyranny. Timarchy (*timokratēia*) was a state where the ruling principle was love of honor. Plato used the example of Sparta, which had a constitution unique on mainland Greece. Plato admired the Spartan constitution, though he recognized some of its faults. The Spartan elite—the so-called “Spartiates”—were a military aristocracy who lived off a peasant population. Known as “helots,” these serfs worked the land for their Spartiate masters, giving them half their produce. They were kept in subjection by brutal methods; Sparta had a secret police to root out any disaffection, and each year the Spartan magistrates formally declared war on the helots so that killing one of them was not murder but an act of war. The Spartiates themselves were a military caste that trained from early youth to excel in warfare. The Spartans were courageous and disciplined, and Plato admired them for it. Yet he also considered them to be slow-witted, greedy, and brutal to the underclasses. The word “oligarchy” comes from the Greek words *oligoi* (few) and *arche* (rule), meaning to rule by a minority. In archaic Greece the minority had been aristocrats—that is, men of good family—but in Plato's time, the minority that controlled oligarchic governments was the wealthy. Plato distrusted the profit-motive and the influence of private wealth in politics. Plato used Athens as an example of a democratic government. Athens in Plato's day may have had as many as 300,000 residents, including men, women, slaves, and resident aliens who had little hope of acquiring citizenship, but the right to vote was restricted to male citizens. Sovereign power was vested in an assembly which was required to meet at least ten times a year, though meetings were often more frequent. At these assemblies any male citizen who attended could vote, but only a small minority did since attendance was difficult for citizens living in country villages. Plato had little respect for the system. The salient feature of democracy was liberty; individuals could do or say what they pleased, which gave

society an attractive variety, but ultimately this freedom worked against social cohesion. When social cohesion failed, society disintegrated into class warfare between the rich and the poor. Finally there was tyranny, which was the personal rule of a dictator. A tyrant needed a private army for self-protection and had to eliminate all possible rivals. A tyrant, Plato argued, was essentially a criminal.

**THE SOLUTION OF THE REPUBLIC.** Having found fatal flaws in each of the existing governmental systems, Plato proposed his ideal constitution. According to Plato's system of government, the lawgiver whose task it was to establish this utopia set up three groups or classes. The first class, composed of “Guardians,” was in charge of ruling and would have to be carefully educated and pass exacting tests before being accepted as Guardians. Once this class was selected by the lawgiver, it perpetuated itself by heredity, though occasionally an unsatisfactory son of a Guardian would have to be degraded. The next class was the “Auxiliaries” who carried out the duties of the military, police, and executive offices under orders from the Guardians. The third class was composed of the craftsmen, traders, and the like. Plato believed that men fitted to be shoemakers or carpenters should stick to their own trades and leave the ruling positions to those who had been specially trained for the task. To ensure that the Guardians carried out the lawgiver's intentions, they had to be carefully fitted for their duties by education in cultural pursuits and physical training. Plato recommended that the poems of Homer and Hesiod be banned due to the fact that their portrayal of the gods was often not edifying. He also believed that their writings made their readers fear death, which could undermine the Guardians' ability to die a fearless death in battle. Plato believed strongly in the power of the written word to influence behavior, and so suggested that the young should not read stories where the wicked are happy, or good men unhappy; he felt the poets to be too subversive, and recommended that they be banished. The other arts were not free of Plato's censorship either, however, as he outlawed any music that was too sorrowful or too joyous. Other recommendations for an ideal state included a balanced economic state in which the Guardians would be neither rich nor poor. They would live in simple houses on simple food, as if in an army camp, and they would hold their property in common. Plato argued that girls and boys should have the same education, and advocated complete equality of the sexes. Plato's advocacy of a strong state is most apparent in his structure of marriage and the family. He believed that marriages should be arranged for the good of the State by lot, although the rulers would actually

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN PLATO'S IDEAL STATE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In Plato's last work, *The Laws*, left unrevised at his death, Plato imagined three elderly gentlemen, a Cretan named Cleinias, a Spartan named Megillus, and an Athenian stranger—in effect, Plato himself—discussing the foundation of a new city on Crete. They turn to a practical discussion of what the laws and constitution of this new city should be. The Athenian eventually brings up the place of women. In Athens, women had no voice in government and no role in public life. The situation was somewhat different in Sparta and Crete, though nowhere was anything approaching equality of the sexes found. Plato's remarks, quoted below, are less than flattering to women, but they show recognition that women make up half of humanity and cannot be ignored and left outside the laws in an ideal society. It was a beginning, and in the Hellenistic period, beginning a couple generations after Plato's death, we find women taking a more active role in public life. The context of the excerpt below is this: the three gentlemen have decided that their new city shall have communal meals for male citizens, as was the case in Sparta, but the Athenian has an additional point to make about the position of women.

The blessings that a state enjoys are in direct proportion to the degree of law and order to be found in it, and the effects of good regulations in some fields are usually vitiated to the extent that things are controlled either incompetently or not at all in others. The point is relevant to the subject at hand. Thanks to some providential necessity, Cleinias and Megillus, you have a splendid and—as I was saying—astonishing institution: communal meals for men. But it is entirely wrong of you to have omitted from your legal code any provision for your women, so that the practice of communal meals for them has never got underway. On the contrary, half the human race, the female sex, the half which in any case is inclined to be secretive and crafty, because of its weakness—has been left to its own devices because of the misguided indulgence of the legislator. Because you neglected this sex, you gradually lost control of a great many things which would be in a far better state today if they had been regulated by law. You see, leaving women to do what they like is not just to lose *half* the battle (as it may seem); a woman's natural potential for virtue is inferior to a man's, so she's proportionately a greater danger, perhaps even twice as great.

**SOURCE:** Plato, *The Laws*. Trans. Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin, 1988): 262–263.

manipulate the lots in such a way as to ensure that the best sires beget the most children. The State would then remove the children from their parents at birth and, if healthy, they would be reared by the State so that no one could know the identities of his or her biological parents. Plato believed that this system would foster a community in which children regarded all their elders as their fathers and mothers. To make it all work, Plato was not averse to the state propagating certain falsehoods—“Noble Lies,” as Plato called them—of which the most important was that God created three species of men: the men of gold, fitted to be Guardians; the men of silver, fit to be soldiers; and the common man of bronze and iron, fit for manual toil. Thus the bulwark of Plato's utopia was a lethal mixture of religious propaganda and political science, but in Plato's view, the result would be “justice,” for everyone would have his proper slot in the political structure, and be satisfied with it.

**PLATO'S LAST WORDS ON THE IDEAL STATE.** Plato returned twice to the question of ideal government. In the *Statesman*, he repeated the view that government is a job for experts. He believed that the best government is rule by an expert, like the ideal lawgiver who laid out the constitution in his *Republic*, but if no such expert

could be found, then a law-abiding monarchy was the best alternative. In his last work, the *Laws*, Plato once again considered the question of what sort of government would rule a city best. It is a remarkably detailed work which shows that Plato's thought had evolved a good deal since he produced the *Republic*. For one thing, he placed much higher value now on the rule of law. He believed that complete obedience to the laws solves the problems of political strife. Another change is evident in that philosophy had been a vitally necessary ingredient in the *Republic*, but in the *Laws* philosophy yields pride of place to religion. Plato went so far as to suggest that atheists in the ideal state of the *Laws* should be converted or killed. This seems to represent a remarkable change of heart in Plato's old age.

**THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.** In the *Apology*, which is Plato's earliest dialogue, he muses on what happens after death. Plato determines that it will either be a dreamless sleep from which there is no awakening, or the soul will migrate to another place where one can meet with the great men of the past, such as Orpheus and Hesiod and Homer. Death is not to be feared. In the *Phaedo*, Plato imagines Socrates speaking to his friends on the last day of his life, and explaining what

happens at death. The soul separates from the body that has prevented it from acquiring true knowledge due to the body's constant interruptions and distractions from man's quest for Truth. Once the soul is free of the body, it can gain direct knowledge of all that is pure and uncontaminated, that is, the Truth. Thus like a man who chooses to follow a wife or children whom he loves into the next world in the hope of seeing them there, the true philosopher will gladly make the journey into the next world to discover Truth. The final book of the *Republic* ends with a vision of life after death: the so-called "Myth of Er." According to the myth, Er was apparently killed in battle, but ten days later, while he was on the funeral pyre, he revived and told an amazing tale. His soul had left his body and gone on a long journey. It had seen the righteous separated from the unrighteous who were condemned to punishment. The souls of the righteous then drew lots for the lives that they would live in their next life, and having made their choices, they traversed the desert plain of Amnesia and camped in the evening on the banks of Lethe, the stream of Forgetfulness. All were required to drink its water, and those who were imprudent drank too much and forgot everything. Er, however, was not allowed to drink, and his soul rejoined his body still remembering what it had seen. The *Phaedo* shows the soul anxious to leave behind the encumbering body to attain the Truth, and the "Myth of Er" tells how it must transmigrate from one life to another before it can attain the Truth. Taken together, they present a picture of the immortal soul seeking to escape from the world of appearances, represented by the body, and reach the realm of real Goodness and Truth.

**PLATO'S UNIVERSE.** The *Timaeus*, one of Plato's last dialogues, was also one of his most influential during the medieval period, partly because the first 53 chapters were available in a Latin translation during the European "Dark Ages" and partly because it presents theology rather than philosophy and thus conformed to the mindset of the medieval world. Plato's construction of the universe rests on his basic premise that there are two orders of reality: that of true existence or "Being," inhabited by the "Forms"; and that of apparent reality, the world of "Becoming," the created world inhabited by the transient things perceived by our senses. The *Timaeus* describes how the world of "Becoming" came into existence, through the character of Timaeus, a Pythagorean philosopher from southern Italy. In the dialogue, Timaeus describes the creation of the world as being similar to the creation of a model by a craftsman. Just as the craftsman works with a model, so the Creator, who is a divine craftsman, created the world of "Becoming" using as his models the Forms that belong to the world of

"Being." His material was composed of the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water—though later in the dialogue we learn that the Creator had found his material as a confused mass in the so-called "Receptacle of Being" and reduced it to form the geometrical shapes of the four elements. The universe itself was a geometrical construction: the planets move in rings around the earth. This concept of planetary movement proved influential to men of science centuries later. In the second century C.E. Claudius Ptolemaeus of Alexandria, better known as Ptolemy, refined the system using trigonometry. Then in the sixteenth century C.E., Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) showed that the earth moved around the sun, but he retained the circles of the planets that Plato described. Then Johann Kepler (1571–1630) showed that the planets moved in ellipses, and Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) showed that they were not regular ellipses, and Plato's concept of a universe constructed according to the principles of geometry perished at last. The *Timaeus* survives as an interesting monument in the history of science but nothing more.

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#### ARISTOTLE

**IMPORTANCE.** Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) was a philosopher whose achievement has been fundamental to the subsequent development of Western philosophy.

No field of knowledge was beyond his purview, and for 2,000 years, his influence on European thought was supreme. It eventually became a straitjacket; from the start of the seventeenth century C.E., almost every new direction in the humanities and science had to start by overthrowing some Aristotelean doctrine, for after Aristotle, Europe never produced even his approximate equal until the Renaissance. Hence Aristotle's philosophy ultimately became unchallenged doctrine and his writings remained "holy writ" for a thousand years. That was not Aristotle's fault, however, but the fault of his disciples in the medieval period. In his own day, he set philosophy in a new direction. He learned from Plato, but he tempered Plato with common sense. He emphasized research and observation, and although he never developed the modern scientific experiment, he was groping in that direction. Politics was one of his interests, but he did not waste his time on utopias; rather he examined governments that actually existed in the Mediterranean world and analyzed how they functioned. His reality was not divided into "Being" and "Becoming" as Plato's was, the first of which was real and the second only apparently real. Instead the two realities were fused and thus one could gain knowledge by observation, for what one observed was real. This was a necessary step before philosophers could develop anything similar to the modern scientific method.

**STUDENT OF PLATO.** The acquisition of knowledge by observation may have been something that Aristotle learned from his father, who was the court physician of Amyntas II, king of Macedon, for by now, the medical fraternity had developed observation into a fine art in order to diagnose diseases. Physicians belonging to the medical fraternity of the Asclepiadae regularly taught their sons dissections, but Aristotle probably missed this training, for both his parents died while he was quite young. When he was about seventeen years old, he joined Plato's Academy. He spent almost twenty years there, but though he never ceased to show affection and respect for Plato, he became less and less comfortable with Plato's philosophy. Plato as he grew older placed increasing emphasis on mathematics and the trend continued at the Academy following his death. Aristotle, who must have suffered some natural disappointment at being passed over for the headship of the Academy, decided to leave it to conduct research in biology at Assos in the region of Troy. Following some time spent in Lesbos, he accepted the invitation—with a suitably generous salary attached—from King Philip II of Macedon to tutor his son, Alexander, who was fourteen years old. Alexander was under his tutelage for two years. Like Plato, Aristotle believed that there could be no good gov-



Modern engraving of the philosopher Aristotle. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

ernment until kings were philosophers or philosophers kings. Then in 336 B.C.E., Philip of Macedon was assassinated, and Alexander embarked on a series of military campaigns that would change the course of history in the Greek world. About a year later, Aristotle returned to Athens after an absence of about thirteen years and founded a school, the Lyceum.

**ARISTOTLE'S WRITINGS.** Approximately two-thirds of all of Aristotle's writings are lost. During his twenty years at Plato's Academy before Plato's death, Aristotle wrote dialogues, borrowing the literary form from Plato, and they were much admired in the ancient world. None have survived but it is possible to ascertain the subject matter of some of them. He wrote on rhetoric, the art of public speaking, where Aristotle probably pointed out the importance of logic. Although Aristotle had written a dialogue during his Academy days accepting Plato's views on the soul—that is, that it existed before birth and, after birth, it could recall the ideal forms from its previous life—his dialogue *On Philosophy*, most likely written after Aristotle left the Academy, dealt with the progress of mankind and indicated that Aristotle was already unhappy with Plato's Theory of Forms. Aristotle

also wrote collections of historical or scientific information, sometimes done in collaboration with students, or perhaps even done by students as assignments. One example from this group has survived: an essay on the Athenian constitution, a copy of which was unearthed in Egypt in 1890, copied on to the back of a tax register of the Roman period. One group of writings which did survive is composed of treatises which were never prepared for publication, possibly Aristotle's lecture notes. They show an enormous range of subjects, indicating that nothing was too great or small to arouse his interest.

**THE ORGANIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE.** Aristotle had an orderly mind and classified all knowledge into three categories: the productive, the practical, and the theoretical. Productive sciences have to do with making things, and their practitioners include engineers, farmers, artists, and the like. Practical sciences are concerned with how men act in various situations. They are the subject of Aristotle's treatises titled *Ethics* and *Politics*. Theoretical knowledge has as its goal the discovery of truth. This category includes theology, mathematics, and natural science with their various subdivisions.

**ARISTOTLE ON CAUSE.** In modern thinking, the causes of something that comes into existence are the factors—both the components and the agents—that are responsible for the thing being what it is. Aristotle's "cause" had a wider meaning; it can be translated as the "dimensions of reality." Aristotle looked at an object and asked "Why? How? What for? What's its material?", which broadened the philosophical discussion that began with the Milesian philosophers back in the sixth century B.C.E. That group concerned themselves only with the material. The underlying substance of the universe was water, according to Thales, and air, according to Anaximenes. Later the Pythagoreans concerned themselves with "why?"—that is, what is the pattern that makes a thing what it is? Aristotle took the discussion a step further in pointing out that "how?" is also important: who made the object what it is, and what for?, i.e. what was the purpose in making the object. Thus everything has four causes. There is the material cause: the stuff from which it is made. For that Aristotle had to find a new term, and the term he used was *hyle* which means "wood," but Aristotle used it for substance in general. There is the formal cause, which is the pattern. There is the efficient cause: the maker of the thing, whether it is a living thing like a dog or a person, or something inert like a table. The fourth cause is the final cause, which answers the question "what

for?" What is the purpose for which a thing is made? Let us take a chest of drawers as an example. The material cause is the wood from which it is made. The efficient cause is the carpenter who made it, and the formal cause is the pattern that the carpenter followed. Then there is the question "what for?"—the teleological question. The purpose of the chest of drawers is to store clothes. Apply the same logic to Bowser, the family dog. The material cause is the flesh from which Bowser is made. The formal cause is not a blueprint; rather it is a species, the sort of thing we find in nature. Bowser is classified by biologists as a dog. Then there is the efficient cause: Bowser was not manufactured, rather he was generated by parents of the same species as himself. Finally there is the teleological question. Aristotle believed that everything, even the stars, had a goal that, in theory at least, could be discovered. Bowser has an inner nature what directs him to grow from a puppy into a mature dog that will become a family pet. That is Bowser's goal. Aristotle applied these principles even to the universe where he asserted that the final cause is what he calls the "prime mover"—not a mechanical force, but an object of desire. It is "God," but though Aristotle often calls his prime mover "God" it is not really a religious God. It is a divine force that exercises a continual attraction for everything in the universe, and this magnetism of the "prime mover" is the reason for the movement that we can see of the constellations in the night sky. They continually seek the final perfection of the "prime mover" that will allow them to rest, and they will never attain it. Aristotle's "prime mover" is closer to "Mother Nature" than it is to any god of religion, whether pagan or non-pagan.

**ARISTOTLE THE LOGICIAN.** Aristotle was proud of his logic; in fact, he claimed to have produced a complete, perfect logic. Essentially he began with a proposition, which is a statement that is either true or false. If it is true, it refers either to a universal truth or a particular one, and similarly, if it is false, it must point either to a particular falsehood or a universal untruth. For instance, the sentence "All mammals are viviparous" is a general proposition. It means that all mammals reproduce through live births. Since Aristotle himself used letters instead of things to express propositions, we can express the sentence as "All X are Y." There are four types of these simple propositions: the universal affirmative ("All X are Y"), the universal negative ("All X are not Y"), the particular affirmative ("Some X are Y"), and the particular negative ("Some X are not Y"). These four types of propositions can be further subdivided into three modes: that X is always Y, that X is of necessity Y, and that X is possibly Y. Once a proposition is proven true,

## ARISTOTLE as a Biologist

Much of the research which went into Aristotle's two monumental scientific works, the *Dissections* and the *History of Animals*, was done in the nearly thirteen years between the time he left Athens after Plato's death and his return. The *Dissections* has not survived. Its subject was the internal structure of animals, and may have consisted largely of diagrams. The *History of Animals* did survive, however, and is a pioneering study of animals, of their appearance, their methods of reproduction, their behavior, and habitat. It covers all living creatures from sheep and goats, to tortoises and crocodiles, octopods and oysters, and, of course, human beings. To modern researchers, Aristotle sometimes seems naive and pedantic. Modern biological textbooks do not bother to point

out that humans have necks between their heads and their torsos, but Aristotle felt that if he was to be thorough that fact should be noted. His description of the European bison gives good grounds for suspicion that he had never seen one. He claims that when it was hunted, it defended itself kicking and discharging its excrement over a distance of eight yards and the excrement was so corrosive that it could burn the hair off the hunting hounds. Aristotle's observations are inexact—he did not usually measure or weigh his specimens, though there seems to have been some exceptions—and he did not discover the experimental method that is the basic procedure of modern science. He used second-hand information: for instance, he asked beekeepers about bees and fishers about fish, and for human anatomy, he relied on the expertise of the Greek medical profession. Yet research in biology was in its infancy, and Aristotle deserves respect as a pioneer.

it is possible to make a deduction using a form of argument called a "syllogism," from the Greek *sullogismos*. A syllogism is an argument whereby, if certain things are assumed as true, then something different from what is assumed can be deduced. An example would be, "All humans are mortal. John Doe is a human. Therefore John Doe is a mortal." The argument proceeds from a general proposition that is accepted as true, to a particular conclusion. Aristotle thought that he had discovered the key to deductive inference. Later philosophers developed Aristotle's logic into a separate field of its own, which it never was for Aristotle, and for better or worse, it became one of his most important legacies to our intellectual tradition.

**ARISTOTLE'S ACHIEVEMENT.** Before Aristotle, Greek philosophy had developed a profound distrust of the evidence of our senses. Parmenides and the Eleatic School were an extreme example. They held that the world perceived through the senses was not the real world. Heraclitus argued that constant change took place in the world. Plato held that the things seen in the visible world were only imperfect copies of ideal "Forms" in an invisible world. Aristotle's study of biology, however, must have quickly demonstrated to him that if a person was to acquire knowledge about plants and animals, he would have to trust his senses. If he was to do research, he would have to observe, and study the observations of others. There is a certain common sense about Aristotle's teachings. Aristotle continued to believe in the unity of knowledge, yet after him, re-

searchers tended to specialize. Theophrastus, who succeeded him as head of the Lyceum, was a notable botanist. Aristoxenus, one of the most brilliant researchers at the Lyceum, wrote on music. Aristotle's Lyceum was the forebear of modern institutes for research and advanced study.

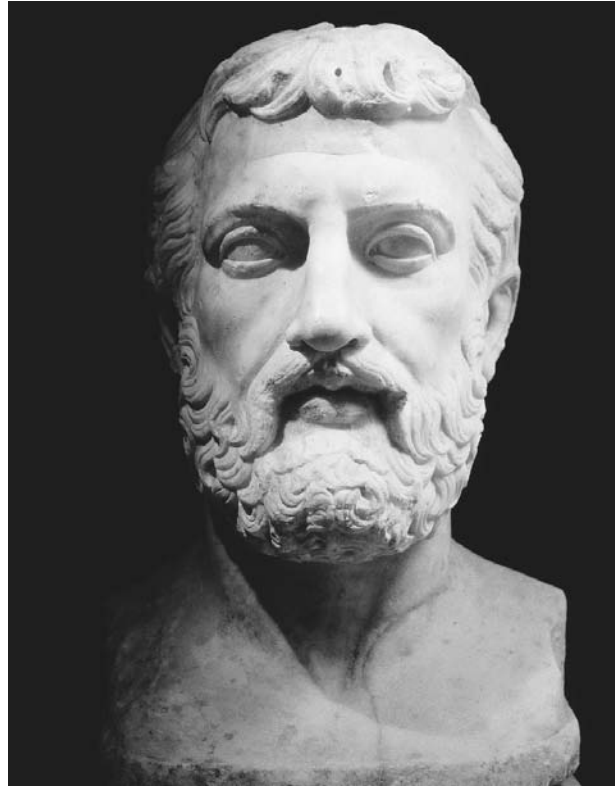
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## THE STOICS

**SCANT HISTORICAL RECORD.** In the six centuries between the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E. and the emperor Constantine (312–337 C.E.) the dominant philosophy that commanded the allegiance of thinking people was Stoicism—named for the *Stoa Poikile* (Painted Stoa) where Zeno of Citium first taught the philosophy. The early development of this philosophy was not preserved in written texts until about 100 C.E., when a disciple of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, Arrian, wrote a memoir of his master’s conversations with his students and published them as *Discourses*. Arrian was a Roman official and a soldier with literary tastes, and a man of his position may have had a slave trained in shorthand who could take notes while Epictetus and his students conversed. After Epictetus, the *Meditations* of the emperor Marcus Aurelius is the last expression of Stoic philosophy. The blanks in the historical record on Stoicism must be filled with second-hand reports of the earlier Stoics, the most important of these being the *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* written by Diogenes Laertius. Without Diogenes’ biography of Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school, and his successors Cleanthes and Chrysippus, it would be impossible to chart the beginnings of this school.

**THE COSMOPOLITAN NATURE OF STOICISM.** Diogenes the Cynic used to say that he was a *polites* (citizen) of the *kosmos* (world) which created the word “cosmopolitan.” Philosophy was outgrowing the intellectual world of the *polis* (city-state) and the checklist of the native cities of the great Stoics proves the point. The founders of the School did not come from Athens, the seat of Greek philosophy. Zeno was a Hellenized Syrian who came from Citium, a city in Cyprus. His successor as head of the school was Cleanthes who came from Assos in the Troad, the region of northwest Asia Minor in the vicinity of Troy. He had been a boxer in his earlier career and when he came to Athens, he worked as a gardener while he attended the lectures at the *Stoa Poikile*. Chrysippus (c. 280–207 B.C.E.), the third head of the Stoic School, came either from Soli or from nearby Tarsus, both in the region of Asia Minor known as Cilicia. The next head of the school was Zeno from Tarsus; after him came Diogenes of Babylon followed by Antipater of Tarsus. After Antipater of Tarsus, Stoicism underwent a revision by the next successor, Panaetius of Rhodes, and a period of history in the philosophy known as the “Middle Stoa” began. This included a change from the rigid practices of the philosophy to a strong focus on humanism and social practice. Because of the revision, many of the prominent figures in Rome converted to



Marble bust of Zeno of Citium (335–263 B.C.E.), the founder of the Stoic school of philosophy. THE ART ARCHIVE/ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM VENICE/DAGLI ORTI.

Stoicism. Panaetius’s writings would influence Cato the younger, the stubborn defender of the Roman republic against Julius Caesar; Marcus Brutus, who was one of Caesar’s assassins; and Cicero, Caesar’s contemporary, who was an eclectic philosopher, picking and choosing his doctrines from several schools. Cicero favored the scepticism of the Academy, but he also ascribed to some of the teachings of Stoicism. Finally in its last phase, Stoicism became the doctrine of the Roman upper classes under the empire, and in the first century C.E. the Roman aristocrats who were martyred for their resistance to the growing autocracy of the emperors all professed Stoicism.

**STOIC PHYSICS.** Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, divided knowledge into three divisions: natural philosophy, ethics, and logic. Stoic physical doctrine rejected the atomic theory of the Epicureans. “Nothing that is incorporeal exists” was the fundamental principle of Stoic physics, and hence there was no place for void. For the Stoics, matter was continuous and empty space did not exist within the finite universe, but only outside it. Everything, even the soul and God himself, was material. In determining what this material was, the Stoics



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MARCUS AURELIUS ON THE SOUL**

**INTRODUCTION:** Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor from 161 to 180 C.E. succeeded Antoninus Pius (138–161 C.E.) whose reign had been long and peaceful. Marcus Aurelius' reign made up for it. He faced a revolt in the east by one of his generals, Avidius Cassius, which he survived. The empire was attacked by plague, probably smallpox although that is uncertain. But most unnerving of all, in 169 C.E. tribes known as the Marcomanni and the Quadi invaded across the Danube frontier of the empire and penetrated as far as northern Italy. Italy had known two centuries of peace, and the invasion was a shattering experience. Marcus Aurelius, who had had little experience in warfare, took command of the army and drove the invaders back. His little book, *Marcus Aurelius to Himself* which is usually known as the *Meditations*, was written on the battlefield, when Marcus, no longer a young man and suffering from tuberculosis, campaigned against the Marcomanni and the Quadi. The translation from which the passage excerpted below is taken is from a classic work by George Long, who dedicated his first edition of the *Meditations* to Robert E. Lee, Confederate commander in the American Civil War, whom Long regarded as another Marcus Aurelius. In the following passage, Marcus expounds the Stoic doctrine of the soul, which is part of the divine *logos* which permeates the world, and understands that all things pass away and are renewed in another cycle of history which will repeat what has happened before.

These are the properties of the rational soul: it sees itself, analyses itself, and makes itself such as it chooses, the fruit which it bears it enjoys itself—for the fruit of plants and that of animals which corresponds to fruits others enjoy—it obtains its own end, wherever the limit of life may be fixed. Not as in a dance and in a play and in such like things, where the whole action is incomplete, if anything cuts it short; but in every part, and wherever it may be stopped, it makes what has been set before it full and complete, so that it can say, I have what is my own. And further it traverses the whole universe, and the surrounding vacuum, and surveys its form, and it extends itself into the infinity of time, and embraces and comprehends the periodic renovation of all things, and it comprehends that those who come after us will see nothing new, nor have those before us have seen anything more, but in a manner, he who is forty years old, if he has any understanding at all, has seen by virtue of the uniformity that prevails all things which have been and all that will be. This, too, is the property of the rational soul, love of one's neighbor, and truth and modesty, and to value nothing more than itself, which is also the property of Law. Thus then, right reason differs not at all from the reason of justice.

**SOURCE:** Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. Book 11, Sec. 1. Trans. George Long (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1956).

looked back to Heraclitus and argued that it was Fire. Fire was the *logos*, the divine reason. *Logos* pervades the universe as honey pervades a honeycomb, and the human soul was a portion of this *logos*. The primal fire which is the *logos* is God, and hence the soul proceeds into the body from God. Periodically the whole world turns to fire and there is a great conflagration that is not so much a destruction of the world as its apotheosis (elevation to divine status), for the world that is consumed by fire has become united with God. Then the fire goes out, and history begins a new cycle, repeating itself in exactly the same way as it unfolded before. History repeats itself in endless cycles.

**THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE.** According to Stoic doctrine, all knowledge reaches the mind through the senses. This view was in stark opposition to Plato's doctrine, that the senses were the source of illusion and error. There was no place for Plato's Theory of Forms in Stoic logic. For the Stoics, concepts have no reality outside the consciousness. They are merely ideas that the mind forms from the evidence with which the senses

have supplied it. Virtue is based on knowledge, but to possess knowledge, the conceptions of the mind must mesh with reality, and so the wise man is one who has an accurate grasp of the real world. The Stoics believed it was possible to accurately grasp the real world, and they tried to show how the mind can acquire conceptions that are based on reality.

**THE VIRTUOUS LIFE.** "Live in harmony with nature" was the watchword of the Stoics, that is, nature in a broad sense. The guiding principle of nature is the *logos*—that is, reason—which the Stoics identified with God. It manifests itself in both fate or divine necessity, and divine providence. Virtue consists of living in harmony with the guiding principle of nature—that is, the *logos*—and to be virtuous is the only good; the only evil is not to be virtuous. The Stoics, with some exceptions, admitted that a wise man might choose to avoid illness or death or seek self-preservation if he could do so and still act virtuously. Nonetheless, pain and discomfort should not affect his happiness, nor, for that matter, should their opposites, pleasure and good health. The

wise man will be indifferent to such things. Pleasure and favor will not influence him, and so he will be completely just. Nor will he consider pain and death evils, and so he will be absolutely courageous.

**PERSONAL CONDUCT.** Zeno defined emotion as an irrational movement of the soul, and so freedom from emotion is the mark of a wise man. A wise man is indifferent equally to fame and obscurity, and so he is devoid of conceit. Good men are not meddlesome; they decline to take any action that is outside the path of duty. Good men may drink wine, but they will refrain from drinking so much as to become intoxicated. The Stoics held that all sins were equal, for every falsehood is false, not more or less false than any other. If one man is a hundred miles from Rome and another man only five miles distant, they are both equally not in Rome. Good men are by nature sociable, and so they will not live in solitude. There should be no Stoic hermits. Finally, if a wise man has a good reason for it, he will commit suicide, or “make an exit” as the Stoics called it, either for the sake of his country or his friends, or because he is suffering great pain of incurable disease. Death as a Stoic was greatly admired in Rome where Cato the Younger became the paradigm of a Stoic martyr. Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon River in 49 B.C.E. and drove the forces of the defenders of the republic—most of them upper-class Romans—out of Italy and defeated them at Pharsalia in northern Greece. Cato the Younger, an obstinate defender of republican ideals as he interpreted them, managed to rally the republican forces in north Africa, and in 46 B.C.E. Julius Caesar defeated them at Thapsus. Cato heard the news of the defeat at Utica near Carthage and committed suicide, refusing to survive the Roman republic. His suicide won him an acclaim which he had not enjoyed in his political career, for he was an unpleasant man and utterly uncompromising in politics. He became Cato Uticensis (Cato of Utica) who “made an exit” at Utica and thus became a martyr for republican freedom both in ancient Rome and in modern Europe. Seneca the Younger (c. 3 B.C.E.–65 C.E.), the emperor Nero’s discarded tutor, made an equally edifying exit. He was accused, justly or unjustly, of being party to a conspiracy to murder Nero and put a new emperor on the throne. Nero decided that Seneca must die, and Seneca committed suicide. He was given no time to make a will, and so he told his family that he left them something far better than earthly wealth: the example of a virtuous life, and then, opening his veins, dictated his last words to his secretary as his life ebbed away. During his lifetime, Seneca had shown a remarkable

appetite for earthly wealth, but he died as a Stoic philosopher should.

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## OTHER PHILOSOPHIES IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

**PHILOSOPHY IN A CHANGED WORLD.** Alexander the Great died in Babylon in 323 B.C.E., having radically changed the Greek world through a series of conquests that unified Greece and brought Persia into the Hellenistic world. The word “Hellenistic” comes from the Greek *hellenizein* which means “to speak Greek,” and with the Greek language, to acquire a smattering of Greek culture. The Hellenistic world embraced regions that had been foreign to the Greeks of the classical period in the fifth century B.C.E. and it is significant that non-Greeks developed the dominant philosophy of the Hellenistic world and the Roman world after it: Stoicism. While the pre-Socratic philosophers had focused on abstract questions on the nature of goodness and aspects of society, the burning questions on the minds of the philosophers in this day and age focused more on how an individual should live in a world that had changed so dramatically within a generation and the achievement of personal happiness.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***DIOGENES LAERTIUS ON THE SCHOLARCH ARCESILAUS**

**INTRODUCTION:** About 265 B.C.E. Arcesilaus became scholarch or head of the Academy which Plato had founded. He brought new life to the Academy. There was some disagreement among later historians of philosophy in the ancient world about whether he could be called the founder of the “New Academy” or if he was the founder of the “Middle Academy” and his successor as scholarch, Carneades, was the founder of the “New” or “Third Academy.” There was no doubt, however, that when Arcesilaus became scholarch, it marked a new stage in the development of the Academy. Arcesilaus employed scepticism—the view that true knowledge was impossible for humans to attain—as a weapon against the Stoics and Carneades continued the quarrel with the Stoics, particularly with their theological doctrines. Diogenes Laertius, writing in the early third century C.E. includes a life of Arcesilaus on his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, and from it we learn some anecdotes about him.

Since he [Arcesilaus] suspended judgment on every question, he never, as it is reported, wrote so much as a single book. Yet others say that he was once observed detecting correcting some passages in a work of his; and

some assert that he published it. Others deny it, however, and claim that he threw it into the fire.

He appears to have been a great admirer of Plato and possessed all his writings. He also, according to some authorities, had a very high opinion of Pyrrho, [the sceptic philosopher]. ...

He was exceedingly fond of employing axioms, very concise in his diction, and when speaking he laid emphasis on each separate word. ...

He was so free from vanity that he used to counsel his students to transfer to other teachers, and once when a young man from Chios was dissatisfied with his Academy but preferred the school of Hieronymus, whom I have already mentioned, he himself took him and introduced him to that philosopher, advising him to continue to conduct himself regularly. There is a very witty saying of his recorded. When someone asked him once why people left other schools to join the Epicureans, but no one left the Epicureans to join other sects, he replied, “People sometimes make eunuchs out of men, but no one can ever make a man out of a eunuch.”

**SOURCE:** Diogenes, “Arcesilaus,” in *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Book 4, Sec.7–8, 10, 18. Trans C. D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853).

**THE ACADEMY AND THE LYCEUM.** Plato’s Academy continued in this new era, though its reputation declined. Plato’s nephew Speusippus became head after Plato’s death, and he adhered to Plato’s doctrines although he did not emulate Plato’s temperament. He had a reputation as a man of violent passions; once, in a rage, he threw a puppy down a well. Xenocrates next took on the role of headmaster, and although he wrote an enormous number of works, none of them survived. In fact, none of the writings of Plato’s successors survived. About 265 B.C.E. Arcesilaus, a pupil of Theophrastus, Aristotle’s successor as head of the Lyceum, became head of the Academy, or *scholarch*, as the head was called, and began a new era: the so-called “New Academy,” which became an opponent of Stoicism. The Stoics claimed that there was a kind of sense-perception that was convincing and irresistible, and that these senses conveyed truth. Arcesilaus retorted that wrong perceptions could be as convincing as right ones—it all depended on the circumstances—and from that argument, he went on to deny the possibility of any knowledge. The Academy became somewhat less dogmatic as time went on. Yet Arcesilaus’ legacy was to make the Academy a center for logical scepticism.

**SCEPTICS.** Thanks to Arcesilaus, scepticism began to exercise considerable influence on Greek philosophy, but he was not the founder of the school. It was Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360–c. 270 B.C.E.) who taught that the aim of life was a serene mind, which can only be achieved if we understand our relation to the nature of things. But since we cannot know the nature of things, we should not trouble ourselves about matters we cannot understand. This doctrine is sometimes called “Pyrrhonism.” It holds that we should refrain from making positive or negative judgments, and by maintaining a balance between “yes” and “no” in our judgment we can create balance in our soul.

**THE CYNICS.** The Cynics liked to claim descent from Antisthenes, who was one of Socrates’ disciples, for that gave them a connection with the great master of classical philosophy, but the term “cynic” (doglike) was first applied to Diogenes of Sinope as a comment on the anti-social life he chose to live. He held that actions based on natural instincts and impulses could not be unnatural, and hence he refused to be bound by an social conventions. He believed a man should be free to say and do whatever he wanted—even to have

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***DIOGENES THE CYNIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** Diogenes was famous for his wit and sharp, often tactless, remarks. When Alexander the Great stood beside him and said, "I am Alexander, the Great King," Diogenes replied, "I am Diogenes the dog." When he was asked why he was called a dog, he answered that it was because he fawned on those who gave him something and barked at those who gave him nothing, and bit them into the bargain. Diogenes Laertius recounts a great number of stories about Diogenes, not all of which can be true, but they illustrate the sort of man he was.

Plato defined man in this way: "Man is a two-footed, featherless animal," and he was greatly praised for his definition. However Diogenes plucked a rooster, and brought it into the Academy and said, "This is Plato's

man." For that reason this addition was made to the definition, "with broad, flat fingernails." A man once asked him what was the proper time for supper, and he replied, "If you are a rich man, whenever you please. If you are a poor man, whenever you can." ...

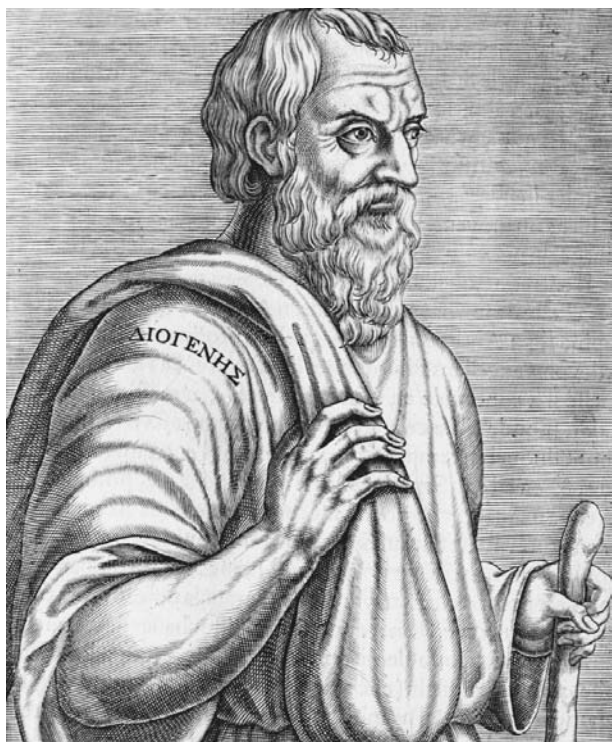
When Plato was lecturing on his Theory of Forms" and using the nouns "tableness" (for the ideal form of a table) and "cupness" (for the ideal form of a cup), Diogenes interrupted, "I, Plato, see a table and a cup, but I see no table or cupness." Plato replied, "That is natural enough, for you have eyes with which to contemplate a table and a cup, but you have no intellect with which to see tableness and cupness."

**SOURCE:** Diogenes, "Diogenes," in *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Book 6, Sec. 6. Trans C. D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853).

sexual intercourse in public, if a natural impulse drove him in that direction. Antisthenes pointed to self-denial as the chief principle of a philosophic life, but Diogenes carried self-denial and the simple life to extremes. Legend has it that one day he saw a child drinking water by cupping it in his hands and raising them to his mouth, whereupon he threw away his own cup, saying that the child had outdone him in austerity. He was a street person—that is, he made his home on the streets, sleeping in porticoes and anywhere he could find shelter—and at one point, he made his home in a large storage jar called a *pitthos*. Wealth and high rank did not impress him. There is a famous story, told by Plutarch in his *Life of Alexander the Great*, that Alexander came to visit him and found him basking in the sun. He asked if he could do anything for him. Diogenes asked him simply to stand aside, for he was blocking the sun. The story is probably apocryphal, but it does illustrate how little the Cynics were impressed by great men. One of Diogenes' early disciples was Crates of Thebes who was once the teacher of Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school of philosophy. Crates gave up a large fortune to follow the life of a beggar and a preacher, and though he was an ugly man, he won the heart of his pupil Hipparchia; she also gave up everything to marry him. Crates glorified his beggar's wallet, but that was precisely the weakness of the sect: they lived off others, thus saving their souls by using others who were too busy to save their own. Cynicism faded out gradually in the second and first centuries B.C.E., but in the first century C.E., it revived

for reasons unknown. In the reign of the emperor Vespasian (69–79 B.C.E.) and his successors, there were swarms of Cynic philosophers in Rome and in the eastern provinces of the empire. Among the upper classes in Rome, resistance to the autocracy of the emperors was associated with Stoicism, but among the middle classes, it was voiced by the Cynics who always claimed the right to speak freely and frankly. They championed the principle that it was the duty of an ideal monarch to care for the welfare of his subjects; he should be like an idealized Hercules who used his great power for the good of his people, and they were fond of pointing out how far the actual conduct of the Roman emperors was from their ideal. The imperial government frequently lost patience with them and drove them from Rome.

**THE CYRENAICS.** The Cyrenaics were a short-lived school that was founded in Cyrene in north Africa by Aristippus, who was once a disciple of Socrates. They taught that the chief end of life was sensual pleasure. This philosophy was built on the belief that the mind feels two emotions, pleasure and pain; while the first is the primary goal of all living things, the latter is what every creature avoids. Pleasure for the Cyrenaics, however, was not merely the absence of pain or discomfort; rather it consisted of a number of particular pleasures, past, present and future: memories of past pleasures, enjoyment of the pleasures of the present, and anticipation of pleasure in the future. Aristippus, who is supposedly the founder of the school (though some scholars have doubted it), was a teacher of rhetoric in Athens who was famous for his pursuit of luxury. He



Imaginative drawing to Diogenes of Sinope, the founder of the Cynic School of Philosophy. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

spent some time at the court of the tyrant of Syracuse in Sicily, Dionysius I, attracted there by the good food and the comfortable living. The chief importance of the Cyrenaics is that they influenced Epicureanism, which also taught that hedonism was the chief end of life, although the Epicureans were suspicious of the pleasures of the senses and sought pleasure by avoiding what might cause pain. The Cyrenaic school came to an end about 275 B.C.E.

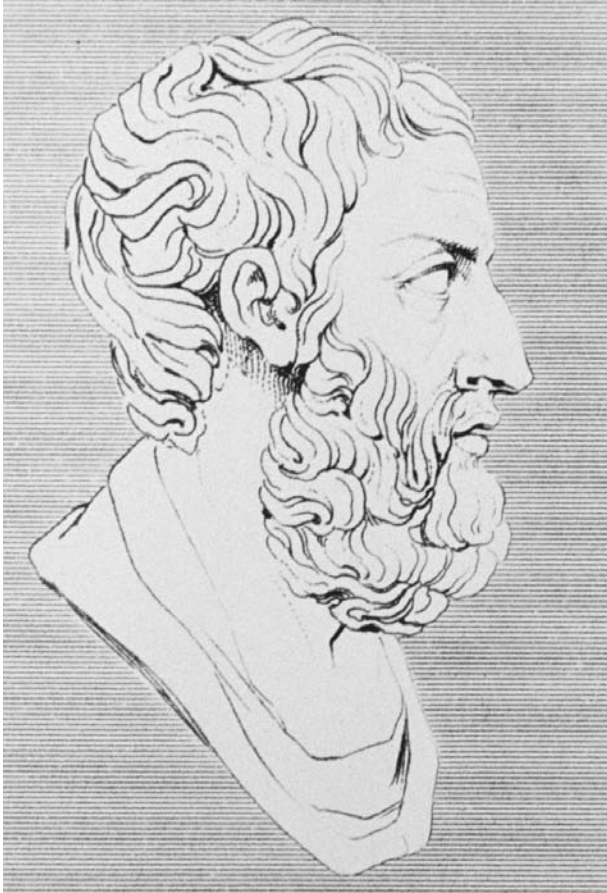
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## EPICURUS

**FOUNDER OF EPICUREANISM.** The English word “epicure,” meaning a person who loves good food and drink, is taken from Epicurus and the Epicureans. It is a singular distortion, for the Epicureans believed that man should restrict his desires to those that spring from the natural appetites—gourmet food and fine wines not being among them. Epicurus (341–270 B.C.E.) was a hedonist in that he believed that the proper goal of all activity was pleasure, but he had an austere definition of it, in that his definition of pleasure was simply the absence of discomfort or pain. The Epicurean ate to rid himself of the discomfort of hunger and no more. According to this philosophy, he should guard himself against anguish at the death of a close friend by having no close friends. Insatiable desire for wealth, power, and fame can never be satisfied, and so they should be avoided. Epicurus himself, the founder of the Epicurean School, was born in Samos, but his parents were Athenian citizens and he himself was educated in Athens. While there, he studied under the tutelage of a disciple of Democritus and learned Democritus’ atomic theory that he would later incorporate into his own philosophy. He taught philosophy at Mytilene on the island of Lesbos and in Lampsacus in northern Greece before returning to Athens, and it must have been in this period that he developed his view that pleasure was the chief end of life. It was not the avid pursuit of pleasure, but there was a fine line separating the Epicureans from the Cyrenaics, and the modern dictionary definition of “Epicurean” as a person who is fond of sensuous pleasure may be wrong but it is not entirely unjustified.

**THE GARDEN.** About 306 B.C.E. Epicurus moved to Athens and there bought a house with a garden as quarters for a school which he founded. There he was joined by his disciples who formed a community of philosophers in the “Garden,” the name of his school. The disciples included women, for Epicurus was the first philosopher to admit women into an organized school. His community was known as a *thiasos* (company); it describes a band of persons such as worshipers of Dionysus who parade through the streets singing and dancing, but it also means a religious brotherhood. In his *thiasos*, Epicurus enjoyed a kind of adulation that approached worship. His birthday was celebrated as a festival. He was a voluminous writer, but all his major works are lost. Fortunately, Diogenes Laertius, writing in the early third century C.E., quotes four works by him: three of them letters to disciples and one, titled the *Chief Doctrines*, which is a collection of proverbs on ethical subjects, meant, evidently, to be committed to memory. Modern



Modern engraving of the Athenian philosopher Epicurus. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

knowledge of Epicureanism expanded in 1888 with the discovery of another collection of proverbs in the Vatican Library.

**ATOMS AND VOID.** Epicurus adapted the atomic theory of Democritus to the purposes of his philosophy. He actually cared very little about the theory itself but he needed a metaphysical background for his ethical doctrine, which taught that pleasure and avoidance of pain were the chief ends of life. He started from two simple points. First, nothing is created from nothing. That was an old principle of Greek philosophy, and it follows that the stuff from which the universe is made has always existed and will never pass away. The universe must also be infinite, for if it had a boundary, it would be possible to reach this boundary and puncture it. A dozen men thrusting their fists through the boundary of the universe could create a new boundary, and this process could be continued endlessly. Second, there are bodies in motion, as our eyes tell us that there is, for Epicurus was willing to trust the senses, and since there is motion, there must be empty space, that is, void, into which they

can move. Thus the existence of atoms and void could be taken as proved, and since the universe is infinite, the number of atoms must also be infinite.

**CREATION.** Epicurus explained the process of creation of objects as occurring when these atoms collided. He thought that the atoms had weight and were constantly falling. They could not fall at the same speed along parallel trajectories, however, or they would not naturally collide. So Epicurus taught that as the atoms fell, they would, purely at random, swerve to one side or the other. The swerve explained the collisions of atoms, which stuck together when they collided—they seem to have had velcro-like appendages—and group of atoms formed the objects that we see, both living and inert. The random nature of the swerve preserved free will in the universe, but it also left a great deal to chance. When an object passes away, the atoms disintegrate. Thus when an animal dies or a tree is cut down, the atoms that compose it will return to the infinite collection of atoms that move forever in a downward motion through the universe. Everything, including man, is atoms and void. Aristotle had claimed that everything that was created in nature had a purpose, or a “final cause.” Epicurus could not accept that. Yet he had to accept the fact that the creative process in nature seemed to follow patterns: men and women, for instance, are not put together at random; they have heads, arms, and legs positioned where they should be on their bodies. Dogs all seem to belong to one species. To explain that phenomenon, Epicurus developed a rudimentary theory of evolution: in the remote past, the atoms did form human being and animals at random, so that once upon a time the world was inhabited by some odd and curious creatures, and a dog might have the claws of a cat, and a man might have the lower body of a horse, like the mythical centaurs. But by trial and error, nature discovered the creatures most able to survive in the competition for life, and these formed patterns of creation. This was a “survival-of-the-fittest” argument, a precursor of Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory.

**THE GODS.** The Epicureans denied divine providence, but they did not discard the gods. To be sure, Epicurus had mechanistic explanations for natural phenomena such as thunder, rainbows, and earthquakes, and he argued against the belief that there was some caring, benevolent deity that watched over the world. The manifold suffering in the world was proof of the falsity of any such notion. But the Epicurean system did leave space for the gods. They were blessed, happy beings who lived in a never-never land, the *intermundia*, to use the Latin term for it, which means the “space between the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE MAXIMS OF EPICURUS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Diogenes Laertius ends his biography of Epicurus with four authentic documents, three of them letters to disciples in which, among other things, he presents purely mechanistic explanations for various natural occurrences. For example, earthquakes may be the result of wind penetrating the interior of the earth or it may be caused by the earth itself being bombarded by particles from the outside, and since earth's own atoms are in constant motion, it is prone to general vibration. In any case, earthquakes were not caused by the will of the gods. The last document is a set of Epicurus's maxims to guide a person seeking a happy life. Ten of them are quoted below.

What is happy and imperishable suffers no trouble itself, nor does it cause trouble to anything. So it is not subject to feelings either of anger or of partiality, for these feelings exist only in what is weak.

Death is nothing to us, for that which is dissolved has no feeling whatsoever, and that which has no feeling means nothing to us.

A person cannot have a pleasant life unless he lives prudently, honorably and justly, nor can he live prudently, honorably and justly without a pleasant life. A person cannot possibly have a pleasant life unless he happens to live prudently, honorably and justly.

No pleasure is intrinsically bad, but what causes pleasure is accompanied by many things that disturb pleasure.

Vast power and great wealth may, up to a certain point, grant us security as far as individual men are concerned, but the security of men as a whole depends on the tranquility of their souls and their freedom from ambition.

Of all the things that wisdom provides for the happiness of a whole life, the most important by far is acquiring friends.

Natural justice is an agreement among men about what actions are suitable. Its aim is to prevent men from injuring one another, or to be injured.

Justice has no independent existence: it results from mutual contracts, and we find it in force wherever there is a mutual agreement to guard against doing injury or sustaining it.

Injustice is not intrinsically bad: people regard it as evil only because it is accompanied by the fear that they will not escape the officials who are appointed to punish evil actions.

The happiest men are those who have reached the point where they have nothing to fear from those who surround them.

**SOURCE:** Diogenes, "Epicurus," *The Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*. Book 10, Sec. 31. Trans. C. D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853).

worlds." They lived happy lives in a perpetual state of *ataraxia* (tranquillity). They did not worry about the wretchedness of human society, which could only disturb their tranquillity. They were ethical ideals, for they had achieved the *ataraxia* which was the aim of the Epicurean philosopher. There was no need to fear their wrath.

**GAINING KNOWLEDGE.** Epicurus' atomic theory explained vision. Every object, he argued, threw off *eidola* (images), which were actually thin films of atoms which traveled through the air to our eyes. An image that struck the eyes affected the soul-atoms there, which transmitted the image to the mind. The whole process was to be understood in terms of the movement of atoms that are arranged and rearranged into patterns. All sensations were true, but Epicurus admitted that some images could be distorted. A favorite example was an oar partly in and partly out of the water that appears to be bent. Epicurus explained the distortion by claiming that the atoms of the *eidola* emitted by the oar collided with

other atoms on their way to the eye, and thus transmitted a distorted image to the eye which in turn transmitted it to the mind. The mind, however, which is made up of very small atoms, can sort things out. The mind stores concepts—Epicurus refers to them as pre-suppositions—of what objects such as oars look like, which it has gained from experience. If a person makes the mistake of believing that the oar really is bent, it is because that person assumed too soon that the image that has reached the eyes is accurate. It follows that a person can accept the evidence received by the eyes so long as the objects that are seen are clearly visible. Senses can provide a person with accurate information.

**THE FEAR OF DEATH.** The aim of life was pleasure—the satisfaction of desires—though Epicurus never went as far as the Cyrenaics who held that sensual pleasure was the aim of life. Fear of death was one thing that could disturb the life of *ataraxia*, and yet there was no reason for such fear. Death was a dissolution of the atoms. The mind, which was also made up of atoms, did

not survive death. There was no need to fear tortures in the Underworld, or any of the travails that, according to myth, the souls of men suffered in the House of Hades. Epicurus and his followers assumed that it was the life after death that men feared, and by eliminating the afterlife, they removed a source of stress. They did not address the fact that what many persons fear is the act of dying itself.

**EPICUREANISM IN ROME.** The philosophy that appealed to the Roman upper classes was Stoicism, not Epicureanism. Rome did produce one enthusiast for Epicurus' philosophy, however: Titus Lucretius Carus, about who little is known. He probably lived from 94–55 B.C.E. He produced one long poem, divided into six books, the *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things), which is a splendid exposition of the physical theories of Epicurus. He explains the atomic theory of Epicurus, and in his third book, he applies it to the human soul, which is mortal. In fact the third book ends with a hymn to the mortality of the soul and the foolishness of humans who fear death. The poem was left unfinished. The Roman statesman, orator, and philosopher Cicero knew it, for he refers to it in a letter dated to 54 B.C.E., which he sent to his brother Quintus in terms that would lead us to believe that both his brother and himself had read it. Cicero himself leaned towards the scepticism which Arcesilaus had preached in the New Academy in Athens. It is also true that a center of Epicurean study developed in the region of Naples in the first century B.C.E.; a house excavated in the city of Herculaneum, which had been destroyed in 79 C.E. by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, contained charred rolls of papyrus apparently containing Epicurean works, most of them by the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus of Gadara (c. 110–c. 40 B.C.E.) who had a villa at Herculaneum. Now known as the Villa of the Papyri, the house must have been a gathering place for Epicureans in the early first century C.E. after Philodemus' death.

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## NEOPLATONISM

**HISTORY.** Neoplatonism is the modern name for the philosophy taught by Plotinus who came to Rome shortly after 234 C.E. and opened a school there. Plotinus' pupil, Porphyry, who published Plotinus' works after his death, was largely responsible for publicizing his philosophy and incidentally, antagonizing Christian leaders who were both attracted to and repelled by Plotinus' teachings. Porphyry in turn had a pupil named Iamblichus who founded a school in Syria. Iamblichus' works are all lost, but his philosophic ideas lived on in Athens, where Plato's old Academy was revitalized by Neoplatonism. The Neoplatonic Academy, which regarded itself as a direct descendant of the Academy that Plato founded, became a center for Neoplatonic doctrine until the emperor Justinian closed the school in 529 C.E., a move which marks the end of pagan philosophy. Thus Neoplatonism is the last product of the Greek philosophic tradition which went back to the Milesian philosophers in archaic Greece.

**REMEMBERING PLATO.** The philosophy of Plotinus harked back to Plato, though not to all of his writings. Plotinus paid no attention to Plato's early dialogues, choosing to draw from the dialogues of Plato's middle and late periods. Plato in his *Republic* referred to the "Being beyond Being" which is the Idea of the Good. The "Being beyond Being" re-emerges in Plotinus' conception of the "One," which is the principle of all being, and hence "beyond Being." It is infinite and, as such, it has no attributes. It simply transcends any description or knowledge. But while the goal of Plato's philosophy was the achievement of knowledge of the divine being, Plotinus went a step further and posited that the goal should be an actual union with the divine being. For Plotinus, the "One" is all things and yet none of them. It is formless, but it possesses a kind of true beauty, for it is the power that produces all that is beautiful. The "One" produces offspring, and its greatest offspring, second only to itself, is Intellect. Soul has the same relation to Intellect as Intellect has to the "One." It is the source of all that lives and, as such, it must be immortal. Soul is the principle of motion. Capable of moving itself, it is the cause of movement in the world, and it is the source of life for all bodies that have souls within them. Soul, therefore, rules nature. So between the "One" and the material world there are three descending grades of reality: "Intelligence," that is, the *nous* (world-mind); the *psyche* (world-soul); and *physis* (nature).



**THE DESIRE OF THE SOUL.** The soul's desire is to attain union with the "One," and to do that, it must itself become simple and formless. The soul must discard all awareness of intelligible realities. The union of the Soul with the "One" cannot be described. It is like the return of a wanderer to his native land. To attain this union, a person must free his soul from all outward things and turn completely within himself, rid his mind even of ideal forms and forget himself and thus come within sight of the "One." The Soul loves God and wants to be one with him. This was not a philosophy for a person who took an active role in public life. Plato had founded his Academy as a school of future statesmen, but the world had changed since the fourth century B.C.E., and Plotinus' philosophers withdrew and sought salvation in contemplation.

**THE FINAL DEVELOPMENT.** Porphyry's pupil, Iamblichus (c. 250–c. 325 C.E.), after studies in Rome, returned home to Syria and founded his own school there. His ideas survive, though most of his writings do not, and what is remarkable about them is that he explicitly subordinated philosophy to *theurgy*, the art of communicating with God by oracles, mysticism and magic. Iamblichus imported a great many religious ideas from the East, particularly from Egypt, into Neoplatonism. In the fifth century C.E. the Neoplatonic Academy acquired new life under a *scholarch* (headmaster) named Proclus (412–484 C.E.). Proclus was born in Constantinople and came to Athens as a young man to study philosophy. He stayed to become the head of the Academy. Professors taught in their homes—the park-like setting where Plato himself had taught had long since disappeared—and the remains of Proclus' house have been discovered. It was below the Acropolis, where Proclus had a good view of the Parthenon, the temple of Athena. When the gold-and-ivory cult statue of Athena was removed from the Parthenon, Proclus had a dream in which Athena appeared to him and told him that now she was ousted from her temple, she would have to make her home with him. Proclus enjoyed Athena's favor, it was said. He and his disciples were also devotees of the Sun God, to whom they offered daily prayers. Life in the Neoplatonic Academy was almost that of a pagan monastery. In 529 C.E., the emperor Justinian closed it down, and the long tradition came to an end.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Philosophy*

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### ARISTOTLE

384 B.C.E.–322 B.C.E.

*Philosopher*  
*Teacher*  
*Biologist*

**EARLY DEVELOPMENT.** Aristotle was born in 384 B.C.E. in Stagira, Chalcidice, the projection of land that forms the eastern edge of the Thermaic Gulf in the northern Aegean Sea. His father Nicomachus was the court physician of King Amyntas II, the father of Philip II of Macedon who would eventually make Macedon the dominant power in Greece. Aristotle may have spent part of his boyhood at the Macedonian court at Pella, and acquired his interest in physical science in his father's surgery. At age seventeen, he travelled to Athens and entered Plato's Academy where he remained until Plato's death in 348 or 347 B.C.E., first as a student, then as a teacher and research associate. When Plato died, Aristotle left Athens, perhaps because he was disappointed at not being named Plato's successor as head of the Academy. In any case, the new head, Speusippus, represented the trend of later Platonic thought to make philosophy into a branch of mathematics, for which Aristotle had no sympathy. Aristotle went to the court of Hermias, a former student at the Academy who extended his hospitality to a small circle of philosophers, and Aristotle married his niece. Hermeias was a eunuch and a tyrant who ruled Atarneus and Assos in the Troad (the region around ancient Troy), on the fringe of the Persian

Empire; in 341 B.C.E. he was betrayed to the Persians who captured him, tortured him and put him to death. In his memory, Aristotle wrote a hymn to virtue. The execution of Hermias may account for Aristotle's prejudice against the Persians which is apparent in his treatise, the *Politics*.

**FOUNDED THE LYCEUM.** Aristotle himself moved to Lesbos, and it is during his stay at Assos and Lesbos that he did much of his research into the natural sciences which laid the foundation for the modern study of biology. Then about 343 B.C.E. Philip II of Macedon asked him to come to Pella as tutor to his son Alexander. The appointment ended when Philip appointed Alexander regent in 340, and Aristotle probably went back to Stagira. The year after Philip's death in 336 B.C.E., Aristotle returned to Athens and leased some buildings—as a non-citizen he could not buy property—and founded a school where he gave lectures and collected books and artifacts to illustrate his lectures, especially his lectures on zoology. The school was in a grove sacred to Apollo Lyceus and the Muses, and it took the name, the Lyceum, from Apollo Lyceus. The buildings which Aristotle rented there included a courtyard with a colonnade called a *peripatos* where Aristotle loved to walk with his students, and from it, the Aristoteleans got the name “Peripatetics” by which they were known in later centuries. There Aristotle built a library and a museum; Alexander the Great is supposed to have given him a grant of 800 talents—a enormous sum by the standards of the day—to fund the collection and ordered information to be sent to him about any new species discovered in the course of his conquests. When Alexander died in 323 B.C.E. Athens was swept up in a wave of anti-Macedonian feeling, and Aristotle's close connections with Macedon put him in danger. He prudently withdrew to Chalcis on the island of Euboea where his family had an estate, and he died there less than a year later.

**RESEARCH LOST.** Much of Aristotle's work is lost. As a young research associate at Plato's Academy, he wrote a number of dialogues that were much admired for their style, but none survive. He also produced memoranda and collections of materials for treatises. At the Lyceum, he organized large-scale research; he assigned his students the task of producing research essays on the constitutions of 158 Greek states and of these one survives: a papyrus found in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century contains most of the *Athenaion Politeia* (The Constitution of Athens), which is probably one of these research essays. Aristotle's surviving works include the scientific and philosophic treatises, perhaps about one-third of his total output.

**DIVERGED FROM PLATO** Aristotle began as a student of Plato but he soon diverged from his master. He could not accept Plato's Theory of Forms, which held that physical objects in the world such as chairs, horses, and men are imitations of perfect realities which exist separate from the human sphere, and among these perfect realities were abstractions such as pure Goodness and pure Beauty. For Aristotle, these “Forms” did not exist apart from the substances from which they were formed. He pointed out that if the substances did not exist, the Forms could not exist. Thus a horse is recognizable, for instance, because a number of horses exist and their characteristics are known. This is true of all species, whether plants or animals or even types of government, and thus by collecting data about them, and classifying them, real knowledge can be acquired. Aristotle would have said that a political scientist who wanted to acquire skill in the art of governing should not formulate constitutions for imaginary utopias, but rather should imagine the actual constitutions of states in the Mediterranean world.

**ACHIEVEMENT IN DEDUCTIVE LOGIC.** One of Aristotle's major achievements was in the field of deductive logic—the process of reasoning from a premise to a logical conclusion, or from a known principle to one that is unknown. Aristotle no doubt spent a great deal of thought perfecting his logic, and he was proud of the results, but for him it was always a means to an end, and the end was a solution to the old problem: how can anyone know anything for certain? Aristotle always regarded his logic as a tool that he might use to separate wrong arguments from sound ones. His logic was taken up with enthusiasm by the medieval philosophers who used it to make rigorously accurate deductions from one or more first principles that were taken as self-evidently true. The problem with this method of reasoning was that the first principle really must be true; otherwise the deduction would be wrong. However, Aristotle, unlike the medieval philosophers that came centuries after him, did not himself accept first principles as true without examining them carefully.

**THE LYCEUM AFTER HIS DEATH.** After Aristotle died in 322 B.C.E., Theophrastus became the head of the Lyceum and it flourished under his leadership. Theophrastus himself carried on research in botany; Eudemus of Rhodes wrote on the researches into science, including arithmetic, geometry and theology; and the brilliant researcher Aristoxenus wrote on music—parts of his works on harmonics and rhythm have survived. After Theophrastus' death, a series of lesser philosophers became heads, or “scholarchs,” as they were called, but the Lyceum was increasingly overshadowed by rival

schools. It probably ceased to exist after the sack of Athens by the Roman general Sulla in 86 B.C.E. Although the school did not survive, Aristotle's influence did, particularly after the publication of an edition of his works by Andronicus of Rhodes in 40 B.C.E.

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### EPICETETUS

c. 55 C.E.–c. 135 C.E.

*Philosopher*  
*Teacher*

**SOURCE OF STOICISM.** Given the small number of surviving writing by the early Stoics, the works of Epictetus take on a particular importance as a major source of modern knowledge of Stoicism. He wrote nothing himself, but he was fortunate enough to have as a student Flavius Arrianus, or Arrian as he is usually known. Arrian was a Roman citizen who served as governor of the province of Cappadocia in Asia Minor under the emperor Hadrian (117–135 C.E.). He transcribed the *Discourses* of Epictetus, which seem to have been conversations between Epictetus and his students after the formal lectures were over for the day. It is hard to believe that they are an actual stenographic record of what Epictetus said, though it is not impossible, for a man of standing such as Arrian might well have had at his disposal a slave trained in shorthand. There is one shred of evidence that would indicate that the *Discourses* do represent the actual words of Epictetus; another work of Arrian—a history of Alexander the Great—differs markedly in literary style from that of Epictetus' *Discourses*, indicating that two different authors are responsible.

**FROM SLAVE TO PHILOSOPHER.** Epictetus was born in Hierapolis (modern Pamukkale in Turkey) and as a boy he went to Rome as a slave where he was purchased by a secretary of the emperor Nero named Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus was himself an ex-slave who had gained his freedom and rose through the ranks of the imperial civil service until he became the official in charge of receiving petitions for his master, the emperor Nero. There were stories told that he treated Epictetus cruelly; he did, however, allow him to attend the lec-

tures of the Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus. During his mid-twenties, shortly after the suicide of Nero in 68 C.E., Epictetus was manumitted, thereby becoming a freedman. It was then that Epictetus began his own lecturing and philosophizing, much of it focusing on the Stoic philosophy. About 89 C.E. the emperor Domitian expelled the philosophers from Rome, including Epictetus who migrated to Nicopolis in north-west Greece, an area that attracted many upper-class Romans including Arrian. Although there were originally eight books of Epictetus' *Discourses*, only four survived to record the philosopher's thoughts for posterity. A manual of personal conduct for the adherent to Stoic doctrine, the *Enchiridion*, also survived, giving readers a synopsis of the key themes of Epictetus' teaching.

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### EPICURUS

341 B.C.E.–270 B.C.E.

*Philosopher*

**EPICURUS' LIFE.** Epicurus was born in Samos in 341 B.C.E., but his father and mother were both Athenian citizens so he suffered none of the disadvantages of resident aliens in Athens who could not, for instance, own property in Athens. Epicurus fulfilled his military service in Athens just after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E. and then rejoined his family who had by then settled in the city of Colophon, an Ionian city in Asia Minor. It was there he probably learned about the theory of atoms and void proposed by Leucippus and Democritus. At age 32, he moved to the city of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, where he set up a school and began his career as a teacher; from Mytilene he moved to Lampsacus on the Hellespont, where he also set up a school and began to acquire pupils and loyal friends. The intellectual center of the Greek world was in Athens, however, so he moved there in 306 B.C.E. He purchased a house with a garden, where he set up a school known as "The Garden." Apart from some visits to Asia Minor, he remained in Athens until his death.

**EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY.** For many Greeks, the Garden provided an escape. The expanded world that resulted from Alexander the Great's conquests had

become a bewildering place. Epicurus' students retired to his Garden where they attempted to live a life of *ataraxia*: freedom from stress and worry. Though the adjective "epicurean" has come to mean "fond of sensuous pleasure," Epicurus himself and his followers were not epicurean in that sense. They were abstemious: a small cup of light wine was enough for a day, otherwise Epicurus taught that happiness was the aim of his ethical system, and happiness meant pleasure. Pleasure was the one true good, but not the sensual pleasure of the Cyrenaic School with which the Epicureans were sometimes confused by their enemies. Rather it was intellectual pleasure, and freedom from stress, desire, need, and, above all, pain.

**EPICURUS' DEATH AND LEGACY.** As it turned out, Epicurus' death was exceedingly agonizing, and he bore the pain with fortitude. He suffered from a kidney stone, and he failed to pass it in his urine. After some two weeks of excruciating pain, he had a warm bath prepared for him in a bronze tub, asked for a cup of pure wine and drank it, and stepped into the tub. As he rested there, he urged his friends to remember his teachings, and so he died. Unlike the Stoics, the Epicureans never influenced the world to any great extent, but on the other hand, Epicurean teachings did not die out despite being much reviled, particularly by the Christians who disagreed with the Epicurean position that the cosmos was the result of accident and there was no divine plan.

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## PLATO

427 B.C.E.–347 B.C.E.

### *Philosopher*

**DISTINGUISHED FAMILY.** Plato, one of Greece's most famous philosophers, was born in Athens in 427 B.C.E. to an old distinguished family. His father, Ariston, was a conservative man of property and established family lineage, and his mother, Perictione, counted among her ancestors Solon, the Athenian statesman who reformed the government in 594 B.C.E. and gave it what

conservatives called the "ancestral constitution" of Athens. Plato himself claimed in two of his dialogues that the tale of Atlantis, a lost continent submerged beneath the sea, was passed down to his family from Solon, who learned it in Egypt. Ariston passed away while Plato was still a child, and his mother married a close friend of Pericles, Athens' powerful statesman. Thus, Plato had close connections to the powerful elite of Athens even as a young child.

**DISCIPLE OF SOCRATES.** Despite his political connections, Plato's most influential relationship was no doubt the one he shared with the philosopher Socrates. Plato must have been quite young when he met Socrates and it was the turning point of his life. Engrossed by Socrates' relentless pursuit of ethical questions, Plato became Socrates' most famous disciple, and it is through Plato's writings that most of the modern knowledge about Socrates is derived. Not everyone was so enamored of Socrates, however; the philosopher's penchant for confronting the citizens of Athens with their own foolishness had earned him many enemies, and the hostility he aroused contributed to his condemnation and death penalty on charges of impiety and corrupting the young in 399 B.C.E. For Plato, Socrates' condemnation resulted in his disillusionment with politics as he saw them practiced in the Greek world. He became convinced that the only cure for bad government lay in philosophy, and there could be no good government until true philosophers gained political power, or politicians become true philosophers. He himself explained how he came to this conclusion in his personal testament expressed in the *Seventh Letter*, which he wrote in his old age, and this belief permeates his most famous work, the *Republic*, as well as his last work, the *Laws*, left unrevised at his death in 347 B.C.E.

**PLATO'S TRAVELS.** Plato traveled widely for about a decade after Socrates' death. He visited southern Italy in the year 388 B.C.E. where he encountered the Pythagoreans; at Tarentum a Pythagorean philosopher and distinguished mathematician, Archytas, had been elected governor and provided an example of a philosopher in power. Plato's fascination with mathematics owed something to Archytas' influence. From Italy, he went to the court of the tyrant Dionysius I in Sicily, and got to know Dionysius' brother-in-law, who was excited by Plato's political ideas. But Plato offended Dionysius somehow and returned to Athens. There he set up the Academy about 386 B.C.E. where he taught for the rest of his life, except for two brief periods (in 367 B.C.E. and again in 361 B.C.E.) when he returned to Sicily to train Dionysius I's successor, Dionysius II.

**PLATO'S ACADEMY.** The aim of the Academy was to train statesmen. Many members of the Academy took an active part in the political life of the Greek states. The Academy was not the first such institution in Athens, but it does have a claim as the first university in Europe. When the Roman general Sulla sacked Athens in 88 B.C.E., the Academy was a casualty, and there is no evidence of activity in the Academy in the centuries that followed. Individual Platonists, however, held classes in their houses and Athens retained a reputation as a center of philosophy. In the fifth century C.E., however, the Academy was refounded as a center for Neoplatonism, which mixed mysticism with Platonic philosophy, and this Neoplatonic Academy claimed direct descent from Plato's Academy, a claim that was clearly bogus. Yet it became paganism's last intellectual stronghold, and in 529 B.C.E., the emperor Justinian closed it down as part of his campaign against the remnants of paganism.

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## PLOTINUS

c. 205 C.E.–270 C.E.

*Philosopher*

**STUDIED FOR MANY YEARS.** The philosopher Plotinus is best known as the founder of Neoplatonism—the study, interpretation, and progression of the work of the Greek philosopher Plato. Plotinus, like many philosophers who studied Plato, was not born in Greece, but in Lycopolis, Egypt, around 205 C.E. Not much is known about his early life other than he had an early thirst for knowledge that prompted him to leave Egypt in his twenties in order to learn more. At the age of 28 he returned to Egypt, this time to Alexandria, in search of a contemporary philosopher by the name of Ammonius Saccas. He attended lectures given by Saccas and eventually became a personal student of the philosopher. It was Saccas that introduced Plotinus to Plato, as well as to Persian and Indian philosophy, both of which would heavily influence his later interpretations of Plato. After eleven years as a student of Saccas, he felt the need to travel again, and his newfound love of Asian philos-

ophy led him to join up with a Roman military expedition to Persia in 243. Unfortunately, Plotinus never made it to Persia, for the leader of the expedition, Roman emperor Gordian III, was lynched by his own troops and the expedition was abandoned. It took Plotinus two years to return from the expedition, and his next recorded appearance was in Rome in 245. By this time Plotinus was forty years old, and was ready to embark on his philosophical career.

**LECTURED IN ROME.** Plotinus's first lectures did not relate to Plato directly but instead focused on the teachings of his old mentor Ammonius. According to a biography written by Plotinus's student Porphyry, Plotinus spoke all over Rome about Eastern philosophies in relation to Plato's work, but did not put down on paper any of his theories or interpretations for close to ten years. However, by 263, Plotinus had moved on to the direct study and interpretation of Plato's work and had written 21 treatises on philosophical issues. These writings, along with 33 other treatises which he would write over the last seven years of his life, would make up his most famous compilation of work, the *Enneads*. The 54 treatises in the *Enneads* cover a wide variety of subjects and were later arranged by Porphyry in the following order: *Ennead* I dealt with issues of ethics; *Enneads* II and III looked into natural philosophy and cosmology; *Ennead* IV delved heavily into psychology; *Ennead* V concerned itself with epistemological issues, especially those of the intellect; and *Ennead* VI covered a variety of topics from numbers to the issue of a higher being above the intellect. These writings are not so much musings on these topics as they are responses to questions that Plotinus received during his lectures about different areas of Plato's philosophy.

**SUFFERED AILMENT IN LATER YEARS.** During his later years, Plotinus also heavily studied the works of Aristotle, another pupil of Plato. While most of Plotinus's written work is original, many of his lectures and many of the positions from which he starts his writings were taken directly from Aristotle's interpretation of Plato's work. By 268, Plotinus had retired from lecturing and his writing also seemed to stop completely. This has been attributed to an ailment he suffered, possibly leprosy, which disfigured him. It is unclear whether it was this ailment or simply old age that caused Plotinus's death in 270 at the age of 66. His final words that were reported were, "Try to bring back the God within you to the Divine in the universe." The *Enneads* which Porphyry edited were published thirty years after his death, and they are the main surviving work that produced Neoplatonism centuries later.

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**THALES**

c. 625 B.C.E.—c. 547 B.C.E.

*Philosopher*

*Mathematician*

*Astronomer*

**THE FOUNDER OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY.** The Greeks looked upon Thales as the founder of Greek philosophy and the first man to attempt to provide a scientific explanation for the origin of the world. He was born in Miletus on the south-west coast of Asia Minor around 625 B.C.E. and in his youth he was an avid traveler. As Hieronymus of Rhodes indicates in his report, Thales measured the pyramids by their shadow, having observed the time when a person's shadow is equal to the person's height. It wasn't long after his trip to Egypt that Thales went to Greece to further his study of geometry. It was in Greece that he began to lecture on natural sciences and philosophy and he founded one of the first Greek schools of philosophy the Ionian School, also called the Milesian school.

**LEGEND OF ECLIPSE PREDICTION.** Thales was said to have predicted an eclipse of the sun which has traditionally been dated to 585 or 584 B.C.E. and if this report is true, it would provide the one certain date in his life. Whether he actually predicted the eclipse or not is a matter of dispute. At one time scholars believed that he used astronomical observations borrowed from Babylon to make his prediction, but it is now known that at this time, the Babylonians had no theory for predicting solar eclipses that Thales could have used. Moreover, the story goes that the eclipse that Thales predicted took place just as the Medes and the Lydians were about to fight a battle at the Halys River in Asia Minor, and the Milesians were present as allies of Lydia. The eclipse caused the Medes and Lydians to break off the battle. The story implies that the eclipse took place during daylight hours, and there was no solar eclipse at a suitable hour in 585 or 584 B.C.E., though on 21 September 582, there was a partial eclipse, three-quarters total at 10 and this may have

been the eclipse which Thales was said to have foretold. Clearly Thales' prediction was a legend, but it is evidence of his reputation as an astronomer was among the Greeks.

**ANECDOTES ABOUT THALES.** There were a number of similar stories told of Thales' activities as engineer, mathematician, and astronomer, as well as a philosopher. When his critics derided his wisdom as impractical, he used his astronomical knowledge to predict a superabundant crop of olives, and made a fortune by cornering the market in olive presses. Another story which presented him as an absent-minded intellectual told that while he was stargazing, he fell into a well, and a servant girl who found him laughed at him because he failed to notice what was at his feet as he examined the heavens. He discovered that two triangles were equal if two angles and one side were equal and he evidently used this theorem to measure the distance of ships out at sea. He was credited with a book on navigation titled the *Nautical Star Guide*, but it is doubtful if he was the author of this work. Most scholars think that Thales wrote nothing.

**CONTRIBUTION TO NATURAL PHILOSOPHY.** Thales argued that the material constituent of all things is water. The earth, he claimed, floats on water, and he used this theory to explain why earthquakes occurred. He rejected the explanation that they took place when a god such as Poseidon shook the earth. It is possible that he derived his theory from Near Eastern mythological explanations of creation, for Babylonian descriptions of the world order spoke of the "waters under the earth." Yet Thales' doctrine did not turn to supernatural or mystical explanations in order to understand natural phenomena. Instead of elaborating stories of how the universe came into existence, as Hesiod did in his *Theogony* which proposed a theological explanation for how the world arose from chaos, Thales posed a new question—"What is the universe?—and his answer was a theory based on observation of the real world. As such he paved the way for the development of modern natural science.

**HELPED CROESUS DURING WAR WITH PERSIA.** When Thales was an old man, the Lydian kingdom, then ruled by Croesus, whose wealth was proverbial, was threatened by a new enemy, Cyrus, king of Persia, who had overthrown the last king of the Medes in 550 B.C.E. Croesus, whose sister had married the last king of the Medes, wondered if he should attack Persia before it grew too strong, and he consulted the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. The oracle gave the ambiguous answer, "If Croesus crosses the Halys River, a great em-

pire will fall.” Croesus imagined the prophecy was favorable and launched an attack, not realizing that his empire was the one destined to fall. Thales accompanied him, and another legend told that he helped the Lydians cross the Halys River by diverting part of the stream into another channel. Croesus was defeated, and in 547 or 546 B.C.E. his capital of Sardis fell to Cyrus. The Ionian cities that had been subject to Croesus wondered what to do, and Thales proposed that they should form a federal state and present a united front to Persia. But Cyrus split the Ionian resistance by offering Miletus a favorable alliance and leaving the conquest of the rest of Ionia to one of his generals. Following this event, Thales passed from the historical records until his death around 547 B.C.E.

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## ZENO OF CITIUM

335 B.C.E.–263 B.C.E.

### *Philosopher*

**EARLY YEARS** Like many people in Citiium, Zeno was most likely Phoenician, a sect of Middle Eastern people who were known for their sea trading. Zeno himself was a merchant in his younger years, traveling often to numerous ports around the Mediterranean Sea. Over the years Zeno began to gather philosophical books from Athens, Greece (both from his own travels and from his father’s travels as a merchant), and by his mid-twenties he sold what cargo he had left and settled permanently in Athens.

**BEGAN TEACHING AT THE PAINTED STOA.** Zeno was influenced heavily in his early philosophical education by two very different schools of thought. He often attended lectures by Polemon, a follower of the Academics, who were considered very traditional philosophers and used Plato’s teachings as their core beliefs. He also was known to follow the teachings of Crates the Cynic, a well-known teacher of Cynicism. Cynicism was the exact opposite of the Academic philosophy, rejecting all

conventions of society and instead pointing towards a life focused on nature and base needs. By the time Zeno began his own lecturing around 300 B.C.E., he had begun to combine these two schools of thought into a new philosophy. Zeno, like many other philosophy teachers at the time, taught in public locations that were accessible to any person who might wander by. It was well known that Zeno’s favorite place to teach was in front of the “Stoa Poikile” (Painted Stoa), a central colonnade on the north side of the agora in Athens. Zeno became so well known for lecturing on philosophy in this spot that his new brand of philosophy was soon named Stoicism. Over time Zeno began to develop a large following that included Antigonus Gonatas, the king of Macedonia who would come to Athens often just to hear Zeno teach. While Zeno was invited numerous times to become the royal philosopher in Macedonia, he declined, not wanting to leave Athens, the seat of philosophy during his lifetime.

**STOICISM.** Zeno’s philosophical core beliefs grew out of the idea of corruption and rationalism. In his most famous and controversial work, the *Republic*, Zeno chastised society and other philosophies for needing to set up binding institutions such as government, law, and religion. In the *Republic* Zeno first breaks down society by all of its ills, and then reconstructs it by describing a new form of society. In this society, members rely completely on rational thinking as a way of life. In this “Utopian” view of the world, there is no need for any sort of government, economic system, nor institutions such as religion. Instead the rational thinking human would only do what is best not only for himself or herself, but for the society at large. This line of thinking allowed Zeno to promote many “radical” ideas for his time period such as equality between the sexes, homosexuality, and shared responsibility for successes and failures. While many of Zeno’s followers saw the possibility of a world where only moral and ethical choices were made, many of Zeno’s contemporaries saw Stoicism as the path toward moral depravity. The philosophy was rejected not only by the Academics, but also by the Cynics who felt that it did not give in completely to all of the natural ways of the world (for much of what Zeno outlined in the *Republic* was an orderly society where no one was offended by actions because all actions were deemed right or wrong by rationalism).

**LIVED A SIMPLE LIFE.** While most of Zeno’s time was spent teaching at the Stoa, he was well known throughout Athens as a person who was of high class and who was highly connected, an unusual status for someone who was not born an Athenian. He was also

perceived as one who enjoyed simple but expensive things. It was well known that he was not a heavy drinker, often turning down invitations to symposia (traditional Greek drinking parties), but that he always drank a little wine of the best stock when taking his meals. He ate loaves of bread with only the freshest honey and could often be found lounging in the sun eating freshly picked green figs. According to the works of some of his later followers, such as Diogenes Laertius, who wrote a biography on Zeno, Zeno was the perfect example of Stoicism; he used his rational mind to enjoy only the best of those things that nature could provide. Unfortunately, Laertius's writing is one of the few records that scholars have of Zeno and his own writings. There are no known surviving copies of the *Republic* nor of any of Zeno's other supposed philosophical writings. Much has been taken from later Stoic writing by followers of Zeno, but it is often difficult to attribute what was originally part of Zeno's Stoicism and what was added later by other philosophers. While Zeno was a student and teacher of rational thinking, he committed suicide, something his own teachings would have looked at as irrational, at the age of 72 after injuring himself severely in a fall.

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chapter seven

RELIGION

James Allan Evans

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	282	<i>The Festival of Apollo and Artemis</i> (excerpt from a hymn celebrating a festival of Apollo and Artemis) . . . . .	293
OVERVIEW . . . . .	285	<i>A Guidebook to Greece in the Second Century C.E.</i> (Pausanias describes religious sites encountered in Laconia) . . . . .	295
TOPICS		<i>The Pessimism of the Olympian Religion</i> (Semonides expresses the common belief that humans are playthings of the gods) . . . . .	296
The Religion of Minoan Crete during the Bronze Age . . . . .	287	<i>A Parody of a Myth</i> (excerpt from Lucian's spoof of the birth of the god Dionysus) . . . . .	304
The Early Greeks on Mainland Greece . . . . .	291	<i>Socrates on Prayer and Sacrifice</i> (Plato writes of Socrates and his questions about piety and sacrifice) . . . . .	321
The Dark Ages . . . . .	292	The Etruscans . . . . .	326
The Gods of Olympus . . . . .	294	<i>The Taboos Surrounding the Flamen Dialis and His Wife</i> (Gellius recounts the strict behavioral code of the Flamen Dialis) . . . . .	328
Other Gods Beyond the Twelve . . . . .	307	<i>The Lupercalia Festival</i> (Ovid describes events associated with the Lupercalia festival) . . . . .	329
The Underworld and its Inhabitants . . . . .	309	<i>The Reforms of Numa Pompilius</i> (Livy describes the religious and social reforms of Romulus' successor) . . . . .	330
Heroes and Demigods . . . . .	312	<i>The Importance of Magic</i> (a spell to allow one to become invisible) . . . . .	332
Heracles, the Super-Hero . . . . .	314	<i>An Epiphany of Isis</i> (excerpt by Apuleius describes Isis rising from the sea) . . . . .	334
Discovering the Will of the Gods: Oracles and Divination . . . . .	316	<i>The Trial of the Scillitan Martyrs</i> (transcript from the trial of Christians from the city of Scillium) . . . . .	336
Worshipping the Gods: Sacrifices and Temples . . . . .	320	<i>The Illegality of Christianity</i> (Trajan provides counsel to Pliny regarding the treatment of Christians) . . . . .	337
The Religion of Early Rome . . . . .	323		
The Religion of the Roman Republic . . . . .	325		
The Worship of the Roman Gods . . . . .	328		
Immigrant Religions: the Arrival of New Cults from the East . . . . .	331		
The Rise of Christianity . . . . .	335		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Constantine . . . . .	338		
Homer . . . . .	339		
Numa Pompilius . . . . .	340		
St. Paul . . . . .	340		
Socrates . . . . .	342		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	342		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS <i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
Chronology of the Bronze Age . . . . .	288		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS

### *in Religion*

- c. 3500 B.C.E. Greece passes through the Bronze Age; –c. 1100 B.C.E. bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, is used for weapons, tools, and cooking utensils.
- c. 3500 B.C.E. On Crete, now in the Pre-Palatial Period, family tombs are built with adjoining dancing floors, suggesting that dancing is part of the funeral rites.
- Gods are worshipped in sacred caves.
- c. 1950 B.C.E. Greek-speaking migrants invade Greece, displacing earlier peoples known in Greek tradition as the “Leleges” and the “Pelasgoi.” The pre-Greek language is unknown but Greek place-names ending in *-inthos* and *-sos* or *-ttos*, such as *Korinthos* (Corinth), or *Knossos* (Cnossus), are thought to belong to this pre-Greek language.
- c. 1900 B.C.E. On Crete during what is known as the Proto-Palatial or “Old Palace Period,” “peak sanctuaries” are built on mountain tops, and human burials are made in great jars called *pithoi*, though Pre-Palatial tombs also continue to be used.
- 1700 B.C.E. The palaces on Crete are destroyed, probably by an earthquake.
- c. 1700 B.C.E. This is the Neo-Palatial or New Palace –c. 1450 B.C.E. period, when the palaces are rebuilt, all of them constructed around rectangular central courts which had a ceremonial function. Seven palace sites have been identified thus far, as well as five other sites with mansions like small palaces but lacking the central court.
- c. 1600 B.C.E. On mainland Greece, a dynasty at Mycenae buries its dead in “shaft graves” with costly gifts of gold and amber, and bronze weapons.
- c. 1500 B.C.E. “Tholos” tombs resembling old–c. 1200 B.C.E. fashioned beehives, roofed with a false vault without a keystone, are constructed in many regions of mainland Greece, the best of them at Mycenae. Princes build palaces not only at Mycenae but also Thebes, Pylos overlooking the Bay of Navarino, Tiryns, Volos and elsewhere.
- c. 1450 B.C.E. The palaces on Crete are destroyed by fire, and are rebuilt only at Knossos.
- c. 1450 B.C.E. In the “Post-Palatial Period,” the Knossos palace is reinhabited, and modern archaeologists will later find in its ruins clay tablets written in “Linear B”—an early form of Greek—which reveal the names of gods worshipped by the classical Greeks.
- c. 1350 B.C.E. There is destruction at Knossos, but the palace continues to be at least partially in use for another two and a half centuries.
- c. 1200 B.C.E. The palace at Pylos on mainland Greece is burned, apparently by raiders, and the “Linear B” tablets discovered in 1939 in its ruins show that the gods of classical Greece—with the exception of Aphrodite—are known in the Mycenaean world.
- c. 1150 B.C.E. The citadel at Mycenae falls to invaders who are part of a general folk migration that causes widespread destruction in the eastern Mediterranean. The *wanaktes*, or semi-divine kings who lived in the palaces at Mycenae and at other Bronze Age sites, disappear, and their role as intermediaries between gods and mortals ceases.
- 776 B.C.E. The first recorded Olympic Games festival is held at Olympia in honor of Zeus Olympios.

- c. 770 B.C.E. The period of Greek colonial expansion begins with a settlement on the island of Ischia near Naples, and for the next two and a half centuries Greek states sponsor colonies along the Mediterranean and Black Sea coasts, and export their religion to these new cities.
- c. 725 B.C.E. The epic poem *Iliad* is put into writing, followed by the *Odyssey* not much later. The Homeric concept of the gods becomes dominant.
- c. 715 B.C.E. The legendary King Numa draws up the Roman religious calendar and establishes an order of Vestal Virgins, the priestesses of Vesta, the Roman goddess of the hearth.
- c. 700 B.C.E. Hesiod writes the *Theogony*, which recounts the generations of the gods, and the *Works and Days*, which describes the Five Ages of Man: the ages of gold, silver, bronze, the age of heroes, and finally the age of iron.
- c. 700 B.C.E. The normal type of Greek temple, usually raised on a three-stepped platform with gable roof, replaces earlier, primitive structures.
- c. 625 B.C.E. An Etruscan ruling family from Tarquinii takes over Rome and introduces the Etruscan divine triad, *Tinia*, *Uni* and *Menrva*, which supersedes the earlier Italic triad of Mars, Jupiter, and Quirinus.
- c. 600 B.C.E. At Olympia, a temple is built to Hera and Zeus using wood for the columns and mud brick for the walls. It is the earliest temple to have left substantial remains.
- 590 B.C.E. The “First Sacred War” results in the destruction of Delphi’s neighbor, Krisa, which had sought to annex Delphi, and Delphi becomes a small independent state deriving its income and its importance from Apollo’s oracle.
- 582 B.C.E. The Pythian Games are organized at Delphi, and athletic, musical and poetry contests are held every four years in honor of Apollo.
- 566 B.C.E. In Athens, the old annual Panathenaea festival in honor of Athena *Polias* is reorganized so that a Great Panathenaea is held every fourth year which is open to competitors from all Greece. In other years, the annual Panathenaea continues as the “Lesser Panathenaea.”
- c. 560 B.C.E. On the acropolis of Athens, the earliest temple is built on the site later occupied by the Parthenon. It is dedicated to Athena *Polias*, the “Guardian of the City,” and houses the ancient wooden cult statue of the goddess.
- 548 B.C.E. The temple of Apollo at Delphi burns down and is rebuilt over the next forty years with subscriptions from across Greece.
- 546 B.C.E. Peisistratus, dictator of Athens, purifies Delos by removing all graves within sight of the sanctuary of Artemis and Apollo.
- c. 530 B.C.E. In Italy, the Etruscans—whose earlier sanctuaries had been caves, lakes, or mountaintops—begin to build temples with wide porches intended, possibly, as places to stand and observe the heavens for portents, that is, signs such as the flight of birds in a particular quarter of the sky that might signal some future happening.
- 509 B.C.E. In Rome, the temple of Jupiter *Optimus Maximus* on the Capitoline Hill is dedicated.
- 480 B.C.E. The Persians invade central Greece, destroying the temples, including those in Athens. Delphi is spared.
- 479 B.C.E.
- 399 B.C.E. Socrates is sentenced to death in Athens on a charge of introducing strange gods and corrupting the youth.
- 324 B.C.E. A decree of Alexander the Great is proclaimed at the Olympic Games,

- demanding that the Greek states recognize him as a god.
- c. 317 B.C.E. Zeno of Citium on Cyprus comes to Athens and founds the Stoic school of philosophy, important not only for its philosophical doctrines but for its theology and cosmology.
- 306 B.C.E. In Athens, Epicurus founds the Epicurean school of philosophy which teaches that all beings are made up of atoms and void, including the gods, who live a blessed life in the space between the worlds (the *intermundia*) and are indifferent to mankind.
- 290 B.C.E. Ptolemy I, *Soter* (the Savior), one of  
-285 B.C.E. Alexander the Great's generals who had carved out a kingdom for himself in Egypt after Alexander's death, introduces divine worship for the dead Alexander.
- 283 B.C.E. Ptolemy I *Soter* dies and his son and successor Ptolemy II proclaims him a god.
- 279 B.C.E. On the death of Ptolemy I's widow, the two are proclaimed "Savior Gods" and a religious festival, the *Ptolemaika*, is established to honor them.
- c. 272 B.C.E. King Ptolemy II of Egypt proclaims himself and his queen Arsinoe, who is also his sister, the "Brother-Sister Loving Gods."
- 205 B.C.E. The Romans, distressed at their failure to defeat Hannibal, consult the Sibylline Books and are instructed to introduce the religious cult of Cybele, the Great Mother, from Asia Minor into Rome.
- 186 B.C.E. The Roman Senate decrees that the rites of Bacchus (Dionysus) be suppressed in Rome and in Italy.
- 100 B.C.E. The worship of the Egyptian goddess  
-90 B.C.E. Isis is introduced into Italy.
- 44 B.C.E. Julius Caesar is assassinated on the Ides of March (15 March) and is deified by decree of the senate.
- 12 B.C.E. The emperor Augustus becomes *pontifex maximus* (high priest) of Rome, and all succeeding emperors until Gratian (367–383 C.E.) continue to hold this priesthood.
- 64 C.E. The emperor Nero persecutes the Christians in an attempt to divert blame from himself for a fire which had burned two-thirds of the city of Rome.
- 66 C.E. In Judaea, a revolt rages against Rome,  
-72 C.E. led by the Zealots, a Jewish nationalist party, and when Jerusalem is captured in 70, the Jewish Temple is burned, possibly by accident.
- 132 C.E. The Jewish nationalist leader, Simon Bar-Kochba, leads a revolt in Judaea, and once it is suppressed, Jews are banned from Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity.
- 312 C.E. Constantine wins control of the western Roman Empire by defeating his rival Maxentius in a battle at the Milvian Bridge outside the walls of Rome, and is converted to Christianity.
- 324 C.E. Constantine wins control of all the Roman Empire and founds a new capital, Constantinople, on the site of the Greek city of Byzantium.
- 341 C.E. The emperor Constantius II bans pagan sacrifices, a repetition of a ban issued by his father Constantine I.
- 391 C.E. Visiting temples or paying them reverence is prohibited, and sacrifices are banned again.

## OVERVIEW of Religion

**THE MEANING OF RELIGION.** There is no word in the vocabulary of ancient Greek for the modern word “religion.” Latin, the language of ancient Rome, does have a term for it, from which the English word “religion” is derived, but the Latin *religio* does not have quite the same meaning. For the Romans, “religio” meant “the fear of the gods” or “reverence for the divine,” and its secondary meaning was “scruples of conscience.” These facts are important to remember in the study of ancient Greek and Roman religion. Greco-Roman religion did not demand acceptance of a creed or theological dogma. What the gods expected of their worshippers was homage, awe, and even fear. Religion, in the broadest sense of the term, was a factor in the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome as far back as one can delve into their prehistory, and its aim, as much as can be discerned, was always to control the great crises of human life: birth, death, and the circumstances that influenced them such as war, pestilence, and famine.

**PRIMITIVE RELIGION.** It is difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend the mind of primitive human beings, who were dependent on hunting, fishing, and gathering wild fruits and seeds. It is apparent, however, that they were aware that their own well-being was intimately connected with the abundance of the wild beasts that supplied them with meat, and they attempted to control the hunt through religion. One of the earliest deities modern scholars recognize in the Greek world was a goddess called the “Mistress of the Wild Animals,” the *Potnia Theron*, who is depicted as a woman, fully clothed, and flanked on either side by wild beasts which she seems to be protecting. In classical Greece, the *Potnia Theron* was Artemis, a virgin goddess who presided over the hunt as well as pregnancy and childbirth. Her earliest precursor was a prehistoric goddess belonging to the Old Stone Age, stretching back into the last Ice Age when a glacier stretched down over northern Europe, and humans lived by hunting and gathering. Once men and women began to domesticate animals and cultivate the

wild grasses which were the ancestors of our barley and wheat, they became even more aware of an environment that was beyond human control. Life began to revolve around an agricultural cycle, with sowing and harvesting seasons, a rutting season when rams bred ewes, and another season when the young lambs were born. Abundant crops depended upon rainfall at the right season of the year and so these humans began to concern themselves with rudimentary theological questions to control these factors. What deities controlled the rain, or presided over the grape harvest? Could their favor be won? How could they be made to notice an ordinary mortal who sought their help? Giving the gods worship that pleased them demanded knowledge of ritual. The Greeks were not as great sticklers for correct ritual formulas as the Romans, who believed that if a mistake was made in the ritual of a sacrifice, the sacrifice had to be begun again. Still, for the Greeks, too, a correct approach to the gods was necessary if their favor was to be won.

**THE PRIESTS.** Neither in Greece nor Rome was there any special class of priests. This is in marked contrast to Egypt and the Near East. Priests in Egypt were professionals who shaved their heads and wore white linen, and ancient Israel had a priestly tribe known as the Levites. The priests in Greece and Rome, however, were ordinary citizens. A Roman who officiated as a priest at an altar wore his toga, a gown made of a single piece of cloth which was considered the everyday dress of a Roman citizen in peacetime. The only difference was that the Roman priest pulled up the cowl of his toga so that his head was covered as he sacrificed, whereas the Greeks, in contrast, sacrificed bareheaded. There might be priesthoods that were hereditary within certain families. In Athens, for instance, the priestess of Athena *Poliias* (Athena who protects the city) had to belong to the House of the Eteoboutadai, and in the sacred mysteries celebrated at Eleusis, now a suburb of modern Athens, the families of the Eumolpidai and the Kerykes had an hereditary right to certain priesthoods. Most priests in Athens, however, were appointed annually and sometimes they were even chosen by lot. Customs differed from city to city; in some places, priesthoods were sold to the highest bidder. But nowhere was there a priestly class set apart from the ordinary citizens.

**THE HOLY DAYS.** No day was set aside each week for worship, as Shabbat is for Jews, Friday for Moslems, and Sunday for Christians. Congregations never gathered for services inside Greek or Roman temples. Instead, worshippers celebrated religious festivals: the feast days of the gods. In Athens the principal festivals numbered 32—some celebrated every month, others only

annually—but if the monthly and the annual festivals are combined, they total 120 festival days every year. No other Greek state, to the knowledge of modern-day scholars, had as many, but everywhere, festivals were important. There would be sacrifices at festivals, and sometimes athletic competitions; in two of the festivals in Athens there were dramatic performances of tragedies and comedies. Festivals were also a time for feasting, for the sacrificial animals were eaten by the worshippers. Only the inedible parts were burned on the altars as offerings to the gods.

**THE LIMITS OF TOLERANCE.** To modern eyes, Greco-Roman religion seems disorganized. Yet the disorganization had one virtue. Since there were so many gods and goddesses, and no fixed theology, the Greeks and Romans lacked any concept of orthodoxy. It follows that there could be no heresy, for if the Greeks and Romans had no idea of what correct belief was, how could a worshiper deviate from it? Yet religion was embedded in society and the Greeks and Romans would not have understood the modern concept of division between church and state. They had no dogma, but they believed in maintaining the traditional beliefs, taboos, and rituals that their ancestors had accepted. Impiety was a crime, and if men who committed impious deeds such as robbing temples or slaying suppliants who sought refuge at the altars of the gods were not punished by their fellow men, then the gods would see to it that they paid a penalty. Out-and-out atheism was not acceptable. If anyone denied the existence of the gods, that person could endanger the whole society, for the gods would be angered by the atheist's blasphemy and seek vengeance, which could take the form of an earthquake or plague. The atheist's neighbors would also suffer, innocent though they might be. Thus it was unsafe to tolerate atheism. The world of the Greeks and Romans was tolerant if compared to medieval or early modern Europe, but their tolerance was not based on principle and there were limits to it.

**THE LONGEVITY OF GRECO-ROMAN PAGANISM.** The history of Greek and Roman paganism spanned a period of more than two thousand years, from its beginnings in the prehistoric period to the fourth century C.E. when the Greco-Roman world abandoned it. For the Minoan period on Crete, and the Mycenaean Age on the mainland, scholars are dependent on mythology and the evidence of archaeology, but it is clear that these Bronze Age civilizations were the matrix of Greek religion. In the "Dark Ages" that followed them, central authority collapsed, and taking its place were several hundred little independent or semi-independent com-

munities—*poleis* or "city-states," as they are referred to—each with its own religious traditions. It was in them that the religion of classical Greece developed. Memories of the Mycenaean age shaped Greek mythology, which told stories of gods mingling with men, even appearing on earth to fight beside mortal warriors, and the bards who performed at festivals or in the banquet halls of great aristocrats articulated religious concepts as they retold the traditional myths. They could not help doing so, for the gods were embedded in Greek mythology. The Greek poets, particularly Homer who was popular all over Greece, shaped popular belief in a family of gods who controlled the forces with which mortals had to contend. Their headquarters was on Mt. Olympus where they had a good view of the world beneath.

**THE DOMINANCE OF THE OLYMPIANS.** The Olympians maintained their grip on Greek hearts and minds throughout the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. Some intellectuals grew skeptical as time wore on, however. In Athens, Socrates pointed out that the Olympian gods could hardly be seen as role models. Anyone who looked for a connection between ethics and religion turned aside from the Olympians with disgust. Yet the majority of Greeks in the classical period lived in rural villages and the speculations of philosophers did not reach them. Temples continued to be built and religious festivals drew crowds as great as ever. The classical period of Greek history came to an end with Alexander the Great's conquests, and in the Hellenistic age that followed religious attitudes changed.

**RELIGION IN THE HELLENISTIC AGE.** One reason for the change was that Greeks emigrated in great numbers to the new kingdoms which Alexander the Great's generals carved out for themselves from Alexander's conquests, and they came in contact with foreign gods and religious cults that were even more ancient than their own. For another, the Hellenistic kings declared themselves divine and expected worship—and there was some logic to their self-proclaimed divinity, since gods were venerated for their power to do their worshippers good or evil, and certainly kings had that power. Then, too, the Hellenistic period was the great age of the philosophic schools, and there was no clear division between religion and philosophy. One philosopher, Epicurus, taught that the gods were made up of atoms and void, and cared nothing for mankind. Last but not least, there was the coming of Rome.

**THE ROMAN ENCOUNTER WITH GREEK RELIGION.** The Roman Empire began with a small, Latin-

## TOPICS *in Religion*

speaking city on the Tiber River in Italy, and the first tutors of the Romans in religious matters were Rome's powerful neighbors, the Etruscans. The Etruscans brought to Rome the great divine triad of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva whose temple on the Capitoline Hill became the focal point of Roman religion. Then the Romans encountered Greek beliefs and fell under their influence. Jupiter was identified with Zeus, Juno with Hera, and Minerva with Athena. More foreign contacts followed: as Rome's empire expanded, the Romans encountered a multitude of foreign gods from the east, whose cults immigrated to Italy. Rome's conquests brought a flood of slaves into Italy, and their gods came with them.

**THE ROMAN REACTION.** There was a reaction to this dilution of Roman theology. Augustus, the first Roman emperor, attempted to emphasize Italian religious traditions. He made himself master of the Roman world by defeating Mark Antony and Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, and his propagandists presented this war as a struggle against effete orientalism. He took over the office of high priest of Rome, as did his successors, and on his death, he was proclaimed a god. Yet for the most part, Rome remained tolerant of other religions. Judaism was accepted, and even accorded special rights, though the Roman could not understand Jewish monotheism. Christianity, however, the Romans could not accept. They considered it atheist and anti-Roman, and they outlawed it. The persecution of Christians were sporadic and served only to create a Christian tradition of martyrdom. Rather than hindering conversion to Christianity, the persecutions aided in the dissemination of the faith.

**THE END OF PAGANISM.** It is customary to speak of the failure of paganism as if the gods lost their grip on the hearts and minds of the people, but paganism did not die a natural death. Christianity had the advantage of a well-organized clergy and a highly-developed theology which usurped the place which philosophy once held in the pagan world. After the conversion of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, in 312 C.E. the church not only became wealthy, but the state took over the task of crushing paganism. The state suppressed pagan sacrifices, which was a severe blow, for sacrifices were central to pagan festivals. By the end of the fourth century C.E. paganism was facing defeat, but it still persisted for more than a hundred years; an appropriate end-date to Greco-Roman paganism would probably be the year 529 C.E. when the emperor Justinian closed the Neoplatonic Academy in Athens which was paganism's last intellectual stronghold.

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### THE RELIGION OF MINOAN CRETE DURING THE BRONZE AGE

**EARLY EVIDENCE.** The earliest Greek agriculturists are found in the north; at Nea Nikomedeia, north-west of Thessaloniki, there was a settlement of farmers as early as 6500 B.C.E. But it is further south, on Crete and on the Cyclades, the archipelago in the Aegean Sea grouped around the island of Delos, that one can find the first signs of civilization—a society complete with political structure, distinctive art forms, and religious rites. Islanders in the Cyclades were forging daggers and spearheads of copper by 2750 B.C.E. The white island marble provided the raw material for a distinctive Cycladic sculpture that was geometric with flat planes, almost two-dimensional. One favorite subject was a harpist sitting on a chair and playing his instrument, perhaps for the dead in the afterlife. The most common subject is a nude woman with her arms folded over her stomach. She is probably a deity, very likely a goddess whose concern was pregnancy and childbirth.

**THE PREPALATIAL PERIOD ON CRETE.** Crete follows a different pattern, even though there was interaction with the Cyclades islands. Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, appears in Crete about 2700 B.C.E. probably introduced by immigrants from Asia Minor, where tin was mined. The immigrants were not numerous and quickly intermarried with the native Cretans. By 2500 B.C.E. monumental tombs appear, first in the fertile Mesarà plain in the southern part of central Crete where five of them have been found, circular in shape with entrances facing east. How they were roofed is uncertain for none have been found intact, but it is clear that they were burial places for entire clans over several generations. Paved dancing floors laid out next to the tombs indicate that these were places where the community gathered for religious rites; dancing in burial grounds renewed the will to live, and affirmed family solidarity in the face of death.

**SACRED CAVES IN THE PREPALATIAL PERIOD**  
There is another clue to contemporary religious belief: sacred caves which were places of worship. On the hill above Amnisos on the north coast of Crete is a cave sacred to Eileithyia, the goddess of childbirth, which received worshippers as early as the New Stone Age, and continued in use until the Roman period. The earliest dedications that the pilgrims left behind were idols with

## CHRONOLOGY of the Bronze Age

Our knowledge of the religion of the prehistoric Bronze Age in Greece is dependent on archaeological excavations which have taken place within the last century and a half. The pioneer was Heinrich Schliemann, an amateur archaeologist from Germany who, in 1870, discovered the site of Troy that was made famous by the legend of the Trojan War. Four years later, he revealed the rich remains of an ancient kingdom at Mycenae. The Bronze Age civilization on mainland Greece that is now known from investigations at many archeological sites is called "Mycenaean" after Schliemann's discovery at Mycenae. Archaeologists now prefer the label "Helladic," since it is evident that Mycenaean culture was widespread in "Hellas," that is, Greece.

In 1899, the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans began excavating at Knossos on the island of Crete and found the foundations of a great sprawling structure which he believed was the legendary Palace of Minos

where a king of Crete named Minos kept the Minotaur, a monster that was half-man, half-bull. Evans labeled this civilization "Minoan" after Minos, and he worked out a chronology for its development. He divided it into three phases: Early, Middle and Late Minoan, each of which is subdivided into three sub-phases denoted by Roman numerals. These divisions suit the site of Knossos well enough, but they are an awkward fit for the other palaces that have since been found on the island, and an easier sequence of periods has been worked out by the Greek archaeologist Nicholas Platon. It begins with the Pre-Palatial period before any palaces were built, corresponding to Early Minoan and Middle Minoan I (3500–1900 B.C.E.), then the Proto-Palatial period (Middle Minoan IB–Middle Minoan II—1900–1700 B.C.E.), then the Neo-Palatial Period (Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan I—1700–1450 B.C.E.), and finally Postpalatial.

All dates in prehistory that are based on archeological finds are approximate and some will no doubt be revised in the future. Platon's chronological system, however, gives a better development sequence than the old labels of Early, Middle, and Late Minoan.

large hips and plump buttocks, handmade pottery, and stone or bone tools. Eileithyia is a goddess known in the classical period, when she is closely associated with the Olympian goddess Artemis, and the fact that her cult persisted here is a remarkable example of continuity. Two other cave sanctuaries on Crete were important enough to survive as cult sites long after the Minoan civilization came to an end. One, in the mountains south of Malia, was—according to one tradition—the cave of Dicte where Zeus was born. His father, the Titan Cronus, learned from an oracle that his son would overthrow the rule of the Titans, and so he swallowed the infants which his wife, Rhea, bore, until at last she managed to give birth to Zeus deep in the cave of Dicte. A roughly-built altar, set against the cave wall, was found in the upper part of the cave, and it was within a sacred precinct which is marked off by a barrier. The Minoan worshipers who climbed up to this cave left offerings behind to win divine favor, for bronze weapons were found embedded in the stalactites of the cave, and other votives were discovered in a pool which is at the lowest point of the cave. The other cave is situated on Mt. Ida, and it is also connected with the infant Zeus, who was supposedly brought there and suckled by the nymph Amalthea who took the form of a goat. Around his cradle danced young warriors called *Kouretes*, leaping high into the air and beating their shields to drive away the

evil spirits who might betray the child-god's presence. The cave was used from the end of the New Stone Age, but it seems to have reached the height of its importance as a cult center in the Early Palace period. The latest offerings were terracotta lamps left there in Roman times. Roman visitors—tourists, perhaps, motivated by a mixture of curiosity and piety—were still climbing up to this cave after Crete had become a province of the Roman Empire.

**THE AWAKENING OF CIVILIZATION.** Quite suddenly, about 1900 B.C.E., palaces were built at a number of sites on the island. The first to be discovered was at Knossos about three and a half miles south of Heraklion, the capital of present-day Crete, where the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans began to excavate in 1899. Within three years he had uncovered a great sprawling building with a maze of rooms which he called the "Palace of Minos" after the legendary King Minos who lived at Knossos, according to Greek myth. He labeled the civilization that he had found "Minoan." Since then, similar "palaces" have been unearthed at six other sites on Crete: Phaistos directly south of Knossos, Malia along the northern coast, Gournia overlooking the Bay of Pseira, Galatas near Khania to the west of the island, and to the east, Petras and Kato Zakros. All were built around central courts roughly twice as long as they are



wide. At other sites archaeologists have found the remains of great mansions, but they lack the central courts which seem to be the characteristic mark of a palace. Palaces imply kings, perhaps priest-kings, and the legend of King Minos shows that the Greek storytellers of a later age believed that a king once ruled at Knossos, where there was the largest palace on Crete and the only one that continued to be inhabited after the others were deserted. Except in the last phase of the Knossos palace's existence, however, there is no archaeological evidence that kings inhabited these palaces. They seem to have had two main functions. One was the storage of food-stuffs, the other was religious ritual.

**PEAK SANCTUARIES.** The sudden appearance of these palaces on Crete postdates—though only by a brief period—a new religious development. At the very end of the Prepalatial period, “peak sanctuaries” appear, built on mountain tops. One example that can be easily visited is on Mount Juktas above the modern town of Arkhanes, where remains of a sprawling Minoan mansion—though without a central court—have been found. Just below the summit of Mount Juktas, a stepped altar was built across a natural cleft in the rock. There were two construction phases, the first dating to the Old Palace period, and the second to the New Palace period. The offerings and the remains of sacrifices found there show that worshipers frequented this shrine from before the palaces were built until after 1100 B.C.E. The only physical evidence that shows what peak sanctuaries looked like is a *rhyton*, that is a vessel for pouring ritual libations, decorated with a low relief of a peak sanctuary. The facade was divided into three sections. There was a great central gateway adorned with multiple spirals, and on either side, smaller wings, their eaves embellished with “horns of consecration”—stylized bulls’ horns with some religious significance. The temple is shown built over a cleft in the rock, and—if allowances are made for the artist’s ignorance of perspective—it rises above two altars decorated with more “horns of consecration.” On the roof of the temple rest some *agrimi*, the Cretan wild goats which still survive on the island in limited numbers. They may be sacrificial victims, quietly awaiting their fate. The temple is situated on a rocky mountain top which the artist has indicated by a schematic sketch.

**THE ORIENTAL CONNECTION.** Peak sanctuaries have a connection to the Near East. The Canaanite gods, like the gods of Mt. Olympus worshipped by the classical Greeks, lived on mountain peaks. Texts found at the Canaanite site of Ugarit, modern Ras Shamra near the Mediterranean coast of Syria, tell of the storm god Baal

going up the “Northern Mountain” to attend the assembly of the gods. Canaanite hilltop altars were the “high places” mentioned in the Old Testament, where the Canaanites propitiated Baal, who sent the rain and ruled the thunder and lightning. This is not to say that the Minoans worshipped Canaanite gods, but the evidence for Canaanite influence is strong. For instance, a statuette of a woman, probably a priestess, handling snakes was found at Knossos, a reminder of the Canaanite goddess Asherah, the Lady of the Serpent and Mother of the gods and all creatures. Though mountaintop gods were worshipped in Canaan, no peak sanctuary like those found on Crete has been found in the Levant except at one site in northern Israel where a hilltop shrine with a stepped altar has been discovered. It dates to the nineteenth century B.C.E. that is, the early Old Palace period on Crete. Later research may turn up more evidence for parallels between Canaan and Crete but for the time being caution must be taken: the Minoans were not Canaanites.

**THE ROLE OF THE PALACES.** Evidence for the religious rites that went on in the palaces is almost entirely dependent on archaeology. At Knossos, clay tablets with writing in “Linear B” have been unearthed, dating perhaps as early as 1450 B.C.E. though many scholars date them later. “Linear B” was deciphered by Michael Ventris in 1952 and shown to be an early form of Greek. “Linear B” has been found at a number of Bronze Age sites in mainland Greece, but on Crete, it has been found only at Knossos. It was preceded on Crete by an earlier linear script that is labeled “Linear A,” and it has been found not only at Knossos but at other places on the island as well; a particularly large cache was discovered at the site known as *Hagia Triada* (Holy Trinity), so-called from a church nearby, for its ancient name is unknown. “Linear A” has not been deciphered, nor has the hieroglyphic script that was used on Crete before “Linear A” became common. Therefore, the clues these documents might provide as to what early Minoan religion was like are inaccessible. The study of pre-Greek words that have survived as place names or the names of gods, however, has provided a few tantalizing clues. For instance, a goddess with the pre-Greek name of Britomartis survived into the classical period; she is probably the same goddess as Aphaia, who had a temple on the island of Aigina, a short boat ride south from Piraeus, the port of Athens. Britomartis seems to have been a Minoan word meaning “sweet virgin.”

**THE DOUBLE-AX.** The archaeological evidence—wall-paintings, statuettes, votive offerings—raises as many questions as it answers. Double-axes have a religious

significance of some sort, for scholars find them in connection with shrines that they seem to mark as holy places. They come in various sizes, made of bronze, bone, or ivory. Some are highly ornate. They seem to be symbols of power, but they are never associated with a male figure. It is always a woman—probably a goddess—who wields the ax, swinging it above her head with two raised arms. The axes can have had no practical purpose, for their blades are too thin and fragile to chop wood or even slit the throat of a sacrificial animal. In Asia Minor double-axes are found symbolizing thunder-bolts, but they are associated with a male god, and it would be hard to show a connection between them and the Minoan double-ax. Yet the double-ax has left behind one tantalizing folk-memory: there is a rarely-used word in classical Greek, *labrys* meaning a “battle-ax” or a “double-ax,” which seems to be connected with the word *labyrinthos*, a building with a maze of corridors from which it was almost impossible to extricate oneself. The myth of King Minos of Crete told that he built a *labyrinthos* to house a monster called the Minotaur, which was half-man, half-bull. Greek words ending in *-inthos* betray a non-Greek origin, and it is tempting to believe that the “labyrinth” of the Minos-myth was the sprawling palace at Knossos with its multitude of rooms and winding hallways, and that *labyrinthos* means something like the “House of the Double-Ax.”

**THE LONG-HORNED BULLS.** The word “Minotaur” means simply the “bull of Minos,” and whatever the monster may have been, it is clear that long-horned bulls had a special place in Minoan religious rites. Terracotta figurines of bulls were left as votive offerings in holy places. *Rhytons*, which are vessels for pouring libations, were frequently made in the shape of bulls’ heads. Stylized bull horns, called “horns of consecration” are found in sacred contexts and have some unexplained religious significance. One fresco from Knossos depicts a bull charging with a flying gallop, both front and rear legs extended to show that the beast is traveling at speed, and toreadors, both male and female, are shown vaulting over his back. This kind of bull-fight, if that is what it was, is too risky to be mere sport. The toreadors are pitting their skill and athleticism against the power and speed of the bull, and those that lost the contest—as some must have done—would perish, impaled on the bull’s horns, sacrificing their lives for the good of the community. The toreadors represented the strength and courage of the youthful hero who faces death unflinchingly, for he knows that the passing years will soon slow his reflexes, and someday he will fail to leap clear of the bull’s deadly charge.

**SHRINES.** Two miniature frescos which depict religious ceremonies were found in fragments just west of the north entrance hallway of the Knossos palace, where they had probably fallen from an upper floor. One shows a scene set in the countryside, where a fence surrounds a precinct with a sacred tree and a small building, possibly a shrine. It is probably a holy space consecrated to a matriarchal goddess, for Minoan gold rings often have engravings of a goddess seated under a tree or in front of a shrine, receiving worshippers. The second fresco shows a scene in the central court of the palace. Against one wall there is the familiar Minoan shrine with tripartite facade, and double axes attached to it. A crowd has gathered there to watch a ceremony that included dancing. From this it is possible to infer that the central courts of the palaces were places where crowds gathered for religious ceremonies.

**WHAT THE MYTHS TELL US.** Greek mythology connected Minoan Crete with the cycle of myths which centered around the Athenian hero, Theseus, a prince of Athens. Each year the king of Crete, Minos, required Athens to send him twelve adolescent boys and twelve young girls to be fed to the Minotaur who lived in the labyrinth at Knossos. Theseus volunteered as one of the youths destined for this sacrifice, but once he reached Knossos, he won the heart of Minos’ daughter, Ariadne, who provided him with a sword to defend himself, and a spool of woolen thread to mark his path when he entered the labyrinth so that he could retrace his footsteps. Theseus slew the Minotaur, escaped from the labyrinth and fled Crete, taking with him Ariadne, whom he soon abandoned. The youths destined as food for the Minotaur sounds like an indistinct memory of a cannibalistic rite, and students of Greek religion often wonder if there is any evidence of cannibalism or human sacrifice on Crete. Sir Arthur Evans did, in fact, discover a cache of children’s bones in the palace of Minos at Knossos that showed what looked like knife marks, which might be evidence of cannibalism, and at a Minoan shrine discovered in 1979 at Anemóspilia near Phourni, an altar was found in one of the rooms with the bones of a young man still on it. Two other skeletons were found nearby. The shrine was destroyed by the great earthquake which brought the Old Palace Period on Crete to an end, and the excavators concluded that the youth on the altar had been sacrificed just before the earthquake, perhaps in an effort to avert it.

**THE MINOTAUR.** The figure of the Minotaur also has possible connections to Minoan religion. He sounds like a therioanthropic god, that is, a god that is half-man, half-beast, and therioanthropic figures do appear on Mi-

noan seals used to make impressions on clay. Another possibility is that the Minotaur was really the priest-king of Knossos, who wore a bull's head mask as part of the sacrificial ritual. Masks made from real bull skulls have been unearthed in sanctuaries on Cyprus, and terracotta figurines wearing such masks have also been found. It seems likely that the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur reflects a dim recollection of human sacrifice to a god that was half-man, half-bull, since there is sound evidence that human sacrifices did take place. The evidence for cannibalism, on the other hand, is shaky.

**THE EVIDENCE FOR GREEK GODS.** In the last phase of habitation in the palace at Knossos—but not elsewhere—clay tablets with “Linear B” writing were found, which indicates that there, at least, Greek-speaking invaders took over. “Linear B” has yielded the names of all the Olympian gods which are most familiar in classical Greek literature, except for Aphrodite, the goddess of love-making. One “Linear B” tablet from Knossos assigns an offering of honey to the Cave of Eilytheia at Amnisos, showing that the Greek-speaking immigrants adopted this ancient shrine. Another “Linear B” tablet from Knossos mentions the *Potnia*, that is, the Mistress, of the Labyrinth. But what does the tablet mean by the word “labyrinth”? Can it mean the same as the English word “labyrinth”? Or does it mean something like the “Holy House of the Double-Ax”?

**THE SINGULARITY OF CRETAN RELIGION.** Long after the Greek-speakers had taken over Crete, Cretan religion retained some unique features that marked it as different from the rest of Greece. The god Zeus, the king of the Olympian gods, was immortal in the rest of Greece. But the Cretans believed not only that their Zeus was born in the Cave of Dicte, but also that he died and was reborn. The Cretan Zeus seems to have been the result of a merger of the Olympian Zeus of the Greeks with an earlier vegetation god, who died and was reborn with the changes of the seasons. The importance of bulls in Minoan religious life may also be reflected in the fact that the Zeus of the Greeks was also associated with the bull, as was his brother, Poseidon, the god of the sea. On Crete, the religion of the Olympian gods overlaid an earlier religion, which seems to have had Asian and perhaps also some Egyptian connections.

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## THE EARLY GREEKS ON MAINLAND GREECE

**THE DISCOVERY OF THE MYCENAEANS.** On the mainland, our study of religion has more guideposts than in Minoan Crete, for classical Greece inherited a wealth of mythology which told of a Greek Bronze Age society where Mycenae was the dominant kingdom, and the other kings owed a sort of allegiance to the high king of Mycenae. This was Greece's age of heroes, which continued to haunt the imaginations of the Greeks and inspire their poets. There is another reason, too, why the label “Mycenaean” is attached to this prehistoric civilization. Mycenae was the site that revealed it to the modern world in 1874, when the pioneer German archaeologist, Heinrich Schliemann, fresh from his discovery of ancient Troy four years earlier, started excavating inside the main gate of the Mycenaean citadel, and uncovered a circle of graves with rich burials. Archaeologists have discovered many more Bronze Age sites in Greece since then, but the term “Mycenaean” is still applied to the whole civilization.

**THE MYCENAEAN GOLDEN AGE.** The great age of Mycenaean civilization was between 1400 B.C.E. and 1200 B.C.E., after the Minoan civilization had fallen victim to some sort of disaster, and only the palace at Knossos continued to be inhabited. These last inhabitants of the Knossos palace wrote in the same “Linear B” script that the Mycenaean used, which was deciphered in 1952 and shown to be an early form of Greek. Hence there is good reason to think that Greek-speaking Mycenaean took over the Knossos palace in its final years. There is good archaeological evidence to show that the Mycenaean Greeks ranged far and wide. They carried on trade with Sicily, Italy, and even Sardinia in the west, and with the Levant in the east, until they fell victim to a general upheaval in the eastern Mediterranean that took place about 1200 B.C.E. and left evidence of folk migration and violent destruction throughout the region.

**THE MYCENAEAN TEMPLE.** It was once thought that the Mycenaean built no temples and religious life was centered in their palaces, which Mycenaean barons built in imitation of the palaces on Crete. This was not the case, however. A temple has been recently discovered at Mycenae that is connected to the palace on the

acropolis by a processional way leading down to a building that was clearly used for religious rites. In front of the entrance was an altar and a table for offerings—limestone blocks with dowel-holes for table-legs are all that survive, but the interpretation is likely. Near it was a circular enclosure filled with ash. This forecourt gives on to two rooms, one of which, the front room, has a great horseshoe-shaped altar made of clay, and beside it was a stone block, possibly intended for slaughtering sacrificial victims. A stairway from the forecourt leads down to a second courtyard where there is a round altar with the remains of many sacrifices, and next to it is a subterranean building that has been called the “House of Idols.” The idols, up to sixty centimeters—almost two feet—tall, are both male and female, and some have painted mask-like features that grimace horribly. They are hollowed underneath so that poles could be fitted to them for carrying in procession. Close to the “House of Idols” was another house, so-called the “House of the Frescoes” from the fresco in the main room showing two goddesses—or perhaps a god and a goddess—on either side of a column, and a woman, either a priestess or a goddess, holding ears of grain. This complex was clearly a place of worship, but it is unlike any classical Greek temple.

**THE EVIDENCE OF THE “LINEAR B” TABLETS.** The “Linear B” tablets found at Mycenaean sites reveal that all the Olympian gods that the later Greeks worshipped were known in the Mycenaean world, except for Aphrodite who seems not yet to have reached Greece. At Pylos, where the largest cache of “Linear B” tablets was found, Poseidon, the god of the sea, seems to have been more important than Zeus. In addition there is a goddess whose name is the feminine form of “Poseidon”—a “Mrs. Poseidon.” Similarly for Zeus: there is a goddess named *Diwija* who is “Mrs. Zeus,” and these goddesses had their own places of worship. Men played a greater role in religious rites than they did in Minoan Crete, where priestesses dominated. But at Pylos, a *ijereu* is mentioned frequently; in classical Greek the word is *hiereus* and it designates a man who holds an official position as a priest.

**THE END OF THE MYCENAEAN KINGS.** Raiders destroyed Pylos about 1200 B.C.E. and the other Mycenaean palaces did not last much longer. The kings who ruled in these palaces disappeared with them. The word for “king” was *wanax*. In classical Greek, which loses the *w*-sound, the word becomes *anax* and it is used to address a god, not a mortal king whose title was *basileus*. That fact may suggest that there were god-kings in the Mycenaean world, but there is no good evidence to sup-

port that theory. The Mycenaean *wanax* prayed to the gods in a spirit of give-and-take: he made offerings to the gods and expected the gods to be grateful and show their gratitude by keeping the kingdom from harm. He was an intermediary between the gods and mortal men, and in that sense, he was semi-divine. In the end, this religious system failed to protect this culture. The little Mycenaean realms fell victim to raiders who came, plundered and burned, and then left—there is no evidence for new immigration immediately on the heels of raiders—and the shock to the religious mentality of the age must have been as great as the trauma that the political structure suffered.

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## THE DARK AGES

**THE BEGINNINGS OF THE POLIS.** In the Dark Ages that followed the end of the Mycenaean world, Greece sank back into illiteracy. “Linear B” writing had been only a tool for keeping records in the little bureaucracies in the Mycenaean palaces, and once the palaces were destroyed, and records were no longer kept, “Linear B” died out. Central authority collapsed, and once stability reappeared in the Greek world, some 700 little independent states called *poleis* (translated rather inadequately as “city-states”) are found—each a little urban center with a market, surrounded by its territory where the citizens had their farms and pastures. The urban center was the seat of government and the market was intended both for commerce and as a gathering-place for the citizens to discuss matters of common concern. Since life in the “Dark Ages” was insecure, the preferred site for an urban center was around an acropolis—the word means simply “high city,” or “city on a mount”—which was a defensible hill, able to provide a place of refuge. Of the hundreds of *poleis*, modern scholars are familiar with only a few of the largest, such as Athens, Sparta, Corinth, and Thebes, and these were not the most typical. They revered the same pantheon of gods; yet each

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE FESTIVAL OF APOLLO AND ARTEMIS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The “Homeric Hymns” were composed by the *Homeridai*, a guild of *rhapsodes* (bards who recited poetry in the epic tradition, sometimes composed by themselves) who performed at religious festivals. The festival of Apollo and Artemis at Delos was celebrated by the Ionians; there were twelve cities founded by Ionian Greeks on the coastline of Asia Minor and the Dodecanese islands, including such famous places as Miletus, Ephesus, Chios, and Samos. The following excerpt comes from a Homeric Hymn that celebrates the festival at Delos. The bard gives us his “signature” at the end of the hymn: he is a blind man living in Chios, which led some Greeks to speculate that the bard was Homer himself, who, according to legend, was blind.

Phoebus [Apollo], you get your greatest pleasure from Delos, where the Ionians in their long robes gather with their children and their esteemed wives; and they commemorate you and delight you with their boxing, dancing and song whenever they hold their competitions. Anyone who chances on a gathering of the Ionians would say they were a deathless people who do not grow old; for he would see how graceful they all are, and he would rejoice in his heart as he watched the men and the well-girdled women and their fast ships and their many pos-

sessions. Besides, there is a great marvel here whose glory will never perish: the Delian maidens, the servants of the Far-shooter. For they sing praises to Apollo first, and then Leto and Artemis the shooter of arrows, and then they recall the men and women of old, and sing songs about them, enchanting the tribes of men. They know how to represent the voices of all men, and the beat of their music. One would say those men themselves were speaking, so realistic is their lovely song.

But come, Apollo and Artemis, give your blessing; and [maidens] farewell to all of you. Remember me in times to come, when a stranger from among the men who haunt the earth, who has seen and suffered much, comes and asks: “Who do you think, girls, is the sweetest of the singers who frequent you here? Who delights you most?” With one voice, all you who stand about me, give him answer: “The blind man who lives in rocky Chios; all his songs are the best and will be, too, in time to come.” And I shall carry your fame with me as I go about the world, visiting the well-sited cities of humankind. And they will be persuaded, for it is the truth. For my part, I shall not cease hymning Apollo of the silver bow, the son of fair-tressed Leto.

**SOURCE:** Homer, “The Delian Festival,” in *The Penguin Book of Greek Verse* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1971): 120–122. Translated by James Allan Evans.

had its own favorites, and sometimes even its own versions of the myths about their favorite gods. Moreover, within the *poleis*, there were great families; Corinth, for instance, was dominated by one extended family called the Bacchiadae, who elected one of their members king. Elsewhere there were various family alliances called *phratries*, each of which might have its own patron god. What gave the religion of the “Dark Ages” whatever unity it had was the common memory of the Mycenaean world and the mythology that arose from it.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF ORAL TRADITION.** The oral culture of the Greek world remained lively. Oral bards sang their poems at religious festivals or in the banqueting halls of the great aristocratic families, and they related stories of a time when gods walked the earth and fought beside their favored warriors on the battlefield. It was the poets who gave shape to the Greek ideas about their gods. They imagined deities in human form, though in the standard epithets that were applied to them there seems to be a folk memory of an early time when some of them were theriomorphic gods. Athena was called “owl-eyed” and her special bird was the owl,

which may recall an early, primitive belief that the owl incorporated her spirit. An owl gliding to its perch on silent wings, for example, was Athena manifesting herself. Hera was called “ox-eyed,” perhaps for the same reason. The gods’ association with animal totems aside, the poets made their gods in the likeness of man, and they thought of them as a divine version of an aristocratic clan, whose members had all the human failings. There was this important difference: the gods were immortal. They were safe from the fear of death, and thus they could afford to be more irresponsible than mere humans.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF HOMER.** Two poets in particular can be singled out for their role in shaping religious concepts. The first is Homer, whom legend said was a blind poet who composed the two epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as well as the *Homeric Hymns* which were sung at religious festivals. Whether a poet named Homer ever existed or not is much debated, but it is the least consequential of the many questions which this body of literature raises. What is important is that the Greeks at a later time looked back on these poems as the literature that gave shape to their concept of the

gods. Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* take their subject matter from the most famous myth that Greece inherited from the Mycenaean world: the story of the siege of Troy. According to the myth, a Trojan prince, Paris, also known as Alexander, abducted Helen, the beautiful wife of the king of Sparta, Menelaus. A Greek coalition led by Menelaus' brother, Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, sailed to Troy in pursuit of Helen and captured the city after a ten-year siege. Archaeology shows that a city on the site of Troy did stand siege and was destroyed at about the date that the Greeks assigned to the Trojan War, and so the Trojan War-myth must have a kernel of truth to it. But the oral bards who performed in the halls of warrior aristocrats in the "Dark Ages" developed a Trojan myth that mingled the human realm with the divine. Homer, who may have been the poet who first put the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into writing, belonged to this bardic tradition. His tales of the gods helped form the Greek conception of them as immortal beings that are powerful but not omnipotent, and capable of doing mortals good or evil according to their whims of the moment. They answered a human's prayers if they were well disposed. They had their favorites, they carried grudges, and they loved to receive honors. When they appeared to humans in divine epiphanies, they were always tall, handsome, and sweet smelling. They were super-human, but they were also unreliable creatures and not to be trusted. They had both the vices and virtues of mortal men, but since they could not die, their lives were untouched by tragedy as were the lives of humans.

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF HESIOD.** The other poet who helped shape the Greek religious beliefs was Hesiod, author of the *Theogony* which is a creation myth, and the *Works and Days* which describes a farmer's life and sets it in a world where the relationship with the divine element was important. The fifth-century historian Herodotus—the first European author to write history that was more than a chronicle of facts—relates that it was Homer and Hesiod who described the gods for the Greeks and gave them all their appropriate titles, functions, and powers, and he suggested the poets lived sometime before 800 B.C.E. That date may not be far wrong, for some scholars think that by that time the Greeks had already learned to write again, having borrowed their alphabet from the Phoenicians. Once the texts of Homer and Hesiod were written down, they gave whatever standard form there was to Greek religion.

**OTHER WRITERS.** The gods of Homer were never canonical, and later writers were free to develop their own concepts that fitted the intellectual currents of the day. Greek story-tellers presented gods that were envi-

ous divine powers, and the tragic poets—the greatest of whom were Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides—took up the theme: the standard subject matter of tragedy was a human who became too great or too lucky, and aroused the jealousy of the gods who struck him down. Greek philosophers freely criticized the conduct of the Homeric gods and even began to point out in the fifth century B.C.E. that there was no way of demonstrating the actual existence of the gods or, if they did exist, what they looked like. Yet worship of the gods was deeply embedded in Greek society. It was sustained by ancient custom, and the Greeks revered the way of life that their ancestors had bequeathed to them.

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## THE GODS OF OLYMPUS

**THE DIVINE BEINGS OF GREECE.** If a modern observer could tour the cities and villages of ancient Greece, he would be astonished at the multitude of gods and goddesses that the Greeks worshipped. They would include some gods whom he recognized, such as Zeus, the king of the gods, or Athena, whose ruined temple in Athens, the Parthenon, has appeared in countless tourist brochures. But many of them would be unfamiliar. There were woodland nymphs, female spirits of nature who might kidnap mortals whom they fancied. There were river gods who could cause floods if they were angered. A god called Pan, half man and half goat, lived in the woods, and could instill irrational terror in men or beasts, which was called 'panic' after him. To make matters more confusing, sometimes the Greeks referred to "Pan" in the plural, as if he was free of the mortal constraints of singular and plural. If the observer went to the little island of Aegina which is a short distance south from Athens, he might see a well-preserved temple built in the early fifth century B.C.E. that was dedicated to a goddess named Aphaea. She is possibly the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A GUIDEBOOK TO GREECE IN THE SECOND CENTURY C.E.**

**INTRODUCTION:** Pausanias traveled through south and central Greece in the second century C.E. and wrote an account of his travels. His work does not seem to have been widely read in his own time, but it did survive to give us a picture of Greece when it was a province of the Roman Empire. Depopulation was emptying the countryside and yet every square mile had holy springs, sacred precincts, shrines, temples—sometimes ruined—or tombs associated with the religion, mythology, and early history of Greece. This excerpt is from his description of Laconia (or Lacedaemon—both names were used), which was the territory of Sparta just as Attica was the territory of the city of Athens. Therapne, the place first mentioned in the excerpt, was where Menelaus and his wife Helen of Troy were supposedly buried.

The spring at Therapne called Messeis is something I myself have seen. Other Laconians have maintained the modern Polydeucia rather than the spring at Therapne is the ancient Messeis; the Polydeucia is on the right of the road to Therapne, both the spring itself and Polydeuces' sanctuary.

Not far from Therapne is what they call the *Phoibaion* with a shrine to the Dioscuri (Castor and Polydeuces) inside it; this is where the fully-grown boys sacrifice to the war-god. Not far away is a sanctuary of Poseidon called the "Earth-holder." If you go on beyond it towards Taygetos you come to a place called "Grinding-ground"; they say that Myles the son of Lelex who first invented the mill-stone ground with it in this grinding-ground. They have a shrine here to Taygetes' son, the divine hero Lacedaemon. From here if you cross the river Phellia and go to Amyclae straight towards the sea, you come to where the Laconian city of Pharis used to be, but if you turn off to the right from the river Phellia, your road will take you to Mount Taygetos. In the plain is the sacred enclosure of Messapean Zeus; they say it got this title from a man who was the god's priest. From here as you come away from Taygetos you come to a place where the city of Bryseai once stood. A temple of Dionysus still survives there with a statue in the open air; only women are allowed to see the statue inside the temple; and all the ceremonies of sacrifice are performed in secret by women.

**SOURCE:** Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*. Vol. 2. Trans. Peter Levi (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1971): 72–73.

Minoan goddess called Britomartis, surviving on Aegina with a changed name. Her temple was in the countryside, high on a hill in the center of the island, and there the islanders gathered for her festivals to pray, offer sacrifices, and enjoy the festivities of a "holy day."

**THE DEMIGODS.** To add to the modern observer's bewilderment, there were the demigods or "half-gods." They were the heroes, and they played a role similar to Christian saints. They were mortals, many—but not all—of whom belonged to the Age of Heroes. What made them demigods was that they won great renown in their lifetimes, and hence received worship after death, for their power did not perish along with their mortal bodies. No temples were built for them, but they did have shrines where worshipers could venerate them with prayers and sacrifice. They did not dwell with the Olympian gods; instead they subsisted with the ghosts of the dead in the Underworld. If they were heroes of mythology, they might be the sons of gods, or more rarely, of goddesses. Great families boasted of pedigrees which went back to a demigod who might have divine ancestry, and the sacrifices they offered their semi-divine ancestor reinforced family solidarity. Our visitor might even have found some heroes that were nameless: if they

ever had names, they were lost in the mists of time. One clan in Athens offered yearly sacrifice to a demigod known simply as the "hero beside the salt-pans."

**THE GREAT MAN AS HERO.** Some of these heroes were historical figures who lived within the time-frame of mortal men. They were men who had once wielded power and used it to perform memorable deeds. If a person founded a colony in Italy or the Ukraine, for example, the colony he founded would honor him after his death as a *Heros Ktistes*, that is, the "founder hero." He would often be buried in the marketplace, where a shrine would be built for him, and sacrifices offered. Great gods were no longer born in historical times, but new heroes could always be created; all that was needed was a resolution passed by a city, clan, or religious group to give a deceased person heroic honors.

**THE LOGIC OF PAGAN WORSHIP.** Although the gods and heroes of the Greeks, and their cults may seem like a chaotic hodgepodge to the modern observer, there was an underlying logic to Greek worship. Gods and heroes were powerful supernatural beings whom men feared and supplicated to win their favor and avert evils, such as shipwreck, earthquake, or the drought that parched the crops. Gods had sacred places which they

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE PESSIMISM OF THE OLYMPIAN RELIGION**

**INTRODUCTION:** The gods did what they wanted to do, and humans were helpless before them. Fate likewise dogged the footsteps of every man as an inescapable force. The following excerpt is a deeply pessimistic expression of an enduring religious belief among the classical Greeks that humans were playthings of the gods. Even if man were lucky enough to avoid angering the gods, old age or disease was sure to finish him off. The passage quoted below was written by Simonides of Amorgos, a little-known poet who probably lived in the seventh century B.C.E.

**SOURCE:** Simonides of Amorgos, "The Vanity of Human Wishes," in *Greek Lyrics*. 2d ed. Trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960): 11–12.

particularly liked, and if a worshipper wanted his prayer to be heard he would be wise to go to a place that was dear to the god whose favor he was seeking and there make his prayer or sacrifice. Gods did not always hear prayers, for they had their own lives to lead and had neither time nor inclination to listen to all the mortals beseeching their help. But if a suppliant went to a precinct sacred to a god, where there might be a temple housing his image, then the chances were good that the god would pay attention. Gods could not ignore their images, for the image captured a god's likeness, and with it, a share of the divine potency.

**DIVINE POLITICS.** The worshipper also had to remember that gods and goddesses had special interests—like cabinet ministers who preside over government departments—and it was important to address the correct department. The goddess Hera took an interest in women in childbirth, Hephaestus was a patron of blacksmiths, and Poseidon controlled the sea and the terrifying earthquakes. Prayers and sacrifices were most effective when they were directed to the right god, for however much a god might favor a suppliant, he would hesitate to trespass upon another god's department.

**GREEK THEOLOGY.** The Greeks had no equivalent of the Bible, the Torah, or the Koran to give coherence to their religion. So far as they had any formal theology at all, they owed it to their poets, particularly the epic poets Homer and Hesiod, who produced the earliest surviving Greek literature. Almost everything that has been written about Homer is subject to controversy, including his very existence, but there can be no doubt that the Homeric poems shaped Greek conceptions of their gods and goddesses. In his *Iliad*, Homer presents them as a large extended family dwelling on Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece, from which they viewed the world below like spectators at a football game. They were immortal: they could not die and did not grow old; they had no need to worry about disease, famine, or the other ills that beset mankind; they had *ichor* rather than blood in their veins; and their food was ambrosia. Beyond these distinctions, they lived lives similar to the lives of earth-bound humans. They had the same family disputes and felt the same passions. They were not, however, bound by the same social constraints as human beings; if a mortal man had dared to rape women with the same licentiousness as the gods, the brothers or male relatives of the victims would have hunted him down. Gods were powerful but not omnipotent; even Zeus, the most powerful of them all, could not change the decrees of Fate. Twelve members of the Olympian family were dominant. Homer knew of more than twelve gods on Mt. Olympus, but twelve great gods formed a sort of inner circle, and that number was never to increase. After Homer, twelve remained the canonical number. Later Greeks added Dionysus, the god of wine, and dropped Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, thus maintaining the number twelve.

**HESIOD'S GENERATIONS OF THE GODS.** Hesiod's contribution was the myth of the creation of the world out of chaos, and the birth of the gods, which he described in his *Theogony*. The main components of the myth were borrowed from the Near East. As more and more clay tablets from the ancient Near East are deci-



phered, it has become increasingly clear that Greek religious ideas owe a great debt to the East. We know now that Hesiod's *Theogony* adapts a story that is found first among the Hurrians, a people in northern Mesopotamia, who passed it on to the Greeks via the Hittites in Asia Minor, and the Phoenicians in what is now Lebanon. Hesiod's tale relates that the great gods of Olympus were preceded by three earlier generations. First there was Chaos, and out of it, *Ouranos* (Heaven) and *Gaia* (Earth) were formed. Ouranos, who was male, covered Gaia, and from their union came the generation of the Titans. The rule of the Titans ended when Cronus, the youngest of the children of Ouranos and Gaia, attacked his father, castrated him, and thrust him up into the sky. Ouranos has been separated from Gaia by the atmosphere of the world above ever since. Cronus, fearing that his offspring would overthrow him in turn, swallowed the infants whom his wife Rhea bore. His children were immortal, and so did not die, but as long as they were imprisoned in Cronus' stomach, they could do their father no harm. Rhea grew angry at the fate of her children, however, and instead of giving Cronus her last child, Zeus, to devour, she handed him a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes, and Cronus swallowed it instead. Zeus was brought up secretly on Crete in a cave high on Mt. Ida. Once he was fully grown, he forced Cronus to regurgitate his brothers and sisters, and after terrible battles—first with the Titans and then with a race of Giants and other monsters—he established the rule of the Twelve Olympians. Yet just as the Titans were overthrown, the Twelve Olympians in their turn might suffer the same doom. The gods were always wary of rivals.

**THE TWELVE OLYMPIANS.** The circle of the twelve great gods of Mt. Olympus consisted of Zeus, the king of the gods, his siblings—Hera, Poseidon, Hestia, and Demeter—and his children—Pallas Athena, Apollo and Artemis, Aphrodite, Ares, Hephaestus, and Hermes. Dionysus was added to the Twelve later, and Hestia dropped. One member of Zeus' family was not included: Hades, the dark lord of the Underworld. He was Zeus' brother, but he lived in a sunless realm, ruling over the weightless ghosts of the dead.

**ZEUS, THE SKY-GOD.** Zeus, the king of the gods, was the god of the sky and the weather. He sent the rain that made the crops grow. Homer called him the "cloud-gatherer," for when the clouds gathered in the sky and lightning flashed the Greeks imagined that they were seeing a manifestation of Zeus' power. He was by far the strongest of the gods, stronger than all the others, who dared not revolt against his rule, much as they might grumble about it. His favorite creature was the eagle, the

most lordly of birds, and his preferred weapon of war was the thunderbolt, which was his exclusive property. Other gods had their preferred weapons as well: Poseidon the trident, Apollo the bow and arrow, and Hephaestus fire, but none of these were as terrible as the thunderbolt. Zeus' enemies, the Titans and the Giants, were utterly overwhelmed by it when he hurled it against them, and mere mortals were powerless in the face of it. The lightning that flashed across the sky was Zeus revealing himself, and wherever it struck the earth, a sanctuary would be set up to "Zeus Descending," for there Zeus had touched the earth and left his mark.

**THE PROMISCUOUS GOD.** Zeus had a wife, Hera, but he was not a faithful husband. He was a god of extraordinary sexual prowess, for he was a fertility god. It was he who made the earth fruitful and saw to it that the seasons came and went in due order. Greek mythology had many tales about his scandalous escapades. He seduced an extraordinary number of both goddesses and mortal women, and his seductions rarely involved mutual consent. One myth related that he saw Leda, the mother of Helen of Troy, taking a bath in a pool and transformed himself into a swan in order to rape her. Another myth related Zeus' seduction of Danaë, who had been imprisoned by her father in a bronze chamber after an oracle told him that a son born to his daughter would kill him. While the chamber had barred mortal men access to Danaë, Zeus worked around this barrier by transforming himself into a shower of gold that penetrated the bronze chamber, and thus he sired her son who did, eventually, kill her father, as the oracle foretold. Zeus was also the father of Heracles, the strongman of Greek legends, and the tale of how he impregnated Heracles' mother Alcmena is an example both of craftiness and a lack of conventional morality. Zeus disguised himself as Amphitryon and slept with his wife, Alcmena, while Amphitryon was away at war. Then, shortly afterwards, the real Amphitryon returned and slept with his wife, who was surprised at his ardor, for she believed that they had slept together only a short while before. From the coupling of Zeus and Alcmena, Heracles was born, while his twin, Iphitus, was fathered by Amphitryon.

**ZEUS, THE SIRE OF GODS.** It is not surprising, therefore, that Zeus had a great many offspring, both mortal and immortal. He sired both Apollo and Artemis by the Titaness, Leto. He begot Hermes by Maia, one of the Pleiades, the seven daughters of the Titan Atlas, whom Zeus set as a constellation among the stars. He fathered Dionysus by a mortal woman, Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, king of Thebes. His sister Demeter bore him

Persephone, the queen of the Underworld whom Hades took as his partner. Hera's children by him were Ares, the god of war, and, according to some accounts, Hera and Zeus were father and mother of Hephaestus, the god of smiths and craftsmen. Zeus deserved his title as father of gods and men. Even those gods who were not sired by him addressed him as "Father," and rose to their feet when he came into their presence.

**THE JUSTICE OF ZEUS.** Zeus was a god of impartial judgment. He was the guardian of conventional morality among mankind even if he did not set an example of it himself. As time went on, he became connected with the principle of justice. Justice, wrote Hesiod, was a daughter of Zeus who reported all deceit and perfidy to him. Yet powerful though Zeus was, he never tried to overturn the decrees of Fate, for he knew that to challenge Fate would be unwise. Every mortal person had his *moira* (portion of life), marked off by boundaries which even Zeus did not transgress, for respect for limits was the basis of ethical behavior. The most distressing of these limits was death, which no mortal could evade. A myth described how a mortal named Sisyphus tried to cheat death and overstep his *moira*, and the judgment of Zeus was severe. In the Underworld Sisyphus was condemned forever to roll a heavy stone to the top of a steep hill, only to be overcome by exhaustion as he neared the top so that the stone rolled back down the hill and he had to start again.

**ZEUS, THE PANHELLENIC GOD.** Zeus was a god whom all the Greeks revered. One of his epithets was *Panhellenios*, which means "god of all the Hellenes," for the Greeks in their own language called themselves "Hellenes." Zeus had no city that he favored above all others. His most famous festival was the Olympic Games that were held every four years at his greatest sanctuary, Olympia, situated in south-west Greece within boundaries of Elis, but in the countryside, away from the urban center of the state. It was a panhellenic festival. Athletes from all over the Greek world gathered there every four years to participate in the contests, and while the games were being held, there was a universal truce: states at war with each other ceased hostilities until the games were finished. All Greeks were welcome to compete, but non-Greeks were not eligible. A victor won only a wreath made of the wild olive for his prize, but the honor and glory that he received in his home city was enormous.

**HERA THE MISTRESS: QUEEN OF THE GODS.** Zeus' wife was Hera, whose name means "mistress." She was the queen of the gods, and she had two city-states she especially loved. One was Argos, south of Corinth, where

she had a sanctuary so venerable that one of her most common titles was "Argive Hera." It was built, not in the urban center of Argos, but some distance away in the countryside. Her other favorite place was the island of Samos where a temple was built for her as early as 800 B.C.E. In fact, she seems to have been one of the first, if not the first, of the Greek deities to have temple buildings erected for her cult. At Olympia, for instance, before the great temple of Zeus was built, a temple was erected for her, and it was so ancient that the walls were made of mud brick and the columns were originally hewn out of wood with stone replacements as the wood columns rotted.

**THE JEALOUS WIFE.** Hera was a goddess of weddings and a patron of married women. She looked after the recurrent cycle of pregnancy and birth—and often infant death—which Greek women experienced. Hera's own marriage with Zeus was no model of connubial bliss, for she saw through the deceptions and infidelities of her randy husband. She reacted with jealousy and anger, and since she could not curb Zeus, she pursued his paramours with unrelenting rage. When the Titaness, Leto, was in labor with Apollo and Artemis—both sired by Zeus—Hera prevented Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth, from going to assist Leto, and consequently Leto's labor lasted nine days. The other gods eventually took pity and offered Eileithyia a great bribe to attend the birth without Hera's knowledge. Her enmity for Heracles, the son of Zeus, was implacable. While he was still an infant, she sent two great serpents to destroy him, but he grabbed them with his fists and strangled them. Once Heracles became a man, Hera deranged his mind, and in a blind rage he killed his wife, Megara, and his children. Another target of Hera's jealousy was Io, a priestess at Hera's sanctuary at Argos who attracted Zeus' lustful eye. Hera persecuted her, first turning her into a heifer and then sending a gadfly that tormented her so much that she fled across the sea to Egypt. In Homer's *Iliad*, Hera plays the role of a quarrelsome partner of Zeus, railing against his infidelity. But she is always careful not to rouse him to violence, for Zeus had no compunction about wife-beating.

**HERA'S CHILDREN.** Hera had children of her own. One was the god of war, Ares, sired by Zeus. The blacksmith god Hephaestus was also Hera's son; one story related that, angered at Zeus' constant infidelities, she bore him miraculously without male sperm. Hera also had two daughters who were not included among the twelve Olympians: Hebe and Eileithyia. Hebe, whose name means "youth and health," was a goddess of healthful well-being. She served as cupbearer of the Olympian

gods until Zeus fell in love with a handsome Trojan boy named Ganymede and snatched him up to Olympus where he usurped Hebe's place as cupbearer. After Heracles was admitted into the company of the gods, Hebe became his wife. Eileithyia, the divine midwife, was an ancient goddess who was worshipped in Minoan Crete, and when she was brought into the Olympian regime, she became Hera's daughter, which must have been a demotion. It demonstrates the disorganization of the Greek religion when Homer speaks of more than one daughter of Hera bearing the name Eileithyia, as if she was a sisterhood of midwives.

**POSEIDON, RULER OF THE SEA.** Poseidon, the god of the sea and earthquake, was the brother of Zeus. Homer refers to a myth that was derived ultimately from an ancient Akkadian epic from Mesopotamia, titled the *Atrahasis*, that after the Olympian gods overthrew the rule of the Titans, the three brothers—Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades—drew lots to decide which portion of the universe each would rule. Hades won the Underworld, Zeus the clouds and the high clear sky, while Poseidon got the sea. The earth, however, was to be common to all three, and whenever Zeus became too autocratic and tried to extend his dominion beyond his proper boundaries, Poseidon complained, though he knew better than to revolt. He ruled the tempests, and sailors and fishermen feared him. If his anger was roused against an unlucky mariner, he was relentless, as the hero Odysseus discovered as he made his voyage home from Troy. Poseidon lived in an underwater palace with his wife, Amphitrite, the daughter of Ocean, and their children were the Tritons, sea monsters with fishtails that could make venturing on the sea dangerous. At the same time, he was the Earth Shaker, the Lord of the Earthquake who could smash rocks with a single blow of his trident. When earthquakes struck, the Greeks would invoke Poseidon and sing his paean, which was a hymn giving thanks for deliverance from evil. He had no city which he could call his own—though he did contest Athens with Athena and lost narrowly—but he did have one famous sanctuary at the Isthmus of Corinth, where every two years the Isthmian Games were held in his honor.

**PALLAS ATHENA, PATRON OF ATHENS.** Athena, or Pallas Athena, was the patron deity of Athens, so much so that when an Athenian referred simply to “the goddess,” it was Athena whom he meant. The derivation of her second name, “Pallas,” is uncertain, but mythology had at least two tales that explained it. One told that Pallas was a Giant, and in the battle between the gods and the Giants Athena killed and flayed him and covered her own body with his skin for protection. An alternative tale

related that Pallas was a goddess who was Athena's playmate when they were both young. They were both skilled warriors, and once when they were sparring, Pallas was about to strike Athena when Zeus intervened and thrust his shield in front of her. Startled, Pallas was thrown off her guard, and Athena's next blow accidentally killed her. Athena mourned her death and took her name. This tale belongs to a common type of myth where one god slays another, sometimes by accident and then assumes his name, and these myths are generally interpreted to mean that the killer god has taken over his victim's cult and co-opted his worshippers. If this interpretation of Pallas' death is right, it may mean that Athena co-opted the cult of an earlier warrior goddess who did not belong to the charmed circle of the Olympians, and the name “Pallas Athena” reflects the merger.

**A GODDESS OF INTELLIGENCE, RESOURCEFULNESS AND WARFARE.** Athena was the daughter of Zeus and Metis. The word *metis* means simply “wisdom” or “cunning,” but in the myth of Athena's birth Metis is a female divinity. While Metis was pregnant, Zeus learned that her son was destined by fate to overthrow his father. Hoping to eliminate this threat, he swallowed Metis with her unborn child. Thus Zeus literally incorporated wisdom in his own body. One day he had a splitting headache, and called on Hephaestus to help. Hephaestus cured the migraine by taking an ax and splitting Zeus' head open. Out stepped the warrior goddess, Athena, in full armor. She was a goddess of battle, and Greek art always depicted her wearing a helmet. She delighted in the clamor of combat. When she favored a soldier, she stood beside him in the fight and gave him courage. In particular she loved a warrior who was not merely strong and brave, but intelligent and crafty as well. The hero Odysseus was a special favorite of hers, for on his long journey home after the destruction of Troy, he survived by his wits, whereas all his men perished. Her shield was called an aegis, and whenever she raised it in battle, it struck panic into her enemies. In art her aegis is shown sometimes as a shield, sometimes as a short cloak; whichever it was, it had in its center the head of a Gorgon, a fearsome monster-woman with snakes instead of hair fringing her head, and a face that was believed to turn those who looked on it into stone. The Gorgon's head was an apotropaic device, that is, a symbol supposed to ward off the evil eye.

**A GODDESS OF DOMESTIC CRAFTS.** Athena was a goddess of domestic crafts as well as warfare. She was a patron of the spinners and weavers of wool, and she was proud of her skill and jealous of rivals. There is a myth that tells how she punished a mortal woman named



Apollo, life-size painted terracotta acroterium figure from the ridgepole of an Etruscan temple, c. 510 B.C.E., found at Veii, Italy. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Arachne who boasted she could weave a better fabric than Athena. Athena challenged her to a contest, and when Arachne lost, Athena turned her into a spider and let her weave her webs to her heart's content. She was also a patron of carpenters and skilled workmen, and it was she who gave Greece the olive tree: not the wild olive but the domesticated olive which yields olive oil, one of the staples of the Greek diet.

**THE VIRGIN GUARDIAN OF ATHENS.** Athena was a virgin—in Greek, a *parthenos*—and in her city of Athens, her great temple which still overlooks the city is called the Parthenon, the Virgin's Temple. Athens was a city she loved, and she won it after a contest with Poseidon, who coveted it for himself. A mark can still be seen on the rock of the Acropolis, the Athenian citadel, which Poseidon supposedly made when he struck it with his trident and created a salt-water well as a gift to Athens. When Athena planted an olive tree beside the well as her gift, Poseidon challenged her to a fight, but

Zeus intervened and set up a court to arbitrate the quarrel. By a majority of one, the court decided that Athena had given Athens the better gift, and Athens became her city. The Athenians continued to reverence the mark on their Acropolis that Poseidon made, however, and never built over it. Instead they left it open to the sky. When the temple known as the Erechtheion was erected and its north porch stretched out over the mark, they left a hole in the pavement of the porch so that the mark was left uncovered, and in the porch roof directly above it a small area was left unroofed. In fact, the mark was probably caused by lightning striking the earth.

**ERECHTHEUS AND ATHENA.** Athena became the stepmother of the ancestral king of Athens, Erechtheus, who was one of the divinities worshipped in the Erechtheion. How Athena, a virgin goddess, became a stepmother was explained by an ancient myth. Hephaestus desired Athena and once tried to rape her. Athena easily fought him off, and all Hephaestus managed to do was to ejaculate semen on to her thigh. In disgust, Athena wiped it off with a piece of wool (Greek *erion*) and hurled it to the ground. When the semen fell on Mother Earth, she conceived and gave birth to Erechtheus. Athena pitied the infant and, taking him up, reared him in her temple. Homer refers to the story in his *Iliad*. Athens, he reports, was the realm of Erechtheus whom Athena settled in her temple, and there the Athenians worshipped him with sacrifices of bulls and goats.

**APOLLO, GOD OF PESTILENCE.** Apollo, the “Far-Darter” was the master of the bow and arrow, and hence his epithet, the “Far-Darter,” which means that the shafts from his bow travelled a great distance. Yet though he was an archer god, he was not a patron of hunters; his sister Artemis filled that role. Apollo's arrows were not for killing wild beasts; instead they brought disease. The first book of the *Iliad* presents a vivid picture of him striding down from Mt. Olympus to the Greek camp outside Troy, with the arrows in his quiver rattling as he walked. When he reached the Greek ships, he knelt on one knee, drew back his bowstring and aimed his shafts into the Greek camp. First the dogs and the beasts of burden died of the pestilence; then men perished, and the smoke rose from their funeral pyres day and night.

**HOLY PLACES.** Apollo's chief sanctuaries were at Delos and at Delphi. Delos is a small, waterless Greek island in the center of the archipelago in the Aegean Sea known as the Cyclades. Greek myth related that Delos alone dared offer a haven to Apollo's mother, Leto, who was driven from place to place by Hera's anger, and she gave birth to Apollo and his sister Artemis as she stood clutching a palm tree for support. Thus Delos became a

holy island, sacred to both Apollo and Artemis. Delphi in central Greece, however, was the greatest center of Apollo's cult. Apollo's oracle there had a reputation for truth which was perhaps undeserved, for when questions were put to it, the replies were famous for their ambiguity. Yet it was thought that if one was clever enough to interpret the real meaning of an oracle, it would prove to be a truthful prophecy. It was no fault of Apollo if his responses were misunderstood. As time went on and the Greeks became more skeptical, belief in oracles faded, but Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi remained a sacred place, and it was filled with rich dedications made over the years by his worshippers.

**THE PYTHIAN GAMES.** Delphi was also the site of the Pythian Games, which were held every four years, and were second only to the Olympian Games in prestige. They included music and poetry competitions as well as athletic contests, for Apollo was a patron of music and poetry as well as athletics. His favorite instrument was the lyre, a stringed instrument with a hollow shell or box to amplify the sound. First prize at the Pythian Games was a laurel wreath, and the laurel, for which the Greek word is *daphne*, had a close association with Apollo, which was explained by a myth. Daphne was the lovely young daughter of a river god, with whom Apollo fell in love. She fled from him, however, and just as he was about to catch her, she prayed for help and was turned into the tree that bears her name. Thus the laurel became a tree that Apollo particularly loved, for it was the maiden he desired and lost.

**APOLLO'S COMBAT WITH THE DRAGON PYTHO.** Apollo won Delphi for himself by fighting and killing the creature that occupied it before him. Before Apollo arrived, Delphi was a hallowed place belonging to a dragon known as Pytho. Apollo fought the dragon and slew it, leaving the carcass to rot (Greek *python*). Murder, however, was an evil deed that made the murderer unclean in the sight of gods and men. Spilling blood left Apollo polluted, and before he could return to the society of the gods, he had to be cleansed of the pollution. He was banished to northern Greece, to a valley near the foot of Mt. Olympus known as the Vale of Tempe, and there he had to undergo a ritual that purified him and allowed his return. To commemorate his combat with the dragon, there was a religious rite called the *Strepteria* that was held at Delphi every eight years. A youth was led to a hut called Pytho's palace, which was built near Apollo's temple. The hut was set on fire, and the youth departed, apparently for exile at Tempe, and then he made his return in a procession along a sacred pathway known as the Pythian Way. The youth impersonated Apollo, who was always shown in art as a well-proportioned,

muscular young man wearing his hair unshorn, like a Greek youth who had not yet reached adulthood. As for the dragon Pytho, his sanctuary which Apollo made his own became the most important oracular shrine in Greece, and the title of the priestess who uttered the sacred oracles, the Pythia, recalled Pytho's name.

**ARTEMIS, PATRONESS OF WILD BEASTS.** Artemis, like her brother Apollo, was born on the island of Delos, and had a temple there which predated Apollo's. Artemis' temple was in the center of the sanctuary, whereas the Apollo temple was off to one side; the positioning of the temples has led students of religion to suspect that Artemis was an early, primitive deity on Delos whom Apollo joined only later, in spite of the myth which related that they were twins. Her cult seems to fit a primordial era, when people survived by killing the beasts of the forest, and were anxious not only that their hunts should be successful, but that the creatures they hunted should increase and multiply, and thus provide them with more prey. In Homer's *Iliad*, Artemis is called the "Mistress of the Animals," the overseer of wild beasts. She was a goddess of hunters and hunting who killed the animals and birds of the forests, mountainsides, and marshes—she was sometimes called "Artemis *Limnatis*" or "Artemis of the Marshes"—and at the same time, she was concerned for their welfare. The endless cycle whereby living creatures were born and killed, or killed in order to survive and reproduce, fell under her authority.

**THE GODDESS OF GIRLS BEFORE MARRIAGE.** Like Athena, Artemis was a virgin, but whereas Athena was asexual, Artemis' virginity was connected with the purity of young girls before they are married. Her followers were the nymphs, and the word "nymph" could refer equally to a divinity of a stream or spring, or a young girl approaching marriage. Everywhere in Greece it was the custom for girls of marriageable age to dance and sing in choruses at festivals in honor of Artemis, and this was one place where young men could become acquainted with unmarried girls. There was a darker side to Artemis, however. Girls who failed to remain pure for whatever reason encountered her wrath. The nymph Kallisto, whom Artemis loved, was raped by Zeus and bore him a son, Arcas. Artemis in her anger turned Kallisto into a bear, and her own son Arcas hunted her down and killed her. In addition to overseeing the purity of unmarried girls, Artemis also presided over the birthing pangs of women. She could be a ruthless midwife, unlike Eileithyia who looked after the actual delivery of the infant from the mother's womb. Eileithyia was a gentle nurse whereas Artemis' interest was the reproduction of the species, and she made decisions involving the life and

death of pregnant mothers. In the *Iliad*, Hera rounds on Artemis at one point and exclaims angrily, "Zeus made you a lion against women, and lets you destroy women in their labor." It was Artemis who determined whether or not a woman would survive childbirth.

#### APHRODITE, GODDESS OF SEXUAL DESIRE.

Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, was worshipped all over Greece, but her most famous temples were at Corinth in Greece and on the island of Cyprus, at Paphos and at Amathus. In Homer's *Iliad*, she was the daughter of Zeus and a deity named Dione, whose name means "the goddess Zeus," or "Mrs. Zeus," so to speak. At an ancient oracle of Zeus at Dodona in north-west Greece, Dione was still recognized as Zeus' wife in classical times, long after Hera had replaced her elsewhere in the Greek imagination. The *Theogony* of Hesiod relates another tale, however. It tells that when Cronus cut off the genitals of his father Heaven, he tossed them into the sea and where they fell, the water foamed and frothed, until Aphrodite arose from the foam (Greek *aphros*), stark naked. She then floated on a scallop shell to Cythera, a favorite island of hers, though later she was thought to prefer Paphos on Cyprus. She was a late arrival among the gods of Greece, and her origins were Eastern. Her counterparts in Mesopotamia were the goddess Innana in ancient Sumer, and in Babylon, Ishtar. The Canaanite goddess Astarte who was worshipped in ancient Syria was Aphrodite in a different guise. Like these Eastern goddesses, Aphrodite presided over sexual desire, and prostitution was practiced at her temples. At Corinth in Greece she had a famous temple that housed prostitutes. While most myths about the couplings of gods and humans invariably involve male gods raping women, Aphrodite was one of the few to reverse the pattern. Aphrodite in disguise seduced a handsome young Trojan named Anchises, and became pregnant with Aeneas, whom the Romans would regard as their founder.

**THE MYTH OF APHRODITE AND ADONIS.** Like her Eastern counterparts, Aphrodite was coupled in mythology with a handsome young lover, who died young and descended into the Underworld. The youthful lover in Aphrodite's case was Adonis, and the myth of Aphrodite and Adonis is an adaptation of the tale of Astarte and Tammuz that was popular in ancient Syria. Both Tammuz and Adonis were young men who were loved by goddesses, and they died in the flower of their youth. Adonis, the story goes, was killed by a boar while he was hunting, and descended to the realm of the Dead. When Aphrodite tried to retrieve him, she found that Persephone, the queen of the Underworld, admired his beauty

too much to release him. Zeus settled the dispute by decreeing that Adonis should spend half the year with Aphrodite, and half with Persephone. Thus he was a fertility god, whose death and resurrection marked the changing seasons of the agricultural year. In the fall, when Adonis descended into the Underworld, the seed was put into the ground and died, and then when the spring sun brought warmth to the earth, it quickened to new life and produced the harvest for the coming year.

**HERMES THE DECEIVER.** Hermes, the deceiver god, was the son of Zeus and Maia, the daughter of the Titan Atlas, and no sooner was he born than he showed his craftiness. On the first day of his life, he invented the lyre, stole cattle belonging to his brother Apollo, then lied when Apollo charged him with the theft, and it took the intervention of Zeus to reconcile the two. Hermes was not only a god of tricksters and thieves, but also the patron of merchants, for any purchaser of goods in Greece or Rome was wise to heed the caution, *caveat emptor*: "Let the buyer beware!"

**THE DIVINE COURIER.** Hermes' chief function in the pantheon of Homeric gods was as the divine courier who carried the messages of Zeus, and he often appears in art dressed like a traveler, wearing a broad-brimmed hat and stout sandals sometimes equipped with wings, and in his hand he carries a herald's staff. This staff was a rod of olivewood twined with two serpents, and it symbolized the sanctity of a herald, for it was a sacrilege to kill a herald. Hermes was also the god who guided the ghosts of the dead to the Underworld, and when this was his mission, he bore a magic wand that is not to be confused with the herald's staff. With it he herded the insubstantial shades to the River Styx where Charon ferried them across. Thus one of his epithets was *Psychopompos*, marshal of the souls of the dead.

**THE GOD OF BOUNDARIES.** Hermes was also a god of boundaries. In fact, guarding boundaries may have been his earliest function, for the word *herma* means a heap of stones piled up to mark a boundary. The heap of stones developed into a square pillar, and about 520 B.C.E. these stone pillars were introduced into Athens to mark midway points between the Athenian *agora*, or marketplace, and the many villages of Attica. As time went on, they came into general usage to mark off neighborhoods. The herm was an oblong shaft about five feet high, with the image of a bearded head on top, projections at the shoulders like two-by-fours, and a phallus half-way down the shaft. Herms were sacred. Anyone who mutilated them committed a sacrilege, and could be tried for it in a court of law. Hermes had one son, Pan, the god of the woods who was half-man, half-goat.

Both Hermes and Pan were connected with Arcadia, the wild mountainous area in the central Peloponnesos, and the identity of Pan's mother was lost in the mists of time, if it was ever known.

**DEMETER, GODDESS OF THE RIPE GRAIN.** Demeter, the sister of Zeus, was the personification of the ripened grain that was reaped at harvest time. The ancient Greeks themselves interpreted her name to mean "Mother Earth," but though the last two syllables of her name, *meter*, do mean "mother," modern linguists point out that the first syllable cannot mean "earth." Yet her connection with the grain harvest is clear. Mythology assigned her a son, Plutos, whose name means wealth, and the wealth of Plutos was the grain stored in the granaries.

**DEMETER AND KORE** Demeter was intimately connected with a goddess who was known simply as Kore, which is the Greek word for "girl," and the relationship between Demeter and "the girl" is so close that they were sometimes known simply as the "Two Goddesses." Kore did have a proper name, however. She was Persephone, daughter of Demeter and Zeus, and the wife of Hades, the king of the Underworld. According to the myth, Persephone was playing one day with other young girls of her age in a meadow near Enna in Sicily; when she stooped to pluck a flower, the earth opened and Hades arose in his chariot, seized her, and carried her off to his realm of darkness. Demeter heard her daughter's cry but did not see what had happened. She set out to look for her, traveling over land and sea, lighting her way with torches. When she reached Eleusis, which is nowadays a suburb of Athens, she paused to rest, and while she was sitting sadly outside the palace at Eleusis, the daughters of the king told her jokes and succeeded in making her laugh. To reward them, she founded the Eleusinian Mysteries at Eleusis that the Athenians celebrated every year. Still mourning the loss of her child, she would not allow the crops to grow until she found her daughter, and the whole race of men would have perished of hunger except that Zeus intervened. It was decided that Kore would spend half the year in the world of the Dead as queen of the Underworld, and half the year in the world above. While she was in the Underworld, the land lay barren, and when she returned to the land of the living, the crops grew and ripened. The death and rebirth of Kore, or Persephone, as she was known in her personification as queen of the Dead, marked the change of seasons from the barrenness of winter to the spring with its new growth.

**THE CULT'S ORIGINS.** It has been often noted that the death and rebirth of Kore does not quite fit the cy-

cle of Greek agriculture, for Greek farmers planted their grain in the autumn; it sprouted and grew over the winter except for a brief period when the temperature fell to the freezing point, and the harvest ripened in late May or June. The barren season was therefore not winter but the hot, dry summer. The cult of Demeter and Kore seems to point to an early period of Greek prehistory, before the Greeks migrated into present-day Greece and were still living in a more northerly latitude. Central Europe has a cycle of seasons which fits the story of Kore better, for there the winter is the barren season, and the summer the time when the fields yield their harvests.

**THE GOD DIONYSUS: THE OUTSIDER.** Dionysus stands apart from the other Olympian gods. He seems to be an outsider, and at one time, scholars believed that he was a non-Greek god who was a relatively recent immigrant to Greece. Evidence from the Linear B clay tablets of Mycenaean Greece does contain the name of Dionysus, however. The tablets on which his name appears come from Pylos, overlooking the Bay of Navarino in southwest Greece, and from Khania in western Crete, and they date from 1250–1200 B.C.E. They give no inkling as to what Dionysiac worship was like in the Bronze Age, except that the one from Khania mentions offerings of honey to Zeus and to Dionysus. There is no mention of wine, with which Dionysus was particularly associated in the historical period.

**THE GOD OF INTOXICATION AND ECSTASY.** Dionysus was a god of wine and inebriation, but he had other associations which set him apart from other gods. His worship included ecstasy and ritual madness. That aspect of his cult in particular marked him as the opposite of Apollo, who appears as the god of self-control and self-knowledge. Apollo's favorite musical instrument was the lyre or *kithara*, a stringed instrument which was the ancestor of the guitar. The instrument of choice for Dionysus was the *aulos*, which was a reed instrument, the ancestor of the oboe, and it had a dominant, vibrant timbre much like modern bagpipes that appealed to deep-seated human emotions. The *skirl* (a shrill sound) of the *aulos* accompanied the chorus in theatrical productions, which were within the province of Dionysus, and the masks which were worn by actors on the stage became symbols of the Dionysiac cult. In art, they became a standard Dionysiac motif. Yet he was primarily a god of wine, which was supposed to have been his invention. When Dionysus is depicted on Greek vases, wine is his constant companion. He is often shown holding a grapevine in one hand, and a cup or some other vessel for wine in the other. Art historians have noticed that while Dionysus is often shown receiving wine, or

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A PARODY OF A MYTH**

**INTRODUCTION:** The satirical essayist Lucian of Samosata, now the village of Samsat in Syria, belongs to the second century C.E., the period which Edward Gibbon, in his classic history, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, calls the happiest period in the history of mankind. It was also a period when people took a great interest in new religions, and the old stories about the gods which were told by Homer and Hesiod were no longer taken seriously. Lucian was a failed lawyer who turned to the composition of satirical essays. In his new career, he won fame and, to a small degree, fortune as an author. Much of his writing makes fun of philosophy and religion, and in this excerpt he spoofs the myth of the god Dionysus' birth. According to the myth, Zeus saved his unborn son, Dionysus, from the flames that consumed the infant's mother Semele, and kept him sewn into his thigh until he was ready for birth. In this satirical dialogue, the god Poseidon drops by Zeus' palace for a visit and is told by Hermes the gatekeeper that Zeus cannot see him. In trying to discern the reason why Zeus will not see him, Poseidon first guesses that Zeus is in the middle of a sexual liaison, perhaps with his wife Hera, or a young man named Ganymede. Hermes informs him that he is wrong on both counts; Zeus is, in fact, not feeling well after giving birth to his own son.

**Hermes:** He mustn't be disturbed, I tell you. You've chosen a very awkward moment—you simply can't see him just now.

**Poseidon:** Why, is he in bed with Hera?

**Hermes:** No, it's something quite different.

**Poseidon:** Oh, I see what you mean. He's got Ganymede in there.

**Hermes:** No, it's not that either. The fact is, he's feeling rather unwell.

**Poseidon:** Why, Hermes, what a terrible thing! What's the matter with him?

**Hermes:** Well, I hardly like to tell you.

**Poseidon:** Oh, come on. I'm your uncle—you can tell me.

**Hermes:** All right then—he's just had a baby.

**Poseidon:** Had a baby? Him? Whoever by? Do you mean to say he's been a hermaphrodite all these years without our realizing? But there wasn't any sign of pregnancy—his stomach looked quite normal.

**Hermes:** You're quite right. That wasn't where he had it.

**Poseidon:** Oh, I see. He produced it like Athena, out of his head. It's a very prolific organ.

**Hermes:** No, he's been carrying this child of Semele's in his thigh.

**Poseidon:** What a splendid chap he is! He can produce babies from every part of his anatomy! But who, exactly, is Semele?

**Hermes:** A girl from Thebes, one of Cadmus' daughters. Zeus had an affair with her and got her in the family way.

**Poseidon:** What? And then had the baby instead of her?

**SOURCE:** Lucian, "Zeus Is Indisposed," in *Satirical Sketches*. Trans. Paul Turner (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1961): 51–52.

pouring a libation of sacrificial wine, he is never shown actually drinking the wine. That may be only artistic convention, however, since intoxication had a central role in the worship of Dionysus.

**THE FRENZY OF DIONYSIAC WORSHIP.** Intoxication was a means to a state of rapture in which Dionysus' votaries, or worshipers, surrendered themselves utterly to his power and merged their identity with his. His most common cult name was *Bakchos*, which is a Lydian word—the Lydians were neighbors of the Greeks in Asia Minor—and when his worship penetrated Italy, he was commonly known by his cult name. His female devotees were called *Bakchai* (in Latin, *bacchantes*) or alternatively, maenads or *thyiades*. The Romans identified Dionysus, whom they called Bacchus, with an Italian god of fertility and wine called *Liber* (the Liberated/Lib-

erating One), who had a festival every March called the *Liberalia*. In Greek art Dionysus is often surrounded by a swarm of devotees who dance with utter abandon. What made his cult unique among the Olympians was the mass ecstasy and the frenzied exaltation that accompanied it. No other god threw aside the restraints of civilized society with such abandon.

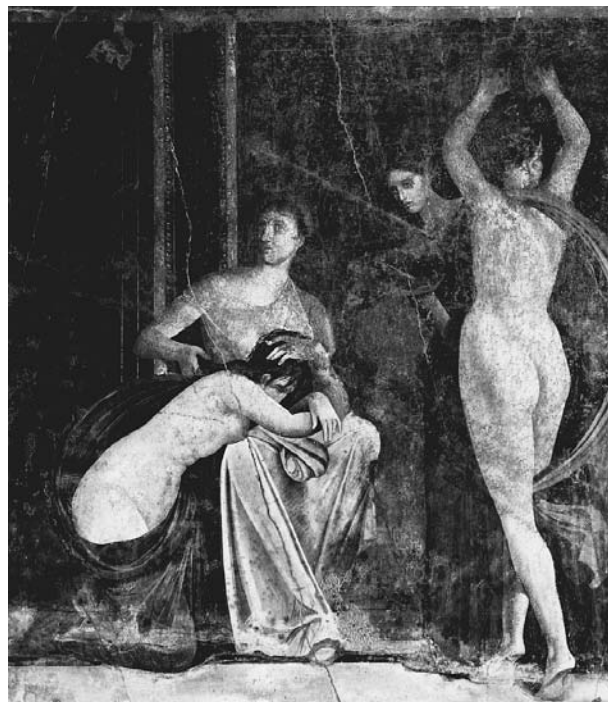
**BIRTH AND UPBRINGING.** Dionysus' mother was Semele, daughter of the founder-king of Thebes, Cadmus. Zeus loved her, and then, when she was six months pregnant, he was tricked by Hera into destroying her. Resentful as ever at Zeus' philandering, Hera visited Semele disguised as an old woman and persuaded the naive young girl to ask her lover to show himself to her in his heavenly regalia. So Semele prevailed upon Zeus to take an oath by the River Styx to grant her whatever



she requested, and when he assented, she asked to see him garbed as the king of the gods. Zeus tried to dissuade her, but even gods dared not break oaths sworn by the Styx, and since Semele insisted, Zeus appeared before her carrying his thunderbolt. The lightning consumed her with its flame, but Zeus snatched the premature infant from Semele's womb, and Dionysus completed his gestation sewn up in Zeus' thigh until he was ready to be born again, which explains Dionysus' epithet, "Twice-born." Then Hermes carried him off to a faraway place called Nysa where maenads attended to him until he grew to manhood. Later mythographers elaborated this period of Dionysus' youth, telling a story of how he wandered as far east as India, but eventually returned to Greece, accompanied by a retinue of maenads and satyrs.

**DIONYSIAC RITES.** Dionysus' rites were called *orgia*: "orgies." The term could be used for any secret rites or mysteries, but its most usual meaning is the rite of Dionysus. In a Dionysiac *orgia*, women abandoned their homes and roamed over the mountainsides, dancing, swinging about torches and *thyrsoi*, which were light sticks of reed with large pine cones fixed on top and wreathed in fresh ivy. In their madness they might seize an animal or even a child, tear it apart, and eat it. How much of this is myth and how much is based on actuality is hard to say. One of Dionysus' epithets was *omophagos*, an adjective meaning "eating raw flesh," and in vase paintings Dionysus and his maenads are shown tearing apart animals with their bare hands and eating them raw. The last play written by the tragic poet Euripides, the *Bacchae* describes a characteristic Dionysiac experience in the words of a herdsman, who witnessed it. He and other herdsmen were pasturing their cattle on the mountain slopes and saw three groups of maenads, who had been dancing together, now sleeping quietly on the ground. On hearing the herd of cattle, they awoke, let down their hair, and wreathed their head with ivy and oak leaves. Then they began a wild dance and fell upon the cattle, tearing them limb from limb, and having had their fill of that, they swooped downhill on two villages which they plundered, snatching children from their houses. The villagers resisted, but the maenads hurled their *thyrsoi* at them and resistance was useless. They then returned to where they had started their wild rampage, their passion spent.

**THE ORGIA IN GREECE.** The rites described in the *Bacchae* were based on reality, for every two years a number of Greek cities held *orgia*. Athens was an exception, but maenads from Athens went to Delphi to celebrate the orgies there. They took place in mid-winter when it



Detail of a wall painting from the Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii, showing initiation into a religion of Dionysus. On the left, a girl, naked to the waist, is being lashed by a winged figure not shown in this photo, and on the right, the girl is performing a wild dance. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

was believed that Apollo left Delphi, and for three months the shrine belonged to Dionysus. Thebes, between Athens and Delphi, was the center of maenadism from which professional maenads were exported to other cities to organize the biennial orgies. Athens did not celebrate Dionysiac orgies, but she had five festivals that were dedicated chiefly to him. In two of these—the Lenaeon festival in January and the City Dionysia in March—tragedies and comedies were presented. Another festival, the three-day long Anthesteria, was a time for merrymaking. The new wine was broached on the first day; the second was a day of competitive drinking, and on the third, the spirits of the dead were free to return above ground and wander among the living, for Dionysus was also connected to death and the afterlife. At the end of the day, the shades were dismissed with the ritual cry, "Get out, ghosts, the Anthesteria is over!"

**WELCOME AND RESISTANCE.** The spread of Dionysus' worship into Greece met resistance: Homer in the *Iliad* recalls that the herdsman Lycurgus drove the maenads pell-mell down the slope of Mt. Nysa with his ox goad, and as punishment, Zeus struck him blind. King Pentheus of Thebes, where Dionysus was born, tried to suppress his worship when Dionysus returned there, but

could not prevent the Theban women from swarming off into the mountains and surrendering to mass ecstasy. There are various other myths of resistance to the coming of Dionysus as well, and this has led scholars to think that he was a late immigrant to Greece. Many ancient Greeks speculated that Dionysus came from Thrace in northern Greece, and it is true that Macedonian and Thracian women were particularly devoted to his *orgia*. The alternative view was that Dionysus came from Phrygia in Asia Minor. The two views are not necessarily incompatible, for the Thracians and the Phrygians were related. There was also the suspicion, even before Dionysus' name appeared on Linear B tablets, that he might have a Cretan origin. His wife was Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, who fled from Crete with Theseus after she helped him escape the Minotaur, and then was abandoned by him on the island of Naxos, where Dionysus came and rescued her. It is generally thought that Ariadne was a Minoan goddess, and now that there is evidence that Dionysus was known on Bronze Age Crete, there may be some significance to the union of the two. By Ariadne Dionysus had a son, Oenopion, who is sometimes shown as his attendant, pouring wine for him.

**THE ROMANS ENCOUNTER BACCHUS.** In 186 B.C.E. news came to the Roman senate that the rites of Dionysus, the Bacchanalia (so called after Dionysus' cult name), were being celebrated in Italy. It was reported that devotees of the rites met at night and took part in a ritual that included not only hard drinking but all kinds of sexual depravity. It was the social and political aspect of the Bacchanalia that disturbed the senate. They appeared to be a breeding ground for conspiracy. The senate issued a decree offering a reward for the arrest of any member of the Bacchus cult or even for the denunciation of anyone. It was reported that over 7,000 men and women were involved. Similar decrees went out to the Italian towns ordering the suppression of the cult. Bacchic sanctuaries were destroyed, and Bacchic ceremonies were outlawed in Rome and Italy. The Roman authorities were generally tolerant of foreign religions, but this is an instance of how fiercely they could react if they discerned a threat to the social order.

**HEPHAESTUS, THE BLACKSMITH GOD.** Hephaestus, the god of metal workers and craftsmen, was the son of Hera, but two stories provide two versions regarding the identity of his father. According to one, he was Zeus. According to the other, Hera, who was enraged at Zeus' infidelities, gave birth to Hephaestus by herself, without being inseminated by a male. He had a non-Greek name, and his favorite island was Lemnos; both facts arouse scholarly curiosity, for on Lemnos there was a non-Greek

people living as late as the sixth century B.C.E. He was deformed, with an immensely powerful torso and arms, and crippled legs, and it has been often pointed out that in early communities a lame man would turn to a specialized trade such as metal working, for his deformity barred him from the occupations of physically fit men, such as farming and fighting as a warrior. Hera wasted no motherly love on him, and a myth told how he took his revenge: he made her a splendid throne, which trapped her when she sat on it and held her until Dionysus reconciled him with his mother. A story that accounted for his deformity described how Zeus threw him out of Olympus when he tried to stop Zeus from beating his mother. He landed on the island of Lemnos and would have died, except that the Sintians who inhabited the island nursed him back to life. Another story related that Hera was so disgusted at his appearance that she threw him out of Olympus. Homer in the *Iliad* treats Hephaestus almost as a comic figure with his crippled legs and heavily-muscled torso, a powerful man hobbling about like a child learning to walk. The Greeks admired the well-proportioned masculine figure of the athlete or the warrior, and the ungainly physique assigned to Hephaestus by their mythology shows how little the Greeks esteemed their craftsmen. He did have a temple in Athens which he shared with Athena, and it still stands largely intact in the old blacksmiths' quarter overlooking the marketplace of the ancient city. It was built in the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., and it is the best preserved of all the ancient temples in Greece. Athena, like Hephaestus, was a patron of craftsmen. Except in Athens, there is little evidence for his worship. Yet the products of his smithy were universally admired as marvelous examples of the metal worker's craft. His inventions even included robots. He was also famously ugly, and there was more than a touch of mockery to the fact that his wife was Aphrodite. The goddess of love and beauty was paired with the only ugly Olympian.

**ARES, THE HATEFUL GOD OF WAR.** Ares, the son of Hera and Zeus, was the personification of battle. He was conceived as a warrior in full armor, and his attendants who harnessed his horses to his war chariot were named *Phobos* and *Deimos*, meaning "Fear" and "Terror." He represented war as a destructive force that spreads fire and rapine. He was an unpopular god; in Homer's *Iliad*, Zeus calls him the most hated of all the Olympians, and, for all his love of battle, he was not a markedly successful warrior. For instance, in the Trojan War where Ares championed the Trojans and Athena the Greeks, the two divinities once met in battle. Ares threw his spear at Athena who parried it, and then Athena hurled a stone at Ares and laid him low. That

was a typical example of the prowess of Ares. He represented everything that was odious in war, but the glory of victory did not belong to him. Victory, for which the Greek word was *niké* was reserved for Athena. On the south-west bastion of the Athenian Acropolis there still stands a small, exquisite temple dedicated to Athena *Niké*: Athena who brings victory. Ares did have one admirer; Aphrodite much preferred him to her crippled husband, Hephaestus.

**THE GODDESS OF THE HEARTH.** Hestia, who is found in early lists of the Twelve Olympians instead of Dionysus, was the goddess of the hearth. Every private house had a hearth, and so did the *prytaneion*, or town hall, of every city-state. The hearth was a sacred place, and any suppliant who sat there could claim the protection of his host. If the host rejected the suppliant on his hearth, he would offend Hestia's brother, Zeus. The sacred fire of Hestia continually burned in the *prytaneion* of every city, representing the vital essence of the community. Whenever a band of colonists set out to found a new city, they took with them a firebrand from Hestia's altar in their mother city, and with its flame, lit the fire of Hestia in the newly founded colony. She had no love affairs. She remained a virgin, and she was the mildest and most loved of all the Olympians.

**CONSTITUENTS OF PANHELLENISM.** The Olympian deities owed their preeminence to the Greek poets, and it was reinforced by the great panhellenic festivals, such as the Olympian Games which were open to all Greeks but not to foreigners. The Greeks had no political unity, but the worship of the Olympians gave them a common denominator. The Greek city-states fought innumerable wars; yet when the Olympic Games were held in honor of Zeus, there was a truce that all Greeks observed. Wars ceased until the Games were finished. Apollo's oracle at Delphi served a similar function, particularly after 590 B.C.E., when Delphi became a small independent state with the care of Apollo's cult its sole reason for existence. The oracle received visitors from all over the Greek world and answered their queries with cryptic utterances believed to be inspired by Apollo. Foreigners could consult Delphi as well, but it was as a holy place for all Greece that Delphi rose to preeminence.

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## OTHER GODS BEYOND THE TWELVE

**TOO MANY TO COUNT.** In addition to the twelve most important gods, there were innumerable other gods in Greek mythology. Any list made of them would be very long and still be incomplete. Some were old deities whom the poets passed over as uninteresting, though they still attracted worshippers. Eileithyia, whose worship on Crete went back to the Stone Age, was still indispensable. Sea gods belonged to the periphery of Greek religion, though they also were very ancient. One of them, the Old Man of the Sea, is known under various names: Proteus, Phorkys, Nereus, or *Glaukos*, meaning "blue-green," the color of the sea. Anyone wanting his cooperation had to overpower him, which was difficult, for he could change from one form to another at the blink of an eye. Only Heracles, the strongman of mythology, had the muscular strength to capture him and then hold on to him.

**THETIS, MOTHER OF ACHILLES.** Thetis was a sea goddess, and her attendants were mermaids called Nereides, who were the daughters of the Old Man of the Sea. She had a sanctuary in Thessaly which the tragic poet Euripides made the setting of his drama *Andromache*. Myth relates that both Zeus and Poseidon desired Thetis, but when they learned from Prometheus that her son would be stronger than his father, they saw to it that she married a mortal, Peleus. She bore him a son, Achilles, whom she tried to make immortal by burning away his mortal element, but Peleus interrupted the ritual and she left him in a rage and returned to the sea. Another story relates that she tried to make Achilles invulnerable by lowering him into a magic well, but since she held him by one heel as she immersed him, the water could not cover that part of his body, and it remained unprotected. Achilles died from an arrow wound in his heel, and this

story gave rise to the modern phrase “Achilles’ heel” to describe an area of vulnerability.

**THE GOD PAN.** Pan was an ancient god of fertility who was not completely anthropomorphic. He was half-man, half-goat, and his homeland was Arcadia, a mountainous region in the central Peloponnesos. He was worshipped in sacred caves, one of which has been found in Athens under the Acropolis. The finds from this cave show that Pan was worshiped there in Mycenaean times and then, after a long period of neglect, worship began again after 490 B.C.E. In that year, the Athenians defeated the Persians at the Battle of Marathon, and they believed that Pan helped them. Thereafter, the Athenians held an annual sacrifice and a torch-race in his honor.

**THE SPIRITS OF RIVERS, MOUNTAINS, AND TREES.** Rivers were gods, and they could take part in human life. The river god Achelous was Heracles’ rival for Deianira, Heracles’ last wife, and Heracles had to wrestle with him to win her. In the countryside and sometimes even the cities there were the nymphs who associated with Pan, and were like the fairies of European folklore. They embodied the divine essences of the mountains, woods, trees, and waters where they lived. The nymphs of the woods were the Alseides, the Napaeae, and the Dryades. The Hamadryades were tree-nymphs—the life spirit of the trees—and when a tree died, its Hamadryas died with it. The water nymphs were Naiads, Potameids, Creneids, and Hydriads. Like Pan, they were often worshipped in caves. They were usually kindly sprites who patronized springs of sweet water and danced with Artemis on the mountainsides, but they could be dangerous. When the nymphs fell in love with Hylas, a handsome boy whom Heracles loved, they dragged him down into a spring as he fetched water there, and he drowned. It was dangerous to be loved by a nymph.

**CASTOR AND POLYDEUCES.** The twin gods, Castor—the famous horseman—and his brother Polydeuces—equally famous as a boxer—were called the Dioscuri, or *Dios kouroi* in Greek, which means “the youths of Zeus,” and there is a “Homeric Hymn” which hails them as the “sons of Zeus.” Greek mythology had various versions of the Dioscuri-myth: the *Iliad* explains that they did not take part in the Trojan War because they were already dead, whereas the *Odyssey* explains that they are living and dead men on alternate days. This refers to a myth in which Polydeuces was the immortal son of Zeus who loved his mortal brother, Castor, so much that he agreed to share his immortality. Thus they spent alternate days alive and dead. Sparta was their homeland, where they were worshipped with a cult im-

age consisting of two upright pieces of wood connected by two crossbeams. They represented the spirits of the young warriors who rode horses into battle, for though Castor was a more famous horseman than his brother, both were known as “riders on white steeds.” Under the name of “Castor and Pollux” or sometimes simply the “Castores,” their cult spread very early to Rome, where the Theoxenia festival was held every year on the Ides of July (15 July) in their honor, and the Roman cavalry performed a ceremonial parade. The parade supposedly commemorated the Battle of Lake Regillus in the early days of the Roman republic when it defeated an effort to restore the Etruscan kings, and Castor and Pollux aided the Romans. They had a temple in the Roman Forum near the spring of Juturna where the two gods were seen watering their horses after the battle.

**THE MYSTERIOUS “MISTRESS.”** Near Lykosoura in Arcadia a goddess called simply “The Mistress” had a temple which she shared with Demeter. There is some indication that “The Mistress” was reared by one of the Titans, but little else is known about her. She is reminiscent of the title *Potnia* meaning “Mistress” found in the Mycenaean “Linear B” tablets, often in phrases such as the “Mistress of Horses” or the “Mistress of Wild Beasts.” A goddess named *Potnia* without any further qualification was an important deity in Mycenaean Pylos. The name of Zeus’ wife, Hera, is thought to mean “mistress”: a powerful female deity whom the poets transformed into Zeus’ shrewish wife, shoving aside Zeus’ first wife, the colorless Dione.

**NEMESIS.** At Rhamnous outside Athens there was a temple to a puzzling deity called Nemesis. There was a myth that Zeus tried to rape her, and she turned herself into various non-human forms to escape him, particularly into various kinds of fish. The word *nemesis* means wrath aroused by any unjust deed, or righteous indignation. The goddess Nemesis presided over retribution, and her adversary was *hubris*, an act of arrogant violence. She preserved the social order by visiting retribution on those who would destroy it.

**ASCLEPIUS, GOD OF HEALING.** Asclepius, whose famous healing shrine at Epidaurus in the Peloponnesos attracted the sick from all over Greece, is a reminder of how blurred the distinction could become between a hero, who was mortal and descended to the Underworld when he died, and a god, who belonged to the world above. Homer in the *Iliad* referred to Asclepius as a “blameless physician” who was already dead at the time of the Trojan War, where his two sons served in the Greek camp as doctors. Yet at Epidaurus a temple was built for him which housed a cult statue made of gold

and ivory, and to the south of the temple was his great altar where sacrifices were made to him as a god. His festival at Epidaurus, held every four years, required a theater that could hold 14,000 spectators. It is now the best-preserved ancient theater in Greece.

**THE BIRTH OF ASCLEPIUS.** Ancient authors had no doubt that Asclepius' father was the god Apollo, but they differed on his mother. The most common version of the myth relates that Apollo impregnated Coronis, the daughter of Phlegyas in Thessaly. Thus Asclepius was of Thessalian origin, and the Asclepiads—Asclepius' priests on the island of Cos whose most famous member was the doctor Hippocrates who is still known for the "Hippocratic Oath"—maintained that Asclepius was born in Trikka, in Thessaly. Epidaurus, however, also claimed to be his birthplace. That version of the myth maintained that Coronis was unfaithful and slept with another man while she was pregnant with Asclepius, and a crow brought the news to Apollo. Apollo wrathfully cursed the crow, turning its color from white to black, and then he slew Coronis. As she lay on the funeral pyre, he snatched the infant Asclepius from her womb and gave it to the centaur Chiron to rear, who taught him the arts of healing. He grew up to be so skilled a doctor that he restored a dead man to life, and for that Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt, for restoring the gift of life was a prerogative of the gods. In fact, only Zeus could do it, and he refrained from the deed. Thus Asclepius went down into the Underworld to live with the heroes. As his cult expanded, the myth was adjusted accordingly. Zeus, it was said, brought Asclepius into the circle of Olympus and made him a god. Thus he could receive sacrifice as a god and not merely the sort of offerings that were made to the *chthonic* deities, or the earth-bound heroes as they were called, for the Greek word for earth was *chthon*.

**SPREAD OF THE HEALING CULT.** The cult of Asclepius grew increasingly popular. In Pergamum, a Hellenistic kingdom in Asia Minor that was carved out of Alexander the Great's conquests, there was an immense shrine to Asclepius a short distance out of the city, and it included a theater that could seat 3,500. The Romans, who called him Aesculapius, brought him from Epidaurus to Rome after a plague in 293 B.C.E. Instructed by an oracle in the Sibylline Books, they brought a sacred snake incarnating the god to Rome, and as the ship bearing the snake up the Tiber River to Rome reached the island known today as the *Isola Tiberina*, it slithered ashore. A temple for Aesculapius was built there and to this day there is a hospital on this island, named after the physician apostle, St. Bartholemew. Early Christians

found Aesculapius a difficult pagan god to extirpate, and at the *Isola Tiberina* their solution was to Christianize his sanctuary by substituting St. Bartholemew for him.

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## THE UNDERWORLD AND ITS INHABITANTS

**GODS OF THE UNDERWORLD.** The Underworld was the House of Hades, the world of the dead, ruled by Zeus' brother, Hades. The name "Hades" means the "Unseen One," and one of Hades' most prized possessions was his "Cap of Darkness" which made him invisible. The Greeks did not typically worship him; only at one place in Greece did he have a temple. In Elis there was a temple to Hades that was open only once a year, and only the priest was allowed to enter. In the land of the Thesprotians in northwest Greece, there was an oracle of the dead, sacred to Hades and Persephone, which is probably where Odysseus made his descent into the Underworld. By and large, the Greeks preferred not to talk about Hades.

**PERSEPHONE AND HECATE.** Hades' wife was Persephone, queen of the Underworld and the daughter of Demeter, and her close companion was Hecate, goddess of the witches. In the magical spells, sorcerer's rituals, and hymns that have survived from the Greco-Roman world, Hecate is one of the deities most often invoked. Her most common epithet was *phosphoros*, that is, "Bringer of Light," and she is sometimes shown bearing two torches. For the Romans, she was identical with Persephone, Selene the Moon Goddess, and Diana, and a witch might invoke any one of them with her magical formulas. The Romans called her by the epithet *Trivia*, for she preferred a place where three roads met for her place of worship. Before Hecate was demoted to an underworld goddess of the witches, she was an ancient, beneficent goddess whom Hesiod in his *Theogony* invokes with a hymn of praise. The Hecate of the *Theogony* was a Titaness, sister of Apollo's mother Leto. She was

a kindly goddess, favored by Zeus, and a patron of fishers and horsemen, and a friend of shepherds and herdsmen. When Hesiod wrote, Hecate was still a deity who had many devotees, particularly in the region of Greece known as Boeotia, which was Hesiod's homeland. Her development into a goddess of witches came later.

**GEOGRAPHY OF THE UNDERWORLD.** The Underworld was the abode of the souls of the dead, and it was a dismal place. Homer's *Odyssey* relates that Odysseus encountered the shade of Achilles there, who told him that he would rather be alive and the slave of a landless man than king of all the dead in the Underworld. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, the Underworld was Tartarus, the prison of the Titans who were overthrown by Zeus. Hades and Persephone had a palace there that was guarded by a fearsome watchdog that wagged its tail in welcome for all who entered, but would not let anyone exit. The river of the Underworld was the Styx, a stream dreaded even by the gods, for if a god swore an oath by the Styx, and then broke it, he would lie in a coma for a year and, once he recovered, would be shunned by the other gods for nine more years. Only in the tenth year could he rejoin their councils.

**PLATO'S "MYTH OF ER."** The geography of the Underworld developed further when Plato concluded his best-known dialogue, *The Republic*, with a parable called "The Myth of Er." The story related the experience of a warrior named Er, who recovered from near-death and told a strange story of his experience. His soul left his body and journeyed to a place where there were two chasms into the earth and, above them, two chasms in the sky. Between them sat judges who commanded the souls of the just to take the right-hand chasm in the sky, and the unjust to take the left-hand chasm into the earth. Some, who had been evil beyond redemption in their lives, were too wicked for even the left-hand chasm, and they were hurled into Tartarus. Those that ascended the path through the right-hand chasm reached a meadow where they saw the Three Fates, the daughters of Necessity, whose names were Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos. There the souls of the dead chose lots for the new lives they would live. The soul of Agamemnon, who had commanded the Greek alliance that destroyed Troy, chose to be an eagle. Odysseus' soul, however, chose to be an ordinary man who would live an uneventful life. These souls then made their way to the River Lethe, where they had to drink its water that brought forgetfulness. Those that drank too much forgot everything; those that drank no more than required continued to remember something of their pasts. Then, after they had drunk, a great earthquake swept up the souls to their rebirth.

**THE UNDERWORLD OF VERGIL.** The Roman poet Vergil, who wrote the national epic of the Roman Empire known as the *Aeneid* in the first century B.C.E., put his stamp on the popular conception of the Underworld. Vergil combined ideas inherited from Greco-Roman tradition to present an idea of the Underworld that would haunt the imagination of the European literary tradition. The hero Aeneas was guided by the Cumaean Sibyl whose cave can still be seen at Cumae near Naples in Italy. He passed Disease, Hunger, and Poverty, and other scourges of mankind at the entrance gate, and War, Perverted Pleasures, and the Furies on the threshold. From there the road led to the river Acheron where the ferryman who ferried the souls across—a fierce old boatman named Charon—would accept only those souls whose bodies had been buried. The souls of those whose bones had not been properly laid to rest had to wander for a hundred years before they were allowed to cross Acheron, which was an alternative name for the Styx in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Aeneas was not dead, but he carried a talisman—a Golden Bough that he had broken off a magic tree—and Charon recognized it as a permit to cross, and ferried Aeneas and the Sibyl over the terrible river. As Aeneas disembarked on the opposite shore, the three-headed watchdog Cerberus lunged at him, but the Sibyl gave him a drugged honey-cake and he was soon asleep. Then he entered the region where the dead were judged by a court over which Minos presided, for Minos, the mythical king of Crete, had become a judge in the Underworld. There Aeneas saw the souls of children who had died young, and persons condemned on false charges, and the souls of those who had committed suicide. Finally he reached the place inhabited by dead warriors where he met the heroes who had perished at Troy. On his left was Tartarus with its triple wall, surrounded by a torrent of flame called the Phlegethon, and from it came fearful cries of anguish. The Sibyl explained that this was the abyss where the Titans lay imprisoned, and where great sinners were punished. Tartarus was Hell.

**THE ELYSIAN FIELDS.** Aeneas and the Sibyl pressed on until they came to a region of woodland and meadow where the souls of the righteous dwelled, enjoying athletic games or dancing to the music of the lyre played by the great musician, Orpheus himself. These were the Elysian Fields, reserved for those who lived just lives. There Aeneas met the ghost of his father Anchises, who was walking among the souls that were waiting to be reborn. Anchises greeted his son with joy. Aeneas expressed amazement at seeing souls buzzing about like bees in a meadow, and Anchises explained the phenomenon by saying that these were the souls that were owed a second

body by Fate. They would drink the water of Lethe and be reborn. Then, with a splendid literary flourish, Vergil imagines Anchises pointing out the builders of the Roman Empire who were still to be born, until he reaches his own patron, the emperor Augustus.

**THE TITANS: PRISONERS IN THE UNDERWORLD.** Hesiod's *Theogony* relates that the Titans were the offspring of Ouranos and Gaia, that is, Heaven and Earth, whose rule was overthrown by Zeus. After a terrible battle, they were imprisoned in Tartarus. The usual explanation is that the Titans were pre-Olympian gods who ruled before the Greeks arrived in Greece, and the battle between the Titans and the Olympians reflects in some way a half-forgotten struggle between the early inhabitants of the north-eastern Mediterranean region and the Greek immigrants. The Titans might have a Near Eastern origin. It has often been noted that one of them was named Iapetos, which reminds us of the name of one of Noah's sons, Japheth. But Iapetos had no connection with a flood, even though the Greeks—like the Hebrews—had a flood legend and perhaps both flood legends derived ultimately from the same source.

**THE CONQUEST OF THE TITANS.** Most of the Titans were consigned to Tartarus after their defeat by Zeus, where the laments of the damned could be heard day and night, as Vergil described them in his *Aeneid*. But legend related that some Titans fought with the Olympians rather than against them, and thus survived. Moreover, Cronus, the lord of the Titans, continued to receive worship. There was a festival called the "Kronia" held in his honor at various places in Greece. In Athens it was held in Hekatombaion, the first month of the Athenian calendar which began about mid-July. It was a harvest festival, a kind of harvest-home holiday when masters and slaves feasted together. The social norms of the class system were abandoned briefly, and everyone was equal. Among the Romans, Cronus was equated with Saturn, and his festival, the Saturnalia, was held during the Christian Christmas season. There was a Roman legend, reported in Vergil's *Aeneid*, that when Zeus overthrew Cronus, the defeated god fled to Italy. There he brought civilization to the natives, and his rule was remembered as a Golden Age that was ended by the arrival of new immigrants known as the Ausonians and the Sicilians. The Romans recognized Saturn as a Greek import, for whenever a priest made a sacrifice to him, he left his head uncovered in the Greek manner, whereas priests sacrificing to Roman deities covered their heads. The Saturnalia was a merry festival. Slaves were given temporary freedom to do what they liked. Presents were exchanged, particularly wax candles, or dolls or images

made of pottery. A mock king, or "Lord of Misrule," might be chosen to preside over the merriment. For a brief period, the social order was overturned.

**THE SATURNALIA AS NEW YEAR'S FESTIVAL.** Once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, many of the Saturnalia customs were transferred to the New Year's Day festivities. The old Titan Cronus himself had a curious afterlife. Greek art depicted him with a pruning hook, for he was a god of the harvests. But the pronunciation of his name "Cronus" is very close to the Greek word for "time," which is *khronos*. So the old Titan became Father Time, his pruning-hook became a scythe, and he reappears in the iconography of the Western New Year's Day holiday as Father Time who is ushered out at midnight on the last day of December by the child who represents the New Year.

**THE TITAN PROMETHEUS.** The Titan Iapetos sired four sons: Atlas whom Zeus sentenced to bear the weight of the sky on his shoulders; Menoitios whom Zeus consigned to the Underworld for his arrogance; and two Titans who complemented each other, Prometheus, who always planned in advance, and Epimetheus who was the exact opposite. Students of folklore recognize Prometheus as a familiar figure: a trickster who could outwit gods and men. A deception that Prometheus played on the gods explained the Greek custom of burning the inedible parts of their sacrificial animals on the altars, and feasting on the more appetizing cuts themselves. A question once arose between the gods and mortals about which portions of the sacrificial animals each should get as their due. Prometheus butchered the sacrificial ox and divided it into two portions. In one portion he put the steaks and prime ribs, but he hid them in the stomach of the ox so that they looked unappetizing. In the other he put the bones, but he camouflaged them so that they seemed the better portion. Then he asked Zeus to choose, and Zeus chose the bones. Hesiod, who tells the story, explained that Zeus allowed himself to be tricked, for it would not do for an omniscient Zeus to be deceived. Yet Zeus was angry. In revenge he denied humans fire. But Prometheus, taking pity on mankind, stole fire from Zeus' altar on Olympus and soon Zeus was outraged to see smoke arising from human habitations. He chained Prometheus to a cliff-side, and sent an eagle every day to devour his liver. Because Prometheus' liver was immortal like the rest of his body, it grew back every night, and Prometheus' agony continued until Heracles released him from his chains.

**THE CREATION OF HUMAN BEINGS.** It was Prometheus who created humans. Using his skill as a

master craftsman, he fashioned human beings out of clay, and the Latin poet Horace added that he used bits and pieces of other animals as well. The Greeks added other creation myths, including the myth of the “Five Ages of Man” which Hesiod relates in his *Works and Days*. In that myth, Zeus created five races of mankind, and the fifth race were humans of the present day. Another myth told that Mother Earth gave birth to men and women. After the flood killed the entire human race except for Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha, Zeus granted them one wish. Deucalion asked that the human race might live again, and Zeus told them to throw stones over their heads. The stones Deucalion threw became men; those that Pyrrha threw became women.

**THE ORPHICS AND THEIR CREATION MYTH.** A sect known as the “Orphics” had another theogony, sharply different from Hesiod’s. The patron hero of the Orphics was the great musician Orpheus, whose wife Eurydice died of a snakebite. He descended into the Underworld to bring her back to life, charming his way past Cerberus, the watchdog of the Underworld, by playing music. Hades himself was so delighted that he allowed Eurydice to follow her husband to the world above, but on one condition: Orpheus was not to look back until they left the Underworld. But as he neared the exit of the Underworld, he could restrain himself no longer. He looked back and saw Eurydice, escorted by Hermes. She smiled at her husband and turned back to the Underworld, guided by Hermes. This death and near-resurrection myth attracted a cult following of converts who lived what they called the “Orphic life.” Their creation myth told that in the beginning, there was a primordial power, either Time or Night. Out of it came an egg, which gave birth to *Phanes* (the Shining One). Phanes gave birth to *Ouranos* (Heaven) and *Gaia* (Earth), who reproduced by the sexual union. Their coition created Cronus and Rhea who copulated and produced the generation of Zeus, and so on by a repetition of murder and sexual acts until the cycle of violence arrived at the race of men. Mortals who opted for the pure Orphic life should refrain from all killing, including animal sacrifice, and attain reconciliation with the gods by a pure life. Hesiod’s creation myth had described progress from chaos to the present-day Age of Iron which was unpleasant but relatively orderly. The Orphic myth described a process of human degeneration.

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## HEROES AND DEMIGODS

**THE AGE OF THE HEROES.** The myth of the “Five Ages of Man” in Hesiod’s *The Works and Days* was borrowed from the mythology of the Middle East. The Middle Eastern version, however, told of only four ages: a blessed Golden Age, followed by a lesser Silver Age which was in turn followed by a Bronze Age, and finally the age of the present day, the Age of Iron. The Greek adaptation inserted a fifth age between the Age of Bronze and the Age of Iron: the age of the heroes and of heroines. These were the men and women who peopled Greek mythology and lived within a mythological time frame. Some were warriors—such as Odysseus, Agamemnon, and Menelaus, who fought at Troy in the Trojan War—or movers-and-shakers of the mythic past, such as Helen of Troy. Theseus, who was the special hero of Athens, killed the Minotaur at Knossos on Crete, and then became king of Athens. He performed heroic deeds that rivalled the famous Twelve Labors of Heracles. Heracles, the superman of mythology, performed not only his Twelve Labors—incredible feats of strength done in penance for killing his family in a fit of insanity—but he was credited with various other deeds as well which only a man of incredible strength and virility could perform. The Dorian Greeks who settled in the Peloponnesos after the collapse of the Mycenaean kingdoms considered him their ancestor and called themselves *Herakleidai* or “offspring of Heracles.” The kings of the Spartans, who were Dorians *par excellence*, had pedigrees that went back to Heracles.

**SEMI-DIVINE.** The heroes were not gods, though they might be called *hemitheoi* meaning “half-gods” or demigods. After death, they lived in the Underworld, not on Mt. Olympus, and as a general rule, no temples were built to heroes. Instead, the hero’s tomb became a *heroon* or “hero-shrine,” where the heroes were worshipped as if they were chthonian powers, that is, spirits of the earth, the nether world. Sacrificial animals with black hides were sacrificed to them after daylight had faded, at night or in the evening. The blood from the sacrificial victims was poured into a trench so that it would trickle down into the earth and feed the spirit, or shade, of the hero. A god would have a sacrifice made



to him on a high altar (*bomos*), whereas a hero had an *eskhara*, which was a low, round altar though—as is frequently the case in Greco-Roman religious practices—there were exceptions to the rule. Heroes were generally tied to a specific locality, for most of them had only one tomb. They were usually barely known outside the region where they were worshipped. Only the great international heroes such as Heracles, Theseus, Perseus, Jason and Medea, and the heroes of the Trojan War were famous all across Greece, and that was because there were innumerable myths told about them. Every storyteller felt free to embellish the old tales about them, and more than one place might claim to possess their bones. Heracles in particular had myths connecting him with localities all over the Mediterranean world, but he was a super-hero. Most heroes were hometown men, and their cults have puzzled historians of religion. There have been efforts to explain them as half-forgotten gods—“faded gods” is the term used, with the implication that gods can grow dim with time, rather like a slow-motion “fade-out” in a movie—or old vegetation gods, or simply men or women of the past who were remarkable for their great deeds, rather like Christian saints. One common explanation was that when a great man died, offerings were made at his tomb which developed over the course of time into a *heroon*. Thus a *heroon* on the site of a Mycenaean tomb showed that the memory of the Mycenaean warrior buried there lasted into the classical period. Archaeological evidence refutes this idea, however. The hero-shrines date from the eighth century B.C.E. Between about 750 B.C.E. and 700 B.C.E., tombs from the Mycenaean era which were discovered—probably accidentally in most cases—were given new importance as the burial places of heroes, and offerings were made there. The Greeks of the eighth century B.C.E. probably had no idea who the original occupants of these tombs were any more than scholars of the twenty-first century do, but they did know that their local hero should have had a burial somewhere in the vicinity of the Mycenaean tomb. So to whom else could the tomb belong? The logic was irrefutable. Thus a prehistoric tomb belonging to persons unknown, but suitably ancient, could become the site of a hero cult.

**HERO CULTS AND THE RISE OF THE POLIS.** The eighth century B.C.E. was the period when the *poleis* or city-states of Greece were developing and marking out their territories, and the hero-cults which arose at the same time were connected with this development. A legitimate *polis* had a hero, or perhaps more than one. The bones of a hero served to preserve and sanction a *polis* in much the same way as the relics of a saint might pre-

serve a community in the Christian Middle Ages. The Greek historian Herodotus, whose *Histories* was published about 425 B.C.E., told how Sparta, which had been fighting the *polis* of Tegea in Arcadia for many years without success, consulted the oracle at Delphi and was told to bring home the bones of Orestes, the son of King Agamemnon, who commanded the Greek coalition in the Trojan War. When the Spartans asked where the bones of Orestes lay, the reply was that they were where two winds were blowing and iron smote iron. The Spartans were baffled and may not have been able to solve the riddle except that one day, a Spartan, taking advantage of a lull in the hostilities, visited a smithy in Tegea. The blacksmith there told him that when he was digging a well in his courtyard, he came across a huge coffin with a corpse inside. The great size of the bones showed that they belonged to the Age of Heroes, so the smith reburied them. His Spartan visitor reasoned that these must be the mortal remains of Orestes, for the two winds were the smith’s bellows and the iron that smote iron was the smith’s hammer striking his anvil. The Spartans tricked the smith into selling his courtyard and found the bones, and once these presumed relics of Orestes were in Sparta, she thereafter always had the better of her enemies until finally she managed to dominate the Peloponnesos.

**THESEUS AND ATHENIAN POLITICS.** The hero Theseus served Athens in a similar way. In his old age Theseus was banished from Athens, and went to the island of Skyros in the northern Aegean Sea. There the king of Skyros murdered him. About 475 B.C.E., the Athenian general Cimon, who was a shrewd politician as well as a good military officer, was campaigning in the area and on Skyros he unearthed huge bones. A cynic might suggest that they were dinosaur fossils and that Cimon did not find them entirely by accident. But their size seemed to prove that they belonged to the Age of Heroes, and it was easy to arrive at the conclusion that they had to belong to Theseus. Cimon carried them back to Athens, and his pious deed brought him more acclaim than any of the many victories he won. A *heroon* was built for Theseus in the marketplace of Athens. A festival was established for him, and the makers of myth—poets and dramatists—developed him into the founder-hero of the Athenian city-state and the patron of democracy.

**THE HERO IN HISTORICAL TIME.** Not all heroes belonged to the Heroic Age. Some were historical figures. Beginning in the mid-eighth century B.C.E., and for the next two and a half centuries, the Greeks planted colonies in the western Mediterranean region, and in the north Aegean and Black Sea area. Careful planning

usually went into the planting of colonies in new and often strange lands. An *oikistes*—the word has been Anglicized as “oecist”—was appointed to head the colonial expedition. The oecist saw to it that a new home far away from the homeland of his colonists was established in an orderly fashion for them. When he died, a *heroon* would be built for him in the marketplace of the new city he had founded and sacrifices would be offered to his remains. Other great men might also be revered as heroes. At Olympia, where the Olympic Games were held, a *heroon* was built for King Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. The cult of heroes made it easy for the Greeks to believe that kings possessed a kind of divinity, and thus it need not surprise us to find divine kings who received worship in the Greek world after Alexander the Great’s death. Within a couple generations of his death, the Hellenistic kings who had carved kingdoms for themselves out of Alexander’s conquests, declared, first, the founders of their realms divine, and then themselves, too. From these divine kingships of the East, the idea passed to Rome. The Roman senate decreed that Julius Caesar became *divus* (divine) after he was assassinated in 44 B.C.E., as was the first emperor, *Imperator* Caesar Augustus, to give him his official name. Although the worship of dead emperors was an accepted practice, the worship of a living emperor met resistance within Rome itself; neither Augustus nor his successor Tiberius liked the idea, for Roman customs had no place for deified kings, and both Augustus and Tiberius were conservative in matters of religion. Yet outside Rome, the acceptance of living emperors as gods encountered little resistance and soon the cult of the emperors, living and dead, became an important instrument for legitimizing imperial rule.

**NAMELESS DIVINE FORCES.** The Greeks recognized another category of divine force as well which had the power to interfere in human affairs. These were the *daimones*—in singular form *daimon*—who were not worshipped with offerings as the heroes were. The English word “demon” comes from *daimon*, but while the Western concept of demons generally refers to unpleasant supernatural forces, the Greek *daimones* might be either malevolent or benign. They governed the impulses that moved men to action, or perhaps inaction. In the Hellenistic world after Alexander the Great, the *daimones* were often regarded as guardian spirits that looked after mortal men. They existed on the periphery of religious practices. They had no festivals or organized cults.

**DEIFIED ABSTRACTIONS.** Perhaps the logic which the Greeks applied to nameless forces called *daimones* also applied to personifications of abstract entities such

as “Peace,” “Wealth,” or “Luck.” In the fourth century B.C.E., the sculptor Kephisodotos made a statue for Athens of *Eirene* (“Peace”) holding the infant “Wealth” in her arms. He treated *Eirene* as a goddess, the personification of the spirit of peace. The boundary between an abstract entity and a divinity was easy to cross. Thus it is clear that “Luck” or “Fortune”—in Greek, *tyche*—was treated as a goddess. In the Hellenistic world, when faith in the power of the Olympian deities grew more problematic, *tyche* became a popular goddess in whom cities might put their faith, and they erected statues showing her as a woman wearing a model of a city’s fortification walls as her crown. In a society where “Fortune” seemed to play an increasingly important role, it was important for a city to cherish its *tyche*. If “Fortune” was in a good mood, she might forget to be blind, and bestow good luck on her city.

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## HERACLES, THE SUPER-HERO

**A HERO WHO BECAME A GOD.** Heroes belonged to the Underworld, and probably the earliest myths about Heracles consigned him there, too, after his death, for in most of Greece, the cult of Heracles was a hero-cult. But as the poets elaborated the Heracles-myth, it developed a happier ending. He was taken up to Mt. Olympus where he reconciled with his bitter enemy, Hera, and married her daughter, Hebe. In fact, the name “Heracles” means “The Glory of Hera,” or “Glory through Hera,” which seems to indicate that Hera was his patron. His name is at odds with the myth that portrayed him as a victim of Hera’s jealousy because he was a son of Zeus by a mortal woman, Alcmena. Yet only at one place in Greece was Heracles worshipped as a god: on the island of Thasos, where he had a sanctuary; he received sacrifices both as a god, on a high altar, and on a low altar as a hero.

**HERACLES’ BIRTH.** Heracles’ mother, Alcmena, was the wife of Amphytrion, who traveled to Thebes with his wife after killing his father-in-law, Electryon, the ruler

of Mycenae. During a time when Amphitryon's military duties took him from Thebes, Zeus assumed Amphitryon's likeness and slept with the lovely Alcmena. Later the same night, Amphitryon arrived home and slept with Alcmena, too, who was amazed at his ardor since she thought he had slept with her only a few hours earlier. Alcmena gave birth to twins: Iphicles, who was Amphitryon's son, and Heracles, who was sired by Zeus.

**HERA'S JEALOUSY.** Hera was bitterly jealous. While Alcmena was in labor, Zeus prophesied that the next descendant of the hero Perseus to be born would rule Mycenae. Alcmena was the granddaughter of Perseus, the founder of the Perseid royal house of Mycenae. Hera heard the prophecy and delayed Heracles' birth. Alcmena remained in labor so long that Perseus' grandson, Eurystheus, was born first and consequently Heracles became Eurystheus' subject. Hera continued her persecution by sending two great serpents to destroy Heracles in his cradle, but he throttled them. Even after he grew up and married Megara, daughter of Creon, king of Thebes, Hera visited him with a fit of madness, and he killed Megara and their three sons. When he recovered his sanity, he consulted the Delphic oracle to learn what he should do to expiate his crime. He was told to submit himself to Eurystheus, king of Mycenae, who would assign him twelve labors. The number "twelve" is the canonical number, but there are variant accounts which assign him ten and have a somewhat different list of exploits.

**THE FIRST SIX LABORS.** The first labor was to slay a lion that terrorized Nemea. No weapon could pierce its hide, so Heracles strangled it, flayed it, and henceforth wore the skin himself. He then slew the Hydra, a many-headed reptile that lived in the swampland at Lerna. Next he captured a wild boar at Erymanthus and brought it back on his shoulders to Eurystheus, who was terrified at the sight of it. He then captured the Hind of Keryneia, and next killed the fierce birds that infested Stymphalus. The sixth labor was the cleansing of the stables of Augeas, who owned many cattle but had never cleaned their stables. Heracles flushed out the manure by diverting a local river through them.

**THE LAST LABORS.** Unlike the first group of labors which were all confined to the northern Peloponnesos, the next six took Heracles further afield. His seventh labor was to capture a wild bull from Crete. Heracles brought it back to Eurystheus and then let it go to continue its depredations. His eighth was to capture the man-eating horses of Diomedes, the king of the Thracian Bistones. Next he was assigned the task of bringing back the sash of Hippolyte, the queen of the Amazons, because

Eurystheus' daughter wanted it. The Amazons were warrior women, and though Hippolyte was quite willing to give Heracles her sash when she learned what his errand was, Hera stirred up trouble and there was a bloody battle between Heracles and the Amazons before he got the sash. The last three labors are variants of the theme of a mortal conquering death. The tenth was to capture the red cattle of Geryon, a triple-bodied monster who had a watchdog with two heads and lived beyond the western reaches of the Mediterranean. It was while he was performing this task that he passed through the Strait of Gibraltar and set up pillars on both sides of it, called the "Pillars of Heracles." There were various stories of how he made his way back to Greece with Geryon's cattle. One related that he spent a night on the site of Rome, where a local monster named Cacus tried to steal the cattle. Another told that the cattle stampeded and led Heracles into what is now the Ukraine, where he slept with a monster-woman and sired the Scythian people. Still another related that he borrowed the vessel of Helios, the Sun God, that Helios used every night after he set in the west to voyage underground back to the east where he would rise next. The eleventh labor took Heracles to the Underworld where he captured Cerberus, the three-headed watchdog of Hades. The final labor took him to the far west, to the world's end, where there grew a tree with golden apples that was guarded by a dragon in a garden belonging to the daughters of Hesperus. Heracles got them and brought them back to Eurystheus.

**MORE CRIMES.** The violence of Heracles is a recurrent theme. Having completed his labors, he committed another crime by murdering his half-brother Iphitus in another fit of madness. This crime was more than fratricide; it breached the laws of hospitality, for Iphitus was Heracles' guest when Heracles hurled him down from the walls of Tiryns. The pollution that resulted from this double crime caused him to contract a terrible disease, and he went to Delphi to ask for a cure. When the Pythia refused to prophesy for him, Heracles, in a rage, seized the tripod on which she sat and would have run off with it except that Apollo himself pursued him and wrestled with him for the tripod. The contest between god and hero ended with Zeus separating them by a thunderbolt. The oracle did speak at this point, and told Heracles that he must work as a slave for three years if he wanted to be purified.

**FURTHER EXPLOITS.** Thus Heracles served as a slave of Queen Omphale of the Lydians for three years and performed various exploits for her. After his three-year stint was complete, Heracles, now cured of his disease, had a number of other adventures, including the capture

of Troy and setting Priam, who was still a young man, on the Trojan throne. Heracles' last wife was Deianira, and to win her he had to wrestle with the river-god Achelous. While he was traveling home with his new wife, he reached a river where Nessos, a centaur (half-horse and half-man), carried people across for a fee. Heracles himself crossed without help, but he allowed Nessos to carry Deianira. As Nessos emerged from the river, he tried to rape her, but her screams reached Heracles, who shot Nessos with an arrow. As the centaur lay dying, he whispered to Deianira that she could make a love-potion by taking the sperm he had ejaculated and mixing it with blood from his wound. Deianira followed his instructions. The potion would prove to be Heracles' undoing.

**HERACLES' DEATH.** Heracles' career of war and homicide ended not on the battlefield but as the result of his wife's insecurity. The king of Oechalia, Eurytus, had offered his daughter, Iole, to whoever could defeat him and his sons at archery. Heracles won, but Eurytus refused to give him Iole because he remembered the fate of Heracles's first wife, Megara, whom Heracles had killed in a fit of insanity. Heracles nursed a grudge against Eurytus because of the broken promise, and he attacked Oechalia, killed Eurytus and his sons, and took Iole by force. He then sent a herald home to bring him a brightly-colored tunic to wear as he offered sacrifice before wedding Iole. When Deianira learned about Iole, she feared that she was losing Heracles' love, and so she smeared the love potion on the tunic. Heracles put it on, and as soon as it grew warm with the heat of his body, it burned into his flesh. He was brought home to Trachis in agony. When Deianira saw his suffering, she hanged herself. Heracles then instructed his elder son by Deianira, Hyllus, to marry Iole when he reached manhood, and he himself went to Mt. Oeta in Trachis where he had a funeral pyre built and climbed on it. Mt. Oeta is one of the earliest places in Greece where there is archaeological evidence of a cult of Heracles, and so if the story of Heracles' death is a later addition to the myth, as some have argued, it is an early addition. Poets and storytellers would later add the detail that, as the pyre burned, there was a clap of thunder, and as a cloud enveloped Heracles he was snatched up to Mt. Olympus.

**HERACLES IN ITALY.** The myth of Heracles came to Italy very early. He was popular among the Etruscans. In Rome, he received sacrifice at the *Ara Maxima* (The Greatest Altar) near the Cattle Market in Rome, and significantly, the sacrifice was "according to Greek rite," that is the priest left his head uncovered as he performed it. The Romans themselves found the rites of Heracles,

whom they called Hercules, difficult to explain. Why was it a Greek rite? Why, too, were women barred from approaching Hercules' altar? There was a legend that before Rome was founded, there was a settlement of Greek colonists on the site, led by a king named Evander, and the worship of Hercules went back to his time. Like many Roman religious rituals, the forms of the rite remained unchanged over the centuries, but the reasons for them were forgotten.

**THE SUFFERING HERO.** One unexpected development of the Heracles-myth was its use as a paradigm of a great man who suffers for the good of mankind. The rationale was that he spent the best years of his life performing labors that rid Greece of monsters, or pushed back the boundaries of the known world. In the period after Alexander the Great when great Hellenistic kingdoms emerged in the lands Alexander had conquered, Heracles became a model king who labored during his life to make the world a better place and was rewarded with divine honors after his death. Under the Roman Empire, the myth continued to have its uses. In 285 C.E., the emperor Diocletian made much-needed reforms, among them taking a junior colleague as emperor. As director of the empire, he called himself "Iovius" after Jupiter, the Roman Zeus, and his junior colleague became "Herculius," who used his power in the service of his subjects. The myth lives on in comic-book heroes such as Superman and Spiderman: men who use their enormous strength to rid society of evils and make the world a better place.

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## DISCOVERING THE WILL OF THE GODS: ORACLES AND DIVINATION

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SEERS.** It was vitally important not to offend the gods, but how could mortal men know what the gods wanted them to do, or learn what fate had in store for them? The gods might vouchsafe a sign that could be taken as an omen, good or bad. Reading divine signs and omens correctly required skill and

learning, and there were seers in ancient Greece who specialized in the art. It was important to watch the phases of the moon, and the meaning of an eclipse could test the limits of a seer's skill. There were seers that belonged to clans of hereditary soothsayers who could trace their ancestry back to some legendary vaticinator, or prophet, whose knowledge came from the gods, particularly Apollo who was the most important god of oracles. There was one such clan at Olympia, the Iamidae, or "Descendants of Iamus." Iamus was a son of Apollo and became a prophet because Apollo directed him to do so. The Iamidae continued to live at Olympia until well into the third century C.E.

**COMMUNICATION BY DREAMS.** A god might communicate by dreams. Dreams were a favorite method of Asclepius, the healing god. Patients who came to his sanctuary at Epidaurus slept in the hospice, and as they slept, the great harmless snakes that embodied the god's spirit would slither around and over them, and a dream would visit them and tell them what treatments the god prescribed. Asclepius' sanctuary was full of votive offerings by patients who left terracotta models of the parts of their body that had been healed, and the sick continued to seek Asclepius' help well into the Christian era.

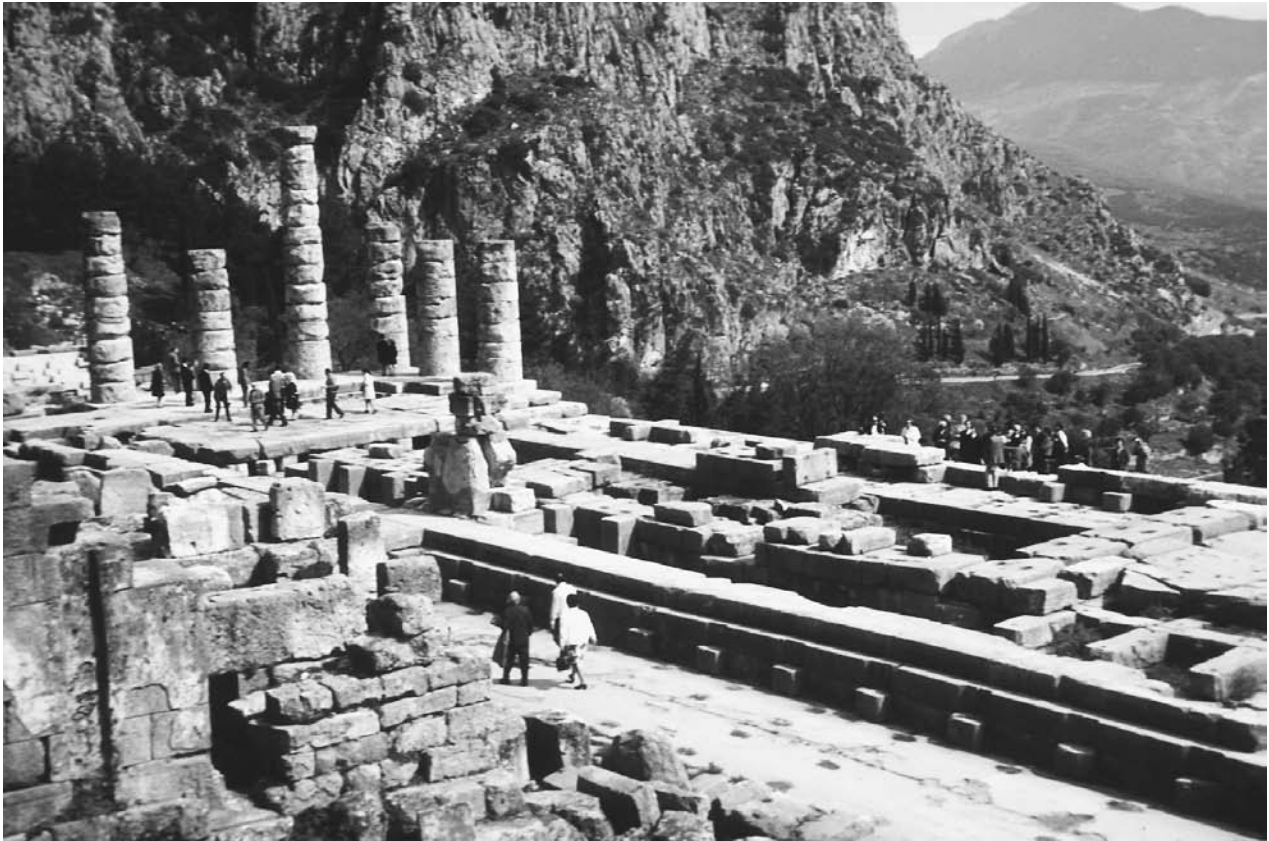
**TAKING THE AUSPICES IN GREECE.** When sacrifices were made, the entrails of the sacrificial victim were examined carefully, with special attention given to the liver. Any abnormalities were noted, and their meaning interpreted by a seer skilled in the craft of haruspicy, that is, the art of interpreting signs and omens in entrails. Ill omens were taken seriously, as is illustrated by a story from Greek history. In 479 B.C.E., the Greeks were about to fight a battle against the Persians at Plataea, a little city-state that neighbored Athens. The Persians were advancing against the Spartan contingent and inflicting severe casualties with their barrage of arrows. The Spartans made the customary sacrifices before battle, but the auspices were not favorable. The Spartans waited, even though the Persian arrows took a deadly toll. The priests continued to slaughter sacrificial victims, but as long as the omens remained unfavorable the Spartans waited. At last the Spartan commander, Pausanias, turned his eyes towards a temple of Hera by the battlefield and in a loud voice prayed to her to save the Greeks from defeat. At that moment, the sacrifices yielded a favorable omen, the Spartans advanced against the Persians and, after a hard struggle, they won a complete victory.

**AUGURIES IN ROME.** Among the Romans, auguries and auspices—which were for practical purposes the same—were a fine art. The Roman augurs, who were Rome's official diviners, formed a committee called a *col-*

*legium* which originally had three members but increased gradually to sixteen. Their duty was to observe signs, such as the flight of birds, and interpret them. They received reports of any unusual events, such the birth of a two-headed calf. On the Capitoline Hill the eating habits of a group of sacred chickens were open to interpretation by the augurs: if they refused to eat at all, that meant an ill-omened day. Roman armies on campaign took with them sacred chickens whose eating habits were carefully watched. It was a very good sign if they ate so as to drop a little food from their beaks. While it is not possible to know how seriously all the Romans took these signs, it is clear that they observed ritual meticulously. One story from their wars with Carthage seemed to prove that it was foolhardy to ignore auguries. In the First Carthaginian War, which cost Rome heavy casualties, a Roman fleet was about to engage a Carthaginian squadron when the sacred chickens aboard the Roman flagship would not eat. In disgust, the commander kicked them overboard, saying, "If you won't eat, then drink!" and joined battle. The Romans lost. The moral was that it was wise to pay attention to auguries. Auspices—from the Latin *auspicium* meaning "omen"—had some importance in the public life of early Rome. Certain magistrates were given the "Right of Auspices," and they played a role in elections or inauguration into office. The auspices would be taken for a governor who was going off to a province to administer it—that is, a magistrate with the "Right of Auspices" would examine the omens and interpret them. As the Roman Empire grew older, the practice fell by the wayside.

**THE ORACLE OF ZEUS AT DODONA.** The word "oracle" is used in two senses: it can be the place or the shrine where a god made his will known, or it can be the god's message itself. There were a number of famous oracles in the Greek world. The oldest was an oracle of Zeus and Dione at Dodona in northwest Greece. The cult center there was an oak tree growing in a sacred precinct or *temenos* surrounded by a low wall. Only in the fourth century B.C.E. was a simple stone temple built, and although later embellishments were added to the site, including a fine stone theater, Dodona remained a small place. A person who wanted to consult the oracle wrote a question on a lead tablet and submitted it. The priests then evidently divined the will of Zeus by interpreting the rustle of the oak leaves belonging to the sacred tree. Some lead tablets with questions written on them have survived, and to judge from them, many who consulted Zeus presented queries of the sort that a "Personal Advice" columnist in a newspaper might receive today.

**THE ORACLE OF APOLLO AT DELPHI.** The oracular god *par excellence* was Apollo who had several



Ruins of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, Greece, which housed the Delphic oracle. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

renowned oracles, the most famous of which was at Delphi. There was a legend that a shepherd at Delphi noticed that if his flock approached a chasm in the rock, they began to leap about in a frenzy. He approached the chasm himself and found himself possessed by the spirit of prophecy. The Delphians, on learning of this phenomenon, chose a woman called the Pythia to prophesy for them all, and placed her on a tripod over the chasm. She fell into a trance-like state and uttered cryptic words. There was a real-life Pythia, a woman over fifty years old, who dressed as a young virgin to accentuate her purity. She gave her prophecies on only one day a month, except for the three winter months when it was believed that Apollo left Delphi and the god Dionysus took up residence instead. Originally, in fact, the Pythia gave oracles only one day each year, on Apollo's birthday, but the demand was such that she had to become more accessible. When the Pythia was not giving oracles, a consultant could get a reply to his query by drawing lots, and the method worked well enough, particularly if the answer that was needed was simply "yes" or "no." A mixture of black and white beans was placed in the bowl of Apollo's tripod. The Pythia would pick a bean at ran-

dom, and its color would give the answer. This was a cheap and easy way of consulting the oracle, and most private consultations seem to have been of this sort.

**ORACLES FROM THE PYTHIA.** On the appointed day when the Pythia herself was to give oracles, she washed herself at the Castalian spring which still flows at Delphi and purified herself in the smoke from laurel leaves and barley. She then went to the Temple of Apollo where the Delphian priests sacrificed a goat. The goat was expected to shiver before the sacrifice, thus indicating Apollo's willingness to use the Pythia as his medium. If the goat failed to shiver, the priests would sprinkle it with cold water and if it still did not shiver, they would accept the unfavorable omen and cancel the proceedings. If the sacrifice was successful, the Pythia would enter the temple and take her seat on a tripod—the tripod, which was a kettle with three legs used for boiling stews, was a sacred ritual vessel, used in sacrifices. She went into a trance and the answers she gave to the queries put to her were in a strange, unintelligible language that the priests interpreted. Most of the oracles that have been reported in literature were in polished hexameters, the meter used



Greek red-figure vase painting showing Aegeus, king of Athens, and father of Theseus, consulting the Pythia at Delphi, shown seated on a tripod, giving an oracle. 5th century B.C.E. FORTEAN PICTURE LIBRARY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



The Cave of the Cumaean Sibyl, a cavern cut in the cliffside at Cumae, outside Naples, Italy. In Vergil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas encounters the Sibyl here. © MIMMO JODICE/CORBIS.

by the epic poets. The oracles that are considered most genuine, however, are in prose.

**INTERPRETATION.** The oracles were renowned for their ambiguity. Croesus, king of Lydia, whose memory survives in the saying “as rich as Croesus,” asked the Pythia if he should attack the empire of Persia that was a threat on Lydia’s eastern border. The oracle told him that if he attacked, a great empire would fall. Assuming that the oracle meant the Persian Empire, Croesus attacked, and discovered too late that the empire destined to be overthrown was his own. Yet the Delphic oracle could give fairly straightforward advice as well. Before a city-state sent out a colony, it consulted Delphi and often got good advice. The fact is that Delphi was a communications center, for it received visitors from all over the Greek world and beyond, and got reports from them. The priests at Delphi were well-informed, more so than most people in Greece in the days before modern methods of communication.

**THE ORACLE OF THE “WOODEN WALL.”** The most famous Delphic oracle, and the longest to survive, is the response which the Pythia gave the Athenians when they consulted her on the eve of the Persian War. The Persian king, Xerxes, invaded Greece in 480 B.C.E. with an enormous army, and as the Athenians anxiously awaited the onslaught, they sent messengers to Delphi for an oracle. These envoys performed the preliminary

rites, then entered the temple and squatted or sat before Pythia’s tripod. Immediately the Pythia uttered a prophecy, which the priests relayed in good dactylic hexameters—the meter used by the epic poets—and its meaning was clear. Resistance to Persia was hopeless. The Athenians were dismayed, but a Delphian—probably a priest—advised them to approach the Pythia again, this time as suppliants carrying an olive branch. Two consultations on the same day were generally not allowed; however the Athenian messengers entered the temple again and asked for a more comforting prophecy, saying that otherwise they would remain in the temple until they were dead. The second oracle was hardly more cheerful than the first, but it held out a ray of hope. It said that Zeus had yielded to Athena’s prayers to this extent: the Wooden Wall would save the Athenians, and it concluded by invoking the island of Salamis that would destroy the offspring of women either in the fall or the spring. When this second oracle was brought back to Athens, there was a great debate about its meaning. The *khresmologoi*—men skilled at expounding oracles—argued that it prophesied a defeat at Salamis. The politician Themistocles argued for a happier meaning by claiming that the Wooden Wall was the Athenian fleet, and the oracle’s reference to Salamis presaged a victory there, for it called the island “Divine Salamis.” As it turned out, the allied Greek navy did defeat the Persian

fleet at Salamis, which proved Themistocles right. Both Themistocles and Delphi gained prestige. Modern students of the ancient world are more cynical about Delphi's clairvoyance, suspecting that Delphi was really ready to collaborate with the Persians and made use of its prophetic reputation to weaken Greek resistance.

**SIBYLS.** At Delphi, there was a rock that was always left in its natural state as if surrounded by a taboo, and it was known as the Rock of the Sibyl. While there was no Sibyl at Delphi in the historical period, a legend told that Delphi was the seat of an oracle prior to Apollo's appropriation of the site for his own oracle. The earlier oracle was a Sibyl who sat on this rock and prophesied. The legend of the wandering of the Sibyl is a curious one. As time went on, the number of Sibyls multiplied. First there was only one, then two, then more until the legend knew ten Sibyls. They were all prophetesses, who uttered prophecies in states of ecstasy. A famous sibyl lived at Cumae on the Italian coast near Naples, where the Greeks founded a colony about 750 B.C.E. The cave of the Cumaean Sibyl, cut into the living rock, is still to be seen there. Vergil, in his *Aeneid*, related that his hero Aeneas visited the Sibyl when he landed in Italy at Cumae. There was also a legend that the Cumaean Sibyl once sold a collection of her prophecies to an early king of Rome, Tarquin the Elder. Whatever the truth of the tale, Rome did have a collection of oracles called the Sibylline Books, written in Greek, which were consulted only on order of the Roman Senate. The books were lost when the Roman Capitol was burned in 83 B.C.E. during a period of civil war, but a new collection was put together to replace them and it still existed in the fourth century C.E. when they were consulted for the last time. Oracles lost their prestige as time went on and popular opinion became more cynical. Delphi was still consulted in the period of the Roman Empire, but no longer on questions of much importance. The last Delphic oracle that is recorded was given to an emissary of the last pagan emperor Julian (361–363 C.E.). It said,

Tell the king, the cunningly-built hall has fallen in the dust, Phoebus (Apollo) no longer has a hut, a prophetic laurel, or a speaking stream. Even the talkative water has ceased to exist.

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## WORSHIPPING THE GODS: SACRIFICES AND TEMPLES

**TEMPLES.** Gods were worshipped at holy places, precincts that were cut off from the surrounding region by a clear, well-defined boundary that was marked by boundary-stones. The Greek word for such a precinct was *temenos*, which is connected with the word that means "to cut." The most important structure in the *temenos* was the altar where sacrifice was made. Then in the eighth century B.C.E., the Greeks began to build houses for their gods and goddesses, and the familiar Greek temple made its appearance. The basic temple was a single rectangular room with a porch in front. It was a *megaron*, which was the name for the main room of an early Greek house with a hearth in its center, a hole in the roof to allow the smoke to escape, and in front of it a porch with a roof supported by a couple pillars. Later the Greeks elaborated the design by surrounding the *megaron* with a row of columns. Yet the temple remained a simple dwelling-place that housed the image of the god or goddess. The indispensable component for a sanctuary was not the temple, but the altar. Inside the sanctuary was the cult statue or statues, if the temple sheltered more than one god. Sheltering the god and protecting the property dedicated to him was the temple's prime purpose, for worshippers left votive offerings in the temples which ranged from painted wooden panels which were within the price range of a humble worshipper to offerings of gold or ivory. Few of these have survived: the wooden dedications have decayed and the dedications of gold and ivory were stolen long ago. Many terracotta votives have survived, however, for crockery is not subject to decay. At any healing shrine, archaeologists find models of legs, arms, women's breasts, or male testicles that were dedicated to the god, probably as thank offerings for healing a particular part of the human anatomy. The interior of a temple must sometimes have resembled an old curiosity shop. The votives might overflow the temple and be stored in separate buildings in the temple precinct called "treasuries," for the Greek word for treasury—*thesauros*—also meant "storehouse" or sometimes "granary." Sometimes the priests might houseclean by removing old dedications and giving them decent burial. When the stadium at Olympia was excavated, the excavators found many votive offerings of helmets, shields, and other pieces of armor that had been carefully buried in the embankments on either side of the track. The temple, evidently, had run out of space for them.

**CULT STATUES.** Some cult statues were magnificent. The statue made of gold and ivory which the sculptor



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SOCRATES ON PRAYER AND SACRIFICE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In Plato's dialogue titled *Euthyphro*, Plato imagines a conversation between his teacher Socrates and Euthyphro. While Euthyphro may or may not have been a real person, Plato presents him as a conventionally pious person who unfortunately models his own behavior on that of the gods; Euthyphro is prosecuting his own father for manslaughter and justifying his action with the example of Zeus, who put his father Cronus in chains for swallowing his children. Socrates and Euthyphro get into a conversation about the definition of true piety. Euthyphro attempts to define piety as what is dear to the gods, and Socrates shows by his relentless questioning that the definition is not so simple. The quotation below on the purpose of sacrifice comes from near the end of the dialogue, which concludes with Socrates and Euthyphro agreeing that they must discuss the matter again another day.

**Socrates:** Doesn't sacrifice consist of making presents to the gods, and prayer in making requests to them?

**Euthyphro:** Yes, indeed, Socrates.

**Socrates:** So on this view piety would be the science of asking and giving?

**Euthyphro:** You grasp my meaning perfectly, Socrates.

**Socrates:** You see, my friend, I am a passionate admirer of your wisdom and keep my attention fixed upon it, so that no word of yours will fall to the ground. But tell me, what is this form of service to the gods? Do you hold that it consists in asking from them and giving to them?

**Euthyphro:** Yes, I do.

**Socrates:** Then would not the right procedure in asking them be to ask for what we need from them?

**Euthyphro:** What else could it be?

**Socrates:** And similarly would not the right procedure in giving be to present them in return with what they actually need from us? Because surely it would be an incompetent use of presents to give a person things for which he has no need.

**Euthyphro:** Quite true, Socrates.

**Socrates:** So piety would seem, Euthyphro, to be a sort of art of commerce between gods and men.

**Euthyphro:** Yes, if you like it better to describe it so.

**Socrates:** I don't like it any better unless it is really true. But tell me, what benefit do the gods really get from the gifts they receive from us? What they give is obvious to anyone, for we have nothing good that they don't give us; but what benefit do they get from what they receive from us? Is our commerce with them so much to our advantage that we receive all our good things from them, while they receive none from us?

**Euthyphro:** But do you really imagine, Socrates, that the gods derive benefit from the things that they receive from us?

**Socrates:** Well, if not, whatever can these gifts of ours to the gods be, Euthyphro?

**Euthyphro:** Why, honor and esteem and—as I was saying just now—gratitude; what else do you suppose?

**Socrates:** So piety is what is gratifying to the gods, but not beneficial or dear to them?

**Euthyphro:** In my opinion it is supremely dear to them.

**Socrates:** Then apparently piety is once more what is dear to the gods.

**SOURCE:** Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates*. Trans. Hugh Tredennick (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1969): 39–40.

Phidias made for the temple of Zeus at Olympia was a masterpiece, and after he completed it, he made an equally famous gold-and-ivory statue of Athena Parthenos for the Parthenon in Athens. Yet the most sacred image of Athena was not the gold-and-ivory image in the Parthenon, but an ancient olivewood statue of Athena *Polias* housed in the Erechtheion beside the Parthenon. Every four years, at the Great Panathenaea festival, the women of Athens gave this image a new saffron-dyed dress that they had woven. Wooden statues of this sort, known as *xoana*, were thought to have a divine origin. They were primitive im-

ages, roughly carved; in some cases a *xoanon* was not much more than a wooden post.

**TEMPLE SITES.** The temple sites were often determined by the preference of the god for a particular location. The preferred sites for temples sacred to Athena and Zeus were in the urban area: Athena on the acropolis and Zeus in the marketplace. Apollo had temples in the marketplace, too, but also sometimes by the seaside. Demeter's sanctuaries are often on a hillside near the city. Hera, Poseidon, and Dionysus preferred the countryside, and Artemis liked woods and marshy areas.

Wherever sanctuaries were sited, they were sacred places where violent acts were not permitted. Temples offered asylum to fugitives, and anyone who dragged a suppliant from a hallowed *temenos* would bring pollution upon himself and arouse the wrath of the gods.

**FESTIVALS.** The year was marked by religious festivals in honor of the various gods. They were holy days, important for both the cultural and the religious life of the community. Dancing, musical contests, athletic games, prayers, hymns, and processions all had a place in them. Greek worshippers did not kneel to pray or utter silent prayers. Instead, they stood and, raising their hands, invoked the god in a loud voice. A hymn was a form of prayer that was chanted: the worshipper addressed the god under his various names, recited his great deeds, and ended with a petition. Processions were parades that often took up the first day of the festivals. Religious custom dictated what the festival procession would be like and what route it would take. If the sanctuary of the god whose festival was being celebrated was outside the city, the worshippers would parade along the country road to the site. In one of Hera's favorite cities, the *polis* of Argos where the Hera sanctuary was several miles outside the city center, the priestess was carried there by ox-cart which apparently led a parade of worshippers.

**SACRIFICE.** The most important part of the festival was the sacrifice. Cattle were the most valued sacrificial victims, but the most common ones were sheep and goats, which were more within the price range of a middle-income Greek. Pigs were sacrificed to Demeter and Dionysus, dogs to Ares and Hekate, birds to Aphrodite, and cocks to Asclepius. A sacrifice to a god or goddess was made on an elevated altar called a *bomos* in front of the temple, and a sacrifice to a hero was made on a low, round altar called an *eschara*, but rules in Greek religion were rarely left unbroken. Sometimes a hero might have a high altar, but the blood from a victim sacrificed to a hero should still trickle down into the earth where it would nourish the bloodless ghost of the dead. Gods on Mt. Olympus needed no such nourishment. A priest or priestess officiated at the sacrifice. Generally, male deities had priests and female deities had priestesses, but one cannot count on consistency. Generally the inedible parts of the sacrificial animal were burned as offerings to the god, and the rest was eaten, or even sometimes sold in the market. The exception was the "holocaust," a sacrifice where the victim was totally consumed by sacrificial flames. The roster of festivals in Athens shows that only one month passed without massive slaughtering of beasts for sacrifice. There must have been many days when the city smelled



Wall painting from tablinum in the House of Livia on the Palatine Hill at Rome showing a Roman domestic sacrifice. End of 1st century B.C.E. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

like an abattoir, and resounded with the noises of the community drinking wine, eating meat, and making merry. For low-income Greeks, festival days might be the only times they ate meat.

**THE WEALTH OF TEMPLES.** Temples had an economic function which should not be overlooked. Sacrifices honored the gods, but they were also occasions for the distribution of food. Temples might also have to shelter asylum-seekers, sometimes in great numbers, whom it had to support. Archaeological excavations reveal that many temples had subsidiary buildings used for accommodation and cooking. Temples also served as depositories. Athens kept its state treasury in the back room of the Parthenon, and when she organized her archives, they were kept in the temple of the Mother of the Gods in the marketplace. Excavations of a temple at Selinunte in Sicily have yielded many clay seals used to seal documents written on papyrus. The papyrus has decayed, but the clay seals remain as mute evidence of the records that were once stored there. In Rome, a citizen might deposit his last will and testament in the Temple of Vesta where it was in the care of the Vestal Virgins. The god whose image was housed in the temple extended his protection over whatever was within his shrine. Some temples were wealthy and possessed large estates which they rented to leaseholders. They had other sources of income as well. An army that was victorious in battle would give the gods a small portion of the booty called "first fruits."



The Roman Forum, showing the foundations of the House of the Vestal Virgins in the foreground and beyond it, the round temple of Vesta. Rome, Italy. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

During the brief period in the fifth century B.C.E. when Athens ruled an empire, she consecrated one-sixtieth of the tribute that she received from the member states of her empire as “first fruits” to the goddess Athena. Temples made loans and functioned as a kind of reserve bank. Religious faith changed as time went on in the Greco-Roman world, but religious festivals continued to draw crowds. Mute evidence of their numbers is to be found in the theaters that were built at popular shrines for visitors to witness the drama of the ancient rituals. At Delphi, the theater overlooks the great temple of Apollo. Even at the lonely oracle of Zeus at Dodona there was a theater built, and it is the largest structure on the site. Faith in the Olympian gods was declining when these theaters were built but they still drew visitors and pilgrims. Religion also served to redistribute wealth. There was no income tax in the ancient world, and, in fact, the well-to-do resented paying any taxes at all. But while wealthy citizens did not like taxes, they were quite willing to make donations to the community. Rich citizens paid the bills for the great religious festivals, and the honor they received repaid their generosity. Thus Greco-Roman religion served an important economic function that cannot be overlooked.

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## THE RELIGION OF EARLY ROME

**BACKGROUND.** The Romans honored the religion of their ancestors, whom they referred to as “the greater ones”—in Latin, the *maiores*. While the Greeks and all peoples in the ancient world also honored their ancestors’ religions, the Romans were excessively conservative.

They believed in superhuman divine beings as far back as surviving Roman history records exist, but at the same time, the Italian countryside that the Romans knew always remained the home of a multitude of little deities without human form. A grove of trees would be home to a god, as would a river or a stream or a spring. There was a host of small gods in charge of sowing the crops: the *deus Occitor* who looked after the harrowing, *deus Sterculinius* who looked after spreading manure on the fields, *Sarritor* who looked after hoeing, and *Messor* who looked after reaping, to name only a few of them. The priest of Ceres, the goddess of production, would invoke them all when he made sacrifice. Some of these unseen spirits were malevolent. Every 25 April, the *Robigalia* was held at a grove outside Rome to appease *Robigo*, who was the god—or goddess, for the Romans were not sure of *Robigo's* gender—of grain rust, the fungus which plagued the farmers' crops. The guts of a dog were burned on *Robigo's* altar and he was invited to stay away.

**KEEPING THE GOOD WILL OF A SPIRIT.** Suppose a landowner had a wooded area on his farm and wanted to thin the trees. Cato the Elder, the earliest Latin writer to produce a treatise on agriculture, instructs his readers first to sacrifice a pig, and then to repeat this prayer:

Whether you who hold this grove sacred are a god or goddess, as it is proper to make you the sacrifice of a pig as a propitiative offering for disturbing this hallowed place, and hence, for these reasons whether I or someone designated by me carried out the sacrifice, provided that it be performed correctly, for this reason in sacrificing this pig, I pray in good faith that you be kindly and benevolent to me, my home, my family, and my children. For these reasons, accept the honor of the sacrifice of this pig as a propitiative offering.

It was not a sin to cut down trees. Roman religion was not greatly concerned with sin. Instead, the Romans regarded gods and goddesses as beings with rights and prerogatives, and one of them was the right not to be disturbed. If they were disturbed, they had to be propitiated. The prayer that Cato prescribed to appease the god of a grove that was about to be violated by a woodman's ax sounds like a legal proposition, and in a way, it was. Roman prayer always offered the god a bargain. If the god granted a petition, then the petitioner would do the god a service in return.

**GODS OF THE HOUSEHOLD.** Every Roman house had its guardian gods. The *Penates* were gods of the pantry, but they came to symbolize the household. The outer door of the house, the *ianua*, was in the care of the god Janus. Little guardian gods called *Lares* were re-



The lararium in a house at Pompeii, Italy. The painting on the back wall shows the "Genius" of the household. © MIMMO JODICE/CORBIS.

sponsible for the security and well-being of the household. A house would have a little shrine to its *Lar*—or its *Lares*, if there was more than one, as there often were—called the *lararium*. Once the Romans began to think of their gods in human forms, the *Lares* would be depicted as dancing figures wearing short tunics and carrying vessels for libations and saucers for offerings of salted meal. There were also *Lares* that protected a neighborhood, called the *Lares Compitales* and *Lares* that protected the whole city of Rome called the *Lares Publici* or the *Lares Praestites*, for the city was, in a sense, an extended family. There was a religious festival called the *Laralia*, held for the *Lares* on the first of May each year.

**ANIMISM.** Religion that recognizes formless supernatural spirits living in trees and rocks and streams is known as animism. The word derives from the Latin *anima*, meaning "soul," and animism assigns every stream or tree a soul or divine spirit, endowed with a right not to be disturbed without its consent. The Romans called this divine spirit a *numen*, a word with the basic meaning of nodding assent, and then by association it came to mean the divinity that nods assent or sometimes refuses it. At one time, scholars thought that at first Roman religion was purely animist, only later becoming more sophisticated as they came into contact with their neighbors—particularly the Greeks—and learned to make images of their gods in human forms. In fact, the Romans made images as far back as their earliest images

exist. Nonetheless, in primitive Italy there was a good deal of animistic belief. Animism explains, for instance, one ritual in early Rome that took place whenever the Romans embarked on a war. Before a general led his army out of the city, he first went to the Regia, which housed shields and spears sacred to Mars. He shook a sacred spear with the cry, “Mars, awake!” The *numen* of Mars, the spirit of war, was clearly somehow within the spear, and a good shaking roused it from its slumber. If a spear was seen to tremble of its own accord, that was a bad sign. It meant that the *numen* was apprehensive.

**JANUS.** The god of doors and gateways was Janus, and since to enter a house or a city, one must pass through a gate or door, Janus became a god of beginnings. Whenever a prayer was addressed to a list of gods, his name was mentioned first. There was a freestanding gateway in the Roman Forum, the “twin gate of Janus,” which was opened to release the magic forces of battle whenever the Romans were at war, which they frequently were. The gateway represented Janus, but once the Romans began to portray their gods in human form, the symbol of Janus became a man with a double-faced head: one face looking forward and the other backwards. The first month of the year was named after him, and his festival was on New Year’s Day.

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## THE RELIGION OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

**THE EARLY BEGINNINGS.** Early Roman history and Roman mythology are so intertwined that it is impossible to separate the two. Legend described how Rome’s first king, a son of Mars named Romulus, founded Rome in 753 B.C.E. He first asked the gods for divine approval, then laid out the sacred boundary—the so-called *pomerium* of his city—and built Rome’s first temple to Jupiter *Feretrius*, that is, Jupiter the Striker, who smote Rome’s enemies. Romulus’ settlement was on one

of Rome’s Seven Hills, the Palatine, and archaeologists have found early cuttings in the bedrock there that were left by a prehistoric settlement. Romulus himself may be fictitious, but the habitation on the Palatine Hill was not. The Romans evolved a legend long after Rome was established that told how it was founded. Its mother city was Alba Longa, a Latin town which was founded generations earlier by the son of the Trojan hero, Aeneas, who escaped from the destruction of Troy and came to Italy. Romulus and his twin brother, Remus, had a wicked great-uncle who had usurped the rule of Alba Longa from their grandfather, and, recognizing the two infants as a threat, he set them adrift on the Tiber River when it was in flood, fully expecting never to see them again. Their cradle floated ashore at the future site of Rome, however, and a she-wolf that had lost her whelps suckled them. A herdsman named Faustulus, who was the woodland god Faunus under a thin disguise, also cared for them until they developed into two husky young men. Upon reaching adulthood, they first disposed of their wicked great-uncle and restored their grandfather to the throne; they then journeyed to the Seven Hills of Rome to found a city. Remus was soon eliminated. He was killed either by Romulus himself or by one of his followers. Then Romulus attracted new settlers by offering asylum to men who were fleeing their native lands for some reason. He remedied the dearth of women by stealing them from a Sabine settlement on the Quirinal, another of Rome’s Seven Hills. The Sabines, an Italic people on the fringes of Latium whose relations with the early Latins were more often hostile than not, were incensed by the abductions, but instead of fighting to the death, they united with the Romans to form a single community. Thus Rome from the beginning was a multicultural community, and archaeology lends credence to this theory, for the earliest burials found in the Roman Forum were both inhumation and cremation instead of either one type or the other, which one would expect if the population were homogeneous. Moreover, the union between the Romans and the Sabines may not have been a coalition of equals, for Romulus’ successor was a Sabine, Numa Pompilius. Romulus himself vanished—snatched into Heaven, according to one legend, murdered according to another—and he was assimilated to the god Quirinus, a Sabine god who seems to have been the Sabine counterpart of Mars.

**QUIRINUS.** Quirinus is a colorless god. There were no myths told about him. He did have a festival that was held every 17 February, and *Quirites*, meaning the “Quirinus’ people,” was sometimes used as a synonym

## THE Etruscans

Ancient Etruria was a little more than half the size of modern Tuscany in Italy, which takes its name from the Etruscans. On the west, its boundary was the Tyrrhenian Sea; on the south and south-east, it was the Tiber River; and on the north, the Arno River which flows through modern Florence. Most of the modern knowledge of the Etruscans comes from their tombs, which suggest that they were excessively religious with a gloomy view of the afterlife. Paintings, particularly from tombs of a later date when Etruscan power was declining, show terrifying demons which the dead would presumably encounter in the afterlife, and Etruscan ossuaries (depositories for the bones of the dead) often have relief carvings showing the dead person, with face veiled, being escorted by a demon carrying a long-handled hammer, his face twisted into a wolfish grimace. The tombs show that the Etruscans spared no expense on funerals, and paintings from the heyday of Etruscan power show a people who loved banqueting, dancing, horse racing, and athletic contests. Women and men mingled freely, unlike in Rome where patriarchal power separated the two sexes.

In ancient Greece and Rome, it was generally believed that the Etruscans were immigrants from Asia Minor who arrived in Italy during the so-called “Dark Ages” (1100–800 B.C.E.), and there is a kernel of truth to this, for a people speaking a similar language lived on the island of Lemnos in the north Aegean Sea until near the end of the sixth century B.C.E. We find the cult of the Trojan hero Aeneas in Etruria, and the theory that the Etruscans were refugee Trojans has attracted some scholars, but it cannot be proved. They spoke an unknown language, but they wrote it using the Greek alphabet. They were also among the best customers for Greece’s exports. The great majority of Greek vases that are in modern museums outside Greece itself came from Etruscan tombs.

Rome came under Etruscan domination in 625–600 B.C.E., and the largest Etruscan temple that was ever built was the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill in Rome. Etruscan influence on early Rome is hard to measure. The Etruscans possessed sacred books on augury and divination, and Rome considered Etruria a source of knowledge in occult skills. As Rome’s power grew, Etruria’s faded, but Etruscan augury still commanded respect even into the Christian era.

for “the Roman people.” He was a member of Rome’s ancient triad of gods that consisted of *Diespiter* (Jupiter), meaning “the father god”; Mars, Jupiter’s son; and Quirinus, who was the son of Mars, since Rome’s founding myth told that Romulus’ father was Mars. Rome’s first emperor, *Imperator* Caesar Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), thought of taking the name “Romulus” as appropriate for his new status, and he rebuilt the temple of Quirinus in Rome. Romulus’ fratricide was not forgotten, however, and Quirinus, the deified Romulus, was left in obscurity.

**NUMA’S CALENDAR.** Roman legend claimed King Numa as the founder figure of Roman religion. He gave Rome its twelve-month calendar to replace the ten-month calendar that began with March, the month of Mars, which Romulus’ city had borrowed from Alba Longa. Numa’s calendar fixed the dates for the religious festivals. Numa’s successors are shadowy figures, but then Rome fell under Etruscan domination. The last three kings to rule Rome—Tarquin the Elder, Servius Tullius, and Tarquin the Proud—were Etruscans, and very likely historical figures.

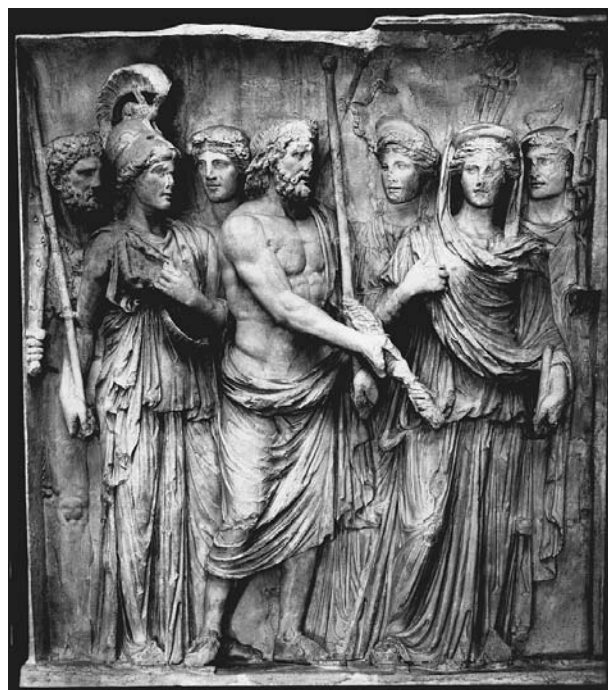
**THE ETRUSCANS.** Roman legend veiled the uncomfortable fact that the Etruscan takeover was a con-

quest with a story that the first Tarquin left Tarquinii where he suffered discrimination because he was the son of a Greek, and came to Rome where he became a respected citizen and was chosen king by a popular vote. Tradition also told that Tarquin’s name in Tarquinii was Lucumo, and in Etruscan cities, the *lucumo* was the chief magistrate. Tarquin, whose name was the Latinized form of a common Etruscan name, *tarcna*, probably came to Rome as a conqueror. With the Etruscans came their triad of gods—*Tinia* (the “Sky-Father”), *Uni*, and *Menrva*—who became Jupiter, Juno and Minerva. The Romans already had a divine triad of gods—Mars, Jupiter, and Quirinus—who were by no means forgotten. The new triad, however, took pride of place, and on the Capitoline Hill there arose a great temple with a grand portico to house them. This was the greatest temple in the whole Etruscan world, and it remained the largest temple in Rome until the fall of the Roman Republic. It had three rooms for its three divinities, but in the middle shrine, clothed in an embroidered tunic and a toga, sat a terracotta statue made by the Etruscan sculptor, Vulca of Veii. It portrayed Jupiter *Optimus Maximus*, that is, “Jupiter, the best and greatest god” who now absorbed the attributes of *Tinia*, the “Sky-Father.” In fact, the Romans sometimes invoked him simply as

*caelum*, meaning “sky.” The traditional date for its dedication was 509 B.C.E. A year before, the last Etruscan king had been expelled from Rome.

**ETRUSCAN LEGACIES.** The Romans owed two other rites to the Etruscans. One was the art of augury: how to divine the future by observing the flight of birds or examining the viscera of sacrificial animals. The Etruscans were experts at reading omens from the size, shape, color, and markings of the vital organs, particularly the liver and the gallbladder. One tool of the augur’s craft has been found at Piacenza in Italy. It is a model liver made of bronze that is divided into forty sections labeled with the names of gods. There were Etruscan textbooks: Books on Lightning, Books on Ritual, Books on Fate, Books of the *Haruspices* (Soothsayers) on interpreting signs and portents, and Books on Animal Gods. Lightning was a significant foretoken. In which of the sixteen divisions of the heavens was it seen? The Etruscan Books on Lightning would have an answer. *Tinia* threw three kinds of thunderbolt, and eight other gods threw one kind each. If the omens were bad, what sort of expiation would avert disaster? Consulting the Books of Haruspices would be in order. The Romans were apt pupils, though they never took the occult sciences of the Etruscans quite as seriously as the Etruscans did themselves. The other Etruscan legacy was the Roman triumph. How much of the ritual was Etruscan is not known, but as time went on, the triumph developed into a parade where a victorious general entered Rome in a chariot and proceeded through the Roman Forum to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. Before him were paraded his prisoners and the spoils of his campaign. He wore the regalia of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, and his face was painted red. Behind him in his chariot stood a servant who repeated, “Remember that you are a man!” The triumph was an honor that generals in the Roman republic sought eagerly, and after the fall of the republic, it was reserved for emperors.

**THE INFLUENCE OF THE GREEKS.** Greek influence arrived early to Rome. A legend related that before Romulus founded his city, there was a Greek colony on the site of Rome. There were flourishing Greek cities in Sicily and southern Italy, and Rome was soon in contact. The result was that Rome’s gods became identified with Greek gods. Mars and the Greek Ares were both war gods so they were equated even though they had little else in common. Aphrodite was identified with the Roman Venus, Artemis with Diana, Athena with Minerva, Hera with Juno, and Zeus with Jupiter. Hestia was Vesta and the Titan Kronos became Saturn. Apollo remained Apollo, and stayed on the sidelines until the em-



Arch of Trajan, detail showing Hercules, Minerva, Bacchus, Jupiter, Ceres, Juno, and Mercury, Benevento, Italy, 114–117 C.E. ALINARI-ART REFERENCE/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

peror Augustus endorsed his cult and built a great temple for Apollo on the Palatine Hill. Dionysus was known by his alternative Greek name, Bacchus, which does not appear in Greek usage before the fifth century B.C.E., and his festivities were called the Bacchanalia. Heracles became Hercules, and his worship was an early import from Greece. Sacrifices made to him at the *Ara Maxima* (the Greatest Altar) in Rome were according to the Greek rite: that is, the priest officiated with head uncovered, and not with head covered as was the Roman custom. These Greek immigrant gods brought their myths with them. Latin literature began when an ex-slave, Livius Andronicus, who was probably a Greek, produced Latin tragedies and comedies in Rome, based on Greek models and using Greek myths for subject matter. He also translated Homer’s *Odyssey* into rough-and-ready Latin verse. Hera became Juno, Zeus Jupiter, and Athena Minerva, and the Romans were told titillating stories about their gods that were revelations. The Romans learned from Homer that Venus was married to Vulcan and had an affair with Mars. The discovery must have come as a shock to many of them.

**THE PREMINENCE OF GREECE.** By the end of the third century B.C.E. there was a circle of Roman nobles who were so influenced by Greek culture that they

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE TABOOS SURROUNDING THE FLAMEN DIALIS AND HIS WIFE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The word *flamen* seems to mean something like “priest” or “sacrificer,” and there were fifteen of them, of whom the *flamines* for Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus were the most important. They had to observe various taboos, and this excerpt from Aulus Gellius’ *Attic Nights*, part of which is quoted below, reports the taboos that the Flamen Dialis (the priest of Jupiter) and his wife had to observe. It was not always easy to find candidates for the office. Julius Caesar considered it in his youth but thought better of it. Aulus Gellius, a Roman lawyer and litterateur who lived in the second century C.E., wrote a collection of table talk in twenty books titled the *Noctes Atticae*, which report a great assortment of information that he has gleaned from his reading. In this case, his source is Rome’s first historian, Fabius Pictor, who lived in the last quarter of the third century B.C.E., and Gellius recalls—evidently from memory—what he has read.

These are the taboos that I recall from my reading. There is a religious ban against the Flamen Dialis riding a horse. Similarly there is a ban against his viewing the Ro-

man people armed and in battle order outside the city boundary of Rome. For that reason, the Flamen Dialis was elected consul very seldom, for the consuls are entrusted with high command in war. Likewise it is never lawful for him to swear an oath by Jupiter, and it is also unlawful for him to wear a ring, unless it is pierced and without a gem. It is not lawful for fire to be removed from the *Flaminia*, that is, the home of the Flamen Dialis, unless it is being taken to be used in sacrifice. If a prisoner in fetters enters the house, he must be released, and the fetters must be pulled up through the *impluvium*, [the opening in the roof above the main room of a Roman house, called the *atrium*] to the roof, and from there be dropped down on to the street. The cone-shaped cap he wears must have no knot on it, nor can there be a knot on his belt or on any other part of his clothing. If anyone who is being taken off to be flogged falls at his feet as a suppliant, it is a sin to flog him on that day. Only a free-born man may cut the hair of the Flamen Dialis. Custom requires the Flamen neither to touch nor even utter the name of a female goat, or raw meat, ivy or beans.

**SOURCE:** Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*. 10.15. Translated by James Allan Evans.

preferred to speak Greek at home rather than Latin. Greek art was prized, and when Rome’s empire expanded into the Greek world, the Romans found plenty of it to plunder. They also wanted copies of Greek sculpture for their houses and gardens, and Greece developed an export trade in replicas to meet the demand. Most of the masterpieces of Greek sculpture are known to us now through Roman copies, which were actually copies made by Greek craftsmen for the Roman trade. In the religious imagination of Rome, Roman gods began to look like their Greek counterparts. Modern cultural historians might consider this a degeneration of Roman culture, but it is unlikely that the Romans saw it that way. Roman culture changed constantly as a result of borrowing from a circle of contacts which expanded as Rome’s imperial dominion grew, and many Romans thought the process strengthened rather than weakened Latin traditions. Not all Romans were so accepting of Greek culture, however. There was a reaction, and one figure associated with the reaction was the first Roman author to produce a work in Latin prose, Marcus Porcius Cato (234–149 B.C.E.). He authored the first history of Rome in the Latin language. It has not survived, but his treatise *On Agriculture* has, and it pays special attention to the traditional rites of the farmers who tilled the Italian countryside. Greek

culture might capture the imaginations of upper-class Romans, but ritual remained intensely conservative.

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**THE WORSHIP OF THE ROMAN GODS**

**THE PRIESTHOODS.** One remarkable feature of Roman religion was that the priests—who were all males except for the Vestal Virgins—were organized into a number of *collegia* and other small priestly groups, each with a special function to perform. There were four major *collegia*, a word usually inaccurately translated as “colleges,” for they were actually clubs or associations. First there were the fifteen pontiffs, headed by the chief priest or *pontifex maximus* who was chosen by his colleagues in the early Roman republic. From the third



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE LUPERCALIA FESTIVAL**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Lupercalia was a pagan festival celebrating Rome's legendary twin founders, Romulus and Remus. The name "Lupercalia" must be connected with the Latin word *lupus*, meaning "wolf," and suggests that this was at one time a primitive rite intended to keep flocks and herds safe from wolf packs. Whatever its origins, the festival became associated with the arrival of the legendary twin infants Romulus and Remus to Rome after their cradle—set adrift on the Tiber River by their wicked uncle—ran aground at the future site of the city. Almost two centuries after the emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire, this pagan festival was still being celebrated. Every 15 February, people swept clean their houses and then went out to watch the Luperci run around the boundary of the city, starting at the Lupercal, the cave below the western corner of the Palatine Hill where a she-wolf supposedly suckled Romulus and Remus in their infancy. The festival began with the sacrifice of a goat (or goats) and a dog in the Lupercal, and then the Luperci—young men wearing only loin cloths—ran carrying strips of goathide from the sacrificial victims with which they lashed out at anyone in their way. Women often deliberately placed themselves within reach of the lash in the belief that a touch

from it aided in fertility, pregnancy, and childbirth. The Roman poet Ovid described the Lupercalia in his unfinished work, the *Fasti*, which was a poetic commentary on the Roman calendar of festivals. In the excerpt below, he described the discovery of Romulus and Remus by the she-wolf.

The cradle drifts to a dark wood and gradually,  
As the river languishes, grounds in mud.  
There was a tree: traces remain, and what is now called  
The Ruminal fig was Romulus fig.  
A whelped she-wolf (marvel!) came to the abandoned  
twins.  
Who'd believe the boys weren't hurt by the beast?  
Far from hurting, she even helps. A she-wolf suckles  
Those whom kindred hands were braced to kill.  
She stopped, her tail caresses the delicate babes,  
And she shapes the two bodies with her tongue.  
You could tell they were sons of Mars. They suck the  
teats  
Fearlessly, and feed on milk unmeant for them.  
The wolf named the place, and the place the Luperci;  
The nurse was well rewarded for her milk.

**SOURCE:** Ovid, *Fasti*. Trans. A. J. Boyle and R. D. Woodard (London: Penguin Classics, 2000): 39.

century B.C.E., however, a pontiff would be elected by the Roman people and held office for life. The emperor Augustus became a pontiff early in his career, and as soon as the incumbent *pontifex maximus* died in 12 B.C.E., he took over the post. The college of pontiffs also included the *flamines* (priests), the *rex sacrorum* (the king of sacred rites), and the six Vestal Virgins. There were twelve minor *flamines* and three important ones: the *Flamen Dialis*, the *Flamen Martialis*, and the *Quirinalis*, that is, the priests of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus, the ancient divine triad of Rome. The *flamines* were surrounded by various taboos; the *Flamen Dialis*, for instance, could not be away from his own bed for more than two consecutive nights. Anyone hoping for military renown avoided the office, for no *Flamen Dialis* could lead an army on campaign. For a long period in the first century B.C.E., the office was vacant. The *rex sacrorum* took over the *sacral* duties of Rome's ancient kings—that is, their functions as priests of the state. Presumably, before the last king, Tarquin the Proud, was driven from Rome in 510 B.C.E., he headed the college of priests, and a "king of sacred rites" took over his sacerdotal functions. The presidency of the college, however, went to the *pontifex maximus*, and as a republican

gesture the "king of sacred rites" was barred from all political offices. The second major college was the fifteen augurs who supervised all rituals concerned with the auspices. The third college had the mouth-filling name *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, meaning "the fifteen-man committee for doing sacred things." Whenever the Roman senate felt that Rome's collection of oracles known as the Sibylline Books should be consulted, it was this group of priests who carried out the consultation. Finally there was a college that looked after one of the most characteristic institutions of later Rome, the *ludi* or the Games which were days filled with competitions and amusements for the public. They began with processions when the images of the gods were paraded through the streets; then there would be the shows: horse racing, to which there was later added animal fights and theater productions held in the presence of the gods, whose images would be seated among the spectators. These priests, called *epulones*, were not the business managers of the *ludi*; those were usually politicians on their way up the political ladder. Despite the political nature of the Games, the religious aspects of the Games were very important, and in 196 B.C.E. a three-man college of *epulones* was established to look after

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE REFORMS OF NUMA POMPILIUS**

**INTRODUCTION:** After the death of Rome's founder, Romulus, the question of a successor arose, and the people elected Numa Pompilius from the Sabine town of Cures to rule over them. Numa was known as a man of peace who established Roman religion. Roman legend attributed to him the ancient rituals of Roman religion. The following excerpt is from Livy's history of Rome, which was written in the reign of the emperor Augustus; he thus was describing reforms that took place some seven centuries before his own time.

[Numa's] first act was to divide the year into twelve lunar months; and because twelve lunar months come a few days short of a full solar year, he inserted intercalary months, so that every twenty years the cycle should be completed, the days coming round again to correspond with the position of the sun from which they had started. Secondly, he fixed what came to be known as "lawful" and "unlawful" days—days, that is, when public business might, or might not, be transacted—as he foresaw that it would be convenient to have certain specified times when no measures should be brought before the people. Next he turned his attention to the appointment of priests; most of the religious ceremonies, especially those which are now in the hands of the Flamen Dialis, or the priest of Jupiter, he was in the habit of presiding over himself, but he foresaw that in a martial community like Rome, future kings were likely to resemble Romulus rather than himself and to be often, in consequence, away from home on active service, and for that reason appointed a Priest of Jupiter on a permanent basis, marking the importance of the office by the grant of special robes and the use of the royal curule chair. This step ensured that the religious duties attached to the royal office should never be allowed to lapse. At the same time two other priesthoods, to Mars and Quirinus, were created.

He further appointed virgin priestesses for the service of Vesta, a cult which originated in Alba and was therefore not foreign to Numa who brought it to Rome. The priestesses were paid out of public funds to enable them to devote their whole time to the temple service, and were invested with special sanctity by the imposition of various observances of which the chief was virginity. The twelve Salii, or Leaping Priests, in the service of Mars Gradivus, were also introduced by Numa; they were given the uniform of an embroidered tunic and bronze breastplate, and their special duty was to carry the *ancilia* or sacred shields, one of which was fabled to have fallen from heaven, as they moved through the city chanting their hymns to the triple beat of their ritual dance.

Numa's next act was to appoint as pontifex the senator Numa Marcius, son of Marcus. He gave him full written instructions for all religious observances, specifying for the various sacrifices the place, the time, and the nature of the victim, and how money was to be raised to meet the cost. He also gave the pontifex the right of decision in all other matters connected with both public and private observances, so that ordinary people might have someone to consult if they needed advice, and to prevent the confusion which might result from neglect of natural religious rites or the adoption of foreign ones. It was the further duty of the pontifex to teach the proper forms for the burial of the dead and the propitiation of the spirits of the departed, and to establish what portents manifested by lightning or other visible signs were to be recognized and acted upon. To elicit information on this subject from a divine source, Numa consecrated on the Aventine an altar to Jupiter Elicius, whom he consulted by augury as to what signs from heaven it should be proper to regard.

**SOURCE:** Livy, *The Early History of Rome: Books I–V of The History of Rome from its Foundations*. Book I. Trans. Aubrey de Séincourt (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1971): 54–55.

them. In the first century B.C.E. their number was raised to seven. The *epulones* also looked after an odd ritual called a *lectisternium*, which the Roman senate decreed when menacing portents indicated that the gods should be appeased. The images of the gods were placed on the streets lying on pillows, and food of all kinds was set before them. Once fed, and presumably happy, the gods were returned to their sanctuaries. Actually, the *epulones* ate the food. Not for nothing did the word *epulones* mean "guests at a banquet." There were other priestly groups, too. The *fetial* priests looked after foreign relations. They determined that Rome's wars were "just

wars," and a fetial priest would perform a ritual before the Roman army crossed into the enemy's territory to make sure that the gods recognized that justice was on the Roman side. The *haruspices* specialized in the Etruscan lore of interpreting prodigies. Two ancient groups were connected with festivals: the *Salii*, priests of Mars who put on archaic armor with conical caps and shields shaped like the figure eight, and danced at various places in the city during the festivals of Mars in March and October; and the "Luperci," the runners in the Lupercalia festival. Finally there were the Arval Brethren, an ancient but obscure college during the Roman republic

that cared for the cult of an equally obscure goddess known as the Dea Dia. The emperor Augustus joined the Arval Brethren and adapted the college to the purposes of the imperial cult. The revived college inscribed its records on stone, and fragments of these inscriptions have survived, running from 21 B.C.E. to 304 C.E., with the result that historians are better informed about the Arval Brethren than any other college.

**FESTIVALS.** The dates of the great festivals were set out in the ritual calendar, which was first drawn up by the legendary King Numa, the successor of Romulus. Copies, inscribed on stone, survive, but almost all date from the reign of Emperor Augustus, and if Numa's calendar ever existed, it had undergone changes over time. Every month except September had festivals. Some lost their original meaning and acquired a new one. The shepherds' festival in April for the protection of their flocks known as the Parilia became a birthday festival for Rome. There were festivals for the dead—the Parentalia every February and the Lemuria in May—which were essentially family festivals. The Saturnalia in December was also a family festival, though it started with sacrifices at the temple of Saturn; the feasting when masters and slaves exchanged roles, and presents were given, all took place inside the household.

**EMPEROR WORSHIP.** Once Rome acquired divine emperors, the worship of the emperor was grafted on to the traditional religion. Temples to the emperors, living and dead, soon became the most prominent temples in Rome and in other great cities of the empire as well. The emperors not only became the high priests of Rome, but, as gods, they received sacrifices. In most of the provinces of the empire, a provincial assembly for the celebration of the imperial cult would meet every year in the chief city. It would hold a festival in honor of the emperor and it would discuss provincial business. If a governor was corrupt, for instance, it could arrange for him to be prosecuted in Rome. The cult of the emperors was not standardized, but it did provide a focus for provincial loyalty as well as a channel for complaints from the provinces to reach Rome.

**JEWISH RESISTANCE.** The Jews resisted the idea of making sacrifices to the emperors, and the civil authorities made an exception, though the emperor Caligula (37–41 B.C.E.) nearly provoked an uprising in Judaea by insisting that his image be placed in the Temple in Jerusalem. Caligula's assassination averted the crisis. The Jews were willing to offer prayers in their synagogues on the emperor's behalf, though they would not offer prayers to him. The Christians, however, were stubborn in their refusal to either pray to the emperor or for him.

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## IMMIGRANT RELIGIONS: THE ARRIVAL OF NEW CULTS FROM THE EAST

**MULTICULTURAL ROME.** By the first century C.E., Rome had a population of nearly a million people. It was huge by the standards even of the early modern world: in seventeenth-century Europe, only London, Paris, and Constantinople had populations above 400,000. It was also a magnet for immigrants from the empire, which by the mid-century stretched from Britain to the Middle East. Many came as slaves, who were then freed and as freedmen became Roman citizens. They brought their religious beliefs with them.

**MAGIC.** Along with the new cults there was an upsurge of interest in magic and astrology. The attraction of magic was that it purported to give mortals some control over life and death and the powers of the Underworld. The magician, with his handbooks of magic spells, gave the impression that he could make things work in a world where nothing seemed to work the way it once did. The authorities found it frightening. A *defixio*—an enchantment against an enemy, often only a thin leaflet of lead with a curse scratched on it, then folded, pierced with a nail and buried at a strategic location—could harness supernatural forces to do damage. What is striking about the enchantments that have survived is the range of divinities. All the Olympian gods appear, but as capricious, demonic powers. Apollo, the Olympian most often invoked, became a sun god. Babylonia, Egypt, and Judaea also contributed deities. Osiris and Isis from

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE IMPORTANCE OF MAGIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** Magic was an important element of Greek and Roman religion. Greek mythology provides some information about it. For example, the Telchines who lived on the island of Rhodes were semi-divine little people like the gnomes of Europe and the leprechauns of Ireland, who were not only skilled metal-workers but also powerful magicians who had the Evil Eye. They hated the Olympian gods, and they cast spells on mortals. The Idaean Dactyls were also dwarfs who were wizards connected with Mt. Ida on Crete, though other traditions placed them in Phrygia. Magic, including astrology, was feared, and the Roman authorities tried to suppress it. Magic books that gave recipes for spells were burned, but some survived, and the sands of Egypt have yielded a large corpus of magical papyri. The document printed below is a spell for invisibility. The words that are in italics are written in Old Coptic, the language of the native Egyptians in the later Roman Empire. The rest of the doc-

ument is in Greek. Where "NN" appears, the man casting the spell should insert his own name.

**SOURCE:** *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*. Ed. Hans Dieter Betz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986): 9.

Egypt rubbed shoulders in the Underworld with Hermes and Aphrodite as did a god called Iao, who is the Jewish Yahweh. In the surviving enchantments, Iao is the god most often invoked. Part of magic's attraction was a wish to control destiny in a changing world, and to understand the life after death. While the worshippers of these gods were often immigrants who remained loyal to their ancestral religions, these new cults also made converts. Some Romans converted to several of them since, except for Judaism and Christianity, they were not exclusive.

**CULT OF ISIS.** The goddess Isis was an import from Egypt. In Egyptian myth she was the sister-wife of Osiris, who was slain by the evil god Seth and cut into many pieces so that he could not be mummified and enter the afterlife. Isis searched for the pieces and found them all but one. The secret of where it was hidden was revealed only when Isis' son, Horus, whom the Greeks called Harpocrates, forced Seth to reveal it. Then, at last, Osiris could be resurrected. In the afterlife, as Osorapis, he became the head of the panel of judges who judged the dead. When the Greeks came to Egypt, they identified Osiris as their god, Dionysus. The best-preserved temple of Isis in Italy is in Pompeii, which had just been rebuilt after it was destroyed by an earthquake in 62 C.E. and had not been in use long before all Pompeii was overwhelmed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E. The temple at Pompeii had cells for her priests and a cistern for the Nile water; Isis

was attended by Egyptian priests who shaved their heads and wore white linen garments, and her rituals used sacred water from the Nile river. The processions that marked her festivals were elaborate productions, with dances, penitent worshippers, and music. When the navigation season opened each spring, and the grain transports began to bring their cargoes from Egypt to Italy, Isis gave the ships her blessing in a festival called the *Ploiaphesia*.

**CULT OF SERAPIS.** The god Serapis was often coupled with Isis. His cult seems to have developed out of the cult of Osorapis, but it was encouraged by the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt who may have thought he would bridge the gulf between the religions of the Greeks and their Egyptian subjects. The great temple of Serapis at Alexandria was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Isis in Egyptian mythology was the mother of Horus, the hawk-headed god, but among the Greeks and Romans, Horus became Harpocrates, who is shown as a chubby infant with his hand in his mouth, and Serapis became his father. He is often shown being suckled by Isis and when Egypt was Christianized in the fourth century C.E., the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus took over the iconography of Isis and Harpocrates.

**MITHRAISM.** Mithraism was an offshoot of Zoroastrianism, the national religion of Persia. Mithras was one of the angels in the forces of Ahura-Mazda, the god of light, in his battle with Ahriman, the god of evil. No



Wall painting from Pompeii showing priests celebrating the rites of the Egyptian goddess Isis. 1st century C.E. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

evidence of Mithraism has been found in ancient Iran, and possibly it was within the Roman Empire that Mithraism developed as a separate cult. Its ritual was secret and confined to men, and modern historians are ill informed about it, except that candidates for initiation underwent a series of ordeals. Initiates met in small oblong chapels with benches along the side-walls and, at the end, a painting or sculpture showing Mithras slaying a bull, for one duty that Mithras undertook was to capture and kill a mysterious bull. Mithraism was a militant religion with a special appeal for Roman soldiers. *Sol Invictus* was a natural associate of Mithras, for *Sol Invictus* was the “Invincible Sun,” and Mithras was a god of light. In the third century *Sol Invictus* almost became Rome’s national religion, for the emperor Aurelian (270–275 B.C.E.) was a devotee and built a great temple in Rome to *Sol Invictus*, which was dedicated on 25 December, the Sun’s supposed birthday.

**OTHER CULTS.** There were other new cults as well. One that arrived early was the cult of Attis and the “Great Mother,” Cybele. The Roman senate imported the cult towards the end of the third century B.C.E. and established a religious festival for it called the Megalensia. The rites of the Great Mother celebrated the death and resurrection of Attis, and they involved ecstatic rituals performed by priests called *galli* who had castrated themselves. The cult was kept under strict control in Rome for more than 200 years, but once it was allowed freedom, it began to win converts. One of



Sculpture from a Mithraeum (underground shrine of Mithras) showing Mithras slaying the bull from which all living things arose. 2nd century C.E. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

the rites attached to it was the *taurobolium* which appeared in Rome in the mid-second century C.E. and from there spread through the Western Empire, becoming particularly popular in Gaul. The recipient would climb down into a ditch and be bathed by the blood of a bull—or alternatively a ram—that was slaughtered above him.

**JUDAISM.** Among the immigrant religions was Judaism. There was already a Jewish community in Rome in the early first century B.C.E. and their numbers increased after the Roman general Pompey extended Rome’s dominion into the eastern Mediterranean and returned home in 63 B.C.E. with a vast quantity of booty and slaves, among them Jews. Julius Caesar gave the Jews certain privileges, such as the right not to be summoned to court on Shabbat, and Judaism became a *religio licita*, that is, a “licensed religion,” a cult that could claim protection under Roman law. There were soon synagogues in the major cities of the empire, and they attracted Gentile (non-Jew) attention. Persons called “God-fearers” were Gentiles with a sympathetic interest in Judaism who might come to synagogues to hear a good speaker and were made welcome. Some became converts, but that involved circumcision, which could be a dangerous procedure for an adult male before modern hygiene. The general Roman attitude to Judaism was ambivalent: Jews were considered clever in the art of healing the sick and

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN EPIPHANY OF ISIS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Lucius Apuleius lived in the second century C.E. as part of a wealthy family at Madaura in Africa. His *Metamorphoses*—better known under the title *The Golden Ass*—is the only Latin novel that survives in its entirety. It tells the story of one Lucius whose curiosity about black magic led to his being transformed accidentally into a donkey, and as a donkey he undergoes a number of adventures. The novel reads like a light-hearted romp until the conclusion, when Lucius has a vision of the goddess Isis as he lies on the beach at Cenchreae, the port of Corinth. Isis restores Lucius to human form and he becomes a devotee. At the end of the story, Lucius shaves his head and becomes a priest of Isis. The following excerpt describes Isis as she rises from the sea.

I had scarcely closed my eyes before the apparition of a woman began to rise from the middle of the sea with so lovely a face that the gods themselves would have fallen down in adoration of it. First the head, then the whole shining body gradually emerged and stood before me poised on the surface of the waves. Yes, I will try to describe this transcendent vision, for though human speech is poor and limited, the Goddess herself will perhaps inspire me with poetic imagery sufficient to convey some slight inkling of what I saw.

Her long thick hair fell in tapering ringlets on her lovely neck, and was crowned with an intricate chaplet in which was woven every kind of flower. Just above her

brow shone a round disc, like a mirror, or like the bright face of the moon, which told me who she was. Vipers rising from the left-hand and right-hand partings of her hair supported this disc, with ears of corn bristling beside them. Her many-colored robe was of finest linen; part was glistening white, part crocus-yellow, part glowing red and along the entire hem a woven border of flowers and fruit clung swaying in the breeze. But what caught and held my eye more than anything else was the deep black luster of her mantle. She wore it slung across her body from the right hip to the left shoulder, where it was caught in a knot resembling the boss of a shield; but part of it hung in innumerable folds, the tasselled fringe quivering. It was embroidered with glittering stars on the hem and everywhere else, and in the middle beamed a full and fiery moon.

In her right hand she held a bronze rattle, of the sort used to frighten away the God of the Sirocco; its narrow rim was curved like a sword-belt and three little rods, which sounded shrilly when she shook the handle, passed horizontally through it. A boat-shaped gold dish hung from her left hand, and along the upper-surface of the handle writhed an asp with puffed throat and head raised ready to strike. On her divine feet were slippers of palm leaves, the emblem of victory.

**SOURCE:** Lucius Apuleius, "The Goddess Isis Intervenes," in *The Transformations of Lucius Otherwise Known as The Golden Ass*. Trans. Robert Graves (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1950): 269–270.

also in magic, but their denial of all other gods except their own seemed unduly exclusive. Still, Judaism was one of the new religions which took an important place in Rome in the imperial period.

**COMMONALITIES.** All these cults had one thing in common: they accepted individuals as initiates and made them part of a special group. Most of them imparted some transcendental knowledge to their converts as part of their initiation, and for that reason they are commonly called "mystery religions." They did not all promise resurrection after death, but they did borrow from each other, and as time went on, they all developed an eschatology—that is, doctrines about the afterlife—of one sort or another. The greatest attraction seems to have been that, in a world that was increasingly chaotic—particularly in the third century B.C.E. when order broke down and the Roman Empire seemed unable to cope with new invaders that crossed its borders—these cults imparted a sense of belonging to a circle of like-minded persons.

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## THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

**CHRISTIANITY AS A JEWISH SECT.** Christianity began with a group of Jews who followed the teachings of Jesus, a Jewish carpenter who attracted many followers during his three-year ministry which began in 30 C.E. Jesus' teachings regarding the Jewish law and his claim to be the "messiah" (the savior of the people) long-awaited by the Jews threatened the Jewish religious leaders, who managed to have him crucified by the Roman authorities in 33 C.E. on charges of heresy. Although the religion initially faltered after Jesus' death, reports that Jesus had risen from the dead bolstered the fledgling church in spite of its continued persecution by the Jewish religious leaders. The years following Jesus' crucifixion saw an increase in the number of "Christians"—so-called because they followed Jesus "the Christ." The religion was not without its growing pains, however. According to the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Epistles* of St. Paul, there soon arose a division of opinion among the followers of Jesus. On the one hand, there was a conservative group centered in Jerusalem, led by James, the brother of Jesus. They clung to the Jewish law of Moses and insisted that all Gentile converts should be circumcised. The other group centered on Paul, a Jew of the diaspora, that is, the Jewish communities living outside Judaea. He had not known Jesus personally, but he had been converted to the new religion that he believed that Jesus had preached, and he was full of zeal. He wanted to reach out to the Gentiles, and he considered the dietary restrictions of Mosaic law and circumcision unimportant. Probably Paul and his followers would have lost the quarrel, except that a Jewish revolt intervened. A sect of Jewish nationalists in Judaea called the Zealots rose in rebellion in the final years of the emperor Nero's reign. The suppression of the revolt was delayed by Nero's dethronement and a year of civil war before Vespasian took over as emperor in 69 C.E.; the next year, Jerusalem was taken by an army led by Vespasian's son, Titus. The Temple was destroyed and its treasures taken to Rome as booty. The Jewish priesthood that had presided over the sacrifices at the Temple no longer had a center for their rituals. The future of Judaism lay with the synagogues and their rabbis, and a rabbinical school that was established at Yavna—later moved to Tiberias—in Judaea was actually encouraged by the Roman authorities. Judaism developed into a religion of the Talmud, which was the collection of writings that constituted Jewish civil and religious law. The Jewish-Christian community in Jerusalem that had opposed Paul had not supported the revolt, but still it was

a casualty. It was dispersed, and many of its leaders were probably killed. Others fled, particularly to Alexandria.

**PERSECUTION.** The future of Christianity lay with the followers of Paul's teachings. They had not supported the Jewish revolt, and their lack of support was not forgotten. Christianity had spread rapidly, partly because Christian preachers were welcome in the synagogues of the Diaspora. That welcome began to grow thin, however, and by the reign of Nero (54–68 C.E.), the Roman authorities began to recognize the Christians as a sect separate from the Jews, and an unpopular one at that. In 64 C.E. more than two-thirds of Rome was destroyed in a great fire. Nero needed a scapegoat, and the Christians were unpopular; in some quarters they were blamed for setting the fire. In fact, many Christians at this point in history expected an imminent Second Coming of the risen Christ and may have imagined that the fire that consumed Rome was the opening scene in the destruction of an evil empire. The Christians suffered their first state persecution at this time, but there were more to follow. The persecutions were sporadic until the middle of the third century C.E. when the empire made a systematic attempt to wipe out Christianity. The emperor Decius (249–252 C.E.) faced a Gothic invasion, the first of many that the empire would suffer. The gods seemed to be angry with Rome, and Decius insisted that everyone sacrifice to them and present certificates to that effect. Had Decius lived longer, he would have done Christianity serious damage, but he was killed in battle, and the persecution slowed. At the beginning of the fourth century C.E. there was another determined persecution, but by then Christianity was too powerful to be wiped out.

**THE ROMAN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CHRISTIANS.** In 111 C.E., a Roman named Pliny was governor of the province of Bithynia in Asia Minor, and encountered a cell of Christians. He wrote to the emperor Trajan to report how he had handled the case, and his letter has survived. As far as Pliny could ascertain, all the Christians did was to meet before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses antiphonally in honor of Christ "as if to a god" and to bind themselves by an oath, in Latin, a *sacramentum*. Then they would disperse and meet later to eat. Despite these innocuous proceedings, Pliny demanded that all of them make a little sacrifice before the emperor's image, and those that refused be put to death. Pliny sought of Trajan the legal basis for punishing the Christians, asking if Christianity was a crime *per se*, or whether it was the actions of Christians that were recognized as crimes by Roman law. Trajan's answer was brief. He approved of Pliny's actions. As for Pliny's question, the reply was simple. Christianity was a crime *per*

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE TRIAL OF THE SCILLITAN MARTYRS**

**INTRODUCTION:** “The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs” is a transcript of the trial of a group of Christians from the city of Scillium in the province of Africa Proconsularis, the capital of which was Carthage. Saturninus, the proconsul—that is, the former consul who was acting as governor of the province—presided. The date was the year when Calusian and Praesens held the consulship, 180 C.E. This was a time when the Roman government had outlawed the relatively new religion of Christianity because its followers did not recognize other religions, including the cult of emperor worship. Christians were given the opportunity to renounce their faith in court; those who did not do so were put to death.

On July 17, when Calusian and Praesens were consuls, the latter for the second time, Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Secunda and Vestia were arraigned at Carthage in the court.

**Saturninus, the proconsul:** If you come to your senses, you will gain the pardon of our Lord the emperor.

**Speratus:** We have never hurt anyone. We have never committed any crime. We have never libeled anyone. But when we were mistreated, we showed our thanks, because we reverence our own emperor.

**Saturninus, the proconsul:** We Romans are also a religious people. Our religion is very simple: we swear by the *genius* of our Lord the emperor and pray for his well-being. That is what you also ought to do.

**Speratus:** If you would only listen to me quietly, I would explain to you the mystery of simple belief.

**Saturninus:** If you are going to deride our sacred ceremonies, I shall not listen to you. Swear, instead, by the *genius* of our Lord the emperor.

**Speratus:** I do not recognize the kingdom of this world. Rather I serve the God whom no one has seen nor can see. I have committed no theft. I pay taxes on everything I buy. And this because I recognize my Lord, the king of kings, and emperor of all mankind.

**Saturninus, the proconsul, then said to the others:**  
“Cease to adhere to this belief.”

**Speratus:** Any doctrine that teaches that we should commit murder or bear false witness—that would be evil.

**Saturninus, the proconsul: [speaking to the others]**  
Take no part in this business—it is madness.

**Cittinus:** The only one we fear is the Lord our God in Heaven.

**Donata:** Respect Caesar as Caesar, but fear God.

**Vestia:** I am a Christian.

**Secunda:** I want to be none other than what I am.

**Saturninus, the proconsul, to Speratus:** Will you persist in remaining a Christian?

**Speratus:** I am a Christian. (And all the rest agreed with him.)

**Saturninus, the proconsul:** Would you like some time to think this over?

**Speratus:** Where our duty is so clear there is nothing to think over.

**Saturninus, the proconsul:** What do you have as the documents in your case?

**Speratus:** The sacred writings, and the epistles of a saint named Paul.

**Saturninus, the proconsul:** You may have a thirty-day reprieve to think this over.

**Speratus again said:** I am a Christian. (And all the others were of the same mind.)

**Saturninus, the proconsul, then read out the sentence from his tablets:** Whereas Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Vestia, Secunda, and the others, have admitted that they live in accordance with the religious rites of the Christians, and whereas they have persevered in their stubbornness even when given the opportunity to return to the Roman religion, it is hereby decreed that they should die by the sword.

**Speratus:** Thank God!

**Nartzalus:** Today we shall be martyrs in heaven—thank God!

**SOURCE:** “The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs,” in *The Fathers of the Primitive Church*. Ed. Herbert A. Musurillo (Toronto: The New American Library of Canada, 1966): 150–152.

*se.* This decision to outlaw Christianity as a religion made it markedly different from Judaism, which suffered from Roman disdain but was always a legal religion. Christianity was considered dangerous for several reasons. For

one thing, the Roman authorities saw Christianity as a secret society, and secret societies made them nervous. The empire was always afraid of subversion. For another, it is clear from early Christian writings that the Chris-



tians regarded the empire as evil. They looked forward to its final destruction and the Last Judgement. Then, too, there was misunderstanding at fault. There were rumors of horrific Christian rituals including cannibalism, and the liturgy of the Eucharist that professes to offer the body and blood of Christ to Christian worshippers must have nourished this misconception. Finally, unlike the ancient religion of Judaism, Christianity was a new sect, and it was founded by a man who had been crucified by the Romans on a charge of high treason. The Romans had reason to be apprehensive.

**THE RETREAT OF PAGANISM.** Rome's change of attitude towards Christianity began with the conversion of the emperor Constantine to Christianity in 312 C.E. In 313 C.E. he persuaded his co-ruler Licinius, who ruled the eastern portion of the empire, that freedom of religion should be extended to all. Licinius was not a Christian, but he wanted to maintain good relations with Constantine. The proportion of the empire that was Christian at the time of his conversion is a matter of conjecture, but it is generally agreed that it was a minority and perhaps a small minority at that. As Constantine began to favor the Christian church, however, new converts flocked to it. Constantine allowed pagans freedom of religion, but he banned sacrifices and thereby inflicted great damage on the pagan cults, for sacrifices were vitally important for them. He also helped himself to the wealth of the pagan temples. Constantine's new gold and silver coinage that helped stabilize the runaway inflation of earlier reigns used bullion from the pagan temples. The laws recorded in the Roman law codes mark paganism's retreat. Rome's machinery for enforcing its laws was always weak. There was no public prosecutor, and thus when a law appears in the law code, it should not be assumed that it was universally obeyed. If the law is repeated a number of times over a period of years, it can be assumed that there was widespread evasion. The ban on pagan sacrifice is a case in point. It was repeated again and again.

**CHANGEOVER TO CHRISTIANITY.** The changeover from a pagan to a Christian empire took up most of the fourth century C.E. On the coins that Constantine minted, three-quarters of the symbols shown belong not to Christianity but to *Sol Invictus*, the "Unconquerable Sun." Constantine, like his predecessors since the emperor Augustus, was *pontifex maximus*, that is high priest of Rome, and his successors continued to hold the post until Gratian (367–383 C.E.). The imperial cult did not die a sudden death. When Constantine received a request from a town in Italy to erect a temple to him, he gave permission, provided that they did not offer him sacrifices. In 356 Constantine's son, Constantius II, or-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### THE ILLEGALITY OF CHRISTIANITY

**INTRODUCTION:** Pliny the Younger was a Roman litterateur and a gentleman of the governing class who was sent by the emperor Trajan to the province of Bithynia (in northwest Asia Minor) which had been misruled by its senatorial governors and needed someone to remedy the situation. Pliny arrived in Bithynia in 111 C.E. and died there two years later. Pliny's policy towards the early Christian church was harsh in accordance with Rome's suspicious attitude towards these radical believers who neither adhered to Roman pagan gods nor worshipped the emperor. He gave those persons admitting Christianity three chances to deny it, and if they persisted in their avowal, he ordered them executed. If they were Roman citizens, they had a right to a trial at Rome, and Pliny entered them on the list of persons to be sent to Rome to have their cases judged there. His efforts to elicit information about the Christian sect, however, revealed nothing that might endanger the state. Christianity seemed merely to be a "degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths." Therefore Pliny consulted the emperor Trajan to discover what course of action he should take regarding the Christian church and he received the following reply.

You have followed the right course of procedure, my dear Pliny, in your examination of the cases of persons charged with being Christians, for it is impossible to lay down a general rule to a fixed formula. These people are not to be hunted out; if they are brought before you and the charge against them is proved, they must be punished, but in the case of anyone who denies that he is a Christian, and makes it clear that he is not by offering prayers to our gods, he is to be pardoned as a result of his repentance however suspect his past conduct may be. But pamphlets circulated anonymously must play no part in any accusation. They create the worst sort of precedent and are quite out of keeping with the spirit of our age.

**SOURCE:** Pliny, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*. Trans. Betty Radice (London, England: Penguin Books, 1969): 295.

dered all temples closed, but in 371 the emperor Valentinian ruled that everyone should be free to worship as he wished. The exceptions were astrologers, magicians, and Manichaeans—the last a sect on the fringes of Christianity which actually had its roots in Zoroastrianism, the national religion of Persia before the rise of Islam,

the doctrines of which envisaged an ongoing struggle in this world between the forces of Good and the dark forces of Evil. In 381, sacrifices were forbidden again, and again in 391 and 392, and in one of those years an event took place that dismayed the pagans who still clung to the old religion: the great temple of Serapis in Alexandria was destroyed by a Christian mob. The pagans expected the god to show his anger by refusing to let the Nile flood and water the fertile fields of Egypt, but the Nile flooded as usual. The pagans were disheartened at the impotence of their god. This was an example of a Christian tactic against paganism which had dramatic effect—demonstrating that the old gods could be flouted without fear of divine punishment.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Religion*

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### CONSTANTINE

286 C.E.–337 C.E.

*Emperor*

*Convert to Christianity*

**LEGITIMIZED CHRISTIANITY.** Constantine I's long reign brought about a profound change between the Roman state and the Christian church. From being a persecuted sect, Christianity became the privileged religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine was, at first, a

pagan, and worshipped *Sol Invictus*, that is, the "Invincible Sun." His sudden conversion to Christianity on the eve of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 C.E. does not seem to have resulted in a clean and immediate break with the Invincible Sun religion, but there can be no doubt that the conversion was genuine. He donated the Lateran Palace to the pope almost immediately after he made himself master of Rome. In 313 C.E. he met the eastern emperor, Licinius, in Milan and together they promulgated a decree ordering tolerance for all religions. Constantine soon made it clear, however, that paganism was out of favor. He probably banned pagan sacrifices; although a decree stating such that can be attributed to Constantine has not survived, one from his son, Constantius II, who banned sacrifices and referred to his ban as a repetition of his father's decree still exists. Sacrifice was at the heart of paganism, and by banning sacrifice Constantine struck the pagan cults a mortal blow.

**CONSTANTINOPLE.** In 324 C.E. Constantine united the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire by overthrowing the eastern emperor, Licinius. He followed up his victory by founding a new capital at Byzantium on the Bosphorus, the strait between the Sea of Marmora and the Black Sea. It was to be a New Rome, free from the pagan traditions and monuments of the old Rome on the Tiber River. It rapidly became known as the "City of Constantine," that is, "Constantinople." It would become the capital of the Byzantine Empire.

**THE ROLE OF A CHRISTIAN EMPEROR.** Emperors before Constantine had held the office of *pontifex maximus*, that is, high priest of Jupiter, Best and Greatest God, and they had also been gods themselves, receiving sacrifices in their temples. Constantine continued to hold the office of *pontifex maximus*, and he did not fully break with the custom of emperor worship; shortly after he conquered Italy he received a request from an Italian town to build a temple to him, and he consented, stipulating only that no sacrifices should be made to him. He eventually redefined the position of the emperor as the "friend" of the *Logos* of the Christian God, that is, the Divine Reason, rather than a god himself. He was God's vicar, that is, his representative on earth. Moreover, as God's vicar, the emperor was involved in defining orthodoxy and repressing heresy. In 325 C.E. he convened the first ecumenical council of the church at Nicaea to resolve the problem of the Arian heresy which held that Christ was a human being, and he was instrumental in formulating the Nicene Creed which set forth church dogma on the nature of Christ.

**BAPTISM AND DEATH.** In 337 C.E. Constantine died as he was planning a campaign against Persia. The end

seems to have come quickly; there was no lengthy illness. He was baptized virtually on his deathbed. It has sometimes been argued that this deathbed baptism shows that Constantine's adherence to Christianity was never strong, but deathbed baptisms were normal at this time, for it was believed that baptism wiped away sin; hence baptisms late in life allowed a sinner to enter Heaven with a spotless record. All the emperors after Constantine were Christian, save one: Julian the Apostate (361–363 C.E.), and his attempt to restore paganism was a failure.

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#### HOMER

c. 8th century B.C.E.—c. early 7th century B.C.E.

##### Poet

**ILIAD AND ODYSSEY.** The long epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* stand at the beginning of Greek literature, and the Greeks generally attributed them to a poet named Homer. Nothing can be said for certain about his identity. The years of his life are much disputed; guesses range from the time of the Trojan War, which was generally placed around 1200 B.C.E., up to 500 years after the Trojan War or about 700 B.C.E., which is a date most modern scholars can accept as the approximate period when he lived. It is generally agreed that he lived near the end of a bardic tradition, when oral poets who were generally illiterate performed at festivals or banquets. Yet at some point, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* took their present form and were written down, and it is at least possible that Homer was the poet responsible for producing the written text.

**DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION.** Whoever Homer was, his importance to the development of Greek religion was enormous. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* defined the gods and goddesses and gave them their attributes. The *Iliad* placed them on Mt. Olympus; the *Odyssey* was a little more vague about the exact location of their dwelling, but in both epics, the gods and goddesses lived high above the earth and looked down on mortals with

detached interest. They represented no ethical ideal, but they were powerful and easily offended.

**PERFORMANCE OF EPICS.** The text of Homer was preserved by a company of bards called the *Homeridai* or “Sons of Homer,” which did not necessarily imply that they were Homer’s descendants, but rather professionals who continued to work in the Homeric tradition. Their responsibility was to recite the portions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* at festivals or public gatherings, accompanied by the lyre. Sometimes, before starting his performance, the bard would recite a prelude of his own composition, and some of these have survived as the so-called Homeric Hymns. These hymns are literary creations and not to be confused with the hymns that might be sung to a god as part of the sacrificial ritual, which invoked the god under his various names, recited his deeds, and ended with a prayer. The headquarters of the *Homeridai* was on the island of Chios, off the west coast of Asia Minor, and the author of one Homeric Hymn refers to himself as a blind poet from Chios. It was probably this little autobiographical detail that gave rise to the tradition that Homer himself was a blind poet from Chios.

**HOMER AS EDUCATOR.** The Greeks recognized Homer as the educator of all Greece. His poems were accepted everywhere as classics, and the education of a young Greek would include the memorization of long sections of the epics. We hear of Greeks who could recite all the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by heart, for they had committed them to memory at school and could still recall them when they became adults. The Olympian gods as Homer represented them became accepted all over Greece, and gave Greek religion whatever unity it had. Moreover, Homer gave Greece a heroic ideal. The Achilles of Homer’s *Iliad* became the splendid model of the heroic warrior who chose honor and valor over a long but uneventful life. If Homer provided the Greeks with an ethical paradigm, it was not the gods but the brave Achilles who died young but left behind him renown and glory.

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## NUMA POMPILIUS

715 B.C.E.–673 B.C.E.

*Second king of Rome*  
*Founder of Roman religion*

**THE CALENDAR OF NUMA.** Numa Pompilius may never have existed, but the Romans looked back to him as the founder of their religion. According to Roman myth, Numa became the second king of Rome after Romulus was snatched up to Heaven to become the god Quirinus, or according to another version, murdered by the senators. He was credited with reforming the ritual calendar of Rome and establishing the priesthoods and the cult of Vesta. Before Numa, Rome had used a calendar of ten months, beginning with March, which it took over from Alba Longa, Romulus' native town in Latium. Numa drew up a lunar calendar of twelve months, with extra days inserted by the pontiffs to keep it congruent with the solar year. He fixed days which were lawful for business (*fasti*) and unlawful (*nefasti*), and he set the days for religious festivals.

**THE ROMAN RITUAL CALENDAR.** Numa's calendar may be mythical, but the Romans did have a ritual calendar. Broken inscriptions from Rome and vicinity have preserved fragments of more than forty copies of it. None are exactly the same, but all have roughly the same forty festivals marked in capital letters. While the person who drew up the calendar may not have been Numa, at least the calendar which the Romans thought was Numa's probably did exist.

**THE CULT OF VESTA.** Numa can hardly have founded the cult of Vesta. Her worship parallels the cult of Hestia in the Greek cities, and Roman legend remembered that Alba Longa also had a cult of Vesta. Vesta had a temple of her own in Rome, and she was attended by six Vestal Virgins, the only priestesses in the Roman priestly establishment. The priestesses of Vesta may show that Vesta's cult dates back to a time before Roman society became rigidly patriarchal. The remains of the Temple of Vesta in the Roman Forum and the House of the Vestal Virgins beside it can still be seen. Archaeologists have found votive offerings which were deposited in the forum temple as early as 575 B.C.E., and remains found in the House of the Vestals are even earlier. While these dates indicate that the cult of Vesta began *after* the death of Numa, Numa could have organized the cult of Vesta first in his own house, with his own unmarried daughters as Vesta's attendants. Only later did the Vesta cult move to its own temple after the Roman Forum was drained, and the number of Vestal

priestesses became six. They had to remain virgins for the thirty-year term of their priesthood, and a Vestal who lost her virginity would be buried alive.

**NUMA'S OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS.** Numa was also credited with creating the *Flamen Dialis*, the priest of Jupiter, to take over some of his own ritual duties. He also created priests for Mars and Quirinus. He was also credited with building the Regia in the Roman Forum, which housed the armor sacred to Mars: one shield was said to have dropped from Heaven. The Regia was later the official headquarters of the *pontifex maximus*, or high priest of Rome, and in spite of the fact that the word "Regia" can be translated as "royal palace," it seems never to have been a residence. The first structure built on the site of the Regia was an open-air sanctuary. Another legend about Numa made him a disciple of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras of Samos, who had a group of followers in the Greek settlement of Croton on the Gulf of Taranto in Italy, and then in Metapontum after they were expelled from Croton. Chronology, however, gets in the way of the legend. Pythagoras emigrated from Samos to Croton about 530 B.C.E., long after Numa died.

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## ST. PAUL

64 C.E.

*Christian missionary*

### BACKGROUND.

Meanwhile Saul was still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the High Priest and applied for letters to the synagogues of Damascus authorizing him to arrest anyone he found, men or women, who followed the new way, and bring them to Jerusalem. While he was still on the road and nearing Damascus, suddenly a great light flashed from the sky all around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Tell me, Lord, who you are." The voice answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Thus the *Acts of the Apostles* introduces us to Paul at the turning-point of his life: a sudden conversion which

transformed him from a Pharisee (a Jewish teacher of the law) into one of the major figures in the early Christian church.

**PAUL THE PERSECUTOR.** The future apostle was born in the Hellenistic city of Tarsus in modern Turkey. His father was a citizen of Rome, so he inherited the special status conferred on Rome's citizens, retaining both a Roman name, "Paulus," and a Hebrew name, "Saul." In addition to holding a privileged status in Roman society, Saul was part of the elite tribe of the Jews, the tribe of Benjamin, and was steeped in both Jewish culture and religion. Saul's schooling at Tarsus taught him a smattering of the Greek authors, but for the final stages of his education, his family must have moved to Jerusalem and placed him under the guidance of Gamaliel, the foremost rabbi of the first century C.E. Under Gamaliel, Saul trained to be a Pharisee, an elite teacher of Jewish law. He was also a tent-maker by trade.

**PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS.** Saul was extremely zealous in his religious vocation, and viewed the Christians as heretics for claiming that Jesus was the Son of God. The *Book of Acts* in the Bible records Saul's first known participation in the persecution of Christians: at the stoning of Stephen, a deacon of the Christian church, Saul is described as looking on in approval and holding the coats of Stephen's killers. Stephen's stoning apparently began a significant campaign by the temple priesthood to suppress Christianity, and Saul was at the forefront of the persecution, traveling to various cities and even making house-to-house searches for Christians to arrest. At the time of his vision of Jesus, he was on the road to Damascus with letters to the synagogues there from the high priest of the Temple, authorizing him to arrest any Jews he found neglecting the Law of Moses and accepting Jesus as the Messiah, in order to bring them to trial in Jerusalem.

**CONVERSION.** Saul's experience with Jesus described in the passage above convinced him that Jesus truly was the Son of God. The vision, however, had left him blind, and he had to be led to Damascus by his companions who had neither seen nor heard the vision Saul experienced. A second vision assured him that he would be healed of his blindness by a Christian named Ananias, who did indeed pray for Saul to be healed at the behest of a vision he had received. Ananias proved to be an important contact with the Christian church for Saul; he was able to convince a suspicious Damascus church that Saul's conversion was genuine, and Saul, now called "Paul," was accepted into their midst. Saul began to apply his knowledge of the Jewish holy text to prove that

Jesus was the promised Messiah, and quickly became one of the most prominent preachers in the early church.

**CHURCH LEADER.** Paul embarked on an ambitious series of missionary campaigns, and was responsible for planting many churches in various cities. From Damascus he traveled to the Nabataean Kingdom of Arabia to make converts among the Arabs, and also went on a 14-year sojourn to Syria and Cilicia, preaching wherever he went. His letters to the churches he fostered compose a significant portion of the New Testament of the Bible, and his expositions of Christian theology in those letters are the basis for the modern church. So prominent was Paul in the church that he was considered to be an "apostle," even though that title was typically reserved for the members of Jesus' original twelve disciples. As a leader, Paul was a central figure in the theological debates that arose within the church; in particular, he advocated for the inclusion of Gentiles (non-Jews) into the church without forcing them to adhere to Jewish rites such as circumcision and the abstention from eating "unclean" foods. Paul argued that the church's continued fixation on Jewish law made them no different from those who did not believe Jesus was the messiah, and that they should be focusing on Jesus' teachings rather than the rites and laws of Jewish holy texts.

**BREAK WITH JEWISH CHRISTIANS.** Paul's position regarding the Gentile Christians eventually caused a permanent breach with some of the Jewish members of the church. Hard-line Jews, led by the apostle James (the brother of Jesus), pressured more moderate Jews like the apostle Peter to demand that Gentile converts adhere to Jewish law. When Peter sided with them, Paul publicly debated the issue with him and accused him of hypocrisy. The result was a break between Paul and the Jewish-Christian missionaries. Paul continued his mission work, and his travels took him through Asia Minor and across Europe, where he founded a church at Philippi in Macedonia and another in Thessaloniki. He visited Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus. Paul's message was not always well received in the cities he visited, and he was just as likely to be arrested, beaten, or threatened with death as he was to make converts.

**PERSECUTION OF PAUL.** Paul's troubles began when some Jews from Asia Minor recognized Paul in the Temple and incited the crowd to seize him. Roman troops intervened, saving his life, but they kept Paul under arrest. Paul was allowed to address the crowd in Hebrew, but this led to new riots, and Paul was taken into protective custody. At this point, fearing he might be flogged, Paul invoked his privilege as a Roman citizen, which protected him from flogging. Paul tried and failed

to defend himself before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish legal body), and Roman troops once again had to intervene. Some Jewish fanatics conspired to murder Paul, but Paul's nephew warned the Roman authorities and they removed him to Caesarea where he was kept under guard. There the Roman procurator of Judaea, Felix, kept Paul for two years without making a decision about him. When Felix's successor, Porcius Festus, arrived, the Jewish leaders renewed their case against Paul and asked Festus to transfer him to Jerusalem. Paul suspected that they were planning an ambush on the way and appealed to Caesar. The appeal saved Paul from possible murder, but it also meant that he had to present his case directly to Caesar.

**DEATH AND AFTERMATH.** Paul had a great deal of freedom in Rome. A soldier accompanied him, but he had his own lodging, and he contacted the Jewish community. He persuaded some as to the rightness of his ideas, but others remained skeptical. He probably died around 64 C.E. and so it is possible that he fell victim to the emperor Nero's persecution of the Christians in that year, though there is no independent evidence of that. If so, he died just before the event that would defeat his Jewish Christian opponents. In 70 C.E. the Romans, led by the future emperor Titus, destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem was a casualty of this catastrophe, as was the Temple priesthood and the Sadducees who had dominated the priestly offices. The break between Judaism and Christianity was complete, and before the end of the century, relations between the two showed signs of hostility.

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### SOCRATES

469 B.C.E.–399 B.C.E.

*Philosopher*  
*Teacher*

**IMPORTANCE TO GREEK RELIGION.** Socrates is more important for his contribution to philosophy than religion. Nonetheless, he was important as a catalyst in Athenian intellectual life of the fifth century B.C.E., and the questioning of conventional attitudes which he helped to

initiate spilled over into religious thought. In 399 B.C.E. he was tried before a popular jury of 501 jurymen on a charge of not recognizing the gods whom the state recognized, introducing other new gods, and corrupting the young. There are two surviving accounts of his *Apology*, that is, his speech in his own defense: one by his disciple Plato and a second by another of his followers, Xenophon. They are quite different and neither has a great claim to accuracy. It is not clear what new gods Socrates introduced, and his accusers seem to have concentrated on the charge that Socrates corrupted the young.

**QUESTIONED CONVENTIONAL VIEWS.** It is true that Socrates questioned conventional views of Greek religion. In one of Plato's early dialogues, the *Euthyphro*, Socrates demonstrated that the Olympian gods could not be taken as models of morality or virtue. He himself, however, was scrupulous in his religious observances. His final words before his death were a reminder that he owed a cock to the god Asclepius. Apparently he had promised to sacrifice a cock at the temple of Asclepius on the south slope of the Athenian Acropolis, and he wanted his vow carried out.

**THE TRIAL OF SOCRATES.** Socrates was convicted at his trial by a vote of 281 out of 501 jurymen. His prosecutors suggested the death penalty, and Socrates then had a chance to suggest an alternative punishment. Socrates at first suggested facetiously that he be given meals at state expense for the rest of his life, but, at the urging of his friends, he suggested a modest fine. The jury was clearly annoyed by Socrates' attitude and opted for the death penalty by a greater majority than had found him guilty in the first place.

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- I. F. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates* (Boston: Little Brown, 1988).

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Religion*

Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* (c. 160 C.E.)—The only complete Latin novel that survives, the *Metamorphoses* better known by its popular title *The Golden Ass*, tells the story of how Lucius, who is too interested in black

magic for his own good, is inadvertently changed into a donkey. It ends with an autobiographical account of how Lucius was transformed by the goddess Isis into a man again who stands for Apuleius himself, and is initiated into the cult of Isis who had saved him.

Cato the Elder (Marcus Porcius Cato “Censorius”), *De Agri Cultura* (“On Agriculture”; c. 160 B.C.E.)—Cato’s handbook on how to farm for profit contains a great deal of information about Roman religion and superstition as well as the sacrificial rites which a farmer must know to keep the favor of the gods.

Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero), *De Natura Deorum* (c. 43 B.C.E.)—Cicero expounds the view of the gods held respectively by the Epicureans, Stoics and Academics (Platonists) and the work is followed by two appendices, the *On Divination* or “How to Interpret Portents” in two books and *On Fate* which shows the difference between determinism and fatalism.

Delphi, *Oracle of Apollo*—Delphi, on the slopes of Mt. Parnassus in central Greece, was the most famous oracular site in the Greek and Roman world. There the priestess of Apollo known as the Pythia, sitting on a tripod in the temple at Delphi, received questions on one day every month except for the three months of winter, and answered them with replies that were famous for their ambiguity.

Dodona, *Oracle of Zeus*—At Dodona in north-west Greece was an ancient oracle of Zeus, reputedly the oldest oracle in the Greek world, which was closed down only in 392 C.E. According to one account, the oracle spoke in the rustling of leaves on a sacred oak tree.

Hesiod, *Theogony* (c. 700 B.C.E.)—The *Theogony* attributed to Hesiod is a description of how the gods of Greece came into being. In the beginning there is Chaos, Heaven, which is male, and Earth which is female, separate from it; from their union is born the generation of the Titans and from the union of the Titans Cronus and Rhea is born the generation of the Olympian gods.

Homer, *The Iliad* (c. 700 B.C.E.)—Homer’s epic poetry describes the Olympian gods and created the Greek concepts of what the gods were like, how they lived and what their relations were with mankind.

Marcus Minucius Felix, *Octavius* (c. 200 C.E.)—A dialogue written in Latin between a pagan, Caecilius, and a Christian, Octavius, with Minucius acting a referee. Though the dialogue ends with Caecilius becoming a Christian, he presents the case for paganism well and describes the wild rumors about the Christians that

were current among pagans, for instance that in their initiation ceremonies the initiate was made to kill a baby unintentionally and then everyone drank the baby’s blood.

Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso), *Fasti* (8–17 C.E.)—The *Fasti* is a poetical calendar of the Roman year which records festivals and religious rites for each month. It is an unfinished work, covering only the first six months of the year.

Pausanias, *Description of Greece* (c. 150 C.E.)—Pausanias’ travel guide, based on his own journeys through Greece, pays especial attention to Greek religious sites such as Delphi and Olympia and fleshes out his account with descriptions of worship, superstitious customs, mythology and the like.

Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus), *Epistulae* (“Letters”; 61 or 62–c. 114 C.E.)—Pliny’s letters are small essays on current events and provide a valuable commentary on the history and society of Rome in the late first and early second centuries C.E. Two letters written towards the end of his life, one by Pliny himself addressed to the emperor Trajan, and the other Trajan’s reply, deal with a cell of Christians which Pliny has discovered in the province of Bithynia which he is governing, and they show that the imperial authorities regarded Christianity at this time as an outlaw religion.

St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei contra paganos* (“Against the Pagans: The City of God”; 413–426 C.E.)—St. Augustine’s most careful refutation of pagan thought, this work urges Christians to look beyond the turmoil of the Roman world and fix their gaze on the City of God instead of the City of Rome. The work was written in the aftermath of the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410 C.E.

St. Luke (?), *Acts of the Apostles* (c. 100 C.E.)—The *Acts of the Apostles*, addressed to someone named Theophilus who was presumably a Roman official, and written by someone familiar with the travel diary of St. Luke which may be incorporated into the latter part of the narrative, describes the spread of Christianity from the crucifixion until thirty-two years later, when St. Paul has been under house arrest in Rome for two years, but is nonetheless free to preach and receive visitors.

Villa of the Mysteries: Pompeii (first century B.C.E.)—This suburban villa outside the walls of Pompeii, which began as a farmhouse in the third century B.C.E., developed into a luxurious villa and then declined to a farmhouse before its destruction in 79 C.E., has a wall painting along three sides of a front room, done in the first century B.C.E. which depicts the initiation of a woman into the mysteries of the god Dionysus.

chapter 8  
eight

# THEATER

Lisa Rengo George

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	346	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	349	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS			
Origins of Greek Theater . . . . .	351	<i>The Queen is the King</i> (An excerpt from Aeschylus' play <i>Agamemnon</i> ) . . . . .	353
Festivals and Theaters . . . . .	352	<i>The Oedipus Complex</i> (Oedipus learns the truth in an excerpt from Sophocles' drama) . . . . .	359
Types of Greek Drama . . . . .	357	<i>Aristotle's Lecture Notes</i> (Aristotle discusses tragedy and comedy in Greek drama) . . . . .	361
The Beginning of Roman Theater . . . . .	366	<i>Speaking Ill of the Dead</i> (excerpt from <i>Peace</i> , emphasizing metatheatrical elements of Aristophanes' comedies) . . . . .	362
Roman Theaters, Playwrights, and Actors . . . . .	367	<i>Medea, Serial Killer</i> (an excerpt from the play by Euripides) . . . . .	363
Other Types of Roman Theater . . . . .	372	<i>Murder and the Comic Evolution</i> (Platonius explains the evolution of ancient Greek comedy) . . . . .	364
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>Sassy Sisters</i> (an excerpt from <i>Two Sisters Named Bacchis</i> by Plautus) . . . . .	371
Aristophanes . . . . .	375	<i>The Yawning Actor</i> (Lucian defends the genre of pantomime) . . . . .	373
Euripides . . . . .	376	<i>An Unholy Feast</i> (an excerpt from Seneca's play <i>Thyestes</i> ) . . . . .	374
Livius Andronicus . . . . .	377		
Lycoris . . . . .	377		
Menander . . . . .	378		
Gnaeus Naevius . . . . .	379		
Nero . . . . .	379		
Titus Maccius Plautus . . . . .	380		
Quintus Roscius Gallus . . . . .	381		
Seneca the Younger . . . . .	381		
Sophocles . . . . .	382		
Terence . . . . .	382		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	383		



## IMPORTANT EVENTS in Theater

- c. 750 B.C.E. Homer composes the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* orally.
- c. 600 B.C.E. The form of the tragic chorus and the first satyr verses are introduced in Athens.
- 566 B.C.E. Tragedies are first staged at the newly established City Dionysia in Athens.
- c. 534 B.C.E. Thespis, the legendary actor who first stepped out of the chorus to sing alone, produces the first tragedy.
- 508 B.C.E. The Athenians establish a democratic constitution under Cleisthenes. The freedom of speech and personal rights the citizens gain under this new political system allows for the development of the intensely critical tragedies and Aristophanic political satire.
- c. 502 B.C.E. The Athenians begin keeping records of victories at dramatic festivals.
- 490 B.C.E. The wars between Greece and Persia begin. The playwright Aeschylus fights at Marathon.
- c. 486 B.C.E. Competitions for comedies are added at the City Dionysia.
- 484 B.C.E. The playwright Aeschylus wins his first victory at a dramatic festival.
- 472 B.C.E. Aeschylus produces a trilogy of plays containing *Persians*, the only extant tragedy not based on Greek mythology.
- 468 B.C.E. The playwright Sophocles enters a dramatic festival competition for the first time and wins the dramatic prize, beating Aeschylus.
- 467 B.C.E. Aeschylus produces his trilogy containing *Seven Against Thebes*.
- c. 463 B.C.E. Aeschylus produces the trilogy containing *Suppliants*.
- c. 459 B.C.E. Mynniskos, an actor in Aeschylean tragedy, comes to prominence.
- c. 450 B.C.E.
- 458 B.C.E. Aeschylus produces the *Orestia* trilogy containing *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, and *Eumenides*, and wins first prize at a dramatic festival competition.
- 456 B.C.E. Aeschylus dies in Sicily.
- 455 B.C.E. The playwright Euripides enters a dramatic competition for the first time.
- c. 449 B.C.E. Competitions for tragic actors are established at the City Dionysia.
- c. 442 B.C.E. Euripides wins a dramatic competition for the first time.
- c. 441 B.C.E. The playwright Sophocles produces the trilogies containing *Ajax* and *Women of Trachis*.
- 441 B.C.E. Sophocles produces the trilogy containing *Antigone*.
- 438 B.C.E. Euripides produces the trilogy containing *Alecestis*.
- c. 435 B.C.E. Theatrical competitions, including contests for both tragic and comic actors, may have been introduced at the Lenaia festival.
- c. 430 B.C.E.
- 431 B.C.E. The Peloponnesian War breaks out between Athens and Sparta. The war and the plague that followed its outbreak become subject material for several plays.
- Euripides produces the trilogy containing *Medea*.
- c. 430 B.C.E. Sophocles produces the trilogy containing *Oedipus the King*.

- Euripides produces the trilogy containing *The Children of Heracles*.
- 428 B.C.E. The philosopher Plato is born.
- Euripides produces the trilogy containing *Hippolytus* and wins first prize.
- 427 B.C.E. The playwright Aristophanes submits a comedy in competition for the first time at age eighteen.
- c. 426 B.C.E. Euripides produces the trilogy containing *Andromache*.
- c. 425 B.C.E. Aristophanes presents *Acharnians* for the first time.
- c. 424 B.C.E. Euripides produces the trilogy containing *Hecuba*.
- Aristophanes produces *Knights*.
- 423 B.C.E. Aristophanes produces *Clouds*.
- c. 422 B.C.E. Euripides produces the trilogy containing *Suppliant Women*.
- Aristophanes produces *Wasps*.
- 421 B.C.E. Aristophanes produces *Peace*.
- c. 420 B.C.E. The tragic actors Hegelochos and Calpides are prominent.
- c. 418 B.C.E. Euripides produces the trilogies containing *Ion* and *Phoenician Women*.
- c. 417 B.C.E. Euripides produces the trilogies containing *Electra* and *Madness of Heracles*.
- 416 B.C.E. The tragic playwright and actor Agathon wins first place at the City Dionysia, according to Plato's *Symposium*, the account of a party in honor of the playwright's victory.
- c. 415 B.C.E. Euripides produces the trilogy containing *Trojan Women*.
- c. 414 B.C.E. Euripides produces the trilogy containing *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.
- Aristophanes produces *Birds*.
- 411 B.C.E. Aristophanes produces *Lysistrata* and *The Festival Goers*.
- c. 409 B.C.E. Sophocles produces the trilogy containing *Philoctetes*.
- c. 408 B.C.E. Euripides produces the trilogy containing *Orestes*.
- c. 407 B.C.E. Sophocles writes *Oedipus at Colonus*, produced posthumously in 401 B.C.E.
- c. 406 B.C.E. Euripides dies at court of King Archelaus of Macedon. Sophocles honors him by dressing his chorus in mourning before the Dionysia.
- 405 B.C.E. Sophocles dies and is honored as a hero.
- The Euripidian trilogy containing *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Bacchae* is produced posthumously and wins first prize.
- Aristophanes produces *Frogs*.
- c. 392 B.C.E. Aristophanes produces *Women in the Assembly*.
- c. 386 B.C.E. "Old Comedy" is listed as a category in the City Dionysia for the first time.
- 384 B.C.E. The philosopher Aristotle is born in Thessalonica. His *Poetics* defines and extensively discusses Greek tragedy.
- 382 B.C.E. Aristophanes produces *Wealth*.
- c. 380 B.C.E. "Middle Comedy" is prevalent in many dramatic competitions.
- c. 350 B.C.E. Tragic actors Neoptolemus, Aristodemus, and Theodorus are prominent.
- c. 330 B.C.E. Aristotle writes his *Poetics*, which defines and discusses Greek tragedy.
- c. 321 B.C.E. "New Comedy" begins in Athens.
- 316 B.C.E. Menander produces *The Grouch*, his only complete extant play.
- c. 310 B.C.E. Comic actor Parmenon becomes prominent.

- c. 300 B.C.E. The Artists of Dionysus, a performers' union and "religious" guild with its own priest, whose members were exempt from paying taxes and military service, is active.
- The poet Rhinthon of Tarentum, a Greek colony in southern Italy, composes scripts for *phlyax* plays, popular in the western Greek colonies.
- 291 B.C.E. Comic playwright Menander dies.
- c. 264 B.C.E. The first gladiatorial show is performed in Rome.
- c. 240 B.C.E. Livius Andronicus translates one Greek tragedy and one Greek comedy for performance at the Roman Games.
- 236 B.C.E. Naevius, a Roman playwright and poet, produces his first play.
- c. 230 B.C.E. Comic playwright Titus Maccius Plautus flourishes in Rome.
- c. 220 B.C.E. Pacuvius, a Roman tragic playwright and painter, is born in Brundisium, Calabria, in the "heel" of Italy.
- 207 B.C.E. A Roman theatrical union is formed called the College of Scribes and Actors.
- c. 204 B.C.E. Livius Andronicus dies.
- 195 B.C.E. The playwright Aristophanes of Byzantium becomes the head of the library at Alexandria, Egypt.
- c. 173 B.C.E. The first annual performance of mime  
-c. 172 B.C.E. occurs at the Roman festival Floralia.
- Roman actors Antipatros and Agathodorus perform at Delphi.
- c. 170 B.C.E. Accius, a Roman tragic playwright, is born in Pisaurum, Umbria, in central Italy.
- c. 166 B.C.E. Comic playwright Terence is active in  
-c. 160 B.C.E. Rome.
- c. 100 B.C.E. Roman actors Roscius and Claudius  
-c. 50 B.C.E. Aesopus are prominent.
- 69 B.C.E. The comic actor Roscius is defended in court by Cicero on a charge of fraud.
- 55 B.C.E. Pompey dedicates the first permanent, stone theater in Rome.
- 22 B.C.E. The actors Pylades and Bathyllus introduce pantomime at Rome.
- c. 4 B.C.E. Seneca the Younger, philosopher and  
-c. 65 C.E. tragic playwright, serves in the court of Nero, who eventually forces him to commit suicide.
- 60 C.E. Nero puts on the first "Neronian Games."
- 65 C.E. Nero himself performs in the second Neronian Games.
- c. 80 C.E. Mime and pantomime performers form their own artistic union, the Parasites of Apollo.

## OVERVIEW of Theater

**MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGINS.** According to mythology, the theater in ancient Greece sprang from rituals that both honored and appeased the god Dionysus. Dionysus first taught the precious skill of viticulture, the cultivation of grapes for winemaking, to a man named Icarius. Icarius wore goatskins in honor of the god, who had been disguised as a goat in childhood to protect him from the wrath of Hera, queen of the gods. After Icarius served his newly made wine to some shepherds, they became ill from overindulgence and, believing that Icarius had poisoned them, killed him. In order to atone for their crime, they, too, donned the skins of goats and danced and sang around the fire to honor Dionysus and his pupil. From these songs and dances grew rituals of public performance, or so myth would have it. Human beings are fascinated by storytelling and the reenactments of human experience, and most likely always have been. That the Greeks developed this kind of myth about the origins of their theater tells us much about them. For the ancient Greeks, theater was more than entertainment, although it was that, too. It was a didactic institution that sought to analyze social and political change, human relationships, the existence of the divine, and the meaning of life in its deepest sense. For the fifth-century B.C.E. Athenian, drama was an educational and a religious experience as well as entertainment for the ancient Greeks.

**AGE OF THE EPIC.** The word “theater” derives from an ancient Greek verb that means “to see.” But formal staged drama was not the first mode of public performance developed and enjoyed by the Greeks. After the great civilizations of the Minoans and Mycenaeans fell under mysterious but violent circumstances, and before Greece once again produced written literature, architecture, and art, there was a period of several hundred years now called the “Dark Ages.” From the mists of these shadowy years arose a great poet, Homer, who wrote “epic” poetry—long, cadenced poems about great heroes and their struggles to retain their humanity in the face

of warfare, loss, and isolation. These tales of the men who fought in the greatest war in human legend, the Trojan War, were composed orally and were memorized and presented by traveling bards called *rhapsodes* (“reciters of poetry”), who punctuated their performances with the beat of their long staffs. The stories of the Trojan War so captivated the ancient Greeks that they produced dozens of prequels and sequels and tangential episodes to fill in the gaps of and offer alternatives to the Homeric versions of the tales. These legends became the bulk of the material that tragedians later used as the basis for their dramas. Within the Homeric sagas, the poet tells us of the performance of “*paean*s” or songs of celebration and thanksgiving to the gods, especially Apollo.

**COMPETITIONS.** In cities and villages all over ancient Greece, large groups of men and boys formed choruses to perform the “dithyramb,” an ecstatic song and dance to honor Dionysus that sprang from those first frenzied attempts of the shepherds to conciliate the angry god. Legend tells that a man named Thespis was the first to step out of the choral group to speak with his own voice, and thereby “invented” the individual actor in a staged drama. These dithyrambic choruses were also included in the structure of tragedy as it developed and became the heart of Greek drama. In the late sixth century B.C.E., the Athenians founded a democratic government and formalized the performance of tragedy by establishing theatrical festivals. During these festivals, religious processions and rituals blended with the day-long performances of dithyrambs, tragedies, satyr plays, and in later years, comedies, which were in themselves religious expressions. Classical drama combined spoken dialogue with monodies (odes for one voice), choral songs, and dances, which were accompanied by music. Competition was at the center of these festivals: playwrights submitted three tragedies (sometimes a trilogy organized and connected by a theme, sometimes not) followed by a light-hearted “satyr” play, a farcical stage show featuring the lecherous half-man/half-animal creatures who were the constant companions of Dionysus. The staging of these tragedies was undertaken by a *choregos*—a rich citizen who underwrote the cost of the production and oversaw auditions, rehearsals, and the equipage of the troupe. Three playwrights out of the dozens who were actively writing drama were chosen to perform their plays and were awarded first, second, and third prizes. Comic playwrights submitted one play for competition with their peers. Judges were selected from among the Athenian citizenry—adult males whose parents were both native Athenians. Actors in both tragedy and comedy wore masks, long robes, and elevated shoes in order to be seen and heard by the large crowds in the theater. There is

evidence that all classes of people attended performances at these dramatic festivals: citizen men and women, foreigners, slaves, and children. The philosopher Aristotle in the fourth century B.C.E. sought to codify tragedy in his *Poetics* according to his own experience and opinions of the theater.

**COMEDY VERSUS TRAGEDY.** Aeschylus is the earliest playwright whose works still survive. He served in the Athenian military and fought against the Persians during the early years of the fifth century B.C.E. when they sought to conquer Greece. His military experience heavily influenced his earliest extant tragedy, *The Persians*, the only surviving tragedy to use historical rather than mythological events for its plot. Aeschylus and most later tragedians like Sophocles and Euripides chose to dramatize the well-known tales from Greek mythology as a way of expressing their insights on such topics as the possibility of justice in a harsh world, the importance of honor, and the differences between divine and human law. Unlike the tragedies, the first comic plays are now categorized in a genre modern scholars call “Old Comedy.” Comic playwrights like Aristophanes opted to stage political and social circumstances of the day and often portrayed famous people, like Socrates and the politician Cleon, in their uproarious and bawdy comedies (mostly in unflattering ways). Women were often featured as protagonists in both tragedy and comedy, despite the fact that in society, women were permitted very little freedom and would not usually have had much experience with public life. Male actors portrayed all the roles on the traditional stage, just as they did in Shakespeare’s time.

**THE GOLDEN AGE.** The fifth century B.C.E., often known as the “Golden Age” of classical Athens, was bookended by two major wars. At the beginning of the century, the allied Greek forces fought off the invading Persians, and in the last thirty years of the century, the Athenians fought a drawn-out and devastating war with the Spartans, known as the Peloponnesian War. The Spartans were ultimately victorious in this war and annexed the democracy that the Athenians had enjoyed for over a century. This event signalled the end of Athenian ascendancy in the Mediterranean, and with it came a shift in the content of the theater. No longer possessed of such great freedom of speech, the comic playwrights abandoned their topical plays, which were often critical of the government and public figures. Instead, Aristophanes and the playwrights of the fourth century B.C.E., such as Menander, created gentle family-oriented comedies that featured stock roles: the grumpy father, the dissolute son, the dispossessed and vulnerable young girl, the nagging wife, and the nosy neighbor. These plays

were known as part of the style of “Middle Comedy.” Although these plays also had a political message to deliver, it was conveyed by much more subtle means. The production of new tragedies slowed down considerably. A canon of tragic plays was established, and frequent revivals of fifth century B.C.E. dramas were popular.

**RISE OF ROMAN THEATER.** As Rome began to build slowly toward world dominance in the third and second centuries B.C.E., native Italic forms of literature and drama, like the Atellan farces and religious poetry, were supplemented by literature and drama influenced by the Greeks, who had had colonies in southern Italy for hundreds of years. The Romans were superior in military force and imperial ambition, but were in awe of the Greeks’ achievements in architecture, art, poetry, dance, and theater, and they unashamedly copied the Greeks. Poets like Naevius wrote tragedies about Roman legend and myth, but these were not nearly as popular as the comedies adapted from the Hellenistic playwrights by Plautus and Terence. While these comic plays retained the ostensibly Greek settings and many of the more familiar stock characters of “Middle Comedy” (400–200 B.C.E.), the “New Comedy” of Plautus and Terence enlivened the dated dramas of the previous century or two with purely Roman expressions, situations, and humor. Plautus was among the most popular and successful playwrights in history, and his plays continued to be revived and performed for hundreds of years after his death. Under the empire established by Augustus in 27 B.C.E., theater in various forms continued to flourish. The poet Ovid, who was exiled in eight C.E., is known to have written tragedies on classical themes, but unfortunately none of these survive. The emperor Nero fancied himself an actor and often appeared on stage in revivals and newer drama. Seneca, a Stoic philosopher and confidante of Nero, also wrote tragedies using some of the most lurid and disturbing classical myths. Today we cannot know whether Senecan drama was intended to be performed on the stage or merely to be read aloud as entertainment (and perhaps edification) in the royal court. Other forms of theater, like mime and pantomime shows, remained popular throughout the Roman Empire. More extreme forms of public spectacle, like gladiatorial combats, wild beast fights, dangerous chariot races, and executions grew ever more lavish and gruesome.

**LEGACY.** The theater of the ancient Greeks and Romans has continued to enthrall the Western world. It influenced the development of new art forms like opera, which combines dramatic storytelling with grand music and dance. The architecture and brilliant acoustics of ancient theaters shape the way many modern theaters are

designed. The themes of ancient Greek tragedy—like the struggle for power in the family and in the outside world, the harshness of unjust laws, the search for meaning amidst catastrophe, and the soaring heroism of the human spirit—remain as pertinent and powerful today as they ever were.

## TOPICS *in Theater*

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### ORIGINS OF GREEK THEATER

**PERFORMANCE CULTURE.** The ancient Greeks had a love of pageantry and formalized ritual that permeated their entire society. The poet Homer composed long ballads orally, narratives of great warriors and great human themes. Wandering *rhapsodes* (“reciters of poetry”) memorized these poems and performed them for audiences at banquets and festivals that were public performances in and of themselves. Religious rituals involving all aspects of what we now call drama were performed publicly as well: weddings, funerals, celebrations to honor the gods, and victories in performative competitions of all kinds. Most of the formal elements of theater—people acting out specific roles, appropriate costumes, a set order of events, as well as audience expectation and participation—already existed in the religious rituals the Greeks had been performing for hundreds of years. For the Greeks, performance was an integral part of all aspects of their life. Athenian democracy involved the entire adult male population, and at several meetings a month on the Pnyx, a hill standing opposite the Acropolis of the city, these men performed speeches in front of thousands to persuade or to inflame. To distill the origins of the “theater” from such a culture of performance is impossible, but at the same time it is easy to see how an art form that focused specifically on the performance of all Athenian customs, laws, rituals, government, and religion attained such heights. This art form was theater.

**MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGINS.** The theater festivals celebrated by the Athenians in the city and rural folk in outlying areas of Attica were all dedicated to the god Dionysus. One of the earliest performers in tragedy was said to have complained that the City Dionysia had nothing to do with Dionysus. In fact, it seems especially appropriate for formal rituals of performance to be dedicated to the mysterious god of wine, fertility, and agricultural growth. Though the name “Dionysus” can be

found in the earliest written form of ancient Greek, Linear B, there is a sense throughout the stories of this god in classical mythology that he was an outsider, a foreigner, essentially “un-Greek” in some fundamental way. Dionysus is related to gods from the Near East and Egypt, such as Osiris, but his presence in the Greek pantheon is no intrusion. While Apollo represented qualities the Athenians prized most—such as rational thought, ordered musical and poetic composition, and civic justice—the Greeks were also aware that human nature is two-fold. For every rational thought, there is an irrational desire. For every beautifully composed paean or song on the lyre, there is a wild and unformed song of pure, raw human emotion. In the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus, the god displays his unpredictable nature and demonstrates how he creates “enthusiasm,” literally “the inspiration of the god,” in his followers. The women who worship him, known as *maenads*, or “mad women,” gave themselves up completely to the intoxicating power of the god, power that could bring ease and comfort from life’s suffering but also brought the consequences of inhibition. An individual could become another person entirely through Dionysiac worship—a person could behave and “act” as another character. The half-man, half-animal creatures known as satyrs represent human nature at its most basic and uncivilized: the satyr lives to satisfy his primal urges for sex, wine, and food and has no thought for others. Thus the Athenians produced dramas written and staged according to ancient and well-defined guidelines, but expressive of the most terrifying aspects of the uncivilized human psyche: lust, betrayal, rage, incest, excruciating desire. The audiences who experienced these dramas were meant to undergo a *catharsis*, a cleansing of the soul. The very process of theatrical production was an essential ritual of life for the Athenians because it demonstrated the reintegration of the savage elements of human nature, represented by Dionysus and his retinue, with the civilized and ordered society defined by the tragic form.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT.** The mighty thalassocracy, or “sea power,” of the Minoans, based on Crete, gave way to the Mycenaeans on the Greek mainland in the mid-seventeenth century B.C.E. The Mycenaeans, whose name comes from the city of Mycenae, built huge palace complexes on the Greek mainland with thick protective walls and ruled through possession of land rather than number of ships. This civilization, from which monumental architecture, magnificent tombs filled with valuable grave gifts, and written documents remain, was wiped out by some kind of catastrophic event around 1100 B.C.E. Greece then entered a period in which there was a widespread deterioration of material culture and

no new cultural production at all. Beginning in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.E., there was a migration from the mainland of Greece to lands in Asia Minor, the islands in the Mediterranean, and Sicily and the southern parts of Italy. During this period of regrowth, poets and artists once again began to create, including the poet known to modern scholars as Homer, who composed two massive epic poems about the Trojan War, which he presented as a cosmic event from Mycenaean times. Other poets composed hymns to various gods in Homeric style. As the Greeks began to trade with merchants from around the Mediterranean, they came into contact with the Phoenicians, a literate Semitic people with a functional system of writing. The Greeks began to adapt this Phoenician alphabet to the Greek language, and literacy spread once more, this time from outlying areas into the mainland. The Greeks began to write down songs previously transmitted orally, and they developed games and competitions, more occasions for the production of art and poetry. The various poetic genres took shape: epic, wedding songs, dirges, choral odes, and poetry for victorious athletes, musicians, and performers. In the sixth century B.C.E., under the rule of Pisistratus, the Athenians began to develop the democratic civilization that modern governments admire and emulate. To celebrate their monumental achievements both in conquest and in culture, they established dramatic festivals and began a building program to demonstrate their supremacy to the world. Although they were almost constantly embroiled in warfare during the century of their greatest accomplishments, they used the strife and suffering that war brings to strengthen their patriotism and their artistic expression, until their patriotism turned to megalomania and their attempts to bring peace inspired instead greed and merciless colonialism.

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DITHYRAMB.** The first performers of songs in praise of Dionysus were said to have been his closest followers, the satyrs. The satyrs played pipes, and the maenads banged on timbrels (tambourine-like drums) in the production of Dionysiac music. Unlike the sober and ordered melodies dedicated to the god Apollo, Dionysiac songs expressed the emotional need to be free from social constraints and conscious rationality. From these earliest musical and verbal expressions of divine ecstasy (literally “a standing outside of oneself”) inspired by Dionysus arose a form of lyric poetry called the *dithyramb*. This word is not Greek and is of unknown origin, but the poetic form became the primary way for a chorus composed of fifty men and boys to praise Dionysus. Arion of Corinth is credited with the development of the dithyramb as an established poetic genre in the seventh century B.C.E., and a poet named

Lasus brought it to Athens. The Athenians embraced it and began including it as part of their dramatic competitions in 509 B.C.E. According to Aristotle in his *Poetics* (fourth century B.C.E.), a poet named Thespis was part of a chorus performing a dithyramb when he decided to step out in front of the chorus and speak lines of his own, thereby “inventing” the actor and the form of tragedy as a whole. In English, a “thespian” is an actor on the stage. Thespis was commonly held as the winner of the first dramatic competition at the City Dionysia around 534 B.C.E. The word “tragedy” is derived from two Greek words meaning “goat-song,” another reference to the earliest forms of Dionysian worship. The goat was sacred to Dionysus because he had been disguised as a goat when he was a child to protect him from the jealous anger of his stepmother Hera. The dithyramb thus became the center of Greek tragedy, which was built upon the foundation of a chorus who sang and danced in between solo songs (monodies) and exchanges of dialogue between characters on the stage.

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## FESTIVALS AND THEATERS

**THE FRAGMENTS OF THEATRICAL CREATION.** Athens was not the only place where plays were written or performed, but after the establishment of the City Dionysia, where formal competitions of drama were held beginning in the late sixth century B.C.E., it was the center of dramatic production. Unfortunately, only a tiny portion of the theatrical output of this time survived. The names Choerilus, Pratinas, and Phrynichus, the first tragic playwright to include female characters in his dramas, in addition to Thespis as predecessors of Aeschylus are known, but all of their works are lost. Of the eighty or ninety plays Aeschylus wrote, only six survive. (The authorship of a possible seventh, the *Prometheus Bound*, is hotly contested; it has been attributed to Aeschylus but also to his son Euphorion, another tragedian.) Sophocles, in his remarkably productive career, wrote some 130 plays, of which only seven are accessible to modern readers. Ion of Chios and Achaëus of Eretria

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE QUEEN IS THE KING**

**INTRODUCTION:** Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, "The Orestes Saga," is the only extant dramatic trilogy remaining from antiquity. It was the venerable tragedian's last production before his death in 458 B.C.E. The satyr play, a farcical and lewd lampoon called *Proteus* which accompanied the trilogy, is lost, however. In these three majestic and powerful dramas, the curse on the house of Atreus, which began with the child-murder and cannibalism of their ancestor Pelops, is finally ended by the young Orestes, the troubled son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Queen Clytemnestra, with her lover, her husband's cousin Aigisthus, has been ruling Argos while Agamemnon was away at the Trojan War, and she is not willing to become submissive to Agamemnon's power again after his return. She is also furious that Agamemnon sacrificed their daughter and came home with a slave-woman, Cassandra, in tow. In this speech, at the end of the first play of the trilogy, *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra gloats over the dead bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra, both of whom she has murdered with her "man-slaying axe." In this passage, the extraordinary imagery and the denseness of Aeschylus' rich poetic voice are on stunning display.

**Clytemnestra:** Since I said many things before to suit my own needs, I am not ashamed now to say just the opposite. For how could one person, planning hateful things for hated enemies who only seemed to be loved ones, build a fence around the nets of suffering so high that no one could jump over it? I had been thinking for a long time about this match to settle an old grudge, and it was a long time coming, but in time it finally came: I stand here where I struck them down, over the deeds I accomplished. In

this way I did it, and I will not deny any of it— my husband did not escape nor did he ward off his doom. I threw a boundless net, like a net used to catch fish, around him, a dreadful mass of a garment. I struck him two times, and with two cries his limbs fell lax, and while he lay there in a heap, I struck him a third time as an offering to Zeus of the Underworld, the redeemer of the dead. And as he fell he released his spirit. Then he breathed out a sharp clot of blood and he sprayed me with a dark mist of bloody dew as I rejoiced just as much as the growing grain rejoices in the god-given sparkling rain when the buds are sprouting. That's the way things are, you elders of the Argives, so rejoice, if you would rejoice. I myself exult in my triumph! If it were appropriate to pour libations over the body, then these things would have been done justly, more than justly. Agamemnon filled the drinking cup of this house with so many curses and evils that he drank it dry when he came home.

**Chorus:** We are horror-struck at your tongue, at your harsh mouth, that glories like that over your husband!

**Clytemnestra:** You are treating me like I am some dim-witted woman! My heart has no fear, and I am speaking to those who know it well. Whether you want to praise me for what I did or censure me, it's all the same to me. Here is Agamemnon, my husband, a corpse, the act of this right hand, the act of a just craftsman. And that's the way it is.

**SOURCE:** Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, in *Aeschyli Septem Quae Supersunt Tragoedias*. Ed. Denys Page (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972): lines 1372–1406. Translated by Lisa Rengo George.

were his contemporaries. Euripides, the youngest of the three great tragedians whose works have survived, produced 92 plays, but only 19 of these made it to modern times. The titles of several other tragedies are known and some fragments from them exist. The names of other playwrights are also known, such as Critias, Plato's uncle and the leader of the notorious "Thirty Tyrants" who controlled Athens briefly after the Peloponnesian War, and Agathon, the host and one of the central figures of Plato's *Symposium*, whose victory at the Lenaia in 416 B.C.E. was the reason for the party.

**DRAMATIC FESTIVALS.** The most important theatrical festivals in Attica during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. were the City or Great Dionysia, the Rural Dionysia, and the Lenaia. The Great Dionysia was held

every year in the month of Elaphebolion, corresponding to March in the modern calendar. Pisistratus either founded or expanded the City Dionysia around 536 B.C.E. by introducing the cult of Dionysus of Eleutherae to the celebration. The Rural Dionysia took place in the month of Poseidon (December), and the Lenaia in the month of Gamelion, or January (in Ionian Greece, the month was known as Lenaion). A special archon (an elected Athenian official) oversaw all aspects of dramatic production at the Dionysia. This archon selected the three tragedians who would present a trilogy of tragedies, not necessarily connected by theme, along with a satyr play, a light-hearted farcical drama, during the days of competition. There were five days allotted for dramatic and choral competition except during the Peloponnesian War, when it



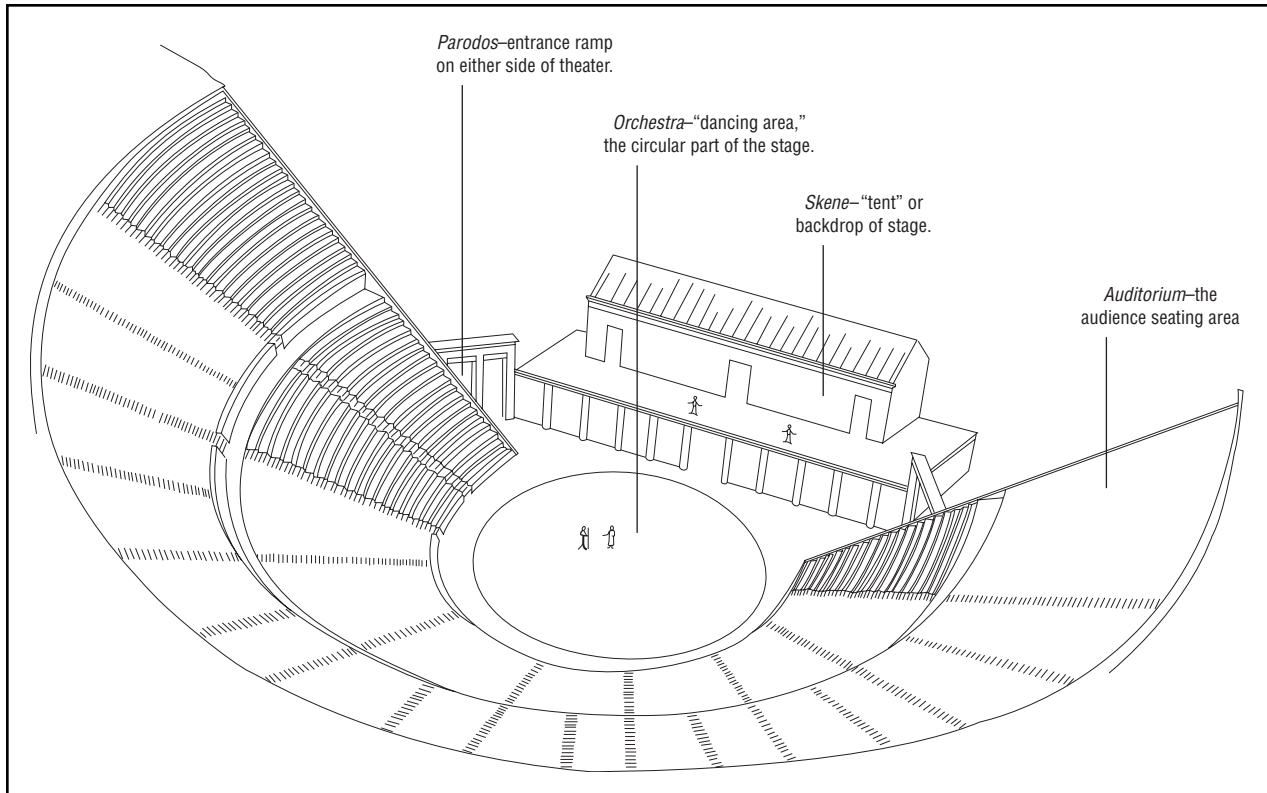


Illustration of a Greek theater. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

was cut back to three days. On the first three days, a tragic trilogy and satyr play were performed, followed by a comedy (beginning in 486 B.C.E.). On the final two days, choral dithyrambs were followed by a comedy. In his *Laws*, Plato suggests that the playwrights read portions of their dramas to the archon who based his choice on these mini-performances. The archon was also responsible for lining up a *choregos* for each production. The *choregos* was a wealthy Athenian citizen who paid for the outfitting and rehearsal of the chorus—the *polis* or city-state of Athens supported the dramatic poets and the leading actors. Playwrights were known to act in their own dramas—Sophocles is said to have stopped acting when his voice became too weak—but as the festivals developed, professional actors were hired. Later, in 449 B.C.E., competitions were held for actors as well as dramatists. Before the theatrical productions proper began, a *proagon* or “pre-contest” was held in which the playwrights appeared with the casts of their plays to explain the sources and themes of their dramas. In a time before theatrical placards or programs, it would have been most useful to have some guidance along these lines from the playwright himself. Athens was divided into ten *phylai* or tribes, and one man was chosen as a judge from each one of the ten. The ivy wreath be-

stowed upon the first-prize winner signified the admiration and adulation of the entire Athenian populace.

#### THE ENACTMENT OF THE DIONYSIAC FESTIVAL.

The City Dionysia began with a lengthy procession that reenacted the original journey of Dionysus from Eleutherae to Athens. The Athenians maintained an image of Dionysus within the ancient temple precinct of the god on the south slope of the Acropolis, where a permanent theater was constructed under Pisistratus in the sixth century B.C.E. A few days before the festival procession, this image was taken to a temple of Dionysus outside the city, and during the opening festivities, the Athenians carried it by torchlight back to its rightful home. The *choregoi* marched in fancy costume along with citizens who carried large phalluses, which signified the agricultural aspects of the god’s character, to the temple precinct. There the ten generals, elected officials of the city, performed sacrifices and libations. Following the *proagon*, the five days of competition began.

**THE STRUCTURE OF THEATRICAL SPACE.** The space for performance and the manner of performance were well-defined by the time tragedy reached its peak in Athens in the fifth century B.C.E. The structure of the Greek theater actually influenced the way actors per-



A view of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus on the south-west slope of the Acropolis in Athens. The seats have been replaced in the modern period. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS, INC. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



View of the Greek theater at Epidaurus, the sanctuary of Asclepius. 4th century B.C.E. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.



Actor making man's head disappear in illusion, red-figure crater, 375–350 B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO NAZIONALE TARANTO/DAGLI ORTI.

formed the dramas. Originally, the performance space was probably little more than a flat semi-circular area where the chorus performed the dithyramb, next to a sloping hillside where spectators could sit with an unobstructed view of the show. The flat area for choral performance was called the *orchestra*, which derives from a Greek word for “dance” rather than the production of music. At the back of the orchestral space stood an altar to Dionysus, for whom the dithyramb was sung. On either side of the orchestra was a path, called a *parodos*. Both spectators and actors used these entranceways to enter and exit the theatrical space. As first one and then two and more actors were added, the *skene*, meaning simply “tent,” was added on a small platform behind the orchestra. This simple hut served as a dressing and waiting room for the actors as well as the primary stage setting of the drama, whether a palace, temple, cave, or tomb was required. The *skene* soon transformed into a permanent building with a number of doors, which would

open into the performance space. The *skene* could be painted to convey more vividly the location of the drama. Inside the *skene* was housed an important piece of equipment called the *ekkyklema*, a platform on runners that could be rolled out of the *skene* at critical moments, such as when the display of dead or dying characters murdered off stage was necessary. A crane-like device, called the *mechane*, was employed to display gods in the heavens or humans hovering above the stage, as when Medea makes her escape in Helios' chariot at the end of Euripides' *Medea*. The Latin phrase *deus ex machina*, literally “god from the machine,” refers to the appearance of a god via the *mechane* who offers a divine solution to the human entanglements in the drama. Seating was erected in the hollowed out hillside for up to some 15,000 spectators at the Theater of Dionysus, with wooden benches for the common folk and specially reserved stone chairs for important officials. The acoustics of such an arrangement are excellent, and some of Greece's best pre-



Ancient Greek actors wearing masks and dressing as old men, "In Camei" written on image, copper engraving from antique cameo. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

served ancient theaters, such as the one at Epidaurus south of Athens, remain in use for modern performances. All theatrical performances took place in daylight, beginning at dawn and running until dusk. The thousands of theater-goers would have been perfectly visible to their neighbors, and would have had to eat, drink, talk to each other, and move around during the lengthy shows. This level of audience visibility would have created a much different atmosphere than the typically hushed and darkened theater in which modern viewers commonly watch dramatic spectacles.

**ELEMENTS OF PERFORMANCE.** Because the structure of the Greek theater remained static, acting style conformed to the theatrical space and exploited its most attractive features. All actors were male, and some men and boys seem to have specialized in performing female roles although most would have had to play roles of both genders. Because there were only two and sometimes three actors, each would have had to take multiple roles. This was more easily accomplished by the use of theatrical masks and costumes that covered the body completely. The mask had a wig attached to it and a large opening at the mouth, perhaps to amplify the voice. The actors also wore a common lace-up boot called a

*cothurnos*, to which high platforms were added in the Hellenistic period to provide greater visibility. Thus, acting style could not be subtle. No facial expressions or small gestures could be seen by the audience, and stage whispers or low voices would not have been heard. It must also be remembered that ancient theater was more like opera than a modern stage play, since the chorus and actors sang many of their parts, accompanied by dance, and even spoken dialogue was constructed in complex poetic rhythms called "meters" that influenced the method of delivery. Actors employed large gestures that became iconic. An actor's skills were expressed by the emotive qualities of his voice, and his rhetorical techniques, the same ones orators used in the government assembly and public forums. The plots of most tragedies were taken from the stories now known as "mythology." In fact, Plato in his *Republic* called Homer "the first tragic poet," not only because his subject matter was revisited in tragedy but because of the many dramatic interactions between major characters in the epic. Only a few plays that are known were not based on myth—Aeschylus' *Persians*, reflecting his experiences in the Persian War and produced in 472 B.C.E., is one of them.

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## TYPES OF GREEK DRAMA

**TRAGEDY TAKES SHAPE.** During the sixth century B.C.E., as Greece awoke from the dark years of illiteracy and cultural deterioration, tragedy as a dramatic form began to take shape. In a performance space that consisted of a central location, known as the *skene* ("tent"), a half-circle called the "orchestra" in front for the chorus, and entrances on either side, tragic drama was first performed. In *Poetics* Aristotle describes how Thespis added an actor to the chorus who would deliver a prologue relating the content of the play and speeches separate from the choral songs. Aeschylus is said to have added a second actor, thereby allowing an exchange of dialogue between two characters, despite the fact that in

some of his surviving plays, the main actor, or “protagonist,” still speaks primarily to the chorus. Aeschylus’ younger contemporary, Sophocles, added a third actor and painted scenery and expanded the chorus from twelve men to fifteen. The movement of the tragic form can thus be seen as the growth of choral song and dance to a series of choral songs relating to spoken interludes of dialogic narration of a story delivered by two or even three actors. The Greek word for actor is *hypocrites*, meaning “interpreter” or “responder,” which suggests that the actor’s earliest role may have been to explicate the cryptic and elusive odes performed by the chorus. In its fully developed form, tragedy followed a generic form. There were two basic styles of communication in a tragedy: the choral ode in poetic meter with musical accompaniment; and spoken dialogue, also in meter, but without music. An actor could perform a solo song, or monody, set to music. Exchanges between an actor and the chorus were also written in special meters. A tragedy usually began with a prologue, spoken by one or two actors, which described the setting and the circumstances of the play. The chorus then entered, singing and dancing, and it remained in the orchestra for the entire drama. Then a series of “episodes,” sometimes culminating in a central *agon*, or debate between irrevocably opposed sides, followed. The chorus divided the episodes with songs called *stasima* (the plural of *stasimon*, meaning “standing in one place”). Sometimes the choral songs were obscure and had only the most arcane connections to the plot of the play, but at other times the chorus sang plaintively about the troubles that swirled around them or rejoiced, ironically, in the peace and happiness that can be foreseen, but which will not materialize. After the last *stasimon* came the *exodus* or final scene and exit, during which the action of the drama was summed up or its results were delineated. Some standard features of tragedy, which appear in some but not all of surviving tragedies, and sometimes in altered forms, are as follows: a chorus of powerless individuals (the elderly, foreigners, women, even slaves); violent action that takes place offstage and is described in detail by a hurried minor character, perhaps a messenger or household member; and a number of silent supernumeraries on stage, such as heralds, guards, servants, children, and other non-speaking roles as necessary.

**TRAGIC PLOTS.** Most tragedies drew on a fund of shared lore that bound Greek-speaking peoples together. We refer to these stories as “myths” and “legends.” Stories of the creation of the cosmos and the battles for control of it; the Olympian gods and the formation of their cults; the many children of the gods, both mortal and

immortal; and their numerous tales of daring and adventure, love and conquest, great journeys, the Trojan war and its aftermath all resurfaced in tragedy as settings for the great fifth century B.C.E. tragedians to dramatize the problems facing their city and the eternal questions of human life. The heroes of mythology were called upon to face danger and repel threats by dint of physical force and mental acuity: they literally voyaged to the ends of the earth and even into the Underworld itself to face down monsters and restore order to their society. In comparison, the heroes of tragedy must still confront danger and take perilous journeys, but these are often represented by the internal struggles of the hero as he or she ruthlessly seeks the truth and determines to find answers. The tragic hero, like the hero of myth, takes the ills of his or her society, often represented by the family unit, upon himself and works tirelessly to bring resolution. Human beings must face the horrors of life: the cruelty of divine will; the greed, lust, and brutality of human interaction; the desire for revenge or power; and the senseless suffering people undergo and inflict on each other. In most tragedies, a terrible deed or event is the catalyst, and we watch as the characters face ultimate catastrophe or, in attempting to thwart it, create new misfortune for themselves. Tragedies did not depend on suspense, since audiences knew well the plots of the stories treated by the playwrights. The excitement and power of the tragedy lay instead in the manner in which the story unfolded, the language employed, and the inevitable realizations of the characters. The Athenian audience would also have felt very deeply the associations the playwright drew between the adversity of the noble family on the stage and their own pressing issues. When Sophocles’ audience was presented with the specter of the plague threatening Thebes at the beginning of *Oedipus the King*, they would have shuddered in acknowledgment, since a horrendous plague struck Athens at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, during the time period this tragedy would have been performed. Matters of individual rights, tyranny, the possibility of justice, and the right way to live were the subjects treated by Athens’ philosophers, politicians, and historians as well as their playwrights. For the ancient Greeks, divisions of genre were not that strict: tragedy was meant to educate, to pose difficult questions, and to offer potential solutions as well as to entertain.

**THE SATYR PLAY.** After an audience at the Great Dionysia had experienced several hours of the intense performance of tragedies, they were eased back into daily reality by means of a “satyr play,” a coarse and farcical play that followed the formula of tragedy. The same play-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX

**INTRODUCTION:** Sophocles presented the trilogy that contained *Oedipus the King* in 430 B.C.E. when Athens was in the throes of a devastating plague. In the second year of the Peloponnesian War against Sparta, all the residents of rural Attica around the city of Athens were forced to abandon their homes and farms and to crowd into the city. The poor sanitation allowed this plague to spread quickly and thousands died. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Sophocles presents the ancient city of Thebes in his play as overwhelmed by plague as well. Many scholars consider *Oedipus the King* to be nearly perfect in its structure, its dramatic irony, and its presentation of the tragic hero, whose very strengths—his relentless pursuit of truth and justice, his strength of will, and his refusal to compromise—bring about his tragic downfall. Oedipus was left to die on a hillside as a baby because of a prophecy that foretold he would kill his father and marry his mother. In this scene, Oedipus confronts the servant who rescued him and the messenger who raised him, and finally realizes the awful truth: *he* is the cause of the plague—his father’s murderer and his mother’s husband!

**Messenger:** Come on now, do you recognize a certain child you gave me to raise as my own son?

**Servant:** What? Why are you asking about that?

**Messenger:** This man here is the one, friend, who was a young child then.

**Servant:** May ruin destroy you! Why won’t you be quiet?

**Oedipus:** Ah, don’t rebuke him, old man, since your words need to be upbraided more than his do.

**Servant:** What am I doing wrong, best of masters?

**Oedipus:** You are not acknowledging the child, the one he inquires about.

**Servant:** He doesn’t know what he’s talking about. He’s on the wrong track.

**Oedipus:** If you won’t talk as a favor, then you will talk while in pain!

**Servant:** Please, by the gods, don’t hurt an old man like me.

**Oedipus:** Will someone pull his arms behind his back?

**Servant:** Oh no, don’t! What do you want to find out?

**Oedipus:** Did you give the child to this man who is asking questions?

**Servant:** Yes, I did. I wish I had died on that very day.

**Oedipus:** You will get there unless you tell the truth.

**Servant:** Things will be much worse if I do talk.

**Oedipus:** It seems that this man is looking for a delay.

**Servant:** Not, I, sir, I just said that I gave him the child a long time ago.

**Oedipus:** Where did you get this child? In your household or from somewhere else?

**Servant:** It didn’t belong to me—I got it from someone else.

**Oedipus:** From which one of these citizens and from what household?

**Servant:** Oh by the gods, master, please don’t ask me any more.

**Oedipus:** You will die if I have to ask you this again!

**Servant:** He was one of the household of Laius.

**Oedipus:** A slave, or a relative of his?

**Servant:** Ah! I am about to say a dreadful thing!

**Oedipus:** And I’m about to hear something dreadful. But it must be heard.

**Servant:** He was said to be Laius’ child. Really, Jocasta inside could tell best what the situation is.

**Oedipus:** Did she give him to you?

**Servant:** Yes, my lord.

**Oedipus:** Why?

**Servant:** So I could kill him.

**Oedipus:** The wretched woman who bore him?

**Servant:** She was afraid of the evil prophecy.

**Oedipus:** What prophecy?

**Servant:** That the child would kill his own father.

**Oedipus:** How did you happen to give him to this old man?

**Servant:** I pitied the baby, master, and I thought he would carry him away to another land, where he himself was from. But he saved him for the worst fate. If you are the man he’s talking about, you were born cursed.

**Oedipus:** AH! Oh my god! Everything is clear now! O light of day, I am looking at you now for the last time!

**SOURCE:** Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, in *Sophocles Fabulae*. Ed. A. C. Pearson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924): lines 1142–1185. Translated by Lisa Rengo George.

wright who produced the tragic trilogy also produced this satyr drama, which may have echoed some of the themes raised in his tragedies. Aristotle believed that satyr drama was the genesis of tragedy, although others think that satyric drama arose as a separate theatrical form. The playwright Pratinas, a predecessor of Aeschylus, turned this ancient cult performance consisting of a group of satyrs who sang and danced in honor of their patron into a dramatic form, with a chorus comprised of actors dressed as men with horse ears and tails led by Silenus, the chief satyr. In the fourth century B.C.E., artists began to represent satyrs as half-goats rather than half-horses. The standard costume for the actors in a satyr play would have been quite obscene from a modern perspective: over a typical bodysuit, they wore short, rough pants with a very large and erect penis attached in front and a horsetail attached behind. Masks portrayed the “ugly” facial features of the uncivilized man-beast: balding, rounded foreheads with snub noses, pointy ears, and black hair and beards. Silenus, as their leader, wore a similar mask with older features and white hair. Although Pratinas wrote over thirty satyr plays, none survive. There are very few examples of this genre: Euripides’ *Cyclops*, essentially the same story Homer tells in the *Odyssey* about Odysseus’ encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemus (with the addition of a chorus of satyrs), is the only complete satyr play to survive. Fragments from Aeschylus’ *Net-Men* and Sophocles’ *Trackers* also survive.

**ORIGINS OF GREEK COMEDY.** In ancient Greece, a *komos* was a drunken parade of carousing revelers who staggered through the streets of their town dancing and singing bawdy and insulting songs. The same form can be seen in the Dionysiac processions that began the theatrical festivals. This familiar kind of inebriated group behavior gradually took shape as a genuine dramatic form, which followed many of the elements of the tragic genre: a chorus, a limited number of speaking parts for actors, the same theatrical structure, and the same modes of production. Comedy, however, as a latecomer to the dramatic competitions, had several unique characteristics as well. The level of invective and insult in comedy is related to the similarly-themed poetics of authors like Hipponax and Archilochus, who flourished during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. during the diaspora from the mainland, as well as to the types of verbally abusive songs sung at the Eleusinian Mysteries, the secretive cult worship of the goddess Demeter, centered at Eleusis, a town south of Athens. Comedy was introduced to the City Dionysia around 487 B.C.E. and was performed after the tragic trilogy and the satyr play. At this time a comic poet named Magnes was on the rise, and for some time he alone remained prominent in the genre,

winning a total of eleven first prizes at the City Dionysia. Magnes was particularly well known for the wonderful musical accompaniments to his plays as well as for his imitations of barnyard animals. In the middle of the century, other comedic poets began to gain prominence: Cratinus, held to be a great drinker; Crates, whom Aristotle said invented actual plots for his comedies rather than producing a series of caricatures; Pherecrates; and Eupolis. Aristophanes is the only comic playwright whose works have survived. Modern scholars know more than 32 titles of his plays, and eleven of them have survived along with some fragments. It is clear from the writings of Aristotle and other historians that playwrights did not write in both the comic and tragic genre.

**THE STRUCTURE OF OLD COMEDY.** Modern scholars must rely on the plays of Aristophanes to determine the structure of ancient Greek comedy also known as “Old Comedy”—those plays written and produced between the mid-sixth century and late fifth century B.C.E. Most of Aristophanes’ plays begin with a prologue spoken by an actor or the playwright himself. In the prologue the author could air grievances, talk about his audience or the government, and describe the circumstances of the comedy to follow. Next the 24-man comic chorus—rather than the twelve- or fifteen-man tragic chorus—entered singing and dancing, often dressed in wild and fantastical costumes. The chorus introduced the audience to the comedy proper and outlined the setting for the play. The chorus usually took sides, either for or against the hero of the play. The *agon*, as in a tragedy, was the centerpiece of the play, in which the two opposing sides argued for their cases, with additions by the chorus. The first speaker in the debate was almost always the loser. The word *parabasis* means “a stepping aside,” and was the time in the play when the chorus, after the actors had exited the stage, held the theatrical space alone and, performing a special song and dance unconnected to the rest of the plot, addressed the audience directly. After this, a series of scenes called “episodes” took place, which illustrated the results of the central debate. Finally, the play ended with a rowdy celebration of marriage or reconciliation.

**FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND OBSCENITY IN OLD COMEDY.** Just as the masks worn by comic actors were grotesquely exaggerated, and their costumes were excessively padded with comically enlarged genitalia, so also were the types of humor, both physical and verbal, garish and vulgar. Athenian democracy guaranteed liberty to its citizens (adult males only), which included freedom of speech (*parrhesia* in ancient Greek). This freedom to speak one’s mind, whether in a public assembly or in a private

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ARISTOTLE'S LECTURE NOTES**

**INTRODUCTION:** Aristotle most likely wrote down his analytical work *Poetics* sometime in the 340s B.C.E.—at any rate, he apparently used this work as notes for teaching in his own school, the Lyceum, which he founded in 335 B.C.E. This collection of “lecture notes” is a unique set of writings; the earliest extant work that treats poetic writing as an art and employs a distinct set of theory and criticism in its analysis. Aristotle set out to define the genres of poetry; in essence, to propose “laws” about its structure and purpose. Poetry was of paramount significance in ancient Greek culture, and who better to tackle it scientifically than the great pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great? Aristotle may sometimes seem hostile to drama, but his observations have influenced the way all scholars since his time have seen, read, and examined the ancient art of stagecraft. In *Poetics* V–IX, Aristotle describes the origins of comedy and tragedy, and lays out his theory that a successful tragedy must have a beginning, middle, and end in the course of a single day. In addition, he discusses types of plots and other integral elements of ancient epic and drama.

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**SOURCE:** Aristotle, *Poetics*. Trans. Stephen Halliwell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995): 45–47; 55–63.

gathering, naturally applied to Athenian playwrights as well. Therefore, the comic poets like Aristophanes were perfectly free to criticize or mock any aspect of their city-state: public figures, wars, laws, treaties, citizens' rights, intellectual movements—all could be, and frequently were, treated in satiric form on the comic stage. Even the gods and religious rituals could be parodied, though Aristophanes never presents the gods with serious skepticism. Excretive humor and obscenity were rampant in Old Comedy as well. Aristophanic comedy is all-inclusive and included elements that every level of the *demos* (the citizen population) could enjoy, from highest political satire to the most juvenile jokes about flatulence and bodily functions.

**ROLE OF WOMEN.** In ancient Greece, wealthy women led lives that would be considered restrictive by modern standards. It is likely that women in poorer families had more freedom, but unfortunately there is not much information about the lives of the poor. The vast majority of evidence about the lives of women in antiquity comes from sources, objects, and monuments created by men, from a male perspective. Young girls of noble heritage were educated mostly at home, in the arts of housekeeping, weaving, and food preparation and preservation. Young women remained in their fathers' households until their marriage, usually at the age of fourteen or so. Married women must have spent con-



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SPEAKING ILL OF THE DEAD**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Athenian demagogue Cleon, who ruled Athens for six years after the death of Pericles during the Peloponnesian War, was one of the comic playwright Aristophanes' worst enemies. Aristophanes criticized Cleon in his first play, *Babylonians*, for his brutal decision to kill all the adult males on Mytilene after Athens conquered that island in 427 B.C.E. Cleon responded by attempting unsuccessfully to prosecute Aristophanes for treason. Aristophanes continued to mock Cleon, even after the ruler's death in 422 B.C.E. In his play *Peace* (421 B.C.E.), the Athenians are awaiting a peace treaty with the Spartans. The comic hero Trygaeus, who is starving because of the food shortage in Athens during the war, decides to emulate the mythological hero Bellerophon, who rode the winged horse Pegasus. Instead of a fantastical horse, however, Trygaeus uses a fattened dung-beetle for his journey to Mt. Olympus. When he arrives at Zeus' palace, Hermes informs him that the gods have moved out because of the war, and that War himself is in charge and has imprisoned Peace in a cave. The following excerpt highlights the metatheatrical aspects of Aristophanes' comedies. "Metatheater" involves the display of knowledge by the actors during a performance that they are in fact merely performing a play with an audience.

**SOURCE:** Aristophanes, *Peace*, in *The Context of Ancient Drama*. Eds. Eric Csapo and William J. Slater (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994): 182.

siderable amounts of time in the *oikos* or private family space, and lived in special secluded areas. This does not mean that women were never permitted to go about in public: women were active participants in religious rituals, and they undoubtedly visited friends and family, shopped for food and household necessities, and attended public events. But women did not have public lives as men did. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that female characters are featured so prominently in Greek tragedy and occupy center stage in some of Aristophanes' comedies. In order to understand this, it must be remembered that the creative setting of the theater was itself sacred space, within the temple precinct of Dionysus, and the performances reflected and commented upon Greek culture by artistically depicting events that could occur in real life. Tragedies borrowed their subject matter from mythology and utilized the family unit, at least in part, as a microcosm for the functioning city-state. Since women were central to family life, they could represent certain values on stage that women in society may not have been allowed to articulate. For instance, Antigone in Sophocles' play of the

same name represents a strict religious view and upholds the duties of individual families rather than the laws of the state, in direct opposition to her uncle Creon, the male head not only of her own family but also of the state itself. In Euripides' play, *Medea*, a foreigner and suspected witch, eloquently expresses the hardship she has suffered at the hands of Jason, a Greek hero, and even gets away with multiple murders, including the killing of her own children. On the comic stage, the line between fantasy and reality is blurred, sometimes even non-existent. The requirements of the stage necessitated that all female roles be played by male actors. Aristophanes enjoyed playing with this convention by having male characters disguise themselves as women, as in the *Women at the Thesmophoria*, and by having female characters, already being played by men, disguise themselves as men to attend a political gathering in *Assembly-Goers*. Just as in tragedy, women were an accepted part of the *polis*, and could express political and social discontent through their behavior. In *Lysistrata*, the women of Athens and Sparta, in despair about the length of the Peloponnesian War and the absence of the menfolk, de-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MEDEA, SERIAL KILLER**

**INTRODUCTION:** The life of Euripides, the youngest of the three greatest Athenian tragedians, spanned most of the fifth century B.C.E., a period of unequalled cultural production in literature, drama, art and architecture, and politics. Euripides was often accused of focusing on marginalized characters—women, foreigners, slaves—in his tragedies, to the exclusion of the noble people tragedy was supposed to portray as didactic examples to the Athenian people. But as a result of this, we can see Athenian attitudes and cultural problems of concern to the democracy, such as in his masterpiece, *Medea*. The story was part of mythology: the hero Jason must capture the Golden Fleece from the distant kingdom of Colchis on the Black Sea in order to regain his rightful kingship in Iolcos. In Colchis, the beautiful daughter of the king, Medea, is charmed by Aphrodite into falling in love with the dashing young hero, and she assists him in his quest. In some versions, she murders her own younger brother and chops his body into pieces, which she throws overboard as the Argonauts make their escape from Colchis. In this play, Euripides seems to ask the question, “What would happen to Medea, a spooky foreign woman, supposedly possessed of eerie magical powers, once she returned with her Greek husband to Greece?” During the fifth century in Athens, no Athenian citizen was allowed to marry a foreigner—if he did so, the marriage was not considered legal in Athens. In the following scene, the end of the play, Medea has killed the king of Corinth and his daughter, to whom Jason was betrothed, as well as her own children with Jason, as revenge for being cast out unceremoniously from Jason’s life. Medea is speaking to Jason from the chariot of the Sun, provided for her escape, with the dead bodies of her children on board.

**Jason:** But may the Fury (a horrid female monster who pursues people who kill family members) and murderous Justice destroy you because of what you did to the children!

**Medea:** (gloating savagely) Which god or divine being will hear you, you oath-breaker and liar?

**Jason:** Oh my god, you disgusting child-murderer!

**Medea:** Go home and bury your “legal wife” [i.e. the king’s daughter].

**Jason:** I’m going, deprived of both my children.

**Medea:** Don’t grieve yet—wait until you’re old.

**Jason:** O dearest children!

**Medea:** Dearest to their mother, not to you!

**Jason:** And you murdered them!

**Medea:** I did it to hurt you.

**Jason:** Ah, the pain! Oh wretched me, I long to kiss the soft mouths of my children!

**Medea:** *Now* you speak to them, *now* you show them affection—not so long ago you pushed them away.

**Jason:** In the name of the gods, allow me to touch just once more the gentle faces of my sons.

**Medea:** No! Your plea is cast on the wind!

**Jason:** O Zeus, do you hear these things, how I am driven away, how much I suffer at the hands of this horrible child-killing lioness? But no matter what, as much as it is possible and I am able, I will grieve for these things and I will call on the gods, making the divinities my witnesses, that after slaughtering my children, you are preventing me from touching their skin, and from giving their bodies a proper burial, bodies which I, their father, should never have had to see destroyed by you.

**Chorus:** Zeus, master of many gods on Olympus, the gods bring to pass many things unexpectedly! Justice was not done, but instead a god found the means of the unjust! In this way, this situation has been resolved.

**SOURCE:** Euripides, *Medea*, in *Euripidis Fabulae*. Ed. Gilbert Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902): lines 1386–1425. Translated by Lisa Rengo George.

clare a sex strike in order to hasten a resolution to the conflict. The fantastical element of comedy can make allowances for such an event as a metaphor for the Athenians’ dissatisfaction with their political leadership.

**MIDDLE COMEDY.** After the Peloponnesian War ended in 404 B.C.E., the zenith of Athenian creativity passed as well. As first the Spartans and then the Macedonians gained ascendancy, Athens continued its cultural production but on a lesser scale. A canon of tragedies was

established and revivals of these plays were performed, but no new tragedies were written. As Athenian democracy faded, so did its civic freedoms, and the comic poets were compelled to tone down the overtly political content in their plays. This period defined the transition from “Old” Comedy to “Middle” Comedy, a term possibly coined by Aristophanes of Byzantium, the librarian at Alexandria, to describe the comedies created between 404 and 321 B.C.E. Some scholars have seen the beginnings of Middle

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MURDER AND THE COMIC EVOLUTION**

**INTRODUCTION:** Platonius was a late Hellenistic writer who, in his work *On the Differences of the Comedies*, set out to explain the evolution of ancient Greek comedy from “Old” to “Middle” to “New” by relying on the questionable theory that the Athenian general Alcibiades had murdered the comic poet Eupolis because of slander, and thereby created the widespread threat of prosecution among poets. Platonius aimed at explicating the particular differences during the three periods—the evolution from the political toward the domestic, the decline in caustic satire, and the loss of the chorus. Platonius owes a debt in his explanation to Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*.

**SOURCE:** Platonius, *On the Differences of the Comedies*, in *The Context of Ancient Drama*. Eds. Eric Csapo and William J. Slater (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994): 172–173.

Comedy in the romantic tragedies of Euripides, like *Ion* and *Helen*, and in the later comedies of Aristophanes, including the *Assembly-Goers* and *Wealth*. The material becomes less inherently political and much more broadly-based. The role of the chorus is diminished substantially; the *parabasis* is completely absent, and only occasional songs meant for the chorus are indicated. Most of the names of authors and fragments of so-called Middle Comedy that survive come from the work of one author: the *Educated Dinner-Party*, written by Athenaeus

around 200 C.E., and no complete examples of Middle Comedy exist after Aristophanes. Hence assumptions must be made about the content of Middle Comedy based on the comments of ancient scholars and the titles and fragmentary remains, but even these extrapolations are telling. Although the political subject matter may be less explicit and the obscenity and scatological humor less evident, there still seems to have been a wider range of plot-types in Middle Comedy than there came to be in the last stage of ancient comedy known as “New” Comedy. Play-

wrights still wrote political plays parodying public officials and intellectuals like Plato and the Pythagoreans. Mythological lampoons were still popular, especially when figures from mythology were placed in more contemporary settings. The riotous celebratory feasts featured at the end of many Old Comedy plays are found in Middle and New Comedy as well, and the theme of *anagnorisis* (“recognition”) figured prominently in many Middle comedies. This type of “recognition” plot often involved a child separated from his or her parents at birth (sometimes by exposure), who is later recognized by the real parents by means of tokens, specific knowledge, or the child’s name. Contemporary mores, characteristics, and manners were also satirized, according to some of the references to figures like the “criticizer,” “lyre-player,” “shoemaker,” and the “lover of Thebes.” Plays about daily family life (romantic entanglements, debts, conflicts between generations) as well as more alarming themes (such as scam artists, illegitimate children, and rapes) were popular in the New Comedy of Greece and later Rome; they are also recognizable in Middle Comedy, as were stock figures like the sycophant, the prostitute and the pimp, the crabby cook, the boastful soldier, grumpy old men, and amorous young men. Athenaeus mentions nearly sixty playwrights and over 800 plays belonging to the period of Middle Comedy; some of the most well-known authors were Alexis, Eubulus, and Anaxandrides.

**NEW COMEDY.** The period of “New” Comedy began in the fourth century B.C.E. but its peak was in the mid-third century B.C.E. The names of more than eighty playwrights who were writing in the late fourth and third centuries B.C.E. and an assortment of fragments survive, but many of them are unidentifiable. The best-known names of this era are Menander, Diphilus, Philemon, Posidippus, and Apollodorus. Although much of their work was lost during the Byzantine era (seventh–eighth centuries C.E.) because their Greek was considered inferior, in twentieth-century excavations in Egypt, archaeologists uncovered several significant fragments, and one nearly complete play of Menander, to whom the Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence were indebted for many of their “adapted” plots. Plautus also named Diphilus and Philemon as sources for some of his plays. The themes of New Comedy are recognizable from Middle Comedy: the plots focus on family life and its daily complications, and include many of the stock characters that were fixed by the playwrights of Middle Comedy. The chorus, whose role was already diminishing in Middle Comedy, was reduced to providing musical intervals between the five acts of the play. New Comedy was originally written and performed in Athens, and its focus is the law and mores of Athens, particularly in regards to citizenship and marriage

laws. One could not become a naturalized Athenian citizen: both parents had to be proven Athenian citizens in order to pass the privileges and duties of citizenship on to their children. New Comedy often addressed social problems like casual rape and resultant pregnancy, children separated from their parents and lost, and love between citizens and “foreigners,” all of which ultimately arrived at the question of legal marriage. Lost children and victimized young women had to be revealed as real Athenian citizens by means of the “recognition” plot, possession of mementos, and other devices, in order to resolve the plot happily with a celebration of marriage. The topics treated in the comedies had broad enough appeal, however, that the plays were popular all over the Greek world despite their Athenian focus. In addition to plots about love, New Comedy treated fundamental social conflicts—between parents and children, rich and poor, neighbors, and city and rural folks. Menander was especially aware of problems of bigotry, misunderstanding, and lack of tolerance, as can be seen from the subjects found in surviving fragments. New Comedy remained popular for hundreds of years, as Plautus and Terence continued the tradition in their plays, which borrowed the Athenian plots but translated them into Roman plays.

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## THE BEGINNING OF ROMAN THEATER

**GREEK INFLUENCES.** The period between the death of Alexander the Great of Macedon (323 B.C.E.) and the beginnings of the Roman Empire (31 B.C.E.) is known to scholars as the Hellenistic era. Even though Athens had undergone a major political downfall, its cultural production remained steady, and its influence on first the Etruscans, from the region of Etruria in northern Italy, and later the Romans is incalculable. The Greeks continued to be highly invested in theater and its performance. Around 300 B.C.E., an actor's union, called the Artists of Dionysus, was established throughout Greece and other Hellenistic sovereignties, a sign of the continuing attraction of the presentation of Greek tragic and comic drama. This powerful guild functioned as a religious organization that was politically independent, with its own priests and sanctuaries (of the god Dionysus) as well as their own elected officials. This was the last era that actors would enjoy such privilege and protection, since performers of all kinds were eventually disenfranchised under Roman law. The Greeks had colonies in southern Italy and Sicily since Homer's time, and they built many permanent performance spaces based on Greek prototypes. Syracuse on Sicily had a theater dating from the fifth century B.C.E., and many other archaeological remains have been excavated throughout the area of colonization. Acting troupes toured the region often, and revivals of ancient plays by authors like Euripides and Aristophanes were popular. In the western colonies, another tradition developed as well: the *phlyax* play, a farcical genre in which tales from myth and everyday life were performed on a special type of stage, with grotesque masks and obscenely padded costumes recalling those worn in Old Comedy, and perhaps involving extemporization and lewd action. A number of vases from this region and era survive depicting the performance of *phlyakes*, and it is from these that most of the modern knowledge about the genre comes. Beginning in the third century B.C.E., a poet named Rhinthon from Tarentum began to write *phlyax* plays as well. The stage consisted of a raised wooden platform covered by a roof and decorated with painted scenery, altars, porches, and other elements necessary for the depiction of the play. It is quite likely that the Romans were influenced far more by these bawdy farces than they were by the performances of "high" drama like tragedy and Old Comedy, but both kinds of theater were well established in Italy.

**ETRUSCAN INFLUENCES.** The Etruscans, an indigenous people from the north of Italy who had power over Rome until the late sixth century B.C.E., seem to have been aware of Greek drama to a greater extent than the

early Romans were. There is much artistic evidence for Etruscan shows, since various performers like musicians, dancers, actors wearing masks, and tumblers, as well as audiences, are found in wall paintings. Etruscan vases from the late sixth century B.C.E. depict performers dressed as satyrs, leading scholars to posit that satyr drama, which was developing in Athens during this period, was the form of theater that most affected the Etruscans, since the satyr play combined coarse farce with a religious element. The Roman historian Livy (59 B.C.E.–17 C.E.) reported that the Etruscans were the first to introduce enacted performance to the Romans in the mid-fourth century B.C.E. Livy, however, was obsessed with identifying "firsts" in Roman history, as evidenced even by the title of his work, *From the Foundation of the City*, and as a result may have exaggerated a bit. The satyr play would probably have appealed to the Romans more than other types of formal drama due to native rituals relating to the harvest that included satirical and vulgar jokes, songs and dances, and good-natured abuse and mockery. Whether the Etruscans were truly the first to introduce acted shows to the Romans or not, their influence was prevalent not only in the lively arts but also in the way the Romans structured their society and government.

**ITALIAN INFLUENCES.** Existing primary sources for early forms of Italian performance are the historian Livy and the Augustan poet Horace (65–8 B.C.E.). Horace traced the development of "Fescennine" poetry to early harvest or wedding celebrations involving sacrifices, libations, and an exchange of playful insults, which Horace says degenerated into cruelty and abusive slander (it was a common lament in Latin letters that society had deteriorated since the innocent days of the early Republic). The term "Fescennine" may derive from the Etruscan town of Fescenna, apparently a place known for these verses, or from the Latin word *fascinum*, having to do with the phallus. This agricultural ritual recalls the legendary origins of Greek drama from lascivious songs and dances, and parades of phallic representations, in honor of Dionysus. Fescennine verses may have developed into an early kind of dramatic performance involving improvisation, rude humor, and rustic music. There was another type of farcical performance already developing in the region of Atella, Campania, called the *Atellanae* or "Atellan farces." The peoples of this region spoke Oscan, an Italic language, and so Latin speakers were unable to understand any of the dialogue in these lampoons, although the mimetic gestures of the actors would have been clear enough. In fact, most Atellan farce lacked extensive dialogue anyway, and relied more on crude physical comedy and charade. The character types

depended on a dominant emotion or quality like anger or stupidity or appetite for food or sex, and stock types carried the same names in every farce: Pappus the old man; Bucco the boaster; Maccus the buffoon. Scholars have suggested the famous Roman comedian Titus Maccus or Maccius Plautus took his familial (middle) name from this last character. The Romans also had a performance tradition of the *satira*, a mixture of genres and content, the precise nature of which remained a mystery even to ancient scholars. One ancient commentator derived the name *satira* from “satyr,” and described the genre as a musical medley written for the pipes and involving the same kind of shameless dialogue and stage action as Greek satyr plays. The Romans derived their own genre of “satire” from this term, and perhaps from the performative tradition as well. Hence, there were a multitude of dramatic influences for the development of the Roman theater, and these influences shed light on why the Romans may have preferred comedy and “light” musical drama such as mime and pantomime to “heavier” dramatic genres, like tragedy and politically driven satire.

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## ROMAN THEATERS, PLAYWRIGHTS, AND ACTORS

**STRUCTURE OF THE ROMAN THEATER.** The Romans did not construct a permanent theater until Pompey sponsored one in 55 B.C.E. Instead, as the Roman architect, engineer, and writer Vitruvius (last half of first century B.C.E.) described, the Romans built temporary wooden structures as performance spaces, and continued to do so even after the advent of permanent theaters. There may have been several political reasons for this. Conservatives argued that theater promoted immoral behavior and fought to prevent the building of permanent structures. As class divisions and personal sponsorship of occasions for performance arose, such as the annual *Ludi Romani* (“Roman Games”), circuses and other spectacles, and funeral celebrations for the wealthy and notable, the building of provisional theater spaces allowed for luxury seating and elaborate decorative elements.

There was also a fear of seditious behavior, again due to the growing divide between the aristocracy and the *plebs* or common people, and permanent theaters provided a made-to-order space for public assemblies and mass communication. As needed for festivals and other celebrations, theaters could be erected in public spaces like the Forum, the Campus Martius, or the Circus. These wooden edifices affected the development of the Roman theater as much as the theatrical influences of the Greeks, Etruscans, and early Roman displays and rituals. The ephemeral nature of these wooden theaters allowed the Romans to modify the buildings as needed rather than blindly follow the Greek and Hellenistic models, resulting in a performance space that diverged in distinct ways from its Greek predecessors. Theaters in *Magna Graecia* and on Sicily seem to have followed models from Greece, as might be expected: built into a hillside for ready-made tiered seating, for the most part with a raised stage, an orchestra dividing the acting platform from the spectators, and side entrances. There were also the *phlyax* stages depicted on painted vases—elevated and covered platforms with scenery and accouterments added as needed for individual plays. No remains of the temporary wooden theaters survive, but based on the stage directions implicit in the comedies of Plautus and Terence as well as Pompeian wall paintings and references to the stage in other works, modern scholars can postulate what these Roman performance spaces might have looked like. There was a raised stage with a roofed structure at the rear and usually a public byway running in the front of the stage building. No space for a chorus was necessary. This building could be adapted to suit specific plays, with an altar in front to serve as a temple, or rocks in front of a cave, or a separation between two citizens’ homes. The stage building probably had at least three doors and an off-stage back alley to allow for unseen action and to accommodate the frenetic entrances and exits required in a chaotic comedy. Roman audiences included all strata of society, from aristocrats in special and secluded seats to common folk and slaves. Some playwrights lamented the short attention spans of their spectators, who could easily lose interest in a performance if sidetracked by a high-energy display of physical skill or combat.

**ACTING TROUPES.** Even though Roman theaters were not permanent until 55 B.C.E. actors were amassed into solid unions and groups by the late third century, something that did not occur until late in the history of Greek theater. In 207 B.C.E., Livius Andronicus—who produced the first plays adapted from Greek originals at the *Ludi Romani* in 240 B.C.E.—oversaw the



Roman theater at Hierapolis in Turkey, built in 2nd century c.e. and restored by the emperor Septimius Severus (193–211 c.e.) and again by Constantius II (337–361 c.e.). COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

establishment of the first performers' union in Rome, called the *Collegium Scribarum Histriorumque*, or the Association of Theatrical Authors and Actors. This union was probably modeled closely on the "Artists of Dionysus," the theatrical association formed in Greece in the third century B.C.E., which was treated as a religious organization exempt from political or military service. This Roman union was associated with the goddess Minerva (Athena in the Greek pantheon), whose temple on the Aventine Hill housed their headquarters. It seems that early on in Roman theatrical history, actors and writers of drama may have had a certain amount of respectability in society that was lost altogether later on. The legal status of actors has been a subject of much debate among scholars. They may have been slaves owned by the company manager, foreigners, freedmen, or even freeborn Romans. At any rate, in the later Republic and Roman Empire, all stage performers, along with gladiators and workers in the sex industry, were deprived of civil rights and designated by the term *infamia*, which indicated legal disenfranchisement. The Romans may have had a *choragus* who supported an acting troupe, much like the *choregia* system in fifth-century B.C.E. Athens (the dif-

ferent spelling comes from the Doric-dialect spoken in the Greek colonies of southern Italy). The magistrates who organized the Roman Games and other opportunities for performance may also have assumed financial responsibilities for some of the dramatic shows held at the annual festival. Many troupes had a *dominus gregis* or "company manager," an actor-director who staged the dramas in conjunction with the playwright himself. Lucius Ambivius Turpio acted in and directed many of the Roman comic playwright Terence's plays in the 160s B.C.E. In the Greek tradition, Roman actors on the formal stage of tragedy and comedy were probably all male, and wore masks and costumes suitable for their roles. The obscene costumes of Old Comedy were long gone, however.

**FAMOUS ROMAN ACTORS.** Although the Romans did not hold full-fledged dramatic competitions as in Greece, there is some evidence that individual actors may have participated in contests with prizes. One of the most famous actors in the first century B.C.E. was Quintus Roscius Gallus. Roscius was born to an equestrian family in Latium and was a close friend of Cicero, who de-



Roman stone relief of actors wearing masks from Sabrata (in modern day Libya), post 4th-century B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE.

fended Roscius in court on a charge of business fraud around 69 B.C.E. It seems that women were allowed to perform in mimes, and various other productions, such as pantomime, private parties, and festivals. Some famous mime actresses are known, like Lycoris, the stage name of Volumnia Cytheris, who was the mistress of some of Rome's most prominent citizens in the first century B.C.E. Toward the end of the Roman Empire, women were known to perform in revivals of Roman comedy as well as in mimes and other skits, sometimes wearing scandalously scanty clothes. Theodora, a sixth-century C.E. mime actress in the eastern Roman Empire,

was described as an especially outrageous and lewd woman by her contemporary Procopius in his *Secret History*. She was raised by theater folk, became a prostitute early in her life (it was a common conceit that mime actresses were also prostitutes), and was something like a modern-day "performance artist"; she paraded through the streets of Constantinople wearing see-through clothing and allowed birds to eat seeds nestled between her thighs. When she married the emperor Justinian in 525 C.E. and became empress of the Eastern Empire, it caused a terrific scandal.





Mosaic of Roman theatrical masks from the Villa of Hadrian at Tivoli, outside Rome. 2nd century C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO CAPITOLINO ROME/DAGLI ORTI.

**PLAUTUS AND TERENCE.** Even though playwrights often took a backseat to actors and other spectacles that occurred in Roman theaters, two Roman playwrights that were known throughout the Roman Empire were Plautus and Terence. Titus Maccius Plautus, a comic playwright perhaps originally from Umbria, was the first to make Greek New Comedy a truly Roman genre. His career stretched from the late third to the early second centuries B.C.E., but his legacy and popularity lasted much longer. Playwrights after Plautus' time could ensure the success of a comedy by attaching the name of Plautus to it, and eventually the number of plays attributed to him grew to more than 130 titles. In the first century B.C.E. the Roman scholar Varro limited that number to 21, and most of these still survive. Plautus freely admitted to borrowing titles, plots, and character-types from his Greek New Comedy predecessors, particularly from Diphilus, Philemon, and Menander, but

he gleefully modified these plays to suit his Roman audience. Plautus referred to his method of adaptation from Greek originals as *vortere barbare* ("to turn into another language"), but the adverb *barbare* also has the connotation of "barbarically, inelegantly, roughly." Plautus took the themes of New Comedy—concerns about marriage, family, citizenship, and disputes—and turned them upside down, relying on the influence of Atellan farce and bawdy harvest rituals as much as on his Greek forerunners. Whereas many Greek New Comedies seem to have ended with a marriage, Plautus overwhelmingly preferred to end with a wild debauch, often in the house of a prostitute. Young men, with the help of their cunning slaves, regularly thwarted their mean-spirited parents and ended up not with the proper and respectable young female citizens, but instead with the prostitutes they have been patronizing. Those who had authority in Roman society or those who exploited the weak—such

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SASSY SISTERS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Titus Maccius Plautus was Rome's favorite comic playwright. He flourished during the late third and early second centuries B.C.E. in Rome, though he may originally have come from Umbria. Plautus freely adapted plots from his Greek New Comedy predecessors for his Roman revels, but since there is very little extant of Greek New Comedy, it is not often that we can compare Plautus' riotous shows with those of his models. In his play *Two Sisters Named Bacchis*, however, we actually have a significant portion of the Menandrian original, called *Double Dealer*, which allows us to make an educated guess about the changes Plautus may have included in his adaptation. Plautus amplifies the roles of the marginalized—the female prostitutes and the clever slave—and employs the double-plot technique, often seen in Terence, in this madcap play. The comedy is about two sisters, both prostitutes, who are trying to avoid extended service to a pompous soldier, while a clever slave named Chrysalus (“Goldie”) schemes to assist his young master in his relationship with one of the Bacchis sisters while at the same time trying to forestall his old master's lust for the same girl. In this scene, one of the young men tries to resist the wiles of Bacchis I, but at last gives in to her charms. In this scene we can see something of Plautus' love of alliteration, puns, and double entendre (many do not translate from Latin).

**Pistoclerus:** I'm more afraid of your allure than of being lured to the bed itself. You are an evil creature. A lurking lair is not appropriate for this young man, woman. ... Why am I, a young man, afraid, you ask? To enter into a wrestling arena of this sort, where one sweats into debts? Where I should take up debt instead of a discus, disgrace instead of a race?

**Bacchis I:** You talk beautifully!

**Pistoclerus:** Where I would take up a turtledove instead of a sword [both slang words for penis], and where someone would put a drinking cup in my hand instead of a boxing glove, a ladies' chamber pot instead of a helmet, a braided wreath instead of military decorations, dice instead of a spear, a soft cloak instead of a breastplate, where I'd be given a bed instead of a horse, and would lie down with a whore instead of a shield? Get away from me, away!

**Bacchis I:** You are much too rough.

**Pistoclerus:** I am to myself.

**Bacchis I:** So make yourself super-soft. ... Go on then. By Pollux I don't care, except for your sake. He [the blowhard soldier] will certainly carry her [Bacchis II] off; you don't have to be with me, if it's not what you want.

**Pistoclerus:** Am I nothing at all, then, can't I control myself?

**Bacchis I:** What is it you're afraid of?

**Pistoclerus:** It's nothing, just nonsense. Woman, I put myself in your power. I am yours, command me.

**Bacchis I:** You're sweet. Now, this is what I want you to do.

**SOURCE:** Plautus, *Bacchides*, in *T. Macci Plauti Comoediae*. Ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903): lines 55–56; 65–73; 91–93. Translated by Lisa Rengo George.

as fathers, money-lenders, and pimps—were the villains, while the underdogs—those who held little power or social status such as the young man still under his father's control, the slave, and the prostitute—were empowered and made comic heroes. Plautus frequently employed many themes that can be traced back to Old and Middle Comedy, such as “recognition” dramas, amatory misadventures, and long-lost children. Plautus' “comedies in Greek dress” could lampoon Roman mores and present a reversal of social structure because they were part of a festival atmosphere, and the fact that they were ostensibly set in Greece (despite the use of purely Roman legal and idiomatic language) helped to displace any sense of Roman impropriety. Plautus' brand of comic chaos remained unflinchingly popular for hundreds of years. Even Shakespeare used one of Plautus' comedies

of recognition, *The Twin Brothers Named Menaechmus*, as the source for his *Comedy of Errors* and inspired the Broadway musical and film *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. Terence, on the other hand, did not aim for such mass appeal, nor did he receive it. A former slave from Africa, Terence rose socially to enter the elite “Scipionic Circle,” as the friends and clients of Scipio Africanus (c. 185–129 B.C.E.) were called. The Scipio family was fond of Greek culture, and they stood in opposition to conservatives like Cato the Elder, who promoted traditional Roman values and perceived Hellenism as a bad influence. Terence adapted four of his six plays (all of which survive) from Menander, and overtly adhered much more closely to the form and language of his originals than Plautus did. Terence, too, was aiming to please an audience of elite philhellenes and in

that he may have succeeded, but he certainly failed to please the masses as Plautus did. He complains bitterly in some of his prologues that his Roman audiences were frequently distracted by displays of spectacle, such as gladiatorial fights and acrobats. Terence was also criticized for *contaminatio*—combining plot elements and characters from more than one play to create something new. The tensions surrounding Terentian drama reflect the contemporary concerns about the possible infestation of Greek culture and its ability to defile Roman purity during a time when Rome had just vanquished Greece and was inundated with Greek art and culture. Terence’s tendency to celebrate and honor his Greek originals as works of art in their own right made him less admired than his older contemporary Plautus. Nevertheless, Terence’s talent was considerable: his language is fluid and elegant and his philosophical interest in the human condition lends a global appeal to his plays.

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#### OTHER TYPES OF ROMAN THEATER

**MIME AND PANTOMIME.** Mime was a genre of theatrical performance lying outside the formal boundaries of tragedy and comedy. It originated in Greece, where it probably began as the informal performance of imitative gestures, impressions, dances, and songs. Mime actors did not wear masks or shoes, and performed mimetically, as the name of the genre implies, improvising the expression of simple but ribald plots from mythology or daily events through gestures, dance, and facial expressions, accompanied by music. In Greece, mime performers were included in the same class as acrobats, much lower socially than the state-sponsored actors, directors, and producers of tragedy, comedy, and the dithyramb. In Rome, performances of mime were at first connected to the *Floralia*, a raucous and bawdy festival for the goddess Flora, which was established in the late third century B.C.E. Flora was a goddess of bloom-



4th-century C.E. mosaic depicting gladiators in an amphitheater scene. THE ART ARCHIVE/ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM MADRID/DAGLI ORTI.

ing plants and was thought to be suspiciously Greek by conservative Roman traditionalists. The *Floralia* was patronized by prostitutes: in fact, *mima* or “mime actress” was a euphemism for a prostitute, and women in mimes often displayed their bodies provocatively. Sulla, the Roman dictator in the early part of the first century B.C.E., elevated the status of mime by socializing with mime performers. Mime eventually became a literary genre in the first century B.C.E., written by such authors as Laberius and Publius Syrus, a former slave who was freed because of his talent in the genre of mime. Historical sources relate that Julius Caesar asked Publius Syrus to compete in the Roman Games of 46 B.C.E., and he challenged his fellow producers of mime to a contest of improvisation, of which Caesar declared him the winner. Roman mime was known for its inclusion of proverbial expressions and pithy moral teachings (despite its reputation for indecency), which were excerpted and collected by Seneca the Elder, among others. This genre reached its peak of popularity in the last years of the Roman Republic, but continued to be enjoyed throughout the remainder of the Roman Empire. A connected genre, “pantomime,” meaning “one who mimes everything,” became popular in the Roman Empire. It was brought to Rome from the Hellenistic east in 22 B.C.E. by the actors Pylades, who was said to have a more dramatic tragic style, and Bathyllus, who preferred comic themes. A single, silent performer who wore a mask and loose clothing to permit free movement, accompanied by mu-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE YAWNING ACTOR**

**INTRODUCTION:** Lucian was a prolific author, critic, satirist, and essayist in the second century C.E. The influences of Attic Comedy, Plato and Cynical philosophy are apparent in his many writings. In *On Dancing*, written around 150 C.E., Lucian defends the genre of pantomime at the expense of traditional drama, and in the process provides us with a fascinatingly detailed (albeit biased) description of the tragic theater of his day. Lucian gives us the impression that for him, at least, old-fashioned and traditional dramas were out of style, and the freer and more balletic genre of pantomime outstripped tragedy and comedy in popularity.

**SOURCE:** Lucian, *On Dancing*, in *The Context of Ancient Drama*. Eds. Eric Csapo and William J. Slater (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994): 182.

sicians and singers, acted out pantomime, and sometimes an actor spoke while the pantomime described the action physically. Prominent authors like Lucian (39–65 C.E.), an epic poet, wrote lyrics for pantomime, and because of its greater demands on the performer, was deemed to be of higher status than mime. Pantomime remained fashionable in both the Roman and Eastern Roman empires well into the sixth century C.E.

**GLADIATORIAL GAMES AND OTHER SPECTACLES.**

Scholars posit that fights between armed opponents at Etruscan funerals were the origin of the Roman gladiatorial combats, dating from the third century B.C.E. Whatever the source, the gladiator became a truly Roman figure, who could earn wealth, admiration from the ladies, and even freedom if successful in the amphitheater. Candidates for Roman office often funded gladiatorial contests as they did performances of other Roman entertainments, like theater, mime, and acrobatic shows, in order to gain popularity among the masses and win votes. Their original connection to funerals was superseded quickly by the desire of politicians and officials to appease the often rowdy and fickle Roman population. Gladiators probably fought in the Roman Forum before permanent amphitheaters were constructed beginning in the early Roman Empire. The most famous amphitheater in Rome is the Colosseum, whose remains still stand. The building of this massive and complex structure was undertaken during the reign of Emperor Vespasian and finished up under Titus in 80 C.E. The amphitheater has

an extensive basement with waiting areas for gladiators, criminals about to be executed, and others unlucky enough to be sent out to face danger and death in the arena, as well as holding pens for wild animals, like lions and tigers, for beast-fights and brutal executions of criminals, slaves, and other undesirables. There were many amphitheaters all over the Roman Empire, as the Romans eagerly exported their favorite entertainments to the furthest reaches of their colonies. As the Roman lust for larger and more elaborate spectacles grew, officials sponsored contests featuring thousands of gladiators and victims. There were four types of gladiator. The Thracian used a round shield and curved dagger. Both the Samnite—dressed to resemble a warrior from the Oscan town of Samnium—and the *murmillio*—identifiable by a fish on his crest—were armed with a long shield, helmet with a visor, and sword. The *retiarius* (“net-man”) had little body armor and relied on agility and speed with his net and trident. Most gladiators were slaves, prisoners of war, or criminals who were pressed into service. Free citizens could also sell themselves to a keeper of a gladiatorial team. The combats were often gruesome affairs, resulting in amputated limbs, horrendous wounds, and death. Not all Romans relished these bloody exhibitions: the great Roman statesman Cicero bemoaned the popularity of these brutal entertainments. The poet Juvenal (first–second century C.E.) was disgusted when a dog ran past with a human hand in its mouth after a night of gladiatorial combats. Other types of popular public

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN UNHOLY FEAST**

**INTRODUCTION:** Lucius Annaeus Seneca the Younger most likely composed his tragedies while serving as an adviser to Nero in the mid-first century C.E. Seneca's tragedies are a puzzle to modern scholars: when exactly were they written, and for what purpose? Are they meant to teach Stoic principles, despite their grotesque violence, or were they merely meant to entertain the callous court of a maniacal emperor? At any rate, they are the only extant Roman tragedies and as such provide us with a glimpse of the continuing tradition of the tragic genre. In his play *Thyestes*, Seneca retells the gory tale of the sons of Pelops, Thyestes and Atreus, who are doomed to repeat the gruesome familial pattern of cannibalism and revenge. Thyestes has seduced his brother's wife, and in a horrible act of vengeance Atreus has killed his nephews and cooked them to serve to his brother in an ironic "reconciliation" banquet for his brother.

**Thyestes (after finishing his grim meal and discovering its source):** This is what shamed the gods, this drove the day against its dawn. Wretched me, what noises shall I make, what laments? What words will be enough for me? I recognize the severed heads, the hands cut off, the feet ripped from broken legs! This is what the ravenous father could not gulp down. My sons' guts are rolling around inside me, and my crime concealed in my stomach struggles without a way out and searches madly for an escape. Brother, give me your sword that is clotted with my own blood. With its blade, the path to freedom may be provided for my children. You refuse to

give me the sword? Then may my chest echo, beaten by resounding blows! Hold back your hand, you miserable son of a bitch—let's show mercy to the ghosts of the dead. Who in the world has ever seen such a horrible crime? What Heniochian [a notoriously savage nation] who lives on a jagged cliff of Mt. Caucasus, what Procrustes [an unusually sadistic fellow], who causes fear among the Cecropians? Look at me, a father who crushes his sons, and is in turn crushed by them. Is there no limit to evil?

**Atreus:** There ought to be a limit to evil when you do evil, but not when you repay it. Even this [gesturing at the bloody body parts of the children] is not enough for me. I should have poured their hot blood right from their wounds down your throat, so that you could drink their gore while they were still alive! My words of rage were lost in my rush. I stabbed them with a deep thrust of my blade, I slaughtered them at the altars, I placated the sacred hearth with their blood as an offering. I carved up their lifeless corpses and I tore them to pieces, immersing some parts in boiling pots: others I set to drip over slow fires. I tore off their limbs and muscles while they were still breathing, and I watched their livers pierced on a thin spit, still quivering, and I myself fed the flames. Their father could have done all these things better—my pain has fallen for no purpose. He ripped apart his sons with an unholy mouth, without knowing it, and without them knowing it!

**SOURCE:** Seneca, *Thyestes*, in *Tragedies*. Ed. Frank J. Miller (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968). Translated by Lisa Rengo George.

spectacle, most involving a high level of risk, were wild-beast hunts, executions, chariot-racing, athletic competitions, military triumphal processions, numerous religious holidays and festivals, and religious rituals.

**NERO AND SENECA.** One era of the Roman Empire deserves special mention here. When Nero became emperor in 54 C.E. he introduced a new level of interest in the performing arts. He had been tutored by Seneca the Elder and fancied himself as a talented artist, author, musician, and actor. He developed his own version of Greek games called "The Neronia," instituted in 60 C.E., and he himself performed in the second year of the games. Nero often traveled to Greece to perform in games and to give recitals of music and drama. His refusal to heed the traditional laws of Rome, which forbade members of the upper classes to perform on the public stage, out-

raged many Romans. Seneca, son of Seneca the Elder, became one of Nero's advisers. He had been a senator and held other political offices, but was renowned for his skills as a public speaker and author. He amassed a great fortune while serving under Nero, but his position in the emperor's court also meant that he had to accept the emperor's unsavory and cruel methods, including several assassinations, while at the same time espousing moral values. His works are comprised of several philosophical and didactic treatises, a book on natural science, a comedy parodying the emperor Claudius, and nine tragedies based on Greek mythology. These plays were modeled explicitly on Greek tragedies: they were written in tragic meters and in episodic form, and they included choral songs and dances. His style has often been called "Euripidean" since he explored the psychology of his characters, portrayed individuals as blameless victims

of fate or the gods, and focused on some of the most gruesome and shocking events portrayed in myth. At the same time, his treatment of themes and characters is so exaggerated it may have been intended as parody. Scholars have argued for centuries about whether Senecan drama was meant to be staged or only recited in private performances or public acting contests. Some have pointed out that the plays would have been impossible to stage realistically, since they portrayed murders, funeral pyres, animal sacrifices, and other scenes of ferocious violence—events that always took place off stage and were only described during the course of a Greek tragedy. Others have argued that the unstageable events could have been performed mimetically, or that the dramas were not intended to be staged as a whole, since many individual scenes are performable. Still others have suggested that Seneca wrote these gory dramas only to be read as an evening's entertainment at court or to provide "set pieces" for Nero and others to perform at recitals or in contests. Not surprisingly, Seneca's plays featured beautifully written speeches with fine rhetorical turns, extensive descriptive passages, moralizing and pithy epigrams, or short sayings. Senecan drama had great influence on theater in the Renaissance and in Tudor and Jacobean England.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Theater*

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### ARISTOPHANES

c. 445 B.C.E.–c. 385 B.C.E.

*Comic playwright*

**FAMOUS COMEDIAN.** Unfortunately, there are very few details about the life of Aristophanes other than the fact that he was born around 445 B.C.E. He began writ-

ing for the comic stage as a very young man, and submitted his first play, *Banqueters*, to the competition at the City Dionysia in 427 B.C.E. when he was only eighteen years old. The titles of 54 of his comedies are known, but unfortunately only eleven of those plays exist today. In fact, Aristophanes is the only Greek comic playwright of the fifth century B.C.E. whose works have survived even in part from this time period. Yet through literary sources, it is clear that Aristophanes was not the only comedic playwright at the time; his most famous contemporaries were Eupolis and Cratinus. Yet Aristophanes' inventive use of language and his inimitable poetic style won the admiration not only of the Athenian public (except the outraged officials) but, later, of Plato. Aristophanes is one of the guests at Plato's fictional *Symposium* and gives a memorable speech about the origins of love.

**WORKS.** Of the surviving plays of Aristophanes it is known that three won first prizes at the City Dionysia. Yet he won many other awards for his plays as well. His known plays include: *Acharnians* (first prize at the Lenaia, 425 B.C.E.); *Clouds* (last place at the City Dionysia, in 423 B.C.E., later revised); *Birds* (second prize at the City Dionysia, 414 B.C.E.); *Lysistrata* and *The Festival Goers* (the first at the Lenaia, the second at the City Dionysia, 411 B.C.E.); *Frogs* (first prize at the Lenaia, 405 B.C.E.); and *Women in the Assembly* (perhaps 392 B.C.E.). Aristophanes was often threatened with prosecution by the statesman Cleon, whom he mocked frequently in his comedies. Comedy in fifth century B.C.E. Athens was quite different from what comedy is to modern audiences. Comedies were topical satires that derided important political and intellectual movements and figures of the day. Famous targets included Cleon, a rich politician and successor of Pericles; Euripides, the famous tragedian; and Socrates, already infamous as a philosopher and teacher, who is identified with the Sophists (itinerant professors of philosophy and rhetoric) whom Aristophanes despised. Even the gods could appear on stage in ridiculous settings. Though he was an intellectual himself, Aristophanes was not averse to including extremely crude (and crowd-pleasing) humor in his plays, which abound in sexual and scatological references. Aristophanes employed outrageous costumes and scenery in some of his fantasies, such as *Birds*, in which actors dressed as animals, wore padded costumes with genitalia protruding from beneath short tunics, and grotesque masks in a fictional utopia called "Cloud Cuckoo Land." Many of the heroes of his plays are common people who want solutions to problems in their

daily lives and who are mystified by the machinations of politicians and diplomats.

**SHIFTED TO MIDDLE COMEDY.** There was a shift in Aristophanes' comic sensibilities as the political climate changed due to the Peloponnesian Wars with Sparta (431–404 B.C.E.). His early plays followed a rigid dramatic structure involving a strong chorus crucial to the action that gradually loosened as the playwright defined his own style. After Athens lost the war to Sparta, however, his plays lost their topicality and became less specific to Athens, and the chorus—formerly of prime importance—became largely extraneous to the plot. These plays are now designated as “Middle Comedy,” as opposed to the “Old Comedy” defined by his earlier style, and influenced fourth and third century B.C.E. Greek playwrights like Menander, and later the Romans Plautus and Terence.

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## EURIPIDES

c. 480s B.C.E.–c. 405 B.C.E.

### *Tragic playwright*

**GIVING VOICE TO THE UNHEARD.** There are more than twice as many surviving plays of Euripides than of either Aeschylus or Sophocles (eighteen as compared with six or seven apiece of the others). There is also a parodic portrayal of the playwright in Aristophanes' *Frogs* and a fanciful biography of him written in the third century B.C.E. which relied on details from the playwright's own works as well as various other spurious sources. Even so, it is difficult to discern the facts of the playwright's life, and ultimately there is as little known about him as about most famous people from antiquity. Euripides was born to a wealthy family in the Athenian deme of Phyla, though there were stories that he came from modest origins as well, most likely because he often portrayed humble people in his plays. The tale that he isolated himself

in a cave at Salamis to write his plays probably more reflects his lack of interest in politics or public life than an actual physical isolation. He first competed at the City Dionysia in 455 B.C.E. He won fewer first prizes—only four—than did Aeschylus or Sophocles during his career, but the story that he fled Athens for Macedon in disgust at his lack of popularity is undoubtedly false. Nevertheless, he did die at the court of King Archelaus of Macedon in approximately 406 B.C.E.; the story has it that he was torn to pieces by the king's guard dogs, which echoes his propensity in tragedies to include unusually violent deaths for his characters, such as the demise of King Pentheus in *Bacchantes*, who is ripped apart by a raving band of maenads led by his own mother. Euripides had three sons, one of whom, also named Euripides, may have produced some of his tragedies after his death

**WORKS.** Eighteen of Euripides' plays survive. (A nineteenth, the *Rhesus*, is of doubtful authorship.) The plays securely attributed to Euripides include: *Medea* (last place in 431 B.C.E.); *Electra* (417 B.C.E.); *Trojan Women* (second prize in 415 B.C.E.); *Bacchantes* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* (first-prize winners produced together posthumously in 405 B.C.E.); and a satyr play, *Cyclops* (date unknown). In addition, there are substantial fragments of eleven others, including *Oedipus*, *Cretans*, and *Archelaus*, written for his patron in Macdeon. Euripidean drama focuses on individual characters and their personal circumstances, the paradoxical nature of human life and its vicissitudes, and the internal struggle that the tragic hero undergoes. As a consequence, the structure of his plays sometimes follows a predetermined plot to its foreseeable, if regrettable, outcome; at other times, his plays swerve as unpredictably as his characters do. Euripides featured characters who commit the most extreme acts humans are capable of—incest, rape, betrayal, murder—and allowed them to stand up for themselves. He sometimes drew criticism for portraying women who defended roles that were contrary to Athenian values, like Agave in *The Bacchantes*, who glories in her newfound bloodlust, and Medea in the play that bears her name. He often added startling innovations to familiar stories from myth. Some of his tragedies, like *Ion*, include elements more familiar to Middle and New Comedy: a son born out of wedlock is eventually recognized and reunited with his parents with the help of the gods. The amazing variety of Euripidean plots, from the very bleak *Trojan Women*, portraying women who must face a future as the sexual slaves of the men who killed their families, to the almost light-hearted *Helen*, which chronicles the awkward reunion of Helen and Menelaus after the Trojan War, ultimately de-

fies categorization. Euripides was criticized in his own time for portraying ordinary people as they were instead of noble denizens of a tragic past, but he often seems like the most “modern” playwright. His plays were among the most popular in later revivals.

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### LIVIVS ANDRONICUS

c. 280 B.C.E.–c. 204 B.C.E.

*Playwright*  
*Translator*

**THE ORIGINATOR OF LATIN POETRY.** Little is known about the early life of Livius Andronicus, who was born around 280 B.C.E. He likely came to Rome as a teacher of Greek and Latin sometime in the mid-third century B.C.E. in the household of one Livius Salinator, from whom he took the family name “Livius” after being freed. His exact region of origin is not known, though his last name “Andronicus” sounds Greek, and he may have been born in the Greek colony of Tarentum in southern Italy. This area was known to the early Romans as *Magna Graecia* or “Greater Greece,” because it, as well as the island of Sicily, had been colonized by the Greeks since at least the eighth century B.C.E. He is credited as the first to create Latin poetry when he began translating Homer’s *Odyssey* into Latin using a native Italic poetic meter. He also began producing plays for and acting on the Roman stage, influenced by the Greek theater in southern Italy, Greek-influenced Etruscan performances, and the early native forms of spectacle, like the Fescennine verses at harvest times, the Atellan farces of the Oscans in Campania, and the Italians’ love of music, dance, and religious ritual.

**WROTE IN BOTH GENRES.** His first production took place in 240 B.C.E., during an especially grand celebration of the annual Roman Games to celebrate Rome’s victory over Carthage in the First Punic War (264–241 B.C.E.). Unlike Greek playwrights, who wrote in only one genre, Livius Andronicus wrote both

tragedies and comedies in the Greek style, of which seven titles and fewer than seventy fragments have survived. His tragedies often centered around the events of the Trojan War, such as *Achilles*, *Aegisthus*, *Ajax with a Whip*, *The Trojan Horse*, and *Hermione*, but he wrote on other mythological stories as well, including *Andromeda*, *Danae*, and *Tereus*. One of the few comedies that survived to modern times is entitled *The Little Sword*. In 207 B.C.E., he received state honors for his work, the first time that the Romans honored literary achievement. In that same year, the professional actors’ and scribes’ union (the *collegium scribarum histrionumque*) was officially recognized, and space was provided for them in a temple on the Aventine Hill. Under the influence of Livius, and due to the popularity of his plays, the old Roman *saturae* (sketches accompanied by music that were originally performed) gradually became a purely literary genre in favor of the Greek-inspired drama Livius brought to his adopted city.

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### LYCORIS

c. 70 B.C.E.–Late 1st century B.C.E.

*Mime actress*  
*Prostitute*

**MIME AND MISTRESS.** “Lycoris” was the pseudonym of Volumnia Cytheris, a freed slave, perhaps originally a Greek, who became a famous mime performer and prostitute. Lycoris was the mistress of some of Rome’s most famous men in the Republican era: Cornelius Gallus, poet and colleague of Catullus and first prefect of Egypt; Brutus, a well-known conspirator in the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.E.; and Marcus Antonius, lover of Cleopatra and the unsuccessful opponent of Augustus in the war for control of Rome in 31 B.C.E. She is mentioned in the poetry of Ovid, Vergil, and the fragments of Gallus’s works, and unflatteringly in Cicero’s letters. It is commonly believed that



Roman actors on the “legitimate” stage were all male, and that respectable women were forbidden to act on the stage, but women were permitted to perform in the less reputable genre of mime and pantomime. All performers of Roman theater and spectacle were legally *infamis* (“disreputable”), and Lycoris, a woman, former slave, and a foreigner as well, lived on the margins of society even though she had connections to powerful political figures. There is no mention of Lycoris after the early 40s B.C.E.

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## MENANDER

342 B.C.E.–c. 292 B.C.E.

*Comic playwright*

**THE MASTER OF NEW COMEDY.** Menander was born in 342 B.C.E., a native Athenian who may have had family connections to the Greek theater of which he became such an integral part. Some sources relay that he was the nephew of the well-known Middle Comedy playwright Alexis, none of whose works survive. Ancient references also tell that Menander studied with the philosopher Theophrastus, Aristotle’s successor as the head of the Peripatetic school of philosophy at Athens. He served in the military with Epicurus, another philosopher whose doctrine, Epicureanism, involved the pursuit of wisdom and happiness by relying on human perception rather than religious belief. These associations may account for much of the philosophical content of Menander’s plays. Nearly 100 titles of plays are attributed to Menander, but very little of his writing survives today. Most of the manuscripts of his plays were lost during the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. because the Byzantines thought their style of Greek was substandard compared to that of the fifth-century B.C.E. dramatists. Fortunately, several substantial portions, including a few plays more or less in their entirety, were discovered during twentieth century C.E. excavations in Egypt. More of Menander’s works may have survived because he was a master of the genre of New Comedy: his plots, which focused on family life and its daily complications, displayed gentle comic flare, timeless social commentary, and impeccable timing. The

plays had such widespread appeal, in fact, that the Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence frequently “borrowed” from him in creating their own comedies.

**WORKS.** A nearly complete manuscript of *The Grouch* exists, which was first performed in 317 B.C.E. and won first prize at the City Dionysia in Athens. Large portions and fragments of varying size and quality have survived as well. *The Grouch*, which in many ways seems to be a typical New Comedy, features a misanthropic old man named Knemon who, after his wife leaves him, withdraws with his daughter to an isolated farm outside Athens. The god Pan announces that he wants to help Knemon’s daughter by setting up a marriage between her and Sostratos, the son of a wealthy farmer. After a series of comic mix-ups and mishaps that focus on the lovestruck Sostratos’ attempts to prove himself worthy to the crabby Knemon, Knemon realizes the benefits of living in society, accepts Sostratos as his son-in-law, and reunites with his wife. Although Menander and his colleagues had a political agenda invested in the laws of Athens, it was much less obvious than their predecessors. Their plays are far less topical and specific to Athens than those of their predecessors in Old and Middle Comedy. Menander in particular seems to have been especially sensitive to widespread social problems and family issues like rape, illegitimate children, citizenship and marriage, prejudice, and intolerance. Menander was an especially adroit playwright, who was aware of dramatic nuance and who used the genre and versification of New Comedy to explore human psychology, political concerns, and societal dilemmas. The Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence openly acknowledged their debt to Menander and other Greek New Comic playwrights in the prologues and plots of their “adapted” plays. Menander drowned while he was swimming in the Piraeus, Athens’ harbor, around 292 B.C.E.

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**GNAEUS NAEVIUS**

c. 270 B.C.E.–c. 200 B.C.E.

*Playwright**Translator*

**FIRST ROMAN PLAYWRIGHT.** Naevius was most likely born in Rome around 280 B.C.E., despite a later reference to his possible Campanian origins. His family name is known from historical records as a plebeian rather than noble name and he was certainly a Roman citizen, not a freedman like his contemporary Livius Andronicus. He served in the Roman army during the first Punic War (264–241 B.C.E.) and began writing for the stage afterward, with his first production in Rome in 235 B.C.E. He did not act in his own plays like Livius, but he did originate a uniquely Roman form of drama: the *fabula praetexta*, historical tragedies about Roman subjects rather than Greek mythology. One, called *Clastidium*, recounted a Roman victory in that city in 222 B.C.E.; another, *Romulus*, told the story of Rome's legendary founder. He also wrote comedies, based on Greek originals (called *fabula palliata* after the Greek *pallium*, or outer garment) and Roman originals (*togata* after Roman clothing). In a style that harked back to Greek Old Comedy and very much contrary to New Comic practice, Naevius often attacked famous Romans, like Scipio Africanus and the noble Caecilius Metellus family. He was even jailed for a time because of his assaults on the upper class, which Plautus alludes to in one of his comedies. He may have been best known for his epic poem "The Punic War," the first real Roman epic in native Italic meter. This sweeping national poem, which went back to Rome's connection to the Trojan Aeneas, was a powerful influence on later writers of Roman epic like Ennius and Vergil. Naevius' younger contemporaries Pacuvius and Accius continued to write in the genres Naevius established or developed, but Roman tragedy as a dramatic form did not endure past Naevius' time. Plautus and Terence carried on writing comedies "in Greek dress," and in the first century C.E., Seneca wrote tragedies based on or inspired by Greek originals.

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**NERO**

37 C.E.–c. 68 C.E.

*Roman emperor**Performer*

**A TROUBLED EMPEROR IN A TROUBLED TIME.** Nero was born Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus in December 37 C.E. to Agrippina the Younger and G. Domitius Ahenobarbus. His mother was the daughter of Germanicus Julius Caesar, grandson of the emperor Augustus and brother of the emperor Claudius. His father was a cruel and much vilified former soldier who swindled and killed for fun. His family was banished by the emperor Caligula in 39 C.E., and his father died soon afterward. When Claudius became emperor in 41 C.E., he restored Agrippina's civil rights and her estates, which had been confiscated by Caligula. Seneca the Elder, an historian and orator, tutored the young Nero. His uncle Claudius adopted him in 50 C.E., making him heir to the throne. Agrippina murdered Claudius in 54 C.E., and Nero became emperor. His dominating mother held the empire's reins at first, but gradually the impressionable Nero fell under the influence of his advisers, and she was removed from the emperor's palace in 55 C.E. Nero murdered his mother in 59 C.E. Never very stable, he allowed his advisers to run the government while he slid into debauchery, excess, and madness. He was married three times, and had numerous affairs with both men and women, and, according to some rumors, even his mother.

**PUBLIC PERFORMANCES.** Nero adored spectacle and the arts, and spent a lot of time in Greece, the cradle of culture for the Romans, where he regularly competed in games. He once staged a triumph for himself, but instead of displaying the spoils of conquered nations, he was preceded by a display of the trophies and proclamations of his victories in singing and lyre playing in Greek. He fancied himself as a gifted author and performer on the stage, and often compelled the citizenry to listen to him declaim and sing excerpts from drama for hours in locked theaters. Citizens were said to have faked serious illness in order to be carried out of the theater. In 60 C.E. he established the Neronia, contests modeled on Greek games in which noblemen vied in declamation and music. He underwent grueling rituals to strengthen himself for performing in public, such as lying with heavy weights on his chest, purges and

extreme diets, and drinking a concoction made of dried boar's feces to repair sore muscles. He surrounded himself with flatterers who encouraged his delusions. The famous fire in 64 C.E., in which Nero was famed to have "fiddled while Rome burned," serves as an example of the extent of his megalomania and the urban turmoil in Rome during his reign. He was so serious about himself as one of the world's most talented performers that the writer Suetonius relays that his dying words were "I die as such a great artist."

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### TITUS MACCIUS PLAUTUS

c. 250 B.C.E.—c. 184 B.C.E.

*Comic playwright*

**FROM SLAVE TO KING OF COMEDY.** Because Plautus was the most popular playwright in Roman history, there are many biographical details about him from many sources. It is ultimately impossible to determine which are true, or even partly true, and which are wholly false. In any case, the stories about Plautus bestow on him a colorful life, with a dramatic rise from slavery to comic sovereign. It is said that he was born in Sarsina, Umbria, around 250 B.C.E., and was a native speaker of his regional Italic language, Umbrian. "Plotus" is the Umbrian spelling of his *cognomen*, or last name, which may have meant "flat-footed" or "big-eared," both perfect for a comedian. This name would have been Romanized as "Plautus." "Plautus" also connotes "applause" (the modern English word comes from a Latin root), and therefore is a clever last name for a famous playwright, whose livelihood depended on his popularity with his audience. His gentilician or family name, Maccius or Maccus (the manuscripts are unclear), was very probably made up as a joke on the Roman nobility with prestigious family names like Julius and Claudius. There was a typical character named "Maccus," a clown, in the native Italic dramatic genre known as Atellan farce. Though Plautus was born a free citizen, his popular biography told that he was a slave who had been a performer in

Atellan farce and mime, and who then came to Rome as a freedman and rose to greatness on the comic stage.

**LIBRARY OF WORK.** In the second century B.C.E. over 130 titles of plays were attributed to Plautus. Certainly he was a prolific author, but part of this overwhelming number of attributions may be a result of his name itself: any play said to be written by the great Plautus would certainly have attracted more audience members. At the end of the century, the Library of Alexandria began to collect manuscripts and put together reliable editions of the best known authors, and in the first century, one of the foremost scholars in Rome, Varro, made what he considered a definitive list of 21 plays that could accurately be called Plautine. These plays are the ones that have been recognized by modern scholars, mostly complete with some fragmentation. The chronology of the plays is uncertain and has been a source of scholarly debate for hundreds of years. Because New Comedy focused on general social situations and avoided most topical references, allusions to historical events are few and often hard to assess. The titles of Plautus' best-known plays are as follows: *Casina*, the name of a household maidservant (c. 186 B.C.E.); *The Twin Sisters Named Bacchis*; *The Twin Brothers Named Menaechmus*; *The Boastful Soldier*; and *Pseudolus*, the clever slave of the play (c. 191 B.C.E.).

**THEMES AND STYLES.** From these plays, much can be garnered about Plautine style, characterization, and staging. Plautus often presented as his comic heroes not members of the nobility or figures of authority but the lowliest and least powerful elements of society: slaves, foreigners, prostitutes, young men without resources. Since Plautus unabashedly "adapted" plots from his Greek New Comedy predecessors, many of the same characters that were established in that genre can be seen: the grouchy old man, the nagging wife, the nosy neighbor, the shrewd prostitute, the dissolute son, the victimized young woman. Plautus made these characters his own, however, by changing them from Greek comic stereotypes to real denizens of Rome, who used Roman idioms and legal terms and thought like Romans. In this way, Plautus could satirize aspects of his own ultra-conservative society by presenting all his characters as "Greek," thereby absolving them of their debauched morals and behavior, and allowing his Roman audience to enjoy the reversal of heroic status. One scholar has compared the comedies of Plautus to the celebration of the Saturnalia, a festival in which masters and servants changed places for the day. Plautus' Latin is the only example of literary Latin in the late third and early second centuries B.C.E. His latinity is deceptively fluid and id-

iomatic; it is also highly stylized, uses a great number of anachronisms and other oddities, and follows a complicated metrical schema. Plautus' play *Twin Brothers Named Menaechmus* was the basis for Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors*.

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### QUINTUS ROSCIUS GALLUS

c. 120 B.C.E.–c. 62 B.C.E.

*Actor*

**ROME'S MOST FAMOUS ACTOR.** Quintus Roscius Gallus was one of the most famous actors in ancient Rome. In fact, his name continued to be used to describe a brilliant actor until the nineteenth century C.E.—as modern critics might use “an Olivier” to designate an especially gifted actor. His *cognomen* (“last name”) Gallus usually denoted someone who was a freedman (the son of a former slave), but Roscius was born to a prosperous family in Latium, what is now the area south of Rome. Most of the biographical information about him comes from the great Roman statesman Cicero, who defended Roscius in court on a charge of business fraud in 69 B.C.E. or thereabouts. He was extremely handsome with a slight squint, and was especially renowned for his *venustas* (“grace of movement”). He may have tutored Cicero in the art of elocution when Cicero was a young student, but he was aristocratic enough to be part of the inner circle of Sulla, the Roman dictator, who made him a knight in 81 B.C.E. Roscius preferred acting in comedies to tragedies, perhaps because comic roles required more physicality, but he was known for his tragic performances as well. As the great actor grew older, he slowed down his movements and was renowned for his “old man” voice.

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### SENECA THE YOUNGER

c. 4 B.C.E.–65 C.E.

*Statesman*

*Author*

**TUTOR TO NERO.** Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the “Younger,” was born in the Roman colony of Spain just before the turn of the first millennium. His father, Seneca the “Elder,” was a famous orator who wrote treatises on rhetoric for his sons, which were later used as school texts. Seneca the Younger was born around 4 B.C.E. and educated in Rome from an early age. He pursued a political career as a young man and, in addition to being a lawyer, held the offices of quaestor and praetor before becoming a senator. When Nero became emperor in 54 C.E., Seneca became one of his most influential political advisers, and thanks largely to him and another adviser, Burrus, the Roman state proceeded smoothly for the next eight years. As Nero's behavior became more erratic and violent, Seneca was increasingly compelled to overlook the emperor's barbarity until, after Burrus died in 62 C.E., he was allowed to retire from court. He set out to write works of philosophy, but was incriminated in a political conspiracy and was forced to kill himself in 65 C.E.

**WORKS.** Seneca wrote prolifically and his corpus included works on morals, philosophy, and ethics in addition to poetry and drama. He became known in particular for the tragedies in Greek style he composed in the first century C.E., such as *Medea*, *Phaedra*, and *Thyestes*. Seneca was indebted to the great Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides for the treatment of his subject matter and in some elements of his style, but overall Senecan tragedy is a unique amalgam of moralizing, gore, and hyperbolic rhetoric. Seneca's rhetorical training is apparent in the frequent, impassioned speeches of his characters, and his focus is on the power of language rather than of actions. Some have suggested that Seneca taught Stoicism through his tragedies, since many of them feature the destructive power of unrestrained emotion, a Stoic precept. This is unlikely, however, since evil often triumphs over rationality in his plays in a distinctly un-Stoic manner. His tragedies are richly drawn with extraordinarily vivid characters. His plays are filled with suspense, madness, and horror, which kept them in the theatrical limelight far past Seneca's own time. It is un-

clear whether Seneca intended for his tragedies to be staged completely or whether he wrote them for other purposes. Seneca had a widespread influence on authors of the Italian Renaissance and Jacobean England.

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### SOPHOCLES

c. 496 B.C.E.—c. 405 B.C.E.

*Tragic playwright*

**ROLE IN GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION.** In his play *Oedipus at Colonus*, Athens' most prize-winning tragic playwright paid tribute to his native village Colonus, just outside of Athens, where he was born sometime around 496 B.C.E. He was the son of Sophilus and had connections to the most important political figures of his day, from Cimon until his ostracism in 461 B.C.E. and Pericles afterward. Sophocles served as a treasurer of Athens and as a *strategos* or general, one of the highest elected offices in the state, though his contemporary Ion of Chios reported that he had no particular talent at politics. He was also called upon to serve as a state adviser after the catastrophic Athenian defeat at Syracuse in 413 B.C.E. Ancient sources report that he was a cult priest and worshipper of Asclepius, the son of Apollo and healer, and after his death he was honored with his own hero cult under the name "Dexion."

**WORKS.** His career as a tragic poet was long and impressive. He is credited with three important theatrical innovations: the addition of a third actor, painting of the *skene*, and the increase of the chorus from twelve men to fifteen. He is said to have written over 120 plays, with twenty first-place prizes and no last-place showings in any dramatic competition. He competed for the first time in 468 B.C.E., perhaps against Aeschylus, and won. His last competition was in 406 B.C.E., when he dressed his chorus in mourning for the death of Euripides during the introduction to his trilogy at that year's celebration of the Dionysia. Of his many titles, only seven plays remain, and the dates for most are uncertain. His most famous plays and their probable dates are: *Antigone* (c. 441 B.C.E.);

*Oedipus the King* (between c. 436–426 B.C.E.); and *Oedipus at Colonus* (won first prize posthumously in 401 B.C.E.). He is renowned for his three Theban plays about the fortunes of Oedipus and Thebes, but those dramas were not written together in one single trilogy; rather, they were produced in trilogies over the course of forty years.

**THEMES.** Sophoclean heroes can be characterized by an arrogant inflexibility that must be broken before the truth—another vital element to Sophoclean drama—can be found. The characters in Sophocles' plays are also haunted by their responsibilities to the dead: the character Oedipus must uncover the murderer of the former king of Thebes; Antigone must bury her dead brother against the edict of her uncle; Ajax is tortured by his failure to possess the dead Achilles' weapons. Part of Sophocles' particular dramatic flair revolved around his use of a talismanic item or action: the solving of the Sphinx' riddle, the bow of Philoctetes, Deianeira's magic potion. Sophocles is also renowned for his use of the theme of dramatic recognition, his characters' exquisitely well-timed entrances and exits, and the naturalistic language he intersperses with high-flown and abstract poetic flourishes. Some of the greatest actors of later periods, such as Polus and Theodorus, often appeared in Sophocles' plays, which were regularly revived. Sophocles died at about age ninety around 405 B.C.E., the same year his younger contemporary Euripides died.

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### TERENCE

c. 193 B.C.E.—c. 159 B.C.E.

*Comic playwright*

**HELLENIST AND HUMANIST.** The Roman biographer and historian Suetonius in the first century C.E. wrote the life of Terence, and some of that biography was preserved by Aelius Donatus, a medieval commentator on the playwright's work. Even so, as with all ancient biography, it is impossible to determine the

authenticity of all the details. He was born in Carthage around 193 B.C.E., which accounts for his *cognomen* (last name) “Afer,” meaning “African.” He may have come to Rome as the slave of one Terentius Lucanus, from whom he took his family name, Terence. Despite his humble and unpromising entrée into Rome, he became closely associated with the house of Scipio, one of Rome’s premier families. Some contemporaries suggested that Scipio Aemilianus or Gaius Laelius, two members of that elite circle, composed Terence’s plays themselves. The playwright refutes these and other allegations in the prologues to his six plays. At any rate, the Scipionic circle held wide influence culturally; they were philhellenes, or lovers of all things Greek, and with their Greek conquests they brought also a renewed passion for Greek art, drama, and culture. This trend is illustrated by Terence’s corpus. Like fellow playwright Plautus, Terence used the plots and titles of Greek New Comedies for his comedic drama, relying on Menander for four of his six plays. He followed his precursors more closely than Plautus did, but his talents were distinctly different from his forerunner in Roman comedy. All six of his plays survive and include: *Mother-in-Law*, *Eunuch*, and *Brothers*. This last play was commissioned for the funeral of Lucius Aemilius Paulus, the father of Scipio Aemilianus, in 160 B.C.E. While Plautus aimed and succeeded at entertaining the Roman masses in vast numbers, Terence’s more tightly constructed and less riotous plays seem to be geared toward a more sophisticated group of theatergoers, people who recognized the constraints of the genre and sought something beyond its boundaries. Terence adhered strictly to the generic conventions, but used them to express a new interest in humanism and the personal. A famous line from *Self-Torturer* states that “I am human, and I don’t think anything human is foreign to me.” Terence also celebrated the artistic achievement of Greece and followed his models more closely in order to showcase his predecessors’ talents. Using primarily Menander as a model, he wrote plays in refined Latin on the Menandrian themes of the importance of friendship, the resolution of family conflicts that reflected social issues, and the making of good citizens. He also offered some important innovations to the structure of theater: Terence used a double-plot structure and strove for on-stage realism, more suspense and less irony, and the universal quality of gentle humor found in Greek New Comedy. In one of his most exciting plays, *Eunuch*, a young man who lusts for an innocent young woman (the slave of a prostitute) poses as a eunuch to gain access to her chamber, while in another plot, a soldier is in love with this same prostitute and competes with another client for her attention. In the end, the slave-girl

is found to be the daughter of a citizen and so can be legally married to her rapist, which passed as a happy ending in New Comedy. Terence’s humanism was not necessarily popular with the public, however, as the playwright himself relays in prologues that make no attempt to be integrated into the plays themselves. At the first performance of *Mother-in-Law* in 165 B.C.E., Terence’s audience was distracted by an acrobatic display; at a second performance in 160 B.C.E., they left in droves to watch gladiators fighting. At a third production later that same year, his audience, or most of it, finally stayed until the end of the play. Terence died at a very young age, either 24 or 34, while on a voyage to Greece. Dying while journeying to the cultural center of the world was especially poetic—the same story is also told of Vergil’s death in 19 B.C.E.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES in Theater

- Aeschylus, *Oresteia* (458 B.C.E.), and other tragedies—This trilogy is the only surviving trilogy from the fifth century B.C.E.
- Aristophanes, *Acharnians* (c. 425 B.C.E.)—Aristophanes’ first play introduced the comedic genius of the young playwright. The plot of this Old Comedy revolves around a simple man who defies the Athenian government and makes a separate peace with the Spartans during the Peloponnesian War.
- Aristotle, *Poetics* (c. 340 B.C.E.)—Aristotle’s treatise is the first to treat poetic composition of all kinds as art, making Aristotle the first literary critic and theorist.
- Cicero (Marcus Tullius), *In Defense of Roscius the Comic Actor* (c. 69 B.C.E.)—In this speech, Cicero defends the comic actor Roscius against a charge of fraud and in

the process reveals important information about the profession of acting in the first century B.C.E.

Euripides, *Medea* (431 B.C.E.)—One of the more famous of Euripides' plays, *Medea* highlights the playwright's penchant for depicting society's victims—women, outcasts, the abused—and his ability to explore the interiority of characters in a new way. In this play, Medea—a foreigner, outsider, woman, and witch—is allowed to wreak vengeance on her callous Greek husband Jason, and is rescued in the end by a *deus ex machina*.

Homer, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (c. 750 B.C.E.)—Homer's epics were the source of Greek dramatic form and much of its subject matter.

Livy (Titus Livius), *From the Foundations of the City* (c. 25 B.C.E.)—This complete history of Rome (not surviving in its entirety) from its founding in the eighth century to 9 B.C.E. in 142 books includes many anecdotes about Roman theater from its beginning until the beginning of the empire.

Ovid (Publius Naso), *Metamorphoses* (c. 5 C.E.)—This extremely creative and playful Roman “anti-epic” focuses on the many transformations that take place in Greek mythology, and is one of the most valuable sources of ancient myth.

Plautus (Titus Maccius), *Pseudolus* (c. 191 B.C.E.)—The comedies of Rome's most popular playwright gleefully borrow plots and settings from Greek New Comedy but turn the material into brilliant and purely Roman plays. Plautus' *Pseudolus* is representative in many ways of his values; the eponymous clever slave outwits his master and assists his young master's quest for love, with no thought of his own gain.

Seneca (Lucius Annaeus) The Younger, *Thyestes* (c. 60 C.E.)—Seneca's work, heavily indebted to the Athenian tragic playwrights, are the only extant attempts from Rome to create new tragedies since the days of Naevius, Accius and Pacuvius in the third and second centuries B.C.E. In *Thyestes*, Seneca displays all of his prodigious rhetorical talent as well as his fondness for the grotesque, as Atreus, the title character's brother, serves up a stew made from Thyestes' own children as revenge for his brother's adultery with his wife.

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (c. 430 B.C.E.)—Sophocles is most famous for three of his plays about the Oedipus story, and his extant tragedies feature strong but stubborn heroes whose greatest qualities often ironically bring about their downfalls. Sophocles' most famous tragic hero, Oedipus, tries desperately to outwit Fate and avoid killing his father and marrying his own mother, while ironically moving inexorably toward the fulfillment of the oracle that prophesied his downfall. This play is often considered one of the most perfect examples of a Greek tragedy, in its characterizations, structure, language, and ultimate moral lesson.

Terence (Publius Afer), *Eunuch* (c. 160 B.C.E.)—This sophisticated playwright's comedies paid tribute to the artistry of Greek New Comedy during a time when a conservative movement fought to eradicate Hellenistic influences from Rome culture. In this play, he uses his trademark double-plot structure to demonstrate how a personal catastrophe, like rape, can in the end be resolved and can even lead to civic justice and order.

Vitruvius, *On Architecture* (first century B.C.E.)—The only architectural work to survive from ancient Rome, it provides modern readers with valuable information about Roman engineering, building practices, and theater design.

chapter nine

VISUAL ARTS

James Allan Evans

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	386	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	390	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		The Potters' Art . . . . .	399
Pottery in the Bronze Age . . . . .	392	<i>Daedalus the Skillful Craftsman</i> (Pausanias discusses some sculptures created by Daedalus) . . . . .	405
The Early Pottery of Greece . . . . .	394	Casting Bronze Statues by the "Lost Wax" Method . . . . .	406
The Dominance of Athens . . . . .	397	<i>Pliny the Elder on the Sculptor, Myron</i> (Pliny discusses the significance of Myron's sculptures) . . . . .	412
Hellenistic and Roman Pottery . . . . .	402	<i>Phidias' Gold and Ivory Statue of Zeus at Olympia</i> (Strabos comments on Phidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia). . . . .	416
Sculpture in Archaic Greece . . . . .	404	<i>Polyclitus and the Argive Style</i> (Pliny comments on the works of the sculptor Polyclitus) . . . . .	419
Sculpture of the Classical Period . . . . .	410	<i>The "Painted Stoa" in Athens</i> (Pausanias describes four wall paintings in an Athenian marketplace). . . . .	432
The Hellenistic Period . . . . .	420	<i>The Beginnings of Perspective</i> (Vitruvius comments on Agatharcus, a painter for Aeschylus's dramas). . . . .	433
Roman Sculpture . . . . .	425	<i>Vitruvius on Contemporary Roman Wall Painting</i> (Vitruvius criticizes wall paintings copied from real life) . . . . .	436
Greek Painting . . . . .	429	<i>Women Painters</i> (Pliny comments on the work of the female painter Iaia) . . . . .	443
Roman Painting . . . . .	435		
Portraits . . . . .	439		
Mosaics . . . . .	444		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Apelles . . . . .	449		
Exekias . . . . .	450		
Lysippus . . . . .	451		
Phidias . . . . .	452		
Polygnotus . . . . .	453		
Praxiteles . . . . .	454		
Zeuxis . . . . .	455		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	455		



## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Visual Arts*

- c. 3000 B.C.E. Early Cycladic art develops in the Cyclades archipelago, the islands that circle Delos and neighboring islands, excluding Crete.
- c. 2000 B.C.E.
- c. 3000 B.C.E. Pottery is handmade during the Prepalatial period on Crete, before the development of the Minoan civilization.
- c. 1950 B.C.E.
- 2600 B.C.E. Fine handmade vases with mottled decoration, called “Vasiliki-Ware” from the place of their discovery, appear on Crete. They appear to imitate vessels made from stone found in Egypt.
- 2400 B.C.E.
- 2500 B.C.E. On the Cyclades Islands, this period known as Early Cycladic II is the heyday of Cycladic sculptors, who produce magnificent abstract figures. Most of them are schematic representations of women, but there are also abstractions of seated harpists, standing pipers playing pipes, and warriors.
- 2200 B.C.E.
- c. 2000 B.C.E. The period known as “Middle Helladic” begins in mainland Greece, corresponding to the Middle Minoan Period on Crete. Wheel-made pottery appears, though on the mainland it does not yet become widespread.
- c. 1950 B.C.E. A new type of pottery, grey “Minyan Ware,” appears on mainland Greece. Minyan Ware has a burnished surface and is decorated with geometric designs either incised on the surface before the pot is fired, or applied in a flat dark color on a pale slip.
- 1950 B.C.E. During the Proto-Palatial or Old Palace
- 1700 B.C.E. period in Minoan Crete, pottery is made using the potter’s wheel.
- c. 1650 B.C.E. Minoan artists are at work in Avaris (modern Tell el Dab’a), the capital of the Hyksos kings in Egypt, producing frescoes in a palace which predates the eruption of the Thira volcano.
- 1628 B.C.E. The volcano on Thira, the southernmost of the Cyclades Islands, erupts. Volcanic ash buries the Minoan settlement at Akrotiri, preserving wall paintings that will be discovered almost intact in modern times.
- c. 1600 B.C.E. Towards the end of the Middle Helladic period on the mainland, gray Minyan ware is superseded by pottery with polychrome geometric designs, owing their inspiration to Crete and perhaps the Cyclades Islands.
- 1550 B.C.E. A new style of pottery emerges on Crete, with patterns favoring spirals and depictions of plants.
- 1500 B.C.E.
- 1500 B.C.E. The “Marine Style” of pottery appears on Crete, with designs of fish, octopods, and argonauts. This is the last Minoan style before the catastrophe of 1450 B.C.E.
- 1450 B.C.E. During the Post-Palatial period, there appears a style of pottery known as “Palace Style” which lacks the spontaneity of the earlier “Marine Style.”
- 1350 B.C.E.
- 1400 B.C.E. In this period, designated “Late Helladic IIIA and B,” Mycenaean pottery is exported far and wide over the Mediterranean area to Sicily, Italy, Egypt, and Asia Minor.
- 1200 B.C.E.
- c. 1200 B.C.E. In the Late Helladic IIIC period after the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces, the so-called “Granary Style” pottery appears, decorated with a few wavy lines and festoons on the belly and neck of the vase. This style will develop into the Protogeometric style.
- 1100 B.C.E.
- c. 1050 B.C.E. Early Geometric (Protogeometric) vases appear—vases painted with geometric

- designs such as circles, spirals, and concentric rings.
- c. 900 B.C.E. In the fully-developed Geometric period, geometric designs spread over the vases that the potters produce and a new repertory of patterns appears.
- c. 700 B.C.E.
- 700 B.C.E. The influence of Asian art is at its height, so much so that art historians have dubbed this the “Orientalizing Period.”
- 600 B.C.E.
- Monumental architecture and sculpture revives.
- 700 B.C.E. Athenian potters have by now adopted the black-figure technique showing figures in silhouette, which had already been practiced in Corinth for a century.
- c. 675 B.C.E. The earliest Greek style of sculpture, the so-called Daedalic style, appears.
- c. 650 B.C.E.
- The Nikandre statue, an over life-sized statue of a woman in Daedalic style, is dedicated to Artemis at Delos by Nikandre of Naxos about this time.
- c. 650 B.C.E. Corinthian pottery dominates the export market in Italy and Sicily.
- c. 550 B.C.E.
- c. 650 B.C.E. The first Daedalic-style *kouros* statues appear. The style depicts nude male figures standing stiffly with one foot thrust forward like contemporary Egyptian statues.
- 620 B.C.E. The so-called Sunium *kouros* is carved for the temple of Poseidon at Sunium. The ten-foot tall statue is the best-preserved of several over life-sized *kouroi* found there.
- 580 B.C.E.
- c. 550 B.C.E. Athenian pottery begins to dominate the export market in Sicily and Italy, displacing Corinthian pottery.
- c. 530 B.C.E. Athenian potters begin to produce vases in red-figure style.
- c. 480 B.C.E. The Greek sculptor Myron produces his masterpieces during these years.
- 445 B.C.E.
- 478 B.C.E. To commemorate a victory in the chariot races in the Pythian Games of either this year or four years later in 474 by Polyzeus, tyrant of Gela in Sicily, the bronze charioteer now in the Delphi Museum was erected as part of a chariot group.
- 465 B.C.E. The Athenian sculptor Phidias is working on his great bronze statue of Athena Promachos, later known as Athena Promachos, which stood over nine meters (30 feet) on the Acropolis of Athens.
- 456 B.C.E.
- c. 452 B.C.E. The earliest work of the sculptor Polyclitus of Argos dates to this time.
- 447 B.C.E. Phidias is working on his statue of Athena made of gold and ivory which stands 12.7 meters (41.67 feet) high in the Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis.
- 438 B.C.E.
- c. 437 B.C.E. Phidias goes to Olympia to work on the gold-and-ivory cult statue of Zeus for the Temple of Zeus.
- 405 B.C.E. The Spartans defeat the Athenians at Aegospotami in northern Greece, destroying the Athenian fleet. The Spartan memorial that Polyclitus of Argos designed for this victory is the last known work of Polyclitus.
- 372 B.C.E. The sculptor Lysippus of Sicyon makes his first statue that can be dated for a victor in the Olympic Games of this year.
- c. 364 B.C.E. Praxiteles sculpts the first female nude, the *Aphrodite of Cnidus*.
- 323 B.C.E. In the Early Hellenistic Period of Greek sculpture, sculptors continue with the traditions of late classical sculpture as exemplified by Lysippus and Praxiteles.
- c. 240 B.C.E.
- 280 B.C.E. A bronze portrait statue of Demosthenes by Polyeuctus, which is erected in the marketplace of Athens a generation after the orator’s death, portrays him realistically, without any attempt at idealism.

- 272 B.C.E. The Romans capture Taras, Roman Tarentum on the south coast of Italy, and take some of its art as plunder, thus introducing Romans to Greek masterpieces.
- 240 B.C.E. In the “High Hellenistic Period,” a  
–c. 150 B.C.E. “Baroque” style of sculpture is developed which is full of violent motion and physical energy.
- 211 B.C.E. The Roman general Marcellus, having captured Syracuse in Sicily the previous year, takes Greek works of art to Rome as spoils, thereby starting a craze for Greek sculpture and painting in Rome.
- c. 190 B.C.E. The *Nike* of Samothrace, a sculpture now in the Louvre in Paris, showing a Winged Victory alighting on the prow of a warship, is erected at Samothrace, an island in the northern Aegean Sea.
- c. 175 B.C.E. The Great Altar of Zeus, the most famous ensemble of High Hellenistic “Baroque,” is erected in Pergamum, modern Bergama in Turkey.
- 168 B.C.E. Aemilius Paullus, having defeated the last king of Macedon, Perseus, takes a huge number of statues and paintings to display at his triumph in Rome.
- c. 150 B.C.E. In the Late Hellenistic Period sculptors  
–31 B.C.E. return to the styles of the classical period.
- 150 B.C.E. The sculptor Alexandros of Antioch-  
–125 B.C.E. on-the-Meander River sculpts the *Venus di Milo*, a statue of Aphrodite holding the apple which Paris had awarded her as a beauty prize, which according to myth was the cause of the Trojan War.
- 146 B.C.E. Lucius Mummius sacks Corinth and ships cartloads of major and minor arts to Rome.
- 133 B.C.E. The last king of Pergamum, Attalus III, dies, and leaves his kingdom to Rome in his will. Pergamum ceases to be a Greek artistic center but Pergamene traditions continue on Rhodes.
- 9 B.C.E. The Altar of Peace is dedicated in Rome.
- 64 C.E. A great fire in Rome ruins half the city, and the emperor Nero seizes the opportunity to build his extravagant “Golden House” in the center of the city that was cleared of buildings by the fire.
- 79 C.E. The eruption of the volcano of Mt. Vesuvius overwhelms Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae, and Oplontis, thus preserving houses and public buildings along with wall paintings and statuary.
- 81 C.E. The emperor Titus dies and after his death, the Arch of Titus is erected in Rome by his successor, Domitian, to commemorate the victories of Vespasian and Titus in the Judaeen War which ended with the sack of Jerusalem.
- 113 C.E. The Column of Trajan in Rome, carved in less than four years by an unknown master sculptor and his workshop, is dedicated in Rome to commemorate the emperor Trajan’s conquest of Dacia (modern Rumania).
- 129 C.E. Antinous, a youth who was a favorite of the emperor Hadrian, is drowned in the Nile River, and Hadrian expresses his grief by deifying Antinous and erecting statues of him which represent a last flowering of the classical male nude as an artistic type.
- 180 C.E. The Column of Marcus Aurelius is  
–196 C.E. built in Rome with marble from quarries at Luni to commemorate his campaigns of 168–176 C.E.
- 203 C.E. The Arch of Septimius Severus is erected in the Roman Forum, spanning the “Sacred Way” at the foot of the Capitoline Hill. The arch commemorates the victories of Severus and his sons Caracalla and Geta over the Parthians (195 C.E.) and the Osroeni (197 C.E.).
- 305 C.E. The Arch of Galerius is erected in Salonika in northern Greece to celebrate

- the victory of Galerius over the Persians. Reliefs show scenes of the campaign: one shows Diocletian, Augustus of the East, and Galerius, his Caesar, offering sacrifice, and another shows the surrender of an eastern town.
- 315 C.E. The Arch of Constantine is erected in Rome to commemorate his victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 311 C.E. It is decorated with sculptural fragments from earlier monuments.
- 330 C.E. The emperor Constantine dedicates his “New Rome,” Constantinople, which is to be the capital of a Christian empire. Large numbers of works of art are taken from Greece to adorn the new capital, including Phidias’ “Athena Promachos” and his “Zeus” from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.
- c. 390 C.E. The emperor Theodosius I erects an Egyptian obelisk originally from the temple of Amon at Karnak in the Hippodrome at Constantinople, and has a base made for it decorated with reliefs, one of which shows Theodosius surrounded by his court. Figures are all frontal and of equal height, except for the taller figure of the emperor in the center.
- c. 425 C.E. The so-called Mausoleum of Galla Placidia is built at Ravenna in Italy, and its interior is decorated with a rich group of early Christian mosaics, including one showing Christ as the Good Shepherd in the lunette above the entrance, still done in the three-dimensional, naturalistic style of the classical tradition.
- 504 C.E. The Church of Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo is dedicated in Ravenna, with mosaics that move away from the naturalistic style of the classical tradition and use gold as the background color.

## OVERVIEW *of Visual Arts*

**PERIODS OF DEVELOPMENT.** The history of ancient Greek art falls neatly into five periods. It begins in the prehistoric Bronze Age, when a civilization flourished on the island of Crete in the second millennium B.C.E., which has the modern label “Minoan.” Its artistic traditions were carried on in mainland Greece via the Mycenaean civilization. This civilization flourished until 1200 B.C.E., when it fell victim to raiders and new migrants into Greece, thereby entering a “Dark Age” (1150–700 B.C.E.). Archaeology is gradually making this period less dark, however, for the ceramics of this age continue to shed light on the development of artistic tradition. By the ninth century B.C.E. a new period of Greek art emerged known as “Geometric” after the geometric designs such as triangles, circles, and spirals that decorate the pottery. “Geometric” developed by natural stages into the Early Archaic Period (700–550 B.C.E.), when the first sculptured human figures appear. The Late Archaic Period (550–480 B.C.E.) is the great age of Athenian vase-painting, when pottery from Athenian workshops found buyers all over the Mediterranean world. Then, in the classical period (480–330 B.C.E.) Athens set the standard for the visual arts of Greece. Alexander the Great’s conquest of the Persian Empire ushered in the next period, the Hellenistic Age (330–30 B.C.E.), which takes its name from the Greek word *hellenizein*, meaning “to adopt Greek culture and language.” It was an era in the ancient world when Greek culture spread over the eastern Mediterranean region, submerging other, more ancient cultures in Egypt and the Near East. The centers of culture moved from Greece itself to new cities such as Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in Syria and many others scattered throughout Asia Minor and the Near East. Egypt, the last Hellenistic kingdom, fell to Rome in 30 B.C.E. and what followed was the period of Roman imperial art, though in the eastern Mediterranean the traditions of the Hellenistic Age lived on until late antiquity (284–632 C.E.).

**THE MINOAN AND MYCENAEAN WORLD.** The art of the Minoans is known solely through archaeological finds, beginning with the excavation of the so-called “Palace of Minos” at Knossos in Crete by British archaeologists in 1900 C.E. The finds at Knossos were rapidly supplemented by finds made by Italian excavators at Phaistos in the south-central region of the island, and by the French at Mallia close to the north coast. At all these sites, sprawling palaces were discovered, built around central courtyards, and the rooms decorated with frescoes provided a glimpse of Minoan artistic tradition. These palaces began to be built about 2000–1900 B.C.E.; they were destroyed by some disaster, probably a great earthquake, about 1700 B.C.E. and then overtaken by another disaster about 1450 B.C.E., after which only the palace at Knossos was reinhabited. The best-preserved examples of Minoan wall painting were discovered at Akrotiri on the volcanic island of Thira, where an eruption in 1628 B.C.E. buried the outpost. On mainland Greece, a prehistoric civilization also flourished, called Mycenaean after the earliest site excavated, Mycenae, where a sprawling, poorly preserved palace was discovered. The Mycenaeans carried on the traditions of Minoan art despite differences of culture in other areas, such as language.

**THE GEOMETRIC AGE.** The Mycenaean civilization began to decline around 1200 B.C.E. when raiders began to invade the area. Over the course of the next century, they overran the rule of the Mycenaean kings and destroyed the palaces. By 1000 B.C.E., some stability had returned to the Greek world, and in the city-states which took the place of the old Mycenaean palace-based monarchies a new type of art emerged that art historians label “geometric.” Athens provides the best evidence for the development of geometric art, for in the Kerameikos cemetery there, in the potters’ quarter of the ancient city, a continuous series of burials have been excavated, from the end of the Mycenaean civilization down to the classical period. About 1000 B.C.E., vase painters in Athens ceased to imitate Mycenaean prototypes and turned to abstract patterns. They decorated the necks, shoulders, and bases of their vases with continuous bands and concentric circles. Athens seems to have taken the lead, but the new style spread rapidly throughout Greece and the islands. As the style developed from Early Geometric (Protogeometric) to mature Geometric, the early simplicity disappeared, and painters covered the whole surface of their vases with geometric forms: triangles, diamond-shaped figures, squares, checker-board patterns, and the so-called “Greek key” pattern, a continuous square-cornered meander. By the eighth century B.C.E., animal figures appear, to be fol-

lowed by human figures not much later. The vase paintings began to show scenes; the most common are scenes of funerals, for many of the greatest surviving vases were intended as monuments for the graves of wealthy men. They held food and drink offerings for the dead and some had holes pierced in the bottom so that drink offerings could flow down into the earth and feed the corpse buried beneath. Then about 700 B.C.E. artistic patterns borrowed from the East appeared: lions, panthers, sphinxes, and griffins. This “orientalizing style” began on Cyprus, and developed in the Greek cities of Asia Minor which came into contact with the art of the Assyrian Empire through the mediation of the Syrians, Phoenicians, and Lydians. The Greeks borrowed the Assyrian way of portraying the human body, as well as the Assyrian technique and style, but their themes were Greek, taken from Greek legends. In 668 B.C.E. Assyria conquered Egypt, but she failed to hold it. By 650 B.C.E., Egypt was in revolt, and Greek mercenaries were helping rebel leader Psammetichos. Greeks visited Egypt as soldiers and traders, and what they saw was a revelation. Egypt would teach Greece the potential of free-standing sculpture.

**SCULPTURE.** Sculptors began to experiment with free-standing human figures in the middle of the seventh century B.C.E. Males are nude, women fully clothed, and both face the onlooker like the Egyptian statues which served as the inspiration for the Greek craftsmen. But by the end of the Archaic Period, sculptors learned how to model the muscles of the body and to show figures that were no longer strictly frontal. The names of famous classical sculptors survived, including Myron, Phidias, and Polyclitus, but their masterpieces did not. Art historians are dependent on Roman copies of these works. Wealthy Romans were passionate collectors of Greek art, and in Greece an industry developed for manufacturing copies for the Roman market. Yet it is rare that a statue has survived with its original color, for statues were painted; in addition to coloring the eyes, lips, and hair, painters decorated the clothing of female statues with bright patterns. The white marble statues displayed in museums have drained Greek art of its color. Even so, marble sculpture has fared better than bronze statues of ancient Greece. Most of them were melted down in the Middle Ages for their metal. Underwater finds, however, have brought a number of bronze masterpieces to light; the best of them is a splendid, life-size figure of Zeus hurling a thunderbolt which is now in the National Museum of Greece in Athens.

**GREEK PAINTING.** The evidence for early Greek painting for the archaic and classical periods comes

mostly from Greek vases. In the mid-sixth century B.C.E. Athenian potters developed a style known as “black-figure” because the figures were shown in black glaze, with details etched with a pointed instrument, while the background was left the natural burnt sienna color of the Athenian clay. Some artists signed their vases with their names, but many are anonymous. “Black-figure” gave way in the last quarter of the sixth century B.C.E. to “red-figure,” where the background is in black glaze and the figures are the natural color of the clay. These vases provide only a tantalizing glimpse of the painters’ art in Greece. Ancient authors wrote descriptions of lost paintings and the names of the great fifth-century B.C.E. painters such as Polygnotus, considered the first great painter; or Zeuxis, famous for his realism; or Apelles in the next century who was the favorite painter of Alexander the Great. Macedonian tombs, which are underground chambers with walls decorated with murals, give some idea of what painting was like in the fourth and third centuries B.C.E.; since the great painter Apelles of Epehesus was active in Macedon in his early years, the murals may reflect his influence. In the Roman period, the cities destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E.—Pompeii, Herculaneum, Oplontis, and Stabiae—had wall-paintings and mosaics, some of which probably tried to reproduce the great masterpieces. One house in Pompeii, the House of the Dancing Faun, has a splendid mosaic showing Alexander the Great defeating King Darius III of Persia at the Battle of Issus in 333 B.C.E. It reproduces some ancient masterpiece, and there have been attempts to conjecture who the artist was—perhaps Philoxenus of Eretria, or a woman artist, Helena from Egypt, both of whom painted a “Battle of Issus.” The Christian churches of the fifth and sixth centuries C.E. also preserve mosaics which continue the traditions of ancient painting.

**THE HELLENISTIC AGE.** New centers of Greek art appeared in the period after Alexander the Great unified Greece and conquered the Persians and Egyptians. Greece itself, particularly Athens, remained a center of art in the expanded Hellenistic world, although other centers developed. In the early Hellenistic period, sculptors carried on the artistic traditions of the fourth century B.C.E. Following the example of Praxiteles, they portrayed female nudes in seductive poses, and following Lysippus’ example, they showed male nudes as active figures. Then, from the mid-third century B.C.E., the Hellenistic Age developed a taste for the baroque. One notable center for the baroque style was Pergamum (modern Bergama in north-west Turkey), where the Great Altar of Zeus, erected about 175 B.C.E., was

adorned with a frieze showing the familiar subject of the Battle of Gods and Giants, where the combatants are in violent motion, with muscles taut and straining. Draperies swirl, figures writhe in anguish. As the eastern Mediterranean slipped under Roman domination, Hellenistic taste returned to its classical roots, though the baroque school continued to flourish at Rhodes which produced a masterpiece dating to the early first century C.E.: a statue group showing the Trojan priest Laocoon and his sons struggling with the two serpents that came out of the sea and attacked them when Laocoon urged his countrymen not to bring the Trojan Horse within the walls of Troy. The statue group illustrates an incident in Rome's national epic, the *Aeneid*, which describes the death of Laocoon in vivid detail.

**ROMAN IMPERIAL ART.** The Roman Empire preferred to take its models from the classical period, not the Hellenistic world. Roman emperors, for instance, were shown with the muscular, well-developed bodies of the male nudes sculpted by Polyclitus, who was famous for his athletes who were more powerfully built than the nudes of the Athenian sculptor Myron in the fifth century B.C.E. or Praxiteles in the following century. The emperors wear Roman armor with breastplates that emphasize the musculature of their chests, but beneath their armor, we see the proportions prescribed by Polyclitus. Roman portraits are a distinctive breed. Greece had produced portraits since the fifth century B.C.E. and sought to combine realism with idealism. The Roman taste for portraits was simply realistic, often brutally so. That is particularly true of those portraits that date to the republican period, before 30 B.C.E. In the first and second centuries C.E. Roman artists looked to classical Greece for inspiration and portraits show a tendency to idealize, though the individuality of the subject is always all-important. Imperial portraits in the late third century C.E. are again brutally realistic, but as we edge into the fourth century the spirit of imperial portraiture changes. The emperors are shown as men of power, not of this world. The robes of imperial office, which are rich and ornate, bear the same message. Art of this time period reflect the end of an era, when the pagan world and its culture were dying.

**EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.** The earliest Christian art is found in the catacombs which were great subterranean passage-ways with cubbyholes (*loculi*) placed one above another like shelves for the bodies of the dead. The catacombs in Rome are estimated to run from sixty to ninety miles and they date from the second to the fourth centuries C.E. The paintings found there are rough work which use the designs and techniques of contemporary

pagan work: what is different is the choice of subject. The Christian artists liked subjects from the Jewish scriptures: Jonah and the whale, Adam and Eve, the Sacrifice of Isaac, and Daniel in the lions' den, for instance. When Jesus appears, he is shown either as a youthful teacher or as the Good Shepherd tending his flock and even carrying a lamb. Only after the Roman Empire became Christian in the fourth century C.E. are there depictions of Jesus with a halo, wearing a purple robe. The picture of Christ as a mature, bearded man, which eventually displaced the picture of the youthful Christ, was developed only in the fifth century C.E. Christian subjects also appear on Christian sarcophagi, many of which have survived, for the Christians rejected cremation of the dead; pagans likewise favored burial over cremation in the third century C.E. Sarcophagi had common themes—standard scenes from the life of Christ—for the marble cutters turned them out with the sculptural decoration roughed out, and only after the sarcophagus was purchased would they finish them to the specifications of their customers. One scene from the life of Christ which did not occur in early Christian art, however, was the Crucifixion. It was unknown in Christian art before the fifth century C.E. and remained fairly rare for some time afterwards. The Resurrection, that is Christ's victory over death, engaged the imaginations of the first Christian artists rather than His death itself.

## TOPICS in Visual Arts

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### POTTERY IN THE BRONZE AGE

**EARLY DEVELOPMENTS.** Pottery first appeared in the Greek peninsula about 6000 B.C.E., introduced, perhaps, by immigrants from the Near East where pottery was made as early as 8000 B.C.E. The first pots were coarse, gray, handmade ware with simple decorations made by scratching linear designs on them, but in the mid-Neolithic period (5000–4000 B.C.E.) there is evidence of potters in southern Greece using slips, or washes of specially-prepared clay painted on the pot before firing in order to produce a lustrous finish. Pottery was still made by hand, as it would continue to be during both the Early Helladic Period (3000–2000 B.C.E.) on mainland Greece, and the Early Minoan Period which corresponds to it on Crete. Yet on Crete, a change took place once the island entered the Early Minoan Period. The quality of pottery on Crete improved. One type of pot-

tery found on Crete during the Early Minoan period hints at connections with Egypt; the “Vasiliki-ware,” so-called from the site of Vasilike on Crete where it was first discovered, apparently imitated vessels made from fine veined stone of the sort found in Egypt. Vasiliki-ware is decorated with patches of paint which is then fired to different shades of red, yellow, and dark brown, producing a mottled effect. Typical shapes are the goblet and a jug with a long spout. By the end of the Early Minoan period (2000 B.C.E.), however, this mottled decoration found on Vasiliki-ware had been abandoned. Contemporary ware on the mainland at the end of Early Helladic is typically plain and dark in color, though pots with patterns have also been found that feature interlocking triangles, winding lines, and chevron. The potter’s wheel also made its appearance on mainland Greece before the end of the Early Helladic Period, though it was not much used there until after 1600 B.C.E. By 2000 B.C.E., when the Middle Minoan period began on Crete and Middle Helladic on the mainland, Crete and mainland Greece apparently went their separate ways.

**THE PROTOPALATIAL PERIOD ON CRETE.** The early years of Middle Helladic on the mainland Greece were marked by a new migration into the Greek peninsula, and it is generally agreed that these new immigrants spoke Greek, and were thus the first wave of Greek-speakers to reach Greece. They brought with them a type of ware which archaeologists call “Minyan Ware,” either gray or beige in color and without decoration. For the next three centuries or more, mainland Greece became a backwater. On Crete, however, the Middle Minoan period ushered in a brilliant age, the Protopalatial or Old Palace Period, when great sprawling palaces were built at a number of sites, chief of them Knossos just south of Iraklion, the capital of modern Crete; Phaistos, due south of Knossos; and Mallia on the northern coast of the island. The potter’s wheel was generally used. Potters in the Old Palace Period threw their clay on the horizontal surface of a disk and molded it with their hands as the disk spun around, turned by the potter’s helper. The result was a more symmetrical pot of a finer texture and the best of these can stand comparison with the best oriental porcelain.

**KAMARES WARE.** The most distinctive pottery of the period is “Kamares Ware” which took its name from a cave sanctuary on the slopes of Mt. Ida near the village of Kamares where the first examples of the style were found in the 1890s. Kamares Ware is egg-shell thin and polychrome, that is, it is decorated with designs in several colors: creamy white and reddish-brown against a black background is the favorite color combination. One

example, from the palace at Phaistos in south-central Crete, shows a large fish and what appears to be a fish-net on the belly of the vase, and beneath it are spirals, concentric circles and wavy lines, perhaps representing the sea. The development of Kamares Ware was interrupted by a catastrophe about 1700 B.C.E. in which the palaces of the Old Palace Period were destroyed. When the palaces were rebuilt, the Kamares-type vases continued to be made, though they lacked the vivacity of the earlier examples.

**VASE-PAINTING IN THE NEOPALATIAL PERIOD.** By 1600 B.C.E. vase-painters began to experiment with designs in dark paint on light backgrounds, the opposite of the Kamares-style where the background was dark. Vase-painters moved towards a new style, with themes taken from nature; a number of vases show illustrations of papyrus plants which the Minoans must have seen in Egypt, for no papyrus grows on Crete. Then, by 1500 B.C.E. the last Minoan pottery style before the great catastrophe of 1450 B.C.E. evolved: the so-called “Marine Style.” In this style, vases were decorated with life-like paintings of sea-creatures: fish, octopods, and the mollusk with octopus-like tentacles known as “argonauts.” There is nothing stiff or ornate about the Marine Style. Fish, dolphins, and cephalopods were depicted as they appear in real life, and the style betrays familiarity with marine life. Then about 1450 B.C.E. catastrophe overwhelmed all the palaces and only the Knossos palace was rebuilt and reinhabited, apparently by Mycenaean Greeks, for their language is Greek. At Knossos in this period, the last pottery style of Bronze-Age Crete emerged: the so-called “Palace Style,” associated with the palace at Knossos. The cheerful spontaneity of the Marine Style disappeared, and was replaced by a style that aimed at grandeur. Formalism replaced naturalism. The taste is Mycenaean, for at Mycenae on the mainland natural motifs were stylized into symmetrical and often heraldic patterns.

**MYCENAEAN VASES.** By the late 1400s B.C.E., Greek-speakers from mainland Greece had probably invaded Crete, and more and more in the later centuries Minoan pottery and the Mycenaean ware from the mainland converged and became standardized. From a technical point of view, Mycenaean vases are often very fine work, with clean shapes and stylized decoration that reuses motifs from Crete. For two centuries after 1400 B.C.E. Mycenaean pottery found markets all over the Mediterranean world. It has been found in Italy, Sicily, Asia Minor, and Egypt. However, with the end of the Mycenaean civilization around 1200 B.C.E., the world became an unsettled place, and the change is reflected



in the pottery. The last styles from the aftermath of the Mycenaean collapse—the period from 1200–1100 B.C.E. which archaeologists call Late Helladic IIIC—belong to the “Close Style” and the “Granary Style,” both modern labels. The Close Style has decoration distributed in close rows of concentric half-circles, triangles, and the like over the body of the vase and sometimes there are motifs of fish and birds. One group that has been found has stylized octopods as decoration. Granary Style got its name because a cache of “Granary Style” vases were found at Mycenae in a store-room for grain inside the “Lion Gate” there, and they can be securely dated. Their decoration is simple: wavy lines and festoons on the belly and neck of the pot. “Granary Style” is recognizably sub-Mycenaean. It is the art of the dying Mycenaean civilization which still influenced potters, though the palaces where the god-kings used to rule had been destroyed and the well-to-do customers who used to buy Mycenaean pottery had vanished. Granary Style or “sub-Mycenaean” developed naturally into the Protogeometric style, whereas the Close Style did not survive the final phase of the Mycenaean world.

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## THE EARLY POTTERY OF GREECE

**THE IMPORTANCE OF ATHENS.** Athens was relatively unimportant in the Mycenaean period, but after the collapse of the Mycenaean world, it dominated the Geometric Period that followed. Sites from the century following 1200 B.C.E. show destruction by fire all over Greece and, for that matter, the Aegean world, but Athens



Funeral monument for Dexileos, a 20-year old Athenian cavalryman killed in action at Corinth in 394 B.C.E., from the Kerameikos Cemetery in Athens. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

survived. Athenian traditions told that Athens was attacked by the Dorians—a group of Greek people speaking the Dorian dialect—and in the struggle, the last king of Athens, Codrus, sacrificed his life to save the city. Athens and her territory, Attica, remained unconquered and offered a refuge for other dispossessed Greeks. The evidence of Athenian pottery during this period is particularly important, for not only is it the only evidence for the visual arts during the “Dark Ages” that followed Mycenae’s collapse, but it contributes a major body of evidence about the period’s history. In the *Kerameikos* cemetery—that is, the cemetery in the Potters’ Quarter in Athens—there is an unbroken series of burials from the end of the Mycenaean age into the classical period, and the pottery found in these burials allows scholars to document pottery decoration from sub-Mycenaean to Geometric.

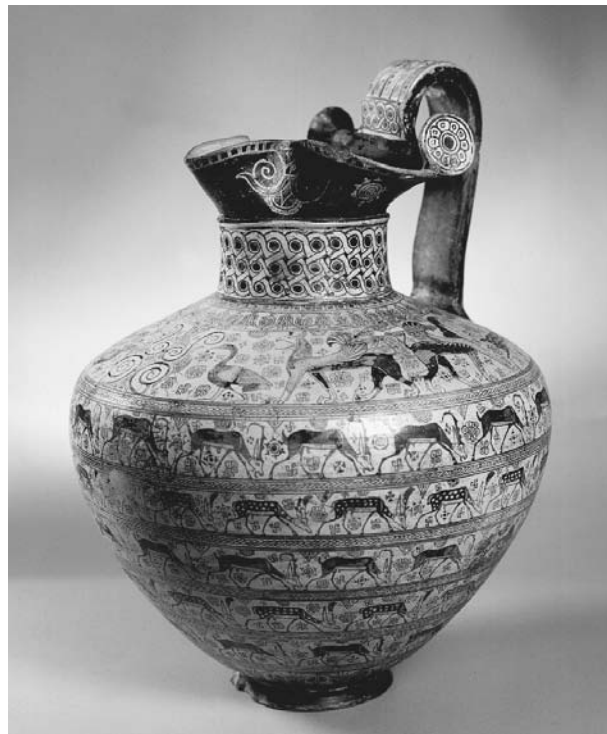
**MOVEMENT FROM SUB-MYCENAEAN TO GEOMETRIC.** The sub-Mycenaean pottery from the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe ending the Bronze-Age civilization is similar to the Granary Style found at Mycenae. It bears signs of culture shock, as the potters adjusted to the collapse of the civilization they once knew.



Geometric amphora from Athens, c. 760 B.C.E., showing the “lying-in-state” of the dead. © WOLFGANG KAEHLER/CORBIS.

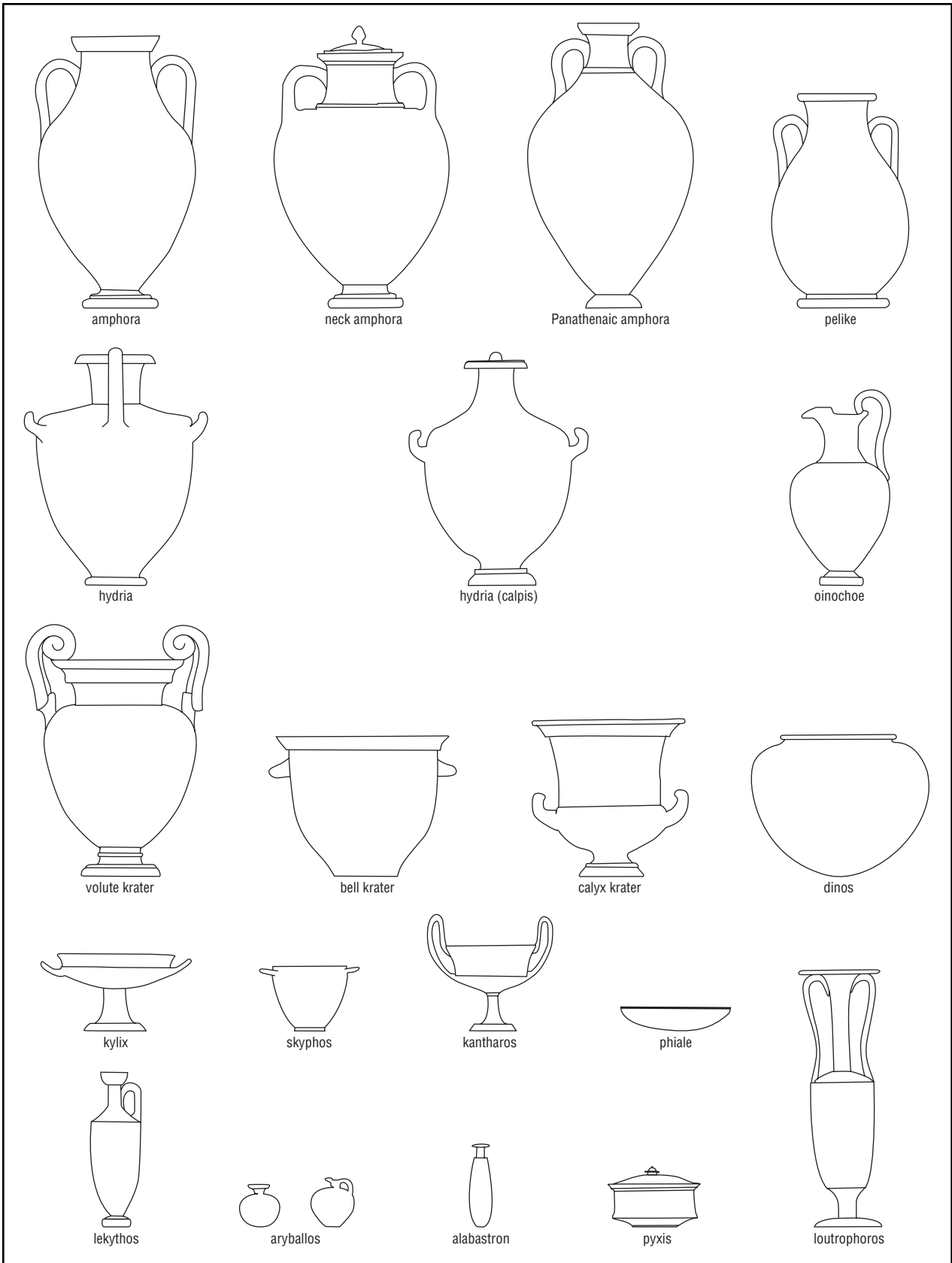
Simple Mycenaean patterns remembered from the past are repeated as if by rote. By about 1050 B.C.E., however, a new spirit emerged with a generation that never knew the Mycenaean world at first hand. The first stages of a new style of pottery appear which is labelled “Protogeometric” or “Early Geometric.” Vases were made once again on the fast wheel and fired at higher temperatures. The feature that gave the style its name, “Protogeometric,” is the type of decoration that the potters used on their ware: lines, circles, and, as time went on, intricate geometric patterns. Protogeometric artists employed a black background with light-ground stripes around the neck or the belly of the vase, or alternatively, a light background with geometric designs such as concentric circles, wavy lines, or checker-board patterns. The vase painters used compasses to draw concentric half-circles. The technique of producing the fine black gloss from the Bronze Age was not forgotten; it is used to cover more of the surface of the vase.

**GEOMETRIC POTTERY.** About 850 B.C.E., the pottery artists moved into the so-called Middle Geometric



Rhodian oinochoe (wine jug), 7th-century B.C.E., belonging to the “Orientalizing Period.” THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEE DU LOUVRE PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

Period with new and more complex geometric designs. Vases have bands of zigzags, triangle-patterns and meander designs that cover the whole surface of the vase. The patterns used by the Middle Geometric artist seem to owe their inspiration to basket weaving. During this period, the most dramatic change occurred with the introduction of figures, first of animals and then suddenly around 770 B.C.E., human figures. The spirit of these new vases is still geometric as the figures are still marshaled in orderly rows. But there is an effort to depict a scene. In one large vase made in Athens about 750 B.C.E., a central band across the belly of the vase shows a woman’s corpse laid out on a bier, and on either side, rows of women with their hands clasped over their heads in a ritual gesture of mourning. The rest of the vase is completely filled with geometric patterns marshaled in concentric circles. This vase, which stands about one and a half meters (five feet) high, was a grave marker, placed on top of a woman’s grave and partially buried. Another vase made in Athens about the same time shows a war galley with rows of oarsmen. A man is about to embark, and as he does, he turns and clasps a woman standing behind him by the wrist. The man is portrayed with a very slender waist and heavily-muscled thighs, and he grasps the woman’s wrist as if he is trying to drag her



Various ancient vase shapes. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

with him into the ship. Clearly the vase is telling a story, perhaps from Greek mythology, as one of the first examples of narrative art.

**CORINTHIAN POTTERY.** Vases ornamented with geometric figures were popular among Athenian potters, but this was not the case everywhere in Greece. In Corinth, the potters preferred linear designs coupled with fine craftsmanship, using the local buff-colored clay that is still found there. A new style of vase painting appeared in the early seventh century B.C.E., at the same time as Corinth became a major exporter of pottery to Sicily and Italy: the Corinthian potters began to decorate their vases with figures and motifs that show Eastern influence. The images were more frequently done in outline rather than in silhouette as had been the case in Geometric, but the artists also started to experiment with a new technique they borrowed from metalworking; they made images in solid black paint and drew in details by graving the surface of the paint with a sharp stylus so that the buff clay beneath it became visible. By about 720 B.C.E., this technique developed into the Corinthian black-figure style, with images in solid black, and details engraved with incised lines. Parts of the figures were sometimes highlighted with purplish-red paint. The subjects that the vase paintings depicted were geared to the taste of the market. Battle scenes reflected a time of civil strife in many of the Greek city-states as the old aristocracies which had once dominated the government faced a changed political situation that they would no longer control. There were also many oriental motifs, such as friezes of animals such as wild boars, wild goats, dogs, lions, and griffins, marshaled in rows, that reflected the growing commerce with the Near East. The inspiration was Asian, particularly from Mesopotamia. The Corinthian potters aimed to please their markets, and Corinthian pottery in this period reached Syria, Asia Minor, and Egypt, where the Greeks had a trading center at Naucratis on the Nile Delta. In Sicily and southern Italy, Corinth was the major player in the pottery export market until the middle of the sixth century B.C.E., when products from Athens suddenly became popular. Yet the Corinthian potters did not retreat from the market in Italy and Sicily without a struggle. There is a remarkable *krater*, or mixing-bowl for wine—the Greeks drank their wine mixed with water—found at Cerveteri in Italy north of Rome, which was the old Etruscan city of Caere. It shows how the Corinthian potters tried to adapt their art to counter the new taste for Athenian pottery in the Etruscan market. A tinge of red ochre had been added to the buff Corinthian clay to make it look more like Athenian clay. There is a familiar frieze of animals, lions, and antelopes in black and dark purple. But on the

belly of the vase, the artist attempted a polychrome effect: a married couple is shown setting out on a chariot, with attendants and well-wishers standing around. Men are done in black-figure and a white wash is used for the flesh of women—that is by now conventional—but the horses are also white, and the cloaks of both the men and the women are purple. This is an example of innovative vase painting, but it did not secure the Etruscan market for Corinth.

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## THE DOMINANCE OF ATHENS

**EARLY BLACK-FIGURE POTTERY.** In the last quarter of the seventh century B.C.E. the Athenian pottery industry adopted the black-figure technique from Corinth, and perfected it. It would be a mistake to think of Corinth and Athens as the only centers of vase painting, for Sparta produced vases of considerable merit at this time, as did Chalcis on the island of Euboea, the cities of East Greece in Asia Minor, and the Dodecanese Islands. Nonetheless, by 550 B.C.E. Athens overtook its Corinthian rival, and its vases became the dominant imports in the western Mediterranean pottery market. Many of the vase painters who produced the masterpieces of Athenian black-figure ware can be recognized by their individual styles as well as their signatures on their work. The first black-figure artist to have a recognizable style to modern scholars is the “Nessos Painter,” an anonymous artist so named because his best-known vase depicts on its neck Heracles fighting the centaur

Nessos. On the belly of the vase he used a stock scene: the three dread sisters with black wings called the Gorgons, galloping in pursuit of Perseus who had just lopped off the head of one of them, Medusa. Any Greek would recognize the myth; the fact that the Gorgons' quarry, Perseus, is omitted from the scene did not matter. After the "Nessos Painter" the next group of painters with recognizable styles all still betray an artistic debt to the Corinthian pottery industry. Then about 580 B.C.E. an artist signed his name: Sophilos. It appears on four vases, three as the vase painter and one as the potter.

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF VASE DECORATION.** Unlike the early painters who scattered ornaments over the whole surface of the vase, painters in sixth century B.C.E. confined them to definite areas, such as the neck, shoulder, and handles, or they served as frames for figured scenes. Moreover, ornaments were reduced to a limited number of standard motifs, such as the meander pattern, the lotus, palmette, ivy and laurel wreaths, scrolls, tongues, and horizontal bands. The figured scenes showed illustrations from mythology, but as time went on the scenes from everyday life became more popular. Youths are shown exercising, riding, arming for battle, or reclining at banquets and listening to music. Women are shown at household tasks. The figures were at first two-dimensional silhouettes, but after 550 B.C.E. artists experimented with three-quarter views. By 500 B.C.E. three-quarter views were completely mastered; drapery is shown with flowing lines and artists were trying linear perspective. One of the treasures of the Florence Archaeological Museum in Italy is a black-figure masterpiece, called the François Vase after its finder, Alessandro François, who discovered it in 1845 in an Etruscan tomb at Vulci in Italy. It is a volute *krater*—a new shape—signed by the potter Ergotimos and the painter Kleitias. It shows scenes from mythology. In a horizontal band under the rim, Peleus and Meleager face an enormous boar. They are identified by their names, so that the viewer is left in no doubt that this is the Calydonian Boar Hunt. Beneath it are friezes showing other scenes from Greek myth, with the figures carefully labelled. This *krater*, which was used to mix wine, evidently served as a conversation piece whenever its Etruscan owner gave a banquet. With vases such as these, by about the mid-sixth century B.C.E. Athenian potters were driving their Corinthian rivals out of the markets in the western Mediterranean.

**IMPORTANT ARTISTS.** Among those artists working in the mid-sixth century B.C.E. was one who called himself "the Lydian," evidently an immigrant from the kingdom of Lydia in western Asia Minor. There was

another who signed "Amasis," a Greek form of the Egyptian name "Ahmose," whose signature appears on eight surviving vases. His black-figure vases are particularly fine, but even greater than he was Exekias. His great masterpiece is in the Vatican Museum. He signed it "Exekias decorated and made me," indicating he was both a potter and a painter. On one side he showed Castor and Polydeuces welcomed home, on the other Achilles and Ajax playing a board game. Both heroes wear splendidly embroidered cloaks which Exekias drew with exquisite detail. Achilles wears a helmet; Ajax's helmet rests on his shield behind him. Both bend intently over the board, but Ajax bends lower. His shoulders are slumped, whereas Achilles has shoulders squared and back comparatively straight. Through the body language of the figures, Exekias subtly conveys the message that Ajax is losing the game. Another Exekias vase, a *kylix*, or drinking-cup, shows the god Dionysus reclining on a ship, its mast sprouting vines while dolphins surround the boat. The painting illustrates one of Dionysus' adventures in which he was captured by pirates, who failed to reverence the god; because of their impiety a grapevine sprouted from the mast and the sailors leaped overboard in terror, becoming dolphins as they did so.

**THE SELLING OF ATHENIAN VASES.** The majority of Athenian vases in modern museums outside Greece itself come from Etruscan tombs in Italy. For the Etruscans, fine Athenian vases were the equivalent of Wedgwood and Royal Doulton china in modern times. Excavations of Etruscan tombs still yield Athenian vases, but the great age of their collection was the eighteenth century. During that century Etruscan tombs were looted for their antiquities, and the Athenian vases that were found were called "Etruscan urns" because it was thought that they were made in Etruria. One pottery workshop in Athens, belonging to an inventive potter named Nikosthenes, made a distinctive type of *amphora* (an ancient Greek vase with a large oval body, narrow cylindrical neck, and two handles that rise almost to the mouth of the vase) with an angular body and broad, flat handles which was made to appeal to Etruscan taste, for the shape mimics Etruscan *bucchero*-ware: black glaze pottery without decoration which was manufactured in Etruria. Various vase painters worked for Nikosthenes, including "the Lydian." There is a curious pattern to the find-spots of his vases. The Etruscans at Caere (modern Cerveteri) apparently liked his *amphora*-type since almost every surviving example is from there. His other types of pottery come mostly from Vulci. It looks as if Nikosthenes targeted these two particular Etruscan markets.

## THE Potters' Art

Greek vases were an important export of Greece, and they are found all over the Mediterranean world, but particularly in Italy and Sicily, where Corinthian pottery dominated the markets until about 550 B.C.E. when exports from Athens came into vogue. Most of the Greek vases on museums outside Greece itself were discovered in Italy, particularly in Etruscan tombs. Ancient Etruria, which comprised the region of modern Tuscany in Italy, was the homeland of the Etruscans, a mysterious people who spoke a language unrelated to Latin or any Italic dialect, were probably immigrants from Asia Minor who developed a unique civilization that influenced early Rome, and they carried on a lively trade with Greece. Many of our best examples of Athenian black-figure and red-figure pottery were found in Etruscan tombs. Greek vases were the equivalent of Royal Doulton and Meissen china nowadays. On some of them, both the potters who made them and the artists who decorated them signed their names. They took pride in their work.

### The Technique of Making a Vase

Both Corinth and Athens had clay deposits of high quality. The clay of Corinth was buff-colored, whereas the Athenian clay was a burnt sienna. The first step in making a vase, after the clay was dug from its bed, was to levigate it. Levigation is the process of removing natural impurities from the clay, and it was done by mixing the clay with water and letting the impurities sink to the bottom. The process was repeated until the clay was pure enough for pottery-making. Then the clay was kneaded like dough to remove air bubbles and make it flexible. This process is called "wedging" the clay. Then the clay was placed on the potter's wheel, a rotating horizontal disk which the potter's apprentice turned by hand while the

potter pulled the clay into the desired shape with his fingers. The body of the pot, the foot and the spout, if there was one, were all made separately, and the handles were shaped by a different method and attached to the pot. A slip made of liquefied clay was applied to the joints to hold them together.

### The Role of the Vase Painter

Sometimes the potter was also the vase painter, but frequently the painter was a specialist employed by a potter. They might sign their names on the vases that they decorated, which is how we know them, but who they were, and whether they were slave or free we cannot say. Students of Greek vase paintings still use terms such as "black glaze" and "paint," but in fact, the Greek vase painters used neither glaze nor paints. Instead they drew their designs using slips of finely-sifted clay, some of which might contain pigments from metal. Then followed a three-stage firing process. In the first stage, which was the oxidizing phase, the kiln was heated to about 800 degrees Celsius and air was allowed free access. Both the pot and the slip turned red. In the second, reducing phase, the supply of oxygen into the kiln was shut off, and both pot and slip turned black, and the areas covered by the slip became partly vitrified. In the final, reoxidizing phase, oxygen was allowed in again, and the kiln was allowed to cool. The result was that the surface areas of the pot that were covered by the smooth slip, now partly vitrified, remained black whereas the coarser surface areas not covered by the slip absorbed oxygen once again and turned red. If the slip was applied too thinly, there might be a red spot in a black area, and this happened not infrequently. This was the technique used for both black-figure and the later red-figure vases which were produced in Athenian potteries. Corinthian potters were fond of a reddish-purple color, which they got by mixing a little red iron oxide into the slip. White could be produced by a slip of very fine white clay, which was not affected by the reducing process.

**RED-FIGURE POTTERY.** A rival of Nikosthenes was a potter who signed his vases "Andokides," and apparently an anonymous employee in his workshop pioneered red-figure vase painting about 530 B.C.E. If not the first red-figure artist, the Andokides painter was the first to show the potential of the technique. The black-figure technique showed figures in silhouette with details incised in the black glaze with a sharp instrument, while the background was left the natural color of the reddish clay found in Attica (the territory under control of Athens). Red-figure reversed the method: the background was black glaze and the figures were the color of

the red Attic clay, with details painted with a fine brush. Some of the early productions were "bilinguals"—red-figure on one side and black-figure on the other. One "bilingual" *amphora* was painted by the Andokides Painter in red-figure on one side, and by the Lysippides Painter in black-figure on the other. Other painters followed the lead on this new trend, including a painter named "Epiktetos," who worked in the potteries of both Andokides and Nikosthenes, and a group known to modern scholars as the "Pioneers" composed of Euphronios, Phintias, Euthymides, and a few others who seem to have belonged to a close-knit guild of painters.



Red-figure calyx crater, late 6th century B.C.E. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY CORBIS CORPORATION.

By the last years of the sixth century B.C.E., red-figure vases dominated the market, and red-figure ware continued to be made until near the end of the fourth century B.C.E. Black-figure production never disappeared, however. In the Panathenaic Games held each year in Athens, the first prize for the contestants was an amphora filled with olive oil, and the amphora was always decorated in black-figure technique, even long after black-figure had gone out of style.

**THE RED-FIGURE VASE PAINTERS.** Like the black-figure artists, red-figure vase painters are mostly anonymous. Buyers seem to have been interested in the potter's workshop that manufactured the vase more than in the artist who painted it. Euphronios, who was active in the years 520–470 B.C.E. was both a potter and a painter; he signed twelve surviving vases as a potter and six as a painter. In his old age he seems to have concentrated on pottery production and employed other vase painters,

some of them the finest artists of the period. One artist who worked in Euphronios' pottery was Douris, who signed his name on 39 vases that have survived, two of which he also potted. Douris worked in the first half of the fifth century B.C.E., and if the number of his surviving works is any indication, he must have been enormously productive. The survival rate for Greek vases is probably no more than an average 0.5 percent of an artist's work, and if that calculation holds true in the case of Douris, he must have produced some 78,000 vases during his productive life. His specialty was red-figure cups, but he worked in other media as well, including white-ground painting, which was a favorite decoration for *lekythoi*, oil flasks which were buried with the dead.

**WHITE-GROUND VASES.** In the fifth century B.C.E., the Athenian Empire reached the height of its prosperity, and Athenian artists made their mark on the art world. Great artists such as Polygnotus produced narra-



The Daimons Sleep (Hynpos) and Death (Thanatos) carrying the body of a warrior, grave stele behind, detail of an Attic white-ground lekythos attributed to the Thanatos Painter, c. 440 B.C.E. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

tive paintings, and they influenced the vase painters. A new spirit can be detected in the years 475–450 B.C.E.; artists decorated large vases with ambitious combat scenes of, for instance, Greeks fighting Amazons, that are set in hilly landscapes where the artists tried to produce an illusion of depth by placing more distant figures at a higher level than those in the foreground. The great murals that inspired these painters have not survived, but descriptions of these works by ancient authors provide a record of them for modern scholars. Yet the skill of the painter's brushwork can be seen on white-ground vases of the fifth century B.C.E. On these, the artist covered the background with a wash of fine white clay, and then painted his figures on the white surface in the same way as he would paint on a wooden panel. The finish is not as durable as red-figure, and thus it was particularly popular for the oil-flasks that were buried with the dead. The paintings on them are often domestic scenes, but there is a cosmetics jar (a *pyxis*) in the Metropolitan Museum in New York that shows the "Judgment of Paris" in which Paris, the young Trojan prince, is visited by the god Hermes. Greeks, who knew their mythology very well, would have known what was taking place: Hermes was bringing Paris a message that he was to judge which

of the three goddesses—Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite—was the most beautiful. Paris seems youthful and innocent, the picture of naivety, and yet he was about to start the Trojan War.

**THE END OF THE RED-FIGURE PERIOD.** The workshops in the Kerameikos—the potters' quarter of Athens—continued to produce red-figure vases in the fourth century B.C.E., though the disintegration of the Athenian Empire meant that there were no more protected markets, and local potters in Italy and Sicily began to offer serious competition. One place where Athenian pottery still found eager customers, it seems, was in the Ukraine, and one fourth-century fashion in pottery is known as the "Kerch Style" after the city on the Black Sea where numerous fourth-century vases imported from Athens have been found. The vases discovered at Kerch improved on the basic red-figure technique by picking out details in color, especially white, yellow, and gold. Among those who were producing Kerch Style pottery was the last notable red-figure artist in Athens: the so-called Marsyas Painter, who is named for a vase of his in Berlin which depicts the flaying of Marsyas, the satyr who had lost a musical contest with



Apollo. He embellished his vases with gilding, raised relief, and colors such as pink, blue, white, and green. Yet as the Athens-based workshops declined, production of red-figure vases in old Athenian markets in Italy increased. The customers were not only the Greeks who lived in the colonies planted during the great period of colonization from the mid-eight century to the end of the sixth century B.C.E. but also the native Samnite peoples who were now encroaching on the Greek cities, driven by a sharp increase in their population. They, too, liked Greek vases. About 400 B.C.E., the Greek colony of Poseidonia (now Paestum on the western shore of Italy south of Naples) had been taken over by the Samnites who denied the Greek inhabitants the right to use their own language except for one day a year, but nonetheless the pottery workshops of Poseidonia remained active. Two of their vase painters are known, Python and Assteas, who signed their names in Greek. They took the subjects for their paintings from the theater and Greek myth. Some of their scenes taken from the comic theater show performers wearing padded costumes and grotesque masks, acting on a wooden stage. These represent a type of comedy called *phlyax*-plays—the word *phlyax* means a comic parody of Greek tragedy invented by a comedian named Rhinthon. They were evidently very popular in southern Italy, and the vases give a hint of what the plays of the Athenian comic poet Aristophanes may have looked like when they were staged in Athens.

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## HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN POTTERY

**MEGARIAN BOWLS AND TERRA SIGILLATA.** During his brief lifetime, the Macedonian king Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E.) brought mainland Greece under his control and also conquered Persia and Egypt to form a “Hellenistic” kingdom composed of diverse peoples. Not surprisingly, the pottery from the period after Alexander the Great shows many diverse cultural influences. One type of pottery, however, became enormously popular in the Hellenistic period and, after 30 B.C.E., in Italy. From Italy its popularity spread to Roman Gaul and from there to Germany and Roman Britain. Its precursors were the “Megarian bowls” in Greece, tableware made in molds which seems to have had no particular connection with Megara, a Greek city on the Isthmus of Corinth. No later than the early third century, Athenian potters were producing crockery with relief ornaments which imitated the designs on metal vessels which were too expensive for most people. These so-called “Megarian bowls” were the forerunners of red-gloss *terra sigillata*, also known as “Samian Ware,” though it has no connection with the island of Samos. *Terra sigillata* means “earthenware decorated with figures,” which describes the pottery well, for on the exterior of the dish there are relief designs and figures which are imprinted from the mold. The place where this type of pottery may actually have been invented was the kingdom of Pergamum in Asia Minor, and the date was probably the mid-second century B.C.E. It was perhaps there that the black-ground ware inherited from Athens was modified into bronze or dark red gloss, which was its distinctive color.

**THE POPULARITY OF TERRA SIGILLATA.** Terra sigillata was pottery that could be easily mass-produced: clay was put in a mold, and the interior of the vessel scooped out using a fast wheel, and then the vessel was fired. With its smooth, red glossy surface, it was serviceable tableware and relatively cheap. Yet it was elegant and artistic, for it copied designs from silverware, and it must have appealed to customers for whom silverware was beyond their means. It brought style to the tables of the common man. As the first half of the first century C.E. wore on, production of terra sigillata in Ar-



Arretine ware bowl from Capua, Italy, with reliefs of the seasons. An example of "terra sigillata." THE ART ARCHIVE/BRITISH MUSEUM/HARPER COLLINS PUBLISHERS.

retium in Italy declined as potters migrated to Roman Gaul. The Roman army was also a factor in this "hollowing-out" of pottery manufacture in Italy. The legionary soldiers liked the sort of pottery that they knew in Italy or the Romanized provinces where they were recruited, and exports from Italy to the regions along the Rhine and Danube Rivers, and Roman Britain, where the military units were concentrated, were common. The corps of craftsmen attached to the army who knew how to make bricks and roof tiles for military use would also turn their hands to making pottery in the Roman style.

**THE DECLINE OF TERRA SIGILLATA.** From the end of the first century C.E. the common ware that came into fashion was "Red Slip" pottery, once called "African Red Slip" since the center of production seemed to be in

North Africa. It is now clear that not only Roman Africa but also Asia Minor manufactured and exported Red Slip ware all over the Mediterranean. Land transportation may have been exorbitantly expensive, but transportation by sea, though slow, was very cheap. Yet though Red Slip ware displaced terra sigillata as the common table crockery of the Roman Empire, it shared a common origin and it was recognizably Roman. It continued in use until the seventh century C.E.

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## SCULPTURE IN ARCHAIC GREECE

**THE DAEDALIC STYLE.** By the mid-seventh century B.C.E. Greek sculptors were experimenting in free-standing figures, influenced, no doubt, by their discovery of the art and architecture of ancient Egypt earlier in the century. Once the Assyrians were driven out of Egypt, the pharaohs of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty cultivated close relations with Greece and allowed the Greeks to build a trading station at Naucratis on one of the mouths of the Nile River. The Greeks themselves attributed many of their early efforts at sculpture to the legendary craftsman Daedalus, whose name means “Cunning Worker,” and hence modern art historians apply the label “Daedalic” to the earliest Greek sculptures. An early example comes from the sanctuary of Apollo and Artemis on the island of Delos, and it must be one of the first made. It is made of the white marble from the island of Naxos, which was the stone of choice for early sculptors until the quarries on the neighboring island of Paros were opened. The statue is of a woman wearing a wig and the garment known as the *peplos*, shaped awkwardly from an oblong piece of marble. She faces the onlooker, her arms hanging by her sides. On her skirt there is a verse inscription disclosing that this statue was dedicated to Artemis by Nikandre of Naxos, whose father, brother, and husband are also named. Nikandre’s statue is the first of many. One, a statuette of solid bronze from Apollo’s other great sanctuary at Delphi from the mid-seventh century B.C.E., shows a boy naked except for his wig and a belt at his midriff. He stands stiffly at attention, except that the left leg is slightly forward, the right leg slightly back. Except for the Daedalic wig and the belt, this is the stance of the later *kouroi*, that is, statues of naked youths.

**THE KOUROI.** The word *kouros* (plural: *kouroi*) means “boy” or “youth,” and it is a term that describes the archaic statues of nude youths produced from about 650 B.C.E. until the last quarter of the sixth century and

the early years of the fifth, when they lost their archaic features and became the male nudes of the classical period. Some 200 known examples of *kouroi* survived to modern times, although most of them are badly damaged and in fragments. The *kouroi* began to appear about the mid-seventh century B.C.E. One of the earliest examples, dating to about 600 B.C.E., is the “Metropolitan *Kouros*,” now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. It is rigidly frontal; the statue has a front, two sides, and a rear—four independent faces that preserve the four sides of the marble block from which it was carved. A comparison between it and an Egyptian statue of a standing male figure reveals the source of the Greek sculptor’s inspiration. The Egyptian figure and the Metropolitan *kouros* have the same proportions. In both, the arms hang at the sides, and the left leg is thrust forward. Yet there are differences: the Egyptian figure wears a skirt held up by a belt whereas the Metropolitan *kouros* is entirely nude; and unlike the Egyptian sculptor, the Greek artist did not try to give the face any individuality. The lips are drawn back at the corners into what has come to be known as the “archaic smile.” Not much later than the Metropolitan *kouros*, about 580 B.C.E., two *kouroi* of Cleobis and Biton were erected at Delphi. According to the historian Herodotus, Cleobis and Biton were the two sons of the priestess of Hera at Argos who dragged their mother’s ox-cart from the city of Argos to the sanctuary of Hera in the countryside. For this act of piety, their mother prayed to the goddess to confer on them whatever reward was best for mortal men. The two youths then lay down to rest after their exertion and never awoke again, proving that, for men, death at the height of their renown is the best reward. The *kouroi* of Cleobis and Biton show them as two sturdy youths with well-developed pectoral muscles, smiling the “archaic smile” and staring with large eyes into the distance. These were two athletic young men who died at their physical peak and the sculptor tried to convey in stone the ideal they represented. They are dwarfed, however, by the contemporary “Sunium *kouros*,” the best preserved of several over life-size *kouroi* found at Sounion, the eastern tip of Attica, where there was a sanctuary of the god of the sea, Poseidon. Over three meters (9.84 feet) high, it stood with its giant companions overlooking the treacherous waters off Cape Sounion, perhaps commemorating men lost at sea. Slightly later, belonging to the second quarter of the sixth century B.C.E., is a *kouros* found at Tenea south of Corinth, a small place whose inhabitants claimed to be captive Trojans whom the Greeks settled there. The sculptor of the Tenean *kouros* had observed the male anatomy carefully; the shoulders, pectorals, stomach muscles, and thighs are well-shaped and well

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***DAEDALUS THE SKILLFUL CRAFTSMAN**

**INTRODUCTION:** Daedalus, whose name means “skillful worker” (the Greek adjective for “well-wrought” or “intricately made” is *daidalos*) was connected in Greek myth with the legendary king of Crete, Minos. It was said that he built a great labyrinth for Minos as a lair for the Minotaur, a monster that was half-man, half-bull. There was also a tale that Daedalus escaped from Crete by making wings for himself and flying away to Italy or Sicily. There is, however, another set of legends that seem to place Daedalus in the period after the fall of the Bronze Age civilization, and attribute the beginnings of Greek sculpture to him. The Greek traveler, Pausanias, who toured Greece in the second century c.e. and wrote an account of what he saw that has been enormously useful to archeologists, remarked on several works attributed to Daedalus which he encountered. A passage from Pausanias is quoted below. The reference to the relief sculpture in “white stone” (marble), which Daedalus made of the “Dancing Floor” of Ariadne, is a reference to a dancing floor designed by Daedalus that Homer describes in

his epic, the *Iliad*. The passage is quoted in the chapter on “Dance” in this volume.

**SOURCE:** Pausanias, *Pausanias*, Book IX, in *The Art of Greece, 1400-31 B.C.: Sources and Documents*. Ed. J. J. Pollitt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965): 7.

coordinated. The pose remains the same: left leg slightly forward, right leg drawn slightly back and arms hanging loosely at the sides. Yet there is a new plasticity to the modelling of the body that signals a leap forward.

**THE KORAI.** The female figures dating to the same period as the kouroi are called *korai* (singular: *kore*). Males are shown nude and women clothed, the convention that will not be breached until the fourth century B.C.E. Sometime in the sixth century, a person whose name was Cheramyas dedicated a *kore* at the great temple of Hera on the island of Samos. The *kore* is now headless, but the body is intact except for the left arm. It is basically a cylindrical figure. A long tunic or *chiton* drapes the body, falling in tiny pleats from the waist to the toes which peep out from under it, and she wears a cloak that once veiled her hair. It falls over her shoulders, covering her right arm completely, and it is drawn diagonally across her breasts. Under her clothes the contours of her body are visible; her breasts are full and her stomach bulges slightly below her belt. Unlike the nude kouroi, the *korai* were clothed, and this required the sculptors to portray garments which were originally painted to reproduce the patterns on the clothes that the *korai* wore—usually a *chiton* and over it a cloak known as a *himation*. The Acropolis of Athens in the late sixth and early fifth centuries must have been full of *kouroi* and *korai* which were dedicated there. In the course of

the Persian Wars, the Persians captured the city in 480, and again in 479 B.C.E., laying the whole area waste and leaving the shattered remains of these statues on the ground. The Athenians buried the decimated statues reverently, and they remained in their graves until archaeologists, clearing the Acropolis in the 1880s, stumbled on an amazing collection of archaic sculpture, including a cache of *korai* from the century before the Persian Wars. They stand, facing forward, left foot thrust slightly forward as if they were dancing. The treatment varies, but in the standard pose the *kore*'s left hand pulls the skirt of her *chiton* across her legs, sometimes so tightly that the legs can be seen beneath it, and over it she wears a *himation*, a wrap that is slung over the right shoulder and hangs diagonally across her bosom and under her left arm. The reason for their burial is unclear, although the statues did commemorate an untimely death on occasion. They were, however, erected all across Greece in the archaic period.

**“RIPE ARCHAIC” SCULPTURE.** “Ripe Archaic” is a convenient label for the style of sculpture from the period dating from about the second quarter of the sixth century to the time of the Persian Wars (490–479 B.C.E.). This is also the period when Greek craftsmen learned how to make hollow bronze statues using the so-called “Lost Wax” technique. In this technique, a model of the figure was made of wax over a clay core, then a

## CASTING

### Bronze Statues by the “Lost Wax” Method

#### The Technical Difficulty

The earliest bronze figures that we have from Greece are small statuettes cast of solid bronze. Bronze in ancient Greece was an alloy of copper and tin and it was expensive. Making a life-size statue in bronze would be costly, to say nothing of its weight. In the sixth century B.C.E., Greek sculptors learned how to cast hollow bronze statues using the “lost wax” method, which they learned from Egypt. Greek authors such as the historian Herodotus in the fifth century B.C.E., Pliny the Elder in the first century C.E., and Pausanias in the second century, whose guidebook to Greece is a mine of information for the archaeologist, attribute the introduction of bronze casting by the “lost wax” process to Rhoikos and Theodoros who worked for the tyrant of Samos, Polycrates, who became tyrant about 540 and died about 522 B.C.E. Whether that is true or not, hollow bronze statues appear around the middle of the sixth century B.C.E.

#### The Technique

First, the sculptor made a clay core. He then inserted metal pins, known as chaplets, into the clay core, covered it with wax and carved it to form a model of his statue. Then he covered his wax model with clay and allowed the clay to become completely dry, thus forming a mold. The next step was to place the mold in a casting pit and heat

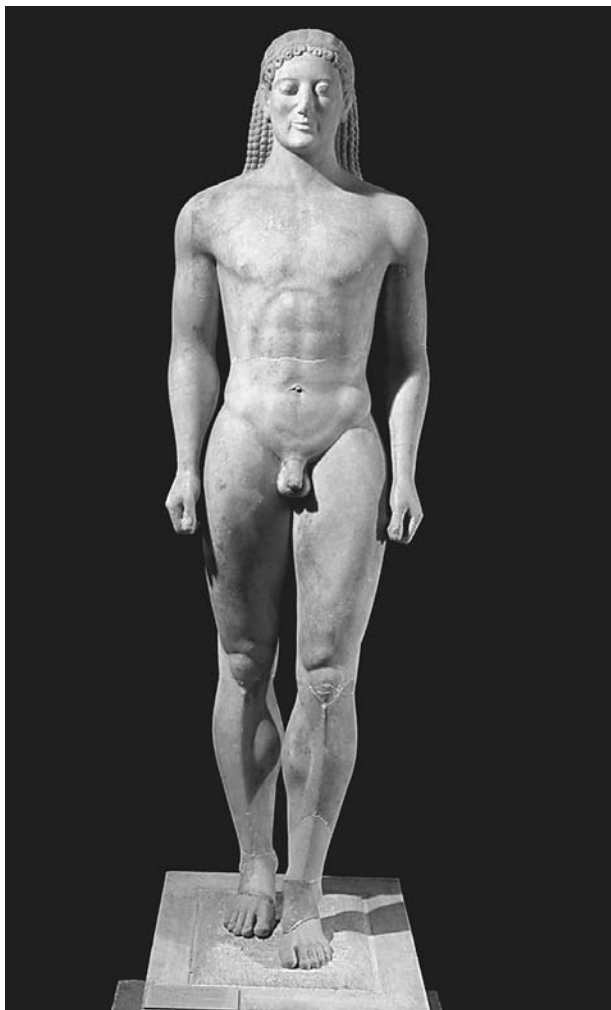
it so that the wax melted and ran out, leaving a space between the clay core and the mold. The chaplets which had been inserted into the core held it firm within the clay mold. Next bronze was melted in a furnace constructed alongside the casting pit and poured into the space between the clay core and the mold, using a clay funnel. The bronze was allowed to cool and harden, the mold was broken away—it would probably not be used again—and the bronze statue would emerge. The clay core could then be removed. Or it might not—in 1959, a bronze Apollo, dating to about 525 B.C.E., was found in Piraeus, the port of Athens, which was part of a lost consignment of bronze statues intended for shipment to Rome in the first century B.C.E., and it was cast using the “lost wax” process, but the core had not been removed. Nor had the iron chaplets which held the core in place.

#### Finishing the Statue

Once the statue was removed from its mold, the sculptor would finish it. Most statues were far too large to be cast at the same time. The head, the legs, and the arms were usually cast separately and then were fitted together only after they had emerged from their molds. The Delphic Charioteer in the Museum at Delphi in Greece, which commemorated a victory at the Pythian Games in either 478 or 474 B.C.E., is a case in point. Its skirt, upper torso, both arms and head, as well as the side-curls on the head, were all cast separately. The left arm is now lost and so we can see how it was originally attached. The sculptor then inset the eyes using colored glass, and smoothed off any imperfections. He then oiled and polished his statue, and it was ready to be erected.

mold was made from the wax model; the wax was then melted out and replaced by molten bronze and finally, after the bronze had cooled, the mold was removed. Before the discovery of this technique, large bronze statues could be made only by hammering bronze plates over a wooden core, in the same way as bronze armor continued to be made. Most of the bronze statues of the ancient world disappeared long ago, melted down in many cases for their metal, and so it is easy to forget that all the great sculptors of Greece worked in bronze. Only one bronze *kouros*, dating to about 525 B.C.E., survived, discovered in 1959 in Piraeus, the port city of Athens. It is the exception, however; the *kouroi* and *korai* that still exist are generally of marble. The type changed very little. *Kouroi* and *korai* still face the viewer head-on as if their movements were constrained by the block of marble from which they were sculpted, and they still wear their archaic smiles which make them look a little smug.

Yet the sculptor’s chisel was surer, as the sculptors became more skilled at representing the anatomy of the male body. A *kouros* found intact at Tenea, a village south of Corinth, illustrates what the type was like at the beginning of the “Ripe Archaic” period. The *kouros* still smiles at the viewer with the corners of his lips pulled back in an archaic smile. His arms hang by his sides and his left leg is thrust forward in the familiar pose that was borrowed from Egypt, but his torso is modeled with skill. The sculptor paid close attention to the pectoral and stomach muscles. Yet a comparison between the *kouros* from Tenea with one made a generation later, the Anavysos *kouros*, shows the great strides forward in just a short time. Sometime after 540 B.C.E., at Anavysos in the countryside outside Athens, a *kouros*-statue was erected on the grave of a young man named Kroisos (Croesus) who had died in battle. The Anavysos *kouros* is intact; in fact, some of the original paint on it sur-



Kroisos, kouros figure from Anavysos, full length marble sculpture of nude young man walking, funerary monument/portrait of a young man who died in battle, c. 530 B.C.E. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

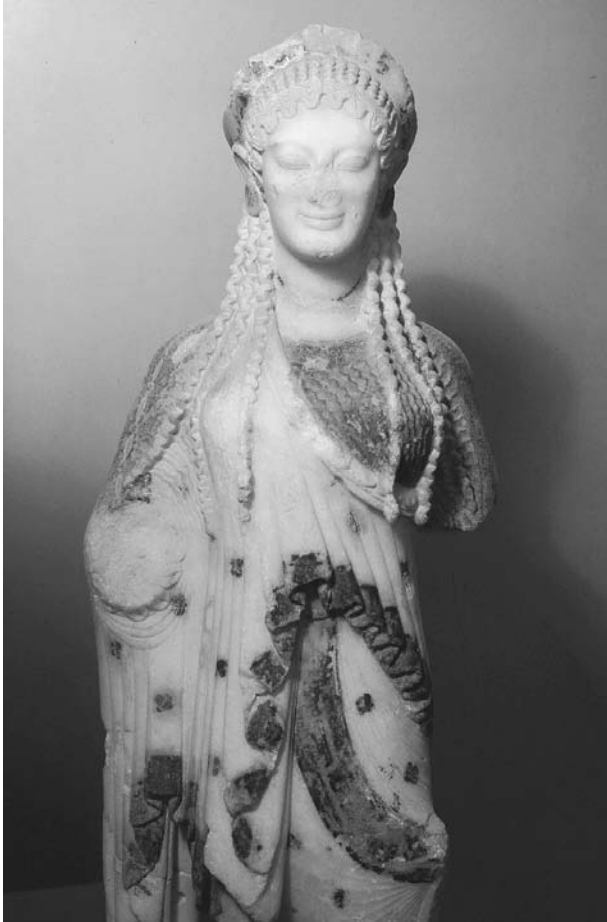
vives. It is not a portrait of *Kroisos*, but it is somehow intended to represent the spirit and life-force of the dead warrior. The lips still smile the “archaic smile,” and the kouros stands, hands hanging at his sides with his left leg still thrust slightly forward and the right leg pulled slightly back. The traditional pose of the kouros-statue is unchanged, yet the spirit is different: the sculptor had observed the musculature of the male body carefully and attempted to reproduce it accurately. Kroisos was evidently a powerfully-built young man, unlike the lithe youth that the *kouros* from Tenea represented, and the sculptor tried to convey an impression of his physical power in the statue that marked his grave.

**THE KORAI IN THE “RIPE ARCHAIC” PERIOD.** The *korai* demanded stone carving that was even more proficient, for these were statues wearing clothing that had



The “Peplos Kore,” a girl wearing the garment known as a “peplos,” found on the Acropolis in Athens with some of its original paint intact, c. 530 B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/ACROPOLIS MUSEUM ATHENS/DAGLI ORTI.

to be recreated in stone. The fashions of the day were elaborate and the garments that the *korai* wear reflect it. The garments were originally brightly painted and on a few of them that have escaped weathering some of the pigment has survived. One of these, dating to 530–515 B.C.E. which is now in the Acropolis Museum in Athens, shows a young woman with an elaborate coiffure and long braids hanging down over her shoulders. She wears a mantle with heavy folds that contrast with the soft, crinkly folds of the tunic (*chiton*) beneath it. The color is well-preserved; the tunic is dark and the mantle has a pattern on a white background and a dark fringe along its edges. Another almost contemporary statue, also in the Acropolis Museum, is the so-called *peplos kore*, so-called because she is wearing a simple *peplos* with an overfold that falls down as far as her waist. Her right arm hangs by her side, and she may have held something in her left hand, though the left forearm is broken off. The simplicity of her dress is more apparent than real for the



Marble statue of a "kore" from the Athenian Acropolis, dressed in an ornate Ionian "chiton" under an Ionian-style "himation," c. 510 B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/ACROPOLIS MUSEUM ATHENS/HARPER COLLINS PUBLISHERS.

fabric was originally brightly patterned. Only a few remnants of the paint survive, but enough to suggest what the statue must have once looked like. Her hair hangs down her back in multiple braids; three are slung over each shoulder. She has a lively face with almond-shaped eyes and pupils picked out in paint.

**SCULPTURE IN RELIEF.** Relief sculpture appeared as decoration for monumental temples about the middle of the seventh century B.C.E., the colonial period of Greece, when various city-states in both mainland Greece and East Greece on the western fringe of Asia Minor sent out colonies to Sicily, Italy, southern France, and the north-east coast of Spain, as well as to the northern Aegean region and the shore of the Black Sea. The earliest Greek temples were one-roomed structures, entered through a porch at one end, with a place for burnt sacrifices in the middle. This style developed into a long narrow room with the entrance-porch at the east end,

and the cult statue facing it at the other end. The earliest examples of cult statues were what the Greeks called *xoana*: primitive statues of wood, hardly more than wooden posts with some human features carved roughly on them. The sacrificial pit was moved to an open-air altar, often outside the east door. The Doric temple evolved from this style in the Peloponnesos, while in East Greece the Ionic temple developed; the first use of relief sculpture decorated both of these temple types. At each end of the temple there was a triangular gable called a "pediment," surrounded by cornices, leaving a recessed triangular space called the "tympanum" in which sculpture could be placed. On Doric temples, a frieze of triglyphs and metopes appeared below the pediment. The *triglyphs* were plaques carved with two vertical channels separated by three moldings, one over each column and one in the space between. The *metopes* were the empty spaces between the triglyphs, and they could be filled with relief sculpture. Some of the earliest examples of metope-sculpture comes from the Greek colonies in Sicily and Italy. One, which comes from a ruined temple at Selinunte (ancient Selinus) in western Sicily shows the hero Perseus cutting off the head of the Gorgon, Medusa, a monster who could turn anyone who looked at her face into stone. The relief tells a story familiar to Greeks, who believed that Perseus was not a mythical hero but a man who actually lived in an earlier era when gods walked the earth; the Gorgon's head was also a well-known terror-symbol that struck fear into men's hearts. Both Perseus who holds his sword at Medusa's throat, and Medusa, whose head is being severed, confront the onlooker, their facial expressions unmoved. From a small mid-sixth-century B.C.E. temple built to Hera at the mouth of the Sele River in Italy comes a remarkable series of 36 metopes, some of which are only roughed out and left incomplete. The finishing of the relief sculptures was evidently done after the metopes were in place, and the builders of this temple never got around to it. Some of the best metopes show the Labors of Heracles or events from the Trojan War.

**SCULPTURE IN AN AGE OF TYRANNY.** The sixth century B.C.E. was a period in Athenian history when Athens moved from aristocratic government to tyranny and finally to democracy, though democracy was not fully in place until the fifth century B.C.E. In 560 B.C.E., Pisistratus, an outsider in Athenian politics who belonged to neither of the main political factions, staged a *coup d'état* and seized power, but he did not last long. The two main factions forgot their bickering long enough to unite against him, and he was expelled. Yet once he was gone, the factions returned to their rivalry, and the leader of the weaker faction made Pisistratus his



Frieze of Perseus Slaying the Gorgon from Temple C in Selinus, Sicily (c. 540 B.C.E.). COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

ally and brought him back. He was soon driven out again, but he made a third attempt, backed by armed force, and this time it took only one battle to scatter his enemies. He remained tyrant of Athens from 546 to 527 B.C.E., and his son Hippias carried on as tyrant until 510. After the tyrants were gone, the Athenians of a later generation looked back on the tyranny as a time of oppression, although in actuality both Pisistratus and Hippias kept their iron fists well camouflaged in velvet gloves. They allowed the Athenian constitution to function and only manipulated from behind the scenes. Likewise during this time period Athens prospered and new temples arose on the Acropolis. Some of the sculpture that adorned their pediments was found among the debris left when the Persians sacked Athens in 480 B.C.E. One group portrays the three-headed serpent Typhon; the long serpentine coils must have filled the corners of the tympanum, and Typhon's three torsos filled the space under the central peak. His three faces still have blue beards and moustaches, and the lips are curved into

the familiar archaic smile. One other sculpture that belonged to the time when Pisistratus was trying to secure his hold on power is a variation of the *kouros*-type: a statue of a man bearing a calf on his shoulders, and its inscribed base reveals that it was dedicated by Rhonbos. Whoever he was, Rhonbos is almost certainly the man whom the sculpture represents, and he is shown bringing a calf for sacrifice. Over his shoulders, he wears a thin cloak; the paint which once set it off from his naked flesh has long disappeared. His upper body, the muscles of his arms, and the calf slung over his shoulders are realistically modeled, though the modeling of his lower body is more stiff, and his legs are broken off at the knees. His face, which is bearded, smiles the "archaic smile." Rhonbos' statue was erected about 560 B.C.E., the year when Pisistratus first seized power and held it briefly. Perhaps Rhonbos erected this statue to commemorate his thank-offering to Athena for delivering Athens from the tyrant. He did not yet know that the tyrant would return.





Carved metopes from a small mid-6th-century B.C.E. temple of Hera at the mouth of the river Sele in southern Italy, showing exploits of Heracles. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

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#### SCULPTURE OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

**THE EARLY CLASSICAL PERIOD.** About 480 B.C.E., just before the Persians under King Xerxes sacked Athens, someone dedicated a *kouros* (a Greek male nude statue) on the Acropolis which has been labelled the “Critian Boy” because of the resemblance of its head to a statue group by two sculptors, Critias and Nesiotes, erected a few years after the Persian invasion had been defeated. The Critian Boy faces the onlooker like earlier *kouros*, but he stands relaxed, his weight on one leg, his head inclined. His body is skillfully modeled. It is that of an athletic youth aged eighteen or nineteen. There is no vestige left of the “archaic smile,” typical of earlier statues, indicating its stylistic alignment with sculpture from the classical period. The sculptors who produced



The Apoxyomenos (athlete scraping himself after exercise): a Roman copy of a famous bronze statue by Lysippus. ART RESOURCE.

the *kouroi* and *korai* (female versions of the *kouroi*, only clothed) are generally nameless, though one battered *kore* bears the signature of the sculptor Antenor. The preferred medium of the great sculptors of the classical period was bronze, although copies of the sculptures were done in marble for Roman customers. It is these copies which survived antiquity, since most of the bronze statues were melted down for scrap metal during in the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, marble cannot reproduce bronze exactly because it is a heavier, more inflexible medium, and the sculptor working in marble must distribute the weight of his statue evenly or it will not be stable. Therefore, the copies do not reveal the evolution of sculpture in the classical period from the stiffness of the archaic period, a development made possible by the more flexible medium of bronze. The bronze *kouros* found in Piraeus which dates to about 525 B.C.E. is already less stiff than contemporary marble *kouroi*; its head is slightly inclined and its forearms stretch out towards the onlooker. The “Discus-Thrower” of the sculptor My-



“Discobolus” or “Discus-thrower,” a Roman copy of a famous statue by Myron, early 5th century B.C.E. © GIANNI DAGLI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ron whose career began just after 480 B.C.E. shows a naked youth in the act of throwing a discus. Though the original is lost, the survival of several Roman copies reveal that the statue is an action figure, a type developed by early classical bronze-workers. It is still two-dimensional; the onlooker can view it from the figure’s right side or from the rear. Other viewpoints are an unsatisfactory jumble of lines. The original in bronze was balanced, though it has been argued that Myron altered the natural stance of a youth about to throw a discus in order to give the statue stability. The copyist, however, introduced a strut to stabilize the figure.

**THE BRONZE ORIGINALS.** While it is fortunate that Myron’s work was preserved in good marble copies of his “Discus-Thrower” and his statue group of Athena and Marsyas, there are no surviving Roman copies of the work of the other two outstanding sculptors of the period, Pythagoras and Calamis, that can be attributed to them with any certainty. Despite the widespread destruction of bronze works during the Middle Ages, some bronze originals of the early classical period did manage to survive. One is the Delphic Charioteer found at Delphi, where it was preserved by a landslide. Of the chariot, horses, and groom that were part of the statue group,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***PLINY THE ELDER ON THE SCULPTOR, MYRON**

**INTRODUCTION:** Myron is best known nowadays for his *Diskobolos*, or “Discus-Thrower,” which depicts a young athlete crouching down to throw the discus. The bronze original is lost, but it survives in copies, of which the finest and best-preserved is the so-called Lancelotti *Diskobolos* in the National Museum in Rome. A second statue group survives, portraying the myth of Athena and Marsyas: Athena invented the reed pipe known in Greek as the *aulos*, but threw it away because it distorted her mouth when she played it, and made her look ugly. The satyr Marsyas picked up the pipe that had been discarded and learned to play it. He became so proud of his skill that he challenged Apollo to a musical contest, and when he lost, he was flayed for his impertinence, for gods took offense when they were challenged by lesser beings. In the ancient world, Myron was particularly famous for his statue of a heifer that was so life-like that, according to one report, it aroused the lust of a concupiscent bull. The passage quoted below comes from the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder, a Roman man of learning who died in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E. His *Natural History* touched on the visual arts among other topics, and it is a major source of our knowledge about ancient art. Pliny’s remark that many short verses or epigrams were written in praise of Myron’s heifer is true. The *Greek Anthology*, which is the title given to two collections of ancient Greek poetry made in the Byzantine period, preserves thirty-six epigrams on Myron’s famous heifer.

**SOURCE:** Pliny, *Natural History*, in *The Art of Greece, 1400–31 B.C.: Sources and Documents*. Ed. J. J. Pollitt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965): 61–62.

only fragments remain. Another is a bronze statue of Zeus hurling a thunderbolt that is now in the National Museum of Greece in Athens. It was found in the waters off Artemisium at the north tip of the island of Euboea in the Aegean Sea. Zeus strides forward, his right arm raised to hurl the thunderbolt. The sculptor is unknown, but Ageladas of Sicyon, a famous artist who taught both Myron and Phidias, is known to have sculpted a Zeus hurling the thunderbolt. If the Zeus in the National Museum is not his, it may at least have served as the inspiration for it. The sea off southern Italy at Riace Marina also yielded two Greek bronze statues in 1972. They are dated to shortly before 450 B.C.E. Both are nudes and both portray bearded warriors; one has the remains of a shield on his right arm, and the other originally wore a helmet which has mostly disappeared. On the first, the eyes are of ivory and glass paste, the teeth—visible between his parted lips—are inlaid silver. His lips, his nipples, and his eyelashes are of copper, precast and inserted into the mold when the statue was made. The warrior that once had a helmet also has copper for his nipples, lips, and eyelashes, and his one

surviving eye is made of marble and glass paste. Both statues were made by the “lost-wax” technique (in which a mold is made from a wax model over a clay core; then the wax is melted out and replaced by molten bronze) and, when found, they still had their clay cores, though these are now removed. Both are about six and a half feet tall, the helmeted one slightly shorter than the other. Better than any other bronze statues that have survived, these powerfully built warriors provide a clue as to what Greek bronzes in the early classical period must have looked like.

**THE HIGH CLASSICAL PERIOD.** By the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., Greece had fully recovered from the ravages of the war with Persia. After the Persian invasion was repelled, Persia remained a powerful enemy, and the Greek states in Asia and northern Greece still felt threatened. They willingly joined an alliance under Athenian leadership to continue the fight and make sure that Persia could not launch a counter-offensive. The center of the alliance was on the island of Delos, sacred to Apollo and Artemis, and there the treasury of what

was called the “Delian League” was kept, and all members of the alliance contributed to it according to an assessment drawn up by Athens. But more and more the Delian League developed into an Athenian Empire. In 454 B.C.E. the treasury was moved from Delos to Athens, and in mid-century the campaigns which the Delian League had once launched annually against Persian territory came to an end; there may even have been a peace treaty signed at last, though that is a matter of debate. Yet Athens decreed that the yearly tribute to the Delian League treasury should still be paid and used the money not only to maintain the most powerful fleet in Greece, but also to finance a building program in Athens. On the Athenian Acropolis, a splendid temple to the goddess Athena Parthenos was built that was larger than the temple of Zeus at Olympia, and unlike the temple at Olympia which was built of limestone, the Parthenon was built of marble from the Athenian quarries on Mt. Pentele. The architect of the temple was Ictinus, but the artist who oversaw the project and made the great gold-and-ivory statue of Athena to stand inside it was Phidias. It was probably Phidias, too, who drew up the designs for the sculpture that decorated the temple: the sculptures that filled the pediments at the east and west ends, the relief sculptures that filled the metopes, and the frieze that ran around the whole of the cella—inner room of a Greek sanctuary or temple—wall inside the colonnade. An examination of the relief sculpture of the frieze shows that it was done by several hands. The same was probably true of the other sculptures, but much has been lost. In 1687, during one of the wars between the Venetians and the Turks, the Turkish garrison on the Acropolis was being besieged by the Venetians and a Venetian cannon lobbed a shell into the Parthenon. The Turks were using the Parthenon as a powder magazine, and the shell ignited an explosion that blew out the center of the temple. The pedimental sculptures affected by the explosion as well as some undamaged specimens were taken to England in the early nineteenth century before the Greek War of Independence by Lord Elgin, British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire which still ruled Greece. They are now in the British Museum and known as the “Elgin Marbles.” There is no agreement about what the pediments of the Parthenon looked like before the explosion of 1687, for most of the sculpture is lost. The frieze is thought to represent the Panathenaic procession that was part of the festival of the Great Panathenaea, but even that is not completely certain. Also uncertain is what part Phidias played in carving the sculptures that do survive, if any, but at least it can be said with confidence that he was the presiding genius who drew up the designs that other stone carvers executed. Phidias’ activity extended



Bronze statue of a charioteer dressed in a long tunic, found at Delphi, dedicated by Polyzalus, tyrant of Gela in Sicily, to commemorate his victory in the chariot race at the Pythian Games in 478 or 474 B.C.E. © DAVID LEES/CORBIS.



Over life-size bronze statue of Zeus hurling a thunderbolt, or possibly Poseidon throwing his trident, recovered off the coast at Cape Artemisium at the north tip of the island of Euboea, Greece, c. 460 B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM ATHENS/DAGLI ORTI.



The Riace Warrior, a Greek bronze statue created c. 460–450 B.C.E., found in the sea off the coast of southern Italy at Riace Marina. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.



Front view of Nike of Paionios of Mende sculpture by Paionios. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

beyond Athens. In fact, he spent his last years in exile. From Athens he went to Olympia and made the gold-and-ivory statue of Zeus there; Olympia is also the site of the discovery of his workshop and the terracotta molds used to fashion the gold drapery of the statue, which was not pure gold as at Athens but gold inlaid with glass.

**THE ARGIVE STYLE.** Although Athens was the dominant center of art and literature in Greece from the mid-fifth century B.C.E. on, one other center retained its artistic independence: Argos and its neighbor Sicyon. While the Parthenon was being built in Athens, in Argos the workshop of the sculptor Polyclitus was perfecting its own idea of what the proper proportions of a male nude should be. Polyclitus also made statues of deities, and though he was primarily a bronze-caster, he made a chryselephantine statue of Hera for her temple at her holy site in the Argive countryside. Chryselephantine statues (from the Greek *khrysos* meaning “gold” and *elephantinos* meaning “ivory”) were made of gold and ivory: the drapery was made of gold and the flesh of ivory, and the statue was supported on a wooden frame. They were considered the pinnacle of Greek sculpture. Polyclitus,



Poseidon, Apollo, and Artemis (left to right), marble relief sculpture fragment from the Parthenon east frieze, c. 445–438 B.C.E. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

however, was especially known in the ancient world for his bronze statues of athletes, two of which survive as good Roman copies: the *Doryphoros* or “Spear-bearer,” and the *Diadoumenos*, a youth adjusting his *diadema* or headband. These male nudes form the climax of the long development towards naturalistic form. Both statues portray arrested motion: the Spear-bearer, for instance, is in the midst of a step forward, with all his weight on his right leg and the musculature of his torso responds to the movement of the body. The right hip that supports the Spear-bearer’s weight is slightly raised, and the left hip droops while the left shoulder is tensed and slightly raised to compensate for the weight of the spear that the Spear-bearer holds in his left hand. In these two nudes, Polyclitus achieved a balanced, harmonious, and naturalistic whole. He was particularly interested in proportion; in fact, he wrote a book on the proper proportions of the body titled the *Canon*. Polyclitus’ *Canon* would be recycled in the Roman Empire for imperial statuary.

Statues from this era showed the emperors as military leaders wearing armor, but under the armor their physiques adhered closely to the proportions which Polyclitus set forth.

**WIND-BLOWN DRAPERY.** In the late fifth century B.C.E. sculptors turned their artistic energy to exploiting the wind-blown style of drapery which the sculptors of the Parthenon pediments had developed. Figures were portrayed as having cloaks blown by the wind. The drapery sometimes appears almost transparent as the wind presses it against the body, showing the anatomy underneath. The style stressed both elegance and technical virtuosity. One example of this style was found at Olympia, an original sculpture by the little-known sculptor Paionius of Mende, who carved a figure of *Nike* (the goddess of Victory) for a victory monument dating to about 420 B.C.E., erected by the Messenians at Naupactus to commemorate a defeat they had inflicted on

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***PHIDIAS' GOLD AND IVORY STATUE OF ZEUS AT OLYMPIA**

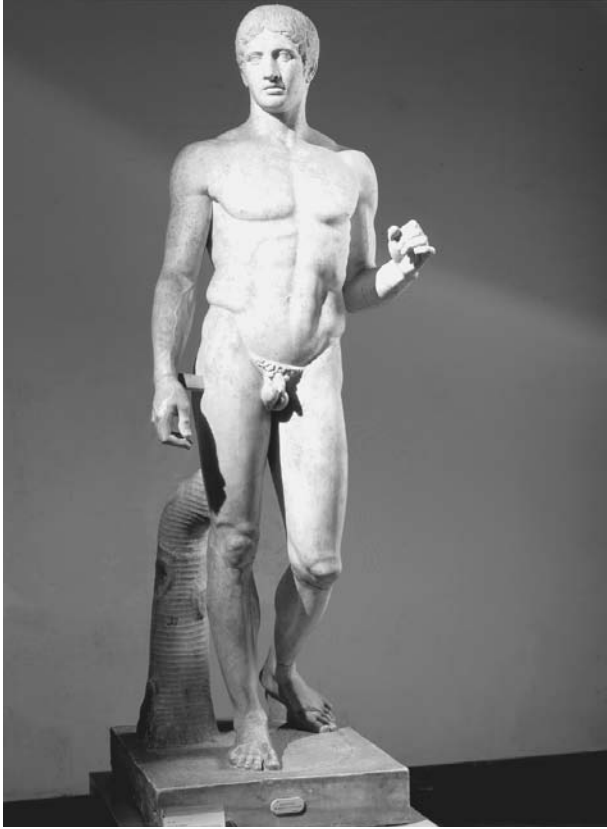
**INTRODUCTION:** After Phidias finished his great statue of Athena for the Parthenon in Athens, he went to Elis which had the site of the Olympic Games within its territory, and there he made another great statue of gold and ivory for the new Temple of Zeus. The remains of Phidias' workshop have been discovered at Olympia—among the finds was a cup bearing Phidias' name—and the pottery found in the workshop can be securely dated to the late 430s and 420s B.C.E. This settles an old debate among archaeologists whether Phidias sculpted the statue of Athena Parthenos in Athens before or after he sculpted the statue of Zeus at Olympia. It is clear now that the making of Zeus came second. The passage quoted below comes from the *Geography* of Strabo (64 B.C.E.–circa 21 C.E.). Strabo visited Greece which he describes in books eight to ten of his *Geography*, and in the following excerpt he describes the impression which Phidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia made on him more than four centuries after it was made.

**SOURCE:** Strabo, *Geography*, in *The Art of Greece, 1400–31 B.C.: Sources and Documents*. Ed. J. J. Pollitt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965): 73.

the Spartans. Messenia was a region west of Sparta that the Spartans had subjugated in the early archaic period, reducing the Messenians to serfdom; the Messenians who erected this monument had escaped from the Spartan yoke and had been settled on the Gulf of Corinth at Naupactus by Athens. To mark the victory, they erected this victory monument at Olympia where all the Greeks who came to the Olympic Games could see it. The *Nike* of Paionius stood on a high triangular base some 9.14 meters (thirty feet) high before the front end of the Temple of Zeus. To viewers below, it looked as if the *Nike* was alighting on the pillar as the air swirled around her, pressing her *chiton* (tunic) against her body, while her *himation* (outer cloak) billowed out around her. The *himation* is now largely broken away, but it is still possible to appreciate the technical virtuosity which this statue displays. Battered though it is, this is a masterpiece of the “flying drapery style.”

**SCOPAS OF PAROS.** Early fourth-century sculpture retained the artistic conceptions of the fifth. Figures stand with the same easy balance, their facial expressions have the same calm serenity, and the drapery is transparent though it is often combined with heavier, agitated

folds. The fourth century did develop its own style, however, in introducing a more human quality. Poses became more sinuous, drapery was more naturalistic, and a dreamy gentleness appeared in the faces. Three sculptors dominated the period: Scopas of Paros, Praxiteles of Athens, and Lysippus of Sicyon. Of Scopas little remains to form a judgement of his art. He worked on three important monuments of the first half and middle of the fourth century B.C.E.: the temple of Athena Alea at Tegea, the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, and the great Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (modern Bodrum in Turkey). From the pediment of the temple at Tegea, some battered heads survive and they are arresting, with deep-set eyes that gaze upwards and furrowed brows. While they cannot be attributed with certainty to Scopas, he was the architect of the temple and these sculptures must have been approved by him at the very least. The sculptural remains from Halicarnassus and Ephesus add little to modern knowledge of Scopas although Roman copies do exist of one famous free-standing sculpture of Scopas, the so-called *Pothos* (“Yearning”). The statue is of a youth standing with crossed legs, leaning on a pillar, with a goose at his feet. He stands with raised



Copy of the "Doryphorus," or "Spear-bearer" from Greek original by Polyclitus of Argos, found at Pompeii. THE ART ARCHIVE/ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM NAPLES/DAGLI ORTI.

head, looking upwards with a melting gaze. The upward gaze seems to have been a mark of Scopas' sculpture.

**PRAXITELES.** The most famous work of Praxiteles was his statue of Aphrodite which he made about 370 B.C.E. for the Dorian city of Cnidus. It was extravagantly admired in its own day for its beauty and its daring, for it showed Aphrodite naked, one hand shielding her pudenda from the onlooker's gaze, and the other resting on a water jar (*loutrophoros*) with a towel draped over it—Aphrodite has been surprised as she was preparing for her bath, it appears. Many Roman copies of the statue have survived. The best example is in the Vatican Museum in Rome but even though it is a competent replica, it gives little idea of the statue's original appearance, when its paint was fresh. At Cnidus it was placed in an open shrine where it could be viewed from all sides. It is the first of a whole series of female figures, some nude, some partially clad, the most famous of which is the *Venus di Milo*, the Aphrodite found on the island of Melos which is now in the Louvre museum in Paris. Praxiteles worked in bronze, but he was at his best working in marble, which he knew how to polish to a finish that

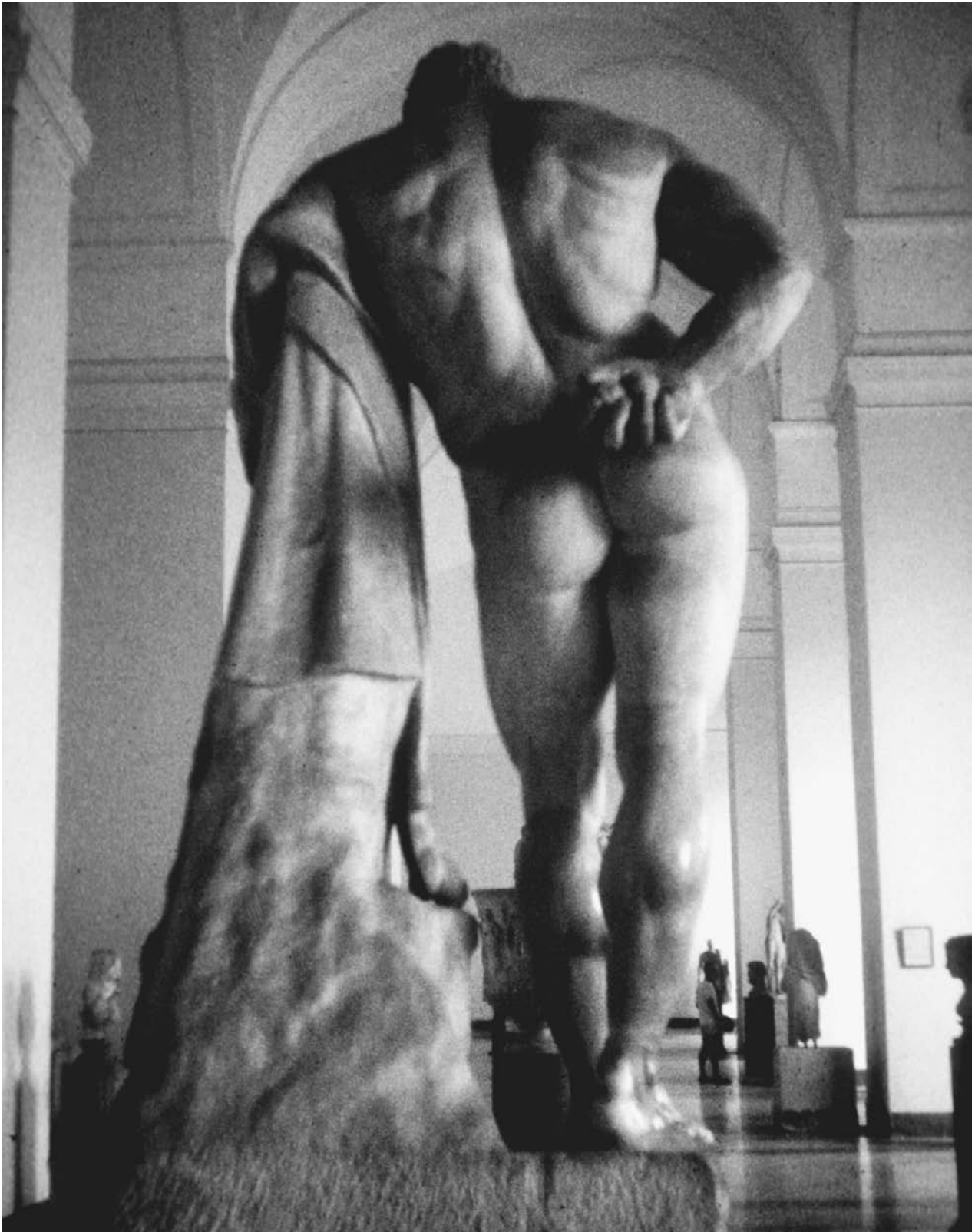


Statue of Hermes carrying the infant Dionysus, by Praxiteles. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

represents the softness of female flesh. He was also a master of the tender gaze. A statue by Praxiteles was discovered during the archaeological excavations at Olympia, and though there has been a long debate as to whether it is a genuine Praxiteles or a later but very fine copy, the reasons for rejecting it as genuine are not convincing. This statue shows the god Hermes holding the infant Dionysus. Hermes holds the child with his left arm, and with his right he dangles a bunch of grapes. The right arm is broken, but other depictions of the statue show that Hermes is teasing Dionysus with a bunch of grapes and Dionysus recognizes his special fruit, infant though he is. Hermes' head is particularly fine, and the finish of the marble and the impressionistic method used to portray Hermes' hair are all marks of Praxiteles' style.

**LYSIPPUS.** Lysippus of Sicyon, who was active not long after 370 and was still at work in 312 B.C.E., marked the period of transition to the Hellenistic Age. When he was born, the city-states of Greece were squabbling in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War that had ended in 404 B.C.E. with the defeat of Athens. When he died,





Rear view of the Farnese Heracles, a copy of a statue by Lysippos. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***POLYCLITUS AND THE ARGIVE STYLE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Polyclitus was a native of Argos, and a younger contemporary of Phidias. Thanks to him, the Peloponnesian tradition of sculpture, centered in Argos and its neighbor Sicyon, maintained its artistic independence from Athens in the fifth century B.C.E. when Athens became the cultural leader of Greece and absorbed the other local sculptural traditions. Like both Myron and Phidias, he is supposed to have been a pupil of Ageladas of Argos who was active in the 470s. The period of Polyclitus' activity as a sculptor stretched over the whole of the second half of the fifth century B.C.E. In the excerpt from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* quoted below, Pliny makes two errors. First, the "Canon" which set out Polyclitus' prescription for the proportions of the male nude figure was not a separate statue. It was the *Doryphoros* or "Spearbearer," a muscular youth carrying a spear over his shoulder. It expressed what Polyclitus thought were the perfect proportions for the young man's body, and he drove home his point with a treatise on the subject titled the "Canon." Second, Polyclitus came from Argos, not Sicyon, but Sicyon, next door to Argos, succeeded Argos as the center for sculpture in the Peloponnesos in the fourth century B.C.E., and Pliny's error is understandable.

When Pliny quotes the opinion of the learned Roman Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 B.C.E.) that Polyclitus' statues were "square," he probably means that they were squarely-built, which is more or less true.

**SOURCE:** Pliny, *Natural History*, Book XXXIV, in *The Art of Greece, 1400-31 B.C.: Sources and Documents*. Ed. J. J. Pollitt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965): 88–89.

the Hellenistic Age had already begun, and Lysippus pioneered the new sculptural style. His workshop in Sicyon produced hundreds of statues—he is supposed to have turned out 1,500 works—but one was particularly famous: his *Apoxyomenos* or "Athlete Scraping Himself," referring to the process by which athletes removed the residue of the olive oil they rubbed on themselves prior to exercise. The *Apoxyomenos* broke with the tradition established by the *Canon* of Polyclitus that the head should be one-eighth the total height of the statue; the head of the *Apoxyomenos* is one-ninth the total height. Nor is the *Apoxyomenos* a "square" statue like Polyclitus' "Spear-bearer." Lysippus' statue constantly draws the viewer's eyes around the figure, for he has given it no clearly defined front, unlike the defined front and back approach of Polyclitus. The *Apoxyomenos* represents a figure in motion, caught in the act of shifting its weight from one leg to the other. Lysippus had absorbed what Polyclitus had to teach him, and moved forward.

**THE FARNESE HERACLES.** Heracles was a subject of interest to Lysippus. Lysippus did a miniature sculpture of the famous Greek hero that was much copied, showing Heracles sitting on a table, somewhat drunk and looking a little flabby. His most famous Heracles-figure, however, is the "Farnese Heracles" in the Naples Museum,

so called because it was once part of the collection belonging to the Farnese family in Rome. It is a marble copy of a bronze original by Lysippus, and the copyist has signed his name: Glycon of Athens. There is reason to suspect that the copy by Glycon gave Heracles a more exaggerated physique than the original to please his Roman customers, for there is a copy of the same statue in the Louvre in Paris where Heracles' muscles are less overwhelming, though he still has the appearance of a body builder. He is shown resting after completing the last of his legendary Twelve Labors: fetching the golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides. He leans on his club, his gaze tilted down and towards the left. He is weary; his labor has exhausted him, for he is clearly no longer a young man. His face expresses utter fatigue. His right arm is tucked behind his back, and his right hand holds the three golden apples. Like the *Apoxyomenos*, the "Farnese Heracles" prompts the viewer to circle around it, and only upon seeing the apples is it possible to comprehend the cause of Heracles' fatigue. This is a good example of three-dimensional sculpture, a style that Lysippus pioneered.

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## THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

**BACKGROUND.** The Hellenistic period spans the years from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 to 30 B.C.E., when Rome annexed the last independent Hellenistic kingdom, Egypt, which was ruled by a royal dynasty that was descended from one of Alexander's generals, Ptolemy. The year 30 B.C.E. does not mark a sharp break in the artistic tradition. Athens maintained its reputation as a center for the visual arts, but it was now only one of many. The world of the Greek artist expanded enormously. This period of artistic development was ushered in by Alexander's favorite sculptor Lysippus of Sicyon. He was not the first to portray figures in motion, but he was the first to make them fully three-dimensional. Yet there is a rational organization to their composition which Lysippus inherited from the classical age and passed on to his successors. Sculptors were fond of using a "pyramidal design," so-called because a pyramid can be drawn around the figures, enclosing them. Hardly less influential than Lysippus was Praxiteles, whose nude Aphrodite of Cnidus set the style for the female nude, a type which sculptors throughout the Hellenistic period exploited with even more flair and ingenuity than their classical predecessors had lavished on the male nude. Then about 240 B.C.E. a new style burst upon the artistic scene. The impression it conveys is almost baroque—to borrow a label that is applied to the grandly ornate art of southern Europe in the period 1550–1750 C.E. The Hellenistic "baroque" loved struggling figures in violent action, with muscles straining and bulging, and faces contorted with desperate striving or



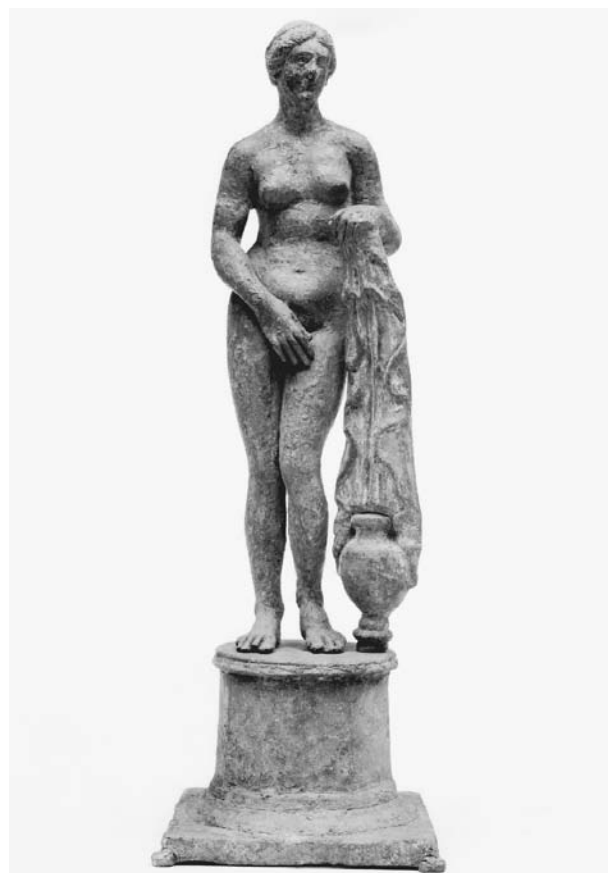
The Capitoline Venus in the Capitoline Museum in Rome. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO CAPITOLINO ROME/DAGLI ORTI.

bitter anguish. The Roman presence, however, began to exert influence. In 197 B.C.E. Rome defeated Philip V, king of Macedon, and in 167 she dethroned the last king of Macedon, Perseus. By 146, Greece had become the Roman province of Achaea. The creative fire that had informed the visual arts of the Hellenistic period began to burn low following this domination by the Romans. Late Hellenistic sculpture returned to the styles of the classical Greece of the fifth century B.C.E., perhaps an artistic expression of the yearning for Greece's heyday. From the late second century B.C.E. on, a group of sculptors known as "Neo-Attic School" specialized in producing reliefs based on classical designs. Sculptors became increasingly satisfied to recall and imitate the

past. It was safe, unadventurous art, and it was what the market wanted. The baroque style continued into the first century C.E., but it was the taste and preferences of the market that dictated style. The sculptors catered to the tastes of their patrons, who were more and more the Romans, the new masters of the Mediterranean world, and the preference of the Augustan Age (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) was for Neo-Attic.

**THE POPULARITY OF THE FEMALE NUDE.** Praxiteles' famous Aphrodite of Cnidus set the style for the female nude and there were many variations on the theme. The subject is always Aphrodite, goddess of love and sexual desire. One variation, by an unknown sculptor, showed her either untying her sandal or putting it on again after taking a swim. Another famous nude, the Capitoline Venus, is simply a variation of the famous Aphrodite of Cnidus by Praxiteles. It exists in more than 100 copies, of which the best is in the Capitoline Museum in Rome. It shows Aphrodite naked; there is a tall water-jug called a *loutrophoros* beside her with a towel draped over it, and so she has presumably just taken a bath. Evidently she has been surprised, for one arm tries to hide her breasts and with her other arm she shields her pudenda. In spite of the enormous popularity of this statue, both the original statue and its creator are lost. One other experiment with the female nude in a different pose became a favorite ornament of the gardens and courtyards of great Roman houses, to judge from the number of Roman copies that have survived. The sculptor of the original, Doidalsas of Bithynia, worked in the mid-third century B.C.E., and the statue for which he is known shows a naked Aphrodite washing herself. She is shown in a crouching position, glancing over her right shoulder. Many copies have turned up in the region of Naples in Italy, which was dotted with villas in the heyday of the Roman Empire.

**THE PARTIALLY-CLOTHED FEMALE NUDE.** Both Praxiteles and Lysippus have a claim to be the first to produce a partially-clothed female nude. In 1651, in France, a statue of Aphrodite, without her arms, was found in an old cistern at Arles. The "Venus of Arles," as she is known, is now in the Louvre with arms restored by order of King Louis XIV. The statue shows Aphrodite with her garment slipping down over her hips far enough to give a glimpse of her groin. Her head turns to the left in a pose similar to the Hermes of Praxiteles found at Olympia, and the creator of this copy's original may have been a work of Praxiteles, too. The claim of Lysippus is based on the Aphrodite of Capua, a Roman copy found in the ruins of the Roman amphitheater in Capua north of Naples and now in the Naples Museum. Praxiteles,



Aphrodite of Cnidus. REUNION DES MUSEES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE, NY.

Scopas, and Lysippus have all been suggested as the sculptor of the original, but Lysippus is the favorite. The most famous partially-clothed Aphrodite, however, is the *Venus di Milo*, now in the Louvre. It was found in 1820 on the island of Melos, one of the Cyclades archipelago, by a young French naval officer and a Greek farmer. Her arms are lost, but a hand holding an apple was found as well as the statue base, which identifies the sculptor. The first four letters of his name cannot be read with certainty, for the inscription is mutilated, but he was probably Alexandros of Antioch-on-the-Meander River in Asia Minor, to be distinguished from the more famous Antioch-on-the-Orontes River in Syria. The apple must be the "Apple of Discord" that started the legendary Trojan War. According to the myth, the goddess *Eris* (Discord) had not been invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, the parents of Achilles, and avenged the slight by hurling a golden apple inscribed "For the fairest" among the guests. The goddesses Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite all claimed it, and they entreated the young Trojan prince, Paris, to judge which of them was the most beautiful and therefore the rightful owner of the apple.



Venus de Milo, statue of Aphrodite found on the island of Melos in Greece, c. 100 B.C.E. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Alexandros' statue portrays Paris' choice, Aphrodite, at the moment of her victory. One lost arm was outstretched and her hand held the apple, and her other hand probably held up her garment which is about to slip off her hips. There is more than a hint of suggestiveness to her pose. Yet the softness of her flesh and the subtle curves of her body have been masterfully rendered, and she is justly famous, though she is not a masterpiece of the classical period of Greek sculpture as art historians proclaimed a century ago. She was probably carved between 150 and 125 B.C.E.

**HIGH HELLENISTIC "BAROQUE."** About 240 B.C.E. sculptors began to portray figures in motion as statues radiated exuberant energy. Men portrayed in violent actions have muscles that ripple and swell. The new style was particularly conducive to the victory monuments that were erected to commemorate some military triumph. The famous Winged Victory of

Samothrace, now in the Louvre in Paris, depicts the goddess Victory at the very moment when she alights on the bow of a ship. She was found in 1863 in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace in the northern Aegean Sea, and she was dedicated probably between 180 and 160 B.C.E. to commemorate a naval victory. The artist sculpted the Victory in the pure white marble from the quarries on the island of Paros, but for the prow of the ship he chose grey marble from Rhodes. The wind swirls round her as she alights, filling her wings like great sails, and blowing back her cloak so that it ripples around her body in great folds. Another military victory was celebrated with the Victory Monument of Attalus of Pergamum. In the first half of the third century B.C.E., Greece was menaced by Gallic invaders, who moved into Asia Minor where they pillaged and marauded, threatening the newly founded principality of Pergamum (modern Bergama in Turkey). Pergamum at first tried to buy them off, but reversed this policy in 241 B.C.E. when Attalus I became ruler of Pergamum. He refused any more payments to the Gauls and when they attacked, defeated them soundly. After the victory he took the title of king and set up a monument to commemorate his triumph. Although the original is long gone, there are some Roman copies. One shows a Gallic warrior in the act of killing himself after his defeat. With his right arm he thrusts his sword into the base of his throat, while with his left he holds the limp body of his wife whom he has already slain. Another shows a Gaul in the throes of death. He has sunk to the ground, but still props himself up with one arm. These tall, hard-muscled Gallic warriors would not be mistaken for Greeks. The sculptors have captured a difference between their nude male bodies and typical Greek physiques. Another monument that Attalus set up to advertise his triumph showed the same taste for the exotic. It showed battles against Gauls, Giants, Amazons, and Persians. Copies of the figures show what they looked like: a Persian lies dead, a Gaul is dying, a wounded Amazon slips from her horse. Attalus had the monument placed on the Athenian Acropolis, for though Athens no longer was a great power, it was still recognized as the cultural heartland of the Greek world.

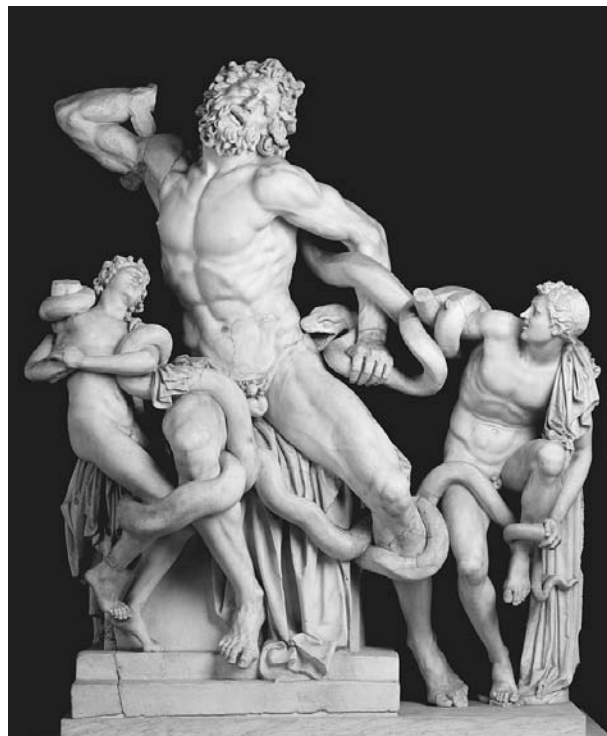
**THE GREAT ALTAR OF PERGAMUM.** The superlative masterpiece of the baroque style is the frieze on the podium of the Great Altar built at Pergamum, erected about 165 B.C.E., and now partially reconstructed in the Berlin Museum. The frieze portrays the Battle of the Gods and Giants from Greek mythology which told how the supremacy of the Olympian gods was challenged by a race of vast creatures like Tityus whose immense mass covered



Nike (Victory) of Samothrace, showing her landing on the prow of a warship, found at Samothrace, early second century B.C.E.

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nine acres when he lay stretched out on the plain, and Enceladus whom all of Mt. Etna was needed to hold down. About one hundred over-life size figures carved in high relief are shown in violent struggle. Muscles strain and bulge, cloaks swirl, faces portray anguish. A dog bites a giant as he sinks to the ground, reminding the viewer of one of the greatest horrors of war, that the dead on the battlefield might be left unburied for dogs to devour. The central part of the west side, which the visitor would see first upon approaching the monument, shows Zeus and Athena in the thick of the fight. Zeus' cloak has slipped from his shoulder, revealing a heavily muscled torso, and on his left, Athena hurls a giant to the ground, his eyes turned heavenwards in mute appeal. The relief gives the general impression of a new, vigorous approach to sculpture, but a closer look reveals reminiscences of the classical past. The mute appeal on the face of the dying giant whom Athena kills is borrowed from Scopas. The relief on the central west side of Zeus and Athena reverses the composition used on the west pediment of the Parthenon, but the derivation is clear. The "Baroque" artists, like the other sculptors of the Hellenistic period, build upon the techniques and traditions of the classical past.



The Laocoon Group, Greek sculpture illustrating an episode from Vergil's *Aeneid*, Book II, Laocoon and his two sons wrestling with snakes. © ARALDO DE LUCA/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**THE LAOCOON GROUP.** The last king of Pergamum, Attalus III, willed his kingdom to Rome when he died in 133 B.C.E., and Pergamum became the Roman province of Asia, which was a notable example of Roman misrule in the following century. However, the High Hellenistic "Baroque" had another center of excellence: the island of Rhodes, where the style of the Great Altar frieze at Pergamum continued to flourish. The Laocoon Group, now in the Vatican Museum, dates from the early first century C.E. and is a good example of late Rhodian work. It is narrative art, and the story that it relates comes from Vergil's poem, the *Aeneid*, the national epic of the Roman Empire which described how the city of Troy supposedly fell to the Greeks. In the story, the siege of Troy by the Greeks had lasted ten long years, and, unable to penetrate the city walls, the Greeks devised a scheme to trick the Trojans into letting them into the city. They constructed a large wooden horse and hid a group of Greek warriors in its belly. They then left it at the city gates, supposedly as an offering to the gods, and pretended to depart, as if they had given up the siege. The Trojans, thinking that the siege was over at last, decided to bring the horse within the city walls as part of a celebration. The Trojan priest Laocoon was the lone voice

of warning against bringing the horse into the city, rightly fearing that it was a trap set by the Greeks to gain access to Troy. As Laocoon made his case to his fellow Trojans, however, two great serpents emerged from the sea and wound their coils around him and his two sons. The Trojans took Laocoon's horrible death as a token of divine anger, and decided to bring the horse into their city, thus sealing their doom. The statue group shows Laocoon and his sons struggling in vain against the serpents, one of which sinks its fangs into Laocoon's thigh. Laocoon's face expresses anguish and despair. He is losing the struggle and he knows it. One of his sons is already dead; the other is still fighting to disentangle himself. The coils of the serpents bind the three figures together into an artistic whole. The statue group was found above the ruins of the Golden House of Nero in 1506, and among the spectators who witnessed the excavation was the great Michelangelo. Unfortunately we cannot be certain that this statue group is an original rather than a copy. According to the Roman historian Pliny the Elder who described this statue, the original was made by three Rhodian sculptors—Hagesandrus, Polydorus, and Athanadorus—from a single block of marble whereas the existing Laocoon is made of seven or eight pieces fitted together. That would seem to indicate that the “Laocoon Group” in the Vatican Museum is a copy, but Pliny is not infallible, and whether it is a copy or not, it is a masterpiece of the baroque style.

**THE SCULPTURES FROM SPERLONGA.** In 1957, at Sperlonga on the west coast of Italy some sixty miles south of Rome, a cave was found that once belonged to a villa of the emperor Tiberius (14–37 C.E.). What was remarkable about the cave were the statues found there. An inscription was found that gives the names of the sculptors: Hagesandrus, Polydorus, and Athanadorus—the Rhodian sculptors who carved the Laocoon group. The find dates these sculptors firmly in the early first century C.E.; they had previously been dated at least a century earlier. The sculptures show incidents from Homer's *Odyssey*; one group shows the blinding of the Cyclops Polyphemus, another shows the monster Scylla attacking Odysseus' ship. This is theatrical sculpture in the best traditions of High Hellenistic Baroque. The face of Odysseus bears an expression of apprehension mixed with resolve; as a portrayal of feeling it is comparable to Laocoon's face and is utterly different from the calm, unemotional expressions found in the classical sculpture of the fifth century B.C.E. The creative fire of the Hellenistic artistic tradition may have been burning low by the first century C.E., but the finds at Sperlonga show that it could still produce a masterpiece.

**THE LATE HELLENISTIC PERIOD: A RETURN TO ATTIC STYLE.** By the second half of the second century B.C.E., it was clear that there was no hope for Greek independence. In 146 B.C.E., Greece became the Roman province of Achaea. In 133 B.C.E., Pergamum fell under Roman rule. Huge numbers of Greek works of art were taken as spoils of war to Rome, and along with Greece's subjection to Roman rule there seems to be a decline in artistic creativity. Rome provided a market for copies of Greek masterpieces that adorned the houses and country villas of the wealthy classes, and sculptors honed their skills by making replicas. Many Greek sculptors went to Rome to find work, making it increasingly hard to disentangle Greek from Roman sculpture. The lack of development is not due altogether to a failure of inspiration, but rather to the fact that Greek artists, who now saw their world subject to a foreign empire, salvaged their pride by looking backwards to the heyday of Greece. The same feeling can also be detected in the Greek literature of the period. It is these classicizing Greek masters of the Late Hellenistic period who provide the artistic vocabulary for the Rome of the emperor Augustus.

**THE “NEO-ATTIC” IDIOM.** The hallmark of this Late Hellenistic style known as “Neo-Attic” is its recycling of the idioms of the classical period—the century when Athens dominated the artistic world of Greece. It was the poses, the modeling, and the features of Attic (that is, Athenian, for Attica was the territory of Athens) sculpture that made up these idioms. The *Venus di Milo* is a successful example of Neo-Attic style. No single part of her is original, but the sculptor Alexandros combined his various borrowings into a harmonious whole. Much less successful is a statue group of Orestes and Electra that apparently once adorned the Roman meat market in Pozzuoli, ancient Puteoli on the western outskirts of Naples. Orestes is a standard male nude of the fourth century B.C.E., and his sister Electra, standing beside him with an arm over his shoulder, is a standard clothed female figure with transparent drapery of the last quarter of the fifth century B.C.E. It is an uninspired work, which shows how perfunctory “Neo-Attic” style could become when art was treated as mere decoration.

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## ROMAN SCULPTURE

**THE ETRUSCAN INFLUENCE.** Roman sculpture has its roots in Etruria, an ancient country north of Rome. According to tradition, the Etruscans were immigrants from Asia Minor who migrated to Italy, perhaps during the general meltdown at the end of the Bronze Age, in the years following 1200 B.C.E. Once they arrived, they established themselves as a ruling class that exploited the resources of one of the richest regions of Italy. Etruria was an important export market for Greek vases, and Greek artisans worked in its cities for Etruscan patrons. One such colony of Greek craftsmen existed in Caere (modern Cerveteri, north of Rome), where there is still a large Etruscan necropolis. The paintings in the Etruscan underground tombs at Tarquinia were probably done by Greek artisans, though the taste is Etruscan. Rome's last three kings were Etruscan; the last of them, Tarquin the Proud, who was expelled in 510 B.C.E., built a great temple for the triad of gods, Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno on the Capitoline Hill in Etruscan style. As a model for all future Roman temples, it stood on a raised podium and was decorated with painted terracotta moldings. The cult statue of Jupiter was made of terracotta by an Etruscan sculptor from Veii named Vulca. A surviving terracotta statue from the school of Vulca was found in the ruins of Veii and now stands in the Villa Giulia museum in Rome. The so-called Apollo of Veii originally looked down from the ridgepole of an Etruscan temple. It has the "archaic smile" of the Greek *kouroi* (nude male statues), but it has little of the quiet serenity of archaic Greek sculpture.

**EARLY SCULPTURE IN ROME.** Etruscan influence continued in Rome after the Etruscan kings were driven



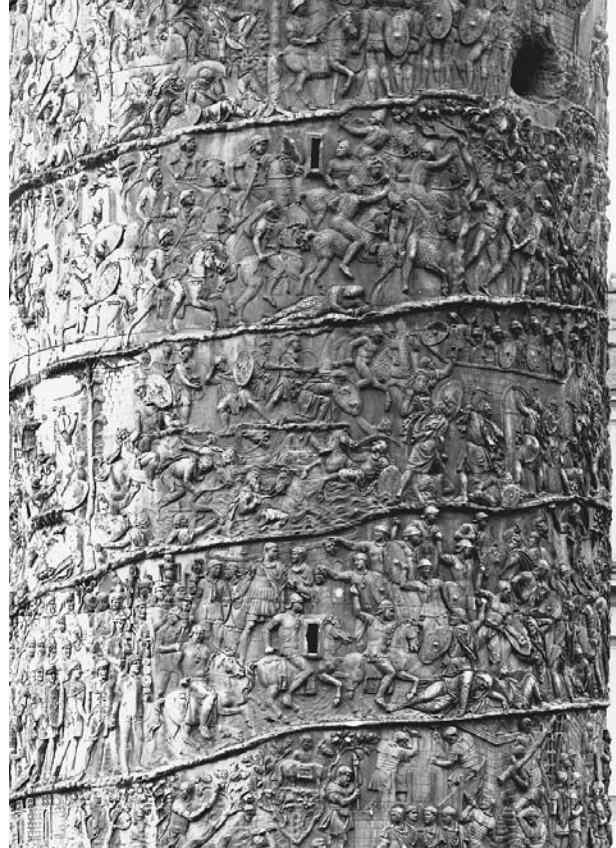
The Apollo of Veii, the head shown in profile of this terracotta Etruscan statue found at Veii. © ARALDO DE LUCA/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

out, and Etruscan sculptors continued to work there. One monument that survived from this early period is a bronze she-wolf of about 500 B.C.E. In the Renaissance period, two infants were added, suckling her teats. The addition clearly identified this wolf with the legendary wolf that suckled Rome's legendary founders, Romulus and Remus, as infants, but it is not clear whether the original statue should be connected with the legend or not. The Etruscan influence on Rome faded, however, as Rome's conquests brought Greece into the empire. A turning point came in 211 B.C.E. while Rome was fighting a desperate war with the Carthaginians who were led by a general of genius, Hannibal. That year the city of Syracuse, which had sided with the Carthaginians, fell to Marcellus, the proconsul commanding the Roman army that was operating in Sicily. Syracuse was a great Greek city filled with works of art, and a share of the art travelled back to Rome as spoils of war. They made a strong impression on the Roman elite, who clamored for more Greek art. In the second century B.C.E., when Rome conquered Greece, there was ample opportunity for more looting. In 146 B.C.E. Rome destroyed Corinth, and the commander, Lucius Mummius, sent shiploads of art works to Rome, saying as he did so that if these cargoes were lost at sea, there were more where they came





Mural paintings in the Tomb of the Leopards in Etruscan, Italy, detail showing banquet scene with young musicians and/or servants, heraldic leopards and geometric patterned ceilings above. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.



Column of Trajan in Rome: detail showing his wars against the Dacians in modern Romania. The sculpture in low relief spirals around the column. ALINARI-ART REFERENCE/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

from. Yet the number of masterpieces was limited, and so a flourishing industry arose in Greece of copying sculptures in marble for the Roman market. The skill of the copyists varied, and though the sculptors knew how to make exact replicas, it is clear that they sometimes varied the originals. Yet without these Roman copies modern understanding of Greek sculpture would be greatly diminished.

**AUGUSTAN CLASSICISM.** The emperor Augustus (r. 27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), the heir of Julius Caesar, made himself master of the Roman world only after a hard-fought civil war. First he had to suppress Caesar’s assassins, Brutus and Cassius, who had mustered armies in the east. He destroyed them in a battle fought in 42 B.C.E. at Philippi in northern Greece. Then he had to suppress a more dangerous rival, Mark Antony, defeating him at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E. After finally achieving peace, Augustus was determined to give the empire a capital worthy of its position as mistress of the Mediterranean world. He turned to the art of classical Greece to accomplish this goal. His artists revived the *Canon* of Polyclitus, a classical treatise on the proper proportions

for sculpture, in creating statues of Augustus. Indeed, a comparison between the so-called “Prima Porta” statue of Augustus, found at the villa of his wife Livia a short distance north of Rome, with the *Doryphoros* (Spear-bearer) of Polyclitus reveals some startling similarities. The statues have the same tilt of the head, and the same treatment of the hair. While Augustus has some individual features, such as his high cheekbones and the hint of resolution to his brow, his physique adheres to the proportions which Polyclitus set forth in his *Canon*. The statue is a copy of an original statue of the emperor conceived about 27 B.C.E., the year that the senate conferred on him the title “Augustus,” meaning “the revered one.” The statue of Caesar Augustus is an idealized version of the man as a celebration of his new title. Augustus harnessed the art of Greece for his political purposes. The aesthetic value of the “Prima Porta” Augustus cannot have greatly interested the sculptor who carved it or Augustus’ wife Livia, who was probably the person that commissioned it, for its rear is only roughly finished. Af-



Roman terracotta relief showing a four-horse chariot race in a Hippodrome. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO DELLA CIVILTA ROMANA ROME/DAGLI ORTI.

ter all, no one could see it, for the statue was intended to stand against a wall.

**THE ALTAR OF PEACE.** In 9 B.C.E., the Roman senate dedicated the *Ara Pacis* (Altar of Peace) on the *Campus Martius* (Field of Mars) in Rome to commemorate the safe return of Caesar Augustus from his campaigns in Gaul and Spain. It was a modest monument, reproducing the proportions of the Altar of the Twelve Gods which stood in the marketplace of Athens. It was adorned with reliefs, which are the most important features that survive of Augustan sculpture. Some of the reliefs portray the sacrifice that took place at the ceremony of dedication on 30 January 9 B.C.E. The panels on the north and south of the altar show a procession of the imperial family and court; the portraits are sufficiently realistic that most can be identified. On the east and west sides there are panels representing mythological scenes. One shows Aeneas, whom Augustus claimed as an ancestor, making sacrifice. But the most arresting of all is a panel on the outside of the altar enclosure that shows a goddess holding two infants. Various fruits are on her lap, and a child offers her one in his small hand. At her feet a cow rests, and a sheep grazes. The identity of the goddess is unknown. Some scholars believe her to represent

“Peace,” while others claim she is “Mother Earth,” or perhaps Venus, the mother of Aeneas and hence the progenitor of the Julian family. Whatever her identity, she adheres to the artistic traditions of classical Greece. Her *stola*, the proper dress of a Roman matron, clings to her body, revealing her breasts and even her navel underneath. It reproduces the transparent drapery of Greek sculpture of the 420s B.C.E., such as the Flying Victory of Painonius of Mende, except that in the *Ara Pacis* relief there is no wind. Yet the message is clear enough. The goddess, whoever she is, is bringing the fruits of peace, and of law and order, to the Roman Empire. This, proclaims the relief, was the achievement of Caesar Augustus.

**HISTORICAL RELIEFS.** In one category of relief sculpture, the Romans could claim a degree of originality: the relief that narrated an historical event. The Arch of Titus in the Roman Forum commemorates the suppression of the revolt in Judaea that broke out in 66 C.E. Titus, who took over command of the Roman forces in Judaea from his father Vespasian, captured Jerusalem and then returned to Rome with his spoils to celebrate a Roman Triumph. In the triumphal ceremony, the victorious general paraded his captives and his spoils



Relief sculpture from the Altar of Peace in Rome, with the goddess Peace shown as Mother Earth, surrounded by symbols of the abundance that peace brings. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

through the streets of Rome, through the Roman Forum along the “Sacred Way” and up to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill where he laid down his command. Inside the arch there are two great panels which portray the triumph: one shows the exhibition of the spoils, which include the seven-branched candlestick from the Temple in Jerusalem, and the other shows Titus himself in his triumphal chariot. There are two other great monuments in Rome that use continuous narration: the columns of Trajan and of Marcus Aurelius. Trajan, emperor from 98–117 C.E., added Dacia (modern Rumania) to the empire, and his column shows the campaigns that he waged to conquer Dacia. The story unfolds in a spiral scroll that runs from the bottom to the top of the column, where there perched a statue of the emperor himself. The episodes run into each other without obvious breaks. The column of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 C.E.) takes its inspiration from the column of Trajan. The “continuous narrative” frieze spirals up the column, but there is less attention to the factual recording of details. The nature of Marcus Aurelius’ campaigns may account for the difference. Trajan’s military operations resulted in an addition to the empire, whereas Mar-

cus Aurelius was fighting to hold back barbarian attacks across the Roman frontier. The emphasis of his relief sculpture is more on the hardships and cruelty of war.

**THE APPEARANCE OF THE FRONTAL POSE.** In the third century C.E., the frontal pose appeared in sculpture as a way of emphasizing the isolation of the emperor. Frontal poses were borrowed from Middle Eastern art; the first examples that we have come from the site of Dura-Europus on the Euphrates River, which was destroyed and abandoned in 257 C.E. Naturalism in sculpture was in full retreat in the third century, and the tendency became more marked in the fourth century. The base of an Egyptian obelisk erected by the emperor Theodosius I (379–395 C.E.) in the Hippodrome at Constantinople is a dramatic illustration of the portrayal of the emperor in the art of late antiquity. Theodosius and the imperial family sit in the imperial loge in the Hippodrome. On either side are senators and court officials. All face the onlooker. Below the imperial loge are various barbarians, recognizable by their dress. They kneel and offer tribute. Even as the empire was growing more ramshackle, the message of Roman sculpture in-

sisted that the emperor was the fount of Roman peace and prosperity.

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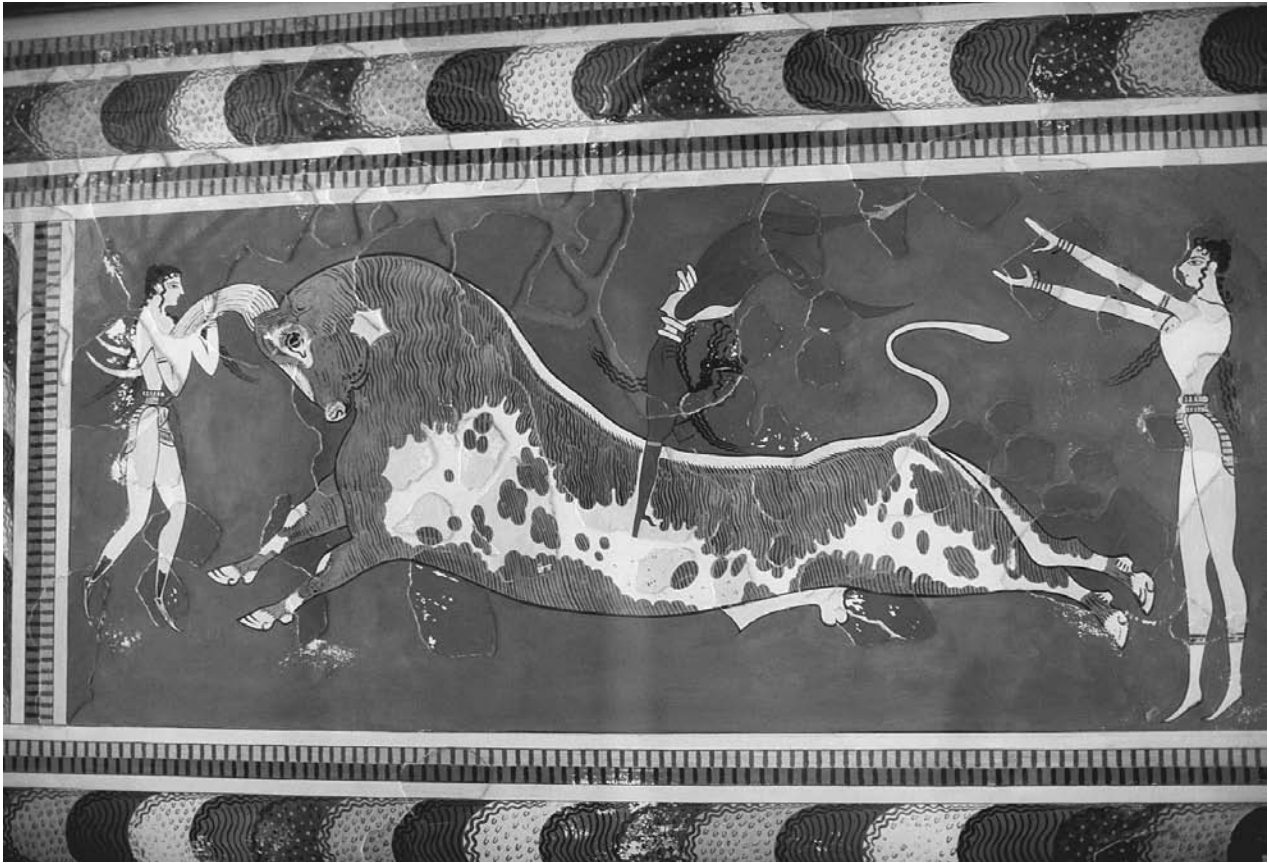
## GREEK PAINTING

**WALL PAINTING IN THE MINOAN PERIOD.** Greek wall painting has its roots in the prehistoric civilization on the island of Crete during what is known as the Minoan Period. The excavations of Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos on Crete at the start of the twentieth century revealed not only a great, sprawling palace, but they also turned up fragments of wall paintings. Reconstructing them was a painstaking process, but the results can be seen in the Heraklion Museum on Crete. The most impressive of the murals that Evans found was one that showed toreadors leaping over the back of a charging bull. Since then, fragments of frescos have been found at other sites on Crete and some of the Cyclades Islands as well. Also in the early 1900s, a house belonging to a Minoan settler was uncovered on the island of Melos, and among the finds was a naturalistic painting of flying fish. In the 1980s, Austrian archaeologists discovered a palatial complex at Tell el-Daba (ancient Avaris in Egypt), which was the capital of the Hyksos who invaded Egypt in the period between the Middle and the New Kingdom and were driven out by the founder of



"Man Carrying a Vessel in a Procession," Minoan wall painting, c. 1400 B.C.E. © WOLFGANG KAEHLER/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the New Kingdom, the pharaoh Ahmose. In it were fragments of Minoan mural paintings, including one showing bull-leapers against a background that shows a maze. The most startling finds, however, have emerged since 1967 from Akrotiri on the island of Thera, where a Minoan town was buried by the eruption of the Thera volcano that preserved houses to their second and even their third story. The eruption is dated by scientists to 1628 B.C.E., for it must have spewed enough ash and pumice into the atmosphere to block the rays of the sun, producing abnormally low temperatures for a year or two. By examining tree rings for signs of retarded growth and ice cores from Greenland for layers of peak acidity, the date can be pinpointed with a degree of confidence, even though the pottery found at Akrotiri would indicate a date about a generation later. Akrotiri produced the earliest surviving Minoan paintings, as well as those that are best preserved.



Toredor Fresco, from the Minoan Palace at Knossos, Crete, c. 1500 B.C.E. A young man somersaults over the back of a charging bull while a girl in front grasps his horns and another girl stands with arms outstretched at his rear. © WOLFGANG KAEHLER/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**THREE CLASSES OF MINOAN MURALS.** Minoan wall paintings—known also as frescoes—fall into three major classes, yet due to their often overlapping styles, it is often difficult to establish any direct line of development between the classes. The first class deals with the world of nature. These frescoes show flowers and other plants, animals, birds, and sea creatures. Human figures are usually not present. The second class shows human figures of both men and women, on a large scale. Female figures seem to predominate, and they are dressed in the fashions of the Knossos court, but it is not always clear whether they are priestesses or ordinary women dressed for a festival. The third group is the miniature frescoes that feature small human figures in a landscape or architectural setting. Assigning dates to these frescoes is not easy, and without dates it is hard to trace any development. Obviously the paintings found at Akrotiri must date before the eruption of the volcano that buried the Minoan town, but elsewhere dates are much less approximate. The famous fresco showing a life-size charging bull and toreadors is part

of a stucco relief of charging bulls from the north entrance of the palace at Knossos and is assumed to have been created relatively late in the Minoan period. Yet it is a thoroughly Minoan painting belonging to the second class, even if it belongs to the years shortly before the palace was taken over by Greek-speaking invaders from the Greek mainland.

**THE PAINTINGS FROM AKROTIRI.** The finds at Akrotiri have added immensely to modern knowledge of Minoan painting. Not only are the paintings well preserved, but they are securely dated before the eruption of the Thera volcano, during the New Palace period on Crete. There are examples of all three classes of painting. The world of nature is represented by a mural in a house labelled the “House of the Ladies” which shows papyrus plants. Since papyrus does not grow on Thera or Crete, the presence of the plant in Minoan art indicates Egyptian influence. A fresco from a shrine portraying a garden with stylized rocks and naturalistic lilies is another example. The second class is represented by a mural of two boys boxing, and another of a naked



A panel from a Greek tomb found at Paestum, Italy, c. 480 B.C.E., showing a young man diving, perhaps symbolizing his departure from life to the realm of the dead in the Underworld. © VANNI ARCHIVE/CORBIS.

fisherman holding his catch of fish in both his hands. The Miniature Style is represented by a remarkable fresco of a ship from the so-called “West House” at Akrotiri. It is a frieze about 43 centimeters (seventeen inches) high running around the top of at least three walls of a room. It shows a flotilla of ships being paddled between two ports. It seems to be an example of narrative art, perhaps of a naval campaign, but it is impossible to know for sure.

**MYCENAEAN PAINTING.** On mainland Greece the Mycenaean civilization, a Greek-speaking peoples, flourished between 1600 and 1200 B.C.E. Mycenaean wall painting is a continuation of Minoan painting, but it is not easy to attach dates to the surviving evidence. Recent excavations at Thebes in central Greece, the city of the legendary King Oedipus, have revealed remains of two successive palaces, and in the earlier of the two, archaeologists found fragments of a fresco showing a procession of women dated to the fourteenth century B.C.E. At Mycenae, houses outside the citadel walls yielded fragments of frescoes that might be dated equally early. But nothing on the mainland is as early as the frescoes found on the island of Thera. Most of what has been found dates to the last century of the Mycenaean civilization.

**FAVORITE SUBJECTS.** A procession of women, life-sized and wearing the typical Minoan dress consisting of a tight bodice, bare breasts, and flounced skirt, is one of the most common themes of Mycenaean murals. Each woman bears an offering, and they move from left to right, making their way probably towards a goddess. There are also battle scenes; at Pylos there were enigmatic battle scenes showing duels between Mycenaeans equipped with short swords, daggers, and helmets made from the tusks of boars, and adversaries wearing animal skins knotted over the shoulder. A painted mural at Mycenae showing scenes of battle ran around the four walls of the main room of the Mycenaean palace, the “megaron,” with a hearth in the middle. There were also hunting scenes, including one of a boar hunt from the palace at Tiryns, where the boar is portrayed running in a flying gallop, pursued by hunting dogs that leap on his back. A shield fresco showing figure-eight shields was found at Tiryns, better preserved than the similar figure-eight shield fresco found at Knossos by Sir Arthur Evans. On the whole, the subjects of the paintings seem to reflect a more martial society than on Crete; hunt-scenes and battle-scenes were apparently more attractive. Other murals do indicate the presence of varied interests, however. The Throne Room in the palace at Pylos had a mural of a black man playing a lyre. From a house at Mycenae built after 1400 B.C.E. outside the citadel,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE "PAINTED STOA" IN ATHENS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The "Painted Stoa" was a colonnade on the south side of the Athenian marketplace which got its name because it displayed on its back wall four paintings, one of the Battle of Oenoë by an unknown artist, and the others by Polygnotus, Micon, and Panainus. The pictures were not painted directly on the wall, but on wooden panels affixed to it, which could be removed. Pausanias, the Greek traveler of the second century C.E., visited Athens and left the following description of them.

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**SOURCE:** Pausanias, *Pausanias*, Book I, 15, 1, in *The Art of Greece, 1400-31 B.C.: Sources and Documents*. Ed. J. J. Pollitt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965): 108.

fresco fragments depict toreadors and bulls. This fresco may have been painted by a Minoan artist who had emigrated from Crete to mainland Greece, and it does not prove that bull-leaping was a sport that was popular in the Mycenaean world, though it does indicate some interest in it. When the Mycenaean palaces fell at the start of the Greek Dark Ages in 1100 B.C.E., the art of fresco painting perished with them.

**THE REVIVAL OF GREEK PAINTING.** Painting revived in the early archaic period of Greece, but except for vase painting the evidence is mostly literary. Only one well-preserved example of painting dating earlier than 600 B.C.E. survived: a terracotta plaque from a temple at Thermon in north-west Greece which portrays the hero Perseus fleeing with the head of the Gorgon, Medusa, under his arm. The Etruscan tomb paintings found in Italy seem to have been done by Greeks for Etruscan customers, however; they are therefore the products of Greek journeymen who traveled to Etruria (modern Tuscany north of Rome) to find work as early as the start of the sixth century B.C.E. A painted wooden votive plaque has been discovered in Greece, at Pitsa near

Corinth, which dates about 530 B.C.E. It shows a family making sacrifice. A man is apparently pouring wine on the altar, and a boy wearing a garland has brought up a sheep to be sacrificed, while two flautists and a lyre-player supply music and two women look on, holding laurel branches in their hands. It is a colorful composition, rather like the polychrome vases which Corinthian potters were producing at the time. The next evidence dates to about 470 B.C.E.: a painted tomb from Poseidonia, a Greek colony in Italy south of Naples, now known as Paestum. It is a small tomb with paintings of banqueters reclining on couches along the sides of the interior, and on the ceiling a picture of a youth diving from a high scaffolding. The painting was not meant for public viewing and it is impossible to interpret its message. In the history of the visual arts, it is important because Greek painting on media other than pottery is exceedingly rare.

**THE GREAT PAINTERS: POLYGNOTUS AND MICON.** For the works of the great Greek painters, modern scholarship must rely on descriptions from ancient authors. The painter who introduced portrayals of per-

sons in three-quarters view was Cimon from Cleonae, which is between Corinth and Argos in Greece. Polygnotus of Thasos, who was brought to Athens by the Athenian general and statesman Cimon who dominated Athenian political life in the late 470s and 460s B.C.E., introduced more innovations. He was the first to paint faces with the mouth open, showing the teeth, and the first to paint women with transparent drapery. He lived in the period when painters were discovering the laws of perspective. The tradition is that painted scenery for productions in the theater was invented by the tragic poet Sophocles, but his older rival Aeschylus was the first to have scenery that had perspective, developed by the painter Agatharchus. Other painters of the period were Micon, who collaborated with Polygnotus, and Panainos, the brother of the great sculptor Phidias. There was one monument where all three of them collaborated: the *Stoa Poikile* (The Painted Colonnade) on the south side of the Athenian marketplace, where the philosopher Zeno, founder of the Stoic School of philosophy, would give his lectures years later. There were four painted panels in the stoa affixed to the back wall. One depicted the Battle of Oenoë between the Athenians and the Spartans that was evidently an important battle although historians are uncertain what it was or why it took place. Another was a painting from mythology showing a battle between the Athenians and the Amazons, warrior women who attacked Athens and were defeated by King Theseus. A third showed a scene from the legendary Trojan War in which the Greek leaders are meeting to decide how to punish Ajax the Less for his rape of the priestess Cassandra. Finally a fourth painting evidently shows a sequence of actions related to the Battle of Marathon where the Athenians defeated the Persians: first the struggle itself, then the flight of the Persians, and finally the Persians trying to embark on their ships to leave. Panainos painted the Battle of Marathon with Micon's collaboration; Micon painted the battle of the Athenians and the Amazons; and Polygnotus' contribution was the painting of the Judgement of Ajax. The greatest masterpiece of Polygnotus, however, was found at Delphi in the *Lesche* or club house of the Cnidiads. One part of it depicted the sack of Troy, and another part the descent of the hero Odysseus into the Underworld. We have a detailed description of it by Pausanias, the Greek traveler of the second century C.E. who toured Greece and wrote a guidebook describing what he saw.

**THE SUCCESSORS OF POLYGNOTUS.** The balancing of light and shade—what modern artists call *chiaroscuro*—was pioneered by a little-known artist Apollodorus of Athens in the late fourth century B.C.E., but the artist who exploited it was Zeuxis in the early third

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### THE BEGINNINGS OF PERSPECTIVE

**INTRODUCTION:** When a modern artist wants to paint in perspective, he draws a horizon line and on the horizon he makes a vanishing point. Then lines that are parallel in real life are drawn so that they intersect at the vanishing point. Greek painters seem first to have discovered the need for something like a vanishing point when they produced painted scenery for theatrical productions. A casual reference in a treatise on architecture and engineering by Vitruvius Pollio, a Roman architect and engineer who worked under the emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), indicates that the first painter to try to show depth by making lines converge on a central point was a craftsman named Agatharcus who produced scenery for the tragedies of Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.E.) in Athens. Democritus and Anaxagoras, who wrote treatises that are lost on perspective, were both philosophers in the fifth century B.C.E.

First there was Agatharcus in Athens who painted scenery for Aeschylus who was producing a tragedy, and wrote a commentary about it. This resulted in Democritus and Anaxagoras writing on the same subject and showing how, once a central point is drawn in a definite location, the sight lines should have a natural relation to the central point and the spread of the visual rays from it, so that painted scenery can portray, by this sleight of hand, a faithful representation of how buildings appear, and though everything is drawn on a vertical flat plane, some parts look as if they have withdrawn into the background and other parts to be positioned in the foreground.

**SOURCE:** Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*. Trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (New York: Dover, 1960): 198. Text modified by James Allan Evans.

century B.C.E., who was famous for his illusionist effects. One of his paintings was *The Centaur Family* which shows a female centaur stretched out on the grass, suckling her two infant centaurs, while the male centaur, who is portrayed as a shaggy beast, leans over them laughing. Zeuxis' contemporary, Parrhasius of Ephesus, took a different approach. He was a careful draftsman, the acknowledged master of contour line. He is best known for his picture of Theseus that adorned the Capitol in Rome years after his death. His other works, besides the obscene subjects with which he supposedly amused





An underground Macedonian tomb from Vergina in Greece, identified as Aegae, the ancient capital of Macedon where the Macedonian kings were buried. COURTESY OF JAMES ALLAN EVANS.

himself in his leisure time, are chiefly mythological groups. A picture of the Demos, the personified People of Athens, is among his most famous of these works. In the fourth century B.C.E. Pausias of Sicyon, who was known for the garlands of flowers that he introduced into his murals, also became famous as a master of paintings in the encaustic technique, mixing his pigments in hot wax and applying the wax with a small spatula. He learned the technique from Pamphilus of Sicyon, who was also the teacher of the great Apelles, the favorite painter of Alexander the Great. With Apelles, Greek painting evidently reached its height in the late fourth century B.C.E. One painting of his was particularly famous: it showed the birth of the goddess Aphrodite, rising from the foam of the sea. A similar painting discovered on the wall of a house in Pompeii may have been an attempt to copy Apelles' masterpiece, or at the very least had its inspiration in Apelles' work. Unfortunately, the journeyman wall painter who made the mural did not do a good job.

**MACEDONIAN TOMBS.** The masterpieces of Greek painting are lost, though sometimes archaeologists un-

cover bits of evidence that intrigue the imagination. Macedon, an ancient country in northern Greece, has yielded a number of underground tombs from the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. at various sites, the most famous of which are the royal tombs at Vergina, the ancient capital of Macedon. There a tomb has been identified, rightly or wrongly, as the burial place of Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great. In one, dating probably to the third century B.C.E. garlands and floral designs are reminiscent of the work of Pausias. Pausias' own works are lost but his influence may be reflected in these tombs.

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## ROMAN PAINTING

**THE DESTRUCTION OF POMPEII.** On 24 August 79 C.E., the volcano of Mt. Vesuvius, which was thought to be extinct, reawakened and blew up, spewing a mushroom-shaped cloud into the air to the amazement and terror of the onlookers. The eruption would claim the life of Pliny the Elder who is one of the major sources for information about Greek and Roman art. When the eruption was over, the cities of Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae, and Oplontis had been sealed in ash and lava. Pompeii and Stabiae were covered in easily removable ash and pumice, but Herculaneum, directly beneath the volcano, was covered with mud and lava that hardened as it cooled, making it impossible to remove without pick-axes and pneumatic drills. While the eruption was a terrible tragedy in the ancient world, it was a boon for modern art historians, for the lava preserved the wall decorations of the houses and the mosaics on their floors for modern excavators to discover. While wall-paintings from other sites are only isolated finds, the art from Pompeii and Herculaneum show the changes in Roman taste over three centuries. Even

though Pompeii, a town of some twenty thousand inhabitants, was already past the peak of its prosperity when it was buried under the ash from Mt. Vesuvius, and so did not attract the Roman Empire's best painters, its houses present a vivid record of changing fashions. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the German scholar August Mau divided the wall paintings of Pompeii into four styles: first, second, third, and fourth, in chronological order. Fourth style was in vogue when the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius abruptly ended the life of the little city.

**FIRST STYLE.** First Style tried to produce in painted stucco the appearance of a wall covered with panels of marble or with blocks of masonry, for which reason it is also sometimes called "Masonry Style." The largest house in Pompeii, the House of the Dancing Faun, which was built in the second century B.C.E., had first-style wall decoration: plaster that faked marble panels, all painted a bright red. Herculaneum has a well-preserved example of this style in a house built in the late second century B.C.E.: the so-called "Samnite House." The plaster is shaped into panels which were painted using the *al fresco* technique in which the pigment is applied to the plaster while it is still damp. The inspiration for the style is the marble-paneled walls in the Hellenistic palaces and public buildings in royal capitals such as Alexandria and Antioch. First Style counterfeits the marble panels in plaster, and since the painter had more colors at his command than did the marble-cutter, the effect of First Style could be more garish than the real thing, an example of which can still be seen in the Pantheon in Rome where the marble panels on the wall are still in place.

**SECOND STYLE.** Second Style came into fashion after 80 B.C.E. though it never pushed First Style completely aside. Second-style painting was illusionist, meaning it tried to create the illusion that the spectator was looking beyond the confines of the wall to a world outside it of gardens and fantastic architecture. One splendid example was found in the villa of Livia, the wife of the emperor Augustus, at Prima Porta just north of Rome. There a vaulted, partly underground room was painted on all sides with a panorama of a garden, complete with trees bearing fruit and birds. With this illusion the walls of the room no longer confine the space. The artist suggests depth to his painting by a kind of atmospheric perspective: the trees and plants in the foreground are painted precisely but as objects recede into the distance, they become increasingly blurred. If the artist working in Second Style wanted to open up the wall and show landscapes beyond it receding into the distance, he had to use perspective to give depth to his

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***VITRUVIUS ON CONTEMPORARY ROMAN WALL PAINTING**

**INTRODUCTION:** Vitruvius, who wrote a treatise of ten books on architecture in the latter part of the reign of the emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) has some derogatory remarks to make about the wall-painting fashion of his own day, which, from his description, was Third Style. In the passage quoted below, he begins with a reference to First Style or “Masonry Style,” and then progresses to Second Style, which, as he reports, took some of its inspiration from the scenery in theatrical productions. He approves of paintings taken from mythology, and many examples of these have been found in Pompeii. Two of the best examples, however, come not from Pompeii but from a house excavated on the Esquiline Hill, one of the Seven Hills of Rome. It shows landscape scenes taken from Homer’s *Odyssey*, copied, like most such wall paintings, from lost masterpieces. The originals of the wall paintings from the Esquiline would have dated to about 150 B.C.E. Note that Vitruvius, whose language was Latin, refers to Odysseus by his Latin name, “Ulysses.”

The ancients, who introduced well-finished wall surfaces, began by representing different varieties of marble slabs in different positions, and then cornices and blocks of yellow ochre arranged in various ways. Afterwards they made such progress as to represent the forms of buildings, and of columns, and projecting and overhanging pediments; in their open rooms, such as *exedrae*, (rooms or outdoor conversation areas) on account of their size, they depicted the façades of scenes in the tragic, comic, and satyric style; and their walks, on account of the great

length, they decorated with various landscapes, copying the characteristics of particular locations. In these paintings, they show harbors, promontories, seashores, rivers, fountains, straits, temples, groves of trees, mountains, flocks and shepherds. In some places there are also pictures designed in the grand style, with representations of gods or episodes from myths portrayed in detail, or the battles at Troy, or the wanderings of Ulysses, with landscape backgrounds, and other subjects reproduced on similar principles from real life.

But those subjects which were copied from real life that exists around us are scorned in these modern days of bad taste. We have now fresco paintings of monstrosities rather than truthful paintings of tangible things. For instance, reeds are put in the place of columns, fluted accessories with curled leaves and volutes instead of pediments, candelabra supporting representations of shrines, and on top of their pediments numerous tender stalks and volutes growing up from the roots and having human figures seated on them without rhyme nor reason. Sometimes there are stalks with only half-length figures, some have human heads, others the heads of animals.

Such things do not exist and cannot exist, and never have existed. Thus this is the new taste that has caused bad judges of substandard art to prevail over true artistic excellence.

**SOURCE:** Vitruvius, “The Decadence of Fresco Painting,” in *The Ten Books of Architecture*. Trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (New York: Dover, 1969): 210–211. Text modified by James Allan Evans.

painting. Greek scenery designers for the theater had been the first to use perspective in the first half of the fifth century B.C.E., and its general rules were well known. A fine example of Second Style was found in the villa of Publius Fannius Synistor, otherwise unknown, at Boscoreale near Pompeii which dates to the middle of the first century B.C.E. The frescoes were removed from the walls and taken to the Metropolitan Museum in New York shortly after the villa was discovered, and they are part of a reconstructed *cubiculum*, or Roman bedroom, there. The wall paintings create the illusion that the onlooker can walk through the bedroom walls into a cityscape with porticoes, arches, and temples; one view shows a charming *tempietto*, a small, round shrine which seems to be set in a courtyard surrounded by porticos. Roman taste changed a few years after the villa of Publius Fannius Synistor, as evidenced

by the construction of another villa belonging to Agrippa Postumus which was decorated in Third Style about 10 B.C.E.

**THE ELEGANT THIRD STYLE.** As the landscapes of Second Style went out of fashion, they were replaced by mural designs that emphasized the wall instead of dissolving it into a vista beyond. The artist painted his wall in a solid, dark color such as black, and instead of the architectural elements of Second Style, he framed his space with thin, spidery columns holding up insubstantial canopies—architectural forms that never existed in real life. In the middle of his space he composed a picture enclosed within a frame, like a painting hanging on a wall. Or he sometimes substituted a motif borrowed from Egyptian art. Third Style was elegant and exquisite, but it was also oppressive.

**FOURTH STYLE.** Illusionism returned with the Fourth Style, which became popular in Pompeii about 62 C.E., when Pompeii was shaken by an earthquake and houses needing their damaged wall paintings restored no doubt opted for the latest style. The emperor Nero, who was building his *Domus Aurea* (Golden House) in the heart of Rome following the devastation of a great fire that broke out in the summer of 64 C.E., used Fourth Style to decorate the rooms of his extravagant new villa. Walls were painted a creamy white with landscapes appearing as framed pictures in the center of a large subdivision of the white wall. There are also architectural vistas, but they are dream cityscapes: columned facades, sometimes fragments of buildings, none of them belonging to the world of reality. The painters of these architectural follies may have been influenced by the painted scenery that they saw in contemporary theater. Some of the framed paintings show scenes from mythology: one, from Pompeii, now in the Naples Museum, shows Aeneas, wounded in one leg, being tended by Iapyx, master of the healing art, while Venus appears in the background, bringing with her a medicinal herb. The scene comes from the final book of Vergil's epic, the *Aeneid*, and it is evidence that the Romans had illustrated books containing such pictures. The *codex*, or bound book, would not appear until the second century C.E., but the picture of the wounded Aeneas from Pompeii is the sort of illustration that might have been found on a parchment scroll containing the last book of the *Aeneid*.

**THE AFTERMATH.** Campania, the region of Italy around Naples which includes the cities destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, has no examples of wall paintings after 79 C.E. The murals after that date which have survived come from Rome or the imperial provinces, and they show less taste for fantastic ornamentation and an increase in simpler, more realistic designs, done on white, red, or yellow backgrounds. In the Roman province of Britain, a town house of the second century C.E. found at Verulamium (modern St. Albans) yields evidence of a mural with painted panels with two candelabra on a red background, and in the center, a blue dove on a perch. On the ceiling, there were ears of wheat painted in a lattice-work design on a purple background. The third century C.E. had a penchant for scenes on a large scale, most of them illustrations of ancient myths. The third century was a period when the Roman Empire seemed on the verge of disintegration, and yet it was also a time when there were new departures in artistic taste. In the eastern provinces, the retreat from naturalism that we find in medieval art, where two-dimensional figures stare directly at the viewer, was already underway.

**DURA-EUROPOS: A POMPEII OF THE THIRD CENTURY C.E.** In 256 C.E., a Roman garrison town on the Euphrates River in modern Iraq, called Europos by the Greeks and Dura by the Romans, fell to the Persians. The eastern frontier of the Roman Empire had become a dangerous place, for the Persians under a new dynasty, the Sassanids, had overthrown Rome's old foe, the Parthian Empire, in 224 C.E. They were more aggressive than the Parthians had ever been for they dreamed of restoring the Old Persian Empire that Alexander the Great had overthrown. Dura-Europos was discovered during World War I, and in 1931 excavations got underway under the auspices of Yale University. The wall paintings that were found made art historians rethink their notions about the retreat from naturalism in the late Roman Empire that had hitherto been associated with the rise of Christianity. There was a Jewish synagogue with scenes from the Old Testament, dating to about 200 C.E. These came as a surprise, for Judaism took the Second Commandment banning "graven images" very seriously, as did early Christianity, but by the start of the third century C.E., the veto for both religions had broken down. There was a Christian "house church," built about 240 C.E., for before Christianity became a legal religion, Christian congregations met in ordinary houses which were adapted for worship; we know that there were at least forty such "house churches" in Rome by 258 C.E. At one end of the baptistery room in the Dura "house church," set in a vaulted niche, there was a font shaped like a sarcophagus, and on the back wall of the niche was a painting showing Christ as the Good Shepherd, carrying a sheep on his shoulders, and beside him, Adam and Eve. This was clearly an example of wall painting as a mode of instruction: Adam and Eve represented the old Adam who sinned, and Christ, the new Adam, redeemed the victims of original sin. The synagogue paintings were also art serving to instruct, and since they date before the "house church" was built, the Christians probably borrowed the idea of using art for religious education from the Jews. One synagogue painting shows the prophet Samuel anointing David as the future king of Israel while his six older brothers look on. Samuel towers over David and his brothers who are all the same height, though David's status is marked by the purple toga that he wears like a Roman emperor. The figures face the onlooker, fixing him with an intense gaze, and they seem to float in air. This frontality and weightlessness is even more pronounced in the sacrificial scenes that were painted and carved in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods in Dura. By contrast, the art in the Christian baptistery has not quite abandoned the classical tradition. The "Christ the Good Shepherd"



Greek chapel of the catacomb of Priscilla, an example of early Christian art in Rome, Italy, c. 230–240 C.E. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

figure recalls a classical type; among the archaic sculpture found on the Athenian Acropolis there is an example, the dedication of Rhombos showing a man carrying a lamb on his shoulders. The Dura finds make it clear that the features associated with early medieval art—two-dimensional, weightless figures in frontal poses—developed independently of Christianity, and that their inspiration came from the Middle East.

**EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.** Apart from the “house church” at Dura-Europos, examples of early Christian art come from the catacombs: underground cemeteries hewn from the rock-like tunnels for mines. The catacombs were not solely Christian—the Jewish catacombs in Rome antedate the Christian ones—nor are they only in Rome: there are also catacombs in Naples, Syracuse in Sicily, and Alexandria. Christians, like Jews, did not cremate their dead, which was the prevailing custom in the pagan world until the later second century C.E., and the catacombs provided burial places that a Christian of modest means could afford. Most of the catacomb burials are later than 313 C.E. when Christianity was made legal by the so-called “Edict of Milan,” and so the old romantic notion of persecuted Christian believers gathering secretly for worship in the

catacombs must be abandoned. The dead were placed in niches (*loculi*) stacked one above the other like shelves lining the underground galleries, and in various places small rooms (*cubicula*) cut out of the rock served as funerary chapels. The paintings in the *loculi* and particularly in the *cubicula* are our earliest examples of Christian art. The style is similar to contemporary pagan art, though there is a charming naivete about the pictures. They are narrative art but they have an educational purpose: they give instruction in the Christian faith. Christ is usually shown either as a teacher or as the Good Shepherd, caring for his flock of sheep. In the early drawings he is depicted as a young man and beardless; he might pass for a young pagan god. The figure of Christ as a mature man with a full beard developed only later in Constantinople in the fifth century, and perhaps it reflects the impression made by Phidias’ great gold-and-ivory statue of Zeus at Olympia when it was taken to Constantinople after the temple was closed by imperial decree in 391. The catacomb paintings were executed by journeymen painters who worked quickly in poor light, surrounded by decaying corpses, and they are not great art. They borrow heavily from the classical tradition. Yet their general aim was instruction in Christian piety, and though occasionally figures from classical mythology appear if they can be linked in some way with Christian teaching, the subjects are usually stories that convey a message from the Old and New Testaments.

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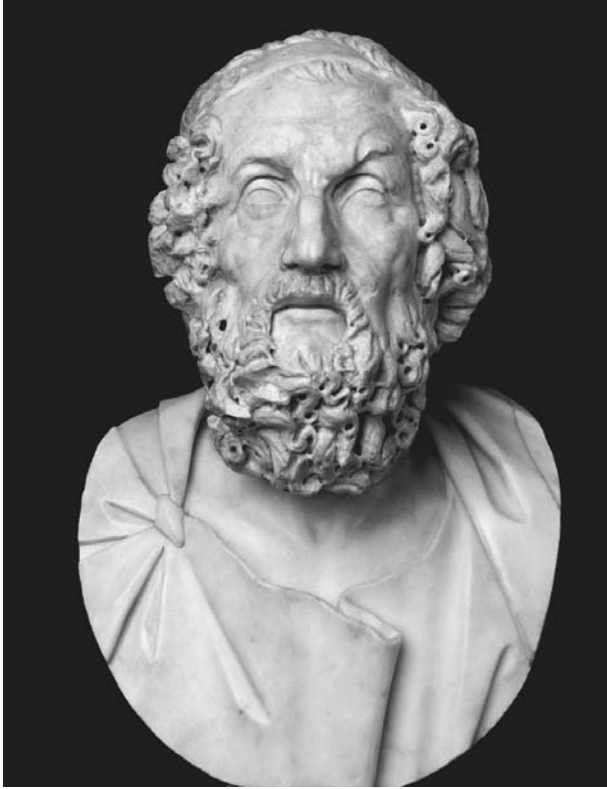
## PORTRAITS

**IDEALISM AND REALISM.** In modern society, photographic equipment makes it easy to capture images of one's self and one's family in portraits, and the ease with which such pictures can be created tends to devalue their significance. The absence of such technology in the Greek and Roman world, however, made the creation of portraits a very important and significant act that was generally done for a motive beyond the capturing of an image. In the sixth century B.C.E., victorious athletes in Greece were commemorated with portrait statues which presented an idealized picture of vigorous youth, though there was a degree of realism as well. Idealism was the hallmark of Greek portraiture because the motive of the portrait artist was not to portray an exact likeness—warts and all—but rather an impression of a real individual as an exemplar of vigor, intellectual power, or heroic virtue or the like. This motivation did not quite hold true for the Romans, however, as portraiture had a practical purpose. A Roman kept *imagines*—images usually of wax—in the atrium or living room of his house as the visible record of his ancestors and of his own social status. They were exact likenesses, and they set the standard for Roman portraiture. Early Roman portraiture can be realistic to the point of homeliness. However, once Rome was ruled by emperors, from the time of Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) onwards, imperial portraiture was used to convey a message of power. Yet the Roman portrait, whether of an emperor or an ordinary citizen, always portrayed an individual with a distinctive appearance, and this taste for realism survived even into the early Byzantine period.

**PORTRAITURE IN CLASSICAL GREECE.** A bust of the Athenian statesman Pericles, the architect of the Athenian Empire, has survived in a Roman copy. The original was a bronze statue by the sculptor Cresilas, erected in Athens after Pericles' death in 429 B.C.E. The

date is important, for there was a prejudice against portraits of living men. The great Phidias who made the gold-and-ivory statue of Athena Parthenos for the Parthenon, smuggled a likeness of Pericles into his design for the shield of Athena and was apparently driven into exile for it. While the original is lost, the marble bust is a good copy and shows an idealized Pericles. Any blemishes he may have had were removed and the helmet he always wore hid his peaked skull. The helmet also marked him as a general, for during his years of power he was elected year after year to the influential Board of Ten Generals. Without the helmet, this portrait of Pericles would pass for the image of a god. Portraits in fifth-century Greece were intended to flatter, although this was not the case in the following century. No original portrait from the fourth century B.C.E. survived, but to judge from Roman copies representing Plato, it seems that the aim of the sculptor was to portray him not so much as an individual as a typical philosopher. Pliny the Elder reported that the Sicyonian school of sculpture experimented with realism and that Lysistratus, the brother of the famous Lysippus of Sicyon, made a likeness from an actual face. Lysistratus was probably the first artist to ask his subject to sit for his portrait so he could sculpt what he saw, whether it was flattering or not. Pliny's evidence has been disbelieved by some art historians, but there is evidence of a greater taste for individualism in portrait sculpture in the Hellenistic world, though it is far from the uncompromising realism found in Egypt and later in Rome.

**PORTRAITURE IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD.** In the Hellenistic world after Alexander the Great's death in 323 B.C.E., there were two rival traditions in portraiture. One carried on the classical tradition. Like Cresilas's portrait of Pericles, it sought to idealize. Alexander the Great's portraits are a case in point. Alexander had his favorite artists: Lysippus for sculpture, Apelles for painting, and the gem cutter Pyrgoteles for his seal engravings. It is likely that the many sculptures depicting Alexander take their inspiration from portraits that he himself approved. They show Alexander with his head bent slightly to the left, directing his gaze above the spectator as if he were looking into the distance, or perhaps a distant future, and they emphasize Alexander's physical beauty and youth. The portrait is of an individual, but in 324 B.C.E. Alexander demanded that the city-states recognize him officially as a god, and his portraits have a god-like quality about them. About 280 B.C.E. a statue in Athens by the sculptor Polyectus of the orator Demosthenes made no effort to idealize Demosthenes, and art historians have pointed to it as a landmark in the development of realistic portraiture. This asser-



Bust of Homer, showing balding head, full beard and beetling brows which were typical of his portraits. © ARALDO DE LUCA/CORBIS.

tion must be tempered, however, with the reality that the statue was made some forty years after Demosthenes' death by an artist who probably never saw Demosthenes in his lifetime. Even so, he showed Demosthenes as he should have looked, not as he did. The statue of Demosthenes has the body of an old man, slightly stooped, and he clasps his hands nervously in front of him; his face is lined and his expression is sober, almost melancholy, as if he was apprehensive of the future, reflecting, perhaps, Athens' approaching defeat by Macedon.

**PORTRAITS OF THE IMAGINATION.** While it cannot be determined how true to life the portrait of Demosthenes is, it is reasonably certain that portraits were produced in this period which were not true to life at all; they portray real individuals, but they are purely imaginary. This is a period in the history of portrait art when sculptors produced "portraits" of authors who were long-since dead, which could be set up in libraries. Homer's portrait is a case in point. No one knew what Homer actually looked like, but the portrait sculptor started with some preconceived notions: Homer was a dignified old man of genius, and he was blind. The finished portrait fits the conception. Yet what was remark-

able about it is its individualism. This portrait was not simply the portrayal of a poet-type; it depicts an individual, and copies of it are immediately recognizable. Homer's hairline is receding and he wears a fillet or headband which partly disguises it. The lines on his forehead suggest great intellectual power. He wears a full beard, denoting maturity, and his eyes are arresting under his beetling brows. This portrait was an imaginative creation, but it was one that the Greeks could accept as a representation of what Homer actually looked like.

**ROMAN PORTRAITURE.** Romans kept *imagines* (portraits) of their distinguished ancestors in the main rooms of their houses. They were usually made of wax from death-masks of the departed ancestor, and when a Roman died, these *imagines* were carried in the funeral procession so that a Roman was buried in the presence of his ancestors. His genealogy was put on public display, and the longer it was, the better it was for his social and political standing. If any such *imagines* existed in the houses buried by the ash and lava from Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E. they were unfortunately melted by the heat. A fourth-style wall painting from a Pompeian house has yielded a wedding portrait, however. It shows a man and a woman, the man holding a scroll and the woman a stylus and a writing tablet known as a *pugillaris*, two small thin wooden boards hinged at one side so that they could be folded over and their inner surfaces covered with a layer of wax on which a message could be written. The scroll, stylus, and *pugillaris* are all stage setting; they are intended to portray the man and wife as an educated couple who read books and wrote letters. The faces of the man and woman are photographic likenesses, done with such startling realism that we could recognize them if we met them on the street. The man transfixes us with his gaze; the woman gazes off to one side with a look of infinite sadness. There must have been many portraits like this in the Roman Empire. From the second and first centuries B.C.E. a number of Roman portraits depict their subjects with uncompromising realism. The wrinkles and other blemishes that come with advancing age are clearly marks of honor. This attitude towards portrait art owes little to Greece. Rather it draws its inspiration from the *imagines* of the ancestors, which Romans kept in their houses. This realistic tradition continued into the first century C.E. and, in fact, never died. Yet by the mid-first century C.E., the completely uncompromising realism of the earlier age was no longer in fashion. Many Romans no longer displayed masks of their ancestors in the atriums. The historian Pliny the Elder makes a grumpy complaint in his *Natural History* about the new custom of decorating rooms with pictures of athletes

from the gymnasium or the arena rather than family portraits. An imposing array of family portraits went along with lengthy genealogies, and the demographic changes in the Roman Empire from the first century C.E. onwards resulted in persons with very short genealogies rising to power and wealth. The portrait artist could pick and choose from the styles of the past, and eclecticism was the vogue.

**THE IMPERIAL PORTRAITS OF AUGUSTUS.** The emperor Augustus (r. 27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), who restored peace to Italy after a half-century of civil war and political turmoil, was very conscious of the fact that his reign was a new beginning for the Roman Empire. His portraits reflected this new era by seeking inspiration in classical Greece, the age before the Hellenistic monarchies, when the city-states (Sparta excepted) were little republics. He adapted the art of classical Greece to Roman uses. One famous statue of Augustus that was found at the villa of his wife Livia at Prima Porta just north of Rome shows him in full armor, with one arm raised in the gesture of an army commander addressing his troops. The body beneath the armor conforms to the *Canon* of Polyclitus which outlined proportions for sculpture in the classical period. Augustus, who in real life did not have an impressive physique, had his statue conform to the proportions of Polyclitus' *Diadoumenos*, a muscular youth adjusting his headband. The face of the Prima Porta statue is easily recognized because it has the high cheekbones and hairstyle of Augustus. Augustus was shown in two other ways as well. He was portrayed as a priest, wearing a toga with a cowl, for Roman priests covered their heads when they sacrificed to the gods. He was also shown as a youth: a young man who was leading in a new age. Augustus' portraits never aged, nor did those of his wife, Livia, though her hairstyles changed with the fashion. Like the famous portrait of Pericles by Cresilas, the portraits of Augustus showed him as no ordinary man.

**CHANGING FASHIONS.** Portrait styles changed in 69 C.E. with the ascension of Vespasian as the new emperor. He had none of the aristocratic background of the previous dynasty, the Julio-Claudian family that became extinct with the suicide of the emperor Nero in 68 C.E., and though he was sensitive about the peasant origins of his family, known as the Flavians, he was wise enough to know that he should make a clean break with the Julio-Claudians. His portraits therefore returned to the realist tradition of Roman republican portraiture. They show him with receding hairline and the leathery skin of an old soldier who knows what life in the military camps is like. His portraits were numerous; this was a

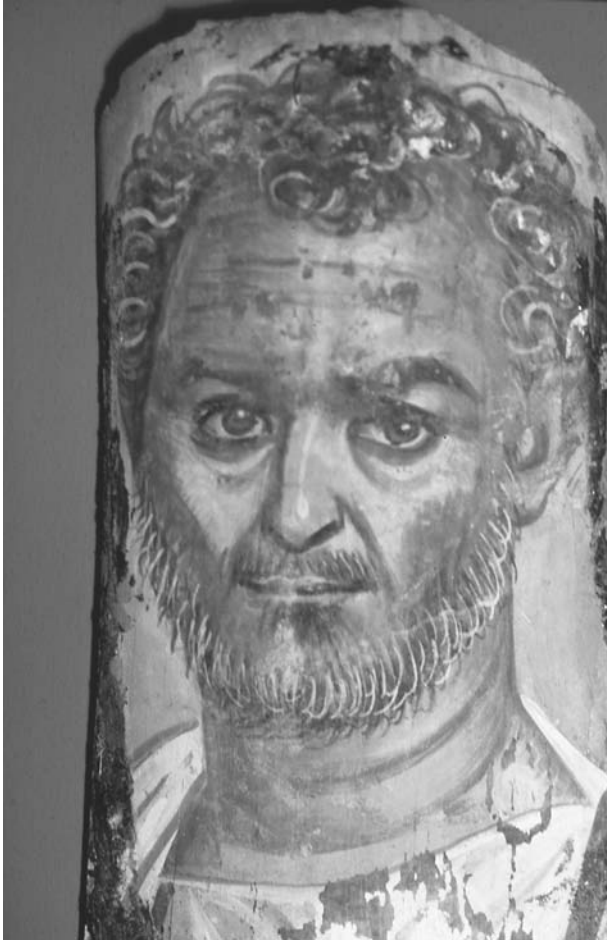


Bust of Roman woman with hairstyle typical of the Flavian period (69–96 C.E.). THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO DELLA CIVILTA ROMANA ROME/DAGLI ORTI.

great age of portraiture when people of all ages, not just old men, had portrait sculptures made. One marble bust of a woman of the Flavian period, which is now in the Capitoline Museum in Rome, should be noted as an example of Flavian style, even if it is not an imperial portrait. The face and the long neck are modelled softly, and the sculptor managed to portray the texture of the skin by the polish of the marble. The woman's coiffure is a mass of tight curls piled up above her forehead. The sculptor used a drill rather than a chisel to sculpt the curls, a trend that became more common as sculptors used the drill more and more, particularly for hair and beards. The surprising element of this particular bust is that the coiffure is, in fact, a wig. It can be lifted off the bust and replaced by another. In an age when hairstyles changed, this was an efficient way of keeping the bust up to date.

**IMPERIAL PORTRAITURE IN TROUBLED TIMES.** With the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 C.E.) the long period of peace that the empire had enjoyed came abruptly to an end. There were grim times ahead, and imperial portraiture conveyed a new message of suffering and sadness. A relief sculpture of Marcus Aurelius





A mummy portrait from the Fayum province, Egypt, c. 200 C.E. Portraits of this type were placed over the face of the mummy. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

that once adorned a lost imperial arch shows him bearded after the style of the emperor Hadrian (r. 117–138 C.E.) who had worn a beard to hide scars on his face. Marcus' face is that of a care-worn man. His eyes are incised rather than merely painted, creating a melancholy effect that no doubt was a window to his soul. The sense of sadness is even greater in the portrait of a short-lived emperor, Decius (r. 249–251 C.E.), in the Capitoline Museum in Rome. He is balding and what is left of his hair is clipped short. The sculptor made no effort to flatter. His gaze is fixed upwards, as if he hoped for help from above. If so, the help failed to arrive, for Decius died in a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Goths. After 268 C.E., when the empire began to revive under a succession of emperors from Illyria (modern Croatia and Serbia), first Claudius Gothicus (r. 268–270 C.E.) and then Aurelian (r. 270–275 C.E.), the emperors are shown as men of action with several days' growth of beard. Re-

alism increased to the point of brutality. The emperors are shown as tough and effective rather than handsome.

**THE LOSS OF INDIVIDUALITY.** A great political change occurred at the end of the third century C.E. In 284 C.E. a soldier from Illyria named Diocles was elected emperor by the Roman army. He immediately changed his name to Diocletian and chose a colleague, a fellow soldier named Maximian, to share the imperial office. A few years later, he chose two more junior colleagues, naming them "Caesars." So the empire was ruled by a committee of emperors, two bearing the title "Augustus" with one of them, Diocletian, senior to the other, and two with the title of "Caesar." This tetrarchy (the rule of four men) lasted until 305 C.E., when Diocletian retired and persuaded his colleague, Maximian, to retire as well. At San Marco Cathedral in Venice there is a remarkable group portrait of the tetrarchs that captures the spirit of the new age. It is made of porphyry, a hard reddish granite from Egypt which, because of its dark crimson color, was considered particularly fitting for representing emperors. The tetrarchs are each shown embracing another with one arm; with the other arm each grasps his sword. They have larger, cubical heads on squat, shapeless bodies. This sculpture group represents the tetrarchy as an office rather than a group of individuals. The sculptural form is less important than the message it conveys. The same spirit, too, informs a colossal portrait of the first Christian emperor, Constantine, who united the Roman Empire under his rule in 323 C.E. and founded a new capital, Constantinople, the next year. The portrait, which is in Rome in the *Palazzo dei Conservatori*, is over two and a half meters (8.2 feet) tall, and it is what remains of a seated statue, over nine meters (30 feet) in height, that has a core of brick, a wooden torso covered with bronze, and head and limbs of marble. The face is a mask. Enormous eyes are set into the broad planes of the face. The eyes stare beyond the onlooker as if their gaze is fixed on Heaven where resides the ultimate authority. This is an image of power and Christian faith, and the message that it conveys almost overwhelms the human individualism of the portrait.

**PAINTED PORTRAITS.** Few of the imperial portraits survived to modern times, except for marble sculptures. While portraits were also painted on wood in hot, colored wax, only one such rendering exists today: a portrait of the family of the emperor Septimius Severus (193–211 C.E.). These wooden portraits were sent to the far corners of the empire and set up in public places when a new emperor ascended the throne. The best examples of portraits come from Roman Egypt. They are mummy portraits painted on wooden panels and placed

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***WOMEN PAINTERS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Two wall-paintings from Pompeii show women artists at work. One shows a woman painting a statue, the other a woman seated at her easel. Most of the ancient painters, men as well as women, are only names to us, and they would not have been known at all except that Pliny the Elder mentions them in his *Natural History*. Pliny garnered his information from earlier sources, and in one of these sources, Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 B.C.E.), he found a reference to a woman who worked as a portrait painter in Rome, sometimes painting with a brush and sometimes using the encaustic technique. Her name was Iaia, and she came from Cyzicus in north-west Asia Minor. Pliny compares her to Sopolis and Dionysius. We know nothing

of Sopolis; Dionysius was a portrait artist who painted only men.

Iaia, who came from Cyzicus and remained unmarried all her life, worked at Rome when Varro was a young man and she painted portraits on ivory, of women mostly, sometimes using a brush and sometimes a spatula (for applying molten colored wax). She painted a large picture of an old woman which is at Naples, and also she painted a portrait of herself using a mirror. No artist worked more swiftly than she; yet the excellence of her art was such that her paintings sold for far more than those of the most celebrated artists of her day, Sopolis and Dionysius, whose works fill our art galleries.

**SOURCE:** Pliny, *Natural History*. Book 35. Chapter 147. Translated by James Allan Evans.

over the face of the corpse that is then wrapped in long bands of white linen. The portrait painters used the encaustic technique, mixing their pigments with hot wax and then applying them to the smooth surface of the wooden panel. The dry climate of Egypt has preserved the wood and the colors have not faded. The faces show the man or woman in the prime of life. They were probably painted some years before the time of death. There are no side-views or three-quarters views; the pose is always frontal, and the eyes transfix the viewer with a sober, almost melancholy gaze, conveying a sense of spirituality. Their eyes are windows to their souls. Hundreds of these portraits have been found in the Fayum province of Egypt west of the Nile River, and they date mostly from the second and third centuries C.E. They show how portrait painting developed in the Roman Empire in the years following the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E. It is interesting to compare them with imperial portraits of the same period. The medium is different and these portraits from the Fayum portray ordinary people, not emperors. Yet one can detect a similarity in spirit. Both suggest that the everyday life with its troubles and turmoil is not all there is to life.

**FORERUNNERS OF THE ART OF ILLUMINATION.**

The troubled third century produced another type of portrait: miniatures on glass set against a gold-leaf background. One exquisite example has survived which bears the signature of the artist: Boumeris. He is otherwise unknown. His portrait group shows a mother and two children, a girl and a boy, painted on a glass roundel (a round object) four inches (10.16 centimeters) in diameter. The portrait, dating to about 230 C.E., shows the

mother and her children full-face and unsmiling. Another example, which is unsigned, shows a man painted in a roundel 2.7 inches (6.86 centimeters) in diameter. This is exquisite work, and only the well-to-do could afford portraits such as this one. They are, however, forerunners of the art of illuminating texts and paintings printed on vellum which is one of the glories of art in the Middle Ages.

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## MOSAICS

**BEGINNINGS.** The beginnings of Greek mosaic art occurred before the middle of the fourth century B.C.E., and all the early examples are pebble mosaics, in which pebbles of different colors are laid in mortar. In Olynthus, a Greek city on the northern coast of the Aegean Sea, there are some fine pebble mosaics in the dining rooms of private houses which were built in the last quarter of the fifth century B.C.E., though the mosaics may not have been laid at the time of construction. However, in 348 B.C.E., King Philip II of Macedon destroyed Olynthus, so the mosaics cannot be dated later than that. They show scenes taken from mythology; one scene shows Dionysus, the god of wine, riding a chariot pulled by leopards and surrounded by a following of maenads and satyrs. The pebbles used are white and black. White figures are shown against a black background, and art historians have pointed out the similarity to red-figure vase painting in which the figures are red against a black background. From these beginnings, the technique developed rapidly.

**THE PELLA MOSAICS.** Pella, the capital of Macedon which was rebuilt on a grand scale by Alexander the Great's father, Philip, has yielded mosaics that mark the high development of pebble mosaic. In addition to black-and-white patterns, there are now mosaics using colored pebbles, though the range of colors is still limited. The basic pattern of white figures against a dark background remains unchanged, but details are modeled using small pebbles that are packed tightly together, while fine strips of terracotta and lead mark the contour lines with the figures, and there is skillful use of colored pebbles. One mosaic from Pella shows a lion hunt with white pebbles for the body of the lion, grey and pale blue to set off muscles and shadows, brown and yellow for the hair, and strips of lead or terracotta to mark the contour lines. Another mosaic from Pella shows two young hunters, both wearing the cloak known as the *chlamys* but otherwise naked, hunting a stag. The mosaic craftsman used different shades of pebbles for the bodies of the two hunters, and for their hair he used yellow pebbles. The tongue of the stag is shown in red. The craftsman's skill is extraordinary.

**TESSELLATED MOSAICS.** The art of the mosaic did not come into its own until mosaicists began to use bits of marble and stone cut, more or less, into cubes and fitted closely together in a bed of mortar. These small pieces of marble or colored stone were called *tesseras*, and the mosaics made from them were called *opus tessellatum*. Tesseras had a range of colors which pebbles lacked,

and if they were cut into tiny pieces and set together closely enough, the mosaic could give the impression of a painting. This new technique sometimes went by the Latin name of *opus vermiculatum*, and probably began in Alexandria, the capital of the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt, but it was embraced enthusiastically by the kingdom of Pergamum. It was the fashion to use *opus vermiculatum* to make what were called *emblemata* (singular: *emblema*)—panels imitating paintings—which the mosaicist could make in his workshop and then insert into the floor of a room, in its center, and surround it with coarser mosaic work. Mosaic artists were not so much creative artists, however, as they were humble craftsmen who executed designs given to them, and ancient literature mentions the name of only one of them: Sosus, who worked at Pergamum. He was known for a famous mosaic that was often imitated. It portrayed a floor with the appearance of being littered with the leavings of a banquet that the banqueters have thrown on it. The central panel, or *emblema*, shows doves sitting on a bowl, drinking from it and preening themselves. The motif was often repeated, with modifications. There are examples of the motif from Pompeii and Herculaneum, and there is a particularly fine example from the emperor Hadrian's villa at Tivoli outside Rome, which is so well done with tiny tesseras that art historians have wondered if it could be Sosus' original. Though ancient literature mentions only one great mosaic artist, some of the mosaics themselves bear signatures. Someone called Gnosis, for instance, signed the pebble mosaic of the stag hunt from Pella. The mosaic craftsmen were proud of their art.

**MOSAICS FOR THE MIDDLE CLASSES.** By the second century B.C.E., mosaic floors were no longer the preserve of princes. They were the decorative flooring of middle-class homes. Evidence for their ubiquity comes from the houses found on the island of Delos in the southern Aegean Sea. For a period between 166 and 69 B.C.E., there was an economic boom on Delos, for Rome had made her a free port, and she rapidly developed as a trading center, particularly for the slave trade. The private houses found there belonged to traders and merchants who settled there during the boom. Mosaics are to be found in every room of these houses, not just in the dining room. This was the sort of mosaic art which the Romans encountered when they came to Greece. In fact, among the merchants living on Delos were a group from Italy, and some of the houses there with elegant mosaics may have belonged to them. When archaeologists excavated Pompeii and Herculaneum, cities buried



Mosaic from the House of the Faun in Pompeii, showing the Battle of Issus between Alexander the Great and Darius III of Persia. Copied from a Hellenistic painting by an unknown artist probably of the third century B.C.E. THE ART ARCHIVE/ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM NAPLES/DAGLI ORTI.

by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E., it is not surprising that they found a rich collection of mosaics.

**THE MOSAICS OF POMPEII.** The House of the Dancing Faun, so called because of a dancing faun in the middle of its atrium or main room, is the largest house in Pompeii, taking up a whole city block. When it was excavated in 1831, it turned out to be a treasure trove of mosaics. Mosaic subjects include a lion, three doves pulling a necklace from a casket that was an adaptation of Sosus' famous mosaic, and a cat attacking a hen. On the floor of a room off the atrium is one of the greatest mosaics to survive. It reproduces a painting of the Battle of Issus where Alexander the Great met the king of Persia, Darius III, for the first time and defeated him. The painting that the mosaicist copied must have been famous, and art historians have made various guesses as to what it was and who executed it. A painter named Philoxenus of Eretria is known to have painted

a "Battle of Issus," and so did a female painter, Helena of Egypt. There have been suggestions, too, that the painter was the great Apelles himself. The painting depicts the moment when Darius flees from the battlefield. Alexander charges from the left, thrusting his long lance towards Darius. Darius is masterfully executed; he turns toward Alexander with panic in his face, while his charioteer lashes the horses. In the middle of the picture, the painter has shown a horse from the rear, which a Persian rider is trying to pull out of the way of the deadly Macedonian charge. The original painting was done with the four-color palette favored by fourth-century artists who created their colors by mixing red, yellow, white and black pigments, but the craftsman who made his mosaic did not have that luxury: he had only tiny tesseras of different colors at his disposal and he had to juxtapose them with infinite care to get the right effect. It is estimated that one and a half million tesseras were used to produce this mosaic. It is likely that this mosaic was



Mosaic from a Roman villa found at Piazza Armerina Sicily, c. 300 C.E., showing a chariot race in a Hippodrome. PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR WILLIAMS. © HECTOR WILLIAMS.

not actually made in Pompeii, but was shipped from somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean in several sections and reassembled in Pompeii. It may have been prefabricated for a Roman customer by a mosaic workshop in the Hellenistic east, but more likely it was a mosaic that had already been laid in the east and was lifted and shipped to Italy in sections where it was reassembled. Probably it came to Italy as plunder from the east. A close examination of the mosaic supports this argument, for it is possible to find mistakes made in reassembling it such as incomplete figures. Mosaics were among the works of art that the Roman armies looted when they operated in Greece in the second and first centuries B.C.E., but not all mosaics from the east came to Italy as spoils of war. Some were made for paying customers in Italy. This was probably true of two mosaics found in Pompeii in the so-called House of Menander, showing scenes from the comedies the playwright Menander. Each is signed by Dioscurides from Samos off the southwest coast of Turkey, and each is set in a marble tray so it could be transported easily.

**MOSAICS IN ROMAN ITALY.** The mosaics of Roman Italy from the latter part of the first century to the third favor silhouette designs. There is an example from Pompeii itself, from the “House of the Tragic Poet,” which has a silhouette mosaic in black and white in the vestibule showing a snarling dog straining at his leash, and the words “CAVE CANEM”—“Beware the dog!”. It is, however, in Ostia Antica (“Old Ostia”) that the best black-and-white mosaics are found. Ostia, situated at the mouth of the Tiber River, was an unsatisfactory port, but the emperor Claudius (r. 41–54 C.E.) attempted to improve it and make it possible for grain ships to unload their cargoes there. His harbor works soon silted up, however, and the commercial buildings and baths in Old Ostia were deserted as business moved to a new port built by the emperor Trajan north of the Tiber river mouth. The “Baths of Neptune” in Ostia still have a well-preserved black-and-white mosaic showing Neptune driving his sea-horses across a floor filled with marine creatures. The figures are distributed freely over the floor; the old Hellenistic practice still found at Pompeii of placing a framed picture, or *emblemata*, in the center of



Lateral view of the colonnaded nave of the Church of S. Apollinare Nuovo with its mosaics, procession of female saints bearing offerings visible along left side, Ravenna, Italy, c. 504 C.E. ALINARI-ART REFERENCE/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the floor had been abandoned. Mosaics of this black-and-white style remained popular in Italy until the third century when color crept back in.

**THE ROMAN PROVINCES.** The black silhouette mosaics of the sort found in Ostia were never very popular in the western Roman provinces and they were not at all popular in the Roman East, where the traditions of Hellenistic mosaics were strong. The exception was Greece, which had suffered greatly in the civil wars of the first century B.C.E. The market for mosaics collapsed during this time, and mosaic workshops in Greece went out of business. When the market recovered in the second century C.E., the mosaic artists looked to Italy for their inspiration. Elsewhere, the provinces developed their own traditions. Excavations at Antioch, the capital of Roman Syria (modern Antakya in Turkey), in the 1930s revealed a splendid group of mosaics which were unaffected by styles in Italy. The mosaic artists of Anti-

och loved color; the black-and-white mosaics of Italy had no appeal. Scenes from mythology were still as popular as they were in the Hellenistic period when they were used as *emblemata* framed in the center of mosaic floors. The chief difference is that the *emblemata* became larger, so that they took over much of the floor space, and the framing around them became narrower and less important. Roman Africa also developed its own style. Few mosaics have been found in country villas there, though that may be an accident of archaeology, for not many country villa ruins have been explored in Roman Africa. The town houses, however, have yielded an astonishing array of mosaics. Polychrome mosaics were particularly popular. One favorite pattern was the “floral style,” where vine or ivy tendrils and flowers were arranged in geometric patterns. One fine example from El Djem in Tunisia, belonging to the second half of the third century C.E., shows grapevines growing out of urns in each corner and spreading over the whole floor. In the



Mosaic from the Tomb of Galla Placidia, Ravenna, Italy, dating to about 425 C.E., showing the martyrdom of St. Lawrence who was roasted on a gridiron. MAUSOLEUM OF GALLA PLACIDIA AT RAVENNA, ITALY.

center there is a small picture framed in a hexagon which shows old Silenus, the perpetually intoxicated follower of the wine god, Dionysus, sprawled on a couch, playing with children. Another popular type of mosaic shows scenes distributed freely over the surface of the floor as they were in the Italian black-and-white mosaics. From the mid-second century C.E. an increasing number of scenes were taken from the amphitheater. Such scenes show wild-beast hunts where gladiators armed with spears faced savage beasts like leopards and bears, or criminals being thrown to them to be torn apart in the Roman arena. The expense of producing these duels between gladiators and wild beasts was heavy, and the mosaics sometimes commemorate the generosity of wealthy citizens who paid the bill out of their own pockets.

**THE MOSAICS FROM PIAZZA ARMERINA.** One of the most extensive African-style mosaics was found not in Africa but in central Sicily, at Piazza Armerina. The villa at Piazza Armerina is a vast, sprawling structure which seems to be a great hunting lodge built at the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century C.E.

Some scholars conjecture that it was built for the use of the emperor Maximian, the colleague of Diocletian from 286 to 305 C.E., who retired without enthusiasm when Diocletian did and presumably sought peace and quiet there. The floors are covered with polychrome mosaics in the style of Roman Africa. Experts generally agree that the mosaic craftsmen who made them came from Carthage, on the edge of modern Tunis. Some show the fauna that was fodder for the amphitheaters—including lions, tigers, elephants, and ostriches—being caught and shipped, presumably to Rome, while others depict the amusements in the arenas and the hippodromes. One mosaic shows a chariot race, with the charioteers competing under their colors which indicated their teams: the Reds, Whites, Blues, and Greens. Another mosaic shows scantily-clad girls playing a kind of water polo, for one of the popular spectacles called for the orchestras of theaters to be made water-tight and then filled with water so that girls wearing bikini-type bathing suits could put on a water show.

**WALL MOSAICS.** Sometime about the middle of the first century C.E. Romans began to put mosaics on their walls. The owner of one up-to-date house in Herculaneum, the so-called House of the Neptune and Amphitrite Mosaic, had wall mosaics installed not long before Herculaneum was buried by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. In Pompeii, a house owner used mosaic to decorate a small fountain. Mosaics were particularly suitable for areas that were damp, such as ornamental fountains and public baths, where painted plaster would quickly mildew. Most of the wall mosaics of ancient Rome were destroyed when the buildings they once decorated were ruined, and the best wall mosaics belong to Christian churches. There are splendid examples in Ravenna, the last capital of the Western Roman Empire before the last emperor was dethroned in 476 C.E. The little mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the sister of the incapable emperor Honorius (395–423 C.E.) who provided what imperial rule there was for the Roman Empire in the middle of the fifth century, has its interior walls covered with mosaics. One portrays St. Lawrence approaching the hot griddle where he would suffer martyrdom, his flesh roasted while he was still alive, and another, in the lunette above the entrance, shows a popular Christian design: Christ the Good Shepherd looking after his sheep. Christ sits in a naturalistic landscape that extends to a background beneath a blue sky. The mosaic belongs to the classical artistic tradition, which was still strong at Ravenna when the mausoleum was built about 425 C.E. Yet its days were numbered. As the sixth century began, the Church of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo was being built in Ravenna, and its mosaics belong to world of Byzantine art. A mosaic of the "Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes" shows Christ wearing imperial robes, facing the onlooker, dominating the center of the picture while on either side are two disciples. The background is gold, symbolizing the splendor of Heaven. Henceforth gold became the background of choice for mosaics.

**THE LAST OF THE RAVENNA MOSAICS.** At Ravenna, there are two famous mosaics which mark the transition from the artistic traditions of the classical world to the new world of Byzantine art. In the Church of San Vitale, which was dedicated in 547 C.E., there are mosaics on the walls on either side of the chancel, one of which shows the great emperor Justinian and his entourage about to enter the church for the dedication ceremony; on the other wall is the empress Theodora, the ex-actress whom Justinian married, standing in the courtyard of the Church of San Vitale, surrounded by her attendants. The mosaic dates to 547 or shortly before, and was probably made in Constantinople; the next year, in 548 C.E.,

Theodora died of cancer. The figures are in procession, filing into the church, and they are not shown in profile; instead they face the viewer and gaze at him. Theodora's eyes are particularly arresting. Yet the figures are still to some degree three-dimensional and the portraits of the emperor and empress show them as real individuals. The classical tradition in art is fading but its influence is not yet dead.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Visual Arts*

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### APELLES

c. 370 B.C.E.—Early third century B.C.E.

*Painter*

**GREECE'S GREATEST PAINTER.** Apelles was probably the greatest artist in the Greek world, though all that survives are descriptions of his works. He gained fame as the portrait artist of choice to some of the most powerful men in the ancient world, including Philip of Mace-



don, Alexander the Great, and Ptolemy I in Egypt. He placed great emphasis on precise line drawing, and every day he made a point of practicing it to maintain his skill. He also used a transparent varnish to preserve his paintings. The exact formula of the varnish is not known, but the word that the historian Pliny the Elder used for it was *atramentum* (black lacquer) which indicates that it darkened his colors and probably softened them.

**TRAINING.** Apelles was born either on the island of Cos, or on the Asia Minor mainland at Colophon around 370 B.C.E. He was thus an Ionian Greek and he trained first with Ephorus of Ephesus who belonged to the Ionian School of artists. He then moved to the Greek mainland to study with the celebrated artist Pamphilus, who headed a school at Sicyon, the western neighbor of Corinth. Pamphilus was famous for charging high tuition fees, but his school had some famous alumni, including the sculptor Lysippus, who became Alexander the Great's sculptor of choice. Apelles learned to combine the precision of the Sicyonian style with the elegance that he had learned in Ionia, and about 340 B.C.E., his reputation was such that he was invited to the court of Philip II, king of Macedonia, where he painted portraits and won the admiration of the young Alexander, Philip's son.

**ALEXANDER'S FAVORITE PORTRAIT ARTIST.** Alexander was the subject of Apelles' most famous portraits, and Apelles helped to create the image of Alexander as a superhuman hero, ruler of the inhabited world. Alexander recognized the value of art in creating an image, and he entrusted his representation to only three artists: Apelles, Lysippus, and the engraver Pyrgoteles. The most famous of the portraits was Apelles' depiction of Alexander as the god Zeus holding a thunderbolt, *Alexander as Zeus Keraunophoros*, a painting that aimed to support Alexander's claim to deity. Another painting of Alexander showed him with the Victory Goddess, *Nike*, and another with strong allegorical overtones showed Alexander in a triumphal chariot along with the personification of war, *Polemos*, whose hands are bound. Both these paintings were later taken to Rome where they were displayed in the Forum of Augustus and later repainted so that Alexander's features in the paintings were replaced by those of Augustus himself by order of the emperor Claudius (r. 42–54 C.E.).

**APHRODITE ANADYOMENE.** One of Apelles' most famous works was *Aphrodite Anadyomene* (Aphrodite Arising) which showed Aphrodite arising from the sea where she was born, and wringing her hair. According to one story, the model for the work was Alexander's mistress, with whom Apelles fell in love during a previous portrait sitting. When Alexander discovered Apelles'

feelings, he gave his mistress to Apelles. If the anecdotes from ancient writers about Apelles' relationship with Alexander can be believed, Apelles was able to take liberties with Alexander that others could not. Both Pliny the Elder and Aelian noted instances when Apelles directly insulted Alexander's understanding of art and apparently suffered no consequences for his cheekiness. Apelles also did a self-portrait, the first self-portrait known from the ancient world.

**PAINTER TO THE KINGS.** When Alexander died in 323 B.C.E., Apelles painted portraits of his successors, including Antigonos *Monophthalmus* (One-Eyed), who was blind in one eye. According to a description of this portrait, Apelles painted it in such a way as to show only the good eye, suggesting that he introduced a three-quarters view. Apelles then travelled to Alexandria in Egypt, where he worked in the court of King Ptolemy I. His career nearly came to an abrupt end there when he was implicated in a plot against Ptolemy, but he managed to clear his name and regain the favor of the king. Some scholars suggested that his famous allegorical painting, *Calumny*, described by the second-century C.E. satirist Lucian, was part of Apelles' argument for his innocence. The fifteenth-century Florentine artist Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510) recreated this work from Lucian's description, and it now hangs in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.

**DEATH.** Apelles died on the island of Cos, while copying his famous *Aphrodite Anadyomene*. The painting was later taken to Rome. While the exact date of his death is unknown, it was probably early in the third century B.C.E.

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#### EXEKIAS

c. 570 B.C.E.—After 530 B.C.E.

*Potter*  
*Vase painter*

**KNOWN BY HIS VASES.** The Greek artist Exekias represents black-figure vase painting at its height, a distinction he shares with a contemporary known as the Amasis-painter. Although the time period in which he

flourished places him in Athens during the rule of the tyrant Pisistratus, the only other biographical details about him come from his vases. His signature appears on two vases as both potter and painter, and on eleven others as the potter. Other vases are attributed to him on stylistic grounds and thus a total of about forty of his pieces survive. Exekias' career as a potter seems to have begun before he tried his hand at vase decoration. Scholars guess that he was probably born in the 570s B.C.E., and while the date of his death is unknown he seems not to have been active after 530 B.C.E.

**REMARKABLE SKILL.** Exekias is remarkable for the quality of his draftsmanship and his skill as a potter. He may have invented the type of vase known as the calyx crater, for he decorated the earliest surviving calyx crater. But it is his skill as a vase painter that is most impressive. His masterpiece is a black-figure amphora in the Vatican Museum showing Achilles and Ajax playing a board game, Achilles wearing his helmet and Ajax, bareheaded, bending intently over the board. After Exekias, this scene is repeated by later vase painters about 150 times. It refers to some incident in the Trojan War myth, but it is not mentioned in any of the classical literature that has survived. The Trojan War, however, seems to have been a favorite subject for Exekias. One vase shows Ajax lifting up the corpse of Achilles who has just been slain by the arrow of Paris. Another vase of his shows Ajax committing suicide: all alone he plants a sword upright in the sand and falls on it. Exekias has only one surviving scene from the sack of Troy. It shows Aeneas rescuing his father Anchises; Exekias managed to portray the haggard face of old Anchises with remarkable skill.

**OTHER SUBJECTS.** Exekias was also interested in other subjects. One splendid drinking-cup shows the god Dionysus in a boat that is sprouting a grapevine from its mast, while dolphins swim round about. The myth is well known: pirates kidnapped Dionysus who turned them into dolphins as punishment. Exekias also did a fine black-figure hydria—a small water jar with three handles and a small neck—showing Heracles wrestling with the Nemean lion. Heracles seems to have been a favorite hero in Athens of the sixth century B.C.E., though in the next century, he was supplanted to a large extent by Theseus who was made into an Athenian counterpart of Heracles. Heracles was too intimately connected with the hated Sparta whose kings claimed to be his descendants. Exekias did a scene from the Theseus-myth but the vase is broken and its scene cannot be reconstructed. Another of Exekias' amphoras shows Theseus' two sons, Demophon and Akamas, walking their horses. This, as far as we know, is the first time they appear in Athenian art.

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## LYSIPPUS

c. 390 B.C.E.—After 316 B.C.E.

### *Sculptor*

**PRODUCTIVE CAREER.** The sculptor Lysippus was born in Sicyon, a small city-state west of Corinth in Greece near the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E. He was active as early as 370 B.C.E., as an inscription found at Delphi makes clear, and according to another inscription, he made a portrait of King Seleucus, one of Alexander the Great's successors who laid claim to Alexander's conquests in the Near East in 312 B.C.E. He was extraordinarily productive. His workshop turned out literally hundreds of bronze statues. None survive, but a few copies sculpted in marble still exist. The most famous is his *Apoxyomenos* (Scraper) in the Vatican Museum, which portrays a naked athlete scraping himself. Athletes rubbed themselves down with olive oil before exercising and then, after exercise, scraped off the oil and sweat with a scraper called a *strigil*.

**ROYAL SCULPTOR.** It is clear that Lysippus' career was closely associated with the Macedonian royal house. Philip II, king of Macedon who ruled from 359–336 B.C.E., employed him first, and then he became the court sculptor of Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 B.C.E.). It is reported that Alexander would allow only Lysippus to sculpt portraits of him. This may not be literally true, but it was probably Lysippus who was responsible for the portrait-type of Alexander which shows him as if divinely inspired, his eyes looking upwards and his hair windswept. Another favorite subject of his was Heracles, whom the royal house of Macedon claimed as an ancestor. He was greatly praised for two colossal statues of Heracles, both made of bronze. One was a seated figure of Heracles made for the Greek city of Taras, Roman Tarentum (modern Taranto) on the southern coast of Italy, where it once stood on the acropolis. It was taken to Rome in 209 B.C.E. and displayed on the Capitoline Hill. Libanius, an author of the fourth century C.E., described the second as Heracles leaning heavily on his club which was draped with his lions' skin. There are about

25 Roman copies of it: the largest was found in the Baths of Caracalla in Rome and is now in the Naples Museum. The statue of Heracles in Naples bears the signature of a sculptor named Glycon, an Athenian sculptor of the second century C.E. who was a copyist. Another copy in Florence states that it is a work of Lysippus. It probably belongs to Lysippus' old age, for it looks forward to the High Hellenistic period with its taste for statues with superhuman bodies; Heracles is shown resting after his exertions with bulging muscles and stretched tendons.

**CAPTURED MOVEMENT IN SCULPTURE.** Outside Lysippus' house in Sicyon stood a statue that the sculptor made for himself, titled *Kairos* which can mean "due measure" and "proportion" or "opportunity"—the right time to do something. It has been taken as Lysippus' manifesto, just as the "Spear-bearer" of Polyclitus represented Polyclitus' *Canon*, his statement of the proper proportions of the naked male body. The *Kairos* showed that Lysippus had moved far beyond Polyclitus. Modern knowledge of the statue comes from reproductions on reliefs and gems. It showed a youth with wings on his shoulders and his ankles, running on tiptoe, with his one hand balancing a set of scales on the edge of a razor and with the other adjusting the scales. This is an allegorical representation and it refers to the saying taken from the historian Herodotus: "Our affairs are on the razor's edge," meaning, "This is the time for decision, and time will not wait." Lysippus represented rapid motion frozen in bronze. In Lysippus' *Apoxyomenos* too, the muscles of the left leg seem to carry the weight of the body, yet the shoulders and torso swing to the right. Lysippus caught the athlete at the moment when he is shifting his weight from one leg to the other thereby successfully sculpting motion. This innovation in sculpture was further developed in the Hellenistic Age when sculptors depicted subjects frozen in a moment of restless or violent motion.

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#### PHIDIAS

c. 490 B.C.E.–c. 417 B.C.E.

*Sculptor*

**THE GREATEST GREEK SCULPTOR.** Phidias was not only the most important sculptor produced by the artis-

tic center of Athens but the most important artist of the fifth century B.C.E. He is responsible for two of the most impressive cult statues produced in Greece—the *Athena Parthenos* and the *Zeus* at Olympia—and, according to ancient sources, was in charge of the creation of the Parthenon, Greece's most recognizable structure. His skill as a sculptor in a number of mediums, including bronze and marble as well as the combination of gold, ivory, and wood used in his chryselephantine statues, made him an extremely versatile artist whose work inspired generations of artists after him. It was largely due to his reputation that Athens became the trendsetter for Greek sculpture. Although none of his works survived to modern times, his art was immortalized in the descriptions of ancient writers, engraved on coins of the day, and copied by lesser artists.

**FIRST MAJOR WORK.** The "Attic Style" which developed in Athens during the period of Phidias' dominance absorbed the other regional styles in Greece with the exception of the Peloponnesos where the city of Argos maintained its reputation in bronze casting and its independent artistic traditions. Phidias himself was a product of the workshops of Argos; according to tradition he had been trained by Hegias and Ageladas, who also trained Myron. His first large commission seems to have been at Delphi, where Athens commissioned a monument to honor its victory over the Persians at the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C.E. The monument dates to some 25 years after the battle, during the political heyday of Cimon, the son of Miltiades who was the architect of the victory at Marathon. Of the sixteen bronze statues on the monument, which included depictions of gods, heroes of Athenian tribes, and Miltiades himself, thirteen were by Phidias.

**EARLY ATHENA STATUES.** Besides his *Athena Parthenos*, Phidias produced several other cult statues of the goddess. He sculpted his *Athena Areia* to celebrate another Greek military victory, although ancient writers disagreed as to which one. The drapery of her clothes was gold-covered while her flesh was crafted in ivory, a composite technique that was a hallmark of his style. Sometime around 450 B.C.E. he sculpted the famous bronze statue of *Athena Polias*, later known as *Athena Promachos* (Athena who fights in the forefront of the battle), which is estimated to have been around seven and a half meters (25 feet) tall. It stood in the Acropolis of Athens where it could be seen by nearby ships. Both of these Athenas are depicted as warriors, and contrast with a more peaceful presentation of the goddess in his bronze of Athena known as the *Athena Lemnia*, produced about the same time. It was probably dedicated by a group of

Athenians who were going to the island of Lemnos as military colonists to secure Athens' hold on the island. A Roman copy of the *Athena Lemnia* was found. Its head—now in Bologna, Italy—and the body—now in Dresden, Germany—fit together to give modern scholars an idea of what the original statue looked like.

**ATHENA PARTHENOS.** While these statues earned Phidias praise, his reputation was built on his creation of the chryselephantine statues *Athena Parthenos* for the Parthenon, and *Zeus* for the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, neither of which survived. A chryselephantine statue (from the Greek *khrysos* meaning “gold” and *elephantinos* meaning “ivory”) is a statue made of gold and ivory: the drapery is made of gold and the flesh of ivory, and the statue is supported on a wooden frame. In 448 B.C.E. Athens decided to build the Parthenon which still stands on the Acropolis of the modern city of Athens. Phidias, who had connections with Pericles, the leading Athenian statesman of the day, was put in charge of the sculpture on the building. Scholars disagree on Phidias' contribution to the project. It is clear from an examination of all the Parthenon marbles that a number of sculptors were at work, but Phidias may have been responsible for the overall design. There is no doubt, however, that the great chryselephantine statue of *Athena Parthenos* that stood inside the temple was by Phidias. She stood more than twelve meters (40 feet) high, and over a ton of gold went into making her clothes. Her robe, however, was made of pieces of gold that could be removed easily and melted down if financial stringency made it necessary. *Athena Parthenos* literally carried a large share of the Athenian treasury on her back.

**ZEUS AT OLYMPIA.** There is some question as to when Phidias worked on his famous *Zeus* at Olympia. Some scholars argued that it was actually completed before he started work on the Parthenon, sometime around 448 B.C.E. There is evidence, however, that Phidias was charged with impiety in Athens sometime around 432 B.C.E., possibly because he included a representation of both himself and Pericles on Athena's cult statue. The resulting trial may have forced Phidias' departure to Elis, where he kept a workshop and created the *Zeus*. The later date is further supported by the style of a piece of black-glaze pottery which reads “I belong to Phidias” on the bottom discovered in the remains of this workshop. At the time of Phidias' arrival to Elis, the temple of Zeus at Olympia had already been built but still lacked a statue. The seated statue Phidias created was even larger than the *Athena Parthenos*, so large, in fact, that one ancient observer noted that were *Zeus* to rise from his seated position, he would unroof the temple.

**UNCERTAIN ENDS.** The fates of Phidias' monumental works are unknown, as is the death of their creator. His statue of *Athena* in the Parthenon was destroyed by fire in the second century C.E., but was restored by the emperor Hadrian. It was removed by imperial decree, probably to Constantinople, in the fifth century C.E. The *Zeus* of Olympia was also taken to Constantinople at which point it disappeared from history.

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#### POLYGNOTUS

c. 500 B.C.E.–c. 440 B.C.E.

##### *Painter*

**INNOVATIONS IN PAINTING.** Polygnotus, a Greek painter who introduced several innovations to his craft, was born on the island of Thasos in the northern Aegean Sea although he lived in Athens during the first half of the fifth century B.C.E. He was the son of a painter of Thasos, Aglaophon, and adhered to the familiar pattern of a son following his father's trade. The historian Pliny the Elder, writing in the first century C.E., credited Polygnotus with being the first to paint women with transparent garments revealing the body beneath them, and to show them with multicolored headdresses. He treated the faces and mouths of his human figures in a freer, more naturalistic manner than his predecessors. The famous Greek philosopher Aristotle praised Polygnotus' ability to represent the characters of his human figures. His effort to represent space and depth in his pictures was also an innovation. Polygnotus was not satisfied with placing all his figures in the foreground, on the baseline of the picture, as was typical in pictures of the time. Instead he tried to represent depth in his paintings by placing figures that were more distant on a higher level than that which were nearer to the viewer. There is evidence of similar experiments in red-figure vase painting about the time that Polygnotus was active, indicating his influence on that medium.

**WORKS.** Since none of his paintings survived, knowledge of his works comes entirely from descriptions of them by later writers. The Greek writer Pausanias who wrote an account of his travels in Greece in the second century C.E. mentioned a painting by Polygnotus in the picture gallery in the north wing of the Propylaea, the

monumental entrance to the Athenian Acropolis. He also saw Polygnotus' picture of an episode in the sack of Troy in the *Stoa Poikile* ("Painted Porch") in the Athenian marketplace. It was painted on wooden panels attached to the wall of the porch, the foundations of which have recently been uncovered, and must date soon after 460 B.C.E. His work on the Stoa may have been the reason that Athens conferred citizenship on him in an era when Athens rarely gave aliens such an honor. His most famous works were at Delphi, however, where he did paintings of the Sack of Troy and of the Underworld—that is, the world of the dead—in the *Lesche*, or club house of the Cnidians, built by the city-state of Cnidus sometime between 458 and 447 B.C.E. The foundations of the *Lesche* survive, and Pausanias provided a detailed description of Polygnotus' paintings there.

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## PRAXITELES

c. 400 B.C.E.—Before 326 B.C.E.

### *Sculptor*

**LEADING GREEK SCULPTOR.** Praxiteles of Athens was the leading Greek sculptor of the fourth century B.C.E. and introduced several innovations to the medium that significantly influenced Hellenistic sculpture. He more than likely belonged to a family of sculptors; his own sons, Cephisodotus and Timarchus, followed in his footsteps, and the fact that he named his first son Cephisodotus indicates that his own father was also Cephisodotus (given names skipped a generation). Praxiteles' father is likely the Cephisodotus who carved a famous statue of *Eirene* (Peace) and *Ploutos* (Wealth) which was set up in the marketplace in Athens in the 370s, perhaps after 374 B.C.E. when Athens made peace with Sparta. The statue betrays some of the characteristics for which Praxiteles would be famous, including a humanizing of the gods that is a departure from the more formal representations of the gods in the fifth century B.C.E.

*Eirene* is shown as a goddess carrying the infant boy Ploutos on her left arm. Cephisodotus managed to portray the psychological interaction between the goddess and the child: the goddess looks tenderly at him, and he stretches out his hand to her in a gesture of trust. On the immediate level this is a portrayal of a mother and child; only after a moment's thought does the onlooker realize that this is an allegorical sculpture.

**PRAXITELEAN CURVE.** The same tenderness is evident in the one genuine statue of Praxiteles that has survived, his *Hermes and the Infant Dionysus* found in the temple of Hera at Olympia in 1877. While it is unclear whether the statue is the original or a copy, Praxiteles' distinctive style is obvious. Instead of the defined muscles of the previous century's statuary, Praxiteles created statues with softer, more fluid lines, and composed his statues along a languid 'S-curve' that became known as the "Praxitelean curve." His *Apollo Sauroctonus* also illustrates the dreamy quality of Praxiteles' work. The statue of the god Apollo as a young boy has him leaning against a tree trunk, on the verge of killing a lizard with an arrow. Roman copies of the work in both bronze and marble highlight Praxiteles' ability to portray the gods as emotional beings.

**APHRODITE OF CNIDUS.** Praxiteles worked both in bronze and marble, but marble seems to have been his most successful medium. Marble was the material for his most famous statue, the *Aphrodite of Cnidus*, that brought tourists to Cnidus, anxious to view the statue. It was the first statue to show a woman naked, and its appeal was perhaps more erotic than artistic. The goddess is shown as if she was surprised by an intruder while she was bathing. One hand shields her pudenda from view, but there is a slight smile on her lips and a hint of welcome to her expression. The statue was exhibited at Cnidus so that it could be viewed from all angles, and it was the first of many female nudes that Greek sculptors would produce.

**LEGACY.** Altogether seventy works have been associated with Praxiteles, though some may be by members of his workshop. He died sometime before 326 B.C.E., leaving his sons to carry on his style. The Praxitelean school became enormously influential in early Hellenistic sculpture as other sculptors sought to emulate the delicacy of expression and fluid lines he introduced in his works.

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## ZEUXIS

Fifth century B.C.E.–Fourth century B.C.E.

*Painter*

**MASTER OF REALIST PAINTING.** The Greek artist Zeuxis was born in the city of Heraclea in southern Italy sometime in the fifth century B.C.E. While still a young man, he travelled to Athens and built his reputation as one of Greece's best realist artists there. His style carried on the artistic innovation known as *skiagraphia* ("shading") developed by the little-known master Apollodorus of Athens. The technique modulated light and shade so as to imitate what the eye sees in nature, thus giving figures the appearance of weight and volume. Apollodorus remarked wryly in an epigram that Zeuxis robbed this artistic technique from his masters and made it his own. Regardless of the originality of his style, Zeuxis indeed was a master of it, and became very wealthy on commissions for his work. He even displayed his wealth at the Olympic Games one year by wearing garments into which his name had been woven with gold thread.

**WORKS.** None of Zeuxis' works survived to modern times, which means all that is known of his art comes from the descriptions of ancient writers. Aristophanes' comedy, the *Acharnians*, produced in 425 B.C.E., has a reference to his famous painting of the god of Love, Eros, wreathed in flowers. Another of his paintings was a renowned work of Zeus on his throne, with the other gods standing by, and another of the infant Heracles strangling the two serpents that Hera sent to kill him. The comic essayist Lucian of Samosata (second century C.E.) described a family of centaurs painted by Zeuxis—an unusual subject for a painting, but in keeping with Zeuxis' penchant for themes beyond the normal fare of gods, heroes, and wars. Lucian remarked that a copy of this work existed in Athens in his time, but the original had been stolen by the Roman general Sulla who sacked Athens in 86 B.C.E. and lost at sea during the journey to Rome. According to a legend, Zeuxis was so skilled at realist painting that birds attempted to eat the grapes he painted. Ever the perfectionist, Zeuxis was apparently disappointed that the boy he had painted with the grapes had not been sufficiently real to scare them off. His monochrome etchings on a white background were also

notable, but what made his reputation was his skill at producing realistic figures in color.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Visual Arts*

Anonymous, the "Critian Boy" (c. 480 B.C.E.)—The "Critian Boy" is a *kouros* that was dedicated on the Acropolis of Athens just before the Persian invasion of 480 B.C.E. It was damaged in the sack of Athens and buried after the Athenians recovered their city. The facial expression is sober but the "archaic smile" has disappeared, and the style of the "Critian Boy" dates it to the beginning of the early classical period. It gets its name from the resemblance of its head to the statue group of the "Tyrannicides" sculpted by Critias and Nesiotes in the decade after the Persian sack.

Anonymous, the "Zeus" from Artemisium (c. 470 B.C.E.)—This bronze statue, now in the National Museum of Greece in Athens, was found in the waters off Cape Artemisium, the northern tip of the island of Euboea. It shows Zeus striding forward like the "Tyrannicides" and hurling a thunderbolt. The thunderbolt is lost, and thus it is a matter of debate whether the statue portrays Zeus or Poseidon hurling his trident, but on the whole it seems more likely that it is Zeus. It is a rare survivor of a bronze statue from the early classical period. The sculptor is unknown, but one suggestion is that it was Ageladas, the teacher of the sculptor Myron.

The *Ara Pacis* of Augustus in Rome (9 B.C.E.)—The *Ara Pacis* ("Altar of Peace") is a modest altar similar in size to the "Altar of the Twelve Gods" in the marketplace of Athens. It was reconstructed on the banks of the Tiber shortly before the outbreak of World War II. Its sculpture speaks the language of Augustan propaganda; one famous relief shows "Mother Earth" with the blessings that peace brings: children brought up without fear, flocks and herds that multiply, and bountiful crops from the fields.

Critias and Nesiotes, *The Tyrannicides* (c. 475 B.C.E.)—In 514 B.C.E., Aristogeiton and Harmodius assassinated Hipparchus, the brother of the tyrant of Athens, Hippias, and though Hippias himself was not driven out

until four years later, thanks to the intervention of Sparta, the Athenians preferred to remember Harmodius and Aristogeiton as the heroes who delivered them from tyranny. To commemorate their deed, a statue group by the sculptor Antenor was erected in the Athenian marketplace shortly after Hippias was expelled, but the Persians took it as booty when they captured Athens, and the Athenians commissioned a replacement by Critias and Nesiotes. A good Roman copy was found in the villa of the emperor Hadrian at Tivoli outside Rome. The statue group, which shows the two men striding forward to attack Hipparchus, is a good example of early classical sculpture, comparable to the Zeus hurling a thunderbolt found off Cape Artemisium.

Lysippus, *Apoxyomenos* (c. 325 B.C.E.)—The *Apoxyomenos* or “Athlete Scraping Himself,” marked a break with the sculptural tradition of Polyclitus of Argos. The *Apoxyomenos* is a three-dimensional figure with no clearly defined front or back. It looks forward to the art of the Hellenistic Age.

Myron, *The Discus-Thrower* (c. 455 B.C.E.)—Several Roman copies of *Discus-Thrower* by Myron survive, the best of which is in the Terme Museum in Rome. It shows an athlete in the act of hurling a discus, his head and body turned in a twisted, yet harmonious pose. The original statue was in bronze.

Phidias, *The Athena Parthenos* statue for the Parthenon (c. 440 B.C.E.)—Phidias was the most prominent Athenian artist in the mid-fifth century B.C.E. and his two most famous works in the ancient world were his cult-statues for the temple of Athena Parthenos in Athens and the temple of Zeus at Olympia. He was in charge of making the sculptures for the Parthenon, but how many of the surviving sculptures were carved by him is a matter of debate.

Polyclitus, *Doryphoros* (c. 440 B.C.E.)—Polyclitus’ bronze *Doryphoros*, or “Youth Bearing a Spear,” exemplifies the proportions of the male nude which he set forth in his *Canon*. A good Roman copy was found in the palaestra (gymnasium) at Pompeii, where it was buried by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E. The *Doryphoros* is a broad-shouldered youth who rests his weight on his right leg while his left is placed sideways and drawn back. The veins and muscles of his chest, abdomen, and biceps are all portrayed accurately.

Praxiteles, *Hermes with the Infant Dionysus* (c. 350 B.C.E.)—Praxiteles’ *Hermes* was found at Olympia, in the Temple of Hera, where the Greek traveler Pausanias reported that he saw it in the second century C.E. Thus this statue is almost certainly an original by Praxiteles. Praxiteles was also famous for his nude *Aphrodite of Cnidus*, the first female nude which inspired many more, including the famous *Venus di Milo*.



## GLOSSARY

**Abacus:** A flat, square-shaped slab forming the top of a column capital.

**Academy:** The school established by the philosopher Plato about 385 B.C.E. in the park and gymnasium on the outskirts of Athens sacred to the hero Academus, from whom the Academy took its name.

**Acanthus:** A plant known in English as brank-ursine, the leaves of which are used as a decorative motif on Corinthian capitals.

**Acheron:** A river in southern Epirus in north-west Greece which disappears underground at several points. It was therefore thought to flow into the Underworld and hence an Oracle of the Dead was situated on it.

**Acropolis:** The “high place” or citadel of a Greek city—an easily-defensible, fortified hill within the city walls. It was usually the oldest part of the city.

**Adyton:** An inner chamber at the rear of a temple.

**Aegis:** The shield of Zeus which flashes forth amazement and terror. The goddess Athena also has an aegis, which is shown in works of art not as a shield, but as a short cloak covered with scales, fringed at the bottom and with a Gorgoneion set in the center of it.

**Aeolian:** The dialect of Greek spoken by the Greeks of Aeolis. The dialect of Sappho and Alcaeus.

**Aeolis:** The territory of the northernmost group of Greek immigrants who migrated to the west coast of Asia Minor after the fall of the Mycenaean civilization. They

mobbed from Thessaly and Boeotia to settle the region stretching southward from the entrance to the Hellespont, including the island of Lesbos.

**Aer:** Air. The Presocratic philosopher Anaximenes believed that the basic matter of the world was *aer*, a substance more like mist than pure air, that was transformed by expansion or contraction into water, earth and all other natural things.

**Aetiological Myths:** From the Greek word *aitia* meaning “the reason why.” An aetiological myth tells why familiar objects or practices originated.

**Agathos Daimon:** The “Good Spirit” or the “Good Luck” of a household.

**Agoge:** The term used for the strict, militaristic education of Spartiate youths.

**Agora:** The marketplace of a city: both its commercial and administrative center.

**Akroterion:** (plural: *akroteria*) An ornament placed on the peak of the gable of a temple roof, or on the corners of the roof.

**Alexandria:** A port city of Egypt slightly to the west of the Canopic mouth of the Nile River. Here, where there was already an Egyptian village named Rhacotis, Alexander the Great founded a city named after himself on 7 April 331 B.C.E., which would become the capital of the Ptolemaic dynasty that ruled Egypt after Alexander’s death, and one of the great cultural centers of the Hellenistic world.



**Alexandrian Library:** A great library in Alexandria probably founded by King Ptolemy I but greatly extended by Ptolemy II (308–246 B.C.E.). Estimates of the number of scrolls which it held range from 100,000 to 700,000.

**Altar:** A platform where sacrifices were made. If connected with a temple, it was outside the entrance, usually on the east side. In Christian churches, the altar was inside, generally at the east end of the church, and was where the bread and wine were offered and blessed as Jesus' body and blood during the sacrament of the Eucharist.

**Ambo:** The pulpit in a Christian basilica. A basilica would have two of them on either side of the church, one for reading the epistle and the other for reading the Gospel.

**Ambulatio:** A terrace where one might walk for exercise.

**Amnisos:** A Minoan harbour town on the northern shore of Crete, where a Minoan villa known as the "House of the Lilies" has been excavated. The Homeric hero Idomeneus is supposed to have set sail from Amnisos to fight in the Trojan War.

**Amphictyony:** A league of devotees of a religious sanctuary whose duty it was to protect and maintain the cult. The word derives from the Greek *amphiktiones* meaning "those who live in the vicinity." Important amphictyonies, however, like the Delphi amphictyony, had representatives from many parts of Greece.

**Amphidromia:** Literally "a running around." A religious ceremony marking the birth of a child where the father of the house carried the five-day-old infant around the ancestral hearth.

**Amphiprostyle:** With columns at the front and rear of the building, but not along the sides.

**Amphora:** A crockery container, normally two-handled, which was the standard storage pot of the ancient Mediterranean world. A type of amphora with a pointed end was used instead of barrels to transport olive oil, wine and other products. Another type, decorated and with a base, was used to keep wine and olive oil for domestic use, and sometimes an amphora filled with wine or olive oil served as a prize in athletic games—for instance, in the Panathenaic Games in Athens, the prize for the victors was an amphora of olive oil, always decorated in black-figure technique.

**Anax:** *See* Wanax.

**Andron:** A principal room in a Greek house, used as the dining room. It was part of the men's quarters in the house—the literal meaning is "belonging to men."

**Aniconic:** Without human features.

**Anta:** (plural: *antae*) The end of a wall, thickened often to form a pilaster. Columns *in antis* are columns at the end of a building between two antae.

**Anthesteria:** A flower festival (the Greek *anthos* means "flower") held in Athens on the 12th of the month Anthesterion in the Athenian calendar, roughly equivalent to the end of February and the beginning of March. The day before, on the 11th, the wine jars with the new wine were opened, and on the 12th, the wine was ceremonially blessed by the god of wine, Dionysus.

**Antioch-on-the-Orontes:** A city founded by Seleucus I in 300 B.C.E. on the Orontes River in Syria some fifteen miles from the sea. It became one of the capitals of the Seleucid Empire—the other was Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, founded in 312 B.C.E., which displaced Babylon as the major center for trade between east and west.

**Antonine Age:** Strictly speaking, the reigns of the Roman emperors Antoninus Pius (138–161 C.E.), Lucius Verus (161–169 C.E.), and Marcus Aurelius (161–180 C.E.). However the term is sometimes used to embrace the period from 96 to 180 C.E., when reigning emperors adopted their successors, thereby avoiding wars over the succession.

**Aoidos:** Singer, or bard, who performed, accompanied by the lyre, at festivals or private banquets.

**Apeiron:** Matter without any limit. According to the Presocratic philosopher Anaximander, the basic matter of the universe was vast, boundless substance where everything was mixed together, out of which the world as we know it emerged.

**Apotheosis:** The act of making a person into a god; deification.

**Apotropaic:** Designed to frighten away malignant spirits or ward off the evil eye.

**Apse:** The half-vaulted, semi-circular end of a building. A building with an apse at one end is called "apsidal."

**Archaic:** The term applied to the period of Greek culture from about 600 to 480 B.C.E.

**Architrave:** The course of masonry immediately above the column capitals, which supports the superstructure.

**Archon:** The highest public office in archaic Athens to which nine citizens were originally appointed and later chosen by lot from forty elected candidates, and after 487 B.C.E., from five hundred elected candidates.

**Areopagus:** The "Hill of Ares" (or Mars' Hill), a rocky outcropping which is directly opposite the entrance to the

- Athenian acropolis. The ancient Council of the Areopagus, composed of ex-archons, met there.
- Aristocracy:** Rule by the *aristoi*—the “best people.” The class of “best people” was usually defined by birth.
- Arris:** In the Doric order, the sharp ridge where the flutes of the column join.
- Ashlar:** A masonry style where the stones are cut and dressed into rectangular blocks and are laid in regular courses.
- Atrium:** The main room of a Roman house, with an aperture in the center of the roof for light, air and rain called the *compluvium* which had a catch basin directly under it called an *impluvium*. In Late Antiquity, the courtyard in front of a Christian basilica, with a fountain in the center where worshippers could wash, was called an atrium.
- Attic:** (1) The upper story of a Roman building. (2) On a Roman triumphal arch, a slab directly above the archway where an honorific inscription was carved.
- Augur:** In Rome, a member of a “college” or body of priests who predicted the future by observing and interpreting the path of lightning, the flight of birds, the feeding of sacred fowls and any unusual occurrences.
- Augustan Age:** The period when Rome was ruled by the emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.).
- Augustus:** A Latin adjective meaning “worthy of esteem and reverence.” In 27 B.C.E., the Roman senate conferred the title “Augustus” on Octavian, the heir of Julius Caesar who had made himself master of the Roman Empire by defeating Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium (31 B.C.E.), and henceforth the title was born by all emperors.
- Aulos:** Often mistranslated as “flute,” the *aulos* was a reed-instrument which was an early ancestor of the modern oboe which was developed in the seventeenth century C.E. The double *aulos* had two pipes, and to assist the piper’s breath control, he wore a leather band called a *phorbeia* like a halter around his head and over his mouth, with holes just large enough for the pipes to poke through.
- Aurelian Wall of Rome:** The Roman wall, most of which survives to this day, built by the emperors Aurelian (270–275 C.E.) and Probus (276–282 C.E.).
- Auxilia:** Units of the Roman army made up of non-Roman citizens recruited in the provinces of the Roman Empire. On Roman monuments they are shown wearing chain mail or scale armor rather than *lorica segmentata* which seems to have been reserved for the Roman legions made up of Roman citizens. When the auxiliary trooper retired after twenty-five years of service, he would receive Roman citizenship — until 212 C.E. when the emperor Caracalla extended citizenship to almost of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire.
- Balneum:** A private bathroom in a Roman house, or a modest public bath, as distinct from the *thermae*, which were the great public baths, such as the Baths of Caracalla in Rome.
- Barbitos:** A type of lyre with long curved arms, favored by Greek courtesans. Also known as *barbiton*.
- Bard:** A poet, often illiterate, who improvised and recited narrative poetry of his own composition, usually with musical accompaniment.
- Baroque:** Characterized by curved, dynamic, elaborately-carved forms.
- Basileus:** In Homeric times, a local ruler like Odysseus or Menelaus, as distinct from the *wanax* or “high king” who seems to have been divine. In the city-states of Classical Greece, a magistrate with priestly functions was often called a *basileus*—one of the archons of Athens was called the “archon *basileus*.”
- Basilica:** A type of Roman hall built to house law-courts. The building type was adapted first by the Jews for synagogues, and after the conversion of Constantine I to Christianity, the type was used for the earliest Christian churches. A typical early basilical church faces west, with a narthex or oblong vestibule across the front end, and in the interior, a central hall (nave) with aisles on either side and an apse at the end wall.
- Beehive tomb:** A Mycenaean tomb with a false or corbelled vault, resembling an old-style beehive.
- Bema:** A rostrum or platform used by a speaker to address a crowd or preside over a meeting.
- Black-figure Technique:** A technique of decorating pottery whereby the figures were shown in black silhouette with incised detail, and the background was the natural reddish color of the clay.
- Boeotia:** The region in Greece northwest of Attica, where the chief city-state was Thebes.
- Breastplate:** Metal armor worn to protect the chest and midriff of a soldier.
- Breccia:** A composite rock made up of fragments of stone that have been compressed together. Also called “conglomerate” or “pudding stone.”

- Byzantium:** A colony founded at the entrance to the Black Sea by the Greek city-state of Megara in 667 B.C.E. The city was refounded as Constantinople (dedicated in 330 C.E.) but the old name survived and hence the eastern Roman Empire which lasted until 1453 C.E. is known as the “Byzantine Empire.”
- Caldarium:** The “hot room” of a Roman bath-house where hot water was available for bathing.
- Caliga:** A leather shoe, especially the leather boot worn by Roman soldiers.
- Cantica:** A passage in a Roman comedy which the actor sang, accompanied by a piper (*tibicen*).
- Capital:** The spreading element that caps a column, forming a transition between the vertical shaft of the column and the horizontal elements of the architrave.
- Capitolium:** The steep hill and the west side of the Roman Forum where the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was built.
- Cardinal virtues:** The four cardinal virtues as listed in Plato’s *Republic* are Justice, Wisdom or Prudence, Courage, and Self-Control.
- Cardo:** In a Roman town plan, the main north-south road which is bisected by the decumanus.
- Caryatid:** A figure of a woman used in architecture to support the entablature of a building in place of a column.
- Catacombs:** Underground graveyards excavated by Christians and Jews, found particularly at Rome but also in places like Naples and Syracuse where the geology was suitable for tunneling. They consisted of a network of tunnels lined with brackets for depositing the bodies of the dead.
- Cavea:** The seating area of a Greek or Roman theater.
- Causia:** Light-colored, broad-brimmed, felt hat of Macedonian origin worn to shield the wearer from the sun and the rain. In Rome, it was worn by poorer people as protection against the sun.
- Cecrops:** The mythical first king of Athens, often represented with a snake’s tail.
- Cella:** The main room of a Greek temple where the cult statue was housed.
- Centauiromachy:** Battle between the heroes known as the Lapiths and the centaurs, who gate-crashed the wedding of the king of the Lapiths, and tried to rape the women, but were driven out. The west pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia shows a centauromachy.
- Chamber Tomb:** An irregularly shaped underground room used for burial, frequently approached by a corridor or *dromos*.
- Charon:** In Greek mythology, the old ferryman who conveyed the ghosts of the dead across the rivers of the Underworld. Greeks would put a coin in the mouth of a corpse as a fee for Charon.
- Charun:** An Etruscan demon with a fiendish face who carried a long-handled hammer and conducted the souls of the dead to the Underworld.
- Chiaroscuro:** The use of light and shade to give the effects of shape and mass in painting.
- Chimaera:** A mythical monster slain by the hero Bellerophon. It had the head and body of a lion, a snake for a tail, and a goat’s head emerging from its back.
- Chiton:** A lightweight Greek garment made from a single piece of cloth, belted and with a buttoned sleeve. The Doric chiton was thigh or knee-length; the Ionic chiton was more elaborate and reached the ankles.
- Chlamys:** A short cloak fastened at the shoulder.
- Chryselephantine:** A statue constructed of gold and ivory; such statues usually had a wooden core.
- Chthonic:** Meaning “belonging to the earth,” this adjective is applied to the gods of the Underworld.
- Cipollino:** A greyish marble with streaks of white or green favored by Roman builders.
- Cithara:** A large stringed instrument used in concerts, festivals and theaters. It was the ancestor of the guitar.
- City Dionysia:** A festival held each spring in Athens in honor of the god Dionysus, where tragedies and comedies as well as dithyrambs were presented.
- Classical Period:** The period of Greek cultural history from 479 B.C.E. when the Persian Empire’s invasion of Greece was repulsed, to the death of Alexander the Great (323 B.C.E.).
- Cnossos:** The site of the Labyrinth of King Minos of Crete where he kept the legendary Minotaur. In 1900 C.E. Sir Arthur Evans discovered the remains of a great sprawling palace there and revealed the Minoan civilization of Bronze Age Crete.
- Colonnade:** A row of columns supporting an *entablature*.
- Columbarium:** A dovecote. The word was also used for a structure with little compartments built into the wall to receive the ashes of the dead after cremation.

**Concrete:** Roman concrete was made from lime mortar, volcanic sand, water and small stones. It was placed in wooden frames and left to dry with a facing of brick or stone or a marble revetment.

**Conglomerate:** *See Breccia.*

**Contrapposto:** A stance in which the body's weight is supported on one leg, so that a contrast is formed between the tension of one side and the relaxation of the other.

**Corbeling:** A system of supporting courses of masonry or wood by extending successive courses beyond the face of the wall. Thus a "corbeled" or false vault can be constructed by thrusting each course of a circular wall slightly closer to the center until it comes together at the peak.

**Corinthian Order:** A development of the Ionic order of architecture, but with a capital of stylized acanthus leaves.

**Cornice:** Horizontal molded projection above the frieze of a temple. Also called a "geison."

**Cornu:** A Roman bugle, or curved horn.

**Cosmogony:** A myth that accounts for the origin and nature of the world.

**Crepidoma:** The platform on which a Greek temple was built, consisting of the stereobate and the stylobate.

**Crotalum:** A castanet used to accompany dances, to accentuate the rhythm.

**Cubiculum:** A bedroom in a Roman house.

**Cuirass:** Metal armor worn to protect the chest and the back.

**Cyclades:** The southern islands of the Aegean Sea, especially Delos, Paros, Naxos, Siphnos, Melos and Thira, which is the southernmost.

**Cycladic:** The term applied to the prehistoric culture found on the Cyclades Islands, 3000–1550 B.C.E.

**Cyclopean:** Belonging to the mythical primitive giants called Cyclopes. The term is applied to the Bronze Age masonry fortifications made of huge, irregular blocks.

**Dactyl:** A "foot" (a group of syllables forming a metric unit in verse), consisting of one long syllable and two short syllables—the long syllable would be held twice as long as the short syllable, and hence when the verse was sung, the dactyl was the equivalent of a half note followed by two short notes.

**Dactylic Hexameter:** A line of poetry consisting of six dactyls or their equivalent. This was the meter used for

epic poetry, such as the epics of Homer in Greek or Vergil's *Aeneid* in Latin.

**Dado:** The lower part of the wall of a room decorated differently from the upper part, often with colored marble or stucco.

**Daedalic:** From the legendary Minoan craftsman, Daedalus. The term is applied to a type of human figurine appearing about the end of the eighth century B.C.E., and belonging to the Orientalizing Period of Greek art, with the following traits: frontality (they face forward), rigidity, flatness, low brows, triangular faces, big noses and eyes and flat skulls.

**Daimon:** A spirit, or a manifestation of supernatural power. A man might have a good or an evil *daimon* which followed him through his life. Christianity impressed upon the word the meaning of "demon" which is now its common significance.

**Dark Ages:** A term applied nowadays to the period of Greek history (1100–900 B.C.E.) when Greece was illiterate.

**Decumanus:** In a Roman town plan, the main east-west road. The main street was called the "decumanus maximus."

**Delphi:** A small sacred city-state in central Greece north of the Corinthian Gulf, where the oracular shrine of Apollo was located on the slopes of Mt. Parnassus.

**Delphic oracle:** The oracle of Apollo at Delphi, where non-Greeks as well as Greeks could seek advice about the future. *See Oracle.*

**Deme:** A district or township. "Demes" were ancient townships of Attica which were distributed by Cleisthenes, the founder of the Athenian democratic constitution, into ten *phylai* or "tribes" that became the basic political units of Athenian government.

**Demigod:** A hero: a semi-divine person who still possessed some supernatural powers even though his soul (or "shade") was in the Underworld.

**Demiourgos:** The divine being in Plato's dialogue, the *Timaeus*, who creates the world out of pre-existing matter.

**Dentil:** Toothlike projection on an Ionic epistyle.

**Deus ex machina:** A "god (descending) by stage machinery" The term is used for a conclusion of a tangled plot of a tragedy which is resolved by the intervention of a god.

**Diadem:** A headband tied at the back of the head. Constantine I, the first Christian emperor, made a diadem encrusted with pearls the normal imperial head-dress.

- Dialogue:** A discourse consisting of question and answer on a political or philosophical subject. The most important source of the dialogue form was the conversations of Socrates, and the dialogue became the favorite medium of Plato for publishing his philosophic ideas.
- Diazoma:** A walkway dividing the upper tiers of seats from the lower in a Greek theater.
- Didactic literature:** Literature intended to teach or to inform the reader.
- Didascalia:** In Greece: the “teaching” of a play or dithyramb to the chorus that was to perform it by the poet or professional trainer who was employed for the task. The term is also used to refer to all aspects of the production of a play or a dithyramb.
- Didascaliae:** The plural form of “didascalia.” In Greece it was used to refer to the records of performances, including the names of victorious tribes, poets, *choregi*, actors and auletes for each year and of the plays that were staged at the festivals in honor of Dionysus. In Rome, the term is used for the brief remarks that preface the plays of Terence, describing the first performances of the plays, mentioning the composer and the type of music, the Greek originals from which the plays were adapted, the date of the play and so on.
- Dione:** The word means “goddess” and it is the feminine form of “Zeus.” At the oracular site of Dodona, Dione was worshipped as the consort of Zeus, and one version of the myth of Aphrodite’s birth makes her the daughter of Dione. In the canon of the Olympian gods, however, it was Hera rather than Dione who was the wife of Zeus.
- Dionysus:** God of wine and of emotional religion. Greek myth made him the son of Zeus and the mortal Semele, a princess of Thebes.
- Dithyramb:** A type of narrative choral song accompanied by dance, originally associated with Dionysus. Aristotle claimed that tragedy originated with the dithyramb.
- Dodona:** The seat of an ancient oracle of Zeus in the mountains of Epirus in north-west Greece. The center of Zeus’ cult at Dodona was a sacred oak tree and from the rustling of its leaves the will of Zeus was ascertained.
- Dorian:** (1) A dialect of Greek. (2) Greeks who spoke the Dorian dialect, who entered Greece in the so-called Dorian invasion which took place after the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization.
- Doric:** A type of architecture, characterized by fluted columns without bases, and triglyph and metope friezes.
- Dromos:** A passageway leading into a chamber tomb or a *tholos*.
- Echinus:** The lower member of a column capital.
- Eileithyia:** The Greek goddess of childbirth.
- Ekkylema:** In the Greek theater, a low trolley used to bring someone on stage such as a dying man or a corpse of a character who has been slain offstage.
- Ekphrasis:** A literary description of a work of visual art.
- Eleatic School:** The philosophy of the Eleatic School takes its name from Elea, modern Velia in southern Italy. The founder of the school was Parmenides of Elea.
- Elegiac couplet:** A verse in dactylic hexameter followed by a pentameter line (a line of five feet) with a caesura or pause in the middle. Roman poets of the Augustan Age associated elegiac poetry with sorrow, but probably early elegiac in Greece was simply poetry sung to the accompaniment of the *aulos*.
- Eleusinian Limestone:** A black limestone quarried at Eleusis west of Athens, which was used for decorative effect in marble buildings.
- Elis:** The state in the northwest Peloponnesus where Olympia, the site of the Olympic Games, was located.
- Elysium:** Elysium, or the Isles of the Blest, appears in the works of Homer and Hesiod as a place where certain favored heroes who were exempted from death were taken by the gods. It came to be regarded as a region of the Underworld reserved for persons who were righteous in their lifetimes.
- Emmeleia:** The dance associated with Greek tragedy.
- Encaustic:** A technique of painting using hot wax colored with various pigments.
- Entablature:** All parts of a building such as a temple above the columns.
- Entasis:** A cigar-like swelling of columns which is particularly pronounced in buildings of the archaic period, but is no longer found by the Hellenistic period.
- Ephebe:** A boy who has reached puberty, about eighteen to twenty years old.
- Epic:** A long, narrative poem written in dactylic hexameter meter.
- Epigram:** Originally a short verse inscription which the Greeks engraved on tombstones or votive offerings or even signposts. In the Hellenistic period, poets wrote artificial epigrams: short poems on persons long dead, or on famous works of art or on pet animals. The epi-

- gram could also be used as a vehicle for invective. Latin epigrams were occasional poetry that could sometimes be humorous, and sometimes spiteful.
- Epigraphy:** The study of inscriptions.
- Epiphany:** The appearance of a god.
- Epistle:** A letter addressed to someone. As a literary form, the epistle could be used to expound philosophy or theology. The epistle was also used as a form of poetry: for instance, Ovid's *Heroides* is a collection of fictitious love letters written by famous heroines to their absent husbands or lovers.
- Epistyle:** Another term for "architrave."
- Epitaphios:** A funeral eulogy given, according to Athenian custom, at the memorial service held each year for the men who had fallen in battle.
- Epithet:** In epic poetry, an adjective applied to a hero, such as "Achilles, swift of foot." Divine epithets were surnames given to the gods, sometimes indicating some aspect of a god's activity, such as "Zeus, the cloud-gatherer," or in Rome, "Mars *Uitor*," that is, "Mars the Avenger." Sometimes the divine epithets are puzzling, such as "Owl-eyed Athena," or "Apollo *Lykeios*" which might mean "Apollo the Wolf-God" or "Apollo of Lycia" (Lycia was in south-west Asia Minor).
- Epyllion:** A type of narrative poem, popular in the Hellenistic period, where certain episodes, usually not the central ones, are taken from the context of old legends and carefully reshaped, while the remaining themes of the legend are left on the fringes of the narrative.
- Erinyes:** The "Furies." Snaky, winged creatures born of the earth who pursue mortals guilty of matricide and fratricide and drive them mad.
- Eros:** Sexual love or attraction. "Eros" (Latin: "Cupid") was the name of the child-god, son of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who was depicted as a winged boy with a bow and poisoned arrows, with which he wounded men and women and infected them with sexual passion.
- Etruria:** The western part of central Italy, somewhat larger than modern Tuscany, inhabited by the Etruscans.
- Etruscans:** A people whose language has not yet been deciphered who emigrated from Asia Minor to Italy in the early Iron Age, established a number of cities in Etruria, and for a brief period, dominated early Rome.
- Euripus:** A long narrow fishpond placed in the center of a formal garden surrounded by a colonnade in a Roman villa.
- Exodos:** The "exit." In a Greek tragedy, it is the final section, after the last ode sung by the chorus.
- Fabula palliata:** A dramatic presentation on the Roman stage where the actors portrayed Greeks and wore Greek costumes, for example the plays of Plautus and Terence.
- Fabula togata:** A Roman drama, usually a comedy but sometimes historical, where the actors portrayed Roman citizens and wore togas on stage.
- Familia:** A Roman household, including father, wife, sons and daughters, domestics, slaves and freedmen.
- Fauces:** The entrance hallway into a Roman house.
- Fayyum:** The modern name for a province of Egypt in a depression in the desert west of the Nile which receives water from the Nile through a natural channel called the *Babr Yousef* ("Canal of Joseph"). In the early Ptolemaic period, the agricultural area was extended and many settlers from the Greek world came there.
- Fayyum portraits:** Portraits from Egypt, painted on wood using the encaustic technique, which were placed over the face of a mummy in the Roman imperial period. They are realistic frontal portraits of the dead person who was mummified, and they are considered the artistic forerunners of later Byzantine icons.
- Fibula:** A brooch, or safety-pin.
- Final Cause:** In the philosophy of Aristotle, the purpose or end by which an event, a thing or a process can be explained.
- Flavian Period:** The period of Roman history when the Flavian dynasty ruled, the emperors Vespasian (69–79 C.E.), Titus (79–81 C.E.), and Domitian (81–96 C.E.).
- Flora:** The Roman goddess of flowers.
- Floralia:** The festival of Flora, held on 28 April. The festival had a reputation for licentiousness where mime actresses might appear in the nude.
- Flutes:** Shallow grooves that run vertically along the shaft of a column.
- Foreshortening:** An illusionistic trick that painters use to suggest depth on a flat surface by representing forms as shorter in length than they actually are.
- Forum:** Like the Greek *agora*, the commercial and administrative center of a Roman city.
- Fresco:** A type of wall painting where the paint is applied while the plaster is not yet dry.

**Frieze:** In architecture, a horizontal band with sculptural decoration.

**Frigidarium:** The cold room in a Roman bath where unheated water was available for bathing.

**Fuller:** A tradesman who “fulled” woolen cloth, cleaning it, thickening it and shrinking it with moisture, heat and pressure.

**Gauls:** Celts who migrated across central Europe into France and the British Isles in the sixth century B.C.E.; in Italy, they settled in the Po River valley which became known as Cisalpine Gaul. In 387 B.C.E. they sacked Rome and in 279 B.C.E. they invaded Greece, and from Greece moved to Asia Minor where they eventually settled in Galatia.

**Geison:** A cornice.

**Geometric Style:** A type of pottery decoration that develops from Protogeometric shortly after 900 B.C.E. with various designs such as cross-hatched and wavy-lined lozenges, squares, triangles, the meander motif arranged in concentric bands around the pot. In the eighth century B.C.E. stylized human and animal forms are introduced.

**Geranos:** The so-called “crane dance”—*geranos* is the Greek word for the bird called a “crane” in English—which was danced in chorus lines of young men and women in festivals on the island of Delos.

**Glaze:** Hard, glossy surface finish for pottery.

**Gorgon:** One of three hideous female monsters in mythology, with wings, large fangs and snakes for hair. The most famous of the three was Medusa whose face turned men who looked on it into stone.

**Gorgoneion:** The head of a Gorgon, shown full-face, with protruding tongue, serving as an apotropaic device.

**Greaves:** Armor worn by an infantryman to protect his lower legs.

**Griffin:** A legendary animal with the body of a lion and the wings and head of an eagle.

**Gymnasium:** A place for exercising. The gymnasium might also be a social center and a place for learning and listening to lectures on philosophy.

**Gynaikeion:** The portion of a Greek house which was reserved for women, either at the back of the house or on the second story. Men from outside the family would not normally enter the *gynaikeion*.

**Gypsum:** An easily-worked white or pinkish-buff limestone.

**Hades:** Lord of the Underworld, which was known as the “House of Hades.” He presided over the souls of the Dead and was not counted among the Twelve Olympian Gods.

**Hagia Triada:** Site of a royal villa on Crete dating to the Late Minoan period where a cache of Linear A clay tablets was discovered.

**Haruspices:** Diviners of Etruscan origin who divined the future from portents such as the entrails of sacrificial animals or prodigies or meteorological phenomena such as lightning.

**“Harvester Vase”:** A Minoan vase of black steatite, dating to about 1500 B.C.E., found at the site of Hagia Triada on Crete, about five inches high, showing in relief sculpture a group of harvesters or sowers, singing as they go to work, or as they return from the fields.

**Helladic:** The term used by archaeologists for the civilization of prehistoric Greece, 3000–1100 B.C.E. The Helladic period is divided into “Early Helladic” (3000–2000 B.C.E.), “Middle Helladic” (2000–1550 B.C.E.) and “Late Helladic” (1550–1100 B.C.E.). “Late Helladic” is otherwise known as the “Mycenaean Age.”

**Hellenistic:** The term applied to the period between the death of Alexander the Great and the completion of Rome’s conquest of the eastern Mediterranean with the annexation of Egypt (323–30 B.C.E.), when the Greek language and culture spread across the Near East.

**Helots:** The serfs in Sparta who farmed the estates of their Spartiate overlords and gave them half the produce.

**Herculaneum:** A town with a population of about 2,000 on the Gulf of Naples, which was buried by lava and mud from the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E.

**Heroon:** The shrine of a hero, a dead man who was considered semi-divine and whose soul in the Underworld received offerings.

**Hexastyle:** A building with six columns along the front, or along the front and the back.

**Himation:** A garment consisting of a large rectangular piece of cloth that was draped over the body. The standard outer garment for Greek men by the sixth century B.C.E. and for women by the fourth century B.C.E.

**Hippodamian:** Belonging to Hippodamus, an architect and town-planner of the fifth century B.C.E.

**Holocaust:** A sacrifice where the victim was completely consumed by fire, as distinguished from the usual sacrifices where only the inedible parts of the sacrificial animal were burnt.

**Hoplite:** A heavily-armed footsoldier wearing helmet, cuirass, and greaves, and equipped with a round shield and spear for thrusting, who fought in a battle-line eight ranks deep. The hoplite was the standard heavy infantryman in Greece from the eighth century to the fourth century B.C.E.

**Horns of Consecration:** Stylized bull's horns, associated with Minoan shrines.

**“House of the Faun”:** The largest house found in Pompeii, taking up a full city block, and dating from the second century B.C.E.

**Hydraulis:** The water-organ, invented by Ctesibius, an engineer in Alexandria in the third century B.C.E., which became popular in Rome as a domestic instrument and in amphitheatres as well because of its loud volume. By the fourth century C.E., organs worked with bellows had also been developed.

**Hydria:** A three-handled jar for holding water.

**Hymettian Marble:** A dark marble quarried at Mt. Hymettus outside Athens.

**Hymn:** Originally a song addressed to a god. However, hymns such as the *Homeric Hymns* were more literary than devotional and related a myth.

**Hypocaust:** Furnace in a Roman bath which not only heated the bath water but also the “caldarium” which had flues under the floor and sometimes in the walls where hot air and smoke from the furnace would be circulated.

**Hypothesis:** A conjecture or a supposition.

**Iconography:** The art of pictorial representation and illustration.

**Inductive Logic:** Inference from a finite number of particular cases to a further case or to a general conclusion. Thus if we know that twelve ducks reproduce by hatching eggs, we may conclude that a thirteenth duck will reproduce in the same way, or even reach the general conclusion that all ducks reproduce by hatching eggs.

**Insula:** Roman tenement house.

**Ionia:** The central part of the western coastline of Asia Minor and the offshore islands, settled by refugees from the Greek mainland displaced by the Dorians after the fall of the Mycenaean civilization.

**Ionic Dialect:** The dialect of Greek spoken in Ionia.

**Ionic Order:** An order of architecture, characterized by columns with bases, flutes on the columns but not with

the sharp arrises we find on Doric columns, capitals with spiral volutes and lacking a triglyph and metope frieze.

**Isthmian Games:** A Greek athletic contest held every two years in honor of Poseidon at his sanctuary at the isthmus of Corinth. The prize was a crown of wild celery.

**Judgement of Paris:** The title given to the event which caused the Trojan War. The goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite appeared before the young Trojan prince Paris who had been banished from Troy to serve as a shepherd on the hillsides because of a prophecy that he would bring disaster on Troy. Paris was asked to judge which of the three goddess should get the golden apple offered by the old hag “Discord” to the most beautiful. Paris gave the apple to Aphrodite who had promised him the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta, thus earning the hatred of Athena and Hera for Troy.

**Jupiter Optimus Maximus:** Jupiter, the Best and the Greatest. The chief god of Rome whose temple was built in the Capitolium, the steep hill on the west side of the Roman Forum. It was a tripartite temple, that is, with three cellas, with Jupiter occupying the central sanctuary, and on either side, sanctuaries for Minerva and for Juno.

**Kantharos:** A deep drinking-cup with high, vertical handles.

**Keystone:** The voussoir or wedge-shaped stone at the center of an arch at the top, which locks the arch together.

**Kordax:** The dance associated with Greek comedy.

**Kore:** A maiden. The term is applied to the archaic, fully-clothed statues of young women belonging to the archaic period.

**Kotyle:** A deep drinking-cup with small, horizontal handles.

**Kouros:** A youth. The term is applied to the archaic naked male figures found from about 650 B.C.E. to the time of the Persian War (480–479 B.C.E.) which marked graves, or served as dedications to a god.

**Krater:** A large mixing-bowl used to mix wine with water before drinking it.

**Kylix:** A shallow two-handled drinking-cup.

**Lacedaemon:** The southeastern region of the Peloponnesos which belonged to Sparta.

**Laconia:** Another term for “Lacedaemon.”

**Lares:** Roman gods who gave protection against supernatural forces. The *Lar familiaris* (or in the plural, *Lares*



*familiares*) protected the family. There were also *Lares* that protected crossroads (*Lares compitales*).

**Larnax:** A casket or ossuary to hold the bones and other remains of a corpse after it was burned on the funeral pyre.

**Late Antiquity:** The period of the fourth and fifth centuries C.E.

**Latona:** The Roman name for Leto, the mother of Apollo and Diana.

**Legion:** The standard unit of the Roman army. It numbered five thousand foot-soldiers and a mounted body-guard of one hundred and twenty men, if at full strength.

**Lekythos:** (plural: *lekythoi*) A tall flask with a single handle and a narrow neck for holding oil and unguents.

**Lenaea:** A festival in honor of Dionysus celebrated in January where dramatic performances were produced. Originally it seems that comedy was preferred to tragedy. The name comes from *lene*, meaning “maenad.”

**Libation:** An offering to a god before eating or drinking. Before drinking wine, which was a part of a meal, a little of it was poured on the floor as an offering to the *Agathos Daimon* (Good Luck) to establish communion with him.

**Light-Well:** A small courtyard or an open shaft inside a building to let in light and air.

**Linear A:** A form of writing using a syllabic alphabet used in Minoan Crete. The language has not yet been deciphered.

**Linear B:** A form of writing using a syllabic alphabet used in the Mycenaean period for writing Greek.

**Lintel:** A horizontal beam bridging the top of a doorway or window in a wall.

**Lions' Gate:** The main gateway through the thirteenth century B.C.E. fortification wall at Mycenae, which has a relieving triangle above the massive lintel block and in the triangle, a relief sculpture, two lions with their heads missing, standing on an altar with a pillar between them which probably had some religious significance.

**Lituus:** A long-stemmed horn with a hook-shaped bell that was bent backwards. Used for military music in Rome.

**Logographos:** A writer of prose. In the fourth century B.C.E. the word designated a ghostwriter for speeches delivered by someone else.

**Logos:** A rational, logical account or explanation. For Heraclitus, the logos had the broader sense of a rational, ordering principle that remains constant in spite of all the apparent changes in the world.

**Lorica segmentata:** Articulated armor made of iron plates developed in the reign of the emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.). It was the body armor of Roman legionary soldiers—auxiliary troops are generally shown wearing chain mail or scale armor.

**Loutrophoros:** A tall vase for holding water.

**Ludi Scaenici:** Theatrical shows in Rome.

**Lupercal:** A grotto on the Palatine Hill in Rome sacred to Lupercus, identified with Pan.

**Lupercalia:** A festival held every February in Rome when *Luperci*, wearing only a girdle around their loins, ran around the city boundaries striking women whom they met in a ceremony supposed to make them fertile.

**Luperci:** Priests of Lupercus, identified with Lycean Pan (Pan the wolf-god) who was thought to keep the flocks and herds safe from wolves. At first these priests were chosen from young herdsmen but later young Romans of high rank might serve as *Luperci*.

**Lustral Basin:** A small, rectangular space generally thought to have a religious purpose, that is accessible from above by a short stairway.

**Lyceum:** The grove just outside Athens, sacred to Apollo Lyceus and the Muses, where Aristotle leased some buildings and founded a school in 335 B.C.E.

**Lyre:** Stringed instrument with a tortoise shell for a sound-box, or with a wooden sound-box shaped like a tortoise shell.

**Lyric poetry:** A term coined by critics in the Hellenistic period for early poetry intended to be sung accompanied by a stringed instrument or by the *aulos*, either separately or in combination. There were two types: choral lyric sung by a choir or solo lyric sung by an individual performer.

**Macellum:** A Roman market building for selling meat.

**Maeander:** A rectilinear, decorative motif that continuously winds backwards and forwards.

**Maecenas:** The wealthy unofficial “Minister of Public Relations and Propaganda” of the emperor Augustus who was the patron of the poets Vergil, Horace and Propertius as well as the pantomime, Bathyllus of Alexandria.

**Maenads:** Female followers of the god Dionysus. In art they are often depicted dancing ecstatically.

- Magna Graecia:** The term (Latin) means “Great Greece,” and it is applied to the Greek settlements in southern Italy, and sometimes it includes Italy as well.
- Mallia:** Site of a Minoan palace on the north coast road of Crete, some twenty-five miles east of Herakleion. The ancient name is unknown.
- Mausoleum of Galla Placidia:** An oratory or place of prayer in Ravenna which, according to tradition which may be wrong, is the mausoleum of Galla Placidia, half-sister of the emperor Honorius and after Honorius’ death, regent on behalf of her son. The interior has some splendid examples of mosaics of the fifth century C.E., including one showing Christ as the Good Shepherd, and another showing the martyrdom of St. Lawrence.
- Megalensia:** A procession and festival held in republican Rome in honor of Cybele the *Magna Mater* (Great Mother), where dramatic presentations were staged.
- Megaron:** The great hall of a Mycenaean palace with a hearth in the center, a vestibule and a porch with columns over the front entrance.
- Mêkhanê:** (in Latin *machina*) Part of the stage machinery of the Greek and Roman stage. The “machine” was a crane used for the entrances of actors playing gods who were lowered from Heaven, or for actors making exits to Heaven.
- Metempsychosis:** The rebirth of the soul in other bodies, a doctrine of the Pythagorean philosophers. Also called “Transmigration of Souls.”
- Metope:** A slab, often blank but sometimes decorated with relief sculptures, between two triglyphs of a Doric frieze.
- Mime:** An imitative performance. Skits in archaic and classical Greece acted out with dialogue and sometimes song and dance presenting short scenes from daily life. In the Hellenistic period, authors such as Theocritus and Herondas wrote literary mimes, intended to be read or for semi-dramatic recitation. In Rome mime troupes produced extempore performances of improbable themes. Actors, who were both men and women, wore no masks. The mimes continued to be popular even after Bathyllus and Pylades introduced the much more elaborate pantomime in the Augustan Age.
- Mimus:** A mime actor. A mime actress was a “mima.”
- Minoan:** The label applied to the culture of prehistoric Crete (3000–1100 B.C.E.), taken from the name of the legendary king Minos of Crete. The Minoan period is subdivided into “Early Minoan” (3000–2000 B.C.E.), “Middle Minoan” (2000–1550 B.C.E.), and “Late Minoan” (1550–1100 B.C.E.).
- Molding:** In architecture, a continuous decorative motif.
- Monodia:** A song sung as a solo.
- Mousike:** “Arts belonging to the Muses,” which include not only music in the modern sense of the word but dancing, poetry and literature in general.
- Muses:** Greek deities of cultural and intellectual pursuits.
- Museum:** A place connected with the arts of the Muses. The most famous Museum in the ancient world was a think-tank in Alexandria founded by Ptolemy, the first king of Egypt, which in its heyday housed about one hundred research scholars, supported by the Ptolemaic kings and later by Roman emperors. It should not be confused with the Alexandrian Library.
- Mycenae:** A Bronze Age citadel dominating the Argive plain in the Peloponnesus. Legend makes it the capital city of King Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek forces who fought in the Trojan War. Heinrich Schliemann’s excavations at Mycenae in the 1870s first revealed the Bronze Age culture of Greece, and the term “Mycenaean” is often used for the civilization of the Late Helladic Period.
- Naos:** The main room of a Greek temple; the *cella*.
- Naxian marble:** A white marble quarried on the island of Naxos in the Aegean Sea.
- Nemean Games:** A Panhellenic athletic contest held at the sanctuary of Zeus of Nemea every two years. The prize was a crown of wild celery.
- Neolithic Age:** The “New Stone Age.” Polished stone and flint are used for tools and weapons.
- Nous:** The divine mind that controls all events and processes in the universe according to the theory of Anaxagoras.
- Numismatics:** The study of coins.
- Obelisk:** A four-sided shaft, tapering towards the top, ending in a pyramidal point, which appeared in Egypt during the period of the Old Kingdom as a symbol of the sun-god Re. A number of Egyptian obelisks were brought to Rome by various emperors and erected there.
- Obol:** An iron spit used for roasting meat over a fire. The obol was also the smallest Greek unit of currency. Six obols equalled a “drachma” (meaning literally a “handful”).
- Obsidian:** Black volcanic glass used in the Neolithic Period to make sharp blades.
- Ode:** A song, often choral. The term was used by the Latin poet Horace for his lyric poems written in meters borrowed from Sappho and Alcaeus.

- Odeum:** From the Greek, *Oideion*. A small theater or roofed hall for musical performances and competitions.
- Oenochoe:** Vase used for pouring liquids, usually wine.
- Oikos:** The household, a concept that included all family members, the husband, wife, and children, as well as slaves, animals and property.
- Oligarchy:** Rule by a select group.
- Olympian Gods:** The original list of the twelve Olympian gods consisted of Zeus, his wife Hera, Athena, Artemis, Apollo, Ares, Aphrodite, Hestia, Hephaestus, Poseidon, Demeter, Hermes and Hestia. Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, was soon displaced by Dionysus. In Latin literature, these gods were given Roman names: Zeus =Jupiter, Hera =Juno, Athena =Minerva, Artemis =Diana, Apollo remained Apollo, Hestia =Vesta, Hephaestus =Vulcan, Poseidon =Neptune, Demeter =Ceres, Hermes =Mercury and Dionysus =Bacchus.
- Olympic Games:** Panhellenic games held every four years, beginning in 776 B.C.E., in honor of Olympian Zeus, at his sanctuary between the rivers Alpheus and Cladeus in the territory of the city-state of Elis in the northwest Peloponnesus. The prizes were crowns of wild olive.
- Omphalos:** A sacred stone at Delphi marking the navel of the earth. Zeus was supposed to have sent two eagles to fly from the two ends of the earth and they met in the middle at Delphi.
- Opisthodomus:** The back porch of a Greek temple.
- Opus caementicium:** Roman masonry of undressed stone laid in concrete.
- Opus incertum:** A concrete wall faced with irregularly-shaped undressed blocks of small stones.
- Opus reticulatum:** A facing of a Roman concrete wall using diamond-shaped stones.
- Opus sectile:** Irregular slabs of colored marble embedded in concrete, used mainly for floors.
- Opus signinum:** Concrete floor with fragments of terracotta, stone or marble pounded into it before the concrete had set.
- Opus spicatum:** Roman brick flooring laid out in a herringbone pattern.
- Oracle:** The response of a god to a question put to him by a worshiper. Depending upon the context, the term might also mean an oracular shrine, or the body of priests that administered the shrine.
- Orchestra:** The level horseshoe-shaped area of the Greek theater between the seats of the auditorium and the stage building.
- Orientalizing Period:** In Greek cultural history, the seventh century B.C.E. when the influence of Asian artistic traditions was particularly strong.
- Orthostate:** An upright slab, higher than the other blocks of masonry, usually placed at the foot of a wall, or a course of masonry of such blocks.
- Oscan:** The Italic dialect spoken by the Sabellian peoples who lived in central and southern Italy.
- Ossuary:** A receptacle for the bones or ashes of the dead.
- Paeon:** A hymn sung particularly to Apollo, but also to Zeus and Poseidon. It might be a hymn of thanksgiving, or it might have a military purpose—the Spartans and other Dorian Greeks sang paeans. Paeans might also be sung at banquets, after the libations were poured and before the feast began.
- Palaeolithic Period:** The “Old Stone Age,” when roughly-shaped, unpolished stone and flint tools and weapons were used.
- Palaestra:** An exercise ground used for wrestling, boxing, ball-games and similar sports.
- Palatine Hill:** A flat-topped hill on the south side of the Roman Forum where the legendary founder of Rome founded his settlement in 753 B.C.E. Later the Roman emperors built their palaces there, with the result that the word *palatium* came to mean “palace.”
- Pallium:** The Latin word for the Greek cloak known as the *himation*.
- Palmette:** A design consisting of leaves arranged like a palm shoot.
- Pan:** A woodland god native to Arcadia in the central Peloponnesus. Pan had a human body as far as the loins and goat’s legs, horns and ears. In Athens he had a cave-shrine under the Acropolis and yearly sacrifices and a torch-race were held in his honor.
- Panathenaea:** An annual festival in Athens honoring Athena. Every four years the Panathenaea was opened to non-Athenians who were allowed to compete in the events—this festival was known as the “Greater Panathenaea.” The prize for victors was always a black-figure amphora filled with olive oil.
- Panhellenic:** Encompassing all of Greece.
- Panta rhei:** A saying attributed to the philosopher Heraclitus, meaning “all things are in flux” or “everything flows.”

It means that the world is in a constant state of change, like the water in a stream driven by the current.

**Parabasis:** The section of an Old Comedy where the chorus comes forward towards the audience and addresses it directly, speaking on behalf of the author.

**Paradox:** An apparently sound argument that leads to an unacceptable conclusion.

**Parian marble:** A pure white marble with flecks of mica quarried on the island of Paros in the Aegean Sea.

**Parodos:** The song which the chorus in a Greek classical drama sang as it made its entry into the orchestra of the theater.

**Parthenia:** Songs sung and danced by young, unmarried girls to the accompaniment of the *aulos*.

**Parthians:** An Iranian people who expanded their power over Mesopotamia and the Near East in the second century B.C.E. at the expense of the Seleucid Empire. The last Parthian king was overthrown in 227 C.E. by the Persians led by the Sassanid family from Persepolis.

**Pediment:** The triangular space formed by the gable at each end of a temple.

**Pedimental Sculptures:** Sculpted figures, carved either free-standing or in relief, which fill the tympanum, that is, the space of the pediment.

**Peloponnesus:** The region of the Greek mainland south of the Isthmus of Corinth.

**Penates:** Roman gods who guarded the family larder or food storehouse.

**Pentelic marble:** White marble from Mt. Pentelikon near Athens. It contains iron oxide and turns the color of honey over time when it is exposed to the air.

**Peplophoros:** (plural: *peplophoroi*) A woman who wore a peplos.

**Peplos:** A woman's garment consisting of a rectangular piece of cloth draped around the body and fastened with brooches at the shoulders.

**Periblema:** Greek clothing, such as the *himation*, designed to be wrapped around the body.

**Perioikoi:** "Those dwelling round about"; people ethnically akin to the Spartiates but not full citizens who lived in separate communities in Laconia with a degree of self-government.

**Peripatetic School:** The Aristotelian school of philosophy. It took its name from the "Peripatos," the covered

walking-place or courtyard which was one of the buildings which Aristotle leased at the Lyceum to found his school.

**Peripteral:** Surrounded by a row of columns.

**Peristyle:** A row of columns surrounding a building such as a temple.

**Petamos:** A man's hat made of felt, with a crown and a broad brim, giving protection from the sun.

**Phaistos:** Site of a Minoan palace in south-central Crete, destroyed about 1500 B.C.E.

**Phlyax:** (1) A type of comic drama with much buffoonery that was popular in south Italy, or (2) an actor who played in a *phlyax* drama.

**Phorminx:** An ancient stringed instrument strummed with a plectrum, which is mentioned in the poems of Homer.

**Pilos:** A felt cap.

**Piscina:** Fish-pool. The term was used for pools in Roman baths or swimming pools in palaestras, or of fish-tanks in private gardens.

**Pithos:** A massive, earthenware jar for storage.

**Plataea:** The little city-state on the southern fringe of Boeotia, on the north edge of Mt. Cithaeron, which maintained its independence from Thebes by becoming an ally of Athens, probably in 519 B.C.E.

**Pnyx:** The place in Athens where the assembly (*ekklesia*) met.

**Polis:** A "city-state," including the chief urban center which was the seat of government, and the agricultural region round about it which the *polis* ruled.

**Politeia:** The constitution of a *polis*.

**Pompeii:** A city with a population of about 20,000, near the Gulf of Naples on the river Sarno, which was buried by ash and debris from the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E.

**Poros:** Term used in Greek archaeology for "tufa."

**Porphyry:** A hard, fine-grained dark-red or purplish rock quarried in Egypt, favored for portraits of Roman emperors.

**Porticus:** A colonnade; the Latin translation of the Greek "stoa."

**Postern Gate:** A small gate or door at the back of a building or a building complex.

**Pozzolana:** A fine volcanic sand that was used for quick-drying cement. *Pozzolana* cement will set under water and hence is suitable for constructing piers and moles.

**Presocratic:** A label given to the Greek philosophers who generally predated Socrates, who interested themselves in natural philosophy, that is, early science.

**Prime Mover:** God, in the philosophy of Aristotle, seen as the efficient and the final cause of the universe.

**Principate:** The term given to the government instituted by the emperor Augustus who entered into an agreement with the Roman senate in 27 B.C.E. whereby the senate would be responsible for governing those provinces of the empire which were peaceful, while those provinces where significant numbers of troops had to be posted would be ruled by Augustus himself who would appoint legates to govern them.

**Proconnesian Marble:** Marble from Proconnesus in northern Greece, much favored for marble sarcophagi in the later Roman Empire.

**Pronaos:** The front porch of a Greek temple.

**Propylon:** (plural: Propylaea) A monumental entrance to a *temenos*. The plural form is used if there is more than one door.

**Prostas:** A south-facing room off the courtyard of a Greek house that allowed for maximum exposure to the winter sun.

**Prothesis:** Lying in state and ritual mourning of a dead person, commonly depicted on Late Geometric pottery.

**Protogeometric:** A type of pottery dating to c. 1050–900 B.C.E. marked by simple decorations of bands and circles. The shapes of the pots mostly derive from the Mycenaean age.

**Protome:** Three-dimensional representation of the head and forepart of an animal, or head and upper part of a human body, usually as a decoration applied to a wall or other flat surface.

**Province:** The sphere of action of any Roman magistrate possessing *imperium* (the right to command an army) who exercised authority as a representative of Rome. The word came to be associated with Roman overseas possessions whose inhabitants paid tribute to Rome.

**Prytaneion:** The assembly hall of the ruling council of a Greek city-state.

**Pseudo-Dipteral:** In architecture, a building plan with a row of columns on all sides, but with unused space between the colonnade and the wall for a second row of columns.

**Ptolemaic Dynasty:** The royal family, descended from Ptolemy, son of Lagus, one of Alexander the Great's generals, who ruled Egypt until its last representative, Cleopatra VII, was dethroned in 30 B.C.E. and Egypt was annexed by Rome.

**Pylos:** According to Homer, the seat of the Homeric hero Nestor in the north-west Peloponnesus. In 1939, excavators at Ano Englianos above the Bay of Navarino revealed a Mycenaean palace, destroyed suddenly by fire about 1200 B.C.E., which has been called "Nestor's Palace."

**Pyrrhic Dance.** A war dance; the national dance of Sparta. In the Roman period, Pyrrhic dances were sometimes staged as spectacles in theaters and amphitheaters.

**Pyxis:** A cosmetic or jewelry box with a lid.

**Quadriga:** A sculpture of a chariot with two wheels drawn by four horses.

**Quirites:** Originally the citizens of the Sabine town of Cures, but once the Sabines and Romans united into one community the Romans began to call themselves "Romans and Quirites." Eventually the two terms became virtual synonyms.

**Raking cornice:** The slanting cornice at the top of the pediment of a temple, which forms the upper part of the gable. Also called a "raking geison."

**Ravenna:** The court of the western Roman emperors moved from Milan to Ravenna on the north-east coast of Italy at the beginning of the fifth century C.E., in the reign of Honorius (393–423 C.E.). The early Christian churches of the city provide us with our best examples of mosaic art in Late Antiquity.

**Red-Figure Technique:** A method of painting pottery which was the opposite of black-figure technique: the background was black with figures left the color of the clay. Contours and interior details were added with relief lines or dilute slip.

**Register:** In painting, a horizontal band or frieze decorated with ornament or figures.

**Relieving Triangle:** A triangular space left in the masonry above the lintel of a door to take some of the weight off the lintel block.

**Repoussé:** Metalwork decoration in relief, made by beating the metal from behind.

**Revetment:** A wall built to hold back earth. When the term is used in architecture, it means a facing of stone, brick or wood.

- Rhyton:** A drinking-horn, or a ritual pouring vessel sometimes in the shape of an animal head.
- Ridge pole:** The roof beam; the beam across the top of a ridge roof.
- Roman Republican Period:** The term given to the period of Roman history from the expulsion of the Etruscan kings in 510 B.C.E. to the civil war between Julius Caesar and the so-called “republicans” led by Pompey, which ended in 45 B.C.E. with Caesar’s last victory at Munda in Spain.
- Rostra:** The speaker’s platform in the Roman Forum, so called because it was decorated by the rams (*rostra*) of enemy warships captured by the Romans in an early naval battle. In English, the singular form “rostrum” is used to mean a speaker’s platform.
- Rubble:** Rough stone-work.
- Rural Dionysia:** Festivals in honor of Dionysus held in many villages in Attica, where dramatic performances were staged, borrowed, in the classical period, from the City Dionysia or the Lenaea festivals.
- Sabines:** An Italic people who probably spoke Oscan who lived in villages north-east of Rome. Rome derived some of her religious rites from the Sabines.
- Sacred Way:** A processional road leading to a sanctuary. The most famous Sacred Way was the road leading through the Roman Forum to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the hill known as the Capitulum.
- Salpinx:** A trumpet used in battle. A salpinx might also be used in some religious ceremonies.
- Sanctuary:** A sacred space defined by a boundary wall, with temple(s), altar(s), stoa(s), treasuries to store sacred objects, and other dependent buildings, where cult activities took place.
- Sarcophagus:** (plural: sarcophagi) A coffin made of stone, terracotta or wood.
- Satura:** *Satura* is translated from the Latin as “satire,” but it is not satire in the English sense of the word. Rather it is a medley, that is, a poem of medium length that deals with a number of subjects often taken from everyday life. The Latin poet Horace claimed the *satura* as the one literary genre that was invented by the Romans.
- Saturnine meter:** The earliest meter used for Latin verse, which may have had an accentual rhythm. It was used by the early Latin poets Livius Andronicus and Naevius.
- Satyrs:** Spirits of wild life from the forests and hills, often shown as attendants of the god Dionysus. At least from the fourth century B.C.E. onwards, satyrs are usually shown as youthful, half-man, half-goat creatures.
- Satyr play:** A play with a chorus of satyrs which a tragic poet staged after the presentation of his tragic trilogy, parodying a tale from Greek mythology.
- Scabellum:** A foot-clapper which pipers used to mark the beat of the dance music that they were playing.
- Seleucid Empire:** The empire founded by one of Alexander the Great’s generals, Seleucus I Nicator, which at his death in 280 B.C.E. stretched from Macedon to Iran. By the peace of Apamea in 188 B.C.E. Rome forced the Seleucid Empire to give up Asia Minor and thereafter the empire went into slow decline.
- Shaft Grave:** A grave for multiple burial, cut as a rectangular shaft in the rock. Two shaft-grave circles have been discovered at Mycenae.
- Sikinnis:** The dance associated with the satyr play.
- Silenus:** (plural: Sileni) Often confused with satyrs. However from the sixth century B.C.E. on, sileni are shown as shaggy, bearded men with horses’ ears and sometimes horses’ tails. Sileni were companions of Dionysus. In satyr plays sileni were treated as drunkards and cowards.
- Sistrum:** A musical instrument used in the cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis. It was a kind of rattle with a metallic sound like castanets.
- Skene:** The literal meaning is a tent, for in the earliest dramatic productions, a tent must have served as the dressing-room. In the developed Greek theater, the *skene* was the “scene-building” where there were dressing-rooms for the actors and storage space for props.
- Skolion:** A drinking-song.
- Skyphos:** A two-handled drinking cup, not as deep as the *kantharos* or *kotyle* but deeper than a *kylix*.
- Slip:** A coat of clay, of a different constitution from the clay of the pot itself, which is applied to cover the surface of the pot before firing. Also used to join together parts of a pot that are fired separately.
- Soffit:** The underside of a lintel, cornice or arch.
- Sophist:** A teacher of rhetoric and philosophy in classical Greece who gave instruction to pupils and charged tuition fees.
- Spartiates:** The warrior class that governed Sparta, educated from youth to be soldiers and supported by helots or serfs who worked their farms and gave them half the produce.

- Spina:** A low wall dividing a circus or hippodrome lengthwise, so that the chariots could race down one side of the racecourse, turn and then race up the other side.
- Stadium:** The Greek *stadion* was 600 Greek feet (184.9 meters or 606.7 feet). This was exactly the length of the single-course foot race in the Olympic Games and thus this was the length of the Olympic stadium or race course. In the Roman period, stadiums acquired stone seats for spectators, though never at Olympia.
- Stasimon:** A “standing song.” Any ode sung by the chorus of a Greek drama after the parodos.
- Steatite:** A soft stone made of compacted talc (magnesium silicate), sometimes called soapstone. In Minoan Crete it was used for carving vessels, such as the “Harvester Vase.”
- Stele:** (plural: stelai) A vertical slab of stone with an inscription and often decorated, the normal use of which was as a grave marker.
- Stereobate:** The lower two steps of the three-stepped foundation of a stone temple.
- Stirrup Jar:** A vessel, normally globular in shape, with a small double handle like a stirrup and a thin spout, common in the Late Bronze Age.
- Stoa:** A long, rectangular colonnaded building of one or two stories found in marketplaces or sanctuaries. In Late Antiquity, the term may designate any building with a colonnade. The term, “The Stoa” was sometimes used to designate the Stoic School of Philosophy because the founder of the Stoic School, Zeno of Citium, lacking the wherewithal to lease a hall for his lectures, gave them in the *Stoa Poikilē* (Painted Stoa) in the Athenian *agora* (marketplace).
- Stoa of Attalus:** A stoa erected on the edge of the Athenian *agora* (marketplace) by King Attalus II of Pergamum (159–138 B.C.E.). It was reconstructed in 1953–1956 on its original foundations by the American School of Classical Studies in Athens and is now used as a museum.
- Stoa Poikilē:** The “Painted Stoa.” A stoa on the north side of the Athenian *agora* erected about 460 B.C.E., which housed paintings by leading artists of the fifth century B.C.E., including Polygnotus and Micon.
- Stola:** Long, female garment worn by Roman married women, reaching from the neck to the ankles.
- Stucco:** Plaster used for coating walls.
- Stylobate:** The uppermost step of the three-stepped platform that formed the foundation of a temple. The columns stood on the stylobate.
- Styx:** One of nine rivers in the Underworld. If the gods took an oath by the River Styx, they feared to break it, for the punishment was terrible.
- Symposium:** An all-male drinking party in Greece where participants sang songs, recited poems and were entertained by musicians and dancers.
- Syncretism:** Identification of one god with another, as of Apollo and the Sun-god, Helios.
- Syracuse:** A Greek colony founded by Corinth on the east coast of Sicily in 734 B.C.E. With its magnificent harbor, Syracuse became the strongest and most prosperous Greek city in Sicily and a center of Greek culture.
- Syrinx:** Panpipes. A group of hollow reeds or pipes bound together and tuned by cutting the pipes to the proper length to produce a fully graduated musical scale. The syrinx was a favorite instrument of shepherds.
- Syssitia:** The dining clubs in Sparta where Spartiates who were club members ate their meals together.
- Tablinum:** A room in a Roman house opening on to the rear of the *atrium*.
- Tanagra:** The chief town of eastern Boeotia with a territory extending to the sea. It is best known for the so-called “Tanagra figurines,” lively little Hellenistic terracotta figures of women and groups from daily life that are found in the graves at Tanagra.
- Tartarus:** The region of the Underworld where the souls of evil persons were subjected to terrible punishment.
- Telamon:** A male figure, used in place of a column, like a caryatid.
- Temenos:** A hallowed segment of land with defined boundaries which was consecrated to a god, where a temple and an altar for sacrifice might be built, though a *temenos* could exist with no structure on it.
- Tepidarium:** The warm room of a Roman bath-house where warm water was available for bathing.
- Terpsichore:** The Muse who presides over dancing.
- Terracotta:** Hard, brown-red earthenware, usually without a glaze, used for pots, statuettes, and ornamental facings on buildings.
- Terra sigillata:** Red-glazed table ware made in molds which imitates metal-ware with embossed decoration. It was the common table ware of the Roman Empire. Also known as “Samian Ware” and “Arretine Ware.”
- Tesserae:** Small pieces of colored marble or glass used for making mosaics.

- Tetrarchy:** The type of imperial government introduced by the emperor Diocletian (284–305 C.E.) where he took a junior emperor, also called an Augustus, and in addition, each Augustus took a junior colleague called a Caesar.
- Tetrastyle:** With four columns at the front, or at the front and back.
- Thalamos:** Women’s quarters of a Greek house.
- Theogony:** The origin of the gods, or the genealogy of the gods, that is, an account of their ancestry.
- Theophany:** A manifestation of a god to man by actually appearing on earth.
- Thermae:** Warm springs or warm baths. In Rome and other cities of the empire, great public buildings known as “Thermae” were constructed which not only served as public baths but also were cultural centers.
- Thesmophoria:** A women’s festival celebrated everywhere in Greece in the autumn, intended to promote the fertility of the grain which had just been sown.
- Tholos:** A circular building, or a Mycenaean “beehive” tomb, circular in plan, roofed with a false vault.
- Thymele:** A place for sacrifice. In the Athenian theater, it was an altar-shaped platform in the middle of the orchestra where the leader of the chorus stood.
- Tibia:** In Rome, originally a pipe made of bone with three or four finger-holes; later a double-pipe reed instrument like the Greek *aulos* with two pipes made of silver, boxwood or ivory. It was a national ritual instrument of the Romans and its playing was intended to drown out any malevolent noises during the Roman sacrificial rites which were rigidly prescribed.
- Tibiae pares:** The Latin name for a double *aulos* with pipes of equal length that were evidently played in unison. Pipes of unequal length were evidently tuned to play in harmony. This was the instrument that provided the music for the plays of Plautus and Terence.
- Tibicines:** Tibia players, whose professional organization was one of the oldest in Rome.
- Tiebeam:** A piece of timber tying together rafters in a roof, or securing masonry in a wall.
- Tiryns:** Site of a Mycenaean citadel close by modern Navplion in Greece, dating to 1400–1200 B.C.E. Legend makes Heracles ruler of Tiryns.
- Toga:** The Roman national dress: an outer garment consisting of a single piece of cloth with one rounded edge which was wrapped around the body.
- Toga candida:** A white toga, made whiter by being rubbed with chalk, which was worn by a candidate for office.
- Toga praetexta:** A toga ornamented with a purple stripe, worn by free-born children, and by Roman magistrates.
- Toga pulla:** A dark-grey toga worn by mourners.
- Toga pura:** An unornamented toga worn by a youth who had laid aside his “toga praetexta” at a coming-of-age ceremony.
- Torsion:** In figural art, the turning or twisting of the human body.
- Trabeated:** A term in architecture for a post-and-beam building—one that depends on horizontal beams and vertical posts.
- Tragedy:** A poetic drama about the vicissitudes of a mythical hero, with an unhappy ending.
- Tragic Trilogy:** A set of three tragedies by a tragic poet that was presented on a single day of a dramatic festival such as the City Dionysia in Athens. The plots of the tragedies need not deal with the same theme.
- Triclinium:** The dining room in a Roman house. In later Roman houses, it becomes the chief reception room.
- Triglyph:** A slab with three grooves carved in it. In the frieze of a Doric temple, a triglyph was placed over each column and another between the columns. The slab between the triglyphs was called a “metope.”
- Trireme:** The standard warship of the late Archaic and Classical periods of Greece. It was a galley with a ram at the bow, which was rowed by about 170 rowers arrayed in three banks of oars on each side.
- Triumphal Arch:** A monumental archway built usually to commemorate a victory.
- Trompe-l’oeil:** A French term for painting so true to life that it seems to be real. Examples of *trompe-l’oeil* painting have been found in Second Style wall painting from Pompeii, where the landscape painting gives the impression that the room opens on to a garden.
- Tuba:** A Roman straight war-trumpet, as distinguished from the *cornu* which was curved. Besides its military use, it was also used in religious festivals, public games, and funerals.
- Tufa:** A porous limestone. It underlies Rome and was ideal for tunneling catacombs.
- Tunica:** A tunic worn by the Romans as an undergarment.



**Tyche:** Chance, or luck. Sometimes “Tyche” is used almost with the meaning of “Providence.”

**Tympanum:** The triangular space formed by the gable at each end of the temple. Also called a “pediment.”

**Verde antico:** A green marble.

**Vergina:** Ancient Aegae, the capital of Macedon before it was moved to Pella in 399 B.C.E. Aegae remained the place where the kings of Macedon were buried, and in 1977 a Greek archeologist discovered there a tomb which he identified as that of Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great.

**Villa:** A country-house, or a farm in the Roman Empire.

**Villa maritima:** A seaside villa.

**Villa of the Papyri:** A suburban villa outside Herculaneum which was overwhelmed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E. It took its name from a cache of carbonized

papyri discovered there when it was excavated in 1752. It is the model for the Getty Museum in San Francisco.

**Volute:** A spiral carving on the face and back of an Ionic capital.

**Vousoir:** A wedge-shaped stone which forms part of an arch. The vousoir at the top of the arch is the keystone.

**Wanax:** A title meaning “lord,” held by the dynasts who ruled from the palaces of the Mycenaean period. The first letter of the name, a *digamma* with the sound “w” became obsolete in classical Greek where the word was spelled *anax*; and the term was applied only to gods, or, in Homer’s *Iliad*, to Agamemnon, high king of Mycenae.

**Xoanon:** Primitive, aniconic statue made of wood, usually an ancient cult statue in a temple.

**Zakros:** Site of a Minoan palace on the eastern shore of Crete, destroyed violently about 1500 B.C.E.



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## MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES

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### GENERAL

The Ancient City of Athens (<http://www.indiana.edu/~kglowack/athens/>)—The Ancient City of Athens contains links for the most important sites and monuments, essays, an Internet tour of the city, teaching and learning resources for students and teachers, and related links. Take a “virtual” visit to Athens and see the setting of history, culture, and literature come alive.

Atrium (<http://web.idirect.com/~atrium/>)—Atrium includes “This Day in History,” which provides the Roman date and important events that occurred on any given day; “The Ancient World on Television,” a list of television programs about antiquity on the History Channel, The Learning Channel, PBS, and network series; Archaeology’s Top 100, and many other resources.

Diotima (<http://www.stoa.org/diotima/>)—Diotima, a storehouse of resources for the study of women and gender in the ancient world, fulfills many functions. It contains bibliographies from ancient gender and family courses from institutions across the country as well as bibliographies and research guides to dozens of topics related to the study of men and women, a refereed journal section with essays published by leading scholars, a database for biblical studies, and a catalog of imagery.

Perseus Digital Library (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>)—The Perseus Digital Library provided by Tufts University is a primary source for a wide range of materials, including ancient texts and illustrations of objects and monuments. There are a number of classical sites included with extensive illustrations of the ruins and monuments.

Providence College’s page on Roman Art and Architecture (<http://www.providence.edu/dwc/romaarch.htm>)—This website is a critical list of other websites on Roman architecture with information on their content and comments on their quality and characteristics.

Vroma (<http://www.vroma.org/>)—Vroma, a virtual community for teaching and learning Classics, includes games, photos, and interactive media. The website allows users to become a Roman character and interact with other characters in a virtual Rome circa 150 C.E.

Women’s Life in Greece and Rome (<http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/wlgr/>)—This is the on-line searchable version of *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome. A Source Book in Translation*, edited and translated by Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, 2nd. ed. (Baltimore, Md.: 1992). This is a useful compilation of primary sources for the study of women in Ancient Greece and Rome.

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### ARCHITECTURE AND VISUAL ARTS

The American School at Rome (<http://www.aarome.org/programs/classical.htm>)—This site is useful for the study of Roman art, history, and archaeology.

The American School of Classical Studies at Athens (<http://www.ascsa.edu.gr/>)—This website is a principal resource for research on the art, history, and archaeology of Greece and the Greek world from pre-Hellenic times to the present. Connected to it is the website of the Athenian Agora Excavations (<http://www.agathe.gr/>) that offers an opportunity to visit an excavation in

progress, the work that has been done, as well as the reconstruction of the stoa carried out by the American School in Athens.

Classical Architecture at Loggia (<http://www.loggia.com/designarts/architecture/classical.html>)—This website is a particularly useful site for illustrations of Greek and Roman architecture. Often several views of a building and its situation in a context are included.

The Getty Museum Collections (<http://www.getty.edu/art/collections/bio/a595-1.html>)— This website from the Getty Museum in Los Angeles presents a biography of the Marsyas Painter, the last of the great Athenian vase painters working in the red-figure style. There is also an image of a work attributed to the Marsyas Painter.

The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs page on Greek Art and Architecture (<http://harpy.uccs.edu/greek/greek.html>)—The University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, sponsors this website on Greek architecture and art with many good links to other sites.

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## FASHION

Illustrated History of the Roman Empire (<http://www.roman-empire.net/society/soc-dress.html>)—The site contains pictures of Roman dress and brief descriptions, including short sections on footwear, hairstyles, and beards.

Metropolitan Museum of Art (<http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/department.asp?dep=13>)—This is a web page sponsored by the Metropolitan Museum in New York. It offers pictures of Greek vases and sculpture to illustrate various types of dress.

Roman Clothing I and II (<http://www.vroma.org/~bmcmanus/clothing.html>)—This site is recommended for its section on fashionable Roman hairstyles and jewelry. There are numerous connections to sites with illustrations.

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## MUSIC

Ancient Greek and Roman Music, Selected Bibliography (<http://titan.iwu.edu/&thksim;classics/music.html>)— This website contains several citations for further research on Ancient Greek and Roman music.

Ancient Greek Music at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (<http://www.oeaw.ac.at/kal/agm/>)—This site contains all published fragments of Ancient Greek music which contain more than a few scattered notes. All of them are recorded under the use of tunings whose exact ratios

have been transmitted by ancient theoreticians (of the Pythagorean school, most of them cited by Ptolemaios). Instruments and speed are chosen by the author. The exact sound depends on the hard- and software used.

*Music from Ancient Rome, Vol 1. Wind Instruments.* Walter/Ravenstein, Natalia van Maioli, Luce Maioli, et al. (Amiata #1396, 1996)—This CD includes performances of primarily cultic music from Imperial Rome, based on the research of Synaulia and Walter Maioli, performed on reconstructions of ancient pipes, trumpets, and other aerophones. Includes notes.

*Music from Ancient Rome, Vol 2: String Instruments.* Performed by Synaulia (Amiata #1002, 2002)—This CD includes performances of primarily cultic music from Imperial Rome, based on the research of Synaulia and Walter Maioli, performed on reconstructions of ancient lyres. Includes notes.

*Music of Ancient Greece.* Christodoulos Halaris and instrumental ensemble, vocal soloists (Orata, 1994)—This CD includes Pindar's First Pythionic Hymn, a chorus from Euripedes' Orestes, a chant to Apollo, and a hymn to the Holy Trinity (based on ancient Greek musical theory). Includes 80 pp. booklet.

*Music of the Ancient Greeks.* De Organographia—Gayle Neuman, Philip Neuman, William Gavin. (Pandourion Records, PRCD 1001, 1997)—This CD features ancient Greek music from 500 B.C. to 300 A.D. performed on voice and copies of ancient Greek instruments including kithara, lyra, aulos, syrinx, seistrion, tympanon, pandoura, trichordon, photinx, salpinx, kymbala, and others. Full listing of instrumentation and photos of ancient Greek instruments included.

*Musique de la Grèce antique.* Gregorio Paniagua and Atrium Musicae de Madrid (Harmonia Mundia, 1979)—This CD recreates the music for 22 of the extant fragments of ancient Greek music, performed on modern replicas of ancient instruments. Includes detailed liner notes.

*Musiques de l'Antiquité Grecque.* Annie Bélis and the Kérylos ensemble. (K617, 1996)—This CD includes performances of fifteen fragments of ancient Greek music, including four Mesomedes' songs and the Christian Hymn of Oxyrhynchus.

Oxyrhynchus Online (<http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk/POxy/>)— This online publication of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri from the excavations at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, contains fragments of ancient Greek and Roman literature, music theory, and notated music.

*Sappho de Mytilene.* Angelique Ionatos and Nena Venetsanou (Paris: Tempo, A6168, 1991)—This CD includes poems

of Sappho sung in ancient and modern Greek by two female vocalists. The music is composed by Ionatos, and sounds very Greek (using both ancient and modern instruments). Modern Greek versions are by Nobel laureate Odysseus Elytis. \$18.98 available from Lady-slipper.

The Thesaurus Musicarum Latinarum (TML) (<http://www.music.indiana.edu/tml/start.html>)—The Thesaurus Musicarum Latinarum (TML) is an evolving database of

the entire corpus of Latin music theory written during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The University of Michigan Papyrus Collection (<http://www.lib.umich.edu/pap/>)—This collection contains over 10,000 fragments. The website provides on-line public access to one of the largest collections of papyri in the world and, through the APIS search engine, to other papyrological resources. Musical documents are included in the collection.



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*Through the Eras*

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Medieval Europe  
814–1450

*Kristen Mossler Figg and  
John Block Friedman, Editors*

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# CONTENTS

ABOUT THE BOOK . . . . .	ix	Jean Deschamps . . . . .	57
CONTRIBUTORS . . . . .	xi	Suger . . . . .	58
ERA OVERVIEW . . . . .	xv	William of Sens . . . . .	58
CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD EVENTS . . . . .	xix	Henry Yevele . . . . .	59
CHAPTER 1: ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN		DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	59
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	CHAPTER 2: DANCE	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	5	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	62
TOPICS IN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN		OVERVIEW . . . . .	64
The Influence of the Carolingians . . . . .	7	TOPICS IN DANCE	
Ottonian and Norman Architecture . . . . .	13	Dancing in Medieval Life . . . . .	65
Geometry and Planning . . . . .	19	Sacred and Symbolic Dance . . . . .	67
Construction Techniques . . . . .	22	Conventional Dance Formations and Steps . . . . .	70
Monastic Architecture . . . . .	27	Popular Dances . . . . .	73
Pilgrimage Architecture . . . . .	34	Additional Dance Types . . . . .	79
A New Vision: Saint-Denis and French Church Architecture in the Twelfth Century . . . . .	37	Choreographed Dancing . . . . .	81
Immediate Impact: Notre-Dame and Chartres . . . . .	39	Dancing Masters . . . . .	81
The Gothic in England . . . . .	41	The Basse Danse and the Bassadanza . . . . .	84
The Illuminated Church and the Rayonnant Style . . . . .	45	The Ballo . . . . .	86
The Architecture of Security and Power . . . . .	49	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
The Architecture of Daily Life . . . . .	54	Antonio Cornazano . . . . .	88
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		Domenico da Piacenza . . . . .	88
Bernard of Clairvaux . . . . .	57	Guglielmo Ebreo . . . . .	89
		Raimbaut de Vaqueiras . . . . .	89
		Ippolita Maria Sforza . . . . .	90
		DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	90
		CHAPTER 3: FASHION	
		IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	94
		OVERVIEW . . . . .	96

TOPICS IN FASHION

Fashion and Cultural Change. . . . . 98  
 Peasant Costume . . . . . 101  
 Academic, Clerical, and Religious Dress. . . . . 105  
 Armor and Heraldry . . . . . 109  
 The Rise of Courtly Costume. . . . . 111  
 Early Aristocratic Dress for Women . . . . . 114  
 Intercultural Influences and Regional  
     Distinctions . . . . . 116  
 The New Silhouette for Aristocratic Men. . . . . 121  
 A New Look for Women. . . . . 125  
 The Spread of the Age of Fashion. . . . . 128  
 Dress Codes and Anti-Fashion . . . . . 130  
 Guilds and Confraternities. . . . . 134

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Thomas Conecte. . . . . 137  
 Eleanor of Aquitaine . . . . . 139  
 Francis of Assisi . . . . . 139  
 Philip the Bold. . . . . 140  
 Richard II . . . . . 140

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 141

CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE

IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . . 144

OVERVIEW. . . . . 147

TOPICS IN LITERATURE

Identity and Authority. . . . . 149  
 Heroic Narrative. . . . . 153  
 Heroic Literature in Medieval Scandinavia . . . . . 155  
 The Heroic Narrative in France . . . . . 158  
 The Heroic Narrative in Spain . . . . . 161  
 Origins, Definitions, and Categories of  
     Romance . . . . . 163  
 Courtly Love. . . . . 166  
 Arthurian Romance. . . . . 169  
 Translatio Studii: Sources for Romance . . . . . 173  
 The Non-Narrative Lyric Impulse. . . . . 177  
 Medieval Allegory and Philosophical Texts . . . . . 183  
 Dante Alighieri. . . . . 186  
 The Medieval Dream Vision . . . . . 189  
 William Langland and Piers Plowman . . . . . 192  
 The Medieval Story Collection. . . . . 195  
 The Canterbury Tales . . . . . 199  
 Christine de Pizan. . . . . 201

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Giovanni Boccaccio. . . . . 204  
 Geoffrey Chaucer . . . . . 205  
 Chrétien de Troyes . . . . . 205  
 Dante Alighieri. . . . . 206  
 Marie de France . . . . . 207

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 208

CHAPTER 5: MUSIC

IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . . 212

OVERVIEW. . . . . 214

TOPICS IN MUSIC

Musical Performance. . . . . 215  
 Music in Private and Public . . . . . 218  
 Musical Instruments . . . . . 219  
 Plainsong and the Monophonic Tradition . . . . . 223  
 Additions to the Sacred Repertory. . . . . 226  
 The Monophonic Secular Tradition . . . . . 228  
 Religious Music of the Layman . . . . . 232  
 The Earliest Polyphonic Music. . . . . 234  
 Motets and Canons. . . . . 235  
 Polyphonic Secular Music and National  
     Styles . . . . . 238  
 Dufay and the Late Medieval Ceremonial  
     Motet. . . . . 242  
 Guillaume de Machaut’s Messe de Nostre  
     Dame. . . . . 243  
 The Cyclic Mass Tradition: Missa Caput. . . . . 244  
 Missa Se la face ay pale . . . . . 245  
 The Mechanics of Music: Scales and  
     Treatises . . . . . 245  
 Systems of Notation . . . . . 249

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Adam de la Halle . . . . . 251  
 Bernart de Ventadorn . . . . . 251  
 Guillaume Dufay . . . . . 251  
 Guido of Arezzo . . . . . 252  
 Hildegard of Bingen . . . . . 252  
 Francesco Landini. . . . . 252  
 Guillaume de Machaut . . . . . 253  
 Notker Balbulus . . . . . 253  
 Pietrobono de Burzellis . . . . . 254  
 Philippe de Vitry . . . . . 254  
 Walther von der Vogelweide . . . . . 254

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 255

CHAPTER 6: PHILOSOPHY

IMPORTANT EVENTS. . . . . 257

OVERVIEW. . . . . 260

TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY

The Foundations: Augustine and Boethius . . . . . 261  
 Rationalism in The Age of Charlemagne . . . . . 264  
 Anselm of Canterbury . . . . . 265  
 The Problem Of Universals . . . . . 266  
 The Schools of the Twelfth Century . . . . . 268  
 Philosophy Among the Muslims and the  
     Jews . . . . . 270  
 The Universities, Textbooks, and the  
     Flourishing of Scholasticism . . . . . 275

The Rediscovery Of Aristotle . . . . .	275	Famine, the Black Death, and the Afterlife . . . .	366
Oxford Philosophy . . . . .	276	Mysticism and Modern Devotion . . . . .	368
Latin Averroism . . . . .	278	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Thomism . . . . .	279	Thomas Becket . . . . .	371
The Conservative Reaction and The Condemnation of 1277 . . . . .	281	Gregory VII . . . . .	372
The Scotist Way . . . . .	283	Innocent III . . . . .	373
The Modern Way and the Triumph of Nominalism . . . . .	284	Mechthild of Magdeburg . . . . .	374
The Retreat From Reason: Mysticism . . . . .	286	Marie d'Oignies . . . . .	374
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	375
Averroës . . . . .	288	CHAPTER 8: THEATER	
Roger Bacon . . . . .	289	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	378
Moses Maimonides . . . . .	290	OVERVIEW . . . . .	381
Thomas Aquinas . . . . .	291	TOPICS IN THEATER	
William of Ockham . . . . .	292	The Legacy of Rome . . . . .	383
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	293	The Renaissance of Charlemagne . . . . .	387
CHAPTER 7: RELIGION		The Development of Liturgical Drama . . . . .	389
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	297	Serious Comedy . . . . .	393
OVERVIEW . . . . .	300	The Popular Bible . . . . .	396
TOPICS IN RELIGION		Plays on the Cutting Edge . . . . .	399
Early Latin Christianity in Northern Europe . . . . .	302	Professional Performers . . . . .	404
Religion in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe . . . . .	309	Community Theaters . . . . .	408
The Spread of Islam and its Relationship to Medieval Europe . . . . .	311	The Afterlife of Medieval Theater . . . . .	412
Medieval Judaism . . . . .	314	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Early Medieval Christianity in the East . . . . .	318	Geoffrey de Gorron . . . . .	414
Medieval Liturgy . . . . .	321	Arnoul Gréban . . . . .	415
Cluny and the Monastic Reforms of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries . . . . .	324	Hildegard of Bingen . . . . .	416
Relics, Pilgrimages, and the Peace of God . . . .	326	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	417
Growing Church Power and Secular Tensions . . . . .	328	CHAPTER 9: VISUAL ARTS	
The Crusades . . . . .	331	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	420
The Military Orders . . . . .	335	OVERVIEW . . . . .	422
Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Monastic Movements . . . . .	337	TOPICS IN VISUAL ARTS	
Women Religious . . . . .	340	The Carolingian Restoration of Roman Culture . . . . .	424
Medieval Education and the Role of the Church . . . . .	342	England and the Vikings . . . . .	428
Secular Clergy: Reform and Reaction . . . . .	345	Spanish Culture and the Muslims . . . . .	430
Medieval Heresy . . . . .	348	Revival of Empire in Germany . . . . .	432
Friars . . . . .	351	The Cult of Saints and The Rise of Pilgrimage . . . . .	434
The Laity and Popular Beliefs . . . . .	356	Romanesque Art: An International Phenomenon . . . . .	437
Children and Medieval Christianity . . . . .	359	Art at the Cultural Frontier in the Twelfth Century . . . . .	441
Papacy and Politics in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries . . . . .	360	Political Life and the New State . . . . .	445
From Schism to Reform . . . . .	363	Intellectual Influences on Art in the Later Middle Ages . . . . .	450
		Art and the Knowledge of Distant Lands . . . .	453
		Social Life and the Individual . . . . .	455
		Spiritual Life and Devotion . . . . .	461

Contents

Images of Death . . . . .	464	GLOSSARY . . . . .	471
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		FURTHER REFERENCES . . . . .	489
Robert Campin . . . . .	466	MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES . . . . .	499
Jean, Duke of Berry . . . . .	467	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	505
The Limbourg Brothers . . . . .	467	INDEX . . . . .	507
Louis IX . . . . .	468		
Simone Martini . . . . .	469		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	469		



## ABOUT THE BOOK

**SEEING HISTORY FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE.** An education in history involves more than facts concerning the rise and fall of kings, the conquest of lands, and the major battles fought between nations. While these events are pivotal to the study of any time period, the cultural aspects are of equal value in understanding the development of societies. Various forms of literature, the philosophical ideas developed, and even the type of clothes worn in a particular era provide important clues about the values of a society, and when these arts and humanities are studied in conjunction with political and historical events a more complete picture of that society is revealed. This inter-disciplinary approach to studying history is at the heart of the *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* project. Patterned in its organization after the successful *American Decades*, *American Eras*, and *World Eras* products, this reference work aims to expose the reader to an in-depth perspective on a particular era in history through the study of nine different arts and humanities topics:

- Architecture and Design
- Dance
- Fashion
- Literature
- Music
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Theater
- Visual Arts

Although treated in separate chapters, the connections between these topics are highlighted both in the text and through the use of “See Also” references to give the reader a broad perspective on the culture of the time period. Readers can learn about the impact of religion on literature; explore the close relationships between dance, music, and theater; and see parallel movements in architecture and visual arts. The development of each of these fields is discussed within the context of important historical events so that the reader can see history from a different angle. This angle is unique to this reference work. Most history books about a particular time period only give a passing glance to the arts and humanities in an effort to give the broadest historical treatment possible. Those reference books that do cover the arts and humanities tend to cover only one of them, generally across multiple time periods, making it difficult to draw connections between disciplines and limiting the perspective of the discipline’s impact on a specific era. In *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* each of the nine disciplines is given substantial treatment in individual chapters, and the focus on one era ensures that the analysis will be thorough.

**AUDIENCE AND ORGANIZATION.** *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* is designed to meet the needs of both the beginning and the advanced history student. The material is written by subject experts and covers a vast array of concepts and masterworks, yet these concepts are built “from the ground up” so that a reader with little or no background in history can follow them. Technical terms and other definitions appear both in the

text and in the glossary, and the background of historical events is also provided. The organization of the volume facilitates learning at all levels by presenting information in a variety of ways. Each chapter is organized according to the following structure:

- Chronology covering the important events in that discipline during that era
- Brief overview of the development of that discipline at the time
- Topics that highlight the movements, schools of thought, and masterworks that characterize the discipline during that era
- Biographies of significant people in that discipline
- Documentary sources contemporary to the time period

This structure facilitates comparative analysis, both between disciplines and also between volumes of *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*, each of which covers a different era. In addition, readers can access additional research opportunities by looking at the “Further References” and “Media and Online Sources” that appear at the back of the volume. While every effort was made to include only those online sources that are connected to institutions such as museums and universities, the web-

sites are subject to change and may become obsolete in the future.

**PRIMARY DOCUMENTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.** In an effort to provide the most in-depth perspective possible, *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* also includes numerous primary documents from the time period, offering a first-hand account of the culture from the people who lived in it. Letters, poems, essays, epitaphs, and songs are just some of the multitude of document types included in this volume, all of which illuminate some aspect of the discipline being discussed. The text is further enhanced by 150 illustrations, maps, and line drawings that bring a visual dimension to the learning experience.

**CONTACT INFORMATION.** The editors welcome your comments and suggestions for enhancing and improving *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*. Please mail comments or suggestions to:

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**Laura F. Hodges** received the Ph.D. in literature from William Marsh Rice University in 1985, and taught literature and composition at the University of Houston at Clear Lake, California State University at Bakersfield, the University of Maryland's European Division, and the University of Houston in Houston, Texas, before retiring. Her books include *Chaucer and Costume: The Secular Pilgrims in the General Prologue*, Chaucer Studies 26 (D. S. Brewer, 2000); and *Chaucer and Clothing: Clerical and Academic Costume in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, forthcoming from D. S. Brewer, February 2005. She has published a number of articles specializing in depictions, and their functionality, of arms and armor, costumes, textiles, and cloth-making in medieval literature, as well as articles on John Steinbeck, Sir Thomas Malory, and Henry James. Initially schooled in the field of clothing and textiles, she blends this training with her later degree in literature and continues to research both the history of costume and

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**Timothy J. McGee** received the Ph.D. in musicology from the University of Pittsburgh in 1974. He was appointed to the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, in 1973, where, until his retirement in 2002, he taught music history, directed the Historical Performance Ensembles, and was cross-appointed to the Centre for Medieval Studies. In 1972 he founded the professional early music ensemble The Toronto Consort, and in 1993–94 was visiting professor at the Villa I Tatti in Florence. His areas of research include the history of music in Canada and the performance of music in the Western world before 1800. His books include *The Sound of Medieval Song: Vocal Style and Ornamentation According to the Theorists* (Oxford, 1998); *Medieval Instrumental Dances* (Indiana, 1989); *Medieval and Renaissance Music: A Performer's Guide* (University of Toronto, 1985); and *The Music of Canada* (Norton, 1985). He is currently working on a history of the civic musicians of Florence in the late Middle Ages.

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*Europe* (1980) and, with Alan C. Kors, *Witchcraft in Europe, 400–1700: A Documentary History* (2001). He has also published several articles on these subjects. He is currently collaborating with Richard G. Newhauser on *Curiosity and the Limits of Inquiry in the Western Tradition*, as well as an intellectual biography of Henry Charles Lea.

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as the Green Man, the Wild Man, and the Celtic Sheelana Gig. Recently she began teaching and writing about twentieth-century cinematic treatments of medieval literature and culture. She is currently completing an interdisciplinary book about late medieval primitivism and the Wild Man figure.

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## ERA OVERVIEW

**DEFINING THE MIDDLE AGES.** Although the traditional term “Middle Ages” suggests that the years between the final fall of the Roman Empire in the sixth century and the full flowering of the Renaissance (literally “rebirth” of Roman and later Greek culture) in the fifteenth century was merely an interval between two great periods of civilization, the history of the arts and humanities in Western Europe during these centuries is, in fact, rich and varied. The era begins with the reign of the Frankish king Charlemagne—who by the time of his death in 814 had, under the auspices of the Latin Christian Church, reunited much of the former Western Roman Empire and joined to it parts of northern Europe that had never been under the rule of Rome. The period ends with the rise of humanism, which by 1450 dominated the art and literature of Italy and was spreading its influence northward. Between these two historical movements the medieval period encompassed major developments in political, economic, and cultural systems, all of which were reflected in the artistic, intellectual, and spiritual movements of the era.

**A PERIOD OF REORGANIZATION.** The emergence of Western Europe as a distinct culture occurred in large part as the result of the administrative division of the Roman Empire into an eastern and a western part in the late fourth century, the cultural and political separation of the two parts in the following centuries, and the migrations of non-Roman settlers and invaders from the east and north. While the strength of the Eastern Empire established by Constantine in his capital of Constantinople (what is now Istanbul, Turkey) allowed for

a continuity of Greek (Byzantine) civilization until the triumph of the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the last ruler of the Western Roman Empire abdicated in 476, leaving the area from what is now Germany and Austria westward to the Atlantic Ocean in disarray. Latin learning was preserved and enriched in monasteries wherever Christianity had been established, with notable examples in Ireland and England, as well as on the Continent. But the lack of a source of centralized political power encouraged vast migrations of non-Roman peoples, including not only the Goths, Visigoths, and Huns who had defeated the Romans, but the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes who settled England in the seventh century, and later the Vikings and their Norman descendants, who continued to raid coastlines and inland regions and establish settlements in both Europe and the New World well into the eleventh century. It was only with the relative stability of the reign of Charlemagne, crowned Emperor in Rome in 800, and the wide cultural and intellectual networks it established and supported that a single dominant influence began to reunify Europe, and the Latin Christian Church became the central focus of Western thought and expression.

**LORDSHIP.** During the period following the establishment of the Carolingian Empire, a new concept of social and political organization began to take hold, creating what is perhaps the most distinctive institutional development of the medieval era. Called “feudalism” in popular terminology, this complex network of interlinked political, economic, and social obligations extended to and involved almost all sectors of the socioeconomic

hierarchy. In practice, both free peasants and “serfs,” the agricultural workforce who tilled the land of medieval estates and manors, owed their physical labor and a large share of the crops they produced to their lord (who might hold a royally-bestowed title like count, duke, or baron), who extended to them his physical and political protection in return for their labor. Knights, the warrior sector of the culture, as the vassals of greater lords owed them homage, usually in the form of military service. In political terms, within the larger hierarchy that was emerging, this meant that dukes and barons were themselves vassals of kings or emperors who, in turn, deferred to the pope, who represented the highest spiritual authority. If the pope asked for military aid from kings or emperors, these monarchs might in turn elicit service from their dukes and barons, who would in turn call upon their vassals from the lower echelons of the aristocratic hierarchy, the knights. These bonds between lords and vassals were never as stable as such a description might suggest, and the term “feudalism” is today widely discredited since there is some argument that it represents a modern, rather than a medieval, formulation of what was really a much more fluid system. But whatever its actual workings, the concept of lordship and obligation, existing side by side with the ongoing traditions of monasticism and the authority of local bishops, established a new kind of balance between secular and spiritual authority.

**CRUSADES AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE.** Even before the system of lordship began developing in the West, the spread of Islam following the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 had led to both a flowering of Arab culture and a vast expansion of Islamic power throughout the Middle East, across North Africa, and into Spain, Sicily, and southern Italy. In 1095, Pope Urban II made an appeal for the formation of a Christian army to retake Jerusalem (Christianity’s most popular pilgrimage site) from Muslim control, and in response approximately 100,000 soldiers (mostly French) set out on the First Crusade, changing forever the relationship between Western Europe and the rest of the known world. Following the success of the First Crusade, and the resulting increase in trade and travel between the regions, subsequent crusades drew armies from broader geographical areas. The Second Crusade (1147) was led by Emperor Conrad III of Germany and King Louis VII of France, while the Third Crusade (1192) included an English army led by King Richard I (Lionheart), as well as French and German contingents. By the time of the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204), which originated in Venice, the crusade movement had proven to be largely

unsuccessful in achieving its military aims, but contact with the Muslim and Byzantine East, as well as with the Arab culture of Spain, had broadened commercial activity and introduced knowledge and learning that would have far-reaching effects on European culture.

**THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE.** Another important development of the twelfth century was the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire as the successor to the series of imperial monarchies that had begun with Charlemagne. After Charlemagne’s death and the division of the empire among his sons, there had been a decline in the power of Carolingian rule, but after the German king Otto I defeated the Magyars in 955 and then established the archbishopric of Magdeburg in 968, the eastern Frankish monarchy strengthened its control over Italy and its alliance with the popes. This relationship, while mutually beneficial in terms of securing territory in central and eastern Europe against Byzantine expansion, led eventually to an ongoing series of conflicts over rights and jurisdictions, particularly with regard to the involvement of non-clerical authorities in the control of ecclesiastical property and appointments (known broadly as the Investiture Controversy or the age of Gregorian reform). In response to challenges from the German emperor Henry IV, the liberty of the church was vigorously asserted by Pope Gregory VII in 1075, leading to a rift between the two leaders and disagreements among the German nobles who chose the succeeding emperors. The internal divisions among the imperial electors were, however, temporarily resolved with the selection in 1152 of Frederick I (Barbarossa) who proceeded to consolidate his authority into what was now for the first time referred to as *sacrum imperium*, a sacred or holy empire emphasizing the divine origin of imperial power. The uneasy balance between the Holy Roman emperors (representing “temporal” or earthly authority) and popes (who along with other ecclesiastics represented “spiritual” authority) over the centuries that followed contributed to a number of controversies and even, at times, military conflicts, that extended throughout northern Europe and in the thirteenth century even to Florence and other Italian cities. Other political pressures eventually led to the relocation of the papacy from Rome to Avignon from 1309 to 1376 (during which time the popes were under the influence of strong French kings, beginning with Philip the Fair) and, with the attempt to move the papacy back to Rome, the election of a series of popes and anti-popes in a period of division known as the Great Schism (1378–1417). The political rancor and abuses apparent during this period ushered in a widespread desire for reform and even a questioning of the value of a strong ecclesiastical hierarchy.

**THE RISE OF INDIVIDUALISM AND THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS.** Along with the challenge to the authority of the papacy came a challenge to the three-tiered manorial structure that had divided human endeavor among those who worked the land, those who fought, and those who prayed. Increasingly, from the thirteenth century onward, the agrarian-based lordship culture was giving way to a more urban culture of tradesmen and artisans offering services for money (a development that gave rise to the first minting since the eighth century of gold coins in Florence and Genoa in 1252) rather than for land tenure. Likewise, the arts of bookmaking and jewelry were coming out of the monasteries and into workshops in towns. Government during this period tended to be increasingly centralized and bureaucratic, especially from the time of Philip Augustus (r. 1180–1223) in France and Henry II (1154–1189) in England. But at the same time the idea of imposing limitations on royal power—as evidenced in the issuing of Magna Carta in England in 1215—points also towards a more modern sense of civil and juridical rights. To meet the needs of the changing social structure, new movements arose within Christianity, including significant numbers of lay religious communities that encouraged greater participation of uncloistered men and women in lives of spiritual activism (sometimes in ways that were judged heretical by the institutional church). Within the Roman Church in the early thirteenth century there emerged mendicant orders of Franciscan and Dominican friars, who turned away from monasticism in favor of a life of interaction that was closely linked both to preaching in urban centers and to teaching in the universities that had been developing there since the late twelfth century. By the fourteenth century, all of these cultural trends were reinforced and hastened by two cataclysmic occurrences that had profound economic and social implications: a series of famines across Europe between 1315 and 1317 and, from 1349 onward, a series of outbreaks of the bubonic plague known as the Black Death, which seems to have been brought to western Europe from central Asia. These two events reduced the population sharply, creating higher wages for those who could work, and mobility across frontiers by people in search of food and jobs. A new class developed in the wake of these disasters, one that could be called a middle class, characterized by well-to-do urban dwellers whose income came from trade and crafts, commerce, banking, and venture capital. At the same time, laborers, no longer tied to the land, began to assert their rights, both in France, in the rebellion known as the Jacquerie, which took place near Paris in 1358, and in England, in the Peasant Rebellion of 1381.

**THE GOTHIC AND AFTERWARD.** The new commercial class of bankers and merchants in Italy and the new middle class of artisans and tradesmen in England, France, Germany, and the Low Countries soon developed their own interests in music, art, and literature, and by the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Western European world that emerged was the result of a long and dynamic process of negotiation between the traditions of the past and the forces of change. The period known as the Middle Ages had certainly encompassed a desire to identify itself with the lost glory of the Roman Empire that preceded it, evident even in the name “Romanesque” as applied to the massive and rounded churches that dominated architectural style before 1150. But it also had been the age of magnificent innovations, captured most visibly in the pointed arches, stained glass windows, and soaring tracery-filled spires of cathedrals like Chartres, Strasbourg, and the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, built in the thirteenth century as a symbolic reflection of the glory of God and the spiritual power of the Christian Church. Ironically, the word “Gothic”—still used to identify this style of architecture and applied more broadly to refer to the entire culture of the later Middle Ages (roughly 1225 to about 1375)—is not a medieval term at all but a derogatory one coined in the eighteenth century to describe a period that was seen as Germanic and primitive rather than Roman and classical in culture, an era that was considered merely imitative in its literature and regrettably “monkish” and “superstitious” in religion. But a closer look at the arts and humanities of the period reveals a complexity of response that evolved continuously, taking in not only the institutional grandeur that dominated the architectural landscape, but also, increasingly, the personal expression that gained power with the emergence of strong national identities and respect for the individual conscience. By the time of the Hundred Years’ War between France and England (1346–1453), the French and the English had come to see themselves as distinct cultural and political entities in which the Latin learning of the church was being rivaled by secular literature in the vernacular languages and by translations of the most important philosophical and scientific documents. This sense of the importance of the language of the people took on a different meaning in spiritual life with the call for vernacular Bibles, led by John Wyclif, whose preaching was condemned after his death in 1384 but whose followers, the Lollards in England and the Hussites in Bohemia, spread the belief in the right of the individual to read and interpret Scriptures. It is no coincidence that while the new, classically-based movement of humanism was

developing among members of the leisured class in the cities of Italy, one of the final events of the Middle Ages in the north was a transformation of the central document of Christianity, the Bible, from handwritten script to print that used moveable type. The Gutenberg Bible (1453) was at once a product of the new technology of

moveable type, and a means of making accessible to far more people the very text that had dominated medieval culture and influenced its arts and institutions for over six centuries. As such, it is a fitting symbol of the blend of conservatism, adaptation, and innovation that characterized the Middle Ages.



# CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD EVENTS

*By Kristen Mossler Figg*

- 330 Roman Emperor Constantine founds the city of Constantinople (present-day Istanbul, Turkey), which becomes the capital of the Eastern (Byzantine) Empire.
- 476 Romulus Augustus, the last Roman emperor of the West, is deposed by Odoacer, a barbarian chieftain of Italy.
- 622 The Muslim era begins with the Hegira as the Prophet Muhammad flees, with a few adherents, from Mecca to Medina.
- 768 Charlemagne (Charles the Great) begins his reign as king of the Franks.
- 778 Charlemagne's nephew Roland is killed in the battle of Roncevalles in the Pyrenees as Charlemagne's army returns from an unsuccessful campaign in Spain against the Saracens. This event serves as the basis for the most famous heroic poem in French literature.
- 800 Charlemagne is crowned emperor of the West by Pope Leo III in Rome.
- c. 810–c. 820 Vikings begin to settle in the Faroe Islands.
- 814 Al-Ma'mun, the seventh Abbāsīd caliph of the Muslim Empire, establishes the House of Knowledge in Baghdad. Scholars there translate Greek, Syriac, Persian, and Sanskrit works of philosophy, science, and literature, and make discoveries in astronomy, mathematics, and medicine.
- The reign of Emperor Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne, begins, bringing with it the beginning of the disintegration of the Carolingian empire.
- 837 Byzantine forces begin invasions of the Abbāsīd Muslim Empire.
- 838 Muslim naval forces prepare to lay siege to Constantinople, but their fleet is destroyed in a storm.
- 843 The iconoclastic controversy in Byzantine Christianity comes to an end, and the use of icons is restored.
- The Treaty of Verdun formalizes the division of the Carolingian realm among the three sons of Louis the Pious: Charles the Bald (western section, roughly equivalent to modern France), Louis the German (eastern section), and Lothair (middle section, later called Lotharingia).
- 847 Arabs sack Rome.
- Ruling from Samarra, north of Baghdad, the weakened Abbāsīd caliph al-Mutawakkil

- begins persecutions of Christians, Jews, and unorthodox Muslim Shiites.
- 849 An Arab fleet is defeated off the coast of Italy by the forces of an alliance formed by Pope Leo IV.
- c. 850 Arabs invent the astrolabe, which allows mariners to use celestial navigation to determine latitude.
- c. 860 Viking explorers discover Iceland.
- 866 Japan begins a period of clan dominance known as the Fujiwara period, which lasts until 1160.
- c. 866 The Abbāsīd caliphs begin to lose the eastern provinces of their empire as the Saffarid Dynasty is established in what is now eastern Iran.
- 869 The Saffarid Dynasty expands to include parts of modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- 870 Al-Kindī dies. He was the first Islamic thinker to try to reconcile Greek philosophy with Muslim beliefs.
- When Lothair II dies, the Treaty of Mersen divides Lotharingia (Burgundy and northern Italy) between Louis the German and Charles the Bald.
- 876 Saffarid troops fail to conquer Baghdad, but in 879 their leader is recognized by the Abbāsīd caliph as governor of the eastern provinces of the Muslim empire.
- 877 Charles the Bald dies, effectively ending the era of Carolingian supremacy on the Continent.
- 878 King Alfred the Great of England (r. 871–899) defeats the Danes in a major battle and ends Viking invasions of England by recognizing an area of northeast England (known as Danelaw) as Danish territory.
- 882 Oleg, Varangian (Viking) ruler of Russia, captures Kiev and makes it his capital.
- 894 The emperor of Japan is convinced that contact with the T'ang Dynasty in China is undesirable because of growing influence from the Near East and breaks off diplomatic relations, ending three centuries of Chinese influence on Japanese culture.
- c. 900 Norse (Viking) explorers settle in Iceland.
- Rulers of the powerful Ghanian kingdom of Africa adopt Islam.
- The lowland cities of the Mayan empire, which comprised a total population of about two million people in present-day Guatemala, Honduras, southern Mexico, Belize, and El Salvador, are abandoned in favor of the highland cities of the Yucatan peninsula.
- 902 The Abbāsīd ruler al-Muqtafi begins his rule, during which he will regain control of Egypt and repulse an attack by the Byzantines.
- 907 The T'ang Dynasty falls in China, ending a golden age of Chinese culture and leading to the break-up of China into separate kingdoms.
- 909 The famous Benedictine monastery of Cluny is founded.
- The Fātimid Dynasty is founded when Al-Mahdī, a member of a family claiming descent from Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, declares himself caliph of Tunis and begins his family's gradual conquest of all of North Africa.
- 910 Following a period of Berber-Arab invasions that had begun in 711, the Muslim Umayyad Dynasty controls all but the northwest corner of Spain.
- 911 French King Charles III the Simple (r. 898–922) concludes an arrangement with Rollo the Dane that allows the Vikings to control the area of northern France known as Normandy (Norman meaning "north man").

- 936 Otto I (the Great) becomes king of Germany (r. 936–983) and begins expeditions to Italy during which he intervenes in Italian and papal affairs, leading eventually to unification of Germany and Italy under his rule.
- 939 Vietnam gains its independence from China.
- 947 The Khitans of northeastern China proclaim the Liao Dynasty, which rules until 1125.
- 950 A French bishop named Gotescalc is among the early pilgrims to travel to the town of Santiago de Compostela, which by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is visited by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from all parts of Christendom.
- c. 950 Harold Bluetooth begins his reign as king of Denmark, during which Christianity will be introduced.
- 958 The maritime city of Genoa, Italy, is refounded after being destroyed by Muslim raids from North Africa in 934–935; it emerges in 1099 as a medieval commune ruled by an association of citizens and six neighborhood consuls.
- 960 The newly proclaimed Sung Dynasty begins reunifying China and establishing trade in porcelain and steel.
- 961 Hugh Capet becomes duke of Francia and Aquitaine, with landholdings that make him more powerful than King Lothair I (954–986), allowing him eventually to take the throne as the first king (987–996) in the Capetian Dynasty of France.
- Establishment of German Ottonian rule in northern Italy allows the city of Verona to use its strategic position at the base of Brenner Pass to negotiate for privileges and rights in return for allegiance.
- 962 German ruler Otto I is crowned emperor of the Romans, establishing the Ottonians as the successors to the Carolingians and reestablishing strong ties between Church and State.
- 968 The Fātimids establish themselves in Egypt, founding Cairo, and shifting the center of Islamic culture away from Baghdad. The dynasty lasts until 1171.
- 972 The Chinese begin printing with movable type.
- 975 Al-Aziz becomes caliph of the Fātimid Dynasty, during which he will conquer Syria and extend Fātimid influence from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Euphrates River in the east.
- 977 A former Turkish slave in modern-day Afghanistan establishes the Ghaznavid Dynasty, rejecting control by the Muslim Sāmānids and expanding eastward to the border of India.
- c. 980 By this date, Arabs and Persians have settled the east coast of Africa and begin founding major cities, such as Mogadishu (tenth century) and Mombasa (eleventh century), and establishing trade routes for ivory, gold, and slaves from the interior of Africa to India and the Arabian peninsula.
- c. 986 Icelanders led by Erik the Red establish settlements in Greenland and make the first known sighting of the North American continent.
- 992 Subject to the Eastern, rather than the Western, Roman Empire, Venice is granted relief from port taxes by Byzantine emperors, the first of many privileges that will give Venice an advantage over all other traders in the Mediterranean region.
- 997 Stephen I (St. Stephen) begins his reign as king of Hungary, during which he is instrumental in establishing Latin-rite Christianity as the religion of Hungary.
- 998 Under the Great Mahmud of Ghazna, son of the dynasty's founder, the Ghaznavids, now extending into northern India, adopt Sunnite Islam.
- 1000 Christianity is introduced to Iceland.



- c. 1000 Seljuk Turks, originally from Central Asia, become Sunnite Muslims and begin westward expansion.
- Persian scientist and court physician Avicenna writes *The Canon of Medicine*, the best known single book in the history of medicine.
- The Incan civilization begins to develop in the Andean region of South America.
- The West African city-state of Benin, in what is now Nigeria, begins its development into a powerful cultural center renowned for metalwork.
- Navajo and Apache peoples from the far north arrive in the American southwest.
- 1001 The troops of Mahmud of Ghazna (in present-day Afghanistan) begin incursions into India, spreading Islam.
- 1004 An expedition of about 130 people from Greenland land on the North American continent and settle in an area they call Vinland, probably on the Gulf of the St. Lawrence River. Three years later, they abandon the settlement.
- 1014 The Cola Empire of southern India begins expansions that will extend the borders northward and include all of Ceylon and portions of the Malay peninsula.
- 1016 After a renewal of Viking invasions in England, Danish King Cnut (r. 1016–1035) ascends the throne of England, but misgovernance by his heirs results in a return to Anglo-Saxon rule in 1042.
- 1019 Yaroslav begins his reign of Kievan Russia, during which the oldest Russian law code, the “Russian Truth,” is written.
- 1042 The Anglo-Saxon Edward the Confessor becomes king of England following a period of Danish rule, but he dies childless in 1066.
- 1046 Henry III, king of Germany, begins his reign as emperor of the West. The Latin Empire is at its height, extending into Hungary, Poland, and Bohemia.
- c. 1050 Pueblo peoples in the American Southwest begin building cliff houses and other apartment-like dwellings.
- 1054 The schism between the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Roman) Christian churches is formalized.
- 1055 Seljuk Turks conquer Baghdad and the Abbāsīd caliph recognizes the Seljuk Toghrīl Beg as Sultan.
- 1056 Henry IV, king of Germany and emperor of the West, begins his reign, during which he struggles with the papacy over lay appointment and investiture of bishops and abbots, resulting in rebellions among those nobles who support the power of the Pope.
- 1061 The Almoravids, a Berber Dynasty, begin their conquest of Morocco and western Algeria.
- 1066 William I of Normandy (William the Conqueror) invades England, defeating the Anglo-Saxon King Harold Godwinson (r. 1066) at the Battle of Hastings and establishing the Anglo-Norman dynasty.
- 1071 At the Battle of Manzikert, the Seljuk Turks seize most of Asia Minor from the Byzantine Empire.
- 1074 Byzantine Emperor Michael II enlists the aid of the Seljuk Turks against his uncle, who is making a claim to the throne, allowing the Seljuks, in return, to establish themselves in Anatolia (the Asian portion of present-day Turkey).
- 1075 Responding to the investiture controversy, the *Dictatus Papae* declares Rome’s supreme authority in all religious matters.
- 1076 The Seljuks take Damascus from the Fātīmids.
- The Almoravids extend their influence into the Ghanian empire of Africa, establishing Islam in the area that is now Mali.
- 1081 Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, whose exploits won him the title *Mio Cid*, or “My Lord,”

- is banished for the first time as an outlaw by Alfonso VI, king of León, an event that figures in Spain's great heroic poem, *The Poem of the Cid*.
- 1085 Christians reconquer Toledo from the Muslims in Spain.
- 1086 The Domesday survey is undertaken in England by King William I (r. 1066–1087), creating surprisingly accurate records of all landed property for tax purposes.
- 1088 Construction begins on the third abbey church of Cluny (Burgundy), the largest church in Christendom.
- 1089 The Almoravids begin their conquest of Spain.
- c. 1090 A small Shiite minority sect in northern Persia organizes into a secret band of political murderers known as the Assassins (a name derived from the word for hashish); they operate out of a fortress in the mountains, sending out missionaries to convert Sunni Muslims and, if that does not work, dispatching terrorist agents to murder key figures and subvert the power of the Seljuks.
- The last Muslim stronghold in Sicily falls to the Normans, who rule Sicily for the next 100 years.
- 1095 Under threat of invasion by the Seljuks, Byzantine Emperor Alexius I calls on Pope Urban II for assistance.
- 1096 Responding to Alexius's call, Pope Urban II launches the First Crusade to regain the Holy Land from the Muslims.
- 1098 The Cistercian Order is founded in an attempt to reform the abuses of medieval monasticism and return to a purer interpretation of the Benedictine Rule.
- 1099 The Fātimids lose Jerusalem to the Crusaders, who establish Christian kingdoms there and in Edessa, Antioch, and Tripoli.
- c. 1100 Inuits from North America settle in northern Greenland.
- Use of the stirrup, horseshoe, and saddle with cantle has become common in France, making heavy cavalry engaging in mounted shock combat the dominant force in medieval European armies.
- 1106 Henry I of England (r. 1110–1135) gains control of Normandy by defeating his brother, Duke Robert, at Tinchebrai. He is later involved in a struggle with the Church, headed by St. Anselm of Canterbury, over lay investiture.
- 1110 Seljuks invade the Byzantine portion of Anatolia.
- c. 1113 The Order of the Hospitallers, which originated as a brotherhood that served poor or sick pilgrims in the city of Jerusalem, is given a charter from Pope Paschal II establishing them as a unique order to be supervised by their own master and answerable only to the pope.
- 1121 The Seljuks lose southwestern Anatolia to Byzantine forces.
- 1122 The lay investiture controversy is settled through a compromise at the Concordat of Worms.
- 1123 The Juchen conquer the Liao Dynasty in northern China and proclaim the Chin Dynasty.
- 1125 The feud between the Guelphs (supporters of Lothair, Duke of Saxony, of the Welf family) and the Ghibellines (supporters of Frederick of Hohenstaufen, whose family are called the Waiblings) begins after Emperor Henry V dies without a direct heir.
- 1128 The order of the Knights Templar is established to protect pilgrims and settlers in the Holy Land following the ousting of Muslim rulers by Crusaders.
- 1130 Fātimid caliph al-Amir is murdered by the Assassins.
- 1135 The Jewish quarter in Muslim Córdoba, Spain, is sacked, causing some Jewish merchants to move from Islamic into

- Christian areas, where they played a key role in trade in the later Middle Ages.
- 1138 The city of Florence is governed as a commune by a consulate made up mainly of knights and a few merchants who serve for one year and preside over an assembly of the people and a grand council.
- c. 1140 The rebuilding of the Abbey of St-Denis outside of Paris marks the beginning of the Gothic style of architecture.
- 1143 Alfonso I Henriques begins his rule as the first king of Portugal, which had previously been a province of León.
- 1144 Muslims recapture Edessa, leading to the Second Crusade.
- 1147 King Roger II of Sicily forcibly transports Greek and Jewish silk workers from Thebes and Corinth to Palermo in order to improve the quality of fabrics manufactured in his royal workshop.
- 1149 The Second Crusade ends, and European troops leave having accomplished little.
- 1152 After her divorce from King Louis VII of France (r. 1137–1180), Eleanor of Aquitaine marries Henry, count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy, who within two years becomes Henry II of England (r. 1154–1189), shifting the immense territories of Aquitaine from France to England. As both queen of France and queen of England, Eleanor acts as an important patron of the arts.
- 1157 The earliest Italian sumptuary law dealing with clothing is enacted in Genoa, initiating a series of such laws enacted for economic purposes (to enhance trade and reinforce the social hierarchy) but often expressed in moral terms.
- 1160 The Taira Kiyomori establish control of the entire country of Japan.
- The Hanse, an association of German merchants, begin securing transnational trading concessions that, over the next 300 years, make it the most influential socioeconomic phenomenon in northern Europe, facilitating trade in everything from amber, beer, furs, and timber to linens, wines, and woollens.
- 1169 Averroës, an Islamic philosopher in Córdoba, Spain, completes the first of his commentaries on Aristotle.
- Saladin becomes commander of Syrian troops in Egypt, orders the assassination of the Fātimid vizier, and is appointed to replace him.
- 1170 Thomas Becket is assassinated at Canterbury Cathedral in England by four household knights of Henry II (r. 1154–1189) following a clash over royal and ecclesiastical rights.
- 1171 Saladin abolishes the Shiite Fātimid caliphates in Egypt and proclaims himself the ruler of a new Sunnite state, establishing the Ayyubid Dynasty.
- As many as 10,000 Venetians are residing in Constantinople to assist in business negotiations and carry out trade transactions.
- 1174 Saladin begins a twelve-year military and diplomatic campaign to unite the Muslim territories of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and northern Mesopotamia under his rule.
- 1175 The English monk and scholar Alexander Neckham provides the first European account of sailors using a compass to establish direction on cloudy days.
- 1177 William II of Sicily (d. 1189) convinces German Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa to end his opposition to a Sicilian monarchy held in fee of the papacy.
- 1180 Philip II Augustus (1165–1223) becomes king of France and begins an expansion of domains and influence that establishes France as a leading power in Europe.
- Bruno of Cologne founds the Carthusian Order of hermits in the Alps north of Grenoble, combining the communal (cenobitic) lifestyle with solitary (eremitic) practice.

- 1187 Saladin captures the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem, leading to the Third Crusade.
- 1189 Richard I (Lionheart) begins his ten-year reign of England, which will be spent almost entirely abroad, on crusades and in conflict against Philip Augustus of France.
- 1191 Forces led by Richard Lionheart of England (r. 1189–1199) and Philip II Augustus of France (r. 1180–1223) conquer Acre, in the kingdom of Jerusalem, and slaughter the inhabitants.
- 1192 After Christian forces fail to retake Jerusalem, the Third Crusade ends with a three-year truce. Saladin allows the Crusaders to retain a small strip of coastal land and access to Jerusalem.
- 1198 Pope Innocent III, the last powerful medieval pope, begins a pontificate in which he restores some Italian territories to direct papal control, initiates the Fourth Crusade (1202) and the Albigensian Crusade (1208), and approves the founding of the Franciscan and Dominican orders.
- 1199 King John of England (c. 1167–1216) begins his reign, which is marked by loss of English possessions to France, a dispute with Pope Innocent III over the election of the archbishop of Canterbury, and the granting of Magna Carta (1215).
- c. 1200 The major city-state of Great Zimbabwe is founded in southern Africa by the Shona tribe, who dominate trade in gold, slaves, and ivory between inland areas and the Indian Ocean coast.
- Europeans become aware of the Chinese invention of gunpowder, probably by way of the Mongols who have brought it with them.
- By this date, Paris has become the leading center in Europe for the study of the liberal arts and theology, with an academic community that may have included as many as 4,000 people.
- The Ghanian empire is weakened when it is invaded by desert nomads, making it susceptible to attack, in 1203, by Sumanguru, leader of the Susu kingdom of Kaniaga.
- 1204 At the end of the Fourth Crusade (begun in 1202), Christian knights capture and brutally sack Constantinople. The Crusaders establish a Latin kingdom that controls Constantinople until 1261.
- Philip Augustus of France quadruples the size of his domain by conquering all English land holdings north of the Loire.
- 1206 Chinggis (Genghis) Khan, ruler of the Mongols, convenes a national assembly declaring him supreme ruler and begins military campaigns that lead to the conquest of Tibet, parts of northern China, Manchuria, and Korea.
- 1208 Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) proclaims the Albigensian Crusade against the heretics of southern France, causing a long period of conflict that brings an end to the great cultural flowering of Provence.
- 1209 The Franciscan Order of Friars is founded in Italy by Francis of Assisi.
- 1212 A French boy, Stephen of Cloyes, leads the Children’s Crusade, as a result of which thousands of children who travel to Marseilles are sold into slavery, while many German children traveling eastward die of hunger and disease.
- 1215 The Fourth Lateran Council convenes and implements major reforms for secular clergy.
- The Poor Clares, a Franciscan order for women, is formed.
- Magna Carta (The Great Charter) is issued by King John of England, granting privileges to “all the free men of our realm,” and establishing precedent for such modern practices as due process of the law and trial by jury.
- Chinggis Khan’s army takes Beijing.
- Peter Lombard’s *Books of the Sentences* or *Quattuor libri sententiarum* (1155–1157)—a comprehensive work arranging the

- opinions of the Church Fathers, especially Augustine, into a system with a logical order of development—is legislated into the curriculum of all theology students at the University of Paris, where it remains until the sixteenth century.
- 1216 The Dominican Order of Friars Preachers is founded by the Castilian canon Dominic of Calaruega.
- 1218 The Fifth Crusade, the most carefully planned and multinational of all the Christian expeditions to the Holy Land, begins its siege of Damietta in Egypt, but by 1220 has failed due to postponements in the arrival of reinforcements.
- 1220 Frederick II (1194–1250), king of Sicily and Germany, becomes Holy Roman Emperor and enters a long dispute with the papacy over control of Italy and Rome.
- Mongols under Chinggis Khan conquer Persia and other areas of western Asia, and large numbers of Persians are massacred.
- 1221 Crusaders fail to conquer Cairo and sign an eight-year truce with the Egyptians.
- 1223 Chinggis Khan’s son Jochi defeats the Russians and claims the Russian steppes for himself and his descendants.
- c. 1230–c. 1250 The Ebstorf World Map, measuring 12 feet in diameter, is created in Germany. Based on the writings of Gervase of Tilbury, the map depicts a round earth surrounded by ocean, with over 1200 legends identifying geographical features, cities, monasteries, and curiosities, including monsters at the edges of the earth.
- 1231 Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II issues legislation to rebuild royal authority in Sicily, eventually deporting 20,000 displaced Muslims.
- 1233 Pope Gregory IX establishes the Inquisition for the investigation of the Albigensian Heresy, which is undertaken by members of the Dominican order.
- 1236 Alexander Nevski begins his reign as prince of Novgorod (he is later also prince of Vladimir), during which he gains fame for great victories over the Swedes (1240) and the Teutonic Knights (1242).
- 1240 The Islamic empire of Mali establishes its domination of West Africa, which lasts until 1464.
- 1241 The Mongol army under Ögödei Khan completes the conquest of nearly all Russian cities and princes just before Ögödei’s death.
- Louis IX of France (r. 1226–1270) begins building the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris to house a large collection of relics of Christ he purchased from the emperor of Constantinople.
- 1242 The Mongol threat to Western Europe ends when Batu Khan (nephew of Ögödei) withdraws his troops to Russian territory and establishes the capital of his khanate (the Golden Horde) at Sarai on the lower Volga River, where his descendants continue to rule for the next 250 years.
- 1245 In response to the recent threat of a Mongol invasion, Innocent IV sends John of Plano Carpini, a first-generation Franciscan friar, on a mission to Karakorum, capital city of the Mongols, a trip of 3,000 miles that was accomplished in only 106 days. On his return, John writes an ethnographic study of the Mongols, *Historia Mongalorum*.
- 1249 Oxford University is founded.
- 1250 Mamluks, members of a class of military slaves, seize control of Egypt and Syria from the Ayyubid Dynasty, establishing a dynasty that lasts until the state is conquered by Ottomans in 1517.
- A Guelf army defeats a Ghibelline army outside of Florence, and the Guelfs establish the regime of the *popolo*, allowing upwardly mobile, prosperous, non-nobles (mainly merchants and guildsmen) to hold political office.

- 1252 Genoa and Florence introduce the first regular gold coinage in the west, with the Florentine *florin* soon dominating the coinage of northern Italy.
- 1254 Upon returning in defeat from the Seventh Crusade, Louis IX of France, later canonized as Saint Louis, begins a series of governmental reforms intended to put into practice his notion of the ideal Christian ruler.
- 1258 Mongol invaders under Hülegü (younger brother of Khublai Khan) take Baghdad, massacre the inhabitants, and kill the last Abbāsīd caliph, ending the rule of the Seljuks and establishing Mongol rule in Persia.
- 1260 Muslim Mamluk Turks defeat a small garrison force of Mongols in Palestine, ending the advance of the Mongols, who now control all of the Middle East except Egypt.
- 1271 Khublai Khan declares the Yüan Dynasty in China.
- c. 1273 Thomas Aquinas writes his *Summa Theologica*, a massive statement of the whole of Christian theology that becomes the basis of medieval clerical education.
- 1275 Marco Polo, who left Venice in 1271, arrives at the court of Khublai Khan in Mongolia and lives in his domains for the next seventeen years.
- 1279 Khublai Khan conquers the Sung kingdom in southern China and reunifies all of China under Mongol rule.
- 1281 In response to the actions of Japanese authorities who executed Khublai Khan's envoys in 1276, a large army of Mongols, Chinese, and Koreans invades Japan. The Mongols withdraw after a typhoon destroys many of their ships and drowns thousands of their warriors.
- 1285 Philip IV (the Fair) becomes king of France and expands royal power by dominating both the ecclesiastical and the secular affairs of Western Europe.
- 1289 Osman I begins his reign as the first Ottoman Turkish sultan.
- 1290 The Jews are expelled from England by Edward I (r. 1272–1307).
- 1291 Acre, the last Christian stronghold in the Levant, falls to the Mamluks.
- 1295 The “Model Parliament” of England, called by Edward I (r. 1272–1307), is the first to represent all classes of society.
- 1300 By this date, Venice is exporting its own high-grade silk fabrics to England and Spain, replacing more expensive imported silks from the East.
- 1302 The Ottoman Expansion begins.
- Philip IV (the Fair) of France (1268–1314) calls the first of several assemblies of nobles, clergy, and town representatives to solidify support for his ecclesiastical policies, anticipating the “Estates General” that later become part of French government.
- 1306 Philip IV of France expels the Jews and confiscates their property.
- 1309 The seat of the papacy moves from Rome to Avignon when Clement V (1305–1314), originally from Bordeaux, acquiesces to the will of Philip IV (the Fair) of France.
- 1317 Famine strikes Europe, lowering resistance to disease and disrupting social institutions.
- 1325 Ibn Battuta leaves Tangiers for thirty years of travel in Asia and Africa, providing a major source of information to Western readers.
- Mansa Musa, emperor of Mali, annexes the Songhai kingdom of Gao, and continues his transformation of key African cities into important religious and cultural centers with mosques, libraries, and schools.
- 1326 War begins in Poland against the Teutonic Knights, continuing until 1333, when the Teutonic Knights are victorious.

- c. 1330 The Bubonic Plague, or Black Death, begins killing people in northeastern China and is carried westward by traders, travelers, and nomadic peoples.
- The medieval galley, with the maneuverability of a warship, is widened to provide room for additional rowers and cargo space, and it is soon adopted by Venice and Genoa for shipping their most valuable goods.
- 1335 The Sultanate of Delhi dominates most of the Indian subcontinent.
- 1336 The Ashikaga family (Shoguns) takes control of Japan, ushering in an era of constant warfare accompanied by economic growth.
- 1338 The Hundred Years' War between England and France begins, precipitated by a dispute involving English interests in the Flemish wool trade, though the underlying cause was a disagreement over control of Aquitaine (held by the English) and Normandy (to which the English claimed rights), and Edward III's ongoing assertion of his claim to the French throne.
- 1344 The Canary Islands, located off the African coast in the Atlantic Ocean and once colonized by the Romans, are granted to Castile (Spain) by papal bull after being rediscovered by a Genoese explorer operating for the Portuguese in 1341.
- 1345 Ottoman Turks extend their conquest of Byzantine territory into Europe.
- 1346 Bubonic Plague reaches the Golden Horde, precipitating the disintegration of Mongol rule in Russia.
- Outnumbered English longbowmen defeat mounted French knights at the Battle of Crécy, signaling a shift from chivalric to modern warfare.
- 1349 Bubonic Plague reaches Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Germany, and the Low Countries.
- 1350 Bubonic Plague reaches Scandinavia and the Baltic lands.
- 1356 At the Battle of Poitiers, the English, under Edward the Black Prince, defeat the French, whose king, John II, is taken prisoner, not to be ransomed until 1360.
- 1358 A peasant revolt in France called the *Jacquerie*, protesting mainly against unfair taxation, is suppressed by the royal army.
- 1360 The Peace of Brétigny ends the first period of the Hundred Years' War when Edward III of England (r. 1327–1377) renounces his claim to the throne of France in exchange for control of Aquitaine, Poitou, and Calais.
- 1368 The Mongol Yüan Dynasty in China is overthrown by the Ming Dynasty, contributing to the closing of the trade routes that have provided silk and spices to Western Europe and leaving remaining trade in the hands of Muslim middlemen.
- 1378 Gian Galeazzo Visconti begins his rule of Milan, during which he will extend his influence over Padua, Verona, and Vicenza, though ultimately failing to control Florence and create a kingdom of northern Italy.
- The Great Schism begins when cardinals opposed to the Italian pope in Rome elect a French pope who rules from Avignon, thus establishing two lines of popes who are supported by various European states according to political affiliations.
- 1380 Charles VI becomes king of France but, because of his insanity, the country is in an almost constant state of civil war, thus opening the door for Henry V of England (r. 1413–1422) to be named regent in 1420.
- 1381 The Peasants' Revolt takes place in England when large numbers of peasants, led by Wat Tyler, march on London to protest a poll tax. The young king Richard II (r. 1377–1399) stops the revolt by promising to meet the crowd's demands, but does not keep his word.
- 1382 The Vulgate Bible is translated into English under the guidance of religious re-

- former John Wyclif, whose teachings, rejecting transubstantiation and supporting vernacular Bibles, are condemned.
- 1396 The Crusade of Nicopolis ends when a European army under Sigismund of Hungary is annihilated by the Ottoman Turks under Bayezid I.
- 1399 Richard II of England is deposed by his cousin Henry Bolingbroke, who is crowned Henry IV (r. 1399–1413).
- 1401 Mongols under Timur (Tamerlane) capture Baghdad, slaughter the inhabitants, and destroy the city.
- 1402 The westward expansion of the Ottoman Turks is halted when the Turks are defeated by invading Mongols under Timur (Tamerlane), who captures Bayezid at the battle of Ankara.
- 1405 Admiral Zheng He of China begins maritime expeditions that visit Champa (Vietnam), Indonesia, and southern India, and eventually round the tip of India, reaching the Persian Gulf and the eastern coast of Africa.
- 1409 The Council of Pisa, called to end the Great Schism, elects a new pope, but when the popes in Rome and Avignon refuse to resign, there are three popes.
- 1415 The Portuguese Expansion begins with the conquest of Morocco and continues with the discovery of the Azores, the circumnavigation of Cape Bojador, and exploration of the western coast of Africa, reaching Gambia by 1446.
- The English win an important battle at Agincourt in the Hundred Years' War.
- 1416 The Czech reformer Jan Hus, a follower of Wyclif's teachings who preached against clerical corruption, is burned as a heretic.
- 1417 The Council of Constance brings to an end the Great Schism (1378) which had created two lines of popes.
- 1420 The Hussite Wars begin in Bohemia, involving both issues of religious reform (the teachings of Jan Hus) and issues of nationalism.
- 1422 Henry V of England (r. 1413–1422) dies, leaving his infant son Henry VI (r. 1422–1461 and 1470–1471) and France's Charles VII as claimants to both the English and the French thrones.
- 1429 Galvanized by the leadership of Joan of Arc at the siege of Orléans and the subsequent coronation of Charles VII (r. 1422–1461), the French begin winning battles, leading to the eventual defeat of the English in the Hundred Years' War in 1453.
- 1431 Joan of Arc is burned at the stake in Rouen, France.
- 1438 The Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, issued by Charles VII of France, asserts the autonomy of the Church in France against the authority of the Pope.
- Albert II (Hapsburg) becomes emperor of Germany, and, from this time on, the imperial title becomes, in practice, hereditary.
- 1453 The Turks, under Mohammed the Conqueror, breach the walls of Constantinople and capture it, bringing the Byzantine Empire, which has lasted 1,000 years, to an end.
- The expulsion of the English from Aquitaine marks the end of the Hundred Years' War.
- 1455 The Gutenberg Bible is printed in Germany using movable type, effectively ending the predominance of hand-copied manuscripts and making books accessible to ordinary people.



1  
chapter one

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

Michael T. Davis

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	5	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		Medieval Architecture Terms . . . . .	8
The Influence of the Carolingians . . . . .	7	Types of Churches and Religious Structures . . . . .	10
Ottonian and Norman Architecture . . . . .	13	<i>On the Liturgy and Reliquaries of the Abbey Church of Saint-Riquier</i> (excerpt from Angilbert's <i>De perfectione</i> concerning rebuilding a church) . . . . .	11
Geometry and Planning . . . . .	19	Symbolic Architecture: Copying the Church of the Holy Sepulchre . . . . .	19
Construction Techniques . . . . .	22	<i>The Church of Santiago de Compostela</i> (excerpt from a guidebook for pilgrims commenting on a cathedral) . . . . .	21
Monastic Architecture . . . . .	27	The Buildings of the Cloister . . . . .	29
Pilgrimage Architecture . . . . .	34	<i>A Building Account from the Church of Saint-Bernard, Paris</i> (account of the materials and methods used to construct the church) . . . . .	32
A New Vision: Saint-Denis and French Church Architecture in the Twelfth Century . . . . .	37	<i>The Master Mason William of Sens and the Reconstruction of the Choir of Canterbury Cathedral</i> (excerpt from a narrative describing the reconstruction of Canterbury Cathedral) . . . . .	43
Immediate Impact: Notre-Dame and Chartres . . . . .	39	Stained Glass . . . . .	46
The Gothic in England . . . . .	41	<i>On the Sainte-Chapelle and the Royal Palace in Paris</i> (Jean of Jandun praises two buildings in Paris) . . . . .	53
The Illuminated Church and the Rayonnant Style . . . . .	45		
The Architecture of Security and Power . . . . .	49		
The Architecture of Daily Life . . . . .	54		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Bernard of Clairvaux . . . . .	57		
Jean Deschamps . . . . .	57		
Suger . . . . .	58		
William of Sens . . . . .	58		
Henry Yevele . . . . .	59		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	59		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Architecture and Design*

- 754 The Abbey of Saint-Denis is begun; its cruciform (cross-shaped) plan imitates that of St. Peter's in Rome.
- c. 790 Construction begins on the abbey of St. Savior at Fulda; the church includes a transept modeled on that of St. Peter's in Rome.
- Construction begins on Charlemagne's palace at Aachen, which is laid out according to a grid of squares in imitation of Roman methods.
- c. 800 Construction begins on the abbey at Lorsch in Germany. Its gateway evokes the Arch of Constantine in Rome.
- 800 Charlemagne, who began a project of articulating the ideas of power, order, and Christian faith through architecture, is crowned emperor in St. Peter's in Rome by Pope Leo III.
- c. 820 The church of San Prassede in Rome is built under Pope Paschal I in conscious imitation of early Christian basilicas.
- c. 830 An ideal plan of a monastery is drawn and sent to the abbot of Saint-Gall.
- 873 At the abbey of Corvey in Germany construction begins on a "westwork," a monumental entry with an upper chapel reached by lateral stair turrets.
- 962 Otto I is crowned emperor in Rome by Pope John XII, leading to repeated copying of the chapel at Aachen in the design of other structures.
- 1001 Construction begins on the abbey of Saint-Bénigne, Dijon. Its rotunda emulates the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.
- 1010 Construction begins on the abbey of St. Michael's in Hildesheim. Its design elaborates on the cruciform basilica.
- 1012 Construction concludes on a castle at Loches, France, which includes an early example of a "tower keep."
- 1030 Work begins on the imperial cathedral of Speyer in Germany, a church of enormous scale completed around 1060 and vaulted around 1100.
- 1037 Construction begins on an abbey church at Jumièges in Normandy. The design introduces a gallery or upper story above the arcade that opens into the main interior space.
- 1066 England is conquered by the Normans, who will rebuild every cathedral and monastery in the country, obliterating all traces of major Anglo-Saxon architecture.
- c. 1078 The Tower of London ("White Tower") is built for William the Conqueror by Gundulf, bishop of Rochester, to dominate the eastern edge of the city and advertise Norman presence.
- 1078 Construction begins in Spain on the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, shrine church of St. James, apostle of Jesus.
- c. 1080 Construction begins on the pilgrimage church of Saint-Sernin at Toulouse, demonstrating development of barrel vaulting.
- 1088 Construction begins on the third abbey church of Cluny, the largest in Christendom.
- 1093 Work begins at the cathedral of Durham. The design features one of the first examples of ribbed groin vaults.
- 1099 Westminster Hall, the great hall of the palace of Norman kings of England, is completed. It is so wide that it requires internal supports.

- c. 1135 Construction begins on the west façade block of the abbey church of Saint-Denis (dedicated in 1140), with three portals and the first example of a rose window.
- 1139 Construction begins on the abbey of Fontenay, exemplar of Cistercian architecture during the lifetime of influential churchman Bernard of Clairvaux.
- 1140 Construction begins on the new choir of Saint-Denis (dedicated in 1144) with columns recalling the churches of Rome.
- c. 1145 Construction begins on the choir of the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, one of the earliest buildings to use flying buttresses.
- c. 1150 Laon Cathedral is begun. It is an example of four-story elevation in northern French Gothic architecture.
- c. 1155 Construction begins on the cathedral of Paris (Notre-Dame), the interior of which rises to the height of a modern ten-story building.
- 1179 Master mason William of Sens leaves Canterbury Cathedral after being injured in a fall during the rebuilding of the choir after a fire; he is replaced by master mason William the Englishman. Their work changes the direction of English architecture towards lightness and linearity.
- c. 1190 Wells Cathedral's nave is begun, using Gothic forms in independent bits and pieces.
- 1192 Master mason Geoffroy de Noyers begins work on St. Hugh's choir at Lincoln Cathedral and introduces "crazy vaults."
- 1194 A fire destroys the Romanesque cathedral of Chartres and work begins on a new Gothic cathedral, which will be known for the expanse of its windows.
- 1211 Construction begins at Reims Cathedral directed by master mason Jean d'Orbais; it is the first example of bar tracery.
- c. 1220 Construction begins on a new choir at the Cistercian abbey of Rievaulx. The structure will illustrate the achievement of balance through the use of harmonious proportions based on the square.
- 1228 Construction begins on the church of San Francesco, Assisi (completed 1253) by the Franciscans, one of the new orders of mendicant friars. The church combines new French forms with the local Italian tradition of broad interior space decorated with frescoes.
- 1229 Work is started on a Dominican church in Toulouse (completed 1292). It is an example of the double-nave church type.
- 1241 King Louis IX of France begins work on the Sainte-Chapelle (completed 1248) within the royal palace; it includes vertical colonnettes which frame enormous, fifty-foot high stained glass windows.
- c. 1244 Work begins on fortifications for the new city of Aigues-Mortes, which serves as a port of embarkation for a crusade led by Louis IX.
- 1245 Reconstruction of Westminster Abbey choir begins under King Henry III by master mason Henry of Reyns, imitating French *rayonnant* style.
- 1246 Work begins on the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, stressing a return to functional purity.
- 1277 Work begins on the west façade of Strasbourg Cathedral where extravagant expressions of bar tracery completely disguise the load-bearing walls behind.
- 1284 The choir of Beauvais Cathedral, the tallest cathedral (158 feet) in Europe, collapses.
- 1294 The architect Arnolfo di Cambio begins work on the Franciscan church of Santa Croce in Florence. The design of the church illustrates the simplicity of Franciscan aesthetic values.
- 1295 Construction begins on Beaumaris castle (in Anglesey, North Wales), the design of which illustrates elaborate defensive structure.

- c. 1296 The remodeling and expansion of the royal palace in Paris begins under King Philip IV, combining elements of church and military architecture.
- 1305 French queen Jeanne de Navarre founds the College of Navarre in Paris; the construction of college buildings begins in 1309, combining elements of monastic and urban palace architecture.
- 1334 Pope Benedict XII begins construction of a papal palace at Avignon, combining an apparently military exterior with residential and bureaucratic halls; work continues under his successor Clement VI.
- 1344 Work starts on Prague Cathedral under French master mason Matthew of Arras; Peter Parler becomes master mason in 1352.
- 1386 Work starts on the Milan Cathedral; in the 1390s debates raise the question of whether a design based on a square or a triangle would be more beautiful and structurally sound.
- 1394 Architect Henry Yevele and carpenter Hugh Herland begin the remodeling of Westminster Hall and the construction of a hammer-beam ceiling.
- 1434 Pierre Robin designs the parish church of Saint-Maclou in Rouen. His design illustrates the growing importance of architectural drawings.

## OVERVIEW *of Architecture and Design*

**THE IDEAL FACE OF THE SOCIETY.** Change has been a constant of human societies as long as history has been recorded, and the six centuries of the Middle Ages were a period of dynamic transitions and developments in architecture. Europe in 1400 bore little resemblance artistically, economically, politically, or technologically to Europe in 800, although each succeeding generation and century built upon the achievements of its predecessors. As might be expected, architecture offers a complex reflection of the collective concerns of medieval European society, as well as a localized guide to the character and tastes of specific regions or institutions. One twentieth-century French scholar wrote that “architecture is the expression of the very being of societies,” but he was also careful to note that architecture represents the ideal face of that society. These structures were erected not only to serve useful purposes as places of worship or residence, but they were, at the same time, visual arguments that were intended to persuade. These important buildings show clearly who had the power and was able to gather the resources of materials, men, and money necessary for their construction. They also reveal the activities and values that were most highly prized and the issues that were deemed the most urgent. Rather than focusing attention on art museums, corporate skyscrapers, or sports stadiums as is common today, the most extravagant medieval architecture was concentrated on churches, aristocratic palaces, and defensive structures.

**COMBINING ROMAN AND CHRISTIAN HERITAGE.** A rapid sketch of the political and religious landscape of medieval Europe sets the stage for an understanding of medieval architecture, whose beginnings in the late eighth century can be linked to the emergence of a new empire under the leadership of Charlemagne. After the collapse of centralized Roman authority in the fifth century, Europe endured 300 years of political fragmentation and economic decline. Invasions of peoples from western Asia and central Europe, wars, and waves of disease destroyed security, devastated agriculture and commerce,

and emptied urban centers. However, in the later eighth century, the Franks, a Germanic tribe that had settled in what is today France and Germany, began to consolidate their power and expand their territory. To support their claims to rule, they presented themselves as the successors to the Romans, but with one important difference: the Franks were Christian. Their architecture constituted an important part of their persuasive argument, for it looks back for many of its forms to the ancient buildings of Rome and, whenever possible, to those associated with the first Christian emperor, Constantine.

**REGIONAL DIVERSITY AND THE ROMANESQUE.** Within less than a century, the Carolingian Empire—the kingdom of Charlemagne and his successors—began to lose its central authority once again, and although large-scale political units, such as the empire of the Romans, existed or were revived in theory, effective power settled into the hands of local and regional lords. A system usually referred to as “feudalism,” based on hierarchy, land holding, and obligations, arose out of the new political realities. An aristocratic lord gained his wealth from payments (usually in kind) from those who lived on and worked his land. In exchange for his subjects’ oath of loyalty and service, he assumed responsibility for their protection. Although great feudal lords might still owe allegiance to the king—for example, the duke of Normandy, even when he was also king of England, was required to swear homage to the king of France for Normandy—they were, in effect, sovereigns in their own regions. A consequence of this political fragmentation is reflected in the diversity of European architecture in the tenth and, especially, the eleventh centuries, a period called the Romanesque. Patrons and their builders continued to employ Roman forms, but did so in such different and imaginative ways that each region’s architecture assumes a distinctive flavor. Architectural forms such as monastic buildings, pilgrimage churches, or castles can best be discussed through comparison across both time and space. These architectural types, moreover, such as shrine churches, for example, were not confined to a single art historical period, and their appearance was modified continually.

**THE INTERNATIONALIZING OF ARCHITECTURAL FORMS.** To a degree, the rise of international monastic orders countered the centrifugal trend of diversity fostered by a political structure based on lordship. Benedictine monastic architectural planning, based on the cloister (walled space) and an orderly arrangement of buildings, was regulated in the ninth century and followed consistently throughout the Middle Ages. In the twelfth century, the Cistercians—a reforming group within Benedictine

monasticism—spread not only consistent methods of planning, but also church types and an artistic attitude of austerity across Europe. Pilgrimage, promoted with special intensity by the Order of Cluny, another group within Benedictine monasticism, also created avenues and institutional connections for the exchange of ideas and innovations in art and architecture. Although precise documentation is lacking, it is obvious, for example, that the builders of the abbey churches of Toulouse (begun in 1080) and Conques in France (begun around 1060) and the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in distant northwest Spain (1078) were aware of one another's work.

**CITIES AND TECHNOLOGIES.** The twelfth century was a period of profound change in European society. Modern centralized states began to coalesce as the kings exercised more effective control over their territories and reduced the independence of regional lords. This current culminated around 1300 with the evolution of England and France into nations and the emergence of powerful kingdoms including Aragon and Castile in Spain, and Naples in southern Italy. With improved security, the dramatic increase of agricultural productivity, and the rise of economies based on money gained from surpluses and the increased manufacture of goods, western Europe entered a period of rapid population and urban growth. Paris, for example, experienced roughly a tenfold increase in its population between 1100 and the early fourteenth century, Florence became a metropolis of 100,000 inhabitants, and London and Prague rose to prominence as both royal capitals and artistic centers. It is certainly no accident that a new style of architecture took shape in and around these cities at this time. Gothic architecture, as it later came to be called, first appeared in northern France within royal territory in the mid-twelfth century, and then spread to all areas of Europe. Although the traditional monastic orders remained important sponsors of large-scale building, bishops in their cities assumed greater importance and an affluent laity, whose fortunes were made in commerce and industry, emerged in the thirteenth century as a key source of support for the building efforts of new urban religious communities, notably the convent churches of the Dominican and Franciscan friars. Commercial success, which underscored individual initiative, not only stimulated construction of luxurious residences, but may also have been a factor in the late medieval emphasis on personal piety that was felt architecturally in the demand for spaces for private worship, such as completely outfitted chapels in the home. In addition, the architectural workshop was an important laboratory of new industrial

methods. As the number and scale of building projects increased, techniques of production were devised based on standardized parts, whose fabrication was controlled by drawings. In turn, other industries, such as wool or dye manufacture, offered models of rational organization and efficient labor to the building yard.

**ARCHITECTURE AND UNIVERSITY LEARNING.** Beginning in the twelfth century and continuing into the fourteenth, universities were founded throughout Europe: Oxford and Cambridge in England; Paris, Toulouse, and Montpellier in France; Bologna in Italy; Salamanca in Spain; and Prague in what is now the Czech Republic (in the Middle Ages part of the Holy Roman Empire). In these centers of intellectual activity, new ways of thinking, based on Aristotelian logic and rhetoric, careful observation, and systematic analysis, pushed received ideas toward original conclusions that transformed European culture. The greatest thinker of the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican friar, recognized similarities between the scholar and the architect. Just as the architect orders the raw materials of sand and stone and the skills of his craftsmen into an overall scheme, the philosopher assembles and arranges the disciplines of human learning into an edifice of knowledge. Although the connections may be indirect, the mental processes of the master mason, his acquisition of specialized knowledge in his craft, his ability to think problems through to a solution, and his achievement of innovative combinations of forms can be viewed within the framework of these progressive intellectual trends.

**THE ULTIMATE CREATIVITY.** Paralleling the development of church architecture throughout the period were technological and conceptual changes in military and domestic architecture. Castles, for example, had evolved from the purely defensive tower that stood alongside a hall for protection, to the residential “donjon” with living spaces for the overlord, and finally to elaborate palace-like structures within fortified walled cities. It was, however, in church architecture that the ultimate expression of medieval creativity was to be found. Gothic cathedrals, as represented by their soaring spires, innovative flying buttresses, and dazzling stained glass, have often been likened to the skyscrapers of the modern era. Despite the obvious differences, the comparison is nonetheless instructive. The modern office building is driven by economic factors, shaped by zoning regulations, designed by skilled architects and engineers, assembled from steel and glass produced in factories and transported by machines to the construction site, run by electricity, accessed by high-speed elevators, climate-controlled by computers, and represents civic pride or

corporate status. It is at once the product of a long developmental process and the awe-inspiring, original creation of the unique forces and capabilities of twentieth-century society. In a similar light, the late medieval cathedral summarized centuries of architectural experience, but also represented the impact of advanced stone-cutting technology and constant structural innovation, patterns of religious devotion, and prosperity as it embodied the visions of earthly power and other-world splendor of its makers.

## TOPICS *in Architecture and Design*

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### THE INFLUENCE OF THE CAROLINGIANS

**BUILDING AN IMAGE.** Medieval architecture, in many ways, was defined during the reign of Charlemagne. Not only was the scale of building enterprises unmatched in Europe since the collapse of the Roman Empire four centuries earlier, but Charlemagne also utilized architecture to create the image of his government. In a biography composed around 830, Einhard, the ruler's friend and advisor, wrote that the emperor

set in hand many projects which aimed at making his kingdom more attractive and at increasing public utility. . . . Outstanding among these, one might claim, are the great church of the Holy Mother of God at Aachen, which is really a remarkable construction, and the bridge over the Rhine at Mainz, which is five hundred feet long. . . . More important still was the fact that he commanded the bishops and churchmen, in whose care they were, to restore sacred edifices which had fallen into ruin through their very antiquity, wherever he discovered them throughout the whole of his kingdom.

During the reign of Charlemagne, the emperor's builders strove to articulate the ideas of power, order, and Christian faith through the arrangement of spaces and the abstract vocabulary of architecture—columns, piers, walls, windows, ceilings. Their task was not unlike the one that the new republic of the United States confronted around 1800: how to give meaningful physical form to guiding political principles. And just as Washington, D.C., wages an eloquent argument in its pediments, domes, porticoes, and temple forms that the United States is heir to the democratic tradition of Greece and the might of Rome, Carolingian buildings turned to ancient Roman architecture to embody the vision of an empire guided

by Christian values that would bring unity and peace to a fragmented and conflict-ridden Europe.

**AACHEN AND THE EMULATION OF ROME.** No project reveals Charlemagne's architectural goals for his new empire better than the palace complex Aix-la-Chapelle at Aachen, in what is now Nord Rhein-Westfalen in northwestern Germany. As another of his biographers, Notker Balbulus (the Stammerer), wrote, "He [Charlemagne] conceived the idea of constructing on his native soil and according to his own plan a cathedral which should be finer than the ancient buildings of the Romans." Built during the 790s, Aachen constituted a palace complex that included a monumental gateway, a chapel, and an audience hall in stone supplemented by residential and utilitarian structures in wood. With this set of impressive buildings, Charlemagne established a permanent and symbolic capital that intended to emulate the great imperial cities of Rome and Constantinople. To make his point clear to the populace, he named his palace "The Lateran," a direct reference to the cathedral and palace, built under Constantine, the first Christian emperor, in Rome. The very plan of Aachen, laid out according to a grid of squares, revived Roman methods to embody the ordered regularity that the emperor wished to impose on his vast territories. Further, the long galleries that linked the three stone structures imitated a feature frequently found in Roman palaces.

**ROMAN MODELS.** Moreover, the buildings themselves were based on particular Roman prototypes. The palace's great hall, for example, where Charlemagne received visitors and presided over court ceremonies while enthroned in the semicircular space of an apse (a rounded projection from the end of a building), resembled that erected by Constantine around 310 C.E. at nearby Trier on the central western border of modern-day Germany. The palace chapel—this is Notker's "cathedral"—consisting of an outer sixteen-sided polygon enclosing an octagonal central space, looked to a tradition of centralized court chapels found throughout the Mediterranean world from the fourth century on; but it was especially close in form to Justinian's church of San Vitale in Ravenna in Italy (c. 540–548). Charlemagne himself had passed through Ravenna shortly before construction of Aachen was begun and his direct experience of this beautiful imperial church must have been a decisive factor in its design. Like San Vitale, the interior space at Aachen is disposed on two levels: a chapel, dedicated to the Virgin, occupies the ground floor, while the upper gallery level, sheltering the imperial throne and an altar of the Savior, comprises a second chapel. The sturdy piers, the tiers of arches, the sophisticated combination of vaults, and the

## MEDIEVAL Architecture Terms

**Aisle:** A long open narrow area at the sides of a church used to walk through the structure.

**Altar:** The elevated place in a church where rites are performed.

**Ambulatory:** The passageway around the end of the choir.

**Arcade:** A series of arches supported by piers or columns.

**Apse:** A vaulted semicircular or polygonal recess in the church at the end of the choir.

**Ashlar:** Stone that is faced and squared, often with a chipped or irregular surface.

**Bailey:** The open courtyard in a castle between the outer ring of fortified walls and the keep.

**Battlement:** The low parapet at the top of a fortified wall composed of solid shields of masonry, called merlons, alternating with openings, called crenels.

**Bay:** Any of a number of similar spaces or compartments between the vertical dividing structures of a large interior.

**Capital:** The uppermost portion of a column or pillar, often carved with relief sculpture on several faces.

**Chapel:** A small space for private worship off the aisle of a church.

**Chevron:** A pattern of angled stripes.

**Choir:** The part of a church to the east of the transept, occupied by monks during the singing of offices.

**Clerestory:** A portion of the interior of a church rising above adjacent rooftops and having windows to admit light.

**Column:** A large post-like support holding up an arch or other architectural feature. The tops of columns were often decorated with sculpture.

**Corbel:** A short horizontal bracket of stone or timber projecting from a wall and supporting an architectural element.

**Crenellation:** A battlement (protective wall) with tapered embrasures or squared openings.

**Crypt:** A chamber or vault below the main floor of a church, often used as a burial spot.

**Donjon:** The great tower or keep of a castle, sometimes thought to be the residence of the lord of the castle.

**Façade:** The front of a church, usually imposing and decorated.

**Flying buttress:** A segmental arch transmitting outward and downward thrust to a solid buttress or square column which transforms the force into a vertical one.

**Gallery:** A long narrow area open at each end or at sides and sometimes elevated.

**Groin vault:** The curved line or edge formed by the intersection of two vaults.

**Hammerbeam:** One of a pair of short cantilevered timbers supporting a ceiling arch.

finely cut stonework of the building are unprecedented in earlier medieval architecture and, once again, suggest that the revival of Roman forms was accompanied by a comparable renewal of Roman building technology. Finally, the decoration of ancient columns and capitals, marble imported from Ravenna, bronze railings and doors, and mosaics all invest the chapel with a dazzling and thoroughly Roman aura. As a whole, Aachen sends the message of Charlemagne as the legitimate successor to the authority of Christian imperial rulership in the West. It was the architectural “first act” of a political drama whose conclusion was staged on Christmas Day 800 with the coronation of Charlemagne as emperor in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

**THE BASILICA.** As the words of Einhard, quoted above, imply, the Carolingian era witnessed a surge of church construction. Although centralized plans were often favored for aristocratic chapels, they were not easily adaptable to the needs of churches that required space for large congregations or housed monastic communi-

ties whose liturgy involved processions to altars located throughout the interior. Once again, Carolingian patrons and builders looked back to early Christian Rome for a model that was at once functional—accommodating crowds of worshippers and the processional liturgy of the Mass—as well as historically resonant and symbolically potent. The basilica fit all three requirements. Adapted from large Roman halls that served a variety of functions, including law courts or public assembly, the Christian basilica is characterized by its longitudinal space organized around a central axis and formed by a dominant central area flanked symmetrically by lower aisles. The usual model contained a long hall or nave, an entry portico on the west side, and an apse (usually semicircular in form, but sometimes polygonal or square) in the east, which usually contained the altar area. The entry and altar were almost always on the short sides of the rectangular configuration, with the altar facing the city of Jerusalem. A large open courtyard or atrium, a feature eliminated in the later Middle Ages, and an entry



**Keep:** The multi-storied tower that combined living quarters and defensive features in a medieval castle.

**Keystone:** A wedge-shaped stone at the summit of an arch serving to lock the other stones in place and create structural strength.

**Machicolations:** A projecting gallery at the top of a fortified wall with floor openings through which heavy objects or boiling liquids could be dropped on attackers.

**Moot:** A ditch of some width and depth around a fortified area like a castle serving to repel intruders.

**Motte:** A fortification consisting of a timber tower set atop a conical earth mound. The motte often was surrounded by a ditch and wooden palisade.

**Narthex:** An enclosed passage between the main entrance and the nave of a church.

**Nave:** The main longitudinal area of a church.

**Parapet:** A battlement wall protecting the wall-walk and roof.

**Pier:** A support for the ends of adjacent spans of arches.

**Plate:** A horizontal timber laid flat atop a pier or wall used to attach the ends of rafters.

**Portcullis:** A heavy iron or wooden grill, set in vertical grooves, that can be raised or lowered by chains to protect the entrance to a castle.

**Purlin:** A longitudinal member in a roof frame usually for supporting common rafters between the plate and the ridge.

**Rafter:** The beam, usually angled and joined at the top to a similar beam in the form of an inverted V, which is used to support a roof.

**Rotunda:** A circular high space in a church surmounted by a dome.

**Rubble:** A wall made of different sizes and types of uncut stone.

**Screen:** A wooden or iron structure separating the nave from the choir of a church, sometimes called "rood screen" if it had a large crucifix ornamenting its top.

**Transept:** The transverse part of the rectangular body of the church, usually crossing the nave.

**Triforium:** The wall at the side of the nave, choir, or transept corresponding to the space between the vaulting or ceiling and the roof of an aisle.

**Truss:** A triangle of timbers used to support compression, used in the construction of a roof.

**Vousoir:** A wedge-shaped brick or stone used to form the curved part of an arch or vault.

**Wattle and daub:** A building material consisting of wattle, a light mesh of laths or interwoven twigs, covered with mud, stucco, or brick.

**Westwork:** The monumental western front to a church involving a tower or group of towers and containing an entrance and vestibule below and a chapel above.

vestibule, called a narthex, frequently fronted the body of the basilica. This axial sequence of spaces lent itself naturally to hierarchical divisions, marked by barriers, curtains, screens, and differences in decoration. The nave served as the congregational space while the apse enclosing the altar was reserved for the clergy.

**SYMBOLIC SHAPE AND NUMBER.** In Abbot Fulrad's rebuilding of the abbey of Saint-Denis between around 754 and 775, the Roman inspiration was evident. The church took the shape of a cross through the addition of a transverse space, termed a transept, inserted between the nave and the apse. The transept appeared earlier only at the great martyrs' basilicas of St. Peter's and St. Paul's in Rome, presumably to provide a suitably impressive spatial setting around the tomb of the saint, but once revived, this cruciform plan became common in Christian architecture. Used at Saint-Denis, it served the dual purpose of linking the local saint with the prestige of the apostle Peter and of equating the Frankish kings, many of whom were buried there (including Charlemagne's

father Pepin the Short), with Constantine, the patron of St. Peter's. To judge from its plan, a nearly exact replica of the transept and apse of St. Peter's was also erected over the tomb of St. Boniface, missionary to the Germans, at Fulda in the early ninth century. Another impressive example can be found in the abbey of Saint-Riquier at Centula in northern France, where the cruciform shape of the church combines with an insistent use of three in its plan to emphasize the Trinity. The importance of number in the church's design is characteristic of medieval architecture. Based on a passage in the Wisdom of Solomon, "you have ordered all things in measure and number and weight," Christian theologians from Augustine, writing in the fifth century C.E., on interpreted numbers symbolically. Numbers revealed the underlying harmonies of the universe and their incorporation into the designs and visual rhythms of medieval architecture intended to convey the beauty of divine creation. In all of these basilicas, the references to early Christian Rome served not only as a political symbol,

## TYPES of Churches and Religious Structures

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**Abbey church:** The church of a monastery under the supervision of an abbot or a convent of nuns under the supervision of an abbess.

**Basilica:** A Roman Catholic church or cathedral given ceremonial privileges by the pope. Christian basilicas were formed out of ancient Roman buildings (originally assembly halls, courts, and exchanges) or built on a similar design.

**Cathedral:** The principal church of an archdiocese or diocese, the regional administrative districts of the Church. The throne—or cathedra—of the archbishop or bishop is located in the cathedral.

**Chapel:** A separate area in a church or home, having its own altar and intended for private worship.

**Cloister:** The enclosed part of a monastery or convent where monks or nuns live and, in some cases, laypeople are not allowed to enter. The term can

also refer to the covered walkway around the interior courtyard of a monastery or college.

**Convent:** The living quarters of nuns or the dwelling of a community of friars.

**Monastery:** The complex of buildings, including an abbey church, in which a group of people, observing religious vows or rules, lives together. A convent often designates a female religious community. A double monastery refers to one that includes both monks and nuns.

**Parish church:** The church of a parish, a small division of the larger diocese. The parish church was the focus of religious activity of the local population, who were ministered to by a rector or sometimes a curate whose living came from the rent provided from the lands of that community.

**Pilgrimage church:** A large church on the major pilgrimage routes, such as the road leading to the shrine of St. James at Compostela. Pilgrimage churches often offered shelter, and provided maps and information about the route.

**Shrine:** An alcove for a tomb, holy relics, or a religious icon in a church.



Tiber River and St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, Italy, early fourth century. JOHN AND LISA MERRILL/CORBIS.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ON THE LITURGY AND RELIQUARIES OF THE ABBEY CHURCH OF SAINT-RIQUIER**

**INTRODUCTION:** During the reign of Charlemagne, the Western Church experienced both a rise in the use of Roman liturgy and an increased interest in the cults of saints. Church architecture responded by providing additional pathways for processions and spaces for the exhibition of relics. This architectural tendency is illustrated at the Abbey Church of the Royal Monastery of Saint-Riquier, near Amiens in northern France, where the abbot was a theologian and court-poet known as Angilbert of Saint-Riquier. Born in the late 750s to one of the families of Frankish aristocracy, Angilbert received his schooling in the entourage of Charlemagne and was closely connected to the emperor's family. In his treatise entitled *De perfectione*, Angilbert provides a narrative account of his personal rebuilding of the abbey and treats the elements of the buildings and treasures of the monastery. The excerpt provided below shows how movement around the church to multiple altars and stations had become an important part of worship. The titles preceding the paragraphs have been added for clarity. They do not appear in the original document.

**The Liturgy**

At all Vespers celebrated in the normal way, when everything has been completed at [the altar of] Saint Richarius, let the brothers proceed by singing psalms up to the holy Passion. When the prayer has been completed, let the choirs be divided into two, of which one proceeds to [the sculpted relief of] the Holy Resurrection, the other to [the sculpted relief of] the Holy Ascension. Then when the prayer has been done, let one choir come to [the altar of] Saint John, the other to Saint Martin. And then afterward [proceeding] through [the altars of] Saint Stephen and Saint Lawrence and the other altars by singing and praying, let them come together at the [altar

of] the Holy Cross... But when Vespers and Matins shall have been sung at [the altar of] the Holy Savior, then let one choir descend to [the sculpted relief of] the Holy Resurrection, the other to [the sculpted relief of] the Holy Ascension, and there, praying, let them just as above process singing to [the altars of] Saint John and Saint Martin; when the prayer has been completed, let them enter here and there through the arches of the middle of the church and let them pray at [the sculpted relief of] the Holy Passion. Thence let them proceed to [the altar of] Saint Richarius, where, when the prayers have been said, they shall divide themselves again just as before and shall come through [the altars of] Saint Stephen and Saint Lawrence, singing and praying, up to [the altar of] the Holy Cross. ...

**The Relics**

These [relics] having been collected ... honorably and fittingly in the name of the Holy Trinity, we have with great diligence prepared a principal reliquary decorated with gold and gems, in which we have placed part of the above-mentioned relics, which we have been eager to place ... under the crypt of the Holy Savior. Moreover, we have taken care to divide the relics of the other saints, which are noted above, into thirteen other smaller reliquaries decorated most handsomely with gold and silver and precious gems, which we merited to collect ... and we have placed them on the beam that we have established on the arch in front of the altar of Saint Richarius [in the apse of the church], so that in every corner in this holy place it will be fitting that the praise of God and the veneration of all of his saints always be adored, worshiped, and venerated.

**SOURCE:** Angilbert of Saint-Riquier, *De perfectione*, in *Faith, Art, and Politics at Saint-Riquier: The Symbolic Vision of Angilbert*. Ed. Susan Rabe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995): 118, 121–122.

but also as a representation of the true Christian faith that Charlemagne and his theologians took as their mission to protect and proclaim.

**INNOVATIONS IN PLANNING.** Carolingian church architecture was more than historical and spiritual nostalgia for early Christian Rome. It enriched its borrowings from the past by contributing a greater complexity to spatial planning. In part, this was a response to the promotion among Charlemagne's ecclesiastical allies of the Roman liturgy, whose worship services featured processions through and around the church. With the rise of the cult of saints as a significant component of

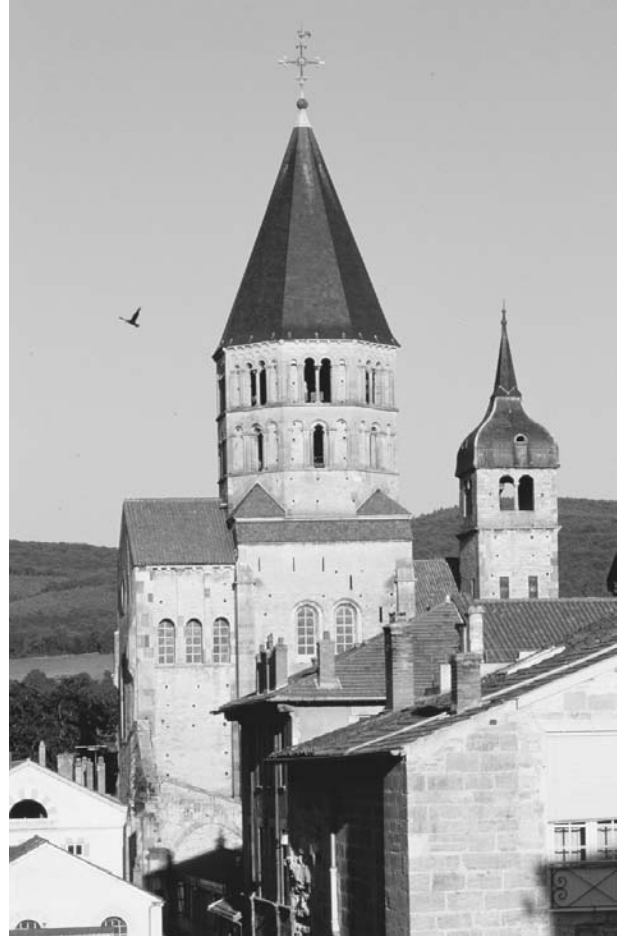
medieval Christian worship, auxiliary spaces were required for the exhibition of relics with pathways providing access to the tomb or shrine. The underground corridor that was excavated in the apse of St. Peter's in Rome around 600 during the reign of Pope Gregory I (the Great) allowing the faithful to circulate around the saint's burial site was copied at Saint-Denis and San Prassede in Rome (c. 820). An elaborate two-story crypt was added outside the choir of the original church of Saint-Germain, Auxerre, in France in the mid-ninth century. Passages, connecting a series of chapels, including a rotunda dedicated to the Virgin Mary, provided circulation around the sixth-century tomb chamber of



Gatehouse from Abbey of Lorsch, Germany, early ninth century. VANNI ARCHIVE/CORBIS.

Saint-Germain as well as space for six new altars. A similar multiplication of chapel spaces was echoed above ground in the 870s at the abbey church of Corvey in Germany, where an axial cruciform chapel and two lateral chapels were linked by a curving aisle that wrapped around the choir. These experimental schemes anticipated the development of the ambulatory (an aisle surrounding the end of the choir) and chapel arrangement of Romanesque and Gothic architecture. A further modification of the standard basilica was the “double-ended” plan, found at Fulda in Germany and in the Plan of Saint-Gall in Switzerland (a series of blueprint-like drawings), where the saint’s shrine and the main altar were placed in apses at opposite ends of the church, a solution that had a long life in German church design.

**PROUD TOWERS.** Proclaiming the majesty of the church, towers represent one of the most daring contributions of medieval architecture, for they existed more for the sake of their visual impact and symbolic resonance than they did to fulfill any functional purpose. Concentrated at the “crossing,” that is, the intersection of the nave and choir of the basilica, towers accented the area of the main altar, the focal point of the church. At Saint-Denis, a 30-foot-high tower rose above the crossing while at Saint-Riquier, a multi-stage polygonal lantern (a tower-like structure admitting light) flanked by two slim stair turrets formed a monumental vertical cluster



Towers of Benedictine monastery, Cluny, France, 12th century. HAMISH PARK/CORBIS.

that contrasted dramatically with the 275-foot length of the body of the church. This embellishment of the crossing, often formed by a central tower with taller towers placed at the ends of the transept, continued through the next major architectural period (the Romanesque), as at the third abbey church of Cluny in France or Tournai Cathedral in Belgium, and then into the culminating period of medieval architecture (the Gothic) at the cathedrals of Laon and Chartres in France, and Milan in Italy, where the towers were likened to the “four evangelists surrounding the throne of God.” Towers appeared most commonly as integral elements of the façades of church buildings. Twin towers are mentioned at the Carolingian Saint-Denis, an arrangement repeated in the reconstruction of the abbey’s new entrance block in the 1130s. However, Carolingian architecture is most notable for its invention of the “westwork,” the monumental entry composed of a dominant central element enclosing an upper chapel reached by lateral stair turrets (that is small towers on each side). Described as a *castel-*



Abbey of Saint-Denis Cathedral, Paris, France, 13th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

*lum* (“castle”) or *turris* (“tower”) by contemporary writers, the westwork of churches such as Saint-Riquier and Corvey served as a virtual vertical church for the staging of important religious services. In addition, because the façade block housed the emperor’s throne at Aachen, it has sometimes been interpreted as an imperial architectural form. Roman city gates, it should be remembered, had included towers and upper chambers used in imperial ceremonies. At the Abbey of Lorsch in Germany, a freestanding triple-arch gateway that probably “copied” the Arch of Constantine in Rome coupled with the church’s westwork behind to create a spectacular entry sequence. The tower, like the inventive mix of Roman and medieval forms of Carolingian architecture in general, resonated on multiple levels as it invested the church with the aura of imperial power, triumphal authority, and transcendental spirituality.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: The Carolingian Restoration of Roman Culture*

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## OTTONIAN AND NORMAN ARCHITECTURE

**CAROLINGIAN QUOTATIONS.** Charlemagne’s vision of a Christian Roman Empire dissolved in the later ninth century, bringing an end to a great period of public construction. Central authority, undermined by the division of territory and royal rivalries among Charlemagne’s grandsons, was shattered by the invasions of Vikings in the north, Magyars in the east, and the Muslims around the Mediterranean. Their attacks devastated hundreds of towns, churches, and monasteries. A new kingdom emerged in central Germany in the mid-tenth century that laid claim to the mantle of the Carolingians, and in 962, Otto I was crowned emperor. In the projects generated by the court and its ecclesiastical allies, architecture reinforced Ottonian political pretensions through a deliberate continuation of Carolingian models. The palace chapel at Aachen was copied repeatedly throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries: in the chapel of St. Nicholas at Nijmegen in the eastern Netherlands, at Bishop Notger’s chapel at Liège in Belgium, and, oddly enough, in nunneries at Essen and S. Maria im Kapitol in Cologne in Germany, and at Ottmarsheim (1049) in eastern France. The interest of these female monastic communities in Charlemagne’s chapel underscored their



Towers and roof of Speyer Cathedral, Germany, 1030. CARMEN REDONDO/CORBIS.

imperial connections, but may have also been suggested by Aachen's dedication to the Virgin Mary and its possession of the relic of her shroud. Westworks appeared in major Ottonian cathedrals and monasteries in Germany, including the cathedrals of Speyer and Worms, and the abbey church of St. Michael's in Hildesheim, suggesting that by this time they were seen as an important component of the imperial architectural image. The cruciform basilica, revived by Carolingians, remained the basis for large-scale church plans. At St. Michael's, Hildesheim, this basic plan was elaborated with a transept and apse at each end of the building with the western choir raised above a crypt whose ambulatory was visible on the exterior.

**SPEYER.** The Cathedral of Speyer in western Germany, started in 1030 during the reign of Emperor Conrad II and vaulted (given its stone ceiling) around 1100, was the pre-eminent structure of the period and illustrates what might be called the progressive historicism—the creating of new architectural forms inspired by historical models—typical of so much of medieval architecture. A glance at the exterior of the cathedral with its massive

westwork and grouped crossing towers certainly recalls Carolingian precedents, such as Saint-Riquier, but the enormous scale of the cross-shaped plan, 435 feet in length, equals that of Roman imperial churches such as St. Peter's in Rome. The interior conjures up a similar Roman spirit. Its combination of rectangular piers and attached columns reproduces the structure of the Colosseum (Rome's massive amphitheater), while the arcade that rises through the entire 90-foot high elevation to frame each window resembles an aqueduct (Rome's system of raised water channels) or, again, the exterior of Constantine's audience hall at Trier in Germany. Visually, the new mix of piers and columns created a system that articulated the building as a series of repeating units that reflected the geometry of the plan. It also produced a more emphatically three-dimensional architecture whose walls were organized in distinct planes. In a similar vein, the exterior was embellished by the disciplined formal rhythms created by niches, decorative arches, and wall arcades framed by columns or pilasters (flattened or rectangular columns). A setting of overwhelming monumentality was created at Speyer to demonstrate the Roman and Carolingian origins of the



Aisle of Speyer Cathedral, Germany, 1030. VANNI ARCHIVE/CORBIS.

power of the German kings who lay buried in the spacious crypt under the choir.

**IMPOSING VERTICALITY IN NORMAN FRENCH ARCHITECTURE.** In a treaty of 911, the Carolingian king Charles the Simple granted the area around Rouen in northwestern France to the Vikings, creating what was to become the duchy of Normandy. Converted to Christianity and expanding their territories, the Normans soon turned to the task of building architecture worthy of a powerful state. The cathedrals and monasteries they erected during the eleventh century reveal a far-flung array of sources drawn from southwestern France, Burgundy, and the Holy Roman Empire in Germany. At the Abbey of Jumièges in France, begun in 1037 and completed in 1066, a pair of tall towers flank a projecting porch with an upper chapel to form an impressive frontispiece that is reminiscent of such Carolingian façade blocks as Saint-Denis or Corvey. The interior of the church emphasizes elegant verticality through the use of tall, attached columns that divide the nave wall into a series of regular units or bays. Even more notable, the elevation now contains three levels: above the arcade, a spacious gallery is introduced with a window zone, called a clerestory, at the top of the wall just below the timber

ceiling. Appearing in Ottonian church designs, but known in early Christian examples from Jerusalem to Trier, the gallery might have accommodated additional altars or been used by pilgrims. Clearly, it invested the church structure with a lordly height that was a symbol of status. Saint-Etienne at Caen in Normandy, founded around 1060 by William the Conqueror, who was also buried in front of the high altar at his death in 1087, exhibits an even more imposing demeanor. The rigorously ordered façade with its three portals and twin towers offered a scheme that would be repeated until the end of the Middle Ages. Like Jumièges, the interior of Caen contains three stories, including a gallery, but here supported exclusively by piers composed of a bundle of shafts set around a cruciform core that are coordinated with the key structural elements of the arcade, aisle vaults, and original wooden ceiling. Its thick walls, honeycombed by passages, resemble the architecture of contemporary Norman castles—the Tower of London, for example—and capture an image of the church as a Christian fortress as well as a symbol of political might.

**NORMAN DOMINATION IN ENGLAND.** Few events so thoroughly remodeled an architectural landscape as the Norman conquest of England in 1066. In the generation



Church of Saint-Etienne, Caen, Normandy, France, under reconstruction. BETTMANN/CORBIS.

following the Battle of Hastings, at which the Norman invaders, led by the future king William I, conquered the Anglo-Saxon king Harold, the Normans rebuilt every major cathedral and monastery in the country, literally obliterating the architecture of the Anglo-Saxons whom they had defeated. Dominating the skylines of English towns, these Norman churches left no doubt as to who was in control. As the twelfth-century historian William of Malmesbury noted in his *Deeds of the English Kings*, “You may see everywhere churches ... [and] monasteries rising in a new style of architecture; and with new

devotion our country flourishes, so that every rich man thinks a day wasted if he does not make it remarkable with some great stroke of generosity.” The ambitions of the new regime were apparent immediately in the projects launched by the conqueror and his ecclesiastical entourage, including Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, and Walkelin, bishop of Winchester. If the recent Norman plans of Rouen Cathedral or Saint-Etienne at Caen guided design at the cathedrals of Canterbury, Durham, or Lincoln, the conscious desire to evoke Rome and rival the architecture of the Continent lies behind





Choir with roof vaulting, stalls, and woodwork of Winchester Cathedral, England, eleventh century. ALAN TOWSE; ECOSCENE/CORBIS.

the pursuit of overwhelming scale, and the selection of majestic forms and materials. By William the Conqueror's death, the kingdom had no fewer than nine churches comparable in scale to St. Peter's. At Winchester, the columns that rise from floor to ceiling, seen in the surviving late eleventh-century transept or in the vaulted choir, parallel the insistent verticality of Speyer Cathedral in Germany and, combined with a huge western entry block, whose outlines have been recovered in archaeological excavations, create an imperial aura based on a mix of Roman, Carolingian, and Ottonian references. In the case of Durham's famous spiral columns, a specific link to St. Peter's is conjured up to reveal the local saint, Cuthbert, as an equal of the apostle. While Durham's architecture draws on Norman features present at Jumièges and Saint-Etienne at Caen, its most significant aspect is its use of pointed arches together with ribbed groin vaults, an innovation that supported the heavy stone roof in a way that was lighter, higher,

and more decorative than the heavy barrel vaults they replaced. Originally planned only over the eastern arm, or choir, of the church, the stone vaults were extended over the entire edifice during the building process. Whatever their structural and aesthetic advantages, they also provided a canopy over sacred space that turns the building into a monumental shrine. This conception of the church as a precious object is reflected at Durham in the lavish decoration of the entire building: the interlacing arches of the aisle walls, the carved patterns on the piers, and the restless chevron (angled stripe) ornament that outlines the arches and ribs.

**A SICILIAN BLEND.** An independent band of Normans established a kingdom in southern Italy and Sicily during the later eleventh century where they formulated an architecture that was an exotic mixture of Byzantine (Eastern Christian, centered in Constantinople or modern Istanbul), Muslim, and Christian Roman traditions. Best represented by the Palatine Chapel in Palermo or



Mismatched ribbed vaulting for transept ceiling in the Chapel of the Nine Altars, Durham Cathedral, England, 1093–1133. ANGELO HORNAK/CORBIS.

the cathedral of Monreale on the Italian island of Sicily, the Norman buildings of Sicily serve as a reminder that architecture is a language of communication whose vocabulary is often tailored to local circumstances. Thus, rather than erasing all signs of the past, the Palatine Chapel, built and decorated by King Roger II between 1132 and 1189, recasts the traditional basilican structure in forms absorbed from the conquered Byzantines and Muslims. The alternating smooth and fluted columns, the dome that rises over the crossing, as well as the glittering gold-ground mosaics are Byzantine in style; the pointed arches and elaborately faceted stalactite ceiling draw upon Muslim architecture. Like the imagery that showcases Christ in Majesty accompanied by the Roman saints Peter and Paul under a ceiling with paintings of constellations, courtly entertainments, and scenes of daily life, the church in its combination of traditional and alien forms comprises a text in which the impact of rival cultures, divine sanction, and the sophisticated refinement of the Norman kingdom and its rulers can be read. The same point is made by Monreale Cathedral, begun in 1174. An arresting play of interlacing pointed arches over the exterior invests the church with an ornamental luxury comparable to the most elaborate Islamic palaces, while the cruciform basilica with classical columns and mosaics seems a deliberate recollection of early Christian models. Far different in appearance from the projects undertaken in France and England, Norman architecture in Sicily underlines the bewildering variety



View of Cathedral, Monreale, Palermo, Sicily, 12th century. ADAM WOOLFITT/CORBIS.

of styles and the creative interplay of sources encountered in the Romanesque period.

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## SYMBOLIC

### Architecture: Copying the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

#### Imitation and Connection

Every church, no matter its size, plan, or style, was a symbol—or rather a set of simultaneous symbols—of heaven, Noah’s Ark, or the Body of Christ, as interpreted by theologians. From the beginning of Christian public architecture in the fourth century, builders often identified holy sites by special plans or by dazzling decoration. In the best known and most widely imitated example, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, as it was originally built around 325 C.E. during the reign of Constantine, marked Jesus’ tomb with a large circular structure, a type of building associated with commemoration in the Roman world. Religious structures in Western Europe from the ninth through the twelfth centuries frequently copied the Holy Sepulchre to make the experience of Jerusalem, which lay in Muslim hands, more accessible and to encourage devotion to the central beliefs of the faith. Bishop Meinwerk of Paderborn in Germany even sent a representative to the Holy Land to measure the building, but the structure he erected in 1036 was cruciform in shape. Evidently, he (and the many pilgrims who engaged in measurement and even carried back banners cut to symbolic proportions) believed that incorporating selective dimensions and adopting a

centralized plan and common dedication to the Holy Sepulchre were sufficient to establish a compelling connection. Rather than an exacting copy, it was the meaning of the Holy Sepulchre as the place of the Crucifixion that was of paramount importance to the bishop.

#### Symbolic Interpretations

For the Templars, the various versions of the Holy Sepulchre that sprang up in their monastic houses throughout Europe during the twelfth century—for example, at London and Paris—all represented their charge to defend and maintain the sites of the Holy Land. Emphasizing a somewhat different interpretation, in the Baptistery of Pisa of 1153, the quotation of the circular plan, the dimensions, the exotic multicolored masonry, and the steep conical roof of the Holy Sepulchre created a symbolic link between the rite of baptism that would take place there and the death and resurrection of Christ. Shifting the symbolism back to the original idea of commemoration, the monastic church of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon (1001–1018) repeated the rotunda as the setting for the tomb of its saint, and as late as around 1180 another such rotunda was attached to the choir of Canterbury Cathedral, where the cranium of St. Thomas Becket was displayed to the eager eyes of visitors. This imitation of a prestigious model, however flexible its interpretation, was one of the ways by which importance and prestige could be conferred onto a building and the saint whose relics “lived” within.

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## GEOMETRY AND PLANNING

**ARCHITECTURE, BEAUTY, AND GEOMETRY.** Modern observers are often filled with awe when they consider the combination of engineering and aesthetic sophistication required to achieve the complex structures that were evolving even in the early Middle Ages. Of the many stages involved in the construction of a medieval

building, the first step, the planning phase, remains the most elusive. This was the moment when thoughts and conversations began to take physical form as architects translated functional requirements and a patron’s vision into structure and space. What strategies did they employ to ensure that an edifice was both stable and beautiful? Geometry provided the means by which masons designed and laid out plans, the common language of communication between craftsman and cleric, and the vehicle by which architectural form could be invested with meaning. Medieval thinkers, such as St. Augustine, followed Vitruvius, a Roman architect who wrote *On Architecture* at the time of Augustus in the late first century B.C.E., by defining beauty as a harmony of parts that arose out of geometrical regularity. Constantly cited by writers from the ninth century on, Vitruvius’s ideas on architectural planning, along with other classical works, were well known in the Middle Ages. In 1321, the monks of the abbey of Saint-Ouen in Rouen wrote, as they planned for the reconstruction of their church, that “we have decided to build in accordance with former

learned treatises” by “industrious and accomplished artisans who are recognized to possess proven and well-known experience in such matters.” Whether or not medieval masons actually read these “treatises,” this document suggests that they were able to put into practice the architectural theories familiar to their scholarly patrons.

**SQUARES, CIRCLES, AND TRIANGLES.** According to Vitruvius, plans of buildings require geometry that “teaches the use of straight lines and the compass.” The designs of most medieval buildings can be understood in terms of skillful combinations of squares, circles, and triangles. An architect might take a “modular” approach based on the repetition of a standard unit, as illustrated by the layout of Charlemagne’s palace at Aachen which used a 12-foot length, organized into larger squares of 84- and 360-feet, or the plan of Saint-Gall that was governed by a grid of 40-foot squares. However, after the fifth century and the collapse of centralized Roman authority, different regions of Europe and even cities within the same region adopted their own standards of measurement that might vary by as much as four inches per foot. The potential for chaos if an architect designed a building according to one foot-length while the craftsmen constructed it using another standard of measure was great. To avoid such problems, builders turned to ratios generated by the manipulation of basic geometric figures as the means of organizing and coordinating the complex of parts and spaces of the church. One of the most common techniques was based on the ratio of the side of a square to its diagonal, that is, one to the square root of two (or mathematically 1: 1.414). For example, imagine that a person laid out a square then drew its diagonal. Then the person swung the diagonal until it lined up with the side of the square. That person has just designed most of the twelfth-century Cistercian abbey of Jerpoint in Ireland: its cloister is a 100-foot square while the nave, created by the diagonal, is 142 feet long. Swinging the diagonal in the other direction establishes the width of the east range of the cloister buildings. A similar square root of two ratios ran through Norwich Cathedral, begun in the late eleventh century, and controlled the relation of width to length of the papal church of Saint-Urbain in Troyes which was begun in 1262.

**OTHER RATIOS.** A second ratio that can be found frequently in medieval architecture is the “golden section” (1: 1.618), easily produced from the diagonal of half a square. Used as far back as ancient Egypt and continued by the Romans in such important Christian structures as Old St. Peter’s in the fourth century, the golden section was applied in the designs of Amiens Cathedral, and again at Saint-Urbain in Troyes and Saint-Ouen in

Rouen. Despite their differences, each plan reveals a golden section ratio between the wide central space and the flanking aisles. Other ratios detected in medieval monuments include the square root of three (1: 1.732), taken from an equilateral triangle and found at the abbey church of Fontenay, and the square root of five (1: 2.236). All of these ratios involve irrational rather than whole numbers and are derived from working directly from the geometrical figures of the plan. These same ratios were projected upwards into the superstructure. The square root of two controls the composition of the elevation at Durham Cathedral. At Milan, arguments broke out during the 1390s over whether the cathedral should be designed on the basis of a square (*ad quadratum*) or a triangle (*ad triangulatum*). Debate raged over which solution would be more beautiful and structurally sound, and advocates of the various solutions supported their positions by citing the Bible as well as Aristotle.

**DRAWING.** The plan of a building could be laid out at full scale on the ground using ropes and stakes to mark its outlines. But as medieval architecture developed in complexity, drawing became an increasingly important tool in the process of design and construction. Few drawings are known before the twelfth century: the famous plan of Saint-Gall, created in the early ninth century, is less a construction blueprint than a conceptual diagram that sets out the scheme of an ideal monastery. As late as 1178 when William of Sens, architect of the new choir at Canterbury Cathedral, was seriously injured after falling from scaffolding, he attempted to supervise construction by having himself carried to the building site on a stretcher. Although William had supplied templates or patterns for architectural details, there apparently were no drawings that could keep the project on course in his absence. Numerous full-scale drawings survive from the thirteenth century onwards. Incised into floors, on walls, or on plaster surfaces, the extant engravings encompass preliminary sketches and finished representations of building parts such as windows, piers, gables, portals, and flying buttresses. They offered the master mason a chance to refine his formal ideas, to evaluate the merits of a design before it was executed, and to check the accuracy of the cutting before stones were mortared into place. Finally, in the Gothic period, drawings on parchment evolved as structures were composed of precisely coordinated networks of shafts and moldings, and intricate and finely scaled vault and window patterns. Drawings not only became indispensable to construction, but they allowed an architect to supervise multiple projects simultaneously. In 1434, Pierre Robin, a Parisian master, was hired to design the parish church of Saint-Maclou

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE CHURCH OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA**

**INTRODUCTION:** So popular were pilgrimages throughout the Middle Ages that various guidebooks were written to help pilgrims negotiate the voyage and understand the significance of the route and the buildings along the way. Among the most famous of these was the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* (the Book of Saint James), a compilation made between 1139 and 1173 of five books, treating such subjects as the four French roads leading to the major pilgrimage routes, the cities and stations along the way in Spain (treated very negatively), hospices, road maintenance, and rivers to be crossed. The fifth book of the compilation, perhaps written by Aimery Picaud from nearby Poitiers in France, is entitled *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*. In the book's eleven chapters, appear a liturgy to serve the cult of Saint James, twenty-two miracles of Saint James, glorification of the cult of Saint James, the story of the legendary Bishop Turpin (who appears as a character in the *Song of Roland*), and three long chapters on relics, reliquaries, peoples, and lands. The section below, describing the cathedral itself, contains details on measurements and proportions.

**The Measurements of the Church**

The basilica of Saint James measures in length fifty-three times a man's stature, that is to say, from the west portal to the altar of the San Salvador [the eastern chapel]; and in width, thirty-nine times, that is to say, from the French [north transept portal] to the south portal. Its elevation on the inside is fourteen times a man's stature. Nobody is really able to tell its length and height on the outside.

The church has nine aisles on the lower level and six on the upper, as well as a head, plainly a major one, in which the altar of the San Salvador is located, a laurel crown, a body, two members, and further eight small heads [chapels] in each of which there is an altar. ...

In the largest nave there are twenty-nine piers, fourteen to the right and as many to the left, and one is on the inside between the two portals against the north, separating the vaulted bays. In the naves of the transepts of this church, that is to say from the French to the south portal, there are twenty-six piers, twelve on the right and as many on the left, as well as two more placed before the doors on the inside, separating the entrance arches and the portals.

In the crown of the church there are eight single columns around the altar of the Blessed James. ...

In this church, in truth, one cannot find a single crack or defect: it is admirably built, large, spacious, luminous, of becoming dimensions, well proportioned in width, length and height, of incredibly marvelous workmanship and even built on two levels as a royal palace.

He who walks through the aisles of the triforium [gallery] above, if he ascended in a sad mood, having seen the superior beauty of this temple, will leave happy and contented.

**Concerning the Towers of the Basilica**

There are nine towers in this church, that is to say, two above the portal of the fountain, two above the south portal, two above the west portal, two above each of the corkscrew staircases, and another, the largest one, above the crossing, in the middle of the basilica. By these and by the many other utmost precious works the basilica of the Blessed James shines in magnificent glory. All of it is built in massive bright and brown stone which is hard as marble. The interior is decorated with various paintings and the exterior is perfectly covered with tiles and lead.

**SOURCE:** *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*. Trans. and ed. William Melczar (New York: Italica Press, 1993): 120–121; 126.

in Rouen. He stayed in the city for five months, delivered a complete set of plans, then left the building entirely to local contractors. Although construction at Saint-Maclou lasted for ninety years, Robin's plans were followed scrupulously, and the church displays a remarkable unity despite the participation of many hands. The most lavish drawings of the later Middle Ages, embellished by color washes, might be shown to patrons to confirm the genius of the design, sent to potential donors, or exhibited in public to raise funds for construction. An example of such geometrical drawing occurs in the portfolio of Villard de Honnecourt in the 1230s.

**MAKING AND MEANING.** While medieval architecture was becoming increasingly technological in its methods, it also maintained symbolic and religious significance. The medieval church building was likened by theologians to the Temple of Solomon as well as to the celestial Jerusalem. The Bible describes these sacred edifices in detail, including their dimensions: the temple was 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high; the heavenly city measured 12,000 *stadia* with a wall of 144 cubits (cubits were measurements of about 17 to 21 inches and *stadia* were about 607 feet). In addition, Christian theology interpreted numbers in symbolic terms. Four was equated with the gospels, five was the

number of divinity, evoking the five wounds of Jesus, and six was the perfect number, according to St. Augustine, because it was both the sum and product of its factors, 1, 2, and 3. Thus although plan designing was a process that involved the mechanical manipulation of geometric shapes by secular craftsmen, it was possible to endow a building with symbolic meaning by basing the design on a resonant module or by encoding a significant number into its geometry. The chapel at Aachen, for example, was based on a twelve-foot module and its total length was 144 feet, both dimensions clearly intended to connect it with the image of heaven. The royal Sainte-Chapelle in Paris quotes the proportions and dimensions of the Palace of Solomon, described in I Kings 7, perhaps as a way to associate the contemporary French monarch with Solomon, the paragon of the wise ruler. And the design of the papal church of Saint-Urbain in Troyes unfolds out of a central square that is 36 feet per side using the square root of two and golden section operations. Six is, of course, a factor of 36, so that the perfect number literally lies at the heart of the plan. Its height, 72 feet, is determined by two of these squares, but is also a factor of the number 144 associated with heaven. In sum, medieval masons used geometry as the practical means to ensure the harmony of their designs while patrons found in number and shape potent symbols that linked the present with the past and connected their earthly projects to divinely inspired models.

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## CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

**BUILDING WITH MASONRY.** Throughout the Middle Ages, the most prestigious and durable edifices—castles, churches, and palaces—were built of stone. However, the loss of the Roman formula for concrete (a mixture

of water, lime, and pozzolanic sand akin to modern Portland cement, to which a coarse aggregate of rubble and broken pottery was added) and its replacement in the Middle Ages by a weak lime mortar made complex masonry ceilings difficult to build. Thus, one of the major achievements of medieval architecture was the recovery of the ability to vault monumental interior spaces to dramatic effect. Medieval masons continued many Roman architectural practices, constructing their buildings with rubble (broken, rather than cut stone) walls faced with cut stone blocks or decorative patterns, as seen in the surviving sections of the late-tenth-century cathedral of Beauvais, Notre-Dame-de-la-Basse-Oeuvre. Yet, there were significant variations from region to region in Europe due to available building materials and established traditions. For example, brick was used in southern France and northern Germany as a substitute for the poor-quality local stone. Ancient Roman architectural elements (remnants of columns, carvings, etc.), called *spolia*, were often incorporated into medieval Italian structures because of their handy abundance as well as their evocative connection to the glory of the past, while timber forms inspired designs in Anglo-Saxon stone buildings in England.

**THE LEGACY OF ROME: ARCHES AND VAULTS.** By far the most important legacy from Rome was the arch, which constituted the basis of medieval church architecture. An arch is a curved structural form composed of wedge-shaped stones called *voussoirs*. The uppermost voussoir is the keystone which, when dropped into place, locks the other stones of the entire arch together. Pushing against one another, the stones stay in place, and as long as there is enough material around the arch to resist this outward, pushing force, the arch will remain stable. There were many uses for arches: supported by columns or piers to form an arcade, they span space to create passages; they frame doorways and windows; they act as structural reinforcement; and, in miniature, they decorate walls. Arches were, in turn, the basis of vaults. The continuous barrel vault was constructed by extending an arch across an expanse from pier to pier, creating a ceiling that had a concave or half-cylindrical appearance, as occurs in the main nave space at Saint-Sernin at Toulouse, France. Two barrel vaults intersecting at right angles, the "groins" marking the lines of intersection, formed a groined vault. By focusing supporting forces at the corners of the vault compartment or bay, the groined vault relieved the wall of its structural purpose and made large openings and windows possible. But because the stones of the groins had extremely complex geometric shapes, these vaults were difficult to



Basilica of Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, France, 11th–14th centuries. MARC GARANGER/CORBIS.

build and were used most frequently over smaller spaces that included windows, such as those in the side aisles of Saint-Sernin.

**THE COMING OF GOTHIC ARCHES.** European architecture in the eleventh and early twelfth century, despite its variety, is commonly called “Romanesque” because its massive walls, its rounded arches, the extension of stone vaulting throughout the entire structure, and many of its ornamental forms resemble Roman buildings. Around 1100, new forms appeared that moved away from the heritage of ancient building and began to transform the appearance of architecture. The first major development can be seen in a change in the shape of arches. Builders from the Carolingian to the Romanesque periods employed semicircular arches. To draw one with a compass requires only a single fixed center point to produce an arch whose height is always one-half of its span. However, a different type of arch appeared in Romanesque buildings, such as Durham Cathedral, that became the dominant form in the Gothic period from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries: the pointed arch. In this case, the intersecting arcs are struck from two centers whose location is fluid. This

creates an arch that not only can be flexibly tailored to fit almost any spatial need but also is more structurally efficient than the semicircular arch. A second breakthrough came with the invention of the ribbed groin vault. This vault had all the advantages of the groin vault, but added ribs—decorative moldings that masked the groin lines. Ribs facilitated construction, first, because they were assembled from identical pieces and, second, because once built, they offered a scaffolding that was filled in by a light stone membrane or web. An example of vaulting appears in the Chapel of the Heiligen-Geist-Hospital in Lübeck, Germany.

**THE FLYING BUTTRESS.** Along with pointed arches and ribbed groin vaults, the flying buttress was introduced as a key structural component in mid-twelfth century buildings such as the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, both in Paris, and the Cathedral at Chartres, France. Exposed arches “flying” over the aisles of the church act to brace the wall against the outward thrust of the vault and the wind pressure on the roof and to direct these forces to massive slabs of masonry (buttresses). Flying buttresses, coordinated with ribbed groin vaults and pointed arches,



Vaulting, Chapel of Heiligen-Geist-Hospital, Lübeck, Germany, 13th century. WOLFGANG KAEHLER/CORBIS.

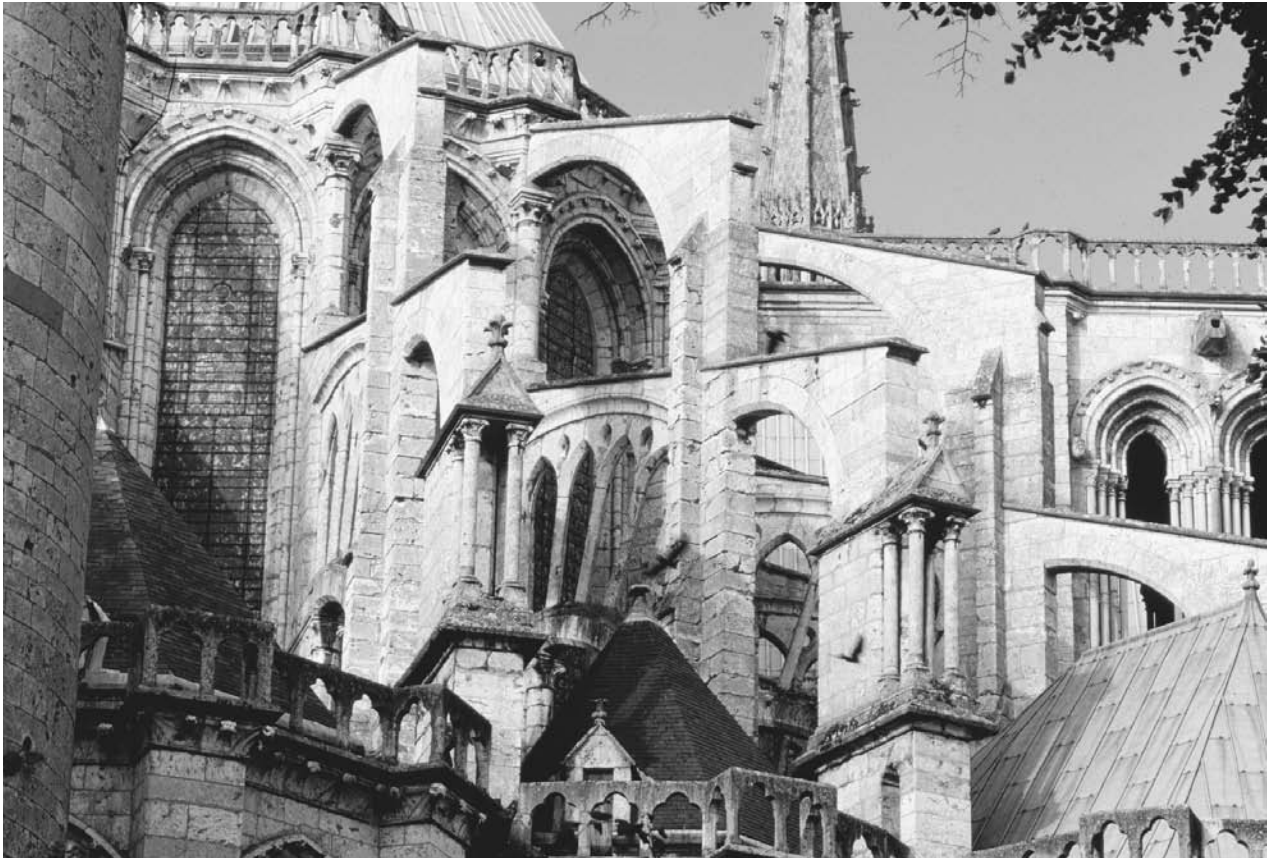
composed a completely new system. Rather than a continuous envelope of heavy supporting walls, as was characteristic of the Romanesque style, the structure now resembled the cage of an Erector set, with the flying buttresses appearing both internally and externally. By exploiting the potential of these new features, Gothic church architecture was able to achieve the impossible: unprecedented height combined with walls that were little more than perforated screens whose openings were filled with vast fields of dazzling stained glass.

**TIMBER.** Most buildings in the Middle Ages—houses, forts, barns, market halls, and even parish churches—were made of timber. Stone construction itself required vast quantities of wood for the temporary scaffolds socketed into walls that served as work platforms in upper levels, for formwork upon which vault stones were laid, and for templates or patterns that guided the cutting of moldings. Cranes and the great wheels that hoisted building materials aloft were made of wood. Timber pilings and lattices were incorporated into the foundations of edifices that rose on marshy ground, a technique still used in the late nineteenth century in Henry Hobson Richardson’s Trinity Church

in Boston. Wooden vaults, imitating the appearance of stone, were erected at York Cathedral in the late thirteenth century, and the fourteenth-century crossing of Ely Cathedral, its stone lantern perched atop a pinwheel of wooden vaults, achieved one of the most spectacular spaces of the age. But, by far, the most significant concern of carpentry was the roof structure.

**ROOFS.** Tall, steeply pitched roofs were more than practical coverings to shed the rain and snow of northern Europe’s inclement weather; they were status symbols. Hrothgar’s magnificent “mead-hall” of Heorot is described in the early (pre-tenth century) Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* as “high-roofed—and gleaming with gold,” and the slate roofs of the palace of the kings of France in Paris struck one fourteenth-century writer as “glistening bright” to the point that “everyone is gladdened by / The very thought of entering.” Churches, too, were crowned by prominent roofs whose beams were likened by a late thirteenth-century bishop, William of Mende, to “the princes and preachers who defend and fortify the unity of the Church,” while the tiles reminded him of “the soldiers and knights who protect the Church against the attacks of enemies of the faith.” Until the





View from the Bell Tower of flying buttresses and stained glass window, Cathedral of Chartres, France, 13th century. ADAM WOOLFITT/CORBIS.

eleventh century, large interior spaces in medieval churches were covered by timber roofs, often open to the space below, devised from a system of members, that included sloping beams called rafters whose ends were connected by horizontal tie beams, to form a triangular truss. Norwegian stave churches, a late example of which is found at Borgund (c. 1250), demonstrate the advanced roofing technology achieved in northern Europe. Trusses, stiffened by curving scissor braces, are supported by tall timber posts or staves to create a bay system that may have influenced the development of a comparably integrated frame in stone architecture.

**STONE VAULTS, TIMBER ROOFS.** With the spread of masonry vaulting in the Romanesque period, carpenters faced a set of problems that tested their ingenuity. The curving crown of the vault that rose into the space of the roof made it impossible to create a structure based on trusses placed every three or four feet as in an unvaulted building, and they were forced to search for solutions that accommodated the vault but did not sacrifice stability against gravity and wind. The number of tie beams was reduced gradually as supplementary rafters

and braces were added to increase the rigidity of the roof frame. In Gothic architecture of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, roofing systems evolved in response to the wide spans of the spaces and the reduction of the thickness of the walls. At Notre-Dame in Paris and Reims Cathedral, trusses were organized into bays consisting of main frames, recognizable by their vertical hangers that support a matrix of beams and rafters that alternate with secondary frames without tie beams. More important, plates that ran along the top of the wall and purlins that supported the additional rafters integrated the system longitudinally. Reaching a pitch of about 60 degrees, these steep roofs emphasized the vertical silhouette of the soaring buildings, making them appear even taller.

**THE HALL.** Timber architecture was not simply a question of money, nor was it indicative of social class. At Aachen, where Charlemagne's audience hall and chapel were built of stone, the emperor maintained his domestic quarters in a wooden structure. As medieval literature, from *Beowulf* to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1360–1370) makes clear, the hall stood at the center of palace life, serving as the stage for aristocratic



Woodwork and roofs of Stavechurch, Borgund, Norway, 1150. ELIO CIOL/CORBIS.



Interior of Westminster Hall showing hammer-beam wooden roof structure and stalls, London, England, 14th century. ADAM WOOLFITT/CORBIS.

festivities. But it was also the basis of other structures of daily life such as hospitals, colleges, and commercial buildings. In stark contrast to the arched form of churches, halls were fashioned of vertical post and horizontal beam construction that created aisled interior spaces. After around 1200, there was a general shift toward aisleless structures that is represented by the remarkable rebuilding of Westminster Hall in the palace of the kings of England. Completed in 1099 by the Norman ruler William Rufus, who is reported to have “spared no expense to manifest the greatness of his liberality,” the original hall was so wide—around 67 feet—that internal supports were required to carry the ceiling. In the 1390s, Richard II engaged his chief carpenter, Hugh Herland, and master mason, Henry Yevele, to refurbish the hall. Herland’s ingenious hammer-beam roof, supported through the use of short cantilevered timbers, covered the enormous space with a single breathtaking span. The hammer beams, projecting from the wall, actually pull in the sloping rafters to keep them from spreading outward. Combined with the heavy vertical

hammer posts and horizontal collar beam (tie beam) as well as the great arch, they transmit the weight and thrust of the roof to the stone brackets, or corbels, located about halfway up the wall, that had been added by Yevele. Masonry and carpentry collaborate in a structure that is at once logical and elegant. Despite the fact that some 600 tons (the weight of a modern diesel locomotive) of oak were used in the frames, the roof—enriched by open grilles—appears to float on the backs of the angels that decorate the ends of the hammer beams. Finally, it is important to remember that this great roof structure was assembled from material provided by trees grown in forests that were legally protected and carefully managed. Eliminating the floor posts was not simply a matter of artistic choice, but permitted the use of smaller trees that were easier to cut and transport. The study of medieval structures reveals the complex interrelationship between architectural form, building technology, natural resources, and human institutions.

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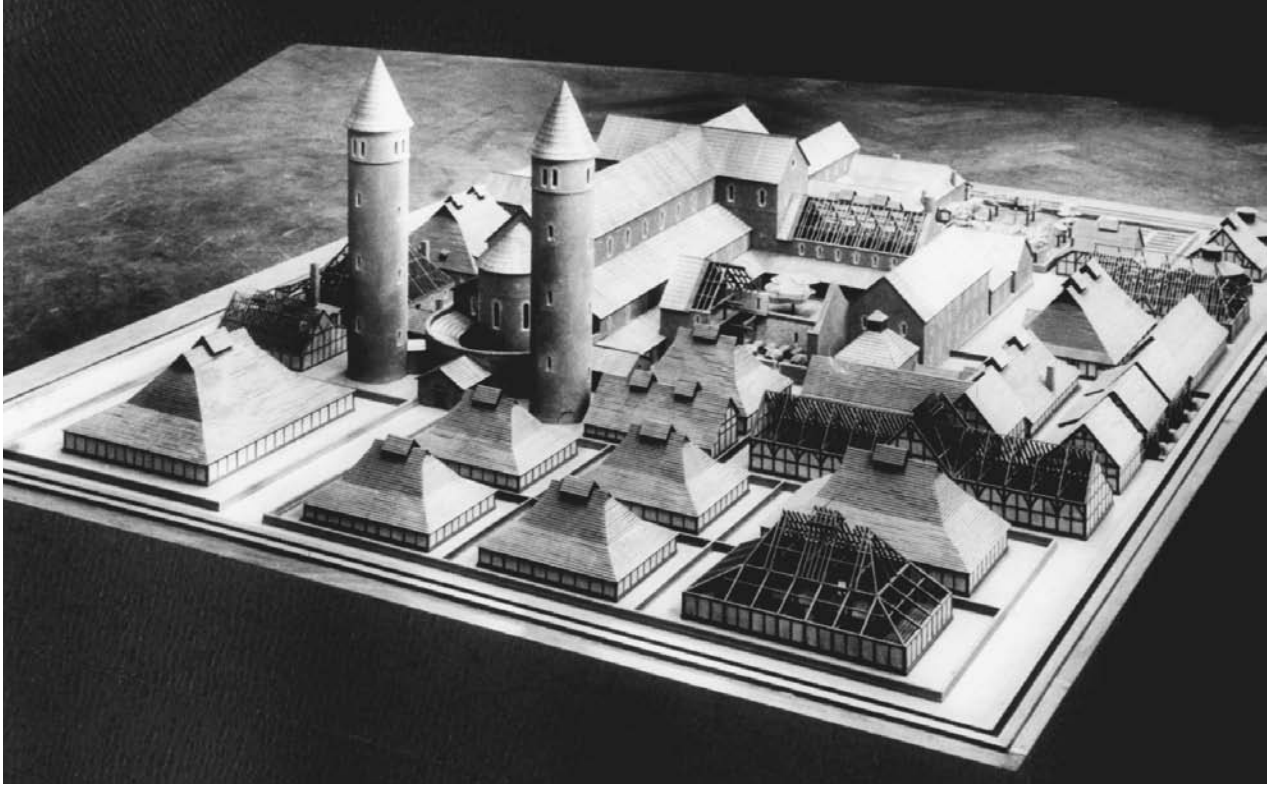
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**MONASTIC ARCHITECTURE**

**MONASTIC RULES FOR CLOISTERED LIFE.** From the earliest days of Christianity, there have been men and women who have withdrawn from the world to seek solitude in order to devote themselves to prayer and meditate upon God. For some, this spiritual quest was a solitary endeavor, but in many cases the holy hermit attracted groups of followers who sought to emulate the ascetic lifestyle, and this formation of groups eventually necessitated the development of specialized architecture. Beginning in the fourth century, life in these religious communities was ordered by rules that divided the day into periods of work, prayer, and reading. Basil the Great (c. 330–379) wrote the first set of rules that became the basis of monasticism in the Orthodox church in eastern Mediterranean regions, and this was followed in the West by the Rules of St. Augustine in the late fourth century, and the Rule of St. Benedict, written around 530, which predominated in Europe throughout the Middle Ages. In drawing up the regulations for his

“school for the Lord’s service,” Benedict included directions for all facets of a monk’s life. In 73 chapters, he set an abbot in charge of the monastery, offered guidelines for food, drink, and clothing, addressed sleeping arrangements, prescribed punishments for misbehavior and mistakes in religious services, and detailed the reception of guests. The day was structured by seven offices, beginning in the middle of the night, at which the Psalms were sung, but also included six to eight hours of manual labor and periods of study and reading. Although the Rule did not contain specific architectural directions, its requirements for eating and sleeping in common, the importance of the oratory as the hub of liturgical life, and the mention of kitchens, an infirmary, cellars, and guest quarters assume a complex of structures that would compose a self-sufficient community. As Benedict wrote in chapter 66, “The monastery should, if possible, be so constructed that within it all necessities, such as water, mill, and garden, are contained, and the various crafts are practiced. Then there will be no need for the monks to roam outside, because this is not at all good for their souls.”

**THE PLAN OF SAINT-GALL AND THE CLOISTER.** The Carolingians translated the framework for monastic life envisioned by St. Benedict into architectural form in the ninth century. With the same view toward uniformity that guided the reform of imperial administration, the development of a more legible script for copying the Bible, and the planning of architectural monuments, Charlemagne commanded all monasteries in his realm to adopt the Benedictine Rule and convened assemblies in Aachen in 816–817 to consider policies that directly affected the layout of the proposed structures. At about the same time, a large plan, drawn on five sheets of parchment and measuring about 44 by 30 inches, was sent to the abbot of Saint-Gall, apparently portraying an ideal scheme of what buildings a monastery should contain and how to arrange them. A model built from the plan shows the monastery’s appearance. The multiplex, dominated by the large “double-ended” church, is organized in a series of concentric zones like an onion. Animal pens, industrial buildings employing secular artisans, guest quarters, and the school formed an outer ring. At the heart of the plan lay the cloister, the focus of monastic life. With a fountain at its center, the square courtyard was surrounded by covered and arcaded walkways that provided sheltered circulation between the primary spaces of monastic activity: church, dormitory, refectory (dining hall), cellar, and scriptorium (book production center). Chapter rooms, for general meetings, became standard features in Cistercian abbeys and were always



Architectural model showing towers and transept of the 9th-century Benedictine Monastery at Saint-Gallen, Switzerland. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

located in the east gallery of the cloister under the dormitory. They were the most important structure of a monastery, after the church, and served as places where the monks assembled after morning Mass to receive spiritual advice or discipline from the abbot, read chapters of the Rule of St. Benedict, and discuss the internal affairs of the community. Because the new orders of the Franciscan and Dominican friars established themselves in cities during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and were not cloistered, they did not need the large cellars, barns, animal pens, and industrial buildings required by monks living in remote rural areas. Further, each Franciscan or Dominican friar lived in his own small cell in the convent—as the houses of friars were called—rather than together in a dormitory. Nevertheless, despite these additions and modifications, the scheme created in the ninth century and represented by the Saint-Gall plan remained the essential template for the cloister for the rest of the Middle Ages.

**THE DILEMMA OF THE MONASTIC CHURCH.** Monastic churches were designed according to the same plans and were assembled from the same architectural forms—columns or piers, arches, masonry vaults or timber ceilings—as other churches. The Rule of Saint Bene-

dict, which all monks followed, left no directions concerning the style or appearance of the church. Thus, there is a noticeable variety in the approaches of the different orders to the physical structure of the church and its decoration, a range of interpretation that reflects a dilemma in the character and purpose of monastic life. On the one hand, monks were constantly urged to embrace humility, to avoid arrogance, to seek moderation, and to be content with poverty in emulation of Christ. On the other hand, the monk spent his life in the task of glorifying God and seeking the vision of his kingdom. And that kingdom, as described in Revelations, chapter 21, was a glittering jeweled structure irradiated by light with streets paved in gold. So what should a monastic church be: a representation of humility and a simple “workshop of prayer,” or an image of heaven and an offering of unsurpassed grandeur to God?

**CLUNY AND THE ROMAN MODEL.** The most important of the monastic churches to represent the argument for opulence was the one begun in 1088 in Cluny. Founded in Burgundy in 910, the abbey of Cluny was not subject to any bishop or secular authority, only to the pope. Other monastic houses, attracted to Cluny’s concept of spiritual improvement through constant

## THE Buildings of the Cloister

One of the most enduring influences of the Carolingian period was the idea that monasteries should have a uniform kind of architecture that was suited to the rules of monastic life. The scheme created in the ninth-century Saint-Gall plan remained the essential template for the cloister for the rest of the Middle Ages. Dominated by a large church on the north side, such a cloister was organized in a series of concentric zones, with such things as stables, pens for oxen and cattle, a mill, a smithy, a tannery, guest quarters, and a school in the outer ring. Outside and to the east might lie orchards, gardens, and fishponds. The abbot's residence, accommodations for distinguished visitors, and the monks' infirmary also lay outside the walls, usually to the east. At the heart of the plan was the cloister itself, the focus of monastic life. With a fountain at its center, the square courtyard was surrounded by covered and arcaded walkways that allowed residents to walk between the primary spaces of monastic activity: church, dormitory, refectory (dining hall), cellar, and scriptorium (book production center). Chapter rooms, for general meetings, became standard features in Cistercian abbeys and were always located in the east gallery of the cloister under the dormitory. The entrance gatehouse and service courts (controlling agricultural and industrial activity) were generally in the west range, as were the refectory and dormitory of the lay brothers, whose princi-

pal responsibilities involved the agricultural or industrial functions of the abbey.

**Cellar:** Space used for storage and located on the ground level of the west range.

**Chapter room:** A room usually located along the east range of the cloister used by the monastic community for daily meetings.

**Day room:** A room in which the monks pursued manual labor within the cloister; sometimes it was used as a scriptorium. The day room was often located next to the chapter room along the east range and below the dormitory.

**Dormitory:** The common sleeping room of the monks. The dormitory was customarily attached directly to the south arm of the church and was located above the chapter room on the east side of the cloister.

**Infirmary:** The building devoted to the care of sick and infirm monks often was situated outside the cloister precinct to the east. With its own cloister and chapel, it formed a monastery in miniature.

**Kitchen:** Conveniently located next to the refectory in the south range buildings.

**Refectory:** The dining hall of the monastery, usually located on the south walk of the cloister.

**Warming room:** A space, often adjacent to the refectory on the south side (under the dormitory in the Saint-Gall plan), where a fire was kept burning during the winter months.

prayer and their resulting splendid liturgy, were reformed by the abbey and brought under its rule so that by around 1100, it controlled about 1,450 monasteries throughout western Europe. Cluny's direct link to Rome and its role as the virtual capital of an international religious empire found expression in one of the most daring and magnificent churches erected during the Middle Ages. Fueled by a donation of 10,000 gold talents from King Alfonso VI of Aragon, the new structure, the third in the history of the abbey, was built between 1088 and about 1130, replacing a mid-tenth-century edifice that had been one of the first fully stone vaulted churches in medieval architecture, but had grown too congested to accommodate the throng of 460 monks who celebrated Mass in the choir. Legend records that a retired monk named Gunzo, who was also a musician, was shown the plan in a dream by saints Peter and Paul. Whether or not this is true, the new design does echo the basilica of St. Peter's in Rome in its inclusion of five aisles that were graded in height and a prominent projecting transept. Further, the inte-

rior walls, which rise to a height of about 100 feet, were embellished by fluted pilasters and the piers crowned by luxurious foliate capitals that emulate the forms of Roman architecture.

**DEPICTIONS OF POWER AND GLORY.** At the same time that it was emulating the design and forms of Rome, Cluny utterly transformed these traditional features by remounting them in an elaborate setting. The 635-foot long plan, the largest in Christendom, included two transepts as well as an ambulatory ringed by a necklace of chapels. Four mighty towers rose above the transepts and two more stood at the western entrance, creating an impressive silhouette. Inside, the elevation was composed of three levels: a tall arcade; a middle zone, or triforium, decorated with cusped arches that resembled Islamic ornament; and a clerestory. Pointed barrel vaults covered the main spaces, while pointed arches were used in the arcade. Given Cluny's extreme height and breadth—the nave vault alone spans 35 feet—this precocious decision to use the pointed arch, which was to become such an



Grounds (with much later buildings) of Abbey at Cluny, France, 910. SANDRO VANNINI/CORBIS.

important component of the Gothic style, was likely based upon structural considerations. Finally, the choir composed an opulently decorated stage where the daily round of monastic offices was sung. Beautifully sculpted capitals topped the tall columns that ringed the apse, depicting figures of the eight tones of plainchant, the four seasons, and the four rivers of paradise, while a monumental painting of Christ in Majesty filled the half dome of the choir above the altar. Taken as a whole, the abbey church of Cluny not only made a compelling statement about the power of the Order but also composed an image of heaven. As the author of the *Life of St. Hugh*, the abbot under whom the new church was built, wrote, “if it were possible for those who dwell in heaven to take pleasure in a house made by human hands, you would say this was the walk of angels.”

**THE CISTERCIANS.** At the very moment that Cluny was nearing completion, Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, voiced his criticism of contemporary monastic architecture in his famous *Apologia* written around 1125 to his friend, William of Saint-Thierry: “I say nothing of the immense height of your churches, their immoderate length, their superfluous breadth, the costly polishings,

the curious carvings and paintings which attract the worshipper’s attention and impede his devotion. ... But I, as a monk, ask of my brother monks, ‘tell me you paupers, what business has gold in the sanctuary?’” The monastic reformers that settled at Cîteaux in 1098 and created the Cistercian Order sought to return to the letter of the Rule of St. Benedict as they rejected the materialism and sensory overload of Cluny. The architectural simplicity of the order’s churches reflected their spiritual ideals and their search for perfection through silence and interior meditation. Although there was neither a set formula for planning nor a clearly defined style shared among the more than 1,100 houses of the order established from Ireland to Greece and from Spain to Sweden, Cistercian architecture can be identified by a common attitude within the variety of its expression. For example, the abbey of Le Thoronet (second half of the twelfth century) strips away all of the grand forms and decorative flourishes so characteristic of Cluny to achieve a structure where every space and stone is directed to function. In a manner typical of Cistercian architecture, the church is laid out on a straightforward cruciform plan, the choir is reduced to a simple square, and the small chapels that open off the main vessels provide additional

altars for those monks who were ordained priests to celebrate individual masses. The interior uses piers, pointed arches, and a pointed barrel vault similar to those at Cluny, but it contains only a single story. Sculpture is banished, stained glass is absent, and no towers ennoble the exterior. Indeed, the crisp cubic mass of the church can hardly be distinguished from the adjacent dormitory or nearby forge. This renunciation, however, should not be viewed as evidence that Cistercian monks and builders were crude or unsophisticated. Like Shaker architecture in nineteenth-century America, Cistercian structures were endowed with a profound balance (using harmonious proportions based on the square), careful craftsmanship, and consistently up-to-date building technology. As seen in the new choirs of Rievaulx in England (1220s) or Altenberg abbey near Cologne (c. 1255–1280), thirteenth-century projects incorporated ribbed vaults, flying buttresses, and even bar tracery. Yet, despite this architectural evolution, the message of humility endured as the essential expression of Cistercian identity.

**FRANCISCANS AND DOMINICANS.** In the early thirteenth century, a new wave of religious thought stressed engagement in the world rather than withdrawal from it. This change in purpose led to a new type of religious community whose members were called friars (brothers) or mendicants (from the fact that they begged for their sustenance). The friars were not cloistered or closed off from the world, but rather lived in convents, often on the edges of cities. First the Dominicans, founded in 1216, and soon afterwards the Franciscans, whose rule was approved by the pope in 1223, began to settle in the rapidly growing cities of Europe where they preached to the faithful, performed charitable works, and defended the Christian faith from heretical interpretation. Both orders embraced poverty; indeed, each rejected the ownership of property, and their members sustained themselves by begging and the acceptance of donations. Although Francis of Assisi opposed church building of any kind and asked to be buried in the refuse dump of Assisi, his followers erected a splendid church, San Francesco, in his honor. Built between 1228 and 1253 on two levels with a lower, crypt-like church surmounted by a taller upper church, the architecture of San Francesco, Assisi, reveals the clear impact of such “modern” French forms as finely scaled engaged columns, ribbed vaults, and bar tracery that frame stained glass windows. Yet the broad interior space and the insistence on prominent surfaces of wall, decorated with frescoes of the life of St. Francis, adhere to the local Italian traditions.

**HALLS FOR PREACHING.** Perhaps more emblematic of Franciscan attitudes is the church of Santa Croce in



Arcaded Cloisters of Cistercian Abbey of Le Thoronet, France, late twelfth century. GAIL MOONEY/CORBIS.

Florence, begun in 1294 and probably designed by the architect and sculptor Arnolfo di Cambio. Like the Cistercians before them, the Franciscans legislated against architectural extravagance. Statutes of 1260 declared that, “any superfluity in length, width, or height above what is fitting to the requirements of the place [should] be more strictly avoided. . . . Churches shall in no wise be vaulted, save for the presbytery [the choir].” The nave of Santa Croce appears as an updated version of an early Christian church with thin brick walls supported by octagonal columns and covered by a timber roof. The vast barn-like space was perfectly suited to the large crowds that came to hear the friars’ sermons. In a similar vein, Dominican churches were also created as preaching halls. The striking church of the Jacobins (Dominicans) in Toulouse that took shape in a series of building phases between 1229 and 1292 adopts an unusual double-nave scheme that resembles a monastic refectory or hospital: a single file of columns marches down the center of the church to the choir, which is covered by a magnificent star-shaped vault. On the other hand, the Dominican

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**A BUILDING ACCOUNT FROM THE CHURCH OF SAINT-BERNARD, PARIS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Saint-Bernard was the church of the College of the Bernardins (Cistercians) in Paris. Pope Benedict XII, who had studied at the college, underwrote the construction of a new church after he was elected pope in 1334. Begun in May 1338, work on Saint-Bernard stopped with the pope's death in April 1342 and remained incomplete. It was demolished during the nineteenth-century urban renewal of the city. The following account offers a detailed record of the materials, methods, and expenses involved in the project, with summaries divided according to the types of materials required.

**The Year of Our Lord 1339**

The payments that follow were made for lumber and large beams and other timbers and are contained in the payments that were necessary for the work of Saint-Bernard made by brother Pons de Madieiras.

**Friday the ninth day of April:**

To Simon Grapeli for 200 timbers for the work of making the arches for the work; per 100 6 £ 10 sous (20 sous = 1 £): 13 £

**Wednesday the fourteenth day of April:**

Item, to Denis le Franc for 260 timbers to make the said arches: 11 £ 10 sous

**Monday the twenty-sixth day of April:**

To Simon Grapeli for 20 beams called joists three toises (the toise, a medieval unit of length, measured six feet) long for the work on the lifting engine: 55 sous

**Monday the seventh day of June:**

To Jean Champion paid for two pieces of timber six toises long. Item for three other timbers called joists for work on the engine: 11 sous

**The Year of Our Lord 1340**

**Saturday the twenty-fourth day of June:**

Item to Jean Champion for two big beams for the work of covering the apse of the church to make the strong arches to support the centering: 45 sous

Item to the said Jean for three large timbers to place across the chapels to make the strong arches; paid for each 2 sous 6 deniers (12 deniers = 1 sous): 7 sous 6 deniers

**Sunday the twentieth day of August:**

To Jean Champion for three big beams each six toises long for the work of placing them above the apse of the church to make the strong arches to place the keystone of the said apse and to make the vault.

**Saturday the eleventh day of November:**

To Jean Polemlang for two beams of three toises in length for the work of making the centering for the flying buttress: 7 sous

Item for fifteen pieces of timber for the work of roofing and to make the roof of the apse of the church, each one three toises long: 50 sous

Item to Jean Champion for forty timbers two and a half toises long. And for twenty-five timbers four toises long to make the roof of the said apse of the church: 100 sous

Item to Jean de Beumon for eight hundred eighty laths for the work of the said roof; paid per one thousand 45 sous: 39 sous 11 deniers

**The Year of Our Lord 1341**

**Saturday the twenty-first day of April:**

To Jean Champion for three beams to make the centering of the aisles ("the little naves"): 11 sous 4 deniers

**Saturday the second day of June:**

To the said Jean (Polemmlang) for five beams to carry the centering of the aisles: 75 sous

Item to Jean Belabocha for four posts for the work of making the centering of the aisles: 11 sous 9 deniers

**Sunday the twenty-sixth day of August:**

To Jean Beumon of the (Place) de Greve for two big beams to place across the large nave to make the strong arches: 10 £

churches of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (begun 1246) or Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome (1280) return to a cross-shaped and three-aisled plan with a two-story elevation inspired by Cistercian designs. Once again, their use of current building technology remains restrained. In place of a complex structure composed of

a worldly vocabulary of shafts, moldings, and screens that emphasized visual drama, verticality, and framed fields of imagery, Dominican and Franciscan architecture offered functional purity. Purging virtually every sign of evocative resonance and material luxury, these churches worked to embody the spiritual ideals of humility and



**Saturday the twentieth day of October:**

To Jean Champion for six big beams to place across the large nave for the work of making strong scaffolding; paid for each 100 sous: 30 £

**Sunday the eighteenth day of November:**

Item to the said Jean (Maurelet) for thirty planks to cover the ribs of the quadripartite vaults of the aisles so that it does not rain in: 7 £ 5 sous

Item to Philippot Dupin for three cartloads of thatch to cover the vaults of the aisles; paid for each cartload delivered to Saint-Bernard 13 sous 6 deniers: 40 sous 6 deniers

**Sunday the twenty-third day of December:**

Item for five large pieces of timber for the work of bracing the piers that are in danger of breaking: 13 £

**The year 1339**

In the year 1339 were made the following payments by brother Pons de Madieiras for plaster to make the floors where the drawings necessary for the work were made and to make the webbing of the vaults of the large nave as well as in the chapels and in the aisles ...

In the year 1339 brother Pons de Madieiras made the following payments for ironwork that was necessary for the work of Saint-Bernard:

**Friday the twenty-second day of May:**

Item for 2800 nails for work on the lifting engine; paid per thousand 5 sous: 14 sous

**Saturday the twenty-sixth day of June:**

Item for the cost of 2000 nails for the work on the engine: 8 sous

Item for the cost of 40 big nails for the work on the engine: 2 sous 8 deniers

**Saturday the fourteenth day of August:**

Item to Robert Lengles, blacksmith of the Place Maubert for four hinges for the doors of the church

weighing thirty-two pounds; paid per pound 8 deniers: 21 sous 4 deniers

**The year 1340****Saturday the third day of June:**

Item to Thomas Lengles, blacksmith, for twelve bars of iron for the windows, which weigh 175 pounds; paid per pound 6 deniers: 4 £ 7 sous 6 deniers

**Sunday the twentieth day of August:**

Item for a bar of iron to place in one of the lifting engines that is used to haul the beams up to the apse of the church for the vault and to place the keystone which weighs four pounds: 2 sous

**Saturday the twenty-eighth day of October:**

Item for the cost of 3000 nails for the work of nailing the laths above the apse of the church; paid per thousand 2 sous 8 deniers: 8 sous

Item to P. Lullier for covering the said apse of the church with tiles and for climbing on top of the said apse: 32 sous 8 deniers

**Monday the twenty-fifth day of December:**

To Jean au Louvre for one cartload for the work of hauling the large stones of the round piers and the large cartloads of stone: 60 sous.

**The year 1341****Sunday the twenty-fifth day of February:**

To the said Thomas (Lengles) for three iron anchors that are placed into the piers of the chapels and in the round piers (of the nave). Each of the anchors has a ring which is outside the body of the pier and into the ring one iron tie rod is placed to hold the round piers and weighs one hundred twelve pounds; paid per pound 6 deniers: 56 sous.

**SOURCE:** *Introitus and Exitus*. MS no. 181, folios 94–121, Vatican Archives. Translated from the medieval Occitan by Michael T. Davis.

moral reform, and to provide an answer to the criticism of the decadent superfluity of elite religious architecture.

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Nave of upper church at the basilica of San Francesco, Assisi, Italy, 1228. ELIO CIOL/CORBIS.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Cluny and the Monastic Reforms of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries; Religion: Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Monastic Movements*

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## PILGRIMAGE ARCHITECTURE

**SYMBOLIC PLACES.** Because medieval Christians believed that holy places bore the mark of divinity, they were drawn to the sites of important historical and spiritual events, such as those in the Holy Land where

Jesus had lived and died, the tombs of revered saints, or important collections of their relics. To visit these spots—the tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem or the footprints of St. Peter in Rome—not only revealed the truth of the scriptures, but also allowed the Christian worshipper to remember the past through the rituals of the present. In religious journeys or pilgrimages to these special places of spiritual power, relics—the physical remains of bones, skin, hair, and fingernails or objects touched by saints—offered concrete points of contact with Christian martyrs, who, though long dead, provided accessible and inspiring models for behavior. While pilgrimage and the cult of saints and their relics originated in the first centuries of Christian devotion, they became especially important in the Middle Ages. The church, and particularly its monastic orders, fostered pilgrimage as one strategy to refocus the energies of secular society away from destructive fighting toward more peaceful concerns. By 1100, the shrine of Saint James, apostle of Jesus, at Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain had become the most popular pilgrimage destination in Western Europe and joined Jerusalem and Rome in importance. Dozens of other churches sheltering the miracle-working

relics of saints—Sainte-Foy at Conques, Saint-Trophime at Arles, Saint-Sernin at Toulouse—rose along the major routes that fanned out through France from the road to Santiago. For local communities, pilgrimage was a lucrative source of income from services provided for the pious travelers and the donations they left behind. Medieval architecture played a critical role in giving form to religious memory and experience, but the cash generated by those encounters with the divine also fueled the burst of building.

**THE AMBULATORY AND CHAPEL PLAN.** As early as the ninth century, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, with its circular plan and dome, had been a model for many kinds of religious buildings in Western Europe. Likewise, St. Peter's in Rome was reproduced repeatedly in the Carolingian period to honor saints, and in Italy its T-shaped plan with a transept and apse inspired other designs, such as that of Bari, where the body of St. Nicholas was placed in 1089, as well as nearby Trani, where the cult of a rival St. Nicholas was promoted. During the eleventh century, however, a new and more complex plan came together that skillfully orchestrated spaces around the multiple functions that a shrine church needed to accommodate. Simply put, the cruciform basilica that maintained the association to the venerable martyrs' churches of St. Peter's and St. Paul's in Rome was joined to the kind of ambulatory and chapel arrangement found in crypts arranged around saints' tombs and pioneered in Carolingian churches such as Saint-Germain at Auxerre and Corvey. The breakthrough came when the apse of the body of the church was spatially connected with the ambulatory through an open arcade. As a result, like a modern highway system, the ambulatory allowed pilgrims to circulate around the outer edge of the interior, bypassing the liturgical area of the choir and leaving the clergy undisturbed. Visitors might descend into the crypt where they could peer in through arches or windows at the tomb of the saint, or they might make the circuit of the ambulatory above to glimpse the golden and jeweled reliquary boxes displayed on altars in the main choir and chapels. Five of the major churches along the route to Compostela—Saint-Martin in Tours, Sainte-Foy at Conques, Saint-Martial at Limoges, Saint-Sernin at Toulouse, and Santiago—adopted this plan, each with a nearly identical two-story elevation composed of an arcade with a gallery above and crowned by a barrel vault. Although this design is often called the “pilgrimage roads” type, it is by no means typical of pilgrimage churches in general. To cite but one example, Saint-Front at Périgueux in southwestern France, begun in the late eleventh century, turned to St.

Mark's in Venice for its cross-shaped plan capped by five domes. By quoting St. Mark's, itself based on the sixth-century church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, Périgueux advertised its saint's identity as one of the seven apostles of early Christian France.

**CHURCH AS GUIDEBOOK.** In addition to the general plan of a pilgrimage church, other architectural features sometimes served to remind visitors of their purpose and impress upon them the scope of their undertaking. A striking example of this phenomenon is the exterior design of the church of Mary Magdalene (La Madeleine) of Vézelay. This church was originally built as a shrine for the relics of Mary Magdalene; once their authenticity had been confirmed by the pope in 1058, the church became a major destination for pilgrims, both because of its own significance and because it lay at the intersection of the roads leading to Compostela and a major route towards Jerusalem. One of the key features of this church is its tympanum, the huge semi-circular carving above the main portal inside the narthex of the church, which was begun in 1124 and sculpted in a style that resembles the choir capitals in Cluny in 1115. This relief carving, which would be one of the first things every visitor would see because of its location at the main entry to the church, depicts the ascension of Christ combined with the mission of the apostles. In this scene of Christ flanked by the apostles, his power both to condemn and to save mankind is clearly revealed to all who walk into the church. The lintel—the horizontal frieze at the bottom of the semi-circle—contains various peoples, including imagined Ethiopians and monstrous races of men with the heads of dogs believed to live in the remote parts of the world, all illustrating Christ's successes in preaching to and converting non-Christians. Appropriately for a church where the Second Crusade was to be preached, the tympanum showed pilgrims the symbolic liberation of the Holy Land, a subject matter that would be easily recognized by later pilgrims as a sort of prophecy.

**THE DECORATED CHURCH.** Church portals were not the sole focus of figural decoration in the medieval church. Gold-ground mosaics that narrated stories of the lives of Christ or the saints, as seen in the Norman churches of Sicily, sometimes covered wall surfaces. Other churches adorned their walls and even the ceilings with extensive cycles of paintings. In the Romanesque period, the capital, the topmost part of a column or pilaster, became a favorite field for sculptural decoration. Often brightly painted, capitals were most frequently carved with figures of animals and fantastic beasts such as griffins, harpies, or sirens. Their appearance on capitals



Relief carved choir stalls and paneling from church of Saint-Denis, Paris, added in 15th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/BASILIQUE SAINT DENIS PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

in monastic cloisters prompted Bernard of Clairvaux to condemn them as distractions.

In the cloisters, before the eyes of the brothers while they read what are the filthy apes doing there? The fierce lions? The monstrous centaurs? The creatures part man and part beast? The striped tigers? The fighting soldiers? The hunters blowing horns? You may see many bodies under one head, and conversely many heads under one body? In short, everywhere so plentiful and astonishing a variety of contradictory forms is seen that one would rather read in the marble than in books, and spend the whole day wondering at every single one of them than in meditating on the law of God.

But in addition to this menagerie of imaginative creatures, capitals in such notable churches as La Madeleine in Vézelay or Saint-Lazare at Autun—both in Burgundy, France—were carved with religious and moralizing subjects. As viewers moved through the interior space of the church, they might look on devils tormenting the lustful

or leading misers to hell, the temptation of Christ, or the miracles performed by St. Benedict. Complementing the monumental images of the divine in stone and paint at the portals and in the apse, these capitals offered a vivid reminder to the congregation of the paths that led to heaven or hell.

**CHURCH AS RELIQUARY.** The ambulatory and chapel scheme remained in force during the twelfth century at such magnetic pilgrimage churches as Saint-Denis, Canterbury, and Chartres. The Canterbury itinerary, for example, led from the altar in the north transept where the archbishop Thomas Becket had been murdered, down into the crypt, then up and around the ambulatory to the stations where Becket's relics were displayed, while pilgrims at Saint-Denis circulated around tombs set on the raised stage-like platform of the choir, in a setting enhanced by an innovative use of glass and a more unified sense of space. It was mainly in drawing upon these new possibilities that shrine architecture of

the thirteenth century adopted a radically different language. Rather than looking to the past for plans and references, commemorative structures during this later “Gothic” era increasingly replicated the delicate, brittle effects of contemporary metalwork. The most breathtaking example of this new taste is embodied by the Sainte-Chapelle, built by Louis IX between 1241 and 1248 as the repository for the fabulous horde of relics of Christ he had purchased from the emperor in Constantinople and transferred to his palace in Paris. With the summit of the exterior walls embellished by an intricate filigree of bar tracery (a network of slender ornamental shafts), bristling with ornate pinnacles, and crowned by a diadem of pierced gables, the royal chapel appears as a monumental stone and glass version of a reliquary fashioned of gold, silver, enamel, and precious stones. The building literally assumed the form of its function. While the construction cost of the chapel itself was reported at 40,000 pounds (as a gauge, the annual salary of a master mason would have been about 10 pounds), the king spent 100,000 pounds on the relic containers, and 135,000 pounds for the relics themselves. Thus, the meaning of the building was not created through connections to historical models, but by emulating objects closely associated with the veneration of holy figures and their symbolically resonant precious materials. Similarly, Saint-Urbain at Troyes, built between 1262 and around 1285 to commemorate the birthplace of Pope Urban IV and as a shrine to his patron St. Urban, advertises its memorial character in the fretwork of sharp gables and tracery that encase the exterior. And at Notre-Dame in Paris, the two tiers of ornate gables added between 1300 and 1350 transformed the choir into an otherworldly container for the body of Christ and the relics of the saints.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: The Canterbury Tales; Religion: Relics, Pilgrimages, and the Peace of God; Visual Arts: The Cult of the Saints and the Rise of Pilgrimage*

## A NEW VISION: SAINT-DENIS AND FRENCH CHURCH ARCHITECTURE IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

**OLD AND NEW AT SAINT-DENIS.** As the history of pilgrimage churches suggests, the reconstruction of the monastery church at Saint-Denis, begun in 1135 under the direction of Suger (1081–1151), abbot of Saint-Denis, initiated a new age of French architecture. Now nearly 400 years old, the original Carolingian church was too small for the many pilgrims who came to visit the relics of the saints and for the monks who needed more altars to accommodate an increasing number of worship services. To alleviate the crowding at the abbey, the first phase of work focused on enlarging the entrance and extending the nave of the eighth-century structure. Although echoing the general form of the old Carolingian west block, Suger's front looked to more recent Norman examples, such as the abbey of Saint-Etienne at Caen, the burial church of William the Conqueror, for a design that included three portals with two soaring towers. Including the first known example of a rose window—a large circular window in the façade of a church, usually decorated with a pattern of radiating tracery that frames stained glass depicting stories from the Bible and the lives of the saints—as well as battlements drawn from military architecture, the twelfth-century façade presented an impressive gateway into the church that was an original blend of old and new, castle and church forms. In the three short accounts that he wrote describing the stages of the construction project and the celebrations upon their completion (held in 1140 for the new west front and in 1144 for the dedication of the choir), Suger declared that his “first thought” was to make sure that the new work harmonized with the old building—believed to have been touched by Jesus himself. To match the interior forms of the eighth-century church, the abbot launched a search for stone to make columns. He considered importing them from Rome, but this proved too expensive and the problems of shipping were too difficult. Finally, a nearby quarry was found where stone for columns could be cut, shaped, and transported by river to Saint-Denis, allowing Suger to realize his architectural plans.

**A RETURN TO COLUMNS.** Columns were rarely seen in Ottonian and Romanesque church architecture; for example, Speyer Cathedral in Germany and Saint-Sernin in Toulouse in France used complex piers to support their tall, heavy structures. As in the Carolingian abbey, the columns of Suger's Saint-Denis were intended to recall the churches of Rome, such as St. Peter's, St. Paul's, or St. John-in-the-Lateran, which had been built



Vaulting and glass of a cathedral as seen by a medieval painter. *Adoration of the Virgin with Mary of Burgundy. Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, by Alexander Bening. Vienna, Austrian State Library MS 1857, folio 14v. Bruges, 1467–1480. BILDARCHIV D. ONB, WIEN.

at the beginning of the age of Christian art and architecture. The columns not only emphasized the prestige of Saint-Denis by imitating famous models, but they also served as reminders that Denis, the saint buried at the abbey who was the first bishop of Paris and the special protector of French kings, had been sent from Rome, so it was thought, by St. Peter. The capitals atop the Saint-Denis columns turned away from the usual figural sculpture of Romanesque architectural decoration and instead adopted baskets of richly carved foliage that emulated the Corinthian order used in ancient Roman and early Christian architecture. This elimination of narrative and animal subjects from capitals was followed throughout northern France in churches influenced by Saint-Denis.

**LIGHT.** At the same time, Suger wanted a church that was filled with light. The choir, he wrote, included a “circular string of chapels, by virtue of which the whole [church] would shine with the wonderful and uninterrupted light of most luminous windows.” Filling the width of the wall, the windows tell stories of biblical

history, such as the birth of Jesus, or illustrate theological ideas. They were composed of richly colored stained glass that made light, interpreted by medieval writers as an image of God and a metaphor for spiritual realities, visible, almost tangible. The intended effect of the jewel-like colors, dominated by deep reds and blues, together with the sacred subjects, was to urge the viewer, in Suger’s words, “onward from the material to the immaterial.” These windows were made by the use of cartoons, large patterns that laid out the stories to be told. Then many pieces of colored glass were cut and fitted together by means of soft flexible channels made of lead (called *comes*), which held the glass in position; these were soldered to each other to create glass fabric that could endure for many centuries. Often the individual stories had written explanations in the glass that were very carefully crafted, though they were so far above the congregation that they can today be read only by means of binoculars.

#### THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SAINT-DENIS CHOIR.

By demanding columns along with large stained glass windows, Abbot Suger forced his master mason to devise a strikingly original structure that was light, yet could achieve an impressive height. He described how his master mason had laid out the choir through arithmetic and geometry. The builder turned to new architectural techniques as well as new technology—most importantly, of the pointed arch and the ribbed groin vault. Although these forms had appeared in Romanesque buildings, they remained part of a massive, even overpowering structure. However, set on top of slender cylindrical columns and used to frame expansive window openings at Saint-Denis, they produced a completely different effect. First, because the pointed arch was flexible, it could be adjusted to create a uniform ceiling height and a fluid, integrated interior space. Looking through the twelfth-century ambulatory of Saint-Denis, the eye slides past the smooth, rounded columns and moves to the stained glass windows without interruption. (A wonderful rendition of stained glass and vaulting as seen by the contemporary medieval eye appears in a book of hours by the Master of Mary of Burgundy, Alexander Bening, now in Vienna.) Second, the pointed arch combined with the rib vault to direct weight to the corners of each structural compartment or bay in a system that was both architecturally efficient and conducive to maximum spaciousness. This upper-level structure rested on an overall plan that continued the well-established formula of an ambulatory with a series of radiating chapels, seen in Romanesque pilgrimage churches such as Saint-Sernin at Toulouse, but it achieved a new sense of unity. Instead of a collection of separate blocks that appear to be added to one another (at Saint-Sernin, for example, the semi-circular

chapels, the curving ambulatory, and the apse are clearly distinguished from one another), Saint-Denis fused all of the parts of the choir into an integrated composition. The chapels form a continuously undulating exterior wall and, in the interior, their space merges with that of the outer choir aisle or ambulatory.

**A HEAVENLY VISION.** Saint-Denis offered a new vision for church architecture. Upon entering the grand west façade and passing through the narthex with its architecture of stout piers and thick walls, visitors to the abbey found themselves in a building in which solid stone walls appeared to dissolve into surfaces of glass, and vaults were transformed into delicate, hovering canopies that framed broad, open spaces shimmering with colored light. Again, as abbot Suger wrote about the choir in his account “On the Consecration of the Church of Saint-Denis,” “we made good progress—and, in the likeness of things divine, there was established to the joy of the whole earth, Mount Zion.” In other words, the church was built as an image of heaven. The twelfth-century abbey of Saint-Denis, and the Gothic churches that followed it during the next three centuries, captured the aura of the celestial city of Jerusalem that would descend to earth at the end of time, described by St. John in Revelations, chapter 21: “And he (the angel) showed me the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.”

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### IMMEDIATE IMPACT: NOTRE-DAME AND CHARTRES

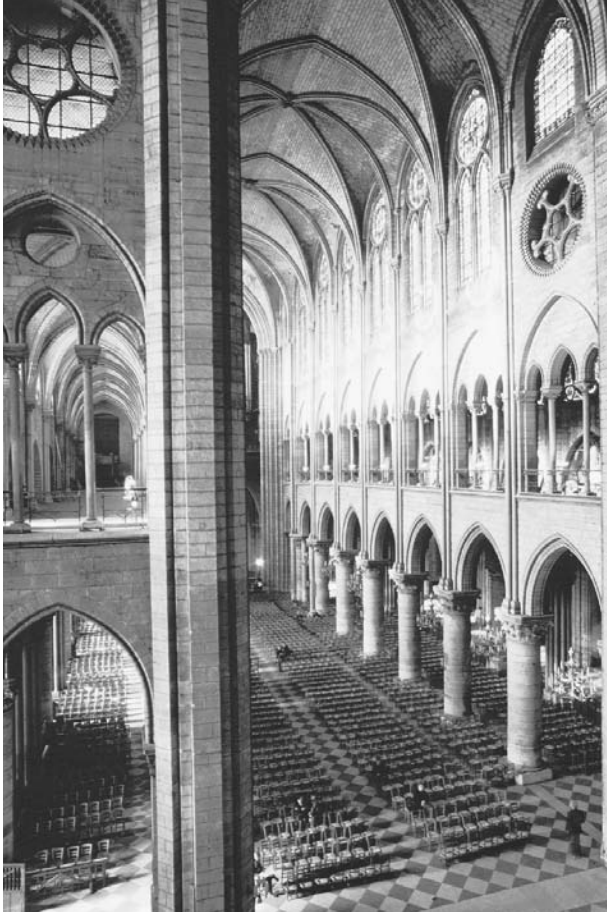
**NOTRE-DAME.** Saint-Denis had an immediate impact on major church-building projects throughout northern



View of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Paris, France, 1163–1250. BILL ROSS/CORBIS.

France. One of the most important appeared in nearby Paris, where the new cathedral of Notre-Dame was begun in the 1150s. The cylindrical columns and other elements in the nave can be recognized immediately as inspired by the architecture of the abbey. But in comparing the two churches, one is struck by the differences. Notre-Dame is enormous. The interior space rises to a height of about 108 feet—the height of a ten-story building. In its original twelfth-century state (remodeled in the thirteenth century and partially restored in the nineteenth) it was composed of four levels: an arcade supported by those monumental columns; a gallery that created a second-story aisle; above that, a series of circular openings in the wall that corresponded to the zone of the pitched roof over the gallery; and, finally, the high windows or clerestory. One views the structure with awe, wondering how such a fragile assemblage of columns, spaghetti-thin colonnettes rising to join with the taut ribs that arc across the vaults, and walls consisting of little more than arched openings can enclose such a vast space. The answer is displayed on the exterior by the cage of flying buttresses that transfer the outward thrust of the walls downward into the ground and thus assure the cathedral’s stability.

**HEIGHT.** Notre-Dame’s monumental scale and the three levels of stained glass windows, in the ground floor aisles, gallery, and clerestory, sought to represent, as at Saint-Denis, the miraculous architecture of heaven. At the same time, the cathedral was more than just a religious symbol. Set in the heart of a rapidly growing city, the



Nave of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame showing stained glass, vaulting and columns, Paris, France, 1163–1250. ADAM WOOLFIT/CORBIS.

great bulk of Notre-Dame towered over the surrounding rooftops and flanking hills to give tangible expression to the prestige of its powerful bishop and clergy. Bishop Maurice de Sully (1120–1196), who spearheaded the construction project, must have aimed to erect the most impressive church in the kingdom of France, outdoing even the new cathedral of his superior, the Archbishop of Sens. This competition among elite churchmen of the time to build larger, higher, and more luxurious churches was critically noted by Peter the Chanter, one of the most powerful members of the Notre-Dame clergy. While he did not mention his cathedral by name, he must have had it in mind when he wrote, “If these builders believed that the world would ever come to an end, no such lofty masses would be reared up to the very sky, nor would such foundations be laid into the abysses of the earth. In that they resemble those giants who built the tower of Babel (men sin even in building churches). Today, on the contrary, the choirs of churches are built higher and higher.”

**CHARTRES.** One of the finest examples of twelfth-century church architecture—and the one preserving the largest collection of Gothic stained glass, with 173 windows—is the cathedral of Notre-Dame at Chartres. A fire in 1134 destroyed the façade of the Romanesque church that was replaced by three new portals, with their renowned sculpture influenced by Suger’s west façade of Saint-Denis, and two towers built between c. 1140 and 1165. A second fire swept through the town on 10 June 1194 devastating the body of the cathedral, but sparing the new west front. The church that rose from the ashes of the 1194 blaze reached 118 feet in height, and was briefly the tallest building in Europe. The cathedral, dedicated like the earlier church to the Virgin, was not only the seat of the bishop that made it the administrative headquarters of a large church territory called a diocese, but it was also a popular pilgrimage destination because it sheltered a prized relic, a tunic or garment believed to have been worn by the Virgin Mary. After the fire in 1194, the bishop and chapter donated part of their large incomes to the new construction and also collected gifts from Christians from as far away as England who wished to honor the Virgin by supporting the rebuilding of her church. Construction proceeded quickly, and in 1221 the clergy moved back into the choir of the nearly completed new edifice.

**SIMPLIFYING THE DESIGN.** Rapid construction was possible not only because of the wealth of the Chartres building fund, but also as a result of the design of the cathedral and developments in building techniques. Unlike the large French churches, including the cathedrals of Paris, Arras, Cambrai, Laon, and Noyon, or the abbey of Saint-Remi at Reims, built between 1150 and 1190, Chartres rejected the four-story interior. A three-level elevation re-appeared at Chartres, composed of an arcade, a dark, narrow passage called a triforium about halfway up the wall, and huge clerestory windows. In many ways, Chartres is a version of Suger’s choir at Saint-Denis, except that it is about twice as high. The master mason may have realized that with flying buttresses providing the necessary structural reinforcement, the gallery, seen at Notre-Dame in Paris, became irrelevant. Eliminating the gallery simplified the design and led to the enlargement of both the arcade and the clerestory, which created two equally tall zones of space and light balanced by the dark horizontal belt of the triforium. Verticality was also emphasized: four slim shafts were added to the arcade columns, which alternate subtly between cylinders and octagons, creating continuous lines that rise from floor to vault and join all of the parts and levels into a unified whole. Further simplification of the design reduced the number of components needed for



the structure, and at Chartres the individual pieces form extremely regular repeating units. Indeed, the piers, triforium, and window patterns are almost identical in each bay. In addition, Chartres used four-part vaults throughout the entire building, in contrast to the six-part vaults seen in Paris, that were at once consistent in their appearance, made from the same limited group of parts, and easier to build. As with a car in a modern automobile plant, Chartres was assembled from a series of mass-produced parts that promoted speedy, efficient construction even though it was part of a trend to construct buildings of ever-increasing size.

**VARIATIONS ON A THEME.** Chartres Cathedral is the most famous example of late twelfth-century developments that established a basic system of construction and a pattern for elite Christian church architecture that continued for the rest of the Middle Ages. To be sure, there were many design variations, such as the Cathedral of Saint-Stephen at Bourges, where tall arcades stressed spatial expansion rather than the vertical concentration of Chartres, but the major monuments of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—the cathedrals of Reims, Amiens, Beauvais, and Narbonne in France; Tournai in Belgium; Cologne in Germany; Burgos, León, and Toledo in Spain; as well as cathedrals in Prague and Milan—bear witness to the enduring impact of these architectural ideas. It is also important to think about the architectural process that produced these marvelous structures as a complex recipe that was shaped not only by religious ideas and symbols, but also by considerations of money, by available technology, and by strategies of production. The church may have been an image of heaven, but it was also the product of practical reality.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Political Life and the New State*

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## THE GOTHIC IN ENGLAND

**SEA CHANGE AT CANTERBURY.** Although Gothic architecture developed in the direction of a highly ra-

tionalized set of forms responding to a combination of religious, technological, and practical conditions, it was never conceived as a rigid formula or an integrated system that obeyed a set of rules. English architecture during the half century from 1175 to 1230 reveals that it is better understood as a kit of parts, including columns, piers, shafts, pointed arches, and ribbed vaults, that could be selectively combined in endless variations. The rebuilding of the choir of Canterbury Cathedral after a fire in 1174 marked the beginning of this change of direction in English architecture. Designed by the French master mason William of Sens (late twelfth century), and completed by William the Englishman, the extraordinarily long east arm includes two transepts and two choirs that accommodated a community of monks as well as the secular clergy of the archbishop and chapter (the canons charged with administration of the church). With its ambulatory and rotunda on the eastern axis, it also provided a splendid theater for the display of the relics of St. Thomas Becket, who had been murdered in the cathedral in 1170. Although it incorporated portions of the old Norman walls into its fabric, Canterbury is thoroughly French in character. In place of the massive walls of the Romanesque period, the choir rose, as at Saint-Denis, in three tiers of light screen walls carried by slender columns and supported on the exterior by flying buttresses. The constantly varying columns that appear in cylindrical and polygonal shapes, as pairs or enriched with additional shafts, enhance the visual complexity of the building. Complemented by the dark marble shafts and moldings that play over the piers and walls, the polished marble columns of the apse, and the incomparable stained glass and wall paintings, the Canterbury choir emphasizes luxurious variety that was a hallmark of medieval definitions of beauty, intended to achieve an almost literal representation of the Heavenly City.

**LINCOLN.** The importance of Canterbury lay not so much in inspiring a series of copies based on French styles, but in directing English architecture toward new effects of lightness and linearity. This is best illustrated at Lincoln Cathedral, where rebuilding that began in 1192 after the collapse of the crossing tower in the original Romanesque church went on through a series of campaigns and eventually resulted, by 1250, in the replacement of the two transepts, St. Hugh's (the western) choir, and the nave—indeed, everything except the west block and towers. Although the Canterbury type of elevation formed the starting point, and a Gothic sensibility is apparent in the adoption of pointed arches, ribbed vaults, and finely scaled shafts and moldings, the



Interior from choir, with columns, capitals, and vaulting of Canterbury Cathedral, England, late twelfth century. ARCHIVO INCONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

Lincoln design was guided by principles of syncopation and a rich layering of the wall in depth that recalls the powerful three-dimensionality of Norman Romanesque. The dark shafts of the vault are cut off above the level of the arcade and meet the rib at a seemingly arbitrary level in the triforium, effectively severing the relationship between the vault and the piers. Looking upward into the vaults of St. Hugh's choir only aggravates the visual uncertainty. These so-called "crazy vaults" comprising groups of three ribs that converge on two centers at the crown, marked the appearance of *tiercerons*, ribs that arc from the wall to an off-center keystone. By multiplying the number of ribs and introducing two keystones tied by a longitudinal ridge rib, the Lincoln vaults broke down the clear definition of the bay unit and intensified the sense of continuous zigzag movement down the length of the interior space. However, the vaults were not the work of an eccentric architect, but

rather an ingenious solution that permitted an expansion of the windows in the choir to include three broad lights per bay. In this regard, the importance of light and color that shaped twelfth-century developments in northern France as well as Canterbury remain central concerns for the Lincoln master. But rather than pursuing the visual logic of a rigorously integrated structure, the Lincoln builder may have turned to disjunction and multiplicity as the effective means to capture the unearthly architecture of heaven. The vaults of St. Hugh's choir were elaborated into star patterns in the nave in the 1220s and 1230s through the addition of *liernes*, short ribs within the surface of the vault that tie tiercerons together. The tierceron and lierne vault was to be repeated in ever more intricate variations throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in such buildings as Exeter Cathedral and the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### THE MASTER MASON WILLIAM OF SENS AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CHOIR OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1174 there was a great fire at Canterbury Cathedral when sparks from burning cottages nearby ignited the wooden timbers supporting the roof, which were hidden between the sheet lead covering above and the painted ceiling below. By the time the fire was discovered, the burning timbers had fallen down onto the choir and set the wooden seats on fire, sending flames twenty-five feet high that damaged the columns of the structure. So severe was the damage to the church that experts were called in to decide how it might be reconstructed. Gervase of Canterbury, a monk at the Cathedral from 1163 to 1210, describes this process in "Of the Burning and Repair of the Church of Canterbury."

[1174] However, amongst the other workmen, there had come a certain William of Sens, a man active and ready, and as a workman most skilled both in wood and stone. Him, therefore, they [the monks of Canterbury], retained, on account of his lively genius and good reputation, and dismissed the others. And to him, and to the providence of God was the execution of the work committed.

And he, residing many days with the monks and carefully surveying the burnt walls in their upper and lower parts, within and without, did yet for some time conceal what he found necessary to be done, lest the truth should kill them in their present state of pusillanimity.

But he went on preparing all things that were needful for the work. ... And when he found that the monks began to be somewhat comforted, he ventured to confess that the pillars [piers] rent with the fire and all that they supported must be destroyed if the monks wished to have a safe and excellent building. ...

And now he addressed himself to the procuring of stone from beyond [the] sea. He constructed ingenious

machines for loading and unloading ships, and for drawing cement and stones. He delivered molds for shaping the stones to the sculptors who were assembled, and diligently prepared other things of the same kind. The choir thus condemned to destruction was pulled down, and nothing else was done in this year. ...

In that summer [1178] he [William of Sens] erected ten piers, starting from the transept ... five on a side. ... Above these he set ten arches and the vaults. But after two triforia and the upper windows on both sides were completed and he had prepared the machines ... for vaulting the great vault, suddenly the beams broke under his feet, and he fell to the ground, stones and timbers accompanying his fall, from the height of the capitals of the upper vault, that is to say, of fifty feet. Thus sorely bruised by the blows from the beams and stones he was rendered helpless alike to himself and for the work, but no other person than himself was in the least injured. Against the master only was this vengeance of God or spite of the devil directed.

The master, thus hurt, remained in his bed for some time under medical care in expectation of recovering, but was deceived in this hope, for his health amended not. ... But the master reclining in bed commanded all things that should be done in order. Thus the vault between the four main piers was completed; in the keystone of this quadripartite ribbed vault ... the choir and the arms of the transept seem, as it were, to [converge]. ... Two quadripartite ribbed vaults were also constructed on each side before winter. Heavy continuous rains did not permit of more work. With that the fourth year was concluded and the fifth begun. ...

And the master, perceiving that he derived no benefit from the physicians, gave up the work, and crossing the sea, returned to his home in France.

**SOURCE:** Gervase of Canterbury, "Of the Burning and Repair of the Church of Canterbury," in *Gothic Art, 1140–c. 1450*. Ed. Teresa G. Frisch (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971): 17–19.

**WELLS AS MODERN ARCHITECTURE.** A glance at the interior of the Wells Cathedral nave, begun around 1190, reveals the way in which English architects used Gothic forms as independent bits and pieces. Pointed arches and ribbed vaults do not work together as parts of a unified skeleton, but appear as repeating forms arranged in three distinct horizontal zones stacked on top of one another. Vertical connections are reduced to a fragmentary clasp between the two upper levels, leaving the vault in a tenuous, hovering relationship to the

lateral walls. With its brawny piers and thick walls with passages, Wells might be seen as an old Norman structure dressed in fashionable new Gothic clothes, but its mantle of sharp forms, increased luminosity, and restless linearity demonstrate the creation of an architecture that is divorced from the forms and effects of the classical Roman tradition. The singular west front, at once majestic and delicate, rearranges the French type by shrinking the portals and emphasizing the stout mass of the towers. Row upon row of statue niches evoke the "many



View of the interior of Lincoln Cathedral at the crossing, 13th–14th century. ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

rooms in my Father's house" mentioned by Jesus in the Gospel of John (14:2) and created more than 500 places for the residents of heaven, prophets, apostles, kings, martyrs, virgins, bishops, and abbots. Choirs hidden in the singing galleries within the thickness of the west wall would have brought these statues to life during liturgical ceremonies throughout the year. Rather than relying on quotations of models and forms from the past to create meaning, Wells is a fully realized example of the Gothic invention of an architecture of persuasive symbolic



View of the nave of Wells Cathedral, Wells, Somerset, England, 1175–1239. COLIN HOSKINS; CORDAIY PHOTO LIBRARY LTD./CORBIS.

power drawn from a formal repertory that was both completely original and infinitely flexible.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Political Life and the New State*



Western facade of Wells Cathedral, Wells, Somerset, England, 1175–1239. ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

## THE ILLUMINATED CHURCH AND THE RAYONNANT STYLE

**LIGHT, VISION, AND ARCHITECTURE.** There is an intimate relation between architecture and its decoration. Whereas in early Christian and early medieval churches mosaics and paintings on walls had been the primary medium for the presentation of sacred stories, the elimination of solid mural surfaces and the transformation of the Gothic building into a skeletal frame led to the ascendancy of stained glass during the twelfth century. No doubt, the importance of an aesthetic that emphasized light as a metaphor of the Divine and spiritual experience spurred the creation of an architectural system that made a maximum expanse of stained glass possible. A third factor to consider is the rise of interest, during the twelfth century, in vision and optics. Not only were scholars curious about how physical objects and visual phenomena—rocks or rainbows—were seen, but they also explored the nature of what might be called “spiritual vision.” How was it possible to understand St. John when he wrote in Revelations, chapter 21, “Then

I saw a new heaven and a new earth—And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God”? As an explanation, Richard of Saint-Victor (d. 1173), the author of a commentary on Revelations, formulated four categories of vision. The first was the “simple perception of matter”: I see a tree. The second viewed an object’s “outward appearance,” but saw a mystical significance in it: I see a rose that is a symbol of the Virgin Mary. The third level of vision was that of spiritual perception in which one discovered, to quote Richard, “the truth of hidden things by means of forms and figures.” This is the experience described by St. John, who saw heaven in the form of a city. The fourth and highest level was the mystical mode in which the divine was encountered face to face. It is important to keep these notions of vision in mind when thinking about medieval architecture and its figurative decoration. Images, of course, were physical things, but through them Christians gained access to a realm beyond the mundane world. And the architecture of the church composed an elaborate frame for those pictures that could lead the worshipper to that higher, spiritual mode of vision.

## STAINED Glass

### Historical Origins

Stained glass work is a phenomenon of the twelfth century, but one whose history can be traced far earlier. Indeed, the Romans had used glass made of local sand or silica in windows to transmit light and keep out insects and the elements. Decorative glass was used in windows in sacred buildings in the Byzantine Empire, in Syria, and in France (by about the sixth century at Lyon), as well as in Britain in Northumberland during the Anglo-Saxon period. Windows in the Carolingian period used colored glass, but the glass did not represent people or stories and was not painted. Augsburg Cathedral in Germany in about 1130 seems to have had decorative windows with fairly elaborate programs of painting, and Saint-Denis (1135) seems to have been the earliest full program (depicting a series of linked narrative episodes) in France.

### Making Stained Glass

Shortly before the first mention of decorative stained glass windows in churches, detailed instructions for making them appeared in the treatise *On Various Arts* (c. 1100) by the monk Theophilus. He gave instructions for coloring glass, cutting and laying it out in designs on flat worktables, and assembling the pieces in a frame. The glass used in cathedrals and the wealthier parish church windows could be of two types—an older kind known as “potmetal” glass, colored in molten state by the addition of various metal oxides, or a “painted” type, further colored for detailed areas like faces or clothing folds by the addition of paints made of iron filings and pulverized glass suspended in a vehicle of wine or sometimes of urine. This paint could range in color from thick black to light gray, and it created a translucent effect. Once the pattern was achieved, the glass was fired in a kiln, bonding the paint to the surface permanently as a sort of glaze.

### Color and Shapes

Ingeniously, the flat pieces of colored glass had designs traced on them with the tip of a tool like a hot poker, and then cold water was applied, causing the glass to crack exactly along the lines. The shape was further refined by using a holding tool called a *grozer* and a pair of pliers with a nipper-like jaw to crack off tiny pieces of the glass until the desired shape was reached. During the fourteenth

century, a new addition to the glassmaker’s toolbox was a stain made of silver oxide, which gives a range of colors from lemon yellow to bright orange, depending on how long the glass was fired. Thus, the artist could virtually paint on the glass and not have to join so many different colored pieces to obtain the desired design. Typical palettes included green, pink, yellow, blue, and shades of red. When the design was created, the pieces of glass were assembled on the flat glassmaker’s board and held together in a mosaic of irregular shapes given structural strength by lead channels called *comes*. A groove along each edge of the came fit the piece of glass, and the resultant pattern was securely soldered together to form a large sheet that was shaped to fit in the arch of the window, encased in a stiffening iron frame.

### Variations

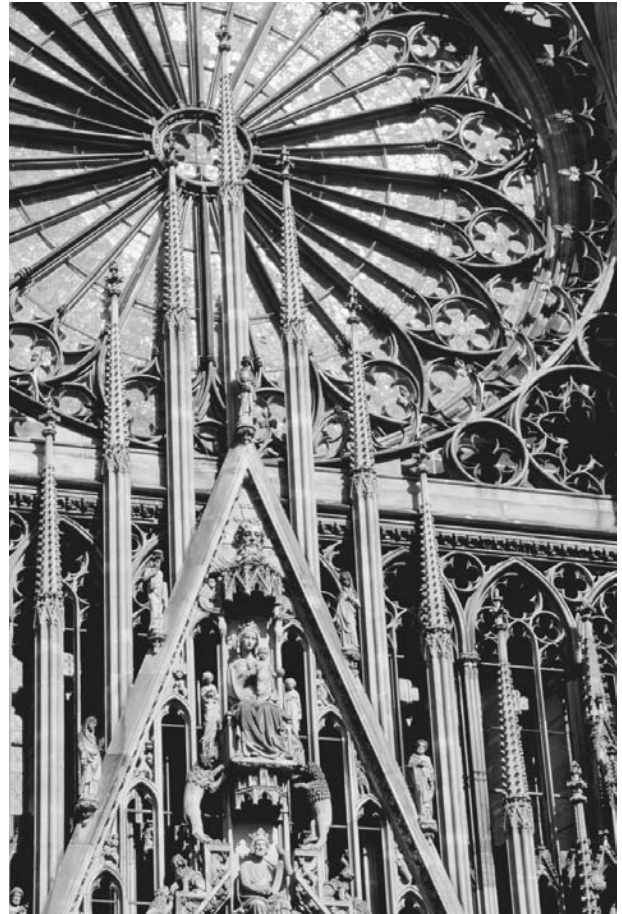
About 100 years after the general introduction of stained glass, the dark, rich colors—reds and blues—changed to *grisaille*, a type of monochrome silvery gray which admitted more light. Grisaille could be unpainted when used in floral or geometric patterns, but was sometimes painted with foliate motifs, as at Salisbury Cathedral in England. From about 1150 on, grisaille glass in its natural state of green, pink, or clear was especially popular with the Cistercians, who avoided spectacular decoration; eventually grisaille was combined with the regular painted glass in some churches, such as Clermont Cathedral in France. As early as 1080–1100, stained glass was used in windows in York Minster in figurative scenes. Canterbury Cathedral was glazed with figurative windows from about 1180 to 1220. From about 1225, in addition to the scenes of New and Old Testament events and the lives of the saints, heraldic motifs and royal arms began to appear in church windows, often signifying the social status of a donor of the window or benefactor of the church. Patrons or donors sometimes had themselves memorialized in the windows of churches, as in the case of Abbot Suger, shown supplicating the Virgin in a window at Saint-Denis. Guilds who gave windows were often represented with scenes of their members (for example, shoemakers or bakers) pursuing their trades in the lower parts of the windows. Stained glass was carefully placed for best viewing, often in the windows of the end of the transept to give maximum visibility. Aisles had biblical subjects, and rose windows showed cosmological scenes or perhaps depictions of the Apocalypse and Last Judgment, while upper or clerestory windows often had large-scale individual figures, which were easier to interpret from far below.

**RAYONNANT ARCHITECTURE.** The course of Gothic architecture can be described in terms of a series of structural innovations, all leading in the direction of greater

light and visual space. The combination of the pointed arch, ribbed vault, and flying buttresses led to a new type of structure that was no longer an opaque box punctu-

ated by intermittent window openings but rather a cage-like frame. As the size of windows expanded in the twelfth century, glass surfaces were subdivided into manageable sections. In the Chartres clerestory, the two tall pointed lancets with an *oculus* (“circular opening”) are partitioned by flat pieces of stone, or plate tracery, that make them appear to be three holes punched through a solid wall. A new solution was proposed at Reims Cathedral in the 1210s, where the window was designed along the same lines as the other elements of the structure—as a taut network of slender ornamental shafts or mullions called “bar tracery.” This invention had an enormous impact on the appearance of buildings, and, ultimately, on the way architecture was experienced. By the mid-thirteenth century, not only had bar tracery been developed into elaborate window patterns—at Amiens Cathedral, four-part windows decorate the clerestory while six-lancet compositions appear in the choir—but grids of delicate shafts began to spread over the remaining solid walls of the interior and exterior. In the interiors of new projects, including the rebuilding of Saint-Denis, the nave of Strasbourg Cathedral, or the choir of Clermont Cathedral, the networks of tracery were coordinated with piers composed of bundles of thin colonnettes to create an overall architecture of consistently delicate scale. On the exterior, the west façade of Strasbourg Cathedral (1275 fl.) in eastern France presents one of the most extravagant expressions of bar tracery, in which a fantastic fretwork of stone completely disguises the load-bearing walls behind. Gothic architecture between around 1240 and 1380 is often called the “Rayonnant,” taking its name from the radiating spokes of the spectacular rose windows that dominate façades, as in the transepts of Notre-Dame in Paris or the west façade at Strasbourg. Although the Rayonnant is usually discussed as a phase in which architects refined forms to achieve an even greater degree of lightness and elegance, its development was a response to the visual experience of the church interior illuminated by stained glass.

**THE SAINTE-CHAPEL.** In two separate purchases of 1239 and 1241, Louis IX, king of France, acquired the most precious relics in Christendom: objects associated with the Crucifixion of Jesus. After bringing the Crown of Thorns, a large piece of the Cross, nails, the sponge, and the lance to his capital in Paris, he set about erecting an appropriately magnificent chapel to honor them in the heart of his palace. Like Charlemagne’s chapel at Aachen, the Sainte-Chapelle, built between 1241 and 1248, contained two levels. A low, broad chapel on the ground floor, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, provided a base for the tall upper chapel where



Gable and rose window above the center portal of the west façade of Strasbourg Cathedral, Strasbourg, France, 1277. FARRELL GREHAN/CORBIS.

the relics of Christ were displayed and the king and his court worshipped. In this remarkable upper chapel, the architecture is reduced to thin clusters of vertical colonnettes, linked by iron chains that support the vault canopies and frame enormous, fifty-foot high stained glass windows. Its design resembles closely the triforium and clerestory of the nave of Amiens Cathedral, built in the 1220s and 1230s, producing the sensation that the visitor has been lifted up into a zone of space and light. Moreover, the architecture is clearly arranged as scaffolding that provided visual cues for apprehending the different ranks represented by the painting, sculpture, and stained glass. For example, closest to eye level and framed in the quatrefoils (four-lobed ornaments) of the wall arcade are paintings (now badly damaged) of local Parisian saints. Sculpted figures of the twelve apostles then appear attached to the columns, their architectural symbols, and lead the gaze up to the windows that present the entire cycle of divine history from Genesis to the Second Coming. Here the architecture creates distinct



Stained glass windows depicting biblical stories, Sainte-Chapelle, Paris, France, 1240s. ROBERT HOLMES/CORBIS.

patterns for each level. The images of the earthly lives of local saints are framed by arcades organized in three units of two, while the stained glass narratives appear in two- and four-lancet windows. Second, as one moves upward across these architectural thresholds, the medium also changes from the more physical substance of opaque paint and three-dimensional sculpture to the jewel-like light of the windows. Although the architecture of the Sainte-Chapelle did not impose a rigid system that dictated the placement of certain images or media in specific locations, its careful organization and relentless subdivision of surfaces into panels, arcades, and niches on multiple levels created a flexible, but structured framework that measured the stages of devotional experience. A measure of the international impact of the Sainte-Chapelle and the French rayonnant style can be seen in the choir of Aachen Cathedral that was added to Charlemagne's church beginning in 1355. The majestic, solid masonry of Carolingian architecture has been replaced by an armature of shafts and ribs that frame enormous windows. Instead of Roman columns and Corinthian capitals, there

are taut screens of tracery, animated sculpted figures of saints, and glowing panels of stained glass that combine in a building whose meaning no longer resides in historical references, but rather is created through the emulation of the dazzling effects of shrines and the evocation of a heavenly edifice.

**CLERMONT CATHEDRAL.** Clermont Cathedral, located in the modern city of Clermont-Ferrand in central France, may well have been inspired by the Sainte-Chapelle. The bishop of Clermont, Hugues de la Tour, attended the dedication of the royal chapel on 26 April 1248, and within a few months launched a new structure in his own diocese to replace the old Romanesque church. The thirteenth-century master mason, Jean Deschamps, adopted an up-to-date Rayonnant style that appears tailor-made for its role as a monumental picture frame. Looking into the deep chapels from the ambulatory, one first sees a section of bare, solid wall. Then, moving into the chapel, the eye first encounters a blind tracery pattern, and then is pulled to the expanse of luminous glazed walls. The colonnettes, moldings, and ribs that constitute the architectural structure define a sequence of thresholds through which one looks: from a location in the ambulatory into the chapel which only the clergy could enter; from a world of solid matter into a realm of light that presents the stories of sacred and saintly history. The paintings added to the lower wall beautifully articulate this visionary path. In one chapel, an angel leads a procession of canons forward into the presence of the saint, while in another, a canon kneels in devotion as his celestial guide points to the altar and the glass cycle beyond. As one gazes upward into the main space of the choir, the clerestory windows appear to hover above the dark band of the triforium that creates a gateway to the visionary realm above. In the clerestory, the rich color of the narrative windows of the chapels evaporates into the cool light of fields of grisaille glass (decorated monochromatically in shades of gray) in which figurative panels of Old Testament prophets, apostles, and in the axial lancets, the Assumption of the Virgin, float. This switch from full color to grisaille, a style of glazing that became widespread in the second half of the thirteenth century, offers another metaphor for spiritual ascent: from the almost tangible colored light, characteristic of terrestrial perception and appropriate to the subject of saints' lives to the brighter, flashing divine light at the highest level of the church.

**DIFFERENT PATHS.** The Westminster Abbey choir (1245–1272), Cologne Cathedral in Germany (begun 1248), and León Cathedral in Spain (begun around 1254) adopted the Rayonnant style in its entirety along



with stained glass as an essential part of the decoration. While this may reflect the prestige that French art and culture acquired during the reign of Louis IX, these royal churches were not trying to be French. Glazing programs were geared to local saints and rulers, suggesting that French architecture was emulated primarily because of its effective representation of the church as an image of heaven, as well as its ability to organize complex ensembles of pictures. Apart from a handful of clearly French-inspired edifices, European architecture between 1300 and 1500 presents an overwhelming variety. For example, the influential church of Saint-Rombout, Mechelen, in the Brabant region of Belgium was rebuilt after a fire in 1342 in the fashionable rayonnant style with wiry patterns of bar tracery that fill the windows and spread over the walls. But its enormous (unfinished) west tower, begun in 1452 and supervised by the architect Andries Keldermans between 1468 and 1500, looked to such contemporary German designs as Ulm Cathedral as well as the great towers of local secular civic structures. Finally, the choir of the church of St. Lorenz in Nuremberg, built 1439–1477, could hardly be more different from Amiens or Clermont in France. A hall church, a type in which the aisles rise to the same height as the central vessel, capped by an intricate net vault and exhibiting a variety of tracery designs, St. Lorenz offered fluid, indeterminate space in place of clear organization. Nevertheless, the ribbed vaults defined interior spatial compartments and the bar tracery created hierarchies of arches, repeated at different scales in which a worshipper was free to plot his own itinerary through stained glass panels, painted altarpieces, and sculpted keystones. Like the Sainte-Chapelle, St. Lorenz's architecture delineated the thresholds and setting of meditation in which the objects and images encountered as a spatial sequence became the material vehicles for an inward journey.

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## THE ARCHITECTURE OF SECURITY AND POWER

**CASTLES.** Although the design of churches was the primary focus of medieval architectural creativity, structures for the daily living and defense of members of the upper level of society also displayed technical ingenuity and an awareness of the importance of image. Just as the monastery assembled different kinds of buildings—church, hall, infirmary, barn—to accommodate all of the activities—prayer, work, eating, sleeping—of the monk's life, the castle fulfilled an equally varied array of functions in the secular world. With the collapse of the centralized authority and administration of the Carolingian Empire in the later ninth century, power was increasingly concentrated in the hands of local lords. Rather than providing a common defense for the towns under his control, the lord built only for his own security. The great circuits of walls and gateways that had protected cities in the past, such as Rome or Constantinople (modern Istanbul), gave way to fortified independent residences. Castles thus developed as multi-purpose structures at once a dwelling, a governmental headquarters, and fortress. But along with these practical duties, castle architecture projected an image of power and security that aimed to impress both the lord's subjects and peers. Rather than pursuing the celestial vision of a "walk of angels" as in religious construction such as at Cluny, it spoke a language of form whose vocabulary was assertive gateways, thick walls, and tall towers. Nevertheless, religious structures drew upon castle features, such as battlements, narrow windows, or towers, to enhance their own image of authority. Building techniques, including the use of precisely cut ashlar masonry and engaged columns, that first appeared in castle construction were soon adopted by church builders, suggesting that despite differences in function and appearance there was an interchange of ideas between the two areas of construction.

**THE KEEP.** Castles appear to have developed from the union of the *motte*, a purely defensive wooden tower set upon a conical earth mound, and the hall. Halls, used for feasts and spectacles, official audiences, rendering



Donjon of the castle at Loches, France. 11th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

justice, and administrative business, were complemented by a private chamber for sleeping, a kitchen, and a chapel for worship; these few structures constituted the essential domestic spaces of early castles. Around the year 1000, and apparently beginning in the Loire river valley of France, these separate areas were combined into a single, multi-storied tower called a keep or *donjon* surrounded by a circuit of protective walls that created an inner courtyard or bailey, where stables or industrial buildings were located. At Loches, one of the earliest examples, the ground floor was probably used for storage while the hall on the first floor, with its fireplace and latrines located in the surrounding wall passages, was entered through an attached rectangular building. A staircase within the massive walls climbed to the private chamber and chapel, distinguished by its apse, on the second floor. A spiral stair on the upper level provided access to another private room. A similar design was used at the Tower of London (White Tower), built by William the Conqueror immediately after his conquest

of England in 1066, where the apse of the two-story chapel is visible on the exterior and the great hall was also likely intended to rise through two levels to create a noble festival space. Marked by four towers at the corners of the square block (118 by 107 feet), the enormous tower that dominated the eastern edge of the city ostentatiously advertised the Norman presence and left no doubt as to who was in charge. Even in the fourteenth century at Vincennes to the east of Paris, King Charles V erected a mighty tower in which residential chambers and a chapel were combined with military features that included provisions for the use of new gunpowder weapons.

**WALLS AND DEFENSE.** The defensive character of the tower or keep of a castle is clearly indicated by its sheer and solid walls and the reduction in the size of windows to narrow slits or small openings. As the last inner stronghold of the castle, the architecture of the keep and the castle continually incorporated new fea-



Upper city ramparts of Carcassonne, Aude, France, mid-thirteenth century. ENTZMANN CYRIL/CORBIS SYGMA.

tures designed to repel the advances in weapons and technology of warfare. In Norman castles of the eleventh century, for example, the battlements formed a protective parapet (a wall with both taller areas for defense and openings for deployment of weapons) for the use of defenders. Cantilevering the battlements forward on supporting arches or corbels created machicolations (openings) through which a variety of missiles, rocks, boiling water, pitch, or refuse could be dropped onto attackers below. Inclining or battering the base of the wall then ensured that the volley would bounce or splash onto an enemy unable to flatten himself against the wall. A moat or deep ditch, often filled with water, and one or two rings of walls then surrounded the keep. A fortified gateway and a heavy portcullis (an iron grating that could be lowered from above) further protected access into the castle, which was gained over a drawbridge. Additional towers studded the outer walls of the castle, each floor with narrow slit windows that widened toward the interior, allowing archers within to cover the entire field of fire around the tower. With this description in mind, one might imagine the difficulties of trying to capture Beaumaris castle, built 1295–1323 by King Edward I on



Westminster Palace and Abbey from the air, London, England, begun late eleventh century. LONDON AERIAL PHOTO LIBRARY/CORBIS.

England's western border with Wales. After climbing the steep hill, somehow crossing the bridge and fighting their way through the gate, attackers would find themselves marooned in a courtyard facing another set of walls, another ring of towers. In this case, the inner gateway is not aligned with the outer entry so that troops are forced to change directions and are exposed to fire from a different angle. Each tower formed an independent bastion so that the fortress would have to be taken tower-by-tower and ring-by-ring. Similar ideas of defense were also applied to cities. The thirteenth-century wall systems of the southern French town of Carcassonne offers a particularly well-preserved example of a double ring of walls, fortified gateways, and directional changes, while Aigues-Mortes, begun in the 1240s by Louis IX, joins an intimidating circular keep, the Tour Constance, that protected the port to a towered precinct wall that enclosed the entire city.

**PALACES.** In contrast to castles, palaces were non-fortified residences that were more ceremonial and administrative in character. At Aachen, for example, Charlemagne's palace consisted of a great audience hall and monumental chapel tied together by long galleries in a scheme that emulated Roman luxury villas and imperial palaces. In the ninth century, a poet described Charlemagne's palace at Ingelheim as "a large palace with a hundred columns, with many different entrances, a multitude of quarters, thousands of gates and entrances, innumerable chambers built by the skill of masters and



Papal Palace with military crenellations at Avignon, France, 14th century. ANGELO HORNAK/CORBIS.

craftsmen. Temples dedicated to the Lord rise there, joined with metal, with bronze gates and golden doors. There, God's great deeds and man's illustrious generations can be reread in splendid paintings." Ranges of rooms, a great hall, a banqueting hall with three apses, and a chapel were set around two spacious courtyards, one rectangular, the other semicircular, and connected by porticoes. The lobed hall carried particular architectural importance for it denoted "the house of the lord." Featured in the banqueting structures of the imperial palace of Constantinople, a similar type would have been seen by Charlemagne in the papal palace of the Lateran in Rome. As in church architecture, German emperors of the eleventh century continued Carolingian traditions in palace design, best represented at Goslar (begun around 1050). Unfortified, the palace's regular organization, double-level hall, and towered chapel composed the ideal expression of heritage and magnitude of the ruler's authority. Because of political instability, palaces such as that at Westminster in England all but disappeared from European architecture until around 1300 when the nation-states led by powerful monarchs created a climate in which display superseded defense.

**PARIS AND AVIGNON.** In the 1290s, King Philip IV ("the Fair") of France began to enlarge and transform the motley collection of buildings, ranging from the eleventh-century donjon to the thirteenth-century Sainte-Chapelle, that composed the royal palace in Paris. In the space of about twenty years, his architect, Jean de Cerens, added a huge new hall, the largest in Europe, built a chamber for the Parlement, towers for civil and criminal courts, and offices for the kingdom's financial departments, and remodeled the royal apartments. All of the branches of government were united in the complex, efficiently grouped around a series of courtyards, and linked by long corridors. Statues of Philip and his royal ancestors decorated the main door into the palace and the piers of the festival hall, the Grand'Salle. Although the king seldom resided in his chambers that looked out onto an extensive garden, its walls encompassed the entire machinery of royal administration and justice, made room for commerce in the galleries, and showcased the Sainte-Chapelle as a religious jewel that signified France's divine favor. The high walls and clusters of towers that encircled the palace gave the appearance of strength but, in reality, these features were decorative and symbolic.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ON THE SAINTE-CHAPELLE AND THE ROYAL PALACE IN PARIS**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1323, Jean of Jandun, a philosophy professor and translator of Aristotle at the University of Paris, wrote his *Treatise in Praise of Paris*, a work in the tradition of the “city encomium,” a genre that had been popular since Carolingian times. In Jean’s case, he was hoping to convey to his readers his own sentiment that “to be Parisian is to be.” The two passages below describe the effect of the ornamentation in the Sainte-Chapelle and the carefully planned arrangement of the various chambers of the Royal Palace, reflecting the author’s sense of how the best examples of architecture are planned to create a perfect harmony between form and function.

**Part II, Chapter II: On the Churches and Principally on Notre-Dame and the Sainte-Chapelle**

In Paris, privileged sanctuary of the Christian religion, beautiful edifices consecrated to God are founded in such great number that there are not many cities among the most powerful in Christianity that can boast of counting so many houses of God.

But the most beautiful of the chapels, the chapel of the King, conveniently located within the walls of the royal residence, is admirable through its strong structure and the indestructible solidity of the materials of which it is made. The carefully chosen colors of its paintings, the precious gilding of its images (statues), the transparency of the windows which shine from all sides, the rich cloths of its altars, the marvelous virtues of its sanctuaries, the exotic ornaments of its reliquaries decorated with sparkling jewels, give to this house of prayer such a degree of beauty that upon entering, one feels transported to heaven and one imagines that one has been ushered into one of the most beautiful chambers of Paradise.

Oh! How salutary are the prayers that ascend from these sanctuaries towards all-powerful God when the inner purity of the faithful corresponds exactly to the outer corporal ornaments of the oratory!

Oh! How gentle are the praises of God the most merciful sung in these tabernacles when the hearts of those who sing are embellished by virtues in harmony with the lovely paintings of the tabernacles.

Oh! How agreeable to God most glorious are the sacrifices prepared on these altars when the life of the priest shines with a brilliance equal to that of the gold of the altars!

**Chapter II: On the Palace of the King in Which Are the Masters of Parlement, the Masters of Requests, and the Royal Notaries**

In this illustrious seat of the French monarchy a splendid palace has been built, a superb testimony to royal magnificence. Its impregnable walls enclose an area vast enough to contain innumerable people. In honor of their glorious memory, statues of all the kings of France who have occupied the throne until this day are reunited in this place; they have such an expressive demeanor that at first glance one would think they are alive. The table of marble, whose uniform surface presents the highest sheen, is placed in the west under the reflected light of the windows in such a way that the banqueters are turned toward the east; it is of such grandeur that if I cited its dimensions without furnishing proof for my statement, I fear that one would not believe me.

The palace of the king was not decorated for indolence and the crude pleasures of the senses, nor raised to flatter the false vanity of vainglory, nor fortified to shelter the perfidious plots of proud tyranny; but it was marvelously adapted to the active, effective, and complete care of our wise monarchs who seek continually to increase the public well-being by their ordinances. In fact, nearly every day, one sees on the raised seats which are placed on the two sides of the room, the men of state, called according to their functions either Masters of Requests or Notaries of the King. All, according to their rank and obeying the orders of the king, work for the prosperity of the republic; it is from them that the generous and honorable favors of grace flow incessantly; it is by them that appeals, weighed with the scales of sincerity, are presented.

In a vast and splendid chamber, entered through a special door in the northern wall of the palace because the difficult negotiations that take place there demand the utmost tranquility and privacy, the skillful, far-sighted men, called the Masters of Parlement, sit on the tribunals. Their infallible knowledge of law and customs permits them to discuss cases with complete maturity and clemency and to hurl the thunder of their final sentences which give joy to the innocent and to the just because they are rendered without regard to persons or presents and in the contemplation of God alone and law. But the criminal and the impious, according to the measure of their evil, are overwhelmed by bitterness and misfortune.

**SOURCE:** Jean of Jandun, *Treatise in Praise of Paris*, in *Paris et ses historiens au XIVe et XVe siècles*. Ed. A. J. V. le Roux de Lincy (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1867). Text modernized by Michael T. Davis.

Jean de Jandun's description of 1323 eloquently captures the character of the royal palace. Rising in the midst of the capital city, its unusual combination of military features, delicate gables and window tracery from church architecture, and a garden embodied the might, the piety, and the prosperity secured for the realm by a wise monarch's good government. Much the same can be said about the palace at Avignon built by the popes in the fourteenth century during their exile from Rome. Begun by Benedict XII in 1334, the original palace with its offices, assembly and banqueting halls, chapel, and residential wing arranged around a central court was not unlike a monastery's plan, perhaps not surprising in light of the fact that Benedict had been a Cistercian monk before his election to the papacy. His successors, Clement VI and Innocent VI, enlarged the papal apartments and added new wings including the west façade with its muscular arches, battlements, archers' slits, battered walls, and machicolations. Who would guess from this forbidding, even ferocious exterior that the palace enclosed an essentially bureaucratic compound and that the pope wielded little effective political power? The towers, like modern office buildings, contained work spaces, libraries, chapels, and apartments; a small garrison could be deployed on the roof platform in case of attack, but the palace was not designed to withstand a determined or prolonged assault.

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## THE ARCHITECTURE OF DAILY LIFE

**COLLEGE ARCHITECTURE.** One of the most original architectural contributions of the late Middle Ages was

collegiate architecture. In the wake of the rise of universities throughout Europe in the late twelfth century, colleges were founded as safe and regulated residences for students who, at the beginning of their liberal arts studies, might be as young as thirteen or fourteen. Initially, colleges in Bologna, Cambridge, Paris, or Oxford were simply established in houses donated or purchased by a benefactor. The famous Sorbonne, founded in 1259 for theology students at the university, was initially located in a series of nondescript houses in the Latin Quarter of Paris. However, in the mid-thirteenth century monastic orders, such as the Cistercians and the Cluniacs, arriving in these centers of learning created enclosed compounds that limited contact with the seductions of the secular world. They adapted the cloister to the new educational requirements, reducing the church to a chapel and lodging students in a building that included a refectory with a dormitory above. The College of Navarre in Paris, established by Philip IV's queen, Jeanne de Navarre, in her will of 1304, marked a further step as it forged a new blend of building types for its seventy students from the liberal arts, law, and theology faculties. Part urban palace, part monastery, the college was composed of fine stone residential houses and included a chapel and a library arranged around an interior court. In England, the Oxford and Cambridge colleges of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries display various combinations of halls, chapel, residential cells, monumental bell towers, and entrance gates built around open quadrangles, a scheme that has been widely imitated in American universities, such as Yale and Michigan.

**THE GUILD HALL.** As Europe made the transition from an economy based on large aristocratic landholdings to a commercial economy with a thriving merchant class, a new kind of architecture emerged to meet the needs of the groups called "guilds." Guilds began as voluntary associations of individuals to control training, membership, prices and quality in a trade or craft, and grew to have social and political significance as the trades gained economic power. These organizations began to own property from donations and bequests, and real estate provided a steady source of income, so they began to construct their own buildings in cities for meetings, celebrations, and political activity. By 1192, the city of Gloucester, in England, had its own guildhall, and as traders came from various countries their guilds erected halls for their members in the cities in which they did business. By the mid-twelfth century, for example, merchants from Cologne had established a guildhall in London. In the great cloth trading city of Ghent in modern Belgium, a variety of different trades such as bakers,

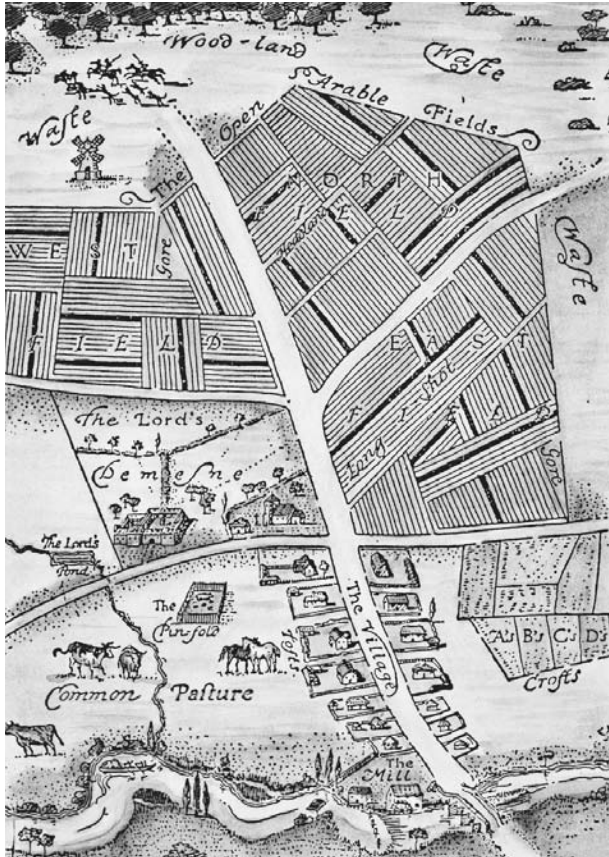


The Tom Tower of Christ Church College, and spires of Magdalen College, and Merton College, Oxford, England, fourteenth century. CHRIS ANDREWS; CHRIS ANDREWS PUBLICATIONS/CORBIS.

brewers, butchers, carpenters, cheesemongers, shoemakers, and coverlet weavers had their own guildhalls. Perhaps the most elaborate of these structures was the Ghent Cloth Hall where members of other trades in the city obtained their materials and women were even allowed to have stalls to sell cloth and related items. Such guildhalls could even politically and economically dominate a city neighborhood. By the early fifteenth century, there were 1,200 craft associations in London alone, and in 1411 a new guildhall was constructed on a site of one dating back to 1128; the borough called “Guildhall,” surrounding the present building, has been the center of London city government since the Middle Ages. The London Guildhall, which is very large, has stained glass windows, echoing a pattern very common in Belgium, where guildhalls consciously imitated Gothic churches. In these barn-like civic structures the steep roofs and large lancet windows created a sense of spaciousness and importance for the crowds doing business just as a Gothic church accommodated and inspired its congregation. The cloth hall at Ypres, built in the thirteenth century, is generally considered the most impressive of secular Gothic buildings. It had sumptuous decorations and elaborate woodwork, as well as huge front steps from which proclamations

could be read. Such buildings expressed not only a belief in the power of commercial enterprise, but a newfound spirit of civic freedom and pride.

**STANDARD PLANS FOR LIVING.** Although non-aristocratic domestic architecture did not go through the number of changes and technical developments that characterized public, religious, and aristocratic architecture, the housing of peasants and working people did reflect an evolution towards multi-room and multi-level architecture. During the earliest period of the Middle Ages, and even as late as 1300, many peasant families lived in single-room buildings called “longhouses,” which they shared with livestock. The bulk of surviving houses, however, had three rooms, usually with a large central room called the “hall” that was heated by an open-hearth fireplace and no real chimney (that is, smoke rose to the rafters and exited through an open hole in the thatched roof). At one end, there would be an entrance passage and service area, screened off to prevent drafts and sometimes subdivided into a pantry and buttery; at the other end of the hall was a private room, which in some plans was on a second or loft level called a *solar*. As more people moved into cities and land became more valuable,



Plan of a medieval English manor showing houses and buildings. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.



Half timbered house in Noyers-sur-Serein, France, 15th century. © MARC GARANGER/CORBIS.

use of vertical space increased. Plans, materials, and styles varied according to local building traditions, physical context, climate, and wealth, yet houses throughout Europe had certain basic features in common. Surviving medieval houses from the eleventh into the fifteenth century tended to include a shop or commercial space on the ground floor (sometimes open to the street by day and shutterable by night), with the living quarters arranged above in the upper stories. A warehouse or manufacturing area might be located towards the rear. Unlike modern houses with rooms that accommodate specific activities and that allow for ample individual private space, medieval dwellings generally were still composed of a few multipurpose rooms, often grouped around an inner courtyard or light well. Surviving twelfth-century houses in the town of Cluny had one large front room connected by a corridor to a smaller back room per floor.

**REFLECTIONS OF URBAN WEALTH.** Nevertheless, later medieval houses, for example the Palazzo Davanzati in Florence of the mid-fourteenth century, could include sophisticated comforts and lavish decoration. Each of the

three floors that rise above the street-level loggia (open arcade) is composed of a large room that stretches the entire width of the house together with smaller chambers decorated with carved and painted ceilings and wall frescoes. A well shaft ran through the main rooms at every level and lavatories were provided on each floor, reflecting the high standard of living enjoyed by this wealthy merchant family. The crenellations that topped the house, later replaced by an open loggia, were a mark of social distinction. The monumental city halls, the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence (c. 1300) or the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena (c. 1300), are in effect enlarged versions of these grand urban palaces. Decorative detailing of houses, seen in door frames or window moldings, mirrored contemporary and local architectural fashion: twelfth-century houses sport classicizing pilasters, columns, capitals, and semi-circular arches; thirteenth-century dwellings feature pointed arches and traceried lights.

**HALF-TIMBER CONSTRUCTION.** But the most widespread and enduring type of town-house construction was the half-timber frame, built with interlocking beams and a wattle and daub filling. With an appearance that



is familiar today in homes that imitate Tudor architecture, this new type of house featured an exposed frame of hewn timbers notched and pinned together to form a cage-like structure in such a way that the dark vertical and diagonal beams remained flush with the finished surface of the exterior wall. To create the wall itself, the spaces between the timbers were filled with “wattle”—actually a mixture of interwoven twigs and branches—and then sealed with a thick coating of mud and straw, the predecessor of modern stucco or plaster. The upper stories of these three- or four-floor houses (five or six floors in crowded cities like Paris) were corbeled out over the street on projecting brackets, a technique that increased precious interior space. Houses of this type, with their distinctive high-pitched roofs and dormers, later sheathed by clapboards, were transplanted to America in the seventeenth century by the first settlers who continued construction techniques learned in Europe.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

*in Architecture and Design*

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### BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

c. 1090–1153

*Cistercian abbot*

**A DEFINER OF MONASTIC AUSTERITY.** Born into an aristocratic family in Burgundy, France, Bernard en-

tered the Cistercian monastery of Cîteaux in 1112. In 1115, he founded the monastery of Clairvaux, and by the end of his life, the order had grown into an international monastic organization of prestige and influence. Bernard’s ideas on monastic life and the role of art in the cloister were reflected in the definition of Cistercian architecture. His views, eloquently set out in such tracts as the *Apologia*, offer a radically different attitude than those of traditional Benedictine monasticism or Cluny. Instead of seeing art and beauty as a vehicle for spiritual illumination, Bernard, certainly aware of images’ attractive power, judged them as distractions that hindered the monks’ devotions. He also condemned lavish church building as an arrogant and needless expenditure of money. Churches built in the mid-twelfth century—for example Fontenay or Pontigny—were laid out on a cruciform scheme, often called the “Bernardine plan,” and emptied of images and sculptural flourishes. This plan, along with the restrained height that expressed the ideal of humility, was emulated widely in other Cistercian houses that, in turn, served as important conduits by which French architectural ideas were introduced into other countries. Thus, Bernard’s defense of an architecture of austerity resonated across Europe.

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### JEAN DESCHAMPS

Early 13th century–Late 13th century

*Architect*

**A FAMILY OF MASTER BUILDERS.** The inscription of his lost tombstone in the cathedral of Clermont-Ferrand informs modern scholars that Jean Deschamps (“Joannis de Campis”) began construction of the choir of the church in 1248 and was buried alongside his wife, Marie, and their children. Judging from the forms and construction methods employed at Clermont, Deschamps came to that city in the central French province of Auvergne from Paris, for the cathedral’s design can be linked closely to work at Saint-Denis, the Notre-Dame nave chapels, and the Sainte-Chapelle of the 1230s and 1240s. In 1286, a Jean Deschamps was appointed “first master” (“premier maistre”) of the works at Narbonne Cathedral,

an event that offers the tempting possibility to propose that this is the same builder four decades later in the twilight of his career. Despite general similarities with Clermont, Narbonne appears to be the work of a different master, who headed construction until 1295 and left drawings for piers in the floor of one of the choir chapels. Nevertheless, Jean Deschamps of Clermont may have been the eldest member of an extended family of architects that included not only his namesake at Narbonne, but also a Pierre Deschamps, who worked at Clermont and possibly at Rodez in the mid-fourteenth century, and Bertrand Deschamps, master mason of Bordeaux Cathedral around 1320. Familial connections in the craft are common in architecture and are encountered in the late Gothic German “dynasties” of the Parlers, whose members worked at Cologne and Prague or the Roriczers. These ties would also explain the similarities between the southern French cathedrals of Clermont, Limoges, Rodez, Narbonne, and Bordeaux, based on northern French verticality enriched by the linearity characteristic of the rayonnant style.

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#### SUGER

1081–1151

*Abbot*  
*Royal advisor*  
*Author*

**AN INFLUENTIAL ABBOT.** Given to the abbey of Saint-Denis as a child, Suger, was, as told by his biographer, “small of body and family; constrained by twofold smallness, he refused in his smallness to be a small man.” Once elevated to the abbacy in 1122, he set about realizing his childhood dream of refurbishing the church, now nearly 400 years old. After reorganizing Saint-Denis’ finances to support the cost of construction, he launched the building campaign in the mid-1130s. Although he was not, as sometimes asserted, the architect of the new church, his travels throughout Europe and France gave him an extraordinarily wide horizon of knowledge of buildings and their decoration. He obviously drew upon his far-flung network of contacts to assemble an international team of masons, sculptors,

glass painters, and goldsmiths in the abbey’s workshops. He was also clearly a “hands-on” patron, riding out into the forest in search of tall trees to provide roof timbers. It was, no doubt, his demands for columns, for large stained glass, for a harmonious union of the old structure with the new, that pushed the master mason to realize the novel combination of architectural elements that produced the spacious, light interior that changed the course of western architecture. In addition to his duties as head of a powerful abbey, advisor to King Louis VI, and regent of France during Louis VII’s absence on Crusade in the late 1140s, Suger authored a life of Louis VI and, most famously, three booklets, *De Administratione* (On what was Done Under his Administration), *De Consecratione* (The Other Little Book on the Consecration of the Church of Saint-Denis), and the *Ordinatio* (Ordinance Enacted in the Year 1140 or in the Year 1141), in which Suger describes the building campaigns, works of art, and dedication ceremonies of his beloved abbey church.

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#### WILLIAM OF SENS

Mid-twelfth century–Late twelfth century

*Master mason*  
*Architect*

**THE RIGORS OF DIRECT SUPERVISION.** The sole source of information on William of Sens comes from Gervase of Canterbury’s account of the rebuilding of the choir of Canterbury Cathedral following the ruinous fire of 1174. William’s expertise and reputation recommended him for the job over other masters who had been gathered to assess the rebuilding project. Not only was he a skillful and subtle designer who incorporated sections of the Romanesque walls into his new structure, but he also fabricated the machinery to lift stones and provided the sculptors with templates for shaping stones. Although his name suggests that he was a native of Sens in France, his architecture shows closer connections to northern France and Flanders. The proportions of his three-story elevation, the use of wall passages screened by arcades, the sexpartite vaults, and the preference for decorative colored marble shafts point to his close affin-

ity with recent building projects in Arras, Cambrai, and Laon. William supervised construction until badly injured in a fall from the triforium in 1178. Although he attempted to supervise work from his bed, he simply was not up to the physical rigor of the job, and was forced to leave Canterbury for France. William's forced retirement suggests that in the late twelfth century construction was not guided by an overall set of plan and detail drawings, and that the master mason's on-site presence was still required. As drawings became more frequently and widely used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, architects were able to take on several projects at once, leaving workshops in the hands of assistants and directing by "remote control."

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### HENRY YEVELE

c. 1320–1400

*Master mason  
Architect*

**FROM MASTER MASON TO ARCHITECT.** The long and prolific career of Henry Yevele encompasses major works of both secular and religious architecture. In many ways, Yevele functioned like a modern architect, directing a workshop that was responsible for design, construction, and maintenance. First mentioned in London in 1353, he was soon appointed master mason to Edward ("the Black Prince"), prince of Wales and, thereafter, became Edward III's Deviser of Masonry and in charge of all works of the crown. Among his many works, either documented directly or attributed to him on the basis of form and style, are Prince Edward's chantry chapel in Canterbury Cathedral, the Neville screen (1372–1376) in the choir of Durham Cathedral (1376–1379), the nave of Canterbury Cathedral (1377–1403), the nave of Westminster Abbey (1387), and the remodeling of Westminster Hall carried out under Richard II between 1394 and 1399 in collaboration with the carpenter, Hugh Herland. These architectural works are executed in a

refined Perpendicular style in which delicate grids of tracery organized the wall surfaces and spread onto the vaults in elaborate rib patterns. Yevele also designed the tomb of the Black Prince at Canterbury along with the tomb chests of Richard II and his wife Anne of Bohemia, and, probably, that of Edward III at Westminster Abbey. He also served as consultant to the projects of William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, such as New College, Oxford.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Architecture and Design*

**Aachen Palace Complex (c. 784–796)**—Located in Aix-la-Chapelle in what is now Germany, the Aachen complex was one of fourteen residences of the emperor Charlemagne. Based on specific Roman prototypes, the buildings were intended to convey and legitimize the idea that Charlemagne was the successor to western Christian Roman rule.

**Avignon Palace Complex (c. 1335–1345)**—While Avignon served as the seat of the papacy during the early fourteenth century, this complex was constructed as a grand papal residence with two huge palaces around a large walled courtyard, with defensive towers at either end. From the outside, it remains today a fine specimen of military architecture, while on the inside it is a repository for grand wall paintings.

**Canterbury Cathedral (1100–1175)**—This site was both the seat of the diocese's archbishop—the spiritual center of the English church—and also, after 1170, an important pilgrimage site of the shrine of Thomas Becket. Begun in the Norman style around 1100 on the site of a vanished Anglo-Saxon church, Canterbury has had several devastating fires and periods of reconstruction. Gervase of Canterbury's narrative of one such period of construction beginning in 1175 (in the Gothic style) is perhaps the most complete account of the building of a cathedral extant.

Cluny Abbey Church (1088–1130)—Now ruined but reconstructed in drawings and plans, the monastery of Cluny (Saône-et-Loire) is a complex of buildings begun in 909; the several churches are referred to as Cluny I, II (c. 955–1040) and III. Its great period was the 1080s when the abbey held about 200 monks, leading to the construction of a much more massive church (Cluny III) between 1088 and 1130. It was perhaps the largest church in Europe. Only small portions of the complex survive today.

Durham Cathedral (1093–1133)—Sitting in a military position atop a hill overlooking the virtually unscalable bank of the river Wear, this cathedral, the burial place of Saint Cuthbert, was intended to convey the presence of Norman power. In its mass it recalls the basilicas of Rome and competes with other great cathedrals such as Winchester. It has stone vault work with extremely fine ribbing, molding, and carved chevron decoration.

Loches Castle (eleventh century)—Located in the French department of Indre-en-Loire and intended to control the Roman roads from Tours, Angers, and Orléans, this castle, first built in the sixth century, was many times reconstructed. The eleventh-century *donjon*, or keep, is a particularly fine specimen of a defensive tower also used at several periods as a prison.

Monreale Cathedral (1174)—Located in Palermo, Sicily (Italy), this cathedral was built by the Norman king

Roger of Sicily. Constructed in the Roman basilica style with a Byzantine transept, it combines motifs of east and west in structure and is highly decorated inside and out with massive bronze doors (late 12th century) with biblical scenes in relief, magnificent carved capitals atop the interior columns, and Byzantine and Venetian mosaics of biblical scenes covering the walls.

Sainte-Foy at Conques (1031–1100?) Located in Aveyron, southeastern France, this Romanesque abbey church in the “ambulatory and chapel” plan is one of the most beautiful of pilgrimage churches. It has a magnificent tympanum of Christ at the Last Judgment and many fine sculptural capitals on its columns.

Santiago de Compostela (1075–1128)—Located in Galicia, northern Spain, this Romanesque cathedral is believed to hold the relics of James the Apostle, as well as a supposed piece of the True Cross. A place of pilgrimage for over a thousand years, it has a magnificent portal with three doorways and sculpture representing the Last Judgment. The symbol of the church and of its role as a pilgrimage site is a scallop shell, the emblem of Saint James.

Speyer Cathedral (1030 and late eleventh century)—Located in western Germany, this enormous church is in the basilica style with four towers and two domes. It was the earliest cathedral to have a full gallery.

chapter *2*

DANCE

Timothy J. McGee

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	62	<i>Hysterical Dancing</i> (excerpt from Giraldus Cambrensis' <i>Journey Through Wales</i> ) . . . . .	69
OVERVIEW . . . . .	64	<i>Dance Terms From De Musica</i> (excerpt from Johannes de Grocheio's <i>De Musica</i> ) . . . . .	74
TOPICS		<i>Two Evenings of Dance</i> (excerpt from Simone Prodenzani's <i>Il Sapporitto</i> ) . . . . .	75
Dancing in Medieval Life . . . . .	65	<i>A Round Dance</i> (music notation and lyrics to one of the earliest known round dances) . . . . .	76
Sacred and Symbolic Dance . . . . .	67	<i>A Dancing Scene from Romance of the Rose</i> (excerpt from the thirteenth-century poem describing a carol) . . . . .	77
Conventional Dance Formations and Steps . . . . .	70	<i>A "Christmas" Carol</i> (a carol in Latin and English for the Feast of the Annunciation). . . . .	77
Popular Dances . . . . .	73	<i>Kalenda Maya</i> (a song by the troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras) . . . . .	78
Additional Dance Types . . . . .	79	<i>A Noble Offer</i> (letter from a dance master seeking employment under Lorenzo de' Medici) . . . . .	82
Choreographed Dancing . . . . .	81	<i>Rules for Women in Dance</i> (excerpt from Guglielmo Ebreo's <i>On the Practice or Art of Dancing</i> ) . . . . .	83
Dancing Masters. . . . .	81	<i>An Example of Dance Notation</i> (French shorthand connecting the steps of a dance to notes of music) . . . . .	86
The Basse Danse and the Bassadanza . . . . .	84	<i>A Fifteenth-Century Ballo</i> (music notation to the melody of the ballo "Petit Vriens") . . . . .	87
The Ballo . . . . .	86		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Antonio Cornazano. . . . .	88		
Domenico da Piacenza . . . . .	88		
Guglielmo Ebreo . . . . .	89		
Raimbaut de Vaqueiras . . . . .	89		
Ippolita Maria Sforza . . . . .	90		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	90		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
Terms in Medieval Dance . . . . .	65		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Dance*

- c. 1190 Troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras composes the *estampie* “Kalenda Maya.” This is the earliest known *estampie* melody.
- 1235 *Roman de la Rose*, a lengthy allegorical poem, is begun by Guillaume de Lorris and completed before 1275 by Jean de Meun. The poem includes several descriptions of courtly dancing.
- c. 1250 A copy of the *Magnus liber organi*, containing sixty sacred round dances, is sent from Paris to Florence, demonstrating the influence of Parisian music.
- The earliest known English instrumental dance is included in Oxford’s Bodleian Library: MS Douce 139, a manuscript from Coventry, England.
- c. 1275 Four dance tenors (that is, melodies that could be used to structure new compositions) are copied into Montpellier, Bibliothèque de l’Ecole de Médecine, MS H 196, one of the largest sources of early motets.
- c. 1280 Eleven instrumental dances are copied into the *Chansonnier du Roi* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS fr. 844). This is the only known medieval collection of French *estampies* and carols.
- c. 1285 Three English *estampies* are copied into London, British Library, MS Harley 978.
- c. 1300 *De musica*, a music treatise by Johannes Grocheio, includes the earliest detailed descriptions of dances and dance music.
- 1300 *Doctrina de compondre dictatz*, a Catalan treatise on poetry by Jofre Goixà, gives instructions on how to compose a *dansa*.
- 1316 *Le Roman du Comte d’Anjou*, a narrative poem by Jean Maillart, includes a description of a carol.
- c. 1320 Three dances, two of them *estampies*, are copied into London, British Library, MS Additional 28550, known as the *Robertsbridge Codex*.
- 1320 Raimon de Cornet cites the *basse danse* as one of the poetic forms that a jongleur (a court entertainer or minstrel) would learn.
- 1328 A set of rules for composing troubadour poetry, including the dance poem *estampie*, is included in the *Lays d’amors*, by Guillaume Molinier.
- 1337 *The Effects of Good Government*, a fresco by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, painted in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena, contains a scene with round and line dances.
- 1353 The *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio narrates the fictional activities of ten nobles who travel to the country to escape the Black Death, and includes descriptions of dancing after each day’s events.
- 1365 *The Church Militant*, a fresco by Andrea di Bonaiuto, painted in the Spanish Chapel of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, includes a scene with dancers.
- c. 1380 A single instrumental dance tenor, called *Czaldy Waldy*, is copied into Prague’s Czechoslovakia State Library, MS XVII F9.
- c. 1390 The largest set of medieval Italian instrumental dances is copied into British Library, MS Additional 29987. The manuscript originated near Milan.
- c. 1395 *The Canterbury Tales*, by Geoffrey Chaucer, mentions dancing in several of the tales.
- c. 1400 Over 100 English carols with music are copied into several manuscripts in England.
- Dança general de la Muerte* (Common Dance of Death), a poem of 79 stanzas originating in Spain, describes the dance of death.

- 1400 *Il Sapporitto*, a literary work by Simone Prodenzani containing a number of poems, includes scenes of courtly dancing.
- 1420 Included in a set of frescos painted in the Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trent is a depiction of a processional dance.
- 1430 Three estampies are copied into Faenza, Biblioteca Comunale MS 117 (the *Faenza Codex*).
- 1445 Domenico da Piacenza writes *De la arte di ballare et Danzare* (On the Art of Dancing and Choreography), the earliest known treatise on dancing.
- 1455 Poet, statesman, and humanist Antonio Cornazano writes *Libro dell'arte del danzare* (Book on the Art of Dancing), the second treatise on dancing, and dedicates it to his student, Ippolita Maria Sforza, one of the first ballerinas known by name.
- 1463 Guglielmo Ebreo (also known as Giovanni Ambrosio) writes the earliest version of his dance treatise *De pratica seu arte tripudii* (On the Practice or Art of Dancing). Six later copies also exist.
- 1465 Ippolita Maria Sforza, the earliest known ballerina, dances with Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence as she travels to Naples to meet her bridegroom and become the Duchess of Calabria.
- 1470 The earliest surviving collection of Burgundian basses danses is copied into Brussels Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9085. The repertory is largely retrospective and shows connections to the Court of Burgundy from at least as early as 1420.

## OVERVIEW *of Dance*

**DANCE IN SOCIETY.** Dance was one of the major pastimes during the late Middle Ages. It was the favorite leisure activity of all levels of society from the peasants to the aristocrats and was a part of most celebrations, just as it is in modern times. In the Middle Ages, however, dance could also be found in sacred settings as a part of many church feasts, and there is an entire repertory of sacred dance songs that celebrate these events. This is not to say that dancing was completely approved by the Christian church. Alongside accounts that speak of sacred dance in a positive way, proclamations can also be found that forbid dance: some are aimed at a specific audience (e.g. clerics); others at specific occasions or locations (holy days, churches, churchyards, and cemeteries); and others are a wholesale condemnation of the entire activity as immoral.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION.** Information about dance in the late Middle Ages is found in a number of sources, although few of them contain sufficient details to allow scholars to reconstruct a clear picture of the activity. Literary accounts are very helpful for placing dancing in a social context, as are iconographic images such as paintings, drawings, and sculptures. To these can be added several types of documentary evidence, including treatises on poetry, since much dancing was done to dance songs whose forms and subject matter are discussed along with those of other kinds of poems. Music treatises also provide some details when they include dance music among the descriptions of musical forms. And finally, the dance music itself, the songs and instrumental pieces that are identified as intended for dancing, add other kinds of information that aid in the understanding of what dance must have been like during those centuries.

**SURVIVING DANCE MUSIC.** The surviving repertory of medieval dance music is relatively small and consists mostly of dance songs. Although it is clear from existing evidence that musical instruments frequently accompanied dance, very little of that repertory was ever written

down. Few instrumentalists could read music; they learned the tunes by ear and passed them on in that manner from generation to generation. The names of some of the favorite tunes come down to us in literature, but few of the melodies are preserved as written music. A large variety of instruments were used in conjunction with dancing; some, such as the bagpipe, are almost exclusively associated with it. In spite of that fact, however, the surviving instrumental dance repertory consists of fewer than fifty compositions.

**DANCE AND POETRY.** It is interesting to note that many of the secular musical forms found in all regions of late medieval Europe bear names indicating that their origins were in dance. Since the music was directly related to the poetry that it set, the names of the musical forms also represent poetic forms. In France, the three most popular secular musical forms were *rondeau* (round dance), *virelai* (twist), and *ballade* (dance). In Italy the *ballata* (dance) was very common; and in England, the round and carol were frequently performed as both music and dance. Throughout the late Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance, these dance types continued to provide the standard formats for secular music, although by the late fifteenth century most of the written compositions with these names were somewhat removed from their dance origins and probably were no longer actually intended for dance. Their very existence, however, suggests the extent to which dance played a central role in the culture of all regions during these centuries.

**STYLES AND VARIATIONS.** Until the late fourteenth century there would seem to have been little difference between the kinds of dances engaged in by the different social classes. There was undoubtedly some difference in style and perhaps in the refinement of the steps due to the kind of clothing worn and the locations where dancing took place, but the existing records show that, for the most part, the dances themselves were very much the same for all levels of society, as were the types of occasions on which dancing took place. Regional differences can be found, having to do with a local or larger regional preference for a particular type of dance, or simply on the level of a local variation in the execution of steps for a dance that was popular in all areas.

**DANCING IN GROUPS.** Most dances were group dances, involving as many participants as wished to join in. They can be thought of as line dances, in which the dancers join hands and follow the leader, often breaking into formations, such as dancing in a circle or forming “under the bridge.” Solo dances were also performed, often allowing demonstrations of impressive athletic ability. Small group dances, involving two or three dancers, were



another part of the tradition, and processional dances usually involved couples holding hands, but all of these dances were related to the line formations; couples never embraced as in later “ballroom” dancing.

**THE BIRTH OF CHOREOGRAPHY.** Sometime in the late fourteenth century, no doubt as a part of the increasing self-consciousness of aristocratic courts, a new form of dance was created in which the individual steps were choreographed and fitted to what might be considered to be a theme or perhaps a mini-drama. That is, there was often a story acted out in the choreography, having to do with the patterns traced by the dancers as well as with their body gestures. There is no record of where or exactly when choreographed dances began, although some evidence does point toward the Burgundian court (centered in modern-day eastern France) of Philip the Bold in the last third of the fourteenth century, an area closely linked after 1350 or so with the county of Flanders, the duchy of Brabant, and the duchy of Hainaut—that is, modern Benelux, Pas-de-Calais, and Nord. By the early fifteenth century, there is evidence that choreographed dancing was widespread in the courts of France, Italy, Spain, and England.

**DANCING MASTERS.** Choreographed dance was a radical change on several levels. It separated these dances from those of the past and created the element of class distinction by introducing a studied and rehearsed element into an activity that formerly was spontaneous. Whereas each of the earlier dances was composed of a single set of steps that were repeated over and over throughout the dance, each of the new choreographed dances contained a specific sequence of several different steps, a sequence it did not share with any other dance, meaning that the steps for each new dance had to be individually memorized. Professional dance teachers not only designed the new choreographies, rehearsed the dancers, and showed them the step sequence, but also taught body movement and leg and hand gestures that would help convey the theme or story of the dance. This type of dance was completely restricted to the noble classes, who could afford to employ the dancing masters. The practice of themed, individually choreographed dances continued to grow through the period of the Renaissance, blossoming into ballet in the seventeenth century.

**CONTINUING TRADITIONS.** At the end of the Middle Ages, dance continued to be an important form of celebration and relaxation for all classes and cultures. The advent of choreographed dances supplemented the more conventional repertory in aristocratic courts, bringing a new dimension to the traditional activity, one that would

## TERMS in Medieval Dance

- Choreographed dance:** A dance having a unique sequence of steps.
- Conventional dance:** A dance consisting of the continuous repetition of a single pattern of steps.
- Monophony:** (mono = one; phony = sound) Music of one part, including not only solo song, but also a single melody performed by more than one person or instrument.
- Polyphony:** (poly = several) Music of more than one part, each musical line having a separate rhythm and melody.
- Tempo:** The speed of the composition.
- Tenor:** A melody borrowed from another composition and used as a basis of a new polyphonic composition. The notes are held as long notes, which explains the use of the word (*tener* = to hold). Music for dance sometimes was written only as a tenor line, requiring the musicians to improvise the accompanying lines.
- Vocal dance:** A dance song—that is, one with words to be sung, as differentiated from an instrumental dance.

continue to flourish throughout the Renaissance and beyond. The dances themselves, both conventional and choreographed, continued to evolve and adjust to political and cultural changes throughout the period. But although our knowledge of dance accelerates from this point forward, thanks to new dance treatises and a growing repertory of written music, for the next several centuries the importance of dance to society as a whole, as well as the general styles and types of dances, remained more or less the way it had been at the end of the Middle Ages.

## TOPICS in Dance

### DANCING IN MEDIEVAL LIFE

**COURT AND COUNTRYSIDE.** Throughout the Carolingian era (eighth to tenth centuries) and the later Middle Ages, dancing was a part of all types of celebrations, both formal and informal. It could involve a solo dancer, couples, or groups of any size, and was accompanied by



Rabardie or Branle, peasant dance, missal from Montierneuf, Robinet Testard, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MS lat. 873, fol. 21, 1485. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

music that was either sung or played on instruments of all types. The dances themselves could be simple or complex, sedate or energetic, and contributed to the social life of every level of society. Dancing filled a variety of needs: it could be a way of expressing happiness, a casual relief from the toils of daily labors, an occasion for amorous flirtation, or a vehicle for displaying elegance and wealth. It took place in castles and manor houses, in town streets and squares, and in neighboring fields. Typical instances of dancing—on joyous occasions outside of churches or churchyards—occurred in a variety of private and public locations and involved a number of different formations and steps, most of which we know from images and descriptions recorded after 1300.

**CONVENTIONAL VERSUS CHOREOGRAPHED DANCE.** Broadly speaking, there are two basic divisions that can be applied to a discussion of medieval dance: conventional dances, in which a single set of steps is repeated over and over until the music stops; and choreographed dances, in which each dance has a unique sequence of steps. The two types are quite different in terms of their origins and purpose, although there are many similarities in steps, social function, and level of importance in the cultural lives of the people of the period. The story of conventional dances begins long before recorded history, continuing to the present day, and

although it is not documented in full detail, there is sufficient evidence to provide a clear outline of the various forms it took and the functions it filled between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries. Choreographed dance, on the other hand, was an invention of the late Middle Ages, and a number of treatises have survived that provide a fairly accurate picture of how it was performed and what it was intended to achieve.

**OCCASIONS FOR DANCING.** Most circumstances in which dancing takes place have not changed much over the centuries. In the Middle Ages, as now, people danced at weddings, on holidays, and at political or cultural gatherings, as well as for simple evening entertainment. There are two occasions in the Middle Ages, however, that would seem to be unusual, both of which involve the church and the clergy: sacred dance, in which life is celebrated, and its opposite, the dance of death. These examples, in particular, demonstrate how widespread dance was as a means of expression in medieval society.

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Acrobatic dancers, English manuscript, 13th century. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

## SACRED AND SYMBOLIC DANCE

**LITURGICAL DANCE.** There is ample evidence from as early as the fourth century that dance was a frequent occurrence in church, serving as a component of liturgical services on special occasions, especially Easter and Christmas. That the tradition continued throughout the Middle Ages is attested to by a twelfth-century description of girls dancing during the Easter celebrations in London and references to thirteenth-century clerics in Gournay (near Rouen, France) dancing as a part of the feasts of the Innocents and of St. Madeline. The troubadour Pierre de Corbiac wrote in his *Tesaur* around the year 1250 that he knew how “to dance the Sanctus and the Agnus and the Cunctipotens,” which refers to three prayers chanted during the celebration of the Mass. In 1313, members of the congregation of St. Bartholomew in Tauste, Spain, were taught by Rabbi Hacén ben Salomo to perform choral dances around the altar. All of this is clear evidence that throughout the period, dancing continued to be associated with sacred occasions, including the celebration of the Mass, and that laymen as well as clerics took part.

**PROHIBITIONS.** At the same time, there are also frequent warnings throughout the period against dance, be-

ginning as early as the late sixth century, when the rather austere English monk, St. Augustine of Canterbury (d. 604), wrote that “it is better to dig and plough on festival days than to dance,” a sentiment echoed a century later by the theologian and English historian the Venerable Bede (673–735). A number of church writings indicate that dancing was frowned upon because it was considered to have pagan as well as erotic overtones. In the first decade of the thirteenth century both the bishop of Paris and the Council of Avignon forbade dancing the carol in processions or during the vigil ceremonies on saints’ days, and in 1325 the General Chapter of the Church in Paris threatened excommunication for clerics who danced on any occasion, with the exception of sacred dancing on Christmas and the feasts of St. Nicholas and St. Catherine. An extremely negative view of dancing is found in the fourteenth-century preacher’s handbook *Fasciculus morum*, which describes a scene in which the devil gathers up his followers by sending one of his daughters to lead a round dance. The same source also connects dancing to gluttony and lechery in the midst of a discussion of the sin of Sloth:

Notice that it is absurd to say that such worldly joy as is generated by dancing and singing and the like on holy day—activities which rouse people rather



Dance of Death, Hartmann Schedel, *Liber cronicarum* (Nuremberg: Wohlgemuth, 1493). HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS.

to gluttony, lechery, and similar wretched deeds than to the praise of God and his saints—can possibly please God; and yet they think they please him the more they devote themselves to such unwarranted activities.

A legend circulating in England and western France, found in a collection of stories known as *Marvels of the East* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614), told the story of seven women dancing in a circle on a Sunday. As a punishment, they were cursed by the priest and turned into stones. A number of megalithic stone circles in Brittany and England have been identified as these women, including the stone circle in Cornwall known as the “Merry Maidens.” In spite of such prohibitions, however, there is ample evidence that dancing on sacred occasions continued throughout the late Middle Ages

and beyond. Documents recording the presence of dance at sacred ceremonies, as well as those forbidding it, can be found into the seventeenth century. The objections to dancing were mostly aimed at clerics taking part in secular dances. The reasons for this strong prohibition included the lascivious nature of the texts of some of the secular dance songs. Also, secular dancing usually involved the participation of women, a temptation seen as best avoided by the celibate clergy.

**SACRED DANCE SONGS.** Although there are no detailed descriptions of what steps may have been danced on these occasions, the music that has survived provides a few clues, which, when matched with the iconography (mostly images from manuscript illuminations), establishes a fairly reliable picture. The largest repertory of sacred dance songs with music can be found at the very

end of a copy of the *Magnus liber organi* (Great Book of Organum), a book that contains music for the liturgy that originated in Paris in the twelfth century, located today in Florence, Italy. The section containing the dance songs has an illumination depicting five men standing in a semicircle. From their garb and the fact that all have been tonsured (that is, they have a shaved patch on the crowns of their heads), it is obvious that they are clerics. Their mouths are open, indicating that they are singing, and they appear to be holding hands, a standard way of symbolizing dance. There are sixty short dance songs in this collection, nearly all of them in a verse and refrain format known as *rondeau*, meaning round (see Round, below). Some of the texts specifically mention dance: “Let the joyful company this day resound in a joyful dance,” and “With a vocal dance this assembly sings.”

**THE DANSE MACABRE.** In sharp contrast to the joyful celebration of church feasts is the dance that was often associated with hysteria of various kinds, a type dating back to ancient times. Stories of wild dancing, often ending in complete exhaustion or even death, are a standard part of the tales and myths of the Middle Ages. The Dance of Death (*Danse Macabre*), one of the more bizarre preoccupations of late medieval literature and iconography, always involves humans and skeletons, and was frequently referred to in sermons as a reminder of mortality. Literary origins of the tradition have been traced back before 1280 in the *Dit des trois morts et des trois vifs* (Story of Three Dead and Three Living) by Baudouin de Condé. Another account, dating from late fourteenth-century Spain, is a poem of 79 stanzas, the *Dança general de la Muerte* (Common Dance of Death), in which Death summons two maidens, Beauty and Pride, and then invites clergy and laymen to dance with them, using their excuses as a forum for social criticism.

**ST. VITUS’S DANCE.** The literary versions of hysterical dancing are nearly all symbolic, but there are also accounts of actual events taking place, sometimes called “St. Vitus’s dance,” described as happening in a church graveyard and associated with a desire to communicate with the dead. These events usually involved large numbers of people and went on for hours or even days. The narratives of such dances usually describe them as spontaneous and uncontrollable, provoked by something akin to mass hysteria. In the mid-fourteenth century in particular, mass hysterical dancing was recorded as a reaction to the Black Death, the plague that resulted in the deaths of nearly one-third of the population of Europe. In modern times St. Vitus’s dance has been identified as Sydenham’s Chorea, a tremor of the nerves and body caused by eating rotten grain containing ergot, a parasitic fungus.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### HYSTERICAL DANCING

**INTRODUCTION:** Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis), a twelfth-century writer from Cambria (in Wales), has provided the most detailed surviving account of a medieval hysterical event in his *Journey Through Wales*, which was completed around 1189. As a writer who specialized in “eyewitness” narrations, Gerald, who himself had both Welsh and Norman ancestors, was fascinated not only with the details of nature and geography in the places he visited, but also with unusual variations in manners and customs, as this passage illustrates.

You can see young men or maidens, some in the church itself, some in the churchyard and others in the dance which threads its way round the graves. They sing traditional songs, all of a sudden they collapse on the ground, and then those who, until now, have followed their leader peacefully, as if in a trance, leap in the air as if seized by frenzy. In full view of the crowds they mime with their hands and feet whatever work they have done contrary to the commandment on sabbath days. You can see one man putting his hand to an [imaginary] plough, another, goading on the oxen with a stick, and all as they go singing country airs, to lighten the tedium of their labour. This man is imitating a cobbler at his bench, that man over there is miming a tanner at his work. Here you see a girl pretending that she has a distaff in her hand, drawing out the thread with her hands, stretching it at arm’s length, and then winding it back onto the spindle; another, as she trips along, fits the woof to the warp; a third tosses her shuttle, now this way, now that, from one hand to the other, and with jerky gestures of her tiny tool seems for all the world to be weaving cloth from the thread which she has prepared. When all is over, they enter the church. They are led up to the altar and there, as they make their oblation, you will be surprised to see them awakened from their trance and recover their normal composites.

**SOURCE:** Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales/ The Description of Wales*. Trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1978): 92–93.

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Carolers with musicians, fresco, "Militant Church and Triumphant Church," Andrea di Buonaiuto, Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Spanish Chapel, 1343. SANDRO VANNINI/CORBIS.

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## CONVENTIONAL DANCE FORMATIONS AND STEPS

**COMMON ELEMENTS.** Dances that require continuous repetition of a small set of steps have a tradition

that precedes written history. Movement to a steady rhythm springs from an essential human desire that includes the need for exercise as well as for self-expression, and it is often associated with mating rituals. From the surviving evidence, we can see that many of the basic dance movements and formations remained more or less unchanged over many centuries. A variety of different formations were employed in dancing, the choice often having to do with the occasion and the space available. The formations, in turn, required different kinds of steps, and each dance was performed to a particular type of musical composition that matched the dance step and its speed. Changes in the dance movements coincided with changes in the phrases of the music. Although our information is incomplete, from the descriptions and the iconography, the following formations and steps seem to have been the most popular.



Dancers, tambourine player, fresco "The Allegory of Good Government," Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Siena, Italy, Palazzo Pubblico, Sala della Pace, east wall, 1338–1340. ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

**ROUND DANCES.** The round dance formation, which is associated with the dance of the same name, involves a group of people holding hands in the form of a circle, usually with a leader in the center. The dance steps require the circle to move first in one direction and then the other, reversing its direction at the beginning of each new verse. The leader sings the verses and the entire group joins in the chorus.

**LINE DANCES.** The most popular dance of the period was called a carol; it is the most frequently depicted formation in medieval art and is described in a number of the literary sources. The principle arrangement calls for dancers to join in a line holding hands, fingers, or a scarf, while they move along, often through the streets, following the leader. One French literary source mentions a line dance "nearly a quarter league long" (Philippe de Remi, in *La Manekine*, c. 1270), which may be an exaggeration, but it does suggest that any number of

people could join this kind of formation. A passage from *Le Roman du Comte d'Anjou*, written in 1316 by Jean Maillart, vividly portrays this kind of dance:

Then the napery was taken up, and when they had washed their hands, the carols began. Those ladies who had sweet voices sang loudly; everyone answered them joyfully, anyone who knew how to sing, sang along.

The iconographic and literary descriptions of this dance often indicate that it could break into other formations, including a round or "under the bridge." The mid-fourteenth-century fresco by Andrea di Bonaiuto, in the Spanish Chapel of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, shows both a line dance of three people and a round dance of four. The steps in a line dance vary depending on the direction the line is traveling—forward, to the side, or in one of the other formations described here.



Carol dancers, *Roman de la Rose*, Flemish, 15th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/BRITISH LIBRARY.

**UNDER THE BRIDGE.** This formation involves dancers in pairs with the first of the couples joining their hands to form a bridge while others take their turn first ducking under the bridge and then emerging on the other end to form a part of the bridge, thus providing an endless series. The early fourteenth-century Siena fresco by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *The Effects of Good Government*, depicts this formation together with the round. In both this painting and that by Bonaiuto (above) there is only a single dance leader (playing a tambourine and singing), which suggests that in the round, in line, and “under the bridge” all were possible variations of a carol.

**PROCESSION.** In many paintings couples are seen moving forward side by side, often holding hands, such as in the “under the bridge” formation, above, or in a more stately procession, such as that in both the *Buonconsiglio* and *Adimari* paintings. It is possible that in the processional-type dances, the steps used are a version of the “simple” and “double” steps employed in the choreographed processional *basse danse* and *bassadanza* (see Choreographed Dances, below). Additional support for this suggestion comes from the Renaissance processional



Stately processional dance. Labor of the Month of June. Fresco, Castello dei Buonconsiglio, Trent, Italy, 1420. SCALA/ART RESOURCE NY.

dance the “Pavan,” which also used those steps. They survive today as the steps of the bridal party during a wedding procession.

**SOLO DANCING.** There are a number of paintings that show a single man or woman dancing while others watch. The gestures of the solo dancer usually indicate a very active, athletic dance, but exactly which of the jumping or twisting dances is being depicted is never stated. The contexts of a large number of the illustrations of solo dancing suggest that they are intended to condemn wild or immoral living. A number of them are found in Psalters and books of hours or sacred manuscripts in conjunction with passages about morality. One illustration, for example, shows a woman of loose morals (skirt up showing legs, arms raised above her head) dancing for a monk who is absurdly trying to play a musical instrument using a *crozier* (a bishop’s staff) as a bow. Depictions such as these must be considered to be symbolic exaggerations rather than typical scenes. On the other hand, there are also pictures of apparently athletic solo dancing in settings that are quite realistic.





Monk plays for dancing woman. Book of Hours, Maastricht, 13th–14th century. LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, MS STOWE 17, FOLIO 38.

**OTHER DANCE MOVEMENTS.** Many kinds of steps are mentioned in literature in conjunction with dance—walk, slide, glide, hop, jump, strut, sway, etc.—although it is rarely clear which dance is being referred to. It is possible to connect some, but not all, of these movements with the named dances below, but the information that has survived is insufficient to show how many of these movements would be employed in any particular dance. As literary narrative tells us, even when specific steps are stated, it was always the dancer's prerogative to ornament and personalize a step by spontaneously introducing other movements.

#### SOURCES

Otto Gombosi, "About Dance and Dance Music in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Musical Quarterly* 27 (1941): 289–305.

Timothy J. McGee, *Medieval Instrumental Dances* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989): 19–22.

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#### POPULAR DANCES

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.** Literary sources, including music treatises, provide the names of several dances and a few descriptions, although some of the

references are so incomplete that little can be deduced from them. Medieval literature includes far more dance names than are described in the treatises, leaving an impression of a society that enjoyed a wide variety of dances, only a few of which are known in any detail. The Catalan treatise written by Jofre Goixà, the *Doctrina de compondre dictatz* (Treatise for Composing Poetry), from about 1300, for example, gives instructions on how one may write a *dansa*, a dance name that is not found elsewhere. According to the treatise, the *dansa* should have three stanzas, a refrain, and one or two envoys ("send-off" stanzas, used for summing up or offering a dedication), the text should be about love, it should have a nice melody, and it is to be sung with an instrumental accompaniment. That description, unfortunately, could apply to nearly all dance songs, and perhaps that is really what is intended: a general characterization of the contents of dance songs rather than instructions for a particular dance called *dansa*.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION.** The most detailed of the early descriptions are found in the treatise *De musica*, written in Paris around the year 1300 by Johannes de Grocheio. In this work, Grocheio defines both vocal and instrumental dances. By combining Grocheio's statements with poetry treatises and other, less specific

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***DANCE TERMS FROM DE MUSICA**

**INTRODUCTION:** The following is a list of dance terms from Johannes de Grocheio's *De musica*, written in Paris around the year 1300.

**Sung Dances**

**Refrain:** A refrain is the way all [dance] songs begin and end. They are different in the round, carol, and estampie. In the round they agree in sound and rhyme. In the carol and estampie, however, some agree and some are different.

**Round:** We call round or rotundellus [those songs] that do not have a different melody in the verse and the refrain. It is sung in a slow rhythm ... and is often sung in the West country, for example in Normandy, by young men and women to celebrate festivals and other grand occasions.

**Vocal estampie:** A song called an estampie [stans-tipes] is that in which there is a diversity in its parts in its refrain, not only in the rhyme of the words but also in the melody. ... This type causes the souls of young men and women to concentrate because of its difficulty, and turns them from improper thinking.

**Vocal carol:** A carol [ductia] is a light song, rapid in its rise and fall, which is sung in carol by young men and women. ... This influences the hearts of young men and women and keeps them from vanity and is said to have force against that passion which is called love or eros.

**Instrumental Dances**

**Instrumental carol:** An instrumental carol [ductia] is an untexted piece with appropriate percussion. I say with regular percussion because these beats measure it and the movement of the performer, and excite the souls of men and women to moving ornately according to that art they call dancing.

**Instrumental estampie:** The estampie is also an untexted piece, having a complicated succession of sounds, determined by its verses. ... Because of its complicated nature, it makes the souls of the performer and listener pay close attention. Its form is determined by its [irregular] verses since it is lacking that [regular] beat which is in a carol.

**SOURCE:** Johannes de Grocheio, *Concerning Music (De musica)*. Trans. Albert Seay (Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1974): 17–21.

literary references, as well as the evidence of the music itself, it is possible to obtain an idea of some of the dances. The dances described in the rather dry and academic accounts of the treatises take on more human and real presence in Simone Prodenzani's *Il Sapporitto*, and Guillaume de Lorris's *The Romance of the Rose*. These poems capture the spirit of the occasions and supply us with vivid glimpses of a very lively dance culture in which everyone took part. The dance music discussed below provides additional details about the nature and spirit of the dance steps and formations.

**THE ROUND DANCE/RONDEAU.** The round and the carol must have been the two most popular dances in the Middle Ages. They are the two most often mentioned in literature and depicted in manuscripts and paintings. The description by Grocheio tells us that the music has a refrain and that the melody of the refrain is exactly the same as that of the verse. A good example of what he is describing can be seen in the round "with a vocal dance" (*Vocis tripudio*), a sacred dance found in the *Magnus liber organi*, which demonstrates how the text is to be sung and also suggests the kind of dancing that would accompany the song. To perform this song, a soloist (the dance leader) would sing the first phrase, "With a vocal dance," and the rest of the dancers (the chorus) would respond with the half refrain, "This assembly sings," using the same melody. The soloist would then sing the next phrase, "With a vocal dance but with a temperate mind," and the chorus would answer with the full refrain, "This assembly sings of Paschaltide," again using the same melody supplied by the soloist. All of the following verses would proceed in the same way with the soloist singing the new words of each verse, followed by the chorus singing the same half and full refrain. The name of this type of verse and refrain song, *rondeau* (round dance), implies that the dance was done in the formation of a circle, perhaps with the leader actually standing in the center of the circle rather than as a part of it. (For practical reasons of size and perspective, manuscript illuminations would often only suggest the formation, but the raised hands of participants would indicate that they were to be joined in a circle.) The usual steps for this kind of dance are leg over leg to the side, going around in a circle, reversing direction at the beginning of each new verse. As Grocheio explains, this kind of song is sung by young men and women on all festive occasions.

**THE CAROL.** Along with the round, the carol is the other most frequently mentioned and depicted dance from this period. The two dances are closely related in that the round is one of the possible formations for the carol. But unlike most other dance formations, the carol

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***TWO EVENINGS OF DANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** These witty poems from *Il Sapporitto*, by Simone Prodenzani (c. 1400), contain the names of a number of dances as well as some detailed descriptions of dance steps not found elsewhere. The poems accompany a narrative about a “bon vivant” named Sollazzo, who is apparently good at dancing, singing, and playing musical instruments. Although fictional, the poems present a fairly accurate picture of music and dance in aristocratic Italian circles during the late Middle Ages.

We come now to the second evening:  
I tell you truly that by the light of the double candles  
they danced a rigoletto rather lightly,  
jumping forward and back and in waves.  
Of those who were seen in the round  
each one arose and danced to “al bicchieri.”  
No dancer had ever been seen  
to make such beautiful moves and turns to the hurdy-  
gurdy,  
with slave-like bends and turns, forward and backward  
jumps,  
some with new halting moves,  
and some made small circles on the point of their feet.  
Some made their bows with head and shoulders,  
while others did it with hands and feet raised  
as if they were sailors or Greeks.

The third evening they danced two by two  
beginning with “ranfo,” and then “l’achinea.”

Here one finds Cagnetto and Monna Mea,  
who would never miss that dance.  
And on the dance floor also was il Vicaro,  
who took Monna Tomea by the hand.  
Nor did there remain either a good woman or a queen  
who did not dance with a man of her status.  
Then came the dance of “La pertusata”  
and after a while came “La palandra”  
and then they did “Donna Innamorata.”  
Never was seen a lark who could sing as well  
as did Solazo play on this wind instrument,  
a performance that was the equal of a piper from Flanders.

With the bagpipe Sollazzo played “La pastorella,”  
then in the evening he played “La picchina,”  
“La forosetta” and then “La campagnina,”  
“A la fonte io l’amai,” and “La Marinella.”  
You would have said “it is fabulous!”  
that he played so well in “La palazina”  
and “La Guiduccia,” also “La montanina,”  
“La casa bassa,” and “La patrona bella.”  
To this last tune they danced in the Roman style  
with the chest extended and raised  
which for the women is more beautiful than the Tuscan  
style.  
Then they formed in a circle to do the rigoletto,  
arm and arm, because it is a country dance.  
All who were there took great pleasure in it.

**SOURCE:** Simone Prodenzani, *Il Sapporitto*, in *Il “Sollazzo”*. Ed. Santorre Debenedetti (Turin: Bocca, 1922). Translation by Timothy J. McGee.

was quite flexible, giving rise to Grocheio’s name for it, *ductia*, meaning “leader’s dance,” signifying that the carol could take on a number of different formations depending on the whim of the leader. It would begin as a line dance for as many as wanted to join, with all the participants holding hands, and could change into round or under-the-bridge formations as the leader wished. According to Grocheio’s description, the steps of a carol were lively and light-hearted, with a relatively quick tempo. He notes that the dance excites the dancers to move ornately, which suggests that a part of the carol dancing tradition included some active improvisation on the part of individual dancers. Grocheio’s rather sober description is augmented by the more fanciful scene depicted in *The Romance of the Rose*, written in the mid-thirteenth century, where we receive a similar impression of light-hearted gaiety with a variety of activities. The surviving repertory, in addition to the surviving English carols, is quite small and consists of three French instru-

mental compositions called *danse* and *danse real*. These pieces all have very short phrases, with light, simple, and lively melodies.

**THE ESTAMPIE.** The *estampie* is mentioned in literature from France and Italy, and Grocheio discusses both a vocal and an instrumental form. The word itself probably derives from the Latin *stante pedes* (stationary feet), referring to the fact that the dance steps remain close to the ground, in contrast to those dances that employ jumps or kicks. Grocheio describes this dance as suitable for people of all ages, which probably means that it is a less energetic dance, as is suggested by the “low” steps, and in contrast to the round and carol that he recommends for “young men and women.” According to the 1328 *Lays d’amors* of Guillaume Molinier, a set of rules for composing troubadour poetry, the *estampie* poem has a text based on love and homage. At the end it can have an envoy stanza that serves as a summary or dedication, or it can possibly repeat the opening or closing couplet.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A ROUND DANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** This is one of the earliest round dances known. It is found in the Florence copy of the (originally Parisian) *Magnus liber organi*, and is intended to

be performed by monks during a church service. The leader sings lines 1, 3, and 4 of each verse (the new material in each verse), and the entire choir sings lines 2, 5, and 6 (the refrain).

**SOURCE:** "Vocis Tripudio." Trans. Randall Rosenfeld (Florence: Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, MS Pluteo 29, 1).

**"Vocis tripudio"**

Text in italics is sung by the chorus.

Vo - cis tri - pu - di - o psal - lat hec con - ti - o vo - cis tri - pu di - o  
sed man - te so - bri - a psal - lat hec con - ti - o fes - ta pas - cha - li - a

I  
With a vocal dance,  
*This assembly sings,*  
With a vocal dance,  
But with a temperate mind,  
*This assembly sings*  
*Of Paschaltide.*

II  
It does not spare the Son,  
*(This assembly sings,)*  
The clemency of the Father  
Does not spare the son  
*(This assembly sings*  
*Of Paschaltide.)*

III  
They are saved for the price  
*(This assembly sings,)*  
Because of great Grace  
They are saved for the price  
*(This assembly sings*  
*Of Paschaltide.)*

IV  
The Resurrection will happen,  
*(This assembly sings.)*  
On the third day,  
The Resurrection will happen  
*(This assembly sings*  
*Of Paschaltide.)*

V  
It fills us with joy,  
*(This assembly sings,)*  
The victory of Christ  
Fills us with Joy,  
*(This assembly sings*  
*Of Paschaltide.)*

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**THE "KALENDA MAYA" ESTAMPIE.** This description is confirmed by all of the existing twenty troubadour estampie poems, and especially by the single example that survives with both text and music, "Kalenda Maya," by the troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras. (There are minor variants in the construction of all of the texts, such as number of stanzas, which suggests that there was some leeway allowed). The text of "Kalenda Maya" is about

both love and homage. It is in five stanzas, with a refrain but without an envoy. From the music of "Kalenda Maya" it can be seen how the individual musical phrases were repeated in pairs, with the refrain at the end of each stanza. This construction suggests that the performance format could have been similar to that of the round, with verses sung by a soloist and a refrain for all to sing. With its dramatic portrayal of a lover who must implore his

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A DANCING SCENE FROM ROMANCE OF THE ROSE**

**INTRODUCTION:** This excerpt from *Romance of the Rose*, a very popular and important thirteenth-century French poem, describes a carol.

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**SOURCE:** Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*. Trans. Harry W. Robbin (New York: Dutton, 1962): 16.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A “CHRISTMAS” CAROL**

**INTRODUCTION:** The term *carol* is usually associated in modern times with a Christmas song that sounds much like a hymn, but the repertory of early English carols shows that they were intended for a number of occasions, including Christmas, and were in the verse and refrain format. (The refrain in an English carol is called a burden.) More than 100 English carols with music have survived from around the year 1400, and nearly five times as many without music, some in Latin, some in English, and some in an alternation of Latin and English known as *macaronic* (mixed texts), where the two languages are blended together in the way illustrated by this carol for the feast of the Annunciation (followed by a modern translation).

This worle wondreth of al thyng  
 Howe a maide conceyued a kynge;  
 To yeue vs al therof shewyng,  
 Veni, Redemptor gencium.

Whan Gabriel come with his gretynge  
 To Mary moder, that swete thyng,  
 He graunted and saide with grete lykynge,  
 “Veni, Redemptor gencium.” [3 additional verses]

Above all, this world wonders  
 how a virgin conceived a king,  
 to make that manifest to us.  
 Come, Redeemer of the nations.

When Gabriel came with his greeting  
 to the Mother Mary, that sweet thing,  
 he spoke to her and said with great fondness,  
 “Come, Redeemer of the nations.”

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**SOURCE:** Richard Leighton Greene, ed., *The Early English Carols*. 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977): 36. Translation by David N. Klausner.

elevated lady to take pity on him, the text of “Kalenda Maya” is typical of courtly love lyrics in the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries.

**REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN THE ESTAMPIE.** In addition to “Kalenda Maya,” the surviving repertory of estampies consists of one additional vocal dance, “Souvent souspire,” which is a new text set to the “Kalenda Maya” music, and 21 instrumental pieces—three from England, eight from France (called *estampie royal*), and ten from Italy (called *istanpitta*), many of which have fanciful titles such as “Chominciamento di gioia” (Beginning of

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***KALENDA MAYA**

**INTRODUCTION:** "Kalenda Maya," written in 1190 by the troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, is the earliest known *estampie*. At the end of each verse, a refrain, beginning with the words "And may I be joined," is repeated. The entire refrain is printed here at the end of the first verse.

As suggested by the words "noble and vivacious lady" and "your fair person" in the first verse, this song is a monologue addressed by a lover to his lady; the use of the phrase "Fair Knight" in verse 4 suggests a comparison to the system of feudalism, as was common in courtly love literature.

**SOURCE:** Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, "Kalenda Maya," c. 1190. Trans. Robert Taylor.

**"Kalenda Maya"**

Text in italics is sung by the chorus.

Ka - len - da ma - ia ni fueills de fa - ia ni chans d'au - zell ni flors de gla - ia  
 8 non es qu.m pla - ia pros do - na ga - ia tro qu'n i snell mes sa -  
 15 gler a - ia del vos - tre bell cors qu.m re - tra - ia pla - zer no - vell  
 22 q'a-mors m'a - tra - ia e - ja - ia e.m tra - ia vas vos do - na ve - ra - ia  
 30 e cha - ia de pla - ia .lge - los anz qu.m n'e stra - ia

I. Neither May Day nor the beech tree's leaves nor the song of birds nor gladiolus flowers are pleasing to me, noble and vivacious lady, until I receive a swift messenger from your fair person to tell me of some new pleasure that love brings me; *and may I be joined to you and drawn toward you, perfect lady; and may the jealous one fall stricken before I must leave you.*

II. My sweet beloved, for the sake of God, may the jealous one never laugh at my pain, for his jealousy would be very costly if it were to separate two such lovers; for I would never be joyful again, nor would joy be of any benefit to me without you; I would set out on such a road that no one would ever see me again; on that day would I die, worthy lady, that I lost you. *And may I be joined ...*

III. How shall my lady be lost, or restored to me, if she has not yet been mine? For a man or woman is not a lover just by thinking so. But when a suitor is accepted as a lover, the reputation that he gains is greatly enhanced, and the attractive appearance causes much stir; but I have not held you naked nor conquered you in any other sense; I have only desired you and believed in you, without any further encouragement. *And may I be joined ...*

[continued]

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**“Kalenda Maya” [CONTINUED]**

Text in italics is sung by the chorus.

IV. I should not likely find pleasure if I should ever be separated from you, Fair Knight, in anger; for my being is not turned toward anyone else, my desire does not draw me to anyone else, for I desire none but you. I know that this would be pleasing to slanderers, my lady, since this is the only thing that would satisfy them. There are those who would be grateful to you if they were to see or feel my suffering, since they admire you and think presumptuously about that which makes the heart sigh. *And may I be joined ...*

V. Lady Beatrice, your worth is so refined by its nature, and it develops and grows beyond that of all other ladies; in my opinion you enhance your dominance with your merit and your admirable speech without fail; you are responsible for initiating praiseworthy actions; you have wisdom, patience, and learning; incontestably, you adorn your worth with benevolence. *And may I be joined ...*

VI. Worthy lady, everyone praises and proclaims your merit which is so pleasing; and whoever would forget you places little value on his life; therefore I worship you, distinguished lady, for I have singled you out as the most pleasing and the best, accomplished in worth, and I have courted you and served you better than Eric did Enide. Lord Engles, I have constructed and completed the estampida. *And may I be joined ...*

CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

Joy), and “Tre fontane” (Three Fountains). The music indicates that the estampie did not take on the same character in all of these regions. In the English and French sources the phrases are all quite short, with simple and lively melodies. The Italian estampies, however, have relatively long phrases with more rhapsodic melodies and are more than ten times the length of the English and French dances. Although the phrases in all of the dances are of irregular lengths, which suggests that all estampies had steps that did not require a specific sequence, the differing characters of the melodic lines hint at a lively dance in England and France, and a more subdued one in Italy.

**SOURCES**

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SEE ALSO *Music: Polyphonic Secular Music and National Styles*

**ADDITIONAL DANCE TYPES**

**NOTA.** The *nota* is an instrumental dance that is neither discussed in any detail nor identified by name in any musical source. It receives a passing reference in Grocheio’s treatise, where he points out that it has formal elements of both the carol and the estampie. Jean Maillart, in his *Le Roman du Comte d’Anjou* of 1316, briefly mentions it in a manner that makes it clear that the *nota* is a distinct dance type: “Some sang pastourelles about Robichon and Amelot, others played on vielles chansons royal and estampies, dances and notas.” Four instrumental dances have been tentatively identified as possible *notas* on the basis of their formal construction; all are in English sources, but nothing at all is known about their formation or steps.

**SALTARELLO.** Although no description survives of the *saltarello* as an independent dance, the name (from the Italian *saltare*, to jump) indicates a very lively dance step, a fact confirmed by the way the *saltarello* step is described in the later bassadanza dance manuals. Only four examples of the medieval *saltarello* are known; all are instrumental and are found in a single Italian manuscript where they are labeled “salterello.” The melodies are lively, with repeated phrases, and the fact that their phrases are of different lengths suggests that the *saltarello* step was relatively simple, something that could be repeated over and over until the music stopped.

**MORESCA.** The name *moresca* usually refers to a special dance in which the dancers all blackened their faces in imitation of Moors, and dressed in what were thought to be “Moorish” costumes with bells attached to their legs. (The term *Moors* originally referred to the people

of Morocco, but Europeans often used the word to mean anyone from North Africa.) The dance sometimes depicts a fight between Moors and Christians, a reference to recent Spanish history, and sometimes includes a fool as part of the cast of characters. A *moresca* is recorded as one of the dances performed in 1465 in Siena in honor of the dancer Ippolita Sforza. The cast on that occasion included twelve men and women dressed in “Moorish” costumes and one woman dressed as a nun, all dancing to a song with the text “I don’t want to be a nun.” *Morescas* were often danced during large celebrations such as carnival processions, and by the late fifteenth century they were transformed into theater pieces and inserted into banquets and plays for light relief. The later English “morris dance” is related to the *moresca*. The word *moresca* also had the more general meaning of any unchoreographed or unsophisticated dance.

**RIGOLETTO.** *Rigoletto* is best known as the name of the jester in Giuseppe Verdi’s 1851 opera by that name, which begins at a ball in sixteenth-century Mantua. In Prodenzani’s description, the dance includes forward and backward jumps and some type of “waving” motion. Another bit of information about this dance comes from the text of a mid-fifteenth century *lauda* (sacred song) with the title “Chi vuol ballare a rigoletto”: “Whoever wants to dance the rigoletto, move with the step to the organetto; make your steps to the sweet sound, executing the changes and matching your foot to the tune ... Anyone who has weak legs or arms, do not embarrass yourself to enter in, since it changes briskly from leaps to level steps.” The term *rigoletto* also was used in a looser context where it carried the meaning “wasting time,” as for example, the early fifteenth-century criticism leveled at the executives of the Florentine government who were “dancing the rigoletto” instead of getting down to business. That is, they engaged in much motion but did not get anywhere. Although there is no more detailed description of the rigoletto dance steps, from these vague statements, as well as its use as a political criticism, we could speculate that the forward and backward jumps may not have progressed from the original position, thereby giving the impression of motion that accomplishes little.

**TARANTELLA.** One theory is that the *tarantella* dance receives its name from the tarantula spider, a reference to the rapid leg motion the spider makes in order to mesmerize its victim before killing it. Another possibility is that the name of the dance comes from its place of origin, the city of Taranto in southern Italy. From all accounts it would seem to involve rapid foot and leg motion while the dancer remains in one spot.

When mentioned in accounts during the late Middle Ages it is usually set in southern Italy, and it is sometimes associated with hysterical dancing.

**DANCE PAIRS.** There are a number of references to dances in pairs, generally referred to as dance and after-dance, although few details are ever given. Three musical examples exist, all from late fourteenth-century Italy. In each pair, the first dance has a fanciful name, while the after-dance is given a label: “Lamento di Tristano”/“La Rotta;” “La Manfredina”/“La Rotta della Manfredina;” and “Dança Amorosa”/“Trotto.” Tristan (Tristano) and Manfred are characters in medieval romances, and Amorous Dance (Dança Amorosa) probably also would be recognized at the time as a literary reference. The melodic phrases of these dances resemble those in an *estampie*, and so it is possible to relate these dances to both the Italian *estampie* and the later *bassadanza* repertory that also featured fanciful names (see The *Bassadanza* below). Since the word *rotta* refers to something that moves very quickly and *trotto* means “to trot,” it is likely that both words refer to the fact that the after-dance is quick and lively. All of this agrees with literary and theoretical descriptions that speak of pairs as consisting of a slow, sedate dance followed by a quick one. In all of the Italian examples the melodies of the paired dances are closely related, which associates the idea itself with the most popular Renaissance dance pairs, known as “pavan and galliard,” in which a sedate processional dance is paired with a leaping dance, both based on the same melody. The concept of organizing dances in sets of contrasting tempos and movements became standardized as dance suites in the late Renaissance, and remained the basic organization of most instrumental music until well into the nineteenth century.

**OTHER DANCE NAMES AND MUSIC.** There are many more names of dances found in literary sources, such as *espringale*, *reien*, *hovetantz*, *tresche*, *piva*, and *farandole*. Some of these names appear as particular steps in later dance choreographies (see Origins of Ballet below), but outside of that nothing else is known of their steps, formations, or music. At the same time, there are also a few musical compositions that are identified as dances or thought to be dances, but which do not fit easily into the known descriptions. Some are possibly tenors (basic melodies for choreographed dances) but others simply defy all efforts to identify their types.

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## CHOREOGRAPHED DANCING

**THE SHIFT TO A NEW ART FORM.** All of the dances described so far come under the heading “conventional”—that is, they consist of a single set of steps and movements which are to be repeated over and over throughout the length of the dance. Although there were many different types of dances, which resulted in a rich variety of steps and movements, a dancer needed only to learn a single set of steps for any one type; once the basic steps were learned, they could be applied to any and all dances of that type (for example, a saltarello step could be danced to any and all saltarello compositions). This is not to imply that the dancing was static; as the descriptions from “Il saporitto” and *Roman de la Rose* suggest, the dancers were free to add variations, as well as other body motions, to all of the basic steps, bringing an element of creativity to each occasion. All of these conventional dances continued to be practiced throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, but sometime in the mid- to late fourteenth century a new level of dancing appeared, one that would blossom into a separate art form in the centuries to come: choreographed dance, the direct ancestor of classical ballet. The very concept of choreographed dancing sets it aside from the conventional type in a number of significant ways. On the technical level, it replaces the spontaneous repetitions of a small number of dance steps with a studied and rehearsed individual sequence. Further, rather than simply being a particular kind of dance (a carol, or an estampie, for example) each choreographed dance was unique; it carried its own order of steps that was not shared by any other dance.

**DIFFICULTY AND EXECUTION.** On the social level, choreographed dances separated the nobles from the lower classes. This was a sophisticated artistic elaboration that was restricted to courtly circles where the nobles had the time to rehearse and the funds to employ a dancing master (a choreographer) who designed the dances and instructed the dancers. The choreographed dances were complicated and required serious concentration on the part of the performers, who had to memorize a complex series of steps as well as arm and body motions and floor patterns that were particular to each dance. In addition to mastering all of the motions, the most difficult chore for each dancer was to be able to execute the movements with grace and elegance, and at all times to make the task appear to be effortless. Hours of weekly practice were necessary for the dancers to execute the steps properly and stay physically agile. Much of this was done under the guidance of a dance teacher.

**SOCIAL DISPLAY.** The most notable difference between the choreographed dances and the other repertory, however, was its function. The choreographed dances were not something that everyone in the room performed at once; they were danced by two, three, or, in Italy, up to twelve dancers, depending on the particular dance, while everyone else watched. In reality, therefore, these were performances not far removed from theater. The noble members of the court placed themselves on display in front of their equals, demonstrating their personal grace and elegance. Not the least of the display was the costume, since attention was brought not only to how the dancers moved in the dance, but to their elegant clothes and jewelry, which were chosen to reinforce the image of wealth and taste. (The majority of accounts of dancing from this period, in fact, dwell on what the dancers wore and how elegantly—or inelegantly—they presented themselves, while unfortunately failing to report details of the dance steps.) The courtly choreographed dance, therefore, functioned as a demonstration of social and political power; it was one of the many tools employed by the wealthy and powerful to establish, maintain, and publicize their position.

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## DANCING MASTERS

**BURGUNDIAN ORIGINS AND ITALIAN SPLENDOR.** Choreographed dances brought into existence a new type of artistic impresario, the dancing master, who invented the dances and taught them to the members of the court. The earliest known of these worked in Italian courts from the beginning of the fifteenth century, although their manuals show a well-developed set of step protocols and dance behavior that suggests that the idea had begun in the previous century, and possibly not in Italy. The name of one of the Italian choreographed dances, bassadanza, is first seen in its French form *basse danse* in a poem by the Provençal troubadour Raimon de Cornet (c. 1340): “A jongleur would rapidly learn stanzas and many little verses, cansos, and basses danses.” It is clear that by the fifteenth century the *basse danse* was choreographed, but since the name simply means “low dance,” contrasting

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A NOBLE OFFER**

**INTRODUCTION:** The following letter, dated 10 April 1469, was written to Lorenzo de' Medici, from Filippus Bussus, a dancing master trying to gain a position with the illustrious noble family. Although there is no evidence that Filippus was successful, the letter gives a picture of how a dancing master would function at a special celebration—arriving more than a week before the festivity, bringing a repertory of dances to teach the nobles, and creating original choreographies for the principal members of the family.

My magnificent and most distinguished and honorable lord:

In the last few days I have learned that your Magnificence is about to take a wife during the upcoming May festivities and that you are preparing a noble and triumphant celebration. This gives me the greatest pleasure for all your consolation and well being. A little before the Carnival I left Lombardy with the children of the Magnificent lord Roberto [da Sanseverino] whom I have taught to dance, and from that area in Lombardy I have brought some elegant, beautiful and dignified balli and bassadanze.

These things are indeed worthy of lords such as yourself and not of just anyone. And I firmly believe that if your Magnificence were to see them performed, you would like them exceedingly and you would wish to learn them since they are so beautiful and delicate. Consequently, I have almost decided to come, if it pleases you, of course, to help honor your festa. And if you would like to learn two or three of these balli and a few bassadanze from me, I would come eight or ten days before the festa to teach them to you with my humble diligence and ability; and in that way it will also be possible to teach your brother Giuliano and your sisters [Bianca, Maria, and Nannina] so that you will be able to acquire honor and fame in this festa of yours by showing that not everyone has them [i.e. the dances], since they are so little known and rare. And thus I beg and pray, press and urge you to accept this unworthy and small offer of mine. There is nothing else to say now except that I recommend myself to Your Magnificence, for whose pleasures I offer my un-failing and ready service.

*Your servant Filippus Bussus of Biandrate*

**SOURCE:** Filippus Bussus, Letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, April 10, 1469. Trans. Timothy J. McGee (Florence: Archivio di Stato, MAP, Filza XXI, No. 90).

its conservative steps with the more flamboyant jumps, hops, and leaps of other dances, there is no way to know whether the history of choreographed dances goes back as early as 1300 or whether the application of specific choreographies to this dance step was developed later. The earliest French collection of basse danse music and choreographies is associated with the court of Burgundy, an area now in eastern France that was once a powerful independent duchy. Although the manuscript itself, a spectacularly beautiful one with silver and gold musical notation on black parchment, dates from approximately 1470, it is clearly a retrospective collection going back at least to the beginning of the century. Given what is known about the splendor of all of the arts at the Burgundian court beginning with the reign of Philip the Bold in 1364, it would not be surprising to learn that the tradition began under his supervision and encouragement.

**CEREMONIES AND CELEBRATIONS.** It is clear that the role of the Italian dancing masters extended far beyond the mere teaching of dance. Often, these men also planned the elaborate ceremonies that accompanied a feast, including the plays, parades, processions, jousts, banquets, wild animal hunts, and games that were a part of the celebrations, as well as the decoration of the city

streets and performance venues. Celebrations of this kind were arranged for engagements, weddings, receptions of important guests, and other special occasions that could provide the powerful noble families with an opportunity to show off their wealth, artistic superiority, and social importance. At the end of one of the later copies of his treatise, Guglielmo Ebreo adds a list of thirty events in which he participated. There is no doubt that this is only a partial account, but it probably contains those occasions that seemed to him most memorable. His comments (not reported in chronological order) provide an interesting glimpse of the nature of festive events in the fifteenth century:

Event 6 [1454]: I was present [in Bologna] at the nuptials of Messer Sante del Bentivoglio, when we accompanied Lady Ginevra [daughter of Alessandro Sforza] and the festivities lasted three days; and I never saw finer repasts or finer refreshments or greater ceremony. And the platters of boiled meat, that is, the capons, were in the form of his coat of arms. And moreover, around the tables there were peacocks whose feathers and spread tails seemed like curtains in that hall.

Event 10 [1450]: I was present when Duke Francesco Sforza made his entry into Milan and

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***RULES FOR WOMEN IN DANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Guglielmo Ebreo's dancing manual, *On the Practice or Art of Dancing*, includes a number of statements about etiquette and proper dress. It also includes this statement about the behavior of women, which provides some interesting evidence of the fifteenth-century attitude toward young women, as well as some details about dancing.

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**SOURCE:** Guglielmo Ebreo, *On the Practice or Art of Dancing*. Trans. Barbara Sparti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993): 109, 111.

was made Duke. And the jousts and the dancing and the great festivities lasted a month. And I saw two hundred knights dubbed. And I understand Giovanni of Castel Nova and Giovanni Chiapa to say to the lord Messer Alessandro Sforza that ten thousand people sat down to table when the trumpet sounded and all of them were in court.

**LOCAL PATRONAGE.** As a special feature on some of these occasions, the dancing masters invented new choreographies that were directly related to their patrons, naming the dance after a local person or place: Domenico's *balli* (dances in the *ballo* form) called "Belriguardo" and "Belfiore" refer to the Este family residences in Ferrara; those called "Lioncello" and "Marchesana" refer to Marchese Leonello d'Este. These special choreographies would be premiered in front of all of the invited guests, featuring the patrons themselves as the dancers. Some dance teachers, such as Domenico da Piacenza and Antonio Cornazano, were permanent members of the household staff, with duties in addition to dance instruction, while others were hired for particular occasions; the letter from Filippus Bussus to Lorenzo de' Medici shows one such itinerant teacher extolling his own talents while seeking employment in Florence.

**ITALIAN AUTHORS.** Three of the fifteenth-century Italian dancing masters left treatises that include not only specific dance patterns for *bassadanze* and *balli*, but also essays on etiquette, costume, and dance techniques. The earliest of the treatises is from 1445, *De la arte di ballare et Danzare* (On the Art of Dancing and Choreography), by Domenico da Piacenza; the second, *Libro dell'arte del danzare* (Book on the Art of Dancing), from 1455, is by Antonio Cornazano; and the third—the first of seven versions of Guglielmo Ebreo's treatise *De pratica seu arte tripudii* (On the Practice or Art of Dancing)—was written in 1463. We know from various sources, including choreography attributions and statements in the surviving treatises, that there were many other dancing masters in Italy during the fifteenth century, including Giuseppe Ebreo (Guglielmo's brother), Pietro Paolo (Guglielmo's son), Moise Ebreo, and Filippus Bussus. However, their writings have not survived, and little is known of these dancing masters or their lives.

**HUMANISTIC INFLUENCES.** The Italian dance manuals contain more than just instructions for recreating specific dances; they begin with a section of poems, highly complimentary dedicatory material addressed to their patrons, and essays on a number of different topics.

It is clear that the authors were all formally educated, since the subject matter of some of this material is a reflection of the humanist movement, relating dance to philosophy, history, and world thought. On a more practical level, there are also discussions of the basic elements of dance: measure and rhythm, accurate memory, artistic use of the dance area, graceful movement of the body, considerations when wearing long or short gowns and capes, and special instructions to women on the subject of modesty when dancing.

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### THE BASSE DANSE AND THE BASSADANZA

**BASSE DANSE.** Each of the choreographed dances—basse danse, bassadanza, and ballo—has a distinct sequence of steps that are appropriate for only that dance, and all of them also have in common a small number of main steps, although they differ in how they are executed. The Burgundian basse danse is an elegant processional dance, consisting of five basic steps that are arranged in a unique sequence for each composition. The steps themselves are not complicated, and all require that the feet stay close to the floor, in keeping with the name *basse* (low). Basse danse steps include the following movements:

**Branle:** A swaying motion with the body turning first to one side and then to the other. Since the partners are holding hands, the first turn is away from each other, the second towards the partner. This is always the first step to follow the *reverence*.

**Double:** Three equal steps forward while raising the body.

**Reprise:** (also called *demarche*) A small step backward with the right foot, followed by placing the left foot behind the right. The right then moves forward again, thus allowing the dancer to end with the right foot in the place where it began.

**Reverence:** A bow, executed with one foot behind the other and the knees bent. It was always the first step in each basse danse.

**Simple:** A single step forward with one foot. This step is always called for in pairs and always begins on the left foot.

This constitutes the complete repertory of steps for all fifteenth-century basses dances. The choreographed versions varied from one another only in the sequence and number of movements. Each basse danse had a specific number of steps that were matched in the music accompanying it by a similar number of units of measure, meaning that the dance and its music were inseparable. Although the descriptions suggest that the steps are not difficult, the exact step sequence for each dance was crucial, and when arm, head, and body motions were added, any one choreographed dance became quite complex, compelling the nobles to spend many hours in dance practice.

**THE BASSADANZA.** The Italian bassadanza is similar to the basse danse in that it too is basically a processional dance, moving at a single steady tempo and organized around a number of relatively simple basic steps. In fact, four of the basic bassadanza steps (called "natural steps") are quite similar to those of the basse danse. The bassadanza and basse danse differ, however, in a number of details of construction and execution, and especially in their tone and the amount of freedom taken by the choreographers and expected of the dancers. Bassadanza and ballo "natural steps" include the following:

**Continenza:** A small step to the side with knees bending, usually executed in pairs. It is somewhat similar to the branle.

**Doppio:** Three equal steps forward, similar to the double.

**Mezza volta:** A half turn, meaning that the dancer ends up facing in the opposite direction. It is sometimes executed by using other steps (one doppio, or two continenze, or two sempii, or two riprese).

**Represa:** A large step to the side with one foot, which is then joined by the other.

**Riverenza:** (two types) The normal bow with one foot behind the other and the knees bent, and *riverenza in terra*, in which the knee of the back leg touches the floor.

**Salto:** A jump with several possible executions: on one foot or two, or from one foot to the other.

**Sempio:** A single step forward, similar to the simple.

**Volta tondo:** A full turn, executed by using the same steps as the mezza volta, but requiring twice as many steps and taking twice as long to execute.



Slide trumpeters. Wedding scene, Master of the Adimari Cassone. Florence, Galleria dell' Accademia, 1460. ARTE & IMMAGINI SRL/CORBIS.

Ornamental steps (sometimes called “accidental steps”) could be interpolated into a performance by the dancers themselves. None of these steps is clearly explained; the descriptions are those suggested by the words themselves:

**Escambiamento:** A change; perhaps performing the motion or step with the other foot.

**Frappamento:** A shaking motion, perhaps meaning the foot.

**Scorsa:** Dragging the foot.

**FORMALITY VERSUS FLAMBOYANCE.** As can be seen by comparing the steps in both dances, the *basse danse*, with its limited number of steps executed in a fairly standard sequence, creates an air of sedate and highly controlled formality and elegance, whereas the *bassadanza*, with its larger repertory of basic steps, numerous variations, and looser tradition of step sequences, results in a far more flamboyant dance. Unlike the two- or three-person formation of the *basse danse*, which is confined to processional movements with a more or less rigid sequence of the basic steps, all of which are low, the *bassadanza* allows as many as eight dancers in formations which can be single file, all dancers abreast, or even circular, and there is far more variety in the sequence of the basic steps. The processional aspect of the dance is interrupted by numerous half-turns and even a jumping step, and the *bassadanza* choreographies include the addition of “accidental” steps to be placed before or after the basic patterns, as well as variations on the basic steps, ornamental movements, and steps borrowed from other dance types. The *bassadanza* is still a very formal dance, but the greater variety of steps and formations, including larger motions such as full- and half-turns, lend a far more theatrical air. The Italian *bassadanza*, therefore, although stemming from the same processional idea as its Burgundian counterpart, was a more extravagant product.

**MATCHING NOTES AND STEPS.** As can be seen in the transcription of a Burgundian *basse danse* called “La Haute Bourgogne” (The High Burgundian), the writ-

ten music for the *bassadanza* and *basse danse*, known as a “tenor,” is expressed only as a series of long notes, each representing one measure of time. The word *tenor*, from the Latin *tenere* (to hold), refers to the fact that the notes were sustained. Each *bassadanza* and *basse danse* has its own music, which contains exactly the correct number of notes to match the choreography. Some of the melodies of these dances are adapted from known songs, although many of them probably were composed specifically for a particular dance choreography. Since there is no change in the pace of the music, it was also possible to compose a new *bassadanza* or *basse danse* to an existing tune; all that was required was that the number of dance steps must correspond with the units of measure in the melody.

**DANCE NOTATION AND INSTRUMENTATION.** Although the music for both low dances looks the same, the way in which the treatises associate the steps with the music differs in that the *bassadanza* steps are described only in prose, whereas the French developed a shorthand in which letters designating the steps are placed beneath the appropriate notes of the dance tune, showing at a glance which steps go with which notes. In performance, the music would be more complex than the single line that was written. In addition to the long notes of the monophonic (single-line) tenor, one or two other parts would be improvised, resulting in a polyphonic (multi-part) composition full of harmony and ornate interweaving melodic lines. Instrumental musicians were quite skilled at this type of improvisation and would easily fill out the harmonies and melodies around the sparse written outline of the tenor. The most common dance ensemble of the period was a trio consisting of a slide trumpet (predecessor of the trombone), and two or three *shawms* (double-reed instruments, similar to the oboe). In performance, one shawm would play the written melody and the other instruments would improvise faster-moving accompaniment parts above and below the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN EXAMPLE OF DANCE NOTATION**

**INTRODUCTION:** In Italian treatises the dance steps for the *bassadanza* were indicated simply by written descriptions that were provided alongside the music. But the French

developed a kind of shorthand in which letters designating the steps were placed beneath the appropriate notes of the dance tune, showing at a glance which steps were to go with which notes. In the example below, from a dance called “La Haulte Bourgongne” (The High Burgundian), the letters beneath the notes correspond to the five basic steps of the *basse danse*: R=reverence, b=branle, s=simple, and so on.

**“La Haulte Bourgongne” in modern notation**

CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

melody. A similar kind of improvised accompaniment would also be added when the music was performed by a single musician playing harp or lute. Other instruments frequently shown in the company of dancers are tambourines, bagpipes, recorders, and fiddles.

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**THE BALLO**

**ORIGINS OF BALLET.** The ballo enters more fully into the area of what we would think of as theatrical

dance or ballet. Although the ballo employs the same basic steps as the *bassadanza*, it is quite different in its overall format and in the number of step variations. Instead of being danced at a single steady tempo and measure, as are the *bassadanza* and the *basse danse*, the ballo is made up of an irregular series of up to four different tempos (called *misura*), each having a different kind of rhythmic organization and speed. The tempos, from slowest to fastest, were *bassadanza*, *quaternaria*, *saltarello*, and *piva*. The changes of tempo result in a large variation in the natural steps. For example, a *saltarello doppio*, which involves a small hop as well as a stepping motion, moves quite a bit faster than a *bassadanza doppio* because the *saltarello* tempo itself is faster. There is also, of course, a *quaternaria doppio* and a *piva doppio*, and to complicate matters, some of the choreographies call for the execution of one kind of step variation in a different tempo: a *saltarello doppio*, for example, in a *bassadanza* tempo. The result of the changing tempos and wide variation of steps was a dance form capable of enormous expression. In the hands of the creative Italian dancing masters, such dances were organized into pantomimes and mini-dramas that were highly entertaining. The ballo “Gelosia” (jealousy), for example, involves three couples who flirt with one another while executing a wide variety of dance steps and floor patterns, ending

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY BALLO**

**INTRODUCTION:** The ballo “Petit Vriens” is a choreographed dance for three dancers by Guglielmo Ebreo, from one

of his dance manuals of the mid-fifteenth century. In performance, a small group of musicians would improvise harmony to this melody.

**“Petit Vriens”**

The image displays the musical notation for the dance 'Petit Vriens'. It consists of four staves of music, each beginning with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The notation is written in a medieval style, featuring a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The melody is presented in a single-line format across the four staves. The first staff contains the first eight measures. The second staff contains measures 9 through 16, with repeat signs (double bar lines with two dots) at the beginning and end of the section. The third staff contains measures 17 through 24, also with repeat signs. The fourth staff contains measures 25 through 32, concluding with a final double bar line. The overall structure suggests a 32-measure piece with repeated sections.

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with an exchange of partners. It would be difficult to exaggerate the enormous amount of time and effort required to present these dances with the flair and elegance they required. Throughout the sixteenth century, the ballo continued to be one of the favorite forms of entertainment, attracting professional dancers by the beginning of the seventeenth century, and eventually—as the name would suggest—becoming the basis of modern ballet.

**MUSICAL COMPLEXITY.** Ballo musical lines are far more complex than those for the bassadanza and basse danse, each having a unique set of sections that vary in style and meter, as well as in the number of times each section is to be repeated. Because of this, each ballo is inseparable from its music. Similar to the music for the other choreographed dances, in performance the ballo music was filled out by the musicians, who extemporized additional musical lines to what was written. The ballo

music, however, was based on a melody with a variety of rhythms (as opposed to a basse danse and bassadanza sustained-note “tenor”), which required the musicians to fill in only harmonic lines. The instruments used in these performances were the same as for the bassadanza; the two types of dances were usually combined during the elaborate feasts in which they were performed.

**NOVELTY AND TRADITION.** The arrival of choreographed dances brought not only a new repertory and style to the activity of dance, but also a new function in which dance took on unprecedented political and social importance as political leaders used it as a measure of culture, elegance, and taste. The political implications, however, could have been important only to relatively few, meaning that for the majority of those who attended the entertainments of the royal court it was simply a new and sophisticated way to enjoy dancing, though certainly one that required far more preparation than anything

they had previously experienced. Rather than replace the older style of conventional dances, the new form merely augmented the repertory for the nobility, while the conventional dances continued to be performed by all the citizens, including the nobles. The low steps of the new basse danse and bassadanza forms were derived from earlier estampie steps, and the line dances of the earlier centuries continued on as well, acquiring new names and step variants but remaining essentially the same. New dances and styles continued to reflect the ever-changing social and political lives of all Europeans, but regardless of the changes, dancing retained its central place in the recreational activities of late medieval society.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Dance*

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### ANTONIO CORNAZANO

1430–1484

*Poet*

*Humanist*

*Statesman*

**MASTER OF MANY ARTS.** Because dance was only one of many arts practiced in the courts of late medieval Italy, it is important to recognize that those engaged in it were not necessarily professionals. Indeed, as the concept of the “Renaissance man” developed, what was most admired was an individual’s ability to move easily from one art to another as a cultivated amateur (that is, one who loves a subject but does not make a living from it). Thus, although Antonio Cornazano taught dancing and wrote a dance manual, it would be inaccurate to refer to him as a dancing master. He was not himself a choreographer—his manual contains only choreographies by Domenico da Piacenza—and he was not a professional dancer, as were all the other dancing masters. He is better described as a poet, humanist, and statesman; at his appointment to the household staff of Duke Francesco Sforza, he was described as “counselor, secretary, chamberlain, and teacher of the Duke’s children.” Cornazano was born into one of Piacenza’s leading noble families and, similar to other young men of his status, received

a broad education that included ancient and modern languages, the theory and practice of military arts, and politics. He learned dancing from Domenico, whom he later referred to as “my only teacher and colleague.” In 1454 he entered into service in Milan at the Sforza court where a year later he dedicated the first version of his treatise, *Libro dell’arte del danzare* (Book on the Art of Dancing), to his young student Ippolita Maria Sforza. Following the death of Duke Francesco in 1466, Cornazano moved to Venice where he spent eleven years as military adviser to General Bartolomeo Colleoni, leader of the Venetian military forces.

**INTERRELATED ARTS.** Cornazano was married to Taddea de Varro, a member of an old noble Ferrarese family, and in 1479 he entered the court of Ericole I d’Este in Ferrara, where he spent the remainder of his life. He was noted as an excellent and prolific poet who was also skilled at extemporizing poetry. His writings include *La Sforzeide* in praise of Francesco Sforza, a set of poems divided into 36 chapters, written in the style of Vergil’s epic *The Aeneid*. His works also include *Vita di Nostra Donna* (Life of our Lady), a book of poems on the life of the Virgin Mary, dedicated to Ippolita Maria Sforza; and *Opera bellissima de l’arte militare* (The Most Beautiful Work of Military Art), a treatise on the art of war. Though to us the combination of the “arts of war” and the arts of poetry and dance might seem unusual, this was not the case in fifteenth-century courts, where dance, like poetry and the performance of music, was an activity of great interest to almost everyone and was always included as one of the skills required of a successful courtier.

#### SOURCES

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell. 29 vols. 2nd ed. (New York: Grove’s Dictionaries, 2001).

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### DOMENICO DA PIACENZA

1390–1477

*Dancing master*

**THE FIRST DANCING MASTER.** Domenico da Piacenza (c. 1390–1477) is the earliest known dancing master. He was born in Piacenza (northern Italy), and worked in the major northern Italian courts, including that of the Sforzas in Milan and the Este in Ferrara. He wrote *De la arte di ballare et Danzare* (On the Art of Dancing and Choreography) in 1445, the earliest surviving dance treatise, and taught a number of Italian dancing masters including the other two authors of dance



treatises, Guglielmo Ebreo (also known as Giovanni Ambrosio) and Antonio Cornazano. On the invitation of Duke Francesco Sforza, Domenico, along with Guglielmo and Antonio, took part in the elaborate celebration for the wedding of Tristano Sforza and Beatrice d'Este in Milan. A year later he was appointed to the Este court in Ferrara where he was listed as "spectabilis miles" (worthy knight). Other sources refer to him as a Knight of the Golden Spur. He remained in Ferrara until his death 21 years later.

**LASTING INFLUENCE.** His treatise was taken as the model by both of his renowned pupils, whose works followed Domenico's format of beginning the treatise with a discussion of dance theory and then providing a set of specific choreographies for balli and bassadanze. It is clear that Domenico was well educated; in his discussion of the aesthetics of dancing he refers to Aristotle. Among his balli are two dance-dramas, "La mercanzia" and "La sobria," which are considered by some dance historians to be the earliest ballets.

#### SOURCES

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.* Ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell. 29 vols. 2nd ed. (New York: Grove's Dictionaries, 2001).

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### GUGLIELMO EBREO

1420–1484

*Dancing master*  
*Author*

**DANCING MASTER EXTRAORDINAIRE.** Guglielmo Ebreo is the best known dancing master of the fifteenth century, owing to the survival of seven manuscripts containing versions of his dance treatise *De pratica seu arte tripudii* (On The Practice or Art of Dancing), as compared to one copy each of the only other treatises from the fifteenth century written by Domenico da Piacenza and Antonio Cornazano. In the early 1460s, while Guglielmo Ebreo (William the Jew) was in the employ of the Sforza court in Pesaro and was a frequent visitor at the Sforza court in Milan, he decided to convert to Christianity and took the name Ambrosio after St. Ambrose, the patron saint of Milan.

**AN HONORED CAREER.** Guglielmo and his brother Giuseppe (also a dancing master) were born in Pesaro (central Italy), the sons of Moses of Sicily, who for a time was dancing master at that court. Quite a bit is known about Guglielmo's career, thanks to a number of surviving letters he wrote to various courts, and especially to

an autobiographical list that he appended to one of the manuscripts of his dance treatise, describing thirty events in which he took part. His career as a dancing master took him to a number of the finest courts in Italy where he was valued for his ability as a dancer, dance teacher, and choreographer. In addition to the Sforza families in Pesaro and Milan, he served the Montefeltro in Urbino, the Gonzaga in Mantua, King Ferdinand I in Naples, and the Medici in Florence. The esteem in which he was held is attested to by his elevation to Knight of the Golden Spur in Venice in 1469 by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, an honor he shared with Domenico da Piacenza, and one that was bestowed only rarely on artists.

#### SOURCES

Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, *De pratica seu arte tripudii; On the Practice or Art of Dancing.* Ed. and trans. Barbara Sparti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

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### RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

c. 1150–1207

*Troubadour*  
*Poet*  
*Composer*

**A PROLIFIC TROUBADOUR-ADVENTURER.** Raimbaut de Vaqueiras (c. 1150–1207) was a troubadour, poet, and composer. Like many of the people associated with early dance, he did not devote his entire career to this interest, but rather was a member of the court who served a variety of personal, literary, and educational functions. Indeed, his life was primarily one of military and diplomatic service. According to his thirteenth-century biography, he was born the son of a poor knight in Provence, near the castle of Vaqueiras. He entered into the service of the Marquis of Monferrat in northern Italy and became a companion at arms to his son Boniface, remaining there until 1180. In 1189, he moved to Provence in the service of Hugues I des Baux, and in 1192 returned to Monferrat. During a military campaign in 1194, Raimbaut saved Boniface's life and was rewarded with a knighthood. In 1202, when Boniface became the leader of the Fourth Crusade and set off from Venice for the Holy Land, Raimbaut at first returned to Provence, but later rejoined his patron and the crusade in Constantinople. Boniface was killed near Messiole on 1207, and it is probable that Raimbaut died at that time.

**CONTRIBUTION TO MUSIC AND DANCE.** Raimbaut was fluent in several languages, including Occitan (a medieval language spoken in what is now southern France),

Italian, French, Gascon (a dialect of French), and Galician-Portuguese. Scholars attribute 26 poems to Raimbaut, although only seven survive with music. The best known of his works is the estampie “Kalenda Maya,” which he composed in honor of Beatrix, daughter of Boniface, to fit a melody that he had heard played on the *vielle* by two French jongleurs.

#### SOURCES

Elizabeth Aubrey, *The Music of the Troubadours* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996): 14–15.

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### IPPOLITA MARIA SFORZA

1445–1488

*Dancer*

*Duchess*

**A CHILD PRODIGY OF DANCE.** Ippolita Maria Sforza was the daughter of Duke Francesco Sforza of Milan and Bianca Maria Visconti. Her father employed a number of scholars to provide his children with the finest of classical educations, which included Greek, Latin, rhetoric, and the arts. In 1454, Francesco added the humanist poet Antonio Cornazano to his household staff, assigning the instruction of dance as one of his teaching duties. A year later Cornazano dedicated his treatise *Libro dell'arte del danzare* (Book on the Art of Dancing) to his ten-year-old star pupil, Ippolita, making her the earliest known ballerina, that is, a dancer of choreographed dances. The treatise also includes a sonnet by Cornazano, extolling Ippolita's graces in language, echoing Latin mythological poetry. In the spring of that same year, Ippolita was introduced to two of the most famous dancing masters of the century when Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo were summoned to the Sforza court to work with Cornazano to organize the festivities and dances for the marriage of Tristano Sforza to Beatrice d'Este, a woman widely acclaimed as a dancer. Shortly afterward, in the fall, Ippolita, still only age ten, was promised in marriage by her father to Alfonso of Naples. From that point forward she was usually referred to as the Duchess of Calabria, which would be her title following her marriage ten years later.

**A PERFORMING ARTIST.** Ippolita's renown as a dancer began at the 1455 Sforza wedding, where she participated in a *ballo* with Beatrice. The next recorded notice of her dancing is from 1465, associated with her wedding celebration in Milan, followed by the long journey she took from Milan to Naples for her marriage. She was escorted on the trip by Federigo, the youngest son of King Ferrante of Naples, accompanied by two of her

brothers and a company of more than a thousand, including 600 nobles, soldiers, servants, and courtiers, among them her dancing teacher Antonio Cornazano. All along the journey the entourage stopped at the major cities and courts where she was lavishly entertained; in Florence she danced with Lorenzo de' Medici (age sixteen), whom she had met and danced with at the earlier wedding celebration in her home palace. Next she traveled to Siena, where one of the entertainments presented in her honor included a costumed *moresca* (Moorish dance). When she finally arrived in Naples after three months on the road, a full week was set aside for the wedding festivities, which included lavish balls. Throughout her reign as Duchess of Calabria, Ippolita was renowned for her learning and her support of the arts, including her beloved dance.

#### SOURCES

Eileen Southern, “A 15th-Century Prima Ballerina,” in *Music and Context, Essays for John M. Ward*. Ed. A. D. Shapiro (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985): 183–197.

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Dance*

*Bodleian Library: MS Douce 139* (1250)—This manuscript from Coventry, England, now housed in Oxford's Bodleian Library, contains the earliest known English instrumental dance.

*Chansonnier du Roi* (c. 1280)—This collection of eleven instrumental dances, copied into a manuscript now located in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale fr. 844), is the only medieval collection of French estampies and carols.

Antonio Cornazano, *Libro dell'arte del danzare* or *Book on the Art of Dancing* (1455)—This book, the second known treatise on dancing, was written by poet, statesman, and humanist Antonio Cornazano, who dedicated it to his student, Ippolita Maria Sforza, one of the first ballerinas known by name.

*Dança general de la Muerte* (c. 1400)—This poem of 79 stanzas, originating in Spain, describes the dance of death. The title, translated as *Common Dance of Death*, acknowledges that mortality is a universal experience.

Domenico da Piacenza, *De la arte di ballare et Danzare* or *On the Art of Dancing and Choreography* (1445)—This work by one of the first dancing masters is the earliest known treatise on dancing and the model for those that

followed. It begins with a discussion of dance theory and then provides a set of specific choreographies for balli and bassadanze.

Guglielmo Ebreo (Giovanni Ambrosio), *De pratica seu arte tripudii* or *On the Practice or Art of Dancing* (1463)—Written by the best known dancing master of the fifteenth century, this dance treatise exists in a total of seven manuscript versions, one of which contains a list of thirty important events in which the author participated.

Jofre Goixà, *Doctrina de compondre dictatz* (1300)—This Catalan treatise on poetry gives instructions on how to compose a *dansa*.

Johannes Grocheio, *De musica* (c. 1300)—This music treatise includes the earliest detailed descriptions of both vocal and instrumental dances and dance music.

*Magnus liber organi* (c. 1250)—This book of music for the liturgy (the title means the “Great Book of Organum”) contains at its end the largest repertory of medieval sacred dance songs with music. The sixty short dance songs in this collection, which originated in Paris, are nearly all in a verse and refrain format known as *rondeau*.

Guillaume Molinier, *Lays d’amors* (1328)—This book, which presents a set of rules for composing troubadour poetry, includes a description of the estampie dance poem.

chapter 3

FASHION

Laura F. Hodges

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	94	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	96	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		Definitions of Medieval Clothing . . . . .	100
Fashion and Cultural Change. . . . .	98	<i>Shepherds' Clothing</i> (excerpt from Jean de Brie's <i>The Good Shepherd</i> ) . . . . .	103
Peasant Costume . . . . .	101	<i>A Shepherd's Fashion Advice to His Son</i> (a father offers sartorial and moral counsel to his son) . . . . .	104
Academic, Clerical, and Religious Dress. . . . .	105	Cinderella's Furry Slippers . . . . .	115
Armor and Heraldry . . . . .	109	Wool and Other Textiles . . . . .	118
The Rise of Courtly Costume. . . . .	111	The Battle Between Blue, Red, and Black . . . . .	120
Early Aristocratic Dress for Women . . . . .	114	Joan of Arc and Cross-dressing. . . . .	124
Intercultural Influences and Regional Distinctions . . . . .	116	Types of Medieval Head Coverings. . . . .	127
The New Silhouette for Aristocratic Men. . . . .	121	<i>A Satire on Women's Horned Headdresses</i> (horned headdresses are attacked for being masculine and thus immoral for women) . . . . .	131
A New Look for Women. . . . .	125	<i>Shepherds Discuss the Houppelande</i> (Jean Froissart's poem mocking both shepherds and aristocratic fashion). . . . .	133
The Spread of the Age of Fashion. . . . .	128	<i>A Mercer Hawks His Wares</i> (a mercer hawks his merchandise and describes his sales practices) . . . . .	136
Dress Codes and Anti-Fashion . . . . .	130	<i>Song Upon the Tailors</i> (a cleric uses the Christian and ancient Greek and Roman religions to comment on tailors) . . . . .	138
Guilds and Confraternities. . . . .	134		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Thomas Conecte. . . . .	137		
Eleanor of Aquitaine . . . . .	139		
Francis of Assisi . . . . .	139		
Philip the Bold. . . . .	140		
Richard II . . . . .	140		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	141		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Fashion*

- 800 Charlemagne is crowned emperor of a realm that includes much of modern France, Germany, and Italy, creating the social structures necessary for the development of a system of fashion.
- c. 808 Emperor Charlemagne decrees the first medieval sumptuary law to regulate the price of clothing.
- 1066 The Anglo-Saxons are defeated by the Normans at the Battle of Hastings. William the Conqueror, duke of Normandy, now king of England, introduces Norman dress to the English court.
- 1095 The First Crusade begins, and French warriors travel to Constantinople (the capital of the Christian Byzantine Empire—modern Istanbul, Turkey) to stage a battle for control of the Holy Land, then under Muslim rule. Returning crusaders will popularize Eastern silks in Europe and initiate Byzantine influence in costume.
- c. 1100 “Courtly dress” is first described in literature and public records.
- 1100 The reign of Henry I of England begins, ushering in a period of more luxurious dress style.
- c. 1125 The French priest Fulcher of Chartres comments that Westerners living in the Latin settlements in the Holy Land have become orientalized in their clothing and habits.
- 1135 The reign of King Stephen in England continues the luxurious styles of Henry I’s reign.
- c. 1140 Earliest forms of Gothic architecture are initiated, paralleling in height the longer silhouette in costume.
- c. 1142 Paris becomes a center of learning as universities emerge throughout Europe, leading to the beginnings of academic dress.
- 1147 Bernard of Clairvaux begins preaching the Second Crusade, influencing Emperor Conrad III of the Holy Roman Empire and Louis VII of France to go on crusade. The result is the extension of the Eastern influence on fashion to the German-speaking world.
- c. 1150 Heraldry, a system assigning distinctive coats of arms to identify knights in tournaments, originates in France and influences display of colors and lineage in costume.
- 1154 Henry II, the first king in the royal family of Plantagenets (1154–1485), takes the throne in England. He marries Eleanor of Aquitaine, who continues to influence female fashion until long after her death; their reign initiates a return to the simpler fashions of 1066.
- 1157 The earliest Italian sumptuary law dealing with clothing is enacted in Genoa, initiating a series of such laws conceived for economic purposes (to enhance trade and reinforce the social hierarchy) but often expressed in moral terms.
- 1192 The Third Crusade—consisting of French, English, and German contingents—ends, and Eastern fabrics are again brought back to Europe.
- 1199 The reign of King John in England begins, during which the court revives lavish dress for men while the ladies continue to imitate Queen Eleanor’s simpler fashions.
- 1204 The end of the Fourth Crusade, which originated in Venice, brings another wave of Eastern fabrics to Europe.
- Constantinople falls to the Crusaders, and the Latin Empire is formed. The resulting decline in Byzantine political power corresponds to a decline in Byzantine influence on European fashion.

- 1216 The reign of King Henry III of England begins. The period will be characterized by unpretentious dress, development of merchants' guilds, and the circulation of "trade poems" (realistic poems depicting the lives of peddlers and artisans) about items of costume.
- 1226 Louis IX of France (later St. Louis) becomes king. His piety will influence the court towards unpretentious dress.
- 1272 Edward I becomes king of England. He favors exceptionally simple styles in clothing, and his court adopts his tastes.
- 1290 In an effort to restrain and control indulgence in excessive dress, laws are passed stating that the women of Florence must register their garments and get them officially approved.
- c. 1300 Gothic art and architecture emphasize the beauty of the natural world in decorative details. Parallel ornamentation and natural motifs appear in costume.
- 1346 The English defeat the French at the Battle of Crécy in northern France. The rich costumes taken as spoils of war after this battle enrich even humble attendants of the English knights, allowing for their display of high style.
- 1348 The first wave of bubonic plague spreads throughout Europe. Recurring until 1400, the plague greatly reduces Europe's population, resulting in the concentration of the continent's wealth—including property, money, and clothing—in the surviving population. The newly enriched middle classes are thus able to indulge in fashions previously worn primarily by the nobility.
- c. 1350 "Fashion" emerges as a recognizable social phenomenon at the same time as Gothic architecture (known as "Flamboyant Gothic") reaches its peak of ornamentation, demonstrating a widespread cultural taste for systems of decoration.
- 1356 The English defeat the French at Poitiers and return home with treasure and rich clothing, again providing the means by which the lower and middle classes might dress above their social station.
- 1363 The English Parliament expands earlier fourteenth-century sumptuary laws and establishes price and garment rules for seven social categories so that overspending is discouraged and members of each class are easily distinguished by their costume.
- 1375 The city-state of Aquila in Italy passes a sumptuary law forbidding males to wear very short doublets.
- 1377 The reign of King Richard II of England begins, and his court imitates Richard's preferences for extreme richness in fabric, color, and cut.
- 1380 The reign of King Charles VI of France begins, ushering in brilliant and excessive fashions that are imitated throughout Europe.
- 1385 Marriages are arranged between the children of Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, and members of the ruling counties of Hainaut, Holland, and Zeeland, extending Burgundian influence into the Low Countries, an area that will be a center for fashion until the early sixteenth century.
- 1399 Henry IV of England becomes king. His court follows the brilliant and extravagant fashions worn throughout Europe.
- 1413 The reign of King Henry V of England begins, continuing the emphasis on the brilliant and excessive fashions worn throughout Europe.
- 1415 The English defeat the French at Agincourt and bring home the spoils of war, including rich and fashionable clothing.
- 1422 The reign of King Henry VI of England begins, instituting a new fashion silhouette characterized by extreme height.
- 1430 The Statutes of Savoy are instituted by Duke Amadeus VIII, describing a hierarchy of 39 social groups and prescribing appropriate dress for each, disallowing inappropriate items, fabrics, and colors.
- 1461 The reign of King Louis XI of France begins, bringing with it a return to simpler dress styles.

## OVERVIEW *of Fashion*

**FASHION DEFINED.** Fashion, as the term is used in this chapter, refers to a dominant mode in dress in a particular place or time, usually a mode that is established by a perceived social elite or by notable persons. Fashion functions as a social phenomenon, setting standards of dress that periodically change when what once was new and desirable becomes ordinary and then must be supplanted by yet another innovation. Moreover, fashion as a social force possesses its own natural laws. For example, it appears that once innovative fashions move too far from what society perceives as the norm, it rejects these excesses, and a pendulum swing occurs with a return to an older or plainer style. Fashionable clothing must convey the impression of distinction, excellence, originality, and character expressed artistically. And, of course, fashion responds to the availability of new materials, dye stuffs, and technologies. The relative importance of each of these factors, although generally present in some combination, will vary at any given time. Therefore, a fashion system is characterized by constant change. Historians of costume agree that in Europe fashion as a social concept—that is, an ongoing awareness of self-consciously changing styles—began in the Middle Ages. By the middle of the fourteenth century, this system was well enough established to be the subject of ongoing commentary and concern, since the pressure always to be purchasing new and expensive clothing, with its emphasis on the human body, has moral implications. But even before fashion became a major force in society, elements of a fashion system were present in European courts, making it possible to trace the development of fashion as early as the age of Charlemagne in the eighth century.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION.** Because of the fragility of materials and the socially downward movement of used garments, very little clothing from the early part of the Middle Ages has survived, but the paintings in illuminated manuscripts provide a wide range of examples of what people wore. Because it was common practice

to illustrate even historical texts dealing with biblical or classical subjects with figures wearing “modern” clothing, books as well as the other visual arts (sculptures, reliefs, wall paintings, tapestries) from the ninth to twelfth centuries offer an ongoing record of fashion trends. Literature is also a source of information towards the end of this period, since the newly developing genre of the romance often included detailed descriptions of courtly heroes and heroines (though these, as well as images from the visual arts, must be used carefully since some details are merely conventional). By the thirteenth century, documentary records, including lists of items sold at fairs and expense ledgers from royal households, offer evidence of both the range and cost of clothing, while the trade poems that emerged in the last half of the century provide details of the kinds of costume goods offered by traveling peddlers (known as mercers) to customers at every level of society. One additional source of information is the gradually increasing tradition of recording wills and inventories of belongings, which by the fourteenth century extended to members of every social rank.

**CLASS DISTINCTIONS.** Members of higher and lower social classes have, of course, always dressed somewhat differently from each other. At the beginning of the period discussed here, society was, for the most part, divided between a small ruling class of warriors and a large laboring class that primarily worked the land. In the 800s, for example, when Charlemagne (Charles the Great) established the first European empire (called “Carolingian” after the Latin word for “Charles”) to replace the Roman Empire that had fallen five centuries earlier, laborers throughout Europe wore a similar costume, common to both the newly dominant Germanic tribes and the earlier Celtic tribes they had displaced. This costume, for men, was made up of a short (mid-thigh-length) smock, belted at the waist, worn over leggings in cold weather and supplemented by a short cape, sometimes with a hood. Members of Charlemagne’s court, on the other hand, maintained the simple style allowing vigorous movement necessary for warfare, but adopted some details imitating their Roman predecessors, adding a wool or silken braid to the hems of their tunics, loose bloomer-like “braies” (underpants) that tucked into their leggings, and a large rectangular cloak (which could double as a blanket) fastened at the right shoulder. By the late eleventh century, courtly robes had become long and voluminous in a more extensive imitation of Roman and Byzantine styles.

**ELABORATION OF STYLES.** Eleventh-century England provides an early example of a period that began to exhibit the kinds of changes typical of a fashion system.

The nobles' standard of living rose, cities were established, trade expanded, and craftsmen flourished, catering to the demands of nobles with money to spend. Following the Battle of Hastings in 1066, the victorious Norman nobility acquired the wealth of England. During the period when William I was establishing his rule, styles for both males and females were based on the long tunic and were relatively conservative as to cut and ornamentation. There was a change in taste, however, during the reign of his successor, William II (ruled 1087–1100). Clothes during this period were lavishly cut from luxurious cloth (some of which was brought back from the Holy Land after the First Crusade in 1095–1099), and both men and women adopted a variety of personal decoration. Still, the extravagance during this reign did not involve the creation of new styles so much as it did the exaggeration of known styles. For example, more fabric was used in the tunic; it was made both longer and fuller, resulting in garments with numerous folds and of a length that bunched fabric on the floor. Such tunics represented a considerable economic investment in a period when both cloth and clothing were thought of as commodities of exchange and were used much as money is used today. Across the twelfth, thirteenth, and the first half of the fourteenth centuries, a sporadic but escalating creation of a detailed set of fashions took place and the range of fabrics available expanded (in silks, for example, there were plain, patterned, and figured pieces in twills and other weaves), first brought back from the Christian military expeditions to regain the Holy Land (including the Crusades of 1095, 1146, 1188, and 1202) and later from the resulting expansion of production sites and trade.

**CRAFTSMEN AND GUILDS.** The increasing trade in both fabrics and dyestuffs became more efficient and vigorous in the middle of the thirteenth century as corporations of craftsmen organized in guilds to supervise training of workers, regulate quality, and specialize in production. In Flanders and in Italy, for example, craftsmen transformed bulk wool from England and silk from Sicily and the East into fine fabrics. In Paris, such specialization had, by the last half of the thirteenth century, resulted in groups of artisans that made doublets, others that made bonnets, and still others that produced shoes. Beyond an increase in quality, an additional benefit of specialization was that the craftsmen were skilled enough to create novel variations in garments and decorative design. These specialized artisans—like those in other kinds of guilds—regulated trade during the Middle Ages; scribes, goldsmiths, bow and arrow makers, and so on tended to intermarry within their own groups and live in certain quarters of the city which took their names

from the trade in question. Thus, a person shopping for certain articles of costume would generally find such items in home-based shops in specific neighborhoods, often indicated by a sign showing, for example, a representation of shoes or hats.

**THE AGE OF FASHION.** Fashion historians often credit the development of the doublet as the event which gave birth, around 1350, to an “age of fashion.” The first appearance of this short jacket, which took its name from the padded garment used as soft body armor under metal armor, occurred at a time when the military importance of the armored knight on a horse was declining, being superseded in actual fighting by the efficient and deadly long- and cross-bowmen. In the latter half of the fourteenth and throughout the fifteenth centuries, the knight continued to be designated as a military leader, even as he became less functionally important as provider and warrior. Simultaneously, his presence in the court took on greater significance, and the knight sought to make a more spectacular impression through dress. At this time, the long, full robe employing rich folds of material, now considered appropriate to the upper civic elite class of lawyers, physicians, and merchants, as well as for male members of the aristocracy, was dramatically replaced by a new silhouette. If the previous generations had preferred to hide the body in sedate movement-encumbering robes that denied physicality, the styles of the 1350s—when the aristocrat’s connection to combat was becoming more symbolic than real—emphasized male freedom of movement and sexuality in an hourglass figure. Especially in the 1500s, such new fashions were specifically associated with the courtier class of persons who maintained themselves by various forms of royal and ducal appointments and “preferments.” Two features of this costume are notable: the *pourpoint*, or short doublet showing the legs and buttocks, and the long pointed shoes called *poulaines* supposedly originating in Crakow, Poland. These exaggerated styles, as well as a trend towards tall headdresses that seemed to mimic the perpendicularity of Gothic architecture, were the subject of numerous satires against excesses in court dress.

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FORCES.** In addition to the development of new tastes in the royal courts of Europe, another significant source of fashion change may be found in the increasing affluence of members of the commercial class, which gave them the ability to adopt the styles worn by the nobility. Consequently, the nobility developed yet newer styles to assert their difference from, and superiority to, the commercial elites. This encroachment of the mercantile class upon the clothing styles formerly worn only by the nobility stimulated the



proliferation of sumptuary laws (laws against excess in food, clothing, and celebrations) to regulate dress in terms of income and birth status, with the aim of stabilizing the visual and social distance between the various levels of society, from the aristocracy down to the plowman. An additional factor that contributed significantly, if indirectly, to changes in late fourteenth-century tastes from about 1348 onward was the recurrence of virulent outbreaks of a plague known as the Black Death. The sweeping fatalities from this disease and its later epidemics in the fifteenth century are thought to have eliminated between 35 and 65 percent of Europe's population. Such decimation of the populace does not seem to have halted in any permanent way the overall tendency toward conspicuous consumption, but it is interesting to note that Italian sumptuary laws responded to the mortality caused by the plague by modifying dowry requirements, including those relating to clothing, in a way that would encourage marriages and, of course, repopulation through economic incentives. One additional effect of the plague on ownership of clothing was that survivors of this epidemic inherited the wealth, including valuable garments, of those who were victims, and thus such wealth was concentrated among fewer owners.

**AN ARISTOCRATIC PREROGATIVE.** In the Middle Ages, regardless of the increase of wealth among the commercial class and their imitation of noble dress, the trendsetters in clothing styles remained those at the highest level of society—especially those courtiers in power at the royal courts. A king was expected to maintain a high standard of magnificence not only in the quality of food and entertainment in his court, but also in his and his family's dress. And he was expected to epitomize *largesse* (generosity) in the giving of gifts, especially of cloth and complete garments, to his courtiers—a virtue the courtiers must in turn imitate with their inferiors. Thus, the consumption of fashionable cloth and garments spread from the top to the bottom of society; as fashion filtered down through the different levels of social class, these garments became increasingly “unfashionable.” As a result, from the mid-fourteenth century onward, the pace of spending to create a fashionable appearance accelerated, changes in styles occurred more often, and the search for innovations in apparel eventually resulted in a standard of “precious elegance,” overly refined elaboration of details such as slashed hems that revealed contrasting colors underneath, puffed sleeves (and, later, puffed trunks), or appliqué and embroidery work. Furthermore, the adoption of this standard coincided with a new acceptance of the concept of individuality, as opposed to the former custom of emphasizing

familial or social groups. This change in attitudes included the idea that an individual might express his or her unique personality through costume. Thus, fashion, understood as a pattern of change and differentiation, became an aristocratic pleasure, enjoyed by courtiers in the same way that they enjoyed other artistic works and extravagant entertainments.

**THE ONGOING FASHION PROCESS.** Ultimately, the change from the long flowing costume that completely covered the bodies of men and women alike in the late eleventh century to the short outer clothing assumed by the mid-fourteenth century male and the long fitted gowns with plunging necklines worn by their female contemporaries was a dramatic one. Adoption of the new short costume differentiated a young nobleman from his more conservative elders and emphasized his masculinity. Similarly, lowered necklines displayed female physical beauty. The long styles of earlier centuries persisted in the more conservative ranks of society, reaching their peak of linearity in the fourteenth century and continuing to be fashionable for another hundred years among civil, judicial, and academic professionals. Near the end of the fifteenth century, the masculine style went even further as shoulders broadened, headgear flattened and widened, codpieces (decorative pouches) were added to the crotch area of the wearer's hose, and the toes of shoes became blunt and broad in the so-called “bear paw” shoe style often associated with King François I of France. As previously stated, such periodic reversals are characteristic in a system of fashion.

## TOPICS *in Fashion*

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### FASHION AND CULTURAL CHANGE

**MEDIEVAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE.** In order to understand the history of Western Europe's costume from 800 to 1450 C.E., it is important to recognize the basic social structures and the dynamic changes that took place during this era. In the years leading up to this period, the fall of the Roman Empire had left much of Europe populated by the Germanic tribal peoples who had invaded from the east, pushing the formerly Romanized Celtic tribes westward, so that the society itself might be characterized by its emphasis on warfare and geographic mobility. Under these conditions, costume tended to vary little between that of the local chiefs or kings and that of their subjects, except by its quality of materials

and decoration. The most stable institution of society was the system of Roman Catholic monasteries where much of the wealth and learning that had arrived with the Romans was concentrated, but these were not yet organized into the numerous orders that would later lead to formalized distinctions in religious costume. It is only with the solidification of the power of the Frankish king Charlemagne and the establishment, in 800, of his empire over an area that includes what is now France, Germany, Italy, and the Low Countries, that medieval society began to stabilize, creating the conditions under which the aristocracy, now spending more time in the royal court than on the battlefield, would wish to distinguish itself by costume. By the eleventh century, a change in the economic and political system had created a hierarchy of lords, elite landholders, and land-working peasants, while in the centuries that followed, increased trade and economic development created a rising class of artisans, merchants, and financiers. At each stage, the impulse to distinguish one class of people from another through clothing became more intense, at the same time that the means of creating distinctive costume—through access to materials, craftsmanship, and wealth—were enhanced. Thus fashion in the Middle Ages reflects the complexity of a particular society in transition, as well as certain processes common to the development of fashion in general.

**THE THREE ESTATES.** Although the period from the twelfth century forward saw a rise in what would now be recognized as a “middle class,” the traditional way of describing medieval society was in terms of the “three estates”: those who fight (the nobility or aristocracy), those who pray (monks, friars, secular clergy, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy), and those who labor (peasants and serfs). There was also an important division between laity and clergy. This sense of how society was organized is basic to any discussion of fashion, since it is to the interests and concerns of the aristocracy that one must always look for the origin of fashion trends. Because the nobility of Europe originated as a warrior class, the males in this society continued to prefer a style of clothing that was designed for vigorous movement both in walking and in riding until the eleventh century. They wore brief garments called tunics that were cut close to the flanks and hips. Belted at the waist, these tunics were made of wool or linen, and were worn over *braies*—a sort of loose bloomer or shapeless trouser-like undergarment for men that was knee-length or slightly longer. The bottoms of the braies were usually tucked into full-length hose or bound close to the leg, and the large cloak worn over top could double as a blanket. This very practical garment reflected the functional role of the

aristocratic male, but at the same time it took on certain decorative elements more characteristic of a system of “style.” During the Carolingian period, the hems of tunics were edged with woolen or silken braid, and the cloak, which was large and square, was fastened at the right shoulder in a style reminiscent of a Roman toga. Both of these touches suggest that costume was being used not only to provide an appropriate garment for work, but also to make a symbolic statement about the relationship between Charlemagne’s new empire and the Roman empire that it replaced. The women in this empire wore longer versions of the male tunic. The clothing of the peasant, which often consisted of only a single smock or long shirt, worn over leggings and under a hooded cape in cold weather, would not be marked by decorative elements, nor, as long as a land-based economic system persisted, would it be subject to periodic change. Likewise, clerical garb for daily wear remained static because it was subject to ecclesiastical regulation and, in keeping with the imagined simplicity of Jesus and his disciples, consisted of the plainest of styles, while church vestments for the celebration of the Mass were determined not by fashion, but by their specific symbolic character.

**THE HISTORICAL PROCESS.** Throughout the Middle Ages, aristocratic costume evolved in a manner characteristic of all fashion change, illustrating the basic principle of periodic shifts and reversals of extremes. The era from the ninth century to the fifteenth saw major changes in social roles, political leadership, economic well-being, foreign influence, and the visual arts, all of which had some direct or indirect influence on styles of clothing. Such influences, however, do not provide the complete explanation for all the shifts that occurred sporadically from the ninth century—when T-shaped styles (cut from a single piece of fabric with a hole for the head, seams down the sides, and sleeves draped over the arms and sewn underneath) and relatively simple fabrics and ornamentation were the norm—to the late fifteenth century when excesses in luxurious, closely fitted, and fanciful dress were commonplace in the upper and middle classes. In this complex historical process, there were periods during which one or more aspects of current dress were carried to such an extreme—for example, the practices of vastly lengthening gowns, widening shoulder proportions, using excessive amounts of fabric in a gown, or tightening a garment to fit the body that had formerly been hidden among folds of fabric—that excesses were followed by a swing or return to conservative, opposite styles in dress. Such reversals in fashion, then, resulted from a variety of factors and contributed to the development of a system of fashion as a powerful force in the

## DEFINITIONS of Medieval Clothing

**Bliaut:** Either a costly fabric, a knight's court tunic, or a lady's court dress. When this term refers to the lady's garment, it signifies a gown of the richest fabrics, banded at neck and wrist edges with strips of embroidery; fur-lined; having a tightly-laced (at the sides) elongated bodice; a full, long skirt; and sleeves of various styles. The sleeves were often sewn on with each wearing, and one pair might be exchanged with another in the course of the day. As a fabric, bliaut meant silk, satin, or velvet imported from the Orient. This cloth was frequently woven with gold thread and embroidered with gems.

**Braies:** Loosely fitted linen thigh- or knee-length underpants worn by men of all classes.

**Corse:** The bodice of a bliaut, or a stiffened garment worn underneath a bodice made of lighter weight fabric. It could be laced tightly to shape the waist and torso.

**Cotehardie:** A short, tightly-fitting jacket-like garment for men popular from around 1333 through the mid-fifteenth century. In its earliest form, it was a tightly-fitting, low-necked garment reaching only to the knee, worn over a shirt, distinguished by a row of buttons that ran from the neckline to the low waistline. When worn by women, the cotehardie was somewhat less fancy. Buttons were optional, and no girdle was worn with it.

**Courtepie:** A short garment worn by men and women over other garments in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The courtepie resembled the surcoat, and in its fifteenth-century version may have been the short houppelande.

**Doublet (pourpoint, gambeson):** A short garment for men with a tight waist and a thickness of padding through the chest; also a garment worn by knights, both as an outer garment (coupled with hose) and as padding under armor.

**Girdle:** A kind of belt introduced into female costumes in the eleventh century to give the female figure a more distinctive outline, but later worn by both men and women. Girdles were usually constructed as twisted cords, sometimes knotted, made from gold or silver wire and dyed wool or silks, and bound with ornamental fasteners or finished off with tassels. Simpler girdles were also constructed from a length of fabric that was decorated with stitching of a contrasting color.

**Gown:** See *Houppelande*.

**Houppelande:** A fourteenth-century garment of variable length that was worn over the doublet and hose. The longest version of this garment was worn for formal occasions and was ground-length or somewhat longer. A short version reached halfway between ankle and knee, and one of an even shorter length hit some inches above the knee. Initial forms of the houppelande had high collars that fanned out, but later collar styles differed. Belts were sometimes worn with houppelandes. Sleeves were funnel shaped, increasingly wide at their ends, and often edged with fancy cut-work ("dagging") and slashed to show fur linings of complementary colors. The short version was named "haincelin" for the jester Haincelin Coq in the court of Charles VI of France. After 1450, the more usual term for this garment was "gown." The houppelande was replaced by the robe later in the fifteenth century.

**Mantle:** A garment worn to protect its wearer from bad weather while serving also to designate high social status and power. Throughout the Middle Ages, variations in style depended on intended usage. In the period from 1066 to 1154, two shapes of mantles had long been in use—the semi-circular and the rectangular. These outer garments were bordered with contrasting colored embroidery interspersed with gold or silver threads. A mantle was often received from an overlord as a valuable gift, then bequeathed from generation to generation; because of its history, this garment increased in social significance through time.

**Paletot:** A short-sleeved, short and loose gown for men, sometimes worn as an over-garment with the doublet.

**Poulaines:** Leather shoes with long pointed toes, sometimes called *crakows*. Both names were associated with Poland where such shoes supposedly originated.

**Pourpoint:** See *Doublet*.

**Robe:** A name applied to many different garments during the Middle Ages, ranging from the long tunic in England (late eleventh century) to a complete outfit of a varying number of layers intended to be worn together, some of them made of silk, some furred (fourteenth century). In the fifteenth century, "robe" indicated a particular kind of gown, worn long for important events and short for ordinary purposes.

**Tunic:** A loose wide-necked garment, usually extending to the hip or knee and gathered with a belt at the waist.

dress of Europe. Regardless of their causes, of course, once the swings had occurred, the movement toward excess in dress would inevitably begin again and build toward another peak. The end of the fifteenth century was one such excessive period in the dress of the nobility and the commercial class that, by this time, also had the money to dress lavishly.

**MEN AND THE AGE OF FASHION.** Although in recent centuries society has been accustomed to thinking of fashion as an area of greater interest to women than to men, during the Middle Ages it was the clothing of men that underwent the most radical transformations. Female aristocratic costume retained a uniform set of basic elements, including a minimum skirt length at the top of the shoes, throughout the entire period; changes in fashion mostly concerned the tightness of fit, exposure of neck, chest, and shoulders, amount of fabric utilized, decorative elements, and the addition of such accessories as sewn-in sleeves, girdles (belts), and headdress. The clothing of men, on the other hand, underwent more profound alterations in garment type and especially length. These alterations reflect the change from an almost exclusively warrior image to a developing role as both warrior and courtier, and, finally, around 1350–1400, to a status in which the former military role was mainly symbolic. This last shift in male fashion, characterized by a major transformation from long to short costume, took place during a period when other economic and social factors encouraged interest in clothing as a reflection of status, and, as a result, led to an accelerated pace of imitation and alteration. Thus, the period from 1350 onward can be identified as The Age of Fashion.

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#### PEASANT COSTUME

**IMAGES OF LABOR.** The costume of the nobility is fairly familiar to modern historians thanks to its frequent depiction in manuscript miniatures, wall paintings, and

tomb art. While such evidence is not as available for the more humble costume of peasants, there is still a considerable body of evidence to offer a rather precise idea of a costume which remained fairly fixed from about 800 to about 1375. Such sources include manuscript illumination, textual sources (including literature), and numerous French wills and inventories of garments in the possession of agricultural laborers. Moreover, some details of female agricultural costume were preserved in poems called *pastourelles* (from the French word for “shepherdess”), a type of song popular in both northern and southern France during the thirteenth century. These poems told the story of how a knight passing through a rural area tries to seduce or overpower a pretty shepherdess. Since the knight coming upon a shepherdess guarding her flock often describes her clothing as part of her charm, these poems also serve as a source of information about rustic female dress. A variant of the pastourelle called the *bergerie* (meaning “shepherd” in French) features an aristocratic observer of a group of shepherds in conversation or playing games. Information about their clothing or discussions of clothing sometimes form part of these poems.

**PEASANT WOMEN.** Regardless of class, women’s costume had certain elements in common, although costume for peasants was drab in color and used far coarser materials and less ornamentation than did the clothes of the aristocracy. All classes of women apparently wore a white linen or hemp chemise or underdress with full-length sleeves, fitted at the wrists. There is no evidence that women in the Middle Ages wore underpants under the chemise, though men did. Women seem to have worn hose, though they were only calf or knee high. The chemise’s neckline sometimes plunged to show the tops of the breasts, and its bodice was often laced horizontally or criss-cross. The chemise could be pleated on occasion. Over the chemise peasant women wore a long, tightly fitting dress similar to that worn by upper-class women. This dress was called a *cote* or *cotte*. The word *robe* in the earlier Middle Ages referred to an entire female costume made up of a chemise, a cote, and a cloak-like over-garment called *surcote* (literally, “overcoat”), or sometimes a mantel. For working outside, they wore a kerchief-like head-cover or a cap with a stiff brim and mittens. In some cases the cote was tucked up into the waistband of a white linen or hemp apron to keep its hem clean while the woman engaged in “dirty work.” By the mid-thirteenth century it became fashionable for women to have the cote and a protective outer garment of a matching fabric called *burel*, which is both a coarse wool and a grayish-brown color. In some cases, as noted in death



Male farm worker with seeding apron and woman with sack of seeds. Labor for October, the Playfair Hours, use of Rouen, Victoria and Albert Museum MS L.475–1918, late 15th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM LONDON/GRAHAM BRANDON.

inventories of possessions of late fourteenth-century Burgundian peasants, the cote is most commonly described as a shade of blue or, next most popular, a shade of red. Against the cold, the rustic woman would often have a cloak or sometimes a hooded surcote; this was apparently a very desirable garment, since in one anonymous thirteenth-century French pastourelle the practical shepherdess tells the narrator that he must give her a “sorcote” before she will make love with him. Somewhat wealthier female peasants wore cloaks trimmed with rabbit or cat fur. In fair weather female agricultural workers wore neither surcote nor cloak. They are often depicted in medieval manuscripts such as the *Très Riches Heures of Jean de Berry* (1415), sowing in the fields while wearing a special apron or overdress with a fold to hold the seed with the simplest of smocks underneath. Rustic women are easily recognizable in medieval manuscript painting by the presence of a large brimmed, rather flat straw hat, very like that worn today by farm workers in Asia.

**MALE AGRICULTURAL COSTUME.** Throughout the period, male peasant clothing was largely similar to the costume that upper-class men had worn in the Carolingian period (eighth to tenth century), when the main concern of the warrior class was to have freedom of movement. Even when male aristocratic costume lengthened, peasant costume remained at the knee or just slightly below. Beginning with the feet, typical male peasant costume consisted of hose of a sturdy white fabric (in good weather) worn inside low patchwork shoes with leather soles and heels. In winter, the peasant wore gaiters or leggings, usually made of canvas or leather, over his hose. His undergarments were the chemise, similar to that worn by women but with long split tails in which he often wrapped any coins he might have, and linen *braies* (underwear). Over the chemise he wore a sleeveless cote, often with double facings—broad strips added on the chest and shoulders for warmth and resistance to wear. This was sometimes called in Old French the *jupeau* or *jupel* and could be made of the coarse

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SHEPHERDS' CLOTHING**

**INTRODUCTION:** The only medieval text to describe in some detail the actual dress of shepherds is the treatise by Jean de Brie called *Le Bon Berger*, or *The Good Shepherd*, supposedly written at the command of King Charles V of France in 1373. The practicality of the average agricultural costume described here highlights the functionality of shepherds' clothing, which stands in stark contrast to the "luxury" of courtly attire.

The shepherd ought to wear stockings of a sturdy white cloth or of a camel-hair fabric and some slippers with soles and heels of sturdy leather. In winter, he ought to have, over his hose, gaiters or leggings cut from the leather of old boots, to keep off rain. To last longer, the heels and soles ought to be sewn with a stout hempen thread well waxed ... And the shepherd ought to be able to squat on his heels, under a bush when it is necessary.

The shepherd's chemise and braies ought to be of a thick and sturdy linen fabric called canvas. The garters or suspenders (brayette) holding the hose to the braies ought to be made of cloth about two fingers wide with two round iron buckles. The chemise should be split into two tails, and these ought to be long and shaped like a small handkerchief so that the shepherd can wrap up his coins inside and tie the bag with a simple knot. Over the chemise he should have a coteron or sleeveless mantle of white linen or of gray camel hair [imitation camel or goat hair]; this ought to be double faced over the shoulders as far down as the belt in order to protect his chest and belly from wind and storms and to allow him to walk across the fields more surely behind his sheep, for they are of such a nature that they go willingly against the wind.

Over the mantle the shepherd ought to have a surcote, a garment of white linen or of gray camel hair ending in two square bibs. The one hangs like an apron before and the other behind, protecting from cold both belly and loins. It has sleeves and is large and ample enough so that he can get it on easily without buttons. For it is not suitable to have buttonholes or hooks that can annoy him when he is getting dressed. Rather he ought to enter it directly, as if getting into a sack or like Aaron's tunic. Above the surcote he ought to have a surplice of canvas with sleeves and four buttons. This surplice protects the shepherd from the rain, and sometimes he will have to remove it to wrap up a lamb just born in

the field. Around his surplice he ought to have a girdle of fine strong cord, braided of three strands, with a round iron buckle. From this girdle he can suspend various things. ...

He ought to hang from this girdle a scabbard in old taw or rough-tanned leather or eelskin in which to keep his flail. And he ought to carry a pouch in which to keep his bread and food for his dog. It ought to be of a kind of netting suitably knotted in the fashion of a potter's harness. This pouch ought to be worn on the shepherd's left in order that it not encumber his right side so that he can easily shear, trim, anoint, and bleed his sheep, if need be. And to the pouch ought to be attached a dog leash of about a yard and a half in length which ought to be redoubled back to the pouch. In the middle of the leash he ought to have a piece of leather with a small toggle of wood to attach and unhook his dog and send him easily and quickly against wolves and other annoying animals which wish to seize his sheep. ...

It is proper that the shepherd wear a felt hat, round and very large. On the brim and upper part of the crown fabric ought to be doubled a palm's length or more. This doubling is necessary for two reasons. At first to protect the shepherd from rain and bad weather when he goes against the wind behind his sheep. Secondly, for the profit of the master who owns the sheep. For each time that the shepherd goes to anoint the animals against the scab and he cuts the wool away with his scissors to get to the scabbed spot, he puts the wisps of wool and clippings in the folds and doublings of his hat, in order to return them to the master at the house. For he is obliged to look out for his master's interests in doing his offices as a shepherd. This hat is usefully adapted to a shepherd's life as much to protect him from rain, wind and storm as to cover his head. ...

In winter the shepherd ought to have some mittens to protect his hands from the cold. He ought not to buy them but make them himself whether he knits them with needles in the fashion of a canon's hood from a skein of wool spun by the hand of a shepherdess, or whether he makes them from cloth of several colors to his own taste; when they are made of such motley bits of cloth they are very pretty. When it is not too cold where the shepherd can work with his hands, he ought to hang these mittens from a small ball hooked to his girdle. ...

**SOURCE:** Jehan de Brie, *Le Bon Berger. Le Vrai Règlement et gouvernement des bergers et bergères*. Ed. Michel Clévenot (Paris: Stock, 1979). Translation by John Block Friedman.

a PRIMARY SOURCE document

A SHEPHERD'S FASHION ADVICE TO HIS SON

**INTRODUCTION:** Shepherd costume is often described in a variant form of the pastourelle called the *bergerie*, from the French word for “shepherd.” These poems were popular in the 1360s; one appearing in a collection of lyrics now in the University of Pennsylvania Library (MS Van Pelt 15) is particularly rich in concrete information about male peasant costume. It also shows the same satiric attitude toward excesses in costume applied to the ornate head-dresses of women. In this *bergerie*, a shepherd named Herman, now 100 years old, offers sartorial and moral counsel to his son Robin—a stock name for a shepherd.

“[Make sure] that you wear a white smock, patchwork shoes laced high and fastened with three iron clasps. Beware of short smocks showing your behind and codpiece in tight-gathered drawers when you squat and crouch, and do not wear pointed and windowed shoes.” ...

[The dutiful Robin agrees to do just as Herman commands:]

“Father, I will do your will. No poulaines will be my shoes, causing me to trip as I go. I will not walk about with my stomach belted in tightly nor with my hose attached to my smock, for in kneeling when girded thus, all will rip in several places.”

*Translated from the Middle French  
by John Block Friedman.*

grayish brown wool called *burel* if undyed, or perhaps dyed dark gray-blue with woad, a pigment-producing plant. The *jupeau* could also be made of heavy canvas. For many tasks, the peasant would wear a linen or leather apron over the *cote*. An example of a male laborer with such an apron for seeding occurs in a calendar for a book of hours (daily devotions and prayers) now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The full peasant costume is illustrated in a manuscript miniature from the *Maciejowski Bible* in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, which shows a peasant at work in a *cote*, tucked up into his *braies*. On top of his *chemise* and *mantel* against inclement weather was worn the *surcote*, also of white linen or of matching wool with bib-like extensions at front and rear. This was usually cut large and had no buttons. A girdle or belt on which pouches could be hung to hold sharpening stones, sewing implements,



Laborers threshing, with gowns tucked up and braies or under-pants exposed, lower left. *Maciejowski Bible*. © PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY 2004. THE PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY, NEW YORK. M. 638, F. 12V. PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID A. LOGGIE.

or, for shepherds, salves or even dog food, completed this outfit. Peasant men usually wore a large round felt hat and fingerless woolen mittens, in contrast to the fancier gloves worn by aristocrats.

**A CHANGE FOR MEN.** By the mid-fourteenth century (1350–1375), members of the working class less frequently spent their lives confined to manors where they labored and began to have increased access to consumer goods. This new freedom translated into fashion as the male costume changed somewhat and began to imitate courtier garb, which had by then become shorter and more tightly fitted. In particular, the *cote* was radically shortened, coming just to the buttocks or slightly below, and the plowmen or urban industrial workers wore hose that were tightly fitted and cut on the bias to give them elasticity. The hose were attached to the hem of the *cote* by laces, sometimes with metal ends called *points*. For vigorous work involving bending, these laces were left unfastened.

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## ACADEMIC, CLERICAL, AND RELIGIOUS DRESS

**STANDARDIZING FOR SIMPLICITY.** Similar to peasants, members of the second estate—those who led a life associated with the church—wore costumes that were not nearly as subject to changes of fashion as the costumes of the aristocracy. Clothing worn by those who served the Christian church was intended to symbolize the simplicity of life modeled by Jesus. The ruling that required all men and women in cloistered religious orders—that is, monks and nuns who lived apart from the world—to wear habits was established by a consensus of church officials several centuries after the founding of the Benedictine Order of monks in 529. Canon 27 (a rule regulating dress) was initiated as early as the Fourth Council of Constantinople (869–870) and reaffirmed in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. These councils, known as "ecumenical" (that is, intended for creating unity), included cardinals, bishops, and superior abbots throughout the whole Christian world and were convened by the papacy. The influence of these rules extended to university students, a relatively new group in the later Middle Ages, for whom religious costume was adapted according to their stage of education. Another group that imitated the simplicity of the early church in their costume were pilgrims, who were to be found on land and sea throughout Europe and the Middle East as they made their way to sacred shrines for purposes of penance or, sometimes, the simple desire to travel.

**MONASTIC AND SECULAR RELIGIOUS COSTUME.** The founder of each holy order in the Roman Church of the Middle Ages established a Rule under which his

or her members should live, and these rules specified appropriate and uniform clothing that illustrated the religious beliefs of that order and served as its identifying insignia to the public. It was desirable that these members, often withdrawn from the world, should demonstrate this withdrawal by avoiding all display of worldliness, especially in their dress. For example, the Rule of St. Benedict, written for monks and adapted for nuns, specified that only locally produced, inexpensive fabrics might be used for religious dress, and the finished garment was to be without decoration. The standard garments for Benedictine monks included braies, over which was worn a long robe with cowl or hood, a belt or girdle, stockings, and shoes. Similarly, the basic dress of Benedictine nuns was a *cotte* (a black surcoat with wide sleeves or a mantle), a headdress consisting of a white under-veil and black over-veil, and a white wimple (a cloth covering the neck, sides of the face, and some portion of the forehead still worn by some orders of nuns). A *pilch* (a cloak made of skins or fur), and/or a fur-lined mantle were allowed in more severe climates. For secular clergy—that is, parish priests who lived in quarters near their churches—there were, however, no hard-and-fast rules about what to wear when they were not officiating at Mass. They were urged to dress soberly.

**FRIARS.** The four orders of friars (Franciscan, Dominican, Augustinian, and Carmelite) differed from members of cloistered religious orders in that they were not removed from the general society. Friars were out and about in the world, begging for their subsistence, hearing confession, sometimes teaching, and sometimes acting as spiritual advisors to wealthy families. Ordinary peasants' dress was the model for their habits. St. Francis set the standard for his followers to have and wear only one tunic with a rope girdle, one hooded coat, and, if needed, a second unhooded coat, and no shoes. He specified that only the simplest materials might be used to make these garments, and they should be patched with the same kind of fabric. Franciscan friars wore brown hoods, brown loose robes with loose sleeves, cord girdles (belts) with knots showing, and sandals. The brown (or indeterminate gray) associated with Franciscans distinguished them from the Dominicans, who wore black over white (they were thus called the Black Friars), as well as from the black monks (Benedictines) and white monks (Cistercians).

**STUDENT DRESS.** Since universities grew indirectly out of the cathedral schools that first began to be established in the 800s, most students in medieval universities were initially required to take "minor" holy orders, the first step towards becoming priests. Indeed, students





Two priests and a bishop bless beggars. *Chronique de St. Denis*, London, British Library MS Royal 16. G.VI, 1325–1350. © THE BRITISH LIBRARY/TOPHAM-HIP/THE IMAGE WORKS.

were known in English and French as “clerks,” or *clerics*, a word also meaning “cleric.” Thus, in certain ways academic costume developed from secular religious dress in the later Middle Ages. As the universities became more formally structured in the thirteenth century, university officials began to pay attention to academic dress for scholars of all ranks in the system. Bit by bit, a detailed system of dress developed that indicated each gradation from bachelor to doctor in a university career. In the thirteenth century, the basic garment was a dark-colored *vestis talaris*, a long tunic. When styles for men were shortened and the pourpoint or short doublet grew popular among younger men in the fourteenth century, student dress retained the “long robe” of sober color, which reached to the ankles. Over this “long robe” students were expected to wear either a formal full-sleeved cope, or cape, which was briefer than the tunic (*cappa manicata*) or, for normal wear, a larger, sleeveless over-garment, also reaching to the feet, having one slit, mid-front, so that arms and hands could reach out, or having slits on each side (*cappa clausa*). These slightly modified religious habits, both for students and for teachers, survive as the academic dress that is still worn for graduation ceremonies today.

**VIOLATIONS OF DRESS CODES.** The fact that university dress codes—apparently based closely on the disciplinary decrees regarding clerical dress of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 held under Pope Innocent III—

were often violated may be inferred from university records where certain items of clothing were periodically and repeatedly forbidden. The wearers of offending garments could be fined or denied privileges. Among the forbidden items were red or green garments (which were considered vain); “secular” shoes (that is, those with cut-out designs); curved or decorative hoods; swords or knives; fancy belts (girdles) enhanced with silver or gold trim; trunkhose, puffed sleeves, red or green hose, or boots that might be seen beneath long garments; and garments that were too short or fitted too tightly to the body (as was increasingly fashionable in late fourteenth-century secular costume). Such attention to color, fabric, and cut showed that the wearer was too worldly and not sufficiently serious for university life. Tailors who made such gowns for academics were subject to imprisonment and non-payment until these tunics were altered to the appropriate dimensions. Certain universities, such as the University of Toulouse, set up systems of dress for scholars of all ranks with economy and seamliness in mind to keep them from spending their fee, book, and subsistence money on clothing. In addition, other rules ensured the plainness of student head coverings: the *pileus*, a close-fitting skullcap; the *biretta*, a square cap with three ridges at the top and sometimes a tuft in the middle; and the hood. Over time, these requirements for plainness gave way to color schemes assigned to each field of study to distinguish one faculty from another and to



Three pilgrim badges, St. Christopher with Christ child in center. 14–15th centuries. © MUSEUM OF LONDON/TOPHAM-HIP/THE IMAGE WORKS.

satisfy the desire for pageantry and display. For example, those who became Masters (achieved a Master's degree) of Civil Law at some time before the late fifteenth century adopted dark blue as the color of their hoods (a practice in color choices retained in the twenty-first century). Similarly, Doctors of Medicine chose red for the color of their robes. The colorful academic hood worn by those who achieve doctoral degrees today is a remnant of this system, as are the black velvet bands sewn to the arms of academic gowns to signify master's or doctoral status.

**CHURCH VESTMENTS.** The particular garments worn by priests when officiating at divine worship and administering the sacraments are called vestments. Because they symbolized the glory of God and the church, such garments could be constructed of costly fabrics, with much ornamentation, and dyed in colors established by long use. When the priest celebrated Mass, he wore six specialized garments: the *amice*, *alb*, girdle, *maniple*, *stole*, and *chasuble*. The *amice* is a handkerchief-like fabric that covers the shoulders; the *alb* is a floor-length white gown with full, long sleeves. The gir-

dle of white tasseled cord belts the *alb* at the waist, while the *maniple* (from the Latin word for "hand") is another handkerchief-like cloth that is worn over the left forearm. The *stole* is a white knee-length scarf around the priest's neck, very much like a modern dress scarf. The *chasuble* is worn over all of these garments. Other vestments were the *dalmatic*, *surplice*, *cope*, and *pallium*. A *surplice* was the garment of the choristers or singers in the choir; it was of white linen and knee length. A bishop wore the *pallium*, a narrow woolen scarf with purple crosses embroidered on it, and a *cope* or *chasuble*-like outer garment. He carried a *crozier* (a staff with a hooked end like a shepherd's crook) and wore a type of pointed headdress called a *mitre*.

**PILGRIM'S COSTUME.** Pilgrims were sometimes members of religious orders and sometimes lay travelers who were engaged in a religious or penitent voyage to a sacred shrine. They wore a distinctive set of garments and accessories and were treated by others as religious persons. This costume distinguished them from other travelers as proper recipients of wayside charity and helped protect them from thieves. Medieval pilgrims



Statue of Saint James the Greater with scrip and wide-brimmed hat with a scallop-shell badge. His staff has broken off. Burgundy, Paris, The Louvre, 15th century. © ADAM WOOLFITT/CORBIS.

carried a walking staff and a *scrip*, or bag, with strap that could be worn across the shoulders for the purpose of transporting the pilgrim's minimal possessions, possibly including a begging bowl, on the journey. Their chief garment was a tunic, normally made of the roughest fabric, sometimes worn or ragged, and a broad-brimmed hat with the brim turned up in the front. Attached to this hat were various insignia in paper, parchment, pewter, or tin that denoted the shrines the pilgrim had visited. The emblem of a scallop shell served as the traditional pilgrim sign of St. James of Compostela. A pilgrim would wear this shell to show that he had made a pilgrimage to the saint's shrine in Spain. For each new pilgrimage the traveler added an appropriate insignia. Thus, someone who made a pilgrimage to Canterbury might return with a badge in the form of a Canterbury cross or one depicting St. Thomas Becket mounted on a horse, while those who came home from Rome displayed Rome's signature pilgrim badge—a *vernicle*, the depiction of Christ's face on a replica of St. Veronica's veil. While on pilgrimage, it was also not uncommon in

the later medieval period to carry a coral rosary (symbolically significant because of the cross-like branching of the original material) in a convenient manner for ready use—over the arm, or suspended from the belt—both for regular prayers and because it was believed that the rosary itself, as well as prayers, protected the pilgrim from possible dangers of the road and from ill health. No shoes are mentioned among these garments and accessories because the greatest piety was demonstrated by going barefoot. Nevertheless, some pilgrims did wear rough sandals or shoes.

**RELIGIOUS VANITY.** In spite of all this regulation, beneficed priests—that is, parish priests who had the income from a specific church and piece of land in a parish—and even monks and friars often dressed as they liked, and sometimes quite sumptuously. Chaucer's Friar in *The Canterbury Tales*, for example, wore a cope which was too short and turned his tippet or hood into a peddler's bag stuffed full of small items to attract the attentions of parish wives. At the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury in England, held in 1460–1461, a complainant alleges that

in modern times a certain abuse has appeared ... that simple priests and other priests over and above their grade and status openly wear their apparel in the manner of doctors or of other worthy men. ... They do not wear their top garments closed but the whole of the front part open, so that their private parts can be seen publicly in the manner of laymen, and many such priests have tight hose and hoods with tippets joined to them and have the collars of their doublets made of scarlet or other bright outlandish dress publicly showing above their gowns or tunics ... to the great scandal of holy orders.

Repeated councils dealt with this problem and addressed numerous details of dress that were forbidden in order that the garments of clerics and laypersons might be visibly different. Later councils even set forth regulations with the aim of distinguishing so-called "simple" priests from those who were elevated in status and/or education.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: The Canterbury Tales; Philosophy: The Universities, Textbooks, and the Flowering of Scholasticism; Religion: Friars; Religion: Relics, Pilgrimages, and the Peace of God*

## ARMOR AND HERALDRY

**COSTUME FOR MILITARY IDENTITY.** Throughout the medieval period, the upper-class male maintained his sense of aristocratic identity in part through wearing the specialized clothing and insignia of military life. This clothing was connected to both military combat itself and the peacetime military exercises known as tournaments, which served not only to provide practice for knights in training but also spectacle for members of the aristocracy. Defensive clothing changed radically during the period from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries, and these changes were largely in response to the evolution of new methods of combat and military organization. While early medieval warriors (before the year 1000) fought in tribes and encountered each other mainly on foot, the development of a system of lordship usually referred to as “feudalism”—based on the idea of an exchange of land for part-time military service as an obligation to an overlord—created a class of mounted soldiers (knights) who were obligated to present themselves, their weapons, and their horses for a certain number of days a year to satisfy the requirements of their contract with the overlord. These knights, known as vassals, formed small troupes accompanied by younger noblemen called squires who acted both militarily as supporters and also as servants. Owing to the cost of their equipment, as well as of the horses for both traveling and combat, only quite wealthy persons could muster such a group and own the armor and weapons that the new style of mounted combat required. The connection between wealth and military costume in this strongly hierarchical social system was further reinforced when decorative elements were added to serve as a way of identifying the individual knight, who was anonymous once clad in his armor. Not only did these decorative elements, in the form of coats of arms, provide a way of distinguishing one knight from another, but they also contributed to the visual stimulation of tournaments and indicated the family lineage that set the aristocrat apart from the other classes.

**LEATHER AND CLOTH.** The military costume of the Germanic peoples, including the Vikings who conducted



Dietmar der Sezzer and another knight with heraldic coat of arms and helmet disguise. Manesse Manuscript, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. Germ 848, 1300. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

raids throughout northern Europe well into the eleventh century, was largely like that of the workers on the land. From about the first century C.E. until about 1150, the warrior's costume was short enough to allow for freedom of movement, and used layers of animal skins or padded fabric to protect the wearer from hacking swords and spear thrusts in close quarters. It was not intended to stop projectile weapons, which were not then in common use. Though this defensive costume had bosses (circular metal plates covering critical areas on the body) and fastening pins of iron or precious metals, only the head covering was of solid metal; this helmet was in the form of a pointed cylinder, often surmounted by an ornament such as the boar's head mentioned in the Old English heroic poem *Beowulf*, which details battles and military life in Scandinavia during the seventh to ninth centuries. Some forms of the helmet during the Carolingian period (eighth to tenth centuries) had a protective bar or “nasal” which came over the nose and sometimes flaps which served as cheek protectors.

**CHAIN MAIL AND PLATE ARMOR.** Military costume changed markedly with the rise of lordship in the eleventh century. The knight who served as a vassal to an overlord held a well-defined place in the social hierarchy and soon had a costume intended both to distinguish his social class and to protect him in the new style of combat, in which mounted knights charged at each other with lances in an effort to unhorse their opponents. Once the knight was dismounted, he fought with sword, axe, or mace—weapons requiring a defensive costume that protected against piercing and blows. This costume evolved rather quickly between the eleventh and twelfth centuries and differed in a number of ways from the older Germanic or the even earlier Roman style of military dress. Over the knight's outer robe known as the *bliaut* or later the *cote*, he wore a vest, often called a *gambeson*, made of *cuir bouillée* (leather boiled to make it tough) or of padded linen, a garment often worn alone as soft armor by non-aristocratic warriors. It was slit at the sides and in the middle of the lower portion, which allowed its lower panel to drape protectively over each thigh as the knight sat on a horse. Over this vest was another waist-length garment called the *brogne* or *burney* from German and French words meaning "bright," which was made of many tiny rings of iron linked together like chains into a sort of metal "fabric" that allowed movement. Up to the eighth century or so the early version of this garment had not protected the neck, but a caped hood of mail soon developed, called in Old French a *hauberc*. Some armor historians use the term "hauberc" to refer to the whole mail garment, but *haubergeon* is the correct term. This chain-mail garment could be sleeved or sleeveless, but it came up over the head and neck in a characteristic hood-like fashion and was supplemented by an iron skull-cap-like conical helmet for further protection. At the end of the eleventh century, through contact with the great metal-working centers of Damascus in Syria and Toledo in Spain, French knights obtained the finest quality haubergeons of mail, in which each ring was welded for strength and had sleeve-like extensions to protect the lower arms. Matching chain-mail-covered leather gauntlets (forearm-high gloves) and cloth or leather leggings with chain mail came into use about 1150 and continued to about 1330, completing this relatively light and flexible defensive costume, especially suitable for close hand-to-hand combat. From about 1350 onward, armor responding to the technology of archery developed; now key areas of the haubergeon would be reinforced with plates of iron, flattened cow horn, or boiled leather to protect the wearer from the bolts or shafts of the crossbow, which appeared in France as early as the mid-tenth century, and the long bow, in use by 1290 or so. Gunpowder weapons appeared

around 1350. From 1330 to about 1450, knights attempted to protect the entire body against these projectile weapons by the addition of plates of iron, eventually linked together by leather straps, and cylindrical helmets with eye and breathing holes. But this standing suit of armor, which is so familiar in modern depictions of castles and medieval life, was unwieldy and eventually became mainly ceremonial.

**THE COAT OF ARMS.** On top of chain mail, as early as around 1100, knights began to wear a long thin fabric garment. It could be sleeveless and open under the arms, or it could have short sleeves. Beginning around 1130, this shirt, which buttoned down the front, often had painted or embroidered on it a shield-shaped insignia called a *cote a armer*, or coat of arms, which identified the disguised knight at a distance. This technique apparently developed during the period of the Crusades in imitation of an Islamic custom of painting an image (a blazon) on the knight's shield to identify him to his own troops, who could then recognize and defend him. The cote remained in use until 1410, and its ensign or design contained elements such as bars, stars and stripes, flowers, animals, crosses, and other images that enabled the knowledgeable viewer to know the whole lineage of its wearer. Such insignia were also painted on the outside of the knight's shield where they could easily serve to identify him when his cote might be obscured. In addition to these two forms of insignia, knights also often carried banners, wore scarves around the helmet (again probably in imitation of their Islamic rivals), and decorated their horses with cloth trappings. These markings and patterns soon became hereditary so that a knight bore the insignia, with small identifying changes, that had been worn by his father and grandfather. Since the possibilities for deception existed, heralds—persons knowledgeable in family history—were trained as early as the 1130s to recognize and validate the knight's right to display the coat of arms.

**THE INFLUENCE OF HERALDIC DECORATION.** Over time, displays of arms provided a popular motif for the decoration of civilian costume, as, for example, in the use of the *fleur de lis* (the symbol of the French royal family) as an appliqué on royal robes and dresses. Such designs also began to move from costume to architecture, in the stained glass window of a chapel donated by a certain local family or carved on the façade of a building. The coat of arms might also be inscribed on jewelry (still common on the modern signet ring) or painted on the title page of an illuminated manuscript to indicate ownership. Arms were placed on tombs of knights in churches as early as 1135 where the sculpture

of a knight in lifelike armor, often with his dog at his feet, was displayed atop the tomb chest with armorial shields at the sides of the chest. When members of noble households married, the symbols of the two families were often combined to form a new heraldic device in which the arms are said to be “impaled” or divided down the middle, with those of each family occupying half of the shield. This “impalement” brought the influence of the coat of arms back to fashion as it gave rise to “particolored” costume in which one leg of hose might be red and the other green. With the gradual coming to power of a civic elite through trade or administrative service, a person’s arms could often include elements of the occupation his preeminence was founded on; in the north of England, for example, the family called Bowes, from their original trade as makers of bows and arrows, showed a pattern of bows presented vertically in panels on the shield. Eventually corporate entities such as cities, universities, and even colleges within universities all came to have arms which were displayed on plates, draperies, in stained glass, and the like.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: The Military Orders*

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## THE RISE OF COURTLY COSTUME

**COURTLY DRESS AND CHRISTIANITY.** With the relative calm and stability of the empire established under Charlemagne and his Ottonian successors, a renaissance of court costume—that is, costume to be worn at times

when freedom of movement was not required for fighting—arose in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It was characterized by both splendor of fabric and cut and a Roman solemnity or soberness in style. This costume was a reaction to the older pagan Germanic or “Barbarian” dress styles, which were chiefly military and short. This newer courtly costume was considered “Christianized” because it was modeled on the long robes supposedly worn by the Evangelists. It also showed marked Byzantine influence, for costume in the Eastern Christian capital of Constantinople had long been floor length. It appears, then, that long costume in a Roman style was absorbed by the spread of Christianity and became the garb of Christians of both high and middle station, above the peasant class. Thus, when St. Bernard preached the first Crusade in 1095 and complained about the excessively long skirts and rich ornamentation of Western aristocratic costume, he showed that elaboration of cut in the standard long costume was already a fashion element by the end of the eleventh century. Indeed, the fact that so many bishops commented in sermons on this lengthening and ornamenting of long costume indicates that it was the norm for both men and women above the level of the laboring classes and that it was primarily the excessive lengthening and the fashion for dragging trains and rather pointed shoes with curved toes for men and women that was seen as foppery and extravagance by those preaching against the sins of pride and luxury. That people sought to elaborate costume to this degree and that such trends disturbed moralists certainly suggests that a strong desire to imitate the clothing of the elite existed already at the end of the eleventh and through the middle of the twelfth centuries.

**BYZANTINE FOUNDATIONS.** The courtly fashions of the eleventh century made use of silks and patterns of ornamentation that were popular in the Byzantine Empire, the eastern Christian realm centered in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey). The question of when such styles were introduced to the West is, however, complex. It has for many years been believed by costume historians that long and highly ornamented robes and other garments employing silks came from the East only in the aftermath of the First Crusade at the end of the eleventh century. More recent opinion, however, suggests that such garments had been native to the Carolingian empire for several centuries, largely because of continuing trade between the Byzantine Empire and the West, especially trade in silks that entered Europe by way of Venetian merchants. And after the Moorish conquest of much of what is now Spain, silks from Andalusia also moved eastward along trading routes. Probably, then,



Empress Theodora with handmaids and deacons. Mosaic, 6th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/SAN VITALE RAVENNA ITALY/DAGLI ORTI.

the Crusades introduced a variety of highly ornamented fabrics to the West in the luggage of returning warriors and their retinues, rather more than specifically Eastern garments like turbans and slippers. Beginning with the return of crusaders at the end of the First Crusade in 1099 and terminating with the fall of Constantinople in 1204, both male and female bliauts displayed Byzantine influence that included voluminous amounts of fabric arranged in linear drapery (that is, uninterrupted lines extending from the T-shaped shoulder to the floor). An example of these linear styles can be seen in the sixth-century C.E. mosaic of the Empress Theodora on a wall in the Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy. Other elements of this influence were the Byzantine fashions for purple and for broad bands of bead embroidery, giving the fabric a geometric and dotted or studded look. This quality is still seen in modern Greek icon paintings where gold raised dots outline the nimbus or halo of a holy person. Though there is an element of fancy in the idealized descriptions of aristocratic male costume in the thirteenth-century French Arthurian romances, it is not far wrong to believe that Erec in Chrétien de Troyes' romance of that name "wore a tunic of noble patterned

silk that had been made in Constantinople" (56). Some of the bliauts had long fitted sleeves and others fairly wide ones. Accessories included fancy embroidered silk belts and a brooch used as a fastening at the neck.

**TREND TOWARDS LAYERING.** The most elaborate ensemble of garments during the Middle Ages would naturally be that of the royal families and their courtiers. Its distinguishing feature was the addition of multiple layers that signified gradations in status and wealth, both because layering required large amounts of the expensive, exotic fabrics now imported from the East and because it allowed display of multiple patterns, textures, and decorations all at once. One of the best examples of this trend would be in the court clothing of the powerful Normans, who, in addition to having conquered Sicily, had also conquered England in 1066. Writers of contemporary chronicles, such as Ordericus Vitalis (1075–1142) and William of Malmesbury (1095–1143), commented on these Norman warriors, describing them as being "particular" about their clothing but not excessively so. During the reign of William I (William the Conqueror, 1066–1087), the king's clothing of state consisted of a

minimum of five garments (from the skin outward). In addition to his braies (male underpants with wide, loose, and short legs and a draw-string waist), hose (Norman French: *chausses*), and shoes, he wore a white, delicately woven long-sleeved shirt of linen with a neckband and wrists decorated with colored stitching (the *chainse* or later the “chemise”). This shirt might be only one of several undergarments of this type, including another warm silken or woolen one (French: *bliaut*) with elbow-length sleeves that might also have decorative edges. The alternate term for the bliaut was “gonelle” that would later become the English word “gown.” By this period, French names for garments were largely replacing the old Roman (Latin) terms. Next, he wore an undertunic of fine fabric, reaching almost to the ankles, and over this a silken *dalmatic* (originally a loose outer garment with short, wide sleeves and open sides; later the sides were partially closed) with wide sleeves, and hem, neck, and sleeve edges bordered in silk and gold embroidery. Sometimes the silk fabric of this garment exhibited a pattern or design. At his waist, the king wore a narrow belt, embellished with gold and jeweled studs. Over this ensemble, he wore a mantle, shaped either as a semicircle or rectangle (Norman-French: *manteau*), with edges bordered with embroidery and/or gold. Additional garments also have French names, including the *doublet*—which, as its name suggests, was a vest made of two layers of linen, often padded—and a *pelisson* from the word meaning “animal hide”—a sleeveless jacket or vest-like insulating garment. The *jupe* (or gipon or juperel or jupeau) was a corset-like garment often worn over the chainse, which could serve as soft body armor for men because it was quilted. The jupe, which eventually became the modern English “slip,” had lacings down the side.

**PRACTICAL AND DECORATIVE ACCESSORIES.** In this period of developing courtly costume, accessories such as cloaks, shoes, belts, and headdresses served both practical and decorative functions. In the interest of warmth, both men and women in northern climes wore a *chape*, a sort of cloak cut either as a round piece of fabric or as a rectangle, lined or trimmed with fur, and fastened with a cord held in place by the hand. This garment goes back to the Roman *pallium* and shows the long continuity with Roman styles. The legs were not bare, but were protected by hose, which could be brightly colored or even striped as a decorative touch. Presumably women also wore hose but this element is not shown in representations of female costume. Over the hose men and women wore leather shoes, which gradually took on more shape with curved, pointed toes that reflected a slight Eastern influence, a fashion phenomenon



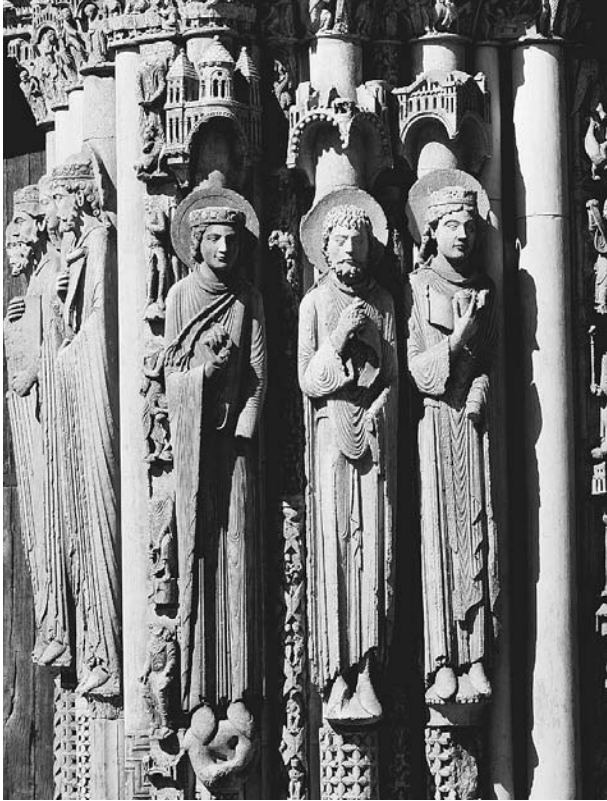
Layered costume, Konrad von Wurzburg dictating to scribe. Manesse Manuscript, Heidelberg Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. Germ 848, folio 383. c. 1300. H.-J. WISSMAN MINNESANGER IN FRANKEN: RENDEZVOUS MITTELALTERLICHEN SANGERN.

remarked on and criticized at the time. The shoes of various types were made to be open at the top of the foot and closed by long laces, which were wound up around the hose. Headdress for both men and women in the court consisted mainly of circlets made of precious metals, braid, or flowers, though by the thirteenth century both women’s and men’s hair could be pulled back and hidden by a linen cloth called a *coif*. Also during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the importance of belts increased as an accent to dress and a mark of affluence, since many of them were studded with jewels or embellished with gold and silver wire. Some served a protective function, for noblemen suspended small weapons from them, thus presenting the image of being armed at all times as a reminder of the aristocrat’s warrior origins.

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Bliants and girdles worn by biblical kings and queens. Column statues, Royal Portal, Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Chartres, France 1145–1170. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

## EARLY ARISTOCRATIC DRESS FOR WOMEN

**LAYERS.** During the period when court costume was evolving, the clothing of aristocratic women mirrored the men's layered look, although women did not wear braies or underpants. Throughout the entire period treated in this chapter, noblewomen wore a chemise or *camise* (Anglo-Saxon, "smock") next to their bodies. The aristocratic version of the chemise was similar to the one worn by peasant women, but in the late eleventh century this basic undergarment became more elaborate; the neckline was gathered with cords within a decorative band of piping that was secured at the front, later replaced with a button and loop fastening. The wrists of the sleeves were similarly decorated, and the embroidery of both the sleeves and the neckbands was allowed to show when the lady was completely dressed. The fabric at the shoulder and upper arm and just above the wrist area of the sleeves was pleated or gathered to ensure a close fit. Such garments were usually made of linen, but fine fabrics such as wool or silk were also used to make a chemise, a variation which, along with the careful fit-

ting and elaborate decoration, emphasized the aristocratic woman's access to materials and labor, as well as the use of servants to help her with dressing and undressing. While peasant women wore a single dress or *cote* over the chemise, aristocratic female outerwear consisted of a series of gowns. Directly over the chemise was worn a second long garment known as the undergown. It, too, was made of fine fabric, but was more closely fitted than the outer gown and had tight sleeves. The over-gown was long, reaching at least to the floor, although in periods of costume excess, these gowns sometimes dragged on the ground or extended behind the wearer in trains that also required servants to manage during court appearances. In the second half of the eleventh century, women wore gowns arranged with easy folds of fabric encasing the body; both upper and lower portions of these gowns were generously cut. The outer and most formal garment was a mantle, fastened with cords or a brooch (jeweled pin).

**THE SHAPED GOWN.** By the late twelfth century, though both men and women wore several layers of gowns, a definite difference between the male and female silhouette began to appear in representations of these garments in works of art. Women's robes now fitted very tightly at the waist and were made to outline the figure through tight bodices with a row of ornamental buttons, tight sleeves, and the girdle, a wide belt-like accessory that went round the hips several times and then was tied off in front with the ends or tags often elaborated to considerable length, even touching the feet. It was during this period that women's costume was amply represented, and sometimes exaggerated, in the newly fashionable medieval romances—long episodic narrative poems describing the adventures of knights, both amorous and military, and their rescues of women from oppressors. The romances often detailed what women were wearing and described ornamentation, such as the embroidery on belts and coifs or head coverings. The *Romance of the Rose*, in its continuation by Jean de Meun (born c. 1237), also discussed the newest styles and fashions for women. Such works showed women how to *wear* their clothes. They provided instructions on how to make the waist of a gown appear smaller by the way the mantle was held, how to lift the skirts so as to reveal a small foot, and how to swing the hips slightly while walking. Notable among mid-thirteenth-century authorial comments was Jean de Meun's observation that the contemporary woman "through the streets [should] go/ With most seductive motion, not too stiff ... / So nobly sway her shoulders and her hips/ That men no motion could believe more fair" (Robbins, 282). In this period of increased awareness of the female form, the

ease of the older styles disappeared and the waistlines of the gowns themselves were tightened, first by the use of stiffer fabric, and later by means of a laced corset worn under gowns made of more delicate cloth. These robes were called *bliaut*, a term which could refer either to a knight's outer tunic, or a lady's outer dress, both of costly cloth. Sometimes, especially in Middle High German, the term could simply mean rich fabric, such as silk, satin, or velvet imported from the Orient. This cloth was frequently woven with gold thread and embroidered with gems. In its most distinctive use to refer to a woman's garment, *bliaut* signifies a gown of the richest fabrics, banded at neck and wrist edges with strips of embroidery, fur-lined, having a tightly-laced (at the sides) elongated bodice, a full, long skirt, and sleeves of various styles. In this manner the upper body silhouette was redefined.

**GIRDLES, SLEEVES, AND HEADDRESSES.** Typically, female fashions in the Middle Ages changed more in the small detail than in the nature of the garments themselves, since vanity in female costume was considered by preachers to be a dangerous vice. Moreover, the major changes in length that characterized male costume were not adopted by women, who never revealed their legs (though their dresses had trains of varying lengths). Thus, it is to matters of silhouette and accent that women generally turned their attention. Belts, called girdles, were introduced into women's costumes during the century following the Battle of Hastings (1066) and emphasized the fitted styles that gave the female figure more of an outline than in previous centuries. Girdles were constructed as twisted cords, sometimes knotted, made from gold or silver wire and dyed wool or silks. These cords were periodically bound with ornamental brooches or emblematic enameled or jeweled bosses, or convex raised metal engraved or otherwise ornamented and sometimes finished off with tassels. It was customary to pass the doubled decorative cords around the body, to pull the ends through the loop, and to allow them to hang down the front of the gown. Simpler girdles were also constructed from a length of fabric decorated with stitching of a contrasting color. Queen Matilda of England willed one of her two girdles made of gold thread—this one with emblematic ornamentation—to the Abbey of the Holy Trinity to use for hanging a lamp in front of the altar. She left her gold embroidered mantle to this same abbey, to be turned into a cope or religious vestment. By the mid-twelfth century another element of female costume that seems to have been the subject of elaboration was the sleeve. Often sleeves were wide, contributing to the overall bulk of the ensemble, and the cuffs hung so low below the

## CINDERELLA'S Furry Slippers

Among the new fashion trends developing in Europe during the period of William II's reign in England was the mantle. These outer garments, always made of the most luxurious fabrics available—some imported from the Orient—became even more elaborate with the innovative addition of a second layer composed of the most expensive furs, especially ermine, *vair*, and *miniver*, which symbolized the owner's wealth and power. Ermine is a white fur with black spots created by sewing together the gray backs and white bellies of whole squirrels; it was called *vair* in France from the Latin *varius*, meaning "speckled" or "changeable." A closely related aristocratic fur, *minever*, is a "fabric" made only from a squirrel's white belly area or constructed from this belly fur with only an edge of the gray flank fur.

The association of the fur called "*vair*" with aristocratic clothing contributed to one of the most distinctive (and rather odd) details in the modern version of the fairy tale "Cinderella." Apparently the strange "glass slippers" that children have accepted for generations without question were, in the original folk story, slippers made of fur or "*vair*." But when Charles Perrault (1628–1723) wrote the story down for publication, an error was made in transcription, and the word became "*verre*," meaning glass. Thus, one of the most fascinating elements of this popular story was the result of a mistranslation of a medieval fashion term.

wrists that they touched the ground and were knotted to shorten them. These sleeves were sewn onto the costume with each wearing, so that it was possible to have a number of different variations that could be added to a basic costume. Since the color of these removable sleeves often contrasted with the color of the robe, it was possible for a lady to choose for herself a distinctive sleeve that could be given to a suitor as a token to be worn on his helm or used as a pennon, sometimes at tournaments, reflecting in this way a similarity to the coat of arms or blazon that identified individual knights. A final detail of female fashion was the headdress, which for noblewomen from 1066 to 1154 was in the form of a veil made from fine linen or cambric in a variety of shapes; these veils hid the wearer's hair and sometimes also hid the neck with draped fabric. Called by the Normans a *cowrechef*, such a veil might also be worn with an end

flung across the shoulder. A later variation, in the thirteenth century, was the *caul*, a fine linen cap fastened under the chin.

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## INTERCULTURAL INFLUENCES AND REGIONAL DISTINCTIONS

**THE ISLAMIC INFLUENCE.** The First Crusade (1095–1099), in which a mostly French Christian army traveled to the Holy Land to recover it from Islamic control, had markedly influenced noble dress by the mid-twelfth century, ushering in a new "Eastern" style. At this time there was already evidence of Byzantine influence in outer tunics. As returning crusaders also brought back ideas of Islamic dress cut and fabrics woven in the Mediterranean area and far East, Islamic influence may be found in European dress at least as early as the first part of the twelfth century. These included cloth specific to the East such as damask, brocade, and muslin—thin fabric of silk and gold from Mosul in what is now Iraq and other very fine and thin gauze-like materials; they tended to replace the heavier, stiffer fabrics and garments of Byzantine cut. Other fabrics of this type were those woven of cotton from Egypt and the cloth called in Old French "camlet," which was believed to be woven with part camel hair in Syria and Asia Minor, the predecessor of modern "camel hair" fabrics for top coats. Eastern silken fabrics, some of which were manufactured in Islamic workshops in Sicily, remained permanently in European costume throughout the Middle Ages. Other features adapted from Islamic dress and merged with customary European styles were the decorative bands on garment edges and top portions of the sleeves, known as *tiraz*. These bands frequently featured embroidered written charac-

ters, often in strange alphabets. Another major change from the old eleventh-century T-shaped garments was the adoption of the dropped shoulder seam in male tunics. In the northern portion of Europe, the long, fuller gown similar to Islamic cut—which had already been accepted in the south—was adopted at the close of the eleventh century by Normans imitating what was called "Saracen" or Islamic dress, understood as quite exotic.

**ENGLAND AND REGIONAL DISTINCTION.** By 1204, the Crusaders had captured Constantinople, ending the cultural dominance of Byzantine and Islamic styles, and in time this Eastern city ceased to be a major influence on the clothing of the European nobility. Dress in Western Europe was then subject to tastes and trends developing within individual national borders; differences in styles now reflected geography. As an island nation, separated from the rest of Europe by the English Channel, England provides early examples of trends in dress that were unique to the local political and economic conditions. Male dress, for example, became more ornate during King John's reign (1199–1216), which was known for its extravagant spending on elaborate clothing, but the women of the court did not follow this trend. Instead their dress retained the styles previously instituted by the highly respected former Queen Eleanor (c. 1170), who preferred simplicity. Henry III's reign, beginning in 1216, ushered in a period of costume featuring unpretentious cut and fabric for both the nobility and moneyed commoners. Indeed, between 1220 and 1270 these plainer garments made it more difficult to distinguish between the nobility and merchants, or between shopkeepers and peasants. Of particular influence in this change from courtly ostentation to simplicity was King Louis IX of France, who reigned from 1226 to 1270. Much revered for his piety during his lifetime, he was canonized as Saint Louis in 1297. Through his marriage to the sister of the English queen Eleanor, his influence spread to both English and French courts, with nobles adopting Louis's preference for simple clothing. At the same time, the flourishing woolen industries in England and the Netherlands and various technological advances (in carding and spinning wool, and in looms) increased fabric production and availability. Woolens began to be dyed in yardage, and blue, green, and brunette (a dark brownish red color from woad and the ground-up shells of a small Eastern beetle) dyes were particularly popular. Twill weaves of an extreme fineness developed along with heavy felt-like wools used in the manufacture of hats. Thus court dress during this period, while simple in style, was renowned for the fine quality of the fabrics. Draped in various ways, long robes that fit easily upon the body without the use of excessive fabric were a distin-

guishing feature of this costume. They created an effect of sobriety and dignity while maintaining a quiet magnificence. Such a style also found favor with King Edward I of England (r. 1272–1307), whose personal humility inspired fashions exhibiting even greater simplicity.

**DESIGNS FROM NATURE IN FRANCE.** Styles in decoration evolved across the centuries as did fashion itself. In the thirteenth century, for example, Gothic art emphasized the beauty of the natural world in its details of flowers and animal life richly distributed throughout the decorative arts of Europe. Cathedrals both inside and out sported carved and sometimes painted friezes showing real and imagined animal and plant forms. And plant and animal life accurately drawn from nature began to appear in the margins and in the bows of letters like O, B, and D in the script of painted manuscripts across Western Europe. This appreciation of beauty found a parallel in the dress of the nobility, in the textures and patterns of fabrics utilized, the silhouettes developed, the patterns of embroidery, and the increasing amounts of additional metallic and jeweled decoration, often in designs representing the beauties of nature. One of the major literary works reflecting the incorporation of natural motifs into fashion is the *Romance of the Rose*, begun by Guillaume de Lorris and completed by Jean de Meun. Guillaume's portion of the poem describes a costume covered in every part with images of geometric shapes (lozenges, escutcheons or small shields), lions, birds, leopards, as well as broom and periwinkle flowers, violets, and other yellow, indigo, or white flowers and rose leaves (ll. 876–98, Robbins, 19). This trend toward naturalistic representation in weaving and embroidery patterns continued into the fourteenth century, by which time it had influenced English fashion as well. The silken band or banner that encircles the hero's helmet in the Middle English romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (written about 1370) is decorated in such a way that it resembles a border for an illuminated manuscript. It was "embroidered and bound with the finest gems/ on the broad silk fabric/ and over the seams were birds such as parrots painted with periwinkles and turtle doves and true love flowers thickly entwined."

**THE GERMAN DECORATIVE TRADITION.** German aristocratic fashion differed somewhat from that of other European courts because, owing to lengthy civil wars and a series of dukedoms rather than a more centralized governmental structure, Germany did not develop a single court style which could respond to trends elsewhere in Europe. Unlike the French and English decorative traditions, which tended to emphasize designs from nature, the German tradition leaned more heavily towards geo-

metric shapes, a feature still seen in the so-called "hex" patterns of Pennsylvania "Dutch" (that is, German) barns and quilts. Throughout the history of German costume, the outermost garments are characterized by decorative patterns, either in the weave or pattern of the fabric used, or in decorative woven or embroidered bands. Such bands appear at the mid-calf or mid-thigh level on gowns of the Byzantine style or, later in the twelfth century, as a decorative placket extending downward from ornamental circular yokes or collars, usually ending at mid-chest. Customarily two tunics were worn, with the outermost being made of patterned fabric with a lower border and the one underneath being fuller and longer, made of plain linen; the wealthy sometimes wore a third and plainer tunic overall, with an undecorated lower edge. The preference for decorative patterns may be seen in early thirteenth-century German costumes in stained glass windows in Augsburg Cathedral, which feature patterns of *diaper* (repeated diamond shapes), *foliates* (leaf-shapes), and *quatrefoils* (flowers or leaves with four petals) linked by squares and stripes. Such ornamentation increases in flamboyance throughout the thirteenth century, as can be seen in the painted marble or alabaster effigy of Graf Wiprecht von Groitzsch (1230–1240) at the Klosterkirche of Pegau, near Leipzig. In the effigy he wears a red mantle and a blue tunic, both bejeweled, a fur tippet (a stole with hanging ends), and an elaborate girdle at his waist. By the late thirteenth century, some overcoats featured short sleeves with a slit for the arm that allowed the sleeve to hang empty and free of the body, thus showing the arm dressed only in the tunic's tight sleeve. In addition, buttons could be both ornamental and functional along the neck placket and side slits. The German preference for colorful, patterned fabrics continued into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

**THE ITALIAN PENINSULA AND THE MANUFACTURE OF SILK.** As early as the time of the Carolingian Empire, Mediterranean styles and Islamic textiles were arriving in Europe, not only directly, by way of East-West trade routes and the return of Crusaders, but also by way of the Italian peninsula. Sicily, an island off the tip of what is now southern Italy, had been controlled by the Muslims until it was reconquered between 1060 and 1091 by the Norman French, and thus it continued to serve as one of the chief geographical areas of contact with the Islamic world. From an early period, many textiles traveled northward from the island to the Italian city-states and the rest of the continent. This region, moreover, early developed a silk manufacturing industry with imported mulberry worms from China. The development of silk manufacturing in Sicily and also in the city of Lucca—which became known especially for

## WOOL and Other Textiles

### Sources of Raw Materials.

Medieval European costume employed three main materials—wool, linen, and silk—in varying qualities. Silks had been imported from the Near East since the time of imperial Rome, and sericulture—the growing of silk worms—had reached Sicily by the tenth century, though fine silks continued to come from Byzantium through the medieval period. Linen was grown within Europe, and cotton, coming from Egypt by way of Italy after the Crusades (later produced in Swabia in Germany), began to be mixed with linen to create a popular fabric called *fustian* by the thirteenth century. Like linen, wool was a native fiber, and wool constituted one of the most important commodities in European trade. England, particularly in the north and west of the country, exported raw wool to France for the actual production of cloth in the south around Toulouse, though France was also a large raw wool producer, especially in Flanders, Artois, and Picardy. The actual wool merchants, at least up to the thirteenth century, were the Flemings from Ypres, Ghent, and Bruges, in what would today be called Belgium. By the fifteenth century, Spain and Germany overtook England as raw wool suppliers, while England began to excel as an actual manufacturer of woollen cloth and soon outpaced all other nations in the production of fine woollen fabrics for luxury clothing.

### Making Woollen Cloth.

The process by which wool moved from sheep to fine dress or robe was a complex and lengthy one. The English wool brokers sold bulk wool in sacks of 346 pounds to *drapers*, as they were called, who then subcontracted the wool to workers (usually women) who washed, beat, and sorted the wool fibers, often at home in cottage industries, a practice that continued in the northwest of England until the mid-nineteenth century. Sometimes these fibers were dyed blue with a plant called woad, imported from northern Italy, which allowed them better to retain other dye colors, such as reds of varying types (sometimes called “scarlet,” though this term also denoted a type of material), a brownish tone (very common for the garments of agricultural laborers), and, by the late Middle Ages, rich blues and black for upper-class clothing. The next link in the chain was the weaver draper, who again subcontracted

the fibers to combers and carders (who worked on the shorter fibered wools); these persons readied the material for the spinners. The wool then went back to the weaver drapers, who paid off the artisans at so much per pound, and on to wooden looms—often water powered—where clothing fabrics like worsteds and more expensive broadcloths and serges were woven. Wool could also, in its finer grades, be ornamented with silk and even metallic threads and have shapes of other fabric sewn on. Yet another step for some grades of woollen cloth was fulling, which involved shrinking the cloth and the addition of a sort of chalk called fuller’s earth to the fabric to compact and stiffen it. The cloth then went back to the weaver drapers who had the cloth dyed in a mix of pigments and alum from Asia Minor in bolts of a certain length and width (called *ells* in England and *toises* in France) and marketed it to merchant clothiers, where it eventually became clothing in the shops of tailors.

### Competing Textiles.

Though woollen cloth was a staple for outer garments for all levels of society, it was expensive because of the many duties and taxes that were collected as it moved from its place of origin as a raw material (for example, England) to the cloth-making regions (usually France) to the actual merchants (in Flanders) and then to the consumer. For this reason, as well as for comfort, undergarments—the chemise or long smock worn by both men and women—were made of linen, a fiber derived from the flax plant, which grew well in France and Italy. It was very durable and less irritating next to the skin. Silk, on the other hand, was preferable to wool for luxury clothing because it was thin and supple, and it could be woven to create shimmering patterns and highlights. By the 1370s there was a taste for very ornate textiles and many new types of fabric became popular. Some of these had come from the East with the returning Crusaders, such as *samite*, a densely woven silk, and *cendal*, a thinner silk much like the silks used in women’s clothing today. Others were damask, brocade, and velvet, a fabric soon reproduced in Florence. These Eastern fabrics were imitated in France in lower-cost examples by the 1460s. Still, though silks and silk blends offered greater versatility and visual splendor, many medieval wools were quite beautiful, and wool had the added advantage of being durable and having a high insulative factor. In an age when housing lacked central heating, especially in northern Europe, the use of wool and wool blends was important to help keep the wearer warm.

its fabrics made of silk blended with other fibers—combined with the activity of Venetian merchants, who were importing silks from China, to create a strong taste for silk in both men’s and women’s attire at least as early

as the twelfth century. Evidence of Eastern influence from this early period of Sicilian fabric manufacture survives in a piece of silk fabric, now preserved in the Fabric Museum in Lyon, France, which shows what appear to

be peacocks and dragon-tailed animals surrounding a floral medallion of the sort found on oriental carpets. Though the technology had been acquired from the Far East, the designs were increasingly blended to include Mediterranean patterns of all kinds, especially combinations mixing European designs with Muslim motifs. Merchants distributed these fabrics widely throughout Europe, Britain, and Scandinavia.

**THE ITALIAN PENINSULA AS AN EXPORTER OF STYLE.** Not only Eastern fabrics, but also fashion itself sometimes moved from south to north during this period. One method of distribution was through aristocratic marriages, as was the case with King Robert II the Pious (972–1031) and Constance of Arles, who were married in 1005; their union brought Mediterranean (in this case, southern French) styles worn by the bride's courtiers to northern France, and these were important enough to be commented on by writers describing the event. These styles involved fabrics with many pleats, a sort of waffle-like pattern called *goffering* crimped into robes more fitted than usual. Indeed, fashion from Italian city-states and the Mediterranean was distinctive from an early period and was exported to France, the Netherlands, England, and Germany. These exports include both actual garments and drawings brought back by courtiers and diplomats on their travels and also renditions of costume in illuminated manuscripts from Italian workshops. One of the distinctive features of fourteenth-century female costume in Italy was the head-dress and hairstyle, which was arranged in a large ball or "balza" at the back of the head, covered with braided bands of fabric and light gauzes. Men in the late fourteenth century had a rather square profile with wide shoulders accentuated by padding in rolls over the shoulders, with a full-length or thigh-length tunic and most of the weight and value of the garment concentrated in the chest and shoulders through banding, piping, folds, and rolls. One of the most interesting examples of exported Italian fashion was a trend towards black silks, which was developed in Italy to distinguish members of the upper middle classes from true aristocrats, who alone could wear bright colors such as scarlet and blue. Before long, black did not have good social connotations, and the Italians exported their black silk garments and dark furs to go with them to European courts, who found them to be very original and were not attuned to the negative social implications of the color black in Italy. Though black silks were primarily used for male doublets and gowns, women also wore them, and the fashion for damasks, velvets, and brocades of black silk with a mantle or trimming of sable (a very dark fur from the area of what is now Russia) was popular among aristo-



Prophet Isaiah in decorated costume, stained glass window, Augsburg Cathedral, Augsburg, Germany, 1130. ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY.

crats in the fifteenth century. Thus, in the fourteenth century a strong taste for black developed throughout Europe among the aristocracy in marked opposition to the taste for bright colors that had prevailed from about 1330 onward. In this, as in other fashions, Italy seems to have been the source of a major trend.

## THE Battle Between Blue, Red, and Black

### The Rise of Black

Clothing colors have long indicated social class, and in the late Middle Ages this was particularly true of the colors blue, red, and black, though it was only during the fifteenth century that black became a competing force against red and blue in bourgeois and aristocratic fashion. Among the most prominent medieval wearers of black were King Charles VI of France (1368–1422), Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy (1396–1467), and King René of Anjou (1409–1480), all of whom dressed in black throughout their adult lives and helped to give the fashion social preeminence. Yet, by an irony of history, their taste for black did not originate with the aristocracy but rather with the upper bourgeoisie in Italy, who in the fourteenth century were forbidden by law to wear garments of “scarlet” or luxurious blues. Although the dull blacks of earlier years had never been an appealing alternative, the medieval dyeing trade was becoming more “industrialized,” allowing artisans to create richer and more luminous hues, including wools of a deeper and more striking black. As parallel technological advances among weavers increased the availability of rich black serges and gabardines, a vigorous trade in black cloth developed to meet the demand. Soon the fashion for black moved from Italy to France, England, Germany, and Spain, and the color became a court fashion, appearing in linens, silks, and woolens as well as in black or very dark furs called sable.

### Luxurious Scarlet

By the mid-fourteenth century, then, black was a competing color with “scarlet,” a term which could refer to several different hues of red as well as to fabrics of various colors but of a generally luxurious appearance, and the dyes used to create them. Authentic scarlet fabric was very expensive to own, as it was created by a special dye called kermes that was laboriously made from the dried shells of a small beetle. Other dyes to make less fancy forms of red involved the use of madder, a plant material common in Western Europe. In either case, however, dyeing fabric red required an additional process with a

chemical called a mordant, literally something “biting” (typically urine, lime, or vinegar) which allowed the red pigment to enter the fibers of the fabric and bond with them. Accordingly, scarlet was a color reserved for royalty and persons of high rank. In Portugal, for example, only members of the royal family were allowed to wear it. Red was also the preferred color of royalty in Italy and Germany.

### Royal Blue

Early blue fabric was first used in the costume of servants and workmen (a use which it still has in France today and which lingers in the American phrase “blue collar”), and it typically denoted low social status. But again technology played a role in changing aristocratic perceptions of the color’s symbolic value. The first blue fabrics were rather pale and lusterless, but as techniques developed for producing blue in more vivid shades (using indigo from India), the color (eventually known as “royal blue”) competed with red, and later black, in status. Blue was associated with the Virgin Mary, considered the religious patron of France, and pictures of her in manuscript painting showing her in blue robes helped to make the color fashionable. Perhaps even more important was the appearance of blue as part of the French royal family’s coat of arms, where a blue ground with gold lilies (*fleurs-de-lis*) became standard from the end of the twelfth century. In scenes from the magnificent manuscript called the *Très Riches Heures* (1416), not only Jean, duke of Berry, but even his horses are draped in blue fabrics with gold *fleurs-de-lis* as the duke and his entourage go out riding. Well before this time, blue had become a color for others to imitate. As the dyers who made red fabric saw their livelihood threatened (for dyers were forbidden by guild regulations to make several colors in one workshop), they responded with propaganda campaigns against the dyers who worked in blue, and actual violence between these “colors” often occurred. Hence, by the mid-fourteenth century—the period when we begin to find the great interest in colors and extravagance of costume developing—there was a true combat between red, black, and blue which was to have important ramifications for the next two centuries of fashion. Of the three colors, only black retains today some elements of its medieval significance, indicating, for example, not only somberness in mourning, but also social respectability and high status as it is worn for formal occasions in tuxedos and formal dresses.

**SPANISH COSTUME.** The area now known as Spain is a particularly interesting case for the development of fashion because of its relative geographic isolation. As a peninsula separated from the rest of Europe by the Pyrenees mountains, with a culture that had long been under Islamic influence, Spain developed some fashion

trends peculiar to the region, though they could be exported. In the early Middle Ages, dress for the Spanish noble class was modeled on that of ancient Rome, but constructed with exotic fabrics derived from the Islamic presence there. Both male and female Spanish costume resembled that of other Europeans in having as its basic

combination a long tunic with tight sleeves worn under a second long tunic with wide sleeves. During the tenth century, however, men wore a mantle with a slit for the left arm, and for their military dress, tunics with striped fabrics. The outer tunic was sometimes sleeveless, and both “keyhole”-shaped neck openings and armholes were decorated with braid. A distinctive cape or mantle, like the surplice a modern Catholic priest would put on to say Mass, was worn over the back and chest, a style adopted by women as well. In the thirteenth century, ladies’ tunics covered their feet, while those for noblemen ended at mid-calf, allowing full visibility of their pointed-toe leather shoes, which were often decorated with gold braid. At this time, noticeable ball-shaped buttons or rosettes ornamented the neck and wrists of the tunics. A distinctively Spanish thirteenth-century fashion trend was the custom of slashing or opening the over-garment under the arms to show the layer below in a contrasting color; lined mantles completed the costume. By the mid-fourteenth century, Spanish nobles had adopted the so-called “short costume” of doublet and hose, worn with long pointed toe shoes, which dominated medieval Europe and Britain from about 1330 onward; it appears that this combination had actually originated in Spain much earlier as a military fashion worn by soldiers in Aragon, after which the concept had taken hold in Naples in Italy, and was later exported from there to France and beyond. The elite retained their semicircular cloak at hip length, decorated with large buttons from neck to breast. In addition to the tighter, shorter fashions, nobles in Spain also continued to wear the two tunics of the older style, but with narrower shoulders, topped with a semicircular flap of fabric reaching to the elbow as a sleeve, and a skirt that gradually flared to the hemline. Though Spanish female costume remained much the same from the early to the late Middle Ages, by the late fifteenth century women did wear a hoop skirt which belled out below the waist through the use of stiffeners, a fashion not yet seen elsewhere. And by the end of the period covered in this chapter, all Spanish garment styles underwent the variety of constant changes in tightness and looseness, and (for men) in lengths of garments and in amount of decoration common in all European courts. Throughout the entire era, cities and regions such as Valencia, Catalonia, Castile, Barcelona, Andalusia, and other places produced fabrics that blended Christian European motifs with Islamic and Far Eastern designs, and Spain retained these patterns long after Moorish control of the country ended in 1492. Catalonian woollens were of the finest quality in the late 1400s and throughout the 1500s, and a thriving silk industry evolved by the late fifteenth century. The peak of such luxury weaving was reached in the production of

silk “cloths of gold.” Hence, Spanish costume was marked by a fondness for richly patterned fabrics and bright colors, such as white, red, pale blue, pink, light violet, and sea green. These were deviations from the older primary colors in use in the rest of Europe (red, yellow, and blue), and even from the secondary colors (orange, green, and violet), and suggested a subtle refinement of taste. A favored fabric design was that of a large pomegranate, woven in both damask and velvet, one example having a background highlighted with metallic thread on which the image appears in cut velvet. Many of these Spanish fabrics reached Europe and the British Isles through merchants, and London livery companies—trade and religious fraternal groups wearing the same costume or “livery” as a sort of insignia—used some of them for palls or coverings for the casket during processions at the funerals of their members.

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### THE NEW SILHOUETTE FOR ARISTOCRATIC MEN

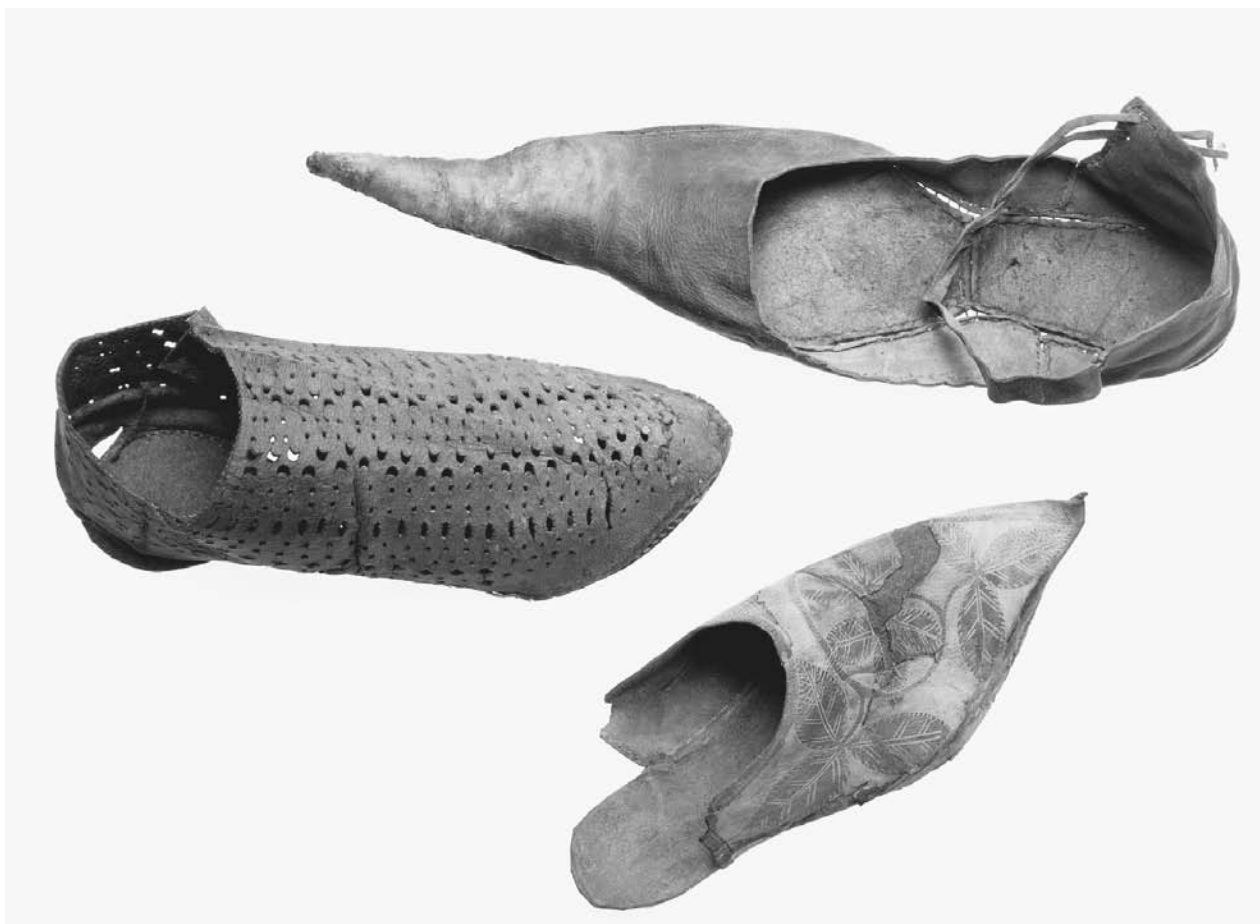
**BODIES ON DISPLAY.** The period around 1330 saw the beginning of Italianate influence on both English and French fashion styles. At this time noblemen abandoned their long robes and, for public appearances, wore short doublets or padded jackets that fit close to the body with leg-hugging hose revealing and emphasizing the thighs and buttocks. This new style first vied in popularity with the long robes worn at the beginning of the century, but, by its end, had fully replaced the traditional fashion among younger men, especially those with ties to the most fashionable courts. The shorter



garments were initially knee-length, but rose throughout the century to mid-thigh and then nearly to the waistline. In the form known as a *cotehardie*, its distinguishing features were the row of buttons that ran from the neckline to the low waistline, and the elbow-length sleeves from which a long extension of fabric known as a “tippet” hung down. Some costume historians have seen the shortening and exhibitionism of male costume in this period as a reflection of the new interest in the unclothed, partially clothed, or sexualized body becoming evident in late medieval culture. Though there are no literary or philosophical documents that can be cited to support any general consciousness of such an interest, it is certainly present in a variety of medieval artistic manifestations. The rising interest in naturalism (the focus on natural and organic processes and forms) fostered by the study of Aristotle’s works in the medieval university, the practice of dissecting bodies in late medieval medical education, and the growing respectability of Greek and Roman mythology with its attention to unclad nymphs and demigods as a subject for literary and artistic imitation all played a part in the idea of a

revealed body, especially at the beginning of the fifteenth century. A good example is the medieval revival of the classical myth of Pygmalion, which was depicted frequently in wall paintings, tapestry, poetry, and manuscript illumination. The story in the Tenth Book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* recounts how a bachelor artist, Pygmalion, made a beautiful ivory statue of a woman with whom he fell in love. He spent much of his time clothing and ornamenting the carving, bringing it presents, and speaking to it. He prayed to Venus to animate this statue and his wish was granted. Among other important medieval representations of female and male bodies are the naked “Venus rising from the waves” scenes of mythographic treatises like the *Fulgentius Metaforalis* in Rome and the famous Zodiac Man in Jean de Berry’s *Très Riches Heures*. The last is a miniature showing an unclothed young man, parts of whose body are keyed to the constellations and planets that have astrological influence on them. In a culture where monastic moralism discouraged excessive interest in the flesh, such “distant” or mythological miniatures provided acceptable spaces in which the body, safely dehumanized, could be examined.

**PADDING AND LACING.** In the fourteenth century, it was customary for knights to wear “soft armor” under their mail or plate armor; in keeping with the continuing identity of the nobility with their military origins, one form of the new short tunic—called the doublet or *pourpoint* (also called *gambeson*)—came to be padded with various fibers, such as hemp, cotton, or silk, and then quilted. In 1322 the Armourers’ Company in London laid down specifications for this garment: that it be covered in *sendal* (a silken fabric) and that it be padded with only new cloths of silk and *cadar* (a name for cotton, which was a new and exotic material now being imported from Egypt to the West). To eliminate extra fabric that bunched beneath the arm, this close-fitting doublet had inset sleeves, replacing the older garment that had been cut in a T-shape. The outermost layer of these garments was composed of the costliest of fabrics from the thirteenth century onward; they were often embroidered, and they were worn as ordinary dress before and after a nobleman was armed. Thus, as the new short costume came to be worn independent of the armor it originally had supplemented, this military necessity became high fashion for the courtier. Later, doublets came to be laced to increase their tightness as part of the new silhouette for men. In the fifteenth century, the doublet and hose were the premier garments of male attire, and a variety of over-garments were also worn, such as the *paletot* (a short-sleeved, short and loose gown for men).



Poulaines or Polish pointed shoes, London, Museum of London, 1380. BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

**THE HOUPPELANDE.** Over the ensemble of doublet (pourpoint), hose, and poulaines (shoes with very long pointed toes), nobles wore a long-sleeved, generally high-collared robe-like garment called the *houppelande*. The *houppelande* is sometimes described as a “hybrid garment” because, toward the end of the fourteenth century, it replaced the cote, the surcoat, and mantle that were all parts of the traditional fourteenth-century “robe.” Some historians of costume have felt that the *houppelande* was fostered by the guilds of tailors, who saw a threat to their economic security as the older style of long costume became obsolete except among older men and those needing ceremonial garments, such as jurists. The style that preceded the *houppelande* is well described in the Middle English romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* where the hero wears a “bliaut of blue that reached to the ground/ his surcote fit him well and was softly furred inside/ and its hood that hung from his shoulder/ was adorned with ermine.” In any case, the *houppelande* quickly became very popular. While the formal *houppelande* was quite long and

voluminous, a shorter version, called the *courtepie* or *haincelin*, developed as a popular variation. This more abbreviated garment reached halfway between ankle and knee, and an even shorter version hit some inches above the knee. Such a garment appears in miniatures for the *Tacuinum Sanitatis*, a treatise on health popular at the end of the Middle Ages. Painted about 1390, they show men collecting roses for medicinal use; their *haincelins* illustrate the fashion for “dagged” (also called “cut-work”) sleeve and hem edges, scalloped in fanciful shapes such as those of leaves, points (known as “vandykes”), or the square indentations on castle rooftops and towers called battlements or crenellations. The longer and more formal version of the *houppelande*, which was ground length or even trailing, also appears in these manuscripts. A third version, worn by the figure of the sun personified as a stylish young man from John de Foxton’s *Liber Cosmographiae* (1408), features a high collar that fanned out from the neck and funnel-shaped sleeves that become increasingly wide at the wrist end, billowing out into the shape of medieval bag

## JOAN of Arc and Cross-dressing

More famous than almost any woman of the Middle Ages, Joan of Arc is still well known today as the female warrior who led French troops to victory against the English in the Hundred Years' War. Claiming to have been guided by the divine voices of Saint Margaret and Saint Catherine since the age of thirteen, Joan, at age seventeen, left her home in a village in northwestern France, put on men's clothes to identify herself as a military leader, introduced herself to the yet uncrowned future king of France, and turned the tide in favor of the French at the siege of Orléans in 1429. In the version of the story most people remember, her charismatic presence continued to inspire confidence among the French, leading quickly to Charles VII's coronation; then, at the height of her power, after only a year on the battlefield, she was captured by the Burgundians and turned over to the English to be tried. After a lengthy and brutal Inquisition, during which she became ill and recanted her supposed heresy, then relapsed and was condemned, she was burned at the stake.

While most discussions of Joan over the centuries have focused on the trial's inquiry into the validity of the voices she claimed to be hearing, an equally important issue at the time was her decision to wear male dress, which was seen as an overturning of natural order as defined in the biblical book of Deuteronomy: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 22:5). Although there was some precedent among earlier holy women to suggest that she might have been forgiven for wearing men's clothing for practical reasons—either to protect her virginity while she was living among soldiers or to make it easier for her to ride a horse—she never offered any such explanation. Her insistence that she wore such clothing at the command of God and his angels, and her refusal to wear women's clothing even while in prison, suggest that she saw men's attire as part of her identity, a symbol of her calling.

The meaning of her clothing is complicated by the fact that Joan—an illiterate peasant who had never even ridden a horse before leaving home—chose to dress not

as a simple soldier, but as something of a fashionable dandy. Indeed, one of the charges against her was an accusation of idolatry, a worship of herself. The transcript of the trial indicates that she wore "shirt, breeches, doublet, with hose joined together, long and fastened to said doublet by twenty points, long leggings laced on the outside, a short mantle reaching the knee, or thereabouts, a close-cut cap, tight-fitting boots or buskins, long spurs, sword, dagger, breastplate, lance and other arms in the style of a man-at-arms." The description goes on to mention the sumptuousness of her attire, including cloth of gold, furs, and a surcoat open on the sides. Clearly, Joan loved beautiful clothes, perhaps seeing her attire not only as a statement of independence from the restrictions usually put on women, but also as an homage to male heroism and the royal cause she was attempting to support. From the point of view of her inquisitors, however, her short costume connected her with immoral elements of society (as perceived by the ecclesiastical hierarchy) and was a sign of her demonic nature. Her refusal to put on a dress, even when she was promised that she would again be allowed to hear Mass if she gave up her male costume, made her an easy target for charges of witchcraft.

The grandeur of Joan's appearance—supplemented by the acquisition of a fine horse and knightly weapons, all of which she mastered almost immediately—must have contributed substantially to her ability to raise the confidence of the French troops. And when she was rehabilitated at hearings between 1450 and 1456, less than a single generation later, it was this image of her as a warrior, her connection to the reigning king, and her vindication as a leader of a just cause that dominated the proceedings. The fact that she wore male clothing was no longer an issue since now the trial and execution were attributed to the political maneuvering and hatred of the defeated English enemies, sidestepping entirely the question of the validity of her voices and the impropriety of her attire, which was now depicted artistically only as conservative military trappings. Ironically, even when she was canonized as a saint in the early twentieth century, the petitions focused on her marvelous equestrian skills, the supernatural signs at her death, and her loyalty to the church, optimizing her value as a rallying point for French Catholicism in an increasingly secular climate and minimizing the transgressivity of her cross-dressing.

pipes. Belts were also sometimes worn with houpelandes. The garment's elaborate ornamentation included fur, fabric appliqué, and slashes showing the linings of complementary colors. The combination of pouppoint, hose, poulaines, and houpelande peaked as

the ruling fashion at the courts of the English kings Edward III and Richard II in the second half of the fourteenth century. After 1450, the more usual term for the houpelande was "gown," and it was gradually replaced by the robe.

**SHOES WITH POINTED TOES.** Shoes worn with the tight hose of the new silhouette had long, pointed toes. Before 1350 shoes generally conformed to the shape of the foot, reached to the ankles, and had leather lacings, although there were periods when the toe became more pointed, even exaggeratedly so, and then returned to a more natural shape. Following the mid-fourteenth-century fashion shift in masculine dress, shoes were more visible and therefore more important as an element of fashion. *Poulaines*, sometimes called *crackowes*, were a recurring style. These shoes were named after Poland or its capital because they were thought to have originated in the city of Crakow in Poland. Featuring a pointed toe as much as six inches long that had been stuffed with moss, these shoes were an accompaniment to styles that stressed linear proportions. Besides the long toes, shoemakers employed many other decorative techniques appropriate to leather and fabric shoes: embroidery, tooling, paint, dye, cut-out designs, and elaborate buckles. Such highly ornamental shoes were often described in late medieval literature; for example, in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*, Absolon, the clerk and would-be lover of Alisoun, is a dandy who wears shoes with cut-out designs on his shoes' insteps that Chaucer likens to the panels in a stained-glass window in St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

**HAIR, HOODS, AND HATS.** Around 1400 to 1450 it became very fashionable for French, English, and Spanish men to wear an unusual hairstyle in which the hair was cut very short at the sides and nape of the neck, leaving a bowl-like area at the crown and above the ears. It is possible that this style developed in response to the popularity of the "carcaille" collar, very high and fur edged, which was found on the houppelande and other forms of the gown. Joan of Arc adopted this male hairstyle, and this was presented as evidence of her alleged cross-dressing tendencies at her trial. To accompany the new short costume in the fourteenth century, men wore a hood that covered the head and shoulders and revealed more or less of the face according to how it was rolled back. About the end of the twelfth century, the hood had ceased to be attached to the cloak, acquiring a very brief neck cape and becoming a separate piece of male apparel. In the fourteenth century, the hood became a fashion accessory for men, and a tail or band called the "liripipe" developed long enough to be worn as a scarf around the neck, or decoratively arrayed and tied around the head, or hanging down and secured by the girdle. Alternatively, this hood might be folded and tied so as to form a hat. During the fifteenth century, it was arranged over a wicker hoop or roll to give it shape. It competed in popularity with crowned felt hats and sheared or long-furred beaver hats with brims, a fashion

exported from Flanders or modern Belgium, which were increasing in size and amount of decoration. These hats took a variety of shapes and some had conical tops, were embroidered and covered with ribbons, or sported peacock or ostrich feathers attached by jeweled pins.

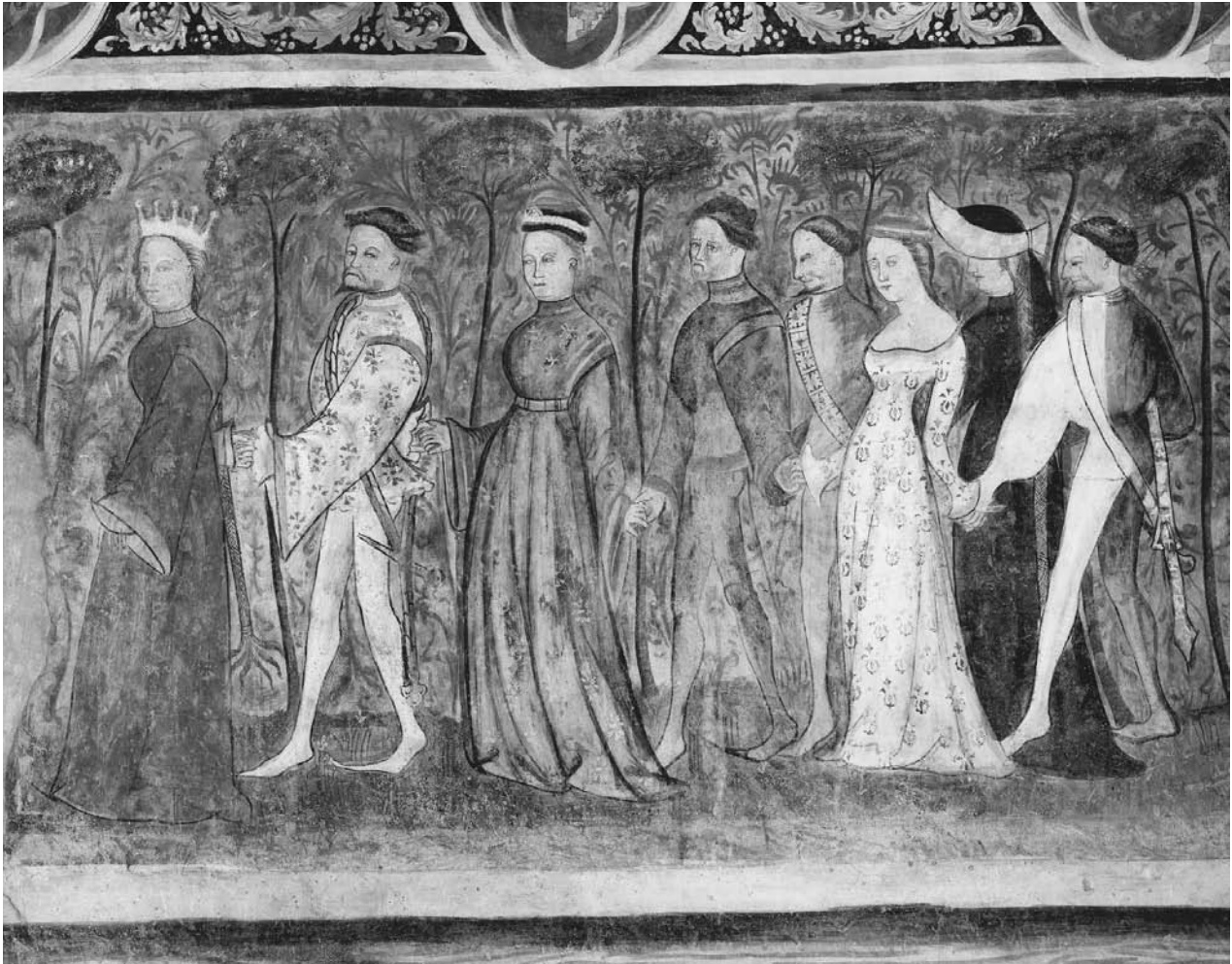
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## A NEW LOOK FOR WOMEN

**NECKLINES AND UPPER BODY COVERINGS.** The most significant change occurring in feminine styles around the middle of the fourteenth century in France and England was a low neckline revealing shoulders and the upper portions of the breasts. One explanation for this change is geographic since the lowering of women's necklines in dresses with very tightly laced or buttoned bodices, tight-fitting sleeves, and A-line skirts was perhaps at first a climate-related trend from Italy. But with the new interest in the human body and the belief that the body was a potential source of beauty, the style spread rapidly northward to cooler regions by the fourteenth century. Now visible were areas of the body that had formerly been hidden by a higher neckline and a *wimple*, a portion of the headdress that covered the whole of the neck and even part of the chin. The contrast between the newer, barer style for fashionable women and the older more conservative style was strikingly expressed in the Middle English romance *Sir Gawain and the Green*



Female dress showing neck and shoulders. Fresco, Runkelstein Castle, Bolzano, South Tyrol, Italy, 14th century. ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY.

*Knight*, where the poet notes of the lady of the house that “her breast and her bright throat were shown bare and gleamed brighter than snow new fallen on hillsides,” in contrast to the witch-like Morgan le Faye who had “a gorger or coverchief over her neck, bound over her black chin with chalk-white veils/ her forehead shrouded in silk.” Such low necklines were a stylistic feature that lasted through the following century. At the same time, for reasons not fully understood, no matter how revealing of the bosom these low necklines were, women’s arms still remained covered by sleeves.

**WOMEN AND THE HOUPPELANDE.** From about 1350 onward, and coinciding with the advent of the new short costume for men, records for expenditures on clothing purchased by various royal courts survive and provide considerable information regarding styles, color, and fabric choices (especially vernacular or non-Latin terms for colors and costume styles), and the particular

court occasions, such as weddings or festivals, for which the items were ordered. Since male fashion seems to have been documented more than female, it is harder to say with certainty exactly what was purchased for women, and costume historians are forced to rely more on manuscript miniatures and other depictions in the decorative arts. Nonetheless, it seems clear that during the period from 1340 to 1485, feminine fashion remained relatively stable, though throughout the fifteenth century women’s necks were decidedly bare, with the exception of a brief period from around 1415 to 1425 when it was fashionable to cover them. In the first quarter of the century, the standard garments for women were the cote and the mantle, with the cotehardie (a sort of vest), the sideless gown or surcoat (adopted from Italy), worn by noblewomen only for the most important court ceremonies. In the second decade of the fourteenth century, the garment formerly reserved for men, the houppelande, with

## TYPES of Medieval Head Coverings

**Almuce:** An elongated, fur-lined hood. Initially worn by the general population, it later became the headdress worn by clerics, especially canons (members of a religious community who lived outside a monastery in “colleges” and were often associated with the daily song rituals in cathedrals).

**Bonnet (English “cap”):** A general French term denoting a small head-covering. This term was used from the early Middle Ages onward.

**Chaperone:** A hood with a lower edge long enough to cover the nape of the neck and upper shoulders, having a circular opening for the face and often a long point, sometimes with a tail or tippet added. In the fifteenth century, the chaperone was often worn in an elaborate curved turban-like arrangement on top of the head, with the tippet wrapped to retain the desired shape.

**Coif:** A small covering for the head, usually of linen, that tied under the chin, resembling a present-day baby bonnet. It was worn beneath other types of headdresses. Dating from the early thirteenth century, it disappeared from men’s fashionable dress by the middle of the fourteenth century, except that it continued to be worn by Sergeants at Law in England even after they became judges. In warmer weather,

nobles often wore other light headgear such as flower wreaths, garlands of peacock feathers, and jeweled circlets.

**Hennin:** Primarily a French headdress of the second half of the fifteenth century, the hennin had a cone-shaped construction with soft veiling attached at the peak that hung behind it in varying lengths, some as long as to the floor. At the time when these were popular, ladies shaved or plucked their foreheads to raise their hairlines, and their tall headdresses emphasized this elongated facial effect.

**Reticulated headdress:** A style in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries characterized by the enclosure of hair arrangements in a net-like receptacle. The forerunner of this headdress was the *caul* or *crispinette*. Reticulated headdresses were made of gold, silver, or silk nets, sometimes set with jewels at intersections, and fashioned into bags to hold the hair in place.

**Wimple:** A small veil or shawl-like garment worn over the neck and upper chest, usually draped, pleated, or tucked. Attached at the sides of the head either by ties or pins, they were worn sometimes as loose coverings and at other times fitted so as to adhere closely to the neck. Wimples were stylish in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, but by the second half of the fourteenth century they were primarily conservative garments worn only by nuns, ladies in mourning, and elderly women.

a variety of fanciful sleeve types, was adopted for feminine wear. This garment’s extravagant decoration, with slashings to show contrasting fabric below and cut-out decoration at very full sleeves and hem, was taken over with slight modification by women in the form of full frontal closure and a train. A variation in the style of the sleeves of the houppelande or robe appeared at the middle of the century when a tight sleeve with a cuff covering the knuckles replaced older sleeve types. The female form of the cotehardie was somewhat less fancy than its male counterpart. It was worn over a “kirtle,” a term originally designating a short linen under-garment, later an overgown, and still later, analogous to the French cote, the outer garment also known as a robe or surcote. Buttons were optional, and no girdle was worn with it.

**HENNINS AND HEADDRESSES.** For the whole of the fifteenth century, very fanciful largely vertical headdresses built up on a framework or understructure were in fashion, perhaps because women wanted to participate in the acquisition of ever-changing fashions but were not permitted to make drastic changes to the length

of their dress. Continuing the trend of decorative excess, women’s fifteenth-century headgear included heart-shaped and “reticulated” headdresses—that is, headdresses characterized by the enclosure of hair arrangements in a stiff net-like receptacle that replaced the earlier “snoods,” or bags, to hold the hair in place. The hennin, primarily a French headdress of the fifteenth century, was a cone-shaped construction with soft, often pleated veiling attached by pins at the peak that hung behind it in varying lengths, some as long as to the floor. The origin of the word “hennin” is unknown; it possibly reflects a contemptuous slur meaning “to whinny,” which was flung by passersby at women wearing such headdresses on the streets. Another form of such headdresses was that called “cornes” (horns), in which the headcovering branched out like a crescent moon in two horn-like protuberances. Towards the end of the medieval period, perhaps responding to the same taste for “verticality” that appeared in Gothic architecture (and also in men’s clothing), women plucked or shaved their hairlines to increase their expanse of foreheads—a style

Cheunsoon Song and Lucy Roy Sibley, "The Vertical Headdress of Fifteenth-Century Northern Europe," *Dress* 16 (1990): 4–15.

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## THE SPREAD OF THE AGE OF FASHION

**DOWNWARD MOVEMENT AND UPWARD PRESSURE.** While at first the development of radically new styles for both aristocratic men and aristocratic women in the mid-fourteenth century probably arose from a combination of intellectual and artistic influences, the increased rate of change and the spread of interest in fashion throughout all levels of society were brought about in large part through a new set of economic and social factors that began to appear around the same time. The significant shift in European styles worn by the fourteenth-century nobility re-instituted class markers in costume that had largely been eliminated in the thirteenth century. Because so many family lines were disrupted by mortality from the bubonic plague, which led to the redistribution of lands and opportunities for the upper bourgeoisie to attain property and power, social status came to be determined in part by the possession of wealth rather than merely by family lineage. The commercial class who survived the plague and became wealthy could afford to imitate the opulent dress of the nobility, and the classes beneath these merchants and citizens, as they were able, followed suit. Likewise, in England, during the Hundred Years' War, the middle and lower classes were able to accomplish such imitation after the English victory over the French at Poitiers (1356) because sumptuous garments flooded the country as a result of booty taken from the defeated French nobility. As the French author Jean Froissart mentions in his *Chronicles of the Hundred Years' War*, from this battle, ransoms were collected for captured French prisoners, dishes made of gold and silver were confiscated, and other treasures were gathered, such as jewels, girdles, and ornaments made of precious metals, and richly furred mantles, all of which the English leader, Edward the Black Prince, shared among his followers. Thus, in the fourteenth century, every time the nobility introduced a new style, there were always immediate imitators whose wearing of the garments took away their appeal and made it necessary for the aristocracy to seek even newer, and often more expensive, fabrics and garments. Some costume historians, for example, have argued that women's headdresses might be used to date costumes with an error factor of only about ten years, presumably because styles in headdresses changed so often and these changes were so well documented that they could be used as dating guidelines. However, this

called "bombé" or "bulged"—and their tall headdresses emphasized this elongated facial effect. A late fifteenth-century panel painting of a young woman with plucked or shaved hairline and a sheer veil and tall headdress from the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden, now in the National Gallery in London, shows this cosmetic and fashion style.

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method of dating should be used cautiously since now a given headdress might be worn even when it was out of style by someone not affiliated with the court, or by someone far removed from the centers of style in the major sites of the court or the cities.

**COMPETITION BETWEEN COURTS.** After about 1350 European styles in general were heavily influenced by the French court, and became ever more elaborately ostentatious following the death of France's king Charles V in 1380. In England, earlier in the century, King Edward II's French consort, Queen Isabella (married 1308, died 1358), had influenced fashion similarities between the two courts. The succeeding two kings of England—Edward III and Richard II—were members of the Plantagenet family, whose claims to the French throne (the cause of the Hundred Years' War) no doubt contributed to a desire to compete with the French court in matters of opulence and led to a similarly unrestrained attitude towards expensive dress. Indeed, Richard II was reputed the greatest fashion spendthrift of all of the English monarchs to his day, a habit to which some attributed his eventual downfall. Overall, in the fifteenth century expenditures for clothing continued to increase, and the rapidity of fashion changes and excesses of ornamentation contributed to the brilliance of a growing number of European courts, particularly in Burgundy and in the Burgundian Low Countries at Bruges and Ghent. Until 1440, noblemen and women continued to wear the lavish styles, garments, and ornamentation developed in the late fourteenth century, with only minor variations in design. Beginning in 1440, tunics of fashionable European noblemen reached nearly to the knee, but in the following decade tunics were made much shorter. The fourteenth-century fashion known as the *courtepie* (or short *houppelande*) returned to favor. From then on, short tunics continued to be in fashion into the sixteenth century. In addition, in France and England, Italian styles and those of the court of Burgundy, which also reflected Flemish and German elements, became popular. Germanic influence included the enlarging of sleeves, chest, and shoulders by means of added padding in a manner that some considered a distortion of the human silhouette.

**TALL AND NARROW.** Perhaps due to a combination of social and economic factors, including the end of the Hundred Years' War, fashion took a turn to a radical new form in the middle of the fifteenth century. In England, toward the close of King Henry VI's first reign (1422–1461), fashionable courtiers wore narrow, long robes, with *houppelandes* and *pelicans* again in style. The shoulders were padded, but the skirts were narrow, and these robes were worn as outer garments



Guy Parat presents *The Preservation of Health* to Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, wearing black "tall" costume. St. Petersburg, Russia, National Library MS Fr.Q.v.v.i.I, folio 2, 1450. ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY.

over the short tunics mentioned above, topped by tall hats. The combination produced a silhouette of extreme height. At the same time, ornamental excesses were appearing in all of the other arts of the period, so that the "perpendicular style" in fashion occurred simultaneously with the period when Gothic architecture was reaching its peak of ornamental linear emphasis. In costume this trend toward extremes was best illustrated in the courts of King Charles VI of France (1380–1422) and the dukes of Burgundy, as the nobility wore garments divided into contrasting color areas—such as red and blue, or green and yellow—and the headdresses of both noblemen and ladies grew more varied and exaggerated in shape, especially in height. Indeed, from mid-century forward, women also sought an elongated fashionable look that included a high, plucked hairline, complemented by a swan-like neck, slender shoulders, and skirts that reached to the ground. Breaking the long line of this fashion look was the fashionable lady's posture, in which her stomach protruded beneath her elevated waistline, an effect often increased by padding.



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## DRESS CODES AND ANTI-FASHION

**THE ORIGINS OF SUMPTUARY LAW.** Sumptuary laws, named from a Latin word that joins the ideas of magnificence and expense, were enacted across Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Such laws had economic, moral, and social foundations. Economically, they regulated personal spending, with the intention of controlling inflation, discouraging the depletion of state resources for purposes of ostentatious display, and limiting the trade deficits that could occur through the import of luxury goods from faraway places. At the same time they regulated behavior, reinforcing the virtues of modesty and moral seriousness that were often thought to be especially lacking among women and young men. Finally, they performed a social function in clarifying the lines between classes through visual signs, slowing the encroachment of the commercial classes on the privileges of the aristocracy. The earliest such laws in the Middle Ages were those decreed by Charlemagne and by Louis the Debonnaire who ruled the Frankish kingdom after Charlemagne's death in 814. These were, respectively, attempts to control the prices that nobles might pay for their customary garments and attempts to forbid the wearing of silk and ornaments of gold and silver. Later sumptuary laws, with the earliest dated 1157 in Genoa—followed by similar statutes in France, Spain, and the rest of Italy—attempted to regulate economic conditions of a political area such as entire countries and individual city-states. Sometimes their purpose was to restrict trade with an eye to promoting local production at the cost of other states' profits; for example, in England at certain periods citizens were forbidden to purchase imported cloth and could only wear clothing made of locally produced fabric. When royal coffers were getting depleted, governments attempted to regulate traffic in consumable goods and monies spent on ceremonial occasions, such as weddings, funerals, knightly investitures (the "dubbing" ceremony), and birth celebrations. It should come as no surprise that during a period of lavish



Pride in open-sided jacket and hose. Psalter hours of Rome use, Robinet Testard, Poitiers, late 15th century. THE PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY, NEW YORK. M. 1001, F. 84.

and luxurious costume in fourteenth-century England, sumptuary laws were initiated there, as they had been previously in other parts of Europe. From time to time, the king and/or his nobles in Parliament attempted to regulate dress by the two standards of income and birth status. Despite their efforts, these laws—passed, sometimes passed then rescinded (1363), or proposed but rejected (as in the case of Richard II)—were never capable of curbing fourteenth-century fashion excesses. Nonetheless, they serve as valuable indicators of the attitudes of certain portions of the nobility toward costume.

**SUMPTUARY LAW AND ITS MORAL IMPLICATIONS.** Not only noble wastefulness, but any excess in dress was the target of sumptuary laws. And sometimes a moral point was made—that excessive consumption of these goods, with clothing specifically mentioned, resulted from the sin of pride. Thus, such practices must be moderated or else such sinfulness would draw upon the community natural disasters such as plague, famine, and war as signs of God's punishments. In many cases, especially in Italy, sumptuary laws were directed at women partic-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A SATIRE ON WOMEN'S HORNED HEADDRESSES**

**INTRODUCTION:** Medieval moralists singled out female headdresses as a special target for attack on the immorality of certain fashions. Not only sermons, but also popular poetry pointed out the dangers of excessive headwear. The male writer of the early fourteenth-century poem reproduced here specifically attacks a style in which women fashioned "horns" of false hair enclosed in a net known as a *crispinette* on both sides of their heads, in this case making the point that women wearing horns were adopting male roles, since horns were a sign of masculinity on animals like bulls and deer. Variations of this style of headdress, with the horns growing longer or taller, survived into the reign of Henry VI (1422–1461 and 1470–1471) and continued to incite satirical comment.

The Bishop of Paris, a theologian  
and a philosopher, observes that  
a woman who puts false hair on her head  
and paints herself to please the world  
is too foolish a hussy. ...

If we do not take care of ourselves  
we shall be slain by these women.  
They wear horns to kill men; they carry great masses  
of other people's hair upon their heads.

Woman began to turn herself to evil  
from the time she caused our first father [Adam]  
to descend into hell.  
Believe me well—

A woman who adorns her head with horns will pay for it;  
if she does not mend her ways. ...

They make themselves horned  
with worked hemp, or flax,  
and counterfeit dumb beasts—  
they who wish to be known as worthy ladies.  
It would be more to their advantage  
to think of their souls; as do  
the worthy women of simple manners,  
who will not display themselves,  
nor show their flesh to attract libertines.  
They [horned ladies] make men much worse—greater fools,  
and greater sinners—by their enticement;  
this foolish behavior entices those who would,  
long ago, have kept out of temptation,  
I do not doubt.

And I believe,  
May God bless me, that a woman  
who decorates herself thus,  
and disfigures herself, and loves  
and values her flesh so much,  
is not much occupied with goodness of heart.  
Even if she were my cousin, or my sister,  
I could only believe that such a one,  
horned, is a foolish woman.

**SOURCE:** Frederick W. Fairholt, ed., *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume: From the 13th to the 19th Century* (1849; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1965): 29–39. Text modernized by John Block Friedman.

ularly, the reputed source of all temptation to excess. Indeed, women as temptresses drawing men into sin through pride and lust were a favorite target for medieval moralists. A striking combined attack against prideful exhibition in male and female costume appears in the *Book of the Chevalier de la Tour Landry*, a late medieval French "courtesy book" intended by the author for the moral education of his daughters. The speaker mentions a sermon against pride—preached to a fashionably dressed crowd of men and women—which presents Noah's Flood as an exemplum of destruction caused by bad behavior and then goes on to remark on women in the church who wore "horned" headdress. The preacher compares the women to snails who are displaying their "horns" to men who have come to church in such short costume that they are showing their behinds and their underpants and even their genitals. Thus, each outdid the other in foolish pride, the ones in short clothes and those wearing horns.

**OPPOSITION TO EXTRAVAGANT GARMENTS.** Many of the styles that took hold from the middle of the fourteenth century onward caused especially strong reactions from conservative members of society. Not surprisingly, one of the concerns was the new trend towards emphasis on the body, as expressed both in the men's short styles just mentioned and women's low necklines. The arguments against these styles took a number of forms. In a poem by Eustache Deschamps, for example, dated around 1398, the concern mainly seems to be a matter of jealousy, the complaint from older women that they are put at a disadvantage when young women use corsets to push up their breasts: "Because bosoms are being shown about / In all manner of places, generally, / A desire has arisen in many a person / To have them covered again; / For it makes many a heart suddenly fill with sadness / To see them ... / For the thing that has put them in this situation / Is youth alone: / Round, small, firm ..." (Ballade 1469). The sideless gown also seems



Male “short” costume and doublets seen from the rear. The “Golf” hours, Flemish, Simon Bening, London British Library MS Additional 24098, folio 19v, 1530. © THE BRITISH LIBRARY/HIP-TOPHAM/THE IMAGE WORKS.

to have disturbed moralists: the resulting openings were called “devil’s windows” since it appeared they made women’s bodies accessible. For men, the revealing pourpoint excited a strong backlash across Europe. For example, the Italian city-state of Aquila passed a sumptuary ordinance in 1375 legislating against men who wore very short pourpoints, and the Middle English poem *Brut* (c. 1346) mentions how the “madness and folly of the foreigners” has brought to England a taste for “short clothes.” The well known Middle English satiric poem “Huff A Gallant” remarks on the fashion for “gowns/Too short their knees to hide,” while a similar poem, “Now is England perished,” mocks those with “short gowns.” One Middle English sermon of about 1380 treats several of these points with an added concern about class transgressivity: “Now are the common people afflicted by the sin of pride. For now a wretched knave, who walks behind a plow and a cart, and has no money but serves from year to year for his livelihood, whom once a white

girdle and a russet gown would have served quite well must now have a fancy doublet costing five shillings or even more and over that a costly gown with baggy sleeves hanging down to his knees and pleats under his girdle like those on a bishop’s surplice, and a hood on his head with a thousand little tags on his tippet, and gay hose and shoes as though he were a country squire.” The extravagant cut of the houppelande, though it was not revealing, likewise excited considerable comment at its appearance in the 1360s because it required so much expensive cloth (and often fur and other decorative touches), resulting in a wasteful display of wealth. French chronicler and poet Jean Froissart wrote a pastourelle in which several humble shepherds discuss this garment with awe and a certain ironic lack of understanding of its function as an indicator of social status.

**THE BATTLE OVER SHOES.** As early as 1298, extravagant shoe fashions drew criticism from both monarchs and moralists. An edict issued in France by King Philip the Fair in that year intended to curb excess of fashion among the rising bourgeois by restricting the length of the toes on poulaines. Such shoes were condemned at the Council of Anvers in 1365 and again by royal edict, for King Charles V of France on 9 October 1368 forbade the wearing of poulaines by all classes under a penalty of a fine of twelve florins (a gold coin). An English statute of 1465 decreed a fine of 20 shillings—a very large sum of money at the time—for those with pointed shoe tips over two inches long. As with many shifts in fashion in the later Middle Ages such as the replacement of long with short costume, the taste for poulaines had some significance in the economics of the cordwainers’ (leatherworkers’) guild and the general rise of guild autonomy throughout Europe and the British Isles. According to Gregory’s *Chronicles*, the pope issued a bull in 1468 excommunicating those who made any shoes with pointed toes exceeding two inches in length: “And some men said that they would wear shoes with long pointed toes whether the Pope approved or disapproved, for they said the Pope’s threat of excommunication was not worth a flea. And a short time later, some members of the Cordwainers guild got privy seals to make such shoes and caused trouble for those fellow guildsmen who heeded the papal edict.”

**BACKLASH AGAINST WOMEN’S HENNINS.** The fashion for the tall dunce-cap-like female headdress called the *hennin* or cornet soon drew the attention of social critics. Although this headdress is the one most commonly associated with medieval female costume in the modern consciousness, it was in fact a late phenomenon mainly limited to France, Burgundy, and the Low

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SHEPHERDS DISCUSS THE HOUPPELANDE**

**INTRODUCTION:** As a poet in the court of Edward III of England in the late 1360s, the French chronicler Jean Froissart wrote a number of "historical pastourelles," poems using the form and context of traditional songs about aristocratic encounters with shepherdesses, but transformed to comment on current events. In a poem that appears as "Pastourelle 1" in both of the original manuscripts, Froissart imagines an aristocratic narrator who overhears a group of shepherds discussing the houppelande fashion of a nobleman who has just passed by. Quoting the words of the shepherds, the poet simultaneously makes fun of both the shepherds' misunderstanding of what they see and the absurdity of the garment itself, which used a tremendous amount of cloth. In the poem, one shepherd wonders if a single ell of cloth (a measurement equal to about 45 inches) would be enough to make a houppelande for himself, and is promptly informed that he would need nine times that much just to line the garment.

Between Aubrecicourt and Mauny  
Near the road, upon fallow ground,  
The other day I heard shepherds talking  
Around the hour of noon.  
And Levrins Cope-osiere was saying:  
"Gentlemen, yesterday didn't you see  
Men on horseback riding by  
Or hear talk about houppelande cloaks?  
I saw each man wearing one of them,  
And the sight brought me such great joy  
That, ever since, I've done nothing but wish that I  
Could dress in a houppelande."

"A houppelande, dear God, oh my!"  
Thus answered Willemes Louviere,  
"And what can that be, now tell me that!  
I know what a bread sack is, all right,  
A tunic and a traveling pouch,  
Leggings, a needle holder,  
A hare, a collar, a greyhound,  
And I know how to guard sheep well,  
Care for them and get rid of disease;  
But I don't have the slightest idea  
What on earth could make you talk about  
Dressing in a houppelande."

"Listen, and I will tell you:  
It's because it's the latest style,  
For the other day I saw someone wearing one,  
One sleeve in front, another behind;  
I don't know whether such clothes are expensive,  
But they certainly are valuable;  
They are good both summer and winter,  
You can wrap yourself up snugly inside,  
You can put whatever you like in there;  
You could easily hide a wicker basket—  
And that's what makes me think about  
Dressing in a houppelande."

"By my faith," said Ansel D'Aubri,  
"I am sure that some time ago  
Shepherds used to wear cloaks of that kind,  
Except theirs were made of light cloth,  
For I still have the very first one  
That belonged to my grandfather Ogier."  
Then Adins, son of Renier, responded:  
"Ansel, by the body of Saint Omer,  
Please bring it with you tomorrow;  
We will use it to cover our food,  
For I might also decide that I wish to  
Dress in a houppelande."

"Gentlemen," said Aloris d'Oisi,  
"By the faith that I owe Saint Peter,  
I will go to Douai Saturday,  
And buy an entire ell of cloth,  
And I will make the most excellent cloak  
That anyone has ever seen a shepherd wear.  
Will I have enough cloth to have one made  
And have a fourth left over?"  
—"My, no; to line it you will need  
Nine ells of broad Irish cloth."  
—"Alas! It would cost me too much to  
Dress in a houppelande."

Prince, I saw them thinking it over  
And talking among themselves and making plans:  
It would be good to require of all shepherds  
That every one of them should agree to  
Dress in a houppelande.

**SOURCE:** Jean Froissart, "Pastourelle 1," *The Short Lyric Poems of Jean Froissart: Fixed Forms and the Courtly Ideal* (New York and London: Garland, 1994): 108–111. Translated by Kristen M. Figg.

Countries. The hennin could be as much as a yard tall, and it was worn inclined to the rear. On its peak was attached a thin veil, which might be short, so as to flutter in the wind, or long, reaching all the way to the floor. The Carmelite friar Thomas Conecte (died 1433) singled

out hennins in a sermon as among the worst expenditures of women on their fashion. His sermons against gambling and extravagance in clothing were enormously popular in northeast France and what is now Belgium, drawing crowds in the thousands.



Women with hennins at a tournament, 15th-century manuscript painting. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

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## GUILDS AND CONFRATERNITIES

### GROUP IDENTITY AND CONTROLLED COMMERCE.

Guilds and confraternities were an essential phenomenon of life in the early thirteenth and later centuries.



Cloth merchants showing wares. Book of statutes of Siena Drapers Guild, 14th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO CIVICO BOLOGNA/DAGLI ORTI.

They played an important role in the development of the cloth trades and in the consequent rise of fashion in all of its social and aesthetic ramifications. For example, although religious confraternities allied to a particular church or shrine were chiefly organized for the purpose of mutual spiritual and social support, they also played a role in the development of fashion. Their rules and charters designated a particular costume to be worn at meetings to identify members and give a feeling of community. Members prayed together and for each other; they provided mutual financial support and comfort in times of illness and death, and they formed and financially supported groups who went on pilgrimages, often wearing the colors and heraldic insignia of the group. The merchant guild was organized in the smaller cities or towns primarily to enforce a monopoly that ensured its membership—craftsmen, traders, and merchants—the control of commerce within the city or town boundaries. They retained economic control within their geograph-

ical area by imposing fees and rules that non-residents and non-members had to add to their cost of doing business within this town or city. These guilds also provided aid to their members who were sick or needed burial, in addition to meeting regularly for ceremonial and social dinners. They, too, required members to be appropriately dressed in the costume that identified the guild. At least as early as 1216 there were a notable number of these merchant guilds controlling, for example, the transportation trades of carters, watermen, and the like.

**STANDARDS OF CRAFTSMANSHIP.** In the larger cities such as London and Paris, however, a different kind of guild—that of artisans—sprang up. There, the numbers of craftsmen were great enough that individual crafts might form a guild of their own, and specialization within a craft provided the opportunity for increasing skills, developing talent, and encouraging innovations in style. Such guild members intermarried and tended to live in

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A MERCER HAWKS HIS WARES**

**INTRODUCTION:** A French “trade poem” called “Le Dit du Mercier,” from a manuscript in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MS fr. 19152, composed between 1270 and 1340, presents the mercer as a speaker, hawking his merchandise and describing some of his sales practices. The text offered here contains only the portions relating to fashion.

Hello to this very fine company.  
 I am a mercer, and carry mercery,  
 which I would sell willingly,  
 for I am in need of pennies.  
 Now, if it pleases you to listen,  
 I can easily describe the goods that I carry,  
 however heavy the weight of it that I bear—  
 I have some charming little girdles,  
 some fine gloves for young girls;  
 I have gloves in both double and single weight thickness.  
 I have good belt buckles  
 and good looking iron chainlets for the belt too—  
 I have wimples saffron tinted and perfumed;  
 I have well sharpened needles  
 and neat little boxes to hide trinkets in—  
 When you see them you will nearly cry out.  
 I have leather purses with nice catches,  
 Indeed, I have too many wares to describe.  
 I have good otter-skin winter cloaks,  
 and ermine and silks  
 and border edging of porpoise.  
 I have trains of fur  
 and nicely worked needle cases. ...

I have braies [male underpants] and lovely garter belts  
 and good saddle bags.  
 I have sewing thimbles  
 and various alms purses  
 of both silk and Spanish leather  
 which I would love to sell.  
 And I have some also of plain linen.  
 I would gladly sell a veil to a Benedictine nun.  
 I have iron buckles for your shoes. ...

and for ladies horn clips for your hair.  
 Buckles for your shoes  
 And even pewter catches for a child’s shoe straps.  
 I have fine laces for felt hats.  
 I have beautiful silver wimple pins,  
 as well as some of pot metal too,  
 that I sell to these fine ladies.  
 I have some pretty head scarves  
 and lovely coifs with laces  
 that I can sell to pretty girls,  
 and a matching silk  
 for hats with bordered brims,  
 and I also have some linen hats for young girls,  
 embroidered with flowers or birds—  
 of a smooth and bright warp and woof—  
 to primp in before their boyfriends,  
 and for peasants some hats of hemp  
 and mittens for their hands.  
 And for monks some purses ...

And knotted laces for surcoats ...

and well-made hose from Bruges ...

the same neighborhoods, which then became identified with those trades. At the same time, the guild developed and maintained standards of craftsmanship and assumed responsibility for punishing any member or apprentice who violated these standards. Like the merchant guilds, artisan guilds also aimed to control commerce, protect it from predatory and innovative non-members or foreigners, and make it work always in their own favor. When towns expanded into cities, these craft guilds supplanted the merchant guilds that had formerly held trade monopolies. Gradually, the number of specialized craft guilds increased. Throughout the Middle Ages, the largest and most powerful of these guilds were those having to do with the cloth trades, but leather crafts were also very important since they supplied shoes, clothes, and belts, as well as other serviceable goods.

**COMMERCIAL PRIDE.** The flavor of these cloth trade guilds and their enterprise is encapsulated in certain “trade poems” of the thirteenth century. For example, the essence of a medieval tailors’ guild is portrayed in the “Song Upon the Tailors,” which emphasizes the importance of tailors to society in a time when those who could afford it always ordered their wardrobes from tailors and those who were less affluent had their garments made at home. This poem, written in Latin and dating from about 1260 to 1270, is extremely useful as a glimpse into attitudes towards clothing from relatively early in the Middle Ages. The poem illustrates the thrifty practice of the remaking of old garments into new ones, and, in a subtle play on the religious concept of transubstantiation, the poet elevates the importance of tailors’ work by likening it to that of divinities (gods)

and combs for the hair—  
I have good Parisian soap  
and nice boxes to keep it in.  
I have catches of both silvered and  
gilded pot metal—and people love those  
which are made of pot metal so much  
that often we mercers use silver colored pot metal  
and call it silver. ...

And I have knives both blunt and pointed  
to make a knight-to-be look chic ...

and ribbons to attach silk-covered gold buttons  
and belts red and green, white and black  
with iron plates—  
that sell very well at fairs. ...

I have many fine collars up to the ears, and napkins  
that rich women wear on their heads on holy feast days,  
and I have much finery for women:  
Everything necessary to the toilette:  
razors to shave the hairline, tweezers, make-up mirrors  
and ear and tooth-picks,  
hair preeners and curling irons,  
shoehorns, combs, and mirrors,  
and rose water with which to cleanse themselves.  
I have cotton with which they rouge,  
and whitening with which they blanch themselves,  
and I have laces for lacing their sleeves ...

I have saffron to spice your food  
which I sell to ladies to tint their collars,  
whole pomegranates (but I think they are expensive).  
But nonetheless I know well how to sell them  
—and get money or payment in kind—  
and very fine belts and deceitful little trumperies. ...

I have catches of pot metal and alloy  
and girdles and beautiful falls to cover the head  
of which I have given three in exchange for one egg!  
(But I don't guarantee that they are new!)  
I have fine muslin to veil your faces ...

and chaplets for the old ones.  
I can tell you the world has mercers  
so that men and women can buy  
all these goods that load me down. ...

Come forward ladies, come here.  
Come forward, Don't avoid me.  
With an egg or a sou or a penny  
come lighten my panniers. ...

Now there is nowhere a man so rich  
who would not better love such a load  
Of mercery were he to have it—  
and if he knew how to safeguard it well—  
But I can get no good from it  
nor could I get any profit with it  
and from nothing I carried  
did I gain enough to eat—  
Therefore will I set down my pack  
I will not meddle any more with it—  
Thus I will go back to the peddlers' tax notice  
at the city gates, and pray you God:  
shelter me in some castle  
and I get some chattel by it.

**SOURCE:** Philippe Ménard, "Le Dit du mercier," in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du moyen age offerts à Jean Frappier*. Vol. 2 (Geneva: Droz, 1970): 797–818. Translated from the Old French by John Block Friedman.

active in the lives of humankind. Thus we see commercial hype alive and well in the Middle Ages.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE in Fashion

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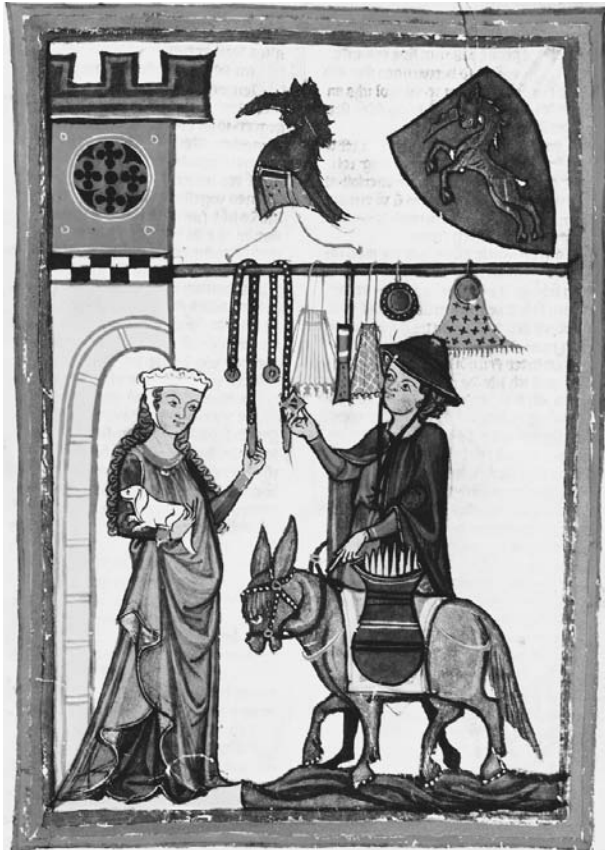
### THOMAS CONECTE

c. 1390–1433

*Carmelite friar  
Reformer*

**A CARMELITE PREACHER SATIRIST.** Thomas Conecte (or Connect) was born in Rennes, in Brittany in northwestern France in the 1390s. He joined the Carmelite order of friars and by 1428 was a popular preacher in Cambrai, Tournai, and Arras in the area of





Mercer showing wares, Manesse Manuscript, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. Germ 848, fol. 64. MINNESANGER MS., C. 1300, HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY (PH. MANSELL).

northeastern France bordering on what is now Belgium. Though he denounced gambling, his chief target of criticism was the fashion for very tall and elaborate female headdress. It is said that his sermons—which drew crowds as large as 20,000—were so effective that gamblers destroyed their dice and cards and women their tall headdresses immediately upon hearing his preaching. The famous eighteenth-century English essayist Joseph Addison had heard of, or read of, these sermons and described the women present at them in their tall headdresses “like a forest of cedars with their heads reaching the clouds.” Soon caught up in the reform movement among the Carmelites in the fifteenth century, Conecte’s denunciations of overly “secular” priests earned him the hostility of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of his diocese; he had to flee France to Italy, where he became involved in the reforms of the Carmelite convents at Florence and later at Mantua. By 1432, he made reforming trips to Venice, and finally to Rome, where he attacked the papal curia and the papacy of Eugenius IV for vices. He was condemned by the Inquisition and publicly burned at the stake as a heretic in 1433.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### SONG UPON THE TAILORS

**INTRODUCTION:** The poem “Song Upon the Tailors” appears in a manuscript miscellany originally written at Reading Abbey in England, now in the British Library (MS Harley 978, folio 78). The author was a cleric both learned and witty as he plays on both the Christian concept of transubstantiation (the belief that the elements of the Eucharist actually transform into the body and blood of Christ upon consecration) as well as the gods of ancient Greece and Rome to elevate the importance of tailors’ activity in reworking older clothes for new owners.

Ye are gods: ...

Gods certainly ye are, who can transform  
an old garment into the shape of a new one.

—The cloth, while fresh and new,  
is made either a cape or mantle;  
but, in order of time, first it is a cape,  
after a little space this is transformed into the other:  
thus ye “change bodies.”

When it becomes old, the collar is cut off;  
when deprived of the collar, it is made a mantle:  
thus, in the manner of Proteus, are garments  
changed;

nor is the law of metamorphosis a new discovery.

—With their shape they change their sex; ...

—When, at length, winter returns, many  
engraft immediately upon the cape a capuce;  
then it is squared;  
after being squared it is rounded;  
and so it becomes an almuce.

—If there remain any morsels of the cloth  
or skin which is cut, it does not want a use—:  
of these are made gloves; ...

—This is the general manner [in which]  
they all make one robe out of another,  
English, Germans, French, and Normans,  
with scarcely an exception.

**SOURCE:** *Song Upon the Tailors*, in *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume: From the 13th to the 19th Century*. Ed. Frederick W. Fairholt (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1965): 29–39. Text modernized by Laura Hodges.

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## ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

1122–1204

*Queen*

**SIMPLICITY AND FINE TASTE.** Eleanor of Aquitaine, wife of two kings and mother of two more, was born in 1122, the daughter of William X of Aquitaine, a large important duchy in southwestern France. At fifteen Eleanor married a relative soon to be King Louis VII (r. 1137–1180) of France but did not bear him male heirs, and he eventually divorced her in 1152 on the grounds of consanguinity (being too closely related). Eleanor remarried; with her new husband, Henry II of England (r. 1154–1189), count of Anjou and duke of Normandy, she had five sons. She brought to this marriage her lands of Aquitaine. In her roles as queen of France and queen of England, Eleanor was an important arbiter of taste, serving as a patron of the arts, rebuilding deteriorated religious houses, and financing the construction of the first church in the “gothic” style. She also supported manuscript illumination and fine book making and has been associated with the rise of courtly poetry, a literary form that focused attention on the beauty of women and their fashions. Though her son King John (r. 1199–1216) presided over a wealthy court that provided ample opportunities for extravagance of dress, Eleanor encouraged a rather plain style among the women of her court, demonstrating the importance of her influence. She died in 1204.

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## FRANCIS OF ASSISI

1181–1226

*Founder of the Franciscan Order*

**THE SIMPLE GARB OF THE FRIAR.** Francis of Assisi was born in 1181 and early in life experienced a mystical conversion to a life of poverty, itinerant preaching, and aid to the poor and disenfranchised. Like-minded persons soon gathered to him and by 1209 had formed what was to be the Franciscan Order of Friars or Friars

Minor. Authorized by Pope Innocent III as a group of public preachers, they came together for their first general chapter in 1217. A Rule, that is, a guide to the organization and behavior of the order’s adherents, was created in 1221 and officially approved for the Order of Friars Minor by Pope Honorius III in 1223. The rule stressed qualities that Francis saw in the apostolic form of Christianity illustrated by the lives and deeds of Jesus and his disciples. One element distinguishing the Friars Minor from the other mendicant or “begging” orders like the Dominicans, Augustinians, and Carmelites was Francis’ insistence on absolute personal and corporate poverty. Franciscans were to live by begging or manual labor, reside in simple surroundings, and, most important, own no money or property. This was reemphasized at his death in 1226 in his *Testament*, a last work which again stressed that Franciscan friars were to own nothing, either as individuals or as a group. This issue of extreme apostolic poverty eventually led to divisions within the church, and a bull (the most solemn and weighty form of papal letter) of 1230 by Gregory IX implicitly favored wealth within the church and seemed to allow the order to own some simple property. This position was supported by the faction of “Conventuals” under the leadership of Bonaventure, who, in writing a “life” of Francis, defended the ownership of property such as the highly ornamented priestly garments known as vestments. Against the Conventuals was the Spiritual party, particularly associated with the name of Peter John Olivi (1248–1298) who argued against any type of possession and for an intense apocalyptic spirituality with a focus on the “use” of material goods, such as books, religious ornaments, and clothing, in only the most basic and necessary form. The garb of the Friars Minor, with its simple robe, rope belt, and sandals, was often depicted in medieval art and established a symbolic standard for simplicity of dress.

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## PHILIP THE BOLD

1342–1404

*General  
Statesman*

**A MAGNIFICENT DUKE OF BURGUNDY.** Philip, known as the Bold, was the son of King Jean II of France and Bonne of Luxembourg. He was born 17 January 1342 at Pointoise. After his capture at the Battle of Poitiers (1356), he was made duke of Burgundy by his father in 1363. He married Marguerite of Flanders, an heiress of great landed wealth, in 1369. Eventually, through his dynastic power, Philip formed a Burgundian state that controlled not only what is now eastern France, but much of the Netherlands and what is now Belgium. In some ways he became the second most important person in France, after the monarch Charles V. His reign of some twenty years was known for its patronage of the arts, and especially for the lavish use of highly ornamented fabrics such as silks, velvets, and cloth with gold and silver wire embroidery. He also favored striking color combinations in the costumes of his courtiers. Because of his influence, the colors blue and black became especially important in late fourteenth-century costume. As interest in clothing grew, extravagant displays of costume became civic ritual, and often the duke and his courtiers changed clothes several times a day. Philip's court left detailed records of purchases of fabric, gifts, descriptions of clothes, and inventories of garments that for the first time created what would later be a virtual library of information for those wishing to study the history of costume. Much of this extravagant fashion was financed from the tax receipts of France. He died in what is now Belgium in 1404.

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## RICHARD II

1367–1399

*King*

**FASHION AND POLITICS.** Richard II, king of England, was born not in England, but in Bordeaux, France, on 6 January 1367. He was the son of the legendary knight Edward the Black Prince, who died without ever becoming king. Thus, Richard succeeded his grandfather, Edward III, whose court was already known for its lavish spending on clothes and jewelry. Both Richard's father and his grandfather loved tournaments, and there is evidence from records of the Royal Wardrobe that they always ordered expensive new clothes for these occasions. Indeed, Edward III did not hesitate to spend large amounts of money on gifts and especially on dresses for the queen. In one case it is recorded that he paid more than £200 for jeweled buttons for his wife, an amount that would have equaled a craftsman's salary for more than ten years. It is not surprising, then, that Richard inherited this taste for fine clothing and that he was eager to keep up with the French fashions then emerging in the celebrated courts of England's chief military rival. From fairly early in his reign, however, Richard was criticized for royal extravagance in a way that his predecessors were not, perhaps in part because he had instituted a series of truces with France that cut off the potential for enrichment that had come from earlier wartime victories. Richard was also in nearly constant conflict with his uncle John of Gaunt and with Gaunt's son Henry Bolingbroke, whom Richard sentenced to a ten-year exile for treason in 1397. When Gaunt died in 1399, Richard made Bolingbroke's exile permanent and confiscated the family fortune—an unpopular decision that was associated publicly with his overspending and his taste for what were seen as decadent foreign styles. Opposition to his authority grew among disgruntled lords; finally charges were made against him in Parliament and he was deposed as monarch, with Bolingbroke taking the throne as Henry IV. Imprisoned far from London, in Pontefract, Yorkshire, Richard died, or was murdered, in 1399.

**FASHION AS SYMBOL.** In many ways, Richard's interest in clothing demonstrates how important fashion had become as a symbol of sophistication. One of his main goals as king was to promote regal ideals and create an image of majesty, a role for which he was well suited physically and intellectually. Handsome and well built, standing six feet in height, he enjoyed such noble pastimes as hunting, observing tournaments, and reading courtly literature. Richard married Anne of Bohemia in 1382, a match that gained him prestige, since she was the daughter of the late emperor Charles IV, but which also contributed to the importation of foreign styles, including the pointed shoes that the French blamed on the Italians and the English blamed on the Flemish. John

Stow's Tudor *Annales* mentions that, since 1382, the points of shoes worn by English courtiers and gallants were of such length that they had to be tied to the knees with silver gilt chains or silk laces. Although Richard was in some ways just continuing a tradition of finery that was already established in the English court, an excess of this kind is a clear example of the sudden acceleration of change that marked the Age of Fashion. Thus, Richard could be said to have done for English costume what his near contemporary, Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (1342–1404), did for fashion in France.

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John Stow, *Annales* (London: G. Bishop and T. Adams, 1605).

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Fashion*

The Bayeux Tapestry (1080s)—This 231-foot-long embroidery on linen features a continuous pictorial narrative relating the story of the Norman conquest of England in 1066. It is an important source of information on

the clothing and arms of the Norman invaders of the eleventh century.

Jean de Brie, *Le Bon Berger* (1379)—This treatise written for King Charles V of France, describing the life and activities of a shepherd, provides detailed information on the costume and appurtenances of shepherds.

“Le Dit du mercier” (thirteenth century)—This thirteenth-century French trade poem found in a manuscript in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale) presents the mercer—a traveling peddler or salesman who carried his stock with him—as a speaker, hawking his merchandise and describing some of his sales practices. The poem provides information on a variety of inexpensive accessories, such as buckles, combs, hats, and cosmetics that the mercer offers for sale.

*Tacuinum sanitatis* (1370)—This medieval health handbook exists in a number of manuscripts from about 1370 on, showing a variety of rustic and aristocratic costumes, including the houppelande worn by persons manufacturing pharmaceuticals, or commissioning and selling garments.

Robinet Testard, *Merveilles du monde* or *Les secrets de l'histoire naturelle* (1480–1485)—This manuscript, now in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, is a work on geography discussing 56 regions of the world. It shows numerous examples of agricultural, as well as aristocratic, costume.

*Très Riches Heures* (1390–1416)—Located in Chantilly, France, in the Musée Condé, this luxuriously illuminated manuscript provides detailed illustrations of both peasant and aristocratic life at the end of the fourteenth century.

chapter 4

LITERATURE

Lorraine Kochanske Stock

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	144	Literary Genres in the Middle Ages . . . . .	152
OVERVIEW . . . . .	147	The Tradition of Alliterative Poetry . . . . .	154
TOPICS		<i>An Icelandic Blood Feud</i> (excerpt from	
Identity and Authority . . . . .	149	<i>Njal's Saga</i> revealing the violence of	
Heroic Narrative . . . . .	153	Icelandic blood feuds) . . . . .	157
Heroic Literature in Medieval Scandinavia . . . . .	155	Heroic Literature in Ireland and Wales . . . . .	162
The Heroic Narrative in France . . . . .	158	<i>A Knight Searches for an Adventure</i> (excerpt	
The Heroic Narrative in Spain . . . . .	161	from Chrétien de Troyes' <i>Yvain</i> in	
Origins, Definitions, and Categories of Romance . . . . .	163	which a knight converses with a serf) . . . . .	165
Courtly Love . . . . .	166	<i>Andreas Capellanus's Rules for Love</i> (excerpt	
Arthurian Romance . . . . .	169	from <i>The Art of Courtly Love</i> ) . . . . .	168
Translatio Studii: Sources for Romance . . . . .	173	The Grail Quest . . . . .	170
The Non-Narrative Lyric Impulse . . . . .	177	<i>What Gawain Learned about Himself</i> (excerpt	
Medieval Allegory and Philosophical Texts . . . . .	183	from <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> ) . . . . .	171
Dante Alighieri . . . . .	186	The Contours of the Literary Life of King	
The Medieval Dream Vision . . . . .	189	Arthur . . . . .	172
William Langland and <i>Piers Plowman</i> . . . . .	192	Boethius and the Consolation of Philosophy . . . . .	175
The Medieval Story Collection . . . . .	195	An Example of Translatio Studii: Boccaccio	
The Canterbury Tales . . . . .	199	and Chaucer . . . . .	176
Christine de Pizan . . . . .	201	<i>Ideal Female Beauty</i> (excerpt from Marie de	
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		France's <i>Lais</i> describing conventional	
Giovanni Boccaccio . . . . .	204	idealized beauty) . . . . .	177
Geoffrey Chaucer . . . . .	205	Birds in Medieval Literature . . . . .	180
Chrétien de Troyes . . . . .	205	The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Medieval	
Dante Alighieri . . . . .	206	Literature . . . . .	181
Marie de France . . . . .	207	The Spiritual and the Erotic in the Middle	
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	208	English "Foweles in the frith" . . . . .	182
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY		Macrobius's Classification of Dreams . . . . .	191
DOCUMENTS		Pilgrimage in Medieval Literature . . . . .	194
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>		<i>Dame Sirith</i> (excerpt from a tale that satirizes	
Technical Terms in Medieval Literature . . . . .	150	bourgeois materialism and courtly love) . . . . .	197
		<i>Opening Lines of Chaucer's General Prologue</i>	
		<i>to The Canterbury Tales</i> (surprising shifts	
		in Chaucer's multi-faceted work) . . . . .	200

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Literature*

- 524 Boethius writes the *Consolation of Philosophy*, which will be translated from Latin into every major medieval European language and become highly influential in medieval literature.
- 800 Charlemagne, who encouraged education and literature, is crowned emperor of the Romans and king of the Franks.
- 870 Viking settlers found the colony of Iceland, which will become the major source of medieval Scandinavian literature.
- c. 895 Anglo-Saxon king Alfred, who encourages learning at his court, translates Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* from Latin into Anglo-Saxon.
- 948 Egil Skallagrímsson, Scandinavian skaldic poet whose life is celebrated in the Icelandic saga, *Egil's Saga* (1230), writes *Head Ransom* while awaiting execution by King Erik Bloodaxe.
- c. 970 Anglo-Saxon lyric and narrative poems, including "The Wanderer," "The Seafarer," "The Ruin," and "The Wife's Lament," are copied into a manuscript collection later called *Exeter Book*.
- c. 1000 The only surviving manuscript version of the Anglo-Saxon heroic poem *Beowulf* is written down after the poem has circulated through memorization and recitation (known as oral tradition) for several centuries.
- 1095 Pope Urban II calls for the first Crusade, which many *chansons de geste* (heroic poems) helped to propagandize.
- c. 1100 The troubadours in the south of France and the trouvères in the north begin composing lyric poetry in a new style.
- The *Song of Roland*, the most famous example of the French *chanson de geste*, appears in manuscript form after several hundred years of circulating orally as a narrative recited along pilgrimage routes to Compostela.
- 1127 Duke William IX of Aquitaine, first *troubadour* poet and grandfather of Eleanor of Aquitaine, dies.
- 1137 Geoffrey of Monmouth writes the *History of the Kings of Britain*, which includes the first major literary treatment of legendary King Arthur.
- c. 1150 Alan of Lille writes *The Complaint of Nature*, a Latin philosophical dream vision that influences medieval writers such as Jean de Meun and Chaucer.
- c. 1150–c. 1179 Hildegard of Bingen, the German abbess of a convent on the Rhine, writes medical treatises, lapidary books, accounts of her mystical visions, *Scivias*, and lyrical hymns.
- c. 1155 The Norman chronicler Wace incorporates inventive embellishments such as King Arthur's "Round Table" and the sword "Excalibur" into his verse narrative, *Le Roman de Brut*.
- c. 1160–c. 1180 Marie de France, the earliest known secular medieval female author, composes her *Lais* (a collection of twelve short story-poems based on traditional Breton tales).
- c. 1170–c. 1190 German minnesingers (lyrical poets) such as Walter von der Vogelweide begin to write lyric love poetry in the manner of the French troubadours.
- c. 1170–c. 1185 Chrétien de Troyes, the father of medieval romance, writes a series of long verse narratives on Arthurian subjects.
- c. 1185 Under the patronage of Marie of Champagne, Andreas Capellanus writes the *Art of Courty Love*, which influenced the depiction of love in romances and lyric poetry.

- 1200–1235 Robert de Borron and other French writers contribute to the *Vulgate Cycle* of Arthurian romances, incorporating new details about Lancelot and Guinevere and the Grail Quest.
- c. 1200 In France, short, clever, and generally bawdy narratives known as *fabliaux* are first composed, preparing for the bourgeois realism of Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales*.
- c. 1201–  
c. 1207 The Spanish heroic poem *El Cid* is composed in written form from Latin chronicles and the oral songs of *jongleurs* on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela.
- c. 1201 Layamon retranslates Wace’s *Roman de Brut* into Middle English alliterative poetry, introducing the motif of Arthur’s prophetic dream before Mordred’s treachery.
- c. 1220–  
c. 1230 The German writer Wolfram von Eschenbach “translates” *Aliscans*, a twelfth-century French *chanson de geste*, into the hybrid heroic romance *Willehalm*.
- c. 1230–  
c. 1235 Guillaume de Lorris writes the first 4,000 lines of the dream vision *Romance of the Rose*.
- c. 1275 Jean de Meun adds almost 18,000 lines to Guillaume de Lorris’s allegorical *Romance of the Rose*, adopting a more satirical tone and adding philosophical and social commentary.
- c. 1280 *Njáls Saga*, the most complex of all the Icelandic family sagas, portrays a violent blood feud and documents the transition of Iceland from pagan Germanic beliefs to Christianity.
- c. 1292–  
c. 1295 Dante Alighieri writes the *Vita Nuova*, a collection of love lyrics to his muse Beatrice.
- c. 1314–  
c. 1320 Dante Alighieri writes the *Divine Comedy*, an epic allegory portraying a visionary journey through *Inferno* (“Hell”), *Purgatorio* (“Purgatory”), and *Paradiso* (“Heaven”).
- c. 1330 The so-called “Harley Lyrics,” a collection of Middle English political, devotional, and love poems, are recorded in the Harley manuscript (British Library MS Harley 2253).
- c. 1341 Giovanni Boccaccio writes two important texts in Italian about characters from Greek history, *Il Teseide* about Theseus and *Il Filostrato* about the Trojan War, which become the sources for Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde*.
- 1350 In England, the alliterative Middle English dream visions *Winner and Waster* and the *Parliament of Three Ages* address the pressing post-plague economic issues.
- c. 1350 In Spain, Juan Ruiz writes the *Book of Good Love*, a story collection incorporating various genres, loosely connected by the theme of sacred and profane love.
- c. 1351 Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron* records the ravages of the Black Death, which furnishes him with the premise of his framed story collection.
- c. 1360 The anonymous *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, a poem describing King Arthur’s death, is composed as part of the Middle English “Alliterative Revival.”
- c. 1365 William Langland writes the A Text of *Piers Plowman*, focusing on the everyday political and economic life of man in society. It will be revised and expanded into the B Text (1377) and the C Text (1380s), with more emphasis on the quest for spiritual perfection.
- c. 1375 An anonymous author composes the Middle English alliterative romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the allegorical dream vision *Pearl*.
- c. 1380 Geoffrey Chaucer adapts *Troilus and Criseyde* from Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato*, heightening courtly love elements and incorporating Boethian passages about fate and predestination.
- c. 1385–  
c. 1400 Geoffrey Chaucer, the “father” of English poetry, assembles the *Canterbury Tales*, a

- framed story collection illustrating most late medieval literary genres.
- c. 1390– John Gower writes *Confessio Amantis*, a
  - c. 1393 Middle English story collection of biblical, classical, legendary and popular narratives, employing the frame device of a lover confessing to his priest sins committed against love.
  - c. 1404– Christine de Pizan, the first professional
  - c. 1405 female writer in Europe, composes *The Book of the City of Ladies*, an allegorical
- vision including stories about exemplary women.
- c. 1455 Johannes Gutenberg invents the moveable type printing press, essentially replacing hand-copied manuscripts with cheaper and more plentiful books, now available to a broad popular audience.
  - c. 1469– Sir Thomas Malory composes a prose
  - c. 1470 version of the corpus of Arthurian legends, which will be edited and published in 1485 by the early printer William Caxton.



## OVERVIEW of Literature

**TRIBES INTO NATIONS.** Medieval literature must be understood in relation to its Roman heritage. When the Germanic peoples (Goths and Vandals, among others) coming from eastern Europe overthrew the Roman Empire in the fifth century C.E., they also destroyed the idea of political identity, because during the period of the empire all persons had been citizens of Rome. With the breakdown of Roman rule and order came a new system of tribal alliances in which small bands were commanded by warrior leaders. These warrior groups did not imagine themselves as members of a single large geographic entity, and their history was that of a tribe, not a nation. Accordingly, the concept of French or English or Italian states, each with a national literature, does not really appear until about 1100. From the establishment of the Frankish Empire under Charlemagne in the ninth century through the end of the period in the fifteenth century, medieval “Europe” represents less a group of separate national cultures than a single international cultural network within which individual developing nations mutually borrowed, imitated, and reworked their respective literary and artistic forms, which evolved sometimes directly from, and sometimes independent of, their Roman heritage.

**THE MONASTIC CONTRIBUTION.** With the loss of the Roman social system in the fifth century, culture and the language arts were largely preserved by Christian monasteries from the sixth century onward; culture then was associated with Latin, the language of the Western church. Monasteries copied and preserved manuscripts that they loaned to other monasteries so that classical texts and contemporary religious works, such as lives of the saints and writings of the church fathers, multiplied. Indeed, the Rule of St. Benedict, which gave guidelines for the organization and daily practice of monastic life, specified that monks should engage in the copying of books. The fostering of Latin among both educated secular people and those in religious life meant that ancient writing, such as the poetry of the Roman authors Ovid and Vergil, and the prose of Cicero, was the object of study and im-

itation in whatever new writing was done. Often these new compositions were not attributed to the persons who had actually done them, and many works passed under the names of Ovid and Vergil that were clearly medieval in date. In the cathedral schools established in the ninth century throughout Charlemagne’s empire, students learned to read and write Latin by studying Roman authors; thus, the literary forms and language of the Roman world took on great authority. Writings about law, theology, medicine, politics, philosophy, and literature, ranging in date from Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* (c. 520) to Alan of Lille’s *Complaint of Nature* (c. 1150), were all written in Latin, which became the universal language of the literate minority of the population.

**ORIGINS OF VERNACULAR LITERATURE.** Around the tenth century, the first vernacular literatures—that is, literatures in developing regional languages like French, English, German, and Italian—began to appear out of an oral rather than a written culture. The two earliest extensive literary works in Old French, *La Chanson de Roland*, and in Old English, *Beowulf*, with surviving manuscripts dating from about the year 1000 (though the events they describe occurred several centuries earlier) evidently were performed for audiences gathered perhaps after dinner to hear of stirring adventures at courts of the nobility. Both of these works are examples of one of the most popular genres or literary types in the earlier Middle Ages: the *chanson de geste* or heroic poem, recounting the military deeds of a national hero like Charlemagne or some of his knights like Roland, or *Beowulf*’s combats with supernatural creatures intent on destroying the tribes in the poem of that name.

**ORAL POETRY.** These early poems were preserved in the oral tradition through memorization by entertainers, such as the *scop* or minstrel mentioned in *Beowulf*, who recited and perhaps even performed them. Thus, oral forms of composition and performance became part of early medieval popular writing, and “literature” tended to be the province of storytelling entertainers rather than of writers working on their own in private. This communal, oral culture valued collective experience and the description of external events over inward or meditative analysis of personal feelings. Rather, in the early Middle Ages, when people listened to stories—recited from memory or read to them from a prepared text—they liked to hear accounts of the marvelous or the fantastic or exotic on the one hand and the didactic and morally improving on the other. So a poem like the Old English *Beowulf* mixes stories of dragons with speeches about the ethical conduct the ruler owed to his followers, and the Old French *Song of Roland* mixes descriptions of exotic

Moors (strange largely because they are not Christians) with a story of God's raising of the hero Roland to heaven after he has fallen in combat. Even late in the Middle Ages, when reading became more commonplace, ordinary people as well as the nobility often retained "lectors" to read aloud to them, either because they could not or preferred not to read for themselves. Also, since the organization of living space in medieval castles or houses afforded little privacy, there was little private reading.

**THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY.** The study of ancient authors in schools and religious foundations and the rise of popular oral poetry together had another effect on the development of national literatures in Europe. The authorial originality modern readers have come to take for granted—the experimentation with plots and situations, with the sounds and meanings of words, and the creation of new characters and forms in verse and prose—was very late in occurring. Nothing is known of the "authors" of either the *Song of Roland* or of *Beowulf*. Indeed, even their dates of composition are uncertain. Medieval writers and readers typically favored reworked rather than "original" plots, situations, and genres. Instead of authorial originality, medieval literary culture emphasized the concept of authority—in Latin *auctoritas* (a word expressing "origination," responsibility, support, and power)—of the literary texts and authors who came before them. A common metaphor was that medieval writers thought of themselves as dwarves standing on the shoulders of the Roman "giants" who had preceded them. Thus, for the Italian Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), the greatest author and authority was his Latin predecessor and literary model Vergil, the writer of the classical epic the *Aeneid*. Dante designated Vergil (spelled "Virgilio" in the Italian text and "Virgil" in English translations) as his guide through the circles of Hell in *The Divine Comedy*, a lengthy narrative allegorical poem describing the adventures of a "pilgrim" as he travels through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven in search of salvation and spiritual understanding. Similarly, for Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, the authors of the Old French thirteenth-century allegorical poem *The Romance of the Rose*, the great authority was Ovid, especially his *Art of Love*. The English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (1342–1400) took over many plots and stories from earlier Latin and vernacular literature, translated *The Romance of the Rose* into Middle English, and saw several earlier writers—some French like Guillaume de Machaut (1300–1377), some Italian like Dante and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375)—as his masters or "auctours" while writing his *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories purportedly told by a group of pilgrims riding together to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury.

**THE COMING OF ROMANCE.** Two strains of literature develop side by side, then: one in the non-Latin or vernacular languages—those spoken in French, English, Italian, German, Scandinavian, or Spanish regions—and one in Latin. The latter included both the irreverent and comic "Goliardic" poems of learned wandering students and the serious and philosophical poetry of more established clerical authors, often teachers of rhetoric. In time, however, with the rise in literacy and feelings of regional identity among all classes, vernacular literatures came to eclipse those in Latin. Literary types like the short formal lyric, for example, which had earlier been composed in Latin, merged with an oral tradition of popular songs to create vernacular lyrics and even an unusual combination called the macaronic lyric, in which lines alternated among as many as three languages (usually French, Latin, and English). One of the first assaults on the primacy of Latin as a literary language came with the spread of French after the Norman Conquest of 1066. When the Normans—Scandinavian Vikings who had settled in Normandy (now northern France) in 911—conquered England in 1066, their French, called Anglo-Norman, displaced Anglo-Saxon, or Old English, as the language of educated people and the governmental elite. Thus the people of England, as well as those in France, were able to appreciate the extensive body of French literature that was developing, reaching its high point in the courtly romance, a genre that celebrated the values of the more centralized aristocratic system that had replaced earlier tribal social organization. These poems are associated especially with the Continental French writer Chrétien de Troyes (1165–1191), but they spread quickly as a popular form in England where the aristocracy was eager to reinforce its sense of historical legitimacy. Such romances tell stories of chivalry dealing with great heroes of the Crusades, knights of Arthur's Round Table, or such characters from classical antiquity as Alexander the Great. This form was like the modern novel, and it remained perhaps the most widespread literary genre from the late twelfth century through the fifteenth.

**ANONYMITY AND FAME.** That Chrétien de Troyes' name was connected to his romances is unusual in the history of medieval literature, much of which is anonymous. Indeed, aside from Chrétien, the Anglo-Norman Marie de France (fl. 1160–1210), and some poets writing in Celtic languages, such as the Welsh Rhirid Flaidd (c. 1160), very few names can be attached to works in the early medieval period. There are several causes for this anonymity. One, of course, is the tradition of "authority" that made it desirable to claim to be retelling a story from a reputable source. Another is the fact that texts and

documents were preserved only in laboriously hand-copied manuscripts, carefully written on parchment made of the skins of sheep and goats. In order to be copied, a document had to be considered worthy of this extremely expensive and time-consuming process, which, during the earlier Middle Ages, was almost entirely under the control of the scriptoria in monasteries. Clerical writers would have been discouraged from the vanity of attaching names to their works, and monastic scribes, in general, were not very interested in preserving the identities of secular authors. Somewhat later, when orders for manuscripts came from aristocratic courts, there was often more incentive to preserve the name of the patron who sponsored the work than that of the author who wrote it. It was not until after 1300 that the idea of the “author” as we understand it—particularly in the sense of a self-conscious first-person narrator who seems to have some existence in the real world—became common. When Dante (1265–1321) writes about his love for Beatrice in his collection of lyric poems the *Vita Nuova*, it is clear that these are new poems written from the experience of a particular individual living in Florence and loving a real woman, however idealized she may be in the poems. Likewise, when Boccaccio (1313–1375) joins together one hundred tales supposedly told by a group of young people who have fled the city to avoid the plague, the stories are clearly a fictional work from the hand of a single author, who has planned his manuscript and expects it to enter history in the form in which he conceived it. The French poets Guillaume de Machaut (1300–1377) and Jean Froissart (1337–1404?) are known to have personally planned and supervised the production of manuscripts of their works, and, by the end of the century, Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?–1400) wrote short poems complaining of errors in spelling and meter made by his scribe. Near the end of his life Chaucer even wrote a retraction apologizing for the over-worldly poetry of his youth, taking for granted the fact that he will have a permanent reputation. This public self-consciousness and awareness of oneself as a poet with an audience marks the beginning of the modern era in literature.

## TOPICS in Literature

### IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY

**FOUNDING HEROES.** When the term “Middle Ages” was first used in the eighteenth century, it was in-



Men in 15th-century dress illustrate a classical text. *Le Livre de Valerius Maximus*, London, British Library MS, 1479. © THE BRITISH LIBRARY/HIP-TOPHAM/THE IMAGE WORKS.

tended to refer negatively to the long period of European history between the fall of the great civilization of classical (Roman) antiquity in the fifth century and the “rebirth” of cultural greatness in the Italian Renaissance of the early fifteenth century. What this terminology acknowledges is the fact that in the period immediately preceding the Middle Ages, a void had been created by the disintegration of the centralized government of the Romans, leaving most of Europe under the control of tribal peoples with no written literature and no continuity of tradition in a geographically or culturally identifiable location. Thus, the early history of literature in the Middle Ages is in many ways the story of people seeking to define and justify their cultural identity. As the peoples of each region became conscious of themselves as a group distinct from others, they transmitted myths of origin involving a founding hero, passing them on orally within the areas of shared language that would eventually be recognized as countries. In some cases this figure was adapted from classical Greek stories, Homeric and Vergilian accounts of the fall of Troy where the Trojan heroes were dispersed throughout the world; the word “Britain,” for example, comes from the name “Brutus” and “France” from “Francus.” In other cases, the heroes were homegrown, such as Britain’s Arthur and France’s Roland. As their stories began to be organized

## TECHNICAL Terms in Medieval Literature

**Alliterative Revival:** Use of the Anglo-Saxon alliterative poetic line, featuring three to four repetitions of words having the same initial consonant or vowel per line, in fourteenth-century Middle English poems, such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Piers Plowman*.

**Comitatus:** The early medieval heroic code practiced by male members of a communal group, defined by a reciprocal relationship in which the lord offered material rewards and a social identity in return for his thanes' military and political allegiance.

**Contrapasso:** The method used by Dante in the *Divine Comedy* to allocate appropriate punishment for sin, where the punishment suits the sin by being its ironic opposite.

**Courtly love:** The term coined by Gaston Paris in the nineteenth century to describe *fin'amors* (refined love), the extremes of devotion and psychological suffering experienced by male protagonists for their ladies in medieval romances and lyrics, as codified by twelfth-century writer Andreas Capellanus in his *Art of Courtly Love*.

**Dolce stil nuovo:** The "sweet new style" of Italian love lyrics in the thirteenth century, mirroring the themes of the troubadours of Provence, used by poets such as Dante and Guido Cavalcanti.

**Fortune's Wheel:** The popular medieval allegorical construct to explain cyclical human misfortune, caused by the turning of a wheel by blindfolded Lady Fortune, on whose "Wheel of Fortune" all men are situated, rising high upon or being cast off of the wheel (regardless of their merits or evil actions) according to their current state of luck.

**Four-fold medieval allegory:** Four levels of medieval allegorical interpretation: 1) the literal level, 2) the allegorical level, 3) the tropological or "moral" level, 4) the anagogical or eschatological level, about the afterlife.

**Kenning:** An oral-formulaic phrase used in Anglo-Saxon poetry that employs juxtaposed words as metaphors to imagine familiar objects in a new way, such as "whale-road" (the sea), "earth's candle" (the sun), and "ring-giver" (king).

**Laissez similaires ("similar stanzas"):** Repeated verse stanzas used to emphasize important and dramatic scenes in French *chansons de geste* and other heroic narratives.

**Litotes:** The rhetorical device of ironic understatement employed in northern European literature of the Middle Ages, especially in *Beowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon poems and the Icelandic Sagas.

**Locus amoenus:** Literally the "beautiful place," the locale of most medieval romances, the opening of dream visions, and the troubadours' *chansons d'amour*, featuring soft spring breezes, flowing water, blooming flowers, budding greenery, and the songs of birds.

and then written down in a cultural climate that honored the "authority" of the past (both classical and biblical), they served as the nucleus for thematic clusters known as "matters," the chief examples being the matter of France, the matter of Britain, and the matter of Rome or antiquity.

**THE MATTER OF FRANCE.** The matter (*matière*) of France provided the plots of many Old French *chansons de geste* (heroic poetry), such as the *Song of Roland*, a poem composed around 1100 which contributed immeasurably to the developing consciousness of what it meant to be French. Based on an historical episode in 778 in which Charlemagne's nephew Roland was killed in an ambush as he was returning home from an unsuccessful campaign against the Saracens (Islamic Moors) in Spain, the poem recounts the heroic defense of a pass in the Pyrenees Mountains by the small French rearguard (with 20,000 men) against the overwhelming Saracen forces (400,000). With its tales of such originary figures as Roland, Charlemagne, and William of Orange, the

matter of France not only created the substance of French literature of the early Middle Ages, but also was imported by other national cultures. For example, by the thirteenth century, many of the tales of Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers (or companions) were translated into prose in the Old Norse *Karlamagnus Saga* (Charlemagne's Saga), while Wolfram von Eschenbach similarly adapted for a German audience the cycle of *chansons de geste* about William of Orange in his *Willehalm*.

**STORIES OF KING ARTHUR.** The "matter of Britain" made King Arthur first a national hero in England, the equal of Charlemagne in French culture, and later a literary figure of international stature. In his twelfth-century *History of the Kings of Britain*, Geoffrey of Monmouth built upon and embellished earlier fragments of texts documenting a sixth-century Saxon warrior named Arthur, who achieved success in battles against the Romans and other neighboring tribes. Geoffrey created a full biography of the reign of the now familiar King Arthur, complete with some of this matter's

**Matter of Britain:** Stories about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, which contributed to the development of romance and made Arthur first a national hero in England and later a literary figure of international stature.

**Matter of France:** Tales of such originary figures in the development of French national culture as Roland, Charlemagne, and William of Orange, contributing especially to the genre of *chanson de geste*.

**Matter of Rome the Great and Antiquity:** The broad category of plots about classical antiquity in Greece, Troy, Rome, or Northern Africa, retold in medieval vernacular romances such as the French *Roman de Thebes* and Boccaccio's *Teseide*.

**Minnesingers (German: *Minnesänger*):** Singers about *Minne*, which means "love," such as Walter von der Vogelweide; the German equivalents of the French troubadours and trouvères, who developed the themes of *fin'amors* in German lyrics.

**Oral-formulaic tropes:** Poetic stock phrases that could be recalled easily or recombined to invent new lines if the *scop* (the Anglo-Saxon minstrel) forgot a line during performance or needed to fill out the meter in a new passage.

**Reverdie:** A term in Middle English meaning "re-greening," celebrating the reappearance of spring after a long winter, employed to start a lyric poem or song, or to open a love poem or dream vision.

**Sapientia and Fortitudo:** "Wisdom and fortitude," a combination of discretion and cleverness with physi-

cal strength and bravery, which contributed to successful lordship or heroism in early medieval literature.

**Seven Deadly Sins:** The Roman Church's designation of the seven most serious sins—Pride, Wrath, Avarice, Envy, Gluttony, Lust, Sloth—used by medieval writers to organize sections of their literary works.

**Story collections:** Anthologies of various separate stories that circulated together in a reasonably coherent form, organized around a theme or involving a framing device.

**Translatio studii:** Reflecting the Latin root of "translate," meaning "to carry across," the transfer of the plot and characters of a tale produced for the audience of one national culture in an earlier period to that of another culture in a later period by medieval writers, involving significant changes in the plot and original roles of the characters as well as the very genre that the model text represented.

**Troubadour or Trouvère:** Poets, respectively from southern and northern France, attached to particular courts and patrons or wandering from court to court, who composed a new style of lyric love poetry with complex stanzas and rhyme patterns, especially the *chansons de croisade* and the *chansons d'amour* from the twelfth century onwards.

**Vernacular:** The language of a national culture of medieval Europe—French, English, Spanish, Italian, German, Norse—as distinguished from the language of learning and the medieval Roman Church, Latin.

most memorable characters, including Uther Pendragon, Merlin (the magician and sage counselor of Arthur), and Morgan le Faye (Arthur's antagonistic half sister). Among his accounts of other authentically historical British monarchs, Geoffrey placed the largely fictive story of King Arthur. Already in twelfth-century France, in the earliest examples of the romance genre (a type of long, episodic narrative poem), Chrétien de Troyes created narratives about Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. Indeed, stories of this "matter of Britain" were retold and amplified by romance writers in France, England, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe throughout the Middle Ages, as well as during the Arthurian revival (called "medievalism") of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**THE MATTER OF ROME THE GREAT.** Although in modern times writers are often praised for the originality or the novelty of their plots and characterizations, these qualities were not much valued in the Middle Ages since it was believed that truth lay in stories and situa-

tions that had been tested and refined through the passage of time and filtered through tradition. Thus, the "matter of Rome the great" was not exclusively the early history of the region that would eventually become Italy. Rather, this broader category of plot source generally comprised various stories about classical antiquity in Greece, Troy, Rome, or Northern Africa. One of the most popular bodies of material concerned the heroes of the ancient Theban dynasties, whose tragic history was told first in Latin in Statius' *Thebaid* (c. 91 C.E.), then later retold in medieval vernacular (non-Latin) poetry such as the French *Roman de Thebes* (1152) and the Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio's epic about the war between Athens and Thebes, the *Teseide* (The Tale of Theseus; late 1339–1341), the source story for the English writer Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* (early 1380s). Another large subject that belonged to the matter of antiquity was the Trojan War and its aftermath, originating in Vergil's *Aeneid*, passed on in Latin versions of Homer, and then portrayed respectively in the French

## LITERARY Genres in the Middle Ages

**Allegory:** A narrative mode in which abstract ideas are presented either through personifications (that is, characters who embody ideas like Truth or Justice) or through concrete, realistic characters and situations that have an additional layer or layers of symbolic meaning, even though they operate within a literal plot that makes sense in and of itself.

**Aubade or Aube or Alba:** Literally a “dawn song,” a type of troubadour lyric in which lovers lament the coming of the dawn because they must part after a night of clandestine lovemaking.

**Breton lay:** A short verse narrative, exemplified by the *Lais* of Anglo-Norman poet Marie de France, which were originally performed orally in the Breton language and were transformed into written narratives from the twelfth-century onward, featuring rash promises, erotic entanglements, an ambivalent code of ethics, and a strong supernatural strain.

**Chanson d’amour:** A troubadour love song in which the vocabulary expressing the roles of the lover and the beloved echoes the terminology of lordship so that the beloved lady plays the role of the haughty “domna” (female “lord”) to the poet, her vassal.

**Chanson de geste:** Literally “song of deeds or exploits,” a type of French heroic verse narrative of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, based on earlier oral accounts, recounting heroic deeds in warfare, often connected with the Crusades.

**Dream vision:** A medieval poetic genre consisting of a narrator’s account of his unusual dream, provoked by his physical surroundings or bedtime reading matter, in which he is often visited by a male or female authority figure who issues guidance or advice. These narratives treated such themes as love, philosophical and spiritual issues, and contemporary mores, often from a satirical perspective.

**Eddic Poetry:** Heroic and mythological lays composed in medieval Scandinavia in freeform or varying meters, based on Germanic legends and mythology about the pagan northern gods.

**Fable (Animal)** A story in prose or verse in which animals speak and act as people, with an attached moralization. The fox, called “Reynard,” was the most popular medieval fable character.

**Fabliau:** A brief tale, most often in French, set in the present-day world, populated by stock bourgeois characters, employing clever, complicated plots (often love triangles) about humankind’s most basic functions, especially sex.

**Goliardic poetry:** The irreverent and comic poems of learned wandering students, and the serious and philosophical poetry of more established clerical authors, often teachers of rhetoric.

**Icelandic family sagas:** Tightly structured, complexly plotted thirteenth-century heroic prose narratives composed from earlier oral accounts, depicting the blood feuds and other events that happened during the settlement of Iceland as a colony of Norway in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

**Marian lyrics:** Medieval religious lyric poetry written especially in France, Italy, and England devoted to veneration of the Virgin Mary, featuring some of the same tropes used to honor the courtly lady in the *chansons d’amour* of the troubadours and other medieval lyric poets.

**Pastourelle:** Literally, a “song about a shepherdess,” a short, dialogue-filled, narrative account in verse about a courtly knight’s attempt to seduce an innocent, but clever shepherdess.

**Romance:** Episodic narratives composed in verse or prose throughout Europe from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, whose plots derive from the various “Matters” of France, Britain, Rome, or antiquity and involve a high degree of fantasy and sometimes the attainment of love in a search or quest, as well as the testing of the prowess or morality of their knightly heroes. Romances explored the emotions of their protagonists in a way that heroic narratives avoided.

**Saint’s life:** A medieval narrative about the life of a saint or virtuous person; also known as hagiography.

**Skaldic poetry:** Verse composed in medieval Scandinavia that employed an erudite, specialized vocabulary in a highly complicated syntax.

*Roman d’Eneas* (1160), Boccaccio’s *Philostrato* (The One Laid Low by Love; late 1330s), and Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* (early 1380s). The matter of antiquity similarly informed the plots and characters of many individual romances about the exploits of Alexander the Great, Queen Dido of Carthage, and other figures or events of Greco-Roman or North African history.

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## HEROIC NARRATIVE

**WAR AND REPUTATION.** Throughout the Middle Ages, but especially in the earlier centuries, literary texts composed in poetry and prose and produced in the British Isles, Scandinavia, and throughout Continental Europe reflected both the dominant warrior culture and the emerging ideals of personal reputation and honor. Such literary works typically celebrated the exploits of larger-than-life, hyper-masculine legendary heroes who fought monsters, battled the enemies of Christianity, and often died tragic martyr-like deaths. In heroic tales and in a variation on the genre in French culture, the *chansons de geste* (songs of deeds), the establishment and maintenance of the hero's reputation (the hero's *los* or *pris* in French) was the driving force inspiring the extraordinary feats and physical exploits by which the male protagonists earned their heroic credentials. Such heroes were expected to display a balance of *fortitudo* (physical courage) and *sapientia* (discretion and wisdom). The tragic downfall of the hero often occurred because of an imbalance of these epic virtues, when his discretion waned and he displayed overweening pride in his physical prowess. In the *Song of Roland*, for example, Roland does not heed the cautions of his companion Oliver and delays calling for help until it is too late. Except for emphasis on such single character traits, however, the usually anonymous authors of heroic narratives paid little attention to the psychological motivations of their male protagonists, who demonstrated less emotional interiority and soul-searching than did their later chivalric romance counterparts. Nor were these heroes' exploits literally spurred by an interest in wooing a fair damsel or saving her from distress. Indeed, in these early heroic narratives love and the softening presence of women were almost completely absent. Typically, little to no information was provided about wives, sweethearts, or other emotional entanglements that might distract from the heroic imperative to perform mightily against almost impossibly dangerous foes, often in the interests of preserving physical security or in defense of their Christian faith.

**THE HEROIC NARRATIVE IN ENGLAND: BEOWULF.** The harsh conditions of early medieval life placed a premium on small tribal units of warriors and an overlord who repelled the raids of neighboring groups and made frequent forays of their own. Early heroic literature celebrated their exploits and memorialized their deeds for later audiences in what has been called "the tale of the tribe." Social conditions, then, led to the rise of a literature peculiarly fitted to immortalizing the heroes of such social units. In English, the first of these heroic narratives was the Anglo-Saxon alliterative poem

*Beowulf*, which is preserved in only one manuscript (now at the British Library), a miscellany (anthology) of stories of monsters, marvels, exotic locales, and fantastic creatures of huge size. Although it is the earliest major literary text produced in England, this story is actually set in Denmark and other Scandinavian locales. Before it was copied into the manuscript in its present form, the poem now known as *Beowulf* underwent many oral and possibly written revisions during a period from about the seventh to the eleventh century. *Beowulf* celebrates the heroic exploits of its title-hero, who is endowed with youth and superhuman strength, especially a mighty grip. These attributes enable Beowulf to rescue the court of the aged Danish king Hrothgar from the ravages of the semi-human monster Grendel, whose ancestry is traced to the biblical character Cain, Adam's "bad" son. Grendel has terrorized and gruesomely killed Hrothgar's retainers, called *thanes*, who nevertheless remain loyal to their chief despite decades of Grendel's murderous, nightly raids on their residence in Hrothgar's mead hall Heorot. The interior of the hearth-lit Heorot represents a haven of social solidarity, physical safety, and celebratory male bonding that contrasts with the brutally harsh winter landscape outdoors. The thanes' life-risking loyalty was part of the early medieval heroic code practiced by male members of a communal group known as the *comitatus*. In the *comitatus* the thanes were bound to their overlord in a special reciprocal relationship in which the lord offered material rewards and a social identity in return for his thanes' military and political allegiance.

**REPETITIONS AND REINFORCEMENTS.** The structure of *Beowulf* reflects not only the simple social life of raiding, distributing booty, and feasting, but also the recurring need for the social values of bravery and measured judgment. The poem has three episodes recounting the hero's contests against three increasingly ferocious monsters. After slaying Grendel, Beowulf and the overconfident Danes are startled out of their victorious complacency by an even more brutal retaliatory attack by Grendel's mother, who kills one of Hrothgar's most valued thanes. Beowulf follows Grendel's mother to an underwater cavern, clearly a monstrous parallel to Hrothgar's Heorot. After defeating this grotesque female in her lair and beheading Grendel, a more difficult struggle than his first monster fight, Beowulf returns a hero to his homeland, the kingdom of the Geats, which is ruled by another king named Hygelac. The hero eventually succeeds Hygelac on the Geatish throne. Following fifty years of successful rule, Beowulf finds himself in a similar position to that of Hrothgar at the poem's beginning when the Geats are attacked by a fire-breathing dragon. Instead of following Hrothgar's example of

## THE Tradition of Alliterative Poetry

The literature of the Old English period, lasting roughly until about 1100, had certain distinguishing characteristics, one of the most important of which was the use of alliteration, instead of rhyme, to organize poetic lines. Early medieval verse was presented orally, and sound was as important as sense, so alliteration, the repetition of an initial consonant or vowel in a succession of several words, was an effective technique that was common not only in Old English (a Germanic language that had been brought to Britain by the Angles, Saxons, and other invading tribes beginning in the middle of the fifth century), but also in French and Spanish poetry of this period. *Beowulf* was composed in the Anglo-Saxon alliterative line with three stressed words per line beginning with the same initial sound, and alliteration continued to be used sporadically in English poetry even as the language evolved into Middle English (highly influenced by the French spoken by the ruling class) after the Norman Conquest in 1066. An example from this period is Lawman's thirteenth-century Arthurian poem, *The Brut*. The tradition of alliterative verse became hugely popular again in the second half of the fourteenth century in what some scholars refer to as the "Alliterative Revival" when some of the most beautiful sounding, as well as intellectually challenging, poems in various genres were rendered in alliterative verse. Prominent examples from romance are *The Alliterative Morte Arthur* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in which a description of Gawain's travels over cliffs in strange countries, far from his friends, illustrates the power of the alliterative line:

Mony klyf he overclumbe in contrayez straunge,  
Fer floten from his frendez fremedly [as a stranger] he  
rydez. (713–714)

Dream visions in alliterative verse include *Pearl* and *Piers Plowman*, while allegorical and philosophical poems include *Winner and Waster* and the *Parliament of Three Ages*.

admitting his limitations, elderly Beowulf insists on fighting the dragon alone when his loyal retainer Wiglaf—a version of himself in his heroic youth—offers to oppose the dragon's venomous flames on his behalf. The old hero succumbs to the monster's venom as young Wiglaf ultimately slays the dragon. The poem ends with

a fiery Viking funeral as Beowulf's now leaderless and vulnerable subjects mourn their king's passing. If Beowulf's attempt to brave the dragon against impossible odds was motivated by pride, his behavior was nevertheless consistent with the heroic ideal. It may, however, be significant that the poem does not eulogize its title hero with the trope "That was a good king!" which had been repeated several times throughout the poem to characterize successful, praiseworthy kings such as the Dane Scyld Scefing. Another ambiguity of the poem's thematic meaning is its use of Old Testament biblical references (for example, the mention of Cain), which are intermingled with pagan values in a way that suggests contact with, but not full conversion to, Christianity.

**LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE.** Often considered the first great poem in English literature, *Beowulf* is important not only for the story it tells but for its literary qualities as well. Composed and later written down in the language of the Anglo-Saxon tribes who had begun settling in England in the middle of the fifth century, the poem makes skillful use of the distinctive qualities of this Germanic dialect (commonly called Old English), which had a strong stress accent on the first syllable of most words and a tendency to express new ideas through compounding. As the poem was recited, perhaps to the accompaniment of a harp, listeners gathered in a hall would hear the insistent repetition of initial sounds (known as alliteration), which drew attention to key words (usually three to a line). Alliteration also helped the poet to remember the text (3,182 lines in its final form), which was probably passed on, in its early stages, only through memorization. The success of *Beowulf* lies, to a great degree, in its skillful use of oral-formulaic phrases called *kennings* like "whale-road" (the sea) and "ring-giver" (king), which are often concealed metaphors which cast a sharp light on a familiar subject or allow the listener to imagine it in a new way. Thus, the ship travels on the sea just as the whale swims on a "path." Or, when Beowulf speaks, he "unlocks his wordhoard" to give out words just as the lord gives out to his followers rings or other gifts. This diction, then, expresses the values of the society.

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## HEROIC LITERATURE IN MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA

**CULTURAL TRADITIONS OF THE VIKINGS.** During the ninth and tenth centuries, migrating northern tribes, now referred to as the Vikings, sailing in lightweight but sturdy and swift longships, invaded almost all regions of Europe, including Russia (named for the rus', the red-haired Scandinavians who settled there), northern France (named Normandy for the "northmen" who settled there), England, Scotland, and Ireland. These Norsemen traded as far east as Byzantium and also forayed westward, to Iceland, Greenland, and as far as North America. The threat of the Vikings unified the formerly disorganized group of competing tribes and small kingdoms of Britain under Alfred the Great (871–899), king of Wessex, who successfully resisted the Viking incursions with military force in 878 and created a fleet of ships, the foundation of the British navy, to defend southern England against the seafaring might of the northern invaders. Eventually, an uneasy peace was reached, with the Norsemen controlling the eastern half of England and Alfred and future Anglo-Saxon kings dominating the rest of the country. The extent of Norse influence on England's literary and linguistic development is measured by the fact that the first major literary work, *Beowulf*, is about Scandinavian tribes, not the original inhabitants of Britain, and there are many Scandinavian loan words in Old English. However, the Vikings did not participate in the mutual imitation of literary forms that took place in other areas of Europe throughout the period. In fact, the literature produced far to the north of central Europe on the remote Scandinavian Peninsula does not parallel whatsoever most of the other medieval genres produced in England and on the Continent. Although some works originated on mainland Scandinavia, the majority of the greatest literary works were produced in Norway's tiny, even more remote, westerly island colony of Iceland, which was settled about 870. By 1000, Iceland had adopted Christianity as its official religion, which had a profound influence on the content of the literary texts produced.

**SCANDINAVIAN LYRIC POETRY.** Like the very early literary works of many other nations, such as those of ancient Greece, some early Scandinavian lyric poems reflected their culture by incorporating polytheistic theological explanations of the world, involving the exploits of gods who were like men, while others tended to emphasize formal concerns, including the intricacies of language itself. Whereas the rest of Europe developed lyric poetry that celebrated courtly love or devotion to the Virgin Mary, the earliest surviving texts in verse written

in the Old Norse language are poems of two distinct types: Eddic and Skaldic poetry. Eddic poems, composed in freeform or varying meters, were heroic and mythological lays (songs) based on Germanic legends and mythology about the pagan northern gods. The Eddic poems incorporating these myths and legends include two major works: *Völuspá* (Sibyl's Prophecy), the history of the world predicted by a sibyl, from creation to Ragnarök, the end of the world when the sun turns black, fire engulfs an earth declining into total darkness, and the gods fall; and *Hávamál* (Words of the High One), a didactic poem wherein Odin instructs mankind about correct social conduct and interaction between the sexes and explains about runes (mystical sayings inscribed using ancient Germanic script) and magic. Composed before the settlement of Iceland, the *Hávamál* as well as these other Eddic poems were handed down orally until they were recorded later in Iceland. This process parallels the development of heroic literature in England and on the Continent where oral versions of the Beowulf story or Roland's tragic stand against the Saracens circulated for sometimes hundreds of years before the texts known to modern readers were established in manuscript form. Unlike the less formal Eddic poetry, Skaldic poetry was much stricter in its poetic technique, employing an erudite, specialized vocabulary in a highly complicated syntax. The most talented skald was Egil Skallagrímsson, whose life was celebrated in *Egil's Saga* (c. 1230), one of the finest Icelandic or family sagas. As recounted in *Egil's Saga*, good poetry could be literally lifesaving. One of this Viking-poet's most successful poems was *Head Ransom*, composed around 948, when Egil was imprisoned awaiting execution by King Erik Bloodaxe, who then ruled in York. The night before the execution, this skald composed a poem honoring Bloodaxe which so pleased his captor that he granted him his head as a reward, hence the poem's title. Although they may have been written on the Scandinavian Peninsula, Eddic and Skaldic poems are nevertheless preserved only in manuscripts found in Iceland.

**DEVELOPMENT OF PROSE GENRES IN MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA.** In addition to poetry, prose genres developed in medieval Scandinavia to a greater degree and earlier than they did on the Continent or in England, apparently out of a desire to record significant historical events, especially accounts of the settlement of Iceland and the reigns of Norwegian kings. For example, the *Landnámabók* (Book of Settlements) details the history of the settlement of Iceland, while *Heimskringla* (Orb of the World), written by Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), recounts the history of the kings of Norway up to 1184. This writer also composed the *Prose Edda*, a handbook

on the use of literary language, which is an important source of heroic tales of Germanic pagan gods and the human heroes of northern legend. However, the most distinctive literary form that developed in Scandinavia was the saga, a unique kind of prose narrative invented in Iceland (hence they are often referred to as “Icelandic” sagas) during the twelfth through fourteenth centuries. The Old Norse word *saga* literally means “something said,” an indication of the ultimate oral origins of most of the narratives that comprise the body of the sagas. As in other national cultures in Europe in the period, accounts of the exploits of noteworthy men or events have always supplied subject matter for orally delivered entertainment or instruction. From such oral narratives, which were amplified, embellished, and transmitted by skilled tale-tellers over the course of several centuries, the written saga evolved.

**THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.** With the coming of Christian missionaries to Scandinavia, the more advanced Latin culture provided the tools for further development of indigenous literary forms. Although “runnic letters” (from a Teutonic alphabet of characters composed of straight lines suitable for inscriptions in stone, metal, or wood) had been employed to convey information in Scandinavia from very early times, runes had not been used to record any lengthy story or even poem since this mode of writing was too cumbersome for communicating anything of considerable length in a manuscript. This situation changed, however, when, after some initial resistance by those favoring the old pagan Germanic faith, Christianity was legally adopted as the state religion of Iceland in 1000, bringing with it the Latin alphabet and manuscript tradition. Following conversion, the clerkly culture, featuring the use of Latin, the language of the medieval Christian church, was introduced into Iceland. Inhabitants of Iceland quickly absorbed the newly adopted ecclesiastical and secular literature. Aided by the far-flung travels of the Vikings, the newly literate Icelandic writers were further exposed to literary genres practiced and themes depicted in other vernacular languages of Europe. The new learning did not eliminate interest in the old largely heroic saga-themes; rather, elements from Continental romance, hagiography (accounts of the lives of the saints), and other forms were grafted onto the traditional saga-lore. Even the pre-Christian mythology, which earlier had been an essential ingredient of the work of Icelandic poets, was not entirely replaced by the imagery of the new religion. Although the Icelandic sagas effectively superimposed Continental Christian influences upon traditional local subject matters, there was always a tension between the pre- and post-Christian materials.

**THE ICELANDIC SAGAS.** If the sagas, which are the crowning literary achievement of medieval Scandinavia, shared some elements with other medieval heroic texts, their style and content nevertheless stood apart from any other heroic literature produced in medieval Europe. Sagas give the impression of being reliable historical or biographical accounts. However, fact and fiction often are seamlessly blended in these prose narratives, and many sagas resemble modern historical novels more than any expected medieval genre. Moreover, exploiting a variety of influences from abroad, saga style was quite elastic, making possible the development of various sub-genres. Kings’ sagas present imaginatively constructed biographies of medieval Norwegian monarchs. “Sagas of Ancient Times,” such as the *Saga of the Volsungs*, recreated in prose the kinds of traditional heroic legends from mainland Norway that had been treated by the Eddic poets and the Skalds. Exposure to Continental genres resulted in new hybrids: sagas inspired by characters from the *chansons de geste*, such as *Charlemagne’s Saga*; sagas influenced by romances about Arthurian characters like Tristan and Isold, such as *Tristan’s Saga*; and Ecclesiastical sagas, inspired by Continental religious writings and hagiography, that deal with the conversion of Iceland to Christianity and the biographies of various Scandinavian bishops.

**THE ICELANDIC FAMILY SAGA.** The sub-genre for which the sagas are best appreciated and most famed is the “family” saga. These largely thirteenth-century narratives skillfully shaped the traditional oral accounts of the social, legal, and religious practices of Icelandic clans (who had originally settled Iceland in the tenth and eleventh centuries) into tightly structured, complexly orchestrated written texts. In general, saga style is plain and terse. Sentences are short, vocabulary is limited, syntax is simple, the plot moves quickly, and the expected repetitive embellishments of other European medieval heroic narratives are noticeably absent. With little extraneous depiction of places or people, the use of descriptive adjectives is quite sparing. Yet character development is typically vivid, relying on revealing statements made by the individuals themselves in the sagas’ extensive use of dialogue, on the actions of the characters, and on brief but pointed summary characterizations made by the usually disinterested narrator. Even these instructive pieces of dialogue, used solely to further the action, are themselves characteristically and disarmingly pithy, exemplifying the literary figure of *litotes* (ironic understatement). A good example of this stylistic feature is the statement made in *Njáls Saga* by Skarp-Hedin when he is about to be burned to death by his enemies and admits casually that his “eyes are smart-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN ICELANDIC BLOOD FEUD**

**INTRODUCTION:** This passage reveals the complex chain of violence provoked in Icelandic blood feuds, the wry, ironic understatement [litotes] employed in the discourse of saga heroes like Skarp-Hedin, and the impact of Christianity on both the history of Iceland and the content of the sagas.

[Flosi said], "There are only two courses open to us, neither of them good: we must either abandon the attack, which would cost us our own lives, or we must set fire to the house and burn them to death, which is a grave responsibility before God, since we are Christian men ourselves. But that is what we must do."

Then they kindled a fire and made a great blaze in front of the doors. Skarp-Hedin [Njal's son] said, "So you're making a fire now, lads! Are you thinking of doing some cooking?"—"Yes," said Grani, "and you won't need it any hotter for roasting."—"So this is your way," said Skarp-Hedin, "of repaying me for avenging your father, the only way you know; you value more highly the obligation that has less claim on you."...

[B]efore those inside knew what was happening, the ceiling of the room was ablaze from end to end. Flosi's men also lit huge fires in front of all the doors. At this the womenfolk began to panic.

Njal said to them, "Be of good heart and speak no words of fear, for this is just a passing storm and it will be long before another like it comes. Put your faith in the mercy of God, for he will not let us burn both in this world and in the next." Such were the words of comfort

he brought them, and others more rousing than these. Now the whole house began to blaze. [Njal negotiates for the release of women, children, and servants from the blazing house. He, his wife Bergthora, and their grandchild lie down on their bed beneath an ox hide and are not heard again. Skarp-Hedin climbs along the wall, looking for an escape.]

Gunnar Lambason jumped up on to the wall and saw Skarp-Hedin. "Are you crying now, Skarp-Hedin?" he said. "No," said Skarp-Hedin, "but it is true that my eyes are smarting. Am I right in thinking that you are laughing?" "I certainly am," said Gunnar, "and for the first time since you killed [my uncle] Thrain."—"Then here is something to remind you of it," said Skarp-Hedin. He took from his purse the jaw-tooth he had hacked out of Thrain, and hurled it straight at Gunnar's eye; the eye was gouged from its socket up to the cheek, and Gunnar toppled off the wall.... [T]hen, with a great crash, the whole roof fell in. Skarp-Hedin was pinned between roof and gable, and could not move an inch.

[The next morning, upon learning that one man, Kari Solmundarson, had escaped from the burning building, Flosi, the leader of the burners, speaks:] "What you have told us," said Flosi, "gives us little hope of being left in peace, for the man who escaped is the one who comes nearest to being the equal of Gunnar of Hlidarend in everything. You had better realize, you Sigfussons, and all the rest of our men, that this Burning will have such consequences that many of us will lie lifeless and others will forfeit all their wealth."

**SOURCE:** "The Fire in which Njal and his Family are Burned to Death," in *Njal's Saga*. Trans. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960): 265–270.

ing." In sagas, the mundane details of daily life are never extraneous, but always anticipate some important event or the climax of the plot, which is almost always gruesomely violent. The sagas feature extremes in behavior and emotional range. Plots rarely recount great, history-changing events. Rather, they create moving tragedy out of the petty banalities of everyday life—breaches of loyalty and friendship that result in family feuds and ensuing vengeance, which in turn lead to the tragic destiny of one of the protagonists. Characters either intensely love or hate one another, with little neutral feeling in-between. By showing how ordinary events can unwittingly be pushed to an extreme that provokes significant consequences, sagas express marked sympathy for and understanding of human tragedy.

**THE SCANDINAVIAN BLOOD FEUD.** What perhaps renders sagas most unique compared to heroic literature in the rest of medieval Europe is that their plots are punctuated by a phenomenon endemic to Scandinavian culture: the blood feud. This social practice requires that a slain character's kin either retaliate against a family member of the offending clan—the new victim must be of equal rank to their lost member—or collect substantial financial remuneration for their loss. The blood feud motivates a degree of physical violence that is extreme even for the medieval romances and *chansons de geste* that were familiar in the rest of Europe, whose audiences were accustomed to exaggerated numbers of anonymous knights being slain on the battlefield. Indeed, sometimes this "eye for an eye" mentality triggers ever-escalating waves

of deadly retaliation. In some sagas, this acceleration of violence culminates in a killing that not only exceeds the legal “rules” of blood feud, but also so shocks the local community by its savagery that it is declared “murder.” Technically the worst conceivable violent crime in a close-knit community tightly bound by kinship bonds, murder merits a penalty even worse than death—the social ostracizing of the perpetrator as a declared “outlaw.” This plot line characterizes some of the best family sagas, such as *Grettir’s Saga*, about the outlaw Grettir the Strong, an analogue of *Beowulf*; *Laxdaela Saga*, a romance-influenced multi-generational tragedy whose female protagonist Gudrun is one of the toughest, most desirable, and most vividly realized women in medieval literature; and *Egil’s Saga*, the biography of the cantankerous Viking-skald Egill Skallagrímsson.

**NJÁL’S SAGA: A NEW CHRISTIAN SENSIBILITY.** Both the traditional influence of the blood feud and the impact of European missionary activity can be seen in the longest Icelandic family saga, *Njál’s Saga* (1280), which is now also generally considered the greatest example of the genre. Judging from its survival in 24 manuscripts—the largest number of any of the sagas—this work was also appreciated as a masterpiece in its own age. Its plot revolves around the enduring friendship between two great heroes: Gunnar, a valorous, yet somewhat naive youth, and Njál, a wise older man, highly respected as a community leader, who possesses prophetic gifts. Eventually both of them die heroically. The saga’s first third introduces Gunnar of Hlíðarend and his courtship and disastrous marriage to the beautiful but proud and fiercely vindictive woman Hallgerd, whose initiation of a series of retaliatory killings between the two friends’ households threatens to provoke a breach in the friendship between Gunnar and Njál. However, through their self-restraint and mutual loyalty, the friendship, though extremely strained, never falters. After Gunnar’s death, Hallgerd continues to fuel the families’ blood feud by provoking her son, son-in-law, and lover to continue to harass and goad Njál’s clan. Escalating tensions climax in the intentional burning of Njál’s house while he and all his family members, including his wife, adult sons, and little children, are inside it. Since the saga includes an account of Iceland’s conversion to Christianity and miracles that occur at the battle waged by the Vikings against the Irish at Clontarf (1029?), the voluntary fiery death of the priest-like Njál suggests the Christian martyrdom characteristic of the medieval saint’s life elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, Njál’s son, Skarp-hedin—in most respects a Beowulf-like figure—brands crosses into his flesh while he endures the burning, thus introducing Christological motifs into the

saga. Ultimately, the deaths of Njál and his family were probably interpreted by contemporary audiences as either a kind of Christian martyrdom, expiation for sins of violence endemic to the old culture, or as the irrational acts of doomed and perhaps despairing heroes. Among the sagas, *Njál’s Saga* is preeminent for its masterly characterization, tight plot structuring, and such memorable scenes as Gunnar’s last heroic defense in his house at Hlíðarend and the burning of Njál’s homestead. These attest to the saga-writer’s skill at creating effective fiction. On the other hand, this work can also be appreciated for its presentation of important moments in Icelandic history and its accurate treatment of the development of Icelandic law.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Religion in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe*

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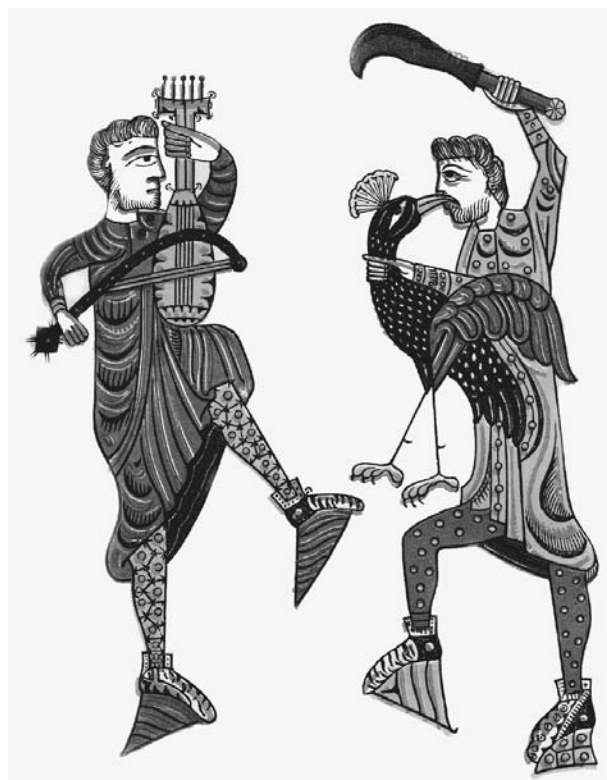
#### THE HEROIC NARRATIVE IN FRANCE

**A NEW HISTORICAL CONTEXT.** The concern for history illustrated in the Icelandic sagas takes a somewhat different form in France, where a new political and economic system was evolving. Three centuries after the disintegration of the Roman Empire, a system of centralized rule re-emerged in the area of Western Europe now known as France when a dynasty of successful kings, the Carolingians (named after founder Charles Martel, whose Latin name was Carolus), capitalized on remaining links to Roman civilization through alliances with the popes of Rome and churchmen in England and created new political institutions. Culturally, the most important innovation was a system of social, political, and economic relationships of mutual dependency between the kings and their *fideles* (“faithful men”) known as *comitatus*. By the tenth century, this system of dependency involved the rulers and their *vassalli* (“vassals”) or *homines* (“men”), retainers who exchanged military service for political protection and social benefits conferred by their temporal lords within the complex social-political-economic hierarchy. These *homines* or retainers paid *homage* to their

lords by providing military service in exchange for an estate of land or property, the *feodum* (“fief”) from which some historians termed this mutual hierarchical relationship “feudalism.” As in Anglo-Saxon literature, where narratives illustrated the virtues of *comitatus*, the emerging literary forms of France demonstrated the values of their social system through the heroic behaviors of characters who participated in this arrangement. The poems often centered on Charles Martel’s grandson, the illustrious Charlemagne (768–814) or *Carolus Magnus* (Charles the Great; *le-magne* means “the Great” in Old French).

**MODELS OF LEADERSHIP.** The key to Charlemagne’s “greatness” was his ability to put into practice the heroic formula for successful lordship: *sapientia* and *fortitudo* (wisdom and fortitude). He achieved a reputation for *sapientia* by his encouragement of letters and the arts, an overall program continued by subsequent Carolingian kings (sometimes called the “Carolingian renaissance”). He demonstrated his *fortitudo* by successfully waging warfare for conquest and plunder on many fronts, especially against Saxons in England and the Avars in the southeast. Even if Charlemagne’s war against the Spanish Muslims in Andalusia was not a military success, the adventures of his vassals in this campaign provided the raw material for the creation of the quintessential heroic literary form of medieval France, the *chanson de geste* (song of deeds or exploits). Although some of these “songs of deeds” stemmed from oral accounts about major heroic figures like Charlemagne, most were devoted to the exploits of less famous figures like William of Orange, about whom a series of these heroic poems eventually were written (the *William of Orange Cycle*, the most important of which is *Aliscans*). However, the subject of the primary exemplar of the genre was a relatively minor figure, Charlemagne’s nephew Roland, who led the rearguard in an otherwise historically insignificant skirmish, the battle of Roncesvalles in 778, an event which Einhard, a scholar in residence at Charlemagne’s palace school, mentions only briefly in his biography of the emperor.

**THE CHANSON DE ROLAND (THE SONG OF ROLAND).** The extraordinary appeal of the *chanson de geste* entitled the *Chanson de Roland* probably arose in part from its connections with two major movements of the tenth and eleventh centuries: the Crusades against the Muslim Arabs in the Holy Land and the popularity of pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James of Compostela. The entrapment of Charlemagne’s nephew Roland in a mountain pass in the Pyrenees range dividing southern France from Spain was a minor incident within the con-



Jongleurs dancing on wooden stilts. London, British Library MS Additional 11695, folio 223, 12th century. © TOPHAM/THE IMAGE WORKS.

text of an ongoing, several-centuries-old animosity between the Christian Franks of France and the “Saracens,” North African Muslims who had colonized Spain. In some sense this story reflects microcosmically the cultural and religious clash between European Christians and Muslim Arabs that was to be played out on a large scale in Jerusalem with the calling of the First Crusade in 1095. As it happened, the story underwent two centuries of oral development before this event, in large part because the same mountain pass in which Roland’s battle against the Saracen emir Marsile took place was part of the on-land pilgrimage route to the shrine of St. James in Compostela, one of the most popular pilgrimage destinations in medieval Europe. For the entertainment of the steady stream of penitents traveling to Compostela beginning in the tenth century, oral tales concerning Roland’s tragically heroic defense in a nearby locale, which was now a part of local folklore, circulated and were performed by *jongleurs* (entertainers) along the pilgrim routes. Thus, by the time the poem was written down around 1100, it was both well known and rhetorically polished, offering a perfect vehicle for Crusading propaganda. Pope Urban II’s request in 1095 to European kings for military support for a holy war initiated

a chain of obligation-fulfillment between lords and vassals that soon had many members of the knightly class traveling to Jerusalem to wage war on the Muslim “infidels.” With its Christo-centric pronouncement, “The pagans are wrong; the Christians are right,” the *Chanson de Roland* supplied in literary form the kind of propaganda that was necessary to help inflame Crusading zeal and to galvanize and popularize the war effort that temporarily united a previously divided Europe against a common enemy.

**POLITICS AND TREASON.** Even with its political appropriateness and folkloric appeal, the *Chanson de Roland* would not, of course, have been able to fulfill its role of inspiring greatness if it did not illustrate the kinds of troubling situations and complex moral issues that challenged contemporary warriors. In this sense, then, the term “songs of deeds” can be somewhat misleading. To be sure, the *Chanson de Roland* contains numerous “deeds”—the mutual “slashing and bashing” of evenly matched warriors and many almost mindlessly repetitive scenes deployed in *laissez similaires* (“similar stanzas” like those also found in Spain’s *El Cid*), that depict Christian Frankish combatants pitted against sometimes outrageously exoticized Saracen warriors, who mutually exchange brutal physical blows. But, more importantly, in the *Chanson de Roland* one also finds interesting scenes that not only reveal the politics of medieval lordship in action, but also depict the homosocial comradeship that bound medieval warriors to one another through their mutual obligations of fealty. This is similar to the *comitatus* ideal described between Beowulf and his retainers or between Beowulf and Hrothgar in the English heroic poem *Beowulf*. The subtleties of medieval politics are exemplified in *Roland* in the complex machinations that occur at the council held by Charlemagne in the poem’s opening. Here the Franks argue about continuing their seven-year-long (and thus far unsuccessful) campaign against the Emir Marsile of Saragossa. Roland, one of the youngest at the council, speaks rashly out of turn, urging their continued effort and, after being denied the mission himself (he is deemed too brash for the delicate diplomacy necessary to the negotiation), he nominates his stepfather Ganelon to serve as Charlemagne’s envoy to the Saracen camp. Suspecting his nephew’s motives, for this has the possibility of being a death mission, Ganelon becomes enraged and vows revenge. Ganelon misrepresents Charlemagne’s terms to the Saracen emir, betrays the Franks to Marsile for financial gain, and ensures his nephew’s defeat in the narrow pass of Roncevalles by nominating him for rear-guard duty in a military trap planned in collusion with the Saracens. This aspect of the story, then, is an *exem-*

*plum* of a failure of loyalty, where a retainer allows his personal antipathy to outweigh his duty to his overlord and to a comrade in battle. The scenes of Roland’s defeat reinforce the listener’s sense of horror at Ganelon’s crime, and the ending of the story provides a lesson in justice. After being tried for treason—the worst crime in the fellowship-oriented ethos of the *chanson de geste* genre—Ganelon is hanged, drawn, and quartered.

**COMRADESHIP AND LOYALTY.** The positive values of comradeship are also present in the poem. The loyalty between men at arms is exemplified in the intense friendship between the hero Roland and his friend, Oliver. This relationship anticipates the chivalric relations between Arthur and his Roundtable knights depicted in the romance genre that was invented in France in the twelfth-century narratives of Chrétien de Troyes. In a dichotomy similar to the simplistic one that distinguished between pagans and Christians, the Roland-poet characterized the two comrades thus: “Roland is brave; Oliver is wise”—a variation on the heroic “sapientia and fortitudo” ideal. Roland may be courageous, but his valor entails a good degree of proud folly when, as it becomes obvious that his army cannot prevail against the Saracen troops, he refuses to heed Oliver’s “sage” advice to sound his horn for help from Charlemagne. Later, when his depleted troops number only seventy and Roland rethinks his position about seeking help, Oliver scorns Roland’s plan. Distinguishing between “prudent valor” and “recklessness,” Oliver claims that if they called for aid now they would lose “los” (renew), the driving force that motivates not only the vassals in the *chansons de geste*, but also the Roundtable knights in the soon-to-be-developed Arthurian romances. Admitting that Oliver is right, in a series of moving *laissez similaires*, Roland nevertheless blows the horn so hard that he bursts the veins of his temples. In the ensuing attack of the Saracens, when Oliver is severely wounded, the blood running into his eyes blinds him and he strikes inadvertently at the weakening Roland. Oliver dies in his comrade Roland’s arms and when the French are outnumbered 40,000 to 3, Roland again feebly sounds his horn. After breaking his beloved sword Durendal so that the enemy cannot confiscate it, Roland dies extending his right hand toward Heaven. Angels bear Roland to Paradise, the promised reward for all loyal Crusaders.

**PASSION AND THE GRAND GESTURE.** As full of “deeds” and broadly drawn differences as their plots are, these heroic poems are also characterized by a depiction of human passions and motives that is intriguing but somewhat baffling, conveying well the inscrutable and perhaps ultimately unknowable causes of their protagon-

nists' behavior. What triggered the evident but unexplained animosity between Roland and Ganelon? Why does Ganelon betray kin and country? What personal hubris (pride) prevents Roland from sounding the horn? The poet leaves these motives unexplored and ultimately elusive. This opaque mode of characterization would change with the advent of romance, which intimately explores the inner workings of the knightly protagonists' minds and the sentiments of their hearts. But the *Chanson de Roland* is a poem full of grand and, if not subtle, then unforgettable gestures: Ganelon's flinging of his cloak and backing up against a pine tree; white-haired, silver-bearded, 200-year-old Charlemagne's brooding, almost mythic stroking of his long beard; Roland's pathetically overdue sounding of the horn. It is also marked by touching moments between two male heroes, Roland and Oliver, whose friendship and mutual loyalty ultimately outweigh any differences of opinion they have about military strategy—the same homosocial affinity that saved the strained friendship of Gunnar and Njál in *Njál's Saga*. Although little is made of the relationship in the poem, Ganelon's sister Aude had been betrothed to Roland, and upon hearing of his death, Aude herself dies. One of the greatest changes in the literary treatment of the chivalric knightly ethos that occurs with the rise of the romance genre is the new prominence given to love relations between men and women. Given this same plot, Chrétien de Troyes would have made much more of the Roland-Aude courtship than the Roland-poet could ever care about.

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## THE HEROIC NARRATIVE IN SPAIN

**THE MULTICULTURAL INFLUENCE IN MEDIEVAL SPAIN.** While the emphasis on group deliberation and the successful trial of Ganelon in the *Chanson de Roland*

suggests a move towards universal law that supersedes the blood feud of the Scandinavian sagas, the heroic narrative in Spain even more clearly shows an intense interest in the development of a legal system, one of a number of literary themes that arose from the area's unique blend of Eastern and Western cultures. From the mid-eighth century—when a renegade from the Abbāsīd dynasty in Persia, Abd al-Rahman I, brought an army to Spain, took possession of Córdoba, and proclaimed himself “emir” (commander) of al-Andalus—Muslim influence became firmly established in the Iberian Peninsula. The Muslim conquest of Spain was accompanied by the transmission to that region of the cultural flowering that had occurred in the eighth through ninth centuries under the Abbasids in Persia, when a widespread effort to translate the great advances in science, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy from Greek and Indian sources was undertaken. Great strides were also made in the development of legal treatises and commentaries on laws regarding taxation, religious practices, and rules of warfare. Under the Islamic emirs, medieval Spain was a rich cultural and ethnic mix of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, with over seventy-five percent of the population in al-Andalus (which took in most of the peninsula except for the small Christian kingdoms in the north) being non-Islamic. Resistance to the emirate began with the Christian king Alfonso II of Asturias (791–842), who modeled his reign on that of Charlemagne to the north. Alfonso's descendents, particularly Alfonso VI (1065–1109), moved the capital of his kingdom from Oviedo to León where they erected churches, endowed monasteries, and encouraged literature and the arts to flourish. Moreover, after centuries of isolation from the rest of Europe, starting in the tenth century and continuing throughout the Middle Ages, northern Spain became the destination of pilgrims from all corners of Europe who journeyed there to visit the shrine of St. James at Compostela, contributing further to the rich cultural mix that characterized medieval Spain. Along the pilgrim routes that extended through France over the Pyrenees, the *chansons de geste* were performed orally by French and Spanish jongleurs (entertainers). The reign of Alfonso VI coincided with the period of the First Crusade, when Christian knights were under the obligation as vassals to fight for the pope against Muslim possession of the Holy Land. This constellation of influences—the free intermixing of Christians and Muslims in Spain, the themes of the literary works performed along the pilgrim route, the longtime tradition of caliphate encouragement of interest in laws and legal practices—were uniquely melded into a historical figure who would become the hero of Spain in its national epic.

## HEROIC Literature in Ireland and Wales

Just as early medieval literary audiences in England, on the Continent, and on the Scandinavian peninsula (and its colony Iceland) favored long heroic narratives, the same pattern predominated in medieval Ireland and Wales, two remote areas having few direct connections to English and Continental literature. These regions, whose cultural roots lay in the mythology of the Celtic tribes that had colonized these areas centuries earlier, produced works in the heroic mode that later were incorporated into developing Arthurian romances. For example, in Ireland, the great cycle of saga-like stories about such Celtic heroes as the “Hound of Ulster,” Cúchulain—involving cattle-raiding, chariot-fighting, and beheading enemies—comprised a collection now generally referred to as the *Táin*. Like its Anglo-Saxon, Continental, and Scandinavian parallels, the *Táin* evolved out of oral celebrations of regional mythology from six centuries earlier and was collected in written form starting in the twelfth century in *The Book of the Dun Cow*. One of the *Táin*’s heroic tales, *Bricriu’s Feast*, may have contributed the beheading motif to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In medieval Wales, the equally ancient Celtic oral tales of the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, involving interactions between the human world and that of Celtic faery, began to be written down in the eleventh century in a work that has come to be called the *Mabinogi*. Some parts of this collection were clearly sources for Chrétien de Troyes’s romances, *Erec and Enide* and *Yvain*.

**THE CAREER OF “EL CID.”** Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, whose exploits won him the title *Mio Cid* or “My Lord,” was banished twice as an outlaw (from 1081–1087 and from 1089–1092) by Alfonso VI, king of León. In many respects, true to the traditional profile of career outlaws, Rodrigo hired himself out as a mercenary knight for both Christian and Muslim sides in the various wars that occurred during Alfonso’s reign. In the first exile, Rodrigo served the Moorish emir Mu’taman of Saragossa in wars against his brother and the count of Barcelona. In the second banishment, Rodrigo captured the count of Barcelona and besieged the Moorish city of Valencia, taking possession of it in 1094 and dying there in 1099. After Rodrigo’s widow Jimena Díaz

buried him in the monastery of San Pedro de Cardena near Burgos, Valencia fell again to the Muslims. Out of these rather mundane threads of an outlaw’s life was spun a rich literary tapestry and the greatest heroic narrative of medieval Spain.

**THE POEM OF EL CID.** Although it is liberally embellished with fictional elements, the oldest nearly complete medieval epic of Spain, *The Poem of El Cid*, like its literary relation the *chanson de geste*, is deeply rooted in historical fact. However, the mode of development of the work, from oral narrative to written epic, resembles the pattern of the *Roland* and the more folkloric, supernatural *Beowulf*. From a few bare facts the poetic treatment of El Cid’s career as an outlaw warrior developed in Latin chronicles and songs delivered by *jongleurs* (entertainers) to amuse visitors to Rodrigo’s tomb. Sometime between 1201–1207, a century after the events which it portrays, the poem as it is known by modern scholars was most likely composed by a monk at the abbey at Cardena, who may have been exposed to French heroic poems such as *The Song of Roland* and the William of Orange Cycle, which were performed for entertainment along the enormously popular pilgrimage route to the shrine of Saint James at Compostela. Blurring the historical facts through the lens of fiction, the Spanish poet invents several pivotal characters who enliven his plot either by befriending the hero—his right-hand man Álvar Fáñez—or by providing conflict for the protagonist—two obscure and cowardly Leónese minor nobles, known in the poem simply as the Infantes of Carrión. These villains marry El Cid’s daughters and later brutally dishonor them by stripping them of their outer clothes and leaving them in a forest; thus the Infantes provoke the delayed vengeance of their father-in-law, a highlight of the poem.

**THE STRUCTURE OF EL CID.** From the outset, one of the distinctive cultural features of *El Cid* is its setting in a society with a highly developed “court” system where many people serve as the king’s advisors, seeking to be among his favorites and thus receive lands and benefits. The poem’s overlapping double plot, structured over three divisions or *cantars* (songs) which may have been orally performed on three separate occasions, concentrates chiefly on El Cid’s second term of exile, purportedly instigated by false accusations about him made by jealous courtiers. The first plot depicts the hero’s dishonorable exile and his gradual political rehabilitation, achieved by his strategic cunning, his display of physical prowess, and the favor of his Christian God towards him in a series of successful military campaigns against the Moors in the first *cantar*. In an epic exag-



generation the Christian Cid loses only fifteen followers while the enemy Moors suffer thirteen hundred fatalities, yet the defeated Moors respect him so much that they are sorry to see him leave. In the second *cantar*, El Cid vindicates his personal honor, achieving a royal pardon for his triumphant capture of Valencia and, yielding to the king's will, marrying his daughters to the Infantes of Carrión, even though he knows that these alliances will lead to trouble in the future. The importance of the theme of courage as the distinguishing characteristic of the hero is emphasized at the beginning of the third *cantar*, which opens with an invented but powerfully effective episode in which the cowering Infantes physically disgrace themselves at the sudden appearance of an escaped lion. When El Cid so intimidates the lion that he is able single-handedly to recapture and cage the beast, he thus increases his own already considerable fame while disgracing his cowardly sons-in-law. The Infantes subsequently avenge their shame by abducting their wives, stripping them of their outer clothing, beating them brutally, and leaving them for dead in the wild oak forest. El Cid's nephew returns the hero's daughters to their grateful father, who brings a lawsuit against his sons-in-law in the king's court. Here the heritage of the caliphate interest in legal issues reflected in a major section of the plot can be seen. Because the king had arranged the marriage between the Infantes and El Cid's daughters, he shares the dishonor of his vassals. The trial culminates in a judicial combat between three of El Cid's followers, who successfully champion his suit against the Infantes and their family, defeating them in the field. In addition to receiving financial compensation from the Infantes, the hero is further honored at the story's end when the king arranges for El Cid's daughters' marriage to the princes of Navarre and Aragon. The poem's structure well displays in Rodrigo's behavior the hero's possession of *fortitudo* (physical courage) in the conquest of Valencia and the lion episode. El Cid exhibits *sapientia* (wisdom, discretion) in the self-restraint he shows in electing to prosecute rather than physically attack the Infantes, which causes them to lose more honor. The trial, a highlight of the text for the original audience, reflects the cultural inheritance of Muslim learning.

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## ORIGINS, DEFINITIONS, AND CATEGORIES OF ROMANCE

**THE NEW-FOUND POWER OF WOMEN.** The invention of the romance genre occurred because of a confluence of historical events, cultural developments, and shifts of literary taste and audience. When Pope Urban II called for the first Crusade in 1095, the lords of hundreds of demesnes (manorial lands) throughout Europe answered the request of their religious lord and marched or sailed to the Middle East to spend years in military combat. These aristocrats and their followers were exposed to Eastern and Arabic cultural and literary influences, as well as opportunities for economic exploitation and importation of the luxury goods, spices, and exquisite fabrics from the region. Literary forms of the first half of the twelfth century, such as the *chanson de geste*, not only reflected the heroic warrior ethic of European Crusaders, but also provided textual vehicles for Crusading propaganda. While these male members of the aristocracy were absent from their courts and manors, life and business went on at home in Europe, chiefly through the management of these estates by their wives and mothers. This trend is reflected in the transitional work, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm*, in which the hero Willehalm leaves his citadel in Orange in the capable hands of his wife Gyburc, who not only runs the estate, but also literally defends its ramparts against invading armies of Moors. Two royal women in such circumstances—Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204) and eventually her daughter, Marie—had a particular influence on the development of romance. Duchess of the largest duchy in France, extending from the Poitou to the Pyrenees Mountains near the border of Spain, Eleanor was first married to the king of France, Louis VII, whom she accompanied to the Second Crusade, where according to one chronicler, she paraded herself to the troops dressed as an Amazon queen. When, after fifteen years of marriage, she failed to produce male heirs, Louis divorced her in 1152, and shortly thereafter Eleanor made an even more lucrative marriage to Henry II, Plantagenet king of England.

**FEMALE LITERARY INFLUENCE.** Eleanor brought to the English court her interests in poetry, music, and the arts, all of which were cultivated at the court of Aquitaine where she was raised by her grandfather William IX of Aquitaine (1071–1127), a Crusader and also the first known troubadour poet. In the vernacular narratives now seen as early “romances” that may have been written for and/or dedicated to Eleanor, an emphasis on the sort of love relationship that is depicted in troubadour poetry, commonly known as “courtly love” (*fin'amors* in

Provençal, the language of troubadour poetry), can be found. In such relationships the female beloved is elevated to have extreme emotional power over her male lover, a supremacy that was probably a literary wish fulfillment fantasy of the female audiences of romances. Marie, Eleanor's daughter by Louis, also made an advantageous marriage by which she became duchess of Champagne, presiding over not only a political court, but also a "court of love," at which troubadour poets and writers of the newly emerging genre of romance, such as Chrétien de Troyes, were supported with her patronage and, at times, that of her mother. Another important writer at Marie's court was Andreas Capellanus, whose *Art of Courty Love*, a treatise on conducting relationships involving *fin'amors*, reflects the new examination of interior feelings and motives that characterize the heroes and heroines of the emerging romance genre. Thus, the new audience of powerful women who presided over the courts of France, England, and Germany influenced the subject matter of many of the narratives that were written in Europe in the second half of the twelfth century. It is no accident that the earliest romances, which were about the "Matter of Antiquity"—the history of Thebes, the Trojan War, and the settlement of Rome by Aeneas—featured female characters who were militarily powerful, such as Camille in the *Roman d'Eneas*, based on the Amazon warrior queen Camilla in Vergil's *Aeneid*, or the Amazon Penthesileia in the *Roman de Troie*, a romanticized version of the story of the Trojan War.

**NEW "MATTER" FOR ROMANCE.** Another factor that gave rise to the development of this new genre was the twelfth-century emergence and dissemination of Celtic legends, circulated by traveling *conteurs* (storytellers) and *jongleurs* (court entertainers) from Brittany. These oral tales of Breton folklore contributed such characteristic Celtic themes and motifs as magic, the supernatural, human to animal transformations, and a faery "otherworld" not only generally to the romance genre, but also particularly to its most famous product, Arthurian romance, which got its start in the mid-twelfth century when Geoffrey of Monmouth (1100–55) wrote about a semi-mythical king, Arthur, in his *History of the Kings of Britain*. Geoffrey established Arthur's conception and birth at Tintagel in Cornwall, his marriage to Guinevere, and his reliance on his sorcerer-like advisor Merlin. Geoffrey's chronicling of British royal history, which began with a "Matter of Antiquity," the foundation of Britain by Brutus (great-grandson of Aeneas), soon became disseminated in France when a Norman chronicler named Wace translated these British materials for a French audience in his verse narrative, *Brut* (1155), incorporating his own inventive embellishments to Geoffrey's themes such as the

"Round Table" and the sword "Excalibur." At the end of the twelfth century still another English writer, Layamon (or Lawman), retranslated Wace's French narrative into alliterative poetry in the Middle English *Brut*. This trans-Channel transfer of stories about Arthur rendered him and his Roundtable knights one of the most enduring subjects of medieval romance. When combined with the effects of the first Crusades and the beginnings of troubadour lyric poetry, the dissemination of Celtic and Arthurian motifs resulted in the development of romance, a genre that was to remain popular in nearly all areas of Europe throughout the Middle Ages.

**CONVENTIONS OF MEDIEVAL ROMANCE.** Medieval romances, which liberally took their plots from the various "matters" of France, Britain, and Rome (or Antiquity), comprised a very elastic form subject to much variation. In certain ways, romances duplicate some of the characteristics of heroic narratives. In fact, both genres are populated by knights who engage in elaborately described martial combat. Nevertheless, certain narrative conventions characteristic of romance help distinguish it from other heroic poetry. A romance is usually a long, loosely organized, episodic narrative, composed in verse or prose, whose plot involves a search or quest and the testing of the prowess or morality of its knightly hero, for whom events are often governed by chance, accident, fate, or supernatural intervention. The romance's handling of narrative time varies: in some cases, plot events are slowly protracted, almost suspended in time; in other cases, there are rapid jumps in narrative time. Observing artificial deadlines is part of the hero's test, as in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*, when the protagonist fails to return to his wife Laudine within a promised year and, to make amends for this betrayal, must spend the second half of the romance in the service of distressed women.

**MALE AND FEMALE PROTAGONISTS.** The goal of the male protagonist—usually the bravest, most handsome specimen of courtly society—is to achieve self-realization through physical adventures, following a plot pattern of separation from the group (often the other Roundtable knights), disruption, testing, and ultimately a return to harmony, often, but not necessarily, gained through a romantic love interest. The focus of romance is the psychologically flawed and un-self-aware individual hero on a quest or journey away from the known to test his moral strength. It is usually not King Arthur himself, but rather one of his individual Roundtable knights who is the hero of Arthurian romances. The female characters of romance, almost always extraordinarily beautiful, are sometimes peripheral objects of exchange between men, sometimes the goal of the quest, sometimes catalysts to disaster as temptresses, and sometimes the ultimate rewards for the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A KNIGHT SEARCHES FOR AN ADVENTURE**

**INTRODUCTION:** This passage from Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, in which a knight consults with a churl on the question of where to go to find an opportunity to acquire reputation, illustrates the randomness of the concept of "adventure," the goal of knights on quests to find the self in medieval romance. It is comic that Calogrenant, something of a braggart, must consult with a bull-keeper who fits the medieval description of "ideal ugliness" (as the lady in *Lanval* represents ideal beauty) to fulfill his role as a knight. Calogrenant's assumption that this bull-keeper, probably a rustic who tends cattle for the local lord, is monstrous reveals the contempt the aristocracy had for the lowest class in the social hierarchy, the serfs. The rustic has no time for seeking "adventure," but he does send Calogrenant into a situation that challenges him suitably and disgraces him.

[Calogrenant narrates:] I had not put my lodging-place far behind me when, in a clearing, I came upon some wild, unruly bulls, all fighting together with such a din and displaying such haughty ferocity that, to tell you the truth, I drew back in fear ... Sitting on a tree-stump, with a great club in his hand I saw a churl, who looked like a Moor and was immensely huge and hideous: the great ugliness of the creature was quite indescribable. On approaching this fellow, I saw he had a head larger than that of a pack-horse or any other beast. His hair was tufted and his forehead, which was more than two spans wide, was bald. He had great mossy ears like an elephant's, heavy eyebrows and a flat face; with owl's eyes and a nose like a cat's, a mouth split like a wolf's, the sharp yellow teeth of a wild boar; a black beard and tangled moustache, a chin that ran into his chest, and a long spine that was twisted and hunched. He leant on his club wearing a most odd garment containing no linen or wool: instead he had, fastened on his neck,

the recently flayed hides of two bulls or oxen. The instant he saw me approach him, the churl leapt to his feet. Whether he wanted to touch me I don't know, nor what his intention was, but I prepared to defend myself until I saw him standing up quite still and quiet, having climbed onto a tree-trunk. He was a full seventeen feet tall. He looked at me without uttering a word, any more than a beast would have done. Then I assumed he was witless and unable to talk.

At all events, I plucked up my courage to say to him: "Pray tell me if you are a good creature or not!" And he replied: "I'm a man!"—"What sort of a man are you?"—"Such as you see: I'm never any different."—"What are you doing here?"—"I stay here, looking after these animals in this wood."—"Looking after them?.... I don't believe a wild beast can possibly be looked after in any plain or woodland or anywhere else unless it is tethered or penned in."—"I look after these and control them so well that they'll never leave this spot." [The Churl explains how he controls the bulls by brute force.] "That's how I am master of my beasts. Now it's your turn to tell me what kind of a man you are, and what you're looking for."—"I am, as you see, a knight looking for something I'm unable to find: I've sought long and can find nothing."—"And what do you want to find?"—"Some adventure, to put my prowess and courage to the proof. Now I beg and enquire and ask of you to give me advice, regarding some adventure or marvel, if you know of any."—"You'll not get any of that," says he. "I don't know anything about 'adventure' and never heard tell of it." [The Churl then directs Calogrenant to the spring of Broceliande, where he meets the defender of the spring, Sir Esclados, who defeats him and unhorses him.]

**SOURCE:** Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain (The Knight With the Lion)*, in *Arthurian Romances*. Ed. and trans. D. D. R. Owen (London: Everyman, 1987): 284–285.

ennobling behavior they elicit from the knightly protagonist. Antagonists are either monsters—giants, mythical beasts, grotesque hybrids like the Green Knight of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—or pathological versions of the self, as in Malory's fratricidal brothers, Balin and Balan. Romances are set in the exotic other world of faery, an "unofficial" or liminal fantasy world that is juxtaposed with the "official" court, from whose safety knights journey through the dark forest of *aventure* (what happens to you) on a quest to discover the self.

**CATEGORIES OF MEDIEVAL ROMANCE.** Although to modern audiences medieval romances can seem utterly fantastic, completely unconnected to the concerns

of reality, for their original audiences these narratives served not only to entertain but also to instruct. The predicaments in which the heroes of romances found themselves and the manner in which they met these challenges served as models of behavior for aristocratic auditors or readers. For example, in the *roman d'aventure* (romance of adventure) a knight achieves great feats of arms almost solely to enhance his reputation through a series of what appear to be random adventures. The similar "courtly" or "chivalric" romance serves as a vehicle for presenting and examining the chivalric ethic, where each in the progression of adventures demonstrates different things about the hero or represents different stages in his journey towards internal harmony. In the knight's

quest or search, the locales he traverses are meaningfully related to the knight's individual moral progress or expose some aspect of the aristocratic life to critical scrutiny. In this way, courtly romance is educative, proposing for the knight-protagonist (and for the romance's original medieval audience) models of courtly behavior or *courtoisie* (courtesy) in various areas such as combat, social relations, or the service of women and the oppressed. In long romances, the series of adventures becomes something like a fated and graduated test encouraging the knight to strive for personal perfection. Other secular romances follow the general pattern of adventure and quest, but combine these elements with another genre: the allegorical dream vision. For example, the narrator of the *Romance of the Rose*, a work that examines the spectrum of erotic love and satirizes aspects of courtly life, dreams that he undergoes a quest for a special rose (symbolizing the psyche of a young woman), resulting in a poem that, while called "romance," is really more closely related to moral or didactic literature.

**RELIGION AND ROMANCE.** Medieval romance was not only about the secular subjects of knightly combat, social niceties, and erotic attraction. A large component of many romances reflected the influence of Christianity and its teachings. In "religious romances" the allegorical and symbolic potential of the genre is exploited to direct the action from secular to religious goals. The knight's progress is turned to a narrower examination of the state of his soul; through the process of the quest, the hero arrives at spiritual revelation and, in the end, he rejects the physical world altogether. The romances about Galahad's achievement of the Grail Quest—where Lancelot's son Galahad concludes that he cannot achieve spiritual perfection *and* remain in the earthly world—and Gawain's humble acknowledgment of his flawed troth in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* illustrate this romance sub-type. Moreover, in "homiletic" or "didactic romances," the usual elements of romance are superimposed on a story told primarily for its moral significance according to the pattern of a saint's life as established in a narrative genre called "hagiography." In these "hagiographic romances," the central character suffers extreme hardships either as punishment for transgression or as a test of faith in a trial by ordeal rather than by adventure. The romance concludes not with the achievement of self-knowledge, but with the granting of grace or reprieve, as is illustrated by Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* of Griselda and his *Man of Law's Tale* of Custance, where after seemingly losing children and family, the heroines have their losses restored to them at the end of the tale.

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## COURTLY LOVE.

**"COURTLY LOVE" OR FIN'AMORS.** One of the most commonly held, and perhaps most misunderstood, modern notions about the Middle Ages is the type of romantic or erotic love believed to have been practiced in the period, popularly referred to as "courtly love." Courtly love is a cluster of related ideas and sensibilities characterizing an extreme expression of romantic passion that was demonstrated frequently by characters in medieval literature, especially in courtly romances and the love lyrics of the French troubadours and the German minnesingers. The term "courtly love" was never used in medieval texts, although medieval authors and poets did use the term *fin'amors* (refined love) to describe the extremes of emotion experienced, often suffered, by male protagonists in romances and by the lover singing love songs to his beloved in the lyric tradition. After observing the phenomenon depicted in various romances, the French literary historian Gaston Paris coined the term "courtly love" at the end of the nineteenth century to describe the devotion of knights for their ladies in medieval romances and love poetry, and the term took on a life of its own. Many general discussions of medieval literature now treat the "courtly love" experienced by various romance heroes—Chrétien's Lancelot, Chaucer's Troilus, or Dante's narrative persona in his ostensibly autobiographical lyric collection *La Vita Nuova*—as if the authors themselves used the term. In fact, although medieval authors never call what they are describing "courtly love," this particular construction of heterosexual love has a long literary history. It is not surprising that the Middle Ages would embrace a variety of love discourse that has such antique, and therefore authoritative, origins.

**THE ORIGINS OF COURTLY LOVE.** The origins of this form of extreme love can be traced to the Roman poet Ovid, one of the most highly regarded "authorities" in the Middle Ages, whose *Ars Amatoria* (Art of Love; 1 B.C.E.) contributed many of the tropes now fa-

miliar as “courtly love.” These include the idea of love as a kind of warfare between the sexes, in which every lover is a soldier in the army of love over which Cupid is the commander-in-chief, and the notion of the absolute power of women over men, who are afflicted by a form of madness because of which they undergo various hardships and physical sufferings and practice absurdly exaggerated behavior. Another likely literary source of more contemporary vintage was *The Dove’s Neck Ring*, produced in Muslim Spain (1022) by Ibn Hazm, who was influenced by Platonic ideals about love. Hazm’s contributions to the discourse of courtly love include the notion that man reveals and improves his character or good breeding by practicing a chaste (rather than sensual) love. This rarefied love produces an ennobling effect on the male lover, changing a man of humble birth to the equal of the noble lady to whom he aspires. According to Hazm’s version of neo-Platonism, true love is a reunion of parts of souls that were separated in the creation.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF COURTLY LOVE.** But what exactly was the late medieval European phenomenon known popularly as “courtly love”? This medieval pattern of erotic behavior was really a cult of frustrated longing. It involved the male lover’s unfulfilled sexual desire for a female love object—an unattainable, extremely beautiful and perfect courtly lady, whose very inaccessibility (because she is married to someone else, often the lover’s lord) makes her more attractive to the lover. Thus, for the male lover, the essence of the experience of love is a paradoxical combination of pleasure and pain. He experiences joy at the sight of the beloved whose proximity brings delight; at the same time he endures intense mental and physical suffering—a host of disorders including chills, fevers, aches, insomnia—experienced simultaneously with the pleasure. This paradoxical combination of pleasure and pain is caused illogically by the fact that despite her very nearness, the lover cannot have her. In this topsy-turvy situation, the courtly lady is the “physician” who is both the cause and the potential cure of the courtly lover’s painful frustration. Because they often involved marital infidelity on the part of at least one of the pair, courtly love relationships had to be conducted with the utmost secrecy. This necessitated clandestine meetings between the lovers, which ended at dawn, thus giving rise to the lyric genre of the *aubade* or “dawn song.” Secrecy and physical separation inspired acute bouts of jealousy in both parties, all part of the phenomenon’s allure. Because the attainment and practice of *courtoisie* (courtesy) was limited to the aristocracy, courtly love was only to be practiced by the most elite classes of medieval soci-



Lancelot embracing Guinevere; Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, Italy. Turin. Biblioteca nazionale. MS L. I. 3 (1626), 15th century. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ety, the knights and ladies at the aristocratic courts. Indeed, when a knight was attracted to the beauty of a peasant woman, he was instructed simply to take her by force if she did not immediately succumb to his flatteries, a plot situation illustrated in the lyric genre of the *pastourelle*.

**REAL AND IMAGINED COURTLY LOVE.** Although no concrete evidence exists that the fantastic courtship known as courtly love was actually practiced during the medieval period, this erotic fantasy or game nevertheless had much literary currency from the twelfth century onwards, when the wife of King Louis VII of France, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and their daughter Marie reputedly set up “courts of love” respectively at their estates in Aquitaine and Champagne. Both Eleanor and Marie were literary patronesses of troubadour poets and romance writers, and, through their encouragement, the discourse of courtly love as we know it took shape. At Marie’s request, Chrétien de Troyes wrote the unfinished romance, *The Knight of the Cart*, about Lancelot’s courtly desire for Guinevere, and at her court another cleric,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ANDREAS CAPELLANUS'S RULES FOR LOVE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In Book Two of *De arte honeste amandi* [*The Art of Courtly Love*], written in France under the patronage of Marie de Champagne in the late twelfth century, Andreas Capellanus (Andrew the Chaplin) enumerates rules for love that mix the cynicism of Ovid's *Art of Love* with the elevated or idealized love of the type called "courtly." This love is manifested by certain conditions such as the married state of the lady, and physical symptoms, such as fainting, palpitations of the heart, or changes of color on the part of the lover. How often these rules were applied in real life is uncertain, but they were highly influential in the development of medieval literature.

**Book Two: On the Rules of Love**

1. Marriage is no real excuse for not loving.
2. He who is not jealous cannot love.
3. No one can be bound by a double love.
4. It is well known that love is always increasing or decreasing.
5. That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish.
6. Boys do not love until they arrive at the age of maturity.
7. When one lover dies, a widowhood of two years is required of the survivor.
8. No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons.
9. No one can love unless he is impelled by the persuasion of love.
10. Love is always a stranger in the home of avarice.
11. It is not proper to love any woman whom one should be ashamed to seek to marry.
12. A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.
13. When made public, love rarely endures.
14. The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.
15. Every lover regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved.
16. When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved, his heart palpitates.
17. A new love puts to flight an old one.
18. Good character alone makes any man worthy of love.
19. If love diminishes, it quickly fails and rarely revives.
20. A man in love is always apprehensive.
21. Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love.
22. Jealousy, and therefore love, are increased when one suspects his beloved.
23. He whom the thought of love vexes, eats and sleeps very little.
24. Every act of a lover ends with the thought of his beloved.
25. A true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved.
26. Love can deny nothing to love.
27. A lover can never have enough of the solaces of his beloved.
28. A slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved.
29. A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.
30. A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.
31. Nothing forbids one woman being loved by two men or one man by two women.

**SOURCE:** Andreas Capellanus, *de arte honeste amandi* [*The Art of Courtly Love*]. Trans. J. J. Parry (New York: Norton, 1969): 184–186.

Andreas Capellanus, wrote his Ovid-influenced treatise *De Amore* (About Love) also titled *De Arte Honestae Amantiae* (About the Art of Frank Loving; 1180s), a three-part "guide" to conducting courtly love addressed to a young man named Walter. Andreas's first two books present the rules of the game—what rank the lovers must be and how they must conduct themselves. Ironically, his

third book, containing a vehement repudiation of secular love and a misogynistic attack on the vices of women, retracts all the advice offered previously. Placed on the proverbial "pedestal" above the reach of the courtly lover by his frustrated yearning for her, the courtly lady of the first two books enjoyed a position of power that few actual medieval women (except for queens and countesses

like Eleanor and Marie) ever experienced. And even queens, subject to the temporal power of their husbands, could be locked in towers, which happened to Eleanor herself when her second husband, Henry II grew tired of her meddling in his political affairs. Knocked off the “pedestal” of adulation, the courtly lady instead returned to being the object of medieval antifeminism more typical of the period’s attitudes toward women.

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## ARTHURIAN ROMANCE

**THE HISTORICAL OR PRE-LITERARY ARTHUR.** King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table are to this day the most familiar and beloved medieval literary characters. They continue to fascinate audiences of contemporary novels, scores of cinematic treatments—from the serious John Boorman film *Excalibur* to the parodic farce, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*—and even print and television advertising employing the Arthurian icons of the sword Excalibur, the ideal of Camelot, and the quest for the Holy Grail. Although the figure of King Arthur known to medieval and modern audiences first took shape in the twelfth century, the product of the accumulation of almost six centuries of legend building, there is some evidence (admittedly slender) for the actual existence of an “historical” Arthur. Contemporary archeological excavation contributes to the still ongoing search for the historical foundations of the King Arthur legend. A leader of the Welsh named “Arthur” who fought against the invading Anglo-Saxons apparently lived in late fifth- to early sixth-century Britain. The historian Gildas first mentioned the battle of Badon (c. 500), which the Welsh poem “Gododdin” (c. 600), in the earliest reference to Arthur’s name, later attributed as a triumph to someone named “Arthur.” The Welsh historian Nennius, in the *Historia Brittonum* (History of the Britons; c. 800), named this Arthur “Dux Bellorum” (leader of warriors). Two tenth-century Welsh chronicles,



Sir Percival, two knights and Holy Grail. Chrétien de Troyes, *Percival*. Formerly Amsterdam, Holland, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 1, ii, folio 140, 1286. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

cles, the *Spoils of Annwen*, and the *Annales Cambriae* (Annals of the Welsh) added to the growing legend the figure of Mordred, Arthur’s illegitimate son, who later kills his father. The tenth- to twelfth-century anthology of Welsh tales titled the *Mabinogion* added other Arthurian characters, including Yvain, whose character was amplified most extensively by Chrétien de Troyes in a romance about his adventures. In 1125, the historian William of Malmesbury wrote his *Gesta Regnum Anglorum* (Deeds of the English Kings), further establishing Arthur’s reputation as a British hero.

**LITERARY TREATMENTS OF THE ARTHUR LEGEND.** The six centuries of scattered historical fragments giving evidence of the existence of a warrior named Arthur coalesced into a coherent narrative of a heroic life in the mid-twelfth century. The version of King Arthur that has become familiar to post-medieval audiences was first compiled then by Geoffrey of Monmouth (1100–1155), whose Latin text, *Historia Regnum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain; 1137), used the growing legend of Arthur as a unification myth for a Britain divided in civil war between loyalty to King Stephen or to Empress Matilda. Geoffrey introduced many of the features that would become standard Arthur lore—Merlin, the Mont-Saint-Michel giant, the prehistory of Arthur’s father Uther Pendragon, and Arthur’s

## THE Grail Quest

The “Holy Grail” has by now come to refer to almost anything that is highly desirable, much sought after, and ultimately elusive. This mysterious object is alluded to in modern poetry, most famously in T. S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland”; it figures as the goal of the main character in the classic Wagnerian opera, *Parsifal*; it plays a part in contemporary films like *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, and *The Fisher King*; and it has been the subject of a bestselling novel, Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*. But the mythic resonance of the Holy Grail is rooted in the legends about the Grail that circulated in the Middle Ages and were explored in a series of quest romances composed by medieval authors.

The father of romance, Chrétien de Troyes, in the late twelfth century wrote an unfinished text about the search for the Grail titled *Perceval*, while in Germany Wolfram von Eschenbach translated Chrétien’s text into the thirteenth-century Middle High German romance, *Parzival*. In a parallel development, a significant segment of the thirteenth-century French *Vulgate Cycle* was *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, which was translated for a fifteenth-century English audience by Sir Thomas Malory in one of the books of his *Le Morte d’Arthur* devoted to the grail-quest. Indeed, in Malory’s estimation, the unsuccessful quest for the Grail signaled the failure of the utopian social experiment that King Arthur’s Camelot signified. In Malory’s version, out of a large group of Roundtable knights who set out, only a “remnant” return alive from years of questing for the Grail, and such otherwise noble knights as Gawain, Perceval, Bors, and Lancelot fail at the quest because of their sexual impurity and “spotted” Christian virtue. In fact, the only knight who successfully experienced a vision of the Grail was Galahad, Lancelot’s illegitimate son by Elaine, who was entitled to this privilege

because of his utter spiritual perfection, a perfection that was so extreme that upon experiencing the Grail, he was no longer capable of living in the compromised (but human) moral climate of Arthur’s Camelot. Like Roland in the *Song of Roland*, Galahad was wafted heavenward immediately after his mystical vision.

What was the Grail that medieval knights so avidly sought? Although the Grail is described in different terms in the various romances, it is often an object associated with the last moments of Jesus Christ’s life, sometimes a cup or bowl used by Joseph of Arimathea, the man who brought the crucified Christ down from the cross and who may have collected His blood in some vessel, after the Roman soldier Longinus pierced Christ’s side with a spear. The objects associated with the Grail are usually a spear or lance and a vessel, either a chalice or a bowl. Sometimes the Grail is associated with the chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper. However, some theorize that the symbols of the Grail, the male lance and the female vessel, originated in pre-Christian fertility myths that became associated with the Grail story through the myth of the “Fisher King,” who was wounded in his thigh with a lance and whose infirmity is analogous with the general decline in fertility of his kingdom (hence the “wasteland” motif). The Fisher King is healed through contact with a vessel containing blood, sometimes Christ’s blood, at other times the blood of a female virgin, which restores fertility to the land once again. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that at the time of Christ’s death, some of the figures associated with this event migrated to Europe: Joseph of Arimathea purportedly came to England and Mary Magdalene reputedly settled in Marseilles, France. Some sites long attached to the legend of King Arthur, like Glastonbury in Somerset, which is reputedly the Isle of Avalon, are also attached to the Grail legend. In fact, in Glastonbury today, one can drink water from the “Chalice Well,” a spring under which, local legend claims, Joseph of Arimathea buried the Holy Grail.

final voyage to Avalon. The Anglo-Norman writer, Wace (c. 1100–1175), “translated”—rewrote in Anglo-Norman French with considerable changes to suit his audiences—Geoffrey of Monmouth’s chronicle into *Le Roman de Brut* (1155), an originary romance featuring stories about Camelot and the knights of Arthur’s court, and inventing the Round Table. In the late twelfth century, Chrétien de Troyes (fl. 1160–1190) appropriated Arthurian knights to produce in Old French a series of long and complex verse romances separately dedicated to the individual stories of several members of Arthur’s court: *Yvain: the Knight of the Lion*, *Lancelot: the Knight*

*of the Cart*, and *Perceval*, who figured prominently in the Quest of the Holy Grail. At about the same time Chrétien was writing his Arthurian romances, Marie de France (1150–1200) also wrote a series of Breton *lais*, two of which feature the Arthurian court—*Lanval*, about an unknown young knight, and *Chevrefoil*, about Tristan and Iseult. Thus by the end of the twelfth century, the constellation of Arthurian characters had become familiar to French and English audiences. Across the English Channel, Lawman (also spelled “Layamon,” 1189–1207) translated Wace’s *Le Roman de Brut* into alliterative early Middle English in a poem titled *Brut*,



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***WHAT GAWAIN LEARNED ABOUT HIMSELF**

**INTRODUCTION:** The delightful fourteenth-century Middle English romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, illustrates both the secular and the spiritual concerns of romance narratives. In this passage, Gawain returns to Camelot after his adventure with the Green Knight at the Green Chapel, presenting the Green Girdle he accepted from Bertilak's lady and revealing to the court what his adventure, in which he broke his covenant with the Green Knight, taught him about his own moral limitations. The translation attempts to mimic the original alliterative poetic style of the Middle English poem in which the same consonant or vowel begins three words in each line.

"Lo, lord," said Sir Gawain, and lifted the lace,  
 "This belt caused the blemish I bear on my neck;  
 This is the damage and loss I have claimed  
 Through the cowardice and covetousness that I  
 acquired there;

This is the token of the untruth I was caught in,  
 And I must wear it while I still live.

A man may hide his misdeed, but never undo it,  
 For where once it's attached, it is latched on  
 forever."

The king comforts the knight, and all the court also  
 Laughs loudly about it, and courteously agrees  
 That the lords and the ladies who belong to the  
 Table,  
 Each guest at the gathering, should have such a belt,  
 A band of bright green circling slantwise about,  
 Of the same sort as Sir Gawain's and worn for his  
 sake. ...

**SOURCE:** *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 2505–2518. Text modernized by Kristen M. Figg and John B. Friedman.



King Arthur and the Green Knight. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, London, British Library MS Cotton Nero A. x, folio 94, 1360.

*cle* (or *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*) and the later *Post-Vulgate Cycle* of romances, parts of which were translated into German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Irish, and Welsh, and were important sources for Sir Thomas Malory's late Middle English *Morte D'Arthur* in the fifteenth century. This vast interrelated but independently authored cycle of romances traced the entire career of the Arthurian cast of characters, including an extensive narrative about the life of Merlin (*The History of Merlin*); the enmity between Morgan le Faye and her half-sibling Arthur; her vengeful desire for Lancelot in order to thwart Guinevere; the knightly adventures of Lancelot as well as the adulterous love between Lancelot and Guinevere (*The Prose Lancelot*); the Grail Quest (*The History of the Holy Grail* and *The Quest for the Holy Grail*); and Arthur's death (*The Death of Arthur*). The *Vulgate Cycle's* authors expanded upon the personal lives of the Arthurian cast more than had ever been done previously and embellished the growing legend with a high degree of magic, mysticism, psychological complexity, and explicit sexuality. This French version of the Arthur story was perhaps the high point in the development of the medieval legend.

which introduced the motif of Arthur's prophetic dream before Mordred's treachery.

**LATE MEDIEVAL EXPANSION OF THE ARTHUR STORY IN FRANCE.** Although Arthur was the main figure in the "Matter" of Britain, his story was appropriated by all European medieval national literatures, but especially in France. By the thirteenth century, the stories about Arthur and his knights had accumulated to such a degree that between 1215 and 1235 several anonymous French writers contributed to the compilation of what has come to be called collectively the *Vulgate Cy-*

## THE Contours of the Literary Life of King Arthur

The poems and stories about King Arthur that were written over a period of several centuries during the Middle Ages do not all include the same amount of detail of his life. His presence as a figure in British history grew from a mere mention of the name of an actual person in the sixth century to a fairly well-developed legend by the twelfth. By the end of the medieval period, a complete outline had emerged in response to changing concepts of heroism, morality, and statehood.

Arthur began his life as the offspring of an illicit union between Uther Pendragon and Igraine of Cornwall, contrived through the shape-shifting magic of the sage, Merlin, who became Arthur's advisor in his early career. After Merlin took the child away from Uther, Arthur was raised in seclusion until the moment when he pulled the sword from the stone (an incident familiar to modern audiences from its inclusion in most Arthurian films), which established his claim to the throne of Britain. Arthur's lifelong sibling conflict with his half-sister Morgan le Faye ("the fairy") generated many episodes in the Arthurian ro-

mances in which Morgan tried to undermine his power, most notably in the *Vulgate Cycle*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Malory's *Works*. After marrying Guinevere, daughter of Lodgreaunce, Arthur established a Utopia-like court, Camelot, supported by the fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table. Most romances feature the fatal attraction between Guinevere and Arthur's best knight Sir Lancelot, the revelation of which led to internal strife in the kingdom, civil war between factions of the Roundtable Knights, and eventually the death of Arthur at the hands of his illegitimate son Mordred. The unsuccessful quest for the elusive and highly symbolic Holy Grail by Arthur's knights also contributed to the decline of Arthur's kingdom. Upon his death, Arthur's corpse was transported by the Lady of the Lake, Morgan, and Morgause, Arthur's other half-sister, to the Isle of Avalon where, according to some versions, he awaits his predicted return as the "Once and Future King." The cycle of stories about the Arthurian characters is vast, and most Arthurian romances feature as protagonist one of Arthur's Roundtable Knights, not Arthur himself. More often, Arthur has little part in the action, except to be present at the beginning and end of the story, as, for example, in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and in the Middle English *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where the knights in the title are the focus of the adventure.

### THE "ENGLISHING" OF ARTHURIAN ROMANCE.

Arthur was not neglected by writers in his own Britain, especially in the last two centuries of the medieval era. In the fourteenth century, several important additions to the Arthurian literary corpus were produced in England. The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (c. 1360), a Middle English poem about Arthur's death which may have been influenced by the *Vulgate Cycle* and later served as an important source for Thomas Malory in his own long collection of Arthurian narratives, is notable for using the Boethian symbol of the "wheel of fortune" (representing the concept of cyclical alternations between worldly prosperity and adversity) in its characterization of Arthur's developing enmity with his illegitimate son Mordred. Written in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, another poem that belongs to the so-called fourteenth-century "Alliterative Revival," *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, depicts the challenge brought to Camelot by a monstrous Green Knight, who is elaborately described as a hybrid of courtly elegance and primitive naturalism. With its intricate structure into four parts or "fitts," its employment of extensive number symbolism (the three correlating hunts and seductions at Castle Hautdesert and the highly symbolic pentangle

emblem on the shield carried by Gawain) and color signification (green and gold), and its incorporation of folklore motifs into a courtly romance (the exchange of blows game introduced by the Green Knight and the exchange of winnings game proposed by Bertilak), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is one of the most literarily sophisticated romances in the Arthurian canon. At about the same time, in the *Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer assigned an Arthurian romance to be told by his female pilgrim, the Wife of Bath, in which an unnamed Arthurian knight (analogues suggest the knight was Gawain) rapes a maiden and to avoid execution quests to find out "what women want most."

**ROMANCE IN PRINT: MALORY'S ARTHUR.** Finally, between 1469 and 1470, Sir Thomas Malory composed a series of tales about Arthur and Camelot in late Middle English prose. Published and edited by the early printer William Caxton, the first printed edition of Malory's Arthurian tales was titled *Le Morte Arthure* by Caxton in 1485. Upon the discovery of the presumably earlier hand-written Winchester Manuscript in 1934, Eugène Vinaver re-edited Malory's romances as Malory's *Works*. Comparison of Malory's texts with earlier versions of the Arthur story reveal that, in addition to the

*Alliterative Morte*, Malory also drew heavily on the various parts of the French *Vulgate Cycle* for such details as the origins of Arthur, the role of Merlin, the treachery of Morgan le Faye, the affair between Lancelot and Guinevere, the Grail Quest, the extensive story of Tristram and Isolde, and the death of Arthur at the hands of Mordred. While many sections of Malory's version are immediately recognizable as deriving from the *Vulgate* source, Malory is far more reticent than his French authorities were about incorporating elements of magic and details of the sexual passions experienced by these Arthurian characters. Like his model, Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose twelfth-century audience was experiencing civil war between advocates of King Stephen and Empress Matilda, Malory, himself a prisoner when he wrote the book, used the story of Arthur as a unifying myth for a divided Britain. In Malory's hands, Arthur's legend, which culminated in internal strife because of the moral frailties of the inhabitants of Camelot, served as an *exemplum*, a story embodying a moral lesson, for his fifteenth-century English audience, who were now divided, as they had been by the Stephen-Matilda feud in Geoffrey's age, by the War of the Roses.

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#### TRANSLATIO STUDII: SOURCES FOR ROMANCE

##### THE MEDIEVAL DEFINITION OF "TRANSLATION."

Reverence for the past and respect for the "authority" of previous authors and texts determined which plots and characters medieval writers selected to "translate" from a different language, either Latin or another vernacular language, into a new vernacular version for their immediate audience. This process, known as *translatio studii*,

was not the equivalent of the modern translator's earnest striving to reproduce with linguistic exactitude the ideas of a foreign language literary text; rather, it reflected the Latin root of "translate," meaning "to carry across." Thus, the medieval translator's goal was to transfer the plot and characters of a tale produced for the audience of one national culture or earlier period to that of another culture in a later period. This process was often accompanied by significant changes in the transfer. Often what got "lost in translation" was not only some of the plot and original roles of the characters, but also the very genre that the model text represented. In France, the twelfth century simultaneously saw a peaking of the popularity and production of *chansons de geste* (heroic poetry), exemplified by the large cycle of William of Orange poems, and the development of a new genre, courtly romance, in the works of Chrétien de Troyes. Given the reluctance of medieval writers to invent new plots, it is not surprising that many older works were "translated" to fulfill the demand for stories that could be reworked into this popular vernacular literary form.

##### TRANSLATIO STUDII FROM FRENCH TO GERMAN.

In the early thirteenth century, the German writer Wolfram von Eschenbach (d. 1220–1230) "translated" *Aliscans*, a twelfth-century French *chanson de geste* from the William of Orange cycle, for a new German-speaking audience. As a result, the genre of Wolfram's uncompleted *Willehalm* is virtually unclassifiable. This hybrid work exemplifies a significant trend in the development of medieval European literature: the transition in literary taste from the heroic mode to the romance. Wolfram's earlier *Parzival* had already translated Chrétien de Troyes's unfinished *Conte du Graal*, a courtly romance about the "Quest for the Holy Grail," proving him an adept practitioner of the new genre. In *Willehalm*, Wolfram maintains the basic *chanson de geste* plot conflict about the title character, a Frankish warrior, William, who must enlist aid from the reluctant French king Louis to defend the city of Orange against attack by armies of Moors attempting to recapture Willehalm's newly converted Christian bride, Gyburc. However, in importing this plot from the French heroic mode, the German author, a practiced romance writer, adds many romance elements to the received heroic plot. Leading the Moors are the father, former husband, and son of Gyburc, whose family is intent on returning her, dead or alive, to both her original home and her Muslim faith. However, in Wolfram's treatment, Gyburc's conversion results as much from her deep love for the Christian warrior Willehalm as from her altered religious convictions. This change reveals the obvious influence of the development of "Minne," the German concept of courtly love.



Initial from page of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS M. 817, folio 1, 1400–1410.

**THE SHIFT TO ROMANCE.** Although the heroic literary tradition exoticized the Moors to the point of their seeming monstrously inhuman and therefore deserving slaughter by the Christian armies, Wolfram also shows a new tolerance for religious difference that replaces the rigid “The Christians are right, the Pagans are wrong” mentality that dominated the earlier heroic mode. He depicts the Moorish leaders as courtly knights who practice the same chivalry as their Christian counterparts. This shift is exemplified in his revised characterization of the giant wild-man-like Moor Renewart. In the epic exaggeration of the source text, this buffoonish character carries an uprooted tree with which he crushes anyone who causes him trouble. Wolfram’s character at first wields a large club, which he later replaces with the more civilized sword. Moreover, his substantial role in the French source is downplayed so as to give Wolfram’s hero Willehalm more prominence. On the other hand, Willehalm’s doomed nephew Vivianz, whose idealistic heroism reflects Roland’s stubborn self-sufficiency and whose saintly death reflects the wafting of Roland heavenward at the end of the *Song of Roland*, seems a throw-

back to the earlier mode. Wolfram’s revised treatment of Gyburc, the heroine, also illustrates his bridging of elements of both genres. This engaging and sympathetic female character is shown to be capable both of carrying out the “feminine” duties of the faithful wife and chatelaine of the castle, and of ingeniously defending the citadel of Orange (in Willehalm’s absence) against a protracted siege waged by armies of Moors that include her own father, former husband, and son. Whereas typical *chansons de geste* downplayed the role of women in the lives of heroic warriors such as Roland and Oliver, Gyburc is a substantial character in Wolfram’s reconceived plot and a major force in the hero’s successful defense of home, nation, and religion.

**TRANSLATIO STUDII FROM GREEK TO ITALIAN TO MIDDLE ENGLISH.** Another case of how *translatio studii* could significantly change the nature of a well-known story involves the transmission of narratives about the ancient Greeks into late medieval literature. Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375), an Italian writer more famous for his story collection the *Decameron*, also wrote two important texts about characters from Greek history—*Il Teseide* (The Story of Theseus; c. 1341) and *Il Filostrato* (The One Made Prostrate by Love; c. 1341)—both of which balance heroic and romance style. Geoffrey Chaucer translated these works into Middle English in the late fourteenth century, but significantly altered them, both in content and in genre, while doing so. Both Boccaccio’s *Filostrato* and Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* are set during the Trojan War and feature such famous classical characters as Troilus, Priam, Hector, and Cassandra. Although Boccaccio had already somewhat altered the Greek story for his medieval Italian audience in the *Filostrato*, Chaucer added to his own translation (written about forty years later) even more “medievalizing” of the costumes worn, religious faith practiced, and general socio-cultural outlook of the story’s characters. For example, Chaucer turned the political tragedy of fallen Troy into a backdrop for complicated interactions between the ill-fated lovers Troilus and Criseyde, their go-between Pandarus (now Criseyde’s uncle rather than her cousin as in Boccaccio), and a rival lover Diomedes. With its incorporation of courtly love elements such as the enforced secrecy between the lovers and Troilus’s protracted languishing in physical afflictions and emotional despair, Chaucer’s text more resembles a courtly romance than an epic. In a further example of *translatio studii*, Chaucer also assigned to his character Troilus many speeches about free will versus predestination taken almost verbatim from Boethius’s Latin *Consolation of Philosophy*, which Chaucer had himself translated from Latin to Middle English as the *Boece*. At the con-

## BOETHIUS and the Consolation of Philosophy

A prominent scholar who translated and harmonized the works of Plato and Aristotle and who wrote treatises on music, arithmetic, logic, and theology, Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (480–524) was most famous in the Middle Ages for a work he wrote while awaiting execution in prison, the *Consolation of Philosophy*. This work strongly influenced the visionary literature of the later Middle Ages, whose writers considered Boethius so authoritative that his prison memoir was the most widely copied work of secular literature in Europe. The structure of the Latin *Consolation* alternates between prose and verse sections, a form also used by other writers, such as Martianus Capella in *The Marriage of Mercury and Philology*; Bernard Silvester in *On the Whole World*; and Alain of Lille (Alan of the Island) in *The Complaint of Nature*. Moreover, the *Consolation* was translated into Old English by King Alfred in the ninth century, into Old French by Jean de Meun in the thirteenth century, into Middle English by Geoffrey Chaucer in the fourteenth century, and into Early Modern English by Queen Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century.

*The Consolation of Philosophy* consists of a dialogue between two characters, the narrative persona called “Boethius,” mirroring the author, who laments the series of misfortunes he feels he has undeservedly suffered, and his interlocutor, the majestic allegorical personification Lady Philosophy (Love of Wisdom), who appears to him in

his prison to console and enlighten him. Lady Philosophy teaches Boethius to find the insight to distinguish what is truly valuable and “good” from the transitory, valueless, “partial goods” he has been complaining about losing—possessions, honors, titles, even friends and family. Through a series of Socratic questions and answers, Lady Philosophy brings Boethius to recognize that the universe is a rationally ordered whole, a great “chain of love,” governed, if not by a benevolent God, at least by a neutral one who can “see” events, even adverse ones, providentially within the grand scheme of time, but whose providential vision of these events does not *cause* the events to happen since man exercises free will. On the other hand, humans only “see” these same events partially and imperfectly—as “fate,” not “providence.”

To explain how bad things can nevertheless happen to good people, Philosophy introduces the metaphoric construct of cyclical human misfortune, caused by the turning of a Wheel by another allegorical personification, blindfolded Lady Fortune, on whose “Wheel of Fortune” all men are situated, rising high upon or being cast off of the wheel (regardless of their merits or evil actions) according to their current state of luck. Thus Lady Fortune, not God, is responsible for alternations between worldly prosperity and adversity, and good fortune is actually more deceptive than bad, since good fortune deceives through raising false hopes while bad fortune warns man not to seek happiness in the false and temporary goods of fortune. The ultimate lesson Boethius learns from Philosophy is to avoid dependence on any external goods, relying instead on self-sufficiency.

clusion of the *Troilus*, Chaucer’s narrator also adopted a medieval Christian perspective that is at odds with his earlier pagan outlook, which had been indicated by invocations to the classical muses and overt references to the Greek pantheon.

**BOETHIAN ADDITIONS.** In the *Knight’s Tale*, the first of *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer performs a similar transformation from an epic or heroic mode to romance. He eliminates most of the material in his Italian source *Il Teseide* about Theseus’s war against the Amazons and renders Theseus less a tyrant and more a philosopher-king, thus moving the poem towards a consideration of universal order and earthly impermanence. Likewise, by enhancing the courtly love motif in the triangle between the rival lovers Palamoun and Arcite and their love object Emeleye, and eliminating any characteristics that would associate her with the war-like Amazons, he brings the trio into a thoroughly medieval world

that includes conventional beauty, love-sickness, jealousy, and the *demande d’amour* (a question of which of the two lovers is worse off, since the one the lady has not chosen can see her from his prison while the other has her love but is exiled). Chaucer also incorporates, as he did in the *Troilus*, significant passages from Boethius’s *Consolation* in the discourse between Palamoun and Arcite, whose imprisonment by Theseus in a tower resembles the situation of Boethius. In this way, Chaucer and other medieval authors took material from the past as well as texts of earlier authors and made them relevant to the cultural situation of their immediate audience. In doing so, they created literary works that straddle the genres of epic and romance.

**THE BRETON LAY IN FRENCH.** Although the transformation from heroic poetry to romance was among the most common kinds of “translation,” not all romances were long narratives with grand battles and episodic

AN

## Example of Translatio Studii: Boccaccio and Chaucer

Although both Giovanni Boccaccio and Geoffrey Chaucer wrote poems about the Trojan warrior Troilus that retold a tale from the matter of antiquity for their medieval audiences, Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* (1351) is a more epic-like text that does not spend much time on Troilus's response to love. In rewriting Boccaccio's poem for an English audience some thirty years later, Chaucer, in his *Troilus and Criseyde*, adds more romance elements, dwelling on how literally smitten his Trojan hero is by the mere sight of Criseyde. This change reflects the incorporation of the discourse of courtly love into the English author's version of a story that is ultimately about Trojans and Greeks at the time of the Trojan War. Although Boccaccio already has medievalized the story somewhat, Chaucer completely recasts it for a fourteenth-century audience accustomed to the conventions of *fin'amors* in medieval romances. He heightens the Ovidian notion of love piercing the heart through the eye (also employed by Guillaume de Lorris in the Dreamer's being struck by the God of Love in *Romance of the Rose*). Numerous other changes and additions recall the conventions of *fin'amors*: Chaucer softens Troilus's jeering at love to a more light-hearted bemusement; adds Troilus's physical reaction to Criseyde's beauty, as if struck by a blow that stunned him; has Troilus address the God of Love; describes Troilus's lengthened and lingering gaze on the new object of his desire; and has him revert to his former joking demeanor in an attempt at secrecy. All of these features

make the poem more like a courtly romance than a heroic narrative.

### From Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*:

Just then, while Troilus went up and down, jeering now at one and now at another and often looking now on this lady and now on that, it befell by chance that his roving eye pierced through the company to where charming Criseida stood, clad in black and under a white veil, apart from the other ladies at this most solemn festival.

### From Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*:

Inside the temple Troilus went forth,  
Making light of every person in the room,  
Looking upon this lady, and now on that,  
Whether she came from Troy or from out of town;  
It happened that through a crowd of people  
Troilus's eye pierced, and his stare bore into them so  
deeply,  
Until it struck on Criseyde, and there his gaze stopped  
short.

And suddenly he was rendered stunned by the sight,  
And he began to observe her more carefully.  
"O mercy, God," thought he, "where have you lived,  
Who are so beautiful and good to look at?"  
Thereupon, his heart began to expand and rise,  
And softly he sighed, in case men might hear him,  
And he recaptured his original scoffing manner.

**SOURCE:** Boccaccio, *Il Filostrato*. Trans. R. K. Gordon, *The Story of Troilus* (New York: Dutton, 1964): 34. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*. ll. 267–280. Text modernized by Lorraine K. Stock.

repetitions. Some examples were quite brief. In fact, the structural relationship between what is known as the "Breton lay" and a full-length romance is similar to that between the short story and the novel. During the twelfth century, traveling minstrels and *conteurs* (storytellers) spread a body of tales then originating in Brittany, whose plots reflected and incorporated aspects of Celtic folklore. These tales, originally in the Breton language, were performed orally until eventually a twelfth-century female writer, Marie de France (probably a native of France living in England), transformed her oral sources into formal Anglo-French "lays." Marie's sparsely written narratives feature settings in the magical Celtic Other World, rash promises, erotic entanglements between humans and the world of faery, an ambivalent almost amoral code of ethics guiding behavior, and a strong supernatural strain. Marie's *Lanval* exemplifies the genre's main characteris-

tics. This lay depicts the secret erotic relationship between an impoverished Arthurian knight Lanval and a ravishingly beautiful faery mistress, who brings him prosperity and fame in return for his promise not to tell anyone about their relationship. When the jealous Queen Guinevere accuses Lanval of homosexuality, he breaks his promise by praising his absent mistress's beauty, thus revealing her existence to Arthur's court. Although the protagonist is saved by the faery, she whisks him, perhaps ominously, to the Other World of Avalon at the tale's end. In another of the tales, the title-character Bisclavret, although a werewolf, nevertheless is portrayed as being ethically superior to his traitorous human wife, thus exemplifying the moral ambivalence of the genre. Similarly, Marie's *Laüstic*, meaning "Nightingale," tautly narrates the clandestine relationship between an unhappy wife and her lover in a house across the alley from

hers. The adulterous courtly love of these neighbors is symbolized by the title bird, whose evening song is the woman's excuse (to her jealous husband) for standing at the window to communicate with her lover. When the irate husband kills the bird, the lovers enshrine the nightingale—and their love—in a jeweled casket.

**THE BRETON LAY IN ENGLISH.** Some of the Anglo-Norman *lais* of Marie de France were translated into Middle English. For example, Marie's *Lanval* was rendered by an anonymous author as the fourteenth-century short romance, *Sir Launfel*. Other Middle English romances based on Breton lays include *Sir Orfeo*, retelling the legend of Orpheus and Euridice, *Sir Degaré*, and *Sir Gowther*, the last two of which involve magical transformations and shape-shifting. However, the most famous English example is the typical Breton lay that Geoffrey Chaucer wrote as one of his *Canterbury Tales*. *The Franklin's Tale*, which is set in Brittany, revolves around an intricate exchange of promises made by a husband Arveragus, his wife Dorigen, a neighboring squire Aurelius who is smitten with the wife, and a clerk from Orléans. The tale's crux involves the disappearance, magical or otherwise, of treacherous rocks along the coastline of Brittany, the removal of which Dorigen imposes on the squire as a condition of her love. *The Franklin's Tale* concludes with the ambiguity that is the hallmark of the genre of the Breton lay, an open-ended question asking the audience to choose—from the husband, the squire, or the clerk—whose behavior was the most "free." This key word "free," an adjective that means "generous" and "honest," also refers to the status of a non-noble landowner, the rank of the teller, the *Franklin* ("frank" = "free"), who is especially concerned with exhibiting virtues that will associate him with a higher class.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: The Foundations: Augustine and Boethius*

#### a PRIMARY SOURCE document

##### IDEAL FEMALE BEAUTY

**INTRODUCTION:** This passage from Marie de France's *Lais*, written in the twelfth century, depicts the idealized beauty of the typical romance heroine, the hero's faery mistress from the lay called *Lanval*. The order of the details—which are entirely conventional—reflects a descriptive method called *ordo effictiones* that was taught in medieval schools, suggesting that Marie had a clerical education of some kind. Often such descriptions worked from the top down, but in this case the author works from the horse up.

There was none more beautiful in the whole world. She was riding a white palfrey which carried her well and gently; its neck and head were well-formed and there was no finer animal on earth. The palfrey was richly equipped, for no count or king on earth could have paid for it save by selling or pledging his lands. The lady was dressed in a white tunic and shift, laced left and right so as to reveal her sides. Her body was comely, her hips low, her neck whiter than snow on a branch; her eyes were bright and her face white, her mouth fair and her nose well-placed; her eyebrows were brown and her brow fair, and her hair curly and rather blond. A golden thread does not shine as brightly as the rays reflected in the light from her hair. Her cloak was of dark silk and she had wrapped its skirts about her. She held a sparrowhawk on her wrist and behind her there followed a dog. There was no one in the town, humble or powerful, old or young, who did not watch her arrival, and no one jested about her beauty. She approached slowly and the judges who saw her thought it was a great wonder. No one who looked at her could have failed to be inspired with real joy.

**SOURCE:** *The Lais of Marie de France*. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby (New York: Penguin, 1986): 80.

#### THE NON-NARRATIVE LYRIC IMPULSE

**LYRIC DEVELOPMENT.** In addition to long heroic and romance narratives in verse and prose, short "lyric" poems, some intended for singing to musical accompaniment, were composed from the ninth through the fifteenth centuries throughout Europe. Their subject matter varied by region, reflecting local political, religious, and cultural developments. And as these issues changed throughout the European Middle Ages, the trends in what was "sung" or recited in these short poetic works



"Sumer is icumen in" round for two or four voices. London, British Library MS Harley 978, folio 11, 1250. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

shifted commensurately. Even so, as also occurred with the long heroic narrative and the romance, there was much mutual imitation of short poetic forms among European nations, especially on the Continent.

**THE LYRIC IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ENGLAND.** In the Anglo-Saxon period in England (ninth through eleventh centuries), lyric poetry had a distinctively nostalgic or elegiac tone. Although the poets could not have known the ancient Greek and Roman elegy lamenting the loss of a person, place, or thing, the brooding or gloomy tone of these poems reflects the harsh conditions of life for isolated tribal peoples who were often separated from their comrades or families by brutal weather, lengthy sea travel, or internecine warfare. Lyric poems produced during this era reflect many of the heroic themes of *Beowulf*, but at the same time sometimes give evidence of a shift in religious sensibility from belief in the old pagan Germanic divinities and myths to the formal adoption of Christianity. More than any poetry of the Continent, these verses resemble the Skaldic and Eddic poems of

early Scandinavian lyricism. These elegiac poems were set against a bleak, wintry seascape, a marked contrast to the spring-like setting of later medieval lyricism on the Continent. For example, the respective narrators of "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer" are roaming almost aimlessly by ship, traversing the icy winter seas off the coast of England while lamenting the death of an earthly leader, who is sometimes allegorized as the Christian "Lord," indicating the often uneasy transformation of formerly pagan Britain to Christianity. In another elegy, "The Ruin," the narrator recalls with regret a once imposing feasting hall that is now a crumbling pile of stones battered by the elements. As in *Beowulf*, these poems employ the trope of "ubi sunt," a series of unanswered questions ("Where are the brave warriors?"), which underscores the absence either of missing or dead comrades from the *comitatus*, or of buildings demolished by the ravages of time and the harsh northern weather.

**A NEW ARAB INFLUENCE.** On the Continent, beginning in the eleventh century, a new style of lyric poetry developed, inspired, as in Britain, largely by political, religious, and cultural shifts. Charlemagne's campaigns against the Muslim inhabitants of Spain in the ninth century, illustrated in the *Song of Roland* and other *chansons de geste* (heroic poetry), anticipated the even more extreme anti-Muslim military expeditions to the Middle East called Crusades, which began in 1095. The Crusades changed the cultural life of Europe through the introduction by the returning crusaders of the Arabic music, poetry, and luxury goods to which they had been exposed while in the East. Coming to Europe through southern France, the returning knights brought back a new Arab-inspired approach to lyric poetry, featuring themes of erotic love. A prominent early crusader, William IX of Aquitaine (1071–1127), became one of the first practitioners of this new kind of lyricism. William was the grandfather of Eleanor of Aquitaine, queen of both France and England through her successive marriages to King Louis VII of France and King Henry II of England in the twelfth century. At their respective courts, Eleanor and her daughter by Louis, Marie of Champagne, became patronesses of this new style of French poetry, which reflected the discourse of courtly love described by Andreas Capellanus in his treatise, *De Arte Honeste Amandi*, which may have been commissioned by Eleanor's daughter, Marie of Champagne, at one of her "courts of love."

**THE TROUBADOURS IN FRANCE.** Paralleling the development of the idea of courtly love in the twelfth century, these Arab-inspired poems, some of which were written about the experience of going on Crusade, called





Troubadours, Bernart de Ventadorn, Jaufré Rudel, Perdigon, Marcabru, Monk of Montaudon, Pons de Chaptueil, Albertet. French manuscript, late 13th century. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

*chansons de croisade* (“Crusade Songs”), were created first in Provence in southern France by the troubadours and later continued by the trouvères in the north of France. The terms *troubadour* and *trouvère* derived from the verb *trobar*, which meant “to find or make.” Although these poets could be attached permanently to a particular court and patron, often they moved about from court to court, seeking more powerful and lucrative patronage. Troubadours in the south include Cercamon (1130–1148), Marcabru (1130–1150), Bernart de Ventadorn (1140–1180), Bertrand de Born (1140–1214), Pierre Vidal (1170–1204), Arnaut Daniel (1170–1210), and even a female poet (female troubadours are known as *trobairitz*) the Countess of Dia (1150–1200). The northern trouvères included Richard the Lion-Hearted (1157–1199), Gace Brulé (1170–1212), the Châtelain de Coucy (d. 1203), and Adam de la Halle (1270–1288). In contrast to the chilly, elegiac mood of Anglo-Saxon lyrics, this Continental poetry, influenced by the Crusaders’ experiences in the exotic Middle East, celebrated a new poetic theme: romantic love for a woman—sometimes the lady of the

court to which the poet was attached, who was unattainable because married, and whose every whim controlled the singer of the *chanson d’amour* (love song). The vocabulary expressing the roles of the lover and the beloved of the troubadour songs echoed the terminology of lordship so that the beloved lady played the role of the haughty “domna” (female “lord”) to the poet, her vassal. If the poet/lover was successful, these songs were expressed joyously as in the fusion of identities between the human singer and the lark he sings about in Bernart de Ventadorn’s “Can Vei la lauzeta” (“When I see the lark”). If the lover was unsuccessful, he might sing mournfully, against the backdrop of a paradise-like setting, the *paradis d’amour* (“paradise of love”), an almost ubiquitous springtime landscape complete with bird-song, gentle breezes, and fragrant flowers that inspire the poet to sing about his love of the lady.

**NEW POETIC GENRES.** Although these French poets are best known for their crusade songs and songs of love, the poetic repertoire practiced by the troubadours

## BIRDS in Medieval Literature

Birds are among the most commonly encountered creatures in medieval poetry, perhaps because it is so easy to understand the analogy between the poet as *singer* of love “songs” and the bird whose only means of communication is singing. Various types of birds or “fowles” are used to represent many different moods and situations in both English and Continental poetry. The *chanson d’amour*, the lyric poem of love “sung” to the accompaniment of music by the troubadours in France, the *minnesingers* in Germany, and courtly love lyricists in England, nearly always begins with reference to the singing of birds—larks, nightingales, or other woodland birds. In poems such as these, birds evoke the mood of the springtime *reverdie* (“regreening”), and the courtly lover expresses or “sings” his feelings of joy at success or sorrow at disappointment in his love pursuit, as in this example by the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn, who wrote between 1150 and 1180:

When I see the lark moving  
Its wings with joy against the sunlight,  
Till he forgets and lets himself fall  
For the sweetness that has come into his heart,  
Alas! such great envy comes over me  
For all those whom I see rejoicing,  
I am amazed that my heart—right then—  
Does not melt with desire.

So tired! I thought I knew so much  
About love, and I really know so little,  
For I cannot keep myself from loving  
A lady from whom I will get no reward.  
She has my whole heart, my whole self,  
And herself and the whole world besides;  
And when she departed, she left me nothing  
But desire and a hungry heart. ...

Dream Visions, such as the *Romance of the Rose* and Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*, use birds and their song

to awaken the dream-narrator from sleep and to beckon the dreamer into the narrative of his dream. But other literary birds are more verbal in their depiction. Chaucer’s *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* is a delightful beast fable about a rooster, Chauntecleer, and a hen, Pertelote, who are married and who debate over whether or not the rooster’s nightmare about being captured by a fox is meaningful. The narrator reminds the audience that although his tale is of a “cock,” they must decide what in the tale is “wheat” and what is “chaff,” the standard metaphor for the possibilities of simultaneous literal and figurative meanings in allegory. Chaucer’s other bird poem, the *Parliament of Fowls*, features a dream in which various species of birds argue with one another about the issue of which aristocratic avian suitor the noble peregrine falcon should choose for her mate. This situation is reminiscent of the many arguments about which rank of suitor is appropriate for which rank of courtly lady in Andreas Capellanus’s twelfth-century *Art of Courtly Love*. Chaucer’s use of debating birds follows another earlier poem, the thirteenth-century *The Owl and the Nightingale*, in which the two title birds debate such issues as predestination, natural character, and carnal sin. Marie de France’s Breton Lay *Nightingale* features a bird whose singing is the occasion for the secret meetings of a married lady and her lover, but which eventually becomes a symbol reminiscent of the nightingale in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, in which the raped Philomela is transformed into the melodic bird. Chaucer includes this myth of a woman whose tongue is cut out to keep her from telling the story of her attack as one of the tales about tragic females in his *Legend of Good Women*. Although, at first glance, the birds of medieval poetry may appear to be mere background for the immediate plot situation, birds were favored vehicles by which poets expressed ideas about love, the creation of art, and the human voice and its silencing.

**SOURCE:** Bernart de Ventadorn, “Can vei la lauzeta mover,” translated from the Provençal by Kristen M. Figg.

and trouvères included a number of different types reflecting both cultural life and social conditions. Among these were the *jeu parti* (a game-like debate poem reflecting the competition between poets to produce the best lyric poetry); the *chanson d’aventure* (song of adventure) about an unusual encounter experienced by a knight errant; and the *aubade* or *aube*, or *alba* (dawn song), a lyric in which lovers lament the coming of the dawn because they must part after a night of clandestine lovemaking. Troubadours also produced the *planh* (complaint) about unsuccessful love or oppressive political or

economic situations; the *pastourelle* (song about shepherdess), a short, dialogue-filled, narrative account of a courtly knight’s attempt to seduce an innocent, but clever shepherdess; the *chanson de toile* (working song), a song voiced by female workers spinning cloth or doing other chores; and the *chanson de mal mariée* (a woman’s song about being badly married), a complaint about marital problems often stemming from the practice of arranged marriages. By the fourteenth century, the emphasis shifted from genres based on theme to genres based on form, as French poets like Guillaume de

## THE Cult of the Virgin Mary in Medieval Literature

Modern readers may be surprised by the number of medieval lyric poems that focus on the Virgin Mary not only in her role as intercessor or sorrowing mother of Jesus, but also as a type of idealized woman to be addressed with the language of love. Indeed, Dante's decision to depict the highest reaches of heaven as a celestial rose in which the Virgin Mary is the central petal reflects a medieval devotional practice, the "Cult of Mary," that began in the twelfth century and attracted Christian devotees throughout medieval Europe for centuries to come. This form of intense Marian devotion echoed the language of Courtly Love, with the Virgin metaphorically cast in the role of the chaste and sometimes demanding courtly "domna" (literally the Ma-donna) of a male supplicant. Also about this time, the Cistercian monk Bernard of Clairvaux, who purportedly was permitted to suckle from Mary's breast in an ecstatic vision, promoted special reverence for the Virgin, highlighting Mary's role as Christ's mother, and emphasizing the nutritive function of her breasts in her role as the "nurse" of God. Bernard's *Commentary on The Song of Songs* provided many new poetic images to be applied to the Virgin in lyric poetry. Samples of Mary's milk, brought back from the Holy Land by Crusaders, became highly prized relics to be venerated at various shrines to the Virgin throughout Europe, including the

English shrine in Walsingham in East Anglia, which attracted thousands of pilgrims from both England and abroad in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

On the Continent, veneration of the Virgin increased during the fifteenth century through the promotion of the rosary, especially by members of the Dominican Order, as part of the Counter Reformation. The rosary as an aid to Marian devotion consisted of a strand of beads used for counting prayers, called "Aves," as in the prayer "Hail Mary." Increasing numbers of lay confraternities (organizations focused on a religious figure or shrine) devoted to the recitation of the rosary endorsed the rosary's efficacy at attaining from the Virgin both her Son's intercession on behalf of the supplicant, and her defense against physical injury. Mary's protection of supplicants was implied in popular visual images of the monumentally proportioned Virgin who shelters diminutive petitioners, and even whole cities, under her mantle. The belief in her ability to protect her supplicants was so great that, in the fifteenth century, another petition was added to the conclusion of the "Ave," asking Mary in turn to pray for the sinner both immediately and eventually at the hour of death. Also in the fifteenth century, woodcuts or paintings promoting the rosary often represented the "Fifteen Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries" of Mary and her Son. The Sorrowful Mysteries, which directed the supplicant's attention to Mary's presence at Christ's crucifixion and death, contributed powerful imagery to lyric poems about Christ's Passion, and to Mary's role as "Mater Dolorosa" (sorrowful mother).

Machaut and Jean Froissart perfected "fixed form" lyrics with complicated patterns of rhyme and meter—genres such as the *ballade*, the *rondeau*, and the *virelais*, which at first were matched to complicated new musical forms, but later circulated independently. These challenging genres emphasizing the elevated language that corresponds to refined love were the precursors of the most famous Renaissance lyric form: the sonnet.

**THE INFLUENCE OF THE TROUBADOURS IN GERMANY.** Eventually, most of these French models were imitated all over the Continent. In Germany, the *minnesingers* (singers about *mine* which means "love"), such as Walter von der Vogelweide (1170–1280), continued to develop the themes of *fin'amors* (refined or distilled love), but the Germans addressed their love poetry to ladies who offered less *daunger* (resistance), and consummation was more realistically attainable in German courtly love poetry than in the French models. On the other hand, the sequences and hymns composed by the

polymath Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), the abbess of a convent of nuns located on the Rhine and the author of both medical treatises and accounts of her mystical visions, exemplify how secular and religious poetic themes could be fused. Like troubadour lyrics, Hildegard's hymns combine celebrations of the re-greening of nature in springtime with awed praise for God's creations and for the role of the Virgin Mary's paradoxical chaste fertility in the Incarnation. For example, Hildegard's hymn, "O viridissima virga" ("O greenest branch/virgin") develops complex wordplay between conventional springtime tropes about re-greening branches, Mary's role as a metaphoric "branch" on the family tree of Jesse (Christ's genealogical lineage), and her giving birth to Christ, which helped endow the earth's flora and fauna with new life and brought mankind into identification with the human/divine Redeemer, her son.

**THE INFLUENCE OF THE TROUBADOURS IN ITALY.** In Italy, the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo* ("the sweet new

## THE Spiritual and the Erotic in the Middle English “Foweles in the frith”

Foweles in the frith,  
The fisses in the flod,  
And I mon waxe wod.  
Mulch sorw I walke with  
For beste of bon and blod.

### A modernization of the Middle English text follows:

Birds in the wood,  
The fish in the river,  
And I must go mad.  
I live in great sorrow  
For the best of bone and blood.

“Foweles in the frith” (modernized from Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 139, folio 5, thirteenth century) is one of the simplest and yet one of the most enigmatic of Middle English lyrics. With its terse placement of the birds in the woodlands and fish in the river, it opens with an extremely abbreviated evocation of the landscape of springtime, the traditional opening of many *chansons d’amour*. This traditional start abruptly precedes a statement that the speaker “must” go mad. Is the speaker envious of the birds and fish, who are in their proper element while he “walks” aimlessly in “much sorrow” to the point of madness?

The mysterious source of this extreme feeling of passion is revealed in the next and final two lines: the speaker is sorrowful because he has lost the “best” creature made of bone and blood, that is, the best human ever created. With no other clues as to the meaning of the five lines, one must consider what spring means in the medieval calendar. Spring brings the time of vernal rejuvenation in the natural world, a time when humans feel, like Chaucer’s “little birds” in the opening lines of the General Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales*, “pricked by nature” to answer their physical urges. In this sense, the poem seems a spare song of thwarted passion, in which the speaker, wracked by pangs of traditional courtly love, explains how he has become crazed after losing the “best” female made of bone and blood, his lost beloved. In the exaggerated diction of Courtly Love poetry, the male lover’s beloved is always the best lady of all women. However, springtime also suggests the season of Lent in the liturgical calendar, a sorrowful time of meditation on the Passion of Christ, leading up to the Resurrection at Easter. In this sense, the poem may also be the lament of a devoted Christian expressed about the loss of the “best of bone and blood,” the Godhead in His human incarnation as Christ, who suffered death at the time of year when birds are in the wood and fish are in the river. Whatever the interpretation, this tiny poem packs a great deal of possible meaning in five seemingly simple lines of verse.

*Middle English modernized by Lorraine K. Stock.*

style”) mirrored the themes of the southern French troubadours, many of whom had traveled—wandering from court to court in search of better patronage—from nearby Provence and Aquitaine to Italy. Notably, Dante Alighieri, the author of the *Divine Comedy*, wrote independent love poems and also incorporated songs and sonnets about Beatrice Portinari in his early autobiography *La Vita Nuova* (The New Life). These anticipate his veneration of Beatrice almost as if she were a saint in the *Divine Comedy*, placing her in the highest circles of Heaven with other saints and the Virgin Mary. The troubadour term “ma domna” for the courtly beloved resonated linguistically with *Madonna*, the Italian epithet for the Virgin Mary, encouraging association between the model of divine femininity and the courtly love object. In Italy, late in the medieval period, the humanist scholar and poet Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374) developed the sonnet, a formal fourteen-line poem, in a famous sequence of sonnets, the *canzoniere* (songs) honoring an idealized courtly lady, Laura. This

popular lyric form, which had probably been invented by Giacomo da Lentini in the Sicilian court in the mid-thirteenth century, was revived in England in the sixteenth century as the “Petrarchan” or “Italian” sonnet, used to great effect in the hands of Sir Thomas Wyatt, the earl of Surrey, and, of course, Shakespeare.

**LYRIC POETRY IN ENGLAND IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES.** After the Norman Conquest (1066) in England, lyric poets also borrowed or absorbed many motifs from the Continental *chansons d’amour*, such as the conventional *natureingang* (“nature-entrance”), also known in Middle English as the *reverdrie* (“re-greening”), a song celebrating the reappearance of spring after a long winter. Many *chansons d’amour*, *chansons d’aventure*, and Crusaders’ songs begin with an evocative celebration of the glories of the re-greening of nature in April or May, and Hildegard of Bingen had used the idea to great spiritual effect in her hymns. This lyric motif clearly influenced and contributed to the *reverdrie*-like openings of dream visions such as the *Romance of the Rose* and the

famous opening sentence of the General Prologue of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which describes how the sweet showers of April, the tender shoots of plant life, the birds making melody, and the spring breezes inspire sundry folk from all over England to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. The love professed by the Middle English lyric singer for flesh-and-blood courtly ladies—for example in the Harley Lyrics' "Alysoun"—was less intense and more playful than that of his passionate French counterpart, more like the German minnesingers. As in the case of Hildegard and the Italian practitioners of the *dolce stil nuovo* (sweet new style) of the late thirteenth century, Middle English poets also imaginatively developed the conventional devices and motifs of the Continental courtly love lyric by applying them not to a worldly female love object, but to the Virgin Mary, who became the spiritual "domna" revered by the lyric singer. In fact, Middle English poets wrote various sub-genres of religious lyric poetry devoted to such themes as veneration of the Virgin Mary, *contemptus mundi* (contempt for worldly things), the mutability of earthly life and the permanence of salvation, lamentation for the crucifixion of Christ, and the effect of the Fall of mankind on the human condition. In many Middle English lyrics, genres are combined paradoxically and provocatively, as in the brief lyric "Foweles in the frith," which fuses the spiritual and the erotic in a *reverdie* that can be interpreted as being both about unsuccessful love and about the tragedy of Christ's crucifixion. Perhaps harking back to the earlier dark, brooding Anglo-Saxon elegies at the close of the fourteenth century, Middle English poets like Geoffrey Chaucer also incorporated serious philosophical ideas and political sentiments in lyrics such as "The Former Age," "Truth," and "Gentillesse," which were inspired by passages in Boethius's philosophical treatise *Consolation of Philosophy*. Other Middle English poets used the lyric form to comment on contemporary political acrimony and social dissent that reflected such socioeconomic movements as the "Peasants' Revolt of 1381" in which the lower classes protested against the nobility, the clerical orders, and the legal courts because of heavy taxation and denial of their demands for higher wages and freedom of mobility.

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SEE ALSO *Music: The Monophonic Secular Tradition*

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## MEDIEVAL ALLEGORY AND PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS

### RELIGION AND MEDIEVAL ARTISTIC EXPRESSION.

The Christian church was the most influential cultural institution in medieval Europe, having far more influence over every facet of life—including response to and production of texts—than any temporal or secular political or economic organizing system. From its earliest inception, the ecclesiastical establishment controlled the dissemination and interpretation of its foundational text, the Bible, accounting for any apparent inconsistencies through an elaborate system of reading that attributed multiple levels of meaning to the Scriptures as well as finding connections between events in the Old Testament and the history of Christ's ministry in the New Testament. This mode of interpretation was invented and disseminated by the early church fathers. Most prominent among these were Augustine of Hippo (354–430), whose autobiography *The Confessions* and treatise *The City of God* exemplify fourfold-interpretation of the Bible, and Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) whose *Moralia in Job* (Moralizing of the Book of Job) took every verse of that Old Testament book and found four different ways of understanding them. These modes of interpreting Scripture not only influenced the expression of spiritual ideas and sentiments in the Middle Ages, but also had significant impact on the visual arts and on literature. When applied to literary texts, this pervasive mode of thinking was known as allegory. In addition to literary

works like *Piers Plowman* or the *Romance of the Rose* which were completely allegorical, many works of medieval literature—even those associated with “realism”—incorporated some limited allegorical aspects in their overall scheme.

**MEDIEVAL ALLEGORY DEFINED: THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT.** Allegory, which sometimes employs an extended metaphor, is a narrative mode in which a series of abstract ideas are presented through concrete, realistic characters and situations operating within a literal plot that makes sense in and of itself. Allegorical literature is typically encountered in two distinct forms. In the older type, called personification allegory (the most famous example of which is *The Romance of the Rose*) characters personify abstractions like Jealousy or Friendship, but these characters have no existence in the real world and do not “symbolize” anything more than their name implies. The narrative then dramatizes the encounter between abstractions made visual. In the second type of allegory, called symbol allegory (of which the *Divine Comedy* is the most famous example), the characters are real people who exist, or once existed in the real world, who “stand for” or symbolize something beyond themselves. This literal plot is meant also to convey an extra level or, in the most complicated types of allegory, several levels of moral, religious, political, or philosophical meaning. To medieval readers of allegory, the difference between the literal and the “figural” or allegorical level reflected Saint Paul’s pronouncement in 2 Cor. 3:6, that “The letter kills, . . . but the spirit gives life.” The early church father Saint Augustine of Hippo interpreted this to mean that the “letter” or literal level of a text covers and conceals the “spirit” just as the chaff covers the grain, or, in a more familiar comparison, the “nutshell” conceals the “kernel” of the nut.

**THE FOUR-FOLD METHOD OF MEDIEVAL ALLEGORIZATION.** In interpreting Scripture, the church fathers recognized the potential for up to four levels of allegorical or “exegetical” interpretation:

1. the literal level, the thing as it really stands in the text;
2. the allegorical level, which refers to the Church or something standing for a universal truth;
3. the tropological or “moral” level, which pertains to the spiritual life of individuals, teaching how they should behave; and
4. the anagogical or eschatological level, which stands for something pertaining to the hereafter.

In short, the literal level teaches things; the allegorical level tells what should be believed; the tropological or

moral level tells what should be done; and the anagogical level explains where a person goes after death. Although this complex system was seldom used directly in the creation of literature, it was important as a mode of thinking and occasionally appears in some of the more self-consciously religious allegorical texts. In the late fourteenth-century poem that modern editors call *Pearl*, a touching story of a father struggling with the death of his young daughter, the poet meditates on the meaning of the word which has become the poem’s title in ways very similar to the “fourfold scheme.” The major symbol of the “pearl” is, literally, a lost gem or the dead daughter; allegorically it represents primal innocence before the fall or the state of a baptized infant; tropologically it emphasizes one’s duty to regain innocence; and anagogically it points to a beatific vision in the heavenly paradise. Much more common than this complex fourfold allegory was a type of narrative built entirely on personifications, which allowed writers to explore directly the interactions between abstract moral qualities (often characterized as vices and virtues) fighting for control of the human will.

**ROMANCE OF THE ROSE.** Surviving in over 300 extant manuscripts and translated into nearly every medieval language, the thirteenth-century allegory *Romance of the Rose* was the single most influential secular literary work written in the Middle Ages and a key text in the development of the medieval genres of dream vision, allegory, and romance quest. The text is divided into a pair of opposing but complementary parts, composed by two different thirteenth-century French authors. Guillaume de Lorris wrote the first 4,000 lines of this seminal dream vision in 1230–1235. The dreamer’s quest for the rose remained uncompleted until Jean de Meun added almost 18,000 lines, continuing Guillaume’s allegorical plot, but adopting a more satirical tone; he completed the work in 1275. This pair of authors exemplifies the medieval reverence for past authorities; both are heavily indebted to Ovid’s works in their conception of love. Jean also incorporated the re-discovery of Aristotelian and Platonic texts that had recently become part of the curriculum at the University at Paris.

**GUILLAUME DE LORRIS’S ROMANCE OF THE ROSE.** Guillaume’s section of the poem opens in typical dream vision fashion, set in a May time *locus amoenus* (literally a “beautiful place”) in which the narrator, who eventually is identified as *Amant* (lover), dreams that he discovers an enclosed garden. The garden’s exterior walls are decorated with images of allegorical figures representing social groups and human types who exemplify the “vices” of

courtly society (such as hatred, felony, covetousness, envy, poverty, hypocrisy) or who are superficially unacceptable for elite membership in the garden of *Deduit* (mirth or diversion). Escorted into the garden by its gatekeeper, Idleness, the dreamer encounters allegorical abstractions representing the qualities of the leisured existence enjoyed by *Deduit* and the aristocratic inhabitants of his garden, a microcosm of courtly society: Beauty, Wealth, Generosity, Openness, Courtesy, and Youth. Proceeding through the garden, the dreamer encounters the fountain of Narcissus, whose myth literally reflects the self-absorption experienced by lovers. Gazing into the waters of Narcissus's fountain, the dreamer sees a reflected rose and is infatuated by the rosebud's surface beauty. The process of being "smitten" becomes literal and concrete as he is stalked by the God of Love, who shoots into the eyes and heart of the dreamer five allegorical arrows—beauty, simplicity, courtesy, company, and fair seeming—all catalysts to the psychological experience of love.

**ALLEGORY IN ROMANCE OF THE ROSE.** As personification allegory, Guillaume's Rose represents a courtly lady confronted with the dilemma of erotic desire as it comes into conflict with the need for *mesure* ("restraint," "rational control"), which will protect her reputation. The God of Love instructs the dreamer about how to pursue the goal of a single kiss from his beloved Rose and outlines what he can expect from the experience of love. Guillaume's text here illustrates one especially common aspect of courtly love, whose victims are afflicted with an array of physical discomforts (chills, heat, pangs, sighs, lost appetite and strength, insomnia) and emotional torments (jealousy, despair) that are gladly suffered by the lover for the moral self-improvement conferred by love. Despite her attraction to the nameless young man, called "Amant" or "Lover" in the poem, the Rose is protected from the dreamer's too avid pursuit by a court of attendants (mirroring actual court life), including Shame, Fear, Chastity, and Resistance (depicted as a churlish Wild Man). These abstractions are all allegorized aspects of her own attempt to maintain rational control over her honor. The attributes of the Rose representing her caution are balanced by others indicating her openness to the experience of love—Generosity, Pity, and Fair Welcoming—who encourage Amant to kiss the Rose. As soon as he does so, Jealousy imprisons the Rose and her Fair Welcome in a tower, where *La Vieille* (Old Woman), a cynical bawd experienced in the ways of sex, guards them. The first part of the poem breaks off with the dreamer's pursuit of the Rose at an impasse, when Guillaume de Lorris apparently died before completing his story.

**JEAN DE MEUN'S PHILOSOPHICAL CONTINUATION OF ROMANCE OF THE ROSE.** In 1275 Jean de Meun more than tripled the length of Guillaume's unfinished text with a continuation of the courtly adventure of Amant's quest to possess the Rose, to which he added new themes and many lengthy digressions from Guillaume's original simple narrative. Jean expands the concept of love from Guillaume's narrow and artificial focus on the emotional satisfaction of love to a more universal concept of fruitful cosmic love presided over by a personification called *Natura*. Whereas Guillaume strove for simplicity and innocence in both content and poetic style, the well-read Jean imbued his section of text not only with the cynical treatments of romantic love and marriage found in popular story collections and misogynistic satires like *The Fifteen Joys of Marriage*, but also the philosophical writings that he had come in contact with at the university. These included Plato and Aristotle, Aristotle's later commentators, and the writings of the Platonists of the twelfth-century School of Chartres such as Bernard Silvestris and Alan of Lille, whose conception of Nature in the *Complaint of Nature* Jean adopted. With lengthy and didactic speeches issuing from their mouths, Jean's allegorical characters resemble masters in medieval universities lecturing their students. Treating the subjects of the purpose of man's existence on earth and his role in the cosmos, these talking abstractions use *exempla* (narrative examples), the "colors" or figures of rhetoric, and classical quotations to illustrate their orations. As Jean continues the plot of the dreamer's erotic quest, Amant is advised by a new set of allegorical characters including Reason, representing the dreamer's own good sense, who "reasons" with him and tries to dissuade him from pursuing love.

**JEAN DE MEUN'S SATIRICAL REPUDIATION OF COURTLY LOVE.** Abandoned by Reason, Amant seeks the help of Friend, who acts as his go-between to the Rose. *La Vieille* (Old Woman) also lectures the Rose's Fair Welcome about the ways of attracting men through flirtatious behavior, a swaying walk, good table manners, and the employment of eye-catching clothing and cosmetics. By concretizing his abstraction False Seeming as a hypocritical friar, Jean also anticipates the satire of the fourteenth-century clergy created by Chaucer and Langland. Finally, Amant gains entry into the Castle of Jealousy, in which the Rose is imprisoned. With the help of Venus the goddess of love, he wages a "war" against the chastity of the Rose. At this point Jean de Meun interpolates into the love-quest plot several digressive sections borrowed from the Christian-Platonist scholars of Chartres. In a passage heavily indebted to Alan of Lille's *Complaint of Nature*, Nature makes her "confession" to

her priest Genius, representing the generative principle. She complains about how mankind has abused nature by practicing the artifice of courtly love rather than propagating the race. Genius urges the practice of various types of fecundity and recommends taking refuge in a park, which features the Well of Life instead of the Fountain of Narcissus. Jean parallels the major myth that anchors Guillaume's garden, the myth of Narcissus, by using another myth to frame the dreamer's experience—the story of Pygmalion, an artist who fell in love with the sculpture he created to represent his idealized perfect woman.

**JEAN DE MEUN'S SATIRE OF MEDIEVAL PILGRIMAGE.** As *Romance of the Rose* draws to its climax, the dreamer's identity shifts to a pilgrim figure, allowing Jean de Meun to satirize the widespread medieval experience of pilgrimage. Accessorized with the typical staff and scrip of pilgrim "weeds" or costume, which in Jean's impudent satire represent Amant's genitalia, the dreamer assaults the architectural "aperture" of the Rose/castle into which he is attempting to gain entrance. The castle has now become a hallowed "shrine" to erotic love. Having broken the barricade, the dreamer literally and figuratively deflowers the Rose, following the laws promulgated by Genius and Nature. When Amant impregnates the Rose, the dream suddenly ends. By this time, with the extra layer of pilgrimage added to the many other strata of allegory, Guillaume's original concept of Amant's delicate courtly adulation for a perfect Rose/lady has been satirized to the point of near-blasphemy.

**LITERARY INFLUENCE OF THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE.** The *Romance of the Rose* influenced many later medieval writers. Dante adopted this text's highly symbolic rose to other purposes in his *Paradiso*, in which his idealized female figure Beatrice is beatified alongside the Virgin Mary as a petal in the Celestial Rose, a metaphor for the highest reaches of Heaven. Chaucer, who translated Guillaume's text into the Middle English poem known as the *Romaunt of the Rose*, apparently also was familiar with Jean's continuation, for he echoes the arguments of Genius in his own dream vision, *Parliament of Fowls*. In the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer modeled the characterization of his pilgrim Pardoner on Jean de Meun's False Seeming, his hypocritical Friar, and *La Vieille* (Old Woman); Chaucer incorporated *La Vieille*'s advice about table manners into the portrait of his pilgrim Prioress Madame Eglantine, whose name means "briar rose." Chaucer also took *La Vieille*'s generally cynical comments about male-female relations and transformed them into the autobiographical discourse of the five-times-married Wife of Bath in her Prologue and her

tale. The *Romance of the Rose* continued to be both influential and controversial throughout the medieval period. In the fifteenth century, Jean Gerson and Christine de Pizan strenuously protested the dubious value of Jean de Meun's text by taking part in a major literary debate with Jean's supporters in the "Quarrel of the Rose." Christine especially took offense at Jean's blatant antifeminism, a far cry from the reverent adulation for the Rose practiced by Guillaume's Amant.

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#### DANTE ALIGHIERI

**POLITICS AND POETRY.** While *The Romance of the Rose*, the most influential poem written in French in the thirteenth century, had combined elements of courtly love, allegory, and philosophy, the Italian poet Dante Alighieri chose an even more daring strategy to write, in Italian, the first truly epic poem since Vergil's *Aeneid*. Born in the city-state of Florence in 1265, Dante brought to his poetry the near photographic recall of an intensely political life and the love of his native language, while also having a vision of heaven, earth, and hell that surpassed all previous efforts at encompassing the vast range of human experience. A member of the Guelph party, which supported the power of the papacy against the Ghibbelines, who took the side of the Holy Roman Emperor, Dante attempted a career in politics, which was aborted when his own party split into two groups and the power fell into the hands of the opposing faction, who sentenced him to death. He lived in exile from his beloved Florence for the rest of his life, a circumstance that intensified his sense of the contrast between happiness and deprivation, and allowed him to make literary use of the characters and events of recent history from which he was forcibly distanced. As a man who so intensely defined himself as a Florentine, in an age distinguished by a new sense of civic identity and participation, Dante is significant for employing the vernacular, rather than Latin (the official language of learning), in his most important writings. In fact, he produced a manifesto ad-



vocating the use of vernacular dialects or the “vulgar” tongue to produce serious literature. This treatise, *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (On Eloquence in the Vernacular), is itself expressed in Latin, not Italian. Dante distinguished between natural language, *locutio prima*, that children learn at their mother’s breast, and a second artificial language, *locutio grammatica*, that they learn at school. Latin should be used only in technical works, such as the *De Vulgari*, while the first nobler, more natural language should be used to create art.

**A POETIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY.** Dante was a disciple of the poet Brunetto Latini, and with Latini, Guido Cavalcanti, and other poets early in his career he practiced the *dolce stil nuovo* (“sweet new style”), the expression of courtly love poetry (influenced by the troubadours) in various Italian dialects. Culminating Dante’s early attempts to be a lyric poet was his creation of the *Vita Nuova* (New Life; 1292–1295), a 42-chapter collection of these early love poems, which are linked with a prose framework written in Italian, commenting on the poems themselves as well as generally about how to write and interpret poetry. This poetic autobiography, which attests Dante’s fidelity to the ideals of the *dolce stil nuovo*, especially to the acceptance of the power of Love as an external force, also chronicles Dante’s love for a young Florentine woman, which produced in him a spiritual renewal (hence the title). Although Dante was married to Gemma di Manetto Donati, with whom he had several children, the woman in the poem is Bice di Folco Portinari, whom he refers to in his poetry as Beatrice or *Bea-Trice*, a symbolic name meaning “triple blessed.” Beatrice served as an artistic muse and spiritual inspiration to him throughout his writing career. Beginning with Dante’s initial encounter with nine-year-old Beatrice and their second encounter nine years later, when she becomes a subject of his love poetry, Dante recounts his prophetic visions about her early death and her ascent to heaven. Upon her actual death in 1290, Dante abandoned writing secular love poetry, for in his perception Beatrice had now gone beyond incarnating earthly love and had become a vehicle of God’s larger plan. In *The Divine Comedy*, Beatrice is nearly apotheosized. She not only guides Dante through Paradise towards the Godhead, but also takes her place near the Virgin Mary as a “petal” in the highly allegorical “Celestial Rose,” Dante’s metaphor for the most sublime reaches of Heaven.

**DANTE’S DIVINE NUMBERS.** Written over the span of 1314 to 1321, *The Divine Comedy* is a tripartite visionary pilgrimage to hell, purgatory, and heaven, a medieval masterpiece that is considered one of the greatest literary achievements of all time. The poem is a highly

structured work revealing Dante’s reliance on number symbolism, a favorite device of many medieval authors, including the poet who wrote the romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the dream vision *Pearl*, who made repeated use of the numbers three, five, and twelve. The entire *Comedy* is comprised of three major parts: *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Heaven). Each of the three parts, reflecting the sacred number associated with the Christian Trinity, is in turn divided into 33 cantos with one introductory canto in *Inferno* adding up to the sacred and mathematically perfect number of 100 cantos (songs) in all. At the beginning of the poem, after realizing he is lost in a dark allegorical wood of error, Dante envisions (significantly) *three* symbolic beasts—a leopard (lust), a lion (pride), and a she-wolf (greed/avarice)—that paralyze him with fear and prevent him from making further progress toward the hill of salvation, until another figure appears to prod the pilgrim into action. Even the verse form Dante invented for the *Comedy*, *terza rima* (“triple rhyme”), reflects his employment of the Trinitarian pattern to organize and unify the vast literary work in which his muse, triple-blessed Beatrice, leads him to the Beatific Vision at the end of the third part.

**THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF THE SELF.** Although the *Comedy* is in many ways a very personal poem, its framework ensures that Beatrice and Dante’s other guide, whom he calls Virgil (spelled in Italian as “Virgilio” rather than as the Latin “Vergil”), does not lead *only* Dante to his goal. While on one level Dante’s mind-boggling experience constitutes his own spiritual autobiography, he is careful to include the reader as a participant on the journey he takes to Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. In the famous opening lines of the poem, Dante admits, “When I had journeyed half of *our* life’s way, I found myself inside a dark wood, for I had lost the path that does not stray.” With his significant use of the plural possessive pronoun “our,” Dante ensures that his experience will have universal applications. Similar to the trip to the Underworld taken by Vergil’s Aeneas or St. Paul’s ascent to Heaven in the New Testament (he later compares himself to both figures), Dante’s allegorical journey begun in *Inferno*’s first canto builds on a literary tradition of journeys that will later appear in the works of other great poets of the period, including Geoffrey Chaucer and William Langland. Dante’s choice of Vergil, author of the *Aeneid*, as his guide in the first part of the poem is hardly random. Significantly, Vergil was the greatest Latin authority for medieval arts and letters, and his epic was also a narrative about the arduous journey of its protagonist Aeneas, the eventual founder of the Roman Empire.



Dante and Virgil with souls in ice. *Inferno*, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, Italy Cod. It. IX, 276 (=6902), 15th century. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**SIN AND RETRIBUTION.** The funnel-shaped landscape of Hell through which the character Virgil leads Dante is organized by various sins—not the traditional Seven Deadly Sins, but Dante’s own personal ranking of sins that adversely affect mankind not only in the personal sphere of life, but in the public realm of the economic and political operation of the *polis* (“city”). Dante has the various sins and subdivisions of them represented by an assortment of figures that include historical personages, literary characters, mythological figures, and his own local Italian contemporaries, many of whom are now obscure to the modern reader. Dante observes how these sinners are punished for eternity. The principle behind the assignment of the specific punishments is known as *contrapasso* (“opposition”), in which the punishment suits the sin by being its ironic opposite. For example, the gluttons, who ate excessively in life, are punished by being pelted by hurricanes of excrement, the byproduct of their own overeating, raining down upon them for eternity.

**THE CIRCLE OF THE LUSTFUL.** In each circle Dante observes the sinners from afar, and then, in the most moving encounters, he actually converses with those being punished. For example, in *Inferno*’s Canto 5, devoted to the circle of the lustful, Dante is powerfully affected

by the punishment of a pair of near contemporaries, Paolo and Francesca, who, for succumbing to the “storms” of passion that drove them to commit adultery and cuckold her husband (who was also Paolo’s brother), are forever within each other’s sight, but swept from each other’s touch by gale-force winds that fling them airborne. Francesca explains to Dante that what first sexually attracted them, impelling them to commit adultery, was their shared reading of a romance about the adultery of the Arthurian characters Lancelot and Guinevere. The reading led to kissing and beyond, and her husband, catching them, killed both. Dante has a violent reaction to Francesca’s characterization of an Arthurian romance as their “go-between” or pimp; he falls into a swoon. Whether Dante’s swoon was provoked by his pity for their fate or stemmed from his own stricken culpability as a writer who produced erotic poetry in his earlier career is a matter of interpretation.

**TREACHERY, THE BOTTOM OF HELL.** Dante and Virgil continue through the circles of Hell, encountering representatives of the sins of gluttony, avarice, wrath, heresy, violence against others (tyrants and murderers), against the self (suicides), and against God (blasphemers, homosexuals, usurers), and fraud in many permutations. The worst sin, and the one punished in the deepest pocket of Hell, is treachery, whose various degrees culminate finally in a monstrous three-headed Lucifer, who betrayed God his creator. Lucifer is seen grinding an anti-Trinity of other traitors in his triple jaws: Judas, Brutus, and Cassius, who respectively betrayed Christ and Julius Caesar, representing Church and Empire. Closing *Inferno* with more “threes,” Dante here underscores his significant use of number symbolism in the *Comedy*. Climbing out of Hell, he and Virgil spiral their way up Mount Purgatory, now encountering another varied group of sinners expiating the traditional Seven Deadly Sins (pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, lust) with punishments again assigned on the principle of *contrapasso*.

**REUNION WITH BEATRICE.** Virgil, technically a pagan, is capable only of guiding Dante through the *bolgias* (“pockets”) of Hell and up the circular mountain of Purgatory to its pinnacle, the Earthly Paradise. Here he must yield his charge to an even higher authority, Dante’s long-lost Beatrice, who leads the pilgrim through the spheres of the planets, to the fixed stars, through the Empyrean to the heights of Paradise, where he has a vision of Beatrice joining the Virgin Mary and other saints in the Celestial Rose, a symbol that had been exploited in a secular way by the authors of the *Romance of the Rose*. In the last moments of *Paradiso*, Dante ex-

periences the light and love of God. In trying to convey his utter incapacity to render his vision into language commensurate with its significance, the great wordsmith compares himself to an infant babbling while suckling at his mother's breast. The poem, which started on a faltering note of moral paralysis, thus ends triumphantly with Dante restored to the primal innocence of a baby. In this way Dante's poem is justifiably called the *Comedy*, a title that, for his medieval audience, indicated its genre. As explained in the *Letter to Can Grande*, duke of Verona, traditionally believed to have been written by Dante himself, a "comedy" is a work with a fortuitous ending and is the opposite of a "tragedy," a story that ends badly for the protagonist. In those terms, Dante's poem is the greatest of all comedies because the plot concludes ultimately with the protagonist experiencing a vision of God in Heaven.

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### THE MEDIEVAL DREAM VISION

**AUTHORITIES FOR THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DREAMS.** Although many people today associate the study of dreams mainly with Sigmund Freud and Karl Jung and the twentieth-century practice of psychoanalysis, these theorists were anticipated in their investigations by nearly eight centuries, for medieval people were intensely interested in dreams and their meanings. As with other medieval literary forms, the dream vision, a genre unique to the period, was securely founded upon the medieval reverence for classical and ancient authorities. First of all, the use of dreams or visions as a literary device was sanctioned by the highest textual authority, the Scriptures. The Old Testament narrates various dreams, purported visions, or apparitions experienced by Pharaoh, Joseph, Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel, and others, while the New Testament features in Corinthians 2:12 St. Paul's vision of being caught up in

Paradise, and in the Book of Revelation, the account of an apocalyptic vision on Patmos. Medieval dream poetry also was preceded and endorsed by classical texts such as Plato's allegory of the cave in *The Republic*, Vergil's account of Aeneas's vision of the underworld in the *Aeneid*, and Macrobius's *Commentary* on Scipio's dream. These early models authorized the creation of a coherent group of texts whose "plot," strictly speaking, consisted of the narrator recounting his or her unusual dream, experienced while literally asleep. Although medieval writers of these narratives never defined their texts by the term "dream vision"—they simply called them "books" or "poems" or "things"—literary historians have attached the term "dream vision" to this recognizable body of medieval texts. This genre, which overlaps with the categories of allegory and philosophical works, was one of the most distinctive and widely practiced literary forms of the Middle Ages.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DREAM VISION.** Medieval dream visions or dream allegories share certain common features. First, dream poems often employ a prologue consisting of an account of the conditions leading up to the narrator's having the dream, which sometimes is provoked by the dreamer's surroundings in a natural setting such as the *locus amoenus* ("pleasant place") full of spring breezes, birdsong, a flowery grove, and the lulling sound of flowing water. Examples include the May opening of the thirteenth-century *Romance of the Rose* and similar beginnings of later French dream visions by Machaut and Froissart, the Middle English *Piers Plowman*, the Prologue to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, and the fourteenth-century English alliterative poem *Pearl*. At other times the dream is provoked by the content of a book read by the dreamer just before going to sleep, which in turn influences the content of the dream. For example, Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* opens with the narrator reading Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, which classified and interpreted dreams according to five types. Second, the main "plot" of the poem consists of a dream report or an account of the events occurring in the dream itself. The scope of this "plot" ranges from a limited, self-contained event, such as the dreamer's encounter and dialogue with the pearl maiden in the fourteenth-century alliterative Middle English poem *Pearl*, to a broad, encyclopedic treatment of many political, social, and spiritual issues such as is found in Langland's enormous alliterative dream vision *Piers Plowman*. Third, many dream poems, whether waking or sleeping visions, include the appearance to the narrator of a male or female authority figure who informs the dreamer about some aspect of his life or teaches him

some spiritual or philosophical truth. For example, personified Nature appears to the narrator of Alan of Lille's *Complaint of Nature*, Lady Holychurch appears to Will in *Piers Plowman*, and Reason, Rectitude, and Justice appear to Christine de Pizan in *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Fourth, some dream visions feature a framing epilogue consisting of the dreamer's awakening from the dream and interpretative speculations about its meaning, as occurs in the end of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*. Occasionally, the dream simply ends without the closing frame of the dreamer's awakening. Such an absence of closure occurs in Chaucer's *House of Fame*, in which the dream breaks off abruptly with the appearance of an otherwise mysterious "man of great authority," perhaps Chaucer's playful reference to the authority figure convention of dream visions.

**CONTINENTAL MEDIEVAL DREAM VISIONS.** The dream vision became a favored literary form in the thirteenth century with the appearance of the seminal exemplar of the genre, *Romance of the Rose*, started by Guillaume de Lorris and completed forty years later by another author, Jean de Meun. In Jean's continuation of the work, he demonstrates the potential of the dream vision to break down the rational barriers of waking life and allow for the inclusion of an encyclopedic range of subjects that would seem too random for an account of lived experience. With hundreds of manuscripts of the *Romance of the Rose* in circulation, often elaborately illustrated, by the fourteenth century the taste for dream narratives reached its zenith, with many examples produced by French love poets influenced by the *Rose*. Guillaume de Machaut (1300–1377), well known for his musical compositions and development of the motet, wrote the *Dit dou Vergier* (poem of the garden) in which the lovesick narrator swoons in an April *locus amoenus* and sees a vision of the God of Love, who dispenses advice about how to conduct a courtly love affair, using secrecy and loyalty to the beloved, whereupon the narrator awakens and vows to be true to his lady forever. As one of his earliest works, Jean Froissart (1337–1410) wrote the *Paradys d'Amours* (The Paradise of Love; 1361–1362), in which a lovesick, insomniac narrator prays for relief to the God of Sleep and, in the dream that ensues, gains the God of Love's support in wooing his lady. When, as a more mature poet, Froissart revisits the genre in *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece* (The Fair Bush of Youth; 1373), he demonstrates the dream vision's potential for psychological complexity as the narrator uses his dream of rejection in the garden of love to resolve his mid-life crisis, leading him to abandon love poetry and move on to more responsible authorial pursuits.

**CURRENTS IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND.** The earliest dream vision written in England, the anonymous Anglo-Saxon religious lyric "The Dream of the Rood," is not a part of the tradition initiated by the *Romance of the Rose* but rather is a more direct descendant of the apocryphal New Testament stories—very like the canonical Book of Revelation—elaborating events in the life, death, and afterlife of Jesus which are reported by a narrator transported outside himself in a vision. In this remarkable poem, the dreamer-narrator recounts a vision of the crucified Christ on the cross in which the anthropomorphized cross or "Rood" speaks of its anguished feelings when made to serve as the implement of Christ's torture at the Passion. The Rood describes its relation to Christ—who is not the suffering victim depicted in late medieval art, but rather a heroic warrior like Beowulf—as that of a thane to his lord in the *comitatus*. As English society changed with the arrival of the Norman French in 1066, there was no continuity of tradition from this early example. After a hiatus of several centuries, however, dream visions reappeared, in imitation of the French, particularly in the work of Geoffrey Chaucer, who produced several examples: *Book of the Duchess*, which is much indebted to the love poetry of Froissart and Machaut; *House of Fame*, which combines French elements with a motif of ascent reminiscent of Dante's *Divine Comedy*; and *Parliament of Fowls*, which owes its conception of Lady Nature to Alan of Lille's allegorical female authority figure in *Complaint of Nature*. Chaucer and his works had English and Scottish imitators as late as the sixteenth century.

**THE ENGLISH PHILOSOPHICAL DREAM VISION.** While Chaucer's dream poems dealt with love, personal bereavement, the common profit, and fame, his English contemporaries combined dream vision with allegory to treat more serious, philosophical subjects. During the fourteenth century, the high mortality rate from the Black Death had accelerated economic changes that led to abandonment of the countryside by agricultural workers, periods of famine, sudden growth of urban centers, and the appearance of a new, socially unsettling, mercantile class that blurred old boundaries between noble and commoner. Camouflaging social critique under cover of a narrative that was "only a dream," such works as *Winner and Waster*, the *Parliament of Three Ages*, and *Piers Plowman* responded to the enormous social, religious, and economic changes that occurred in England from about 1350 onwards. The anonymous poet of the unfinished *Winner and Waster* (1350), for example, addressed the pressing economic issues of the proper getting and spending of money, posing the question of how to use national wealth with social responsibility. As the

allegorical armies of Winner and Waster prepare for battle before King Edward III, the king deems that Winner should ally itself with the Church while Waster joins the merchants of London's Cheapside market district. Similar economic concerns dominate the *Parliament [Debate] of Three Ages* (1350), in which the dreamer is visited by three men, representing allegorized Youth, Middle Age, and Old Age. Youth is carefree and thinks little about anything except the immediate moment and his pleasures; Middle Age worries only about keeping what he has earned; Old Age rails against the vices of the previous two ages and reminds Youth and Middle Age about the evanescence of earthly life. Using illustrative *exempla* (parable-like stories of moral instruction), Old Age reminds them that all is vanity and only death is certain. When the dreamer awakens, he is so traumatized by the vision that he remains lodged in a tree house, unable to return to civilized life.

**A SPIRITUAL DREAM VISION.** One of the most exquisitely constructed poems in Middle English is the late fourteenth-century alliterative dream vision *Pearl*, composed by the same unknown writer who created *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Patience* (a retelling of the biblical story of Jonah and the whale). As in his Arthurian romance about Sir Gawain, this poet employs striking number and color symbolism in a technically brilliant and emotionally moving poem comprised of 1,212 lines complexly organized into a structure reminiscent of a pearl necklace, with stanzas that are linked by the appearance of a key word in the last line of a stanza and its repetition in the first line of the next. The first stanza group depicts the narrator, a "joyless jeweler," lamenting the loss of some literal object, person, or state of being identified as a "pearl." The poem begins in a garden-like setting that may be the grave of the narrator's deceased young daughter or the literal "spot" where he lost a valuable pearl. After swooning from emotional loss, the narrator has a vision of a landscape suggestive of the terrestrial paradise in which a young woman, the pearl maiden, appears to him as a female authority figure like Boethius's Lady Philosophy. The pearl maiden instructs the literal-minded dreamer how to cope with his loss, using two New Testament parables as *exempla*. When the stubborn dreamer refuses to accept the promotion of such a young girl to one of the "queens" of heaven, she uses the "Parable of the Vineyard," whose moral is that the last shall go first, to explain the democracy of heavenly reward. To console him for his bereavement, she uses another parable from the Gospels, the "Pearl of Great Price," in which a jeweler exchanges a valuable gem for the greater prize of salvation. In an instance of *translatio studii*, John's vision of Revelation

## MACROBIUS'S Classification of Dreams

Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius (399–422 c.e.), a late Roman author, wrote the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (circa 400 c.e.), a long treatise interpreting the *Somnium Scipionis* (Dream of Scipio), the closing section of Marcus Tullius Cicero's *De re publica* (54–51 b.c.e.). Macrobius was an important source for the transmission of Plato's thought for the twelfth century. His *Commentary*, sixteen times longer than Cicero's original text, treats number symbolism, astronomy, cosmography, geography, the classification of the virtues, the division between body and soul, and other subjects, but the section he was best known for was his classification of dreams, which was cited frequently by medieval writers of dream visions, including Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meun, and Chaucer. According to Macrobius, there are five types of dreams: 1) the *insomnium* (nightmare), caused by anxiety or physical or mental distress, which had no special meaning and was not considered prophetic; 2) the *visum* (apparition), which occurs in the half sleep state just before one falls in deep sleep, and which also was not considered prophetic; 3) the *oraculum* (oracular dream), in which an authority figure or parent appears in the dream and advises or prophesies to the dreamer; 4) the *visio* (prophetic vision), a prophecy that comes true; 5) the *somnium* (enigmatic dream), whose meaning is veiled and must be interpreted. Macrobius considered only the last three types of dreams significant. Chaucer mentions Macrobius's commentary in his *Book of the Duchess*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, in which his well-read rooster, Chauntecleer, quotes Macrobius on dreams.

about the procession of the Lamb (representing Christ) into the jeweled city of the New Jerusalem is incorporated almost verbatim into the dream vision. The white-attired maiden, adorned with a huge pearl, joins the procession of 144,000 virgins honoring the Lamb. Against her warnings that it was not his choice to make, the dreamer, who cannot resist trying to cross the river separating him from this scene, is abruptly awakened from his vision. In the final stanza group, he finds himself once again on the mound where he fainted, consoled by a new white, round symbol to replace the lost pearl, the Eucharist. The highly suggestive image of the pearl can be read according to the four levels of allegorical interpretation: literally as a lost gem or the dead daughter;

allegorically as primal innocence before the fall or the state of a baptized infant; tropologically as innocence, with emphasis on one's duty to regain innocence; and anagogically as possession of the beatific vision in the heavenly paradise.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF DREAMS TO MEDIEVAL SENSIBILITY.** Other medieval literary works that are not, strictly speaking, dream visions also allude to the importance of dreams and attest both their veracity and the possibility of accurately interpreting them. Chaucer's delightful animal fable, the *Nun's Priest's Tale* in the *Canterbury Tales*, features a well-read rooster and hen, Chauntecleer and Pertelote, who argue over the validity and possible significance of the cock's nightmare about capture by a fox, with the cock citing many of the above-mentioned biblical and classical dreams for authority, as well as referring directly to Macrobius. This tale combines dream vision and the animal epic, specifically the story of Reynard the Fox, the most famous example of which is the French *Roman de Renart* cycle, composed between 1174 and 1250 by a number of different authors. By using this important popular genre, where animals take on the roles of people (with the fox representing the voracious, aggressive, and overly clever part of man), Chaucer is able to reinforce a traditional theme about the similarities between animals and humans while at the same time exploring the issue of dreams satirically, drawing on the audience's familiarity with the cock's self-important attitude. Medieval dream visions are often, like this tale, self-referential, with many of them alluding to Macrobius's authoritative typology of dreams, as well as other early dream visions such as Alan of Lille's *Complaint of Nature*, and the *Romance of the Rose*.

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## WILLIAM LANGLAND AND PIERS PLOWMAN

**WILLIAM LANGLAND AND THE ALLEGORICAL WILL.** The long philosophical dream vision—or series of dreams—that editors title *Piers Plowman* is perhaps the finest example of the use of the dream vision for social, political, and spiritual commentary. Composed in alliterative verse in a Northwest Midlands dialect of Middle English, the poem twice was revised and enlarged over the course of the second half of the fourteenth century. Authorship by William Langland is based on internal evidence in some of the more than fifty surviving manuscripts (approaching the number of extant manuscripts of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*) whose large number indicates both the high demand for copies of this long and difficult text and, thus, the high regard in which Langland's text was held in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. What little concrete evidence about the author's life and background is known comes from inside the text itself. Langland was probably born about 1331 in the region of the Malvern Hills. He was most likely some form of cleric educated at a Benedictine school in that region, judging from his extensive knowledge of, and allusions to, scriptural passages and his use of Latin quotations throughout the poem. Like his narrative persona, Langland seems to have spent much of his life wandering and making a living from offering prayers for the dead for fees. Langland also seems to know a lot about the workings of the royal court and contemporary politics in London, so it is likely that he also lived in London at about the same time that Chaucer was working and writing there, though there is no evidence that they knew one another. The poem's narrator is called "Will"—a pun referring to the author's first name as well as signifying the abstract "human will," rendering Will the Dreamer an Everyman figure. For convenience, modern editors divide the large sprawling allegorical plot into two major parts: the *Visio* and the *Vitae*. Langland subjected his first draft of the poem to two consecutive major re-writings and the three versions have been designated by modern editors the A, B, and C Texts, all of which are divided into chapters or parts called (in both singular and plural) *Passus* (paces or steps). These "steps" on the road to salvation are undertaken by Will through

an allegorical pilgrimage whose goal is attaining a life devoted to “Truth.”

**LANGLAND’S VISIO.** The A Text (1360s), the shortest version, includes only Passus 1–11, the *Visio* (vision) dreamed by Will about the everyday political and economic life of man in society. This section culminates in the appearance of the allegorical character Piers Plowman, an agricultural worker and pilgrim figure who leads Will on the pilgrimage to Truth throughout the remainder of the poem. All three texts begin on a May morning, typical of the dream vision, when the narrator, a wandering cleric named Will, falls asleep in the Malvern Hills and has a vision of a “fair field of folk,” a cross-section of the fourteenth-century English population similar to that achieved by Chaucer in the pilgrim portraits of the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*. This initial dream, which merges into a political allegory on the subject of good kingship (presented as an animal fable in which rats and mice—the laboring and middle classes—attempt to bell the cat or king in order to limit his power) becomes highly abstract. Like Boethius and Lady Philosophy or Dante and Beatrice, Will is visited by a female authority figure Lady Holychurch, standing for the institutional Christian Church. To Will’s question, “How can I save my soul?” Holychurch replies cryptically, “When all treasure is tried, *truth* is best.” She warns him against the temptations of money and worldly goods by showing him a vision of the failed metaphoric wedding of “Conscience” to another female allegorical figure, Lady Meed (fee or payment), who represents all the possible beneficial or corrupting influences of money, whether offered as a just reward or as a bribe. The Lady Meed episode, structured around the metaphor of marriage, illustrates various fourteenth-century crises in language, the economy, politics, and interpersonal relations. Both Langland’s allegorical use of marriage metaphors and his designation of “Truth” as the eventual goal of the Visio’s pilgrimage can be read in typical patristic fourfold allegorical interpretation as

1. literal marriage between an individual and his spouse;
2. political harmony between an individual subject and his king;
3. social and economic harmony between the individual and the larger community of his fellow men; and
4. spiritual union between the individual’s soul and God.

**THE ALLEGORY OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS.** In his dream, Will then witnesses the confession of the

Seven Deadly Sins, a parade of allegorical personifications, illustrating various social types from medieval estates satire—also employed by Chaucer in his General Prologue to type his Canterbury pilgrims—that embody in their lifestyles the practice of pride, wrath, avarice, envy, sloth, gluttony, and lechery. This is one of the most allegorical and at the same time most “realistic” sections of Langland’s poem. Gluttony’s overindulgence and vomiting in the tavern, Pride’s preening in her fine apparel, the slothful priest’s ignorance of the words to his *Pater Noster* (the Lord’s Prayer) when he knows by heart the rhymes of Robin Hood, all give fascinating glimpses into daily life of fourteenth-century London. When the plowing of a half-acre of land is disrupted by the workers’ laziness (here Langland is seen incorporating aspects of the new post-Black Death economy), the allegorical figure Piers the Plowman suddenly appears, offering to guide the group on a pilgrimage to “Truth.” This multifaceted virtue represents the abstract ideal of what is right, especially through the keeping of promises or contracts. Overall, in its many concrete references to and images of social, political, and economic life, the *Visio* is more “realistic” than the *Vitae*.

**THE VITAE OF DO WELL, DO BETTER, DO BEST.**

The B Text (1370s), three times the length of A, adds to the *Visio* Passus 12–20 comprising the “lives” of the allegorical triad of Do-wel, Do-bet (Do Better), and Do-best (lives of doing well, doing better, and doing best), whose subject is less the reform of general society than an exploration of how the individual Christian (represented by the narrator Will) can strive for spiritual perfection by practicing (with emphasis on *do-ing*) the virtue of Charity. B incorporates many more forms of allegory than A, each of which becomes increasingly more abstract, including the allegorical representation of the frustrating search for spiritual improvement through clerical and academic study, represented in Will’s ultimately inconclusive engagement with various personifications of the intellectual faculties such as Wit, Dame Study, Thought, and Scripture. Will’s quest to learn how to practice a virtuous life is represented in his attendance at a satirical banquet shared by personifications such as Patience, Conscience, and Haukyn the breadmaker, who represents the Active Life. The *Vitae* speak provocatively about such late medieval social problems as the hypocritical lifestyle of friars, who live luxuriously despite the pervasive poverty in the general populace. Will’s dream vision turns nightmarish in the concluding *Passus*, in which the narrator witnesses an attack on the Church’s unity by Antichrist, who leads an army of the Seven Deadly Sins. Apprehensive about the imminent collapse of society, the collective Conscience undertakes another

## PILGRIMAGE in Medieval Literature

Making pilgrimages was a popular devotional practice that sometimes became more pastime than penance in the Middle Ages. Christians from all corners of Europe flocked to the major pilgrimage destinations to venerate relics of saints and to undergo spiritual renewal through self-denial. Pilgrims traveled to both nearby shrines and to far-flung destinations such as Compostela in northern Spain, Rome, and Jerusalem. The Wife of Bath in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* visited all these pilgrim sites and more. Her real-life counterpart, Margery Kempe, who had visions of a bleeding, crucified Christ while on pilgrimage, wrote *The Book of Margery Kempe*, an account of many of her travels and spiritual experiences.

Although shrines were dedicated to many different international and local saints, medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary was especially widespread. There was special interest in the Virgin in England starting from the Anglo-Saxon period when many cathedrals, monasteries, and convents were rededicated to Mary. The foremost site for veneration of the Virgin in England was a shrine established in 1131 by Richelme de Fervaques, a widow who, after being inspired by a series of visions, ordered the construction of a chapel to Our Lady in Walsingham, a town on the Norfolk coast. Walsingham became a popular local, national, and international pilgrimage destination in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, reaching its zenith in the fifteenth through sixteenth centuries, when visitation of Walsingham's shrine surpassed even that of Canterbury.

In the fourteenth century Walsingham became a shrine of national prominence, as indicated by William Langland, who, though he never once mentions Canterbury, describes the Walsingham pilgrimage experience several times in *Piers Plowman*, where Will observes, "A heap of hermits with hooked pilgrim staves/ Went to Walsingham with their wenches following them" and "They were clothed in pilgrim weeds to be distinguished from others" (Prologue: 53-54, 56; modernized by Lorraine K. Stock). Here Langland observes that pilgrims wore a distinctive costume to proclaim their penitent status. These lines also indicate that not all pilgrims practiced sexual abstinence during what was supposed to be a penitential exercise. During the peak of Walsingham's popularity, ordinary travelers as well as royalty stopped at the "Slipper Chapel" at Houghton (circa 1348), less than two miles from their destination, to remove their shoes and walk barefoot the rest of the way to the shrine. This degree of self-denial throws into sharp relief the much more comfortable situation of Chaucer's well-dressed and well-shod pilgrims on horseback to Canterbury. Like the crypt containing the remains of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral, Walsingham also displayed saintly tokens that pilgrims venerated. In addition to a famous statue of the Virgin and a pair of wells noted for their healing waters, the Walsingham shrine displayed a relic of Mary's milk, which was reputed to aid the lactation of mothers. Perhaps because of such superstitions, at the end of the fourteenth century the shrine was a target of the reforming Lollards, led by John Wyclif, who decried Walsingham's Virgin Mary as the "witch of Walsingham."

pilgrimage to find Piers Plowman (who had disappeared from the plot of the dream), thus reprising themes from the *Visio*. Will awakens abruptly in the last lines of the poem to the stricken sound of Conscience's perhaps unanswered cries for grace, leaving the conclusion of the quest for Truth uncertain.

**AGRICULTURAL IMAGERY AND PILGRIMAGE.** The longest version of *Piers Plowman*, the C Text (written in the late 1380s, about the same time Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales*), is largely the same as B, except for a few details, such as the addition of purportedly autobiographical details about the author and the deletion of certain controversial segments. In both B and C, Langland unifies the disparate themes of his complex philosophical vision through a series of agricultural and organic images and tropes begun in the *Visio* with the "field" of folk, the plowing of the half-acre, and the figure of Piers the Plowman, and continuing in the *Vitae* with the organic

metaphor of the Tree of Charity, the plowing of the four Gospels, and the Universal Church imaged as a Barn called *Unitas* ("unity") at the poem's end. If this set of rural images reflects England's agricultural foundations, then another motif, that of pilgrimage, ties the poem to a more contemporary concern: the popularity of pilgrimages. Langland's selection of an allegorical "pilgrimage" to find Truth as his governing metaphor parallels Chaucer's far more secular employment of the theme of a literal pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury in the *Canterbury Tales*. Increasingly, as the Middle Ages drew to a close, the undertaking of pilgrimages became a thorny issue as the sometimes less-than-pious motives of pilgrims were questioned by reform movements such as the Wycliffites or Lollards, led by Oxford clergyman John Wyclif. Knowing that the practice was both widespread and controversial, both Langland and Chaucer used the pilgrimage theme to great (if dis-



similar) effect to illustrate some of the most compelling social and spiritual issues of their era.

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### THE MEDIEVAL STORY COLLECTION

**RESISTANCE TO CATEGORIZATION.** A characteristically unique feature of medieval literature is its tendency to mix forms and styles. In the cases of the philosophical dream vision, the romance, and the allegory, individual medieval literary works often combine or incorporate several independently identifiable genres such as prose and verse, or comic and serious elements, within one work. This tendency makes it impossible to classify certain works in a single generic category. For example, the long, highly complex thirteenth-century poem *Romance of the Rose* combines dream vision, courtly romance, adventure quest, allegory, love poem, philosophical treatise, social satire, and more, within a vast plot that was begun by one author, Guillaume de Lorris, and completed a half century later by another writer of a completely different mindset, Jean de Meun. Similarly, *Piers Plowman* combines allegory, dream vision, philosophy, pilgrimage quest, social satire and other forms to such an extent that it is difficult to describe it by a more precise term than “dream vision.”

**MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPT MISCELLANIES.** One of the more popular ways for medieval readers to obtain copies of literary works was to order manuscripts that collected a variety of kinds of genres and forms within the binding of a single book. Medieval audiences thus might receive a mixture of long romances, mid-length narratives, and short lyrics in manuscripts that were loosely organized “miscellanies” or anthologies containing a sampler of varied genres and modes. Paralleling this manuscript model of the “miscellany,” medieval writers themselves were inclined to create what were essentially anthologies of different stories that circulated together in a reasonably coherent form. Sometimes these “story collections” were organized around a theme that provided a reason for a compiler to collect the tales. This variety would include collections of saints’ lives like the enormously influential

mid-thirteenth-century *Legenda Aurea* (Golden Legend) by Jacob of Voragine; tales of remarkable people and events like the *Gesta Romanorum* (Deeds of the Romans); and the Breton *lais* and animal *fables* of Marie de France. However, the most formal and literarily self-conscious medieval story collections involved a framing device, a larger narrative that linked all the other stories through an author’s invented occasion at which stories and exempla were exchanged. In some cases the stories were chosen to illustrate either a moral principle or its violation. Other story-collecting frameworks involve a group of people telling tales to one another as a social exercise, a game, or a way of passing what would otherwise be tedious travel time. Such storytelling “frame” situations were employed to organize several important landmarks of medieval literary culture in Continental Europe and England.

**THE LATIN STORY COLLECTION IN ITALY.** The Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) compiled several story collections, both in Italian and in Latin, although in his own lifetime the Latin works were more popular than the vernacular ones. One Latin collection, *De casibus virorum illustrium* (Concerning the Fates of Illustrious Men; 1355), which was possibly a source for Chaucer’s *Monk’s Tale*, has no frame, and is almost exclusively didactic. It narrates the rise to fame and fall from fortune of various great men and several women in chronological order, starting with the biblical Adam and going to the middle of the fourteenth century. These tales, which seem overly similar to a modern audience, were enormously popular in Boccaccio’s time, and the *De casibus* was the work for which he was then best known, judging from over eighty surviving manuscripts and numerous French translations in luxury illuminated editions. Each narrative offers the same pattern—the turning of Boethius’s Wheel of Fortune, the foolishness of pride, and God’s humbling of the proud. Boccaccio also wrote a similar Latin collection on women, *De mulieribus claris* (Concerning Famous Women; 1361–1362), which recounts the lives of over 100 mythological and classical women who became famous or infamous for various reasons. This work anticipates Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*, which has an elaborate frame and prologue, and Christine de Pizan’s *Book of the City of Ladies*, a collection structured around the building of an allegorical city comprised of the biographies of illustrious women.

**THE DECAMERON.** The work for which Boccaccio is now most famous, *The Decameron* (One Hundred Stories), is an Italian anthology organized within

an elaborate fictive structural framework. It starts with a gruesomely graphic description of the physical symptoms of the Black Death, the pandemic outbreak of bubonic plague that swept across Europe in the middle of the fourteenth century, killing off between one-third to one-half of Europe's entire population. If for no other reason than the fact that its opening offers one of the only written eyewitness accounts of the ravages of the Black Death, Boccaccio's *Decameron* would be a landmark of medieval literature. However, additionally, like Chaucer's similarly framed Middle English *Canterbury Tales* and Juan Ruiz's Spanish *Book of Good Love*, this Italian collection of stories serves as a sampler of the variety of types of literary forms available in the late Middle Ages. Like Chaucer's host, who stipulates that the pilgrims' tales must combine "sentence and solas" (moral instruction and enjoyment), Boccaccio's narrator dedicates his collection to the edification and pleasure of "ladies in love" who, confined to their sewing rooms, do not have the freedom of their male counterparts to escape the distress of being in love through outdoor physical activities, hunting, and business affairs.

**STORYTELLING IN THE DECAMERON.** Boccaccio's fictive frame has ten young Florentines (seven ladies and three men) fleeing from plague-ridden Florence to various estates outside the city to escape infection in the more healthful air of the countryside. They agree to a story-telling game to pass their time pleasantly, with the rule that a queen or king is to be selected daily to determine the theme for that day's ten tales. The assigned themes include positive reversals of fortune; recovery of losses; unhappy love affairs; successful love affairs; clever verbal maneuvers; treachery of wives against their husbands; tricks played by both sexes; the performance of generous deeds; or free topics—in short, the full range of life experiences. After ten days of story telling, the participants return to Florence and go their separate ways. Unlike the other story collections Boccaccio wrote, this group foregoes didacticism for the sheer pleasure of telling and hearing tales. The possibility of complete disorder in so many stories is precluded by the announced themes, which help give the stories coherence. Here, as in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the sheer abundance and variety of tale-types—ranging from moral tales to romances, to bawdy *fabliaux* (for which Boccaccio is probably most famous)—ensure that all readers will find stories to amuse, provoke, and enlighten them. Moreover, as in Chaucer's *Canterbury* story collection, the delightful interplay between the tellers within the framework of the contest provides additional human interest.

#### A LITERARY MISCELLANY IN MEDIEVAL SPAIN.

One of the landmarks of literary culture in medieval Spain was the 1350 *Book of Good Love* by Juan Ruiz, otherwise identified as the "Archpriest" of Hita, a town north-east of Madrid. Although not a formally framed story collection like Boccaccio's *Decameron* or Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Ruiz's *Book*, a meandering, episodic series of accounts of the Archpriest's fourteen attempted (and sporadically successful) adventures in love, incorporates many literary genres and a wide spectrum of tones, ranging from the academically serious and religiously pious to the satirical and nearly blasphemous. Narrated by a priest who in one episode woos a nun by means of a bawd-like go-between named Conventhopper, Ruiz offers a scathing treatment of contemporary clergy and religious life. Ruiz parodies the *pastourelle* in the narrator's encounters with the aggressive, ugly Wild Woman-like "mountain girls" who physically overpower the Archpriest, forcing him to have sex in exchange for dinner and a place by the fire. The Archpriest also creates an Ovidian "art of love" similar to Andreas Capellanus's *Art of Courty Love* in which Sir Love and Lady Venus teach the narrator how to court women. The many allegories include a mock joust between a personified Sir Carnival and the pilgrim-attired Lady Lent (using meat and sardines as cannon balls), an allegory of the seasons and months, an allegory of the arms of a Christian, and an allegory of the seven Vices of Love illustrated by beast fables. Ruiz includes a dream vision in which Sir Love appears to the Archpriest, *exempla*, fables, *fabliaux* exchanged between the nun and the go-between, and other genres.

**ALLEGORY AND AMBIGUITY IN RUIZ'S BOOK OF GOOD LOVE.** Whereas the intended meanings of other story collections are more obvious, the ultimate signification of Ruiz's complexly woven, tapestry-like collection is equivocal. He repeatedly reminds his audience of the metaphor of the "husk and the kernel," suggesting that the work (or parts of it) may be understood as an allegory meant to convey meaning(s) beyond its sometimes outrageous literal level. Like Boethius in the *Consolation of Philosophy*, the narrator's opening prayer indicates that he is writing from prison. But by "prison," does he mean a literal jail cell, the "prison" of corporeal flesh, or the "prison" of the experience of love? Even the work's title, which initially implies that its subject will be erotic love, proves to be ambivalent, for eventually Ruiz distinguishes between "good love" (defined as love of God and obedience to His Commandments) and "foolish love of *this* world," which many of the Archpriest's adventures illustrate, though it is uncertain whether anything is learned from

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### DAME SIRITH

**INTRODUCTION:** *Dame Sirith* [Siriz] (from a manuscript made between 1272 and 1283) is the only known English fabliau besides several of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Probably Oriental in origin, the story of *Dame Sirith and the Weeping Bitch* offers an attack on bourgeois materialism, hypocrisy, and complacency. At the same time, it satirizes courtly love with masterful irony in a complex stanza form typical of popular romances. The story recounts the passion—complete with the pangs of love sickness—of a young clerk, Willikin (a diminutive of William), for a smug married woman, Margery. All of the protagonists are villagers of the lower middle class, but Willikin's language employs many of the conventions of aristocratic courtly love, which lend an improbable and comic note to the poem. The clerk one day visits the woman when her merchant husband has gone to a fair, revealing that he has loved her for many years and would like her to be his "leuemon" or beloved (a term from courtly love lyrics). But the lady rejects his advances, citing the respectability of her life and the virtues—and wealth—of her husband. Willikin then addresses himself to a go-between, Dame Sirith, a bawd on the order of the woman charmingly called "Convent Hopper" in Juan Ruiz's *Book of Good Love*. Through a clever trick, Dame Sirith convinces Margery to cooperate, and at the end of the tale, she brings Willikin back to Margery with the admonition that he "plow her well and stretch her thighs wide apart," which Willikin, with the now eager Margery, proceeds to do. In the passage modernized here, Dame Sirith prepares for her visit to Margery by feeding her small dog pepper and mustard until it weeps, then goes to see Margery with the weeping dog under her arm. Complaining to Margery of her poverty, she gets her sympathy and attention, as well as food and drink. Margery asks Dame Sirith what has brought her to this miserable condition. The following excerpt is her response.

[Dame Sirith]: "I have a daughter fair and free  
No man might find one fairer.  
She had a husband great and rich  
And generous as well.  
My daughter loved him all too much,  
Which is why I am so sad.  
On a certain day he was out of the house—  
Which is why my daughter is ruined.  
He had an errand out of town;  
A tonsured clerk came by

And offered my daughter his love.  
But she would not do as he said—  
He might not have his way with her,  
No matter how great his desire.  
Then the clerk began casting spells  
And turned my daughter into this bitch  
You see here in my arms.  
My heart breaks for her!  
See how her eyes run  
And how the tears flow down.  
Therefore, lady, it's no surprise  
That my heart is breaking in two.  
And any young housewife cares little for her life  
If she refuses a clerk her love,  
And doesn't give in to him."—  
"Oh my god," said Margery, "what should I do?  
The other day a clerk came to me  
And bade me love him in just this way,  
And I refused him. Now I fear  
He will transform me too.  
How can I escape?"—  
"May God Almighty keep you safe  
From becoming a bitch or a puppy!  
Dear lady, if any clerk offers his love,  
I think you should grant his wish  
And become his sweetie straightaway.  
And if you don't, a worse fate will befall you."—  
"Lord Christ, woe is me  
That that clerk went away  
Before he had won me.  
I wish more than anything  
That he had lain with me  
And done it right away!  
Dame Sirith, evermore I will be in your debt  
If you will fetch me Willikin,  
That clerk I'm speaking of—  
And I will give you gifts  
So that you will be better off  
Forever, by God's own bell.  
Unless you bring me Willikin,  
I will never laugh or sing  
Or be happy ever again."

**SOURCE:** *Dame Sirith and the Weeping Bitch*, in *Middle English Humorous Tales in Verse*. Ed. George H. McKnight (Boston and London: D. C. Heath, 1913): 16–18. Text modernized from the Middle English by John Block Friedman and Kristen Figg.

his described experiences. One thing is clear—in a period of extreme antifeminism, the narrator admires and philosophically supports women in all their infinite variety. If the Archpriest's persona remains flat and undeveloped, the characters of several of the eccentric

women he woos (or is wooed by) remain unforgettable: the physically grotesque and sexually voracious "mountain girls," the ever-present and ever-faithful "Convent-hopper," and the two women with whom the narrator has most success in love, the widow Lady Sloeberry and

the nun Garoça (with whom he enjoys a platonic relationship).

#### THE STORY COLLECTION IN ENGLAND: CHAUCER.

In addition to his more famous *Canterbury Tales*—within which is included another incomplete collection, the *Monk's Tale* (consisting of “tragedies” of men’s diminished fortunes)—Geoffrey Chaucer also wrote another unfinished collection, *The Legend of Good Women* (1389), his third-longest work, created shortly after *Troilus and Criseyde*. Like Christine de Pizan’s French allegory *Book of the City of Ladies* and Boccaccio’s Latin collection *Concerning Famous Women*, the Middle English *Legend* provides a story collection about various (sometimes questionably) “saintly” females who were victims of love. Chaucer’s female figures were selected from the annals of antiquity and classical myth, including Ariadne, Cleopatra, Medea, Dido, Lucretia, Philomela, and others. The *Legend’s* prologue sets the stories within the framework of a dream vision in which the narrator is harassed by Cupid, the God of Love, and his queen, the daisy-like Alceste, for writing literary works that defame women, such as the *Romaunt of the Rose* (Chaucer’s translation of the thirteenth-century French dream vision) and *Troilus and Criseyde*, in which Criseyde betrays her lover Troilus. To rectify this literary “sin” against the fair sex, the narrator of *Legend* is issued the “penance” of writing a collection of stories lauding the more than twenty thousand “good women” whose stories he has neglected. However, the legends that follow only tell of ten women. Whether Chaucer tired of this literary exercise and voluntarily abandoned the project or decided to express an ironic view of womanly virtue through the very brevity and inconclusiveness of the collection is impossible to tell.

**JOHN GOWER’S STORY COLLECTION, CONFESSIO AMANTIS.** In *Confessio Amantis* (Confession of the Lover; 1390–1393), containing over 30,000 lines of narrative verse, Chaucer’s English contemporary John Gower presents a collection of biblical, classical, legendary, and popular narratives, recounted by Genius, priest of Venus, as he hears the confession of *Amans* (“the lover”). The narrative voice represents John Gower, who poses as an elderly lover. The structure of *Confessio* is organized as if *Amans* confesses to his priest the various sins committed against love in seven books of stories organized according to the Seven Deadly Sins—Pride, Avarice, Envy, Wrath, Lechery, Gluttony, and Sloth—with one book assigned to each mortal sin. For Genius and the Lover, Gower obviously is indebted to the same figures in Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Romance of the Rose* as well as Jean’s source, Alan of Lille’s *Complaint of Nature*. Before the

confessions proper start, there is a Prologue narrated by “John Gower” as well as another book summarizing Aristotelian lore at the lover’s request. Even though both Gower and Chaucer sometimes tell analogous stories—for example Gower narrates stories that parallel those of the *Man of Law’s Tale* of Constance and the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* of a rash promise to a loathly damsel—readers today generally favor the psychological complexity of Chaucer’s rendition over Gower’s more prosaic version. Gower, however, was a prolific writer, composing thousands of lines of verse in Latin, French, and Middle English, for which he had a large audience in his time.

**THE FABLIAU.** This brief type of tale, also known as the short *conte*, was predominantly a French form, the earliest examples dating from 1200. The term is the Old French diminutive for “little fable” and its plural is *fabliaux*; no equivalent name exists in Middle English. Unlike the romance, which often takes place in the far away and long ago Celtic Other World or in some idealized version of Camelot, the *fabliau* is set in the everyday world of the present. Its characters are bourgeois: peasants, clerks, lecherous clergy, oversexed wives, artisans, and cuckolded husbands. Despite its bourgeois or lower-class subject matter, the *fabliau* is not a bourgeois phenomenon, and, indeed, examples of the genre or texts in related forms occur alongside romances and in such important works as Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, and Juan Ruiz’s *Book of Good Love*. The genre may have been an aristocratic form that mocked middle- or lower-class pretensions or the lack thereof. Its clever, complicated plots, often love triangles, are concerned more with cunning and folly than with virtue and evil, and generally concern humankind’s most basic functions—mostly sex, sometimes excretion. Little descriptive detail is given and characterization is usually minimal, reducing people to stock character types: the stupid cuckold, the venal woman, and the lecherous clerk. Sometimes, as in an *exemplum* or fable, there is a moral, usually a satirical spoof of the character and his or her “sins.” Essentially, however, the whole point of the form is amorality. The *fabliau* expresses the non-official culture of carnal, almost carnival, irreverence, of those feelings suppressed by courtly politeness or religious asceticism.

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## THE CANTERBURY TALES

**A CROSS-SECTION OF FOURTEENTH-CENTURY CHARACTER TYPES.** Begun about the late 1380s and still incomplete at Chaucer's death in 1400, the *Canterbury Tales* comprise the most famous story collection in medieval literature. Like the journey to escape the ravages of the plague in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the frame that holds together this collection of tales is the purportedly random meeting of 29 individuals at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, southeast of the city of London. The common goal of this group of "sundry folk" is to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury. In some ways, this pilgrim group presents a cross-section of late fourteenth-century English people and professions. At the top of the social hierarchy are an aristocratic knight and his entourage (his squire son and their attending yeoman). Also represented are various strata of the clerical class (an Oxford clerk and a lawyer) and assorted clergy and male and female religious persons (several nuns, a parson, a summoner, a friar, a monk, and a pardoner). Chaucer makes sure to also include representatives of the mercantile class from which he himself originated (a franklin, a merchant, some guildsmen, and a cloth-weaving female entrepreneur from Bath). In a parallel to Langland's agricultural laborers and his title character Piers Plowman, Chaucer went on to include members of the agricultural peasantry (a plowman, a miller, and a reeve), though how they could have afforded the time or the funds to travel on a pilgrimage is left to the reader to wonder about. Chaucer's treatment of the portraits of the pilgrims in

the General Prologue to the *Tales* features stock character types from the tradition of medieval estates satire, which assigned recognizably stereotypical traits and appearances to certain professions. To these expected stereotypes, Chaucer added individualizing personal touches, like the hairy wart on the Miller's nose, or the brooch proclaiming "Love conquers all" dangling from the Prioress's rosary, or the gold "love knot" that fastens the Monk's cloak. These details ultimately render the pilgrims vividly realized individuals rather than types.

**THE STORYTELLING CONTEST.** These pilgrims are gathered together in a common enterprise by the inn's host, Harry Bailly, who proposes a story-telling contest as a pastime to allay the tedium of days of travel on horseback. The promised prize is a free dinner (to be paid for by all the losers) at Harry's inn on the return trip. The winning tale must successfully combine moral instruction and amusement (*sentence* and *solas*). Harry, the self-appointed judge of the contest, rigs the game so that the first contestant, appropriately, is the Knight, the highest-ranking member of the entourage. This aristocrat tells a long, highly philosophical, Boethian-influenced tale about ancient Greek and Theban characters, based on Boccaccio's *Teseide* (Story of Theseus). Although Chaucer did not complete the *Canterbury Tales* (of the contracted two tales per each of the 29 pilgrims going to and returning from Canterbury, Chaucer did not even finish one set of tales apiece), what he did create is a sampler of the various literary genres popular at the time: an Arthurian romance by the Wife of Bath; a Breton lay by the Franklin; *fabliaux* told by the Miller, Reeve, Cook, and Shipman; *exempla* and moral fables offered by the Pardoner and Manciple; hagiographic romances narrated by the Man of Law and the Clerk; an allegory and a metrical romance volunteered by the pilgrim narrator; saints' lives told by the Prioress, Second Nun, and Physician; a beast fable offered by the Nun's Priest; and a treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins and remedial virtues by the Parson, which concludes the journey on the proper penitential note. This catalogue of genres gives little indication of how freely Chaucer intermixed elements of the various literary forms available to him to create new hybrid categories such as: *exempla* with *fabliau* elements by the Summoner and the Friar; a mixed romance-*fabliau* by the Merchant; and a mixed romance-epic by the Knight.

**THE PILGRIMS' CONTESTIVE SPIRIT.** Beyond the astonishing variety of the tales told by the pilgrims, what sets the *Canterbury Tales* apart from other story collections, such as those by Boccaccio and John Gower, is the dramatic interplay between the tellers, who often

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***OPENING LINES OF CHAUCER'S GENERAL PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES**

**INTRODUCTION:** The General Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* serves to establish the genre and tone of the collection of stories that follows in much the same way that the opening shot of a movie gives a viewer information about the setting, time period, and mood of a film (comedy? tragedy? historical? modern day?). In this case, however, the message is quite complex, since the "high style" suggests a tone of seriousness, the references to astrological dating give it a sense of a universal or cosmic import, and the descriptions of birds and plants would seem to be leading towards a work focusing on love. At the same time, the passage is configured as one convoluted and extended sentence with a surprising climax about the travel plans of what turn out to be a group of rather ordinary, everyday people who represent almost all of the levels of society in England. This contemporary focus points towards a new kind of literature that addresses social questions and depicts a multitude of occupations—often bourgeois in character—quite out of keeping with the elevated or epic style. All in all, then, these opening lines (modernized from the original Middle English) let the audience know that their expectations are not likely always to be met.

When April with his sweet showers  
Has pierced to the root the drought of March,  
And bathed every plant's system in such liquor [liquid]

(By which virtue the flower is engendered);  
When Zephirus [god of the winds], with his sweet breath,  
Has blown life, in every wood and meadow,  
Into the tender plant shoots, and the young sun  
Has run halfway through his course in the sign of Aries;  
And small birds are making melody,  
That sleep all night with open eyes  
(Nature so excites them in their aroused spirits):  
Then people long to go on pilgrimages,  
And palmers [pilgrims to Jerusalem] want to seek out  
foreign shores,  
And faraway shrines, known in sundry lands;  
And especially, from the borders of every area in England,  
They go to Canterbury,  
To seek the holy blissful martyr [Thomas Becket],  
Who had helped to cure them when they were sick.  
It befell in that season one particular day,  
That in Southwerk, I stayed at the Tabard Inn,  
Ready to go on my pilgrimage  
To Canterbury with completely devout heart;  
That night there came into that hostelry,  
A company of twenty-nine people,  
Sundry folk, fallen together by chance  
In fellowship; and they were all pilgrims  
Riding toward Canterbury. ...

**SOURCE:** Geoffrey Chaucer, "General Prologue," *Canterbury Tales*. Text modernized by Lorraine K. Stock.

seem to be taking the contestive spirit of Harry Bailly's "game" a bit more personally than he had planned. Some pilgrims, like the Miller and Reeve, or the Summoner and Friar, tell thinly disguised tales about their antagonists. Others, like the Clerk, Wife of Bath, Merchant, and Franklin, seem to be playing their stories against the previous one in what amounts to a symposium on power relations between husbands and wives in medieval marriages. Many of the pilgrim narrators are also far more richly characterized than their counterparts in other collections. Most readers easily forget that the Wife of Bath is merely a collection of words on parchment. She seems to burst forth as a three-dimensional figure from off Chaucer's pages, divulging in her Prologue to her tale, which is much longer than the tale itself, many autobiographical details about her married life (since the age of twelve) with five different husbands. In some of her defenses of women, she anticipates Christine de Pizan's championing of womankind and even the arguments of twentieth-century feminists. Thus, the Prologues also often serve as "confessional" literature, revealing the personal and professional secrets of the tellers. The

Pardoner's Prologue reveals the teller's duplicity, hypocrisy, and greed, which ironically, is the very vice that his moral *exemplum* about trying to kill Death condemns.

**CHAUCER'S PILGRIM NARRATOR.** What also sets this collection apart from others of the period is the complex narrative voice of the pilgrim persona who may or may not be Geoffrey Chaucer. No mere omniscient voice-over, this narrator-character is at times a player in the contest, at other times a disinterested reporter of the appearance and actions of the pilgrims (he claims he is describing the 29 people "as they seemed to me"). However, his seemingly innocent comments, interjected in the otherwise objective reports of the pilgrims' clothing, physiognomy, and behavior, speak volumes about the inner character of his subjects. For example, in describing the Man of Law's busy-ness, the narrator slyly and revealingly interjects, "And yet he *seemed* busier than he was." Like some of Chaucer's earlier narrators in the dream visions or *Troilus and Criseyde*, this narrator is remarkably complex and a character in his own right in the literary work.

**THE GENERAL PROLOGUE'S OPENING.** This narrator also opens the work with probably some of the most wonderfully poetic and famous lines of verse in the English language. Chaucer's evocation of the re-greening of nature in April—the time of year when the seasonal rains and Zephyrus's winds encourage the reseeded and germinating of verdure and flowers, when birds sing love songs “pricked” by nature in their libidos—replicates the “spring opening” tropes of many of the love songs of medieval lyric poetry and the *reverdies* topos. The opening lines comprise one nineteen-line-long compound-complex sentence describing a series of causes and their single effect. Whereas the tradition of love poetry that preceded Chaucer would have prepared his audience—when they heard or read about breezes, April showers, May flowers, and birdsong—to expect that the succeeding text would in some way involve love, Chaucer stuns his audience with an unexpected effect of all these causes: he claims, *then* folk long to go on pilgrimages; especially in England, they long to go on pilgrimage to Canterbury to venerate the holy blissful martyr, Thomas Becket. In addition to being some of the most evocative nature poetry in English, these lines play a joke on the audience, who learn early on that Geoffrey Chaucer is always full of surprises.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: Pilgrimage Architecture; Fashion: Academic, Clerical, and Religious Dress; Religion: Relics, Pilgrimages, and the Peace of God; Visual Arts: The Cult of Saints and The Rise of Pilgrimage*

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#### CHRISTINE DE PIZAN

**MEDIEVAL FEMALE WRITERS.** Generally, female children in the Middle Ages were not educated as well as their male brothers were. That is not to say that all women were illiterate, but it was fairly uncommon for

women to write literary texts. To be sure, there were prominent exceptions throughout the 600 years of the period, and literary works to which no certain authorship can be ascribed and which seem to voice the female perspective may have been composed by women. In the corpus of Anglo-Saxon lyric poetry is an anonymous first-person narrated poem, “The Wife’s Lament,” that explores the sadness of a woman who is separated from her husband. It is ultimately impossible to know whether an actual woman wrote it. In twelfth-century France, Marie de France composed her *Fables* and Breton *lais* (lays), apparently enjoying some degree of fame in the English court, though little is known of her actual career. In the same century, a woman named Heloise (1098–1164) had a notorious affair, and later a secret marriage, with Peter Abelard (1079–1142), a prominent and brilliant theologian at the University of Paris. After they parted and she became the abbess of a convent of nuns, Heloise wrote a series of illuminating *Letters* to Abelard, which express her emotional feelings for her former lover as well as detail the running of the convent. But these letters are not what is usually thought of as “literature.” The female troubadour poets in the south of France, known as the *trobairitz*, did create lyric poems, but they were amateurs, not professional writers. Also in that century in Germany, Abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) wrote prolific letters to various ecclesiasts, as well as treatises on medicine and gemstones, accounts of her visions, the *Scivias* (Ways of Knowing), and many hymns, though these works were intended for the education of other nuns rather than for a larger public. Female visionaries and mystics in late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England, such as Dame Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, left records of their visions, respectively in Julian’s *Showings* and Margery’s *Book* of memoirs about her marriage, her travels on many pilgrimages, and her visions of a bleeding Christ while on pilgrimage in Jerusalem. However, both these works were dictated to male scribes and we cannot be sure to what extent the resulting text reflects the sensibility of their female “authors.” The only female writer to which none of these qualifications applies is a prolific author of the late Middle Ages, Christine de Pizan.

#### EUROPE'S FIRST PROFESSIONAL FEMALE WRITER.

Christine de Pizan (1364–c. 1431) was the first “professional” female writer in Europe. As she admits in her allegorical autobiography *The Book of Fortune’s Mutation* (1403), unfortunate circumstances in her life forced her metaphorically to “become a man” in order to achieve such a rare distinction. Christine was widowed young and left with three small children and other family

members for whom she had to provide. Rather than remarry or enter a convent as most women in her position might do, Christine instead supported herself by writing various popular literary forms such as collections of love lyrics, love debates, devotional texts, female conduct books, and *pastourelles* for aristocratic patrons. Like another unusual female writer three centuries earlier, Abbess Hildegard of Bingen, Christine was both prolific and multifaceted, mastering a dazzling variety of genres in both verse and prose, as well as involving herself not only in the composing, but also in the production and illustration of manuscripts of her works. She began her career at the court of Charles V of France, whose biography, *The Book of the Deeds and Good Conduct of the Wise King Charles V* (1404), she was later commissioned to write. The extraordinary range of her literary output includes examples of genres unexpected from a woman: a military treatise, *The Book of the Deeds of Arms and Chivalry* (1410); a political treatise, *The Book of the Body Politic* (1404–1407), a guide for the behavior of princes, knights, and lesser subjects; and a mythographic work in epistolary form, *The Letter of Othea* (1400), in which the

goddess of wisdom in the title teaches moral lessons to the Trojan prince Hector by using stories from mythology. Just as the twelfth-century female writer Marie de France wrote Ovidian-inspired fables and Breton lays, in *Othea* Christine reveals her knowledge of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, one of medieval Europe's greatest literary authorities.

**CHRISTINE'S ALLEGORICAL WRITINGS.** Although she demonstrated skill at nearly all major medieval literary genres, Christine is best known for her allegorical works, which often incorporate autobiographical and political sentiments into the allegory, such as *The Path of Long Study* (1402–1403) and *The Book of Fortune's Mutation* (1403). Of special interest is *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1404–1405), for which she has become noteworthy as an early champion of women. In this allegory, Christine echoes the sentiments of Chaucer's Wife of Bath that female characters have suffered terrible treatment in the writings of male authors, and women would be depicted more positively if female writers had the opportunity to tell their stories. As in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, or Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Christine is visited in a vision by three allegorical female personifications—Reason, Rectitude, and Justice—who instruct her to create a new literary tradition about women by “constructing” a metaphorical “city” of ladies. In reality, this new tradition is really a story collection in the mode of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, or John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*—each building block/story of which narrates the achievements of a praiseworthy, virtuous woman. In creating *City of Ladies*, Christine was responding (as was Chaucer's Wife of Bath) to misogynist collections of tales such as Boccaccio's *Concerning Famous Women*, whose female exemplars were more infamous than famous and more notorious than virtuous. Christine includes in her literary “City” women who excelled in secular fields (painting, poetry, science, farming, military arts) as well as saints. Christine continued to promote the interests of women until her death. The last poem attributed to her was *The Tale of Joan of Arc* (1429), one of the only contemporary literary treatments of the purportedly visionary female warrior who led French troops against the English in the Hundred Years' War. If Christine had lived to revise her text, Joan of Arc surely would have earned a place alongside other Amazon warriors such as Penthesilea in the *City of Ladies*.

**CHRISTINE AND THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE.** Christine also demonstrated her advocacy of the female voice by participating in a heated literary debate that took place in 1401–1402. Both as a writer of visions,





Christine de Pizan presents her book to Queen Isabel of France in a bedroom of the Royal Palace, Paris. London, British Library MS Harley 4431 folio 3, late 15th century. © HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

such as the autobiographical *Vision of Christine* (1405), and as a literary critic, Christine figured importantly in the development of real-life female characters (not mere personifications) in the dream vision genre. In the “Quarrel over the Rose,” Christine sided with the theologian Jean Gerson against other male intellectuals such as Pierre and Gontier Col and Jean de Montreuil over the value of perhaps the most famous and widely read allegorical poem and dream vision of the medieval period, the *Romance of the Rose*. Christine strongly criticized *Rose*, especially the continuation by Jean de Meun, for its antifeminist sentiments. Having collected the letters and arguments of the major antagonists in the quarrel, she presented them to Queen Isabeau, wife of Charles VI. Her very public profile as a professional writer and controversialist prepared the way for literary women who would begin writing in the Renaissance, at

the same time that her literary range rivaled that of the great male writers of medieval Europe—Chaucer, Boccaccio, and Dante.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Literature*

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### GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

1313–1375

*Author*

**AN EDUCATION IN ARISTOCRATIC VALUES.** Giovanni Boccaccio was perhaps the greatest realistic story teller of the later Middle Ages and along with Chaucer did much to develop a vernacular literature of wit, sharp psychological observation, and tolerance for human foibles. He was born the illegitimate child of a merchant of Naples but was later legitimized. His father, a banker, gave him a good education and allowed him to follow a literary career. He claimed that his mother was French, though this, like other supposed “facts” in his biographical comments, may be pure self-construction. Another key element in his life, his love for a certain Fiammetta, may also have been somewhat fictionalized. Boccaccio went to work in Naples in his father’s counting house, but he soon left to study canon law at the University of Naples about 1331. All told, he spent some thirteen years in Naples, reading in the Royal Library, learning the life of the court and of the mercantile classes. Thus, books, business, and aristocratic love would all come to be later subjects of his work. It was also in Naples that he started to read Dante.

**LIFE IN MERCANTILE FLORENCE.** The second phase of Boccaccio’s life was in a totally different environment, in the mercantile city-state of Florence, where the nobility were forbidden to hold public office. Here money and political shrewdness were elevated above the virtues he had learned at Naples. In 1340 he became secretary to important Florentines, making a living serving the commune as a roving ambassador or as an emissary to the papal court at Avignon (in 1354 and again in 1365). It was in Florence that he became friendly with the famous poet Francesco Petrarch in about 1350, who helped him with his Latin. He also later learned Greek, though with difficulty. Thus Boccaccio was a man of two worlds: one of the Neapolitan culture of lords and vassals, watching tournaments and pageantry, and reading about aristocratic values and refined love; the other

of Florentine mercantilism, in a city dominated by a class struggle for political and social power, where money and opportunism were prized above all things.

**WRITING IN THE CLASSICAL STYLE.** Boccaccio’s early experiences were reflected in poems with mythological titles and classical subjects, like *Diana’s Hunt* (1334), the *Filostrato* (about the Troy legend, 1335), and the *Teseida* (c. 1340), about the Theban story of Theseus and the war against the Amazons. In all of these courtly love works, love rules all and knows no law. In his middle period there is evidence of his Florentine learning in works that still use classical materials and feature the power of love, but now more in an allegorical than a narrative mode. By the 1350s, Boccaccio turned from vernacular narrative poetry to Latin learned prose works, such as the *Praise of Famous Women*, *On the Fall of Famous Men*, and the *Genealogies of the Pagan Gods*, the last reflecting his newly acquired skill in classical Greek.

**THE DECAMERON.** In 1351, however, Boccaccio turned directly to the contemporary Florentine world with the *Decameron*, a work that has proven to have an enduring influence. In this collection of stories, ten young people—seven women and three men, all rich and cultivated—meet at the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence and plan to escape the plague decimating the city by going to a country house, where they will pass time by telling 100 tales—ten from each person. Based on Eastern story collections, classical sources, fables, Florentine gossip, and personal observation, these stories mark a shift from the world of refined erotic fancy illustrated in Boccaccio’s earlier writings to the land of things as they are, where calculation displaces illusion. The majority of the characters are middle class, including merchants or wives of merchants, peasants, laborers, and artisans. While Dante believed that only people of prominence could serve a didactic purpose, Boccaccio used people from every walk of life, including a larger proportion of female characters—and of women in important roles—than any other writer of his period. In contrast to earlier works like the *Song of Roland*, the *Decameron* represents a recognition of the triumph of wit over prowess in a world where values were less absolute and increasingly more relativistic.

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**GEOFFREY CHAUCER**

c. 1340–1400

*Poet**Court administrator*

**A LIFE AT COURT.** Geoffrey Chaucer, arguably the greatest English writer before Shakespeare, was born in London in the early 1340s to a merchant family; the family name suggests the shoe trade, though there is some record of their having been wine merchants. He quickly made his way in the world, apparently acquiring some legal training at the Inns of Court, and by 1357 was in royal service. His wife, Philippa, was an attendant to the queen, and her sister, Katherine Swynford, was the mistress and later wife of John of Gaunt, one of the king's sons. Both through family connections and, most importantly, through his own abilities as an administrator, Chaucer quickly made his way in the royal household and traveled abroad on the king's business several times, holding the posts of controller of the customs and clerk of the king's works. It is chiefly through these positions and various grants and gifts in payment for his services that Chaucer's life is documented; there is no independent record of his activities as a poet. It is clear, however, that during his early years in royal service, Chaucer was reading deeply in French courtly poetry by such poets as Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart (about 1368–1375), on whom he relied heavily in composing his own early works in dream narrative form. He also read Italian literature by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, the last of whom he resembles in using a framing narrative of tales told by a group of travelers.

**THE CANTERBURY TALES.** Judging from some of the story lines he sketched out in the 1370s and 1380s, Chaucer was already meditating the *Canterbury Tales*, his best known work, in which a variety of different stories, exemplifying a wide range of literary genres, are told by pilgrim travelers on their way to Canterbury to visit the shrine of Thomas Becket. Each pilgrim—including Chaucer, who pretends to be a pilgrim also—is supposed to tell two tales going to the cathedral and two coming back again, though this plan is interrupted. While Boccaccio had introduced the idea of using non-aristocratic characters in the tales told by his wealthy young Florentines, Chaucer goes a step further by including people from all walks of life among the pilgrim story-tellers themselves, ranging from a knight and his son to a physician, a lawyer, several nuns, a monk, a lower-middle-class widow, a miller, a sailor, and even a plowman. The work as a whole seems to have been put together about 1385 to 1395, but it was never actually finished. The different manuscripts reflect differing arrangements of the parts.

**RANGE AND INFLUENCE.** Chaucer's other greatest work was *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1380), a poem of some 8,000 lines in an elevated style, which relies on Boccaccio's *Filostrato* for its classical plot. Chaucer tells the story of how Criseyde, a widow in the besieged city of Troy, is loved by and then loves Troilus, but then gives him up to try to save herself through another man, Diomedes. In a wonderful mix of comic and tragic, aristocratic and bourgeois, this poem, though set in ancient Troy, reflects the changing world of late fourteenth-century England. In addition to other poems of his own, Chaucer did many translations of classic medieval works such as the *Romance of the Rose* and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, as well as a group of lyric poems. His use of English, rather than French, for courtly poetry is sometimes credited with helping to bring the dialect of London into prominence as the standard for all speakers of English.

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**CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES**

c. 1130–1190

*Poet*

**A WRITER OF ROMANCE.** Chrétien de Troyes is the best known of the writers of Arthurian quest romances, especially those telling the love story of Lancelot and Queen Guinevere. He is one of the few early medieval authors whose name has independent corroboration. Nothing is known of his early life and connections, except that he mentions that Marie de Champagne, daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, was a patron who provided him with elements of the story of Lancelot and the Cart, and that the count of Flanders, Philippe d'Alsace, provided him with the narrative elements of his Grail story.

Chrétien was a popular author in his own time and after, with anywhere from seven manuscripts of his shorter romances to fifteen of his Grail story surviving, an unusually high number for a secular author.

**ARTHURIAN AND ANTIQUE SUBJECTS.** Chrétien's works include *Erec et Eneide*; possibly the "antique" *Philomena* from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and some adaptations of Ovid's two treatises on love; *Cligès*, a romance with an Eastern or Byzantine theme; *Lancelot, Yvain* or the *Knight of the Lion*, and *Perceval* or the *Conte de Graal*. A work sometimes attributed to him was a saint's life called *Guillaume d'Angleterre*. As medieval romances go, most of Chrétien's works are relatively short at about 7,000 lines (the *Graal* is about 10,000 lines) and though episodic, have more shape than many examples of the genre. Chrétien's poems were adapted or translated by writers of later romances and serve as the genesis of the Arthurian romance down through its final phase in the work of the Englishman Sir Thomas Malory.

**CHIVALRIC VIRTUES.** Chrétien is one of the first medieval "self-conscious" authors, writing prologues for his romances in which he comments on his works in the style that is later associated with Dante's *Vita Nuova*. He often enters into the narratives, remarking on characters and actions as well, and even speaks of the structural elements of romance. His poems explore chivalric values, "mésure" (measure or balance in human behavior), and the inevitable conflict between love and the quest for *los* or *pris* (chivalric reputation). This is especially evident in the Arthurian romance *Yvain or the Knight of the Lion*, built on the motif of the "rash vow." Yvain kills Esclados the Red, the husband of Laudine de Landuc, in combat by a mysterious spring in the forest. Falling in love with the new widow, he wins her hand and marries her. But his companion Gawain persuades him to leave his new bride and go in search of adventure at tournaments. He vows to his wife he will return in one year but fails, and she repudiates him. He then goes mad in the forest, where he meets a helpful lion. Eventually, he wins Laudine back, but the poem points up well the difficulties and conflicts between domesticity with a beloved and the attractions of knight errantry.

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## DANTE ALIGHIERI

1265–1321

Poet

**EARLY LIFE IN FLORENCE.** Dante Alighieri was born in Florence, a great commercial and banking center strategically located on a trade route between the Mediterranean and northern Europe. In Dante's lifetime the city was much involved in the controversy over the relative power of the pope and the Holy Roman Emperors. His father was perhaps a judge and a notary public, a lender of money and speculator in land. At this period the republic of Florence was split into two political factions, the Guelphs (supporters of the papacy) and Ghibbelines (supporters of the emperor), and the Alighieri family, as Guelphs, may have suffered exile at various times when their faction was out of power. Dante married Gemma di Manetto in 1283 and had with her three children, though when he himself was exiled from Florence (in 1301/02), he left without his family. At the age of nine, so the poet says, he had fallen in love with Beatrice Portinari, who served him as a muse. She died in 1290, and he memorialized her in his cycle of poems and prose commentaries *La Vita Nuova*, finished in 1295.

**POLITICAL STRIFE.** The political life of Florence was dominated by various guilds of artisans and merchants, and only through guild membership could one hold public office; thus, Dante joined the guild of physicians and apothecaries, though it is doubtful that he had any interest in these professions. From about 1295 through 1301 Dante held various public offices and served as an ambassador or emissary, but further political factionalisms were developing between two groups within the Guelph party, the "Whites" and the "Blacks." The latter of these two factions supported Pope Boniface VIII and Charles of Valois, while the whites, the faction Dante was allied with, were much opposed to both of these figures. While Dante was on an embassy to Rome, Pope Boniface VIII and Charles of Valois gained political control of Florence. Charles' forces killed or exiled the Whites, and Dante himself was banished in 1301/1302 for alleged financial misbehavior and for opposition to the political and ecclesiastical power. A second banishment on pain of death was pronounced in 1302. Dante wandered through Italy from 1302 ("eating another man's bread and climbing another man's stair," as he described it) until his death in 1321. Though he broke off his allegiance to the white party and indeed to politics altogether, he never returned to Florence, attaining instead some measure of security and fame in Ravenna.

**LEARNED AND LITERARY WORKS.** Dante wrote both in Latin and Italian and was the first poet to use the Italian language for a lengthy literary work in the high style, allowing it to compete in prestige with Greek and Latin. His Latin works, which demonstrate the range of his interests and knowledge, included *De Vulgari eloquentia* on the use of Italian as a literary language; *De Monarchia*, on temporal kingship and its relations to papal power; some letters and eclogues; and a scholastic scientific treatise *Questio de aqua et terra* on the levels of land and water on the surface of the earth. He is best known, however, for his Italian works. *La Vita Nuova* is a collection of lyric poems about Beatrice (centering on her death), interspersed with prose commentaries that develop a narrative and explain the poems. He also wrote other lyric poems, called *canzoni*, and a work called *Convivio* or *The Banquet*, a prose commentary on some of his *canzoni*. His three-part masterpiece *The Divine Comedy* appeared in 1314 (for the first part, *Inferno*), 1315 (for the *Purgatorio*), and 1320 (for the last part, the *Paradiso*). This monumental work combines in its three parts a number of important genres: the dream vision allegory of poems like *The Romance of the Rose*; the voyage to the other world, such as *Saint Patrick's Purgatory*; and the medieval encyclopedia, with its attempt to incorporate all human knowledge in a single book. It also made use of Dante's intimate knowledge of the political and social history of Florence, many of whose citizens Dante's narrator encounters on his journey from hell to heaven. A heavy reliance on trinitarian number symbolism, even down to the *terza rima* or three-rime verse structure, is another fascinating feature of the poem. Dante looks to the classical tradition of the *Aeneid* in his use of that work's author, Vergil, as a guide through hell in the first part of his imaginative journey. In the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* the poet examines human political and spiritual life, while in the *Paradiso* he considers the mystical union of the soul with the Divine in a beatific vision of God, the saints (including Beatrice), and the heavens.

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## MARIE DE FRANCE

Mid-twelfth century–Early thirteenth century

Poet

**AN ANGLO-NORMAN FEMALE POET.** The poet known as Marie de France, who apparently wrote between 1160 and 1210, is unusual both for being the earliest known woman writer in French and for the fact that she identifies herself by name. In the epilogue to her *Fables* (a collection of 102 moralized stories about animals in the tradition of Aesop), she states that she is giving her name because she wishes to be remembered, and then she says, "Marie is my name" ("Marie ai num"), adding the final comment "and I am from France" ("si sui de France"). This last phrase has been taken to mean that she had settled in Britain, where the court spoke Anglo-Norman French, since it would be unnecessary for her to indicate that she was from France unless she was living elsewhere. She had perhaps come to England because of marriage or because she wished somehow to further her literary career, and her list of literary patrons and dedications (including one to the "noble king") suggests that she was well connected. Nonetheless, attempts to identify her with any known person have failed. She is believed to have written three surviving works, most likely composed in the following order: the *Lais*, the *Fables*, and the *Espurgatoire saint Patrice* (St. Patrick's Purgatory), a 2,300-line translation of the story of a knight's descent into the Underworld. Of these, her masterpiece is considered to be the *Lais*, a collection of twelve short story-poems based on traditional Breton tales but involving sophisticated crises in love relationships that allow her to explore both contemporary ideas of refined love (so-called "courtly love") and the social complexity of the lives of her often resourceful female characters.

**EDUCATION AND BACKGROUND.** What is known of Marie's life comes in part from the testimony of Denis Piramus, who, around 1180, mentions her in an Anglo-Norman poem called *The Life of King Edmund*, where he indicates that she is admired in the English court. She was obviously an educated lady of good background who knew Latin well enough to translate the *Purgatory* from Latin to French, perhaps an indication that she had been trained in a convent. References in her texts show that she was also familiar with several of the most popular French and Anglo-Norman works of her day, including Wace's *Brut* (1155) and the *Roman d'Enéas* (1160), but not the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, who wrote between 1165 and 1191.

**FABLES AND LAYS.** In modern times, until the later eighteenth century, Marie was known only for her fables,

which had been so popular in their day that they can still be found, in whole or in part, in 23 extant manuscripts. In these entertaining moral poems, she reveals a generally aristocratic point of view, with a concern for justice, a sense of outrage against the mistreatment of the poor, and a respect for the social hierarchy, which must be maintained for the sake of harmony. It is to the *Lais*, however, that Denis Piramus was referring when he said that Marie's poetry had garnered great praise and that both lords and ladies loved to have it read out loud again and again. It is important to understand that even though she drew on the "authority" of the Breton source and retained Breton words like "Laüistic" (nightingale) and "Bisclavret" (werewolf), she was not merely writing down a story she had heard, but rather was composing a carefully crafted poem in rhymed octosyllables where the broad outlines of each tale were reshaped to allow her to create individualized heroes and heroines who must deal with the difficulties of enforced separations, love triangles, and even magical transformations. Events in the lays lead to fundamental changes in the lives of the protagonists, in contrast to the slower pattern of development and fulfillment characteristic of romances. Although the *lais* survive in only five manuscripts, their influence established Marie as the initiator of a narrative genre that lasted into the late fourteenth century.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Literature*

Andreas Capellanus, *Art of Courtly Love* (1185)—Written under the patronage of Marie of Champagne, this treatise on conducting relationships according to the rules of *fn'amors* influenced the depiction of love in medieval romances and lyric poetry.

*Beowulf* (c. 1000)—The earliest extensive literary work produced in England, this alliterative heroic narrative poem in Old English (Anglo-Saxon) tells the story of a hero with super-human strength who slays the monster Grendel and the monster's vengeful mother, and then, many years later, is killed in a confrontation with a fire-breathing dragon. The poem demonstrates the tribal heroic code of thanes and lords, and illustrates oral-formulaic style.

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (c. 1351)—This Italian-language collection of "One Hundred Stories" uses a frame tale about ten young people fleeing the plague in Florence to take refuge in a country house where they tell stories illustrating a wide range of medieval genres and themes.

*Chanson de Roland* (c. 1101)—The most famous example of the French *chanson de geste*, this heroic poem, based on an historical episode in 778, recounts the defense of a pass in the Pyrenees Mountains by a small French rear-guard against the overwhelming Saracen forces. It portrays the tragic downfall of a hero who fails to maintain a balance between physical courage and good judgment.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1380s–1400)—In this most famous story collection in medieval literature, the descriptions and interactions of 29 pilgrim storytellers on their way to Canterbury presents a cross-section of late fourteenth-century English people and professions, while their stories offer a sampling of almost every available prose and verse genre, made new and original by the overall work's complex and often ironic tone.

Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain* (c. 1170–1185)—This French-language poem by the "father of Arthurian romance" tells the story of a knight who goes off on an adventure with Gawain and suffers severe consequences when he fails to keep his promise (a rash vow) to return to his new wife within one year. This poem is one of several long verse narratives in which Chrétien expands the story of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table into complex psychological and moral studies.

Christine de Pizan, *City of Ladies* (1404–1405)—In this dream vision, Christine, the first professional woman writer in medieval Europe, is visited in a vision by three allegorical female personifications—Reason, Rectitude, and Justice—who instruct her to create a new literary tradition about women by "constructing" a metaphorical "city" of ladies, a story collection in which each building block/story narrates the achievements of a praiseworthy, virtuous woman.

Dante, *The Divine Comedy* (c. 1314–1321)—This epic allegory in three parts, written in Italian, relates a visionary

pilgrimage to *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Heaven), through which the narrator is guided first by the classical Latin author Vergil and then by his muse Beatrice. Most famous for its portrayal of the punishment of sins in the descending circles of the Inferno, the work combines a realistic treatment of contemporary Florentine politics with a spiritual voyage and the experience of reunion with God.

John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* (Confession of the Lover; 1390–1393)—Containing over 30,000 lines of narrative verse, this collection of biblical, classical, legendary and popular narratives is recounted by Genius, priest of Venus, to whom *Amans*, an elderly lover, confesses the various sins committed against love in seven books of stories organized according to the Seven Deadly Sins, with one book assigned to each mortal sin.

Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose* (1275)—This 18,000-line continuation of Guillaume de Lorris's allegorical love

poem about a dreamer's quest for a rose adopts a satirical tone and incorporates the rediscovery of Aristotelian and Platonic texts that had occurred in the twelfth century.

Marie de France, *Lais* (c. 1160–1180)—This collection of twelve short verse narratives by medieval Europe's first identifiable female writer (probably a native of France living in England) transforms stories from Celtic oral sources into formal Anglo-French courtly poetry. Marie's sparely written narratives feature settings in the magical Celtic Other World, rash promises, erotic entanglements between humans and fairies, and an ambivalent code of ethics.

Juan Ruiz, *The Book of Good Love* (1350)—This Spanish story collection presents a meandering, episodic series of accounts of the narrator's fourteen attempted (and sporadically successful) adventures in love, incorporating many literary genres and a wide spectrum of tones.

# chapter five

## MUSIC

Timothy J. McGee

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	212	Walther von der Vogelweide . . . . .	254
OVERVIEW . . . . .	214	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	255
TOPICS		SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY	
Musical Performance . . . . .	215	DOCUMENTS	
Music in Private and Public . . . . .	218	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
Musical Instruments . . . . .	219	Medieval Musical Terms . . . . .	216
Plainsong and the Monophonic Tradition . . . . .	223	<i>Instruments at a Minstrel Performance</i>	
Additions to the Sacred Repertory . . . . .	226	(excerpt from <i>Remede de Fortune</i> naming	
The Monophonic Secular Tradition . . . . .	228	several musical instruments) . . . . .	219
Religious Music of the Layman . . . . .	232	Music Sources for Medieval Instrumental	
The Earliest Polyphonic Music . . . . .	234	Performance . . . . .	223
Motets and Canons . . . . .	235	<i>Singing of Psalms</i> (application of a musical	
Polyphonic Secular Music and National Styles . . . . .	238	formula to Psalm 125, “In convertendo	
Dufay and the Late Medieval Ceremonial		Dominus”). . . . .	224
Motet . . . . .	242	<i>An Example of a Responsory</i> (example of this	
Guillaume de Machaut’s <i>Messe de Nostre</i>		elaborate chant form) . . . . .	225
Dame . . . . .	243	<i>Lines from a Sacred Play</i> (excerpt from one	
The Cyclic Mass Tradition: <i>Missa Caput</i> . . . . .	244	version of the sacred play reenacting	
<i>Missa Se la face ay pale</i> . . . . .	245	Christ’s Resurrection) . . . . .	227
The Mechanics of Music: Scales and		<i>An Easter Introit</i> (example of an antiphon	
Treatises . . . . .	245	with trope lines) . . . . .	228
Systems of Notation . . . . .	249	<i>A Troubadour Song</i> (music and lyrics for	
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		“Lancan vei la folha”) . . . . .	230
Adam de la Halle . . . . .	251	<i>A Cantiga to the Virgin Mary</i> (a song from	
Bernart de Ventadorn . . . . .	251	the Spanish collection known as the	
Guillaume Dufay . . . . .	251	Songs of Holy Mary). . . . .	233
Guido of Arezzo . . . . .	252	<i>A Musical Puzzle</i> (an example of a puzzle	
Hildegard of Bingen . . . . .	252	canon in “Agnus dei” from <i>Missa</i>	
Francesco Landini . . . . .	252	<i>L’Homme armé</i> ) . . . . .	236
Guillaume de Machaut . . . . .	253	Structure of Medieval Song Forms . . . . .	240
Notker Balbulus . . . . .	253	<i>An Example of Musical Borrowing</i> (a secular	
Pietrobono de Burzellis . . . . .	254	song provides the basis for a mass) . . . . .	246
Philippe de Vitry . . . . .	254	Medieval Modes . . . . .	248



## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Music*

- 600 St. Gregory the Great, pope from 590 to 604, begins to establish a standardized Christian liturgy, including the plainchant melodies (“Gregorian Chant”).
- Pope Gregory establishes the papal choir school (Schola Cantorum), which continues to the present day in Rome.
- 800 Charlemagne, king of the Franks and emperor of the Romans, continues the process, begun by Pope Gregory I, of regularizing the plainchant repertory.
- c. 814 Following earlier suggestions by Emperor Charlemagne, the clergy begin to dramatize some of the important stories in church history, an effort that eventually results in the first liturgical dramas that reenact, with sung dialog, the visit of the three Marys to the tomb of Christ.
- c. 850 An anonymous author writes *Musica enchiridis* (Music Handbook), a widely circulated treatise on music theory that is one of the earliest attempts to notate music. It includes the first written attempt at polyphony (music in more than one part).
- The earliest manuscripts containing music notation date from this time. The repertory is plainchant, music for the sacred services.
- c. 900 The music treatise *De harmonica institutione* (Melodic Instruction) is written by Hucbald, a monk at the Benedictine abbey (or monastery) of St. Amand in Flanders. It describes the modal scale system in detail and discusses the concept of polyphony.
- 900 Notker Balbulus, a monk at the Abbey of Saint-Gall in Switzerland, writes the *Liber Hymnorum* (Book of Hymns), a book of sequences for the Mass. Notker is the first composer known by name.
- c. 1000 Guido, a Benedictine monk in Arezzo, Italy, invents the scale syllables, the staff, and a way of teaching new music by pointing to the knuckles on his hand.
- c. 1050 The earliest practical examples of polyphonic music are included in the Winchester Troper, a manuscript from Winchester, England.
- 1098 Hildegard of Bingen, a Benedictine nun who founded a convent near Bingen, Germany, is born. She is the earliest known female composer.
- 1100 French and English manuscripts containing the earliest repertory of polyphonic organum begin to appear.
- Troubadours, trouvères, and trobairitz (poet-musicians) in France begin the tradition of composing courtly love songs.
- c. 1135 Master Leonin, a poet and composer at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, is born. He will compose the first comprehensive body of polyphonic music.
- c. 1147 Bernart de Ventadorn, one of the most famous troubadours who worked in France and England, is born.
- c. 1150 Choir masters centered around the Monastery of Saint-Martial in Limoges (central France) begin extensive experiments with composed polyphony.
- c. 1150 Master Perotin, a singer and composer at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, is born. Perotin will add to the repertory begun by Leonin.
- 1170 Walther von der Vogelweide is born. He later becomes the most famous minnesinger (a poet-composer who worked in the courts in Germany and Austria).
- c. 1200 A collection of polyphonic sacred music for the important feasts of the liturgical

year, the *Magnus liber organi*, is compiled. Originating in Paris and circulated throughout Europe, it contains the compositions of Leonin and Perotin.

- c. 1230 The Fleury Play Book (Orléans, Bibliothèque Municipale, Manuscript 201), the largest collection of extended liturgical dramas, appears.

- c. 1250 Motets (polyphonic compositions with different texts for the individual lines) are first created in and around Paris. They become the most important musical form of the late Middle Ages.

The Cantigas de Santa Maria, a collection of more than 400 songs from the court of Alfonso X “el Sabio,” king of Castile, appears.

- 1260 Franco of Cologne writes *Ars cantus mensurabilis* (The Art of Measured Song), a music treatise that assigns specific duration to each of the note shapes, setting the stage for further developments in notation.

- c. 1283 Trouvère Adam de la Halle writes *The Play of Robin and Marion*, a *bergerie* (shepherd poem) set to music.

- c. 1290 *Carmina Burana* (Songs of Benediktbeuern), a large collection of Latin songs from the south German monastery of Benediktbeuern, includes texts on serious religious subjects, love songs, and drinking songs, some of them in German.

- 1316 Gervais de Bus and Chaillou de Pesstain write the *Roman de Fauvel*, a long poem that contains numerous musical compositions including several motets that reflect the new French notation developed by Philippe de Vitry.

- 1318 Music theorist and composer Marchettus of Padua writes *Lucidarium in arte musicae planae* (Explanation of the Art of Unmeasured Music), followed two years

later by *Pomerium artis musicae mensuratae* (Orchard-Garden of the Art of Measured Music), two important treatises dealing with Italian notation and harmonic practices.

- c. 1320 Three important treatises on music—*Ars Nova* (The New Art) once credited to Philippe de Vitry, *Ars Novae Musicae* (The New Musical Art) by Johannes de Muris, and *Speculum Musicae* (Musical Reflection) by Jacques de Liège—deal with new trends in music composition involving refinements in notation.

- 1340 Guillaume de Machaut writes *Remede de Fortune*, a lengthy poem that contains a fanciful list of musical instruments at a festivity.

- 1364 Guillaume de Machaut writes *Messe de Nostre Dame*, one of the first polyphonic settings of six parts of the Mass Ordinary.

- 1420 The largest collection of late medieval English sacred music is gathered in the Old Hall manuscript.

A large collection of late medieval Italian music is gathered together in a beautifully illustrated manuscript known as The Squarcialupi Codex, which was once owned by the famous Florentine organist, Antonio Squarcialupi.

- 1436 Guillaume Dufay writes the motet *Nuper rosarum flores* for the dedication of the cathedral in Florence.

- c. 1440 *Missa Caput*, the earliest complete set (cycle) of Mass Ordinary movements, is composed in England (composer unknown) using the same phrase of chant for the tenor part in each movement.

- 1452 Guillaume Dufay composes *Missa Se la face ay pale* for the Savoy court. This is one of the earliest polyphonic mass settings to employ a secular theme as the central point of organization.

## OVERVIEW *of Music*

**THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC.** Music was a very important part of sacred and secular daily life in the Middle Ages. It was a major component of all religious services in which prayers were chanted, including the Mass services attended each week by all Christians and the canonical office hours observed several times each day by clergy and monks; it also served a less formal religious role in the devotional songs of the laity. Music for the sacred services, known as plainchant, is by far the largest surviving repertory of music from the period, consisting of thousands and thousands of compositions from all over Europe. The complexity of the music varies from simple settings that resemble heightened speech to extremely elaborate melodies with wide ranges. Some are for soloists, others for choir, and some for an alternation of choir and soloist.

**MUSIC FOR EVERYDAY LIFE.** Music in the secular (that is, non-religious) world took a number of forms, and included both professional and amateur musicians. Singing and playing instruments was an ever-present part of relaxation for peasants and nobles: music making took place in the village square, the castle and manor house, the local tavern, and the open air. It was part of the foreground and background entertainment on all social levels in a society where everyone sang and danced. Local amateurs provided music for peasant gatherings, while professional minstrels entertained at the banquets of the aristocracy, but on both occasions everyone would be welcome to join in. Although art and literature provide certain kinds of information about the quantity of music in the world of the peasant, nothing survives of their repertory. Much of the music they performed must have been improvised, and the remainder was known only from memory, handed down from generation to generation with no written record. Actual secular music from the late Middle Ages survives only for the upper classes, although from the similarity of the references concerning music at every social level, we can guess that there was a considerable amount of uniformity at least in terms

of melodic and rhythmic styles between the music of both classes.

**THE MUSIC OF MINSTRELS.** The earliest of the professional performers of the period were known as minstrels (*ménéstrels* or *jongleurs*), who were actually general entertainers and did not restrict themselves to music; many were also actors, jugglers, animal trainers, and so on. These were the wandering entertainers who moved from place to place in search of a paying audience. The music they performed included not only the usual mixture of love songs and dance songs, but also the *chanson de geste* (song of deeds), a long narrative poem that recounted historic accomplishments, the most famous of which is the French *Song of Roland*. Love songs, drinking songs, and dance music were an essential part of the relaxation of both nobles and peasants; moreover, the songs of minstrels were a major source for the transmission of myths, history, and current news. Musicians performed a variety of repertory in the streets, and groups of trumpets accompanied people of wealth and political power, announcing their daily arrivals and departures.

**FROM MONOPHONY TO POLYPHONY.** The type of music most frequently heard during the early Middle Ages can be described as monophonic—music with a single melodic line—which included the sacred plainchant heard in church services as well as the secular songs and music played on instruments. This use of a single line is a characteristic that European music has in common with the music of the rest of the world, a repertory that has evolved and grown slowly since antiquity. It was during the period of the late Middle Ages, however, that one of the most striking characteristics of Western music came into existence: the development of music in more than one part, called polyphony. In all cultures there exist performances that are not completely monophonic; the use of drones (continuous accompanying notes, like those produced by a bagpipe), for example, is widespread, as is the practice of parallel performance (singing or playing the same melody on two different pitches simultaneously), or performances that would seem to combine elements of both drone and parallel traditions. All of these embellishments can be considered a part of the tradition of improvisation since they are often produced spontaneously during performance. But although the additions and embellishments to monophonic music in the West undoubtedly began in the same way as in other cultures, the Europeans took it much further, developing a system in which individual parts of a polyphonic composition trace separate melodic and rhythmic profiles. This technique is exclusive to Western culture, and while popular or folk music continued to be mainly

monophonic, polyphony soon became a standard part of all European-based art music.

**THE INVENTION OF NOTATION.** The technical element that assisted the birth and development of polyphony was the invention of a written musical notation, which happened between the ninth and eleventh centuries. The original reason for the invention of notation was primarily a desire on the part of the Latin Church to standardize the details of the sung parts of the liturgy by exactly transmitting to all parts of Europe the correct notes and rhythms of the vast repertory of plainchant. A secondary motive was to speed the teaching of new repertory, which until then had been taught only by constant repetition and rote memorization, a relatively slow process that was susceptible to frequent error. In the first half of the eleventh century, an Italian monk, Guido of Arezzo, responded to both needs by inventing a notation system that incorporated exact pitch and duration into a code that could be read with ease—a system that became the basis of the notation still in use today. It is no surprise that the first experiments with composed polyphony developed almost immediately after this innovation.

**THE SPREAD OF POLYPHONY.** The earliest forms of composed polyphony were developed in the twelfth century at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris when new two-voice sections were composed to replace already existing sections of plainchant. The idea of new polyphonic substitute sections quickly spread to all parts of Europe, where additional local repertory was soon composed. Europeans were attracted to this kind of sound, and the techniques were quickly applied to nearly all forms of music, both sacred and secular. At first polyphony was thought of as little more than an interesting contrast to the most frequently heard type of music, monophony. Its earliest use was for the more lavish church events and celebrations of the wealthiest citizens. Little by little, however, it gained in popularity until by the fifteenth century it was the preferred repertory for the socially conscious art connoisseur. This also led to a class separation in which monophonic music was left to the lower social classes while the educated, aristocratic society adopted the new polyphony, the only exception being plainchant, which remained a major part of all sacred ceremonies. Even in sacred settings, however, polyphony was introduced for the most celebrated occasions, replacing some of the traditional chant.

**COMBINING THE SACRED AND SECULAR.** Initially the repertories of sacred and secular music were quite separate from one another and consisted of mutually exclusive material. The advent of polyphonic composition

and its application to so many areas of sacred and secular repertory helped to break down this distinction as composers began to combine the two. Most of the combinations were more or less innocent, but surprising exceptions can be found as early as the thirteenth century, such as a song based on a chant, with a sacred hymn in one part and a decidedly erotic text in another, all to be sung at the same time. In the early decades of the fifteenth century it became common practice for a composer to adopt secular music, including love songs, as the basic material in the composition of music for the sacred Mass. By the end of the period one of the largest repertories of polyphonic music consisted of settings of five movements for the Mass Ordinary (that is, the parts of the religious ceremony that do not vary throughout the year), all written by a single composer using a sacred or secular melody as a unifying musical theme throughout, and intended to be performed as a celebration of a very special event, such as a coronation, a wedding, or a military victory. The most obvious implication of this practice is that the secular world was increasingly intruding on the sacred. The mixture of secular elements into a sacred repertory that had previously been tightly controlled suggests a slackening of the former rigidity of the Church with regard to its services and ceremonies, as well as a more worldly orientation among those who wrote music for sacred performance. In short, these musical events can be seen as evidence of a general trend in Western history: the weakening of the power and influence of religious authority and the rise of the secular world, a tendency that became the dominant characteristic of the period to follow.

## TOPICS *in Music*

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### MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

**MUSIC EVERYWHERE.** During the Carolingian era—that is, the age of the Frankish emperor Charlemagne and his dynasty (eighth to tenth century)—and continuing through the late Middle Ages, the sound of music was, quite literally, everywhere. Music was so much a basic part of everyday life that it would be difficult to discuss many significant daily events or activities without noting its presence. From the nobles at the highest level of society to the simple peasants who worked the land and the monks who lived in the isolation of monasteries, music, in its various forms, served as one of the

## MEDIEVAL Musical Terms

**Cyclic:** A composition of several movements that are related by the use of some of the same material.

**Harmony:** The result of two or more notes sounding at the same time.

**Isorhythm:** A rhythmic pattern that is imposed on a melody and repeated exactly throughout the length of the composition.

**Mensural signs:** Symbols that indicate tempo and rhythmic subdivisions.

**Monophony (mono = one; phony = sound):** Music of one part, either a solo song or a single melody performed by more than one person or instrument.

**Motet:** A polyphonic composition with more than one text.

**Motiv:** A short passage of music (as short as three notes) that is repeated.

**Organum:** An early, fairly simple type of polyphony. There are several different types, including one in which the voices sing the same melody at different pitches (known as “parallel organum”). Other varieties include the addition of an upper part over an already-existing melody (that is, a tenor). The upper part usually moves faster than the tenor.

**Polyphony (poly = several):** Music of more than one part, each musical line having a separate rhythmic and melodic profile.

**Substitute clausula:** A new section of polyphonic music intended to replace an old one.

**Tempo:** The speed of the composition.

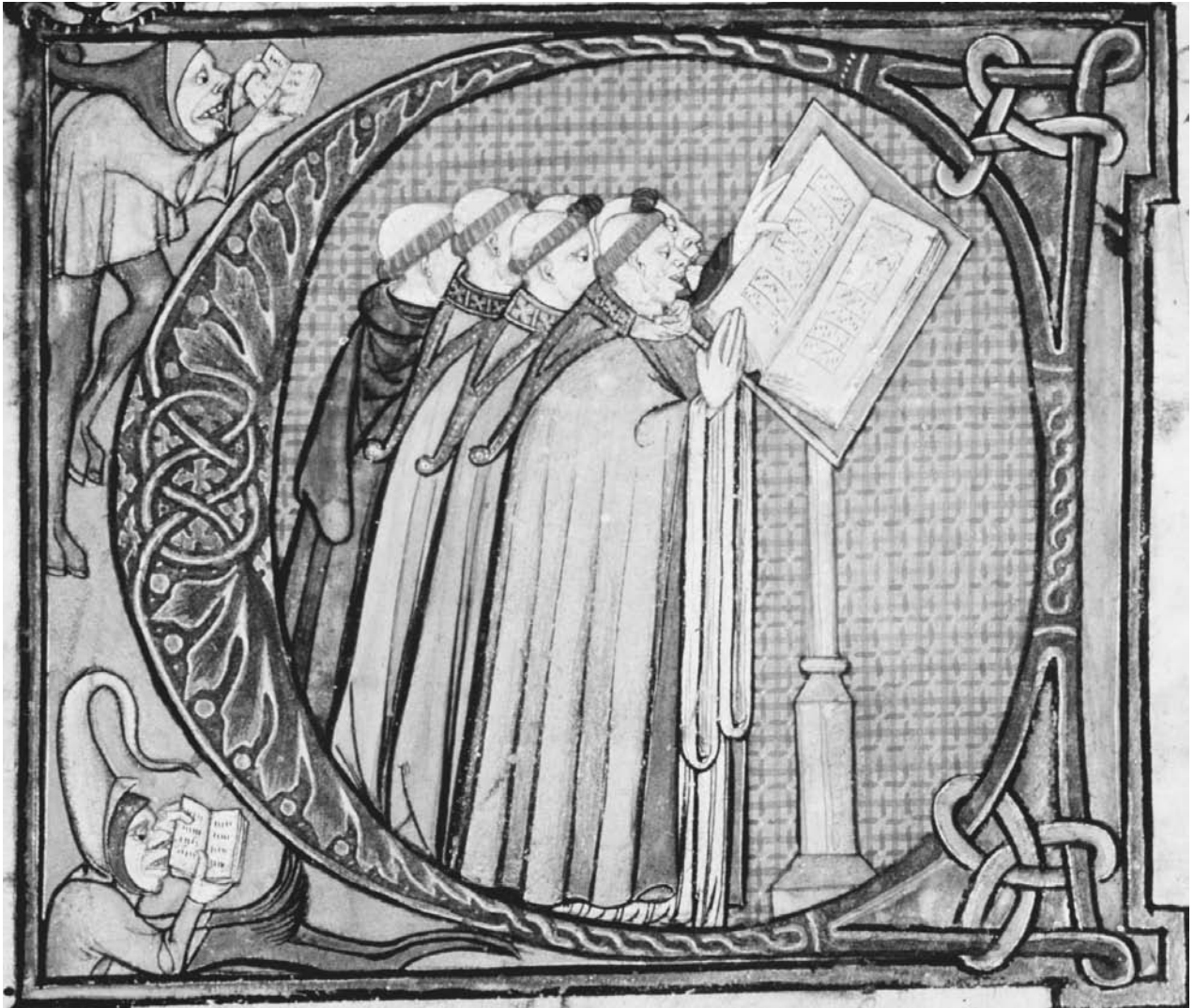
**Tenor:** A melody borrowed from another composition and used as a guide for the structure of new polyphonic lines. Sometimes these notes are held as long notes (*tenere* = to hold).

stable elements in their lives. It rang in the banquet halls and private chambers of the palaces of the wealthy nobles, resounded through the monastic cloisters and in the churches, and echoed in the streets and taverns of the cities and villages. Music served to mark the presence of nobles in public, it accompanied the tasks of the workers in the field, and it was an inseparable part of the many hours each monk spent daily in the worship of God. And for everyone, the sound of songs and music for dance filled the leisure hours.

**LOST EVIDENCE.** What has survived over the centuries is only a pale reflection of the quantity and variety of music that flourished during the early centuries, and, unfortunately, this material represents only certain parts of the repertory—that is, the entire body of works available for performance. Almost completely lost is the music of the lower classes—the songs they sang in the fields, around the hearth, and in the village inns, as well as the dance tunes they sang and played. All of their repertory was learned by ear and passed on in the same manner; nothing was written down. Music of the upper classes—the nobles, and, later, the merchants, teachers, doctors, and lawyers in the developing middle class—fares a bit better since that level of society could read and write and could afford to have written copies made of their favorite repertory, although what remains is rather fragmentary and quite incomplete. Largest by far is the surviving music of the Christian church that comes down to us in thousands of manuscripts that preserve the music that accompanied the weekly Mass in the larger churches and the daily ceremonies in the many monasteries that dotted the landscape all over Europe. The Latin Church was highly organized and had a more or less uniform body of works that was written down and distributed throughout Europe and preserved in church archives through the centuries. For secular society there is a far smaller body of preserved evidence.

**THE WRITTEN RECORD.** The beginning of the Carolingian Era almost exactly coincides with the earliest written music, and therefore it is possible to obtain an actual sound image of some of the repertory that dates back to the very beginning of the period. But the earliest manuscripts are all from churches and monasteries, meaning that they record only sacred music; manuscripts containing secular music did not appear until the twelfth century. By supplementing the surviving music with information gained from literary accounts, archival documents, personal letters, diaries, and iconography, some of the missing pieces can be filled in, providing a general impression of how music functioned in late medieval society.

**A CULTURE OF SINGING.** A great variety of musical instruments—plucked, hammered, and blown—populated the medieval world, adding their sounds to most formal and informal occasions. There is little doubt, however, that the vast majority of music heard and performed during this period was vocal. Everyone sang, and most of the occasions for music involved singing, including music for dance. The daily activities of monks in the monasteries revolved around the chanting of prayers every few hours, and for those who lived



Choir of monks sing from the psalter of Stephen of Derby, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson G. 185, folio 81, 15th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD.

outside of monasteries, singing was the most common form of entertainment and relaxation. The professional musicians also were mainly singers; the minstrels who entertained in the village squares, the inns, and the courts had vast repertoires of songs of all types. Even the narrator of heroic poetry, the teller of tales, often performed his verses by improvising a melody while accompanying himself with an instrument. In the later centuries of the Middle Ages the wealthier courts employed resident musicians who sang both the traditional chant and the new polyphonic music in the chapels, as well as entertaining their noble patrons with songs and instrumental music at dinnertime and on all festive occasions.

**VOICES AND INSTRUMENTS.** In striking contrast to modern practices, the combination of musical instruments

with voices was found in only certain circumstances. Solo singers often accompanied themselves, usually with a lute or a harp, and on extremely festive occasions, massed instruments and singers would march in procession through the city streets. Chant, however, was performed only vocally, and the common practice for the performance of polyphonic music—that is, music with multiple parts—was totally by instruments or totally by voices, but rarely a combination of the two. In church an organ would be used to play processions or devotional music, but it performed in alternation with the choir, never at the same time. Further, the choir as a whole usually was restricted to singing monophonic chant. Polyphonic music, no matter what the repertory, sacred or secular, was usually sung by an ensemble of soloists. Choir performance of polyphonic music, meaning several voices

on each musical part, was not part of the performance tradition during this period. A mixture of voices and instruments in a polyphonic performance did not become standard practice until the sixteenth century.

#### SOURCES

Christopher Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages* (London: J. M. Dent, 1987).

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### MUSIC IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

**MUSIC FOR THE LOWER CLASSES.** Singing and playing musical instruments was one of the main forms of private entertainment, and the usual time for music making was in the evening, following dinner. Everyone sang, and from the literary accounts, it would seem that a large number also played musical instruments. For the lower levels of society—the peasants, small merchants, and artisans—most of this type of entertainment was home grown, meaning that they entertained one another. Professional instrumentalists would be hired only for special occasions such as weddings where, as images from manuscript illuminations and tapestries affirm, they played dance music.

**MUSIC IN WEALTHY HOUSEHOLDS.** The nobles and wealthier merchants also sang and played instruments, and it is clear that they too often performed for one another in a family setting after dinner. In addition, in contrast to the less affluent people, they often hired professional singers and instrumentalists who would entertain their dinner guests with songs and instrumental music during and after dinner. The distinction as to who performed on any given occasion, however, was not so finely drawn as in the modern world. The troubadour tradition that flourished between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries included noblemen as well as people of lower social levels, meaning that this highly demanding repertory of song was performed by both professionals and amateurs. Many of the wealthier aristocrats had a permanent staff of household musicians, but an evening's entertainment could just as easily include one of the nobles singing his own poetry while accompanying himself on a lute or harp. The duties of the palace and court musicians usually included teaching music to the children and, often, singing for daily Mass in the nobleman's private chapel, in addition to the performances of secular music at dinnertime.

**SINGING IN THE CLOISTERS.** Music within the monastery consisted of the daily celebration of the Mass and eight services spaced throughout each day known as the Office or the Hours. Most of these included the

singing of chant, meaning that on ordinary days all of the monks sang for a total of several hours. On special days—Sundays, or special holy days (e.g. Easter)—the chants were particularly elaborate, and everyone processed through the halls of the monastery while singing. The earliest written music was the sacred plainchant of the church, which is found in a few manuscripts that date from the middle of the ninth century (see Notation, below). This body of works, as well as the bulk of all recorded compositions throughout the entire period, consists of sacred music intended for the various services of the Christian church.

**MUSIC IN THE STREETS.** Music heard in the city streets took many forms. Songs and chants of the many daily sacred services wafted out of the churches that were located every few blocks. Many of the municipalities employed instrumental ensembles that provided music for the frequent civic ceremonial occasions that happened in public, and for public dancing as well as church celebrations. Wedding receptions included singing and dancing and often took place in a public square; minstrels played and sang in the plazas everywhere; and amateur and itinerant “vagabond” musicians were a common presence—and often a common nuisance—on the streets and in the taverns and barber shops of cities and villages in all regions. Laws imposing a curfew that limited the hours music could be made in public were established in most large communities. The frequency with which these prohibitions were reiterated, as well as the numerous judicial records of people fined for playing instruments such as a bagpipe or singing in the streets after curfew, suggests that the curfews were not always observed.

**THE CEREMONIAL TRUMPET.** One of the most frequently heard instruments in public places all during the late medieval period was the trumpet. Because of its volume it performed a number of different functions, accompanying ceremonial occasions, celebrations, and military advances in the field. Trumpets, usually in sets of two, were the symbol of power and authority, a tradition inherited from ancient times. In every locale the political leaders and other powerful, wealthy men employed trumpet players as heralds to precede them whenever they went out in public, announcing their presence. These trumpets would often be made of silver with banners suspended from them emblazoned with the coat of arms of the lord or of the community, and the trumpeters wore livery, colorful costumes identifying them as the retainers of civic entities or wealthy lords. Public events, such as jousts, horse races, mock naval battles, and athletic contests, also employed trumpets to heighten the excitement and to signal the beginning and end of various activities. Trumpets were also used by the



Jousting knights and trumpeters, women watching from above. Ivory casket, 1350. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO DEL BARGELLO, FLORENCE/DAGLI ORTI.

town criers, who often played from horseback, traveling from one neighborhood to the next where they would sound their trumpets to call the citizens together to hear the latest pronouncements, banishments, or sentences of deaths. In many cities there were watchmen on the towers looking for signs of fire, curfew violations, or an advancing enemy, who signaled their messages with trumpet calls. Both trumpets and drums were a staple of the military where they served to frighten the foe with their loud noise and also to sound attacks and retreats because they could be heard over the din of battle.

#### SOURCES

Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie, eds., *Performance Practice; Music before 1600*. The Norton/Grove Handbooks in Music (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989).

Keith Polk, *German Instrumental Music of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

### MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

**LOUD VERSUS SOFT.** Musical instruments were divided into two fairly discrete groups—loud and soft—

#### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### INSTRUMENTS AT A MINSTREL PERFORMANCE

**INTRODUCTION:** This fanciful scene from *Remede de Fortune* by Guillaume de Machaut (1340) names a number of instruments, including some that cannot be identified.

But you should have seen after the meal  
 The minstrels who entered in generous number,  
 With shining hair and simple dress!  
 They played many varied harmonies.  
 For I saw there all in a group  
 Fiddle, rebec and gittern,  
 Lutes, morache, micanon,  
 Citols, and a psalterion,  
 Harp, tabour, trumpets, nakers,  
 Organs, more than ten pair of trumpets,  
 Bagpipes, flutes, chevretes,  
 Douceinnes, cymbals, clocettes,  
 Tymbres, flutes from Brittany,  
 And the large German horn,  
 Flutes from Scens, panpipes, whistles,  
 Muse d'Aussay, small trumpets,  
 Ceremonial trumpets, eles,  
 and monocords with only a single string,  
 And muse de blef all together.  
 And certainly, it seemed to me  
 That never was such a melody seen nor heard,  
 For each of them, according to the tone  
 Of his instrument, without discord  
 Plays on vielle, gittern, citole  
 Harp, trumpet, horn, flageolet,  
 Pipe, bellows, bagpipe, nakers  
 Or tabor and every sound that one can make  
 With fingers, quill and bow  
 I heard and saw in that park.

**SOURCE:** *Le jugement du roy de Behaigne, and, Remede de fortune/Guillaume de Machaut*. Ed. James I. Wimsatt and William W. Kibler (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988): lines 3959–3988. Translation by Robert Taylor.

each group having specific functions and repertoires; the two groups were rarely mixed together. The “loud” instruments were trumpets, bagpipes, shawms (double-reed instruments rather like the modern oboe), and drums. These instruments were assigned ceremonial functions, mostly out of doors, and were never found in the company of voices. The remaining “soft” instruments—bowed and plucked strings, woodwinds, and keyboard





Bagpiper and other instrumentalists with King David, Olomouc Bible, Olomouc University Library, Czech Republic, 1417. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

instruments—were played individually or in ensembles; some of them accompanied voices. The instruments that are described in this section are those most often seen in visual art and mentioned in literature.

**TRUMPETS.** Trumpets came in several sizes, shapes, and materials. Straight trumpets approximately six feet in length and often made of silver were the instruments usually associated with governmental authority. Military trumpets were approximately the same length and made of brass, but beginning in the fourteenth century they were, for practical reasons, folded (similar to a modern bugle). Another popular shape was one resembling an “S,” which was used for the smaller trumpets (approximately four feet of pipe) that are often depicted being played at indoor ceremonies such as banquets. All trumpets were without valves or keys, which restricted their notes to those of the natural acoustic overtone series, that is, something similar to the sounds of a modern bugle call. By 1400 a trumpet with a sliding pipe was invented to allow the players to access the complete scale. This was refined by 1480 to a double slide, which improved both speed and accuracy. The new instrument was called *trombone* in Italy, *sackbut* in England, and *saqbutte* in France.

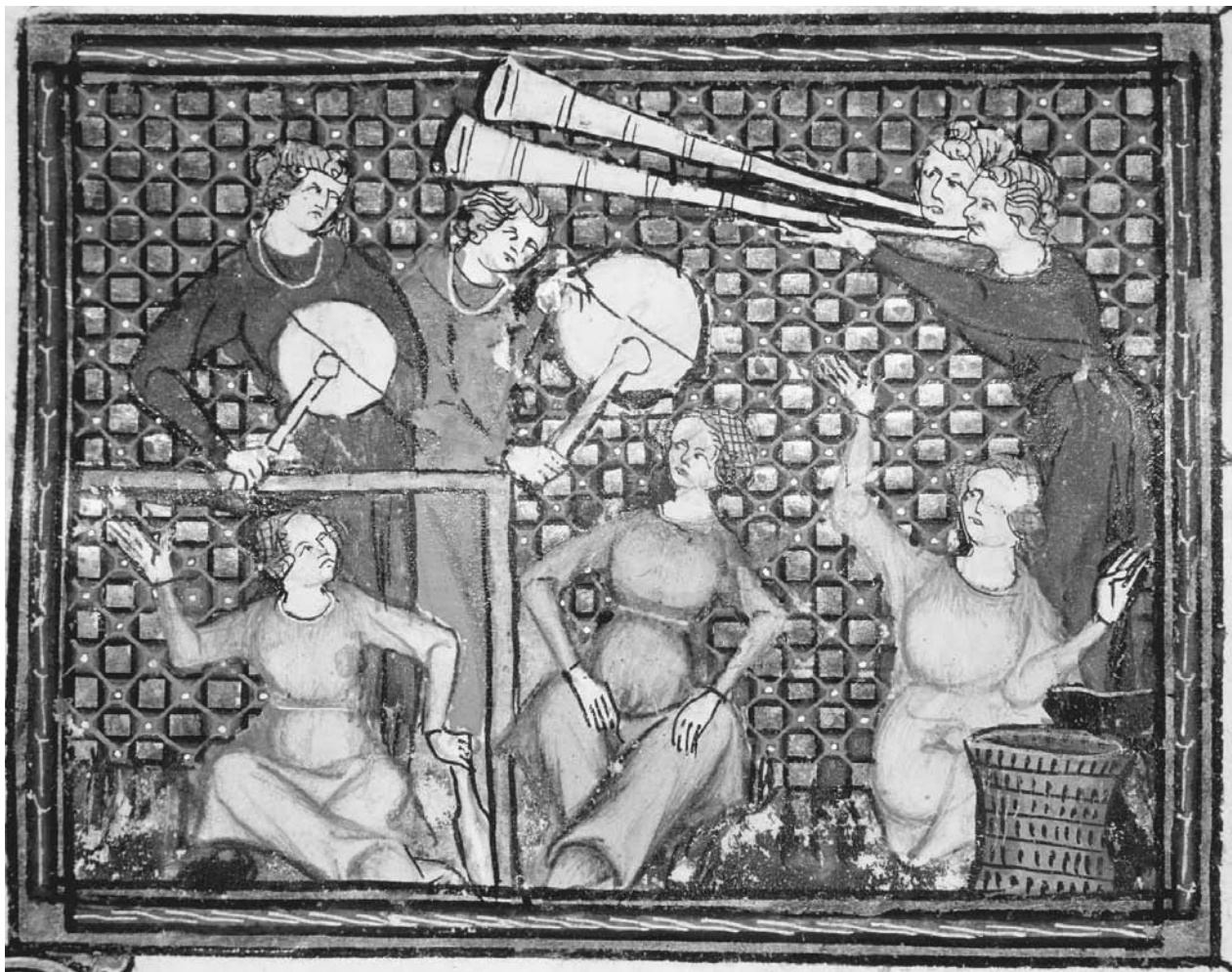
**SHAWMS.** The shawm, also considered “loud,” is a double-reed instrument much like an oboe. It resembles similar instruments popular in the Arab countries and is

first depicted in Spanish sources of the late thirteenth century, suggesting that it had been introduced to Europe during the Arab or Moorish occupation of Spain. Since the shawm had a fairly large range and could play many of the chromatic notes, it was capable of performing all of the repertory of the period. By the mid-fourteenth century there were two sizes, the traditional alto range instrument and a newer one that played at a lower pitch (tenor range) called a *bombarde* because of its resemblance to a cannon. Instruments of these two sizes often performed in pairs. By the early fifteenth century an alto and tenor shawm were often depicted with a slide trumpet as a standard dance music ensemble.

**BAGPIPE.** The bagpipe is found throughout the Middle Ages in most areas of Asia and the Middle East as well as in Europe, with a heritage that goes back to ancient times. There are many different sizes and shapes, but what they all have in common is that the sound is made by squeezing a bag (originally the skin of a goat) and the melody is played on a chanter pipe with finger holes. Instruments could have one, two, or three drone pipes or even none, and there are examples of both one and two chanter pipes. The bagpipe is most often seen playing alone, mostly for dancers, and it is usually associated with rural or pastoral scenes.

**PERCUSSION.** The percussion instruments make up the final group in the “loud” category. The type most frequently depicted is *nakers*, a pair of small “kettle” drums, usually tied to the performer’s waist or over the neck of a horse; *tabor*, a larger barrel-shaped drum, often called a “side drum,” usually associated with the military; and *tambourine*, a hand-held instrument with jingles, which is usually depicted in conjunction with dancing.

**KEYBOARD.** The keyboard group, considered “soft” instruments, included organs, harpsichords, and clavichords. Two types of organs were in common use: a portable organ (i.e. small and portable), which was usually held on the lap of the player and played with one hand while the other hand worked the bellows; and a larger positive organ that was not portable and was usually found in church, some of which had multiple keyboards, pedals, and several ranks of pipes. Medieval harpsichords were similar to those in use today. The earliest evidence of their existence comes from the mid-fifteenth century. They had a single keyboard with one wire string for each note, and a sounding device that plucked the strings with a pick called a plectrum, which could be made of leather or quill. The clavichord (also called *exchequer* in England) appears as early as the fourteenth century. It differs from the harpsichord in several ways: it had a very soft volume; it made its sound by striking the strings with a metal



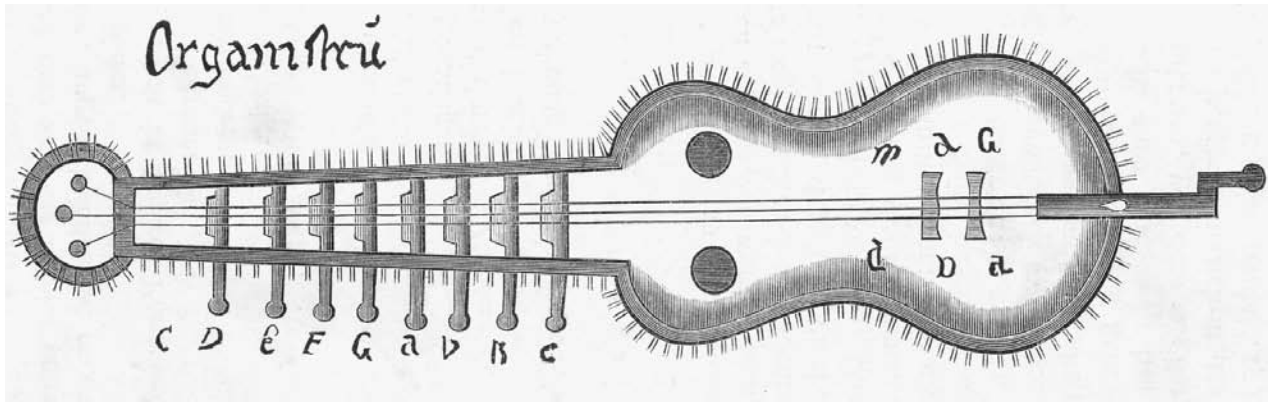
Drummers and trumpeters, Chrétien Legouais, *Ovide Moralisé*, Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 1044, folio 103, 14th century. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE, NY.

strip called a tangent; and some of its strings could make more than one pitch according to the amount of force applied to the key—that is, a stronger pressure would result in a higher pitch.

**WOODWINDS.** The woodwind group was quite small, including only the flute and the recorder. These instruments were similar to those of today, but without keys. Only the higher-pitched (soprano) members of these families existed until late in the fifteenth century. The flute is often depicted with drums in a military setting, while the recorder was used for domestic music making.

**BOWED STRINGS.** Bowed strings in the Middle Ages ranged from those that are obvious ancestors of modern instruments to some that are much less familiar. One of those that is less well known today was the hurdy-gurdy, which made its sound by the turning of a crank that

caused a wheel to scrape against two or three strings. A set of keys or levers could be pressed against one of the strings to change the pitch, while the other(s) provided a drone. By the late Middle Ages it was played by a single performer, usually in a lower-class setting, but an earlier version, known as an *organistrum* or *symphonia*, requiring two performers, can be found depicted in a sacred setting in the form of stone sculptures on Gothic churches. Other bowed instruments of the period were distinguished mainly by size and pitch. The rebec, a small three-string instrument, played in the soprano range, while the vielle (Italian viola, English fiddle) was a four- or five-string instrument with a range similar to a modern viola. In Italy the *lira da braccio* was used to accompany improvised song. It was a bit larger than a vielle/viola although it was still played while held against the shoulder. It had seven strings, five of which could be “stopped” (i.e. the player could change the pitch with the fingers



An organistrum, a larger form of hurdy-gurdy. MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.



Nine muses with instruments, Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des dames*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MS fr. 12476, folio 109v, 1451. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE, NY.

of his left hand, similar to a modern violin), and two more that were plucked by the thumb of the left hand, adding a strummed drone.

**PLUCKED STRINGS.** Lutes came in several sizes, with frets and four “courses” (paired sets) of strings and a fifth solo string called a *chantarelle*, used for playing melodies.

During this period it was usually plucked with a quill plectrum and played mostly single-line melodies with drones. It is clearly descended from the Arab instrument *oud*. The gittern, in contrast, was smaller and higher-pitched than the lute. It also had frets and was plucked with a plectrum and is depicted with three to five single strings. The final member of the group was the harp. Although harps existed in a variety of sizes and forms, the instrument most often depicted was a small portable harp with 24 or 25 strings.

**MUSIC FOR INSTRUMENTS.** Although musical instruments were present all through the period and were played at many different kinds of occasions, very little music intended solely for instruments has survived. The repertory of instrumentalists consisted mainly of improvised music and melodies that circulated aurally. The only materials recorded in written form were ornamented versions of some pieces originally written for voice and a small number of dances. It is clear that throughout the period instrumentalists often performed vocal music, but it was not until the period of the Renaissance, beginning at the very end of the fifteenth century, that we begin to find a sizable body of music specifically composed for instrumental performance.

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## PLAINSONG AND THE MONOPHONIC TRADITION

**ORIGINS OF PLAINCHANT.** Music can be easily divided into two large categories according to how many parts are performed simultaneously—that is, monophony and polyphony. Monophonic music, which consists of a single line whether performed by a soloist or by many performers in unison, is the oldest tradition of European music and one shared with all other cultures. At the

## MUSIC

### Sources for Medieval Instrumental Performance

In the medieval music manuscripts that still exist today, there are very few examples of music intended for instrumental performance. The small amount of music written for instruments that has come down to us consists of the following:

The Robertsbridge Codex (English) from c. 1370: a total of six compositions consisting of two-part arrangements of dances, motets, and a hymn, possibly intended for keyboard performance.

The Faenza Codex (Italian) from c. 1430: approximately fifty, mostly two-part arrangements of secular songs, plus a few dances and sacred pieces. It may have been intended for keyboard or lute duets.

The Buxheimer manuscript (German) from c. 1470: over 250 two- and three-part pieces for keyboard, consisting of a few dances, some preludes, and many arrangements of sacred and secular pieces for organ.

A total of 45 pieces, mostly monophonic, known or suspected to be dances, and found in manuscripts from Italian, French, English, and Czech sources, including *estampies*, carols, and *saltarellos*.

beginning of the Carolingian period, the music of the Christian church was a monophonic type called plainchant, a style of music that was originally adopted in the first and second centuries from the traditions of a number of other religious sects—mainly, but not exclusively, Judaism. In the early centuries this repertory was passed on orally, growing and adapting as Christianity and its ceremonies gradually evolved. The name “Gregorian Chant” is often used for this music, based on the erroneous belief that it was composed by Pope Gregory the Great in the seventh century. It is true that some of the chant comes from his era, and Gregory probably had a hand in its organization and promotion. But chants continued to be composed throughout the later centuries of the Middle Ages, and therefore it has recently become the custom to refer to the entire corpus as plainchant (or chant). Chants range from the fairly simple, which involve only a few different pitches and assign a single note to each syllable, to elaborate melodies with large ranges

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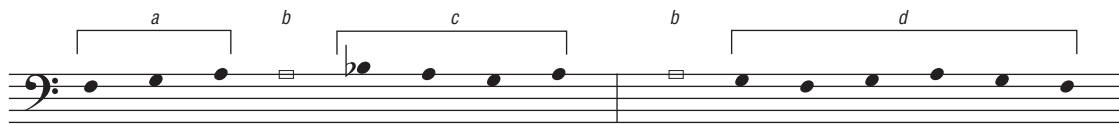
**SINGING OF PSALMS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Psalms were sung to formulas that allowed for expansion and contraction to accommodate the varied lengths of the verses. There was a different formula for each of the eight modes. The example below shows

the formula for Mode 1, where a = the opening phrase; b = the reciting tone; c = the internal phrase ending; and d = the closing phrase. The application of the formula, shown for the first verse of Psalm 125, "In convertendo Dominus," shows how each syllable of the psalm is matched to one note in the opening, internal, and closing musical phrases, while all the remaining syllables of the verse are chanted on a single reciting tone.

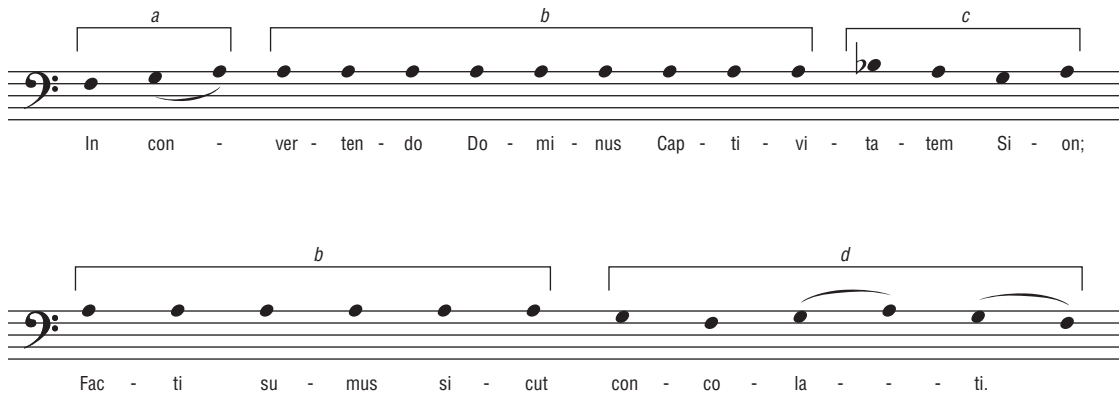
**Psalm Formula for Mode 1**

a = opening phrase; b = reciting tone; c = internal phrase ending; d = closing phrase



**"In convertendo Dominus"**

First verse of Psalm 125, set to the formula.



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of notes and dozens of ornate melodic passages for a single syllable. Some chants are performed by a soloist, some by the entire chant choir (or the entire monastery), and some alternate between soloist and choir. They occur in several principal styles.

**PSALMS AND ANTIPHONS.** Psalms are sung to relatively elementary music with a single note for each syllable. This music usually involves no more than four or five different pitches, with the majority of each phrase of text chanted on a single note, known as the reciting

tone (see Modes). The remainder of the phrase, its beginning and ending words, are sung to simple formulae specified by the mode itself. Since the psalm verses are all in prose lines of different lengths, the reciting tone can easily be adjusted to the length of each verse. When performed during the daily office, the singing of a psalm involved the entire monastic choir divided into two groups, each group alternately singing one of the two balanced phrases that make up the dozens of verses in each psalm. Antiphons, on the other hand, are usually quite melodic, with a somewhat wider range and more

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN EXAMPLE OF A RESPONSORY**

**INTRODUCTION:** Responsories are the most elaborate of all chants. They can be found in a number of the Office

Hours and were also composed for the Gradual and Alleluia in the Mass. The music is divided between a soloist and the choir, with highly ornate passages throughout, as shown in the example of the beginning section of a verse shown below.

**Gradual for Monday in Holy Week**  
Beginning section of verse.

E - ffun - de fra - me - am

et con - clu - - - - - de

(continues)

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frequent variation of pitch, reflecting their performance by the entire choir. They are found in a number of different places in the Mass and office liturgies, often framing (that is, preceding and following) a psalm verse. An introit (entrance song), for example, would repeat a single antiphon in alternation with a succession of psalm verses, resulting in a performance that could be graphed as: Antiphon; Psalm verse 1; Antiphon; Psalm Verse 2; Antiphon; etc.

**HYMNS AND RESPONSORIES.** Hymns involve poetic texts with regular meter. Their musical construction, therefore, involves matching words to musical phrases, which are composed to fit all of the lines of the first verse of text and intended to be repeated for all successive verses. They are melodic but not overly complex or ornate, and are sung by the entire choir. In contrast, responsories are the most elaborate of all chants, and their music is divided between a soloist and the choir, with highly ornate passages throughout. Responsories are used in a number of the Office Hours, and for the Gradual and Alleluia in the Mass. One responsorial chant, the Mass Alleluia, is a rather special case because it includes

a long, rhapsodic melodic section on the final “a” in Alleluia, sung by the choir. The extended melody is called the *jubulus*, and it was originally intended to be an expression of pure, wordless joy. After the ninth century the jubulus was frequently replaced by a new composition with a text, known as a Sequence (see Additions to the Sacred Repertory, below).

**MASS.** Central to the Christian demonstration of faith is the ceremony of the Mass, which includes the Communion service, a reenactment of the Last Supper. The ceremony itself evolved slowly over the centuries; various prayers and events were added, subtracted, and revised, reaching its present form only in the mid-sixteenth century following the Council of Trent. During the late Middle Ages the Mass included approximately twenty prayers and readings, half of which were spoken and half sung. The texts include some that remain the same throughout the year, known as the Ordinary items, others that change depending on the liturgical season (for example, Christmastime, Easter), and some, known as the Proper, that change each day and are particular to the saint being celebrated on that date (for example,

St. Stephen is celebrated on 26 December, St. John the Apostle on 27 December, and so on). Of the many sung parts of the Mass, it is to five parts of the Ordinary that composers devoted most of their attention during the late Middle Ages. In the order in which they occur in the service the items are:

Kyrie elieson—"Lord have mercy," a ninefold invocation for mercy;

Gloria—"Glory to God in the Highest," a celebration of the glory of God (omitted during the forty days of mourning preceding Easter);

Credo—"I believe in one God," a declaration of the essential beliefs of the Christian faith;

Sanctus—"Holy, Holy, Holy," the cry of the multitudes when Jesus entered Jerusalem;

Agnus Dei—"Lamb of God," a plea for personal peace.

**OFFICE HOURS.** In addition to the Mass, the clergy observe eight additional daily prayer rituals at various hours of each day, known as the Office or the Hours, beginning shortly after midnight and lasting until evening. In the monasteries, when it is time for each of the Hours, all of the monks stop whatever they are doing and gather in the Chapel to pray and chant together. Priests not part of a monastic community simply read the prayers to themselves. Most of the Hours have prayers that are sung, including antiphons, psalms, responsories, and hymns. An outline of Matins, the most important of the Hours, will provide an idea of the structure of the service and its contents:

Introduction: *Deus in adiutorium meum intende* (dialogue chant), Psalm 94 with antiphon, hymn

Nocturn I: three psalms with antiphons, three responsories.

Nocturn II: three psalms with antiphons, three responsories

Nocturn III: three psalms with antiphons, three responsories

Conclusion: *Te Deum* (hymn), *Benedicamus Domino* (dismissal)

All five sections in Matins involve the chanting of psalms: an introduction and conclusion, both of which remain the same each day, and three central sections known as Nocturns. The importance of the Psalms to the services is apparent from the fact that the services in monasteries are constructed so that all 150 can be sung each week.

Not all of the eight Offices are as elaborate as Matins, but it can be seen that a very large portion of a medieval monk's day was spent in singing.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Medieval Liturgy*

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#### ADDITIONS TO THE SACRED REPERTORY

**CONTINUAL CHANGE.** It is tempting to view something as old and formal as the sacred liturgy—the Mass and the Hours—as immutable, with a body of works and system of practice that has remained unchanged since it began. Nothing can be further from the truth. The entire liturgy, both its format and repertory, was in a constant state of flux throughout the period. New compositions and ceremonies were added, older items were revised and altered, and regional variants of all types arose and were suppressed all during those centuries. Discussed below are some of the major changes that came about during this period involving music, although there were also numerous changes to the prayers and the format of the ceremonies themselves. The inclusion of musical drama, the addition of new chant items and devotional works, and the application of polyphony to new and old repertory are evidence of a sacred ritual that was constantly under revision.

**LITURGICAL DRAMA.** During the reign of Charlemagne in the early ninth century, the church authorities at his principal residence in Aachen (northern Germany) decided to dramatize the most important event in the liturgical year, the Resurrection of Christ on Easter morning, by acting out the scene in which the three Marys (Mary the mother of James, Mary Salome, and Mary Jacobi) visit Christ's tomb and find it empty. Three monks were assigned to take the part of the Marys, impersonating women by raising their cowls over their heads, and another monk sang the part of the angel who tells the Marys that Christ has risen. Initially, the entire dialogue consisted of only three lines of text and music, sung during the procession on Easter morning and enframed by a number of processional antiphons. The idea of dramatizing the major celebrations of the Church spread quickly throughout all areas of Europe, where they became immediately popular and

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**LINES FROM A SACRED PLAY**

**INTRODUCTION:** The earliest known sacred play with music was the recreation of Christ's Resurrection on Easter morning.

There were hundreds of different versions of this play, all of which contain the following basic lines and music.

**Liturgical Drama**  
Original three lines.

Quem quae - ri - tis in se - pul - chro - O Chris - ti - co - le?  
(whom do you seek, O followers of Christ?)

Je - sum Na - za - re - num cru - ci - fi - xum O ce - li - co - le.  
(Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, O heavenly one.)

Non est hic sur - re - xit sic - ut pre - di - xe - rat; i - - - te nun - ti - a - te  
(He is not here, he is risen as he foretold; go announce that he had risen, saying:)

qui - a sur - re - xit:

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attracted additional creative inspirations. In some places the drama was enlarged by the addition of other scenes from the biblical account of the Easter story: the seller of spices, pilgrims who passed by the grave, apostles who arrived later at the tomb. By the twelfth century the tradition of dramatizing the liturgy had grown in some monasteries to include church celebrations at other times of the year, including biblical events such as the Adoration of the Magi, the Slaughter of the Innocents, and the Raising of Lazarus. In some places the enactments were removed from their original setting within a liturgical ceremony and presented as independent musical plays lasting over an hour. The most elaborate set of plays is found in a manuscript known as the Fleury Play Book (named for the French monastery where it is believed the manuscript originated), written in the early thirteenth century. This source contains a total of eleven

grand plays, all set to music, on subjects such as the St. Nicholas legend, the Son of Getron, the Pilgrims, and the Conversion of St. Paul, as well as the original topic of the Resurrection.

**TROPES.** Tropes were additions of new text phrases and music inserted at the beginning and between the existing text phrases of antiphons for the Mass. The new phrases served as a commentary on the original text. In the example of the *Resurrexi* Antiphon With Trope, the original text is underlined. Just as the new text phrases amplified the original text, the new music was written to match the melodic style of the old. Tropes continued to be added to antiphons to the point that they were even collected in separate manuscripts, called Tropers, which would provide a singer with a choice of a number of different sets of tropes to add to specific antiphons.



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN EASTER INTROIT**

**INTRODUCTION:** The following is an antiphon for Easter Introit with trope lines. The original antiphon, in italics, begins with "I am risen." The trope lines are added before the first line and following each phrase, ending with a final trope line. All of the trope lines and the first phrase of the antiphon are sung by a soloist. The choir sings the rest of the antiphon phrases, alternating with the solo performances of the trope lines. Following this, the soloist sings an antiphon verse, and that is followed by another troped performance of the antiphon.

Today there came forth a strong lion from the  
sepulchre on account of whose victory the heavenly  
ministers shall rejoice in God, and we rejoice singing

*I am risen*

The prince of hell having been vanquished, all doors  
are open.

*And yet I am with you, Alleluia*

from whom I never went away while I was lying in  
the flesh, dust

*You placed upon me*

whom you alone created, O God, before all time

*Your hand, Alleluia*

By your order death was tasted

*A wonderful thing has been done*

to one to whom no wisdom in the world can be  
equated

*Your knowledge, Alleluia*

That wish such a victory you laid low the boastful  
victor, Alleluia.

**SEQUENCES.** Sequences are additions for the end of the Alleluia, one of the chants for the Mass, as a replacement for the long, extended melodic rhapsody on the final syllable of "Alleluia." The name "sequence" refers to the texts, which are in paired lines all with the same syllable count, although not rhymed. The music is very melodic (as opposed to psalm-tone), but not elaborate in that only one note is assigned to each syllable, much in the style of a hymn. Thousands of sequences were composed beginning in the Carolingian era sometime around 850 and continuing until the twelfth century. One of the earliest sources was the music written by Notker Balbulus (c. 840–912), a monk at the Swiss monastery of Saint-Gall, who gathered his sequences into a book (*Liber Hymnorum*), thus becoming the first known composer. Tropes and sequences continued to be sung until the reforms of the Council of Trent in the

sixteenth century, when all tropes were eliminated from the liturgy, as well as all but four sequences.

**RHYMED OFFICE.** The largest repertory of new sacred material during the late Middle Ages was written for the Office. Over a thousand new saints were added to the liturgical calendar during this period, meaning that new chants had to be written for their services. Although the earliest of the new texts were written in prose, as the older texts had been, by the twelfth century it became the custom to write them as poetry, in strict meter and rhyme. The matching or coupling element of a rhymed text inspired the composers to write music with similarly matching phrases, resulting in new office chants that were quite different from those that preceded them. Since many of the new saints were venerated only in a particular region, this provided the opportunity for new composers in each area to contribute material to their local sacred observances.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Medieval Liturgy*

**THE MONOPHONIC  
SECULAR TRADITION**

**REGIONAL STYLES.** At the same time plainchant was being sung in the churches and monasteries, there was a rich body of monophonic music developing for non-religious use. In contrast to the unified nature of chant, which was more or less standard throughout Europe, the music of the laymen varied by region. The entire Western Christian church was controlled centrally by an enormous, stable hierarchy in Rome that extended to all regions, with a single official language—Latin—all of which resulted in a single, uniform practice. The secular world, on the other hand, was divided into autonomous regions that were subject to sudden political change and maintained separate languages and customs. A discussion of secular music, therefore, takes on a geographical/national character, reflecting local cultures and preferences. There are a number of similar basic elements in all areas, but the differences are sufficiently large and striking to warrant a discussion by general regional types.

**LOST EVIDENCE.** Although we know that there was a thriving tradition of secular music in all areas, not all are well represented by surviving music. Very little secular monophony is preserved from England, for example, in spite of the fact that in the twelfth century Eleanor of Aquitaine was a patron of troubadours and trouvères, and literary sources such as the writings of Geoffrey Chaucer make it clear that there was a great quantity of secular music. The entire English monophonic repertory that has come down to us consists only of three sacred songs attributed to St. Godric, a Saxon hermit who died in 1170, and a handful of love songs. The surviving repertory from Spain is equally slim, although we do have the sacred *cantigas*, discussed below. Given the basic similarities of the social milieu in all parts of Europe, however, we can imagine that repertoires and musical practices existed in all of these areas, similar to those that have survived.

**TROUBADOURS IN THE COURTS.** Although much of the repertory of the minstrels was never recorded, we can catch a glimpse of it through one particular branch of the tradition that flourished in aristocratic circles: the courtly love songs written and performed by troubadours, and *trouvères* (men) and *trobairitz* (women). The name depended on where they lived and performed and the language in which they wrote: the troubadours mostly worked in southern France, northern Spain, and northern Italy, and wrote in the Occitan language (also called *langue d'oc* and Provençal), while the trouvères worked in northern France and wrote in a medieval version of French (Old French, *langue d'oïl*). The names come from the verb *trouver*, meaning “to find,” which suggests that they invented (“found”) their poetry and music. They were a talented group of professionals and amateurs that included nobles as well as members of the lower classes who lived and performed mostly in the courtly circles of France, England, and northern Italy (where they were known as *trovatori*) during the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. In contrast to the other minstrels who led a somewhat insecure nomadic existence, these poets/composers were usually attached to a single location for long periods.

**COURTLY LOVE SONGS.** Much of our impression of courtly life of the period is taken from medieval song texts, although what they describe is often idealized—describing a perfect world—rather than factual. The subject matter of these poems is highly stylized, following a partially imaginary etiquette of courtly love and behavior that is both elaborate and complex. “Lancan vei la folha,” by the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn is a good example of both the musical style of troubadour melodies and the convoluted and decorative language used in a

typical love song; the lover expresses his devotion in reverential terms, vowing eternal devotion in spite of the woman being unattainable (often because she is married to someone else). In contrast, Bernart’s musical setting is relatively simple: the melody that sets the first four lines of the stanza is repeated for the next four; a new contrasting melody is introduced for lines 9 and 10 (that is, it descends rather than ascends), and then the last half of the earlier melody returns for the final two lines. All of the stanzas are intended to be sung to the same melody, although the singer would be expected to insert different ornaments (embellishing notes, rhythms, or any number of other vocal expressive devices) for each stanza in order to add variety and support the text message.

**THE PASTOURELLE.** Another of the favorite formats in the troubadour/trouvère tradition was the pastourelle, which had as its theme the romantic pursuit of a shepherdess by a knight. Named after the French word for “shepherdess,” these poems usually told the story of a noble visitor to the countryside who catches sight of a pretty rustic girl, approaches her, and offers her gifts in exchange for her acceptance of his advances. Sometimes the nobleman forces his attentions on her, and other times she outwits him. A variant of this form, called the *bergerie*, changes the situation slightly. Now a hidden narrator overhears shepherds, or a shepherd and shepherdess, debating. The 1284 *Jeu de Robin et de Marion* (Play or Game of Robin and Marion), by the trouvère Adam de la Halle, is the most famous of these, and incorporates a number of charming songs for the two principal characters and a narrator who tells the story.

**THE CANTIMPANCA AND THE IMPROVISED TRADITION.** *Trovatori*, the Italian equivalent of French troubadours, flourished at the northern Italian courts during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, producing a repertory similar to that of the troubadours. At the same time, outside of the court the centuries-old practice of the village bard survived in the person of the *cantimpanca* (singer on a platform), or *cantastoria* (singer of history), carrying on a tradition that lasted long after the trovatori died out. The cantimpanca was a poet and singer who improvised music while he sang verses about historical subjects, love, and any other topic that interested him. His verses often commented on current political events, and he accompanied himself with a lute or a lira da braccio. Some of these poet/musicians were quite famous and had regular followings; the Florentine cantimpanca Antonio di Guido, who performed on Sundays in the piazza in front of the Florentine Church of San Martino in the late fifteenth century, could count among his fans Lorenzo de’ Medici (Lorenzo the Magnificent), the great Florentine statesman and patron of the arts. Pietrobono de

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**A TROUBADOUR SONG**

**INTRODUCTION:** “Lancan vei la folha,” written by troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn in the twelfth century, is a good example of the musical style of troubadour melodies. All of the stanzas, which illustrate the combination of total

loyalty and extreme suffering expected of a lover in the “courtly love” tradition, are intended to be sung to the same melody, although the singer would be expected to insert different ornaments for each stanza in order to add variety and to support the text message.

**SOURCE:** Bernart de Ventadorn, “Lancan vei la folha” (When I see the leaves). Trans. Robert Taylor. Used by permission.

**“Lancan vei la folha”**

Lan - can vei la fo - lha jos dels al-bres cha - zer, cui que pes ni do - lha a  
 me - deu bo sa - ber, no cre - zatz qu'eu vo - lha flo - ni fo - lha ve - zer, car vas me s'or -  
 go - lha so qu'eu plus vohl a - ver, cor ai que m'en to - lha mas non ai ges po - der, c'a -  
 des cuit m'a co - lha, on plus m'en de - ze - sper

I  
 When I see the leaves  
 Fall down from the trees  
 No matter if this brings pain or grief to anyone else,  
 To me it must bring pleasure.  
 Do not think that I want to see flowers or leaves,  
 For to me comes disdain  
 From the one I want most to have.  
 My heart tells me to leave her,  
 But I don't have the strength to do it,  
 For I always think that she might treat me with favor,  
 Even when I most despair of her.  
 [continued]

II  
 Unpleasant news  
 You may be hearing about me,  
 Who was accustomed to favor me,  
 She no longer calls to me  
 Nor summons me to her side.  
 My heart within my chest  
 Is about to break with grief.  
 May God, who rules the world,  
 Let me take pleasure in her, if it please Him,  
 For if she remains so hostile to me,  
 There remains nothing but to die.

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Burzellis, who was located principally in Ferrara, was widely acclaimed both for his virtuosity as a lutenist and for his singing voice, as well as his ability as an improviser. Although some of the poetry of these popular entertainers still exists, not a note of the music has survived.

**MINNESINGERS.** The German counterpart to the courtly tradition of the troubadour and trouvère in France was the minnesinger (*Minne* = love), a singer of love songs, popular during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Originally the kinds of songs—the subject

**“Lancan vei la folha” [CONTINUED]**

III

I no longer have faith  
In augury or spells,  
For straightforward hoping  
Has destroyed and finished me,  
For the beautiful one whom I love strongly  
Casts me so far off,  
When I seek her love,  
As though I had done her wrong.  
I have so much distress from this  
That I am deeply afflicted;  
But I do not allow it to show  
For I go on singing and enjoying myself.

IV

I don't know what else to say,  
Except that I am acting very foolishly  
In loving and desiring  
The most beautiful one in the world.  
I really ought to kill  
The person who invented the mirror.  
When I think carefully about it,  
I have no worse adversary than this.  
On any day that she looks at her reflection  
And thinks about her worth,  
I shall surely possess  
Neither her nor her love.

V

She does not love me sensually,  
For that would not be suitable.  
But if it were to please her  
To show me any favor at all,  
I would swear to her,  
In her name and in the name of my faith,  
That any favor she might do me  
Would not be revealed by me.  
Let her will be done,  
For I am at her mercy.  
Let her kill me if it please her,  
For I am not complaining of anything.

VI

I have the right to complain  
If I lose through my own pride  
The pleasant company  
And the pleasure that I used to have.  
I gain little profit  
From the false bravery that I display,  
For the one I most love and desire  
Rebuffs me.  
Oh Pride! May God crush you,  
For now my eyes weep on your account.  
It is right that all joy should desert me,  
For I myself have driven it from me.

VII

As defence from the suffering  
And the pain that I endure,  
I have my constant habit  
Of thinking always about that place (where she is).  
Pride, folly  
And villainy will be committed  
By anyone who distracts my heart from her  
Or makes me think of anything else,  
For no better messenger  
Can I have in the whole world,  
And I send it (my heart) to her as hostage  
Until I return from here.

VIII (Envoy)

Lady, I send you my heart,  
The best friend that I have,  
As hostage,  
Until I return from here.

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matter and the forms—were similar to those of the troubadours, but in the late thirteenth century many of the minnesingers began to write on more popular themes, including parodies of the idea of courtly love. Many of the songs in this later period are quite humorous and earthy. The tradition lasted into the fifteenth century in Germany, nearly one and a half centuries after it had died out in France. A notable minnesinger of the later period was Tannhäuser, who was involved in the Fifth Crusade (1217–1221), and whose life inspired one of Richard Wagner's operas in the nineteenth century. Tannhäuser's song (*minnelied*) *Est Hiut Ein Wunnliclicher Tac* (“Today Is A Wonderful Day”), written in four stanzas around the year 1250, is a song of penitence. Its narrow range and simple rhythms are typical of the genre.

The musical form is known as *Bar*, matching the form of the poetic stanzas. It consists of two unequal sections; the first section is shorter and is repeated immediately (setting the first eight lines of the text, 4+4), the second is longer (setting the last twelve lines) and includes material from the first section plus new melodic phrases. The tradition of the minnesinger gave rise to the highly organized guild of the Meistersingers in the Renaissance, another of Wagner's opera subjects.

**CARMINA BURANA.** Another repertory of German songs is found in a manuscript known as the *Carmina Burana*, dating from the end of the thirteenth century, which contains over 200 secular poems. The collection is from the Benedictine monastery of Benediktbeuern (south



Walther von der Vogelweide, Manesse manuscript, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. Germ 848, folio 124r., c. 1300. BETTMANN/CORBIS.

of Munich), and consists of a number of poems in Latin as well as some in German. The repertory is quite broad, including drinking songs and parodies of religious songs, as well as some with texts of love, many of which are related to the minnesinger repertory in terms of style and subject matter. In recent times the composer Carl Orff (1895–1982) used the poetry and some of the melodies as an inspiration for his *Carmina Burana*, a substantial work for orchestra, chorus, and soloists.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: Courtly Love*; *Literature: The Non-Narrative Lyric Impulse*

## RELIGIOUS MUSIC OF THE LAYMAN

**SONGS OF PERSONAL EXPRESSION.** Not all sacred music was for church or monastic services; laymen also participated actively in their faith by singing sacred songs. One of the uses of this repertory was the personal or familial expression of faith done at home, although there was also a widespread tradition of confraternities—societies of laymen who gathered together in a chapel or church to pray and sing devotional songs. These gatherings were not part of a liturgical service, and generally were not presided over by the clergy. The sacred songs of the different regions, sung in the vernacular language, differ from one another in several ways, including subject matter and style of melody.

**CANTIGAS DE SANTA MARIA.** One of the earliest and most interesting repertories of sacred song has been preserved in three elaborate Spanish manuscripts, dating from the thirteenth century during the time of Alfonso X “el Sabio” (The Wise), king of Castile and León (regions of what is now Spain) from 1252–1284. His reign was one of enormous contrasts. On the one hand, there was political unrest and civil war, but on the other there were great advances in culture, science, and literature. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (Songs of Holy Mary) includes more than 400 songs, all of which are devoted to the Virgin. The subject matter of the texts concerns everyday people in contemporary Iberian life (encompassing Spain and Portugal), all of whom are assisted by miracles performed by Mary. As in the cantiga illustrated here, each song is introduced by a narrative passage that sets the scene. The poems that follow are all in strophes (stanzas or groups of lines in a single metrical form), usually of six to eight lines of verse, with a four-line refrain. The music that sets each of the cantigas is therefore in two parts, reflecting the poetic form and rhyme scheme. The music is fairly simple, having a modest range, simple

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**A CANTIGA TO THE VIRGIN MARY**

**INTRODUCTION:** "Aquela en que Deus" is one of over 400 songs devoted to the Virgin, known as the Cantigas de Santa

Maria (Songs of Holy Mary). They are all preserved in three elaborate Spanish manuscripts, dating from the thirteenth century, during the time of Alfonso X "el Sabio" (The Wise), king of Castile and León. The song in the example below explains how Holy Mary of Ribela does not allow any oil to be burned before her altar except olive oil, which is very clean and pure.

**"Aquela en que Deus carne"**

**CANTIGA DE SANTA MARIA**  
Text in italics represents the refrain. The music shown here represents the first verse and the refrain.

1. *A - que - la en que De - us car - ne pren - deu et nos deu por lu -*  
4. *en un' al - de - a que - no - me á Ri - be - la. ú so - y -*

*me, das cou - sas tim - pias se pa - ga sem - pre tal é seu cos - tu -*  
*a a - ver ben d'an - ti - gue - da - de un mo - es - teir' a cos - tu -*

me. 2. *E des - to mos - trou mi - ra - gre a Vir - gen San - ta Ma - ri -*  
me.

a. 3. *grand' en hu - a ssa ei - gre - ja el de - mos - tra ca - da di - a*

**REFRAIN:** That One in whom God took flesh and gave to us for light is always pleased by cleanliness, such is Her custom.

**VERSE 1:** The Holy Virgin Mary performed a great miracle in a church of Hers, as She does every day, in a village called Ribela where long ago there used to be a monastery.

**REFRAIN:** That One in whom God took flesh and gave to us for light is always pleased by cleanliness, such is Her custom.

**VERSE 2:** Now only the church remains of the Order of Saint Benedict, which was dedicated to the Virgin (may She be ever blessed), in which there are five altars, and where God sheds wondrous power on the altar consecrated to Her, for no light may burn there.

**REFRAIN:** [That One ...]

**VERSE 3:** [No light] of any oil except that of olives, very clean and pure. Although linseed oil may burn before the others, it is unthinkable that it should be burned before the Virgin's altar. This is proven many times during the year, and it has become the custom.

**REFRAIN:** [That One...]

**VERSE 4:** Knights, farmers, priests, monks, barefoot friars, and preachers often prove this to be true, for although they have tried to light other combustible oils there, they immediately went out and would not burn at all.

**REFRAIN:** [That One ...]

**VERSE 5:** Therefore, the people of that place do not dare to be so bold as to burn any other oil there, since they fail foolishly each time they try. For this reason they go back to burning olive oil in the lamps, as is the custom.

**REFRAIN:** [That One ...]

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rhythms, and, for the most part, only one note per syllable of text; all of the settings are monophonic. In “Aquila en que Deus,” there are really only two different musical phrases for the entire cantiga. The Cantigas show a number of interesting relationships. The melodies and their form—verse, refrain—are quite similar to the troubadour repertory; they coincide with the end of the era in which troubadours were active on the other side of the Pyrenees Mountains in France, although their subject matter is unique to Iberia. The artistic styles and patterns of the illustrations in the cantiga manuscripts indicate an obvious influence from the Islamic world. The Arabs had been in Spain for several hundred years at that point, and some of the musical instruments in the cantiga manuscript illuminations are clearly modeled on Arab instruments. The rhyme scheme of most of the Cantigas, one that was popular at Alfonso’s court, is known as *zajal*, an Arabic form. All of this suggests that while the music seems to be related to the northern repertory, the texts probably were influenced by Arabic literature.

**ITALIAN LAUDE.** The small body of surviving Italian monophonic songs consists almost entirely of *laude spirituali* (spiritual praises), all of them in the vernacular language and on religious subjects. The laude were the repertory of the numerous religious confraternities (groups united for a common purpose such as the veneration of a saint or other figure) in many North Italian cities during the late Middle Ages. Citizens by the hundreds joined these societies, some joining several, which would meet regularly (sometimes weekly), and sing the laude in procession. Approximately 150 laude exist with music from before the mid-fourteenth century; most are fairly simple in terms of range and rhythms; nearly all of them are in stanza form with a verse and refrain, suggesting soloist-chorus performance.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: The Laity and Popular Beliefs; Theater: The Development of Liturgical Drama*

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## THE EARLIEST POLYPHONIC MUSIC

**ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT.** The most far-reaching addition to music during the Middle Ages was the invention of polyphony—music in more than one

part—an aspect of Western art that is not duplicated in any other culture. The idea itself undoubtedly originated centuries earlier than the earliest written evidence or even the first mention in theoretical treatises. In its simplest forms polyphony can easily be improvised as, for example, when two or more performers simultaneously sing the same song at different pitches, and it still exists in that form in a number of cultures. But the musicians of Europe took the idea quite a bit further, developing and refining the practice to a level of complexity that could not be extemporized, but required long thought-out and calculated written composition. Monophonic music, both chant and the secular compositions, continued to be performed throughout the Middle Ages and long after, but once invented, polyphony invaded all forms with dramatic consequences. It added an entire new body of works to sacred music, supplementing the chant and even replacing it on special occasions. The effect was somewhat different on secular music, where polyphonic music became the treasured repertory of the upper classes, creating a musical class distinction that had not existed previously.

**THE EARLIEST FORMS.** Instruction and information about polyphony is found in theoretical treatises from as early as the *De harmonica institutione* (Melodic Instruction), written by the monk Hucbald c. 900, and later expanded and developed in a number of treatises including *Micrologus* (Little Discussion), by Guido of Arezzo. The basis of the technique comes from parallel motion, which is described by Hucbald as the sound that results when a man and a boy sing the same melody simultaneously, each one in his own range. Extensions of this idea include refinements made by one of the voices varying from exact parallel at different times, creating different harmonies, or one voice moving slowly while the other moves quickly, filling in the gap with ornamental passages. All of these techniques are known as “organum,” and the earliest written examples of the technique can be found in eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscripts from England and France. By the twelfth century additional experiments revolving around the monastery of Saint-Martial in Limoges (central France) involved composing two lines of music with separate melodic profiles, which resulted in constantly changing harmonies between the two parts. It is at this point that we can mark the true beginning of composed polyphony, the most distinguishing mark of Western art music.

**NOTRE DAME ORGANUM AND THE SUBSTITUTE CLAUSULAE.** Along with the construction of the Gothic Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris in the twelfth century came distinctive and far-reaching experiments in composition of a new polyphonic repertory by two of the

cathedral's choirmasters: Master Leonin and Master Perotin. These compositions, called *organum*, consisted of a new added part above the traditional chant. Leonin (c. 1135–1201) is credited with originating the *Magnus liber organi* (Great Book of Organum), which contains several different kinds of innovative compositions, including organum sections for Graduals, Alleluias, and Responsories for the entire liturgical year. Leonin's organum compositions were intended to be substitutes for those phrases of plainchant usually sung by a soloist. When organum passages are applied to a chant, the result is an interruption of the monophonic performance with a section in which a rapid upper part is sung by a soloist against the long, sustained lower notes of the original chant, followed by a return to the unison chanting of the choir. The new sections are known as *substitute clausulae* because their purpose was to take the place of a phrase (clausula) already present in the chant.

**DISCANT.** Perotin, who followed Leonin as leader of the Notre-Dame cathedral choir, took the next step and added to the substitute repertory in the form of a new rhythmic organization of the original chant notes with a much lower ratio between the number of notes in the upper and lower parts. Perotin's style of composition, called *discant*, brings a heightened sense of rhythmic flow to the substitute sections. In performance, therefore, an Alleluia in which both organum and discant sections have been substituted would take on a format in which, for example, only three sections of plainchant performed by the whole choir might be alternated with six sections of organum or discant. The change from the original plainchant version of the Alleluia would be that the choir participation has been substantially reduced because both organum and discant sections are performed by two soloists, one of whom sings the original chant while the other adds the newly composed organum or discant melody above it.

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## MOTETS AND CANONS

**THE MOTET: A NEW FAVORITE FORM.** The motet, which originated in the early thirteenth century, quickly grew to be one of the most important of the new polyphonic inventions. Through the final three centuries of the Middle Ages it became the form of choice for com-

posers who were looking to experiment with techniques, to extend the boundaries of form, harmony, and inter-relationship among the parts, and to try new ideas in notation. From its inception it was intended to mark a particular occasion, and this emphasis continued to grow, as did the size of the compositions themselves. The technique of motet writing itself came about as a natural extension of the substitute clausula practice. When composing a new upper part for the chant section, instead of duplicating the text of the lower voice part, the composer would add a new text for the new part. The name *motet* is a Latinized form of the French word "mot," meaning "word," referring to the additional set of words. In the earliest examples, the added text was related to the text of the original part, glossing or amplifying the sentiment. This can be seen as analogous to the trope tradition (see above), except that instead of interrupting the original text with the new commentary, it was sung simultaneously.

**MOTET FORMS AND VARIATIONS.** The most common format for a motet throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was three voice parts: two new upper melodies composed above a borrowed (that is, pre-existing) melody in the lowest voice. The lowest voice, the one borrowed from a chant (or later, from another composition) was referred to as the *tenor*, from the Latin *tenere* meaning "to hold," referring back to organum in which the chant notes were slowed down—that is, "held out" for a longer duration. The next voice was called alto, meaning "high," and the highest was the soprano, from the Italian *sopra*, meaning "above." Shortly after its invention in the early thirteenth century, composers began to experiment with the motet, and the form quickly took on a number of different genre and variations. From its rather humble and subservient beginning as an addition to a chant section, the motet quickly became a completely independent composition that could be substituted for chants in certain places within the liturgy, for example at the Communion. At first the lowest part, the tenor, was usually chosen from an existing sacred source, and the text of the added part was related to that of the tenor. But many motets were designed for performance outside of the liturgy, some obviously intended for a secular setting. In these, the tenor was not necessarily from a sacred source, nor were the added texts in Latin; the vernacular (that is, the language of the region) could also be used. And the subject matter of the new texts, even for those built on sacred tenors, is sometimes on decidedly earthy topics. This was music for an educated class who reveled in the sophistication of the subtle cross-references among the texts as well as their harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic interplay.



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A MUSICAL PUZZLE**

**INTRODUCTION:** A puzzle canon is an example of the kind of intellectual “games” that were often employed by composers during the late Middle Ages. In the example here, “Agnus dei” from the *Missa L’Homme armé*, the symbol at

the extreme left of the staff lines is a clef sign marking F on the middle line, and the vertical grouping of four symbols immediately before the beginning of the music on the top line corresponds to the four parts that will be sung. The musicians would “solve” the puzzle by following the markings at the beginning of the music, which direct them to sing the same melody at four different speeds and pitches, turning it into a four-part composition. The result for the opening section is transcribed on the facing page.

**Liber III.** 445

**Petri Platenfis III uocum fuga**  
**exunica ad Hypodorium.**

COURTESY OF JOHN FRIEDMAN.

**COMPLEXITIES AND PUZZLES.** The motet was usually singled out as a format for introducing complexities of melody, rhythm, and tempo into compositional structures. The initial idea of simultaneous sets of words that played on one another suggested to the composers that such intellectual “games” could be extended to the actual construction of the music as well. The most interesting and long lasting of these techniques is known as *isorhythm*, a device in which a particular rhythmic sequence is chosen more or less arbitrarily and the melody is then sung

in the chosen rhythmic sequence, repeating the rhythm exactly throughout the composition. Refinements and variations involve whether or not the rhythmic sequence coincides with the length of the melodic phrases, and how many voice parts of any one composition are set in isorhythm. One of the most spectacular displays of the isorhythmic technique can be found in the four-voice motet *Veni sancte Spiritus—Veni Creator Spiritus* by John Dunstaple. The composer writes all four voice parts in different isorhythmic patterns that do not coincide with

### A Puzzle Canon: "Agnus Dei"

Transcription of opening section.

The image shows a musical score for a four-part canon. The top staff is in treble clef with a common time signature (C) and a 2/4 time signature. The second staff is in treble clef with a common time signature (C) and a 3/4 time signature. The third staff is in bass clef with a 3/8 time signature and a common time signature (C). The bottom staff is in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature and a common time signature (C). Each staff begins with a mensural sign: a common time (C) for the first, a circle (O) for the second, a circle with a 3 (O3) for the third, and a common time (C) for the fourth. The notes are written in a medieval style with stems and flags.

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the melodic material, and then further complicates the structure by speeding up the pace of each section of the piece by means of tempo signs based on a mathematical ratio. The imposition of such strict formal devices has the potential of stifling artistic creativity, but in the hands of a skillful composer like Dunstaple, the product is as much a musical triumph as it is a technical *tour-de-force*.

**CANON.** Another compositional device on the level of an intellectual game, applied to polyphonic music, was *canon* (canon = rule), which required the performers to solve a puzzle presented either in words or in symbols in order to perform the composition, only part of which was actually written down. The written form provided cryptic directions for deriving an added part from what was already on the page. "Cry without ceasing," for example, the only direction given on one such composition, results in the addition of a complete second part if one singer performs only the notes but not the rests, while another singer performs the line exactly as written, including its rests. On a similar level are the compositions written as only a single part with several different symbols indicating tempo (known as mensural signs), which will yield a polyphonic composition when the piece is performed simultaneously at different pitches

and speeds. In the "puzzle canon" illustration, the mensural signs indicate that the melody should be sung in the following manner (the first note is to begin where the sign itself is located).

The uppermost part  $\text{C}$  begins on high D, and proceeds in duple time.

The next part  $\text{O}$  begins on G, and proceeds in triple time.

The next part  $\text{O}3$  begins on lower D (the actual notated pitch), and proceeds in a faster triple time.

The bottom part  $\text{C}$  begins on low G, and proceeds in a slow duple time.

**ROUNDS AND CATCHES.** Other musical forms also employed the device of canon in performance, although not usually as complicated as those used in the motet. The most obvious of these is the "round" format, in which a single line of music is marked for successive beginnings in the manner of the well-known "Frère Jacques" or "Three Blind Mice." A variation of this is found in the fourteenth-century repertory of both France and Italy, known as *chace* (French), or *caccia* (Italian). The word literally refers to a hunt, but thinly veiled

beneath a superficially naive text, it always has an erotic double meaning. Because the second voice enters later than the first but starts at the beginning, the singers are always at different places in the same text and melody. The composer cleverly constructs the melodic line so that words from one line are interspersed among those of another, producing a completely new meaning, and one that cannot be seen by merely viewing the text itself. These are quite entertaining to hear, many of them containing onomatopoeic sounds such as dogs barking or trumpets sounding. The English “catch” of the seventeenth century is related to this form.

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### POLYPHONIC SECULAR MUSIC AND NATIONAL STYLES

**FROM DANCE TO ART MUSIC.** Soon after its development, the new polyphonic technique was employed by composers to set non-religious songs, applying it to the different regional types that already existed as monophonic forms. Secular songs stemmed mostly from music intended for dancing, and, in their monophonic format, retained many of the characteristics of dance music, including regular rhythmic patterns and simple melodies with regular phrases. Once polyphony was adopted for this repertory, however, its relationship to dance became increasingly distant. Polyphony, with its potential for complex interrelationships among the parts, tempted the composers to experiment with refinements and sophistications on all levels. The result was a growing body of art music that set traditional poetic text forms, but was technically much more demanding than its monophonic predecessors. By the late fourteenth century the polyphonic secular repertory had replaced much of the monophonic in courtly circles, both in quantity and in prestige.

**COURT MUSICIANS.** The performance of these pieces required the ability to read music and therefore they were the domain of musically literate performers, both amateur and professional. The resident musicians

in the major courts adopted this new collection of compositions in their daily performances; kings, counts, dukes, the pope, and cardinals in all areas prided themselves on the quality of their court musicians, and vied with one another to hire the highest quality performers and composers and to commission manuscripts of the new repertory. Musical establishments such as those at the French court in Paris, the Sforza’s in Milan, and the papal court first in Avignon and later in Rome became havens for the finest musicians, but none reached the prestige of that of the duke of Burgundy, whose ensemble of vocal and instrumental musicians set the standards for all of Europe well into the fifteenth century.

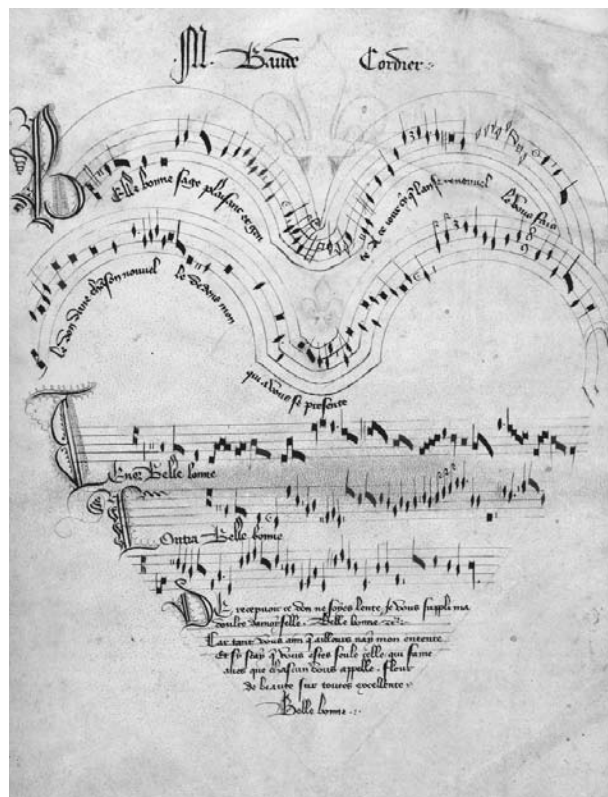
**BURGUNDIAN DOMINANCE.** Initially the styles and techniques of the polyphonic songs were as regional as the monophonic secular repertory, but that soon changed. By the end of the fourteenth century the most influential musical style was that of the area known as Burgundy, including much of what is now northeastern France as well as Belgium and the Netherlands. As the political power of Philip the Bold (duke of Burgundy 1364–1404) grew in the last decades of the fourteenth century, so too did his cultural influence, spreading his musical preferences throughout Europe. Franco-Netherlandish sacred and secular music influenced the writing of composers in all of Europe, especially in Italy where not only the northern repertory was imported, but also the composers and performers themselves. A single example of the influence of the Burgundian musical tastes can be seen in the area of dancing: the fifteenth-century choreographed dances in Italy, Spain, Germany, and England all were modeled on the Burgundian *basse danse*. Not only was the idea of choreographed dancing itself of Burgundian origin, but also the way in which the music was formally composed as only a single line of long notes that was to be expanded in performance into polyphonic form by the musicians themselves. Even the make-up of the usual dance band was copied from the ensemble at the Burgundian court: two shawms and a slide trumpet. There is very little surviving secular polyphony from the other European countries, owing to a combination of factors that include the ravages of time and war, and a preference for the improvisatory style. Whatever the reason, we do not have a significant body of secular polyphony representing England, Germany, or Spain until the very end of the fifteenth century.

**FRANCE AND THE CHANSON.** The French secular forms of the late Middle Ages were based on earlier dance music, all of which was built on a verse-refrain structure matching the construction of the poetry. The *chanson* (meaning “song”) repertory consisted of hundreds of

compositions in the forms well established from the time of the troubadours: *rondeau*, *ballade*, and *virelai*. By the time they became polyphonic, however, around the year 1300, it is doubtful that they still had a practical dance association; their structure and the subtle nature of their rhythmic flow would make them difficult to dance. All of the forms were in two melodic sections, differing from one another only in the way in which the repeat scheme works and whether or not the music for the refrain was also used for part of the verse. The existence of a refrain in each of them suggests a performance in which a soloist sings the verse and everyone else (the chorus) sings the refrain. Undoubtedly this was the performance practice in the earlier Middle Ages, but the later, more complex, polyphonic songs probably were completely sung by soloists. There is a special repertory of *chanson* from around the year 1400 that is full of notational complexities that make them extremely difficult to read and transcribe into modern notation. They are often referred to as *Ars subtilior* (the subtler art), and when performed have a slightly “jazzy” sound because of their rhythms.

**FRENCH FORMS.** The *rondeau* (round dance) is the most complex form because the standard two sections of music are both used as the performer sings first the refrain, then the verse, and then again the refrain. This is further complicated by the insertion of a half refrain in the middle of the verse, as opposed to all other forms, where the refrain is always sung in its entirety, either at the beginning or the end of the verse. (For an example of a monophonic *rondeau* see Dance Chapter, “Vocis Tripudio.”) A different complexity occurs in the *ballade* (which simply means “dance,” as in the modern English word *ball*). Although the music of a *ballade* is again in two sections, the relationship between the verse and refrain is unbalanced because the refrain is usually quite short and therefore occupies only a part of the second section of music. The third type, the *virelai* (twist) is more similar to the *rondeau*. In this case, the refrain both begins and ends the musical setting, although it is not inserted in the middle of the verse as is the *rondeau* refrain.

**BIRD-SONG.** The texts of all of the *chansons* were usually the same idealized love topics found in the courtly love poems from the time of the troubadours and trouvères, although by the fourteenth century the language was not quite so stylized. There is one unusual type of text occasionally employed in the *virelai*, in which birds and their calls are included in the words and the music in order to symbolize particular sentiments. The bird symbolism included the following: the eagle, suggesting power or royalty; the lark, indicating mourn-



A love song written in the shape of a heart. Baude Cordier, Polyphonic *chanson*, Chantilly, France, Musée Condé MS 1047, folio 11v., 15th century. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE NY.

ing or warning; the crow, a sign of craftiness or mockery; the cuckoo, referring to cuckoldry; the falcon, suggesting power and danger; the peacock, a sign of beauty and vanity; the nightingale, symbolizing night and erotic love; and the turtle dove, indicating fidelity. In some of the polyphonic bird-song *virelais*, the singer professes one message in words while the bird sounds in the accompanying parts suggest something completely different.

**POLYPHONIC MUSIC IN ITALY.** There is very little surviving secular polyphonic music from Italy until the mid-fourteenth century, owing to the prominence of improvisation. When we do find some written music, it is quite different from the French style in that the melodies are far more rhapsodic, often organized as elaborations of the notes in the scale in contrast to the French style of short rhythmic-melodic motifs with clear phrase shapes. The early Italian compositions appear to be rather close images of what must have been the free improvisatory style. The largest collection of Italian music from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries is contained in a beautifully illuminated manuscript that once belonged to Antonio Squarcialupi (1416–1480),

## STRUCTURE of Medieval Song Forms

Nearly all secular songs in the Middle Ages were composed of two musical sections, but, unlike many modern songs where there is generally one melody for the “verses” (units made of a number of lines, each of which is sung only once) and another for the “refrain” (a line or group of lines that is repeated at regular intervals), the two sections of music in medieval songs were matched in a number of different ways with lines of text. In fact, the main difference between medieval song forms is that they differ in the way in which the lines of the verses and the refrains are distributed between the musical sections.

### Modern Song Form

To understand how medieval song form worked, it is useful to look first at a simple modern verse and refrain pattern. In modern songs, including many church hymns and national anthems, verses usually alternate with refrains, either of which may include several musical lines. In some songs the verses may be long and the refrains short, while in others the pattern is reversed. The words of the verses change with each repetition of the verse melody, but the words of the refrain, set to a different melody, remain the same:

Musical Sections	A	B	
Text sections	1. verse	2. refrain	
	3. verse	2. refrain	
	5. verse	2. refrain	
	7. verse	2. refrain	
	etc.		

### Minnesinger Bar Form

In this German form, the singer sings text lines (or groups of lines) one and two to musical phrase A, then sings the third line (or group of lines) to musical phrase B. The first A setting, for example, might contain four lines of text; in this case, then, the second A section would be identical in music and number of text lines, though the words would be different. The B section would introduce another new set of words and music, and might have a different number of lines altogether.

Musical Phrases	A	B
Text lines	1	2
		3

### Cantiga Form

In a cantiga, a Spanish song form, the first section of music (A) acts as a setting for the refrain. Then, after two verses that are each sung to a new musical section (B), the first music (A, originally used for the refrain) reappears as a setting for an additional verse. The entire pattern can be repeated, beginning again with the refrain.

Musical Phrases	A	B
Text lines	1 refrain	2 verse
		3 verse
	4 verse	

### Rondeau Form

In this complex medieval form originating in France, the words of the refrain (which, in this version, is two

Florentine organist, composer, and friend of the powerful Medici family. The Squarcialupi Codex (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, MS Palatino 87) contains 354 compositions by twelve of the most important Italian composers of the late Middle Ages, preceding the collection of each composer’s works with a portrait. Most compositions are for two or three voices, and all are on secular subjects, written in three of the most important Italian musical/poetic forms: madrigal, ballata, and caccia. Composers represented in the manuscript are known to have worked in important north Italian courts such as Milan, Ferrara, Venice, and Florence.

**MADRIGAL.** Although the madrigal is one of the dominant musical/poetic forms in late medieval Italy, its origins and even the meaning of the word itself are

unclear. (The medieval madrigal should not be confused with the late Renaissance form.) Several theories have, however, been put forward. Its verse-refrain format suggests a possible relationship with dance forms, although what that might be is not certain. In any case its subject matter is usually a pastoral love theme, although there are some with strong political references. A typical madrigal format is in two musical sections—one for the verse and one for the refrain (ritornello).

**BALLATA.** The name *ballata*, from *ballare* (to dance), makes the original purpose of this form quite clear. In fact, one of the most striking images of the ballata in fourteenth-century Italian society can be found in Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, a collection of 100 fictional tales told by ten young people assembled in a

lines in length) and verses (one line each) go back and forth between the two sections of music with three repetitions of the first tune in the middle of the song, so that the order is as follows: Music A (refrain line one), Music B (refrain line two), Music A (first verse), Music A (refrain line one), Music A (second verse), Music B (third verse), Music A (refrain line one), Music B (refrain line two):

Musical Sections	A	B	
Poetic lines	1. refrain	2. refrain	
	3. verse		
	1. refrain		
	5. verse	6. verse	
	1. refrain	2. refrain	

**Ballade Form**

Verses in the French ballade generally ranged from 4 to 6 lines in length; the refrain was shorter, so as to combine with a half-verse on the second singing of musical section B.

Musical Sections	A	B	
Poetic lines	1. verse		
	2. verse		
		3. verse	
		4. half-verse and refrain	

**Virelai Form**

In the virelai, another French form, the refrain, sung only to melody A, is sung at the beginning of the song and then again following the three verses of each stanza.

The first two verses are sung to the second melody (B), and the third verse uses the melody of the refrain (A).

Musical Sections	A	B	
Poetic lines	1. refrain		
			2. verse
			3. verse
			4. verse
			1. refrain

**Madrigal Form**

The format of a madrigal, an Italian form, is fairly simple: the two verses, which are similar in length, are sung to the A melody, and the ritornello, which usually has fewer lines of text, has its own melody (B).

Musical Sections	A	B	
Poetic lines	1. verse		
	2. verse		
			3. ritornello

**Ballata Form**

The Italian ballata form is exactly the same as the French virelai.

Musical Sections	A	B	
Poetic lines	1. refrain		
			2. verse
			3. verse
			4. verse
			5. refrain (same text as 1)

country home to avoid the plague. In the story, each of the refugees is called upon every evening after dinner to improvise a ballata while the others dance. The ballata is in the verse-refrain form with two musical sections and the subject matter is always love.

**CACCIA.** The *caccia* (hunt) is usually written as a single melodic line that becomes polyphonic when a second voice enters after the first, singing the same music (see “Complexities” above). A few of these compositions have a textless accompanying part, but the form in all of them is a single verse without a refrain. The texts, although superficially about hunting, fishing, market scenes, and fires, usually carry a double meaning that is revealed only when the words of one phrase are interspersed among those of another during performance.

**FRANCESCO LANDINI.** Because the Squarcialupi Codex is retrospective, it includes compositions in the older Italian style with long, flowing, elaborate passages, as well as those composed later in the century by Francesco Landini. These are written with shorter, less elaborate phrases, demonstrating the strong influence of the French style. By the mid-fifteenth century, French culture had made such strong inroads into Italy that Italian courts began to import northern composers, performers, and repertory in preference to employing native musicians. Italian performers and composers continued to be hired in Italian courts throughout the fifteenth century, but the most prestigious positions were given to the northerners. It is worth noting that the motets commissioned for some of the most significant people



Page from Squarcialupi Codex, 1320. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

and events in Italy were written by northerners, as, for example, by Johannes Ciconia for Michele Steno, Doge of Venice, in 1406; by Bertrand Feragut for Francesco Malpiero, Bishop of Vicenza, in 1433; and by Guillaume Dufay for the consecration of the Cathedral of Florence in 1436 (see below).

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SEE ALSO *Dance: Popular Dances*; *Dance: Additional Dance Types*

## DUFAY AND THE LATE MEDIEVAL CEREMONIAL MOTET

**MUSIC FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS.** In addition to its role as the leading format for new and creative experiments, in the fourteenth century the motet expanded its prominence as the composition of choice for the most important occasions. From its origin it was written with a particular function in mind; the form had the flexibility of being appropriate in both sacred and secular settings, and, as the accepted vehicle for the most avant-garde experiments as well as the most sophisticated technical devices, it was suitably elegant to commemorate even the most special affair. From the mid-fourteenth century, a dedicatory or ceremonial motet was the logical form to be adopted by composers who were called upon to set texts celebrating events such as coronations of kings, weddings of nobles, elevation of cardinals, or other such monumental occasions, both sacred and secular.

**NUPER ROSARUM FLORES.** One such special occasion that called for a ceremonial motet was the dedication of one of the finest cathedrals in Italy. Guillaume Dufay's motet *Nuper rosarum flores* (Recently Roses Blossomed), written for the consecration of Santa Maria del Fiore, the cathedral in Florence, deservedly has become one of the most celebrated compositions of the late Middle Ages. It is a musical masterpiece and exhibits the kinds of sophisticated techniques that were employed by composers to mark such important ceremonies. New construction for the Cathedral of Florence was begun around the year 1300 as an expansion of the older and much smaller Church of Santa Reparata. Construction continued throughout the fourteenth century but could not be completed until the architect Filippo Brunelleschi was able to work out a design for the enormous dome. When this work was finally done, Pope Eugenius IV presided over the consecration of the cathedral on 25 March 1436, with Dufay, Brunelleschi, and numerous other dignitaries in attendance. Dufay's motet to honor the occasion is an excellent example of the kind of sophistication that was built into both the text and music in these symbolic works.

**TEXT AND MELODY.** The tenor of *Nuper rosarum* is appropriately chosen from the antiphon for the consecration of a church, *Terribilis est locus iste*—"Redoubtable is this place," referring to the unholiness of the edifice prior to its consecration to God. The text of the upper two voice parts is a Latin poem in four stanzas that was

written specifically for the occasion; it refers to the dedication of the cathedral and the city of Florence, mentions Pope Eugenius as the successor of Jesus Christ and Saint Peter, and makes allusions to the Temple of Jerusalem erected by King Solomon. The musical construction is for four voices in four sections that do not coincide with the text stanzas; each section moves at a different pace. The two upper voice parts—the only parts with text—have a continuous flow of melody without repetition. They trace separate rhythmic patterns and do not sing the same words at the same time except for the name of the pope, “Eugenius,” which is also set off from the surrounding material by sustained notes. The lower two parts are in strict isorhythm, having a single melody that is repeated for each of the four sections. These two parts—called “tenor I” and “tenor II”—have the same melody, but are performed at different pitches and do not begin or end at the same time. They are written out only once with the four different tempos indicated by mensural signs (see *canons* above).

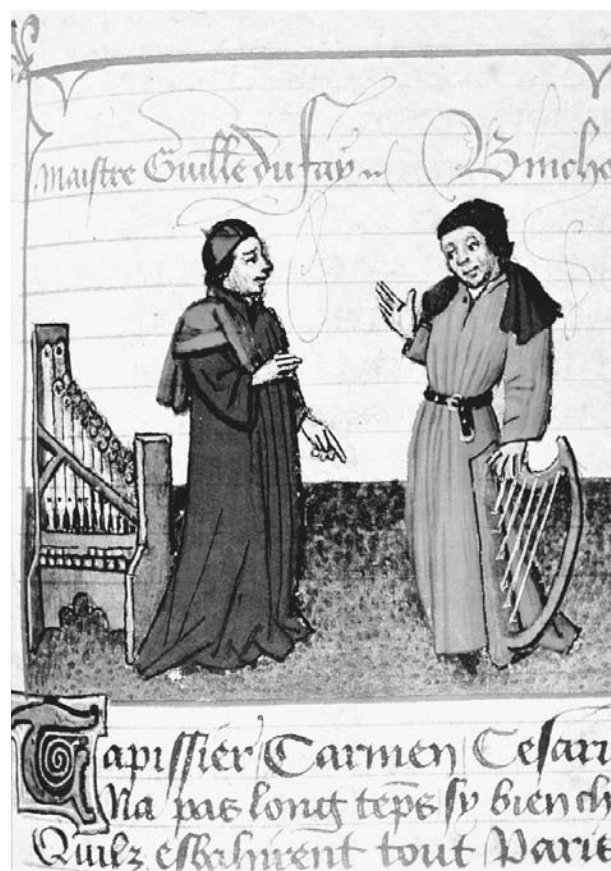
**SYMBOLIC RATIOS.** The construction of the motet and its text also incorporates some complex symbolism involving references to the Temple of Solomon that are present in the text and represented in the proportions and ratios of the musical construction; Dufay’s tempos for the four sections of the motet are in the ratio 6:4:2:3, which match the dimensions of Solomon’s Temple, given in the Bible (I Kings 6:1–20) as 60 x 40 x 20 x 30. *Nuper rosarum flores* is a classic assembly of medieval motet techniques, incorporating the complex musical features as well as the sophisticated textual and symbolic ingredients that mark this form throughout the late Middle Ages.

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### GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT’S MESSE DE NOSTRE DAME

**A UNIFIED MASS.** Sometime before 1365 the French poet and cleric Guillaume de Machaut composed a new work including the five sections of the Mass Ordinary—



Two composers Guillaume Dufay and Gilles Binchois. Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des dames*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MS fr. 12476, 1451. THE ART ARCHIVE.

Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus—plus the dismissal, the *Ite Missa Est* (“Go, the Mass is done”). As a point of unification, the composer selected relevant chants for each section as the borrowed tenor of each movement (that is, a Kyrie chant for his Kyrie, and so on). Each of these came from chants that were assigned for feasts in honor of the Blessed Virgin. In doing this he created the earliest unified set of Mass Ordinary movements. What is unusual about this concept, in addition to the fact that there is no similar model on the level of the chant practices, is that in the celebration of the Mass, with the exception of the Kyrie and Gloria, the items of the Ordinary are separated from one another by a number of different prayers and chants, that is, they are not performed one after the other as in a modern-day concert performance, and therefore to think of these Mass items on the level of an artistic whole is to impose an abstract artistic idea on something that had never been considered from that point of view. The original intention for creating this rather unusual assembly of polyphonic movements was for use at the special mass



in honor of the Virgin Mary (the *Messe de Notre Dame* or “Mass of Our Lady”), which since 1341 had been celebrated on Saturdays in one of the chapels in Reims Cathedral, where Machaut was a canon (a member of the clergy on the permanent staff). Later, however, in conformity with the wills of both Guillaume and his brother Jean (who also was a canon at the cathedral), the mass was transformed into a memorial service for the two of them following their deaths (Jean in 1372, Guillaume in 1377).

**STYLE, FUNCTION, AND FORM.** The individual movements of the Mass of Notre Dame employ two distinctly separate structural models and styles, dictated at least in part by the function and form of the movement itself. For the four movements with relatively small amounts of text—Kyrie, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and *Ite Missa Est*—Machaut chose the style he used in his elaborate motets: the upper lines proceed with more or less independent rhythmic motion and long rhapsodic (that is, somewhat irregular and richly decorative) melodic sections over a tenor set in isorhythm (see above, “Complexities”). Unlike his motets, however, there is only a single text in each movement, which is sung by all four voices. The texts of both Gloria and Credo are quite lengthy, and therefore Machaut set these movements in a style reminiscent of the earlier discant style (see above, “Notre Dame Organum”) having short phrases, similar rhythmic motion in all parts, and a low ratio of notes per syllable of text, both ending with long, rhapsodic sections for the final word, “Amen.” An additional feature of the Mass of Notre Dame was that it was for four voices rather than the more common three; Machaut added a voice called *contratenor* (meaning “against the tenor”) that moved in the same low range as the tenor part, sometimes replacing it as the lowest voice.

**INNOVATION AND INFLUENCE.** Machaut’s innovations, both the assembling of a complete set of Ordinary movements and the expansion to four-voice texture, became an important influence on sacred musical composition for the next several hundred years. One additional detail also was copied by most composers to follow him; in setting the phrase “Et incarnatus est” (“and He was made flesh”) in the Credo, Machaut abruptly stops the motion in all parts so that each syllable is sustained, and then returns to the previous pace, thus drawing attention to a key Christian belief. Although the techniques and styles have changed over the centuries, the concept that originated in the late Middle Ages of a single composer organizing all of the Ordinary movements of a mass into an artistic whole persists to the present day and includes such universally acclaimed contributions as Johann Sebastian Bach’s Mass in B Minor.

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## THE CYCLIC MASS TRADITION: MISSA CAPUT

**SHARED MUSICAL MATERIAL.** The term “cyclic mass” refers to a mass in which all five movements have musical material in common. One of the earliest is the *Missa Caput* in which all movements are composed over the same section of chant—a long, rhapsodic passage on the word *caput* (head), the last word in the Holy Thursday chant *Venit ad Petrum*. The anonymous English composer of this work assigns the chant to the tenor part of each of the five movements, and further unifies the movements by beginning each of them with the same small melodic-rhythmic motif.

**THE CONTRATENOR BASSUS.** The Caput Mass also displays another technique that was more and more becoming the norm in all polyphonic composition: writing the fourth voice part below the tenor rather than above it, creating the *contratenor bassus* (“against the tenor but lower,” later known simply as the bass part). The technical implication of this change is substantial, since it is the lowest voice that governs the harmony. When the tenor voice was the lowest, it was the borrowed material that played a substantial role in determining the harmonic content of the composition. By adding a lower, newly composed voice part, the composer had far more control of the harmonic flow of the composition.

**ABSTRACT RELATIONSHIPS.** The *Missa Caput* probably was written in the 1440s, and it was immediately followed by many more cyclic masses, including two additional masses using the same borrowed tenor. It is interesting to note that while the *Missa Caput* is organized around a tenor melody borrowed from the liturgy, the relationship between the borrowed material and the use to which it is put is far more abstract than when the relationship is direct—that is, when a Kyrie chant is borrowed as the basis for a polyphonic Kyrie, as in the Machaut Mass (see above). The Caput chant, on the other hand, is not from any of the parts of the Ordinary, and therefore it is foreign to each of the sections where it is employed as a controlling and unifying device. Once the model had been set for this kind of abstract relationship, composers felt free to choose their

organizing material from any kind of sacred or even secular source: *Missa Ave maris stella* (“Hail, Star of the Sea”), based on a hymn, took its place next to *Missa L’Homme armé* (“The Armed Man”), on a popular tune, and Guillaume Dufay’s *Missa Se la face ay pale* (“If My Face Is Pale”), on a love song also written by Dufay.

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### MISSA SE LA FACE AY PALE

#### SECULAR ELEMENTS IN THE SACRED REPERTORY.

In 1434–35, while Guillaume Dufay was first in the service of the duke of Savoy, he wrote a chanson, *Se la face ay pale*, thought to be in honor of Anne de Lusignan, who was the duchess of Savoy (part of the kingdom of Burgundy). Although his whereabouts prior to 1452 are unknown, it is clear that he lived in Savoy between 1452 and 1458, and among the many compositions he wrote for various occasions was a cyclic mass, the *Missa Se la face ay pale*, based on the tenor of the earlier chanson. One can only guess at what might have been the very special significance the earlier chanson had for the Savoy court.

**PUNNING RHYMES.** The text of the chanson is an unusual ballade because instead of the usual lines of eight or ten syllables, *Se la face ay pale* has only five, in a complicated format known as *équivoquée* (punning rhyme). Unfortunately, the numerous puns (pale/principale, amer/amer/la mer, voir/voir/avoir) in the text do not translate from French to English, but it is possible nonetheless to get an idea of the difficulty of this format from observing the range of meanings that are created from words with almost identical sounds.

Se la face ay pale  
 La cause est amer. [“amer”=love]  
 C’est la principale,  
 Et tant m’est amer [“amer”=bitter]  
 Amer, qu’en la mer [“amer”=to love, “la mer”=the sea]  
 Me voudroye voir. [“voir”=see]  
 Or scet bien de voir [“de voir”=truly]  
 La belle a qui suis  
 Que nul bien avoir [“avoir”=have]  
 Sans elle ne puis.  
 If my face is pale  
 the reason is love.

That is the main cause,  
 and love is so bitter  
 for me that I wish to  
 drown myself in the sea.  
 So she can truly know,  
 the fair one to whom I belong,  
 that I cannot have any joy  
 without her. [two more stanzas]

Dufay’s musical setting of the chanson text is also unusual in that he wrote a continuous single unit of music with short phrases rather than the usual format with two sections and longer melodic phrases.

**FAST AND SLOW.** In writing the *Missa Se la face ay pale*, Dufay borrows only the tenor line, which he places in the tenor voice in all five movements. In the shorter movements (Kyrie, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei), the chanson melody closely resembles the tenor part of earlier motets, moving at a much slower pace than the other three voices, thereby calling attention to itself. In both the Gloria and Credo, Dufay extends this idea by employing yet another motet-like technique: he repeats the chanson melody in the tenor at three speeds, beginning it three times slower than the other parts, then twice as slow, and finally at the same speed as the other voices. Borrowing a technique employed in the *Missa Caput*, Dufay further unites the movements of his mass by beginning each of the five movements with the same opening melodic-rhythmic motif.

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### THE MECHANICS OF MUSIC: SCALES AND TREATISES

**THE MEDIEVAL SCALES.** The medieval musical scales were called modes, which were described by their ranges, the location of the half-steps, the important pitches used at the beginning and end of the composition, and the “reciting tone”—the pitch used for recitation in psalms (see Plainchant, Psalms). During the Middle Ages there were eight modes, grouped into four pairs (this was enlarged to six pairs in the sixteenth century, and reduced to two—the major and minor scales presently in use—in the eighteenth century). Each mode was known by its number and by a Greek name. The names chosen were those of ancient Greek tribes that

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**AN EXAMPLE OF MUSICAL BORROWING**

**INTRODUCTION:** The love song “Se la face ay pale” (“If my face is pale ...”) was originally written by Guillaume Dufay for

the Savoy court in 1434–1435. Later he used the tenor line of the same song as the basis for an entire mass. The examples below show the opening section of the love song or *chanson*, followed by an excerpt from *Gloria* where the tenor line of the mass (third line down) is borrowed from the tenor line of the chanson (the line on the bottom).

**“Se la face ay pale”**

A CHANSON BY GUILLAUME DUFAY. OPENING SECTION.

Se la face ay pa - - - le la cause est a -

Tenor

mer c'est la prin - ci - pa - - - le

[continued]

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were believed to have exemplified the emotional character of that mode. Although the system of modes was originally invented to describe and control monophonic music, it was also applied to the polyphonic repertory. In both techniques, modal considerations dictated many decisions concerning choices of notes and harmonies to be put in important structural places in the compositions. The importance of understanding the modes to a

medieval composer and performer can be seen in that a detailed discussion of modes constituted a major portion of most theory treatises of the period.

**THEORETICAL TREATISES.** Much of our understanding of the thinking of medieval musicians, especially composers, comes from the theoretical treatises, books of instruction that provide details about the practice of writing music. The treatises are by and large ret-

**“Missa Se la face ay pale” [CONTINUED]**  
EXCERPT FROM GLORIA.

mus ——— te ——— ad - o - ra ———

te Ad - o - ra — mus - te Glor - ri - fi

Tenor

Ad - - - o - - - ra - - - - - mus

Ad - o - - - - - - - - ra - mus - te

CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

respective in that they usually report or explain current practice, rather than propose anything new. The theorists, many of them university professors and/or monks, observed the changes taking place as practices evolved over the centuries and attempted to explain them (or in some cases, condemn the changes). By looking at what issues absorbed their attention, we can follow the revisions in technique that underlay the various compositional practices.

**PRACTICAL VERSUS INTELLECTUAL THEORY.** When people in the Middle Ages discussed music in learned writings, they made a clear separation between the intellectual consideration of the art and the practical, with the practical (that is, music itself) left mostly to practitioners, and usually thought to be unworthy of intellectual discussion. Throughout the period, music was included as one of the seven liberal arts, placed in the *quadrivium* (four ways) alongside the mathematical arts of arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, rather than in the *trivium* (three ways) with the verbal arts of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Its placement indicates the way in which music was addressed: number, ratio, and proportion were actually what was considered under the subject-heading, based on the study of vibrating bodies (for

example, by dividing a vibrating string in the middle, it would vibrate at twice the speed, the ratio of 2:1). Later, these ratios influenced the consideration of perfect and imperfect intervals. Another, more philosophical or theological consideration of music was to divide it into three areas: *musica mundana*, *musica humana*, and *musica instrumentalis*. *Musica mundana* (music of the Spheres) referred to the harmony caused by the motion of heavenly bodies. *Musica humana* (music of humans) was the harmony within the human body, having to do with the balance of physical elements. *Musica instrumentalis* (instrumental music) referred to actual sounds, either sung or made by instruments. This division of music was discussed to some extent in most medieval treatises, ending in the late thirteenth century, when *mundana* and *humana* were finally dropped from the discussion following their rejection by Johannes Grocheio in his *De musica* (c. 1300), one of the earliest treatises to concentrate on the practical detail of music and the first to consider secular music, including dance.

**HARMONY AND INTERVALS.** Practical theorists during the Carolingian era (eighth to tenth centuries) were frequently concerned with the modes (see next page), attempting to regularize the practice and to explain

# MEDIEVAL Modes

The medieval method of describing a melody was to classify it according to the scale used—its distribution of

steps and half steps, its final, and its reciting tone. None of the medieval modes corresponds exactly to any of the major and minor scales used today. The sequence of steps and half-steps that differentiate the modes can be most easily described by relating them to the white notes of the piano keyboard.

**Modes: Medieval vs. Modern**

□ = the reciting tone  
 ○ = the most important note of the mode, known as its 'final,' since a composition in this mode ends on this pitch

MEDIEVAL MODES		MODERN SCALES
Mode I Dorian 	} <b>Maniera One</b>	Major (Ionian mode) 
Mode II Hypodorian 		Minor (Aeolian mode) 
Mode III Phrygian 	} <b>Maniera Two</b>	
Mode IV Hypophrygian 		
Mode V Lydian 	} <b>Maniera Three</b>	
Mode VI Hypolydian 		
Mode VII Mixolydian 	} <b>Maniera Four</b>	
Mode VIII Hypomixolydian 		

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certain chants that did not exactly fit the system. By the late ninth century, treatises begin to discuss polyphony—explaining the way in which different notes can be sounded together in harmony, classifying intervals (the distance between the pitch of two notes) as more or less harmonious according to the mathematical ratios of their vibration speeds. Those intervals whose ratios could be expressed in simple numbers were referred to as “perfect” (octave [a distance of eight notes on the diatonic scale, as in C to C], 2:1; fifth [a distance of five notes, as in C to G], 3:2; and fourth [a distance of four notes, as in C to F] 4:3); all other combinations of notes were considered dissonant to varying degrees. The classifications continued to undergo revisions throughout the remainder of the Middle Ages, with the fourth losing its status as a preferred interval, while the imperfect third became more and more accepted. Throughout the period the treatises explored the ways in which harmonies can be used to shape and control compositions.

**THEORIES OF NOTATION.** Once polyphony was well established in the twelfth century, the next new issue to appear in the treatises was notation, a topic that continues to occupy theorists down to the present day. The earliest notation recognized only three actual values: short, long, and a long that was the value of both the other two notes combined. The system allowed some freedom in the assignment of values to these notes, causing certain situations to be somewhat ambiguous. One of the earliest theorists to tackle the problem of ambiguity was Franco of Cologne, who in 1260 wrote *Ars cantus mensurabilis* (“The Art of Measured Song”), which assigns specific duration to each of the note shapes. The next step along this line was to add new flexibility to the system by subdividing the existing notes, which is the major subject of three different treatises written in Paris at the beginning of the fourteenth century: *Ars nova* (“The New Art”) once credited to Philippe de Vitry, *Ars novae musicae* (“The New Musical Art”) by Johannes de Muris, and *Speculum musicae* (“Musical Reflection”) by Jacques de Liège. The systems they describe are highly sophisticated, allowing accurate notation of minute rhythmic variations and complicated combinations. At the same time as these changes were occurring in French music, Marchettus of Padua was explaining an Italian system that was quite different. In his two treatises from approximately 1320—*Lucidarium in arte musicae planae* (“Explanation of the Art of Unmeasured Music”) and *Pomerium artis musicae mensuratae* (“Orchard-Garden of the Art of Measured Music”)—Marchettus described a system of notation as well as a group of harmonic practices that set Italian notation and harmonies apart from the French. By the mid-fifteenth century, however, the

Italian composers had abandoned their own notation and adopted that of the French. Treatises from the end of the fifteenth century, such as those by Johannes Tinctoris, demonstrate that a single system of notation and harmonic practices was in use throughout Europe.

#### SOURCES

Hugo Riemann, *History of Music Theory*. Trans. Raymond Hagg (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962).

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### SYSTEMS OF NOTATION

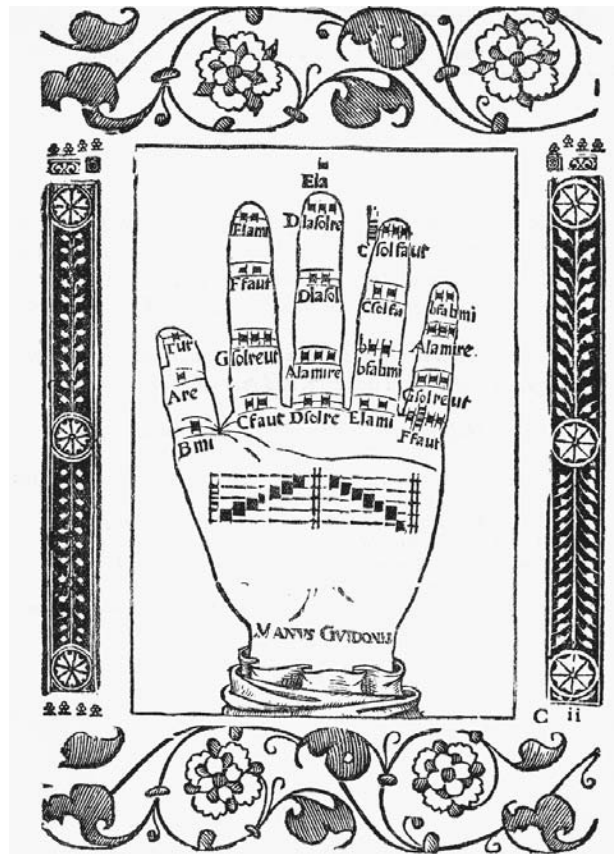
**NEUMES.** Before the invention of a system for notating music in the ninth century, music was passed on from one person to the next only by aural transmission—that is, melodies were carried only in the memory, and learned by repeated hearing. A new monk, for example, would spend hours every day for several years learning by rote memory all of the chant melodies for the entire liturgical cycle, taught by the *magister scholarum*—the director of music. The first system of notating music was developed sometime during the Carolingian era after 800 for the purpose of transmitting information about vocal performance, the nuances of a singing style. Although this led eventually to the notation system still in use today, it did not have the same purpose as modern notation, that of presenting the basic information about pitch and duration. The earliest notes, called *neumes*, required the reader to know the melody already—its pitches and its rhythms. The information provided by the neumes indicated performance details such as which sounds to separate and which to join together; when to sing a steady pitch and when to slide the voice. Although its appearance is quite startling to those of us acquainted with modern notes, the notation transmitted its message very clearly by graphically representing what the voice was to do:

a straight line / signified to sing the note with a steady voice.

a curve ∪ indicated which way the voice was to slide.

a jagged line ⇄ directed the singer to move his voice rapidly back and forth from a lower to a higher note.

**THE GUIDONIAN HAND.** The next step in the development of notation came in answer to a desire on the part of the church leaders to speed up the learning of new material as well as to transmit the melodies more accurately. Over the centuries, the tradition of aural transmission had inevitably resulted in errors and variations in some of the melodies, and church officials wanted to



Guidonian Hand. Venice, Italy, 1547. BETTMANN/CORBIS.

standardize the repertory. The result was the placement of the neumes on a graph in which lines and spaces represented the notes of the singing scale. The first such experiment was by a clever monk named Guido, a *magister scholarum* in a Benedictine monastery in Arezzo, a small town in northern Italy. Guido's first invention was to assign the notes of the scale (mode) to the knuckles of his hand, so that by pointing to a particular knuckle he could direct the choir boys to sing a certain pitch. The "Guidonian Hand" caught on very quickly and even after the development of the staff it remained one of the easiest ways to teach chant, staying in use for hundreds of years.

**LINES AND SPACES.** Guido's next invention was to mark two parallel lines on paper, representing the pitches "c" and "f" which provided two exact places where the singer could orient his voice, with the other notes located either above or below these lines, graphically representing their relationship to the two known pitches. It is this

system that evolved over the next several hundred years to the system of five lines and spaces currently in use. The notation of rhythm followed a somewhat different path. Rhythm in the earliest notation was controlled by the syllables of the text: one syllable was one unit of measure. If there was only a single note for a syllable, it received the entire unit of measure; two or more notes for a syllable all shared the single unit of time. Eventually a system was developed in which the shape of the note indicated its value:

- was long.
- was short.
- ◆ was shortest.

The basis of measure in this notation was its linkage to the heartbeat that was represented by the long note. The pace of the long note—its tempo—was declared to be the speed of the heartbeat of a healthy man at rest (approximately 60–80 beats per minute in modern terms). Although this system made it very easy to establish a basic tempo, in order to notate music that proceeded either slower or faster than the heartbeat required a complex set of neumes that were modified by stems, flags,

and colors, and a set of other symbols (mensural signs) that could reassign the heartbeat to a subdivision of the long note. This system was somewhat simplified after the fifteenth century, but remnants of it were still in use well into the time of the German composer J. S. Bach. It was eventually replaced by the modern system that developed after the invention of the metronome in the early nineteenth century.

#### SOURCES

Willi Apel, *The Notation of Polyphonic Music 900–1600*. 5th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1953).

Timothy J. McGee, *The Sound of Medieval Song* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Music*

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### ADAM DE LA HALLE

c. 1240–c. 1285

*Performer*

*Poet*

*Composer*

**THE LAST OF THE TROUVÈRES.** Adam de la Halle (c. 1240–c. 1285) is considered to be the last of the trouvères, the poet-musicians of northern France who specialized in writing poems and songs of courtly love. He was born in Arras in northern France (Picardy) and later probably studied in Paris. Also known as “Adam le Bossu” (*bossu*= hunchback), he is known for having written one of the earliest recorded secular dramas in French, a 1,099-line satiric play (apparently intended for performance at a local festival) that ridicules character traits of some of the citizens of Arras. Manuscripts of this work include music since songs were a part of the play, which had little plot but was full of proverbs and puns. Sometime after 1276, Adam entered into the service of Robert II, the count of Artois, and accompanied him to Naples where he wrote a poem about Charles d’Anjou, king of Sicily. He was celebrated as a singer as well as a poet-composer, and may have performed at a royal feast in England. His compositions include works both in the traditional monophonic style of the trouvères and also in the newly emerging polyphonic style. He wrote a number of love songs and a 780-line work closely related to the pastourelle, the famous *Jeu de Robin et de Marion* (Play of Robin and of Marion).

#### SOURCES

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 29 vols. 2nd ed. Eds. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (New York: Grove’s Dictionaries, 2001).

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### BERNART DE VENTADORN

1147–1180 or 1217

*Troubadour*

*Poet*

*Composer*

**A TROUBADOUR LOVER.** Bernart de Ventadorn (c. 1147–1180 or 1217) is one of the numerous troubadours whose biographies come to us in *vidas*, stories of the poet/composers’ lives that were included in the manuscripts along with their compositions. The accounts, which are known to be fanciful and are therefore highly suspect, record that Bernart was the son of servants in the castle of Eble II, viscount of Ventadorn (near Limoges). He fell in love with the lady of the castle about whom he wrote a number of songs, and was therefore banished from the castle. He next went to the Norman court of Eleanor of Aquitaine, again falling in love and composing songs in her honor until she left to become the wife of King Henry II of England. One theory is that at this point he stopped composing and joined a monastery. Another account suggests that he became abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Martin de Tulle and continued composing. Approximately forty of his poems survive, half of them with music.

#### SOURCES

Elizabeth Aubrey, *The Music of the Troubadours* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

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### GUILLAUME DUFAY

1397–1474

*Poet*

*Composer*

**THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR.** Guillaume Dufay (1397–1474) was born near Cambrai in northern France, where he is first recorded as a member of the cathedral choir in 1409. He became a priest and received a degree in canon law from the University of Bologna. Throughout his career he traveled widely, being associated with the court of Burgundy, the Papal Chapel, the duke of Savoy, and the Malatesta family in the Italian towns of Pesaro and Rimini. He was appointed a canon



(a member of clergy on permanent staff) of the Cathedral of Cambrai by Pope Eugenius IV, and he returned there at the end of his life. Dufay's compositions are widely considered to be among the finest creations of his generation. His works include settings of the Ordinary and the Proper of the Mass, Latin motets and hymns, and secular songs in Latin, French, and Italian. His Mass for St. Anthony of Padua may have been written for the dedication of Donatello's great altar in the Church of St. Anthony in Padua in 1450. He was one of the earliest to write cyclic masses based on non-sacred material: his *Missa Se la face ay pale* (1452) is based on a love song he had written earlier. Of the many outstanding compositions by Dufay, two of his motets are especially significant in terms of their commemorations. His *Nuper rosarum flores* was written in 1436 for the consecration of Santa Maria del Fiore, the Florence cathedral, on the completion of the dome by Filippo Brunelleschi. *Lamentatio Sanctae Matris Ecclesiae* was written in 1454 on the occasion of the Banquet of the Feast of the Pheasant in Lille, in which Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, pledged to recapture Constantinople and reunite the Holy Roman Empire. The borrowed tenor in this motet is from the Lamentations of Jeremiah in Latin, with a French text in the upper voices that glosses (that is, translates and explains) that of the tenor.

#### SOURCES

David Fallows, *Dufay*. Rev. ed. (London: J. M. Dent, 1987).

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### GUIDO OF AREZZO

990–1040

*Monk*

*Music teacher*

*Music theorist*

**INVENTING WAYS OF WRITING MUSIC.** Guido of Arezzo (c. 990–1040), a Benedictine monk living in a monastery in Arezzo (northeastern Italy), devised novel ways of teaching music. In order to teach young monks new chants much more quickly, Guido first invented a set of syllables for names of the steps of the scale: do, re, mi, etc. (the system, known as *solfège*, is still in use). Then he assigned the scale steps to the knuckles of his hand, so that by pointing from one knuckle to the next the boys would know what note to sing, a teaching device that lasted well into the seventeenth century and is known as The Guidonian Hand. His next invention was to write musical notes (neumes) on a graph consisting of two parallel lines with space between them, which would allow the accurate placement of notes to indicate

exact pitches. This was soon expanded to become the present-day staff of five lines and spaces. These inventions so impressed Pope John XIX that he invited Guido to come to Rome to explain them to him. In addition, his book *Micrologus* (Little Discussion) is considered to contain the final formation of the modal scale system, as well as having one of the earliest detailed discussions of music in more than one part (polyphony).

#### SOURCES

Warren Babb, *Hucbald, Guido, and John on Music: Three Medieval Treatises*. Ed. Claude Palisca. Music Theory Translation Series, 3 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978).

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### HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

1098–1179

*Abbess*

*Author*

*Composer*

**THE FIRST FEMALE COMPOSER.** Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) is the earliest known female composer, and possibly the most famous woman of her time. She was a member of a noble family near Spanheim in the Rhineland (modern Germany), and was educated at the Benedictine cloister of Disiboden. She was elected abbess in 1136, but in 1147 left Disiboden with eighteen other nuns and founded a convent at Rupertsberg in the Rhine valley near the town of Bingen. She was a prolific writer on subjects as diverse as science, medicine, and saints' lives, and during her own time was revered as a prophet and mystic. Her musical compositions include a number of sequences, antiphons, hymns, and other sacred forms for the feasts of women saints and the Blessed Virgin. She also is the author of the *Ordo Virtutum* (Play of Virtues), the earliest surviving morality play with music.

#### SOURCES

Peter Dronke, *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

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### FRANCESCO LANDINI

1325–1397

*Organist*

*Composer*

**AN EMINENT ORGANIST AND COMPOSER.** Francesco Landini (1325–1397) was the most renowned Italian composer of the fourteenth century. His father

was a painter and a member of Giotto's circle of artists in Florence. As the result of smallpox in his youth, Francesco was blind, an affliction that kept him from taking up the profession of his father but did not prevent him from pursuing a distinguished career as an organist, organ builder, singer, poet, and composer. He is described as poet, composer, and performer by Giovanni da Prato in his 1389 *Il Paradiso degli Alberti*: "He plays his love verses so sweetly that no one had ever heard such beautiful harmonies, and their hearts almost burst from their bosoms." Landini was buried in the Florentine Church of San Lorenzo, where his tombstone depicts him holding a portative organ, one of the symbols of a revered musician. He is similarly portrayed in a miniature illumination in the Squarcialupi Codex, one of the most important sources of late medieval Italian music. His compositions were all secular and almost all in a single form, the *ballata*, written for two and three voices. In addition to having written excellent musical compositions, Landini was influential in the adoption of the French compositional style by Italians.

#### SOURCES

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 29 vols. 2nd ed. Ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (New York: Grove's Dictionaries, 2001).

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### GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT

c. 1300–1377

*Cathedral canon*

*Poet*

*Composer*

**COURT AND CHURCH.** Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300–1377) was the most famous and influential French composer and poet of the fourteenth century. As his name indicates, Guillaume was born in Machaut, a small town in northern France. He was educated in Rheims, entered the priesthood, and in 1323 was employed as secretary to King John of Bohemia, traveling with him to many parts of Europe. Following John's death in 1346, Guillaume served at some of the most influential courts in France, including those of Charles, king of Navarre; Jean, duke of Berry; and Charles, duke of Normandy (later King Charles V). He eventually retired to the position of canon (a member of the clergy on permanent staff) at Rheims Cathedral.

**MOTETS, DITS, AND POPULAR GENRES.** Machaut contributed significant poetry and musical compositions in nearly every genre of the period including the newest, most advanced forms as well as the most traditional. He

wrote music in both the monophonic and polyphonic styles, with compositions for sacred occasions as well as motets for secular ceremonies and love songs. Much of the subject matter of his secular work is heavily influenced by the *Roman de la Rose* (Romance of the Rose), the long allegorical poem from the thirteenth century by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. His largest secular compositions (known as *dits*) are sets of poems and musical compositions that contain idealized characters, issues, and situations from the courtly love tradition. The longest of these, the *Livre dou voir dit* (True Story), thought to be somewhat autobiographical and written in his later years, concerns a love affair between a young girl, Péronne d'Armentières, and an aging poet. Another dit, the *Remede de Fortune*, includes seven musical compositions, each in a different form, probably intended to provide a model of each of the most popular genres of the period.

**AN INNOVATIVE MASS.** Machaut's *Messe de Nostre Dame* (Mass of Our Lady) is outstanding and unusual for a number of reasons: it is in four voice-parts throughout (at a time when three-part writing was far more common); the individual movements are much longer than comparable movements of other composers of the time; and it is the first known composition of the movements of the Mass Ordinary by a single composer intended to be performed intact, an idea that would become popular nearly 100 years later. At the end of his life Guillaume assembled all of his compositions into a set of manuscripts, grouping the compositions by formal type.

#### SOURCES

Gilbert Reaney, *Machaut* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

Anne Walters Robertson, *Guillaume de Machaut at Reims: Context and Meaning in his Musical Works* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

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### NOTKER BALBULUS

840–912

*Monk*

*Historian*

*Composer*

**THE FIRST MEDIEVAL COMPOSER.** Notker Balbulus (c. 840–912), the earliest known composer, was a monk at the Benedictine Abby of Saint-Gall in Switzerland who wrote history and poetry. Notker (his name Balbulus means "the stutterer") wrote poems and accounts of the lives of a number of saints. His rather idealized history of the life of Charlemagne (*The Deeds of Charles the*

*Great*) is still consulted as an historical document. His most important contribution to music was the *Liber Hymnorum* (Book of Hymns) which contains a set of 33 sequences that he composed. These were some of the first of what became standard additions to the Alleluia chant in the Mass. According to Notker, his models were from an antiphoner (liturgical book containing antiphons and other items) that was brought to Saint-Gall in 860 by a monk fleeing from the monastery of Jumièges (in northwest France), which had been attacked by the Normans. Notker's sequences were sung throughout Europe until the sixteenth century.

#### SOURCES

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 29 vols. 2nd ed. Ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (New York: Grove's Dictionaries, 2001).

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### PHILIPPE DE VITRY

1291–1361

*Poet*

*Bishop*

*Royal advisor*

**THE NEW ART.** Philippe de Vitry (1291–1361) was a poet and composer who taught at the University of Paris, held administrative positions at the French royal court as advisor to kings Charles IV, Philip VI, and John II, and in his later years was Bishop of Meaux. He was once credited with authorship of the treatise *Ars Nova* (New Art), which provided new techniques for writing sophisticated rhythms, paving the way for far more complex musical structures that were soon explored in all of the polyphonic forms, especially in motets. Although Philippe probably did not write the treatise, he was highly influential in the development and teaching of its techniques, and it is likely that he invented the isorhythmic motet and contributed to the dominance of the chanson forms in fourteenth-century French secular music. He was highly regarded as a composer, teacher, and poet during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Only a few of Philippe's compositions have survived, two of which are musical insertions in the poem *Roman de Fauvel* by Gervais de Bus and Chaillou de Pestain.

#### SOURCES

A. Colville, "Philippe de Vitry: Notes Biographiques," *Histoire Littéraire de la France*. Vol. 36 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1925): 520–547.

Ernest H. Saunders, "Philippe de Vitry," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Vol. 20. 2nd ed. Ed.

Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London and Washington, D.C.: Macmillan, 1980): 22–28.

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### PIETROBONO DE BURZELLIS

1417–1497

*Musician*

*Poet*

**THE GREAT IMPROVISOR.** Pietrobono de Burzellis (1417–1497) was one of the earliest musicians to be recognized as a performer. His fame rested on his technical virtuosity as a lutenist, his beautiful singing voice, and his skill as an improviser. He was frequently referred to as Pietrobono del Chitarino, a reference to his improvised singing with the lute (a pear-shaped instrument related to the guitar), which was thought to be a modern version of the classical Greek musical practice of singing to the ancient kithera. He was praised by a number of humanist writers including Aurelio Brandolino Lippi, Battista Guarino, Filippo Beroaldo, Paolo Cortese, and Raffaello Maffei, and his image was immortalized on medals, an honor usually reserved for the nobility. He was a native of Ferrara and served at that court throughout the century, entertaining the most important heads of state. By mid-century his fame brought him numerous invitations to other courts; he is known to have visited the courts of Milan, Naples, and Mantua, and in the 1480s he spent time in the service of Beatrice d'Aragona, the queen of Hungary. In an elaborate tribute written in 1459, the poet, humanist, statesman, and dancing master Antonio Cornazano described his performances by comparing him to Apollo and Orpheus, and claiming that "his music rivals the heavenly harmonies, can revive the dead, turn rivers and stones, and even change people into statues." Because his artistic creations were improvised, nothing is preserved.

#### SOURCES

Lewis Lockwood, "Pietrobono and the Instrumental Tradition at Ferrara in the Fifteenth Century," *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 10 (1975): 115–133.

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### WALTHER VON DER VOGELWEIDE

c. 1170–c. 1230

*Composer*

*Poet*

**A FAMOUS MINNESINGER.** Walther von der Vogelweide (c. 1170–c. 1230) was one of the most famous of the minnesingers. Most of what is known about him

comes from his own songs where he describes himself as having come from a minor aristocratic family in the area near Vienna. He worked for a number of different dukes, and for three emperors, including Frederick II. Most of his songs are on the usual topics that were popular in all courtly circles—love, politics, and nature—but he also wrote about proper behavior and etiquette. Near the end of his life he composed an elegy in which he looks back over his life, wondering where all the years had vanished and thinking that it was perhaps all a dream. He was immortalized in a manuscript miniature that depicts him as a poet deep in thought.

#### SOURCES

Ronald J. Taylor, *The Art of the Minnesinger: Songs of the Thirteenth Century Transcribed and Edited with Textual and Musical Commentaries* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1968).

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Music*

*Ars Nova* or *The New Art* (1320)—This treatise, once thought to be written by Philippe de Vitry, is one of three important treatises on music (along with *Ars Nova Musicae* by Johannes de Muris, and *Speculum Musicae* by Jacques de Liège) that dealt with new trends in music composition involving refinements in notation.

*The Cantigas de Santa Maria* (c. 1250)—This collection contains more than 400 songs from the court of Alfonso X “el Sabio” (the Wise), king of Castile.

*Carmina Burana* or *Songs of Benediktbeuern* (c. 1290)—This large collection of Latin songs from the south German monastery of Benediktbeuern includes texts on serious religious subjects, love songs, and drinking songs, some of them in German.

Guillaume Dufay, *Nuper rosarum flores* (1436), *Missa Se la face ay pale* (1452)—The works of this composer, which are considered among the finest of his generation, include a motet that was written for the dedication of the cathedral in Florence upon completion of its dome and one of the earliest polyphonic mass settings to employ a secular theme as the central point of organization.

*The Fleury Play Book* (c. 1230)—Manuscript 201 in the Bibliothèque Municipale of Orléans, France, contains the largest known collection of extended liturgical dramas.

Franco of Cologne, *Ars cantus mensurabilis* or *The Art of Measured Song* (c. 1260)—This music treatise assigns specific duration to each of the note shapes, setting the stage for further developments in notation.

Gervais de Bus and Chaillou de Pesstain, *The Roman de Fauvel* (1316)—This long poem includes numerous musical compositions including several motets that reflect the new French notation.

Hucbald, *De harmonica institutione* or *Melodic Instruction* (900)—This music treatise, written by a monk at the Benedictine Monastery of Saint-Amand in Flanders, describes the modal scale system in detail and discusses the concept of polyphony.

Guillaume de Machaut, *Messe de Nostre Dame* (1364)—This work by the most famous and influential French composer and poet of the fourteenth century is one of the first polyphonic settings of six parts of the Mass Ordinary and the first known composition of the movements of the Mass Ordinary by a single composer intended to be performed intact, an idea that would become popular nearly 100 years later.

*Magnus liber organi* (c. 1200)—This collection of polyphonic sacred music for the important feasts of the liturgical year, which contains the compositions of Leonin and Perotin, was compiled in Paris and circulated throughout Europe.

Marchettus of Padua, *Lucidarium in arte musicae planae* or *the Explanation of the Art of Unmeasured Music* (1318), *Pomerium artis musicae mensuratae* or *The Orchard-Garden of the Art of Measured Music* (1320)—These two important treatises deal with Italian notation and harmonic practices.

*Missa Caput* (1440)—This earliest complete set (cycle) of Mass Ordinary movements was composed in England (composer unknown) using the same phrase of chant for the tenor part in each movement.

*Musica enchiriadis* or *Music Handbook* (c. 850)—This widely circulated treatise on music theory by an anonymous author is one of the earliest attempts to notate music. It includes the first written attempt at polyphony (music in more than one part).

Notker Balbulus, *Liber Hymnorum* or *Book of Hymns* (900)—This book of sequences for the Mass is the first to be written by a composer known by name.

chapter six

PHILOSOPHY

R. James Long

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	258	Thomas Aquinas . . . . .	291
OVERVIEW . . . . .	260	William of Ockham . . . . .	292
TOPICS		DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	293
The Foundations: Augustine and Boethius . . . . .	261	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
Rationalism in The Age of Charlemagne . . . . .	264	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
Anselm of Canterbury . . . . .	265	Medieval Philosophical Terms . . . . .	262
The Problem Of Universals . . . . .	266	<i>Anselm's Argument for the Existence of God</i> (excerpt from Anselm's <i>Proslogion</i> discussing atheism) . . . . .	265
The Schools of the Twelfth Century . . . . .	268	The Tragic Story of Abelard and Heloise . . . . .	267
Philosophy Among the Muslims and the Jews . . . . .	270	<i>Maimonides' "Negative Theology"</i> (excerpt from Maimonides' <i>The Guide for the</i> <i>Perplexed</i> ) . . . . .	272
The Universities, Textbooks, and the Flowering of Scholasticism . . . . .	273	<i>A Metaphysics of Light</i> (Robert Grosseteste speculates on the properties of light) . . . . .	277
The Rediscovery Of Aristotle . . . . .	275	<i>Transcendence and Immanence</i> (excerpt from St. Thomas Aquinas' <i>Summa theologiae</i> ). . . . .	279
Oxford Philosophy . . . . .	276	A Rebellious Dominican . . . . .	281
Latin Averroism . . . . .	278	<i>A Philosophical Definition from Ockham</i> (William of Ockham defines the term "universal") . . . . .	285
Thomism . . . . .	279	The Sword and Pen . . . . .	285
The Conservative Reaction and The Condemnation of 1277 . . . . .	281	<i>Meister Eckhart's Sermon on the Birth of Christ</i> (a sermon that caused trouble for Eckhart with ecclesiastical authorities) . . . . .	287
The Scotist Way . . . . .	283		
The Modern Way and the Triumph of Nominalism . . . . .	284		
The Retreat From Reason: Mysticism . . . . .	286		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Averroës . . . . .	288		
Roger Bacon . . . . .	289		
Moses Maimonides . . . . .	290		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Philosophy*

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| <p>354 Augustine of Hippo, who successfully reconciles Neoplatonism and Christianity, is born.</p> <p>525 Boethius, the “last of the Romans,” whose book struggling with the problem of evil fortune will influence generations of medieval thinkers, is executed for treason.</p> <p>800 Charlemagne, whose establishment of cathedral schools will usher in a reformation of learning, is crowned the first emperor of the Romans.</p> <p>c. 875 John Scotus Eriugena, author of the first <i>summa</i> (“summary treatment”) of theology, dies.</p> <p>950 Alfarabi, a Muslim philosopher who first suggested the distinction between essence (what a thing is) and existence (that by which a thing is), dies in Baghdad.</p> <p>1033 St. Anselm of Canterbury, who exhibited an “almost unlimited confidence” in the power of reason, is born.</p> <p>1037 Avicenna, the most influential of Muslim thinkers, dies.</p> <p>1085 The Christian reconquest of Toledo in Spain gives Western thinkers access to Arabic translations of Greek philosophy and science, including Aristotle, as well as Arab contributions to these disciplines.</p> <p>1115 John of Salisbury, writer of the <i>Policraticus</i>, is born.</p> <p>c. 1125 Distinctive schools of philosophical thought develop among scholars at Chartres and Paris.</p> | <p>1135 Moses Maimonides, the greatest Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages, is born in Córdoba, Spain.</p> <p>1141 Peter Abelard’s teachings are condemned at the synod of Sens for endangering the faith.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Hugh of St. Victor dies. He developed an elaborate program of the Seven Liberal Arts and their utility for philosophical investigation.</p> <p>c. 1152 Peter Lombard’s <i>Books of the Sentences</i> is published.</p> <p>1153 St. Bernard of Clairvaux dies. Cistercian and preacher of the Crusades, he opposed what he saw as the excessive rationalism of Peter Abelard.</p> <p>1198 The death of Averroës (Ibn Rushd) brings the Golden Age of Islamic philosophy to a close.</p> <p>1209 Pope Innocent III approves the first Rule of St. Francis of Assisi; many of his followers (called Franciscans) will make significant contributions to scholastic philosophy and theology.</p> <p>1210 The first prohibitions of the works of Aristotle are issued in Paris.</p> <p>1217 The Order of Preachers (Dominicans) establish themselves in Paris, eventually producing such philosophical luminaries as St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas.</p> <p>1231 The papal bull <i>Parens scientiarum</i> is issued, which prohibits lectures on the natural philosophy of Aristotle at Paris.</p> <p>1235 Robert Grosseteste leaves Oxford to become bishop of Lincoln, a diocese which included Oxford.</p> <p>1255 All known works of Aristotle become required texts in the curricula at the University of Paris and Oxford University.</p> <p>1267 Roger Bacon sends his <i>Opus maius</i> to the pope.</p> |
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- 1273 Thomas Aquinas stops writing the *Summa theologiae*, claiming it was like “straw.”
- 1274 Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, proponents of opposing views on the value of Aristotle, die.
- 1277 The Condemnation at Paris by the bishop of 219 mostly philosophical propositions brings to an end the Golden Age of medieval thought.
- 1280 St. Albert the Great, teacher of Thomas Aquinas, dies.
- 1284 Siger of Brabant, the Latin Averroist, dies.
- 1308 John Duns Scotus, the “Subtle Doctor,” dies in Cologne.
- 1328 William of Ockham, the “Venerable Inceptor,” whose critical thinking rocked the scholastic synthesis, flees the papal court at Avignon and places himself under the protection of Emperor Ludwig of Bavaria.
- 1329 Pope John XXII condemns as heretical some of the teachings of Meister Eckhart, who had died two years earlier.
- 1349–1350 The Black Death ravages Europe, hitting hardest in urban areas and decimating the universities. The plague will contribute to the end of medieval philosophy by claiming the lives of several philosophers.
- 1464 Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, widely considered the last medieval philosopher, dies.

## OVERVIEW of Philosophy

**DEFINING MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY.** Philosophy is the discipline that inquires into the first causes and ultimate principles of things; in other words philosophers try to find the answer to the final “why”—why is there being, for example, rather than nothing? Representing the longest period in the long history of philosophy in the Western world, medieval philosophy is distinguished from speculative thought in other periods by more than mere chronology. Philosophers during this period were for the most part theologians who were attempting to integrate what their beliefs told them about God, about themselves, and about the world with what their reason told them.

**FAVORABLE CONDITIONS.** The story of philosophy in the Middle Ages also reveals two commonplace truths. First, the activity of rational inquiry requires a certain degree of economic and social well-being. Hunger and fear of violence render such an activity unimaginable. Hence, between the fall of the Western Roman Empire, or at least the death of the Roman philosopher Boethius in 524 or 525, and the relative peace and prosperity that resulted from the empire established by Charlemagne in the ninth century, there is virtually no written evidence of philosophical activity. Second, whenever the West came into contact with Greek thought in any of its many guises, philosophical activity flourished. There is an oral tradition in philosophy as in other disciplines, but for the most part the transmission of philosophical thought depends on the written word, and the written legacy left by the ancient world when Rome fell to Germanic tribes from the north was meager indeed: a Latin translation of part of Plato’s late and perplexing dialogue, the *Timaeus*, a couple of pieces of Aristotle’s *Logic* with commentaries, and some Seneca and Cicero.

**PROBLEMS SUGGESTED BY FAITH.** By the time philosophy reappeared, the context had changed. During the thousand-year period from approximately 500 to 1500, known by some historians as the Age of Faith, ultimate questions were now being asked by believers, and more specifically, believers in a sacred book, be it the

Bible for Christians, the Torah for Jews, or the Koran for Muslims. This new approach entailed first a change in motivation for philosophizing, which was now the understanding of faith; it also entailed new and hitherto unconsidered problems, problems suggested by the text that was regarded by its adherents as the word of God. Can one, for example, demonstrate rationally the existence of the God of religious faith? How does one understand a Being who is regarded as infinite in all respects, or the problems associated with creation, the coming-into-being out of nothing, which seemed to violate an axiom of ancient Greek philosophy: “out of nothing comes nothing”? What is the meaning of human existence, and do the categories of good and evil necessarily entail the power to choose freely? Is there life after death? Many other issues may be cited.

**RECONCILING FAITH AND REASON.** Though St. Paul was suspicious of, if not hostile towards, pagan philosophy (“Beware the seductions of the philosophers,” he tells the Colossians in one of his letters) and though a number of intellectuals in the early Christian Church were likewise opposed to the enterprise of reconciling faith and reason (“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” Tertullian asked rhetorically), it was the vision of the Christian philosopher Augustine that prevailed; as he writes in one of his dialogues: “To those who believed, [Jesus] said, ‘Seek and you shall find’; for what is believed without being known cannot be said to have been found.” With very few exceptions this subordination of reason to faith prevailed throughout the Middle Ages. Philosophy became, in the words of one twelfth-century writer, the *ancilla theologiae* (the serving girl of theology). There remained those who believed that faith alone gave one access to religious truth (known as “fideists” today), and even a few who preferred reason to faith (“rationalists” in modern jargon) and interpreted Scripture figuratively to fit their philosophical conclusions. The paradox, however, is that the best philosophy done during the Middle Ages was done by theologians, within a theological context, and for theological ends.

**THE AGE OF SCHOOLMEN.** There was another change of context that characterized the later Middle Ages, and that change necessitated a change of methodology. It was the age of the schoolmen—modern-day college professors—and for the first time in the history of philosophy they were producing textbooks as the favored mode of philosophical expression. As with most beginnings, the Age of the Schoolmen began modestly enough: the newly crowned Emperor Charlemagne (or Charles the Great) decreed that there should be a school attached to every cathedral in his realm. Three centuries



later, some of these schools, the one at Paris preeminently, began to evolve into what we know as universities, in large part because new organizational structures were needed to accommodate the thousands of students now flocking to cities like Paris.

**THE RECOVERY OF ARISTOTLE.** In the thirteenth century conditions conspired to create a Golden Age, one that has been compared with the Athens of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in the richness and breadth of its philosophical productivity. Through contacts with the Arabic world, not all of them friendly, Europeans gradually became aware of the wealth of Greek, Arabic, and Jewish philosophy and science of which they had heard only rumors, foremost among which was the complete corpus of Aristotle's writings. Once the translations were underway, the European mind was never to be the same again. It is an exaggeration to claim that the story of philosophy in the thirteenth century is the story of the Christian reaction to the natural philosophy of Aristotle, but it is not much of an exaggeration. The reintroduction of Aristotle to Western thought, moreover, came at precisely the same time that the universities were being shaped. When designing a curriculum, the first thing one has to decide on is a textbook; and in discipline after discipline there was a treatise on the very subject by that universal genius, Aristotle. Thus, just by being a university student in the High Middle Ages, one got a thorough indoctrination in Aristotelian philosophy.

**REACTIONS TO ARISTOTLE.** There were three distinct reactions to Aristotle's philosophy, which became the litmus test for the three schools that evolved during this period. There were those who learned Aristotle and used his terminology, but consciously opted for the traditional Christian-Neoplatonic synthesis worked out by St. Augustine. Historians refer to this group as "Augustinians." A second group believed that Aristotle was right on every count and that one could not go beyond Aristotle in matters touching on reason. This group was named after the foremost Muslim commentator on the writings of Aristotle, Ibn Rushd, or Averroës (c. 1126–1198), and thus they were referred to as "Latin Averroists." The third group saw in Aristotle a brilliant philosopher whose work provided a better underpinning for Christian theology than Plato's philosophy. These were the "Thomists," followers of St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224–1274). The free and untrammled pursuit of philosophical truth came to an abrupt halt in 1277, when those who saw in Aristotle and his Muslim commentators a threat to Christian truth prevailed. A condemnation of a number of philosophical teachings was issued at Paris and a pared-down version shortly thereafter at Oxford, which changed irrevocably

the course of medieval thought. The move thereafter was away from what was regarded as excessive rationalism and toward the absolute power of God: whatever God can do and it is fitting that He do, He does, whether it makes sense to human reason or not.

**PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY DIVERGE.** The resulting breakdown in the medieval synthesis meant that the disciplines of philosophy and theology began to diverge. The latter, detached from its anchor in reason, moved in the direction of increased fideism, an unquestioning acceptance of the text of Scripture, the logical outcome of which was the Protestant Revolt; figures like Martin Luther railed against what he called punningly "Narristoteles" (fool-istotle). It is no accident that the fourteenth century has been seen as the Golden Age of Mysticism—suggested, for example, in the literary sphere by the mystical journey depicted in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. What the mystics were saying, each in his or her unique way, is that God is beyond human understanding, and that the most people can do is empty themselves and wait for God to speak to them individually. Philosophy on the other hand headed off in the direction of increased skepticism and increased triviality, the latter in part because the philosophers were banned institutionally from discussing any doctrine that touched on the faith, such as questions concerning the soul. Skepticism extended to the very questioning of the ability of human reason to know, and the logical conclusion of this direction is Descartes (1596–1650) and his followers, who begin philosophy not with things, but with ideas.

**THE END OF MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY.** History intruded again with the bubonic plague, also known as the Black Death (1349–1350), which killed off about a third of the population of Europe, including many philosophers, among whom was possibly the great champion of nominalism, William of Ockham (c. 1290–1349). Etienne Gilson (1884–1978) once remarked that medieval philosophy did not die for want of issues, but for want of philosophers.

## TOPICS in Philosophy

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### THE FOUNDATIONS: AUGUSTINE AND BOETHIUS

**THE AUGUSTINIAN MODEL.** Although Augustine (354–430) lived during the waning decades of the Roman

## MEDIEVAL Philosophical Terms

**Augustinianism:** The school of philosophy in the thirteenth century that adhered to the teachings of the pre-Aristotelian period, rallying around the name and authority of St. Augustine, and that strongly opposed Aristotelian and Thomistic views.

**Cause/Causality:** Responsibility of one being for some feature in another (the effect), such as its existence, essence, matter, accidents, or changes.

**Contingency:** (a) A state of affairs which may and also may not be; (b) a relation between events such that the second would not happen but for the first.

**Deism:** The view that while God is responsible for the existence of the world, He otherwise has no commerce with it.

**Dialectics:** (a) The science or art of logic; (b) a method of arguing and defending with probability open questions.

**Disputation:** A formal and structured dialogue between master and pupil, proposing questions and replies, difficulties to the teacher's reply and solution of these.

**Emanation:** Flowing forth from a source; the pantheistic view that all things arise necessarily out of the substance of God's being, intellect, etc.

**Essence:** In the broad sense, what a thing is, all its characteristics, as contrasted with its existence.

**Essentialism:** The metaphysical view that identifies being with essence or claims that the act of existing is always identified with the actual essence.

**Existence:** The actuality of an essence; that act by which something is.

**Fideism:** The thesis that religious belief is based on faith and not on either evidence or reasoning.

**Illumination:** In the Augustinian sense, the function of the divine light within a human intellect making truths or intellectual knowledge (as opposed to sense knowledge), especially of immaterial things, possible to the rational creature.

**Immanence:** (a) Presence in and operation within; indwelling: as God is immanent in all things; (b) Pantheistic sense: God's presence in the universe as a real part of it.

**Metaphysics:** The division of philosophy which studies being as such and the universal truths, laws, or principles of all beings; "the science of being as being" (Aristotle).

**Mysticism:** The religious theory that conceives of God as absolutely transcendent, beyond reason and all approaches of mind, placing emphasis on the negative way, that is, on what God is not.

**Neoplatonism:** The philosophical school, founded by Plotinus (205–270), which extended and built the philosophy of Plato into a system, focusing on the emanation of all things from the One (or Good) and their return thereto; a version of this philosophy, made compatible with Christian teachings, was forged by St. Augustine and became the most influential school in the Middle Ages.

**Nominalism:** The theory that universal terms like *horse* or *equality* are merely names, not real essences.

**Pantheism:** The doctrine that the world or nature in the widest sense is identical with God.

**Principle source:** That from which something proceeds.

**Quietism:** The attitude of passivity and receptivity before God, as opposed to activism (that is, the view that the human agent has some role to play in earning God's favor).

**Rationalism:** Any one of the views that attribute excessive importance to the human reason: for example, that all authority in matters of truth is subject to the scrutiny and approval of reason, without any duty of obedience or reverence for religious authority.

**Realism:** (a) The philosophical position that accepts the existence of things prior to and independent of human knowledge; or (b) in relation to the problem of universals, the epistemological view that man's direct universal concepts ordinarily represent natures that are objectively real and in some way fit to be represented as universal by the mind's activity.

**Skepticism:** The philosophical school that doubts or denies the possibility of any certain human knowledge; the skeptic is therefore enjoined to suspend all judgments in the speculative order.

**Transcendence:** Existence apart from and superior to the universe: opposed to immanence.

**Universal:** A term for a typical form that can be affirmed of or is attributed to many in a univocal and distributed sense; one name applied in exactly the same sense to many objects taken singly.

Empire in the West, his influence was crucial in the Middle Ages, for his work as a theologian trying to reconcile belief with reason defined a major problem that would be at the heart of philosophical pursuit for the

next thousand years. It was Augustine, the great bishop of Hippo in North Africa, who established the first successful synthesis between a school of Greek philosophy (namely, Neoplatonism) and the Christian religion. A

genius of the first rank, Augustine agonized over the pursuit of truth, falling prey to several positions that he eventually rejected as false, including skepticism. Finally, when in his thirties, he was lent a copy of the treatises of the Greek philosopher and disciple of Plato, Plotinus (205–270). A new world suddenly opened to him, and within the context of the other-worldly philosophy of Plotinus, the teachings of the Christians, previously rejected as primitive and unsophisticated, now made sense. “Far be it from us to suppose that God abhors in us that by which he has made us superior to the other animals [that is, the reason],” he wrote in one of his letters. Faith alone is not sufficient, as it was for Tertullian (c. 160–220), the greatest of the early Latin Christian theologians. Humans are rational creatures and crave to know, and this natural desire for knowledge cannot be quenched. As articulated by Augustine, this stance became the overriding theme of the medieval enterprise: faith in search of understanding. “Unless you believe,” wrote the prophet Isaiah, whom Augustine frequently quoted, “you shall not understand.” This adage became the motif of the succeeding age, which since the fifteenth century has been labeled the “Middle Ages.”

**BOETHIUS AS TRANSLATOR.** Exactly half a century after the death of Augustine, Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, the man sometimes called “The Last of the Romans,” was born in privileged circumstances, but privilege that coexisted with a new political reality. The Roman Empire in the West by the late fifth century had ceased to exist, and the Italian peninsula was ruled by the Ostrogoths. Notwithstanding, Boethius received the best philosophical education available. He studied at either Athens in Greece or Alexandria in Egypt, the latter the site of the greatest library of the ancient world, where among other things he mastered the Greek language. Rightly convinced that Greek was becoming a dead language in Western Europe, he undertook what he hoped would be his lifelong project—the translating of Plato’s and Aristotle’s complete works into Latin—in order to show the ultimate harmony of their thought. Unfortunately for later centuries, Boethius had not made much headway in his project—in fact he had translated only two of Aristotle’s six volumes on logic—when he came under suspicion of treason and was cast into prison under sentence of death. Nonetheless, the translations and commentaries he completed formed much of the basis for logical inquiry—what was called the “old logic”—until the recovery of the remaining works of Aristotle, which occurred in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

**THE CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY.** While in prison, awaiting a cruel and, in his view, unjust execu-



Fortune spins her wheel while Boethius looks on. *Consolation of Philosophy*. PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE MS FR. 809, FOLIO 40, C. 1460.

tion for treason, Boethius wrote his most famous and enduring work, a dialogue entitled *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Destined to become a “best seller” in the Middle Ages (a status determined by the number of Latin manuscript copies and vernacular translations), the work deals with the problem of evil in a very existential setting. Boethius asks why he, a good and virtuous man, lost everything—his power, his wealth, contact with his family, and, not least, his good name. He receives consolation in his troubled state from Lady Philosophy, who is a personification of Boethius’s better self. She tells him that happiness does not consist in the goods of fortune (a Stoic message) but rather in the unending possession of the Highest Good, which is God, a goal still within his grasp. The question of whether Boethius was a Christian used to be much debated, since he never made any explicit references to his religion in the *Consolation*. Ever since the discovery and authentication of his tractates on theological topics, however, the question has been laid to rest.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: Translatio studii: Sources for Romance*

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## RATIONALISM IN THE AGE OF CHARLEMAGNE

**THE SCHOOLMASTER ERIUGENA.** In the centuries separating Boethius and the Age of Charlemagne (who built the kingdom of the Franks into an empire in the ninth century) there was little philosophical activity. That was, however, soon to change. One of the most fruitful decrees of the newly crowned emperor was to establish a school at every cathedral in his realm, which extended throughout what is now France, Germany, northern Italy, and parts of the Low Countries. Intended for the education of the clergy, the focus in these schools was on basic grammatical and mathematical skills—in other words, the “three R’s.” The creation of schools, however, meant a need for teachers. It was thus that the Celtic monk from the remote West of Ireland, John Scotus Eriugena, was brought to the court of Charlemagne’s grandson, Charles the Bald. Eriugena was destined to become the greatest Irish philosopher of all time, and in a rare tribute his image until recently adorned the five-pound note issued by the Republic of Ireland.

**TRANSLATING DIONYSIUS.** The Irish monks of this time period, almost alone in the Latin West, had somehow preserved a knowledge of the Greek language. Hence, while serving at the court of Charles the Bald in the middle of the ninth century, Eriugena was asked to

translate from Greek the writings of Dionysius, called the pseudo-Areopagite (fl. c. 500). These writings, four in all, constitute the longest-lived forgery in Western history: they were signed “Dionysius, companion of St. Paul” and thus accorded enormous respect, until finally in the Renaissance they were discovered to have been written at least 400 years later than claimed. Working with primitive Greek-Latin glossaries and no knowledge of Greek paleography (unable, for example, to distinguish between “therefore” and “therefore not”), Eriugena produced a translation that was so flawed that the pope’s librarian complained that he had buried the meaning of Dionysius in a deep cavern where it must await a new translation. Notwithstanding, Eriugena’s translation was the basis for the study of Dionysius for 300 years.

**THE CONCEPT OF DIVISION.** Stimulated by Dionysius’s version of Platonic thought—which was purer than the synthesis achieved by Augustine—Eriugena produced the first *summa* (“summary treatment” of a discipline) in Western philosophy. The work, which he called *Periphyseon* (On the Division of Nature), deals with nature and the ways in which it encompasses the entire universe, both being and non-being. Eriugena divided the summary into four components: that which creates and is not created; that which is created and also creates; that which is created and does not create; and finally that which neither creates nor is created. He treated successively the Creator-God, the primordial causes emanating from Him (Plato’s Forms), the material universe, and God-as-End. He looked at creation as a process of division beginning with God, through the primordial causes to a multiplicity of things, and finally returning to God in a cosmic resolution.

**RECONCILING PLATONISM AND CHRISTIANITY.** Eriugena went further in trusting the powers of his reason than was to be the norm for Christian philosophers, occasionally forcing the biblical text to agree with what his Platonically-schooled reason dictated. One example was the issue of the human body. For Plato, the body was evil. But to a Christian philosopher, the human body was created by God and therefore must be something good. The resolution for Eriugena was that God created humans without bodies, and that the acquisition of bodies as well as sexual differentiation was a result of the Fall. The Genesis text recounting Adam and Eve making loincloths of fig leaves is to be interpreted allegorically, argued Eriugena—that is, that they were making for themselves bodies. Thus, Eriugena remained both a Christian and a Platonist at the same time. In this bold design, Eriugena went further in the direction of Platonism than any other Christian writer, and it is not sur-

prising that long after his death his work was condemned on three counts of heretical teaching early in the thirteenth century.

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### ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

**THE BEGINNING OF THE MODERN AGE.** Whether or not the ending of the first millennium aroused the same apocalyptic fears as the year 2000 witnessed, a growing number of modern historians in fact see the year 1000 as marking the beginning of the modern age. The life of St. Anselm (1033–1109), who is commonly called Anselm of Canterbury, in many ways reflects this new era. Born in the Val d'Aosta area of northern Italy, he left home at an early age to seek an education (and to escape a repressive father). Significantly, he headed not south to Mediterranean countries but north to Normandy in the north of France, attracted to the monastery of Bec because of the reputation of its abbot, the learned Lanfranc. In those dark centuries whatever glimmer of culture and learning still existed was being preserved in these monastic centers. Among other activities at the monasteries that followed the Rule of St. Benedict, monks would copy whatever piece of writing came into their hands, not infrequently without being able to read what they were copying. It was in the quiet and seclusion of Bec that Anselm wrote his best philosophical works. Eventually he succeeded Lanfranc as abbot when the latter was made archbishop of Canterbury, following the Norman Conquest in 1066. Called by historians "the second Augustine," Anselm had an almost unbounded confidence in the power of reason. He even went so far as to seek what he called "necessary reasons" for the Incarnation, the central teaching of Christianity.

**PROOF OF GOD'S EXISTENCE.** The work of Anselm that is most familiar to contemporary philosophers, however, is a short treatise entitled *Proslogion*, which means an

#### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

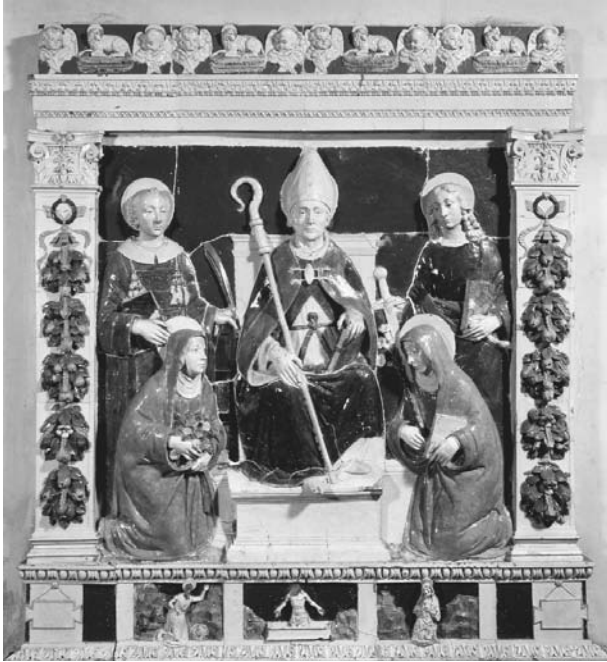
#### ANSELM'S ARGUMENT FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

**INTRODUCTION:** Anselm's famous argument for the existence of God in the *Proslogion* (or "Allocation"), which was requested by his monks, demonstrates not only that God exists in reality—not simply in the mind—but also that one cannot even think that God does not exist. How then can one explain the atheist, or "the Fool" in the language of the Psalms? In this passage Anselm attempts to explain how the atheist can think the unthinkable.

How indeed has [the Fool, that is, the atheist] "said in his heart" what he could not think; or how could he not think what he "said in his heart," since to "say in one's heart" and to "think" are the same? But if he really (indeed, since he really) both thought because he "said in his heart" and did not "say in his heart" because he could not think, there is not only one sense in which something is "said in one's heart" or thought. For in one sense a thing is thought when the word signifying it is thought; in another sense when the very object which the thing is is understood. In the first sense, then, God can be thought not to exist, but not at all in the second sense. No one, indeed, understanding what God is can think that God does not exist, even though he may say these words in his heart either without any [objective] signification or with some peculiar signification. For God is that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought. Whoever really understands this understands clearly that this same being so exists that not even in thought can it not exist. Thus whoever understands that God exists in such a way cannot think of Him as not existing.

**SOURCE:** Anselm of Canterbury, *St. Anselm's Proslogion*. Trans. Maxwell John Charlesworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965): chapter 4.

address or discourse. It is called this because it is addressed to God, and it asks God's help in proving not only God's existence but also everything else that has been taught about Him. It was a part of Anselm's belief as a Christian that God is something than which a greater cannot be thought. But to be in the mind and in reality is surely greater than to be in the mind alone. Therefore, to deny that God exists, as the atheist does, is to involve oneself in a contradiction: something than which a greater cannot be thought is the same as that than which a greater can be thought.



Anselm of Canterbury surrounded by saints, glazed terra cotta relief, school of Lucia della Robbia. Museo della Collegiata di Sant' Andrea, Empoli, Italy, 15th–16th centuries. SCALA/ART RESOURCE, NY.

**GAUNILON'S RESPONSE.** This philosophical argument, which was to receive more attention in future centuries than any other, already proved provocative in Anselm's own day. A monk by the name of Gaunilon, about whom nothing is known except his monastery (Marmoutier in the south of France), wrote a response, which he entitled *On Behalf of the Fool*. "Fool" is Scriptural language for the atheist, and Gaunilon, though a believer, did not think Anselm had proved anything to the man without faith. First, he did not believe this formula for God ("something than which nothing greater can be thought") was meaningful, and therefore it did not exist in the mind in any real way, that is, in any way different from non-real things. And second, even if it did, one could not conclude from this that God existed in reality, just as one could not conclude that the most perfect island that the mind can conjure must really exist; otherwise, any truly existing island, no matter how humble, would be greater.

**ANSELM'S REPLY.** The long-distance correspondence between Gaunilon and Anselm ended with Anselm's reply to the "fool": of course his way of thinking about God is meaningful to Gaunilon for it is part of his faith as a Christian. But even if his attacker were truly a godless man, Anselm showed how he might construct a meaningful concept of God from his experience

in a contingent world. Everyone has experience of beings that begin and end; is it not clear that beings that begin but never come to an end are greater—even if one has no experience of such beings? And so Anselm concluded that a being that has neither beginning nor end nor duration is greater than any other conceivable being, and therefore close to a being than whom a greater cannot be thought.

**THE ADVANTAGES OF DIALOGUE.** The "dialogue" between Anselm and Gaunilon shows clearly the great advantages to be gained by such exchanges. As Aristotle had said, philosophical dialogue "polishes" the truth. Though he has been called the "Father of Scholasticism," the fact is that Anselm was a monk, which entailed a retreat from the world to be "alone with the Alone," as Plotinus phrased it; hence the etymology of "monk" from *monos*, meaning "alone." A few decades after Anselm's death, the situation was to change dramatically; institutions were evolving that were to create the proper cultural climate for philosophical activity up to the end of the Middle Ages and beyond.

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## THE PROBLEM OF UNIVERSALS

**CONCERNING GENUS AND SPECIES.** The question on which Peter Abelard (c. 1079–1142) originally made his name and indeed the question that engaged philosophers at the fledgling school at Paris was the so-called problem of universals (common terms like "animal" or "man"). Sparked by a casual remark by Boethius in one of his commentaries on Aristotle's logic ("concerning genus and species, whether they have real existence or are merely and solely creations of the mind ... on all this I make no pronouncement"), the debate raged for nearly half a century. John of Salisbury (c. 1120–1180), a Paris graduate, visited his *alma mater* twenty years after he had left for England and remarked that the Paris masters in the intervening years had made no progress in resolving the conundrum concerning universals.

**REALISM AND NOMINALISM.** The debate surrounding universals focused on the problem of whether

universals, essential to speech and communication, had any status outside of the mind. For instance, does “dogness” or “horseness” have any reality apart from one’s thinking? The question generated two extreme positions: realism—that the universal exists as such outside the mind, like the Forms of Plato—and nominalism—that the universal is only a word, from the Latin *nomen*, meaning “name.” According to Roscelin, a member of the latter school, the only reality possessed by the universal was the *flatus vocis*—“the breath made by the voice as it pronounced the word.” William of Champeaux (c. 1070–1121), a champion of the former view, believed that there was something that Socrates and Plato, for example, had in common, something by virtue of which each could be called human. When his student Abelard attacked his position, William retreated to a new position: namely, that although Socrates and Plato had nothing in common, each had an element that can be called “indifferently” the same. Abelard again demolished this position as well, and William, thoroughly humiliated, was driven into retirement. Notwithstanding his failure in the battles of academe, William was subsequently consecrated bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne.

**ABELARD’S “CONCEPTUALISM.”** Originally a student of Roscelin’s, Abelard himself moved away from his master’s position and, partly as a result of his debates with William, adopted a view known as conceptualism, which was close to what Aristotle’s would have been had he isolated the problem: that is, that the universal is present within the particular thing, but not as such; it needs to be abstracted by the mind and therefore stands as a mental representation of the nature of the thing, while remaining other than the particular thing itself.

**THE TRIUMPH OF NOMINALISM.** The harsh reality of a nominalist view is that if universals were only words, then no nature would have any reality. In other words, there would be no such thing as human nature or angelic nature or even divine nature; natural law would be left without a foundation. Only individuals exist; universals are simply a convenience of the human mind. While philosophical interest moved away from the problem by the end of the twelfth century, the nominalists reasserted themselves in the fourteenth century, at which point they triumphed over all other positions, and their victory spelled the effective end of the medieval synthesis. Foremost among the champions of this re-emergent nominalism was the Franciscan William of Ockham (c. 1290–1349), the central theme of whose philosophy was the individual thing. Each individual reality was so self-contained that it shared nothing with anything else. It was a philosophy, in other words, of the singular. For the

## THE Tragic Story of Abelard and Heloise

In the century that saw the introduction of the concept of courtly love into Europe, Abelard was the knight errant of dialectics, vanquishing all in his path. Oral arguments, “disputations” they were called, were more a part of the educational scene in the High Middle Ages than they are today. But students then, as today, love a good show, and Abelard obliged, his skills in logical debate destroying reputations and, in one case, driving his vanquished opponent into the seclusion of a monastery for the rest of his life. That is until he met Heloise. Hired to tutor the precocious teenager by her uncle, a canon of the cathedral, the forty-year-old Abelard was soon smitten, and the ensuing affair produced a son, who was given the name Astrolabe, meaning “fallen from the stars.” Though Abelard was canonically free to marry, since he was not at this time a priest, the tradition from Socrates onward was that the philosopher should be celibate, in order to devote himself more completely to his vocation. The ensuing attempt to cover up the disgrace enraged the uncle, who arranged for Abelard’s castration. Though today they are buried in the same grave in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, Abelard and Heloise were separated for the rest of their days, each attached to a monastic center.

In the midst of Abelard’s misfortunes, recounted in a series of letters between the lovers, a member of a new and strict religious order, the Cistercians, and preacher of Crusades, Bernard of Clairvaux, launched an attack on Abelard’s orthodoxy and succeeded at the Council of Sens in having his works condemned. Among other charges, Bernard argued that Abelard was a rationalist, which meant setting the human reason above faith. In a work called *Sic et Non* (*Yes and No*) Abelard had pointed up the number of teachings on which the Fathers of the Church seemed to contradict themselves, but then with an appropriate distinction or bit of linguistic analysis the “contradiction” dissolved. Perhaps Abelard’s most important contribution to moral philosophy was his notion that the internal act called consent was what determined an act as good or evil, not the doing or not doing of the deed. For the rest, as with the fate of many a critical thinker before and since, his direct influence on subsequent thinkers was slight.



Abelard and Heloise debating. *Romance of the Rose*, Chantilly, France, Musée Condé MS 482/665, folio 60v, 15th century. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE, NY.

sake of communication and indeed convenience, words need to be used to represent these singular things, but these are no more than fictions (*ficta*), not reducible to the notion of a thing in the world. The word “man” does not adequately represent Socrates or any part of Socrates, but functions like a mental model. Ultimately, however, this fiction theory fell afoul of his “razor”—the principle of philosophical economy—and Ockham abandoned it in favor of a view that can be more adequately termed “conceptualism”: that is, a universal is simply an act of understanding whereby people are aware of things in terms of their more or less generalizable features.

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## THE SCHOOLS OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

**THE SCHOOL AT CHARTRES.** The ascendancy of Paris as the intellectual center not only of France but of all of Europe was by no means inevitable. In the first half of the twelfth century, in fact, Paris’s rival was the school at Chartres, some fifty miles to the south. The cathedral school there enjoyed a succession of first-rate masters, whose focus was the seven liberal arts: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics. These subjects of study assumed visible form, carved in stone over the main portal of the cathedral, dialectics being represented by a portrait of Aristotle. Notwithstanding their interest in Aristotle’s logic—mediated through the translations and commentaries of Boethius—the masters of Chartres were more at home with the philosophy of Plato. They worked mainly from the *Timaeus*, the only one of Plato’s dialogues available to them, and attempted to match up the Platonic myth of cosmogenesis (that is, the generation of the cosmos) with the story of creation in the book of Genesis.

**GILBERT OF POITIERS AND ESSENTIALISM.** Perhaps the most brilliant and creative of the Chartres masters was Gilbert of Poitiers (1076–1154), who repeated and refined the distinction Boethius made between “that which is” and “that by which a thing is what it is.” The individual “Socrates,” in short, is distinct from that which makes Socrates what he is—his humanity. These are the foundational principles of a metaphysical view known as essentialism: to be is to be a certain kind. To the extent that a thing changes, to that extent is it not completely what it is. Hence anything that has the ability to change is in flux and has no true identity at any point in time. It is change, finally, that distinguishes the creature from the Creator, who is completely self-identical and therefore completely changeless.

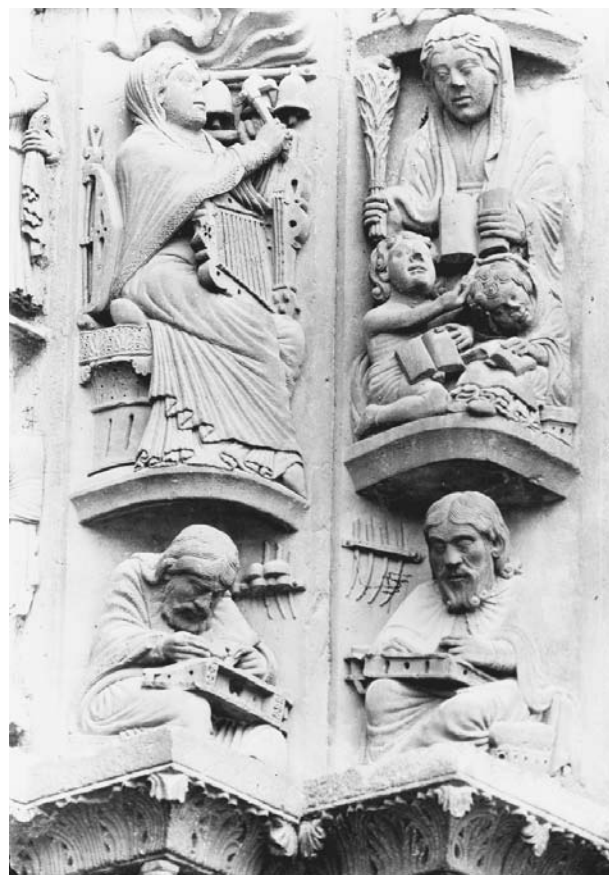
**JOHN OF SALISBURY AND THE POLICRATICUS.** Also counted by some among the notables of Chartres was the Englishman John of Salisbury (c. 1120–1180). Secretary to Thomas Becket (c. 1118–1170), archbishop of Canterbury, he joined his master in exile following Becket’s dispute with King Henry II (1133–1189). After Becket’s murder John was appointed bishop of Chartres, where he ended his days. The most influential of John’s writ-



ings was the *Policraticus*, whose aim was to demonstrate that secular as well as ecclesiastical courts must be ruled by philosophical wisdom in order to direct that polity to eternal happiness. Though influenced by Plato's political thinking, John expanded Plato's three classes of society into four, adding craftsmen to the ruling, military, and worker classes. The king, representing the King of kings on earth, is responsible for attaining and preserving the common good. The bad king becomes a tyrant, and John invested his subjects with the right, and even the duty, of protecting themselves against such a ruler. Unlike Aristotle's (and later Aquinas's) political philosophy, John's state rested on positive law, not natural law. A law is a law because the king declares it a law and has the power to enforce it. John had his own rather practical solution to the problem of universals: the mind is capable, he says, of contemplating the resemblances between individual things; these things are called by the name of genus or species; they are not, however, realities apart from the things, but merely fuzzy likenesses of them, reflected on the mirror of the mind. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, John's letters as well as his ecclesiastical history provide us with valuable insights into his times. His narrative, for example, of the trial of Gilbert of Poitiers, with whom John had studied and who was tried for heresy in 1148, is the only objective account of that event.

#### HUGH OF SAINT-VICTOR AND THE VICTORINES.

A third school may be mentioned as testimony to the breadth and richness of twelfth-century intellectual currents—namely, the Victorines. Chased out of the schools by the rapier wit of Abelard, William of Champeaux, master of the school of Notre-Dame in Paris and reputed to be the foremost logician of his day, retired to the Augustinian house of canons regular of Saint-Victor on the Left Bank, where he resumed his teaching. There followed a succession of gifted theologians, known collectively as the Victorines, among whom were Hugh of Saint-Victor (1096–1141) and his successor, Richard of Saint-Victor (d. 1173). Dismissed by many historians of philosophy as a mystic, Hugh was, in fact, a rigorous thinker who was nevertheless convinced that the pursuit of truth was inseparable from the pursuit of virtue. “Learn everything you can,” he writes, “you will find in time that nothing is wasted.” This statement set the tone for Hugh's vision of theology: namely, that the knowledge of all the sciences serves as an introduction to what had been styled the queen of the sciences; philosophy was theology's *ancilla*, its “serving girl.” It is this conception that in subsequent generations led to the most intense philosophizing of the Middle Ages—and possibly the most intense philosophizing the world has ever known.



Two of the Seven Liberal Arts, Music and Grammar, with Pythagoras below. Archivolte from right door of Royal Portal, Chartres Cathedral, France, 13th century. FOTO MARBURG/ART RESOURCE, NY.

**THE VICTORINE PROGRAM OF EDUCATION AND ITS AFTERMATH.** Hugh's educational program was laid out in a vast compilation entitled *Didascalicon*, which established in excruciating detail the curriculum to be undertaken by the budding theologian. He divided philosophy into four categories: theoretical, practical, mechanical, and logical. The first, theoretical, was subdivided into theology, physics, and mathematics; practical philosophy was subdivided into solitary, private, and public; mechanical—a Hugonian invention—into cloth-making, armament, trade, agriculture, hunting, medicine, and theater arts; and lastly, logic into grammar and disputation. It was this educational program that linked Hugh to the later Victorines. While it is not clear whether Richard of Saint-Victor was Hugh's personal student or not, he was certainly the latter's doctrinal disciple. Honored by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) with a place in Paradise in his *Divine Comedy* as one who was “in contemplation more than a man,” Richard was a master of spirituality or mysticism.

In his *Benjamin Major* and *Benjamin Minor* Richard stressed love over knowledge, drawing principally from the tradition of Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite; God is attained only fleetingly and in a “cloud of darkness,” a metaphor that was to have great currency in the succeeding centuries. It is a movement known as negative theology—the notion that the truest thing that can be said of God is that no one knows what God is.

**PETER LOMBARD AND THE BOOK OF THE SENTENCES.** Although there was no actual twelfth-century “school” associated with the teachings of Peter Lombard (c. 1100–1160), bishop of Paris, his contribution to theology in this period was profound: he was the author of what has been referred to as “one of the least read of the world’s great books.” Called the *Books of the Sentences*, Lombard’s great work not only attempts to reconcile seemingly contrary texts in the manner of Abelard’s *Sic et Non*, it also arranges the opinions (*sententiae* in Latin) of the church fathers, especially Augustine, into a system with a logical order of development. Canvassing as it does the whole of the discipline, it was an obvious choice for a textbook in theology, and from the end of the twelfth century until the sixteenth every candidate for a terminal degree in the sacred science was required to spend at least two years “commenting” on Lombard’s *Sentences*. Literally hundreds of these commentaries survive, most of them still in manuscript form.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Intellectual Influences on Art in the Later Middle Ages*

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## PHILOSOPHY AMONG THE MUSLIMS AND THE JEWS

**THE INFLUENCE OF ARISTOTLE.** While the Latin West was moving toward the triumph of scholasticism,

other important developments were occurring in the territories under Islamic rule. Within a century of the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad, his followers had conquered all of the Middle East, North Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula (consisting of modern Spain and Portugal), which they called al-Andalus. Along with other spoils of conquest, the entire corpus of Aristotle’s writings, minus the *Politics*, had fallen into their hands. Translated into Arabic with the help of Syrian Christians over a period of a century and a half (c. 750–900), Aristotle, virtually unknown at the time to the Latins, was to become, as it were, the “house philosopher” of the Muslim world. Philosophy for Muslim thinkers primarily consisted of comments on the writings of the pagan Aristotle. Sometimes these commentaries concentrated on explaining phrase by phrase the Aristotelian text. Sometimes the commentaries combined a literal explanation with a more expanded development of Aristotle’s teachings. The commentaries could also assume the form of parallel treatments of topics suggested by the Aristotelian text. The prominent Islamic philosopher Averroës, whom Latin-speaking thinkers called simply “Commentator” (The Commentor, as if there were no other) practiced all three kinds.

**ALKINDI AND ALFARABI.** The first important name in the tradition of commentators on Aristotle’s work was Alkindi, who lived most of his years in Persia and in 873 died in Baghdad. In his commentaries on Aristotle’s work on the soul, Alkindi elaborated on the philosopher’s distinction between the passive and active intellect. According to Alkindi the latter was a single superhuman intelligence active for all mankind; it performed the function of abstracting universals from particulars and depositing them in the particular passive intellects, much like a bee sucks nectar from a flower and deposits it in a hive. An equally original thinker was Alfarabi, who lived his entire adult life in Baghdad, dying there in 950. He was, most notably, the first to distinguish between essence (what a thing is) and existence (that by which a thing is real). With this distinction he was able to account in metaphysical terms for the absolute otherness of the Creator and at the same time for the utter contingency of the creature (creatures may possibly exist, but may possibly not exist; they are, in other words, not necessary). Existence, claimed Alfarabi, was merely an accident of the essence; it did not belong to the nature of anything (except God) to exist rather than not to exist. On the other hand, Alfarabi borrowed from Alkindi (and ultimately from the Neoplatonists) the concept of a single active intellect, which provides for all human minds the intelligibilities of things; ultimately God, and not the senses, is the sole adequate cause of our coming to know the truth about things.



Averroës conversing with the third-century philosopher Porphyry, *De Herbis et Plantis*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MS lat. 6823, folio 2v, 14th century. GIRAUDON/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

**AVICENNA AND THE NECESSARY BEING.** A generation later there appeared on the scene the man who would become the most influential of all Muslim thinkers, the Persian Ibn Sina (980–1037) or Avicenna, as the Latins were to call him. He was a person of great learning; his *Canon* (meaning a “rule” or “measure”) on the theory and practice of medicine, for example, was the single most authoritative work on the subject between the great physician, Galen (c. 129–c. 200), and the Renaissance. Moreover, his interpretation of Aristotle’s thought—more faithful to the text than Alfarabi’s—was destined to reverberate in the Christian as well as in the Muslim tradition. Avicenna, for example, was the first to distinguish necessary from contingent or possible being, thus providing St. Thomas Aquinas with one of his arguments for God’s existence. The things that are encountered in the world exist, but they need not exist; they do not exist necessarily; there is nothing about their natures that demands that they exist rather than not. But if the universe were composed wholly of such beings, it

would have already ceased to exist, given the Aristotelian conviction that the universe has existed eternally. One is therefore compelled to conclude that there is in the universe of beings at least one necessary being, a being which cannot not-exist, a being whom Avicenna called “Allah” or God. Although Avicenna’s system had much to recommend it to Christian thinkers of the High Middle Ages, there were nonetheless elements of his teaching that could not be assimilated to medieval Christian theology, such as the eternal existence of the world and the necessary character of God’s governance. According to Avicenna, the divinity creates out of necessity and rules the universe through the mediation of a hierarchy of intelligences, which are superior orders of angels, and spheres. God knows the sub-lunar world, the world of humans, only in general terms and does not know particulars. This is, of course, implicitly a denial of divine providence and also of free choice of the will, a doctrine firmly established in the Christian tradition by St. Augustine.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MAIMONIDES' "NEGATIVE THEOLOGY"**

**INTRODUCTION:** Moses Maimonides, in his greatest philosophical work, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, addresses himself to what is now referred to as God-talk, that is, the question of how we talk about God. His conclusion is that we are unable to affirm anything positive of God; we are capable only of negations. Even the metaphors employed by the Bible tell us only something of ourselves. This passage is an argument for what is termed "negative theology."

You must bear in mind, that by affirming anything of God, you are removed from Him in two respects; first, whatever you affirm, is only a perfection in relation to us; secondly, He does not possess anything superadded to this essence; His essence includes all His perfections, as we have shown. Since it is a well-known fact that even that knowledge of God which is accessible to man cannot be attained except by negations, and that negations do not convey a true idea of the being to which they refer, all people, both of past and present generations, declared that God cannot be the object of human comprehension, that none but Himself comprehends what He is, and that our knowledge consists in knowing that we are unable truly to comprehend Him. All philosophers say, "He has overpowered us by His grace, and is invisible to us through the intensity of His light," like the sun which cannot be perceived by eyes which are too weak to bear its rays.

**SOURCE:** Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Trans. M. Friedländer (New York: Dover, 1956). Reprinted in *Medieval Philosophy*, Vol. II of *Philosophic Classics*. 4th ed. Ed. Forrest E. Baird (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2003): 271–272.

**AVERROËS.** The only Muslim philosopher to challenge Avicenna's preeminence was a polymath (one versed in many fields of knowledge) from Córdoba, Spain—then a part of al-Andalus or Western Islam—Ibn Rushd (c. 1126–1198), known to Latin thinkers as Averroës. Trained in medicine and in law, Averroës was not the creative thinker that Avicenna was, but he did have tremendous critical powers and took on the task of commenting on all of Aristotle's works with the purpose of making them more accessible to the Muslims. In this project he was indefatigable, writing over thirty commentaries on the man known simply as the Philosopher,

sometimes as many as three different commentaries on the same work—an epitome or summary, a middle commentary, and a long commentary. Ultimately he fell out of favor with the religious leaders of the country, and by the time of his death in 1198 the Islamic world had begun to de-emphasize the philosophical system-building which had been inspired by Aristotle.

**AVERROËS AND THE "THEORY OF DOUBLE TRUTH."** Averroës himself can be seen as a rationalist, in much the same vein as Scotus Eriugena. There are three classes of people, he claimed in *The Decisive Treatise*: the simple uneducated workers, the moderately educated people, and, finally, the exclusive coterie of philosophers—a division no doubt reflecting Plato's division of society in the *Republic*. For members of the first class, only authoritative and emotional arguments are effective, and these simple and uneducated people have no choice but to interpret the Koran literally. Members of the second group are capable of probable or rhetorical arguments, and these people are called "theologians." Finally, the rare geniuses, the philosophers, are able to follow—and must follow—demonstrations in the strict sense, even though their conclusions may seem to contradict the teachings of the Koran. In such cases of conflict, says Averroës, they are to read the Koran figuratively, so that they agree finally with the findings of their reason. Here can be found the roots of what will later be dubbed the "theory of double truth."

**MOSES MAIMONIDES.** The greatest Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages, arguably the greatest Jewish thinker of all time, was also from Córdoba. His given name was Moses ben Maimon, but was known to the Latins as Maimonides or simply Rabbi Moses. Like the great Muslim thinkers, he was a polymath, and for much of his adult life was court physician to Saladin, the Muslim ruler of Egypt. As leader of the local Jewish community, he was also learned in Jewish law or *Torah* and wrote a voluminous legal codification known as the *Mishnah Torah*. The work, however, for which he is most widely known was written in Arabic and addressed to a young protégé named Joseph, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. There can be no conflict between faith and reason, Maimonides writes to Joseph, and any apparent conflict is the result either of misinterpreting the philosophers or misreading the Scriptures. The latter contain manifold metaphors, which are not to be taken literally; these predicates (words that affirm or deny something about the subject), in fact, tell us nothing about God, but only about God's influence on us. For example, to refer to God metaphorically as a mighty fortress, as the Psalmist



Statue of Moses Maimonides outside synagogue, Córdoba, Spain. 18th–19th century. ©STUART COHEN/THE IMAGE WORKS.

does, is merely to express the comfort and security the believer feels as a result of his faith.

**MAIMONIDES AND THE METAPHYSICS OF EXISTENCE.** On the thorny question of the eternity of the world, Maimonides reasons both that Aristotle’s arguments in favor thereof are not conclusive and that, in any case, his position is not incompatible with God’s creation: it is possible, given divine omnipotence, that God created the world eternally. God can create a world of any duration he wishes. It was an argument that was later to be taken up by St. Thomas Aquinas. Three of Maimonides’s arguments for God’s existence—from change, from efficient causality, and from contingency and necessity—were also to find echoes in Aquinas’s *Summa* of theology. But the most profound influence of the Jewish thinker upon the Christian was in the interpretation of the text in Scripture where God names Himself in response to Moses’s question. Written in four Hebrew letters and thus called the *Tetragrammaton* (meaning simply “four letters”), the name was never uttered, but Maimonides believed it to mean “existence it-

self.” In other words, God’s very nature is to exist whereas in all other things—following Avicenna—existence is merely an accident. This insight would later be at the heart of Aquinas’s metaphysics of existence.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Medieval Judaism*; *Religion: The Spread of Islam and Its Relationship to Medieval Europe*

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## THE UNIVERSITIES, TEXTBOOKS, AND THE FLOWERING OF SCHOLASTICISM

**THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCHOLASTICISM.** Scholasticism is a term that was borrowed from the Greek word *scholē*, which means “leisure,” and came to mean the activity of a person of leisure or a *scholastikos*, a scholar. By the twelfth century the term “scholastic” had come to signify the system whereby knowledge was imparted in an organized fashion and with a specific methodology. At first, the term was only applied to those schools which taught a certain curriculum of the seven liberal arts, headed by a *scholasticus*, or master scholar. Yet as more specific forms of study began to appear, there was need to expand the term scholasticism to signify any type of formal learning that occurred between a teacher of great knowledge and a student. Hence, as universities came into existence during the course of the twelfth century, many historians have called the rise in the level of education the “Golden Age of Scholasticism” in reference to the great importance placed on organized knowledge during this period.

**THE RISE OF THE UNIVERSITY.** The emergence of the university, a medieval invention, is a complex phenomenon, and it happened slightly differently in different parts of Europe during the course of the twelfth century. There is still considerable debate concerning which was first—Paris, Oxford, Salamanca, and Bologna are all in the running—and the resolution hinges on various criteria. What is essential for a school to be a university? If a written charter is key, for example, then the first university was Paris.



Teacher lecturing to pupils, design by Andrea Pisano for Campanile, Florence, Italy, 1340. THE ART ARCHIVE/DUOMO FLORENCE/DAGLI ORTI.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS.** In the case of Paris, what started as a cathedral school on an island in the Seine simply outgrew its locale and its structure, owing to the thousands of students from all over Europe, drawn to Paris by charismatic teachers like Peter Abelard. New organizational structures were needed, and out of this need a new institution began to take shape. Nothing quite like it existed before, and in all of its essentials the medieval university was identical with its modern counterpart. These essentials include a group of learned scholars, in different disciplines, all gathered at one place; a fixed course of study, called a *curriculum*, whose original meaning in the Latin of the day was “a path” or “period of time;” and, at the end of the course of study, a degree, which, proclaimed that its bearer was learned. With this degree in hand (the earliest was descriptively called a *licentia ubique docendi*, “a license to teach everywhere”), the graduate could present himself at universities such as Oxford, Bologna, or Salamanca, and if there was a position available, he got the job.

**A LEGAL CORPORATION.** This new kind of institution’s standing before the law was crucial to its existence: universities were legal corporations, associations of teachers and students with collective legal rights, often guaranteed by charter, originally from a pope, emperor, or

king, and later issued by the town or the local prince or the resident prelate. One important aspect of the university’s legal standing was its exemption from the civil law. Membership in a university entailed exemption from military service, from taxation, and from trial in a court of civil law. An advantage of the last was that canon law—under whose jurisdiction fell all clerics—dealt out sentences that were more lenient, and never the death penalty. This system of two laws—one for clerics, including university folk, the other for townsfolk—led inevitably to what were called “town-gown” conflicts. Brawling students causing damage to a local tavern, for example, could not be tried by the local civic authorities; resentments were inevitable, as they are to this day.

**A STUDENT-CENTERED MODEL.** The other model of corporate organization was in force at Bologna in Italy. The university at Bologna was founded for the study of law, itself spurred by the West’s recovery in the late eleventh century of the Roman Law issued by Justinian in the sixth century, later called the *Codex Iuris Civilis*. At Bologna the corporation or guild (*universitas*, in medieval Latin) was composed not of faculty, but of students, who ran a tight ship. Faculty members wishing to leave town for any reason were obliged to seek permission of the students; likewise if they wished to marry. Missing classes subjected the truant teacher to a fine. It was also at Bologna that the first women were licensed as teachers, although initially one of them, at least, was obliged to lecture from behind a screen, lest her beauty prove a distraction to her students.

**THE FOCUS ON TEXTBOOKS.** Courses for either model of university were organized not around a subject, but a text. Since books were expensive and in short supply, masters, scribes, and perhaps even wealthier students rented sections or “pieces” of the books (*peciae*) from “stationers” (so-called from their locations along university streets) to take home and copy, then return to exchange for another. This new book-centered context of learning inevitably left its mark on the way theology and philosophy (and all other disciplines, for that matter) were presented. For the first time in the history of philosophy, philosophers found themselves writing not dialogues or treatises or meditations, but textbooks. A textbook, to be successful, has several requirements: it must be well organized, comprehensive (covering all the essential parts of the discipline), and economically expressed. There was no room or time for fat. The downside was that these works were not especially fun to read.

**THE REBIRTH OF ARISTOTLE.** In one of those rare coincidences of history, universities were taking shape at the same time that the philosophy of Aristotle was reach-

ing the West. The two occurrences are closely related. At the time when curricula were being established and authorities were looking about for textbooks, a freshly translated treatise from the pen of the pagan Aristotle appeared at hand as if bidden by the fates. Universal genius that he was, Aristotle had written on nearly every discipline known in antiquity. It was no surprise that Aristotle was quickly incorporated into the curriculum, making it impossible for a student at one of these universities, notwithstanding his philosophical prejudices, to ignore Aristotle.

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SEE ALSO *Fashion: Academic, Clerical, and Religious Dress; Religion: Medieval Education and the Role of the Church*

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## THE REDISCOVERY OF ARISTOTLE

**ARISTOTLE IN THE WEST AND THE EAST.** Owing to vagaries of history, the complete body of Aristotle’s writings was lost to the Latin West. The only bits and pieces available were a couple of treatises on logic, a discipline Aristotle invented, and some commentaries on those works: in particular, the *Categories* and the *On Interpretation* (the texts translated by Boethius, both collectively referred to as the “Old Logic”); the *Topics* of Cicero, and the *Topical Differences* of Boethius, together with the latter’s translation of Porphyry’s *Isagoge* (Introduction to the *Categories*) as well as his commentaries on the *Isagoge*, *Categories*, and *On Interpretation*. This is all that was known—directly and indirectly—of Aristotle’s enormous contribution until the twelfth century. The same was not the case in the Muslim world. As part of the plunder from their conquest of much of the Mediter-

ranean region, the Arabs fell heir to the Aristotelian corpus that had been recorded on scrolls that were in the hands of Nestorian Syrians (a heretical Christian sect). The Muslim conquerors quickly translated these works into Arabic. The pagan Aristotle subsequently became, as it were, the “house philosopher” of Muslim intellectuals, and it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that to philosophize for a Muslim between the ninth and the twelfth centuries was in large measure to comment on the works of the Philosopher (as he was called). The view that was widely held was that one could not go beyond Aristotle in matters of reason.

**RECOVERY THROUGH TRANSLATION.** The Muslim monopoly on Aristotle’s philosophy began to change radically in the twelfth century. Owing to contacts with the Muslim world—some friendly, most hostile—European Christians began the process of recovering the philosophy of Aristotle and translating it into their own language, Latin, sometimes through the intermediary of one of the vernaculars. There were several points of contact: the Middle East, especially the rich capital of Byzantium, Constantinople; Sicily, always a melting pot of cultures; and finally, and most especially, Andalusia (Spain). In the Spanish city of Toledo, for example, re-conquered from the Moors (as Muslims in Spain were called), Christian monks worked with Jewish rabbis to translate the Arabic text first into Spanish, and then into Latin—all without the benefit of dictionaries. Thus it was that many Arabic words entered the West and eventually the English language: words like *alcohol*, *algebra*, *coffee*, *zenith*, plus a word which did not exist in the Roman system of numbering, *zero*, essential for mathematical place-notation and hence for mathematics.

**PHILOSOPHICAL DIVISIONS.** It is difficult to exaggerate the impact Aristotle’s writings had on Western Europe. Here was a new and radically different view of nature, of the cosmos, and of the human person, a view that challenged long-held Christian philosophical understandings adapted from Neoplatonism. The reaction of Christian thinkers to this challenge is essentially the story of philosophy in the thirteenth century. For the first time in Christian history there arose different schools of philosophy, the litmus test being how one reacted to the natural philosophy of Aristotle. Those who thought that Aristotle was right on every count were called “Averroists”—or, better, “Latin Averroists” to distinguish them from their counterparts in the Muslim world. Those who preferred the tried and true synthesis of St. Augustine and rejected the innovations of the pagan Aristotle were known to historians as “Augustinians.” A third group that attempted to mediate between

these two radical positions were known as “orthodox Aristotelians” or “Thomists,” a name derived from St. Thomas Aquinas, who was responsible for building a masterful synthesis of Christian teachings and Aristotelian philosophy.

**ACCESS TO GREEK ORIGINALS.** By the middle of the thirteenth century the earliest translations of this Aristotelian material from the Arabic gave way to new translations from the Greek originals, which had been recovered in the meantime. Added to the list was the Greek version of Aristotle’s *Politics*, a work that the Arabs never possessed. It was to these new and improved translations that thinkers like Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas had access, and one would have to have worked with the earlier Arabic-Latin versions to appreciate the improvement.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Intellectual Influences on Art in the Later Middle Ages*

## OXFORD PHILOSOPHY

**OXFORD AND THE EMPIRICAL APPROACH.** While the University of Paris was earning its reputation as the premier school in the West for the study of theology—the *Parvens scientiarum* (“The Mother of all Knowledge”) as Pope Gregory IX (c. 1145–1241) put it—the University at Oxford in England was developing its own tradition and making its own unique contribution. Many Englishmen had been active in the translation process in



Astrolabe, yellow copper, Islamic, 14th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/NATIONAL MUSEUM, DAMASCUS, SYRIA/DAGLI ORTI.

Spain and returned to England with word of new concepts and instruments of which no one in Britain had heard. One example was the astrolabe, used to observe the position of celestial bodies. In response to the interest in these new ideas, the young university at Oxford adopted a decidedly empirical approach to knowledge, even to theological knowledge.

**ROBERT GROSSETESTE AND NATURAL PHILOSOPHY.** The person most responsible for harnessing and giving direction to these tendencies was the humbly born Robert Grosseteste (c. 1175–1253), “Robert of the large head” in Norman French. A master of arts as early as the last decades of the twelfth century, Grosseteste contributed a number of scientific treatises, displaying wide and original thinking. Perhaps the most important among these was a treatise entitled *De luce* (“On Light”), which was the only treatise on cosmogony (an account of the generation of the universe) between Plato and the Renaissance. In what one modern author has compared to a “big bang” theory, Grosseteste observed that a point of light immediately diffuses itself in all directions, in a spherical shape. Recalling that the Genesis story begins with God’s creation of light, Grosseteste found in its



properties a natural explanation for physical reality, which therefore could be explained mathematically.

**GROSSETESTE AS THEOLOGIAN AND BISHOP.** Well into his fifties, Grosseteste changed careers and became a theologian, accepting a post as the first lecturer to the Franciscans at Oxford, although he never joined the order. As theologian, Grosseteste insisted on the centrality of Scripture as opposed to the more speculative theology practiced by commentators on the *Sentences* at Paris. He also insisted on the importance of mastering the languages of the sacred text and showed the way by learning Greek himself. A third career ensued, that of the powerful bishopric of Lincoln, in whose diocese and jurisdiction lay the university at Oxford. Though Grosseteste took his pastoral duties seriously, he was ever aware of developments at his old university. At one point he wrote a letter to the Oxford masters enjoining them to keep the earliest and preferred lecturing times (the 6 A.M. shift) for Scripture, not the *Sentences*. The master guilty of the contrary practice was a young Dominican by the name of Richard Fishacre, and it took a letter from the pope himself in defense of the practice and of Fishacre's role before Grosseteste would desist.

**SCIENCE AS A TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING.** The notion of employing natural philosophy—what moderns would simply call “science”—as a tool for the understanding of the sacred text, however, remained the permanent legacy of the man known as “Lincolniensis” (Grosseteste's sobriquet). A member of his “school,” Richard Fishacre, in the prologue to his *Commentary on the Sentences*—the first composed at Oxford—borrows the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to illustrate the relationship between the disciplines. According to Fishacre's interpretation of the Old Testament story, Abraham's elderly wife Sarah could not become pregnant until Abraham slept with her serving girl, Hagar. Once Abraham had done so, Sarah was able to conceive, and Hagar was banished from the camp. In like manner, before the aspiring theologian can bear fruit, he has to bed down with the sciences, the knowledge of which is a necessary preparation for theology. The aspiring theologian should not, however, linger for too long a time in the bedchamber of the serving girl, but hurry on to the queen of the sciences.

**A MODEL FOR ROGER BACON.** Grosseteste's approach became the model for the Christian theologian in the eyes of the contentious and outspoken Franciscan friar, Roger Bacon (c. 1214–1292), who praised Grosseteste's knowledge of languages and the experimental sciences. Bacon himself wrote Greek and Hebrew grammars and had some familiarity with Arabic; he also con-

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**A METAPHYSICS OF LIGHT**

**INTRODUCTION:** In the first cosmogony (a theoretical account of the origin of the material universe) since Plato's *Timaeus*, the Oxford master and later bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste, speculates that the property of light is to propagate itself infinitely and instantaneously in all directions to form a sphere. This “metaphysics of light,” composed around 1225, is a bold and original attempt to explain how matter was generated from the initial creation of a point of light announced in the Genesis story.

The first corporeal form which some call corporeity is in my opinion light. For light of its very nature diffuses itself in every direction in such a way that a point of light will produce instantaneously a sphere of light of any size whatsoever, unless some opaque object stands in the way. Now the extension of matter in three dimensions is a necessary concomitant of corporeity, and this despite the fact that both corporeity and matter are in themselves simple substances lacking all dimension. But a form that is in itself simple, and without dimension could not introduce dimension in every direction into matter, which is likewise simple and without dimension, except by multiplying itself and diffusing itself instantaneously in every direction and thus extending matter in its own diffusion. For the form cannot desert matter, because it is inseparable from it, and matter itself cannot be deprived of form.

**SOURCE:** Robert Grosseteste, *On Light (De Luce)*. Trans. Clare C. Riedl (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1978). Reprinted in *Medieval Philosophy*. Vol. II of *Philosophic Classics*. 4th ed. Ed. Forrest E. Baird (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2003): 292–293.

tributed to the science of optics (according to one legend he was the inventor of eyeglasses) and the rainbow. Never shy about promoting his own projects, Bacon addressed his *Opus maius*, literally the “Greater Work,” to Pope Clement IV (d. 1268), who, unfortunately, died before he could give a response.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Intellectual Influences on Art in the Later Middle Ages*

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## LATIN AVERROISM

**ARISTOTLE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS.** While the works of the Muslim commentators on Aristotle were certainly cited by the Oxford masters, it was only at Paris that a distinct school evolved that took its inspiration from one of these commentators. The movement was known as “Latin Averroism,” after the Spanish Islamic philosopher Averroës, the principal commentator on Aristotle’s work, and originated in the arts faculty in the course of the 1260s. With its concentration on philosophy in its many branches (including disciplines that would today be counted among the sciences, like botany and physics), the bachelor of arts degree was the first earned by a university student in the Middle Ages. The professors in the arts faculty were expected to “reign” for a respectable time and then move on to one of the higher faculties, such as theology, law, or medicine. *Non est senescendum in artibus*—“do not grow old in the arts”—was a well known and widely observed saying.

**PHILOSOPHY AS A SEPARATE DISCIPLINE.** It was, at any rate, among these philosophy professors that the conviction took hold that Aristotle represented the incarnation of the purest reason and that one could not go beyond the philosopher in matters of the human reason. Not only did they have a model in the great Aristotle, but masters were also gradually becoming more conscious of the value of philosophy as a discipline, a subject of study that could be pursued as an end in itself and not simply as a “handmaid” to theology. In other words, they wished to investigate what the philosophers had to say without concerning themselves about the implications for religious belief. The leaders of the movement, Siger of Brabant (c. 1240—between 1281 and 1284) and Boethius of Dacia (d. before 1277), saw their roles as ascertaining what the philosophers had

held on the subject of the soul, for example, “by seeking the mind of the philosophers rather than the truth, since we are proceeding philosophically.” In his earlier writings on the soul (before 1270) Siger maintained that the human intellect was eternally caused by God as Aristotle professed, a view which he regarded as more probable than Augustine’s view that God created the soul in time and upon the conception of the body. He later modified this view somewhat, and in a recently discovered treatise he is seen to hold a view that is quite orthodox. Whether orthodox or not, the stratagem adopted by Siger and his associates was that they were presenting views that were not necessarily their own, but rather the views of Aristotle.

**THE PROBLEM OF “DOUBLE TRUTH.”** Siger and Boethius and other Latin Averroists were clerics and hence bound in a kind of institutional way to uphold Christian teachings. So when some of these teachings contradicted positions argued by the pagan Aristotle, as was the case with the mortality of the rational soul and the eternal duration of the world, these philosophers were faced with the difficulty of reconciling their religious beliefs with their philosophical convictions. Although no textual evidence survives to support this, the claim was made by the Averroists’ enemies that they held a doctrine of “double truth”—that is, that one could hold one proposition as true according to one’s faith and its precise opposite as true according to one’s reason. In other words, it was possible for the same intellect to maintain that the soul was immortal (by faith) and yet not immortal (by reason).

**LASTING INFLUENCES.** This movement came under official condemnation by the bishop of Paris and the archbishop of Canterbury in 1277, but it managed to continue into the Renaissance as a viable school of philosophy. It found a welcome home in northern Italian universities such as Padua, and some say that even Dante, author of the *Divine Comedy*, was influenced by it. Curiously, he places one of its leading lights, Siger of Brabant, in his *Paradiso*, in the company of Aquinas, Bonaventure, Albert the Great, Boethius, Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite, and a half dozen other saints and doctors.

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## THOMISM

**CHALLENGING THE AVERROISTS.** St. Thomas of Aquino in Italy, more commonly called Thomas Aquinas (1224 or 1225–1274), represents for many the pinnacle and climax of medieval philosophy, and his study has been recommended by popes from Leo XIII to the present occupant of the chair of Peter. A man large in soul as well as in body, Thomas was generally magnanimous in his writings toward his doctrinal enemies: a man must love his enemies, because they help him come closer to the truth. But he reserved his harshest words for the *averroiste*, clerics who upheld the teachings of Aristotle even when they contradicted the Scriptures. Thomas believed that truth is one and cannot contradict itself; therefore the dual truth system of the Latin Averroists was unthinkable. Moreover, he challenged the Averroists to debate him openly and not simply to talk with young boys (a reference to the age of the arts students and the fact that philosophy was taught in the arts faculty) on street corners.

**ACKNOWLEDGING THE NATURAL WORLD.** Thomas, who as a student at Naples got an early grounding in the New Philosophy, discerned the value in Aristotle’s thinking precisely because of its naturalism, the view that there existed a natural explanation for all phenomena. For Aristotle, this world is the real world; reality is not elsewhere in some transcendent realm as in Plato’s thought. Christianity, moreover, is in its essence an “incarnational” religion, the foundational doctrine being that God became man. The Christian theologian therefore needs a philosophy that gives an accounting of the natural world, including the autonomy of the human person. A world in which creatures exercise their own proper causality, even while maintaining an existential dependence upon Being itself for their being, renders more glory to God in Thomas’s view. This is a radically different view than that taken by the Ash’arites, a group of Muslim theologians, who believed that it is God alone who is acting in all the causes appearing in the world. It is God causing the effect of heat in the presence of the fire or, in a modern rendering, it is God causing letters to appear on the computer screen, not the person entering the data.

### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

#### TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

**INTRODUCTION:** Every believing Christian, as well as every believing Jew and Muslim, is obliged to hold that God is both transcendent (that is, totally other than the world) and immanent (that is, somehow present to it). To give a coherent account of this tension, however, requires a sophisticated metaphysics, indeed a metaphysics of existence. St. Thomas Aquinas, here in the eighth question of his masterpiece, the *Summa theologiae*, explains how God is present to the world without being a part of it, thus avoiding the extremes of deism on the one hand and pantheism on the other.

God exists in everything; not indeed as part of their substance or as an accident, but as an agent is present to that in which its action is taking place. For unless it act through intermediaries every agent must be connected with that upon which it acts, and be in causal contact with it: compare Aristotle’s proof that for one thing to move another the two must be in contact. Now since it is God’s nature to exist, he it must be who properly causes existence in creatures, just as it is fire itself sets other things on fire. And God is causing this effect in things not just when they begin to exist, but all the time they are maintained in existence, just as the sun is lighting up the atmosphere all the time the atmosphere remains lit. During the whole period of a thing’s existence, therefore, God must be present to it, and present in a way in keeping with the way in which the thing possesses its existence. Now existence is more intimately and profoundly interior to things than anything else, for everything as we said is potential when compared to existence. So God must exist and exist intimately in everything.

**SOURCE:** Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (Cambridge, England, and New York: Blackfriars, 1964), 1.8.1c. Reprinted in *Medieval Philosophy*, Vol. II of *Philosophic Classics*. 4th ed. Ed. Forrest E. Baird (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2003): 352.

**BEING AS ACT.** To claim, therefore, that Thomas worked out a synthesis between Christianity and Aristotelianism is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It can also be claimed with some justification that Thomas goes beyond Aristotle, not simply because he had the benefit of Divine Revelation, but because he was a better philosopher. His core insight—that being is fundamentally an act, or, in other words,



Glorification of St. Thomas Aquinas, Benozzo De Lesse Gozzoli (1421–1497), 15th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEE DU LOUVRE, PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

is that which makes any thing real—opens a dimension beyond Aristotle’s and, indeed, any predecessor’s metaphysics, just as Einstein’s fourth dimension goes beyond the speculations of any previous physicist. This being-as-act enabled Thomas to account not only for the absolute transcendence of God—that God is totally other than creation—but also for his immanence—that God is present to creation in some intimate way. Aquinas thus avoids pantheism on the one hand—the view that God is all things or is a part of all things—and deism on the other—the eighteenth-century notion that God is responsible for creating the universe, but that is the end of his involvement, like the clockmaker who winds up the clock and then walks away.

**AN AUTHENTIC EXISTENTIALISM.** The “concept” of existence is a slippery one—the tendency of the human mind is to think in terms of “things”—and it is little wonder that Thomas’s theories were not fully grasped until the twentieth century, spurred by the insights of the school known as Existentialism. Most philosophers in his own time identified Thomas’s naturalism with the heterodox Aristotelianism of the Latin Averroists, and when the bishop of Paris drew up his list of condemned teachings three years after Thomas’s death in 1274, some two dozen of Thomas’s teachings were included. Thus, paradoxically, the thinker who in time became virtually identified with Catholic orthodoxy was shortly after his death under a cloud of suspicion for heresy.

## A Rebellious Dominican

Not long after the death of St. Thomas Aquinas, members of his order rallied around his teachings and defended them against attacks from both the seculars and the Franciscans. He was, in short, the official Doctor of the Order of Preachers. There is always someone, however, who refuses to conform, and in this case it was the Dominican friar, Durandus of Saint-Pourçain. He seems to have been a personage of some note, since he was entrusted by Pope John XXII with an important diplomatic mission. For his success he was rewarded with the bishopric of Limoux (1317), a truly singular title since no one before him or after held the title. He soon abandoned that position to become bishop of Le Puy (1318), then of Meaux (1326), a post he held until his death in 1334.

His wrong in the eyes of his fellow Dominicans, however, was that he refused to become a Thomist. He believed that in everything that was not a matter of faith, one should rely upon reason rather than on the authority of any master, no matter how famous or revered. He ended up by writing three commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, which is not unlike writing three doctoral dissertations on the same subject. For the first he received a warning from the order, eventually having 91 articles censured by a theological commission. His second version resulted in no fewer than 235 articles being condemned as deviating from St Thomas. His third attempt showed little amendment on his part, but by that time he was bishop (successively of three sees) and seemed no longer to care.

The reaction at his passing gives some sense of how strongly most Dominicans felt about remaining loyal to Thomas and his teachings. The epitaph of the wayward Dominican featured this piece of doggerel, inspired by the fact that the first syllable of Durandus' name is "dur," a Latin root meaning "hard":

Durus Durandus jacet hic sub marmore duro,  
An sit salvandus ego nescio, nec quoque curo.  
"Here lies the hard Durand beneath the hard  
tombstone,  
Whether he is saved or not, I don't know, nor do I  
care."

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Intellectual Influences on Art in the Later Middle Ages*

## THE CONSERVATIVE REACTION AND THE CONDEMNATION OF 1277

**BONAVENTURE AND THE "AUGUSTINIANS."** Even as Aristotle's naturalistic philosophy became foundational to university curricula, there was strong resistance to his ideas. Historians, with their penchant for labeling, have called this group "Augustinians," but in truth the term came to identify a whole complex set of teachings, not all the same. The most articulate of the group was Bonaventure (1217–1274), third successor of St. Francis as Minister General of the Friars Minor or, more popularly, the Franciscans. In the prologue to his major theological work, his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bonaventure declares that he has no wish to be an innovator, that he wishes only to follow in the footsteps of the great St. Augustine, who not only is a valid guide for the things here below (the extent of Aristotle's competence) but is also master of the things above, sometimes called wisdom. In fact, he claimed that no question had ever been propounded by the masters whose solution may not be found in the works of Augustine. Bonaventure's own work relied heavily on that of Augustine; scholars have identified over three thousand citations of Augustine in the writings of Bonaventure. Like Augustine, moreover, Bonaventure insisted that theology must be rooted in faith; it is, in fact, faith in search of understanding, an idea that echoed St. Anselm's assertion in the eleventh century. He believed that there is an infinite distance between knowing Christ and knowing an axiom of Euclid. Theology cannot be a purely speculative science, but is rather a way of life. It is this emphasis on the affective as opposed to the intellectual that distinguished Bonaventure's thought from that of his contemporary and fellow countryman Thomas Aquinas.

**THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE ILLUMINATION.** Central to Bonaventure's thought was the Augustinian

doctrine of divine illumination. According to this doctrine, the knowledge received from the senses cannot account for the certitude that man enjoys with respect to truth. The sole sufficient cause of this certitude has to come from within. The problem becomes where this certitude originated. Either man is born knowing these truths (as Plato claimed) or man is dependent upon God's light, which strengthens the mind to know the meanings of things. If the latter is the case—and Christian philosophers (in Bonaventure's view) could not hold the former—then man possesses a simultaneous awareness of the truth of God's existence in every truth that is known, in the same way that man is aware of the presence of light in the perception of color. Bonaventure invented a new word for this concept: *contuitio*, or "contuition"—that is, a "seeing-with" or concomitant realization. It is not that Bonaventure does not have arguments for God's existence; he holds the record—twenty-nine in all, including the shortest ever written: "If God is God, God is." But they are not rigorous and breathe an air of casualness. They are, in short, not demonstrations in the strict Aristotelian sense. Bonaventure himself calls them "exercises for the mind," exercises to make more explicit what one holds already in an implicit way. Bonaventure's certainty of God's existence was such that he claimed to doubt his own existence more easily than that of God. Indeed, he calls the proposition "God exists" a *verum indubitabile*—"a truth which cannot be doubted."

**REVELATION AND REASON.** Paradoxically, Bonaventure far exceeded Aquinas with respect to the confidence he placed in reason. In his *Quaestiones disputatae de mysterio Trinitatis* (Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity), Bonaventure maintained that it is possible to make intelligible this most mysterious truth of the Christian religion, namely the Trinity. Given the knowledge of the three Persons in the Godhead from revelation, it is possible for the reason to perceive the doctrine as logically necessary. Like Anselm, Bonaventure looked for "necessary reasons," a notion that Aquinas explicitly denied. Philosophically, Bonaventure's work can be seen as the extension of Augustine's, tempered however by the distinctive spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi. Some scholars, furthermore, have argued for the deep influence of Bonaventure's thought on contemporary philosophy: on hermeneutics, on process philosophy, and on German idealism. Within his own Order, however, he was within a short time supplanted by Scotism, the philosophical system of John Duns Scotus, which then became the quasi-official philosophy of the Franciscans.

**THE CONDEMNATION OF 1277.** It was the conservatives like Bonaventure who would triumph in the con-

flict with the radical Aristotelians—at least in the short run. The story is easily told, but more difficult to assess. Pope John XXI (c. 1210–1277), who in his earlier life had made a name for himself in logic (in fact, his book, the *Summa logicalis*, was the most widely used logic text in the thirteenth century), had heard rumors of suspicious teachings emanating from the University of Paris, the premier center for theological studies in the West. He ordered Stephen Tempier, the bishop of Paris, to investigate. Taking this papal letter as his warrant, Tempier hastily assembled a panel of theologians and in short order drew up a list of 219 propositions from the teachings of the Parisian masters that he condemned as heretical. Included in the list were approximately two dozen teachings of St. Thomas. The fact that the condemnation was issued three years to the day after Aquinas's death (7 March 1277) led some to suspect a personal insult to Thomas.

**THE ANTI-AVERROIST ATTACK.** The list itself was a hodgepodge. Condemned as heretical were a book on courtly love, one on geomancy (the art of foretelling the future by studying the patterns formed when earth is randomly thrown on the ground), and one on necromancy (the art of prophesying through communication with the dead). Condemned also were some teachings originally ascribed to Avicenna as well as to St. Thomas Aquinas (as, for example, the teaching that angels are "nowhere," that is, not in a place). But the focus of the document was the teachings of the Latin Averroists: for example, that there is no more excellent state than to study philosophy; that the only wise men in the world are the philosophers; that God does not know things other than himself; that God is eternal in acting and moving, just as he is eternal in existing, otherwise he would be determined by some other thing that would be prior to him, and so forth. In the prologue to this very harsh document the bishop became the first to ascribe to the Averroists (*averroiste*) the teaching by which they came to be known:

For they [the Latin Averroists] say that these things are true according to philosophy but not according to the Catholic faith, as if there were two contrary truths and as if the truth of Sacred Scripture were contradicted by the truth in the sayings of the accursed pagans ...

In other words, they held a theory of double truth.

**THE DIVORCE BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON.** If the principal aim was to wipe out the Averroist school, the condemnation was a failure. Its unintended effect, however, was wide-ranging: it created a new atmosphere, one in which theologians were more concerned with be-

ing right in the eyes of the Latin Church than they were in pursuing their insights to their logical conclusions. The greatest loss was to speculative theology, namely, a theology grounded in sound reason. In the new mood the trendy phrase became *potentia absoluta* “absolute power”: even though it makes no sense to human reason, God can do anything—even make it such that Caesar did not cross the Rubicon (when it is known that he did). It was the divorce between faith and reason and the beginning of the end of the golden age of medieval thought. Philosophy veered off into increased skepticism, doubting the very ability of the mind to know things, the logical conclusion of which was the universal and methodological doubt of Descartes in the seventeenth century, which most recent scholars consider the beginning of modern philosophy. Theology on the other hand headed in the direction of fideism, the view that religious belief is based solely on faith and not on evidence or reasoning, and private religious experience. The outcome of this tendency is to be seen in the flourishing of mysticism in the fourteenth century and ultimately in the Protestant Reformation.

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## THE SCOTIST WAY

**THE SUBTLE DOCTOR.** The most powerful and certainly the most wily thinker of this new era was John Duns Scotus (c. 1266–1308), called the *Doctor Subtilis* or “the subtle doctor.” Born in the village of Duns in Scotland, Scotus, declared “Blessed” by the Roman Catholic Church, was educated at Oxford. Following his ordination to the priesthood in 1291 (one of the few solid dates from his life known to scholars), he “reigned” as master of theology at Oxford. He was subsequently sent to Paris, where he wrote a commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*. He occupied one of the chairs assigned to the Franciscans in 1305 and a short time later was sent by his superiors to Cologne, where he taught until his death in 1308. Given the fact that he died at the young age of 42, it is little wonder that much of his promise as a philosopher remained unfulfilled and much of the system he had outlined undeveloped. The fact that some of his works survive only in the form of a *reportatio*—a report taken down by a student—adds to the difficulty in understanding this complex thinker. Reflecting the new spirit of his age, Scotus defended the necessity of divine revelation against those rationalists who advanced the claims of reason alone. The philosophies of Aristotle and his Muslim commentators, by this time so integrated into Christian thinking, were powerless to explain the human condition with its innate sinfulness and need for grace and redemption.

**THE CONCEPT OF INFINITE BEING.** Unlike St. Thomas, Scotus had a univocal, not an analogous, concept of being; in other words “being” meant the same thing in all of its instances. Scotus’ concept of being was everything that is not nothing. Thus emptied of content, being has neither depth nor degrees; nor is there room for the distinction so crucial for Aquinas between essence and being. Thus conceived, being for Scotus eluded comprehension in this life. Given this radically novel metaphysics, Scotus was forced to find a new path to God. All of the beings known to man are finite beings; they therefore demand a cause that is infinite and necessary. If the concept of infinite being is reasonable and not self-contradictory, then it must include the perfection of existence. In other words, if an infinite being is possible, it is necessary.

**DIVINE LAW AND DIVINE NATURE.** God for Scotus was both completely rational and completely free. Nothing in the immutability of the divine nature demanded one course of action as opposed to another. The moral law was not the result of capriciousness on the part of the divine will, nor was it determined in any



Justus von Ghent, Flemish, panel painting of Duns Scotus, Italy, 1470. THE ART ARCHIVE/PALAZZO DUCALE, URBINO/DAGLI ORTI.

absolute sense by the divine essence. This meant that the divine law, which is the foundation of the moral law, was the product of the divine will, operating, however, in accord with the non-contradictory character of the divine nature. Thus God can change the rules of morality, according to Scotus, but he cannot contradict his own nature. He cannot, for example, command that he not be loved.

**KNOWLEDGE OF UNIQUENESS.** Scotus was the first among the Franciscan masters to break with St. Augustine on the question of knowledge; he did not believe that man needed a special divine illumination in order to know truth. On the other hand, he also distanced himself from Aristotle in one important detail. For Aristotle the paradox was that we know individuals but only in a universal way; one knows Callias, said Aristotle, as man (a universal), not as Callias (an individual). Scotus found this explanation wanting and proposed an additional form or entity that makes each individual the individual he or she is; he even invented a word for it: *haecceitas* or

“this-ness.” In addition to the formal realities we share in common, such as being embodied, living, sentient, and rational, there is an additional difference that is unique to each of us, and the mind is capable of knowing this uniqueness. The late nineteenth-century English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, a great admirer of Scotus, called it “the dearest freshness deep down things.”

**COMPLEXITY AND DISTINCTIONS.** Like Augustine—and unlike Aquinas—Scotus gave primacy to the will over the intellect. True, desire is moved only by what is known, but the impetus toward the object comes from the will. The will is thus the higher faculty in that it moves the intellect to know what it knows. The complexity of his thought and the glut of distinctions (of which only a few have been suggested here) led his enemies to dub him the “Duns man,” which quickly evolved into the term of denigration that is with us to this day: *dunce*.

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## THE MODERN WAY AND THE TRIUMPH OF NOMINALISM

**THE WAR OF THE WAYS.** The disintegration of the medieval synthesis played itself out in what Germans call *die Wegestreit*, the “war of the ways.” The situation was parallel to that which prevailed among Greek philosophers following the death of Aristotle: those with a philosophical bent would join one of the existing schools, learn its teachings, then do battle with the rival schools. The Dominicans had adopted the “Thomist way” after the teachings of Thomas Aquinas; its major challenger, favored by the Franciscans, was the “Scotist way” after the teachings of John Scotus. By mid-fourteenth century these were already seen as the old ways, and many embraced what was called the “modern way” (“modern” being a relative term), that is, the movement begun by William of Ockham (c. 1285–1347) and his followers.



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A PHILOSOPHICAL DEFINITION FROM  
OCKHAM**

**INTRODUCTION:** This passage from Ockham provides an example of the philosophical definition of a key term ("Universal") in scholastic philosophy. It also demonstrates the use of analogy to clarify discussion.

I maintain that a universal is not something real that exists in a subject [of inherence], either inside or outside the mind, but that it has being only as a thought-object in the mind. It is a kind of mental picture which as a thought-object has a being similar to that which the thing outside the mind has in its real existence. What I mean is this: the intellect, seeing a thing outside the mind, forms in the mind a picture resembling it, in such a way that if the mind had the power to produce as it has the power to picture, it would produce by this act a real outside thing which would be only numerically distinct from the former real thing. The case would be similar, analogously speaking, to the activity of an artist. For just as the artist who sees a house or a building outside the mind first pictures in the mind a similar house and later produces a similar house in reality which is only numerically distinct from the first, so in our case the picture in the mind that we get from seeing something outside would act as a pattern. For just as the imagined house would be a pattern for the architect, if he who imagines it had the power to produce it in reality, so likewise the other picture would be a pattern for him who forms it. And this can be called a universal, because it is a pattern and relates indifferently to all the singular things outside the mind. Because of the similarity between its being as a thought-object and the being of like things outside the mind, it can stand for such things. And in this way a universal is not the result of generation, but of abstraction, which is only a kind of mental picturing.

**SOURCE:** William of Ockham in *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*. Ed. and Trans. Philotheus Boehner (Indianapolis and N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957): 44.

**OCKHAM'S RAZOR.** If distrust of the reasoning power is in evidence in the thought of Scotus, a skeptical attitude became a hallmark of the modern way. Whereas St. Thomas opened his *Summa* of theology with a discussion of theology as a science, Ockham refused to grant it such status, asserting that theology is based on

**THE  
Sword and Pen**

Although Ockham finished the requirement for his degree of Master of Theology, he never held the one chair that had been assigned to the Franciscans at Oxford; and because he had "incepted," that is, that he had merely begun his studies, he has been given the sobriquet "Venerable Inceptor." Before his turn came to occupy the chair, he was accused of heresy by John Lutterell, the chancellor of the university and a fanatical Thomist. Subsequently summoned to Avignon, the city to which the papacy had relocated, he waited from 1324 to 1328 at the papal court while a committee examined his writings for suspicious teachings. Before a verdict was rendered, however, he became enmeshed in a controversy over the extreme version of poverty practiced by a wing of the Franciscan Order called the "Spirituals." Convinced that the pope had fallen into heresy, he fled with the deposed General of the Order, Michael of Cessena.

Seeking the protection of the Holy Roman Emperor, Ludwig of Bavaria, whose election the pope had refused to ratify, Ockham and his companions journeyed south to Italy, where the emperor was engaged in a military campaign. One version of what ensued, which is probably apocryphal, is that Friar William knelt before Emperor Ludwig and said: "Protect me with your sword, and I will defend you with my pen." Whatever the accuracy of the incident, Ockham in truth spent his remaining years in Munich under the emperor's protection, where he engaged in political writing, all of it polemical in nature. It is now fairly certain that the sentence of excommunication that was imposed on him was never lifted, and in all probability he died of the plague that swept through Europe in 1348–1350. Today his final resting place is marked by a boss in the pavement at the entrance to an underground parking garage in downtown Munich.

faith, not on evidence. He likewise limited the scope of theology in positing that only those truths that lead to salvation are considered "theological." William's philosophical obsession was the individual, which for him was the sole reality. Scotus's multiplication of formal realities, like his *haecceitas* "this-ness," were pointless distinctions and mere subtleties that needed to be trimmed away. Ockham's relentless wielding of the principle of philosophical economy became known as his "razor."

**INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE.** This abandonment of realism (“no universal is existent in any way whatsoever outside the mind of the knower,” he wrote) also entails for Ockham the abdication of abstractive knowledge. The latter can no more be shown to be real than the universals. According to Ockham, it is only possible to know individual things, and that knowledge is intuitive, not abstractive. For example, if a man has a pet, Buckfield, he attaches that knowledge to a sign, which in his language is “dog”; there is, however, no such thing as canine nature, either in reality or in the mind. Furthermore, what is intuited immediately is not the thing, but the sense image or “phantasm” of the thing. In this atomization of the knowing process, it is generally presumed that the image is caused by the thing, but of this there can be no certainty. The image may be an illusion, a dream, the result of a piece of bad meat; it may for that matter be caused by God, who after all possesses absolute power. For example, a point of light in the night sky is assumed to be a star. Was that image truly caused by the heavenly body so many light-years away? Ockham claimed that there was no way to be certain of this. In modern times, it is known that some of the lights in the night sky are stars that have long ago ceased to exist, but because of the vast distances their light is just now reaching our planet. Ockham would have been fascinated with this notion.

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## THE RETREAT FROM REASON: MYSTICISM

**ESCAPE FROM A HARSH REALITY.** The fourteenth century was on many fronts a desperate age, an age of disintegration. The papacy had been weakened morally and militarily by generations of struggle against the powerful rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, a dynasty that traced its legitimacy to the time of Charlemagne in the ninth century and controlled both Germany and northern Italy. As a result of this and other political conflicts, the papacy had become virtually a captive of the French crown at Avignon. Later in the century there were si-

multaneously three different men claiming to be pope. The magnificent structure of scholastic theology, elaborated as no other system of theology in the history of the world, was crumbling, brought down by the assaults of the Ockhamists. The bubonic plague was ravaging Europe, killing off approximately a third of the population. Especially hard-hit were urban centers, in which the universities were located. We know of at least two philosophers who fell victim to the epidemic. Yet, paradoxically, amid the social and ecclesiastical chaos, the age also witnessed the flowering of mysticism. Perhaps it was in part an escape from realities that had become too harsh, or it represented a retreat from the rational. Whatever the case, it was the age of Dante, exiled from his native city of Florence, who wrote the greatest epic poem in the Italian language, perhaps in any language, detailing his mystic journey through hell, purgatory, and finally paradise.

**THE SPIRITUALITY OF MEISTER ECKHART.** Especially fertile in spiritual developments was the Rhineland area of Germany and the Low Countries. Of the impressive number of mystics from this area the greatest was the German, John Eckhart, who had earned his degree of Master of Theology at Paris (hence the honorific “Meister”), and who had even served in an important administrative post in the Dominican Order. His academic writings, composed in Latin, were rather traditional and certainly above suspicion. It was in his sermons preached in his native language, however, that Meister Eckhart gave full vent to the exuberance of his spirituality. His following among lay people, especially nuns, soon gained the attention of the archbishop of Cologne, and Eckhart was cited before the Inquisition. Journeying to Avignon to argue his case before the pope, Eckhart intended to defend himself with the claim that heresy was a matter of the will, not the intellect; if he were wrong, he asked for correction, but he did not will to place himself outside of orthodoxy.

**TOWARDS DIVINE UNION.** Unfortunately, Eckhart died before his hearing. Notwithstanding, two years after his death in 1327, 28 of his teachings were condemned, including the following: “there is in the soul something that is uncreated and uncreatable,” “all creatures are a pure nothingness,” and “God loves souls, not their external works.” Taken out of context, these statements seem to affirm pantheism, deny the reality of creation, and anticipate the German religious reformer Martin Luther’s rejection of good works in the early sixteenth century. Such statements were bold and paradoxical to be sure, shocking even, but Eckhart’s sermons, when allowances are made for figurative and imaginative language—especially for inspired hyperbole—become expressions of a profound spirituality. It is a spirituality, moreover, that is God-centered,

emphasizing the union of the soul with the divinity without intermediaries, without community, without sacrament. Eckhart urged his congregation to dismiss the agents of the soul—that is, the intellect and the will—and allow God to occupy the core of the soul, the *finklein*, or “little spark.” Eckhart did not believe that man could do anything to merit this divine union, believing that it was all God’s doing. Man’s efforts count for nothing.

**A TRADITION OF PASSIVE RECEPTIVITY.** Although they are subject to a Catholic interpretation, these teachings point in the direction of Protestantism, or at least to quietism, a religious attitude of passive receptivity. It was an attitude that drew more from Dionysius and Neoplatonism, and turned away from the relentless rationalism of High Scholasticism. It was an attitude, moreover, that found fertile soil in German-speaking lands, and several disciples followed in Eckhart’s footsteps: John Tauler (“the masters of Paris read big books . . . but these [the mystics] read the living book wherein everything lives”), Henry Suso, John Ruysbroeck, Gerard Groote, and Thomas à Kempis, the reputed author of *The Imitation of Christ*. The canonization process for Eckhart is currently underway after these many centuries, and it is a certitude that the condemned propositions will be reevaluated.

**NICHOLAS OF CUSA AND RHINELAND MYSTICISM.** The enterprise of medieval philosophy can with some justification be extended into the fifteenth century and comes to an end with the towering figure of Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464). Nicholas, or Cusanus, studied with the Brothers of the Common Life, Gerard Groote’s foundation, which in turn was inspired by the Rhineland mystics. Cusanus was a prodigious and wealthy scholar; his personal library held over 300 manuscripts, including those authors most influential on his own thinking: Augustine, Proclus, Dionysius, Avicenna, and Eckhart.

**THE UNKNOWABILITY OF TRUTH.** The title of his major work, *On Learned Ignorance*, summarizes quite accurately his central insight. Reason not only is powerless to reach the infinite, it is likewise incapable of knowing the whole truth about anything. Knowledge is like a polygon inscribed within a circle: sides can be added to the polygon indefinitely, but the polygon will never be identical with the circle. No matter how close the human mind approaches to the truth, it will never completely conform to it. Indeed, as in the Socratic paradox, the more that is known, the more the extent of one’s ignorance is recognized. With dazzling originality, Cusanus faulted Aristotle and his logic for the divisions in the Roman Church and in philosophical circles. He instead advocated a logic that was made to unite. He made his own the teaching of the ancient Greek Anaxagoras:

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**MEISTER ECKHART’S SERMON ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST**

**INTRODUCTION:** Meister Eckhart, a member of the Order of Preachers, preached in both Latin and his native German (when he was addressing laypeople). It was the boldness and exuberance of the latter, however, that got him into trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities. Here, in a sermon on the birth of Christ, is a glimpse of the grounds for two of the charges: pantheism (that the core of the soul is one with God) and quietism (the view that our salvation requires no works on our part).

**SOURCE:** Raymond Bernard Blakney, trans., *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969): Sermon 1.

“everything is in everything.” To create all things is for God to be all things. If this sounds dangerously like pantheism, one must remember Cusanus’s Neoplatonic roots that recognized that God is above being. Or, conversely, creation is but an explication or unfolding of God; since God is all, the creature is reduced to nothing.

**THE FUSION OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY.** In his treatise *De li non aliud* (“Concerning the Not-other”), Cusanus argued that the absolute cannot stand in a relationship of otherness to any relative being; hence the

“Not-other,” or God, is both absolute in its causation and at the same time present to its effect in creation. Here Cusanus, a cardinal of the Catholic Church, proclaimed doctrines very similar to those that had been condemned as heretical a century earlier in Eckhart’s sermons. In a new century the assault on the rational structure of theology seems to have been rendered less unacceptable. But what actually happened in the waning of the Middle Ages is that the discipline of philosophy—which was distinct from, but clearly subordinate to, theology for the thinkers of the earlier medieval centuries—had, in the synthesis of Nicholas of Cusa, been assimilated into theology. The two disciplines are fused in Cusanus’s mystic vision. This fusion is quite at odds with the estrangement of philosophy and theology which otherwise prevailed in the late medieval period. In some ways Cusanus’s thought harkens back to an earlier golden age.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Mysticism and Modern Devotion*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE in Philosophy

### AVERROËS

1126–1198

*Spanish Islamic philosopher*

**THE LAST OF THE GREAT MUSLIM COMMENTATORS.** Ibn Rushd, known as Averroës to Latin-speaking peoples, was the last of the great Muslim commentators on Aristotle. Born in Córdoba in Spain (or al-Andalus, as the Arabs called it) in 1126 to a family of eminent jurists,

Averroës was educated in law, medicine, philosophy, and theology. In addition, he had a deep interest in and knowledge of the literature of the Arabs, a knowledge he exploited in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

**VALUABLE PATRONAGE.** A key moment in Averroës’s life was his introduction to the caliph of Marrakech. Although reticent at first, Averroës learned in the course of the conversation that the ruler, Abu Ya’qub Yusuf, was sympathetic to philosophers. Feeling free then to reveal his position on the sensitive topic of the world’s eternal duration—a view which Aristotle defended and which the Muslim clerics found sacrilegious—the young scholar revealed his Aristotelian sympathies. As a result of this fateful meeting, Averroës was not only appointed a judge in Seville but also commissioned to write a series of commentaries on the Arabic versions of the writings of Aristotle. With this patronage supporting him, Averroës began the task that was to occupy him for most of his life, writing more than thirty commentaries on Aristotle’s treatises. Sometimes, indeed, he wrote as many as three different commentaries on the same work: a long commentary, a “middle” commentary, and an epitome or summary. He did not shy away from controversy, as is evident in his defense of philosophy against the writings of al-Ghazali. A century earlier al-Ghazali had written a work entitled *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of Philosophy), in which—like David Hume centuries later—he attacked the principle of causality in an attempt to preserve God’s infinite power. He argued that human beings do not in fact cause anything, but merely provide the occasion for God to act directly. Al-Ghazali’s reasoning thus strips secondary causes of any role in action and in turn renders philosophy a useless pursuit. Averroës answered this attack on philosophy in his work *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), pointing out succinctly but effectively the sophistries in al-Ghazali’s arguments:

Denial of cause implies the denial of knowledge, and the denial of knowledge implies that nothing in this world can be really known, and that what is supposed to be known is nothing but opinion, that neither proof nor definition exist, and that the essential attributes which compose definitions are void.

**THE SUPERIORITY OF PHILOSOPHY.** So unbounded was Averroës’ admiration for Aristotle that he penned the most exaggerated praise that one philosopher ever wrote of another.

I consider that that man [Aristotle] was a rule and exemplar which nature devised to show the final perfection of man ... the teaching of Aristotle is the supreme truth, because his mind was the final expression of the human mind. Wherefore it has

been well said that he was created and given to us by divine providence that we might know all there is to be known. Let us praise God ...

Averroës was at pains, moreover, to defend the vocation of philosophy, arguing that not only is the pursuit of wisdom not forbidden by the Koran, it is expressly commanded—for those, that is, who have the intellectual acumen. No conflict need arise between the small and exclusive class of philosophers and the common people or even the theologians, if only these classes would confine themselves to the mode of argument of which they are capable. Of the three modes of proof outlined by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*—exhortations, dialectics, and rational demonstrations—the first was the only appropriate approach to truth for the uneducated masses; the theologians' capacity to understand probable arguments meant that dialectics was most suitable for them; and the philosophers were the only ones able to follow rational demonstrations. They were enjoined, however, not to lord it over the lower classes, but to pursue their studies with the conviction that they enjoyed the most direct road to the truth.

**THE END OF THE MUSLIM GOLDEN AGE.** Averroës' privileged status came to an abrupt end when his patron died and the patron's son, having decided that the philosophers blaspheme the true religion, sent him into exile. Three years later, in 1198, he was exonerated and allowed to live in Marrakech where he died a short time later at age 72. With the death of Averroës the Golden Age of Philosophy among the Muslims came to an end, a victim of religious fundamentalism. It is ironic that this greatest commentator on Aristotle enjoyed his most avid and attentive readership, not among his own people, but in the Latin West.

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## ROGER BACON

c. 1214–1292

*Franciscan teacher*  
*Natural philosopher*

**FROM OXFORD TO PARIS.** Notwithstanding his subsequent notoriety, there are very few facts known with certainty about the life of Roger Bacon. Most of

the dates listed by scholars are reconstructed from indirect remarks made by Bacon in his *Opus tertium* or "Third Work" (c. 1267). According to one reading of this work, he was born in 1214 of a well-known family of landed gentry, one member of which was the first Dominican master at Oxford and the teacher of Richard Fishacre. He was (according to this same reading) educated at Oxford from 1228 to 1236, then taught as master in the Arts faculty at Paris from 1237 to 1247. There Bacon became one of the earliest Christian thinkers to lecture and to write commentaries on the newly translated natural philosophy of Aristotle. Owing to the discovery in the nineteenth century of a manuscript at Amiens, scholars now have a copy of these commentaries.

**PRIVATE RESEARCH.** Between the years 1248 and 1256, Bacon, now a Franciscan friar, retreated to what can only be described as private study (possibly at Oxford) and the instruction of others, using his family inheritance to support himself. These studies were to lay the foundation for the positions he passionately held for the rest of his life: the insistence on the practical orientation of theology, the importance of the study of languages (for which he praises the efforts of Robert Grosseteste), the significance of experimental science, and the centrality of the mathematical sciences. He argued for the development of new technologies for the betterment of human life, especially as regards health-care, military technologies, and warfare.

**A FLURRY OF PRODUCTIVITY.** Toward the end of this period Bacon was posted by his superiors back to Paris, where he was resident in the Franciscan house of studies from 1256 until 1280. Bacon soon came to regret his "conversion" to the Franciscan Rule, owing to the unwillingness of his superiors to assign him to the classroom. In desperation, he appealed to Cardinal Guy Le Gros Foulques, petitioning him for funds to begin a major research project. As fate would have it, his would-be patron was elected pope in 1265, taking the name Clement IV. In a letter of June 1266, the new pope ordered Bacon to send him a copy of his grand work. Since the book had not yet been written, Bacon set to work feverishly and in three years produced the *Opus maius* ("The Greater Work"), the *Opus minus* ("The Lesser Work"), the *Opus tertium* ("The Third Work"), the *De multiplicatione specierum* ("On the Multiplication of Species"), *De speculis comburentibus* ("On Burning Mirrors"), the *Communium naturalium* ("Common Account of Natural Things"), and the *Secretum secretorum* ("The Secret of Secrets").

**BACK TO OXFORD.** Tragically, not only did the pope not respond to this deluge of writings (it is unclear

whether he even read them), but now Bacon was in trouble with his superior. Bonaventure, the Minister General of the Franciscans, held strong views on such subjects as astrology and alchemy and regarded Bacon as flirting with dangerous ideas. Furthermore, Bacon seems to have had leanings toward more radical elements in the Franciscan Order, those namely that saw the Order as the fulfillment of the prophecies of the apocalyptic visionary, Joachim of Fiore. As a result he was put under a kind of house arrest. In 1280, Bacon was transferred to Oxford again, where he remained until his death in 1292. His old age did not seem to have mellowed him. He persisted in his outspoken manner to criticize theological education and single out those who were—falsely in his view—reputed as wise. Although he attacked by name Thomas Aquinas and Albert his teacher, noting that he was dubbed “The Great” even during his own lifetime, his primary target was a fellow Franciscan.

I knew well the worst and most foolish [author] of these errors, who was called Richard of Cornwall, a very famous one among the foolish multitude. But to those who knew, he was insane and [had been] reprov'd at Paris for the errors which he had invented [and] promulgated when lecturing solemnly on the Sentences there ...

Research continues on this figure who was seemingly out of step with his time, but whose attempt to integrate Muslim, Jewish, and Christian wisdom pointed the way to the future.

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## MOSES MAIMONIDES

1138–1204

*Judge*  
*Physician*  
*Commentator*

**FROM SPAIN TO NORTH AFRICA.** Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, more commonly referred to as Maimonides, was the most eminent Jewish philosopher of the me-

dieval period. He was born in 1138 in Córdoba (the birthplace also of the famous Islamic philosopher Ibn Rushd or Averroës), the court city of the Almoravid caliphate. He came from a long line of Talmudic scholars, including his father, Maimon, who was a rabbinic judge as well as a mathematician and astronomer. It is little wonder then that his earliest education was imparted in the home. Later he was sent to Arab masters for instruction in the natural sciences, medicine, and philosophy. The flourishing Jewish intellectual community into which Maimonides was born and raised, however, came suddenly under threat when the less tolerant Almohads conquered their region. Faced with persecution, the Maimon family fled to North Africa, eventually settling in the city of Fez. It is during this period, according to one account, that the family was offered refuge by Averroës.

**EARLY WORKS.** In the meantime, the precocious young Maimonides had at age sixteen produced his first philosophical work, a treatise on Arabic logic. Four years later he had also composed a mathematical and astronomical work on the Jewish calendar and commenced a ten-year project: a commentary designed to make the oral law of Judaism more accessible. He came to prominence in the Jewish community at this time, however, for his “Letter on Apostasy,” a passionate plea for his co-religionists to emigrate to countries where they would be permitted to practice their faith freely and also to forgive those who had been forced to abandon their observance of the Law.

**COMMERCE AND MEDICINE.** By 1165 Fez was also to prove inhospitable to the Maimon family. An inquisition was instituted to punish those who had relapsed from Islam (the family had earlier been forced to convert). Once again Maimonides and his family fled, first to Palestine, then to Cairo in Egypt, where he spent the remainder of his years. His livelihood at this time was derived from commerce, but when his beloved brother David died in a shipwreck, Maimonides abandoned the business world and turned to the practice and teaching of medicine. Eventually he became court physician to the great Saladin, Sultan of Egypt and victor over the Crusaders.

**FAITH AND PHILOSOPHY.** Fluent in both Hebrew and Arabic, Maimonides wrote in the former language when he was addressing the Jewish community, as for example in the *Mishneh Torah* (a clear and systematic exposition of the entire oral law), and in Arabic, the *lingua franca* of most of the Mediterranean world, when he wanted to reach a larger audience. Such was the case with his major philosophical work, the *Dalalat al-Ha'irin*, or

“The Guide of the Perplexed.” Addressed to a certain Joseph, a former student and, therefore, one considerably advanced in philosophical knowledge, Maimonides aimed in this lengthy work to clear up his pupil’s confusions over the apparent lack of correspondence between his religious faith and his philosophical convictions—to reconcile, in other words, Athens (personifying reason) and Jerusalem (personifying faith).

**INFLUENCE ON CHRISTIAN THINKERS.** Maimonides was recognized as an authority on the Jewish Law by diaspora communities throughout the Middle East and Mediterranean and his advice was frequently sought. After his death the translation of his *Guide* into Latin extended the influence of his philosophical accomplishments to Christian thinkers of the thirteenth century, where he was cited as an authority (“Rabbi Moses”) by such philosophers as Richard Fishacre, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas.

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## THOMAS AQUINAS

c. 1224–1274

*Dominican friar  
Philosopher*

**A LIFE IN THE CHURCH.** Thomas Aquinas, called the “Common Doctor” or (some centuries later) the “Angelic Doctor,” was born in the family castle of Roccasecca in the county of Aquino (hence his name), which was located in the Kingdom of Naples. The youngest son in a noble family of thirteen children, Thomas was undoubtedly destined by his father for service in the Church. Hence it was that he was packed off at the age of five to the nearby monastery of Monte Cassino as an oblate (a lay member of the religious community), possibly one day to be its abbot, a post befitting his aristocratic status. Thomas’s career path took a different turn, however, after his superior transferred him to nearby Naples to continue his studies at the newly founded university, the establishment of the emperor, Frederick II.

There Thomas was exposed, full bore, to the newly translated works of Aristotle. It was also there that he first encountered the religious order of begging preachers, founded by St. Dominic. Attracted to the mendicant way of life, young Thomas took the habit, much to the consternation of his mother. Sending his older brothers, both knights, to seize her youngest son, she had Thomas placed under “house arrest” in the family castle.

**A MASTER OF THEOLOGY.** A year’s captivity was not able to shake his resolve, however, and Thomas was allowed to continue his interrupted journey to Paris, where he came under the tutelage of Albert of Swabia, who was already being called Albertus Magnus, or “Albert the Great.” The teacher recognized the genius of his pupil; one time, on overhearing the nickname with which his fellow students had dubbed him, “the dumb ox,” he predicted that one day the bellowing of this dumb ox would fill the world. Following a period in Cologne, where he witnessed the laying of the cornerstone of the great cathedral, Thomas was sent back to Paris to study for the terminal degree in theology, the “master of the sacred page” (referring to Scripture). Owing to university politics, however, the degree was withheld, and it took a letter from the pope to the chancellor before Thomas and his fellow student Bonaventure (the future Minister General of the Franciscan Order) were admitted to the “university” of masters.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SUMMA.** For three years Thomas held the chair assigned to the Dominicans at Paris, then was transferred to his native Italy for the next ten years. While teaching in the house of studies in Rome, Thomas conceived the idea of what was to become his masterpiece, the *Summa theologiae*, the “Summary of Theology,” which was written, as he said in the Prologue, for beginners in the discipline. In 1268 Thomas was transferred again to Paris, this time to do battle against the movement that had arisen in his absence, Latin Averroism. One detects in his writings from this period a dramatic change from his usual placid and tranquil demeanor, and Thomas used rather harsh language in challenging the professors who he was convinced were misinterpreting Aristotle and threatening his own project, which was to build a new synthesis of Christian theology on the foundations of Aristotle’s natural philosophy.

**A REMARKABLE OUTPUT.** Thomas left Paris after four years of incredibly intense activity, when in addition to his lectures on Scripture and his continuing work on the *Summa*, he had begun his own commentaries on the works of Aristotle. Although these commentaries were extracurricular for Thomas—that is, they did not

constitute part of his duties as a master of theology—they were written by him precisely to defend his use of Aristotle in theology in the face of the “Augustinians” who had accused him of Averroism. Back in Naples, exhausted by his Herculean efforts (he wrote or dictated fifty works in his forty-nine years), he suddenly stopped writing altogether, leaving the *Summa* incomplete. When questioned by his secretary, Reginald of Piperno, Thomas would only reply that after what had been revealed to him, he realized that he had not come close. The following spring, on his way north to attend the Council of Lyons to which he had been summoned, he fell from his horse and was taken to a nearby monastery, where some days later he died. He was officially recognized as a saint almost fifty years later, after several of his teachings which had been condemned in 1277 were subjected to a re-examination and found to be orthodox.

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## WILLIAM OF OCKHAM

1285–1347

*Franciscan friar*

*Teacher*

*Political polemicist*

**THE VENERABLE INCEPTOR.** Few philosophers of the Middle Ages have proved to be as divisive in their own age or since as the Franciscan friar, William of Ockham. Born about 1285 in the town of Ockham in Surrey, a quiet shire south of London, William joined the Order of Friars Minor at the tender age of twelve. Following his novitiate and philosophical studies at the Franciscan convent in London, he began his study of theology at Oxford around 1306. His lectures on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* came in 1317–1319, at which time he was recognized as an “inceptor,” or bachelor of theology. With another two years of study he completed the requirements for the degree of Master and had even delivered his inaugural lecture. Owing to a restriction on the number of mendicants allowed to become masters, however, Ockham did not assume the chair in theology at this time, and circumstances later intervened so that

he never in fact lectured in theology as a master; his title thus became the Venerable Inceptor.

**A FORCIBLE STAY AT AVIGNON.** Instead Ockham was posted to the Franciscan house of studies in London where for the next several years he lectured and wrote extensively. It was writings from this period that make up the bulk of Ockham's philosophical output. In 1324, however, the chancellor of Oxford, John Lutterell, charged Ockham with heresy, and he was forced to travel to Avignon in France (where the pope had taken up residence) to defend himself. For four years the investigation into his teachings dragged on, but in the end none of the suspect teachings was formally condemned. Notwithstanding, his academic career was at an end. He would never hold a chair. While Ockham was biding his time in Avignon, however, he encountered his superior, Michael of Cessena, also summoned to Avignon because he had opposed the pope's condemnation of absolute poverty—that is, the surrender of any right to property both on the part of the individual friar and also on the part of the Order. The Minister General had given Ockham the charge of examining three papal documents and rendering a verdict. Ockham's judgment was clearly not tailored to endear him to the pope. The papal assertions were in his words, “heretical, erroneous, foolish, ridiculous, fantastic, senseless, defamatory, and equally contrary and obviously adverse to the orthodox faith, sound morality, natural reason, certain experience, and fraternal charity.” Burning their final bridges, Michael and William fled Avignon, taking a boat to Pisa, where they caught up with the Holy Roman Emperor, Ludwig of Bavaria. The story told about the meeting is probably apocryphal, but it is colorful: the friar knelt before the emperor and said, “Defend me with your sword and I will defend you with my pen.”

**IMPERIAL APOLOGIST.** Defend the emperor Ockham did, and for the final seventeen years of his life he abandoned philosophy and theology entirely and wrote polemical works exclusively, analyzing the nature of the Christian Church, the relationship between church and state, and the role of natural law. Death came in 1347, and he was buried in the Franciscan church in Munich. Today the Bavarian National Theater occupies that site. At the bottom of the stairs leading to the parking garage can be found a modest plaque marking the probable burial site of one of the most revolutionary thinkers of the medieval period.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Philosophy*

Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non* (early 12th century)—Reflecting his age’s infatuation with dialectics, Abelard cleverly lines up apparently contradictory teachings on the part of the fathers of the church and shows through logical analysis that the contradictions are only superficial.

Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion* (mid 11th century)—Responding to a plea from his monks who wanted one single argument to prove not only God’s existence but everything else we believe about God, Anselm creates the most intriguing and most discussed argument of all time, the genius of which is to force the atheist into a contradiction if he continues in his denial of God.

Augustine (Aurelius Augustinus), *On the Free Choice of the Will* (c. 400) and *Confessions* (c. 397–400)—The first work, widely regarded as the best philosophical writing by this early Christian theologian, introduces to Western thought the notion that the human will freely makes choices. The *Confessions*, considered one of the great books of the Western world, is a “letter” to a fellow bishop recounting Augustine’s knotted journey to find the Beauty ever ancient and ever new. It is a unique work owing to the fact that we are let in on the workings of the mind of a philosopher.

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (523–524)—A “best seller” all through the Middle Ages, the *Consolation* was written by a man facing

death and wrestling with the problem of evil and the secret of human happiness.

Bonaventure, *The Mind’s Journey into God* (mid-thirteenth century)—Guided by the metaphor of the six-winged seraph that had appeared to St. Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure in this spiritual masterpiece traces the journal of the pious soul from the sensible things of this world, through the soul, into the transcendent God.

Dionysius, the pseudo-Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* (c. 500)—This treatise on divine language—that is, the problem of how to talk about God—had an influence that lasted about a thousand years; the Italian humanist, Lorenzo Valla, finally exposed it as a forgery.

John Scotus Eriugena, *On the Division of Nature* (mid-9th century)—In this first “summa” of the Middle Ages, the Irish monk creatively divides nature into four parts: God as principle of all things, the divine (creative) ideas, creatures, and God as end and goal.

Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (late 12th century)—This classic of medieval Jewish thought was written for believers who also knew Greek philosophy and were confused as to how to reconcile faith and reason.

Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance* (mid-fifteenth century)—In a departure from Aristotle’s law of non-contradiction, Cusa argues in this most original masterpiece of the medieval period that in all entities, but especially in God, there is a “coincidence of opposites.”

John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* (1298–1302)—One of two commentaries which Scotus wrote on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, this work puts on display the subtle mind of the man awarded the epithet “Subtle Doctor” by his contemporaries.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (1273)—Though written professedly for beginners in the discipline, this masterpiece of philosophical or speculative theology represents the high point of medieval thought.

7  
chapter seven

RELIGION

Tim J. Davis

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	297	Famine, the Black Death, and the Afterlife. . . . .	366
OVERVIEW . . . . .	300	Mysticism and Modern Devotion . . . . .	368
TOPICS		SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Early Latin Christianity in Northern Europe . . . .	302	Thomas Becket. . . . .	371
Religion in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. . . .	309	Gregory VII . . . . .	372
The Spread of Islam and its Relationship to		Innocent III . . . . .	373
Medieval Europe. . . . .	311	Mechthild of Magdeburg. . . . .	374
Medieval Judaism . . . . .	314	Marie d'Oignies . . . . .	374
Early Medieval Christianity in the East . . . . .	318	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	375
Medieval Liturgy. . . . .	321	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY	
Cluny and the Monastic Reforms of the		DOCUMENTS	
Tenth and Eleventh Centuries . . . . .	324	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
Relics, Pilgrimages, and the Peace of God . . . . .	326	Medieval Religion Terms . . . . .	304
Growing Church Power and Secular		The Monastic Day . . . . .	306
Tensions . . . . .	328	Roles and Occupations in the Latin	
The Crusades . . . . .	331	(Western) Christian Church. . . . .	307
The Military Orders . . . . .	335	The Midrash . . . . .	317
Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Monastic		<i>A Homily at Hagia Sophia</i> (homily celebrating	
Movements . . . . .	337	the gradual return of religious icons) . . . . .	319
Women Religious . . . . .	340	Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox:	
Medieval Education and the Role of the		Some Modern Differences . . . . .	320
Church . . . . .	342	<i>Papal Power: The Dictatus Papae</i> (March 1075)	
Secular Clergy: Reform and Reaction . . . . .	345	(a claim of ultimate power for the	
Medieval Heresy . . . . .	348	papacy, especially power over secular	
Friars. . . . .	351	rulers) . . . . .	329
The Laity and Popular Beliefs. . . . .	356	<i>A Reconciliation at Canossa</i> (Emperor	
Children and Medieval Christianity. . . . .	359	Henry IV's reconciliation with Pope	
Papacy and Politics in the Late Thirteenth		Gregory VII) . . . . .	331
and Early Fourteenth Centuries . . . . .	360		
From Schism to Reform . . . . .	363		

<i>Spiritual Privileges Granted to Crusaders</i> (a call by Pope Eugene III to support and participate in a crusade). . . . .	333	Three Stories of St. Francis . . . . .	353
<i>A Critical Look at the Crusades</i> (excerpt from a report given at a council to debate the merits of the crusades). . . . .	334	<i>A Late Medieval Satire on Friars</i> (excerpt from the Prologue to Chaucer's <i>Canterbury Tales</i> ). . .	355
<i>Clerical Reform: The Legislation of 1059</i> (Pope Nicholas II attempts to make reforms for ecclesiastical offices) . . . . .	346	<i>Unam Sanctam: A Papal Bull</i> (Pope Boniface VIII's response to France's reduced financial support of Rome) . . . . .	362
The Battle over Magna Carta . . . . .	347	<i>The Call for a General Council</i> (excerpt from a bishop's letter advocating the formation of a council to solve the problems of the Great Schism) . . . . .	364

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Religion*

- 800 Charlemagne is crowned emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III, creating a linkage between spiritual and temporal powers.
- 813 Charlemagne requires all Christian altars to contain holy relics.
- 815 Byzantine iconoclastic policies (removal of sacred images from church decoration) are revived by Emperor Leo V.
- 843 The iconoclastic controversy in Byzantine Christianity comes to an end, and the use of icons is restored.
- 860 Russian ambassadors to the court of Constantinople embrace Christianity.
- 909 The founding of the famous Benedictine monastery of Cluny, France, occurs in this year.
- 945 A Christian church is built in the Russian city of Kiev.
- 962 The coronation of the German ruler Otto I as emperor of the Romans occurs in this year, reestablishing strong ties between spiritual and temporal powers.
- 990–1096 Local church councils address Peace of God and Truce of God legislation attempting to lessen medieval violence.
- c. 1000–1080 This is the early period of revival for women’s monastic life in Europe.
- 1027 The Danish king Canute makes a famous pilgrimage to Rome.
- 1054 Rome’s excommunication of the patriarch (a bishop in Eastern Orthodox sees) of Constantinople marks a significant early break between Latin and Greek Christian institutions.
- 1059–1080 The height of papal legislation concerning conflict between secular and religious authority (which historians often label as the “Investiture Controversy”) is reached. The contest over various influences and powers in society culminates in a disagreement between churchmen and powerful princes concerning the authority to invest new bishops with their symbols of office.
- c. 1075 The military religious order of Hospitallers begins its work in the Holy Land, providing comfort and assistance to pilgrims.
- 1080 Bruno of Cologne founds the Carthusian Order of hermits, combining the communal (cenobitic) lifestyle with solitary (eremitic) practice.
- 1095 The First Crusade, a Christian military expedition to free the Holy Land from Muslim domination, is promoted by Pope Urban II.
- 1098 The formation of the Cistercian Order attempts to reform the abuses of medieval monasticism and return it to a purer interpretation of the Benedictine Rule.
- 1110–1143 Persecution of the Bogomils, a religious movement holding that the earth was created by Satan, takes place in the Byzantine Empire.
- 1121 The Premonstratensian Order is founded. The order is unique in that it accepts both men and women and attempts to accommodate them in the same monastery.
- 1128 The Council of Troyes approves plans for the establishment of the Knights Templar, an order of knights which protected pilgrims and settlers in the Holy Land following the ousting of Muslim forces from the area during the Crusades.

- 1143 The Cathar movement begins in France. The Cathars desire to purify the church from worldly elements and the corruptions of the flesh.
- 1145 The Second Crusade, to rescue the city of Edessa in Greece from Muslim control, is preached by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, while simultaneous crusades are planned against European non-Christians (Bohemians, Wends, and Moors).
- 1170 Archbishop and former English chancellor Thomas Becket is murdered at Canterbury Cathedral following a conflict with the king over the rights and authority of the church.
- 1184 The papal bull *Ad Abolendam* condemns the teachings of the Waldensians (who preached against clerical corruption), Cathars (who rejected the bodily resurrection of Christ), and certain Humiliati (a lay order).
- 1189–1192 The Third Crusade is undertaken against the Muslim leader Saladin, and some coastal territory is recovered.
- 1199–1204 The Fourth Crusade, intended to fight Muslims in Egypt, goes off course and ends with the sacking of Constantinople and establishment of the Latin Empire, which lasts sixty years.
- 1200 Masters at the University of Paris receive royal charter, which will be approved in Rome in 1231.
- 1201 The lay spiritual Humiliati movement receives papal recognition.
- c. 1205 The lay women's movement of Béguines begins in Germany and the Lowlands.
- 1209 The Albigensian Crusade is launched against heretical Cathars, and is carried out over the next twenty years with great cruelty.
- 1210 Pope Innocent III grants Francis of Assisi permission to found an order of mendicants (later called Order of Friars Minor).
- 1215 The Fourth Lateran Council convenes and implements major reforms for secular clergy.
- The Poor Clares, a Franciscan order for women, is formed.
- 1217 The Dominican Order of Preachers receives papal confirmation.
- 1232 Pope Gregory IX grants the constitution for the foundation of Dominican nuns.
- 1249 Oxford University is founded in England. It later becomes one of the institutions where religious orders send their most talented brethren to teach and study.
- 1250 The Carmelites, who had been hermits in the Holy Land, are approved as an order of friars in European communities.
- 1265 Thomas Aquinas begins to write the *Summa Theologiae*, which organizes arguments reconciling faith and reason.
- 1298–1350 This period marks the height of the lay Humiliati movement.
- 1309 The pope, involved in struggles between religious and secular authority, begins to reside in Avignon, France, where the papacy would remain until 1377 (1408 including anti-popes).
- 1315–1317 Famine strikes Europe, triggering a heightening of spirituality.
- c. 1325 The Cistercian movement peaks in influence, with some 700 male abbeys and 900 women's houses.
- 1347 The advent of the Black Death (the bubonic plague) reinforces the idea that the world is transitory and only the spiritual life has true value.
- 1373 The mystical visions of the English anchoress Julian of Norwich begin.
- 1378 The Great Schism occurs over rival claims to the papacy, dividing Europe's allegiance

- between two (and at times even three) different popes.
- 1382 The teachings of the English reformer John Wyclif, who rejects transubstantiation and supports vernacular Bibles, are condemned.
- 1416 The Czech reformer Jan Hus, a follower of Wyclif's teachings who preached against clerical corruption, is burned as a heretic.
- 1417 The Great Schism comes to an end with the Council of Constance.
- 1453 The fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans diminishes the link between Eastern and Western Christianity.
- 1455 The Gutenberg Bible is first printed, beginning an era when ordinary people will be able to read and interpret scriptures for themselves.

## OVERVIEW *of Religion*

**A PERVASIVE PRESENCE.** The importance of religion in all facets of medieval life can hardly be overestimated. One of the reasons for the pervasive presence of religious ideology was that the dominant or most influential figures (often those in power) in Western European, Byzantine, and Muslim cultures each lived according to a revealed religion that reached deeply into every aspect of daily life. Many historians have attributed the early growth of such influences in northern Europe to the efforts of Christian missionaries, most of whom were members of monastic orders from the remnants of the western Roman Empire. In the Byzantine Empire (the former eastern part of the Roman Empire, centered in what is now Istanbul, Turkey) and areas dominated by Islam, organized religion was connected to the offices of both emperor and caliph (the spiritual and political head of Islam). The shaping of culture was clearly tied to the way each of these religions became a part of people's lives. Substantial support from the monarchies of northern Europe would not become the norm until the ninth century when the scope of secular administrative power became more widespread. Some of the northern European kings were profoundly affected by the Christian message, while others were mainly concerned with making alliances with church leaders who had significant authority, thus assisting the development of the prominent position of religion in the social and ideological landscape.

**THE CAROLINGIANS AND THE FRANKISH ROMAN EMPIRE.** The great rise of religious influence in northern Europe took hold during the Carolingian period in the late 700s and is often considered to have begun with the reign of the Frankish king Charlemagne (768–814). Charlemagne's successors and the legacy he left behind ensured the ongoing dominance of Christianity by bringing it to both the common people and the nobility. This was done in a variety of ways: through education, personal example of the secular rulers, and church leadership, as well as infusing Christianity into the system of

social obligations, particularly those associated with lordship. Fostering the growth of monasteries along with local secular churches ensured a more even distribution of religious program. Strong links to Latin (that is, Roman) Christianity were established by adopting many of the Roman traditions for religious ritual, but a political relationship with the papacy was also forged via the institution that was later called the Holy Roman Empire (a realm centered in the areas that are now France, Germany, Benelux countries, Switzerland, Austria, Bohemia, and northern Italy), whose heads of state, beginning with Charlemagne, were crowned by the pope himself.

**MEDIEVAL RELIGION OUTSIDE THE FRANKISH ROMAN EMPIRE.** During the tenth century, missionaries continued to facilitate the spread of Christianity outside of the Frankish Roman Empire, particularly in areas to the east of Germany. As bishoprics and their jurisdictions were created, they brought with them certain social structures (such as ecclesiastical courts) and official channels that encouraged the expansion and growth of new Christian states. At the same time, pervasive incursions, attempts at settlement, and large-scale invasions by polytheistic Vikings from Scandinavia and Magyar groups from what is now Hungary proved to be both an interruption to the progress of Christian development and an opportunity for further evangelization. Conversions of Danes, Swedes, Norse, and Magyars, both in their native regions and among those who settled in England, France, and Germany, were attempted with varying degrees of success between the ninth and twelfth centuries. Spain continued to be dominated by Islam at this time, although there were large numbers of Jews and Christians living in the Iberian Peninsula. Jews also had settled early on in the areas that are now Italy, northern France, and Germany, after being displaced from the Holy Land by Muslim invaders, and they remained an important, if marginalized, presence in most areas of Europe throughout the Middle Ages.

**BYZANTINE CHRISTIANITY.** While the heirs of the ancient Western Christian empire had suffered a period of social and political decline following the final fall of Rome in the fifth century, Eastern Christianity, centered in the capital city of Constantinople, had continued to develop in power, wealth, and influence. The stability of Eastern (Byzantine or Orthodox) Christianity was tested, however, in the ninth century when church authorities revisited the question of whether or not icons—that is, religious images such as wall paintings, panel paintings, and statues—should be allowed in churches. The controversy, essentially a question of what constituted idolatry, caused tension between the crown and the

monasteries, whose members were supporters of the icons. At the same time, theological disagreements between the Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) church over the relationship between Trinitarian elements (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) reappeared and continued to be a source of division throughout the Middle Ages, contributing to the separation between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians that continues today.

**EARLY RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR CONFLICTS.** Tensions between the Latin Christian religious and temporal authorities increased during the eleventh century, particularly in the growing German Empire and in England. Quite visibly, some of this struggle for control came to a head over the issue of powerful laity—lords and kings—insisting upon having the power to invest new bishops with their symbols of office. This particular conflict (known under the umbrella of “Investiture”) culminated in the debate over whether or not church leaders should swear oaths of loyalty to secular leaders. The relationship between temporal and spiritual powers, kings and popes, bishops and nobles, generally was not characterized by smooth cooperation. As both secular leaders and churchmen became more powerful, each attempted to come to terms with the problems and benefits of the system of lordship. In this system, advantages like wealth, power, and influence were tied to the ownership and management of land, particularly as it related to sources of income. But when sons and daughters of nobles became bishops, abbesses, abbots, cardinals, and popes, there was bound to be a complexity of ideological tension. During the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, the following basic questions would resurface in a variety of ways: Were church leaders superior because of their spiritual connection to God? Should “religious” nobles relinquish or diminish their hereditary stations, step aside, and allow secular leaders to guide and govern? How should church and state cooperate in the promotion of a better Christian society? What was to be done about the problem of violence between various factions of Christians?

**MEDIEVAL SPIRITUALITY, LITURGY, AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP.** Aspects of spirituality changed gradually during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The Benedictine Order, with its *Rule* for monastic life stressing a corporate existence of prayer, work, humility, and stability under the leadership of an abbot, grew tremendously and became quite popular. As monastic “franchises” such as the houses of Cluny and Gorze began to develop, greater attention was paid to proper practice and the material aspects of worship, including more extensive and elaborate and formulaic prayer, as well as the decoration and

enlargement of worship spaces and rubrics for their use. The secular churches underwent their own reforms, which were instituted from the top down (popes to bishops to local priests) to deal with moral and economic abuses. Among the improvements was a new emphasis on education, which was intended to broaden and deepen the clergy’s understanding of the sacraments and improve their ability to communicate this knowledge to others. Specialized liturgical books such as the *pontifical* (a comprehensive book of sacraments, ceremonies, and rites performed by bishops) and the *ordo* (a book of directives for the celebration of liturgies) reflected the desire to make Latin Christian worship more uniform throughout all of Europe. As the clergy became more and more elite, however, changes in the liturgy increasingly diminished the role of laity in communal celebration.

**MONASTIC REFORMS AND THE RISE OF THE FRIARS.** By the twelfth century, there were major attempts on the part of reform orders such as the Cistercians, Carthusians, and Premonstratensians to bring monasticism back to the model of simpler communities or even eremitical (hermit-like) roots. Existing orders, especially the Cluniacs, had grown rich in their control of lands and properties, and seemed to lack the spiritual dimensions intended by the Benedictine Rule. These new orders attracted large numbers of adherents, suggesting some degree of success in dealing with the problems, but by the early thirteenth century, a new major religious movement arose, taking Christian existence out of the formal monastic establishments altogether. Under the leadership of two charismatic preachers, later to be canonized as St. Dominic and St. Francis, these new orders, known as the Dominican and Franciscan friars, emphasized poverty and service to the world. Friars lived on the edges of cities, begged for their sustenance, and spent their time preaching and hearing confessions. While the Dominicans were later associated mainly with education, Franciscans became missionaries, expanding the scope of their activities as far as Mongolia. Among lay Christians, the Béguines sought to de-institutionalize Christian apostolic standards and took on many aspects of Christian discipline without joining formal monastic orders.

**RELICS, PILGRIMAGES, AND CRUSADES.** During the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, holy relics and the miracles associated with them inspired a great proliferation of pilgrimages within Europe and to the Holy Land. The veneration of the relics in altars contributed to the growing number of private masses in monasteries and churches where there were numerous priests and multiple altars. Popular piety and devotion toward relics



and pilgrimages also helped fuel the crusading movements, which promised to free the Holy Land from Muslim domination and keep it accessible to travelers. The appearance of military orders in the twelfth century primarily arose in response to perceived needs connected to both the Crusades and the Reconquista (Christian Reconquest) in Muslim Spain. Medieval Christianity was not very tolerant of divergent theological opinions. In addition to the struggle for control of the Levant (an area on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, located between western Greece and western Egypt), Crusades were launched against Christian heretics such as the Cathars and pagan polytheists like the Wends. There were even localized persecutions of Jews, lepers, and homosexuals during this period. While Christians, Muslims, and Jews found it easier to coexist on a daily basis under Muslim rule in Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East, concerted conflict was bound to arise linked to the expansion of political and religious power structures.

**CRITICISMS OF CHURCH INSTITUTION AND HIERARCHY.** By the thirteenth century, the institutional factors that had contributed to the church's growth, wealth, and influence were being called into question by Christians from all walks of life. The emerging new universities began to pull away from strictly church-centered types of education to accommodate the study of law, rhetoric, medicine, and mathematics required by a more mobile and commercially vibrant Europe. By the thirteenth century theology had begun to emerge as one of the central disciplines within the realm of formal education. Scholastic approaches to philosophy and theology that developed as a result of university influences during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries continue to serve today as a hallmark of medieval intellectual activity. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries also marked a rich period for the development of Gothic architecture, a style in which soaring heights, open space, and increased light created a more inviting and invigorating place for the glorification of God. In addition to church and state struggles, the church in the fourteenth century now faced an ecclesiastical political crisis from within, as disputes over papal elections resulted in a schism or split between several factions who each claimed to have elected legitimate popes. The Avignon Papacy and Great Schism once again raised the issue of secular influences upon church elections, causing Christians to seriously reconsider the nature of papal power and supremacy.

**LATE MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS.** The ravages of famine and plague (the Black Death) during the early and middle fourteenth century gave medieval Christians pause to reexamine the idea of the afterlife,

the worth of the human soul, and the fleeting nature of all things temporal. In such times of crisis, people turned to religion once again to provide comfort to the afflicted. In the wake of the plague, the penitent act of flagellation, the desire to seek a personal mystical experience with God, and the organization of groups expressing dissatisfaction with the "human" elements of Christian leadership all influenced the Protestant Reformation that was soon to come. While humanism—a secular cultural and intellectual movement stressing the artistic and philosophical achievements of the Greeks and Romans—flourished in Italy and was beginning to take hold in northern Europe, the papal schism was being healed. But reformers like John Wyclif (in England) and Jan Hus (in Bohemia) were tenacious in protesting the ongoing abuses and corruption of the clergy, and many of Hus's fifteenth-century followers paid with their lives for opposing hierarchical church control. These major movements and events, coupled with an improved economy and the invention of the printing press, eventually set the stage for the great Reformation ideals of sixteenth-century Latin Christendom. The mid-fifteenth century religious climate was imbued with complex and often contradictory attitudes of suspicion, desire to hold on to tradition, optimism, enthusiasm for education, and an impulse towards personal freedom, the combination of which led many to distrust ecclesiastical authority and seek a return to Christianity's earliest roots.

## TOPICS *in Religion*

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### EARLY LATIN CHRISTIANITY IN NORTHERN EUROPE

**FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.** Although medieval Europe is often associated today with the dominance of Christianity, the beginning of the Middle Ages was a period of competing religions when many of the pre-Roman inhabitants and invading tribes who had helped bring about the end of the Roman Empire continued to practice polytheism. Latin Christianity had been established in parts of Western Europe outside of Italy during the time of the Roman occupation (especially from the second through fifth centuries C.E.), and centers of Christianity continued to exist in such cities as Lyon, Arles, Tours, Poitiers, Marseilles, Reims, and Provence (all in modern France); in Silchester, Dorchester, Water Newton, and St. Albans (in Britain); Trier,

Cologne, and Mainz (in modern Germany); and in Toledo, Córdoba, and Elvira (in modern Spain). The increasing presence on the part of bishops, theologians, and monastics fueled growing support for Christian ideas and practices throughout parts of northern Europe. Moreover, during the period of decline and deterioration of the Roman Empire, many members of the invading tribes—including the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Huns, Franks, and Saxons—accepted Christianity in one form or another. However, the key to Christianizing the north seemed to be the conversion of the tribal leaders, as happened when the Merovingian (Frankish) king Clovis—who ruled over what is now Belgium, northern France, and parts of Germany—and some of his followers were baptized in the mid-490s. A century later, with Rome still serving as the center of Western Christianity, Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) sent monks from the relatively new Benedictine Order to function as missionaries, priests, bishops, and even ambassadors to parts of northern Europe. The influence of the Irish monk St. Columbanus (d. 615) spread more Eastern (Orthodox) traditions of Christian monasticism into centers like Bangor (in Ireland) and Whitby (in Northumberland), as well as Annegray, Fontaine, and Luxeuil (in France). St. Boniface and St. Willibrord had helped spread Christianity in the Germanic regions, while Patrick (d. circa 460), Augustine of Canterbury (d. before 610), Abbess Hilda of Whitby (d. 680) and Columba (d. circa 597) facilitated such growth in the British Isles. By the ninth century, Christianity began to proliferate in parts of France, Britain, Ireland, Germany, and Spain.

#### MEROVINGIAN AND CAROLINGIAN INFLUENCE.

An eighth-century alliance that was formed between the Frankish kings and the bishops of Rome did much to secure the place of Christianity within the circles of the ruling class as they expanded their territory in northern Europe. A forged document known as the *Donation of Constantine*, which asserted that in the fourth century Constantine himself had given the bishop of Rome authority to govern over all territories in the western empire, may have helped legitimize the series of agreements between the Roman pontiffs and the Franks to provide each other with mutual support. In any case, over the last several decades of the eighth century the Carolingian family—rivals of the Merovingians—used their military power to come to the defense of the papal territories in Italy. In return for such protection and support of the papacy, along with support for certain papal claims of jurisdiction, Rome continued to give its blessing to the Carolingians in their usurpation of the Frankish throne from the previous Merovingian line. This alliance (which some have viewed as morally suspect) went on to create

a period of stability that would foster the development of Christian education, ideas, and institutions in the Frankish kingdom. It also set a precedent later on for providing the church with military assistance from Christian kings who were seen as God’s representatives, ruling through “divine right.” In thanksgiving for the continued support, at a Christmas celebration during the year 800, Charlemagne, the king of the Franks (whose Latin name “Carolus” was the source of the term “Carolingian”), was given the title “Emperor of the Romans” by Pope Leo III. The title linked the Franks to the former Roman Empire in an idealization of the place formerly occupied by Constantine the Great and his important relationship with the Christian church. Within the next century this title would be passed to the German kings (later called “Ottonian”) who succeeded the Carolingian line.

**CONQUEST AND CONVERSION.** The coronation of Charlemagne as emperor of the Romans on Christmas

## MEDIEVAL Religion Terms

**Ascetic:** Devoted to solitude, contemplation, discipline, fasting, denying the body in order to derive spiritual benefits.

**Augustinian Rule:** A set of guidelines devised by St. Augustine of Hippo in the fourth century for the common life of religious and often used by the canons regular or Austin Friars.

**Benedictine Monasticism:** Western communal practice begun in the sixth century by Benedict, the abbot of Monte Cassino in Italy. *The Rule of Benedict* stressed a corporate life of prayer, work, humility, and stability under the leadership of an abbot.

**Benefice:** Certain church offices, such as the rectorship of a parish church, with particular duties for which one would be granted revenues.

**Canonical hours:** The Divine Offices or daily prayers usually sung or recited by religious (often seven times a day).

**Canon Law:** The body of church law imposed by the authority of councils and bishops, particularly pertaining to matters of belief, morals, and discipline of the Christian faithful.

**Cenobitic:** A communal monastic lifestyle.

**Chapter:** The assembly of a monastic community (often daily) where a chapter of their rule was read, official business was dealt with, and faults of the monks were addressed.

**Cloistered:** Enclosed in a monastery, literally in the cloister space that forms part of a monastery; not free to leave or have visitors due to one's monastic status.

**Crozier:** The staff of a bishop, abbot, or abbess, sometimes bearing their insignia, commonly depicted in the form of a shepherd's staff signifying pastoral powers.

**Diocese:** A geographic division or extent of a bishop's jurisdiction.

**Ecumenical:** Worldwide, as in a general synod or council called by bishops, church leaders, or a pope.

**Episcopal:** Having to do with a bishop.

**Eremitic:** Having to do with the life of a hermit or solitary.

**Eucharist:** The celebration or reenactment of the Lord's Supper using bread and wine consecrated by a priest.

**Excommunication:** Church censure imposed by an authority which excludes individuals from communion and deprives them of rights to certain sacraments.

**Filiations:** Daughter houses, often founded or adopted by the mother monastery. A group of daughter houses dependent upon a main house or linked together in a system.

**Filioque:** A Latin phrase (literally meaning "and the son") referring to an argument as to whether or not the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father or emanates from both the Father and the Son. The Latin Church seems to have added the notion that the Holy Spirit can also proceed through Jesus as well as God the Father.

Day of 800 provides a watershed date for the development of a Christianity in northern Europe that had begun to be linked to the monarchy. This Latin Christianity, which was increasingly being embraced by European kings and lords, also began to be urged by the nobility upon the general populace. While Christianity had been firmly in place in northern Europe for several centuries, a majority of people in the areas of the British Isles, France, and Germany had still not embraced the faith. These cultures still retained a mix of polytheistic remnants from the pre-Roman era. Particularly along the border regions of the empire (north of Thuringia and in the east between the Rhine and Elbe Rivers of present-day Germany), groups like the Saxons were forcibly converted to the Christian faith. Saxons could be put to death for following their own traditions and ritualistic religious practices, such as cremation of the dead and human sacrifice, or even for the refusal to observe the Christian Lenten season. Many

who were unwilling to submit to Christian baptism or pay tithes (one tenth of their produce or income) to the church were also killed. One of the leading churchmen in Charlemagne's court, Alcuin of York, raised objections to the practice of forced conversion. He wrote:

Converts must be drawn to the faith and not forced. A person can be compelled to baptism and still not believe. The adult convert should profess a true belief and if he lies, he will not reach salvation.

During the conquest and conversion of the Avars in the southeastern marches of Bavaria and in lands such as Pannonia beyond the Danube River, Alcuin more carefully directed the prelates of the Carolingian realm:

Be preachers of piety and not exactors of tithes, slowly suckling souls with the sweet milk of apostolic gentleness, lest these new converts to the faith choke upon and vomit the Church's harsher teachings.

**Flagellation:** Whipping or beating oneself in punishment for sins, or to commiserate with the suffering of Christ.

**Host:** The consecrated bread at the Mass which medieval Christians believed was changed into the body of Christ in conjunction with the action of the celebrant.

**Iconoclast:** One who literally would smash religious statues and icons, based on the belief that they were idolatrous.

**Indulgence:** After the confession of sin, the substitution of penance by another act, such as almsgiving, pilgrimage, crusade, or financial contribution for the construction of a church.

**Inquisition:** The juridical persecution of heresy by special church courts.

**Investiture:** The investing or conferring of authority to a church official by a superior in a ceremony involving presentation of the symbols of office, including an exchange of homage before consecration.

**Laity:** Secular persons, not members of the clergy (monks, priests, canons, bishops, deacons, etc.).

**Limbo:** An abode of souls for those who, through no fault of their own, are barred from salvation because they were not baptized (as in the case of infants or people who lived before the time of Christ).

**Mass:** The liturgical rite of Christianity connected to the blessing or consecration of bread and wine along with the conventional prayers, songs and readings which accompany it.

**Mendicants:** Those religious, specifically friars, who depend upon begging for their support.

**Missal:** A book containing the complete rite of the Mass, with all prayers, readings, and chants.

**Office:** From Latin *officium* or duty, the prescribed daily round of prayers, mainly psalms, recited seven times a day in community, called for in the *Benedictine Rule*.

**Office of the Dead:** Prayers said on behalf of the deceased, often for individuals connected by membership or patronage to the monastery or community offering the prayer.

**Papal bull:** A written pronouncement or mandate from the pope. In the early days they were sealed with the stamp of the pope's ring (from the Latin *bullā* or seal).

**Penance:** The sacrament of forgiveness (that is, forgiveness by God through the action of a priest), which in the Middle Ages involved confession of sins followed by an act of restitution.

**Psalter:** A book of the psalms.

**See:** Literally, the official seat (from the Latin *sedes*) of a bishop, hence the place where the bishop sits or resides.

**Simony:** The sale or purchase of a church office.

**Stigmata:** Bearing the wounds of Christ.

**Transubstantiation:** Conversion of the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, with appearances of bread and wine remaining.

**Votive:** A liturgy or offering of prayer that is done with a particular intention in mind.

**SCHOOLS AND LAWS.** In developing a formal link with the papacy (the bishop of Rome who had authority over Western Christianity) and becoming a defender of the papal holdings of land and interests in northern Italy, Charlemagne and his Carolingian Dynasty, which ruled until the tenth century, united with the legacy of the old Roman Empire as well as the traditions and administration of Western Christianity. Taking this role seriously, Charlemagne sought to establish schools that would be located in the cathedral city centers and at monasteries where boys (mostly from the upper class) could be instructed in mathematics, grammar, and music, as well as in reading from church books such as gospels, psalters, and missals (if such manuscripts were available). Scholars such as Alcuin of York were brought into the kingdom from other lands to serve as teachers in the Frankish schools. Charlemagne also attempted to ensure that Sunday be observed as a holy day and kept

free from work. Activities like hunting, farming, construction, gathering for legal procedures, weaving, tailoring, and even doing laundry were discouraged. People throughout the new empire were urged to attend Mass on “the Lord’s Day.” During the services priests were encouraged by royal directives to teach the notion of the Trinity—made particularly visual in an image from an English book of hours from York—and introduce doctrines associated with judgment, salvation, hell, faith, hope, and charity, as well as the love of God and neighbor. As the influence of Christianity became more pervasive, it appears that a fusion of church traditions and the laws of the Carolingian realm began to intertwine. However, it is not clear as to the extent to which these laws were actually enforced, since a number of forged collections of laws from the period (among them the Pseudo-Isidorian *Decretals*) dominate those that have survived. While some of the false decretals, particularly

## THE Monastic Day

One part of the monastic rule required monks to sing the divine offices at specific times during the day and night. The schedule for this activity (which changed according to the time of year), as well as mealtimes and work periods, is given below with the names of the “canonical hours” of the day. Said privately, the prayers would take up a total of about one and a half hours, but sung in the choir, they would take much longer. “Lauds” are said at first light, “compline” at sunset, with the times for other services determined by dividing the hours of daylight into twelve, so that in summer each daylight hour is longer than each night hour, and vice versa in winter. The version here is based on the Rule of St. Benedict as observed by the Cistercians.

	June	December
Rising	1:45 a.m.	1:20 a.m.
Vigils	2:00–3:00 a.m.	1:30–2:50 a.m.

		[Reading]
Lauds	3:10 a.m.	7:15 a.m.
Prime (first hour)	4:00 a.m.	8:00 a.m.
		[9:20 a.m.–Terce]
Chapter	4:15 a.m.	9:35 a.m.
Manual labor	4:40–7:15 a.m.	9:55 a.m.
Terce (Third hour)	7:45 a.m.	
Sext (Sixth hour)	10:40 a.m.	11:20 a.m.
Dinner	10:50 a.m.	
	[Reading or sleep]	[11:35 –Manual labor]
None (Ninth hour)	2:00 p.m.	1:20 p.m.
		[1:35 p.m.–Dinner]
Manual labor	2:30 p.m.	
Vespers	6:00 p.m.	2:50 p.m.
Supper	6:45 p.m.	
Compline	7:50 p.m.	3:55 p.m.
Sleep	8:00 p.m.	4:05 p.m.

those that favored a strong papacy, were promulgated during this period, there was actually no one official and universally accepted body of canon law until the Decretals of Gregory IX in 1234.

**A RULE FOR MONKS.** Under the Carolingian kings there was an attempt to create a uniform rule for monks throughout the empire. Charlemagne favored the *Rule of Benedict*, which had been developed in Italy in the sixth century, and encouraged those monastic houses (especially those east of the Rhine River) that were not in compliance to consider seriously adopting this lifestyle of stability and obedience, lived out in a balanced daily spiritual experience of work, study, and prayer. However, it was not until the time of Charlemagne’s son Louis the Pious (778–840) that a reformed version of the Rule of Benedict was established. These revisions to the Benedictine lifestyle were introduced by a monk named Benedict of Aniane (750–821) and became universally adopted throughout the Frankish empire. Under these ninth-century monastic reforms additional prayers were included alongside the original sixth-century Benedictine Office. This kept the monks much busier in prayer, often too preoccupied with the Daily Offices to comply fully with the directives for manual labor that were an essential component of the earliest Benedictine Rule. The Frankish crown’s endorsement of the Monastic Capitulary of 817, which en-

sured enforcement of Benedict of Aniane’s revisions, is most likely responsible for the eventual standardization of the Benedictine Rule throughout Western Europe.

**THE MULTIPLICATION OF PRIVATE MASSES.** Interestingly, it was also during this time that the number of monks who were also priests (a minority in early monasticism) began steadily to grow. The shift to larger numbers of ordained priests encouraged a more formal liturgical emphasis in the monastic lifestyle, which increasingly attracted members of the nobility. This tendency for some monks to spend most of their time on liturgical duties also left the door open for the appearance of lay brothers (members of a lower class in society whose focus was predominantly on labor), as well as the use of peasants to work on monastic lands and estates. With the increase in monks who were also priests came the development of private masses, where priest-monks would celebrate liturgies ostensibly by themselves, but usually with a lone attendant such as an oblate or lay brother. In cathedrals and larger churches, the presence of multiple altars containing relics of saints requiring veneration on a regular basis also helped create the occasion for private masses. Eventually numerous requests for votive liturgies—those conducted with a particular intention in mind, usually at the behest of wealthy laity—gave rise to the multiplication of private masses

## ROLES and Occupations in the Latin (Western) Christian Church

**Acolyte:** A person in the beginning stages of the priesthood delegated to assisting priests and deacons in masses of the Latin Church.

**Anchoress (f.)/Anchorite (m.):** A solitary or hermit who pledges her or his life to prayer and contemplation. Anchoresses often lived in a small room attached or “anchored” to a church or public building. Visitors could come and speak with them and receive spiritual direction.

**Archdeacon:** The bishop’s principal assistant or officer.

**Bishop:** A senior cleric in charge of the spiritual life and administration of a region known as a diocese.

**Canon:** A member of the clergy following a rule like those followed by monks but often attached to a cathedral or large urban church; the canon is responsible for the daily running of the church and for educating the children of the nobility (sometimes called “canons regular” because they lived according to a rule and formed groups called “colleges”).

**Cardinal:** A member of the college of Roman princes who are the immediate counselors of the pope and rank second only to the pontiff in the church hierarchy. At various times they meet in conclave to elect new popes. There are also various local and episcopal offices, most in the city of Rome, to which the term “cardinal” is attached: cardinal deacons who took care of the poor in Rome, cardinal priests who were priests of the various Roman churches or parishes, and cardinal bishops (mostly outside of Rome) who were needed for service as the pope’s representatives.

**Chancellor:** A church officer in charge of a university.

**Conversi:** Lay brothers, or adult converts to religious life, as opposed to those oblates who were raised in the monastery as children.

**Deacon:** Literally, the servant of the bishop in early Christianity. The status of deacon was one of the early steps on the way to priestly ordination in the medieval period. The deacon could have specific liturgical functions associated with the Eucharist and dismissal at Mass.

**Friar:** A member of one of several religious orders who served as missionaries, teachers, and confessors; friars (brothers) did not live a cloistered life, but rather lived together in convents on the edges of cities.

**Lay brother:** A person associated with monastic life, but often of a lower social class than the other monks; lay brothers were commonly less educated or unable to recite in Latin, were not part of the choir, and spent much of their time in manual labor.

**Monk:** A member of an all-male religious order who follows a Rule requiring withdrawal from society and devotion to prayer, solitude, and contemplation.

**Nun:** A member of a religious community of women living a cloistered life of religious devotion in a convent or double monastery.

**Oblate:** A lay person who is part of a religious community. From the Latin word *oblatio*, meaning to offer, this term often refers to children who were “offered” by their families to the service of God in a monastery or convent, to be brought up as a monk or nun.

**Pope:** The head of the Roman Catholic Church. The pope, or pontiff, was also called the Bishop of Rome since he presided over the entire Latin Church due in part to his authority over the local Roman episcopal see.

**Postulant:** A person seeking admission to a religious order. Often he or she was allowed to try out monastic life for a brief time.

**Secular clergy:** Priests living in the world, as opposed to “regular” clergy, living under the rule of a religious order.

**Sub-deacon:** A minor order of cleric who could not administer sacraments (only sacramentals) and who prepared bread, wine, and vessels at Mass.

in the monasteries. Papal records during the ninth century indicate that certain priests celebrated the liturgy as many as nine times each day.

**THE GROWTH OF THE SECULAR CLERGY.** Alongside the growing monastic movements, a separate group of secular clergy (those living out in the world rather than in a cloister) ministered to the laity in local parish churches and in large urban cathedrals. The English called these secular churches “proprietary” while the Germans referred to them as *Eigenkirchen* (churches under

private control or ownership), since often the local lords helped support them and would commonly appoint the parish priests. The cathedrals—large, important churches, usually in urban areas—often had a number of priests who might reside in the household of the bishop, the senior official in charge of the region or diocese. Eventually the term *canon* was applied to the clerics who lived at the cathedrals because it was said that they were living according to the canons (traditions and laws) of the church. According to the rule developed by Chrodegang



Bishop performing exorcism, bas relief of font, Modena Cathedral, Museo Civico, Modena, Italy, 13th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO CIVICO, MODENA/DAGLI ORTI.

of Metz, the canons, unlike monks, could own their own property and were not always required to live under the same roof with their fellow clergy. But like the cloistered monks (those who lived beyond the monastic *cloister*—that is, enclosed space—and took the Benedictine vow of stability), the canons assembled each day to hear a reading of a chapter of sacred scripture and thus were said to belong to a community or *chapter* of canons. Houses for canons began to become more popular by the mid-eleventh century. This communal arrangement worked well for urban dwellers but proved to be difficult for rural clerics. Customs seemed to differ from house to house. They would eventually come to prefer the Rule of Augustine by the twelfth century.

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF SACRAMENTARIES.** The Carolingian era was an important time for Western liturgical development. Books called *Sacramentaries* which contained prayers and guides for the celebration of Mass and other religious rites began to become common throughout France. However, there seemed to be little uniformity in the way each community used the liturgi-

cal prayer books. Alcuin of York, the primary teacher at Charlemagne's palace school and abbot at several monasteries, began the process of making revisions to the Roman Sacramentary sent to the Franks by Pope Hadrian I (772–795) as usages became refined in the Christian empire over the next two centuries. The Frankish version of the Sacramentary eventually became the standard throughout Europe (preferred even to the Roman text) and continued to be the basis for practice in the Western church right up until the mid-twentieth century.

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## RELIGION IN SCANDINAVIA AND EASTERN EUROPE

**EARLY VIKINGS.** The term “Viking” has been used to refer to inhabitants of Scandinavia and the northern regions (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden). The native religion of these people was polytheistic (that is, involving worship of more than one deity) and revolved around a pantheon (a system of gods and goddesses) that was anthropomorphic—that is, featuring gods with human characteristics. Viking societies were also reputed to be polygamist, allowing multiple spouses within a family. Some scholars have gone so far as to attribute the invasions to the south and east, which began after 800, to a crisis of overpopulation linked to the polygamist practices of certain Scandinavian groups. Little is known about the actual religious practices of the Vikings before the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Most of the information on this era comes from Icelandic sagas that had long been removed from their earlier Scandinavian cultures and were perhaps even further affected by Christian ideas, since they were recorded in Icelandic societies that had long been educated and immersed in Christian tradition. The Saxon chronicler Widukind of Corvey, who wrote in the mid-tenth century, commented that although the Danes converted to Christianity they “continued to venerate idols according to their heathen customs.” From this time period in Denmark and Sweden, casting molds were discovered which simultaneously produced crosses for Christians and hammers for devotees of the thunder god Thor.

**GODS AND DOMAINS.** The Vikings’ religious practice helped orient them to the world around them, assisting them in understanding both the present and the past. They perceived the universe to be comprised of a number of worlds (heavens, hells, earth) numbering anywhere from three to nine, depending upon the cultures and particular historical time frame. The gods resided in a variety of these worlds and affected the daily lives of

humans. These divinities had certain domains for which each was responsible. For example, Odin (or Woden) was the god of war, the all-father, a middle-aged kingly figure who in later periods was seen as the god of the sky. He resided in Asgard, the heavenly home of the warrior gods. Odin rode an eight-legged horse named Sleipnir and was accompanied by two ravens (Hugin and Munin) who informed him on a daily basis of the deeds of the other gods, giants, dwarves, and, of course, humans. He was also attended by the Valkyries, female warriors who were said to be responsible for taking those who died bravely in battle to Valhalla, a great palace in the city of heaven close to where Odin resided. In Valhalla the dead war heroes spent eternity fighting by day and feasting at night. Among the more popular Viking gods was Thor. He was said to be tall, strong, determined, and good-hearted, but he was known to have a temper and was lacking in intelligence. The thunder god wielded a throwing hammer forged by dwarves that could, after its release, magically return to his hand at his bidding. Freyr, a nature deity associated with the sun, rain, and agriculture, was also the god of peace and goodness. His twin sister was Freya, the goddess of love and beauty. It was believed that she could turn herself into a bird by donning the skin of a falcon. Some members of the Viking pantheon, of course, reflected the “darker side.” Loki was the challenger of order and structure—the god of fire and a sort of “trickster” deity, the one deemed necessary to bring about change. His daughter was Hel, the goddess of death and the afterlife.

**RITEs AND CEREMONIES.** The Vikings believed it was necessary to establish close relationships with the gods as they looked after their families and their honor, as well as their tribes, villages, and kingdom. The gods helped the kings keep peace and looked favorably upon the harvests. The deities were both patrons and companions, to whom the people owed tribute and from whom they received many blessings. Priests functioned as intermediaries and would perform rites to the cults of various gods. However, they were not a professional caste. Chiefs and tribal leaders often functioned as priests, or a father would fulfill that function during family gatherings; however, the priest could often be killed or banished from society for improper or unfavorable mediation. The Scandinavian polytheists most often worshipped in open-air spaces where they could more appropriately connect with nature. There were communal ceremonies in open fields, meadows, and clearings, at gravesites and near massive stones. The dead were often buried with their possessions. At especially solemn feasts there could be blood sacrifice (*blot*). The eleventh-century chronicler Adam of Bremen described



a particular Viking religious ceremony that was supposedly celebrated only every ninth year, explaining that “nine heads were offered from every type of living male creature and the custom was to appease the gods with their blood.” Decapitated bodies were hung in a grove, which was considered sacred, as were the trees upon which the victims hung. In fact, the trees were by virtue of their role in the ceremony considered sacred in and of themselves. The details of the event were startling:

Dogs were hung with horses and men and a Christian told me that he had seen as many as 72 corpses hanging in rows. The blood was collected in a sacred vessel and sprinkled by the priests. The ritual was followed by a feast with offerings to the gods.

**THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY.** Christian missionaries began to be sent to the Danes and Swedes in the early 800s, though it is unlikely that any of the kings in Scandinavia from that period underwent conversion. What is clear is that Vikings and Christians lived side by side and freely traded goods at stations such as York, Lincoln, Dublin, Fécamp, Rouen, Birka, Kaupang, Nov-

gorod, and Hedeby. Those Vikings who settled in predominantly Christian areas on the European mainland eventually assimilated Christian customs, lifestyle, and faith, and by the mid-1000s Christianity began to become more firmly established in Denmark and Norway, with Sweden following in the middle of the twelfth century. As these conversions took place, some of the pagan sacred sites in Scandinavia were taken over by Christians, and churches were built on or near these places. In Sweden at Gamle Uppsala there are remains of an early Christian church that stands beside a large Viking burial mound. Harold Bluetooth, the king of Denmark from 940 to 986, was quite successful in influencing his people to convert to Christianity. Christian images appear on Danish coinage from his reign and there are records of the establishment of bishoprics in major Danish cities. Christianity became even more pervasive in Denmark once Canute (1018–1035) became ruler of both England and the Danes in 1018. Influenced by the great English bishop Wulfstan of York (d. 1023), Canute became a patron of Christian institutions and a model king, rivaling his royal and noble contemporaries. After Canute’s famous pilgrimage to Rome in 1027, other nobles such as Robert of Normandy, Macbeth, Sihtric Silkbeard, Earl Thornfinn, and Earl Tostig all followed his example in undertaking journeys to holy sites. He attached a number of Danish bishops to his court and sent them out to establish churches throughout Scandinavia.

**LOOTING OF MONASTERIES.** From around the year 800 on, the Vikings engaged in a period of tremendous expansion, using their naval expertise first to engage in raiding and looting along the coastlines of Europe and later to undertake conquest and settlements in England, Ireland, northern France, and Russia, as well as places as far away as Iceland, Greenland, and Finland. During the age of Viking invasions, it was not uncommon for Christian monasteries in coastal regions of England, France, and Germany to endure a certain amount of looting—not, apparently, as a deliberate attempt by the invaders to destroy the system of Christian organization and faith, but for purely material reasons. Not only were the monasteries repositories of church treasure (including gold and silver vessels, jeweled reliquaries, lavishly decorated manuscripts—such as a French book of hours containing an ornate miniature of the Annunciation to the Virgin—and priestly vestments), but some of them acted as banks and safe depositories for the aristocracy. Monasteries located on rivers were also susceptible; for example in Normandy, along the Seine, there are records of displacements at Saint-Audoen and Saint-Filbert at Jumièges. It was also common to find certain breaks in

episcopal succession in areas that were prone to Viking invasion. For example at Avranches in Normandy there was no bishop from 862 to 990. In the British see of Galloway, records of episcopal activity vanish in the ninth century and do not reappear until the office was revived in 1128. Those Christian monasteries and bishoprics that were fairly poor did not seem to be disturbed as much by the Viking invasions.

**CONVERSIONS.** The period of competing religions in western Europe reached its end by around the beginning of the twelfth century. The story of the conversion of Norse settlers in Iceland, for example, is told in the *Landnamabok* (Book of Settlements). Bishops from the Isle of Iona (off the coast of Scotland), such as Patrick in the late ninth century (not to be confused with St. Patrick of Ireland) and Fothad (c. 960), sent native Scandinavian missionaries that they had trained to Iceland to build Christian churches. Intermarriages between Christian Scottish aristocrats and Scandinavian ruling families were common, and by the mid-1000s many of the Vikings who had settled in the northern British Isles had converted. (Conversions of the native British and Irish were much earlier, mostly during the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries.) In Ireland more permanent coastal commercial centers of Viking traders were established during the ninth century, and certainly by the tenth and eleventh centuries there are records of conversions of leaders such as King Olaf Cuaran of Dublin and his son Sihtric, who made a pilgrimage to Rome in 1028, issued coins with Christian symbols, and founded Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin. Likewise, the conversion of tribes of the Rus' in eastern Europe (the area near modern Kiev, Russia) was a lengthy process. In the 860s Rus' ambassadors to the court at Constantinople had embraced Christian monotheism, and in the 870s a bishop was sent to live among them, but it is more likely the primary concern was ministry to those Christian merchants who routinely made journeys into the Russian territories, not ministry to the Rus' themselves. Indeed, in the early 900s the Muslim traveler Ibn Fadlan still relates tales of offerings made by the polytheistic Rus' to their gods for success in commercial endeavors. The Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913–959) wrote in his diplomatic manuals about the practice of sacrificial offerings made by Rus' merchants for safely navigating the rapids of the Dnieper river during their trade with the west. By 945 there was a Christian church in the city of Kiev, and Olga, the wife of Prince Igor, was baptized in 957 while on a visit to the city of Constantinople. Upon her return she built a church in Kiev dedicated to the *Hagia Sophia* (holy wisdom) in commemoration of her admiration for the fa-

mous cathedral of the same name in Constantinople. Olga's grandson Vladimir was baptized at Kiev in 988 and was married to Anna, the sister of the Byzantine emperor Basil II. Shortly after this, there were mass baptisms in Russia, followed by the establishment of more churches, bishoprics at Belgorod and Novgorod, and a school to educate clergy. In the eleventh century native Rus' such as Luke of Novgorod were elevated to episcopacies, the monasteries of St. George and St. Irene were built in Kiev, and Jaroslav the Wise (d. 1045) rebuilt Kiev's *Hagia Sophia* on an extraordinary scale. Additional monastic establishments followed.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: Heroic Literature in Medieval Scandinavia*

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## THE SPREAD OF ISLAM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO MEDIEVAL EUROPE

**GROWTH OF ISLAM.** When Islam first emerged in Arabia during the mid-seventh century, there was little indication that within 150 years the movement would come to dominate the entire Middle East, as well as northern Africa and Spain. The early spread of Islam was directly linked to the revelations and work of the Prophet Muhammad who preached religious and moral reform throughout Arabia between 610 and 632 C.E. However, the origins of the movement were fraught with struggle. Acceptance of the faith in the polytheistic city of Mecca along with much of the rest of Arabia was gradually accomplished after a series of military campaigns, treaties, and non-violent pilgrimages undertaken by the newly formed Ummah (the gathered community of believers). The earliest Muslims were scorned in the major trade center of Mecca and began assembling their community under the leadership of Muhammad at the more northerly city of Yathrib in the Arabian peninsula.

Several generations of the Prophet's successors (known as caliphs) during the eighth century spread the faith through both religious and political programs into North Africa, the Middle East, and even as far as Spain. Still, despite its widespread geographic success, until about the year 1000 Islam was more of an administrative presence than an ideology that had won over the majority of the populace. In many areas, the growth of converts was gradual, perhaps because (at least until the twelfth century) the Muslim conquerors seemed quite tolerant of other faiths. It has also been suggested that political, economic, and military control of strategic geographic locations was more important than converting entire populations. Forced conversion to Islam was not practiced in many non-pagan areas, especially where Jews and Christians were living in newly occupied Muslim territories. In fact, they were often referred to as the "People of the Book," since all three traditions shared common elements in their sacred scriptures and traced their heritage back to the figure of Abraham. While members of other faiths were often tolerated, they usually were not allowed to participate in government and had to pay special but not exorbitant taxes. The cultures and faiths affected by the early growth of Islam were quite diverse: not only the formerly polytheistic people of Arabia, but the Coptic Christians in North Africa, Eastern Orthodox in Palestine and Asia Minor, Roman Christians in Spain, Nestorian and Arian Christians in the Holy Land, polytheistic Berber tribes in North Africa, and Jews of various kinds throughout the Mediterranean and Middle East all became subjects of Muslim caliphates. By the year 1000 it is believed that nearly eighty percent of the population in the Dar-al-Islam (Islamic territory) had converted to faith in Allah as it had been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century and handed down through succeeding generations by way of the holy Koran (Qur'an).

**ELEMENTS OF ISLAMIC BELIEF.** Requirements for participation in the religion of Islam were not extreme compared to some Jewish and Christian practices. The Muslim theological notion that people tended to be "forgetful" of Allah (God) seemed to be reinforced by directives for prayer five times a day (*salat*) and a month-long season of fasting (*sawm*) during the season of Ramadan. However, the most important religious act was that of simple belief, reciting the creed or confession of faith (*shahadah*), that "there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His prophet." Almsgiving (*zakat*) was also expected of Muslims, charity both to the poor and in support of religious institutions. Although these were not practices all people readily desired to embrace, the potential for reward seemed not to be fraught with

as many of the complex and confusing doctrines or laws as existed in Christianity and Judaism. Those who followed without question the teaching of the Prophet and the will of Allah were assured eternal paradise. As time passed, the Islamic holy book, the Koran, began to be seen as an infallible scripture, the mother of all books, the literal word of Allah, sealed as the final revelation that humans will ever need. Islamic law (or *shari'a*) seems not to have been divided between separate religious and civil realms. By the ninth century, law began to be viewed as descending not only from the authority of God's scripture but also from the practices and sayings of the Prophet (*sunna*), which were handed down orally and eventually written into the *Hadith*. Added to this law was the *ijma* or traditions of historic Islamic communities. Later works like the ninth-century *Tafsir* became important commentaries on the Koran and formed the basis for Islamic theology.

**DYNASTIES AND RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS.** Islamic presence in Spain appeared at a very early juncture during the evolution of the major Muslim dynasties. The presence of the Umayyad Dynasty, which began in Damascus in the middle eighth century and continued in Spain until the eleventh century, put Muslim Spain (known as al-Andalus or Andalusia) into commercial contact with the North African coast, Palestine, and Syria. This led to the development of flourishing trade centers and a period of artistic and intellectual growth. Under the Umayyads, Jewish merchants enjoyed more tolerance than in Christian states, although persecution increased with the arrival of the Almoravids in the eleventh century and the Almohads in the twelfth, each of whom brought their own cultures and customs to the interpretation of Islam. There were also major religious divisions within Islam that began to emerge after 1000. The *Sunni* and *Shi'ite* positions, which go back to seventh-century disputes over the requirements for who might succeed the prophet Muhammad as caliph and still divide Islam today, became strongly linked to ideological and political separations dictating the way Islam would be practiced and perceived. The Sunni, who were in the majority, most often preferred to be directed by teachers, scholars, preachers, and government officials. They subscribed to interpretations of an eternal and uncreated Koran, the word of Allah, which was to be obeyed without question, but expressed concepts of an Allah that could not be completely known to humankind. The Shi'ites, making up roughly a fifth of medieval Muslims, had migrated toward stricter and even more literal interpretations of Islamic law and ideology, as well as relying upon religious leadership that was more charismatic. The mystical branch of Islam called *Sufism*, which be-

gan as more of a monastic movement in the eighth and ninth centuries, became popular among individuals who rejected the formalized trappings of Islamic religious life and were looking for more inward and personal expressions concerning their relationship with Allah.

**LAW AND PHILOSOPHY.** There were no priests with sacramental powers in Islam, as individuals were considered accountable directly to Allah and needed no spiritual intermediaries. Any devout Muslim could lead prayer, so that all were regarded as equal in the eyes of Allah. However, certain dynasties subscribed to the notion of a *mahdi* (that is, a divinely guided savior or messiah) who might bring justice and righteousness to the earth, restoring the true and proper message of Allah, if one would only follow his lead. The observance of religious law became most important, particularly as a variety of dynasties began to compete with each other for political control of Arabia, Persia, North Africa, Spain, and Asia Minor. As early as the eighth century, Muslim schools sprang up which were devoted to examining the roots of Muslim law. This process was called *ijtihad*, meaning a strenuous examination. Sunni schools of religious law called *madhhabs* began to emerge which would establish norms for Muslim practice. Four distinct schools came into being at the major centers of Damascus, Medina, Baghdad, and al-Andalus. The growth of learning centers and formalized education as well as interest in mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy began to create divisions in Islam and give rise to a host of theological debates. Unlike the Christian scholars, the organization of knowledge for medieval Muslims took in separate religious and non-religious categories. However, like Christian scholastics, there were prominent Muslim philosophers, such as Al-Ghazali (b. 1058) in Baghdad, Averroës (1126–1198) in Spain, and Avicenna (980–1037) in Persia, who struggled to reconcile the notions of faith and human reason. The numerous advances of Muslim thinkers had important influence on philosophers in the Christian West. Based upon the works of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, Islamic examination of natural and metaphysical truths attempted to link everything in the universe to Allah.

**CONFLICTS WITH CHRISTIANITY.** During the first several centuries of Muslim control over the Holy Land, Christian pilgrims were able to visit the sacred sites with relative freedom. Their overland route usually took them across southeastern Europe, through Hungarian territory, Greece, Anatolia (Turkey), and Syria. Those who traveled by sea landed in Egypt or directly in Palestine. The growing threat of the Muslim presence on the border of the Byzantine (Eastern Christian) Empire and the loss of Byzantine control over the Holy Land served as a pretext

for the Christians initiating the Crusades, which were in part due to religious ideological differences (Pope Urban II characterized the First Crusade as the will of God), but not completely driven by a desire to eradicate Islam. The factor most likely responsible for the early successes of the Christian invasions of the Holy Land was the internal disorder among the various Muslim dynasties, several of which were on the brink of controlling the area. Since the concept of the “Crusades” is something that developed from a European mindset, Muslims did not write their history about the wars for the Holy Land in the same way as Christians. These conflicts are more or less seen as any other wars with an invading enemy (most particularly in this case the French or “Franks”). The idea of *jihad*, struggling or fighting to maintain excellence (or striving for an ideal society in which Islam might flourish), is present almost from the beginning of Muslim thought, but not in terms of physical battle as much as a spiritual and a collective duty expected of all Muslims. Emphasis was upon the “greater jihad,” that is the struggle within oneself. The “lesser jihad” was connected to the idea of the physical struggles on the path to God. Endeavors connected to the “lesser jihad,” such as mission effort, good works, building mosques, even ideas such as physically overcoming the enemies of the faith, would not become significant to Muslim theology and ideology until the twelfth century. Those who lived in the part of the Islamic world that was spreading the faith were, for example, linked to the ongoing missionary activity in the *Dar al-harb* (the abode of conquest or expansion). Throughout its early history, Islam did carry out large-scale military conquest, but the term *jihad* as specifically connected to holy war only began to appear much later, at the time of the Second Crusade (1146–1148), in response to the Christian military threats.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: Philosophy among the Muslims and the Jews; Visual Arts: Spanish Culture and the Muslims*

## MEDIEVAL JUDAISM

**DIASPORA AND REESTABLISHMENT.** Judaism came to Europe as a result of a process known as *diaspora* (from the Greek “scattering”), which can refer to any number of migrations of Jewish communities when they were forced to leave their homes and live among Gentiles outside the Holy Land. Major diaspora occurred after the Babylonian exile in the sixth century B.C.E., after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the first century C.E., in the early medieval period following Muslim conquest of the Holy Land, and in the late medieval period linked to Christian inquisitions and persecutions. Medieval Jewish religious communities were quite diverse as the various diaspora movements resulted in pockets of settlement all over the Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and European world. Those settling in Spain, known as the Sephardim, created a golden age of Jewish culture in Muslim Andalusia. Those who settled in Germany and eastern Europe following the diaspora of late antiquity and the early medieval period were known as Ashkenazim (from a word meaning “Germany”). These two groups came to be distinctive in their liturgy, religious customs, and pronunciation of Hebrew, but both revered the Torah, the scriptures which constitute the Jewish “Law,” identified by Christians as the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Both were also guided by rabbis, the teachers of classical Jewish tradition who, after the second diaspora in the first century C.E., came to serve as legal and spiritual leaders for the Jewish communities.

**TORAH AND TALMUD.** Among the various groups of Jews who settled in Europe, some chose to hold on to the traditions of the Talmud (from the Hebrew word for “study”), a collection of commentaries on the Hebrew scriptures that had begun as an “oral Torah” in the first century B.C.E. and was eventually codified by rabbis. Those inclined toward liberal education embraced more philosophical understandings of their traditions, while others adopted more decidedly mystical approaches to God. Centers of higher learning known as the yeshivah (*yeshivot*) began to arise in cities with significant Jewish populations. Among the more famous were Córdoba in Spain, al-Qayrawan in Tunisia, and Mainz in Germany. These schools began to produce scholars, rabbis, and poets who made rich contributions to medieval Jewish tradition. As early as the ninth century, a Jewish movement developed that saw the Talmud as a departure from the divinely revealed truth of the Torah, which was the supreme authority in matters of faith. This group, which drew ideological inspiration

from the eighth-century scholar Anan ben David of Baghdad, soon became known as the “Children of the Text” or the *Karaites* (*Qaraites*, literally, “readers”). The Karaites abstained from eating meat, seeking treatment from physicians, and using lights on the Sabbath. They practiced personal interpretation of the scriptures and challenged Orthodox Judaism’s juristic interpretations of God’s Law. In the midst of this awakening, a Babylonian scholar, Saadiah ben Joseph (882–942), rejected the more radical Karaite notion of completely eliminating Talmudic interpretation, but he did endorse the return to the Hebrew Scriptures themselves. In order to provide a fuller appreciation for the language and voice of the scriptures, he had the Hebrew texts translated into Arabic for Jews in Muslim-controlled areas. He also introduced the idea that the Creator may have had some purpose for giving humans a rational side, one that might lead them to a greater understanding of God’s purposes. Reflecting the Aristotelian naturalism and logic that were beginning to be introduced into Jewish thought through intellectual interaction with the Arabic culture, Saadiah’s most famous work, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (*Sefer Emunot ve-De’ot*), carved the way for the tradition of rationalism in the rabbinic authority of Judaism. After this period, rabbis moved in two directions, either embracing or rejecting the role of philosophical reason in Jewish theology and practice, a pattern that would be repeated among Christian philosophers and theologians several centuries later when these same Aristotelian ideas began to form part of the European university curricula.

**THE JEWISH INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT IN MUSLIM SPAIN.** As Arabic translations of the Greek philosophers were introduced to Jewish schools, reason and revelation began to be seen as working hand in hand to bring about a more balanced and enlightened system of Jewish thought. Many of the Babylonian scholars (in modern-day Iraq) who held such notions migrated to the Muslim-controlled portion of Spain (al-Andalus), where they founded universities such as the tenth-century Jewish Academy at Córdoba and encouraged new interpretations of Jewish tradition infused with the light of philosophical reason. One such scholar, Judah Halevi (1075–1141), argued that while philosophy might be compatible with the Torah’s depiction of the Almighty, the revelations in the Torah gave a much more complete rendering of the human relationship with God. Halevi’s view warned against too rigorous an incorporation of philosophy and supported the interpretive role of the rabbi in Jewish religious life. Other eleventh- and twelfth-century Spanish scholars, rabbis, and poets, such as Solomon ibn Gabirol, Bahya ben Joseph ibn Pakuda, and Abraham ben David Halevi ibn Daud, were quite

supportive of Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies. Out of this growing and diverse intellectual Jewish environment came Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), the most famous and influential Hebrew scholar and philosopher of the medieval period. When Maimonides and his family had to flee Córdoba and relocate in North Africa to escape Muslim persecution, Moses continued his education within a liberal Jewish philosophical and theological environment. His writings—based upon the scriptural traditions, the Mishnah (the authoritative legal tradition), Aristotelian principles, and some ideas of his own—emphasized a practical, ethical, rational, and balanced Jewish life. His greatest work, the *Guide for the Perplexed* (*Moreh Nevuchim*), sought to articulate Jewish belief in light of Torah revelation, faith, reason, science, and philosophy. Maimonides felt that faith must supplement human reason, which can only go so far. He also taught that miracles might be explained rationally, and scriptural accounts that defy reason might better be interpreted in a more allegorical fashion. Some of his realizations concerning God, the soul, and the place of humanity were written into the Thirteen Articles of Jewish Faith, which formed a creed that was used in later medieval Jewish worship.

**CHRISTIAN OPPOSITION.** As the general knowledge of the Hebrew language declined in northern Europe, European Jews began increasingly to rely upon interpretations of their tradition in the form of the Talmudic texts instead of a direct reading on their own of the collected Hebrew scriptures. Although medieval Christians accepted the entirety of the Hebrew canon as what they called the “Old Testament,” they harbored much suspicion concerning the Talmudic traditions. Certain writers such as Peter the Venerable (1092–1156), the abbot of Cluny, went so far as to suggest that these texts contained material that was blasphemous to Christian belief. (Scholars are not in complete agreement as to whether or not Peter actually read the Talmud.) In 1240 at the request of Pope Gregory IX, Jewish books were seized from synagogues throughout England, France, and Spain, and a trial at the city of Paris was conducted accusing Jews of being discontent with the “Old Law” of Moses and affirming another law, the Talmud. In France, rabbis were imprisoned and forced to defend their position in disputations with Christian scholars. In May of 1248 the Talmud was condemned at Paris by the Christian commission. Cartloads of the document had been burned, and the practice continued throughout Europe over the next few decades. However, Innocent IV had made certain provisions for some tolerance of the Talmudic traditions inasmuch as they were not harmful to Christian teaching and assisted Jews in com-

ing to the light of conversion, against their old ways. In the early fifteenth century, repeated condemnations of the Talmud under (the extremely anti-Jewish) Pope Benedict XIII continued, but many of these statutes were reversed by Pope Martin V in 1419 at the behest of a Jewish delegation to Rome.

**MYSTICISM IN THE KABBALAH AND ZOHAR.** The Jewish word *qabbalah* (tradition) is often equated with a movement toward medieval Jewish mysticism which has its roots in scriptural accounts of visions, such as the “visions of the chariot” in the text of the prophet Ezekiel or apocalyptic notions from the book of Daniel. Works of the philosopher Philo, ideas from the Talmud, and lost books like the *Sefer Adam* (Book of Adam) also contributed to these mystical ideas. The major texts of the Kabbalah (or Qabbalah) were composed or edited sometime in the late twelfth century, likely in Provence or Spain. Many scholars suggest that the development of the Kabbalah came as a reaction against the Jewish philosophical schools in Spain that emphasized a more rational approach to one’s faith. The Kabbalah was written in various chapters over many decades and is comprised of several strands of mystical thought from gnostic (“secret knowledge”) to theosophical (concerning intuition and perception of the spiritual or divine) and visionary. At the heart of the work was the notion of uncovering hidden symbolic meanings and secret wisdom by interpreting the arrangement of words and numbers in the Hebrew scriptures. The interplay of letters, numbers, and their ciphering was believed to yield speculative insights into the nature of Godhead, on the principal that one who searches to find God in the “beyond” comes to discover that what one is seeking actually lies within. The Kabbalah addresses such issues as how a perfect God might create an imperfect world. Did God compromise Himself by bringing forth the finite from His infinite splendor? Interpreters went so far as to think they might be able to use Kabbalistic ciphering to predict or identify the Messiah. Certain movements connected to Kabbalistic spirituality would go on to produce a series of false messiahs in central Europe, which proved to be of tremendous disappointment to the medieval adherents of this mystical path. The Zohar, a part of the body of the Kabbalistic literature touted to be the mystical work of an earlier Talmudic sage but later discovered to have been composed in the late thirteenth century by Moses de Leone, attacks those who would neglect the commandments or seek solace in the rationality of things philosophical, and seeks a deeper penetration into the mysteries of the Torah. The human body is seen as a composite soul, as a perfect balance of male-female, reflecting spiritual elements, those “holy forms” of God

that can be unified in humanity with the supernatural soul of God.

**THE MEDIEVAL HASIDIC MOVEMENT.** Ashkenazi Jews in Germany developed a form of *hasidic* (pious) practice between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Their focus seems to have been on the love of God, not the more prevalent legalistic notions of fear or punishment. They were strict and demanding of themselves, feeling they should provide an example to the world, but lenient toward those outside their immediate communities. The Hasidei Ashkenazim were concerned with educating people toward an ethical life. Their *Sefer Hasidim* provided a guide toward a moral conversion of the heart. It was their fear that the world of humanity was besieged by demons and spirits of evil. Some became attentive to the power contained in the names of God and were attracted to the Kabbalist literature. Others were interested in living lives of a more ascetic nature. These German Ashkenaz communities were often caught up in sporadic persecutions by Christians. It was said that the greatest expression of one's love for God could be shown by enduring a martyr's death. Stories of pious Ashkenazim, exhibiting acts of charity, love, and moral rectitude, continued to provide inspiration for European Jews for centuries beyond the Middle Ages. The medieval movement is distinct, however, from the Hasidic movement of the eighteenth and subsequent centuries, whose members, distinguished by conservative clothing and hairstyles, can still be found today in communities in Israel, Canada, New York City, and elsewhere.

**THE DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL AND LEGAL ROLES OF RABBIS.** In the period before there was widespread Jewish migration to Europe, the title *rav* (*rabbi*) had been given to one who had received a type of ordination based upon his ability to teach and judge the law or his mastery of the Talmud. It was not quite like sacramental Christian clerical ordination, but it was conferred by the Sanhedrin or leading teachers of the community. During the diaspora in the centuries following the destruction of the Second Temple, the title "rabbi" became one of respect but most generally was applied specifically to those who were experts regarding Jewish law, particularly those formally trained by other Talmudic scholars. By the Middle Ages, then, rabbis were scholars, teachers, judges (particularly in Muslim Spain), and preachers, but not necessarily clergymen. Among their responsibilities, medieval rabbis were charged with composing commentaries on the scriptures, Talmud, and Halakah (legal texts), as well as works on ethics. One of the most famous contributors to this body of commentary known as the Midrash was Solomon ben Isaac

(Rashi) who emphasized the notion of uncovering the "plain meaning" of texts, both scriptural and Talmudic. Also produced by the rabbis were the *responsa*, which were legal opinions, arguments, or precedents, some of which even became codified into medieval Jewish law. Examples of the *responsa* might include a discussion of the ethical questions faced by Jewish tailors employed to sew crosses on the clothing of crusaders, the issue of allowing candles to burn on the eve of the Sabbath in a Jewish home, or whether it was permissible for the windows on one's house to be constructed so that one could look out into the house of a neighbor. Medieval ethical treatises were composed by rabbis such as the Spaniard Jonah Gerundi and the German Judah Samuel, responsible for *Sefer Hasiydiyum*. Because of the variety of roles they performed, rabbis sometimes faced ethical problems themselves, since they were not, at least in theory, to receive payment or salaries for their rabbinical functions, even though many, for example, were expected to serve as judges for their people. Thought and practice regarding compensation of rabbis began to change during the fourteenth century, and, similar to the medieval Christian controversy over lay investiture, the issue of governmental interference in rabbinical appointment became a problem. Some Spanish rabbis were even required to pay the royal treasury certain fees for their appointment.

**THE SYNAGOGUE.** While it seems logical that synagogues might be the natural and most essential center of medieval Jewish religious life, this was not necessarily the case. Sites for other activities, such as the *miqveh* (a ritual bath for women) and schools for both younger and older children, far outweighed the importance of a formal house of prayer and worship. In medieval Judaism, individuals could pray wherever they liked, as long as the area was clean, and there was no obligation to attend services regularly at the synagogue. However, group prayer, by a *minyan* of ten or more adults, was encouraged under Jewish law and required for certain prayers or for the reading of the Torah. Because of this practice, and also because Jewish worship was so often officially proscribed in the medieval era, private homes were often used for these gatherings. In fact, in many Muslim cities, construction of a large synagogue was prohibited. In European Christian cities, according to canon law, Jewish congregations could maintain small synagogues, but new and enlarged buildings were not allowed. Although very few synagogues from the medieval period have survived (those that have were often converted into churches), descriptions have been pieced together from limited archaeological evidence and extant historical accounts. At the center of the worship space was usually located a large table on which the Torah

## THE Midrash

The Midrash was a body of folkloric commentary gathered by rabbis from the third through the twelfth centuries to explain difficult passages of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tracing its origins to Moses, who was believed to have received teachings directly from God and then begun a chain of oral transmission through subsequent generations (the "Oral Torah"), the Midrash was especially known for its clarifications of elements of the book of Genesis and the story of the Creation and Fall of man. Many of these midrashic explanations were of striking charm and originality, and they were often incorporated by Christians into their own retellings of Bible stories, probably first transmitted when social relationships developed between some medieval rabbis (or "Hebraei" as Christians called them) and Christian commentators interested in the original Hebrew text of scripture. They were also known through the *Historia Scholastica*, a glossed Bible abridgment by Peter Comestor, dean of the Cathedral at Troyes, France, written about 1170. This work served as the basis of popular Bibles as it was widely translated into vernacular languages, and its Latin text formed part of university study. Peter Comestor seems to have acquired a considerable amount of Hebrew learning through direct or indirect contacts with rabbis, most particularly the work of Rashi (1040–1105) in the Jewish community of Troyes.

The Midrash is especially important to the study of medieval art and literature because, in various forms, rabbinic explanations of scripture were used in Byzantine and Catalan painting. Particular representations of Moses in art, for example, are based on midrashic additions or

glosses to the story of Moses in the Book of Numbers, and images of a tall, upright serpent who has not yet lost his legs appear in representations of the Garden of Eden before the Fall. An example of one of these midrashic glosses—apparently known to the author of the Middle English poem *Patience*—attempts to solve a problem in the Old Testament book of Jonah. The difficulty, which is glossed in the work of Rashi, is the puzzling fact that, in the Hebrew text, the gender of the whale who swallows the reluctant prophet Jonah changes from masculine to feminine from one verse to the next. Actually, Rashi said, there were two whales, a male and a female. Jonah was first swallowed by a male whale, and finding his quarters pleasant, he was not penitent. Then God commanded him to be spat up and swallowed by a pregnant female whale. Jonah now found himself so crowded and squeezed on every side by baby whales that he called out to the Lord for mercy.

Such midrashic glosses so captured popular attention that church authorities were concerned lest they form a sort of parallel Bible, and, as a result, there was something of a campaign to discredit them. For example, a Dominican friar, Raymond Martini, who died in 1285, quotes in Hebrew from midrashic glosses and follows them up with Latin translations in his *Pugio fidei*, a controversial work directed against the Jews. Even more significant was the *Extractiones de Talmud*, which consists of charges made during the Dominican "trial" in 1240 of the Talmud for advancing positions contrary to Christian doctrine. The *Extractiones* mainly single out Rashi from among the French Jewish rabbinic commentators for condemnation, and a great deal of his writing is quoted very exactly by the compiler, Thibaut de Sezanne, who is thought perhaps to have been a Jewish convert to Christianity since he obviously was working directly from Hebrew manuscripts.

scrolls could be rolled out and read. In Spain the scrolls remained upright in containers from which the scripture text was then moved to the proper place and recited. To store the Torah scrolls, many worship spaces had arks, which ranged from chests large enough to hold several scrolls to decorative niches constructed in the walls. The more elaborately decorated synagogues had desks or stands where prayer leaders could be located and even elevated pulpits (*minbar*) for preaching. In some worship spaces there were seats, but in many medieval synagogues, as in most medieval churches, the congregations would stand. Participants would often face the minbar or ark, which was oriented in the direction of Jerusalem. One of the oldest surviving synagogues from the medieval period is at Worms in Germany, dating to the late

twelfth century. Its floor plan may have been borrowed from monastic chapter houses with two large intersecting halls. Wings of the structure possibly served as galleries for women who remained separate from men in some synagogues. The Worms synagogue had two exterior arched entrances with adjacent arched windows, and a ceiling that was vaulted in the style of Christian churches and supported by columns with decorative floral patterns. Building styles of this type endured and became a common architectural plan for synagogues throughout eastern and central Europe.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: Philosophy among the Muslims and the Jews*

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## EARLY MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY IN THE EAST

**THE PROBLEM OF ICONOCLASM.** Although Rome had remained the center of Western Christianity after the disintegration of the empire in the fifth century, the center of Eastern Christianity—that is, Christianity as it was practiced in Asia Minor, the Balkan peninsula, Greece, and certain other Mediterranean regions—was in Constantinople, the city that Constantine the Great had chosen in 330 to serve as the capital of the Roman Empire of the East. Known as Byzantium, this area maintained a high level of social organization at a time when conditions in Western Europe had seriously deteriorated, and thus the Byzantine church was highly influential in the development of not only Western (or Latin) Christianity, but Western art and architecture as well. One of the more pressing issues facing the early ninth-century medieval Eastern Christian church was the revival of iconoclastic practices—that is, the smashing of statues and icons—under the emperor Leo V (813–820). A number of opponents of the use of statues and images in the churches had returned to old eighth-century prohibitions against idol worship, which, at that time, had culminated in the practice of Christian icons being defaced and destroyed. It had been perceived by some—particularly those tied to the imperial court—that the extensive use of icons in Eastern Christian churches was one of the major obstacles to the conversion of Muslims and Jews throughout the Byzantine Empire. In 815, a council at Constantinople reiterated that the practice of venerating religious images was idolatrous. Probably the hardest hit by the iconoclastic movements were the monasteries where, in the previous centuries, Byzantine monks had ardently opposed the iconoclastic movement.

Many monasteries had become great repositories of religious artwork. Images in countless Eastern Christian monasteries and churches were once again destroyed by the iconoclasts.

**POWER STRUGGLES.** Because they were such strong supporters of the use of religious images and were not under the direct control of the bishops, monks became caught up in the emperor's struggle to become the highest authority in the Byzantine church. Byzantine emperors began to see the independence of the monasteries as a threat to their control over the church. What began as an eighth-century theological controversy developed into a power struggle between church leaders, who felt best equipped to direct religious practice, and a secular power that wished to exert control over the church through imperial policy. During the late eighth century, Theodore the Abbot of Studius at Constantinople led a resurgence of Greek monastic life. He was also on hand at Constantinople in 815 to protest the iconoclastic revival. Soon after, Theodore was sent into exile. Emperors Michael II and Theophilus continued to support the iconoclastic position. It would not be until the regency of the Empress Theodora (wife of Theophilus) in 843 and the elevation of Methodius as patriarch (a bishop in Eastern Orthodox sees) of Constantinople that icons would once again be allowed in the worship life of Byzantine Christians, a change that is celebrated in an excerpt from a homily at Hagia Sophia given by the patriarch of Constantinople two decades after the restoration of the icons. After 843, the monks were again viewed with greater respect as they regained their former influence. Some monks were even allowed to go on to serve the church as bishops. In 862 the emperor Michael sent Bishop Methodius and his brother Cyril to Moravia where they taught Christianity in the vernacular language. Cyril is credited with assembling a Slavic alphabet and producing a Slavonic translation of the scriptures. Missionary work continued on the eastern borders of the Byzantine Empire. Cyril and Methodius also went to Bulgaria where they converted and baptized the khan (ruler), Boris, in 865. As the Latin church also began to send missionaries to Bulgaria, the eastern borderlands became contested territories of potential conversion between East and West.

**THE PHOTIAN SCHISM.** The Moravian and Bulgarian churches continued to grow throughout the late ninth century but became the focus of a controversy when the lay bishop Photius of Constantinople attempted to exert his authority over these sees. The Latin church had protested the legitimacy of his election as patriarch of Constantinople, which allowed him to claim

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A HOMILY AT HAGIA SOPHIA**

**INTRODUCTION:** This homily was delivered by Photius, the Byzantine Patriarch, on Holy Saturday, March 29, 867, at the great basilica Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. It celebrates the gradual return of icons to the Byzantine churches and public spaces following the Iconoclastic Contest. Present at this service were the Emperors Michael III (of the Amorion Dynasty) and Basil I (of the Macedonian Dynasty).

But the cause of the celebration, whereby today's feast is conspicuously adorned, is, as we have already said, the following: splendid piety erecting trophies against belief hostile to Christ; impiety lying low, stripped of her very last hopes; and the ungodly ideas of those half-barbarous and bastard clans which had crept into the Roman government (who were an insult and a disgrace to the emperors) being exposed to everyone as an object of hatred and aversion. Yea, and as for us, beloved pair of pious Emperors, shining forth from the purple, connected with the dearest names of father and son, and not allowing the name to belie the relationship, but striving to set in all other aspects also an example of superhuman love, whose preoccupation is Orthodoxy rather than pride in the imperial diadem—it is in these things that the deed which is before our eyes instigates us to take pride. With such a welcome does the representation of the Virgin's form cheer us, inviting us to draw not from a bowl of wine, but from a fair spectacle,

by which the rational part of our soul, being watered through our bodily eyes, and given eyesight in its growth towards the divine love of Orthodoxy, puts forth in the way of fruit the most exact vision of truth. Thus, even in her images does the Virgin's grace delight, comfort and strengthen us! A virgin mother carrying in her pure arms, for the common salvation of our kind, the common Creator reclining as an infant—that great and ineffable mystery of Dispensation! A virgin mother, with a virgin's and a mother's gaze, diving in indivisible form her temperament between both capacities, yet belittling neither by its incompleteness. With such exactitude has the art of painting, which is a reflection of inspiration from above, set up a lifelike imitation. For, as it were, she fondly turns her eyes on her begotten Child in the affection of her heart, yet assumes the expression of a detached and imperturbable mood at the passionless and wondrous nature of her offspring, and composes her gaze accordingly. You might think her not incapable of speaking, even if one were to ask her, "How didst thou give birth and remainest a virgin?" To such an extent have the lips been made flesh by the colours, that they appear merely to be pressed together and stilled as in the mysteries, yet their silence is not at all inert, neither is the fairness of her form derivatory, but rather is it the real archetype.

**SOURCE:** Photius, "Homily xvii," in *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*. Trans. Cyril Mango (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958); reprinted in *The Early Middle Ages 500–1000*. Ed. Robert Brentano (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964): 281–282.

jurisdiction over the eastern border areas. Photius, an extremely learned scholar and theologian (but not a priest), was elected by the imperial administration to replace the rather conservative Bishop Ignatius in 858. Pope Nicholas I attempted to have Photius deposed in a bid to exert primacy—the idea that the bishop of Rome had a primary place over all other bishops—over Constantinople and Eastern Christianity. In 863 Photius was excommunicated by Rome. In a similar move, Photius attempted to excommunicate Nicholas for supporting what he believed was a heretical position on the doctrine of *filioque*, an argument as to whether or not the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father or emanates from both the Father and the Son, which had been previously debated at the Council of Nicea (325). This medieval disagreement, sometimes called the Photian Schism, would signal continuing unrest between Eastern and Western Christianity over issues of doctrine and the primacy of bishops—controversies that have separated the churches up to the present day. As a compromise, Photius, for a

time, was forced by the new Byzantine emperor to relinquish his see at Constantinople, thus creating easier relations with the Latin church. The Photian Schism was finally healed by certain changes in imperial and papal administration and compromises at the Council of Constantinople in 870. Photius returned to power from 877 to 895. His *Treatise on the Holy Ghost*, which outlines the major Eastern objections to Latin *filioque* theology, remained an important work used by theologians throughout the Middle Ages to support the Eastern viewpoint on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and God the Father.

**EXTENSIONS OF EASTERN INFLUENCE.** Byzantine missionary efforts continued in the East as Bulgarian, Serbian, and Russian converts to Christianity continued to follow Greek practice. In 927 the Bulgarian church was even given its own patriarch. Vladimir, the prince of Russia, converted to Christianity in 988 when he married the princess of Byzantium, and bishops were sent to

## ROMAN

### Catholic and Eastern Orthodox: Some Modern Differences

The disputes between the Eastern (Byzantine) and Western (Roman) branches of Christianity in the Middle

#### Latin Catholic Christianity

Theology is more scholastic, philosophical, doctrinal

Emphasis is more juridical (influenced by medieval canon law)

Leadership is more monarchical (authoritative pope assisted by teaching tradition of church, cardinals, and bishops)

Clergy are celibate (influenced by medieval directives toward universal practice); more pronounced distinction between lay and clergy

Religious orders include many distinct orders of religious (Benedictine, Franciscan, Cistercian, etc.)

Seven distinct sacraments

Baptism by sprinkling/pouring

Still supports doctrine of purgatory

Fasting is much less significant (especially after Vatican II)

Divorce discouraged (no sacramental re-marriage without annulment)

Domed, cruciform, and contemporary worship spaces all in use

Rood screen removed after Middle Ages; communion rails removed after Vatican II

Statues, paintings, crucifixes (no restrictions)

Vernacular used in Mass (not Latin, as it was until the 1960s)

Less elaborate Mass since Vatican II (elaborate liturgy reserved for special occasions)

Daily Mass

Ages, including the Photian Schism of the ninth century and later tensions over the Latin Church's assertion of primacy, have kept the two churches under separate leadership for over a thousand years, allowing each to become distinctive in a number of different ways. Presented below is an overview of the modern remnants of the medieval East-West division in Christianity.

#### Greek Orthodox Christianity

Theology is more liturgized, spiritualized, monastic, and patristic (directed by the church fathers)

Emphasis is more mystical (influenced by monastic and Hesychastic traditions)

Leadership more conciliar and episcopal (relies on authority of councils and bishops)

Clergy are married (except bishops and monks)

No defined religious orders

No First Communion or Confirmation (communion and confirmation at Baptism)

Baptism by immersion

No purgatory

Rigorous fasting by both clergy and laity

Divorce allowed (up to three times)

Most churches (even the newer ones) follow traditional dome-shaped design

Iconostasis (icon screen) still persists, separating the sanctuary from the laity

Icons (mosaics and paintings) but no statues; religious art is two-dimensional

Greek, plus vernacular, used in liturgy

Longer, more dramatic Mass: many songs, much incense, use of bells

Daily Mass only in monasteries

Eucharist not consecrated every day

Russia from Constantinople to guide the development of Christianity in the region. By the eleventh century, Mount Athos in the northern part of Greece was becoming a major center of monastic spirituality. Orthodox Christians from the Greek mainland, Serbia, Bulgaria, Russia, and Georgia established communities

in this secluded area, located on a peninsula that juts into the Aegean Sea and ends on an imposing mountain. Access to the mountain was quite limited—indeed, visitors were raised up in baskets attached to a rope and windlass, and women were never allowed entry at all. Thus, the solitude of the monastic groups was ensured

in a system somewhat different from the Benedictine way of life as it developed in the West. Many Western monastic houses, although controlled by vows of stability and the rule of enclosure, began to develop limited ties with various secular entities that surrounded their communities, and so had connections to outside society that were more integral to their existence than those in the East.

**CONTINUING TENSIONS.** In 1053 a dispute between the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, and Pope Leo IX of Rome caused a schism which resulted in the East and West once again attempting to excommunicate one another. Cerularius wanted Constantinople to have equal status with Rome and to be able to operate independently in the Eastern sphere. To show his opposition to Rome's position, Michael closed all of the Latin rite churches in Constantinople. He also solicited other bishops to write letters in support of the traditional theological objections that had long divided the two rites. This time one of the major objections was the use of unleavened bread by the Armenian and Latin church. Churches in Russia, Serbia, and Bulgaria, and even the Melkites in Egypt, sided with the Greek church and initiated a break with Rome. Tensions were further exacerbated during the Crusades as Latin armies en route to the Holy Land pillaged the countryside in order to feed the troops. In 1204 Western crusaders even succeeded in taking military control of the city of Constantinople, which was followed by three days of looting. An attempt at reconciliation and reunification between the Greek and Latin churches was made at the Second Council of Lyon in 1274 by Pope Gregory X (1272–1276) and efforts continued throughout the following centuries. A rather unexpected concord came at an ecumenical council in 1439, with Greek acceptance of the Roman pontiff's primal place as successor to the apostle Peter as head of the Roman church. The most significant outcome of this agreement was the notion of the unity of faith and diversity of rite (ritualistic practice), a principle that is still respected between Eastern and Western Christians today.

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## MEDIEVAL LITURGY

**BLENDED FORMS.** The development of the Christian liturgy in Europe—that is, the forms and arrangements of public worship—reflects shifts in political and cultural dominance throughout the medieval period. Roman liturgy (that form of Christian worship practiced in the city of Rome) began to find its way into northern Europe during the eighth century with encouragement from Charlemagne's father, Pepin the Short. As its use became more widespread, the Roman liturgy also assimilated many older uses that were native to Frankish Gaul. In circulation at this time were two major sacramentaries (books of prayers for sacramental services): the Gregorian (dating from the late sixth and early seventh centuries at Rome) and the Frankish-Gelasian (which had Gallic and Benedictine influences, parts of which dated from the early seventh through mid-eighth centuries). The earliest surviving medieval liturgical manuscripts, in fact, blend these Gallic and Roman types. During the reign of Charlemagne, the Hadrianum, a sacramentary sent by Pope Hadrian, further assisted in the promotion of Roman elements in the Frankish liturgy. This hybrid or "mixed" liturgy spread into Germany with renewed support from Rome during the tenth century. The Gallo-Roman liturgy actually found its way back to Rome during the tenth century and further added to the rich blend of medieval liturgical practices.

**MISSALS AND ORDINES.** Since the old-style sacramentary did not include all the information necessary for conducting a service, it eventually gave way to the missal (*Missalis Plenarius*), a type of book that included not only the aspects of former sacramentaries, but also epistles (letters of St. Paul in the New Testament), antiphons (chants used during the canonical hours), and directives for preaching. This change did not happen all at once, but the missal virtually replaced the sacramentary by the eleventh century. Not only did celebrants find it easier to use because all the components of the liturgical prayers, songs, and readings were in one volume, but the missal also included more specialized liturgical formulas for use in commemorative services like the private mass. To understand exactly what went on during the medieval liturgies, however, one must look not only at prayers, readings, and songs in the missals, sacramentaries, lectionaries, and antiphonaries, but more importantly to a book called the *ordo*, which gave directives for liturgical action or served as a guide for liturgical procedure. One problem, however, is that these books (called *ordines* in the plural) were constantly changing, and there did not seem to be much of a need to save those that had become outdated. Some of the directives

existed as individual manuscripts and actually had to be gathered in collections. Like the sacramentaries, antiphonaries, and lectionaries, the disparate directives of the *ordo* were eventually replaced by a more comprehensive single-volume work which later became known as the *pontifical*. Again, it took some time for the full transition of such usages to occur, depending upon local customs, between the tenth and twelfth centuries.

**THE SETTING OF THE EARLY MEDIEVAL MASS.** By looking at some of the early medieval ordines, scholars have been able to reconstruct aspects of the medieval mass. Particularly in the urban areas and especially in the cathedrals, there seems to have been a great deal of pomp and ceremony connected to these services. Indeed, medieval masses were quite extravagant affairs. The papal and episcopal liturgical directives from the eighth century still followed old Roman and Byzantine courtly rituals for the robing of participants in the sacristy (a room for keeping vessels, candles, and other ceremonial objects, near the front of the basilica). The vestments worn were very similar to those used today by Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran clergy. Deacons, subdeacons, and acolytes acted as ministers for the celebrant. In the cathedrals and at papal services, the bishops and presbyters (priests) sat near a throne in the apse (an addition at the eastern end of the church, usually near or connected to the altar area) awaiting the arrival of the main celebrant and his attendants. Lesser clergy and those in training sat in the choir near the front altar. Lay men and women of the congregation were seated in separated rows throughout the nave of the church, with members of the aristocracy always seated in the front.

**THE PROCESSION, PRAYERS, AND READINGS.** The service proceeded with Gospels being carried in by an acolyte, then placed reverently upon the altar by the subdeacon, a minor order of cleric. Candles were lit (there were often seven candle bearers), incense was employed, and an Introit (opening) antiphon was begun as the celebrant and his entourage processed to the altar of the church. Bread that had been consecrated (blessed) at the most recent mass was handed to the celebrant by the deacons. Once members of the procession reached the altar, they would bow, then make the sign of the cross, as the celebrant proceeded to give the attendants a kiss of peace. This was followed by the prayers *Gloria Patri* ("Glory to God the Father"), the kissing of the Gospels by the celebrant, and then his return to the throne. While facing east, the choir sang the litany *Kyrie Eleison* ("Lord Have Mercy"). This was followed by the hymn *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* ("Glory to God in the Highest") sung by the congregation. Afterward, the celebrant turned and

greeted the people with *pax vobiscum* (peace be with you) and began to pray the *Collect*. The celebrant then sat back on the throne, the congregation sat, and the subdeacon proceeded to a raised platform (the *ambo*) to read scriptures from the lectionary. A response to the readings (*gradual*) was sung by a cantor, and then the deacon who was appointed to read the Gospel proceeded to the throne to receive a blessing from the celebrant. If the pope was present, the reader was to first kiss his feet, a practice from an old Byzantine court ritual. The deacon then removed the Gospel book from the altar, first kissing it, then processed with two subdeacons carrying candles and incense to the ambo to read the Gospel. After the reading, the book was carried by the subdeacons to the places in the sanctuary where clergy were seated so that all might venerate the book of Gospels by kissing it. The book was then returned in its cover or *capsa* (which was usually decorated with ornate precious stones) to the main altar. During the eleventh century the creed or *Credo* (literally "I believe") was added after the reading of the scriptures.

**PREPARATION FOR THE EUCHARIST.** Following the service of the Word of God, there was an offertory procession, during which those lay participants at the liturgy would present the gifts that they had brought by coming forth toward the altar. The bishops and priests would receive the gifts, including the offerings of bread and wine for the eucharist (commemoration of the Last Supper of Christ). In large congregations this was quite a time-consuming process. The flasks of wine were poured into a large vessel (the *scyphus*) and the loaves of bread were placed in linens (called *sindones*). The celebrants and attendants would then wash their hands. Additional wine, brought by the celebrants, was then poured into the large common chalice (sometimes so big it had to have handles), and the celebrant also poured in a bit of water. While all of this was going on, the various hymns, antiphons, and psalms prescribed for the day would be sung. The next action involved the clergy taking positions around the altar in the sanctuary. They would be arranged according to rank, with priests and deacons closest to the altar, and subdeacons and acolytes closer to the nave. The celebrant would then sing a prayer of thanksgiving (later called the Preface) followed by the *Tersanctus* sung by the subdeacons. The lay community did not always take part in the singing.

**THE EUCHARIST.** Once all the elements were in place, the celebrant recited the Eucharistic prayers while those in the sanctuary bowed their heads. The chalice was lifted by one of the bishops or assistant celebrants for all to see, while the celebrant held the offering of bread on the edge of the chalice. Following this action, the celebrant recited or sang the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father"),



Monks sing in choir. Life of St. Nicholas, fresco, Pietro da Rimini, San Nicola basilica, Tolentino, Italy, 14th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/SAN NICOLA BASILICA, TOLENTINO/DAGLI ORTI.

deposited particles of consecrated bread both from that celebration and the previous day, and then returned to his throne to sit. The consecrated loaves of bread were next broken for distribution while the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) was sung. The celebrant then broke his own bread and dropped a piece into his chalice of wine, to symbolize that both elements of bread and wine represented one true Lord. Bread and wine were then consumed by the celebrant. Once the bread was consecrated, fragments were carried by sub-deacons to local parish churches in order to connect them to the episcopal or papal service. Consecrated wine from the celebrant's chalice was poured into the larger common cup, and the clergy then received bread from the hands of the seated celebrant. Clergy went to the altar to drink wine from the smaller cups. The celebrant with bishops, priests, and deacons then brought the consecrated bread to the laity (which they handed to them) and filled smaller cups from the large scyphus, which were also presented to the congregation for consumption. It is likely that the bread and wine were brought whenever pos-

sible directly to the people instead of there being a procession to the altar area by the laity who elected to receive communion. It is quite clear that by the medieval period the sanctuary was off limits to the laity. By the eleventh century, a screen (made of wood or metal, sometimes called the rood screen) was erected in certain churches to separate the clergy and altar from the laity. These became more common in the abbey churches and larger cathedrals. During the reception of the bread and wine by the laity, songs and antiphons were sung, often by a choir. After the communion, the celebrant returned to the altar, faced east (toward the altar itself), and said a post-communion prayer; then the congregation was dismissed by the deacon. In the closing activity, the celebrant processed out of the church toward the sacristy with the acolytes, sub-deacons, and other attendants, blessing the congregation along the way.

**A DECLINE IN LAY PARTICIPATION.** While simpler liturgical forms likely took place in the smaller and rural

churches, the directives of the ordines clearly stated that celebrants were to try to stay as close to the urban and Roman rituals as possible. Some of the Frankish changes to the old Roman rite found their way back to Rome as early as the eleventh century. But the old Roman liturgy imported to France by Charlemagne underwent only minor changes in northern Europe during the following three centuries. One important trend that increasingly became more evident during the late eleventh century was that the members of the laity were losing their participatory voice in medieval liturgy. Prayers of the celebrant, once said aloud so that all in the congregation could hear, began to be whispered. The prayers of the laity began to be limited to short acclamations and then to fall into total disuse. Burchard of Worms (d. 1025) in his list of penitentials wrote that the growing failure of people to respond in church constituted “unbecoming” behavior. However, it might be said that the environment for participation was not especially inviting, since in most parts of medieval Europe the laity usually stood for the entire mass. There were no seats or pews, though there were stalls for the monks or canons of the choir. By the thirteenth century, the laity began to be instructed to kneel during the consecration. It was not until the fifteenth century in Germany that preachers began to direct the laity to sit for their sermons. Thus, the strong ties that once existed in early Christianity between the celebrant and people were being gradually loosened throughout the medieval period.

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SEE ALSO *Music: Plainsong and the Monophonic Tradition; Music: Additions to the Sacred Repertory; Theater: The Development of Liturgical Drama*

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## CLUNY AND THE MONASTIC REFORMS OF THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH CENTURIES

**THE FLOWERING OF CLUNY.** As the pervasive presence and influence of Benedictine monasticism emerged from Carolingian reforms of the ninth century, a par-

ticularly powerful house at Cluny (in the Burgundy region of eastern France) became the embodiment of church leadership, independence, and success in Western Christianity. Through cooperation with its benefactor, Duke William the Pious of Aquitaine, the monastery (founded in 909) adopted an original charter that allowed the monks to choose their own succession of abbots without interference or intervention from outside secular or church authorities. The abbot and community were also to have complete control over all of the monastery's properties, being answerable only to the Apostolic See in Rome. A string of influential and creative abbots—Odo (926–944), Mayeul (965–994), Odilo (994–1048), and Hugh (1049–1109)—caused the house to become a major center of spirituality that quickly spread its influence over much of Europe. The notion that the present evil age was signaling the end of the world and that monastic life was the most perfect embodiment of the Christian vocation became cornerstones of Cluniac spirituality. The monks believed that if they renounced the world and undertook a life of silence and interior transformation they would experience God in the unceasing prayer of their community and the paradise of the cloister. Due to their high standards of observance, European houses as far away as Italy and Spain asked the Cluniacs for assistance with their own reforms. Although the community was poor at first, it did not take long for admirers of their lifestyle to become supporters and benefactors, creating a wealth of endowments. Secular estates and even entire monasteries were given over for Cluny to manage.

#### ARCHITECTURAL AND POLITICAL EXPANSIONS.

During the abbacy of Odilo, further exemptions from outside secular or episcopal influences were obtained, placing Cluny and all its daughter houses and dependencies under direct control of the pope. This was highly unusual for the time since local bishops and lords commonly exercised certain jurisdictions and rights of taxation over the monasteries. As the number of filiations grew, however, their care and management continued to be shouldered by the abbot of Cluny, the spiritual father of all Cluniacs throughout Europe and the one to whom postulants, novices, and newly professed monks from all the dependent houses took their vows. Portions of the incomes from these dependent houses also flowed into Cluny itself, financing a period of architectural expansion replete with elements of religious grandeur. Under Abbot Hugh, a 530-foot basilica with four transepts, fifteen towers, and five radiating chapels was constructed. After subsequent additions, Cluny boasted the largest Christian church that had ever been built in Europe up to this time. By the early twelfth century, Cluny had be-

come one of the wealthiest and most influential establishments in all of Christendom. Within the next fifty years, Cluniac dependencies numbered over one thousand. Many leaders of the Cluny organization were from the most significant noble families of Europe. Not only was there a close relationship between Cluny and Rome, but the abbey also forged strong links with the Holy Roman emperors. Abbot Hugh was the godfather of Emperor Henry IV, and he arranged for a marriage between his niece and King Alphonso VI of León and Castile. Pope Urban II was a former grand prior of Cluny, and a long list of monks to follow (from both Cluny and its filiations) went on to serve in the episcopal ranks.

**LITURGY AND LAY CONNECTIONS.** The liturgical practices at Cluny were rooted in the notion that the monastic life was the only sure way to salvation, and this idea applied not only to the monks themselves, but to members of the surrounding lay communities as well. The monks believed that the monastery should be a place where continuous prayer was lifted up to God. According to the order's *customals* (books containing instructions for monastic daily life), the monks extended the time for prayer well beyond the earlier Benedictine directives to the point where as many as eight hours of their day were dedicated to activity in the *choir*, the special seating area near the altar. In addition to the extra offices, two daily community masses were often celebrated. Extra psalms recited for benefactors, longer night offices on saints' days, and the chanting of the entire books of Genesis and Exodus prior to the Lenten season also served to lengthen the time of prayer. During Lent so many prayers were added that the offices became almost continuous. Those laity who could not make such an extreme commitment to the monastic lifestyle might share in the merits of the monks' work by associating themselves with the monasteries. This could be accomplished through donations, sending family members (sometimes child *oblates*) to the monasteries, being buried on the monastic property, or requesting the prayers of the monks during their various offices. One could even apply for confraternity, an arrangement by which the community chapter would vote to accept a person as an associate member of the house, sharing in the same spiritual benefits as the monks and even being remembered in the Office for the Dead like a regular member of the community. Lay members' names could also be written in the *Liber Vitae* (Book of Life), which occupied a place on the high altar during Mass. Much of the theology behind lay association with the monasteries was linked to the belief in petitionary prayer, which allowed individuals to direct specific requests to God.

**GERMAN REFORM MOVEMENTS.** Cluny was not the only major reform group from the tenth and eleventh centuries, nor did it offer the only new model for monastic organization and liturgy. In 933 the Abbey of Gorze (near Metz, Germany) began a revival of the community once formed by Chrodegang in the eighth century. During the ninth century it had been run by a series of lay abbots. With the help of German nobility and bishops, the new Gorze reform extended to Trier, Verdun, and Lorraine (now in France), as well as Hesse, Swabia, and Bavaria. The customal of Gorze soon began to be used by over fifty monasteries. Houses of women also took up the customs in Bavaria during the 900s. While Gorze followed the Benedictine traditions as introduced during the Carolingian era by Benedict of Aniane, there were a number of differences from the Cluniac foundations. Some of the early reform abbots (Arnold, John, and Immo) had placed themselves in positions of obligation to lay patrons, nobles, and bishops who had invited the Gorze reformers into their territories. Control of the Gorzer monasteries resided with the bishops. Also those German abbeys and daughter houses that embraced the Gorze reform were not dependent upon the motherhouse but operated in an autonomous fashion. There were a number of core monasteries connected to the reform that became the nucleus of a group of confraternal houses. The Gorze lectionary and liturgical ceremonies were also different from Cluny's. What turned out to be most significant were the liturgical enactments and performances that were linked to the seasonal celebrations such as Easter. These are said to have been the origins of the mystery plays that evolved into medieval drama.

**ENGLISH REFORM.** The English monasteries of the tenth and eleventh centuries were affected in various ways by both Gorzer and Cluniac reforms. As was the case at Cluny, carrying out the liturgy of the daily offices became the primary focus of the monastic life. However, more in keeping with the Gorzer model, connections between English monasteries and English monarchs were quite strong. In 970 abbots and abbesses from all over the realm attended a royal assembly at Winchester where an agreement of customs known as the *Regularis Concordia* was drawn up. The result of this convention was that the king became the overseer of a uniform set of monastic observances. Prayers for the king and queen were included in most of the daily offices. Monasteries were even given by the crown certain jurisdictions over secular matters, such as land management and the courts. Thus, a unique type of unity developed between the monasteries and the monarchy, one that was also linked with the English people themselves.



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SEE ALSO *Architecture: Monastic Architecture*

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## RELICS, PILGRIMAGES, AND THE PEACE OF GOD

**INTEREST IN RELICS.** Much of the activity related to pilgrimages and holy sites in the Middle Ages can be connected to a renewed interest in relics that began in the ninth century in northern European Christendom. Any physical objects tied to famous saints or holy personages, such as body parts, bones, hair, fingernails, or even clothing worn during their lifetime, qualified as relics. In 801 and again in 813 the emperor Charlemagne revived a statute from the Council of Carthage (401) that required all altars to contain relics. The Carolingians went so far as to import relics from Italy and Spain. Pilgrimages to the tombs of saints were also encouraged. Charlemagne even suggested that important oaths were to be sworn upon relics. Not all relics were kept in churches, however. Charlemagne himself kept relics in his throne room for the occasion of oaths. There were even special decorative containers called *reliquaries* where these holy objects were kept for veneration on ceremonial occasions. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, nobles would swear peacekeeping oaths upon relics. Cults to the physical remains of saints did not take long to develop, an attraction that may have gone back to the practice of pre-Christian hero cults in Europe, and pictures of them were common in churches and religious manuscripts of all sorts, as illustrated in an English book of hours now in Oxford. For many ordinary Christians, sacred objects connected to the saints and particularly their remains were often thought to be conduits to the holy. Churches and monasteries that had such important relics in their possession would be considered prestigious. Places such as Dijon, Fulda, Vézelay, Verdun, Cologne, Bruges, Verona, Milan, Loreto, Trier, Conques, and Compostela attracted visitors due in part to their famous relics. This did much for the income and morale of congregations and communities. In theory, the objects were not to be worshipped in and of themselves.

Theologically it was argued that the relic allowed humans to come close to the spirit of the prescribed saint who then became an intercessor for humanity assisting in the transmission of God's grace. The relics would, of course, have only as much significance as a group of worshipers gave them. But they did provide a point of contact between their perception of the divine and their everyday mortal lives.

**PILGRIMAGES.** The Christian practice of making pilgrimages to holy sites dates back to the fourth century. The theology behind this was the notion of establishing a connection to places significant to the incarnate Christ. As early as the seventh century, Christians in northern Europe were making pilgrimages to Rome, where they wished to visit the supposed tombs of saints Peter and Paul, and by the eighth century such visitors could follow a written guide with an established itinerary. Around this time, the notion of remitting the public penance (assigned by a priest in confession) for one's sins through some sort of pilgrimage had become common. Thus, pilgrimages often became associated with the notion of penitence. By the tenth century pilgrimages began to be organized on a grander scale. Nobleswomen, dukes, bishops, abbots, and even those from lesser walks of life, from as far away as England, Normandy, Bavaria, and Swabia, sought to visit the Holy Land. With the conversion of the Hungarians in the late 900s, overland routes to the Levant (the area comprising modern-day Lebanon, Israel, and parts of Syria and Turkey) began to be developed through southeastern Europe. The monks of Cluny also assisted with the organization of the pilgrimages, particularly from France. Even when sites of Christian shrines were located in Muslim-controlled areas such as the Holy Land and Spain, Christians were traditionally allowed access since a deep respect for the notion of pilgrimage was a vital part of the Islamic faith. However, when these holy places became inaccessible, Christians believed that they were justified in attempts to secure these areas by force.

**POPULAR JOURNEYS.** Depending upon the balance of power in the Levant and the route of travel one chose, journeys to the Holy Land could be quite dangerous. Pilgrimages to sites in western Christendom such as Conques (southeastern France), Rome, and Santiago de Compostela (northwestern Spain), which were more associated with the relics of saints, could be much safer. By the twelfth century, sites such as the shrine of St. James at Compostela became tourist attractions and local economies flourished along their travel routes. Sites like Canterbury commemorated both relics and events, such as the twelfth-century murder of Thomas Becket



Portraits of various saints. Lacy Hours, Oxford, St. John's College MS 94, folios 4-4v, 1430-1434. BY PERMISSION OF THE PRESIDENT AND SCHOLARS OF SAINT JOHN BAPTIST COLLEGE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

(chancellor of England and archbishop of Canterbury). Becket's grave as well as the spot upon which he was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral became a popular destination for both the pious and the curious. Miracles were recorded at Becket's tomb, and eventually his remains were moved to the choir of Trinity Chapel in 1220 where they stayed until the shrine was destroyed by Henry VIII in 1538. In effect, Becket became one of the first saints elevated by popular acclaim and enthusiastic devotion in medieval European tradition. Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1390s) remind us of the Becket tradition and testify to the fact that these pilgrimages were not always somber affairs. Certainly, such expeditions contained elements of adventure and entertainment as well as spiritual satisfaction.

**TRUCE OF GOD AND PEACE OF GOD.** The experience of pilgrimage was made possible, in part, by attention to the issue of safety both for travelers and for the broader European society. Effective peacekeeping in

the early part of the Middle Ages was a major problem not only for secular rulers, but also for the church, as uncontrolled violence posed threats to both church property and those in religious life. Also caught up in these dangers were innocent lay people who would often find themselves at the mercy of armed local warriors. Without physically fighting back, the church found it necessary to create ways to disarm a society where violence seemed to have become an all too commonplace occurrence. Legislation at tenth- and eleventh-century assemblies known as *synods* began to reflect principles such as the Peace of God (*Pax Ecclesiae*) and the Truce of God (*Treuga Dei*). Between 990 and 1096 at least thirty church councils addressed the problem of unchecked martial activity in European society. At these synods the church promoted the cessation of unnecessary violence through the Truce of God and imposed penalties, under threat of excommunication, for carrying on warfare during certain holy seasons, on Sundays, and in certain

holy places. In an attempt to save the weak and innocent from the horrors of unjust physical abuse, the knightly order was obliged through the ideals of the Peace of God to protect unarmed poor, children, women, clerics, merchants, and pilgrims. This also extended to their property, merchandise, and even farm products, animals, and equipment.

**THE CONCEPT OF JUST WAR.** The idea of war which could be justified in the service of the church—a principal that was applied to the Crusades both in connection with protecting pilgrims and with maintaining access to holy places—may have been indirectly tied to notions of curbing the outright martial character of medieval society as a whole, although it certainly was rooted in the drive for the church to gain more control over secular affairs. During the eleventh century, the notion of “Christian” knighthood had begun to moralize the activities of a knight, turning him from full-time warrior to part peacekeeper, as would be encouraged by the Peace of God and Truce of God movements. Bishops even went so far as to impose spiritual sanctions on offenders who refused to put down their weapons. Soldiers fighting for the church on the advice of their bishops or in a war against heretics, on the other hand, could be forgiven without penance for their violent acts. In 1085 Anselm of Lucca published the *Collectio Canonum*, which assembled just war texts from St. Augustine to Gregory I (fifth through seventh centuries). This literature supported the ecclesiastical right actively to direct the *ius gladii* (literally: by right of the sword) in the service of the church. Actions like blessing the weapons of a knight for the service of justice and God came from a century earlier. The idea of the *militia Christi* (army of Christ) certainly precedes the Crusades, but it had been used more in a metaphorical sense by the Gregorian reform movement (beginning in 1059) to address the spiritual battles fought by the monks. As it began to be applied to the military during the time of the Crusades, it probably reflected the growing need of the church to justify protecting itself from secular powers or taking up a noble cause.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: Pilgrimage Architecture; Fashion: Academic, Clerical, and Religious Dress; Literature: The Canterbury Tales; Visual Arts: The Cult of Saints and the Rise of Pilgrimage*

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## GROWING CHURCH POWER AND SECULAR TENSIONS

**A PERIOD OF PAPAL WEAKNESS.** In the tenth century, as the Carolingian Empire started to break apart and the Germanic Empire rise, increasing tension developed between bishops, the pope, and secular rulers. Strong local nobility had begun to emerge during the age of the Viking invasions in Italy, France, Germany, and England, while the Roman bishops themselves were hardly in a position to wield significant political power at all. The last of the noteworthy early medieval popes was Nicholas I (858–867), after whom there would not be meaningful individual ecclesiastical authority directed from Rome until the eleventh century. In fact, the majority of the popes in the early Middle Ages functioned primarily as liturgical leaders and guardians of tradition (not political figures). While holy and accomplished Roman bishops such as Hadrian I, Nicholas I and John VIII did much to direct the positive course of early medieval Christianity, near the early part of the tenth century, a series of degenerate popes (John VIII, Formosus, Lambert, Stephen VI, Leo V, Christopher, and Sergius II) succeeded one another by each deposing his predecessor. These changes in leadership included a chain of nine successive pontiffs within the span of an eight-year period. Probably the most bizarre story connected to this era was that of Formosus (891–896), whose dead body was exhumed and put on trial by his rivals for a variety of offenses that he had committed while in office. After being found guilty, his corpse was defrocked of its vestments and his consecrated fingers (those used in blessing and holding the host, or consecrated bread, during Mass) were severed from his body. There was even a teenage pope (John XII) elevated in 955 whose father was the half-brother of a former pope (John XI). While abstinence from sexual activity among Western Christian clerics had begun to be legislated in the late 300s and several edicts in the 400s had imposed oaths of celibacy upon the clergy, there were still many who refused to comply. By the sixth century, only a small percentage of priests and bishops openly continued to have

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### **PAPAL POWER: THE DICTATUS PAPAE (MARCH 1075)**

**INTRODUCTION:** This statement of papal authority was crafted during the first two years of Gregory VII's pontificate (1073–1085). It systematically sets forth the claim (likely for the first time) that the pope had the power to depose an emperor.

**SOURCE:** *Dictatus Papae* (March 1075), in *Church and State Through the Centuries*. Trans. S. Z. Ehler and J. B. Morrall (London: 1954): 43–44. Reprinted in Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050–1300* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988): 49–50.

wives, but much larger numbers had *focariae* or mistresses. Violations of clerical celibacy defiantly continued through the eleventh century, particularly in the more rural areas. Pope John XII was himself openly sexually active (he is accused of turning the papal residence into a brothel) and was said to have died of a stroke while in bed with a married woman. However, historians remember John XII for breathing new life into the power of the western Christian Roman Empire. His coronation of the German em-

peror, Otto I, on Candlemas Day in 962 saw (through military means) the return of former Italian papal territories to the church. This also rekindled the strong ecclesiastical and secular relationship that had once existed between the Roman bishops and the powerful institutional western European kingdoms.

**THE INVESTITURE CONTROVERSY.** The Latin Church's dependence upon lay powers for support (both

economic and military) had allowed for the development of a practice during the ninth and tenth centuries where kings and princes reserved for themselves the power of investiture over bishops and abbots. That is, these secular powers, operating according to the patterns established in the broader society, literally would invest high-ranking clergy with the symbols of their office. In the case of bishops and abbots, this was the presentation of the ring and staff (*crozier*) that served as visible signs of ecclesiastical authority. In return, the bishop or abbot would pay homage to the king and swear an oath of *fealty* or loyalty, just as a vassal or land-tenant might. The kings and nobility who owned much land might grant *benefices* or tenure on the land for a particular number of years. Powerful secular leaders granted such lands to local churches or even would give over church-owned lands to laity as they saw fit. By the mid-eleventh century, church leaders began to condemn the practice, which resulted in a contest between church and state. The Investiture Controversy was sparked by church legislation initiated in 1059, 1075, 1076, 1078, and 1080 under Popes Nicholas II and Gregory VII. Humbert of Silva Candida published a work entitled *Three Books Against the Simoniacs* which not only was a polemic against simony (the sale or purchase of a church office), but supported the notions of clerical celibacy and papal primacy. Humbert's treatise was also an attack upon lay authority as it related to the power of the priesthood. According to Humbert, church authority came from God and was to be carried out through the electoral will of his people and priests, not the kings and nobility, whose power extended only to secular matters. These reforms attempted to purify the ordination process from selfish secular interests, first by placing the election of the pope in the hands of the cardinals, and later by ruling against lay influence in ecclesiastical elections and, eventually, lay investiture of any kind under any circumstance.

**AN AUTHORITY STRUGGLE.** Royal and noble compliance with these church directives was difficult to obtain, however. The distinctions between the spiritual office of the bishop and the material possessions or physical powers linked to the post were not clearly defined during the early years of the investiture contest. The issue came to a head with the authority struggle between Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085) and the German emperor Henry IV. Gregory was credited with issuing the famous decree *Dictatus Papae* which stated that the pope, not the emperor, was to be seen as the vicar of Christ. (It was the pope who was the successor of Constantine.) The pontiff alone could both depose and in-

stall princes, emperors, and bishops. The pope could be judged by no mortal man. He might also absolve individuals of their fealty to evil persons of power. While the struggles between the bishop of Rome and the German emperor were real, scholars now suggest that *Dictatus Papae* was later submitted into the register of documents for 1075 in order to bolster claims for papal power. It is likely that the term “paptus” was not even used until decades later, around the beginning of the twelfth century. In any case, Henry IV refused to recognize Gregory's authority, and the bitter struggle continued for some ten years. The crown attempted to depose the pope in 1076 and shortly thereafter the papacy declared the emperor excommunicated. Bishops and princes from all parts of Christendom intervened and took sides. The northern Italian and German bishops even went so far as to side with Henry and ratify the emperor's decision to depose the pontiff. Lay nobility who were plotting Henry's demise forced the emperor into reconciliation, and there appeared to be some change in the balance of power during the early part of 1077 when the penitent Henry appeared before Pope Gregory barefoot in the middle of winter at Canossa begging forgiveness for his immortal soul.

**THE REASSERTION OF THE CHRISTIAN ROMAN EMPIRE.** Henry's apparent sincerity demonstrated in the Canossa incident was short-lived. In fact, some historians have suggested that this entire act of penitence may have been a ploy on the part of Henry to buy the cooperation of German nobles. Several years after he had been forgiven, in 1080, the emperor managed to invade Italy and forcibly have Pope Gregory exiled and deposed. Henry elevated a new pope, Clement III, who officially restored Henry IV's place as emperor of the Romans. Henry IV renewed his quarrel with the papacy after the elevation of Urban II (1088–1099), whose organization of the First Crusade helped solidify the public view of the papacy as the visible head of the Roman Church in administrative, judicial, and military capacities. Urban eventually succeeded in rallying the bishops of Germany against lay investiture, but after Urban's death Henry IV again came into conflict with Pope Paschal, and the emperor was again excommunicated by Rome in 1102. The controversy between the German emperors and popes continued for another generation as each side gained and lost ground. Some of the difficulties between spiritual and temporal powers during these decades may have been tied up in disagreements over valid canonical election. Between 1059 and 1179 a series of some fourteen anti-popes served sporadically alongside or in conflict with the pontiffs now recognized by historians. With

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A RECONCILIATION AT CANOSSA**

**INTRODUCTION:** During the period of the Investiture Controversy, when lay rulers struggled with the papacy over the right to ordain or depose princes and bishops, one of the most dramatic confrontations was a ten-year struggle between Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV, who refused to follow church directives and even attempted to depose the pope. Finally, after the pope declared the emperor to be excommunicated and other princes began plotting against him, Henry was forced to attempt reconciliation, which he did by appearing barefoot outside the pope's residence at Canossa in the middle of winter. The following account (dated the end of January 1077), which relates the Canossa event, appears in a letter to the German princes written by Gregory:

Whereas for love of justice you have made common cause with us and taken the same risks in the warfare of Christian service, we have taken special care to send you this accurate account of the king's penitential humiliation, his absolution and the course of the whole affair from his entrance into Italy to the present time. According to the arrangements made with the legates sent to us by you we came to Lombardy about 20 days before the date at which some of your leaders were to meet us ... [and] we

received certain information that the king was on his way to us. Before he entered Italy he sent us word that he would make satisfaction to God and St. Peter and offer to amend his way of life and to continue obedient to us, provided only that he should obtain from us absolution and the apostolic blessing. For a long time we delayed our reply and held long consultations, reproaching him bitterly through messengers back and forth for his outrageous conduct, until finally, of his own accord and without any show of hostility or defiance, he came with a few followers to the fortress of Canossa where we were staying. There, on three successive days, standing before the castle gate, laying aside all royal insignia, barefoot and in coarse attire, he ceased not with many tears to beseech the apostolic help and comfort until all who were present or who had heard the story were so moved by pity and compassion that they pleaded his cause with prayers and tears ... At last overcome by his persistent show of penitence and the urgency of all present, we released him from the bonds of anathema and received him into the grace of Holy Mother Church, accepting from him the guarantees described ...

**SOURCE:** Pope Gregory VII, Letter to the German Princes, in *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII.*, Book IV, 6, Columbia University Records of Civilization. Trans. by Ephraim Emerton (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960): 109–110.

rival claimants to support, emperors, princes, and kings were not always in agreement over who represented the church's position and which religious leader the secular powers should choose to recognize. A compromise between German kings and bishops of Rome finally came at the Concordat of Worms in 1122 with an agreement executed by Pope Calixtus II and Henry V of Germany. A similar compromise had been struck in England during the early 1100s between Anselm, the archbishop of Canterbury, and King Henry I, who had agreed that secular leaders would still invest bishops but with the understanding that they were only granting the bishop earthly temporal authority. The church would also have its representative (usually a higher ranking bishop, pope, or cardinal) invest the bishop with symbols of priestly authority, namely the ring and staff. In some areas the king conferred power through the touch of his scepter. While the presence of the king or secular noble leaders was permitted at a bishop's elevation, it was by the authority of the leading local bishops that a candidate was placed in office. However, it is more likely that leaders in significant church positions (such as bishops, abbots, and even popes) had the blessing of both clergy and secular leaders.

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**THE CRUSADES**

**MOTIVATIONS.** The Crusades were a series of military campaigns waged by Christian armies against Muslim-controlled areas in the Holy Land beginning in 1095 and continuing on an intermittent basis even as late as the sixteenth century. While the Crusading momentum seems to have begun with the justification of rescuing holy places from Muslim control, it is likely that the motivation for the First Crusade was a complex

mixture of religious emotion, individual ambition, and political programs. Pope Urban II's call to crusade was in response to the March 1095 request from the court of Byzantine emperor Alexius for military assistance against the Turks threatening to take control of much of Asia Minor. It is clear that Urban was concerned about the pressure Islam was exerting on the eastern frontiers of Christendom. He was also anxious to improve relations between the Greek and Latin Churches. At the Council of Clermont in November of 1095, Urban's call for pilgrims to respond to a war (that was God's will) to liberate the land of Jesus's birth from the Infidel (one who is "unfaithful to the true teaching," a terminology used by both Christians and Muslims to refer to each another) had decidedly religious overtones. It is no surprise that the first group to whom he presented this idea were predominantly clergy. Many of these clerics were sons of knights, hardly any were pacifists, and it appears there were few objections to this justification for war. Clearly, at the heart of his agenda was the desire to free the Greeks from Muslim oppression. However, the idea of the liberation of Jerusalem and its pilgrim routes seemed to be what was most ideologically appealing to Western Christians. The response to Urban's 1095 tour of preaching, beginning at Clermont, moving through various parts of France (Limoges, Toulouse, Angers, Le Mans, Nîmes, Tours) and ending in Italy, was impressive. The fact that the pope had made a personal and individual appeal to local people may have had a tremendous impact. An army of 70,000 to possibly 130,000 Christians (many of them French, probably fewer than ten percent from the nobility) followed bishops like Adhémar of Le Puy, preachers such as Peter the Hermit and Walter Sans-Avoir, and veteran knights like Raymond of Toulouse and Godfrey of Bouillon through strange territories they had never before seen, under the religious pretext of rescuing the Holy Places. Not all departed together or took the same routes. Many of them never reached the Holy Land and, clearly, fewer than a third returned. The successful response to the First Crusade may have been due to several factors: it was completely voluntary, it was proposed as an act of devotion, and it carried with it a means to ensure remission of sin. Indeed, while the initial indulgence proposed by Urban granted a remission from temporal penance, during later Crusades it would be modified to include punishments both in this life and the next.

**RELATED PERSECUTIONS.** Several of the armies from Germany began their crusade against infidels by unleashing violence upon Jews living in Europe. In 1096

at Worms, Mainz, Ratisbon, Neuss, Wevelinghofen, Xanten, and Prague, Jewish residents were massacred in the name of the Christian holy war, partially justified by the popular notion that it was the Jews who had killed Jesus. Such persecutions of non-Christians outside the Holy Land would not be limited to the First Crusade, but were tied to subsequent holy wars as well. They included not only Jews, but other ethnic and religious groups living throughout Europe. Muslims in Spain, Wends (Slavic people) on the German borderlands, multiple pagan groups in the Baltic, and the Cathars (a heretical Christian sect who believed that Satan ruled the earth) in France also suffered during the various Crusades.

**OUTCOMES OF THE FIRST CRUSADE.** The First Crusade was relatively successful despite the loss of large numbers of troops along the way, as well as some questionable pillaging by Latin crusaders in Hungarian and Byzantine cities. While only one-third of the initial contingent reached Jerusalem, they were able not only to free major Byzantine centers such as Nicea from Muslim control, but also to secure Christian settlements along the way, particularly on the western coast of the Mediterranean in the future Latin kingdoms of Edessa, Antioch, and Jerusalem. At the outset, a Latin principality at Edessa was established under Baldwin, the brother of Duke Godfrey of Bouillon, in 1198. This was followed by the siege of Antioch, which took over a year but resulted in Latin control of that fortress as well as the surrounding area. In the summer of 1099 Jerusalem was finally toppled. However, with the death of Bishop Adhémar of Le Puy at Antioch, there was no strong, rational voice of the church to stop the bloodbath in the city of Jerusalem following the siege. Soldiers, women, children, Muslims, Jews—indeed, most of the inhabitants of the city—were slaughtered by the crusading army. Shortly thereafter, the remnants of the army returned to Europe in triumph.

**THE CRUSADING KINGDOMS.** Subsequent establishment of the Latin Crusading Kingdoms would take place within the next few decades under a second generation of French campaigners, all with papal support. The Knights Templar set up headquarters in Jerusalem under Hugh de Payens to ensure that the Holy Places and Christian pilgrims remained protected. A continued military presence was required for the western Christians to maintain control of the region. An additional kingdom was established at Tripoli between Jerusalem and Antioch. Each Latin kingdom had its own rulers or princes, most of which were drawn from the French nobility who decided to settle and manage the area. Vassal

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES GRANTED TO CRUSADERS**

**INTRODUCTION:** This is likely the first of two crusade encyclicals issued by Pope Eugenius III (one in December of 1145 and the other in March of 1146). *Quantum Praedecessores* was directed at the French nobility and it is likely that Eugenius would not have attempted to call for such an action if he did not have the support of the French king Louis VII. The bull emphasized the religious nature of the crusade and outlined spiritual privileges for participants.

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**SOURCE:** Pope Eugenius III, *Quantum Praedecessores Nostri*, 1145, in *The First Crusade, The Chronicles of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*. Ed. Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971): 239.

territories and Latin castles were established throughout the Levant. A small number of Westerners (possibly 2,000) acted as administrators and lords over numerous Muslim and Jewish subjects. Part of the task of the settlers, especially in Jerusalem, was to rebuild the shrines associated with the holy sites. During the twelfth century, once the territory was secure, large numbers of European pilgrims came to visit and venerate the sacred places. Schools, hostels, monasteries, and churches began to proliferate throughout Jerusalem. One of the great accomplishments of the early crusader period was the rebuilding of the Holy Sepulchre (the supposed location of the tomb of Christ) into one of the greatest Romanesque churches in Christendom. What the First Crusade actually accomplished was to establish Latin dominance in the Holy Land, creating wealth for many French noble families, and to set into motion the religious and political mechanisms for future defense and campaigns.

**THE FAILURE OF THE SECOND CRUSADE.** After the successes of the First Crusade, the concept of Holy War and the religious obligation of Christians to control the

Holy Land and purge society of non-believers was firmly entrenched. The Second Crusade was spurred by the fall of Edessa (then part of Syria, now Urfa in Turkey) on Christmas of 1144 to the Muslim leader Zengi. At stake for Western Christians was the impending threat to Jerusalem itself. There seemed to have been somewhat less enthusiasm for this second campaign, but Pope Eugenius III's papal bull *Quantum Praedecessores* spelled out for the first time specific spiritual privileges available to participating crusaders. The crusade proclamation was delivered by Eugenius at Vetralle and later recorded in Bishop Otto of Freising's *Gesta*. Assisted by the charismatic preaching of St. Bernard of Clairvaux and other Cistercians, the Second Crusade organization gained some momentum. Secular bishops like Henry of Olmütz were directed to preach the Bohemian Crusade, while there were simultaneous crusades launched against the Wends in northern Europe and the Moors in Spain. When the effort to recapture Edessa ultimately proved unsuccessful, the crusaders decided instead to journey on to Jerusalem (which was still secure) to do homage to the holy sites. At that point, the crusaders attempted a joint attack upon the city of Damascus. This military



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE CRUSADES**

**INTRODUCTION:** At the beginning, the Crusades were a popular movement, both because they reopened the Holy Land to pilgrimage travel and because they provided an opportunity for Christian service and reward. But eventually the Crusades began to draw increasing criticism. A number of church councils (beginning in 1149) were called to debate the merits of crusading or to discuss whether or not failed crusades should be revived. The following excerpt comes from a report by Humbert of Romans, fifth Master General of the Dominican Order, delivered at the Second Council of Lyon in 1274.

There are some of these critics who say that it is not in accordance with the Christian religion to shed blood in this way, even that of wicked infidels. For Christ did not act thus ...

There are others who say that although one ought not to spare Saracen blood one must, however, be sparing to Christian blood and deaths ... Is it wisdom to put at risk in this way so many and such great men of ours? ...

There are others who say that when our men go overseas to fight the Saracens the conditions of war are much worse for our side, for we are very few in comparison to their great numbers. We are, moreover, on alien

territory ... And so it looks as though we are putting God to the test ...

There are others who say that, although we have a duty to defend ourselves against the Saracens when they attack us, it does not seem that we ought to attack their lands or their persons when they leave us in peace ...

There are others who say that, if we ought to rid the world of Saracens, why do we not do the same to the Jews? ...

Other people are asking, what is the point of this attack on the Saracens? For they are not roused to conversion by it but rather are stirred up against the Christian faith ...

Others say that it does not appear to be God's will that Christians should proceed against the Saracens in this way, because of the misfortunes which God has allowed and is still allowing to happen to the Christians engaged in this business.

How could the Lord have allowed Saladin to retake the land won with so much Christian blood, the emperor Frederick to perish in shallow water and King Louis to be captured in Egypt ... if this kind of proceeding had been pleasing to him?

**SOURCE:** Humbert of Romans, "Humbert of Romans to the Second Council of Lyon, 1274," in *The Atlas of the Crusades*. Ed. Jonathan Riley-Smith (New York: Facts on File, 1991): 80.

effort proved to be a disaster, and the crusaders returned home shortly after. The failure of the Second Crusade was attributed to the sinfulness, pride, and bickering of the contestants who traveled to the Holy Land under the pretense of being pilgrims. Instead, they insulted God with their unworthiness. According to St. Bernard, it was God who allowed the bungled Christian attempt to fail, not merely due to the sins of the crusaders themselves, but the collective sinfulness of all of Christianity.

**SUCCESSSES AND DISASTERS.** It took some time after the failure of the Second Crusade for Christians to be able to legitimize another campaign. Christian presence in the Holy Land did not altogether disappear as Templar and Hospitaller strongholds dotted the landscape along the Mediterranean, where Latin Christians maintained control of the kingdoms at Antioch, Tripoli, and Jerusalem, sustaining a presence in an area some 100 miles long and 30 miles wide. However, the southern part of that territory around the city of Jerusalem was conquered in 1187 by the Muslim leader Saladin, resulting in a massive response of combined European

forces descending upon the port city of Acre over the next four years. By 1192 the Third Crusade succeeded in recovering some of the coastal territory along the Mediterranean, particularly around the cities of Tripoli, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The following Crusade, however, went seriously off course. While originally intended to fight Muslims in Egypt, the Fourth Crusade instead engaged itself with interventionary efforts in Christian cities. Departing from Venice in Italy during 1202, the crusaders first rescued the Croatian city of Zara, which had previously been lost to the Hungarians in 1186. Behind schedule and short on cash, they were convinced—by arguments ranging from Christian charity and a promise of permanent papal jurisdiction to a substantial monetary reward—to go to Constantinople in 1204 to assist in resolving a dispute between rival Byzantine factions. Having little to show for their previous efforts, the crusaders ended up engaging in a three-day sacking of the city that left all of the Byzantine Christian holy places, including Hagia Sophia, defiled and stripped of everything of value. While most crusaders simply went

home with their loot, some stayed to support the new Latin Kingdom that would last for fifty years.

**CONTINUING CAMPAIGNS.** Perhaps because the Crusades blended religious motivation with opportunities for political domination and enrichment, new campaigns continued throughout the Middle Ages. The Fifth Crusade of the early thirteenth century was intent upon rescuing Jerusalem, which was still under Muslim dominion. But it also targeted the power base of the Ayyubid dynasty in Egypt in an effort to stabilize Christian control of the Holy Land. After four years of effort, the Fifth Crusade inevitably failed. Crusades against the heretical Cathars and pagans in the Baltic during the early thirteenth century, as well as crusades to restore papal power in the late thirteenth century, were more successful. They were all attempted under the guise of similar crusade ideals—ridding the Western Christian world of threats to the orthodoxy of its belief system. The Crusades of St. Louis in the thirteenth century and the Popular Crusades (Children's in 1212, Shepherds' in 1251 and 1320, as well as the People's in 1309), all of noble intent, were highly influenced by the crusading propaganda of the time. Crusaders were convinced that righteous participants were the key to success in defeating the Infidel. St. Louis's initial crusade effort in 1248 is sometimes known as the Sixth Crusade, but, after this, historians seem to stop counting. There were a variety of smaller crusades that continued through the next several centuries linked to both religious and political agendas. At this point, all sorts of arguments were presented concerning the pros and cons of crusading, as illustrated in a report given to the Second Council of Lyon during 1274 by Humbert of Romans. Despite objections and the fall of Acre to the Islamic Mamluk dynasty in 1291, the idea of the crusade remained alive in Latin Christendom through the sixteenth century.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Spanish Culture and the Muslims*

## THE MILITARY ORDERS

**RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS OF KNIGHTS.** One of the most distinctive developments of the period following the First Crusade (begun in 1095) was the creation of “military orders,” religious congregations of knights whose initial purpose was to protect pilgrims and maintain control of the “Crusader Kingdoms” established by the French in the Holy Land. Clearly the military religious orders began with the justification of Christian warfare during the First Crusade. The act of killing the enemies of Christ was not seen as a sin but rather as necessary and meritorious. Thus, if a Christian soldier died in such a war, it brought him the status of martyrdom. Also, the Crusades themselves had taken on the character of a special pilgrimage, and, like pilgrims, a participant in a Crusade could be granted an indulgence, or remission from temporal penances associated with his sins. As the size of pilgrim groups to the Holy Land increased, the church felt somewhat obliged to provide for their protection. While the First Crusade had temporarily eliminated the threat of Muslim control of the Holy Land, the area itself remained relatively unprotected since most knights returned home once the military campaigns ended. The population of Christian settlers in the Crusader Kingdoms around the city of Jerusalem and along the Palestinian coast of the Mediterranean was rather small and unable to provide pilgrims with adequate protection. A group of knights led by Hugh de Payens decided to make a vocation out of protecting pilgrims who were on their way to visit the holy places. They formed a religious group that resided in the city of Jerusalem and became known as the “Templars.”

**SOLDIER-MONKS.** Hugh envisioned the Templars as an army of soldier-monks whose martial duties contained a decidedly spiritual element. In a sense, they embodied the highest ideals of Christian knighthood. These Templars took vows of obedience and chastity, and they followed the spiritual lives of the canons that resided at the church of the Holy Sepulchre. They were called “Templars” or “Knights of the Temple” because they lived in an area of Jerusalem believed to be near the old Temple of Solomon. Their movement seems to have evolved out of the spirituality connected to Crusade ideology. The journey of a crusader to Jerusalem was justified as a penitential process, an ascetical exercise of self-denial, prayer, mortification, and fasting. All of these idealized crusader elements were incorporated into the Templar spirituality. When the plan for the group was first approved in 1128, they were not considered monks but fell into the category of “lay religious.” For a time this seems to have appeased critics who were in staunch

support of church directives against monks bearing arms. Templars wore their hair short, donned white robes, and avoided women. Sometime after 1132, the Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux was asked to write a treatise supporting the Templars. It may not have been so much a direct approval of their movement as an exposition on monastic life as the highest form of knighthood, or possibly an attempt to help reform the knighthood of Bernard's time. He wrote:

Thus in a wondrous and unique manner they appear gentler than lambs, yet fiercer than lions. I do not know if it would be more appropriate to refer to them as monks or as soldiers, unless it would perhaps be better to recognize them as being both. ... What can we say of this except that this had been done by the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes. These are the picked troops of God, whom he has recruited from all ends of the earth ...

**THE TEMPLAR RULE.** A rule was eventually composed for the Templar lifestyle which contained elements of the Benedictine Rule along with particular aspects of Cistercian spirituality and practice. The rule and the order were approved in 1139 by Pope Innocent II in his bull *Omne Datum Optimum*. The Templars were not under the control of local bishops but answered directly to the pope. About the time of the Second Crusade (1146), the Templars came to be seen as religious knights whose commitment to protecting the holy places was permanent. There were several levels to the order, which consisted of knights of noble birth, sergeants who were not nobles, chaplains who were clerics and not allowed to take up arms, and, in addition to all these, their servants. Only the knights took permanent vows. They continued to operate in the Holy Land until the fall of Acre (the main port of entry to Palestine) in 1291, but were eventually suppressed by Pope Clement V in 1312. The Templars also participated in campaigns in Spain and the Baltic area of Europe. While they became famous for their almsgiving, along the way the knights began to lose sight of some of their founding principles. After a century in the Holy Land, they had succeeded in amassing great wealth and had significant involvement with banking. Their massive fortifications functioned as depositories as they transported wealth to and from the East and brokered loans. Indeed, their wealth may have been their undoing. Despite the Templars' attempt to merge with the Hospitallers after the end of the Crusades, their assets were seized by the French king Philip the Fair and their leaders executed as heretics.

**THE HOSPITALLERS.** The Hospitallers (also known as the Knights of St. John) originated as a brotherhood that served poor or sick pilgrims in the city of Jerusalem.

About 25 years before the First Crusade, they began their work in a Benedictine monastery, St. Mary of the Latins, near the Holy Sepulchre. The hospice was staffed both by the Hospitaller brothers and by monks. All those who worked there followed the Benedictine lifestyle. Following the First Crusade, the Hospitallers were given additional lands in the Levant (an area on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, located between western Greece and western Egypt) along the pilgrim routes on which to establish daughter houses. They also had establishments in the port cities of Italy and southern France, from which pilgrims would normally depart. In 1113 the Hospitallers were given a charter from Pope Paschal II establishing them as a unique order to be supervised by their own master and (like the Templars) answerable only to the pope. Initially they were a charitable order, not a military group, dedicated to the care of pilgrims and almsgiving, but in 1123 they added a military element due to the shortage of Christian knights in the Holy Land. They continued to protect and serve pilgrims as well as to provide military assistance to the local nobility against the Muslims. By the 1130s they had begun to construct and defend fortified castles throughout the Holy Land. Soon their order began to resemble the Templars with divisions of service for clerics, knights, sergeants, and laborers in the houses. And like the Templars they were considered lay religious and took vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty following whenever possible the daily monastic routine. The order also admitted women, who had separate accommodations. In 1141 they moved their headquarters to a castle called Krak des Chevaliers, situated on a high plateau in what is now Syria, and after 1187 they were forced to withdraw from Jerusalem. With the fall of Acre and the final destruction of the Latin Kingdoms in the Holy Land, they established themselves on Cyprus, and in 1309, after taking Rhodes from the Greeks, made a new headquarters there. The order still functions today as a charitable organization.

**OTHER CHIVALRIC ORDERS.** By the middle of the twelfth century other chivalric orders had begun to appear in Spain with the intention of assisting with the *Reconquista*, the reconquest of the Iberian peninsula from the Moors. Orders like Calatrava and Alcantara took their lead from the Templars. The Calatrava group began in 1158 when local monks allied themselves with knights to fight the Almohads, a Muslim dynasty that replaced the short-lived Almoravids. Eventually the knights of Calatrava went on to form their own order, but in 1164 they were attached to the Cistercians (a reform monastic movement that had begun in 1098) by Pope Alexander III. By the fourteenth century the order

was responsible for protecting some 350 towns in the area of Castile. Following the reconquest, the order became more of a political entity. Alcantara began functioning in 1156 to defend the towns of León. They received papal approval in 1177 and began to follow the Rule of Benedict. Eventually they became allied with the Calatrava knights in driving out the Muslims. The Knights of the Teutonic Order and the Order of Santiago functioned more on military and hospitality levels, although they strove to maintain the highest standards of Christian knighthood. Their groups were also composed of warriors, clerics, and brothers. The Teutonic Knights began in 1198 during the time of the Third Crusade and eventually returned to Germany in the thirteenth century to function in the campaigns against the pagans on the borderlands of Prussia, while the Order of Santiago was formed in the late twelfth century to protect pilgrims traveling to the shrine of St. James at Compostela. The Santiago knights ruled almost as lords protecting territories throughout reconquered parts of Spain. The order survived through the end of the *Reconquista*.

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SEE ALSO *Fashion: Armor and Heraldry*

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## TWELFTH- AND THIRTEENTH-CENTURY MONASTIC MOVEMENTS

**ANCHORITES AND HERMITS.** From the end of the eleventh and throughout the twelfth centuries, groups of religious began to react against the extravagant growth and development of monastic orders like that at Cluny. The desire for a return to primitive Christian experience was now reflected in monastic practices. New religious orders seeking quiet, solitude, poverty and simplicity began to appear, likely in reaction against the highly litur-

gized and richly endowed Benedictine monasteries. While some twelfth-century secular communities supported the hermit-like activity of anchorites who chose to live a spiritual existence in a cell that was often located outside the village or even attached to the structure of a church, some individual monks began leaving their communities to take up the solitary lives of hermits completely removed from the rest of society. In northern Italy during the early eleventh century, eremitic (solitary) monks like the Greek-speaking St. Nilus chose their own paths. St. Romuland organized huts for hermits in the hills of Camaldoli that attracted only the most serious monks, the contemplative elite. At Valombrosa, John Gaulberto also founded a cenobitic (communal) group who chose to persevere in the strictest observance of the Benedictine Rule. They lived in complete isolation, buffered from the world by professed lay brothers who were administrators of the monastery's secular affairs. The lay brothers were dedicated to keeping outsiders away.

**THE TEACHINGS OF PETER DAMIAN.** One of the most influential monastic figures of this period was Peter Damian (1007–1072), who received an education in the city schools of Italy. He abandoned formal learning for a time and joined a group of ascetics at Fonte Avelana in the Apennine hills. Peter denounced the pleasures of the flesh, producing marvelously mystical poetry. He also wrote a treatise for hermits entitled *Institutes for the Order of Hermits*. In this work he spelled out guidelines for brothers who wished to live under the strictest regimen. The monks were to occupy cells in pairs, living in a perpetual state of fasting, remaining barefoot in both summer and winter. While most of the Italian men who were attracted to these severely contemplative groups were drawn from among the wealthiest of the nobility, Peter was himself of humble origin. Peter Damian was particularly drawn to the practice of the mortification of his flesh through flagellation, that is, the practice of whipping oneself as punishment for sins or in commiseration with the suffering of Christ. When a community member died, the entire group would undergo a seven-day period of fasting, recite the entire psalter thirty times over on behalf of the deceased, and experience the whip seven times. Peter was also active in a campaign against simony (the buying and selling of clerical offices) and clerical marriage. In 1051 he wrote the *Book of Gomorrah (Liber Gratissimus)*, which was a polemic against sexual activity among the Italian clergy, including prohibitions against masturbation and homosexual conduct.

**CARTHUSIANS.** In 1080 Bruno of Cologne, a former master and chancellor of the cathedral school at

Reims, left teaching to become a hermit in the forest of Colan. He was credited with founding the Carthusians, an order that mixed both eremitical and cenobitic elements. The monks lived in a group hermitage where each member spent most of his time in the solitude of a private cell, except for communal prayer twice a day. Mass and chapter were held once a week. Monks took most of their meals alone and had a private garden, toilet, and area for study. At first they lived lives centered around deliberate simplicity. Their churches were unadorned, their clothing and bedding of the coarsest materials. The original Carthusian settlements were comprised of a series of huts, but by the twelfth century more elaborate stone structures took their place. Because of their strict rules, the Carthusians needed *conversi* (lay monks) to deal with the outside world, tend to the labor of the monastery, and function as go-betweens for the hermit

monks. The *conversi* were usually illiterate. They had their own dormitory, which was slightly removed from the community, and would sit silently while their procurator chanted the daily offices for them in an oratory quite separate from the hermits. Growth within the Carthusian Order was rather slow, but the establishments were deliberately small. Gradually, between 1178 and 1400 they added some nine houses in England. As Bruno of Cologne once wrote, “The sons of contemplation are slower than the sons of action.”

**THE FOUNDING OF THE CISTERCIANS.** One of the most explosive movements of the twelfth century was the Cistercian Order. It had been founded in 1098 by a group of former French Benedictines from Molesme who were dissatisfied with their observances. The Molesme community had originally lived as hermits in the forests of Burgundy. Eventually they came back to following the Benedictine Rule. The abbot, Robert of Molesme, set out one day in 1098 with 21 of his monks for a more remote site at Cîteaux (the Latin word for Cîteaux is *Cistercium*, meaning “a marshy place”). The Cistercian movement that began from the vision of Robert blossomed into one of the largest and fastest growing religious movements of the Middle Ages. The Cistercian Order was directed toward a reform of the perceived growing laxities within the French Benedictine system, especially among the Cluniacs. In the mode of the other reform orders, they were focused upon moving away from the “worldliness” that had crept into medieval monasticism. Like the hermits, they attempted to separate from secular society in a quest for solitude, a simpler life, and a renewed focus on connecting the scriptures to one’s spiritual and human nature. This reform community wished to continue the cenobitic existence in fidelity to the Rule of Benedict, along with greater independence from secular entanglements and obligations of vassalage, and a vision of poverty and self-sufficiency. The monastery began as a series of wooden huts that were built by the monks themselves. Their first decade at Cîteaux saw little growth, but in 1112 the charismatic St. Bernard of Clairvaux appeared at the gate of the monastery with thirty companions. From that point on, the order began to flourish. Cîteaux started sending out small groups to found daughter houses throughout France and eventually all of Europe. Bernard was made abbot of Clairvaux in 1115, and within the next twenty years engendered some twenty daughter houses of his own. During the order’s first fifty years, 339 houses were established, and by the middle of the thirteenth century the number had grown to 640. At its height in the fifteenth century, the order boasted close to 700 abbeys of men and 900 houses of women. The

development of the order was strongly influenced by charismatic leaders and spiritual writers, including William of St. Thierry (1085–1148) and Aelred of Rievaulx (1109–1167) among the men, and Mechtild of Hackenborn (1241–1299) and Gertrude of Hackenborn (1251–1292) among the women. Mechtild's allegory of how Anima or the Soul comes to the side wound of Christ and sees it as a cavern of burning flames and vapor is one of the great pieces of mystical writing of the period. The side wound with wounded heart within is vividly seen in a miniature from a devotional manuscript in Oxford. Often, such miniatures give evidence of being kissed and stroked by pious owners of the books over a long period of time.

**THE CISTERCIAN CONCEPT OF REFORM.** The original charter for the Cistercian Order was presented to Pope Calixtus II for approval in 1119. These documents provided for nurturing filial relationships (that is, relationships to daughter houses), annual chapters (assemblies) for all the order's abbots, uniformity in practice among the houses, fair treatment of the monks, elections of the abbots by their peers, checks on corruption in leadership, fair but limited dealings with outside secular interests, and, most importantly, the ability to change its own constitution. What is essential to an understanding of the Cistercian tradition is the concept of "reform." The reform that seems to be constantly ongoing within the Cistercian and other Benedictine-related traditions might be more simply understood as a "re-reading" of the Benedictine Rule. This re-reading is what happens each time a new generation picks up the Rule and begins to read it in light of their own time, in a way which seems to allow the greatest progress toward spiritual transformation and a vision of communal charity. The twelfth-century charter documents most clearly reflect the way the early Cistercians had devised a plan in which their vision of the Rule could be continually re-examined. The yearly meetings of the General Chapter of all Cistercian abbots allowed for an ongoing interpretation of the monastic tradition. These traditions were passed down to the monks on a daily basis through their reading, activities, and communal prayer, as well as through the abbot's chapter sessions. The Cistercians in general never really made much effort to focus upon the intellectual and philosophical dimensions of the faith, a fact that eventually made them less attractive to the nobility in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when scholasticism and the work of the friars (who served as missionaries and teachers) began to take hold. Instead, they were known for their great spiritual reforms and return to the ideals of the early Benedictine experience. The simplicity

of their cloistered monastic life is what the Cistercians believed best led them to God.

**CISTERCIANS AND MEDIEVAL INDUSTRY.** The proliferation of Cistercian houses led to a great increase in their holdings of land. Granges (monastic farms) and large farm estates began to be managed or rented, and significant incomes began flowing into the Cistercian enterprises. Many houses even owned or controlled property in other countries. Unlike the Cluniacs, the Cistercians allowed each house and daughter to control its own finances directly. The drive toward self-sufficiency led the Cistercians to create independent industries at each monastery. Many chose sites near running water. They actually became known for their use of hydraulics. As a result there were numerous mills and waterwheels employed by the Cistercians. They sold items produced at the mills, and often would rent their grain mills to neighboring laity in order to facilitate the production of local food stuffs. As industrious as they were, and as prosperous as many of their houses became, one thing that can be said of the Cistercians is that they were adamant about charging fair prices for their products.

**CISTERCIANS AND THE LITURGY.** Cîteaux's second abbot, Alberic (1099–1108), sought to introduce a profound simplicity into the Cistercian liturgy. Benedictine choral chants of the daily offices were deemed too melodic. The second abbot, Stephen Harding (1108–1134), reformed the hymnal and antiphonaries by going back to the basics of the old Ambrosian hymns (of the fourth century) because they had been recommended by St. Benedict in the Rule. St. Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux from 1115 to 1153, sought to simplify melodies and eliminate repetitions in the chants, though some new texts and melodies were added to express devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The Cistercians chanted the entirety of their office (with the exception of the scriptural readings) in low, unembellished plainchant. Their offices contained only the very few psalms prescribed by the Rule of Benedict, so they spent much less time in the choir than many of their medieval counterparts. A twelfth-century Benedictine monk writing to Cistercians on behalf of Cluny once remarked that their prime alone (the office celebrating sunrise) was lengthier than the entire set of daily offices of the Cistercians. Fewer feast days were celebrated, and reception of communion by the monks was limited. Processions of any kind were prohibited. Cistercian liturgical directives of the General Chapter from the early twelfth to the thirteenth centuries echoed the sentiments of their foundational documents. The altar was to be completely unadorned, relics were not permitted in altars until 1185, and the use of

candles was extremely limited. The celebrant's vestments were not to be made of silk (except the stole and manipule) and all liturgical ornaments and vessels were to be made without silver, gold, or precious stones, except for the chalices for the wine and the fistula (a straw used to sip the wine), which could be gold or silver plated. There were no pictures or sculptures in the early worship spaces with the exception of painted wooden crosses. Window glass was to be plain, not stained or decorated. Genuflections (bending down on one knee) were discouraged and monks could not lie prostrate in prayer. In 1261 communion under both species (bread and wine) was suppressed for members of the community.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: Monastic Architecture*

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## WOMEN RELIGIOUS

### MONASTIC WOMEN IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES.

It is interesting to note that a substantial amount of information from the early Middle Ages about women's religious houses was written by male clerics from the period. Throughout much of the Middle Ages many of the women dwelling in monastic communities lived lives not that much different from individuals in the male houses. In fact, there is not even a specific medieval Latin term for a female monastic house. The term "nunnery" only comes into use in the late medieval period and the term "convent" (*conventus*) could actually have applied to houses for both men and women. As early as the sixth and seventh centuries, a large number of noble female saints emerged from monastic houses in Merovingian territories, such as Gandersheim and Quedlinburg. They espoused a form of spirituality that put less emphasis on virginity and asceticism than on compassionate leadership, performance of miracles, and service (both charity

and peacemaking) to the surrounding community. From the ninth through tenth centuries it appears there were very few women's monastic houses (likely fewer than forty in all of Europe) compared to the much larger numbers two centuries earlier. This is due in part to their destruction during the age of invasions and the reluctance to rebuild amid the insecurities of civil governments. Some of the early medieval convents and double houses (for both males and females) served as viable opportunities for women to devote themselves to spirituality during this period. Mixed houses in Germany, northern parts of Gaul, and Anglo-Saxon England were even run by abbesses instead of abbots.

**RETREATS AND RENEWED OPPORTUNITIES.** During the tenth through mid-eleventh centuries, women in Europe lost some of their independence as the male-dominated church, which was putting more emphasis on celibacy, began to stress the moral and intellectual weakness of women. At this time, some of the nunneries began to function more or less as secure places for the retirement of widows and daughters of the nobility, who often had little vocation for the spiritual lifestyle. Such houses tended to be well endowed and frequently rather exclusive. The Canonesses at Farmoniers (France) and Essen (Germany) provided such comfortable living for eleventh-century women. While the number of nunneries declined throughout the tenth and early eleventh centuries, there were a few significant communities operating in Germany such as Herford, Gandersheim, and Quedlinburg. All of these houses received patronage from Matilda, the mother of Emperor Otto I. Women's houses in France and England began to rebound after 1000 with new or transplanted communities being established in Picardy, Arles, Nîmes, and Marseille. Between 1000 and 1080 some 36 convents were founded or restored in France and England. They were present in the French cities of Beauvais, Angers, Evreux, Angoulême, Rennes, LeMans, Rouen, Tours, and Verdun, as well as English centers such as Canterbury, Chatteris, Elstow or those attached to men's houses at Bury St. Edmunds, Ely, St. Albans, and Evesham. When double monasteries began to reappear in the eleventh-century reform movements, it was rather uncommon for abbesses to have any control over the male elements of the community. The female houses associated with the Cluny movement, while they did have claustral prioresses, were answerable to the priors of affiliated males houses who were under the authority of the abbot of Cluny. But, by the end of the eleventh century, there appears to have been a rapid proliferation of women's houses.

**FEMALE ACHIEVEMENT.** Early medieval Germanic communities often allowed females to occupy a higher position than their counterparts in other cultures or countries, which may be the reason why there were more independent houses for women in the Anglo-Saxon territories. That the middle twelfth century offered good examples of the heights to which women's religious life extended can be seen in the case of Hildegard, the leader of the women's community at Bingen, just northwest of Mainz (1098–1179). Not only was she thought to be the spiritual equal to men of her day, but she left behind an immensely vivid body of literature that recounts the lives and thought of women within the cloister, along with their spiritual activities and the labors of their hands. Some of the twelfth-century mendicant orders of hermits had mixed houses associated with movements from places like Fontevrault (founded in 1101) and Prémontré (1115) in France. They attracted large numbers of women, and the fifteen Fontevrault communities all seemed to be female-centered, although they were clearly mixed houses; both the great patroness of courtly literature, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and her daughter, who ended her days as a nun, are buried there. At Prémontré the women occupied a less prominent place in the community, remaining strictly cloistered and tending to do much of the manual labor of the community. Double monasteries were also common in the Low Countries. Some of these double houses that felt it necessary to practice strict segregation gave way to allowing the nuns to run their own affairs and resulted in the eventual separation of these double communities when the women took up their own residences.

**THE BÉGUINES.** The appearance of the Béguines in the early 1200s had much to do with the growing sense of lay piety that had developed throughout the preceding century. In the beginning the movement was not very organized, but it seems that groups of urban lay women began to assemble together in parts of Germany and the Lowlands to attempt to live holy lives in a similar fashion. Many were inspired by the story of Marie d'Oignies, a Flemish noble and mystic who renounced her family's wealth and gained stature as a spiritual healer. Eventually some of these women sought to live together in community. The Béguines came from all walks of life and all social classes although the wealthier members tended to congregate together. Attitudes toward poverty varied. While many members rejected the wealth of their families and chose to live in deliberate austerity, the decision to embrace radical poverty or to retain possessions was individual. A few groups even formed their own little villages in areas that were near



Nun saying vows, *Decretals of Gratian*, Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 372 folio 59v, 13th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/ BIBLIOTHÈQUE MUNICIPALE, LAON/DAGLI ORTI.

large cities. They supported themselves with the labor of their own hands: many undertook weaving, sewing, and embroidery, although some groups resorted to begging. The Béguines took no formal vows but were committed to living in chastity. Some eventually left the communities and went on to marry, and many of the non-communal members continued their connection with the order though married. Their male counterparts were the Beghards, who commonly worked as weavers, fullers, or dyers. The Beghards did not own property and spent much of their time engaged in charity work or spiritual contemplation.

**PATRONAGE AND PERSECUTION.** The Beghards' and Béguines' lifestyles were ascetical, but they rejected the formalism of some of the other orders of their time. The Béguines often attended Mass and the daily offices at their local churches. Gradually these movements gained widespread acceptance from both church and secular authorities. Hundreds of houses sprang up throughout northern European towns. By the end of the thirteenth century, there were 54 houses in the city of Cologne alone. While noble families' or members' fortunes tended to support these groups, chapels like those



of la Vigne were given over to Béguine communities for their use. Eventually church legislation of the thirteenth century forced the Béguines to confine themselves strictly to communal activities similar to those being practiced by contemporary convents. This did not stop outspoken Béguines like Marguerite Porete, who reproached the weakness of a male-dominated church and its outward signs, which served as a crutch to aid religion. Her book *The Mirror of Simple Souls* received much criticism, but remained immensely popular, even without the attribution of her authorship. She was eventually accused of heresy and burned at the stake in 1310. As hostility towards the Béguines grew in the church hierarchy, the movement suffered persecution in Germany, but it fared better in France, where it had the protection of powerful patrons.

#### CISTERCIANS, FRANCISCANS, AND DOMINICANS.

In the years that followed the ground-swell of lay initiatives, there are numerous accounts of women connected to the Cistercian, Franciscan, and Dominican movements, thus contributing significantly to the European monastic presence. Although the male Dominican movement that arose after 1217 was defined as an order of preachers (called friars), St. Dominic's first religious house, founded in 1207 at Prouille, was a convent established for former Cathar women (members of a heretical sect chiefly in southern France). Likewise, although St. Francis of Assisi's male order, based on the ideal of complete poverty, sent friars on preaching missions throughout the world, his conversion of a wealthy young woman named Clare led to the founding of a female order (later known as the Poor Clares) that required a strictly enclosed life of asceticism, fasting, and perpetual silence. By 1223 there was already significant opposition throughout the Dominican Order in regard to the admission of more nuns. Maintaining convents would require ordained resident Dominican men who would say Mass and serve as confessors. Some felt such duties compromised the early mission and ideal of the friar ministry. The Dominican General Chapter of 1228 discouraged the admission of additional convents. The Cistercians also came to a similar conclusion at their General Chapter the very same year. But after 1245, papal legislation allowed for the multiplication of Dominican convents, particularly in Germany. The Dominican nuns, quite unlike the friars, could not leave their convents to beg or minister. Instead, they remained strictly cloistered, encouraged to develop interior lives of humility, poverty, and simple spirituality. Male Dominicans had no idea how popular this movement would become for medieval women, as some 150 Dominican convents were organized by 1300. The Cistercians experienced

much greater growth with some 900 houses claiming to be Cistercian or Cistercian affiliates founded by 1325. Within less than a hundred years, however, the number of registered Cistercian convents dropped to somewhere around 211.

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## MEDIEVAL EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

**THE RISE OF EDUCATION.** During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the many social and economic changes which came about in European society helped create an increased interest in education. Burgeoning bureaucratization within both civil and church administration created the need for educated men with abilities in the area of law (both canon and civil). The universities also began to teach medicine. In cities like Bologna, the study of rhetoric and Roman law was useful for both canonists and those who drafted legal documents in secular society. Such a school or *studium* during the twelfth century drew such people as the great medieval canon lawyer Gratian, Thomas Becket, and Pope Innocent III. It was at this time, also, that the universities slowly began to separate themselves from the firm control of the church. However, as late as 1200, the majority of students were still ecclesiastics. For example, at Bologna, no one could be made a medical doctor without permission of the archdeacon.



Monks using a monastic library from a 14th-century French MS. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

**MONASTIC AND CATHEDRAL SCHOOLS.** Prior to the age of the studium or of university scholars (through the mid-eleventh century), monastic schools had been the most stable force in education. Although the boys who were sent there were children of the nobility who may or may not have had an interest in clerical life, much of the schools' curriculum focused on teaching them to read and write Latin, and preparing them to join the ranks of the church. Monastic lives of prayer, silence, labor, and meditation were not, of course, always conducive to the free exchange of thought. However, these monasteries did become great repositories of knowledge, in that many of the books of the day (particularly religious texts) were copied by hand in monastic *scriptoria* and stored in their libraries, as shown in an illustration of monks using a monastic library from a French manuscript of the fourteenth century. On the secular side, some women, as well as young men of privilege, were instructed at court, learning to read and write Latin; but their education was rarely broad or extensive. Between 1050 and 1200 the cathedral schools (or bishop's schools) assumed the leading role in education. Bishops had traditionally been entrusted with providing for the

education of the secular clergy. Cathedral schools were often staffed by clerics who lived as canons, residing on the grounds of the bishop's estate or in the town nearby. These schools were rather flexible in their structure and invited learned men or "masters" to come and lecture to their students. The effectiveness of the system, however, was somewhat variable since the school's reputation depended on a single master and often, when he was gone, did not survive him. Thus, both masters and students traveled from cathedral town to cathedral town looking for the best environments in which to teach and learn. Eventually the cathedral schools insisted that the masters possess formal licenses to teach, which were issued by the chancellors (*licentia docendi*). These are actually the pre-cursors of modern academic degrees. Anyone attending a cathedral school at this time took minor church orders and held status as a cleric. This status gave them immunity from civil courts—that is, they were under the jurisdiction of canon (church) law and ecclesiastical courts, which usually gave milder sentences for serious crimes. This distinction in legal status applied also to the new universities and was at times a source of conflict between "town and gown."

**THE BIRTH OF UNIVERSITIES.** As the number of traveling students increased, some schools tried a new plan of keeping students in one place by engaging multiple masters, who then separated from the cathedral schools and took up residence in other parts of major cities. These new teachers were paid directly by the students, so, in effect, the least popular instructors often found themselves out of work. This competitive climate of intellectual revival brought about the appearance of the great universities in the 1200s and 1300s. To protect their interests, the students and scholars began to form guilds, from which the university structure eventually grew (*universitas* was a Latin word for corporation). The universities literally became independent legal entities. Masters in Paris received a royal charter around 1200 for their university. Some of the finest churchmen and independent clerical scholars came to Paris to teach. Originally they rented out halls for their classes on the left bank of the Seine River, which soon became known as the Latin Quarter because Latin was the language of learning. The guild received approval from Rome in 1231 and soon became a model for other European universities, although some cities, such as Oxford and Cambridge in England as well as Salerno and Reggio in Italy, had begun university-style systems of education even earlier, during the twelfth century. While these universities were growing in secular influence, they also became the place where religious orders like the friars sent their most talented brethren to teach and study. The curriculum was comprised of the *Trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, logic) and *Quadrivium* (arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music). There was master's level work offered at these universities in law, medicine, and theology, which took five to seven years to complete. Theology students had to be thirty years of age before they could undertake the degree. However, education which was once geared exclusively toward the clergy (although this is not completely true of the Italian schools) had now become much more liberal and was certainly not just for clerics. Most students were from the upper and lower nobility, some sons of knights, although offspring of the merchant class soon began to break into their ranks. The founding of hundreds of European universities continued through the thirteenth, fourteenth, and early fifteenth centuries. Over time, fewer than half of the students in these institutions were seeking education related to the service of the church. The advent of humanism saw a greater variety of other disciplines added to the curriculum.

**SCHOLASTIC INQUIRY IN THE MEDIEVAL UNIVERSITY.** While, strictly speaking, scholasticism was the intellectual tradition of logical inquiry practiced in medieval schools, it has come to be understood as the at-

tempt to use techniques of Aristotelian logical inquiry to link Christian revelation, church doctrine, and the mysteries of the natural universe in a deeper and more reasonable understanding of the Christian life. While the theoretical basis for scholasticism was introduced in the late Roman period by early philosopher-theologians like St. Augustine and Boethius, in the medieval period it appears in the ninth century in the work of John Scotus Eriugena who made the important distinction between reason and the revelation of sacred scripture. The scholastics drew upon the logical analysis of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, establishing a common method of inquiry by posing a question, following lines of thought presented by earlier authoritative scholars, and attempting to reason their way to a logical conclusion. Early scholastic problems dealt with attempts to explain the notion of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. A debate between the theologian Berengar of Tours (998–1088) and the Benedictine Lanfranc of Bec (1010–1089) during the mid-eleventh century resulted in the development of the doctrine of transubstantiation (conversion of the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, with appearances of bread and wine remaining). Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), a pupil of Lanfranc, employed a dialectical method (a form of debate marked by the dynamic of inner tension, conflict, and interconnectedness), and began to examine necessary truths of the Divine mysteries, attempting to postulate them in a logical argument. Anselm's famous proofs for the existence of God, while subsequently refuted, formed the departure point for problems of scholastic theological inquiry that preoccupied scholars for the rest of the Middle Ages.

**THE HEIGHT OF SCHOLASTICISM.** Around the middle of the thirteenth century, the scholastic tradition reached its peak with the work of Albertus Magnus (1200–1280), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), and St. Bonaventure (1215–1274). The establishment of the universities with their faculties of theology contributed greatly to the development of this scholarship, as did the promulgation of Aristotle's concept that all human thought originates with the senses. Western interest in Aristotle and other classical texts was revived in part due to contact with Eastern Christian and Muslim ideas during the time of the Crusades. European scholars eagerly began to translate Greek and Arabic works into Latin. Patristics (works of the early church fathers), classical philosophy (some of which included commentary by Muslim philosophers such as Avicenna and Averroës), and Jewish thought (such as that represented by Moses Maimonides) became sources of new learning in Western Europe. Most scholastic argumentation was driven

by the Aristotelian questions (sometimes described as the Four Causes) regarding the nature of things in the universe: What are these things made of? What shape do they take? How do they come to be? What were their purposes? The use of categories and the notion of causality led to attempts to place the existence of God and the mysteries of creation philosophically within the limits of human understanding.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: The Universities, Textbooks, and the Flowering of Scholasticism*

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## SECULAR CLERGY: REFORM AND REACTION

**SIMPLICITY AND CELIBACY.** The eleventh-century clerical reforms directed by the papacy called for a new discipline among secular priests. Proponents of reform stressed simplicity of lifestyle and singular dedication (including celibacy), as well as the need to break ties with secular interests and worldliness. The two most troublesome issues involving corruptions of the priesthood at this time were those related to simony (the buying or selling of church office) and clerical marriage. The momentum of reform also ushered in a rise in the number of individuals seeking the monastic life at places like Cluny. The character of priesthood was also an issue, but more importantly the social distinctions between the powers of the church and the laity were being clarified during this time. Pope Nicholas II's legislation of 1059 reflects Rome's awareness of the acute need for clerical reform at the most basic level. It is also a reminder of the growing power of organized religion and its competition with the laity for control of society.

**EDUCATION AND RESTRAINTS ON PERSONAL BEHAVIOR.** The need for more systematic clerical reform was the agenda of twelfth-century bishops. They were charged with personally controlling the quality of candidates for the priesthood as well as their instruction. Education of the clergy was a major issue since many

clerics in the more rural areas often had not received a thorough theological or scriptural orientation. The Third Lateran Council of 1179 decreed that each cathedral should have a master for the instruction of grammar and each major city a master of theology. They assisted the priests in their understanding of the scriptures and the nature of the sacraments. These teachers also ensured that the clergy not only had training in the implementation of ritual, but also knew something about the proper care of souls. An educated clergy also needed to combat the erroneous teachings of self-styled wandering preachers and zealots, who themselves quite often lacked formal religious education. At this time, control over localized preaching was a problem not only for local priests but bishops as well. Parochial jurisdictions seemed to be an important but often criticized aspect of clerical life. With the advent of the Crusades, the issue of whether or not clerics could bear arms or participate in an excursion of holy war came to public attention as well. Other behavioral issues, including excessive immoral public displays, such as drinking or concubinage, were also addressed by the councils. The more extreme monastic reform movements like Cistercians and Carthusians served as a gentle reminder that the secular clergy were certainly not living the most ideal or perfect Christian lives.

**AWARENESS OF INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS.** The thirteenth-century reforms of the secular clergy were spurred by the realization that the church in its domination of European culture had become more institutional than spiritual. The 1215 *Magna Carta*, an English document laying out the rights of free men, even included provisions for relief of the institutional church by the crown. Despite the power amassed by the church, however, it was the increasingly frequent development of lay spiritual movements and the establishment of four new mendicant orders that finally delivered the wake-up call to the hierarchy, who were inundated with requests for confirmation of new religious lifestyles. Canon 16, decreed by the Fourth Lateran Council, sheds some light on the problems of the day:

Clerics shall not hold secular office nor indulge in commerce, especially unseemly commerce. They shall not attend performances of mimes, jesters or plays and shall avoid taverns except only out of necessity while traveling. Nor shall they play with dice; they should not even be present at such games. They should wear the clerical tonsure and be zealous in the performance of their divine offices and in other responsibilities. Moreover, they shall wear their garments clasped and neither too short nor too long. And they shall eschew bright colors such

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CLERICAL REFORM: THE LEGISLATION OF 1059**

**INTRODUCTION:** Pope Nicholas II (1058–1061) was a leading figure in the eleventh-century drive toward clerical reform. He was significantly influenced by fellow reformers such as Humbert of Silva Candida, Peter Damian, and Hildebrand (later to become Gregory VII). At this time the church was rife with corruption. Particular concerns surrounded the inappropriate elevation of the hierarchy and the practice of simony as many unqualified candidates found their way into ecclesiastical office.

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**SOURCE:** Pope Nicholas II, "The Legislation of 1059," in *The Crisis of Church and State 1050–1300*. Ed. and Trans. Brian Tierney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988): 43–44.

as red and green as well as ornamentation on their gloves and shoes. [Canon 16]

Another passage (Canon 17) suggests that even within the cloister, behavior was often inappropriate:

We regret that not only some clerics in minor orders but also some of the prelates of churches spend half of the night eating and talking, not to mention other things that they are doing, and get to sleep so late that they are scarcely wakened by the birds singing and they mumble their way hurriedly through morning prayers. There are some clerics who celebrate Mass only four times a year, what is worse, they disdain even attending Mass. And, if they happen to be present at Mass, they flee the silence of the choir to go outside to talk with laymen, preferring things frivolous to things divine. These and similar practices we totally forbid under penalty of suspension.

After the Fourth Lateran Council, the clergy were prohibited from having anything to do with the spilling of blood, including service as a soldier or a physician. Priests were not allowed to hunt or participate in fowling. The giving of a benefice (an ecclesiastical office to which an endowment is attached) to any unworthy cleric was also deemed an offense. In the late thirteenth century, the English bishop Robert Grosseteste wrote the *Templum Dei* (the Temple of God), a simple and clear guide for the performance of clerical duties including the distinctions among particular vices and virtues. Around the same time in France, Bishop William Durandus put together a work outlining priestly functions and the teaching mission of clergy.

**UNCLOISTERED RELIGIOUS LIFE.** An important outgrowth of the lay religious movements of the twelfth century was the notion of living an apostolic life outside

## THE Battle over Magna Carta

The significance of the thirteenth-century English document called *Magna Carta* (the Great Charter) is often thought of not in relation to religion, but in terms of its influence upon the evolving notion of constitutional liberties. King John of England (1199–1216) was forced to admit that, even as king and lord, he had certain contractual obligations to individuals at many levels of society. On 15 June 1215 at Runnymede, under mounting pressure from the barons of England (led by Stephen Langton, the archbishop of Canterbury), King John set his seal to the document, consenting to certain rights and freedoms for the church, as well as his barons, and granting relief from unjust legal, financial and tax-based statutes for subjects of the crown. Magna Carta's provisions for trials by jury, consent to taxation by common council, fishing and hunting rights, the imposition of an aristocratic king's council, and adjustments to standard legal procedures created precedent for a more participatory government and set the stage for the necessary developments of a representative parliamentary process. Over the centuries, the precedent and spirit resulting from these events would continually remind the English people that even the king, like those over whom he ruled, should be subject to the law. Rather than being just a single document, Magna Carta actually went through several drafts and a period of negotiation, and its implementation led to further developments of parliamentary and constitutional governance in England. These events then influenced other European constitutional monarchies, but most significantly fostered the representative, constitutional, and republican ideals that gave birth to the government of the United States.

What is most interesting is the role played by the Roman Church in the whole chain of events. Some of this had to do with the tenuous nature of John's power in England. A rift between King John and Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) went back to the disputed election of the archbishop of Canterbury in 1205. Despite English clerical opposition, John had favored his secretary, the bishop of Norwich, for elevation to the vacant post and forced the clergy to elect his candidate. Innocent, however, invalidated the election and persuaded the Canterbury clerics to support Stephen Langton, an English scholar who was teaching university students at the time in Paris. (Tradition

has suggested that Innocent and Stephen were friends while studying together at the University of Paris.) Despite the pope's consecration of Stephen as Canterbury's archbishop, King John would not allow Stephen to occupy that important ecclesiastical office. Langton remained in France for some six years until the pope forced John's hand in 1208 by excommunicating him and placing the entire English kingdom under interdict. John's response was an abusive taxation of church property, to which Innocent responded by authorizing the French king, Phillip Augustus, to depose John by force and take over England. John was eventually compelled to submit to the papacy and Stephen was placed in power. In addition, the kingdoms of England and Ireland were made subject to the papacy, and King John was only allowed to rule them as a vassal of Rome. This formal relationship of vassalage between England and the papacy continued for the next hundred years. (Events such as this leave little doubt as to why animosity persisted between the English monarchs and the papacy.)

Once at Canterbury, Langton quickly took the side of the barons in attempting to lessen the king's domination of the English people. It is quite clear that Stephen Langton, as archbishop, assisted the nobles in the drafting of Magna Carta, which included provisions to guard against excessive taxation of the church, even though this issue had been resolved long before the drafting of the document. In spite of this, Pope Innocent III, now symbolically entrusted with the care of England, was not in favor of many of the elements in the great charter. He particularly did not agree with the provisions in the document concerning the liberties of the barons. Powerful dukes and princes in Italy had caused much trouble for the church. In August of 1215, Innocent annulled Magna Carta. Some scholars have argued that the pope found the document too politically liberal. Others suggest that Innocent felt he needed John on his side in the implementation of the directives from the Fourth Lateran Council. Innocent called the king's "forced" concessions to the nobles which were set forth in the charter unjust, degrading, shameful and illegal. In fact, Langton was soon removed from his episcopal office by the pontiff. What is interesting to note is that this was a case in which the pope felt he not only had the authority to manipulate the running of a kingdom, but also the power to invalidate a secular legal document. After both Innocent and John died in 1216, Magna Carta was reissued, and Stephen Langton was eventually re-appointed as archbishop of Canterbury.

the cloister. The practices of preaching, teaching, ministry, and living in simplicity or poverty, as well as performing charitable work, became focal points for some

of the more socially oriented religious movements of the 1100s. One of the reasons behind such reform was the feeling that these were the very apostolic activities that

were somehow being neglected by the secular clergy. However, some of the lay spiritual movements that developed over the next several centuries, such as the Waldensians, Humiliati, Béguines, and Beghards, came under criticism from Rome or were even accused of heresy. Regardless, the laity throughout medieval Europe began to listen to these reforming voices for inspiration in their own spiritual lives. It was believed by many members of the church establishment that such loosely organized movements lacked the order, direction, and type of training or education necessary to carry out the orthodox mission of the church in a responsible way.

**THE ORIGINS OF THE FRIARS.** As interest in religious reform increased, the growing urban cultures were giving rise to greater commerce, more mobile populations, an increase in education, and a broader distribution of wealth. With this rising prosperity came sophistication, greed, skepticism, and a growing distrust of wealthy and powerful religious institutions. An outgrowth of this skepticism was the development within the church itself of a new form of religious life emphasizing a combination of poverty and preaching. The friars, as they came to be known, proved to be an answer to some of the tensions being experienced both within institutional Christianity and outside it. On the one hand, the friars belonged to organized and papally sanctioned orders, yet on the other, they were not obligated to the Benedictine vow of cloistered stability. The two major movements of friars, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, were substantially different, both in their origin and character. The Dominicans evolved from canons regular (clergymen belonging to a cathedral or collegiate church) while the Franciscans were more akin to the simple lay spiritual movements. Once established and accepted by Rome, these friars were free to minister to the poor as well as preach, teach, and counter the spread of heretical ideas, all within the authority of the institutional church. With the benefit of theological education, the sanctioned orthodox preaching of the Dominicans was quite befitting of their name, Order of Preachers (O.P.).

**SERMONS.** The friars targeted urban areas in their ministry, supporting themselves by begging in communities along the major European trade routes. In these cities, where medieval commerce was thriving, there were large numbers of people with a certain amount of disposable income. Members of this rising merchant class needed direct and practical spiritual guidance, and they were open to hearing the messages of educated preachers. The preaching of homilies by secular clergy at Mass in both local churches and cathedrals had all but disap-

peared by this time. Among the Dominicans and Franciscans, however, the sermon became an art form. Manuals for preaching such as *The Instruction of Preachers* by the Dominican Humbert of Romans or *The Art of Preaching* by Thomas Waleys became important tools for evangelization. *Exempla* (moralizing anecdotes drawn from the lives of saints, animal fables, or wise sayings about everyday life) were used as effective aids in the delivery of clever sermons, while biblical concordances (books where all the key words in the Bible are arranged so that they might be referenced or cross-referenced) helped bolster the preacher's arsenal of effective speech. The message the friars brought to the laity incorporated a theology that was reasonable, optimistic, human, accommodating, and directed toward living a fruitful life in this world. These qualities made the laity more willing to confess their sins to the friars. In fact, Dominican convents gave their brothers regular instruction in the theology of penance.

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#### MEDIEVAL HERESY

**DEFINING LIMITS.** While the twelfth century was a great period of religious reform and revitalization, there were also harsh caveats that came from Rome regarding unworthy priests, schismatic groups, and, in their opinion, wrong-thinking leaders of movements. The same climate that fostered reform was also a breeding ground for ideas not in keeping with the basic doctrines of Christianity. It was actually Rome who decided which groups had gone too far. But they almost always allowed opportunities of forgiveness for the wayward to come back

to the fold. This made the heresies more a matter of disobedience, failure to accept correction, and open rejection of the church's official position than the adherence to a belief which brought with it permanent condemnation. The early heretics in Western Europe were not always theologians; rather, they were sometimes merely simple people who condemned worldliness and hierarchical church institutions in favor of evangelical simplicity. Rejection of institutional marriage, emphasis on chastity, disputing the authority of the Old Testament, questioning some of the sacraments, and, above all, denial of the Trinity were elements of the twelfth-century movements that were soon branded heretical in the West. Preachers like Tanchelm in the Low Countries, Henry of Lausanne in the south of France, Peter of Bruys in the Rhône Valley, Eudo in Brittany, and Arnold of Brescia in Rome were all accused of initiating popular heretical movements.

**BOGOMILS.** While the most actively persecuted group in the Western Christendom was the Cathars, a number of historians have attempted to trace their roots to a much earlier medieval heresy practiced by the Bogomils in the east. Bogomil was a tenth-century preacher in Macedonia who taught a life of prayer, penitence, wandering, and simplicity of worship. He rejected sacraments, church feasts, icons, liturgy, vestments, and veneration of the cross. His basic message was quasi-dualist in nature: he claimed the world was evil because it had been created by the Devil, the eldest son of God. Christ was seen as the youngest son of God who came to earth to redeem, but never fully became human. Bogomil and his followers saw the Devil as inferior to God (which actually makes for a sort of "uneven" dualism). The Bogomils espoused complete renunciation of the world. Consumption of meat and wine was forbidden, marriage was discouraged, and obedience to church hierarchy was seen as having no validity. Their scriptural focus was on the New Testament. For a time the group seemed to gain favor at the court of Constantinople. In this cosmopolitan Byzantine environment, Bogomilism was transformed into a more philosophical movement, even an academic religion. It appealed to the upper classes in the Byzantine Empire, and evolved from its former roots as a religion of the peasantry, deeply connected to New Testament ethics. After Bulgaria's conquest of parts of the Byzantine Empire in 1018, the Bogomils retreated into a more monastic existence, while persecutions in 1110 and 1143 at Constantinople forced them to move to Dalmatia and Bosnia. In later years, their worship became more ritualized. They baptized by laying hands on converts and holding the Gospel of John over their heads. In Bosnia and the Bulgarian Empire, Bogomilism

became the state religion after 1218. The Bogomils sent missionaries to Western Europe, and it is likely that by the middle of the twelfth century they were active in Germany and the Rhineland. Such dualist ideas—that is, beliefs emphasizing opposing elements, such as good and evil—were also carried by merchants and pilgrims who had come into contact with the Bogomils and other forms of dualism in the east.

**CATHARS.** It was out of the religious fervor of the mid-twelfth century that the Cathar movement came to light. It was reported to be present at Cologne as early as 1143 when Everwin of Steinfeld wrote to Bernard of Clairvaux about the practice. Soon after, it had quickly spread into Flanders. Cathar disdain for the corruption of the medieval clergy bred in them a desire to purify the church (thus the term *katharos*, meaning "pure"). They believed that the material world was impure and that the soul must strive to free itself from the evils of this existence. The Cathars were vegetarians; they fasted regularly, avoided sexual activity, and rejected material possessions. Like the Bogomils, they regarded Jesus not as God, but as more of a super-angelic being who came to lead people on the right path. They rejected the notion of the bodily resurrection of Jesus and suggested that true redemption comes from the teaching of Christ, not his redemptive act. Affirming a philosophy similar to that of the Docetists in early Christianity, Cathars questioned the actual physical sufferings of Christ, seeing them as apparent rather than real. The more serious adherents and leaders of the movement were known as *Perfects*. Their lives were basically ascetical in nature. In 1167, during a Cathar council at St. Felix de Caraman, a missionary named Nicetas pushed for a more absolute dualist position concerning the nature of the world. Most dualists in the Languedoc (southern) region of France began to follow his directive. Similar to the Bogomils, they believed that the earth was created and controlled by Satan. Human spirits, which are heavenly and connected to God, have been trapped in bodies created by Satan. The greatest of sins, the original sin, was that of procreation, which Adam and Eve began and which has generationally continued to entrap the good spirits that have fallen from heaven. Salvation can only come from *consolamentum*, which is the path of moral standards that all Perfects have begun, creating a dialogue of forgiveness from sin and restoration to relationship with God the Father. Baptism seems to have been a major step on one's way to perfection. It was at baptism that the Cathari entered into the state of *consolamentum*. Like the Bogomils, they employed the Gospel of John and laying on of hands in the ceremony. This was a baptism of Spirit, not of water. As such, John the Baptist was not seen as a saint.



**CATHAR BELIEFS AND INFLUENCE.** Both men and women were equally able to embrace the level of Perfect and thus engage in communal leadership. This notion seems to have been particularly appealing to many spiritually inclined women from the noble families of Languedoc, though they were not allowed to become bishops. The Cathars had a significant following of *credentes* (or believers) who supported the work of the Perfects and hoped that they too might be committed enough to accept baptism. The *credentes* were allowed to remain married, own property, eat meat, and even participate in the Roman church in the hopes that their conversion might someday be full. Cathars believed that the souls of those who died in an unconsolated state would be reincarnated and allowed to make further progress along the road to freedom from their sinful flesh. Someday, once purified, they could finally return to the heaven from which they had originally come. Cathars made their way into northern Italy between 1150 and 1160 as their numbers grew rapidly. They were given many names in Europe. One such group was called the Albigenses after the town of Albi in the southern part of France where the first Cathar bishopric was established. Often welcomed into the courts of the nobility, Cathar preachers on the streets attracted listeners and even had public debates with Catholic bishops as well as with the Waldensians. They organized their own church with its own clergy, liturgy, and doctrine. By 1190 Italian Cathars had split into six churches. In Languedoc some of the nobility embraced the Cathar heresy in order to overthrow powerful local Catholic bishops. At its height there were eleven Cathar bishoprics, six of which were in France, with the remainder in Italy. All of the bishops were seen as equals.

**WALDENSIANS.** Another popular movement of the time were the Waldensians or Poor of Lyon. They insisted upon living lives of poverty, reading the Gospels in the vernacular (language of the people), and encouraging lay people to preach. The group was founded in 1170 by Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant who, after a powerful conversion experience, began giving away his possessions to the poor. Interest in the movement was fueled by a famine that struck the city of Lyon in 1176, creating a tremendous inequity in the distribution of resources. After expending a good deal of his personal assets on good works during the famine, Waldo adopted a mendicant lifestyle and went about the countryside preaching. The Waldensians had little tolerance for the kind of clerical corruption Waldo had witnessed at the church of Lyon, which was very powerful and strongly tied to the aristocracy. Waldo had reluctantly been granted approval from Pope Alexander III to form a

community based upon a lifestyle of poverty, but he was not given permission to preach. This may have had something to do with the fact that Waldo was not formally educated and had learned the Bible by committing parts of it to memory as it was translated to him in the vernacular. In 1184 the teachings of Peter and the Waldensians were condemned as heresy, and members were forced to stop preaching and leave the city of Lyon. Many of the group's members chose to capitulate. After a series of condemnations and reprimands, Waldo and his followers moved into Italy and the southern part of France. There they began attracting attention by preaching anti-clericalism, stirring up reaction against secular authority, and performing the sacraments without authorization. The movement later split between French and Italian groups, perhaps because they did not have a clearly defined theology. The Italian movement went so far as to condemn the sacraments that were dispensed by unworthy priests. Subgroups of the Waldensian movement, such as the Poor Lombards, eventually merged with the late twelfth-century Humiliati. A number of thirteenth-century Waldensians, including leaders like Durand of Huesca and Bernard Prim, were brought back into the church. Underground contingents continued to survive through the seventeenth century, when they eventually joined groups of Protestant reformers.

**POLITICS AND INQUISITION.** In 1184 Pope Lucius III issued the bull *Ad Abolendam* which prescribed penalties for heretical activity and condemned such groups as the Cathars, Patarines, Humiliati, Poor of Lyon, Arnoldents, and Josepheni. A system of inquisition led by the bishops was soon developed. In order to combat the spread of Cathar teaching, a number of religious orders were employed. At first, in the early part of the thirteenth century, the Cistercians attempted to convince the Cathars of their error. The Dominicans (Order of Preachers) were in part born out of a second wave of the missionary work to the Cathars. In 1209 the Albigensian Crusade, which lasted for some twenty years, began to be carried out with tremendous cruelty. It may have been spurred by the murder of a papal legate, Peter of Castelnau, in 1208. As a result, the papacy increasingly pressured the counts of southern France to help put an end to local heresies. Uncooperative nobles (such as Raymond, the count of Toulouse) found themselves at odds with Rome. Caught up in the military campaigns to root out the Cathars during this period was Peter, the king of Aragon. Not a Cathar himself, he chose to fight against the Albigensian crusade forces and to use the conflict in southern France to gain greater control of the region. Peter was soundly defeated and killed at the battle of Muret in 1213 by outnumbered crusader forces under Captain

Simon de Montfort. The crusade continued for a couple of decades as military force seemed more effective than counter-preaching at keeping the movement from growing. In 1233 Gregory IX launched an inquisition that was responsible for torturing, imprisoning, and burning at the stake thousands of unrepentant Cathars. The extermination of the Cathars came to an end after 1243 with the capture of the fortress at Montségur.

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#### FRIARS

**PREACHING AMONG HERETICS.** The Dominican Order of Friars was founded by an Augustinian canon named Domingo (Dominic) de Guzman from the cathedral at Osma in Spain. Dominic left his duties at the cathedral when he developed an interest in doing missionary preaching among the heretical Cathars in Languedoc. During 1203, while traveling through Toulouse in the southeastern part of France with his companion Diego Acevedo, the bishop of Osma, Dominic first encountered the Cathars. Upon their return, the two clerics petitioned Rome for a commission to preach. It was Diego's idea that conversion might be accomplished by competing with the Cathar Perfects, living an austere apostolic life of self-denial with no concern for material goods. Depending upon others for their daily bread, they were able to move about the countryside freely, preaching and interacting with the Cathars. This plan met with some success. In 1207, Dominic and Diego established a nunnery for converted Cathar women at Prouille. During that year, Diego died and it was left up to Dominic to carry on the mission. With the help of Peter Seila, a wealthy benefactor from Toulouse, houses were donated for the work, and Dominic was given charge of a group of diocesan preachers to address the Cathar heresy. Dominic and his ministers went on foot to preach the word of God in evangelical poverty, living according to the Augustinian Rule and the usages of Prémontré. The preachers recited divine offices, had a daily chapter of faults (a community meeting to confess their failings or have their im-

perfections pointed out), and followed the penitential directives of the Premonstratensians. In 1217 Pope Honorius gave official confirmation to the Order of Friars Preachers (*fratres praedicatorum*), a name suggested by Honorius himself, but around the time of Dominic's death, the order began to be referred to more affectionately as the Dominicans. Later that year, preaching associates were sent to Paris, Bologna, Rome, and Madrid to study, preach, and found houses. They adopted a mendicant lifestyle (that is, they lived by begging) and did not own material possessions; they began to work among the urban poor. General Chapters (an assembly of all the heads of houses) were called during 1220 and 1221 in order to give some direction to the new movement. A Master General of the order was chosen for life to oversee the geographic provinces, which were each supervised by a provincial prior; individual houses also had their own local priors. Since Dominic had hoped that new recruits would receive solid theological education, headquarters were established in the great university towns of Bologna and Paris. When Dominic died in 1221, his successor Jordan of Saxony, began to target these university areas, seeking young educated recruits. By 1230 there were over fifty Dominican houses and twelve provinces, some as far away as Poland, Denmark, England, Hungary, and the Holy Land.

**DOMINICAN EXPANSION AND NEW DIRECTIONS.** After this, the order began to expand exponentially. In 1256 there were estimated to be some 13,000 Dominican friars, many located near university towns such as Paris, Bologna, Valencia, Cologne, and Montpellier. By the early 1300s, there were over 600 Dominican houses; about 150 of them were for women. While preaching remained the Dominican focus, teaching, writing, and combating heresy became their strengths. No friar was allowed to preach without at least three years of study with a trained theologian. The thirteenth century produced such great Dominican philosopher/theologians as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. The fourteenth century was famous for the Dominican mystics Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler; the latter devoted himself completely to the spiritual care of the sick during the Black Death. Dominican struggle against heresy waned somewhat after the demise of the Cathars, but it did not completely end. The order continued to be involved in aspects of inquisition (juridical persecution of heresy by special church courts) during the fourteenth century. Figures like Bernard Gui made sure orthodox practice and teaching were preserved throughout institutional Christendom. Participation in rooting out heresy more vehemently resurfaced at the time of the Spanish Inquisition when Jewish and Muslim converts

to Christianity were suspected of having relapsed and were either directed back to the faith or to their death by infamous fifteenth-century Dominicans such as Tomas de Torquemada.

**THE EARLY CAREER OF ST. FRANCIS.** St. Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) was clearly the most important figure in the early development of the friars. A special place has been given to him in church tradition, some going so far as to call him the quintessential medieval model of Jesus, an example of love and humility to which all Christians should aspire. He was born Giovanni Bernardone in 1181, the son of a merchant family living in Assisi, above Italy's Spoleto Valley. His French-speaking father gave him the nickname Francesco, reminiscent of their heritage. Francis was probably not very well educated as a child. He lived the type of comfortable, carefree, enjoyable existence that his father's success as a cloth merchant afforded him. While he was drawn to luxury, he was also known to be extremely generous. Francis joined a military campaign in his early twenties, fighting a war in Perugia in Italy and spending almost a year in a military prison. Upon his return to Assisi he lived an unsettled existence. While on a pilgrimage to Rome, it is said he encountered two beggars. Francis exchanged clothes with one of them and went about experiencing what it was to live in poverty. In 1205 he again joined a military expedition to fight against the enemies of the pope. At that point, a dream influenced him to abandon his secular life, and he retreated to a hermitage. For the next several years he lived in relative seclusion, befriending lepers and the unfortunate, living in the ruins of the abandoned church of San Damiano outside of Assisi. When he attempted to use some of his father's wealth to rebuild an old church and assist the poor, his father had him dragged before the local magistrate. Shortly after this he completely renounced his heritage, removed his clothing and shoes, and took up living in a coarse garment with a rope for a belt, traveling about the countryside in absolute poverty, begging for his necessities, attempting to live an apostolic life.

**THE FOUNDING OF THE FRANCISCANS.** Soon other sons of the merchant class joined him, selling all they owned, becoming mendicants and preachers. In 1210 it is said that Francis walked barefoot to Rome to meet with the pope and petition for official approval of a group, though Pope Innocent III had reservations about such notions of radical poverty and itinerancy. Medieval monasticism had long been troubled by *gyrovagi*, wandering monks who moved from monastery to monastery in search of the best possible circumstances. Itinerant

preachers like Peter Waldo and members of the late twelfth-century lay spiritual movement called the Humiliati had been condemned less than thirty years earlier. Nonetheless, the group was given limited papal approval, and Francis returned to Assisi to begin his ministry. Their lives were extremely simple, not attached to property of any kind, and their daily routines were largely unregulated, save for a few offices they could pray when appropriate or convenient in the midst of ministry. Later popes (Honorius III and Gregory IX) gave formal approval to Franciscan rules, which became more detailed over time. The group called themselves *fratres minores* (brothers minor). They were given an old Benedictine church, the Portiuncula, outside of Assisi, which they restored and around which they began to build huts. In 1212, this growing brotherhood of mendicants grew to include sisters. The Poor Clares (or second order), who based their community at the restored church of San Damiano, were not allowed to beg or preach, but they did live out the ideal of poverty within their community. Soon Francis and his followers began to travel about southern France and Spain. By 1217 they had organized into provinces with superiors appointed over each area, and in 1221 Francis founded the Tertiaries (or third order), a lay movement that adapted Franciscan ideals to daily life. Francis' order of friars grew so rapidly that they were able to extend their ministry into Eastern Europe and North Africa, though their preaching in Muslim areas did not meet with great success. Francis himself accompanied the Fifth Crusade and even attempted to convert the Sultan al-Kamil. Of great benefit to the order was Francis' friendship with Cardinal Ugolino, who later became Pope Gregory IX. It is said that in 1224 Francis received the *stigmata* (gift of the wounds of Christ). He died two years later and was canonized (declared a saint) by Pope Gregory in 1228. Legends of Francis' life abound and have been used by Franciscans, as well as Christians in general, as a source of inspiration for their lives.

**THE PROBLEMS OF PROPERTY AND EDUCATION.** After Francis' death, the order was forced to deal with two growing problems: how to educate the brothers and whether or not the Franciscans would own their own houses, books, and trappings. The earliest Franciscans had gotten around the issue of ownership by entrusting all their possessions to Rome. While there were some friars who wished to share in the more radical vision of Francis, living in caves or huts and shunning formalized university education, many of the recruits to the Franciscan Order were from the literate and elite classes of society. This tension continued to be present in the order for the next several centuries. By the 1230s the uni-

## THREE

### Stories of St. Francis

One of the most fascinating legacies of St. Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) is the wealth of biographical information, anecdotes, stories, and legends connected to his life. Many of these stories were compiled in the thirteenth century during the decades following Francis' death by biographers such as Thomas of Celano. These accounts were written mainly by individuals who had contact with the saint during his life. Later thirteenth-century compilations, such as the work of St. Bonaventure (a second generation Franciscan and Minister General of the Order), reflected the earliest Francis traditions but were also linked to elements of the growing ideological debate over apostolic poverty. Numerous fourteenth-century documents and elaborations trace their roots to writings and oral traditions of Francis' disciples, such as those of Brother Leo who was the famous traveling companion of the saint. The *Little Flowers*, *Considerations on the Holy Stigmata* and the *Actus Beati Francisci* were fourteenth-century creations based upon a variety of earlier accounts.

Among the hundreds of tales he relates, Bonaventure (a spiritualist) was particularly fond of recounting stories he had gathered from individuals who had witnessed Francis' stigmata. In one of his sermons Bonaventure makes a point about the authority of those who had seen the wounds, comparing the many lay witnesses and more than a hundred clergymen who vouched for Francis to the "two or three" who were considered sufficient by Jesus to establish veracity (Matt. 18:16). The fact that the key witnesses were virtuous and holy men who swore under oath is provided as further evidence of the truth of Francis' holy status. Most notable in his account, however, is the description of the marks themselves, which he says are "contrary to the laws of nature"—first because he never wore a bandage, in spite of the fact that the wound in his side was continuously bleeding as he went about his work, and second because the wounds in his hands were not merely piercings that could easily have been counterfeited, since the nails "actually grew out of his flesh, with the head on one side and the point bent back on the other." Bonaventure concluded that such an "extraordinary" sight would convince any Christian that the stigmata were miraculous.

Tensions between the radically active, less austere, and spiritual elements of the fourteenth-century Franciscans are manifest in a particularly moving story from the *Little Flowers* which demonstrates both Francis' humility and sanctity. It was written by a friar of the Marches around 1330. In it he describes how Francis was praying and weeping aloud through the night until he was so exhausted that he could not walk the next day. His companions went to a local peasant to find a donkey for Francis, and, upon hearing that the animal was for this man who had a reputation for doing so much good, the peasant approached him with advice:

"Well then," said the peasant, "try to be as good as everyone thinks you are, because many people have great faith in you. So I urge you: never let there be anything in you different from what people expect of you." When Francis heard these words, he did not mind being admonished by a peasant, and he did not say to himself, as many proud fellows who wear cowls nowadays would say, "Who is this brute who admonishes me?" But he immediately got off the donkey and threw himself on his knees before the farmer and humbly kissed his feet, thanking him for having deigned to admonish him so charitably.

It may be safe to say that throughout the medieval period, there were few individuals whose legends attesting to their character had such an encompassing effect upon the spirit and development of Christianity. In yet another story, Francis is approached by a friar novice who has obtained his own copy of a book of Psalms, against the usual Franciscan policy of not owning personal possessions such as books. Concerned about this breach of conduct, he approaches Francis, who says to him:

"Once you have a psalter, you will want a breviary. And when you have a breviary, you will sit in a high chair like a great prelate and say to your brother, 'Bring me my breviary.'" As he spoke, blessed Francis in a great fervor of spirit took up a handful of ashes and placed them on his head, and rubbing his hand around his head as though he was washing it, he exclaimed, "I, a breviary, I, a breviary!" And he repeated this many times, passing his hand over his head. And the friar was amazed and ashamed.

versities of Paris, Padua, Bologna, and Oxford had become a breeding ground for Franciscan ideas. Franciscan scholars like Alexander of Hales, Robert Grosseteste, and Anthony of Padua were among the leading theologians of the day. After 1239, it was decided that all the

leaders within the order needed to be priests. When the great theologian and philosopher St. Bonaventure became minister general of the order (1257–1274), admission was limited to clerics who were educated or to lay persons of distinction (something of a contradiction,

since Francis himself had taken only the order of a deacon and had at best a working knowledge of Latin). During this period the order began to grow tremendously. While in 1250 there were fifty Franciscan houses in England and some several hundred in Italy, by the early fourteenth century the order had grown to 1,400 houses. With this growth, debates over the issue of radical poverty and the order's ownership of property intensified. Notions of a new age of religious orders who would come to reshape the world and usher in the final phase of a spiritual church had been predicted by the mystic Joachim of Fiore (1132–1202) in his apocalyptic writings. Members of the Spiritual Franciscans led by Gerard of Borgo San Donnino and various other Fraticelli (general and fringe mendicant groups) took these ideas to heart in the mid-thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, attempting to bring Joachim's prophecies to fulfillment. Following the Black Death and a dwindling of numbers in the order, however, there was an increased laxity of practice and tolerance for material possessions. The issue of property and observance continued to agitate the Franciscan Order, and finally in 1415 and again in 1443 the Conventual (the more lax) and Observant (the more traditional) branches were granted separate provinces and eventually their own Vicar Generals. Not until 1517 would there be a formal division between the Conventualists (who felt that they were the real order) and the Observants.

**CARMELITE FRIARS.** Both the Carmelite and Augustinian (Austin) friars began as hermits who gradually adopted the practices of the mendicants. The real strength of these movements is that they were able to blend the ministerial ideals of the life of the apostles with the contemplative calling of the earliest Christian desert fathers. The Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel originated in mid-twelfth century Palestine where hermits gathered in a community under a common rule at Mount Carmel near Haifa. The group had been founded by a pious crusader named Berthold of Cambria. Tracing their origins to the biblical Elijah, by the early 1200s they undertook a strict rule of asceticism, which was condoned by the Latin patriarch (bishop) of Jerusalem. The Carmelite hermits fasted regularly, avoided meat, and observed lengthy periods of quiet. With the fall of the Holy Land and the demise of the Latin Christian Kingdoms in the early part of the thirteenth century, the Mount Carmel community slowly began to break up into several groups that moved into Italy, Spain, Cyprus, Sicily, southern France, and England. Some Carmelites were said to have come back with troops returning from the Third and Fourth Crusades. At first the European Carmelites continued to live a cloistered existence, but

soon they became engaged in a more active life of preaching, poverty, and active study in the world, modeling their new way of life on the Dominicans. Corporate poverty, teaching, preaching, and mendicancy were the cornerstones of their movement. By 1300 there were at least a thousand Carmelites in England alone.

**AUSTIN FRIARS.** The origin of the Austin friars is much more documented than that of the Carmelites. They began with a group of hermits that were spread throughout Italy, particularly in the regions of Tuscany and Lombardy. St. John Buoni of Mantua had begun to organize the group in the mid-thirteenth century. In 1243 Pope Innocent IV prescribed the Rule of St. Augustine for these hermits and in 1255, under Pope Alexander, all hermits living in Italy were brought into one group called the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine. The following year they adopted a constitution similar to that of the Dominicans. Their lifestyle became more mendicant in nature, and they were given exemptions from the control of local bishops. Based upon the influences of the other friar orders, the Austins moved from their hermitages and took up residence in the cities where they began to minister and preach. They also became interested in university education, taking up the formalized study of theology, the scriptures, and the philosophy of St. Augustine. Toward the end of the thirteenth century, they began founding priories throughout Italy, Spain, France, Germany, and England. Gregory of Rimini, who taught at the University of Paris, was possibly their finest scholar. He later became general of the Austin Order in 1357. The most famous of the Augustinians is the sixteenth-century reformer Martin Luther, who first entered as a hermit in 1505.

**THE SECULAR-MENDICANT CONTROVERSY.** Conflicts between secular clergy and the new mendicant orders began to occur once the friars (who were not under permanent obligation to local bishops) came to urban areas to preach and hear confessions. As the friars moved in, they began to establish schools and build churches. Members of the laity were attracted to these educated friars who were living in poverty, and local secular clerics noticed that the flow of offerings and bequests to their churches was dwindling. The resources of lay nobility that once had gone to the benefices and holdings of the secular clergy were being diverted to build and decorate such magnificent centers of the preachers as Santa Croce in Florence. Around 1250, the Burgundian schoolmaster William of Saint-Amour, who taught in Paris, began to crusade against the rights of the friars to compete with secular clergy for pastoral ministry and even their right to monopolize the chairs at prestigious

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A LATE MEDIEVAL SATIRE ON FRIARS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*, one of the stories in the *Canterbury Tales* from about 1390, indicates the poet's general distaste for friars and brings together many of the conventional charges against them. The Summoner, who was like a bailiff "summoning" or calling offenders to the Bishop's court, was the friar's natural professional enemy, since friars often tried to evade the bishop's control over his diocese when they came to a community to preach, hear confessions, and collect charitable donations, often leaving with monies which the parish priest felt were properly due him. In this excerpt from the Prologue to the Tale, the use of references to excrement and defecation in the treatment of the friar, while coarse, was not at all uncommon in late medieval religious controversy; indeed, many of the attacks over a hundred years later during the Reformation—both by the Lutherans and by those writing against them—employed scatological imagery of a very similar type.

This friar boasts that he knows all about hell—  
And God knows, that can hardly to be wondered at  
Since between friars and fiends there is little difference.  
You have often heard tell

How a friar was carried off to hell  
In the spirit in a vision,  
And as he was led up and down there  
By an angel, to show him the various torments,  
In the entire place he saw not one friar,  
Though he saw plenty of other people in misery and woe.  
Then the friar asked the angel,  
"Now sir, have friars such grace from God  
That not one of them comes to hell?"  
"Yes indeed," said the angel, "many millions do,"  
And he led him further down to where Satan dwelt  
Who had a tail broader than the sail on a barge.  
"Lift up your tail, Satan," the angel commanded.  
"Show your arse-hole and let this friar see  
Where the nest of all his fellow friars is found"—  
And before five minutes had passed,  
Just as bees swarm from the hive when troubled,  
So out of the devil's arse poured forth  
Some twenty thousand friars in a pack  
And swarmed all about hell,  
And then just as rapidly as they came out,  
Each crept back into Satan's arse.  
Satan then dropped his tail and lay still.

**SOURCE:** Geoffrey Chaucer *Summoner's Prologue*, in *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1390). Text modernized by John Block Friedman.

universities. These arguments spun into an ideological battle over *ecclesiology*, that is, whether secular priests or religious should hold authority over the teaching and preaching of the church. The friars were seen by some as extensions of lay orders—mendicant, and thus not completely devoted to either institution or rule. Notions of hierarchy, diocesan boundaries, and the rights of local churches were defended by the secularists. Friars such as St. Bonaventure wrote *apologia* for their orders, defending themselves by appeals to their papal commissions and authentic apostolic lifestyles. The old medieval power of clerics in isolated communities was giving way and being challenged by a European society that was open to mobility, education, competition, and diversity of opinions, all of which the friars brought to the church by way of emerging societal changes and conventions. The erosion of secular church authority continued when the Franciscan pope Martin IV (1281–1285) issued his *Ad Fructus Uberes* which allowed the friars to perform any pastoral duties they deemed necessary in any diocese where they were present without first seeking a license from the local bishop. A compromise was later struck by Boniface VIII in 1300 which limited the jurisdictions of the friars and returned to the bishops cer-

tain controls over them in their diocese. However, remnants of this dispute lingered on to the 1400s. Examples of this are the manuals of instruction for parish priests in England, which questioned whether or not absolution of a penitent by a friar was sufficient or whether it might be helpful and even necessary for the parish priest to re-hear the confession of their parishioner. Another good example is seen in the negative image of the friar described by the character of the Summoner in *The Canterbury Tales*, a description that illustrates Chaucer's dislike of the friars and support of the secular party in this ongoing conflict.

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SEE ALSO *Fashion: Academic, Clerical, and Religious Dress*

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## THE LAITY AND POPULAR BELIEFS

### SEPARATIONS BETWEEN CLERICS AND LAITY.

Even though people today view the Middle Ages as a time of great religious faith, it is clear that the role of the laity within official medieval Christianity was relatively limited. By the thirteenth century, the majority of people who lived in Western Europe were nominally Christian. Most had received Christian baptism and professed to practice the faith, the exceptions being the minority of Jewish people scattered throughout various European cities and the Muslims who were still living in Spain. For those who were not part of the clerical world, however, it seems there was not much access to the richness of the Christian tradition. Nobles and royalty who had clerics living among them at court clearly had the advantage of daily contact. But since many others did not know how to read, and understood Latin (the language of most prayers) in only a limited way, contact for the laboring and commercial classes did not extend much beyond attending worship and interacting with local clergy. Lay experience of the holy was mostly visual and auditory, including encounters with religious art and the stories portrayed in these artworks, as well as the homilies of their priests (during the time periods that medieval liturgies incorporated preaching). Such religious art often showed biblical typology or foreshadowing of New Testament events in Old Testament stories; for example, David struggling with a bear foreshadows Christ's conquering of Satan in a miniature from the Winchester Bible of 1160–1175. During Christian feast days, they may have heard or seen enacted stories connected to the saints and the important events from the life of Christ. Members of the laity were not, however, encouraged to receive communion during the earlier medieval centuries. In fact, it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 that they were required to go to confession and receive the eucharist at least once a year.

**LAY OBSERVANCE AT MASS.** In the absence of receiving communion, the only contact with the sacrament was visual, when the priest elevated the host and chalice. However, in churches with rood screens (wooden or metal par-view gates separating the altar area from the rest of the church), visual contact was often impaired. Mothers did teach their children statements of faith and prayers, particularly the *Credo*, *Pater Noster*, and *Ave Maria*. In urban areas where there were schools, clerics taught children to read Latin from the Bible or a psalter (a book containing the psalms). These city-dwellers received formal religious education from the clerics who taught them, and, in imitation of their teachers, might set aside certain times of the day to pray. If they were literate and wealthy enough to own psalters, they might recite the written prayers. Daily attendance at Mass for the laity was limited to those who had both the piety and leisure to comply. In most cases, these masses were held in small chapels and provided opportunity for greater contact with the clergy, although the priest's back was turned to the congregants for most of the liturgy. Again, it was not until the thirteenth-century Lateran Council that serious directives were issued in regard to weekly attendance at Mass. Some evidence of contemporary expectations for participation is offered by a twelfth-century book of instructions and devotion for laity called the *Lay Folk's Mass Book*, written by an archdeacon of York named Jeremiah. The instructions were originally written in French for Norman aristocrats, but only the late thirteenth-century English translation survives. A collection of directives that indicate the role of the worshipers and how they should be positioned, such as kneeling at the elevation of the consecrated elements, are contained in the work.

**THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE.** The notion of marriage as a sacrament began to be connected in the Middle Ages to certain rituals and exchanges of consent that took place at the front door or on the porch of churches. Marriage did not become an official sacrament of the church until the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Emphasis on assent and mutual giving, including consent of both partners along with the physical act of consummation, mark the canonical parameters of the essence of the union. While local customs and laws varied widely throughout Europe, the role of the church in witnessing and binding the union seems to have only been prevalent from the twelfth century onward. However, once it became a sacrament, the church also played an important role in the dissolution or annulment of marriage and the integrity of family life. All marriages from the early thirteenth century on were to be public. *Banns* (formal public announcements) were to be published, and pri-

vate or clandestine unions were forbidden (although, if secretly performed, these marriages were not invalid). Marriage of blood relatives (consanguinity) within the fourth degree of relationship and marriage within a spouse's family (affinity) within the third degree was forbidden. Later, the statute concerning affinity was revised to forbid only the first degree (marrying a dead spouse's parent or sibling). In many cases, marriage was certainly not even seen as an idealized or spiritualized form of love, but a contractual arrangement. The attitude towards marriage and love held by most celibate theologians was far removed from the ideal of courtly love espoused by Eleanor of Aquitaine, Christine de Pizan, Chrétien de Troyes, Gottfried von Strassburg, and Dante Alighieri in the literature that developed during this period.

**THE AFTERLIFE.** In medieval Christianity everyone believed in an afterlife where the good were rewarded and the evil were punished. But the idea of going directly to heaven or hell upon one's death was not firmly entrenched in the popular lay mentality. Sometimes souls were visualized being raised to God in a napkin as in a miniature from a book of hours from York, England. It was believed that souls lingered among the living (almost as ghosts), possibly to keep promises, solicit prayers, or even settle old accounts. Dances for the dead in cemeteries, some attempting to drive the deceased back to the spirit world, were banned by synods in the twelfth century. It was necessary for the church to affirm the doctrine of purgatory, a place where the distressed souls would be allowed to linger. It was not that people during this era had a greater fear of death than in other historical periods, but they did fear dying in a state of sin, without the comfort of the sacraments or forgiveness. People began leaving property to the church or to the poor so that their souls would be prayed for after their death. Even the most corrupt of princes and knights on their deathbeds sought to make reparations for their evil deeds. This may be the reason why many people in the final years of their lives would retire to monasteries and convents to be connected to God and the prayers of a community in death and be remembered in the community's masses for the deceased.

**MIRACLES.** The laity also believed in miracles and divine interventions, with saints often playing a major role. Indeed, at times it seems people were more interested in miracles and relics than in the accumulation of countless good deeds that might earn them a way into heaven. Pious lay persons could distinguish themselves through generosity, hospitality, and almsgiving. However, taken more seriously was the idea of penitence and making reparations for one's sins, even after absolution

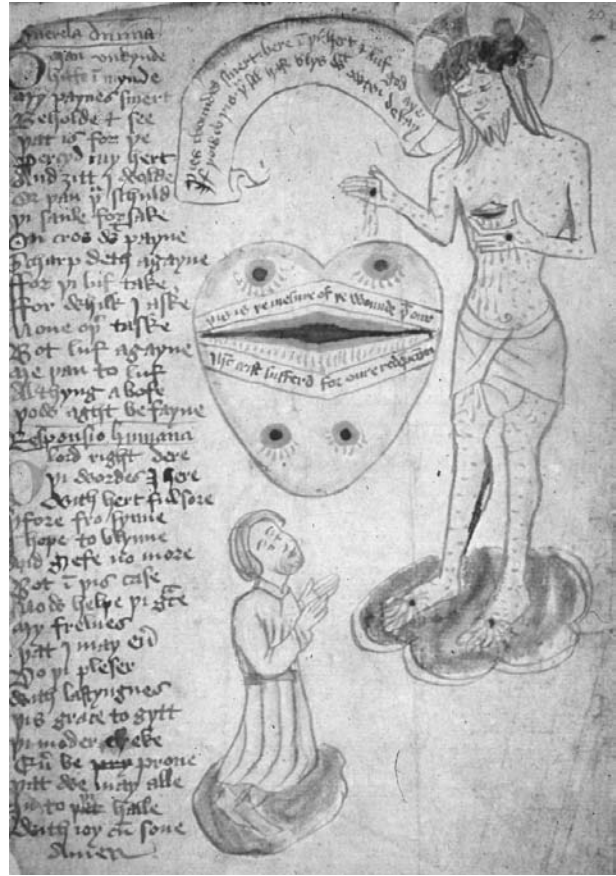
through a priest was given in confession. Piety found its expression most clearly in outward signs and rituals. *Sacramentals* (such as blessings, benedictions, exorcisms, stations of the cross, dubbing of a knight, coronations, ceremonies, receiving palms and ashes, and litanies) were often as important to the medieval laity as the *Sacraments* (Baptism, Eucharist, Confession, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick). The church of the thirteenth century did a number of things to eliminate the power of popular piety by creating more rigid standards for the canonization of saints, rather than allowing the cults of these figures to develop from popular acclaim. The condemnation of practices such as trial by combat (in which the accused and the accuser of a crime engaged in physical combat with the belief that right would triumph over wrong) or trials by fire and water (in which a guilty person thrown into a body of water would float and one whose hand was burned would become infected) were included in the Fourth Lateran Council in order to allow church courts rather than miraculous intervention to rule the day. Priests were



forbidden to be present at the ordeals, thus discouraging the notion that these affairs might be orthodoxy.

**LAY SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS.** Since the laity were in many ways excluded from active participation in the official life of the church, it is not surprising that lay spiritual movements began to flourish. One late twelfth-century movement developed into a group called the Humiliati, which actually evolved into an officially sanctioned lay order during the early thirteenth century. The Humiliati began in Lombardy and Milan around the time of the Waldensian controversy, which arose in the late 1170s when a rich merchant named Peter Waldo in Lyon, France, underwent a religious conversion and started a lay spiritual movement—unsanctioned by the church hierarchy—based on voluntary poverty, vernacular translation of the Scriptures, and public preaching. Some Humiliati were married and lived with their families. Others lived in community, almost like a religious order. They held meetings in common houses owned by the local groups. Most Humiliati were nobility or, at the least, educated people of some means. Their first obligation was to embrace apostolic simplicity. They wore simple clothing, lived simple lives and sought to stand at odds with enemies of the true Christian faith. Unlike the Waldensians, they found it distasteful to preach in public. Each group had a minister or lay leader but in general they did not abide by a rule.

**THE LIFE OF THE HUMILIATI.** While several popes like Lucius III and Alexander III tried to legislate against the Humiliati, other pontiffs wrote them letters calling on them to live lives of penitence, to be peaceful and forgiving, to act against usury (charging interest for loans), to keep their married state if already wed, and to prepare to enter the narrow gate of heaven. Some members recited the seven canonical hours, others fasted twice a week. They gave charity to all those in need and showed special concern for lepers. One of the things the group became famous for was the making of cotton cloth and inexpensive wools. During this period, producers of fine cloth often belonged to guilds that controlled prices, so there was a great need, especially among the lower classes, for inexpensive cloth. In a sense, the production of such cloth became part of their “ministry,” to the point where it even began to be asked for by the trademark of Humiliati. The lamb of God became their symbol. By 1216 there were 150 communities of Humiliati in the Diocese of Milan alone. In 1201 Pope Innocent III gave permission for the Humiliati to continue their work under two conditions: that they not own land that they themselves did not work with their own hands, and that their preaching be limited to the sharing of faith and exhort-



Christ with side wound and bleeding heart revered, *Desert of Religion*, London, The British Library MS Stowe 39, folio 20, c. 1420. © THE BRITISH LIBRARY.

ing of one another. Eventually the Humiliati fell into three orders: canons and canonesses, monks, and lay people. Like other European religious, Humiliati monks followed the Rule of Benedict, and their canons followed the Augustinian Rule. In 1246 they had grown large enough that Pope Innocent IV decreed that all the Humiliati orders take direction from one Master General for their group. By 1298 there were 389 houses of Humiliati of the second order in Italy. The third order of laity was, of course, immense and beyond calculation. The group began to decline in number after the fourteenth century but continued through the 1500s.

**DEVOTIONAL IMAGES.** Another effect of the increasing lay desire for direct participation in spiritual experience was the development, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, of devotional art, with a distinctive emphasis on images of the Passion of Christ. While earlier lay Christians, particularly women in the upper class, had relied on beautifully illustrated texts called Books of Hours to guide and inspire their devotions, later worshippers focused specifically on the pictures themselves as

they appeared in wall paintings, stained glass, and scrolls, as well as amulets, charms, and individual parchment or paper broadsheets that could be owned even by people of modest means. Among the most popular images were the Holy Face—an image of Christ’s countenance supposedly imprinted on a cloth (*sudarium*) held by Saint Veronica when Christ used it to wipe his face—and the Sacred Heart bearing the evidence of the side wound Christ suffered at the crucifixion and showed to Doubting Thomas (John 20:27). Various meditational techniques were employed to make the Passion vivid, among which was a strong interest in the damage wrought to Christ’s body both before and after his crucifixion and the physiological changes it underwent on the cross. For example, Christ’s torment was often expressed in metaphors comparing the body to a book, or a scroll, or even a shield bearing a coat of arms whose “armorial bearings” were made of the tools and weapons—called the *arma Christi*—used in his torment. Thus, the words of Christ’s “book” are his deeds, suffering, and passion, and the letters are the five wounds of his hands, feet, and body. Often all of the wounds can be placed on a heart-shaped shield such as the one revered in a late medieval English devotional work called *The Desert of Religion*.

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SEE ALSO *Music: Religious Music of the Layman; Visual Arts: Spiritual Life and Devotion*

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## CHILDREN AND MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY

**THE INNOCENCE OF CHILDREN.** The notion of the innocence and purity of children was a concept which became connected to a host of medieval religious images. Beginning in the ninth century, children were depicted nude in art to signify their purity. They were often

depicted as cherub-like or cupid-like angelic figures. Quite commonly, children were also connected to the notion of the infant Son of God. Many medieval monks claimed to have seen an infant in the consecrated bread during the liturgy at the moment of its ritual elevation by the priest. Familiar scripture quotations that supported the sacred role of children are still often cited: from Psalms 8:2–3 and Matthew 21:16, “out of the mouths of babes;” Psalms 85:12, “truth will spring from the ground;” and Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17, “whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child.” These scriptural ideas supported the special place children occupied in the medieval religious consciousness. Very young children were often asked to open the Bible at any spot they would choose, and adults would interpret the verse that appeared as some sort of prophecy in a divinatory process called the *sortes biblicae*.

**INFANT BAPTISM.** In spite of the apparent purity of intention and deed in small children, the medieval church held that they were inherently tainted by the doctrine of Original Sin, a state of separation from God that all people were born into as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. By the early Middle Ages, infant baptism was standard practice. In fact, during that period it was generally believed that children who died unbaptized went to hell. In 830 Jonas of Orléans wrote, regarding the children of Christian parents, that it was “necessary that they be presented without delay to receive the gift of baptism, even if they do not yet speak. We are right to do this as children are guilty of the sins of others (original sin).” Failure to baptize a child was a serious matter. Most unbaptized children were not even allowed Christian burials in the early medieval period. Parents who neglected to have infant children baptized before death could be required to do penance up to seven years. Cemetery records throughout France after the Carolingian baptismal legislation was enacted strongly support claims of adherence to the practice of early baptism. Hincmar of Reims expressed similar sentiments around 850 in a letter to Loup de Ferrières: “If they die after having receiving the gift of baptism, they are saved by the will of God; on the other hand, deprived by God’s judgment of this very gift of baptism, they are damned by the fault of hereditary sin.”

**CHANGING REGULATIONS.** Rules regarding baptism and confirmation of children changed gradually throughout the Middle Ages. The liturgist Amalarius of Metz commented in the ninth century that baptism should take place at the ninth hour of a child’s life, as it was during the ninth hour that Christ breathed his last on the cross. During the ninth century in England, both civil and religious regulations required baptism for Christian infants

before they reached one month of age. Following such guidelines would, however, be almost impossible in France after the ninth century, since most baptisms there were performed only at Easter and Pentecost. In the High Middle Ages (after 1200) there were more widespread canons that required children to be baptized before the age of three. Formal creedal confessions more appropriate to adult initiates gave way to rites of exorcism, signing of the cross, and prayers for the infant, to be followed by confirmation of the child's baptism (which consisted of the laying on of hands and the bishop's anointing of the child using blessed oils) once the child reached the age of reason (normally seven or older). This practice became more common between the tenth century and the twelfth, when the doctrine of *limbo puerorum* was promulgated, stating that children who died unbaptized went to a state in the afterlife that was slightly removed from the sight of God, but where they were outside the torments of hell. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century went so far as to suggest that those in limbo actually enjoyed a type of natural happiness. The notion of limbo remained a matter of evolving theological opinion throughout much of the medieval period. In contrast to the debate over baptism, however, many medieval Christians were not particularly concerned with the sacrament of confirmation. In the early Middle Ages, the reception of communion and penance usually did not occur until adulthood or adolescence, and, in fact, the Council of Tours in 813 had discouraged communion for children unless there were special circumstances warranting it. It was not until the thirteenth century that the Fourth Lateran Council decreed that all children past the age of seven should confess their sins and receive communion at least once a year.

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### PAPACY AND POLITICS IN THE LATE THIRTEENTH AND EARLY FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

**A PIOUS MONARCH.** Many of the developments within Christianity during the late thirteenth and early

fourteenth centuries were tied to the might of monarchies and the shifting of papal powers. When the goals of monarchs were consistent with the ideals of a Christian life, both ecclesiastical and political functions ran smoothly. In France, King Louis IX (1214–1270), for example, did much to advance the ideals of piety and the prominent place of the church within the European consciousness. He was noted for personal religious devotion, prayer, liturgical attendance, and even wearing the humble attire of Franciscan friars. Some 27 years after his death, he was canonized as Saint Louis. Not only did he personally lead two crusade campaigns (on one of which he was taken prisoner, and on the other of which he died of illness), but Louis was responsible for bringing peace among contentious nobles in Flanders, Aragon, and England. He endowed many religious foundations throughout his reign and supported the initiation of the Sorbonne theological college in 1257. His devotion extended to the building of Sainte-Chapelle in Paris (between 1245 and 1248) where he placed relics from what he believed to be the crown of thorns worn by Jesus (obtained from Baldwin II, the Latin emperor at Constantinople) and a piece of the true cross on which Christ was crucified. His biographer Jean de Joinville told stories of him washing the feet of the poor and going to the countryside in the summer to talk with the more lowly subjects of his kingdom.

**POLITICAL DOMINATION.** Many of the rulers and members of the religious hierarchy of the period did not, however, follow Louis' example. In the southern part of Italy and in Sicily, there was continual conflict between powerful noble families and the church. Charles of Anjou (the brother of Saint Louis) had been placed in control of the region by the church, after authority was wrested from the German Hohenstauffen monarchs. Charles' role became self-serving, however. He began allying himself with Italian political elements (powerful nobles and clergy) and even gained control of a number of cardinals—councilors to the pope who ranked second in power only to the pontiff himself. The result was years of political wrangling, stalled papal elections, and vacancies in the office of bishop of Rome. Indeed, as a result of the political conflicts in this region, there were nine popes from 1276 to 1295, with a total of 42 months in which there was no pope at all. A brief period of sanity came with Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294–1303), who proclaimed 1300 a "jubilee year" and also promulgated a very responsible body of canon law (*Liber Sextus*) in 1298, which supplemented previous codes, particularly those of Gregory IX. Nonetheless, Boniface's tenure was tarnished by acrimonious disputes with the French king Philip the Fair (1268–1314), who was taxing church

properties to finance a war against England. The result of this was the papal bull of 1296, *Clericis Laicos*, condemning the unnamed laity (the kings of England and France) for unjust taxation supporting a war between Christians (prohibited without papal consent). It took several months and much political maneuvering before the taxations ceased. Boniface continued to have difficulties with Italian cardinals and nobles who allied themselves with Philip until, finally, the French plotted to have the pope's elevation nullified. In 1302, Boniface issued his famous *Unam Sanctam*, calling for the unity of the church under one pope, whose authority extended to the secular subjects because his spiritual power took precedence over secular powers. The bull sparked flaming invectives from both sides, including physical attacks upon the pope by agents of the French king. With Boniface's death in 1303, the vestiges of medieval papal power began to slip away. Philip soon succeeded in expelling most of the merchant Jews from the growing French realm and divesting the Knights Templar of their wealth and resources.

**THE AVIGNON PAPACY (1309–1377).** After the death of Pope Boniface VIII, Philip the Fair continued attempting to weaken the church in order to further his political aims. Popes Benedict XI (r. 1303–1304) and Clement V (r. 1305–1314), a Frenchman, proved ineffective at limiting royal authority. Following the deaths of Boniface and Benedict, bitter factions formed in Rome over the direction the papacy would take. Clement, who had been crowned in Lyon, was unable to occupy the papal residence in the city of Rome due to a variety of political complications. In 1309, during a prolonged illness, he finally decided to remain at Avignon, which was located in what is now southern France on the lower Rhône River. The location had for some time been under papal control connected to its vassals, the Angevin kings of Naples. Since Avignon bordered France, Philip the Fair was quite pleased to have the French pope much closer at hand. It was not unprecedented for a pope to reside outside Rome or spend extended periods of time outside the city, but in this case his decision had dire consequences.

**THE GROWTH OF SECULAR POWER.** Under Pope Clement, and Pope John XXII who followed him, the papacy was characterized by a mixture of valuable reforms and increasing assertions of secular power. Clement appointed nine French cardinals, four of whom were his nephews, and he was forced by the French king into some serious compromises of papal integrity. Some of his reforms proved productive, however. At the suggestion of the Catalan theologian and missionary Ray-

mond Lull, Clement began to encourage the development of chairs at the various leading universities (Bologna, Oxford, Paris, and Salamanca) for the study of Arabic, Hebrew, and Chaldaic, believing that knowledge of both scriptural and local languages would lead to success in the conversion of Muslims and Jews. Likewise, his successor, John XXII, might be admired for his personal simplicity, as well as a program of almsgiving (distribution of food, clothing, and medication to the poor). However, as the papacy continued to reside in Avignon, the desire for power and opulence became ever more apparent. The city of Avignon was virtually a military fortress with some three miles of walls surrounding the papal palace. Pope John XXII allowed for the securing of additional resources to decorate the palace and brought artists, artisans, and scholars to the city. During a dispute over control of the Holy Roman Empire (1316–1326), Pope John refused to recognize all three claimants to the position of emperor and asserted his right to administer the empire himself during the void in leadership, a move that elicited protest in many parts of European society. Treatises by writers like John of Paris, Marsilius of Padua (*Defensor Pacis*, 1324) and Dante Alighieri (*De Monarchia*, c. 1310) stressed the parallel and autonomous natures of papal and imperial powers. While such power came from God, one authority did not have the right to interfere in the other's domain. Marsilius, a philosopher and canonist, went so far as to suggest that it was the people who held the basis of power. He felt that all clergy were equal in status and that no human had the right to define Christian truth, or dispense interdicts and excommunications that would be deemed universal. Infallibility, according to Marsilius, could only come from the consensus of the faithful. The Italian poet Petrarch, in his *Book Without A Name*, railed against the abuses and scandal at Avignon, calling it a medieval Babylon.

**THE GREAT SCHISM.** The abuses of the Avignon papacy were so great that they eventually led the church to split into two, and even three, separate entities. One of the most abusive aspects of the Avignon regime was its policy of taxation. Due to the loss of revenues from the papal states, additional revenues had to be extracted. Church benefices began to be bought, sold, and traded, and such sales were supplemented by the *annates*, a tax amounting to approximately one year's income on all new appointments. Out of the seven Avignon popes, six were French. All continued to function as the bishop of Rome, although residing outside the city. (A vicar was appointed to attend to the necessary ministry there.) Many of the cardinals that had been appointed were

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***UNAM SANCTAM: A PAPAL BULL**

**INTRODUCTION:** Following a series of bitter disputes with the French king Philip the Fair (1268–1314), who was taxing church properties to finance a war against England, Pope Boniface VIII went on to address the issue of the church's authority in the 1245 bull *Unam Sanctam*. King Philip IV of France, in reaction to the earlier *Clericis Laicos*, had prohibited the transfer of money outside of his realm and, as a result, had quite effectively reduced French support to Rome. Many of the French bishops had given in to pressures from the king and became less than supportive of the pontiff. The bull *Unam Sanctam* once again outlined papal claims of authority over God's people, with its spiritual exigencies exceeding those of the temporal judgments of the crown. Philip's outrage at the bull resulted in the ransacking of the papal palace and the brief imprisonment of Boniface.

French, and internal secular political strife that had besieged Italy continued. There was a brief return to Rome between 1367 and 1370 under Pope Urban V, but he reconvened his court at Avignon the following year. A general plea for returning the papacy to Rome came from many parts of Europe. Following the pontificate of Gregory XI in 1378, an Italian, Urban VI, was named pope, quite possibly under the pressure of demands from the Roman people. In less than a year, however, the curia was dissatisfied with Urban's leadership and asked the pope to step down. When Urban refused, Clement VII, a cardinal from Geneva who was a cousin of the French king, was elected to replace him. Clement was forced to withdraw from Rome and move the papal court back to Avignon. There were now two popes. This is the event that likely started the Great Schism (1378–1417). While it was certainly not historically unusual for there to be two rival claimants to the papacy (pope and anti-pope), this Rome-Avignon split caused a rift that lasted some forty years. The two courts existed side by side, with the

Avignon popes being recognized in France, Spain, Scotland, Naples, Sicily, and parts of Germany while the Roman popes were acknowledged throughout northern and central Italy, much of Germany, Bohemia, England, Poland, Hungary, and Scandinavia. Abuses of power continued and church-related taxation became overwhelming. There were now two sets of cardinals, each connected to a pope.

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## FROM SCHISM TO REFORM

**REFORMING COUNCILS.** The need to resolve the Schism brought about new kinds of efforts to unify and reform the church. Dietrich von Neheim, a bishop from Verden in Germany, who had spent much of his life in the service of the papacy, proposed a reforming union that might be brought forth by an authoritative council superseding the voice of the popes, with the power to determine the general direction the church should take. In 1409, the first council, the Council of Pisa, met and began a series of general reforms. The council tried to deal with the problem of the schism by deposing the two rival popes and electing a new one, hoping this action would cause a merger of the two Cardinal Colleges. Unfortunately, the plan did not work, and now all three

continued in power. A second council was then called at Constance in the southern part of Germany in 1414 by the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund to continue the reforms started at the Council of Pisa. Of the three schismatic popes, John the XXIII (supported by the Pisan group) presided as the dominant papal figure. The council took three and a half years to finish its work, holding some 45 sessions. Representatives from all of Christendom were present: bishops, university representatives, leaders of religious communities, and secular rulers (observers even came from the Eastern churches). Among the matters addressed were the ideas of reform through regularly scheduled councils, the superiority of a council over the pope, and certain heresies that were gaining ground among the common people.

**THE END OF THE SCHISM.** The theologian Pierre d'Ailly played a significant role in the direction of the council. He suggested that in addition to completing the reforming work of Pisa, they might attempt again to heal the schism. He asked John XXIII, by far the strongest

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE CALL FOR A GENERAL COUNCIL**

**INTRODUCTION:** At the time of the Great Schism, when rival popes held power in Avignon and Rome, Dietrich von Nieheim, the bishop of Verden in northern Germany, strongly advocated the convocation of a council to heal the disorder within the Western Christian Church. He suggested that the council should be called by the collective authority of churchmen representing the interests of Christendom. But he also suggested that an emperor, in time of need, had the authority to convene a general council.

Now take the pope. He is a man of the earth, clay of clay, a sinner liable to sin, a mere two days ago the son of a poor peasant. Then he is raised to the papacy. Does such a man, without any repentance of sin, without confession, without inner contrition, become a pure angel, become a saint? Who has made him a saint? Not the Holy Spirit, because it is not as a rule the office which confers the Holy Spirit but only the grace and love of God; nor his place of authority which may come to both the good and the wicked. Therefore, since the pope can be no angel, the pope as a pope is a man, and being a man he thus is pope: and as pope, and as a man, he can err. For a good many of them, as you may read in the chronicles, were not very spiritual. ... It is absurd to say that one mortal man should claim the power to bind and to loose from sin in heaven and earth, even though he may be a son of perdition, a simoniac, miser, liar, oppressor, fornicator, a proud man and arrogant, one worse than the devil. Therefore human judgment neither can nor ought to assume one to be a saint who in that Seat, by his evil deeds, proclaims the contrary. ...

These various members [of the Church], however, stand diversely—higher and lower—in its mystical body. They must all be brought back to the unity of the Church in a double manner: by obedience as well as by withdrawal. That is to say, they must obey the one universal and undoubted vicar of Christ, and they must by common consent and with a single will withdraw their obedience from these two or three contenders for the papacy who are a scandal to the whole Church. This withdrawal, as I have said, is binding uniformly on all Christians under the pain of mortal sin. For supposing the Universal Church, whose head is Christ, have no pope, the faithful dying in charity shall yet be saved. For when two or more compete for the papacy and when the truth of the matter is not known to the Universal Church, it is neither an article of faith, nor a deduction from one, that this man or that must be accepted as pope, nor can any faithful Christian be obliged to believe so. ...

Now, since the General Council represents the Universal Church, I shall speak my mind about the assembling of this Council. I have said elsewhere that when the issue is the reconstruction of the Church and the matter of the pope—whether to get him to resign, or whether he should be deposed for his evil living and the scandal in the Church—it by no means belongs to the pope, however sole, universal and undoubted he be, to call a General Council. Nor is it his place to preside as a judge, or to lay down anything concerning the state of the Church; but the duty belongs in the first place to the bishops, cardinals, patriarchs, secular princes, communities and the rest of the faithful. In equity no man of ill-fame can or may be a judge, particularly in his own cause. ... I tell you, the prelates and princes of the world must, under pain of mortal sin, call and summon [a Council] as quickly as they can; they must cite to it this pope and those who strive with him for the papacy, and, if they will not obey, must depose and deprive them. ... But is then such a Council, in which the pope does not preside, above the pope? Indeed it is: superior in authority, superior in dignity, superior in competence. For even the pope must obey such a Council in all things. Such a Council can limit the pope's power because to it, representing the Universal Church, are granted the keys to bind and to loose. Such a Council can abrogate the papal decrees. From such a Council there is no appeal. Such a Council can elect, deprive and depose the pope. Such a Council can make new laws and repeal old and existing ones. The constitutions, statutes and regulations of such a Council are immutable and cannot be dispensed from by anyone inferior to the Council. The pope cannot, nor ever could, issue dispensations contrary to canons made in General Councils, unless the Council, for good reason, specifically empowered him to do so. Nor can the pope alter the decisions of the Council, or even interpret them or dispense from them, for they are like Christ's gospels from which there is no dispensing and over which the pope has no jurisdiction. Thus there will come to the members the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace; thus we shall live in the Spirit and shall walk in the Spirit. ...

Therefore, if a General Council, representing the Universal Church, is anxious to see an entire union and to repress schism, and if it wants to put an end to schism and exalt the Church, it must before all else, following the example of the holy fathers our predecessors, limit and terminate the coercive and usurped power of the pope.

**SOURCE:** Dietrich von Nieheim, *The Union and Reform of the Church by a General Council*, 1410, in *Renaissance and Reform 1300–1648*. 3rd ed. Ed. G. R. Elton (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1976): 16–18.

of the three schismatic popes, to step down and allow for the election of one pope. The voting blocks were divided into regions since it was feared that the Italian cardinals and bishops would easily dominate the election. John stepped down after considerable posturing on the part of his opponents and proponents. John's absence gave the council the opportunity to broach the issue of *conciliarism*, a supreme church authority which rested with the general council, not the pope. The decree *Haec Sancta* supported the authority of the council and all future general councils, demanding that all Christians (even the pope) adhere to its decisions. The council, in the name of the church, representing the interests of the church, would draw its authority from Christ. The council went on to depose the other two papal claimants, Gregory XII (almost ninety, who resigned) and Benedict XIII (who refused and died in exile). In November of 1417 the electorate, represented by 23 cardinals and delegates from the European nations, elected Martin V, to whom all would claim obedience. He presided over the remaining concordats and reform. Significant among the actions of the Council of Constance were the reforms on papal taxation, the ability as a body to call future councils with their own authority, and the resolution of the issue of transfer of bishops by Rome. There was also a condemnation of the heresies that had been propagated by the Englishman John Wyclif (who had died in 1384) and the Czech reformer Jan Hus.

**JOHN WYCLIF.** Although the Council of Constance resolved issues having to do with political power and the papacy, the concern over the preaching of John Wyclif was an indication that the public perception of church corruption ran much deeper. Wyclif had been a teacher at Oxford whose controversial theological views were condemned by the Blackfriars Council of 1382. Despite the fact that he himself held several absentee benefices (positions from which he received income by delegating the work to a curate), he had railed vehemently against clerical abuse. He felt that unrighteous church leaders had no religious authority whatsoever. In his work *On the Truth of the Holy Scriptures*, he wrote that scripture was the church's highest and truest authority. Wyclif had rejected the church's teaching on transubstantiation, calling it unscriptural, illogical, and unfaithful to the teaching of the early church. In 1380 he wrote his treatise *On the Eucharist*, which advanced a literal interpretation of the substances of bread and wine after consecration. He intimated that Christ was not corporeally present after the blessing, that the bread and wine remained physically unchanged. Wyclif also insisted that preaching was more important than the encounter of the sacraments. *On the Power of the Pope* claimed that the office of the

papacy was completely of human origin. Wyclif also did not believe in the existence of purgatory. Toward the end of his life he began producing a vernacular translation of the Bible so that individuals who did not have an opportunity to learn Latin could read the Bible in English, without the need for a clerical intermediary.

**LOLLARDRY.** After Wyclif's death in 1384, his followers, often called the Lollards (literally the mumblers), continued his attempts to reform the church. Most of the early Lollards were Wyclif's students from Oxford, but soon the movement began attracting individuals from the lower and middle classes. The term Lollard also was applied to the Béguines and Beghards in the Netherlands. In England, Lollard preachers, based upon their reading of the Bible, went about the countryside protesting the corruption, abuse, and excesses of the clergy. During the reign of Richard II (1377–1399) a number of Lollard preachers were imprisoned, but the movement continued to grow. Not only did they have disdain for clerical wealth and power, but their indictments extended to members of the lay nobility as well. They also opposed clerical celibacy and use of the Latin Bible, and some even espoused free love and pacifism. In 1401, under Henry IV, a statute was passed making heresy a crime punishable by death. Lollards were quickly branded as heretical and many were executed, some being burned at the stake. While the movement was eventually driven underground, it took root in northern England, where it was embraced in certain circles through the sixteenth century. Wyclif's ideas proved to provide a fertile base for the eventual success of Protestant reformers. So powerful was the fear of Wyclif's reforms that in 1428 the bishop of Lincoln had his body exhumed and burned, and his ashes thrown into the river.

**JAN HUS.** In 1382 Wyclif's teachings had found their way from England to Bohemia by way of a member of the household of the English queen Anne, who was the sister of the Bohemian king Wenceslas IV. It was at the University of Prague that Wyclif's ideas gained popularity among Czechs, and it was there that Jan Hus came under its influence. In 1407, some 23 years after Wyclif's death, his theology was being discussed at Prague's university. Soon after, the teaching was condemned by the archbishop of that city. Hus, who was rector of the University of Prague, embraced many of Wyclif's ideas, however. He especially appreciated Wyclif's arguments concerning church authority and the fact that it should be limited only to those who were righteous enough to treat it responsibly. Hus began to preach aggressively against simony (the buying and selling of clerical offices) and the greed of the clergy. He



also openly criticized the sale of indulgences and believed that the church should always accommodate itself to be at the disposal of the faithful. In 1410, while the works of Wyclif were being burned, Hus's theological viewpoints were being scrutinized by the church. Although attempts were made to silence him, Hus continued to preach and even succeeded in rousing an angry mob to storm the archbishop's residence, which led to the burning of Hus's theological writings and his eventual excommunication in 1411. Throughout the next year, Hus continued to stir up revolt and was forced to leave Prague. Further condemnation of Wyclif's teachings was launched by the Council of Pisa in 1413; but this did not stop Hus, who all along wished for a reform of the church, never a break with it. To make his point, he even appeared at the Council of Constance in 1414, arguing that the church was founded on Christ and that the church hierarchy was a creation of mankind. While the conciliarists were in agreement with some of Hus's ideas, they found the majority of his teachings far too radical. Some thirty errors were pointed out in Hus's *De Ecclesia* ("Concerning the Church"). Hus denied teaching these heretical ideas but never formally denounced them. He was condemned and burned by a group of secular officials. It was said that a paper hat with the word "heretic" was placed upon his head during the fiery execution.

**THE HUSSITE WARS.** Upon news of Hus's death, riots broke out in Prague, and his followers, who became known as the Hussites, continued to preach throughout Germany and the Czech territories with both a religious agenda and one that supported Czech nationalism. A persecution of the Hussites, sometimes referred to as the Hussite Wars, took place between 1419 and 1436. According to the provisions created at the Council of Constance, Pope Martin was obliged to call subsequent councils to steer the direction of the late medieval church, and at the one in Basel, in 1433, a group of 300 Hussites came to debate the issue of the church's condemnation of their beliefs. The council at Basel turned into more of an academic debate, but like the previous council at Siena, suffered poor attendance. It was not until 1437 that a compromise was reached which brought an end to the religious revolts in the Czech region.

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## FAMINE, THE BLACK DEATH, AND THE AFTERLIFE

**FAMINE.** Despite the divisive fourteenth-century power struggles that shook the papacy and church hierarchy, there were other events which even more gravely affected the religious outlook of all Christians. A devastating famine that ravaged Europe between 1315 and 1317 delivered its most violent shocks throughout much of northern Europe. Weather patterns during those years that produced extremely cold winters and rainy summers resulted in crop failures that left many urban dwellers without food. Significant failure of wheat crops in France caused prices to double. In England it was much worse, and livestock were forced to go with little food. Fish and meat became scarce, as the fishing industry in Holland was affected by the imbalance of trade, and diseases began to kill the cattle in England that had survived the famine. Germany may have fared the worst. The toll on human lives may have reached twenty percent of the northern European population, affecting the wealthy as well as the poor. The monasteries and convents were particularly devastated. In addition to large numbers of religious succumbing to starvation and related disease, properties had to be sold off at greatly reduced rates. There are harrowing stories of religious going without food in order to save the lives of their tenant farmers and families. Such devastation was thought, in part, to be linked to God's wrath upon sinful humanity. Thus, both in popular consciousness and in church doctrine, notions relating to death, heaven, hell, and purgatory became the subject of speculation. The famine, as such, never became a subject of religious and popular literature, but it created conditions of psychic unease that planted the seeds for the proliferation of literature concerning sin, human destruction, and death that would burst on to the scene during the period of the bubonic plague (1347–1350).

**THE BLACK DEATH.** As northern Europe barely began to recover from the famine, the bubonic plague known as the "Black Death" plunged much of Europe

into a state of widespread contagion. Some estimate that as many as one-half of Europe's population perished (possibly thirty million lives). As with the famine, no social class, station, faith, or age group escaped the ravages, save those in a few isolated cities who had the luck or foresight to quarantine themselves (a practice invented in Venice around 1360). The clergy were particularly concerned with ministering to the dying and, of course, burial. Sacramental anointing of the dying, extreme unction, had been reduced in the thirteenth century to a much simpler formula of forgiveness that could be administered by one priest, usually at the time near death. Given the necessity of such contact with the infected, it is surprising that any priests survived. Due to the resulting shortage of priests in England, the bishop of Bath gave permission to the people to confess their sins to laity, men or women, if no priest was available. Canons were appointed to the parishes of dead secular priests. There are also French accounts of cowardly parish priests fleeing their stations, leaving members of the religious orders with the task of ministering to the dying. It has been suggested that the friars were the division of religious with the largest number of afflicted. The cloistered groups were particularly susceptible to the plague once it entered their community. Hundreds of monasteries and convents were completely wiped out.

**PERSECUTIONS.** In the midst of this devastation, attempts were made to determine its causes. Aside from the scientific theories of physicians, irrational blame began to be directed toward certain social groups: Muslims in Spain, strangers in small villages, pilgrims, ethnic minorities, those who spoke foreign languages, lepers, and, most virulently, Jews. Sporadic and spontaneous attacks upon Jewish people were common throughout the time of the plague. They were most often accused of poisoning the wells and drinking water of Christians. Punishments ranged from imprisonment to burning. Accounts of mass incineration are documented in the German cities of Worms, Dresden, Stuttgart, Erfurt, Memmingen, Freiburg, and Lindau. Other murders took place in Speyer, Cologne, and Mainz. Clement VI called for the excommunication of Christians who persisted in persecuting the Jews. Pedro IV of Aragon attempted to give protection to the Jews of his kingdom and prosecuted Christian assailants. Efforts at stemming the violence were also made at Cologne and in Austria. Despite such attempts, the attacks upon European Jews did not substantially subside until after the plague ended.

**THE FLAGELLANT MOVEMENT.** The religious fervor accompanying the Black Death could be seen in a most extreme form in the practice of flagellation, self-

administered whippings that were intended to punish the body as penance, both for personal sins and for the sins of mankind which were thought to have caused the plague. The flagellant movement had been going on for some time in the Middle Ages (dating to the twelfth century), when individuals punished their sinful flesh or brought it under control through the sting of the beatings. These inflictions were often done in public by groups connected to the movement, accompanied by procession and the singing of psalms. The earlier practices were condemned by church authorities, but during the bubonic plague they seem to have made a strong reappearance. Some believed the plague was signaling the end of the world, and groups of flagellants began to organize and march about Europe calling for general repentance. Processions of hundreds of flagellants are recorded, marching in twos, with crosses and purple banners (purple was seen as the color of penitence). The groups would often move into village squares, or to local churches, announced by the ringing of bells, strip off their outer hooded garments, lie upon the ground with outstretched arms (cruciform) and begin to take turns scourging one another, chanting as they proceeded. Their whips were made of leather thongs, and many brandished instruments with barbed metal tips. Spectators frequently were so moved by the emotional and disturbing scene that they themselves joined in the penance.

**THE CULT OF THE AFTERLIFE.** One outcome of the plague for most Europeans was a preoccupation with the afterlife. It was not an issue of whether or not there was an afterlife, since the need for hope amid daily experiences of loss assured the continuation of that expectation. But there were a number of different approaches to the question of how to maintain a spirit of hope and how to avoid dying without proper preparation of the soul. One development that occurred was the rise of treatises called *Ars moriendi* (literally "art of dying"), intended to prepare Christians for the act of death. These treatises taught *contemptus mundi*, the hatred of the goods of the world and an awareness of the transience of the flesh, illustrated in a form of popular poetry that asked the question *ubi sunt* ("Where are they?") of long lists of kings, queens, beautiful women, and heroes who are, inevitably, dead. Doctrines and popular notions of the world beyond included the notion of purgatory. Even in earliest medieval Christianity, prayers were regularly said on behalf of those who had died but whose souls were still awaiting eternal reward. Only a few heretical theologies dismissed the notion of purgatory: the Waldensian, the Cathar, and the Wycliffite. With so many people involved in some form of religious life, it was easy to see by contrast that spiritual perfection,

which must be the key to heaven, was not easy to attain. Hell was for the worst of sinners; purgatory was for the rest. The period of one's stay in purgatory depended upon the number of unrepentant venial sins that a person died with. If so many would be in the state of purgation from life's sins before entering heaven, there was need for prayers, devotions, and even strategies for making the stay less punishing. The theologian Peter Lombard in the twelfth century had addressed many of these issues, which were further considered by thirteenth-century philosophers and theologians such as William of Auvergne, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas. A culminating statement came from the Council of Lyon in 1274, the year of Aquinas' death, and by the early fourteenth century, the beliefs were so widespread that they served as the basis for Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* of heaven, hell, and purgatory. Thus, in the wake of the plague, prayers were said, masses were offered, and indulgences were earned or purchased to assist both self and loved ones with the arduous task of navigating the afterlife. Fraternal and guild organizations starting in the thirteenth century compiled lists of members needing prayer. Thousands of these confraternities existed throughout the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries all over Europe. Protestant theologians during the sixteenth century would reject these beliefs.

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#### MYSTICISM AND MODERN DEVOTION

**AN AGE OF PERSONAL PIETY.** The late Middle Ages witnessed a period of popular piety and mysticism that is quite unparalleled in Christian history. Ideas of service to others in the world combined with spirituality, which came on the heels of twelfth- and thirteenth-

century monastic and religious reforms and found itself deeply imbedded in the fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century religious mindset. The search for a direct and personal communication with God, whether it was through mystical experience or a life of quiet inner contemplation of images (such as the *arma Christi* or the implements used to torment Christ, as in a miniature from a book of hours now in Oxford, England), seemed to replace the notion of conformity to institutional rituals. Like the religious reformers in the centuries before them, however, the proponents of this new kind of spirituality were often seen as bordering on the edge of herodoxy—holding opinions at variance with established belief. Their desire for personal religious experience also prepared the way for the pre-reformation idea that the mediation of priests and sacraments was not the only way, and maybe not even the best way, for people to live meaningful Christian lives centered on a quest for spiritual perfection. Exactly what the mystics experienced is hard to grasp objectively. Their own writings report their personal ecstatic experiences which, whether real, imagined, or induced, have helped shape a broad tradition of spiritual understanding in the Latin Christian tradition.

**MEISTER ECKHART.** Germany seems to have been a center for mystical and spiritual activity in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Among those mystics whose ideas proved influential was Johannes “Meister” Eckhart (1260–1327). Eckhart was a leader in the Dominican Order whose studies of Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus led him to reflect upon some of the more Neoplatonic elements of theology (relating back to the Greek philosopher Plato and his theories of the soul). Eckhart, during his later career, became absorbed in the notion of the soul’s relationship to God. This led him to adopt ideas of the indwelling “spark” or spirit of God that not only allowed people a glimpse of the divine but was what truly made them “one” with the divine. He felt the soul could literally experience the Word of God dwelling within, and become that Word, just as Jesus became the Incarnate Word. This transformational mystical experience, quite unlike what the great twelfth-century mystics like Bernard of Clairvaux wrote about, appeared to eliminate the distance between God and people. Bernard’s “affective” mysticism (focused on emotions rather than intellect) was grounded in humility and love, which is seen as the experience of God, since God is love itself. Bernard had believed that one came to know and love the self for the sake of God. But in Bernard’s opinion, the self did not become a realization of the divine, as Eckhart seems to imply. This is what brought Eckhart into conflict with church doctrine, resulting in the condemnation of some 28 of his propositions by Pope John XXII in 1329.

**MYSTICS IN GERMANY.** One of Eckhart’s disciples, another Dominican named Johannes Tauler (1300–1361), studied with Eckhart at Cologne and later became a preacher and spiritual advisor at Strasbourg and Basel. Like Eckhart, Tauler was also convinced that a “grounding” of God’s image existed in the soul, but he felt that it was something that came from God and was not intrinsic to humans. He believed the return of the soul to its source in God was an operation of grace where Christians absorb something of God into themselves. Another of the great German Dominican mystics was Henry Suso (1295–1366). Henry was also part of the Cologne school and defended Eckhart during his condemnation. Suso lived as an ascetic and later launched his career in preaching and ministry. His approach to the mystical experience was expressed in the idea of the uncreated and created wills of God and humans. He wrote treatises called the *Little Book of Truth* and the *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom*, meditations on Christ’s passion and guides to mystical questions which gained wide popularity. Some of his treatises were translated into other languages and were beautifully illustrated. All three of the preced-



Annunciation to the Virgin, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Pinoteca Nazionale di Siena, Italy, 1340. THE ART ARCHIVE/PINACOTECA NAZIONALE DI SIENA/DAGLI ORTI.

ing German Dominican mystics were spiritual advisors to groups of Dominican nuns and Béguines. The particular brand of German mysticism that emerged from these groups was grounded in personal piety, vernacular preaching, and the care of souls. Eckhart and his disciples also wielded much influence over the religious and lay mystics of the Rhineland who called themselves “The Friends of God.” This group produced the late fourteenth-century work *Theologica Deuch* which had profound effects upon sixteenth-century reformers like Martin Luther, the Anabaptists, and the Spiritualists, including Caspar Schwenkfeld and, much later, the Quakers, who espoused a mystical form of Christianity which emphasized “following an inner light.”

**ENGLISH CONTEMPLATIVE MYSTICS.** England also produced its own brand of fourteenth-century mystics who were more inclined to the eremitical and contemplative lives, unconnected to religious orders, away from the world (quite different than the German Dominicans). Richard Rolle (1300–1349) became a hermit at the age of eighteen and began to write about his mystical experiences. His most distinctive writings, in a work called *Incendium amoris* (The Fire of Love), concern his physical sensations of spiritual union with God, what he refers to as heat (actual warmth in his body), sweetness, and song. He also wrote *De amore dei contra amatores mundi*, which compares the love of God with the transient pleasures of this world. One of Rolle’s followers,

Walter Hilton, who died in 1396, wrote *The Scale of Perfection*, which was not published until 1494. Hilton's work describes the restoration of the defaced image of God on our souls through faith and feelings, hindered by a mystical darkness and attachment to earthly things, aided by the spirit. Both Rolle and Hilton worked with religious communities at the very end of their lives—Rolle directing Cistercian nuns at Hampole, and Hilton living with Augustinian canons. Most likely one of the greatest women mystics of the Middle Ages, Julian of Norwich (1342–1416), also lived in England during this period. She took up the life of an anchoress outside the walls of St. Julian's Church in Norwich. On 8 May 1373, after taking ill and being near death, she reported receiving a series of fifteen revelations lasting almost five hours. Many of these were visions of the crucified Christ. She made a complete recovery in a little over a week. It was not until some twenty years later, reflecting upon these experiences, that she completed *Revelations of Divine Love*, also called *The Showings*. Much of her spirituality is intertwined with her visions of Christ's Passion and the Trinity. In God's love lay the answers to all of the world's difficulties, including the solution to the problem of evil. She felt that evil was linked to the human will and was the clear absence of the divine reality. Human ability to desire to glimpse the divine love was an indication of God's true mercy.

**AN ITALIAN MYSTIC.** St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380), a Dominican tertiary, lived a different type of spiritual and mystical life. At an early age it is reported that she began mortifying her flesh, and at sixteen she entered a Third Order group of Dominicans. She spent most of her time in secluded contemplation at her family's home. A vision persuaded her to begin doing apostolic work in the world. Catherine assembled about her a devoted group of religious and began employing her gifts of infused prayer (emotional prayer over an extended period) to bring about a devotion to the Precious Blood and a greater understanding of the reconciliation of sinners. Her reputation as a mystic grew to the point that she was forced to defend her activities in front of a Dominican General Chapter in 1374, at which time she was cleared of suspicion of heresy. In 1376 Catherine made a journey to Avignon to plead for a return of the papacy to Rome. She is most famous for her series of letters and spiritual instructions, which were dictated to her scribes.

**DEVOTIO MODERNA.** One of the most expansive ideological developments in late medieval spirituality was initiated in the Netherlands by Gerard Groote (1340–1384) and one of his followers, Florentius Radewijns (1350–1400). This movement, later known

as the *Devotio Moderna* (modern devotion), was based upon the philosophy of Groote, a university master, who renounced his wealth, which had been derived from church benefices, to become a religious reformer living a life of piety and simplicity. Radewijns' and Groote's work strongly influenced three early reform communities: the Deventer groups of both Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life, and the community of Augustinian canons at Windesheim. The idea was for groups of Christians to live in common, not separating themselves from the secular world, carrying on shared religious observances, with no vows, hopefully preventing them from falling into the institutional traps that had snared the monastic reform movements. Many laypersons were attracted to this lifestyle, and branch communities began to spring up throughout western Germany. Some who desired an existence with more structure and monastic influences, yet grounded in Groote's philosophy, joined a tertiary Franciscan group that had formed a chapter at Utrecht. After Groote's death the groups were recognized by Pope Gregory XI and continued to spread their ideology throughout Germany and the Low Countries. Radewijns' Brothers of the Common Life were organized in his vicarage in Deventer where he was a parish priest. They spent time copying books, distributing pamphlets, and founding schools throughout the Netherlands, providing individuals with a general education that was free and of surprisingly good quality. Thomas à Kempis, Pope Hadrian VI, Erasmus, and Nicholas of Cusa were all famous products of this educational system. In 1387 a congregation adhering to the lifestyle of Augustinian canons was founded at Windesheim. Their constitution was approved by Pope Boniface IX in 1395, and three other Dutch monasteries soon joined them. The Windesheim canons soon became a full monastic order and developed into the most ardent proponents of the *Devotio Moderna*. They encouraged the laity toward frequent reception of the Eucharist as well as the devotion and veneration of the Blessed Sacrament. Thomas à Kempis, a member of one of the Windesheim daughter houses at Agnietenberg, is credited with writing the great spiritual work *Imitation of Christ*. In this work he suggests that all Christians are pilgrims in this life and are but on a journey to the next. *Imitation of Christ* appealed to people living simple lives in the world. It was soon translated into the vernacular (Dutch in 1420 and German in 1434). There were few other books from the fifteenth century that had such an impact upon lay spirituality.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: The Retreat from Reason: Mysticism*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Religion*

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### THOMAS BECKET

1120–1170

*Archbishop of Canterbury*

*Diplomat*

*Martyr*

**COMPANION TO THE KING.** Thomas Becket was the son of Norman settlers who lived in the city of London. His father was a merchant who traveled among the circles of French-speaking Norman immigrants. The name "Becket" is likely a nickname, possibly meaning beak or nose, which was given to his father. As a boy, Thomas studied with the Augustinian canons at Merton Priory and later at the cathedral school of St. Paul. Some suggest that as a young man Becket studied in Paris under Thomas Melun. Around 1141 he came into the service of Theobald, the archbishop of Canterbury, whose household companions included several future bishops. Thomas was later sent to study law at Bologna and Auxerre, likely entering into minor clerical orders along the way, and eventually becoming a subdeacon. Theobald consecrated Thomas as an archdeacon at Canterbury in 1154, and he continued in the service of the bishop's household where he had been for nearly ten years prior. Soon after, the young king Henry II's backers chose

Thomas for the position of chancellor of the realm, which was essentially a secular position as royal counselor. While working in the English court, Becket developed an extremely close friendship with the king, accompanying him on hunting expeditions and even a successful military campaign in Aquitaine, where Thomas commanded an army of hundreds of knights and thousands of mercenary soldiers. Upon the death of Archbishop Theobald in 1162, Henry asked Thomas to take the position of archbishop of Canterbury. It may have been Henry's wish that his close friend hold both positions of chancellor and archbishop since the king then would be able to exert significant influence over the English church.

**A SURPRISING CONVERSION.** To Henry's surprise, upon his friend's ordination to the priesthood in June of 1161, and his elevation to the archbishopric one day later, Thomas resigned his post as chancellor. He quickly began to take his new office very seriously. It is said that he lived an almost ascetic lifestyle, rising early to pray, enduring humiliations like washing the feet of the poor, wearing a purposely uncomfortable hair shirt, scourging himself out of indifference to his flesh, studying the scriptures, and surrounding himself with learned churchmen. It was not long before he came into conflict with the king over the rights and authority of the church, as well as the notion of church taxation. One particularly distasteful battle took place over a document known as the Constitutions of Clarendon. Issued by Henry II near Salisbury in 1164, it reasserted the church-state customs and relationship conducted during the time of Henry's grandfather, Henry I (r. 1100–1135). Issues concerning the judgment and punishment of clerics by secular powers, freedom of the bishops to travel outside the realm without royal consent, the requirement that the church obtain the king's permission before excommunicating his tenants, and the crown's entitlement to income from vacated church lands were among the more vexing statutes. In essence, these propositions gave the king specific and, as Thomas saw it, excessive legal authority over the church. Henry demanded that the bishops swear oaths to the effect that they would uphold the Clarendon conditions. Thomas reluctantly did so, along with other bishops present. However, Thomas later regretted the decision when Pope Alexander III openly denounced the Constitutions of Clarendon. Thomas felt obliged to uphold the opinion of Rome and, after being found guilty at a public trial, escaped England and fled to France where he lived in exile for six years. His years living as a penitent monk in Cistercian and Benedictine houses were not comfortable, especially since he had little support from his fellow bishops or even from Pope Alexander,

who was distracted by the claims of an anti-pope. After several attempts at reconciliation and the threat of interdict issued by Alexander III, Thomas and Henry agreed to a “rhetorical” compromise, which in no way actually modified either man’s position. Becket returned to England in 1170 and resumed his role as archbishop of Canterbury. But less than a month after his arrival, disgruntled elements in the royal circle inflated issues related to Thomas’s excommunication of several bishops who had acted in defiance of Rome, on the king’s behalf, and were being punished by Thomas. Hearing Henry II’s displeasure over another confrontation with Thomas, four of the king’s knights took the initiative to rid the realm of the troublesome cleric for good. After an argumentative exchange in Thomas’s chambers, the knights followed the archbishop into Canterbury Cathedral, where they attacked and killed him.

**SAINTHOOD AND KINGLY PENANCE.** Upon news of Thomas Becket’s murder, Pope Alexander III went into mourning, then placed an interdict (exclusion from sacraments) upon King Henry II. At Sens, the French archbishop imposed interdict over the inhabitants of all the king’s lands on the European continent. Henry was eager to make peace with the church, and at Avranches in 1172 conceded to give in to the notion of appeals to Rome in all cases of church disputes. He also restored all property to the archbishopric of Canterbury and made a vow to go on a crusade to the Holy Land. Henry even agreed to the exemption of clerics from the jurisdiction of secular courts. In 1173, just two years after his death, Thomas was canonized as a saint of the church. The cathedral at Canterbury where he was murdered became a famous pilgrim site, one even visited by the penitent Henry II himself in July of 1174. It is said that he walked barefoot from the city gates to the tomb of his former friend, admitted his guilt in the archbishop’s death, and submitted himself to some 240 lashes administered by the monks from Canterbury Cathedral. As in the case of Henry IV of Germany during the investiture crisis (some 100 years earlier), a monarch’s act of penitence and humility, whether calculated or not, demonstrated the power of devotion that was held by Christians in Europe, even in the face of dominant secular authority.

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## GREGORY VII

1021–1085

### *Pope*

**A SKILLED ADMINISTRATOR.** Gregory VII served the church in Rome for many long and distinguished years before becoming pope in 1073. Consequently, he is more often than other popes referred to by his given name, which was Hildebrand. He was born to a poor family in Tuscany and came to Rome as a boy to be educated at the monastery of St. Mary on the Aventine Hill. Although it has been suggested that he spent his early days as a monk, scholars now think that unlikely. Hildebrand served under seven different popes before his own elevation. He was the chaplain of Pope Gregory VI and even accompanied him in exile to Germany during 1046 and 1047. Upon Gregory VI’s death, Hildebrand remained in Germany and worked with reform groups to create a more serious, committed, and spiritual outlook among European clergy. He returned to Rome in 1049 to work under Leo IX as an administrator of papal estates and properties (called the Patrimony of St. Peter). Hildebrand guided other papal successors through their pontificates (such as Nicholas II and Alexander II) and may even have been responsible for helping them get elected. There is little doubt Hildebrand came to influence a crafting of the legislation for the process by which cardinals eventually came to vote on papal successors. In 1059 he was given the title Archdeacon of the Roman church and also held the title of Chancellor of the Apostolic See. His election as pope in 1073 came as no surprise since he had held major administrative posts in Rome for some thirty years prior.

**A MAJOR REFORMER.** Upon his elevation to the Roman bishopric, Hildebrand began to work more aggressively to reform the morality of the church and clergy by issuing decrees against simony (the buying and selling of clerical offices), clerical participation in sexual activity, and lay investiture (conferring of authority to a church official by a secular prince or landowner). *Dic-tatus Papae*, which has been attributed to Gregory, declared Rome’s supreme authority in all religious matters. Monarchs reacted to these changing ideas of church authority in varying ways. In England, William the Conqueror saw to it that all of the Gregorian reforms, with the exception of rules against investiture, were rigorously carried out. In France, despite King Phillip I’s opposition, the bishops complied. Henry IV of Germany, however, posed a major stumbling block for Gregory’s vision, the most important results of which were to raise the

moral awareness of the clergy, create a more unified and powerful church governance, and establish an organized administrative system of papal legates. These changes set in place the ideology for the new reforming monastic movements beginning in the late eleventh century, the rebirth of Roman legalism linked to canon law, the condemnation of growing materialism in European society, and even the new theological and scholastic attitudes of the time. Moreover, he created an atmosphere of dialogue that eventually led to some measure of agreement on the vexed question of the existence of the “real presence” in the Eucharist (Christ’s actual presence in the elements of bread and wine). It was from the seeds of that resolution that the twelfth-century doctrinal view of transubstantiation would emerge. Although his effort to unite Eastern and Western Christianity were unsuccessful, only two other bishops of Rome, Gregory I (r. 590–604) and Innocent III (r. 1198–1216), could be said to have had as great an impact on the future of medieval Western Christianity.

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### INNOCENT III

1160–1216

#### *Pope*

**SECULAR INTERVENTIONS.** Innocent III was born Lothario de Segni to a noble family and was educated at Paris and Bologna. As a young cleric, he rose through the ranks of the papal service, becoming a cardinal in 1190 and being elevated to the papacy in 1198 upon the death of Celestine III. It is interesting to note that Innocent was not yet ordained a priest at the time of his election. His strength lay in his ability to intervene effectively in secular affairs, and it has been suggested that no pope in the entire medieval era had a greater impact on the period in which he lived. Innocent reduced the size of the papal curia (the court or administrative body), wresting it from the grasp of Italian secular politics. He also was able to restore papal territories that had been lost over time to the Holy Roman Empire. Interventions in several conflicts over disputed succession to the Ger-

man throne were also among the accomplishments of Innocent. Examples of involvement in major European church and state politics include his interaction with the emerging kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula, the struggle for the conversion of eastern Europe to Christianity, and settlement of political disputes involving Bosnia, Bulgaria, and Hungary. Above all, he sought to extend the powers of the bishop of Rome. Innocent was the first pope to employ the title “Vicar of Christ,” which implies the ability to act as Christ’s representative on earth. This is certainly a testament to the broad extent of his ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

**MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS.** Another matter concerning spiritual and temporal powers which drew considerable attention during his reign was Innocent’s intervention in the issue of the succession of the archbishop of Canterbury in England. After declaring the election of 1205 invalid, Innocent placed his own candidate, Stephen Langton, in office after overriding separate decisions about candidacies by both the local bishops and King John. John’s failure to cooperate in the matter resulted in the entire kingdom of England being placed under an interdict which limited reception of the sacraments by all of the English people. Irreconcilable positions between crown and church resulted in the king’s excommunication (just prior to his capitulation in 1211). After a series of political twists involving Innocent’s revocation of Magna Carta, John finally took the position of accepting the pope as his overlord. Possibly the crowning achievement of Innocent’s pontificate was the fact that he presided over the Lateran Council of 1215. This massive gathering of clergy made major reforms to the medieval church, possibly marking it as the most important council of the entire Middle Ages. Nearly every bishop from the Catholic territories, some 25 churchmen from the Latin East (including Maronite bishops), representatives of canons from every cathedral chapter, the heads of the major religious orders, as well as secular representatives of the major kingdoms attended. Literally thousands of participants were summoned to the council. Most of the seventy or so decrees that were drafted by Innocent and his curia were not debated, but presented to the church. The majority of these decrees (or canons) involved pastoral care and the reform of the clergy, including their careful education by the bishops. There were also several crusades during his tenure, including the failed Third Crusade and the successful campaign against the Albigensian (Cathar) heretics. Innocent’s approval of the Franciscan and Dominican orders of friars proved to be of major significance to the growth of ministry and education for the church in the centuries to follow.



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**MECHTHILD OF MAGDEBURG**

1212–1281

*Mystic*  
*Spiritual writer*

**A VISIONARY BÉGUINE.** Mechthild of Magdeburg was a German spiritual writer as well as a great mystic of the thirteenth century. She came from a noble Saxon family but rejected her heritage for an existence of simplicity and prayer. Mechthild joined a Béguine community at Magdeburg, devoting herself to a life filled with penance and humility. Like another of the great Béguine mystics, Hadewijch of Antwerp, she saw herself as a vessel of divine inspiration. Mechthild believed she had received the ability to speak, as inspired by God, directly from her visions of ecstasy, led by a charismatic spirit. One of her common themes was the notion that from weakness comes strength. Like other Béguines, she saw that a life lived in imitation of Christ was something open to all Christians, not just clerics and individuals in orders. Her prophetic calling was viewed as a transcendent communion with the love of God.

**A THREAT TO CHURCH AUTHORITY.** Like the Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, Mechthild employed the image of bride and bridegroom from the Old Testament Song of Songs to convey her spiritual union. Because of her association with the secular world, it was also permissible for her to use the language of courtly love in her writings. Between 1250 and 1269 she produced a book about her visions entitled *Das Fließende Licht der Gottheit* (Outflowing Light of the Godhead). The work was written in bold poetic style and became quite influential on subsequent German medieval mystics. Mechthild, like Marie d'Oignies, was not afraid to point out the prevalent immoral activity of the clerics that she saw around her. She drew great criticism from

the male-dominated church, both for her freedom of expression and for her claims to receive direct divine communication. The period in which the Béguines operated was clearly a time when clerics were threatened by the profound piety of holy secular women, particularly when they admitted to having mystical experiences or direct illuminations. Not only did they undermine the authority of the hierarchy, but also it was felt that their lack of formal theological training might lead them into some type of heresy. The anti-mendicant Parisian master William of Saint-Amour once wrote that the laity stood in constant need of perfection through the ministry of the clergy. Since the Béguines were not under the authority of a religious order or secular clerics, the direction of their spiritual leadership and influence was seen as unregulated, uninformed, and unprofessional. Eventually, as with many other outspoken Béguines of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Mechthild was pressured into retreating to a convent. At the age of 62, she entered the Cistercian house at Helfta, where she continued writing and added one more volume to her work.

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**MARIE D'OIGNIES**

1177–1213

*Mystic*  
*Founding mother*

**A SPIRITUAL HEALER.** Marie was born into a noble Flemish family near Liège in the Low Countries and was one of the first women to be recognized as a Béguine. Although she was married at fourteen, she and her husband did not consummate their marriage, but rather worked together in the care of the sick. At thirty, she renounced her wealth and retired to a cell at an Augustinian monastery, devoting herself to an ascetic, Christ-centered life in which she experienced ecstasies and visions, even to the point of accomplishing a miraculous three-day feat of incessant chanting and scriptural exegesis (critical interpretation). She was particularly well known as a spiritual healer, and her reputation inspired the growing groups of urban laywomen who were beginning to assemble together in parts of Germany and

the Lowlands to attempt to live holy lives in austere communities, but without taking formal vows as required within the official structure of recognized convents and monasteries. She is thus recognized as a founding mother of the movement of spiritual women known as the Béguines.

**AN EXAMPLE OF A VIRTUOUS LIFE.** The story of the life of Marie d'Oignies was written by Jacques de Vitry, who had relayed stories of virtuous Béguines to the papal curia. Jacques de Vitry had begun his career as an Augustinian canon and for one year was a neighbor and confessor to Marie, along with being a disciple of her spirituality. His biography of Marie d'Oignies was written to show the heretics of Languedoc an example of what a truly holy woman's life should be. Jacques wrote of Marie's extreme piety, her disdain for her fleshly self, and the inspiration that he drew from her criticisms of his own life of spiritual inadequacy. When Jacques became bishop, he used his stories to help the Béguines gain from Rome some type of temporary recognition, although he could not get them formally approved as an order. Gregory IX's bull *Gloriam Virginalem* did later recognize these chaste virgin women of Germany and afford them papal protection.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Religion*

Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of St. Benedict* (early 6th century)—This set of guidelines for monastic living, written by the abbot of Monte Casino for his own monastery and possibly some neighboring houses, focuses on humility and obedience. Promoting stability and stressing the need to give up all personal property, it offers practical and moderate advice for a community of monks designed to function almost as a family under a fatherly abbot. This rule was the most widely adopted by monasteries throughout medieval Europe from the ninth century onward.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* (c. 1153)—This unfinished work by the first leader of the Cistercian Order follows the medieval exegetical scheme of fourfold meaning of Scripture: literal, allegorical, moral, and mystical. Themes range from behavior of monks to the mystical union between the Bridegroom (Christ) and the Bride (the Church).

St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (The Journey of the Mind into God, 1259)—This Franciscan theologian, philosopher, and leader of his order (born John of Fidanza, c. 1217–1274) took a more traditional view than Thomas Aquinas of the relationship between human reason and the mysteries of God. In this work he puts forth the notion that human wisdom meant nothing or was a waste of time when compared to the profound mystical understanding that could be imparted by God to those of His faithful who were receptive to such enlightenment.

Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam* (1302)—This papal bull, named after its opening statement, claimed that there was “One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” outside of which eternal salvation did not exist. The pope was seen as supreme head of the church, and to reject his authority was to sever ties with the institution to which God had granted spiritual authority. In short, obedience to the pope was necessary to salvation. While this statement was not universally accepted by all Christians and it really was not a new dictum, it did represent a summation concerning the church's vision of papal authority.

St. Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of the Sun* (1225)—This work is a hymn of praise to God's creation and the revelations of the divine that are found in nature. Traditionally thought to have been composed at the Garden of the Poor Clares at San Damiano, the poem was not written in Latin but in the Umbrian dialect of the Italian people. Francis encouraged his friars to recite or sing it while they were out preaching, and it is often mentioned in medieval writings concerning Franciscan spirituality. Many scholars now think that the second part of the hymn, dealing with the notions of peace, pardon, and death, was composed during a later period, possibly before the death of Francis.

Gratian, *Decretum* or *Concord of Discordant Canons* (early twelfth century)—The man called “the father of the science of canon law” (now believed to be two separate people) wrote this work, which had as its purpose the reconciliation of diverse and often contradictory thought on church law through the application of dialectic. It is divided into a treatise on law, a series of hypothetical cases, a tract on penance, and a sacramental tract.

Gregory of Palamas, *Heihasmos* or *Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychast* (c. 1338)—This theologian and monk of Mount Athos became immersed in the Hesychast tradition of mystical prayer. He wrote this famous treatise against Barlaam, a Greek Calabrian monk who supported the notion that God was unknowable. Gregory contended that it was possible for humans to experience the Divine Light. While he believed that God's essence might be unknowable, his energies—that is, the reality of God himself—are in all things and can be experienced and visualized by people in a direct sense through the workings of God's grace.

Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* (c. 1151)—One of the first medieval women to write about theology and Christian spirituality, Hildegard (1098–1179) became widely known during her own lifetime. Her prophecies and visions were written down in a three-volume Latin work, the *Scivias*, often translated as “Know the Ways.” The work includes some 26 visions, a number of which were composed in poetry or later set to music. Hildegard used images to express spiritual concepts and discussed a range of topics from the Fall of Humanity to depictions of the institutional church, as well as renderings of the end of the world.

Julian of Norwich, *The Showings* (c. 1373–1393)—This work consists of the recounting and interpretation of a series of ecstatic revelations of the Passion of Christ and the Holy Trinity received in 1373 by Julian, an anchoress of Norwich. She completed the work some twenty years after the revelations took place, recounting her lifelong meditation upon the experience. Julian's writing on the mystery of faith and the life of prayer became a classic, reprinted in numerous fifteenth-century devotional works, where it served to emphasize the central place of God's love as the root of spiritual growth, determination, and perseverance.

Peter Lombard, *Four Books of the Sentences* or *Quattuor libri sententiarum* (1155–1157)—This comprehensive work arranges the opinions (*sententiae* in Latin) of the church fathers, especially Augustine, into a system with a logical

order of development. It was legislated into the curriculum of all theology students at the University of Paris in 1215 and remained there until the sixteenth century.

*Summa Cartae Caritas* or *The Charter of Love* (twelfth century)—This important charter laid out the constitution of the Cistercian Order and expressed a departure from the relationship between houses in the Benedictine Order, particularly as practiced in the tradition of Cluny. The document was said to have first been presented to Pope Callixtus II in 1119, outlining the autonomy of Cistercian houses, their system of visitations by abbots of their motherhouses, and the call for yearly meetings or General Chapters, where monks would meet to decide collectively upon their order's legislation and governance. The document was subsequently revised during the early Cistercian period and may have reached a final form around the middle of the twelfth century.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (before 1273)—This massive statement of the whole of Christian theology is divided into three parts treating God, God's relations with humanity and humanity's relations with God, and Christ and the Sacraments. This work became the basis of medieval clerical education and is still recognized today for its system and clarity.

Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ* (c. 1418)—This manual of spiritual devotion was written by an ascetical monk from the reform house of Zwolle, a daughter house of Windesheim. Thomas was influenced by the tradition of the Brethren of the Common Life and directed this work toward achievement of a life of spiritual perfection based upon the Christ as its model.

Urban II, *Clermont Sermon* (27 November 1095)—This is the speech that Pope Urban gave in support of the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont. There are actually five surviving versions of the speech, all of which put forth the principles and justification for crusading that would set the theological tone relied upon by churchmen in their promotion of subsequent campaigns.

chapter **8** eight

THEATER

Carol Symes

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	378		
OVERVIEW . . . . .	381		
TOPICS			
The Legacy of Rome . . . . .	383		
The Renaissance of Charlemagne . . . . .	387		
The Development of Liturgical Drama . . . . .	389		
Serious Comedy . . . . .	393		
The Popular Bible. . . . .	396		
Plays on the Cutting Edge . . . . .	399		
Professional Performers . . . . .	404		
Community Theaters . . . . .	408		
The Afterlife of Medieval Theater . . . . .	412		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Geoffrey de Gorron. . . . .	414		
Arnoul Gréban . . . . .	415		
Hildegard of Bingen . . . . .	416		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	417		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
Medieval Theater Terms . . . . .	384		
The Festive Year . . . . .	385		
<i>A Medieval Definition of Theater</i> (excerpt from Hugh of Saint-Victor's encyclopedia, <i>Didascalicon</i> ) . . . . .	386		
		<i>St. Augustine Confesses His Love of Theater</i> (excerpt from the <i>Confessions</i> of Saint Augustine, an early theologian). . . . .	387
		<i>The Visit to the Sepulchre</i> (excerpt from a collection of liturgical reforms). . . . .	391
		<i>The Incident at Riga</i> (Henry of Livonia describes the outcome of a play performed by missionaries). . . . .	399
		<i>The Service for Representing Adam</i> (excerpt from <i>The Play of Adam</i> as the Devil tempts Eve) . . . . .	400
		<i>A Sheep In The Manger: The Second Shepherds' Pageant</i> (the second of two pageants devoted to the role of shepherds in the Christmas story) . . . . .	402
		<i>Staging The Castle of Perseverance</i> (excerpt from the play's detailed instructions for staging) . . . . .	407
		<i>List Of Props, Sets, And Costumes For The Last Judgment At York</i> (inventory of materials used for an elaborate annual pageant) . . . . .	411
		<i>The Censorship of a Medieval Play</i> (excerpt from a letter concerning a play that was controversial to Elizabeth I's Protestant England) . . . . .	413
		<i>Medieval Theater in the New World</i> (English translation of an excerpt from the oldest surviving play in any Native American language) . . . . .	413

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Theater*

- 814 Emperor Charlemagne dies. Under his auspices, numerous innovative programs are undertaken that contribute, directly and indirectly, to the development of medieval theater and the preservation of ancient Roman plays.
- c. 825 Amalarius, bishop of Metz (778–850), expresses concern over the overtly dramatic nature of the Mass, indicating that he views the devotional practices of the medieval Christian Church as inherently theatrical.
- c. 850 Heroic poems in many European languages have already been written and performed, notably the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* and the Germanic poems that will later contribute to the *Nibelungenlied*.
- c. 900 Evidence shows that many European monasteries, like that of Saint-Gall in Switzerland, are developing new and dramatic approaches to worship.
- c. 950 Revivals and imitations of ancient Roman comedy are being performed.
- c. 960 King Edgar of England complains that the monasteries of his realm are so decadent they are being publicly mocked by professional actors.
- c. 975 Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester, promulgates the *Regularis Concordia* (A Harmony of the Rules) for use in the Benedictine monasteries of England, including instructions for the performance of liturgical drama.
- The Easter sequence built around the question *Quem queritis in sepulchro?* (“Whom do you seek in the sepulchre?”) is already central to the liturgical re-enactment of Christ’s Resurrection.
- c. 1002 Hrotsvit, a nun in the imperial abbey of Gandersheim (Germany), dies. Her Christian Latin comedies borrow the techniques of the Roman playwright Terence.
- 1066 Portions of the Old French heroic poem *The Song of Roland* are performed by a minstrel prior to the victory of William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings in England.
- c. 1080 William IX, duke of Aquitaine and one of the first troubadours, dies. His songs are composed in his native Occitan (southern French) dialect.
- c. 1090 The earliest liturgical drama to make use of the vernacular, a play called *Sponsus* (The Bridegroom), is recorded at the abbey of Saint-Martial at Limoges (France).
- c. 1100 *The Song of Roland* is written down for the first time.
- c. 1110 A French schoolmaster named Geoffrey de Gorran produces a play about the martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria with the help of his students and some borrowed vestments from St. Albans Abbey in England.
- c. 1140 Numerous Latin comedies, among them *Pamphilus* and *Babio*, are being composed and performed in monasteries, cathedral schools, and princely courts.
- c. 1150 The liturgical plays that make up the manuscript known as the *Fleury Playbook* are put together at about this time; they are usually associated with the abbey of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire in France.
- c. 1155 Hildegard of Bingen composes the *Ordo virtutum* (Service of the Virtues) for the nuns of her convent at Rupertsberg, one of many dramas mingling song, dance, and elaborate costumes to create special effects.

- 1160 The monks of Tegernsee Abbey compose and perform the *Play of Antichrist* in honor of Frederick Barbarossa, the Holy Roman Emperor.
- c. 1180 Two early vernacular plays based on the Bible, the *Service for Representing Adam* and the *Play of the Magi Kings*, are composed at about this time in Anglo-Norman French and Castilian Spanish.
- c. 1191 Following the conquest of Arras by King Philip II Augustus of France, Jehan Bodel composes the *Play of St. Nicholas*, the first non-biblical play written entirely in a vernacular language (Picard French).
- c. 1200 The monks of the Bavarian abbey of Benediktbeuern compose the songs and plays that will be collected as the *Carmina Burana*. Their Easter play makes use of the local German dialect.
- 1205 Henry of Livonia, a missionary to the people of Riga (in what is now Latvia), describes an unsuccessful production of an *ordo prophetarum* or “Play of the Prophets.”
- c. 1210 The young men and boys of the cathedral school at Beauvais, in northern France, preserve the script for their musical, *The Play of Daniel*.
- 1215 The Fourth Lateran Council calls for the recruitment of effective and charismatic preachers to minister to the newly urbanized population of Europe; they will have to compete with professional entertainers for the attention of the people.
- c. 1230 Bawdy verse tales known as *fabliaux* are being widely circulated; many were probably dramatized as plays, among them *Courtois of Arras*.
- c. 1250 Two manuscripts of a second play in Anglo-Norman French, *The Holy Resurrection*, are copied at about this time.
- c. 1267 The script for a comic French dialogue called *The Boy and the Blind Man* is written down.
- c. 1270 By this date, the aristocracy of Europe enjoys participating in elaborately staged tournaments, many of which involve dramatic recreations of popular Arthurian romances.
- c. 1276 Adam de la Halle, French playwright and poet, composes a second play set in contemporary Arras, the *Jeu de la feuillée* (The Play of the Bower); it may have been modeled on the earlier *Play of St. Nicholas* by Jehan Bodel of Arras.
- c. 1283 While in the service of Robert II, count of Artois, Adam de la Halle composes a musical comedy called *The Play of Robin and of Marion*.
- c. 1311 The Feast of Corpus Christi, originally established in 1264, is officially promulgated at the Council of Vienne. It will become the major occasion for community theatricals, most notably in England.
- 1339 In this year, the Parisian guild of goldsmiths and its religious confraternity begin sponsoring the annual performance of plays devoted to the miracles of the Blessed Virgin; forty of these survive in a single, deluxe manuscript.
- 1376 This year marks the first documented mention of the York Corpus Christi cycle.
- 1378 A play about the Crusades is performed at a banquet in Paris hosted by King Charles V of France, according to an illuminated manuscript.
- 1381 The English Peasants’ Revolt takes place on and around the Feast of Corpus Christi, replacing theatrical violence and public displays of civic harmony with real violence and civil unrest.
- c. 1400 By this date many major European cities are performing annual Passion plays or staging other types of civic spectacles on a grand scale.
- 1415 The *ordo paginarum* (“order of the pageants”) for the performance of the York cycle is written down at this time.

- The manuscript of the oldest Middle English play, *The Castle of Perseverance*, is copied around this date.
- c. 1450 A play celebrating the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is being performed annually on August 15 in the Basque town of Elche by this date; its performance will continue into modern times.
- 1452 The invention of the printing press spurs the widespread dissemination of play scripts throughout Europe, especially the texts of morality plays and farces.
- c. 1465 The play *Mankind* is scripted for a troupe of traveling professional actors.
- 1468 The 43 plays that make up the *N-Town Cycle* (sometimes known as the *Ludus Coventriae*) are written down after this date.
- 1477 The 48 pageants of the York Cycle are committed to parchment around this time.
- c. 1480 Two ambitious English plays, one devoted to the life and deeds of Mary Magdalene and the other to the conversion of Saint Paul, are written down after this date.
- c. 1495 A Dutch morality play called *Elkerlyke* (Every soul) is in print; it is eventually translated into English as *Everyman* and made available in several editions.
- c. 1500 The so-called Towneley (or Wakefield) cycle of 32 English plays is copied into a manuscript at about this time.
- 1567 Matthew Hutton, the dean of York Minster cathedral, advises the mayor and council of York not to perform the *Creed Play* of the Corpus Christi cycle, on the grounds that it would be considered heretical by the Protestant authorities and Queen Elizabeth I.
- 1576 The Theater, the first modern purpose-built venue for the performance of plays, is constructed in London.
- 1579 The final performance of the Corpus Christi play of Coventry takes place in this year. The young William Shakespeare would have been able to see this and many other examples of medieval drama.
- 1634 The people of the village of Oberammergau (Germany) begin to perform their *Passion Play*; it becomes an ongoing devotional ritual and is still performed in modern times, at ten-year intervals.

## OVERVIEW *of Theater*

**THE ROLE OF MEDIEVAL THEATER.** During the Middle Ages, theater was both a part of daily life and a way of celebrating special occasions. It was not limited to scheduled presentations of formally composed and fully scripted plays, and performances were not confined to particular buildings, dependent on a caste of professional actors or a paying clientele. Rather, medieval theater was a means of communication within and between communities, from monasteries to parish churches to princely courts to urban marketplaces. There was a wide array of theatrical styles and genres: musical dramas performed as part of the liturgy of worship; bawdy Latin comedies written for the amusement of students and clerics; biblical dramas that translated sacred stories into familiar languages and scenarios; ballads and tales of heroic deeds chanted and dramatized by professional entertainers; obscene jokes and sketches for late-night entertainment after feasts; royal entries and pageants that made a dramatic spectacle of power; morality plays; farces; and civic rituals on a grand scale. Medieval theaters were not built, but rather made use of pre-existing locations such as the town square, the street, the inn yard, the lord's hall, and the church. Plays of a kind more familiar to modern readers thus shared the same spaces. They also shared the same audiences as other civic activities such as the preaching of sermons, the news of town criers, royal proclamations, public executions, and religious processions. Theater was woven into the very fabric of medieval life and was the most effective medium for entertainment, religious instruction, and political propaganda.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION.** Evidence for the workings of theater within medieval culture must be traced through that dense fabric, like gold threads in a richly colored tapestry. The study of theater in the Middle Ages is not so much the study of individual plays and particular dramatic productions as the study of myriad interactions between performers, audiences, and the larger social context in which performers and audiences participated. These interactions were only loosely scripted, if they were written down at all. As a result, the sources

scholars would normally rely on for the history of theater—a group of documents identifiable as plays, whose circumstances of performance can also be documented—rarely exist for the Middle Ages. Either such information was not written down, or (if it was) these written records have disappeared. By contrast, the wealth of material that survives from the early-modern period (after 1500), and which makes the study of Renaissance drama so appealing, is partly owing to the development of an important new technology: the printing press. The people of the Middle Ages, like those of the ancient world, produced only handwritten records known as manuscripts (from the Latin *manuscripta*, “things written by hand”). In consequence, most of the texts that survive from these early eras, theatrical or otherwise, were not available in multiple copies and did not circulate widely. Many ancient and medieval sources have not survived at all. To take but the most famous example, the great library of Alexandria, founded by Ptolemy II (309–246 B.C.E.) to house the books of antiquity, was destroyed by fire sometime in the first century B.C.E.—and with it, most of the body of Greek drama. The few classical plays that are still read today—for example, the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, or the comedies of Aristophanes—have survived only because copies were made and kept in other places than the library at Alexandria. Hundreds more plays, by these and other Greek and Roman authors, have vanished. During the Middle Ages, and up to the present day, natural disasters, warfare, theft, arson, and ordinary wear and tear continue to diminish the number of theatrical artifacts available from this era. Fortunately, quite a few significant plays do survive, and what they communicate about this period can be supplemented by information gleaned from an array of other materials, including scholarly treatises, legal documents, church records, letters, and chronicles.

**THE CREATIVE PROCESS.** A medieval play generally came into being as the end result of a process quite the reverse of what modern readers would expect. In the twenty-first century, a play begins with the playwright, and the playwright's idea is then expressed in written form, in a script, which is then marketed to a theatrical producer, who then hires a director, finds a theater, casts the actors, and finally tries to capture the attention of an audience, who will in turn pay to see a certain performance in the theater at a fixed time. Throughout the Middle Ages, a play began with the community. Liturgical dramas embellished the rituals of the church, and used actors drawn from the monastery or cathedral churches—monks and nuns, students, and clerics. Plays performed in towns promoted the harmony of the community or celebrated their histories. Many were acted by members



of the newly emerging trade guilds, and became a source of solidarity and pride. The various entertainments of the princely court involved the aristocracy in performance, side by side with professional actors and minstrels. Rural communities all over Europe had their own local performance traditions for celebrating special feasts and important events like weddings and funerals. In all of these cases, it was the community's need—its ideas or message or conflict—that would shape the story that was eventually dramatized by actors engaged by, or chosen from among, the members of that community. The resulting play would then be performed in some space deemed appropriate to the material, at a time of the year and of the day that was also considered appropriate. Only at the very end of this process might someone decide that the play should be written down and saved for posterity; more often, the theatrical moment would pass unrecorded, or be revived from memory at another time, or freely adapted for another occasion or audience.

**THE VARIETY OF MEDIEVAL THEATER.** Medieval theater developed through a number of stages. In the earliest period, the theatrical legacy of ancient Rome was passed down and revived in the newly Christian world of early medieval Europe. Some classical plays continued to be copied and performed by educated men and women with a knowledge of Latin, while the timeless craft of professional entertainers found new audiences, occasions, and places for its expression. Alongside these established forms, a new and unique type of Christian theater emerged in church liturgy, which created numerous opportunities for the dramatization of significant events in the life and ministry of Jesus, and in the history of human salvation. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, significant surviving texts show that the drama of the medieval Christian Church was becoming a powerful theatrical genre in its own right, blending the Latin language of worship with the vernacular languages of daily life in order to communicate more directly with the growing populations of prosperous towns. Bible stories were updated in order to convey messages of contemporary importance, and plays also became a vehicle for serious social or political commentary. At the same time, plays independent of the liturgy addressed an ever wider array of topics and problems, and experimented with new performance venues and new types of engagement between actors and audiences.

**NEW OPPORTUNITIES.** The largest number of surviving plays, however, are those composed and performed during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By this time nearly every sizable community in Europe developed and fostered a local theatrical tradition that promoted the growth of urban and regional identities, and

traveling troupes of professional actors were taking advantage of the new commercial opportunities afforded by the cultivated audiences of cosmopolitan centers and the sophisticated courts of the aristocracy. By the sixteenth century, the cultural heritage of the Middle Ages would prove indispensable to the playwrights and performers of the Renaissance, whose fascination with classical drama was grafted onto that tradition, producing a modern mixture of the ancient and the medieval.

**ORAL TRANSMISSION AND PATTERNS OF PRESERVATION.** Since performance traditions were usually passed down by word of mouth, only a tiny percentage of the entire theatrical legacy of the Middle Ages was preserved in writing; and even these scripts are often incomplete because they would have been accompanied by further oral instructions and improvisations. It is arguable, in fact, that the survival of a text is an indicator that the play recorded there was thought to be in danger of extinction, or even that it was marginal, about to be relegated to obscurity. Ironically then, the most popular performance pieces may never have been written down, for the very reason that everybody knew them so well and thought that they would never be forgotten. This is particularly true for the early medieval period, until about 1100. Thereafter, writing became more widespread, and more widely trusted, so that by 1300 the number of available plays is relatively large. Histories of medieval theater thus focus more attention on these later centuries, because more documents were produced—not because it was only at this late date that people began to participate broadly in theatrical activities. Furthermore, the predominance of religious drama among the surviving plays does not necessarily mean that the theater of the Middle Ages was always, or even primarily, dominated by religion. Prior to 1300, written records were mainly produced by men and women connected with the church, so, of course, most surviving early plays are in Latin, the language of learning and ritual, and were generally connected to major religious holidays and performed as part of the liturgy. These few scripted plays, however, represent only a tip of the iceberg.

**THE EMERGENCE OF NEW DRAMATIC FORMS.** The answer to the question “What is medieval theater?” depends on how one decides to read the historical record. Does the available evidence indicate that there was very little theatrical activity in Europe for over a thousand years? Some scholars have argued that this is so, and that the history of theater in the Middle Ages is tantamount to the history of the destruction of ancient dramatic traditions, which were replaced by a purely Christian series of “static” or boring ceremonies. In this formulation, drama must first “break free” from the “oppressive” rit-

uals of medieval religion before it can enter the modern age, ushered in by the Renaissance. Very recently, however, this argument has been challenged: it is now being shown that medieval people made use of classical models while at the same time developing their own unique theatrical practices, which eventually contributed to the emergence of the new dramatic forms associated with the Renaissance. In other words, modern scholars can interpret the evidence to mean that the theater of the Middle Ages was diverse and vibrant, that it had the immediacy and impact associated today with modern sketch comedy, street theater, or live television—as well as (depending on the occasion) the pageantry characteristic of grand opera, the beauty of a carefully choreographed dance, the solemnity of a state funeral, the festivity of a carnival, or the violence and eroticism of action films.

## TOPICS *in Theater*

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### THE LEGACY OF ROME

**THEATER OR LITURGY?** The theater of ancient Rome was both challenged and enriched by the demands of the Christian religion, which rose to prominence during the early decades of the fourth century. On the eve of an important battle in the year 312, a Roman general called Constantine (c. 274–337) prayed to the Christian god to assist him in defeating his enemies, rival claimants to the leadership of the Roman Empire. According to his biographer, Eusebius of Cæsarea (c. 260–340), Constantine had a vision in which he saw the image of the cross, and was told that “under this sign” (*in hoc signum*, abbreviated IHS) he would be victorious. Painting crosses on his banners and the shields of his legions, he marched into battle. When he won, his loyalty to Christianity was assured, and the traditional monogram IHS that had stood for the Greek name of Jesus was now reinterpreted by historians of the church to refer to this event. A year later, Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, making Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire, and just over a decade later, in 325, Constantine would spur the rapid growth of Christianity as an institutional religion by convening the Council of Nicea (an ecumenical or official church gathering) in Asia Minor. Here, for the first time in the history of the young church, bishops and teachers from all over the Roman world could meet and compare their views on how that church should be organized, and what its official teachings should be. Once an official doctrine was in place, there arose other

pressing topics of debate for succeeding generations of Christians, one of which was the relationship between the theatrical spectacles of pagan Rome—many of which had a strong religious component—and the new Christian theater of worship: the liturgy. The prayers, chants, hymns, and ceremonies that made up the liturgy emphasized Christianity’s debt to the stories of the Old Testament and its commitment to the teachings of the New Testament. The liturgy also dramatized the life and ministry of Jesus through a series of powerful rituals. The most fundamental of these was the daily ritual of the Mass, a re-enactment of the Last Supper when Jesus had performed the highly-charged act of breaking bread and inviting his disciples to eat this potent symbol of his own flesh, at the same time bidding them to drink the wine representing the blood he would shed for them the following day, Good Friday. But the very theatricality of the Mass engendered controversy, and it continues to do so in modern times. Some scholars argue that the Mass, as well as the many festive rituals of the church calendar, should be considered an integral part of medieval theater history. Others insist that the liturgy should not be classified as a type of theater, and make careful distinctions between a religious service (Latin: *ordo*) that merely performs a set of symbolic actions, and a play (*ludus*) that attempts to represent events through the impersonation of the characters involved.

**THE THEATER OF WORSHIP.** This modern distinction between dramatic ceremony and “real” drama is not one that medieval audiences appear to have made. In fact, a contemporary (medieval) definition of theater offered by the respected teacher and biblical scholar Hugh of Saint-Victor (1096–1141) includes divine worship in an extensive catalogue of entertainments and leisure activities, listing it alongside plays, sporting competitions, gambling, puppet shows, public reading, dancing, instrumental music, singing, and other pastimes. Writing at about the same time, an influential theologian called Honorius of Regensburg (fl. 1106–1135) explicitly compared the celebration of the Mass to the performance of a classical tragedy.

It is known that those who used to recite tragedies in the theaters would perform, through their actions, a display of their struggles. In just this way does our own tragedian, Christ, perform his actions before the Christian people in the theater of the church, and impresses on them the victory of redemption.

A century later, a Latin sermon would echo these sentiments when preachers began to complain that the emotive power of the Mass needed to be emphasized even more convincingly, so that it could compete effectively with other types of entertainment—in this case, attractive

## MEDIEVAL Theater Terms

**Antiphon:** A style of liturgical chant in which the chanted verses constitute a conversation between two choirs, with solo interventions by a cantor.

**Apocrypha:** The non-canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. For theater the most important of these is the Acts of Pilate, more commonly called the Gospel of Nicodemus in the New Testament apocrypha, believed genuine in the Middle Ages. It details how Christ descends to the underworld after his death, struggles with Satan in Hell, binds him in chains, and leads the Patriarchs, like Adam and Eve, out of Hell up to heaven again.

**Corpus Christi:** Festival dedicated to the “body of Christ.” Instituted in 1311 by Pope Clement V, it became the occasion around which many of the mystery cycles and Passion plays of Europe were performed.

**Eucharist:** The consecration and communion of bread and wine which memorialize Christ’s death and resurrection in the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. A “miracle” play was performed in England by the bakers’ guild, whose bread became the body of Christ during their re-enactment of the first Eucharist.

**Feast:** A certain day in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church devoted to the birthday or martyrdom of a particular saint or event of significance in the Christian year.

**Jongleur:** An Old French word associated with modern English “juggler,” used as a catch-all term to identify a person with the array of talents shared by the professional performers of the Middle Ages.

**Liturgy:** In the Roman Catholic Church, the forms of prayers, acts, and ceremonies used in public and official worship. The main parts of the liturgy are the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice called the Mass, the singing of the divine office, and the administration of the sacraments. It was from elements of the Mass that the earliest medieval drama is thought to have developed.

**Ludus:** From the Latin word for a game, it later came to mean “play.” Thus the name *Ludus Coventriae* refers to the cycle of Coventry plays.

**Mass:** The official name of the Eucharistic sacrifice and associated ceremonies and rituals. The word seems

to have come from the words of dismissal that end the Mass—*ite missa est*— meaning “go, the mass is done.” It is a re-enactment of the Last Supper when Jesus had broken bread, asked his disciples to eat this symbol of his own flesh, and bid them to drink wine representing the blood he would shed for them the following day, Good Friday. Some scholars argue that the Mass, and the many festive rituals of the Latin Church, should be considered the source of medieval theater.

**Monasticism:** The way of life typical of monks or nuns who dwell together for life, living austere and sharing in common according to a rule; their lives are devoted to the service of God.

**Mystery:** The term has two meanings in medieval drama. First it means one of the “mysteries” of Christianity, a miraculous event which must be accepted on faith such as the idea of the Virgin birth of Jesus. Second, it means a play put on by a craft guild, a group who have trade secrets or mysteries.

**Office:** The prayers and ceremonies in the Roman Catholic Church for some particular purpose such as the Office for the Dead, or the church’s services in general, such as the Divine Office.

**Ordo:** The service for representing some aspect of the liturgy or of dramatic events.

**Pageant:** A separate event in a pageant cycle or large group of plays on Old and New Testament themes, such as a pageant of Christ’s nativity.

**Passion:** The events of Christ’s last hours, his torments, suffering, and crucifixion. The term also refers to Passion Sunday or the fifth Sunday in Lent as these are dramatized in Passion plays of the late Middle Ages.

**Rubric:** From the Latin word for red (*rubeo*), the larger script indicating a chapter heading or division in a manuscript and particularly the directions (often printed in red in missals and breviaries) for the conduct of church services and the carrying out of liturgical rites.

**Sequence:** A type of hymn, but not in a regular meter, said or sung between the gradual and the Gospel of certain masses.

**Trope:** An antiphon or verse interpolated into a liturgical text.

**Vernacular:** The popular or non-Latin language of a country, such as French or English.

street-corner performances of the Old French heroic poem *The Song of Roland*.

When in the voice of the jongleur, sitting in the public square, it is recited how those errant knights

of old, Roland and Olivier and the rest, were killed in war, the crowd standing around is moved to pity, and oftentimes to tears. But when in the voice of the Church the glorious wars of Christ are daily commemorated in sacrifice—that is to say, how He

## THE Festive Year

The liturgical calendar of the medieval Latin Church begins at Advent, four Sundays before Christmas (25 December). It consists of fixed feasts, whose dates (like that of Christmas) never change, and moveable feasts, whose dates depend on the dating of Easter, which in turn is dependent on the Paschal Moon, the first full moon of the Vernal Equinox (March 21). The following is a list of the principal feasts, many of which provided the occasion for the performance of plays and related festivities. Also included are some non-religious celebrations based on the change of seasons.

Event	Date(s)		
Advent	Season begins four Sundays before Christmas	Maundy (Holy) Thursday	The Thursday before Easter
St. Nicholas	6 December	Good Friday	The Friday before Easter
Conception of the Blessed Virgin	8 December	Holy Saturday	The Saturday before Easter
Nativity or Christmas	25 December	Easter	Falls between 21 March and 25 April
Holy Innocents or "Feast of Fools"	28 December	Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin	25 March
Presentation of Jesus or Circumcision	1 January	First day of the medieval summer	1 May
Epiphany ("Twelfth Day of Christmas")	6 January	Ascension Day	Fortieth day after Easter (a Thursday)
Purification of the Virgin or Candlemas	2 February	Pentecost Sunday or Whitsunday	Fiftieth day after Easter, 14 May–14 June
Lent, beginning Ash Wednesday	Season begins six weeks and four days before Easter	Holy Trinity	Sunday after Pentecost, 21 May–21 June
		Corpus Christi	Thursday after Trinity Sunday, 25 May–25 June
		"Midsummer night"	23 June (vigil of the feast of St. John the Baptist)
		Nativity of St. John the Baptist	24 June
		Visitation of Our Lady	2 July
		Assumption of the Blessed Virgin	15 August
		Nativity of the Blessed Virgin	8 September
		All Hallows' Eve	31 October (vigil of the feast of All Saints)
		All Saints Day	1 November
		All Souls Day	2 November

defeated death by dying, and triumphed over the vainglory of the enemy—where are those who are moved to pity?

However, the theatricality of the Mass was not an issue for the people of the Middle Ages. Put more strongly, the Mass was fundamental to the culture of medieval Christianity because it was "good theater." The priest, standing at the altar of the church, spoke the very same words that Jesus had spoken to his disciples on the night of his betrayal and arrest, and performed the same actions. He enacted the role of Christ and, when he did so, the bread he blessed and broke became the body of Christ. In short, this miraculous occurrence, crucial to the Christian faith, was achieved through dramatization

of the event. The many feasts that made up the liturgical calendar of the church's ritual year, which began at Advent and climaxed at Easter, were likewise valuable because they provided further opportunities for festive drama. (The word "festive" derives from the Latin for "feast," *festum*.) Those who performed these rites and those who participated in them understood that these rites were supposed to enlighten, inspire, even entertain. They were theatrical.

**PAGANS AND CHRISTIANS.** The testimonies of later medieval theologians represent the perspectives of medieval people who were far removed from Christianity's pagan past and, at the safe distance of several centuries, appear to have felt comfortable in making comparisons

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A MEDIEVAL DEFINITION OF THEATER**

**INTRODUCTION:** Hugh of Saint-Victor, an influential teacher and scholar of the Bible at the monastery of Saint-Victor, outside Paris, included the science of “theatrics” (*theatrica*) as one of the seven “Mechanical Arts” in Book Two of his encyclopedia, the *Didascalicon* (circa 1125). In this passage Hugh exhibits a familiarity with Roman spectacle.

The science of playing is called theatrics from the theatre, the place where people used to gather for entertainment—not because a theatre was the only place in which entertainment could be had, but because it was more well-known than the rest. Some types of play were indeed done in theatres, some in the entrances of buildings, some in gymnasia, some in circuses, some in arenas, some at feasts, some at shrines. In the theatre, deeds were related either in verse, or by characters, or by means of masked figures or puppets. In entrance halls, they held dances or processions; in gymnasia they wrestled; in the circuses they ran races on foot or on horseback or in chariots; in the arenas, boxers exercised their skill. At banquets, they made music with harmonious and rhythmic instruments, recited stories, and played at dice. And in the temples at solemn festivals they sang the praises of the gods. ... For since it is necessary for people to get together in some place for amusement, they decided that certain spaces for entertainment should be defined, rather than that there should be many different meeting-places where they could perform shameful acts and misdeeds.

**SOURCE:** Hugh of Saint-Victor, *Didascalicon* (circa 1125). Translation by Carol Symes.

between the tragedies of Greece and Rome and the Christian tragedy of the daily Mass. But in Constantine’s day, as in modern times, there was controversy over the overt theatricality of Christian worship. In the fourth and fifth centuries, Christianity was still a minority religion, newly legal and as yet unformed. The theologians who came of age in those heady days were among the first generation of Christians who were able to discuss the tenets of their faith openly, and many were eager to distinguish it from the other sects with which it competed for attention in the crowded religious marketplace of late antiquity. They were also eager to show that Christianity offered the conscientious citizen of the Roman Empire an opportunity to rise above the distractions and

vices of that empire. Even in the days before Constantine’s conversion, when Christians were still—literally—fighting for survival, some prominent Christians had been outspoken in their denunciations of Roman decadence, especially the decadence of its theater. The writings of the Christian apologist Tertullian (c. 155–c. 221) offer extended, biting critiques of Roman beliefs and morals, and explicitly contrast the bloodless symbolism of Christian worship with the bloody sacrifices of pagan religions and the blood sports of the amphitheater and the coliseum. Yet Tertullian’s views on theater were, in their day, a reactionary, minority opinion. They could not hope to prevail against the overwhelming power of the empire, or its attractive program of public entertainments.

**THE INGREDIENTS OF MEDIEVAL THEATER.** The opinions of St. Augustine (354–430), who ended his life as the bishop of Hippo Regis in the Roman province of North Africa, carried much more weight. A late convert to Christianity, Augustine was the chief doctrinal architect of the fledgling Roman Church, one of the devout men who came of age in the decades after Constantine’s establishment of Christianity as a viable state religion. It is through him that we can best trace the strand of anxiety that led to some of the most stringent denunciations of the corrupting dangers of Roman theater, and its potential influence on Christian worship. In many of his writings, notably his autobiographical *Confessions* and his Christian revision of history, *The City of God*, Augustine described the dangerous seductions of theater in all its forms. But these descriptions readily betray the source of his anxiety: his own youthful, dramatic passions, and his mature conviction that the devout Christian must turn his back on the worldly pleasures of Rome, the city of man, in order to attain salvation in the celestial City of God. It would therefore be a mistake to assume that Augustine’s Christian contemporaries shared a negative view of theater, or that—even if they did—such a view would lessen the attraction of traditional entertainments, or diminish the importance of pre-Christian Roman culture. They also had little negative effect on the way that a new Christian theatricality grew and flourished. It is actually rather ironic that Augustine’s own intellectual sparring-partner, St. Jerome (c. 340–420), would at the very same time be laboring to produce the greatest theatrical script of the Middle Ages. For it was Jerome’s Latin translation of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures that would form the Old and New Testaments of “the people’s Bible” (*Biblia vulgata*), which provided the raw material for the vast majority of medieval plays. At the same time, the order of service of the Mass and the fes-

tive calendar of the church began to take on their familiar forms, while the legacy of Roman theater continued to be passed down by professional entertainers and lovers of classical literature, both pagans and Christians. All of these elements would be woven together in the rich theatrical tapestry of medieval Europe.

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### THE RENAISSANCE OF CHARLEMAGNE

**A NEW ROMAN EMPIRE.** Charles the Great, king of the Franks and emperor of the Romans (742–814), presided over a cultural revolution known as the Carolingian Renaissance. ("Carolingian" is the adjective derived from the Latin form of Charles, *Carolus*.) He would do more for the preservation of Roman plays and the promotion of medieval theater than any other person, before or since. Ruler of a territory that included much of present-day France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, and Italy, Charlemagne (as the French would call him) knew that governing his vast empire would be easier if the many different people who inhabited these lands had a common culture. In addition, therefore, to promoting peace within the empire's borders, he promulgated new laws and codified old ones, established procedures for the administration of justice, and encouraged the conversion of the many pagan tribes in his domain to Christianity. To aid in this task, he also embarked on a series of church reforms. The papacy of his time was weak, and it was Charlemagne's political and military power that provided the channels through which the doctrines and ideals of Christianity could be disseminated. This was the beginning of the politico-religious entity that would later be known as the Holy Roman Empire. And more than law or justice, more than the development of bureaucratic institutions, it was liturgy—the theater of worship—that would help to bring the disparate peoples of Europe together to form an entity known as Christendom.

#### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### ST. AUGUSTINE CONFESSES HIS LOVE OF THEATER

**INTRODUCTION:** St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354–430), was the most important theologian of the early Christian Church. Born in the Roman colony of North Africa, in the small town of Thagaste, he was educated in Carthage and Rome, where he became a successful teacher of rhetoric. During a stay in Milan, he encountered its bishop, St. Ambrose (c. 339–397), under whose guidance he first began to investigate the claims of Christianity. He eventually converted, but not before living a full and varied life, described in his *Confessions*.

The spectacles of the theatre ravished me, for they were filled with representations of my own miseries and were the kindling that ignited my fires. Why is it that a person should want to suffer pain in such places, by watching sorrowful and tragic things—things which he himself would never wish to suffer? And yet he wants to suffer from them, to feel sorrow as a spectator, and let sorrow itself become his pleasure. What is this, but a strange madness? For the more anyone is excited by such things, the less capable he is of governing his emotions. For when he himself suffers it is misery, and when he is compassionate for others it should be called mercy; but what kind of mercy should there be for made-up characters and scenarios? The person in the audience is not called upon to relieve, but invited only to grieve; the more he sorrows, the more he approves the performance of the actors in these scenes. And if the misfortunes of these people, whether they are long dead or purely fictitious, happen to be acted in such a way that the spectator is not saddened by them, he walks out, disgusted and critical. But if he is forced to be sad, he stays attentive and weeps, rejoicing.

**SOURCE:** St. Augustine, *Confessions*, c. 390. Translation by Carol Symes.

**THE UNIFYING FORCE OF RELIGION.** Christendom was a spiritual empire whose borders coincided, roughly, with the secular empire of Rome, and whose unifying power is expressed in the name of the Roman Catholic Church, the "universal" church (from the Greek adjective *katholikos*) established in Rome. It was under Charlemagne's patronage that the many disparate rituals, prayers, ceremonies, and music developed by individual Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire

were eventually brought together to form a cohesive liturgy. Some of these rituals, like the solemn performance of the daily Mass, were almost as old as Christianity itself. Others, like the annual feasts commemorating significant episodes in the life of Christ (his Nativity at Christmas, his resurrection at Easter) or honoring the deeds of the saints, were later additions, often in response to the needs of recent converts. The observance of Christmas on 25 December, for example, was tied to that date in order to coincide with the winter solstice and the celebration of Yule, which was sacred among the pagan peoples of northern Europe because it marked the darkest day of the year and the subsequent return toward light; thus, the symbolism of Jesus' birth and the rebirth of the sun reinforced one another. By contrast, Easter continued to be a "moveable feast," whose date was not constant from year to year, but was instead tied to the dating of Passover, which was calculated according to the lunar calendar in use by the Jews, rather than the solar calendar that had governed the reckoning of time in the territories of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, the English name of the most important feast in the Christian calendar, Easter, has nothing to do with Christ, but is the name of the Saxon fertility goddess, *Eastra*.

**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MONASTICISM.** In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great (540–604) had begun laying the groundwork for Charlemagne's later program of liturgical reforms. Under his direction, the musical sequences that accompanied the recitation of the Psalms and other biblical verses were brought together into a corpus of melodic material that is commonly called Gregorian chant. Like the Mass, many of these chants were very old. Others had been composed to support the expanded services of the newly legalized church in the fourth and fifth centuries, notably under Ambrose, bishop of Milan (c. 339–397), the mentor of St. Augustine. Still others were the artistic product of the monasteries that were being founded throughout Europe, and which would be the recipients of Charlemagne's generosity. The Rule of St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–543), which provided the basic guidelines for monastic life in much of Europe—and which is still in use in modern Benedictine monastic houses all over the world—had instituted an elaborate schedule of daily worship called the *opus Dei*, "the work of God." The phrase indicated that it was the special job of monks and nuns to pray continually for the welfare of Christendom. At seven intervals throughout the day, and once in the middle of the night, the monastic choir would perform the office (from the Latin word for "duty," *officium*), each segment of which involved the chanting of the Psalms, singing of hymns, recitation of prayers, and reading of Scripture.

This program of prayer was, in many respects, inherently dramatic; the selection of Bible passages, the choice of the music, the display of certain ornaments and colors, and the wearing of special vestments (ceremonial costumes) all contributed to the theatrical expression of devotion to God. The very calendar of the church was theatrical, turning the cycle of the seasons into a year-long drama which re-enacted the stages of Christ's mission on earth and showed the continual workings of God in the world by commemorating the deeds of holy men and women.

**CHARLEMAGNE'S ACHIEVEMENT.** Charlemagne's contribution to the theatrical innovations of the early Middle Ages was material, in several senses. By financing churches and monasteries throughout his domain, he helped to enrich the celebration of the liturgy and to make Christian worship an increasingly attractive interplay of music, light, color, and ceremony. But even more importantly, he ensured that the rituals and chants of the early church would not be forgotten, collecting the scattered manuscripts and oral traditions by which they had been conveyed and having them copied and disseminated throughout his realm. These new manuscripts, many of them beautifully decorated with colored inks and gold leaf (the brightness of their pages gives the impression that they are "illuminated") were written in a script that was also new. Called "Carolingian minuscule," it abandoned the laborious square capital letters that had been in use since antiquity in favor of a rounded hand that was easier to write and to read, the ancestor of modern typefaces like those in printed books. Finally, the scribes of Charlemagne's court developed a system of musical notation, which operated like a recording device, enabling the transmission of music through writing (rather than by word—or song—of mouth). In addition to preserving and augmenting the unique heritage of early medieval Christianity, the artists and intellectuals of Charlemagne's court devoted themselves to preserving and honoring the classical age, especially the legacy of Rome. The universal language of Western Europe was still Latin, the language of the Romans, but that language was rapidly becoming specialized, a language of scholarship and worship. It was no longer the language of conversation, prayer, or writing. It was only one of many European languages, some derived directly from Latin (the "romance" or Roman languages of French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Romanian, Portuguese, Occitan), others rooted in Germanic or Celtic dialects (Anglo-Saxon or Old English, Gaelic, Breton). These vernacular or "native" languages were much more widely spoken than Latin, and in the centuries after the death of Charle-

magne they would become literary languages in their own right.

**PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE.** The Carolingian Renaissance is so called, then, because it suggests a “rebirth” of interest in the past, and a desire to emulate the literary and artistic forms of that past. Not surprisingly, one of the most compelling aspects of the Roman past was its theater. In *scriptoria* (“workshops for writing”) throughout Charlemagne’s realm, scribes and illuminators turned out hundreds of lavishly illustrated manuscripts of Roman plays, especially the comedies of Terence (Publius Terentius Afer, c. 190–158 B.C.E.), which were among the entertainments that had made so indelible an impression on St. Augustine. Of course, Carolingian scribes also preserved other classical texts, not just plays: the poetry of Vergil, Catullus, Horace, and Ovid; the speeches and letters of Cicero; and the histories of Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus. Hence, most of what is known about Rome is known because of the work of the copyists who saved the endangered texts of antiquity from oblivion. The surviving knowledge of Greek drama, on the other hand, is attributed to the Greek-speaking heir of the Roman Empire, Byzantium, where Constantine had founded his new capital of Constantinople in 325. The knowledge of Greek was unavailable to the people of medieval Western Europe. Thus, it was not until Constantinople was captured by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 that the tragedies and comedies of the Greek dramatists became accessible to the West, helping to fuel the artistic endeavors of another Renaissance.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Early Latin Christianity in Northern Europe*; *Visual Arts: The Carolingian Restoration of Roman Culture*

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITURGICAL DRAMA

**THE TRADITION OF THEATRICALITY.** The liturgy of the medieval church was essentially theatrical, as was the festive cycle of the Christian year. But at certain times

during that year, this theatricality took on a special character. At Easter, and on the days leading up to its celebration of Christ’s Passion (“suffering”) and Resurrection, and again at the Christmas season, churches throughout Europe provided the settings for musical dramatizations of scenes from the gospels. It is hard to know when these liturgical plays were first performed, because the oldest manuscripts that record them were copied after the Carolingian Renaissance had made the preservation of texts a high priority. Often, the late dates of manuscripts have been taken to indicate that medieval drama itself was a late invention—that in order for there to be a play, there must be a script. But this is obviously not the case: all that a play requires is a story, some performers, and an audience. And medieval people had a wealth of stories at their disposal, thanks to St. Jerome’s translation of the Bible, which was supplemented by a series of popular tales from the Apocrypha or “hidden” books of Hebrew scripture, among them the stories of Judith, Susannah, and Daniel. Surviving manuscripts, therefore, allow scholars to view only the skeletal remains of liturgical drama, giving some indication of how these stories were performed. Most of these plays are undetailed and would have existed long before the time of Charlemagne. For example, it is evident that elaborate processions commemorating the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday had been staged in that holy city for years, but the earliest record of them comes from the *Itinerarium* or travel journal of Egeria, a high-born lady or perhaps a nun from the Roman province of Galicia (Spain), written about 384. By the same token, the ceremony for the consecration of churches is surely older than its first ninth-century manuscripts, which show that it was loosely based on the story of the Harrowing of Hell presented in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, when Jesus, on the Saturday between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, descended to the underworld and led out from it the souls of Adam and Eve and other Old Testament heroes and prophets, taking them with him to glory.

**BASIC COMPONENTS.** The many manuscripts which provide us with different versions of important Christmas and Easter plays are all of more recent date than the dramatic traditions to which they refer. These plays demonstrate that there were many ways to perform the story of Christ’s Birth and Resurrection, some highly creative. But all shared certain essential components. At Easter, the most important component was a vital question: *Quem queritis?* (“Whom do you seek?”). The question is that of the angel guarding the empty tomb on Easter Sunday morning, when the Three Marys (Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary Magdalene; and the Mary



described in the gospel of Mark as “the mother of James and Salome”) approach with oils and incense to anoint the body of Jesus. But Jesus, unbeknownst to them, has risen from the dead, so the women are surprised to see the angel, and to be asked “Whom do you seek in the sepulchre, O followers of Christ?”. These fateful words, sung in Latin, have been used to describe the entire dramatic genre of Easter liturgies: they are often called *Quem queritis?* or *Visitatio sepulchri* tropes (traditional phrases inserted into the Mass) since they all make use of the same symbolic elements to dramatize “The Visit to the Sepulchre.” Their essential melodic dialogue consisted of an imaginative pastiche of words and phrases from the gospel accounts of the Resurrection, sung in the antiphonal or “call-and-response” style that was a feature of the monastic office, in which the chanted verses constitute a conversation between two choirs, with solo interventions by a cantor.

**THE INTEGRATION OF DRAMA AND WORSHIP.** It is worth noting that what made these musical dramatizations effective was not their separation from the theater of

worship, but their participation in it. One of the earliest manuscripts of the Easter play, the *Visitatio sepulchri* from Winchester in England, demonstrates this beautifully. Four members of the religious community are instructed to disguise themselves by dressing up in costumes taken from the monastery’s storehouse of liturgical vestments: an alb (white robe) for the angel, and copes (long hooded capes) for the three women—all of whom would be portrayed by men when this play was produced in a male monastic house. The props they carry are also items in use for daily worship: thuribles (censers, containers for holding aromatic spices and incense) representing the vessels of oil and myrrh carried by the Marys. The location of the tomb is not specified in the script, but here again the church space and its furnishings would be put to use. Perhaps the tomb was represented by the altar, or perhaps it was a real tomb in one of the church’s side chapels, or a “prop,” a special tomb erected expressly for the performance of this play. In any case, the symbolic significance of staging this sacred story using actors, props, and sets provided entirely by the resources of the community underscores the intimacy and immediacy of

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE VISIT TO THE SEPULCHRE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Between the years 965 and 975, Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester promulgated a series of liturgical reforms which were crystallized in a collection called the *Regularis Concordia*, a "Concordance of the Rules" for worship and religious life among the monastic communities of England during the reign of King Edgar (959–975). These guidelines, similar in many respects to those circulated by Charlemagne nearly two centuries earlier, were one long-term result of an ambitious program of civil engineering and religious instruction introduced by King Alfred the Great (r. 871–900), whose leadership had united warring English tribes during the Viking invasions of the ninth century and who had strengthened that new political unity by promoting an idea of a shared Anglo-Saxon heritage. The guidelines quoted here contain numerous quotations from *The Visit to the Sepulchre*. When reading the texts of liturgical plays, it is important to bear in mind that all of the dialogue was sung, and would have been much more effective in performance than it appears.

While the third lesson is being read aloud, four of the brothers should dress themselves. One of them, wearing an alb, should come in as though intent on other business and go stealthily to the place of the sepulchre, and there he should sit quietly, holding a palm in his hand. Then, while the third response is being sung, the three remaining brothers, all of them wearing copes and carrying thuribles with incense in their hands, should walk slowly and haltingly, making their way to the place of the sepulchre as if they are seeking something. For these things are done in imitation of the angel seated on the tomb and of the women coming with perfumes to anoint the body of

Jesus. When, therefore, the one sitting there sees the three drawing near, who are still wandering about as though seeking something, he should begin to sing sweetly in a moderate voice: "Whom do you seek [in the sepulchre, O followers of Christ]?" When this has been sung through to the end, the three should answer together in one voice: "Jesus of Nazareth [who was crucified, O heavenly one]." He to them: "He is not here. He has risen as he predicted. Go, tell the news that he has risen from the dead." Heeding the call of this command, the three should turn toward the choir saying: "Alleluia. The Lord has risen, [today the mighty lion has risen, Christ the Son of God]." When this has been said, the seated one again should say the antiphon, as if calling them back: "Come and see the place [where the Lord was laid. Alleluia]." And then, having said these things, he should stand up and raise the veil, showing them the empty place where the Cross had been laid [i.e., during the liturgy of Good Friday], where there should be nothing but the linen bands in which the Cross had been wrapped. Seeing this, they should put down the thuribles which they have carried into the sepulchre, and taking up the linen cloths they should hold them out toward the assembled clergy, as though showing them that the Lord has risen and is now no longer wrapped in them; and they should sing this antiphon: "The Lord has risen from the tomb, [He who was hung upon the Cross. Alleluia]." And they should lay the linen cloths upon the altar. When the antiphon has ended, the prior should begin the hymn *Te Deum laudamus* ("We praise you, O God"), rejoicing at the triumph of our King, who was delivered from the conquest of death. When the hymn has begun, let all the bells peal in unison.

**SOURCE:** Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester, *Regularis Concordia*, ca. 975. Translation by Carol Symes.

the play's message: it is as if Jesus has been resurrected in their own church, as if members of the monastic community are themselves going mournfully to anoint his body, only to be greeted by the angel's question, "Whom do you seek in the sepulchre?" and the joyful news of Christ's Resurrection. Whereas people today imagine the events of the Bible as taking place in the distant past, medieval people reminded themselves constantly of their proximity to those events. Their theater underscored the messages implicit in this proximity, year after year.

**THE EXPANSION OF CHRISTMAS THEATRICALS.** Some of the same dramatic techniques featured so prominently in the Easter liturgies were also put to use in the performance of plays at Christmastime. Even the important question *Quem queritis?* could be asked again, this

time of the shepherds who come to Bethlehem, seeking the birthplace of the child Jesus: "Whom do you seek in the manger, shepherds? Tell us!" But because Christmas was a less solemn feast than Easter, greater liberties were taken with the biblical text. In some places, by the eleventh century at the latest, Christmas theatricals had expanded to include not only the story of Jesus' birth, but of the angels' address to the shepherds, the journey of the Magi, their interview with Herod, Herod's violent response to their news, and the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. Numerous extra characters were added: Mary has midwives to help her in the birthing of Jesus; Herod, as befits a great king, has men-at-arms, attendants, courtiers, ambassadors, diplomats, and ineffectual bureaucrats surrounding him; the Old Testament matriarch, Rachel, is brought on to witness Herod's massacre of the



Herod and the Innocents, Fresco, School of Giotto, Church of San Francesco, Assisi, Italy, 14th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/SAN FRANCESCO, ASSISI/DAGLI ORTI.

innocents, and mourns for the lost children of Israel. All of these people and events could scarcely be encompassed within a single morning's liturgy, and it became traditional to celebrate Christmas over a twelve-day period, beginning on 25 December and ending on the Feast of the Epiphany (from the Greek word for "manifestation") on 6 January, the holiday celebrating the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem. The play commemorating Herod's Slaughter of the Innocents was usually performed on 28 December, which became the Feast of the Holy Innocents. Like the tragic episode that it commemorated, it occurred a few days after the Nativity. In many monasteries and cathedral schools throughout Europe, this feast was also called "the Feast of Fools," since the boys of these communities were allowed special privileges on that day, their festive misbehavior sanctioned in compensation for the cruel deaths meted out to the children of Judea. This was a time of carnival, one of several occa-

sions in the year when the "world turned upside down" and hierarchies of power, social status, and gender roles were reversed.

**THE LONG REIGN OF KING HEROD.** Not surprisingly, the Magi and King Herod were the stars of many Christmas plays, since these characters have always held a special fascination for audiences. During the Middle Ages, the Magi were intriguing because they were exotic, mysterious men from the fabled Orient, astronomers and astrologers who could read the stars and look into the future. Herod was fascinating because of his blustering, ranting manner and excessive cruelty, and it is for this reason that the part has been a perennial favorite among actors who like to play the villain. When Shakespeare's Hamlet complains that over-acting "out-Herods Herod," he is referring to an ongoing tradition that dates back to medieval liturgical drama, and which inspired

Shakespeare's own characterizations of Richard III and Iago. But Herod, because he was a king, also stood in for the ultimate tyrant, and in an age when monarchy was becoming a powerful political institution, the representation of bad lordship as exemplified in Herod could serve as a warning to real lords. So there was a political dimension to liturgical drama, as well as a religious one. In the two twelfth-century Christmas plays associated with the monastery of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, in France, Herod's central place in the Christmas story is evident from the title of the drama, which is called *The Service for Representing Herod*. Throughout the play, Herod's violent behavior, and that of his murderous soldiers, must have seemed to the audience to resemble that of real rulers and their henchmen. But there were elements of comedy as well. When the Magi tell Herod about the miraculous star they have seen, Herod sends for his own experts, to see whether they can corroborate the story. The monks playing the scribes are described in the rubrics (stage directions written in red ink) as bumbling idiots, carrying stacks of moldy books and wearing false beards; they have to "turn over the leaves of the books for a long time" before they finally find the correct prophecy.

**THE CHURCH AS PERFORMANCE SPACE.** The geography of the medieval church was vitally important to the staging of Christmas drama. At Easter, the sole stage setting could be "the place of the sepulchre," which was usually located at or near the altar. At Christmastime, the entire church became a theater, if only because so much of the action of these plays involved traveling: Mary and Joseph journey to Bethlehem, the Magi come "from the East" to Herod's court and from there to Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt, the Magi return to their homes. Each of these trips provided an opportunity for the actors to process around the church and through the audience, who would be standing in the nave (the central hall). Since all medieval churches were oriented on an East-West axis, with the altar in the apse at the eastern end, it would be from this part of the church that the Magi would "come together, each one from his own corner as though from his own region," according to the rubrics of the play from Saint-Benoît. The star that guides them rises from behind the altar, also in the east, and then leads their procession around the church. The citizens of Jerusalem are the members of the choir, while the members of the congregation are the people of Bethlehem. When the shepherds find the baby Jesus in the manger, they worship him and then "they invite the people standing all around to worship the child." Through such simple, effective techniques, the staging of liturgical drama allowed the events of the

Bible to be mapped onto the church space, collapsing the distance between actors and audience, the past and the present, the local and the universal.

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SEE ALSO *Music: Additions to the Sacred Repertory; Religion: Medieval Liturgy*

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#### SERIOUS COMEDY

**ROMAN THEATER IN THE MIDDLE AGES.** The initiative of the artists and intellectuals who contributed to the Carolingian Renaissance provided the tools that would make the transmission of liturgical drama possible, but it also ensured the preservation of older theatrical traditions. Hundreds of manuscripts containing the Latin comedies of the popular Roman playwright Terence were made in the centuries between 800 and 1200. Many were lavishly illustrated and suggest that some medieval people knew a great deal about Roman comedy. These illustrations show lively, two-dimensional stagings of key scenes, in which actors are depicted wearing the masks and costumes typical of Roman performances. Their very gestures are meticulously rendered, contributing to the illusion that the viewer is looking at "snapshots" of Terence's comedies as they would have been presented around the time of Constantine or St. Augustine, in the fourth century C.E. It would have been easy for the medieval readers of these plays to reconstruct some of the circumstances of their performance, as they looked at the pictures and read aloud the various parts. However, the careful authenticity of the manuscripts' representations of ancient comedy also suggests that the copyists were striving to preserve information about an archaic art form: medieval audiences were not used to seeing masked actors, nor did they frequent the same types of theaters as the people of ancient Rome. When Hugh of Saint-Victor offered his definition of the "theatrical arts" in the early twelfth century, he was trying to capture the timeless diversity of human amusements and leisure activities; yet he was also aware that times had changed, that the theater "was the place people used



Masks from Terence, *Andria*, line drawing from an edition of Terence, 1736. BETTMANN/CORBIS.

to gather for entertainment”—employing the past tense, to emphasize that the pagan theater of ancient Rome was not the same as the theater of medieval Christendom. Hugh himself would have seen the remains of Roman theaters and other buildings (baths, temples, an amphitheater) on the Left Bank of the River Seine, nestled in the hills where the new University of Paris would be founded during the course of the twelfth century. And he knew that it had been a long time since those structures had been used for the purposes for which they were originally designed. But this did not stop other medieval writers from making constant—and knowing—references to Roman theater and its many attractions.

**COMIC REVIVALS.** If knowledge of Roman theater, the scripts of Roman plays, and even Roman theater buildings survived into the Middle Ages, why was medieval theater not more like the theater of that distant past? One reason is that the church had made an effort to promulgate a special type of Christian theater, the liturgy, and had also worked hard to modify the pagan festivals that had provided many of the occasions for the

performance of Roman plays. More to the point, though, is the fact that the Latin language of these plays was no longer a language readily understood by most people in Europe, so their popular appeal was largely lost. Still, there is plenty of evidence that new forms of medieval comedy continued to draw heavily on ancient traditions and techniques, retaining some of the same plots, gags, and characters regardless of the language in which the lines were spoken. Moreover, the plays of Terence were constantly revived and performed in venues where the love of Latin was continuously cultivated: in monasteries and cathedral schools, universities, royal courts, and any place where the performers could speak the language of Vergil, Cicero, and Ovid. In fact, Latin comedies would have been performed by many of the same amateur actors who also appeared in the Latin liturgical dramas. And because these plays made the learning of Latin fun, they were often used as teaching tools in medieval classrooms. They were also widely emulated by a new generation of playwrights; at the same time that the manuscripts of Roman plays were being copied, and the Easter and Christmas liturgies written down, there were men and women composing their own comedies in Latin, some with contemporary—even Christian—themes. The simultaneity of these different dramatic traditions and genres is one of the most intriguing aspects of medieval theater.

**THE PLAYS OF HROTSVIT.** One of the most famous playwrights of the Middle Ages embodies what might be considered some of the paradoxes of medieval drama. Her name was Hrotsvit (or Hroswitha), and she was a canoness (a member of a religious order) vowed to the religious life at the abbey of Gandersheim in Germany. But she was probably brought up and educated at the imperial court of Otto I (912–973) who ruled a large portion of Charlemagne’s former empire after 951. Moreover, Hrotsvit (c. 935–1002) is remembered today not only for her dramatic works, but for her skills as a mathematician and theologian. Together with her childhood friend Gerberga, who was the emperor’s niece and the future abbess of Gandersheim, Hrotsvit probably entered the convent when she was in her late teens or early twenties, and it is reasonable to speculate that she intended her seven comedies to be performed by her sister nuns, whose knowledge of Latin and of the Christian faith would have been strengthened at the same time, in a highly amusing manner. Among Hrotsvit’s achievements, therefore, is the invention of a distinctly Christian form of comedy, in which many comic devices as old as the comedies of Aristophanes (448–385 B.C.E.)—trickery, role-playing, delusion, love-sickness, youthful rebellion, pompous old age—are blended with the divine “comedy” of the ultimate sacrifice: death for one’s



Early medieval conception of a Roman theater performance. Rhabanus Maurus, *De universo*, Abbey of Montecassino MS 132, folio 489, Montecassino, Italy, tenth century. A. M. ROSATI/ART RESOURCE, NY.

faith, a death that cannot be viewed as tragic, since it earns the martyr the bliss of eternal life.

**TWO CHRISTIAN COMEDIES.** Hrotsvit's *Gallicanus* tells the story of the Roman general Gallicanus, a ruthless pagan whose command over the legions of the Emperor Constantine gives him great power. In the play, Gallicanus uses his clout to secure the hand of Constantine's daughter Constance, despite the fact that both father and daughter oppose the match because of their intense devotion to Christianity. But Constance advises her father to trick Gallicanus into thinking that she will marry him after he has successfully completed his military campaigns, cunningly sending two of her Christian advisors to help convert him to Christianity, while inviting Gallicanus' young daughters into her house, where they are quickly persuaded to join Constance in vows of

virginity. Meanwhile, in the heat of a losing battle, Gallicanus (like the historical Constantine before him) prays to the Christian God for assistance and sees a vision of Christ himself marching into battle, carrying the cross. He is immediately converted and, taking vows of celibacy, becomes a hermit. Years later, he suffers martyrdom under the pagan emperor Julian the Apostate, but when Julian's son is possessed by the devil as a punishment for his father's crimes, both father and son agree to be baptized. In another comedy, *Dulcinius*, Hrotsvit embroiders some of the same themes through a spicier plot set during the time of Great Persecution of the Roman emperor Diocletian (284–305). A lascivious Roman official, Dulcinius, schemes to deflower three beautiful Christian maidens who have been arrested for their faith, but their virginity is protected when Dulcinius falls victim to a delusion in which he believes the dirty pots and pans in

the girls' kitchen to be the bodies of his intended victims. He embraces them passionately and covers them with kisses, blackening himself with soot in the process and becoming a laughing-stock among his fellow pagans. Later on, when the evil executioner Sisinnius attempts to send one of the defiant virgins to a brothel, she is miraculously rescued from this fate, although she (like her two sisters) is eventually—but triumphantly—martyred.

**THE PERFORMANCE OF LATIN PLAYS.** Hrotsvit's plays are particularly sophisticated examples of what could be achieved through the creative blending of classical and medieval ideas of comedy, but they are not the only examples. A later group of about two dozen Latin comedies, composed by a variety of authors over the course of the late eleventh through early thirteenth centuries, take a more conventional approach to updating classical genres. Most are much shorter than Hrotsvit's, and many are anonymous, but like hers they are written in Latin verse and would have been performed by and for well-educated men and women in the service of the church or of the great secular rulers of Europe. Walter Map, a member of the entourage of King Henry II of England (r. 1154–1189), related that his clerks would often spend the evenings play-acting or making "jokes to take the weight off their minds." But so, it seems, did many other people, including monks, nuns, priests, schoolmasters, and their pupils. Froumund of Tegernsee (d. 1008), a prolific poet and dedicated teacher at the important Bavarian abbey of Tegernsee (a place well-known for its later contributions to medieval drama), complained good-naturedly that it was hard to engage his students' attention unless he indulged them with comic displays and other antics, anything "ridiculous, that cracks up all the boys." Geoffrey de Gorron (d. 1146), the abbot of St. Albans in England, began life as a schoolmaster whose enthusiasm for theatrical display led him to borrow valuable vestments from the monastery to use as costumes in a play about St. Catherine of Alexandria; when they were accidentally destroyed by fire, he himself became a monk to compensate for the loss. Writing at the end of the twelfth century, Reinerus of Liège revealed that classroom performance of Terence's comedies was a favorite exercise at his own monastery of Saint-Laurent, so much so that one over-zealous teacher was visited in a dream by the abbey's patron saint, who chastised him for behaving too much like a comedian.

**A LATIN SITUATION COMEDY.** Given that the plots of most medieval Latin comedies revolve around sex, it is easy to see why they might have been controversial when produced in an ecclesiastical setting. The play *Babio*, probably written in England during the mid-twelfth

century, was therefore heavily edited when it was adapted for performance by the choirboys at Lincoln Cathedral, to judge by the state of one surviving manuscript. A glance at the plot-summary added to another manuscript copy offers an explanation for this censorship:

Babio was a priest, Petula his wife, Fodius the household servant of Babio and Petula. Viola was the daughter of the latter, the daughter of the wife and not the daughter of Babio, but his step-daughter as it were, whom both Babio and Fodius love, unknown to one another. Croceus was a certain knight, lord of the town where the girl was, and he was the lord of Babio the priest. This Croceus loved the girl Viola and wished to have her, and the priest was upset about that. Fodius had an affair with the wife of the priest, that is with Petula, and his master, in other words Babio, didn't know it, even though he had his suspicions.

Add to this situation the humor of Babio's relationship with his dog (who makes a brief appearance early in the play), and it is easy to see why Latin comedies continued to be written and performed throughout the Middle Ages, even though they may have raised a few eyebrows. One of the most popular, the play known as *Pamphilus*, survives in so many manuscripts that it gave its name to the term *pamphlet*. Along with a number of other medieval Latin comedies—such as the *Geta* of Vitalis of Blois written in the twelfth century—it endured the test of time, appearing among the earliest printed books of the late fifteenth century and thereby influencing the work of countless Renaissance dramatists.

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#### THE POPULAR BIBLE

**MEDIEVAL MASS MEDIA.** The Latin Bible in use throughout the Middle Ages had been translated from Greek and Hebrew by St. Jerome around the turn of the

fifth century, when Latin was still the mother tongue of the Roman Empire. This Bible was therefore called the “popular Bible” (*Biblia vulgata*) because it could be understood by those who could not read Hebrew or Greek. By the time of Charlemagne, however, Latin had ceased to be a language for everyday use, while the need to educate people about the Bible, and to instruct them in the tenets of the Christian faith, was greater than ever. The world was changing rapidly. By the end of the eleventh century, Western Europe was more culturally diverse and more densely populated than it had been since the power of the Roman Empire was at its height, nearly a thousand years before. Improvements in agricultural technology, the development of long-distance trading networks both by water and by land, and the flourishing of local economies during the twelfth century meant that people enjoyed greater freedom of mobility, both geographical and social. The availability of cathedral schools in major cities and the founding of the new universities in Paris, Bologna, Oxford, and Cambridge made it easier for young men from humble families to acquire an education, and thereby to fit themselves for careers in the church or in the increasingly powerful courts of secular rulers. Some of these men—those who preferred a more free-wheeling lifestyle—took what they had learned and applied it to the performing arts and to communication in the emerging vernacular literatures, which more and more people were able to read. Moreover, the fact that the population of Europe was increasingly concentrated in cities meant that it was possible to reach and to influence larger numbers of people at a time. This new urban audience was the focus of a renewed effort on the part of the church to make religious instruction available to all and, where possible, in the vernacular. Theater provided the perfect mass medium for conveying the message.

**THE COMING OF “THE BRIDEGROOM.”** This is not to suggest that only secular urban audiences were more comfortable with their own vernaculars than with Latin. In fact, the first surviving medieval play with a significant vernacular component comes not from a prosperous town but from a powerful monastery, the abbey of Saint-Martial in Limoges, France. The monks of Limoges would have learned Latin from an early age, and most probably spoke, wrote, and even thought in Latin during daily worship, study, and conversation. But no man or woman in Europe, no matter how well educated or intellectually inclined, would have learned Latin in the cradle; the language that would always be the most comforting, the most familiar, was the language of childhood. In Limoges, that language was known as Occitan, and indeed the whole southern and southwestern portion of

what constitutes modern-day France (from Provence to the Pyrenees) was really Occitania, a politically and culturally distinctive region where the people spoke Provençal or what was often called the *langue d’oc*, the language in which the word for “yes” is *oc* (as opposed to the language of northern France, the *langue d’oïl*, in which the word for “yes” is *oui*). One of the plays that used the vernacular Occitan, which was copied into a manuscript toward the end of the eleventh century, is about the *Sponsus*, or “the Bridegroom.” It is a musical dramatization of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1–13), in which ten bridesmaids take lighted lamps and go out to wait for the arrival of the Bridegroom (in allegorical terms, they are Christian souls waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ). When the Bridegroom’s coming is delayed, all of them fall asleep. But five of the maidens are wise and bring extra oil for their lamps; the other five are foolish and let their lamps go out. (Again, in allegorical terms, some souls remain vigilant and virtuous, while others become complacent and slack.) At midnight, when the Bridegroom finally arrives, the foolish maidens are left out of the triumphal procession because they cannot help to light him on his way. Running home, they try to buy more oil from merchants in the town, but this means that they are late to the wedding banquet, and are not admitted. The use of the vernacular in the *Sponsus* underscores the drama inherent in this story of human frailty and salvation. While most of the dialogue is sung in Latin, there is a plaintive refrain in Occitan after each exchange: “Sorrowing, sinners, alas we have slept too long!” Furthermore, the exchange between the foolish maidens and the oil merchants takes place entirely in the vernacular, emphasizing the worldliness and futility of their failed business transaction.

**THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE IN TRANSLATION.** Although very few plays survive from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it is clear that the use of the vernacular to heighten the effects of liturgical drama was becoming widespread. In the important episcopal city of Toledo in Spain, the *Auto de los reyes magos* (an Epiphany play about the Three Magi) was composed in the Castilian Spanish of that region at about the same time that the great heroic poem the *Poema del Cid* was written down. Because Toledo was close to the border separating the Muslim territories of Spain from those held by Christians, it is possible that the play—about pagan kings doing homage to the Christ Child—also carried a strong political message. Far to the northeast, in the influential Bavarian abbey of Benediktbeuern, the Easter drama of Christ’s suffering and death—the events collectively known as the Passion—came to include a number of



significant vernacular elements. The characters most sympathetic to the German-speaking spectators of the play often talk directly to them in their own language. Mary Magdalene flirts with the young men in the audience in German, and also sings in German when she buys cosmetics from a merchant—foreshadowing the moment when she will buy ointments to anoint the dead body of Jesus in the sepulchre. The Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, wins special sympathy by expressing her sorrows in German. Longinus, the blind soldier who stabs the crucified Jesus with his lance, speaks German to reveal that the blood flowing from Christ's wounded side has restored his sight. Finally, Joseph of Arimathea and Pontius Pilate close the play with a dialogue conducted entirely in German. Similar popularizing techniques are used in a "Visit to the Sepulchre" liturgy from the convent of Origny-Sainte-Benoîte in northeastern France, which was sung almost entirely in French, and in a play called *Suscitio Lazari* (The Raising of Lazarus) written in the Anglo-Norman French dialect spoken in northern France (Normandy) as well as in England after the Norman Conquest of 1066.

**THE CELEBRATION OF YOUTH.** Perhaps the most famous musical drama of the Middle Ages, *Danielis ludus* (The Play of Daniel), is another play that intermingles Latin and the vernacular in effective ways. Based on stories about the youthful prophet Daniel (stories that form part of the non-canonical Apocrypha, or "hidden writings" of the Bible), it was written by and for the youths of Beauvais cathedral in France—for the young men and boys who sang in the cathedral choir and attended the choir's school. Copied into a deluxe manuscript around the year 1230, it proudly proclaims the authorship and provenance of the play in the opening song:

The play of Daniel we record:  
it was created in Beauvais  
the work of youth, in every way.

Daniel was a particularly attractive hero for these young performers, since his boyish curiosity, compassion, and wit were the qualities that allowed him to solve riddles, investigate puzzling crimes, and foil the evil designs of his elders. In the version of his story dramatized at Beauvais, the precocious sage is able to decipher the mysterious handwriting that appears on a palace wall of the pagan king Belshazzar. Later, when he is wrongfully imprisoned by Belshazzar's successor, Darius, he will make a miraculous escape from the lions' den. Finally, he astonishes everyone with his perspicacity, by prophesying the future birth of the Savior, Jesus. The use of French in the lyrics of this musical is not extensive, but it does add an especially festive element to a play already

rich in pageantry, humor, intrigue, and suspense. Performed annually on 1 January, *The Play of Daniel* was an integral part of the liturgy for the Feast of the Circumcision (also known as the Feast of the Presentation), one of several feasts that punctuated the Twelve Days of Christmas, from 25 December to the Feast of the Epiphany on 6 January (the first day of January was not celebrated as New Year's Day in northern France at this time). And, like the Feast of the Holy Innocents on 28 December, it compensates for the pain inflicted on the children of the gospel narrative (Herod's slaughtered innocents, or the circumcised baby Jesus) by allowing contemporary children a special license for revelry and misbehavior. Depending on the locale, any of these feasts could become a "Feast of Fools," when the traditional rituals of the church, including the Mass, were parodied and lampooned in ways that modern-day theologians might find shocking but which were widely accepted and greatly enjoyed during the Middle Ages.

**TELLING IT STRAIGHT.** Many of the religious-themed plays make use of the vernacular in conjunction with Latin in a form sometimes called "macaronic," and these would have been chanted and sung as part of the dramatic liturgies that highlighted the importance of certain feasts. But there is no reason to believe that these same stories were not also told in plain language, unadorned by music and unaccompanied by Latin. Surviving sources often mention the performance of biblical plays, or plays about the lives of saints, without specifying which language they used—Abbot Geoffrey's play about St. Catherine is one. Some may have been spoken entirely in the vernacular, but perhaps it scarcely mattered. After all, every man, woman, and child in Europe would have been intimately familiar with these stories; like the audiences of Greek tragedies, they knew what would happen before the play even began. They may not have needed to understand every word in order to participate in a satisfying theatrical experience. And many of these plays may never have been scripted to begin with; it would have been very easy for the performers to ad-lib their roles. However, we do have part of the written texts for two early biblical plays that were performed almost entirely in rhyming French couplets: *Ordo representationis Ade* (The Service for Representing Adam), sometimes called *Jeu d'Adam* (The Play of Adam), and *La sainte resurreccion* (The Holy Resurrection). Both may have been composed during the latter half of the twelfth century, and were probably originally intended for audiences in southeastern England and Normandy, since their dialect is the Anglo-Norman French of those regions. Both are incomplete, but appear to have been ambitious in scope. *The Play of Adam* is particularly well known,

and it is possible that it was designed to tell the entire story of human salvation, from the Fall of Man in Eden to the Last Judgment. But the sole surviving manuscript ends abruptly, with the Old Testament prophets foretelling the birth of Jesus (in a *processio prophetarum* or “procession of prophets,” similar in some respects to that which was probably performed at Riga, now the capital of modern Latvia). This play is also noteworthy for its careful instructions to the actors (written in Latin, to better distinguish them from the vernacular dialogue) with regard to costuming, set design, and the proper speaking of the verse. Most remarkable of all is the way that old stories are transformed when performed in modern dress—literally and figuratively. Here, Adam and Eve are a young, upwardly mobile couple; he’s hard-working and away from home a lot, while she’s ambitious but has too much time on her hands. They are perfect prey for a con-man like Satan. Later on, Cain and Abel’s quarrel over the offering of sacrifices becomes a controversy about the payment of church tithes, taxes levied on parishioners for the support of priests; Abel is resigned and pious, Cain is angry and frustrated that the fruits of his hard labor should go into someone else’s belly. This is serious social commentary, as well as sound religious doctrine.

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#### PLAYS ON THE CUTTING EDGE

**AIRING DIFFICULT ISSUES.** Medieval theater could simultaneously instruct and challenge its audiences. It would be a mistake to assume that just because a play contained an important religious message, and may in fact have been performed as part of the liturgy, that it could not also be funny or “edgy.” Even liturgical dramas could be controversial, depending on how they chose to

#### *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

##### THE INCIDENT AT RIGA

**INTRODUCTION:** In his chronicle history of the Baltic region, completed around the year 1225, a priest called Henry of Livonia described what happened when a play was performed for an audience that had no prior acquaintance with the conventions of medieval European theatre. In the excerpt below, Henry describes an incident that took place at Riga, on the coast of the Baltic Sea in what is now Latvia. He and his fellow German-speaking missionaries had been sent to convert the native peoples to Christianity, and they decided that putting on a play was the most effective way of doing this. However, the assembled audience did not understand that the violence in the play was not directed toward them; perhaps they were far too well acquainted with real violence to be able to grasp the meaning of theatrical violence.

##### Concerning the big play put on in Riga

That same winter [of 1205], an extremely well-produced play of the prophets was put on in the middle of Riga, in order that the folk might be taught the rudiments of the Christian faith as though through eye witness. The subject-matter of this play was most carefully explained to new converts, as well as to the pagans who came to see it, through an interpreter. However, at the place where Gideon’s soldiers were fighting with the Philistines, the pagans began to run away, fearing that they would be killed—and could only be coaxed back with some care. But finally, after a while, the congregation grew calm and quieted down. Indeed, this very play was like a prelude or foreshadowing of the future, for in the play there were wars, such as those of David, Gideon, Herod; and there was the teaching of the Old and New Testaments. And in fact, through the many wars that followed the folk were going to be converted, and through the teaching of the Old and New Testaments they were to be instructed in such a way so as to arrive at true peace-making and eternal life.

**SOURCE:** *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, 1225. Translation by Carol Symes.

represent the power of kings, how much they emphasized the importance of the vernacular, or how they depicted the relationships between men and women, lords and servants, sinners and saints. King Herod’s tyrannical behavior is held up as a warning to contemporary rulers. The pagan wisdom of the Magi, which includes

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE SERVICE FOR REPRESENTING ADAM**

**INTRODUCTION:** *The Service for Representing Adam* (1180), also known as *The Play of Adam*, is one of the earliest surviving dramas to have been written in a vernacular language—in this case, the French dialect known as “Anglo-Norman,” because it was spoken in Normandy (northern France) and in England after the Norman Conquest of 1066. Like other biblical plays in the vernacular, it was designed to “update” the stories of the Old and New Testaments, making them accessible and relevant to a contemporary audience using vivid, colloquial language and familiar situations. In this scene, the Devil has just failed to tempt Adam into eating the forbidden fruit of Paradise (a scene that is not in the original story, as told in Genesis 3), so he turns his attention to Eve. Note that while the play is in rhyming octosyllabic verse couplets (reproduced in this translation), the rapid-fire exchange of dialogue between the characters creates a very naturalistic effect.

**Devil:** Look, Eve, I’m here to talk with you.

**Eve:** Tell me, Satan, what you’re up to.

**Devil:** To do you good, that’s why I’m here

**Eve:** God grant it, then.

**Devil:** Oh, have no fear.

For many years, I’ve kept my eyes

On what goes on in Paradise.

Do you like secrets? Should I tell?

**Eve:** Yes, go ahead: I’ll listen well.

**Devil:** You hear me?

**Eve:** Yes, I said I do.

I’ll trust that what you say is true.

**Devil:** Then you’ll believe me?

**Eve:** By my faith!

**Devil:** And you’ll not tell?

**Eve:** The secret’s safe.

**Devil:** You’ve given me your guarantee;

That’s fine, that’s good enough for me.

**Eve:** Oh, you can trust me, as a rule.

**Devil:** You’ve clearly been to a good school!

But Adam, now: he’s pretty thick!

**Eve:** He’s a bit slow ...

**Devil:** You’ll make him quick.

Now, iron’s not as hard, or rock—

**Eve:** He’s noble.

**Devil:** He’s a laughing-stock!

That’s why he can’t take care of you.

He should do as you want him to.

You are so dainty (may I say?)

More lovely than a rose in May

As white as crystal, or as snow

That falls on icy streams below.

That was a bad day’s work for God

When he matched you with that big clod.

You’re soft, he’s hard; he’s dumb, you’re smart—

You have great courage in your heart.

detailed knowledge of mathematics and astronomy, is depicted as both glamorous and dangerous. Satan’s temptation of Eve, in *The Service for Representing Adam*, suggests that women can easily succumb to flattery and ambition, but it also acknowledges their intelligence and their influence over men. One of the liturgical dramas associated with the monastery of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire in France, *The Service for Representing How St. Nicholas Freed the Son of Getron*, describes the capture of a beautiful Christian boy by the pagan king Marmorinus, who takes the boy into his household and treats him with great tenderness. When the child is miraculously restored to the care of his grieving parents, the play does not go on to show the punishment of the king, but instead leaves the viewer with a sense of his probable grief over the loss of his treasured companion (his last words to the boy are: “No one can take you away from me, so long as I do not wish to lose you”). A respected modern scholar of medieval theater has suggested that this play confronts the problem of homosexual desire within the closed community of the monastery.

**FAITH VERSUS REASON AT BENEDIKTBEUERN.** It is arguable that the Latin dramas developed and performed by monastic communities could be more explicit in their treatment of controversial issues precisely because these were close-knit communities. Theater provided an outlet for the discussion of disturbing ideas. At the monastery of Benediktbeuern, where the Passion play’s surprisingly extensive use of the vernacular suggests that it was geared toward the entertainment and edification of the local German-speaking population, the Christmas play is striking for a very different reason. It makes no use of the vernacular, and does not appear to have been designed primarily as a vehicle for popular piety. Rather, it addresses—at some length—the sophisticated intellectual concerns of well-educated churchmen who, by the end of the twelfth century, were trying to come to terms with Aristotelian philosophy, which had recently been re-introduced into the medieval West via increased contact with Jewish and Muslim scholars. In this context, the celebration of the event of Jesus’ birth is subordinated to the problem of believing in the Virgin Birth,

I knew we'd get along, we two.  
So now let's talk.

**Eve:** I'll listen well.

**Devil:** You'll tell no one?

**Eve:** Who would I tell?

**Devil:** Not even Adam?

**Eve:** Very well.

**Devil:** All right. Let me just take a glance  
To see that no one's come by chance—  
Save Adam, who's just over there.

**Eve:** Speak up, he'll never overhear.

**Devil:** There is a great conspiracy  
Against you in this garden, Eve.  
The fruit that God gives you for food  
Is not enough to do you good;  
But that on the forbidden tree  
Has powerful efficacy.  
If you eat that, you'll never die  
You'll have God's power, majesty,  
Know good and ill—eternally.

**Eve:** How does it taste?

**Devil:** Oh, heavenly!  
And with your body, and your face,  
You should be ruler of this place—  
Of all the world you'd be the queen,  
Surveying what no man has seen.  
You'd know what all the future brings,  
You'd be the master of all things.

**Eve:** Is that the fruit?

**Devil:** Yes. Go and see.

*Then Eve should very carefully consider the forbidden fruit and, after having admired it for a long time, say:*

**Eve:** Just looking at it pleases me.

**Devil:** And if you eat, what happens then?

**Eve:** How can I know?

**Devil:** Don't you listen?  
You take it first, and then Adam:  
That done, you'll wear the crown of heaven.  
You'll then be your Creator's peer,  
He'll have to share his powers here.  
The instant that you taste the fruit  
You'll be transformed; he'll follow suit.  
You will be gods in your own right,  
With equal graces, equal might.  
Come, taste the fruit.

**Eve:** I think I may—

**Devil:** Don't trust Adam—

**Eve:** —but not today.

**Devil:** When?

**Eve:** Let me be.  
When Adam is asleep, maybe.

**Devil:** Eat it right now! Are you afraid?  
You'll lose this, if it's long delayed.

**SOURCE:** *Jeu d'Adam* (c. 1200). Translation by Carol Symes.

a phenomenon that can only be accepted through arguments based on faith, rather than by rational proof. The spokesman for these new, disturbing arguments in the Christmas play from Benediktbeuern is a character called Archisynagogus, “the leader of the synagogue” or “the head Jew.” While Archisynagogus is described in some of the stage directions as a comic character, behaving in ways that a medieval Christian audience might have considered stereotypically “Jewish,” he is also the character who represents scientific truth and intellectual rigor—qualities very attractive to the community’s scholars. Initiating a debate over the Old Testament prophecies of the Virgin’s miraculous conception, Archisynagogus defeats all of his opponents single-handedly, confidently refuting the pious arguments of the prophets, the Boy Bishop (a choirboy appointed to preside over the Christmas festivities), and even St. Augustine. In the end, faith does triumph over reason—but only by virtue of superior numbers and the “proof” offered by the gospel story. Moreover, Archisynagogus is not vilified for his “great arrogance” but is brought back on stage toward the end

of the play to advise Herod in his dealing with the three Magi, speaking “with great wisdom and eloquence.” Even the shepherds in this play fall prey to doubts, and are nearly convinced by the devil that the angels’ glorious proclamation must be a lie. This is no simplistic re-enactment of the Christmas story, but a serious attempt to come to terms with the central problem of religious belief. The Middle English *Second Shepherds’ Play* provides another example of the degree to which medieval plays allowed audiences to express their doubts, and challenged them to think about their faith in new ways.

**THE JOURNEY OF A SOUL AT GANDERSHEIM.** A very different type of challenge is offered by another play from a German monastic community, composed and performed around the middle of the twelfth century. This is the *Ordo virtutum* (The Service of the Virtues) by Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), abbess of a convent that she herself founded at Rupertsberg on the Rhine river. Hildegard was famous in her own day for her scientific and medical knowledge, her preaching, her

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A SHEEP IN THE MANGER: THE SECOND SHEPHERDS' PAGEANT**

**INTRODUCTION:** *The Second Shepherds' Pageant* forms part of the Corpus Christi play known as the *Wakefield* cycle (from the Yorkshire village mentioned in the play) or as the *Towneley* cycle (the name of the family in whose private library the manuscript was preserved). It is literally the second of two pageants devoted to the Christmas story—or, more specifically, to the role of the shepherds in that story. The biblical shepherds were popular characters in northern England during the Middle Ages. Many of the local people would have made their living in similar ways, and would have identified with the shepherds' plight: their poverty and loneliness, the terrible wintry weather they endured, their fear and surprise on hearing the angels' greeting, their joy at the Christ Child's birth. They would also have enjoyed the shepherds' irreverent attitude toward authority in this pageant, which goes so far as to poke fun at the doctrine of the Virgin Birth by introducing a plot which parallels that of Jesus' Nativity. A pair of unsavory characters, Mak and his wife Gill (Jill), steal one of the shepherds' precious sheep and hide it in a cradle, pretending that Gill has just miraculously given birth. When the shepherds come to look for their lost property, they are fooled into thinking that the creature in the manger is really a baby—until one of them is overcome with sentimental feelings and returns, intending to give the child a gift. The sheep is discovered, and so is Mak and Gill's deception. This is the scene excerpted below. The language of this play is the Middle English of the North—the language of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400), but with a strong Yorkshire accent. The verse is the work of an anonymous poet known as the "The Wakefield Master," who favored a distinctive nine-line stanza and complex rhyme scheme. Some words have been modernized, but for the most part the text is as it appears in the play's fifteenth-century manuscript.

**Shepherd 2:** Mak, friends will we be, for we all are one.

**Mak:** We? Now I hold for me—[*Aside*] For amends get I none.

Farewell all three!—[*Aside*] All glad were ye gone.

**Shepherd 3:** Fair words may there be, but love is there none

This year. [*The shepherds depart.*]

**Shepherd 1:** Gave ye the child anything?

**Shepherd 2:** I trow, not one farthing.

**Shepherd 3:** Fast again will I fling—  
Abide me ye here. [*He goes back in.*]

Mak, take it no grief if I come to thy bairn.

**Mak:** Nay, thou does me great reproof, and foul has thou fared.

**Shepherd 3:** The child it will not grieve, that little day-star.

Mak, with your leave, let me give your bairn

But six pence.

**Mak:** No, do way! He sleeps.

**Shepherd 3:** Methinks he peeps.

**Mak:** When he wakens, he weeps.

I pray you, go hence! [*The other shepherds enter.*]

**Shepherd 3:** Give me leave him to kiss, and lift up the clout. [*He lifts the cloth covering the sheep.*]

What the devil is this? He has a long snout!

**Shepherd 1:** He is markèd amiss. We wait ill about.

**Shepherd 2:** Ill-spun weft, I wis, aye comes foul out.

Aye, so! [*Suddenly, realization dawns.*]

He is like to our sheep!

**Shepherd 3:** How, Gib, may I peep?

**Shepherd 1:** I trow kin will creep

Where it may not go.

**Shepherd 2:** This was a quaint gaud and a far cast:  
It was a high fraud!

**Shepherd 3:** Yea, sirs, it was.

Let's burn this bawd and bind her fast.

[*Pointing to Gill.*]

A false scold hangs at the last.

So shall thou.

Will ye see how they swaddled

His four feet in the middle?

Saw I never in a cradle

A horned lad ere now.

**Mak:** Peace, bid I. What, let you be far!

I am he that him got, and yon woman him bore.

**Shepherd 1:** What devil [name] shall he have, Mak?

Lo, God, Mak's heir!

**Shepherd 2:** Let be all that. Now, God give him care,  
I saw—

**Wife:** A pretty child is he

As ere sat on a woman's knee

A dillydown, perdy,

To make a man laugh.

**SOURCE:** *The Second Shepherds' Pageant*, in *Medieval Drama*.  
Ed. David Bevington (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975): 402–405.

tremendous literary and artistic productivity, her mystical visions, and her highly unconventional approach to worship. Visitors to the convent reported that her nuns

often wore elaborate costumes on special occasions and were encouraged to find new and creative outlets for the worship of God, celebrating the feasts of the church with

unusual songs and liturgies composed by Hildegard herself. *The Service of the Virtues* may have been intended to celebrate the dedication of the convent around 1151; it could also have been performed more frequently, to honor the monastic profession of a new postulant, or simply to commemorate the challenges and rewards of the monastic life as it was experienced by women. Anticipating the morality plays of the later Middle Ages, it tells the story of a single (female) soul, Anima, and her journey through life, beginning with her embodiment in the “beautiful garments” of the flesh and the happy innocence of her childhood. Early on, Anima is introduced to the (female) Virtues and, through them, is made aware of life’s temptations and difficulties. But living in God’s created world is delightful to her, and Anima unabashedly revels in the delights of her body—until her encounters with the Devil leave her bruised and terrified. Calling on the Virtues to rescue her, Anima flees from the evil influence of her sins and eventually succeeds in escaping from the embrace of the Devil, yet not before she is reminded of how difficult her chosen path will be and how many earthly joys she is missing, including the pleasures of sexual intercourse and the joys of motherhood. Although there are few stage directions, the language of Hildegard’s play is full of action verbs, sensuality, and violence. The virility and power of the Devil is underscored not only by the masculinity of the actor portraying him (the role was probably assigned to the convent’s chaplain or to Hildegard’s male secretary) but also by the fact that he is the only character who either cannot or does not sing. Instead of communicating through melody, like the female characters played by the nuns, he speaks or shouts his lines, by turns insinuating and threatening. It would be anachronistic to call this a “feminist” play, but it is certainly a play that does not shy away from dealing with the special concerns of women vowed to lives of celibacy, poverty, and domination by men.

**APOCALYPSE PLAYS.** Yet another Latin play created by a monastic community in twelfth-century Germany reveals that withdrawal from the temptations of the world did not necessarily imply a retreat from interest in worldly affairs. *The Play of Antichrist* from the imperial abbey of Tegernsee probably dates from the years around 1160, which marked important developments in the political career of Frederick II “Barbarossa” (c. 1123–1190), who had been elected emperor of the Romans in 1152. Nicknamed “red beard,” and as hot-tempered as he was redheaded, Frederick was extremely ambitious, and spent his long reign attempting to exercise control over a vast and diverse region, which included the principalities of Germany, the city-states of

northern Italy, and parts of Eastern Europe. Constantly in conflict with the pope, and jealous of the success of his contemporary, Henry II of England, Frederick saw himself as the rightful successor of Constantine and Charlemagne—and seemingly believed that he was also destined to unify Europe; in fact, it was Frederick who coined the term “Holy Roman Empire” to describe the loose configuration of territories that made up his domain. *The Play of Antichrist* dramatizes Frederick’s political pretensions, and may have been performed in his presence at Tegernsee. It draws upon Christian teachings about the Apocalypse—the second coming of Christ—suggesting that Frederick might well have seen himself in the role of the triumphant world leader whose restoration of Roman power would eventually bring about the coming of the Antichrist, thereby ushering in an era of fear, hypocrisy, and false miracles. But this time of uncertainty is a necessary precursor to the salvation of the human race, since the duplicity of the Antichrist is destined to be revealed by the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who will also succeed in bringing about the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, which is necessary to pave the way for the Second Coming of Christ, the Last Judgment, and the End of Days. This is hardly a comfortable subject for a play, and it is difficult for a modern reader to understand the messages that may have been conveyed in its performance. But the staging must have been a revelation in itself. Like the liturgical dramas devised for Christmas and Easter, *The Play of Antichrist* was designed for performance at various stations or sites, with some of the action taking place in several locations simultaneously. In this case, however, the relatively simple requirements of *The Visit to the Sepulchre*, or even the plays of Herod and the Magi, are replaced by the full-scale deployment of armies, the negotiations of ambassadors, and the ceremonious subjugation of kings; the stage directions in the manuscript reveal that *The Play of Antichrist* required seven “thrones” or scaffolds representing the major powers of the known world, each of which is vanquished by the emperor of the Romans and then reconquered by the Antichrist and his minions. The trickery of the Antichrist also calls for special effects of a more subtle kind, since it must be made evident to the audience that he is not the real Christ, and that his promises are lies. Accordingly, the actor performing this role is directed to wear armor that is only partly concealed by his outer garments, while the performer playing the part of a man whom Antichrist will pretend to raise from the dead is carefully instructed to make it clear that he is only “faking death.” But the very theatricality of the Antichrist’s “miracles” is itself disturbing and potentially subversive, since it brings to mind the overt theatricality

of the church's own performance of sacramental miracles, notably in the daily celebration of the Mass.

**ACTING LOCALLY IN ARRAS.** The surviving plays dating from the years prior to 1300 suggest that the theater of the Middle Ages was well equipped to address timely issues through the retelling of timeless stories. Even when performed in Latin, and as part of the liturgy, plays could contribute to ongoing debates within a community, or provide incisive commentary on the world outside. When performed in the vernacular, such plays worked even more powerfully, and could reach a wide audience. The thriving mercantile center of Arras in northeastern France provides scholars with the first vernacular plays written specifically for an urban population and developing plots that owe little to biblical models. The *Jeu de saint Nicolas* (The Play of St. Nicholas), composed after 1191 by Jehan Bodel (a professional entertainer and town clerk whose written works contributed new vocabulary to the language now called Old French), is based in part on stories of the saint's many miracles, but its real purpose is to describe a set of recent and momentous occurrences in the life of the town. In 1191, Arras became part of the expanding kingdom of Philip II "Augustus" (r. 1180–1223), the medieval architect of the modern French state; prior to that date, it had formed part of the independent county of Flanders. Jehan chose to tell the story of his town's changing political, cultural, and economic climate through the lens of saintly legend. In the play, a greedy pagan king wages war against a wealthy town, easily identifiable as Arras, and takes one of its official representatives captive. He also captures an icon of St. Nicholas, which the man from Arras tells him is capable not only of safeguarding treasure, but increasing it. Intrigued, the king places the icon in his treasury and advertises the fact that the money could easily be stolen. But when three thieves from a tavern in the marketplace of Arras try to make off with it, they are confronted by the angry St. Nicholas himself, who forces them to return the gold. When the king counts his money, he finds that there is more of it than ever before, so he converts to Christianity. Medieval Arras was renowned for its strong currency and its banking industry; Philip Augustus was famous for taking advantage of every opportunity that came his way, using the raw ingredients available to him, and Jehan created his own allegorical reading of the situation. About 75 years later, another famous son of Arras, the composer and poet Adam de la Halle, would imitate the artistry of Jehan Bodel in *Jeu de la feuillée* (The Play of the Bower), which would make even greater use of local settings, characters, and controversies. In fact, the humor of this later play is so specific to Arras around 1276 that

it is very difficult for modern readers to understand what it is really about, let alone to laugh at its jokes.

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## PROFESSIONAL PERFORMERS

**THE MARK OF THE PROFESSIONAL.** Most often, the plot of a medieval play addressed the specific concerns of the community for which it was performed, while the actors performing the play represented the community at large. By the same token, the resources for a play's production were furnished by the community; audiences did not pay for the privilege of attending, nor were actors paid to perform. This begs the question of the existence of professional entertainers in the Middle Ages and their role in the development of medieval theater. It is a difficult question to answer, largely because the material that these professionals developed and performed was almost entirely improvised, or at least unscripted. The men and women who made a living through performance had to be ready to practice their crafts anywhere, at any time, for any audience. They prepared routines and gags, sketches and bits, tricks and acts; they did not, for the most part, memorize texts or preserve what they performed in writing. This occurred for many reasons. A professional performer's livelihood could be dependent on the originality of his or her approach to the material; publishing trade secrets would diminish their value. Also, most actors, singers, musicians, dancers, acrobats, and clowns learned their skills by watching and listening to one another; as they traveled and worked, on their own or in groups, they were constantly developing, devising, copying, changing, adapting, and inventing. Certainly, some could and did read; some could also write, a skill that (unlike reading) was rare in the Middle Ages. Thus only a very few would produce scripts or songs; Jehan Bodel and Adam de la Halle of Arras are unusual exceptions to the rule. In general, it was not until the late sixteenth century that performers came to depend on written scripts for their craft. Throughout the Middle

Ages, the mark of the true professional was the ability to work independently, relying on memory and skill.

**THE ROLE OF THE JONGLEUR.** Edmond Faral, one of the only scholars to attempt a systematic study of medieval entertainers, used the Old French word *jongleur* or “juggler” as a catch-all term to describe the array of talents and practices shared by the professional performers of the Middle Ages. His attempt to answer the question “What is a jongleur?” forms the opening paragraph of the book he first published in 1910:

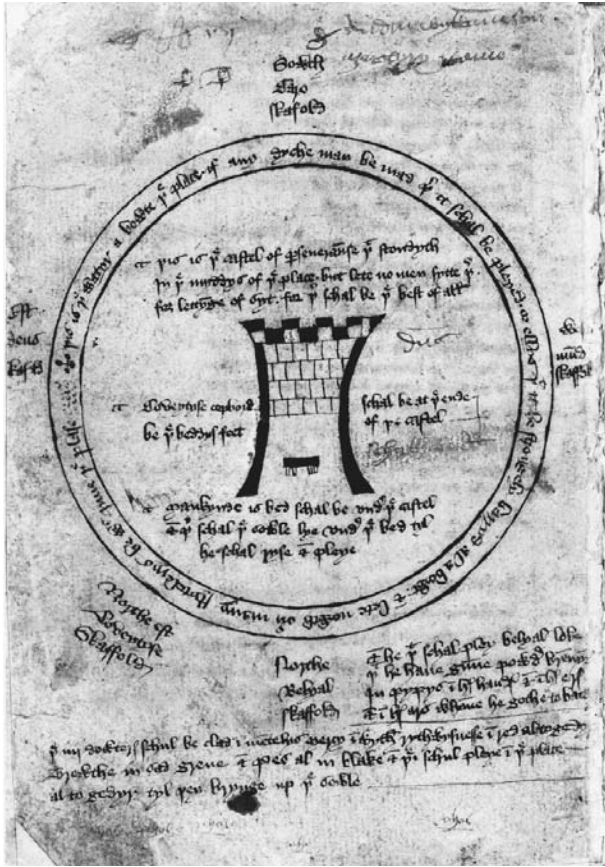
A jongleur is a being of multiple personalities: a musician, poet, actor, mountebank; a sort of steward for the pleasures associated with the courts of kings and princes; a vagabond who wanders the roads and puts up shows in the villages; a hurdy-gurdy man who, at a resting-place, sings of glorious deeds for the pilgrims; a charlatan who amuses the crowd at the crossroads; an author and actor of plays played on feast-days outside the church; a lord of the dance who makes the young people caper and skip; a taborer, a blower of trumpet and horn who keeps time in processions; a teller of tales, a bard who enlivens the feast, the wedding, the watches of the night; a circus-rider who vaults onto the backs of horses; an acrobat who dances on his hands, who juggles with knives, who jumps through hoops, who eats fire, who bends himself back in two; a buffoon who struts and mimics; a clown who plays the fool and speaks blarney; a jongleur is all that, and more besides.

However, no single performer could be master of so many skills, or practice them all at once. Faral’s essential point is that the medieval entertainer was a jack-of-all-trades, since his livelihood depended on his willingness to be all things to all people, to turn his hand to anything. In fact, like most professional entertainers in modern times, the medieval jongleur also held a variety of “day jobs.” A jongleur often worked as a servant in the houses of the wealthy when he was not entertaining there, or acting as a herald, messenger, or secretary. He also worked for the town where he performed on street corners or in the market square, as a crier, clerk, schoolmaster, or craftsman. Many jongleurs, however, were vagrants, traveling from place to place, begging for food or doing odd jobs when they could not earn enough money passing the hat during performances. It was a hard life, and it often earned the performer a bad reputation. Medieval people respected stability and feared the unfamiliar. Men and women who were constantly on the move, constantly changing jobs, and perpetually versatile could be objects of mistrust as well as sources of delight. This is why so much of the anecdotal evidence relating to the status of performers in the Middle Ages is negative.

**ENTERTAINMENT AT COURT.** Most professional entertainers were wanderers, but a privileged few were able to find steady employment in the entourages of the rich and powerful. They provided their masters with theater on demand, and with the prestige derived from patronage of the arts; in return, they received food and shelter, clothing and occasional gifts, and sometimes a steady wage. Depending on their individual talents, these men and women would have been called by a variety of names. The term *jongleur* was sometimes used generically, but it usually applied more specifically to clowns or jesters, many of whom also called themselves “fools.” The (unnamed) Fool in *King Lear*, Feste the jester in *Twelfth Night*, and Touchstone the clown in *As You Like It* are a few of their Shakespearean offspring. Entertainers who specialized in music, vocal or instrumental, were often called minstrels, but this does not mean that they devoted themselves exclusively to music. Some were also capable of reciting tales of heroic deeds, like those described in the heroic poem *Song of Roland*; in Scandinavia, they helped to develop the intricate adventure narratives that would later come together to form the great Norse sagas; in Ireland, bards sang the exploits of the giant Cuchulain, and the cycle of stories that now make up the *Tain*; in England before the Conquest performers boasted of Beowulf, and other heroes of the Anglo-Saxon past. By the thirteenth century, all over Europe, the deeds of King Arthur and his knights eclipsed all of these, and were especially popular in courtly circles, where tournaments were often designed to resemble those described in story and song.

**THE POET-MUSICIANS.** There was also the special class of poet-musicians who composed and sang their own lyrics of love and longing in the new vernacular languages of Europe, and who were known as troubadours, trouvères, or minnesingers, depending on whether they were from northern or southern France, or Germany. They were the entertainment elite. In fact, some were not professional entertainers at all, but clerics or noblemen “moonlighting” as performers. Adam de la Halle of Arras, the author of *The Play of the Bower*, exemplifies the traits of this group. Well-educated, with perhaps some training at the university in Paris, he was active in the multifarious theatrical activities of his hometown but also appears to have been attached to the court of Count Robert II of Artois (1250–1302), for whom he may have written *The Play of Robin and of Marion*, a musical comedy with a romantic—and spicy—pastoral plot (one focusing on shepherds and shepherdesses). While it was almost certainly intended for performance at court, with a cast consisting of Robert’s household entertainers, its manuscript indicates that it was later revived for





Castle of Perseverance, Drawing of staging, Macro Manuscript, 15th–16th century. BY PERMISSION OF THE FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY. V.A. 354, F. 191 VERSO.

performance in the very different urban milieu of Arras, another indication of medieval theater's versatility.

**FABLES AND FARCES.** While it has often been assumed that certain plays, jokes, or songs would have been more appropriate to a courtly setting than to an urban one, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that medieval performers and their audiences enjoyed a wide variety of entertainments, regardless of social class. Urban audiences wept when they heard the tale of noble Roland's death, and so did the knights who strove to emulate him. Rustic audiences laughed at the antics of clowns and the scatological humor of the short, salacious stories known as *fabliaux*, as did kings. The manuscript books that preserve the raw materials of the performers' repertoire as it had evolved by the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries were obviously made for aristocratic or well-to-do collectors, but the materials themselves could have been adapted for performance in taverns or halls or market-squares, on streets or at fairs, after feasts or before campfires. The plays that survive from this era were not only adaptable to occasion and circumstance, but

also to the number of available performers. Two of the earliest examples come from the region around Arras: a dialogue called *The Boy and the Blind Man* and a retelling of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32) called *The Courty Lad of Arras*. The extant manuscripts of these two short pieces indicate that both were performed many times over a period of several centuries, and they make use of some of the same plot-lines and devices that would later be recycled in the comic interludes or farces that were literally sandwiched in between longer or more serious plays in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (the French word *farce* means “stuffing,” while the Latin *interludium* means “a play between the plays or games”). Both consist of rhymed couplets (easily memorized) and both could have been performed in under an hour, perfect for any occasion. *The Boy and the Blind Man* uses the tried-and-true formula of the comic duo, one the mastermind (the Boy), the other the straight man and butt of the jokes (the Blind Man). The aim of the characters is the same as that of the performers—to entertain a crowd of people and con them out of as much money as possible. While it calls for two actors, it could probably be performed by a single jongleur with the help of his fool's “bauble,” the jester's puppet-on-a-stick. *The Courty Lad* could have been recited by a single performer as well, but it could also have been divided into parts. Its re-working of the biblical story provides a new parable for the fast-moving world of late medieval Europe, when hapless young men from the countryside were easily attracted to the pleasures of town life and often lost their money to gamblers and prostitutes. The fact that it could easily have been performed in a tavern is a constant reminder of the interaction between theater and public life in the Middle Ages.

**MIRACLES AND MORALITIES.** The plays performed by professional actors had to be as adaptable as the performers themselves, shrinking or expanding to fill any space, or to accommodate any cast. Because there were no permanent acting companies in Europe until the late sixteenth century, no troupe of actors could be sure that it would have unlimited resources, human or material, when it was time to perform. There were exceptions, of course. Occasionally, wealthy individuals and corporations hired professional actors to perform plays on festive occasions, or to supplement the talents of amateur actors. For example, a remarkable group of forty plays from Paris, each devoted to a miracle attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, survives in a deluxe manuscript copied in the last decades of the fourteenth century. These *Miracles de Notre Dame* were performed between 1339 and 1382 at the annual feasts of the Paris guild of goldsmiths (an association of craftsmen who

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***STAGING THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE**

*The Castle of Perseverance* may be the oldest play text in Middle English, dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century (c. 1405–1425). It is certainly one of the most unusual. For one thing, it survives in a remarkable manuscript (now at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.)—remarkable not only because of its length, but because it provides detailed instructions and a schematic plan to facilitate the staging of the play. Designed to be presented in the round, *The Castle of Perseverance* has thirty-five speaking parts and would have taken several hours to perform. It is often classified as a morality play, but unlike most morality plays it was probably not intended for production by a troupe of traveling players; instead, it may have been written for a cast that included professional and amateur actors. But like *Everyman* and *Mankind*, it tells the allegorical story of one human being's journey through life, from birth to death.

As the manuscript's stage plan indicates, *Humanum genus* or "Mankind" makes his entrance on the stage of the round world as a naked infant, "born" in a bed sheltered by the Castle of Perseverance. He is accompanied throughout the play by two Angels, one Good and one Bad, who offer constant advice and are always at odds with one another. As he grows to adulthood, Mankind is attracted to the empty promises of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, each of which occupies a scaffold beyond the moat that encircles the Castle, to the west, south, and north. Goaded by Backbiter, the World's minion, Mankind is tempted by the vices of youth: Lust and Folly; Covetousness (Greed), Pride, Wrath, and Envy; Gluttony, Lechery, and Sloth. As he grows older, however, Mankind begins to repent with the help of Shrift (Confession) and Penance,

and is brought to the Castle of Perseverance, to be sheltered by the Virtues: Charity, Abstinence, Chastity, Industry, Generosity, and Humility. No sooner is he safely inside its stronghold, but the Castle is besieged by the Vices, who attempt to "rescue" Mankind with the help of his Bad Angel, and the combined forces of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. But because Mankind is older and wiser, his Good Angel and the Virtues remain strong, and are able to vanquish the Vices—all but one, the special Vice of old age: Covetousness (Greed). Lured out of the Castle by Covetousness, leaving his Virtues behind, the unprotected Mankind quickly succumbs to Death. But as he dies, he cries for mercy, and this cry will be what saves the Soul that now issues from his body. For just as the Bad Angel is triumphantly leading the damned Soul to the Devil, the four daughters of God appear: Mercy, Righteousness (Justice), Truth, and Peace. Accompanied by the Good Angel, they lead the Soul to the throne of God in the east. There, the daughters of God sit in judgment on the past sins of Mankind, and in the end Mercy triumphs, pleading successfully for his Soul's salvation. So God pardons the Soul, and then speaks the closing lines of the play:

And they that well do in this world, here wealth shall awake:

In heaven they shall heightened be, in bounty and in bliss.

And they that evil do, they shall to hell-lake

In bitter bails to be burnt: my judgment it is.

My virtues in heaven then shall they quake;

There is no one in the world that may escape this.

All men example here then may take,

To maintain the good and mend what is amiss.

Thus endeth our games!

To save you from sinning,

Ever, at the beginning,

Think on your last ending!

Te Deum laudamus.

banded together to protect and regulate their trade), and they often call explicitly for the talents of professional musicians and possibly of dancers; since a new play appears to have been staged every year, it is not unlikely that professional actors were also called in. But usually when actors banded together to perform plays, they developed a limited repertoire and took the show on the road, moving from place to place and performing in taverns, inn yards, and private houses. One of the earliest scripts for a portable play of this kind is *Mankind*, a Middle English "morality play" written down between 1465 and 1470. Morality plays addressed the problems and temptations faced by ordinary people by following a representative human being through daily life. Because

they aimed to be accessible to everyone, they generalized common experiences through the use of allegory, a technique which relied on personifications of abstract qualities in characters with names like "Good Works" and "New Guise" (Trendy Fashion); and although the central message was religious, the dramatization of the allures of vice and the struggle for virtue was intended to be highly entertaining. The actors would go hungry if their play was boring, since the most common way of collecting money was to ask for donations during or after the performance. An interval for the collection of cash is actually written into *Mankind*, which is designed for performance by a cast of six actors, one playing the title character, four playing the pranksters who plague him—

aptly named Mischief, New-Guise, Nowadays, and Nought—and the sixth doubling the key roles of Mercy and Titivillus, the “All-Vile” chief devil. The pairing of these two very different roles is itself suggestive of the lead actor’s virtuosity, as well as of the playful quality of even the most moral of medieval morality plays. It was for precisely this reason that contemporary critics condemned their performance, no matter how religious the theme. *The Tretise of Miraclis Pleying*, written in England probably by a proponent of Lollardry (a pre-Protestant group hostile to the hierarchical nature of the Roman Church) several decades before *Mankind*, argues that the “playing” or performance of miracles and moralities “taketh away the dread of God.” But when plays and their performers are controversial, it is a good sign that both are doing their job.

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#### COMMUNITY THEATERS

**URBAN CENTERS.** Toward the end of the twelfth century, a cleric called William FitzStephen included a lengthy description of the city of London in his biography of St. Thomas Becket (1118–1170), written to attract visitors to the new martyr’s shrine at Canterbury and to his birthplace nearby. Among the city’s attractions, William emphasized its opportunities for entertainment, listing an array of pleasurable pastimes that resembles the catalogue of theatrical activities outlined by Hugh of Saint-Victor.

I do not think that there is any city deserving greater approval for its customs, with regard to church-going, honoring divine ceremonies, the keeping of feast-days, the giving of alms, reception of strangers, confirmation of betrothals, making of marriages, celebration of weddings, preparation of banquets, welcoming of guests, and also in the observance of funeral rites and the burying of the dead.

He goes on to paint a tantalizing picture of “the sports of the city, since it is appropriate that a city be not only useful and important, but also a source of mirth and diversion.” Acknowledging that London, unlike ancient Rome, has no theater buildings in which plays can be seen, he assures his audience that it “has dramatic performances of a holier kind, plays wherein are shown either the miracles wrought by holy confessors or the sufferings which glorified the faith of the martyrs.” Moreover, he says, London has Carnival plays and games, tournaments and processions, mock naval battles, hunting and hawking, summer games showcasing feats of athletic skill, and winter sports like bear-baiting and ice-skating. In many ways, urban communities such as London showcased the quintessential community of medieval theater—which used the resources of the community to which it performed in order to deliver its message—more fully even than the closed community of the monastery. The city could be the theater when it provided the stage for theatrical activities mounted at different times and seasons of the year; or it could be an actor in great pageants of national significance when it arrayed itself in finery and put on parades and plays to welcome visiting kings and dignitaries. And sometimes it could represent the whole world, and the whole history of human salvation, when it staged the great cycle plays of the later Middle Ages.

**CHRISTMASTIDE AND CARNIVAL.** Like the drama of the church, the drama of the medieval town was governed by the liturgical calendar and the seasons of the year. Certain seasons were especially conducive to theatricality, either because they were times of comparative leisure and plenty, when the rhythms of sowing and harvest had slowed, or because they were times when people were drawn together by sociable impulses as old as humanity, as at the dark time of the winter solstice. While spring and summer offered numerous opportunities for the games, dances, and diversions described by William FitzStephen—played out in towns and villages all over Europe—Christmastide and Carnival were the major occasions for festive theater in most communities. The week after Christmas was a busy time in churches, and it is important to remember that the liturgical plays celebrating Jesus’ birth and the events leading up to the Epiphany of the Magi were in performance throughout the Middle Ages, and would have been extremely familiar to everyone. Supplementing these formal dramas were the revels associated with Christmas, which included a variety of small-scale dramatic productions often called “mumming plays.” These drew upon the same ancient inclinations that had prompted the church to attach the celebration of Christmas to the winter solstice in the first

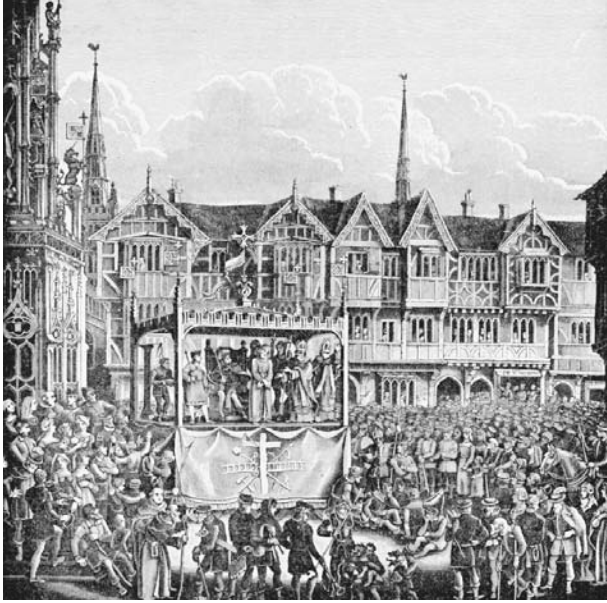


Death of Herod, Performance of *Massacre of the Innocents*, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, Spring 1983, produced by John Block Friedman. COURTESY OF JOHN BLOCK FRIEDMAN.

place. The birth of a marvelous child, the rekindling of light in a dark place, the miraculous recycling of the new year—the simple plays that dramatized these things reached deep into the primal mythology in which medieval Christianity was already firmly rooted. So did the revelry of Carnival, the season of license and conspicuous consumption that followed Epiphany and ended on “Fat Tuesday” (Mardi Gras), when Ash Wednesday ushered in the six weeks of fasting and penance that preceded Easter. Carnival, Lent, and Easter were also products of the natural cycle, since the meat from animals slaughtered in late autumn would not last through the winter and had to be eaten, thus providing for the feasting of Carnival; Lent, by contrast, institutionalized the basic necessity of rationing the remaining store of grains and legumes that had been put up at the autumn harvest and had to last until spring, when earth’s fertility would be renewed, just as Christ’s body was resurrected from the tomb. The theater of Carnival resembled the foods of Carnival: excessive, rich, and unlike the normal

fare of everyday life. Carnival plays, like the *Fastnachtspiele* of Germany, accordingly reveled in cross-dressing, the reversal of hierarchies, and the flouting of acceptable conventions. As at the Feasts of Fools during Christmastime, the world was turned upside down. The celebration of subversive behavior may seem strange to us, but in many ways it was the glue that held these communities together. Carnival allowed the people of Europe to use up excess energy, as well as excess food—both being commodities which, if stored too long and allowed to go bad, would be far more dangerous than a period of organized dissipation.

**PASSION AND MYSTERY.** The further development of towns in the later Middle Ages led to the growth of new identities within these communities, as well as to a growing sense of shared identity—local, regional, and even national. Theater became a medium for expressing these identities. In Italy, where towns had long been the fundamental units of political as well as economic organization, lay confraternities often took the lead in



An imagined performance of a fifteenth-century mystery play, engraving in a study by Thomas Sharp, early nineteenth century. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

displays of public religious fervor, competing with one another in the performance of *laudes*—songs and ritual processions staged in honor of the Blessed Virgin or the saints—which by the fifteenth century were accompanied by *sacra rappresentazioni*—theatrical presentations of events from sacred history performed on major feasts. In Spain and Catalonia, the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, celebrated on the 15th of August, became an especially important occasion for dramatic demonstrations of collective piety, and plays glorifying the life and miracles of the Virgin were performed annually; the *Misteri d'Elx* is still performed every year in the Basque town of Elche, the oldest European play in continuous production. Elsewhere on the Continent, community theater received its fullest expression in plays devoted to the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In some places—notably in the major cities of the Low Countries, Switzerland, France, and Germany—these Passion plays (plays dramatizing the suffering of Christ) came to be called “mystery” plays, not only because they delved into the mysteries of faith, but because they were produced by representatives of the various trade guilds, associations of craftsmen who banded together to protect and regulate the secrets or “mystery” of their trades. Depending on the size of the city, the number of its guilds, and the generosity of their budgets, these plays could be more or less elaborate. In some places, episodic plays chronicling the entire history of human salvation were performed on successive days in a cycle that could

last nearly a month. The geography of the town would often dictate where and how such plays were performed, whether in the round, using several scaffolds or platforms, or in procession at various stations throughout the city. Continental towns in northern Europe tended to have larger market squares that could accommodate large-scale spectacles and their audiences; in England and in Spain, by contrast, more constricted spaces favored the use of pageant wagons that were drawn through the narrow streets, stopping at certain pre-arranged sites for the performance of individual plays.

**A NEW OCCASION FOR THEATER.** It is clear that members of medieval communities eagerly sought opportunities to take part in dramatic productions. In *The Miller's Tale*, one of the stories in *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1342–1400), a parish clerk called Absolon falls in love with Alison, the pretty young wife of a wealthy carpenter; but she is already infatuated with Nicholas, a student who lodges in her husband's house. Desperate to win her for himself, Absolon woos Alison with gifts and sweets, tender ballads, and proofs of his prowess. These include demonstrations of dramatic skill, when “to show his lightness and his mastery, / He playeth Herod upon a scaffold high.” Given the ubiquity of community-sponsored theater in late medieval Europe, young men with a penchant for acting had many opportunities to showcase their talents—especially in England, where the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi provided the opportunity for towns and guilds to advertise themselves and their piety, as well as to satisfy the histrionic ambitions of their members. This new feast, dedicated to the “Body of Christ,” was formally instituted in 1311 by Pope Clement V and became the occasion around which many of the mystery cycles and Passion plays of Europe were performed. This new focus on Christ's corporeality, his mystical body as well as his physical humanity, and on the manifestation of his miracles in the world, tied in beautifully with the conventions of medieval theater.

**THE CORPUS CHRISTI PLAY.** From the liturgical dramas of the early church to the moralities of the later Middle Ages, medieval performers and audiences had developed a shared vocabulary that used symbols, spatial orientation, and sophisticated storytelling techniques to convey meaning in direct, immediate, even visceral ways. Biblical events were not treated as part of the past, but as aspects of a continuous present that affected the actions of men and women in the here-and-now. The fact that an episodic staging of the gospel narrative might require dozens of actors playing the role of Christ is already a profound theological statement in the making (as Jesus himself had taught, all men and women should

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LIST OF PROPS, SETS, AND COSTUMES FOR THE LAST JUDGMENT AT YORK**

**INTRODUCTION:** One of the most elaborate pageants in the York Corpus Christi cycle was *The Last Judgment*, performed annually by the Guild of Mercers (cloth merchants). This was the finale of the day-long theatrical event, and was therefore expected to be particularly impressive—and to require significant expenditure on the part of the guild's members. The mercers therefore accumulated an impressive array of costumes, props, and set-pieces, which they inventoried in 1433. The list (given below) suggests that the pageant wagon represented the Earth, on which Christ and his apostles were enthroned as judges. It may also have featured trap doors for the graves out of which the righteous and the damned souls could have risen to receive their sentences. Heaven would have been situated on a higher scaffolding rigged out with moving mechanical angels, and the mouth of Hell on the street itself, in front of the wagon.

First a Pageant [wagon] with 4 wheels, Hell Mouth, 3 garments for 3 devils, 6 devils' faces in 3 Visors [i.e., masks], Array [i.e., costumes] for 2 evil souls, that is to say: 2 Shirts, 2 pairs of hose, 2 visors & 2 wigs, Array for 2 good souls, that is to say: 2 Shirts, 2 pairs of hose, 2 visors & 2 wigs, 2 pair of Angels' wings with iron in the ends, 2 trumpets of White plate, & 2 reeds, 4 Albs for 4

Apostles, 3 diadems with 3 visors for 3 Apostles, 4 diadems with 4 Wigs of yellow for 4 Apostles, A cloude and 2 pieces of rainbow [made] of timber, Array for God [i.e., Christ], that is to say: a Shirt wounded, a diadem, With a visor gilded, A great coster [i.e., hanging] of red damask painted for the back side of the Pageant, 2 other lesser costers for the 2 sides of the Pageant, 3 other costers of linen broadcloth for the sides of the Pageant. A little coster 4-squared to hang at the back of God. 4 Irons to bear up Heaven, 4 small cotter-pins & an Iron pin, a grate of Iron that God shall sit upon when he shall rise up to Heaven, With 4 ropes at 4 corners. A Heaven of Iron, with a hub of wood, 2 pieces of red clouds and stars of gold belonging to Heaven, 2 pieces of blue clouds painted on both sides, 3 pieces of red clouds, with sun beams of gold & stars for the highest of Heaven, with a long small border of the same Work. 7 great Angels holding the Passion of God [i.e., the symbols of Christ's Passion: crucifix, nails, crown of thorns, and so on], One of them has a vane of copper & a cross of Iron in his head, gilded. 4 smaller Angels, gilded, holding the Passion. 9 smaller Angels painted red to run about in the Heaven. A long small cord to make the Angels run about, 2 short rollers of wood to put forth the pageant.

**SOURCE:** "The Mercers' Indenture of 1433," in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*. Ed. Greg Walker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2000): 159. Text modernized by Carol Symes.

be treated as though they were Christ). These civic exhibitions of piety often began with the Creation and ended with the Last Judgment, and were produced over several days. In England, some communities attempted to perform this feat in a single day, beginning at dawn with the prehistory of mankind as described in Genesis, and ending late into the midsummer night with the bodily resurrection of the dead, the eternal damnation of sinners, and the salvation of the righteous. This was the case in the ancient city of York, where the pageant wagons carrying the actors and the scenery for individual plays followed a route that can be traced even today; each play would be performed several times at certain key locations. The props, costumes, and special effects were the jealously guarded property of the guilds that performed the plays, and particular roles may have been passed on from father to son over several generations. Moreover, the subject matter of a given play often said something about the guild, or its craft. At York, "The Last Supper" was performed by the bakers, whose bread became the body of Christ during their re-enactment of the first Eucharist; "The Crucifixion" was performed by

the pinners or nail-makers, samples of whose wares were on prominent display when Jesus was nailed to the cross.

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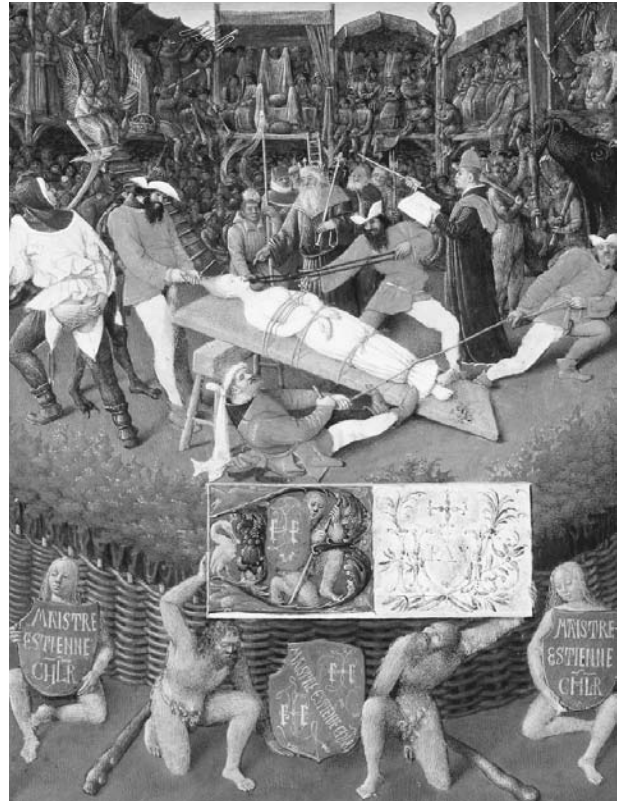
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## THE AFTERLIFE OF MEDIEVAL THEATER

**CIRCUMSCRIBING THE THEATER: ENCLOSURE, REGULATION, AND CENSORSHIP.** In 1598, John Stowe (1525–1605) published his *Survey of London*, a record of the city’s rich history, changing geography, and rapidly disappearing theatrical traditions. Among other things, he noted with regret the loss of traditional recreations, “which open pastimes in my youth, being now suppressed, worsor practices within doors are to be feared.” Citing William FitzStephen’s description of London, written four centuries earlier, Stowe devoted page after page to a description of the Christmas revels, Carnival celebrations, city festivals, athletic contests, religious processions, and plays which had been the focus of community life in the days before the Reformation. In one section in particular, he focuses on May games, describing first the pleasures of the “sweet meadows and green woods” and other pleasures of the season, and then providing detail about the nature of the celebrations themselves:

I find also, that in the month of May, the citizens of London of all estates, lightly in every parish, or sometimes two or three parishes joining together, had their several mayings, and did fetch in May-poles, with divers warlike shows, with good archers, morris dancers, and other devices, for pastime all day long; and toward the evening they had stage plays, and bonfires in the streets.

Some of those plays featured the exploits of Robin Hood and his men, who would entertain the company with “other pageants and pastimes.” These, despite the potential they afforded for stringent social commentary, continued to be popular in England. But other types of entertainment, particularly those plays associated with religious holidays like Corpus Christi, would be increasingly suppressed during the Reformation, when the Roman Catholic Church, with its emphasis on feast days, was being displaced by the new Church of England. By the end of the sixteenth century, the rulers of most Protestant countries were actively engaged in rooting out and destroying the theatrical traditions of the Middle Ages, which had become associated with “popish idolatry” and superstition. In Catholic countries, the Counter Reformation, a movement to suppress Protestant ideas, produced ironically similar results, as religious and secular authorities attempted to control and regulate plays that might potentially preach unsound doctrine or carry unsavory political messages. The advent of the printing press after 1450 also made it easier to control the reproduction and dissemination of texts; for although print made more and more plays available to a wider public,



Martyrdom of St. Apollonia reflecting dramatic staging. Jean Fouquet, Hours of Etienne Chevalier, Chantilly, Musée Condé MS 71 folio 39, 1445. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCES.

this new technology also made effective censorship of these plays more efficient and more complete. These circumscriptions of medieval drama were matched by another new trend: the enclosure of theater itself, as plays were now confined to purpose-built structures that required the payment of admission. Not only was access to theater now limited to those who could pay, and performance of plays increasingly the province of a specialized acting profession, but the plays themselves had to be vetted and licensed by the authorities. Finally, the teachings of Renaissance humanism advocated a return to classical dramatic forms and the Aristotelian conventions of comedy and tragedy, which were now considered superior to the dramatic genres invented during the Middle Ages. Together, these modern innovations posed a threat to the continued survival of medieval theater.

**RECEPTION AND REVIVAL.** Yet varieties of medieval theater persisted, despite these strictures. Renaissance dramatists continued to use themes, characters, and devices borrowed from the plays they had grown up watching. William Shakespeare could well have witnessed the performance of a Corpus Christi cycle, possibly at Coventry, and would certainly have seen miracle and morality

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE CENSORSHIP OF A MEDIEVAL PLAY**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1567, the mayor and Council of York decided to seek expert advice. With the accession of Queen Elizabeth I in 1558, and the re-establishment of the Protestant faith in England, it was becoming increasingly dangerous to perform plays that might be construed as sympathetic to the Catholic Church. The most controversial of the Corpus Christi pageants was the “Creed Play,” and it was this pageant, in particular, that caused the men of York a great deal of anxiety. Therefore, they approached the dean of York Minster (cathedral), Matthew Hutton, and asked for his opinion as a theologian. He responded to them in a letter, excerpted below. Perhaps the best proof that the “Creed Play” was ultimately deemed too dangerous for public performance is the fact that it no longer survives: it appears that all extant copies were destroyed sometime after the receipt of this letter.

To the right honourable my Lord Mayor of York, and the Right worshipful his Brethren.

I have perused the books that your Lordship with your Brethren sent me, and as I find many things that I much like because of their antiquity, so see I many things that I can not allow, because they are Disagreeing from the sincerity of the Gospel, the which things, if they should be altogether cancelled or altered into other matter, the whole drift of the play should be altered, and therefore I dare not put my pen to it, because I want both skill and leisure to amend it, though in goodwill I assure you, if I were worthy to give your Lordship and your Right worshipful Brethren council, surely my advice should be that it should not be played. For though it was plausible forty years ago, and would now also of the ignorant sort be well liked, yet now in this happy time of the Gospel I know the learned will dislike it, and how the State will bear with it, I know not.

**SOURCE:** Matthew Hutton, Letter to the Mayor and Council of York, 1567, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*. Ed. Greg Walker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2000): 206. Text adapted from Early Modern English by Carol Symes.

plays performed by troupes of traveling players. One such professional troupe performs “The Mousetrap” or play-within-the-play devised by Hamlet; a very different group of amateur performers stages “The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe” after Bottom the weaver recovers his senses (and loses his ass’s head) in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MEDIEVAL THEATER IN THE NEW WORLD**

**INTRODUCTION:** After the Incident at Riga, it will come as no surprise that medieval drama was also used as a conversion tool to help complete the Spanish conquest of Mexico in the sixteenth century. Toward the end of that century, a native Aztec poet translated a Spanish sacred drama called *The Beacon of Our Salvation* into the indigenous Nahuatl language of his people, so that it could be performed by and for the new Mexican converts to Christianity. The Holy Week play is not only one of the oldest documents written in Nahuatl, it is the oldest surviving play in any Native American language. Like all translations, the resulting rendition demonstrates that it is not only words that must be translated, but entire concepts. In the excerpt below, Jesus says farewell to his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, explaining to her—and to the audience—why he must suffer crucifixion for the sins of mankind.

**SOURCE:** Louise M. Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday: A Nahuatl Drama from Early Mexico* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996): 125.

The comedies of Molière, which still form the cornerstone of the repertoire of the Comédie Française, are essentially reworkings of medieval French farces. In Spain,



the Assumption play of Elche continues to be performed every year on 15 August. In the German village of Oberammergau, the entire population is required to perform the Passion Play staged every ten years since 1634. At York and Chester in England, and at Toronto in Canada, groups of performers drawn from local community theaters and universities regularly organize Corpus Christi pageants; in London, the National Theater of Great Britain has twice produced *The Mysteries*, a cycle of plays presented over the course of an entire day. Early music ensembles, beginning in 1958 with a landmark production of *The Play of Daniel* by New York Pro Musica, have found audiences increasingly receptive to medieval liturgical dramas; the works of Hildegard of Bingen have become perennial favorites, and her *Ordo virtutum* has been staged at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris and at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., among other venues. But medieval dramatic forms also influence modern theatrical genres, indirectly and directly. Mel Gibson's 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ* is one of the most obvious modern-day examples, but the "rock opera" *Jesus Christ, Superstar* by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice is more closely based on medieval models. This is to say nothing of the ways that the humor, pageantry, cruelty, and humanity of medieval drama have contributed to the development of everything from television sit-coms to grand opera. In the end, medieval theater proved too elusive, too multi-dimensional, and too powerful to be eradicated by the more limited theatricality of the modern world.

#### SOURCES

John Block Friedman, "The Performance of Some Wakefield Plays on the University of Illinois Campus," in *From Page to Performance: Essays on Early English Drama*. Ed. by John A. Alford (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1995): 99–108.

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Theater*

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### GEOFFREY DE GORRON

c. 1080(?)–1146

*Schoolmaster*

*Abbot*

**FROM ACTOR TO ABBOT.** Geoffrey de Gorron (d. 1146), who in 1119 became abbot of one of the most

powerful monasteries in England, came to his religious career by a surprising turn of events. Born into an aristocratic family in Normandy (now part of northern France), Geoffrey appears to have been good-natured, somewhat accident-prone, and not especially ambitious. After working as a clerk and schoolmaster at the cathedral of Le Mans, he was eventually offered a job teaching in the new school founded by the abbey of St. Albans, across the channel in England. But he took his time getting there, and when he finally arrived at the monastery, he found that the job had been given to someone else. Undaunted, and probably too poor to afford the passage home to Normandy, Geoffrey opened his own school in the nearby village of Dunstable, and proceeded to indulge his real passion: theater. The chronicle history kept at St. Albans vividly describes what happened next.

While he was there, he put on a certain play about St. Catherine, the sort of play that we commonly call a "miracle play." And in order to enhance the production, he begged the sacristan of St. Albans to loan him some of the copes used by the abbey's choir, which he was allowed to borrow. And so he performed the play about St. Catherine. But it so happened that, the following night, the house of Master Geoffrey caught fire and was burned, and so were all his books, as well as the vestments he had borrowed. Not knowing how else to make amends for damage done to God's property, and that of St. Alban, he offered himself as a sacrifice to God, and assumed the habit of a monk at the monastery of St. Albans. And this is the reason why he always took so much care to compensate for the loss of the choir's copes, by making rich gifts to adorn the abbey in later years.

The chronicle goes on to say that, when Geoffrey was elected abbot some years later, he commemorated the events that had led him to the monastery by celebrating the anniversary of his ordination on the feast of St. Catherine, at which time he would treat the monks to a display of the new vestments he had commissioned for the abbey over the previous year.

**INSTRUCTIONAL THEATER.** Geoffrey's interest in theater and its instructional uses did not end when he was elected abbot. It was almost certainly Geoffrey who commissioned and designed the famous St. Albans Psalter, which contains, among other fascinating elements, the oldest copy of the dramatic Old French poem known as "The Song of St. Alexis" and the oldest script for a liturgical play performed, in many different versions, all over Europe. This is the *Peregrinus* play (The Play of the Pilgrim), based on the gospel story of two disciples' meeting with the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–29). The manuscript image

depicts the initial meeting of Luke and Cleophas with an unknown Pilgrim (they do not recognize Jesus) and uses some of the same stylized techniques as the manuscripts of Terence's comedies; however, the dialogue spoken among the characters seems to have been added as an afterthought, in alternating lines of red, blue, and green ink in the upper left-hand corner of the page. The following two pages in the Psalter complete the story in pictures, showing Jesus the Pilgrim sitting down to supper with the disciples and then his mysterious disappearance. No dialogue accompanies these images, since all of the important action takes place in silence.

#### SOURCES

David Knowles, et al., *The Heads of Religious Houses England and Wales*. Vol. 1: 940–1216. 2nd ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

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### ARNOUL GRÉBAN

1420–1471

*Playwright*  
*Musician*

**A MYSTICAL DRAMATIST.** Arnoul Gréban, with his brother Simon, is one of the very few named authors of a medieval play of any sort and the first named author of a passion play. He wrote a *Mystère de la Passion* or *Mystery of the Passion of Christ*, a strongly visual, lyrical, and carefully structured work of some 35,000 lines containing music and involving a variety of literary styles such as the sermon form, the debate, and the lamentation; the play moves from comic to tragic in tone and back again. Passion plays of this kind were quite popular in France from the late thirteenth century (with the *Passion of Paulinus*) and were performed as late as 1549. More than 100 performances are recorded at French cities like Arras, Valenciennes, Angers, and Clermont-Ferrand in the Auvergne.

**A PLAYWRIGHT AND TEACHER.** Gréban was born in Le Mans in France, and seems to have been in religious orders, as he was a student of theology in the early 1450s at the University of Paris and a singer and a performer on the great organ of the Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris. It was during this time as a teacher that he is believed to have composed the *Mystère de la Passion* in about 1451. Against a cosmic backdrop of a sort of Manichaean struggle—that is, a war between the principles of good and of evil—he set the passion of Jesus. The play is of great scope and takes in both Old and New Testament time, beginning with a Prologue describing the Creation and Lucifer's or Satan's rebellion against

God and his temptation of Adam and Eve through the serpent. The Trial in Heaven occupies Day 1 with sections on the Annunciation to the Virgin, the Nativity of Jesus, and his *enfance* or miracles of childhood (a very popular extra-biblical subject). Day 2 of the play concerns the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus' public activities and ministry, his entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, and then his arrest by the Roman authorities. Day 3 is devoted to the earlier phases of the Crucifixion to the moment when guards are placed at the tomb. Day 4 is entirely occupied with the Resurrection and Christ's ascension to the heavens. Though the exact conditions of these performances are not known, there were at least three performances of Gréban's Passion before 1473 in Paris; it was adapted by a later French dramatist, Jean Michel, and was also performed in the 1490s in the city of Troyes. A lesser known play by Gréban concerns only the Nativity of Jesus, and with his brother Simon he seems to have written a *Mystère des Actes des Apôtres* in 62,000 lines treating the dispersion of the Apostles through many countries and with highly dramatic episodes of shipwrecks and martyrdoms. This last play was performed at Bourges and at Paris between 1536 and 1541.

**THE PASSION PLAY GENRE.** In addition to the stories of Jesus' passion recounted in the Gospels, passion plays were also based on a variety of extra-biblical materials such as the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, the *Golden Legend* of Jacob of Voragine, and the *Meditations on the Blessed Mary*, as well as a popular French narrative poem of the late twelfth century called the *Passion des Jongleurs*. The early Passion plays, like the *Passion of Paulinus*, dramatize only the events of Holy Week, commencing the action with Jesus's entry into Jerusalem and concluding it with his resurrection and appearances to his followers, but later ones, such as Gréban's, could be much longer and more complex, forming part of what was called the Trial of Heaven, a sort of court proceeding in which God listens to testimony from personifications called Justice and Mercy about the deceptions of Satan on earth and finally agrees to send his son—through the incarnated Jesus—to ransom or redeem mankind. This Trial idea was codified and developed by the Passion dramatist Eustache Marcadé (d. 1440). The later Passion plays were very long, often requiring many days to perform, and Gréban's appears to have taken four days to complete. In smaller towns, the expanded forms of these plays in performance may have occupied the attentions of nearly all the adults of the community. As is true of medieval drama elsewhere, very few scripts contemporary with the Passion plays survive, as it appears they were memorized and only later written down. But

Gréban's *Mystère* exists in three complete manuscripts and several fragmentary texts.

#### SOURCES

- Maurice Accarie, *Le Théâtre sacré de la fin du moyen âge* (Geneva: Droz, 1979).
- Micheline de Combarieu du Graes and Jean Subrenat, modernizers, *Le Mystère de la Passion de notre sauveur Jesus-Christ/Arnoul Gréban traduction et présentation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).
- Grace Frank, *Medieval French Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).
- Paula Giuliano, trans., *The Mystery of the Passion. Day Three* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1996). [A portion of Gréban's vast Passion play.]
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## HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

1098–1179

Abbess

Composer

Playwright

**A MYSTICAL DRAMATIST.** Hildegard of Bingen (c. 1098–1179) is one of only a few of the men and women known by name who authored plays in the Middle Ages, and the only one about whom modern scholars have a substantial amount of information. Abbess Hildegard of Bingen, polymath and mystic, was the composer of the *Ordo virtutum* or “Service of the Virtues,” among many other works. Hildegard’s extraordinary life and achievements have attracted the attention of an extremely wide and varied audience—including medievalists, feminist critics, New Age spiritualists, historians of science, and fans of medieval music.

**AN ECLECTIC EDUCATION.** Hildegard was the tenth child born into an aristocratic family. She suffered from ill health throughout her life, and by the time she was eight years old her parents apparently decided that she should be dedicated to religion. She was entrusted to the care of a young anchoress called Jutta, who lived in seclusion in a cell attached to the Benedictine

monastery at Disibodenberg, near the German city of Speyer. There, Hildegard learned some Latin and also apparently received informal instruction in a wide and eclectic array of subjects, including medicine and the natural sciences. Above all, she learned the elements of musical composition, which she would later employ in her drama. At the same time, Hildegard began to experience the visions for which she would later become renowned. By the time Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard had acquired a secretary, the monk Volmar, to whom she dictated and described the visual and aural messages that came to her from God. In the ensuing decade, Hildegard attracted many young women to the tiny convent that had grown up around her, and by 1147 was actively in search of a new home for her burgeoning community.

**DRAMA IN THE CONVENT.** In the meantime, the fame of her visions and holiness had spread, and Hildegard began to preach in public, as well as to circulate her writings. These controversial activities brought her to the attention of the bishop of Mainz and also to that of Pope Eugenius III (r. 1145–1153), both of whom eventually declared her teachings to be divinely inspired and encouraged her to complete work on what is now recognized as one of the great mystical books of the Middle Ages, the *Liber Scivias*, roughly translated as “The Book on Knowing the Ways.” By 1150, Hildegard and her followers were established in a new and larger convent at Rupertsberg on the banks of the Rhine, near Bingen. It was here that Hildegard composed the *Ordo virtutum*, a drama about a female soul appropriately called “Anima” and her journey through life. This work is only one of many innovative liturgies, hymn sequences, and song-cycles intended for performance by her nuns. She also oversaw the copying of the books containing her writings and personally directed the production of the many manuscript images designed to illustrate these books and to capture the extraordinary visual qualities of her mystical communications with God. The color, vibrancy, and sensuality of these illuminations provide some indication of the qualities that must also have enriched the spectacle of performance in the convent.

**AN UNORTHODOX CAREER.** Hildegard died in 1179, and it was widely believed that she would be canonized as a saint. An official biography was produced, and a number of miracles were attributed to her. However, the late twelfth century was a time when the process of canonization was becoming highly politicized, and when control over this procedure had shifted from local authorities to the papal court. Official enquiries were conducted four times over the course of the next two

centuries but, on each of these occasions, objections to the orthodoxy of Hildegard's life and works were raised by various factions within the church. To this day, only a few religious communities acknowledge her sanctity and celebrate her feast on 18 September.

#### SOURCES

Charles Burnett and Peter Dronke, eds., *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of Her Thought and Art*. Warburg Institute Colloquia no. 4 (London: Warburg Institute, 1998).

Barbara Newman, ed., *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES in Theater

Adam de la Halle, *Jeu de la feuillée* or *The Play of the Bower* (c. 1276) and *The Play of Robin and of Marion* (1283)—The works of this dramatist and poet include a satiric drama set in contemporary Arras, naming and assigning recognizable traits to 49 citizens, and a musical comedy where spoken dialogue alternates with singing.

Jehan Bodel, *Play of St. Nicholas* (c. 1191)—This trouvère and minstrel composed the first non-biblical play written entirely in a vernacular language, Picard French. It is a dramatized miracle play celebrating the heroic victory of Christian forces over Moslems, called Saracens.

*The Castle of Perseverance* (1415)—This morality play, the oldest play text in Middle English, had 35 speaking parts and was designed to be performed in the round.

Hildegard of Bingen, *Ordo virtutum* or *Service of the Virtues* (1155)—The Abbess Hildegard composed this work for the nuns of her convent at Rupertsberg; it is one of many dramas she wrote mingling song, dance, and elaborate costumes to create special effects.

*Mankind* (1465)—One of the earliest scripts for a troupe of traveling professional actors, this morality play follows a representative human being through the problems and challenges of everyday life.

*N-Town Cycle* or *Ludus Coventriae* (1468)—This collection of 43 plays from the West Midlands region of England actually has no connection with the town of Coventry, after which the cycle was once named. Performed as early as the 1370s for the feast of Corpus Christi, sixty days after Easter, the plays portray the scope of Christian history from the fall of Lucifer to the Last Judgment.

*Pamphilus* (1140)—One of the most popular of the Latin comedies composed and performed in the monasteries, cathedral schools, and princely courts, this dramatic poem was copied so often that it gave its name to the word “pamphlet.”

*Play of Antichrist* (1160)—Composed and performed by the monks of Tegernsee Abbey, this play draws on the Christian teachings of the Apocalypse to dramatize the political career of Frederick Barbarossa, the Holy Roman Emperor.

*Sponsus* or *The Bridegroom* (1090)—This musical dramatization of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25: 1–13), recorded at the abbey of Saint-Martial at Limoges (France), is the earliest liturgical drama in a vernacular language.

*The Towneley Cycle* (1500)—This collection of 32 English plays, which includes the excellent work of the so-called “Wakefield Master,” was copied into manuscript after 1500. These plays are considered among the most performable and “modern” in sensibility of all the English Cycle plays.

*The York Cycle* (1477)—Performed as early as 1376, the 48 pageants or separate episodes of this cycle were produced cooperatively between the City of York and its craft guilds. Since the city had no open spaces, the plays were performed as a procession of wagons stopped at designated stations.

chapter nine

# VISUAL ARTS

*Véronique P. Day and Michael A. Batterman*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	420	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	469
OVERVIEW . . . . .	422	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
TOPICS		<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
The Carolingian Restoration of Roman Culture . . . . .	424	Medieval Art Terms . . . . .	424
England and the Vikings . . . . .	428	The Making of an Illuminated Manuscript . . . . .	425
Spanish Culture and the Muslims . . . . .	430	Monasticism and the Production of Medieval Art . . . . .	427
Revival of Empire in Germany . . . . .	432	Byzantine Visual Arts . . . . .	432
The Cult of Saints and The Rise of Pilgrimage . . . . .	434	Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela . . . . .	435
Romanesque Art: An International Phenomenon . . . . .	437	<i>A Reliquary and a Chalice at St. Alban's</i> (descriptions of the origins and purposes of a reliquary and a chalice) . . . . .	436
Art at the Cultural Frontier in the Twelfth Century . . . . .	441	<i>Bernard of Clairvaux on the Vanity of Sacred Art</i> (excerpt from a critique of the Benedictine Order and their permissive approach to the arts) . . . . .	440
Political Life and the New State . . . . .	445	<i>Artistic Techniques from Different Lands</i> (excerpt from the introduction to Roger of Helmarshausen's <i>De diversis artibus</i> ) . . . . .	440
Intellectual Influences on Art in the Later Middle Ages . . . . .	450	Weaving and Embroidery . . . . .	441
Art and the Knowledge of Distant Lands . . . . .	453	<i>Abbot Suger on Altar Decoration</i> (excerpt from Suger's <i>De Administratione</i> detailing his remodeling campaign at Saint-Denis) . . . . .	446
Social Life and the Individual . . . . .	455	Book of Hours . . . . .	447
Spiritual Life and Devotion . . . . .	461	Metalwork and Enamel . . . . .	459
Images of Death . . . . .	464	<i>Two Decorated Bibles</i> (excerpt from an inventory of Jean, Duke of Berry's possessions) . . . . .	460
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Robert Campin . . . . .	466		
Jean, Duke of Berry . . . . .	467		
The Limbourg Brothers . . . . .	467		
Louis IX . . . . .	468		
Simone Martini . . . . .	469		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Visual Arts*

- 768 Charlemagne becomes king of the Franks, and the Carolingian era begins; cultural policy encourages opulent artistic production.
- c. 776 Abbot Beatus of Liébana in Spain begins writing an extended commentary to the biblical book of Revelations, which either in its original or in early copies incorporated a program of illustrations that was quickly reproduced.
- c. 780 Charlemagne's first book-painting workshop begins to produce illuminated manuscripts.
- c. 800 Vikings begin to invade England, Ireland, and the Continent. Their technically accomplished decorative metalwork will have an important impact on the visual arts.
- c. 870 The Lindau Gospels, with front cover of hammered gold, gems, and pearls, are created for Charles the Bald, whose death in 877 marked the end of the Carolingian era.
- 900 The Alfred Jewel, made of gold and enamel, is created for King Alfred of England.
- 908 The Victory Cross of Oviedo is presented to Oviedo Cathedral by King Alfonso III of León.
- 962 The German Imperial Crown is made for Otto I, who is crowned emperor by Pope John XII in Rome.
- 966 The New Minster Charter, the first illuminated manuscript of the Winchester school in England, is commissioned by Bishop Aethelwold.
- c. 985 A golden reliquary statue of St. Foy is newly decorated in south-central France.
- c. 998 A Gospel Book and the Lothair Cross are created for Emperor Otto III.
- 1016 The first Normans arrive in southern Italy, initiating a period of cross-cultural interaction in the visual arts.
- 1063 The Romanesque-style reliquary shrine of San Isidoro is installed to house relics newly transferred from Seville to León in Spain.
- c. 1080 The Bayeux Tapestry, commemorating and justifying the Norman invasion of England, is created.
- c. 1100 A marble relief of Abbot Durandus is installed in the cloister of the Cluniac abbey of Moissac, in Languedoc, France.
- 1111 Illuminated manuscripts of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* are completed in three volumes for the Abbey of Cîteaux in France.
- c. 1133 An embroidered coronation mantle is created for the Norman king Roger II, crowned king of Sicily in 1130.
- c. 1135 A deluxe psalter (a collection of psalms) is illustrated for Queen Melisende of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.
- c. 1140 Early Gothic style begins under patronage of Abbot Suger at Saint-Denis near Paris.
- c. 1156 The Stavelot Triptych is commissioned by Wibald, the Benedictine abbot of Stavelot (in modern-day Belgium).
- 1170 Abbess Herrad of Landsberg creates the *Garden of Delights* (*Hortus Deliciarum*), an encyclopedic work that includes some 636 illustrations.
- 1181 Nicholas of Verdun creates the Klosterneuberg altarpiece.
- 1210 The English natural scientist Roger Bacon, who will influence art through his interest in optics, is born.

- c. 1230 A *Bible moralisée*, an ambitious and lavishly decorated new kind of picture Bible, is made for Blanche of Castile and her son Louis IX of France.
- Villard de Honnecourt produces a sketchbook showing the influence of Aristotle and Aquinas in its use of basic geometry.
- 1252 The minting of the florin in Florence, Italy, introduces the first gold coinage of purely Western conception to Europe.
- 1260 Meister Eckhart, a German Dominican whose emphasis on Christ's suffering will influence devotional art, is born.
- 1280 The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* written for King Alfonso the Wise in Spain is a collection of some hundred songs in praise of the Virgin Mary, with narrative illustrations describing many of her miracles.
- c. 1295 Marco Polo returns to Italy from China and writes an account that is accompanied by images encouraging empirical knowledge of the world.
- 1307 Work begins on the tomb (Gloucester Cathedral) of Edward II of England.
- 1308 The Duccio *Maiestà* altarpiece in Siena, Italy, is commissioned.
- 1325–1328 Famous painter Jean Pucelle illuminates manuscript for Jeanne d'Evreux in France, introducing *grisaille* technique.
- 1330 The Röttgen Pietà, an example of the *vesperbildern* genre, is created in the Rhineland region of Germany.
- 1338 Ambrogio Lorenzetti begins painting a fresco, "The Effects [Allegory] of Good Government in the City and Country," for the Siena town hall.
- 1340 Altarpiece painting of St. Thomas Aquinas, an Italian Dominican theologian, is begun by artists in the circle of Simone Martini.
- 1349 Jean le Noir paints "The Three Living and the Three Dead" in the Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg, France.
- 1356 The second decorative campaign of the papal palace begins at Avignon, France.
- 1364 Christine de Pizan, author and counselor to King Charles V of France, is born. Scenes from her books were important subjects for tapestry, manuscript illumination, and wall painting.
- André Beauneveu begins carving recumbent tomb figure of King Charles V of France.
- 1374 Geert Groote, a Flemish mystic, is converted. He will found the Brethren of the Common Life and promote the ideals of *Devotio Moderna*, which encourages meditation on the Passion of Christ and has a profound influence on devotional art.
- 1413 The Limbourg brothers begin painting the *Très Riches Heures* for Duke Jean de Berry of France.
- 1420 The illustrated *Book of Wonders* containing the travel accounts of John Mandeville and Marco Polo is created.
- The Master of Rohan paints the *Grandes Heures of Rohan* in France.
- 1423 An anonymous woodblock print of St. Christopher is produced in Germany.

## OVERVIEW *of Visual Arts*

**AN ERA OF RECONSTRUCTION.** The Roman Empire, which at its height encompassed most of Europe, disintegrated during the fourth and fifth centuries, and the culture of classical antiquity disintegrated along with it. The next thousand years, a period known as the Middle Ages, was an era of gradual reconstruction and original invention. During this time ambitious rulers consolidated former Roman and non-Roman territories into the various European states. Social and economic expansion accompanied this political process, and by the latter part of the Middle Ages, European civilization had reached a new height of cultural achievement, although in terms that were very different from those of ancient Rome. The visual art of this period is therefore, at its most fundamental, the art of a civilization rebuilding itself and redefining its social and political institutions. As the medieval economy expanded and developed, creating greater financial surpluses and more readily available resources, art became more abundant, more ambitious, and more technically refined.

**THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.** Also fundamental to medieval art is its predominantly Christian character. The Latin (western) and Greek (eastern) Christian churches emerged from their origins in the late Roman period to become the dominant religious and social institutions of medieval Europe. The word “Europe” was thought of in the Middle Ages not simply as an expanse of territory or a collection of kingdoms or states, but as Christendom, the realm of the Christian church. The visual arts, whether functioning in the service of the church or not, participated in a lively Christian culture and, more often than not, were formulated in expressly Christian terms.

**THE DEBATE OVER VISUAL IMAGES.** Church authorities continually sought to define the role of the visual arts in the Christian experience. In the early medieval period (850–1150) especially, heated debates over the proper use and significance of images were a testament to churchmen’s efforts to come to terms with a form of

visual expression that predated Christianity. Noting the pagan origins of the visual arts, some Fathers and Doctors of the church, like Tertullian (c. 160–225) and Augustine (354–430), condemned the use of visual imagery within the church as inappropriate and idolatrous. The most radical among them followed a policy of iconoclasm, the actual destruction of images. Others, such as Pope Gregory I (or “Gregory the Great,” c. 540–604) defended the value and significance of images and art objects within a Christian context, citing biblical precedents such as Solomon’s Temple, with its sumptuous and divinely sanctioned decoration. Variations on these two basic positions (for and against visual images) appeared in the writings of church leaders and reformers throughout the early Middle Ages, and such discussions provide important insight into medieval understandings of the visual arts. But regardless of the often theoretical debates of churchmen, the arts flourished, providing a visually stunning record of cultural achievement.

**POLITICS AND PATRONAGE.** During the early part of the Middle Ages, one of the most distinctive cultural phenomena was the influence of powerful rulers who acted as patrons seeking to express their ambitions and political ideals in visual terms. Unlike the works of later periods that were often created by artists who then hoped to sell them on the open market, early medieval art objects owe their existence to the beneficence of individuals who generally had something to gain by their patronage of the arts. The art itself, produced typically in royal or monastic workshops, stands as a record of the political agendas and cultural policies of those individuals.

**CULTURAL SYNTHESIS.** Early medieval art can also be viewed as a synthesis of the different cultural traditions that found expression in the visual arts and elsewhere. The Romans passed on to the early Middle Ages the remnants of a highly developed visual tradition which, together with the visual heritage of the various Germanic and Eastern peoples who settled in Europe, was transformed into something essentially new. But during these early centuries the art also retained more or less visible traces of the different visual traditions to which it was indebted. Only later, from about 1200 onward, did there emerge a European visual art that fully transcended its origins as a mixture of separate artistic legacies.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF THE “MODERN.”** By the end of the twelfth century, the rebuilding and reorganization of social and political institutions since the collapse of the Roman Empire was largely accomplished. The visual arts of this period demonstrate a new level of aesthetic confidence and technical mastery. They also manifest a transformation undergone in order to adapt to changing



conceptions of the state, of society, of God, of the physical world, and of the relationship of the individual to each of these. Many of the developments that we tend to think of as characterizing the Renaissance in European art and culture—the renewed interest in classical antiquity, the more scientific observation of nature, the pursuit of more naturalistic ways of depicting the world—in fact have their origins in the later Middle Ages. It would not be an overstatement to say that during the period from about 1050 to 1400, many “modern” institutions came into existence. The modern nation-state has its origins in the royal states consolidated under monarchs like King Philip Augustus of France (r. 1180–1223) and King John of England (r. 1199–1216). Representative government, international commerce and finance, university learning, vernacular literatures (that is, those in the newly developing non-Latin languages), exploration and colonization of distant lands, and many other practices and institutions familiar in the modern age can be traced to this dynamic period in the history of Europe.

**NEW SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES.** In the visual arts, the later Middle Ages witnessed a significant “modernization” as well. Beginning in the thirteenth century, visual art could sometimes express a “national identity”—for example, writers of this period became conscious of “national” art, and the terms *opus francigenum* (French work) and *opus anglicanum* (English work) can be found in written sources from the period. The arts also reflect, in their attention to details of nature, the new Aristotelian learning of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and iconographic programs are often more complex and comprehensive. Philosophers like Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great applied the rules of logic and rational analysis to the interpretation of Scripture and the natural world, and their methodology broke large categories of experience into many smaller ones. This approach allowed abstract subjects like theology to be subdivided into concrete elements that provided a virtual handbook of figures and ideas that artists could express in paint, glass, stone, wood, and other media. Art production itself, while still located in courtly workshops as it was during the early Middle Ages, increasingly leaves the monastic setting for the new, professional lay (non-religious) workshops located in towns and cities, often in particular areas of a city which became devoted to that craft through intermarriage among members of artisan families. There was a much more socially diverse audience for art than was the case in the early Middle Ages, and patrons of art also come from different segments of society: royal, aristocratic and middle class, lay and religious, urban and rural manorial, male and female.

**THE GOTHIC STYLE.** Although artistic styles varied greatly over time and from place to place, the term “Gothic” has been used for some 500 years in reference to the arts (and to the architecture as well) produced during the later Middle Ages and until the onset of the Renaissance. In fact, “Gothic” was an adjective first used by Renaissance humanists as a pejorative term for the late medieval style that was thought of as “monkish”—inferior and barbaric next to the new Renaissance classicism, essentially a revival of Greek and Roman rules of simplicity and clarity. (The Goths, as one of the migratory Teutonic tribes that settled in western Europe in the early medieval period, were blamed for the downfall of classical civilization, but they actually had nothing to do with the style that later took their name.) One of the principal characteristics of Gothic art, when compared to visual art of the earlier Middle Ages, is its greater and more consistent reliance upon nature as inspiration and model. This “naturalism” or “realism” has a connection to the rediscovery of ancient Greek philosophical texts treating the physical world, preserved over the centuries by Muslim scholars and newly translated from Arabic into Latin in the later twelfth century. The philosophical, logical, and scientific writings of Aristotle, in particular, spurred medieval scholars to examine the natural world more closely, and the arts expressed this newfound interest. Artists increasingly sought to visualize the world and human experience during the later Middle Ages, and there was less discussion—even among churchmen—about the legitimacy or appropriateness of visual images than was the case in earlier centuries. One could increasingly take for granted that the visual arts now had their place. Of course, to the medieval mind, which understood nature as God’s creation (and art as human invention), “naturalism” in art was always tempered with the authority of inherited artistic practices (a conservatism that helped ensure some measure of continuity over time) and the inevitability of ornament.

**A THEMATIC VIEW.** Because the explosion of art production in many centers, media, and social contexts makes a strictly chronological and geographical account of later medieval art impractical, it is perhaps most productive to discuss the art of the mid-twelfth through the mid-fifteenth centuries according to certain thematic categories having to do with the political, intellectual, social, and spiritual realms of human experience. Within each of these categories it is possible to consider a range of examples from the visual arts, and, indeed, most works can be discussed in terms of two, three, or even all four of these categories of experience, which suggest not only the many motivating circumstances that contribute to the production of art, but also its potential audiences and

## MEDIEVAL Art Terms

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**Altarpiece:** A devotional, religious work (painting or sculpture) placed usually on or above a church altar (where the Mass is celebrated). It can depict one or several different scenes, the imagery usually referring to the doctrine of the Mass or to the saint to whom the church or chapel is dedicated. It can include one or multiple panels (can be a *diptych* with two panels; a *triptych* with three; or a *polyptych* with more).

**Arch:** An architectural formation that spans an opening in such a manner that the weight of the material is converted into outward thrusts, carried to the sides and then down along flanking columns, piers, or buttresses. The *rounded* arch was common in ancient Rome and in Romanesque Europe and is made from wedge-shaped blocks. The *Gothic* or *pointed* arch forms a central point above. The *Ogival* (or *Ogee*) arch is formed by double curved lines (like two S-curves mirroring each other) that meet at a point.

**Benedictine monastery:** Monastic house or community of monks adhering to the Rule of St. Benedict.

**Christendom:** The extent of Christianity on earth, often configured in the Middle Ages as a series of Christian states.

**Enamelwork:** The artistic use of enamel, a substance formed from colored glass particles that are melted and fused, usually to a metal surface. *Champlevé* enamel is a process whereby the substance is poured into grooves that are previously engraved into the metal surface, so that the hardened enamel is flush with the surface of the metal. In *cloisonné* enamel, the substance is poured into compartments formed by a network of metal bands such that the exposed tops of the bands serve to divide the areas of colored enamel.

**Filigree work:** Fine metalwork created using tiny beads or very fine threads of metal to create the effect of delicate, lacelike, openwork ornament.

**Grisaille:** Monochrome painting, usually in tones of gray, found especially in stained glass and painted altarpieces (and sometimes illuminated manuscripts, textiles, etc.) from the later Middle Ages.

**Iconic:** The quality of a visual image or object that is generally static, frontal, and non-narrative.

**Iconography:** The pictorial representation of a subject, especially when comparing the particular character of a represented subject to the complete visual record of that subject throughout the history of art; also the study of the meaning of the subject matter of visual images.

**Illuminated manuscript:** A manuscript (that is, handwritten book) with hand-painted decoration or illustrations, usually employing silver, gold, and different colored pigments.

**Lancet window:** A tall, narrow window usually ending in a sharply-pointed arch and found mainly in Gothic architecture.

**Niello:** A metalwork process whereby a design is engraved in a metal surface and then filled with a black alloy of sulfur with gold, silver, copper, or lead and then fused with heat.

**Pilgrimage:** A journey made usually for spiritual reasons, to reach a particular shrine or sacred place; a pilgrim is one who makes such a journey.

**Pinnacle:** A small, decorative turret or end of a spire, buttress, or other such architectural element, generally pointed, conical, or pyramidal in shape.

**Repoussé:** Relief (that is, raised) decoration on a metal surface produced by hammering from the underside.

**Rose Window:** A large, circular stained-glass window placed centrally above the portal(s) on the façade of a Gothic church.

**Scriptorium:** The workshop found especially in abbeys and monasteries where manuscripts are copied and decorated.

**Tracery:** Ornamental, openwork sculptural decoration, in wood or stone, found especially above Gothic windows and on screens or panels.

effects. Thus, while these themes do not refer to separate categories of works as they were understood by medieval people, collectively, the examples chosen will encompass the range of places (England, France, Spain, Flanders, Germany, and Italy), social contexts (royal, aristocratic, middle class, secular, religious, urban, manorial, male, female), and artistic media (wood, stone, ivory, metalwork, enamelwork, illuminated manuscripts, prints, tapestry, fresco, and panel painting) that together describe the world of the visual arts in the later Middle Ages.

## TOPICS in Visual Arts

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### THE CAROLINGIAN RESTORATION OF ROMAN CULTURE

**CHARLEMAGNE AND THE RESTORATION OF EMPIRE.** The first enduring attempt at a restoration of

Roman culture since the fall of Rome was accomplished under the rule of Charles the Great (768–814), king of the Franks, known to history as Charlemagne (Carolus Magnus, in Latin; the “Carolingian” dynasty was named for Charlemagne and his grandfather, Charles Martel or Carolus Martellus). One of the many migrant Germanic tribes that came from the east to settle in early medieval Europe, the Franks were able to consolidate their power into a kingdom (more or less corresponding to present-day France, Germany, and the Benelux countries [or Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg]) of formidable size and strength. Charlemagne’s ambition was stated on his royal seal—*renovatio Romani imperii* (restoration of the Roman Empire)—and in the realm of politics as well as culture and the arts, he expressed the spirit of a classical revival, a trend that would continue into the following centuries with art objects such as the processional Lothair Cross (c. 1000, today in the Schatzkammer of the Aachen Dom), which features a cameo with a portrait bust of the emperor Augustus in the center of the cross’s triumphal side. Politically, Charlemagne sought to make his rule a continuation of the western empire of Rome and a counterpart to the great Byzantine Empire of Constantinople, the eastern part of the late Roman Empire and center for Greek Orthodox Christianity. He took a major step toward this goal when, on Christmas Day in the year 800, he had himself crowned emperor in Rome by Pope Leo III.

**DECORATED BOOKS.** Charlemagne and his successors, from their capitals in Aachen (in present-day Germany) and elsewhere, developed a cultural policy that depended upon the opulent and aristocratic artistic heritage of the Roman and Byzantine imperial courts. Books were an important part of the literary, intellectual, and religious culture of the Carolingians, and manuscripts that were beautifully illuminated (illustrated with colored and gilded pictures) and adorned (provided with richly decorated covers) represent the peak of achievement in the visual arts during this time. In Latin manuscripts—copied in a stately round, wide, and highly legible script called Carolingian minuscule and decorated in royal and monastic workshops—Carolingian notions of sacred kingship and courtly refinement were strongly expressed. Some of the most extravagant of these books—usually copies of the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, intended for use by the emperor—had covers made of gilt silver and precious stones or of ivory panels carved in relief in the Byzantine manner.

**THE LORSCH GOSPELS.** An excellent example of such a work of decorative art is the preserved back cover of the Lorsch Gospels, produced in about 810. It is composed of five ivory panels carved in relief and arranged

## THE Making of an Illuminated Manuscript

In the Middle Ages, each book, or *codex*, was made by hand through the collaboration of several skilled craftsmen under the direction of a designer who oversaw the whole work. The creation of an illuminated manuscript was time-consuming and expensive, and took place within a monastic *scriptorium* or a royal workshop in the earlier Middle Ages, or else a professional, lay workshop in a later medieval town. First, in the earlier period before paper was introduced (around 1350), the scribe must choose parchment or vellum made from animal skin (calf, goat, sheep) that has been prepared by cleaning, scraping and dipping in lime, then drying and stretching. The object was to create a smooth surface, free of blemish. The next step was cutting the parchment into double leaves (*folios*) of appropriate size and assembling the double leaves into *quires* or gatherings of a fixed number of pages that could be distributed to different artisans for the next stage of work. Next, a layout person would rule the pages and create spaces for pictures in which the designer would add brief notes to guide the scribe(s) and illuminator(s). At this point the scribe begins the copying of the text, usually working from a written exemplar, and he or another scribe, called a *rubricator* (from the Latin *rubeo*, meaning “red”) puts in the large red or blue letters that indicate divisions of the text. The decoration is carried out by one or more illuminators, who follow the designer’s explicit instructions as to subject matter of illustrations, type, and extent of decoration in initial letters, borders, margins, full-page illumination, etc. Different skilled artisans carry out different parts of the decoration, from the underdrawing to the illumination of figures and scenes, to the foliate (ivy or acanthus leaf) decoration, to the application and burnishing of gold foil. Sometimes a *colophon* is included at or near the end, with the completion date and the name of the scribe (and sometimes the names of the illuminators). Then the various gatherings are sewn together in the proper order and the manuscript is bound in thin boards with vellum or leather covering.

so that the Virgin and Child appear in the center flanked by the figures of Zacharias and John the Baptist, with a scene of the Nativity below and two angels supporting an image of Christ in Majesty above. The iconography



Crucifixion scene, embossed and jeweled front cover of Lindau Gospels, New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library MS M. 1, 875. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.



St. Mark, gospel book of Archbishop Ebbo of Reims, Reims, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 1, folio 60v, 9th century. © GIANNI DAGLI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

or image-types depicted, as well as the style of carving and the use of the luxury material ivory all suggest an interest in emulating the sumptuous art of the Byzantine imperial court. A full-page illumination depicting the evangelist John contained within a gospel book executed for Charlemagne around 800 demonstrates how the royal painting workshops very often depended upon classical Roman models. Not only does this image hark back to antiquity in its naturalistic treatment of the human figure, but it also adopts the antique motif of the author portrait in its representation of John as author of his gospel. Such artistic masterworks as these ivory panels and this manuscript painting showcase the abilities of Carolingian craftsmen and express a clear cultural policy of classical revival and courtly opulence.

**THE LINDAU GOSPELS.** Luxury book covers, executed in metal and precious stones, conveyed a similar sense of courtly magnificence and sacred kingship. The front cover of the Lindau Gospels is a prime example of such work. Both the central figure of the crucified Christ (the prototype of the “sacred king”) and the angels and mourners hovering above and below the arms of the cross were created by hammering designs into sheets of gold,

a technique known as *repoussé*. The rigid symmetry of the composition as well as the use of gems and pearls set within the gold cover are a fine example of how the sacred, royal art of the early Middle Ages was meant to communicate a particular idea in powerful and unambiguous terms. It was also meant to flatter the royal patron (in this case the Emperor Charles the Bald) and impress the members of his court, since it clearly encouraged imperial pretensions and implied that the ruler was worthy of such a magnificent object.

**THE MONASTIC INFLUENCE.** Benedictine monasteries had a particularly important role to play in the elaboration of the visual arts of the period, in no small part because of the royal support of Benedictine monastic houses within the Carolingian Empire and emphasis on the Rule of St. Benedict in preference to other monastic rules. This was true especially under the rule of the Carolingian king Louis the Pious (814–840), who endowed major monastic foundations at Reims, Metz, and Tours (all in present-day France), each of which produced some of the most important decorated manuscripts that have survived. The portrait of the evangelist St. Mark in the gospel book of Archbishop Ebbo of

## MONASTICISM and the Production of Medieval Art

Christian monasticism began with the hermit monks, individuals who left society behind to lead ascetic lives—that is, lives of self-denial—in the wilderness, devoted to prayer. Most influential were the Egyptian desert fathers of the late third and early fourth centuries, such as St. Anthony of Egypt and St. Paul the Hermit. Loose communities began to form around some of these figures, and established communities of monks were commonplace in the West by the fifth century. The monastic rule written by St. Benedict of Nursia in the sixth century for his monastery in Monte Cassino, Italy, became standard throughout the West. This Rule sought to regulate all aspects of monastic life and assigned to each monk his place, from the abbot on down to the novice. The production of visual art, especially in the form of manuscript illumination and metalwork, was among the types of manual labor practiced by the monks. In part because of the great success of Benedictine monasticism—especially after its institutionalization under Carolingian rule—many different religious figures began to take issue with the growing wealth and worldliness of the Benedictines, leading to various efforts at monastic reform.

The most important early reformed community was that of Cluny, founded in Burgundy in 910, although the

great wealth and power amassed by the Cluniacs during the eleventh century precipitated another wave of reforms, including that of the Carthusians, established in Cologne in 1084, and the Cistercians, founded in Burgundy around 1100. To a greater or lesser degree, such movements sought a more ascetic existence that was closer to the model of the early hermit monks. Debates over appropriate forms of Christian monasticism often focused on the “problem” of the sumptuous and highly refined art produced by some communities, which, it was argued, distracted the faithful and represented a misuse of needed funds. The major reform movement of the later Middle Ages was the creation of the mendicant orders, initially the Franciscans (1210) and Dominicans (1216). These friars and preachers renounced all worldly goods and dedicated themselves to serving society at large. Thus, they were not bound to particular monastic houses but circulated more freely and became integrated into society at all levels. Dominicans, for example, often served as royal confessors and took an active role in the struggles against heresy, and mendicants played an important role in the life of medieval universities and in the study of medieval theology, philosophy, and mysticism. Despite their vow of poverty and their commitment to live lives more in accordance with Christ’s own example, the mendicants were in fact not monks and the period of their rise in influence (and that of other non-monastic religious orders) coincided with the decline of more traditional monasticism in the medieval period.

Reims (816–835) shares with the portrait of St. John—from one of Charlemagne’s personal copies of the gospels—a dependence upon a classical formula, but the more dynamic and expressive style hints at the creative vigor of monastic artists of the period, especially in the strong lines of the garment folds. A similar linear dynamism and pictorial inventiveness can be seen in the illustrations to the famous Utrecht Psalter (a book of psalms used during the Liturgy of the Hours), also from the Reims school of manuscript decoration. Once again, the style of the drawings (like the minuscule script modeled on what the scribe imagined was “Roman” writing) are unmistakably classical in inspiration, though the images, which provide literal illustrations to the text of the psalms, are without precedent in late Roman wall and book painting. In a detail from Psalm 11, the figure of Christ literally rises up and steps out from the confines of his divine aureole (a circle of light around the head or body of a divine being) in illustration of the text: “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I rise, said the Lord.” Below that, the wicked

actually “walk round about,” again in a playful and literal response to the text. These few examples from the visual art of the Carolingian period give a sense of the ingenuity of Carolingian artists; they point to the centrality of luxury books within the religious, intellectual, and political culture; and they represent the early medieval adaptation of artistic techniques (in metalwork, ivory carving, and manuscript painting) inherited from classical antiquity.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The Influence of the Carolingians; Theater: The Renaissance of Charlemagne*



Portrait of King Alfred, The Alfred Jewel, probably intended to be the top of a royal scepter. England, 900. THE ART ARCHIVE/ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, OXFORD/EILEEN TWEEDY.

## ENGLAND AND THE VIKINGS

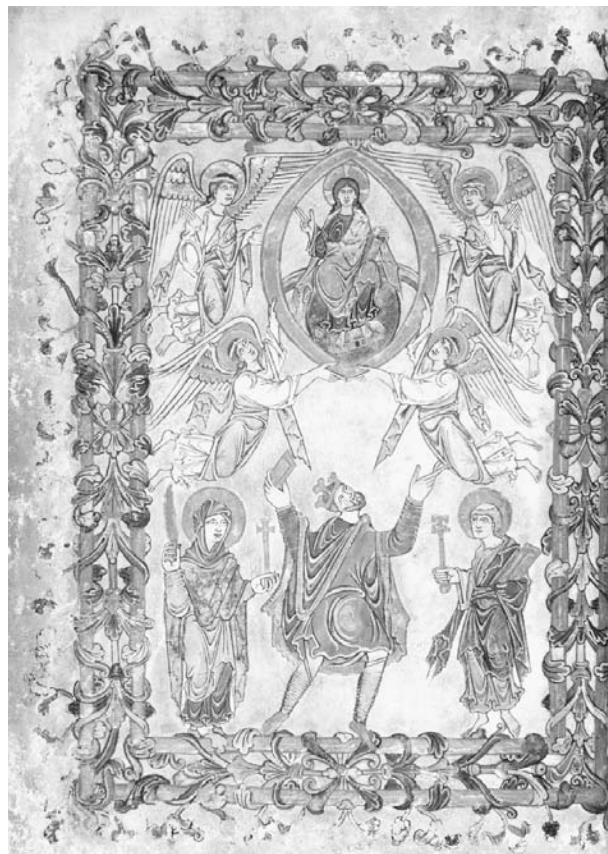
**THE RISE OF ENGLISH UNITY.** The empire of the Carolingians began to decline after the monarchy of Louis the Pious (814–840), but its artistic influence was felt for centuries to come, often far outside its borders. England, settled by the Germanic tribes known as Angles and Saxons, developed a political model of sacred kingship that was based on Old Testament precedents and that was dependent upon the official sanction of Christian churchmen, just as Carolingian kingship had been. This early medieval notion of sacred kingship implied that the authority of the church was exercised through the person of the king or emperor, whose claim to both political and religious authority was based on the precedent of the Old Testament kings and, more recently, the Frankish (or Carolingian) emperors of Rome. It was an accommo-

modation between spiritual and temporal authority that served the interests of both, as each sought to gain legitimacy and power by association with the other. The “golden age” in early medieval English culture is usually associated with the reign of King Alfred the Great (871–899) of the royal house of Wessex, the unifier of the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in their defense against the invasions of the Vikings. A Scandinavian people not yet converted to Christianity, the Vikings raided and looted all over western Europe in the ninth century, destroying many wealthy monastic houses but invigorating interregional trade in early medieval Europe through their establishment of routes along which their precious booty (slaves as well as gold and silver) was exchanged for goods from the East. The Vikings, and in particular their technically accomplished and decorative metalwork, had an important impact upon the visual arts in Western Europe.

**THE ALFRED JEWEL.** The Alfred Jewel, made from gold and enamel and probably intended to be the top of a royal scepter, reveals quite a bit about the state of the visual arts in England around 900. First, there is the connection of this object to a king. The arts would not have flourished as they did in the early Middle Ages were it not for the sponsorship of rulers, who saw the propaganda value of art and often lavished great resources upon the royal and monastic workshops that produced all sorts of luxury objects. Second, an inscription around the edge of the Alfred Jewel reads “Alfred ordered me to be made,” an attribution that demonstrates the general anonymity of the early medieval artist in contrast to the all-importance of the (royal) patron. Additionally, the style and craftsmanship of the jewel shows the way that different cultural traditions were often combined in the creation of works of art: the goldwork resembles that of the Vikings, who specialized in small-scale portable objects in metal, stone, and wood and were especially known for detailed and decorative metalwork, while the half-length enameled figure of the ruler is based on earlier English indigenous traditions of semi-abstract figure drawing. The Carolingian (and more Roman) impact on the visual arts in England is not yet evident in the Alfred Jewel, but would appear soon in the illuminated manuscripts of the tenth century.

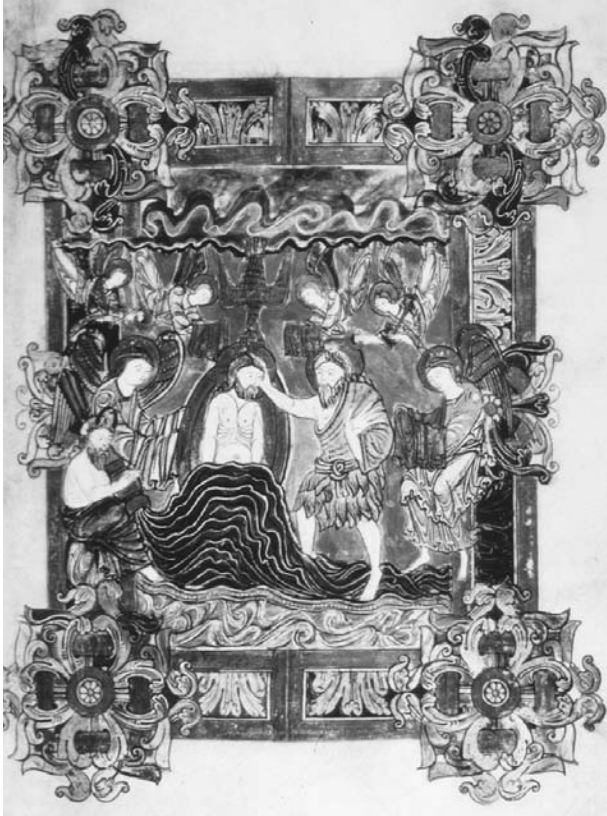
**MONASTIC CENTERS OF ILLUMINATION.** King Alfred presided over a flourishing and vibrant court culture, and in the manner of Charlemagne he invited scholars from all over the continent to come to his court and work under his patronage. Because monasteries were the preservers of the intellectual heritage and many of these had recently been destroyed or looted by the Vikings in the ninth century, Alfred and some of his successors helped to rebuild monastic libraries in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Illuminated manuscripts, therefore, constitute an important part of the artistic legacy from England in the early Middle Ages. Important schools of manuscript illumination sprang up in cathedral centers like those of Canterbury and Winchester, thanks to the efforts and patronage of church leaders like St. Dunstan (d. 988), the abbot of Glastonbury and later the archbishop of Canterbury, and St. Aethelwold (d. 984), a monk at Glastonbury who was made bishop of Winchester.

**THE NEW MINSTER CHARTER AND BENEDICTINAL OF AETHELWOLD.** The first known work of the new Winchester school of manuscript decoration shows the close relationship between pictorial imagery and accompanying text. The book called today the New Minster Charter was commissioned by Bishop Aethelwold in 966 to commemorate the introduction of Carolingian-style



King Edgar between the Virgin and St. Peter offering the Charter to Christ. Frontispiece, New Minster Charter, London, British Library MS Cotton Vespasian A. viii, fol. 2v, c. 966. BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

monastic reform (focused on eliminating “worldly” behavior) into a Winchester monastery. The frontispiece of the charter depicts King Edgar between the Virgin Mary and the Apostle Peter, the two patron saints of the abbey. Edgar is shown extending the charter—a document outlining and confirming the royally granted holdings and privileges of a monastery—up to the enthroned Christ, visualizing the royal donations made to the abbey by the king on this occasion. The accompanying text says, “Thus resides on his heavenly throne he who created the stars. The devout King Edgar humbly adores him. King Edgar issued this privilege to the new monastery and, with praise, granted gifts to the almighty Lord and his mother Mary.” Just as monastic reform was introduced to England from France, so too were later Carolingian traditions in manuscript illustration brought to England and adapted to local tastes, as shown by this image. In the 970s Aethelwold ordered a lavishly decorated benedictional (a book containing blessings spoken by the bishop during the Mass) in which each major feast is accompanied by a pair of full-page illustrations. The illustration



Baptism of Christ, Benedictional of St. Aethelwold, London, British Library MS Add. 49598, fol. 25, c. 980. © THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

of the Baptism of Christ demonstrates further how Carolingian traditions in manuscript illumination found new life in the vibrant monastic houses of Anglo-Saxon England. The figures of Christ, John, and the angels, as well as some of the narrative details (like the water), are rendered in a linear style reminiscent of the French “Reims Cathedral” school, but the complex color scheme and the profusion of leafy ornament that literally bursts out of the frame indicate a rising interest in decorative embellishment and a new artistic complexity.

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## SPANISH CULTURE AND THE MUSLIMS

**PROMOTING THE RECONQUISTA.** Like their counterparts in England, the tenth-century rulers of the Chris-

tian kingdoms of Spain were consolidating power in the face of enemy resistance and developing a visual culture of ornament and symbols to express their political aspirations. Muslim forces had crossed from northern Africa into Spain in the year 711 and proceeded to defeat the Visigoths, a Germanic people converted to Christianity who had ruled Spain until that time. After the Muslim conquest of most of Spain, the Christian territories occupied only the northernmost and northeastern parts of the Iberian Peninsula. Here, Christian rulers held their ground against Muslim incursions and gradually expanded the area of their control. Clinging to the hope that all of Spain would one day be united under Christian rule, as it was before the Muslim conquest, Christian rulers in Spain developed the notion of the Christian Reconquest of Spain (*Reconquista*), and they sponsored a program of visual arts to advance this notion. From liturgical objects (objects used in church services) created out of precious materials to illuminated manuscripts of Bibles and other religious texts, the arts of early medieval Christian Spain proclaimed Christian victory to be inevitable. In the Christian kingdoms of Asturias, León, Castile, and Navarre, these luxury arts combined established Visigothic visual traditions with Carolingian influences, as well as artistic motifs and styles derived from the neighboring Islamic culture.

**THE VICTORY CROSS OF OVIEDO.** The royal ideology of Christian Reconquest is clearly evident in the spectacular Victory Cross of Oviedo, donated in 908 by King Alfonso III of Asturias to the cathedral of Oviedo, and probably made a few years earlier. This fine object draws upon the tradition of the cross as an image of Christian victory, which originated in the fourth century with the Roman Emperor Constantine (who was told in a dream that he would defeat his enemies “under this sign”). As an object of richness and beauty, it perfectly showcases the artistic splendor and magnificence that in the early Middle Ages was the aesthetic counterpart to the Christian idea of worldly triumph in its figural embodiment. The iconography of this cross displays no humility or poverty, virtues often associated with Christianity in other contexts.

**APOCALYPTIC IMAGERY.** Monastic communities in Christian Spain, just as in Carolingian France and Germany, and Anglo-Saxon England, played a major role in the elaboration of the visual arts. As scribes and illuminators of decorated and illustrated manuscripts, Spanish monks developed a recognizable visual language that was the unique expression of their culture. An illustration from a manuscript produced around 950 is a fine example. The work is an illustrated commentary on the Book of Revelation, also known as the Apocalypse of St.



John in the modern New Testament. The text of this commentary was compiled before 800 by a Spanish monk known as Beatus of Liébana, and, as the idea of Christian Reconquest picked up momentum in the tenth century, it was expressed anew in the monastic houses of the Christian north through extensive programs of illustration. The apocalyptic theme of these books may have appealed to monks of the time, who imagined the Christian Reconquest of Spain as an apocalyptic battle between good and evil. An illustration from one manuscript of the Beatus Commentary, perhaps produced for the monastery of San Miguel de Escalada in the kingdom of León, shows the Heavenly Jerusalem, a mystical vision presented in highly schematized (rather abstract and diagrammatic) form. The visual language of intense color and ornamental flatness—for the image lacks any suggestion of naturalistic or three-dimensional space—hearkens back to some Visigothic precedents but may also be understood in relation to the very impressive and influential art of Islamic Spain. Islamic art is noted for its geometric patterns, its profusion of ornament, its rich colors, and its general avoidance of figuration because the Koran forbade the reproduction of human and animal forms in art as idolatrous. Of course, in such Beatus illustrations, the inclusion of human (and divine) figures indicates a specifically Christian point of view. The decorative and somewhat formulaic presentation provides an effective way to express in pictorial form a text that is full of mystical imagery.

**MOZARABIC INFLUENCE.** Also typically Spanish in such illustrations of the Heavenly Jerusalem is the “horseshoe” arch that often frames the figures arranged around the central square or circle. This is an architectural form common in Islamic Spain and certainly familiar to those Christians, known as “Mozarabs,” who had lived under Islamic rule before coming north to the Christian kingdoms in the tenth century. The Mozarabs brought their knowledge of Islamic culture and artistic traditions along with them, and the image of the Heavenly Jerusalem is an example of how those traditions were incorporated into the visual art of Christian monasteries in tenth-century Spain. Another example of Mozarabic influence can be found in a Beatus manuscript from about 970, made for the monastery of San Salvador at Tábara in the kingdom of León. The image on the colophon page (at the end of the manuscript where the scribe provides identifying information about his involvement in the production) shows the same architectural feature—the horseshoe arch—in the representation of the tower and scriptorium of the monastery. In this earliest surviving image of a medieval scriptorium (where manuscripts were copied by hand and sometimes deco-



Vision of the Lamb surrounded by 4 Evangelists and 12 Elders. Commentary on the Apocalypse of Beatus of Liébana, Pierpont Morgan Library MS M 644, folio 87, 950. THE PIERPOINT MORGAN LIBRARY/ART RESOURCE, NY.

rated), the scribes named “Emeterius” and “Senior” are hard at work. It is a testament to the cultural importance of monasteries such as this one that the likely creators of this illuminated manuscript are known to us by name.

**COMMON ELEMENTS.** The ongoing struggle between Christianity and Islam in medieval Spain clearly was (and continued to be) a significant factor in the development of unique and often hybrid artistic forms. Yet the visual art of early medieval Spain shares many commonalities with other artwork being produced outside of Spain during the same period: its undeniably Christian character; its royal and/or monastic context of production; its relationship to earlier and contemporary artistic traditions; and its ambitions, which at this early stage in the history of medieval Europe sometimes exceeded the level of technical ability or the availability of wealth and resources.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: The Spread of Islam; Religion: The Crusades*

## REVIVAL OF EMPIRE IN GERMANY

**THE OTTONIANS.** Although the Carolingian Empire lasted hardly a hundred years, the mantle of empire was passed in the tenth century to a dynasty of rulers from Saxony, in Germany, known as the Ottonians (after “Otto,” the name used by three of them). These rulers styled themselves “Roman Emperors” and very self-consciously attempted to recapture the power and prestige of Rome and Constantinople for their reigns, just as Charlemagne had done. In the sumptuous production of the cathedral and monastic workshops (which were supported by imperial donations), precious metalwork objects, carved ivory panels, and deluxe manuscripts speak of the Ottonian reign as decreed by God, and, in particular, they show a strong debt to Byzantine artistic practices. Like Charlemagne, the Ottonian rulers were formally recognized by the Byzantine emperors and the two realms were soon connected by marriage ties. Byzantine visual arts and fashions of all kinds were imitated by Ottonian artists and court officials. This imperial art in the center of Europe, with its impressive synthesis of Carolingian, Byzantine, and other, especially Roman, traditions, would play a major role in the elaboration of the early Romanesque style by the mid-eleventh century.

**THE IMPERIAL CROWN.** In its material and symbolic richness, the German Imperial Crown fashioned for the coronation of Otto I as emperor in 962 (and used as well by subsequent German emperors) is a wonderful example of German imperial art of the early Middle Ages. Its eight arched golden plates form an octagon, in deliberate reference to the architecture of Charlemagne’s palace chapel in Aachen. The many gemstones and pearls arranged on the eight plates make explicit reference to the number and distribution of pearls and gems on the walls of the Heavenly Jerusalem as described in the biblical Book of Revelation. The symbolic schema applied to the construction of this crown therefore serves both to associate Otto’s rule with that of his famous Carolingian predecessor and also to lend biblical authority to that rule. The crown’s structure and arrangement of parts clearly demonstrate that monastic artists of the time could combine their masterful craftsmanship with their scriptural and theological knowledge. In this way a work of medieval art also becomes a document of medieval learning and culture in a broader sense.

**THE LOTHAIR CROSS.** The Lothair Cross, a work created around the year 1000 for processional use or for

## BYZANTINE Visual Arts

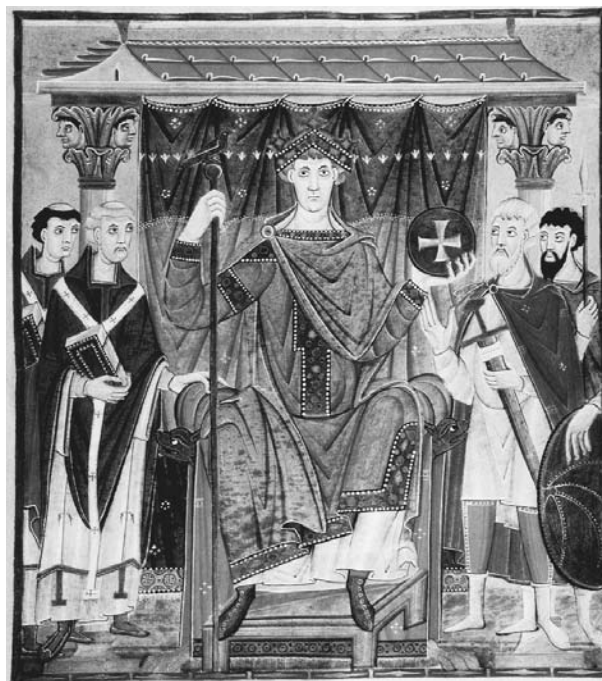
In the year 330 the Roman emperor Constantine founded a new capital at an ancient site in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) known as Byzantium. Here at this strategic location on the eastern frontier of the empire he set out to reconstitute the city of Rome, thus establishing a tradition of magnificence for his new capital, renamed after himself, “Constantinople” (modern Istanbul). When the Roman Empire split in 395 into a western half and an eastern half, Constantinople became the capital of the latter, a vast empire with borders that, by the sixth century, extended as far as North Africa and Italy in the west and the Caucasus and northern Mesopotamia (modern Syria and Iraq) in the east. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the late fifth century, it was the Eastern Roman Empire, known today as the Byzantine Empire, that would carry forward into the Middle Ages the memory and the traditions (especially legal and administrative) of Roman antiquity.

Byzantine civilization, however, was distinct from that of ancient Rome. Its language was not Latin, but Greek, and its unique form of government, elaborate court ceremonial, famous material refinement, and distinctive national church (Greek Orthodox, not Roman Catholic) all helped to keep the Byzantine Empire separate from, and alien to, the culture of Latin Christendom in Western Europe. The Byzantine visual arts—painted icons, silks, mosaics, enamels, and illuminated manuscripts—were celebrated in the medieval West for their beauty, richness, and high degree of technical development. The commercial supremacy of Byzantium insured that its luxury goods (especially silks, spices, and jewelry) would be known all over the world. For the less highly developed civilization of western Christendom, Byzantium was the standard of courtly sophistication and cultural achievement (as were the Islamic court cultures centered in Córdoba and Baghdad from the eighth century onward). The visual arts of Byzantium were therefore admired and emulated at various times throughout the western Middle Ages, and it was in particular the Byzantine emphasis on the human figure in art that made that civilization such an important link between the arts of classical antiquity and those of the Renaissance. When the empire finally fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 (over eleven hundred years after it was first established), it was the end of what had been the longest-lived state in medieval Europe.



Enamel plaque of King Solomon as the symbol of wisdom. Crown made for coronation of Otto I, the "Great," Vienna, Austria, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 962. BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

display on the church altar during a mass before an imperial audience bears a clear relationship to earlier examples such as the Spanish Victory Cross of Oviedo. With its very different front and back configurations, however, the Lothair Cross expresses the dual, antithetical character of medieval Christianity. On the one side, a simple linear engraving of the dead Christ on a silver ground embodies the notion of the cross as an instrument of suffering and death. On the other side, an array of jewels upon a golden ground proclaims Christ's victory over death and recalls the magnificent, visionary images of the cross as an apocalyptic sign of Christian triumph. Early medieval art objects and images were very often designed in this way so as to negotiate between such antithetical concepts as luxury and austerity; biblical past and apocalyptic future; time-bound narrative and eternal symbol. The Roman cameo with its portrait bust of the emperor Augustus, set in the center of the cross's triumphal side, provided a worthy model for the imperial rule of the reigning emperor, Otto III (983–1002). It also illustrates the interrelationship between religion and politics that was crucial in the configuration of so much early medieval art.



Emperor Otto III enthroned and flanked by ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries. Dedication miniature, Gospel Book of Otto III. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek MS CLM 4453, folio 1, 997–1000. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

**THE GOSPEL BOOK OF OTTO III.** Ottonian artists were equally accomplished in the field of manuscript illumination, and this pictorial medium was just as important as metalwork objects in expressing the ideals of the Ottonian emperors and bishops who commissioned particular manuscripts. The deluxe Gospel Book of Otto III is a case in point. Upon opening the jewel-encrusted golden cover, with its inset carved ivory panel, one finds a painted ceremonial portrait of the emperor and members of his court spread across two full pages. The very formal, frontal depiction of the larger-than-life emperor hearkens back to late Roman and early Christian ruler portraits. His large scale and central placement with respect to his attendants (bishops on his right, secular lords on his left) indicates his place at the top of the hierarchy and his sovereignty over both church and state. The four female figures that approach in homage on the facing page are personifications of the four provinces of the empire bearing tribute for the emperor. In early medieval painting as in metalwork or sculpture, any attempt at naturalism is generally subordinated to the symbolic or hieratic (traditional) expression of key ideas in unambiguous terms. Naturalism did exist in early medieval art, but not in any absolute sense, and always in tension with non-naturalistic modes of representation.

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## THE CULT OF SAINTS AND THE RISE OF PILGRIMAGE

**AN INVESTMENT IN PILGRIMAGE ART.** Although the concept of Christian pilgrimage to a sacred site was almost as old as Christianity itself, pilgrimage as a social phenomenon in medieval Europe increased dramatically during the tenth and eleventh centuries as more people visited traditional shrines where saints' relics had long been venerated. A relic is what's left of a saint, either a part of the body (a tooth, an arm, a skull, some blood, etc.) or an article of clothing or other accessory (ranging from Christ's own Crown of Thorns to a shoe or garment belonging to the most minor of saints). Such holy objects, increasingly in the possession of churches, cathedrals, and abbeys all over Europe, were venerated by members of all social classes who attributed to them a divine power. Their custodians preserved and honored these relics by creating beautiful containers, known as reliquaries, to house them.

**THE IMPACT OF PILGRIMAGE.** The impact on European culture and visual art of this new flourishing of the cult of saints is difficult to overestimate. Whether pilgrims traveled to fulfill an oath, to seek a cure for an illness, to gain the favor of a particular saint, or as an act of penance, they spent money along their journeys and gave donations at local shrines. Recognizable by their large brimmed hats, walking sticks, and food bags called scrips, pilgrims collected small tokens or badges at shrines along the way, which they could bring home as souvenirs of their journey. Fundamentally a spiritual endeavor, pilgrimage also became a big business in the eleventh century, stimulating the economy and motivating secular rulers and monastic communities to invest heavily in the visual arts associated with the cult of saints. Thus, in addition to new and larger churches along the major pilgrimage routes designed to accommodate greater numbers of pilgrims, this period witnessed an explosion of metalwork and enamelwork reliquary containers for saints' relics; illustrated books narrating the lives and miracles of saints; other decorated religious books such as Bibles and psalters; and liturgi-



Christ, the Virgin, angels and saints. Reliquary casket, champlevé enamel on gilt copper, Limoges, France, Bargello Museum, Florence, Italy, 13th century. THE ART ARCHIVE/BARGELLO MUSEUM, FLORENCE/DAGLI ORTI.

cal vestments and vessels used for the performance of the Mass before ever-larger crowds of Christian pilgrims. The powerful abbey of Cluny in Burgundy, France, promoted the growth of pilgrimage across Europe and profited immensely, while kings and bishops found political as well as economic advantage in supporting and endowing popular shrines with costly art objects.

**RELIQUARY SHRINE OF ST. FOY.** A wonderful example in many ways is the golden reliquary statue of St. Foy (or Foi), currently in the Cathedral Treasury of Conques, in south-central France. Foy was a martyr saint, a young girl executed by the Romans for her Christian beliefs. Her relics were brought to the abbey of Conques in the later ninth century. During the expansion of pilgrimage to Conques in the tenth century, the monks there actively promoted the cult of this saint and over time built for her relics a magnificent statue-like container (which was embellished further in the centuries afterward). Gold sheeting was laid over a wooden core, and a metal crown and throne were added along with the jewels, antique cameos, and gold filigree work that adorn the garment. The head is actually a late-Roman parade helmet, readapted for this new purpose. The resulting representation of the saint is a powerful object of

## PILGRIMAGE to Santiago de Compostela

Pilgrimages in the Middle Ages were such an important part of the general culture that they were represented in a wide range of art forms, including sculpture, jewelry, and manuscript illumination. One of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Europe was the shrine of St. James of Compostela in the mountains of what is now northwestern Spain. According to Christian legend, the apostle James the Greater evangelized Spain before his martyrdom in Asia Minor and his body was subsequently returned to Spain for burial. In the early ninth century, the hidden or forgotten grave was discovered at a site known as Compostela, and King Alfonso II of Asturias ordered the construction of a church at the site, designating it a cathedral. Almost immediately, pilgrims from other regions journeyed to the shrine, such was the importance of the cult of St. James, or Santiago. Within Spain, St. James came to stand for the ideal of a Spain made fully Christian again (since the Muslim conquest of most of the peninsula in 711). He became the patron saint of the Christian "Reconquest" of Spain. The traffic of pilgrims from all over Europe to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela increased dramatically over the next two centuries (in line with the general increase of pilgrimage activity in Europe) until by about 1100 the cathedral of Santiago was one of the three most important pilgrimage centers in Latin Christendom, along with St. Peter's in Rome (where the relics of St. Peter were preserved) and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (site of Christ's own—empty—tomb). The volume of pilgrims necessitated a bigger church, and a new Romanesque cathedral was erected over the early medieval church. A description of the new

structure can be found in the *Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago*, written before the middle of the twelfth century.

As was the case with pilgrimage routes elsewhere, commerce prospered with the increasing flow of pilgrims. Economic expansion due to pilgrimage brought about the growth of towns along the route and encouraged rulers and wealthy landowners along the way to capitalize on the traffic by promoting the cults of local saints and patronizing the arts associated with pilgrimage. Thus, the major routes through France and Spain to Santiago can be traced today from one pilgrimage church to another, through once-thriving town centers and along major monastic foundations. In the visual art of the Middle Ages, pilgrims can be recognized by the walking staffs and srips or food sacks that they carry with them. Pilgrims to Santiago also wear the signature scallop shell of St. James on their cloaks, hats, and bags. One of the most interesting phenomena associated with the shrine was the invention of the pilgrim souvenir, in the form of a pewter badge that pilgrims could take away with them as evidence that they had completed their pilgrimage. Decorated with the motif of the scallop shell, such badges were mass-produced in an effort to keep pilgrims from dismantling the shrines themselves, but they also served the purpose of identifying pilgrims who could then receive both safe passage through dangerous territories and the charity that aided their travel. The badges also became an important source of income for the shrine, and many people believed they had healing powers, especially when they were made of fine metals and embellished with gems. So familiar were these souvenirs that images of the badges were often painted in a highly realistic *trompe l'oeil* manner in the margins of Books of Hours to look as if the actual objects were attached to the page.

devotion, and as an image of sacred authority (following the ancient Roman visual tradition of seated authority figures), it was an effective visual aid in the abbey's campaign to solicit donations in gold from the surrounding region. Some of the donations were used in the creation of this exquisite reliquary, but most of the abbey's income from this campaign was used for trade and other projects. The St. Foy statue thus represents and visualizes the very straightforward economic power of the reinigorated cult of saints, just as it suggests how the devotional power of a relic could be enhanced by the creation of a work of visual beauty to contain it.

**ENAMELWORK RELIQUARIES.** Less magnificent and imposing but still very fine and much more abundant were the box- and casket-reliquaries composed of metal plates

(sometimes over a wooden core) decorated with enamel panels, such as a twelfth-century container for a fragment of the True Cross (the cross upon which Christ was crucified) that seems to have been made specifically for the church of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, France. The figures decorating the box are labeled by name and tell the story of the relic's journey from the East to Saint-Sernin. On the lid is an image of Christ in glory. The beauty of the container with its fine craftsmanship and colorful surface suggests the importance and value of the relic within. The two main centers for the production of such small, portable enamelwork objects beginning in the twelfth century were Limoges, in central France (where the Saint-Sernin reliquary was produced), and the Mosan region in the Rhine and Meuse River valleys. The type of enamelwork seen in the Saint-Sernin reliquary is known as

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A RELIQUARY AND A CHALICE AT ST. ALBAN'S**

**INTRODUCTION:** Although there are not many written descriptions of art works during the Middle Ages, there were numerous records of the building of churches and cathedrals, some of which also included mention of the treasure of the church. The following passage from the chronicle of the abbey of St. Alban's in Hertfordshire, England, describes the origins, crafting, and purposes of a reliquary and a chalice, with some appreciation of how the shape and ornamentation were conceptualized, as well as a show of contemporary pride in their possession and display.

Abbot Simon [1167–1183] of pious memory started to collect from that time, zealously and with foresight and wisdom, a considerable treasure of gold and silver and precious stones, and to fashion the outside of the repository which we call a reliquary or *feretrum* (than which we have seen none finer at this time), undertaken by the hand of Master John, goldsmith and most excellent craftsman. He completed this most painstaking, costly, and artistic work most successfully within a few years. He placed it in a prominent position, namely above the main altar, facing the celebrant, so that anyone celebrating Mass at this altar would have before his eyes and in his heart the memory of the Martyr [Saint Alban]; thus facing the celebrant was portrayed the martyrdom, that is, the beheading. Moreover, around the reliquary, namely on the two sides, he had clearly depicted a series from the life of the Blessed Martyr, which consisted of his passion and the preparation for his passion, with raised figures of gold and silver, which is embossed work (commonly called relief). On the main side, which faced east, he reverently placed the image of the Crucified with the figures of Mary and John in a most

fitting arrangement of divers jewels. On the side facing west he portrayed the Blessed Virgin enthroned and holding her child on her lap, an outstanding work surrounded by gems and precious jewels. And thus, with a row of martyrs arranged on both sides of the lid, the reliquary rises to an elaborate and artistic crest; at the four corners it is beautifully and harmoniously shaped with windowed turrets covered by crystals. In this [reliquary] then, which is of extraordinary size, is appropriately enclosed the reliquary of the Martyr himself (being, as it were, his own chamber in which his severed bones are known to be contained), a fitting repository first commissioned by Abbot Geoffrey. ...

The same Abbot Simon also had made and bestowed to his everlasting renown, and to the glory of God and the church of the Blessed Martyr Saint Alban, a great golden chalice than which we have seen no finer in the kingdom of England. It is of the best and purest gold, encircled by precious stones appropriate to the material in such a work, made most subtle with a delicate and fine composition of interwoven flowers. This chalice was made by Master Baldwin, a preeminent goldsmith. He also had made by the hand of the same Baldwin a small vessel, worthy of special admiration, of standard yellow gold, with jewels of divers priceless kinds fitted and properly placed on it, in which "the artistry surpassed the material;" this work was to hold the Eucharist, to be hung over the main altar of the Martyr. When this became known to King Henry II, he sent with joy and devotion to the church of Saint Alban's a most splendid and precious cup in which was placed the repository immediately holding the body of Christ. ...

**SOURCE:** William Durandus, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*. Trans. and Eds. John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb (Leeds, England: T. W. Green, 1843): 17–30.

*champlevé*, created by a process in which the desired forms and lines are engraved into the metal surface and filled with colored glass powder, which is then heated until it fuses, producing a glass-like surface. Such works were exported all over Europe, helping to promote the veneration of relics while contributing to a greater uniformity of style and iconography in the visual arts of the period.

**THE THRONE OF WISDOM.** Another important benchmark in the rise of European devotional culture is the increasing presence of sculpted representations of the Virgin Mary (or the Virgin and Child), usually on church altars. One striking twelfth-century example carved in wood illustrates a specialty of the Auvergne region in central France. With its rigid frontality and rather abstract ren-

dering of drapery and other details, this statue and others of its kind were meant to project an iconic presence and to convey a theological notion of the Virgin as "Throne of Wisdom" (*sedes sapientiae* in Latin). Such objects often doubled as reliquary containers, and they flourished in churches along the pilgrimage roads. The expression of stern authority and devotional intensity of this Virgin and Child is clearly related to that of the St. Foy statue. It is this period, in fact, that witnesses the return of monumental figurative sculpture which had been generally absent in European art since the fall of the Roman Empire.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: Pilgrimage Architecture; Literature: The Canterbury Tales; Religion: Relics, Pilgrimages, and the Peace of God*

## ROMANESQUE ART: AN INTERNATIONAL PHENOMENON

**AN AGE OF SURPLUS.** Until the eleventh century (and so, throughout the early medieval period), the visual arts in western Europe were an index of a young civilization's efforts to recapture a former grandeur and to express the ideals of the developing culture of Latin Christendom. Beginning around the end of the first Christian millennium (and certainly by the mid-eleventh century), European culture and the visual arts reached a new plateau and entered into a wonderfully rich and fertile period that we have come to call "Romanesque." The historical factors underlying this cultural development are well known. Improved agricultural technology helped to bring about an historic expansion of the European economy and society in the eleventh century. Old centers of production were revitalized, interregional trade increased (as did the use and circulation of gold and silver coinage), and populations grew. Unprecedented surpluses, controlled by the landed aristocracy, made possible the burst of building activity and art production that is associated with the Romanesque period, the beginning of what might be called the "High Middle Ages."

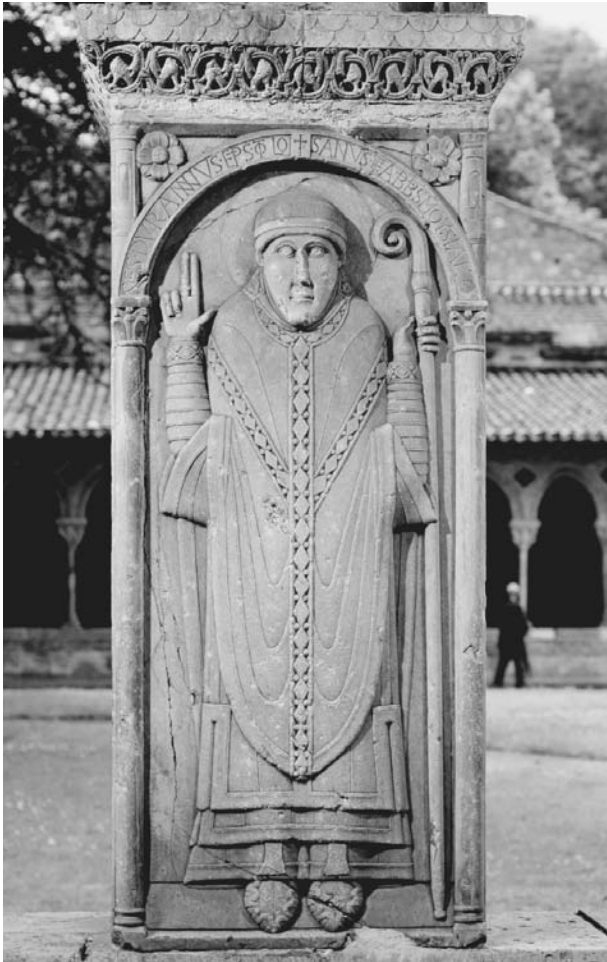
**THE ROMANESQUE STYLE.** The art-historical designation "Romanesque" was first used in the nineteenth century to describe the architecture of eleventh- and twelfth-century Europe, which, with its rounded arches, barrel vaults, and columns with decorative capitals, seemed derivative of ancient Roman architectural forms. Today the term Romanesque is used to describe the general style of the visual arts from the period. For the first time since ancient Rome, a genuinely international movement in the visual arts is apparent, united by common forms, subjects, and styles and stretching across the regions that now comprise England, France, Spain, Germany, and Italy. The arts reached a new level of coherence in the integration of Roman, Byzantine, Carolingian, Ottonian, and Islamic traditions. The imperial art of Germany was an especially important influence with its Byzantine connections and its powerful visual language, while the explosion of pilgrimage activity helped to establish pathways throughout Europe over which artistic styles and techniques could be spread.



God creating Adam detail from silver gilt relief reliquary shrine of San Isidoro, Spain, 1063. THE ART ARCHIVE/REAL COLLEGIATA SAN ISIDORO, LEÓN/DAGLI ORTI.

While the renaissance of Charlemagne in the Frankish Empire around 800, or of King Alfred the Great in England around 900, represented the ambition of a ruler to project a higher level of civilization, the Romanesque era was more than a projection; European civilization legitimately began to rival both Byzantium and Islam in terms of cultural development and sophistication. The visual arts—sculpture in stone and wood, metalwork, textiles, manuscript illumination, and mural painting—bear witness to this remarkable achievement.

**THE RELIQUARY SHRINE OF SAN ISIDORO.** The Reliquary Shrine of San Isidoro in León is a good example of how royal sponsorship helped to bring about the production of what may be considered the earliest known Romanesque reliquary shrine. In its monumentality of conception and execution, it anticipates works of the following century. The occasion for the creation of this shrine was the defeat of the Muslim forces at Seville and the capture of that city by King Fernando I of León in 1063 (a major advance in the Christian Reconquest of Spain). The prized relics of San Isidoro (who was something of a Spanish national saint) were transferred at this time from Seville in the south to León in the north and deposited in a church that was rededicated to the saint. The ideological importance of the relics



Marble cloister pier relief of Abbot Durandus of Brédon, bishop of Toulouse. Church of Saint-Pierre, Moissac, France, 1100. PETER WILLIAMS/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

within the kingdom of León and the political importance of the occasion warranted the creation of the gilt silver container. The five scenes from the biblical book of Genesis (two additional scenes have been lost) as well as the figure of Fernando I appear on plaques that adorn the shrine. The choice of scenes and particular compositions recall both Carolingian Bible illustration from the Tours school and figurative bronze work from the Ottonian era (specifically a set of bronze-relief doors from Hildesheim in Saxony). The decorative silks lining the casket are of Islamic origin, their re-use a customary practice for Christian reliquary containers in Spain.

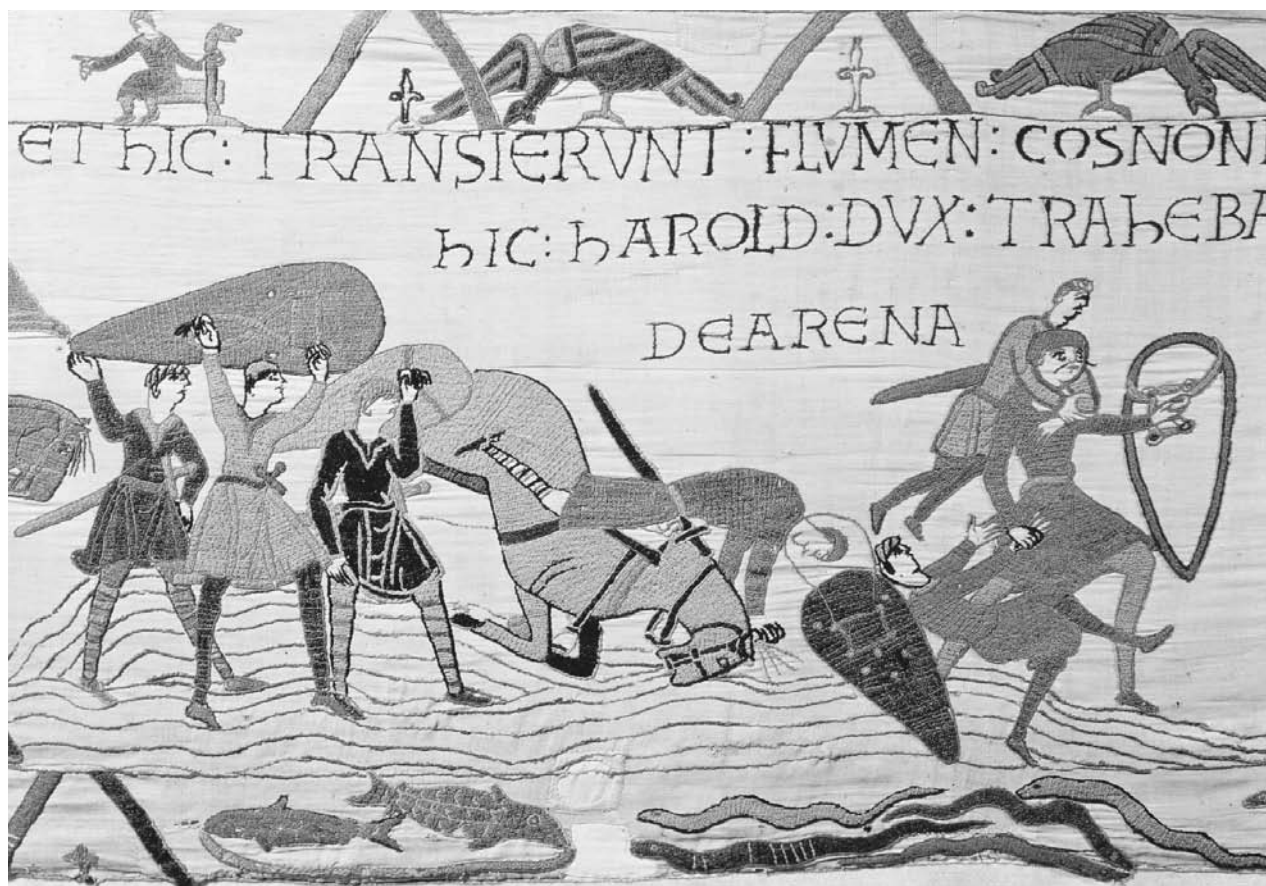
**ABBOT DURANDUS AT MOISSAC.** The effectiveness of so much Romanesque art in conveying a sense of political authority by drawing upon powerful, iconic modes of representation is well illustrated by an image of Abbot Durandus from about 1100, carved in low relief on the central marble pier in the cloister of the abbey



St. George and the dragon initial, Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*. Dijon, France, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 168, folio 4v, 1111. THE ART ARCHIVE/BIBLIOTHÈQUE MUNICIPALE, DIJON/DAGLI ORTI.

church of Saint-Pierre, in Moissac (southwest France). This church, an important stop on one of the major pilgrimage roads, was a key outpost of the powerful monastic order of Cluny. It was reformed according to the Cluniac Order by Durandus, who ruled the religious community there as abbot from 1047 to 1072. This marble slab, erected later in his memory, commemorates the period of his rule and serves as a visualization of the authority that was so important within a monastery. This sense is conveyed by the rigid symmetry and frontality of the figure and by the ceremonial vestments and gesture. In its position facing the room where the monks regularly held meetings, this image functioned very well as a reminder of the abbot's supremacy. Romanesque art does not always display such rigidly abstract qualities; in fact the period after 1100 saw the spread of a more dynamic expressiveness in many works of visual art. But the close physical connection between the figure of Durandus and the architectural frame enclosing him (and also the structural support upon which he appears) is very characteristic of the Romanesque aesthetic.





Harold II King of England assisting Duke William, later William I the Conqueror, to escape from quicksand near Mont Saint-Michel, France, Bayeux Tapestry, France, 1080. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE DE LA TAPISSERIE, BAYEUX/DAGLI ORTI.

**THE CISTERCIAN MORALIA IN JOB.** The close relationship between figure and support was even more creatively explored in the realm of manuscript illumination, a much more fluid medium. Text and image were often conflated in “historiated” or “inhabited” initials, in which the form of a letter provides space and structure for one or more figures to appear and to act out scenes related to the text. An example is the initial “R” from the title page of an early twelfth-century manuscript of the *Moralia in Job*, a well-known commentary on the Old Testament Book of Job composed centuries earlier by Pope Gregory the Great. The title *Moralia* indicates the “moralities” or allegories of New Testament events Gregory found contained in the story of Job. Literally occupying the space within the letter is a dragon confronted by a sword-wielding knight who stands upon the back of a lance-wielding soldier or servant. The monastic community responsible for the production of this manuscript and its decorations is that of the new Cistercian Order, founded in 1098 in Cîteaux (in Burgundy, France) by Benedictine monks who op-

posed what they saw as the worldly excesses of the Cluniac Order (the leading order of Benedictine monasticism). They wished to live a more austere life closer to the model of the early Christian hermit monks, and their outlook eventually carried over into the visual art (and architecture) that they produced. By the time this manuscript was completed in 1111, the Cistercians’ most rigorous strictures regarding the artistic embellishment of books and other objects had not yet been enforced (although there is a conspicuous absence of gold leaf, and there are no full-page illustrations within). Decorated initials such as this one were seen by the monastic audience in terms of spiritual meanings; in this case the fight between dragon and knight represented the spiritual struggle of the monks over evil impulses. Although involved in a scene of strenuous action that might seem to call for a realistic style, the figures are depicted with fantastically proportioned bodies and decorative, stylized clothing characteristic of the Romanesque. Naturalism here is clearly subordinated to a scheme that is decorative and made to literally “fit” the text it embellishes.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX ON THE VANITY OF SACRED ART**

**INTRODUCTION:** The following is an extract from a letter written in 1125 by St. Bernard (Bernard of Clairvaux, 1091–1153) to the monk William of Thierry, in which he builds upon the early Christian critiques of sacred art production in offering an elaborate complaint against what he argues are the excesses and the inappropriateness of art in a monastic context. Bernard was a leader of the new Cistercian Order of monks, a group that formed in reaction to the more permissive and worldly Benedictine orders, which were associated with the sponsorship of artistic works and monuments. This critique of the Benedictine (especially Cluniac) approach to the visual arts in a sacred context was written in 1125.

Their eyes are feasted with relics cased in gold, and their purse-strings are loosed. They are shown a most comely image of some saint, whom they think all the more saintly that he is the more gaudily painted. Men run to kiss him, and are invited to give; there is more admiration for his comeliness than veneration for his sanctity. Hence the church is adorned with gemmed crowns of light—nay, with lustres like cartwheels, girt all round with lamps, but no less brilliant with the precious stones that stud them. Moreover we see candelabra standing like trees of massive bronze, fashioned with marvellous subtlety of art, and glistening no less brightly with gems than with the lights they carry. What, think you, is the purpose of all this? The compunction of penitents, or the admiration of beholders? O vanity of vanities, yet no more vain than insane! The church is resplendent in her walls, beggarly in her poor; she clothes her stones in gold, and leaves her sons naked; the rich man's eye is fed at the expense of the indigent. The curious find their delight here, yet the needy find no relief. In short, so many and so marvellous are the varieties of divers shapes on every hand, that we are more tempted to read in the marble than in our books, and to spend the whole day in wondering at these things rather than in meditating on the law of God. For God's sake, if men are not ashamed of these follies, why at least do they not shrink from the expense?

**SOURCE:** Bernard of Clairvaux, "Letter to William of St. Thierry," in *A Mediaeval Garner*. Trans. G. G. Coulton (London: Constable and Co., 1910): 70–72.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ARTISTIC TECHNIQUES FROM DIFFERENT LANDS**

**INTRODUCTION:** This extract is from *De diversis artibus* (On Divers Arts), considered the foremost medieval treatise on the arts of painting, stained glass, and metalwork techniques. It was written around 1125 in western Germany by a certain Theophilus, who is tentatively identified with the goldsmith Roger of Helmarshausen from Lower Saxony. As a defense of the liturgical and decorative arts, the treatise offers a response to St. Bernard's critique of sacred art. It argues that art for liturgical purposes follows God's own specifications, and that the work of artists aware of this religious significance is an inspired spiritual activity that imbues the whole process of making and using liturgical art with a dignity transcending decorative concerns. The passage excerpted here from the introduction presents the author's claim to include descriptions of artistic techniques from all over the known world.

Wherefore, gentle son ... covet with greedy looks the "Book on Various Arts," read it through with a tenacious memory, embrace it with an ardent love.

If you scrutinize this book most diligently, you will find the mixtures and kinds of various colors which they use in Greece; whatever Russia knows about the crafts of enamels and niello; how Arabia is distinguished by skill in repoussé or casting or open-work; how Italy decorates vessels with gems and gold and excels in carving of ivory; how France delights in the precious tracery of windows; and whatever subtle Germany appreciates in the fine working of gold, silver, copper, and iron, and in wood and precious stones.

**SOURCE:** Theophilus, *De diversis artibus*, in Robert Hendrie, *An Essay Upon Various Arts, in Three Books by Theophilus, called also Rugerus, Priest and Monk* (London: John Murray, 1847): 1. Translated by John Block Friedman.

**THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY.** The relationship between text and image is just as important in the 231-foot-long "Bayeux Tapestry," which is technically not really a tapestry at all but an embroidery on linen. Commissioned in the 1080s, it features a continuous pictorial narrative relating the story of the Norman conquest of England in 1066. This secular work, apparently unique, follows very closely the written narrative account of the conquest by William of Poitiers, the chaplain of the victorious Duke

William of Normandy. Captions throughout identify figures and scenes. In one section, for example, the Earl Harold of England can be seen accompanying Duke William of Normandy on his military campaign in Brittany; another section shows the Battle of Hastings, where William's forces defeated Harold and paved the way for William's ascent to the English throne. Meant largely as a justification for the Norman Conquest and subsequent rule over the English, this monumental work draws inspiration from the ancient Roman tradition of the continuous picture roll, which similarly served a political function. The combination of forms, colors, composition, and iconography marks this work as distinctly Romanesque. It is also worth noting that the Bayeux Tapestry shares with other Romanesque works a certain focus on the contest for power and authority (whether secular or religious). Interestingly, its theme and its lively narrative have appealed to more modern military leaders and would-be conquerors (such as Napoleon and Hitler, who sought to study this work), just as its abundant imagery continues to inspire new art-historical scholarship.

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### ART AT THE CULTURAL FRONTIER IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

**A MULTICULTURAL ART.** Interregional trade in luxury and art objects helped make it possible for Romanesque art to synthesize many different visual languages. But there were also particular regions where Latin Christians from Europe coexisted or came into frequent contact with members of other cultures, and these points of contact were important in giving Romanesque art its international character. Spain continued to be a frontier region where Christians and Muslims intermingled, sometimes sharing in a common artistic culture. In southern Italy and Sicily, a dynasty of Norman rulers presided over “a kingdom of the Two Sicilies” in which Latin, Greek (Byzantine), and Islamic traditions all had a share in defining the local culture. The eastern Mediter-

## WEAVING and Embroidery

Because they were so often damaged or destroyed through use, exposure, or some other calamity, medieval textiles have not survived in numbers indicative of their actual importance for medieval culture. Decorative woven and embroidered textiles were used most often in the creation of ceremonial vestments (for bishops or secular rulers) or for large wall-hangings and floor-coverings.

Weaving is a process used in the production of carpets, tapestries, and other textiles, and is carried out on a loom. The structure of vertical threads is known as the warp; the weft refers to the horizontal threads woven across to form the pattern or decoration. Different artisans were involved in the design and execution of a piece of artistic weaving. A famous example is the series of tapestries illustrating the Apocalypse commissioned in 1376 by Louis of Anjou for the decoration of his castle. A master weaver named Nicholas Bataille was commissioned to do the work, but he in turn ordered designs to be drawn up by the king's painter, Jean Bandol of Bruges.

Embroidery is a needlework technique in which designs are sewn in a fine material (like silk) onto a support made of another material, such as wool, cotton, or linen. The most famous example of a medieval embroidery is the improperly named “Bayeux Tapestry.” It is a 70-meter long strip of linen embroidered in dyed wool with narrative scenes relating the story of the Norman conquest of England in 1066 in great detail—over 50 scenes with more than 600 human figures. This example is unique; more common were the many decorative textiles used for liturgical purposes by priests and bishops. English embroidery became well known throughout later medieval Europe as *opus Anglicanum*. An example is the Chichester-Constable Chasuble, a velvet vestment worn during performance of the Mass and probably made for Edward III (r. 1327–1377), whose family emblem appears in the top portion of the decoration. Embroidery on the back of the vestment, done in gold, silver, and silk threads adorned with seed pearls, depicts scenes from the Life of the Virgin.

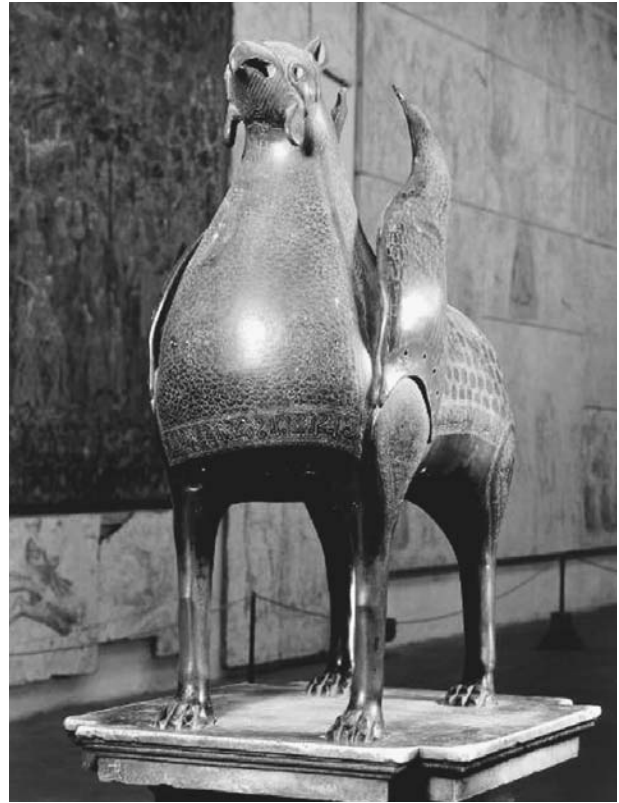
anean—the Holy Land—was another crucible of cross-cultural interaction where Latin Christian crusaders, Byzantine Christians, and Muslims fought each other and yet gained knowledge of each other's traditions in the visual arts. Sometimes, art objects produced by one



Christ crowning King Roger II of Sicily, Mosaic, St. Mary's of the Admiral (Martorana) church, Palermo, Sicily, Italy, 1151.  
© ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

culture were taken and reused in a new context by another culture. Some hybrid art forms (Christian or Islamic? Latin or Greek?) carried across Europe through trade, war, or diplomacy were expressive of this medieval multiculturalism. With such a rich and cosmopolitan art scene in twelfth-century Europe, the stage was set for the advent of the more complex, intellectually sophisticated, and naturalistic visual art of the later Middle Ages.

**NORMAN SICILY.** The Normans, who had recently invaded and conquered England, established dominion over Sicily in the early twelfth century and founded a state which became a major power in the Mediterranean basin. The mantle for the coronation of the Christian king Roger II, created between 1133 and 1134, is a work of Islamic art made by Muslims in the royal workshop in Palermo (as its Arabic inscription states). It features a central Tree of Life flanked by lions attacking camels, a common hunting motif that signified royal power and dominion. What is meant by the commissioning and ceremonial employment of Islamic art by a Christian king? A comparison with the Spanish situation is in-



Cast bronze Griffin, Museo delle Opera del Duomo, Pisa, probably Fatimid Egypt, 11th–12th centuries. SCALA/ART RESOURCE, NY.

structive. Christian kings of Spain brought back Islamic textiles or carved ivory caskets (often produced at the caliph's court in Córdoba) as spoils of war and then often incorporated them into Christian shrines (as in the Reliquary Shrine of San Isidoro). This sort of hybridization in the arts, however, must be seen in the light of the ongoing military struggle between the two communities and the practice of despoiling one's enemy and then neutralizing enemy symbols by re-contextualizing them. In Norman Sicily, Muslims were recognized subjects and even members of the royal administration; they were not the enemy. The coronation mantle, when worn by the king, visualized his claim to be ruler over a diverse ethnic constituency. His appeal to the visual tradition of his Muslim subjects demonstrates that rulers during this period could no longer assert their authority in the early medieval terms of absolute power. In multicultural contexts, they increasingly relied on a visual language of inclusiveness.

**THE PISA GRIFFIN.** Sometimes works of art from this period are not so easy to identify with one specific cultural group or another. This may be because of the fact that they were moved from region to region, or perhaps because many of the same techniques and visual



Beatus Vir initial, Psalter of Queen Melisende, MS Egerton 1139, folio 23v, c. 1135. © THE BRITISH LIBRARY.

motifs were often employed in different places. A long-celebrated enigma of Islamic craftsmanship in bronze, the so-called “Pisa Griffin” has been alternatively assigned to Ummayyad Spain, Fatimid Egypt (the first two named for the dynasties of their Muslim rulers), Sicily, Italy, or Iran. Each of these places had bronze-working traditions as well as flourishing court cultures that produced luxury objects and engaged in trans-regional trade. For some 700 years the Griffin stood proudly atop Pisa Cathedral in Pisa, Italy; how it got there is something of a mystery. It is thought to have been made in the late eleventh or early twelfth century, but was it given as a gift, exchanged through channels of trade, or taken as booty during a military campaign? Standing just over three and a half feet tall, this majestic creature would have been understood by any number of Mediterranean communities as a symbol of power and victory (hence its placement as a trophy atop the cathedral). It is the circulation of such works from place to place that gives evidence for cross-cultural relations during the period.



Scenes from life of King David, ivory cover from the Psalter of Queen Melisende, MS Egerton 1139. © THE BRITISH LIBRARY.

But surely these works also played a role in establishing pan-cultural identities and fostering knowledge of neighboring and distant peoples. In an era long before “globalization,” individual works of art very often did the work of establishing connections between places or attesting to the existence of those connections.

**QUEEN MELISENDE’S PSALTER.** One outpost of Latin Christendom that served as a crucible of cross-cultural exchange in the visual arts was the Holy Land during the period of the Crusades (from about 1100 to almost 1300). During this time, knights and adventurers from all over Western Europe established states along the coast of the eastern Mediterranean, the most important of which was the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Here, rulers of Latin or sometimes mixed Latin-Byzantine ancestry asserted their sovereignty over a mixture of peoples, not unlike the rulers of Norman Sicily. One such ruler was Queen Melisende, who ruled alongside her husband Fulk until his death in 1143, after which she enjoyed exclusive sovereignty over the kingdom until 1152. One of the greatest monuments of visual art from the



Biblical scenes from Stavelot Triptych, Mosan enamel and metal work. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 1156–1158. THE PIERPOINT MORGAN LIBRARY/ART RESOURCE, NY.

period of her reign is a deluxe psalter, or book of Psalms, currently preserved in the British Library. The psalter text itself, the first page (and the first letter, an historiated letter “B” for “Beatus vir,” the first words of one of the Psalms), begins after a cycle of full-page New Testament illustrations and a calendar of the feasts of the saints. The golden script used throughout, as well as the overall sumptuousness of the book, indicates royal patronage and imitates the manner of imperial manuscripts from the Byzantine court in Constantinople. The text was copied by a scribe in a northern French style, and the figural work within the initial letter “B” imitates an English style. This mixture of influences can be found throughout the manuscript; the illustrations are largely Byzantine with some western touches, and the carved ivory covers recall textile motifs from the Near East. A work that truly synthesizes various cultural influences, the psalter expresses the queen’s desire to establish royal

authority over a mixture of peoples by accommodating their various traditions within the new visual culture of the royal court. Other strategies are employed as well, such as the propagandistic scenes of King David on the front ivory cover which suggest a biblical prototype for the crusader rulers of Jerusalem.

**THE STAVELOT TRIPTYCH.** That a single work of art may express inter-regional connections by the literal incorporation of other works within it is clear from the example of the Stavelot Triptych, thought to have been commissioned by Wibald, the Benedictine abbot of Stavelot (in modern-day Belgium) sometime after 1155. It is a portable gilt copper altarpiece whose doors open to reveal scenes from the life of the Roman emperor Constantine in circular enamel panels, an assortment of gems and pearls, and two smaller triptychs in the central section. Wibald had just returned from a trip to Constantinople, and this altarpiece, executed by master

metalsmiths in the Mosan region, emphasizes the abbot's regard for Byzantine traditions in the visual arts. The two small triptychs in the center are actually reliquary containers from Constantinople, given as gifts by the Emperor Manuel I. The fragment of the True Cross that each contains as well as the particular type of enamel-work used to decorate the small reliquaries are both decidedly Byzantine intrusions into a work from Western Europe. The pride of place they are given within the overall work suggests that Byzantine sacred objects were held in especially high regard in the West. Perhaps the patron is also making a statement about the interconnectedness of different Christian traditions or about his own enlightened cosmopolitanism. Regardless of the specific meaning, it is works such as this that tell us that twelfth-century Europeans were finding many ways to assimilate influences from neighboring and distant cultures in the forging of new works of visual art. It is this openness to the larger world, as much as any internal developments, that helped pave the way toward the magnificent visual arts of the later Middle Ages.

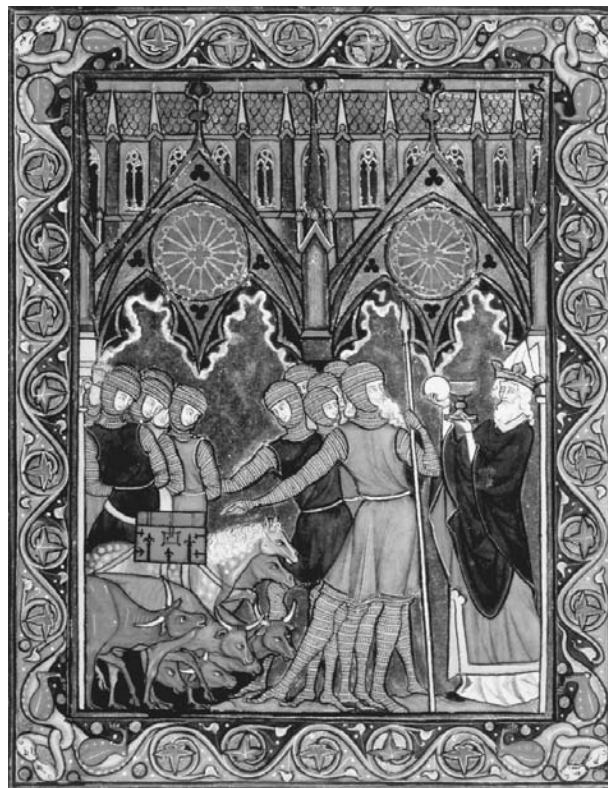
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### POLITICAL LIFE AND THE NEW STATE

**ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ROYAL STATE.** By the later Middle Ages the various European states reached a crucial stage in their political development. England, France, and the Spanish kingdoms were each able to consolidate power and territory, asserting royal prerogatives and centralizing the administration of the realm. In France of the Capetian and Valois dynasties (987–1498) and in England of the Plantagenet dynasty (1154–1399), particularly, this resulted in the achievement of the royal state—the predecessor of the modern nation-state. The case of France is especially important because it is there that centralized political authority coincided with the development of the Gothic style—the prevailing style of European art in the later Middle Ages. Generally associated with the patronage of Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis in the 1140s, outside of Paris, and emerging first in architecture, the new style very quickly came to be thought of as both "modern" and native to France. Leaving behind all notions of aesthetic and spiritual austerity, Gothic art fully embraced visual splendor for the greater glory of



Abraham presents his prisoners to Melchisedek, St. Louis Psalter, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MS lat. 10525, folio 6, 1250. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE, NY.

God, not to mention the glory of the monarchs, bishops, and noble individuals that promoted it. It was elegant and awe-inspiring, human-centered and otherworldly. The Gothic spread rapidly throughout the Ile-de-France (Paris and the surrounding region) and then on to England and elsewhere. It is found first in architecture but soon became predominant in all the visual arts, in fashion, and even in the design of mundane and everyday objects.

**THE GOTHIC AS A FRENCH STYLE.** If the maturity of the Gothic style in France and its dissemination throughout Europe can be associated with the reign of a single monarch, then that ruler is King Louis IX (r. 1226–1270). This "most Christian king" (Louis was made a saint 27 years after his death) patronized the arts in grand fashion as part of his effort to glorify Paris as the "new Jerusalem" and exalt the French nation as the "true Israel." Convinced he was favored by God and destined for greatness, Louis spared no expense in pursuing his ambitious plans, both at home in Paris and on Crusade in the Holy Land. Because Paris became such an important and influential center during Louis' 44-year reign, the mature Gothic style found its way from there to all corners of Europe. As a strong monarch and a

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ABBOT SUGER ON ALTAR DECORATION**

**INTRODUCTION:** Suger (1081–1151), abbot of Saint-Denis outside of Paris from 1122 onward, is one of the most famous and best-documented medieval patrons of the arts. The text below comes from Book XXXIII of *De Administratione* (1144–1149), Suger's treatise detailing the change in his abbey's economic fortunes and the remodeling and artistic embellishment of the church's interior. It is one of three treatises he wrote concerning the rebuilding and redecorating campaign that he led. In it, we see Suger's effort to glorify as well as describe; he was well aware of the artistic importance of his patronage. The latter part of the excerpted passage describes the "anagogical" power attributed to religious art by Suger: this is the ability of art and material beauty to help transport the human spirit into closer proximity to the Divine.

We hastened to adorn the Main Altar of the blessed Denis where there was only one beautiful and precious frontal panel from Charles the Bald, the third [Carolingian] Emperor; for at this [altar] we had been offered to the monastic life. We had it all encased, putting up golden panels on either side and adding a fourth, even more precious one; so that the whole altar would appear golden all the way round. On either side, we installed there the two candlesticks of King Louis, son of Philip, of twenty marks of gold, lest they might be stolen on some occa-

sion; we added hyacinths, emeralds, and sundry precious gems; and we gave orders carefully to look out for others to be added further ...

But the rear panel, of marvelous workmanship and lavish sumptuousness (for the barbarian artists were even more lavish than ours), we ennobled with chased relief work equally admirable for its form as for its material, so that certain people might be able to say: "The workmanship surpassed the material. ..."

Often we contemplate, out of sheer affection for the church our mother, these different ornaments both new and old...Thus, when—out of my delight in the beauty of the house of God—the loveliness of the many-colored gems has called me away from external cares, and worthy meditation has induced me to reflect, transferring that which is material to that which is immaterial, on the diversity of the sacred virtues: then it seems to me that I see myself dwelling, as it were, in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven; and that, by the grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner.

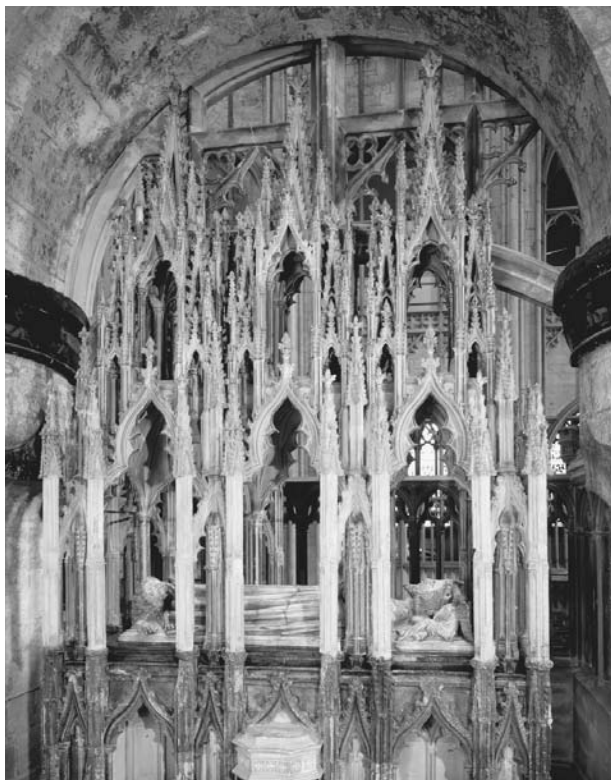
**SOURCE:** *Abbot Suger On the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures*. 2nd ed. Eds. and trans. Erwin Panofsky and Gerda Panofsky-Soergel (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979): Book XXXIII, 64–65.

patron of the arts, Louis came to be a model for other late medieval kings, most notably his contemporaries kings Henry III of England (r. 1216–1272) and Alfonso X of León-Castile (r. 1252–1284), as well as later rulers like King Charles V of France (r. 1364–1380) and King Edward III of England (r. 1327–1377).

**THE PSALTER OF SAINT LOUIS.** Created between 1253 and 1270 for the private devotion of the French king, the Psalter of Saint Louis defines the Gothic as a courtly French art. This exquisite small-format manuscript (5 cm x 3.5 cm), along with the many other high-quality illuminated manuscripts produced for the royal court of France during this time, earned for France its reputation as a center of Gothic art and culture. As a bibliophile whose library was famous throughout the royal courts of Europe, King Louis commissioned the psalter to be decorated with more than 78 full-page illustrations of Old Testament scenes. Each scene is set in an architectural frame adorned with lancets, pinnacles, tracery, and rose windows that seem to echo in miniature the architectural elements of Louis's newly built Sainte-Chapelle (1243–1248). Along the borders run

scrolls with an ivy leaf motif and fantastic animals in the corners. The program of illustrations lacks a clearly-defined relationship with the psalter text, and the choice of scenes—many of which concentrate on biblical heroes, such as Abraham and David—suggests that Louis probably intended there to be an association between himself and the biblical figures who were seen as his prototypes. In one example two episodes from a biblical story are depicted, conveniently separated by an oak tree. On the left, three strangers appear before the bearded and kneeling Abraham; on the right, the men have been invited in to break bread with their host, who has just learned that Sarah—who peeks through the open curtain in the back—will bear a child. Such a story would have been understood in thirteenth-century Christian Europe as a prefiguration of the Annunciation to the Virgin, a pattern of symbolism in which the Old Testament episode was intended to foreshadow a New Testament event, thus showing that the New Testament stories fulfilled prophecies in the Old. For Louis, programmatic and jewel-like works of art like this psalter were part of a coordinated cultural policy that exalted





Canopied marble tomb of King Edward II. Gloucester Cathedral, England, 1330. ANGELO HORNAK/CORBIS.

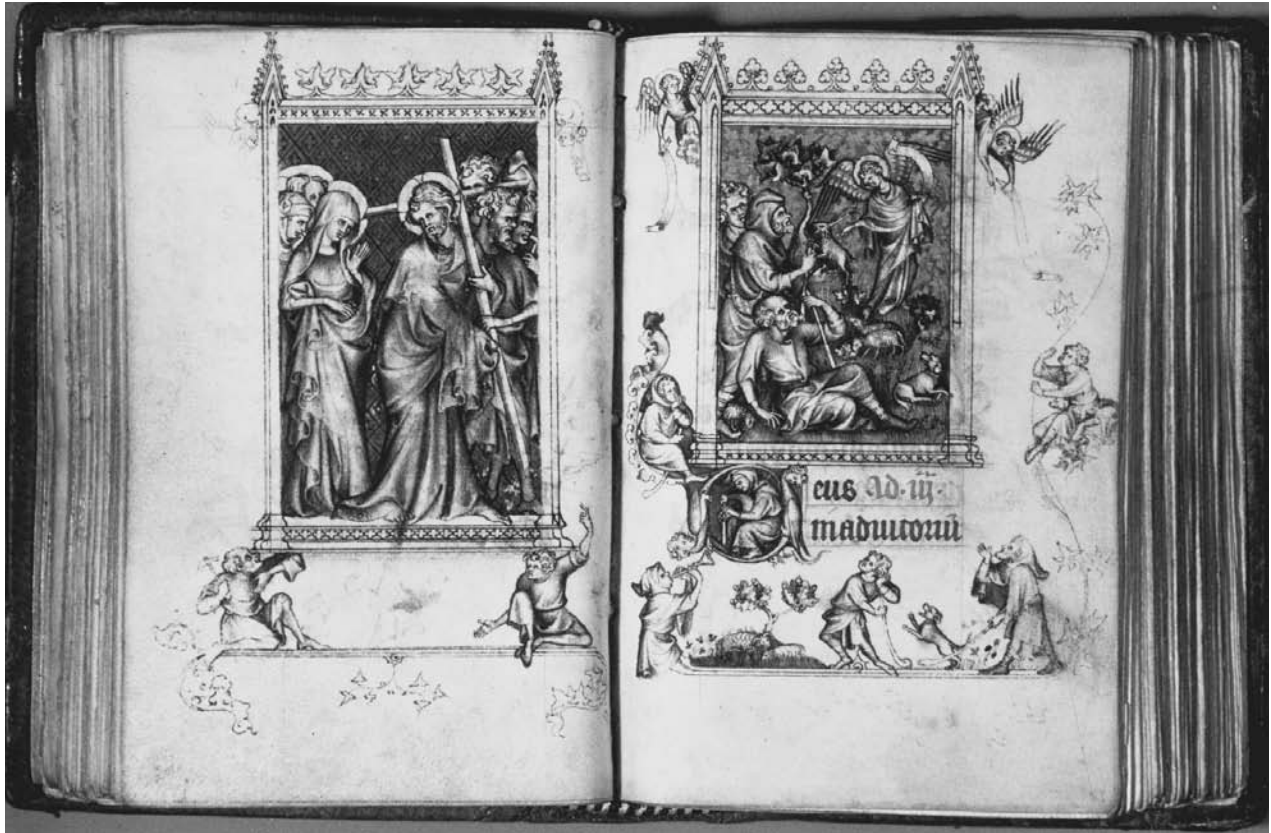
the ruler as saintly and his kingdom as a latter-day Israel, chosen by God and destined for greatness.

**THE SPREAD OF THE GOTHIC STYLE.** Within the culture of the aristocratic and royal courts, the arts continued to flourish, sponsored by men and women who shared a common culture and held fast to the noble virtues of rank, wealth, and vestiges of chivalry. These individuals decorated castles, erected public monuments, and sought to commemorate their own deeds and those of their ancestors. They also turned to the visual arts to celebrate the more mundane pleasures and activities of courtly life, such as hunting, jousting, and literary invention. The taste and high standards of the nobility—visualized in illuminated manuscripts, goldsmith work, tapestries, and sculpture—translated into an aesthetic of opulence, elegance, and technical complexity that created a fashion across Europe. Drawing their inspiration from the new Gothic style in architecture, both visual artists and sculptors endowed their works with a decorative style of intricate lacy designs, sinuous curves, and a taste for architectural motifs such as high, pointed arches and pinnacles. Stone- and wood-carvers tended to favor patterns inspired by nature, such as vine and ivy foliage and acanthus flowers. The tomb of King Edward

## BOOK of Hours

One of the most popular types of privately owned books in the later Middle Ages was the illuminated Book of Hours (called *horæ* in the Latin plural). A devotional book, almost always illuminated, it was intended for laypeople so that they could imitate the devotions of the monastic hours followed by monks and nuns. They did, in fact, contain liturgical texts borrowed from the Breviary, the book used by monks that contained the complete service for the Divine Office (the daily cycle of prayers for the eight canonical hours). At the heart of the Book of Hours was the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin (or Hours of the Virgin), a series of prayers to be recited at seven different times during the day: *matins* and *lauds* at daybreak, *prime* at 6 a.m., *terce* at 9 a.m., *sext* at noon, *nonas* at 3 p.m., *vespers* at sunset, and *compline* in the evening. This was supplemented by many other elements, such as a calendar, a litany of saints, the Office of the Dead, the Penitential Psalms, other offices (of the Trinity, of the Passion, etc.), and other prayers and suffrages (which typically contained a picture and a prayer to a specific saint).

Texts varied quite a bit depending upon the needs and preferences of each owner; for example, books of hours owned by women often had prayers for St. Apollonia, connected with childbirth, and St. Anne, who taught Mary to read. Likewise books often provide clues to their region of origin. The calendar of a Book of Hours intended for someone living in Paris, for example, would contain the festival days for certain saints such as Dionysius (St. Denis) who was especially venerated in central France, while a Book of Hours for Oxford (called “Oxford use”) would include the city’s patron saint, Frideswide. Even the date of the book can sometimes be determined by its content, since suffrages for St. Sebastian and St. Roche, associated with protection from plague, would have begun to appear only after 1349. The book of hours assumed its standard form in the thirteenth century and continued to be produced in large numbers, especially in northern Europe, until the sixteenth century, when print versions with hand-colored woodcuts replaced painted decoration. Its popularity was an expression of the growing piety of laypeople in the later Middle Ages, though books of hours also showcased the wealth and taste of patrons. Typically, major divisions would feature an illustration or a cycle of illustrations, and decoration throughout the book could be quite extensive.



Christ carrying the cross and Annunciation to the Shepherds, double page. Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, New York, The Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, MS 54.1.2 folios 61–62, 13th century. FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS.

II of England (Gloucester Cathedral, 1307–1327) illustrates all these characteristics and shows how thoroughly this style of French origin was now implanted in England. It features an effigy of the deposed monarch reclining beneath a canopy of marble adorned with high pinnacles and ogival (curved and pointed) arches. With its complex architectural structure, its profuse ornament and overwhelming size, the marble canopy sets the deceased king apart from the viewer as it elevates him to an unattainable heavenly resting-place. Enshrined in this highly decorative structure, the idealized alabaster portrait of the king, contrasting in size and sobriety with the canopy, rests undisturbed in a majestic dignity. Here we see the Gothic in the service of the later medieval royal state, expressing the power and importance of the royal office while commenting upon the greatness of the honored individual.

**THE HOURS OF JEANNE D'EVREUX.** Charles IV of France was another of the monarchs whose patronage expressed the elegant and aristocratic quality of the Gothic style. His wedding present to his wife, Jeanne d'Evreux, was a precious Book of Hours executed between 1325 and 1328. The small size of this manuscript (8.2 cm x 5.6 cm)

made it a perfect present for the queen. Like many other ladies of the court, she most certainly treasured compact and portable manuscripts that could easily be carried in a pouch on the belt and read at intervals throughout the day. Books of Hours were very often personalized with portraits of the owner (Jeanne appears kneeling in an initial D below an image of the Annunciation) and with coat of arms when appropriate, and their pages were also used to press flowers or to hold images of favorite saints on tabs of parchment attached to the margins.

**ICONOGRAPHY AND DECORATION.** Both the iconographic program of the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux and its decoration point to its essentially aristocratic nature. The book includes a special cycle of devotions to Saint Louis (King Louis IX of France), newly canonized and favored at the French court. In the borders and the lower margins, small human figures and animal or hybrid grotesques are performing courtly games and secular activities such as jousting, hunting, and musical performance, so as to amuse the reader. The famous Parisian illuminator Jean Pucelle was responsible for the majority of the decoration, most notably the innovative technique of grisaille painting in manuscripts. Grisaille



Arrest of Christ, Annunciation to the Virgin. Double page, Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, New York, The Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, MS 54.1.2 folios 15–16. 13th century. FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS.

or monochrome painting (in shades of gray) was better known as a stained-glass technique and was also used in fresco painting when artists wished to emulate the volumetric quality of sculpture. During his travels in Italy, Pucelle may have been inspired by the works of Italian painters from whom he borrowed technical as well as compositional features. Besides the grisaille technique, he employed the device of the apparently three-dimensional volume of space containing each scene, the mannered drapery of the figures, and their swaying posture. The double page showing the Annunciation and the Betrayal of Christ illustrates some of these characteristics: the architectural device that encloses the Virgin and the archangel Gabriel resembles an Italian loggia, with decorative niches housing cherubs watching the scene. Mary's mannered position and elegant drapery fit the delicate attitude of the court ladies of France, but Pucelle could also have seen examples of this style in Italy. Below, young girls and boys play a game of "froggy in the middle," mocking one of the children, perhaps a deliberate reference to the mocking of Christ. On the facing page, below the Betrayal of Christ, two knights

mounted on goats attack a barrel, possibly an allusion to military training.

**THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE.** The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux expresses a courtly aesthetic that was increasingly international and that would before long give rise to the well-known and aptly-named "International Style" of aristocratic art by the end of the fourteenth century. Following the blood lines and the marriage ties that linked aristocratic courts, the International Gothic style could be found by the later fourteenth century in France, Italy, England, Germany, Bohemia (the western part of the modern Czech Republic), and Aragon. Instrumental in the establishment of interregional connections were the artistic commissions of the papal court in its new surroundings in southern France. By the early fourteenth century, political intrigue had combined with a weakened papacy in bringing about the pope's exile from Rome to Avignon in 1305. This exile lasted for much of the fourteenth century, only to be followed by the Great Schism (beginning 1379), in which two and, at one point, even three rival popes each claimed absolute spiritual authority over Christendom. Pope Clement VI



Hunting scene fresco in the Stag Room, by Matteo Giovanetti (1322–1368). Papal Palace, Avignon, France, 1356–1364. THE ART ARCHIVE/ PAPAL PALACE, AVIGNON/DAGLI ORTI.

(r. 1342–1352) saw himself as a worldly sovereign and member of the aristocratic elite, and his grandiose palace in Avignon was meant to express this status. He employed both French and Italian artists under the supervision of the Italian master Matteo Giovanetti to decorate his private apartment with scenes that convey all the pleasures of courtly life. The Stag room (or *camera cervinus*), the antechamber leading to the pope's private bedroom, gets its name from one of the scenes that decorate the walls. Each of the four walls presents a large fresco depicting several scenes of fishing, stag hunting, falconry, fruit gathering, and bathing. Only the two windows of the south wall interrupt the scenes, which are set upon a continuous landscape background (complete with animals, men, and all sorts of naturalistic detail), itself presented upon a lavish red ground. In terms of style, the frescoes combine the elegance of Parisian court painting, the realism of Flemish painting, and the Italian fresco technique in a truly international style.

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## INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES ON ART IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

**ACADEMIC INFLUENCES ON NATURALISM.** Already in the twelfth century, formal education had moved from monastic houses to urban cathedral schools, and by the turn of the thirteenth century, the latter had given rise to the first universities, which quickly became the center of later medieval intellectual life throughout Europe. Although the traditional seven “liberal arts” (grammar, rhetoric, logic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music) remained part of the curriculum, it was the newly translated writings of Aristotle that were most highly valued. Because of the perceived heretical ideas in the more naturalistic of his works, university scholars often dedicated themselves to the integration of this classical inheritance with Christian theology. Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus were two of the most important masters in the project of integrating faith and reason. More important for the visual arts, however, were the teachings of Robert Grosseteste (who wrote a treatise on light) and his admirer, Roger Bacon, who argued for greater attention to what can be seen with the human eye and more intellectual emphasis on empiricism and experimentation. Aristotle had placed the sense of sight at the top of the hierarchy of human senses, but these medieval thinkers formulated new ideas that harmonized with, perhaps justified, and possibly even helped to bring about the greater naturalism of later Gothic art. Artists always reserved a place for copying designs from model-books, but as the Middle Ages progressed, more artistic attention was also devoted to the observable world as inspiration.

**A VISUAL STATEMENT ON LEARNING.** The “Allegory of Learning,” an illustration from an early thirteenth-century encyclopedic work known as the *Garden of Delights* (*Hortus Deliciarum*), provides a clear visual statement of the interrelationship of faith and reason (and the curricular dominance of theology and philosophy) in the Gothic era. The original manuscript of the *Gar-*

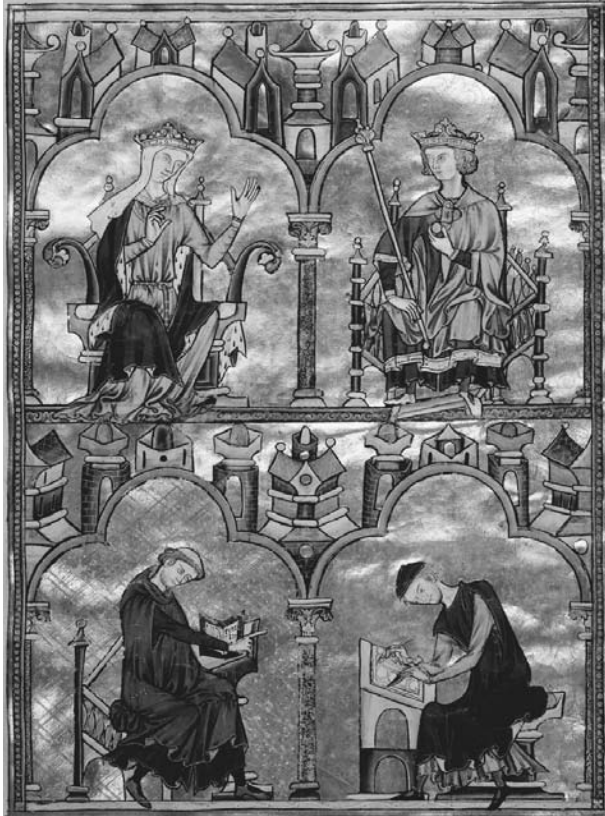
*den of Delight*, preserved in Strasbourg until it was destroyed by fire during the bombardment of the city in 1870 (and after which reproductions of some illustrations were made based on nineteenth-century drawings from the originals), was the ambitious product of Herrad von Landsberg, abbess of the convent of St. Odile in Hohenbourg (near Strasbourg) from 1167 to 1195. The new genre of the Christian encyclopedia or compendium of knowledge was a product of the twelfth century that sought to accommodate biblical, moral, and theological material. The *Garden of Delights* included nearly 1,200 texts by various authors, as well as some 636 illustrations that were so closely tied to their texts it is thought that Herrad must have supervised their planning, if not their execution (the manuscript illumination was most likely completed after her death). Although she undertook this massive project in “praise of Christ and the Church,” Herrad’s privileging of intellectual pursuits is obvious. “The Allegory of Learning” illustration in the text represents the seven liberal arts arrayed in niches around the central personification of Philosophy, who is enthroned and holding a scroll that reads, “All knowledge comes from God.” Socrates and Plato sit at her feet, emphasizing further the prominence of the Greek intellectual heritage within the now-Christian world of later medieval Europe. That such an undisguised tribute to pagan learning was possible at the time is a testament to the efforts of theologians and scholars who made this material “safe” by enveloping it within a thoroughly Christian worldview. It is notable in the history of medieval visual arts that such innovative compendia as the *Garden of Delights* relied so heavily upon their visual component. Certainly the compelling visual images helped to define the new construct according to which reason and revelation would continue to be reconciled.

**ATTENTION TO HUMAN PHILOSOPHY.** Two fourteenth-century paintings from Italy demonstrate a similar concern for the intellectual preoccupations of medieval scholastic philosophers, and they present them in a format that offered much greater public access than Herrad’s manuscript, which was produced solely for the nuns in her convent. The first, an altarpiece from Santa Caterina in Pisa, created by artists working in the circle of Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi (c. 1340–1345), depicts the glorification of St. Thomas Aquinas (See Philosophy, Challenging the Averroists, for a portrait of this type.) Aquinas had recently been canonized, and such images were meant in part to combat the spread of heretical ideas by reminding Christians that this saint’s approach to synthesizing philosophy and theology had become part of church doctrine. Accordingly, the painting shows the saint receiving his inspiration directly from

God as he reads from the books presented to him by none other than Aristotle and Plato. This knowledge is transmitted to lay and religious figures alike in the form of golden rays, a motif traditionally used to depict the transmission of divine revelation. The figures of the evangelists above, accompanied by Paul and Moses, represent the enduring authority of God’s revelation, newly accommodated (but not subordinated) to the wisdom of human philosophy. At the bottom, the Muslim philosopher Averroës (1126–1198) reclines half-asleep. Another work that visualizes this theme for a Christian public is the fresco painting of the Apotheosis of St. Thomas Aquinas, made by Andrea da Firenze in the vault of a chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence (c. 1360–68). Clearly, the church wished for the saint to be viewed as the model of Christian wisdom, for here he is enthroned with the representation of the seven liberal arts as well as leading figures from the various sacred and secular realms of knowledge. Such attention to human philosophy, here and elsewhere, did not pose a threat to the church’s authority because according to Aquinas, the physical world (as described by the philosophers) is a metaphor for the divine cosmos. Likewise, the work of art was to be seen as only a mirror image of the physical world. By cultivating the virtues of order, clarity, and harmony in their work, artists approach the ideal of beauty that for Aquinas refers ultimately to the perfection of the divine. Hence there was not only a justification for visual representation, but also an argument for greater realism in art, greater fidelity to the physical world.

**ART FROM SKETCHBOOKS.** Direct evidence for such an approach to art-making is available in the preserved notebooks of an architect from early thirteenth-century France named Villard de Honnecourt. His ink sketches on parchment, dating from the 1220s or 1230s, illustrate Aquinas’ Aristotelian belief that “all causes in nature can be given in terms of lines, angles, and figures.” Since basic geometry (one of the liberal arts) was thought to assist artists and practitioners of all kinds in the creation of ideal structures in any medium, it was the essential tool in reconciling the observable physical world with the perfect and transcendent divine cosmos. Honnecourt’s notebook, used as a teaching manual, shows how such lofty ideas, conceived by great thinkers like Aquinas, translated into the relatively mundane and humble practice of art and architecture during the later Middle Ages.

**ART FOR MORAL INSTRUCTION.** In addition to the famous naturalism of Gothic art, university teaching also gave rise to new kinds of texts with commentaries used



Blanche of Castile, King Louis IX, author dictating to scribe.  
*Bible Moralisée*, MS M 240, fol. 8r., 1226–1234. THE PIERPOINT  
 MORGAN LIBRARY, NEW YORK.

at court for the instruction of princes. From the viewpoint of the visual arts, an especially notable group of such texts are the ones developed in Paris and known as “moralized Bibles” (*Bibles moralisées*). A sophisticated program of illustrations was developed for this book; copies of this work were among the most ambitious and beautifully decorated illuminated manuscripts of the thirteenth century. The creation of the illustrations, as well as the writing of the commentary texts, was overseen by clerics and theologians associated with the university in Paris. They were concerned with maintaining influence at court despite the increasing independence of the state from the church. In addition to advising lay rulers on how best to govern, they also wished to combat any heretical ideas associated with pagan learning or with Jewish traditions. One surviving example of a moralized bible was produced in Paris around 1230 under the patronage of Blanche of Castile and her son, the young king Louis IX. Preserved today as a fragment (of what was originally a three-volume work with over 5,000 illustrations) in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, this volume follows the typical format for arranging the illustrations in two columns of four superim-

posed medallions. The first of each vertical pair illustrates a scriptural verse, which is duly transcribed in a separate column just to the left of the medallion. The second of each pair illustrates the commentary text, also located on the left, which was intended to elucidate the contemporary meaning of the scriptural passage. The illustrations were generally configured according to a system of biblical typology: the first medallion of each pair illustrates an Old Testament scene while the second illustrates a New Testament scene. The former was understood to be a “type” (i.e., prototype) for the latter, the relationship between them helping to describe how the truth of the New Testament was “disguised” in the verses of the Old Testament, which has been superseded but which, through typological connections, continues to bear witness to Christian truth. Sometimes a medallion depicted a biblical scene while its companion illustrated a scene from contemporary life in order to show how real-life events unfold according to scriptural truth. In contrast to this innovative arrangement, the frontispiece of the book shows a conventional set of portraits, including Blanche of Castile, King Louis IX, the author, and a scribe.

**ILLUSTRATIONS FOR DIDACTIC TEXTS.** Another, more secular kind of morally didactic art appears in a work by Christine de Pizan, a prolific author who supported herself with her writing after the death of her husband, Estienne Castel, in 1389. Because they were responsible for the rearing of children, medieval women were often recognized as ambassadors of lay education, and it was not all that uncommon for women to be tutors or advisors in the employ of kings and queens, as Christine de Pizan was at the courts of Charles V (r. 1364–1380) and Charles VI (r. 1380–1422) of France. Born in Venice, she embraced French aristocratic culture at the court of Charles V where her father was appointed as court doctor and astrologer. She became an important figure at court, advising and tutoring the princes through her didactic texts, which were often preserved in manuscripts with illustrations and lavish decoration meant to amuse the reader and to augment the text. Sometime after 1405 all of her existing works were collected in one manuscript now in Paris. Often her works focused on moral precepts as do two illustrations from *Epître d’Othéa* (Letter from Othéa), a work that takes the form of a letter to the warrior Hector from the goddess Othéa (See illustration in Literature, Europe’s First Professional Female Writer). One illustration depicts the “Wheel of Fortune,” a device that demonstrates the ephemeral nature of fame and fortune by sending each figure in turn from the top of the wheel down to the bottom (and then back again). Related in its con-

cern for the vanity of worldly happiness, the second illustration depicts two lovers who are criticized for confusing the happiness of their carnal embrace with a more meaningful and transcendent happiness.

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## ART AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF DISTANT LANDS

**SATISFYING THE THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE.** The Crusades to the Holy Land during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had whetted the European appetite for contact with foreign and distant lands and knowledge of strange peoples and customs. Despite the risks of travel, individuals set out on long-distance journeys and brought back tales that circulated throughout Europe and inspired the late medieval imagination. The travels of the young Venetian Marco Polo to the Mongol court of Khublai Khan and of the Englishman John Mandeville to both familiar and exotic regions became known through written accounts as well as through the programs of illustration developed to accompany these texts. During this period there also developed a new genre of world map, offering large circular depictions of the earth that included not only place names and topographical features, but images of unusual peoples and mythical animals believed to live in remote parts of the world. The largest example (destroyed in an air raid on Hanover, Germany, during World War II) was the Ebstorf Map (c. 1239), which was twelve feet in diameter and painted on thirty goatskins. In a typical symbolic representation of cosmology, the world is depicted as a disc in the hand of Christ, with his head at the top and feet below. Still to be seen today is the Hereford Map in Hereford Cathedral in England (65 by 53 inches, dated 1290), which shows an image of the crucifixion in Jerusalem, as well as a griffin fighting with men over emeralds, and numerous other exotic animals such as parrots, crocodiles, and camels. Visual images therefore assisted the growing late medieval thirst for empirical knowledge of the world.

**THE BOOK OF WONDERS.** “Empirical knowledge” is a relative term when applied to the Middle Ages. Most of the works of travel literature and accounts of journeys relied at least in part upon standard formulas, previous works, or even ancient accounts of the “monstrous races” of the earth. A good example is a manuscript of the *Book of Wonders*, produced in early fifteenth-century France. This work included the travel accounts of both Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville. Marco Polo (c. 1254–1324) was a Venetian who set out for China in 1271 with his father and uncle, both merchants. At that time China was ruled as one of four Mongol khanates under Khublai Khan, and the Polo family bore letters for the Mongol leader from Pope Gregory X. The journey took four years and was followed by a seventeen-year sojourn in the service of the great Khan, during which Marco traveled extensively throughout China. He returned to Italy in 1295 and dictated his book, *A Description of the World*, while a prisoner during the war between the rival city-states of Venice and Genoa. *The Travels of John Mandeville* was in fact a compilation of geographical texts from diverse sources (including medieval encyclopedic works), and, although attributed to an Englishman, was probably first written in mid-fourteenth century Flanders. It was divided into two parts: a sort of pilgrim’s guide to the Holy Land and a description of travels in the Far East. Like Marco Polo’s text, it circulated widely in the late Middle Ages and helped spur a popular fascination with outlying territories and exotic peoples (the circulation of such works would only increase with the invention of printing and the voyage of Columbus to the New World).

**ILLUSTRATING THE MONSTROUS RACES.** One famous image from the *Book of Wonders* depicts three inhabitants of “Syberia,” who were described by Marco Polo as “wildmen” and who were illustrated as representative of the marvelous races of the East. In fact, these figures—one a *blemmiæ* with his head on his chest; the second a *sciopode* or shadow foot with only one leg ending in a huge foot that provided shade from the sun; and the third a naked wildman with club and shield—refer back to the descriptions of the monstrous races from antiquity (such as those encountered by Alexander the Great) that were compiled in the early Middle Ages by Isidore of Seville and passed along into later medieval compendia. Extreme climates were often thought to account for the deformities of these grotesque figures. Although opportunities for travel were increasing and readers were eager for factual information, the images in these books tended to reproduce mythical and imaginary legends, so that, ironically, real travelers, even as late as



Three monstrous inhabitants of Syberia, Marco Polo, *Divisement du Monde*, French, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS fr 2810, folio 29v, 1415. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

Christopher Columbus, continued to expect to find such peoples.

**TOPOGRAPHICAL MAPS.** Another perspective on the world, with attendant visual imagery, was provided by late medieval cartographers. Knowledge of classical cartography combined with newer and more accurate technology enabled the creation of topographical maps that bore little resemblance to the earlier maps that typically placed Jerusalem at the center of the world and imagined the earth as the very body of Christ, whose head, hands, and feet could often be seen projecting from the top, bottom, and sides. A splendid example of the newer variety is the famous “Catalan Atlas” of 1375, commissioned by King Pedro IV of Aragon and executed by a Jewish cartographer from Palma de Mallorca named Abraham Cresques (1325–1387). The completed Atlas was given as a gift to King Charles V of France, and was intended to assist in the navigation of the seas. Several different cosmographical, astronomical, and astrological texts were copied onto the parchment in order to provide practical information on how to gauge tides and reckon time at night. Other illustrations, calendars, and

charts document the state of contemporary knowledge on the planets and constellations, the tides, and so on. The actual map itself shows an indebtedness to the literary traditions of Marco Polo, Mandeville, and their precursors. There are also many biblical and mythological references, such as Moses’ crossing of the Red Sea with the Israelites, the Tower of Babel, the magi following the star, Alexander the Great, pygmies battling cranes, etc. Overall, this unique artifact provides a very compelling demonstration of the accumulated learning of the Middle Ages and the effectiveness of visual traditions when deployed for such a purpose. Of course, it also points toward the historic sea voyages of over a century later and their discoveries that would forever alter the European outlook on the world and that belong more properly to the period of the Renaissance.

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## SOCIAL LIFE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

**THE RISE OF URBAN CENTERS.** With the continued growth of the mercantile economy throughout Europe, towns and cities flourished and became the vital centers of late medieval culture and art production. At the forefront of this new urban culture was the middle class, a social group that increasingly came to be associated with the patronage base for much art of the period. They were merchants and financiers, manufacturers and craftsmen, and they could afford to acquire works of art

that accorded with their tastes and growing sense of their social status. With the rise of a professional class of artists organized by trade or specialty into guilds, cities such as Paris, London, Barcelona, Siena, Cologne, and Brussels became booming marketplaces for the production and sale of art. Art from such a context was very often secular in nature and in its new subjects and themes it tended to express the materialism and social experience of the middle class.

**DAILY LIFE IN ART.** These new clients for art encouraged artists to explore new themes in their work. Painters, in particular, increasingly turned to the objects of everyday life, which when rendered in a naturalistic style expressed the taste of their middle-class patrons. Subjects such as landscapes, cityscapes, still lifes, and portraits became more and more prominent in art, whether the work was to have a religious or a purely secular function. In works of a religious nature, complex theological ideas were made more accessible to a middle-class viewer



Virgin and Child before a Firescreen (sometimes called the Salting Madonna), oil on oak panel by Robert Campin (Master of Flémalle), National Gallery, London, England, 1425–1430. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

when expressed in a visual language of everyday naturalism. In the oil painting known as the Salting Madonna, Robert Campin, an artist from the city of Tournai in Flanders, placed the Virgin Mary within a contemporary domestic setting, complete with fireplace, a bench with comfortable pillows (upon which lies an open Book of Hours), and a window with an open shutter allowing a view of the town outside. An attentive mother dressed in contemporary bourgeois clothing, Mary holds her baby gently and prepares to nurse. Except for the occasional visual clue that a contemporary viewer would recognize in this or similar paintings—the fire screen that frames Mary’s head like a halo, in this case (the chalice is part of a modern restoration)—little about such paintings suggests a divine, otherworldly subject. In fact, bourgeois viewers would have easily identified with the familiar scene and its homey details. The modest size of this work and others like it stood in contrast to the more lavish and grandiose productions destined for the church or the aristocracy and suited the taste and the needs of a middle-class urban clientele. As head of the Tournai painters’ guild (as well as holder of several other prominent positions in the city), Campin

was part of the new urban social fabric and thus he well understood the milieu of his patrons.

**CIVIC IDENTITY.** Town life also bred a sense of civic identity, and as urban populations assumed more control over society and politics, the arts provided a visual expression of this new sense of civic pride and power. This is especially evident in the case of the rival city-states in Italy like Florence, Siena, Pisa, and Venice, which commissioned major civic monuments throughout the later Middle Ages. Increasingly specialized and organized into guilds, artists participated in a professional culture that was more highly regulated and standardized than ever before. Regulations stipulating the civic responsibilities of artists were laid out in compilations such as the *Livre des Métiers* (Book of the Trades) written in Paris in 1268.

**COMPETITION FOR ART.** In thriving European cities, cathedral and town hall often competed with one another in luring the best artists and commissioning works that combined in equal parts civic pride and Christian piety. The case of fourteenth-century Siena is exemplary in this regard. The acclaimed painter Duccio di Buoninsegna (active 1278–1318/19) was commissioned in 1308 to create a large altarpiece for the cathedral’s main altar. It was to depict the Virgin Mary in glory according to an established format and type known as *Maestà*. Duccio’s completion of the project in 1311 occasioned citywide festivities. The huge altarpiece, made up of a large central panel and 26 smaller side panels, was carried in procession from Duccio’s workshop to the cathedral accompanied by the music of tambourines, trumpets, and castanets. In acknowledgment of Duccio’s great renown and his importance to the city, his signature was prominently displayed on the face of the altarpiece. In this case the artist and the work of art are both emblems of civic pride and identity. But this status was not conferred only upon one artist or one work: six years later the acclaimed painter Simone Martini was commissioned to paint the same subject for Siena’s city hall.

**A FRESCO OF GOOD GOVERNMENT.** In 1338, the elected city council of Siena (the nine good and lawful merchants of the city, known simply as The Nine) requested the services of Ambrogio Lorenzetti to create an elaborate program of frescoes to decorate their meeting chamber (the Sala della Pace) in the Palazzo Pubblico or town hall. A Siena native, Ambrogio (with his brother Pietro) was perhaps the chief rival to the great Simone Martini. The commission was granted in the hope that the work—in its quality as well as its subject—would reflect well upon the governing administration. The subject consisted of three scenes depicting the effects of good



La Maestà or Virgin and Child in Majesty, fresco by Duccio di Buoninsegna (1278–1318), Siena, Italy, 1308–1311. THE ART ARCHIVE/ MUSEO DELL'OPERA DEL DUOMO, SIENA/DAGLI ORTI.

and bad government and an allegory of good government. Ambrogio chose the wall receiving the most light (East) to paint the Effects of Good Government, while leaving the Effects of Bad Government on the darker side. (For Ambrogio's Effects of Good Government, see the paragraph "Round Dance" in the Dance chapter.) In the former, Ambrogio depicted the interrelated urban and rural economies by means of realistic topographical representations of a town and its surrounding countryside, with all the details of an organized landscape and the industrious work of its inhabitants. The view of the town offers a panorama of late medieval occupations that included, among others, carpenters, shopkeepers, shoemakers, and shepherds. A school recalls the importance of education for good government, and the tavern perhaps alludes to the necessity of some leisure in a balanced society. To complete this image of harmony, a group of elegant ladies are dancing and playing tambourines in the foreground. Painted with utmost realism, this picture of civic life in Siena impressed upon any visitors to the Palazzo Pubblico the soundness of the local government and the pride of the citizens.

#### INDIVIDUALISM AMONG ARTISTS AND PATRONS.

Both patrons and artists came to imprint their own personal identities on works of art. Although patrons now included members of the rising civic elite, they shared with the most exalted rulers a desire to express their pretensions and their ideology in commissioned works. Artists, encouraged by demanding clients to achieve ever-

greater levels of technical mastery, developed innovative approaches and personal styles that increased their status and their appeal among patrons. Aristocratic patrons especially sought out some of the most well-known and accomplished painters, illuminators, sculptors, and goldsmiths of their day, from the late twelfth-century's Nicholas of Verdun to later masters such as William de Brailes, Jean Pucelle, Jean de Liège, Simone Martini, Ferrer Bassa, the Limbourg brothers, and Giovanni Pisano. Because society recognized the importance of the arts for the promotion of particular values, the status and role of the artist in society advanced from that of a simple artisan to the more distinguished rank of ambassador or city councilor. With this upwardly mobile status came the prospect of steady commissions as well as special tax exemptions and other advantages. Many of the best artists were drawn to important urban centers for these reasons, while the competition among artists encouraged innovation and technical virtuosity.

**COMMISSIONS IN GOLD AND ENAMEL.** Perhaps the practice of the goldsmith best represents the patrons' demands for singularity and perfection in their commissioned works. Religious commissions in gold and silver were intended to express the brilliance of the celestial city and they often occupied a proud spot within their respective church treasuries. The durability of the material was seen as fitting for a representation of an eternal concept, and the economic and symbolic value of the precious metals meant that such commissions were



Panels depicting biblical scenes. Altarpiece, Mosan, *champlevé* enamel, niello, and gold by Nicholas of Verdun. Stiftsmuseum, Abbey of Klosterneuburg near Vienna, Austria, 1181. ALI MEYER/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

generally entrusted to the expert hands of the most talented craftsmen. An important center for this kind of work was the Meuse Valley, in northwest Germany. The goldsmiths, aware of their own status and importance, typically signed their work, and some even included a self-portrait within a completed art object. Nicholas of Verdun's Klosterneuburg altarpiece, executed around 1181, is a good example. The work was originally conceived as a pulpit for the abbey of Klosterneuburg near Vienna, Austria, and it was later reconstructed as an altarpiece after it was damaged in a fire in 1330. In this most excellent example of the goldsmith's craft, Nicholas employed both the *niello* and *champlevé* enamel techniques on bronze-gilt panels. The translucent blue

enamel technique vividly contrasts with the gilt-bronze, and the virtuoso chiseling of the metal creates a fine design delineating sinuous figures and details of drapery folds, hair, beards, and muscle definition. A certain Provost Wernher, whose name is recorded with that of the artist, was presumably responsible for orchestrating the iconographic program that contains typological comparisons between the Life of Christ and the Old Testament scenes. These scenes, reconstructed into three horizontal rows are organized into the following categories: *ante legem* (before the Law of Moses: scenes from Genesis and Exodus), *sub lege* (under the Law of Moses: scenes from subsequent sections of the Old Testament), and *sub gracia* (under Grace: the new dispensa-

## METALWORK and Enamel

Always important in medieval Europe (especially as part of the luxury trade), the so-called decorative arts of metalwork and enamel reached a new peak of technical accomplishment and popularity during the Romanesque and Gothic periods. Metal smiths applied their skill to the creation and embellishment of liturgical (church) objects, secular objects such as vessels for use at royal and noble courts, and decorative covers for deluxe illuminated manuscripts. They used both precious and non-precious (base) metals, and often ornamented their objects with gems (precious and semi-precious stones) and enamels. Vessels, candlestick holders, and other objects used for church services were cast in bronze, brass, or copper, and their production seems to have increased beginning in the twelfth century. The surfaces of these cast objects were often tooled for decorative effect, gilded, or enameled. Sometimes they were ornamented using *niello*, a metalwork process (from the Italian *niellare*, meaning to fill in) whereby a design was engraved in the metal surface and then filled with a black substance made from sulfur combined into an alloy with gold, silver, copper, or lead, and then fused with heat so that the image is in contrast to the background.

Gold and silver were more highly valued metals. They were considered precious because of their sheer material splendor and their rarity, but also because of their malleability. Most often these metals were not cast but were made into reliefs using a process known as embossing or

*repoussé* (literally “pushed away”) in which the sheet is hammered from behind to create a raised design. Further texture and detail is created by *chasing*, or indenting the surface with a blunt instrument. Reliquary containers were often made using these techniques.

Enamel is a substance formed from colored glass powder that is melted and fused, usually to a metal surface. It was developed into a major art form in medieval Europe and was used principally for liturgical objects, such as reliquary containers, altarpieces, crowns, chalices and other vessels, and altar crosses. The enamel itself is not expensive, though the objects adorned with this colorful, durable, jewel-like medium were highly valued. In *cloisonné* enamel, a technique more associated with the Byzantine Empire where it was likely invented (and known in the West thanks to the trade in luxury goods), a network of metal bands or strips of gold (*cloison* in French means “partition”) is soldered together on a thin, usually gold surface to form the structure of the design. The enamel is then set within these compartments, which are visually separated by the exposed top edge of the dividing bands. The very delicate effect suited the Byzantine aesthetic. *Champlevé* enamel was practiced long before it was reinvigorated in twelfth-century Western Europe. It is a process whereby the substance is poured into grooves that are previously engraved into the metal surface, so that the hardened enamel is flush with the surface of the metal (*champlevé* is French for “raised field”). Production was concentrated in two main areas: the Mosan region in the Meuse River Valley, today’s Belgium, and the southwest of France (most notably in the city of Limoges).

tion of Christ, with scenes from the Annunciation to the Pentecost).

**PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS IN THE COURT.** As artists’ sense of self-worth and social importance increased, patrons and artists developed new kinds of relationships. Artists working in the service of kings and dukes were often recognized with courtly titles, such as Valet de Chambre, which guaranteed them lifelong security. A well-known example is that of the brothers Limbourg and the duke of Berry. The story of Pol, Herman, and Jean Limbourg, manuscript illuminators, begins in Nijmegen in the northern Netherlands where they were born to a family of artisans. While traveling to Brussels where they planned to join their uncle the painter Jean Malouel, who worked for the Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy, they fell victim to the conflict between the regions of Brabant and Guelders, and were imprisoned. Thanks to the intervention of their uncle, the generos-

ity of the duke of Burgundy (who paid their ransom), and the duke’s family ties to Jean, duke of Berry, the three brothers ended their journey at the court of Jean, duke of Berry, in Poitiers (south-central France). There, they entered into a privileged relationship with the duke that ended only with his death in 1416. An exceptional art amateur, a great collector of gems and precious objects, and a renowned bibliophile, Jean, duke of Berry, became for the three brothers an ideal patron and benefactor. Expert in the art of illuminations, the Limbourg brothers offered to the duke, in exchange for his protection and support, some of the most excellent manuscript decorations of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Their best-known production is the very famous *Très Riches Heures* (Very Rich Hours) executed between 1390 and 1416.

**THE TRÈS RICHES HEURES.** The decorated book of hours was a quintessentially late medieval product



Resurrection of the Dead, Altarpiece, Mosan, champlevé enamel, niello, and gold by Nicholas of Verdun. Stiftsmuseum, Abbey of Klosterneuburg near Vienna, Austria, 1181. THE ART ARCHIVE/KLOSTERNEUBURG MONASTERY, AUSTRIA/DAGLI ORTI.

with which some of the most familiar artistic personalities and the most pretentious and demanding patrons found common cause. A compendium of devotional texts that developed from the psalter and the monastic breviary but that was intended for private use among the laity, the book of hours became a showcase for both illuminators and patrons to express their identities and to champion the individualism and the artistry of the late Middle Ages. In the *Très Riches Heures*, the Limbourgs present a wonderfully detailed panorama of the duke's properties and of courtly life in later medieval France. In the calendar pages, scenes depicting the "labors of the months" feature aristocrat pleasures or peasant activities set against the background of the duke's castles. In the January page, for instance, the duke receives his guests at a lavish banquet. Jean can be identified sitting at the center of the group with a "halo" that is in fact a fire screen. The master of the ceremony welcomes his guests ("approche, approche") who warm their hands near the fire, and servants bring more food and wine to the table. The detailed depiction of the trappings of courtly life helps to showcase the wealth and extravagance of the duke: for example, the bells hanging from the lavish costumes of the courtiers, gold thread embroideries, the

## *a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### TWO DECORATED BIBLES

**INTRODUCTION:** Decorated books were among the treasured works of art that often were passed down from one generation to another and thus appear in wills and inventories. The first of the two illuminated Bibles described below originally belonged to the French king Charles V, was inherited by Charles VI, and then was loaned to his uncle, Jean, duke of Berry, one of the great collectors of the Middle Ages (he had, for example, 1,500 hunting dogs). Jean never returned the book to its owner, and, judging from the mention of the swan—one of Jean's personal insignia—on the metalwork of the cover, perhaps had it rebound to his own taste. Jean's interest in clothing and fashion is reflected in the mention of the three different kinds of fabric used to make the covers of the second Bible. The importance of the decoration on these two books is illustrated by the fact that the secretary entering the items into an inventory of Jean's possessions in 1413 says almost nothing about the contents of the books, but offers careful descriptions of the bejeweled covers.

Item, a very beautiful Bible in French, written in Gothic book script, richly illuminated at the beginning, decorated with four gold clasps, two with two light-colored rubies and the other two with sapphires, each with two pearls, enameled with the arms [of the king] of France; the bars on the other side each having a pearl at the ends and on top tiny gold fleurs-de-lys nailed to them, the edge being rimmed with two heads of serpents adorned with small swans.

Also another Bible in two small volumes, written in French in Gothic book script, well illuminated with narrative and decorative designs; at the beginning of the second leaf of the first volume it contains the sermon and on the second leaf of the second volume the inscription: "Whatever is born (*nais*) will be destroyed." Each volume is covered with a flowered silk cloth having four gold clasps, each enameled with the royal arms and with a portrait. There is also a gold border enameled with said arms. The whole is covered with a jacket of purple damask, lined with black *tiercelin* [a textile woven of three kinds of thread]. The Bible was given to my lord in August 1407 by the now deceased commander (Vidame) of the province of Laon, who used to be great master of the palace of the king. My lord had the jacket made.

**SOURCE:** Jean, Duke of Berry, *Inventaires de Jean Duc de Berry (1401–1416)*. Ed. Jules M. J. Guiffrey (Paris: E. Leroux, 1894–1896). Translation by John Block Friedman.

ducal coats of arms and emblems woven into the tapestries that hang on the walls, the golden vessels, and the generous display of food upon the table. The Limbourgs' knowledge of the duke's collection is demonstrated by their faithful rendering of particular objects, such as the golden vessel in the shape of a boat or the tapestries with battle scenes. Their views of several of the duke's castles suggest that they at times accompanied their patron on his journeys to these residences.

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### SPIRITUAL LIFE AND DEVOTION

**THE CHURCH IN CRISIS AND THE RISE OF DEVOTIONAL ART.** Throughout the medieval period, the church continued to be a powerful force in the dissemination of the aristocratic tastes and styles of the Gothic movement. At the same time, however, the later medieval papacy experienced a number of crises that served to diminish both its political authority and its spiritual credibility among the faithful. German emperors such as Frederick II (1212–1250) enjoyed an expanded sphere of influence and challenged the authority of the popes, and widespread perceptions of corruption in the church—particularly on such issues as the sale of indulgences, which promised sinners a reduced period of time in purgatory—caused ordinary people to turn away from the authority of hierarchical religion. While a good deal of art continued to celebrate the “Church Triumphant” during the Gothic era, a new artistic trend based on the imagery associated with private devotional practices resulted from the spiritual needs of individual Christians. Moreover, the interest in this devotional imagery in later medieval Europe was reinforced by a growing middle-class demand for privately owned images of all kinds. At the center of this world was the *Devotio Moderna*, an approach to personal devotion that was newly formulated by the Flemish Dominican mystic Geert Groote (1340–1384) and was soon widespread (especially in northern Europe). In appealing to popu-



Nobles feasting. Calendar page for the month of January. CHANTILLY, MUSÉE CONDÉ MS 65, FOL. 2R IN JEAN LONGNON AND RAYMOND CAZELLES EDS. *THE TRÈS RICHES HEURES OF JEAN, DUKE OF BERRY* (NY: BRAZILLER, 1969): PL. 2. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

lar belief and practice, the *Devotio Moderna* relied a great deal upon the cult of saints and especially of the Virgin Mary, a practice that was centuries old, but now more popular than ever. Marian devotion prompted Christians to visit shrines of “Our Lady” all over Europe, and the many images of Mary created during this time expressed the popularity of the accessible and ever-compassionate Virgin.

**PRINTED IMAGES OF SAINTS.** The various saints were popular as subjects in later medieval art because as role models, personal protectors, and intercessors they were so well-positioned to attend to the needs of individual believers. Cities and guilds all had their own patron saints, and routine events and solemn occasions both required special devotion. Individuals also turned to particular saints at specific times and for specific reasons: St. Margaret watched over pregnancy, St. Apollonia could be helpful in soothing a toothache, and St.



A modern tracing of a woodcut of St. Christopher carrying Jesus across the river. MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.

Sebastian received particular devotion during outbreaks of plague. A woodblock print image of St. Christopher carrying Jesus across the river, produced in Germany anonymously in 1423 illustrates the contemporary piety for individual saints and the new medium of woodblock printing, through which their images were so easily disseminated. A necessary companion to the medieval traveler, St. Christopher's image facilitated devotion to the saint who provided protection on the difficult and often unsafe journeys of tradesmen, artisans, noblemen, clerics, students, soldiers, and pilgrims. Easily reproduced by mechanical means (though colored by hand) and reasonably priced, prints were an ideal form of portable devotional image that gained tremendous popularity in the later Middle Ages. Prints were pasted in books, jewel boxes, and on walls. They were kissed and handled, prayed to, and wept upon. Such popular devotional practices have been learned from written sources, but the images themselves, with the material evidence of their use, are silent witnesses to a vibrant and flourishing visual tradition.

**THE CANTIGAS OF SANTA MARIA.** The art of devotion also made an impact in more elite contexts. Created for Alphonso X (the Wise), king of Castile, around 1280 by an anonymous court illuminator, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* demonstrates both the importance of Marian devotion in later medieval culture and the obsession with tangible signs of divine intervention in everyday life. The royal manuscript is a collection of some hundred songs in praise of the Virgin Mary, with narrative illustrations describing many of her miracles. In one illustration that tells the story of how the Virgin miraculously saved a man from falling, the page is split up into six different scenes. A line of text below each scene provides the reader with an abbreviated version of the story. The first scene shows an artist perched on scaffolding beneath the vaults of a church interior as he paints images of both the Virgin and the Devil. The Devil, apparently not flattered by his portrait, confronts the painter and causes the scaffolding to fall in the next scene. Thanks to the intervention of the Virgin, the man remains suspended in mid-air in the following scenes so that he can finish his work, which is subsequently admired by the community in the final scene. The moral here, as in each *Cantiga*, is that the sincerity of one's devotion to the Virgin will protect him or her from harm.

**THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST AND THE DIPTYCH.** Another important facet of late medieval devotional culture was the focus on the humanity (as opposed to the divinity) of Christ. Mystic writers of the fourteenth century, such as the German Meister Eckhart (a Dominican) and his disciple Henry Suso, focused their attention on Christ's suffering, spurring the production of new visual images, such as the Pietà (Mary cradling the limp, dead Christ) and the Man of Sorrows (the dead Christ displaying his bloody wounds to the viewer). These images were meant to convey the grief and pathos that would prompt a viewer's empathy, and were thus aids to devotion. One painted diptych (a pair of paintings on two hinged panels) produced around 1350 depicts Christ as Man of Sorrows on one side and the Madonna and Child on the other. Viewers are meant to be struck by the contrasting (though interrelated) images of maternal compassion and pitiful suffering. The figures are depicted on a gold-tooled ground that recalls the aesthetic of Byzantine icon painting. The tilt of the Virgin's face, saddened with the foreknowledge of her son's sacrifice, echoes that of Christ, and her pensive gaze foretells her future grief. Meanwhile the infant seems to provide reassurance to his mother with a gentle caress on her cheek. Such painted images were often produced in small format and used as private devotional altarpieces. Opened up at times of prayers and for special celebrations, dip-





Pietà, painted limestone, Stiftsmuseum, Seeon Monastery, Seeon-Seebruck, upper Bavaria, Germany, 1400. BAYERISCHES NATIONAL MUSEUM, MUNCHEN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

tychs could easily be personalized with their owners' mottos, monograms, or coats of arms, usually on the back of the panels.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF THE MENDICANT ORDERS.

Individual piety and affective devotional practices were advanced early on by the friars of the new mendicant orders, the Franciscans (founded 1210) and Dominicans (founded 1216). Poverty, asceticism, and preaching were the ideals from the Gospels that the mendicants espoused, providing all Christians access to personal and profound spiritual experience. Instead of the almighty and powerful judge familiar from the early Middle Ages,

God was increasingly imagined in human terms as the suffering and merciful Christ. In the visual arts Christ was more consistently presented in these terms, his humanity and earthly life eclipsing images of apocalyptic Majesty or stern judgment. During times of plague or pestilence mendicant preachers reassured the populace with verbal imagery that was closely connected to the visual imagery of devotion. Conversely, new visual images drew upon the preaching of the mendicants. Works of visual art from the Rhineland, intended to trigger a viewer's empathy for the suffering Christ, show a particularly striking connection to the sentiments often conveyed orally by preachers. Known by the term *Vesperbilden*,

such images and objects aroused a sense of grief comparable to that experienced by the Virgin (and commemorated during the Vespers celebration on Good Friday). The Seon Pietà, sculpted around 1400, effectively conveys a sense of emotional distress through the representation of suffering. The grief-stricken Virgin holds the oversized body of her dead son on her lap. The contorted body of Christ prominently displays bleeding wounds. Similarly moving is the Pestkreuz Crucifix (plague crucifix) of around 1304 that displays an emaciated Christ on the cross. By visualizing Christ's suffocation, dehydration, and dislocation, the work encourages viewers to contemplate and meditate upon this ultimate sacrifice, endured for the sake of their own salvation.

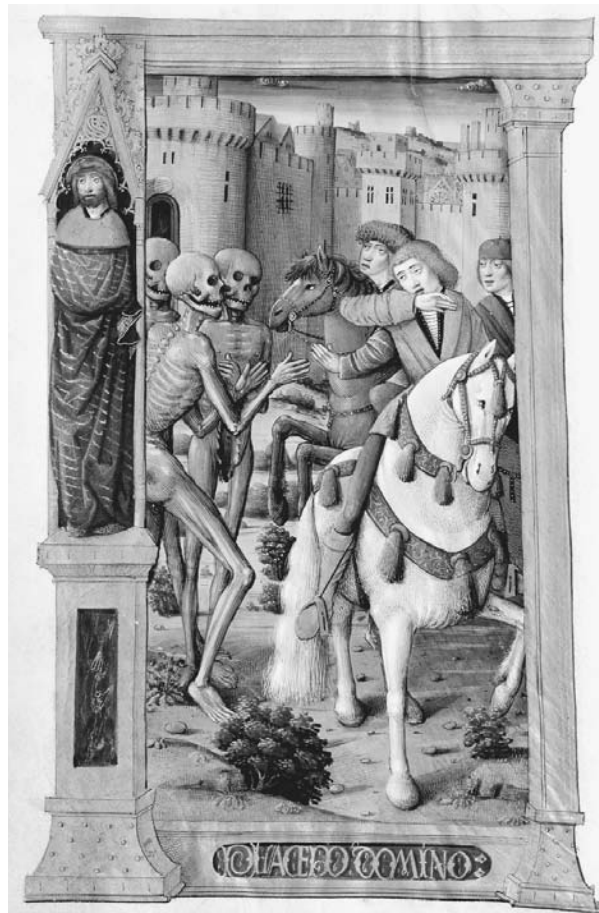
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SEE ALSO *Religion: The Laity and Popular Beliefs*

## IMAGES OF DEATH

**CONSCIOUSNESS OF MORTALITY.** Whether or not one's pious devotions assured him or her of salvation, the specter of death continued to provoke anxiety among



Three Living and Three Dead. Office for the Dead, Book of Hours, Musée Condé, Chantilly, France MS 72, folio 50v, 1530. RÉUNION DES MUSÉES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE, NY.

even the most faithful. In the later Middle Ages, the visual arts record this anxiety with a particular vividness. Climaxing around the time that the worst epidemic of the bubonic plague (referred to as the Black Death) wiped out a third of the European population (1347–1350), visual images of death and mortal decay appear throughout Europe. Scenes of the Dance of Death, the Three Living and Three Dead, the Apocalypse, and the Last Judgment reminded viewers of their inexorable fate. Hoping to guarantee salvation or lessen their time in purgatory, the poor often undertook arduous pilgrimages to shrines of their favorite saints, while the rich commissioned lavish tombs, public monuments, and private works of art to express their piety and devotion.

**THE OFFICE OF THE DEAD.** Such apprehension about death is illustrated in the scene of the Last Judgment from the Office of the Dead in the *Grandes Heures de Rohan*. The manuscript, named after its last owner, was probably commissioned by Yolande of Aragon (widow



Effigy of Duke Philip the Bold with angels. Tomb begun in 1386 by Jean de Marville, continued by Claus Sluter, and finished in 1411 by Claus de Werve. Charterhouse of Champmol, France. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE DES BEAUX ARTS, DIJON/DAGLI ORTI.

of Louis II, duke of Anjou) and executed by an anonymous French master illuminator between 1420 and 1427. In books of hours the office of the dead (a series of prayers) functioned as a sort of gateway into paradise for those who read it regularly. Since all believing Christians were concerned with the fate of their souls after death and wished desperately to find salvation, with little or no time spent in purgatory (in Catholic thinking, the place where souls expiate their sins before going to heaven), the prayers read as part of the office of the dead were a special focus of attention. Another illustration from the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* depicts the ultimate combat between the archangel Michael and the devil for the soul of a deceased man, whose naked body reclines on a burial ground scattered with bones and skulls. He engages a conversation in Latin with the almighty God above: “Into thy hand I commit my spirit, thou hast redeemed me, O Lord of Truth” (Psalm 31:5). God’s

response in French comes as a modified version of his response to the repentant thief who died with Jesus at the Crucifixion (Luke 23:41–43): “For your sins you shall do penance. On Judgment Day you shall be with me.” The grayish body of the man features realistic details such as stiff limbs, crooked feet, and a limp neck that all imply the artist’s direct observation of death or dying. The aristocratic beholder of this image took the opportunity to meditate upon her own mortality and to consider the likelihood of salvation.

**THE THREE LIVING AND THE THREE DEAD.** Humor—usually mixed with a dose of moralizing—focused on human vanity and foolishness and helped the medieval Christian community to deal with the certainty of death. A popular visual “lesson” was the theme of the “Three Living and the Three Dead.” Based on a subject from thirteenth-century troubadour poetry, the image

flourished in several different versions in later medieval Europe and was reproduced in various media, including manuscript paintings, fresco painting, and sculpture in stone, in addition to printed images. The image normally depicts three noblemen, often hunting on horseback, who suddenly come across three dead men near a cemetery. The three grotesque specters of death harangue them with testimonies of their own past deeds, as a warning to the noblemen about the folly of pride and the inevitability of death. The lesson warns the three noblemen as well as the beholder of the image that “what you are now we once were, and what we are you will become.” This is an admonition to abandon fleeting worldly pleasures for eternal life in the love of God.

**FUNERARY ART.** In the funerary art of later medieval Europe, the obsession with confronting death and publicly visualizing one’s piety and hope for salvation took many forms. Many great cycles of frescoes and sculptures were commissioned to express devotion to saints and to proclaim the virtue of the deceased. Tombs themselves were often framed by elaborately carved niches in the walls of a chapel or by ornately embellished canopies (as was the case with the tomb of King Edward II of England). Very often tombs containing the mortal remains were topped with carved representations of the deceased in idealized, peaceful repose. The most elaborate of these tomb chests had multiple levels—called *transi tombs*—with portrait effigies accompanied by solemn funeral processions and grieving figures. Sometimes sculpted effigies took the form of decaying corpses in order to emphasize the divergent paths of the soul and the body after death. A notable example is the tomb of the Burgundian duke Philip the Bold, originally situated in the Chartreuse (or monastic charterhouse) of Champmol. Executed by the renowned artist Claus Sluter and two other sculptors, the tomb (finished by 1414, ten years after the death of the duke) features a portrait effigy reclining above the sarcophagus with some forty mourning Carthusian monks within a curtain of niches below, in a carved evocation of the actual procession that took place between Brussels, near the duke’s place of death, and Dijon, where he was laid to rest. This six-week procession over more than 250 arduous miles was undertaken on foot, though the carved representation expresses more playfulness than exhaustion. Each monk, draped in a heavy woolen garment, expresses a unique attitude: one is absent minded, another is bored, one is pinching his nose in mock disgust, and yet another grieves in silence. The striking naturalism with which Sluter is associated (and that was such a hallmark of the later Middle Ages) is employed here both to capture a real-life event and to guarantee the eternal rest of one mortal soul.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE in Visual Arts

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### ROBERT CAMPIN

c. 1376–1444

*Painter*

**AN URBAN PAINTER.** Robert Campin (d. 1444) exemplifies the late medieval urban artist, with his middle-class connections and civic activism. A highly respected resident of Tournai, in Flanders, Campin held the positions of dean of the Guild of St. Luke (the guild of painters), member of the *stewards* (a committee entrusted with the accounts and finances of the city), warden of his parish, bursar of his church, and captain of the city militia. He was probably already a recognized painter in 1406 when his name first appears in the city archives. He received commissions from the local bourgeoisie, city officials, and clergy members, and he also lent his talent to the city by creating banners, coats of arms, and costumes for civic events. Formerly referred to by modern scholars as the Master of Flémalle (from a set of paintings wrongly ascribed to the Abbey of Flémalle on the Lower Rhine), Campin is well known for the realism of his work and especially for his inclusion of domestic details, such as

those in his *Salting Madonna* of about 1430. His best known work, a triptych (three-panelled altarpiece) called the *Merode Altarpiece* (dated about 1425, now in the Cloisters Museum in New York), presents significant aspects of Flemish art. Filled with religious symbolism, this work comprises a wealth of domestic details painstakingly depicted with special care for realistic textures, surfaces, and portraits, generous draperies, and an intuitive use of perspective. In placing his religious subjects in domestic interiors, Campin brought a sense of actuality and reality to the divine that spoke more directly to his lay audience. This innovative way of treating religious scenes also echoes the contemporary piety that required a more “down to earth” and tangible experience of the divine. Campin collaborated with other important artists such as Jacques Daret and Rogier van der Weyden, whose careers flourished respectively in France and Flanders during the fifteenth century. His work remained influential well into the sixteenth century when a number of his compositions were still being copied or imitated.

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## JEAN, DUKE OF BERRY

1340–1416

*Duke*

*Patron of the arts*

**AN ARISTOCRATIC PATRON OF THE ARTS.** Jean, duke of Berry, was a Capetian prince and brother to the French king Charles V, Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy, and Duke Louis I of Anjou. He was born in 1340 in Vincennes and died in Paris in 1416 during a plague epidemic. Probably one of the greatest art patrons of his time, Jean had an eclectic taste and collected a variety of artifacts of immeasurable value, both ancient and modern, including antique coins and cameos, jewels, gold and silver vessels, tapestries, 1,500 dogs, and even ostriches and camels. Most noteworthy, however, was his collection of illuminated manuscripts. Three extant inventories provide a glimpse of the range and scope of his library of 300 books, of which only about 100 have survived, scattered today among various libraries through-

out the world. His outstanding collection of books, which he tended to maintain at his castle at Mehun, comprised many kinds of texts, such as Trojan histories, chronicles, astronomical treatises, *mappaemundi* (representational maps), and religious books. He attracted artists of renown to his court, and his enlightened patronage encouraged their creativity and originality, as well as the mixing of stylistic influences from France, Flanders, and Italy. Jacquemart de Hesdin, Jean Le Noir, André Beauneveu, and the Limbourg brothers were just a few of the most famous artists who produced works for the duke's collection and for his many castles (seventeen in all) at Poitiers, Dourdan, Mehun, Lusignan, Bicêtre (Paris), and other places. In some of his books can be found the duke's coat of arms, emblem, and the motto “The time will come.” His portrait appears in several manuscripts: in a wishful entry into heaven in the *Grandes Heures* (Great Hours); introduced to the Virgin by his patron saints Andrew and John the Baptist in the *Belles Heures* (Beautiful Hours); or welcoming his guests at his first-of-the-year banquet in the *Très Riches Heures* (Very Lavish Hours). In his *Grandes Heures*, a bear and a swan occupy the margins of a page that features the arms of France. This is a play on the words *ours* (bear) and *cygne* (swan) that together stand for *Oursine*, the name of a mysterious woman the duke once loved. Records show that Jean, duke of Berry, was a generous patron with his artists, bestowing upon them many gifts (such as coins, rings, and diamonds, on special occasions) in addition to substantial financial compensation, which was often sufficient to enable the purchase of a house. Artists traveled with the duke from one to the other of his many residences. All in all, the duke stands as an example of the type of enlightened collector and patron of the arts who helped bring about the creation of many great works in a period generally known for its artistic excellence.

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Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke* (London: Phaidon, 1969).

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## THE LIMBOURG BROTHERS

1380s–1416

*Manuscript illuminators*

**ILLUMINATORS AT THE DUKE'S COURT.** The Limbourg Brothers (Pol, Herman, and Jean) were born into

a family of artisans in Nijmegen, in the northern Netherlands, and their names were mentioned as apprentices in the goldsmith shop of Alebret de Bolure in Paris as early as 1399. Caught between the rival regions of Brabant and Guelders, they were imprisoned and held for ransom while on their journey home from Paris. Only after the intervention of their uncle, Jean Malouel, a highly regarded painter at the court of Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy, and a generous ransom payment from the duke himself, were they finally freed. Afterwards, they resided at the court of Burgundy long enough to produce an illuminated manuscript for the duke (a *Bible Moralisée*, or moralized bible), and then they entered into the service of the Philip's brother, Jean, the duke of Berry, in 1404. Their art flourished under the patronage of Jean, whose collections of rare objects, antique coins, precious stones, and jewelry provided primary source materials for the artists' study. Their brief training as goldsmiths probably enabled them to render the minute details of jewelry and other objects found in their paintings. The duke held his artists in very high esteem, granting Pol one of the largest houses in the city of Bourges. As an example of the affection and good humor that characterized their relationship with their patron, the Limbourg brothers presented the duke with an unusual New Year's gift. They created a "fake" manuscript from a piece of wood that they painted with a *trompe-l'oeil* design (illusionistic, means "trick of the eye") simulating a vellum cover with gilt silver clasps featuring the arms of the duke. Their most famous work is the *Très Riches Heures* (or Very Lavish Hours), an ornate book of hours made for the duke. Mixing the spheres of religious devotion and secular life, the miniatures offer a vision of the duke's world—his chateaux, tapestries, coins, and other belongings—in alternating scenes of aristocratic pleasure and peasant toil on the duke's lands. Although they demonstrated their knowledge of Italian paintings in some of their compositions, they remained true northerners in their depiction of realistic details and life-like textures. In terms of their elegant representations of aristocratic figures, they were working in true Parisian fashion. All three brothers and their patron died in the same year (1416), probably from an outbreak of plague, leaving the Most Lavish Hours to be completed (in 1485) by another famous painter, Jean Colombe.

#### SOURCES

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Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries* (New York: Braziller, 1974).

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## LOUIS IX

1214–1270

*King of France*

*Patron of the arts*

**PATRON OF THE GOTHIC STYLE.** Born in 1214, Louis IX was king of France from 1226 until his death in 1270. During his minority he ruled under the regency of his mother Blanche of Castile (1226–1242) who even afterwards remained an influential counselor to the king in matters of politics, culture, and religion. Guided as a young man by his mother's interest in education, he later confirmed the foundation of the University of Paris (the Sorbonne, 1257), where significant theologians and intellectuals such as Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Roger Bacon came to teach and contribute to Paris's fertile intellectual climate. Louis also followed his mother in becoming a famous bibliophile, commissioning numerous illuminated manuscripts and thereby contributing to the development of a Parisian court style in painting. Among the many such works of which Louis oversaw the production and likely also the iconographic programs are a well-known psalter and a *Bible Moralisée*. Works such as these and the many architectural projects undertaken under Louis' patronage brought about a consolidation of the Gothic style. A devout Christian, Louis understood his royal mission to include evangelizing, the giving of charity, and the administration of justice, and he strove to make France a model Christian state. He participated in the seventh and eighth Crusades (during the second of which he contracted the plague), founded public hospitals, and presided over a court of justice, which later evolved into the Paris Parlement. Hence, during his reign, considered the Golden Age of French monarchy, Paris became a flourishing intellectual, administrative, and artistic capital, full of Gothic masterworks such as the flamboyant Sainte-Chapelle, built in the 1240s to house the relics of the Passion that Louis acquired from the East. His wisdom, magnanimity, and mediating prowess were recognized throughout Europe, and he was often solicited to intervene in conflicts outside of France. He was canonized by Pope Boniface VIII in 1297, and his cult was especially honored thereafter at the court of France (the Office of St. Louis appears in some notable illuminated books of hours created for members of the royal court). Louis was a patron of the arts *par excellence*, and subsequent rulers sought to emulate him in this regard.

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## SIMONE MARTINI

1283–1344

*Painter*

**AN ITALIAN MASTER.** A close imitator and perhaps even a pupil of the famous painter Duccio in Siena, Italy, Simone Martini (active 1315–1344) might have worked on some of his master's later commissions and perhaps even on the famous *Maestà* (an altarpiece featuring the Virgin enthroned). He was himself commissioned to paint a *Maestà* in 1315 for the council chamber in the Palazzo Pubblico (town hall) in Siena. Invited to Naples by Robert of Anjou, king of Naples, he painted a portrait of the king receiving his crown from the hands of his brother St. Louis of Toulouse. His most notable works, however, remained in Siena. For the city council there he created an equestrian portrait of Guidoriccio da Fogliano (to celebrate the Siennese victory of Montemassi in 1328), and for the Cathedral he painted an impressive *Annunciation* set in a French gothic flamboyant frame with twisted colonnades. He spent the last six years of his life in the service of the pope in Avignon, decorating the papal palace and probably instructing French artists on the Italian art of fresco painting. His works continued the tradition of Duccio, with their Italo-Byzantine aesthetic and abundant ornamentation. With his elegant figures draped with weightless fabrics silhouetted against decorative, flat grounds, his work exemplifies the Italian court style, which contributed to the formation of the International Gothic Style at the turn of the fifteenth century.

### SOURCES

Alessandro Bagnoli, *La Maestà di Simone Martini* (Cinesello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana, 1999).

Cecilia Jannella, *Simone Martini* (Florence, Italy: Scala; New York: Riverside, 1989).

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Visual Arts*

Aelred of Rievaulx, *De institutione inclusarum* or *On the Institution of the Recluse* (1109/10–1167)—Written by an English monk, this work contains a description of the devotional practices of the recluse who concentrates on images of the life and death of Christ in order to

identify mystically with the event. It illuminates the practices of individuals like Christina of Markyate who turned to illustrated psalters for their devotions in the twelfth century.

Bernard of Clairvaux, *Letter to William of St. Thierry* (1125)—Written by the Cistercian founder of the monastery of Clairvaux who would later be canonized as St. Bernard (1091–1153), this critique of the Benedictine (especially Cluniac) approach to the visual arts in a sacred context is part of the twelfth-century debate over the appropriateness of sacred art.

Etienne Boileau, *Le Livre des métiers* (1268)—Written in Paris, this work discusses the city regulations of the artistic trades in the thirteenth century.

*The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*—Written in France in the twelfth century, this guide for pilgrims includes excerpts about shrines and relics to visit along the way, and the many perils of the journey.

Theodulf, Bishop of Orléans, *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum* or *Libri Carolini* (c. 791)—Probably authored by Theodulf, bishop of Orléans (c. 760–821), a member of Charlemagne's court chapel, this theological treatise on the religious significance of visual imagery was ordered by Charlemagne as a direct response to the Byzantine Council of Nicaea of 787, which restored the cult of images for the Greek church. Denying that human-made images are intrinsically sacred, the *Libri Carolini* concluded that images should be neither worshipped nor condemned, and that as a human art, painting could legitimately be used in the service of the church or for secular purposes.

Theophilus, Presbyter, *On Divers Arts* (c. 1125)—Written in western Germany, offering a response to St. Bernard's critique of sacred art, this treatise on painting, glasswork, and metalwork argues that art for liturgical purposes follows God's own command and specifications, and that the work of artists aware of this religious significance is an inspired spiritual activity which imbues the whole process of making and using liturgical art with a dignity transcending decorative concerns. Theophilus is tentatively identified with goldsmith Roger of Helmarshausen from Lower Saxony.

Villard de Honnecourt, *Sketchbook* (c. 1230)—This book of 33 leaves (from probably what were originally around fifty) was created by an artist from Picardy in northern France, who traveled widely and drew animals, cathedrals, abbeys, carpentry, church furnishings, geometrical figures, people, masonry, mechanical devices, and surveying implements and techniques, as well as recipes and formulas. Addressed to an unspecified audience, the book gives advice on the professional practice of the arts in the thirteenth century.



## GLOSSARY

**Abbey:** A monastery under the supervision of an abbot or a convent of nuns under the supervision of an abbess.

**Acolyte:** A person in the beginning stages of the priesthood delegated to assisting priests and deacons in the service of the Latin Church.

**Affective mysticism:** Religious spirituality taking place in the emotions as opposed to the intellect, to the extent that a spirituality of the heart becomes the center of one's piety.

**Aisle:** A long, open, narrow area at the sides of a church used to walk through the structure.

**Al-Andalus:** The Muslim-controlled portion of Spain from 711 to 1492.

**Albigensian Crusade:** A series of military campaigns, beginning in 1209, intended to put an end to Cathar heresy in southern France.

**Allegory:** A narrative mode in which abstract ideas are presented either through personifications (that is, characters who embody ideas like truth or justice) or through concrete, realistic characters and situations that have an additional layer or layers of symbolic meaning, even though they operate within a literal plot that makes sense in and of itself.

**Alliterative revival:** Use of the Anglo-Saxon alliterative poetic line (featuring three to four repetitions of words having the same initial consonant or vowel per line) in fourteenth-century Middle English poems, such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Alliterative Morte D'Arthur*.

**Almuce:** An elongated, fur-lined hood initially worn by the general population but later becoming the headdress worn by clerics, especially canons.

**Altar:** The elevated place in a church where rites are performed.

**Altarpiece:** A devotional, religious work (painting or sculpture) placed usually on or above a church altar (where the Mass is celebrated). It can depict one or several different scenes, the imagery usually referring to the doctrine of the Mass or to the saint to whom the church or chapel is dedicated. It can include one or multiple panels (*diptych* with two panels; a *triptych* with three; or a *polyptych* with more).

**Ambulatory:** The passageway around the end of the choir.

**Anchoress (f.)/Anchorite (m.):** A solitary or hermit who pledges her or his life to prayer and contemplation. Anchoresses often lived in a small room attached or "anchored" to a church or public building. Visitors could come and speak with them and receive spiritual direction.

**Antiphon:** A style of liturgical chant in which the chanted verses constitute a conversation between two choirs, with solo interventions by a cantor.

**Antiphonary:** A choir book containing chants used during the canonical hours in a monastery.

**Antipope:** Someone who claims or is declared to be pope, even though a pope recognized by the orthodox canonical system already holds office.



**Apocrypha:** The non-canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, many of which were believed genuine in the Middle Ages.

**Apologia:** Something written in defense or justification of a position.

**Apostolic:** Relating to the pope, or connected with the Apostles (one of the twelve followers of Jesus chosen by him to preach Christianity) and their teachings.

**Apse:** A vaulted semicircular or polygonal recess in the church at the end of the choir.

**Arcade:** A series of arches supported by piers or columns.

**Arch:** An architectural formation that spans an opening in such a manner that the weight of the material is converted into outward thrusts, carried to the sides and then down along flanking columns, piers, or buttresses. The rounded arch was common in ancient Rome and in Romanesque Europe and is made from wedge-shaped blocks. The Gothic or pointed arch forms a central point above. The ogival (or ogee) arch is formed by double curved lines (like two S-curves mirroring each other) that meet at a point.

**Archdeacon:** The bishop's principal assistant or officer.

**Arian Christianity:** A sect founded upon the ideas of an Alexandrian priest, Arius, who came into conflict with mainstream Christianity at the Council of Nicea in 325. Arians believed that Jesus and the Father were not one in the same being, that is, as God's son Jesus possessed a certain creaturehood. The doctrine became popular for a brief period in the East at the imperial court and was adopted by Western Goths and Vandals.

**Ascetic:** Devoted to solitude, contemplation, discipline, and fasting; denying the body in order to derive spiritual benefits.

**Ashlar:** Stone that is faced and squared, often with a chipped or irregular surface.

**Atrium:** A front court, sometimes covered, sometimes containing a fountain, before the entry to the church proper.

**Aubade, or Aube, or Alba:** Literally a "dawn song," a type of troubadour lyric in which lovers lament the coming of the dawn because they must part after a night of clandestine lovemaking.

**Augustinianism:** The school of philosophy in the thirteenth century that adhered to the teachings of the pre-Aristotelian period, rallying around the name and authority of St Augustine, and strongly opposing Aristotelian and Thomistic views.

**Augustinian Rule:** A set of guidelines devised by St. Augustine of Hippo in the fourth century for the common life of the religious and often used by the canons regular or Austin Friars, but rarely before the eleventh century.

**Austin Friars:** An order of friars that began as hermits in Italy in the mid-thirteenth century. Brought together into one group called the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine, they eventually began ministering and preaching in urban areas and became interested in the formalized study of theology, the scriptures, and the philosophy of St. Augustine.

**Avignon Papacy:** A period from 1309 to 1377 when the leadership of the Latin Christian Church was located in Avignon (now southern France) rather than in Rome.

**Bagpipe:** An instrument found throughout the Middle Ages in most areas of Asia and the Middle East as well as in Europe, in many different sizes and shapes. The sound is made by squeezing a bag (originally the skin of a goat), and the melody is played on a chanter pipe with finger holes, accompanied by a sustained tone created by one or more drone pipes. The bagpipe is most often seen playing alone, frequently for dancers, and it is usually associated with rural or pastoral settings.

**Bailey:** The open courtyard in a castle between the outer ring of fortified walls and the keep.

**Ballo:** A late medieval form of dance that is the precursor of ballet. Unlike the earlier *bassadanza*, which is danced at a single steady tempo and measure, the *ballo* is made up of an irregular series of up to four different tempos (called *misura*), each having a different kind of rhythmic organization and speed.

**Banns:** A formal public announcement of weddings, required in Christian Europe after the early thirteenth century.

**Basilica:** An early Christian church which borrows elements from Roman public buildings called basilicas (often oblong or rectangular in shape) used for law courts, tribunals, and meetings. Some Roman basilicas were given to the Christians to use as churches. The title of basilica was also given by Rome to denote certain privileged churches.

**Bassadanza:** An Italian dance similar to the Burgundian *basse danse* in that it was a processional dance, moving at a single steady tempo, and organized around a number of relatively simple basic steps. The *bassadanza*, however, had nine basic steps and allowed the choreographers and dancers more freedom, as, for example, in the addition of "ornamental" steps.

**Basse danse:** An elegant choreographed processional dance originating in Burgundy by the early fourteenth century

and consisting of five basic steps that are arranged in a unique sequence for each composition. The steps themselves are not complicated, and all require that the feet stay close to the floor.

**Battlement:** The low parapet at the top of a fortified wall composed of solid shields of masonry, called merlons, alternating with openings, called crenels.

**Bay:** In architecture, any of a number of similar spaces or compartments between the vertical dividing structures of a large interior.

**Béguine:** A member of a lay movement based on piety that began in the early 1200s when groups of urban laywomen in Germany and the Low Countries came together to live celibately in communities, supporting themselves with the labor of their own hands. The movement suffered persecution in Germany but had the protection of powerful patrons in France.

**Benedictine monastery:** Monastic house or community of monks adhering to the Rule of St. Benedict.

**Benedictine monasticism:** Western communal practice begun in the sixth century by Benedict, the abbot of Monte Cassino in Italy. *The Rule of Benedict*, one of the first of its kind for western monks, stressed a corporate life of prayer, work, humility, and stability under the leadership of an abbot. By the eighth century, the Benedictine lifestyle had become an important blueprint for the development of western monasticism.

**Benefice:** Originally a manor, estate, or land that one held (often for life) at the pleasure of the donor. In later periods, the term under canon law came to refer to certain church offices, such as the rectorship of a parish church, with particular duties for which one would be granted revenues.

**Berbers:** A people living in northern Africa, especially in the area that is now Algeria and Morocco.

**Bishop:** A senior cleric in charge of the spiritual life and administration of a geographical region known as a diocese.

**Bishop of Rome:** A title used by the pope since his authority over the entire Latin Church was due, in part, to his control over the local Roman Episcopal See. The symbol of Rome as the center of the empire gradually gave way to the place of Rome as the center of Christendom.

**Black Death:** An epidemic of bubonic plague that killed over 50 million people in Asia and Europe in the fourteenth century.

**Blessed Sacrament:** The sacrament of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, often referring to the consecrated elements of wine and wafer themselves.

**Bliaut:** Either a costly fabric, a knight's court tunic, or a lady's court dress. When this term refers to the lady's garment, it signifies a gown of the richest fabrics, banded at neck and wrist edges with strips of embroidery, fur-lined, having a tightly-laced (at the sides) elongated bodice, a full, long skirt, and sleeves of various styles. As a fabric, bliaut meant silk, satin, or velvet imported from the Orient, frequently woven with gold thread and embroidered with gems.

**Bogomils:** Followers of Bogomil, a tenth-century preacher in Macedonia who taught a life of prayer, penitence, wandering, and simplicity of worship, and subscribed to a quasi-dualist view that the world was evil because it had been created by the devil, the eldest son of God.

**Bonnet (English "cap"):** A general French term, used from the Middle Ages onward to denote a small head-covering.

**Breton Lays:** Short verse narratives, exemplified by the *Lais* of the Anglo-Norman poet Marie de France, which were originally performed orally in the Breton language and were transformed into written narratives from the twelfth-century onward, featuring rash promises, erotic entanglements, an ambivalent code of ethics, and a strong supernatural strain.

**Bubonic plague:** *See* Black Death.

**Bull:** *See* Papal bull.

**Burgundian:** Relating to the area and court of Burgundy (now part of France), an independent duchy beginning in the eleventh century lying halfway between Paris and the Mediterranean. In the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Burgundy became the capital of a powerful principality that included not only northeastern France but much of Lorraine, Luxembourg, Hainaut, Brabant, and Flanders (present-day Belgium and the Netherlands).

**Byzantine:** Relating to the eastern part of the late Roman Empire or to the Orthodox Christian Church and its traditions.

**Caliphs:** Literally, successors to the Prophet Muhammad who are temporal and spiritual heads of the religious community in the Muslim world.

**Canon:** A member of the clergy following a rule like those followed by monks but often attached to a cathedral or large urban church; the canon is responsible for the daily running of the church and for educating the children of the nobility (sometimes called "canons regular" because they lived according to a rule and formed groups called "colleges.")

**Canon law:** The body of Latin Church law imposed by the authority of councils and bishops, particularly pertaining

- to matters of belief, morals, and discipline of the Christian faithful. One schooled in canon law is a canonist.
- Canonical:** Belonging to a set of religious writings regarded as authentic and definitive, and forming a religion's body of scripture.
- Canonical hours:** The Divine Office or daily prayers usually sung or recited (often 7 times a day) by members of religious orders as part of their required normal routine.
- Canonize:** In western Christianity, to declare an exceptionally holy person who is deceased to be a saint.
- Capital:** The uppermost portion of a column or pillar, often carved with relief sculpture on several faces.
- Cardinal:** A member of the college of Roman princes who are the immediate counselors of the pope and rank second only to the pontiff in the church hierarchy. At various times they meet in conclave to elect new popes.
- Carmelite Friars:** Members of the order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, which originated in mid-twelfth-century Palestine as a group of hermits following a strict rule of asceticism. With the fall of the Holy Land and the demise of the Latin Christian kingdoms in the early part of the thirteenth century, the community broke up into several groups that moved into Italy, Spain, Cyprus, Sicily, southern France, and England, where they soon became engaged in a more active life of preaching and study in the world.
- Carol:** The most popular dance of the medieval period, a type of line dance in which the principle arrangement calls for dancers to join in a line holding hands, fingers, or a scarf, while they move along, often through the streets, following the leader.
- Carolingian:** Relating to the dynasty of Frankish kings, descended from Emperor Charlemagne, that ruled an area corresponding to modern France and Germany (expanding into northern Italy and as far east as Austria) in the eighth to tenth centuries.
- Carthusians:** Members of an order of monks, founded in 1080 by Bruno of Cologne, that mixed both eremitical (hermitic) and cenobitic (communal) elements. The monks lived in a group hermitage where each member spent most of his time in the solitude of a private cell, except for communal prayer twice a day.
- Cathars:** A mid-twelfth-century movement that taught that the material world was impure and that the soul must strive to free itself from the evils of this existence. Like the Bogomils, they regarded Jesus not as God, but as more of a super-angelic being who came to earth to lead people on the right path.
- Cathedral:** The church which forms the seat or throne of a bishop and is the main church in a diocese or large administrative division of the church in a region.
- Catholic:** A term meaning "all inclusive" that was used to refer to the Roman Christian church from the fourteenth century onward and became official with the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.
- Cause/Causality:** In philosophy, responsibility of one being for some feature in another (the effect), such as its existence, essence, matter, accidents, or changes.
- Cellar:** Space used for storage and located on the ground level of the west range of a monastery.
- Cenobitic:** Having to do with the communal aspect of monasticism; monks or nuns living a communal lifestyle.
- Champlevé:** A form of enamel work in which the melted glass is poured into grooves that are previously engraved into the metal surface, so that the hardened enamel is flush with the surface of the metal.
- Chancellor:** A church officer in charge of a university.
- Chanson de geste:** Literally "songs of deeds or exploits," a type of French heroic verse narrative of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, based on earlier oral accounts recounting heroic deeds in warfare, often connected with the Crusades.
- Chapel:** A small space for private worship, located off the aisle of a church.
- Chaperone:** A hood with a lower edge long enough to cover the nape of the neck and upper shoulders, having a circular opening for the face and often a long point, sometimes with a tail or tippet added. In the fifteenth century, the chaperone was often worn in an elaborate curved turban-like arrangement on top of the head, with the tippet wrapped to retain the desired shape.
- Chapter:** The assembly of a monastic community (often daily) where a chapter of their rule was read, official business was dealt with, and faults of the monks were addressed. This term can also refer to a group of clergy (often canons) serving a cathedral.
- Chapter of faults:** A community meeting where religious individuals can make confessions of their failings or imperfections to leaders, or the failings of individuals may be pointed out by leaders and other community members.
- Chapter room:** A room usually located along the east range of the cloister used by the monastic community for daily meetings.

- Charismatic:** Christian groups or forms of worship characterized by a quest for spontaneous and ecstatic experiences, such as healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues.
- Chastity:** The practice of abstaining from sex on moral grounds; one of the basic vows of monastic life.
- Chevron:** A pattern of angled stripes.
- Choir (or quire):** The part of the church to the east of the transept containing seats for the monks, canons, or clergy, often near the altar; the place where monks and canons would sing the daily offices.
- Choreographed dance:** A dance having a unique sequence of steps (in contrast to conventional dance).
- Christendom:** The extent of Christianity on earth, often configured in the Middle Ages as a series of Christian states.
- Cistercian Order:** A reform monastic movement that began in 1098 and became one of the largest and fastest growing religious movements of the Middle Ages. The Cistercian Order was directed toward reform of the perceived growing laxities within the French Benedictine system, especially among the Cluniacs, and focused on moving away from the “worldliness” that had crept into medieval monasticism.
- Clerestory:** A portion of the interior of a church rising above adjacent rooftops and having windows to admit light.
- Cloisonné:** A kind of enamel work in which the melted glass is poured into compartments formed by a network of metal bands such that the exposed tops of the bands serve to divide the areas of colored enamel.
- Cloister:** An enclosed space (often in the form of a roofed walkway with arches and columns) that forms part of a monastery.
- Cloistered:** Enclosed in a monastery, literally in the cloister space that forms part of a monastery; not free to leave or have visitors due to one’s monastic status.
- Cluniacs:** Members of a reform Benedictine monastic movement (founded at Cluny, Burgundy, in 909) whose members sought to experience God in the unceasing prayer of their community and the paradise of the cloister. The order is known for its large abbey church and its elaborate liturgy based on the idea of continuous prayer. By the mid-twelfth century, Cluny had expanded to over 1,000 dependencies and had become one of the wealthiest and most influential establishments in all of Christendom.
- Coif:** A small covering for the head, usually of linen, that tied under the chin, resembling a present-day baby bonnet.
- It was worn beneath other types of headdresses. Dating from the early thirteenth century, it disappeared from men’s fashionable dress by the middle of the fourteenth century, except that it continued to be worn by Sergeants at Law in England even after they became judges.
- Collect:** A short form of prayer or petition in the Mass, originally used to denote the collecting of petitions.
- College of canons:** A group of religious leaders charged with the administration of a cathedral and living together in a group (college).
- Column:** A large post-like support holding up an arch or other architectural feature. The tops of columns were often decorated with sculpture.
- Comitatus:** The early medieval heroic code practiced by male members of a communal group in a special reciprocal relationship in which the lord offered material rewards and a social identity in return for military and political allegiance.
- Conciliarism:** The notion that an assembly of Christian bishops who are gathered in the name of the church have the right to make binding decisions for the church in the absence of the pope, especially during a time of crisis. This idea was advanced by bishops during the Great Schism.
- Confraternity:** Association with a monastic community granted to a layperson, conferred by prayers, including the sharing in the spiritual privileges of the monastery.
- Consecration:** The action of blessing by a priest or bishop and made holy by the power of God. Bread and wine are consecrated in the Eucharistic action.
- Consummation:** The act of making a marriage legally complete and fully valid through physical sexual union.
- Contemptus mundi:** Literally “scorn of worldly things,” especially wealth, beauty, social status, and political power. This attitude of rejecting earthly life in favor of hope of the world to come was particularly pervasive in medieval Europe during the fourteenth-century famine and plague, and is reflected in literature and art.
- Contingency:** (a) In philosophy, a state of affairs which may and also may not be; (b) a relation between events such that the second would not happen but for the first.
- Contrapasso:** The method used by Dante in the *Divine Comedy* to allocate appropriate punishment for sin, where the punishment suits the sin by being its ironic opposite; for example, the gluttons, who ate excessively in life, are punished by being pelted by hurricanes of excrement, the byproduct of their own overeating.

- Convent:** Living quarters of nuns or a community of friars.
- Conventional dance:** A dance consisting of the continuous repetition of a single pattern of steps.
- Conversi:** Lay brothers, or adult converts, to religious life, as opposed to those oblates who were raised in the monastery as children.
- Corbel:** A short horizontal bracket of stone or timber projecting from a wall and supporting an architectural element.
- Corpus Christi:** Festival dedicated to the “body of Christ” instituted in 1311 by Pope Clement V; it became the occasion around which many of the mystery cycles and Passion plays of Europe were performed.
- Corse:** The bodice of a bliaut, or a stiffened garment worn underneath a bodice made of lighter-weight fabric. It could be laced tightly to shape the waist and torso.
- Cotehardie:** A short, tightly-fitting jacket-like garment for men popular from around 1333 through the mid-fifteenth century. In its earliest form, it was a low-necked garment reaching only to the knee, worn over a shirt, distinguished by a row of buttons that ran from the neckline to the low waistline.
- Courtepie:** A short version of the houppelande for men, worn over other garments in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
- Courtly Love:** The term coined by the nineteenth-century French scholar and critic Gaston Paris to describe *fin’amors* (refined love), the extremes of devotion and psychological suffering experienced by male protagonists for their ladies in medieval romances and lyrics. This medieval amatory experience was codified by twelfth-century writer Andreas Capellanus in his *Art of Courtly Love*.
- Crenellation:** A battlement (protective wall) with tapered embrasures or squared openings.
- Crosier:** The staff of a bishop, abbot, or abbess, sometimes bearing his or her insignia, commonly depicted in the form of a shepherd’s staff signifying pastoral powers.
- Cruciform:** In the shape of a cross.
- Crusade:** One of a series of military campaigns, first promoted in 1095, in which European Christians attempted to retake the Holy Land from Muslim domination. The term was also applied to campaigns against heretics inside Christendom, as well as campaigns against pagans on the boundaries of Europe.
- Crypt:** A chamber or vault below the main floor of a church, often used as a burial spot.
- Cubit:** A measurement of ancient origins corresponding to the length of the forearm (about 17–21 inches), sometimes used in medieval architecture.
- Customals:** Books containing the instructions for practice and celebration of the divine office and other activities of monastic daily life. The customals also spelled out rubrics or instructions for processions, and the use of candles, incense, crosses, and reliquaries in liturgical and devotional celebrations or commemorations. In addition, they might contain customs concerning the manors and estates controlled by a monastery along with information concerning rents and obligations.
- Cyclic:** A musical composition of several movements that are related by the use of some of the same material.
- Dagging:** Fancy cut-work decorating the edges of sleeves and hems in medieval clothing.
- Dance of Death (Danse macabre):** In late medieval literature, sermons, and iconography, a dance involving humans and skeletons, intended as a reminder of mortality.
- Dar-al-Islam:** The abode of Islam or the Islamic territory.
- Day room:** A room in which monks pursued manual labor within the cloister, sometimes a scriptorium. The day room was often located next to the chapter room along the east range and below the dormitory.
- Deacon:** Literally, the servant of the bishop in early Christianity. The status of deacon was one of the early steps on the way to priestly ordination in the medieval period. The deacon could have specific liturgical functions associated with the Eucharist and dismissal at mass.
- Deism:** The view that while God is responsible for the existence of the world, He otherwise has no commerce with it.
- Dialectics:** (a) The science or art of logic; (b) a method of arguing and defending with probability open questions.
- Diocese:** A geographic division or extent of a bishop’s jurisdiction.
- Diptych:** A pair of painting or carvings on two panels, usually hinged together.
- Disputation:** A formal and structured dialogue between master and pupil, proposing questions and replies, difficulties to the teacher’s reply, and solution of these.
- Docetism:** From the Greek “I seem,” a belief popular among early Christian gnostic groups (sects claiming superior knowledge of spiritual things) that the human-

ity and suffering of the earthly Christ were apparent, but not real.

**Dolce stil nuovo:** In Italy, the “sweet new style” of poetry practiced by such poets as Dante and Guido Cavalcanti, who mirrored the themes of the southern French troubadours in Italian love lyrics of the thirteenth century.

**Dominican friars:** Members of the Order of Preachers, which originated when an Augustinian canon (Dominic de Guzman) from Spain began preaching against the heretical Cathars in southern France in 1203. Given official confirmation in 1217, the order frequently located near university towns and maintained a focus on preaching, teaching, writing, and combating heresy.

**Donjon:** The great tower or keep of a castle, sometimes thought to be the residence of the lord of the castle.

**Dormitory:** The common sleeping room of the monks. The dormitory was customarily attached directly to the south arm of the church and was located above the chapter room on the east side of the cloister.

**Double monastery:** The buildings used by a group of cloistered religious individuals that includes both monks and nuns.

**Doublet (pourpoint, gambeson):** A short garment for men with a tight waist and a thickness of padding through the chest; also a garment worn by knights both as an outer garment (coupled with hose) and as padding under armor.

**Dream vision:** A medieval poetic genre consisting of a narrator’s account of his unusual dream, provoked by his physical surroundings or bedtime reading matter, in which he is often visited by a male or female authority figure who issues guidance or advice. These narratives treated such themes as love, philosophical and spiritual issues, and contemporary mores, often from a satirical perspective.

**Dualism:** Belief consisting of, or focusing upon, two elements, often the spiritual and the corporeal, or forces of good and evil.

**Ecclesiology:** The study of the church, or theories concerning the organizational and spiritual body of believers.

**Ecumenical:** Worldwide, as in a general synod or council called by bishops, church leaders, or a pope. Ecumenical councils were often called to resolve issues that affected the entirety of Christendom.

**Eddic poetry:** Heroic and mythological lays composed in medieval Scandinavia in free form or varying meters, based on Germanic legends and mythology about the pagan northern gods.

**Effigy:** The likeness of a person, sculpted in wood, plaster, stone, or bronze, and placed on top of the person’s tomb; effigies often adorned the aisles of medieval churches.

**Eigenkirchen:** A church under private control or ownership. Many rural churches in the early Middle Ages were of this kind.

**Emanation:** Flowing forth from a source; the pantheistic view that all things arise necessarily out of the substance of God’s being, intellect, etc.

**Enamelwork:** The artistic use of enamel, a substance formed from colored glass particles that are melted and fused, usually to a metal surface.

**Episcopal:** Having to do with a bishop.

**Eremitic:** Having to do with the life of a hermit or solitary.

**Essence:** In the broad sense, what a thing is, all its characteristics, as contrasted with its existence.

**Essentialism:** The metaphysical view that identifies being with essence or that holds that the act of existing is always identified with the actual essence.

**Estampie:** Mentioned in literature from France and Italy, a dance or musical form whose name derives from the Latin *stante pedes* (stationary feet), referring to the fact that the dance steps remain close to the ground, in contrast to those dances that employ jumps or kicks.

**Eucharist:** In Christianity, the celebration or reenactment of the Lord’s Supper using bread and wine consecrated by a priest in order to memorialize Christ’s death and resurrection.

**Excommunication:** Church censure imposed by an authority which excludes individuals from communion with the faithful and deprives them of rights to certain sacraments.

**Exemplum (pl. exempla):** Moralizing anecdotes drawn from the lives of saints, animal fables, or wise sayings about everyday life, assembled to help a preacher make a powerful connection with his audience.

**Existence:** In philosophy, the actuality of an essence; that act by which something is.

**Extreme unction:** The sacrament of the sick and dying, usually accompanied by prayers and an anointing, given as a last grace and opportunity of forgiveness.

**Fabliau:** A brief tale, most often in French, set in the present-day world, populated by stock bourgeois characters, employing clever, complicated plots (often love triangles) about humankind’s most basic functions, especially sex.

**Façade:** The front of a church, usually imposing and decorated.

**Fasting:** Abstinence from food as a religious observance.

**Feast:** A certain day in the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church devoted to the birthday or martyrdom of a particular saint, or event of significance in the Christian year.

**Feudalism:** *See* Lordship.

**Fideism:** The thesis that religious belief is based on faith and not on either evidence or reasoning.

**Filiations:** Daughter houses, often founded or adopted by the mother monastery. A group of daughter houses dependent upon a main house or linked together in a system.

**Filigree work:** Fine metalwork created using tiny beads or very fine threads of metal to create the effect of delicate, lacelike, openwork ornament.

**Filioque:** A Latin phrase (literally meaning “and the son”) referring to an argument as to whether or not the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father or emanates from both the Father and the Son. The Latin Church seems to have added the notion that the Holy Spirit can also proceed through Jesus as well as God the Father.

**Flagellation:** Whipping or beating oneself in punishment for sins or to commiserate with the suffering of Christ.

**Flying buttress:** A segmental arch transmitting outward and downward thrust to a solid buttress or square column which transforms the force into a vertical one.

**Fortune’s wheel:** The popular medieval metaphoric construct to explain cyclical human misfortune, caused by the turning of a Wheel by an allegorical personification, blindfolded Lady Fortune, on whose “wheel of fortune” all men are situated, rising high upon or being cast off of the wheel (regardless of their merits or evil actions) according to their current state of luck.

**Four-fold medieval allegory:** Four levels of medieval allegorical interpretation: 1) the literal level; 2) the allegorical level; 3) the tropological or “moral” level; and 4) the anagogical or eschatological level, about the afterlife.

**Franciscan friars:** The Brothers Minor, an order based on the principles of extreme poverty and itinerancy, first proposed by Francis of Assisi in 1210. In the early fifteenth century, the order split into the conventual (the more lax) and observant (the more traditional) branches in a disagreement over the issue of property and observance.

**Fresco:** A technique of painting on a moist lime plaster surface with colors ground in water or a limewater mixture.

**Friar:** A member of one of several religious orders who served as missionaries, teachers, and confessors; in contrast to monks, friars (brothers) did not live a cloistered life, but rather lived together in convents on the edges of cities.

**Gallery:** A long, narrow area in a church, open at each end or at sides and sometimes elevated.

**Gambeson:** *See* Doublet.

**General Chapter:** An assembly bringing together all the abbots, abbesses, heads, or representatives of the houses of a monastic order for a general meeting.

**Genuflection:** A Christian practice of bending down on one knee, as it touches the ground in veneration.

**Girdle:** A kind of belt introduced into female costumes in the eleventh century to give the female figure a more distinctive outline, but later worn by both men and women. Girdles were usually constructed as twisted cords, sometimes knotted, made from gold or silver wire and dyed wool or silks, and bound with ornamental fasteners or finished off with tassels. Simpler girdles were also constructed from a length of fabric that was decorated with stitching of a contrasting color.

**Gittern:** A plucked string instrument that was smaller and higher-pitched than the lute, depicted with three to five single strings.

**Gothic:** A term originating in the Renaissance to refer to the architectural style that dominated the western half of Europe from the twelfth through the mid-sixteenth centuries, distinguished by the use of pointed arches, ribbed vaults, flying buttresses, and stained glass windows.

**Gown:** One of several garments worn by both men (over an under-tunic) and women (over a chemise), distinguished, according to a principle of layering, as an under-gown or over-gown.

**Grace:** The theological notion of the free gift of love and unmerited assistance that God gives individuals so that they bridge the gap between humanity and divinity, attain salvation, and participate in the life of God.

**Grail:** An object, apparently originating in medieval literature, associated with the last moments of Jesus Christ’s life, sometimes identified as the chalice or bowl used by Joseph of Arimathea to collect Christ’s blood after the Roman soldier Longinus pierced His side with a spear.

**Grange:** A monastic farm settlement at a distance from the monastery that was part of an abbey’s estates, usually

- supervised by a monk and worked by the lay brothers, but sometimes contracted out to others.
- Great Schism:** The period from 1378 to 1417 during which there were two, and sometimes three, claimants to the papal office.
- Grisaille:** Monochrome painting, usually in tones of gray, found especially in stained glass and painted altarpieces (and sometimes illuminated manuscripts, textiles, etc.) from the later Middle Ages.
- Groin vault:** In architecture, the curved line or edge formed by the intersection of two vaults.
- Guild:** An association of persons belonging to the same class or job, often connected with a particular profession, joined together for the betterment or promotion of their situation.
- Gyrovagi:** Monks or clergy who wandered from institution to institution, a practice frowned upon by the Church; these unsettled religious and clerics were sometimes referred to as “professional guests.”
- Hagia Sophia:** A famous sixth-century church in Constantinople, Byzantium, now Istanbul in modern Turkey.
- Hagiography:** Medieval narratives about the lives of saints or virtuous people.
- Haincelin:** A short version of the houppelande, sometimes said to have been named for the jester Haincelin Coq in the court of Charles VI of France, who may—as was the case with many jesters—have been a dwarf.
- Hammerbeam:** One of a pair of short cantilevered timbers supporting a ceiling arch.
- Harmony:** The result of two or more notes sounding at the same time.
- Harp:** A common medieval musical instrument that existed in a variety of sizes and forms. The type most often depicted in art was a small portable harp with 24 or 25 strings.
- Hennin:** A French headdress of the second half of the fifteenth century that had a cone-shaped construction with soft veiling attached at the peak that hung behind it in varying lengths, sometimes reaching to the floor.
- Heresy:** Opinion or doctrine at variance with the orthodox or accepted doctrine of a church or religious system.
- Hierarchy:** A chain of office, consisting of a body of officials organized by rank.
- Holy Roman Empire:** The term used from the twelfth century onward for a Germanic empire (originating with the coronation of Otto I of Germany in 962) that was viewed theoretically as the continuation of the Western Roman Empire and as the temporal form of a universal dominion whose head was the pope.
- Homage:** The formal public acknowledgment by which a knight or tenant declared himself a vassal of his lord, owing him fealty and service. See also *Lordship*.
- Host:** The consecrated bread at the Mass which medieval Christians believed was changed into the body of Christ in conjunction with the action of the celebrant.
- Houppelande:** A fourteenth-century garment of variable length that was worn over the doublet and hose. The longest version of this garment was worn for formal occasions and was ground-length or somewhat longer. A short version reached halfway between ankle and knee, and one of an even shorter length hit some inches above the knee. Initial forms of the houppelande had high collars that fanned out, but later collar styles differed. Sleeves were funnel shaped, increasingly wide at their ends, and often edged with fancy cut-work (dagging) and slashed to show fur linings of complementary colors. After 1450, the more usual term for this garment was “gown.”
- Humiliati:** A lay spiritual movement, eventually given papal approval, that developed in the late twelfth century and emphasized voluntary poverty and vernacular translation of the scriptures. The Humiliati became known for the production of inexpensive cloth for the poor.
- Hurdy-gurdy:** A musical instrument that made its sound by turning a crank that caused a wheel to scrape against two or three strings. A set of keys or levers could be pressed against one of the strings to change the pitch, while the other(s) provided a drone.
- Hussite Wars:** A persecution of the followers of Jan Hus that took place between 1419 and 1436 when they continued to preach throughout Germany and Czech territories after Hus was burned for heresy.
- Icelandic family sagas:** Tightly structured, complexly plotted thirteenth-century heroic prose narratives composed from earlier oral accounts, depicting the blood feuds and other events that happened during the settlement of Iceland as a colony of Norway in the tenth and eleventh centuries.
- Iconic:** The quality of a visual image or object that is generally static, frontal, and non-narrative.
- Iconoclast:** One who literally would smash religious statues and icons, based on the belief that they were idolatrous.
- Iconography:** The pictorial representation of a subject, especially when comparing the particular character of a



represented subject to the complete visual record of that subject throughout the history of art; also the study of the meaning of the subject matter of visual images.

**Illuminated manuscript:** A manuscript (handwritten book) with hand-painted decoration or illustrations, usually employing silver, gold, and different colored pigments.

**Illumination:** In the Augustinian sense, the function of the divine light within a human intellect that makes truths or intellectual knowledge (as opposed to sense knowledge), especially of immaterial things, possible to the rational creature. Also, the gilded hand-painted decoration or illustrations in an illuminated manuscript.

**Immanence:** (a) Presence in and operation within; indwelling: as “God is immanent in all things”; (b) Pantheistic sense: God’s presence in the universe as a real part of it.

**Indulgence:** After the confession of sin, the substitution of penance by another act, such as almsgiving, pilgrimage, crusade, or financial contribution for the construction of a church.

**Infirmary:** The building devoted to the care of sick and infirm monks. Often situated outside the cloister precinct to the east with its own cloister and chapel, it formed a monastery in miniature.

**Inquisition:** The juridical persecution of heresy by special church courts.

**Interdict:** A ban imposed by a pope, church council, or bishop that excludes a person, group or country from the sacraments.

**Investiture:** The investing or conferring of authority to a church official by a superior in a ceremony involving presentation of the symbols of office, including an exchange of homage before consecration.

**Isorhythm:** A rhythmic pattern that is imposed on a melody and repeated exactly throughout the length of the composition.

**Jihad:** The Muslim duty of struggling or fighting to maintain excellence or striving for an ideal society in which Islam might flourish. Early interpretations emphasized the “greater jihad,” that is the struggle within oneself, while the “lesser jihad,” connected to the idea of the physical struggles, such as mission effort, good works, building mosques, and overcoming the enemies of the faith, would not become significant to Muslim theology and ideology until the twelfth century.

**Jongleur:** An Old French word associated with modern English “juggler,” used as a catch-all term to identify a

person with the array of talents shared by professional performers of the Middle Ages.

**Jubilee year:** A holy year in which special blessing and indulgences remitting time spent in purgatory are granted to Christians who visit Rome and fulfill certain spiritual requirements. Jubilees come every fifty years.

**Kabbalah:** Meaning “tradition,” a medieval Jewish mystical movement which has its roots in scriptural accounts of visions.

**Karaites:** Meaning “readers,” a ninth-century Jewish movement (also known as “Children of the Text”) that saw the Talmud as a departure from the divinely revealed truth of the Torah, which was the supreme authority in matters of faith.

**Keep:** The multi-storied tower that combined living quarters and defensive features in a medieval castle.

**Kenning:** In Anglo-Saxon poetry, an oral-formulaic phrase that employs juxtaposed words as metaphors to imagine familiar objects in a new way, such as “whale-road” (the sea), “earth’s candle” (the sun), and “ring-giver” (king).

**Keystone:** A wedge-shaped stone at the summit of an arch serving to lock the other stones in place and create structural strength.

**Kirtle:** Originally a short linen undergarment, later an overgown, and still later, analogous to the French *cote*, the outer garment also known as robe or surcote.

**Knight:** A member of the warrior sector of medieval European culture, who owed homage as a vassal to a duke or baron (his temporal lord), usually in the form of military service. See also *Lordship*.

**Koran (Qur’an):** The sacred text of Islam, believed to have been dictated to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel.

**Laisses similaires:** Literally “similar stanzas,” repeated verse stanzas used to emphasize important and dramatic scenes in French *chansons de geste* and other heroic narratives.

**Laity:** Secular persons, not members of the clergy (monks, priests, canons, bishops, deacons, etc.)

**Lancet window:** A tall, narrow window usually ending in a sharply pointed arch and found mainly in Gothic architecture.

**Lay brother:** A person associated with monastic life, but often of a lower social class than the other monks; lay brothers were commonly less educated or unable to recite in Latin, were not part of the choir, and spent much of their time in manual labor.

- Lectionary:** A book containing readings (usually of sacred scriptures) for use at Mass in a church or during the offices of monks and nuns.
- Lent:** A forty-day period of penance, fasting, and reflection leading up to the commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ.
- Limbo:** An abode of souls for those who, through no fault of their own, are barred from salvation because they were not baptized (as in the case of infants or people who lived before the time of Christ).
- Litotes:** The rhetorical device of ironic understatement employed in northern European literature of the Middle Ages, especially in *Beowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon poems and the Icelandic sagas.
- Liturgy:** In the Latin Christian church, the forms of prayers, acts, and ceremonies used in public and official worship. The main parts of the liturgy are the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice called the Mass, the singing of the divine office, and the administration of the sacraments. It was from elements of the Mass that the earliest medieval drama is thought to have developed.
- Locus Amoenus:** Literally the “beautiful place,” the locale of most medieval romances, the opening of dream visions, and the troubadours’ *chansons d’amour*, featuring soft spring breezes, flowing water, blooming flowers, budding greenery, and the songs of birds.
- Lollards:** Literally the “mumblers,” followers of John Wyclif after his death in 1384. Lollards (or Wycliffites) subscribed to John Wyclif’s belief in the importance of preaching and vernacular Bibles, and rejected beliefs in transubstantiation, purgatory, and clerical celibacy.
- Lordship:** A complex network of interlinked political, economic, and social obligations (formerly called “feudalism”) that extended to and involved almost all sectors of the socioeconomic hierarchy in the Middle Ages.
- Low Countries:** The lowland regions near the North Sea, divided in the Middle Ages into numerous small states (Brabant, Flanders, Hainaut, Holland, etc.) and corresponding today to Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (sometimes called, as a group, “Benelux”).
- Ludus:** From the Latin word for “game,” it later came to mean “play.” Thus the name *Ludus Coventriae* refers to the cycle of Coventry plays.
- Lute:** A plucked musical instrument that came in several sizes, with frets and four “courses” (paired sets) of strings and a fifth solo string called a *chantarelle*, used for playing melodies. During the medieval period it was usually plucked with a quill plectrum and played mostly single-line melodies with drones.
- Machicolations:** A projecting gallery at the top of a fortified wall with floor openings through which heavy objects or boiling liquids could be dropped on attackers.
- Magyars:** An ethnic group that makes up the predominant element of the population of Hungary.
- Maniple:** A church vestment consisting of a narrow strip of cloth usually worn over the arm in the service of the Eucharist.
- Mantle:** An outer garment, usually bordered with embroidery or gold and silver threads, worn to protect its wearer from bad weather while serving also to designate high social status and power. In the period from 1066 to 1154, two shapes of mantles had long been in use—the semicircular and the rectangular. A mantle was often received from an overlord as a valuable gift, then bequeathed from generation to generation.
- Manuscript:** A hand-written or hand-copied book or document, which may, if created for a wealthy patron, be decorated with elaborate painted illustrations and a highly ornate cover. Before the fourteenth century, the pages of manuscripts were generally made of vellum (parchment) prepared from the skin of a lamb or goat.
- Marian lyrics:** Medieval religious lyric poetry, especially in France, Italy, and England, devoted to veneration of the Virgin Mary but featuring some of the same tropes used to honor the courtly lady in the *chansons d’amour* of the troubadours and other medieval lyric poets.
- Mass:** The official name of the liturgical rite of Christianity commemorating the Eucharistic sacrifice, involving the consecration of bread and wine, along with the conventional prayers, songs, and readings that accompany it. It is a reenactment of the Last Supper when Jesus broke bread, asked his disciples to eat this symbol of his own flesh, and then bade them drink wine representing the blood he would shed for them the following day, Good Friday.
- Matter of Britain:** Stories about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, which contributed to the development of romance and made Arthur first a national hero in England and later a literary figure of international stature.
- Matter of France:** Tales of figures in the development of French national culture such as Roland, Charlemagne, and William of Orange, contributing especially to the genre of *chanson de geste*.
- Matter of Rome the Great and Antiquity:** The broad category of plots about classical antiquity in Greece, Troy, Rome, or Northern Africa, retold in medieval vernacular romances such as the French *Roman de Thebes* and Boccaccio’s *Teseide*.

**Mendicants:** Those religious peoples, specifically friars, who depend upon begging for their support.

**Mensural signs:** In music, symbols that indicate tempo and rhythmic subdivisions.

**Merovingian:** Pertaining to the Frankish dynasty established by Clovis I, which reigned in Gaul and Germany from about 500 to 751. The dynasty was named after the semi-legendary Merovech, Clovis' grandfather.

**Metaphysics:** The division of philosophy which studies being as such and the universal truths, laws, or principles of all beings; "the science of being as being" (Aristotle).

**Midrash:** In Judaism, a body of oral commentary on the scriptures, Talmud, and Halakah (legal texts), collected and expanded by rabbis beginning about the ninth century.

**Military orders:** Religious congregations of knights whose initial purpose was to protect pilgrims and maintain control of the Crusader Kingdoms in the Holy Land, but who, in different orders, engaged in various activities, including protecting holy places, campaigning against pagans, staffing hospices, and providing hospitality to travelers.

**Minnesingers (German Minnesänger):** Singers about *minne*, which means "love," such as Walter von der Vogelweide; the German equivalents of the French troubadours and trouvères, who developed the themes of *fin'amors* in German lyrics.

**Miracle:** An extraordinary event that surpasses what is known of natural laws and is considered a work of God.

**Missal:** A book containing the complete rite of the Mass, with all prayers, readings, and chants.

**Moat:** A ditch of some width and depth around a fortified area like a castle serving to repel intruders.

**Monasticism:** The way of life typical of monks or nuns who dwell together for life, living austere and sharing in common according to a rule; their lives are devoted to the service of God.

**Monk:** A member of an all-male religious order who follows a rule requiring withdrawal from society and devotion to prayer, solitude, and contemplation.

**Monophony:** Music of one part, either a solo song or a single melody performed by more than one person or instrument.

**Monotheism:** The doctrine or belief that there is only one God.

**Moresca:** A special dance in which the dancers all blackened their faces in imitation of Moors (people of northern

Africa), and dressed in what were thought to be "Moorish" costumes with bells attached to their legs. The dance sometimes depicts a fight between Moors and Christians, a reference to Spanish history, and sometimes includes a fool as part of the cast of characters.

**Motet:** A polyphonic composition with more than one text, first created in or near Paris around 1250.

**Motiv:** A short passage of music (as short as three notes) that is repeated.

**Motte:** A fortification consisting of a timber tower set atop a conical earth mound. The motte often was surrounded by a ditch and wooden palisade.

**Mystery:** a) A term referring to one of the "mysteries" of Christianity, a miraculous event which must be accepted on faith, such as the idea of the Virgin birth of Jesus; or b) a play put on by a craft guild, a group who have trade secrets or mysteries.

**Mysticism:** The religious theory that conceives of God as absolutely transcendent, beyond reason and all approaches of mind, placing emphasis on the negative way, that is, on what God is not.

**Nakers:** A pair of small "kettle" drums, usually tied to the performer's waist or over the neck of a horse.

**Narthex:** An enclosed passage between the main entrance and the nave of a church.

**Nave:** The main longitudinal area of a church.

**Neoplatonism:** The philosophical school, founded by Plotinus (205–270), which extended the philosophy of Plato and built it into a system, focusing on the emanation of all things from the One and their return thereto. A version of this philosophy, made compatible with Christian teachings, was forged by St Augustine and became a very influential school in the Middle Ages.

**Niello:** A metalwork process whereby a design is engraved in a metal surface and then filled with a black alloy of sulfur with gold, silver, copper, or lead and then fused with heat.

**Nominalism:** The theory that universal terms like *horse* or *equality* are merely names, not real essences.

**Nun:** A member of a religious community of women living a cloistered life of religious devotion in a convent or double monastery.

**Obedience:** An oath taken to a superior (often religious) to abide by that person's judgment and jurisdiction.

**Oblate:** A lay person who is part of a religious community. From the Latin word *oblatio*, meaning to offer, this

term often refers to children who were “offered” by their families to the service of God in a monastery or convent, to be brought up as a monk or nun.

**Office:** From Latin *officium*, or duty, the prescribed daily round of prayers, mainly psalms, recited seven times a day in community, called for in the *Benedictine Rule*. Also, the prayers and ceremonies in the Latin Christian church for some particular purpose, such as the Office for the Dead, or the church’s services in general, such as the Divine Office.

**Office of the Dead:** Prayers said on behalf of the deceased, often for individuals connected, by membership or patronage, to the monastery or community offering the prayer.

**Oral-formulaic tropes:** Poetic stock phrases that could be recalled easily or recombined to invent new lines if the scop (the Anglo-Saxon minstrel) forgot a line during performance or needed to fill out the meter in a new passage. Examples from *Beowulf* include the exclamation “That was a good King!”; the formula for introducing a new speaker, “Beowulf unlocked his word-hoard”; and the term for the temporal lord in the *comitatus*, “ring giver.”

**Ordo (pl. Ordines):** A book of directives for the celebration of liturgies, including Mass, the order of the Divine Office, and other religious rituals.

**Organum:** An early, fairly simple type of polyphony. There are several different varieties, including one in which the voices sing the same melody at different pitches (known as “parallel organum”). Other varieties include the addition of an upper part over an already-existing melody (that is, a tenor). The upper part usually moves faster than the tenor.

**Orthodox:** A sound or correct theological or religious doctrine.

**Orthodox Church:** The Christian church of those countries formerly comprising the Eastern Roman Empire and of those countries evangelized by it; the Byzantine Church.

**Ottonian:** Pertaining to the German dynasty that ruled from 962 to 1002 as the emperors of the Romans (later the Holy Roman Empire).

**Pageant:** A separate event in a pageant cycle or large group of plays on Old and New Testament themes, such as a pageant of Christ’s nativity.

**Paletot:** A short-sleeved short and loose gown for men, sometimes worn as an over-garment with the doublet.

**Pantheism:** The doctrine that the world or nature in the widest sense is identical with God.

**Pantheon:** In polytheism, the system of all the gods and goddesses.

**Papal:** Having to do with the bishop of Rome and his authority as pope over Western Christendom.

**Papal bull:** A written pronouncement or mandate from the pope. In the early days, these pronouncements were sealed with a large circular wax disk containing an impression of the pope’s ring (from the Latin *bullā*, or seal).

**Parapet:** A battlement wall protecting the wall-walk and roof.

**Parish church:** The local church attended by the people of a parish and ministered to by a rector or sometimes a curate whose living comes from rent provided from the lands of that community.

**Passion:** The events of Christ’s last hours, his torments, suffering, and crucifixion. The term also refers to Passion Sunday or the fifth Sunday in Lent as these are dramatized in Passion plays of the late Middle Ages.

**Pastourelle:** Literally, a “song about a shepherdess,” a short, dialogue-filled, narrative account in verse about a courtly knight’s attempt to seduce an innocent but clever shepherdess.

**Peace of God:** An ideal articulated by numerous church councils between 990 and 1096 obliging the knightly order to protect unarmed poor, children, women, clerics, merchants, and pilgrims.

**Penance:** The sacrament of forgiveness (that is, forgiveness by God through the action of a priest), which in the Middle Ages involved confession of sins followed by an act of restitution.

**Penitential:** A book setting out recommended penances or satisfactions associated with particular sins.

**People of the Book:** A category of people in Islam that consisted of monotheists with written scriptures, including most types of Christians and Jews. Because of the common heritage of faith that they shared, Muslims often extended to them the status of *dhimmi*, or protected people.

**Perfected:** Leaders of the Cathars who had developed a high level of spiritual attainment.

**Pier:** In architecture, a support for the ends of adjacent spans of arches.

- Pilgrimage:** A journey made usually for spiritual reasons, to reach a particular shrine or sacred place; a pilgrim is one who makes such a journey. The Haj was the Arabic term for the pilgrimage required of all adult Muslims.
- Pilgrimage church:** A large church on one of the major pilgrimage routes (for example, the shrine of St. James at Compostela) that often offered shelter and provided maps and information about the route.
- Pinnacle:** A small, decorative turret or end of a spire, buttress, or other such architectural element, generally pointed, conical, or pyramidal in shape.
- Plainchant:** Music for the sacred services, the largest surviving repertory of the medieval period.
- Plate:** A horizontal timber laid flat atop a pier or wall used to attach the ends of rafters.
- Polyphony:** Music of more than one part, each musical line having a separate rhythmic and melodic profile.
- Polytheism:** The belief that there are many gods within the religious system.
- Pope:** The head of what is now called the Roman Catholic Church. The pope, or pontiff, was also called the Bishop of Rome since he presided over the entire Latin Church due, in part, to his authority over the local Roman Episcopal See.
- Portcullis:** A heavy iron or wooden grill, set in vertical grooves, that can be raised or lowered by chains to protect the entrance to a castle.
- Postulant:** A person seeking admission to a religious order. Often he or she was allowed to try out monastic life for a brief time.
- Pourpoint:** *See* Doublet.
- Premonstratensians:** An order founded in 1121 that was unique in its policy of accepting both men and women and attempting to accommodate them in the same monastery.
- Primacy:** The idea that the Bishop of Rome had a primary place over all other bishops by virtue of the tradition of St. Peter being at Rome and the idea that Rome was the center of the old Roman Empire.
- Prime:** The liturgical office celebrated at sunrise (or the first hour of the day).
- Principle source:** In philosophy, that from which something proceeds.
- Procession:** A type of stately dance in which couples move forward side by side, often holding hands.
- Psalter:** A book containing the Psalms for liturgical or devotional use.
- Purgatory:** According to medieval Christian doctrine, a place where the souls of those who die penitent remain to be purified from sins before they go to heaven.
- Purlin:** A longitudinal member in a roof frame usually for supporting common rafters between the plate and the ridge.
- Qabbalah:** *See* Kabbalah.
- Qaraites:** *See* Karaites.
- Quietism:** The attitude of passivity and receptivity before God, as opposed to activism (that is, the view that the human agent has some role to play in earning God's favor).
- Quire:** *See* Choir.
- Qur'an:** *See* Koran.
- Rabbi:** A title used in early Judaism to identify one who had received a type of ordination based upon his ability to teach and judge the law or his mastery of the Talmud, and applied specifically to those who were experts regarding Jewish law. By the Middle Ages, rabbis were scholars, teachers, judges (particularly in Muslim Spain), and preachers.
- Rafter:** The beam, usually angled and joined at the top to a similar beam in the form of an inverted V, which is used to support a roof.
- Rationalism:** Any one of the views that attribute primary importance to the human reason: for example, that all authority in matters of truth is subject to the scrutiny and approval of reason, without any duty of obedience or reverence for religious authority.
- Realism:** (a) The philosophical position that accepts the existence of things prior to and independent of human knowledge; or (b) in relation to the problem of universals, the epistemological view that man's direct universal concepts ordinarily represent natures that are objectively real and in some way fit to be represented as universal by the mind's activity.
- Rebec:** A small three-string musical instrument, played in the soprano range.
- Reconquista:** The process of recovering Christian lands from the Moors who had control of Spain or various parts of the Iberian Peninsula during the Muslim occupation from 718 to 1492.

- Refectory:** The dining hall of a monastery, usually located on the south walk of the cloister.
- Relic:** Something that is kept and venerated because it once belonged to a saint, martyr, or holy person, especially a part of his or her body.
- Reliquary:** A box, container, or shrine in which relics are kept for veneration, often highly decorated and made of precious materials.
- Repoussé:** Relief (that is, raised) decoration on a metal surface produced by hammering from the underside.
- Reticulated headdress:** A style in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries characterized by the enclosure of hair arrangements in a net-like receptacle. The forerunner of this headdress was the *caul* or *crispinette*. Reticulated headdresses were made of gold, silver, or silk nets, sometimes set with jewels at intersections, and fashioned into bags to hold the hair in place.
- Revelation:** The word of God as it is manifest through the sacred scriptures and the church tradition.
- Reverdie:** A term in Middle English meaning “re-greening,” celebrating the reappearance of spring after a long winter, employed to start a lyric poem or song, or to open a love poem or dream vision.
- Rigoletto:** A dance that includes forward and backward jumps and some type of “waving” motion.
- Robe:** A name applied to many different garments during the Middle Ages, ranging from the long tunic in England (late eleventh century) to a complete outfit of a varying number of layers intended to be worn together, some of them made of silk, some furred (fourteenth century).
- Romances:** Episodic narratives composed in verse or prose throughout Europe from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, whose plots derive from the various “Matters” of France, Britain, Rome, or Antiquity and involve a high degree of fantasy and sometimes the attainment of love in a search or quest, as well as the testing of the prowess or morality of their knightly heroes.
- Rose window:** A large, circular stained-glass window placed centrally above the portal(s) on the façade of a Gothic church.
- Round dance:** One of the most popular forms of medieval dance, a dance in which a group of people hold hands in the form of a circle, usually with a leader in the center. The dance steps require the circle to move first in one direction and then the other, reversing its direction at the beginning of each new verse. The leader sings the verses and the entire group joins in the chorus.
- Rotunda:** A circular high space in a church surmounted by a dome.
- Rubble:** A wall made of different sizes and types of uncut stone.
- Rubric:** From the Latin word for red (*rugeo*), the larger script indicating a chapter heading or division in a manuscript and particularly the directions (often printed in red in missals and breviaries) for the conduct of church services and the carrying out of liturgical rites.
- Rus’:** Tribal people, perhaps originally Scandinavian Vikings who, by the ninth century, had settled in what is now the area around Kiev, Russia.
- Sacrament:** A visible sign instituted by Jesus Christ to symbolize or confer grace. Those accepted in medieval Christianity were baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, matrimony, penance, holy orders, and extreme unction.
- Sacramentals:** Actions or ceremonies resembling sacraments but regarded as originating with the church rather than with Jesus Christ himself.
- Sacramentary:** A book used in the celebration of the Mass and for other liturgical rites.
- Saga:** A unique kind of prose narrative invented in Iceland during the twelfth through fourteenth centuries. The Old Norse word *saga*, literally “something said,” indicates the oral origins of most of these accounts of the exploits of noteworthy men or events that were later amplified, embellished, and transmitted by skilled tale-tellers over the course of several centuries.
- Saint:** In Christianity, a person who led a holy life on earth and has been declared to have a privileged place in heaven and be worthy of veneration.
- Sanctuary:** The part of the church containing the altar.
- Sapientia and Fortitudo:** Wisdom and fortitude, a combination of discretion and cleverness with physical strength and bravery, which contributed to successful lordship or heroism in early medieval literature.
- Schism:** The division of a group into mutually antagonistic factions, as, in the Middle Ages, the Photian Schism (ninth century), between Eastern and Western Christianity; the ongoing schism between the Greek and Latin churches that began in 1053; and the Great Schism within Western Christianity (1378–1417) when there were two, or even three, popes.
- Scop:** An Anglo-Saxon minstrel who recited poems, perhaps to a harp accompaniment.

**Screen:** A wooden or iron structure separating the nave from the choir of a church, sometimes called “rood screen” if it had a large crucifix ornamenting its top.

**Scriptorium:** The workshop or area found especially in abbeys and monasteries where manuscripts are copied and decorated.

**Secular clergy:** Priests living in the world (as, for example, parish priests serving local churches), as opposed to regular clergy living under the rule of a religious order.

**See:** Literally, the official seat (from the Latin *sedes*) of a bishop, hence the place where the bishop sits or resides.

**Sequence:** A type of hymn, but not in a regular meter, said or sung between the gradual and the gospel of certain masses.

**Serf:** A member of the agricultural workforce that tilled the land of the medieval estates and manors owned by temporal lords such as dukes and barons, and was bought and sold with the land.

**Seven Deadly Sins:** The Roman Church’s designation of the seven most serious sins—pride, wrath, avarice, envy, gluttony, lust, and sloth.

**Shawm:** A double-reed instrument much like an oboe first depicted in Spanish sources of the late thirteenth century, suggesting that it had been introduced to Europe during the Arab or Moorish occupation of Spain.

**Shi’ite:** The more conservative branch of Islam that accepts only the direct descendants of the Prophet as legitimate successors, beginning with Ali Talib, the fourth caliph who was the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad.

**Simony:** The sale or purchase of a church office or possession.

**Skaldic Poetry:** Verse composed in medieval Scandinavia that employed an erudite, specialized vocabulary in a highly complicated syntax.

**Skepticism:** The philosophical school that doubts or denies the possibility of any certain human knowledge; the skeptic is therefore enjoined to suspend all judgments in the speculative order.

**Spiritual authority:** The power exerted by the institutional church, its leaders, and other religious entities, as opposed to the “temporal power” wielded by political institutions or individuals such as kings and lords. Spiritual power included the authority to excommunicate and to place a temporal leader’s subjects under interdict.

**Stability:** The vow taken, often by monks, to remain stable in one place as part of their profession, until death.

**Stadia:** Ancient units of measurement of about 607 feet, used in medieval architecture to liken church buildings to biblical descriptions of the celestial Jerusalem.

**Stigmata** Marks on the hands and feet resembling the wounds from Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, thought to be supernaturally impressed on the person as a sign of spiritual similarity to the Christ.

**Stole:** A long narrow cloth worn around the neck by priests and bishops as part of their vestment.

**Story collections:** Anthologies of various separate stories that circulated together in a reasonably coherent form, organized around a theme or involving a framing device, a larger narrative that linked all the stories through an author’s invented occasion at which tales were exchanged, as in Boccaccio’s *Decameron* or Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

**Studium:** An institution of higher education, not just for clerics, which taught law, medicine, and rhetoric, as well as theology.

**Sub-deacon:** A minor order of cleric who could not administer sacraments (only sacramentals) and who prepared bread, wine, and vessels at Mass.

**Substitute clausula:** A new section of polyphonic music intended to replace an old one.

**Sufism:** A mystical branch of Islam, which began as a monastic movement in the eighth and ninth centuries and became popular among individuals who rejected the formalized trappings of Islamic religious life and were looking for more inward and personal expressions of their relationship with Allah.

**Sunni:** The branch of Islam that believes anyone from the Qurayish clan or tribe of Muhammad can succeed him as caliph. Sunnis recognize the first four caliphs and their traditions as the rightful succession.

**Synagogue:** A building used by a Jewish community as a formal house of prayer and worship, but also as a gathering place for other communal activities.

**Tabor:** A large barrel-shaped drum, often called a “side drum,” usually associated with the military.

**Talmud:** From the Hebrew word for “study,” a collection of commentaries on the Hebrew scriptures that was begun in the first century B.C.E. and was eventually codified by rabbis.

**Tambourine:** A hand-held percussion instrument with jingles, usually depicted in conjunction with dancing.

**Tempo:** The speed of a musical composition.

- Temporal authority:** The power exerted by political institutions or individuals such as kings and lords, as opposed to the spiritual authority of religious institutions. The word “temporal” refers to the limitation of time associated with earthly life, in contrast to the timelessness of eternity.
- Tenor:** A melody borrowed from another composition and used as a guide for the structure of a new polyphonic composition. The notes are held as long notes. Music for dance sometimes was written only as a tenor line, requiring the musicians to improvise the accompanying lines.
- Tertiary:** “Third Order,” or lay groups that came into existence in the thirteenth century to give the laity living in the world opportunities to live lives of religious dedication. Many of the Third Orders are linked to the mendicant movements.
- Tithes:** Payment of a portion (customarily one-tenth) of one’s produce or income to the church, clergy, or the clergy person’s office.
- Torah:** The scriptures that constitute the Jewish law, identified by Christians as the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- Tracery:** Ornamental, openwork, sculptural decoration, in wood or stone, found especially above Gothic windows and on screens or panels.
- Transcendence:** Existence apart from and superior to the universe; opposed to immanence.
- Transept:** The transverse part of the rectangular body of the church, usually crossing the nave.
- Translatio studii:** Reflecting the Latin root of “translate,” meaning “to carry across,” the transfer of the plot and characters of a tale produced for the audience of one national culture or earlier period to that of another culture in a later period by medieval writers, involving significant changes in the plot and original roles of the characters as well as the very genre that the model text represented.
- Transubstantiation:** In the sacrament of the Eucharist, the conversion of the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, with appearances of bread and wine remaining.
- Trial by combat:** Rooted in the medieval notion that God punished evil and preserved good, a judicial process in which the accused and the accuser of a crime (or a contracted “champion”) would engage in physical combat in the expectation that right would triumph over wrong.
- This judicial remedy was never officially approved by the church and was eventually outlawed.
- Trial by fire:** A means of allowing divine intervention in the case of a dispute, often involved the burning of the accused’s hand. The wound was bandaged for three days and then examined. If the area had become infected, the person was seen as guilty.
- Trial by water:** A means of allowing divine intervention in the case of a dispute, in which the accused were tied up and thrown into a body of water. If they floated, they were deemed guilty (the common belief being that water as a pure element would reject the sinner). Jews were exempt from the ninth century onward since it was believed that their rejection of Christ caused disfavor in the eyes of God.
- Triforium:** The wall at the side of the nave, choir, or transept of a church corresponding to the space between the vaulting or ceiling and the roof of an aisle.
- Trinitarian:** Subscribing to the doctrine of the Trinity, the union of three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in one Godhead.
- Triptych:** A group of paintings or carvings on three panels, usually hinged together.
- Trope:** An antiphon or verse interpolated into a liturgical text.
- Troubadour:** Poets, such as Bernart de Ventadorn and Adam de la Halle, respectively from southern and northern France, attached to particular courts and patrons or wandering from court to court, who composed a new style of lyric love poetry with complex stanzas and rhyme patterns, especially the *chansons de croisade* and the *chansons d’amour* from the twelfth century onwards.
- Trouvère:** *See* Troubadour.
- Truce of God:** A policy developed at a series of church councils between 990 and 1096 to promote the cessation of unnecessary violence in Western Europe by imposing penalties for carrying on warfare during certain holy seasons, on Sundays, and in certain holy places.
- Truss:** A triangle of timbers used to support compression, used in the construction of a roof.
- Tunic:** A loose wide-necked garment, usually extending to the hip or knee and gathered with a belt at the waist.
- Ulama:** A class of learned Islamic scholars, particularly those who have special knowledge or expertise in theology and Muslim law.
- Ummah:** The collective community of Islam.



**Universal:** In philosophy, a term for a typical form that can be affirmed of or is attributed to many in a univocal and distributed sense; one name applied in exactly the same sense to many objects taken singly.

**Unleavened bread:** Bread that is flat, containing no yeast or leavening agent to make the dough rise, used in many Christian eucharistic services in imitation of the unleavened bread from the Jewish Passover service, in recognition of the fact that three of the four New Testament Gospel writers describe the Last Supper as taking place during the week of the Jewish Passover.

**Usury:** The charging of interest (or excessive interest) for a loan.

**Vassal:** A person granted the use of land, in return for which he rendered homage, fealty, and usually military service to his lord or other superior. See *Lordship*.

**Vernacular:** The language of a national culture of medieval Europe—French, English, Spanish, Italian, German, Norse—as distinguished from the language of learning and the medieval church, Latin.

**Vielle:** A four- or five-string medieval musical instrument with a range similar to a modern viola.

**Vikings:** Migrating northern tribal people from Scandinavia who traveled along coastlines in swift longships and invaded almost all regions of Europe during the period between the eighth and the mid-eleventh centuries.

**Vocal dance:** A dance song—that is, one with words to be sung, as differentiated from an instrumental dance.

**Votive:** A liturgy or offering of prayer that is done with a particular intention in mind.

**Vousoir:** A wedge-shaped brick or stone used to form the curved part of an arch or vault.

**Waldensians:** A popular movement of the late twelfth century (also called the Poor of Lyon) whose members (followers of Peter Waldo) led lives of poverty, read the Gospels in the vernacular, and encouraged lay people to preach. Interest in the movement was fueled by a famine that struck the city of Lyon in 1176, creating inequity in the distribution of resources, as well as by evidence of clerical corruption in the church of Lyon.

**Warming room:** A space, often adjacent to the refectory on the south side of a monastery (under the dormitory in the Saint-Gall plan), where a fire was kept burning during the winter months.

**Wattle and daub:** A building material consisting of wattle, a light mesh of laths or interwoven twigs, covered with mud, stucco, or brick.

**Westwork:** The monumental western front to a church involving a tower or group of towers and containing an entrance and vestibule below and a chapel above.

**Wimple:** A small veil or shawl-like garment worn over the neck and upper chest, usually draped, pleated, or tucked. Attached at the sides of the head either by ties or pins, they were worn sometimes as loose coverings and at other times fitted so as to adhere closely to the neck. Wimples were stylish in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, but by the second half of the fourteenth century, they were primarily conservative garments worn only by nuns, ladies in mourning, and elderly women.

**Wycliffites:** Followers of the reform movement originated by the Oxford clergyman John Wyclif. See *Lollards*.



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## MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES

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### GENERAL

The Labyrinth: Resources for Medieval Studies (<http://labyrinth.Georgetown.edu>)—Produced by Georgetown University, this is one of the best resources, growing all the time, for materials about texts and culture in all languages of Medieval Europe. It contains a multitude of links to other sites about various medieval authors, online texts and translations of medieval literary works, related visual images, and other materials that bring the Middle Ages to life for students, whether beginners or advanced.

The ORB: On-Line Reference Book for Medieval Studies (<http://the-orb.net>)—This comprehensive site features a general compendium of resources, textual and otherwise, for the study of the Middle Ages, including electronic texts and translations, an encyclopedia of terms, and links to other important sites about medieval European culture.

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### ARCHITECTURE

Amiens Cathedral: An Animated Glossary ([http://www.learn.columbia.edu/amiens\\_flash/](http://www.learn.columbia.edu/amiens_flash/))—Produced by the Media Center for Art History, Archaeology & Historic Preservation at Columbia University in New York City, this useful beginners-level site matches the cathedral's ground plan and elevation to key terms in architecture. Clicking on a term causes the appropriate area on the diagram to be highlighted, and vice versa.

*Cathedrals: Notre Dame to the National Cathedral*, A&E, 50 minutes, 1995. VHS Media for the Arts #AAE95010—

This video explores the engineering feats (some of which have not changed in 900 years) involved in creating Gothic cathedrals.

A Digital Archive of Architecture ([http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/cas/fnart/arch/contents\\_europe.html](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/arch/contents_europe.html))—This site was created by Professor Jeffery Howe at Boston College. Images include Romanesque cathedrals, Gothic cathedrals, medieval fortifications, rural architecture, and half-timbered houses, with special attention to Belgian architecture, including Bruges.

*The Great Cathedral at Amiens*, VHS or DVD. Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 29 minutes color, #JEY11430—Looking at both the history and the engineering of one of the monumental achievements of the High Gothic period, this film examines a thirteenth-century cathedral that stands 140 feet high, is virtually all windows, and could accommodate 10,000 people.

*The Jeweled City: The Cathedral of Chartres*, BBC. Text written and narrated by Professor Christopher Frayling. 50 minutes color, 1995. Films for the Humanities & Sciences #JEY7624—This documentary is a narrated tour of the cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic architecture built between 1150 and 1220, with commentary on the religious and political sentiments of the time. It is one of five films in a series now entitled *The Medieval Mind* but originally called *Strange Landscape: The Illumination of the Middle Ages*.

The Lost Medieval Village (<http://loki.stockton.edu/~ken/wharram/wharram.htm>)—This site about the lost village of Wharram Percy contains descriptions and artist's renderings of both peasant houses and manor houses

from a long-deserted village in northern England as it was in the thirteenth century.

*Notre Dame: Cathedral of Amiens*, Media Center for History, Columbia University, 2 vol., 1997. VHS Media for the Arts Series #CP6152—This two-part high-tech architectural video describes the thirteenth-century construction of Amiens Cathedral.

*Walls Of Light: The History of Stained Glass*, VHS, 85 minutes, 1997. Media for the Arts #CP6153—This is a documentary on the history of stained and leaded glass from its beginnings in the Middle East 5,000 years ago up to the exciting works of today's artists. Rare pieces are included from locations in five continents.

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## DANCE

*A L'Estampida: Medieval Dance Music*. Dufay Collective. Audio CD Avie #AV0015. ASIN: B00008LJGB—This CD recording, released in August 2003, offers examples of several estampies and saltarellos, including the Robertsbridge Codex estampie and “La Rotta.”

*Chevrefoil*, Istanpitta Medieval Music Ensemble. Audio CD. Avatar Music.—Besides including the complete text of *Chevrefoil* by the Anglo-French twelfth-century poet Marie de France, this CD made by a Texas-based early music group includes examples of an estampie, a salterello, and the ballo “Petit Vriens,” performed on oud, saz, medieval bagpipes, recorder, vielle, Gothic harp, and long tabors.

The Library of Congress page on Burgundian Dance in the Late Middle Ages (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diessay1.html>)—This site discusses the history of western social dance.

Medieval Dance Picture Collection (<http://www.uni-mainz.de/~khoppe/sammlung/>)—This repository includes images of medieval dance, including manuscripts, wall-paintings, sculpture, and photos of modern performances.

*Music of the Troubadours*, Ensemble Unicorn and Ensemble Oni Wytars. Dir. Michael Posch and Marco Ambrosini. Naxos 8554257—Songs in French and Provençal are sung by a female voice with instrumental accompaniment.

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## FASHION

Circa: 1265, Male Clothing and Armor (<http://www.bumply.com/Medieval/Kit/kit.htm>)—This site, designed to give information for historical re-enactors, provides

detailed descriptions and drawings of each piece of medieval male clothing, along with photographs of modern reproductions and links to thirteenth-century source images.

Extant Clothing of the Middle Ages (<http://www.virtue.to/articles/extant.html>)—This site, assembled by Cynthia du Pré Argent, contains photographs and descriptions of complete garments, generally earlier than 1500, which are preserved in museums. It includes men's and women's clothing, jewelry, and shoes.

Footwear of the Middle Ages (<http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/shoe/SHOEHOME.HTM>)—This site examines the history and development of footwear and shoemaking techniques up to the end of the sixteenth century. Includes discussion and illustrations of particular shoe types, such as turned shoes, pattens, clogs, and long-toed shoes, as well as details about shoe decorations, tools and techniques, and methods of construction. It provides detailed instructions and patterns for making shoes, as well as a bibliography of research about them.

Historical Clothing from Archaeological Finds (<http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/cloth/bockhome.html>)—This document is intended to be a cursory examination, for people interested in historical recreation and replication, of the extant archaeological and museum materials relating to clothing in the Middle Ages, with images redrawn by the author. It covers all the basic garments—kirtles, cotes, tunics, gowns, chemises, smocks, etc.—as well as hoods, hats, hose, shoes, and weaving and spinning.

Index of Resources: Skin Out ([http://www.maisonstclair.org/resources/skin\\_out/](http://www.maisonstclair.org/resources/skin_out/))—This index of costume resources, prepared for re-enactors, provides access to an excellent collection of actual manuscript miniatures illustrating all aspects of male and female costume. Most useful are the links called “Menswear,” “Womenswear,” “Skin Out,” and “Bare Necessities,” which illustrate each type of garment one by one.

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## LITERATURE

*The Camelot Project at the University of Rochester* (<http://www.lin.Rochester.edu/Camelot/cphome.stm?CFID=890430&CFTOKEN=5688408>)—This compendium of resources having to do with the world of King Arthur, medieval Arthurian romance, and Arthurian medievalism includes links to electronic texts, visual images, and related websites. The Main Menu lists Arthurian characters, symbols, and sites; sub-menus direct visitors to basic information, texts, images, and a bibliography about that subject.

*The Decameron*. Dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italian, subtitled, 1971, Water Bearer Films, 116 min., VHS and DVD.—An adaptation of eight stories of the hundred in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, this is part of the director's medieval trilogy, which included films of the *Arabian Nights* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. This film captures the earthy spirit of the Italian author's realism. Rated R.

The Decameron Web ([http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb/dweb.shtml](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/dweb.shtml))—Sponsored by the Italian Department at Brown University, this site is an interlinked resource containing the text of Boccaccio's *Decameron* as well as many links to information about cultural contexts of Boccaccio's Italy and medieval Europe.

*Gawain and the Green Knight*. Dir. John Phillips, Thames Productions, 90 minutes, VHS and DVD, 1991. Films for the Humanities & Sciences FFH 3084.—This feature film is an extraordinarily faithful cinematic rendering of the Middle English romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Phillips succeeds in getting settings, costumes, the material culture of the feast and hunt scenes accurate for the period, and the depiction of the human-monstrous Green Knight surpasses other earlier film versions such as Stephen Weeks's *Sword of the Valiant*.

*Excalibur*. Dir. John Boorman, Orion, 141 minutes, VHS and DVD, 1981.—This feature film, though it claims to be based on Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, actually better reflects the vast thirteenth-century *Vulgate Cycle* of Arthurian romances, including major treatments of not only all aspects of Arthur's life, but also Perceval's Grail Quest and the activities of such important Arthurian characters as Merlin, Morgan le Faye, Guinevere, Lancelot, and Mordred. Boorman's film is noted for its epic sweep and its employment of a mythic perspective to the legend. Rated R.

The Harvard Chaucer Page (<http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer>)—Sponsored by Harvard University, this site offers a multitude of materials to enhance the study of Chaucer's texts and his cultural milieu both in England and on the Continent.

*Lancelot of the Lake*. Dir. Robert Bresson, French, subtitled, 1974, New Yorker Video, VHS and DVD—A dark, de-romanticized cinematic version of the Arthurian legend, particularly the Grail Quest and the romance between Guinevere and Lancelot, very different from Boorman's grand epic treatment or Bresson's simplicity and stylization. Rated PG.

*The Middle English Collection at the Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia* (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/mideng.browse.html>)—This site features electronic texts of most major works of Middle English Literature, in-

cluding those by Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, the Gawain-poet, and William Langland.

*Perceval* (also titled *Perceval le Gallois*). Dir. Eric Rohmer, Fox Lorber, 141 minutes, French with English subtitles, VHS and DVD, 1979—This feature film is an extraordinarily faithful cinematic rendering of Chrétien de Troyes's romance about the Grail Quest, *Perceval*. Rohmer's visual direction is very stylized, achieving an effect of having twelfth-century manuscript illuminations come to life.

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## MUSIC

*The Age of Cathedrals: Music from the Magnus Liber Organi*. Theatre of Voices. Dir. Paul Hillier. Harmonia Mundi France 907157—This 1996 CD includes anonymous works, as well as works by such composers as Leonin and Perotin, documenting the emergence of polyphony. The disc comes with a deluxe set of notes, including texts, translations, and color photographs of the manuscript basis of the music.

*Ancient Voices: Vox sacra*. Anonymous 4, Ensemble Organum, Marcel Pérès, Soeur Marie Keyrouz. Harmonia mundi HMX 290 608—This collection presents a selection of masses, lyrics, sequences, antiphons, hymns, motets, and offices, as well as Byzantine, Maronite, and Melchite chant.

*Chant: The Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos*. Dir. Ismael Fernandez de la Cuesta and Francisco Lara. EMI Angel 55138—In this 1994 recording, a twenty-man choir sings in the Solesmes style.

Early Music FAQ (<http://www.medieval.org/emfaq/>)—This website provides lists of recordings, biographies, discographies, and helpful short articles on such technical topics as "Pythagorean Tuning and Medieval Polyphony" and "Chord Structure in Medieval Music."

*A Feather on the Breath of God: Sequences and Hymns by Abbess Hildegard of Bingen*. Gothic Voices. Dir. Christopher Page. Hyperion 66039—This 1981 recording began the popularization of Hildegard's music, with performances alternating soloists and unison choir over a drone (bagpipes) or using a single unaccompanied voice. It is Hyperion's best-selling title.

The Gregorian Chant Home Page ([http://www.music.princeton.edu/chant\\_html/](http://www.music.princeton.edu/chant_html/))—Chant Research Sites listed include Medieval Music Theory Sites, Resources for Chant Performance, Other Chant Web Sites, and Web Sites Helpful for Chant Researchers.

A Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Instruments (<http://www.s-hamilton.k12.ia.us/antiqua/instrumt.html>)—

This website provides illustrations and short sound recordings to demonstrate 32 medieval instruments.

Malaspina Great Books ([http://www.malaspina.com/site/results\\_c5\\_p7\\_page1.htm](http://www.malaspina.com/site/results_c5_p7_page1.htm))—This site offers biographies, bibliographies, and links on ten medieval composers.

*Music of the Troubadours*. Ensemble Unicorn and Ensemble Oni Wytars. Dir. Michael Posch and Marco Ambrosini. Naxos 8554257—Songs in French and Provençal are sung by a female voice with instrumental accompaniment.

*Musica humana*. Anonymous 4, Ruth Cunningham, and Marsha Genenski, et al. Dir. Brigitte Lesne and Marcel Pérès. Empreinte digitale (L) ED 13 047—This wide-ranging 1996 CD includes selections from Machaut and Ockeghem, as well as a variety of music from the Byzantine world and the Middle East.

*My Fayre Ladye: Tudor Songs and Chant*. Lionheart. Nimbus 5512—This 1997 CD performed by a male ensemble includes a number of types of late medieval English music, some based on the Eton choirbook. Texts and modern English translations are given.

*Paschale Mysterium: Gregorian Chant for Easter*. Aurora Surgit. Dir. Alessio Randon and Alberto Turco. Naxos 553697—This CD featuring a female vocal ensemble and solos by Alessio Randon takes chant from various eras to create a program for the Catholic Easter vigil.

The Recorder in Literature and Art (<http://members.iinet.net.au/~nickl/fortune.html>)—In a site entitled “A Pipe For Fortune’s Finger: The Recorder in Literature and Art,” Nicholas S. Lander presents a thorough history of the recorder from medieval to modern times, with a wealth of illustrations from medieval art, numerous literary references, and a list of bibliographical sources.

*El Sabio: Songs for King Alfonso X of Castile and Leon (1221–1284)*. Sequentia. Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 77234—This 1991 CD includes songs mostly from the collection of over 400 *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, made for Alfonso X “The Wise.”

*Sumer is Icumen in: Medieval English Songs*. Hilliard Ensemble. Dir. Paul Hillier. Harmonia Mundi 1951154—Songs are performed in Middle English, Middle French, and Latin, including secular and many religious lyrics.

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## PHILOSOPHY

EpistemeLinks.com (<http://www.epistemelinks.com/Main/Topics.aspx?TopiCode=Medi>)—This site provides a collection of links to resources in medieval philosophy—a

good source for information about philosophers from all periods, portraits, chat about matters of current philosophical interest, and hot buttons to other sites that provide lists of reference materials, books, academic departments, and special features, such as famous quotations.

Medieval Philosophy Texts Online (<http://www.fred.net/tzaka/medvtxt.html>)—An excellent source of various full and excerpted texts from the time period, this site also provides links to other websites on the medieval period.

Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy (<http://www.lmu.edu/smrp/>)—This site provides updated bibliographies (twice yearly) and other information of interest to historians of medieval philosophy.

Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics (<http://www.fordham.edu/gsas/phil/klima/SMLM/index.htm>)—This site provides links to professional societies and recent publications.

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## RELIGION

*Becket*. Dir. Peter Glenville, with Richard Burton and Peter O’Toole (1964)—This film depicts the relationship between the English king Henry II and his friend Thomas Becket. A serious conflict occurs when Becket, who is Henry’s chancellor, accepts an appointment as the archbishop of Canterbury. Traditional elements of the medieval church-state rivalries are portrayed. Rated R.

*Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire*. Europe in the Middle Ages Series (1989), dist. Films for the Humanities & Sciences—This 31-minute color documentary depicts life at court as well as the Battle of Roncevaux; it ends with the critical church-state confrontation between Henry IV and Gregory VII.

Franciscan Authors, 13th–18th Century: A Catalogue in Progress (<http://users.bart.nl/%7eroestb/franciscan/index.htm>)—This alphabetical list of Franciscan authors from the thirteenth century onwards includes biographies and information on miracles, manuscripts, editions, and studies.

Internet Medieval Sourcebook ([www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html))—This general website on the Middle Ages includes countless links to topics concerning religion.

*The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Dir. Carl Theodor Dreyer, with Maria Falconetti and Eugene Silvain (1928)—A new boxed DVD collection includes this classic silent film, which has been digitally restored and enhanced by original orchestral work from Richard Einhorn’s *Voices of*

*Light*. The music is performed with lines from actual texts of medieval women mystics by Anonymous 4 and soloist Susan Narucki. There are also interactive essays on the production of the film, a libretto booklet from Einhorn, and historical information on Joan's life. Much of the film was inspired by the transcripts of the trials of Joan, an early fifteenth-century teenage peasant girl who is called by heavenly voices to lead the French army against the English, subsequently captured by the Burgundians, and tried in a church court for heresy and witchcraft.

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## THEATER

European Medieval Drama in Translation (Steve Wright, Catholic University of America) (<http://arts-sciences.cua.edu/engl/faculty/drama/index.cfm>)—This site provides an online bibliography of published English translations of early European drama, including Latin, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Cornish, Welsh, and Croatian.

Hildegard of Bingen, *Ordo virtutum*. Performed by Sequentia. Dir. Barbara Thornton and Benjamin Bagby. Deutsche Harmonia Mundi. 05472-77394-2—Recorded in the Basilica of Knechtsteden, Germany, in June 1998, this two-CD set offers a full performance of the innovative twelfth-century musical drama *The Service of the Virtues*. Music ranges from the Soul's weary lament as she returns from her sojourn with the devil to the grunts and shouts of the devil himself, who cannot sing because music is heavenly.

*Lo Gai Saber: Troubadours and Jongleurs, 1100–1300*. Performed by Camerata Mediterranea. Dir. Joel Cohen. Erato 2292-45647-2—Among its 21 performances, this 1992 CD includes *Le jeu de Robin et de Marion* (The Play of Robin and Marion) by Adam de la Halle, as well as songs by famous troubadours, such as “Lancan vei la folha” by Bernart de Ventadorn and “Dirai vos senes duptansa” by Marcabru.

*Ludus Danielis*. Performed by the Harp Consort. Deutsche Harmonia Mundi. 05472-77395-2—Recorded in April 1997 at St. Bartholomew's Church, Oxford, this CD captures a live performance of a medieval “opera” (The Play of Daniel) from the 13th-century cathedral in Beauvais. Musical instruments include the vielle, the shawm, the gittern, the psaltery, and the medieval harp, lute, and drone organ.

The Medieval and Renaissance Drama Society (<http://www.byu.edu/~hurlbut/mrds/mrds.html>)—The site for this academic organization offers twice yearly news-letters and information about research opportunities.

Medieval Drama Links (University of Leeds) (<http://collectorspost.com/Catalogue/medramalinks.htm>)—This set of about 200 links, collected personally by Sydney Higgins, is most useful for its access to information on sets, props, and make-up, and to images of manuscripts (such as the *Jeu de Robin et de Marion*).

*The Mysteries*. Produced by the Royal National Theater of Great Britain. Heritage Theater Video Production/BBC. VHS 3904013—This work is a complete performance of a medieval play, recorded in September 2002.

The St. Albans Psalter (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/stalbanspsalter/>)—This website includes an introduction to the story of the Psalter, as well as page-by-page photographs of this beautiful multi-colored document, with English transcription of the text printed alongside.

The Oberammergau Passion Play ([http://www.passionsspiele2000.de/passnet/english/index\\_e.html](http://www.passionsspiele2000.de/passnet/english/index_e.html))—This is the official site, including tourist information, for the German town where performances of their local medieval passion play have taken place every ten years since 1634, with the next performance scheduled for 2010.

*The Play of Daniel* and *The Play of Herod*. Performed by New York Pro Musica. Dir. Noah Greenberg. MCA Classics. MCAD2-10102—This two-CD set offers a compilation of earlier recordings of the Play of Daniel at The Cloisters in New York City, January 1958 (40 minutes), and The Play of Herod from January 1964 (75 minutes). Both feature vocal and period musical performances, including the boy choristers of the Church of the Transfiguration, New York.

Poculi Ludique Societas—Medieval and Renaissance Players of Toronto (<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~plspls/>)—This site offers information on past, present, and future productions, with extensive archives of photos.

The York Cycle in York, England (<http://www.yorkearlymusic.org/mysteryplays/index1.htm>)—This official site for the York Early Music Foundation includes a history of the York Corpus Christi plays and video clips from the 1998 production.

The York Cycle in Toronto, Canada (1998) (<http://arts-sciences.cua.edu/engl/toronto/york98.htm>)—This record of the performance of the entire York cycle in Toronto in 1998 includes discussions of history, staging, and sources, as well as pictures from all 47 plays.

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## VISUAL ARTS

The Aberdeen Bestiary ([http://www.clues.abdn.ac.uk:8080/bestiary\\_old/firstpag.html](http://www.clues.abdn.ac.uk:8080/bestiary_old/firstpag.html))—Sponsored by the University

of Aberdeen Library and Department of History of Art, this website offers a full set of digitized images from a medieval bestiary, a type of book that probably originated in Greece and that began to be produced in Britain by the twelfth century. The manuscript is organized as a collection of short descriptions of all sorts of animals, real and imaginary, birds and even rocks, accompanied by a moralizing explanation.

Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland (<http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/>)—The first searchable digital archive of Romanesque British and Irish stone sculpture, this site is adding new data county by county to provide images and detailed descriptions from all locations representing the Romanesque period.

A Hypertext Book of Hours (<http://members.tripod.com/~gunhouse/hourstxt/hrstoc.htm>)—This site offers side-by-side Latin and English texts illustrating the structure and contents of a Book of Hours. It can be downloaded as a zip file and used off-line. The site also offers numerous links to sites with illuminated images from Books of Hours.

Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts (<http://www.kb.nl/kb/manuscripts/>)—Hosted by the National Library of the Netherlands, this site allows visitors to browse through the library's manuscripts, as well as to search by subject or by more specialized categories, such as scribe, miniaturist, language, and place of origin. Text is available in English, German, and French.

Timeline of Art History (<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/splash.htm>)—Hosted by the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, this site allows visitors to choose a spot on a timeline and a location on a world map to see images of individual works of art owned by the museum that represent the indicated time and place. Each work is carefully labeled and shown in the context of other objects from the same region and period.

Web Gallery of Art (<http://gallery.euroweb.hu/welcome.html>)—This website “contains over 11,600 digital reproductions of European paintings and sculptures created between the years 1150 and 1800” supplemented with commentary on their technique and history. The site has been online since 1996.





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by Charles W. Dunn. Translated by Harry W. Robbins. Copyright © 1962 by Florence L. Robbins. Renewed 1990 by Penguin Books USA, Inc. Reproduced by permission of Dutton, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.—Ebreo, Guglielmo. From "Rules for Women," in *De Pratica Seu Arte Tripudii: On the Practice or Art of Dancing*. Edited and translated by Barbara Sparti. Clarendon Press, 1993. Copyright © Barbara Sparti 1993. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.—Elton, G. R. From "Dietrich von Nieheim (c. 1340–1418): The Union and Reform of the Church by a General Council (1410)," in *Renaissance and Reformation 1300–1648*. Edited by G. R. Elton. The Macmillan Company, 1963. Copyright © 1963 by The Macmillan Company. Copyright renewed © 1991 by G. R. Elton. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.—Grosseteste, Robert. From *On Light or The Beginning of Forms*. Translated by Clare C. Riedl. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1942, 1978. Reproduced by permission of Marquette University Press.—Nicholas II, Pope. From "The Legislation of 1059," in *The Crisis of Church and State 1050–1300*. Edited by Brian Tierney. Copyright © 1964 by Prentice-Hall, Inc. Copyright renewed © 1992 by Brian Tierney. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group.—Peters, Edward. From "Quantum Praedecessores Nostri, 1146," in *The First Crusade, The Chronicles of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*. Edited by Edward Peters. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971. Reproduced by permission.—Photius. From "Homily XVII," in *The Early Middle Ages 500–1000*. Edited by Robert Brentano. Free Press of Glencoe, 1964. Reproduced by permission of The Gale Group.

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Renaissance Europe  
1300–1600

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# CONTENTS

ABOUT THE BOOK . . . . .	ix	High and Late Renaissance Courtly Dance . . . . .	66
CONTRIBUTORS . . . . .	xi	Theatrical Dance . . . . .	70
ERA OVERVIEW . . . . .	xiii	Folk Dancing in Europe . . . . .	75
CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD EVENTS . . . . .	xxi	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
CHAPTER 1: ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN		Thoinot Arbeau . . . . .	81
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	Fabrizio Caroso . . . . .	81
OVERVIEW . . . . .	4	Catherine de' Medici . . . . .	82
TOPICS IN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN		Cesare Negri . . . . .	83
The Birth of the Renaissance Style . . . . .	6	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	84
The High Renaissance . . . . .	17	CHAPTER 3: FASHION	
The Later Renaissance In Italy . . . . .	25	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	86
The Architectural Renaissance Throughout Europe . . . . .	37	OVERVIEW . . . . .	89
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		TOPICS IN FASHION	
Leon Battista Alberti . . . . .	50	The Regulation of Clothing . . . . .	90
Filippo Brunelleschi . . . . .	51	Fashion as an Industry . . . . .	98
Francis I . . . . .	53	Early Renaissance Styles . . . . .	103
Andrea Palladio . . . . .	54	High and Late Renaissance Fashion . . . . .	107
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	55	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
CHAPTER 2: DANCE		Bernard of Siena . . . . .	111
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	58	Lucrezia Borgia . . . . .	112
OVERVIEW . . . . .	60	Francesco Datini . . . . .	113
TOPICS IN DANCE		Elizabeth I . . . . .	114
Courtly Dance in the Early Renaissance . . . . .	61	Marie de' Medici . . . . .	115
		DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	116
		CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE	
		IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	118

OVERVIEW . . . . .	121	Michel de Montaigne . . . . .	252
TOPICS IN LITERATURE		Francesco Petrarch . . . . .	253
Early Renaissance Literature . . . . .	122	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	254
The Fifteenth Century in Italy . . . . .	129	CHAPTER 7: RELIGION	
The High and Later Renaissance . . . . .	135	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	258
The Northern Renaissance . . . . .	141	OVERVIEW . . . . .	262
Renaissance Women Writers . . . . .	155	TOPICS IN RELIGION	
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		The Late-Medieval Church . . . . .	264
Pietro Aretino . . . . .	160	Renaissance Piety . . . . .	269
Giovanni Boccaccio . . . . .	161	The Reformation's Origins . . . . .	277
Marguerite of Navarre . . . . .	162	The Spread of Protestantism in Northern	
Thomas More . . . . .	163	Europe . . . . .	285
Hans Sachs . . . . .	165	The Council of Trent . . . . .	294
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	166	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
CHAPTER 5: MUSIC		John Calvin . . . . .	302
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	168	Catherine of Siena . . . . .	303
OVERVIEW . . . . .	171	Ignatius Loyola . . . . .	305
TOPICS IN MUSIC		Martin Luther . . . . .	306
Music and the Renaissance . . . . .	173	St. Teresa of Avila . . . . .	308
Renaissance Innovation . . . . .	176	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	309
Sixteenth Century Achievements in		CHAPTER 8: THEATER	
Secular Music . . . . .	182	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	312
Religious Music in the Later Renaissance . . . . .	193	OVERVIEW . . . . .	315
Music Theory in the Renaissance . . . . .	200	TOPICS IN THEATER	
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		Theater in the Later Middle Ages . . . . .	316
William Byrd . . . . .	204	The Renaissance Theater in Italy . . . . .	323
Guillaume Dufay . . . . .	204	The Renaissance Theater in Northern	
Josquin des Prez . . . . .	205	Europe . . . . .	331
Orlando di Lasso . . . . .	206	The Commercial Theater in England . . . . .	337
Claudio Monteverdi . . . . .	207	Renaissance Theater in Spain . . . . .	345
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina . . . . .	207	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	208	Ludovico Ariosto . . . . .	350
CHAPTER 6: PHILOSOPHY		Alexandre Hardy . . . . .	351
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	212	Christopher Marlowe . . . . .	352
OVERVIEW . . . . .	214	William Shakespeare . . . . .	353
TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY		Torquato Tasso . . . . .	355
Scholasticism in the Later Middle Ages . . . . .	216	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	356
Humanism in the Early Renaissance . . . . .	225	CHAPTER 9: VISUAL ARTS	
Renaissance Platonism . . . . .	232	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	358
Humanism Outside Italy . . . . .	238	OVERVIEW . . . . .	361
New Trends in Sixteenth-Century		TOPICS IN VISUAL ARTS	
Thought . . . . .	242	The Early Renaissance in Italy . . . . .	363
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		The Early Renaissance In Northern	
Desiderius Erasmus . . . . .	248	Europe . . . . .	376
Marsilio Ficino . . . . .	249	The High Renaissance in Italy . . . . .	386
Niccolò Machiavelli . . . . .	251		

The High and Later Renaissance in Venice . . . . .	398	Michelangelo . . . . .	425
Late Renaissance and Mannerist Painting in Italy . . . . .	405	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	426
The Arts in Sixteenth-Century Northern Europe . . . . .	412	GLOSSARY . . . . .	427
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		FURTHER REFERENCES . . . . .	439
Albrecht Dürer . . . . .	420	MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES . . . . .	445
Giotto . . . . .	422	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	451
Hans Holbein . . . . .	422	INDEX . . . . .	455
Leonardo da Vinci . . . . .	424		



## ABOUT THE BOOK

**SEEING HISTORY FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE.** An education in history involves more than facts concerning the rise and fall of kings, the conquest of lands, and the major battles fought between nations. While these events are pivotal to the study of any time period, the cultural aspects are of equal value in understanding the development of societies. Various forms of literature, the philosophical ideas developed, and even the type of clothes worn in a particular era provide important clues about the values of a society, and when these arts and humanities are studied in conjunction with political and historical events a more complete picture of that society is revealed. This inter-disciplinary approach to studying history is at the heart of the *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* project. Patterned in its organization after the successful *American Decades*, *American Eras*, and *World Eras* products, this reference work aims to expose the reader to an in-depth perspective on a particular era in history through the study of nine different arts and humanities topics:

- Architecture and Design
- Dance
- Fashion
- Literature
- Music
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Theater
- Visual Arts

Although treated in separate chapters, the connections between these topics are highlighted both in the text and through the use of “See Also” references to give the reader a broad perspective on the culture of the time period. Readers can learn about the impact of religion on literature; explore the close relationships between dance, music, and theater; and see parallel movements in architecture and visual arts. The development of each of these fields is discussed within the context of important historical events so that the reader can see history from a different angle. This angle is unique to this reference work. Most history books about a particular time period only give a passing glance to the arts and humanities in an effort to give the broadest historical treatment possible. Those reference books that do cover the arts and humanities tend to cover only one of them, generally across multiple time periods, making it difficult to draw connections between disciplines and limiting the perspective of the discipline’s impact on a specific era. In *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* each of the nine disciplines is given substantial treatment in individual chapters, and the focus on one era ensures that the analysis will be thorough.

**AUDIENCE AND ORGANIZATION.** *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* is designed to meet the needs of both the beginning and the advanced history student. The material is written by subject experts and covers a vast array of concepts and masterworks, yet these concepts are built “from the ground up” so that a reader with little or no background in history can follow them. Technical terms and other definitions appear both in the



text and in the glossary, and the background of historical events is also provided. The organization of the volume facilitates learning at all levels by presenting information in a variety of ways. Each chapter is organized according to the following structure:

- Chronology covering the important events in that discipline during that era
- Brief overview of the development of that discipline at the time
- Topics that highlight the movements, schools of thought, and masterworks that characterize the discipline during that era
- Biographies of significant people in that discipline
- Documentary sources contemporary to the time period

This structure facilitates comparative analysis, both between disciplines and also between volumes of *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*, each of which covers a different era. In addition, readers can access additional research opportunities by looking at the “Further References” and “Media and Online Sources” that appear at the back of the volume. While every effort was made to include only those online sources that are connected to institutions such as museums and universities, the web-

sites are subject to change and may become obsolete in the future.

**PRIMARY DOCUMENTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.** In an effort to provide the most in-depth perspective possible, *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* also includes numerous primary documents from the time period, offering a first-hand account of the culture from the people who lived in it. Letters, poems, essays, epitaphs, and songs are just some of the multitude of document types included in this volume, all of which illuminate some aspect of the discipline being discussed. The text is further enhanced by 150 illustrations, maps, and line drawings that bring a visual dimension to the learning experience.

**CONTACT INFORMATION.** The editors welcome your comments and suggestions for enhancing and improving *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*. Please mail comments or suggestions to:

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## ERA OVERVIEW

**DATING THE RENAISSANCE.** The concept of the Renaissance as a broad cultural renewal in European history that occurred at the end of the Middle Ages has long been used to structure the larger narrative of Western history. This book focuses on developments in the arts, literature, religion, and philosophy between 1300 and 1600—three centuries that saw the rise of distinctive attitudes toward human creativity and its artistic and philosophical expression which shaped our modern notion of the humanities and the arts. The act of dating an historical period is significant in that it often reveals the underlying assumptions of those who establish the dates. Choosing a beginning or ending date for a period often highlights a particular development or event as decisive in producing key changes in the years that follow it. So, for instance, modern historians have often chosen the date 1789, the beginning of the French Revolution, as a decisive turning point leading to the rise of the modern period. In this way dating or naming a period also functions as a kind of intellectual shorthand that allows us to identify key changes that occurred from one period to the next. But in reality all schemes of historical periodization are artificial constructs. Scholars might speak of “nineteenth-century Victorian values,” “Cold War mentalities,” or “medieval economic realities,” but human history itself is a web of events and movements in which what comes before continues to shape what follows. Societies are too varied and complex to be understood completely according to simplistic terminologies, and a time’s values or beliefs do not change suddenly with the rise of a new king or political party. So, too, the Renaissance did not sweep away elements

of medieval life. Instead it is best conceived as a broad, but sometimes diffuse, cultural renewal that affected the ideas, perceptions, and mentalities particularly of the upper classes and learned elite over a long stretch of European history. The choice of the dates 1300–1600 used in this volume has been largely one of convenience and tradition. Some historians have argued that the Renaissance’s beginnings should be dated later, often around 1450; more recently, others have pushed back the rise of Renaissance values into the thirteenth century. The traditional periodization used here has been adopted for several reasons. The date 1300 corresponds roughly to the birth of Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374), a figure long noted as vital to the formation of Renaissance philosophy and literature. The fourteenth century also witnessed the first glimmer of a new naturalism in sculpture and painting, and it saw key changes in fashion and style as well. Although much of the tenor of fourteenth-century life seems traditional and medieval in nature, great economic and social changes were underway in Europe at this time that brought forth a new kind of society and intellectual life. These changes often appear in stark contrast to the relative peace and stability that had prevailed in Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Increased famine, economic recession, the enormous catastrophe of the Black Death (1347–1351), as well as a series of great peasant and urban revolts were just a few of the trials that gripped the fourteenth century. From these trials a new set of economic and social realities was born that led to the even greater flowering of art and intellectual culture that occurred in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

**THE END OF THE RENAISSANCE.** It is relatively easy to identify forces at work in the fourteenth century that helped to produce renewal in Europe, but the question of when the Renaissance ended is considerably more problematic. It has been argued that the relatively free and tolerant attitude of Renaissance intellectuals began to change with the rise of the Reformation in the first half of the sixteenth century—that the rise of Protestantism and the Counter-Reformation, in other words, led to a gradual eclipse of the Renaissance in the face of a renewed religious intolerance. On the other hand, other scholars have seen key elements of Renaissance intellectual life persisting even into the late seventeenth century, when the rise of science and the early Enlightenment began to alter Europe’s high culture once again. There are elements of truth in both of these arguments, although the date of 1600 has again been used for several reasons. It corresponds roughly to the death of Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), the last great philosopher to be universally recognized as a Renaissance thinker. In 1598, moreover, the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes in France granted a limited degree of religious toleration to French Protestants, a key event in bringing to an end the religious controversies that Montaigne himself decried in much of his writing. Only a few years later, in 1603, Queen Elizabeth I passed away in England, and the period to which she had given her name, the Elizabethan Age, gradually changed as a result of the accession of the Stuart kings and the religious controversies of their reigns. All these factors justify the choice of 1600 as a date that approximates the end of the Renaissance, a date that might, of course, be fixed elsewhere if one relied on different rationale.

**CONCEPTUALIZING THE PERIOD.** The concept of the Renaissance as a rebirth of culture and intellectual life in Europe has its origins in the period itself, as intellectuals and artists of the time spoke of their time as one of progress and achievement. They contrasted the innovative and inquiring spirit of their days against the “Middle Ages” that preceded them, and in this way they helped give birth to the tripartite division of Western history into the periods of antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the modern world, that has survived ever since their time. Scholarly conceptions of the Renaissance have been greatly influenced by the work of the great Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, who published *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* in 1860. In that work, Burckhardt argued that the Renaissance witnessed a great awakening of modern individualism and human creativity, which he first saw emerging in Italy. There the absence of a strong monarch allowed the values of individual

achievement and merit to flourish, creating a society in which rank and status mattered less than a human being’s intellect and creativity. While he generally celebrated the growth of individualism in the Renaissance as a positive development in Western history, Burckhardt’s admiration for it was not unbounded. The darker side of Renaissance individualism led to the growth of a secular spirit and opened the door to intense egotism and even atheism, developments that Burckhardt saw as the root of problems in his own nineteenth-century Europe. Since Burckhardt’s time, scholarship has often assessed the validity of his model, and while certain features of his picture have survived, many have been rejected as projections of his discontent with his own age onto the very different circumstances of the Renaissance. Few scholars would now characterize the beliefs of Renaissance intellectuals as secular, or as in any way connected to the growing atheism of the nineteenth century. Instead they recognize that the Renaissance represented a curious amalgam of medieval and innovative elements. While they agree with Burckhardt that the Renaissance was a period of outstanding artistic, literary, and intellectual creativity, they have also demonstrated that these forces were at work within the constraints of a society that was often conservative and highly traditional in nature.

**THE REVIVAL OF ANTIQUITY.** The love of precedent and custom expressed itself in the Renaissance world in a deep and abiding affection for the culture of ancient Rome and Greece. During the fourteenth century, figures like Petrarch and Boccaccio reached out to the ancient world in search of values and philosophies that might help them negotiate the problems of living in an urban world. Ancient philosophy and literature had never disappeared from the Latin world of medieval Europe, but the scholars of the Middle Ages had often considered the writings of the ancients like a database of factual information and insights that might be applied to problems of Christian theology and the law. Renaissance humanism, by contrast, embraced antiquity as an inspiration for resolving ethical and moral dilemmas and for creating a philosophy that might foster virtuous living. The word “humanism” itself was a nineteenth-century creation that described those Renaissance scholars who practiced the *studia humanitatis* or “humane studies,” the origin of our modern notion of the humanities. While there was no creed or manifesto to which all these scholars subscribed, the humanists were united by a distaste for what they considered the logical and arid theorizing of scholasticism, the dominant intellectual movement of the medieval church. In place of the

scholastic curriculum, which emphasized logic, the humanists tried to create a philosophy that provided an ethical standard for living. The disciplines the humanists championed differed from place to place and across time, but most often humanists identified these studies as rhetoric (the art of graceful speaking and writing), moral philosophy, grammar, history, and poetry, perceiving the language arts as the primary keys to virtue. Beyond humanism's advocacy of a common curriculum, it remains difficult to generalize about the character of this movement. There were civic humanists, who concentrated their efforts on exploring the arts of government and civic involvement; humanists influenced by ancient Stoic philosophers, who argued that virtuous human beings should avoid social entanglements and develop an indifference to the world; and still other scholars who revived the ideas of Plato and used these to create a mystical philosophy that might join the human soul with God. Other forms of humanism also flourished in the Renaissance, and these are discussed in the pages that follow. While they attacked the methods of scholastic philosophy that prevailed in the European universities at the time, humanists could not avoid considering many of the same logical problems the scholastics had tackled in their works. Thus humanism and scholasticism shared many common concerns. At the same time the rivalry between the two movements was often intense, with the humanists attacking the scholastics' method of logical argumentation as "childish prattling" and "logic-chopping." By contrast, they argued that their goal of creating more virtuous human beings was far more important. Petrarch summarized these sentiments in the fourteenth century when he wrote, "It is better to will the good, than to understand truth." In choosing the word "truth," the fourteenth-century philosopher had in mind the scholastics' attempt to prove Christianity's teachings logically. For humanists like Petrarch, such attempts fell far short of the greater task of making Christianity's teachings relevant as a force of moral renewal.

**CHRISTIANITY AND HUMANISM.** In his *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* Burckhardt argued that secular values triumphed in the Renaissance world, a notion that has long been rejected by the scholars who followed him. Since Burckhardt's day, a long line of historians has called attention to the Christian roots of humanism and restored its character as an orthodox movement within Christianity. Indeed one prominent American scholar, Charles Trinkaus (1911–2000), demonstrated that humanism might best be conceived as a long Christian discourse on the concept of human creativity and its divine origins. Trinkaus agreed with Burckhardt that the Re-

naissance world saw an unparalleled growth in Western individualism. At the same time he called attention to the many humanists' discussions of mankind's creation in God's likeness, a Jewish and Christian teaching rooted in the scriptures. Humanist philosophers frequently considered the attributes human beings shared as a result of their creation in God's image, identifying language, poetry, music, and the arts as proof of the human race's divine origins. As the Renaissance progressed, the search for these signs of divinely inspired creativity grew more intense, and the exploration of ancient philosophy deepened, efforts that reached a high point in the movement known as Renaissance Platonism. This intellectual creed became attractive to many scholars and artists during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Renaissance Platonists like Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) attempted to harmonize the ancient philosophy of Plato with the Christianity of their day. In works like his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* Pico celebrated human creativity and the arts in some of the most extravagant and optimistic terms ever used in the Western tradition. The larger goal of these explorations of human creativity was to identify ways in which the human soul might achieve mystical union with God. To achieve these ends, the Platonists embraced astrology, poetry, music, the visual arts, metaphysics, and many occult philosophies. The emphasis they placed on the arts, however, had a definite impact in fostering a distinctive Renaissance notion of human creativity as divinely inspired. Michelangelo Buonarroti and Sandro Botticelli were just a few of the many Renaissance artists who tried to give visual expression to many Platonic teachings, while more generally, the notion of artistic inspiration as divine is to be found in many Renaissance writings.

**HUMANISM AS A PROFESSION.** During the fifteenth century humanist investigations of ancient philosophy deepened, and humanists themselves emerged as a professional group in Renaissance Italy. At this time many humanists found employment in Italy's princely courts or in its cities. The most prized and rare positions of the day were as scholars-in-residence and tutors in princely courts and in the households of Italy's wealthiest merchants, situations that provided the humanist scholars with a large amount of free time to pursue their scholarship. The Medici family, the behind-the-scenes manipulators of Florence's fifteenth-century political scene, were just one of many Italian families who supported humanist scholars in this way. Among the many figures they brought under their patronage in the fifteenth century were Marsilio Ficino and the distinguished Latinist

Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494). Humanists also found employment as secretaries in the growing state bureaucracies of Italy. Towns and princes prized these intellectuals for their mastery of the skills of graceful speaking and writing, and many humanists rose to powerful positions of authority in Italy's governments. They often became ambassadors, entrusted with representing Italy's states in diplomatic negotiations. The church also nourished humanism, as many humanists were members of monastic orders, or some took priestly vows and found employment in ecclesiastical government. At Rome, there were many humanists employed in the papal court and in the households of cardinals and other church officials. The fashion for humanism at Rome grew throughout the fifteenth century, intensifying especially after the election of the humanist Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447–1455), who assured the city a lasting role in the movement by founding the Vatican Library in 1450. This institution played a key role in furthering scholarship in the humanities over the following centuries. Of all Italy's institutions, the universities proved most resistant to the new educational movement, a mark of the ongoing rivalry between humanists and scholastics. But even in academia, humanists began to make inroads by securing a number of appointments by the later fifteenth century.

**INCREASING SCHOLARLY SOPHISTICATION.** As humanism spread as an important intellectual movement, it acquired greater sophistication in dealing with language and history. During the fourteenth century new investigations of ancient Latin showed that the language had changed greatly over time, and in the work of Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) a new discipline known as philology emerged. Philology, the historical study of literature and language, allowed scholars to date anonymous and disputed texts by examining the words, phrases, and syntax used in these documents. Although he had the support of the papacy as a scholar, Valla did not shy away from controversy. In several treatises he took on ancient claims of the church. In one of his works, for instance, he demonstrated that the *Donation of Constantine*, a document that had long been alleged to have been written by the fourth-century Roman emperor Constantine, was a forgery. Valla examined the language of the text and showed that it could not have been written earlier than the late eighth century. The papacy had long relied on this document to support its claims to secular power in Western Europe, and in this way, Valla challenged one of the church's sources of authority. His investigations into language also resulted in an important work, *The Elegancies of the Latin Language*, a grammar and stylistic manual that showed scholars how

to master the ancient Latin of the Golden Age. Valla's defense of pure Latin style had the enthusiastic support of many humanists in the fifteenth century, and the ability to write and to speak a grammatically correct ancient Latin became a mark of social distinction among Italy's elites. Other developments in fifteenth-century humanism allowed for scholars to judge the authenticity of various texts, as well as to date their origins. As scholars at the time studied ancient writings more thoroughly than before, they realized that there were frequently many variant editions of key texts. At Florence, Angelo Poliziano developed scholarly methods for establishing the authenticity of variant versions of a text, and for establishing which version was the earliest and hence likely the most authoritative. In the development of these techniques humanism played an important role in developing more critical forms of historical analysis.

**THE MOVEMENT SPREADS.** After 1450, the techniques and disciplines that the humanists had developed began to spread beyond Italy's borders, particularly to Germany, the Netherlands, England, Spain, and France. The character of humanism in northern Europe differed from place to place, but nevertheless shared certain similarities. Often humanists outside Italy pursued the mystical, magical, and artistic investigations of Renaissance Platonism. At the same time study of the Bible and the early church fathers was popular among Northern Renaissance scholars. As they studied the Bible, many humanists realized that the Latin translation that had long been used in medieval Europe, the Vulgate, had been seriously flawed with many mistranslations. By the early sixteenth century humanists like Desiderius Erasmus, John Guillaume Budé, and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples devoted themselves to biblical study and to correcting the Vulgate's errors. At the same time Northern Renaissance humanists championed the cause of reform in the church and the ethical renewal of society. Here Erasmus' brand of "Christian humanism" was particularly important, and the teachings of this greatest scholar of the Northern Renaissance influenced the demands of Protestant reformers like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, although Erasmus and many of his fellow humanists remained loyal to the church. While scholars have sometimes seen an increasingly intolerant attitude developing toward humanism in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, more recent research has called attention to the ways in which the movement's educational concerns survived to be accommodated within new Protestant and Catholic schools and their curricula. It is true that the tenor of debate the Reformation and Counter Reformation produced sometimes resulted in

new repressive measures that outlawed the critical and inquiring spirit the humanists had championed in the previous centuries. At the same time, humanism as a scholarly method survived and was transformed in the later sixteenth century to become one of the most visible legacies of the Renaissance. Its techniques and discoveries were transmitted to the seventeenth-century Baroque world, where an even more disciplined and scientific examination of ancient literature, science, and history developed.

**HUMANISM'S INFLUENCE ON THE ARTS.** As a movement, Renaissance humanism was broad and diffuse, factors that still make it difficult for historians to summarize today. At the same time its close affiliation with and influence on the arts of the Renaissance has never been in doubt. Humanists like Petrarch and Boccaccio wrote great literary works that inspired later painters and sculptors, even as both these figures' studies of ancient literature and mythology continued to inspire later artists. Until the seventeenth century the humanist Boccaccio's *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods* (1350–1373) served as a kind of textbook for artists seeking to depict mythological themes. The alliance between the visual arts and humanism, however, ran deeper than just a preference for ancient themes. In Italian Renaissance cities artists mingled freely with humanists, acquiring a familiarity with the movement and its various philosophies. The great families of the era often appointed their own resident artists, even as they kept philosophers at work in their libraries and households. Michelangelo was for a time a student in the Medici household in Florence, where he acquired more than a passing familiarity with Renaissance Platonism, the dominant philosophy of the city's humanists in the late fifteenth century. In his subsequent works as a sculptor and a painter, Michelangelo labored to give visual expression to many of the Platonic ideals he had acquired in his youth. Michelangelo's education in the Medici household was one of the more extraordinary examples of the links that developed in the Renaissance between art and learning. Yet many similar, if perhaps less dramatic ties between the visual arts and humanism appear throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In architecture, humanism's influence is readily visible in the revival of ancient styles that began in the early fifteenth century and continued through the sixteenth. Humanist scholars studied the proportions and building techniques of ancient architects like Vitruvius, often translating these works into Italian, and the designers of the time enthusiastically read and studied these new vernacular editions. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Italian archi-

itects labored to clothe the medieval cityscapes of towns like Florence, Siena, Rome, and Venice with a new veneer of classicism that gave visual expression to the new humanist ethos. Many of these buildings became vehicles for conveying philosophical truths. In designing them, architects often relied on proportions, shapes, and numerical relationships that carried with them a philosophical message. The fashion for round structures and for churches constructed in a central style with equal radiating arms were two styles whose origins can be traced to the influence of humanism, and more particularly to Renaissance Platonism. In these and many other ways, works of Renaissance art expressed the philosophical viewpoints of learned elites and the wealthy merchants and princes who commissioned them.

**STATUS OF THE ARTIST.** Another byproduct of the ties between art and humanism was a rise in the social status of artists. In 1300, artists were considered craftspeople, and were usually members of urban craft guilds. Italy and northern Europe continued to produce many figures that enjoyed modest reputations as craftsmen, and artists' affiliations with the guilds largely survived intact throughout the period. At the same time the most accomplished painters, sculptors, architects, composers, and dancers enjoyed considerable reputations for their ability to create, and the modern notion of the artist as an individual charged with a powerful and unique vision began to emerge. This transformation can be seen in the voluminous notebooks that Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo kept, or in the *Autobiography* of the boastful sixteenth-century sculptor Benvenuto Cellini. As the status of the artist as a creator rose, many of the arts also began to acquire their own histories and a sense of lineage. Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Artists* (1550) is now the most famous of the many histories of art that survive from the period, but many similar treatments of the history of music, literature, and dance were written at the time as well. A sense of achievement permeates many of these texts, a sense that is also to be found in the many theoretical manuals that treated the practice of the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, and music. Writers often traced recent innovations in their fields, crediting key figures with an enormous "divinely-inspired genius," even as they argued that these accomplishments proved the high status of a particular art form. In this way the defenders of various arts made use of the same arguments humanists had long exploited to defend their literary, philosophical, and poetic works. In some cases the claims artists made for themselves and for their art likely fell on deaf ears. Despite his own powerful sense of his art as a

divine gift, Michelangelo sometimes suffered treatment as a hired hand by the popes who employed him. They moved him from project to project at their whims, a fact that explains the many incomplete projects he left behind at his death. At the same time the enormous gifts of a Michelangelo, a Titian, a Palladio, or a Dürer gained wide recognition, and the greatest of Renaissance artists consequently rose to the status of gentlemen.

**AN ARTFUL SOCIETY.** Another feature of Renaissance life points to the vital role that all the arts played as indicators of social refinement. In his nineteenth-century classic Burckhardt called attention to the great number of “universal men” that existed in the Italy of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. One of these, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), adopted the motto “Man can do all things, if he but will,” and Alberti’s life became a testimony to the pervasiveness of his philosophy. Trained in law, he was also a humanist and took minor orders in the church, eventually finding employment as a secretary to the humanist pope Nicholas V. While pursuing a life of active engagement in public affairs, Alberti became a practicing architect, sculptor, and painter, and his theoretical treatises on these subjects were widely read and disseminated among artists of the time. He was a gymnast, a horseman, a poet, a musician and composer, a theologian, a mathematician, and a philosopher. To his many other talents, Alberti also added skills as a comic, writing a number of popular spoofs on the lives of animals. This short snapshot of his many talents shows the role that the arts and humanities played in the Italian Renaissance. They were signs of refinement that displayed one’s ability to live graciously. This trend intensified in the sixteenth-century world, and the ability to write at least a passable sonnet; to paint and sculpt; and to dance, sing, play an instrument, and compose music all became celebrated as skills necessary to participate in an increasingly rarefied court society. The conduct manuals of the time taught courtiers and wealthy patricians in Italy’s cities how to refine their conversation, even as they often included an almost endless list of skills that were necessary for anyone hoping to be admitted into aristocratic society. Of these texts, Baldassare Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* (1528) survives as the most famous and influential. In the course of the sixteenth century conduct manuals like this became popular in almost every corner of Renaissance Europe. They soon acquired a broader readership, being studied not only by courtiers and patricians but also by members of the urban bourgeoisie. As the conduct manual moved into these new frontiers, writers pared down the number of skills and arts that were nec-

essary for their readers to master, while preserving some like dancing and singing as essential tools that demonstrated a person’s refinement. This tendency can be seen already in Thomas Elyot’s *Book of the Governor* (1531), one of the most widely read conduct manuals to survive from England. Elyot knew that the urban men for whom he wrote had neither the time nor the inclination to master all the disciplines and arts promoted in a rarefied courtly manual like Castiglione’s, so he condensed the essence of that earlier work and showed his readers only the most essential skills for functioning in civil society. In this way achievement in the arts and at least a passable degree of classical learning functioned as necessary skills for those who desired to participate in the public world.

**NEW MEDIA.** The rise of technological innovations in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe also influenced the arts and the humanities in new ways. The most visible and important of the many new media that emerged in the Renaissance was the printing press, which greatly increased the flow of information in Europe and played a vital role in informing artists and scholars of key developments elsewhere in the continent. Printing helped to fuel the dynamism of the religious controversies of the Reformation, while at the same time allowing for music, dances, plays, and other art forms to be performed far from the place at which they were written or composed. With the development of woodcut illustration and copper engraving techniques, the press also contributed greatly to the visual arts, giving birth to new forms of pictorial art that have persisted since the Renaissance. At the same time printing also constricted the rich variety of local art forms that had long flourished throughout Europe, particularly in the performing arts. As performance manuals in both dance and music sanctioned one set of practices as correct over other possibilities, longstanding local performance customs began to disappear in favor of the ones in printed books. In musical composition, too, the popularity of printed madrigals and motets throughout Europe tended to eclipse many native forms of music. Printing also sounded the death knell for the art of hand copying and illuminating manuscripts with beautiful miniatures. Scribes simply could no longer compete with the cheaper flood of books that now poured from Europe’s printing houses. At the same time, printing was only the most visible of the many technological innovations that transformed the arts and scholarship in Renaissance Europe. In painting, new techniques in oils allowed for a broader range of color and provided artists with a medium that was more adaptable to an artist’s expressive brushwork



than the true tempera techniques used in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. In music, new instruments similarly increased the tonal range and volume of instruments, even as rich forms of polyphony introduced a new harmonic complexity and depth of sound in choral music. This list of technical innovations that occurred in the arts and humanistic scholarship of the period might be lengthened considerably, and it forms a significant focus in all the chapters that follow. But more fundamentally the rise of a climate of technological experimentation points to the development of a culture increasingly concerned with pioneering ways of mastering and extending the possibilities of the natural world, an observation that many scholars have long associated with the Renaissance. At the same time not every attempt to improve artistic production or scholarly techniques was successful. In creating his famous painting of the Last Supper at Milan, Leonardo da Vinci experimented with a new medium of fresco that mixed traditional pigments with oils. Soon after he completed his work, the painting began literally to slide off the wall, much to the chagrin of art lovers ever since. But many more technical innovations were successful than unsuccessful, and the legacy of Renaissance experimentation greatly extended the expressive power of the arts in Europe over the centuries that followed.

**THE VERNACULAR LANGUAGES.** A final fundamental transformation of which readers of this volume should be aware is the rise of vernacular languages as literary modes of expression, a development that did not proceed at the same rate in all of Europe's national cultures. Of all the medieval national languages spoken in Europe, only French had a rich tradition of use as a literary language during the Middle Ages. While native epics, religious poems, and other works survive from before 1300 in all Europe's languages, the explosion of vernacular literature in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries is undeniable. This rise of literary forms of Italian, German, Spanish, and English occurred at the same time as humanists avidly pursued the revival of a grammatically correct and uncorrupted style in Latin. In these efforts the works of the ancient Roman Golden Age, including the writings of Cicero, Livy, Horace, and Ovid, guided Renaissance authors. By 1500, their efforts in defense of an ancient pure form of Latin had triumphed over the many medieval usages that had long flourished in the language. The revival of classical Latin was widely successful; writers produced more literature in the language during the sixteenth century than at any other time in history. At the same time, the efforts of humanism in defense of pure Latin style produced a para-

doxical effect, since the language was no longer a living and expanding language as it had been throughout most of the Middle Ages when new vocabulary and usages had been constantly introduced over time. Scholars and authors soon became aware that Latin was no longer a growing, vital language, and many sensed that the future lay in the vernacular languages. The rise of native forms of Italian, French, Spanish, English, and German consequently began to inspire many disputes about the literary styles that were appropriate for these languages. In every country authors debated which dialect of the language and which syntax and vocabulary were best suited for writing in French, German, or English. These heated debates reveal to us the excitement surrounding the possibilities the native languages offered. In his *Book of the Courtier* Baldassare Castiglione neatly summarized this excitement when he judged Latin a "dead" language, and instead advocated his readers adopt the lively conversational form of Tuscan Italian since it was "a garden full of sundry fruits and flowers." The new nectar writers like Castiglione hoped to squeeze from national languages captivated authors even more as the sixteenth century progressed. Michel de Montaigne, who had been trained from his earliest youth to speak and write in Latin, nevertheless chose French to compose his *Essays*, and in so doing, he helped to extend its possibilities for literary expression. In England, the great achievements of the Elizabethan theater had a similar effect in raising the literary standard of English, and in Spain, the authors and playwrights of the emerging Golden Age fulfilled a similar function for modern Spanish. Latin was far from moribund by the end of the Renaissance; it remained an essential language for the educated for centuries to follow. But the quality of prose and poetry Renaissance authors composed in the various national languages helped to assure their further development as literary languages, even as the styles these languages used in subsequent centuries often continued to pay tribute to the Renaissance and its debates over syntax, structure, and vocabulary.

**SCOPE OF THE BOOK.** As the title suggests, this work focuses exclusively on the arts and humanistic scholarship. The definition of humanism, the source of the modern notion of the humanities, has been outlined in this introduction. At the same time the notion of the arts that is developed here demands some explanation. A broad and inclusive definition of the arts has defined the choice of chapters in this volume. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries aesthetic philosophers in Europe pioneered the concept of the "beaux arts" from which we derive our modern English term, "Fine Arts." That concept has been most often applied to the arts of

painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry. In the eighteenth century an increasingly formal system of aesthetics also drew a firm distinction between the “Fine Arts” and the “crafts.” Under crafts, aesthetic theorists once placed an entire variety of skills as diverse as needlepoint, weaving, tailoring, ceramics, and cabinet making. Value judgments lay hidden in these classification schemes, since these distinctions were intended to separate those practices that required art, understood as intellectual skill, and those that by contrast primarily demonstrated the powers of the hands. As anyone knows who has ever tried a hand at cabinet making, it is an enormously difficult craft that requires both great intellectual as well as physical skill. In considering the role of the arts in Renaissance culture, we can largely bypass these distinctions between what is an art and what is a craft. At this time, the system of the “Fine Arts” played no role in how people defined the term “art.” When Renaissance people used that term, they had one of several meanings in mind. The arts referred, of course, to the seven liberal arts that were an identifiable curriculum in which educated people were schooled before entering university. At the same time “art” described the crafts that were practiced in the urban guilds. And by the sixteenth century the word “artist” had acquired much of its modern meaning; it implied someone who had developed a high degree of skill in one of the categories that we today associate with the arts: painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, music, poetry, and theater. In this

sense tailors were not generally considered “artists” at the time, even though they practiced an “art” that was regulated by the craft guilds of the day. In trying to render the very different attitudes that Renaissance people had toward artistic production, then, we have come to emphasize many areas of cultural production. Numerous discussions of masterpieces abound in the chapters that follow, the traditional preserve of literary scholars and of art, theater, and music historians. At the same time we have treated a broad range of works and physical artifacts in order to suggest the inclusive nature of art in the Renaissance.

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# CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD EVENTS

*By Philip M. Soergel and Melanie Casey*

- 1303 Pope Boniface VIII dies a broken man about a month after being beaten up by a gang of toughs sent by King Philip IV of France.
- 1304 Francesco Petrarch, who will become known as the “Father of Humanism,” is born.
- 1309 The pope moves the capital of his government to the French border town of Avignon, beginning the so-called “Babylonian Captivity” of the church.
- 1316 The Great Famine strikes much of Europe.
- 1321 The poet Dante, author of the epic poem *Divine Comedy*, dies.
- c. 1325 The Aztecs settle in the area around modern Mexico City.
- 1337 Edward II is crowned king of England and begins the Hundred Years’ War with France.
- 1340 Defeat of the Moors in Spain leaves the kingdom of Granada as the only Arab possession in Iberia.
- The English attack the French fleet off the coast of the Netherlands in order to secure the English Channel for an invasion of France.
- 1341 Petrarch is crowned with laurel at Rome, a ceremony that imitates the ancient Roman custom of naming poet laureates.
- 1346 The Battle of Crécy is fought in the ongoing war between England and France. It is the first battle to use cannons, and is a decisive victory for England.
- 1347 The Black Death strikes Europe. Over the next three years it will claim perhaps as much as a third of the entire population, and the disease will recur many times over the following three centuries.
- 1348 Giovanni Boccaccio begins to write his *Decameron*.
- 1349 Pogroms (organized massacres) against Jews rage in Germany and France in the wake of the Black Death. Jews are blamed for causing the disease, either through magic or through poisoning wells.
- 1350 War breaks out between the two Italian powers of Venice and Genoa over their rights to navigate in the Black Sea.
- Sixteen-year-old Javan ruler Hayam Wuruk takes the throne of the Hindu state of

- Majapahit when his mother, Tribhuvana, abdicates. Along with his powerful minister Gajah Mada, he extends Javan control throughout Indonesia.
- Ramathibodi I, a Utong (Thai) general, becomes king and moves the capital to Ayutthaya, a settlement on an island north of Bangkok. He engages in warfare against the Cambodians—who are defeated, but they introduce Khmer culture into that of their conquerors—and establishes coded laws. He becomes a Buddhist priest and rules until his death in 1369.
- 1352 The Ottoman Turks establish a settlement on Gallipoli, near Tzyppe.
- Arab traveler Ibn Battutah crosses the Sahara and visits the Mandingo Empire.
- 1353 Fa Ngum unites the Laotian people and introduces Khmer civilization. He leads his country until he is exiled in 1371.
- Chinese general Hsü Ta and rebel Hungwu join their forces and fight against the Mongols, eventually leading to the downfall of Mongol control and the start of a new Chinese dynasty.
- 1354 Forces of the Ottoman Turks capture the Byzantine province of Thrace in the Balkans.
- 1355 Chu Yüan-chang becomes leader of rebel forces in China, after the death of Kuo-Tzu-hsing.
- 1356 The English Black Prince attacks the French at the Battle of Poitiers, capturing the French king John the Good. England demands much of southwestern France and the port of Calais, in addition to a large ransom, to return John. A temporary lull in the hostilities begins.
- Yüan-chang's forces take the city of Nanking.
- Mobarez od-Din Mohammad, son of southern Iranian ruler Sharaf od-Din Mozaffar, captures Tabriz in northwest Iran.
- 1358 In France, the peasant rebellion of the *Jacquerie* begins.
- Od-Din Mohammad is deposed by his sons Qotb od-Din Shah Mahmud and Jalal od-Din Shah Shoja', who divide the kingdom between themselves.
- 1359 At London, a treaty signed between France and England forces the former to give control over a large portion of its territory. The following year the English king Edward III will fail in his attempt to try to capture the French throne during an unsuccessful campaign on the continent.
- Angora (later Ankara) is captured by the Ottomans. It will become the capital of modern Turkey.
- 1360 The Ottoman Turks seize the important city of Adrianople from the Byzantine Empire. In the same year Murad I assumes the throne of the empire, establishing the powerful force of troops that will become known as the Janissaries. The Janissaries are made up of prisoners of war and Christians, and they remain a powerful Turkish force until the nineteenth century.
- Mari Jata II becomes the mansa of the Mali Empire in West Africa. He rules until 1374.
- 1362 Adrianople (now Edirne, Turkey) is captured by the Ottomans under Murad I.
- 1364 Javan minister Gajah Mada dies, possibly after being poisoned by Hayam Wuruk, who may have feared the influence of his powerful subordinate.
- 1365 Indonesian poet Prapanca writes *Nāgarakertāgama*, an epic poem featuring the rule of Wuruk.
- 1368 The Yüan dynasty in China, a period of Mongol control initiated by Kublai Khan in 1260, ends. It is replaced by the Ming dynasty, founded by the monk Chu Yüan-chang, whose forces capture Khahbalik (later Beijing). Ashikaga Yoshimitsu becomes a shogun in Japan. He serves in

- many government posts, reorganizes civil service and suppresses piratical activities.
- 1369 The peace that has reigned between England and France ends with the outbreak of renewed hostilities in the Hundred Years' War between the two countries.
- 1370 King Timur or Tamerlane assumes the throne of the state of Samarkand (in modern Uzbekistan). During his reign he will subdue much of Central Asia and the Middle East.
- c. 1371 Arab jurist ad-Damīrī writes the *Hayāt al-hayawān*, an encyclopedia of animals that appear in the Koran.
- 1373 Sam Sene Thai becomes the ruler of the Lan Xang kingdom of Laos and rules for forty-four years of peace and prosperity.
- 1375 Suleiman-Mar wins independence for the Songhai, who controlled the western Sahara, from the Mali Kingdom.
- 1377 Islamic traditionalist theologian al-Jurjānī arrives to teach in Shīrāz, where he stays for ten years. He is best known for his dictionary *Kitāb at-ta' rifāt*.
- 1378 In Florence, members of the guilds rebel against the great masters and seize control of the city government in the Revolt of the Ciompi.
- Pope Gregory XI dies in Rome while preparing the way for the return of papal court to its ancient capital. Competition between Avignon and Rome, however, gives rise to the Great Schism.
- 1381 English peasants revolt under the leadership of Wat Tyler. During their brief rebellion, they slay the archbishop of Canterbury and other British nobles.
- 1382 The Mongols are decisively expelled from China, making way for the rise of the Ming dynasty.
- 1385 Japanese poet Kanami, who is credited with transforming primitive dance into Nō drama, dies.
- 1386 Serbian prince Lazar Hrebeljanović defeats the Turks at the battle of Pločnik.
- 1389 Hrebeljanović is killed, and his forces are crushed by the Turks at the battle of Kosovo. Also killed, however, is the Ottoman sultan Murad I, who is replaced by Bayazid I.
- 1390 Bayazid I captures Anatolia.
- 1391 A massacre of Jews in Seville in Iberia claims as many as 4,000 lives.
- 1392 Korean general Yi Sōnggye overthrows the Koryō dynasty, names his kingdom Chosōn, and establishes his capital at Hanyang (Seoul). The Yi dynasty rules Korea until 1910, when Japan annexes the country.
- 1393 The Thais invade Cambodia, capturing Angkor and ninety thousand people. The policy of seizing and subjugating whole populations, often removing them to the home state, leads to much intermixing of peoples in the region.
- 1394 King Charles VI expels all Jews from France.
- Turkish ruler Timur captures Baghdad and controls Mesopotamia.
- 1395 Thai king Ramesuan dies and is replaced by his son Ramraja. Fourteen years of peace follow.
- 1397 The Ming law code is introduced in China, reinforcing traditional authority and the responsibility of the paterfamilias along hereditary groupings. A system of social organization (ten-family groups organized into one-hundred-family communities) is developed to regulate and indoctrinate the populace.
- 1398 Timur's Turkish troops invade India, destroying the province of Delhi and massacring more than one hundred thousand Hindus before capturing the city of the same name.

- 1399 Faraj becomes ruler of Egypt. He allows a defensive alliance with the Turks to lapse and is later captured by the Turks while trying to regain Syria.
- c. 1400 Five Iroquois nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca) emerge as distinct tribal entities in North America.
- 1400 Damascus and Aleppo in Syria fall to Timur's armies.
- 1402 Bayazid is defeated, and later dies in captivity, by Timur at the Battle of Angora.
- 1403 Prince Paramesvara founds Malacca (Melaka) on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. The area will become a major supplier of spices.
- 1405 Chinese explorer Cheng Ho (Zheng He) begins the first of seven expeditions, which will last until 1433, to Asia, India, East Africa, Egypt, Ceylon, and the Persian Gulf.
- Timur dies during an expedition to conquer China. Shah Rokh, his son, begins his reign of Persia (Iran) and Central Asia, which lasts until 1447.
- 1406 The city of Florence conquers nearby Pisa, granting it an access to the Mediterranean.
- 1407 Civil conflicts rage among the nobility of France.
- 1408 The king of Ceylon is taken to China as a prisoner.
- 1409 Thai prince Nakonin overthrows Ramraja and takes the Intharaia.
- 1410 Sultan Ahmad Jalayir of Iraq is killed in a dispute with the chief of the Black Sheep Turkmen tribal confederation from eastern Anatolia.
- 1411 The once powerful Teutonic Knights are forced to relinquish control over much of their Eastern European territory after defeat by an alliance of Polish, Lithuanian, Russian, and other ethnic groups' forces.
- 1412 Faraj is killed by the Turks in Damascus while trying to recapture Syria.
- 1413 Henry V begins to press his claim to the throne of France.
- 1414 Khizr Khan, former governor of the Punjab, becomes ruler of the Delhi sultanate, beginning a reign known as the Sayyid dynasty, because the leaders claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. North India is divided among military chiefs for half a century.
- 1415 The Great Schism is brought to an end through the work of the Council of Constance.
- Although his forces are outnumbered four to one, Henry V defeats the French at the Battle of Agincourt.
- 1416 A revolt begins in Iznik, Turkey, initiated by the communalistic social theories pushed by Moslem theologian Bedreddin, who had been exiled to the city. He is captured and hanged after the rebellion is crushed by Mehmed I.
- 1418 Le Loi begins a Vietnamese independence movement in the Red River basin against the Chinese.
- 1419 In Portugal, Prince Henry begins to support voyages of exploration down the coast of West Africa.
- Sejong becomes the king of Korea. His reign, which lasts until 1450, is known for cultural achievement, development of a phonetic alphabet, and reduction of the power of the Buddhists.
- 1420 The Duchy of Burgundy supports Henry V as king of France. The southern part of the kingdom remains loyal to the heir of Charles the Mad.
- 1421 Murad II becomes the Ottoman sultan.
- China establishes its capital at Beijing.
- 1422 Indian Bahami Shihāb-ud-Dīn Ahmad I becomes sultan of the Deccan and expands

- the territorial holdings of his country during his reign, which lasts until 1436.
- 1423 Mongol leader Aruqtaï, chief of the As, declares himself khan of the Mongols and attacks North China.
- 1425 The lands and rule of the Mentese Dynasty of the Mugla-Milas region of southwestern Anatolia are annexed by the Ottomans.
- 1427 In Florence, a census is undertaken of all the population, and an income tax is introduced.
- 1428 Joan of Arc's visions begin to play a vital role in French opposition to English occupation.
- Aztec ruler Itzcóatl begins his reign, which lasts until 1440.
- 1429 Charles VII is crowned King of France with Joan of Arc at his side.
- 1430 Philip the Good of Burgundy founds the Order of the Golden Fleece on the occasion of his marriage. The order's aims are to defend the code of chivalry and the church.
- 1431 Joan of Arc is burned at the stake after being captured by Burgundian forces and sold to the English.
- 1432 The Kara Koyunlu destroy remnants of the Jalayirid dynasty of Iraq, which had fled to areas around Basra.
- 1435 Chu Ch'i-chen, son of Chu Chan-chi, begins his rule of China.
- 1438 In France, the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges limits the rights of the pope in that country.
- Pachacuti begins his 33-year reign, expanding and reorganizing the social and political system of the Inca Empire. His domain stretches from present-day Ecuador to southern Peru.
- 1440 The Praquerie, a rebellion of nobles against the French king, fails in France.
- Venice and Florence combine to defeat the Duchy of Milan.
- Aztec ruler Montezuma I begins his reign, which lasts until 1469. He extends the control of his people over what will become known as Mexico.
- 1442 The Portuguese begin trading in Berber slaves they capture in North Africa.
- 1444 The Ottomans, led by Murad II, who had been coaxed out of retirement from public life, defeat Christian Hungarians, led by János Hunyadi, at Varna.
- 1446 A revolt of the Janissaries, who opposed a planned attack on Constantinople, calls Murad II back to Edirne from a second retirement because of the weakness of his fourteen-year-old son Mehmet's rule.
- 1447 Tartar prince Ulugh Beg becomes ruler of Turkestan. His short reign, which lasts until 1449, marks the transition of Central Asia, as after his death the Timurid Empire breaks up.
- 1450 The French defeat English forces at the Battle of Formigny, paving the way for France to reclaim its possessions in Normandy.
- 1451 Ottoman sultan Mehmed II (Mehmed the Conqueror) succeeds his father, Murad II. He is considered the true founder of the Ottoman Empire.
- Afghan king Bahlul Lodī begins his reign, initiating the Lodī dynasty.
- 1453 Constantinople falls to the Turks and is renamed Istanbul.
- The English are defeated in the Hundred Years' War and withdraw from France.
- 1454 The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is restored to Istanbul by Mehmed, who also allows a Jewish rabbi and Armenian patriarch into the city.
- 1455 Johann Gutenberg von Mainz perfects the first press with movable type and prints the first book, the Bible.

- The War of the Roses breaks out between the Houses of York and Lancaster in England.
- 1456 Tun Perak, the chief minister of Malacca, leads his forces to a victory over the invading Siamese.
- 1457 Chu Ch'i-chen returns as emperor of China, remaining on the throne until his death in 1464.
- 1458 Herāt, an ancient town on the trade route through Afghanistan, is captured by Jahān Shān of Azerbaijan.
- 1460 The Portuguese prince Henry the Navigator, supporter of that country's explorations, dies.
- Le Thanh Tong becomes ruler of Vietnam. He institutes Chinese-style government, develops an efficient provincial system, employs centrally appointed officials, institutes new taxes, and promotes education.
- 1462 The Portuguese found a colony on the Cape Verde Islands.
- In Russia, Ivan III assumes the title of Grand Prince of Moscow. He will be a strong ruler committed to expelling foreign influences in the country.
- 1464 Sonni 'Alī (Alī the Great) becomes king of Gao and Songhai, beginning an expansion of territory that leads to the development of the Songhai Empire.
- 1468 Mengli Giray begins nearly half a century of rule as Khan of the Crimean Tartars.
- Sonni 'Alī drives the Tuaregs out of Timbuktu.
- 1469 The two Medici brothers, Lorenzo the Magnificent and Giuliano, assume control of government in Florence.
- 1471 The conquest of Champa by Le Thanh Tong, who establishes military colonies in the southern parts of Vietnam, is completed. This victory allows the Vietnamese the freedom to take border areas from the Cambodians.
- Topa Inca Yupanqui, son of Pachacuti, assumes the Incan throne.
- 1472 Chinese Ming philosopher Wang Yang-ming is born. Trained as a Taoist, he brings new interpretations to Confucianism, advocating the philosophy of subjectivism. He serves as a governor and war minister in the Chinese government.
- 1474 Isabel of Castile seizes the throne of her native kingdom from her sister. As ruler of Castile, Isabel is also married to Ferdinand of Aragon. Their union begins the process of forging a united Spanish kingdom in Iberia.
- 1476 Japanese painter and art critic Nōami compiles a catalogue of Chinese artists, titled the *Kundaikan sayu*.
- 1478 The Pazzi Conspiracy at Florence fails. The conspiracy had been planned by enemies of the Medici and was timed to occur during a Mass in Florence's Cathedral. One of the Medici brothers, Giuliano, is killed, but Lorenzo survives and puts down the plot by executing a number of conspirators and their supporters, including Florence's bishop. These executions cause disputes between Florence and the papacy that last for several years.
- 1479 The Spanish claim the Canary Islands.
- 1481 Sultan Mehmed II dies, possibly from poisoning, and is replaced by his elder son Bayezid II, despite the dead leader's wish that his favorite son, Cem, get the throne. Cem attempts a revolt, but is defeated and exiled to Rhodes. Bayezid rules until 1512.
- 1482 The Portuguese begin to develop trade links with the African state of the Congo.
- The mouth of the Congo River is located by Portuguese navigator Diogo Cão, who soon finds the Kongo people. Trade be-



- tween Kongo and Portugal commences, and the Kongo people become Christianized and Europeanized.
- 1483 Bābur (Zahīrud-Din Muhammad), founder of the Mughal dynasty in India and its first emperor, is born. He rules until 1530.
- 1485 King Richard III is killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field, and the Earl of Richmond, his attacker, assumes the throne of England as Henry VII. Henry thus establishes the Tudor dynasty that will last until 1603.
- Saluva Narasimha begins a new dynasty in India, opening ports on the west coast to trade, revitalizing the army, and establishing centralized rule.
- 1486 Japanese poet Ike Sōgi, a Buddhist monk and master of linked verse, writes *Minase Sangin Hyakuin*.
- 1487 The Fugger family of Augsburg founds an international banking empire that soon competes successfully against the Medici Bank.
- The Court of Star Chamber is established in England to hear cases against the nobility in secret.
- Chu Chien-shen's son Chu Yu-t'ang begins his rule, a mostly peaceful reign, of China. He controls the throne until his death in 1505.
- 1488 King Trailok dies and is replaced by his son and deputy Boromaraja III, who leads the Thais for only three years.
- The True Pure Land Sect in northern Japan rebels against a local lord and kills him, leading to a series of uprisings by this group.
- 1492 Columbus sails west in hopes of finding a route to India. Instead, he discovers the Caribbean.
- The Jews are expelled from Spain.
- 1494 The Treaty of Tordesillas is signed between Spain and Portugal. It establishes a line approximately 1,200 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. Portugal is to be allowed to colonize east of the line in modern Brazil and Africa, while Spain is to control the area west of the marker.
- France invades Italy, touching off the "Italian Wars" that will last intermittently until 1559 and produce a bitter rivalry between the Hapsburgs and the French Valois for territory in the peninsula.
- 1497 The Italian explorer John Cabot sets sail on a voyage underwritten by King Henry VII of England. His intentions are to find a route to India, but he finds lands in modern Labrador and Newfoundland instead.
- 1498 The Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama discovers a route to India by sailing around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa.
- 1499 War between Venice and the Ottoman Turks begins, and a Venetian fleet is defeated in the same year.
- Switzerland's independence from the Holy Roman Empire is recognized.
- c. 1500 The Aztec empire has by this date grown into a vast and powerful force in Central America.
- The Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral claims Brazil for his king.
- For approximately forty years, two queens, Rafohy and Rangita, successively rule the island nation of Imerinanjaka, located on Madagascar.
- 1501 The French conquer the kingdom of Naples.
- The enslavement of Africans is introduced into the West Indies to replace the rapidly dying off Native American population, which had been pressed into service. Nicolás de Ovando of Hispaniola imports some Spanish-born blacks for the purpose of using them as slaves.

- 1505 Emperor Chu Yu-t'ang dies, leaving the throne in the hands of his son, Chu Hou-chao, whose reign is marked with rampant corruption, dominance by the eunuchs, and internal strife.
- Ozolua (the Conqueror) dies after a twenty-three year reign as king of Benin (Nigeria). He expanded the size of his kingdom and traded with the Portuguese.
- 1506 The king of the African Kongo, Alfonso I, converts to Christianity.
- 1507 Martin Waldseemüller publishes his imposing atlas, *Cosmographie Introductio*, naming the continents of the Western Hemisphere "America," after the Italian navigator, Amerigo Vespucci.
- 1509 An Arab-Egyptian fleet is destroyed off Diu (northwest of Bombay, India) by a Portuguese navy led by Francisco de Almeida, who had established forts along the Indian coast.
- 1510 The Portuguese establish trading colonies at Calcutta and Gao in India, thus establishing their powerful position in the European spice trade.
- 1512 Selim I (the Grim) becomes sultan upon the abdication of his father, Bayezid II. He doubles Ottoman territory, moves the capital to Istanbul, brings the Arab world into the Ottoman Empire, and becomes an Islamic caliph (or protector) of the Sunni Muslims. He rules until 1520.
- Afonso I of Kongo signs a treaty with Manuel I of Portugal.
- 1513 The Spanish explorer Balboa crosses Panama, discovering the Pacific Ocean.
- 1515 The Turks capture Anatolia and Kurdistan.
- 1516 King Ferdinand of Aragon dies in Spain, and Charles I assumes the throne.
- Ang Chan becomes the king of Cambodia, resists Thai dominance, and rules until 1566.
- Syria is annexed by the Ottoman Empire.
- 1517 Martin Luther's 95 Theses begins to excite controversy in Germany.
- Spain allows the importation of slaves from Africa in its New World colonies.
- 1519 The Spanish conquistador Cortés conquers Mexico, making the once powerful ruler Montezuma into a puppet.
- Charles I of Spain is elected Holy Roman Emperor. Charles now controls a vast empire that includes Spain, the New World, the Netherlands, Austria, and parts of Italy.
- 1520 Cuauhtémoc becomes the last emperor of the Aztecs, but is hanged in 1522 by Cortés.
- Babur invades northern India.
- Photsarath becomes ruler of Lan Chang (Laos), builds monasteries and temples, and promotes Buddhism. He rules until 1547.
- 1521 After a short revolt, the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan falls to the Spanish.
- Magellan is the first European to sight one of the Polynesian Islands, that of Pukapuka.
- 1522 Ferdinand Magellan completes his circumnavigation of the globe.
- 1526 The Muslim Moguls, rulers of an empire centered at Kabul (in modern Afghanistan), invade India, subduing a large part of the subcontinent.
- The Turks defeat Hungarian forces at the Battle of Mohács.
- 1527 Imperial forces of Charles V sack Rome and take the pope hostage.
- Somali chieftan Ahmed Gran, a Moslem, invades Ethiopia.
- 1529 Spain names Mexico City, built on the site of the former Tenochtitlán, capital of the viceroyalty of New Spain.

- The Turks attack the city of Vienna in Austria.
- 1530 Atahualpa assumed the throne of the Incan Empire in Peru.
- 1531 Tabinshweti becomes the king of Burma.
- 1533 Francisco Pizarro conquers Cuzco, capital of Peru, and secures a large quantity of gold from the former empire.
- Four-year-old Prince Ratsadatiratkumar becomes ruler of Siam, but is killed by his half brother Prince Prajai.
- 1534 The French explorer Jacques Cartier sails to the Gulf of St. Lawrence in modern Canada.
- 1535 The first printing press in the Western Hemisphere is established in the colony of Mexico.
- 1536 The Spaniard Pedro de Mendoza leads an expedition into modern Argentina.
- 1537 A period of peace and stability in China begins with the ascension to the throne of Chu Tsai-kou, son of Chu Hou-tsung.
- 1539 In Ghent in the Low Countries, a revolt begins against the rule of the emperor Charles V. It fails, but Charles stations a permanent garrison of troops in the city.
- Tabinshweti conquers the kingdom of Pegu (Myanmar).
- 1543 Portuguese naval ships arrive in Japan, the first time Europeans visit these islands.
- The English perfect the iron cannon, a weapon that is stronger and cheaper to produce than those made out of bronze.
- Altan Khan becomes chief of the eastern Mongols. His army breaches the Great Wall of China in 1550.
- 1544 The city of Lima is named the capital of the Spanish province of Peru.
- Hindu religious reformer Dādu, founder of the Dādupanthīs sect, is born.
- 1545 Spanish conquistadors discover a large lode of silver at Potosi in modern Bolivia.
- 1548 Sinan, considered the greatest Ottoman architect, builds the Sehzade Mosque in Istanbul. He is credited with designing more than three hundred buildings.
- 1549 Spanish missionary Francis Xavier, who helped found the Jesuit Order and preached in Gao and India, arrives in Kagoshima, Japan, where he works for two years. He returns to India in 1551 and dies on Sancian Island.
- 1550 Jón Arason, a prelate of Iceland who resists the expansion of Lutheranism into his country, is beheaded.
- Arab traveler Leo Africanus's *Descrittione dell' Africa*, the only source of information on the Sudan, is published.
- 1555 The Peace of Augsburg in Germany resolves religious tensions between Protestants and Catholics and establishes the principle, "He who rules, his religion," a settlement that will hold until 1618 when hostilities once again break out between the two factions. At the end of that conflict, the so-called Thirty Years' War in 1648, the principles of the Peace of Augsburg ("He who rules, his religion") are reiterated.
- Turkish poet Bâkî gains the favor of Sultan Süleyman I, helping to revitalize lyric poetry in Turkey.
- 1556 Abu-ul-Fath Jalāl-ud Din Muhammad Akbar (Akbar the Great) becomes the Mughal emperor of India. He reigns until 1605, conquers most of India, and promotes reforms, learning, and art.
- 1557 Spanish troops defeat the French at the Battle of Saint-Quentin, forcing them to abandon Italy.
- Shaybanid ruler 'Abd Allāh ibn Iskandar conquers Bukhara in Central Asia, as well as several regional kingdoms, and attacks Persia (1593–1594, 1595–1596).

- 1559 King Henri II of France dies as a result of a wound he received in a jousting tournament.
- The Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis ends hostilities between France and Spain and allows the latter to remain dominant in the peninsula.
- 1562 The Wars of Religion between Protestants and Catholics commence in France. They will last until 1598.
- A cargo of African slaves is deposited in Hispaniola by Englishman John Hawkins, the first of three such voyages, initiating English participation in the trade.
- 1563 Burmese king Bayinnaung invades Siam, assaulting the capital of Ayutthaya.
- 1564 England surrenders its claim to the port of Calais.
- 1566 Selim II becomes sultan of the Ottoman Empire.
- 1568 The Azuchi-Momoyama period begins in Japan, an era of unification under military rule that lasts until the turn of the century.
- 1569 The Flemish mapmaker Gerardus Mercator perfects the Mercator Projection map.
- c. 1570 The Iroquois League is established between various tribes of Oneida, Mohawks, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca in the modern northeastern United States and Canada.
- 1571 Forces of Venice and Spain combine to produce a navy of about 200 ships. They capture an Ottoman navy at the Battle of Lepanto, thus stopping for a time the advance of the Turks into the Mediterranean.
- The Spanish conquer the Philippine Islands.
- The Ottomans capture Cyprus.
- Safavid philosopher-author Mullah Sadra is born; he will lead the Iranian cultural renaissance into the early seventeenth century.
- 1572 The Dutch declare their independence from Spain, thus precipitating a long conflict between the two countries.
- 1574 Murad III, the son of Selim II, becomes the sultan of the Ottomans.
- Rās Dās becomes the fourth Sikh Guru and founds Amritsar (in Punjab, India).
- Hindu poet Tulsīdās writes *Rāmcaritmānas* (Lake of the Acts of Rama), one of the greatest Hindi literary works.
- The Spanish are pushed out of Tunis by the Turks. While the Spanish are losing in Tunis, they are establishing a settlement in Angola.
- 1576 In an attempt to destroy a rebellion in the Netherlands, Spanish forces advance on Antwerp. There they wreak devastation on the city when Spain is unable to pay them.
- 1578 The Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci journeys to China and works to promote Christianity. In 1601, he founds a mission in Beijing.
- 1580 Chinese dramatist Liang Ch'en-yü, whose K'un-shan style of singing dominates Chinese theater for nearly three centuries, dies.
- 1581 King Bhueng Noreng of Burma, who had conquered the Thais, is succeeded by his son Nanda Bhueng.
- 1582 Pope Gregory XIII establishes the Gregorian Calendar in place of the older Julian styled one that had been used in Europe since the first century C.E. It will be adopted in Portugal, Germany, and Spain the following year.
- 1584 Queen Elizabeth I authorizes Sir Walter Raleigh to undertake an expedition to the New World. The colony that Raleigh establishes at Roanoke Island fails the fol-

- lowing year, and another settlement will fail in 1587.
- 1586 Japanese dancer Izumo Okuni, considered the founder of Kabuki, begins performing works inspired by Buddhist prayers.
- 1587 An expedition of Spaniards visits Japan. The Inquisition is established in Portugal.
- 1588 Elizabeth I's navy defeats the Spanish Armada after a storm comes to the aid of her forces. More than half the Spanish navy is destroyed in the conflict.
- Abbās I (Abbas the Great), the son of Shāh Soltān Mohammad, begins his reign in Persia. He rules the empire, defeating the Uzbeks and Ottoman Turks and regaining Persian lands, until 1629.
- 1589 King Henri III of France is assassinated by a monk, thus paving the way for the Protestant Henri of Navarre to come to the throne as Henri IV. Civil war again breaks out in France.
- 1590 Japan, including the islands of Shikoku and Kyushu, is united under the leadership of Hideyoshi Toyotomi. He brings peace and infrastructural improvements, and will lead his nation (though he relinquishes his official title), until his death in 1598.
- 1591 The kingdom of Aragon rebels against King Philip II of Spain.
- 1592 Ming troops defending Korea battle Hideyoshi's Japanese army in its unsuccessful attempt to capture the country.
- 1593 Henri IV renounces his Protestant faith, and is crowned the following year as King of France.
- 1596 Mexican historian Agustin Dávila Padilla publishes *Historia de la fundación de la provincial de Santiago de México de la Orden de predicadores*.
- 1597 Hugh O'Neill leads an uprising against the English in Ulster; Irish forces will eventually be reinforced by Spanish armies, but the uprising will be finally subdued in 1603.
- 1598 Henri IV of France promulgates the Edict of Nantes, granting a limited degree of toleration to French Protestants. King Philip II of Spain dies.
- Abbās I defeats the Uzbeks near Herāt.
- Trade between Ayutthaya and Spain begins.
- 1599 Manchurian chief Nurhachi begins conquering the Juchen tribes in his quest to unite the Manchu, which will become the Ch'ing dynasty starting in 1644.
- 1600 The East India Company is founded to regulate England's trade with India.

1  
chapter one

# ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS <i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	4	<i>Mastering Ancient Building Practices</i> (excerpt from Manetti's flattering biography of Brunelleschi) . . . . .	8
TOPICS		<i>Beauty in Building</i> (Alberti excerpt commenting on the aesthetic value of architecture) . . . . .	12
The Birth of the Renaissance Style . . . . .	6	<i>A Papal Architect</i> (Vasari comments on the building of St. Peter's Basilica) . . . . .	19
The High Renaissance . . . . .	17	<i>Assessing Ancient Rome</i> (Raphael admires ancient architecture) . . . . .	21
The Later Renaissance In Italy . . . . .	25	<i>Trouble at St. Peter's</i> (A letter displaying Michelangelo's dissatisfaction with St. Peter's construction) . . . . .	27
The Architectural Renaissance Throughout Europe . . . . .	37	<i>Church Architecture</i> (Palladio comments on style in Christian church architecture) . . . . .	33
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>A Royal Patron</i> (Cellini's account of receiving a royal commission) . . . . .	38
Leon Battista Alberti . . . . .	50		
Filippo Brunelleschi . . . . .	51		
Francis I . . . . .	53		
Andrea Palladio . . . . .	54		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	55		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Architecture and Design*

- c. 1300 Work begins on the Cathedral of Florence. When completed, the building will be the largest church in Europe.
- 1334 The painter Giotto is appointed to oversee the construction of Florence's cathedral.
- c. 1350 Work is temporarily halted on the cathedral at Florence. It soon resumes and during the 1350s the structure's bell tower or campanile is completed.
- 1377 The future founder of the early Renaissance style in architecture, Filippo Brunelleschi, is born.
- 1401 The competition to create new doors for the Baptistery of Florence's cathedral is announced.
- c. 1420 In Florence, Brunelleschi designs the orphanage known as the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, the Church of San Lorenzo, and the dome of the cathedral.
- 1433 The Pazzi Chapel, one of Brunelleschi's important masterpieces, is begun.
- 1434 The humanist architect Leon Battista Alberti arrives in Florence.
- 1436 The dome of Florence's cathedral is completed.
- c. 1443 Giuliano da Sangallo, the first of a dynasty of Florentine architects, is born.
- 1445 The Medici Palace, designed by Michelozzo di Bartolommeo, is begun at Florence.
- Bernardo Rossellino designs a classically-styled tomb for the Florentine chancellor Leonardo Bruni.
- 1447 The humanist Tommaso Parentucelli is elected pope and takes the name Nicholas V. Nicholas will support public works and construction projects in Rome during his eight-year pontificate.
- c. 1450 The humanist Alberti writes his *Ten Books on Architecture*, a work that is influenced by the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius. Around this time he also designs at Rimini the Malatesta Temple for the tyrant Sigismondo Malatesta.
- c. 1455 Alberti plans several important buildings in Florence that will be imitated by other architects over the coming decades.
- 1458 The Pitti Palace is begun at Florence.
- 1459 Pope Pius II commissions Bernardo Rossellino, a follower of Alberti, to redesign the core of the city of Pienza.
- c. 1460 A great age of palace building begins in Florence. The wealthiest families of the town try to outdo each other to build the most sumptuous family residence.
- c. 1465 Federigo da Montefeltro commissions Luciano Laurana to design a classical courtyard in his palace at Urbino.
- 1470 Alberti designs the Church of Sant'Andrea in Mantua.
- c. 1475 The artist Piero della Francesca paints his *Vision of an Ideal City*.
- 1481 Leonardo da Vinci leaves Florence to work in Milan. There he serves the dukes of Milan for almost twenty years, undertaking the design of many important military and civil engineering projects.
- 1484 Francesco di Giorgio designs the Church of Santa Maria del Calcinaiò at Cortona.
- 1499 The architect Donato Bramante is forced to flee Milan after French forces capture the city. He travels to Rome where Popes

- Alexander VI and Julius II will keep him busy designing many projects.
- 1502 Bramante designs the little *Tempietto* for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. When eventually built, the small domed structure will commemorate the site where, according to legend, St. Peter was crucified, as well as influence many later designers.
- 1505 Michelangelo completes his first plans for Julius II's massive tomb.
- 1506 Pope Julius II orders the original St. Peter's Basilica demolished at Rome, and Bramante designs its replacement as a central-style church in which all the radiating wings will be of the same size.
- 1508 The central-style Church of Santa Maria della Consolazione is begun at Todi. The popularity of this style derives, in part, from the vogue for Renaissance neoplatonism.
- Andrea Palladio is born.
- c. 1510 Bramante designs the facade for Palazzo Caprini in Rome.
- c. 1515 The painter Raphael designs the pleasure palace called Villa Madama at Rome. A great age of palace building commences within the city, as the town's major families and important church officials compete against one another to build ever more imposing structures.
- 1519 Michelangelo designs the New Sacristy at the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence.
- The Château de Chambord is begun in France.
- c. 1520 Antonio da Sangallo, younger brother of Giuliano da Sangallo, receives the commissions for a number of important churches and urban palaces in Florence and Central Italy.
- 1524 The Laurentian Library, designed by Michelangelo, is begun at Florence.
- 1527 The Mannerist Palazzo del Te, designed by Giulio Romano, is begun near Mantua.
- Rome is sacked by forces of the imperial armies of Charles V.
- 1528 The royal palace of Fontainebleau is begun in France.
- 1532 The High Renaissance architect Baldassare Peruzzi designs the Palace of the Monumental Columns at Rome, a work that is influenced by the developing taste for Mannerism in architecture.
- c. 1535 Jacopo Sansovino plans classical buildings to house Venice's mint and the Library of San Marco.
- 1538 Michelangelo's Campidoglio, a complex of public buildings on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, is begun.
- 1546 The Renaissance-styled Square Court of the Louvre, designed by Pierre Lescot and Jean Goujon, is begun.
- c. 1550 Andrea Palladio designs a number of important palaces and churches in and around the cities of Vicenza and Venice.
- 1556 A classical facade is begun for part of the Heidelberg castle in Germany.
- c. 1560 Giorgio Vasari designs the Mannerist-styled Uffizi Palace in Florence, home of the future famous gallery of paintings.
- 1563 The Escorial, a royal palace and monastery combined in the same complex, is begun outside Madrid in Spain.
- c. 1575 Il Gesù, the church of the Jesuit order in Rome, is begun. The design will be widely imitated in Jesuit churches throughout Europe.
- 1580 Andrea Palladio dies. His last important design is for the Olympian Theater at Vicenza.
- Wollaton Hall is begun in England.
- 1583 The Renaissance-styled St. Michael's Church is begun at Munich.



## OVERVIEW *of Architecture and Design*

**TRADITION AND CHANGE.** In 1300 most Europeans lived in cities that resembled fortresses more than the spaces modern people would associate with urban life. Long-standing warfare and insecurity in medieval Europe had caused people to huddle together closely within the confines of towns protected by walls and battlements. Inside these fortifications, functional houses and tenements crafted from rustic stone, timber, or brick were built close to the street, choking out light and the flow of air from above. Poor or inadequate sanitation was usually the norm, and smoke from family hearths filled the cities. The largest public buildings in a medieval city were almost always churches, and around 1300, the Gothic style—notable for its height and intricate complexity—dominated their construction. These buildings, the largest architectural monuments of the Middle Ages, were not only centers of worship and Christian ritual, but also objects of local civic pride, and towns avidly competed to outdo each other in their construction. Three hundred years later the situation had changed dramatically in many places, as Renaissance Europeans built churches, public buildings, broad squares, and urban palaces that expressed new and strikingly different attitudes towards urban space and design. In creating these projects architects found inspiration in the buildings of classical Antiquity. The revival of knowledge about ancient styles, proportions, and construction techniques deepened tremendously during the Renaissance as architects studied the buildings and urban spaces of ancient Rome more systematically than before. The birthplace of this revolution in architecture was Italy, and as in many other areas of Renaissance life, it was in Florence that the new classicism first developed. There the new projects that architects built in the early fifteenth century made use of the language of classical Roman architecture, while developing a native style that would be imitated elsewhere. As the fifteenth century progressed, architectural innovations appeared in a number of other cities throughout the peninsula.

**THE HIGH RENAISSANCE.** By 1500, Italy's architects, drawn mostly from the guilds of sculptors and carpenters in the cities, had achieved a remarkable mastery of the elements of ancient design. They had used ancient inspiration to create buildings that functioned well under the quite different circumstances of life in Renaissance cities. During the first quarter of the sixteenth century, architecture, like painting and sculpture, underwent another rapid transformation. This period, known as the High Renaissance, saw painters like Leonardo da Vinci, Donato Bramante, Raphael Sanzio, and Michelangelo Buonarroti entering into the planning of buildings with increasing frequency. As painters trained in the Florentine tradition of *disegno*, that is, draftsmanlike design, each brought with them a new sophistication about the use of light, line, and mass in the construction of buildings. Although natives of Tuscany and central Italian towns, each of these figures worked in Rome at different points in their careers, and that city benefited from the construction of most of the grand projects of the High Renaissance. This style was notable for its great simplicity, harmonious proportions, and unified design. Julius II, the commanding "Warrior Pope," employed Michelangelo, Bramante, and Raphael, among many other artists, to fashion his grand rebuilding and renewal projects in the church's capital. By far the greatest of the pope's ambitions was his plan to demolish and rebuild the ancient Basilica of St. Peter's, a building originally constructed by the emperor Constantine in the fourth century. The scale of this project was unprecedented in European history, and in Bramante, Julius found an architect whose designs were equal to his goals. Bramante designed the new structure to be a central-style church that radiated from a commanding dome. Like many of the projects that Julius began, however, the rebuilding of St. Peter's was too immense to be completed in a single lifetime. The pope accepted Bramante's designs and had his workmen begin the demolition of Constantine's basilica. He also ensured that the central piers that were to support Bramante's dome were begun before his death in 1513. Thus Julius laid down the proportions for a truly grand structure that later consumed the energies and creativity of the finest artists and architects of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The High Renaissance in Rome was also a time of creative and often frenzied building projects undertaken throughout the city. In domestic architecture, Bramante, Raphael, and others created new edifices notable for the complete integration of classical decoration as well as their harmonious beauty. Toward the end of the period the sculptor-painter Michelangelo began to turn to architecture as well, applying the skills that he had acquired

in the planning and execution of Julius II's massive tomb project. During the 1510s he returned to Florence, where he designed several projects for the Medici family. Increasingly these designs took on a willful nature, that is, Michelangelo violated certain tenets of classical design in order to create structures of greater imaginative creativity. In his Laurentian Library at Florence, in particular, the artist created spaces that inspired later Mannerist architects to search for new and innovative ways to use space and decoration.

**THE LATER RENAISSANCE IN ITALY.** Rome had been the great stage on which High Renaissance architects had designed their new monumental and heroic structures. It had been Julius II's aim, and that of his successors Leo X and Clement VII, to remake the city into an imposing showpiece that celebrated Rome as the very center of the Christian world. Even as this monumental rebuilding of the city was underway in the High Renaissance, Rome's position on the international political scene grew more precarious. In 1527, the great period of creative activity in the city came to an abrupt halt with the Sack of Rome carried out by imperial forces of Charles V. Almost all of the artists and architects who had been active in the High Renaissance fled to work in other cities, carrying with them the skills they had acquired while working in the church's capital. During the 1530s and 1540s Rome experienced a slow recovery from the massive destruction and psychological distresses the Sack had caused. Construction resumed on the new St. Peter's, but not until the 1560s was the building of another large church, the Gesù, begun. During the brief pontificate of Sixtus V (r. 1585–1589) Rome again became a great center of architectural and artistic endeavors. Like Julius before him, Sixtus employed an army of designers, painters, and sculptors to beautify the city. He brought new sources of public water to the town; forged broad, straight avenues through Rome's ancient maze of streets; and built public spaces with attractive architectural focal points. Rome became a model for urban planning and renewal that would be imitated throughout Europe in subsequent centuries. Elsewhere in Italy the sixteenth century was a time of great architectural vitality. In Florence, the Mannerist painters and designers of the mid- and late century created new projects characterized by a style of intricate complexity and repetition. Many of the city's artists worked for the Medici, who now ruled the city as dukes. For inspiration, these figures turned to the architectural works of Michelangelo at the Church of San Lorenzo, notable for its willful violations of classical design tenets. Their projects inspired other designers in Rome and central Italian cities, although their influence rarely spread

into the world of northern Italy and Venice. Here a refined and elegant classicism, best articulated in the architecture of figures like Jacopo Sansovino and Andrea Palladio, continued to dominate both public and private construction. This classicism, characterized by a greater lightness and delicacy and balanced symmetry, was eventually widely imitated throughout Europe, but most notably in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Palladio's illustrated architectural treatises even influenced American architecture such as the graceful structures that Thomas Jefferson and other colonials designed for the new Republic.

**THE ARCHITECTURAL RENAISSANCE THROUGHOUT EUROPE.** Around 1500, European architecture outside Italy remained traditional. The first buildings inspired by the Renaissance of architectural design occurring in Italy were not in Western Europe, but at the continent's eastern fringes. In the second half of the fifteenth century King Matthias Corvinus encouraged the development of humanism in Hungary, and brought to his kingdom a small group of Italian artists and architects to remodel his castles and to build several new projects. In Russia, Grand Prince Ivan III did likewise when he lured a group of Italian craftsmen and architects to Moscow to beautify the Kremlin complex. In Western Europe the spread of humanism similarly encouraged patrons and designers to adopt elements of Renaissance classicism, but this process of integration occurred slowly throughout the sixteenth century. In Western Europe, Spain was among the earliest places to show signs of a classically influenced architectural Renaissance. In Northern European countries, building in the early sixteenth century usually proceeded along late-Gothic lines. In its late phase, Gothic architecture embraced a highly ornate and decorative style, with highly elaborate piers and vaulted ceilings being among its most distinctive elements. As the Renaissance affected styles throughout the region, Northern Europeans often borrowed ancient decorative elements to create highly ornate decorations that were more Gothic than Renaissance in their overall effect. The presence of Italian architects and painters in France, Germany, and Spain, as well as the journeys of craftsmen to Italy, gradually helped to develop a more complete understanding of classical architecture, its design elements, and its uses, as did the spread of architectural treatises written by Italians like Serlio, Palladio, and Vignola. These works, with their engraved illustrations, deepened the appreciation of classicism among European architects working outside Italy. One notable holdout, though, was England, where a native style of Gothic architecture continued to be popular throughout

much of the sixteenth century, with very few attempts at Renaissance classicism. In most of Northern Europe, a shift in the type of building was also evident. In France, the Netherlands, and England, religious controversy between Catholics and Protestants had a dampening effect on the building of new churches in the sixteenth century. At the same time the era was one of great achievement in the building of royal palaces, country châteaux, and public buildings. These structures illustrate the gradual appropriation of Renaissance classicism that occurred throughout the region. At the beginning of the century most projects continued to be built in native and traditional styles with classical and Gothic elements appearing on the same structure. As the sixteenth century progressed, a new sophistication and rigor developed in the uses of ancient design, sponsored by changing tastes, a deepening knowledge of antique architecture, and the spread of humanistic ideas. By 1600, all Western European countries, with the exception of England, had developed vigorous new patterns of building that combined native traditions with Renaissance classicism. These edifices played an important role in expressing the power of the church and state, even as they expressed a new longing for balance, harmony, and order.

## TOPICS *in Architecture and Design*

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### THE BIRTH OF THE RENAISSANCE STYLE

**ENVIRONMENT.** The development of a uniquely Renaissance style centered on the city of Florence, the town often called the “birthplace of the Renaissance.” While the citizens of Florence did not single-handedly create the revival of culture and learning that occurred in Europe during the period, they did nevertheless pioneer new architectural styles imitated first in Italy and later abroad. This revival was evident to visitors to the city in the fifteenth century, as they saw the town’s urban fabric being transformed through the building of a host of new architectural monuments, most of them created in a style that imitated the buildings of Antiquity. During this period the building of Renaissance Florence was a significant industry, and one whose foundations can be traced to the peculiar circumstances of the town’s history in the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance.

**POPULATION.** During the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries Florence’s population expanded rapidly,

more rapidly than most European cities at the time. Around 1200, for example, the town was smaller than nearby Pisa. A little more than a century later in the time of Dante and Giotto, its numbers had increased at least fourfold. The city’s population was then probably around 90,000. Although small by modern standards, the city ranked among the largest in Europe. This great expansion created a building boom, beginning with the new walls constructed to defend the town. A new system of fortifications had been built around Florence in the late twelfth century, but a century later, another was already necessary. These new walls, begun around 1284, were not completed until the mid-fourteenth century. When complete, they increased by five times the area enclosed within the city’s fortifications. Such ambitious plans proved unnecessary, however. Between 1347 and 1351 the Black Death struck Florence hard, as it did other European cities at the time; Florence experienced a sudden and dramatic decline in its population as the disease moved quickly through densely packed streets and overcrowded dwellings. Florence’s population may have fallen by as much as one-half after the Black Death, and the city’s numbers remained depressed from their pre-plague levels in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, in part because of renewed outbreaks of the disease.

**CAPITALISM.** Although the Black Death produced sudden economic dislocation in Europe’s towns and countryside, it is more difficult to generalize about the epidemic’s long-term economic effects. The population decline affected Europe’s various industries differently. Activities that required a great deal of labor, for instance, tended to experience a rise in the real wages of their workers, since there were fewer laborers than before the Black Death. In many parts of Europe nobles and peasants converted their lands to pastoral purposes, raising sheep and other animals that required less manpower than other kinds of farming. The increase in the production of wool this transformation provided presented producers in towns like Florence with a steady source of cheap raw materials to refine into finished cloth. While many wealthy families had died out during the epidemics of the fourteenth century, those that survived now faced ideal circumstances in which to consolidate their control over the local economy. By 1400, all evidence suggests that an extraordinary amount of wealth had accumulated in the hands of Florence’s wealthy merchants, bankers, and industrial producers. Over the coming years a large part of this wealth funded the construction of buildings designed to glorify and immortalize the city’s most prominent families. As a result, the building trades wit-

nessed unprecedented expansion, as cities throughout Italy—but most particularly in Florence—devoted significant capital resources to construction.

**LURE OF ANTIQUITY.** Florence, like many Italian cities in the early fifteenth century, was a republic that had long been dominated by an oligarchy comprised of prominent families. During the fifteenth century the Medici family, in particular, increased its control over Florence's political structure, while at the same time upholding Florence's pretensions to being a republic. The town's control extended into the surrounding countryside, and during the fifteenth century Florence continued to conquer many neighboring towns in Tuscany, bringing them under its control. These conquests, which had been occurring for years, were now increasingly necessary to protect the town from the threat of outside invasion. Around 1400, Florence narrowly averted a major threat to its independence from the duchy of Milan when a sudden outbreak of plague struck the enemy's armies. A decade later another threat loomed, this time from the Kingdom of Naples to the south. Disease again prevented the town's conquest. In this situation of constant endangerment the image of the city as a David that stood up against the greater Goliaths of Italy became a potent symbol in the town's mythology. At the same time the town's humanist philosophers, artists, and architects were studying the antique worlds of Rome and Greece, finding a kinship with the urbane sophistication and republican values of Greek, Etruscan, and early Roman civilizations. In the decades after 1400 Florence's wealthy families surrounded themselves with the trappings of Antiquity, not only in their intellectual culture but in their art and architecture as well. While this taste for Antiquity was certainly a distinctive element of Florence's Renaissance, it was also at the time becoming a general phenomenon throughout Italy. Even in towns and cities ruled by despotic princes, rulers and ruled were coming to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the ancient world. In Florence, though, the revived classicism of Renaissance architecture played a vital role in expressing the values of independence, civic involvement, and local identity.

**MEDIEVAL PROJECTS.** Despite the falloff that had occurred in Florence's population as a result of the Black Death, many public building projects had continued in the fourteenth century unabated. Some of these projects were still under construction even as the new architecture of the Renaissance transformed the cityscape. Around 1300, the city's government had begun construction on a new town hall. Today known as the Palazzo Vecchio (or Old Palace, to distinguish it from

another civic complex dating from the sixteenth century), the building was constructed in a thoroughly medieval style, with heavily rusticated walls and a crenellated tower. Toward the end of the fourteenth century the town had also opened a new square outside this town hall by demolishing medieval houses that had stood at the site. Florence's governmental square was notable for its size and attractive shape, and although medieval in origin, the plaza displayed sculptural works by the town's most prominent artists throughout the Renaissance, a practice that has continued to the present day. A second major project of the fourteenth century, the town's grain market, began in 1336. When completed, the covered market of Orsanmichele was the most elaborate in Europe. Constructed in stone, the building was over 120 feet high and had two floors of vaulted space for merchants' sales. Even prior to the structure's completion, Florence's town fathers converted the building, allowing it to be used by the city's confraternities and guilds as a center for their charitable works and religious devotions. The decoration of the new religious complex consumed the energies of many Florentine artists and sculptors during the early Renaissance. Although their design was still medieval in nature, the scope of Orsanmichele and the Palazzo Vecchio went far beyond the scale of other projects built in Florence in previous centuries. They, in turn, were soon to be dwarfed by the building of the town's cathedral, the single largest project ever undertaken in the city and still one of the world's largest churches.

**CATHEDRAL.** Although work began on the Florence cathedral in 1296, it took over a century and a half to complete the mammoth structure. From the first, the cathedral's creators conceived it as a public monument, rather than an ecclesiastical project. The town's government and the local guilds, for instance, financed the church's construction, and Florence's archbishops had little say in how the structure was built. Over time the city's most powerful guild, the Arte de Lana or "wool-maker's guild," controlled the cathedral's construction, establishing a special Board of Works of the cathedral charged with supervising all matters concerning the building. This board appointed many of the city's famous artists and sculptors to decorate the project, including Giotto Bondone (c. 1277–1337), who has long been credited with designing the cathedral's graceful campanile or bell tower, to serve as the director of the work during the final years of his life. Most European cities with similar projects underway at the time of the Black Death abandoned or radically pared down their plans in the years following the epidemic. This was not

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MASTERING ANCIENT BUILDING PRACTICES**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Florentine scholar Antonio Manetti (1423–1491) was the first to write a life of the great early Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi. In it, he lauds Brunelleschi for his innovation. The following excerpt from that biography describes the way in which the architect gained mastery over the process of building by examining the structures of ancient Rome.

Having perceived the great and difficult problems that had been solved in the Roman buildings, he was filled with no small desire to understand the methods they had adopted and with what tools [they had worked]. In the past he had made, for his pleasure, clocks and alarm clocks with various different types of springs put together from a variety of different contrivances. All or most of these springs and contrivances he had seen; which was a great help to him in imagining the various machines used for carrying, lifting, pulling, according to the occasions where he saw they had been necessary. He took notes or not, according to what he thought necessary. He saw some ruins, some still standing upright, and others which had been overthrown for various reasons. He studied the methods of centering the vaults and of other scaffolding, and also where one could do without them to save money and effort, and what method one would have to follow. Likewise, [he considered] cases where scaffolding cannot be used because the vault is too big and for various other reasons. He saw and considered

many beautiful things which from those antique times, when good masters lived, until now had not been utilized by any others, as far as we know. Because of his genius, by experimenting and familiarizing himself with those methods, he secretly and with much effort, time and diligent thought, under the pretense of doing other than he did, achieved complete mastery of them, as he afterwards proved in our city and elsewhere ...

During this period in Rome he was almost continually with the sculptor Donatello. From the beginning they were in agreement concerning matters of sculpture more particularly ... [but] Donatello never opened his eyes to architecture. Filippo never told him of his interest, either because he did not see any aptitude in Donatello or perhaps because he was himself not sure of his grasp, seeing his difficulties more clearly every moment. Nevertheless, together they made rough drawings of almost all the buildings in Rome and in many places in the environs, with the measurements of the width, length and height, so far as they were able to ascertain them by judgment. In many places they had excavations done in order to see the joinings of the parts of the buildings and their nature, and whether those parts were square, polygonal or perfectly round, circular or oval, or of some other shape ... The reason why none understood why they did this was that at that time no one gave any thought to the ancient method of building, nor had for hundred of years.

**SOURCE:** Antonio Manetti, *The Life of Filippo di Ser Brunellesco*, in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. I. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1957): 177–178.

the case in Florence where construction continued on the cathedral despite the decline that occurred in the city's population after the Black Death. During the 1350s builders completed the structure's campanile, and soon after Florentines laid down the piers of the church's massive crossing, the area between the nave and the choir. The massive scale laid out for these piers committed Florence to the construction of a building of truly enormous size. For years the project continued, even though no one had any idea how the structure's crossing—more than 130 feet in diameter wide—was to be roofed over.

**BRUNELLESCHI'S DOME.** In the years after 1400 the architect Brunelleschi worked to solve this puzzle. Originally trained as a sculptor, Brunelleschi had been a finalist in a competition to create new doors for Florence's cathedral baptistery in 1401. The judges were unable to decide between Brunelleschi's and his competitor

Lorenzo Ghiberti's submissions, and awarded the commission to be shared by both. Brunelleschi, according to a long-standing legend, refused to accept this plan, and from this point onward he turned away from sculpture to devote himself to architecture. He traveled to Rome where he studied the buildings of the ancient world, measuring their proportions and analyzing their structural elements. By 1420, he had perfected his skills as an architect. His designs for a dome to complete the city's cathedral had been accepted and work began on his novel conception. The existing structure, a Gothic-styled cathedral, shaped Brunelleschi's plans for this work, and except for the lantern that sits atop the structure, there are few classical influences in the architect's dome. The ingenious solutions that Brunelleschi developed to cover this enormous space, though, point to his great skill as an engineer, skills that he would put to use later in a series of churches, chapels, and public buildings he designed in Florence. Brunelleschi directed the cathedral

project for a number of years, supervising work crews and resolving thorny issues of design and building on a daily basis. His solutions to the practical problems of building show the strongly inventive strain of his mind. One of the problems of constructing a dome of this magnitude proved to be the issue of scaffolding. It had been estimated that it might consume the wood from several forests to build a scaffold large enough to construct the structure's dome. Brunelleschi instead devised an innovative system in which the scaffolding positioned at the top of the dome's drum could be moved up as new sections of the structure were completed. He also created a device whereby building materials could be hoisted up to these scaffolds as needed, an invention that reduced the number of workmen needed to ferry materials. The dome's structural elements consisted of eight ribs that supported both an outer and inner skin. Patterned brickwork between the ribs added strength to the structure, allowing the two elements—the stone ribs and brickwork—to support the dome's interior skin. A series of buttresses arranged around the base or drum of the dome also gave further support to the entire project's mass. This solution allowed the structure to soar with commanding simplicity almost 40 stories over the skyline of Florence. Since its completion in 1436, Brunelleschi's dome has become the most famous and readily recognizable symbol of the city.

**OTHER PROJECTS.** As construction on Brunelleschi's dome reached completion, the city of Florence witnessed a building boom of unprecedented proportions. For the architect Brunelleschi, managing the cathedral project was a full-time job that required his presence on a day-to-day basis. Even though the demands of this work were considerable, Brunelleschi still found time to design a number of structures elsewhere in the city. These projects helped forge a distinctive Renaissance architectural style imitated by later architects. In these designs Brunelleschi put to even greater use the classical language he had learned from his study of ancient architecture in Rome. The architect's plans for the Ospedale degli Innocenti show the artist's first attempts to develop a complete style influenced by classical proportions and design elements. Founded in 1410, the Ospedale was a foundling hospital or orphanage—one of the first European institutions to deal with the problem of abandoned children. The design that Brunelleschi crafted for the institution's orphanage was similarly innovative. In it, he created an arcade of eleven slender columns that supported rounded Roman arches. One of the most significant things about the architecture the artist created here was its use of a geometrically regular system of propor-

tions. Each column, for instance, was as high as the width of the arch it supported and equal, too, to the distance between the outer colonnade and the interior wall. Brunelleschi made similar use of regular proportions throughout his plans, thus producing a work that was simple, elegant, and visually balanced. The only decorative elements he included in his original plans were the acanthus-leaved Corinthian capitals that crowned the colonnade's columns. Thus in contrast to the complexity of Gothic architecture being constructed at the time in most of Europe, his designs for the Ospedale were a model of restraint, clarity, and simplicity. A key feature of Brunelleschian architecture was its use of numerical relationships. On the building's façade the proportions he relied upon made use of the relationships one to two, one to five, and two to five. Brunelleschi repeated these same numerical relationships in the building's interiors. These numbers were not haphazardly chosen, but were religiously significant: one being the number associated with God the Father, two with Jesus Christ, and five with the number of wounds the Savior suffered during his crucifixion. Further, the multiple of two and five equals ten, the number of the Commandments, which were an important set of strictures used in raising the orphanage's children. In this way Brunelleschi's mathematical relationships, which were readily intelligible to the astute fifteenth-century observer, expressed certain underlying religious ideals, a feature of his architecture that became one of the hallmarks of Renaissance design. In both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries architects would use numerical relationships, proportions, and shapes not only to create harmonious designs but to express underlying philosophical and religious truths.

**CHURCHES.** In a series of churches and chapels designed throughout Florence the architect perfected his new classical idiom. Work on Brunelleschi's plans for the Church of San Lorenzo commenced in 1421. The Medici family, which was rising to prominence at the time, financed much of the construction of this project, and their ties to the church remained strong throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In his designs for San Lorenzo, Brunelleschi pioneered the first use of an architectural system of single-point perspective. Looking down the church from the high altar back to the end of the nave, the church's lines and columns are designed so that they diminish and converge at one point in the rear of the structure. In place of the mystery of a Gothic church, Brunelleschi here expressed an architectural system in which the interplay of light on simple refined surfaces recalled the grand interior spaces of ancient Rome. In place of the traditional Latin cross usually relied upon



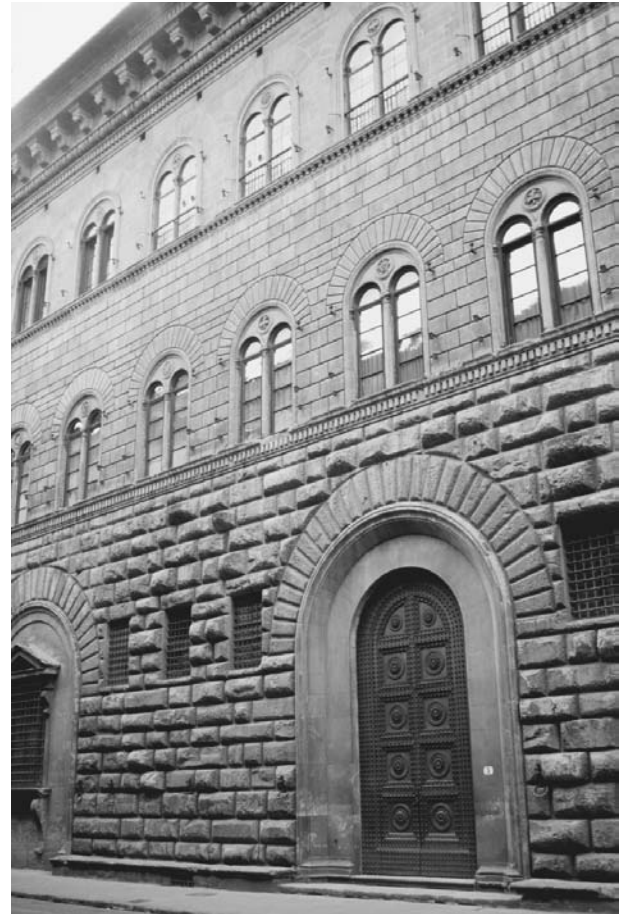
The Pazzi Chapel, Church of Santa Croce in Florence, Italy, designed by Filippo Brunelleschi. © ANGELO HORNAK/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

in Western church architecture, the architect substituted the T-shape of the ancient Roman basilica. On both sides of the nave, a colonnade of Corinthian columns supporting Roman arches sets off side aisles, in which the church's chapels are recessed again into Roman arches. Above these arches round windows known as *oculi* admit light into the space. Throughout the structure Brunelleschi restricted his use of materials to the gray stone known in Italy as *pietra serena* and white plaster. Although the resulting effect is severe, it is also rational, harmonious, and altogether appealing. The use of the two-tone palette of gray and white, found in Brunelleschi's earliest creations, became a long-standing feature of Tuscan design, surviving well into the nineteenth century. The architect perfected this new classical style of church architecture further in his plans for a new Church of Santo Spirito, a building that eventually replaced an older medieval structure on the spot. Here Brunelleschi

relied on a different set of proportional relationships to produce a structure that appears more massive and imposing than the lighter and more elegant San Lorenzo. In the case of both churches Brunelleschi planned to situate the structures within impressive piazzas that would serve as a focus for civic life. Unfortunately, neither design was executed in the way in which the artist had wished, although later architects studied his plans. Thus they had an indirect impact upon developing ideas about urban design in the Renaissance. For the Church of Santa Croce in Florence, Brunelleschi designed a third architectural masterpiece, the small Pazzi Chapel that is a free-standing structure on the church's grounds. In this building the contrast between the late-medieval architectural world and that of the developing Renaissance becomes even more evident. In contrast to the complexity and mystery of Gothic spaces, Brunelleschi's plans for the chapel are at once clear, graceful, and har-

monious. They give expression as well to the developing sensibilities of the humanist movement, with its emphasis on the notions of a universe filled with divinely inspired harmonies and proportions that could be understood by the human mind. At the Pazzi Chapel, the artist again relied on the color scheme he chose for Santo Spirito and San Lorenzo: cool gray and white. Yet within this space, touches of blue—from the terracotta medallions designed for the chapel by the sculptor Luca della Robbia—relieve the severity inherent in the earlier structures. In addition, Brunelleschi altered his proportions so that he diminished the scale of each of the chapel's three stories. The result makes the Corinthian pilasters, which serve as a decorative element upon the chapel's walls, take on an even greater visual importance.

**MICHELLOZZO.** All Brunelleschi's completed buildings in Florence were public in nature. At the same time a revolution was also underway in domestic architecture led by the architect's younger competitor, Michelozzo di Bartolommeo (1396–1472). Michelozzo and his studio designed numerous chapels, churches, and monastic buildings in and around the city of Florence, along with urban palazzi (palaces) and country villas. The quality of domestic architecture in medieval Florence had been low, consisting mostly of medieval tenements filled with crowded apartment-styled dwellings. Even the wealthiest families in the town had long clung to fortress-like houses, which in the uncertain and insecure world of the Middle Ages had often been sited around a massive defensive tower. During the 1440s Cosimo de' Medici, the head of the wealthy banking family and the backdoor manipulator of Florence's politics, commissioned the architect Michelozzo to design a new family palace or palazzo. At that time, as now, the word "palazzo" in Italian referred to all kinds of substantial urban buildings. The Medici Palace that Michelozzo designed became the nerve center of the Medici banking and business concerns as well as the family's domestic residence. At the time the Medici was a family of comparatively new wealth that lacked a noble title. Cosimo de' Medici consequently wanted to use his new palazzo to project the right image. We know, for instance, that he had originally approached Brunelleschi to design the building, but he rejected the architect's plans because he felt that they were too ostentatious and elaborate. Since Florence was a republic (although ostensibly one largely controlled by Cosimo) he desired a palace that would bolster the image of his family as cultured and substantial private citizens of the city. The Michelozzo design he chose has been somewhat altered over the centuries. It consisted of three floors. The first floor, which was the center of the



The Medici Palace in Florence, Italy. © PHILIPPA LEWIS/CORBIS.

Medici bank during the Renaissance, originally had large Roman-styled arches that were open to the street so that merchants and businessmen could gain free access to the structure. The exterior walls of this floor are finished with rustic blocks of stone, while above on the second and third floors, the masonry becomes progressively more refined. At the top of the structure a classical cornice crowns the building. Although the Medici Palace is more than 70 feet high, the overall effect is not one of grandeur, but of squatness. The interior courtyard fills the structure with light and relieves the fortress appearance of the exterior. The colonnade that surrounds this courtyard shows the influence of Brunelleschi's designs for the Ospedale, although Michelozzo used columns that were shorter and more massive to support the heavy weight of the floors above. To modern minds, the appearance of the Medici Palace appears far from homey since its high ceilings and forbidding rusticated exterior seem to connote more the appearance of public rather than domestic spaces. Such distinctions, however, played little role in the overheated commercial world of fifteenth-century



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**BEAUTY IN BUILDING**

**INTRODUCTION:** Leon Battista Alberti's *On the Art of Building* closely followed the ideas of the ancient Roman designer Vitruvius. Later architects and patrons read Alberti's treatise, and many of Alberti's ideas were to shape the aesthetic values of the later High Renaissance. The scholar's definition of beauty was often repeated in the evolution of Renaissance thought.

In order therefore to be as brief as possible, I shall define Beauty to be a harmony of all the parts, in whatsoever subject it appears, fitted together with such proportion and connection that nothing could be added, diminished or altered, but for the worse. A quality so noble and divine that the whole force of wit and art has been spent to procure it; and it is but very rarely granted to any one, or even to Nature herself, to produce any thing in every way perfect and complete. How extraordinary a thing (says the person introduced in Tully) is a handsome Youth in Athens! This Critick in Beauty found that there was something deficient or superfluous in the persons he disliked, which was not compatible with the perfection of beauty, which I imagine might have been obtained by means of Ornament, by painting and concealing anything that was deformed, trimming and polishing what was handsome; so that the unsightly parts

might have given less offence, and the more lovely, more delight. If this be granted, we may define Ornament to be making of an auxiliary brightness and improvement to Beauty. So that then Beauty is somewhat lovely which is proper and innate, and diffused over the whole body, and Ornament somewhat added or fastened on rather than proper and innate. To return therefore where we left off. Whoever would build so as to have their building commended, which every reasonable man would desire, must build according to a justness or proportion, and this justness of proportion must be owing Art. Who therefore will affirm that a handsome and just structure can be raised any otherwise than by the means of Art? and consequently this part of building, which relates to beauty and ornament, being the chief of all the rest, must without doubt be directed by some sure rules of art and proportion, which whoever neglects will make himself ridiculous. But there are some who will by no means allow of this, and say that men are guided by a variety of opinions in their judgment of beauty and of buildings, and that the forms of structures must vary according to every man's particular taste and fancy, and not be tied down to any rules of Art. A common thing with the ignorant to despise what they do not understand!

**SOURCE:** Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. I. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1957): 230–231.

Florence, as most families lived and worked in the same space. The Medici Palace, by contrast, offered the family a greater degree of privacy and comfort than was usually present in the dark and damp homes in which even many of the city's wealthiest citizens lived. The building's rusticated exterior, too, duplicated the surviving monuments of ancient Rome rather than medieval models, in order to give the Medici family a degree of greater respectability. To the fifteenth-century observer, the palace's exterior likely conveyed an impression of dignity and solidity. Observed from this direction, it is not difficult to see why the palace exercised an influence over the construction of many similar structures for Italy's notable families.

**ALBERTI.** Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) was the finest fifteenth-century architect to follow Brunelleschi in Florence. One of the great “universal men” of the Renaissance, Alberti was a humanist by training who worked in Florence during the mid–1430s. Although he was a member of one of the town's most distinguished families, the young Alberti had been born illegitimate

and was brought up in Venice during one of the periods of his father's exile from the city. His father died during Alberti's student years, ultimately leaving the young scholar without sufficient resources to support himself. Thus Alberti sought patrons in the wealthy, cultivated families of Italy, numbering among his distinguished supporters the Este of Ferrara, the Gonzaga of Mantua, at least two popes, and the Rucellai family in Florence. He designed a number of structures for these patrons, and in 1450 he finished his *Ten Books on Architecture*, a work that revived the ideas of the ancient Roman scholar Vitruvius about architectural proportions. While his architectural ideas were not widely influential among Florentine builders in the fifteenth century, architects elsewhere in Italy imitated his design tenets.

**DESIGNS.** At the invitation of Pope Nicholas V (1459–1557), a scholarly pope whom Alberti met during his student days, the architect completed the first plans for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Although that project stalled for almost another half cen-

tury, Bramante, Raphael, and Michelangelo—the Vatican’s chief sixteenth-century builders—all studied his plans. Alberti’s ideas about architecture maintained that beauty was a truth, and that buildings must be designed rationally to provide people with space that was harmonious and beautiful. At the same time he was conscious of the functionality of the spaces he created, insisting that buildings must serve practical uses and consequently be designed for their inhabitants. Alberti’s theories on architectural beauty are evident in the palace he designed for the Rucellai family during the mid-1440s. The architect rejected the heavy fortress style of Michelozzo’s slightly earlier Medici Palace, and instead created a façade that was altogether more refined. Unlike Brunelleschi who used columns to support his graceful colonnades and arches, Alberti liberated the column and the pilaster to become mere decorative elements. The arch itself, he insisted, was an opening in a wall, and most of his designs preserved its essential nature. Alberti, for instance, did not create colonnades of columns that supported Roman arches in the way that Brunelleschi had done before him. He developed these ideas in a number of commissions he completed for Italian princes, amassing a distinctive list of creations that influenced the development of the later High Renaissance style. One of the most unusual buildings he designed was for the notorious despot Sigismondo Malatesta, at the time lord of Rimini. Alberti was then working within the papal household and was also a member of a religious order, but this did not dissuade him from helping Malatesta in his plans to build a temple that glorified pagan learning and humanist scholars. Originally, Malatesta had planned to remodel a local church to suit his ambitions for a pagan shrine. At Alberti’s instigation, though, the tyrant began to completely encase the former church within an entirely new skin of marble. Unfortunately, Malatesta’s fortunes changed before the shrine’s completion, and work on the structure ceased. The exterior of this structure, though, shows Alberti’s successful assimilation of classical elements of design, an assimilation that was also expressed in the architect’s plans for the Church of Sant’Andrea in Mantua. The architect finished designing this project in 1470, shortly before his death, and most of its construction occurred following his death. Here he relied on a traditional Latin cross layout for the structure, although in his writings he advocated the use of central style, in which none of a church’s radiating wings was larger than another. Instead of the rows of columns that Brunelleschi and other fifteenth-century architects had used to support their vaulted ceilings, Alberti created a single-aisle church with side chapels recessed into the walls within gigantic Roman



Engraving of Leon Battista Alberti. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

arches. Further he designed the ceiling of this church as a single rounded barrel vault that moves toward the crossing and is met by similar barrel vaults in the transepts and choir. The overall effect of the design produced is at once harmoniously proportioned and majestically beautiful. It is little wonder, then, that elements of Sant’Andrea’s barrel-vaulted style had numerous imitators, most notably in both Bramante’s plans for the new St. Peter’s Basilica and the Jesuit Church of Il Gesù, important sixteenth-century projects in the city of Rome.

**AFTER ALBERTI.** The impact of Alberti’s harmonious creations inspired many designers in the second half of the fifteenth century. In Rome, Alberti’s work for Pope Nicholas V created a new urban design for the city centered on St. Peter’s and the Vatican complex. A number of buildings constructed after 1450 seem to be influenced by his ideas and designs, although their architects are unknown. These nameless figures copied Alberti’s plans for the façade of Santa Maria Novella in Florence at several Roman churches during the 1470s and 1480s. In addition, Alberti’s architectural ideas are evident in the courtyard built for the Palazzo Venezia in



The Malatesta Temple in Rimini, Italy, designed by Leon Battista Alberti. ALINARI-ART REFERENCE/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Rome sometime after 1455. Although the architect's influence upon subsequent designers was profound, innovators also continued to appear on the Italian scene. One of these, Giuliano da Sangallo, was the first of a distinguished family of architects. Like Brunelleschi and Alberti, Sangallo studied the buildings of ancient Rome, recording a number of buildings that have since disappeared. In Prato, a suburb outside Florence, he designed the Church of Santa Maria dell'Carceri that drew imaginatively on elements from Alberti and also from Brunelleschi's plans for the Pazzi Chapel. In this structure he placed a ribbed dome similar to those Brunelleschi had designed in Florence. Sangallo designed the church itself in the central style, a departure from the traditional Latin cross used throughout most of the Middle Ages. Alberti's theoretical writings on architecture had stressed that the central style—in which the radiating transepts of the building were of equal size—was

more harmonious and beautiful. Sangallo's integration of Albertian and Brunelleschian styles continued throughout the interior and exterior of the building. Inside he decorated the structure with the palette of *pietra serena* and white plaster typical of Brunelleschi. On the exterior of the church, however, the architect played off brilliant white and green marbles, similar to the façades that Alberti had crafted for his structures. Sangallo established a popular design practice in Florence, and during the late fifteenth century he produced plans for a number of charming structures, including a new country villa for the Medici at Poggio a Caiano.

**PALACE BUILDING.** The years between 1450 and 1500 saw a great boom in the construction of urban palaces for the wealthy merchants and nobles of Italian cities. In Florence the town's patrician class rushed to imitate the Medici and other families who had already constructed domestic palaces during the first half of the

fifteenth century. The façades of these structures were either constructed from rusticated stone or finished with rough plaster known as *intonaco*. In a few cases both materials were combined on the same façade. Like the Medici Palace, the impression most Florentine palaces made from the street was not one of opulence or grandeur, although such buildings would have stood out in a cityscape filled with monotonous and undistinguished medieval houses. Inside, though, the interiors were flooded with light from the stylish courtyards that usually served as the central focus of the building. The contrast between the dark spaces typical of medieval houses and those of the Renaissance was probably striking to fifteenth-century observers. Over time, the palazzi grew larger and more elaborate, as families competed to outdo each other. In the 1490s, for instance, the prominent Strozzi family began construction on a palace that they hoped would outshine all others in the city. Not completed until 1507, the Palazzo Strozzi was, like many of these palace projects, an early exercise in urban renewal that necessitated the demolition of many pre-existing structures. The family demolished a huge city block that included a massive medieval tower that belonged to a noble count, several shops, and at least four other houses in order to build its new home. While the interiors of these dwellings offered definite improvements in comfort over most medieval structures, a palace's walls were frequently plain and unadorned. The amassing of collections of art, a custom that grew more popular at the time, did much to relieve the monotony of Florence's new interior spaces. Even with these great collections, though, a palace was not a homey structure in a modern sense.

**CONSEQUENCES.** The construction of so many great structures within such a short time transformed the Florentine cityscape. Palace construction displaced huge numbers of people from their residences, as wealthy families bought up large tracts of land within the city and demolished former tenements. As poor residents were dispersed into other areas of town, fashionable and unfashionable neighborhoods emerged. The city's wealthiest families crowded into particular areas and even certain streets, while the poor sought housing at the boundaries of the town's developed areas. The result produced more notable distinctions between rich and poor in the city. Writing about 1470, a prominent Florentine observed that thirty imposing urban palaces had been constructed during his lifetime. A half century later another observer noted an additional twenty structures that had been added to the city, but he also remarked that anyone who would want to list all of the town's major

palaces would have a difficult job indeed. The construction of such a large number of imposing structures required an equally large number of designers and tradespeople. Among the architects who frequently designed and supervised construction of these buildings were Giuliano da Sangallo, his brother Antonio, and their nephew Antonio. The Sangallos maintained a popular and profitable business constructing domestic palaces. But Florence also produced a number of competent designers at this time, men who met the demands of wealthy citizens for new accommodations. Most of these figures had risen in their respective guilds—goldsmithing, carpentry, and stonecutting—and had acquired notable expertise in the arts of construction. Around 1500, painters, too, ranked among those who designed urban buildings, and the long list of sixteenth-century artists who planned such buildings included Raphael Sanzio, Michelangelo, and Giorgio Vasari. But in most cases architecture was not a self-sustaining profession, as in the modern world. Most designers practiced other crafts besides designing buildings, and many merely designed one or two structures at the request of their patrons.

**URBAN PLANNING.** From Brunelleschi's days onward, architects had often envisioned plazas and squares surrounding the structures that they built; but like the oft-unfinished façades of Renaissance churches, few of these plans ever came to fruition during the fifteenth century. The experience of seeing the Roman forum, even in its dilapidated and ruined state, suggested to Renaissance scholars, architects, and artists, the public vitality of ancient life. In an effort to recover this kind of use of urban space, architects in the fifteenth century increasingly turned to study the ancient designer Vitruvius as well as the works of Polybius. They often envisioned entirely new cities planned along lines suggested by these antique writers. Although they rarely produced results, these plans had avid students in the artists and designers who came later. The fifteenth century, though, did produce one fine example of a planned city. During the 1460s Pope Pius II had his native village south of the city of Siena rebuilt along the lines suggested by contemporary Renaissance architects. Eventually named Pienza in his honor, the town featured a plan in which streets and subsidiary squares radiated out from a central plaza. Within Pienza, different architectural proportions established a visible hierarchy among the city's various structures. Architects and artists admired this kind of centralized, rational planning. The Urbino court artist Luciano Laurana designed one of the most famous plans for an ideal city of this sort. In a plan from around 1475 the architect grouped all structures in a large city

around a central square in which he placed a classically styled round “temple” inspired by the architectural writings of Alberti. The central Italian painter Piero della Francesca immortalized Laurana’s visually appealing plans in a famous panel painting, *Vision for an Ideal City*. Most fifteenth-century architects, Laurana included, had to be satisfied with far more limited successes, such as the design of the small squares that surrounded their architectural creations.

**THEORY.** The fifteenth century also witnessed a revival in interest in the theory of architecture. Brunelleschi and other architects had studied the buildings of ancient Rome, measuring their proportions and analyzing their structural and design elements. This initial interest gave rise to a heightened interest in architectural theory. The humanist scholar and artist Alberti had been among the first to comb the pages of the ancient builder Vitruvius’ works on architecture. In his *On the Art of Building*, completed around 1450, he had codified the ancients’ ideas about decoration and proportion into a set of architectural “laws.” Vitruvius had insisted that the human body was the primary model for architectural design, and he had based the building of his structures on proportions and design elements drawn from the body. Alberti similarly argued that beautiful buildings arose from principles that were similar to those of the human body’s design. According to Alberti, beauty arose from the interplay of design elements within a building so that, like the human body, no part could be taken away without diminishing the effect of the whole. Alberti’s treatise, however, was primarily a literary work. He provided, in other words, no illustrations to make clear just exactly how buildings designed with these principles might look. For clues to the application of his ideas, his later students studied the many he had planned throughout Italy.

**FILARETE AND DI GIORGIO.** Shortly after the completion of Alberti’s treatise, *On the Art of Building*, the Florentine sculptor and architect, Antonio Averlino (1400–1469), who was widely known as Filarete, completed a similar work of theory. Unlike Alberti’s work, though, Filarete illustrated his *Treatise on Architecture* with examples of the buildings he envisioned. The architect wrote the work for the duke of Milan and, although it was not printed in the next generations, it was widely circulated in manuscript form. Filarete wrote his theory with an evangelical tone, trying to convert his readers to the Florentine way of construction. He celebrated the revival of Antiquity that had recently occurred in his hometown and tried to convince his readers of the supremacy of antique styles of building. Along the way he advised on topics about ornament, decoration, pro-

portions, and urban design. He did not write his work, though, with designers in mind, since he addressed his comments not to architects and artists but to princes and nobles. He hoped to encourage these figures to patronize the new architecture. He used a complex and contrived style throughout the work that included a narrative plot in which a court architect educates a young prince in the arts of building. By contrast Francesco di Giorgio (1439–1501), a Siennese painter, sculptor, and architect, was more systematic in his *Treatise on Civil and Military Architecture*, which he probably wrote sometime during the 1480s and later revised in a completely new manuscript edition. As a painter, di Giorgio laid great emphasis both on the inventiveness and drafting skills that were necessary for those who hoped to practice architecture. Like Filarete, di Giorgio illustrated his work, but he did so more systematically than the earlier theoretician. His illustrations, in other words, elaborated upon issues he had discussed in the text, even as they conveyed additional technical information necessary to the practitioner. This technical strain recurs in the text as well, since di Giorgio included a great deal of practical information on methods for measuring heights and depths, military engineering, and hydraulics. Like many artists of the period, di Giorgio also desired to elevate the practice of his discipline and to promote it as an endeavor equal in intensity and seriousness to the liberal arts. His treatise praised the skills that were necessary in the architect, including sophistication in geometry and arithmetic. These he celebrated as signs of the nobility of the calling. Together with Filarete’s and Alberti’s works, di Giorgio’s treatises helped establish a body of architectural theory studied by later sixteenth-century practitioners in Italy and throughout Europe.

**ACHIEVEMENT.** Fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance architects had many accomplishments. Early in the century Filippo Brunelleschi had made the pilgrimage to Rome to study the structural elements of Antique buildings and to measure their proportions. Returning to his native Florence, he had used the insights gained there, as well as his own skills as a sculptor and stonemason, to create a dome of stunning beauty for the town’s cathedral. In works undertaken throughout the city, he had also relied on his new knowledge of classical Antiquity to design buildings notable for their graceful harmonies and proportions. The success of his initial structures had inspired other figures to create monuments that made use of the visual language of classical buildings. These architects, at first drawn mostly from the stonemasons’, goldsmiths’, and carpenters’ guilds, produced works for the ever-intensifying building boom that occurred in

Florence during the later fifteenth century. The results of this swell in construction clothed the town in new marble-clad churches, domestic palaces, and civic buildings notable for their size and elegance. Florence, in other words, developed from a medieval town filled with monotonous, fortress-like buildings, into a city punctuated by great squares, imposing churches, and dignified residences. These developments did not go unnoticed elsewhere in Italy. Throughout central and northern Italian towns, architects observed the elements of Florentine design and imitated some of its innovations. While the influence that the city cast was great, designers native to other cities—figures like Luciano Laurana and Francesco di Giorgio—point to the growing vitality and originality of centers outside Florence. By the end of the fifteenth century, this productivity had prepared the stage for an even greater era of architectural accomplishment that unfolded in the following century.

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## THE HIGH RENAISSANCE

**ACHIEVEMENT.** By the end of the fifteenth century Italian designers had developed a new sophisticated architectural language that relied on elements culled from the monuments and buildings of Antiquity. They had used this knowledge to create daring new structures that were unparalleled in the centuries that preceded the Renaissance. In Florence and other Italian cities, the new knowledge of classical style had also been used to create imposing urban palaces for wealthy families. For most of the fifteenth century architecture had been a craft largely practiced by sculptors, masons, and carpenters. Around 1500, though, painters began to design build-

ings with increasing frequency. Painters brought new skills to the practice of architecture, including a surer sense of draftsmen's skills acquired in their craft. They also used light and mass in building in bold new ways. Although none of his structures were ever built, Leonardo da Vinci's plans for several buildings point to the vibrancy of this new trend. Both his imagined designs as well as the writings and buildings of Alberti—all of which emphasized harmonious beauty and elegant refinement—were major influences on the development of High Renaissance architects. This period, which began around 1500 and ended abruptly with the Sack of Rome, produced many fine designs for buildings planned on an enormous scale. As in painting and sculpture, the High Renaissance in architecture produced new structures that were more heroic and grand than those of the fifteenth century. Unfortunately, the relatively slow progress of building construction doomed many of the High Renaissance's monumental architectural plans to incompleteness. Some builders abandoned projects altogether; other builders truncated their projects or modified them to fit changing tastes. The High Renaissance in architecture, then, frequently presents us with a picture of great promises, but promises that were often left unfulfilled.

**SHIFT TO ROME.** Around 1500, the center of architectural innovation also shifted in Italy from Florence to Rome. The pace of construction in the city had already picked up during the second half of the fifteenth century, but with the election of Pope Julius II in 1503 a great period of expansion began. Julius was an impetuous and fiery personality. Known as the "Warrior Pope" he faced friends and foes alike with equal determination. Abroad, Julius marched into battle with his troops, pronounced public curses against his enemies, and beat recalcitrant cardinals who refused to march into battle with him with his cane. At home in Rome, he turned his steely will upon the face of the city, razing whole districts and rebuilding them to suit his desires for a grand capital. The tentative renewal plans of previous Renaissance popes paled in comparison with the building campaigns he waged during his ten-year pontificate. Julius called a host of artists to work in the city and refused to live in the papal apartments that had been recently refurbished by his predecessors. Instead he commissioned Raphael to provide him with new monumental frescoes that might equal the forcefulness of his personality. He hired Michelangelo to work on his enormous tomb, and then only a few years later, redirected the artist to painting the ceiling frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. His greatest endeavor of all, though,



Portrait of Pope Julius II by Raphael. © NATIONAL GALLERY COLLECTION; BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON/CORBIS.

was his decision to rebuild St. Peter's Basilica, a structure originally constructed by the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century. To create the new church, which he stipulated must outshine every other church in Christendom, he demolished one of the largest surviving buildings from the ancient world. Summoning the architect Bramante, he soon began the greatest building project of the sixteenth century. Along the way to completion, the new St. Peter's Basilica consumed the efforts of the greatest architectural minds of the age, not to mention enormous sums of money. The project also lasted for more than 175 years, long beyond the scope of the pope's life. Before his death in 1513, Julius oversaw the partial destruction of the old basilica and the construction of the piers of the new building's crossing in order to commit future popes to follow through with his ambitious plans, even when those plans ran counter to the best interests of the church. During the reign of his immediate successor, Leo X (1513–1523), the demand for money to continue St. Peter's construction actually contributed to the great crisis of the Protestant Reformation when Leo arranged for the sale of an indulgence in Germany to finance the building's construction. Similar crises throughout the sixteenth

century threatened the building's completion, although it was, and it remains, an indubitable testimony to Julius' initial inspiration.

**BRAMANTE.** Donato d'Agnolo, who was better known as Bramante, (1444–1514) became the chief aid to Julius in attaining his greatest architectural ambitions. A native of a small town near the central Italian city of Urbino, Bramante had a successful career as a painter before beginning to practice architecture in his forties. At that time he worked for the Sforza duke Lodovico il Moro and he designed several churches in their capital Milan. The architecture of Alberti (particularly in its use of Roman barrel vaults) and the architectural drawings of Leonardo, with their emphasis on the use of the central style and geometric shapes, both influenced Bramante's style. In 1499, French forces conquered Milan, however, and Bramante was left without employment. He traveled to Rome, where he soon found work because of his connections with the Sforza dynasty. In the city a member of the family, Ascanio Sforza, commissioned him to build his tomb, and over the following years Bramante designed and supervised the construction of a cloister in the city. In 1502, he created the small *Tempietto*, a memorial commissioned by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to mark the site upon which St. Peter supposedly had been crucified. This small domed structure, considered one of the finest of High Renaissance architectural creations, perfects the central style of construction to a point of high finesse. Everything in the small building radiates outward from the memorial's center point, and shows that Bramante had now taken full advantage of his recent viewing of ancient Roman monuments firsthand. Although more severe than the architect's earlier designs, the work points forward toward his plans for the new Basilica of St. Peter's, a commission he won in 1506.

**ST. PETER'S.** For that great construction project the artist may have considered several possible plans, although he settled eventually on a central-style church, created in the shape of a Greek cross. The architectural drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, which Bramante had studied years before in Milan, influenced his plans for a building constructed as a Greek cross in which each of the church's four radiating wings were of exactly equal size. Eventually, the church's later architects abandoned the Greek cross in favor of a more traditional Latin cross design in which the nave was longer than the other three wings. Bramante's plan, however, called for each of the four corners of the building to be crowned with a large tower, and a dome—envisioned from the very first—was to sit atop the central crossing. Inside the structure Ro-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A PAPAL ARCHITECT**

**INTRODUCTION:** The architect and painter Giorgio Vasari wrote a famous series of biographies of Italy's greatest artists, which were first published in 1550. In his life of Bramante, Vasari carefully catalogues the changes that were made up to his day in the architect's plans for the new St. Peter's Basilica. The following excerpt illustrates the dangers of later alteration, to which most of the great architectural projects of the High Renaissance fell prey. By Vasari's time, Michelangelo, then the papal architect, was at work to restore key elements of Bramante's original design.

But the work we are here alluding to was conducted after a much altered fashion on his death and by succeeding architects; nay, to so great an extent was this the case, that with the exception of the four piers by which the cupola is supported we may safely affirm that nothing of what was originally intended by Bramante now remains. For in the first place, Raffaello da Urbino and Giuliano da San Gallo, who were appointed after the death of Julius II to continue the work with the assistance of Fra Giocondo of Verona, began at once to make alterations in the plans; and on the death of these masters, Baldassare Peruzzi also affected changes when he constructed the chapel of the king of France in the transept which is on the side to-

wards the Campo Santo. Under Paul III the whole work was altered once more by Antonio da San Gallo, and after him Michael Angelo, setting aside all these varying opinions, and reducing the superfluous expense, has given the building a degree of beauty and perfection, of which no previous successor to Bramante had ever formed the idea; the whole has indeed been conducted according to his plans, and under the guidance of his judgment, although he has many times remarked to me that he was but executing the design and arrangements of Bramante, seeing that the master who first founded a great edifice is he who ought to be regarded as its author. The plan of Bramante in this building does indeed appear to have been of almost inconceivable vastness and the commencement which he gave to his work was of commensurate extent and grandeur; but if he had begun this stupendous and magnificent edifice on a smaller scale, it is certain that neither San Gallo nor the other masters, not even Michael Angelo himself, would have been found equal to the task of rendering it more imposing, although they proved themselves to be abundantly capable of diminishing the work: for the original plan of Bramante indeed had a view to even much greater things.

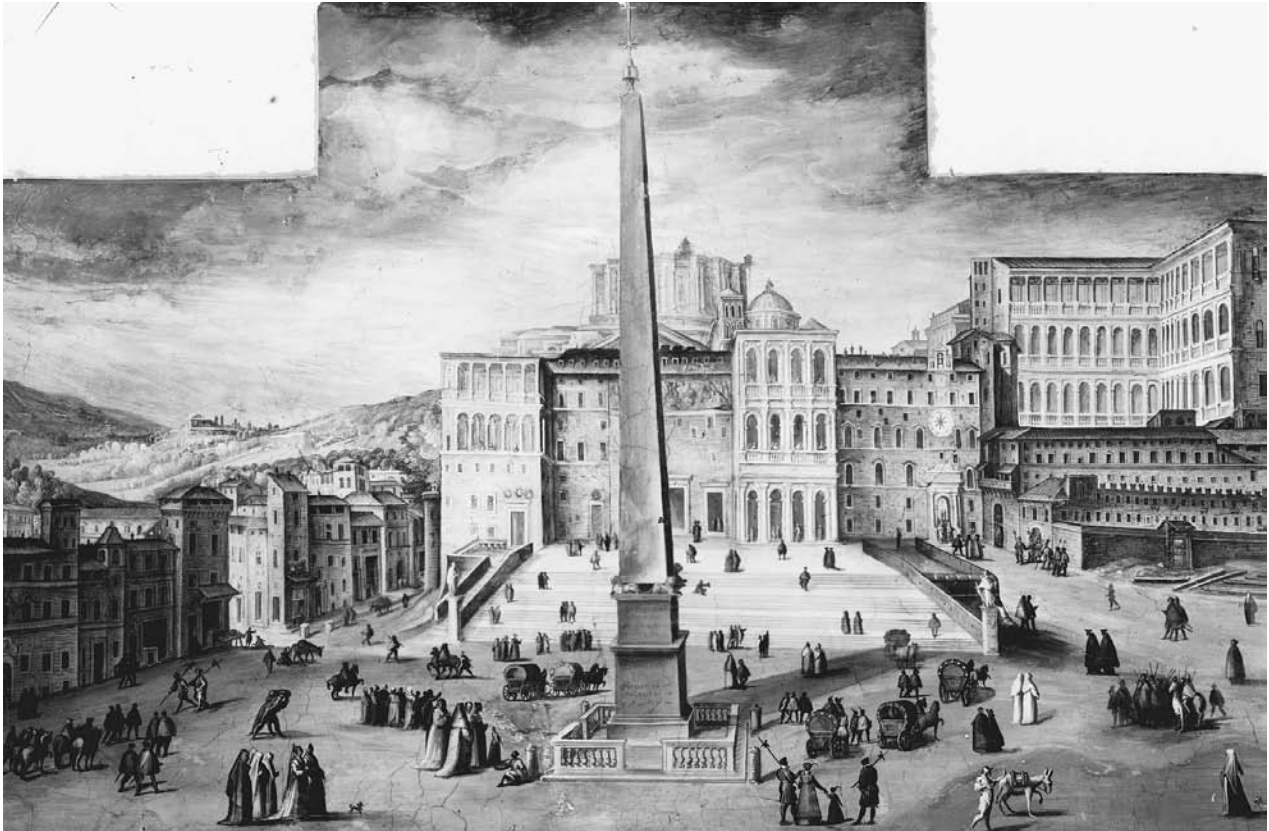
**SOURCE:** Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of Seventy of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. Vol. 3. Trans. E. H. and E. W. Blashfield and A. A. Hopkins (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913): 52–53.

man barrel vaults, drawn from the architecture of Alberti, were to cover each of the wings, a design feature that was also later achieved. The dome Bramante designed was innovative by Renaissance standards, and shows his growing mastery of the architectural forms of Antiquity. Until Bramante's time architects had relied on the ribbed-style dome first used by Brunelleschi at the cathedral of Florence. In that structure, floating ribs of stone had supported panels of masonry. Bramante's plans for the new St. Peter's stipulated a circular structure, an exact hemisphere based upon the still-standing ancient Pantheon in Rome. To give the dome's unusual shape greater height, Bramante placed the structure atop a drum, a structure that was one of the Renaissance's chief design innovations in constructions of this nature. In sum, the plans Bramante crafted for the new St. Peter's were monumental, and befit the enormous ambitions of the "Warrior Pope" Julius II. At the same time the design was too large to be completed in a single person's lifetime. At the time of Julius' death only the eastern portion of the ancient Roman structure at the site had been cleared away. Many of the features of Bra-

mante's design never came to fruition, including his plans for a perfectly hemispherical dome and other elements of his interior and exterior plans for the church. The imaginative design that he envisioned can best be seen not in Rome but in the small central Italian town of Todi. Here in 1508 Bramante designed the much smaller Santa Maria della Consolazione, a small pilgrimage church, which made use of the ideas he was developing for the new St. Peter's around the same time. The building sits on a small plain and is not surrounded by any other structures, a site that provides an excellent vantage point to observe the harmonious aspects of its design. Like many of Bramante's other plans, the structure functions organically, almost as if it were a sculptural, rather than an architectural creation. It is here that one can observe the Renaissance's desire to develop an architecture based upon the design principles of the human form.

**OTHER PROJECTS.** Even as he was at work upon the designs for the new St. Peter's, Julius II deployed Bramante to plan other projects. One of these was the





Sixteenth-century fresco showing the construction of St. Peter's Basilica at Rome. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

rebuilding of the Vatican Palace. Julius wished to join two structures—the small hilltop house known as the Belvedere and the Vatican Palace—which stood more than an eighth of a mile apart across undulating terrain. Bramante planned two enormous corridors that were more than a thousand feet long and two hundred feet wide. These corridors enclosed three garden terraces filled with fountains and grand staircases designed to follow the rolling shape of the site's hills. The scale of the project was immense, and like many of Bramante's buildings it was left unfinished at his death. Subsequent alterations changed the face of those parts of the work that Bramante designed, destroying the grand vistas that the architect had envisioned for the Vatican complex. Not until Louis XIV's building program at Versailles in the seventeenth century, though, did another monarch attempt anything quite so grand as Bramante's design, and the partial realization of the surviving plans for the gardens of the complex influenced garden planning for several centuries to come. A similarly important work from the architect's later years in Rome was his design for the Palazzo Caprini, a structure that is sometimes referred to as the House of Raphael, since the artist purchased it in 1517. In that building Bramante made full use of the

concept of a screen or decorative façade filled with classical elements that masked the building's underlying structural elements. The ground floor of this structure was heavily rusticated and contained a succession of Roman arches. Above this, the living quarters featured decorative balustrades and grouped columns that supported a classical cornice. None of these elements played a structural role, but were design touches that evoked Roman Antiquity and granted an air of refinement to the building. The elegance of the design (the house itself has long since been demolished) affected later architects, including the Venetian Andrea Palladio. Palladio so admired Bramante's Roman buildings that he observed that the artist had single-handedly brought "the light of architecture" back into the world. This hyperbole was far from correct, since a number of great and innovative designers had preceded Bramante. Nevertheless, his grand Roman designs instituted and continued to shape architecture in the style of the High Renaissance throughout the sixteenth century.

**DOMESTIC BUILDING.** The first decades of the sixteenth century witnessed a dramatic surge in the building of great urban palaces and suburban villas for Rome's

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ASSESSING ANCIENT ROME**

**INTRODUCTION:** With the death of Bramante, Pope Leo X appointed Raphael to serve as his chief architect. One of the tasks given to the artist was to complete a survey of the surviving ancient monuments in Rome. Raphael was a poor writer, so it appears that he wrote his report with the aid of his friend, Baldassare Castiglione. Castiglione was the author of the *Book of the Courtier*, one of the greatest prose works in sixteenth-century Italian. The following excerpt from the report shows the deep feelings of wonder that ancient architecture inspired in Raphael, and he laments the decay of the city.

For, if one considers what may still be seen amid the ruins of Rome, and what divine gifts there dwell in the hearts of the men of ancient times, it does not seem unreasonable to believe that many things which to us would appear to be impossible were simple for them. Now I have given much study to these ancient edifices: I have taken no small effort to look them over with care and to measure them with diligence. I have read the best authors of that age and compared what they had written with the works which they described, and I can therefore say that I have acquired at least some knowledge of the ancient architecture.

On the one hand, this knowledge of so many excellent things has given me the greatest pleasure: on the other hand the greatest grief. For I behold this noble city, which was the queen of the world, so wretchedly wounded as to be almost a corpse. Therefore I feel, as every man must feel, pity for his kindred and for his country. I feel constrained to use every part of my poor strength to bring to life some likeness, or even a shade of that which once was the true and universal fatherland of all Christians ...

May your Holiness, while keeping the example of the ancient world still alive among us, hasten to equal and to surpass the men of ancient days, as you even now do, by setting up magnificent buildings, by sustaining and encouraging the virtuous, by fostering talent, by rewarding all noble effort—thus sowing the fruitful seeds among the Christian princes. For, as by the calamities of war are brought to birth the destruction and the ruin of the arts and sciences, so from peace and concord are born the happiness of men and that highly-prized serenity of spirit that may imbue us with strength to accomplish work reaching to the heights of achievement.

**SOURCE:** Raphael in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. I. Ed. by Elizabeth G. Holt (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1957): 290, 292.

wealthiest citizens and foreign dignitaries. This boom, similar to the great construction bonanza that occurred in fifteenth-century Florence, resulted in the erection of a number of new and innovative domestic structures. The finest painters and architects of the age worked on these projects, including Raphael, Baldassare Peruzzi, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, and Giulio Romano. By contrast to the solidity and weight of most Florentine palaces of the previous century, an elegant refinement characterized these Roman structures. In the years after Bramante's death in 1514, Raphael entered the arena of Roman architecture. He became director of the construction of St. Peter's Basilica, a project on which he accomplished little since the building program slowed in the years after 1515 because of lack of funds. His most ambitious design program, outside of his involvement in the great basilica, was the construction of the Medici Villa or, as it is now known, the Villa Madama, a large suburban house near the Vatican intended for the use of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici. Raphael designed the structure with a number of intriguing and fantastic details, including circular courtyards and domed ceilings. He made use of the sloping hillside site and planned to set

the villa within a series of delightful gardens. As in the case of many ambitious Renaissance projects of this nature, circumstances forced Giulio de' Medici to divert his attentions from the project, and little of Raphael's ambitious design saw completion. One section of the villa, the Great Hall, still stands today, allowing us to observe Raphael's skills as an architect. He designed the room with a series of arches that supported a dome; the room's arches also frame the exterior gardens. Both the interior and exterior space thus work as part of a harmonious whole; later sixteenth-century architects imitated Raphael's design at the Villa Madama.

**SANGALLO.** Another domestic project from the early sixteenth century merits mention. In 1517, the influential Cardinal Alessandro Farnese commissioned Antonio da Sangallo the Younger to remodel a palace he had bought in Rome. Sangallo, a member of the Florentine dynasty of builders and designers, had originally served as a carpenter at the building of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The majestic structure he crafted for Farnese established Sangallo's reputation; he received numerous commissions and even served as the chief architect of St. Peter's during the years between 1539 and 1546. The

architect planned a huge masonry palace for the cardinal that abandoned the long-standing use of rusticated stone on its façade. Rough stone appears only at the arches that grant entrance into the building's massive interior courtyard. On the first floor he used low-rising windows, similar to ones that Michelangelo had designed to be installed a few years before on the façade of the Medici Palace in Florence. On the story above he relied on the Corinthian columns to frame the windows, which are alternately topped by rounded and triangulated pediments. Above on the structure's final floor, he mixed elements from the lower two floors before capping the entire structure with a cornice. Michelangelo, who supervised the later years of the building's long construction period, made this element grander and more prominent. The Palazzo Farnese was a huge building, massive in size, severe, yet refined in its effect. It influenced the design of many public and private buildings in European cities for years to come. The Palazzo Farnese also shaped American architecture. With the Renaissance architectural revival that occurred in North America in the late nineteenth century, numerous buildings resembling Italian palaces appeared in American cities. The style of the Farnese became popular. Perhaps it is for this reason that, in 1944, the United States purchased the Palazzo Margherita, another palace closely constructed upon the model of the Farnese, to serve as its embassy in Rome.

**PLEASURE PALACES.** The sixteenth century in Rome also produced a spate of pleasure palaces, buildings designed as retreats for their owners and as the backdrop for impressive banquets and other entertainments. The artist Raphael, who had already designed the suburban Villa Madama, also played a role in the decoration of one of these projects, a pleasure palace constructed for Agostino Chigi, the pope's banker. This structure is now known as the Villa Farnesina (since the Farnese family later bought it and connected it to their town Palazzo by a suspended walkway). Originally, the villa stood in a quiet country setting on the outskirts of the city. Chigi chose Baldassare Peruzzi as the project's architect. The building has two stories with a large façade of Roman arches in the center facing the surrounding gardens. Originally, delicate ornamentation carved into the stucco plaster or *intonaco* decorated the façade. Today, these decorative details survive only on the building's frieze, the others having been covered up since the sixteenth century. The delicacy of these decorations suggested the building's role as a pleasure palace, a building intended for the amusement of Chigi, his wife, and their guests, as opposed to a dwelling. The villa had only a few ma-

ior rooms, but these were sumptuously decorated and used to entertain. At Chigi's banquets, guests were said to have imitated the customs of ancient Rome by throwing their gold plates out the villa's windows (although Chigi's servants soon reclaimed them below). The interior walls of the villa were filled with ornate and sumptuous decorative cycles painted by Peruzzi, Raphael, and other artists in a style that imitated ancient Roman frescoes. The illusionistic details of the frescoes suggested the architecture of ancient Rome, and their erotic and classical imagery impressed Chigi's guests not only with the size of his fortune but the depth of his learning. The example of Chigi's pleasure villa inspired other members of Italy's ruling classes to build similar structures in the decades that followed.

**MICHELANGELO.** The artist Michelangelo had the longest and most varied career of any figure of the Renaissance. He lived until 1464 and his art underwent a progression from the idealized, heroic forms of the High Renaissance to the more willful and turbulent creations that inspired Italian Mannerism. As the greatest artistic genius of the age, his development affected other figures who avidly imitated his design innovations. Originally trained as a painter in the studio of the prosperous Florentine artist Domenico Ghirlandaio, Michelangelo also studied sculpture, and throughout his life he felt most at home in this medium. It was as a sculptor that the artist made his first decisive marks on Renaissance art. The carving of his Roman statues *Bacchus* and the *Pietà* established his reputation. Following these masterpieces, Michelangelo returned to Florence to complete, among many other works, his colossal *David*, the largest free-standing statue since Antiquity. Michelangelo continued to work in Florence, but with the accession of Julius II to the papacy, he was soon called to Rome to work on the pope's tomb project. The plans for the Julian tomb called for a massive independent structure that would contain scores of sculptures, architectural niches, and a bronze frieze. The tomb was never completed on this ambitious scale and it took more than thirty years for a greatly scaled-down memorial to be finished. But in the years between 1505–1508, Michelangelo was at work on the project, and from these initial experiences he began to acquire the skills necessary to be a successful architect and project supervisor. The tomb project required the quarrying of enormous amounts of marble and the supervision of large work crews. Although Michelangelo worked on the project for several years full time, Julius II soon moved him to work on the famous Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes, a commission he completed in the years between 1508 and 1512. The election of the Medici



The Campidoglio in Rome, designed by Michelangelo. © MICHAEL MASLAN/CORBIS.

pope Leo X in 1513 confirmed Michelangelo's papal patronage, and by 1517 the artist was back in Florence, undertaking an important project for the pope: the construction of a new façade for the Medici's family church of San Lorenzo. During the fifteenth century the family had richly showered this site with patronage. By the time that Michelangelo worked there, the Medici had weathered several challenges to their control over Florence and they had now allied themselves through marriage to the kings of France. The family now turned again to San Lorenzo, to shower it with new projects that underscored their rising status. Just before Michelangelo had arrived in Florence the venerable architect Giuliano da Sangallo, the uncle of the Roman architect Antonio, had made several drawings for plans for the project, although he had died before progressing further on the project. One of Sangallo's designs created an imaginative solution to the problem of the façade. Sangallo created a two-story Roman temple flanked by enormous towers to hide certain of the unattractive exterior elements of Brunelleschi's

original design. In this drawing he planned to mass classically-styled sculptures of the saints atop the façade's upper story, in effect creating a screen similar to that with which Baldassare Peruzzi was experimenting in Rome at the Palazzo Caprini around the same time.

**SAN LORENZO.** The Medici chose Michelangelo's plan for the church's façade instead. In keeping with the grand pretensions of the church's patron family, Michelangelo intended his design to be a "mirror of architecture and sculpture of all Italy" and he labored on the plans for over three years. The design he formulated was also for a two-story structure, although Michelangelo designed his structure without towers to cover the entire area of the church's edifice. Like the earlier project for the building of Julius' tomb, the San Lorenzo project was overly ambitious; it included eighteen statues in bronze and marble as well as fifteen carved reliefs. A surviving model of the façade shows shallow niches, from which the planned statues were to have projected



The New Sacristy at the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence, designed by Michelangelo. ALINARI-ART REFERENCE/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

outward. The use of marbles and bronze together would have created a dramatic interplay of color. Michelangelo set himself to the task quickly, supervising the quarrying of stone, a project that eventually required him to build a road through a portion of the Apennine Mountains outside Florence. But although the artist worked feverishly on the project for several years, the Medici cancelled the commission for the façade abruptly in 1520, deciding to expend the family's resources on a chapel and family tomb at the church instead. They chose Michelangelo again to direct this commission, and the chapel he designed was made to harmonize with a sacristy Brunelleschi had built for the opposing side of the church in the fifteenth century. Work was frequently interrupted on the tombs, and the chapel was never finished as it had been designed. But among Michelangelo's architectural creations it ranks as one of his most completely realized creations. To secure better lighting for the tombs, Michelangelo raised the roof of the chapel by

adding a third story that brought the structure's roofline above those of surrounding houses. In other respects he relied on the traditions of Brunelleschian architecture, including the use of gray *pietra serena* set against white stucco. In this structure Michelangelo's carved tombs, with their more delicate and refined High Renaissance architectural frames, seem out of place with the surrounding fifteenth-century style of the chapel.

**LAURENTIAN LIBRARY.** Michelangelo was soon to develop a more unified style, one that was notable for its willful violations of the traditional canons of classical design. In 1524 the Medici pope Clement VII (r. 1523–1534) awarded the artist the commission to design a new library for San Lorenzo. This site was intended from the first to be dedicated to the use of humanist scholars and was to house the Medici's large collection of rare manuscripts. Michelangelo planned an entire complex at the site, including an Entrance Hall, Reading Room, and a

rare-book chamber, although he never lived to see the structure completed. The site itself was problematic since it was irregularly shaped, and the building had to be made to fit overtop and in between other structures that already stood on the church's grounds. Michelangelo's design solved these problems brilliantly, although the building was not executed completely in the manner in which he had planned. He designed a stately entrance to the library with a high staircase set in an imaginative architecture that bent the rules of traditional classical design. Michelangelo lined the walls of these spaces with pilasters that appear to support the ceiling, but which are instead set in niches, so that on second glance they appear like mere decorative sculptures that taper as they move downward. Below these niches the architect placed classical stone scrolls that again serve, not as traditional supports, but as mere sculptural or decorative elements placed on the walls. The effect of these design elements seems to make the room cave inward, although other features counteract this effect. The architect, for instance, divided the large staircase—the focal point of the room—into three sections and he bowed the stairs of the central section outward in a bold hemispherical shape. These hemispheres wage battle against the downward tapering pilasters that are placed within the wall's niches. Once above within the Reading Room the first impression is at once more traditional. The columns that line the room actually appear to support the ceiling, and its other elements seem to be drawn from a traditional classical architectural language. On closer inspection, though, Michelangelo seems to repeat the elements of the room's design *ad infinitum*, so that the windows and transepts that are above them, as well as the endless rows of reading desks and the patterned floor, take on the same dimension of a Herculean struggle as occurred outside in the entry hall. One appears, for instance, to be caught in a cage in which the room's design elements are constantly being repeated without relief. Unfortunately, the last element of Michelangelo's Laurentian Library design was never built. The architect had planned a final culmination to the architectural battle he had presented in the library's first two spaces: a dramatic triangular-shaped rare-book room designed to fit inside the spaces between buildings on the library's exterior. This conclusion to the Laurentian Library's strange and challenging architecture might have presented one of the most unusual spatial solutions of the Renaissance. But like many architectural plans of the period it was not constructed when the patron's interests shifted elsewhere.

**CHANGING TASTES.** The Laurentian Library reveals a new taste for creative experimentation, a taste shaped by artist and patron alike. As the High Renaissance pe-

riod drew to its conclusion at the end of the first quarter of the sixteenth century, architectural design came to be affected by changes similar to those underway in painting, sculpture, and literature. During the course of the fifteenth century architects had fastidiously studied classical Antiquity, and in the High Renaissance had achieved a mastery over ancient styles that allowed them to produce designs and structures notable for their complete assimilation of classicism. These details had been used to grant a human scale to projects that were heroic and monumental in nature. In his Laurentian Library complex Michelangelo showed a new direction, and the structure influenced later architects who used the language of classical Antiquity in a boldly willful and creative way. The violations of the canons of ancient design that Michelangelo displayed at the Laurentian were intentional, and they helped to give rise to the new movement in Renaissance architecture known as Mannerism.

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#### THE LATER RENAISSANCE IN ITALY

**MANNERISM.** The High Renaissance of the early sixteenth century was notable both for its amazing level of artistic achievement and its brevity. By 1520, artists and architects were already in search of new styles that made the heroic and idealized paintings, sculptures, and buildings of the early years of the sixteenth century appear to many connoisseurs as dated. In architecture, Michelangelo had shown a new willful creativity that inspired later designers, particularly in Rome, Florence, and Central Italy. Even here, though, High Renaissance architectural styles persisted alongside the new Mannerism. The path of architectural development in Venice was slightly different. There, figures like Jacopo Sansovino and Andrea Palladio created a classical style notable for its elegance and refinement as well as its faithful use of the elements of ancient design. The very multiplicity of styles that

coexisted at the time provided a wealth of inspiration as Renaissance design moved from Italy into other parts of Europe.

**ROME.** Although the first two decades of the sixteenth century had been a time of incredible productivity, artistic activity and construction in Rome slowed dramatically in the later 1520s and 1530s. This falloff in production was largely the result of the Sack of Rome that occurred in 1527. During the 1520s the Medici pope Clement VII had tried increasingly to maintain the autonomy of the city of Rome and the Papal States he controlled in Central Italy. These policies had brought him increasingly in conflict with both the Habsburg emperor Charles V and the king of France. In May of 1527, a force comprised of mostly German, French, and Italian soldiers laid siege to Rome and conquered the city within a day. The army's commander soon died, and his successor was unable to control the force. Over the next few months the invading armies raped local women, tortured and ransomed citizens, and plundered Rome's villas and palaces. Many of the attacking soldiers were Germans who acted on anti-Italian sentiments fueled by the rise of the Reformation and its distaste for religious art. They desecrated the city's most venerable churches, plundering their gold and silver and destroying their religious art. Forced to take refuge in the papal fortress, the Castel Sant' Angelo, Clement VII was completely unable to stop this wanton destruction and carnage. Eventually, he surrendered, and to regain control over the city he paid a ransom of more than 400,000 ducats, an enormous sum that required him to melt down papal crowns and other ornaments. As a result of the Sack, Rome's ambitions to be an autonomous and powerfully independent state ended. A spate of prophecies that interpreted the crisis as signs both of God's judgment on papal immorality and warnings of the coming end of the world followed the attack. At the same time scholars in both Protestant and Catholic camps throughout Europe expressed regrets about the event since numerous libraries and important monuments had been destroyed. Rome gradually regained political and economic strength during the reign of Paul III (1534–1549), but most of the artists and architects who had worked in Rome during the golden years of productivity before the Sack packed up and left to work in other Italian centers. Slowly new artists and architects arrived, while others returned. Michelangelo was the most notable of those who returned to Rome. He arrived even in the relatively dark days of 1534, and he stayed in the city for the rest of his life. In part from his inspiration, as well as the arrival of other enormously creative figures, Rome's culture flow-

ered again in the second half of the sixteenth century. Yet even then, a growing realization of the city's dependence upon other major European powers helped to breed a kind of nostalgic longing for the early years of the sixteenth century. This nostalgia can be seen reflected in many of the grand and monumental church and secular projects that were undertaken at the time. These late sixteenth-century monuments, impressive in their grandeur, formed the foundations for the flowering of the Baroque in the first half of the seventeenth century in Rome.

**MICHELANGELO.** The first commission Michelangelo undertook upon his return to Rome was the project for his famous *Last Judgment*, which he painted on the wall behind the High Altar of the Sistine Chapel between 1534 and 1541. While he was involved at the Sistine, the artist also began to take on architectural projects. In 1538 he won the commission to redesign Rome's Capitoline Hill, the center of the ancient city. Although the Capitoline was not completed until after his death, it reflects the intentions of Michelangelo's late style. During the late 1530s the artist made several tentative steps toward refurbishing the famous plaza on the Capitoline Hill, and in 1561, shortly before his death, he returned to the plaza's designs. At this time he planned a dramatic square, and in the pavement to this plaza, he created a circular pattern filled with trapezoids, triangles and diamonds, at the center of which he placed an ancient Roman equestrian statue of the emperor Marcus Aurelius. At the time Romans believed that this statue was of the emperor Constantine, the figure who had converted the empire to Christianity. It had long stood nearby at the Church of St. John Lateran, the pope's cathedral church within the city of Rome. Although Michelangelo resisted moving the statue to the Capitoline, he eventually relented and created his dramatic plans for the square to frame the sculpture. His new design glorified Rome's position as the center of the world, a position that by the time was only symbolic, since the city's political powers had grown increasingly circumscribed by the greater European states of France and Spain. Michelangelo designed two palaces for the site that served as the center of Rome's civil government, and he sited these structures so that they radiated outward at angles from the pre-existing Palace of the Senate at the back of the plaza. The result produces a trapezoidal-shaped courtyard notable for its warm and enveloping feel. Despite poor eyesight and bad health, Michelangelo managed to keep up an astonishing level of productivity during his later years in Rome. During the 1540s, he undertook the decoration of the Pauline

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***TROUBLE AT ST. PETER'S**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1557, Michelangelo wrote the following letter to his friend Giorgio Vasari at Florence, explaining his dissatisfactions with the pace of the building's construction, and explaining his reasons for staying in Rome.

Messer Giorgio, Dear Friend,

God is my witness how much against my will it was that Pope Paul forced me into this work on St. Peter's in Rome ten years ago. If the work had been continued from that time forward as it was begun, it would by now have been as far advanced as I had reason to hope, and I should be able to come to you. But as the work has been retarded the fabric is much behindhand. It began to go slowly just when I reached the most important and difficult part, so that if I were to leave it now it would be nothing less than a scandal that I should let slip all reward for the anxieties with which I have been battling these ten years. I have written this account in reply to your letter because I have also received one from the Duke which fills me with astonishment that His Lordship should deign to write to me in such kindly terms. I thank both God and His Excellency with all my heart. I am wandering from my subject, for both my memory and my thoughts have deserted me and I find writing most difficult, being, as it is,

not my profession. What I wish to say is this: I want you to understand what would happen if I were to leave the aforesaid work and come to Florence. Firstly, I should give much satisfaction to sundry robbers here, and should bring ruin upon the fabric, perhaps causing it to close down for ever: then also I have certain obligations here, as well as a house and other possessions which are worth several thousand crowns, and if I were to depart without permission I do not know what would happen to them: and finally, my health is in the condition, what with renal and urinary calculi, and pleurisy, that is the common lot of all old people. Maestro Eraldo can bear witness to this, for I owe my life to his skill. You will understand, therefore, that I have not the courage to come to Florence and then return once more to Rome; and that if I am to come to Florence for good and all it is imperative that I should be allowed sufficient time in which to arrange my affairs so that I should never again have to bother about them. It is so long since I left Florence that Pope Clement was still alive when I arrived here, and he did not die until two years later. Messer Giorgio, I commend myself to you, begging you to commend me to the Duke and to do the best you can on my behalf, for there is only one thing left that I should care to do—and that is to die.

**SOURCE:** Michelangelo Buonarroti, "Letter to Giorgio Vasari, May 1557," in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1958): 19–20.

Chapel, a private papal chapel, within the Vatican with two large frescoes. At the same time Pope Paul III appointed him to serve as the official architect for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in 1546, and in 1547, he took on supervision of the final stages of the Farnese Palace's construction. On this building he added a massive decorated window above the palace's central entrance and increased the size of the cornice, two features that softened the severe effects of the original architect Antonio da Sangallo's design. In the interior courtyard his revisions inspired later seventeenth-century Baroque architects. On the courtyard's third story, for instance, he superimposed pilasters on top of each other and added broken moldings and lions' heads to the windows, features that played an important role in the language of seventeenth-century architecture.

**ST. PETER'S.** At St. Peter's Michelangelo's innovations removed many of the innovations that Antonio da Sangallo had made in the project, and he reinstated features of Bramante's original plans. Sangallo had added a series of loggias, galleries, and towers that, had they been

built, might have doubled the already colossal size of the building. Michelangelo swept away these planned additions and returned the design to a more harmonious High Renaissance style in tune with Bramante's original plans. At the dome the architect abandoned Bramante's idea of a simple hemispherical dome and instead adopted a shape that was more ovoid. To achieve the greater height necessary for this shape, Michelangelo's design required the Florentine ribbed style of construction, a system that Bramante had avoided. But although most of Michelangelo's design for the dome was realized, the wooden model he created for the structure shows that even his plans were not carried out completely in the way he wished. The huge drum that supports the dome was later lengthened and the dome itself was stretched into an even more oval shape than he had originally planned; both these features added even more height to the design than Michelangelo's already soaring plan stipulated. Michelangelo's designs, like Bramante's before him, tried to make the dome the central architectural feature so that it would dominate all views of the church. During the seventeenth century the Greek style of





The dome of St. Peter's Basilica, designed by Michelangelo.  
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construction that both he and Bramante had advocated was abandoned. St. Peter's was made into a more traditional Latin cross by the addition of several bays of arches to the nave. This change increased the size of the church to truly enormous proportions, its total length from the rear of the church to the edge of the choir being almost 700 feet in length. At the same time these alterations obscure views of the dome to those who stand directly before the entrance to the church. Despite the change, the overall effect of the structure bears Michelangelo's indubitable stamp, and the architect returned clarity and coherence to a construction that might have turned out dramatically different had Sangallo's plans been realized. In the rich decorative elements that the architect designed for the church, which included grouped pairs of Corinthian columns and pilasters on the dome and exterior of the church, his plan also anticipated the complexity and grandeur of the later Baroque period.

**THE GESÙ.** For many years following the Sack of Rome in 1527, the construction of large churches in the city of Rome dropped off. The largest religious building program underway in the years between the Sack and 1560 had been the ongoing reconstruction of St. Peter's, a project that proceeded by fits and starts. After 1560, the construction of new churches picked up again in the

city and the most important building of the time was the new Church of the Gesù. This structure was designed to be the center of the new Jesuit order in Rome. In 1540 the pope had recognized the Jesuits, who soon became a major force in the reform of the church and in opposing the spread of Protestantism. Officials of the order sought a structure to express their organization's rising status within the church and to present their ideas about the reform of Christian worship they believed was a necessary precondition for the reform of the church to be successful. Their plans for a Roman church proceeded slowly during the 1540s and 1550s. Finally in 1561, they secured funding from Cardinal Farnese, with the stipulation that he was to be the only person allowed a tomb within the structure. Several architects, including Michelangelo, had already created plans for the church, although construction of the interior followed a plan laid down by Giacomo Vignola. A student of Michelangelo, Giacomo della Porta, later assumed responsibility for the façade and the church's dome, and under his supervision, the Gesù became a showpiece for the developing aesthetic sensibilities of the Counter Reformation. Inside the Gesù a single massive barrel vault, similar to Alberti's Church of St. Andrea in Mantua, leads to the domed crossing and high altar of the church. Throughout the structure nothing detracts from the centrality of the High Altar, a demand that had recently been made explicit in the decrees of the Council of Trent. The exterior that Giacomo della Porta fashioned for the church was similarly innovative. As in Michelangelo's later designs, della Porta paired Corinthian pilasters upon the church's two-story façade, but he also incorporated fluid lines into his design above the central entrance and in the consoles that hid the vaults of the church's side chapels. These fluid lines inspired later Baroque designers in the seventeenth century, but already in the sixteenth a number of imitations of the Gesù were begun throughout Italy and Europe. During the 1580s, for instance, the plans for the church were already being copied in Munich, where the Jesuit order used the new St. Michael's Church to express the architectural ideas of the Counter Reformation. The heightened emphasis on visual unity and the centrality of a church's main altar became a feature in other churches throughout Europe that imitated the design of the Gesù. Constructed elaborately in marble and often decorated later in the less restrained and sumptuous style of the Baroque, these had a profound effect on early-modern Catholicism.

**ROME RESURGENT.** During the reign of Pope Sixtus V (r. 1585–1590) the gathering strength of Rome's

artistic and architectural wealth came to fruition in dramatic new plans for the city's renewal. The sixteenth century had already seen enormous changes in Rome, first through the offices of the High Renaissance popes Julius II, Leo X, and Clement VII. All three figures had attracted an army of artists and designers to the city with the intention of remaking the town into a truly Renaissance capital. The Sack of the city had cut this first spate of activity short in 1527. Around mid-century, Michelangelo had aided the designs of the popes for urban renewal, but even his projects paled in comparison to the great energy displayed during the reign of Sixtus V. This Counter-Reformation pope set his hand to creating a grand capital that was to make Rome the envy of European cities. During his short pontificate he set in motion the forces that transformed the town into a model early-modern capital. Sixtus concentrated his efforts on restoring the great churches of the city and on joining these ancient monuments together with the construction of a series of broad and straight streets. These new thoroughfares linked Rome's major points of religious interest together in a circuit that was easily comprehensible for the many pilgrims who came to the city. Despite enormous expense and technical problems, he arranged for ancient Egyptian obelisks captured by Roman armies to be moved to the new squares and plazas his designers created, adding architectural focal points to the cityscape he was creating. He capped Roman columns, with their historical reliefs narrating the exploits of ancient emperors, with new bronze figures of the saints. Many of his new axis streets, broad squares, and monuments still exist as defining features of Rome today, and during the seventeenth century successive popes elaborated upon his basic plans. Sixtus, too, provided new sources of water to the city by restoring ancient Roman aqueducts and building a series of fountains throughout the city. These new projects resolved a long-standing shortage of fresh water in the city that had plagued inhabitants throughout the Middle Ages and which had often forced citizens to bring their water daily from the polluted Tiber. In all these projects Sixtus employed a group of accomplished architects and designers. Most prominent among these was Domenico Fontana, who aided the pope in his plans to construct straight streets through the city and to beautify the urban landscape. Fontana also provided technical solutions for the pope's plans to relocate Egyptian obelisks and to make them prominent landmarks in the city, and he aided the pope by restoring the interiors of many of the city's ancient churches. Another architect who won papal favor in the reign of Sixtus V was Giacomo Della Porta, who had already designed the new façade for the

Gesù. Della Porta supervised the final stages of the construction of the dome at St. Peter's Basilica, adding even more height to the already towering structure. The completion of the project proved to be a symbolic victory for the papacy, demonstrating to Romans and Europeans alike the power of the Roman pontiff to conquer seemingly insoluble problems of design. It is no wonder, then, that during the seventeenth century urban planners elsewhere throughout Europe looked favorably upon the Rome that Sixtus and his architects had helped to fashion. Throughout the continent architects avidly copied features typical of Rome's renewal plan, and thus even as the city's political power weakened on the European landscape, it took on a new role as a force for urban planning and renewal.

**FLORENCE.** In the course of the sixteenth century the Medici rule increasingly dominated both the visual arts and architecture in Florence. The family had long been the most influential citizens of the town. In the fifteenth century they had at first used back-room manipulation to dominate the town's politics, although later they increasingly abandoned these subtle measures in favor of a more overt management of Florence's political affairs. In 1537, the family's elder statesman Cosimo de' Medici, known as Cosimo I, became a duke, which officially ended Florence's long-standing republican pretensions. Cosimo secured the often unstable Medicean dominance of the city and he ruled over both Florence and its surrounding territory Tuscany until his death in 1574. During Cosimo's long reign Florence's major artists and architects came increasingly to serve the court. These figures—men like Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), Francesco Salviati (1510–1563), Bartolommeo Ammannati (1511–1592), and Angelo Bronzino (1503–1572)—had either studied with the great master Michelangelo or with one of his pupils. They were often described as *maniera* (meaning “mannered” or “stylish”). In English, long-standing usage has referred to these figures as Mannerists. At its best Mannerism became known for its great elegance, profound intellectual and allegorical content, formalism, and linear complexity. At its worst, art critics through the ages have criticized the Mannerists for being artificial, intellectually arid, overly elaborate, and slavishly imitative of Michelangelo and earlier masters. In the sixteenth century, however, the principle of imitation of previous models was a venerable one. At their core, most of the arts and scholarly activities practiced in the sixteenth century proceeded from the principle of imitation, whether it was the imitation of Antiquity, or of more recent models. In verse and prose, the works of the Renaissance authors Dante and Petrarch were highly

venerated models. In art, the achievements of Leonardo and Michelangelo fulfilled a similar role. Most theoreticians of the arts assured their audience that only through imitation of an acknowledged master was one really able to acquire the sure style that would harness human creativity and allow for truly great expression. Criticisms of the Mannerists' art as derivative and unimaginative, then, represent modern, and not Renaissance, notions about taste and creativity. In architecture, as in painting and sculpture, Mannerist designers often paid homage to Michelangelo, Bramante, and Raphael, figures they placed at the pinnacle of artistic achievement. Florence was the leading center of Mannerism in sixteenth-century Italy, although the style appeared in many Italian courts and was prized for its elegance and sophistication. By the second half of the sixteenth century Mannerist styles were also influencing the arts and architecture of Northern Europe, particularly in the Netherlands. The foundation of the Florentine Academy in 1563 helped to establish Mannerism's dominance within Tuscany's capital and in the surrounding region. Cosimo I patronized and sponsored this institution, which his chief artist and architect Giorgio Vasari had helped to organize. The Florentine Academy nurtured the development of new styles and themes in the arts along the lines favored by the Mannerist artists who participated in the institution. Its members also nourished an interest in art theory and aesthetics. In the second half of the sixteenth century the two important members of the academy, its founder Giorgio Vasari and Bartolommeo, were the town's most important architects.

**VASARI.** Giorgio Vasari is better known to the modern world for his *Lives of the Most Eminent Artists*, a collection of biographies of the most prominent sculptors, painters, and architects of the Renaissance. He was himself an accomplished painter and architect, and his greatest construction design was for a new civic palace, the Palazzo Uffizi, in Florence. The Uffizi, as it is commonly known today, was intended to house all the offices of Florence's civil government, as well as those of the guilds, and of the court artists who served the Medici. Vasari designed an enormous U-shaped complex whose exterior shows a clear influence from Michelangelo's Laurentian Library. Four stories tall, the building's three sides enclose a space that is narrow, more like a street than a city square. Throughout the building Vasari achieves a grand effect by the seemingly endless repetition of details. At the street level two columns and a pier continually alternate along the two parallel sides of the building. Above, at the second floor, decorative consoles inspired by those in Michelangelo's Laurentian Entrance

Hall demarcate triplets of simple square windows. At the third floor, groups of three windows are again repeated, but this time with rounded and triangular pediments governed by a strict A-B-A pattern. On the top floor, an open loggia (now glassed in) repeats the columns of the street level. The only break in this constant pattern of repetition comes at the perpendicular wing at the end of the complex. Here three arches at the street level—the center one rounded—serve to relieve the seeming monotony of the other two façades. To build this massive government complex, Vasari made use of pre-existing buildings at the site. These various structures are visible from the rear of the complex, but are masked by the massive edifices Vasari designed for the façade. To join these disparate structures together and to build to such a height, Vasari reinforced parts of the Uffizi with steel supports. Thus, his building was one of the first in European history to rely upon a metal skeleton.

**BARTOLOMMEO AMMANATI.** The sculptor Bartolommeo Ammanati, a close associate of Michelangelo, also completed two notable architectural projects in Florence in the second half of the sixteenth century. First, he created designs for a remodeled Palazzo Pitti, a fifteenth-century palace purchased by Cosimo I to serve as his official residence. The original design of the palace had been massive, and included seven bays of Roman arches on the ground floor. It eventually grew to more than three times its original proportions, but the sixteenth-century remodeling plan of Ammanati consisted of lengthening the structure's façade and in creating a beautiful interior courtyard, now known as the Cortile dell' Ammanati (Ammanati's courtyard). In this interior space the architect again relied on the principles of repetition inspired by Michelangelo's Laurentian Library. The chief elements he used included Roman arches and rusticated stonework, which appeared on all three of the building's floors. An interesting innovation that Ammanati made at the Pitti was his use of rusticated columns and arches. On all three floors the architect relied upon rustic stonework to outline both the arches of the courtyard's ground floor colonnade and those of the windows on the second and third floors. Despite the palace's monumental scale Ammanati's use of decorative stonework tamed the colossal spaces of the interior courtyard. Rustication had traditionally been used in Florence's palaces to grant an impression of weight and solidity. In Ammanati's hands, however, he transformed the traditional design element into a kind of decorative ornament, a breakthrough typical of the often creative aesthetics of Mannerism. The second of Ammanati's great architectural contributions in Florence was his Bridge of the



Façade of the Palazzo del Te in Mantua. © MASSIMO LISTRI/CORBIS.

Holy Trinity (Ponte Santa Trinita), which was begun in 1566. Here he relied on triangular pylons and flattened Roman arches to support a delicate roadway over the River Arno. He created this elegant construction after showing his original designs to Michelangelo, shortly before the elder artist's death. Michelangelo made several suggestions that improved upon Ammanati's original designs, and the result was a structure of great beauty. Tragically, the original structure did not survive the Second World War, falling victim to the retreating German army as they destroyed bridges to hinder the advancing Allied forces. It was, however, rebuilt according to its original plans shortly after the war's end.

**GIULIO ROMANO.** Rome and Florence did not have a monopoly on architectural innovation in sixteenth-century Italy. Throughout the peninsula designers of merit produced plans for buildings that shaped architectural tastes in Europe in the decades that followed. One influential figure was Giulio Romano, a native Roman who had originally worked as a painter in the studio of Raphael as a young man. In 1527 he moved to Mantua

in Northern Italy, where he became a court artist to Duke Federigo Gonzaga. The duke deployed Giulio on a variety of projects, including the design and construction of a new pleasure palace to be situated in a meadow known as the Te outside Mantua. Duke Federigo was a breeder of horses, and the plans for the Palazzo del Te, as it is known today, situated a banqueting hall beside his stables. Soon the duke decided to expand the structure at the site to build a larger palace in which he could entertain his guests while on retreat in the country. The grand exterior that Romano designed for the palace makes the structure appear far larger than it is in reality, and similar illusions recur throughout the structure. On the structure's façade the artist played willfully with the traditional classical orders in a way that was similar to the somewhat later structures built by the Florentine Mannerists. Doric order columns and heavily rusticated blocks of stone finished the exterior of the building, while inside a series of luxurious rooms are filled with rich illusionism. In the Salon of the Giants, for instance, the walls of the entire room have been painted without

any kind of framing device, so that the viewers enter a room in which they are totally surrounded by illusion. Columns snap under the exertions of heaving Giants, clouds roll by, and everywhere Romano surrounds his viewers with a rich panoply drawn from the artist's imagination and its interpretation of classical myth. Similar illusionistic devices occur throughout the palace, so that the façade and the interior function as one of the most fantastic creations of the later Renaissance. The dukes of Mantua entertained many visiting dignitaries with their playful palace, including the Hapsburg emperor Charles V. It is not hard to understand, then, why other designers throughout Europe turned to the structure for inspiration as they crafted similar pleasure palaces for their noble patrons.

**VENICE.** Like other Italian cities Venice in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries had seen a construction boom, still visible today through the many churches and palaces that survive from this period. These early Renaissance buildings were craftsman-like without being innovative masterpieces. Venetians in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries indulged a taste for the elaborate Gothic ornamentation still in fashion in much of Northern Europe. Architects hired from other Italian regions—most notably the northern Italian province of Lombardy around Milan—had designed many of these structures. In the sixteenth century Venice continued to import its architects, and no native school of designers developed in the city until much later in the seventeenth century. By the mid-1500s, though, two architects of unsurpassed skill practiced in the city: Jacopo Sansovino and Andrea Palladio. Together they created new and innovative plans for Venice's renewal influenced by the lessons they had learned in Rome, Florence, and other centers of the Italian architectural Renaissance. Given its enviable position as the City of the Lagoons, Venice provided a safe haven in the turbulent world of sixteenth-century Italy. Sansovino (1486–1570) was just one of many great figures who found refuge there after the disturbing Sack of Rome in 1527. Palladio was a resident of nearby Vicenza and he settled in Venice late in life, when he assumed the position of architectural adviser to the Republic after Sansovino's death. By this time Palladio had already designed several churches in Venice as well as many country villas within Venice's mainland territories. Together both figures helped to forge a distinctively northern Italian Renaissance style different from the Mannerist creations to the south in Florence, Rome, and central Italian towns.

**SANSOVINO.** When Sansovino arrived as a refugee in Venice, he was already 41 years old. He intended only

to stay for a few months, but remained in the city for the rest of his life. Over this considerable span of years, his plans largely reshaped the Venetian cityscape. Trained in Florence during his youth, he had also worked in Rome during the High Renaissance, and the works of Bramante, Raphael, and Michelangelo had shaped his designs. The grand architecture of ancient and High Renaissance Rome affected him deeply, but in his years in Venice, he developed a new style well-suited to the broad vistas and brilliant light of this city literally on the sea. At the time of his arrival, Venice's Doge and the Venetian Senate intended a renewal of the city that was to symbolize the town's claim to be a second Rome. Outside forces had threatened Venice since the early sixteenth century, but at the conclusion of the first phase of the Italian Wars in 1530, the town could boast, unlike most other Italian powers, to having retained its independence relatively unscathed. Sansovino was an ideal architect for the grand plans that were underway in Venice at this time. Unlike Florence or Rome with their cramped streets and tiny plazas, Venice was a city of broad canals. Sansovino designed buildings that were not only functional, but a delight to the eye. He altered his styles and ornamentation to fit different projects and the spaces in which they were located. His first great masterpiece of design in the city was the *Zecca*, a building that housed the town mint. In the sixteenth century Venice's currency, the ducat, was among the most respected in Europe. Sansovino labored to create a structure worthy of the eminent currency produced inside. A rusticated first floor, similar to those of Rome and Florence at the time, is crowned by a second and third story more delicate in design. On the façade he included banded Doric columns, similar to those in use among some Mannerist designers at the time. The elegant and overall classical effect of the building, though, differs greatly from the repetitive formalism typical of Mannerist designs. Despite the building's gentle appearance, particularly in the upper stories, Sansovino claimed that the structure was fireproof. The structure he designed proved to be a venerable tribute to the distinguished city and its highly respected coinage.

**ST. MARK'S LIBRARY.** In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Venetians had often evidenced a taste for richly ornamented gothic façades. In Sansovino's greatest work, the Library of St. Mark's, he translated this traditional idiom into the world of the Renaissance. He designed two arcades, one atop the other, that made use of rich and graceful classical ornamentation in a way that fit in with the pre-existing architecture of St. Mark's Square. The building had been necessary to house,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CHURCH ARCHITECTURE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Four Books on Architecture*, Andrea Palladio discussed how the insights of antique temple builders could be used to create more beautiful Christian churches. Since the time of Alberti, architects had argued that churches should be constructed in the central style, that is, in the form of a Greek cross where the radiating wings are of equal length or that they should be built in the round. Palladio, too, was fascinated by the possibility of a round church. The long-standing use of the Latin Cross style was too deeply ingrained in contemporary practice and prevented the great popularity of round churches, although a few attempts were made during the Renaissance to build structures in that shape. Palladio admits that even he had been forced to adopt the traditional style in his Church of St. George Major in Venice.

We, therefore, who have no false Gods, should, in order to preserve a decorum about the form of Temples, choose the most perfect and excellent; and seeing the round form is that (because it alone among all figures is simple, uniform, equal, strong, and most capacious) we should make our Temples round, as being those to which this form does most peculiarly belong: because it being included within a circle, in which neither end nor beginning can be found nor distinguished from each other and having all its parts like one another, and that each of them partakes of the figure of the whole: and finally the

extreme in every part being equally distant from the center, it is therefore the most proper figure to shew the Unity, infinite Essence, the Uniformity, and Justice of God. Over and above all this, it cannot be deny'd that strength and durability are more requisite in Temples than in all other Fabrics; in as much as they are dedicated to the most Gracious and Almighty God, and that in them are preserved the most precious, famous, and authentick records of towns: for which very reasons it ought to be concluded that the round figure, wherein there's no corner or angle, is absolutely the most suitable to Temples. Temples ought likewise to be as capacious as may be, that much People may conveniently assist in them at divine service; and of the figures that are terminated by an equal circumference, none is more capacious than the round. I deny not but those Temples are commendable, which are made in the form of a Cross, and which, in that part making the foot of the Cross, have the entry over against the great Altar and the Quire, as in the two aisles, which extend like arms on each side are two other entries or two Altars; because being built in the form of the Cross, they represent to the eyes of those who pass by what wood on which our Savior was crucified. In this form I built myself the Church of Saint George the Great in Venice.

**SOURCE:** Andrea Palladio, *The Architecture of A. Palladio, in Four Books*. Trans. G. Leoni (London, 1742); Reprinted in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1958): 61–62.

among other things, the great collection of manuscripts given to the city by the Greek humanist Cardinal Bessarion. Like other Venetian buildings, St. Mark's Library glitters in the brilliant sun reflected from the light blue waters of Venice's lagoons. Sansovino's Library and Mint, which form part of the large civic and Cathedral plaza of St. Mark's Square, grant a dignified yet human scale to the surrounding plaza, considered one of the finest in Europe. It is interesting to note that part of the vaulting of Sansovino's Library collapsed shortly after it was built during an unusually cold winter. Authorities blamed the artist and imprisoned him for producing shoddy designs. Sansovino's friend, the painter Titian, eventually negotiated his release and the restoration of his reputation and fortunes. While the architect maintained a successful career designing public buildings for the Venetian Republic, he also took on commissions for domestic palaces in the city. Among these, the Palazzo Corner dell Ca Grande, commissioned by the wealthy Corner family, ranks among his greatest works. Here

Sansovino introduced rigorous classical detailing drawn from the ancient architectural theoretician Vitruvius. Although thoroughly classical in design, Sansovino ensured that the palace fit in visually with the other older structures that surrounded it on its canal. For the ground floor, he designed a heavily rusticated façade and included elements of the severe Doric order. The three bays he placed in the façade served to admit merchants and businessmen into the interior courtyard, much as the arched colonnades in Roman and Florentine palaces did at the same time. On the two floors above, Sansovino used first the Ionic order and then the Corinthian. While the exterior of the structure fit neatly into the unusual canals of Venice, Sansovino also included an immense interior Roman-styled courtyard. This was an unprecedented luxury in a city in which dry land was a dear commodity.

**PALLADIO.** The architect Andrea di Pietro is better known today by the classical Latin name he took in middle age, Palladio. The precise place of his birth remains



Exterior of the Villa Rotonda (once called the Villa Capra) near Vicenza, Italy, designed by Andrea Palladio. © SANDRO VANNINI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

an uncertainty but he first served as an apprentice to a Paduan stonemason. By 1524, he had moved to Vicenza, the site of many of his architectural masterpieces. He joined a local workshop, but by his mid-thirties he had come to the notice of a nobleman residing in Vicenza, the humanist scholar Gian Giorgio Trissino. Trissino took Palladio into his scholarly circle, exposed him to the rudiments of a humanist education and to Vitruvius' treatise on architecture. It was under the influence of Trissino, too, that the architect adopted his classical name. With the elder humanist's patronage, Palladio traveled to Rome many times during the 1540s. On one of these trips he met Michelangelo, and on all of his journeys he spent a great deal of time in Rome's ruins, studying and drawing their design elements. Even as he was developing his taste for classical Antiquity, Palladio was also at work designing structures for Vicenza's wealthy inhabitants. His first independent creation seems to be the designs for the Villa Godi in a small town near Vicenza. Within the city he also created plans for two domestic palaces as well as another country villa. These works do not yet show the secure integration of classi-

cal design elements, while one of them, Palazzo Thiene, shows that the architect toyed with some elements of central Italian Mannerism. He later rejected Mannerism of a thoroughly classical idiom. By 1549, the architect had been appointed by Vicenza's town council to restore the city's Basilica, or town hall. In the fifteenth century this large complex of separate buildings had been joined into a single structure surrounded by Gothic-styled arcades. One of these arcades had collapsed in 1496, and the Vicenza council had long searched for an architect who could remodel the complex along the lines of the new Renaissance classicism. In the structure that Palladio designed he displayed a thorough knowledge of Roman styles of building, and the ingenious solution that he created for this problematic structure helped to establish his reputation as a designer of merit.

**DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE.** Palladio continued to design new palaces in Vicenza during the 1550s and 1560s, and much of the city still bears his indubitably elegant stamp. He also filled the countryside in and around Vicenza with numerous villas. The most influential of these was Villa Rotonda (sometimes referred to

as Villa Capra). Later it would become the model for Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. The Rotonda, so called because of its central dome, sits atop a hill with a view of Vicenza. The villa is a square building with a hemispherical dome shaped like that of the Roman Pantheon at the center. Each of the building's four sides is framed with a portico whose columns and pediments show the influence of ancient temple architecture. Each portico frames a different view of the attractive countryside and distant city, and at the same time these structures provide shelter from the elements and from the harsh summer sun. In this way Palladio created a building that allowed inhabitants to spend a great deal of time outdoors at all times of the year. Palladio's porticoes have continued to be an important design feature in houses since his day, and they are to be found not only in Europe but also in many hot regions of North and South America. Here these structures provide shelter from the elements and the sun, allowing people to spend greater time out of doors. Palladio decorated each of his structures with an arcade of Ionic columns and classical pediments. Statues atop these pediments and at the corners of the stairs leading to each portico are among the only decorative elements placed upon the structure. The window pediments, often a place upon which Renaissance designers showered great decorative attention, are restrained. The structure is elegant, yet severe, with simple unadorned plaster facing the exterior walls rather than expensive stonework. Perhaps this restraint explains the great popularity the Palladian style had for the colonial settlers of North America and for rapidly expanding eighteenth-century towns like London and Philadelphia. In these circumstances the building techniques of Palladian architecture provided structures that were pleasing to the eye, yet relatively inexpensive since they could be constructed with materials that were close at hand.

**VENICE.** Most of Palladio's architectural commissions were for domestic structures, and, unlike other great Italian architects of the Renaissance, he designed churches only infrequently. As he matured and his fame spread, however, he did complete designs for two famous churches in the city of Venice. The first of these, the Church of St. George Major, stands on an island away from the main center of Venice but still visible from the Doge's Palace in St. Mark's Square. Built for a Benedictine monastery at the same site, the church has been one of the most beautiful landmarks of Venice's cityscape since its completion. In his architectural writings Palladio, like other sixteenth-century architects, advocated a central-style church as the most visually pleasing and harmonious space. He believed that such a shape stressed

the unity and power of God. At St. George, however, he bowed to the pressure of the local church authorities and instead created a traditional Latin cross plan with a long nave. Palladio filled these spaces with light from the dome at the crossing, as well as a row of windows placed just under the vault. He crafted an arcade of Roman arches set off with columns in gray stone, and above this he included a large entablature that was among the most prominent decorative elements in the church. Designed after the conclusion of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), Palladio also complied with the new dictates of the church for simple unobstructed views of the High Altar. The effect of St. George Major is at once simple, rational, and harmonious. Together with another Church of the Redeemer that the architect designed a little more than a decade later, Palladio's church architecture inspired several generations of English designers, including Sir Christopher Wren (1632–1723), who relied on its appealing visual language in the churches he created in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century London. A final important design from the late period of Palladio's life was his plan for the Olympian Theater, the construction of which was overseen by his student Vincenzo Scamozzi in the city of Vicenza after his death. The architect's designs for the theater had been influenced by architectural theory about the size and shape of ancient Roman theaters, and the building was intended for recreations of classical dramas. Fixed scenery was included in Palladio's design, and after his death Scamozzi added perspectival street scenes. These are stepped up so that they appear to vanish at a great distance from the front of the stage. In reality, these are only tricks of perspective, for the depth of the stage from front to back is only a few feet, rather than the vast distance that it appears to be. The Olympian Theater was one of several attempts in Italy to reconstruct a historically accurate version of a Roman theater, an effort in which both humanist scholars and artists participated. Most other attempts involved temporary structures in wood or plaster, while Palladio's more elaborate stage and theater has survived over the ages.

**THEORY.** Palladio was also an important figure in the history of architectural theory. In 1556, Palladio created a series of illustrations for a new printed edition of Vitruvius' ancient architectural text. Slightly later, the author published his own *Four Books on Architecture*, a work that he also illustrated and used to inform his readers about many of the practical problems of building in the classical style. He treated the preparation of building sites, the practical design elements of the ancient architectural orders, and discussed what types of rooms





Exterior of the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. © ARALDO DE LUCA/CORBIS.

were best suited to which activities. Palladio also discussed public works and civic buildings, even as he surveyed ancient Roman designs. He also assessed and criticized the most prominent structures of his own times. The architect's writings advocated the styles of Antiquity, not from a doctrinaire perspective, but as the most practical forms for the contemporary situation. He showed, in other words, how classical elements and designs could be profitably adapted to current realities to provide city and country dwellers alike with spaces that were visually pleasing, yet functional. Palladio's prominent pupil Vincenzo Scamozzi, later updated and expanded upon this pragmatic dimension of Palladio's work in a treatise entitled *The Idea of a Universal Architecture* (1615). In sixteenth-century Italy, Palladio's work shared an audience with the *Rules of the Five Orders of Architecture* (1563), a treatise written by the papal architect Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola. Elsewhere in Europe Palladio's work traveled farther and acquired a greater following, a following that eventually stretched from England to Croatia, from Scandinavia to the Americas. In these widely diverse cultures the *Four Books of Architecture* kept alive High Renaissance classicism, de-

spite the simultaneous popularity of Mannerism in many of these regions. Even centuries later, Palladio's treatise produced new revivals of classicism. The work was particularly admired in Georgian England, and one disciple, the colonial revolutionary Thomas Jefferson, relied on its canons as he planned the buildings and grounds of the University of Virginia in the new American Republic. Thus it is difficult to overestimate the importance that Palladio's treatise on classical design exercised upon the minds of Europeans, both in the Renaissance and in the centuries that followed.

**IMPLICATIONS.** The sixteenth century in Italy was an era of amazing architectural productivity. The century opened with the ambitions of Julius II for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica and the renewal of the ancient city of Rome, plans that came abruptly to an end with the Sack of the city in 1527. In Florence, Michelangelo's first architectural works, notable for their willful individualism and creative use of ancient design elements, inspired Mannerist artists and architects in the decades that followed. Dissatisfied with Medicean rule in his native city, though, Michelangelo returned to

Rome in 1534. His later Roman works, while monumental and influential in inspiring later Baroque designers, did not continue along the path that he had laid out in his Florentine buildings. Mannerism persisted in Italy, and became a significant influence throughout Europe in the decades following 1550. The emphasis of Mannerist artists on designing complex spaces and on repeating classical elements in new formations inspired many projects in Florence, Rome, and Central Italy, and slightly later in Northern Europe. At the same time the allure of Palladio's classicism, and of High Renaissance forms generally, survived in the second half of the sixteenth century. This rich diversity in sixteenth-century Italian design presented architects working in other European regions with a wealth of examples, styles, and possibilities upon which to draw as they integrated the new architecture of the Renaissance into buildings constructed in their own countries. While they reached out to Italy for inspiration, European designers also created their own ways to give native expression to the Renaissance's taste for the world of classical Antiquity.

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## THE ARCHITECTURAL RENAISSANCE THROUGHOUT EUROPE

**SPREAD OF CLASSICISM.** The adoption of the classical style that had flourished in Italy since the early fifteenth century appeared only slowly throughout Europe. Even within Italy, the spread of classicism had been uneven in the 1400s, and had often been governed by the presence of vigorous local circles of humanists. With its love of Roman and Greek texts, humanism tended to support the revival of classical architecture, as scholars and patrons pursued an interest in all aspects of life in the ancient world. In Northern Europe, the fondness for the intricacies of Gothic style persisted everywhere dur-

ing the fifteenth century, and buildings constructed in the classical style appeared first, not in Western Europe, but in Hungary and Russia. Hungary's despotic King Matthias Corvinus (r. 1458–1490) was among the first European monarchs to import Renaissance humanists and architects to his court. He subdued his country's nobles and established a firm but tenuous hold over the country. At Buda he rebuilt the city's castle in the Italian Renaissance style and provided space for a library, the Biblioteca Corvina. The library housed Corvinus' large collection of manuscripts, a collection that at the time was about the same size as that of the popes' Vatican Library in Rome. At several other places throughout the country he deployed his Italian architects to remodel or build anew structures in the Renaissance styles of contemporary Italy. Far from the centers of Western Europe, the Grand Prince Ivan III did much the same when he called several Italian designers to plan projects for his rebuilding of the Kremlin in Moscow. One of the structures he built, the Palace of the Facets, was the first secular building to be located within the walls of the ancient fortress upon its completion in 1491. Ivan's Italian architects also aided him in strengthening the fortifications of the Kremlin by constructing defensive works similar to those being built in Italy at the same time. In Western Europe, though, patrons and architects proved more resistant to the new style, and it was not until the early sixteenth century that a great number of buildings based on the newly revived classicism began to appear. As in Italy, the spread of humanism furthered these developments, and royal and aristocratic patrons, as well as wealthy merchants and townspeople desired buildings that expressed their newfound fondness for classical Antiquity. The political chaos of the Italian scene in the first decades of the sixteenth century also created a supply of architects available for commissions and positions as court designers in France, Spain, and elsewhere throughout the continent.

**ORNAMENTATION AND INTEGRATION.** Local artists, though, designed most of the Renaissance buildings constructed outside Italy in the sixteenth century. Kings and princes were usually the only figures who possessed resources considerable enough to import their designers from Italy, the wellspring of Renaissance neoclassicism. Oftentimes the new fashion for Antiquity of the early sixteenth century produced buildings that were not notably ancient in their feel or design, but which were merely decorated classical elements. The fondness for elaborate ornamentation characteristic of the late phases of Gothic architecture thus persisted, and designers produced many buildings that were a forest of classical

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A ROYAL PATRON**

**INTRODUCTION:** Francis I of France was one of the great sixteenth-century royal builders and connoisseurs of art. In a relatively long reign, he beautified the Palace of Fontainebleau, began rebuilding the Louvre, and created a string of country châteaux. Francis also called artists from Italy and Flanders to work for him, among them the swashbuckler, Benvenuto Cellini. In his *Autobiography*, Cellini reported how he received one commission from Francis to build a new fountain at Fontainebleau in a casual almost offhand manner. Whether the story is true or not, Cellini usually engineered his accounts to throw himself into the best possible light.

For my great King, as I have said, I had been working strenuously, and the third day after he returned to Paris, he came to my house, attended by a crowd of his chief nobles. He marvelled to find how many pieces I had advanced, and with what excellent results. His mistress, Madame d'Etampes, being with him, they began to talk of Fontainebleau. She told his Majesty he ought to commission me to execute something beautiful for the decoration of his favourite residence. He answered on the instant: "You say well, and here upon the spot I will make up my mind what I mean him to do." Then he turned to me, and asked me what I thought would be appropriate for that beautiful fountain. I suggested several

ideas, and his Majesty expressed his own opinion. Afterwards he said that he was going to spend fifteen or twenty days at San Germano del Aia, a place twelve leagues distant from Paris; during his absence he wished me to make a model for that fair fountain of his in the richest style I could invent, seeing he delighted in that residence more than in anything else in his whole realm. Accordingly he commanded and besought me to do my utmost to produce something really beautiful; and I promised that I would do so.

When the King saw so many finished things before him, he exclaimed to Madame d'Etampes: "I never had an artist who pleased me more, nor one who deserved better to be well rewarded; we must contrive to keep him with us. He spends freely, is a boon companion, and works hard; we must therefore take good thought for him. Only think, madam, all the times that he has come to me or that I have come to him, he has never once asked for anything; one can see that his heart is entirely devoted to his work. We ought to make a point of doing something for him quickly, else we run a risk of losing him." Madame d'Etampes answered: "I will be sure to remind you." Then they departed, and in addition to the things I had begun, I now took the model of the fountain in hand, at which I worked assiduously.

**SOURCE:** Benvenuto Cellini, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* Vol. 31 of *The Harvard Classics*. Trans. John Addington Symonds (New York: Collier, 1965): 292–293.

ornamentation, but in which the overall effects lay closer to medieval than to Renaissance sensibilities. Eventually the growing body of books treating architectural theory and practice aided architects in Northern Europe and Spain, as designers and patrons were now able to read about the design principles and rationale that underlay classical architecture. Many of these works' illustrations, along with the independent prints that circulated of classical buildings, helped to produce purer forms of architectural classicism, although the development was not without difficulty. In Northern Europe the sixteenth century was also a time of great religious and political upheaval. The protracted religious crisis had a dampening effect everywhere on the construction of new churches, one of the chief kinds of monuments upon which Italian designers had displayed their newfound fondness for Antiquity. The Religious Wars in France and the Netherlands delayed or caused patrons to abandon the completion of many secular projects as well. In England, the Reformation similarly dampened enthusiasm for church building. Despite these difficul-

ties Northern European and Spanish architects learned many lessons from ancient and Renaissance architectural designs, and by 1600, they had developed their own forms of classicism tempered by their native traditions.

**FRANCE.** France proved to have one of the most innovative climates for pioneering new architectural forms in the era. Although the period was not one of great achievement in church building, the country produced a wealth of new châteaux, palaces, townhouses, and civic structures during the sixteenth century. The taste for Italian design influenced many of these buildings. In the early stages of the French Renaissance, Italian designers—at first drawn from the Duchy of Milan conquered by the French at the very end of the fifteenth century—planned and executed many ambitious projects for the French crown. Among the Italians lured to France was Leonardo da Vinci, who experienced a stroke shortly after his arrival, and produced little in the last years of his life in France. Da Vinci did design a new royal château to be built at



Château de Chambord, France. MICHELLE GARRETT/CORBIS.

Romorantin, and although the project did not begin until after the artist's death, it was soon given up to build the larger, still-standing Château de Chambord. Leonardo's design ideas, nevertheless, seem to have left their impact on French design. While the artist was still living in Milan, he had developed plans for interlocked double staircases, built in a structure that resembled a double helix. These structures allowed one staircase to be used by those ascending and another for those who were descending. His designs seem to have encouraged a series of interlocked staircases in sixteenth-century French châteaux, a type of construction that was springing up on the French landscape with increasing frequency at the time.

**CHÂTEAUX.** Although the sixteenth century proved to be a time of religious warfare and chaotic political rivalries in France, the period actually opened on a note of optimism. This optimism is evident in the large number of construction projects undertaken for new and rebuilt châteaux. The English equivalent for this French word is "castle," and originally medieval châteaux had been heavily fortified, their role being defensive. Certainly, most sixteenth-century French châteaux for the

nobility and the king retained their defensive elements, but now they also took upon a refined elegance more in keeping with their residential nature. Francis I (1515–1547) was an avid builder of these country châteaux, and during the early years of his reign, he concentrated his efforts on his castles at Blois, Chambord, and Amboise. One of the most unusual of the many structures he built was a loggia at Blois, modeled closely upon Donato Bramante's famous plans for the Belvedere Palace at the Vatican. At Chambord, he built the most imposing of his country castles, using a plan that melded French Gothic ideas with the newer design features of the Italian Renaissance. Built over a period of twenty years, the castle was notable for the layout of its central keep (the most heavily fortified part of the château). Francis had the keep designed in the shape of a Greek cross, an innovation that showed the influence of Italian ideas about the superiority of the central style of design. At Chambord, he also included paired ascending and descending staircases made popular by Leonardo's designs, and at Chambord their construction shows a new concern with privacy, since no one is able to see those who are on the opposing staircases. But although this, the largest and most impressive of Francis' châteaux,



Château Ancy-le-Franc in France. © BOB KRIST/CORBIS.

included some of these Renaissance details, it continued to display the traditional French Gothic taste for dormers, spires, and fanciful roof decorations. These tended to overwhelm the building's classical details. At the same time as Francis beautified his castles, similar structures built for the country's notable families dotted France's countryside. While the Loire Valley contained the greatest number of châteaux as France's nobles congregated there in hopes of being close to the king, construction of châteaux in the more refined and elegant style of the times occurred throughout the country—albeit on a distinctly smaller scale than the royal castles at Chambord and Blois. One of the most beautiful structures that traces its origins to this early boom in Renaissance châteaux construction is Chenonceaux. It was picturesquely sited above a river, where it replaced a mill that had stood upon the same spot. Later in the century, Henry II (r. 1547–1559) purchased it for his mistress, Diana of Poitiers, who gave the original castle greater classical detailing and connected it to the opposite shore by the construction of a new Renaissance-styled wing. Significant additions over the centuries have altered the appearance of the castle, which today still ranks as one of

the most delicate and beautiful of European buildings. The châteaux at Azay-le-Rideau, Villandry, and Le Rocher Mézanger also present examples of the various styles that were popular during the first half of the sixteenth century, and show the taste for mingling of Renaissance and Gothic ornamentation.

**ITALIAN ARTISTS.** Besides Leonardo, three other prominent Italian artists—Rosso Fiorentino, Primaticcio, and Serlio—spent significant portions of their careers in France. They were among the most influential Italian émigrés who settled in the country in the sixteenth century. Rosso Fiorentino and Primaticcio had begun their careers in Italy as painters during the development of early Mannerism. While they continued to paint in France, they also designed and decorated rooms for the royal palace at Fontainebleau as well as for a string of royal châteaux located mostly in the Loire River valley and in the Île de France, the countryside surrounding the city of Paris. This tradition of imported Italian designers continued in the 1540s when Sebastiano Serlio (1475–1554) took up residence in the country. Serlio was an architect, sculptor, and painter whose designs

attracted a wide following through his publication of his architectural treatise. In France he designed several works, including the new Château Ancy-le-Franc. The building's plan was C-shaped and enclosed a central courtyard guarded on the open side by a low rising wall. This style of construction grew popular in France over the coming centuries, as French patrons generally disregarded the central enclosed courtyards that were popular in Renaissance Italy.

**FONTAINEBLEAU.** Throughout his long reign Francis showered his greatest attentions on the royal palace of Fontainebleau. He commissioned a number of Italian artists to decorate the palace's chambers, including Rosso and Primaticcio. In the rooms they decorated for the king both artists developed a highly ornamental style that made use of the design techniques that Raphael and Giulio Romano had developed in Rome at the Villa Farnesina, but which extended that pattern of decoration to an almost baroque complexity and elegant finesse. From 1528 onward, Francis also began to transform parts of the palace's façade, relying on the native architect Gilles Le Breton as his designer. With the premature death of Rosso in 1540, Francis also coaxed Sebastiano Serlio to France. By this time Serlio's reputation had already been established by the publication of his architectural treatise in 1537. The work was popular and appeared in French and Italian editions during the following years. Serlio's design tenets included impressive classical colonnades similar to those Bramante had designed for the Belvedere Palace in the Vatican. His influence was widespread and gave encouragement to the construction of similar structures at Fontainebleau and at the Louvre in Paris as well as in other noble houses constructed throughout France.

**LOUVRE.** The greatest achievement of sixteenth-century French architecture was the rebuilding of the Louvre Palace in Paris, a project planned and executed by mostly French, rather than Italian designers. The project began in 1546 under the direction of Pierre Lescot (1510–1578), and the rebuilding continued for centuries. Francis began by demolishing the medieval keep that stood in the center of the palace, and building on its site a series of buildings arranged around a courtyard. Lescot was unusual by the standards of many Northern European architects of the time. In France, in particular, most sixteenth-century designers came from stonemason backgrounds. By contrast, Lescot was from a prosperous legal family, and he had received a broad education. Unlike many native French architects of the time, he did not learn his craft by traveling to Italy. Instead he applied the mathematical, painting, and archi-



Façade of the Palace of the Louvre in Paris. © PHILIP GOULD/CORBIS.

tectural lessons he had learned at home in France. His chief achievement at the Louvre was the building of the Square Court. In the designs he crafted for this part of the palace, Renaissance architecture in France reached a high expression of classical finesse. Lescot's plan shows a mastery of all the details of the classical orders, and at the same time the building's appearance is refined and unified. It is also an elegant structure when compared against the massive palaces of Florence and Rome. Lescot also skillfully incorporated details that were typically French. In the cold climate of Northern Europe, steeply sloped roofs were a necessity, and thus the imitation of the Italian example was never to be complete. Lescot's steeply pitched roof, however, manages to fit nicely with the other details of his design. His use of small decorative statues to ornament the façade was a design element rarely used in Italy, and points to the greater taste for ornamentation that continued to live on in France even under the guise of the classical revival. In total, though, Lescot's classicism was more assured than any work designed by a French designer to this point. Yet at the same time he developed a native French Renaissance idiom

that was free from tutelage to Italian models. It is not surprising, then, that later designers were to build upon his example.

**SPAIN.** The architectural Renaissance in Spain followed a path similar to that of France. Like its northern neighbor, Spain dominated political developments in Italy in the early years of the sixteenth century, and many of its artists traveled there to learn firsthand about the new styles in painting and architecture. Three phases occurred in the integration of Renaissance elements into the native architecture of Spain. In the first phase, a decorative style known as the Plateresque (for its affinities to work in silver and gold plate (in Spanish known as *plata*), incorporated classical elements as highly decorative ornaments on tombs and altars in churches. Soon this classical detailing spread to use on wall surfaces and façades, too. By the end of the first quarter of the sixteenth century, in the second phase of classical integration, a more thorough adoption of Italian influences resulted in the construction of projects that were more outrightly Renaissance in their design and construction methods. Finally, an austere classicism, known as the Herreran style (for the architect Juan de Herrera), began to appear around 1560. As in all regions in Renaissance Europe, elements of older styles continued to co-exist alongside newer innovations. Decorative Plateresque buildings, in other words, continued to appear at the same time as the more austere forms of Herreran classicism were growing popular.

**ROYAL PATRONAGE.** The greatest architectural projects in sixteenth-century Spain were undertaken on a grand scale with royal patronage, as befitted the country's status and the enormous wealth its government derived from New World silver and gold. Among the classically styled monuments erected under the patronage of the crown, the Royal Hospital at Santiago de Compostela was one of the first examples of Renaissance classicism in Spain. Santiago de Compostela was the site of an important pilgrimage church to which Europeans from throughout the continent came, and the hospital was intended to care and provide lodging for these pilgrims. Spain, like France, had no formal capital in a modern sense during the sixteenth century, and the monarch regularly moved from place to place, supervising the administration of the country. This annual circuit brought the king to Spain's most important cities. Taking up residence in various parts of the country was even more important in Spain than in France or England, for the country was really an amalgamation of many kingdoms and provinces, many with very distinct customs, laws, and languages. During the later Middle Ages,

two kingdoms—Castile and Aragon—had conquered much of the peninsula, and they had been linked in an uneasy alliance through the marriage of the dual monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella. Granada, Toledo, Madrid, and Seville were just a few of the cities the sixteenth-century Spanish kings regularly visited as they conducted their annual tour of Spain. The itinerant nature of the Spanish monarchs during much of the sixteenth century thus necessitated the construction of palaces, churches, and other governmental buildings throughout the country. After 1560, the center of royal administration of the two kingdoms became situated in the central Spanish city of Madrid, thus setting off a building boom in and around that town. Besides these royal construction projects, the crown in Spain was also a fervent supporter of universities, and in the sixteenth century Spain's major educational centers acquired many new buildings in the various Renaissance styles flourishing throughout the peninsula. Among these, the campuses of the University of Salamanca and the new University of Alcalá acquired some of the finest Renaissance structures in Spain. In both cases, these buildings utilized the more ornate Plateresque style, rather than the severe Herreran classicism that became popular later in the sixteenth century.

**THE ESCORIAL.** The greatest, and at the same time most unusual, architectural project undertaken in sixteenth-century Spain was the construction of the Escorial near Madrid. King Philip II's favorite architect, Juan de Herrera (c. 1530–1597), designed this building, which was constructed between 1563 and 1584 as a combination church, monastery, mausoleum, and royal palace. The complex expresses the fervent, unbending Catholicism of its patron, Philip, who presided over the country's internal affairs and vast colonial empire between 1556 and 1598. The king acquired a reputation, even in his own lifetime, for being an overly scrupulous religious fanatic and a meddling absolutist ruler. In reality, Philip exercised a great deal of restraint and was far from being a zealot, but the religious wars of the sixteenth century were chiefly to blame for developing a “Black Legend” about Spain and his rule, particularly in Protestant countries where fear of the forces of the Counter-Reformation ran high. The king was an avid connoisseur of art and he maintained a long friendship with the great Venetian artist Titian. Both his taste for Italian art and his own austere religious temperament influenced his distaste for the ornamental Plateresque style of Renaissance architecture that flourished in much of Spain at the time. Herrera became the perfect architect to give expression to Philip's tastes. Undertaking the great project of the Escorial, the king wrote to his architect, advising him that



El Escorial, Spain. © VANNI ARCHIVES/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the building should have “simplicity of form, severity in the whole, nobility without arrogance, majesty without ostentation.” Herrera gave brilliant expression to these demands in the plans he completed for the building, although a change in the purpose of the building likewise necessitated a radical change to the architect’s original plans. In 1558, Philip’s father, the emperor Charles V, died, and his son decided to transform his palace, still in the design stages, into a tomb for his father. He added a monastery, where monks were to pray continually for the soul of his father. The church at the center of the new palace was to become Charles’ mausoleum. Herrera designed a great gray granite mass of a building with its prominent domed church for a plot at the edge of the mountains outside Madrid. Until he received the commission for the Escorial, Herrera had been living in Naples, at the time a Spanish possession in Italy. While in Italy he had studied the plans for the new St. Peter’s Basilica, and the influence of Michelangelo’s designs can be seen in his subsequent plans for the Escorial. He designed the central domed church as a simplified, even puritanical version of Michelangelo’s St. Peter’s dome. Around this he built a series of square courtyards, the sur-

rounding wings of which house the royal palace and monastery complex. The façade of the entire structure is largely undecorated, and where ornamental elements appear, they are in the simplest of classical forms. Herrera used the Doric, rather than the more ornate Corinthian order, and on the palace’s many rectangular windows he placed mere square pediments, the only decorations that penetrated the otherwise unending granite wall surfaces. Four large spires at the four corners of the structure repeat the motif of the two central spires of the palace’s church; the overall effect of the palace bears more resemblance to the grand churches of sixteenth-century Rome than to any kind of domestic structure. Detractors have long criticized the structure as cold and monotonous, while its admirers have defended it as simple and grand. Its influence on subsequent designs in Spain was considerable, as the Escorial paved the way for a new Spanish architecture characterized by a rigid use of classical forms and massive, relatively undecorated spaces.

**GERMANY.** The influence of Italian Renaissance architecture can be seen at work in Germany from the first decades of the sixteenth century. Religious turbulence, though, characterized life in the region during much of



the sixteenth century, and the disputes of the Reformation initially cast a pall over the construction of new churches. These were once the largest building projects of the German Middle Ages. In the first half of the sixteenth century, though, church building ground to a halt before reviving in the second half of the century. As in France and somewhat later in England, the greatest architectural projects that made use of Renaissance classicism were castles, palaces, and civic buildings. But in contrast to France and Spain, most German projects were on a decidedly smaller scale because of political realities. The area comprising modern Germany and Austria was part of the Holy Roman Empire, a loosely knit confederation of more than 350 states, ruled over in theory—if not always in practice—by an emperor chosen from the Habsburg dynasty. In the sixteenth century this powerful family had amassed significant territories outside the region, including the kingdoms of Spain, the counties of the Netherlands, and the New World colonies. These more prosperous territories became far more important to the dynasty than the traditional seats of Habsburg power in Austria and the German southwest. Although Charles V (r. 1519–1558) ruled over the Holy Roman Empire for much of his life, his positions as king of Spain and ruler of the Netherlands consumed more of his time than the rural and undeveloped territories of Central Europe. He visited Germany only occasionally, and centuries of feudal development in the region limited his power, allowing small territories and cities to become, in effect, semi-autonomous states. Thus court life on the massive scale typical of France or Spain was largely unknown in Germany. Before his death Charles divided his massive empire into two parts, splitting off his Spanish and Italian possessions as well as the Netherlands from the ancient German heart of Habsburg power. Charles' Spanish heir was Philip II, while his son Ferdinand (r. 1558–1564) succeeded him as Holy Roman Emperor; during his relatively short reign, Ferdinand concentrated his energies on resolving Germany's religious crisis, on his role as king of Hungary and Bohemia, and on his struggles against the incursion of the Turks into his Eastern European possessions. Despite these problems Ferdinand and his successors began to devote significant attention to the development of the court at Vienna. But this was a local phenomenon that affected only Austria and the other centers of Habsburg power in Eastern Europe. Ferdinand called several Italian artists to his court and he patronized a small circle of German masters. His successors followed this pattern, although the great age of the Austrian Habsburgs' patronage of art and architecture lay ahead in the seventeenth century. At this time Vienna and the surrounding Austrian countryside became

a great stage upon which the Habsburgs displayed their absolutist pretensions through the construction of monumental and imposing edifices. There was, in other words, no sixteenth-century Austrian Fontainebleau or Escorial, although the Habsburg emperors constructed several projects in their homelands on a decidedly more modest scale.

**COURTS.** For most of the sixteenth century Germany may have lacked the central state authority typical of France and Spain which inspired monumental architectural projects. More than 300 territories ruled by members of the feudal aristocracy and the Roman Church produced hundreds of courts, in which German princes were increasingly concerned to safeguard their power and to demonstrate their control over the small lands they held. Architectural projects were thus a visible result of the trend toward heightened local control. To imitate the greater princes of Europe, Germany's territorial rulers relied on building projects to express their increasingly grand pretensions. In the first half of the sixteenth century relatively few projects relied upon the innovative styles of the Renaissance. One notable exception was the remodeling of the Wittelsbach's Residence in Landshut. Landshut today is no more than a respectably sized town about an hour's train ride north of Munich. In the sixteenth century, though, it was an important center of the duchy of Bavaria's government. In 1536, the local duke visited Italy, where he saw the imaginative designs that Giulio Romano had crafted for the pleasure Palace of the Te. The duke recruited a small circle of Italian craftsmen and painters to come to Landshut, where they constructed and decorated a series of rooms in the city's palace that strongly resembled the Te. Such fervent devotion to Italian design, though, was rare among the German princes of the first half of the sixteenth century.

**RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.** The ideas of Protestant Reformers like Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli spread through German cities and the surrounding countryside quickly during the 1520s. Outlawed by imperial edict, Luther's views continued to attract significant support, particularly in the empire's towns and among some of its most prominent nobility. Growing tension between Protestant and Catholic factions of towns and the nobility produced brief, but vicious religious wars followed by attempts at reconciliation between both sides. In 1555, leaders crafted a compromise between the two opposing religious factions. Known as the Peace of Augsburg, this treaty stipulated that German rulers possessed the power to sanction either Lutheranism or Catholicism within their territories. Although most combatants in the religious disputes that had gripped Germany over the

previous decades thought of the treaty as a temporary truce, its solution to the problems of religious diversity proved to be particularly long lasting. The Peace of Augsburg forestalled religious war in Germany until 1618, introducing a period of stability that was unusual in Northern Europe at the time. One of the stipulations of the treaty had the unintended effect of producing a great flowering in church building. The Peace of Augsburg forbade Protestants from appropriating additional property belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. As a result, Protestant cities and princes constructed a number of new churches in the years after 1555.

**PROTESTANT CHURCHES.** While many important church-building projects had been underway in Germany during the early sixteenth century, new construction had generally ceased with the rise of the Reformation. Protestants had found the late-medieval trend to create ever larger and more elaborate side-aisle chapels within churches wanting, believing that such structures detracted from the central messages of the altar and the pulpit. These, their leaders intoned, were more suitable foci for the laity's devotion. Although they initially avoided new church construction, Protestants still placed their indelible stamp on existing structures. In many places the Reformers removed side-aisle chapels, and introduced more elaborate main altars and pulpits to underscore the change in church teachings. With the conclusion of the Peace of Augsburg, and the realization of its prohibitions against the further appropriation of Roman Church property, Protestants began to build new churches. At first no single style dominated, as designers searched for a distinctive style that might express their new religious convictions. By the end of the sixteenth century, though, a new style of construction began to appear. Designers adopted Renaissance classical elements to create spaces characterized by simpler sight lines, less ornate decoration, and better-lighted, vaulted spaces for the purpose of throwing into greater relief the central messages conveyed from the altar and the pulpit. The Marian Church in Wolfenbüttel, in a town today near the northern industrial city of Braunschweig, and the City Church in the Black Forest town of Freudenstadt in southwest Germany are typical examples of this new style. Both structures date from around 1600.

**CATHOLIC CONSTRUCTION.** Between 1580 and 1600 more church construction began in Germany than in all the other regions of Northern Europe combined. In contrast to the traditional designs of the later Middle Ages, those of the later sixteenth-century Catholic Church evidenced innovative new designs, designs that answered the calls of religious reformers, both Catholic

and Protestant, for renewal in the church's teachings and worship. These included St. Michael's Church in Munich, the headquarters of the new Jesuit order in the Bavarian capital. Modeled closely on the designs that Giocomo Vignola had perfected for the Gesù in Rome, the St. Michael's Church gave prominence to the High Altar by eliminating side aisles and truncating the normally long transepts that radiated from the church's crossing. While side chapels did not disappear altogether, they were tucked inside the walls of the church, so that all sight lines in the structure led eyes inexorably to the church's main focal point in the choir. In this way the designers of the church, and the Jesuit patrons who commissioned it, hoped to answer the call of the Counter-Reformation Catholic Church for greater focus on the centrality of the Eucharist in the Mass. In Münster in northwestern Germany, the Jesuits began the Peter's Church around 1590, a structure very much influenced by St. Michael's. During the seventeenth century the order continued to rely on a similar style throughout Northern Europe, which they hoped might focus the attention of their worshippers closely on the important features of Roman Catholic ritual.

**CASTLES.** As in other regions of Europe, the sixteenth century in Germany was a great age in the construction of palaces and castles. Like the châteaux of sixteenth-century France, the German *Schloss*, (meaning literally "keep") was more refined and elegant than the castles of the Middle Ages. They appear today more like grand homes than the fortress-like structures of the late-medieval period. Most were constructed of stucco and refined stone masonry, rather than the heavy and rustic stonewalls of the past. Although produced on a smaller scale than buildings of the kings of France or Spain, German palaces and castles often made imaginative use of the design tenets of the Renaissance, and merged the new classicism with older native styles of buildings in ways that were similar to trends in France and Spain.

**PROJECTS.** The boom in construction was particularly vigorous between 1560 and 1580. Among the Renaissance projects constructed at this time were a new castle for the Dukes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel in the town of Wolfenbüttel and a grand new section of the Palatine Electors' castle at Heidelberg. At Heidelberg, the local Duke Ottheinrich used his offices to try to introduce humanist learning into his small, but politically important territory. The new wing he constructed for his palace made use of ancient architectural forms, as well as design tenets drawn from Sebastiano Serlio's famous architectural treatise. Further south and east in Munich, the reigning Wittelsbach dynasty set itself to



Aerial view of Weser Renaissance houses in Hannoversch Münden. © BOB KRIST/CORBIS.

remodeling their residence. Among the many important monuments they constructed at this time on the grounds of the residence was an Antiquarium, a new hall built under the family's library and intended from the first to house their collection of antiquities. Painted by the Netherlandish artist Peter Candid, the hall became the first museum to be built in Germany. These projects in Wolfenbüttel, Heidelberg, and Munich represent only a tiny fraction of the many princely projects undertaken in the later sixteenth century. Throughout the country the second half of the sixteenth century proved to be one of particularly vigorous building on the parts of Germany's nobles, as the country's princes made use of the relative domestic stability to indulge a taste for construction. The aristocratic embrace of refined palace architecture continued over time. Although initially dampened by the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), the German princes' support of architecture survived to become one of the defining features of the court life of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

**CITIES.** Besides the presence of numerous courts throughout Germany, there were scattered throughout the country about eighty imperial cities that were relatively independent since they owed allegiance only to the rather distant figure of the emperor. It was in these towns that Germany's most vigorous circles of humanists had appeared in the early sixteenth century. As elsewhere in Europe, urban life proved to be one of the factors encouraging the adoption of Renaissance architecture. Germany's wealthy merchants, bankers, and patricians favored the new styles as an expression of their solidity and their embrace of humanism. Here the imperial city of Augsburg was the leader. There the wealthy banking family, the Fuggers, had a chapel built in the Church of St. Anna around 1510. They also remodeled three existing patrician houses on an important market square in the city, adopting new classical façades for their project. The inspiration for these projects came from the family's close association with Italy, particularly its trading contacts with Venice, although the designers for the Fuggers' Augsburg projects were Germans. Many other notable families in towns and cities throughout Germany imitated the architectural attentions the Fugger family had showered on their native city. From Augsburg's early embrace of classical design, Renaissance architecture spread quickly in all directions throughout southern Germany. By 1550, classically styled public buildings and houses decorated with ancient elements had appeared in Regensburg, Nuremberg, Basel, and Strasbourg, among many other cities in the region. Thereafter the taste for buildings in the Renaissance style spread even further a field throughout Germany. During the years between 1570 and 1620, for example, the towns of the Weser River valley in north central Germany experienced a building boom, and many of the new structures constructed at the time made use of the new fashion for Antiquity. While many projects undertaken during this "Weser Renaissance" had styles affected by the classicism of Renaissance architecture, older medieval patterns of building persisted, as they did elsewhere in Germany. Half-timbered houses continued to be constructed alongside the classical masonry styles favored by Renaissance designers. We would like to know more about the many architects who practiced in the Weser Renaissance, but, like most of the designers active in sixteenth-century Germany, their identities are rarely mentioned in contemporary documents. Most seem to have come from the stonemason and construction trades, and the buildings they constructed were often eclectic, mixing elements of the new classicism with those drawn from native traditions. Steep stepped roofs, a design style popular in the later Middle Ages, persisted in newer build-

ings that made use of Renaissance design elements. Many houses built at the time made use of Gothic and Renaissance elements simultaneously. During the Weser Renaissance, as elsewhere throughout Germany at the time, designers often built houses that ran perpendicular to the street on which they were situated. Thus in many cases the longest part of the house faced inward and was not visible to passersby, a contrast to Italy where architects had designed most domestic palaces since the fifteenth century to face the street with an impressive façade oriented to foot traffic. Urban vistas were rare in Renaissance Germany, and few great squares dotted the cityscape, as people huddled into the cramped spaces enclosed by a town's walls. Open-air markets, often sited in front of a city's major churches or town hall, were among the largest places in which people congregated out-of-doors. It was not until the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that many German towns began to realize plans for broader public squares and avenues like those envisioned in the works of Italian Renaissance architects.

**NETHERLANDS.** The outlines of architectural development in the Low Countries (today the areas making up modern Belgium and Holland) followed closely developments in Germany and France, although the heavily urbanized region allowed for the construction of fewer great castles. No new churches appeared in the region between the Reformation and the 1590s, the first major structure for the new Dutch Calvinist Church being the *Zuiderkerk* begun around that time in Amsterdam. Although Calvinism generally discouraged the building of large and elaborate church structures, the *Zuiderkerk* and the structures that imitated it were truly monumental structures filled with elaborate and often ornate decorations, when compared against other Calvinist-inspired churches throughout Europe. The great age of church building in Amsterdam and other cities throughout the Netherlands lay more in the Baroque than the Renaissance period. Netherlandish designers were particularly innovative in their planning of town halls, if not in their construction of castles, palaces, or churches. In 1561 the harbor city of Antwerp in Flanders began construction of an immense town hall based upon plans by Cornelis Floris de Vriendt (1514–1575). De Vriendt had studied in Rome and published books of engravings based upon his study of classical buildings. In comparison with many Northern European buildings at the time, de Vriendt's town hall is relatively restrained and has a simpler and more harmonious appeal. Its classical decoration shows a thorough understanding of antique building practices, and displays de Vriendt's

conscientious attempt to adapt that style to the very different climate and situation of Northern Europe. Antwerp's new town hall was an influential building as well. Even prior to its completion, designers from other towns in the region began adapting its plans in the construction of similar town halls throughout the Netherlands.

**ENGLAND.** The classicism typical of Renaissance architecture played little role in early sixteenth-century England where a vigorous tradition of building in the late Gothic style persisted. When antique elements appeared in the architecture of the island at this time, they were almost always treated as mere decorative elements to be elaborated upon in ways drawn from the Gothic tradition. A few notable exceptions to the almost universal love of Gothic architecture may have been built in the early sixteenth century. Recent theories suggest that Cardinal Thomas Wolsey's massive estate at Hampton Court, a property later given to Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) when its owner was disgraced, may have originally been constructed in a style imitative of Italian Renaissance palaces of the time. A coffered ceiling and other details that survive at the site point to an original style influenced by Italian designs, albeit with rather poor craftsmanship. Whatever Hampton Court's original style, though, Henry VIII soon set about modifying its design to fit with more native traditions of palace building. The remodeling of the massive palace, then the largest in England, continued for almost a dozen years. At Nonesuch, another royal palace later destroyed, Henry allegedly entertained his taste for a palace in the Italian style, although the images that survive of the building suggest that he based his designs instead on fairly traditional models drawn from France and the Low Countries, rather than Italy. Throughout the sixteenth century Nonesuch remained one of the most popular of English royal palaces, although it had originated in a game of one-upmanship played against King Francis I of France. No great Renaissance classical churches survive from the sixteenth century, and the few churches and ecclesiastical building projects undertaken in the period were usually on a small scale and relied on the architecture of the past. The Reformation in England produced the same stultifying effects on church building that it did in France and the Netherlands, although in other respects Protestantism aided in the creation of a building boom. Soon after pushing his divorce from Catherine of Aragon through England's Parliament and contracting his ill-fated marriage to Anne Boleyn, Henry imitated the actions of some German princes by seizing the property of England's convents and monasteries. Henry's Lord Chancellor Thomas



Exterior of Hardwick Hall near Chesterfield, England. © ERIC CRICHTON/CORBIS.

Cromwell realized great gains for the crown by selling these lands to English aristocrats and wealthy merchants. These, in turn, were made wealthy by their newly gotten gains, and they built a number of great country houses throughout England during the rest of the sixteenth century. Most of these structures followed traditional lines, although several magnificent exceptions stand out. At Longleat, Sir John Thyme designed a house constructed around 1572 that is noteworthy for its elegance and restraint. Built in Somerset, the house contained a number of beautiful bay windows, a typically English feature used at Longleat to accentuate the vertical lines of the great house. Inside the house Thyme moved the traditional English Great Hall to the structure's side, thus allowing for a central entrance hall and a symmetrical placement of the front door and many luxurious glass windows, a ridiculously expensive commodity at the time. This harmonious rationality had a number of imitators. At Hardwick Hall and Wollaton, two houses designed by Robert Smythson at the very end of the century, central entrance halls imitative of continental examples recurred. At Hardwick the design made the traditional Great Hall the center of the house, approached as it was by the building's

colonnaded entrance and interior hall. The growing importance of Netherlandish and German styles throughout Northern Europe influenced the designs of both Hardwick and Wollaton. In many respects, in other words, these houses seem to owe little to the Italian Renaissance. It was not until the seventeenth century, with the rise of figures like Inigo Jones (1573–1652) and the great designer Christopher Wren (1632–1723), that English architecture integrated fully the lessons of Italian Renaissance classicism. In buildings such as Jones' Banqueting Hall (1619), once a part of the royal palace complex at Westminster but now a venerable monument in the governmental quarters of Whitehall in London, Jones fully integrated the lessons of Renaissance classicism in a way similar to the Louvre rebuilding projects of Lescot. He repeated this successful formulation several years later in his Queen's House in Greenwich, a structure that demonstrates his increasing mastery of the tenets of Renaissance design, and at the same time still preserves some native elements of English architecture. Jones, a figure of the very late Renaissance, also laid out the great market square of Covent Garden along lines that many Italian fifteenth- and sixteenth-century designers might



Exterior view of Wollaton Hall in Nottingham, England, designed by architect Robert Smythson. © FARRELL GREHAN/CORBIS.

have envied. His innovative plans were to be followed a generation later by Sir Christopher Wren, who revived the architectural models of Andrea Palladio in England, and, in turn, created a native English style that today is popularly referred to as “Georgian,” in reference to the Hanoverian kings who ruled England in the eighteenth century. The origins of this widely popular style, which influenced British colonial design in the Americas, had their roots in sixteenth-century Northern Italy. Thus while the classical revival of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had little immediate impact on the architecture of England, its influence reappeared to shape British construction in the centuries following the Renaissance.

**IMPLICATIONS.** Throughout the continent the classicism that had first been born in Renaissance Italy in the early fifteenth century helped to reinvigorate native styles of architecture and to inspire new construction projects, notable for the inclusion of classical details, harmonious designs, and rationalistic proportions. The process of integrating the classical heritage into the very different circumstances of life that prevailed throughout Renaissance Europe was a long one. The rising popu-

larity of humanism as a scholarly movement helped to encourage the adoption of classical designs, and in the first stages—as in Hungary, Russia, and France—kings and princes who had a passing familiarity with the movement imported Italian architects to design new structures and supervise their construction. Over time, though, native architects dedicated themselves to mastering the tenets of the new Renaissance modes of construction. Architectural treatises and engravings helped to broaden knowledge of the buildings of Antiquity, as did the journeys of local craftsmen to Italy. In Northern Europe until about 1550, architects merely added Renaissance elements to buildings that were more traditional and Gothic in their feel and flavor. The fashion for classicism produced buildings in which ancient columns and orders combined to create a thicket of ornamentation similar to the highly decorative styles of the later Middle Ages. In Spain, the highly decorative Plateresque style made use of classical elements to form architectural filigrees more similar to the works of silversmiths than to those of ancient architects. Over time, as knowledge of the ancient world deepened, an increasing sophistication and appreciation of the classical uses of space, mass, and

ornament appeared. In France, this sophistication can be seen in the façade of Pierre Lescot's Square Court at the Louvre; in Spain, it found expression in the austere and severe Escorial; and in Germany, it was articulated in scores of castles and churches constructed in the second half of the sixteenth century. The quest to integrate the architectural forms of the ancient world into contemporary life proved to be more than just mere fad or fashion. In the new styles of churches that Renaissance classicism inspired, a rational, harmonious attitude toward space became an essential tool for both Protestants and Catholics to enhance the worship of ordinary Christians. Similarly, the new town hall projects constructed throughout Northern Europe with designs inspired by Antiquity gave expression to notions of order and the public good that prevailed when cities were ruled by long-standing traditions of civic involvement and self-government. And finally, for Renaissance kings and princes who were increasingly jealous of their power, monumental classical buildings revived the purposes of the temples and ancient public spaces of imperial Rome. The new structures showed subjects the necessity of submitting to the growing central authority of the state.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: The Arts in Sixteenth-Century Northern Europe*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Architecture and Design*

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### LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI

1404–1472

*Humanist  
Artist*

**IMPACT.** Leon Battista Alberti has long been considered one of the finest examples of the Renaissance “universal man.” During his relatively long life he mastered an enormous number of arts, made important contributions to humanist scholarship, and fulfilled administrative roles within the papal government and the noble courts of Italy. In the history of architecture he played a key role as a designer and in deepening contemporary understanding of the buildings of classical Antiquity. His treatise, *On the Art of the Building* (1452), had a great impact on later fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century designers.

**EARLY LIFE.** Alberti's early life had been filled with problems. He had been born illegitimate, the son of Lorenzo Alberti, a member of a powerful Florentine banking family. At the time Alberti's family was in exile from Florence, and as a young boy, he grew up in Genoa and Venice. He received his early schooling in Padua before attending the University of Bologna, then Europe's premier center for the study of church law. His father intended for Alberti to have a career in the church bureaucracy, but he died during Alberti's student days, and members of the Alberti clan appropriated his inheritance. Alberti was drawn to the ancient philosophy of Stoicism, which taught disregard for fortune and worldly cares, as a solace for these problems. One of his closest associates in his student days was Tommaso Parentucelli, a figure whom Alberti later served. Parentucelli became Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447–1455), the first humanist scholar to hold the office. As Alberti completed his law degree, he took holy orders and accepted a position within the church bureaucracy. In 1432, he finally visited his family's native Florence, where he remained for several years. His exposure to Florentine humanism and the vigorous artistic culture of the city left a profound mark on his subsequent development. The quality of Alberti's written work deepened. He wrote his famous *Book of the Family*, a work that analyzes the strategies that preserve great families over time, during this first period in the city. The work is a lively dialogue in Italian, an unusual innovation for a humanistic work of the time. Alberti's display of the possibilities of literary Italian helped to encourage other humanists to use the language. In Florence, Alberti also befriended the architect Filippo Brunelleschi, and in 1435, he composed a Latin treatise entitled *On Painting*. The work included a technical method for artists who wished to use linear perspective. Alberti likely learned these techniques from his friendship with Brunelleschi. He soon saw the need for a translation of his work into Italian since many of the artists of the time could not read Latin. A year after

completing the Latin version he issued his new Italian version. Alberti followed his treatise on painting with other works on artistic theory and practice, including his *On Sculpture* and *On the Art of Building*. This latter work dates from 1452 and its ten books written in Latin treat many aspects of the theory and practical application of architecture. Alberti relied on the ancient Roman architectural treatise of Vitruvius, but the views expressed in his work did not support a slavish imitation of antique designs. Instead he showed how classical symmetry, ornament, and proportion could be mined to solve contemporary design problems in new and imaginative ways. Alberti had acquired much of the obvious architectural sophistication evident in *On the Art of Building* while serving in the 1440s in the church government at Rome. One of the tasks he undertook in these years was the survey of the city's ancient monuments, and when his friend Parentucelli became pope, he took on many planning projects for the renewal of Rome.

**BUILDINGS.** Despite his professional duties and his scholarly interests, Alberti was also a practicing architect in his spare time. His first important design was for the Malatesta Temple, a project he undertook for the ruthless despot Sigismondo Malatesta at Rimini around 1450. Alberti was an official of the papal government, but he seems to have had few qualms about desecrating an existing church in Rimini by transforming it into a Roman-style temple intended to glorify pagan virtues. He clothed the existing church with a new skin of marble and planned a classical arched façade for the exterior. A change in Malatesta's fortunes left the building unfinished. Among Alberti's subsequent architectural plans, several works had broad influence. These included his plans for a new Rucellai family palace in Florence and his Church of St. Andrea in Mantua. Alberti's palace design successfully adapted classical elements to the building of a contemporary palace; his façade, harmonious and more elegantly refined than was the custom in Florence at the time, inspired later designers from other parts of Italy to adopt his style in similar projects. At the Church of St. Andrea in Mantua he forged massive barrel vaults to cover the church's nave, transepts, and choir, and for the crossing he designed an attractive dome. His design dispensed with the side aisles traditional in most Italian churches to this point. He recessed the lesser chapels of the church into the building's walls. In this way he created clear sight lines that focused on the church's central altar, at once creating a structure that was symmetrical and harmonious. In his architectural treatise Alberti had described beauty in building as an organic phenomenon that arose from the balanced

interrelationships of a structure's constituent parts. At St. Andrea, Alberti achieved his ideal, and elements of the structure can be found in many later Renaissance church designs, including that of St. Peter's Basilica and the famous Jesuit Church of the Gesù in Rome. This latter structure became, in turn, the model for many Baroque churches throughout Europe. Even in Alberti's lifetime, his architectural ideas bore fruit in new structures from the hands of other designers. Although his buildings were not particularly influential among Florentine builders, who preferred the more severe style first developed by Brunelleschi, figures working in Central Italy and Rome, in particular, relied heavily upon Alberti's designs in the decades that followed his death.

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### FILIPPO BRUNELLESCHI

1377–1446

*Sculptor*  
*Architect*

**EARLY TRAINING.** The future architect Filippo Brunelleschi was born the son of a notary who worked for the city of Florence. His mother was from a prominent local family. Brunelleschi spent most of his life in Florence. As a child, Brunelleschi received a thorough education, including training in the reading of Latin, in the hopes that he might follow in his father's footsteps and become a notary. Early on, he took great pleasure in drawing, and in 1398, he joined Florence's Silk Guild, membership of which also included goldsmiths. Brunelleschi soon became a master of the goldsmith's trade. He completed his first commissioned sculptures in silver for the cathedral of the nearby town of Pistoia. By 1401, after having completed several other major sculptural projects, he entered the competition to create new bronze baptistery doors at the cathedral of Florence. The subject chosen was the "Sacrifice of Isaac," and Brunelleschi completed a highly dramatic and moving panel for the doors that still exists today. The judges of the competition were unable to decide between his submission and that of the sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti. They asked the two to share the project, although Brunelleschi



allegedly refused. Disheartened, he turned now away from sculpture to study architecture. In the first decade of the fifteenth century he made several journeys to Rome, where he measured and studied the proportions of ancient buildings. He also became one of the first Renaissance figures to excavate ancient buildings so that he could examine their foundations. During these years he studied mathematics and geometry. Even in this early stage of his development as an architect, he became fascinated with problems of numerical proportions and perspective. Contemporaries in Florence credited him with solving the riddles of linear perspective, and his system for working out geometric relationships on a picture plane allowed artists to represent three-dimensional space in their paintings and sculptures more rigorously than previously. Up to this time artists had used perspective only intuitively. Brunelleschi's breakthrough permitted paintings and sculptures to be constructed with a single vanishing point in the background. This system found expression in the Florentine frescoes of the great painter Masaccio, and the theoretical treatise of the humanist Leon Battista Alberti on painting codified and communicated it to artists throughout Italy. Later in life, Brunelleschi used his knowledge of linear perspective in the creation of his architecture. In his designs for the Church of San Lorenzo he constructed the interior much like a three-dimensional pictorial space so that the lines of the building converged at a single vanishing point in the rear of the church.

**THE DOME.** Brunelleschi's first great achievement as an architect was his successful design of the dome over the crossing in Florence's cathedral. The construction of this massive church had continued throughout the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, even though no one knew at the time how a roof might be constructed between the enormous piers that stood at the central crossing of the structure. Florence's foremost builders had estimated that it might consume the wood of several forests to construct scaffolding sufficient enough to build a roof over the structure. Previous designers feared that any structure that covered this space could not stand without some kind of central support that rose from the cathedral's floor, thus obstructing the view of the altar. Brunelleschi turned to the problem and realized that a central support was unnecessary. The building might be covered with a freestanding dome made up of an inner and outer shell. In designing the dome he created a huge octagon drum, which added height to the structure and dispersed the dome's weight. He buttressed this drum with hemispherical constructions at its base. Over this, he created a huge conical structure supported by eight

stone ribs on its outer shell. Between these ribs, Brunelleschi devised a pattern of brickwork that added great strength to the dome's outer shell. Consequently the inner shell—in effect the ceiling of the church—hung from the outside ribs and masonry. Brunelleschi's accomplishments in building the dome were far more than a mere design marvel. The dome was the greatest practical construction feat of the fifteenth century. A key problem to contemporaries had been the issue of scaffolding, which Brunelleschi resolved by designing hanging platforms that could be moved up as the construction progressed and the dome grew higher. To bring materials to workmen who were hundreds of feet in the air, the architect built a system of sturdy winches that hoisted the stone, brick, and mortar to the scaffolds. Brunelleschi duplicated this system in the great projects he designed throughout Florence in the years after 1420.

**PUBLIC PROJECTS.** Brunelleschi's dome, completed in 1436, established his reputation as an architect of great merit. Despite the punishing schedule of his duties as master builder at the cathedral, the architect also undertook many commissions in Florence. These works form the foundation of the early Renaissance in architecture, and include his designs for the Orphanage of the Innocents (in Italian, *Ospedale degli Innocenti*), the churches of San Lorenzo and Santo Spirito, and the gemlike Pazzi Chapel on the grounds of the Church of Santa Croce. Key elements in Brunelleschi's classicism, which was not nearly as rigorous as that of later fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian architects, were the construction of graceful colonnades that supported Roman arches. The designer was the first European architect to rely on a system of clear mathematical relationship in his buildings. These are readily distinguishable to the astute observer, and in the fifteenth century these numerical proportions were intended to convey underlying religious and philosophical truths. The interiors of many of Brunelleschi's structures appear to many today as severe, since his buildings are less highly decorated than those constructed in later Renaissance styles. All his public buildings relied on simple gray *pietra serena*, a stone quarried near Florence, set against white stucco. The result was harmonious and elegant, and it was a style that Florentines embraced enthusiastically. Until the nineteenth century, buildings modeled on Brunelleschi's early Renaissance achievements were built in Florence and the surrounding region of Tuscany. The architect himself lived to see few of his creations completed, since the painstaking building processes of the time meant that their construction usually lasted over many decades. Lack of funds, too, sometimes dogged the construction of his

great public buildings in Florence, and changing tastes and demands altered some of his designs. Still, Brunelleschi has long been credited with being the “father of Renaissance architecture,” and his key position in the creation of the early Renaissance style is even now maintained, although more recent scholarship has located many of the designer’s seeming innovations within the contemporary context of widespread building practices in the Florence of his day.

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## FRANCIS I

1494–1547

*King of France*

**UPBRINGING.** Francis I was born the cousin of King Louis XII of France. His father Charles was a Count of Angoulême and his mother was a member of the princely house of Savoy in northwestern Italy. When it appeared that he was to succeed his elder cousin as king, the young Francis and his sister Margaret moved to court so they could be trained to assume royal duties. During this time, however, their mother, Louise of Savoy, continued to supervise her children’s education, which appears to have been remarkably advanced for the time. Francis’ sister, the future Marguerite of Navarre, became an important advocate for reform in the church and an author of unusual distinction. Francis, on the other hand, led a spirited life that seemed to bear more resemblance to that of an itinerant and carefree knight than a man of state affairs. Early on in his reign he challenged the growing power of Spain, opposing its conquests in Italy and waging his own battles to achieve supremacy in the peninsula. On one of these campaigns during 1525, he was captured by Charles V at Pavia, and taken as a hostage to Spain. Later his sister, Marguerite of Navarre, successfully negotiated his release, in exchange for which Francis renounced his claims to his Italian possessions. He was twice married, first to the daughter of his cousin, King Louis XII, Claude de France, and later to Eleanor of Portugal, who was a sister of the emperor Charles V. Never faithful to either wife, Francis kept a long string

of mistresses, some of whom played important roles in court politics.

**RULE.** Francis was a competent, if not astute monarch. His foreign policy brought him continually into conflict with Spain and involved him in constant intrigues with Italy, England, and the papacy. Domestically, his policies were often authoritarian, but ineffective. During his reign the Reformation swept through France. At first Francis’ policies against the new religious ideas vacillated between toleration and condemnation. Toward the middle part of his reign he began to persecute Protestants, who multiplied despite his prohibitions. Under Francis’ rule, corruptions in the system of taxation and royal fiscal system worsened. Francis attempted to deal with these problems by creating a system of public debt that was secured by the taxes levied on the city of Paris. Corruption, nevertheless, persisted.

**PATRONAGE.** Francis compensated for his deficiencies in governing with his avid connoisseurship of the arts and architecture. From his earliest youth the king was a great lover of art, and early in his reign he built three stunning châteaux at Blois, Chambord, and Amboise. At this time the royal court moved from palace to palace on an annual progress. The itinerant nature of the court thus made necessary a large number of stately palaces and castles, but the progress was more than just a sign of royal extravagance. Through these annual circuits through the countryside French kings conducted royal business in the various regions of their large kingdom. The progress was often attended by elaborate royal entries, in which particular towns welcomed the king with elaborate processions and musical and theatrical performances. During the sixteenth century these entries grew more elaborate, and they often imitated Roman triumphs in keeping with the French taste for Renaissance classicism. The increasingly elaborate scale of court life in France necessitated an almost continual program of palace decoration. To undertake these projects, Francis brought Italian artists to France and he hired native craftsmen, too. He began by attracting Leonardo da Vinci to his court in 1516. Although the artist spent the last three years of his life there, he produced little in France beyond several drawings for a new royal château at Romorantin. The artist suffered a stroke shortly after his arrival, and his slow recovery affected his productivity. Several years after Leonardo’s death, Francis also lured the Italian painters Rosso Fiorentino and Francesco Primaticcio to France, where they worked on decorating a series of new rooms at the royal palace of Fontainebleau. As Francis’ reign progressed this great palace became the focal point for his most ambitious

artistic and architectural programs. Among the architects who left their stamp upon the Fontainebleau were Sebastiano Serlio, Giacomo da Vignola, and the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini. Later in his reign Francis focused greater attention on his plans for rebuilding the Louvre, the medieval royal palace within Paris. In 1528, he added a royal chateau that became known as the Madrid in the Bois de Boulogne, the woods just outside the Louvre. And in the 1540s, the native French architect Pierre Lescot began construction on a new central section of the palace, the Square Court, which replaced the old medieval structure that had stood at the spot. Lescot's façade for the new palace has long been judged the first truly Renaissance construction by a French artist. The Louvre rebuilding project was massive and lasted over many generations. While Francis' tastes in art and architecture were generally Italian, he favored portraitists in the Flemish tradition. Among these, Jean Clouet and his son Francis most often painted members of the royal court.

**ASSESSMENT.** In the sixteenth century Francis was known as one of the country's great kings. Since that time assessments of this larger-than-life figure have changed. Modern judgments have sometimes cast the king in a harsh light, pointing to his extravagance as well as the corruption that reigned in his government. At the same time even the most critical of assessments of Francis have had to take account of the great cultural legacy of his reign. In the construction of palaces, the amassing of a royal collection of art, and the support of humanistic scholarship, Francis outshone almost every other European prince of the time.

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## ANDREA PALLADIO

1508–1580

### *Architect*

**TRAINING.** Palladio, the greatest architect of sixteenth-century Northern Italy, was probably born in Padua in 1508. At birth his name was Andrea di Pietro; he did not take the classical name Palladio until he was middle-aged. Around the age of 13 he worked as an apprentice

to a local stonemason, but he apparently did not stay in this workshop long. By 1524, records show that he had enrolled in the stonemasons' guild in nearby Vicenza, where he joined a local workshop. Eventually, his talents came to the attention of the local aristocrat, Gian Giorgio Trissino. Trissino was a humanist scholar and he soon became the young stonemason's patron. Under Trissino's influence, the future architect acquired some knowledge of Latin and studied Vitruvius' ancient treatise on architecture. At Trissino's urging, Andrea di Pietro changed his name to the Latin, Palladio, and with the elder aristocrat's support the designer made several study trips to Rome during the 1540s. On one of these journeys he met Michelangelo, and during all his stays in Rome he spent a great deal of time in the ancient center of the city, studying and drawing the monuments of the ancient Roman Empire.

**ARCHITECTURE.** Around 1540, Palladio had already begun to design buildings in and around Vicenza. His earliest commissions were for domestic palaces in the city and country villas. These works do not yet show a secure understanding of ancient Roman architecture. During the course of the 1540s, though, his mastery of classicism grew more assured. The most important commission Palladio received at this early stage in his career as an architect was for the reconstruction of Vicenza's Basilica. This complex, a series of local government offices, had been joined together in the later Middle Ages with a series of Gothic arcades. In 1496, one of these structures had collapsed, and during the following decades the government at Vicenza searched for an architect who might rebuild the structures on a more secure footing. Palladio won the commission, and the resulting building he created established his reputation as an architect of merit. Palladio continued in the 1550s to design domestic palaces, government buildings, and country villas in and around Vicenza. In his country villas especially, Palladio's works display his certain mastery over classical building styles and his ability to adapt those elements to contemporary situations. His structures were notable as well for the great harmony they achieved between interior spaces and the surrounding exterior gardens. Before his death in 1580, the architect had populated the region around Vicenza and the Veneto (Venice's mainland possessions) with a number of graceful and harmonious structures. Palladio's classicism was restrained and, in contrast to the great Venetian architect Sansovino, he used relatively little ornament. Porticos that made use of the region's gentle climate were one common feature, as was the so-called Palladian window, a structure in which side columns supported a hemi-

spherical shaped arch. In later years Palladio used his relatively severe but graceful style in two churches he designed in the city of Venice.

**THEORY.** Trissino had introduced Palladio to circles of humanists in Northern Italy, and Palladio nourished his scholarly interests even as he was busy designing his many domestic and public projects. His career testifies to the rising status that was accorded Italian architects in the sixteenth century. When his friend Trissino died in 1550, Palladio began to develop his own contacts among Northern Italian humanists. One of the most avid friendships of his later life grew to become a fruitful collaboration. In the years following Trissino's death, the humanist Daniele Barbaro influenced Palladio, and the two cooperated to produce an Italian translation of Vitruvius' ancient architectural work. Palladio wrote a commentary for this new edition and prepared a number of illustrations of the works that Vitruvius had discussed in his text. Both the illustrations and the translation were of undeniable importance in spreading knowledge of Vitruvius' architectural ideas. Few architects at the time had the advantage of Palladio's Latin education, and thus the edition became an indispensable tool for those hoping to design classically styled buildings. In his later years, the friendship with Barbaro, a member of a distinguished Venetian family, also helped to gain Palladio several commissions in the city of Venice. At this time Palladio also published his own work on theoretical treatise, the *Four Books on Architecture*. Palladio's work was just one of many produced by sixteenth-century designers. Its author had written sections of the work over a long period of time, and then in 1570 he rushed to get the book into print. As a result, the work contained numerous internal contradictions, and its illustrations sometimes defy the canons that the author sets out in the text. Later the artist's most accomplished student, Vincenzo Scamozzi, expanded the work and clarified its arguments. But even in its imperfect state, Palladio's text influenced architects throughout Europe, and somewhat later in America. In England, the famous designers Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren were disciples of Palladio's elegant style of building. Their influence, in turn, spread knowledge of his systems of design everywhere where English was spoken. Elsewhere in Europe, interest in Palladio's architectural treatises and in his villa projects gave rise in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to structures that continue to show his influence. It is for this reason that some scholars have argued that Palladio was the single most important architect in spreading the ideas of Renaissance classicism to the rest of Europe.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Architecture and Design*

- Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building* (1452)—This humanist attempt to come to terms with the ancient architectural treatise of Vitruvius cast a wide influence over subsequent building in fifteenth-century Italy. Alberti argued that beauty was an organic phenomenon. Harmony between the constituent parts of a building was similar to the functions of the limbs and various parts of the human body. Take away one element and, Alberti warned, disaster might result. An architect who added too much ornamentation might similarly violate Alberti's canons of classical beauty.
- Filarete, *Work on Architecture* (c. 1460)—Antonio Averlino, known popularly as Filarete, originally circulated this treatise on building among noble and wealthy urban patrons in Italy in many manuscript editions. The text recounts the education of a prince by his architect, thus encouraging noble patrons to support the architecture of the Renaissance. It is illustrated, although many of Filarete's building prescriptions are drawn from the medieval past and are not in sync with the innovations of Renaissance design occurring at the time.
- Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture* (1570)—A major architectural treatise by one of Italy's most accomplished Renaissance designers, this work treats many practical problems arising from construction and presents illustrations of Palladio's classically inspired buildings. Inaccuracies and disagreement between the illustrations and the text did not prevent this book from exercising a major influence on later designers, particularly in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and America.
- Sebastiano Serlio, *Treatise on Architecture* (1537)—The famous architectural theorist Sebastian Serlio served in many sixteenth-century courts, including that of the opulent King Francis I in France. His architectural treatise went through several editions, published in Italy, France, and the Low Countries, and was to have a wide

influence, particularly in Northern Europe. Serlio's books defined subsequent treatments of Vitruvian-inspired architecture, as later writers came to terms with the categories that Serlio had developed to treat the classical revival of the Renaissance.

Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550)—This work is one of the first attempts to write a history of art and architecture from a biographical perspective. Vasari was himself a painter and he treats Italian artists from the time of Giotto until Michelangelo. He is frequently opinionated, and his work gave rise to a number of legends about various artists. He stresses that the development of Italian art occurred as an organic process. According to Vasari, the arts first began to bud in Italy in the time of Giotto.

Later, the bud turned to a bloom in the years after Masaccio, before coming to full flower in the time of Leonardo and Michelangelo. As a result, his assessments of contemporary architectural achievements placed great emphasis on the buildings of the High Renaissance and Mannerist artists.

Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture* (1st century B.C.E.)—The most influential of ancient writings on building in the Renaissance, this work became the Bible for many designers anxious to revive the classical style. Alberti relied upon it in the fifteenth century to write his *On the Art of Building*. In the sixteenth century it was given an important new edition, labored over by the architect Palladio and his friend the Venetian humanist Daniele Barbaro.

chapter *2*

DANCE

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	58	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	60	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>The Golden Mean</i> (Piacenza comments on the theory and practice of dance) . . . . .	63
Courtly Dance in the Early Renaissance . . . . .	61	<i>Feminine Modesty</i> (Ambrosio instructs women in dancing) . . . . .	65
High and Late Renaissance Courtly Dance . . . . .	66	<i>Behavior on the Dance Floor</i> (Caroso gives detailed rules for dance conduct) . . . . .	67
Theatrical Dance . . . . .	70	<i>A Perfect Union</i> (Elyot comments on the perfection of dance as an art form) . . . . .	68
Folk Dancing in Europe . . . . .	75	<i>A Masque</i> (Jonson describes the sets for <i>The Masque of Blackness</i> ) . . . . .	74
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>A Plea For Rules</i> (Arbeau discusses the practice and evolution of dance) . . . . .	76
Thoinot Arbeau . . . . .	81	<i>The Evils of Dance</i> (Lovell discusses the evil nature of dance) . . . . .	78
Fabrizio Caroso . . . . .	81		
Catherine de' Medici . . . . .	82		
Cesare Negri . . . . .	83		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	84		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Dance*

- c. 1420 A Burgundian manuscript preserved at Brussels outlines the steps necessary to perform the *bassedance*.
- c. 1445 Domenico da Piacenza, dance master to the D'Este family at Ferrara, completes the dance handbook, *The Art of Leaping and Dancing*. Piacenza's work is the first to discuss the theory of dance.
- 1459 The lively Italian dance known as the *chiarentina* is performed before Pope Pius II. The *chiarentina* is full of hops and jumps and elaborate reel constructions.
- 1488 The anonymous book, *The Art and Instruction of Good Dancing* appears in print in Paris. It is the first dancing manual to be written for use in urban, rather than aristocratic society.
- 1499 A total of 144 performers are needed to stage the *moresca* dances that are performed in the intervals between the acts of four comedies staged in Ferrara. Throughout the following years the practice of staging elaborate *intermedi* between the acts of plays will steadily intensify throughout Italy.
- 1512 Henry VIII introduces the Italian practice of *masquerie* into the English court.
- 1528 In his important conduct book, *The Book of the Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione celebrates dance as an essential skill necessary for the cultivated courtier.
- 1531 Thomas Elyot's *The Book of the Governor* recommends dance to gentlemen as a virtuous and civilizing pursuit.
- 1533 The first ordinances governing dance schools are enacted in London.
- 1539 Elaborate *intermedi* or interludes, which include dances, are staged during a comedy produced at Florence, which is presented to commemorate the wedding of Cosimo I de' Medici to Elenore of Toledo.
- 1545 The office of Master of the Revels is established within the Tudor Court to supervise entertainment.
- c. 1550 The *allemande* emerges as an independent dance form in France and spreads in the later sixteenth century throughout Europe.
- 1557 The term "suite" is first used to describe a grouping of dances.
- 1559 Catherine de' Medici becomes regent of France, giving important support to the development of the ballet in France.
- 1570 The Academy of Poetry and Music is founded by Jean de Baïf in France. The institution works to revive ancient Greek meters in French poetry and music, and leads to experiments in dance.
- 1572 The City of London grants a monopoly to three expert dancing masters to teach dance within the city limits.
- c. 1580 The *camerata*, a loose-knit organization of scholars and musical amateurs, supports the revival of ancient poetry, music, and dance in and around Florence.
- 1581 Fabrizio Caroso publishes his dance instruction manual *Il Balarino*.  
  
In France, the first *ballet de cour* is performed in the French court.
- 1583 The sexually suggestive dance known as the *sarabande* is prohibited in Madrid.
- 1588 Thoinot Arbeau completes his *Orchésographie*, a late-Renaissance dance manual

- that outlines a variety of dances just coming into fashion at the time.
- 1589 Catherine de' Medici, an avid supporter of dance and particularly of the French court form known as the *ballet de cour*, dies.
- c. 1590 Shakespeare begins to write his plays in London. These will make use of rich metaphors about dance's role in the cosmos.
- 1594 The English poet John Davies' poem "Orchestra. A Poem of Dance" praises the art for its ability to enhance people's sociability and argues that the universe itself is organized around principles that mirror the dance's harmonious choreography.
- 1600 Fabrizio Caroso's dancing manual *On the Nobility of Ladies* appears in Italy.
- c. 1601 The *chaconne* and *sarabande* are the two most popular dances in Spain.
- 1602 Cesare Negri publishes his important dance manual, *The Charms of Love*, which he dedicates to Philip III, king of Spain.
- 1606 Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones stage the influential *The Masque of Blackness* in King James' court in London.



## OVERVIEW of Dance

**DEVELOPMENT.** By the early Renaissance dance had flourished in Europe for more than a thousand years. Evidence for medieval dance, though, comes to us primarily from literature and art. With the coming of the Renaissance, new dance manuals appeared in both Italy and Burgundy, the two major centers of courtly dance of the period. In Burgundy, the first of these works was written around 1420, and in Italy somewhat later, in the 1440s. The Italian examples, in particular, show that there was already a high degree of choreographical sophistication in Renaissance dance by this time. The authors of these books were courtly dance masters who lived in the houses of Italy's nobles and who were charged with training noble children and courtiers in the dance steps. These dancing masters also staged elaborate spectacles for Italy's counts and dukes that expressed the rising taste of the period for pageantry and ritual. The dance masters considered their art to be an athletic exercise that displayed a courtier's intellect through his ability to subject the body to the mind. Italy's dance theorists reached back to ancient philosophy—particularly to Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*—to elevate the status of dance into an art, rather than just a mere pastime. By contrast, Burgundian *bassedance* was an elegant form of processional dance that consisted of a rigid vocabulary of walking steps, performed either sideways, backwards, or in a forward direction. Popular at the court of Burgundy, it also spread to England, France, and other northern European regions, its diffusion aided by Burgundy's enviable position as one of the most brilliant courts of fifteenth-century Europe.

**HIGH AND LATE RENAISSANCE DANCE.** The development of dance as a social entertainment continued to expand during the sixteenth century, the period of the High and Late Renaissance. New forms of choreographed dances flourished in the elegant court societies of Italy and Northern Europe, notable now for their complex footwork and relatively rigid upper body positions. The styles, epitomized in the popularity of the

*branze* in France or the Italian *galliard* and *pavan*, owed much to changing fashions in court dress. Men and women now wore corsets that constricted the movements of the torso and the upper body. By contrast, tight leggings for men and women's bell-shaped skirts allowed the feet relatively more freedom to move than had the older long-flowing gowns of the fifteenth century. New types of shoes equipped with soles and heels allowed dancers a greater degree of flexibility on the floor. The dance manuals published at the time reveal an increasingly complex and elaborate language of steps. Jumps, skips, lifts, twirls, stomps, and hops, which had previously been avoided as unseemly and inelegant, came now to play a vital role in social dance. In their manuals, too, dance theorists argued that dancers were reviving the movements of the ancients and experiencing again the dance's power to unite the force of poetry and music to movement. They celebrated dance in ever more elaborate metaphors and imagery and promoted the art as a force for ennobling the human spirit.

**THEATER.** Dance also played a vital role in Renaissance theater, particularly in the spectacles staged in Europe's courts. In Italy, the *intermedi*, or interludes that occurred between the acts of plays, included dances. Since the humanist-influenced theater of the period favored five-act comedies based upon ancient Roman models, there were plenty of opportunities in an evening for dancers to display their skills. Often members of the court danced in these productions, but professional dancers also flourished in Italy's wealthy courts. During a festival of four comedies staged at Ferrara in 1499, more than 140 performers danced the sixteen *intermedi* that occurred between these plays' acts. Throughout the sixteenth century these interludes grew even more complex, mixing together song, poetry, dance, and music in ways that influenced later dramatic forms like the opera and the ballet. In France, the inspiration of Italian *intermedi* combined with older forms of court spectacle to produce the *ballet de cour*, a dance and musical entertainment staged in the royal court. Patronized by the queen regent Catherine de' Medici, the *ballet de cour* made use of a story line and a libretto text, and it enlisted members of the court as its dancers. It included recited poems, musical airs, and a succession of mimed and danced scenes. The English equivalent of the *ballet de cour* and the *intermedi* was the court masque, a form of entertainment that Henry VIII introduced into England from Italian examples in 1512. At these masques, disguised courtiers and professional entertainers rode into a palace's great hall atop an elaborate pageant wagon, and proceeded to present a series of dances and

songs to the court. Even Queen Elizabeth, notable for her restraint in expenditure, paid out generous sums for the celebrations of these masques. During her reign, the genre adopted some of the features of the French *ballet de cour* and the Italian *intermedi*, including the use of a unified story line and of complex and expensive stage machinery. The greatest masques to be celebrated in England were those written by the playwright Ben Jonson and staged by the architect Inigo Jones, which were performed in the early years of the seventeenth century.

**FOLK DANCE.** As the Renaissance matured in the sixteenth century, urban elites developed a dance culture similar to that which flourished in Europe's great courts. Wealthy merchants and political figures in the towns avidly studied the dance manuals of the time, and dance schools allowed them to learn the complex steps that had previously only been taught by resident dance instructors in the palaces of the nobility. As a result, dance became a mark of social distinction among gentlemen and gentlewomen. At the same time the sixteenth century records a rising chorus of complaints about the dances of the lower orders, the urban poor and peasants. Many of the charges made against their dances—that they promoted sexual immorality, that they wasted time, and that they were generally lascivious—had long been leveled against folk dances throughout medieval Europe. It was not until the Reformation and Counter Reformation, however, that religious reformers joined forces with civil magistrates in an effort to try to curb, and sometimes even to prohibit, such dancing. These officials tried to reform the celebration of Carnival, an occasion that frequently erupted into raucous dancing, and to curb the excesses associated with the celebration of the wedding feast, although these efforts were generally unpopular and produced few long-term results. Attitudes towards Europe's folk dances present us with a paradox. On the one hand, civil authorities and religious moralists feared that the dancing of the people was a source of disorder and sexual immorality. On the other hand, nobles and cultivated elites adopted many dances from popular culture, and thus folk forms played a vital role in dance's elevation to one of the "fine arts."

**TOWARD THE FUTURE.** By the conclusion of the Renaissance dance had benefited from at least two centuries of attention from dance masters, theorists, and cultivated elites who perceived in its practice an art form that might ennoble performers and audiences alike. The results of Renaissance innovation had raised the status of dance beyond the role that it had played as a sociable pastime in the Middle Ages to a point from which dance now competed against other art forms, like mu-

sic and the theater, for the attentions of noble patrons. Dance had found its way into the spectacles of court, and in art forms like the *intermedi*, the *ballet de cour*, and the masque, dance had come to play a key role in Renaissance pageantry. These developments paved the way for the rise of the professional ballet in the seventeenth century, an art form that has persisted since that time as a display of beauty, intellect, and sheer athleticism. Dance also had entered into the European imagination as a model of how social relationships might function in an ideal world. In courtesy books, like Thomas Elyot's *Book of the Governor* (1531), European social commentators recommended dance for its ability to teach its participants the disciplines and behaviors necessary for conducting life in a civilized society. Dance also played an important role in the fictions of the era, as dramatists like Shakespeare frequently relied on dance to emphasize key observations in their literary masterpieces. In his popular tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare never let his star-crossed lovers share a dance, foreshadowing their dismal fate, while in his comedy, *Much Ado about Nothing* he underscored the successful resolution of the drama's many plot twists with a dance that began just as the curtain fell. Like Shakespeare, the Elizabethan poet John Davies glorified dance in his popular poem "Orchestra" (1594) as "love's proper exercise," and he described the movements of the planets themselves as a heavenly dance, with the sun, earth, moon, and stars progressing through an elaborate choreography in the heavens to the music of the heavenly spheres. In these ways dance entered into the Western imagination during the Renaissance as a force of civility, sophistication, and human inventiveness, and from this vantage point, the art continued to flourish for centuries to come.

## TOPICS in Dance

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### COURTLY DANCE IN THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

**MEDIEVAL DANCE.** Dance is one of the oldest and most universal of human art forms. European cave art from the Stone Age depicted dancing figures, and dance flourished in the ancient societies of Greece and Rome. The ancient Greek word for poetry, *mousike*, referred to a series of stanzas that were delivered in song while dancing. The art form of dance is unique from the other

Renaissance arts in that the church did not dominate its development, and largely failed in its attempts to regulate it. Although there were some religious dances—particularly as part of the Good Friday celebrations that occurred prior to Easter—dance was largely a secular pastime by the thirteenth century, and every segment of the society participated: peasants, urban townspeople, and courtly societies. Another unique feature of dance was its inability to exist apart from music as an essential part of performance. Changing musical fashions have served to inspire new dance forms on the one hand, but dances have just as easily given rise to new tastes and fashions in music. Medieval sources testify to the vast popularity of dance, although before the fifteenth century no instructional or theoretical manual survives in Europe that allows us to reconstruct medieval dance steps. Our knowledge of the medieval forms of dance that existed in Europe on the eve of the Renaissance comes to us from paintings and frescoes and from literary sources. Two basic forms of dance seem to have been generally performed throughout the Middle Ages, of which there were a number of variations. The first, known as the *carole*, was common in folk and elite society alike, and was a kind of line dancing in which groups of men and women formed linear or circular patterns. Jumps and hops were common to the caroles, although some involved nothing more than a series of relatively peaceful steps. In addition, singing often accompanied the carole, and these songs were either sung in unison or in response to the chants of a leader. The most common kinds of songs to accompany the carole in the later Middle Ages and the early Renaissance were the *virelais*, the *rondeaux*, and the *ballades*. The second form, often referred to in the documents with the French word “danse,” was more elevated and consisted of groups of two or three dancers walking and making a series of elegant steps, struts, and glides. The possibilities of variation were limitless in such dances, and it is for this reason that this form of entertainment flourished in elegant court societies. Many courtly dances appear to have been international and spread from country to country through the efforts of professional entertainers who moved between courts. In France these entertainers were known as *jongleurs* (jugglers) and in German, *spielleute* (players). Jews often played a special role as well, since Jewish entertainers known as *letzim* were prized at court for their knowledge of dance steps. All these figures were itinerant. Traveling from place to place, they entertained nobles with dances, pantomimes, and song, often teaching those in court the latest dance steps. Medieval folk dancing, by contrast, seems to have been subject to a greater degree of regional variation.

**DANCE MASTERS.** The appearance of dance masters in Renaissance Italy reveals a new attitude toward dancing in the great courts of the region. Just how and when the dance masters of the Renaissance appeared cannot be determined, but by the mid-1400s many of Italy’s wealthiest, most powerful noble and merchant families already had a resident dance master. In contrast to the medieval entertainers who had traveled from court to court, the dance masters were permanent members of noble and merchant households. They trained the family in the latest dance steps as well as instructed them in a variety of other skills. They might be best thought of as a kind of physical education instructor, charged with teaching members of the household, not only dance but gymnastics, fencing, riding, and every kind of athletic endeavor. Beyond physical training, dance masters taught the children about manners and deportment (the proper carriage of the body), and they staged entertainments and choreographed dances and spectacles for the court. The variety of their tutoring duties mandated that the dance masters be highly educated figures skilled in the arts of music, painting, sculpture, poetry, mathematics, philosophy, and aesthetics. The appearance of these masters points to a key change between medieval and Renaissance attitudes toward dance. In the Middle Ages dance had been a relatively straightforward pastime that had flourished in court and village societies, usually at the end of the day as a social entertainment that concluded a festival, a hunt, the harvest, or a tournament. Steps had been so simple that most people probably learned them on the spot. In the Italian Renaissance court, though, dance grew more complex, becoming an art form that must be mastered through careful study. In addition, the dance master’s role in teaching skills besides dancing demonstrates the increasingly ritualized and formal character of Renaissance courtly life. Proper manners, good carriage or deportment, and the mastery of a variety of athletic skills were now important signs of social distinction.

**PROMINENT FIGURES.** A lineage of distinguished masters in fifteenth-century Italy flourished from the training of the early dance theorist and master Domenico da Piacenza (c. 1400–c. 1476). Piacenza served for many years in the urbane, sophisticated court of the D’Este family at Ferrara, where he not only taught dance to members of the court, but also choreographed a number of special dances for the family’s entertainments. He was also much in demand elsewhere in Italy, and frequently staged important dance entertainments for the peninsula’s wealthiest families. Sometime around 1445, Piacenza completed his dance manual, *On the Art of*

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE GOLDEN MEAN**

**INTRODUCTION:** Domenico da Piacenza began his *On the Art of Dancing* (1445), the oldest surviving Renaissance dance manual, by treating the theory of dance before outlining its contemporary practices. His opening chapter defended dance against the charge that it wasted time by pointing to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, an ancient work that outlined the doctrine of the "golden mean," the notion that human beings should avoid actions and emotions that are extreme, and instead search for the moderate position. Aristotle also treated dance in the *Ethics* as a way to harness the mind's power over the body, a position that Piacenza also relies upon in his defense.

Thanks to the great and glorious God for the intellects that by his grace are inspired. To Him belongs the honor and glory in all things intellectual and moral. The respectable and noble knight Mister Domenico da Piacenza wishes to petition with great reverence Him who, because of his holy humanism, has always blessed the said practitioner to treat this material to a good end. Although many object to this agile and elegant motion made with great subtlety and effort as one which is a waste of time, the practitioner cites the second [book] of *Ethics*. The author states that all things spoil or go bad if they go astray, that is, to extremes. Being moderate saves one. The wise Aristotle discusses movement well quite a bit in the tenth of *Ethics*. In other parts, even with his sensitivity, he could not draw forth the implications of his bodily motion through space. With *misura* [measure], *memoria* [memory], *agilitate* [agility], *maniera* [grace], *misura di terreno* [balance], aided by placing the body with *fantasmate* [imagination], he argues well that this art is a refined demonstration of as much intellect and effort

one can find. Not that if you perform this motion in the way that you do not go to extremes, I say that this refined art has natural goodness and many things because of its delicateness in its execution.

Note that no creature who has natural defects is capable of this refined motion. He [Aristotle] states that lame, hunch-backed, or maimed people of all callings will not succeed in this. One needs good fortune—which is beauty. The proverb goes, "The one made beautiful by God is not all poor." Nature must grace and sculpt from the foot to the head the practitioner of this art form. But beauty alone is not all required for this refined art.

Note that aside from being blessed by God with a good mind and body, one has to learn to discern the underlying structure of this refined art. He states that the foundation is *misura*, which governs everything quick or slow according to the music. Aside from this, it is necessary to have a large and deep *memoria*, which stores all of the corporal movements—natural and incidental—that are required by all performers depending upon the composition of the dances. Note that aside from all these things, it is necessary to have a refined *agilitate* and physical *maniera*. Note that this *agilitate* and *maniera* under no circumstances should be taken to extremes. Rather, maintain the mean of your movement, that is—not too much nor too little. With smoothness appear like a gondola that is propelled by two oars through waves when the sea is calm as it normally is. The said waves rise with slowness and fall with quickness.

**SOURCE:** Domenico da Piacenza, *On the Art of Dancing in Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music. Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico da Piacenza*. Trans. A. W. Smith (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1995): 11, 13. Annotations by Philip M. Soergel.

*Dancing*, the first theoretical and instructional handbook for the art of dance. For his theory of dance, he drew upon the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle, the text that outlined the doctrine of the "Golden Mean" and whose Tenth Book discussed beauty and pleasure in movement. Similarly, Piacenza advised his readers that dance provided a "refined and delicate demonstration of ... intellect and effort" and he counseled against extremes or jerks in movement. After treating the theory of dance along these Aristotelian grounds, he proceeded to outline the musical meters commonly used in Italy at the time and the various steps needed to perform dances. Piacenza's manner of treating first the theory of dance and then its practice had imitators in the many dance manuals that followed his early hand-

book. Two of these came from the hands of his students, Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro (William the Jew of Pesaro) (c. 1420–1484) and Antonio Cornazano (c. 1430–1484), both of whom were active in courts throughout Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century. Guglielmo Ebreo was much sought after as a dance master. Born a Jew, he converted to Christianity and took the name Giovanni Ambrosio, perhaps to increase his prospects at court. He spent most of his career working as a dance master at the court of the Malatesta family in Pesaro and Rimini, although he also worked for the ruling dynasties of Milan, Ravenna, Naples, Ferrara, Urbino, and Camerino, and for the Medici family at Florence. Ebreo earned special recognition for the quality of dance spectacles he choreographed for weddings, entries, and the

visits of state dignitaries, and his skill in the construction of elaborate entertainments meant that he was very much in demand. In 1463, he completed his own instructional manual on dance, a work that was less theoretical than that of his teacher, Piacenza. Antonio Cornazano, by contrast, was born a nobleman at Piacenza near Milan. Early on, he studied dance with Domenico da Piacenza before joining the Sforza family as a secretary around 1454. In the years that followed he also served as dance master to the young Sforza princess Ippolita, dedicating his first edition of the *Book on the Art of Dancing* to her in 1455. This work, like Ebreo's shows a great debt to the ideas of Cornazano's teacher, Domenico da Piacenza. Together these three treatises inspired many similar works over the following years that discussed both the theory and practice of dance.

**BALLO AND BASSADANZA.** Each of these manuals outlined two types of dance: the *bassadanza* and the *ballo*. The *bassadanza* was the Italian version of the French and Burgundian *bassedance*, although it was significantly different from this Northern European style. In a dance of this type lines or circular groups of dancers performed a series of steps in procession. The word "bassa," meaning "low," reveals one feature of the *bassadanza*: the feet stayed close to the floor. There were, in other words, no leaps or hops worked into the steps and the *bassadanza* was an elegant, if somewhat severe dance. A *ballo* or *ballo*, by contrast, was a highly choreographed dance with a more playful dimension, in which a couple or several couples performed a series of dances involving changes of speed and steps. Oftentimes, *balli* followed a story line, which required a higher level of choreography. A key difference between the *bassadanza* and *ballo* at this time seems to have lain in the music available to each. *Balli* were choreographed for a specific piece of music that fit with the steps of the dance master's choreography. A *bassadanza*, on the other hand, was more often performed with any piece that had a suitable tempo, meter, and length for the steps chosen. Although the dance manuals recommended that all dancers develop a fluid and beautiful line, displays of mere technical prowess on the dance floor were generally discouraged in these manuals. These styles of dance constituted courtly entertainment, and thus the authors advised their aristocratic readers to avoid unseemly movements or specific dances that might tarnish their reputations. The dancer's body should become, these writers observed, an expression of beauty and of the dancer's own intellect. Courtly dance was thus a restrained art, different from the athletic proficiency displayed by professional performers. At the same time all three writers allowed men a greater degree

of flexibility on the dance floor than women. A male dancer's jumps were to be higher and his steps could be ornamented more vigorously. A woman's conduct on the dance floor was expected to be more modest, and although she was always to stand tall, she was expected to keep her eyes downcast as a sign of modesty.

**BURGUNDY.** Unlike Italian court dances of the fifteenth century, which were characterized by great complexity, difficult choreographies, elegant footwork, and other bodily disciplines that expressed the taste of the Renaissance for a language of movement that was refined and difficult to achieve, the styles of dance that flourished in Northern Europe at the time were heavily influenced by the tastes of the court of the Duchy of Burgundy, a powerful territory in the center of Europe. While Burgundian dance was very refined, its steps were simpler and its choreography less difficult to master than the Italian models. It is perhaps for this reason that we find evidence of the appearance of dance masters in Northern Europe much later than in Italy. Burgundy was a territory that was officially subject to the French king, but which had by the end of the fourteenth century acquired a vast amount of land in central and northwestern Europe, including Lorraine, large parts of northern France, and the Netherlands or Low Countries (modern Belgium, Luxembourg, and Holland). These areas included some of the wealthiest commercial centers of Europe, and in the early fifteenth century, Burgundy's style of court life influenced many other European regions. Courts throughout Europe sought out Burgundy's music and musicians, and its dance form—the *bassedance*—affected tastes in dance in places far from the center of Burgundian power.

**BASSEDANCE.** The *bassedance* was a line dance that consisted of only five steps: single steps, double steps, branle, reverence (a bow or curtsy), and reprise. Very strict rules governed the ways in which these steps could be arranged, and dances that followed all these rules were known as common dances. Others that slightly altered these conventions were known as uncommon forms. It is difficult to reconstruct these steps precisely from the few technical descriptions that survive, although artistic evidence does provide some clues. Burgundian dance did not emphasize the technical display of skill, but slow and graceful movements of the feet and the upper body. Like the early Italian *bassadanza*, which had originally been inspired by the Burgundian *bassedance*, this form was to be performed "low," that is, without hops and skips. The elegant, controlled steps allowed the lines of the dancers' bodies and the folds and drape of their clothes to be brilliantly displayed.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### FEMININE MODESTY

**INTRODUCTION:** All writers of dance manuals firmly insisted on a distinction between the sexes in dance. William the Jew, who converted to Christianity and changed his name to Giovanni Ambrosio, was one of the great fifteenth-century Italian dance masters. In his dance treatise, *The Art of Dancing*, he gave these rules to his female readers.

For the young, virtuous woman who delights in learning and understanding such exercise and art, it is necessary to have a rule and manner with much more modesty and honesty than for the man ... Her *movimiento corporeo* [bodily movements] should be humble and controlled, with a worthy and noble body carriage, agile in the feet, and with well-formed gestures. Her eyes should not be arrogant or flighty, looking here or there as many do. Most of the time, they should be honestly glancing at the floor, though the head should not be lowered in the chest, as some do, but should be straight up and corresponding to the body, as nature herself would teach. Her moving should be agile, graceful, and moderate, because when performing a *sempio* [single step] or a *doppio* [double step] she needs to be well adapted. Also for the *riprese* [sideways movements], *continentie* [sideways steps], *riverentia* [curtseys], and *scossi*

[rises] she needs to have a human, gentle, and sweet manner. Her mind should always remain attentive to the harmonies and *misura* [beat of the music] so that her actions and sweet gestures are well composed and correspond to them. At the end of the *ballo* [dance] when left by the man, she turns entirely around to him and with a sweet glance at him performs a compassionate and honest *riverentia* [curtsey] to that of the corresponding man. Then, with a modest attitude she goes to rest, noting the actual defects of others, the correct actions, and the perfect *movimenti* [movements]. If these things are well noted and prudently observed by the young woman, she will be notably adept in the aforesaid art of dancing, worthy of virtuous and commendable fame. So much more, because it is most rare for women to perfectly understand such virtue and art. They use such exercise as a random practice rather than as a science. Some of them often commit errors and oversights and are reprimanded by one who understands. With devoted disposition for their comfort let all attentively read this little work of mine. It will offer them very refined and virtuous fruit.

**SOURCE:** Guglielmo da Pesaro or Giovanni Ambrosio, *The Art of Dancing in Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico da Piacenza*. Trans. A. W. Smith (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1995): 141–142. Italian terms translated by Philip M. Soergel.

Since it was a highly stylized, dance-like procession, its steps involved simple, short movements of the feet, the raising and lowering of the body, and gentle sideways motions. In the final step—the reprise—dancers moved backwards, and great care needed to be taken so that the women did not trip on the elaborate trains popular in Burgundy at the time. The shoes worn at Burgundy's court at the time were known as *poulaine*, and they were long constructions in felt that ended with a high-rising point at the toe. While preventing a great freedom of movement, the *poulaine* allowed the graceful stepping movements typical of the basse dance, and they also accentuated the line of the foot, thus adding to the impression of the dancer's elegance. The range of steps was limited, yet at the same time, modern reconstructions of the Burgundian basse dance have shown that it can be a remarkably expressive form. Like Italian dances, the basse dance inspired its own manuals of instruction, including an anonymous fifteenth-century manuscript written at Brussels around 1420 and a later anonymous dance manual published in Paris in 1488. This later book, *The Art and Instruction of Good Dancing*, con-

tained instructions about the music that should accompany these dances. It stipulated a tenor line for the music above which up to three layers of instruments might improvise harmonies to accompany the dance. Typically, the *sackbut* (an early trombone) played the tenor, while *shawms* (the Renaissance counterpart of the modern oboe) performed the improvised lines.

**OTHER REGIONS.** The Burgundian style of basse dance was already well developed as a form in the early fifteenth century and maintained its popularity in many of the courts of Northern Europe throughout the century. It was performed in France, England, and in certain parts of Germany and Spain at the time. Certainly, other forms of dances may have flourished in Northern European court societies, but the lack of documentation makes it difficult for us to reconstruct many of the precise details of dance in Western Europe during the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century an increase in sources reveals the rising popularity of dance as a form of entertainment as well as its steadily increasing repertory of forms.

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SEE ALSO *Fashion: Early Renaissance Styles*

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## HIGH AND LATE RENAISSANCE COURTLY DANCE

**FASHION.** The styles of courtly dance popular in fifteenth-century Italy and Northern Europe favored restraint in the use of the body. The Burgundian bassedance was intended to be an elegant dance procession that displayed the rich splendor of courtly costumes. Sudden jerks, quick steps, and hops were avoided in favor of an understated repertory of subtle footwork that showed off the long, flowing lines of dancers’ bodies and their costumes. Despite the greater complexity of Italy’s courtly dance, the Italian dancing masters of the time similarly urged restraint in their dance manuals. Changing fashions, both in clothing, shoes, and dance itself, altered the types of movements used in courtly dancing in the sixteenth century. For much of the fifteenth century Burgundian and Italian women’s fashions had favored a long flowing gown under which was worn a simple white chemise. The trains of these creations restricted sideways and backward movements because of the great lengths of material that trailed behind a woman as she moved on the dance floor. At the outset of the sixteenth century the corset came into use and was adopted by both men and women. In women’s dress, its rise to popularity inspired new styles in which the bust line was flattened and the bodice tapered toward the waist in a funnel-like shape. Bulky skirts then flowed from the waist to the floor, often flaring outward into a bell-like shape. The upper portions of both men’s and women’s dress, with their whale-boned corsets, restricted the movements of the torso. The fashion that developed later in the century for ruffled starched collars similarly constricted head movements.

At the same time, the broad, bell-shaped skirts allowed women’s feet to move with relative freedom, as did the tights favored by fashionable courtly men. New styles of shoes, too, allowed greater flexibility in steps. Shoes with soles and heels became common among the nobility, allowing dancers to stomp and stamp their feet and protecting them from splinters and other debris on the floor. Thus while the upper body grew more rigid, the feet at the same time could explore a greater range of movement than before.

**REFINEMENT.** Italian courts continued to lead the way in creating complex social dances in the sixteenth century, and Italy’s dances spread to many Northern European courts. At the very end of the Renaissance three technical manuals published by the great Italian dance masters Fabrizio Caroso (c. 1527–c. 1605) and Cesare Negri (c. 1535–c. 1604) allow us to gauge the changes that had occurred in attitudes toward courtly dance since the fifteenth century. Both Negri and Caroso laid incredible stress on the proper execution of steps, setting down a large number of rules for the proper performance of each. Caroso continually warned his readers about the possible pitfalls that existed in each dance step, and he spent a large amount of his treatise cautioning his readers about proper deportment at a ball. In addition, he prescribed how men and women should treat their dance accessories—swords, gloves, handkerchiefs, fans and so forth—so that all their movements at a ball were closely choreographed. This increasing emphasis on social refinement was partially inspired by the humanist fashion for Antiquity, as writers like Negri and Caroso argued that modern dance revived the virtues of movement of the ancient Greeks and Romans. In his dance manual, *Love’s Graces*, published in 1602, Cesare Negri contrasted the art of dancing with another popular courtly pursuit: jousting. Jousting, he argued, was the provenance of the ancient god Mars, while the goddess Venus ruled over the dance floor. In his two popular treatises on dancing, *The Ballerina* (1581) and *The Nobility of Ladies*, Caroso gave ancient Latin names—drawn from the poetry of Ovid and Vergil—to the new dances he created. The styles outlined in Caroso’s and Negri’s works were more elaborate than ever before and were now choreographed for groups of up to four couples. Many new steps, too, had been added to the dancing repertoire. In addition to the traditional walking and running steps, bows and reprise steps (which were performed backwards) new foot crossings, leg raisings, and swings flourished, as did vigorous foot stomping. Single-sex dances and solo dances thrived in the period, and many of the new complex

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***BEHAVIOR ON THE DANCE FLOOR**

**INTRODUCTION:** Fabritio Caroso published *The Nobility of Ladies*, a dance manual, in 1600 at Venice. The work expanded upon another manual he had published about two decades before. In the *Nobility*, he included dialogues between a dance master and a gentleman disciple in which he set out rules for conduct at balls. His style was lively, and he left nothing to chance, as this exchange over the matter of a man's gloves and cape shows.

**Disciple:** Please Master, I pray you to teach me the gentleman's comportment at a party.

**Master:** I will do so, if you are patient. Let me say, then, that there are some gentlemen who go to parties wearing gloves so tightfitting that, upon being invited to dance by the ladies, and preparing to take hands, they must take more time than an 'Ave Maria' to remove [them]; and if they do not succeed with their hands, they even use their teeth! When they do this some accidentally drop their capes (or riding cloaks). This also pays little honour to the lady who has invited one, by making her wait so long. It is better, then, to wear gloves that are fairly loose rather than too tight, for on occasion I have seen [a gentleman] on trying to remove them with his teeth, who has had one finger of the glove left in his

mouth, while all in attendance at the party laughed at this behaviour.

**Disciple:** Is there anything else you wish to advise me of, Sir?

**Master:** Yes, of course. Let me say, then, that there are others who, while dancing a grave dance, or promenading with a lady, take one side of their cape in their left hands and put it over their left shoulders, leaving the other [end] hanging down so far that it trails along the ground, which is awkward and doesn't look well; for though ladies are permitted to trail their dresses, or trains (if you will), this is not suitable for a gentleman. There are still others who wear their [cloaks] even more improperly while dancing, for they wrap themselves up as if swaddled, which has two unfortunate consequences; first, that they cover their swordhilts; and the other is that the swords are so obstructed that if they should be needed, they could not be [got at], thereby endangering their lives, which is a bad and perilous habit. So I advise you to wear your cape, or any mantle with which you cover yourself, in the style I have shown you above, and always to shun this bad behaviour since it displeases everyone, and could cause the entire company to ridicule you.

**SOURCE:** Fabritio Caroso, *The Nobility of Ladies*. Trans. J. Sutton (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 135–136.

creations choreographed by the dancing masters of the High Renaissance bore elaborate titles and were dedicated to noble patronesses.

**NEW FORMS.** One of the most popular dances to flourish in the sixteenth century was the *branle*, a couple's dance that had originated in France, but which soon spread to most of Europe. Branles developed out of the sideways steps that were prescribed in fifteenth-century *bassedances*. In his dance treatise, *Orchesographie* (1588), Thoinot Arbeau outlined three kinds of branles that were practiced at the time. These included the simple branle, which consisted of either single or double sideways steps; the mixed branle, which included hops on one leg; and the mimed branle, which incorporated the steps of the other two but also required that performers mime facial gestures and hand movements. Here the *Washerwoman's Branle* and the *Maltese Branle* were among the most popular forms. The boisterousness of the branle form, which evolved over time to include foot stomping, hand clapping, and other exaggerated pantomimes, helped to sustain the dance's popularity throughout the sixteenth

century. Not all observers, though, found the style worthy of inclusion in court balls. In his famous conduct manual, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), Baldassare Castiglione warned courtiers and princes against performing the branle in public, arguing that its extremes of motions were not compatible with the decorum necessary for court life. The branle style seems to have been resisted in England for a time, where its English term—the brawl—suggests some of the noisome and “peasant” qualities associated with the dance. In both Italy and England, though, the branle established itself as a popular court entertainment throughout Europe after 1550. In his dance treatises written in 1602, Cesare Negri included several late sixteenth-century examples of branle or *brando* as they were known in Italy, that had been performed in some of the most elevated court circles of the peninsula.

**GALLIARD AND PAVAN.** By far one of the most difficult dances that flourished in the sixteenth-century court was the *galliard*. Of Italian origin, it quickly spread to almost every corner of the continent. Within the



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A PERFECT UNION**

**INTRODUCTION:** The English gentleman Thomas Elyot modeled his conduct book, *The Book of the Governor* (1531), on Baldassare Castiglione's famous *The Book of the Courtier*. While Elyot wrote for an elite reader, his work was notable for disseminating the ideas of civility and courtly manners among the English gentry (a wealthy, but non-aristocratic class of wealthy landowners and commercial figures). Elyot's book also included one of the most enthusiastic endorsements of the art of dance in the sixteenth century. For several pages he catalogued the virtues that accrued to those who mastered its complexities, showing the gravity with which Renaissance thinkers considered the art form. In the following excerpt, he celebrates dance's power to achieve a perfect marriage of the contrasting natures of men and women. In dance, he argued, the ideals of the sacrament of matrimony were actually achieved. Each sex on its own is incomplete before the dance, but when joined in its artful motions, their natural qualities are brought into the perfection of the "golden mean."

But now to my purpose. In every dance of a most ancient custom, a man and a woman dance together, holding each other by the hand or the arm, which betokens concord. Now it behooves the dancers, and also their audience, to know all the qualities incident to a man, and also all the qualities that also pertain to a woman.

A man in his natural perfection is fierce, hardy, strong in opinion, covetous of glory, desirous of knowl-

edge, hungers to reproduce his likeness. The good nature of a woman is mild, timorous, tractable, benign, with a good memory, and modest. Certainly, many other qualities of each [of the sexes] might be identified, but these are the most apparent, and for our purposes sufficient.

Therefore, when we behold a man and a woman dancing together, let us suppose there is a concord of all these said qualities, being joined together, as I have set them here in order. And the moving of the man is more vehement, while the woman is more delicate, and she moves with less advancing of the body. These [qualities] signify the courage and strength that ought to be in a man, and the pleasant soberness that should be in a woman. And in this wise fierceness, joined with mildness, severity is formed. Audacity with temerity produces magnanimity; willful opinion and tractability (which is to be shortly persuaded and moved [by the dance]) makes constancy a virtue. [Man's] search for glory adorned with [a woman's] benign nature produces honor. [His] desire for knowledge combined with woman's good memory procures Wisdom. [Women's] modesty joined to the [male] appetite for generation makes continence, which is a mean between Chastity and inordinate lust. These qualities, in this wise being knit together, and signified in the personages of man and woman dancing, do express or set out the figure of very nobility, which in the higher estate it is contained [there], the more excellent is this virtue's estimation.

**SOURCE:** Thomas Elyot, *The Booke Named the Governor* (London, 1531): L1v–L2r. Text modernized by author.

galliard, the male dancer makes a series of five jumps, shifting his weight back and forth from side to side. This feat must be performed within a musical interval of six beats. More complex and difficult jumping patterns were also common in the galliard, allowing dancers at court to demonstrate their prowess on the dance floor in a way that had generally been avoided in the more restrained fifteenth century. In his *Orchesographie* (1588) Thoinot Arbeau included a number of variations on the basic galliard as well as some choreographies that linked together two five-jump variations into an even longer eleven-step variation. By contrast, the *pavan* was more restrained and dignified. It consisted of two single steps walked forward, followed by a double step. Of Italian origin, the pavan was first mentioned in texts in the early sixteenth century. Its name may derive from the Latin word for the city of Padua, or from the Spanish word for a peacock's tail. The pavan was in many respects similar to the

bassedance styles that had flourished in fifteenth-century northern Europe in its restraint and use of staid and grand music.

**ALLEMANDE.** Little is known about the origins of this form, although the dance's name, the French word for "German," suggests that its origins may lie in Germany. Some have suggested that it developed as a German form of the bassedance. By 1550, the *allemande* was considered its own independent dance form. In this dance a group of couples stand beside one another and fall into a procession that moves across the dance floor. At the other end of the floor each male partner turns his female partner, and the progress is repeated in the opposite direction. By the end of the sixteenth century the allemande had grown more complex with small jumps or leg lifts worked into some of its surviving choreographies. The allemande's music witnessed a long life. The surviving music composed for the dance in the sixteenth



Dancers performing the galliard, from Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchesographie*. HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

century shows that the form was innovative in its exploration of changes in tonality as well as tempo. It is perhaps for this reason that allemandes continued to be written as music long after the popularity of the dance had faded on the ballroom floor.

**OTHER FORMS.** The great popularity of dance as an entertainment in the High and Late Renaissance court gave rise to an almost infinite number of styles. There were couple's dances like the *volta* in which the dancers held themselves in a tight embrace, moving around the dance floor. At regular intervals in the *volta* the man thrust his female partner high into the air by grabbing her firmly at the back, and the couple then performed a series of turns in this position. Considered obscene by some authorities, the dance was banned for a time in early seventeenth-century France during the reign of Louis XIII. Its freedom of movement and athleticism, however, inspired its popularity, and the dance spread far from its origins in the southern French region of Provençale. The *chiarentana*, by contrast, was an elaborate figure dance preceded by a staged chase in which men picked their female partners. The dance that followed made use of complex patterns of line dancing, reels, and figure eights that some authorities, including the great dance expert Fabrizio Caroso, found confusing and difficult to perform. Simpler and easier to learn were the "country dances," figure dances that flourished in the courts and noble households of France and England at the time and which harked back to rural line dances and earlier bassedance forms. Similar to modern square dancing, the country dances might be learned quickly,

since only the first couple that stood at the head of the line needed to be certain of the various steps that were to be performed for the dance to begin. Others might learn the dance merely by imitating the actions of the first couple.

**DANCE MUSIC.** The writers of dance manuals had usually informed their readers about the kinds of musical meters used to perform particular dances, often even including tunes in their guidebooks for performance. Printed music became more popular in the sixteenth century, giving us a clearer glimpse of the kinds of dance music that flourished at the time. The first printed collections of dance music issued from the houses of Ottaviano de Petrucci at Venice and Robert Attaignant in Paris in the early sixteenth century. Printed music was an expensive commodity and thus was likely only to have been used in the wealthiest noble houses and merchant families of the time. Most collections were scored for lute (the most common household instrument), for the keyboard, or for small ensembles of wind and brass instruments. Throughout the sixteenth century printed dance music grew more popular, and toward the end of the century printed dance music popularized dance suites that had been recently performed in some of Europe's greatest households. These dance suites were often specially written to accompany highly choreographed "ballets" created by dance masters in these courts.

**IMPLICATIONS.** The wealth of dance forms that flourished in the sixteenth century points to the rising



Portrait of Cesare Negri from the frontispiece of his dance manual *Nuove inventioni di balli*. AMERICAN MEMORY/THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

importance that dance played as a marker of social distinction and cultivation in courtly societies at the time. In the dance manuals of Italy and France, theorists like Negri, Caroso, and Arbeau celebrated the art as a sign of the era's kinship with classical Antiquity, and they left little to chance in the choreographies and recommendations that they prescribed to their readers. Dance as an art form had clearly come of age in Renaissance courts, and the clear distinctions of genres and forms that developed at the time expressed the era's determination to mold the actions of the body to the creative impulses of the human mind.

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SEE ALSO *Fashion: High and Late Renaissance Fashion*; *Music: Sixteenth-Century Achievements in Secular Music*

## THEATRICAL DANCE

**TYPES.** Dance played a vital role in Renaissance theater. In Italy, troupes of *Commedia dell'Arte* performers relied on songs and dances to break up the action of their improvised comedies. Dances and musical interludes became a feature of the intermissions of the early professional theaters common in Europe's largest cities during the sixteenth century. The surviving sources, though, give little information about the kinds of dances that were performed in these circumstances. In aristocratic society, by contrast, dance flourished as an important component of court spectacles and was well recorded in the documents of the period. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a steady increase in the theatricality of these entertainments, as kings and princes competed with each other to create ever more elaborate spectacles. Such entertainments were almost always undertaken with the purpose of demonstrating a prince's power and wealth to foreign visitors. Diplomatic visits, dynastic marriages, and ceremonies of royal entry were just a few of the many important political occasions for which elaborate spectacles were mounted. Dance played a key role in these celebrations, and its popularity in the Renaissance provided a constant source of employment for the prominent dance masters of the day who choreographed these productions.

**BANQUETS.** During the fifteenth century Europe's nobles marked important occasions with "theme" banquets. The rise of these great feasts can be traced to the Duchy of Burgundy, which influenced aristocratic tastes throughout Europe in these years. Philip the Good, who served as Duke of Burgundy between 1423 and 1467, established a court life notable for its lavish display and intricate rituals. In 1430, Philip founded an order of nobility on the occasion of his marriage to Isabella of Portugal. This Order of the Golden Fleece was intended to promote chivalry and to mediate disputes between nobles. With the fall of Byzantium to the Turks in 1453, however, Philip devised a plan to use the order to promote a new crusade that might wrest the Holy Land from Islamic control. At his famous "Feast of the Pheasant," held in 1454, Philip announced his vow to un-

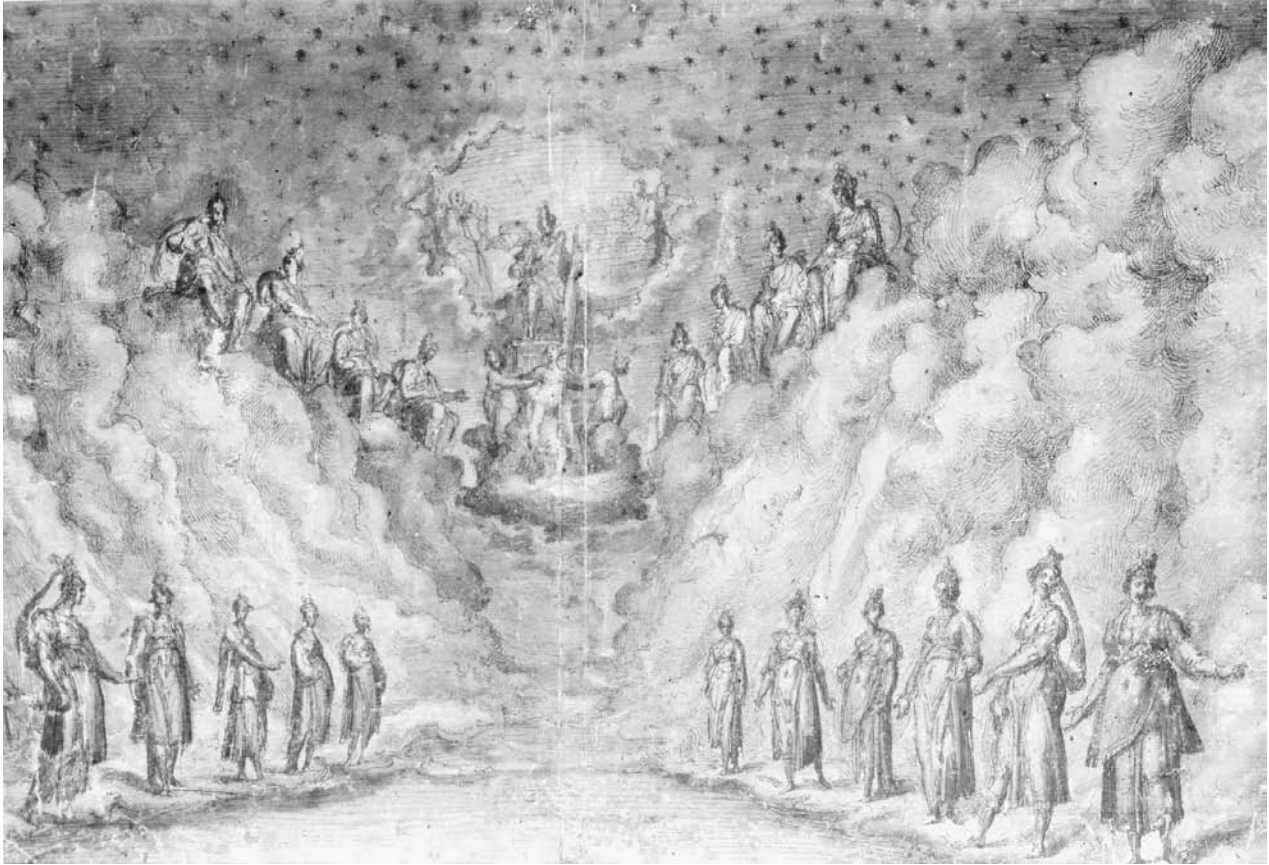


Marguerite de Valois dancing the volta at court. © GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

dertake the campaign and encouraged other members of the Golden Fleece to follow suit. The evening's festivities soon became famous throughout European aristocratic society and set a bar that later Renaissance princes tried to surpass. As Philip's disguised guests arrived in the hall, they encountered elaborate *entremets* or sculpted concoctions of food that adorned the tables. Originally, such platters had consisted of nuts and other lighter fare that guests consumed between the feast's courses. Philip's ingenious chefs, though, had created *entremets* in which ships sailed, a working pipe organ played music to accompany a celestial choir, and animals engaged in combat. As the banquet proceeded, living *entremets*, consisting of acrobatic acts, dances, and musical performances, also entertained the guests between the feast's courses. At the end of the banquet Philip announced his vow to retake the Holy Land in a highly staged manner,

and he encouraged his fellow members of the Order to follow suit. A ball concluded the festivities.

**INTERMEDI.** Pantomime, dances, and songs performed in the space between a banquet's courses flourished in the wake of the *Feast of the Pheasant*. In Italy these interludes, known as *intromesse* (the origin of our modern English word "intermission") or *intermedi* soon came to be used not only in banquets but in theatrical performances in the space between the acts of plays performed in Italian courts. The dancing of a *moresca* was among the most common type of interlude used at the time. The *moresca* was an exotic dance that took its name from the Italian word for "moorish." Often participants blackened their faces and attached bells to their clothing in imitation of the North African and Spanish Moors. *Morescas* often had a loose plot narrative in which a Moor threatened a fool dressed as a woman. Sexual



Engraving of the set and costume designs used in the first intermedio of the comedy *La Pellegrina*. ART RESOURCE.

overtones and whirling, seemingly ecstatic movements were common to the *morescas*, and for this reason, the dance was often entrusted to professionals, who would not be embarrassed by performing such exotic actions. In his *Book of the Courtier*, for instance, Baldassare Castiglione recommended that no prince be seen dancing a *moresca* in public since its suggestive movements and themes were incompatible with his dignity. By 1500, the popularity of the *moresca* as a form of theatrical dance was well established throughout Italy, and the rising fashion for Antiquity prompted dancers to adopt the seductive imagery of the *moresca* to story lines that they drew from ancient mythology and pastoral poetry. At Ferrara, these dance interludes first flourished in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. At the time the D'Este family who ruled the city favored five-act comedies written in the style of the ancient Latin dramatists Plautus and Terence, thus providing four opportunities between the acts for dancers to perform. These interludes usually bore little relationship to the plays themselves, and the dances and other entertainments that occurred between the acts were intended to be mere diversions while the actors prepared for the next act. Over time, intermedi were some-

times added before and after the performance and there were attempts to rely upon the interlude to establish an atmosphere for the play itself. The purpose of the intermedi, though, was always to entertain, and their popularity soon rivaled that of the plays themselves. During 1499, for example, 133 actors performed four plays staged at the court of Ferrara, while 144 performers danced the sixteen *moresca* interludes that occurred between these plays' acts. During the sixteenth century the great popularity of dance in court life encouraged the custom's rapid adoption in palaces throughout Italy and Europe.

**DEVELOPMENT.** The dancing of *moresca* continued to flourish in the interludes popular in sixteenth-century Italy, but a great variety of musical forms and pantomimes also developed. The singing of madrigals was soon to be adopted in these interludes, and in Florence and other Italian cities the most extravagant stagings of intermedi were usually reserved for the celebration of important dynastic weddings. For the marriage celebrations of Cosimo de' Medici to Elenore of Toledo in 1539, specially composed madrigals and dance music were used



Portrait of Catherine de' Medici, queen of France.  
© BETTMANN/CORBIS.

to stage six interludes for a comedy: four for the spaces between the acts and one each at the beginning and end of the play. Each of the interludes was carefully crafted to enhance the evening's overarching message: that the union of Cosimo and his bride Elenore was to give birth to a new Augustan Golden Age in Florence. That evening, though, the play came to a quiet and serene ending, and the producers of the entertainment feared that its conclusion might disappoint the audience. Thus the final concluding intermedi of the performance consisted of 20 performers who entered the stage to sing and dance an elaborate Bacchanalian rite. Experiments with interludes like these, then, contributed to the development of the modern musical theater, and they continued in Florence during the rest of the sixteenth century. The genre had an important impact on the development of opera, a form that emerged in the city during the final years of the sixteenth century. Concluding "ballets," similar to that staged at the performance marking the marriage of Cosimo de' Medici, became a popular feature of these early performances.

**BALLET DE COUR.** In France, the popularity of these interludes combined with a native tradition of court *fêtes* or festivities that had long been staged around

a central theme. Together the two forms of the intermedi and *fête* inspired a new genre that came to be known as the *ballet de cour* or "court ballet." The ballet de cour became a popular dance entertainment in the royal court during the final decades of the sixteenth century. Members of the royal family commissioned the poetry and music for these events, and the productions made use of elaborate stage machinery and sumptuous costumes. The court ballet was very much influenced by the ideas of the French Academy of Poetry and Music, which had been established in 1570 by Jean-Antoine de Baïf. De Baïf was interested in reviving the powerful union he believed had existed in the ancient world between poetry and music. Members of the academy strove to write poetry and music that made use of the ancient metrical modes, thus hoping to deepen music's power to influence the human spirit. The curiosity the academy bred also inspired investigations into ancient dance, and members of the academy soon experimented with performances staged to their rhythmical songs. Catherine de' Medici, the regent of France and later Queen Mother, supported these innovations, and frequently included choreographed dances in the festivities she staged at court. Under her influence and patronage, the ballet de cour flowered in the years around 1580. The genre wedded fantastic stage effects with instrumental and vocal music, poetry, and dancing. The first *ballet de cour* to rely on an integrated and dramatically effective libretto was *Circe, or the Comic Ballet of the Queen*, which was produced in Paris in 1581. The story retold the ancient tale of Circe, daughter of Perseus and the Sun, who lured men to ruin through their passions. In the end, though, human reason triumphs over the weaknesses of passion, and rationality succeeds in destroying Circe's power. It is because of this plot, a story in which order is brought out of chaos, that the ballet was termed a "comedy." The subject matter—the relative power of reason and the passions—was to recur many times in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French literature. Yet as it was conceived in the *Comic Ballet of the Queen*, the triumph of reason was also intended to glorify the French monarchy. The work's poetry and art drew frequent parallels between rationality and its French champion, the reigning monarch Henri III, and it glorified the harmony his rule bred in France. In the coming years the optimism of such sentiments proved misplaced as France descended ever deeper into the malaise of religious civil war at the end of the sixteenth century. Despite these troubles, ballets de cour remained popular in these years, but none of the successive works rose to the artistic level of the early *Comic Ballet of the Queen*. As the seventeenth century approached, though, the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A MASQUE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In the Tudor and Stuart court in England masques often marked the Christmas celebrations, especially the final concluding or “Twelfth Night” of those festivities. Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones mounted the most sumptuous of these masques in 1605, *The Masque of Blackness*. Jones, an architect, designed the sets for the masque, which made use of innovations in stage machinery and set design of the French *ballet de cour*. Jonson included this description of the sets in his prologue to the printed edition of the masque. The masque is notable for its rich mixture of poetry, song, and dance, a development inspired by the revival of antiquity that the Renaissance initiated.

First, for the scene, was drawn a landscape consisting of small woods, and here and there a void place filled with huntings; which falling, an artificial sea was seen to shoot forth, as if it flowed to the land, raised with waves which seemed to move, and in some places the billows to break, as imitating that orderly disorder which is common in nature. In front of this sea were placed six tritons, in moving and sprightly actions, their upper parts human, save that their hairs were blue, as partaking of the sea-color: their desinent parts fish, mounted above their heads, and all varied in disposition. From their backs were borne out certain light pieces of taffeta, as if carried by the wind, and their music made out of wreathed shells. Behind these, a pair of sea-maids, for song, were as conspicuously seated; between which, two great sea-horses, as big as the life, put forth themselves, the one mounting aloft, and writhing his head from the other, which seemed to sink forward; so intended for variation, and that the figure behind might come off better: upon their backs, Oceanus and Niger were advanced. Oceanus presented in a human form, the color of his flesh blue; and shadowed with a robe of sea-green; his head gray, and horned, as he is described by the ancients: his beard of the like mixed color: he was garlanded with algae, or sea-grass; and in his hand a trident. Niger, in form and color of an Æthiop; his hair and rare beard curled, shadowed with a blue and bright mantle: his front, neck, and wrists

adorned with pearl, and crowned with an artificial wreath of cane and paper-rush.

These induced the masquers, which were twelve nymphs, negroes, and the daughters of Niger; attended by so many of the Oceaniæ, which were their light-bearers. The masquers were placed in a great concave shell, like mother of pearl, curiously made to move on those waters and rise with the billow; the top thereof was stuck with a chevron of lights, which indented to the proportion of the shell, struck a glorious beam upon them, as they were seated, one above another: so they were all seen, but in an extravagant order.

On sides of the shell did swim six huge sea-monsters, varied in their shapes and dispositions, bearing on their backs the twelve torch-bearers, who were planted there in several graces; so as the backs of some were seen; some in purple, or side; others in face; and all having their lights burning out of whelks, or murex-shells.

The attire of the masquers was alike in all, without difference: the colors azure and silver; but returned on the top with a scroll and antique dressing of feathers, and jewels interlaced with ropes of pearl. And for the front, ear, neck, and wrists, the ornament was of the most choice and orient pearl; best setting off from the black.

For the light-bearers, sea-green, waved about the skirts with gold and silver; their hair loose and flowing, garlanded with sea-grass, and that stuck with branches of coral. These thus presented, the scene behind seemed a vast sea, and united with this that flowed forth, from the termination, or horizon of which (being the level of the state, which was placed in the upper end of the hall) was drawn by the lines of perspective, the whole work shooting downwards from the eye; which decorum made it more conspicuous, and caught the eye afar off with a wandering beauty: to which was added an obscure and cloudy night-piece, that made the whole set off.

**SOURCE:** Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness*, in *The Works of Ben Jonson*. (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Co., 1853): 660–661.

conventions that governed these ballets’ performances became ever firmer. Members of the court danced in the productions and played characters in the various scenes, while in the final choreographed dance, the *grand seigneurs* or “peers of the realm” participated. At least once each year the king danced in the finale of a ballet de cour, establishing a tradition of royal performance that lasted into the early years of the reign of Louis XIV

(r. 1643–1715). The genre, with its mixture of music, poetry, and dance, had a profound impact on the emergence of both opera and ballet as independent art forms in seventeenth-century France.

**MASQUES.** Dance figured prominently in a final category of court entertainments popular in England, which became known as “masques.” The development of masques was long and complex. In late-medieval Eng-

land professional actors and dancers known as mummers regularly visited the houses of the nobility in disguises to perform for members of the household. These mummers performed elaborate dance pantomimes, and while festive social dances sometimes concluded these events, the professionals did not mingle or dance with the noble audience. In 1512, Henry VIII introduced a new kind of *masquerie* into England that was inspired by Italian examples. The king and revelers—all in disguise—surprised members of the court, danced and sang, and, in a break with tradition, recruited volunteers from the audience to participate with them. In the course of the sixteenth century, these masques at court grew increasingly formalized. One force that aided in their rising popularity was the establishment of the Master of the Revels in 1545, the chief Tudor official responsible for supervising entertainments at court. The Master appointed the poet George Ferrars to serve as the court's official "Lord of Misrule," and during his tenure, Ferrars staged a number of fantastic masques with odd-sounding titles, including *The Masque of Covetous Men with Long Noses* and *The Masque of Cats*. Mounting such productions was costly. At first, masques only required an elaborate pageant wagon, which served as their principal set. The performers rode atop this wagon as it was wheeled into the hall in which the masque was to be performed. Over time, though, English spectacles adopted the expensive costumes and elaborate stage machinery typical of Italian intermedii and French ballets de cour. Despite Queen Elizabeth I's thriftiness, she doled out large sums for the celebration of the masques, and she participated in them on many occasions. They often marked Twelfth Night, the concluding festivities of the annual Christmas celebrations. During Elizabeth's reign (r. 1559–1603), the English court masque also adopted the unified themes and high quality literary texts that were typical of the intermedii and ballets de cour. Masques were also celebrated, not only at court, but in the Inns of Court, the four legal societies in London. The greatest English masques—notable for their high literary quality, fusion of music and dance with poetry, and elaborate architectural stage effects—were mounted in the first decades of the seventeenth century during the reign of Elizabeth's successor James I (1603–1625). The playwright Ben Jonson (1572–1637) and the architect Inigo Jones (1573–1652) joined forces in these years to produce high-quality works that influenced all court entertainments during James's reign. Jones served as set designer, importing innovations in stage machinery from the continent and adapting them for use in the masques. The production that Jones and Jonson mounted in 1605, *The Masque of Blackness*, influenced the style of a number of

other Stuart-age poets who wrote for the masque, including Thomas Campion, Thomas Middleton, and William Rowley.

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SEE ALSO *Theater: Theater in the Later Middle Ages; Theater: The Renaissance Theater in Italy*

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#### FOLK DANCING IN EUROPE

**PROBLEM.** The development of the office of dance master and the circulation of dance manuals in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries aided the rise of courtly dance as an art form. Court pageants, ballets de cour, masques, and intermedii were all well documented in the artistic records of the period, allowing for the reconstruction of these festivities in which dance played a central role. These increasingly complex and highly choreographed events spurred dance's rise to one of the "fine arts" in the seventeenth century, as ballet and other forms of cultivated dance eventually became professional endeavors for which long periods of training and athletic development were necessary. We are less informed, however, about the kinds of dances that were performed by the lower orders of urban people and rural peasants. Certainly dance played a crucial function in these strata of society. It was a vastly popular entertainment, recorded in literary and artistic sources. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century engravings as well as the paintings of artists like Pieter Bruegel frequently depict dancing at peasant festivals and weddings. The sermons and moral tracts of both Catholic and Protestant religious reformers constantly criticized this popular dancing, attacking it as an evil that led to lasciviousness and sexual promiscuity. Europe's princes and magistrates often tried to limit the lengths of wedding feasts, which sometimes included up to three days of dancing and revelry. At the same time the dances of the countryside inspired dancing masters and courtiers as they fashioned new dances



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A PLEA FOR RULES**

**INTRODUCTION:** The dance masters of the Renaissance frequently criticized the absence of rules in popular dance. Thoinot Arbeau wrote his *Orchesography* for cultivated urban people, hoping to foster a strict understanding of the rules of the dance. The text was written, like many of the dance manuals, as a dialogue between the master, in this case Arbeau, and the student, named Capriol or Caper. Capriol at one point asks about the proper performance of the galliard, a court dance that sprang from folk roots. Arbeau criticizes the way in which the dance is being practiced in the cities of his time, and instead makes a plea for a strict interpretation of the dance's traditional courtly rules. In point of fact, however, the free-flowing way in which he describes the dance being performed in his own time may lie closer to the dance's true roots. While Arbeau is critical of popular practice of the dance, and tries to foster a "courtly style," his comments are interesting because he realizes that all dances change over time.

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**SOURCE:** Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesography*. Trans. M. S. Evans (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967): 76–77.

throughout the Renaissance. The *branle*, or brawl as it was known in English, had originally been one of the steps of the Burgundian *bassedance*. During the sixteenth century, though, it was expanded to include a number of elements drawn from the dancing of French peasants, including hand-clapping, facial gestures, hops, skips, and jumps. Even though cultivated aesthetes like Baldassare Castiglione implicitly criticized the dancing of the lower orders of society as rambunctious and lacking in refinement, the court society longed for the livelier rhythms and forthright gestures of popular dance.

**CITIES.** Perhaps nowhere were the dancing styles more varied and complex than in Europe's cities. Here elites imitated the dances of the European courts, while the lower orders of society continued to use dance forms that were popular in the countryside. Accounts from ur-

ban society, too, point to a great innovation in the cities, as urban dancers experimented with new forms that were often perceived by moralists to be sexually suggestive. Courtly patterns of dance first influenced urban elites through printed dance manuals. In 1488, an anonymous dance manual, *The Art and Instruction of Good Dancing*, was printed in Paris. Unlike the elaborate theoretical manuals of dance that were being written for Italian aristocrats at the time, this manual was more pragmatic than theoretical and was designed for urban burghers who were interested in mastering the techniques of dance. Other practical manuals intended for city elites anxious to develop their skills on the ballroom floor soon followed in England, Germany, and Italy. While the great dancing masters of the Renaissance worked primarily in courtly society, dance schools began to appear throughout Europe during the sixteenth century for anyone who



Examples of peasant dance in Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting *Wedding Dance in the Open Air*. © FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

could afford the tuition. By 1533, the first laws were enacted in England to regulate the new dancing schools. Somewhat later, the City of London granted a monopoly over the instruction of dance within its boundaries to three dancing instructors. At about the same time, two types of dance schools flourished in Lisbon, Portugal: those that taught the whirling, ecstatic style of the *morescas*, and others that instructed in the more restrained courtly forms. A number of Spaniards also flocked to Italy to learn dancing technique from figures like Cesare Negri. Returning home, they opened their own schools in cities throughout the peninsula, but especially in the capital Madrid and the important provincial city of Seville, which were populated with a large number of dance schools by the late sixteenth century. In his important dance treatise, *The Charms of Love* (1602), Negri mentioned more than forty men who had trained in Italy before establishing their own schools or winning court positions throughout Europe. Through

these new dance schools the techniques and forms of elegant dancing that had flourished in Europe's courts during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries spread far beyond the confines of castles and palaces. In the late Renaissance this refined style now became a mark of social distinction among the upper and middle ranks of urban society as well.

**PEASANT DANCES.** The artistic evidence that survives of rural society suggests that different patterns of dancing prevailed in the countryside and among many of the lower orders in the cities. The French engraver, Théodore de Bry, completed a series of engravings documenting the styles of dance in use in sixteenth-century Europe. His *Dance of Lords and Ladies* showed cultivated couples arranged in the stylized poses recommended in the elite dancing manuals of the period. By contrast, his *Peasants' Dance* showed wild and raucous movements, with couples hopping and springing, men lifting their women high off the ground, and couples

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE EVILS OF DANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** During the sixteenth century both Catholic and Protestant reformers stepped up attacks on dance and even tried to eliminate dancing, particularly the kind of folk dance that occurred in connection with weddings and peasant festivals. In 1581, Thomas Lovell, a Puritan minister in London, published a short dialogue about the evils of dance, entitled *A Dialogue Between Custome and Veritie Concerning the Uses and Abuses of Dance*. It was typical of the many pamphlets that circulated in sixteenth-century Europe attacking dance. In the dialogue, the figure of Custom continually defends dance by recourse to traditional arguments, i.e., dance increases sociability, it provides a way for men and women to meet one another, and so on. Verity, on the other hand, launches bitter attacks like that which follows on the evils of dance.

**Custom:** But some reply what fool would dance  
if that when dance is done  
He may not have at lady's lips  
What dance hath for him won.

**Verity:** By this their minds they utter plain:  
To feed their fancy and their lust  
Not God in mind to keep.  
Such dancing where both men and maids  
together trace and turn,  
Stirs up the flesh to Venus' games,  
causes men with lust to burn.  
If we the living God do fear,  
and dread his laws to break,  
what so might move us until evil  
we should nay do nor speak.  
So if the causes we cut out,  
the effect we take away.  
Our holy life our loving Lord,  
better serve we may.  
Lest I alone with dance do fight  
this battle should be thought,  
out of the works of worthy men  
let's see what may be brought.  
Sirach, that sage in chapter ninth  
this counsel doth he give:  
In company with dancing dame,  
see that thou doth not live,  
Gaze not upon her beauty brave,  
hear not her mermaid's noise,  
Lest thou be snared, and lest that she  
enchant thee with her voice.

Bishop (Saint) Augustine were wont  
vain dances to reprove.  
But they are now so far from it,  
they that to dance do love.  
Better (he saith) that on Sabbath's rest,  
if were all day to ditch,  
Then on that day to be defiled  
with dancing as with pitch.  
Dancing is a flattering devil,  
a poison fire, destroying them  
that take delight therein.  
Oh, would that men their sins could see,  
how dance do them defile:  
Though pricked in pride and garnished gay,  
and they like wanton's smile.  
And Chrysostom, that golden mouth,  
for so his name may spell,  
where he of Jacob's wedding writes  
this doth he plainly tell:  
Weddings, thou hearest that thou might  
no wanton dancing hear,  
might it which dances diabolical  
he plainly calleth there,  
The bride and ere the bridegroom is with  
dance (saith he) beguiled,  
and the whole house and family  
therewith also defiled.  
And writing of Herodias  
her daughter's dancing nice,  
before the king to which her gave  
John Baptist's head of price.  
Ye saith that many nowadays whom  
Christians men do judge  
Not half their kingdoms for to give,  
nor others heads do grudge.  
But their own souls most dear of all,  
they give to be destroyed.  
While by their devilish dancing  
they are daily sore annoyed.  
Yea where that wanton dancing is  
erected, he doth say,  
The devil himself doth dance with them  
in that ungodly play.  
I wish that dancers then would weigh  
the author of their sport,  
which is the devil, and that he doth  
with them in dance resort.

**SOURCE:** Thomas Lovell, *A Dialogue Between Custome and Veritie Concerning the Use and Abuse of Dancing and Minstrelsie*. (London: John Allde, 1581): C4v–D1v.

engaged in close tight embraces. The hops, lifts, and tight embraces that de Bry depicted were also found in the artistic depictions of peasant dances of Albrecht Dürer, Hans Sebald Beham, and Pieter Bruegel. These movements had long raised the ire of moral reformers throughout Europe. The popular fifteenth-century preachers St. Bernard of Siena and St. John Capistrano had frequently railed against the immodesty of popular dances. When they preached in towns and villages, their audience sometimes tossed the musical instruments and other frivolities used to celebrate dances into massive “bonfires of the vanities.” Other more cautious individuals packed musical instruments and other dance paraphernalia away, waiting for the religious fervor to subside before bringing their items out of hiding. During the sixteenth century, though, the attacks on dancing from Protestant and Catholic reformers grew more severe, and in many places attempts were made to prohibit the custom. A pamphlet published in Augsburg in 1549, *A God-fearing Tract on Ungodly Dancing*, criticized peasant dances for their overt sexuality. The author attacked the custom of “fore” and “after” dances. After couples danced a serious “fore-dance,” the author railed, they then proceeded to perform a “less disciplined dance, with nudging, romping about, secretive hand touching, shouts, other improper things, and things about which I dare not speak.” Moralists feared such “improper” mixing of the sexes, and civil authorities tried to curb the popularity of such spirited movements by limiting opportunities for dances or by prohibiting these customs altogether. In spite of the efforts to censure dance, it continued to be a part of wedding celebrations as well as the long church festival of Carnival. While authorities attempted to segregate the young, unmarried men from women at these occasions, these festivals and celebrations provided an important avenue for socializing in country and town societies. At dances many men met their future wives through the courting rituals during which men often sat on ladies’ laps, caressing and fondling them. Such open displays were perceived by Christian moralists and governing officials alike as an easy entree into premarital sex. Sixteenth-century government officials responded by enacting ever-tighter regulations against dance and by sending magistrates into the countryside to punish offenders. Sometimes the magistrates seized and smashed the instruments that had been used to accompany such dancing. But despite such draconian efforts, the popularity of dance persisted.

**NEW FORMS.** The association of the dances of peasants and the urban poor with immorality and disorder

was reinforced in the sixteenth century by the rise of several new dance forms, including the *sarabande* and the *chaconne*. Legends linked both dances to the New World Indians, although each derived inspiration from native Spanish folk traditions as well. The sarabande was first mentioned in a manuscript poem written by Fernand Guzmán Mexía in 1539 in Panama, but was not recorded in a Spanish document until 1583, when it was prohibited at Madrid. The sarabande was performed in groups with castanets and tambourines and was explicitly sexual in its movements. It was denounced as a “national disgrace,” and described by one Spanish moralist as a “dance and song so lascivious in its words, so ugly in its movements, that it is enough to inflame even very honest people.” In 1599, Swiss observer Thomas Platter witnessed a group of fifty men and women performing the sarabande in Barcelona, making “ridiculous contortions of the body, the hands, the feet.” Still others condemned the dance as a devilish creation. From Spain the dance spread into France, Germany, and England, where it flourished in the early seventeenth century. As the dance moved throughout Europe, it developed different styles. Some of the forms of the dance were lively and suggestive, while others were grave and mannered, suitable to be performed in the ballrooms of the aristocracy and the rich. The rhythm of the dance, which was similar to the later Baroque minuet, inspired new native sarabande steps. In time, the original daring element of the dance disappeared, and it became one of the more staid of seventeenth-century dances. The chaconne, like the sarabande, developed in Spain, emerging in the final years of the sixteenth century. The songs that accompanied it were frequently filled with anticlerical sentiments and sexual innuendo, and the movements of the dance were thought to be similarly suggestive. The refrains to its songs frequently began with phrases like, “Let’s live the good life! Let’s go to Chacona!” Chacona may have been associated at the time with a colonial outpost in Mexico, but the precise derivation of the dance’s name is still a matter of conjecture. The dance grew popular in Spain’s cities around 1600, and chaconnes together with sarabandes were the two most popular urban dances in the country during the first quarter of the seventeenth century. No one was said to be able to resist the call to dance the chaconne, and its feverish popularity soon spread to other European regions. Its adoption in courtly societies toned down its more overt sexuality, as had happened with the sarabande before it.

**FOLK DANCES.** The examples of the chaconne and sarabande illustrate the ongoing and important influence that European folk dance had on the more elevated and



Hans Sebald Beham's engraving of folk dance steps. MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.

highly choreographed styles of the continent's great ballrooms. A distinguished lineage of ballroom styles in France, Italy, England, and Germany developed out of the folk dances of the European Renaissance. The *gavotte*, *bourrée*, *passepied*, and *jig* (or *gigue*) were just a few of the many folk dance forms that entered the repertory of social dances practiced in aristocratic and upper-class European societies during the period.

**CONCLUSION.** As one of the fine arts, dance experienced a long period of apprenticeship in the Renaissance under the direction of courtly dance masters and European aristocrats. The widespread love for dance gave birth to scores of new styles, choreographies, and spectacles that were characterized by complexity and grace of movement. For inspiration, Europe's dance theorists turned to the ancients, trying to recapture the power they believed had flourished in ancient Rome's poetry, dance, and music. They revived neoplatonic ideas about the nature of the universe as a dance, believing that the harmonies on the dance floor mirrored those of the cosmos. And they also combed through the native styles of their regions and adapted folk dances to the new demands of the ballroom. Dance as an art form of the Renaissance

court flourished, even as moralists and civic authorities attacked the spirited dances of the countryside and the urban landscape. Dance played an important role as a marker of social distinction, a sign of cultivated upbringing. As the end of the Renaissance approached, new court forms of theatrical dance like the ballets de cour, masques, operas, and intermedii were being performed throughout Europe. Dance played a key role in court spectacle, and the stage was set in these developments for the emergence of the independent professional ballet in the seventeenth century, a form which has since delighted audiences with its combination of stagecraft and highly choreographed movements.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Dance*

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### THOINOT ARBEAU

1520–1595

*Cleric*

*Dance theorist*

**A CLERIC.** Thoinot Arbeau was born Jehan Thauburot in 1520 in Dijon, once a center of fifteenth-century Burgundian court life. He received his schooling in Dijon and Poitiers and may have also attended the University of Paris. He took a degree in law before entering holy orders. By 1542, he became treasurer of the chapter house at Langres, and five years later was named a cathedral canon. He held a number of important church positions throughout his life, rising to the post of vicar-general, an important diocesan office. Late in life he wrote his dance treatise, *Orchesography*, a work that provides a vital glimpse of the styles of dance practiced in late sixteenth-century France, and which subscribes to the prevalent Neoplatonic notion about the importance of dance as a reflection of the cosmos.

**TONE.** Arbeau's dance manual was the only such work to appear in France in the late sixteenth century, although works of this kind were relatively common in Italy. It is a text comparable to the works of Fabrizio Caroso and Cesare Negri, and it records a similar number of dances. Arbeau, though, writes for an urban clientele, in contrast to the "courtly" tone of Caroso and Negri, and his dances are simpler and more direct. At the same time he includes even more important information about musical accompaniments to the dances. Arbeau developed, for example, a precise system for mapping out the steps to the accompanying musical passages he includes. Thus there can be no doubt about how he wanted the dance steps to follow the music, and for this reason, his work has been an invaluable tool to modern scholars wishing to recreate sixteenth-century dances. Among the many dances he relates, Arbeau includes 25 different branles, perhaps the most

popular dance of the time in France. The branle, known as the brawl in English, had originally developed out of one of the steps of the Burgundian basse dance of the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century, though, ingenious dance masters and dancers had added a number of choreographed movements and innovations to the dance, which Arbeau carefully catalogues. One of the colorful branles he relates is the *washerwomen's branle*, in which dancers clap their hands like washerwomen beating clothes on the banks of the Seine. Another is the *hermit's branle*, in which participants mime the hand gestures that religious hermits made in greeting. Fancy footwork was a hallmark of such dances, and Arbeau recounts these with care as well. Beyond his numerous branle variations, he includes choreographies for the pavan, 15 different galliards, the volta, allemande, canary, as well as many others. The entire tone of the book is good-natured and charming; it is written, for instance, in the form of a dialogue between the teacher Arbeau and his disciple Capriol (meaning "step" or "caper"). As a cleric, Arbeau was one of an increasingly rare breed that actively pursued secular pursuits like the dance, and he recommended it in a strikingly modern way as good exercise. The changing spirit in the church, fueled by the severe tastes of the Counter-Reformation, took an increasingly dim view of priests like Arbeau who danced. The Jesuits and other religious orders of the time included dance instruction into their school curricula for children destined for marriage and secular careers, but dance was quickly becoming a pursuit too worldly for the rectory and the chapter house.

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### FABRIZIO CAROSO

c. 1530–c. 1605

*Dance master*

*Dance theorist*

**EARLY LIFE.** Little is known about the circumstances of Caroso's life, except that he was born in Sermoneta, a small town near Rome, sometime between

1527 and 1535. Long-standing legends have alleged that he was a peasant taken into the household of the Caetani family, dukes of Sermoneta and Rome, and provided with an education. In his treatises Caroso dedicates a number of his dances to members of the Caetani and Orsini families, and it is likely that he probably served as the dance instructor in these households for a time. Both families kept large palaces in Rome during the sixteenth century, and besides the Orsini and Caetani, Caroso mentions other powerful Roman nobles of the day, including the Farnese and Aldobrandini Duke and Duchess of Parma and Piacenza, to whom he dedicates his second dance book, *The Nobility of Ladies* (1600). Torquato Tasso, the accomplished late Renaissance poet, also wrote a sonnet dedicated to Caroso, which is included in *The Nobility*. Like most of the prominent dance masters of the period, though, he probably spent much of his life moving in princely circles in Italy, teaching dance and mounting spectacles and other entertainments for court circles. Little more, though, can be determined about his life.

**WORKS.** Caroso is remembered today for two dance manuals he published late in the sixteenth century: *The Dancing Master* (1581) and *The Nobility of Ladies* (1600). Both are informative sources about the kinds of dances that were popular in the later Renaissance and together include information on about 100 different dances. Among these dances, Caroso includes a number of *balletto*, which were specially choreographed dances that consisted of multiple parts and specially composed music. While Caroso's works include a few simple dances that could be easily mastered, most of them were highly complex constructions that even expert amateurs might have had to spend many hours practicing. His books also include music intended to accompany these dances, and thus his work has been of great value to scholars and modern dance enthusiasts anxious to recover Renaissance styles of dance. In his *Nobility of Ladies* Caroso also included two dialogues between a dance master and his student that outline ballroom etiquette and a series of hard-and-fast rules for dancers to observe. His prescriptions on etiquette are notable for their extreme courtliness. He advises his readers on such subjects as how to wear a cape, how to sit and stand, when and how to remove gloves, and so forth. New editions of Caroso's book *Nobility of Ladies* continued to appear in Italy until 1630, demonstrating its continued role in the seventeenth century as an authority on dance techniques and ballroom behavior.

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## CATHERINE DE' MEDICI

1519–1589

*Queen of France*

**CULTURED BEGINNINGS.** Catherine de' Medici was one of the most powerful women of the sixteenth century. She was the daughter of Lorenzo de' Medici, duke of the Italian city of Urbino, and the French princess Madeleine de la Tour D'Avergne, but was completely orphaned by the age of one. Her upbringing was entrusted to nuns in the city of Florence and later in Rome. Her marriage to the heir to the French throne, Henri, the duke of Orléans (king of France from 1547–1559), was negotiated by her uncle, Pope Clement VII. This wedding took place in Paris in October 1533. According to long-standing legend, Catherine made a sensation in her first appearance at the wedding ball by wearing a new style of high-heeled shoe that gave a swaying undulation and grace to her dance steps. Shoes with soles and heels were just coming into use in the early sixteenth century, and they had a definite effect on dancing, since they allowed performers to stomp and stamp their feet and to perform more intricate steps than was possible in the older fifteenth-century styles. Whether or not Catherine introduced these shoes to France cannot be determined, but she has long been credited with raising the standards of civility and culture in France's noble courts. Her cuisine was widely admired, and noble families searched for Italian cooks that could make the kinds of dishes that Catherine served at state festivities. Italians have long been fond of crediting the subsequent glories of French cooking to the advances that this Italian princess introduced into the royal kitchens in the sixteenth century.

**COURT FESTIVITIES.** Catherine's years in political life were tumultuous ones, dominated by the ongoing controversies and civil conflicts between French Protestants, known as Huguenots, and Catholics. One way in which Catherine escaped the stress of these difficulties was through the development of the genteel and ordered

art of dance in her court. Like dance enthusiasts elsewhere in Renaissance Europe, Catherine saw in the art a way of teaching the harmony and order that should prevail in the social and political world. Dance was, in her mind and in the minds of other cultivated Europeans, a model for properly ordered social relationships. In the many festivities she staged at court during the troubled years of her reign, she relied upon dance to express these ideas. She staged a series of “magnificences,” grander than any that had yet been seen in France. These costly spectacles were attacked at the time as a source of ruination and poverty to the French crown, although Catherine saw them as an essential way to unify the French monarchy’s quarrelling noble factions. As Catherine wooed other European kings and states and as she tried to mediate between her restive nobles, she imported ideas from the Italian dances and *intermedi* of the day. The “magnificences” relied extensively on dance choreography to express the faith in dance’s powers to teach peaceful and harmonious living. Out of her efforts the *ballet de cour* emerged, a royal art form that joined together artistic stage designs, poetry, music, and dance. This genre influenced both the rise of the opera and the seventeenth-century ballet. Thus although Catherine’s years as regent of France were troubled, her political career has long been credited with being an important stimulus to the development of the *beaux arts*, or “fine arts” in France.

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### CESARE NEGRI

c. 1535–c. 1604

*Dance master*  
*Dance theorist*

**MILAN.** Cesare Negri’s *The Graces of Love* (1602) was the most complete and detailed of all the great Renaissance works on dance theory and practice, and it provides a great deal of information about the dance life of the Italian upper classes in the late Renaissance. In this work Negri also informs us about his own life, allowing

us to reconstruct the career of one of the Renaissance’s most important dance masters. Born in Milan around 1535, he served the city’s Spanish governors as dance master until 1599. Between 1555 and 1600 he also directed a number of spectacles for major Italian ducal families. His list of distinguished clients included the Visconti, the Medici, the Gonzaga, and D’Este. One of his most impressive productions was a spectacle celebrating the naval victory of the Italian admiral Andrea Doria against the Turks in 1560. Another was his direction of the festivities marking the visit of Queen Margarethe of Spain to Milan in 1598. In his capacity as dance master, Negri also traveled extensively with Milan’s noble rulers, performing dances for them on journeys to Malta, Genoa, Naples, Florence, Mantua, and Saragossa. Negri’s *Graces of Love* is also a rich source of information about the major dancing masters of the later Renaissance. He includes the names of over forty dance masters who practiced at the time and gives details about their training and where they traveled to practice their art. His work thus points to the development in Italy of a group of professional male dancers, many of whom opened dancing schools in Europe’s cities or who taught dance to their noble patrons.

**DANCES.** Negri’s dance manual includes some of the typical information on ballroom etiquette that is to be found in many similar books from the period. He also discusses dance’s role in aristocratic processions and *intermedi*, two of the most common occasions for theatrical dance in Renaissance Italy. By far, though, the largest portion of *The Graces of Love* is given over to a technical discussion of dance steps. The dances that he treats in the work are extremely complex, among the most difficult to survive from the Renaissance. In particular, he treats extensively the upper-class forms of the galliard and outlines a number of variations on the dance’s footwork. He also shows that dances, just like the music of the time, were often improvised and that dancers loved to practice variations on the basic steps, joining different steps and footwork together to create ever more difficult choreographies. He includes 43 choreographies for dances, a number of which are figure dances similar to those that are still performed in American square dances. Like other dance manuals of the period, Negri’s also included music to accompany these forms.

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- Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesography* (1588)—Written in a dialogue between the dance master Arbeau and his student Capriol or Caper, this dance treatise provides invaluable evidence for many of the dances that flourished in late Renaissance Europe. It is important, too, because it includes many of the melodies and rhythms to which dances were performed.
- Fabritio Caroso, *The Nobility of Ladies* (1600)—Caroso's second edition of his *Il Ballarino* or *The Dancing Master* includes a greater range of choreographies than his first work. It also outlines the rules of deportment that are essential to men and women on the dance floor. Dedicated to the Duke and Duchess of Parma, it was printed in Venice in an impressively produced edition.
- Robert Davies, "Orchestra, or a Poem of Dancing" (1596)—Davies' Elizabethan verse celebrates the power of dance and in its many stanzas also informs about many of the customs of the dance floor in Renaissance England.
- Thomas Elyot, *The Book of the Governor* (1531)—A Tudor conduct book modeled on Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528), Elyot's book outlines the behaviors necessary for a man to be considered a "gentleman" in sixteenth-century England, and devotes a large amount of space to the subject of dancing. He recommends the art as a way for a gentleman to display his civility.
- Cesare Negri, *The Charms of Love*, (1602)—A late-Renaissance dance manual, this work provides a complete look at the social dance and theatrical spectacle that flourished in Italy during the period.
- Domenico da Piacenza, *Of the Art of Dancing* (1445)—The first Italian dance treatise to survive from the early Renaissance, this work demonstrates Piacenza's vast reading on the history and theory of dance as well as his general theoretical knowledge of the arts. He relies on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, particularly its outlining of the law of the "golden mean," to evaluate what steps nobles should perform on the dance floor.

chapter **3** three

FASHION

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	86	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	89	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>Labor Troubles</i> (Machiavelli describes a laborer's revolt) . . . . .	91
The Regulation of Clothing . . . . .	90	<i>Clothing a Bride</i> (Boccaccio's tale of a peasant bride) . . . . .	93
Fashion as an Industry . . . . .	98	Trousseaux . . . . .	94
Early Renaissance Styles . . . . .	103	<i>The Evils of Apparel</i> (Stubbes' published work warning of the sins associated with fashion) . . . . .	96
High and Late Renaissance Fashion . . . . .	107	<i>Sumptuary Law</i> (excerpt from a law assigning fashions by social class) . . . . .	97
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		Wool Imports . . . . .	99
Bernard of Siena . . . . .	111	<i>Women's Dress</i> (excerpt from Barbaro's treatise advising women how to dress) . . . . .	101
Lucrezia Borgia . . . . .	112	<i>Taming a Shrew</i> (scene from Shakespeare's <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> ) . . . . .	110
Francesco Datini . . . . .	113		
Elizabeth I . . . . .	114		
Marie de' Medici . . . . .	115		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	116		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Fashion*

- 1311 The Council of Ravenna repeats a traditional medieval requirement that Jews wear a distinguishing sign on their clothes. These measures continue to be unpopular and largely disregarded by populations throughout Italy.
- 1348 The bubonic plague, also known as the Black Death, strikes Europe.
- c. 1350 The hemlines of men's *jupons* or doublets begin to rise in France to scandalous levels; women's bust lines, on the other hand, start to plunge.
- 1373 The city of Florence passes stricter sumptuary laws (laws designed to curtail luxury in dress) aimed at women.
- 1405 In her *Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine de Pizan praises women's love of fashion.
- 1416 Giacomina della Marca takes clerical orders in Italy. Della Marca's fiery sermons delivered over the next sixty years are typical of the fifteenth-century Franciscans, who favored restraint in dress and the adoption of a strict system of dress codes to identify Jews, prostitutes, and other marginal groups.
- 1427 Bernard of Siena conducts a hugely successful preaching tour in Italy that encourages men to discard their gaming boards, dice, and cards, and women to throw their finery into "bonfires of the vanities."
- 1434 The humanist Leon Battista Alberti completes his *Book of the Family*, an important work in promoting styles of feminine beauty for women, and one that encourages men to adopt a gravity in dress.
- c. 1450 The rich court of the Duchy of Burgundy dominates fashions in courtly societies in Northern Europe.
- c. 1460 The codpiece begins to grow, both in popularity and size, in male fashions.
- 1463 A series of sumptuary laws are passed in England that aim to define the status of various classes of society through distinguishing dress.
- 1464 Pope Paul II passes a series of vestment laws at Rome that exert greater control over the dress of the clergy.
- 1469 Galeazzo Maria Sforza, duke of Milan, gives his wife a pair of earrings, a style of jewelry long associated with Jewish women. Over the next half century earrings will be increasingly adopted by Christian women.
- 1477 A fashion for "slashed" and puffed styles in court dress develops in Germany.
- c. 1485 Italian court dress becomes fashionable in aristocratic circles throughout Europe.
- 1493 The popularity of the *poulaine*, long and pointed footwear, fades in favor of new soled and heeled shoes.
- 1494 The fiery Dominican Girolamo Savonarola begins to preach in Florence after the expulsion of the Medici. Over the following years, his sermons will encourage many Florentines to abandon their sumptuous clothing styles, but his preaching will remain controversial.
- 1498 Savonarola, recently excommunicated by the pope, is deposed following a counter-revolution in Florence.
- 1501 Catherine of Aragon marries Prince Arthur of England, introducing the style of the *farthingale*, a large hoop skirt, to the country.

- 1510 German styles reign in court dress fashions adopted throughout Europe, spreading the popularity of “slashing,” in which overgarments are cut away to reveal rich undergarments.
- Many aristocrats adopt the richly jewelled and decorative patterns of clothing popular in Italy.
- 1512 While Venice is under attack from the League of Cambrai, its Senate deliberates for a month about the kinds of ornaments that are to be permitted on clothing.
- 1527 In England, the German painter Hans Holbein begins to immortalize the clothing styles of many of the most famous English aristocrats and courtiers of the Tudor period through his minutely accurate and richly opulent portraits.
- 1530 The Medici family is restored to power after a brief interlude of republicanism at Florence. They will adopt a richly elegant style of dress in contrast to the severe republican styles that flourished in the city during the fifteenth century.
- c. 1535 The Italian sculptor Benvenuto Cellini is active at the court of Francis I. Besides his many duties as a sculptor, Cellini designs a great deal of jewelry for the French king Francis I.
- 1539 Cosimo I de’ Medici celebrates his wedding to Elenore of Toledo at Florence. Elenore will become known in the city for her lavish gowns.
- Henry VIII sends his court painter Hans Holbein to Flanders to paint the image of his prospective bride Anne of Cleves. Although the marriage is never consummated because of Henry’s personal distaste for her physical appearance, Anne gains a reputation in England for her richly decorated clothes, which establish new styles in the English court.
- c. 1540 In Italy the Mannerist painters’ portraits of the upper classes are notable for their richly jewelled and elaborately decorated women’s dresses.
- 1541 Protestant leader John Calvin establishes control over the Reformation at Geneva and begins to promote tougher sumptuary laws. During his more than two decades in the city over 800 people will be arrested for violations, and 58 will be put to death for excesses in clothing.
- c. 1550 The upper-class dress of Spain begins to affect courtly styles throughout Europe.
- Henry II of France forbids the wearing of clothes made of silk and velvet and of styles that are trimmed in silver and gold in order to prevent the flow of money outside France.
- 1553 Marguerite de Valois, the future wife of King Henry IV (r. 1589–1609) and an important originator of many upper-class feminine styles, is born.
- 1558 Queen Elizabeth I ascends the throne of England. During her more than forty-year reign she will influence the styles of her court and will, according to legend, commission more than 3,000 costly dresses.
- c. 1560 Pocket watches begin to appear in France.
- Huge pants known as “Plunder” trousers are popular in Germany, although preachers attack the style as wasteful and sinful.
- 1564 The use of starch is introduced in England, allowing for the development of complex pleats and ruffles.
- 1569 The Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel paints his famous *Peasant’s Wedding*, a source for information on rural styles at the time.
- c. 1570 The ruffled collar becomes popular as an upper-class style favored throughout Europe.

- c. 1580 In Germany, the style of women's clothes grows increasingly severe and restrained. Religious changes in both Catholic and Protestant regions as well as the popularity of Spanish dress at the time encourage the new style.
- 1581 The French court witnesses the production of a *ballet de cour* entitled *The Comic Ballet of the Queen* which is notable for its rich costuming and its elaborate use of gold, silver, and jeweled decoration on the characters' costumes.
- 1589 William Lee invents the knitting machine in England. Elizabeth I denies him a patent for his invention because she fears it will put people out of work.
- 1590 Men begin to wear "love locks" at court in England. These locks are long shocks of hair that fall over one side of the collar.
- 1599 The Tudor court in England spends approximately £10,000 on clothes this year at the same time many professionals (lawyers and government officials) live on less than £100 per year.
- 1600 Marie de' Medici becomes queen of France. She establishes a court notable for its luxury and acquires a reputation as the most expensively dressed woman in Europe.
- 1603 Elizabeth I dies in England. Her successor, James I of Scotland, ascends the throne. During the initial years of his reign James will quadruple the amount spent on clothing in the English court.

## OVERVIEW *of Fashion*

**A CLIMATE OF RESTRICTION.** Renaissance society depended upon the production of cloth and clothing as one of its key industries. As a time-consuming and labor-intensive process, the production of textiles kept as much as a third of urban populations employed, often in servile and brutal conditions. Despite the immense amount of energy that went into the production of clothes, there was a prevalent mistrust of clothing as “fashion” at the dawn of the Renaissance; the majority of the population still adhered to the medieval belief that such displays contributed to the sin of vanity. This attitude lost some ground during the fourteenth century, however, as court and urban fashions in Europe became more changeable and daring. The tension between moralists who denounced changing fashions as sinful and the upper-class obsession with clothes became a hallmark of this period. Renaissance moralists particularly zeroed in on a perceived association of style’s fickleness and mutability with women, even though little evidence exists to suggest women’s passion for clothes exceeded that of men. In fact, the advice books of the Renaissance written by humanists frequently encouraged men to pay more attention to their clothing than women. The association of women as the “fashion horses” of the time, though, arose from complex causes and transformations in the exchange of property that, by the Renaissance, had become established throughout society. The system of inheritance excluded women from inheriting property from their husbands, and they received their share of their father’s estate when they married in the form of a dowry and a trousseau (a gift of clothing that was intended to see women through the first few years of marriage). The husbands, in turn, had to give a complex set of gifts to their wives that rivaled the trousseau and dowry she had received from her own family or face the loss of status. During the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries the cost of establishing a household rose quickly in Europe as a result of inflation touched off by the Black Death and subsequent outbreaks of the plague.

As a result, men began to marry later, and dowry and trousseau expenses rose. The cost of a man’s “counter-trousseau,” the gifts he gave his wife at marriage, consequently rose to keep pace with this inflation. Thus in the minds of Renaissance men, women’s taste for fashion was one of the chief evils of the age. Civic officials tried valiantly to contain the costs of this luxury, while the popular preachers of the age denounced it. Still, fashion had penetrated into Renaissance society, and over the following centuries its steady advancement knew no retreat.

**FASHION AS INDUSTRY.** Although moralists and town and state officials tried to contain fashion’s excesses, the style industry was a significant portion of a Renaissance city’s economy by the early fifteenth century. In many parts of Europe tailors had their own guilds that regulated production and fixed prices. Elsewhere this group existed within pre-established guilds. In Florence, tailors became associated with several guilds, but gained a greater reputation as part of the relatively low status “clothing resellers” guild. By the standards of the fifteenth century tailoring was still only a middling occupation, but the increasing emphasis on clothing and appearance increased the status of the best tailors. Beyond tailors, however, an entire battery of professions satisfied the Renaissance demands for style. Milliners, cobblers, lace makers, leather workers, and furriers were just a few of the myriad professions who served the fashion industry. The boundaries between all these various occupations were often strikingly clear, although at the bottom rung of the clothing market independent suppliers sometimes poached these professions’ livelihood. The clothing market was highly competitive, with the high cost of materials offset by the relatively cheap labor. To take advantage of these realities, families bought their own cloth from retailers and producers before commissioning a tailor to construct a garment. Many families did their own sewing at home or gave it to a family member who had entered a convent. Still, the cost of clothing was dear, and patterns in dressing drew a clear line of demarcation between social classes; servants, the lower classes, and the poor dressed in clothes that were considerably more threadbare, and made over patterns that required far less material than those of the wealthy.

**EARLY RENAISSANCE STYLES.** In Florence an ethos of republicanism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries bred restraint in clothes. The humanist literature of the age counseled wealthy men of affairs to dress in a magnificent, but severe fashion that reflected favorably on their lineage and their city. Although this literature advised women from the same class to think less about

their clothes and more about their husband's desires, wives often dressed in elaborate styles at ceremonial occasions attended by other members of the upper classes as reflections of their husbands' wealth and status. The greatest of the many occasions that called for finery was the wedding. Brides and grooms planned for months and sometimes years the clothes that they were to wear on these occasions, and an ever-escalating climate of competition among families is evident in Renaissance cities throughout the period. Governments frequently tried to control the expenditure of these events, but despite these prohibitions urban dress continued to grow more sumptuous, elaborate, and ornate as the fifteenth century drew to a close. At this time urban fashions, particularly in Italy, reflected the increasingly elegant styles popular in court circles throughout Europe. While the elites in cities tried to ape court societies, they could never come close to rivaling the expense and magnitude of styles favored by Europe's aristocrats.

**THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.** As the sixteenth century approached, styles in Europe were largely regional. Around 1500, however, a wave of styles that emanated from Germany and somewhat later from Italy affected European court dressing. The new dress was elaborate, many-layered, and given to patterns that reshaped the body, sometimes into profoundly distorted shapes. A case in point is the Spanish-inspired *farthingale*, or wide hoop skirt, which made it difficult for women to sit in chairs and even to pass through doorways. It became popular in France, England, and Germany in the sixteenth century, although moralists attacked it for deforming the human body. Despite such attacks, fashion's ever-changing whims persisted. The corset, an undergarment adopted by both men and women, achieved strikingly different effects in each gender. For men, it allowed tight-fitting, heavily tailored doublets, while for women it flattened the bust and tapered the waist into an "hour glass" shape. In the styles of the first half of the sixteenth century, this tendency to distort the human form gave birth to eccentric fashions like slashing, in which elaborate cuts in an outer garment's material allowed the many-layered undergarments to show through. Around 1550, upper-class fashions changed again rather quickly. The new styles came from the Spanish court and favored heavily tailored, more restrained appearances. High ruff collars and capes were also elements of Spanish style adopted by courtiers and urban elites at the time. The continued criticism of fashion's ever-changing bazaar failed to blunt the reality that style had become a fundamental feature of European life.

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## THE REGULATION OF CLOTHING

**CONSUMPTION.** The Commercial Revolution that began in Europe around 1000 C.E. rested on a firm foundation of cloth and clothing production. As Europe's cities increased in population during the High Middle Ages, fabric weaving became a lucrative business, and by the early Renaissance Italy was Europe's preeminent center of cloth production, exporting fine silks and woolens throughout the continent. The production of cloth—an item for which there was universal need—was the foundation upon which great Renaissance economies relied, and the spinning of fabric produced much of the enormous wealth that allowed the era's elites to indulge their tastes for art, fine buildings, and sumptuous fashions. The guilds that controlled the milling of wool and the weaving of textiles were usually the most important commercial organizations in Europe's cities, and they often dominated local politics. In Florence, perhaps as many as a third of the city's population worked in the woolen industry, and Florentine cloth had a reputation throughout Europe for its fine quality. Spun from English wool, it had captured a place as a luxury commodity of the highest distinction. In the course of the Renaissance the wealth that Florence's looms produced funded many of the city's building projects, including the construction of the city's cathedral. In the 150 years it took to complete the massive edifice, the town's Arte della Lana, or Wool Guild, controlled the building's construction, even as it dominated the city's economy and government.

**LABOR PROBLEMS.** The medieval and Renaissance guilds have often been compared to modern trade unions, but in one crucial respect they were vastly different. The goal of modern unions is to better the living standards and wages of workers, while in pre-modern Europe, great masters dominated the guilds and acted to keep costs low. As a result, many guilds were far from harmonious organizations, as journeymen and small producers resented the actions of the great masters who controlled the guilds' structures. At Florence, for example, the master weavers responsible for the final stages of production of the town's luxurious woolens sat at the apex of a vast pyramid of woolen workers. Their high-handed tactics frequently angered those who performed simpler, less skilled tasks associated with cloth production. Tensions erupted in the Arte della Lana, sometimes threatening the city's social fabric. In 1378, for instance, the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LABOR TROUBLES**

**INTRODUCTION:** Like many large European cities in the later fourteenth century, Florence experienced major conflicts in its guilds. After the population decline caused by the Black Death and subsequent outbreaks of the plague, labor grew comparatively more expensive in the towns, although the demands for better wages and working conditions sometimes fell on deaf ears in the guilds, many of which were controlled by the wealthiest masters. In his *History of Florence*, the famous sixteenth-century humanist Niccolò Machiavelli recounted the history of Florence's bitter revolt of the *Ciampi*, or wool carders, in 1378. As this relatively powerless group within the wool guild clamored for a greater voice in their guild and in urban government, they were joined by many of the minor artisans of the city. Machiavelli was not unsympathetic to the workers' plight and the interesting observations that he places in the mouth of one of the rebels show us the fundamental role that dress played in the mentality of the Renaissance.

When the companies of the arts were first organized, many of those trades, followed by the lowest of the people and the plebeians, were not incorporated, but were ranged under those arts most nearly allied to them; and, hence, when they were not properly remunerated for their labor, or their masters oppressed them, they had no one of whom to seek redress, except the magistrate of the art to which theirs was subject; and of him they did not think justice always attainable. Of the arts, that which always had, and now has, the greatest number of these subordinates is the woolen; which being both then, and still, the most powerful body, and first in authority, supports the greater part of the plebeians and lowest of the people.

The lower classes, then, the subordinates not only of the woolen, but also of the other arts, were discontented from the causes just mentioned; and their apprehension of punishment for the burnings and robberies they had committed, did not tend to compose them. Meetings took place in different parts during night, to talk over the past, and to communicate the danger in which they were, when one of the most daring and experienced, in order to animate the rest, spoke thus:

If the question now were, whether we should take up arms, rob and burn the houses of the citizens, and plunder churches, I am one of those who would think it worthy of further consideration, and should, perhaps prefer poverty and safety to the dangerous pursuit of an uncertain good. But as we have already armed, and many offenses have been committed, it appears to me that we have to consider how to lay them aside, and secure ourselves from the consequences of what is already done ... We must, therefore, I think, in order to be pardoned for our old faults, commit new ones; redoubling the mischief, and multiplying fires and robberies; and in doing this, endeavor to have as many companions as we can; for when many are in fault, few are punished; small crimes are chastised, but great and serious ones rewarded ... Be not deceived about that antiquity of blood by which they exalt themselves above us; for all men having had one common origin are all equally ancient, and nature has made us all after one fashion. Strip us naked, and we shall all be found alike. Dress us in their clothing, and they in ours, we shall appear noble, they ignoble—for poverty and riches make all the difference.

**SOURCE:** Niccolò Machiavelli, *History of Florence*. (Washington: M. Walter Dunne, 1901): 128–129.

Ciampi, or the wool carders, revolted against the control over production held by the weaving masters and retailers. The carders did not possess a vote within the guild so they demanded their own guild to represent them against the wealthier weavers and exporters of fabric. Eventually, many of the city's less-skilled workers or "little people" (*popolo minuto*) joined the carders in their demands and succeeded in briefly seizing control of the town's government. Although eventually suppressed, the Revolt of the Ciampi left a legacy of bitter faction and enmity in Florence's government and cloth industry that persisted in the early fifteenth century.

**LUXURY GOODS.** Florence was not alone in its guild tensions, as a demographic crisis had long aggravated problems within Europe's cities. By 1300, three centuries

of unparalleled population growth had outstripped the towns' ability to provide employment for the thousands of new immigrants who flooded into them each year. This population boom depressed wages and made widespread poverty a fact of life in Renaissance towns. While the numbers of the poor varied widely from place to place, as many as one-third of a town's population might be impoverished. They survived on occasional day labor, begging, and thievery. The problem of overpopulation encountered a devastating solution between 1347 and 1350 when the bubonic plague decreased the population of many of Europe's cities by as much as one-half. Repeated outbreaks of the disease throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries effectively prevented population numbers from replenishing. The dramatic falloff in population in the towns initially deflated the



demand for the goods produced in cities, but as equilibrium returned to the urban scene the population decline bred inflation. While the Black Death and subsequent plagues often destroyed entire families, those wealthy producers who survived faced relatively less competition than before the epidemic. As a result, the concentration of wealth allowed the great families who had long dominated town governments and the urban economy to achieve even greater dominance. While this dominance fueled urban revolts like the Ciompi, it also inspired a new taste for luxury consumption. In Italy, especially, the cities' great families embraced fashion as a way to demonstrate their status and standing within urban society.

**FASHION: A FEMININE PROBLEM.** By 1400 the rise of an opulent world of fashion in the Renaissance city was indisputable. This trend did not go unnoticed at the time, and criticisms of the love of luxury were common. In contrast to earlier medieval commentators who had frequently attacked men for their role in sustaining the taste for rich display, the moralists and civic fathers of the Renaissance more often blamed women for the insatiable appetite for sumptuous clothing. In truth, men were just as often guilty of sartorial excess as women, but the notion that fashion was a “women’s disease” was common and had its origins in certain customs and legal practices of Renaissance society. The patrilineal system of inheritance (in which property passed through the father’s line of descendants) made women legal outsiders in the families they joined when they married. While a married woman might produce heirs for her husband’s family, Renaissance law gave her no claim to his wealth upon his death, and even the children she bore her husband belonged, not to her own but to her husband’s lineage. A woman, then, effectively borrowed her status from her husband, and the high mortality rate of the time meant that the identification with her husband’s lineage might be only a temporary one. Widowhood and remarriage thus threatened the stability of the family, as widows might take a new husband and leave their children to be raised by their deceased spouse’s family. Thus many Renaissance men made bequests in their wills to their wives, stipulating incomes and property they might enjoy if they stayed within their adopted families and continued to raise their children. As these practices became ever more fixed in the society of the High Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the symbolic role of a wife’s clothing and jewelry increased dramatically. Her dress became, in other words, a potent symbol of her husband’s power over her and of her ties to his lineage. From queens to the ranks of humbler women who en-

tered marriages, women adopted the styles of dress favored by their husbands’ families. Those who used their dress, by contrast, to express an individual identity or to satisfy a mere desire for fashionable display could be attacked for defying their husband’s authority.

**TROUSSEAUX AND DOWRIES.** In the mid-fourteenth century the humanist Giovanni Boccaccio concluded his famous collection of tales *The Decameron* with the story of Griselda, a woman who suffered trials in her marriage similar to those of the Old Testament figure Job. Boccaccio celebrated Griselda’s patient suffering as the highest expression of Christian womanhood, and his story shows the vital role that clothing played in Renaissance marriage and family life. Born of peasant stock, the virtuous Griselda rose to become the wife of a king. At the couple’s marriage, her husband richly adorned her with fine jewels and costly garments, only to take these away from her soon after the wedding guests had departed. In the years that followed, Griselda bore her husband children, but he turned her out of the house to live in poverty. Despite these and other trials, she preserved her honor, lived in acute need, and refused to take a lover to support herself. Her constancy convinced her royal husband of her virtue, and he eventually restored her to an honored position in the family, clothing her again in rich finery. The exchanges that Boccaccio detailed in Griselda’s story were very much a part of Renaissance family life. While no peasant ever rose to become the wife of a king, marriage was, in fact, preceded by a highly complex system of gift exchanges in which clothing and jewelry figured prominently, underscoring a bride’s entrance into a new family and her willingness to live, like Griselda, under the control of her husband. At marriage, for example, a woman received her dowry from her own family as her share of her father’s wealth. These sums, often consisting of cash payments, property, and household items, transferred to her husband to offset the expenses of the new couple’s household. In addition, none but the poorest of families ever sent their daughters off to begin marriage without an opulent trousseau (a set of sumptuous clothes and gifts intended to help the young woman establish her household) that expressed their ability to provide her with a suitable entrance into married life. To match the finery that her own family provided, the groom and his family also presented the future bride with many gifts of clothing, jewels, and luxurious household items that matched and even surpassed those provided by her birth family. These exchanges—of rings, gowns, silver, and gold—thus played a symbolic role in underscoring that a woman was leaving her own lineage, and taking up a new position within her husband’s family. At the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CLOTHING A BRIDE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The fourteenth-century humanist Giovanni Boccaccio concluded his *Decameron* with the tale of patient Griselda, a peasant woman who rose to become the wife of a king. Stripped of all her possessions, her husband Gualtieri clothed her in rich finery for the wedding, but soon afterwards stripped her of her possessions and subjected her to many trials. Withstanding these, she convinced her husband of her true nobility of spirit and at the story's conclusion he restored her finery to her. The story shows the way in which Renaissance men perceived clothes as a means for fashioning their wives' identities. First dressed in her wedding finery, Griselda seems to take on a new noble appearance and to shed her peasant identity. Yet Boccaccio undermined these sentiments at the tale's end, because he argued that true nobility of spirit had nothing to do with birth but with a person's spirit. Centuries after the completion of the *Decameron*, Griselda's story was still being repeated in plays, short novels, and even in the opera. It ranks as one of the most powerful fictional narratives to come out of the Renaissance.

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**SOURCE:** Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*. Trans. G. H. McWilliam (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1972): 786–787.

same time, family honor hung in the balance of gift-giving, and the exchange of rich goods often became a competition that demarcated each family's standing in the urban hierarchy. Among the wealthiest families of Italian cities, specially constructed and elaborate caskets known as *cassoni* carried these items on ceremonial processions that wended through a town's streets in the days and weeks before a marriage occurred. Thus the exchanges of clothing, jewelry, and household items that occurred in the critical days before a wedding played a vital role in publicizing a family's wealth and status in cities, and the size of a woman's dowry, her trousseau, and her husband's gifts became a matter for local commentary and record.

**INFLATION.** Such displays of family status were costly and could threaten the financial well being of all but the wealthiest families. Amassing a daughter's trousseau was an expensive and time-consuming process, and the husband's counter-gifts of clothing and finery represented a similar effort. By the 1400s, husbands often offset the exorbitant cost associated with celebrating a marriage by renting the elaborate wedding costumes with which they clothed their brides from other families who had recently undergone the same event. Those who actually purchased the gowns might, after the wedding, cut off the gold, silver, pearls, and precious gems affixed to the fabric, or even sell the dresses to other

## TROUSSEaux

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**SOURCE:** C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002): 139–141.

prospective grooms. Only the wealthiest families or the most generous husbands allowed their wives to keep the finery that they provided for the wedding indefinitely, particularly since sumptuary regulations mandated that women put away these lavish clothes several years after marriage and adopt a reserved and matronly style of dress. Such practices made these wedding customs affordable to a broader range of the populace, but the cost of celebrating a couple's wedding was still considerable. By the early fifteenth century even bourgeois women came to their new homes laden with many changes of clothes, numerous slippers and shoes, a wide selection of hats and jewels, and a variety of purses and accessories.

By the fifteenth century a prospective husband might invest as much as one-third of the money he received from a woman's dowry in wedding gifts of clothing and jewelry, a development that caused, in turn, the price of dowries to rise and inspired some cities like Florence to introduce municipal bonds that allowed the parents of daughters to invest in a publicly funded bond market to amass the sums needed to see their daughters installed in marriage. Out of fear that this rising tide of consumption would make marriage too expensive for all but the wealthiest Italians, many towns tried to limit the values of the gifts that a groom's family could shower upon a bride, even as they tried to pare down the size of a

woman's dowry and the number of items that might be included in her trousseau. Despite laws passed to outlaw these excesses, the costs of trousseaux and marriage gifts continued to rise. Women's elaborate consumption of clothing, town authorities feared, discouraged many men from marrying. In Florence and other towns, they introduced new taxes that discriminated against men who had failed to wed by a certain age in an effort to prod them into marriage. At the same time fears of male homosexuality grew in some cities as civic officials suspected that a perceived increase in sodomy resulted from male anxieties about the enormous costs of marriage. And finally, fears of population decline emerged as a result of the debate over women's fashions. In 1512, for example, the Republic of Venice faced the threat of an attack from the powerful forces of the League of Cambrai. That year in the midst of these troubles the Venetian Senate spent a month debating the cut of women's clothes and the finery that was permissible on their dresses in order to limit the costs of female fashions. Like civic officials elsewhere, Venice's town fathers perceived women's opulent dress as a barrier to marriage. Their line of reasoning ultimately linked the city's costly fashions with the military crisis, since they credited women's excesses with lengthening the age at which men might marry and thus with depressing the birth rate and ultimately limiting the number of men who might be recruited to serve in the city's army and navy.

**MORAL ATTITUDES.** Prospective husbands and town authorities detested fashion as a costly excess that threatened family and the home front. The attitudes of the friars—members of the Franciscan and Dominican orders within the church—were even more uncompromising, and arose from long-standing interpretations of Christian teaching. In the fifteenth century a distinguished lineage of Franciscan and Dominican preachers, including St. Bernard of Siena and St. John Capistrano, toured Italy denouncing women's fashions, gaming, prostitution, and Jewish money lending as vain practices that encouraged sexual depravity. In Italian cities the preaching of these figures concluded with huge "bonfires of the vanities" into which men threw their cards, dice, and gaming boards, and women tossed their ruffles and frills. In the wake of these rituals of purification Italy's towns redoubled their efforts to confine the activities of the Jews, often insisting that Jewish men and women wear some distinguishing sign on their clothing to make their identity plain for all to see. They linked Jewish money lending with luxury consumption, and banished prostitutes from cities in the days and weeks that followed the friars' preaching missions. In all cases, the



Engraving of Girolamo Savonarola. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

prostitutes returned within a few months, but they faced closer scrutiny and limited activity for a time after the friars' missions. The relationship between Jewish money lending, prostitution, and women's finery was close in the friars' perceptions. As they explained in their sermons, women's seemingly insatiable appetite for fashion encouraged single men to spurn marriage for sodomy or sexual relations with a prostitute, even as it forced the married man to Jewish money lenders to support his wife's consuming habits. One of the most vicious and extreme outbreaks of these sentiments occurred in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century, as the Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola attracted a following in the city and tried to establish a "Godly" republic. In daily sermons he preached from December 1494 until his downfall and execution in 1498, Savonarola encouraged Florentines to establish a "New Jerusalem" free from the vices of avarice and ostentation. Frequent religious processions and "bonfires of the vanities" popularized the rise of a new holy republic, as many Florentines tried to rid themselves of every hint of immodesty, including their rich finery and games. At the same time, Savonarola's puritanism remained unpopular

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE EVILS OF APPAREL**

**INTRODUCTION:** Attacks on clothing styles as a symptom of pride stretched back to the Middle Ages. Even in the late sixteenth century, the Puritan minister Phillip Stubbes continued to denigrate fashion in ways similar to many medieval preachers. His *Anatomy of Abuses*, published in London in 1583, recounted a dialogue between a philosopher and a student concerning the evils of pride, in which the philosopher identified pride as a threefold sin that included pride of the heart, of the mouth, and of apparel. Stubbes claimed that pride of apparel was the worst of the vainglorious sins. His claim that his own country England was most given to “newfangledness” and innovation in style might have been vigorously disputed by the many critics of fashion who wrote at the time in all European countries. Each critic seemed always to be convinced that their own nation was most affected by the disease of fashion.

S[tudent]: How is Pride of Apparel committed?

P[hilosopher]: By wearing of Apparel more gorgeous, sumptuous, and precious than our state, calling, or condition of life requires, whereby, we are puffed up into Pride, and forced to think of ourselves more than we ought, being but vile earth and miserable sinners. And this sin of apparel (as I have said before) hurts more than the other two [sins of pride], for the sin of the heart, hurts none but the Author in whom it breeds, so long as it hurts not forth into the exterior action: And the Pride of the Mouth, which consists, as I have said, in offending and bragging of some singular virtue, either in oneself or in his kindred, and which he arrogates to himself (as it were by hereditary possession, or lineal descent from his progenitors) though it be mere ungodly in its own nature, yet it is not permanent. ... But this sin of excess in Apparel remains as an example of evil before our eyes, and it is provocative to sin, as experience daily proves.

S: Would you not have men to observe a decency, a comeliness, and a decorum in their visual Attire?

Does not the word of God command all things to be done ... decently and after a civil manner?

P: Yes truly, I would wish that a decency, a comely order, as you say, a decorum were observed, as well in attire, as in all things else. But would God the contrary were not true. For do not most of our novel inventions and newfangled fashions, rather deform us, than adorn us, disguise us, than become us? Making us rather to resemble savage beasts ... [rather] than continent, sober and chaste Christians?

S: Hath this contagious infection of Pride in apparel infected and poisoned any other countries besides Ailgna [England], suppose you?

P: No doubt but this poison of Pride hath shed forth his influence, and poured forth his stinking dregs over all the face of the earth, but yet I am sure, there is not any people under the Zodiac of heaven ... so poisoned with this ... Pride ... as Ailgna (England). ...

S: But I have heard them say that other nations ... [wear] exquisite finery in Apparel, the Italians, the Athenians, the Spaniards, the Chaldeans, Helvetians, Zuitzers, Venetians, Muscovites, and such like. ...

P: This is but a ... cloak to cover their own shame ... The Egyptians are said never to have changed their fashion, or altered the form of their attire from the beginning to this date ... The Greeks are said to use but one kind of Apparel without any change, that is to wit, a long gown, reaching down to the ground. The Germans are thought to be so precise in observing one uniform fashion in apparel as they have never receded from their first original ... The Muscovites, Athenians, Italians, Brasilians, Africans, Asians, Cantabrians, Hungarians, Ethiopians ... are so far behind the people of Ailgna (England), in exquisiteness of Apparel that they esteem it little or not at all.

**SOURCE:** Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomy of Abuses*. (London, 1583): fol. cir–ciir. Text modernized by Phil Soergel.

with the aristocratic and wealthy element in Florence, who taunted him at his public sermons. Thus while the Dominican developed a significant following in the city, members of the government were not always as enthusiastic about adopting his policies as the law of the town. Excommunicated for his anti-papal views, Savonarola was eventually arrested in Florence, tried, and burnt at the stake for heresy. Although his plans for a “Godly Re-

public” failed, his extreme puritanical views about the relationship between clothing and morality survived, and religious figures as different as the English Puritans and the Catholic Counter Reformers expressed similar views in the sixteenth century.

**SUMPTUARY LEGISLATION.** While moral and social reasons prompted Renaissance Italians to regulate dress, sumptuary laws—laws aimed to curtail extravagance in

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SUMPTUARY LAW**

**INTRODUCTION:** Cities and kingdoms throughout Europe passed frequent sumptuary laws between the fourteenth and the eighteenth centuries to restrict the consumption of fashionable clothing. England's sumptuary laws were typical of Northern European states in that they set out categories of clothes that could be worn by different classes of people. Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) did so by setting out a model of what clothes were permissible to be worn by the categories of people who comprised her own household and then enjoining her subjects to hold to the same rules in the country. This excerpt from a 1577 proclamation of one such law explains patiently that previous laws have had little effect on curbing waste in clothing. Elizabeth, in fact, republished these laws at least five times in her reign, and each subsequent proclamation noted that her subjects were not heeding the restrictions. The higher members of her court, though, enthusiastically consumed the articles that were permitted to them, and Elizabeth herself cut a daring sartorial figure as she matured in her office.

Whereas the Queen's Majesty has by sundry former Proclamations notified unto her loving Subjects of this Realm, the great inconvenience and mischief that hath grown to the same by the great excess of apparel in all states and degrees, but specially in the inferior sort, contrary to divers laws and statutes of the Realm, whereof notwithstanding there hath followed no redress or very little at all; whereby hath appeared no less contempt in the offenders, than lack of dutiful care in those to whom the authority to see due execution of the laws and orders provided in that behalf was committed, which thing might give her Majesty just cause (were it not that of her own gracious disposition she is naturally inclined rather to clemency than severity, so long as there is any hope of redress otherwise) to commit the execution of the said laws, to such persons as would have proceeded therein with all

extremity. Notwithstanding her Majesty meaning to make some further trial, before we have recourse to extreme remedies, and finding upon conference had with the Lords and others of her privy counsel, for the redress of so grievous and pernicious a sore in this commonwealth, the chief remedies for the same, to be example, and correction. Her Majesty therefore for the first, which is example, thinks it very meet and expedient that the due execution in her Majesty's most honorable house, of such orders and articles as are annexed to this Proclamation, should serve for a pattern throughout the whole Realm, and therefore her Majesty hath already given, and by these presents doth give special charge to all those that bear office within the said house, to see due observation of the same, which she trusts will be duly observed. And further her Majesty doth generally charge all Noblemen, of what estate or degree so ever they be, and all and every person of her privy counsel, all archbishops, and bishops, and the rest of the clergy, and all other persons, according to their degrees that they do respectively see the same speedily and duly executed in their private households and families. And likewise does [she] charge all mayors and other head offices of cities and towns corporate, the chancellors of both the universities, governors of colleges, readers, ancients and benchers in every Inns of Court and Chancery, and generally all that have any superiority or government over and upon any society or fellowship, and each man in his own household for their children and servants, that the likewise do cause the said orders to be straightly kept by all lawful means that they can.

**SOURCE:** Elizabeth I of England, Proclamation entitled *By the Queene: Whereas the Queen's Maiesty hath by sundry former proclamations notified unto her loving subjects of this realm, the great inconvenience and mischief that hath grown to the same, by the great excess of apparel in all states and degrees.* (London: Richard Jugge, 1577). Text modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

dress—were a common feature of life everywhere in Renaissance Europe. While maintaining a common base in Christian morality, these laws varied from region to region. In France and England, Renaissance sumptuary laws served to reinforce social distinctions and status, with certain items being reserved for the exclusive use of the nobility. In England, a series of Tudor sumptuary laws detailed the kinds of fur, fringes, and cloth that were appropriate for each class. While such regulations eventually spread to Mediterranean Europe, the far greater inspiration for Italian sumptuary regulation lay in the

climate of intense competition that existed within the peninsula's cities. Towns feared that the rivalries in gift-giving and lavish clothes surrounding marriage squandered resources and discouraged men to marry. In Germany, cities and territories also had a long tradition of sumptuary legislation, and they relied on various codes of dress to make obvious distinctions between different categories and classes of people. In particular, Germany's urban sumptuary laws upheld differences in the patterns of dress among guild masters, journeymen, and apprentices. While in most places sumptuary violations merely

resulted in fines, from time to time offenders received more extreme punishments. In 1541, for example, the Protestant reformer John Calvin gained control over the church in the city of Geneva in Switzerland. Among the many moral reforms that Calvin instituted were a stricter prosecution of those who violated the traditional prohibitions against luxury, ostentation, and display. He also tried to curb immodesty by bans on the display of women's busts. During the almost quarter century that Calvin dominated the city, sumptuary violations resulted in more than 800 arrests and as many as 58 death sentences. The rigor of Geneva's sumptuary laws was extreme, however. Most Protestants and Catholics differed little in their attitudes toward sumptuary laws, favoring fines rather than death sentences for violations.

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#### FASHION AS AN INDUSTRY

**CLOTHING.** While moralists and city officials perceived ostentation and display as a threat to urban society, a large class of wealthy consumers in Renaissance towns admired fashion for its innovations and its ability to express individual tastes. By the fifteenth century a category of wealthy consumers no longer feared ostentatious dress as a sign of concupiscence, the chief evil the friars had identified in lavish clothes. In medieval and Renaissance terminology concupiscence was any strong desire that might lead one to the even greater sins of avarice and sexual depravity. As wealthy Renaissance men and women shed their fears of ruffles and finery, the fashion market expanded in towns like Florence and Venice. By the fifteenth century a vast number of tailors, seamstresses, accessory producers, furriers, glove

makers, cobblers, and leatherworkers produced the daily wear and grand costumes consumed in Italian cities. The clothing industry was by this time as varied and complex as the modern "rag trade" is today, and while most of the men and women who toiled in the industry earned low wages, great and middle ranks of tailors who catered to the whims and demands of the city's rich became increasingly common. Their presence in a town like Florence—a city lacking a court and a hereditary aristocracy—points to the development of a style-conscious elite who relied on fashion to express their wealth and family position as well as their individual preferences. Honorable men, Florentines frequently repeated, were created out of "cloth and color." Thus the first glimmers of the modern consumer society can be found in a Renaissance city like Florence, where fashion emerged as an important expression of one's individual identity.

**SILKS AND WOOLENS.** In Italy, the standard measure for cutting cloth was the *braccio*, a length that differed from city to city but which usually was about 22 to 26 inches long. In Rome, though, the standard was considerably longer, measuring almost thirty inches. In those towns where the cloth trade was a vital part of the local economy, a bronze measuring stick was often affixed on the exterior of the town hall or on the cloth guilding's offices, so that merchants might be sure that they were receiving the correct length of material from local suppliers. Shorting on the weights and measures of raw materials used in the construction of clothing was a serious offense. The cost of fine fabric of the type used in the upper classes' gowns, doublets, and robes fluctuated dramatically, but began at around three florins per braccio for woolens and escalated to twenty florins for the finest silks. Since the grandest men's robes and women's gowns might consume up to 20, 30, or even 35 braccio of material, the cost of fabric used in these garments was enormous. A family of four, for example, could live in Renaissance Florence at a minimal standard in the fifteenth century for sixty or seventy florins annually. Many gowns and robes of the period thus consumed in fabric alone far more than most people's annual incomes. Cloth was expensive for a number of reasons. First, the weaving of wool or silk was a time-intensive project. It required more than 25 steps to produce a length of woollen cloth and nine steps to produce a similar length of silk. Wool had first to be carded and spun into yarn before it was woven, bleached, and stretched. The dying of most fabric occurred after it had been formed into cloth and subjected to more than twenty separate production steps. The cost of dyes varied enormously, with red being the favored color for men's cloth-

## WOOL Imports

*The great merchant Francesco Datini presided over the weaving of wool in the Tuscan town of Prato, just outside Florence. Datini was a pious man whose more than 140,000 letters provide one of the great collections of evidence concerning Renaissance commerce. He was also fiercely competitive and amassed a considerable fortune. A relatively self-made man, he often kept his suppliers waiting for months for payment. In her classic biography of Datini, the twentieth-century historian Iris Origo describes the shrewd way in which Datini imported English wool, buying up the raw material from abbeys throughout the island even before the sheep had been shorn. At the same time, Datini was a pioneer in outsourcing, for he also bought up woollen cloth that had been woven in England because it could be sold more cheaply in Italy and throughout Europe than what he could have woven in his own workshops.*

It was, of course, exceedingly important to avoid any delay in buying up the clip. At the beginning of the century the papal tax-collectors who purchased English wool from the great abbeys often reserved the amount of the clip they wanted, even before the sheep were shorn, and this custom apparently still survived in some places, for there is a letter to Datini from Francesco Tornabuoni and Domenico Caccini and Co. of London apologizing for some wool from Cirencester which had proved unsatisfactory by saying that he had been obliged to buy up the clip before seeing it. "For one must buy in advance from all the Abbeys, and especially from this one, which is considered the best ..."

The wool—which was classified as "good," "middle," or "young," was exported either in sacks of shorn and wound wool from the clip or as wool-fells (i.e., sheepskins with the wool still on them, collected after the Martinmas slaying)—240 wool-fells, for purpose of taxation, being considered equal to one sack. The wool was brought in to the great barns of the sleepy Cotswold villages, weighed and valued and packed and carded and sold, after much hard bargaining, to the highest bidder, and was then loaded on pack-horses and brought to London, where it was weighed for custom and subsidy, and shipped off with the next merchantman who set sail for the Mediterranean ...

Datini imported to Tuscany not only wool but cloth—which may at first sight seem surprising, since he had a cloth-manufacturing company of his own. It must, however, be remembered that English cloth was not only good, but cheap, since English manufacturers had the great advantage over their Italian or Flemish competitors of first-rate raw material on the spot, and since the English export tax on cloth was then only about 2 per cent, while that on wool was about 33 per cent. Moreover, fine English cloth seems also already to have been fashionable, for we find Datini ... buying "6 scarlet berrette, dyed in England" for his own use. The types of cloth he imported were Essex cloth ... in various colours, Guildford cloth ... in various colours, and unbleached cloth ... from the Cotswolds and Winchester, while there is also one record of two bales of "Scottish cloth" sent from Bruges to Majorca.

**SOURCE:** Iris Origo, *The Merchant of Prato*. (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1957): 57–58.

ing of the time. A wide array of red dyes was available, and the discriminating consumer could distinguish quite easily between those colors that were expensive and cheaper hues. Other colors favored by Renaissance elites included black, purple, and a deep blue violet. Although the weaving of wool was labor- and time-intensive, the industry's returns were far less than those in silk production. Because of the great profits generated by the silk industry, the weaving of this fabric eventually outpaced the production of woolens in Renaissance Italy in many cities. Florence and Venice gave important tax incentives to spur the production of silk, realizing the important revenue that might be generated from the industry. By the mid-fifteenth century Florence's government encouraged the planting of mulberry trees throughout Tuscany, from which the precious cocoons that provided silk's raw material might be grown. Silk

required only nine steps to produce, but the finer thread necessitated a complex, time-consuming weaving process. It might take up to six months to weave a length of luxury silk suitable for making two gowns. Beyond the higher returns of silk production, other factors made it a desirable industry for cities. The higher incomes of the silk weavers made them generally more satisfied and less contentious than wool weavers, and the bigger profits from silk allowed a city to tax it more lucratively than wool. In Italy, the production of many different kinds of luxury silks became popular. These included an array of velvets, taffetas, damasks, and cloth of gold. This last kind of fabric had gold or silver threads woven into them in a number of stunning patterns that caught the light. Sumptuary laws enacted throughout Europe restricted its use; in England regulations permitted it only for nobles of the highest rank, and in Renaissance Italy it could



only be used on women's sleeves. At twenty florins per braccio it was the highest priced fabric of the age.

**CLOTHING PRODUCERS.** Renaissance men and women usually purchased their cloth directly from producers in the cities before taking these materials to a tailor to be sewn. In many European cities tailors had their own guilds that defined training requirements and set prices for garments. In other towns, those who produced clothing worked in many guilds, depending upon which kind of clothing they produced. In Florence, for instance, some tailors and seamstresses had originally belonged to the city's luxury retail guild before moving into the silk guild. Over time, however, only the producers of the most luxurious garments like male doublets (an elaborate vest worn under a man's robes) maintained their affiliation in these guilds. Eventually most Florentine tailors worked within the guild of secondhand clothiers, men and women who bought up the linens and clothing of the deceased in order to resell them. This guild organized the first "ready-to-wear" marketplace within Florence, and its members also sold silk hats, purses, gloves, and a variety of other fashion accessories. Most of the tailors who belonged to this group ranked among the middle level of artisans in the city, while the most successful had considerable fortunes. Generally, tailors earned only modest incomes in spite of their high level of skills, although the status of the profession increased during the fifteenth century. Female tailors earned less than their male counterparts since they generally served less distinguished clients. The greatest tailors—admittedly a small circle within the guild—moved easily within the cultivated palaces of the time and sometimes became trusted confidantes of their most important clients. Most of these artisans, though, spent their days in less rarefied surroundings.

**SUPPLIERS AND CRAFTSPEOPLE.** Besides tailors, a complex web of craftspeople also served the clothing industry in all cities. Milliners, cobblers, hosiers, purse makers, furriers, and goldsmiths were just a few of the many categories of artisans who produced clothing and accessories. The labor market was highly stratified, with the makers of slippers falling under different regulations than those who produced shoes or clogs. The guilds carefully monitored the activities of each, ensuring that one group did not stray into another's territory. In addition, the guilds supervised with minute detail just exactly how much each kind of artisan might charge for its work, and they defined the kinds of materials each was to use in production. Beret makers, for instance, were distinguished from those who made hats out of wool or silk, while those who made clasps and buckles were further

separated from those who produced buttons. While a tailor might be responsible for the final sewing of a garment, he sewed the final gown or doublet only after extensive work had been done on the materials by embroiderers, furriers, or goldsmiths. Beyond work performed by guildsmen, a variety of other clothiers worked outside these structures, producing lace, veils, scarves, and other items that were part of a complete dressing ensemble. Many of those producers who worked outside the guilds were independent vendors who crowded into a city's back alleys or sold their wares by going door to door. They were usually female, with reputations for being aggressive salespeople. At Florence, these women vendors were notorious for their brash manners and for encouraging the women to whom they sold to buy more than they needed.

**SEWING AT HOME.** More sewing was done at home—even in the houses of the very wealthiest families—than in modern times. Some seamstresses did not sew but merely cut material for clothes that could then be sewn by women in the home, thus keeping the costs of daily dress down. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the popularity of underwear was on the rise, and the records and letters of great families show that it was the mistress of the household's job to see that her husband, children, and servants had the proper undergarments. To do so, even many of the wealthiest women usually visited a linen retailer to purchase a bolt of the cloth before she and her daughters set to sewing the chemises, undergarments, and nightcaps for the household. Even high-ranking women acquired skill with the needle and thread, and great families with a daughter in a convent frequently sent her sewing projects to fill the day. Although nuns only wore plain habits, many of them spent their time sewing for others. Lace- and purse making as well as embroidery were crafts that were frequently practiced in the Renaissance convent.

**OCCASIONS.** As in modern times, Renaissance urban life required different kinds of clothes, depending on the occasion. The men who governed Florence, Venice, and other cities dressed in a dignified, yet magnificent style when in public or conducting affairs of state. Advice books written by humanists counseled men to have their clothes made of the finest fabrics and grand materials in order to prolong their wear and to reflect favorably on their family and city. They cautioned women, on the other hand, to be restrained in choosing clothes to wear at home, although the wives of great men dressed in grand splendor when accompanying their husbands at public occasions. There were many such events annually in Florence and other important Renaissance

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***WOMEN'S DRESS**

**INTRODUCTION:** In the early fifteenth century the Venetian humanist Francesco Barbaro wrote his treatise *On Wifely Duties*. Besides doling out a great deal of advice to women on how to get along with their husbands, Barbaro treated the manner in which the wife should dress. In many humanist treatises of the time, the man of affairs was urged to adopt a magnificent, yet restrained attire. Barbaro, on the other hand, encourages women to avoid waste and to avoid dressing to give pleasure to other men. The only judge of a woman's clothes that mattered was her husband.

**SOURCE:** Francesco Barbaro, "On Wifely Duties," in *The Earthly Republic*. Trans. and Ed. B. G. Kohl and R. G. Witts (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978): 206–208.

cities. Florence, for example, celebrated at least twenty important feast days each year, in addition to weddings and those affairs demanded by public offices. In this last category, royal visits, the arrival of ambassadors, and state banquets called for those who held urban office and their wives to don their finest clothes. In Italy, most great families kept a logbook that recorded their major purchases, and these included entries for cloth and dress accessories as well as notes about when a tailor had been hired to complete an outfit. These records show that the greatest merchant families of the Renaissance paid endless amounts of attention to their dress throughout the year as the cycle of public festivities and state occasions demanded a steady influx of new garments for public life.

**COSTS.** Generally, the enormous costs of the wealthy's garments resulted from the high price of materials. The clothes of kings, nobles, and merchant princes consumed an inordinate amount of costly silks, velvets, and woolens, and they were generally bulkier than those worn by society's lower orders. Servants and

slaves wore clothes that were shorter and made over patterns that consumed relatively little material. By contrast, the huge, bulky folds of men's robes and women's skirts represented wealth and often slowed the steps of the wealthy to a crawl, lending dignity to the important person's gait. Stories abounded of women who appeared to be weighted down under the dresses they wore on important occasions, and in at least one case a young Renaissance bride had to be carried to her wedding because her dress was too heavy to walk in. The expenditures of Renaissance patricians and merchants differed widely across the spectrum of the upper classes. Prosperous, but not enormously wealthy merchant families spent more each year on clothing than the annual salaries of many venerable professions, including accountants, university professors, and tax collectors. Above this, the inventories conducted at death from some of the wealthiest members of the Renaissance urban elite show that as much as one-third to forty percent of a family's wealth might be invested in clothing.



Portrait of Lucrezia Borgia. © LEONARD DE SELVA/CORBIS.

Yet nowhere in the cities were expenditures comparable to the enormous amounts spent on clothing in Renaissance courts. The records of these courts indicate an enormous increase in clothing costs during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1502, Pope Alexander VI married his illegitimate daughter, Lucrezia Borgia, to Alfonso I, duke of Ferrara. She came to Ferrara with a total of more than 80 gowns, 200 day dresses, 22 head-dresses, 20 robes and cloaks, 50 pairs of shoes, and more than 30 pairs of slippers. One of her dresses alone was worth the princely sum of 15,000 ducats. Her jewelry collection included almost 2,000 pearls and 300 gemstones, and in addition, she packed in her trunks another 2,500 yards of precious satins, silks, gold cloth, and velvet to be made into dresses at a later date. To transport her luggage from Rome to Ferrara her father the pope had to have a number of wagons specially constructed, and more than 150 mules were necessary to pull this caravan. Lucrezia Borgia was certainly an extraordinary case, yet as the Medici family in Florence rose to become dukes in the sixteenth century, they, too, emulated such expenditures. Duke Lorenzo de Medici's personal clothing expenses for the year 1515 alone totaled more than 5,100 florins, a truly unbelievable sum when one considers that many respectable professions had incomes of less than 100 florins annually.

**WEDDINGS.** Renaissance families lavished the greatest care on the creation of gowns for a bride's wedding and the garments that were part of her trousseau. Two ceremonies—one of betrothal, the other of the formal wedding—marked the couple's entrance into married life. The betrothal usually took place some months or years before the actual wedding. At this ceremony, the couple exchanged the words of consent ("I take you to be my lawfully wedded wife") that established marriage. The church's teachings dictated, however, that unions be sexually consummated before they were legally binding, and consummation occurred at a distinctly later date, that is, after the formal exchange of marriage vows at the wedding. During the intervening period, both the bride and groom's family completed the financial exchanges necessary for the marriage to occur. In this period, a great deal of effort went into the creation of the bride's gown for the wedding feast as well as the items that made up her trousseau. During these months the groom also prepared for the coming celebrations by seeing to the creation of the bride's "counter-trousseau," that is, the gifts of clothing, jewelry, and items that he was to offer his bride at the time of the wedding. Of all the preparations, families of brides showered the greatest attention on the actual creation of the wedding gown itself. Sisters, mothers, cousins, aunts, and uncles all weighed in with their opinions about the dress, but in most cases the father of the bride took the active role in determining what kind of dress his daughter wore and in choosing its fabric and decorations. While no Renaissance merchant's daughter ever approached the level of luxury accorded a royal princess, the costs of these gowns was nevertheless enormous, with prosperous, but not wealthy merchants sometimes spending several hundred florins on the gown itself. Pearls and other gems frequently decorated these dresses that grew more complex and magnificent the further up the social ladder one went.

**CONCLUSIONS.** While preachers and civic officials castigated women throughout the Renaissance for their costly wardrobes, the evidence suggests that men lavished just as much attention on their clothes as women did. The life of a public figure in the Renaissance required careful dressing to project the right image. The preparation of outfits worn at civic events consumed a family's time and money. In fifteenth century Florence, great families might spend as much as forty percent of their wealth on clothing. These upper-class styles favored bulk and ostentatious display, and a complex web of suppliers served this clientele. Tailors and seamstresses represented just one segment of those involved in the clothing



Late eighteenth-century French fashion plate depicting fashions of Renaissance England. HULTON ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

industry, as many small suppliers churned out the accessories, trims, buttons, and other items needed for dress. Guilds mostly controlled workers in these professions, but small independent suppliers sometimes carved out niches in the trade in certain accessories, much to the guilds' chagrin. Tailors themselves were among the middle ranks of a town's artisans, less prosperous than goldsmiths and other master craftsmen. While their status was lower than those in the great trades, the fondness of Renaissance men and women for clothing helped to boost their position within the urban hierarchy. The greatest of these figures, those who clothed great merchant princes like the Medici and Strozzi families at Florence, mingled with elites and sometimes became trusted figures within great Renaissance households.

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#### EARLY RENAISSANCE STYLES

**REGIONAL VARIATIONS.** Urban and courtly clothing differed greatly from region to region throughout the Renaissance, with the styles favored in England vastly different from those of southern France or Italy. One factor that sustained this regional variation was the numerous sumptuary laws enacted in various European cities and states. Whereas a law in one place might forbid an item to be used in dressing, another place might allow it, and the highly specific laws designed to contain fashion's excesses frequently inspired new styles. Florentine law, for instance, forbade the use of embroidery and decoration on women's clothing for many decades, except at the sleeves. Thus sleeves were often one of the most complex parts of women's outfits, and Florentine tailors began to create detachable sleeves that might be adapted for wear on several different gowns. While tailors often devised cleverly ingenious fashion solutions to circumvent the letter of the law, they had to be careful in doing so since tailors and seamstresses who violated sumptuary legislation were liable for the same fines



Engraving of a woman wearing chopines, platform shoes. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

that might be levied on a woman or man who wore an offending style. Thus both those who bought and those who created clothing set their minds to creating fashion that might be accommodated within the law's restrictions. Towns, for instance, frequently prohibited the sewing of dresses and robes with stripes made out of pieced cloth since these fashions wasted material. But if a regulation forbade vertical stripes, tailors might create similar daring effects by running the pieced materials horizontally or by demanding that weavers produce new fabric to achieve similar effects. In this way the repertory of fashion continued to be enlarged despite the seemingly draconian regulations designed to contain it. At the same time the ingenuity of tailors and consumers sustained an ongoing climate of restriction throughout the Renaissance as civic and state "fashion police" kept abreast of the latest styles. The result produced a constant flow of fashion regulations, with a town like Florence producing eighty revisions of its laws governing fashion between roughly 1300 and 1500. As a group,

these laws form part of the largest body of legislation to survive from the Renaissance, with thousands of such laws surviving from a region like Germany alone.

**COURTLY STYLES.** While fashion tended to differ greatly throughout Europe, certain international patterns influenced the courtly styles favored in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. For most of the fourteenth century clothing fashions emanated from the royal court in France to be adopted by nobles in England and other Northern European regions. In this period, patterns of dress in Germany, Italy, and Spain, however, continued to evidence strong regional variations. Men in the fourteenth-century French court adopted a close-fitting padded garment known as the *jupon*, which they wore beneath elaborate robes. The popularity of the *jupon* spread to many regions throughout the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, inspiring the later fashion of the doublet, a fitted vestcoat that became a highly decorated expression of status. The fourteenth century witnessed the development of new more elastic hosiery fabrics, and men laced these new hose to ever shorter, tighter *jupons*. Outer robes grew ever shorter to show off the line of a man's legs, leaving a man's buttocks, thighs, and groin relatively exposed under the thin hosiery's material to the dismay of moralists. The clothing styles favored by both French men and women made extensive use of buttons as a sign of wealth and status, with close-fitting, many buttoned sleeves becoming a favorite fashion of women. An innovation of the mid-fourteenth century was the growing tendency for women's bodices to be sewn separately from their skirts, a fashion that opened up new possibilities for decorating each along different lines. At the same time necklines plunged deeper and sleeves grew longer. The dominant style of shoe at the French court, the *poulaine*, was a long pointed-toe construction. The *poulaine* was particularly well-suited to Northern European styles of dancing known as the *bassedanse* as it elegantly extended the line of the foot.

**CITIES.** By contrast the styles worn in the early Renaissance cities were distinctly more practical and egalitarian. The vast artistic legacy of the period has left us with a great wealth of depictions of contemporary urban dress. During the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, a tradition of sumptuary legislation gave Italian fashions a distinctly republican flavor that downplayed extravagance in favor of a restrained use of ornament and clothes that had relatively simple lines. This style of dress expressed an egalitarian consciousness that was common in the cities among artisans and merchants, and which frequently had an anti-aristocratic edge. Even patri-



Detail from a painting showing fifteenth-century poulaines, spikered-toe footwear. MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.

cians—nobles who lived within the cities—usually adopted this reserved pattern of early Renaissance dress. Male artisans clothed themselves in simple belted tunics and hose that had soles at the feet, while the civic officials of the Renaissance city wore bulky gowns and robes with rolled hoods. Generally, these garments were not decorated, although the quality of the cloth distinguished upper classes from those of the poorer classes. Women of the time wore woolen gowns or long-sleeved day shifts that covered the body from head to toe. Over these, the working woman wore an apron to protect her garments from soiling. Since all clothing was expensive, working-class women patched their garments or remade them into new styles. Both the skirts of the upper and working classes contained a large amount of material at the front, and the depictions of women in Renaissance paintings often feature them holding these shocks of material artfully to one side. The extra material served the purpose of allowing working women to use the same clothes during pregnancy and upper-class women to disguise whether they were pregnant or not at any given time. Upper-class women seldom showed themselves on the streets of a Renaissance city. Instead they hid themselves from the “prying” eyes of common people and only appeared at events among members of their own class. Thus while the ceremonial outfits of these women were often ostentatious and highly decorated, they were not for public display. One fashion innovation readily adopted by upper-class Renaissance women was the wearing of *chopines*, a form of tall platform shoe first introduced in Venice. Made of cork, wood, or leather, the chopines’ platforms could be as high as 18 to 24 inches. Since

sumptuary legislation often prohibited women from wearing long trains that consumed inordinate amounts of cloth, the chopines’ extreme elevation permitted women to consume more fabric in their dresses while also allowing them to avoid the effects of mud puddles and garbage in the street. The custom was controversial, and as the style spread among wealthy women in Italy and Spain it prompted increasing criticism. In Venice, moralists attacked it as a custom similar to the Chinese binding of feet, and in Spain, royal officials and priests claimed that the chopines’ enormous platform soles would destroy the country’s cork oak forests. Others charged that prostitutes had introduced the style, and in some cities laws limited the wearing of chopines to women of that profession. Civic officials contended that the hobbling gait such shoes produced was better suited as a sign of “distinction” to these women than it was to those from respectable families.

**GROWING SPLENDOR.** As Italians developed their more severe fifteenth-century public styles, the lavish life of the court of Burgundy dominated court dress in Northern Europe. Officially a French territory, the duchy’s counts began a meteoric rise to European prominence at the end of the fifteenth century by conducting astute marriage alliances and military conquests. The troubles of the Hundred Years’ War had diverted the attention of their feudal overlords, the kings of France, who were powerless to prevent the duchy’s increasingly enviable position. By the early fifteenth century Burgundy had captured a large area of European territory, including much of northern France, the Netherlands or

Low Countries (modern Belgium, Luxembourg, and Holland), and Lorraine. Enriched by the Flemish cities' cloth industry, the dukes of Burgundy developed the most brilliant court in Europe, noted for its music, dance, poetry, and fashion. At Burgundy, the fashion for many elegant styles reached new, often eccentric extremes, with high-pointed and multi-peaked headdresses becoming common for women. The elongated *poulaines*, the pointed shoe that was French in origin, reached new fashionable excesses, as their toe peaks sometimes had to be tied to men's knees. Like fifteenth-century Italians, Burgundy's courtiers favored sumptuous reds, from which we take the modern term "Burgundy" to describe the color's deeply tinged shades. Gowns at the Burgundian court and among the Flemish burghers who fueled the territory's prosperity were richly decorated and fashioned from brocade, damask, and other luxuriously patterned fabrics. Cloth of gold, too, was widely used at court as well as elaborate jewelry. Men's styles continued to creep northward, so that the *jupons* or doublets of the period now only rarely covered a man's buttocks. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, long-standing legend alleges, Burgundy may have also played a role in the development of one of the Renaissance's most puzzling fashions. After Swiss and German mercenaries defeated the duchy's forces at Nancy in 1477, they stormed the duke's tents, which had been hastily left behind in the retreat. The soldiers tore the rich fabrics and tapestries that they found there and tied them through the slashes and holes that had been made in their clothes during the preceding battle. Returning home, this penchant for slashing and slitting clothing was said to have spread in Germany and Switzerland before becoming one of the fashion rages throughout Europe after 1500. While a fascinating tale, the rage for slashing clothes and decorating them with richly contrasting fabrics probably did not arise from a single source. Yet the elaborate display, sumptuous fabrics, and oddly exaggerated styles that were typical of Burgundian taste seem to have captivated the imaginations of wealthy Europeans everywhere as the fifteenth century came to a close. In Italy, where the public dress of wealthy merchants had often been restrained in the city republics, a new trend of purely luxurious consumption became popular. In Florence and other wealthy cities, a taste for elaborate, detachable, and merely decorative sleeves, ornate headdresses, casually unlaced bodices, and a number of other purely decorative items like berets and caps for men swept through wealthy urban society. The once reigning ethos that stressed dignified restraint as a way to create an aura of magnificence now disappeared in favor of pat-

terns of dressing that emphasized the ability of the wealthy merchant class to rise above merely utilitarian considerations. In this way the clothing of the wealthy, but non-aristocratic Italians resembled more closely patterns of court dress popular at the same time in European principalities.

**PEASANT CLOTHING.** Historians are best informed about the patterns of dressing that predominated in Europe's cities and courts. The rich artistic legacy as well as the many inventories that survive from these quarters of society have left us with rich testimony of the vital importance that clothing played among the nobility and wealthy elites in the continent's cities. Surprisingly less is known about the ways in which peasant society dressed. In the nineteenth century, those that were interested in the history of costume often turned to the countryside and found certain regional or peasant patterns of dress. They reasoned that these were "traditional" costumes that had existed from many centuries. In truth, the terms "fashion" or "costume" to describe the clothing of peasants in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance is inappropriate, and although there were regional variations in traditional Europe, the clothing of the peasantry seems everywhere to have displayed more similarities than differences. One of the most distinctive differences between city and country in the Renaissance, in fact, was in clothing. While in the city one could witness a great variegation in the ways in which people dressed—with patricians and great merchants adopting clothing that displayed their status and wealth—the clothing of peasants was primarily functional. In the countryside men and women rarely had more than two or three changes of clothing, and styles altered relatively slowly over time. The difference between rural and urban dress is all the more surprising when we bear in mind that many in the countryside possessed significant financial resources. Not all peasants were, after all, poor, although many did live at the subsistence level. Whereas powerful urban elites and aristocrats came in the course of the Renaissance to adorn themselves with costly fabrics, gold jewelry, and other precious materials, life in the countryside admitted no such extravagances. The gold that a peasant earned as a result of selling his goods at market very often went into hiding—that is, it was hoarded as a hedge against future crises—rather than spent on finery. Those peasants that were better off still circulated goods, clothing, and other valuable items at the marriages of their sons and daughters, although on a far less grand scale than in the countryside. Daily wear for rural peasants at the beginning of the Renaissance

seems to have showed a considerable similarity across European regions. In the fourteenth century long tunics were still popular for both men and women. By the sixteenth century, simple, ankle length skirts for women had replaced the medieval tunic. Over this peasant women often worn an apron. For men, hose or leggings were donned separately for each leg, while a simple jerkin was worn as outerwear over the torso. By this time, underwear of rough linen had become the rule, even in the countryside. The fabric used for peasant clothes was either homespun, or was purchased cheaply in urban markets. Fabrics constructed from hemp and beaten tree bark were used in regions where the wool trade was undeveloped. Elsewhere coarse, rather than finely spun wool and roughly woven linens were common materials as well. The clothing of the more than 90 percent of peasants was considerably more monochromatic than in the cities, too. Grey, black, white, ivory, and brown were favored over other more brilliantly colored cloth, although rural dress was not without color. Those reared in the cities would have been readily able to distinguish the costly dyes used to give color to the clothes of the wealthy in the cities from the cheaper dyes worn in the countryside. Although leather-soled shoes came into use in Europe at the end of the fifteenth century, wooden clogs and wooden-soled shoes were more popular among peasants than in the city. If peasant outfits were generally constructed from rougher materials, they were not necessarily less comfortable than those worn by courtly and urban elites. Wool provided warmth, a consideration in the cold and damp climate of Europe, and if the character of peasant clothing was more roughly hewn than in aristocratic or merchant societies, it may have all the same been even more comfortable. Peasants did not wear corsets or farthingales, two of the more uncomfortable and constricting garments of the age. Nor were starched collars, known as ruffs, an item of country dress throughout the Renaissance.

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## HIGH AND LATE RENAISSANCE FASHION

**COURT FASHION.** During the first half of the sixteenth century most courts throughout Europe adopted successive waves of styles in both male and female dress. Around 1500, a taste for German styles became evident, but fashions that were Italian in origin soon superseded them. As a result of these trends, courtly dress tended to shake off many older regional styles and instead become more international in appearance. Similar changes refashioned the dress of bourgeois urban society as well, so that by the mid-sixteenth century the clothes of the most urbane city dwellers in Flanders appeared roughly similar to Italians of the time. This internationalization of style, though, held only in courtly and upper-class urban societies, and even there, an elite foreigner might be embarrassed by the cut of his clothes when he visited another country. Peasant dress and the styles of most artisans and the urban proletariat still continued to differ greatly from region to region. One factor that helped establish the new international styles at court was aristocratic marriage alliances. A case in point is the rise of the *farthingale* throughout sixteenth-century Europe. *Farthingales* were broad hoop skirts that extended the lines of women's hips through a contraption made of wood, hoops, and rope. The style originated in Castile in Iberia (modern-day Spain and Portugal), but spread throughout Europe as the ambitious marriage policy of the Castilian dynasty sent its princesses to other countries. Catherine of Aragon was the first to wear the skirt in England, and at about the same time it appeared in France at the court of Francis I (r. 1515–1547). In both places attacks on the farthingale were common, and moralists charged that it so deformed and accentuated a woman's childbearing parts that it was impossible to tell whether a woman who wore it was pregnant or not, and thus it might promote sexual depravity. Despite such attacks the style continued to make headway in court circles, and by the second half of the sixteenth century its perceived dangers had by and large been dismissed. It became a favorite of Elizabeth I (r. 1559–1603), and was worn widely throughout her court in England, as well as in France, Germany, and Italy.

**ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BODY.** The farthingale excited public opinion by distorting the body's contours, a trend that affected many sixteenth-century styles, particularly those popular in aristocratic circles up to 1550. Clothes of this period remade the human form by pushing, squeezing, pulling, or in some other





Portrait of Marie de' Medici, queen of France. © ALI MEYER/CORBIS.



Portrait of Elenore of Toledo. © FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS.

way exaggerating the body. Among the fashion accessories of the age, the corset was an important innovation worn by both men and women. For men, these tight-fitting, whale-boned undergarments shaped the upper body for the form-fitting doublets popular at the time. For women, they were used at first to flatten the bust, and somewhat later in the century to taper the body toward the waist so that women's torsos took on the shape of an inverted funnel. Another item of dress that came to be greatly elaborated and increasingly important at the time was the codpiece, an accessory that had originally been developed to hide men's crotches as doublet hemlines rose in the later Middle Ages. By the mid-sixteenth century, however, the codpiece took on a heightened importance as an expression of male virility. It was enlarged and frequently covered with decorative touches, including sequins, striped fabric, and other ornaments. Reaching its height of decoration around 1550, the codpiece soon became more restrained, but not after exciting considerable commentary from sixteenth-century preachers and moralists. Codpieces, like farthingales, point to some of the underlying attitudes about style in the first half of the sixteenth century. Unlike the free-flowing, relatively unconstrained robes of the later Middle Ages and the

early Renaissance, the stylish man and woman of this period perceived the body as badly in need of enhancement. The human form required discipline and had to be transformed into what it was not in order to appear stylish. Similarities exist between these attitudes and the roughly contemporaneous Mannerist movement among artists. Mannerist painters, in both Italy and Northern Europe, promoted a "stylish style" notable for its artificiality, elongation, and distortion. Similarly, the clothes that were popular in elite society at this time distended and constricted the human body, making some body parts appear larger, longer, or smaller than they were in reality. In these distortions the stylistic mentality of the first half of the sixteenth century proclaimed a taste for the exotic and the exaggeratedly elegant.

**FASHION SHIFTS.** Around 1550, aristocratic styles shifted in court circles throughout Europe rather quickly to favor new influences from Spain. German fashions had given birth to a craze for slashing fabric and for making exotic cuts that allowed the undergarments to show through. Italy's contribution to court style had consisted in the elegant juxtaposition of costly materials. The cut of Spanish clothes, however, was altogether different. Often restrained and given to long lines, Spanish tailoring

was widely admired for its excellent fit, which closely followed the lines of the upper body. While Spanish court women favored the farthingale (known in Spain as the *verdugado*) and the elaborate ruffed collar for formal occasions, they also chose clothes that were more severe and restrained than those that had been common in courtly circles in the first half of the sixteenth century. Both men's and women's choices of colors were more limited, favoring deep reds, greens, and black, rather than the bright colors of the earlier period. Indeed a taste for black often became synonymous with the notion of "Spanish style," although the court originally adopted this color in large part because of the protracted period of mourning that Philip II (r. 1556–1598) observed after the death of his first wife, Maria of Portugal, in 1545. Philip II's marriage to Mary I of England in 1554 helped to establish the Spanish style in England, and Spain's dominance in the international arena during the second half of the sixteenth century ensured that its court fashions were imitated almost everywhere in Europe. Besides the high starched ruff at the neckline of men's and women's clothes, the use of a limited color palette, and an emphasis on restrained, yet grand tailoring, another fashionable innovation associated with the Spanish Habsburgs and their noble courtiers was the hooded cape.

#### ELIZABETHAN AND THE EARLY STUART COURT.

By the end of the century the surviving records of the court of Elizabeth I provide us with a unique glimpse of how the monarch and her court dressed. Elizabeth had a reputation for thriftiness, but she spared little on her dress and that of her court. A number of her portraits show the care she obviously put into choosing her wardrobe. In fact, these portraits are usually far more detailed and accurate representations of her costume than they are of the monarch herself. Following the sixteenth-century court custom, an artist only hastily sketched Elizabeth's image, but took her clothes back to the studio to faithfully copy every element of their finery. As a young monarch, Elizabeth was not known for the quality of the clothes she wore, although as she matured she developed an inimitable style. She favored the drum farthingale and the high starched ruff that developed in imitation of Spanish court dress. Her clothes were heavily embroidered and beautifully produced. Fragments from at least one of Elizabeth's outfits survive, a heavily embroidered jacket and other items she presented to Sir Roger Wodehouse of Norfolk after spending an evening in his house during 1578. This custom was common since clothing had a recognized worth, and Elizabeth's courtiers often used items of dress to settle their debts. The Norfolk outfit shows that she was a small person,



Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I of England. © CORBIS.

and it is richly embroidered with silver and gold sequins. During the 1570s and 1580s Elizabeth favored many-colored gowns, and in her old age her style grew only slightly more restrained. While the finery of the Elizabethan court was considerable, Elizabeth frequently reused embroidered finery, gems, and adapted them into the succeeding years' styles. Still, estimates of Elizabeth's dress collection alleged that she may have had as many as 3,000 gowns made while queen, and that 500 of these were still in her wardrobe near the time of her death. These were apparently left to Queen Anne, wife of her successor James I, who had many of them refashioned for her own use. James I generally increased the splendor of dress at English court in the first years of his reign. Where Elizabeth had spent around £10,000 a year to clothe herself and ranking members of her court in the last years of her reign, the first years of James' ascendancy saw a fourfold increase in the cost of court clothing. Thereafter James' enormous expenditures on court finery grew, reaching a high point of £66,000 during 1612. At the time the humble profession of a wool spinner earned less than £6 annually, and a London craftsman less than £20 per year. Those that James appointed to the post of Master of the Wardrobes continually tried to introduce greater economy into the court's clothing,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**TAMING A SHREW**

**INTRODUCTION:** William Shakespeare, like many Renaissance authors, relied on clothing as a metaphor for the fashioning of the self. In his *Taming of the Shrew*, the hero Petruchio tames Katherina, his restless wife, in part, by breaking her taste for the latest fashion. He presents her with a dress and tailor to clothe her to attend her sister's wedding and then proceeds to rip the gown to shreds in front of her. The scene is also notable for its many mentions of different fashions of the late sixteenth century.

**Petruchio:** ... And now, my honey love,  
Will we return unto thy father's house  
And revel it as bravely as the best,  
With silken coats and caps, and golden  
rings,  
With ruffs and cuffs and farthingales and  
things,  
With scarfs and fans and double change of  
brav'ry.  
With amber bracelets, beads, and all this  
knav'ry.  
What, hast thou din'd? The tailor stays thy  
leisure,  
To deck thy body with his ruffling treasure.  
[Enter Tailor]  
Come, tailor, let us see these ornaments;  
Lay forth the gown. [Enter Haberdasher]  
What news with you, sir?

**Haberdasher:** Here is the cap your worship did  
bespeak.

**Petruchio:** Why, this was moulded on a porringer;  
A velvet dish. Fie, fie! 'tis lewd and filthy;  
Why, 'tis a cockle or a walnut-shell,  
A knack, a toy, a trick, a baby's cap.  
Away with it. Come, let me have a bigger.

**Katherina:** I'll have no bigger; this doth fit the time,  
And gentlewomen wear such caps as these.

**Petruchio:** When you are gentle, you shall have one  
too,  
And not till then.

**Hortensio:** [Aside] That will not be in haste.

**Katherina:** Why, sir, I trust I may have leave to speak;  
And speak I will. I am no child, no babe.  
Your betters have endur'd me say my mind,  
And if you cannot, best you stop your ears.  
My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,  
Or else my heart, concealing it, will break;  
And rather than it shall, I will be free  
Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words.

**Petruchio:** Why, thou say'st true; it is a paltry cap,  
A custard-coffin, a bauble, a silken pie;  
I love thee well in that thou lik'st it not.

**Katherina:** Love me or love me not, I like the cap;  
And it I will have, or I will have none. [Exit  
Haberdasher]

**Petruchio:** Thy gown? Why, ay. Come, tailor, let us  
see't.  
O mercy, God! what masquing stuff is here?  
What's this? A sleeve? 'Tis like a demi-  
cannon.  
What, up and down, carv'd like an  
appletart?

Here's snip and nip and cut and slish and  
slash,

Like to a censer in a barber's shop.

Why, what a devil's name, tailor, call'st thou  
this?

**Hortensio:** [Aside] I see she's like to have neither cap  
nor gown.

**Tailor:** You bid me make it orderly and well,  
According to the fashion and the time.

**Petruchio:** Marry, and did; but if you be rememb'ed,  
I did not bid you mar it to the time.  
Go, hop me over every kennel home,  
For you shall hop without my custom, sir.  
I'll none of it; hence! make your best of it.

**Katherina:** I never saw a better fashion'd gown,  
More quaint, more pleasing, nor more  
commendable;  
Belike you mean to make a puppet of me.

**Petruchio:** Why, true; he means to make a puppet of  
thee.

**Tailor:** She says your worship means to make a puppet  
of her.

**Petruchio:** O monstrous arrogance! Thou liest, thou  
thread, thou thimble,  
Thou yard, three-quarters, half-yard, quarter,  
nail,  
Thou flea, thou nit, thou winter-cricket thou-  
Brav'd in mine own house with a skein of  
thread!

Away, thou rag, thou quantity, thou  
remnant;

Or I shall so bemetee thee with thy yard  
As thou shalt think on prating whilst thou  
liv'st!

I tell thee, I, that thou hast marr'd her  
gown.

**SOURCE:** William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act  
IV, Scene 3.

but with few long-term effects. Graft and corruption significantly inflated the costs that James' court paid for its wardrobe. But even when this is taken into account, the finery must have been striking. James' level of expenditure was enormous, particularly so when one considers that England was, by European standards, a relatively poor country at the time.

**COMMON PEOPLE.** Throughout the Renaissance, fashion had been largely a game in which only aristocrats and wealthy city dwellers might participate due to the exorbitant cost of handwoven cloth. The vast majority of society—from craftsmen, to the urban proletariat and peasantry—remained largely unconcerned about the cut of their clothes. Hand-me-downs were a common fact of life, and patching or remaking clothes to suit new circumstances was an everyday event for most people. Fashion played no role in these societies. Toward the very end of the sixteenth century evidence points to the growth of consumption among broader segments of the population. Still, it was to be at least another century before a majority of the population developed the kind of fashion consciousness that wealthy merchants and nobles evidenced during the Renaissance. A key invention in this development was William Lee's perfection of a knitting machine in 1589. Lee, a clergyman in London, applied for a royal patent for his efforts, but Elizabeth I denied his request because she feared the invention would put large numbers of people out of work. The Renaissance's technological base thus continued to prove too rudimentary to provide luxury goods like finely woven or knitted cloth to the majority of the population. Without automation, the lavish display typical of upper-class clothing continued to have the whiff of immorality and luxury for vast portions of the population. Upper-class innovations in dress had long been criticized for its excess and senseless patterns of change, and as the Renaissance approached its conclusion, fashion's critics continued to charge that the ever-changing bazaar of style deformed the body and made it into an object of rampant sexual desire. Critics also blamed fashion's constant patterns of change for contributing to the squandering of family and state resources. Even so, a barely perceptible but undeniable change in attitude during the sixteenth century made comfort and luxury more acceptable in the eyes of the general population, an attitude that solidified with the emergence of a consumer society in Europe around 1700. In 1530, the humanist moral philosopher Desiderius Erasmus wrote a little tract entitled *On Good Manners*, to teach civility to young male students. Much of Erasmus' advice seems strikingly modern, while other parts express the traditional atti-

tudes of his age. Erasmus counseled his readers on how to stand, sit, walk, and even blow one's nose. But when he considered dress, he cautioned young men from thinking too much about their clothes. Instead they should ensure they were clean and tidily presented. Erasmus further advised his readers to avoid innovations at all costs: "Slashed garments are for fools; embroidered and multicolored ones for idiots and apes." In his opinion, fashion was an affectation of the rich which did little more than flaunt magnificence and bring before the eyes of the less fortunate their own wretchedness. As a result, its offspring were jealousy and hatred. Within a generation or two after Erasmus wrote, Jesuit missionaries made their way to the New World and the Far East. In their letters and journals some of these figures noted the absence of changing styles of dress among the Indians and the Japanese. Fashion, long attacked and criticized throughout the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance, had thus entered into the warp of the European mentality. It was to remain there as an important part of the economy and as a symbol of cultural vitality, imagination, and decadence until modern times.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Fashion*

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### BERNARD OF SIENA

1380–1444

*Franciscan preacher*

**NOBLE BIRTH.** Bernard of Siena was born, not in the town of Siena but in the seaport of Massa Maritima,

where his father, a Sienese noble, was living at the time. He was orphaned at an early age and decided on a religious life after spending time caring for the sick and dying during an outbreak of the plague in 1400. He joined the Franciscan order in 1402, becoming a member of a strict Observant monastery in the order. At the time the Observant movement within the Franciscans championed an austere and disciplined interpretation of the rules of the order, emulating St. Francis' initial asceticism and poverty. Bernard soon developed skill as a preacher and began to conduct missions in and around his convent, which was near Siena, and in other cities throughout northern Italy. His fame as a preacher spread far and wide through a hugely successful mission he undertook during 1417. Transcripts of some of Bernard's surviving sermons illustrate his colorful style. He ranged over a broad variety of topics, including sexuality, heresy, domestic life, and clothing. He spiced these sermons with a common touch, including the use of bawdy sexual humor. The paintings that survive of his missions show that his audience was largely women, and those who heard him recorded that he often grew exasperated when his listeners grew restless.

**BONFIRES OF THE VANITIES.** Bernard of Siena's preaching missions made skillful use of religious ritual as well. He designed an emblem that included a seal made from the letters "YHS," which stood for the Holy Name of Jesus. After whipping his audience into a frenzy of enthusiasm through his skillful rhetoric, he often concluded his sermons by holding up the emblem to the roars and cheers of the crowd. Like Catherine of Siena and other figures revered for their pious lives, he also engaged in peacemaking, mediating disputes in the Italian cities and encouraging combatants to adopt the YHS seal to replace their factional banners. His heavy reliance on the "Holy Name of Jesus" worried some clerical officials at the time because they feared that it led his audiences into idolatry. While Bernard was known for his peacekeeping skills among Christians, he was not so sanguine with those that stood outside the church's fold. His sermons frequently attacked the Jews for their money lending and pawn brokering, and prostitutes were also a frequent target as well. On the positive side, he did help to inspire movements that redeemed women out of prostitution by providing them with dowries so that they might marry. Later fifteenth-century preachers imitated his preaching missions, and elements of his style can be found in the sermons of St. John of Capistrano and the fiery rebel Girolamo Savonarola. These missions sometimes included dramatic public exorcisms, and they stirred weeping and intense displays of emotion from the

audience. They usually concluded with a huge "bonfire of the vanities," into which men threw their cards, dice, and gaming boards, while women cast off their lace, ruffles, and other finery. Given this level of emotion, prostitutes and Jews often temporarily left town when word of Bernard's impending visit spread.

**SAINTHOOD.** Bernard was already revered by many during his life for the saintliness of his behavior. He died during a preaching mission, and his cult quickly developed following his death. Reports of miracles associated with these relics were frequently broadcast in the years immediately after his death, and his canonization—that is his rise to an official saint of the church—had already occurred by 1450. In this role, his memory continued to live on since he was frequently a subject for religious altarpieces. His fiery sermons, which often forged a link between vain display and contemporary styles in clothing, also long outlasted his death.

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## LUCREZIA BORGIA

1480–1519

*Italian noblewoman*

**OTHERS' AMBITIONS.** Lucrezia Borgia was one of the most notorious of Italian noblewomen of the Renaissance. Her fame arose, not from her own ambitions but from those of her brother and father. Her father was a member of the Borgia, a noble family of mixed Spanish and Italian heritage, and in 1492, he became Pope Alexander VI. Her mother, Vannozza Cattanei, was her father's long-time mistress, and she bore him four children, including the famous Cesare Borgia, who became his father's right-hand man in the papal states during the 1490s.

**THREE MARRIAGES.** Lucrezia was married three times to suit the changing course of the Borgia's political ambitions. The first marriage was to Giovannia Sforza, lord of a small territory of Pesaro. In 1498, when the opportunity presented itself, Lucrezia's father annulled this marriage and wed her to Duke Alfonso of Buscaglia. Alfonso was the illegitimate son of the king of Naples, but in 1501, as a new opportunity beckoned, Lucrezia's brother Cesare had Alfonso assassinated. Finally, Lucrezia wed Alfonso D'Este, the powerful duke of Ferrara. In her capacity as duchess of Ferrara, Lucrezia presided over a

brilliant court. Among those who were affiliated with Ferrara during her rule as duchess were the poets Pietro Bembo and Ariosto and the humanist and printer Aldus Manutius. Despite her previous marital difficulties, Lucrezia made her husband an admirable wife and bore him seven children. The people of Ferrara, too, affectionately held her in high regard because of her numerous charitable activities in the small state. She died young, though, as a result of complications from childbirth.

**STYLE.** Long-standing rumors once linked Lucrezia with the suspicious deaths, not only of her second husband but of several other Italian nobles. Her notoriety, however, was largely the result of her relation to the ruthless figures of her father, Pope Alexander VI, and her grasping brother, Cesare. In her own time, though, Lucrezia was widely recognized in court circles for her style, and her dowry and trousseau were among the largest for a noblewoman of the early sixteenth century. Lucrezia came to Ferrara with one of the largest trousseau ever recorded up to this time, worth the princely sum of 15,000 ducats. While Lucrezia's impressive wedding ensemble was extraordinary, it points to the enormous role that clothes played in defining status and rank in the Renaissance world.

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## FRANCESCO DATINI

c. 1335–1410

*Cloth merchant*

**CORRESPONDENCE.** Francesco Datini's life is one of the best documented merchant stories in all European history. At his death he left behind almost 140,000 letters and a collection of more than 500 account books. His career may not have been extraordinary, but the degree of records his businesses produced have provided a rich mine for scholars anxious to reconstruct the history of one of Europe's most vigorous commercial centers in the early Renaissance.

**HUMBLE BIRTH.** Datini came from humble origins and lost his parents during the Black Death in 1348. When

he was about fifteen he left Florence and traveled to Avignon, which at the time was the capital of the Roman Church. There he began work in a Florentine business in the city. Like many later capitalists he shepherded his resources, eventually investing in the business. Within eight years of his arrival in Avignon, he had already acquired a significant fortune, although his success later in life was to outstrip vastly these early successes. In Avignon, Datini dabbled in all manner of business, including the selling of salt, dyes, gemstones, works of art, and military equipment, such as armor and daggers. When he was 47 he returned to Tuscany and took up residence in Prato, a small, but important trading center just outside Florence. Like other merchants of the day, he patronized scholarship, providing financial support for Lapo Mazzei's university studies. These two figures conducted an extensive correspondence, the letters of which revealed that Datini's business interests had become a significant burden in his later life that required him to spend a great deal of each day managing his enterprises. By the end of the fourteenth century, for example, Datini's interests had branched out from his early dabbling in retail and small trade. He now controlled a vast number of banking interests in trading companies. From Prato, his ties stretched out to firms in England, Flanders, Spain, the Near East, as well as the major Italian societies. By this time, Datini was also a major figure in the woolen industry, and he regularly imported huge amounts of fine English wool and finished English cloth to Italy. He kept a small portion of the wool he imported for his own woolen workshops, but also resold a great deal of the raw product to weavers throughout Tuscany. English cloth, while widely respected at the time, could also be sold cheaper in Italy because of its lower cost structure. Thus Datini was one of Europe's first outsourcers. Beyond these interests in the wool industry, the Merchant of Prato, as he came to be known, had a large amount of real estate at the time of his death, including more than seventy properties in and around Prato.

**TRENDS.** Datini's life and career shows the possibilities and limitations that existed within Renaissance society. Born relatively poor, he climbed the social and economic ladder in the urban world through a shrewd understanding of the new realities of trade. Like the Medici and other major Italian merchants of the time, Datini arranged all of his interests into an organization that resembled the modern industrial holding company. The branches of his business that stretched throughout Europe each constituted a separate company, although Datini retained controlling interest in their governance. In these ways he limited his liability, since if one of his business or banking interests failed, it did not threaten

his still healthy companies. He was also extremely pious, supporting charitable organizations and founding the *Casa del Ceppo* to aid poor children. Generally, he did not involve himself in politics, though he did spend a brief period as a civic official in Prato. Shrewd, high-handed, and arbitrary, he, like many other merchants of his time, often strung along his small suppliers, many of whom performed steps in the production of wool for his shop. Datini kept these poorer artisans and craftspeople in a servile position, often refusing to pay them for months on end for their work. His curious combination of religious sentiment, corrupt practices, business acumen, and entrepreneurial risk taking, though, is strikingly modern.

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## ELIZABETH I

1533–1603

### *Queen of England*

**EARLY TROUBLES.** The early years of Elizabeth's life were fraught with problems, largely brought about by the tempestuous marital career of her father, Henry VIII. Daughter of Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth had been conceived officially out of wedlock, and with the execution of her mother she grew up in the company of governesses and tutors, largely ignored by her father. Her early life was troubled, and during the reign of her sister, Mary Tudor, she was even suspected of treason. These problems left her ill-prepared for assuming the throne, but in 1558 Mary's death put Elizabeth in control of the state nonetheless, and despite ongoing problems she fashioned an enormously effective domination of her country.

**RELIGION AND POLITICS.** The advances that Elizabeth made in English government are too complex to be all but suggested here. In place of the religious factionalism and infighting that had dominated court and parliament during the previous 25 years, Elizabeth gradually achieved a mediating settlement that became styled as the *via media* or "middle way." In a famous statement she was alleged to have said that she had no intention of

"making windows onto men's souls," and so she cautiously reintroduced the Protestant *Book of Common Prayer*, with conciliatory nods toward Catholics. As her policy matured, she threatened those who questioned her moderate religious policy with fines, rather than death, although a number of staunch and prominent Catholics were indeed executed during her reign. During the Elizabethan period, too, the Puritans grew as an opposition party in Parliament. Although Elizabeth I skillfully maintained power despite their demands for increasingly definite Protestant reforms, she left her successor James I with many issues unresolved in this regard. At court, Elizabeth often played nobles against one another, but she was criticized for her pattern of favoring a succession of male courtiers. Some of these, like Robert Dudley, were married, inspiring rumors about her sexual depravity. At home, Elizabeth tried unsuccessfully to curb the changing styles and expensive fashions of her subjects. On many occasions she reissued her sumptuary laws, which were designed to designate status by limiting the consumption of rare and expensive items to the upper nobility. The constant reissuing of these royal edicts, however, demonstrates their ineffectiveness, although their prohibitions against imported items stand as evidence of the growing mercantilist spirit of her day. Mercantilism promoted the economic self-sufficiency of a country by trying to drastically reduce a country's imports.

**COURT CULTURE.** Although Elizabeth cut a rather austere figure at the outset of her reign, she adopted a fashion of dress that was increasingly grand as her reign progressed. An inventory conducted of her clothes before her death showed she had more than 500 gowns, and it was rumored that she had more than 3,000 of these elaborate dresses created during her reign. Tudor dress, like all sixteenth-century court clothing, was complex and many layered. Numerous items that made up an ensemble were reused year after year in new guises, thus much of the gem-embroidered finery in which Elizabeth was often depicted in her portraits were reusable. At the end of a season her maids carefully trimmed away the beads and other precious gems to be used in the next year's fashionable creations. Her clothing also had added use as costumes for the immensely popular court masques of the time or her dresses were passed on to courtiers for favors rendered. Thus while the scale of Tudor life was grand—clothing costs totaled almost £10,000 annually in the final years of Elizabeth's reign—the tenor of court life in England was more reserved than elsewhere in Europe.

**ACHIEVEMENT.** Elizabeth I came to power in England at a time when feminine monarchy was controver-

sial throughout Europe, and yet she managed in the 35 years of her reign to place her indelible stamp on the Tudor court and on her nation. She was more than adept at skillfully handling her opponents and in using faction to her own advantage. Internationally, Elizabeth largely kept England out of many continental intrigues, but in the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 she placed a powerful imprint on the politics of the sixteenth century. That victory, although only momentary since England fought Spain for another ten years, provided an enormous boost to the morale of Protestant states in Northern Europe. Under Elizabeth's guidance, a Protestant prince had succeeded in taking on the greatest Catholic power of the age. Her period also coincided with an unprecedented growth in English literature and the rise of the professional theater in London. Both institutions benefited from the relative peace and stability that Elizabeth provided as well as from her tangible patronage. At the same time, the queen was also imperious, stubborn, and vain. In her old age, for example, she dismissed the Earl of Essex from her patronage after he surprised her in her chambers and saw her without her makeup and wig. By this date the bloom of Elizabeth's reign had long since faded, and her popularity had waned, both among her courtiers who rarely received financial advantage from her, and among her subjects, who were by this time heavily taxed to pay for the golden aura of her court.

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### MARIE DE' MEDICI

1573–1642

*Queen of France*

**ART AND FASHION.** The propulsion of Marie de' Medici into the arena of high politics arose from the crisis of the French monarchy at the end of the sixteenth century. With the kingdom of France under a heavy burden of debt after more than thirty years of civil war, the country's new king, Henry of Navarre, divorced his wife, Marguerite de Valois, and married his niece, Marie de' Medici, in 1599. Henry owed Marie's father a lot of money, and as part of these marriage negotiations much of this debt was forgiven in exchange for a large portion of Marie's dowry. While Henry tried to introduce greater economy into the French court, particu-

larly concerning matters of dress, Marie was from the first one of the most fashionable women of Europe. Her early portraits show her obviously sumptuous style. In contrast to the relatively restrained Spanish tailoring that was popular in the late sixteenth century, Marie favored ermine, gem-embroidered gowns, and luxurious high ruffed collars. Her taste for lavish clothes was immortalized in a series of portraits and paintings on royal themes painted by the French artist Pourbus and eventually by the great seventeenth-century Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens. During Rubens' time as Marie de' Medici's court painter, he completed a series of 25 canvases that glorified the history of her life and royal mission. The relationship that developed between Rubens and Marie was a close one and gave rise to a correspondence. During her last period of exile Marie also stayed with her artist for a time in Flanders. In short, Marie de' Medici's life shows the close relationship that developed between fashion, art, and political power during the late Renaissance. Marie may have been a woman who played a high stakes political game and lost, but she astutely understood the necessity of fashioning an imposing royal image while she was involved in royal pursuits. Since the seventeenth century, though, the lavish face that she presented to her world has often been used to lend credence to the charge that she was but a mere fashion plate, instead of a woman against whom the forces of her times conspired.

**RISE TO POWER.** Marie de' Medici's rise to power began with the assassination of her husband, Henri IV, in 1610. On the day following his death, Marie convened a royal assembly, installing her son, the heir to the throne, beside her to show that she intended to exercise power in his name. This disregard for the traditional mourning period that followed a monarch's death scandalized the French court, but Marie persisted all the same in her attempts to dominate French politics. In the years immediately following the death of her husband, Marie recruited Rubens to glorify her role in French politics. In these paintings, which were originally housed in the Luxembourg Palace in Paris, the queen regent was elegantly displayed in all her finery. In her office she continued to pursue many of the same policies of her late husband, although her involvement in state affairs eventually resulted in her own exile from France in 1630, as she fell afoul of her son and his powerful minister, Cardinal Richelieu. Even in exile, though, Marie de' Medici continued to present herself in royal style, making imposing entries into cities in Flanders and Holland, clad in her royal finery. During this bleak period of her life, she spent time in her daughter's court in England, but



as the crisis of royal government worsened in that country she moved on to Cologne in 1641. She died not soon after, impoverished. Her application to her son, the king of France, for permission to be buried in the royal gravesite at St. Denis had been ignored during her life, but in the months following her death, Louis XIII granted her wish.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Fashion*

Leon Battista Alberti, *The Book of the Family* (c. 1435)—An advice book written for wealthy urban families, it discusses the different patterns of dressing that men and women ought to adopt.

Bernard of Siena, *Sermons* (c. 1410–1444)—These sermons provide insight into the piety of the later Middle Ages. Bernard links women's fashions of the day, Jewish usury, and prostitution, all in a lively way that held his mostly female audience captivated, and which encouraged them to throw their finery into "bonfires of the vanities" following these sermons.

Francesco Barbaro, *On Wifely Duties* (c. 1410)—This advice manual, intended for women and their husbands, counsels on all sort of problems arising out of marriage. One chapter treats the way in which women should dress themselves.

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (c. 1350)—Clothing and the cloth trade figure prominently in this major work of fiction. The final story of patient Griselda Boccaccio gave to the Renaissance a poignant tale about the role that men played in shaping women's dress, and he warned his readers that nobility of spirit was more important than fashionable dress.

Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (1527)—This is a major Renaissance advice book that treats the subject of dress and shows the mounting importance that elegant clothing played in the minds of courtiers of the day.

Francesco Datini, *Correspondence* (c. 1380–1410)—This is one of the largest collections of Italian letters to survive from the Renaissance. These detail the activities of Datini in the wool trade of the late fourteenth century.

William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594)—In this famous play, Shakespeare's hero uses clothing as one of the ways to tame a wild wife.

Philip Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583)—This is a late Renaissance indictment of fashion from the hand of a Puritan minister. Stubbes repeats many of the charges that had long been made against fashion's vanities over the past centuries and argues that "newfangledness" in fashion is chief among all the permutations of the sin of pride.

# 4 chapter four

## LITERATURE

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	118	<i>Observations On the Black Death</i> (prologue to Boccaccio's <i>Decameron</i> describing the bubonic plague) . . . . .	127
OVERVIEW . . . . .	121	<i>Advice to a Young Lady on the Study of Literature</i> (Bruni advises Baptista Malatesta on the study of literature) . . . . .	130
TOPICS		<i>Stanzas For a Jousting Match</i> (Poliziano's work about his pupil romancing a young woman) . . . . .	132
Early Renaissance Literature . . . . .	122	<i>The Pazzi Conspiracy</i> (Poliziano comments on the death of his pupil) . . . . .	133
The Fifteenth Century in Italy . . . . .	129	<i>A Tribute to Love</i> (example of Bembo's unique poetic style) . . . . .	137
The High and Later Renaissance . . . . .	135	<i>A Sonnet Lamenting Art</i> (Michelangelo's poem evaluating his devotion to art) . . . . .	139
The Northern Renaissance . . . . .	141	<i>An Attack On Monks and Scholastic Theologians</i> (Rabelais defends himself against monks and theologians) . . . . .	144
Renaissance Women Writers . . . . .	155	<i>Advice On Worldly Engagements</i> (prologue to Marguerite of Navarre's <i>Heptameron</i> ) . . . . .	145
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>A Statesman Imagines a Perfect Society</i> (excerpt from More's <i>Utopia</i> ) . . . . .	150
Pietro Aretino . . . . .	160	<i>On Women's Virtues</i> (excerpt from Pizan's feminist <i>Book of the City of Ladies</i> ) . . . . .	156
Giovanni Boccaccio . . . . .	161	<i>Love's Fire</i> (Louise Labé's passionate poem showing the duality of love) . . . . .	158
Marguerite of Navarre . . . . .	162		
Thomas More . . . . .	163		
Hans Sachs . . . . .	165		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	166		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
<i>Petrarch Considers the Nature of Poetry</i> (letter from Petrarch to his brother discussing the nature of poetry) . . . . .	123		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Literature*

- c. 1300 Humanism, with its emphasis on the works of classical Antiquity, begins to attract disciples in Italy.
- 1321 Dante Alighieri completes his *Divine Comedy*.
- 1341 Petrarch crowned poet laureate at Rome.
- c. 1350 Giovanni Boccaccio meets Petrarch, and Boccaccio's collection of stories, *The Decameron*, is completed.
- 1374 Petrarch dies, having achieved widespread fame through his literary works.  
  
Coluccio Salutati is called to Florence to become the town's first humanist-trained chancellor. In that capacity he will support the arts and humanities.
- 1375 Boccaccio dies.
- 1385 Chaucer writes *Troilus and Cryseide*.
- c. 1387 Geoffrey Chaucer begins the *Canterbury Tales* in Middle English. In the coming century, the language will evolve into its early-modern form.
- 1391 Salutati completes his *On the Labors of Hercules*, a study of the poetry related to Hercules. One year later he will discover letters written by Cicero in a library at Verona.
- 1396 Manuel Chrysoloras begins to teach Greek in Florence to the city's humanist scholars.
- 1400 Chaucer dies and is buried in Westminster Abbey, London.
- 1405 Christine de Pizan writes her classic *Book of the City of Ladies*, a work influenced by Giovanni Boccaccio's *On Famous Women*.
- 1427 Leonardo Bruni, an accomplished humanist and historian, accepts the post as Chancellor of the City of Florence.
- 1431 François Villon, greatest of France's fifteenth-century poets, is born.
- 1434 Leon Battista Alberti uses Tuscan Italian to compose his humanist tract *On the Family*.
- 1440 The Italian humanist Flavio Biondi completes his *Decades of History since the Decline of the Roman Empire*, a great contribution to medieval history.
- 1458 Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini becomes the first humanist pope. An active author, he will support scholars and build the Vatican Library as Pope Pius II.
- 1462 Lorenzo de' Medici appoints Marsilio Ficino to translate the works of Plato from Greek into Latin. Ficino's own mixture of Christian theology and Platonic teaching will have a tremendous impact on literature, particularly in its notion of Platonic Love.
- 1470 First printing press is established in the city of Paris. Two years later the technology will appear in Spain and by 1473, in Lyon, a city destined to become a center of humanist publishing.
- 1491 Froben publishing house is established in Basel; the Froben press will eventually become dominant in editions of humanist works in sixteenth-century Europe.
- 1492 Marguerite of Navarre, author of the *Hepameron*, is born.
- c. 1493 Fernando de Rojas writes *La Celestina* as a sixteen-act play; in novel form the *Celestina* will eventually become the

- sixteenth-century's best-loved piece of fiction.
- 1494 Sebastian Brant's satire, *Ship of Fools* is published.
- Hans Sachs, author of more than 6,000 poems, dialogues, and plays is born at Nuremberg.
- 1495 Aldine Press established by Aldus Manutius, a scholar. The press will maintain publishing houses in Rome and Venice and will become famous for its pocket size books and its publication of many Greek classics.
- 1496 John Colet arrives in Italy for three years of study with Renaissance Platonists, including Ficino and Mirandola. He will help to popularize Platonism in England upon his return in 1499.
- 1502 The German humanist Conrad Celtis publishes his *Four Books of Love Poetry*, the only one of his many writings that will be printed during his life.
- 1503 Sir Thomas Wyatt, the most accomplished poet of King Henry VIII's age, is born.
- 1505 Polydor Vergil, an Italian scholar who will become the best historian of the English Renaissance, arrives in England on an assignment from the pope.
- 1509 Desiderius Erasmus dedicates his *Praise of Folly* to his friend Thomas More.
- c. 1513 Baldassare Castiglione begins his *Book of the Courtier*.
- 1516 Sir Thomas More completes the second book of the *Utopia*. The first book and a complete edition of the work will be published two years later in Basel.
- In Italy, Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso (Mad Roland)* is published.
- 1528 The first edition of Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* appears. It soon becomes a model for many similar conduct books throughout Europe.
- 1529 Pietro Bembo, a great Italian and Latin stylist, is named official historian of the city of Venice.
- 1531 Beatus Rhenanus completes his *History of German Affairs* from documentary research and oversees the work's publication at Basel.
- 1532 François Rabelais publishes *Pantagruel*, a satirical novel.
- 1538 Pietro Aretino, an Italian who writes in the vernacular, begins publishing the first of six volumes of his personal letters. The popularity of these works encourages many similar editions of personal letters.
- 1539 First New World printing press is established.
- 1540 Francesco Guicciardini, historian and statesman of Florence, dies.
- 1547 The great Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes is born.
- Vittoria Colonna, the greatest Italian woman poet of the sixteenth century, dies with her friend, Michelangelo, at her side.
- 1549 The first Book of Common Prayer is required for use within the Church of England. The work's lofty language will influence the development of Elizabethan English in the later sixteenth century.
- The Pleiades, a group of seven French poets who adopt a strict classical style, is formed. The group takes its name from the Greek myth that surrounds this famous constellation. According to that legend, seven great Greek poets were transformed into the seven stars of the Pleiades upon their deaths in order to make them immortal.

Literature

- 1553 The French novelist François Rabelais dies.
- 1555 The *Works* of Louise Labé, greatest woman poet of the French Renaissance, are published.
- c. 1571 Michel de Montaigne begins his *Essays* in seclusion at his country home.
- 1577 Ralph Holinshed publishes his *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, while Sir Francis Drake sails around the globe.
- 1580 The first edition of Montaigne's *Essays* are published.
- 1590 Edmund Spenser completes his *Faerie Queene*.

## OVERVIEW of Literature

**EARLY RENAISSANCE LITERATURE.** Two developments shaped literature in fourteenth-century Italy. First, the humanist revival of the classics encouraged writers to adopt a new cultivated style in their writings and to develop new literary genres. Second, the works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio in the Tuscan dialect—the language used in and around the city of Florence—laid the foundations for early-modern Italian as a literary language. The masterpieces each of these three great literary figures wrote would provide models for later Renaissance writers.

**THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.** By 1400, most Italian writers had come to favor the gracious and elegant Latin and Italian style of Boccaccio and Petrarch, rather than the now seemingly dated Dante. During the course of the fifteenth century, the fashion for classical rhetoric, grammar, and vocabulary would inspire new efforts to revive a pure classical Latin, and humanist writers would criticize with increasing vehemence the barbarity of the medieval Latin used by the scholastics. Knowledge of Greek, too, would extend the Italians' understanding of the classical past, and would also deepen their vision of history. Humanist works of history would contribute to the literature of the age and would become a genre in which many scholars displayed their cultivated Italian and Latin prose. After 1450, literary tastes changed in Italy rather quickly. In place of the civic humanist attention to the arts of government, many writers in the second half of the century devoted their attention to lyric poetry, the pastoral, and chivalric romances. Numerous factors contributed to this change in tastes. In Florence and other Italian cities, a new longing for privacy and inwardness made the reading of literary works one of the chief recreations of the age. Literary endeavors were also more generously funded by Italy's urbane princes. And the spread of the printing press throughout the peninsula meant that writers could read and imitate successful texts more quickly than before. By the end of the fifteenth century a new self-assurance had emerged in

Italian literature. Writers no longer felt bound to imitate classical models, but instead experimented and often created new genres.

**THE HIGH AND LATER RENAISSANCE IN ITALY.** The sixteenth century opened with a brilliant episode in artistic and cultural life known as the "High Renaissance." In art, this movement coalesced around the stunning achievements of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael Sanzio, and Michelangelo Buonarroti. By 1520, the first two of these figures were dead and Michelangelo had begun to experiment with an altogether more personal and distorted style that would eventually become known as Mannerism. In literature a similar progression can be seen as writers imitated ancient models, particularly Cicero and Vergil in Latin prose and poetry, and Petrarch and Boccaccio in their Italian writings. Ciceronianism and the Italian literary movement known as *Bembismo* (after its chief proponent Pietro Bembo) stressed that the emulation of older literary models could provide artists with a sure style in which to express their individuality. Others, like Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Erasmus, and Castiglione, rejected the principle of literary imitation. The "question of language," as it came to be known, became a burning issue for Italy's literary theorists. Writers debated which genres were suited to Latin and which to Italian and what style should be used when writing in these languages. Court culture also left its mark on many of the classic works of the period. Courts favored a "stylish style" that demonstrated writers' technical proficiency and their mastery of the principles of elegant ease or *sprezzatura*. Finally, Petrarchism, a poetic movement that emulated Petrarch's fourteenth-century verse, appeared in Italy and quickly spread throughout Europe. Over the coming generations proponents of Petrarchism would produce an enormous quantity of verse, particularly of sonnets.

**THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE.** After 1450, humanism began to spread to areas outside Italy. Although Northern European universities often resisted the New Learning at first, humanists had established themselves in many places by 1500. The first impact of the new movement was a revival of classical Latin and the study of ancient languages. Most Northern Renaissance humanists did not turn immediately to write in their native languages. Over time, humanists adopted their vernacular, helping to produce a great flowering in sixteenth-century literature and the study of history.

**WOMEN WRITERS.** Literacy increased in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and with this rise came an expansion in the number of women writers. Around

1400, Christine de Pizan set out many of the issues that women would discuss in their writings over the coming generations. In her *Book of the City of Ladies*, she desired to rehabilitate women's virtues against the criticisms of men. The early feminism of her attack upon male attitudes would be evidenced in the work of later Renaissance writers like Laura Cereta, Veronica Franco, and Marguerite de Briet. Many Renaissance women authors, though, accepted male domination as part of the God-given order of the world. As the educational levels of wealthy city and noble women rose in the sixteenth century, women wrote enormous quantities of love poetry, religious commentary, and fiction. By the end of the sixteenth century these achievements had set the stage for the even greater participation of women in literature that occurred during the early-modern period.

## TOPICS *in Literature*

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### EARLY RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

**GROWTH OF ITALIAN.** During the fourteenth century Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374), and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) laid the foundations for Italian as a literary language. Around 1300, Dante became one of the first Europeans to discuss a subject that would become increasingly important during the Renaissance. In his *On the Vulgar Tongue* he considered what style was most appropriate for writers who decided to compose their works in their own native language, rather than in Latin. Dante advocated his own “sweet new style,” an elegant form of medieval Italian that was intended to please both the mind and the ear. In his great masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, Dante used the “sweet new style” to record his imaginary pilgrimage through hell, purgatory, and paradise. He intended this masterpiece, which he completed shortly before his death in 1321, to be a summation of everything he had learned in his life about philosophy, theology, and science. The *Comedy* expressed its author's profound faith that everything in the world operated according to the designs of God's will. Throughout the work humanity is caught in a divinely-controlled drama it cannot hope to influence, and human beings are ultimately powerless when judged against God's omnipotence. Dante's bleak and personal vision of the afterlife still ranks as one of the greatest masterpieces of world literature, and its influence in establishing Dante's own

language—the Tuscan Italian used in and around Florence—as a literary language was considerable. But by 1400, the new philosophical and literary movement known as humanism had altered literary tastes. To many of Italy's authors, Dante's “sweet, new style” seemed dated and old-fashioned. For inspiration, Italy's growing number of humanists would now turn to Petrarch and Boccaccio, the other two literary geniuses of the fourteenth century.

**HUMANISM.** Petrarch and Boccaccio were the two acknowledged geniuses among early Renaissance humanists. Humanism had begun to appear as an educational movement within the Italian cities during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In place of the scholastic curriculum of Europe's universities, which stressed logic and the disciplined proof of theological and philosophical principles, the humanists advocated study of the language arts, moral philosophy, and history. Petrarch, who is sometimes called the “Father of Humanism,” was the first of many of these scholars to achieve an international fame through his literary works. In a life devoted to writing and study, he tried to create a relevant personal philosophy guided by the works of classical Antiquity. In place of the austere vision of Dante and many medieval writers, Petrarch's works stressed that there was a place for the enjoyment of literature and the other good things that the world had to offer. Although he remained deeply traditional and Christian in his outlook, his philosophy emphasized that graceful writing and speaking might have a good end if used to encourage its audience to lead a virtuous life. Petrarch was not a systematic thinker; he frequently contradicted himself and at times adopted points of view that were in conflict with his earlier positions. But in both his Italian and Latin writings, Petrarch devoted himself to the cause of eloquence, making it the basis for a career that spread his fame throughout Europe.

**POETRY.** Petrarch wrote his philosophical works largely in Latin, while composing his poetry mostly in Italian. In some of his philosophical works, though, Petrarch argued that the art of poetry might have a philosophical function, an idea that would have puzzled most medieval thinkers. While poetry had not been neglected in the Middle Ages, it was seen more often than not as a kind of literary enjoyment and recreation that was incapable of conveying the profound truths of philosophy. In his *Divine Comedy* Dante had used poetry to address deep religious truths, but he had placed the ancient Roman poet, Vergil, within his creation to represent the limits of human reason. His choice of the acknowledged master of ancient poetry to personify

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***PETRARCH CONSIDERS THE NATURE OF POETRY**

**INTRODUCTION:** Petrarch, one of the Renaissance's foremost humanist writers of poetry and literature, was also an avid philosopher and theologian. But like most of his endeavors, it is through the written word that Petrarch delved into these topics in order to gain a higher and fuller understanding. In the following letter to his brother, Gherardo, Petrarch makes a case for the importance of poetry in understanding religion and theology. He references not only the allegorical and poetic nature of biblical texts, but also refers to Aristotle's *Poetics*, revealing his love of the antiquity as well as his need to rectify antique text with modern Renaissance religious ideals. Petrarch sees poetry as one of the many ways that humans can pay homage to higher powers, and equates the nature of writing poetry with such activities as building religious structures, such as temples, and going through religious orders to become priests and nuns. Petrarch's goal in this letter is to convince his brother that all poetry, regardless of the surface subject matter, is truly directed to God, and it is only the intelligent, patient person who is willing to take the time to read and understand the poetry that will truly understand its true purpose and in doing so, will become closer to God.

On the Nature of Poetry, to his Brother Gherardo

I judge, from what I know of your religious fervour, that you will feel a sort of repugnance toward the poem which I enclose in this letter, deeming it quite out of harmony with all your professions, and in direct opposition to your whole mode of thinking and living. But you must not be too hasty in your conclusions. What can be more foolish than to pronounce an opinion upon a subject that you have not investigated? The fact is, poetry is very far from being opposed to theology.

Does that surprise you? One may almost say that theology actually is poetry, poetry concerning God. To call Christ now a lion, now a lamb, now a worm, what pray is that if not poetical? And you will find thousands of such things in the Scriptures, so very many that I cannot attempt to enumerate them. What indeed are the parables

of our Saviour, in the Gospels, but words whose sound is foreign to their sense, or allegories, to use the technical term? But allegory is the very warp and weft of all poetry. Of course, though, the subject matter in the two cases is very different. That everyone will admit. In the one case it is God and things pertaining to him that are treated, in the other mere gods and mortal men.

Now we can see how Aristotle came to say that the first theologians and the first poets were one and the same. The very name of poet is proof that he was right. Inquiries have been made into the origin of that word; and, although the theories have varied somewhat, the most reasonable view on the whole is this: that in early days, when men were rude and unformed, but full of a burning desire—which is part of our very nature—to know the truth, and especially to learn about God, they began to feel sure that there really is some higher power that controls our destinies, and to deem it fitting that homage should be paid to this power, with all manner of reverence beyond that which is ever shown to men, and also with an august ceremonial. Therefore, just as they planned for grand abodes, which they called temples, and for consecrated servants, to whom they gave the name of priests, and for magnificent statues, and vessels of gold, and marble tables, and purple vestments, they also determined, in order that this feeling of homage might not remain unexpressed, to strive to win the favour of the deity by lofty words, subjecting the powers above to the softening influences of songs of praise, sacred hymns remote from all the forms of speech that pertain to common usage and to the affairs of state, and embellished moreover by numbers, which add a charm and drive tedium away. It behooved of course that this be done not in every-day fashion, but in a manner artful and carefully elaborated and a little strange. Now speech which was thus heightened was called in Greek *poetices*; so, very naturally, those who used it came to be called poets.

**SOURCE:** Petrarch, in *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters*. Ed. and Trans. J. H. Robinson (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1898): 261–263.

earthly knowledge expressed the traditional medieval judgments about the limits of poetic wisdom. By contrast, Petrarch argued that poetry could, through its use of metaphor, simile, and other literary devices, convey truths that were more profound than those derived from arid logic. Poetry could also appeal to the senses and captivate the imagination, and in these ways spur the mind and the human will to try to achieve virtue. While Petrarch developed this defense of poetry in his philo-

sophical works, most of his poetry celebrated human love. When he was 23, Petrarch was to have met his love Laura, the woman who would serve as his poetic muse for the remainder of his life. Whether Laura was real or imagined has never been definitely determined, but Petrarch always emphasized that his love for her went unrequited. For Petrarch, Laura became the subject of his most lyrical and influential poetry, the *Canzoniere* or *Songbook*. This collection would eventually



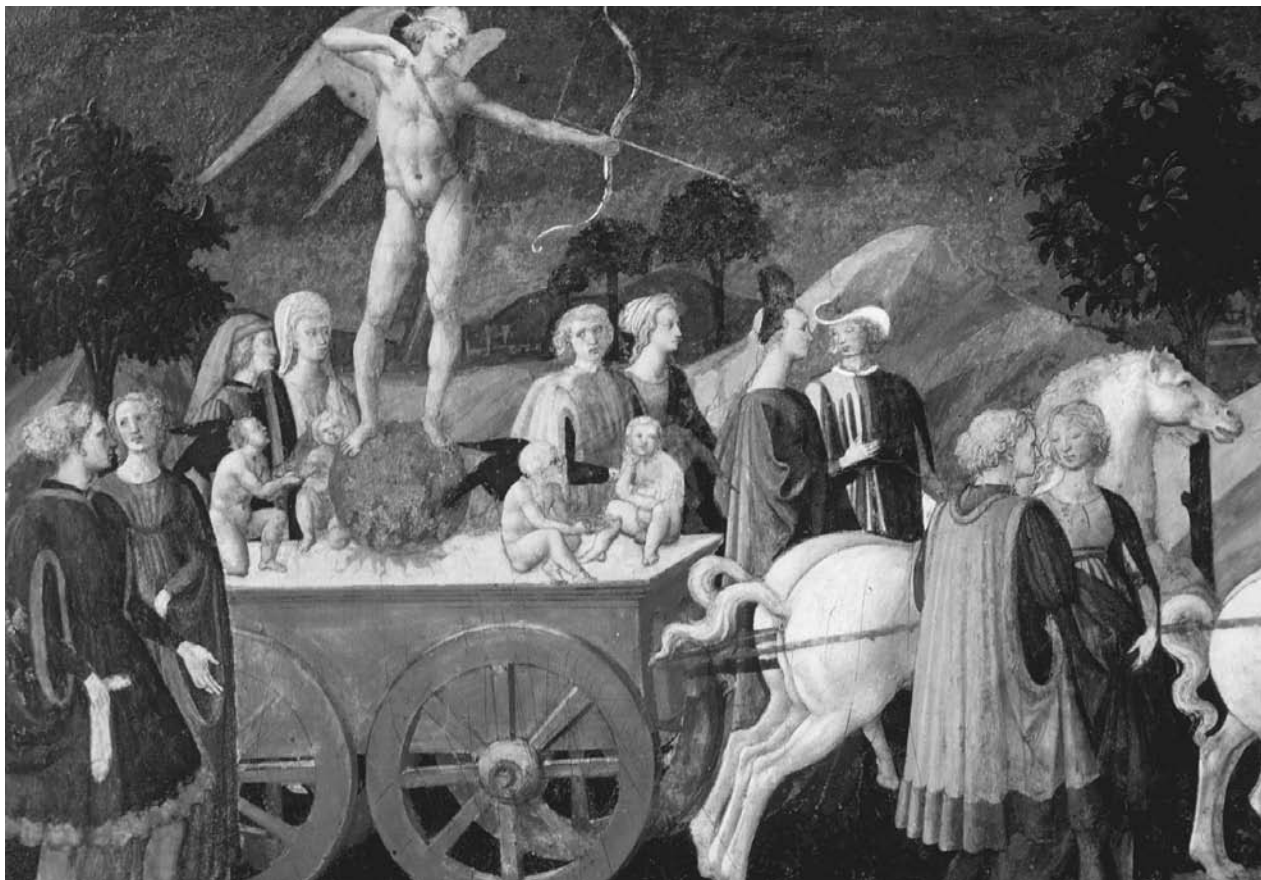


Portrait of Petrarch. ©BETTMANN/CORBIS.

include 366 poems, more than 300 of which would be written in the sonnet form Petrarch perfected. He wrote about two-thirds of these poems while Laura was living, and the other third after her death, but he often returned to polish the collection. Although Petrarch would discredit his Italian poetry later in life as youthful indulgence, he seems to have realized that it would form one of the foundations of his reputation. In them, Petrarch made use of the long tradition of love poetry from Ovid and Vergil, to the medieval troubadours, and to the Italian poets of the “sweet new style.” Petrarch transformed these influences, though, to create poems that were stunningly lyrical and profound in their psychological depth. They ranged over a variety of topics—love, death, politics, and religion—but somehow their most important subject emerges as Petrarch himself. He uses the poems, in other words, to present himself to his readers as a thoughtful and unique personality. Time and again Renaissance writers would return to these poems, and they would eventually be seen as setting the highest standard for verse treating love. During the sixteenth century, the style of the *Songbook* would even give rise to a literary movement known as “Petrarchism” in Italy that would spread throughout Europe.

**THE TRIUMPHS.** Petrarch’s collection of six poems treating triumphs also influenced later writers and artists, although their influence upon the art of the Renaissance was more profound than on literature. The *Triumphs* were written in rhymed triplets around 1355, when Petrarch was in his middle age. They depict a series of six victories that occur in a sequence. Petrarch richly describes symbolic battles between Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and Eternity. Each of these abstract nouns is personified, and each in turn experiences its own victory, but every one but the last, Eternity, is conquered in turn by another, more powerful figure. Through this sequence the *Triumphs* lead Petrarch to a final consoling realization. In the first poem, for example, the God of Love is victorious, as he leads famous historical lovers in bondage to the island of Cyprus. Soon, though, the figure of Chastity rises in the figure of Petrarch’s Laura. She rescues Love’s captives and steals the god’s bow and arrow, which she places in the Temple of Chastity at Rome. Chastity’s victory, too, is short-lived, as Death arrives to steal her and her ransomed lovers. In his grief Petrarch consoles himself that Fame triumphs over Death, since reputation and accomplishments outlive mortal life. But even Fame’s conquest is ephemeral because in the fifth poem, the God of Time’s decaying effects on human memory conquers Fame. In the final poem the God of Eternity conquers Time, a victory that reassures Petrarch. He realizes that in the infinity of Eternity, he will be able to enjoy the beauty and love of his Laura. Because of their rich visionary description, Petrarch’s *Triumphs* were frequently exploited by artists throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in paintings, tapestries, and even on furniture. Depictions of the *Triumphs* were most prominent on Renaissance dowry chests, which were the ceremonial caskets used to carry a woman’s dowry from her family’s house to her husband’s in the weeks that preceded her wedding. The *Triumphs* were usually included in the many manuscript and printed editions of the *Songbook* that circulated in the Renaissance. Although Petrarch downplayed their importance as he had the poems of the *Songbook*, he also returned to revise them many times, even in the months leading up to his death.

**LATIN WORKS.** Petrarch’s Italian verse would rank among his most important contributions to the literary traditions of the Renaissance. The impact of his Latin works, by contrast, would be felt most keenly among the humanist moral philosophers who followed him, and these works were generally less important in inspiring new literary themes and genres. His *The Secret, or the Soul’s Conflict with Desire*, an important philosophical



Il Pesellino's "The Triumphs of Love, Chastity, and Death," based on Petrarch's work. © BURSTEIN COLLECTION/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

work written in dialogue form, inspired many subsequent Renaissance dialogues. There were also some other notable exceptions among Petrarch's Latin works that would prove influential to later Renaissance authors. In his monumental poem, *Africa*, Petrarch turned to the history of the Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage and he treated the life and deeds of the Roman hero Scipio Africanus. Petrarch admired this work above all his other poetry, and its praise of Roman valor and the virtues of patriotism helped popularize the study of history among his humanist followers. He continued to praise Roman virtues in his collections of biographies entitled *The Lives of Illustrious Men* and his *Letters to the Ancient Dead*. But perhaps Petrarch's most important contribution to Latin literature during the Renaissance was his collections of letters; these helped establish the art of letter writing as one of the literary techniques favored by later humanists. In 1345, Petrarch discovered at Verona a collection of letters written by the ancient Roman philosopher and orator Cicero. These letters encouraged Petrarch to collect and edit his own communications in a series of manuscript editions. By the time

of his death in 1374, he had compiled three volumes of his Latin letters. These would circulate during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in both manuscript and printed editions and would inspire other collections of letters written by famous political dignitaries, scholars, and literary figures.

**BOCCACCIO.** Petrarch's relationship with Giovanni Boccaccio also helped to shape the course of early Renaissance literature. In 1350, these two figures met for the first time, and struck up a friendship that would last for the rest of their lives. Petrarch continually worried about his own posterity and the reputation that his works would achieve after his death. Boccaccio, on the other hand, was more humble about his literary achievements, and he allowed his ideas to be shaped by his older friend Petrarch. For example, Petrarch's defense of poetry, his love for the classics, and his insistence that literature and eloquence must serve the cause of virtue all influenced Boccaccio. In his *Genealogy of the Gods* (written over many years but finished shortly before his death), Boccaccio displayed the influences that he had derived from



Botticelli's depiction of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICA, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

his relationship with Petrarch. This work catalogued pagan mythology and would be widely used as a textbook for students of literature and by artists composing works on mythological themes during the next four centuries. When they had turned to consider ancient myths, medieval writers had usually granted these stories Christian interpretations. Boccaccio's *Genealogy* strove instead to present Greek and Roman mythology from their literary sources without extensive commentary or Christian philosophizing. In the final two sections of *The Genealogy* Boccaccio also defended the study of pagan literature and the writing of poetry and fiction along lines consistent with his mentor Petrarch. Boccaccio insisted that poetry's purposes were far more profound than mere literary enjoyment. Poetry could convey truths concealed in beauty, and the poet's gift consisted in "exquisitely discovering and saying, or writing, what you have discovered." Poetry was not, according to Boccaccio, an earthly enjoyment that led away from divine truth, as many medieval commentators had argued. It was instead a craft that brought glory to God, since He was the ultimate source of the poet's inspiration. Importantly, the *Genealogy* also defended the writing of fiction, insisting that fables and stories possessed the power both to entertain and to instruct their readers in morality.

**DECAMERON.** While Petrarch's influence on the development of Boccaccio's humanist ideas was great, he

shares little of the credit for directly shaping Boccaccio's great masterpiece, *The Decameron*. Boccaccio had begun that work in 1348, shortly after the Black Death struck Florence. He completed it in 1352, only shortly after his first meetings with Petrarch. The work's prologue recounts the horrors of the bubonic plague as it winnowed down the city's population during 1348 and 1349. Few descriptions of epidemics are more chilling than this, as Boccaccio describes the swiftness with which the plague moved through the city, the variety of ways in which Florentines responded to the disease, and the gruesome manner in which many met their deaths. In the midst of this carnage a group of ten wealthy men and women decide to flee the city. They take refuge in the countryside outside Florence and begin to tell tales to pass the time. Each day, the group elects a king or queen from among their members to preside over their storytelling, and during the ten days that they stay in the countryside, each of the group's members tells a tale. Boccaccio relates the resulting 100 tales in a short story form known as *novella*, a literary form popular in Italy at the time. Some of the stories are written for pure literary and comic enjoyment; others convey a message. To underscore these messages, Boccaccio identifies themes for most of the days' storytelling. Day One, for example, treats tales of villainy and deceit, while Day Ten recounts stories in which virtue triumphs over vice. Between these two ex-

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### OBSERVATIONS ON THE BLACK DEATH

**INTRODUCTION:** The bubonic plague (better known as the “Black Death”) wiped out a third of the European population in the years between 1300 and 1500, leaving a devastating mark on the continent. The swift, gruesome, and certain death associated with the disease was all the more terrifying because no one knew how it began or how it spread. In the prologue to his *Decameron*, Giovanni Boccaccio chillingly described the course of the Black Death as it made its way through Florence.

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**SOURCE:** Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*. Trans. G. H. McWilliam (London: Penguin, 1972): 5–6.

tremes of hellish wickedness and heavenly virtue, Boccaccio tells a number of other tales that presented a variegated portrait of human nature. In many of these, women get the better of men because of their cunning nature or superior intelligence. Other characters redeem themselves from imminent catastrophe because of a witty reply or sheer human inventiveness. And still others are able to confront harsh fortune successfully because of their ability to master their will and overcome human passions. These last themes—the passions and the human will—are elements that run throughout the tales. Some people, Boccaccio shows, are able because of their superior intelligence and will power to shape the world to their needs and desires, while those who succumb to their passions are rarely ever able to rise above the blows

of ill fortune. The clergy are prominent among those Boccaccio criticizes as victims of their own desires, and a number of the tales recount the clergy’s sexual antics. At other times he presents Jews and Moslems as more virtuous than Christians. Finally, he records many of the tensions of fourteenth-century Italian life, particularly those that existed between the new merchant class and the older nobility. In all these ways Boccaccio’s work presents an extraordinary tapestry of Mediterranean life, and one which found a wide readership during the following centuries, both in Italy and throughout Europe.

**OTHER WORKS.** The *Decameron* was Boccaccio’s undisputed masterpiece, but the author’s literary output was enormous, both in Latin and Italian. Like Petrarch, Boccaccio styled some of his works self-consciously to



Giovanni Boccaccio. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

resemble ancient literary styles and genres, hoping to revive these forms. In his *Country Songs*, or *Buccolicum carmen* Boccaccio wrote in Latin and used the ancient Roman form of the eclogue, a kind of pastoral poetry that had been developed by the ancient poet Vergil. Boccaccio, like Petrarch who also wrote eclogues, used these poems to discuss ethical, political, and religious themes. And like Petrarch, Boccaccio also devoted himself to writing biographical studies. Two of these, *The Fates of Illustrious Men* and *On Famous Women*, continued to debate an issue that Boccaccio had identified in the *Decameron*: the role of fortune in human affairs. In the *Fates of Illustrious Men* Boccaccio examined the lives of men from the Garden of Eden to contemporary times and argued that the fall of powerful historical figures was most often the result of moral failings, rather than mere bad fortune. Sometimes, though, he admitted that pure misfortune could prove disastrous. In his catalogue of women's lives, *On Famous Women*, Boccaccio became the first European author to create a collection of biographies devoted exclusively to women. The examples that Boccaccio treated in this work were all drawn from pagan Antiquity, and he praised these women for their learning, their writing, their political skill, and even their military prowess. While Boccaccio presented this work

as a tribute to a famous Florentine woman, his comments throughout the book show that he intended it to be read by both men and women. He often criticized men for allowing women to outdo them in scholarship and other endeavors. *On Famous Women* appeared during the early Renaissance, and inspired at least one other collection of feminine biographies: the more famous *Book of the City of Ladies* written by Christine de Pizan in the early fifteenth century.

**GREEK LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.** Boccaccio exercised a significant impact on later Renaissance literary tastes through his support of the study of the Greek language and literature. Although he was usually self-deprecating, he did stress in his *Genealogy of the Gods* his role in establishing the first professorship of Greek at the University of Florence. He called Leontius Pilatus, a southern Italian Greek scholar, to this position and asked him to translate works of Homer and Euripides into Latin. Boccaccio became Pilatus' student, and he was the first Renaissance European to learn Greek for the expressed purpose of reading classical literature. He circulated the translations that Pilatus had completed of Greek texts, sending copies to Petrarch and other humanists. In this way, he helped to encourage the revival of the study of Greek, a language that had been virtually unknown in Western Europe over previous centuries.

**IMPACT.** Both Petrarch and Boccaccio's literary endeavors provided models for later Renaissance writers. Each figure had conducted extensive studies of ancient prose and poetry, and they had often self-consciously used their works as a way of reviving classical style and literary genres among their fellow humanists. While dedicated to the study of ancient literature, and using it as a guide, both Petrarch and Boccaccio were also original and innovative artists. In his Italian lyrics, for example, Petrarch perfected the sonnet and expressed psychological insights that would inspire later writers. For his part, Boccaccio created a fictional universe in his *Decameron* that made use of the medieval genre of the novella. Boccaccio breathed new life into this form by weaving his own consistent perspective as well as the philosophical insights of early humanism into the work. These features helped to raise his work to the level of a masterpiece.

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SEE ALSO *Theater: The Renaissance Theater in Italy*

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## THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY IN ITALY

**CIVIC HUMANISM.** During the first half of the fifteenth century humanists in Florence and elsewhere in Italy wrote mostly prose treatises and dialogues. They did not immediately develop the fictional possibilities that Boccaccio's *Decameron* presented. Nor did they devote themselves to the writing of love lyrics or other poetry in the style of Petrarch. Florence's first humanist chancellor, Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), had been a disciple of both Boccaccio's and Petrarch's humanism, and he continued to defend the study of poetry in his writings in ways similar to his mentors. In the first half of the fifteenth century the humanist circle that Salutati was largely responsible for assembling in Florence devoted itself to other concerns. These scholars turned instead to study ancient philosophy, history, and the classical languages, rather than pursue purely literary pursuits. Their writings were not without literary merit or importance, but they often used their treatises and dialogues to discuss the arts of good government and the importance of a life of civic engagement. A perennial theme of their works considered how one might achieve virtue while living an active life in society. For these reasons, the humanists of this period have often been called "civic humanists." Other achievements of the humanists in this period would prove decisive for the later development of Italian and Latin literature in subsequent generations. The humanists recovered a thorough knowledge of classical Latin's structure, style, and rhetoric, providing the basis upon which later Renaissance writers would successfully imitate the style of the ancients. The recovery of the knowledge of Greek, too, continued to expand in Florence and elsewhere in Italy, and with it, came a deeper understanding of the classical literary and historical past. Humanist writers like Leon Battista Alberti also expanded the use of Italian in this period by adopting it as the language for their dialogues and treatises. Alberti wrote his massive dialogue *The Book of the Family* in Tuscan Italian rather than Latin during the 1430s, and he circulated the work among educated Flo-

rentines. *The Book of the Family* presented a conversation between members of the Alberti family about the strategies that could best ensure a family's survival, and it advised readers about ways to achieve marital harmony. It was practical concerns like those that Alberti demonstrated in this dialogue that most often dominated the humanists' attentions at the time.

**IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY.** The study of history was also an area in which the humanists distinguished themselves. Leonardo Bruni, another of Florence's humanist chancellors, ranks among the finest of Italy's many fifteenth-century historians. In his *History of the Florentine People*, completed between 1415 and 1429, Bruni used his knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman history to debunk many long-standing myths about Florence's and Europe's history. His work defended republicanism as the best mode of government, against medieval notions that the monarchical Roman Empire was the supreme political achievement of the ancient world. Until Bruni's time, legend had located Florence's origins in the days of the Roman Empire. Bruni's *History of the Florentine People* relied on documentary evidence to disprove those myths. He pushed back the city's origins into the days of the Roman Republic, arguing that Florence's greatness was a product of her republican past. Medieval thinkers had admired the Roman Empire because they believed that it had played a providential role in the establishment of Christianity in Europe. Bruni, by contrast, stressed that the earliest forms of governments in Greece and Rome had been republican, and these societies had valued the free debate and circulation of ideas. He established a link, in other words, between these free political systems and the cultural greatness of these ancient civilizations. The Roman emperors had destroyed these long-standing traditions of civic liberty, and in this process classical civilization itself had decayed. Thus by locating Florence's founding within the Republic, Bruni aimed to prove that the city's greatness was a product of its long fidelity to the traditions of civic liberty. At the same time Bruni was no modern democrat; most of his works reveal an essentially conservative political thinker. He accepted that aristocratic dominance was a necessary part of government, even in the government of a republic. It was natural for those who possessed greater wealth and status to have a greater say in a state's government. He also defended imperial expansion, so long as a republic, and not a dictatorial empire conducted it. His histories celebrated Florence's conquest of neighboring cities in Tuscany. Importantly, their popularity helped encouraged a new disciplined study of local history throughout Italy,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ADVICE TO A YOUNG LADY ON THE STUDY OF LITERATURE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The humanist chancellor of Florence, Leonardo Bruni, sent a letter to Baptista Malatesta, a noblewoman, advising her on her intentions to study literature. Like many Renaissance letters, this one would have been circulated in the humanist circles that were growing increasingly common in fifteenth-century Italy.

I am led to address this Tractate to you, Illustrious Lady, by the high repute which attaches to your name in the field of learning; and I offer it, partly as an expression of my homage to distinction already attained, partly as an encouragement to further effort. Were it necessary I might urge you by brilliant instances from antiquity: Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio, whose Epistles survived for centuries as models of style; Sappho, the poetess, held in so great honour for the exuberance of her poetic art; Aspasia, whose learning and eloquence made her not unworthy of the intimacy of Socrates. Upon these, the most distinguished of a long range of great names, I would have you fix your mind; for an intelligence such as your own can be satisfied with nothing less than the best. You yourself, indeed, may hope to win a fame higher even than theirs. For they lived in days when learning was no rare attainment, and therefore they enjoyed no unique renown. Whilst, alas, upon such times are we fallen that a learned man seems well-nigh a portent, and erudition in a woman is a thing utterly unknown.

For true learning has almost died away amongst us. True learning, I say: not a mere acquaintance with that vulgar, threadbare jargon which satisfies those who devote themselves to Theology; but sound learning in its proper and legitimate sense, viz., the knowledge of reali-

ties—Facts and Principles—united to a perfect familiarity with Letters and the art of expression. Now this combination we find in Lactantius, in Augustine, or in Jerome; each of them at once a great theologian and profoundly versed in literature. But turn from them to their successors of today: how must we blush for their ignorance of the whole field of Letters!

This leads me to press home this truth—though in your case it is unnecessary—that the foundations of all true learning must be laid in the sound and thorough knowledge of Latin: which implies study marked by a broad spirit, accurate scholarship, and careful attention to details. Unless this solid basis be secured it is useless to attempt to rear an enduring edifice. Without it the great monuments of literature are unintelligible, and the art of composition impossible. To attain this essential knowledge we must never relax our careful attention to the grammar of the language, but perpetually confirm and extend our acquaintance with it until it is thoroughly our own. We may gain much from Servius, Donatus and Priscian, but more by careful observation in our own reading, in which we must note attentively vocabulary and inflexions, figures of speech and metaphors, and all the devices of style, such as rhythm, or antithesis, by which fine taste is exhibited. To this end we must be supremely careful in our choice of authors, lest an inartistic and debased style infect our own writing and degrade our taste; which danger is best avoided by bringing a keen, critical sense to bear upon select works, observing the sense of each passage, the structure of the sentence, the force of every word down to the least important particle. In this way our reading reacts directly upon our style.

**SOURCE:** “Leonardo Bruni” in *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*. Ed. by W. H. Woodward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912): 119–120.

even as they nurtured the republican sentiments of many Italians against the despotic princes who were growing more powerful at the time. Bruni’s works would eventually be read elsewhere in Europe, where they helped to establish history as an important humanist literary genre. Because of his disciplined reliance upon the sources, his revisionism, and his use of history to defend liberty, Bruni has sometimes been called “the first modern historian.”

**REVIVAL OF CLASSICAL LATIN.** Bruni had located the cultural greatness of ancient Rome in the time of the Republic. At the same time as his histories were appearing, humanists were actively engaged in recovering and

studying the literature and language of this period. While most humanists were concerned with recovering the entire classical heritage, they were often especially interested in the literature of the late Republic, the so-called “Golden Age” of classical Latin. In particular, they were fascinated by unearthed copies of the letters and other works of Cicero (d. 43 B.C.E.), who had been identified even in Antiquity as the finest master of the language. In Florence, two figures were particularly important in these attempts to recover classical texts: Poggio Bracciolini and Niccolò de Niccoli. Through his letters to friends and associates, Niccoli tracked down the locations of many works and he purchased a number of these manuscripts for his personal library. Upon his death he



Engraving of the city of Florence, late sixteenth century. HULTON/ARCHIVE. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

left this collection to Florence, and his close friend Cosimo de' Medici built facilities within the town's Dominican monastery of San Marco so that scholars could study his library. Poggio Bracciolini surpassed even Niccoli's exhaustive efforts. Besides conducting a voluminous correspondence to track down texts, he ransacked many German monastery libraries while he was serving as a Florentine delegate to the Council of Constance (1413–1417). Among the treasures that Bracciolini discovered were several unknown orations of Cicero as well as many works of history and philosophy in ancient Latin. As a result of his efforts, scholars studied the classical heritage more intently than ever before, and subjected antique Latin to critical scholarship. During the 1430s, for instance, Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) devoted his attentions to studying the language of classical texts. His research resulted in the foundation of a new discipline: philology. Valla discovered that languages changed and developed over time. Until Valla's time, the humanists had tried to emulate the style of ancient writers intuitively. From Petrarch and Boccaccio's time, humanist authors had labored to acquire a voluminous knowledge of Latin literature, and they had tried to write in a classical Latin style merely by pulling phrases and other literary devices from their reading. Valla warned his fellow humanists that Latin had changed greatly over

time. One could not, for example, draw phrases and stylistic devices from texts that had been written several centuries apart. If a writer hoped to write in a classical Latin style, he must confine himself to imitating the works of a certain period. Like most fifteenth-century humanists, Valla preferred the Latin of the Golden Age, and in his *Elegances of the Latin Language* he guided his readers through the style, usage, and grammar that characterized the Latin of this period.

**CODICOLOGY.** By the mid-fifteenth century humanist students were carefully learning the lessons that Lorenzo Valla had taught. They paid close attention to mastering the grammar and rhetoric of ancient Latin and many tried to emulate the elegant and polished style of ancient writers using the disciplined methods Valla had outlined. Valla himself had preferred the Latin of the ancient Roman Quintilian to Cicero, but later authors more often followed the example of Cicero. The Roman works of Horace, Livy, Ovid, and Vergil also provided important models. Among the many humanists who distinguished themselves as students of ancient style, Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494) was acknowledged as the master. A precocious student, Poliziano had translated Homer's *Iliad* into classical Latin verse by the time he was 19. The depth of his knowledge of Latin and Greek impressed



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***STANZAS FOR A JOUSTING MATCH**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his “Stanzas for a Jousting Match,” Angelo Poliziano imagined Florence in a classical landscape for the setting of a romance between his pupil Giulio de’ Medici and a young noblewoman. Poliziano was widely recognized for the beauty and clarity of his style, as testified in these lines.

**SOURCE:** Angelo Poliziano, “Stanzas for a Jousting Match,” in *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*. Trans. David Quint (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979): 3.

Lorenzo de’ Medici, who became his patron and soon asked Poliziano to tutor his children. Poliziano developed an especially profound attachment to Giuliano Medici, who was murdered in the Pazzi Conspiracy in 1478, an unsuccessful coup directed against the Medici. The fam-

ily tutor wrote a vivid account of the event, one that was touching for its pathos. Eventually, Poliziano became a professor of rhetoric and poetry at the University of Florence, and in that position he published a study of texts that would have far-reaching impact. Poliziano’s *Miscellanea* was a collection of essays about certain problems in textual editing and interpretation. Humanist scholars had long been aware of many variations in the texts that they studied. Over the centuries, scribes had introduced errors into later manuscripts and medieval scholars had sometimes written variant forms of texts willfully to defend their own principles. Until Poliziano’s time, scholars had dealt with this problem intuitively. When faced with several variations in different manuscript versions, they had chosen the reading that seemed to fit with the style of the entire work. Poliziano showed that the use of intuition was insufficient, and his *Miscellanea* provided a method for establishing which manuscript version of a text was the oldest, and therefore, likely to be the most accurate. In his brief life Poliziano examined many variant versions of ancient texts in circulation, and the dates that he assigned to many of these manuscripts continue to be accepted even now. His most important contribution to Renaissance literary study, though, was his method, which became known as codicology. Codicology became in the following centuries an essential tool for philologists and historians, who used its critical methods to weed out erroneous texts and even to debunk forged manuscripts.

**NEW GENRES.** The developments in the study of language that were occurring in Florence and elsewhere throughout Italy point to a growing literary sophistication, a sophistication that would produce an undeniable flowering of Italian poetry and prose in the later fifteenth century. Emboldened by their new knowledge of classical literature, authors from throughout Italy would revive ancient genres and develop new ones to express their ideas. They were supported in these endeavors by the princely patrons of the period. Literary achievement became an important marker of social distinction at the time, and Italy’s many princes encouraged inventiveness and experimentation in the authors they supported. Finally, the spread of the printing press in Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century helped stimulate the rise of new literary forms since it allowed writers and scholars to circulate numerous copies of both ancient texts and their own works more quickly than ever before. Writers, in other words, could imitate successful works in their own writing. Lyric poetry, pastoral literature, and chivalric romances were the most common literary forms favored by late fifteenth-century Italian

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### THE PAZZI CONSPIRACY

**INTRODUCTION:** Renaissance writers were well-acquainted with the political intrigues of their time, enjoying the patronage of wealthy, political families for their livelihoods. Often writers used their pen in service to their patrons' careers, producing propaganda against their enemies, or stirring public support with sonnets of praise. The humanist Angelo Poliziano wrote this contemporary history in which he described the death of his beloved pupil, Giuliano de' Medici, in a conspiracy that occurred in Florence in 1378. In the plot, members of the Pazzi clan joined with Florence's Archbishop Salviati and others discontented with the Medici rule to kill the family's two male heirs at a mass in Florence's cathedral. Although Giuliano was killed, his brother, Lorenzo, survived.

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**SOURCE:** Angelo Poliziano, "The Pazzi Conspiracy" in *The Earthly Republic*. Trans. Elizabeth B. Welles. Eds. B. G. Kohl and R. G. Witt (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1978): 315–316.

writers. Most lyric poetry treated love, and would now be influenced by Petrarch's *Songbook*, as well as the more thorough knowledge of ancient love poetry that had recently been acquired. In his *Books of Love*, for example, Matteo Maria Boiardo relied on Petrarch's example as well as the ancient Roman poet to tell of the problems that his love for a young woman caused him. A similar sensibility about the pains of love shaped the Italian poetry of cultivated figures like Angelo Poliziano and Lorenzo de' Medici. In Florence, the love poetry of these all figures would also be shaped by Neoplatonism, which downplayed the importance of erotic attraction, and instead stressed the intellectual character of love as a meeting of minds.

**PASTORAL.** Poliziano and others also encouraged a new attention to an ancient literary form: the pastoral. In the fourteenth century Boccaccio had written pastoral poems that were set in the countryside and featured bucolic conversations between shepherds, sprites, and nymphs. He had been inspired to compose these poems after discovering the beautiful pastoral lyrics of the ancients, and he hoped his compositions would bring about a revival of the genre. His lead, however, was not followed until long after his death, as Poliziano and other late fifteenth-century writers now turned to champion pastoral imagery to give shape to their poems, plays, and novels. Pastoral literature often recounted tales of those who discovered wise and noble circles of shepherds and



Angelo Poliziano. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

nymphs in the countryside. The genre expressed a nostalgic longing for the simpler pleasures of rural life. Poliziano set his *Stanzas Begun for the Jousting Match of the Magnificent Giuliano di Piero de' Medici* (1478) within a pastoral setting, a classical landscape he placed around the city of Florence. In this country landscape he placed the love affair of his pupil, Piero de' Medici and Simonetta Cattaneo. He mixed themes that he derived from his study of history, classical mythology, and the Bible. And his work was freely tinged with the Neoplatonism popular among Florentine humanists at the time. Poliziano's shift to tales set in an idyllic rural setting was also symptomatic of the cultural transformations that were underway in Florence and other Italian cities in the second half of the fifteenth century. Before 1450, most of Florence's humanists had favored issues of government and civic engagement in their philosophical and historical works. Or in their treatises they had outlined programs for the liberal arts, the revival of ancient rhetoric, and the development of eloquence as part of a philosophy designed to encourage men and women to virtuous living. After 1450, in Florence and somewhat later elsewhere in Italy, many humanists became disciples of Neoplatonism, a philosophical move-

ment that favored meditation and a solitary life spent in the pursuit of individual perfection. These changes were also reflected in the architecture and art of the time. In the early part of the century great public monuments were constructed throughout the city of Florence, while later in the century, the town's great families built new, private family palaces and country villas in the areas surrounding the town. These changes were occurring elsewhere in Italy, and in these imposing structures Italy's reigning princes, nobles, and wealthy merchants achieved the privacy to cultivate the arts and their literary pursuits—recreations Neoplatonism advocated. The longing for the countryside and the isolation and simplicity of rural life then expressed in pastoral literature was yet another symptom of this shift toward privacy and inwardness. Eventually, these sensibilities became popular throughout Europe, and pastoral literature became one of the most widely read genres of the sixteenth century. In England, the taste for pastoral themes produced the famous rural scenes of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* as well as the forest images of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**ARCADIA.** The most accomplished work of pastoral fiction to appear in late fifteenth-century Italy was Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, which was first published in 1502. Sannazaro set his rural vision in a shepherd's world, and he mixed poetry and prose throughout the work. He recounts the tale of an autobiographical figure named Sincero, whose entrance into the idyllic Arcadia province of Greece becomes a vehicle for the author to consider the nature of poetry and art. Sincero is only gradually accepted into the company of shepherd poets he finds in this new world. The local shepherds share their wisdom, poetic skills, culture, and customs with him, but ultimately Sincero cannot be completely assimilated into their company. He leaves Arcadia and returns to Naples to find that his former love has died, and the poem ends with Sincero cursing his decision to leave the peaceful tranquility he had once experienced in Greece. The return to his native world has exposed him to the sorrow attendant upon all human attachments. The outlines of this plot, with its story of a wayfarer who learns poetic wisdom in a peaceful Paradise, would often be repeated in later pastorals.

**CHIVALRIC ROMANCE.** In another genre known as chivalric romance, writers forged together influences from many different literary traditions and periods, including works drawn from the classical period, the Middle Ages, and the more recent Renaissance. During the 1480s and 1490s Matteo Boiardo (1441–1494) pub-

lished his *Orlando innamorato* or *Orlando in Love*, a masterpiece of chivalric romance. Boiardo was a member of the brilliant D'Este court at Ferrara, a place in which a cultivated knowledge of literature and history was prized. His story drew upon Carolingian history and Arthurian legends, medieval romances, and the literature of courtly love. The epic poem recounts the life and deeds of Roland, the nephew of the emperor Charlemagne, and of Roland's love for the Saracen Princess Angelica. The plot is complex, involving numerous twists of fate that keep Roland apart from his Lady. But in the process of relating the complex tale, Boiardo transforms the rude and rough manners of the Carolingians into a courtly culture similar to the D'Este. While acknowledged as a masterpiece, the work was left incomplete at the author's death. In the sixteenth century the brilliant poet Lodovico Ariosto continued the poem, carrying the story to its conclusion as *Orlando furioso* or *Mad Roland*. Over time, Ariosto's *Furioso* enjoyed an even wider fame than the original that inspired it. Another chivalric romance, *Il Morgante* (1483) by Luigi Pulci, reveals a similar tendency to merge literary traditions drawn from the classical and medieval periods. Pulci was a member of the cultivated circle that surrounded the Medici family in late fifteenth-century Florence. His subject matter is similar to Boiardo's *Roland in Love*; his tale relates, in other words, events at the court of Charlemagne. While the tale is epic in proportion and complexity, Pulci lightens his story by narrating the tale from the perspective of the mock hero and giant Morgante. Along the way, the ponderous action is punctuated with many comic episodes. In France, the novelist François Rabelais read Pulci's work and relied upon it as one source of inspiration for his comic novels, *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*.

**IMPLICATIONS.** During the fifteenth century Italy's literary figures moved to assimilate fully the traditions of classical Antiquity. At the beginning of the century, humanist writers, particularly in the city of Florence, devoted themselves to the study of history and to writing philosophical works that dealt with the ethics of government and an active life in society. By mid-century, though, new styles and fashions had helped to inspire a taste for Neoplatonism. In art, architecture, and literature, Italy's cultivated elites expressed a fondness for privacy and inward contemplation. In literature especially, these new sensibilities produced a number of new genres. Through these new literary forms Italy's literati demonstrated their intense classical learning, their mastery of rhetoric and stylistic devices, and their sheer imaginative inventiveness.



Fifteenth-century French manuscript illumination of "Lancelot Embracing a Lady." ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

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## THE HIGH AND LATER RENAISSANCE

**THE STYLISH STYLE.** At the very end of the fifteenth century the artistic and literary achievements of Italy reached their apex in the movement known as the High



Baldassare Castiglione. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Renaissance. In art, an impressive merger of the knowledge of classical art and technical brilliance produced the serenely beautiful works of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Raphael Sanzio. In the visual arts this High Renaissance synthesis emphasized classical proportions, balance, naturalism, rationality, and harmony. These accomplishments began with Leonardo's *Baptism of Christ* and *Annunciation* in the 1480s and concluded with Raphael's frescoes in the papal apartments in the Vatican and the early stages of Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling paintings. By 1520, the High Renaissance style, which had been favored for only a generation, was already beginning to give way. By that time, Michelangelo was the sole surviving genius of the movement, and he was moving to develop a new style that would become known as Mannerism. Mannerism has often been called the "stylish style," because it was often exaggerated and contorted and its spirit was tenser and more disturbed than the peaceful, harmonious compositions of the High Renaissance. Mannerism survived into the later sixteenth century and affected artists throughout Europe. At the same time Mannerism was also symptomatic of more general cultural trends in the age. In literature, we can see the development of a similar "stylish style" occurring in Italy around the same

time. These changes resulted, in part, from the rise of refined court culture throughout Italy. Many of the peninsula's finest sixteenth-century authors lived and worked in this new refined environment. Members of a court, or courtiers for short, were expected to have mastered the Renaissance ideal of universality; that is, they were to have achieved competence in many different areas of endeavor. In literature, the refined courtier was expected to display a cultivated knowledge of classical literature, mythology, and the ancient rhetorical forms. Writing was also conceived of as a craft, and every refined courtier was expected to be able to write at least a passable sonnet or an elegant letter. The distinguishing signs of literary genius consequently shifted in this period to prize ingenuity and invention as signs of individuality. In the visual arts, the rise of this heightened sense of individuality extended the boundaries of pre-existing styles and genres. So, too, did writers strive to display their unique character, their refinement, and their individuality to their readers.

**SPREZZATURA.** Another value that was prized in the court culture of Italy at this time was known as *sprezzatura*. It can best be described as grace under pressure. To demonstrate *sprezzatura*, a courtier was expected to undertake difficult tasks—whether they be in writing, acrobatics, or horsemanship—and to perform them with an effortless ease. For writers, achieving *sprezzatura* often meant the ability to write about difficult themes and subjects in ways that seemed artless. In practice, reaching this goal sometimes proved beyond many writers' skills. At its best, the fashion for displaying one's *sprezzatura* produced stunning and original literary creations, but at its worst, it resulted in literature that could be overwrought, obscure, and merely difficult to understand.

**BOOK OF THE COURTIER.** Nowhere can the emerging values of late Renaissance court culture be observed more brilliantly than in the *Book of the Courtier*, a work begun by Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529) around 1510. Castiglione was a nobleman who was related to the Gonzaga dukes of Mantua. In his youth he enjoyed the best education available in Italy and when he reached maturity he served as a diplomat in the courts of the dukes of Mantua and Urbino as well as in the papal government. He knew the life of a courtier firsthand, and in his guide to court life he tried to encapsulate the perfect mix of qualities necessary for someone to survive and prosper in this environment. *The Book of the Courtier* is written in dialogue form, a genre that the humanists had favored since the fourteenth century. The conversation it relates is set within the court at Urbino in Northern

Italy, reputedly one of the most elegant and refined in sixteenth-century Europe. The text is divided into four books, each treating a different dimension of the ideal courtier. The portrait that emerges from the dialogue is complex and multi-faceted. The ideal courtier must be of noble birth, skilled in the arts of war, but at the same time a master of all the liberal arts. His outward appearance must be pleasing, and in his speech and all his behavior he should be moderate and avoid any affectation. He must be a good conversationalist, witty, and able to crack a good joke. And since he serves as an adviser to a prince, he must always speak the truth. In this way, he can gain the trust and admiration of his lord, and having done so, he should speak his mind freely to prevent his master from erring. The *Courtier* also deals extensively with the role of the court lady, and the participants in the discussion at Urbino are similarly idealistic about this figure. While she should have many of the same qualities as her male counterparts, she must also cultivate discretion, generosity, grace, and purity. To this list, Castiglione also adds likability, liveliness, and a kind nature. Importantly, he supports women's education and argues through his courtiers' conversations that women are in many cases the intellectual equals of men. But in these discussions of women's capabilities, the female members of the Urbino court only rarely contribute to the dialogue.

**INFLUENCE.** The impact of Castiglione's work was two-fold. Written in an elegant Italian, *The Book of the Courtier's* style was imitated by Italian writers in the decades that followed its publication. More importantly, though, Castiglione championed an ideal of a truly liberal and wide-ranging education for those who participated in court life. In Italy, the standards of behavior and intellectual life had risen in these societies during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Elsewhere in Europe, though, court life often remained rude and unsophisticated, and many courtiers at the dawn of the sixteenth century, particularly in Northern Europe, were illiterate. Castiglione's work championed a higher standard of education and conduct. Although it has often been criticized for placing too much emphasis on outward appearances, it did have a civilizing effect on courts throughout Europe. It was widely published throughout Italy in the sixteenth century, and was soon translated into Spanish, French, English, and Latin. In Northern Europe, it inspired an entire genre of conduct books. And in England, as wealthy but non-aristocratic gentry came to play a more dynamic role in the political life of the country in the seventeenth century, "gentlemen's books" promoted an ideal of civilized behavior similar

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**A TRIBUTE TO LOVE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Pietro Bembo's poetry and prose was widely imitated among sixteenth-century Italians for its complex turns of phrase and elegant style. An example of this "stylish style" follows.

**SOURCE:** Pietro Bembo, *Gli Asolani*. Trans. Rudolf B. Gottfried (Bloomington: Indiana University Publications, 1954): 83.

to Castiglione among members of this rising class. In short, Castiglione's work proved to be an important chapter in what some historians have called the "tilt toward civility" in early-modern Europe.

**CICERONIANISM.** Questions of style took on renewed importance in another area of sixteenth-century literary life, this time concerning issues of rhetoric. During the fifteenth century the humanist campaign to



Pietro Bembo. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

emulate the classical Latin of the ancients had focused on recovering the language of the “Golden Age,” that era believed to encompass roughly the century before and after the birth of Christ. Most scholars had insisted that Cicero represented the best model for prose, while for poetry they had usually turned to Vergil or Ovid as models. Lorenzo Valla had been a dissenting voice in the early debate over Latin style, as had the prolific Latinist Angelo Poliziano. In a famous letter to one Ciceronian disciple, Poliziano had pronounced “I am not Cicero; I express myself.” Still, the example of Cicero prevailed. In the early sixteenth century the issue of which Latin style should be emulated took on renewed and now heated importance among the humanists. In 1513, Pietro Bembo, a philologist and literary theorist, defended the principle of literary imitation in a highly influential treatise written against those who attacked over-dependence on Cicero’s model. Bembo showed that only by emulating a single example could an author hope to produce a work in a unified style. Imitation, in other words, was not stifling to creativity, but it allowed authors to achieve a unified voice that they could use to express their own individuality. Like many before him, Bembo promoted Cicero as the best model for Latin prose and Vergil for Latin poetry. At the same time that he was at work on his defense of Cicero and Vergil, Bembo devoted his attentions to literary Italian, too. Like

many, he realized that Italian would eventually triumph as a mode of written expression over Latin. In his *Prose* Bembo considered what form written Italian should take. Should literary Italian emulate the fourteenth-century Tuscan works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio? Should writers adopt the language of the Italian court? Or should they aim to express themselves in a generalized form of the language that everyone might understand? Bembo debated these questions and advised authors again to adopt the principle of literary imitation. For poetry, he insisted Petrarch’s fourteenth-century Italian provided the best model, while for prose, Boccaccio was the best source for emulation. Bembo’s many disciples followed his advice, and imitated the already archaic forms of Italian written by Petrarch and Boccaccio. The style that Bembo outlined in his *Prose* quickly became known in colorful Italian as “Bembismo,” or “in the manner advocated by Bembo.” Characteristics of Bembismo included complex turns of phrase, veiled meanings, and finely carved and chiseled lines, all of which writers in this vein saw as an attempt to revive the literary Italian of Petrarch and Boccaccio. Poetry and prose written in the style that Bembo advocated was often beautiful to the ear, but its critics charged that it was overly difficult and precocious as a literary language. But over time, Bembo’s position would triumph. The long-term consequence of his support of the archaic usage of Petrarch and Boccaccio would mean that literary Italian tended to diverge increasingly from spoken forms of the language.

**REVOLT.** Bembo’s victories in defining Latin and Italian style did not go unquestioned. In Northern Europe the humanist Desiderius Erasmus was widely recognized as the best Latinist of the age. On his travels to Italy, Erasmus had wearied of the devotion to Cicero that he found among scholars there, and he had been horrified to learn of the path taken by one of his Dutch countrymen, Christophe Longueil. With Bembo’s encouragement, Longueil had dedicated himself to becoming a kind of living Cicero. In 1528, Erasmus published a bitter satire of Longueil and the Italian Ciceronians entitled *The Ciceronian*. The central character of this dialogue is Nosoponus, a pedant, who is cured of his disease of Ciceronianism through the ministrations of Bulephorus, the character in the dialogue that represents Erasmus’s point of view. Throughout *The Ciceronian* Erasmus attacked the notion that Cicero’s language could be an appropriate vehicle for communicating the very different circumstances of sixteenth-century European life. As the battle raged over literary Italian, other authors expressed their disapproval. In Flo-

rence, Niccolò Machiavelli, an important literary figure as well as political theorist, advocated that contemporary Florence's language should be the basis for literary Italian, and he dismissed Bembo's attempts to revive the archaic form of the language written by Boccaccio and Petrarch. Baldassare Castiglione, a champion of yet a third perspective, advocated the use of the language of Italian courts because it made free use of words drawn from many Italian dialects and even incorporated words from non-Italian languages.

**PETRARCHISM.** The imitation of Petrarch's poetry advocated by Pietro Bembo in his *Prose* also gave rise in Italy to a poetic movement known as Petrarchism. In the course of the sixteenth century Petrarchism became truly international, spreading to almost every corner of Europe. Among those who wrote poetry in the style of Petrarch were the Italians Baldassare Castiglione, Vittoria Colonna, and Michelangelo Buonarroti, the Frenchman Pierre de Ronsard, and the English poets Thomas Wyatt and William Shakespeare. At its best, Petrarchism's emulation of the language and style of the fourteenth-century poet produced many beautiful lyrics. In his *Songbook* Petrarch had written mostly in the sonnet form which, because of its relatively few lines and tightly controlled scope, was a suitable candidate for mimicry. But in the hands of lesser artists and amateur poets the fashion for Petrarch would also produce much mediocre verse.

**HISTORY.** In the sixteenth century Italian humanists continued to nourish their fascination for local history. Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540) produced notable works in this genre that treated the history of their native Florence. In his *History of Florence* Machiavelli used the past as a mirror to support his republican political assumptions. He drew heavily upon older works, including those of Leonardo Bruni. Bruni had drawn strong links between republicanism and human creativity, and Machiavelli, too, used history to confirm such assumptions. At the same time he believed that the past repeated itself in cyclical patterns. Thus the astute observer could hope to predict coming events through a thorough knowledge of history. As in his *Prince*, Machiavelli's Florentine history also celebrated the virtues of the ancient Romans of the Republic. He found the valor they displayed sorely missing among contemporary Italians. Through his writing of history he hoped to reinvigorate this spirit among his readers, encouraging them to emulate Roman virtues. Machiavelli was a writer of unusual brilliance, creativity, and verve. After 1512 he lived in exile from government in Florence. During this time writing proved both a so-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**A SONNET LAMENTING ART**

**INTRODUCTION:** In addition to his numerous works of art and architecture, Michelangelo wrote a distinguished body of poetry, many written in the sonnet style popularized by Petrarchism at the time. In this poem, written late in his life, Michelangelo re-evaluates his youthful devotion to art.

My course of life already has attained,  
Through stormy seas, and in a flimsy vessel,  
The common port, at which we land to tell  
All conduct's cause and warrant, good or bad,

So that the passionate fantasy, which made  
Of art a monarch for me and an idol,  
Was laden down with sin, now I know well,  
Like what all men against their will desired.

What will become, now, of my amorous thoughts,  
Once gay and vain, as toward two deaths I move,  
One known for sure, the other ominous?

There's no painting or sculpture now that quiets  
The soul that's pointed toward that holy Love  
That on the cross opened Its arms to take us.

**SOURCE:** Michelangelo Buonarroti, "Sonnet (1554)," in *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of Michelangelo*. Trans. Creighton Gilbert (New York: Random House, 1963): 159.

lace and a tangible means of support. He wrote in a colloquial Florentine Italian different from the highly stylized forms favored by other Italians. His use of the contemporary spoken language distinguished his writing and probably enhanced its popularity. Like many of Machiavelli's literary endeavors, the ideas contained in his *History of Florence* were neither new nor particularly insightful. His historical writing fit with his political philosophy, which favored both strong republican government when possible, and dictatorship when necessary to serve the common good. The strength of Machiavelli's history and the admiration that it drew resulted primarily from its literary style which, like most of Machiavelli's works, was clear, forceful, and capable of inspiring readers through its immediacy.

**GUICCIARDINI.** The Florentine statesman Francesco Guicciardini, on the other hand, was more sophisticated as an historian. He has long been seen, in fact, as the greatest historian of the Renaissance. In his *Florentine*





Francesco Guicciardini. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

*History* he wrote in the same contemporary Florentine Italian that Machiavelli had used, but he relied more heavily upon documentary evidence than Machiavelli had. In fact, before the modern world few historians evidenced a dedication to the documents deeper than Guicciardini's. His narrative covered the period of Florence's history from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. It retold events clearly and evaluated the actions of the key players in Florence's government fairly. Guicciardini was not content merely to construct this history on the basis of past works, or documents he had seen while working on behalf of the state. Instead, as a member of Florence's government, he gained access to the city's secret files. At one point he even moved the city's wartime archives to his villa, where he carefully combed through thousands of documents. As a result, he constructed a relatively unbiased picture of this decisive period in the city's past. His efforts anticipated the development of historical objectivity pioneered by the great German historian Leopold von Ranke in the nineteenth century. The results of this research produced a history that was more thorough and objective than Machiavelli's, but one that was sometimes ponderous and slow reading. It was also no more optimistic in its conclusions than Machiavelli's had been. Like Machi-

avelli, Guicciardini was pessimistic about the course of Florence's development and about its citizenry's moral virtues. He presented the period following the death of the capable Lorenzo de' Medici in 1492 as a story of persistent decline in the city's fortunes.

**ARETINO.** One of the most unusual of Italy's sixteenth-century literati was Pietro Aretino (1492–1556), a native of the city of Arezzo near Florence. Aretino was the son of a shoemaker, but despite his humble origins and little formal schooling, he rose to play a role on the literary and political scene in Rome, and later in Venice. Above all, Aretino was a satirist, and the defamatory letters that he circulated about candidates for the papacy in 1523 influenced the election of Giulio de' Medici to the office. In his years in Rome, Aretino wrote pornography and used literal "blackmail" to extort money from the city's powerful. He threatened to expose the hypocrisy of these figures in published letters if they did not pay him off. Eventually, Aretino's intrigues forced him to flee Rome, and he wandered through Italy for a time before finding a home in Venice. There he wrote for the popular press, but he also produced a remarkable range of literary works. These included sonnets, plays, mock predictions, dialogues, and even biographies of saints known as hagiographies. His satires mocked the rich and the powerful as well as contemporary trends in the arts and learning, including Petrarchism and Neoplatonism. Aretino's greatest achievement, though, was the publication of his correspondence. He became the first Renaissance figure to publish his letters in Italian, and the witty and sometimes salacious contents of these letters inspired a fashion for the great and near-great to publish gossipy correspondence. These documents show Aretino advising princes, cursing his enemies, and holding forth on subjects in literary and artistic criticism. Together with Venice's famous painter, Titian, and the architect, Jacopo Sansovino, Aretino formed a kind of triumvirate that judged artistic taste in the city. Aretino's chief goal in life seems always to have been to tend his own fame, and in this profession, he was an astute master. He realized many of the promotional opportunities that the printing press offered and he used these to his advantage to become one of Europe's first modern celebrities.

**TASSO.** The last major literary genius the Italian Renaissance produced was Torquato Tasso (1544–1595). His life and work show the influence that the increasingly puritanical tastes of the Counter Reformation produced upon literary fashions in the second half of the sixteenth century. Tasso was born in Sorrento near the city of Naples in Southern Italy, where his father Bernardo served as a courtier to the Baron of Salerno.

Bernardo's opposition to the establishment of the Inquisition in nearby Naples forced his departure from that position. During the 1550s, Torquato traveled with his father, who had to take a series of insecure court positions in Northern and Central Italy to support the family. While on these travels, Tasso acquired an excellent education, but he also became familiar with the uncertainties that could plague a courtier's life if he failed to please his prince. In 1560, he entered the University of Padua, where his father wanted him to pursue a legal career that would free him from the need to secure literary patronage. Young Tasso, though, preferred poetry and philosophy to the law, and in these years, he began some of the poems that eventually established his fame. He began the chief of these works, *Jerusalemme liberata* or *Jerusalem Delivered*, at this time, although he did not finish it until many years later. He conceived the poem as a chivalric epic similar to those of Ariosto, Boiardo, and Pulci. Its tastes, though, were more moral and religiously profound than these earlier works. While Tasso did not completely abandon the complex plot twists, eroticism, or adventure of the chivalric romance, he sublimated these features to the higher themes of love and heroic valor. Completing *Jerusalem Delivered*, though, proved to be a lifelong, tortuous task. After leaving university, Tasso received patronage from a wealthy and influential cardinal. He had few duties except to write and amuse the cardinal's court in the city of Ferrara. In this environment Tasso circulated his poems, realizing that his works might cause offense in the heightened moral climate of the day. Over time, Tasso grew suspicious of his critics, and he feared that he would be denounced to the Inquisition. He went to confess his wrongdoings to the body when he had not even been summoned. Eventually, he stabbed a household servant whom he suspected of spying on him and he fled Ferrara. He left behind his manuscripts for *Jerusalem Delivered* and spent several years wandering through Italy. Later he returned to Ferrara where he denounced his former patrons, who imprisoned him, believing him to be mad. After seven years spent in an asylum, Tasso was finally released and had his writings returned to him. He regained his sanity and completed his masterpiece. His exaggerated, often paranoid fears of being persecuted by the Inquisition colored *Jerusalem Delivered*, and Tasso seems to have practiced a thorough self-censorship to avoid giving offense. Nevertheless, in his capable hands he still raised the chivalric tale he told to the level of high art.

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SEE ALSO *Music: Sixteenth-Century Achievements in Secular Music*

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## THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE

**SPREAD OF HUMANISM.** In the final quarter of the fifteenth century humanism's influence began to spread beyond Italy, into France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and England. The timing of the arrival of this New Learning differed from place to place. In most countries pockets of scholars active in the first half of the fifteenth century had tried to revive ancient Latin grammar and rhetoric and to imitate the ancients' style in their work. Many of these proto-humanists were teachers, and their interests nourished in their students a hunger to learn about the *studia humanitatis*. By the 1460s and 1470s, an increasing number of northern European scholars journeyed to Italy to learn firsthand about the Italians' textual scholarship and their historical discoveries. As these figures began to return home, they frequently faced resistance from more traditional faculties in the universities. By 1500, though, the dogged persistence of this first generation of humanists had paid off and the movement was now established in many places outside Italy. As humanism matured in the sixteenth century, it helped to inspire a literary Renaissance. Inspired by the study of the classics, humanist scholars labored to revive ancient Latin and to reinvigorate their own native literary traditions. Their efforts resulted in a brilliant flowering of poetry and prose in sixteenth-century Europe.

**LATIN.** Latin had long been the *lingua franca* of Europe, a shared language that had allowed literate people from every corner of the continent to communicate with each other. During the Middle Ages the language had never ceased growing, as theologians, philosophers, and

government officials had constantly coined new terms and phrases in Latin to fit changing realities. Over the centuries, the native languages spoken in Europe had influenced medieval Latin, as writers often latinized terms drawn from their own spoken vocabulary. But Latin's influence on the development of the vernacular languages—that is, on French, German, English, and the other languages spoken in Europe—was even greater. As these native languages developed more and more into literary languages in the later Middle Ages, Latin provided a constant well from which writers drew words and phrases that had no equivalent in their own tongue. By contrast, the Renaissance humanists bypassed medieval Latin and worked to revive the language of ancient Rome, a Latin that differed enormously from the many medieval forms in use throughout Europe. Ancient Latin was an extremely precise language with a rich vocabulary and a complex and highly structured grammar. Latin now had to be mastered as a foreign language and it required years of instruction and practice to become fluent. Sixteenth-century intellectuals proved more than equal to this task. During this period more Latin literature would be written in Europe than at any other time in history, and while many works were of a mediocre quality, much of this writing was also distinguished by its technical brilliance and learning. The roll call of distinguished Latinists included Desiderius Erasmus, Thomas More, Juan Luis Vives, Philipp Melancthon, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin, and Michel de Montaigne. Many Latin writers translated or arranged to have their works translated into vernacular languages, and in this process classical Latin enriched the style and vocabulary of the vernacular languages, as medieval Latin had once done. There were few signs of any decline in Latin's importance throughout the sixteenth century. The period was instead a great autumn harvest in the uses of Latin. Most intellectuals were bilingual, and while the language was used for every kind of writing, its precision and literary sophistication were seen as absolutely essential to those who wished to discuss theological, scholarly, or technical issues in their writing.

**VERNACULAR LANGUAGES.** At the same time as the revival of classical Latin was occurring throughout Europe, the continent's rich variety of spoken dialects were more and more coalescing into the forms we recognize today as modern national languages. Spoken dialects persisted in European countries until modern times, and the gulf between many of these spoken dialects and the national written language continues even now to be enormous. Yet by the end of the Middle Ages, vernacular French, German, English, Italian, and Spanish began to

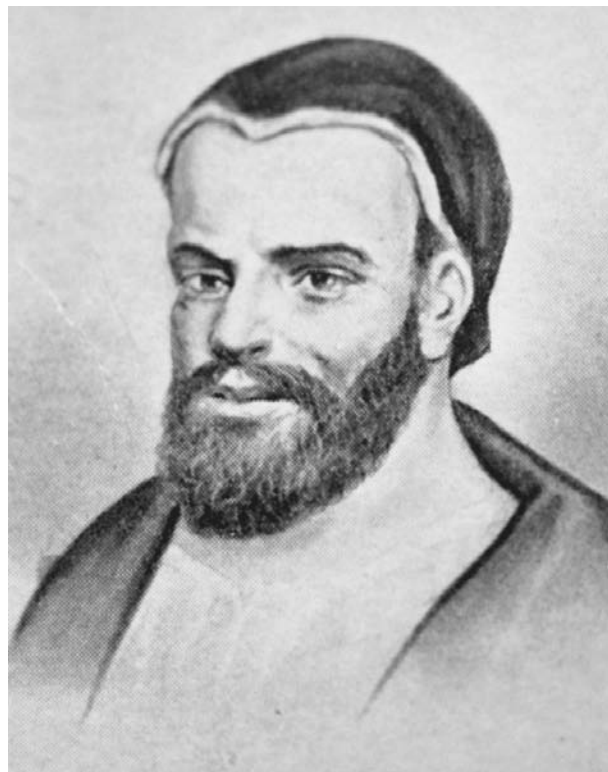
challenge Latin's dominance as a literary language. At least three factors had stimulated the development of these languages as written forms of expression. First, in the high Middle Ages Europe's aristocracy had evidenced a taste for chivalric themes and epic literature written in their own languages. The literary traditions that had been born in this period—epic poetry, chivalric romances, and ballads, to name just a few—continued to live on in the later Middle Ages. The language used to retell these tales was the vernacular, a written approximation of the spoken dialect of a region. Government was a second force that stimulated the rise of the vernacular. By the end of the Middle Ages, government documents, court records, and wills were being kept in many parts of Europe in native languages rather than Latin. These practical uses created a demand for notaries, secretaries, and other officials who were trained in both Latin and the native language. Governmental usage helped elevate the importance of the vernacular language, which had long been seen as a form of expression inferior to Latin. The final factor that aided the rise of vernacular languages was the invention of the printing press. In the first generation of the press, most printers devoted their attentions to printing copies of ancient classics, theological works, and other texts useful to scholars, typically published in Latin. Though less common, vernacular works printed during this early period of the development of the press resulted in the circulation of hundreds of copies, influencing later writers to adopt the vernacular. The press, moreover, played an important role in standardizing the form of the national languages. In Germany, Luther's translation of the Bible into German helped establish the reformer's own Saxon German as the dialect many later German writers preferred. In England, the publication of the Great English Bible and the Book of Common Prayer played similar roles in standardizing English. While great regional variations in usage and vocabulary persisted in written forms of the national languages, the economies of printing tended to fix the style, vocabulary, and spelling of the early-modern national languages. Authors and printers concerned with maximizing their earnings favored the emerging standard forms of English, French, and German used in the press at the expense of other regional dialects. In adopting these standard vernacular forms their works could be read by the broadest possible audience.

**FRENCH LANGUAGE.** The French language possessed the longest literary tradition of all the vernacular languages of Europe and its influence spread across a great area of the continent. As a result of the Norman Conquest, French had been established in Britain, where

it shaped the development of Middle English. Even in the sixteenth century, many of the English and Scottish aristocracy continued to write and speak French rather than the native languages of their countries. French was also a language used in diplomacy in Northern Europe, and it was spoken in parts of Flanders (a province of modern Belgium), in Burgundy (an important duchy located between France and Germany), and in regions of Germany and Switzerland. Thus a large portion of Northern Europe was French-speaking in the later Middle Ages, although there were considerable regional variations in the language. Over the course of the sixteenth century these differences diminished within France itself, in part because of a royal edict of 1539 requiring all court proceedings within France to be conducted in the French language. This decision sounded the death knell for Provençal, a widely spoken and written form of French in the southern part of the country. Now attorneys, judges, and royal officials needed to adopt the northern French dialect favored by the royal government.

**LITERARY TRADITIONS.** Medieval French authors had written a vast body of lyric poetry, historical chronicles, epics, and romances. In the course of the sixteenth century Renaissance humanism affected these older literary traditions, in most cases causing writers to abandon the older genres in favor of new classical forms. Enlivened by these classical examples, writers produced some of the language's finest poetry, and in the works of François Rabelais and Michel de Montaigne, France made two undeniably great prose contributions to world literature.

**INFLUENCE OF ERASMUS.** Literary achievement, though, was far from the minds of the first French thinkers to develop their skills as humanist scholars. Instead religious issues stimulated the growth of humanist studies, as France's first humanists aligned themselves with the movement because of its support of Christian reform. The example of Erasmus was particularly important to many of France's early humanists. In his many satires Erasmus had mocked the sterile theology taught by scholastic theologians in the universities. Erasmus had acquired this distaste for traditional theology, in fact, while he was a student at the University of Paris during the 1490s. As his ideas developed in the first decade of the sixteenth century, he promoted a revival of primitive Christianity as the only sure way to enliven the reform of the church. Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) and other early French humanists took interest in these ideas and they became avid students of Greek and Latin so they could deepen their understanding of the scriptures and



François Rabelais. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

the early history of the church. This sure and certain understanding of primitive Christianity, though, could not be achieved without a thorough knowledge of the Greek and Roman classics. And so, like Erasmus, many French humanists argued that classical eloquence and ancient moral philosophy could play a role in helping to shape the reform of the church. Budé, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, and other French humanists of this first generation developed this form of "Christian humanism" during the first decades of the sixteenth century.

**INITIAL LITERARY DEVELOPMENTS.** Humanism's impact on literary developments in France was already evident by the 1530s. At this time the first generation of Renaissance fictional writers and poets relied on the critique of the church and of medieval traditions that humanist philosophers like Erasmus, Budé, and Lefèvre d'Étaples had developed. Three figures stand out in this early period of the French Renaissance: François Rabelais, Marguerite of Navarre, and Clément Marot. Of the three, François Rabelais (1494–1553) was the undisputed genius. In two novels, *Pantagruel* (1532) and *Gargantua* (1534), he wove together fantastic comic tales about a race of giants into an enormous tapestry that attacked traditional medieval religious life and learning. He had developed his disdain for the monastic life firsthand.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN ATTACK ON MONKS AND SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGIANs**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his novels *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, the French humanist François Rabelais often mocked monks and scholastic theologians. At the end of the second book, Rabelais defended himself against these figures, and he defends the role that laughter plays in his work and in living generally.

Do I hear you saying: "Master, it scarcely seems sensible of you to be writing such jocose twaddle!" My reply is that you are no more sensible to waste your time reading it.

But if you do so as a gay pastime—which was the spirit in which I wrote—then you and I are less reprehensible than a rabble of unruly monks, critters and hypocritters, sophists and double-fists, humbugs and other bugs, and all folk of the same water and kidney who skulk under religious robes the better to gull the world. For they seek to persuade ordinary people that they are intent solely upon contemplation, devotion, fasts, maceration of their sensualities—and that merely to sustain the petty fragility of their humanity! Whereas, quite to the contrary, they were roistering, and God knows how they roister! As

Juvenal has it "*Et Curios simulant sed bacchaniali vivant*, they play the austere Curius yet revel in bacchanalian orgies." You may read the record of their dissipation in great letter of illuminated script upon their florid snout and their pedulous bellies unless they perfume themselves with sulphur.

As for their studies, they read only Pantagrueline books, not so much to pass the time merrily as to hurt some one mischievously. How so? By fouling and befouling, by twiddling their dry fingers and fingering their dry twiddlers, by twisting wry necks, by bumming, arsing and ballocking, by devilscutting, in a word by calumniating. Rapt in this task, they are like nothing so much as the brutish village clods who in the cherry season stir up the ordures of little children to find kernels to sell to druggists for pomander oil.

Flee these rascals at sight, hate and abhor them as I do myself, and by my faith, you will be the better for it. Would you be good Pantagruelists? That is, would you live peaceful, happy, healthy and forever content? Then never trust in people who peep through holes, especially through the opening of a monk's hood.

**SOURCE:** François Rabelais, *The Five Books of Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Trans. Jacques LeClercq (New York: Modern Library, 1936): 289–290.

In his youth he had been a member of a Franciscan monastery. There, Rabelais frequently came to loggerheads with his superiors, and he soon left the convent to join a more liberal group of Benedictines. Eventually, he left the religious life altogether to pursue his classical studies and to complete a medical degree. Rabelais promoted his *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* as mere trivialities he had created to lighten the sufferings of his sick patients. While the two books contain much buffoonery and grotesque humor, a deeply serious vein runs through these comic tales. Their satire mocks contemporary hypocrisy, popular superstitions, and religious intolerance, faults that Rabelais saw as being in abundant supply during his times. Beyond his Christian humanism, Rabelais did not subscribe to a set of religious orthodoxies or to a single philosophical perspective in his work. Instead he preached the enjoyment of life, the value of study, and a tolerant understanding of human foibles and shortcomings. Rabelais wrote two more installments to the series in the 1540s, and in these he stepped beyond the stylistic confines of the medieval chivalric epic in which he had begun the tales. He moved to develop instead a classical heroic narrative that was

more consonant with the story's underlying humanist ideology. Throughout the entire series, though, the tales were freely tinged with a frank and open sexuality, a great deal of coarse and scatological humor, and the language of the street. These factors helped to stimulate their enormous popularity, which was immediate and stretched far beyond France. Rabelais' works were translated into other European languages, and eventually influenced Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in seventeenth-century Spain as well as novel writers in eighteenth-century England and France. At home, though, the scholastic theology that litter the tales were not fondly received by the theologians of the University of Paris, who routinely condemned Rabelais' works as subversive.

**MAROT AND MARGUERITE OF NAVARRE.** Christian humanist and Protestant ideas shaped the poetic works of Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Clément Marot (1496–1544). Marguerite of Navarre was one of the most brilliantly educated women of the sixteenth century. She was the sister of King Francis I of France and, following her first husband's death, she married the King of Navarre, a small but important king-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ADVICE ON WORLDLY ENGAGEMENTS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron* was closely modeled on Boccaccio's *Decameron*. In the prologue, the characters discuss the purpose of life, and in their deliberations they are guided by an old woman who warns them to avoid worldliness and engage in the study of the scriptures.

"You ask a thing of me, my children," replied the old lady, "which I find very difficult. You want me to invent an amusement which shall dissipate your ennui. I have been in search of such a remedy all my life long, and I have never found but one, which is the reading of Holy Writ. It is in such reading that the mind finds its true and perfect joy, whence proceed the repose and the health of the body. If you ask me what I do to be so cheerful and so healthy at so advanced an age, it is, that as soon as I rise I read the Holy Scriptures. I see and contemplate the will of God, who sent his Son on earth to announce to us that holy word and that good news which promises the pardon of all sins, and the payment of all debts, by the gift he has made us of his love, passion, and merits. This idea affords me such joy, that I take my psalter, and sing with my heart and pronounce with my lips, as humbly as I can, the beautiful canticles with which the Holy Spirit inspired David and other sacred authors. The pleasure I derive from them is so ravishing, that I regard as blessings the evils which befall me every day, because I have in my heart through faith Him who has suffered all these evils for me. Before supper I retire in

like manner to feed my soul with reading. In the evening I review all I have done in the day; I ask pardon for my faults; I thank God for his graces, and lie down in his love, fear, and peace, assured against all evils. This, my children, is what has long been my amusement, after having searched well, and found none more solid and more satisfying. It seems to me, then, that if you will give yourselves every morning for an hour to reading, and say your prayers devoutly during mass, you will find in this solitude all the charms which cities could afford. In fact, he who knows God finds all things fair in him, and without him everything ugly and disagreeable. Take my advice, therefore, I entreat you, if you wish to find happiness in life."

"Those who have read the Holy Scriptures," said Hircan, "as I believe we have done, will confess, madam, that what you have said is true. But you must also consider that we are not yet so mortified but that we have need of some amusement and corporeal pastime. When we are at home we have the chase and hawking, which make us forget a thousand bad thoughts; the ladies have their household affairs, their needlework, and sometimes dancing, wherein they find laudable exercise. I propose then, on the part of the men, that you, as the eldest lady, read to us in the morning the history of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the great and wondrous things he has done for us. After dinner until vespers we must choose some pastime which may be agreeable to the body and not prejudicial to the soul. By this means we shall pass the day cheerfully."

**SOURCE:** Marguerite of Navarre, *The Heptameron*. Trans. Walter K. Kelly (London: 1855). Available online at <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/navarre/heptameron/introduction.html>.

dom between Spain and France. Marguerite's interests were wide-ranging, and included Neoplatonic philosophy and the cause of church reform. While she remained outwardly loyal to Rome, her court harbored a number of Protestants, and those suspected of Protestant sympathies. She was a prolific writer, although most of her works were not published during her lifetime. In many of these she develops a consistent theme, first outlined in the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*. In that long work she describes the soul as constantly in danger from temptation, but still moving along toward the path of salvation. Many of Marguerite's poems were allegories that described her own religious turmoil and the consolation she received from Christ. She modeled her greatest work of fiction, the *Heptameron*, on Boccaccio's *Decameron*. In it, a flood traps a group of ten French noble men and women. While they wait to be rescued, they tell tales to

pass the time. After each of these, the group considers the moral message of the fable. Like Rabelais, Marguerite's tales are often marked by a frank sexuality, which caused some scholars to discount its value. More recent examinations of the *Heptameron* have shown that it is filled with dynamic female characters, complex observations, and a subtle morality. For a time Marguerite of Navarre was also patron of Clément Marot, a figure that influenced much later sixteenth-century French verse. Marot fell under suspicion of Protestant sympathies at more than one point in his life, and his persecution became the subject for several of his poems. When he was not yet thirty, he abandoned the traditional medieval style of verse that he had used until that point, and adopted a lighter and more elegant style. At Marguerite of Navarre's urging, he translated the Old Testament Psalms into French verse, and these soon became

wildly popular. They were used at the royal court and adopted by congregations of French Protestants. During the sixteenth century French presses published more than 500 editions of Marot's poetic versions of the Psalms, even though the theological faculty at the University of Paris had condemned them. Fears about his religious orthodoxy forced Marot into exile later in his life, and he died in the Northern Italian city of Turin. Importantly, Marot became the first French poet to learn of the Italian movement of Petrarchism, the imitation of Petrarch's style. He wrote the first sonnet in the French language, and his other verses, which included a number of short poems and epigrams, influenced poets in the second half of the sixteenth century.

**THE PLEIADES.** Around 1550, a group of seven poets known as the Pleiades self-consciously tried to separate themselves from France's medieval traditions of verse. In the place of native verse forms, they adopted a strictly classicizing style based on poetic models found in Greek and Roman literature. The group took its name from the heavenly constellation, which according to Greek myth had been formed to immortalize the memories of seven great poets. The Pleiades rejected France's medieval poetry as barbaric, and instead they wanted to endow literary French with the same kind of elegance that was to be found in the works of Homer, Vergil, Horace, and other ancient figures. They fashioned the manifesto for the movement after Joachim Du Bellay's treatise *Defense and Illustration of the French Language*, which he published in 1549 along with thirteen odes written in the style of Horace. Du Bellay's friend Pierre de Ronsard soon followed with the publication of a much larger collection of odes, and over the course of the next two decades the other members of the Pleiades worked to perfect classical style in French verse. Around 1570, the movement began to die out as fashions changed. By this time the members of the Pleiades had succeeded in introducing a number of ancient poetic forms into French verse, and writers continued to return to many of these forms during the early-modern and modern periods.

**MONTAIGNE.** In the final decades of the sixteenth century religious wars broke out in France. As the disruptions of these conflicts grew, the dream of reviving a classical Golden Age seemed increasingly unrealistic. Now Renaissance writers experimented with more personal styles, making many of their works difficult to classify within the existing French or the newly adopted classical genres. Such is the case with the greatest author of the period, Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592). He was at one and the same time a classical humanist of distinction, a critical and literary theorist, a political

philosopher, and a skeptical figure of some subtlety (see *Philosophy: Trends in Sixteenth Century Thought: Montaigne*). Disgusted by the violence and intolerance that was becoming increasingly common in France, Montaigne retired from public life to his country chateau when he was not yet forty. For the rest of his life he devoted himself to his *Essays*, a collection of internal thoughts, debates, and trials of ideas which he recorded and expanded upon over a number of years. From his earliest youth Montaigne had been trained in the traditions of Renaissance humanism and he had grown up speaking classical Latin. While his mastery of that language was prodigious, he chose to write his *Essays* in French, a sign of the growing dominance of the language among writers in sixteenth-century France. The beauty of his style, his depth of classical knowledge, and the fine literary distinctions he made in recording his thoughts and feelings expanded the boundaries of literary French even farther. They would also make the *Essays* one of the milestones in the history of the language. As the sixteenth century drew to a close, Montaigne's *Essays* came in their final form to reflect the increasingly pessimistic cast of the humanist movement in France. The century had opened in high optimism, as a new generation of scholars like Budé had seen in the imitation of classical Antiquity a force that would revitalize morality and reform Christianity. Inspired by Erasmus and other Christian humanists, French humanists had labored to revive the antique ideal of eloquence in speaking and writing. But now as religious intolerance and violence punctuated the final years of the sixteenth century, figures like Montaigne questioned the civilizing effects of these efforts. "Between ourselves," he wrote, "these are the things that I have always seen to be in remarkable agreement: super-celestial thoughts and subterranean conduct."

**SPANISH LANGUAGE.** In Spain, Renaissance humanism did not produce the great flowering of Latin works that the movement did elsewhere in Northern Europe and Italy. In the second half of the fifteenth century the humanist Antonio de Nebrija helped to establish the study of classical Latin in Spain by publishing a textbook about the language in 1481. Queen Isabella of Castile soon encouraged Nebrija to translate the work into Spanish so that a wider audience could study his text. By 1500, small groups of Spanish humanists wrote literature in a revived classical Latin, and some of these scholars worked on the great Polyglot Bible project that began at the University of Alcalá in 1506. But Spanish humanists wrote largely in their own language, and despite the intensely orthodox character of religious life in Spain at the time, they adopted many of the ethical and

moral teachings that humanists did elsewhere in Europe. Erasmus was a key figure in the Spanish Renaissance—so key, in fact, that humanism came to be known in parts of Iberia as Erasmianism. As elsewhere in Europe, written Spanish was being standardized during the sixteenth century, its vocabulary, spelling, and phonetic structure acquiring its modern elements. In the creation of this national language, the Castilian dialect grew to be dominant. The expansion of Castilian hastened in the sixteenth century as the union of Castile and Aragon that had first been forged by the marriage of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella grew tighter over time. Like France, Spain had a distinguished medieval tradition of chivalric romances, epic poetry, and love lyrics. In the course of the sixteenth century, these native traditions would be influenced by Petrarchism, which popularized the writing of sonnets, and by the revival of knowledge of ancient poetry.

**THE NOVEL.** In the writing of novels, the sixteenth century in Spain was a distinguished prelude to the Golden Age of Spanish literature in the seventeenth century. As in France, the traditions of chivalric romance had been strong in medieval Spain. Novels about knightly love affairs formed a widely popular genre in Renaissance Spain. The most successful of these was *Amadis de Gaula*, a tale which had been written by several authors before being given its final form by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo and published in 1508. *Amadis* recounted the tale of an idealized knight and his love for an equally idealized lady. The success of the work gave rise to an entire genre of knightly romance in which military figures embodied Christian virtues. But by the end of the sixteenth century, the popularity of these tales had begun to wane in favor of new kinds of fiction. Tragicomedy, as evidenced in the success of Spain's greatest sixteenth-century novel *La Celestina*, also attracted new readers. Published in 1502, Fernando de Rojas's great masterpiece relates in dialogue form the love interests of the noble Calisto, who tries to seduce the lovely, but lowborn woman Melibea. She rebuffs his advances, and Calisto, offended by this assault to his honor, appeals to the sorceress Celestina for aid. After many twists and turns, the novel ends uncharacteristically with Celestina's gruesome murder, the accidental death of Calisto, and the suicide of the deflowered Melibea. The picaresque novel was another important form of fiction that emerged in sixteenth-century Spain. Instead of recounting the heroic deeds of great lovers or knights errant, these stories treated society's downtrodden and outcasts. These novels are notable for their moral ambiguity since their heroes are,

in reality, anti-heroes. Vagabonds, thieves, and other deviants populate the pages of these works, and writers often used the genre to satirize society's absurdities. The first novel in this vein, *The Life of Lazarillo of Tormes* is often judged the best. It was published in 1554, and by the end of the century many authors had imitated its formula. As a genre, the picaresque novel proved important in the seventeenth century in forging more realistic kinds of fiction. A final fictional form that was popular in sixteenth-century Spain was the pastoral romance. In 1559 Jorge de Montemayor published the first of these works in Spanish entitled *Diana*. Modeled after the *Arcadia* of Jacopo Sannazaro, *Diana* included scenes in which nymphs and shepherds engaged in airy discussions of Platonic love. By century's end, Spanish authors had published a number of other pastoral romances; most notable among these was Miguel de Cervantes' *Galatea*, first published in 1585.

**VIVES.** Spain's most accomplished sixteenth-century humanist philosopher, Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540), was also a literary figure of distinction. When he was only seventeen Vives left Spain for the University of Paris. He soon attracted the attention of Erasmus, Budé, and other humanists in northern Europe, and he lived for a time in Louvain in Flanders before moving on to England where he was appointed a lecturer at the University of Oxford. He remained in England for several years, but eventually fell out of favor when King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his Spanish wife, Catherine of Aragon. He moved on to Bruges, the home of his wife, and spent the remainder of his life there. He continued in these years to nourish a correspondence with Thomas More and other humanists, both in England and throughout Europe. Vives made powerful contributions to the study of philology and philosophy, but he was also an advocate of social and educational reform. In 1526, for instance, he wrote a tract entitled *On Aid to the Poor* which he sent to the magistrates of his wife's city Bruges. Vives recommended that the increasingly large number of refugees present in Europe should be treated as natives in those places in which they settled, a visionary plan when judged against the restrictive citizenship requirements common at the time. In his educational tracts he outlined plans for the education of children and women. One of these, *On the Right Method of Instruction for Children*, was written for Princess Mary of England, the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. In *On the Education of the Christian Woman*, Vives advocated the education of women in the classics. These tracts influenced court societies throughout Europe in the sixteenth century, and where the advice of



*On the Education of Women* was followed the status accorded women's education was elevated. Vives today is best remembered for one of his early works, *The Fable of Man*, a parable that expounds the Christian humanism and Neoplatonism that were popular at the time.

**GERMAN LANGUAGE.** In comparison to France, Italy, and Spain, the development of a national language proceeded more slowly in Germany and England. The Holy Roman Empire, the political confederation that governed Germany, Austria, and much of Central Europe, was comprised of more than 300 individual territories loosely joined together under the rule of an elected monarch. Most people within this complex political entity were German-speaking, although there were large minorities that spoke other languages. In addition, enormous differences characterized the German spoken and written in the various regions of the empire, so that the language of one area was often unintelligible to people from another area.

**WRITTEN GERMAN.** Many different written forms of German developed from these local dialects, and this complex variety did not give way decisively to a single standard literary German until the late seventeenth century. Spoken dialects, on the other hand, have persisted in Central Europe ever since to confound natives and travelers alike. The origins of written forms of German stretched back to the High Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century, some German states began keeping their records in native forms of their language, rather than in Latin. During the fourteenth century the emperor Charles IV (1346–1378) helped to stimulate the growth of the empire's first shared form of written German. Charles ruled from Prague, but his officials adopted both a new form of Latin based upon the writings of the early Italian humanists and a standard German. They based this written German on the spoken dialects of Austria and South Germany and the eastern and central parts of the empire. Johannes von Tepl used this language, known as "Common German," around 1400 to write *The Ploughman of Bohemia*, one of the first literary classics of early-modern German. In the fifteenth century the imperial court continued to develop a standard form of written German, but the Austrian Habsburg emperors who ruled at this time now favored their own local South German dialects in comparison to the more broad-based "Common German" that had been used in the fourteenth-century court. Around 1500, another form of written German developed and began to compete against the Habsburg court's language. The powerful electors of Saxony developed a new literary form of German based upon their own dialect. The use of this form

of written German was greatly expanded during the sixteenth century as a result of the rise of Protestantism, since Martin Luther used it to write his tracts condemning the pope and the Roman Church. As Luther's career continued, he translated the Bible into this same Saxon German. Eventually, Luther's German Bible became the most powerful tool in establishing a standard written language throughout Germany. By the time of his death in 1546, more than three hundred editions of the Luther Bible had been printed and as many as three million copies of the German Bible may have been in circulation throughout the empire. During the remainder of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Luther's idiom, ensconced in this biblical translation, became the dominant force in establishing a standard form of written German throughout the empire. While he did not single-handedly create modern German as some might suppose, his forceful and colorful use of the language exerted a powerful influence on shaping the language's style, vocabulary, and grammar. At the same time, vast regional differences in written German persisted, and while the press had originally aided in the dissemination of a standardized form of literary German through the publication of books like the German Bible, it also kept alive regional differences. Local printers, concerned to satisfy their readership, continued to use written forms of local dialects for years to come.

**RENAISSANCE STYLES.** Humanism appeared in Germany slightly earlier than in France and Spain and, by 1500, it had established itself in a pattern similar to other places in Northern Europe. The movement was present in small circles throughout the country, where it often faced the opposition of the scholastics. The first German humanists of distinction, Rudolph Agricola (1444–1485) and Conrad Celtis (1459–1508) devoted themselves to writing poetry in the style of Petrarch as well as mastering the languages and literary styles of Antiquity. Celtis became the most accomplished poet of early humanism, although he wrote most of his important creations in Latin, rather than German. One undisputed classic of the early German Renaissance was *Das Narrenschiff* or *The Ship of Fools* written by Sebastian Brant (1457–1521) and published in 1494. The work was a long allegorical poem that mocked the foibles of humankind. It served as a prelude to Erasmus' great Latin oration, *The Praise of Folly* of 1509, a work which also criticized human stupidity. Although Brant was less thorough and biting in his attacks than Erasmus, a similar spirit animates his long work, which is divided into 112 chapters each devoted to mocking a different kind of human fool. Satire was one of the genres in which

German humanists excelled during the Renaissance. Among the many achievements in this vein, *The Letters of Obscure Men* of Ulrich von Hutten were particularly brilliant and influential. Written in a mock scholastic style, they poked fun at the absurd conventions of Germany's university theologians. Composed to defend the German humanist Johann Reuchlin during the height of a controversy over the study of Jewish books, von Hutten's works became the model for a truly widespread genre of satirical tracts and polemics that would be published during the Protestant Reformation. Later Protestant and Catholic writers made use of the broad humor and satirical techniques that von Hutten perfected in his *Letters*, spawning one of the most universally consumed literatures of sixteenth-century Germany.

**RELIGIOUS CRISIS.** The controversies of the Reformation and Counter Reformation often dominated sixteenth-century German literature. Critical analysis has only begun to digest the enormous amount of pamphlet literature published during the period. Although most of these tracts were not of high literary quality, one does find fine allegorical poems and humanist-inspired dialogues amidst the thousands of short tracts defending the Roman Church or promoting the ideas of the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant reformers, including Thomas Müntzer and Martin Luther, also wrote some of the finest lyric poems of the period and these often served as hymns in the developing Protestant churches. Another genre that arose in Lutheran territories was the funeral sermon, of which more than 100,000 printed copies survive from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Originally, the Protestant reformers had been reluctant to allow eulogies to accompany the sermons preached at the burial of the dead. Over time, however, eulogies treating the life of the deceased crept into these sermons, which were printed in the days and weeks following a funeral and circulated as a memorial to the dead. While many of these texts show that the task of writing and delivering a funeral sermon was frequently a perfunctory one, in some cases and in the hands of some gifted preachers these Lutheran funeral sermons could rise to the level of high art. In addition, the tradition of the Meistersinger continued unabated in sixteenth-century Germany, and in Protestant towns this late-medieval form of singing was placed into the service of the Reformation. The Meistersinger, immortalized in Richard Wagner's famous opera, *The Meistersinger from Nuremberg* were usually members of local guilds who met at certain times to perform musical works they had written. They performed their works as unaccompanied solos, and their compositions were judged according to strict rules

that had long been laid down by their society. The city of Nuremberg was the most famous center of this art, and during the sixteenth century as the town became a center of Protestantism, the Meistersinger focused increasingly on using their songs to promote Lutheran ideas. The most fertile of all the Meistersinger at Nuremberg was Hans Sachs, (1494–1576), a dramatist and poet, and the central character of Wagner's opera. During his long life Sachs wrote more than 4,000 of these songs, and an additional 2,000 other short verses, dramas, and dialogues.

**FICTION.** The excitement that religious disputes created in sixteenth-century Germany helped to increase the number of readers throughout the population. As the German audience grew, new forms of fiction appeared to satisfy an increasingly diverse public of readers. By mid-century collections of short, humorous stories, written either in prose or verse, appeared. The most popular of these were *Humor and Seriousness*, written by the Franciscan monk Johannes Paul, and *The Carriage Booklet*, by Jörg Wickram. Wickram, from Colmar in the far western province of Alsace, was illegitimate and had little more than a rudimentary education. He did read widely in German works, but was apparently unschooled in Latin. In several fictional works he pioneered the form of the novel in the German language. These longer narratives had central characters, more involved plots, and better character development than the short German fiction that had been written up to his time. His most fully developed work was *Of Good and Bad Neighbors*, a tale of a merchant family across several generations. The values that he praised in his works included hard work, thrift, respect for authority, and kindness to one's neighbors. Another great achievement of late sixteenth-century German fiction was the *History of Dr. Johann Faustus*, a short anonymous book published at Frankfurt in 1587. It was an overnight success and was soon translated into a number of other languages. In its original form the plot of *Dr. Faustus* treats the story of a young theologian who turns from his studies to take up magic. To strengthen his knowledge of the new art, he concludes a pact with the devil to enjoy 24 years of prosperity and mastery of magic. At the conclusion of this period the devil returns to take him to hell. *Dr. Faustus* soon became the basis upon which other writers constructed more complex plots in other fictional and dramatic works. The most famous Renaissance adaptation of the tale of Faustus was Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, which he apparently wrote within just a few years of the original. The story of Faustus is one of the most enduring tales in European history; it survived long

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A STATESMAN IMAGINES A PERFECT SOCIETY**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Utopia*, Sir Thomas More imagined a tightly controlled society that was free from many of the vices common in Europe at the time. In this passage, he describes how his imaginary Utopians are all engaged in useful occupations, thus avoiding the poverty that is common among Europeans.

The chief, and almost the only business of the siphogrants, is to take care that no man may live idle, but that every one may follow his trade diligently: yet they do not wear themselves out with perpetual toil, from morning to night, as if they were beasts of burden, which, as it is indeed a heavy slavery, so it is everywhere the common course of life among all tradesman everywhere, except among the Utopians; but they dividing the day and night into twenty-four hours, appoint six of these for work; three of them are before dinner, and after that they dine, and interrupt their labor for two hours, and then they go to work again for the other three hours; and after that they sup, and at eight o'clock, counting from noon, go to bed and sleep eight hours. And for their other hours, besides those of work, and those that go for eating and sleeping, they are left to every man's discretion; yet they are not to abuse that interval to luxury and idleness, but must employ it in some proper exercise according to their various inclinations, which is for the most part reading. ... After supper, they spend an hour in some diversion: in summer, it is in their gardens, and in winter it is in the halls where they eat, and they entertain themselves in them, either with music or discourse. They do not so much as know dice, or any such foolish and mischievous games: they have two sorts of games not unlike our chess; the one is between several numbers, in which one number, as it were, consumes another: the other resembles a battle between the virtues and the vices, in which the enmity in the vices among themselves, and their agreement against virtue, is not unpleasantly represented; together with the special oppositions between the particular virtues and vices; as also the methods by which vice either openly assaults or secretly

undermines virtue, and virtue on the other hand resists it ... But this matter of the time set off for labor is to be narrowly examined, otherwise you may perhaps imagine, that since there are only six hours appointed for work, they may fall under a scarcity of necessary provisions. But it is so far from being true, that this time is not sufficient for supplying them with a plenty of all things, that are either necessary or convenient, that it is rather too much; and this you will easily apprehend, if you consider how great a part of all other nations is quite idle. First, women generally do little, who are the half of mankind; and if some few women are diligent, their husbands are idle: then consider the great company of idle priests, and of those that are called religious men; add to these all rich men, chiefly those that have estates in land, who are called noblemen and gentlemen, together with their families, made up of idle persons, that do nothing but go swaggering about. Reckon in with these all those strong and lusty beggars that go about pretending some disease, in excuse for their begging; and upon the whole account you will find that the number of those by whose labors mankind is supplied, is much less than you perhaps imagined. Then consider how few of those that work are employed in labors that Men do really need; for we who measure all things by money [and] give occasion to many trades that are both vain and superfluous, and serve only to support riot and luxury. For if those who are at work were employed only in such things as the conveniences of life require, there would be such an abundance of them that the prices of them would so sink that tradesmen could not be maintained by their gains; if all those who labor about useless things were set to more profitable employments, and if all that number that languishes out their life in sloth and idleness, of whom every one consumes as much as any two of the men that are at work do, were forced to labor, you may easily imagine that a small proportion of time would serve for doing all that is either necessary, pleasure being still kept within its due bounds.

**SOURCE:** Sir Thomas More, *Utopia* (London: Richard Chiswell, 1685): 81–84. Spelling and punctuation modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

after the Renaissance to become the subject for operas, plays, and novels. While the original work warned of the dangers of magic and curiosity, the Faustian tale has come to be seen since then as symptomatic of the dangers that lurk in humankind's search after knowledge.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE.** The reception of humanism followed a similar path in England as elsewhere in North-

ern Europe. Toward the end of the fifteenth century a group of scholars, inspired by Italian examples, devoted themselves to the study of Latin and other ancient languages. Over time Neoplatonism and the Christian humanism popularized by figures like Erasmus in the early sixteenth century developed in circles of scholars throughout the island. The greatest member of this group, Sir Thomas More, produced a number of works

that inspired later generations of English writers. Until 1550, though, most humanists in England wrote in Latin. Even More's immensely popular work of political philosophy, *Utopia* did not have an English translation until a quarter century after its Latin publication. In England, Latin was usually the language of scholarship, while most of the country's nobles preferred to speak and write in French. This situation, though, began to alter quickly and dramatically in the first half of the sixteenth century. At the same time as humanism was maturing in England, the use of written forms of English was also expanding greatly. Long thought by English aristocrats and intellectuals to be an inferior form of expression, English gradually replaced Latin in the course of the sixteenth century as the preferred written language. These developments occurred at a time of rapid change for the English language. Chaucer completed his *Canterbury Tales* around 1400 in a form of Middle English, and in the century that followed English changed dramatically. By 1600, the English vocabulary underwent a serious expansion, aided by the publication of William Tyndale's English New Testament in 1525, by the English Great Bible in 1539, and by the Protestant *Book of Common Prayer* adopted throughout England in 1549.

**QUESTIONS OF STYLE.** By 1550, it had become increasingly clear that English would eventually triumph over Latin, and humanist-trained intellectuals now debated what direction English style should take. During the so-called "Inkhorn Controversy" opponents of Latin style and eloquence like Thomas Wilson argued that English possessed a clear and forceful style and that it should be kept free of Latin, Greek, and French words and phrases. Against this purist pose, others supported borrowing phrases from Latin and other languages for which there was no ready English equivalent. Over the remainder of the century, the practice of adapting words from other languages gradually won out over the purist perspective, although purists continued to defend native words and styles into the seventeenth century. Despite the purists' opposition, borrowing from other languages continued, and a tremendous expansion in vocabulary transformed the language into an elegant and malleable vehicle for written and spoken expression. The masters of sixteenth-century English who had helped to expand the language included Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542), who was influenced by Italian Petrarchism and introduced the sonnet into English; Sir Thomas Elyot (1490–1546), who was a prolific writer and whose courtesy book, *The Book of the Governor*, helped to establish standards of civility in English aristocratic life; and



Portrait of Sir Thomas More by Hans Holbein the Younger. © FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS.

Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey (1517–1547), who among his other literary accomplishments translated Vergil's *Aeneid* into English. These figures had laid the foundation for the incredible flowering of English verse and prose that would occur in the final years of the Elizabeth period, the era of Marlowe and the early Shakespeare.

**STUDY OF HISTORY.** Outside Italy, Renaissance scholars also devoted themselves to the study of history. Humanist historiography varied greatly in quality and sophistication throughout Europe. Nationalistic concerns often dominated the writing of history, as humanists from England, Germany, France, and Spain became interested in treating the glories of their nations' past. Other authors saw in the central characters of history morality lessons; they stressed that certain figures were worthy of emulation. As a rule, though, humanist historiography in Europe downplayed the role of God in shaping human events, and instead saw history as the product of great men working with and against fortune. Toward the end of the sixteenth century a more objective, less moralistic spirit began to prevail among some scholars, particularly in France. The standards of proof these historians applied laid the foundations for a more



Fifteenth-century English manuscript from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

modern and unbiased writing of history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

**GERMAN TRENDS.** History was a central concern of the German humanists. In the early sixteenth century these scholars began to form a recognizable group within the court of the emperor Maximilian I, and many of these figures wrote histories. In the fifteenth century Italian humanists had frequently pointed to the works of Latin Antiquity to confirm their dark judgments about German culture—that is, that Germans were barbaric and their learning was inferior to Italians. As a result, the early German humanists frequently focused on rehabilitating their own heritage. Their histories celebrated the bravery and independence of the early German tribes and these writers posed Germanic valor against effete Italian culture. They pointed to the early Christianization of the German tribes, a sign of the depth of German piety and religious sentiments. But humanists also devoted themselves to writing local histories, as Italians had done in the fifteenth century. In scores of works like Johannes Aventinus' *Bavarian Chronicle*, Germany's new

historians tried to reconstruct the history of Germany's many regions. Much of this work was uncritical, merely relying on ancient myths that had long circulated in older chronicles. But every now and then, a new critical spirit sometimes shone through. The Strasbourg historian Beatus Rhenanus (1486–1547) was a friend of Erasmus who questioned the uncritical tactics of many of his fellow humanist historians. Rhenanus constructed more reliable histories of the German past by examining the surviving documents. One of the insights that Beatus Rhenanus had—his suggestion that the Franks were also a Germanic tribe—would spark a great deal of controversy in France. Longstanding myths about French history had traced the French to the descendants of Francus, a refugee from the destroyed city of Troy. Beatus Rhenanus debunked these myths, instead interpreting the early history of the Germanic tribes according to the documents and artifacts that survived from the early-medieval period. Even though Beatus Rhenanus helped to debunk myths about France and Germany's past, new legends developed in the sixteenth century. The Protestant Reformation had a profound influence on shaping ideas about the German past. Many German historians at the time had been trained as humanist scholars, and as Protestants, men like Martin Bucer at Strasbourg and the Lutheran theologians Philip Melancthon and Matthias Flacius Illyricus developed the notion of a medieval “Roman yoke.” In their works they celebrated the Protestant Reformation for freeing Germany from the weight of Roman oppression. This Protestant view of history interpreted the Middle Ages as a dark period of decay and degeneration in which the Roman papacy had tyrannically ruled over the human conscience. The revival of the New Learning and the Reformation's restoration of true Christian teaching in Germany had rescued the nation from the oppression of a thousand years of medieval history.

**HISTORY IN FRANCE.** In France, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also saw a revival of interest in history. Philippe de Commines (1445–1509) was one of the first of a new breed of historians in France who applied a more distanced and objective spirit to his retelling of the past. He was not a humanist scholar, but he served as a member of the court of Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy. At the time Burgundy was one of the most powerful territories in Europe, and Commines recorded many of the great events he had witnessed in his *Memoires* in a relatively unbiased way. As humanists devoted themselves to writing history after Commines, they downplayed the role of divine providence in shaping history. Instead they stressed the role that human actors had



Woodcut illustration of the city of Augsburg from Hatmann Schedel's *World Chronicle* (1493). © HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

played in shaping their countries' history, and like many Italian Renaissance historians, they identified virtuous individuals in history who were worthy of emulation. Among the many humanist scholars who practiced history in the sixteenth century, Jean Bodin, Étienne Pasquier, and Jacques Auguste de Thou stand out. In his works treating history, Jean Bodin (1530–1596) tried to develop a theory for interpreting the past and for undertaking study in the discipline itself. He stressed the importance of acquiring a broad knowledge of the past before specializing one's study in a particular era. By contrast, Étienne Pasquier (1529–1615) was a lawyer who adopted legal methods of proof in his histories. He worked in the royal government in France and, like Guicciardini before him, had unprecedented access to state documents. Through this experience he acquired a critical understanding of France's past as well as a broad picture of how government had developed over time. When he was thirty years old, he began his *Researches on France*, a work he did not complete until forty years later. The *Researches* eventually comprised ten thick volumes. Pasquier intended his work to stir an admiration in his readers for the glories of French history, but he applied a judicious standard to do so, carefully documenting his conclusions. In constructing his French history he did not rely on past chronicles, but went instead to the primary legal and court documents that contained more reliable information about developments. His work did much to advance notions about documentary proof and the necessity for an historian to adopt an unbiased spirit. The last great genius of French sixteenth-century historical writing was Auguste de Thou (1533–1617). De Thou was also a trained lawyer, and in his works he strove for a similarly objective presentation of the past.

He wrote his works in a commanding and eloquent Latin. As Pasquier had been before him, de Thou was also a Gallican—that is, he supported the notion that the French Church should develop as a national church and be kept free from papal intervention. He believed that this tradition of relative French independence had deep roots, and he attempted to demonstrate the origins of Gallicanism in medieval history. These sentiments did not endear him to church authorities outside France. Although the histories he wrote of sixteenth-century France were erudite and largely objective, his judgments about Gallicanism resulted in the placing of at least one of his histories on the *Index of Prohibited Books*, the organ of censorship in the Roman Catholic Church.

**MARTYRS.** While Pasquier and de Thou favored a distanced objectivity, the religious crises of the second half of the sixteenth century in France, England, and other parts of Europe stimulated the popularity of another more emotional historical work: the martyrology. Martyrologies treated the lives and deaths of those who had sacrificed themselves for their faith, and these sometimes gruesome books had both Catholic and Protestant versions throughout the sixteenth century. Among the most astute authors in this genre were the English historian John Foxe and the French Protestant Jean Crespin. Crespin published his *Book of Martyrs* in 1554, and the work continued to be edited and re-issued after his death, becoming an enormously popular text among French Calvinists at the end of the sixteenth century. Since the publication continued over time, new editions of the work added accounts of those who had been killed for their faith during the Wars of Religion. In England, John Foxe drew upon Crespin's example for his *Actes*

and *Monuments of These Latter and Perilous Days* first printed in 1563. Foxe included many stories of European martyrs drawn from Crespin's text, but, in particular, he focused on those recently executed in England during the reign of Mary I. Together both Crespin and Foxe hoped that these tales of suffering would invigorate readers to defend the Reformation against those who would subvert it. Martyrologies like these remained a tremendously popular genre throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* as it came to be popularly known, would be published many times, and influenced later writers, including the seventeenth-century authors John Bunyan and John Milton.

**TRENDS IN ENGLAND.** In England it was the Italian Polydor Vergil (1470–1555) who established the genre of humanist historical writing. Vergil was a native of Urbino and he had been sent to England in 1502 on a minor diplomatic mission. He stayed on in England, eventually publishing his *English History* in Latin in 1534. Vergil cast doubt on the traditional myths of Britain's origins which traced England's kings to Brutus the Trojan, a figure who had reputedly liberated England from the rule of giants. Vergil's history served Tudor purposes, since throughout his history he did celebrate the "great deeds of England's kings and those of this noble people," and these included the deeds of the ruling Tudor dynasty. But the skeptical eye he cast on some of the legends of English history irritated native scholars, and his humanist-styled history of England and the "great deeds" of its people would not be imitated until very late in the sixteenth century. Another humanist work of history was Sir Thomas More's *History of Richard III*, a book that More wrote in both English and Latin editions about the same time. The picture he drew of this hated king has largely persisted until the present, although recently some have questioned Richard's villainy, and historians have never conclusively decided whether Richard was a hunchback, as More treated him. More had been a child when many of the pivotal events of Richard III's reign had occurred, and he probably based his accounts on the testimony of his father and others who had been adults at the time. As a literary work, though, More shaped his account of the king's life relying on Roman history, particularly the works of Tacitus. He injected imaginary dialogue into the account, and he made maximum tragic use of Richard's alleged slaying of the "little princes," the two sons of Edward IV. His version of events became canonical, and survived to be read by William Shakespeare and immortalized in the playwright's masterpiece *Richard III*.

**SPANISH HISTORY AND THE NEW WORLD.** In Spain, a country recently unified from separate kingdoms, history took on a special importance during the Renaissance. Both the monarchy and the scholars hired to write histories of the country were keenly interested in the distant past, as they searched for a source of Spain's sixteenth-century greatness and imperial expansion. In the early sixteenth century King Ferdinand hired several historians to undertake historical studies. He desired to justify his expansionist policies, but unfortunately most of these projects, although undertaken by capable scholars, were left unfinished. Similar problems dogged later monarchical histories, too. The most important literary histories to emerge in sixteenth-century Spain were not those that dealt with Iberia's distant past, but with more recent events. Spain produced a distinguished lineage of humanist and non-humanist scholars who turned their attentions to Spain's conquests in the New World. These writers produced a record of events, which if not always factual, was of a consistently high literary quality and was often characterized by profound human insight. Christopher Columbus had helped to stimulate this attention to the New World discoveries by publishing accounts of his voyages. Peter Martyr D'Anghiera, an Italian, studied Columbus' accounts intently and published the first historical treatment of his journeys. It was Martyr who actually coined the term, "New World," through using it as the title of a history he published in several stages between 1511 and 1530. Bartolomeo de Las Casas built upon these efforts with his *History of the Indies*, which he finished around 1550. De Las Casas based his work on documentary evidence, and upon his own firsthand observations of conditions in Spain's American possessions. His account still proves useful today for the insights it offers concerning native peoples and their treatment at Spanish hands. The greatest historian of the period, though, was Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, who lived for a decade in the New World, undertaking various jobs before being appointed official historian of the Indies. Oviedo amassed a valuable collection of documents about the conquest and he used them to write a history of the early conquest and settlement of Mexico and Peru. His career as a professional historian of the Spanish territories inspired a lineage of later sixteenth-century New World historians, who often treated in detailed fashion the establishment of Spanish rule within the various regions of Central and South America. Many of these turned in particular to treat the establishment of Spain's control over the Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in Peru. While these later accounts often celebrated the conquistadors' bravery in subduing native populations, some were more critical. Some of

Spain's New World historians, particularly those that treated the history of Peru, attacked the Conquest for unleashing the unbridled individualism of the conquistadors and for destroying the Incas' basically peaceful and orderly way of life.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: New Trends in Sixteenth-Century Thought*

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#### RENAISSANCE WOMEN WRITERS

**WOMEN'S LIVES.** Social class and wealth were the chief determinants of the path a woman's life would take in the Renaissance. At the bottom of the social ladder the poorest women often faced bleak prospects, and daily life could become a quest for survival. High social status and family wealth, not unsurprisingly, enhanced a woman's choices, and also granted her greater leisure. An increasing number of women learned to read and write their native languages during the Renaissance, although female literacy continued to be rare. Literacy was prized

in the cities, where it was necessary for both men and women from certain sectors of society to be able to read. Merchants who were frequently away on business needed wives who could manage their business interests while they were away from home. In cities, then, many merchants' wives could read and write. Reading was also important to artisans, and since many women helped their husbands in their businesses, there were also many artisans' wives who could read as well. While many urban women probably possessed basic literacy during the later Renaissance, most women as a rule had little time to indulge in reading or studies. They were usually far more interested in their account ledgers than in literature. Only a few women, moreover, were ever taught Latin, the dominant language of scholarship until the late Renaissance. Widespread male prejudice and even Renaissance medical wisdom taught that women were not cut out for a life of scholarship, their intellect being of a more delicate and sensitive nature than men's. Despite these enormous barriers to women's literary and scholarly careers, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw an increasing number of women writers, many of whom left behind subtle and refined works of fiction, poetry, and scholarship. This trend first appeared in the fifteenth century in Italy and France. During the sixteenth century women writers appeared in every major European country, and although the career of a woman author was still extraordinary, there were more women who wrote in this period than at any other time in the past. Humanism was one important force in producing this change; many humanists elevated the importance given to women's education. The list of humanists who advocated a more thorough education for women was long, and included Giovanni Boccaccio, Leonardo Bruni, Baldassare Castiglione, and Juan Luis Vives. At the same time even the most enlightened Renaissance men continued to think that women's capabilities as writers and scholars were distinctly inferior to men. A woman who wrote and recorded her thoughts and who did so elegantly was often described as "surpassing her sex." Still, the groundwork was being laid in Renaissance Europe for women to compete in the arena of literature, philosophy, and the humanities. By the end of the sixteenth century, although women still wrote far less than men, they had begun to take their place beside their male counterparts, a trend that would persist and expand further in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

**CHRISTINE DE PIZAN.** Although Christine de Pizan (1364–1430) is known today primarily as a French writer, she was an Italian who was born in Venice and whose family was originally from Pizano, a village outside the



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ON WOMEN'S VIRTUES**

**INTRODUCTION:** Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies* was written in the early fifteenth century and was one of the earliest feminist statements of women's worth. In this passage, Christine is instructed in women's virtues by the figure of Rectitude.

**SOURCE:** Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies*. Trans. E. J. Richards (New York: Persea Books, 1982): 164–165.

Italian city of Bologna. When she was five, Christine's family moved to Paris where her father had been appointed as the astrologist to the king. She was schooled alongside her brothers, a common Italian custom of the day. She married early and became a widow by the time she was 25. There followed a hard period in Christine's life, as she lost her money because of bad advice. Gradually, she created a new life based around literature, study, and writing. In these endeavors she was largely self-taught. At first she wrote a great deal of conventional poetry, but she gradually broadened the scope of her literary work. Around 1400, she wrote *The Letter of the Goddess Othea to Hector* in which she theorized about the proper education that should be given to young men. Christine de Pizan became aware of humanism's development in Italy, and she seems, in particular, to have come into possession of copies of at least two of Boccaccio's important works: his *Genealogy of the Gods*, the textbook of classical mythology he had written late in

life; and his *On Famous Women*, his catalogue of great women of classical Antiquity. Knowledge of these is reflected in Christine's most famous work, her *Book of the City of Ladies*, a long allegory in which the author set forth a new positive view of the role of women in history. As her career as a writer continued, Pizan also treated a number of political themes in her works, advising the French queen and members of the court on matters of social policy. Many of these works dealt with the problems that France's wars with England caused throughout the country. As a result of these troubles, Christine de Pizan gradually despaired, and she withdrew from public life, although shortly before her death she did write *The Tale of Joan of Arc*, commemorating the arrival of this French heroine on the contemporary scene. Although Christine de Pizan was the first independent female writer in European history, her career would not be immediately emulated in France. It was instead in Italy that female scholars and authors began

to grow more common during the remaining years of the fifteenth century.

**WOMEN HUMANISTS.** The two women who achieved the greatest notoriety as scholars in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Italy were Laura Cereta (1469–1499) a native of Brescia, and Cassandra Fedele (1465–1558), a Venetian. Fedele became the most famous female humanist of her time, learning Latin at a young age and, slightly later, Greek. Fedele went on to master philosophy and Aristotelian logic. Early on, her father promoted her as a prodigy. When she was not yet an adult, she delivered Latin addresses to the faculty of the University of Padua and to the Senate of Venice. She published her first book at 22, but spent most of her life writing letters to a distinguished circle of intellectual and political figures. Angelo Poliziano, the great Florentine Latinist of the late fifteenth century, admired her writing, and Fedele was even offered a post as a professor in Spain. She refused, was eventually widowed, and was forced by hardship to live with her sister. The pope learned of her plight and offered her a position in a local orphanage so she could be independent. In her letters and the small surviving body of other texts she wrote, Fedele made clear that she accepted the inferiority of women as part of the pattern of nature. She often criticized her own weaknesses of style and intellect. This self-deprecating strain endeared her to her elite readers. Laura Cereta's disposition, on the other hand, was not nearly so modest. Cereta was the daughter of a Brescian attorney from a family that had noble pretensions. After being educated at home and in a nearby convent, she married, but was quickly widowed. She spent her widowhood alone writing lengthy and urbane letters to notable humanists, political figures, and churchmen, and of these a number survive. In her letters she develops a number of themes that would be pursued by later Renaissance and early-modern women, and many of her ideas have a distinctly feminist cast. Unlike Fedele, she was not content to see herself as a mere decorative ornament in Italy's learned society. Instead she assaulted traditional stereotypes about women; her letters painted marriage as enslavement and the chores of women's lives as drudgery. This early brand of feminism would influence later Renaissance women writers.

**POETS.** Prepared by the examples of Cereta and Fedele, women entered into the arena of public letters in sixteenth-century Italy. Among those who achieved notoriety for their cultivated learning and literary endeavors, most were members of noble families. Vittoria Colonna, a member of the Roman aristocracy, was happily married to a marquis, and cultivated her literary and



Vittoria Colonna, after a chalk drawing by Michelangelo. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

artistic ambitions during his frequent absences. She became friends with such important members of the Italian literati as Jacopo Sannazaro (author of the pastoral *Arcadia*) and the artist Michelangelo. For many years at Naples she transformed her home into an early version of the salon, inviting visiting intellectuals there and cultivating local talents. When her husband died, she was grief stricken. She eventually left Naples and spent the remaining twenty years of her life living in convents. While staying in Rome, she befriended a number of Catholic religious reformers who were known as the "Spirituals." Their religious beliefs emphasized an interior pious devotion, and even made use of the concept of justification by faith that was being promoted at the time in northern Europe by the Protestant reformer Martin Luther. Colonna devoted herself to these religious pursuits, but she also became one of the premier Italian poets of the sixteenth century, developing her sonnets and other literary inventions in the Petrarchan mode that had become popular at the time. She wrote some of her most beautiful lyrics to her beloved deceased husband. For several generations of sixteenth-century noblewomen in Italy she represented the highest standard in piety and learning. The poetess Gaspara Stampa (1523–1554), by contrast, followed a different path. She wrote about the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LOVE'S FIRE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Louise Labé was a poet known for her passionate poetry on the nature of love as well as the nature of madness. Labé often equated the two with one another and saw them as two sides to the same coin. In *Love's Fire*, Labé plays out this duality by personifying love as an unruly master whose only purpose is to switch the speaker from joy to pain in a single instant to symbolize its control, causing the speaker to sound unstable and on the brink of madness.

I live, I die: I burn and I also drown.  
 I'm utterly hot and all I feel is cold.  
 Life is too soft and too hard for me to hold;  
 my joy and my heavy burden are mixed in one.  
 I laugh at the same time that I weep and frown;  
 the tarnish of grief has marred my pleasure's gold;  
 my good flies away, but stays until it's old;  
 I wither just as I find out that I've grown.  
 This is how love guides me, so changeably  
 that when I think the pain has me controlled,  
 with my very next thought I find that I am free.  
 Then, just as I trust in joy so certainly  
 that the peak of a yearned-for hour makes me bold,  
 he shows me my familiar grief unfold.

**SOURCE:** Louise Labé, *Love's Fire*. Trans. Professor Annie Finch, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH.

same time as Colonna, but her works were frequently filled with erotic and passionate imagery rather than religious inspiration. Her mother had brought her to Venice so that she might pursue a career as a musician. She entertained Venice's cultured elite with her musical renditions of her poetry and soon came to the notice of the best poets in the city. They admitted her to their literary academy and cultivated her talents. Although she did not live long, Stampa wrote more than three hundred poems that were published soon after her death. She wrote her verse in a Petrarchan style and was influenced by Italy's arbiter of literary taste at the time, Pietro Bembo.

**NOTORIOUS CELEBRITY.** Since Petrarch's time authors had been concerned with cultivating their fame. In the sixteenth century self-promotion reached new heights in Italy with figures like Pietro Aretino, whose celebrity derived from his scandal-filled letters and his

connections to other famous people. A similar strain of fame can be seen in the career of a Venetian courtesan, Veronica Franco (1546–1591). Franco became an “honest courtesan” after separating from her husband; this category of woman in sixteenth-century Venice was seen as standing above the level of the common prostitute. They were often literate and educated, and in their homes they nourished their male companions' desires for intellectual stimulation, as well as erotic love. Franco, like many educated Italian women, had received her education at home by sharing tutors with her brothers. She became an important literary figure on the Venetian scene by compiling and publishing collections of poems she received from members of Venice's male elite. She was herself a poet and released a volume of her own poetry in 1575. In these works she was honest about her profession and sometimes even candid about sexual matters, in contrast to the Platonic love poses that many men took at the time. Like Aretino and a number of sixteenth-century Italian authors, she also printed her letters and these displayed her as conversant with the ideas of ancient authors. Franco's life came to a tragic end, however, when she was brought before the Inquisition on charges she practiced love magic. Although she was exonerated, the trial cast a shadow over her reputation and, as she had already experienced financial losses, she died an impoverished and lonely figure.

**WOMEN POETS IN FRANCE.** Outside Italy, the largest group of accomplished women authors appeared in sixteenth-century France. Here the example of the powerful and dynamic figure Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) helped to foster a literary climate receptive to female authors. Marguerite was not only the author of the cultivated prose *Heptameron*, but also of a number of poetic allegories that expressed her powerful religious sentiments as well as her passionate emotions. Two other figures, Marguerite de Briet and Louise Labé, would build upon and expand Marguerite's example of the feminine author. Marguerite de Briet was a noblewoman who separated from her husband and took up residence in Paris. There she fashioned a literary career that attacked male misogyny and defended female virtues. Under the pseudonym “Hélisenne de Crenne,” she published a collection of her letters that became popular and were reprinted a number of times. These provide insights into sixteenth-century life, but they also dissected male prejudices against women in a way that had not been done in French letters since the time of Christine de Pizan. Marguerite de Briet pointed out the logical inconsistencies in men's attitudes toward women. Women took the blame for tempting men with their beauty, but men, who were sup-

posed to be “wiser than women should not deal with anything they know to be harmful or dangerous.” De Briet was also a novelist and her romance *The Painful Anxieties that Proceed from Love* treated her literary creation Hélienne de Crenne’s passionate and disastrous devotion to her lover. Marguerite intended this fiction to serve as a warning to her women readers of the dangers that lurked in a love that was not tempered by reason. The second of France’s great female authors was Louise Labé, who came from the country’s second largest city, Lyon. She was not a noblewoman, but the daughter of a wealthy rope maker. The extensive education she acquired in languages, music, and art was extraordinary for the time. She married a much older man, also a rope maker, and possessed leisure to pursue her studies and writing. She struck up an acquaintance with a member of the Pleiades, a group that sought to revive classical styles in French verse. In 1555, she published a collection of her poems, which she wrote largely as sonnets and elegies. Labé also composed a prose work, *The Debate Between Madness and Love*, that was a dialogue between Folly and Cupid. Like writers elsewhere in Europe at the time, her works were influenced by the fashions of Neoplatonism and Petrarchism, but her poems in particular were notable for their passionate imagery.

**OTHER EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS.** The works of Marguerite of Navarre and Louise Labé represent only the best known surviving works of sixteenth-century women writers in Northern Europe. Throughout Europe, the sixteenth century produced an enormous increase in the number of women writers. In the course of the century the spread of the press throughout Europe, the religious controversies of the age, and the diffusion of humanist educational ideas resulted in an enormous expansion of the sixteenth-century reading public. Not everyone who could read and write chose to leave behind a written record. The writing of poetry and prose fiction was still a rare art, usually practiced only by those who possessed sufficient leisure to do so. But among the educated elites of Europe, literary achievement was becoming an increasingly important sign of one’s cultivation. It was recommended by courtesy books like Baldassare Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* and humanist educational treatises like those written by Erasmus and Vives. Women, particularly those from the wealthy urban classes and the nobility, benefited from this attention to literature, even if they were not nearly so great beneficiaries as men. Outside the cultured and urbane circles of Italy and France, women who were instructed in Latin, Greek, and classical literature remained rare. In England, for instance, only the very highest ranks

of ladies at court and Henry VIII’s daughters Mary and Elizabeth received classical educations. But in time the rise of the vernacular languages made classical instruction increasingly irrelevant to those women who wanted to write. The growing body of women who wrote about their ideas and emotions in the later sixteenth century thus helped to lay the foundations for the even greater literary achievements of European women in the centuries to come.

**CONCLUSIONS.** Beginning with Petrarch in the fourteenth century, Renaissance writers identified literary achievement as a way to achieve fame and immortality after death. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries humanists in Italy devoted themselves to the study of ancient literature, to perfecting classical Latin style, and to incorporating these insights into their own letters, histories, and poetry. By 1500, the methods they had perfected were being adopted elsewhere in Europe, where they often joined with demands for the reform of Christianity. Many members of this first generation of Northern Renaissance humanists shared a common desire to revive the moral standards of the church. They studied the literary forms of Antiquity with a mind toward imitating ancient style and applying the moral insights they discovered in classical Antiquity. Over the course of the sixteenth century they created an enormous body of Latin literature, even as they devoted themselves to perfecting and expanding their own native languages. The rise of the vernacular and the increasing demands of a non-specialist, non-Latin reading public helped to produce an enormous flowering of literature in French, Spanish, German, and English. Many of those who wrote in these native languages adopted styles drawn from the classics. Yet as the sixteenth century progressed an increasing sophistication and innovation can be seen in the vernacular literature that was being written throughout Europe.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Literature*

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### PIETRO ARETINO

1492–1556

*Italian author*

**HUMBLE ORIGINS.** Pietro Aretino was born the son of a cobbler in Arezzo, a small town in Tuscany that was subject to the city of Florence. His mother grew estranged from Aretino's father and moved in with a local nobleman, taking her children with her. At eighteen the young Aretino left Arezzo and moved to Perugia to become a servant in the home of the humanist Francesco Bontempi. Here he met the city's circle of humanists, painters, and authors, and he acquired his taste for writing and painting. In Perugia he published a book of his poetry, in which he described himself as a painter, and he also became acquainted with Agostino Chigi, a prominent Siennese banker who kept a villa in Rome. Chigi became Aretino's patron, inviting him to move to the papal capital, where he broadened his circle of friends and acquaintances. At the time Rome was emerging as the capital of the High Renaissance. Long a dusty and dirty city when compared to Florence and the other Northern Italian centers of the time, Rome was in transformation, becoming the center of artistic and intellectual life at the time. In this brilliant atmosphere Aretino became constantly embroiled in scandals.

**POLITICAL INVOLVEMENTS.** In Rome, Aretino soon became known for his skills as a satirist when Giulio de' Medici hired him to write propaganda for him supporting his case for election to the papacy in 1521. Besides writing pamphlets praising the Medici candidate, Aretino also wrote a series of scathing satires that mocked Medici's rivals, and when one of these candidates won election instead of Giulio, Aretino fled the city. Two years later, though, Giulio de' Medici finally secured his election as pope and Aretino returned to Rome. However, he irritated his powerful friend when he wrote a series of pornographic sonnets that attacked Bishop Giberti, one of Giulio's close advisers. These sixteen *Lascivious Sonnets* recounted Giberti's bizarre sexual tastes, and resulted in Aretino's second banishment from the city. He made his way to the French court and tried to secure the patronage of Francis I, although his reconciliation with the pope soon allowed him to return to Rome. His taste for scandal, though, prompted him to

write *A Comedy about Court Life*, a biting satire of the debauched sexual lives of those in the papal court. Aretino fell out of favor again, and when he tried to seduce the wife of a powerful Roman citizen, an assassination attempt nearly ended his life. Although unsuccessful, the attack damaged Aretino's hand and he never painted again. He traveled to Mantua in northern Italy where he continued to write satires and plays that attacked the papal court, but a second assassination attempt in 1527 forced him to flee yet again. He traveled to Venice, a more congenial place for his scathing wit, and he remained there for the rest of his life.

**VENICE.** Venice was widely known throughout Europe for its tolerant atmosphere and its anti-papal politics, and Aretino prospered in this setting. He quickly became a close friend of the artist Titian and the architect Jacopo Sansovino. Together the three figures formed a kind of triumvirate that established the tastes and fashions in the city. Aretino wrote for the popular press in Venice on a whole range of subjects, including Petrarchism, Neoplatonism, and other philosophical topics, but he became wealthy from his satires of the pope, of court life, and of the high-born's sexual peccadilloes. His prose and poetry were vigorous, and captured the spirit of *sprezzatura*, the art of seeming artlessness that Castiglione and other prominent writers recommended as the best style. He became a friend of Italy's literary arbiter, the Cardinal Pietro Bembo who was also a Venetian and who supported and promoted Aretino's work. His satires and plays made him wealthy, as did his custom of sending "blackmail" to European princes and nobles. These figures often paid Aretino off with large donations rather than allow him to publish works that mocked them. In Venice, Aretino also became the first to publish his letters in Italian rather than Latin, which increased his readership since much of Italy's literate population was not schooled in scholarly Latin. Aretino's gossipy and frequently earthy letters gave readers throughout Italy an insider's glimpse into the lives of the rich and famous. He published more than three thousand of them during his life, and their subjects range over the most diverse areas, including minutiae of fashions, politics, and daily life. In Venice, Aretino's fortunes became so well established that he was able to promote the careers of many young artists and writers whose works ran counter to prevailing taste. But throughout his life his success continued to be tinged with controversy. In 1542 he earned the English king Henry VIII's favor when he dedicated a book of his letters to him, but a few years later, he had so enraged the court in England that an ambassador of the country made a third at-

tempt on Aretino's life. While he became known as the "scourge of princes," he kept a large townhouse in the city of Venice that overlooked the city's Rialto Bridge on the Grand Canal, where he established a kind of court of admirers. Here his literary collaborators, mistresses, male lovers, and friends came to pay him homage. By 1550, Aretino had again won favor with the papal court so that he was granted a pension from Rome, but just a few short years after his death, his works would be placed on the *Index of Prohibited Books*. Such extremes of favor and disfavor and of controversy and celebrity had long been a fact of this fascinating figure's life.

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## GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

1313–1375

*Humanist  
Author*

**EARLY LIFE.** Giovanni Boccaccio was born in the small town of Certaldo south of Florence to an employee of the Bardi bank. His father intended that he would pursue either a career in the church or in banking, but from an early age Boccaccio preferred the study of literature. When Boccaccio was a teenager, his father traveled to Naples on business, and there Boccaccio became an apprentice banker, but he also met many literary figures in the local university and court. He was a friend of the royal librarian and several other men, one of whom was a close friend of Petrarch's and who introduced Boccaccio to the poet's works. While in Naples, Boccaccio began to write, and his works in this period show a mixture of contemporary Italian styles with idioms he drew from classical Antiquity. Boccaccio clearly admired Dante, who would be a lifelong influence on his work. His Italian poem *Diana's Hunt* imitated the medieval poet's style, but it also made use of Boccaccio's knowledge of Ovid and other classical works. Another work from this Neapolitan period, the *Filostrato*, related the tragic love story of a Trojan prince and his love for Cri-

seida, and would become the model for the Englishman Geoffrey Chaucer's masterpiece *Troilus and Criseyde*. Many of the poems he composed at this time show his affection for classical literature, but they did not step very far outside the confines of contemporary styles in Tuscan poetry.

**FLORENCE.** In 1341 the Bardi bank suffered a disastrous failure, and Boccaccio returned with his father to Florence in search of work. There, the young author wrote his *Ameto*, a work that criticizes the drab commercial nature of Florence when compared to the brilliant court at Naples. Other poems and Italian works gave evidence to Boccaccio's growing literary mastery, including his *Elegy of Madam Fiammetti* written sometime around 1343. That work has often been judged as one of the first novels because of its central character, longer narrative development, and its emphasis on the psychological examination of its heroine. It relates the tale of Fiammetta, who becomes increasingly miserable in contemporary Naples and attempts suicide before comparing her fate to famous women from classical Antiquity. It became an important source of literary inspiration to Renaissance women writers, including Marguerite de Briet (pen name Hélisenne de Crenne), the French sixteenth-century feminist author. Boccaccio's later collection of short feminine biographical portraits entitled *Of Famous Women* (1361), would also inspire later authors, including Christine de Pizan who based *The Book of the City of Ladies* on it.

**DECAMERON.** Boccaccio's greatest fictional achievement was his *Decameron*, a collection of 100 tales told during the outbreak of the Black Death in Florence in 1347–1348. Collections of novella, which were short stories with morals, had been popular in Florence and Tuscany since the late thirteenth century. Boccaccio's work revolutionized the genre by linking these tales together into a single narrative construction. His prologue sets out a premise for the entire collection and states Boccaccio's stoic perspective on life. As many Europeans did at the time, he pondered the underlying causes for the recent catastrophe of the Black Death, and the subsequent stories present Boccaccio's point of view concerning the perennial question of whether the plague was a divine judgment upon human sinfulness. The will of God, Boccaccio counsels his readers, is inscrutable and trust in God's grace provides the only consolation in times of trials. At the same time the stories celebrate human ingenuity, even as they warn readers that human life is governed by fortune and the passions. Those who succumb to these forces will fail, but the ingenuous can triumph over their desires and use their intellects to

succeed in life. Boccaccio began this work sometime around 1348 as the plague had just receded in Florence, and he completed it about four years later. During this same period he met Petrarch, the figure he had long admired. The two eventually became close correspondents, with Petrarch playing the mentor to the slightly younger Boccaccio. The *Decameron*, though, seems to have been largely formed and shaped before Boccaccio struck up his friendship with the humanist and is thus a testimony to the literary skills he had acquired over the previous years.

**LATER WORKS.** In the last two decades of his life, Boccaccio came increasingly under Petrarch's influence, and the relationship with his mentor caused him to devote his efforts to literary scholarship rather than the writing of fiction. After the *Decameron*, he wrote only one more fictional work, the *Corbaccio*, a misogynistic tale about a lusty widow. During these years he retired to his family home at Certaldo, outside Florence, and spent the largest portion of his efforts writing the enormous *Genealogy of the Gods*, a work that would eventually comprise fifteen massive volumes. In it, Boccaccio treated Latin and Greek mythology from a literary perspective, rather than from the Christian moralizing traditions that had long commented upon ancient myth. Boccaccio's *Genealogy* was also important for its defense of the study of pagan literature and of poetry. Until the eighteenth century the work continued to be the main scholarly reference work on ancient mythology, and it was widely used by authors and painters when they composed works on mythological themes. In his later years Boccaccio also wrote verse in Latin, including his *Country Songs* (*Buccolicum carmen*) through which he tried to encourage the revival of ancient pastoral poetry. Written in the ancient form of the eclogue, these poems did not immediately produce any great flowering of pastoral literature, but they did become important in fostering a renewal of the pastoral in Florence a century later.

**IMPACT.** Boccaccio was generally an appealing and self-deprecating figure on Florence's literary scene in the mid- and late-fourteenth century. In later years he was chiefly responsible for spreading Petrarch's brand of literary scholarship and humanistic philosophy among the educated circles of Florence. The esteem which his admitted masterpieces like the *Decameron* brought him allowed him to influence intellectual developments in the city. Although his works became a major milestone in the creation of Italian as a literary language, Boccaccio felt that his chief accomplishment in life was his encouragement of the establishment of a Greek professorship at the University of Florence. He himself studied

Greek with Leontius Pilatus, the man who filled this position, and he did so with the expressed and revolutionary purpose of studying ancient Greek literature. Boccaccio's scholarly and literary connections were broad, and they helped to spread knowledge of his works throughout Europe. His efforts encouraged the formation of a humanist circle within Florence, and after Boccaccio's death, this circle grew to dominate the city's civic life by the early fifteenth century.

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#### MARGUERITE OF NAVARRE

1492–1549

Queen  
 Author

**UPBRINGING AND EARLY LIFE.** Marguerite was the sister of King Francis I of France and as a young child she received extensive tutoring in the classics from her mother. She mastered French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, and Spanish and had also read the scriptures widely by the time she married Charles, the Duke of Alençon, in 1509. When her brother ascended the throne in 1515, she moved with him in his court, exercising an influence on his policies. In 1525, French forces lost the battle of Pavia in Italy, and the Spanish army took Francis captive, imprisoning him at Madrid. Marguerite traveled there and negotiated her brother's release in exchange for an enormous ransom payment. In this same year her husband died, and two years later Marguerite married Henri d'Albret, king of Navarre, a small but important territory in the Pyrenees between France and Spain. While Marguerite continued her public role in her brother's court, she had already become active in the campaign for the reform of the church, too. In 1521, Guillaume Briçonnet, a French bishop, introduced Marguerite to evangelical ideas, and the two continued a long and fruitful correspondence. Briçonnet, together with the humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, had a profound influence on her religious ideas. Although Marguerite remained loyal to Rome, she supported reform movements within the church in France. At the same time the court she kept at various châteaux throughout France and

Navarre sheltered a number of authors and religious figures that were suspected of heresy. These included Briçonnet and Lefèvre d'Étaples, who fell under the umbrella of suspicion of heresy at various points in their careers, and the poet Clément Marot. For a time she even harbored John Calvin, the future reformer of Geneva. In touch with powerful men and women throughout Europe, including the reform-minded women Vittoria Colonna and Renée of Ferrara, Marguerite lobbied for religious change for a time, but she gradually isolated herself over time and devoted herself to her writing.

**POETRY.** During her life Marguerite wrote an enormous body of works, little of which was printed while she lived. In 1531, she did publish her *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, a 5,000-line poem that would eventually be condemned as heretical by the theological faculty of the University of Paris. The *Mirror* is typical of many of the themes that Marguerite developed in her plays and poetry. The soul is depicted as constantly embattled by worldly temptations but, aided by the grace of Christ, moves toward a final happy resolution in its salvation. A collection of her poems were published two years before her death in a work entitled *Pearls from the Pearl of Princesses*, and although these works were long judged inferior to other French poetry of the time, they have more recently been re-evaluated. Scholars now find in Marguerite the expression of a deeply tormented conscience, but one that strives to find joy in its relationship with Christ.

**HEPTAMERON.** The queen's most ambitious project, the *Heptameron*, was left incomplete at her death. She modeled this collection of tales on Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The premise behind this work of storytelling is similar to Boccaccio's masterpiece: a flood traps ten noble men and women, and to pass the time they tell stories. After each of these the men and women deliberate upon the moral messages in the fables they have just recounted. Like Boccaccio's masterpiece and the nearly contemporaneous *Gargantua and Pantagruel* series of François Rabelais, these tales are frequently filled with a great deal of frank sexuality. In comparison with the earlier *Decameron*, though, Marguerite's use of sex is frequently violent and less playful. The mood of the piece is somber, and the storytellers debate the morality of the tales they tell with a subtle, finely tuned discrimination.

**ASSESSMENT.** Long dismissed as pornographic, Marguerite's *Heptameron* has recently been the subject of a number of studies, as scholars have seen in it unusual feminine characters, a complex narrative, and a subtle and ambiguous moral message. While it may never

rank among the great monuments of sixteenth-century French literature, as Rabelais' and Montaigne's works do, it is nevertheless a significant achievement and displays Marguerite's depth and breadth of learning. Marguerite's other works, particularly her poetry, have also witnessed resurgence in popularity since the late nineteenth century. At that time a number of her poems were rediscovered and published, and these have re-established her justified reputation as perhaps the best educated woman of the Renaissance and certainly one of its finest writers.

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## THOMAS MORE

1478–1535

*Statesman*  
*Humanist*

**EDUCATION.** More was the son of a prominent lawyer in late fifteenth-century London who gave his young son the best education available in England at the time. More went to school early and he entered the household of English cardinal John Morton at the age of twelve. Morton was not only a churchman, but he also served the Tudor king Henry VII as Lord Chancellor of England, and thus he helped to introduce Thomas More to the life of high politics that would play such an important role in his later life. After leaving Morton's household, More entered the University of Oxford where he was tempted for a time to pursue a career in the church, but his father's wishes prevailed. After completing his studies at Oxford, More entered the Inns of Court in London to begin his legal education. While he was a law student, he came under the influence of John Colet, the prominent humanist who served at the time as the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral and who influenced many English intellectuals to take up humanist studies. In 1499 More met Erasmus and the two struck up a friendship that would last the rest of their lives. Both men studied the comedy of Lucian together during this



period, and their later mastery of ancient comedy punctuated the letters they exchanged as well as the humanist works they dedicated to each other. During the first decade of the sixteenth century More continued his humanist studies, but he was also actively involved in furthering his career. He married Jane Colt and had four children with her, but she died in 1511. A month later More married Alice Middleton, who would later be criticized by one of More's humanist biographers as "blunt" and "rude." Like most humanists, More believed that education helped produce virtue and so he saw to it that all his children were well educated. His daughters were famous in sixteenth-century England for their mastery of Latin and the classics.

**AMBITIONS.** By his middle age Thomas More had established himself as a lawyer of distinction in London, and he had begun to play a role in local and later national politics. He was first chosen as undersheriff of London, before becoming a member of the Royal Council. Later he served as speaker of Parliament, and finally, with the embarrassment of Cardinal Wolsey in 1529, he was elevated to become Lord Chancellor. He used his positions to foster the New Learning in England and to defend humanism against scholastic traditionalists who aimed to stamp the new movement out. At the same time More was hardly a worldly and liberal figure in the Italian mold. He was reputed to wear a hair shirt and to practice self-flagellation, and when Luther's ideas began to acquire admirers in England during the 1520s, More advocated the swift and sure punishment of these heretics.

**WORKS.** Like many humanists More was an active letter writer and he used his letters to discuss all manner of issues with his friends and associates. One of his most famous letters defended his friend Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* against its detractors. Erasmus had dedicated this work to More, and the title was actually a play on words. The work's Latin title *Moriae Encomium* could be read as either "In Praise of Folly" or "In Praise of More." Today, More is chiefly remembered for two works, his *History of Richard III* and *Utopia*. The first of these works was unusual for the time since it was prepared about the same time in both English and Latin versions. The English version is longer, which has led some authorities to conclude that it was actually written before the Latin. The use of English at the time was highly unusual, since most scholars in the island relied on Latin or French. More's work was thus an important literary milestone in the creation of modern English. The history that More constructed about the evil king Richard III was not objective in a modern sense, but was nevertheless an advance from

the largely legendary chronicles that passed for history in England at the time. Like other humanist historians More believed that the study of the past could ennoble readers by providing them with moral lessons from the lives of good and evil figures. In the *History* More created the image of the evil king Richard that Shakespeare was to use as the basis for his masterpiece *Richard III*. More relied on eyewitnesses to Richard's reign and although he may have created the notion that Richard was a hunchback, historians have for centuries confirmed his picture of the king as a ruthless tyrant. Much of *The History of Richard III* was written around the same time as Machiavelli was completing his *Prince* in Italy. A comparison of the two works is revealing. Where Machiavelli embraced the ability of rulers to enforce their will with determination and at times even ruthlessness, More linked Richard's destruction to his tyrannical and amoral behavior. The second and even more widely known of More's works, *Utopia*, was first published at Basel in 1516. More came up with the idea for the work while he was on a diplomatic mission to the court of Burgundy. It is one of the first pieces of European fiction to be inspired by the discovery of the Americas. It records the experiences of Raphael Hythloday, a voyager who has just returned from a journey to the New World with Amerigo Vespucci, the famous Italian geographer. Hythloday is a philosopher of sorts and he praises every place he has seen on his journeys at the expense of contemporary Europe. One of these is the island of Utopia, and the remainder of the book treats the strange customs of the inhabitants of this newly discovered world. Many of Hythloday's statements mock contemporary mores, including his attacks on contemporary penal practices and capital punishment in Europe. The work was exceptional primarily for its economic theories. More pointed out that privation was the cause of enormous suffering and lawlessness in European society, and the perfect society that he imagines is consequently one in which private property is banned. The Utopians do not pursue the creation of wealth or the production of goods for mere luxury's sake, but each has enough for his or her own needs. They spend part of each day working, but since everyone has a task and there are no leisured elites like in Europe, there is greater time for everyone to enjoy the good things of the world. Many have seen in More's vision a bleak and darker side, that is, of a society in which most human freedoms have been abolished. Certainly his identification of an imaginary society that serves as a critique of contemporary Europe was popular. It gave rise in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to an entire genre of Utopian literature in which social theorists imagined their own perfect society.

**LATER PROBLEMS.** Although More's rise to power had been swift throughout the 1520s, he exercised little influence on government following his appointment as Lord Chancellor because of his disapproval of Henry VIII's plans to divorce Catherine of Aragon. More eventually retired from public life, writing polemical works against Protestantism. When he refused to swear a loyalty oath in 1534 to Henry VIII, he was first imprisoned in the Tower of London and later tried and convicted for treason. He was executed on 1 July 1535.

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## HANS SACHS

1494–1576

*Poet*

*Playwright*

*Cobbler*

**EARLY LIFE.** Born the son of a tailor in Nuremberg, Hans Sachs attended local Latin school before being apprenticed to a cobbler at age 15. Like other journeymen, he traveled for a time before returning to set himself up in his trade at Nuremberg. He married, had seven children, and eventually became a staunch supporter of the Protestant Reformation. He continued to practice his trade throughout his life, only leaving Nuremberg for brief trips to trade fairs in Germany. In short, his life was relatively without incident or disruption, but as a local poet and author in Nuremberg he wrote more than 6,000 works.

**SUPPORT OF REFORMATION.** Like many literate townspeople at the time, Sachs was fascinated with Martin Luther's campaign against the church, and he read all of the reformer's available works. Soon after the outbreak of the Reformation, he published *The Wittenberg Nightingale*, an allegory of 700 verses in which Sachs denounced the Roman Church and its financial exploitation of the German people. Published in numerous editions over the next years, the poem made Sachs something of an instant celebrity throughout the country.

Sachs' support for the Reformation never wavered and he published other short pamphlets that praised Luther's teaching in a lively idiom. These were written as dialogues, the most famous being the autobiographical work *A Dialogue between a Canon and a Shoemaker*, in which a Bible-verse-spitting cobbler takes on a cleric to reveal the evils of the Roman religion.

**MEISTERSINGER.** In the modern world Sachs has long been known to opera lovers as the hero of Richard Wagner's famous work, *The Meistersinger of Nuremberg*. In that work Wagner immortalized Sachs as the cheerful and beloved master of the art of *Meistergesang* or *Master Song*. This tradition had grown up in Germany in the later Middle Ages, and Nuremberg was the primary center of its art. A strict set of rules governed *Meistergesang* and those who practiced it were members of trade guilds in southern German cities. They met regularly to perform the works they authored and they were judged according to strict criteria. Between 1524 and 1560, Sachs was the undisputed leader of Master Singing or *Meistergesang*, and during these years he wrote over 4,000 lyric poems that he performed in the Nuremberg competitions. These covered an enormous variety of topics, including subjects that he drew from the Bible, from classical literature, and from medieval German traditions. Some were light farces, others Protestant propaganda. His literary output as a master singer was so enormous that not all of his songs have yet been studied.

**PLAYS.** Sachs was also a dramatist, and he particularly excelled in writing Carnival Plays or *Fastnachtspiele*. These were light and short farces that were performed in Nuremberg immediately before the beginning of Lent, and Sachs cast his dramas with a rich variety of characters. Grasping merchants, country bumpkins, simpletons, and an enormous range of human types play off each other in these short comedies, and are given a humane cast by Sachs' light touch. Many of these dramas are still performed today. Less well known are Sachs' 130 other tragedies and comedies which were intended to play a moral and didactic function. In all these works Sachs transformed his characters—whether they were drawn from ancient or medieval models—into contemporary Nurembergers, and the values that he celebrated were those of the emerging European bourgeoisie. He praises hard work, thrift, and religious faith, while condemning self-interest, greed, and envy. Similar themes, too, emerge in the more than 2,000 poems he also wrote. While Sachs was a widely recognized talent of his age, he was largely forgotten after the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century the great German poet, Johann

Wolfgang von Goethe, studied his lyrics and promoted his works. Restored to his rightful place among German authors, Sachs inspired a number of dramas, poems, and operas in the nineteenth century, including Wagner's famous and idealized portrait. Since that time scholars have also been devoted to reviving a truer picture of this admitted genius of sixteenth-century German literature.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Literature*

Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (c. 1350)—A collection of 100 stories told by a fictional group of wealthy Florentines while awaiting the recession of the Black Death away from their homes, this pioneering work of fiction in the Renaissance inspired many later writers.

Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Poems* (c. 1550)—These beautiful lyrics show the influence of Petrarch as it was developed in the later Renaissance among Italian writers.

Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528)—This work is a dialogue between members of the cultivated court of Urbino about the qualities of a perfect courtier. The book was translated into a number of European languages and became read as an advice manual for courtiers in the later Renaissance. It also spawned a host of imitators who wrote similar courtesy books.

Niccolò Machiavelli, *A History of Florence* (1532)—Published after his death, this work ranks among the greatest literary achievements in historical studies in the Renaissance. It carries on the tradition of history as a republican duty, which had been begun by Leonardo Bruni a century earlier in Florence.

Marguerite of Navarre, *Heptameron* (c. 1547)—The famous French noblewoman and queen of Navarre's unfinished collection of short novella was inspired by Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The work, long thought to be scandalously erotic, has more recently been shown to be filled with subtle moral insights.

Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (1595)—The final edition of Montaigne's famous work includes the expansions that the author continued to make in these works throughout his later life. The *Essays* are an unprecedented journey of one man's search through his psyche and his attempts to establish a meaningful personal philosophy. The *Essays* are also a literary milestone in the creation of modern French.

Sir Thomas More, *Richard III* (c. 1510)—This is a pioneering work of contemporary history by the famous Northern Renaissance humanists. This work helped to establish the stereotypical image of one of history's most famous villainous kings.

Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere* or *Songbook* (1373)—This is a collection of Petrarch's lyric poetry dedicated to his illusory love Laura. Renaissance writers continued to return to the work, particularly to the sonnets, as inspiration for their poetry.

François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (c. 1534)—These two novels were written in several installments throughout the writer's life and recounted the fabled exploits of a race of giants. They are the greatest fictional works of the French Renaissance and were widely copied by other satirical writers.

chapter **5** five

MUSIC

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	168	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS <i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	171	<i>Musical Diversions</i> (introduction to Boccaccio's <i>Decameron</i> ) . . . . .	175
TOPICS		Musical Forms . . . . .	179
Music and the Renaissance. . . . .	173	<i>The Courtier and Music</i> (excerpt concerning music from Castiglione's <i>Book of the Courtier</i> ) . . . . .	184
Renaissance Innovation . . . . .	176	<i>The Sound of Music</i> (excerpt from Brandolini's <i>On Music and Poetry</i> ) . . . . .	185
Sixteenth Century Achievements in Secular Music . . . . .	182	<i>A Guide to Performance</i> (Morley's treatise on the practices of music and dance). . . . .	192
Religious Music in the Later Renaissance. . . . .	193	<i>Luther Defends Music</i> (foreward to Luther's first hymnal) . . . . .	194
Music Theory in the Renaissance . . . . .	200	<i>A Cautious Acceptance</i> (preface to Calvin's Geneva Psalter commenting on music in the church) . . . . .	195
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>Catholic Reforms</i> (text from the Council of Trent concerning music) . . . . .	198
William Byrd . . . . .	204	<i>Music of the Spheres</i> (foreward to Tinctoris's <i>Book on the Art of Counterpoint</i> ) . . . . .	201
Guillaume Dufay . . . . .	204	<i>On Composing and Singing Well</i> (excerpt from work by musical theorist Zarlino) . . . . .	203
Josquin des Prez . . . . .	205		
Orlando di Lasso . . . . .	206		
Claudio Monteverdi . . . . .	207		
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina . . . . .	207		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	208		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Music*

- 1308 The pope takes up residence at Avignon on the Italian-French border. During the fourteenth century French composers working in Avignon will nourish the development of secular and religious music inspired by their native styles.
- 1321 The French mathematician Jehan des Murs completes his treatise *Ars nove musicae* (On the New Art of Music), a work that defends innovations in the writing of sacred music.
- 1322 The French poet, composer, and bishop Philippe de Vitry (1291–1361) writes an important treatise on music entitled *Ars Nova* (The New Art).
- 1325 Jacques de Liège attacks the *Ars nova* style in his *Mirror of Music*.
- Francesco Landini, the leading fourteenth-century Italian composer of secular ballads, is born at Florence.
- 1377 The papacy returns to Rome from Avignon, giving rise to the Great Schism that lasts until 1415. The return of the capital of the church to Rome brings an influx of French musicians and composers to Italy, inspiring innovation in music.
- c. 1390 The composer Johannes Ciconia, a native of the French city of Liège, becomes a resident of the city of Padua. He will influence the musical life of his adopted town and nearby Venice.
- 1404 Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy, an enthusiastic supporter of church music, dies.
- Philip's successor, Philip the Good, will continue Burgundian patronage of church music until his death in 1467.
- c. 1420 Guillaume Dufay composes a series of songs and motets while working for the Malatesta family in the Italian city of Pesaro. These works are often cited as the first to express a distinctly "Renaissance" musical style.
- 1422 The Duke of Bedford, an English nobleman, becomes regent of France. One of the members of his court is John Dunstaple, whose use of new harmonies and rhythms in his compositions influences French musicians.
- 1436 Guillaume Dufay composes the motet *Nuper rosarum flores* for the dedication of the Cathedral of Florence's dome, designed by Filippo Brunelleschi.
- 1440 The "English Style" becomes popular in masses composed in France and the Low Countries.
- 1450 Pipe organs become increasingly common instruments used throughout large churches in Western Europe; at the same time, the harpsichord and clavichord grow in popularity.
- 1460 Gilles Binchois, a Burgundian court musician and avid composer of songs or *chansons*, dies.
- 1467 Charles the Bold becomes Duke of Burgundy and establishes his courts in the north of the Burgundian lands, rather than in the traditional French province of Dijon. An amateur musician, Charles continues the tradition of Burgundian support for musical composition and performance and supports the development of an important school of musical composition in Flanders.
- c. 1470 The Platonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino champions music in his philosophical works for its ability to inspire poetry and to heal body, mind, and soul.

- c. 1472 Josquin des Prez, called the “father of musicians” and praised by Martin Luther as “the master of the notes,” enters into the service of the Sforza dukes at Milan.
- 1474 Composer Guillaume Dufay dies in Cambrai, a town in modern Belgium. Dufay’s music will continue to influence the development of a Burgundian style after his death.
- 1477 Johannes Tinctoris’ important theoretical treatise *A Book on the Art of Counterpoint* appears. Tinctoris is a Flemish composer active at the royal court in Naples.
- c. 1480 Lorenzo de Medici grants rich patronage to the choir of the cathedral of Florence and recruits Flemish musicians to serve there.
- 1497 Johannes Ockeghem, an important Flemish composer, dies.
- 1501 Ottaviano dei Petrucci becomes the first to print music through the publication of a collection of motets and chansons in Venice.
- 1519 Maximilian I, the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor, and an enthusiastic supporter of court music, dies.
- 1520 Pierre Attaignant develops a new method for musical printing that drastically cuts the time needed to prepare an edition. Music printing begins to spread quickly throughout Europe as a result, arriving in London apparently in the same year.
- 1522 Francesco Gaffurio, an important Italian musical theorist, dies.
- 1524 The Protestant Martin Luther embraces the chorale, a hymn form which will be used in Reformation churches.
- 1534 Music printing begins in Germany.
- 1543 William Byrd, the last great Catholic composer of church music in England, is born.
- 1547 Edward VI succeeds to the throne of England and begins reforming the country’s worship and religious music along severe lines.
- Thomas Tallis, once a composer in Henry VIII’s chapel, now adopts a more severe and measured style emphasizing texts.
- 1558 Gioseffi Zarlino’s important treatise *The Art of Counterpoint* is published at Venice.
- 1562 John Dowland, a composer of popular English lute songs, is born.
- 1563 The Council of Trent concludes its deliberations. Although music was not a central issue, the Council’s decrees begin to inspire a reaction in the church against complicated polyphony, causing a more restrained style of religious music to eventually prevail.
- 1567 Claudio Monteverdi, master of the Italian madrigal and composer of early operas, is born at Cremona in Italy.
- c. 1570 A major controversy erupts in Italy between supporters of Francesco Zarlino and Vincenzo Galilei over the precise contours of ancient Greek music.
- Michael Praetorius, an important musical theorist and early Baroque composer, is born in Germany.
- c. 1573 Groups of local musicians and academics organize to form the *camerata* in Florence, which will champion the revival of Greek performance practices and influence the development of the early opera.
- 1588 Nicholas Yonge publishes a collection of Italian madrigals translated into English in London. This and other works will inspire a fury of English madrigal writing at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries.
- 1594 Orlando di Lasso, perhaps the greatest of sixteenth-century European composers, dies after a long career in service to the dukes of Bavaria.

- Giovanni da Palestrina, greatest of Italian Counter-Reformation composers, dies at Rome.
- 1597 The opera *Dafne*, with words written by Ottavio Rinuccini and music composed by Jacopo Peri, is the first opera to be produced at Florence.
- 1600 A second Rinuccini-Peri opera, *Euridice* is performed at the wedding of Henry IV of France to Marie de' Medici of Florence.

## OVERVIEW *of Music*

**ACHIEVEMENT.** In the modern world, rich musical traditions have so long affected the ear that it is difficult for modern listeners to imagine the musical styles that were common in Western Europe 700 years ago. For centuries, the Western musical tradition has made extensive use of harmony, rhythm, melody, and lyrics, and it has embraced innovation and experimentation in sound. But while the modern musical universe is constantly evolving, a tradition of musical experimentation was also a feature of the musical landscape of the Renaissance. The music of the Middle Ages, while often of great expressive beauty, possessed dynamic and harmonic possibilities that were considerably more limited than the art form known today. The Renaissance helped to open up those possibilities by embracing new rhythms and harmonies, developing new genres like the madrigal and opera, and exploring the musical colors of instruments and the human voice. The art of counterpoint—the combination of independent melodies to create an overarching harmonic structure—also matured as an important foundation of Western music at this time. If the Renaissance produced no universal musical genius that is revered in modern times throughout the world like Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven, the period, nevertheless, saw the rise of the professional composer, a figure who expressed his own individualistic and creative musical vision. The ranks of distinguished musical composers of the period include Claudio Monteverdi, who experimented with the madrigal form and the early opera; Orlando di Lasso, whose vocal compositions influenced musical styles throughout Europe; and Giovanni da Palestrina, who defined the Catholic Church's sacred music to fit with the emerging religious sensibilities of the Counter-Reformation. New musical styles and forms flourished everywhere in Europe during the Renaissance. In Germany, Martin Luther and other early Protestant reformers embraced the singing of chorales as part of the new religious services adopted in their churches. These hymns were performed with rich harmonies and drew

their tunes from a variety of sources. In other quarters new types of national song flourished, like the German *lieder*, the English carols, and the French *chansons*. If the sounds of the Renaissance sometimes seem strange and foreign to modern ears when judged against the still widely revered music of the Baroque, classical, or romantic periods, the period's music stands far closer to these modern eras than it does to the often severe and unadorned music of the Middle Ages. As Renaissance composers experimented with new ways of pleasing their audience, they acquired an innovative and inventive musical spirit. It was this spirit of dynamic innovation that produced the great musical masterpieces of the time, even as it helped to lay the foundations for the profound period of musical achievement that occurred in Europe between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries.

**THE EARLY RENAISSANCE.** During the first half of the fifteenth century, European music experienced a major stylistic shift. Harmonies and rhythmic patterns imported from England broadened the range of compositional possibilities open to composers in France and the Netherlands. Throughout the fifteenth century these two regions were to remain Europe's premier centers of musical innovation. In the Duchy of Burgundy—a large and wealthy territory that stretched over eastern France, Lorraine, Burgundy, and the Low Countries (modern Belgium, Luxemburg, and Holland)—composers developed a distinctive style characterized by a broader range of harmonies, tighter structural unity, and greater rhythmic complexity. Chief among the early exponents of this new style was Guillaume Dufay who, together with Gilles Binchois, found inspiration in English patterns of composition as well as native French and Flemish secular song and sacred plainsong. The frequent travels of Burgundian composers throughout the fifteenth century helped spread the new style to Italy and other parts of the continent. By the end of the century the foremost exponents of this Franco-Flemish school of composers—figures like Jacob Ockeghem and Josquin des Prez—influenced musical tastes almost everywhere in Europe.

**HUMANISM.** The revival of Antiquity championed by the humanists in Italy was also a significant factor in changing musical tastes. The humanists advocated the study of ancient literature as a road to virtue, and, among composers, one of its chief results was to foster a new emphasis on the texts of vocal music. As the sixteenth century approached, composers became more concerned than ever before with finding musical forms of expression that expanded their audience's understanding of a piece's lyrics.



**MUSICIANS' WORLDS.** While the knowledge of performance practices and the training of musicians in the Renaissance is comparatively less than in later centuries, the evidence suggests that a sophisticated audience for music was developing at the time and that more professional musicians were being employed in important churches, cathedrals, and courts than ever before. Most musicians likely acquired their first musical training in the home from their parents or tutors or from someone in the neighborhood who was skilled in singing or in the playing of a musical instrument. Many young boys probably honed their skills in music by serving for a time as a choirboy in a cathedral or major church, the incubators that produced most of the period's accomplished composers. In France, Flanders, England, and Italy, major choir schools were already training a number of musicians by 1500, and the skills of French and Flemish musicians, in particular, were widely prized and admired throughout Europe. The choir schools taught a number of musical skills beyond just singing. They familiarized their male students with harmony and instrumentation and they included extensive training in how to improvise, perform, and ornament music. While young girls were barred from attending these schools or performing in these important choirs, many women did receive a musical education. In court society, in particular, the ability to play an instrument and to accompany oneself while singing was prized as a sign of refinement for both men and women alike. Most cultivated women of the Renaissance acquired these skills, and even outside the great courts, female amateur musicians were common. In sixteenth-century Italy a number of female professionals also entertained audiences with song concerts. The increasing number of books published about performing music also testifies to the swelling ranks of both professional and skilled amateur musicians.

**INSTRUMENTS.** By the sixteenth century the categories of instruments in use throughout Western Europe already resembled those common in the modern world. Strings (either of the violin or the viol family), woodwinds, brass, and percussion and keyboard instruments were popular throughout the West, and although these instruments differed greatly from place to place, new innovations were expanding the sounds available to composers and musical ensembles. The range of woodwind instruments—the ancestors of our modern flutes, oboes, and clarinets—did not alter in the period. Yet these instruments came to be combined into new groups or “courses” that were of three sizes—such as the soprano, alto, and tenor recorders that were common in the period. Each type of instrument's pitches were set about a

fifth apart, and thus the recorder sound was able to be produced over a broader range. By the end of the fifteenth century, these changes meant that similarly voiced woodwind instruments could play a far broader harmonic spectrum than before. The brass instruments—trumpets, trombones (known as sackbuts at the time), and cornets—were not only constructed of brass, but of wood and silver. Like the woodwinds, they, too, were combined into new groupings or consorts to achieve greater ranges of color and pitch in the period. While violins were popular, the use of the viols—stringed instruments that were supported in the lap or held between the knees, rather than at the chin—were more popular. A great deal of music was played on the string instruments generally, because of the high status they had in approximating the character of the human voice. Perhaps no other instrument underwent a more fundamental transformation at this time than the organ. At the beginning of the Renaissance, small portable organs that sat on a table or in the player's lap were popular. While this style of organ continued to be used throughout the Renaissance, the modern pipe organ, characterized by its fixed location and massive structure, became popular in the largest churches and cathedrals of Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Like most of the instrumental developments of the Renaissance, the new fashion for these large organs reflected the taste of the age for increased volume and a broader range of pitch and sounds. But while organs were one of the signs of the new technological bent of the period—a bent that was to produce great changes in instruments during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the most popular domestic instrument of the time was the lute. Originally of Middle Eastern origins, the lute had long flourished as a household instrument in medieval Europe, prized for its compatibility with the human voice. During the Renaissance the range of the instrument was extended, at first by the inclusion of a fifth string in the fifteenth century, and then, by the addition of another in the sixteenth. By that time most Western Europeans played the instrument with their fingertips, rather than with a plectrum, a small piece of bone or wood used to pluck strings. The lute continued to be among the most popular instruments in Europe long after the Renaissance, surviving as perhaps the most important amateur and household instrument until the eighteenth century.

**HIGH RENAISSANCE ACHIEVEMENTS.** During the sixteenth century skill in musical performance and discernment in listening became an increasingly important marker of good taste and sophistication. In Italy, the madrigal emerged as a kind of chamber music performed

in educated circles that gave musical expression to some of Italian's finest poetry. Written in four- and five-part harmony, madrigals spread rapidly and influenced choral music through the rise of musical printing. New national styles of secular songs flourished as well, including the Parisian *chanson* and the German *Lied*. The development of centers of musical printing, particularly in Paris, the Low Countries, Venice, and Nuremberg, played a key role in establishing the European-wide reputations of some of the age's greatest composers, including figures like Orlando di Lasso and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina. In addition, the popularity of printed music spread knowledge of musical innovations then occurring in Italy and elsewhere to other parts of the continent. While vocal and choral forms remained dominant in the music published in the Renaissance, instrumental music came to be printed, too. The importance of memory and improvisation in instrumental music had long necessitated a dependence on the skill of musicians, who had learned to embellish and play their works from tunes that had their origins in songs and dances. Now as instrumental music came increasingly to be written down, composers became more definite about the ways in which their music should be played. Thus heightened technical virtuosity became important for professional musicians who hoped to succeed in the new, highly competitive market.

**CHANGES.** The sixteenth century may have seen the rise of more sophisticated patterns of musical consumption, but it also produced a number of new musical genres and, in the spread of humanism and Protestantism as well as the rise of the Counter-Reformation within the Catholic Church, the period saw fundamental transformations in the uses of music. During both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, music was a practiced art as well as an important branch of the “mathematical sciences” taught in the seven liberal arts, the dominant secondary school curriculum used throughout Europe. From the beginning of the Middle Ages this curriculum had developed a considerable body of theory about music as the “science of pitch.” Much of this theorizing about music had speculated about its role in the structure of the universe, and this body of highly technical knowledge continued to be debated in the sixteenth century. At the same time the rise of humanism also sent these musical scholars into the libraries to investigate more closely the precise contours of ancient music. In doing so, these figures hoped to be able to recover the power that ancient philosophers had associated with music's performance. In turn, Renaissance musical investigations gave birth to several attempts to imitate ancient

music, including the first operas that were performed in and around the city of Florence at the very end of the sixteenth century. In these first performances Italian composers and their poetic librettists relied on a new form of musical performance known as the recitative, in which the work's text was highlighted by being recited against an accompanying instrumental background. While the great age of opera's development was to lie outside the Renaissance, the pioneering of these secular musical dramas was just one way in which the sixteenth century enlarged the European musical universe. The religious controversies of the age similarly acted as a leaven in the musical world, producing new musical forms. In the German-speaking heartland of Europe, Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers embraced the chorale, which was a form of melodic hymn that was harmonized in several parts. In Switzerland, by contrast, the stricter, uncompromising Calvinist tradition of Protestantism avoided such elaborate and showy uses of church music, and instead relied on severe, unison psalm singing. In Italy, other reassessments of music's role in the church were underway. As the Counter-Reformation came to maturity, it prompted both religious leaders and composers to rethink the role that polyphony—the simultaneous performance of many musical lines—should play in sacred music. Giovanni da Palestrina and other church musicians led a reform in music that made use of a new grand and restrained style that was to affect Catholic religious composers in the centuries to follow.

## TOPICS *in Music*

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### MUSIC AND THE RENAISSANCE

**PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION.** In art, architecture, and literature, long-standing definitions of Renaissance style have stressed the importance of the recovery of ancient models and their impact upon the artists and writers of the period. To speak of a “musical Renaissance,” however, is more problematic. In the three centuries following 1000 C.E., European composers and musicians had developed distinctive national styles and musical forms that continued to shape the achievements of the Renaissance long after the recovery of Antiquity had begun in other arts during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While knowledge of ancient styles proved often to be crucial for the creation of “Renaissance” paintings, sculptures, and architecture, the application of such

knowledge to music presented a special problem to the scholars, composers, and musicians of the time. The improvisational, performance-based music of Antiquity yielded very few documents or records that could be studied by later generations; as a consequence, Renaissance scholars did not focus on ancient musical theory or performance practices until comparatively late in the period—not until the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The absence of scholarship concerning Antique music prevented most attempts by Renaissance musicians to imitate ancient practices; as a result, the ancient world had a comparatively lesser impact on the great changes that occurred in music during much of the Renaissance than it did in the other arts. For these and other reasons, historians of music, in contrast to those of art, architecture, and literature, have long dated the emergence of a distinctive Renaissance style in music only after 1450, roughly a century and a half later than in other media.

**MUSIC AS A SCIENCE.** During both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance a clear line existed between music's role as a branch of the sciences on the one hand and musical composition and performance on the other. What modern scholars consider music theory was in both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance known as "speculative" or "scientific" music (in Latin *musica speculativa* or *musica scientia*). From the early Middle Ages philosophers had included music within the "mathematical" sciences, four distinctive branches of the seven liberal arts. These disciplines together were known as the Quadrivium, and anyone who hoped to gain entrance into a university needed to acquire knowledge of the mathematical relationships that existed in musical pitches, intervals, and harmonies. In this way the academic study of music developed as the "science of sound" and a great deal of theory was written during the Middle Ages that treated the physical properties of music. Philosophers speculated upon music's abilities to produce changes in the characters of its listeners as well as to generate alterations in the external world. This body of theory grew immensely during the Renaissance, too, largely as a result of the contact of intellectuals with the works of ancient writers that treated music as an important aid to philosophy. At the same time, the great philosophers of the ancient world, although they had prized music for its ability to speak to the human soul, had had little definite to say about musical practices per se. Thus the discussions of music as a science that continued during the Renaissance were not an abrupt break with medieval tradition. One figure whose work continued to be widely read and discussed was Boethius (480–524), a late antique figure who had

transmitted the musical knowledge of his day and of the ancient world to the Renaissance. While important as a transmitter of knowledge, Boethius was also a major figure in the history of musical theory and science in his own right. He treated music as one of the four branches of mathematics, a view that continued to be shared in both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Yet he also insisted that music had a special role among these sciences because it might breed both ethical virtue and reason.

**MUSICAL PERFORMANCE.** Performers, by contrast, were largely unaffected by these rarefied discussions of music as the "science of sound," or of music's role as one of the mathematical sciences. In fact, the evidence suggests that while many musicians may have been able to read music, they were not able to read the written word. They learned their skills by being taught in the home, or from someone nearby who could already sing or play an instrument, or by serving for a time as a choirboy in a local church or cathedral. Musical performance was a practical art, and most accomplished musicians were by and large unaware of the complexities of musical theory or of the scientific and philosophical discussions about music. The performance of music was instead governed by long-standing traditions, by the role that music played in the church, and by the secular songs and ballads that were performed in medieval society. While the music of the church often bore a resemblance across regions, secular music differed greatly from place to place, with the popular or "folk" music of France making use of traditions, sounds, and instruments that were often very different from those of Italy or Germany. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a wealth of these native kinds of music existed everywhere in Europe, although most music was still performed from memory or through improvisation of a well-known tune. Far less music was "composed"—that is written down—than was to be the case in later centuries. Even many cathedral choirs improvised their harmonies according to generally accepted conventions, rather than reading the parts from a score. During the Renaissance quickening changes in musical tastes helped to popularize the practice of writing down a greater range of music than previously. As composers gained reputations in places far from their homeland, a fashion for "new music" emerged, and written scores were more necessary than ever before to satisfy the demands of audiences for the admired works of the age.

**ROLE OF THE CHURCH.** During the fifteenth century, the writing of sacred vocal music for the rituals of the church continued to be the most important outlet for those who composed music. While a current of in-

novation is discernible by the 1300s, the music of the church had long been defined by the primary importance of plainsong, a form of unison or chant-style singing. Since early Christian times plainsong had been the dominant form of music performed in the European church. Modern listeners popularly refer to plainsong as Gregorian chant, a term that is technically a misnomer, since it associates one form of early medieval chant sanctioned by Pope Gregory I (540–604) with the rich variety of plainsong that flourished in medieval Europe. Plainsong involved the singing of texts, prayers, and biblical readings that were used in the church's rituals, thus elevating their performance above mere spoken recitation. The simplest forms of plainsong used only a single tone, sometimes with a falling pitch on the last note of a phrase. But several thousand plainsong melodies survive from the Middle Ages, showing a considerable diversity and complexity in the form's development. Medieval plainsong did not have "keys" like most Western music has had since the seventeenth century. Instead plainsong was based around a system of eight scales known as modes; these modes governed the progression of tones and semi-tones used in a piece's scale. While some of the medieval modes sounded remarkably similar to the modern system of major and minor keys, music written in some other modes has a very different character than that written in the modern system of tonality. Plainsong developed during the Middle Ages in close connection with monasteries and cathedrals, and their performance occurred during a series of daily religious prayers known as the Offices and in tandem with the celebration of the Mass. The Offices began with *Matins*, a service that occurred in the middle of the night, and they continued with *Lauds* at sunrise. Thereafter they followed at intervals of about every three hours during the day and concluded with Vespers and Compline at sundown. At these services, monks and clerics chanted prayers, hymns, Psalms, and lessons from the Scriptures with matins, lauds, and vespers generating the most complex musical forms. The Office of Vespers was particularly important, since it was the only ritual that initially allowed monks and clerics to perform music that was polyphonic, that is, in which multiple melody lines or harmonies were sung simultaneously. As such, musical innovations tended to develop around the Office of Vespers.

**THE MASS.** The rituals of the Offices occurred in cathedrals and monasteries throughout Europe and were performed only by the monks and priests who resided in these institutions. By contrast, the Mass was a universal religious rite, separate from the Offices, in which

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### MUSICAL DIVERSIONS

**INTRODUCTION:** In his famous work *The Decameron*, Giovanni Boccaccio described the entertainments of a group of ten noble men and women who fled Florence during the outbreak of the Black Death in 1348. For ten days, the company told stories, each day electing a king or queen to preside over their efforts. In his introduction to the work, Boccaccio describes how music enlivened this aristocratic circle's time in exile.

Thus dismissed by their new queen the gay company sauntered gently through a garden, the young men saying sweet things to the fair ladies, who wove fair garlands of divers sorts of leaves and sang love-songs.

Having thus spent the time allowed them by the queen, they returned to the house, where they found that Parmeno had entered on his office with zeal; for in a hall on the ground-floor they saw tables covered with the whitest of cloths, and beakers that shone like silver, and sprays of broom scattered everywhere. So, at the bidding of the queen, they washed their hands, and all took their places as marshalled by Parmeno. Dishes, daintily prepared, were served, and the finest wines were at hand; the three serving-men did their office noiselessly; in a word all was fair and ordered in a seemly manner; whereby the spirits of the company rose, and they seasoned their viands with pleasant jests and sprightly sallies. Breakfast done, the tables were removed, and the queen bade fetch instruments of music; for all, ladies and young men alike, knew how to tread a measure, and some of them played and sang with great skill: so, at her command, Dioneo having taken a lute, and Fiammetta a viol, they struck up a dance in sweet concert; and, the servants being dismissed to their repast, the queen, attended by the other ladies and the two young men, led off a stately carol; which ended they fell to singing ditties dainty and gay. Thus they diverted themselves until the queen, deeming it time to retire to rest, dismissed them all for the night. So the three young men and the ladies withdrew to their several quarters, which were in different parts of the palace. There they found the beds well made, and abundance of flowers, as in the hall; and so they undressed, and went to bed.

**SOURCE:** Giovanni Boccaccio, "Introduction to Day One," in *The Decameron*. Trans. J. M. Rigg (London: Routledge, 1921).



Medieval choir-book illumination. © HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS.

all medieval Christians participated. Priests celebrated the ritual, although lay people attended it and played a role in its celebration. While the Offices were relatively short religious observances, the Mass was the church's most important, and therefore, elaborate religious rite. Sacred music accompanied the Mass very early in the history of the church. The Mass was celebrated in Latin and although there were variations in the ritual throughout Western Europe, it proceeded with a text that was largely fixed according to custom. Often the celebration of the Mass was a relatively humble affair, with priests merely chanting the text of the ritual before those who were in attendance. Yet "high" masses accompanied by choirs, music, and instruments were also celebrated in both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and were especially common in Europe's most important churches on particularly solemn occasions.

**CIVIC MUSIC, SACRED FORMS.** By the end of the Middle Ages, Europe's cathedrals were vital centers of musical production, a trend that was to persist in the Renaissance and beyond. The quality of music performed in a town's cathedral or major churches was already an important element of civic pride by this time. Town governments helped to fund the establishment of choral schools, choirs, and instrumental groups to ac-

company the singing that occurred within their churches. In Italy, where great commercial wealth came to be amassed during the later Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, choirs were a major preoccupation of town governments and not just church officials. At first, the great Italian cities—places like Florence, Siena, and Milan—imported many of their singers from northern Europe, particularly from Paris and throughout northern France, the great centers of musical composition and performance in the later Middle Ages. Over time, though, these towns nurtured their own home-grown talent, so that by the fourteenth century, a city like Siena or Florence already had its own widely admired musical establishment. At the same time not all music that was performed in Europe's cities was liturgical in nature. Civic music—music that was intended to accompany the rituals of government such as the reading of public announcements and proclamations—the processions of city officials and of visiting dignitaries, and important feast days were all major occasions for musical performances.

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#### RENAISSANCE INNOVATION

**THE LATE MEDIEVAL INTERNATIONAL STYLE.** Like late Gothic sculpture and painting throughout much of Europe, the surviving musical texts of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries display the prominence of an "international style" that flourished over large expanses of Europe, particularly in France, Italy, and the Netherlands. This style was already making use of a number of innovations in musical composition, rhythm, and harmony that had been pioneered in fourteenth-century France, particularly in Paris at

mid-century, and somewhat later in Avignon, the capital of the papacy at the time. With the eventual return of the capital of the church to Rome in the early fifteenth century, Avignon faded as a center of musical innovation, and instead new centers of experimentation began to emerge in other places. For inspiration, composers began to turn to the music of England, an island that had been relatively isolated from many continental musical traditions during the Middle Ages. This isolation had caused English composers to follow a slightly different course from the courtly, chivalric styles and rigid plainsong melodies that had flourished in France or those favored by the civic musicians of Italy. The Mass in use in much of later medieval England—known as the Sarum Rite after its origins in Salisbury Cathedral—made use of melodies and scales in its chants that differed from those favored in continental Europe. Generally, English musicians used major keys rather than the varied and often minor-sounding modal scales that were employed on the Continent. The polyphony that developed from such a tradition, too, was different from the French and French-influenced sacred music popular in much of Europe during the fourteenth century. In most of continental Europe, for example, intervals of the fourth, the fifth, and the octave had long been favored as the most perfect harmonies. The third and the sixth—while they had begun to make inroads throughout the Continent at this time—were sometimes controversial. Much medieval musical theory taught that the harmonic relationship between these two intervals was too close and consequently dissonant. To modern Western ears, however, both the third and the sixth have long been heard as the most perfect or consonant of intervals, the very basis upon which much harmony rests. It is sometimes difficult for modern listeners to imagine a time when these intervals were heard as dissonances, but they were only gradually accepted in the fifteenth century, prompted largely by English examples. It is for this reason that scholars have often identified the reception of these harmonies as “consonant” as one of the first markers of the birth of a true Renaissance style.

**DUNSTAPLE.** One of the key figures in popularizing the new harmonies and in pioneering new settings of the Mass and sacred music generally was John Dunstaple (1390–1453), the greatest fifteenth-century English composer. Dunstaple was a member of the household of the Duke of Bedford, a powerful commander in the English army of the time. England’s engagement in the Hundred Years’ War against France resulted in military victories that gave Bedford practical control over a large portion of French territory in the



Hans Memling's *Virgin and Child with Two Angels Playing Music*. © ARTE & IMMAGINI SRL/CORBIS.

1420s. Dunstaple may have spent the years between 1422 and 1435 living in France in Bedford’s household, although the evidence for this French residency is slight. His works, however, must have had many admirers on the Continent since they exist in many manuscript collections throughout Europe. Seventy of his compositions survive, demonstrating his taste for the full sound and major tonalities favored by English composers of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In addition, he made frequent use of thirds and sixths in his work, helping to popularize their use by later composers in France and Burgundy especially. Like the French medieval composer Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300–1377) before him, Dunstaple also set the Mass in choral music. These settings were, like Machaut’s earlier French example, artistically unified, but in a new, bold way. Dunstaple constructed many of the individual parts of his masses on pre-existing church melodies, but he granted to these settings a new lyricism as well as the harmonies of English music of the time. Dunstaple also wrote numerous carols, a type of song structure that was distinctly English, yet similar to the French songs known as *rondeaux* and the Italian form of the *rondeau*, the *ballate*. The

carol had its origins, like these continental forms, as accompaniments for dances and made use of contrasting stanzas set against choral refrains. By Dunstaple's time, however, composers increasingly used the genre to set religious poems to music. In writing carols, English composers like Dunstaple gave primacy to their texts, which they set from poems written in Latin, English, or sometimes in a lively mix of the two languages. Most carols had two- or three-part harmonies with colorful texts, and while these songs were not truly "folk music," they did have a popular and distinctively English flavor.

**BURGUNDY.** No other place in fifteenth-century Europe surpassed the musical achievements and innovations of Burgundy. Although the heartland of this powerful duchy lay within France and was officially subject to the French king, the dukes of Burgundy had by 1400 surpassed him in the wealth and splendor of their court, particularly as France became mired in the Hundred Years' War. To their homelands in eastern France, the dukes had added through skillful marital alliances the rich Low Countries of Europe (that is modern Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg), a large portion of northeastern France, as well as the province of Lorraine. In the early fifteenth century they maintained their capital at Dijon, but Burgundy's dukes began to spend more time in their northern possessions, particularly in Flanders or modern Belgium, than in the original seat of their power. The Burgundian territories that they ruled were diverse in language and culture, and so each year the court spent a great deal of its time traveling through these various lands. This annual progress bred sophistication in Burgundian standards of musical performance, as accomplished musicians flocked to this court from throughout the dukes' possessions to receive patronage. Through their travels, too, the dukes learned of musical forms and innovations in the far corners of their vast lands. Thus the rise of Burgundian power was a force that aided further developments in an International Style in music throughout the Continent, as rulers elsewhere imitated the tastes of the rich Burgundian court. Rising to prominence around 1400, the Burgundian court became an important center of art, culture, and music under Duke Philip the Good (1419–1467). Philip, an enthusiastic supporter of church music, retained a large choir and the most elaborate armory of musical resources in Europe. Beyond his ranks of singers, Philip also employed trumpeters, bagpipers, drummers, organists, and a vast array of other instrumentalists. The attention he showered on music was surpassed by his successor Charles the Bold, whose rule began in 1467. He was to be the last of the Burgundian dukes, however, as the

duchy of Burgundy reverted to France and the northern possessions in the Low Countries came under the control of the Habsburg dynasty upon his death in 1477.

**DUFAY.** During Burgundy's heyday, a number of composers of distinction flourished. Generally, those favored at the Burgundian court made use of the new inspirations from the composer John Dunstaple and other English figures to enliven their musical traditions. Among the most accomplished of these figures was Guillaume Dufay, a figure of the first importance in fashioning a distinctively new musical style. Dufay was born near Brussels around 1397, and became a choirboy at the Cathedral of Cambrai, an important bishopric within the Burgundian lands. As he reached maturity, he traveled to Italy, where he found employment at first in the household of the powerful Malatesta family before serving for a time in the papal choir at Rome. In 1432 Dufay left Rome to serve the duke of Savoy on the northwestern frontier of Italy. Thereafter, he lived in his native Cambrai until his death in 1474, except for a brief four-year return to Savoy in the 1450s. Dufay is often associated with the Burgundian style and its innovations in music, but he was truly an international figure, as at home in the world of Italy and Savoy as he was in his native Cambrai. He was also highly educated, an unusual status for a musician by the standards of the time. He had received a degree in canon law from the prestigious University of Bologna, and his education allowed him to acquire a number of offices in the church. The works that Dufay composed while in Cambrai proved to be particularly fruitful in inspiring other composers, including Gilles Binchois (1400–1460), the second great Burgundian composer at the time. Dufay's output included a number of masses, motets, and secular songs or chansons, while Binchois was notable, in particular, for the quality of his chansons.

**THE MASS.** Although the duchy of Burgundy disappeared as a political force following the death of Charles the Bold in 1477, its musical styles survived into the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries throughout much of Europe. The Burgundian chanson (song) style developed by Binchois and Dufay relied on free flowing melodies, frequent use of triple meter, and a gentle, sometimes melancholic sound. These features of the style survived to be deployed in many of the masses which composers in the former Burgundian lands and elsewhere in Europe wrote at the time. Before the early fifteenth century there had been relatively few attempts to craft a single unified musical service around the ordinary parts of the Mass, that is, those sections of the Mass that were unchanging and occurred in every celebration

## MUSICAL Forms

The forms in which Renaissance composers wrote their music differed greatly from those of the modern world. The most popular musical genres are summarized below.

**Allemande:** From a French word meaning “German.”

The term was given to a popular dance of the sixteenth century that was written in double meter and believed to be German in origin. Allemandes survived in dance suites, and were even used in the early symphonies of the eighteenth century.

**Caccia:** From the Italian for “hunt” or “chase.” A popular Italian song of the fourteenth century in which two vocal parts appear to be chasing one another.

**Canon:** Meaning “rule” or “law,” a canon was a musical form in which composers originally wrote out a musical theme and then devised a series of rules by which the other voices in a choir were to sing the theme in polyphonic patterns. Canons became increasingly complex in the late fifteenth century and came to include counter-themes. As a result of their rising difficulty, all the parts of a canon came to be written down. Canons played a major role in the development of the art of counterpoint, the combination of polyphonic lines into a single artistic unity.

**Carol:** Originally, a song that was used to accompany ring and line dances. During the Renaissance, English composers embraced the carol and made it into a distinctly native style that played the same role in English music as the chansons did in France or the Lied in Germany.

**Chanson:** One of the longest lived native song styles in French-speaking Europe. Their popularity spread to almost every corner of Renaissance Europe, and under the influence of the period’s foremost composers the form often became a remarkably complex art song that was performed in court and cultivated urban societies.

**Chorale:** A hymn form originally embraced by Martin Luther and other early Protestant reformers in Germany. Chorales were originally performed in unison. Quite quickly, though, rich harmonies were created around these hymns’ melodies, which were usually carried in the uppermost vocal part. The chorale inspired the greatest sacred music of the German Reformation and survived into the age of Bach to be transformed into a high musical art form.

**Frottola:** A verse song much performed and published in Italy in the sixteenth century. The melody was usually carried in the top voice with three parts harmonized below. In performance, all four parts could be sung, or the lower three harmonies could be played by a small ensemble as an accompaniment to a solo performer.

**Lied:** German for “song.” The earliest Lieder that survive from Renaissance Germany date from the fifteenth century, and show that this form was then written either as a simple single-line or homophonic song or that it was set in three-part harmony.

**Madrigal:** Originally a popular medieval Italian song that contained a refrain (known as a *ritornello*), the madrigal was embraced by and transformed into a high art form. Madrigals became an important form of vocal chamber music and were written in four, five, six, and even more parts. Italian madrigal composers like Gesualdo and Monteverdi set to music some of the finest Italian poetry of the period.

**Mass:** From the fourteenth century European composers began to compose masses that set to music the unchanging parts of this religious ritual’s texts (the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and so forth). By the fifteenth century the writing of masses provided an important opportunity for a composer to demonstrate his skill in linking the work’s various parts together into a single artistic unity.

**Motet:** Originally a musical form that was performed outside the rituals of the Mass or the Offices of the church, but which usually, but not always, made use of sacred texts. The first motets had contrasting vocal lines and texts given to various voices in a choir. These lines were sung simultaneously, and thus the motet played a key role in the development of polyphony. The motet is one of the longest-lived choral forms in European history, with its origins stretching back to the High Middle Ages.

**Plainsong:** Also known as plainchant or Gregorian chant. By the time of the Renaissance this form of unison or chant singing already had a history that was more than a thousand years long. Plainsongs were not composed in keys like modern music, but within a system of eight modes, some of which sounded similar to modern major and minor keys, and others of which had completely different characters.

**Rondeau:** A lively French song with contrasting themes that was used to accompany dances.

**Virelais:** A popular French song of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that was preceded and followed by a refrain.



of the ritual. In the fifteenth century, though, such attempts soon grew common. To give their works artistic unity, composers often relied on older plainsong melodies, sometimes using a different plainsong in each of the separate movements they wrote, a practice that has sometimes been called “plainsong mass.” The custom also developed of choosing a musical motif from one plainsong and building it into each of the five movements of the Mass, a development that has often been referred to as the *motto mass*. Another fifteenth-century development was the appearance of the *cantus firmus* Mass, in which a single melody, often adapted from a secular song, appeared at the beginning of each movement in the tenor voice. *Cantus firmus* masses had first been written in England in the early fifteenth century, but after 1450, they became the customary way to set the Mass to music. Among the most beautifully integrated masses of this time were those of Dufay, who drew upon his own musical ballads to craft artistically integrated and aesthetically pleasing sacred music for the service. In the sixteenth century the fashion for *cantus firmus* masses soon evolved into the Imitation Mass. In this form even popular songs were inserted into the various movements of a Mass, and the polyphony imitated the source of inspiration, often in a highly original way. Such ingenious works fascinated many sixteenth-century composers, and the form, in fact, soon became dominant throughout Europe at mid-century. Yet the fondness that imitation masses expressed for secular music was criticized by the Council of Trent (1545–1563), the church council that met to consider ways of reforming Catholicism in the wake of the Protestant Reformation.

**OCKEGHEM.** Another standout among the many competent composers of the fifteenth century was Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1420–1497). Ockeghem was born in the French-speaking province of Hainaut, at the time part of the duchy of Burgundy. He began his career apparently as a member of the Cathedral choir at Antwerp, but soon entered into service in the household of Charles I, duke of Bourbon in France. In 1452, he became a member of the royal chapel of the king of France, and during the remainder of his long life he served three French kings. By the time of his death he was celebrated in verse and song as one of the founders of a new musical style, and he has long been revered, together with Guillaume Dufay and Josquin des Prez, as an important developer of a distinctive Renaissance style. Unlike Dufay and des Prez, however, his surviving body of works is somewhat small, consisting of ten motets, thirteen settings of the Mass, and twenty chansons. In contrast to Dufay, who preferred to set his chansons using two and

three voices, Ockeghem most frequently used four separate vocal parts. The lines of his works are longer and are often complex. One of the most distinctive features of his style is his use of an expressive bass voice, a departure from previous compositions in which comparatively little importance had been granted to this part of the harmonic range. Ockeghem also extended the range of the bass voice downward four or five tones lower than had been common previously. The result was a harmonic texture with more gravity, but with a broader range of sound, and his emphasis on the lower sonorities opened up new possibilities for later composers. In his settings of the Mass, Ockeghem sometimes relied on a familiar, pre-established melody to serve as a *cantus firmus* throughout his setting. At other times he avoided the use of a *cantus firmus* and instead developed the individual movements of the Mass as a canon, a contrapuntal form in which successive vocal parts imitated the line that had been set out by the first voice. Ockeghem was a master of the canon, a style of composing that took its name from the Latin word for “rule” or “law.” Up to this time composers had not usually written out all the various parts of their canons. Instead they often wrote down the first voice and then set out a set of rules or canons by which the other voices in the choir should follow or imitate the first voice. The voices were usually to proceed through principles of strict imitation. Ockeghem vastly extended these possibilities by writing canons in which the voices moved at different speeds while reproducing essentially the same vocal line. He also created double canons in which several vocal parts proceeded in canonical form, while several more wove independent lines around their harmonies. These innovations established Ockeghem as an early master of the art of counterpoint, making his compositions vital to later sixteenth-century students and masters who mined their intricacies for inspiration. At the same time the very complexities of his creations tended to make later composers assess his works as mere products of technical finesse. Recently, his compositions have been more adequately studied, however, and Ockeghem has been restored to his position as a master of expressive vocal lines as well as contrapuntal invention.

**OBRECHT.** As the life of Johannes Ockeghem illustrates, the musical innovations occurring within the duchy of Burgundy in the fifteenth century soon spread farther afield through the migrations of composers and musicians. Jacob Obrecht (1452–1505) was one important figure who developed compositions using the broader ranges of harmonies and new musical forms on the rise in Flanders and France. His surviving opus in-

cludes thirty masses and about an equal number of chansons. He also composed songs in Dutch and instrumental music, although comparatively little of this music has survived. Unlike Ockeghem, Obrecht usually relied on *cantus firmus* melodies to grant structure to most of his masses, adopting popular, well-known secular songs as well as Gregorian plainsong melodies to serve in this role. He opened up new imaginative vistas, though, in the use of *cantus firmus*. In some compositions, for instance, he repeated the borrowed theme at the outset of each movement of the Mass, as was customary at the time; at other times he relied on the first phrase of the melody in the mass's first movement, while using the second phrase in the next, the third in the following, and so on. Or in still other compositions he based his masses around two or three *cantus firmus* melodies simultaneously. Obrecht also wrote various movements of his mass settings in canon style, although his use of the form was not exact, with the various voices sometimes subtly altering the original melody that had been set out by the first voice. Obrecht's modulations and violations of received forms thus presented followers with new ways of envisioning vocal music. In his travels to Italy, moreover, he brought to that country a knowledge of the new styles and forms emerging in Northern Europe at the time.

**JOSQUIN DES PREZ.** Josquin des Prez, a composer born sometime around 1450 in northern France or within the Flemish province of Hainaut, ranks as the greatest musical genius of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. He gained recognition as a genius in his lifetime, and his reputation as the “father of musicians” survived long after his death. Even in the late sixteenth century commentators continued to compare his achievements to those of Michelangelo in the visual arts. As with the creations of Michelangelo, contemporaries found des Prez's compositions remarkably expressive, noting his ability to forge a complete union between music and the chosen text. Further comparisons between the two men include their ability to solve complex aesthetic problems in a way that seemed effortless, and their willful individuality coupled with occasional bouts of moodiness.

**DES PREZ'S MUSIC.** Josquin des Prez's surviving compositions include some eighteen masses, fifty motets, and about seventy chansons. His masses are masterful creations, although they are not ranked among his most innovative works. In these, Josquin des Prez usually relied on a *cantus firmus* melody to grant structure to his works, often choosing these themes from popular secular songs of the day. Sometimes he paraphrased these tunes, and in his most skillful creations he relied on all



Josquin des Prez. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

the voices that had appeared in the original chanson to create a free-flowing expansion of the original's themes. In this way his masses extended the boundaries of the *cantus firmus* mass, and were the origins for the imitation or parody masses that flourished in the later sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Catholic Church. In these parody or imitation masses, composers sometimes used the initial theme quite explicitly and at other times they played with it extensively, constructing variations that disguised the theme's origins through elaboration and ornamentation. In this way Josquin des Prez helped to solve a central problem that revolved around setting the Mass to music: how to keep an audience captivated over a long period of time by using music to outline the various distinct parts of the Mass's ritual. While Josquin's masses are artistically notable, his motets are even more accomplished demonstrations of his skills as a composer. The Mass may have still been a major vehicle for demonstrating an artist's inventiveness at the time of his life. But his skill in the motet, and his far greater output in this genre, shows the increasing importance that non-liturgical music—music that was not to be performed within the Mass *per se*—was to have in the sixteenth century. The unchanging nature of the Mass's text gave a composer relatively little freedom to explore the relationship between words and music, since church tradition narrowly prescribed the acceptable text. In a motet, by contrast, a composer could set poems and other texts of greater variety to music since the motet was performed outside the regular structure of the Mass and thus did

not have to conform to the ritual's restrictions. Des Prez's work in the humanist-influenced courts of Italy caused him to focus on the imaginative possibilities that music offered for conveying literary meaning. To do this, he abandoned the involved, complex lines of the type of French and Flemish music exemplified by Ockeghem and his followers, and instead he tried to forge a union between the chosen words and notes so that the lines of the poems and other texts he set to music could be consumed as thoughts. The example that he left behind in his motets inspired several subsequent sixteenth-century composers of vocal music who relied on rhythm, harmony, pitch, and tonalities to suggest the meanings of their texts.

**IMPORTANCE OF EARLY RENAISSANCE INNOVATIONS.** During the course of the fifteenth century an international style of musical composition flourished throughout much of continental Europe. This style was at first enlivened by the examples of harmony and rhythm of English composition and later inspired by the complex lines and intricate counterpoint harmonies of the Burgundian composers. Harmonies of thirds and sixths in many musical compositions were relative innovations, and writers of masses and motets borrowed melodies for their works from the church's plainsong and the secular chansons. Through the influence of Johannes Ockeghem and others the harmonic possibilities of fifteenth-century music expanded to include a wider range of pitches and in many cases to subject the construction of harmony to the bass, rather than the tenor voice. In this process the once-dominant tenor voice began to fade in favor of a more equal construction of harmony between all the voices. In Ockeghem's work, in particular, the bass became the entire foundation upon which the upper harmonic relationships were created. In this way a more resonant sound began to flourish. While the Mass remained the primary vehicle through which composers demonstrated their imaginative finesse, the motet became increasingly important as a vehicle for expressing the complex meanings of texts. As the century drew to a close the genius of Josquin des Prez opened up a new flexibility for forging relationships between texts and the musical forms in which they were conveyed. During the sixteenth century composers were to build upon this new sophistication to create a distinctive Renaissance mixture of polyphony, harmony, and melodic exploitation.

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## SIXTEENTH CENTURY ACHIEVEMENTS IN SECULAR MUSIC

**HUMANISM.** As the dawn of the sixteenth century approached, humanism's influence on music grew increasingly important. Humanism was a complex literary movement that had its origins in the works of fourteenth-century intellectuals like Francesco Petrarch and Giovanni Boccaccio. The term itself is a nineteenth-century creation crafted to describe those in the Renaissance who practiced the *studia humanitatis* ("human studies"). Thus humanism, the source for modern notions of the humanities, was not a philosophy, but a curriculum. As such, it differed greatly from the scholastically influenced studies that were dominant in most European universities at the time. The university system based its curriculum on logic, Aristotelian natural philosophy, and theology. By contrast, the humanists championed training in rhetoric (graceful speaking and writing), history, moral philosophy, and the languages. These disciplines, they argued, were better suited to creating virtuous human beings than were the logic and reasoned argumentation favored by the scholastics in medieval universities. The works of the humanists who followed Petrarch and Boccaccio persistently recommended the cultivation of the language arts and the study of Antiquity, and humanism sponsored a revival of ancient culture and learning that has long been synonymous in many people's minds with the very idea of the Renaissance itself. Throughout most of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the primarily literary concerns of the humanists had little impact on music, but in the final decades of the fifteenth century the links between humanism and composition became more important. As the humanists studied a broader range of ancient texts throughout the fifteenth century, they learned of the importance that ancient philosophers had attached to music. The importation of many ancient Greek treatises on music into Italy from the ailing Byzantine Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as forays into Western European monastic libraries aided their studies. By the end of the century most of the vast and variegated musical theory of Antiquity had been recovered and translated into Latin. Somewhat later, many of these texts were also to be translated into

Italian. From this vantage point, ancient theoretical and aesthetic works that treated music could be read and studied by a broader range of educated men, and even by a small minority of cultivated women. From their reading, both humanists and educated composers like Josquin des Prez came to learn that the ancients had prized music for its power to ennoble the human spirit, inspire poetry, and change the soul. In a more general sense, humanist culture's emphasis on rhetoric and language expressed a fondness for good poetry; thus its influence came to be felt upon music in a deepening attention to the texts that composers set to music. These trends can be seen in the works of Josquin des Prez, the figure that has long been attributed with developing a distinctively Renaissance musical idiom.

**PRINCELY PATRONAGE.** In the fifteenth century most humanists were only able to realize the ideal of the detached study of literature, history, and ancient philosophy through finding employment in Italy's burgeoning governments or through attracting the patronage of powerful princes and wealthy merchants. Similarly, as the taste for Antiquity flourished among elites, Italy's humanist-educated princes and wealthiest merchant, banking, and patrician families sought out the best composers and musicians to create works that expressed their love of the ancients and of the humanist creed of literary study. It was in Florence that a musical culture first began to flourish that made use of the philosophical insights drawn from the works of the ancients. During the 1470s and 1480s the city's wealthy merchants joined the backdoor manipulator of Florence's political life, Lorenzo de' Medici, in seeking out the best Flemish musicians of the day. Lorenzo was an avid supporter of the philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), one of the most important scholars of the day who was actively engaged in the translation and study of Plato's entire body of work. Ficino himself was a musician and physician, and his studies of Plato frequently recommended music's power to influence the cosmos. From Ficino, humanists and musicians alike began to adopt Plato's notion of poetic inspiration to defend musical composition. This idea—that poets were seized with divine inspiration when they wrote—could also be applied to musicians and composers, even as it came to be used in the High Renaissance by painters and sculptors in a similar fashion to defend their arts. Modern scholars have sometimes credited Ficino with founding the discipline of musical therapy, an interest that derived from his interests as a musician and physician. The practice of musical therapy was often undertaken in the hospitals of the later Renaissance and was recommended in the philoso-

pher's works. Among the many other accomplished musicians that Lorenzo de' Medici invited to his court were Heinrich Isaac, Alexander Agricola, and Johannes Ghiselin. Medici patronage of the art was important, but almost every major court in late fifteenth-century Italy awarded employment to a sizable contingent of musicians and composers. At Ferrara, for example, the d'Este dukes patronized Jacob Obrecht, Antoine Brumel, and Adrian Willaert, among many others. In Rome, the papal household, as well as the many courts of the church's cardinals, maintained sizable contingents of musicians and composers. And in despotic Milan, the Sforza dukes stocked their chapel with 22 singers and their palace chamber choir with another eighteen. The composers among these ranks experimented with achieving the new Renaissance ideal of a music that stirred the emotions and purified the soul. Until 1550, those active in the great households and courts of Italy were predominantly from Northern Europe, and the taste for Franco-Flemish musical practices was strong. Still, Italians made inroads in these years, although the international character of the peninsula's musical life was constantly enriched and strengthened by the migrations of Europeans from beyond the Alps.

**FROTTOLA.** The emergence of a new, distinctly Italian genre of popular song in the second half of the fifteenth century points to this vitality. In the Renaissance the Italian term "frottola" had both a narrow and a broad meaning. In its broadest sense it came to be applied to any of a number of secular song types that were popular throughout the peninsula in the years between 1470 and 1530. This genre included a number of more specific song types, including odes, sonnets, capitoli, strambotti, and canzoni. In a narrow sense, the frottola also referred to a song that was written for four vocal parts with its melody usually placed in the uppermost voice. Underneath this melody, the other voices often provided an accompaniment of chords. Usually, frottola were written in 3/4 or 4/4 time. The origins of this form, which came to set much ancient and Renaissance lyric poetry to music, lay in the traditions of the early Italian Renaissance, when poetry had often been recited against a musical accompaniment. Over time, a tradition of extemporized singing of lyrics emerged, and became a popular form of entertainment, notably in the Medici household in Florence, but in a number of other courts throughout Italy as well. Lorenzo de' Medici greatly admired an artist's ability to extemporize vocally *ad lyram* ("on the lyre"), and many of Florence's humanists developed this skill. Among those that were particularly noted for the ability to perform such frottola were

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE COURTIER AND MUSIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Book of the Courtier*, a conduct manual describing the arts necessary to succeed at court, the accomplished Italian writer Baldassare Castiglione singled out music for special consideration. The book was written as a dialogue, and in it, one character defends knowledge of music and skill in performance as befitting to those in refined society. He defends the art, moreover, from the charge that it is effeminate and stresses music's role in ancient philosophy, a defense that is distinctively Renaissance in nature.

And the count, beginning afresh:

"My lords," he said, "you must think I am not pleased with the Courtier if he be not also a musician, and besides his understanding and cunning upon the book, have skill in like manner on sundry instruments. For if we weigh it well, there is no ease of the labors and medicines of feeble minds to be found more honest and more praiseworthy in time of leisure than it. And principally in courts, where (beside the refreshing of vexations that music brings unto each man) many things are taken in hand to please women, whose tender and soft breasts are soon pierced with melody and filled with sweetness. There no marvel that in the old days and nowadays they have always been inclined to musicians, and counted this a most acceptable food of the mind."

"I believe music," [another] said, "together with many other vanities is appealing to women, and peradventure for some also that have the likeness of men, but not for them that be men indeed; who ought not with

such delicacies to womanish their minds and bring themselves in that sort to dread death."

"Speak it not," answered the Count. "For I shall enter into a large sea of the praise of music and call to rehearsal how much it hath always been renowned among them of old and counted a holy matter; and how it hath been the opinion of most wise philosophers that the world is made of music, and the heavens in their moving make a melody, and our soul framed after the very same sort, and therefore lifts up itself and (as it were) revives the virtues and force of it with music. Wherefore it is written that Alexander was sometimes so fervently stirred with it that (in a manner) against his will he was forced to arise from banquets and run to weapon, afterward the musician changing the stroke and his manner of tune, pacified himself again and returned from weapon to banqueting. And I shall tell you that grave Socrates when he was well stricken in years learned to play upon the harp. And I remember I have understood that Plato and Aristotle will have a man that is well brought up, to be also a musician; and declare with infinite reasons the force of music to be very great purpose in us, and for many causes (that should be too long to rehearse) ought necessarily to be learned from a man's childhood, not only for the superficial melody that is heard, but to be sufficient to bring into us a new habit that is good and a custom inclining to virtue, which makes the mind more apt to the conceiving of felicity, even as bodily exercise makes the body more lusty ...

**SOURCE:** Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Trans. Thomas Hoby (London, 1561), in *Source Readings in Music Theory: The Renaissance*. Ed. Oliver Strunk (New York, W. W. Norton, 1965): 91–92. Text modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

Raffaele Brandolini (1465–1517), a native Florentine who spent much of his life as a scholar in Rome, and who wrote an important treatise entitled *On Music and Poetry*. Two other performers of merit were Baccio Ugolini and Serafino dall'Aquila, but the custom for extemporizing songs was so popular that even Lorenzo de' Medici himself sometimes performed this way. By 1500, Mantua had become the most brilliant center of frottola performance; the city's duchess, Isabella d'Este (1474–1539) supported this popular song form by seeking out the best poetry from Italian authors, and then turning it over to musicians to be set to music. These departures from the genre's extemporaneous roots have provided music historians with manuscripts and printed editions of the works her composers wrote, an invaluable source for reconstructing the popular song trends of the age. In

contrast to the many musical genres of the period that were heavily influenced by Franco-Flemish styles, the *frottola* style was a native art form, with its poetry and music written by Italians. Nurtured by Isabella d'Este and in a number of Italian cities, the form was a significant source of inspiration for Italian musical creativity in the sixteenth century.

**IMPROVISATIONAL VERSUS WRITTEN MUSIC.** The vigorous musical culture that flourished at the time created an almost insatiable demand for compositions that might be presented at the many ceremonial occasions, festivities, and court entertainments at which music was demanded. Most musicians were schooled in the techniques of musical improvisation, although the degree to which they relied on these skills depended upon the type of music that was being performed. Italian song tradi-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE SOUND OF MUSIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Renaissance humanist Raffaele Brandolini wrote one of the first serious treatises about musical performance. In his *On Music and Poetry* (1513) he argued that music and poetry were disciplines that arose from the same creative impulse, an argument that supported music's claim to a high status among the arts, rather than in its traditional place as one of the sciences. Brandolini's statements were typical of many discussions about the relative merits of specific arts at the time, and his ideas came to have an impact in raising the importance accorded to music by the thinkers that followed him.

If you rebuke music, which nature herself instituted with the first elements of the world for lightening labors, for calming and stimulating affections, and for expressing happiness and enjoyment, I do not plainly see what liberal art you would find very worthy of praise. Or do you not accept the great literary tradition that the world is composed of musical ratio? For Pythagoras, studying with divine diligence the rhythms, modes, and inflections of the various pitches from the blows of hammers, established this ratio according to the model of heaven. His school of thought presented this opinion as transmitted from ancient times; and, not satisfied with merely the concord of dissimilars which they call harmony, that school also attributed its varied symphony to the diverse motions of the heavenly spheres. But we will leave these matters, all too obscure as they are, to be debated by natural philosophers; let us now lay out carefully those which are both easy to see and consistent with the qualities of popular knowledge.

What is it that urges oarsmen, laborers in the field, and artisans in the city to persevere in their work as much as does song? Nor does it encourage only those labors

where many strive together, led by some pleasant voice; the fatigue of individuals is also assuaged by any simple song. For while some fight back savage tempests and gusts of wind with all their strength of body and soul, while others eagerly wield their hoes, mattocks, and axes to cultivate a field in good time, and while still others exert themselves in various and complex works for human benefit, they render labor lighter by means of song. In the camp, workers and soldiers too soften their labors day and night with the beauty of song, while they build palisades, dig trenches, and raise bulwarks, and keep their watches or vigils. There is no need to confirm all this with examples, since it is accepted in constant and everyday practice.

By the sound of music, moreover, an army itself is armed, drawn into formation, and led headlong against the enemy, as is shown by the experience and efforts of many kings and nations. The Lacedaemonians, not the least among Greek warriors, are remembered for their use of the music of the tibia when they joined in hand-to-hand combat—not, in brief, as a religious rite or for the sake of worship, but in order to moderate and modulate their souls. The Cretans, as tradition has it, were accustomed to go into battle with the cithara sounding beforehand, setting the pace of their march. The Amazons, excelling beyond their female sex in battle skill, were accustomed to wield arms to the sound of the reed-pipe, the Sybarites to the tibia ... Indeed many others everywhere, though especially the Romans, have done so, as they were roused up for battle by the sounding of the horn and the clarion. For the louder it was than all others, the more the glory of Rome surpassed the others in warfare.

**SOURCE:** Raffaele Brandolini, *On Music and Poetry*. Trans. Ann E. Moyer (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001): 13, 15.

tions, in particular, had long had a vigorously creative and sophisticated set of improvisational and extemporizing techniques, while other kinds of music—polyphonic motets and settings of the Mass—were often more thoroughly composed or written down. In Italy, entire evenings of entertainment were sometimes constructed from extemporaneous song. But the most complex polyphonic music of the period, performed in church on solemn occasions or as part of civic festivities, required more disciplined performance practices and written music, since these compositions made use of many different and contrasting lines of counterpoint. They could not, in other words, be executed unless per-

formers paid strict attention to written music. In addition, the increasing numbers of musical manuscripts that survive from the period reveal an emerging demand for music that might be readily replayed or sung time and again. The circulation of these manuscripts beyond the point at which they had first been written down and their extensive recopying in subsequent editions reveals as well the emergence of a sophisticated culture of musical consumption.

**PRINTING.** With the invention of the printing press, new technology afforded musicians and composers a process that might make the hand copying of music less laborious. The first printed musical edition

appeared in Venice in 1501, when Ottaviano Petrucci released a collection of 96 chansons, mostly written in French. While printed editions of music were cheaper than those compiled and copied by scribes in handwritten manuscripts, they were still enormously expensive by sixteenth-century standards and only available to the wealthy, cultivated few. To print his early musical editions, Petrucci had to process each page three separate times. First he had to print the staff lines on the page, then he printed the words that flowed under the lines, and the notes were added in the final impression. In 1520, Pierre Attaignant simplified the process when he developed a way to print music through a single impression in Paris; the new process quickly spread to Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands. By mid-century, Europe's primary centers of music publication included Rome, Venice, Antwerp, Paris, and Nuremberg. The rise of these centers greatly increased the flow of knowledge about recent musical developments. By the late sixteenth century, for example, printed music traveled from Rome or Venice to the farthest corners of the European continent in a matter of months, and printing became a way for composers to establish their reputations on a European-wide scale. Figures like Orlando di Lasso and Giovanni da Palestrina enjoyed widespread renown throughout the continent by virtue of the printed editions of their works. Printed music, too, allowed new compositions to be played in many places quickly. Thus the press could play a role in establishing musical tastes. Orlando di Lasso, for example, was among the first composers whose printed music helped to establish certain common tastes throughout Europe rather quickly. At the same time the importance of printed editions of music should not be overemphasized. They were still an expensive rarity when compared to the vast amount of music that circulated in hand-copied editions. Much Renaissance music, moreover, continued to be improvised from pre-existing melodies, chansons, and other musical forms, or as in the tradition of the frottola, it was often by its very nature designed to be an extemporaneous exercise. Although many songs of this sort were not written down, such singing was often governed and judged according to complex conventions and rules.

**NATIONAL STYLES.** During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries French and Netherlandish composers and musicians practiced in many of the most important courts and religious institutions of Europe. By 1500, their dominance in Italy was particularly great. At the same time, all European regions had long had their own native musical cultures and idioms distinct from

those of the Franco-Flemish composers who held the continent's most important musical posts. These national styles gained a higher profile in the sixteenth century, in part due to the increase of published manuscript editions. Not long after he released his first edition of mostly French chansons, for instance, the Venetian printer Petrucci devoted his attention to printing eleven vast collections of frottole. His editions helped in spreading the popularity of this style of performance, particularly at court, where the frottole could be played and sung by performers with vast differences in ability levels. Both hired players and amateurs could join in their performance. Their simplicity, too, meant that they were open to free extemporizing on the one hand, or that they might be accompanied only by a lute on the other. The growth of musical styles like the frottola gradually undermined the dominance of French and Flemish composers and musicians in Italy, as did the training of Italians at the hands of northerners like Adrian Willaert, the organist and music director of the Cathedral of St. Mark's in Venice, the most important musical post in Italy. In turn, the printing of these native songs and dances and their circulation throughout Europe eventually expanded the musical language of all countries as well.

**MADRIGALS.** The most important genre of secular music to flourish in Italy during the sixteenth century was the madrigal, a form that eventually became popular in many countries throughout Europe and which established Italy as the undisputed musical center of the later sixteenth century. The Renaissance madrigal was a musical setting of a short poem that bore little resemblance to the earlier madrigals that had flourished in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy. In the earlier period madrigals had been performed with verses that alternated with refrains. In keeping with the new influence that humanism exerted on sixteenth-century Italian taste, however, the later madrigal gave primacy to the text. It was a thoroughly composed form of music, with none of the connections to the popular and folk forms that had originally inspired the medieval style. Writers of madrigals chose to set poems that were written by the foremost poets of the age, and they expressed a preference above all for the fourteenth-century sonnets of Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374). During the time that the madrigal appeared, disputes were common among poets and literary critics concerning the direction literary Italian should take. The preference for Petrarca evidenced in the early madrigal writers, in particular, fit neatly with the aims of Pietro Bembo, one of Italy's most important arbiters of aesthetic taste and

an important author. He argued that Petrarch's Italian was particularly musical in nature. Among the qualities that Bembo identified in Petrarch were rhythm, melody, dignity, sweetness, and magnificence, and he recommended the author's poetry to composers as particularly fitting for music. From the earliest development of the madrigal, then, Petrarch's creations played a central role in the musical genre, inspiring Adrian Willaert and other early writers in the genre to adapt styles in their compositions that mirrored the music of Petrarch and other major Italians' verse. In their remarkable settings these composers labored to fit their music to the moods and sounds of the poetry, crafting musical imagery that was harsh and grave or light and sweet as the text demanded. Besides Petrarch, some of the poets whose works were most frequently set in madrigals were Lodovico Ariosto, Pietro Bembo, Jacopo Sannazaro, and Torquato Tasso. While comic and satirical madrigals certainly appeared during the great Italian outpouring of madrigal writing that occurred between 1530 and 1600, most madrigals dealt with serious themes of love and eroticism. Many drew upon the popularity of pastoral poetry as well. The enormous fondness of the Italian elite for madrigals at the time cannot be disputed. More than 2,000 printed editions of these works survive from the sixteenth century alone, and the form remained one of the most popular in secular music well into the seventeenth century. Originally written for four voices, most madrigals after 1550 had five voices, and somewhat later, works written for six or more voices appeared. Composers intended each written part to be sung by only one voice, and thus the madrigal played a role in cultivated Italian circles as an early form of chamber music. The genre's appearance and rapid development thus point to a sophisticated, although mostly amateur, culture of musical consumption. Madrigals, in other words, were performed within Italian court circles by courtiers who were relatively well educated in reading and executing musical scores.

**GESUALDO AND MONTEVERDI.** The two greatest composers of madrigals were Carlo Gesualdo (c. 1561–1613) and Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643). Gesualdo was an Italian nobleman, notorious for having murdered his wife and her lover in 1586 after he caught them in the act of adultery. He outlasted the scandal, however, and in 1593 married the prominent Leonora d'Este, niece of the powerful ruler of the duchy of Ferrara. Like other composers of the later sixteenth century in Italy, Gesualdo employed chromatic scales and harmonies in his work, a fashion at the time that was prompted through the study of Greek musical treatises.



Claudio Monteverdi. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

While the fad for chromaticism was considerable in Italy at the time, Gesualdo relied on it as more than a mere imitation of ancient style. In his beautiful madrigal settings, he employed chromatic melodies together with root chords that were a third apart. The result produced music that was frequently a touching response to his emotion-laden texts. By contrast, the late Renaissance composer Claudio Monteverdi was a master not only of madrigal composition but a pioneer in the writing of opera and a composer of sacred works as well. Born in Cremona, he served the Duke of Mantua, eventually attaining the rank of music master in his chapel. In the last thirty years of his life he gained prominence as the choirmaster at St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice. In 1587, Monteverdi began to publish his madrigals, and by 1605 he had produced five printed collections. His settings mixed contrapuntal and homophonic sections, and he freely employed the chromatic scales and dissonant harmonies that had grown popular in response to Greek theory. His settings were lively and sensitive responses to the texts he chose. In addition, his works were innovative and point to some of the trends that developed as important features of seventeenth-century Baroque music. Monteverdi, for instance, relied on the recitative style in many of his madrigals, allowing the voices to declaim certain important parts of the



poetic text. The composer also wrote embellishments into his scores rather than allow performers to improvise these freely as was the sixteenth-century custom. Through their wide circulation in printed editions Monteverdi's madrigals had an enormous influence on the development of musical tastes and fashions, not only in Italy, but throughout Europe.

**CHANSONS.** The madrigal, a courtly and elite form of musical entertainment, was prized by the musically sophisticated circles that had sprouted in Italy during the sixteenth century. Elsewhere in Europe, native styles of song and choral music underwent a similar development. In France the chanson, a native medieval genre, had become one element of the international European musical landscape by 1500. During the first half of the sixteenth century the chanson reacquired many native French elements, and in the vicinity of Paris, in particular, a style of chanson composition, frequently referred to as "Parisian chanson," emerged. The new form made use of distinctive French poetry, and was encouraged by the chivalric tone of Francis I's court. Another spur to the popularity of the Parisian chanson lay in the publication efforts of Pierre Attaignant, who published some fifty books of chansons in the years between 1528 and 1552. Attaignant was an innovator who perfected the process of single-impression musical printing, thus greatly reducing the cost and effort needed to print music. His chanson collections included more than 1,500 musical creations, and other French printers soon imitated their success. The earliest printed chansons were similar in many respects to the frottole popular in Italy around the same time. They were light confections that moved quickly and rhythmically, scored for four voices with the highest voice most often carrying the melody. Somewhat later, hundreds of the most popular of these songs were transcribed for the lute or for the voice with lute accompaniment. Among the most popular compositions Attaignant published were the songs of Clément Janequin (c. 1585–c. 1560). Janequin's chansons made use of sounds that imitated the birds, calls to the hunt, battle cries, and street noises, and they had a dominant melodic line. Outside Paris, printers in sixteenth-century Lyons and Antwerp continued to publish chansons that were true to the genre's original polyphonic origins. And after 1550, French fascination with the polyphonic madrigal exerted an influence on the traditional chansons. At this time some composers experimented with inserting madrigal elements into the production of their chansons, including the madrigals' polyphonic and contrapuntal texture. As the seven-

teenth century approached, though, the homophonic Parisian style of chanson tended to dominate throughout France.

**MUSIQUE MESURÉE À L'ANTIQUÉ.** Another sign of the creative ferment that the alliance between Renaissance and humanism was producing throughout Europe lies in the development of the *musique mesurée à l'antique*. This French form developed in the second half of the sixteenth century in a series of experiments undertaken by members of the Pléiade, a group of poets concerned with applying the metrical lines of ancient Greek and Latin poetry to the writing of sixteenth-century French verse. Underlying the concerns of the members of the Pléiade—most notably Jean-Antoine de Baïf—was the notion that music and poetry should be reunited, as he and others believed they had been in the ancient world. De Baïf soon enlisted a number of musical colleagues to achieve this reunification of the two arts. The composers that participated in this effort to set French texts, based on classical metrical models, to music included Thibault de Courville, Guillaume Costeley, and, perhaps most importantly, Claude Le Jeune. Just as in the spoken performance of these poems, *musique mesurée à l'antique* proceeded through a combination of long and short sounds, intended to heighten the difference between the accented and unaccented syllables that were fundamental to the endeavor of creating French lyrics based on classical models. The result produced an austere, somewhat severe style of music, but one that fascinated French humanist intellectuals and many educated musicians and composers during the 1570s. In developing *musique mesurée à l'antique*, de Baïf worked in tandem with Thibault de Courville to set out a theory for the new music, and in 1570 enough interest in the project had developed to found the Académie de Poésie et de Musique, an institution that soon received a royal charter. Like many humanist-inspired experiments in music, the Académie de Poésie et de Musique had a philosophical agenda: to revive the power of music to achieve ethical virtue, a power that humanists believed had existed in Antiquity, but had long since been corrupted. Through concerts, de Baïf and other members of the Académie hoped to spread their new art form among a small cadre of intellectuals and members of Paris' political elites, who might then work for the reform of all music in France along the lines advocated by the Académie. Thus membership in the organization included both professional musicians and a second category of listeners, who were learned and often wealthy musical fans. This second group of members were expected to support the institution financially,

in large part by paying expensive yearly fees for admission to its concerts. Despite such grand intentions the Académie was not a success, but points rather to the perennial appeal that the revival of classical musical forms had on the musical figures of the later Renaissance.

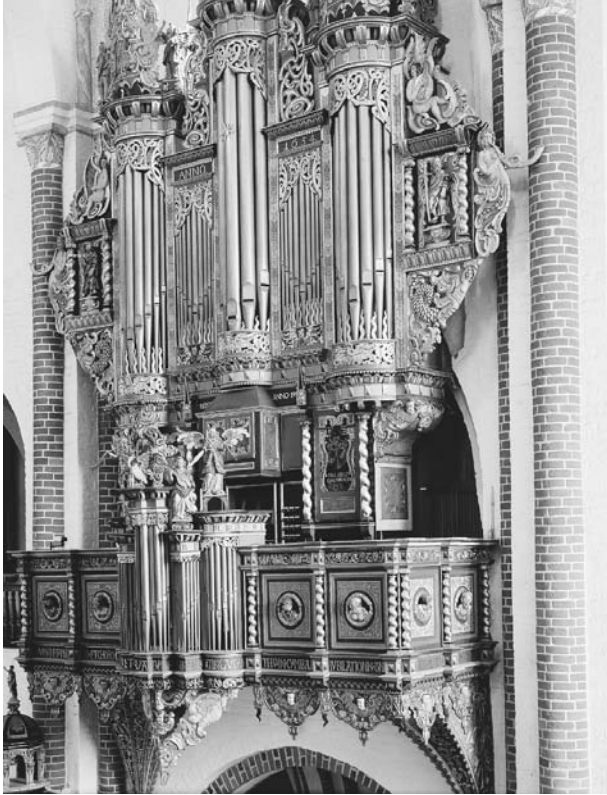
**LIEDER.** The *Lied*, a distinctively German song form, experienced a development similar to the madrigal in Italy and the chanson in France. The earliest collections of *Lieder* survive from the mid-fifteenth century, and show that these songs were performed either as simple monophonic melodies or they were set in three voices with the tenor singing the melody. Like the madrigal and chansons, the singing of *Lieder* flourished and developed in tandem with courtly musical life. One of the most accomplished sixteenth-century composers of these songs was Paul Hofhaimer (1459–1537), who served as organist to the Emperor Maximilian I (r. 1489–1519). Hofhaimer relied on traditional German melodies that he set in harmony according to the contrapuntal techniques popularized by the French and Flemish composers of the day. Through the efforts of composers like Ludwig Senfl, too, the *Lied* became a highly artful genre that was similar in many ways to the complex choral motets sung throughout Northern Europe at the time. At the same time Senfl and others composed shorter *Lieder* that imitated folk melodies and which often had a bawdy quality. With the rise of music printing in the first half of the sixteenth century, the wealthy city of Nuremberg became Germany's primary center of *Lieder* publication, and many collections of the songs issued from the city. Later in the century, however, *Lieder* publication fell off in Germany as the taste for the more complex Italian madrigal grew. The melodies that had been popularized in the earlier printed *Lieder* collections, however, formed the basis upon which many late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century composers constructed Protestant chorales, hymns that were sung in Germany's newly reformed Lutheran churches.

**MADRIGALS AND SONGS IN ENGLAND.** The printing and performance of secular songs written in parts developed in England somewhat later than in the rest of Europe, and was intricately connected to the Italian madrigal's rising popularity in the late sixteenth century. Nicholas Yonge's 1588 *Transalpine Music* (*Musica transalpina*) represents the first collection of madrigals published in England. Yonge merely translated and adapted these works from Italian models, and in his preface he explained that he had been meeting regularly with a group of gentlemen to perform these works. His anthology became popular, and by the 1590s it inspired a



*Music* by Hans Baldung Grien, Alte Pinakothek, Munich. ART RESOURCE.

number of composers to produce their own madrigals. Among the most prolific of these English madrigal composers were Thomas Morley (1557–1602) and John Wilbye (1574–1638). Great variety characterized the many English madrigals that were written between the 1590s and the 1630s. Generally, though, their musical



Sixteenth-century organ, designed by Hermann Raphael Rottensten-Pock, Roskilde Cathedral, Denmark. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

phrases were longer than those that originated in Italy at the same time. And while Italian composers granted primacy to the setting of the texts, English composers tended to pay greater attention to the overall musical and aesthetic structures of their works. As the sixteenth century drew to a close in England, collections of lute songs became popular, too. In these solo songs with lute accompaniment composers set to music some of the best English poetry of the period, and the literary quality of these works is usually consistently better than the texts used at about the same time for madrigals. The two most prominent composers of lute songs were John Dowland (1562–1626) and Thomas Campion (1567–1620). Dowland's "Flow, my tears" was among the most successful and well known of the lute songs. Published in 1600, it inspired a number of variations and arrangements.

**INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.** Music intended to be played only by instruments had long existed in Europe as accompaniment to dances, or as incidental pieces at courtly banquets and other entertainments. Because most of this music was improvised or played from memory, very little instrumental music had ever been written down be-

fore the later fifteenth century; the surviving manuscripts and sixteenth-century printed editions we possess record only a small portion of Renaissance instrumental music. These written works, too, are rarely reliable guides to the actual performance of the pieces since, until very late, written music did not stipulate the embellishments that performers should include. Performers made these enhancements to the written text according to certain commonly accepted conventions, and at the same time they often freely improvised on the text's theme. The increasing number of musical instructional books common in Renaissance Europe points to the growing importance Europeans attached to the proper performance of instrumental music. Many of these books taught their readers how to embellish a musical line as well as how to tune their instruments. The first of such works, Sebastian Virdung's *A Summary of the Musical Sciences in German*, appeared in 1511. Many similar books followed that were of a practical nature and addressed both the professional and amateur musician. Consequently, they were written in the national languages rather than in the Latin preferred by writers of musical theory. The ensemble instruments preferred by the composers of sixteenth-century instrumental music were the viol, the harp, the flute, the shawm (an early double-reeded form of the oboe), the cornet, trumpet, and sackbut (an early version of the trombone). The keyboard instruments of the day consisted of the portable organ or organetto, the pipe organ (which by the sixteenth century had acquired the massive size and fixed position in churches similar to the modern instrument), the clavichord, and the harpsichord. The most popular domestic instrument in use throughout Europe was the lute, an instrument that by the sixteenth century already had more than five centuries of history. In Spain the lute resembled the modern guitar, while elsewhere it was shaped more like a pear.

**PERFORMANCE PRACTICE.** Despite the growth in forms of instrumental music, vocal music continued to be dominant in the written music of sixteenth-century Europe, and its importance influenced many instrumental performance practices. In accompanying the Mass or in the performance of other choral pieces, instruments typically served to double or substitute for voices in the choir. Instrumental and organ interludes were played between the various sections of the Mass or they were used as intermezzi within one of its sections. In addition, a number of musical forms developed that were based around vocal compositional models. In Italy, for instance, composers wrote pieces for ensembles and instruments that were termed *Canzone da sonar* ("songs

to be played”). At first, these pieces imitated the fast-moving chanson vocal style, with its strong rhythms and straightforward counterpoint based around a central theme. Over time, however, composers broke these works into sections and often employed different themes in each of the work’s movements. The sixteenth century, too, saw a great elaboration in instrumental dance music, much of it written for the lute, the keyboard, or small ensembles. Most dance music at the time still tended to be improvised, but printers also released collections of dances. Written and printed forms of dance music grew more complex, and while many pieces retained the rhythms originally associated with a dance, they were not intended to accompany dancers, but to serve as diversions in well-heeled or aristocratic households. Over time, too, composers tended to group these stylized, diversionary dances into suites comprised of several different types of pieces in contrasting meters. In the dance suites slow movements usually alternated with faster ones. Fashions for dances changed greatly over time. Around 1550, the most popular dance throughout Europe was the *allemande*, a dance in double meter that continued to be included in the dance suites written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries long after its popularity had waned. *Pavanes* and *galliards*, too, while popular in the sixteenth century, survived as musical forms long after their popularity had faded in the ballroom. In the Baroque era, for example, the widespread popularity of dance suites extended the life of many Renaissance dances. Although many forms like the pavane or the galliard came to be danced less and less over time, their rhythms and styles of musical composition lived on in instrumental music of that later period.

**VARIATIONS.** By the Renaissance, improvisation already had a long history throughout Western Europe. Improvised variations on tunes, for instance, had a venerable tradition as the accompaniment to social dancing. With the advent of printing, some variations began to be written down. In 1508, Joan Ambrosio Dalza published a series of Italian tunes for which he included variations suitable for accompanying dances on the lute. The custom of crafting variations continued to flourish in the sixteenth century, particularly in Spain, where composers for the lute and keyboard developed the genre of variation to a high level. Of all the sixteenth-century variations that survive, however, the most technically brilliant were those created by a group of English composers known as the Virginalists, who composed variations for the keyboard. The leading figure among the Virginalists was William Byrd (1543–1623), who composed a series



Albrecht Dürer's engraving of a piper. ART RESOURCE.

of keyboard variations notable for their brilliant song-like character. Other Virginalists included John Bull (c. 1562–1628) and Orlando Gibbons (1583–1625). The art of variation that flourished in England at the time did not always place great emphasis on displaying the technical brilliance of the player, but instead composers tried to play ingenuously with the themes they selected from the lute songs and other melodies popular in England at the time.

**CHANGES.** Sixteenth-century achievements in music began with the great masses and sacred motets of Josquin des Prez, and the legacy of achievement continued unbroken throughout the century. In these developments, though, secular music played an increasingly important role. Humanism’s influence on music could be felt in the revival of Greek and Roman theory concerning the art, and in a new attention to song texts. Chromatic and harmonic inventiveness were

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The sixteenth century produced a great number of practical guides to music that were intended for musicians. These treatises were largely practical and without a great deal of theory. The accomplished English musician and composer Thomas Morley wrote one of these works entitled *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music*. In it, he described the various forms of dances and songs that were in use at the time, and advised his readers about the practice of “composing fantasies,” many of which were not written down at the time, but improvised.

The slightest kind of music (if they deserve the name of music) are the *vinate*, or drinking songs, for as I said before there is no kind of vanity whereunto they have not applied some music or other, as they have framed this to be sung in their drinking, but that vice being so rare among the Italians and Spaniards, I rather think that music to have been devised by or for the Germans (who in swarms do flock to the University of Italy) rather than for the Italians themselves.

There is likewise a kind of songs (which I had almost forgotten) called *Giustinianas* and all are written in the Bergamasca language. A wanton and rude kind of music it is and like enough to carry the name of some notable

courtesan of the city of Bergamo, for no man will deny that Giustiniana is the name of a woman.

There be also many other kinds of songs which the Italians make, as *pastorellas* and *passamezos* with a ditty and such like, which it would be both tedious and superfluous to relate unto you in words. Therefore I will leave to speak any more of them and begin to declare unto you those kinds which they make without ditties.

The most principal and chiefest kind of music which is made without a ditty is the fantasy, that is, when a musician taketh a point at his pleasure and wresteth and turneth it as he list, making either much or little of it as shall seem best in his own conceit. In this way more art be shown than in any other music, because the composer is tied to nothing but that he may add, diminish, and alter at his pleasure. And this kind will bear any allowances whatsoever tolerable in other music, except changing the air and leaving the key, which in fantasy may never be suffered. Other things you may use at your pleasure, as bindings with discords, quick motions, slow motions, proportions, and what you list. Likewise this kind of music is with them who practice instruments of parts in greatest use, but for voices it is but seldom used.

**SOURCE:** Thomas Morley, *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* (London, 1597), in *Source Readings in Music History: The Renaissance*. Ed. Oliver Strunk (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965): 86–87.

also another direct result of the revival of knowledge of antique music. In Italy, the great courts, cathedrals, and wealthy merchant families expanded their patronage of musicians and composers, attracting many French and Flemish immigrants during the first half of the century. Eventually Italians trained by the greatest of these figures established Italy as the undisputed center of European musical life, a position that it retained over the next two centuries. Italian forms, like the madrigals, frottole, and balleti, became popular throughout Europe, competing against native musical styles that were also being enriched and creatively reassessed at the same time. Instrumental music, too, became increasingly important during the later Renaissance, as exemplified by the many musical handbooks and written instrumental pieces that survive from the period. The tendency to commit more music to written and printed scores placed a higher emphasis on the technical virtuosity of performers, since a written text could now be compared against the actual performance. In turn, this new tendency to “fix” later Renaissance music in printed and

written scores gave birth to many manuals that treated proper performance techniques and the arts of ornamentation and elaboration. The rising fashion for instrumental music at the time inspired the development of new instruments that often shared the traits of increased volume and tonal range. The innovations of Renaissance instrumental and vocal music, largely centered in Italy, spread quickly to all corners of the continent through travel and the printed page.

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Seventeenth-century virginal. © MICHAEL BOYS/CORBIS.

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## RELIGIOUS MUSIC IN THE LATER RENAISSANCE

**PROTESTANTISM.** If the sixteenth century represented a great age of secular musical achievement and innovation, religious music was to be equally transformed by the enormous religious changes that occurred at the time. The Reformation began with Martin Luther's attack on the sale of indulgences in 1517, and, over the decade that followed, a number of groups with teachings focused on reforming the Catholic Church appeared throughout Northern Europe. While some Reformation figures—notably Ulrich Zwingli in Zürich—aimed to purify the church of music altogether, most retained some place for it in the new Protestant services. The develop-

ing Lutheran Church was the most accepting of medieval musical practices. Throughout Germany many of the territorial churches reformed along the lines of Luther's model kept a great deal of the musical tradition of the medieval church alive. Often new German texts conformed to the old melodies of the Middle Ages, but innovations occurred as well. Luther himself had been a singer, and he composed many vivid new hymns for the Reformation movement that stirred the imagination, deepened the piety, and inspired musical creativity for centuries. A great age in the writing of hymns, or "chorales" in the German Lutheran tradition, resulted from the relatively accepting and fluid attitude of the Lutheran Church toward music. Elsewhere the situation was not so tolerant. The reformed churches that followed the religious ideas of John Calvin and other more extreme reformers permitted music in church life, but often in a new, severe way. The leaders of Reformed congregations usually insisted on a spare and unadorned style

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LUTHER DEFENDS MUSIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Protestant reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546) was an avid music lover and singer. In 1524, he published the first of a series of spiritual songs and motets for the developing Lutheran Church, which he followed with several more editions of chorales or hymns. During the sixteenth century this sacred music grew to a large repertoire. In his foreword to the first of his hymnals, the *Wittenberg Song Book*, he made clear his reasons for his generally tolerant attitude toward music's role in the church.

That it is good, and pleasing to God, for us to sing spiritual songs is, I think, a truth whereof no Christian can be ignorant; since not only the example of the prophets and kings of the Old Testament (who praised God with singing and music, poesy and all kinds of stringed instruments), but also the like practice of all Christendom from the beginning, especially in respect to psalms, is well known to every one: yea, St. Paul doth also appoint the same (I Cor. xiv) and command the Colossians, in the third chapter, to sing spiritual songs and psalms from the heart unto the Lord, that thereby the word of God and Christian doctrine be in every way furthered and practised.

Accordingly, to make a good beginning and to encourage others who can do better, I have myself, with some others, put together a few hymns, in order to bring into full play the blessed Gospel, which by God's grace

hath again risen: that we may boast, as Moses doth in his song, (Exodus xv) that Christ is become our praise and our song, and that, whether we sing or speak, we may not know anything save Christ our Saviour, as St. Paul saith (I Cor. ii).

These songs have been set in four parts, for no other reason than because I wished to provide our young people (who both will and ought be instructed in music and other sciences) with something whereby they might rid themselves of amorous and carnal songs, and in their stead learn something wholesome, and so apply themselves to what is good with pleasure, as becometh the young.

Beside this, I am not of opinion that all sciences should be beaten down and made to cease by the Gospel, as some fanatics pretend; but I would fain see all the arts, and music in particular, used in the service of Him who hath given and created them.

Therefore I entreat every pious Christian to give a favorable reception to these hymns, and to help forward my undertaking, according as God hath given him more or less ability. The world is, alas, not so mindful and diligent to train and teach our poor youth, but that we ought to be forward in promoting the same. God grant us His grace. Amen.

**SOURCE:** Martin Luther, "Luther's First Preface," in *The Hymns of Martin Luther*. Ed. Leonard Woolsey Bacon (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883): xxi.

in musical performance, and they resisted great musical embellishments and elaboration in performance. The chief musical achievements of this tradition lay in the Psalters, collections of tunes that set to music the poetic texts of the Old Testament Psalms. With the penetration of reformed ideas into late sixteenth-century England and the growth of Puritanism, the music of the new Anglican Church grew more restrained as well. In Anglicanism, a musical tradition developed that placed a greater emphasis on music that did not obscure the sacred texts, but which made their meanings obvious to worshippers. Similarly, a new stress on making religious lyrics intelligible to the laity dominated the music of the Roman Catholic Church over the course of the sixteenth century. Composers in the Counter-Reformation Church downplayed the intricate simultaneous vocal lines and complex polyphony that had flourished in the later Middle Ages. This new sensibility, which favored the primacy of the text in the composition of vocal music, was one of the hallmarks of the age for both Catholics and Protestants.

**LUTHERAN CHORALES.** The Lutheran Church's most distinctive musical contribution to sacred music was the chorale, a verse hymn set to a tune. The first Lutheran hymnals appeared in 1524 in Luther's hometown of Wittenberg and also at Nuremberg and Erfurt. Luther himself wrote many of the texts for these early collections, and he and a close composer friend Johann Walther set them to music. The first chorales were to be sung without accompaniment and in unison. Luther's own hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," illustrates some of the musical properties that developed early on in this tradition. Most of the words of the hymn are set to music using a single tone for each syllable, although *melisma*—the singing of a word or syllable on more than one tone—added emphasis to words like "fortress," "sword," and "bulwark" that convey the poem's central ideas. Luther, unlike more severe Protestant Reformers, also approved of polyphony in church music, calling it a "heavenly dance." In the collections upon which he and Walther collaborated, they included a number of

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A CAUTIOUS ACCEPTANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The French Reformer Jean Calvin was considerably more cautious than German or English religious authorities concerning the role that music should play in the Church. He was one of the most important founders of Reformed Christianity, and in his preface to the *Geneva Psalter* of 1543, he explained his position on sacred music. Calvin's reference to Plato's ideas about music in this paragraph betrays his early training as a humanist.

Now among the other things which are proper for recreating man and giving him pleasure, music is either the first, or one of the principal; and it is necessary for us to think that it is a gift of God deputed for that use. Moreover, because of this, we ought to be the more careful not to abuse it, for fear of soiling and contaminating it, converting it our condemnation, where it was dedicated to our profit and use. If there were no other consideration than this alone, it ought indeed to move us to moderate the use of music, to make it serve all honest things; and that it should not give occasion for our giving free rein to dissolution, or making ourselves effeminate in disordered delights, and that it should not become the instrument of lasciviousness nor of any shamelessness. But still there is more: there is scarcely in the world anything which is more able to turn or bend this way and that the morals of men, as Plato prudently considered it. And in fact, we find by experience that it has a sacred and almost incredible power to move hearts in one way or an-

other. Therefore we ought to be even more diligent in regulating it in such a way that it shall be useful to us and in no way pernicious. For this reason the ancient doctors of the Church complain frequently of this, that the people of their times were addicted to dishonest and shameless songs, which not without cause they referred to and called mortal and Satanic poison for corrupting the world. Moreover, in speaking now of music, I understand two parts: namely the letter, or subject and matter; secondly, the song, or the melody. It is true that every bad word (as St. Paul has said) perverts good manner, but when the melody is with it, it pierces the heart much more strongly, and enters into it; in a like manner as through a funnel, the wine is poured into the vessel; so also the venom and the corruption is distilled to the depths of the heart by the melody. What is there now to do? It is to have songs not only honest, but also holy, which will be like spurs to incite us to pray to and praise God, and to meditate upon his works in order to love, fear, honor and glorify him. Moreover, that which St. Augustine has said is true, that no one is able to sing things worthy of God except that which he has received from him. Therefore, when we have looked thoroughly, and searched here and there, we shall not find better songs nor more fitting for the purpose, than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit spoke and made through him.

**SOURCE:** John Calvin, "Epistle to the Reader," in *The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music: 1536–1543*. Trans. Charles Garside, Jr. (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1979): 32–33.

Latin motets written in five-part harmony. Although the chorale texts originally written in Lutheran hymnals had a simple unison tune, by the late sixteenth century harmony had become an essential part of the chorale tradition. In the numerous hymnals published at the time, four-part settings with the melody carried in the highest voice dominated. It is difficult to overestimate the popularity of hymns in the Lutheran Church. Throughout the sixteenth century Lutheran pastors, musicians, and composers combed through the medieval tradition in search of tunes in sacred and secular music that were appropriate for the new chorales. They adopted texts and music from traditional plainsong, composed new texts that they set to the music of popular secular songs, and wrote many hymns from scratch. Luther himself termed these spiritual songs "sermons in sound," and he believed they possessed the power to purge the soul of evil thoughts and to prepare it to commune with God. The force of "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" was so widely

revered throughout the Lutheran confession that it was sometimes even used to exorcize those who were believed to be demonically possessed. In Reformation Germany, a distinctly vibrant culture of chorale singing was one of the results of Luther's and other early Protestant reformers' admiration for the power of music. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Lutheran tradition's major musical figures, from Heinrich Schütz to Johann Sebastian Bach, elaborated and embellished the Reformation chorale tradition, elevating it to the level of high art.

**THE PSALTERS.** The tradition of church music that developed in Switzerland, France, and other regions of Europe where Reformed Protestantism took hold differed greatly from the harmonic complexity and embellished elaboration of the Lutheran tradition. Reformed Christianity, a second wing of the Protestant Reformation, began to emerge first in Switzerland and



along the Rhine River in southwestern Germany around the same time as Luther attacked the traditional church. A key figure in defining this tradition was Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), who banned all music from the churches of Zürich in spite of his background as a humanist, musician, and lover of the arts. Sacred music did not return to the city until the very last years of the sixteenth century. Elsewhere, Reformed Christians did not oppose music so completely, although they limited its use and development far more than Lutherans did. At Geneva in French-speaking Switzerland, John Calvin (1509–1564) helped to codify the Reformed tradition's teachings during his more than twenty years' tenure in the city as its chief minister. He opposed many of the elaborate ceremonial elements of the traditional church, and sought to restrict the use of music by insisting that all texts sung in church have biblical foundations. Thus throughout most of the Reformed churches in Europe, the greatest achievements in sacred music consisted largely of the Psalters, collections of translations from the Old Testament Book of Psalms that were set to music with melodies drawn from medieval plainsong, from popular secular songs, and from some newly written tunes. Although some harmonized versions of the Psalters were published for private use in Reformed homes, these hymns were originally sung in unison in church. Eventually some simple four-part harmonies did make their way into Reformed practice. The first of the many Psalters that appeared in sixteenth-century Reformed Christianity was the Geneva Psalter of 1542, which was followed by several later editions in the city. This first Geneva Psalter made use of fifty of Clément Marot's translations of the Psalms, which had been rendered in an elegant metrical French verse. Marot's translations, although condemned by the theological faculty of the University of Paris, were wildly popular in France at the time. More than 500 editions of his Psalm translations were published in French during the sixteenth century, and their inclusion as the texts in the first Geneva Psalter helps to explain part of the book's popularity and its constant republication. The book also spread to other non-French speaking regions of Europe, including the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and Germany. In some of these places, the popularity of the Geneva Psalter, with its sophisticated metrical renderings, encouraged the replacement of previously existing Psalters. In other places, like England, Scotland, and the New England colonies, the Geneva Psalter inspired new native versions of the Psalms. While the Reformed Psalms never rivaled the Lutheran chorales for musical inventiveness, they were a devotional music that was prized for generations in their own tradition.

**ENGLAND.** England's long, sometimes torturous Reformation greatly affected religious music. Although England's music had inspired the innovations of the Flemish composers of the early fifteenth century, the country was largely a musical backwater by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. At this time musical currents on the island were relatively isolated from the innovations in Renaissance style that were occurring on the continent. This situation began to change slowly under Henry VII (r. 1485–1509), and during the reign of his son Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) English music began to flower. Both Henry VII and Henry VIII were music lovers, and during their reigns, the religious music of the English court acquired greater sophistication. By the mid-sixteenth century a number of native composers were at work in service to the court and the country's major religious institutions. The most important of these was Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585), whose long and varied career illustrates some of the implications that England's "long Reformation" had for the musical scene. Tallis entered into royal service under Henry VIII, the monarch who severed ties to Rome to achieve his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Henry, however, remained a religious conservative, and the pieces that Tallis wrote for the English church at the time were largely traditional in nature. During the reign of Henry's minor son, Edward VI, Protestant forces at court achieved ascendancy over religious practices, and in the king's short reign, they attempted to introduce the severe style of Reformed worship in the English church. As part of this goal, they required Tallis to write service music to be used in tandem with the *Book of Common Prayer*, and he wrote a number of austere, yet beautiful anthems on biblical texts in English translation. In 1553, the premature death of Edward, however, resulted in the re-introduction of Catholic practices throughout the land at the instigation of Queen Mary I. In response, Tallis returned to writing Latin hymns, motets, and masses. The Catholic Restoration proved equally short-lived, with the ascendancy of Elizabeth I in 1558, who soon re-introduced the *Book of Common Prayer* and Protestant reforms throughout the Church of England. Tallis now returned to writing works in English, although under the generally tolerant attitude of Elizabeth, he continued to compose works in Latin. Among the greatest achievements of his maturity in Elizabethan times were two settings of the Old Testament *Lamentations* of Jeremiah. Another of his greatest works was the motet *Spem in alium*, a work that was scored for a remarkable forty voices, each carrying a different melodic line. Both the *Lamentations* and *Spem in alium* are noteworthy for their intricate interplay of vocal lines. They are dramatic tour



Portrait of composer Thomas Tallis. HULTON ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

de forces of Renaissance polyphony, yet at the same time, the composer always managed to find a pleasing balance in his work between the texts that he set to music and the use of counterpoint and harmony. Despite their complexity, they beautifully portray the spirit of the lyrics they convey.

**MUSIC IN ANGLICANISM.** As the life of Tallis suggests, the Reformation in England had major implications for composers of sacred music. A chief aim of Edward VI's introduction of the *Book of Common Prayer* was to introduce the celebration of the liturgy in the native language, and he and his Protestant officialdom desired to eliminate the elaborate traditional music of the Roman Church. In its place, these figures wanted to sponsor a new kind of religious music notable for its textual clarity and simplicity. Catholic restoration brought yet another series of short-lived changes to the sacred music favored in England, although Elizabeth I's ascendancy to the throne in 1558 signaled a new "middle

path." During her long reign she took a generally accepting attitude toward the traditional Latin motets and masses of the medieval past, allowing these services to be celebrated in some of the island's venerable religious institutions. At the same time the composers favored at court—figures like William Byrd, Thomas Tallis, and Orlando Gibbons—created new forms of Anglican service music that survived over the following centuries. Chief among the services of the English *Book of Common Prayer* were the Offices of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Holy Communion, reformed celebrations of two of the medieval Offices and the Mass. Since Holy Communion was celebrated less frequently than it had been in the medieval church, the composition of masses played a less important role in Anglicanism than it did in Roman Catholicism. Choral evensongs and anthems composed for the celebration of Morning Prayer tended to replace the once dominant choral mass. At the same time the custom of composing Great and Short Services

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CATHOLIC REFORMS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Council of Trent, which met in Northern Italy during the years between 1545 and 1563, deliberated on many issues in the church. Although concerns for the reform of church music came to play a major role in Roman Catholicism during the later sixteenth century, the Council only rarely gave mention to music in its canons and decrees. The following text shows, though that the removal of “lascivious” melodies, by which sixteenth-century commentators usually had in mind the popular melodies of the street, was as important for the Catholic church fathers as it was for John Calvin and Martin Luther.

What great care is to be taken, that the sacred and holy sacrifice of the mass be celebrated with all religious service and veneration, each one may easily imagine, who considers, that, in holy writ, he is called accursed, who doth the work of God negligently; and if we must needs confess, that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mystery itself, wherein that life-giving victim, by which we were reconciled to the Father, is daily immolated on the altar by priests, it is also sufficiently clear, that all industry and diligence is to be applied to this end, that it be performed with the greatest possible inward cleanness and purity of heart, and outward show of devotion and piety. Whereas, therefore, either through the wickedness of the times, or through the carelessness and Corruption of men, many things seem already to have crept in, which are alien from the dignity of so great a sacrifice; to the end that the honour and cult due thereunto may, for the glory of God and the edification of the faithful people, be restored; the holy Synod decrees, that the ordinary bishops of places shall take diligent care, and be bound to prohibit and abolish all those things which either covetousness, which

is a serving of idols, or irreverence, which can hardly be separated from impiety; or superstition, which is a false imitation of true piety, may have introduced. And that many things may be comprised in a few words: first, as relates to covetousness:—they shall wholly prohibit all manner of conditions and bargains for recompenses, and whatsoever is given for the celebration of new masses; as also those importunate and illiberal demands, rather than requests, for alms, and other things of the like sort, which are but little removed from a simonical taint, or at all events, from filthy lucre.

In the next place, that irreverence may be avoided, each, in his own diocese, shall forbid that any wandering or unknown priest be allowed to celebrate mass. Furthermore, they shall not allow any one who is publicly and notoriously stained with crime, either to minister at the holy altar, or to assist at the sacred services; nor shall they suffer the holy sacrifice to be celebrated, either by any Seculars or Regulars whatsoever, in private houses; or, at all, out of the church, and those oratories which are dedicated solely to divine worship, and which are to be designated and visited by the said Ordinaries; and not then, unless those who are present shall have first shown, by their decently composed outward appearance, that they are there not in body only, but also in mind and devout affection of heart. They shall also banish from churches all those kinds of music, in which, whether by the organ, or in the singing, there is mixed up any thing lascivious or impure; as also all secular actions; vain and therefore profane conversations, all walking about, noise, and clamour, that so the house of God may be seen to be, and may be called, truly a house of prayer.

**SOURCE:** The Council of Trent, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*. Ed. and Trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848): 159–161.

developed. In a Great Service, composers like William Byrd created elaborate choral responses that relied on counterpoint and all the devices common to the musical life of Renaissance Europe at the time. The more common Short Service, though, made use of far simpler unison responses, which could be sung to simple chordal music, chanted, or merely spoken. In the most elaborate Anglican ceremonies the anthem played a role similar to that of the Catholic motet in the Roman Church as a musical interlude within the service, or as part of a solemn occasion external to the church’s ritual. And as with the Catholic motet, the anthem became one of the most important avenues for composers to demonstrate their technical finesse during the sixteenth century.

**COUNCIL OF TRENT.** Protestants were not alone in making major reforms in church music during the sixteenth century. The criticisms of the elaborate, overly ornate worship of the fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century church struck a chord within the Catholic Church, too. Between 1545 and 1563 the Council of Trent met in several sessions to answer the charges that Protestants had made against the church and to refine church discipline, theology, and religious practices. The church fathers who met in Trent, a city on the northern Italian border with Austria, did not consider religious music in much depth or detail. Instead they insisted that churches should be houses of God in which nothing “impure or lascivious” occurred, and that they wanted to rid the church of

worldly music, including the longstanding practice of composing imitation masses that were based on popular songs. The Council also insisted that the texts of sacred music should be readily intelligible, since the liturgical text was the focus of worship. Beyond these prescriptions, however, the Council gave composers little concrete guidance, although a new more severe style of religious music soon began to flourish in Italy, prompted in part by the spirit of the age and also by the peninsula's bishops and major religious institutions who favored greater clarity and less ornamentation in music. Eventually, this style influenced Catholic music throughout Europe. Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c. 1525–1594) was the chief exponent of this new, more serious style. He had been born in Palestrina, a small town near Rome, and received his musical education in the church's capital. He began to compose early, publishing his first masses when he was only nineteen. His musical idiom fit the developing contours of the Counter-Reformation in the city, and he held a number of important posts in Rome as choirmaster. As part of Palestrina's duties, he was also responsible for revising the church's official chants, a task that he did not complete during his lifetime because of its enormous complexity. According to the directives given to him by Pope Gregory XIII, he was expected to purge the church's chants of "barbarisms" and "superfluities" so that the teachings of the Mass and of the other Christian rituals might stand out in greater relief. The composer also wrote more than 100 masses and almost 250 motets. A master of the developing madrigal style, he composed about 50 of these works based on religious themes. Palestrina's music brilliantly fit with the serious tone of Catholic reform, and although he relied on polyphony, his compositions gave greater primacy to the text. To achieve this union between music and sacred message, Palestrina generally reduced the number of voice parts, usually only writing for four voices, rather than the five, six, or even more parts that filled the works of his contemporaries. To this economy of harmony, Palestrina also brought gentle rhythmic lines that enhanced the music's message.

**LASSO.** While Palestrina's most masterful achievements were in his settings of the Mass, Orlando di Lasso (1532–1594), a composer in the Franco-Flemish tradition, brought his considerable talents to bear on the perfecting of the motet to fit within the changed circumstances of Counter-Reformation taste. Though the composer spent his youth publishing books of madrigals, chansons, and motets, he eventually concentrated in his later years solely on the production of sa-



Portrait of Italian composer Palestrina. © MICHAEL NICHOLSON/CORBIS.

cred motets, leaving behind 500 of these works at his death. Like Palestrina, his later works (published by his sons a decade after his death), reveal a dynamic association between textual rhetoric and musical interpretation. Yet Lasso's temperamental and tempestuous nature is reflected in his music, which varies freely, includes rich harmonies and intricate vocal lines, and is governed by sudden changes in tempo, rhythm, and harmony. Only rarely did Lasso make use of the contemporary fashion for chromatic scales, but when he did, he always wedded its use to the piece's words. Lasso was one of the first composers to establish his reputation largely through musical printing, gaining a reputation during his years in Italy in the 1540s and 1550s for his numerous published musical pieces. From 1556 onward, he lived in the relative isolation of Munich, the capital of the Duchy of Bavaria. Here he had access to the considerable musical establishment and resources amassed by the Bavarian dukes over previous decades. Even in this relative backwater, Lasso continued to publish his pieces, which were enthusiastically studied by composers



Portrait of composer Orlando di Lasso. MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.

throughout Europe and performed by ensembles soon after they came into print. From this vantage point, they had an enormous influence on sacred musical conventions, not only in Catholic Europe but in some Protestant centers as well.

**IMPLICATIONS.** The dynamic events of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations left their imprint on the sacred music of sixteenth-century Europe. The most radical centers of Protestantism removed music altogether from the church. Other branches of Protestantism—particularly the Genevan Reformed tradition—allowed music to flourish only within rigid confines. In Lutheranism and Anglicanism, a greater tolerance, even approval, for sacred music inspired new forms like the chorale and the anthem. A key feature shared by both Protestant and counter-reforming Catholic composers, however, was a new emphasis on the importance of texts and on fashioning a musical vocabulary to convey religious meaning in a way that was forceful and clearly intelligible to listeners.

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## MUSIC THEORY IN THE RENAISSANCE

**SCIENCE.** For most of the Renaissance, music was also considered a branch of the sciences. From the early medieval period onward music had been designated as one of the four mathematical branches of the quadrivium, the curriculum used by secondary schools as a prerequisite for entrance into the university. The issues that had been identified by the early medieval philosopher Boethius in his treatise, *Fundamentals of Music*, continued in the early Renaissance to dominate questions concerning music as a science. In the *Fundamentals*, written around 500 C.E., Boethius concentrated on the pitches and musical intervals, and he treated knowledge of the mathematical proportions in music as a way to attain virtue. His work transmitted some ancient musical theory to the Middle Ages, and it did so relying, in particular, on the ideas of Pythagoras. Pythagoras had treated the proportions of musical scales as revealing the entire order that underlay the human soul as well as the physical universe. Thus the study of music, as championed by Boethius's treatise, laid great stress on identifying the underlying rationale behind Creation. In 1500 Boethius' treatise was still the essential starting point for any student hoping to undertake the study of music as a part of the quadrivium, although the body of theoretical texts written from the vantage point of music as a science had grown enormously during the fifteenth century.

**REVIVAL OF ANTIQUITY.** This great flowering of theory had its inspiration in the efforts of humanists working mostly in Italy, who scoured European monastic libraries in search of ancient musical texts and imported many of these works from the Byzantine Empire, the descendant of ancient Rome in the Eastern Mediterranean that fell to the Turks in 1453. Some of the many musical texts that came to be known in new Latin translations were those of Ptolemy, Euclid, Aristides Quintilianus, Aristotle, and Plato. While many theorists in the fifteenth century tried to remain faithful to the Pythagorean tradition, the sheer variety of ideas about music that circulated at the time prompted reassessment. The chief debates among musical theorists continued to

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MUSIC OF THE SPHERES**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1477, Johannes Tinctoris, a Flemish music theorist, published his *Book on the Art of Counterpoint*, a mostly technical manual that treated harmony and polyphony. In his foreword to the work, however, Tinctoris dressed up his ideas by considering the arguments for and against the music of the spheres. This belief, held by some in the Renaissance from ancient inspiration, taught that there was a relationship between the sounds the heavenly bodies made as they moved through heaven and the harmonies that existed on earth. The most dedicated of this camp believed that music should be studied for the changes that it might accomplish on earth and in the stars. Tinctoris discounts such a position and instead sides with Aristotle, who insisted that heavenly bodies made no sound as they moved through space.

Now, therefore, among other things, I have decided to write out at length, for the glory and honor of His Eternal Majesty, to whom by this counterpoint, as is ordered in the Psalm, is made a joyful and fitting praise, and for the benefit of all students of this noble art, those few things I have learned from careful study about the art of counterpoint, which is brought about through consonances that, according to Boetius, rule all the delight of music.

Before I explain this, I cannot pass over in silence the many philosophers such as Plato, Pythagoras and their successors, Cicero, Macrobius, Boetius, and our own Isidore, who believe that the spheres of the stars revolve under the rules of harmonic modulation, that is, by the concord of different consonances.

But although, as Boetius says, some assert that Saturn is moved with the deepest sound and, taking the remaining planets in proper order, the moon with the highest, while others, however, conversely attribute the deepest sound to the moon and the highest to the stars in their movement, I adhere to neither position. On the contrary, I unshakeably agree with Aristotle and his commentator, together with our more recent philosophers, who most clearly prove that there is neither real nor potential sound in the heavens. For this reason I can never be persuaded that musical consonances, which cannot be produced without sound, are made by the motion of heavenly bodies.

Concords of sounds and melodies, therefore, from whose sweetness, as Lactantius says, the pleasure of the ears is derived, are brought about, not by heavenly bodies, but by earthly instruments with the cooperation of nature. To these concords, also, the older musicians, such as Plato, Pythagoras, Nichomachus, Aristoxenus, Philolaus, Archytas, Ptolemy and many others, even including Boetius, most assiduously applied themselves, but how they were accustomed to arrange and put them together is only slightly understood at our time. And, if I may refer to what I have heard and seen, I have held in my hands at one time or another many old songs of unknown authorship which are called *apocrypha* that are so inept and stupidly composed that they offended our ears rather than pleased them.

**SOURCE:** Johannes Tinctoris, *The Art of Counterpoint* (1477). Trans. Albert Seay (n.p.: American Musicological Society, 1961): 13–14.

revolve around issues of pitch and tuning, harmony, and how these related to the human mind, the body, and the physical universe. But ancient philosophers like Plato had also taught that the musical forms, particularly the various modes, produced moral effects in their listeners. Renaissance musical theoreticians, then, became fascinated with stories from ancient literature that warned about and celebrated music's effects on the individual. They frequently quoted a legend about Pythagoras, who had allegedly calmed a violent youth by changing a piper's tune, or Alexander the Great who had been stirred to battle by a song written in the Phrygian mode. In trying to understand the power of ancient music, Renaissance theorists soon realized that an insufficient understanding of the pitches and tuning systems of ancient music hampered their efforts. They recognized that medieval musical theory had merely associated the eight

modes that had flourished in medieval plainsong—the Dorian, Phrygian, and so forth—with the similarly named modes of the ancient world. Johannes Gallicus (1415–1473), who worked in tandem with humanists in the city of Mantua, was the first to discover that a vast difference separated the Greek systems of music from medieval plainsong. His work inspired a number of subsequent musical theorists to try to recover a firmer understanding of the various scales, modes, and tuning systems that underlay ancient music.

**MUSICAL AESTHETICS.** Until 1550 much of the musical theory that flourished as a result of these questions was highly technical and mathematical in nature. The scholarly interest in rediscovering the precise pitch relationships or intervals that had existed in ancient music had little impact on musical practice. Most of these

figures pursued the theory that the mathematical study of pitch provided a way to illuminate the universal harmonies they believed inspired music's beauty as well as its power to stir the senses and perfect the soul. But while frequently arid and theoretical, the ferment this scholarship produced can be seen in the debate that occurred between two of the most distinguished theoreticians of the mid-sixteenth century: Gioseffe Zarlino (1517–1590) and Vincenzo Galilei (1530–1590).

**ZARLINO CONTROVERSY.** Zarlino had been trained by the most distinguished musician in early sixteenth-century Italy: the Flemish composer Adrian Willaert, who was at the time choirmaster of St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice. Zarlino himself succeeded his teacher in that position. In his work, *The Art of Counterpoint* (1558), Zarlino credited Willaert with reintroducing a sophisticated style of musical composition inspired by the ancients, and he rejected the music of the Middle Ages as barbaric. Like those who had come before him, Zarlino associated the relationship of pitches with numerical ratios, and he accepted as a given that the ancients had understood the underlying mathematical nature of music. Although his *Art of Counterpoint* survived as a practical manual on the techniques of counterpoint that composers used well into the seventeenth century, his theoretical perspectives on ancient music were soon to be challenged by one of his most prominent students, Vincenzo Galilei. A patrician, Galilei had studied with Zarlino in Venice during the 1560s, and he continued to nourish his interest in ancient music throughout the rest of his life. Galilei's correspondence with another scholar, Girolamo Mei, undermined his faith in Zarlino's conclusions about ancient music. Mei showed Galilei that Greek music had been single-toned or monophonic rather than polyphonic, and thus it could not serve as a ready guide for modern harmony or counterpoint, the original aim of Zarlino's *The Art of Counterpoint*. As he combed through the historical record, Mei found no evidence that polyphony and counterpoint had existed in European music before the early fifteenth century. The Greeks, Mei showed, had actively rejected polyphonic music because they believed it diluted the emotional effects of a piece to allow several different melodies and pitches to play at the same time. In 1581, Galilei published his *Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music*, a work in which he publicized many of Mei's historical insights and thus threw into question the suitability of ancient theory in the practice of contemporary music. Galilei also examined the ways in which the instruments of his time were tuned, and he showed that none of the tuning systems then in use fol-

lowed the numerical relationships advocated in the works of the Greeks. The specific tuning of any instruments, he argued, was subjected not to an underlying set of natural and mathematical laws but to the ear itself, which became used to hearing tones in a certain way. According to Galilei, scales, polyphony, the modes, and tuning systems were all mediated by culture and thus had no relationship to universal or cosmic harmonies. His work thus opened up the possibility of viewing the final arbiter of "good" and "bad" music according to mere considerations of taste, a strikingly relativistic notion among the musical theorists of the day. At the same time Galilei did not question that moderns might learn from the ancients, for he included a plea in his work for music that was monodic, that is, which consisted of a single melodic line accompanied by a simple orchestration.

**RECITATIVE.** While the debate raged between supporters of Zarlino and Galilei, Galilei played an important role in attempts to revive an historically accurate style of Greek performance. Since the early 1570s, the theorist had been involved in a circle of music connoisseurs and scholars that met in the home of his patron, Vincenzo Bardi in Florence. This group, which later became known as the *camerata* ("circle"), examined many topics in literature, science, and the arts. Out of this coterie developed the first attempts to fashion recitative. At its origins, recitative was intended to be a naturally expressive vocal line with changes in pitch, rhythm, and tempo that mirrored the text being recited. Galilei himself experimented with recitative, setting to monodic lines selections from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. His example inspired the poet Ottavio Rinuccini and the composer Jacopo Peri, who wrote the earliest forms of opera in the final years of the sixteenth century.

**IMPLICATIONS.** Growing out of the tradition of the quadrivium, the musical science of the Renaissance encompassed the study of the harmonies, intervals, and proportions of music as a branch of the mathematical sciences. Little change was evident in the musical theory produced in Europe until the later fifteenth century, when humanist-trained scholars began to realize that many previously accepted ideas about ancient music were inaccurate. At this time they ransacked libraries in search of ancient musical texts and imported Greek works from Byzantium, translating these works into Latin, and somewhat later into Italian. From this vantage point, they were now more widely read and studied. Questions continued, though, about the precise harmonic intervals and pitches that had governed ancient music, as many Renaissance theorists believed that these might provide some clues to the relationships that underpinned all Cre-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ON COMPOSING AND SINGING WELL**

**INTRODUCTION:** Gioseffe Zarlino (1517–1590) was the most important musical theorist in Europe before the seventeenth century. In his works he decried the music of the Middle Ages as barbaric and instead insisted that his own period, guided by the ancients, had been successful in recovering true musical practices. For Zarlino, music was comparable to natural law, and aesthetic tastes were to be subjected to certain universal laws that reigned in the cosmos. In the following excerpt he uses such logic to recommend techniques to singers, reminding them that they are to execute the demands and notes set down by the composer.

If music is the science of singing well or of forming good melody ... as St. Augustine defines it, and aims at nothing else, how can we include a composition that contains such errors and is so disordered as to be unsupportable to the eye, not to mention the ear, among those that serve this end? ...

The composer will seek, therefore, to make his parts easily singable and formed of beautiful, graceful, and elegant movements. Then his listeners will be delighted with them rather than offended.

Matters for the singer to observe are these: First of all he must aim diligently to perform what the composer has written. He must not be like those who, wishing to be thought worthier and wiser than their colleagues, indulge in certain divisions ... that are so savage and so in-

appropriate that they not only annoy the hearer but are ridden with thousands of errors, such as many dissonances, consecutive unisons, octaves, fifths, and other similar progressions absolutely intolerable in composition. Then there are singers who substitute higher or lower tones for those intended by the composer, singing for instance a whole tone instead of a semitone, or vice versa, leading to countless errors as well as offense to the ear. Singers should aim to render faithfully what is written or express the composer's intent, intoning the correct steps in the right places. They should seek to adjust to the consonances and to sing in accord with the nature of the words of the composition; happy words will be sung happily and at a lively pace whereas sad texts call for the opposite. Above all, in order that the words may be understood, they should take care not to fall into the common error of changing the vowel sounds, singing a in place of e, i in place of o, or u in place of one of these; they should form each vowel in accord with its true pronunciation. It is truly reprehensible and shameful for certain oafs in choirs and public chapels as well as in private chambers to corrupt the words when they should be rendering them clearly, easily, and accurately. For example, if we hear singers shrieking certain songs—I cannot call it singing—with such crude tones and grotesque gestures that they appear to be apes ... are we not compelled to laugh? Or more truthfully who would not become enraged upon hearing such horribly, ugly counterfeits?

**SOURCE:** Gioseffe Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint*. Trans. G. Marco and C. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968): 110–111.

ation and which governed music's relationships to the human body, mind, and spirit. At the same time a definite shift in emphasis is evident in many of the works of musical theory published in the later sixteenth century. In the debate between Gioseffe Zarlino and Vincenzo Galilei, aesthetic questions, rather than mathematical issues, dominated the discussion. In these disputes Galilei promoted the notion that ancient music's power had resided in simple melodic lines, lines that emphasized the text and that possessed the power to move people's hearts and emotions, rather than in mathematical harmonies. He and other thinkers promoted a new art, the recitative, that gave greater weight to words than to harmony, and they attacked many of the polyphonic forms like the madrigal that were then in use. Galilei's own work, however, had set up the human ear as the final arbiter of taste in music, and thus supporters of the madrigal and other polyphonic forms popular at the time

were able to counter that these genres were capable of stirring the emotions and of ennobling their listeners. Polyphony did not die out as a result of the innovations of later Renaissance theorists like Galilei and Mei, but recitative and other monodic forms were to be integrated into the early Baroque opera and other musical forms and consequently to enrich the musical choices available to later European composers.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

*in Music*

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### WILLIAM BYRD

c. 1540–1623

*Composer*

**TRAINING.** Like many others who composed music during the Renaissance, William Byrd probably began his training as a chorister in the Royal Chapel in London. At the time, Thomas Tallis was the most important English composer in England, and Byrd studied with him. During 1563, Byrd became organist and choirmaster at the Cathedral of Lincoln. He developed a successful career in Lincoln before being recalled to London to serve as organist and singer in the Chapel Royal. He shared the position of organist with Tallis and together both men received a royal patent (in effect, a monopoly) to publish all music in England for a period of 21 years. Elizabeth I regularly granted such patents to revered members of the court, allowing them to reap generous financial benefits for service to the crown. Byrd thanked the queen with the composition of his *Sacred Songs*, a work he dedicated to Elizabeth in 1575. During the 1570s and 1580s Byrd regularly composed service music for the new Anglican rite, although his family's Catholic background caused them to be targeted as recusants—those who celebrate Catholic rituals in secret. Sometime during the early 1590s, Byrd went into an early retirement in Essex, where he continued to compose music. He completed three masses, which he published between 1592 and 1595, and two other books of graduals (responses for the Mass) appeared in 1605 and 1607. A few years later Byrd published a collection of his songs. During the long period of his retirement he also instructed students, including the English composers Thomas Morley, Thomas Tomkins, and John Bull.

**COMPOSITIONS.** Besides his church music Byrd composed in almost every genre popular in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. In his Latin church works, Byrd became the first Englishman to master the continental style of contrapuntal motet. In these, he developed the continental style of imitation—in which the voices mirrored each other—to a high point of finesse. At the same time his music granted imaginative and often emotional intensity to the text. Many of his Latin compositions were destined to be performed in

private, rather than public, since England as a Protestant country was moving more and more to service music written in the English language. The book of Graduals that he wrote in the early seventeenth century was intended, not just for the Anglican service, but also for the Catholic Mass, making Byrd the last major composer in England to write for the Roman rite. These liturgical works have long been judged to be the finest sacred music written by an English composer. Beyond his output of music intended for church ritual, much of which had to be performed secretly in the houses of great Catholic families in England, Byrd wrote a large number of sacred and secular songs. He scored these for vocal parts, with the melody in the upper line. These works could also be performed by solo voice together with lute accompaniment. It was this versatility that contributed to the success of Byrd's music in the printed music market of the day. Their adaptability, moreover, helped to sustain their popularity, and many of Byrd's songs have been performed in England over the centuries, even to the present day. In the area of keyboard works, the composer was also a master. Well known as a virtuoso on the organ, Byrd also printed some of his keyboard pieces, and these compositions show a great development of the musical form of variation. He also relied on contrapuntal invention and his typically brilliant conception to give structure to his work.

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### GUILLAUME DUFAY

c. 1397–1474

*Singer*

*Composer*

**UPBRINGING.** Born near Brussels, Dufay was educated in the school of the Cathedral of Cambrai in what is now modern Belgium. He completed his education around 1414, took holy orders, and set off for the Council of Constance, which was then meeting in the north of Switzerland. After 1420, Dufay became a member of the Malatesta court, which ruled the cities of Pesaro and Rimini in Italy. Several compositions survive from these early years of his career. Like many fifteenth-century Burgundian musicians and composers, Dufay spent most of his life moving from court to court, accepting

short stints of patronage and working in important choirs. By the mid-1420s he was in León in France, but he soon returned to Italy. In this period he first served a cardinal at Bologna, then moved on to become a member of the papal choir. Later he became a member of the Duke of Savoy's household, the head of an important state on the northwestern border of Italy, before joining the papal household once again. Between 1435 and 1437, Dufay spent most of his time in Bologna and Florence, where he continued to serve the pope. In this period he wrote his famous mass, *Nuper rosarum flores*, a work commissioned for the dedication of the dome of the Cathedral of Florence. Gianozzo Manetti, a Florentine humanist, attended this celebration, and later described the piece as "filled with such choruses of harmony and such a concert of diverse instruments that it seemed ... as though the symphonies and songs of the angels and of divine paradise had been sent from Heaven to whisper in our ears an unbelievable celestial sweetness." Dufay returned to work for the Duke of Savoy for a short time in the late 1430s, and again for a longer six-year stay during the 1450s. But he spent most of his middle and older years at Cambrai, near the place of his birth.

**IMPORTANCE.** Dufay's career coincided with the rise of the Burgundian musical style throughout Europe, and he achieved recognition during his life as one of the greatest of its composers. Like other Burgundian composers, he made use of the innovations that had recently been imported into Northern Europe from England. From John Dunstaple and other Englishmen, the composers active in France and the Netherlands during the fifteenth century adopted more complex rhythms and the use of the closer harmonies of the *fauxbourdon*. *Fauxbourdon* made use of intervals of thirds and sixths to set the harmony against a plainsong tune that continued to reside in the tenor voice. Eventually, the musical writing that flourished as a result of the popularity of the *fauxbourdon* tended to become more homophonic, that is, it sounded more like a melody with harmonic accompaniment. In addition, the works of composers like Dufay helped to win acceptance for the use of the third and the sixth, intervals that until this time had often been avoided as dissonances. Dufay was one of the fifteenth-century figures who tamed these intervals, helping to train the Western ear so that these sounds appeared more consonant than previously. As a composer he wrote a wide variety of music, including masses, magnificats, chansons, and motets, much of which survives in important manuscript collections throughout Europe.

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## JOSQUIN DES PREZ

c. 1450–1521

*Composer*  
*Musician*

**CONFUSION.** Little is known about many key details of Josquin des Prez's life, the indisputable genius of High Renaissance musical composition. It had long been thought, for example, that he had been born sometime around 1440, although research conducted in recent years has thrown his date of birth into grave doubt. The composer's family name was actually Lebloitte, and he was born in Northern France, where he served as a choirboy in Saint-Quentin. Part of the confusion about Josquin's early career has arisen from the fact that he shared the name "des Prez"—the name he adopted in adulthood—with another musician active in Italy who was a decade or two older. A date of birth of around 1450 for Josquin des Prez now seems likely, because his first positions seem to have been in the employ of the Sforza dukes of Milan in the mid-1470s.

**CAREER.** While the early circumstances of this composer's life are still shrouded in some mystery, Josquin's quick rise to prominence allows scholars to track his career as it progressed. After leaving the court of Milan, he entered into the service of King René of Anjou, who maintained a residence at Aix-ex-Provence near Marseilles in southern France. By 1486, he had resumed his affiliation with the Sforza, having become a member of the Sforza Cardinal Ascanio's household. In these years he spent most of his time in Rome, where he was occasionally associated with the pope's chapel. In 1501, he traveled to France, where he likely worked in the king's court for a few years before returning to Italy to take a position in the court of the dukes of Ferrara. For his services Josquin was offered an enormous salary, although he only stayed in Ferrara for a little over a year. In 1504, Josquin des Prez left Italy, this time for his ancestral homeland in Northern France, where he served as an official in the Cathedral of Notre Dame at Condé-sur-L'Escaut until his death in 1521.

**MUSIC.** Josquin des Prez's compositional output was considerable and included about eighteen masses, fifty motets, and some seventy secular pieces. Many other

works from the time have long been attributed to him, although ongoing research is still separating spurious compositions from those actually from Josquin's hand. His chief importance lay in his ability to fashion new techniques and styles that heightened the understanding of his music's text. Although he still continued to be affected by the French and Flemish musical traditions of the fifteenth century, Josquin des Prez simplified his work's musical phrases, bringing his compositions into alignment with the humanist demands for a music that expressed ideas and words and did not just impress the ear with complex harmonies. While he made use of canons and cantus firmus melodies in his masses, Josquin also expanded the boundaries of these compositional techniques by freely varying and re-interpreting the melodies that were repeated in these compositions. Josquin des Prez was known for being a willful individualist, and was sometimes compared to Michelangelo in this regard. His career was similar to the great sculptor and painter in that he established a standard in music that those who came after him tried to emulate and surpass. His works continued to be widely admired in the first half of the sixteenth century. For many years they were played at the court of the Habsburg emperor Charles V. Notably, the Protestant reformer Martin Luther dubbed Josquin des Prez the "master of the notes," and he stressed the composer's ability to bring all the compositional devices to bear in his works so that a single artistic unity and a deeper understanding of the text developed after one listened to them.

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## ORLANDO DI LASSO

c. 1530–1594

*Composer*

**EARLY LIFE.** The Flemish composer Orlando di Lasso was born in Mons in what is today modern Belgium, where he received his early musical training and served as a choirboy. Lasso's beautiful voice resulted in him being kidnapped on three occasions by wealthy families desiring his services; after the third incident, his parents finally relented and allowed him to stay in the household of the viceroy of Sicily. As part of the viceroy's household he traveled to Palermo, and over the next ten

years, he also spent time in Milan, Rome, and Naples. His years in Italy were critical for his later development as a composer, and while there, he adopted the Italian name that he continued to use for the rest of his life. Following the death of his parents in 1554, he took a position in Antwerp, but several years later became a chorister in the chapel of Albert V, duke of Bavaria. He remained in the duke's household at Munich for the rest of his life. Although Munich was a small and rather provincial capital at the time, Bavaria was a large and important state, a center of the Counter-Reformation in Northern Europe. In his Munich years, Lasso published a number of his compositions, and he became, in fact, the first composer in European history to establish his reputation primarily on the basis of his printed work. In the last forty years of his life Lasso printed more than 600 works, and usually a new composition appeared in the press about once each month. He favored musical printing houses in France, Italy, and the Netherlands, as well as those in Germany.

**WORKS.** Lasso wrote more than 1,000 works and he was a master of most of the musical forms of the period. He produced a number of excellent compositions in all genres except instrumental music. His Latin motets form his largest group of compositions, totaling more than 500. He also composed almost sixty masses and about 100 magnificats. Most of the motets have sacred themes, and were likely performed within church rituals, at public ceremonies, or for the private devotions of the duke of Bavaria and his family. A few celebrate secular events, while an even smaller number are humorous. Lasso was also a writer of madrigals based on Italian texts and chansons that set some of the finest sixteenth-century French poetry to music. Finally, he wrote German lieder as well.

**IMPORTANCE.** Lasso was widely admired in his own day. Referred to as the "prince of music" or "the divine Orlando," he earned praise for his ability to bring the subject of his chosen texts to life through his music. Like other sixteenth-century composers, he relied on changes in melody, harmony, and rhythm to suggest essential elements of the text, and sometime subtle musical innuendos lie hidden in his works. A consummate technician, Lasso did not care for many of the musical innovations of his own period. The chromatic style so popular among writers of Italian madrigals as a bow to the music of Antiquity only rarely is employed in his works. By the time of his death, his musical language had been superseded by other developments, but Lasso's works continued to be prized in Germany well into the seventeenth century.

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**CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI**

1567–1643

*Composer*

**LONGEVITY.** In a long and illustrious career Claudio Monteverdi established himself as one of the great musical geniuses of the Western tradition. His music gave expression to late Renaissance tastes while eventually helping to establish the characteristics of early Baroque style. Monteverdi's career occurred at a pivotal point in the history of Western music, as a melodic line supported against an instrumental background replaced the relatively equal polyphonic lines and harmonies of the sixteenth-century madrigal. Monteverdi helped to establish this style in a career that lasted more than sixty years.

**MADRIGALS.** Until the early seventeenth century Monteverdi's most important compositional work was in the madrigal form, then popular as a kind of vocal chamber music in elite societies throughout Italy. These were written for five voices, with complex interwoven lines, as was the popular custom of the day. In the years following 1600, though, Monteverdi also experimented with some of the most innovative forms to develop in the later Renaissance. One of these was the opera, and Monteverdi's earliest contributions to this genre are performed to this day. These include his *Orfeo* written in 1607, which gave expression to the then contemporary desire to recreate the music of ancient Greece. The early opera had grown out of the discussions and experiments of the Florentine camerata, which under the influence of such theorists as Girolamo Mei and Vincenzo Galilei, had begun to piece together scattered evidence of the kinds of music that had been used in Greek tragedy. The most fervent supporters of this revival argued that ancient Greek tragedy had been completely sung in monodic or single-toned expressive lines. The first attempts to recreate this form of drama had occurred in the city of Florence in the final years of the sixteenth century, and had been supported by the wealthy merchant and patrician families of the city as well as members of the Medici dynasty. These early entries had relied almost solely on recitative, a new form of monody that imitated, yet heightened the patterns

of human speech. Monteverdi patterned his *Orfeo* along the lines of what had been developed in Florence, but beyond making use of the new recitative, he also introduced solo airs, duets, and madrigal-like portions into the action of the opera. In this way he joined many of the contrapuntal techniques that had flourished in the late Renaissance to the emerging fashion for a monodic line.

**IMPORTANCE.** Even in his own day Monteverdi was credited with founding a "modern" style in music, a position within the history of the Western repertory that he has retained even to the present day. Besides his important innovations in opera and the madrigal, he served from 1613 until his death as choirmaster at St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice. From this, the most important musical position in Italy, he also influenced contemporary tastes in sacred music. At the same time, late Renaissance musical theorists attacked his work for its disregard of the craftsman-like techniques and traditions of counterpoint. They criticized his new experiments with melodies that were supported against a backdrop of choral and instrumental harmonies. Certainly, Monteverdi rebelled against many of the traditions that governed Renaissance music, but at the same time he never completely abandoned the style of his youth. While long judged one of the founders of the early Baroque style, he continues to be classified by most scholars as a "late Renaissance" composer. In a long and distinguished career the experiments he made in madrigal form, opera, and sacred music continued to inspire subsequent generations.

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**GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA**

1525–1594

*Composer**Musician*

**TRAINING AND LIFE.** The composer Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina was born in the small village of Palestrina outside Rome and by the 1530s he was serving as a choirboy in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. By 1551 he had risen to the rank of the "master of the choirboys" and somewhat later Pope Julius III appointed him a member of the Capella Giulia at St.

Peter's. Unlike the Sistine Chapel, the Capella Giulia's ranks of choristers were drawn from Italians and not from the numerous professional Flemish musicians who flourished in Italy at the time. Julius III had hired Palestrina without the customary vote of the other members of the choir, and his appointment remained controversial. Soon after his taking on the duties of a papal chorister, Palestrina released his first printed book of masses. This was the first Italian collection of masses to be dedicated to a reigning pope, and it was a sign of the rising status of native Italian musicians in Rome. In 1555, Palestrina lost his position after Paul IV cleared the Capella Giulia's choir of all married choristers. During the following years Palestrina found employment as master of choirs at a number of Rome's most important religious institutions, and by 1565 he had regular commissions to write music for the papal chapel, eventually becoming its official composer. In 1571 he returned to the Capella Giulia at St. Peter's and spent the rest of his life as choirmaster. When his wife died in 1580, Palestrina considered for a time entering the priesthood, although he decided to remarry instead. The composer died on 2 February 1594, and was buried at St. Peter's; his funeral was an important occasion attended by all of Rome's musicians and many dignitaries, too.

**COMPOSITIONS.** Although many of Palestrina's works were published while he was still alive, his son also supervised the printing of a number of works following the composer's death. Palestrina wrote an enormous amount of music for the Catholic Mass, and these compositions expressed the developing religious sensibilities of the Counter-Reformation. He produced more than 100 masses and about 250 motets. In addition, hymns, Magnificats, offertories, litanies, and lamentations make up his opus. While his religious works gave expression to the severe Catholic piety of the age, he was perhaps more revered for his madrigals, publication of which began in 1555. Later in life when Palestrina's own religious convictions had grown more serious, he was embarrassed by these early sensual creations. Besides his work as a composer, he was also an influential trainer of musicians and composers. While important on the late sixteenth-century musical scene, he attained an almost mythic status after his death. By the seventeenth century a legend credited Palestrina with "saving" music in the church during the reign of the severe pope Marcellus II (r. 1555). Palestrina's *Pope Marcellus Mass* was said to have so pleased the short-reigning pope that he gave up his plans to ban music in the church. More recent research, though, has dated this mass to around 1562, rather than

1555, thus undermining the legend of Palestrina's rescue of music.

**IMPORTANCE.** In 1577, Pope Gregory XIII chose Palestrina and his colleague Annibale Zoila to sift through the church's bewildering variety of chants and responses. Palestrina was expected to reform the use of liturgical music along the lines necessitated by recent reforms in the Mass. The composer did not complete this enormous project before his death, although the work that he began helped to define the project as it was carried to fruition in the seventeenth century. At this time, too, Palestrina had an important role. Seventeenth-century composers recommended study of Palestrina's works to their students, who were interested in mastering the techniques of Renaissance counterpoint. His reputation as an authority on contrapuntal technique survived even into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a result Palestrina was one of the first Renaissance composers to be granted significant modern scholarly attention.

#### SOURCES

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES in Music

- Boethius, *The Fundamentals of Music* (500 C.E.)—This early medieval musical theory textbook remained indispensable to those who studied music as a branch of the mathematical sciences in the Renaissance. Boethius transmitted the ancient Pythagorean notion that proportionate intervals or musical harmonies underlay Creation and that music was thus a source for understanding natural laws.
- Raffaele Brandolini, *On Music and Poetry* (1513)—This important humanist treatise opened up the possibility for music to be understood as a kin to poetry, rather than as a branch of mathematics.
- Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music* (1581)—This pathbreaking work argued that music's power derived, not from its mathematical relationship, but from the ear as it was trained to accept certain sounds and sensations. Galilei also promoted the

monodic (single-lined) music of Greek Antiquity as the style that was most capable of stirring the emotions.

Thomas Morley, *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* (1597)—One of many sixteenth-century guidebooks, this work informed its readers about the various musical forms, tuning systems, and arts of embellishment necessary to succeed as a musician at the time.

Gioseffo Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint* (1558)—This work was both a theoretical and practical guide to the art of writing counterpoint (two or more musical lines heard simultaneously). Zarlino's ideas about ancient polyphony were subsequently disproved, but his influence on later students of musical composition continued to be strong even in the seventeenth century.

chapter six

PHILOSOPHY

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	212	<i>A Scholastic Deliberates Upon Religion as Art</i> (excerpt from a sermon by Cusa) . . . . .	223
OVERVIEW . . . . .	214	<i>A Humanist Decides How to Achieve Virtue</i> (passage from a letter by Petrarch concerning fame and virtue). . . . .	227
TOPICS		<i>Liberal Education</i> (Vergerio's treatise arguing for liberal education) . . . . .	228
Scholasticism in the Later Middle Ages . . . . .	216	<i>On the Will</i> (excerpt from Valla's <i>Dialogue</i> <i>on Free Will</i> ) . . . . .	230
Humanism in the Early Renaissance . . . . .	225	<i>The Human Mind</i> (passage from Ficino's <i>Five Questions Concerning the Human</i> <i>Mind</i> ) . . . . .	234
Renaissance Platonism . . . . .	232	<i>Humanism on Human Dignity</i> (Pico draws connections between God, man, and religion). . . . .	235
Humanism Outside Italy . . . . .	238	<i>Christian Humanism</i> (excerpt from Erasmus's <i>Handbook of the Militant</i> <i>Christian</i> ). . . . .	239
New Trends in Sixteenth-Century Thought . . . . .	242	<i>Establishing a Republic</i> (excerpt from Machiavelli's <i>Discourses</i> ). . . . .	244
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>Cultural Relativism</i> (essay by Montaigne defending differences between Brazilians and Europeans) . . . . .	246
Desiderius Erasmus . . . . .	248		
Marsilio Ficino . . . . .	249		
Niccolò Machiavelli . . . . .	251		
Michel de Montaigne . . . . .	252		
Francesco Petrarch . . . . .	253		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	254		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
<i>An Academic Attacks Papal Power</i> (Marsilius discusses state and papal powers) . . . . .	221		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Philosophy*

- c. 1300 Circles of humanists begin to appear in Italy.
- 1304 Francesco Petrarch is born.
- 1308 John Duns Scotus, the “subtle doctor,” dies.
- c. 1310 Dante Alighieri completes his *On Monarchy*, a work praising the universal state.
- 1323 William of Ockham resigns his professorship at the University of Paris, and dedicates himself to political philosophy. His works will attack the church’s interference in secular affairs and will lay the foundation for nominalism, the most important movement of scholastic philosophers in the later Middle Ages.
- 1324 Marsilius of Padua writes his *Defender of the Peace*, a treatise that argues for the separation of secular and religious powers.
- 1327 John Buridan, a nominalist philosopher trained by William of Ockham, becomes rector or head of the University of Paris.
- 1341 Petrarch is crowned “Poet Laureate” at Rome.
- 1360 Leontius Pilatus is called to serve as professor of Greek at the Studium Generale of Florence.
- 1375 Pierre d’Ailly publishes his commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard.
- Coluccio Salutati becomes the first humanist chancellor of Florence.
- 1380 Political theory of conciliarism, which advocates the superiority of the church’s councils over the power of the pope, emerges as a solution to heal the Great Schism.
- 1396 Manuel Chrysoloras becomes professor of Greek at the University of Florence and begins to train the town’s civic humanists in the reading of ancient Greek.
- c. 1400 Civic humanism begins to develop in Florence and other Italian cities.
- 1410 Leonard Bruni is elected as second humanist chancellor of Florence.
- 1440 Lorenzo Valla uses philological techniques to show that the *Donation of Constantine* is a forgery.
- c. 1450 Nicholas of Cusa relies on his knowledge of astrology and advances the notion that the world is infinite and the earth is a star, similar to the other stars in the heavens.
- 1458 Nicholas V, the church’s first humanist pope, expands the church’s role in the world of learning by founding the Vatican Library.
- 1462 Cosimo de Medici appoints Marsilio Ficino to translate Plato.
- c. 1466 Desiderius Erasmus is born at Gouda in the Netherlands.
- 1474 Marsilio Ficino completes his *Platonic Theology*, a work that tries to join an accurate understanding of Plato’s philosophical ideas to Christianity. The work’s emphasis on Platonic Love as a communion between two minds will have a major impact on philosophers during the coming century.
- 1486 The Renaissance Platonist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola publishes his *900 Theses*, which outlines the fundamental truths all religions seem to share. Its preamble, *The Oration on the Dignity of Man* praises humankind’s dignity as a virtue of its creation.



- in God's likeness and serves as a call to debate the author's Platonic philosophy.
- c. 1500 Printing begins to spread humanist texts in Northern Europe.
- 1503 Erasmus publishes his *Handbook of the Militant Christian*, a work that instructs its readers in piety and the "Philosophy of Christ." The book will become popular quite quickly and establish Erasmus's fame as a Christian philosopher throughout Europe.
- 1506 Johannes Reuchlin publishes his Hebrew grammar and supports the study of medieval Jewish philosophy and theology.
- 1509 Desiderius Erasmus publishes *The Praise of Folly*, which pokes fun at the foibles of Europeans, but criticizes the learning of the scholastic theologians, in particular. Erasmus argues that Christianity is a religion that surpasses the limits of human reason.
- 1513 Niccolò Machiavelli writes *The Prince*, a work praising the role of a strong prince in unifying his kingdoms. The book is published in 1532, five years after Machiavelli's death, and placed on the church's *Index of Prohibited Books* in 1559.
- 1516 Thomas More publishes his *Utopia*, a vision of an ideal society.
- The humanist and Aristotelian philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi completes his *On the Immortality of the Soul*, a work that calls into question the eternal nature of the human soul.
- c. 1525 Philip Melanchthon, a close associate of Martin Luther, begins to reform the university curriculum at Wittenberg. Melanchthon's mix of scholastic and humanist methods will dominate universities in much of Protestant Northern Europe over the coming centuries.
- 1527 Rome is sacked by troops of the emperor Charles V and for a time the city falls into an economic recession and declines as a center of learning.
- 1530 Ignatius Loyola studies philosophy and theology at the University of Paris.
- Apparently influenced by Renaissance Platonism, Nicholas Copernicus completes his *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Planets*, which argues that the sun is the center of the universe and that the stars travel around the sun in circular orbits. The treatise is published in the year of Copernicus's death, 1543.
- c. 1545 The Council of Trent begins its deliberations. During the two decades in which the council meets it relies on the scholastic philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and other medieval theologians as the basis for creating the modern orthodoxy of the Catholic Church.
- 1547 The Jesuits found their first secondary school at Messina in Southern Italy. This college, as Jesuit institutions come to be known, adopts a humanist curriculum. It will be widely copied by other Jesuit institutions in Europe.
- 1553 The astrologer and metaphysician John Dee, an expert in the learned magic that has become popular in the wake of Ficino's *Platonic Theology*, is imprisoned in England for conjuring "evil spirits." He is later released, but Queen Elizabeth seizes his library in 1583.
- 1584 The Renaissance Platonist Giordano Bruno publishes *On the Infinity of the Universe*, while serving as an Italian ambassador to London.
- 1592 In his *Essays* Michel de Montaigne argues for the superiority of human experience over ultimate truths.

## OVERVIEW *of Philosophy*

**SCHOLASTICISM.** At the dawn of the Renaissance, philosophy in Western Europe continued to be dominated by the scholastic method, and philosophical examination occurred primarily within Europe's universities. Because philosophy was largely pursued in faculties of theology, theological issues were of primary importance. Scholastic philosophy relied on a method for examining questions logically by weighing opposing viewpoints, propositions, and evidence. In the thirteenth century the scholastic method had reached a high watermark of development, particularly at the hands of thinkers like St. Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, and St. Bonaventura. Aquinas's achievement, in particular, still ranks as one of the great intellectual edifices of European history, and his *Summa Theologiae* or *Theological Summation* remained influential in the later Middle Ages. Thomism proceeded from the assumption that human knowledge might, in large part, be harmonized with divine revelation. In the Renaissance many scholastics continued to examine theological and philosophical questions in a manner that was consistent with Thomas Aquinas, but Thomism's dominance was only unquestioned within the Dominican Order. Elsewhere new movements arose that criticized the Thomists' faith in human reason, and bitter disputes occurred in the late medieval universities between the "old way" of Aquinas and the "new way" comprised of nominalists and Scotists.

**NOMINALISM.** It was the issue of philosophical universals that separated the new nominalist philosophy most decisively from thirteenth-century scholasticism. To explain why humans agreed on the meanings of certain terms, earlier scholastics had relied on the concept of universals, their interpretations of which they had drawn from Platonic philosophy. Universals, Platonists had taught, were ideas imprinted upon the human mind. For this reason, much thirteenth-century scholasticism had shared an underlying realism, i.e. the notion that earthly terms and concepts existed in a perfect form in

a realm of universals. Realism had allowed scholastic philosophers to argue that the human mind contained imperfect but nevertheless reliable representations of these universals. During the thirteenth century the concept of universals had grown more controversial, with some scholastic philosophers continuing to hold to an "ultra-realist" position, while others insisted that the precise nature of these ideals was unknowable. In a third position, scholastics like Thomas Aquinas upheld the reality of universals within the mind, while insisting that the human senses still provided reliable knowledge of the world. Relying upon this reasoning, Aquinas had argued that human reason and divine revelation (sacred scriptures and the authoritative sources that explained its meaning) could provide true answers to questions about God and the Christian religion. Around 1300, though, nominalist critics began to attack the concept of universals altogether. They expressed a new skepticism about the human mind's ability to establish truths about the nature of God. William of Ockham, an English scholastic, was most prominent among this new school, and he argued that philosophical terms were not expressions of universals. They were instead but mere names that human beings had given to things they had observed in the world. In place of the confidence that thirteenth-century scholastics had placed in human reason, then, the nominalists argued that philosophers should confine their speculations to what they could prove reasonably from their own observation. As a result, the nominalist school increasingly separated scientific truths from religious ones. Because of their skepticism about the mind's ability to understand God rationally, the nominalists also reduced the scope of questions a theologian might treat. They argued, for instance, that the truths of the Christian religion could not be proven rationally through logical proofs. Instead theology consisted in examining the scriptures and the traditions of the church to reveal the nature of the promises God had made with humankind.

**HUMANISM.** Three main schools of scholastic theology persisted in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: Thomism, nominalism, and Scotism, a theology derived from the ideas of the Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308). While fundamental differences of interpretation separated these theological systems, all three schools proceeded with certain common assumptions about method. The scholastics embraced logic and the weighing of arguments from traditional authorities to prove their points on rationalistic grounds. While the nominalists attacked traditional scholasticism for its heavy reliance upon human reason, they shared a conviction with all medieval philosophers that truth should be established through log-

ical examination. In the fourteenth century humanists began to attack scholasticism generally for having favored logical analysis. They argued that scholasticism's heavy reliance upon logic was ineffectual in the true goal of philosophy: the pursuit of virtue. Petrarch was the first humanist to attain an international reputation, and the patterns he set in his writings were imitated throughout Italy over the next century. Petrarch believed that rhetoric, the art of persuasion, appealed to the human will, and might prompt human beings to virtuous living more effectively than scholasticism's appeal to logic and the intellect. Graceful writing and speaking and study of the literary works of the ancients could all be used to encourage human beings to live virtuous lives. Thus, humanists like Petrarch shared a passionate devotion to Antiquity, and during the fifteenth century members of the movement dedicated themselves to recovering the knowledge of the classics. A deepening understanding of the ancient languages and a new critical sophistication in the study of texts emerged during this period as a result.

**RENAISSANCE PLATONISM.** Florence was the first city in which humanism emerged to dominate public life. Around 1400, the town produced a circle of civic humanists, who considered issues of politics, civic ethics, and history in their works. As a group, they advocated an active life engaged in public duties. During the first half of the fifteenth century this political philosophy became the creed of Florence's growing humanist circle. As the Renaissance matured in the city and knowledge of ancient philosophers grew, Platonism became increasingly attractive to Florence's intellectual elite. Renaissance Platonism, in contrast to earlier civic forms of humanism, advocated a life lived in contemplation and relative isolation from society. The figure of Marsilio Ficino was important in spreading this new creed, first in Florence and somewhat later throughout Italy and Europe. The leading Platonic scholar of his day, Ficino completed authoritative translations of Plato's surviving works. During the 1460s and 1470s, he also dedicated himself to the creation of a *Platonic Theology*, a huge theological summation that tried to merge Plato's philosophy with Christianity. A popular form of Renaissance Platonism became part of the intellectual creed of the later Renaissance. The doctrines of the movement, including its emphasis on Platonic Love, on the soul as a spark of the divine flame, and on human creativity as a divine attribute, affected many areas of art and cultural life during the High Renaissance.

**HUMANISM BEYOND ITALY.** As a new philosophical and educational movement, humanism did not remain solely within Italy. During the fifteenth century

scholars from throughout Europe began to journey to Florence and other Italian intellectual centers to learn the new scholarly methods promoted by the humanists. As they returned home to Northern Europe and to Iberia, they brought with them knowledge of the humanists' achievements in translation and in rediscovering the ancient classics. A key impetus in spreading the New Learning beyond Italy was, as it had been in Italy, the need for properly trained secretaries, royal officials, and diplomats. But humanism spread throughout Europe within the secondary schools and universities, too. Although they were at first resistant to what became known as the New Learning, most universities had accommodated themselves to it by 1500. They were encouraged by the changing tastes of their students, who hungered for the humanist training that had become popular in Italy over the previous century. As humanism left Italy, its practitioners often devoted themselves to harmonizing classical wisdom with Christianity. Platonism was one movement that had an appeal in this vein. But the Renaissance outside Italy also produced strikingly original thinkers like Desiderius Erasmus, who promoted Christian reform and whose ideas cannot be neatly classified into any category. Erasmus' ideas acquired many admirers in the early sixteenth century, from England to Germany and Spain. Yet as the sixteenth century progressed, both Catholic traditionalists and reform-minded Protestants distanced themselves from the gentler reforms of Christian culture that he had advocated.

**NEW TRENDS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY THOUGHT.** In the sixteenth century a new breed of intellectuals began to alter the course of debate in European philosophy. Many of these new thinkers turned to politics and presented new ideas about political power. These political thinkers included Niccolò Machiavelli, who presented a strikingly amoral portrait of the astute ruler in his *Prince*; Jean Bodin, who laid the foundations for political absolutism; and Theodore Beza, who defended a subject's right to resist a monarch's tyranny. In a more personal vein the French humanist Michel de Montaigne gave his readers an internal journey through his most intimate thoughts in his *Essays*. Montaigne's pessimism about contemporary society was at odds with the traditional humanism that had shaped his early development. And his skepticism about the ability of human beings to establish absolute moral truths was not shared by most of his contemporaries. His intense search for a relevant personal philosophy, free from traditional religious dogma and intolerance, would recur among thinkers in later centuries.

## TOPICS *in Philosophy*

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### SCHOLASTICISM IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

**TERMINOLOGY.** The term *scholasticism*, a word invented by sixteenth-century humanist critics, has long been used to describe the dominant intellectual movement of the Middle Ages. The humanists used the term to attack the verbose style and arid intellectualism they perceived to be the defining features of medieval intellectuals. Humanists criticized the scholastics for concentrating on legal, logical, and rationalistic issues at the expense of genuine moral and ethical problems. In truth, the thought of the schoolmen possessed considerable variety and depth. These thinkers often engaged in debating complex moral and intellectual issues in ways that were far from arid and which dealt with realistic considerations. There was not, moreover, a single set of assumptions about philosophical issues within the scholastic movement. Instead it possessed great variety and witnessed continued vitality and development throughout the later Middle Ages. But humanist philosophers came to contrast their own method of discussing and writing about philosophical problems against those of the scholastics and to argue that their ideas were more original and morally relevant than those of the medieval schoolmen. At the same time humanist thinkers were often indebted to the ideas of the scholastics, and the gulf that separated the two movements was less profound than many humanists often imagined.

**UNIVERSITIES.** Scholasticism first developed in schools attached to Europe's cathedrals in the twelfth century. By 1200, the most successful of these schools had emerged as universities. These first universities—places like Oxford in England, Bologna in Italy, and Paris in France—shared a common educational outlook, even though each specialized in different kinds of learning. These institutions were carefully nourished, both by the church and their local states, since the students that they trained provided a pool of eligible talent to assume positions of authority in secular and religious governments. The medieval universities enjoyed special legal status as largely autonomous bodies, free from local control. As a result, “town and gown” rivalries often erupted, even at this early point in their development. The curriculum taught in the universities changed little over time. Students began their instruction at the universities in their mid-teens after completing their preparatory

work at home or in the secondary schools in Europe's cities. Since all instruction within the universities was in Latin, most students required years of elementary and secondary instruction, either formally or informally, before they could enter a university. The course of primary and secondary education differed from place to place, as did the number of schools available to educate young boys in the basic instruction that they would need before they entered the university. While there were a few notable exceptions of talented, young women who attended universities in the Middle Ages, women were prohibited from taking degrees. And as a rule, women received no instruction in Latin, so that in all but extraordinary cases, this prevented them from pursuing higher learning. Before a student entered university, he needed a basic knowledge of the seven liberal arts: the *trivium* (which included rhetoric, grammar, and logic) and the *quadrivium* (astronomy, geometry, arithmetic and music). A university's curriculum was more systematic, though, and during the four or five years a student was enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts curriculum he was expected to master logic and the other tools of the scholastic method. At the end of this course, a student usually took the degree. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were a great period in the expansion of university education throughout Europe. University education still was a rare thing, but universities spread in this period to almost every corner of the continent. In 1300 there were only 23 universities in Europe. During the fourteenth century, an additional 22 were founded, and in the fifteenth century 34 new institutions appeared. This growth was strongest in Germany, Eastern Europe, and Spain. As new universities appeared throughout the continent, the number of individual colleges within these institutions also grew, as nobles, wealthy burghers, kings, and princes moved to endow new schools within the framework of existing universities. Medieval universities also specialized, as universities do today, in particular areas of expertise. Until the sixteenth century, Paris remained Europe's premier theological university, while Bologna in Italy was known for its legal studies. It trained many of the lawyers who practiced in the church's courts. Salerno, in Sicily, was Europe's first medical school. As university specialization increased in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages, a new kind of itinerant scholar appeared. Many fourteenth- and fifteenth-century students migrated from university to university, spending only a year or two in each place, before taking the B.A. at one institution. In this way students took advantage of the lectures given at particular places by the most expert of professors. Rising complaints of students who lacked direction and seriousness, though, also accompanied these

changes, and the European system of degrees allowed students to remain in school for many years. For those who desired the academic life and who possessed the resources to pursue education, the Masters of Arts degree could be attained with another two to three years of study. At this point the most dedicated students usually became teachers for several years before pursuing the doctoral degree, which required another seven or eight years to complete.

**SCHOLASTIC METHOD.** A common way of teaching known as the scholastic method dominated in most universities. The scholastic method—often attacked by later humanists for its verbose style—was, in reality, a logical way of examining problems from contrary points of view. The scholastic thinker set out a proposition to be debated and then he proceeded to present arguments on both sides of this question. He carefully answered each argument in support of this proposition and each in opposition before coming to a final conclusion about the matter. To practice this method, students relied upon a highly technical form of Latin, one which humanists attacked as barbaric in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A thorough knowledge of the ideas of previous authorities was also a key skill needed by those students who hoped to succeed in mastering the method. The accomplished scholastic was expected not only to be able to deal with problems in their discipline logically, but to recall and manipulate the ideas of previous authorities on a subject. These skills were put to the test in oral debate, as students were called upon to demonstrate mastery of the material through engaging their peers in verbal matches.

**PERVASIVENESS OF THE SCHOLASTIC METHOD.**

This style of examining intellectual questions was common in all the disciplines that were taught in the medieval university and was particularly important in the development of law, theology, natural philosophy (that is, those studies concerned with matter and the physical world), and medicine. Philosophy itself was not an independent discipline in the medieval university, as it is today, although its methods of rational analysis and its logic pervaded all studies. Much of what we would identify today as “philosophy” was concerned with theological issues, although in every area of academic endeavor, medieval scholars wrote works that were philosophical in nature. The importance of philosophy in the medieval curriculum, especially in theological studies, had grown during the course of the high Middle Ages (the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries). In the eleventh century, for instance, many of those who taught in Europe’s cathedral schools had been wary of the use of an-



Instruction at the University of Paris in the later Middle Ages.  
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cient philosophy within theological studies, but over time the rational and logical analysis that philosophy offered influenced theological study more and more. In the twelfth century Peter Abelard (1079–1142) compiled his *Sic et non*, a work that presented the conflicting statements of the scriptures and of early church fathers concerning doctrinal issues. Although Abelard was a Platonist as were many scholastics of his day, he relied on Aristotle’s dialectical method as a means to analyze and harmonize contradictory statements. Peter Lombard (c. 1100–c. 1160) built upon his efforts to construct his *Sentences*, a work that examined the sum of the church’s theology, and which attempted to harmonize the contradictory statements of the ancient church fathers concerning the key teachings of Christianity. In many cases, however, Lombard’s *Sentences* left the contradictions that existed between early Christian authorities unresolved, and thus his work became

an important textbook for those theological students who followed him. Students were expected to weigh the contradictory statements of ancient church authorities and the Scriptures the *Sentences* contained, and to construct their own theological judgments by confronting and harmonizing those contradictions through reasoned and logical analysis. As the *Sentences* became more popular the dialectical method of Aristotle and the teachings of ancient philosophy concerning the science of logic became increasingly important to European theologians, many of whom wrote commentaries on Lombard's work. By the thirteenth century, in fact, logic had a pre-eminent position in the theological curriculum of universities throughout Europe.

**INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF ARISTOTLE.** Aristotle's increasing prominence in medieval theology arose, not just from his expertise in logic or the dialectical method, but because the philosopher came to be accepted as a pre-eminent authority on science, nature, and ethics. Early scholastics like Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard had advocated the adoption of Aristotelian forms of reasoned argumentation, but they had remained Platonic in their theological outlook and often wary of Aristotle's ideas. During the twelfth century, though, Western thinkers had begun to re-acquire a firmer understanding of Aristotle's works. They were aided in their efforts by the studies of Aristotle that had been undertaken by Jewish and Muslim scholars in previous centuries, since firsthand knowledge of Aristotle's texts had largely disappeared in medieval Europe. As more and more European scholastics studied the philosopher's works, Aristotle's influence grew, and the sense of uneasiness that had once existed regarding his "pagan" philosophy disappeared. Aristotle became a powerful ally in the attempt to construct a reasoned defense of the Christian faith. By the thirteenth century key aspects of Aristotle's ideas, including his system of logic, his science, and his moral philosophy, helped to fashion a new Golden Age of scholastic theology. Theologians saw in Aristotle's science and metaphysics—particularly in his emphasis on a Prime Mover—new ways to prove the existence of God. They embraced his ethics because they saw in it ways to defend Christian moral imperatives. Aristotle also provided a set of logical tools that allowed theologians to systematize the doctrines derived from the Bible and church tradition. They also relied on these tools to make the church's system of the sacraments rationally coherent. During the thirteenth century, then, the philosopher's largely secular-spirited philosophy served as a foundation for theologians' attempts to interpret the Bible and to explain the workings of the

Christian religion and its sacraments. This new marriage between theology and ancient philosophy also played an important role in defining the limits of secular and ecclesiastical authority.

**REASON AND REVELATION.** At the high point of scholasticism's development in the thirteenth century many scholastic philosophers were convinced that human knowledge could be harmonized with divine knowledge. They believed, in other words, that faith and human reason were complementary and that human reason could be used to prove the tenets of the Christian religion. This confidence in the compatibility of human reason and the Christian religion was nowhere more profoundly displayed than in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). Aquinas was an Italian by birth who entered the Dominican Order, and eventually studied at the University of Paris, then Europe's pre-eminent theological institution. After spending some time in Cologne, he returned to teach in Paris before retiring to Italy in his later years. His career thus exemplifies the international nature of university education in the thirteenth-century world. An indefatigable scholar whose literary output was vast, he was sometimes observed writing one work while dictating another. One of his greatest achievements was his *Summa Theologiae*, or *Theological Summation*. In this work Aquinas argued that many of the truths of the Christian religion were beyond rational explanation and that they must, by their very nature, be treated as mysteries of a "divine science." At the same time, he applied Aristotelian logic, metaphysics, and ethics to theological problems to make the intellectual issues of the faith readily intelligible and rationally coherent. Almost invariably in the *Summa*, each article follows a set form. Its title asks whether something is true, such as "Is the Existence of God Self-Evident?" This question is then followed by the words "It seems that" as well as a series of objections that refutes the initial question. These objections include statements from the scriptures, the church fathers, the saints, and other Christian authorities, although in some cases they present purely philosophical statements about logic or nature. The side of the argument Thomas wants to defend is then introduced with the words "but on the contrary," and is accompanied by the quotation of the same kinds of authorities previously presented under the objections. Then Thomas turns to the heart of the article with the words "I answer that" in which he shows by logical argument and the citation of authorities that "what seems" is incorrect, and that what he has stated following the words "on the contrary" is, in fact, correct. He then disposes of the initial "objections," most

often by showing that if one interprets them correctly, they actually do not support the erroneous side of the argument. The *Summa* in its entirety—in its four parts and hundreds of questions—is always built upon these same balanced and orderly principles of argumentation. Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* is thus a work of theology, but one that nevertheless relies on philosophical methods and ideas to defend many Christian teachings. In other writings, particularly his *Commentaries on Aristotle*, he treated subjects that were more purely philosophical in nature, but most of Aquinas's works are best described as works of theology that make use of philosophy's tools. As a theologian, Aquinas was well aware of the problems that might arise from a too heavy reliance on logic and reason to prove Christianity's premises. At the same time, a confidence existed in his work that the mind of man mirrored the mind of God, and thus human beings might strive to understand the Christian faith aided both by divine revelation (the sacred Scriptures and those authorities that had commented upon them) and human reason.

**UNIVERSALS.** In the decades following Aquinas's death a number of scholastic theologians criticized what they felt was a too heavy reliance on reason in his and other thirteenth-century theologians' works. The issues that precipitated this debate involved the nature of universals, an issue that had been debated by theologians since ancient philosophy had begun to make inroads into scholasticism in the twelfth century. The issues surrounding universals seem to modern minds to be erudite and removed from practical considerations, but to thinkers in the high and later Middle ages, the debate over universals was part of a broader set of discussions about the science of epistemology, that is, the science of how human beings can establish the truth of what they know. These epistemological debates became fundamental to theologians' considerations of their discipline and to their treatment of Christian truth, the church's sacraments and institutions, and even to their considerations of the relationships between religious and secular authority. Until the thirteenth century many scholastics had relied on Platonic realism to explain why human beings shared certain ideas and concepts. Plato had taught that the human mind had been imprinted at birth with knowledge of archetypes or universals that existed in a perfect realm, and this knowledge allowed human beings to recognize and react to the ideas and objects they observed on earth. As a human being saw the elements that made up the world, in other words, each particular object or idea forced the mind to recall its correspondence to a perfect universal. When the hu-



Engraving of Thomas Aquinas. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY PICTURE COLLECTION.

man eye turned to look at a chair, for example, the mind recognized it as a chair because of its relationship to the pre-existing universal idea of chair. This way of interpreting earthly reality as a shadowy emanation of a realm of pure forms or universals has often been called realism. It proved particularly amenable to the needs of some early scholastics desirous of proving the Christian faith using reasoned arguments. In the eleventh century, for example, St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) had relied on realism to prove the existence of God. According to Anselm's proof, if God was conceived in the mind as that "being which nothing greater could be conceived" then the very presence of this notion in the mind proved God's existence. As a realist, in other words, Anselm believed that certain concepts were imprinted on the mind at birth that pointed to the reality of their existence in the realm of universals. As scholastic theology matured, however, new positions on the subject of universals had multiplied. Some thirteenth-century thinkers had remained faithful to realism and had even become "ultra-realist" in their attitudes toward universals. Others insisted that the precise nature of universals was unknowable and they refused to pronounce any opinion on the matter. Still others, like Aquinas, forged positions on universals that were somewhere in between both alternatives.

**AQUINAS'S REFORMULATION OF UNIVERSALS.**

While Aquinas insisted on the reality of universals, he argued at the same time that human knowledge derived from sensory experience working in tandem with these ideas in the mind. The eyes, ears, and hands provided the mind with a reliable picture of the world, even though universal knowledge shaped and gave meaning to sensory perceptions. With this notion of universals, Aquinas was able to treat concepts like the existence of God in new ways. He avoided the old means of proof based upon *a priori* notions imprinted upon the mind at birth, notions that had once played such an important role in the work of figures like St. Anselm. Instead he looked to the natural world and argued that the senses might provide human beings with some reliable proofs for God's existence. Aquinas argued that wind, the flow of water, and the life cycle of flora and fauna all pointed to the presence of a prime mover, a planner that had set these processes in motion. Thus Aquinas's reformulation of the concept of universals allowed him to forge a new kind of theology that linked science, human reason, and divine revelation together, even if he continued to insist that neither nature nor human reason could provide sufficient proofs for the Christian religion on their own. The theologian, according to Aquinas, still had to rely on a detailed and logical study of sacred scriptures and the church's authorities to arrive at religious truth. Although Aquinas's formulations concerning these problems continued to be influential among many later medieval scholastics, particularly in the Dominican Order, his concepts were soon challenged after his death. By 1300, a new group of thinkers began to attack the concept of universals altogether, and in a skeptical vein they insisted that there were clear limits to human reason's ability to understand God and religious truth. As they attacked the concept of universals, they insisted that their precise nature was indeterminable and that each and every object in the world was endowed with its own peculiar, unique qualities. The terms that human beings used to describe these things, in other words, did not have their origin in universals imprinted on the mind, as earlier scholastics had argued. Instead they insisted that philosophical concepts were mere names that arose from human attempts to categorize and comprehend what they observed in the world.

**OCKHAM'S RAZOR.** This philosophy eventually became known as nominalism, taking its name from the Latin word for "name" (*nomenus*). The nominalists generally tried to limit the use of human reason in understanding the Christian faith. In place of the trust that Aquinas and other thirteenth-century thinkers had

placed in logic and the mind's ability to comprehend the Christian religion, they argued that faith could not be proven by strictly rational means. Instead there were truths of faith that were not reliant on human reason, and truths of science that were independent of religion. The nominalist critique of the notion of universals was made most cogently by William of Ockham (1285–1349), a brilliant English philosopher and theologian. Ockham had a diverse and interesting career as an academic, a political theorist, and a campaigner for reform in the church. His impact on philosophy, though, proved to be his most enduring contribution. He denied the nature of universals and instead insisted on a simpler explanation for human knowledge. The concept he pioneered, today known as "Ockham's Razor," proposed that the simplest explanation for a phenomenon should win out over a more complex one. Ockham divided all human knowledge into intuitive and abstract categories. Intuitive knowledge is by far the more common, since it is the basis upon which all human understanding of the world is constructed. Intuitive knowledge is acquired through experience and from discussing one's experiences with others. Through their intuition human beings discover that the sky is blue, water is wet, and wood is hard. These intuitive conclusions, though, are nothing more than names which human beings use to describe the realities that they observe in the world. The second category of human knowledge, abstract knowledge, arises from human beings' ability to imagine. Here Ockham cites the example of the unicorn as a typical invention of humankind's abstract knowledge. A fantastic and concocted being, the unicorn is not an expression of a heavenly archetype, but is instead a completely imaginary animal created within the human mind out of the intuitive knowledge of horses and horned animals. From their ability to think in abstract terms, human beings possess the ability to create, but Ockham cautioned that abstract knowledge can also err and, as in the case of the unicorn, create ideas that are completely imagined. In this way Ockham argued for a dramatic reduction of the role of universal truths, one of the fundamental building blocks of scholastic philosophy up to his time. Instead of insisting that universals were pre-existing archetypes in the mind of God, Ockham argued that they were little more than ideas that human beings created to name the things that they observed while living together in the world. This denial of universals or archetypes had a profound effect on philosophy and theology. Fueled with his new understanding of how the mind operated, Ockham argued that the truths of religion could not be understood using human reason. The human mind, in fact, could not establish the reality of



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN ACADEMIC ATTACKS PAPAL POWER**

**INTRODUCTION:** Marsilius of Padua's *Defender of the Peace* was written in 1324 while controversy raged concerning the pope's recent decision to condemn the teachings of the Spiritual Franciscans, a group of the order who held to a strict interpretation of their founder St. Francis's ideas concerning poverty. Marsilius attacked the foundations of papal authority by insisting that the authority of the state should be supreme over the church. Marsilius also included an early theory of representative government in his work, arguing that all government's power derived from the people, but in the fourteenth century, most readers focused on his attack upon the power of the church.

Now we declare according to the truth and on the authority of Aristotle that the law-making power or the first and real effective source of law is the people or the body of citizens or the prevailing part of the people according to its election or its will expressed in general convention by vote, commanding or deciding that something be done or omitted in regard to human civil acts under penalty or temporal punishment ...

On the other side we desire to adduce in witness the truths of the holy Scripture, teaching and counseling expressly, both in the literal sense and in the mystical according to the interpretation of the saints and the exposition of other authorized teachers of the Christian faith, that neither the Roman bishop, called the pope, nor

any other bishop, presbyter, or deacon, ought to have the ruling or judgment or coercive jurisdiction of any priest, prince, community, society or single person of any rank whatsoever. ... For the present purposes, it suffices to show, and I will first show, that Christ Himself did not come into the world to rule men, or to judge them by civil judgment, nor to govern in a temporal sense, but rather to subject Himself to the state and condition of this world; that indeed from such judgment and rule He wished to exclude and did exclude Himself and His apostles and disciples, and that He excluded their successors, the bishops and presbyters, by His example, and word and counsel and command from all governing and worldly, that is, coercive rule. I will also show that the apostles were true imitators of Christ in this, and that they taught their successors to be so. I will further demonstrate that Christ and His apostles desired to be subject and were subject continually to the coercive jurisdiction of the princes of the world in reality and in person, and that they taught and commanded all others to whom they gave the law of truth by word or letter, to do the same thing, under penalty of eternal condemnation. Then I will give a section to considering the power or authority of the keys, given by Christ to the apostles and to their successors in offices, the bishops and presbyters, in order that we may see the real character of that power, both of the Roman bishop and of the others....

**SOURCE:** Marsilius of Padua, *Defender of the Peace* in *The Early Medieval World*. Vol. V of *The Library of Original Sources*. Ed. Oliver J. Thatcher (Milwaukee, Wisc.: University Research Extension Co., 1907): 423–430.

God's existence, nor could the truths of religion be defended using an abstract system of logic. Human knowledge existed in a realm completely separate from the majesty of God, and it could only establish the absolute truth of the things that it witnessed through its own observations.

**IMPLICATIONS.** Despite his criticisms of the limits of human reason, Ockham remained a devout Christian. As a result, he and his followers stressed the absolute power of God on the one hand, and the necessity for philosophers to confine their speculations to what they could prove through their observation on the other. His nominalist philosophy was particularly important in the University of Paris, Europe's leading theological institution. A second group of philosophers, known as Scotists, elaborated the positions of John Duns Scotus (1266–1308), a Scottish scholastic who had emphasized the will over human reason in his works. Scotus's thought had

been complex and had merged elements of both Aristotle's and Plato's philosophies. Because he was so adept in harmonizing these two conflicting figures, Scotus became known as the "subtle doctor." Scotus's followers emphasized freedom of the will and the necessity of both good works and divine grace in the process of human salvation. Their theory of knowledge differed from the nominalists because the Scotists continued to affirm the role of universals in human thought. Scotism was most widely developed as a philosophical movement among members of the Franciscan Order. While Scotism was a more conservative movement in some ways than nominalism, Scotists often joined forces with nominalists in the later Middle Ages to oppose Thomists, and together the two philosophies became known as the *via moderna* or "the modern way." While the gulf that separated both traditions was pronounced, both Scotists and Nominalists were skeptical about the mind's ability to fathom the truths of the Christian faith rationally. Despite the

growth of these two movements, Thomism continued to attract supporters in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but outside the Dominican Order its influence was slight. In contrast to the *via moderna*, Thomism was known as the *via antiqua* or the “old way.” Like Thomas Aquinas, followers of the “old way” continued to express a confidence in the human mind’s ability to understand sacred things. Within university faculties generally, bitter disputes often raged between followers of the “old” and “new” ways. Scotism and Thomism continued to attract support throughout the Renaissance, but nominalism would be the most definite force for change on the scholastic horizon. It helped to shape new ways of conducting theological study and new modes of asking philosophical questions. The simplifying effects of Ockham’s teaching, in particular, have long been seen as laying the groundwork for the ideas of later Protestant Reformers. Martin Luther began his career as a scholastic theologian within the tradition of the “modern way.” That philosophy also helped to shape John Calvin’s theology, with its emphasis on the majesty of God and the importance of understanding the covenants that He had established with humankind in the scriptures. Beyond its religious implications, many have seen in Ockham’s defense of empirical truths over abstract logic a development that helped to influence the course of Western science.

**POLITICAL THEORIES.** William of Ockham also involved himself in the political issues of his day, including the long-standing controversies that revolved around church and state power. Ockham became embroiled in these matters while defending the concept of Franciscan poverty against Pope John XXII (r. 1316–1324), who had declared a radical interpretation of the order’s teachings on poverty to be heretical. In 1324, the pope summoned Ockham to Avignon, and Ockham, displeased with the papal behavior he witnessed, quickly became an opponent. After leaving Avignon, he joined forces with radical leaders in the Franciscan Order who had taken up residence at the court of the German emperor Louis the Bavarian. From there, Ockham wrote several works defending the outcast Franciscans and attacking John XXII as a heretic. These tracts argued that the pope should be deposed and they defended the power of church councils and the state over the papacy. Ockham’s political philosophy was unusual in its arguments concerning the nature of church truth. Theologians had long argued that the church, guided by the Holy Spirit, could not stray from the truth. Ockham, for his part, noted that while truth always prevailed in the church in some quarters, the papacy and even church councils could err and stray

from true Christian teaching. While his ideas shared certain affinities with later Protestant attacks, most late-medieval theologians and philosophers did not support them. Ockham’s more limited defense of church councils to resolve the issues facing the church would be influential later in helping to resolve the crisis of the Great Schism (1378–1415). (See Religion: The Church in the Later Middle Ages.)

**MARSILIUS OF PADUA.** Ockham’s radical political philosophy had been partly influenced by the ideas of Marsilius of Padua, who had completed his influential *Defender of the Peace* in 1324. Although Italian by birth, Marsilius rose to become the rector of the University of Paris and, like Ockham, became an outspoken opponent of Pope John XXII. Eventually, he, too, left his position to join the court of the emperor Louis the Bavarian. In the *Defender of the Peace* Marsilius stressed that the will of the people was the basis for all government. Power did not flow from God to the pope and into secular rulers, as many political philosophers had long supposed. Instead it rose from the people, who established governments in order to live by the rule of law. At first glance, these ideas might seem a democratic manifesto, but Marsilius still envisioned that kings, princes, and nobles would play a greater role in defining government than common people. The importance of his work lay in its strong support of the secular power of princes over that of the church. Throughout this political treatise Marsilius criticized the power of the clergy by insisting that they were only one part of society, and as such, bound by the laws the entire community enacted. As he turned his attention to papal power, he argued that the pope was merely a humanly appointed executive, responsible to the Christian community in the same way that all rulers were. The members of the church acting in a general council could, when circumstances warranted, depose him. While Marsilius’s *Defender of the Peace* was an early defense of the principles of representative government, it did not influence political philosophy until much later. In the fourteenth century those secular rulers who prized it did so because it supported their power against the pope.

**CUSA.** These strains of political theorizing continued in the fifteenth century, too. They can be seen in the works of the scholastic philosopher Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464), a German and a cardinal. In his *Catholic Concordance* Cusa examined the history of the church, including the long-term relationships between the German Empire and Rome. Cusa showed that the *Donation of Constantine*, one of the foundations of papal authority, had left no trace in historical documents through-

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### A SCHOLASTIC DELIBERATES UPON RELIGION AS ART

**INTRODUCTION:** The scholastic philosopher Nicholas of Cusa was also a cardinal and a tireless campaigner for the reform of the church. In this capacity he gave hundreds of sermons throughout his life. This excerpt from one of these entitled "Where is He that is Born the King of the Jews?" makes the following interesting observations about religion as art. According to Cusa, one of the purposes of religion is to help human beings live better, more fulfilled lives.

Now everyone has one entrance into this world, but not all men live equally. For even though men are born naked like the other animals, still they are clothed by men's art of weaving so they may live in a better state. They use cooked foods and shelter and horses and many such things which art has added to nature for better living. We possess these arts as a great service and gift or favor from their inventors.

And so when many live wretchedly and in sadness and in prisons and suffer much, but others lead lives of abundance joyfully and nobly, we rightly infer that a human being can with some favor or art attain more of a peaceful and joyful life than nature grants. Even though many have discovered the various arts of living better by their own talent or with divine illumination, as those who discovered the mechanical arts and the arts of sowing and planting and doing business. And others have gone

further, as those who wrote the rules of political life and of economic activity, and those who discovered the ethical life of habituating oneself through mores and customs even to the point of taking delight in a virtuous life and thus of governing oneself in peace. Nonetheless all these arts do not serve the spirit, but hand on conjectures how in this world a virtuous life worthy of praise can be led with peace and calm.

Thereupon religion based on divine authority and revelation is added to these arts that prepare a human being for obeying God through fear of him and love of him and one's neighbor in the hope of attaining the friendship of God who is the giver of life so that we may attain a long and peaceful life in this world and a joyful and divine life in the world to come. Nonetheless, among all the ways of religion which fall too short of true life, a way to eternal life has been revealed to us through Jesus, the Son of God. He handed over to us what the heavenly life is which the sons of God possess, and revealed that we can reach divine sonship and how to do so ... Jesus is the place where every movement of nature and grace finds rest. The word of Christ or his teaching and his command or the paradigm of his movement is the way to vision or the taking hold of eternal life that is the life of God who alone is immortal. It is a more abundant life than the life of a created nature. Therefore, no one can reach on his own the way of grace which leads to the Father, but must proceed to that way through the gate.

**SOURCE:** Nicholas of Cusa, "Where is He that is Born the King of the Jews?" Trans. by Professor Clyde Lee Miller, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

out the ages, thus calling into question one of the foundations of the pope's secular authority in Western Europe. Like Marsilius of Padua, his *Concordance* argued that the basis of all government lies in the will of the people, although Cusa would take his conclusions farther than Marsilius. As the monarch of the church, Cusa argued, the pope should be elected by a body of cardinals that was truly representative of the entire church. Church councils, moreover, were the ultimate arbiters of Christian teaching because they derived their powers directly from Christ.

**LEARNED IGNORANCE.** Even as he devoted himself to writing political philosophy, Cusa was also an academic philosopher who embraced mysticism in other works. His *On Learned Ignorance* displayed a skepticism about the human mind's ability to understand God rationally and instead argued that God could be best understood through the way of negation. The deity, in

other words, was most easily comprehended in terms of what He was not, rather than in terms of what He was. This small treatise advocated a mystical path toward union with God, a God that Cusa perceived as present everywhere in an infinite universe. *On Learned Ignorance* demonstrates another keen interest of the late-medieval scholastics: their fascination with mathematics and the natural sciences. In this work Cusa relied upon geometry to demonstrate the infinitude of the universe, a realm he described as having no center or circumference. As a result, his theory denied the traditional notion that the earth was at the center of the universe. For Cusa, the center of the universe was everywhere, a space that God alone occupied. He admitted that his concepts were difficult for the human mind to grasp, and he often relied on difficult mystical terms to present his ideas. At the same time his work was one of the first Renaissance philosophical documents to present a notion of the shape



Detail from Nicholas of Cusa's tomb, showing the philosopher venerating St. Peter. ALINARI-ART REFERENCE/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

of the world that was different from the traditional “earth-centered” models that had long been accepted as orthodoxy.

**NATURAL PHILOSOPHY.** Cusa's interest in considerations about the shape of the universe illustrates another dimension of late-medieval philosophy: its continuing interest in nature and metaphysics. Before the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century, universities treated the physical sciences largely as branches of natural philosophy, an important part of the philosophical curriculum in both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Aristotle's ideas concerning matter and the physical universe had largely shaped the development of medieval natural philosophy, and Aristotelian ideas continued to be important in Renaissance natural philosophy, too. Over the centuries, though, some Christian, Neoplatonic, and Islamic commentaries had been added to the corpus of works treated in the universities' natural philosophical instruction. But as a discipline, natural philosophy continued to be dominated largely by Aristotle. Two of his commentaries were especially important: the *Physics* and *De Anima* (*On the Soul*). These provided the discipline with many of its underlying assumptions. Natural philosophy was concerned chiefly

with understanding natural bodies—their form, motion, shape—and the causalities that altered or affected these bodies. Motion had been introduced into the world by a Prime Mover, and now everything in the world that moved contrary to its natural course did so because of the force being applied to it. Following Aristotle and other Antique writers on nature, natural philosophers accepted that there was an inherent purpose or potential in every created thing, for nothing had been created by chance or without a reason. Matter tended to fulfill these natural purposes and in doing so, it came to a state of rest. Natural philosophers debated these questions of purpose through intellectual speculation and by studying previous writings in their discipline. They only rarely observed or experimented with matter. Aristotle's influence, too, prevented them from stepping outside traditional ideas. Although some experiments disproved Aristotle's physics in the fourteenth century, his authority tended to survive unquestioned. In the fifteenth century this began to change, as natural philosophers embraced alternative theories about nature. The revival of Plato was of key importance in questioning Aristotelian ideas about natural philosophy as Plato's works became better known through more accurate Latin trans-

lations and Greek editions. Nicholas of Cusa had relied upon Platonic ideas about nature when he created the infinite universe of his *On Learned Ignorance*. But Cusa was not alone, and fifteenth-century natural philosophers now investigated other ideas in the works of ancient authorities, including those of Pythagoras, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Hermetic tradition. The rise of knowledge of these alternative systems of physics complicated the natural philosophy taught in the Renaissance, and opened up the possibility of new hybrid approaches to the discipline. Over time, too, observation and the testing of the assumptions contained in natural philosophical texts through experiments became more common. But until the advent of Galileo's modern scientific method after 1600, the observation of nature was not seen as a means of establishing a truth, but as a way to confirm what one had read in the works of other authorities. Renaissance thinkers, in other words, remained wedded to the notion of "textual" truth.

**SCHOLASTIC SURVIVALS.** Although scholasticism is typically thought of as a medieval phenomenon, the movement survived long after the Middle Ages. Scholasticism's vitality persisted in the sixteenth century, helping to shape the teachings of both Protestantism and Catholicism. In Spain many of those who became leaders within the Society of Jesus had trained as scholastic philosophers, and they mixed Thomist teachings with humanism in their educational schemes. Of the Jesuits' many philosophers, the most influential in shaping the development of the society's teaching was Francisco Suarez (1548–1617), who taught a version of Thomism that nevertheless included powerful theological and philosophical arguments drawn from Scotism and nominalism. As a result of the Council of Trent (see Religion: The Council of Trent and the Catholic Reformation), Thomism increasingly became the position of the official theology of the Roman Catholic Church, helping to sustain scholastic instruction into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Scholasticism, too, affected the development of early-modern Protestantism. Protestants like Martin Luther may have criticized medieval philosophy, but Protestant universities soon welcomed the scholastic method. In Germany, Philip Melancthon and others re-introduced Aristotelian logic and metaphysics into the university curriculum. They adopted the scholastic method in university instruction as well. Elsewhere, in Protestant England, Scotland, and the Netherlands, scholastic philosophy continued to play a role in the early-modern period. And by virtue of the planting of new universities by missionaries and settlers in North and South America, scholasticism exercised an influence in Europe's colonies overseas.

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## HUMANISM IN THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

**DEFINITION.** While scholasticism was dominant in Europe's universities during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, humanism also appeared at this time as the primary intellectual innovation of the Renaissance. Humanism first developed in Italy's cities in the fourteenth century, and underwent a process of maturation before affecting intellectual life throughout Europe around 1500. The word "humanism," though, is a modern term created to describe a broad and diffuse movement. There was no intellectual manifesto for humanism, no set of beliefs that all humanists shared, as in modern Marxism or existentialism. Instead humanism describes an intellectual method and a pattern of education that Italy's *umanisti* or humanists embraced in the fourteenth century. These humanists practiced the *studia humanitatis*, the origin of the modern humanities. They believed that an education rooted in the classical texts of ancient Greece and Rome would help to bring about a rebirth of society. Their interests in Antiquity were wide ranging, embracing both the writers of the pagan and the early Christian world. Humanists desired to revive classical literary style and to create graceful speakers and writers who would encourage their audience to pursue virtuous living. The incubator for these ideas was the Italian city, and throughout humanism's long life, the movement often treated the problems that arose from Europe's rapidly urbanizing society. The specific disciplines the humanists stressed in their studies differed across time and place, but an emphasis on rhetoric (the art of graceful speaking and writing), grammar, moral philosophy, and history was usually shared as a common vision. Thus in place of the university's scholastic method

with its emphasis on logic, the humanists' vision of education stressed the language arts. From the first, the humanists distinguished themselves from the scholastics. They attacked the scholastics for their "barbaric," uncultivated Latin style, and for emphasizing logic over the pursuit of moral perfection. This rivalry at first made the universities resistant to humanist learning. In Italy, the movement developed in the cities, in ducal courts, and in monasteries and other religious institutions before it eventually established a foothold within the universities in the fifteenth century. As humanism spread to Northern Europe in the later fifteenth century, it experienced similar resistance. Universities continued to be dominated by the scholastic study of theology and philosophy. By 1500, though, most of Europe's distinguished centers of learning had begun to establish training in the "New Learning," a signal for the adoption of humanist patterns of education. In early-modern Europe the emphasis on the Classics and the humanities became signs of intellectual and cultural distinction and helped to create the modern vision of liberal arts instruction within the universities.

**ORIGINS.** The first humanist to achieve international renown was Francesco Petrararch (1304–1374), and his interests and ideas shaped the humanist movement for several generations. Petrarch gave up the study of law when he was young and instead devoted himself to literature, particularly the literature of classical Rome. He took the example of the ancient poet Vergil as the model for his poetry, while Cicero was important in shaping his prose. Petrarch self-consciously styled his letters to other humanists to be read by an audience, and in one of these he set forth a new idea of Western history. In place of the traditional periodization, which had stressed the birth of Christ as a key date, Petrarch saw the collapse of Roman authority in Western Europe as decisive. Constantine's abandonment of the Western Empire had given rise to an era of barbarism, from which Petrarch believed that European civilization was only beginning to recover in his time. Thus Petrarch helped to shape the notion of European history as divided into ancient, medieval, and modern periods. In 1341, Petrarch became the first of the humanists to accept the poet laureate's crown, an event that humanists over the following centuries considered the highlight of their revival of letters. Petrarch staged this ceremony himself as a way of self-consciously identifying with the poets of classical Antiquity. His coronation as poet laureate, though, helped spread his celebrity throughout Europe, and for the remainder of his life Petrarch continued to extend his fame through his writing. In these works he expressed a love

for St. Augustine, particularly the autobiographical *Confessions*. Petrarch took this work as a model for his *The Secret, or the Soul's Conflict with Desire*, a work that was unprecedented since Augustine's time in revealing the internal psychological dimensions and tribulations of its author.

**THOUGHT.** Petrarch's thought lacks a systematic current, but is instead characterized by several recurring themes. Petrarch was deeply Christian in his outlook, but because of his admiration for Antiquity, his Christianity was broad and inclusive. His love for classical literature, too, meant that he was often critical of the scholastics. He disliked intensely the logically structured arguments of medieval philosophers like St. Thomas Aquinas, and he berated the scholastics' style as mere "prattlings." Petrarch argued instead that the chief end of philosophy should be to help human beings to attain moral perfection, not the logical understanding of philosophical truths. These truths were ultimately unknowable and they did not prompt human beings to live virtuous lives. He expressed this position in his famous and often quoted dictum, "It is better to will the good than to understand truth." Petrarch realized that harnessing the human will was essential in any effort to achieve virtue, and so his writings often contained deeply introspective passages in which he recorded his efforts to overcome human passions and to lead a more virtuous life. Petrarch's emphasis on the will in his writings gave rise as well to his argument that rhetoric—the art of persuasive and graceful writing and speaking—inspired morality more profoundly than the study of logic or ethics. The ancient Roman rhetoricians Cicero and Seneca, for instance, prompt their readers to live virtuous lives. By contrast, Aristotle's *Ethics* may promote an intellectual knowledge of morality, but it is incapable of making its readers into better human beings. These ideas together with Petrarch's life and literary corpus provided a powerful example to humanists of his own generation and those that followed. Later humanists emulated Petrarch's love for classical literature and learning, his powerful individuality, and his advocacy of the study of rhetoric in place of traditional scholastic logic.

**FLORENCE.** It was in Florence that a distinctly humanist culture first emerged in Renaissance Italy. Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), a disciple of Petrarch, was a key figure in the development of humanism within the city. Salutati served the city as its chancellor or chief administrator in 1375 and he remained there until his death. His success in this post helped to quiet Florence's long-standing tradition of factional infighting among its powerful families, and in the quieter years after Salutati's

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A HUMANIST DECIDES HOW TO ACHIEVE VIRTUE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Petrarch's career exemplified many of the dimensions of learning that would become associated with Renaissance humanism: a love for poetry, an insatiable taste for the works of the classical philosophers, and a desire to create a personal philosophy that would treat the despair and disappointments that arise from living. Petrarch's letters were particularly important in spreading his ideas among other humanists and they helped to produce a new fashion for letters as a way of treating philosophical issues. Sometime in his middle age, Petrarch sent a letter to his friend Dionisio da Borgo San Sepolcro, a monk and professor of philosophy at the University of Paris. In it, he described a journey that he had taken up Mt. Ventoux in southeastern France; the climb became a symbol for Petrarch's journey through life. In the following passage Petrarch engaged in an intense self-examination, scrutinizing his desire for worldly fame. He concluded his letter to Dionisio with the realization that the search for notoriety in this world could not compare in magnitude and importance with the pursuit of moral perfection that leads to eternal happiness.

While I was thus dividing my thoughts, now turning my attention to some terrestrial object that lay before me, now raising my soul, as I had done my body, to higher planes, it occurred to me to look into my copy of St. Augustine's Confessions, a gift that I owe to your love, and that I always have about me, in memory of both the author and the giver. I opened the compact little volume, small indeed in size, but of infinite charm, with the intention of reading whatever came to hand, for I could hap-

pen upon nothing that would be otherwise than edifying and devout. Now it chanced that the tenth book presented itself. My brother, waiting to hear something of St. Augustine's from my lips, stood attentively by. I call him, and God too, to witness that where I first fixed my eyes it was written: "And men go about to wonder at the heights of the mountains, and the mighty waves of the sea, and the wide sweep of rivers, and the circuit of the ocean, and the revolution of the stars, but themselves they consider not." I was abashed, and ... I closed the book, angry with myself that I should still be admiring earthly things who might long ago have learned from even the pagan philosophers that nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, when great itself, finds nothing great outside itself. Then, in truth, I was satisfied that I had seen enough of the mountain; I turned my inward eye upon myself, and from that time not a syllable fell from my lips until we reached the bottom again. Those words had given me occupation enough, for I could not believe that it was by a mere accident that I happened upon them. What I had there read I believed to be addressed to me and to no other, remembering that St. Augustine had once suspected the same thing in his own case, when, on opening the book of the Apostle, as he himself tells us, the first words that he saw there were, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

**SOURCE:** Petrarch, "Letter to Dionisio da Borgo San Sepolcro," in *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters*. Trans. James Harvey Robinson (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1898): 316–318.

arrival, learning began to flourish in the city. Salutati encouraged the development of humanism in Florence by inviting scholars to come to the town. Of the many immigrants who took up residence during Salutati's years in Florence, Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459) was important in deepening knowledge of classical Antiquity. Salutati had hired Bracciolini to copy important classical manuscripts so that their insights might be made available to other scholars at work in the city. But Poggio did far more than merely serve as a scribe. He combed through Florence's rich monastery libraries and those in surrounding Tuscany. He used his trips outside Tuscany to deepen his knowledge of classical literature, too. While attending the Council of Constance (1414–1417), he spent his free hours searching for texts in the libraries of Southern Germany and Switzerland. The result of his research there uncovered many of Cicero's orations as

well as ancient rhetorical manuals, which became guides to Florence's humanists as they tried to recover a purer classical Latin style. Knowledge of these texts circulated quickly through Florence's growing humanist contingent, in part through the efforts of Niccolò Niccoli (1363–1437), who collected these texts and founded Europe's first lending library to serve the city's scholars.

**REVIVAL OF GREEK.** Humanists of Petrarch's generation had confined their efforts to the study of classical Latin texts, but around 1400 knowledge of the Greek classics began to expand dramatically. In this regard, Florence led the way by establishing the first European professorship of Greek in 1360. Of those who held this position, Manuel Chrysoloras (c. 1350–1415) was chiefly responsible for creating a resurgence in the study of Greek. He arrived in Florence in 1397 at Salutati's

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LIBERAL EDUCATION**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1404, the humanist Pier Paolo Vergerio wrote one of the first humanist treatises on education. The ideas that he sets forth in the book—that liberal education is necessary for the formation of men capable of governing—link him to the civic humanist tradition that was developing in early fifteenth-century Florence. The work was widely read and shaped the training of young men in Florence and throughout Italy in the fifteenth century.

We call those studies *liberal* which are worthy of a free man; those studies by which we attain and practise virtue and wisdom; that education which calls forth, trains and develops those highest gifts of body and of mind which ennoble men, and which are rightly judged to rank next in dignity to virtue only. For to a vulgar temper gain and pleasure are the one aim of existence, to a lofty nature, moral worth and fame. It is, then, of the highest importance that even from infancy this aim, this effort, should constantly be kept alive in growing minds. For I may affirm with fullest conviction that we shall not have attained wisdom in our later years unless in our earliest we have sincerely entered on its search. Nor may we for a moment admit, with the unthinking crowd, that those who give early promise fail in subsequent fulfillment. This may, partly from physical causes, happen in exceptional cases. But there is no doubt that nature has endowed some children with so keen, so ready an intelligence, that without serious effort they attain to a notable power of reasoning and conversing upon grave and lofty subjects,

and by aid of right guidance and sound learning reach in manhood the highest distinction. On the other hand, children of modest powers demand even more attention, that their natural defects may be supplied by art ...

We come now to the consideration of the various subjects which may rightly be included under the name of 'Liberal Studies.' Amongst these I accord the first place to History, on grounds both of its attractiveness and of its utility, qualities which appeal equally to the scholar and to the statesman. Next in importance ranks Moral Philosophy, which indeed is, in a peculiar sense, a 'Liberal Art,' in that its purpose is to teach men the secret of true freedom. History, then, gives us the concrete examples of the precepts inculcated by philosophy. The one shews what men should do, the other what men have said and done in the past, and what practical lessons we may draw therefrom for the present day. I would indicate as the third main branch of study, Eloquence, which indeed holds a place of distinction amongst the refined Arts. By philosophy we learn the essential truth of things, which by eloquence we so exhibit in orderly adornment as to bring conviction to differing minds. And history provides the light of experience—a cumulative wisdom fit to supplement the force of reason and the persuasion of eloquence. For we allow that soundness of judgment, wisdom of speech, integrity of conduct are the marks of a truly liberal temper.

**SOURCE:** Pier Paolo Vergerio, "The Qualities of a Free Man," in *Vittorino Da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*. Ed. William H. Woodward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921): 102–110.

instigation, and during his three-year tenure in the city, he taught Greek to many outstanding humanists, including Salutati, Poggio Bracciolini, Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444), and Pier Paolo Vergerio (1370–1444 or 1445). Chrysoloras's tenure at Florence produced great enthusiasm for the study of Greek, and knowledge of the language steadily grew among humanists during the fifteenth century. After leaving Florence in 1400, Chrysoloras taught in a similar fashion in Milan and Pavia, and his activities in these places produced similar results. In the next few decades as humanists throughout Italy devoted themselves to recovering antique texts, knowledge of the Greek tradition expanded apace with the recovery of Latin sources. In 1418 Ciriaco D'Ancono traveled to Greece to collect classical texts, and in 1423 Giovanni Aurispa returned from a journey there laden with more than 230 volumes of classical Greek

manuscripts. As a result of his reception in Italy during the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1445) the Greek Cardinal Bessarion later left his collection of more than 800 Greek works to the city of Venice, where they became the foundation for the city's Marciana Library. While knowledge of Greek grew in the fifteenth century, many humanists were still unable to master the language. Translations out of the Greek and into Latin continued to feed the desire of many scholars for a more direct knowledge of the Greek classics. Of the many translation projects undertaken by the humanists in the fifteenth century, none was more important than Marsilio Ficino's translation of all the surviving works of Plato into Latin during the 1460s. With the completion of this project, Italy's humanists finally possessed a detailed knowledge of the entire scope of Plato's ideas, something that scholars had longed for since the days of Petrarch.





The city of Florence. CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**CIVIC HUMANISM.** The humanist culture that Salutati and others introduced into Florence matured during the period between 1400 and 1440. A lineage of humanist chancellors succeeded Salutati, of whom Leonardo Bruni was the most notable. Bruni served as chancellor during the period between 1427 and 1444, continuing the tradition that had by then developed of civic support for the arts and humanist scholarship. A number of artistic projects undertaken during Bruni's period as chancellor gave Florence the veneer of a classical Roman city. These included the doors of the baptistery, the dome of the cathedral, and a number of churches, public buildings, and patrician palaces. These new movements evoked the antique past and were largely designed and executed by the Renaissance artists Filippo Brunelleschi, Leon Battista Alberti, and Michelozzo Michelozzi. Artists established ties with Florence's circle of humanists. Alberti, for instance, was both a practicing architect and a humanist, and he spent his time writings treatises on marriage and family life even as he codified the rules of visual perspective and revived ancient architectural style. Although Bruni's day-to-day government work consumed his time, he continued to

nourish his scholarly interests. He completed Latin translations of works of Aristotle, Plato, Plutarch, and other Greek writers, which became models of cultured style imitated by other Florentines. His *History of the Florentine People* was a widely popular work among the city's humanist circle, and although written in Latin, each volume's immediate translation into the local Tuscan dialect reached the broadest possible audience. In the work, Bruni argued that Florence had been founded during the Roman Republic, and not, as had been previously thought, in the era of the empire. The work, together with other monuments of Florence's artistic and literary life, glorified Florentine patriotism for its defense of civic liberty. More generally, an emphasis on civic values and the arts of good government was a subject that the Florentine humanists frequently took up in the works written in this period. The "civic humanism" that appeared in these years advocated an active life engaged in government and society as the most conducive to virtue. The town's civic humanists also celebrated the republican virtues of ancient Rome and they saw Florence as the modern heir to the ancient arts of good government.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ON THE WILL**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Dialogue on Free Will* Lorenzo Valla considered a perennial philosophical question: What part does God play in the creation of evil? The work was fashioned as a conversation between Valla and his friend Antonio Glarea. The two debated the nature of free will and predestination, considering the age-old question, Did God create Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ, knowing that he would be damned for his treachery? In the *Dialogue* Valla held to an extreme interpretation of predestination, one that would mirror the position later developed by Luther and Calvin during the sixteenth century. Toward the end of the dialogue, Lorenzo Valla delivers his own conclusions on predestination, stressing that God's will is inscrutable and that all the Christian can do is to have a simple faith in the promises that Christ has made in the gospels.

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**SOURCE:** Lorenzo Valla, *Dialogue on Free Will* in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*. Ed. E. Cassier, P. O. Kristeller, and J. H. Randall, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948): 180–181.

**HUMANISM BEYOND FLORENCE.** In part because of the success of the humanists at Florence, elites in northern and central Italy embraced humanism as the preferred means of preparing men to enter into government service. Often, students who had trained with Salutati, Bruni, and other Florentine scholars spread the new learning to cities throughout the peninsula. By 1450, humanists were active as civil servants, diplomats, and secretaries in most of Italy's important city governments, and humanist training became more and more essential as preparation for those who wished to undertake careers in government. Outside urban governments, humanists also worked in the courts of Italy's dukes and in the governments of church officials, including those of the pope. In addition, many who had received humanist training served as private tutors in the households of the elite, while humanists also taught in Italy's secondary schools and universities. The most fortunate of humanist scholars sometimes became "scholars-in-residence" at the courts of Italian dukes, in the church at Rome, or in the households of merchant princes. In these positions a scholar

received a salary merely in exchange for pursuing his studies. Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) was one such humanist, who was singled out by the Medici family in Florence for patronage. The son of the family's physician, Ficino exhibited precocious scholarly talents at an early age. When not yet thirty, the Medici set him up with a pension and a town house and a villa outside Florence in which he pursued his studies and translations of Plato. Lorenzo Valla (1405–1457), one of the outstanding humanists of the fifteenth century, received similar appointments, first in the household of the king of Naples and later at the papal court at Rome. Most humanist scholars, though, struggled to pursue their love of learning while working in government positions or teaching their craft.

**INTENSIFICATION OF LITERARY STUDIES.** As humanism spread from Florence throughout Italy, an increasing sophistication developed in the movement's critical study of languages. The career of Lorenzo Valla exemplifies this trend. Valla was the most distinguished

of the many students trained by Leonardo Bruni at Florence and early in his life he displayed a keen understanding of classical Latin and Greek. When he was not yet thirty he had written a grammar of classical Latin entitled *The Elegancies of the Latin Language*. During the next century the *Elegancies* became the dominant Latin grammar used by students of the language. Valla's nature was impetuous, though, and the criticisms that he made of scholasticism's barbaric Latin style offended his colleagues at the University of Padua. Soon after he completed the *Elegancies*, Valla fled Padua for Naples. There he enjoyed the most productive period of his career, devoting himself to perfecting the philological method. As Valla developed philology, it became a tool for studying the original meanings of words in texts. With the disciplined techniques that he developed, he was able to authenticate or deny the originality of documents that historians had long relied upon. He found many of the texts that had long been used to justify historical developments to be forgeries. His studies disproved the authenticity of *The Donation of Constantine*, a document that had long been a foundation of papal authority. Valla examined the text, which reputedly ceded secular control over Western Europe to the Roman pope. He found words, phrases, and concepts used in the document that had not existed during Constantine's life, and he demonstrated that the *Donation* was probably written in the late eighth or early ninth century, hundreds of years after the Roman emperor's death. Other philological studies that he undertook in this period denied the authenticity of the Apostle's Creed and pointed out inaccuracies in St. Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, that had long been used in Western Europe. Valla's critical scholarship raised the suspicions of the Inquisition at Naples, but although they questioned him, they allowed him to continue his studies. In the final years of his life he took up a position at Rome under the patronage of Nicholas V, the first humanist-trained pope.

**EPICUREANISM.** Until Valla's time most humanists had been attracted to those ancient philosophies that stressed self-denial and the pursuit of moral perfection. In the generations following Petrarch the humanists had often argued that mastering the human will through self-examination and self-denial was key if one hoped to attain a virtuous life. Lorenzo Valla's life and ideas, though, point to the growing philosophical variety of fifteenth-century humanism. Early in life he had been drawn to the ideas of the ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus, who had argued that the pursuit of pleasure was humanity's life-giving principle. Valla made use of Epicurus's insights concerning the importance of pleasure to



Lorenzo Valla. MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.

create a surprisingly original philosophy. In *On Pleasure*, a work completed during Valla's final years at Rome, he outlined a synthesis of ancient Greek Epicureanism with Christianity. On its surface, the text seemed to praise the joys and pursuits of the ancient pagans. But beneath this surface, Valla presented a highly moral Christian philosophy that would later be echoed in the works of sixteenth-century Protestants like Martin Luther and John Calvin. Only Christianity, according to Valla, offered a way out of the cycle of human sinfulness. The sinful human will, according to Valla, could not be overcome, nor could human beings hope to achieve moral perfection. But Christianity, through its pursuit of the higher aim of love, offered a means for human beings to substitute the pursuit of God's love for earthly pleasure. In this way the Christian religion presented humankind with a genuine way out of the dismal cycle that the pursuit of pleasure created. While these ideas were highly original, Valla's Christian Epicureanism found few admirers during his lifetime. His critical scholarly methods, though, inspired humanists in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

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## RENAISSANCE PLATONISM

**ORIGINS.** Medieval scholastic philosophers had often revered Plato, even though very few of his works were directly known to them. Plato's dualism (the notion that the spiritual was inherently superior to the physical) and his realism (the notion that the realm of ideas shaped our sensory perception of the world or that the things that we see are only dim reflections of universal ideals or forms) seemed to fit with Christian ideas about the world. Very few of Plato's works, though, had survived in the Middle Ages. Some were available in Greek, but knowledge of Greek was almost non-existent in medieval Europe. Most scholastics knew of Plato's ideas only secondhand. They were known, in other words, from the writings of St. Augustine, the late antique Platonic philosopher Plotinus, and the early medieval scholar Boethius. Francesco Petrarch had collected some of Plato's works in their original Greek, but he struggled unsuccessfully to learn the language. With the revival of the knowledge of Greek that occurred in Florence and other Italian cities after 1400, scholars began to read Plato and other Greek philosophers in their original texts. By the mid-fifteenth century knowledge of Greek expanded even further because of the political situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. By 1450, the Byzantine Empire, the descendant of ancient Rome, faced conquest at the hands of Islamic Turks. Although Byzantium had long been wealthier and more sophisticated than Western Europe, the empire building of Islamic states, particularly the Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean, had caused the empire's power and dominions to shrink over the last few centuries. Italy now became home to many cultivated scholars fleeing Islamic domination in the East. Among these, George Gemesthis Plethon (c. 1355–1450 or 1452) and Cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472) were important in helping to spread a detailed knowledge of the Greek classics and to advance the study of

Plato in Italy. Both Plethon and Bessarion attended the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439, where they exercised a profound influence on humanist scholars.

**NEW TRANSLATIONS.** In 1462, Cosimo de Medici, patriarch of the merchant banking house, asked Marsilio Ficino to complete a translation of Plato's works from a collection of manuscripts he had recently purchased. Even by the cultured standards of fifteenth-century Florence, Ficino was an extraordinary figure. The son of the Medici family physician, he had entered the University of Florence at an early age to study Latin grammar and rhetoric. He received training in Aristotelian physics and logic, too, but his father had intended that he pursue a career as a physician, and so he completed medical training. Healing became an important concept, both in his writings on medicine and in those that treated philosophy. His philosophical works, in other words, frequently aimed to heal the human soul. Ficino's interests were wide ranging. From his medical training he was also well versed in pharmacology and astrology (an important science to those who practiced medicine). He was a practicing alchemist, nourished an interest in music and music theory, and was an accomplished poet. He was also ordained a priest, wrote theological treatises, and was even considered at one point in his life for election as a bishop.

**PLATONIC ACADEMY.** It was long supposed that the Medici had supported the development of a formal academy in Florence to study the works of Plato, in which Marsilio Ficino served as the director. This myth of the Florentine Academy as a school seems, in part, to have been created by the sixteenth-century Medici to bolster their reputation for long-standing patronage of the arts. While a group of scholars seems to have coalesced around Ficino from the 1460s, they were a loosely knit society who met to discuss philosophical issues and to learn from Ficino's encyclopedic knowledge of Plato. The kind of philosophy that arose from this group was eclectic, and stressed privacy and contemplation. The Florentine Platonists placed a high value on meditation and mysticism with the goal to become God-like, something they thought was possible to humankind because of the race's creation in the likeness of God. The Florentine interest in Platonism during the second half of the fifteenth century marked a turning away from the active life of public duty that the civic humanists had advocated in the early 1400s. This transformation was part of a general shift away from civic involvement in the later Italian Renaissance to more personal modes of mystical contemplation. Renaissance Platonism became one of the most important intellectual fashions of the age, and its teach-

ings spread throughout Europe to shape religious beliefs, the visual arts, and learned culture over the next century and a half.

**FIGINO'S PLATONISM.** During the 1460s Ficino completed most of his translations of Plato's works from the manuscripts supplied to him by the Medici, but he continued to revise his translations until their publication in 1484. While working on the Platonic translations, Ficino received a request from Cosimo de Medici to complete a Latin translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. These were mystical and magical texts that survived in fragmentary form from ancient Egypt and which ranged over a variety of occult subjects, including alchemy, astrology, and numerology. These texts treated the knowledge of the occult as branches of practical science. Ficino interrupted his studies of Plato to complete the translation of these hermetic works, and influences from his readings of these magical texts found their way into his most important work, his *Platonic Theology*. Ficino began this work in 1469 and completed it five years later. He intended the *Theology* to be a philosophical summation, like the medieval summaries of figures like Aquinas, that would merge Plato's teachings with Christianity. The work's length, not to mention its repetitive and difficult nature, prevented a thorough examination of its ideas by most students of philosophy, including most of Ficino's own fifteenth-century disciples. While many of his followers adopted its ideas concerning the soul's divine nature, they were less rigorous in emulating Ficino's complex metaphysics. Some disciples popularized smatterings of the text's metaphysical ideas, but few understood all of Ficino's complex notions. Ficino saw his role as being one of harmonizing Christianity with Platonism. To be sure, Christian thinkers had long relied on Platonic concepts to make Christianity intelligible as a philosophic system. But Ficino was the first Western thinker to understand Plato's ideas and those of his commentators in their entirety. Harmonizing true ancient Platonism with Christianity was considerably more of a challenge. Like Plato, the most important dimensions of Ficino's thought were his strong dualism and realism. Ficino thought that the realm of universals or Platonic forms shaped all human life on earth and all human perceptions. In addition, his thought stressed that the physical world was inherently inferior to the spiritual, or internal world. Ficino and other Florentine Platonists championed the doctrine of Platonic love that became immensely popular in the sixteenth century. The term today describes non-sexual attractions between the sexes. For Ficino and other Renaissance Platonists, Platonic love meant a great deal



Marsilio Ficino. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

more than this. This form of attraction was a true meeting of the minds on the highest plane of reality, that is, in the realm of universals. Since the Platonists were usually men, Platonic love occurred within the male sex. According to Platonists like Ficino, this intellectual love was inherently superior to erotic attraction. Ficino and some of his disciples consequently advocated chastity just as vigorously as had medieval monks.

**METAPHYSICS.** According to Ficino, human beings inhabit a cosmos filled with spheres and intelligences. In the highest or supercelestial sphere one finds God, and beneath God is a many-storied universe consisting first of the angels and intelligences (ideas and semi-animate beings that motivate actions in people), the planets and fates, the souls of men, and finally the realm of the natural world. According to Ficino and later Platonists, every realm above humankind has the power to shape and influence human life, thought, and actions. The realms of God, the angels, intelligences, and fates affect human beings' mind, soul, and intellect. In addition, however, human beings are governed from below by their instincts. The human creature, then, is distinct among all Creation because it occupies an intermediate position between the realms of higher ideas, intelligences, and so forth, and the physical world. Human beings can

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE HUMAN MIND**

**INTRODUCTION:** Marsilio Ficino wrote his little tract called *Five Questions Concerning the Human Mind* in 1476, shortly after he had completed his monumental synthesis of Christianity and platonic philosophy entitled *Platonic Theology*. As in many of Ficino's works, he argues that the aim of the soul is the search after truth, which ends in God. To accomplish this journey, the soul's appetite must be whetted for divine perfection. In this passage Ficino also argues that the universe is infinite, one of the contributions of Platonism to the intellectual landscape of Europeans.

**SOURCE:** Marsilio Ficino, "Five Questions Concerning the Human Mind," Trans. J. Burroughs. In *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*. Ed. E. Cassirer, P. O. Kristeller, and J. H. Randall, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948): 201–202.

decide which realm—spiritual or physical—they want to inhabit. For Ficino, though, the central task of philosophy became to wean oneself away from attachment to earthly or physical things and to find ways to return to God. Thus much of his *Platonic Theology* dealt with learned magic or the "occult sciences" which Ficino believed could aid the human soul in returning to its origins in God. The soul's reunion with God could also be accomplished through cultivating poetry, prophecy, and meditation, or occur in the dream world of sleep, the unconsciousness of comas, and in certain psychological states.

**ANCIENT THEOLOGY.** Renaissance Platonism had its origins in humanism's hunger for knowledge of classical Antiquity. It is hardly surprising, given Ficino's bent toward philosophical synthesis, that he adopted a new stance concerning ancient religion and philosophy. Throughout his works he frequently argued that God had granted the ancient pagans a line of religious teachers who had taught philosophical insights that ran parallel to those he had supplied to the Jews through the

Hebrew prophets. Ficino called this notion *prisca theologia*, meaning that a divinely inspired ancient theology ran through all pagan religions. The fountainhead of this wisdom had been the Persian teacher Zoroaster, but Ficino insisted that the tradition of the ancient theology had achieved its full and final expression in the works of Plato. Thus Christians could profitably study the religious works of antique pagans as divinely inspired wisdom that mirrored the truths God had also given to Moses. In this way Ficino moved to christianize the works of the ancient philosophers.

**PICO.** Many of Ficino's ideas reached a broader audience through the brief but notable career of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). Pico was a nobleman, born to an ancient family of counts, but he renounced his inheritance in exchange for money to underwrite his studies. At fourteen he left home to study law in Bologna, but soon moved on to the universities at Ferrara and Padua. In the last institution, Pico became familiar with the works of Marsilio Ficino, and he soon began to correspond with Lorenzo de Medici and

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HUMANISM ON HUMAN DIGNITY**

**INTRODUCTION:** The widely-read scholar, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola was an admirer of Platonism and believed that there was a certain common foundation to all human religions. In his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* Pico praised the dignity of humankind because of its creation in the image and likeness of God. Sparked with the divine spark that God's creation gave to the species, human beings could achieve great things. They could also, as this passage shows, act as the great chameleons of the universe, modulating their behavior to various purposes.

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**SOURCE:** Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*. Ed. E. Cassirer, P. O. Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948): 225–227.

other Florentine humanists. Pico left Italy for the University of Paris in 1485, and he returned a year later. Upon his return he circulated and had printed a collection of *900 Theses* he had culled from his studies of ancient religions and philosophies. Like Ficino, Pico believed in a shared unity of religious and philosophical truths across the ancient religions, and he intended his *Theses* to be a definitive statement of these shared truths. He drew these from the works of pagans, Muslims, Christians, and Jews, and he intended to have his *Theses* debated at a conference to be held at Rome. But Pico's adventurous reading of texts from various religious traditions and his assertion that all religions shared in the same truths as Christianity caused the pope to examine the *Theses*. A commission appointed by Pope Innocent VIII declared thirteen of the work's assertions to be heretical, and when Pico refused to recant, the pope responded by condemning the entire document. The

philosopher left for Paris shortly afterward, although he reconciled with the church shortly before his untimely death. Despite his short life, Pico's fame continued to live on, primarily through the document that has long been known as his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. That work, which Pico circulated to stir debate for his *Theses*, extravagantly praised human dignity because of its spiritual descent from the mind of God. It argued that the highest calling of the human race was to seek the communion of the angels and higher intelligences that populated the celestial spheres. But it admitted that human beings were often "chameleon-like," and were more interested in emulating the beasts of the field than they were in rising to the heavens.

**INFLUENCES ON THE ARTS AND SCIENCE.** Renaissance Platonism praised creativity as a sign of humankind's creation in God's likeness. It became a widely popular philosophy, particularly in Florence, during the



Portrait of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. PUBLIC DOMAIN.



Lorenzo de' Medici. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

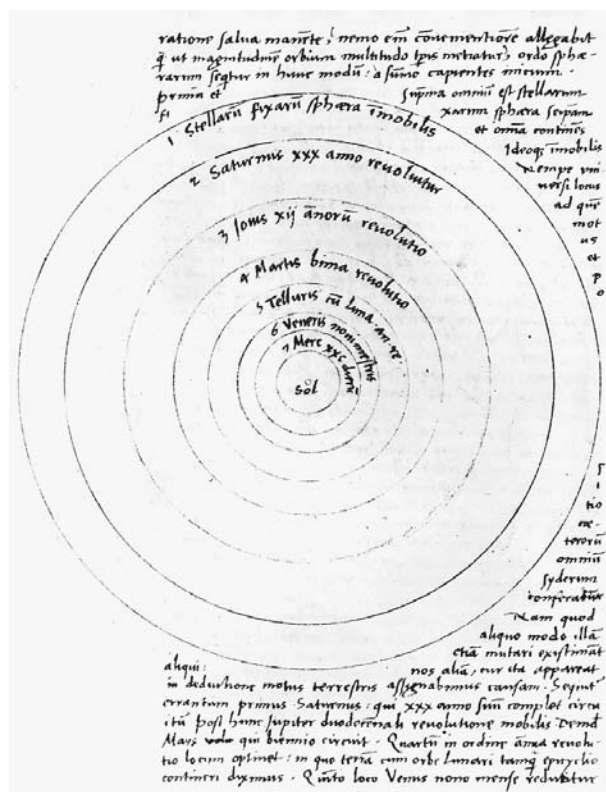
second half of the fifteenth century. There its ideas helped to shape the artistic world that would soon be known as the High Renaissance. The Platonists celebrated human creativity as evidenced in poetry and literature as divine attributes and they searched for ways in which the soul could return to commune with God. Artists relied on these and other ideas from the movement to argue that, like the poet, their creations were the product of humankind's divine genius. In this way they helped begin the process that elevated the artist's status above the medieval notion of a craftsman. Although he was not a humanist, Michelangelo Buonarroti was influenced by the vogue for Renaissance Platonism in his native Florence, and its ideas found expression in his poetry and other writings. Even during his lifetime, he was frequently interpreted as someone sparked with the flame of divine inspiration, an interpretation that would have been largely unthinkable without Platonism's celebration of creativity as a sign of humankind's creation in God's likeness. Michelangelo's sonnets also praised the skill of the sculptor to liberate Platonic forms that lay hidden and pre-existent in the marble he sculpted. And his painted compositions made use of Renaissance Platonism's ideas about the importance of

shapes; he frequently relied on circles and triangles to give his compositions form, shapes that had been praised by Renaissance Platonists for their strength and mystical meanings. Elsewhere in Italy, the philosophical movement's influence helped inspire the popularity of central-style churches. Within these buildings—constructed either as a Greek cross or in the round—the most distant worshiper could be no farther from the altar than another in the remaining three wings of the church. The architect Bramante had originally planned the new St. Peter's Basilica (begun after 1506) in this way, but the plan was later altered to make the building conform to the more traditional pattern of a Latin cross. Architects also used the harmonies and proportions that Platonic philosophers insisted lay hidden within the universe, and this emphasis on the importance of shape and mathematical proportion influenced the sciences, too. Renaissance Platonism taught that the heavenly spheres, intelligences, and angels that populated the celestial realms influenced life on earth. Through *Natural Magic* the Platonist hoped to use these relationships to best advantage in one's daily affairs. Thus astrology and other occult sciences were often profoundly important to the Platonist. In spite of this strikingly non-scientific way



of thinking about the world, some Renaissance Platonism ideas proved important in the shaping of a more modern scientific mentality. For the Platonist, mathematical laws governed all natural processes and the numerical relationships that were in evidence in Creation were part of the hidden mysteries of the universe that might be unlocked through mathematical investigation. Platonism thus helped to promote a growing arithmetical sophistication in Europe, as disciples of the movement frequently searched for the harmonies and numerical relationships they perceived as underlying Creation. Nicholas Copernicus and Johannes Kepler, promoters of the sun-centered or heliocentric universe, were just two of many Renaissance scientists whose thinking about the natural world was, in part, shaped by Platonism.

**SPREAD OF RENAISSANCE PLATONISM.** In the second half of the fifteenth century Florence had been the center of Renaissance Platonism. By 1500, though, disciples of the movement appeared in every country in Europe. In Germany, the Christian Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin was one of the first to be attracted to the movement. Through his friendship with Ficino and Pico he became convinced of the profound spiritual insights that Platonism offered. He devoted himself especially to studying the collection of Jewish mystical writings known as the Cabala, an interest he shared with Italian Platonists. Through two treatises he popularized their study within Germany's growing group of humanists. His taste for Jewish wisdom eventually embroiled him in international controversy, and led to his condemnation by Rome (see Religion: Humanism: Reuchlin Affair). In France, Jacques Lefèvre D'Étaples (1450–1536) was also a disciple of Pico and Ficino, and he nourished an interest in mystical writers. He published Ficino's translations of the hermetic texts and continued to pursue the studies of the Jewish Cabala that Pico and Reuchlin had begun. In England, Renaissance Platonism took root earlier than in many parts of Northern Europe thanks to a group of English scholars who had traveled to study with Ficino and Pico in the 1460s and 1470s. By the early sixteenth century the movement produced the brilliant scholar John Colet, who served as the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. In a series of famous lectures on the Epistles of St. Paul, Colet inspired a generation of English humanists with his dedication to Christian reform and the Platonic ideals of scholarship. His lectures also deeply affected Desiderius Erasmus. Platonism survived in England as a philosophical movement longer than in most European countries. It produced scholars like John Dee in the sixteenth century, who



Page from Copernicus' *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres* (1543). © HULTON/ARCHIVE. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

practiced the occult sciences in the court of Queen Elizabeth I, and the physician Robert Fludd, whose career stretched into the mid-seventeenth century. A revival of Platonism in seventeenth-century Cambridge produced a group of scholars who became known as the Cambridge Platonists and who professed a metaphysical worldview that had its origins in Ficino's *Platonic Theology*.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The High Renaissance; Visual Arts: The High Renaissance in Italy*

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## HUMANISM OUTSIDE ITALY

**ORIGINS.** In the fifteenth century humanism spread beyond the boundaries of Italy, first to Spain and Portugal and somewhat later to Northern Europe. In the Iberian Peninsula humanists often wrote in Spanish and Portuguese, adapting the literary style of Petrarch, Boccaccio, and other Italian humanists to their own local languages. Northern European humanists continued to rely on Latin, although there were notable exceptions of humanists who dedicated themselves to using and expanding their local languages. Outside Italy, humanists promoted notions about their movement similar to those already expressed in Florence and other Italian cities. They celebrated their movement as the birth of a new “Golden Age” in which religion and learning would be invigorated by the examples of Antiquity and a renewal in moral philosophy. In Northern Europe and Spain, humanism became associated with plans for Christian reform and placed less emphasis on the rhetoric of Cicero and other ancient writers. For this reason humanism outside Italy has sometimes been called “Christian humanism.” The philosophers and writers of this movement advocated a renewal of Christianity that would be illuminated by the new knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew and envisioned a reform of the church that would rely on the knowledge of Antiquity and the study of the scriptures in their original languages. They emphasized the importance of moral philosophy rather than scholastic logic, and were often just as critical of the scholastics as their Italian predecessors had been. But as in Italy, the gulf that separated humanism from scholasticism was not so deep as many humanists claimed. Some humanists, for instance, studied both scholasticism and the newer forms of learning, but their anti-scholastic rhetoric made many universities initially resistant to the humanists. By 1500, though, humanists had gained a foothold in many institutions of learning north of the Alps and in Spain and Portugal.

**GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS.** In both Germany and the Netherlands, the humanist movement exhibited signs that were similar to the Renaissance elsewhere in Northern Europe. Like its Italian version, humanism here owed a great debt to the classics of Greek and Roman Antiquity. Rediscovering and studying classical texts became a burning desire of humanists in Germany and the Netherlands; these scholars argued that

literary study was more conducive to human virtue than the arid logical considerations of scholasticism. For these reasons, the humanists initially encountered opposition as they tried to assume positions in Dutch and German schools and universities. Eventually, these barriers were overcome, and by 1500, the humanists had gained a foothold. In the educational institutions in which they taught, the humanists argued for a reformed curriculum based upon the study of the classical languages. But as the movement developed in Germany and the Netherlands, they also advocated religious reform and an ideal of learned Christian piety. In Germany, the first great scholar of humanism was Rudolph Agricola (1444–1485). Like many later German and Dutch humanists, Agricola had been schooled by the Brethren of the Common Life, the lay monastic movement that had developed in the Netherlands and Germany from the Modern Devotion movement. When he was 25, Agricola traveled to Italy, studying the Classics at Ferrara and Pavia. After ten years he returned to Germany, where he spent the remainder of his life encouraging the development of humanistic studies from his post at the University of Heidelberg. Agricola’s religious ideas were conservative and traditional, but he laid great emphasis on the study of the scriptures, something that later Dutch and German humanists embraced enthusiastically. Although he died relatively young, he had by the time of his death developed a group of disciples that included Conrad Celtis and Jakob Wimpheling, two scholars who expanded the cause of humanism in Germany. Their efforts saw humanism embraced in the imperial court, as the emperor Maximilian I appointed a number of classical scholars to serve as secretaries, historians, and astrologers in his government. One of the greatest of these was Johannes Reuchlin, who accepted several imperial appointments during the 1490s and 1500s. Reuchlin was one of the most widely traveled scholars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He studied at the universities of Orléans, Basel, Paris, Tübingen, and in Rome and Florence, before devoting himself to the study of the Hebrew language and Jewish literature. He authored the first grammar of Hebrew intended for Christian students of the language, and he published several monumental studies of the Jewish Cabala. Because of these involvements, Reuchlin was eventually drawn into a controversy over the study of Jewish books (see Religion: Reuchlin Affair). Many of the imperial humanists that Germany produced in these years were advocates of German nationalism. In their historical works these court humanists tried to address a sense of cultural inferiority. They attempted to show in their works that Germans had not been barbarians (an interpretation of German history

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CHRISTIAN HUMANISM**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Handbook of the Militant Christian*, Desiderius Erasmus outlined a program of Christian ethics based upon the life of Christ. In the following passage he recommends his readers seek invisible and spiritual things rather than material ones. Renaissance Platonism here influences Erasmus's arguments, especially in his argument that humankind occupies an intermediary position between the visible and invisible worlds.

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**SOURCE:** Desiderius Erasmus, *Handbook of the Militant Christian* in *The Essential Erasmus*. Ed. and Trans. J. P. Dolan (New York: Penguin, 1993): 60–63.

that Italian humanists had kept alive through their knowledge of Tacitus and other ancient Latin writers). The Dutch humanists did not share this focus on national identity. But like their German counterparts, they took an interest in the study of traditional mystical texts and in the newer metaphysical ideas of Renaissance Platonism.

**ERASMUS.** The Dutch-born Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466–1536) was the commanding figure produced by the Renaissance in Northern Europe. Erasmus was a religious thinker of profound depth, a writer of some of the sixteenth century's most brilliant and cultivated prose, and a philosopher of some sophistication. Like Agricola and other German and Dutch humanists, he had been trained in youth in the traditions of the Brethren of the Com-

mon Life, and the concept of the imitation of Christ advocated by the Modern Devotion had shaped his early life. To these early interests, Erasmus added training in the methods of both humanism and scholasticism. Erasmus's writings fall into three categories. First, he produced works of critical scholarship, editing important classical works and translations, including his definitive translation of the New Testament. Second, Erasmus published a number of comic and satirical works, including his famous *Colloquies*. He wrote the *Colloquies* as a series of conversational dialogues, and teachers used them to train young men in the knowledge of Latin. The works mocked the foibles and superstitions of people, most especially of monks and scholars. Finally, a third category of Erasmus's works aimed for a re-establishment of early Christian teachings in Europe. In this last kind of work,



Portrait of Desiderius Erasmus. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Erasmus frequently outlined his “Philosophy of Christ,” a set of teachings he believed were revealed in the gospels, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount. Among the several works that Erasmus wrote in this vein, his *Handbook of the Militant Christian* (1503) was the most influential in attracting disciples to his ideas and plans for Christian reform. The work argued that the kernel of all Christ’s teachings consisted in love, charity, and respect exercised toward one’s neighbors. “Wish for good, pray for good, act for good to all men” is how he summarized this great rule in the *Handbook*. Erasmus’s beautiful literary style and his engaging summation of the core of Christian teachings attracted numerous admirers throughout Europe in the sixteenth century. To many educated humanists, his works presented a middle path between the extremes of traditional Catholicism and the newer and more radical forms of Protestantism. Vestiges of his reform ideas survived in the works of many humanists, many of whom served in Christian reform efforts throughout Europe. His ideas, for instance, were particularly important in shaping the course of the Reformation’s teachings in England, and had admirers at the same time in the Catholic reformers in Spain and Italy. As the sixteenth century progressed, though, and

religious positions hardened on both sides of the Protestant and Catholic divides in Europe, Erasmus attracted increasing criticism from many quarters. Catholic traditionalists identified in Erasmus’s emphasis on the spiritual nature of Christianity a set of teachings that was subversive to the sacraments and religious discipline. By the end of the century, a number of his works had been placed upon the *Index of Prohibited Books*, a list of books which Catholics were forbidden to read. For committed Protestants, too, Erasmus’s denial of the concept of justification by faith and his loyalty to Rome helped limit his appeal.

**ENGLAND.** Renaissance humanism attracted significant support from English intellectuals at the end of the fifteenth century, despite the conservative character of intellectual life in the country at the time. Many aspects of English learning remained tied to medieval scholasticism, and chivalric ideals still dominated English elite society in the late fifteenth century. Still, during the 1460s and 1470s a group of English scholars traveled to Italy to study with humanists and several were students of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino. These included Thomas Linacre, William Sellyng, and William Grocyn. This last figure was particularly important in building a circle of humanist scholars in England. Grocyn served as court physician and a royal tutor during the time of Henry VII and Henry VIII. While he did not write a great deal, like Rudolph Agricola in Germany, he helped to popularize humanistic studies among England’s intellectual elite. The first undeniably accomplished English humanist, though, was John Colet (1466–1519), who was a member of the clergy and dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. Colet had spent four years in Italy during his youth, much of it in close affiliation with Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. When he returned to England, he helped to spread knowledge of Ficino and Renaissance Platonism. Like Erasmus and other Northern Renaissance humanists, he was critical of the corruption of the church and the popular superstitions of the people, and his sermons argued for a reform of ecclesiastical abuses. His great achievement, though, lay in fostering the study of the humanities in England through his foundation of St. Paul’s School in London. This cathedral school opened the way for the training of members of the English elite in the classics and it exerted a significant influence on English intellectual life during the following centuries.

**MORE.** Sir Thomas More (1478–1535), an admirer of John Colet, exemplifies a different path taken by some English humanists. He was a layman and a lawyer who occupied the highest political positions in the court of

Henry VIII. More received his Bachelor of Arts at Oxford before studying law at the Inns of Court in London. By 1510, he had become an official in the City of London and he soon rose to serve in Henry VIII's diplomatic service. It was while on a diplomatic mission to Flanders that More wrote part of his famous *Utopia*, a work that has since his time been the model for many imaginary visions of a perfect society. The *Utopia*, one of the best examples of sixteenth-century literature, also reflects More's personal philosophy (see Literature: Utopia). He was skeptical of humankind's ability to achieve virtue, and the society he imagined in his work was tightly ordered and highly disciplined so that its people could avoid their natural inclinations toward wrongdoing. More was well read, and an excellent stylist in Latin prose; he was also well connected among humanists in England and in Europe. Among his correspondents, he maintained a close friendship with Erasmus throughout his life, and Erasmus dedicated his *Praise of Folly* to him. Religiously, though, More was more conservative than the Dutch humanist. He engaged in prayer vigils and practiced ascetic disciplines like the wearing of a hair shirt. While he enthusiastically supported charities, he was also an unswerving opponent of heresy. As a royal official, he supported the persecution of heretics, including those who were drawn to the new Protestant ideas that began to circulate in England in the 1520s. The same sword of royal authority that More wielded to eradicate Protestants in England would eventually be turned against him. Because of his loyalty to the Roman Church, he refused to recognize Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, and he was condemned and beheaded in 1535.

**FRANCE.** In France, humanism developed within the same time frame as it did in Germany, the Netherlands, and England. While the country's intellectual centers, particularly the University of Paris, were resistant to the new studies, humanists had established themselves at Lyon and Paris by the late fifteenth century. Both towns were important printing centers, and they played a key role in spreading the new humanistic knowledge throughout Europe. Robert Gaguin (1433–1501) was the first in a distinguished lineage of French humanists. In his works he tried to harmonize classical philosophy with Christian teaching, a goal that would be pursued by a number of French Renaissance thinkers. Gaguin's influence upon his students at Paris helped to permanently establish the humanities within the university. His influence, though, was soon to be eclipsed by Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) and Jacques Lefèvre D'Étaples (1450–1536), the two most accomplished scholars of the French Renaissance. By train-



Guillaume Budé. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

ing, Budé was a lawyer, and found no university appointment until he established his own college late in life. He was a particularly astute philologist, who translated the Greek works of Plutarch and wrote treatises in Greek even in his youth. Of the many honors that Budé received during his lifetime, one was to prove particularly important for posterity: his appointment as the head of the king's library enabled him to purchase a number of important Greek manuscripts. Jacques Lefèvre D'Étaples, by contrast, took a different turn in his scholarship. Inspired by the example of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Lefèvre became convinced of the unity of philosophical truth. As a result he ranged broadly in his studies, dedicating himself to the works of Italian Renaissance Platonists, the medieval scholastics and mystics, the Jewish cabalistic writers, and hermeticism. As he matured, though, he concentrated his efforts on biblical scholarship, and in his studies of the New Testament he developed ideas that were similar to many German Protestants. Lefèvre remained a devout Catholic, but as a consequence, his scriptural studies shaped the ideas of some of France's early Protestant reformers.

**SPAIN AND PORTUGAL.** Humanist influences can be seen in both Spain and Portugal from the early fifteenth century as the works of Petrarch and Boccaccio became popular in the peninsula. In both countries, as elsewhere in Europe, the demand for properly trained

secretaries and diplomats helped to fuel the popularity of humanism. The presence of an increasing number of skilled Latinists within the region in the fifteenth century encouraged the study of classical texts, as well as the importation of works by the Italian humanists and their translation into Spanish and Portuguese. During the reign of the married monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, humanist study within the two kingdoms of Castile and Aragon expanded. The project for a new polyglot Bible at Alcalá, which became known as the Complutensian Polyglot, brought many humanists to Spain in the early sixteenth century. But it was not until the reign of the Spanish emperor Charles V (r. 1516–1556) that a true Renaissance in Spanish learning occurred. During the early part of Charles' reign Spain's humanists revered the works of Erasmus, including the *Handbook of the Militant Christian*, which for a time became the country's most widely read devotional book. Its influence persisted even after its placement on the *Index* in 1559. In Charles' Spain, a number of distinguished humanists were actively engaged in the king's service. These included Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, Juan de Valdés, and Antonio de Guevara. The greatest of Spain's humanists, Juan Luis Vives, was also from a family of recent converts to Christianity. Known as *conversos*, these former Jews or descendants of Jews were particularly receptive to the ideas of Erasmian humanism. Vives studied in Spain until his teenage years, when he moved to the University of Paris. When still young, he distinguished himself through the publication of his *The Fable of Man*, a work tinged with Renaissance Platonism. As a result of his literary successes, Vives became a professor of literature at the University of Louvain, and eventually served as the royal tutor in the court of Henry VIII. When he failed to endorse Henry's divorce of Catherine of Aragon, he was forced to emigrate, and he settled in Bruges in Flanders where he spent the remainder of his life. Vives' death came before a great change in attitude toward humanism began to sweep across his native Spain. At home, fears of Protestantism gave rise after mid-century to attempts to suppress the Erasmian humanism that had circulated in Spain relatively freely during the first half of the century. Humanists came to be suspected of heresy, and followers of Erasmus, together with Spanish mystics (known as the *Alumbrados*) became victims of persecution. In Portugal, the rise of counter-reforming sentiments similarly discouraged a nascent humanist culture.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: The Spread of Protestantism in Northern Europe*

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## NEW TRENDS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY THOUGHT

**NEW QUESTIONS.** The character of intellectual life in sixteenth-century Europe was traditional and not given to dramatic reassessments or change. Nevertheless, in many areas of life new questions arose that could not be easily answered by the wisdom that had been received from Antiquity or the Middle Ages. The discovery of other parts of the globe, for instance, raised questions about cultures and histories that had apparently not been mentioned in the Bible or in ancient authorities. Most thinkers continued to try to fit their new knowledge of these societies and exotic lands into the textual knowledge they had received from tradition. The authority of the church came under attack in the sixteenth century, too. The Protestant Reformation began with dramatic blows against the power of the clergy and the pope, yet during the remainder of the century, Protestant leaders recreated political authority in ways that were essentially traditional and conservative. Most intellectuals opposed radical change and revolutionary ideas, and even the most radical religious and social reformers of the century usually argued that they were restoring, not destroying, tradition. At the same time there were truly revolutionary thinkers at work within the sixteenth century whose ideas eventually altered the course of intellectual debate. While their scholarship was not completely integrated into the fabric of sixteenth-century intellectual life, they raised questions that Europe's intellectuals returned to again in early-modern and modern times. These thinkers had been trained in the traditions of medieval scholasticism and Renaissance humanism, but they broke the mold of these traditions to ask new questions and to answer them in ways that eventually led to more dramatic change.

**ARISTOTELIANISM.** At the same time as Platonism became one of the intellectual fashions of the later Renaissance, a revival of Aristotle was also underway, particularly in Italy at the University of Padua, an institution

long associated with the ideas of the great Greek philosopher. In Northern Europe scholasticism had relied on Aristotle's philosophy and logic to support the teachings of the church. At Padua, though, scholars had been more concerned with the study of Aristotle's *Physics* and with the insights that his philosophy offered in natural philosophy (the branch of knowledge concerned with nature and matter) and medicine. Padua's Aristotelians had long developed a venerable tradition of commenting upon the works of Aristotle. They were also largely responsible for transmitting knowledge of the great Aristotelian Averroës among Europeans. The twelfth-century Averroës was a Spanish Arab, and his works had emphasized the superiority of reason over faith. While the tradition of studying and commenting upon Aristotle and Averroës remained strong in fifteenth-century Padua, it was now to be affected by the revival of knowledge of Greek. Now enlightened by their knowledge of Aristotle's original language, Paduans re-examined his works. The results produced a reassessment of Aristotle's philosophy similar to that which was occurring with Plato among Florence's Platonists.

**POMPONAZZI.** The greatest thinker this new scholarship produced was Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), a native of Mantua who had studied at Padua and later became a professor there. Pomponazzi treated many subjects in his popular lectures at Padua since his interests ranged across natural philosophy, psychology, and logic. His most famous published work was *On the Immortality of the Soul*, which denied that philosophy could prove the soul's eternal existence. Pomponazzi's position was not entirely new, but the methods that he used to prove the mortal nature of the human soul were innovative. They fascinated his students, even as they sparked controversy. Pomponazzi identified the human soul with the intellect, and he argued that a human being's intellect was a mere organic phenomenon that perished with the body. Pomponazzi realized that his ideas were a challenge to morality. For if the soul did not survive death, why should someone lead a moral life? To this question, Pomponazzi responded that virtuous living was its own reward. A person who leads a good life, in other words, need never suffer guilt. But many intellectuals throughout Italy responded to Pomponazzi's challenge to human immortality by denouncing his work, publishing tracts against him, and, at Venice, even by burning his book. In 1514 at the Fifth Lateran Council, the church reaffirmed the concept of the immortality of the soul against Pomponazzi's challenge. For his part, Pomponazzi defended his denial of the soul's immortality by insisting that he had come to those conclusions, not on

religious grounds, but through the logical methods of philosophy. Philosophy, in other words, could not prove the soul's immortal existence; that truth must be accepted through faith. And faith, Pomponazzi had already pointed out toward the end of his *On Immortality*, is a realm that is superior to philosophy. Whether Pomponazzi actually believed that the Christian faith transcended human reason remains an open question. In the remaining years of his life he continued to devote himself to daring philosophical studies, publishing two more important treatises before his death in 1525. The first of these, *On Fate*, was strongly deterministic and largely denied the freedom of the human will, while the second, *Of Incantations*, explained away miracles by using naturalistic explanations. Pomponazzi's naturalistic philosophy, while popular in some quarters in the early sixteenth century, did not produce a long-lasting circle of followers. In the era of heightened religious controversy that occurred as a result of the Protestant Reformation, the church discouraged attempts like those of Pomponazzi to explain away concepts like human immortality. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though, European philosophers resurrected for discussion the questions he had posed.

**MACHIAVELLI.** Another challenge to traditional morality appeared in late Renaissance Italy in the political ideas of Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527). Machiavelli was born in a Florence that had been tightly controlled by Lorenzo de' Medici. Very little is known about his early life. He received a humanist education, but did not learn Greek. His father was an impoverished lawyer, and so Machiavelli entered public life in 1498 as a member of the Florentine government. Machiavelli's career in Florentine politics occurred during the Republican period that followed the expulsion of the Medici and which lasted until 1512. As a member of the government Machiavelli was soon charged with important diplomatic missions, and these allowed him to witness the treachery that occurred in Italian foreign relations. In 1512, Machiavelli's career was cut short when the Medici returned to power and removed those who had served the Republic. He retired to his country home and spent the remaining years of his life writing plays, satires, poetry, and other literary works. Some of the most important works completed in this period include *The Prince*, *Florentine Histories*, and *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy*. In 1526, the Medici government of Florence once again recalled Machiavelli to public life, but within a few months the family was expelled again. The officers of the new Republic removed Machiavelli from office, and he died several months later.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ESTABLISHING A REPUBLIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli has long been famous for his portrait of the ruler contained in *The Prince*. Machiavelli spent his youth and middle age, though, working for the Republic of Florence as a civic official and when he had been banished from power he wrote his *Discourses*, a work that analyzes the reasons for the initial successes and later failures of the Roman Republic. In the following extract, Machiavelli discusses and approves of the murder of Remus by his brother Romulus (mythological twins considered to be the founders of Rome), because it gave rise to an effective state—a state that, in other words, achieved the greatest good for the greatest number of its subjects. The justification of murder for a greater political good is an example of Machiavelli's amorality.

We must assume, as a general rule, that it never or rarely happens that a republic or monarchy is well constituted, or its old institutions entirely reformed, unless it is done by one individual; it is even necessary that he whose mind has conceived such a constitution should be alone in carrying it into effect. A sagacious legislator of a republic, therefore, whose object is to promote the public good, and not his private interests, and who prefers his country to his own successors, should concentrate all authority in himself; and a wise mind will never censure any one for having employed any extraordinary means for the purpose of establishing a kingdom or constituting a republic. It is well that, when the act accuses him, the result should excuse him; and when the result is good ... it will always absolve him from blame. For he is to be reprehended who commits violence for the purpose of destroying, and not he who employs it for beneficent purposes.

The lawgiver should, however, be sufficiently wise and virtuous not to leave this authority which he has assumed either to his heirs or to any one else; for mankind, being more prone to evil than to good, his successor might employ for evil purposes the power which he had used only for good ends. Besides, although one man alone should organize a government, yet it will not endure long if the administration of it remains on the shoulders of a single individual; it is well, then, to confide this to the charge of many, for thus it will be sustained by the many. Therefore, as the organization of anything cannot be made by man, because the divergence of their opinions hinders them from agreeing as to what is best, yet, when once they do understand it, they will not readily agree to abandon it. That Romulus deserves to be excused for the [murder] of his brother and that of his associate, and that what he had done was for the general good, and not for the gratification of his own ambition, is proved by the fact that he immediately instituted a Senate with which to consult, and according to the opinions of which he might form his resolutions. And on carefully considering the authority which Romulus reserved for himself, we see that all he kept was the command of the army in case of war, and the power of convoking the Senate. This was seen when Rome became free, after the expulsion of the Tarquins, when there was no other innovation made upon the existing order of things than the substitution of two Consuls, appointed annually, in place of an hereditary king; which proves clearly that all the original institutions of that city were more in conformity with the requirements of a free and civil society than with an absolute and tyrannical government.

**SOURCE:** Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince, and the Discourses*. Trans. Christian Detmold (New York: Modern Library, 1950): 138–140.

**POLITICAL THEORY.** While most famous for *The Prince*, Machiavelli developed a consistent theory of the state in several of his works that was novel for its insight. He wrote these works during one of the low points of Italian political history, as French, German, and Spanish forces invaded the peninsula and used Italy's disunity to play one state against the other. Machiavelli dealt with these issues in his works and tried to present solutions to Italy's problems. But he also theorized in his political tracts about government in general. He argued that immutable laws ruled politics, laws that did not operate according to the considerations of personal morality. He advocated secular government, kept free from all interference from the church. Although he believed that organized religion was necessary in a society, he saw it as

little more than a mysterious force that bound a state's subjects together in a common set of beliefs. He also supported a strong military, even in a republic, as a necessary protector of public welfare. Machiavelli has often been accused of amorality, of justifying in his works any and all means to achieve an end. This charge has most frequently been levied against *The Prince*, the work Machiavelli intended as a manual to inspire an Italian ruler to build a unified coalition that would expel Italy's foreign invaders. Even in *The Prince*, though, Machiavelli does not advocate that a ruler use any and all means to obtain and maintain his power. Instead he observes that when faced with certain circumstances, he must put aside his own morality and act in a way that accomplishes the greatest good for the greatest number. This



same argument appears in Machiavelli's treatise on republican government, *The Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy*. There he approves of ancient Romulus' decision to murder his brother Remus, because it allowed for the creation of a strong republic, a task that must be completed by one person. During the rest of his life Romulus vindicated the murder by dedicating himself to building an effective state that secured the liberty of its citizens. Passages like these celebrated the valor and bravery of the ancient Romans, values Machiavelli often saw as lacking in his own time. But while he was sometimes pessimistic about his contemporaries' ability to achieve the virtues of the ancient Romans, he was more often cautiously optimistic. His works expressed a fervent desire that a revitalized Italy, animated by the ancient spirit of military valor, might successfully expel its foreign invaders.

**RESISTANCE.** *The Prince* had advocated strong government under the authority of a determined monarch as the solution to Italy's political woes. In the sixteenth century "Machiavellianism," as the political philosophy of *The Prince* came to be known, became synonymous with evil and amorality in public life, and thus political philosophy did not immediately follow the lead that Machiavelli had laid out in his work. In Germany, France, the Netherlands, England, and Scotland, religious controversies fostered a new critical examination of the power of governments, and theories of resistance to state tyranny were the result. Protestantism was largely the incubator for these new attitudes toward government, and it was in Germany that these ideas first began to appear. Martin Luther had always been careful in his career as a religious reformer to stress the Christian's duty to submit to the power of the state. Political authority was part of the divinely established realities that the pious must accept. His essentially conservative attitude had helped to protect his reform movement from the charge of political subversion, particularly in the 1520s and 1530s when other more radical groups like the leaders of the Peasants' War of 1524–1525 and the Anabaptists had argued for more extreme social and political changes (see Religion: Radical Reformation). By the mid-sixteenth century, though, a group of Lutheran conservatives encountered a dilemma. Their states began requiring them to profess teachings that ran counter to their conscience and their theological interpretations. Meeting at Magdeburg in 1550–1551, the group wrote its own manifesto. Known as the Magdeburg Confession, the document soon circulated throughout Europe, where its strains of resistance to governmental authority inspired a number of groups. Supporters of this "resis-



Portrait of Niccolò Machiavelli. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

tance theory" soon produced a spate of tracts and pamphlets that outlined under what circumstances subjects might disobey their rulers. In France, Protestant writers, including Theodore Beza (1519–1605) and Philippe du Plessis Mornay (1549–1623), were particularly active in developing this political theory, especially after the slaughters of Protestants that occurred during the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres of 1572. John Knox, the Calvinist reformer of the church in Scotland, the Dutch Calvinists who revolted against Spain in the later sixteenth century, and English Puritans all developed resistance theories, too. Beza's works, though, had an especially wide appeal because he was careful to outline precisely how, when, and why subjects might oppose their rulers. His works did not argue that everyone had the right to resist the will of a monarch. Instead he concentrated on the French nobility, who had long shared power with the king in France's national assembly, known as the Estates General. Many of France's nobles were Calvinists, and Beza hoped to invigorate them to oppose royal plans to suppress Calvinism. His works emphasized that obedience to God was more important than obedience to a king, and that natural law granted subjects the right to depose a monarch who acted contrary to the will of God. Beza's reading of biblical and

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CULTURAL RELATIVISM**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his famous essay “Of Cannibals,” Michel de Montaigne recounted having seen Brazilians while on a trip to the French city Rouen. Montaigne criticizes the fantastic accounts that have circulated about these peoples, and tries to establish a true picture of their behavior. His work is unusual as an early statement of the concept of cultural relativism. He argues, in other words, that culture and historical developments produce differences between peoples, and at times he extols the greater simplicity and virtue of the New World natives when compared against the barbarism of Europeans.

**SOURCE:** Michel de Montaigne, “Of Cannibals,” in *The Complete Essays of Michel de Montaigne*. Trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1958): 152.

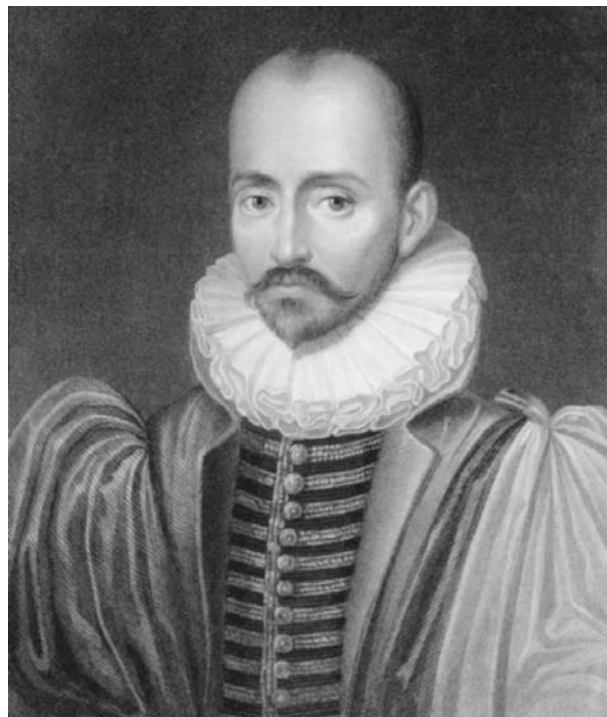
ancient history was broad, and his works pointed to numerous instances in which lower officials like the French nobles had resisted the authority of a tyrant.

**POLITIQUES.** Beza’s opponents saw his attempts to sanction resistance as a prescription for anarchy, and the second half of the sixteenth century saw numerous attempts to defend the sovereign power of the monarch against those who supported resistance. The political tide of the period was on the side of those who supported the strong central authority of the monarch over the state, although Beza and other Protestant resisters continued to inspire readers and rebels in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Wracked by internal civil conflicts born of the country’s religious disunity, some French legal scholars downplayed the role that religion should play in public life. They argued instead that the survival of the state was more important than religious differences between Catholics and Protestants. For this reason, their opponents mocked them at the time as *politiques*, because they emphasized political goals at the expense of spiritual issues. Jean Bodin (1530–1596) was one of the most important of this

group, and his ideas would have an impact, not only in France, but also across Europe. They helped to form the foundations of the later seventeenth-century theory of absolutism, but, when he wrote, Bodin saw his ideas as a solution to the political and religious intrigues common in his times. He pleaded with his countrymen—both Catholic and Protestant—to respect the power of the monarch. In his *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, first published in 1576, he argued that the king’s authority over the state must be respected. The survival of the state—an entity that could do the greatest good for the greatest number—was more important than the goal of enforcing religious uniformity. Similar pleas for a limited tolerance of religious differences to foster civil peace appeared in the works of other *politiques*, including the famous late sixteenth-century essayist, Michel de Montaigne. While the political program advocated by the group fell in and out of royal favor in the last two decades of the sixteenth century, the program of monarchical unity amidst religious disunity that the *politiques* envisioned would eventually be established by Henry IV (r. 1594–1610). A Catholic convert, Henry eventually granted a limited degree of religious toleration to his

former Protestant compatriots, the Huguenots, helping to lay the foundations for the strong centralized monarchy that developed in seventeenth-century France.

**MONTAIGNE.** Politics had initially shaped the strikingly original insights of Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), one of the greatest minds of the late sixteenth century. Montaigne had been trained as a humanist, and as the son of a prosperous nobleman he had been brought up to assume a role in public life. He practiced law and became a member of the royal court, but he was horrified by the Wars of Religion and retired from public life to his country estate. There he soon began the task that would consume the rest of his life: the writing of his *Essays*, a collection of internal thoughts and debates he conducted with himself over two decades. The *Essays* show that Montaigne was not a systematic thinker, even though the works are rich in moral insight. In them, Montaigne ranged over his thoughts about the most diverse of subjects. He found the ideological dogmatism of both contemporary Catholics and Calvinists wanting, and was skeptical generally about all attempts to establish moral absolutes. Instead his sermons counseled tolerance of divergent opinions. Montaigne was one of the most important spokesmen for the positions of the *politiques*, the party who argued that religious differences were less important than the need to preserve the peace of the state. Montaigne's ideas as recorded in his *Essays* seem to bear little imprint from his own Catholic upbringing. He solves the intellectual dilemmas and problems that he treats in these short pieces in a completely secular way, with little recourse to traditional Christian morality or church teaching. Montaigne was also a liberal thinker, able to train his penetrating glance upon the behavior of his countrymen, to criticize their barbarity, and to express his distaste for their extremism in all its forms. He was also intellectually curious about those areas of the globe recently discovered by explorers. One of his most famous essays, *Of Cannibals* subjects the customs that have been discovered among Indians in the New World to searching questions and compares it to the behavior of Europeans. Montaigne concludes that all cultures are relative and are produced by a combination of history, religion, and environment. He concludes, moreover, that there is a hint of barbarism in all peoples, and there is little to suggest that Europeans are more civilized than the inhabitants of the New World. In this and many ways, Montaigne questioned the received wisdom long accepted by most European intellectuals, and he began the process of questioning the underlying assumptions of intellectual culture in ways that would be continued by later seventeenth-century philosophers.



Michel de Montaigne. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

**IMPLICATIONS.** While the character of religious and intellectual life remained conservative in sixteenth-century Europe, thinkers like Montaigne, Beza, Machiavelli, and Bodin posed new questions that extended the boundaries of intellectual debate. Their ideas were not completely integrated, nor were the issues they raised exhausted by the controversies they inspired in their own times. During the following two centuries European philosophy returned to the skepticism that Montaigne expressed in his penetrating *Essays*. Thinkers examined the claims that Machiavelli, Bodin, and the *politiques* made for the central authority of the state. And they revisited the criticisms that resisters made of the unfettered authority of monarchs over the human conscience. The sixteenth century, then, presents us with a time in which a new breed of intellectuals set the agenda for the intellectual debate to be pursued during the early-modern period.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: The Northern Renaissance; Religion: The Reformation's Origins*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Philosophy*

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### DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

c. 1466–1536

*Scholar*  
*Philosopher*  
*Religious reformer*

**LIFE.** The early life of Desiderius Erasmus remains shrouded in some mystery, a situation that Erasmus helped foster. He was the illegitimate son of a priest, and he remained acutely sensitive about his illegitimacy throughout his life. For this reason he left little testimony behind about his youth, and some of what he did leave was deceptive. We know that he attended the Brethren of the Common Life schools at Deventer and Hertogenbosch in Holland, and that Erasmus and his brother were eventually orphaned. Their guardians suggested that they enter the Augustinian Order. Later in life Erasmus admitted that he had never felt much calling to the religious life, but instead of abandoning his monastic vows completely as Luther and other Protestants did, he sought papal dispensations that relaxed his observance of his order's rule. He was ordained a priest in 1492 and began to work in the household of the bishop of Cambrai, in modern Belgium. The bishop paid for Erasmus to attend the University of Paris where he studied theology. There he developed his strong dislike for scholasticism, nourishing instead his interest in classical literature. In 1499, Erasmus made his first journey to England where he met many scholars, including Sir Thomas More, who became a lifelong friend. At this time, too, John Colet, the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, encouraged Erasmus to begin biblical studies. He returned to the continent, and by 1506 he was in Italy, where he received a doctorate in theology from the University of Turin. A few years later Erasmus returned to

England, where he took a lectureship at Cambridge and continued his biblical studies. In 1514, he took up a post in the household of the Hapsburg Prince Charles (who later became the emperor Charles V). By this time Erasmus had already achieved considerable fame from his written works, and his several pensions from church appointments allowed him to set up a household at Louvain where he finished his Greek and Latin New Testament. These works established him as an authority on biblical matters, although some criticized his translations for inaccuracies in the first few years after they appeared. Erasmus himself admitted that he had rushed to complete the work, and he made numerous corrections to later editions. His discipline paid off as his versions became the standard critical edition of the New Testament used by scholars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Because of the depth of learning, the 1520s saw Erasmus participating in the religious debate of the early Reformation. At Louvain, Erasmus was credited with having inspired Luther, and as his situation there grew increasingly untenable, he moved on to Basel in Switzerland in 1521. When that town converted to Protestantism in 1529, Erasmus moved again, this time to Catholic Freiburg in southwestern Germany. In the last years of his life both Protestants and Catholics attacked him—Catholics because they doubted his orthodoxy and Protestants for his failure to support Luther. At the same time his supporters, sometimes known as Erasmians, continued to be an influential group within the Roman Church, demanding reform of its institutions and working to further classical studies. While en route to the Netherlands in 1536, Erasmus died at Basel.

**WORKS.** Erasmus was one of the most broadly educated figures of the Renaissance and one of its most creative and productive writers. Erasmus himself published a catalogue of his enormous body of works in 1523 and he divided these into nine categories. These categories ranged over educational treatises and textbooks, collections of proverbs and wisdom, devotional books, polemics, biblical studies, critical editions of Latin texts, and works of church history and theology. In addition to this voluminous output, more than 3,000 of his letters survive and these show that Erasmus was constantly in contact with the most politically important and brilliant minds of his age. He published many of these letters while he was living, often in annual installments, and students avidly studied them to imitate their author's elegant style. Although he was primarily a literary figure of unusual distinction and was known even while living as the "Prince of the Humanists," his works reveal a great deal of subtle philosophy.

**POLITICAL IDEAS.** In his *Education of a Christian Prince*, published in 1516, Erasmus revealed many of his political ideas. In contrast to the roughly contemporary portrait of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Erasmus portrayed the monarch as a divinely appointed figure. He stressed that God established kings and princes to personify goodness and justice before their peoples, and his vision of the good prince was strongly patriarchal. The benevolent and effective prince, in other words, should serve as a father to his people, correcting those that err, but dispensing justice with mercy. In his *Complaint of Peace* Erasmus attacked war as a tool of international relations. Although he did not deny that there were times and places that wars might be justified, the tone of his *Complaint* was undeniably pacific. War provided an inadequate solution to nations' problems, and instead he advocated a system of mediation to resolve diplomatic issues. In many other works he outlined a vision for a highly structured Christian society under tight control by authorities. In this way his social ideas were similar to those of his close friend, Sir Thomas More, whose *Utopia* imagines the perfect society as an organized and disciplined community under the watchful eye of state authorities.

**CHRISTIAN HUMANISM.** Erasmus's text also outlined a program of Christian humanism designed to reinvigorate European societies' ethics and morality. Here Erasmus's most influential work was his *Handbook of the Militant Christian*, a manual of edification that he first published in 1503. The work was immediately influential and drew disciples to Erasmus's ideas of reform from throughout Northern Europe, Italy, and Spain. The *Handbook* outlines a system of Christian ethics based upon the teachings of the New Testament, particularly those that Christ preached in the Sermon on the Mount and the parables. It is a clear and elegant work that also supports the study of the classics to cultivate the moral insights and eloquent style of the ancients. Erasmus advocates the study of the scriptures together with the classics of Antiquity as the basis for a program of moral reform throughout society. The *Handbook* also argues that the rituals of the church are of little use without an internal spirit that enlivens one's devotion and leads to piety, good works, and the practice of charity. The entire law of Christianity or as Erasmus termed it "the philosophy of Christ" is to be understood in the law to love one's neighbors. While many found this work a vital aid to their devotional lives, others responded that Erasmus's teachings undermined the institutional church and that they transformed Christianity into a mere system of ethics. After his death, Erasmus's celebrity waxed and

waned over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. More recently, modern commentators have found in his works a perennially attractive set of teachings and have sometimes called him "the first modern."

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### MARSILIO FICINO

1433–1499

*Translator*  
*Philosopher*

**EARLY LIFE.** Marsilio Ficino was born at the time when the revival of knowledge of the classics was expanding greatly in Renaissance Florence. His father was the Medici family's physician, and Ficino was to follow in his footsteps. Ficino did pursue a career as a physician, but he also mastered a number of other fields. By the time he was thirty he had come to the attention of Cosimo de' Medici, who began to support his scholarly endeavors. Cosimo had recently acquired collections of Plato's manuscripts as well as of the *Corpus Hermeticum* that he asked Ficino to translate from Greek into Latin. The *Corpus Hermeticum* was a collection of mystical and magical texts that had long been attributed to the ancient Egyptian figure Hermes Trismegistus (meaning literally "Thrice Great Hermes"). During the 1460s Ficino involved himself in these projects, and he continued to win rich patronage from the Medici family. Eventually, the family set Ficino up in a townhouse and also gave him one of their country villas so that he could pursue his work without interruption. By 1469, Ficino had largely completed his Platonic translation, and he began an ambitious new project. He would write a theological *summa* or summation that would harmonize Christianity with the new insights he had acquired from his study of Plato and other ancient works. He completed this *Platonic Theology* in 1474, but along the way he gave lectures in Florence and discussed his ideas with many of the city's intellectuals, helping to popularize his Platonism among them. His ideas helped to seal the shift of the town's humanists away from the "civic humanism" that had been popular in the first half of the fifteenth century. That movement had discussed issues of good government and public involvement. Ficino's philosophy, by contrast, stressed inwardness, quiet contemplation, and the cultivation of the arts.

**METAPHYSICS.** Metaphysics, the study of the underlying and unseen properties of matter, was also an important dimension of Ficino's ideas. Ficino had trained as a physician and he was as interested in astrology, alchemy (the science of transforming matter), and the other "occult sciences" as he was in philosophy. In his *Platonic Theology* he joined these interests to his philosophical concerns, creating a difficult and often mysterious intellectual broth. Many ascribed to his ideas, but few understood them in all their complexity. They are only now coming to be completely studied by scholars, and they have also recently received attention from some "New Age" philosophers. But in the Renaissance, Ficino was responsible for fostering the dissemination of several ideas that became important in the sixteenth-century intellectual world. First, he promoted the notion of a *prisca theologica* or *ancient wisdom*. From his enormous range of reading, Ficino realized that there were certain underlying similarities among the ancient religions. He identified a wisdom that began with the ancient Egyptians, Persians, and other Near Eastern religions and which culminated in the ideas of the Greek and Roman philosophers. This knowledge, he argued, had been divinely inspired and was a second path of illumination God had granted to the human race alongside the revelations of the Jewish and Christian traditions. In pointing to an underlying similarity in their religious ideas, Ficino gave a great stimulus to the study of ancient philosophies and religious cultures. One of his more important disciples was Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who collected an enormous number of ancient texts and in his *900 Theses* tried to summarize the teachings of the *prisca theologica*. A second idea Ficino helped popularize was the notion of Platonic love, the belief that in an intellectual, non-erotic relationship human beings can commune with one another on a higher celestial plane. Much of his writing focused on how the human soul could be liberated from the body and ascend to its true home in heaven. Some of the techniques for cultivating the divine nature of the soul Ficino stressed were celibacy, poetry, ascetic self-denial, and contemplation. Platonic love, a relationship that could be engaged in by those striving for illumination, gave the usually intensely private Neoplatonism a social dimension. In addition to these ideas, Ficino's Platonism stressed the notion of an infinite, many-storied universe controlled by celestial intelligences, spheres, and planets. To identify the underlying proportions that existed in this infinite world, the Platonists who followed Ficino devoted themselves to the study of mathematics and music, believing that these could reveal the spatial and harmonic relationships that governed creation. Although these ideas were meta-

physical rather than scientific, scholars have long debated the extent to which they shaped the insights of the seventeenth-century Scientific Revolution.

**SPREAD OF HIS IDEAS.** Ficino's interpretation of Plato and his attempts to fashion a new Christian theology that made use of ancient wisdom grew to be tremendously popular in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century. It soon spread throughout Europe, sparking an intensified concern among philosophers with metaphysics and the occult sciences. Traces of Ficino's influence can be seen in the works of Desiderius Erasmus, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, John Colet, and Thomas More, and this tradition persisted into the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Neoplatonism also influenced the artistic culture of the High Renaissance. The artist Michelangelo came to be admitted into the Platonic circle that surrounded the Medici family and which included Angelo Poliziano and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola as well as Ficino. Michelangelo promoted the use of certain shapes, numerical proportions, and the personification of ideas in his works that were drawn from his knowledge of Platonism. The Sistine Chapel frescoes, for example, make use of Neoplatonic ideas about the ancient wisdom, showing as they do Cumaean sibyls and other antique figures alongside the Old Testament biblical history. Others resisted the movement. In his *Notebooks* Leonardo da Vinci was frequently critical of the Florentine Platonists, often attacking the group for their difficult, unintelligible ideas that lacked empirical evidence. In Padua, a group of humanist scholars began to promote Aristotle as an alternative to the popularity of Plato. The most prominent of these figures was Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), who in 1516 shocked the Platonists and the church with a work denying the immortality of the soul. Pomponazzi relied on a penetrating logic to show that philosophy could not prove the existence of the soul as an eternal spark of the divine flame.

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**NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI**

1469–1527

*Humanist**Historian**Political theorist*

**LIFE.** Like other Florentine children of his age and class, Niccolò Machiavelli's education included the humanist study of the classical authors. Very little, though, is known about Machiavelli's life before he entered the world of politics in 1498. At this time he was almost thirty years old, but he managed to rise quickly in Florence's government. The Medici family had been expelled several years before from the city, and a republic had been established which had fallen under the influence of the puritanical preaching of Giralamo Savonarola. Machiavelli came into the Florentine chancery immediately after Savonarola had been executed, a time of significant upheaval in the republic. His first job involved the supervision of the city's relationships with its subject towns in Tuscany. Machiavelli was soon responsible for other tasks, and on several occasions he carried out diplomatic missions. While he was never actually a diplomat, he conducted a number of visits to other Italian courts as an "envoy." These missions allowed Machiavelli to witness firsthand the ruthless political deeds of Italy's despotic princes and dictators, including the actions of Cesare Borgia, the son of Pope Alexander VI, who serves as one model for the ruler in Machiavelli's later classic *The Prince*. As a result of the successes he attained in these years, Machiavelli's star rose higher in the republic's administration, and by the time of the abolition of this government in 1512, he was one of the republic's senior officials. Once the Medici returned to power, though, Machiavelli lost his posts and for a time he even fell under suspicion of treason in the new government. He retired to his country home, where he spent the next years writing *The Prince* and a number of other works of history, political philosophy, and literature.

**THE PRINCE.** Machiavelli wrote this work and circulated it in 1513, although it was not published until 1532. He dedicated it to the Medici princes who had recently taken over government in Florence, and in a letter to a friend, he expressed the hope that it would secure him a place in the new government. In this little book he strives to present his readers with a theory of politics, a relatively novel idea at the time. Previous writers had stressed that the uncertainties of fortune made theorizing about the fates of states impossible, but Machiavelli insisted that the reasons for the successes and

failures of kings, princes, and republics could be understood through careful observation. This idea would recur in Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories*. There he argued that history operated according to cycles, and an astute observer could predict the future and perhaps avoid past mistakes by acquiring a detailed knowledge of the past. Although Machiavelli seems always to have believed that a republican government was best suited to achieving human virtue, he was willing to accept dictatorship and despotism, provided it served higher ends. Italy's political disunity and the jockeying of its petty despots had marked the peninsula as easy prey to its more powerful neighbors, France and Spain. In *The Prince* he wanted to identify the virtues and behaviors necessary in an Italian leader who could unify the country sufficiently to expel its foreign invaders. While much of the work analyzes political successes and failures drawn from incidents in classical and recent Italian history, it is the later part of the book that has proven most troubling to its readers ever since the sixteenth century. Here he identifies the behaviors that are necessary in an effective prince. In these chapters Machiavelli argues that power requires a prince to forsake the normal bounds of morality to ensure the stability of his position. The effective prince must not be afraid to exercise cruelty when it is warranted. And although it is good for him to seem to be kind, benevolent, religious, and compassionate before his subjects, he need not practice these virtues when circumstances demand more ruthless behavior. To be feared is frequently a better goal of the prince than to be loved, but above all he must not be hated, for out of hate arises all manner of challenges to a prince's authority. In the final chapter of the work he raises a call for a prince who will exercise the strengths of political character he has identified throughout the book and work to expel Italy's foreign invaders.

**REPUBLICAN WORKS.** Like Florentine humanists of the early fifteenth century, Machiavelli also devoted his attention to questions of civic involvement and republicanism. Around 1518 he completed his *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy*. By this time he realized that he had little prospects for finding employment in the Medici regime and he now turned to questions of political liberty and republicanism, subjects that were generally not in favor in a Florence that was ruled by the Medici dukes. The *Discourses* affected the development of later European writing about republicanism, particularly among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English political theorists. In them, Machiavelli argues that a balance of power between the various interests that comprise society is the surest defense of human liberty.

Strong governments may be created through the efforts of a single ruler, but it requires the actions of many within a society to preserve their institutions. These insights hark back to Marsilius of Padua's early theory of representative government contained in the *Defender of the Peace*, although Machiavelli defended the power of the people in an even more vigorous way.

**IMPACT.** In both his *Discourses* and *The Prince* Machiavelli insisted that the moral conventions that governed normal private interactions between human beings did not apply to the realm of government. Politics occurred in a completely different sphere in which the considerations of human ethics did not apply. These insights were troubling to most sixteenth-century political theorists, who identified Machiavelli as a great source of evil, and who produced at the time a significant body of anti-Machiavellian works that argued for the compatibility of Christian morality with good government. At the same time even Machiavelli's enemies admitted that there were times when "reason of state" demanded certain actions from a ruler. Since the sixteenth century interpretations of Machiavelli have often shifted. In the nineteenth century Italian writers found in him a source for their nationalist movement aimed at unifying the disparate states of the peninsula into a single state. And in the twentieth century scholars treated Machiavelli in a variety of ways. Some have seen him as a political opportunist who used *The Prince* to try to ingratiate himself with the Medici regime, while others have argued that he was a political realist who astutely judged the character of Italian politics at a difficult time in the country's history.

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## MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

1533–1592

*Essayist*

**EARLY LIFE.** Born in Bordeaux in southern France, Michel de Montaigne's father oversaw his early education by hiring tutors to teach the child Latin at an early age. Allowed only to speak this language until the age of six, Montaigne then entered the Collège de Guyenne, a secondary school in Bordeaux and a center of the humanist movement in France. He stayed there until he

was 16, at which point he moved on to attend the University of Toulouse, another center of French humanism and a place of fervent religious debate at the time.

**RELIGIOUS WARS.** Like other humanistically-educated sons of prosperous fathers, Montaigne soon made a political career. In 1554 he took a legal post at Perigeaux and a few years later he became a member of the *parlement* (a local court of appeals) at Bordeaux. While a member of the *parlement* Montaigne traveled to Paris and took part in several important missions for the king. On one of these to Rouen he witnessed the consequences of the Wars of Religion, the great civil war that afflicted France at the time. In Rouen he also saw Brazilian natives recently brought to Europe, a subject that he later exploited in his famous essay *Of Cannibals*. In 1565 he married a wealthy heiress, and the large fortune that she brought to their marriage made Montaigne a rich man. He had six children with his wife, but only one survived infancy. In his writings he only rarely mentions his family. His closest personal attachments seem to have been with other leading humanists and scholars. Among these, his closest friend was Étienne de la Boétie, a French humanist with whom Montaigne worked in the *parlement* at Bourdeaux. Boétie's premature death in 1563 had a lasting impact on Montaigne, and in later life, he composed his famous essay "Of Friendship" in memory of him. Another of Montaigne's friends was the female scholar Marie de Gournay, whom Montaigne considered like an adopted daughter. Gournay edited one version of the *Essays*. By 1570, Montaigne had grown increasingly disillusioned with public life and he resigned his duties. A year later he took up residence at a country estate where he shut himself off for a great part of each day in a tower of the chateau to devote himself to reading, study, writing, and contemplation. Except for only brief interruptions, Montaigne remained there for the rest of his life, producing the *Essays* for which he became justifiably famous.

**ESSAYS.** At the time in which he wrote these works, the French word *Essai* meant "trial" or "attempt." Essays were a form of short, reflective prose that had developed out of the genre of Renaissance letters. Montaigne used this form and raised its literary value to a high level. He wrote his works over a number of years and revised them many times so that they eventually became one of the milestones in the history of the French language. In France his thoughts affected later thinkers like René Descartes, Blaise Pascal, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Montesquieu, among others, and the works enjoyed wide readership outside their native country, too. In his play, *The Tempest*, William Shakespeare quotes from the *Es-*



says. Certainly, one reason for their broad appeal was their diversity of subjects. Montaigne ranges over a number of areas, including friendship, cannibalism, cruelty, presumption, the enjoyment of food and wine, and even the human imagination. To these various subjects Montaigne brings a depth of insight and often a cool detachment to dissect human emotions, thoughts, and fears. He is also strikingly relativistic in his judgments; in *Of Cannibals*, the essay recounting his seeing of Brazilian natives at Rouen, Montaigne concludes that Europeans are crueler than New World natives. Unlike the so-called savages of the New World who live relatively peaceful lives in harmony with nature, Europeans inhabit a social order filled with intolerance, inequality, filth, and violence.

**DEVELOPMENT.** Traditionally, scholars have seen three stages in the development of Montaigne's ideas in the *Essays*. More recently, others have called attention to the eclectic and free-ranging nature of his ideas, stressing that elements of many different schools of thought can be found in all periods in which he wrote the essays. While Montaigne was eclectic, there is still a definite change of tone in each of the three volumes. In the first book Montaigne appears to be applying the ancient ideas of the Stoics to the problems he analyzes. Stoicism taught that an ascetic self-discipline and disregard for the world was the best way to face harsh fortune. In the second volume Montaigne's intellectual development embraces an increasingly skeptical and relativistic creed. Truths, his insights taught him, were not to be found in religious orthodoxy or in moral absolutes. These were instead merely cultural ideas that one inherited from being brought up in a particular place and time. Catholic children were the result of Catholic parents, while Protestants and Muslims were the products of a different upbringing. No amount of philosophizing could ever prove that the assumptions that each group doggedly held were, in fact, true. In the final section of the essays, Montaigne shifted his stance yet again to develop his thoughts in an Epicurean mold. The Epicureans, an ancient Greek philosophical sect, taught that the purpose of life consisted in enjoying the good things the world had to offer. As he concluded his *Essays* Montaigne seems to have come to peace with the world, realizing that in the embrace of its pleasures lay one of the mysteries of existence. Although he remained an orthodox Catholic throughout his life, his thoughts contained many ideas upon which later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers would build more skeptical philosophies, philosophies that eventually challenged theistic religions altogether. For this reason his works would eventually be placed on the *Index of Prohibited Books*, the

organ of Roman Catholic censorship throughout Europe. In their own time, though, they were a stunning testament to the insights that classical scholarship helped breed among Renaissance thinkers. And they continue to provide unparalleled insights into sixteenth-century life and customs.

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## FRANCESCO PETRARCH

1304–1374

*Poet*

*Philosopher*

**EARLY LIFE.** Petrarch was born into an impoverished family at Arezzo in Tuscany. Although his father was from Florence, the family had been banished from the city as a result of one of its many factional disputes. In 1312, Petrarch's father secured employment with the papal court in Avignon, and the family moved there. Petrarch studied law at the University of Bologna, Europe's foremost center for teaching church law, but in 1326 his father's death forced him to return to Avignon. While in Avignon the following year, Petrarch was to have met Laura, the woman who would serve as his poetic muse for much of the rest of his life. Scholars have never been able to determine whether Laura was real or imaginary. Petrarch always stressed that his love for Laura was unrequited, and the poems he dedicated to her had profound psychological insights. In order to secure employment Petrarch took Holy Orders, although he was never ordained a priest. His entrance into the church provided him with a secure income, but he continued to live much as a layperson. In this period in his life he traveled widely, visiting the Netherlands, Germany, France, and many parts of Italy. While reading in monastery libraries throughout Europe, he acquired his taste for classical literature, and he came to see Italy as the heir to the greatness of ancient Rome.

**POET LAUREATE.** Petrarch gained recognition throughout Italy, and eventually Europe, for his poetry.

Besides the poems that he wrote to Laura in his *Songbook* (in Italian the *Canzoniere*), Petrarch also tried to write poems in classical Latin. His efforts in this vein were largely intuitive, based upon his readings of ancient texts. The recovery of ancient Latin, which the humanists would come to champion, was a full century away, although Petrarch's attempts to revive a classical Latin style encouraged greater study among his humanist followers. For his poetic attempts in Latin and Italian, Petrarch received the poet laureate's crown at a special ceremony staged in Rome in 1342. Although he craved fame and celebrity, Petrarch tended by the mid-fourteenth century to live a life of isolation in which he could devote himself to study. During this period of his middle age, he made many contributions to the humanist movement.

**HUMANISM.** The word "humanism" is a modern expression coined to describe those who practiced the *studia humanitatis*, or "humane studies." Humanism championed the study of literature, moral philosophy, and history as the disciplines that could best ennoble the human spirit. Petrarch has often been called the "Father of Humanism," but he was preceded in his efforts by several generations of Italian scholars who were interested in classical Antiquity. He is better described as the first Italian to attract European-wide attention to this brand of scholarship. In Petrarch are to be found many of the tendencies that the humanist movement would evidence over the next 200 years. He was passionately concerned with recovering knowledge of classical Antiquity. He believed that eloquent speaking and writing were more effective means of promoting virtue than the logical scholastic philosophy that was common at the time. In many of his works he strove to create a relevant personal philosophy, in which he relied on the works of Cicero, the ancient Stoics, and St. Augustine as his primary sources of inspiration. Realizing that the difficulty of mastering the human will was the greatest barrier to achieving virtue, Petrarch focused his efforts on trying to identify ways in which human nature might be overcome. His dictum, "It is better to will the good than to understand the truth," expresses much of the core of his thought. Still, Petrarch was eclectic, drawing inspiration from many different sources, and he was not always logically consistent. A final dimension of Petrarch's humanism defended the study and uses of poetry, a form of literature that had not been held in high esteem by medieval scholastic philosophers. Petrarch insisted that the scriptures were, in fact, forms of poetry and that the study of poetic literary forms could serve virtuous purposes. The consequences of his enthusiastic embrace of

poetry helped to inspire many later discussions of poetry among the humanists and gave inspiration as well to later Renaissance poets.

**LITERARY OUTPUT.** Petrarch's literary output was enormous. Among his most important works were his *Songbook*, in which he perfected the use of the sonnet form, his *Familiar Letters*, which were a collection of letters he wrote to friends and associates on philosophical subjects, and his *The Secret or the Soul's Conflict with Desire*, a dialogue in which he debated St. Augustine on how to master his will. At many points in the Renaissance, though, scholars continued to consider the themes he had first identified in other writings. His discussion of the solitary life, *De vita solitaria*, inspired later humanists to emulate his cultivation of the classical ideal of studious, isolated leisure. And his attempts to revive ancient styles of poetry also gave rise to new literary genres in the later Renaissance. In short, Petrarch helped to establish many later patterns evidenced among the humanists. He was a philosopher of some insight, a literary figure of celebrated acclaim, and a voracious student of classical Antiquity.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Philosophy*

Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (1576)—This response to the religious crises of the Wars of Religion advocates respect for the absolute sovereignty of the prince as the way out of France's troubles. It became an important text justifying the absolutist pretensions of seventeenth-century monarchs.

Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology* (1474)—A major work of Renaissance Platonism, this treatise tries to synthesize Plato's philosophy with the Christian religion. Its heavy reliance on metaphysics was not widely understood, although many tried. Certain concepts, like the notion of Platonic Love, were to catch on as a result of Ficino's works.

- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)—The author thought that this portrait of the amoral prince was necessary to end the chaos of Italy's politics. Notorious in the sixteenth century for its amorality, the work was one of the first realistic portraits of politics.
- Marsilius of Padua, *Defender of the Peace* (1324)—This important political treatise argues for the separation of the powers of church and state and sets out an early theory of representative government.
- Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (1595)—One of Montaigne's longest life projects, this work presents his philosophical musings on an extraordinary array of subjects. It shows his search for a relevant personal philosophy free from the intolerance of traditional religion.
- Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance* (c. 1350)—A difficult philosophical treatise that combines medieval mysticism with Neoplatonism, this work posits that God is everywhere present in the world, that he is the universe's center, and that the world is infinite. It is the first Renaissance statement of a limitless universe and was followed by many more in the coming centuries.
- Francesco Petrarca, *Familiar Letters* (1374)—Written throughout his life, these letters by Petrarch on a multitude of themes provide an insight into the early philosophical ideas of humanism.
- Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486)—One of the Renaissance's most enthusiastic endorsements of the concept of human dignity, this oration was written as an introduction to Pico's *900 Theses*, a work that argued that all religions share an underlying core of truths.
- Pietro Pomponazzi, *On the Immortality of the Soul* (1516)—An Aristotelian and a humanist, Pietro Pomponazzi argues in this treatise that the soul's immortality cannot be proven on philosophical grounds.
- Lorenzo Valla, *Dialogue on Free Will* (1439)—An important Renaissance dialogue that argues against the traditional position that human beings have free will to participate in their salvation; this work presents a position that anticipates the later Protestant principle of salvation by faith.

7  
chapter seven

RELIGION

Philip M. Soergel

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	258	Milestones in the Renaissance Papacy . . . . .	267
OVERVIEW . . . . .	262	<i>The Imitation of Christ</i> (excerpt from Kempis's devotional classic commenting on education) . . . . .	275
TOPICS		<i>Mystical Visions</i> (excerpt from Capua's <i>Life of St. Catherine</i> ) . . . . .	276
The Late-Medieval Church . . . . .	264	<i>The Role of the Scriptures</i> (introduction to Erasmus's translation of the New Testament). . . . .	278
Renaissance Piety . . . . .	269	<i>Humanism vs. Scholasticism</i> (excerpt from Von Hutten's <i>Letters of Obscure Men</i> ) . . . . .	280
The Reformation's Origins. . . . .	277	<i>Luther's Tower Experience</i> (excerpt from Luther's autobiography describing a revelation he experienced) . . . . .	283
The Spread of Protestantism in Northern Europe . . . . .	285	<i>The Majesty of God</i> (excerpt from Calvin's <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> ) . . . . .	290
The Council of Trent . . . . .	294	<i>The Martyrdom of Coligny</i> (excerpt from a history detailing the murder of the Duke of Coligny) . . . . .	291
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>Jesuit Missions</i> (letter from Xavier concerning missionary work in India) . . . . .	298
John Calvin . . . . .	302	<i>The Inquisition Investigates Art</i> (excerpt from Veronese's testimony before the Inquisition) . . . . .	299
Catherine of Siena . . . . .	303		
Ignatius Loyola . . . . .	305		
Martin Luther . . . . .	306		
St. Teresa of Avila. . . . .	308		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	309		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			
<i>Heretical Criticism</i> (Wycliffe argues against transubstantiation in an excerpt from his <i>Trialogus</i> ) . . . . .	266		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Religion*

- 1300 Pope Boniface VIII calls for the celebration of the first Jubilee year at Rome, granting indulgences to those European pilgrims who visit the city. The rise of the Turks in the Mediterranean has made pilgrimage to Palestine increasingly difficult for Europeans, leading to Rome's emergence as Europe's pilgrimage capital during the Renaissance.
- 1302 In his ongoing rivalry with King Philip of France, Boniface VIII publishes his bull, *Unam Sanctam*, the most extravagant medieval statement of papal authority ever written. One year later, he is captured by a mob outside Rome, tortured, and released, dying a broken man a few months later.
- 1309 Through the king of France's influence, the administrative capital of the church is moved from Rome to Avignon, on the southeast border of Italy and France. The change in the church's administrative center will become known as the Babylonian Captivity, in reference to the captivity of the Jews at Babylon in the Old Testament.
- 1320 The poet Dante Alighieri finishes his great religious and allegorical poem, *The Divine Comedy*.
- 1323 The spiritual Franciscans, or Fraticelli, are condemned for their literal interpretation of St. Francis's notion of poverty.
- Pope John XXIII declares in a bull of November of that year that the Apostles and Jesus had owned private property.
- 1327 The mystic Meister Eckhart dies at Cologne.
- 1342 The pontificate of Clement VI, widely known for his corruption and decadence, begins at Avignon.
- c. 1350 Tensions resulting from the Black Death cause Jews to be blamed for the disease's outbreaks in many parts of Western Europe. Pogroms (organized massacres of Jews) erupt in Southern France and Germany.
- More than one million Europeans visit the city of Rome during the second Jubilee.
- 1351 The Statute of Provisors in England establishes the king's right to appoint bishops and archbishops within his kingdom.
- 1353 English Statute of Praemunire forbids subjects to appeal their legal cases to Rome. Tighter restrictions follow in 1365 and 1393.
- 1378 Pope Gregory XI returns the capital of the church to Rome, but soon dies; rival popes are elected, beginning the period of the Great Schism in the church.
- 1380 The mystic Catherine of Siena dies.
- 1381 Peasants kill the archbishop of Canterbury during the English Peasants' Revolt.
- 1382 John Wycliffe begins to translate the Bible into English.
- 1409 The Great Schism worsens when a third pope is elected at the Council of Pisa.
- 1415 The Council of Constance is convened to heal the breach in the church caused by the Great Schism; the Council also condemns the Bohemian heretic John Huss, who is sentenced to be burnt at the stake.
- 1417 The Council of Constance concludes by deposing Benedict XIII and electing a new pope, Martin V, thus ending the Great Schism.
- c. 1430 The Hussite heresy grows in Bohemia and the church undertakes several crusades to

- suppress the movement. By 1436, concessions are made to the Hussite Church in Bohemia, which is allowed to retain its liturgy and celebration of communion with both bread and wine.
- 1438 Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges limits the power of the pope in France.
- 1439 The Council of Ferrara-Florence is convened in Italy.
- 1440 Lorenzo Valla proves that the Donation of Constantine is a forgery. The document had alleged that the fourth-century emperor Constantine had ceded control over Western Europe to the Roman pope.
- c. 1450 The Vatican Library is founded at Rome. Pope Nicholas V, a humanist, strengthens the church's support of the arts and scholarship.
- 1456 Johann Gutenberg of Mainz publishes the first Bible using movable type.
- 1460 Pope Pius II declares conciliarism a heresy. The conciliarists had argued that church councils were superior to the judgments of the pope.
- 1472 The first printed edition of *The Imitation of Christ* appears; more than seventy additional editions will be printed before 1500.
- c. 1480 Humanism begins to spread to Northern Europe; biblical studies intensify in Italy and elsewhere in Europe under the influence of humanism.
- 1483 Martin Luther is born at Eisleben in Saxony, Germany.
- 1492 Spain begins to expel Jews who will not convert to Christianity.
- 1499 Desiderius Erasmus makes his first journey to England where he befriends Sir Thomas More and John Colet.
- 1503 Cardinal Francisco Ximénes des Cisneros founds the Polyglot Bible project at Alcalá in Spain.
- 1506 Pope Julius II has St. Peter's Basilica in Rome demolished and begins to formulate plans for an enormous replacement.
- 1509 Under the influence of Johann Pfefferkorn, a converted Jew, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I orders all Jewish books critical of Christianity to be seized and burnt. The plan is denounced by the Christian Hebraist Johann Reuchlin, and the resulting controversy, known as the Reuchlin Affair, pits Germany's humanists against scholastics.
- 1516 Desiderius Erasmus publishes his Greek and Latin New Testament. The Concordat of Bologna grants the kings of France the right to appoint hundreds of officials to high posts in the French Church.
- 1517 Martin Luther distributes his *95 Theses*, a protest against the church's sale of indulgences.
- 1519 Martin Luther debates papal authority and other issues with Johann Eck in a staged disputation held at Leipzig.
- Ulrich Zwingli takes up the post of city preacher at Zürich and introduces biblical preaching.
- 1520 Martin Luther publishes three major treatises defending his views: *The Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *On Christian Liberty*.
- 1521 Pope Leo X condemns Luther as a heretic.
- 1522 Luther is called to the imperial diet at Worms to answer the charges of heresy; he is placed under the imperial ban, a death sentence, but leaves the diet on a safe conduct. He is kidnapped and taken into seclusion at the Wartburg place near Eisenach, where he continues his translation of the New Testament into German.
- Ulrich Zwingli violates the church's teachings against eating meat in Lent and convinces Zürich's town council to begin to reform the local church.

- 1524 The Peasants' War begins in southwestern Germany and spreads into central and eastern Germany. As many as 100,000 of the movement's supporters are slaughtered during the suppression of the revolt that occurs in the spring of 1525.
- 1527 Saxony stages the first Visitation of its churches, causing Luther to formulate his *Small Catechism of 1529*, a document intended to indoctrinate children in the Reformation's teachings.
- German imperial forces sack the city of Rome.
- 1528 The pope recognizes the Capuchins, an order of reformed Franciscan brothers.
- A league of states and cities sympathetic to Martin Luther stage a protest at the imperial diet at Augsburg. After walking out of the meetings, they become known as Protestants, a name which eventually encompasses all those who reject the authority of Rome.
- 1534 Luther completes his translation of the Bible into German.
- Anabaptist forces seize control of the city of Münster in northwest Germany. They abolish private property and introduce polygamy into the city, prompting a coalition of church and state forces from throughout the region to lay siege to the city, eventually crushing the Anabaptist revolution.
- To secure his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII obtains from Parliament the Act of Supremacy, a document that establishes his supremacy over the church in England.
- 1535 The Ursulines, a religious order that will specialize in the education of young women, is founded in Italy.
- 1536 The French reformer John Calvin prints the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a document that will help to spread the Calvinist form of Protestantism throughout Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century.
- In England, Henry VIII begins to dissolve Catholic monasteries.
- 1540 Pope Paul III officially recognizes the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits, who soon begin their missionary work in India and the Far East.
- 1541 John Calvin returns to the city of Geneva in French-speaking Switzerland after a period in Strasbourg and consolidates his power over the Reformation in the town.
- 1545 The Council of Trent begins its deliberations on the reform of the Roman Church.
- 1548 The first Jesuit college is founded at Messina in Southern Italy.
- After the defeat of the Protestant Schmalkaldic League, the emperor Charles V establishes the Interim, a religious plan to re-catholicize Protestant areas of Germany.
- 1549 Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, issues the first *Book of Common Prayer* in England. The book, influenced to an extent by the Reformed theology of Zwingli and Martin Bucer, prescribes regular English liturgies that are obligatory for all members of the Church of England.
- c. 1550 Calvinism begins to spread throughout Europe as a result of the missionary efforts of those who are trained at Geneva.
- 1555 The Peace of Augsburg in Germany establishes the principle "He who rules, his religion." Territorial rulers are allowed to decide whether Catholicism or Lutheranism will be practiced in their territories.
- 1559 Pope Paul IV establishes the *Index of Prohibited Books* to identify and publish a regular listing of books that are dangerous to Catholic truth.

- 1563 The Council of Trent concludes its deliberations.
- 1572 During August, massacres of Protestants break out in Paris and other provincial cities in France. Within several weeks perhaps as many as 5,000 French Calvinists are dead.
- Revolt against Spanish rule of the Netherlands begins in the Dutch provinces.
- 1595 The Protestant Henry of Navarre successfully pursues his claim to the throne of France, becoming the first of its Bourbon monarchs. To subdue Paris, Henry renounces his Protestantism and converts to Catholicism.
- 1598 The Edict of Nantes grants French Calvinists a limited degree of religious toleration.



## OVERVIEW *of Religion*

**INTOLERANCE.** Renaissance Europe was an overwhelmingly Christian society where the teachings of the Roman Church exercised an influence on all areas of life. The hold of this Catholic or universal religion was profound, but at the same time, it frequently bred intolerance. Over the centuries Europe had become a persecuting society, and intolerance of religious minorities mounted during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In Spain, the last Islamic communities were banished in the final stages of the Spanish Reconquest of the peninsula. And at the same time Christian treatment of Jews, which had never been good, grew harsher. In the wake of the Black Death (1347–1352) Jewish pogroms occurred throughout Southern France and Germany, as locals accused Jews of poisoning wells to bring on the disease. Jewish persecution persisted in the fifteenth century, with Austria expelling its Jews in 1421, Spain and Sardinia in 1492, and Portugal in 1497. Europeans may have directed considerable violence at religious outsiders, but they were no less accepting of those Christians who taught unorthodox ideas. In Renaissance Europe, the deadly persecution of heresy continued. In the fourteenth century the church struggled to contain the teachings of the Spiritual Franciscans and of John Wycliffe. The Spiritual Franciscans held to a literal interpretation of St. Francis's notions about religious poverty—teachings that were a challenge to the wealth and worldly prestige of the church. A similar note echoed in the writings of the Oxford theologian John Wycliffe, who attacked the secular authority of the pope and the church's doctrines concerning the sacraments. In England, both church and state tried to root out Wycliffe's followers, but a small, underground group, known as the Lollards, persisted. Wycliffe's teachings, moreover, escaped from England, and in the early fifteenth century, they inspired the theologian John Huss in Bohemia (a part of the modern Czech Republic). Following his execution at the Council of Constance in 1415, Huss's ideas inspired a rebellion that produced a new Utraquist

Church. The Utraquists violated orthodox teaching by giving both bread and wine to lay people during communion. Since the high Middle Ages the church had withheld the Chalice or consecrated wine from the laity and reserved this portion of the Eucharist only to priests. By the 1430s, the Hussite movement had grown in Bohemia and now threatened to spill over into other areas of Central Europe. Rome mounted five largely unsuccessful crusades to wipe out Hussitism. The movement splintered into factions and civil war broke out. In 1434, the Utraquists were successful in subduing the more radical Taborites, and they entered into negotiations with Rome. Rome eventually recognized their liturgy, allowing the Utraquist Church to survive in Bohemia, where it would eventually provide an example to sixteenth-century Protestants of a successful secession movement from Rome.

**CRISIS IN THE CHURCH.** In the fourteenth century long-standing rivalries between church and state over the election of bishops and archbishops and other details of church administration heated up. In 1303, King Philip IV of France inspired a Roman mob to attack Pope Boniface VIII, who died a broken man several months later. Philip succeeded in obtaining the election of a friendlier pope, and by 1309, the administrative capital of the church had been moved from Rome to Avignon, within southern France. The papacy remained there for slightly more than 70 years, a period that became known in the later Middle Ages as the "Babylonian Captivity," a reference to the seventy years of Jewish captivity in ancient Babylon recorded in the Old Testament. The return to Rome in 1378, however, brought new problems. Rival factions from within the College of Cardinals elected their own popes: Urban VI, who remained at Rome, and Clement VII, who continued to administer the church from Avignon. This era of dual papacies became known as the Great Schism and it grew more complicated in 1409, when the Council of Pisa elected Alexander V to replace the rival Roman and Avignese popes. In both of the church's capitals, factions refused to accept the election, and for a time, three popes ruled in Western Christendom. By 1417, the Council of Constance had successfully resolved the crisis by eliminating all three popes and electing Martin V in their place. As a result of the council's success, however, a new conciliar movement had grown up in the church. The conciliarists argued that a permanent council within the church—in effect a kind of parliament—should supervise the papacy. Although conciliarists grew progressively weaker throughout the fifteenth century, they did call for reform in the church. But re-established in the city of

Rome, the traditional seat of its power, the papacy was generally successful in re-exerting its authority over the church. By 1500, the prestige of the popes was high, despite widespread corruption and abuse within the church.

**LAY PIETY.** If the administrative problems of the church were profound in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this same period saw a vital and deepening surge of piety among the laity. This surge can be seen in the popularity of confraternities, which were brotherhoods and sisterhoods of lay people who met regularly for prayer, to perform Christian rituals, and to do good works. The religious devotion of the laity also found expression in the many bequests made to churches and religious institutions as well as the endowing of posts for preachers and priests. Much of late-medieval piety focused on the preparation for death, as in the popular *Art of Dying* books that began to appear in the fifteenth century. It also found expression in a devotion to the Eucharist, as the devout came to favor frequent participation in communion. In both the countryside and the cities pilgrimages to venerate the relics of the saints were popular, and a number of new shrines appeared in the period. Indulgences were another important dimension of popular piety. The church granted indulgences as formal pardons for the time one would have to spend in purgatory atoning for sins after death. The popularity of pilgrimages and indulgences points up the continuing vitality of traditional medieval religious life in the Renaissance. At the same time, the increase of new, individual religious practices demonstrated the growing importance of an internalized religion. The spread of *Books of Hours*, collections of prayers for private meditation, points to the appearance of a more internalized and subjective kind of devotional life, as do works like St. Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*. Bible reading, a practice supported by heretical groups like the Lollards and Waldensians, began as well to find its way into the mainstream, although it could only be practiced by the small minority of people who were literate. Both the sixteenth-century Protestant and Catholic Reformations would continue to deepen this strain of individual and internalized religious devotion.

**THE LUTHER AFFAIR.** By the early sixteenth century the church had weathered significant controversies and emerged resilient. Most Europeans still believed that there was no salvation outside the church, beliefs that were soon to be challenged by the sixteenth-century Reformation. Martin Luther, a German monk and theologian, dominated the early history of this movement. Luther's own life had been marked by an intensely per-

sonal quest for assurance of his salvation. He had dedicated himself to the study of the scriptures, and by 1516, he had begun to teach radical doctrines about salvation in his post as professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg. Luther's lectures stressed that a person's salvation was a consequence of the gift of faith that one received through God's grace, not one's good works. This radical idea challenged traditional orthodoxy, which stressed that both good works and faith were necessary for salvation. These teachings did not attract much attention until late 1517, when Luther attacked the church's unscrupulous sales of indulgences. Through the circulation of his *95 Theses*, Luther hoped to spur debate among theologians about the teachings of the church. In the years that followed the controversy he unleashed dominated public life in Germany. The new invention of the printing press helped to disseminate Luther's ideas to an audience beyond the confines of the universities. Rome did not stand by quietly while Luther's position attracted admirers. After several quiet attempts to encourage Luther to recant, Pope Leo X condemned his ideas as heresy in June 1520, and the following spring, summoned him to appear before the imperial Diet meeting in the city of Worms. Luther steadfastly refused to deny his teachings, for which the Diet sentenced him to death. At the conclusion of the trial Luther's protector, the elector Frederick the Wise, managed to have him spirited away. In hiding Luther began translating the Bible into German, something that had already been advocated by Renaissance humanists like Desiderius Erasmus. Embraced by Luther and other reformers, lay Bible reading eventually became one of the defining features of Protestantism.

**RADICAL REFORMERS.** During Luther's enforced confinement, other reformers began to teach even more radical ideas. In Zürich, Ulrich Zwingli convinced the town council to abolish the traditional laws of the church. He established a pattern of reform that was even more extreme than Luther's, advocating the abolishment of all religious practices that did not have direct support in the scriptures. Both Zwingli and Luther desired that the reform of the church proceed along orderly lines and be controlled by state and city authorities. Elsewhere, though, radical reformers like Andreas Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer began to argue for a complete clearing away of medieval Christianity, and they showed little deference to state authorities. Many radicals preached an apocalyptic message that the world was nearing an end, and they encouraged their followers to take the law into their own hands. Some championed the cause of the poor and downtrodden and became involved in the great Peasants' War of 1524–1525. Their presence in

that movement prompted Luther's condemnation, and helped to produce a bloody repression of the rebellion. Religious radicalism survived, though, and came to be dominated by the Anabaptists, a group that practiced a second adult baptism and advocated a Christian life lived in isolation from "worldly abomination." In 1527, supporters of this movement met at Schleitheim in Switzerland and formulated a simple confession of their faith. Many who followed in this radical path practiced a simple, communal life. But in 1534, one group of Anabaptists seized control of the Northern German town of Münster, where they founded a social revolution that abolished private property and established polygamy. Though suppressed a year after it began, this Revolution of the Münster Prophets inspired widespread fears about the Radical Reformers, prompting their persecution in both Protestant and Catholic states.

**REFORMED CHRISTIANITY.** In most of Germany and Scandinavia Luther's pattern of reform dominated, and state authorities adopted and controlled the Reformation. In Switzerland, a different pattern of Reformed Protestantism had already begun to develop in Zwingli's Zürich and in the German border town of Strasbourg. Reformed Christianity placed greater emphasis on the remolding of society through the teachings of the Bible and the offices of the church than had Luther's reforms, which were more concerned with establishing the teaching of justification by faith. In the figure of John Calvin, a French Protestant who fled to the city of Geneva in Switzerland, Reformed Christianity found its most coherent exponent, and as a result, the movement came to be known as Calvinism. Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, first published in 1536, became the intellectual manifesto of Reformed Christianity, and through the missionaries that Calvin and his associates trained at Geneva, Calvinism spread to the British Isles, the Netherlands, France, and Central and Eastern Europe. Eventually, its teachings dominated much of North America through the settlement of Calvin's English followers, the Puritans. By 1550, the growing popularity of Calvinism made it increasingly difficult for Rome to combat Protestant teachings. At the same time the increasing divergence between Lutheranism and Calvinism helped to breed bitter divisions within Protestantism.

**THE CATHOLIC REFORMATION.** From the 1520s many loyal to the Roman Church had called for a council to resolve the differences between the reformers and the traditional church. Despite many efforts to heal these differences in the 1530s and 1540s, intractable divisions increasingly separated Catholicism and Protestantism. In 1545, though, the papacy finally convened the long-

hoped-for council at Trent, in modern northern Italy. During the next eighteen years, the members of the council met three different times to consider the criticisms that Protestantism had made of the church. They ultimately rejected Protestant teachings, and their definition of Catholic orthodoxy prevailed in the church until the Second Vatican Council of 1962. Trent also laid out a plan for the reform of the church that concentrated on raising the standards of the clergy. Its highly negative decrees condemning Protestantism gave rise to the term "Counter Reformation." At the same time a widespread revival of Catholicism was already underway, prompted not by Protestantism, but by the deepening surge of piety that had characterized the later Middle Ages. This Catholic Reformation gathered steam in the sixteenth century. Its effects can be seen in the birth of new religious orders, the development of early baroque art and architecture, and in renewed expressions of popular piety such as confraternities, processions, and pilgrimages.

**CONCLUSION.** The Renaissance was a period of momentous change in the history of Christianity in Europe. The period began with the calamities of the Avignon papacy and the Great Schism, events precipitated by long-standing competition between church and state. Heresy, too, was a problem in the late-medieval church, and the patterns that emerged to deal with it shaped the church's reaction to the Protestant Reformation. That movement—the most significant development within the period—produced new churches controlled by the secular state. The intolerant attitude that grew out of these new religions was not new, but the intensified effect these new exclusive creeds exercised on the arts and humanities would be profound.

## TOPICS *in Religion*

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### THE LATE-MEDIEVAL CHURCH

**COMPLEXITIES.** The late-medieval church was vast and complex, the single largest and most diverse political institution of the Renaissance. In theory, the church's governmental structure was a pyramid in which the papacy sat at the top. The pope and his officialdom at Rome supervised the activities of scores of bishops and archbishops throughout Europe, who, in turn, oversaw thousands of priests and their parishes. Numerous religious orders of monks, nuns, and friars scattered

throughout Europe often stood outside the structure of the provinces of the church known as diocese. Over the centuries, these orders had amassed significant wealth, and many enjoyed exemptions from the control of Europe's bishops and archbishops. Most owed allegiance to their order, which the papacy ultimately supervised; that tie could be tenuous when hundreds of miles separated an abbey or a monastery from the church's capital. The administrative complexities of the Roman Church may have been considerable, but so were the numerous roles the institution fulfilled in society. In the spiritual realm, the church provided a necessary link between God and humankind by virtue of its performance of the sacraments and rituals. For the orthodox, there was no salvation outside the church. In the political realm, the institution was an international force that jealously maintained its power against the encroachment of kings and princes. And locally, the church performed numerous practical functions in society. It administered an effective and sophisticated judicial system to which, in theory, all Europeans could bring cases. As Europe's largest landholder, it was a financial powerhouse, levying taxes and collecting revenues that were the envy of many princes. Its monasteries and convents produced rich storehouses of agricultural goods that were sometimes sold on the urban market; many of these institutions ran breweries and distilleries that could compete more successfully against private concerns because of the church's widespread exemption from local taxation. And finally, religious orders like the Carthusians and the Cistercians were important breeders of sheep and livestock who influenced the international market in wool.

**ANTICLERICALISM.** Its worldly wealth and power, though, subjected the church to criticism. Little evidence exists to suggest that corruption was more widespread within the Renaissance church than it had been in previous centuries, but high-profile crises like the Babylonian Captivity and the Great Schism made the church more vulnerable to critics. A more general anticlerical spirit, motivated by the hatred of the clergy's special rights and privileges, grew as well. The corruptions people identified—sexual immorality among the clergy, the holding of multiple offices by clerics, and the selling of dispensations from church law, to name just a few—had long existed. Rising dissatisfaction with these centuries-old problems, though, can be seen in the attacks on the wealth and sexual immorality of the clergy that litter great works of Renaissance literature like Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* or Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. These criticisms also came from famous preachers like St. Bernard of Siena (1380–1444) and St. John of

## Die wortte Doctor Keiserspergs predig



**A**inwar du gütter hirt. Hochwürdigere vater. Du fleißiger bischoff off dieses wütdigen stiftes Straßburg. Ainwar deine tügter sein alle versamlet. Sie sind sammenthafft zu dir kommen. nit vñ forcht der iudert sander vñ gebofsame. Sie sind nit also irrige schesflin sander sie haben sich getret zu dir item hirten vñ bischoffen irer felen. Du stest auch mit vnder in als ein güter hirt vñ folgst nach den süßstapfen des obersten hirtē. Der mit tel vnder seinen lungen gestanden ist. Du hirt stoß mittel vnder de hirten. Du wan du sie fragst wer sie sein so gebürt inē. Das sie mit den kindern Jacob dir antworten. Wir sind schaff hirtē. Got wolt auch. Das inen vñ ir dem das ewangelisch wort gesim. Ich bin ein güter hirt. Der sein sel güte für seine schesflin. Ja für die schesflin. In die wort des künig David zu got de

Late-medieval preaching as depicted in a 1513 printed sermon of Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, ROSENWALD COLLECTION.

Capistrano (1386–1456), who rode a high tide to popularity, in part, by criticizing the immorality of the church. And more generally, an anticlerical spirit rested just below the surface of late-medieval society, where political circumstances might bring it to life. In the frequent peasant revolts that erupted in Europe after the Black Death, hatred of the clergy sometimes boiled over to produce spectacular attacks on priests, bishops, and archbishops. In 1381, for example, English peasants seized and decapitated the archbishop of Canterbury Simon Sudbury who, as England's Lord Chancellor, fulfilled both important clerical and secular functions. Anticlerical violence seems always to have been most pronounced in those places where, as in the case of Sudbury, clerics exercised both important secular and religious powers, proof that the mingling of worldly and religious power so in evidence within the Renaissance church could be an uneasy mix for Europeans.

**AVIGNON.** For most of the fourteenth century both the possibilities and limitations of papal power were

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HERETICAL CRITICISM**

**INTRODUCTION:** John Wycliffe was among many medieval heretics who denied transubstantiation, the notion that in communion the bread and wine is changed into the actual body and blood of Christ through the priest's consecration. This belief was later to be rejected as well by sixteenth-century Protestants. His *Triologus* was a discussion between the figures Alithis, Pseudis, and Phronesis in which Wycliffe pointed out the illogicality of transubstantiation, because the bread used in the Eucharist could not be in the same place as the Body of Christ at the same time.

**Alithis:** I must request you, brother, to show still farther, from reason or Scripture, that there is no identification of the bread with the body of Christ ... For I am no means pleased with the spurious writings which the moderns use, to prove an accident without a subject, because the church so teaches. Such evidence should satisfy no one.

**Phronesis:** As to identification, we must, in the first place, agree on what you mean by the term. It signifies God's making natures which are distinct in species or number, one and the same—as though, for instance, he should make the person of Peter to be one with Paul... For if A is identical with B, then both of them remain; since a thing which is destroyed is not made identical, but is annihilated, or ceases to be. And if both of them remain, then they differ as much as at first, and differ consequently in number, and so are not, in the sense given, the same ...

**Pseudis:** In the first place, you cannot escape from this expository syllogism: First, This bread becomes corrupt, or is eaten by a mouse. Second, The same bread is the body of Christ. Third, Therefore the body of Christ does thus become corrupt, and is thus eaten;—and thus you are involved in inconsistency.

**SOURCE:** John Wycliffe, *Triologus*, in *Tracts and Treatises of John de Wycliffe*. Ed. Robert Vaughan (London: Blackburn and Pardon, 1845): 150, 152.

that likened the papacy's relationship to France with Israel's bondage in Babylon. It was not a very accurate portrayal of the Avignon Papacy. It is true that Pope Clement V (r. 1305–1314) moved there at the instigation of the French king, but the city was not technically a French possession. It belonged to the kingdom of Naples, and the church purchased it before setting up its capital there. The town did lie within France's boundaries, but the king was still several hundred miles to the north, unable to exert day-to-day influence over church administration. Instead France's dominance over the church was more subtle. All seven of the Avignon popes were French, and the College of Cardinals—the body charged with electing the pope—had a large contingent of Frenchmen, too. Still, except for the first Avignon pope, Clement V, the pontiffs elected in the city were bright and energetic, and they administered the church more effectively than it had been for some time. During this period the cost of papal government steadily rose. To create sufficient revenue to meet their expenses, the popes moved to centralize their administration of the church and to identify new sources of revenue. The papacy, for instance, reclaimed its rights of reservation, that is, the power to appoint clerics to key offices in the church. While vacant, the income from these offices flowed to the popes, and the papacy began to levy fees on those who wished to be appointed to them. To manage this system, a large bureaucracy developed in Avignon, and bribes became commonplace. For these reasons, Avignon became synonymous in the minds of Europe's rulers with corruption. Such feelings produced measures like the Statutes of Provisors (1351) in England, an act of Parliament that prohibited the pope from appointing non-English subjects to church offices. At Avignon, the church's dependence on revenues from the sale of indulgences grew, too. All these innovations in papal finance and government caused a decline in papal prestige and a growing distaste for the rising flow of wealth into the church's coffers.

**THE GREAT SCHISM.** These problems paled in comparison to the dilemmas that arose after the papacy's return to Rome in 1378. Soon after he re-established papal government in the city, Pope Gregory XI died, and the College of Cardinals elected an Italian to assume the office as Urban VI. Within months, Urban's attacks on the worldliness and corruption of the church's cardinals had alienated many, and a faction of the college met to depose him. In his place they elected Cardinal Robert of Geneva who took the name Clement VII. Urban, for his part, refused to resign, and instead he excommunicated the rebel cardinals and their pope. He created a number

brilliantly displayed, not in Rome, but in the city of Avignon, just inside the southern borders of France. The period in which the papacy ruled from Avignon lasted from 1309 until 1378 and was known even in the fourteenth century as the "Babylonian Captivity," a phrase

## MILESTONES in the Renaissance Papacy

**1309:** The papacy moves to Avignon.

**1350:** A Jubilee is celebrated at Rome after the disaster of the Black Death.

**1378:** Gregory XI returns the papacy to Rome; after his death in the same year, the Great Schism begins.

**1415:** The Council of Constance deposes rival popes and resolves the crisis of the Great Schism.

**1450:** The first humanist pope, Nicholas V, founds the Vatican Library.

**1492:** Pope Alexander VI is elected pope. One of his three children will die suspiciously. His daughter, Lucrezia, will be married off to a series of important noblemen, and his son, Cesare, will conduct wars of conquest for the pope.

**1503:** Alexander VI dies and Cesare Borgia tries to take over the papal territories in central Italy; Julius II is elected pope and captures him.

**1506:** Pope Julius tears down St. Peter's Basilica and makes plans for a larger and more splendid building.

**1513:** Leo X, a member of the Medici family, assumes the office of the pope and continues construction of the Vatican.

**1520:** Leo X denounces Luther's teachings as heresy.

**1527:** Rome is sacked by imperial forces of Charles V. The destruction of the city is widespread and sends shock waves through Europe.

**1541:** The papacy grants official recognition to the Society of Jesus or Jesuits.

**1545:** Pope Paul III convenes the Council of Trent to reform the church and consider Protestant doctrines.

**1559:** Pope Paul IV establishes the Index of Prohibited Books, an organ of censorship in the Catholic Church.

**1575:** The pope pronounces a Roman Jubilee at Rome that is widely attended by Catholics from throughout Europe and symbolizes the resurgence of Catholicism following the Reformation.

**1585:** Sixtus V ascends to the papal throne. During his brief five-year reign, a number of major public works and church construction projects will be completed, including the dome of St. Peter's Basilica, the Lateran Palace, and the new aqueduct, the Acqua Felice, which provides the city with a secure source of water. These projects will help to prepare the way for the great age of Rome's expansion that occurs in the Baroque era.

of new, mostly Italian cardinals to replace them. Clement VII now refused to step down, and he left Rome for Avignon, where he and the majority of the original College of Cardinals set up a rival papal court. For almost forty years this Great Schism prevailed in the European church, with international politics determining which pope a specific nation recognized. England, Ireland, parts of Germany, and most of Italy remained loyal to the pope at Rome, while France, Castile, Aragon, Portugal, and Scotland recognized Avignon. The resulting confusion eroded the notion of the church as the sacred instrument of God on earth. Instead more and more people saw the church as a human institution. The schism thus helped to create an audience for the teachings of figures like John Wycliffe in England and John Huss in Bohemia, both of whom attacked the wealth and secular power of the church and instead insisted that Rome would do better to concentrate on its spiritual mission.

**CONCILIARISM.** The way out of the crisis of the Great Schism gradually appeared in the form of a new political theory that developed within the church known

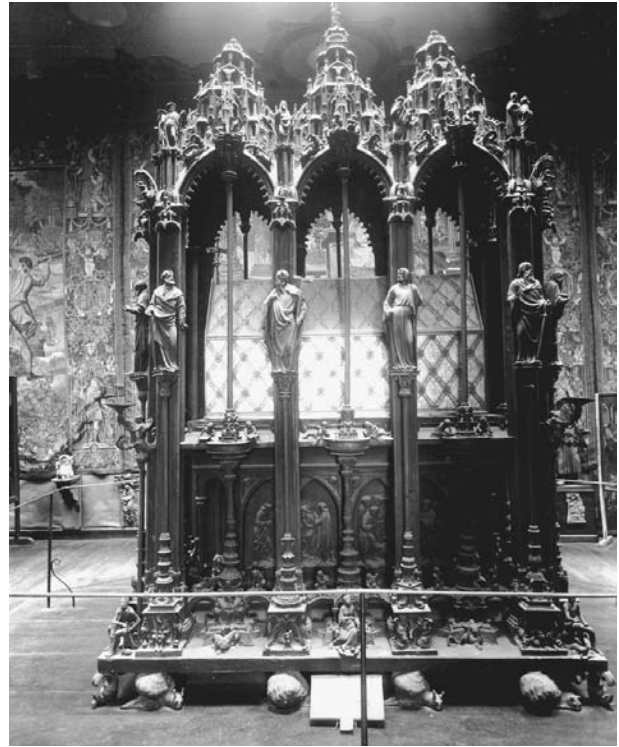
as conciliarism. The conciliarists taught that the decisions of a church council could override those of the popes. In the past the popes had convened church councils, but neither the Avignon nor the Roman popes could be expected to call a council that might depose them of their office. Thus conciliar theorists at the University of Paris began to make the convincing case that a church council might be convened independently of the pope under extraordinary circumstances. In 1409, representatives of both papal governments and church officials from throughout Europe met in the Italian city of Pisa to consider ways of healing the breach in the church. After deliberating, the council decided that both papal governments were invalid and it called for the resignations of the Avignon and Roman popes. When neither would resign, it declared them antipopes and elected a new pope, Alexander V. For a time both Avignon and Rome held out against the new Pisan pope, and factions throughout Europe supported each of the three papal governments. Thus the Council of Pisa, which had been called to heal the breach, inadvertently worsened the



*Pope Pius II Canonizes St. Catherine of Siena* by Pinturicchio.  
PUBLIC DOMAIN.

crisis for a time. In 1413, a second council convened at Constance in Germany. There church officials successfully obtained resignations from the Pisan and Roman popes, and deposed the Avignon pope when he refused to resign. They elected Martin V to serve as the indisputable leader of the church, who now enjoyed loyalty from all parts of the church. In the decades that followed, many conciliarists continued to argue that the church needed a permanent resident council to advise and supervise the activities of the pope, an innovation that, had it been established, would have transformed the church into something similar to a constitutional monarchy. Although conciliarists remained powerful in the first half of the fifteenth century, one tenet of their teachings—that church councils were superior to the judgments of the pope—was declared heretical by Pope Pius II in 1460. After that date, conciliarism declined rather rapidly as a challenge to papal authority.

**INDULGENCES.** Indulgences were an important feature of the late-medieval church. They had first been used to encourage soldiers to participate in the Crusades, but by the fourteenth century, they were being applied to all kinds of good works in the church. The theolog-



*Shrine of St. Sebald* by Peter Vischer, in St. Sebald's Church, Nuremberg. MARBURG-ART REFERENCE, ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ical definition of indulgences was subtle. They were not licenses to sin, nor did they release souls automatically from purgatory. They were instead pardons that substituted for penances, those penitential acts assigned by priests at confession. In practice, though, the indulgence's popularity developed from the growing importance of purgatory in the later Middle Ages. Purgatory was believed to be that realm of the afterlife where Christians would be purged of the unconfessed sins they had committed in life. By the fourteenth century, most Europeans believed that only the saints, those sinless Christians, would go immediately to Heaven after their deaths. Others would have to spend some time in purgatory suffering for their sins. Indulgences substituted for this penance in the afterlife by granting a specific number of days off the time that would be spent in purgatory. There were many ways to attain indulgences. Contributing to church building projects, making pilgrimage to certain shrines, venerating a saint's relic, or saying certain prayers were just a few of the many good works that Christians could perform to gain access to the indulgence's pardon. In the fifteenth century the evidence shows that the market in indulgences went into an "inflationary spiral." At Rome, local church officials lobbied and bribed church officials to secure indulgence letters, which they often

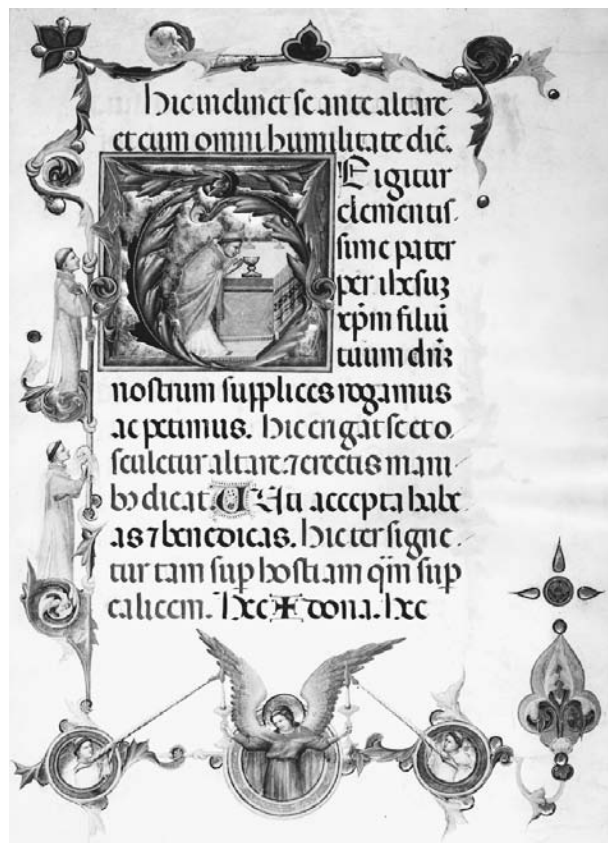
sold at home in exchange for mere money payments. The funds indulgences generated became a vital source of revenue, both at Rome and in the church's provinces. Toward the end of the fifteenth century the market for indulgences expanded once again, when the church began awarding the documents, not only to the living, but also for the benefit of the dead already suffering in purgatory. Certainly, these abuses in the indulgence trade were one of the most glaring ills of the late-medieval church, and they inspired the sixteenth-century reformer Martin Luther to speak out against the church's teachings on salvation. But both Protestant and Catholic reformers criticized these glaring abuses. The custom of granting indulgences as pardons would play no role in Protestantism. Among Catholics, though, a reformed notion of indulgences continued to serve as an accompaniment to good works after the Council of Trent.

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### RENAISSANCE PIETY

**VITALITY.** Despite the political and administrative problems of the church, popular religion witnessed a dramatic surge in the Renaissance. This surge can be seen in the many bequests the laity made to support masses, to found new monasteries and convents, and to build new churches. The authority of the church as an institution that controlled people's salvation was still widely respected, and late-medieval religion often evidenced a ritualistic flavor. The Mass and the other sacraments were seen as effective forces that aided in the salvation of an individual's soul. One of the most common priests at the time was the chantrist, who did nothing more than repeat the Mass many times each day for the benefit of people's salvation. Many people tried to amass as many indulgences as possible, holding fast to the notion that salvation could be accomplished through the routine channels the church provided. At the same time a deeper kind of piety was intensifying that pointed to the growth of more internal religious beliefs. Confraternities increased dramatically in importance among the laity. These brotherhoods and sisterhoods practiced many of



Illumination from a late fourteenth-century missal showing a priest consecrating the host in the Mass. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

the same prayers and rituals that had long been used in Europe's monasteries, but, in addition, they dedicated themselves to pious works that were practical and beneficial to society. They fed the poor, tended the sick, and even accompanied the condemned to the gallows. This search for a practical piety found expression, too, in the numerous endowments the laity made to support preachers in Europe's towns. And the new subjective religious spirit can be seen in the great surge in the writing and circulation of devotional literature. New classics appeared at the time, works like Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* or the *Books on the Art of Dying* that would help Christian readers shape their devotion, not only in the Renaissance, but in the centuries that followed. Finally, these sensibilities were displayed as well in the rising attention Europe's scholars and lay people gave to the scriptures.

**SACRAMENTS.** The system of the seven sacraments had grown up in Europe during the medieval centuries, and it remained a source of Christian discipline and consolation during the Renaissance. The seven sacraments were Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Holy Orders,





*The Seven Works of Mercy* from a fourteenth-century Italian psalter. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

Marriage, Holy Communion or the Eucharist, and Last Rites or Extreme Unction. The church taught that the sacraments were outward signs that brought grace to the faithful and thus they were the most important rituals of the church. The sacraments were not mere symbols, but acts that helped heal a human being's sinful nature. The system of sacraments, moreover, functioned to discipline Christians. The sacraments could be withheld through excommunication, and since people feared death without Penance and Last Rites, the sacramental system functioned as a force of control. Every Christian did not receive all the sacraments during his or her life. Those who married, for instance, generally could not take Holy Orders, which required sexual abstinence. Everyone, though, participated in Penance and the Eucharist at least once each year. For most lay people, they did so in the days and weeks immediately preceding Easter, giving rise to the custom of "Easter duties." The Eucharist occurred in the final

part of the Mass, and it was the most ritually potent event within the Renaissance church. Most people accepted the church's doctrine of transubstantiation—that is, that the bread and wine used in the sacrament become the actual body and blood of Christ through the priest's consecration. The popularity of the Eucharist in the later Middle Ages can be seen in the spread of the Feast of Corpus Christi throughout Europe. Corpus Christi was a eucharistic celebration that occurred in late spring, and it became one of the liturgical year's most important festivals. In England and France especially, the celebration of Corpus Christi included impressive processions and dramatic play cycles that sometimes lasted over several days. The Eucharist was also displayed in every church, often in elaborately carved or silver monstrances which could be quite large. At the end of the fifteenth century, for example, the late Gothic sculptor Adam Krafft (1455–1509) created a soaring 64-foot tall stone tabernacle for the Church



"Sakramentshaus" by Adam Kraft, Church of St. Lawrence, Nuremberg, early sixteenth century. ART RESOURCE.

of St. Lawrence in Nuremberg, a monument that became a source of local civic pride.

**IMPORTANCE OF RITUALS.** Beyond the sacraments, a rich life of rituals and observances was an important feature of Renaissance religion. Fasting, for example, was a common sign of religious devotion, but also a requirement imposed by the church at particular times. Fasting was prescribed for the 40 days of Lent, for the four weeks of Advent before Christmas, and on a number of other days throughout the year. At these times the eating of all animal products and sexual intercourse were forbidden. Prolonged fasts were also considered signs of saintliness. For women saints, in particular, fasting had a special significance. Long-standing religious teachings condemned women as "daughters of Eve," and the view that women were more highly sexed than men also ran through much medical and scientific literature in circulation in the Renaissance. While the biographies of Renaissance male saints sometimes stressed their asceticism, the ability to survive without food was usually a necessary precondition for becoming a female saint. The ability to fast demonstrated a woman's victory over her body, that she had successfully conquered her flesh. For most



Giovanni Santi, *Saint Roch*. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Christians, though, the church stressed that fasting should be practiced in moderation, as but one part of a program of self-denial and discipline. Most people were more eager to celebrate the numerous "feast days" that occurred throughout the church's calendar than they were to fast. Although the precise dates and reasons for these holidays differed from place to place, feast days were usually times for parish festivals, for processions, and for other events that helped to relieve the monotony of daily life. Many religious rituals also occurred outside the church, and often without the participation of the clergy. People practiced a lush variety of prayers, benedictions, and ceremonies at the time and saw ritual as possessing an almost magical effectiveness to protect one's self or family. Women in childbirth, for example, relied on talismans, charms, and prayers to ensure their safety. Farmers used similar measures to try to increase their yields of livestock and crops. Specific prayers existed for almost any circumstance. Some were believed



*The Pilgrimage to the Fair Mary at Regensburg* by Michael Ostendorfer, 1520. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

to be effective in winning lawsuits, others for curing nosebleeds, and still others for avoiding sudden death, robbery, or specific illnesses. The church had long condemned this attitude toward prayer as magic, but it survived nonetheless.

**PILGRIMAGE.** Society's love of ritual and the church's desire to promote the veneration of the saints combined to inspire a great age of pilgrimage in the later Middle Ages. In 1300 the papacy had initiated the practice of the Roman Jubilee, a year-long religious festival held in the church's capital. Journeys to Palestine had become unfeasible for most Europeans because of the spread of Islamic power in the Western Mediterranean. Now Rome became Europe's undisputed pilgrimage capital, and the papacy supported its development by awarding rich indulgences to those who made the journey. During the second Jubilee held in the city during 1350, more than a million Europeans journeyed there, their journeys inspired by indulgences and the desire to demonstrate their devotion to God in the wake of the Black Death that had recently afflicted Europe. Individuals and communities often relied on pilgrimage in



Early seventeenth-century engraving of the Altötting pilgrimage shrine in Bavaria. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

this way to secure the saints' aid in solving their problems. Church teaching stressed that the saints could not perform miracles, but they could offer people aid by interceding with God, encouraging him to grant a miracle. If plague threatened a town, civic leaders often promoted communal pilgrimages to try to obtain the saints' aid. Those suffering from disease, or in fear of dying, promised to make journeys to local shrines, too. By the fourteenth century, thousands of pilgrimage shrines dotted the European landscape, and new shrines added to their number constantly. Some were quite small, but Europe also had many impressive centers for long-distance pilgrimage. Like Rome, these places drew the faithful from throughout the continent. In Spain, Santiago di Compostella, a shrine possessing the relics of St. James, drew pilgrims from everywhere in Europe, as did Canterbury in England, and Mont St. Michel in France. The pilgrimage industry brought with it the rich donations of Europe's faithful, and by the fifteenth century, local church leaders and civic boosters were often anxious to see the development of shrines within their

provinces. In Germany, places like Wilsnack, Grimmental, and Regensburg were enthusiastically advertised to draw as many pilgrims as possible. In Regensburg, for example, the shrine developed in the wake of miracle reports during 1519, and during the next two years, it had drawn several hundred thousand pilgrims. But the excitement could fade just as quickly as it arose. By 1522, Regensburg had largely been forgotten. This enthusiasm inspired criticism from many in the church and state who feared these spontaneous outbursts of religiosity. Crowds might turn dangerous, as at Niklashausen in Germany during 1476. Pilgrims traveled to a shrine there because of the anticlerical sermons of an itinerant preacher. When the church prohibited their pilgrimage, the faithful revolted, marching on the local bishop's palace and staging riots along the way. Other critics of late-medieval pilgrimage attacked it as nothing more than a ploy to raise money. Humanists like Desiderius Erasmus poked fun at the popular beliefs in the saints. In his short dialogue, *A Pilgrimage for Religion's Sake*, Erasmus used bitter satire to mock those who believed their problems could be solved merely by journeying to a saint's relic. It would be better, he advised, for people to stay at home, say their prayers, and do their work.

**MODERN DEVOTION.** Erasmus's pragmatic attitude had been shaped by a different set of religious values, values that had been formed by his education and early upbringing within the schools of the Brethren of the Common Life. The Brethren practiced a disciplined religious life that was known as the Modern Devotion. The movement's founder, Gerd Groote, had been destined for a brilliant career in the church when, in 1370, he renounced his worldly ambitions and entered a monastery. After several years spent as a monk, Groote embarked on a preaching career that lasted until his death in 1384. During this time he turned over his house and belongings to a group of laywomen, who became known as the Sisters of the Common Life. These women took no formal religious vows, nor did they wear any special dress. They were free to leave the group when they wished, but while serving as members of the community they were to share their possessions. Within a short time, a male wing of the movement, the Brothers of the Common Life, had developed, and during the next century, scores of houses of the Brothers and Sisters had been founded in the Netherlands and Germany. The life of the Brothers and Sisters stressed prayer and introspection. They frequently expressed distaste for the ritualistic formalism they saw in the church, but they did not reject Catholic teachings. They insisted instead that the sacraments and other rituals of the church must be



A sixteenth-century Northern European wood panel painting showing the profession of the faith and vestiture of a nun.  
© ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

practiced with a spirit of fervent internal devotion. To support themselves, many of the Brothers undertook scribal work, copying manuscripts for scholars. Others ran boarding schools that provided their students with an elementary knowledge of Latin and the Christian classics. The Sisters, on the other hand, served as nurses and ran hospitals. Church leaders had long distrusted lay movements like the Brothers and the Sisters because they feared they might teach heresy. Over time, though, this group ingratiated itself with the church leadership in most of the places in which it founded communities, in part because the Brothers and Sisters resembled other orders of monks and nuns. By the late fifteenth century, the number of their lay members had shrunk as Brothers and Sisters took permanent vows and followed disciplines similar to other religious orders. Even at this time, though, the Brothers continued to exert an influence over learning and scholarship in Northern Europe through their primary schools. From their scribal endeavors, many of the Brothers of the Common Life were also aware of the inaccuracies that had crept into manuscripts over the centuries. With the coming of the Renaissance to Northern Europe in the late fifteenth century, the schools of the Brothers of the Common Life helped to

disseminate knowledge of the textual studies of the Italian humanists in their schools. The largest of these institutions at Deventer had more than 2,000 students in 1500, and counted among its pupils Desiderius Erasmus. Elsewhere the alumni of the Brethren of the Common Life schools were just as distinguished, and included such figures as the Protestant reformer Martin Luther.

**THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.** The teachings of the Modern Devotion were broad and eclectic, despite a firmly orthodox flavor. One work, *The Imitation of Christ*, became particularly important in spreading the ideas of the movement. The work has long been ascribed to Thomas à Kempis, a member of a religious house associated with the New Devotion, but evidence to prove his authorship is slight. The Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life enjoyed works like the *Imitation* which was essentially a collection of adages, proverbs, and spiritual admonitions drawn and paraphrased from other spiritual writings. One phrase in the work, though, manages to sum up much of its teaching: "It is better to feel sorrow than it is to understand it." When he used the word "understand," the author of the *Imitation* had in mind the intense intellectual efforts that theologians used to understand sorrow as a necessary part of the sacrament of Penance. The Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life believed that these attempts to comprehend how the sacraments worked were meaningless. The sacraments, they taught, were not mere exercises in ritual; they needed to be combined with an internal change of heart. As such, the *Imitation* was typical of a rising strain of piety in the later Middle Ages which advocated a greater internalization of religious experience. The immediate impact of the work is evident from the more than 700 handwritten manuscripts that survive from the fifteenth century. The *Imitation* was also printed in 1472, and by the end of the century, more than 85 printed editions were in circulation. During the sixteenth century another 200 printings appeared. Eventually, the *Imitation* had translations in all European languages, and from its almost unchallenged vantage point as a manual of the Christian life, it continued to inspire the religious devotion of both Catholics and Protestants until modern times. Its effect can be seen on figures as diverse as Desiderius Erasmus, Martin Luther, Ignatius of Loyola, and John Wesley.

**THE ART OF DYING.** The fifteenth century witnessed a number of new theological handbooks and practical guidebooks that treated the subject of death. The surge in the production of texts on these themes was part of a more general preoccupation with death in the later Middle Ages. Preparation for death, concentration on its inevitability, and attention to the final hours of those

who were dying had long been important themes in the Christian religion. Since the early church, in other words, Christians had written numerous texts about the final moments of life and how the Christian should approach that time. The grim realities of living in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries heightened people's fascination with these themes. Many of the new works used the word "art" in their titles. By art, their writers had in mind "skill." The authors of these books treating the art of dying intended to teach the skills that the still-healthy would need as they approached their final hours. The theologian Jean Gerson (1363–1429) wrote the first of these works entitled *On the Art of Dying*. Another twenty similar theological handbooks appeared on the subject during the fifteenth century. The primary aim of Gerson's work was to keep sick and dying people confirmed in their faith in the period between their last Confession and the moment of death. These moments were particularly important in the medieval mind. Sins committed after a person's final Confession would need to be atoned for in purgatory. More serious mortal sins, like denying one's religion or cursing God, would result in one's damnation. Gerson tried to provide his readers with prayers, admonitions, and meditations that would keep the Christian true to his religion on his deathbed. Other theologians imitated his success, but the genre of books treating the art of dying also included two works intended for a popular readership. The first of these was a text version and it was more widely circulated. The second was an illustrated handbook that consisted of a series of pictures outlining the stages the dying would experience before their last breath. More than 300 handwritten manuscripts of both works still survive, and 75 printed editions appeared in Latin and other European languages between 1468 and the end of the fifteenth century. Both works recommended that family members and friends accompany the dying on their deathbeds. This custom had been used in the medieval monastery and it now came to be practiced by laypeople relying on the books of the art of dying for advice. The works gave those gathered at the deathbed tools to help their loved ones avoid the temptations that approaching death might bring. Overall, the tone of these books was not morbid, but cautiously optimistic. Every death, the books taught, is a drama, but armed with the proper tools of the faith, the dying can be committed to the afterlife successfully. The art of dying was one of the most popular religious themes treated in the early press, with scores of editions being printed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

**RENAISSANCE MYSTICISM.** Mysticism was a form of religious experience that became increasingly popular

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE IMITATION OF CHRIST**

**INTRODUCTION:** The third book of Thomas à Kempis's devotional classic is written as a dialogue between Christ and a Christian. In this, the 43rd of its chapters, Christ advises the faithful on the proper use of learning and study.

MY CHILD, do not let the fine-sounding and subtle words of men deceive you. For the kingdom of heaven consists not in talk but in virtue. Attend, rather, to My words which enkindle the heart and enlighten the mind, which excite contrition and abound in manifold consolations. Never read them for the purpose of appearing more learned or more wise. Apply yourself to mortifying your vices, for this will benefit you more than your understanding of many difficult questions.

Though you shall have read and learned many things, it will always be necessary for you to return to this one principle: I am He who teaches man knowledge, and to the little ones I give a clearer understanding than can be taught by man. He to whom I speak will soon be wise and his soul will profit. But woe to those who inquire of men about many curious things, and care very little about the way they serve Me.

The time will come when Christ, the Teacher of teachers, the Lord of angels, will appear to hear the lessons of all—that is, to examine the conscience of everyone. Then He will search Jerusalem with lamps and the

hidden things of darkness will be brought to light and the arguings of men's tongues be silenced.

I am He Who in one moment so enlightens the humble mind that it comprehends more of eternal truth than could be learned by ten years in the schools. I teach without noise of words or clash of opinions, without ambition for honor or confusion of argument.

I am He Who teaches man to despise earthly possessions and to loathe present things, to ask after the eternal, to hunger for heaven, to fly honors and to bear with scandals, to place all hope in Me, to desire nothing apart from Me, and to love Me ardently above all things. For a certain man by loving Me intimately learned divine truths and spoke wonders. He profited more by leaving all things than by studying subtle questions.

To some I speak of common things, to others of special matters. To some I appear with sweetness in signs and figures, and to others I appear in great light and reveal mysteries. The voice of books is but a single voice, yet it does not teach all men alike, because I within them am the Teacher and the Truth, the Examiner of hearts, the Understander of thoughts, the Promoter of acts, distributing to each as I see fit.

**SOURCE:** Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ* (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Bruce Brothers, 1940): 164–166. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Available online at <http://www.ccel.org/k/kempis/imitation/imitation.html>; website home page: <http://www.ccel.org> (accessed January 8, 2004).

in the later Middle Ages. Mystics came from many different social classes and educational backgrounds, and they were both male and female. Great variety characterized late-medieval mysticism, making it difficult to generalize about the movement. All mystics attempted to achieve a direct, unmediated union with God, but the methods they relied upon to achieve this relationship differed dramatically. Still, trends can be discerned in the history of mysticism in medieval and Renaissance Europe. By the fourteenth century, European writers wrote more mystical texts than ever before. Laymen and laywomen, too, played roles in mysticism, as they did in other dimensions of late-medieval piety. Finally, mysticism influenced other areas of late-medieval and Renaissance intellectual life. In Italy, the movement affected humanist scholars from Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374) to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), who studied mystical texts for the insights they offered concerning human nature and its relationship to the Creator. Northern European scholars similarly combed through

the mystical heritage. Renaissance humanist Jacques Lefevre D'Étaples (d. 1536) in France and scholastic theologian Martin Luther were just two of the many Northern European intellectuals whose ideas were in part shaped by mystical texts. Although mysticism's influence stretched to these different spheres of Renaissance life, both the church and society at large were distrustful of mystics. The mystic claimed to have direct knowledge of God, a knowledge that was more personal and subjective than the insights the scriptures and church theology offered. Many mystics experienced visions, and their pronouncements could veer into prophecies that were a challenge to the church and state. As a consequence, church authorities often carefully scrutinized the writings of mystics to see if they conformed to church teaching or if they threatened medieval institutions.

**AFFECTIVE MYSTICISM.** Two broad categories of mystical experience have long been identified in late-medieval Europe, with considerable overlap between the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MYSTICAL VISIONS**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Life of St. Catherine*, Raymond of Capua recorded St. Catherine's rich visionary life. This excerpt describes one of Catherine's most famous visions. It occurred the day after Catherine first drank human pus and Christ rewarded the saint by allowing her to drink from the wound in his side.

On the night following ... a vision [of Christ with his five wounds] was granted to her as she was at prayer ... "My beloved," [Christ] said to her, "You have now gone through many struggles for my sake ... Previously you had renounced all that the body takes pleasure in ... But yesterday the intensity of your ardent love for me overcame even the instinctive reflexes of your body itself: you forced yourself to swallow without a qualm a drink from which nature recoiled in disgust ... As you then went far beyond what mere human nature could ever have achieved, so I today shall give you a drink that transcends in perfection any that human nature can provide ..." With that, he tenderly placed his right hand on her neck, and drew her toward the wound in his side. "Drink, daughter, from my side," he said, "and by that draught your soul shall become enraptured with such delight that your very body, which for my sake you have denied, shall be inundated with its overflowing goodness." Drawn close ... to the outlet of the Fountain of Life, she fastened her lips upon that sacred wound, and still more eagerly the mouth of her soul, and there she slaked her thirst."

**SOURCE:** Raymond of Capua, *Life of St. Catherine*, in Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*. Trans. C. Kearns (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987): 172.

two. The first, known as "affective mysticism," involved the mystic adopting certain behaviors to try to achieve union with God. Affective mystics desired to conquer their wills as a necessary pre-condition for uniting with God. Many practiced acts of self-denial and subjected their bodies to tortures so that they could triumph over their human needs. Affective mystics described their journey to union with God using metaphors drawn from the writings of monasticism. They treated the mystical union as a marriage, or they pictured Christ as a mother who fed them from His breasts or the wound in His side. One affective mystic, Catherine of Siena (d. 1380),

used these metaphors in her *Dialogue On Divine Providence*, one of the major mystical texts of the later Middle Ages. Catherine was the daughter of a large Sienese family who had spent her youth in conflict with her parents. They disapproved of her desire to become a nun and her extremes of religious devotion. From a young age, Catherine had fasted regularly and subjected her body to regimens of sleep deprivation so that she could spend more time in prayer. Because of her deep feelings of unworthiness, Catherine never became a nun, but instead joined an auxiliary order of laywomen attached to a local Dominican convent. There she performed the most menial of tasks and tended the sick and dying. For much of her life she was said to have lived only on the communion wafer she received each day and pus she drained from those she nursed. Following the first of these episodes of drinking filth Catherine reported a vision of Christ, who came to feed her from the wounds in his side, and from this point forward she developed a rich visionary life. She died at 33 as a consequence of her fasting, but her ability to conquer her human needs and her success in achieving mystical union with Christ gave her a great deal of influence while she was alive. In the many letters she wrote to kings, queens, and popes, she doled out praise and blame. Other women followed a path similar to Catherine's. St. Birgitta of Sweden (1303–1373) told of her many visits from Christ in her *Revelations*, as did Julian of Norwich (1342–c. 1416) in her *Revelations of Divine Love*. Margery Kempe (1373–1438), a laywoman, recounted her visions in a widely read spiritual autobiography in English. And at the end of the Middle Ages, St. Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510) published her fascinating visionary accounts of purgatory, which reached a large audience. The affective mystical tradition persisted in the sixteenth century, particularly in Spain where St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) and St. John of the Cross (1542–1591) informed their readers of their visions through their writings. St. Teresa wrote her autobiographical *The Interior Castle* in 1577, a book that found a ready audience in both the women of her religious order and members of the Catholic devout. John of the Cross' *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel* and *Dark Night of the Soul* were equally popular and provided early-modern Catholics with an orthodox theology of mysticism. John's writing, in particular, stressed that the Christian's soul needed to be emptied and purified in order to be filled by the spirit of God. Teresa of Avila's mysticism, on the other hand, shows less influence from the scholarly and theological traditions; it is instead an often highly personal and emotional account of the visitations she received from God while in prayer.

**SPECULATIVE MYSTICISM.** A second kind of mystical experience was important in late-medieval Europe. It was less emotional and less ascetic than “affective” mysticism and is sometimes referred to as “speculative” mysticism because of the importance that intellectual issues had for its practitioners. Speculative mysticism flourished in Germany and Northern Europe in the later Middle Ages, and Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–c. 1327) was among its most important exponents. Many speculative mystics drew upon Neoplatonism in their writings. Neoplatonic thought had allowed Christian theologians like St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1275) to argue that human ideas were dim reflections of universal truths that pre-existed in the mind of God. Neoplatonism also stressed that human nature, which had been created in God’s likeness, possessed a spark of divinity. As a consequence, speculative mystics often stressed that mystical union with God was but a return to humankind’s original oneness with God, a teaching that, when overstated by Meister Eckhart, led to the condemnation of his ideas as heretical. Speculative mysticism also found inspiration in the newly discovered works of Pseudo-Dionysius. Pseudo-Dionysius was actually a sixth-century writer, but he alleged to be Dionysius the Areopagite, the associate of St. Paul spoken of in the New Testament. In his works Pseudo-Dionysius had tried to communicate a special “gnosis,” that is, a secret wisdom he alleged had been given to him by the apostles. This special wisdom, Pseudo-Dionysius argued, surpassed human reason, and thus those mystical writers who relied upon his texts stressed that union with God was an experience that was incomprehensible according to rational, intellectual standards. Besides influencing Meister Eckhart, Dionysian ideas can be seen at work in a number of late-medieval mystical writers. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous fourteenth-century English mystical text, was among the first to apply these sober insights about the limits of the human intellect to understanding the divine mind. But the ideas of Pseudo-Dionysius continued to have perennial appeal. *On Learned Ignorance*, a treatise written by the late-medieval theologian Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464), went to great lengths to demonstrate the finite limitations of human reason when applied to the infinitude of God. Cusa’s treatise argued that the true mystic needed to cultivate an awareness of the limitations of his own intellect, a first step toward developing a higher knowledge of the divine mind.

**OTHER TRADITIONS.** Other mystical texts appeared in late-medieval Europe that cannot neatly be fit into “affective” and “speculative” traditions. The *Theologia Germanica*, or *German Theology*, a compilation of mystical

texts that circulated in Northern Europe in the fifteenth century, shows influences from all the Christian mystical traditions— affective, speculative, monastic, Dionysian, Neoplatonic, and so forth. The publication of that text in 1516 by the German reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546) granted medieval mysticism renewed life in the early-modern period. It also ensured that mystical ideas would continue to be discussed and debated, not only among Catholics, but among Protestants, too. Mystics were often eclectic, drawing upon a variety of texts, metaphors, and allusions in their quest to express the union with God. These metaphors were adaptable, and could be used not only by other mystics but by non-mystical devotional writers in search of vocabulary and rhetoric to portray the indescribable character of God and the Christian’s relationship to Him.

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## THE REFORMATION’S ORIGINS

**PHILOLOGY.** The maturing of Christian humanism in Northern Europe around 1500 preceded the rise of the Protestant Reformation. Like the followers of the Modern Devotion, many Christian humanists criticized the ritualism of religion at the time, and instead argued for the importance of an internal change of heart among Christians (see also Philosophy: Christian Humanism). The humanists also devoted themselves to the study of the classics and ancient languages. One important innovation of fifteenth-century humanism was its perfecting of philological techniques. Philology, the historical study of languages, taught the humanists that the meanings of words used in ancient documents, particularly in the scriptures, had changed over the centuries. One of the most important demonstrations of fifteenth-century philological technique had come from the Italian humanist philosopher Lorenzo Valla. In 1440, Valla had



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE ROLE OF THE SCRIPTURES**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1516, Erasmus published his edition of the New Testament in parallel Greek and Latin versions. The work soon became popular among scholars and was used by translators throughout the sixteenth century as they translated the Bible into Europe's native languages. In his "The Paraclesis," an introduction to his translation, Erasmus advocated the revolutionary idea of lay Bible reading, and his final words from that work argued that the message of the scriptures was clear to anyone who wished to examine them.

Let all those of us who have pledged in baptism in the words prescribed by Christ, if we have pledged sincerely, be directly imbued with the teachings of Christ in the midst of the very embraces of parents and the caresses of nurses. For that which the new earthen pot of the soul first imbibes settles most deeply and clings most tenaciously. Let the first lisplings utter Christ, let earliest childhood be formed by the Gospels of Him whom I would wish particularly presented in such a way that children also might love Him. For as the severity of some teachers causes children to hate literature before they come to know it, so there are those who make the philosophy of Christ sad and morose, although nothing is more sweet than it. In these studies, then, let them engage themselves until at length in silent growth they mature into strong manhood in Christ. The literature of others is such that many have greatly repented the effort expended upon it, and it happens again and again that those who have fought through all their life up to death to defend the principles of that literature, free themselves from the

faction of their author at the very hour of death. But happy is that man whom death takes as he meditates upon this literature [of Christ]. Let us all, therefore, with our whole heart covet this literature, let us embrace it, let us continually occupy ourselves with it, let us fondly kiss it, at length let us die in its embrace, let us be transformed in it, since indeed studies are transmuted into morals. As for him who cannot pursue this course (but who cannot do it, if only he wishes?), let him at least reverence this literature enveloping, as it were, His divine heart. If anyone shows us the footprints of Christ, in what manner, as Christians, do we prostrate ourselves, how we adore them! But why do we not venerate instead the living and breathing likeness of Him in these books? If anyone displays the tunic of Christ, to what corner of the earth shall we not hasten so that we may kiss it? Yet were you to bring forth His entire wardrobe, it would not manifest Christ more clearly and truly than the Gospel writings. We embellish a wooden or stone statue with gems and gold for the love of Christ. Why not, rather, mark with gold and gems and with ornaments of greater value than these, if such there be, these writings which bring Christ to us so much more effectively than any paltry image? The latter represents only the form of the body—if indeed it represents anything of Him—but these writings bring you the living image of His holy mind and the speaking, healing, dying, rising Christ Himself, and thus they render Him so fully present that you would see less if you gazed upon Him with your very eyes.

**SOURCE:** Desiderius Erasmus, "The Paraclesis," in *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: The Selected Writings of Erasmus*. Ed. John C. Olin (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987): 107–108.

demonstrated that one of the foundations of papal power, the Donation of Constantine, was a forgery. This document had allegedly been written by the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century, and transferred power in the West to the Roman pope. Valla's detailed examination of the language used in the text demonstrated conclusively that it was a fake written around 800 C.E. Inspired by the example of Renaissance philologists like Valla, the humanists began to study the ancient Classics to revive an accurate ancient knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. Nowhere were their insights to produce more profound changes in Christianity than in the corrections they made in the Bible. Until 1500, the most important version of the scriptures used in Europe was the Vulgate, a fourth-century translation of the Greek and Hebrew books of the Bible into Latin by St. Jerome. Humanists began to use their new so-

phisticated knowledge of Greek and Hebrew to examine this text and they found that it contained numerous inaccuracies. Medieval scribes had also compounded the Vulgate's problems by miscopying the text. Consequently, humanists undertook a great project to ensure the accuracy of the Bible's translation. Their new translations into Latin and other European languages produced powerful reassessments in Christian teaching. In 1516, for example, the humanist Desiderius Erasmus published his translation of the New Testament. Corrections Erasmus made in the text undermined traditional church teachings, and Erasmus pointed out that the sacrament of Penance had no clear scriptural foundation. While this Dutch humanist remained a loyal follower of the church, Protestant preachers and theologians made use of his scholarly insights to reform Christian teachings.

**PRINTING.** The development of the printing press aided the new studies undertaken by humanists in the late fifteenth century, as it promoted the circulation of texts throughout Europe. The printing press, traditionally attributed to the German Johann Gutenberg of Mainz, was a complex development to which many contributed ideas and techniques. The new technology spread quickly throughout Europe after 1450. In the first half-century of its existence, the press largely published editions of the Classics and medieval theology. It helped scholars by providing them with cheaper versions of important works for their libraries. In 1490, Aldus Manutius founded a publishing house in Venice that pioneered the use of italic print. This Aldine press issued many important classical works in Greek editions, and it helped spread the new textual scholarship throughout Europe. Even in 1500, though, some humanists and theologians still desired to circulate their texts in manuscripts copied by scribes because they were more beautiful. Publishers like Aldus Manutius, however, successfully weaned Europe's scholars away from manuscripts because they produced cheaper books that were as pleasing to the eye and easier to use than handwritten manuscripts. The press, too, helped make the scholarly insights the Renaissance had produced a permanent feature of the intellectual scene as the identical copies of a particular work ensured that a scholar working in England had access to the same authoritative text as one who worked in Italy. The fact that printed books had editions of several hundred to several thousand meant that a text could never be lost again, as many had been in the Middle Ages. In its first decades, then, printing proved to be an invaluable boon to scholarship. But by the early sixteenth century another possibility of the press became evident to people as well: its ability to transmit knowledge quickly. The press allowed the lecture notes of a famous Greek professor in Venice to be printed and sent to Northern Europe within a matter of weeks, and it fostered intellectual debates and controversies as scholarly opponents sparred off with printed defenses of their positions. Protestantism made brilliant use of these possibilities, but it also used the press as a mass medium that could spread ideas throughout society.

**REUCHLIN.** Another dispute that helped to shape the early course of the Reformation was the Reuchlin Affair, a controversy that erupted over Hebrew books in Germany after 1506. Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), one of the most distinguished scholars in Renaissance Europe, had spent his early years studying at the universities of Freiburg, Paris, and Basel before turning to study law at Orléans and Poitiers. He made two trips to

Italy where he impressed Italian humanists with the depth of his knowledge. Although Reuchlin's interests were wide-ranging, he applied himself increasingly to the study of Hebrew, and one of his chief achievements was the popularization of the study of Hebrew among humanists in Germany. He published a Hebrew grammar for students in 1506. A few years later Reuchlin became embroiled in controversy with the converted Jew Johann Pfefferkorn, who had received the emperor's permission to seize and destroy Jewish books. Reuchlin immediately opposed Pfefferkorn's plan, and advocated that Christians study Hebrew texts for the insights they might offer for their own religion. The debates over these issues lasted more than a decade, with first Pfefferkorn's position winning the upper hand, then the balance shifting in Reuchlin's favor, and finally back to Pfefferkorn. Generally, Germany's Dominican Order and scholastic theologians tended to side with Pfefferkorn in favor of the destruction of Jewish works, while the empire's humanists supported Reuchlin's position and condemned Pfefferkorn's plan as an assault on academic freedom. During the high tide of the controversy around 1515, two of Reuchlin's humanist supporters, Ulrich von Hutten and Crotus Rubianus struck a successful blow against Pfefferkorn and his Dominican and scholastic supporters with the publication of their *Letters of Obscure Men*. This biting and hilarious work berated the intentional "obscurity" of theologians and churchmen and was one of the Renaissance's most successful satires. In the bitter disputes that resulted, charges leveled at Reuchlin for the biting tracts he had written against Pfefferkorn resulted in his condemnation by the church in 1520.

**INDULGENCE CONTROVERSY.** The bitter divisions the Reuchlin Affair caused between Germany's humanists and scholastic theologians helped to shape the responses of Germany's intellectuals to Martin Luther's attacks upon the sale of indulgences. The Dominican Order and traditional scholastics tended to oppose his ideas; while many humanists supported them. Martin Luther had assumed the post of professor of biblical theology at the University of Wittenberg in Saxony in 1516, but his radical ideas did not attract much attention until the following year, when he attacked the sale of indulgences. At this time his attacks on the practice collided with German politics and the church hierarchy. To secure his election as archbishop of Mainz, Albert of Brandenburg had incurred enormous debts from bribes and fees that he paid to the church's officials in Rome. To pay these off, he and Pope Leo X came up with a plan to sell a new indulgence in Germany. Leo planned to use his share of the indulgence sales to support the construction

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

**HUMANISM VS. SCHOLASTICISM**

**INTRODUCTION:** In the *Letters of Obscure Men*, a series of satires, several German humanists rose to defend Johannes Reuchlin, who advocated the study of Hebrew texts. The satires mocked the intentional obscurity of scholastically-trained theologians. The first of this collection was typical of the vigorously critical tone taken throughout. In it, Thomas Langschneider writes to his former teacher for advice on a minute point of terminology.

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**SOURCE:** Ulrich von Hutten, et al, *Letters of Obscure Men*. Trans. F. G. Stokes (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964): 5–7.

of a new St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, which had been demolished in 1506 but not yet rebuilt. During the autumn of 1517 Luther became aware of the unscrupulous methods that the indulgence's chief salesman, Johann Tetzel, used to boost sales of these letters in Germany.

Luther wrote to the archbishop, warning him to keep the indulgence salesmen away from Saxony, and at the same time he prepared his famous *95 Theses* against indulgences. Luther may have posted the theses on the door of the university's church in Wittenberg, an act that

has legendary status as the beginning of the Reformation. But that act cannot be definitely established from the surviving documents. Such public postings were a common way to inspire debate in the university among scholars. The sale of indulgences offended Luther for several reasons. First, the techniques of Tetzel and others active throughout Germany suggested that salvation could merely be bought in exchange for money payments. Second, salesmen taught that the indulgence letters could be applied not only to one's own wrongdoings, but also to those of dead relatives and friends suffering in purgatory. For Luther, salvation was always a personal matter between God and a human being, and thus Luther saw the indulgences as a fraud, a way to dupe innocent men and women out of their hard-earned money.

**95 THESES.** Luther had probably hoped to discuss his criticisms of the sale of indulgences only among scholars. He sent copies of his *Theses* to friends and colleagues elsewhere in Germany, and one of these contacts arranged for their printing without Luther's permission. During the coming months editions of the work appeared in several cities in Germany. Luther's attacks on indulgences became controversial, and Johann Tetzel and other German Dominicans called for his condemnation. The archbishop of Mainz referred the case to Rome, and the pope responded by sending an emissary to Germany to discuss the matter with Luther. In several meetings during October 1518, the pope's ambassador tried unsuccessfully to get Luther to retract his statements. Other initiatives followed, since church leaders wanted desperately to avoid making a martyr of the scholar. Luther, for his part, agreed to take part in a staged debate the following June with the Dominican Johann Eck at Leipzig. In this debate Luther generally defended his ideas skillfully. But at one point in the three-week deliberations, Luther admitted that he admired some of the ideas of the heretic John Huss. This outburst would later be used to condemn the reformer. In this sense Luther emerged partially bruised by the Leipzig experience, although a transcript of the deliberations there were printed and circulated throughout Germany. This printed account expanded Luther's notoriety throughout Europe. In the wake of the Leipzig debate, Luther became more and more convinced that the problems with the church's teachings ran deeper than mere clerical corruption and indulgence sales. These problems had developed over centuries and they necessitated a more complete reform of the church. In the months that followed Luther began denying the authority of the pope.

**THREE TREATISES.** In spite of his many problems with church authorities, Luther continued in these busy



Martin Luther. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

months to work out the many implications of his new ideas. Three of the works he published in 1520 became important manifestoes for the Reformation. In the first, *The Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, Luther argued that corruption had become so entrenched in the church that it was unrealistic to expect reform to come from the clergy. He appealed instead to the German princes and nobles to take up the task of reforming the church within their lands. This call for state-directed reforms would prove important to the Lutheran cause in subsequent years. Luther was always careful to argue that his ideas and reforms must be adopted through the lawful measures of the states, and Germany's territorial princes found Luther's ideas attractive because they sanctioned a state-directed church. The second of the three important 1520 tracts, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, presented a new theology of the sacraments. Luther denied that the sacraments helped in human salvation. He insisted instead that sacraments were signs of promises God had made with humankind and thus they must be clearly commanded in the scriptures. This definition caused Luther to reduce the number of sacraments from seven to two, although he held out the possibility that a reformed Penance might play some role in the church. For Luther, only baptism and the Eucharist had clear scriptural foundations. While Luther's teaching on baptism remained close to that of the medieval church, his ideas about the Eucharist differed

from traditional orthodoxy in two ways. Like John Huss, Luther believed the laity should celebrate communion with both bread and wine, and he denied transubstantiation. Luther taught instead that the body of Christ was present everywhere in the world, and the words of consecration uttered in the communion service brought Christ's body to the bread. This doctrine became known as consubstantiation. In the third of the treatises, *On Christian Liberty*, the reformer presented his mature theory concerning salvation. Luther stressed that human beings received justification by faith alone, which was a gift of God's grace. Since God gave this gift to some and not others, Luther upheld the doctrine of predestination. In order to stress the primary, initiating role that faith played in salvation, Luther went to great lengths in this short work to show that good works were not the cause of a sinner's justification, but the result. At one point, he even insisted that the experience of justification was similar to a marriage between Christ and a prostitute: "Who can comprehend the riches of the glory of this grace? Christ, that rich and pious Husband, takes as a

wife a needy and impious harlot, redeeming her from all her evils and supplying her with all His good things." *On Christian Liberty* also insisted that those who had been saved in this way had no need for a special category of priests to intercede for them with God; they were, in other words, their own priests. Luther did believe that there was still a need for ministers within the church, but that this office should not be seen as radically separate from the laity. All three treatises were widely published throughout Germany and translated into other European languages. By 1525, more than a quarter of a million copies of these three tracts alone had been printed throughout Europe. Luther had become a best-selling author, and the press had aided the spread of his ideas among the German people.

**THE DIET OF WORMS.** Certainly, Luther's dramatic treatment at the hands of imperial and ecclesiastical authorities also helped to create an audience for his work. The church had originally tried to deal with Luther quietly, but by June 1520, the papacy was losing patience, and Leo X issued a bull (an official papal document) condemning 41 of his teachings. The pope gave Luther two months to retract his statements or face excommunication. When Luther received his copy, he staged a bonfire, placing medieval theological works, church laws, and the papal bull on the flames. By the following year the emperor Charles V was anxious to see the entire affair put to rest, and he summoned Luther to an imperial diet (a national parliament) in the city of Worms. Luther had prudently asked for a safe conduct while he attended the meetings. At the diet the emperor and the parliament's representatives interviewed him twice. When pressed at the end of his second audience to recant his errors, Luther responded with a speech that became famous for its defense of conscience: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason ... I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, for it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen." Despite his stirring rhetoric, the diet responded by placing Luther under an imperial ban, in effect a death sentence. The decree stipulated, however, that the punishment would not go into effect for another month to allow Luther time for prayer and reflection. This sentence plagued Luther for the rest of his life, since it meant that he could not travel outside Saxony and a few neighboring friendly territories in Germany where he was under the protection of local princes.

**THE WARTBURG.** While Luther was on his way back to Wittenberg from Worms, he was "kidnapped"

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***LUTHER'S TOWER EXPERIENCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his latter autobiography Martin Luther described his experience of the realization of justification by faith. The insight he received was to have occurred in his monastery's tower or study one day while he was preparing his lectures. Luther dates this event as occurring in 1519, but other sources disagree on the date. Luther always described the event as a sudden realization in which he became aware of the futility of the medieval church's doctrine of works.

Meanwhile in that same year, 1519, I had begun interpreting the Psalms once again. I felt confident that I was now more experienced, since I had dealt in university courses with St. Paul's Letters to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the Letter to the Hebrews. I had conceived a burning desire to understand what Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans, but thus far there had stood in my way, not the cold blood around my heart, but that one word which is in chapter one: "The justice of God is revealed in it." I hated that word, "justice of God," which, by the use and custom of all my teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically as referring to formal or active justice, as they call it, i.e., that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust.

But I, blameless monk that I was, felt that before God I was a sinner with an extremely troubled conscience. I couldn't be sure that God was appeased by my satisfaction. I did not love, no, rather I hated the just God who punishes sinners. In silence, if I did not blaspheme, then certainly I grumbled vehemently and got angry at God. I said, "Isn't it enough that we miserable sinners, lost for all eternity because of original sin, are oppressed by every kind of calamity through the Ten Commandments? Why does God heap sorrow upon sorrow through the Gospel and through the Gospel threaten us with his justice and his wrath?" This was how I was raging with wild and disturbed conscience. I constantly badgered St. Paul about

that spot in Romans 1 and anxiously wanted to know what he meant.

I meditated night and day on those words until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid attention to their context: "The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: 'The just person lives by faith.'" I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e. that by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just person lives by faith." All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light. I ran through the Scriptures from memory and found that other terms had analogous meanings, e.g., the work of God, that is, what God works in us; the power of God, by which he makes us powerful; the wisdom of God, by which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

I exalted this sweetest word of mine, "the justice of God," with as much love as before I had hated it with hate.

This phrase of Paul was for me the very gate of paradise. Afterward I read Augustine's "On the Spirit and the Letter," in which I found what I had not dared hope for I discovered that he too interpreted "the justice of God" in a similar way, namely, as that with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although Augustine had said it imperfectly and did not explain in detail how God imputes justice to us, still it pleased me that he taught the justice of God by which we are justified.

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**SOURCE:** Martin Luther, Preface to *The Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Works (1545)* by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546. Trans. Bro. Andrew Thornton. Internet Christian Library. Available online at <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/tower.txt>; website home page: <http://www.iclnet.org> (accessed February 13, 2004).

in a plan hatched by his protector Frederick the Wise. Frederick arranged to have Luther taken for safekeeping to the Wartburg Castle. He remained there for over a year, studying, reflecting, and beginning one of his most important works: the translation of the Bible into German. When completed in 1534, Luther's German Bible was a significant literary milestone. It affected the development of written German over the coming centuries in a way similar to the King James Version of the Bible's influence over literary English. German writers, just like

their English counterparts, pulled phrases, metaphors, and allusions from the scriptures as knowledge of the Bible expanded dramatically among Protestant readers. Medieval translations of the Bible into native European languages had existed, to be sure. But Luther's program to translate the scriptures into his native German had proceeded from a key principle of his teaching: that the scriptures, and not the teachings of the church, should be the prime foundation of Christianity. Here Luther's ideas had been shaped in part by the humanists, who

had criticized the medieval church for insisting that only trained and skillful theologians could interpret scripture. At this early stage in his career as a reformer, Luther believed that the truths of the scriptures were self-evident. His ideas were similar to Desiderius Erasmus, who had dreamed of a day when farmers would chant the scriptures at their plows and women recite them at their spinning wheels. For Luther, the Word of God would accomplish the job of reforming the church by itself. Events soon demonstrated, though, that not everyone who read the scriptures shared Luther's interpretation. Even as he was deep in the work of his translation of the Bible in 1522, news reached him that some former associates in Wittenberg had begun teaching ideas that were more radical than his own. Andreas Karlstadt, for example, advocated iconoclasm, that is, the violent destruction of religious art, and Thomas Müntzer hoped to radicalize Saxony's poor and downtrodden. After Luther's return to Wittenberg, the events he saw unfolding there helped convince him that clear authority and decisive teaching was necessary to ensure the Reformation's survival. Although he often insisted that he had no special authority to define the Bible's meaning, Luther struggled for the remainder of his life to ensure that his interpretation of the Bible prevailed among his evangelical disciples.

**PEASANTS' WAR.** The theological quarrels that Luther had with Karlstadt and Müntzer, though, soon paled in comparison to the outbreak of revolt among the peasants during 1524. In June of 1524, rebellion broke out among the peasants of the Upper Rhine in southwest Germany. During the year that followed, this revolt became known as the Peasants' War and spread into central and eastern Germany, affecting Swabia, Franconia, Thuringia, Saxony, and Austria. Peasant revolts had grown increasingly common in the Holy Roman Empire during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Fourteen rural rebellions occurred in the half-century between 1450 and 1500, and in the quarter century leading up to the great Peasants' War of 1524–1525 another eighteen rebellions are recorded. This tradition of peasant rebellion grew out of the great demographic changes occurring in Europe. After the dramatic mortality caused by the Black Death (1347–1351) and the recurrence of the plague in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Europe's population had fallen off by almost forty percent. It began to grow again after 1450, though, and this increase made agricultural land more expensive and produced inflation. Because land was usually let on long-term leases, Europe's nobility faced shrinking incomes. To deal with this crisis, many of Germany's nobles had

moved to revive taxes and payments that had long since passed away. They had also begun enclosing lands that had once been commonly owned by village communities. These changes had inspired many of the sporadic revolts that had occurred in the period before the Reformation. The causes of the great Peasants' War, the largest of these rebellions, were more complex than these previous rural rebellions. The momentous changes in Germany's economy attracted supporters to the peasants' movement, not only from the countryside, but from the urban poor and the artisans' guilds. Radical religious reformers, too, joined it. In March 1525, representatives from these various factions met at Memmingen in Swabia, and produced the "Twelve Articles" as their manifesto. Tens of thousands of copies of the document circulated in the following months. The Articles called for the return of common lands and the abolition of serfdom as well as the new exactions and laws that the nobility had been enforcing in the countryside. They demanded the establishment of biblical preaching and "godly law." By "godly law," the Memmingen assembly had in mind the establishment not only of Christian principles in society but a return to the customs that had governed people's lives before the nobility had begun to exact the new, harsher feudal duties. As the revolt spread, its death toll rose. By April of 1525, Luther feared the Peasants' War might destroy the developing Reformation in Germany, and he published an *Admonition to Peace*. That work blamed the nobility for causing the revolt because of their harsh rule, but it also counseled the revolt's supporters to give up on their rebellion. Luther's counsel proved futile, and as the revolt continued, he reissued the *Admonition*, in June 1525, together with a new postscript entitled *Against the Robbing and Murderous Hordes of the Peasantry*. Now Luther advised the nobility to put down the rebellion immediately, using all the armed force necessary. Germany's nobles probably did not need much encouragement. While the precise death toll is unknown, as many as 70,000 to 100,000 peasants may have been slaughtered in the campaign to suppress the rebellion.

**AFTEREFFECTS.** The suppression of the Peasants' War had a major and lasting impact on the Reformation. Luther had taken no direct role in inspiring the rebels, and had always been critical of their violent actions. But the presence of religious reformers like Thomas Müntzer within the movement fed the fears of many that the Reformation would lead to full-scale revolution. For his part, Luther's denunciations of the peasants helped condemn his Reformation movement to widespread unpopularity among the poorer classes of

Germany. Luther and state leaders in Saxony realized that discipline and control were necessary if the Reformation was going to survive. In the wake of the Peasants' War, a number of measures appeared to ensure that Lutheran teachings were established in an orderly fashion in ways that were sanctioned by the government. Indoctrination of the population in the evangelical doctrines became particularly important to the state, too. State and religious authorities undertook an inspection of the territory's religious life, investigating the level of religious knowledge among Saxony's ministers and its laity. Known as a Visitation, this practice became a key vehicle for establishing the Reformation in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Investigators were often disheartened with the results of their fieldwork. The first Saxon Visitation revealed widespread ignorance of the Reformation's teachings in the countryside. As a consequence, Saxony became one of the first territories to require mandatory primary education of the young. To accomplish this, Luther prepared a *Small Catechism* in 1529 designed to teach evangelical principles to children. Each week parents were required to bring their children to church to receive religious instruction, much of which was accomplished merely by rote memorization. This Lutheran practice of instructing children in doctrine would be widely imitated in both Protestant and Catholic countries in the following generations and would become one of the primary ways in which children learned the substance of religious teachings. The emphasis on mere memorization of religious principles, though, would often make these programs unpopular.

**LUTHERANISM IN GERMANY.** The Peasants' War temporarily slowed the speed with which Luther's teachings spread throughout Germany. After the revolt Lutheranism competed, too, against the rising popularity of Zwingli's reform program, particularly in southern Germany's cities (see also Spread of Protestantism: Zwingli). Eventually, many of Germany's towns and territories favored Luther's brand of religious reform over Swiss Reformed Protestantism, in part because of its clear respect for state authority over religion. Within Germany's Lutheran states, the church became almost a department of the state. Unlike England or France, Germany was not a unified monarchy, but a loose confederation of more than 350 states presided over by an emperor. Politics affected the spread of the Reformation in this loose-knit empire deeply, at times halting the spread of Lutheranism and at other times encouraging it. By the 1540s, a recognizable group of cities and territories known as the Schmalkaldic League had emerged. In 1546, the emperor Charles V defeated this alliance,

and introduced a plan to re-catholicize all German territories. The consequences of Charles V's arbitrary decisions, though, inspired a resurgence of Protestant forces, which defeated the emperor's armies in 1552. In 1555, both Protestant and Catholic states met at the imperial diet at Augsburg to forge a peace. This Peace of Augsburg recognized Lutheranism as a legal religion, and gave Germany's princes the power to decide which religion would be practiced within their territories.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: Humanism Outside Italy; Philosophy: New Trends in Sixteenth-Century Thought*

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## THE SPREAD OF PROTESTANTISM IN NORTHERN EUROPE

**SCANDINAVIA.** Luther's teachings became the dominant form of Protestant Christianity, not only in Germany, but throughout Scandinavia. In the later Middle Ages, the cultural ties between these two regions, which were linked by trade and similarities in language, had been strong. Scandinavia was sparsely populated, and had only a few universities. Many Scandinavian scholars regularly enrolled in German universities and thus became familiar with the Reformation teachings in the early sixteenth century. When they returned to their homelands, they brought with them knowledge of Luther's ideas, and encouraged the monarchs of Sweden and Denmark to adopt evangelical reforms. In 1527, the Swedish Parliament voted to break its ties with Rome, and a council held two years later prepared the way for a reform of Sweden's church. In Denmark the pattern was similar, although the adoption of Lutheranism occurred slightly later. At first, a national parliament meeting at Odense granted recognition to Lutherans, while protecting the rights of Catholics. Denmark's monarch,





Drawing of Zwingli's death at Kappel, Switzerland, in 1531. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

though, favored Lutheranism, as did the nobility, who stood to benefit from the crown's abolition of Catholic monasteries and the sale of their lands. After a brief civil war, Protestantism triumphed in Denmark in 1536, and the king called one of Luther's closest associates, Johann Bugenhagen, to Denmark to advise him on how to institute Lutheran reforms. These new Evangelical churches, the term Lutherans used to describe their institutions, adopted essentially conservative reforms. They preserved much of the character of medieval Christianity, particularly in worship, while adopting the Reformation's teachings concerning justification by faith and the authority of the scriptures.

**ZWINGLIANISM.** A very different kind of Reformation emerged in Switzerland during the 1520s under the leadership of Ulrich Zwingli at Zürich. Zwingli had been born to a wealthy peasant family and had received a thorough education, both in the Christian humanism of figures like Erasmus and in traditional scholastic philosophy (see also Philosophy). Upon his arrival in Zürich

in 1519, Zwingli began to preach the gospels in a way that was simple and graceful and which won him many admirers among the local population. During the next few years Zwingli's sermons encouraged many in the city to demand church reforms. In 1523, the council agreed to allow Zwingli to debate his positions with supporters of the Roman Church. His performance convinced many on the council of the correctness of his positions, and the council began to institute changes in the church, including the abolishment of clerical celibacy and the closing of the town's monasteries and convents. Zürich used the proceeds from the sale of these properties to fund a community chest that cared for the town's poor. By 1525, the Mass had been eliminated, and a simple service of communion took its place. To underscore Zwingli's rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation, he insisted that the town's churches get rid of their elaborate silver and gold communion services. In their place he substituted simple wooden bowls and cups. This innovation emphasized that Christ's physical body was not present in communion, and it showed a second key

element of Zwingli's communion teachings: that communion was a symbolic commemoration of Christ's sacrifice. In other words, communion did not confer any special divine grace on those who participated in it. Like Luther, Zwingli denied that the clergy had any special status, although the flavor of many of his church reforms proved to be more radical.

**CHURCH AND SOCIETY.** Zwingli's more radical ideas resulted largely from a different understanding of the Bible. Luther had insisted that the central teaching of the scriptures was salvation by faith, and his aim had always been to call the church back to the preaching of the gospel. While Zwingli accepted salvation by faith, he also believed that the laws and commandments outlined in the Old Testament should be observed in society. As a result, his reform of worship was severe. In place of the Mass, Zwingli introduced church services that emphasized the scriptures. He considered church music and religious art to be violations of the Ten Commandments, and he ordered that the murals in Zürich's churches be hidden with whitewash. Zwingli looked to the town council to accomplish these reforms, but he also argued that the church must play a key role in reforming society. It is for this reason that his reforms have often been described as theocratic. He taught, in other words, that the church's ministers should share power with civil government, and that they should exercise this influence not only over spiritual matters but over secular issues as well. In this way Zwingli saw the church as playing a dynamic role in the reform of society, an idea he passed on to John Calvin and the Reformed tradition of Protestantism. Like Luther, Zwingli admitted only two sacraments into his reformed church: baptism and communion. He continued to baptize infants and made few changes in the ritual. But his denial of a physical presence of Christ in the communion ritual separated him from Luther, and caused bitter disagreement between the two figures. In the later 1520s Catholic forces amassed in Switzerland against the Reformation in Zürich, and Zwingli decided to enter into negotiations with Luther in an effort to forge a united front against Catholicism. The two figures' conflicting notions of communion, though, proved to be a stumbling block, and no agreement was forthcoming in the meetings that occurred between the two parties at Marburg in Germany in 1529. Two years later Zwingli died while leading Zürich's forces in battle against Catholic armies in Switzerland. Despite his early death Zwingli's ideas lived on to influence the development of both Anabaptism and Calvinism.

**ICONOCLASM.** Iconoclasm—that is, the destruction of religious images and statues—had accompanied the

Reformation since its earliest days. Luther had disapproved of the iconoclasm that some of his more radical colleagues in Saxony had supported. He had insisted that religious images and sculptures were “matters of indifference” to Christians who possessed faith and he had advocated only clearing away those medieval works of art to which people displayed extravagant worship. Zwingli's uncompromising attitude towards public religious sculptures and paintings—a view John Calvin would also share—became a central tenet of the Swiss Reformation. At the same time neither Zwingli nor Calvin ever advocated the violent popular attacks on religious art that sometimes erupted in Northern Europe during the sixteenth century. Each stressed that religious art should be done away with in an orderly fashion. Nevertheless, the Swiss Reformation's more extreme teachings about art led to eruptions of iconoclasm from time to time among Zwinglians and Calvinists. An outbreak of iconoclasm in the Swiss city of Basel during 1529 horrified the humanist Erasmus, who decided to pack up and leave town as a result. And the many Calvinist Protestants of France in the second half of the sixteenth century also actively embraced iconoclasm as a technique to denounce Catholicism. During the Wars of Religion that gripped the country from 1562 to 1598, Calvinist iconoclastic episodes often produced riots and the indiscriminate slaughter of Protestants by their Catholic opponents.

**ANABAPTISM.** This movement takes its name from the “second baptism” that was given to adult Christians as they joined the sect. The Anabaptists practiced this rebaptism as a rite of entry into their community, which they believed was a gathered body of true adult believers. Since ancient times rebaptism had been seen as a heretical practice. To defend themselves against the charge of heresy, Anabaptists argued that infant baptism was not valid because it was unscriptural. In this and other ways, Zwingli's emphasis on the rigorous observance of the scriptures influenced the Anabaptist's early leaders. The pattern of simplified Christian worship that had developed in Zwingli's Zürich also came to be adopted by the Anabaptists. Whereas Zwingli had insisted that the church had an important role to play in the reform of society, however, Anabaptism was an exclusive movement that tried to separate the church from the “abomination of the world.” Only those who had received adult baptism were allowed to take part in the Lord's Supper and participate in the community's life. Anabaptist teachings also advocated pacifism, and members were prohibited from taking vows. Each congregation chose its own minister, and members submitted themselves to

his discipline. In turn, these groups also supervised the moral behavior of their ministers. The movement outlined these teachings in its first statement of faith, *The Schleitheim Confession*, a document adopted by Swiss Anabaptist congregations in 1527. Elsewhere, the precise outlines of Anabaptist teaching and organization were somewhat different, although the movement spread very quickly in the 1520s through many parts of Germany and the Netherlands.

**MÜNSTER PROPHETS.** Wherever the Anabaptists taught the new doctrines, harsh, repressive measures arose to discourage them. One exception was the northern German town of Münster, but the establishment of an Anabaptist state there in 1534 was to have far-reaching implications for the subsequent history of the movement. The so-called Revolution of the Prophets that occurred in Münster helped condemn Anabaptism to continuing widespread unpopularity. In 1533, the Reformation had just been officially established in the town, when one of the city's preachers, Bernard Rothmann, convinced the council to take in persecuted Anabaptists from the neighboring Netherlands. During 1533, the numbers of Anabaptists at Münster swelled and this encouraged the spread of the religion among the local population. By February 1534, the Anabaptist party seized control of local government, and advised those who were not in agreement with their religious views to leave. Over the next few months, a dictatorship of the Anabaptists emerged, eventually led by one Dutch immigrant, John of Leyden, who tried to establish a godly community through force. The new Münster government was a theocracy, run by the town's religious leaders that carefully controlled every dimension of the town's life. They abolished both private property and the circulation of money within the city because neither of those things had played a role in the ancient church. Leyden also demanded compulsory polygamy from his subjects and he justified the practice because of its use among the Old Testament patriarchs. The intensive regulation that Leyden introduced in Münster was soon unpopular among many in the town, and a reign of terror, complete with horrifying public executions, became necessary to keep the populace in line. While all this was transpiring within the town's walls, a confederation of princes from the surrounding region had joined with the local Catholic bishop of Münster to lay siege to the town. As this siege lengthened, conditions within the city's walls worsened. The Münster Anabaptists desperately pegged their hopes on the arrival of reinforcements from the Netherlands, but although thousands of Dutch Anabaptists marched on Münster, the military forces in the vicinity crushed

them. In June 1535, months after the siege of the town had begun, Münster was retaken and many of its Anabaptists slaughtered. John of Leyden and his associates were tried, displayed in cages for several months, and finally tortured and publicly executed in January 1536. Harsh reprisals against the movement followed the suppression of the Revolution of the Münster Prophets, and persecution of Anabaptists remained the rule almost everywhere in sixteenth-century Europe. Pockets of Anabaptists survived, particularly in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Moravia, but these groups settled down into a life of quiet pacifism. Nowhere were the dramatic events of Münster to be repeated. It was not until the eighteenth century, and the expansion of the British colonies in North America, that Anabaptism was truly able to prosper. In Pennsylvania, in particular, the radical wing of the Reformation found a home that was more congenial than Europe. And in the nineteenth century many of the descendants of the sixteenth-century radical reformers, including Anabaptist offshoots like the Mennonites and the Amish, spread into the American Midwest and the Canadian plains.

**CALVINISM.** The emergence of Calvinism in Geneva was one of the most significant developments in the later Reformation. Calvinism was a form of Reformed Protestantism, the movement whose origins lay in the uncompromising biblical and theocratic views of figures like Ulrich Zwingli. Calvinism takes its name from its leader, John Calvin, a French theologian who settled in Geneva. Like Zwingli and other Reformed Protestants, Calvin was much influenced by the Christian humanism of figures like Desiderius Erasmus (see also Philosophy: Christian Humanism). He also trained as a lawyer, and his written work constantly displayed the keen intelligence and clear argument typical of the best legal minds of the sixteenth century. After 1550, Calvinism grew into a vast international movement; its influence spread out from Geneva to affect the British Isles, the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Central and Eastern Europe. By virtue of its disciplined organizational structure and coherent teachings, Calvinism successfully challenged the dominance of the Lutheran Reformation in Northern Europe and it also competed vigorously against a resurgent Catholic Church.

**GENEVA.** John Calvin had converted to Protestantism in 1533, and soon fled religious persecution in France. He arrived in Geneva in 1536, well aware of the fears that radical religious movements like the Münster Prophets had caused among monarchs and civic leaders. He spent the remainder of his life trying to create a disciplined form of Protestantism to counteract the Refor-

mation's radical wing. He directed many of his most determined efforts toward spreading his teachings in France, as he trained French-speaking preachers to carry Reformed Protestantism back to his homeland. During his first sojourn in Geneva, Calvin worked closely with his associate William Farel, but local officials expelled both from the town because of their uncompromising attitudes towards religious reform. Calvin and Farel retreated to Strasbourg, a town that under Martin Bucer had also become a center of Reformed Protestant teachings, but in 1541, Calvin returned to Geneva where he remained for the rest of his life. The reformation movement he built in the city attracted converts from throughout Europe, eventually doubling the town's population. Among its admirers, Geneva became known as the "most perfect school of Christ," a reference to its role as a training center for Calvinist preachers. Critics of Calvin, however, attacked him for acquiring dictatorial power and sometimes mocked him as "the pope of Geneva."

**SACRAMENTS.** Like Zwingli and Luther, Calvin retained only two sacraments: baptism (which was performed in infancy) and the Eucharist. In contrast to the symbolic interpretation Zwingli gave to communion, though, Calvin insisted that Christ's spirit was present in the sacrament. He went to great lengths to emphasize the importance of this spiritual communion with Christ in the Christian's life. In Geneva, the Eucharist became the most important ritual of the church. Although Calvin had desired to celebrate the sacrament more frequently, the town's original reform ordinances had been influenced by Zwingli's ideas and they stipulated that communion should not occur more than four times each year. For his part, Calvin went to great lengths to increase the importance of the Last Supper in the religious life of Geneva. A time of collective penance and a period of internal reflection preceded each celebration of the Eucharist that underscored communion's importance in the church and in the Christian's life.

**MAJESTY OF GOD.** Calvin's teachings also extended and codified many of Luther's evangelical ideas, but with important shifts in emphasis that resulted in a different kind of Protestantism. In all his writing Calvin went to great lengths to emphasize the majesty of God over everything in His Creation. A huge chasm separated God from sinful humankind, and only God could bridge that gap. From this insight, Calvin stressed predestination more than Luther, who had also taught the doctrine. The notion that God pre-ordains human fates had long existed in Christianity, having been discussed in the works of St. Augustine and other early Christian theologians.



John Calvin. © HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS.

Augustine had taught that a person's election was a gift of God's mercy, while the damned were responsible for their own fate because of their sins. By contrast, Calvin outlined a teaching that has sometimes been called "double predestinarian," because he insisted that God had chosen both the elect and the damned before the Creation of the world. There was nothing a human being could do to influence these judgments. Those whom God had elected would be saved because His grace was irresistible, while eternal punishment awaited as the inescapable fate for those He had chosen to damn. Calvin called predestination the "terrible doctrine," and he spent comparatively little time writing about it in his works for fear that it might lead his followers to become fatalistic. His emphasis on the majesty of God in all human affairs, though, tended to reinforce the notion that human beings had no control over their destiny.

**VISIBLE SAINTS.** Some found Calvin's emphasis on God's majesty and predestination distasteful because it denied all free will and any human participation in the process of salvation. At the same time Calvin's devoted followers found reassurance in these same teachings. Calvin always assured his followers that they could be relatively certain of their election if they were leading good Christian lives, and Calvinists stressed that good works were the visible signs God produced in His saints.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE MAJESTY OF GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:** For John Calvin, true knowledge of God was only possible for those who understood the depths of human depravity and the extent of the divinity's omnipotence. The first book of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* treated these themes, of which a small excerpt from the English translation of the work follows.

The entire sum of our human wisdom, in so much as it is to be judged true and perfect wisdom, consists in two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But since these two sources of knowledge are linked together by many bands it is difficult to discern which of the two precedes and inspires the other. For at first, no man can look upon himself except by turning all his senses to the discerning of God, in whom he lives and moves because it is plainly evident that those gifts we possess do not arise from ourselves. No, in fact, our being derives from the very essence of God. Furthermore, it is through those good things that fall like streams from the heavens that we are led to the fountainhead. And so the infinity of God's goodness shines through our need. The miserable ruin into which the fall of the first man has thrown us compels us to lift up our eyes, not only out of hunger

and want because we crave what we lack, but also being stirred by fear to learn humility. For as there is found in man a certain world of miseries, and since we have lost the divine apparel our shameful nakedness discloses an infinite heap of filthy disgraces; [in this way it seems] that every man needs to be stung by his own conscience with knowledge of his unhappiness to make him come at least to some knowledge of God. So by the very understanding of our ignorance, vanity, beggary, perversity and corruption, we are reminded that in no other place but in the Lord abides the light of true wisdom, sound virtue, perfect abundance of good things, and purity of righteousness. And so by our own evils we are stirred to consider the good things of God; and we cannot earnestly aspire to them until we begin to dislike ourselves. For of all men, what one is there that would not willingly rest in himself? Yea, who does not rest as long as he does not know himself, that is to say, so long as he is contented with his own gifts, and ignorant or unmindful of his own misery? Therefore every man is by the knowledge of himself, not only pricked to seek God, but also led as it were by the hand to find him.

**SOURCE:** John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (London: Eliot's Court Press, 1611): 1. Text modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

Works thus testified to election. But this doctrine of election also bolstered many Calvinists as they defied the authority of the state when its laws and actions contradicted the teachings of the scriptures. Over time, the notion of election spilled over into other areas of Calvinist life. In seventeenth-century Calvinist communities in England, Scotland, the Netherlands, and North America, many followers of the religion saw worldly success, especially in the world of commerce, as a sign of God's favor. In this way the Calvinist notion of election contributed to that complex set of ideas and behaviors that has often been referred to as "the Protestant Work Ethic."

**SCRIPTURES.** Calvin's attitude toward the scriptures also explains some of the differences that developed between Calvinism and Lutheranism. Luther had taught that the primary purpose of the Bible was to reveal God's gift of salvation by faith, and thus those parts of scripture that treated faith were more important than those that did not. By contrast, Calvin's attitude toward the Bible was more complex and closer to Zwingli's. He believed that the scriptures were a record of two covenants or promises God had established with humankind throughout history: law and grace. The church had a

duty to ensure the establishment of biblical laws in society; at Geneva, the town's pastors closely supervised the morality of citizens. Each week a consistory met to hear cases of immorality among the town's inhabitants. The consistory included all nine of Geneva's pastors and twelve elders chosen from the town council, and had the power to excommunicate, expel, and even sentence citizens to death for violating the town's strict moral code. As Calvinism spread beyond Geneva, the consistory was sometimes an appealing feature to local civic leaders and princes as a way to control the morality of their subjects. The consistory could be used as a way to establish greater discipline among citizens. Other monarchs, though, feared the sharing of church and state powers within the consistory as a challenge to their power.

**INSTITUTES.** Calvin disseminated his ideas and reforms beyond Geneva through his theological masterpiece *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. That work was first published in 1536 as a thin French primer on the teachings of Reformation Christianity. Until his death in 1564, Calvin constantly edited and expanded the book, so that by the final edition the *Institutes* had grown to four books and 80 chapters. The *Institutes* be-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE MARTYRDOM OF COLIGNY**

**INTRODUCTION:** On August 22, 1572, the tensions between French Catholics and Protestants came to a head when a group of French Catholics, perhaps inspired by the Queen Catherine de' Medici, murdered Gaspard, the Duke of Coligny, a prominent French Huguenot. The event touched off a series of riots and massacres first in Paris and later throughout France, in which as many as 5,000 Protestants may have been killed. Protestant propagandists made use of Coligny's martyrdom to solidify their cause. An excerpt from one of the first histories to describe that event follows.

Meanwhile Coligny awoke and recognized from the noise that a riot was taking place ... when he perceived that the noise increased and that some one had fired an arquebus in the courtyard of his dwelling, then at length, conjecturing what it might be, but too late, he arose from his bed and having put on his dressing gown he said his prayers, leaning against the wall. [After a struggle in which one Swiss guard was killed, the conspirators finally] broke through the door and mounted the stairway ...

After Coligny had said his prayers with Merlin the minister, he said, without any appearance of alarm, to those who were present ... "I see clearly that which they seek, and I am ready steadfastly to suffer that death which I have never feared and which for a long time past I have pictured to myself. I consider myself happy in feeling the approach of death and in being ready to die in God, by whose grace I hope for the life everlasting. I have no further need of human succor. Go then from this place, my friends, as quickly as you may, for fear lest you shall be involved in my misfortune, and that some day your wives shall curse me as the author of your loss. For me it is enough that God is here, to whose goodness I commend my soul, which is so soon to issue from my body." After these words they ascended to an upper room, whence they sought safety in flight here and there over the roofs.

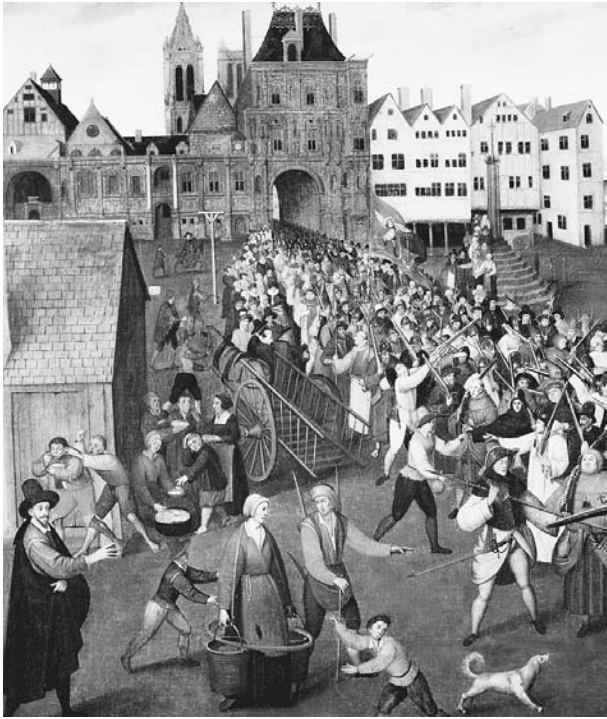
Meanwhile the conspirators, having burst through the door of the chamber, entered, and when Besme, sword in hand, had demanded of Coligny, who stood near the door, "Are you Coligny?" Coligny replied, "Yes, I am he," with fearless countenance. "But you, young man, respect these white hairs. What is it you would do? You cannot shorten by many days this life of mine." As he spoke, Besme gave him a sword thrust through the body, and having withdrawn his sword, another thrust in the mouth, by which his face was disfigured. So Coligny fell, killed with many thrusts. Others have written that Coligny in dying pronounced as though in anger these words: "Would that I might at least die at the hands of a soldier and not of a valet." But Attin, one of the murderers, has reported as I have written, and added that he never saw any one less afraid in so great a peril, nor die more steadfastly. [Coligny's body was thrown into the street, and the head removed.] They also shamefully mutilated him, and dragged his body through the streets to the bank of the Seine ...

As some children were in the act of throwing the body into the river, it was dragged out and placed upon the gibbet of Montfaucon, where it hung by the feet in chains of iron; and then they built a fire beneath, by which he was burned without being consumed; so that he was, so to speak, tortured with all the elements, since he was killed upon the earth, thrown into the water, placed upon the fire, and finally put to hang in the air. After he had served for several days as a spectacle to gratify the hate of many and arouse the just indignation of many others, who reckoned that this fury of the people would cost the king and France many a sorrowful day, Francois de Montmorency, who was nearly related to the dead man, and still more his friend, and who moreover had escaped the danger in time, had him taken by night from the gibbet by trusty men and carried to Chantilly, where he was buried in the chapel.

**SOURCE:** J. H. Robinson, ed., *Readings in European History*. Vol. 2 (Boston: Ginn, 1906): 179–183.

came Protestantism's most significant systematic theology, and it was translated into a number of European languages. Although the final version of the *Institutes* was an imposing volume, it was, when compared to Luther's massive literary output, a relatively compact and coherent statement of faith. Its clear and forceful language, as well as its logical cast, attracted many, particularly those in the growing educated and urbanized classes of Europe's cities. As a result, Calvinism tended to attract a literate, relatively prosperous and well-educated group of converts.

**VIOLENCE.** Violence was often the result of the early confrontations between Calvinism and Catholicism. Calvinism taught that many of the traditional rituals of the Catholic Church were not just the products of wrong thinking, but were sources of evil that needed to be eliminated. Calvinist preachers often stressed the similarities between the idolatries God had vigorously punished in the Old Testament and those practiced by sixteenth-century Catholics. Many Calvinists believed that tolerating these modern idolatries would result in divine punishment, and so they staged episodes of iconoclastic



*March of the Holy League in the Place de Grève, Paris, late sixteenth-century French painting. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.*

destruction upon religious images, relics, and other Catholic objects. Calvinists often timed these demonstrations to occur on particularly important Catholic holidays. They sometimes subjected the Catholic host to mock tortures before destroying it. In this way they hoped to demonstrate to their opponents that Catholicism's ritual objects were merely physical things that could not aid in a person's salvation. Catholics responded with violent counterattacks, and deadly riots often erupted. In the second half of the sixteenth century religious violence between Catholics and Calvinists, particularly in France and the Netherlands, was a frequent threat to public order and claimed many lives. Between 1562 and 1598 civil war raged in France over the question of what would be the state religion. During this time there were many battles between rival noble armies and the forces of the crown. But sporadic outbursts of street fighting and rioting, similar to modern Northern Ireland or Lebanon, occurred throughout the period, too. In the series of massacres that occurred around St. Bartholomew's Day in the late summer of 1572 as many as 5,000, mostly Calvinist French, may have been slaughtered. In 1598, the royal pronouncements of the Edict of Nantes helped to end this violence. The Edict granted Calvinists a limited degree of religious toleration in France, allowing them to fortify themselves for protec-

tion within certain French cities. Calvinists were forbidden to preach their religion outside these cities. The solution of the Edict of Nantes survived until 1685 when Louis XIV revoked it and forced Calvinists to convert to Catholicism or to leave France.

**SPREAD OF CALVINISM.** Although it had not been officially recognized by the terms of the Peace of Augsburg (the treaty that governed religion in Germany), Calvinism spread in the German Empire in the later sixteenth century as several German princes decided to adopt the religion in their territories. Reformed Christianity's emphasis on moral discipline was attractive to these rulers, but sometimes proved less so to their subjects. In several territories, princes abandoned their plans to convert their territories to Calvinism, as their subjects seemed by now to prefer Lutheranism to the new practices. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, German Calvinist and Lutheran theologians also engaged in bitter polemical disputes with one another. These controversies marred relationships between the two religions, and inadvertently aided the resurgence of Catholicism as Roman Catholic missionaries were quick to contrast the unity of their church's truth against the disunity of Protestants. Despite the growing tensions in Germany between these three religious camps—Lutheran, Calvinist, and Catholic—religious war did not occur in Germany until 1618, when the Thirty Years' War broke out in the country. The conclusion of that conflict recognized Calvinism as a legal religion in Germany, so long as a prince initiated the reforms in his state. The role of Calvinism in the German Empire, though, remained small as compared to Lutheranism and Catholicism. By contrast, Calvinism became the dominant form of Protestantism practiced in the Netherlands, and it played a greater role in Eastern Europe than Lutheranism. In Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary, many Lutherans converted to the new religion in the second half of the sixteenth century, but these Eastern European Calvinist churches did not survive the intensive efforts of rulers to re-establish Catholicism in the seventeenth century. Outside continental Europe, Calvinism's influence was most pronounced in Britain. Through the efforts of John Knox (1505–1572) and other Genevan-influenced reformers, a Calvinist-styled Presbyterian Church prevailed in Scotland, the largest state to adopt the religion officially. Reformed Protestantism also affected the course of the Reformation in England, where Calvinists remained an important religious minority that later became known as Puritans. The migration of Puritans to colonial New England helped establish Calvinism as one of the dominant forms of religion in North America.

**ENGLAND.** In comparison to other parts of Northern Europe, Protestant teaching made slower progress in England during the first half of the sixteenth century. England was a unified monarchy with stronger central authority than other states, and during the early 1520s King Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) made his opposition to the teachings of Martin Luther clear. By the late 1520s, though, Henry faced a crisis. His marriage to the aging Catherine of Aragon had produced only one child, Princess Mary, and the rights of women to succeed to the throne in England had not been officially established. Henry began to lobby Rome for a divorce, but because of Catherine of Aragon's powerful dynastic connections as a Spanish princess, Rome prevented the dissolution of the marriage. In 1533, Henry asked Parliament to approve a decree severing England's ties with Rome and naming him as supreme head of the church in England. The decree's approval allowed the archbishop of Canterbury to hear and grant the divorce. By this time, though, Henry had already married his mistress, Anne Boleyn. Some of Henry's ministers, especially his Lord Chancellor Thomas Cromwell, favored the introduction of moderate Protestant reforms in the wake of the divorce controversy. Despite Henry's unwavering support of traditional doctrine, he granted Cromwell the power to begin dissolving England's monasteries and convents in 1536. At first the king's minister proceeded only against the smallest houses in the kingdom, but in 1539, he convinced Henry to abolish all remaining monastic institutions in England. Cromwell ruthlessly arranged the sale of these lands, and through his skillful management he realized an enormous increase in the king's revenues. Henry continued to pursue traditional religious policies throughout the rest of his life. Upon Henry's death, his son, Edward VI (r. 1547–1553), was too young to rule without a regent, and his advisers favored the introduction of greater religious reforms. Edward's archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, invited Protestant theologians from Germany and Switzerland to England. The influx of these Protestant preachers from the continent soon bore fruit in 1549 with the introduction of the first *Book of Common Prayer*, a book that prescribed English-language services in the Church of England. In 1552, a second edition of the book included a celebration of the Eucharist along the severe lines prescribed by Ulrich Zwingli. But Edward VI was to die a year later, and his Catholic sister, Mary, took the book out of circulation upon her succession to the throne. Mary set herself to the task of undoing England's tenuous Protestant reforms and to re-establishing the Catholic Church. At first she proceeded slowly, but with the accession of the anti-Protestant pope Paul IV she

pursued more vigorous efforts to rid England of Protestants. During the final years of her reign more than 300 Protestants were put to death, including the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. Even more Protestants fled to the continent, particularly to Geneva, where they immersed themselves in the teachings of Calvinism. Eventually, they returned to England to demand more extensive reforms in the church.

**ELIZABETH I.** Mary died childless in 1558, and so her Protestant sister Elizabeth now ascended the throne. Elizabeth's accession boded well for those who had been exiled by the intolerant Catholic measures of "Bloody Mary." The Marian exiles that returned to England in the first years of Elizabeth's reign brought with them the desire to purify the Church of England of its Roman teachings and rituals. For her part, though, Elizabeth I was always a moderate, and the religious settlement she crafted for England was to be a middle path between the extremes of Protestantism and Catholicism. While Elizabeth's international policies favored Protestant states in Northern Europe, the revised *Book of Common Prayer* authorized for use during her reign was vaguely worded, and many of the Protestant innovations that had been included in her brother Edward's prayer book were now removed. Elizabeth's middle-of-the-road religious settlement pleased the majority of the English population, and the policy lasted throughout her reign. Fervent Catholics and Puritans—as English Calvinists had come to be known—were less enthusiastic about the state's religious policies. Through the skillful use of politics, Elizabeth forestalled Puritan demands for greater reform in the English church. Her record with Catholics, though, was not so happy. Fearing that her Catholic subjects might participate in political intrigues and plots to depose her, Elizabeth secured the passage of a loyalty oath from Parliament. Those who refused to recognize her power over the English church could be tried for treason. About 200 of these English recusants (those who refused to swear loyalty to the queen) were put to death during Elizabeth's reign. Despite the climate of persecution, English Catholicism survived to be practiced as a largely underground movement by a small minority of the population.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: Humanism Outside Italy*

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## THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

**CALLS FOR A COUNCIL.** Political disunity within Germany, the spread of printing, long-standing anticlericalism, and international political rivalries had all aided the rise of Protestantism in Northern Europe. Initially, the Roman Church's response to the movement had been to condemn outright the teachings of Luther and the Protestant reformers who followed him. As the Reformation expanded, both geographically and numerically, these prohibitions proved insufficient. Many began to call for a church council to address the issues Protestantism had raised and to deal with long-standing corruption in the church. There were a number of moderate leaders in the Roman Church during these years that clearly recognized the need for reform, both in the church's administration and its teachings. Liberal Catholic humanists, influenced by figures like Erasmus, often shared many beliefs with Protestants. But the papacy resisted their calls for a council for almost two decades. Conditioned by the history of conciliarism in the later Middle Ages, the popes feared councils as a threat to their authority. They preferred instead to try to negotiate with Protestants in the hopes that they could heal the rifts developing in Christendom, or at the very least, paper over some of the divisions with broad, vaguely-worded statements. There were several such efforts, but the most famous occurred in the German city of Regensburg during 1541. Pope Paul III sent the reform-minded Cardinal Gasparo Contarini to serve as his delegate at the meetings. Luther, who was prevented from traveling to Regensburg because of the imperial sentence pronounced upon him in 1521, sent his closest associate Philip Melancthon as his representative. The delegates at Regensburg reached agreement over many key issues, but the theology of the Eucharist proved to be a stumbling block. Their meetings broke off without resolving the crisis in the church. During the next few years, though, Pope Paul III grew more confident of his abilities to control a council, and in 1545 he convened a meeting at Trent, a town on the border of Northern Italy just inside lands controlled by the German emperor Charles V. Protestant leaders were invited to



Portrait of Pope Paul III by Titian. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

attend the meetings, although they were not allowed to speak at them. The debilitating effects of the previous 25 years had by this time dampened enthusiasm for the long-awaited council. Only 35 bishops and archbishops turned up for the first session, and these came mostly from Italy.

**THE DEBATES OF TRENT.** The number of bishops and archbishops in attendance eventually grew, although Trent's delegation still continued to be dominated by its Italian members. It took almost two decades for the delegates to complete their work, although the council did not meet continuously. A series of sessions occurred during the years 1545–1547, 1551–1552 and 1561–1563. The first sessions of Trent discussed Protestant teachings concerning salvation, and after much debate, the position the delegates formulated denied the Reformation's principle of justification by faith. The Council's statements asserted the traditional medieval doctrine of free will: human beings were free to accept or reject God's grace, and both faith and human works were necessary for salvation. During the next block of meetings in



Painting of the Council of Trent by Hermano Zuccarelli. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

1551–1552, the council debated the role of the scriptures in the church and they denied the Protestant teaching of the primary authority of the Bible. Instead they asserted the ancient principle that the church's tradition and scriptures were two equal sources of authority. This teaching ensured that the Roman Church would possess the authority to interpret scripture and to define what views would be considered orthodox. The final meetings of the Council during 1561–1563 had far-reaching implications for the development of church discipline. Here the Council strengthened the powers of bishops to oversee local monasteries and the parish clergy. It reinforced older prohibitions against holding multiple offices in the church and stipulated that those who held offices should be resident in the place from which they received their income. Among the more enlightened of the requirements that Trent formulated was the mandate that each

bishop should establish a seminary within his diocese for the training of priests. Although it would take many years for these seminaries to be established everywhere in Europe, this requirement ensured that in the future the Catholic clergy would be trained to certain minimal standards of religious knowledge.

**NEGATIVE TONE.** The Council of Trent had been called with the expectation that it might heal the developing rift between Protestants and Catholics. Most of Trent's decrees, though, were essentially negative condemnations of Protestantism, and thus the Council helped to widen the gap between the groups. The positions adopted at Trent were often expressed in ways that made the Catholic Church's teachings as distinct from Protestant positions as possible. The Council ignored the moderate Catholic humanism of figures like Erasmus in

favor of theological teachings drawn from the more distant past. The church leaders assembled at Trent adopted many positions from the scholastic theologians, especially those of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1275). From the Council of Trent onward, Aquinas' teachings were seen more and more as the foundation of Catholic orthodox theology.

**COUNTER-REFORMATION.** The conservatism that was developing at Trent and more generally in the hierarchy of the church in these years helped inspire the term “Counter-Reformation,” a phrase that calls attention to the essentially reactionary character of many reforms in the church. This growing conservatism can be seen in the actions of the popes who were elected at the time. Perhaps none was so determined a counter-reformer as Paul IV (r. 1555–1559). During his short period as pope, he tried to make Rome into a model Catholic city, adopting many of the same moral reforms that had already been used by Protestants in places like Geneva. Paul outlawed gaming and dancing, banished Rome's prostitutes, and placed severe restrictions on the activities of the city's Jews. He became best known for one innovation that would shape Catholic life for centuries to come: the *Index of Prohibited Books*. He charged the administrators of the index with compiling a list of works that were believed to be subversive to Catholic truth. The list was to be made available to Catholics so that they could know what works were forbidden. The index came to include many works written by Lutherans and Calvinists, but also by moderate Catholic reformers like Erasmus. Paul encouraged Europe's Catholic rulers to enforce the index in their states and to strengthen their efforts to punish Protestants as heretics. Not all Catholic monarchs pursued the harsh counter-reforming campaign he and his successors advocated, but the most fervent did. In Catholic Bavaria, a territory in the German Empire, the duke instructed his officials to conduct house searches and regular inspections of the territories' booksellers for prohibited Protestant books. To try to re-establish Catholic orthodoxy, Bavaria's dukes also required their subjects to attend Mass and confession regularly, and they ensured compliance with an ingenious system. Priests gave out certificates to their parishioners at Mass, and each year, subjects had to present these proofs of attendance when they paid their state taxes. Those who failed to attend could be fined. Harsh and repressive measures like these became common in those states where staunch Catholic rulers enforced the uniform beliefs that a counter-reforming church demanded.

**CATHOLIC REFORMATION.** These measures, though, were only a part of the revival that occurred within the

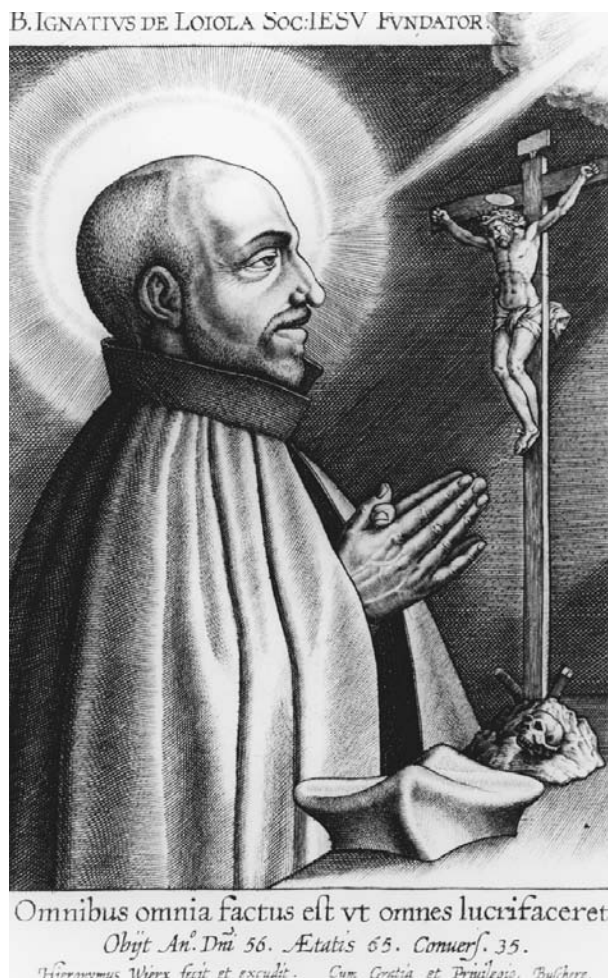
Catholic Church in the early-modern period. Many reform movements had also grown up within Catholicism in the years prior to the Protestant Reformation, and for this reason, most historians prefer to use the term “Catholic Reformation” to describe the church's revival. The phrase calls attention to the fact that not all the reforms that appeared in these years were inspired by the battle against Protestantism. Many developments had occurred independent of those controversies. Of the many reforming groups within the church that existed prior to the Reformation, the Oratory of Divine Love was the most famous. The founders of the Oratory of Divine Love had been influenced by the example of Catherine Adorno (1447–1510), who would later be canonized as St. Catherine of Genoa. Although married, Catherine renounced her family's wealth and lived a celibate life in service to Genoa's poor. She drew around her a circle of devoted admirers, who spread her message of penance and good works through the foundation of the Oratory. The confraternity soon spread to other Italian cities, including Rome. There it shaped the thinking of some of the church's most important figures, including Pope Paul IV; Gaetano da Thiene, the founder of the Theatines; and Gasparo Contarini, the papal representative who negotiated with Protestants at Regensburg.

**NEW ORDERS.** In the first half of the sixteenth century a number of new religious orders appeared in the Roman Church. These included the Theatines founded in 1524, the Capuchins (1528), the Ursulines (1535), and the Jesuits (1540). The Capuchins took their name from the hooded cape (in Italian *capuccio*) that they wore. Their founder Matteo di Bassi (1495–1552) intended the order to observe the Rule of St. Francis in a strict, literal fashion; members devoted themselves to prayer and preaching and a strict adherence to Franciscan poverty. By contrast, the Ursulines' founder, Angela Merici (d. 1540), envisioned that her order of religious women would take vows of perpetual virginity but continue to wear normal clothes and live with their families. The Ursuline was to devote herself to the education of young girls. Eventually, though, the long-standing distrust of unsupervised groups of laywomen led the Ursulines to develop their own convents, from which they ran schools for girls.

**JESUITS.** The Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits as they came to be known, were by far the most important order to appear in this early stage of the Catholic Reformation. Their founder, Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), exercised a profound influence on Catholic spirituality in the early-modern period, particularly through the widespread diffusion of his classic devotional work *The*

*Spiritual Exercises*. He originally wrote the work as a diary of his own quest for spiritual perfection, but he adapted it for his followers' use. It relied on a technique of mental prayer that Loyola called "meditation." The Jesuits who first practiced the *Exercises* were to keep certain prescribed images from the life of Christ before their eyes. By undertaking these meditations over the course of thirty days, the Jesuits acquired the mental tools they needed to avoid sin. While intended originally for Loyola's followers, the *Spiritual Exercises* eventually became a form of retreat that many members of the Catholic devout practiced in the early-modern period. The practitioners of these devotions thus held ideas that were very different from Protestants, who placed great stress on humankind's wickedness and helplessness outside of God's aid. These devoted Catholics, on the other hand, believed that sin could be conquered through a combination of human effort and God's grace.

**JESUITS AS CATHOLIC REFORMERS.** Besides their role in fostering a deepened Catholic piety, the Jesuits played a major part in shaping the resurgence of the Roman Church. Loyola had been a soldier, and he molded his society into a military-style organization that culminated in the office of the society's Order General. Local communities of Jesuits did not have the customary rights of religious orders to choose their leader; instead the Order General appointed their superiors. Loyola, moreover, envisioned the society as a highly mobile force that could be deployed to establish schools, to preach and conduct missionary work, and to combat Protestant influences wherever and whenever the church required. The Jesuits had very stringent entrance requirements that included a nine-year probationary period. Despite these requirements, the rapid development of the Society points to its widespread popularity. At the time of Loyola's death in 1556, the Jesuits numbered more than 1,000; by the end of the century, their numbers had surpassed 5,000. One area in which the Society of Jesus exercised a profound influence was in the establishment of secondary schools for young men. After renouncing his military career and experiencing a religious conversion, Loyola himself had entered the University of Paris, where he had been schooled in the traditions of Renaissance humanism. In 1548, as the Jesuits founded their first secondary school at Messina in Sicily, Loyola chose to adopt a humanistic, rather than scholastic, curriculum. Soon Jesuit schools modeled on Messina opened throughout Europe. By 1600, more than 100 such institutions had been founded in Germany alone, and the schools became one of the primary vehicles through which young men from prominent families acquired a classical education.



Engraving of St. Ignatius of Loyola. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

**MISSIONS.** The Jesuits were also enthusiastic missionaries, as were many of the orders of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Jesuits, though, played a particularly important role in the establishment of seminaries that trained preachers who worked for the re-conversion of Protestants to the Catholic religion. In Germany, more than half the lands that had been won over to Protestantism re-converted to Catholicism by the mid-seventeenth century. In this intensive effort of recatholicization the Jesuits played an important role. The Jesuits performed their work by conducting preaching missions, particularly in the cities where Protestantism was strongest. These missions also aimed to keep Catholics confirmed in their faith. Jesuit success elicited Protestant anger, and prompted numerous polemics against the society. In Germany, where the Jesuits were particularly effective in winning converts, Lutheran preachers often attacked the society as a force of Antichrist. Jesuit missions also took on an international dimension. The Jesuits, together with the other

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***JESUIT MISSIONS**

**INTRODUCTION:** In the mid-sixteenth century the Jesuit Order published the letters of its missionaries at work in the Far East. The letters, filled with adventures and stories of conversions the order had accomplished in their missionary work, became successful propaganda for the Roman Catholic Church. This 1543 letter from Francis Xavier, a missionary working in India, to the Jesuits is one of the first of this genre of missionary communications.

I and Francis Mancias are now living amongst the Christians of Comorin. They are very numerous, and increase largely every day. When I first came I asked them, if they knew anything about our Lord Jesus Christ? but when I came to the points of faith in detail and asked them what they thought of them, and what more they believed now than when they were Infidels, they only replied that they were Christians, but that as they are ignorant of Portuguese, they know nothing of the precepts and mysteries of our holy religion. We could not understand one another, as I spoke Castilian and they Malabar; so I picked out the most intelligent and well read of them, and then sought out with the greatest diligence men who knew both languages. We held meetings for several days, and by our joint efforts and with infinite difficulty we translated the Catechism into the Malabar tongue. This I learnt by heart, and then I began to go through all the villages of the coast, calling around me by the sound of a bell as many as I could, children and men. I assembled them twice a day and taught them the Christian doctrine: and thus, in the space of a month, the children had it well by heart. And all the time I kept telling them to go on teaching in their turn whatever they had learnt to their parents, family, and neighbors. ...

I take care to make them repeat the Creed oftener than the other prayers; and I tell them that those who believe all that is contained therein are called Christians.

After explaining the Creed I go on to the Commandments, teaching them that the Christian law is contained in those ten precepts, and that every one who observes them all faithfully is a good and true Christian and is certain of eternal salvation, and that, on the other hand, whoever neglects a single one of them is a bad Christian, and will be cast into hell unless he is truly penitent for his sin. Converts and heathen alike are astonished at all this, which shows them the holiness of the Christian law, its perfect consistency with itself, and its agreement with reason. ...

As to the numbers who become Christians, you may understand them from this, that it often happens to me to be hardly able to use my hands from the fatigue of baptizing: often in a single day I have baptized whole villages. Sometimes I have lost my voice and strength altogether with repeating again and again the Credo and the other forms.

The fruit that is reaped by the baptism of infants, as well as by the instruction of children and others, is quite incredible. These children, I trust heartily, by the grace of God, will be much better than their fathers. They show an ardent love for the Divine law, and an extraordinary zeal for learning our holy religion and imparting it to others. Their hatred for idolatry is marvelous. They get into feuds with the heathen about it, and whenever their own parents practice it, they reproach them and come off to tell me at once. Whenever I hear of any act of idolatrous worship, I go to the place with a large band of these children, who very soon load the devil with a greater amount of insult and abuse than he has lately received of honor and worship from their parents, relations, and acquaintances. The children run at the idols, upset them, dash them down, break them to pieces, spit on them, trample on them, kick them about, and in short heap on them every possible outrage.

**SOURCE:** Francis Xavier, "To The Society at Rome," in *Modern Asia and Africa*, Vol. 9 of *Readings in World History*. Ed. W. H. McNeill and M. Iriye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971): 4–6.

Catholic Reformation orders, helped carry Catholicism to the New World and the Far East. In Spanish and Portuguese South and Central America, Jesuit missionaries shared the mission field with groups of Dominicans, Franciscans, and Capuchins. In India and the Far East, their efforts were at first unchallenged. In 1542, Loyola's close associate Francis Xavier (1506–1552) arrived in the Portuguese colony of Goa on India's west coast. He and a group of Jesuits stayed there for three years, planting the seeds of a Catholic Church in the region. In 1545, Xavier moved on to Malacca and in 1549 to Japan.

Xavier and his followers communicated frequently by letters with their superiors in Europe, and at home the Jesuits published these communications. These printed "Letters from the Far East" became popular reading for devout Catholics, filled as they were with accounts of conversions and adventures the missionaries had experienced in the East. They became, in other words, highly successful propaganda for Rome's renewal. By 1582, the Jesuits estimated that they had established 250 churches in Japan and converted more than 200,000 to the Christian faith. The society advertised similar successes in

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE INQUISITION INVESTIGATES ART**

**INTRODUCTION:** In July 1573, the Venetian painter Paolo Veronese was called before the Inquisition to defend a painting of the Last Supper he had recently completed. The painting was filled with riot of richly dressed figures, including Germans, court jesters, and serving men and women. The Inquisition was not satisfied with Veronese's defense of his work, which stressed artistic license. They demanded that he paint out the extraneous figures that would not have been present at the Supper. Instead he changed the work's name to *Feast in the House of Levi*, a biblical theme that allowed for his luxuriant depiction. A portion of his testimony before the Inquisition follows.

**Q:** What is the significance of those armed men dressed as Germans, each with a halberd in his hand?

**A:** We painters take the same license the poets and the jesters take and I have represented these two halberdiers, one drinking and the other eating nearby on the stairs. They are placed there so that they might be of service because it seemed to me fitting, according to what I have been told, that the master of the house, who was great and rich, should have such servants.

**Q:** And that man dressed as a buffoon with a parrot on his wrist, for what purpose did you paint him on that canvas?

**A:** For ornament, as is customary.

**Q:** Who are at the table of Our Lord?

**A:** The Twelve Apostles.

**Q:** What is St. Peter, the first one, doing?

**A:** Carving the lamb in order to pass it to the other end of the table.

**Q:** What is the Apostle next to him doing?

**A:** He is holding a dish in order to receive what St. Peter will give him.

**Q:** Tell us what the one next to this one is doing.

**A:** He has a toothpick and cleans his teeth.

**Q:** Who do you really believe was present at that Supper?

**A:** I believe one would find Christ with His Apostles. But if in a picture there is some space to spare I enrich it with figures according to the stories.

**Q:** Did anyone commission you to paint Germans, buffoons, and similar things in that picture?

**A:** No milords, but I received the commission to decorate the picture as I saw fit. It is large and, it seemed to me, it could hold many figures.

**Q:** Are not the decorations which you painters are accustomed to add to paintings or pictures supposed to be suitable and proper to the subject and the principal figures or are they for pleasure—simply what comes to your imagination without any discretion or judiciousness?

**A:** I paint pictures as I see fit and as well as my talent permits.

**Q:** Does it seem fitting at the Last Supper of the Lord to paint buffoons, drunkards, Germans, dwarfs and similar vulgarities?

**A:** No, milords.

**Q:** Do you not know that in Germany and in other places infected with heresy it is customary with various pictures full of scurrilousness and similar inventions to mock, vituperate, and scorn the things of the Holy Catholic Church in order to teach bad doctrines to foolish and ignorant people?

**A:** Yes, that is wrong; but I return to what I have said, that I am obliged to follow what my superiors have done.

**SOURCE:** Paolo Veronese, "Testimony before the Inquisition," in *Italian Art, 1500–1600: Sources and Documents*. Ed. Robert Klein (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966): 31–132.

China. While these numbers may be exaggerated, Jesuit conversions were frequently troubling to local non-Catholic populations. In both Japan and China, sporadic persecutions of Christian converts gave way through time to brutal efforts to suppress Christianity. Local rulers feared the foreign cultural influence of Christianity the Jesuits had sowed among their subjects.

**RELIGIOUS ART.** Because of their religious teachings, all the Protestant Reformations had favored an aes-

thetic that drastically reduced, and sometimes eliminated the use of religious art in churches. Of all the forms of Protestantism that developed in the sixteenth century, only Lutheranism retained a prominent place for pictorial images and the plastic arts. The Swiss forms of Protestantism, the Radical Reformers, and the Church of England all moved to curb the use of religious art within the public spaces of churches. The Council of Trent, by contrast, enthusiastically supported the continuing use



Spanish flagellants and soldiers from a sixteenth-century print. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

of religious art, insisting that images provided a necessary way to teach the faithful the truths of the church. As the Roman Church's officialdom met at Trent, though, they were well aware of problems in the uses of religious art. Throughout Europe, the contemporary style of many artists favored the movement known as Mannerism, which sometimes distorted religious themes or clouded them in images that were so complex that few could understand the Christian message. Thus Trent tried to reform the uses of religious art in the church, entrusting its decrees on the proper uses of religious art to the church's bishops for enforcement. A key figure in the movement to reform art in the second half of the sixteenth century was Gabriel Paleotti, the bishop of Bologna and a cardinal of the church. Paleotti's *Discourses* became an essential text used by bishops and reformers throughout Europe to discern whether religious art fit within the church's teachings. He insisted that artists must make their messages clear and that religious paintings and sculptures should stir the faithful to piety. In the wake of decrees of the Council of Trent and the reform measures that bishops like Paleotti instituted, artists were sometimes brought before the Inquisition to answer for their compositions. The Council had stipulated that the message of religious art should be clear

and forceful; it should, in other words, communicate Catholic truths to the unschooled in a way that seized upon their emotions and inspired their loyalty to the Roman Church. The most famous case of the censorship of art involved the great Venetian painter Paolo Veronese, who had painted an elegant Last Supper filled with serving men and women, Germans, buffoons, and so forth. When the Venetian Inquisition demanded that he paint over these unscriptural figures, he responded by merely changing the work's name from "The Last Supper" to "The Feast in the House of Levi."

**POPULAR RELIGION.** The later Middle Ages had witnessed a vital surge in lay piety that had taken many forms. In Northern Europe, the Modern Devotion had deepened the sense of religion as an internal and individual experience. Members of confraternities had also practiced rigorous penitential disciplines that imitated those of monks and nuns. They had displayed their devotion to the sacraments and had helped the poor and downtrodden through good works. A surge in the veneration of the saints had also been evident in the foundation of scores of new pilgrimage shrines. During the Catholic Reformation all these forms of religious devotion were renewed and intensified. Through the efforts of the reforming orders the sacrament of Penance be-



A sixteenth-century engraving showing a prisoner being subjected to the wheel by the Spanish Inquisition. HULTON/ARCHIVE. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

came an intense act of self-examination in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In place of the often ritualistic observance of the late-medieval church, the new preachers of the Catholic Reformation taught that Penance needed to be preceded by an internal change of heart and that it should be accompanied by a rigorous inward examination of the conscience. These views show the triumph of religious views that had initially been championed by groups like the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life and Christian humanists like Erasmus. Confraternal piety lived on in the later period, too. In Northern Europe these traditional religious organizations had been attacked by several generations of Protestant preachers and had fallen into decline. In the second half of the sixteenth century, though, confraternities witnessed a renewal there and everywhere in Europe. The new confraternities of the Catholic Reformation often took the Virgin Mary as their standard bearer since Marian devotion had been widely attacked by Protestants. Many of these organizations imagined themselves as a kind of religious army of lay people that would effectively re-establish Catholicism throughout Europe. Many confraternities spread from their point of original foundation to establish constituent branches throughout the continent, becoming international movements that linked groups of the Catholic laity together across national boundaries thus sustaining the universal character of Catholicism. Some supported the revival of pil-



The engraving *The Birth of the Virgin* by Albrecht Dürer. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

grimages and renewed devotion to the Catholic saints, practices that had been attacked by the Protestant reformers. Everywhere in Europe, pilgrimage became a vivid symbol of Catholicism and a tool for creating Catholic identity. Luther and other Protestants had attacked pilgrimages and the saints as products of the flawed teachings of the medieval church. But the Catholic reformers of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe embraced these practices as embodiments of Catholic truth since they taught that the Christian life was a journey in search of individual spiritual perfection.

**IMPLICATIONS.** The Protestant and Catholic Reformations were complex events, so complex indeed that most generalizations about them prove problematic. Important patterns nevertheless emerged in the religious world of the later Renaissance, patterns that had been shaped by the enormous controversies that had occurred between competing religions. This competition between Catholicism and Protestantism helped produce new highly defined religious orthodoxies. In the process of reforming and reordering religion in Europe, long-standing conflicts between church and state were



generally resolved in favor of the secular state. As the Renaissance drew to a close, in other words, it was Europe's princes who now possessed the power to define what religion their subjects would practice. In both early-modern Catholic and Protestant states, indoctrinating people in the principles outlined in a religion's confession (that is, its formal statement of belief) became a central concern of the state. Catholic and Protestant rulers expended considerable energy trying to ensure uniform belief among their subjects. In this offensive, Europe's rulers often relied on the arts—particularly theater, music, and the visual arts and architecture—to express their Protestant or Catholic principles. This campaign also left its marks on European literature, too, as authors published works that both defended and attacked their state's religious principles.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Late Renaissance and Mannerist Painting in Italy*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Religion*

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### JOHN CALVIN

1509–1564

*Protestant theologian*

**EARLY LIFE.** John Calvin was born at Noyon in Northern France, the son of a local official of a bishop. The family was relatively prosperous, and early in Calvin's life his father groomed him to pursue a career in the church. In 1523, he enrolled at the University of Paris where he studied theology within the university's Collège de Montaigu, the college in which thirty years before Desiderius Erasmus had been a student. After Calvin completed his bachelor of arts, his father encouraged him to pursue advanced studies in law, a move that necessitated a move to Orléans and later to Bourges. While he was a law student, Calvin became attracted to

the study of literature, particularly the classics, and in 1531, he returned to Paris with the intention of pursuing humanist studies. Although his father disapproved, Calvin came to know the premier French humanist Guillaume Budé closely in this period. In 1532, he published his first work, a commentary on the ancient Stoic Seneca. It showed that he had acquired a very fluent Latin style and that he was capable in Greek. Sometime in 1532 or 1533, Calvin converted to Protestantism, a religion under persecution by the French government at the time. He fled Paris, and thus began a long pilgrimage that eventually established him as one of the leading religious reformers of Europe.

**TRAVELS.** Over the course of the next several years Calvin traveled throughout Europe in search of a suitable refuge. He stayed for a time in Ferrara, and then in Basel in Switzerland, before deciding to take a position as the pastor to the French-speaking Protestants in Strasbourg. On his way he passed through Geneva, and some local citizens, impressed with his scholarly reputation, asked him to stay. By this time Calvin's fame had already grown through the recent publication of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which had appeared in its first Latin edition in 1536. It explained the essential ideas of Calvin's Protestantism in a way that was forceful and persuasive. During the next two years, Calvin remained at Geneva, where he labored to reform the city along the lines he had revealed in his *Institutes*. His extremism attracted the hatred of some of Geneva's citizens, and they succeeded in having the town council expel him in 1538. Now Calvin moved on to Strasbourg where he remained for several years and where he would marry. Although he was content in Strasbourg, his supporters at Geneva regained control over the town, and they asked him to assume once more his post in the city. Calvin reluctantly returned and he remained in Geneva for the rest of his life.

**GENEVA.** As Calvin set up residence in Geneva again, he was more cautious about establishing his reformation over the city. He desired to mold Geneva into an example of a reformed Christian town, and in the 1540s and 1550s his influence grew. His admirers celebrated the city as "the most perfect school of Christ," while critics both in Geneva and throughout Europe attacked him for the control he seemed to wield over people's daily lives and consciences. As part of the conditions for his return from Strasbourg, Calvin had already sent the town council his "Ecclesiastical Ordinances" in 1541. He had demanded that they enact these regulations as laws of the city. The ordinances were based upon Calvin's interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, the

New Testament history that outlines the pattern of government the apostles used in the very earliest days of the church. Calvin's reading of the Acts established four chief offices in the Genevan church: ministers, teachers, deacons, and elders. The most powerful body of the church was the consistory, which functioned like a court, hearing cases of moral infractions reported among the citizens of Geneva. Each Friday during Calvin's tenure in the city, the consistory met to deliberate. It heard marital disputes, conflicts between neighbors, and even tried and sentenced to death heretics (those whose ideas ran contrary to the city's reformed Protestantism). This institution would be widely imitated in other places in which Calvinists established reforms. The Calvinist-inspired Puritans who emigrated from England to North America, for instance, established its use in Massachusetts and elsewhere in their new settlements.

**CALVIN'S TEACHINGS.** Calvin saw himself as continuing and perfecting the reforms begun by Luther and Zwingli. In the *Institutes* he laid out his Protestant teachings in a way that was clear and intelligible to his mostly urbanized audience. These views placed a great emphasis on the majesty of God. Calvin, for instance, devoted a full quarter of the book to showing his readers how human beings could not comprehend God's omnipotence. He stressed the huge chasm that separated a perfect God from sinful humankind; nothing that human beings could do by themselves could ever bridge this gap. These observations led Calvin to adhere to a strict interpretation of the Christian doctrine of predestination, a doctrine he did not create but instead interpreted in a radically new and extreme way. Predestination was an ancient teaching of many Christian theologians. Many traditional statements of the doctrine had stressed a difference between God's foreknowledge and his election. God chose or elected some to salvation, but at the same time He had only foreknowledge of those who would be damned. He did not, in other words, create some human beings merely to damn them; instead the damned were responsible for their own fates because of their sins. By contrast, Calvin's notion of predestination has often been called "double predestinarian" because he insisted that God chose both to save some and damn others. Critics charged that such an interpretation of predestination led to fatalism and despair, and Calvin himself did not emphasize the doctrine in the *Institutes*. He was more concerned to foster among his followers a sense of their unworthiness when judged against God's omnipotence. The enormous effort he expended on trying to drive home this point to his readers, though, tended to reinforce the sense that human beings were utterly power-

less in determining their fate. These were relatively bleak doctrines, but Calvin assured his audience at the same time that they could be reasonably certain they were among the elect if they were leading an upstanding moral life. Thus Calvin's ideas tended to sanctify good works, hard labor, and moral discipline, and although they lacked a general appeal throughout society, they found many adherents, particularly among the growing bourgeoisie of Europe's cities.

**SPREAD OF CALVIN'S IDEAS.** Through the intensive efforts of dedicated missionaries trained in Geneva, Calvin's ideas spread to France, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and parts of Central Europe. Scotland became the only country outside Switzerland to adopt Calvinism as its legally recognized religion. In other monarchies Calvinists were a distinct, but often-powerful minority. In France and the Netherlands, the Calvinist movement clashed in the second half of the sixteenth century with a resurgent Catholicism that was fueled by the Counter-Reformation to produce bloody civil wars. In England, Calvin's followers, the Puritans, also lobbied Queen Elizabeth I for greater reform in the Church of England. They were largely unsuccessful in promoting Calvinism's general adoption throughout the English church, but in the seventeenth century, the brief English Civil War succeeded in establishing a Calvinist government throughout the land. The victory of the Puritans proved short-lived, and the monarchy and the Church of England were re-established. In the wake of this crisis, English Puritans often became dissenters from the national church and established their own Presbyterian institutions. Others immigrated to the English colonies in the Americas. There Calvinism shaped the development of American institutions over the coming centuries.

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#### CATHERINE OF SIENA

1347–1380

*Mystic*

**EARLY LIFE.** Catherine was born in Siena in Western Italy. She was one of 25 children and was also a twin.

When Catherine was an infant her mother was only able to nurse one of her children, and so Catherine's sister had a wet nurse. Although this custom was common in the Renaissance, it often proved disastrous to the child, as it was to Catherine's sister. It may be the death of her twin sister that sowed in Catherine the notion that she had been marked by God for a special destiny. As she grew older, events within the family continued to shape her outlook. Her beloved older sister Bonaventura died in childbirth, and without her company, Catherine turned to religion for solace. When she was still a child, she escaped to isolated caves around Siena to imagine herself as an ascetic saint from the early church. Over time, she spent long periods of the year in fasts and prayer. Her family tried to encourage her to pursue the normal interests of a maturing girl. They wanted her to make herself attractive to men and prepare herself for marriage, but Catherine resisted. She wanted instead to enter a convent, and when her family resisted she tried to make herself unattractive to men. When she came down with the smallpox, for instance, she refused to take any special precautions to protect her complexion, and on another occasion she tried to scald herself. She also practiced flagellation (self-whipping) and wore coarse hair shirts.

**CONVENT LIFE.** By the time she turned sixteen Catherine's behavior had convinced her family to allow her to enter a religious order. She joined the Sisters of Penance, a group that did not have a regular convent, and Catherine continued to live isolated within her family's home. For three years she saw almost no one and ate only infrequently, spending her time in constant prayer. During this period she began to have ever more intense visions, and by nineteen she experienced a vision of her "mystical marriage" to Christ. These mystical experiences continued, and in another vision several years later she heard a command to leave her parents' house and enter the world. As a result, she left her isolation behind and devoted herself to the world of church politics. Despite her inexperience she exerted a significant influence on the history of the church. At the time, the pope resided not in Rome but in Avignon, a small city just inside France's borders. This "Babylonian Captivity," as it was called, was a significant blow to Italian prestige as well as to the economy of the city of Rome. During the 1370s Catherine put pressure on the pope to return the capital of the church to its ancient home. She also called for him to support a crusade against Islam. While she eventually was successful in obtaining the first of her desires, the second eluded her. Her political involvement brought her fame among the powerful throughout Eu-

rope. In the letters she wrote during this period in her life, Catherine took on the role of an adviser to kings, queens, and other powerful figures throughout the continent. She was not always complimentary to her correspondents, castigating and chiding those of whom she disapproved.

**POLITICS.** Because of her visions and political engagement, the church mounted an investigation into Catherine's life. In 1374 the priest Raymond of Capua received the appointment to serve as her confessor and spiritual advisor. Although Capua was supposed to make sure that Catherine kept quiet, he soon came to respect her and the two developed a close relationship over the coming years. For the rest of Catherine's life, Raymond acted as her confidant. Raymond relieved the doubts of those in the church who had suspected that Catherine's motives were less than pure, and she was now free to pursue her political ambitions. In 1376 the city of Florence asked her to go to Avignon to negotiate a resolution to a dispute between the town and the pope. Catherine agreed, and although she was unsuccessful in resolving Florence's problems, she did succeed while she was in Avignon in finally convincing the pope to return to Rome. When she returned to Florence, she soon became involved in a popular revolt in the city known as the "Ciompi," and at one point she received a death threat. Catherine survived to negotiate a settlement to the political problems in Florence, and afterwards she set down to write her *Dialogue on Divine Providence*, which recounted a conversation between God and the human soul. In this book Catherine set out her religious ideas about the importance of love and service. Although she wanted to retire from her public role, the Great Schism required her diplomatic skills once more in 1378. This breach in the church—caused by the election of rival popes at Avignon and Rome—saddened Catherine, who tried to resolve the issue by writing numerous letters to her correspondents. Catherine also believed that she was somehow responsible for the problems of the church because of her role in encouraging the pope to return to Rome. She soon gave up even the small amount of food and water that she normally consumed and died soon afterwards.

**BIOGRAPHY.** Fifteen years after her death Raymond of Capua wrote on the life of Catherine of Siena. Although Raymond was convinced of her saintliness, he still managed, in a relatively unbiased way, to present a faithful life of his friend. Fasting and asceticism was not unknown in the Middle Ages, but Catherine carried these religious disciplines to audacious extremes, and they eventually resulted in her death. Catherine's visions

and the mastery she displayed over her body through her fasts and rigorous disciplines demonstrated her spiritual authority to the fourteenth-century world. Besides her *Dialogue of Divine Providence* and several other works, Catherine's letters are an eloquent testimony to the fame and influence she achieved in her own time. In the years following her death her reputation continued to grow, and Catherine became an official saint of the Roman Church in 1461.

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## IGNATIUS LOYOLA

1491–1556

*Catholic reformer*

**EARLY LIFE.** Christened as Inigo, this founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) was born into a Basque noble family in Northern Spain. Like other children of his class he was trained in the arts of war and groomed for a military career. In 1521 he was wounded in battle and spent over a year recovering from a crushed leg. During this recovery he had several religious experiences and he realized that he wanted to help other Christians. He entered into a year of isolation, during which he kept a spiritual notebook. This collection of his prayers and spiritual observations would later become the basis from which he wrote his *Spiritual Exercises*, a great classic of devotional literature.

**EDUCATION.** Once his recovery was complete, Loyola went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and realized that he needed a better education if he was going to realize his dream of helping his fellow Christians. He enrolled in the university at Barcelona to study Latin and later moved on to the universities of Alcalá and Salamanca before finally ending up as a student at the University of Paris, Europe's premier theological institution. In Paris, he attracted a group of disciples, and this group later formed the core of the Society of Jesus. Among Loyola's earliest followers in his student days were Francis Xavier (1506–1552), who would become a great missionary to the Far East, and Diego Laynez, who was a distinguished theologian of the Catholic Reformation. By 1540, others had joined them, and the group based itself in Rome. In that year the pope approved the order

officially, and a year later the group elected Loyola as their leader, a position in which he served the Society of Jesus for the remainder of his life. His tenure oversaw the Jesuits' expansion from the handful of 1540 to more than a thousand members at the time of his death.

**CHARACTER.** Despite the time he spent at universities in Spain and France, Loyola was never an intellectual. He possessed only a passing familiarity with the educational innovations of humanism and with the fine theological distinctions that were developing at the time as a result of the Council of Trent. His genius consisted in identifying those who could help him in his efforts and in recognizing the talents of those who surrounded him. From the start the Jesuits envisioned themselves as a missionary order that would fulfill Christ's charge to evangelize the world. As a result they stipulated in their first constitution that members were not required to meet daily for common prayers, nor were they required to dress in a common habit. These innovations granted them greater freedom and they attracted many highly educated, highly motivated men to the group. In 1548, the Society took on a new dimension when it founded its first secondary school at Messina in Italy. The Jesuits' educational role grew over the next several decades and established the order at the forefront of Catholic educational trends over the coming centuries.

**SPIRITUAL EXERCISES.** The core of a Jesuit's religious training consisted in the *Spiritual Exercises*, which was a devotional guidebook to a month-long retreat that all Jesuits undertook once in their life. Ignatius Loyola first published the book in 1548. The prayers and meditations that are outlined in this short book provided a common core of experience for all Jesuits and helped to forge an identity within the group. Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* also spread outside the order to lay people and members of other religious orders. The central insight of their teachings lay in their notion that a time of isolation and intensive self-examination might provide a person with the defenses needed to avoid sin. Throughout the work Loyola's early experiences in the military shaped the language of the *Exercises* in describing the Christian life as a battle against sin. For each of the thirty days of these devotions, the Jesuit was expected to keep vivid images of Christ's suffering and passion before his eyes. In imagining the lashes that raised Christ's blood or the thorns that pierced his brow, the practitioner was to acquire a lifelong distaste for wrongdoing. Besides participation in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the Jesuits also required that their recruits endure one of the longest probationary periods of any order in the Catholic Church. They desired to weed out those who were unsuitable for

missionary or educational efforts, and their constitution stressed absolute obedience to the authority of the church and to superiors in the order. For this reason they have long been likened to a military force within the Catholic Reformation.

**MISSIONS.** Ignatius Loyola also identified missions as an important dimension to be pursued by the Society, and the missionary expansion of the Society of Jesus into Asia and the New World began during his tenure. In 1542 he sent Francis Xavier to India where he worked to establish a strong Jesuit presence. Xavier moved on to Japan in 1549, planting the seeds of Christianity on that island. One of the innovations of the Jesuits allowed those they converted in other countries to enter into their society, and Japanese Jesuits soon found their way into the life of the order. In the same year Xavier arrived in Japan, Jesuit missionaries also went to Brazil. By the time of his death, not all the mission fields in which the Jesuits would work had been opened up, but Loyola had led the order into the missionary work he prized.

**FINAL TROUBLES.** The final years of Ignatius Loyola saw an increasing number of problems. Portuguese Jesuits rebelled against his authority, and the election of Pope Paul IV, an enemy of the order, complicated Loyola's administration. Despite these problems the Society continued to prosper and expand, and Loyola even received recognition in his life as an exemplary Christian. In death his reputation only continued to grow, and he was named an official saint of the Roman Catholic Church in 1622.

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## MARTIN LUTHER

1483–1546

*Protestant reformer*

**EARLY LIFE.** Martin Luther was the son of prosperous peasants, and his father intended him to become a lawyer, the avenue that many upwardly mobile people followed in the fifteenth century. Early in his life he studied at schools run by the Brethren of the Common Life and he eventually attended the University of Erfurt where he earned a master's of arts degree in 1505. Before

he could begin his law studies, however, fate intervened. One day he was caught in a terrible storm and, fearing for his life, he prayed to St. Anne, vowing to become a monk if he was spared. He survived to make good on his promise, despite his father's vehement opposition. He entered an Augustinian monastery and took priestly orders. During this time he continued his studies, earning a doctorate in theology in 1512. A few years later he became professor of biblical theology at the University of Wittenberg in Saxony, one of Germany's newest universities. He stayed in this position for the rest of his life.

**ANXIETY.** In the 1950s the Danish psychologist Erik Erikson painted a picture of Luther's psychological makeup that was less than flattering. He saw Luther as someone who had suffered from an identity crisis in his early life because of his conflicts with his father over his choice of career. According to Erikson, Luther's quest for certainty of his salvation was a way to resolve these long-standing issues with his father. Historians have long attacked Erikson's version of events, but it is clear that Luther was someone with an anxious nature. Even as he completed his studies in biblical theology, the future reformer continued to try all the remedies the medieval church prescribed for sinful human nature. In the later Middle Ages the church taught that while human beings could not save themselves, they needed to cooperate with God by participating in the sacraments and doing good works. Luther tried this path. He went on pilgrimage to Rome, performing the prayers and rituals that were customarily undertaken in the Holy City to obtain indulgences. He fasted and spent long nights in prayer vigils, but he could not dispel doubts and uncertainties about his salvation. Johann von Staupitz, Luther's superior in the monastery, originally identified Luther's problems, and it was he who suggested Luther undertake biblical studies in the first place. Staupitz thought that reading and studying the Bible would calm Luther's fears, and in his ongoing attempts to keep Luther occupied, he arranged for the scholar to be appointed to his post at Wittenberg. Sometime around the time he took up his new position, though, Luther had a momentous insight. This event would later become known as his "Tower Experience," although it cannot be established with certainty just when it occurred. While gathering his thoughts together for a lecture on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, he was struck by the phrase, "The just shall live by faith." Fueled by his powerful new insight, he began to teach that works were unnecessary for salvation. Only faith in the promises of God could redeem sinners. These insights soon clashed with imperial politics. During 1517, members of the Dominican Order began to sell a

papal indulgence in Germany in order to finance the building of the new St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and to retire the debts a German archbishop had acquired in securing his election. Luther became disgusted with the techniques of the chief salesman, Johann Tetzel, and he wrote his *95 Theses* to spur debate. Luther probably did post these propositions on the door of Wittenberg's university church on 31 October 1517, an event that has become legendary as the start of the Protestant Reformation. But it cannot be definitely established whether he decided to publicize his ideas in this way at the time. He did send the *95 Theses* to the church officials responsible for the sale and to close friends and associates. Someone soon arranged for its publication without Luther's knowledge, and although it had been written in Latin, the language of scholars, its translation into German caused great excitement throughout the country.

**DEBATE.** While Luther's fame grew, Rome made several attempts to quiet his criticisms. These efforts failed, and in 1519 Luther debated his propositions publicly at Leipzig against the Dominican theologian Johann Eck. The reformer defended his positions skillfully, although at several points in the debate Eck drew him into making statements that showed he did not recognize the authority of the pope. Luther also expressed sympathy for John Huss, the leader of the fifteenth-century religious rebellion in Bohemia. These admissions made it clear to Pope Leo X that Luther was a heretic, but they also extended his popularity throughout Germany where the press promoted him as a sort of folk hero. Leo X condemned Luther's positions, but when Luther received his copy of the condemnation in June 1520 he publicly burnt it together with several esteemed theological works of the medieval church. In the months that followed, Luther actively engaged in preaching and writing about his new ideas. Among the many works he wrote in 1520, three treatises stand out in the history of the Reformation because they redefined Christian teachings according to Luther's principle of justification by faith. They presented a plan for the reform of the church and they also reformulated the role of the sacraments in Christianity. Over the following years these three treatises circulated throughout Germany and Europe in thousands of cheaply produced copies. They soon produced such excitement that a number of writers throughout Germany wrote similar tracts condemning the church, and the short Reformation pamphlet became the most popular printed work in Germany.

**IMPERIAL DIET.** As the controversy over Luther's ideas grew, the emperor Charles V summoned Luther to a meeting of the imperial parliament in the city of

Worms. Charles wanted to put the matter to rest, but Luther refused to recant his ideas and he was condemned as an outlaw. Before attending the meetings at Worms, though, Luther had asked for a safe conduct, and he was able to leave the meetings to travel home. While en route, his protector, Frederick the Wise, arranged to have him kidnapped and taken to the Wartburg castle, where Luther hid for ten months. During this period Luther began his translation of the Bible into German, a task that would require another decade to complete. Although Bibles were tremendously expensive, Luther's translation became enormously popular. It was printed in hundreds of thousands of copies and had a major impact on the German language.

**UNREST.** While Luther was at the Wartburg, the situation at home in Wittenberg was quickly changing. Many of Luther's closest associates began to promote ideas that were even more radical than his own. In 1522 the reformer returned to Wittenberg to try to establish control over the situation. One of the key elements of these radical reformers' program at the time was the condemnation of traditional religious images and sculptures. These figures taught that religious art was a violation of the Bible's teachings about "graven images." Iconoclasm, that is, the destruction of religious art, had broken out in Saxony. Luther responded with a conservative defense of religious art's role in worship. The ideas he formulated at this time fashioned an essentially conservative Reformation in the church.

**REFORM OF WORSHIP.** Luther insisted that the chief insight of his movement, justification by faith, should be the central teaching of the church. For those who possessed faith, religious art was a matter of indifference. While church and state authorities should see to it that those objects that excited idolatrous affection in the people should be removed, religious art, Luther argued, had a role to play in people's devotions. At this time Luther also translated the traditional Mass and the other services of the church into German. He pruned away those parts of medieval worship that were in conflict with his teachings, but he preserved much from the Middle Ages. With Frederick the Wise's support, Luther abolished monasticism, and at Wittenberg, he arranged for the marriage of the town's monks and priests to nuns. In 1525, Luther himself married Katherina von Bora, a former nun.

**PEASANTS' WAR.** While Luther reshaped the life of the church in Saxony, unrest continued to brew. In 1524, peasants in Germany's southwest revolted, formulating their demands for religious and social reform in a widely circulated manifesto known as the *Twelve*

*Articles.* The movement soon spread to the east and north in Germany, threatening to erupt into a full-scale social revolution. Luther had originally supported the peasants' demands. He had himself been born a peasant and knew that Germany's nobles were often harsh and repressive in their dealings with the class. As the peasant rebellion grew more violent, Luther distanced himself from the peasant rebels, and in 1525, he condemned the movement outright. In the years after the bloody suppression of the Peasants' War, the reformer increasingly relied on the power of the state to reform the church. Together with his close associates, especially Philip Melancthon, Luther developed new plans for the education of the young, instituted an inspection of local churches, and reformed the curriculum of the University of Wittenberg. Luther's reliance on the state, however, coupled with his denunciation of the peasantry during the Peasants' War, condemned many of his reforms to unpopularity, particularly in the countryside.

**LATER YEARS.** The remaining two decades of Luther's life were times of both success and failure. During the 1520s Ulrich Zwingli had championed a different course of reform in Switzerland and southern Germany, and this movement now rivaled Luther's own. In 1529 Zwingli and Luther met at Marburg in Germany in an attempt to iron out their differences so that they might form a united church. This Marburg Colloquy, as it became known, was a failure, and Swiss Protestantism continued to develop as a separate movement. During the 1530s and 1540s, numerous attempts to reconcile Luther and his followers with the Roman Church also failed. Furthermore, the bigamy of one of his most powerful followers, Philip of Hesse, embarrassed Luther, as Philip's taking of a second wife made it seem to many conservative minds that Reformation was a force of disorder and lawlessness. Still, there were many positive developments in these years. Luther's cause took on a distinctive identity and its message became the religion of many cities and territories. In 1534 Luther also completed his biblical translation. His family multiplied, eventually totaling twelve children, six of whom Luther's wife Katherina bore, and six which they adopted. The loss of Luther's daughter, Magdalena, in 1542 devastated Luther, and he was unusually candid about it. In these years he also continued to suffer from health problems, as he had throughout his life. Some have credited his worsening health with inspiring the violent anti-Semitism of a tract entitled *Against the Jews and Their Lies* which he published in 1543. He wrote increasingly violent diatribes against the papacy in these years, too. At the same time Luther remained a tremendously popular figure in

the circle that surrounded him at Wittenberg. He boarded many of his students, who recorded their lunchtime conversations with him. Known as the "Table Talk," these accounts provide us with an unparalleled view into his life, often allowing us to reconstruct his day-to-day activities. His death in 1546 came after he had traveled to a neighboring territory to help settle a dispute between two nobles. Even in death, though, Luther's life produced controversy. His followers circulated an account of his final hours that stressed that he had remained steadfast in his faith until the very end. But rival Catholic propagandists circulated a counter myth that he had recanted in the last moments and returned to the traditional faith.

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## ST. TERESA OF AVILA

1515–1582

*Mystic*  
*Catholic reformer*

**FAMILY LIFE.** Teresa was the daughter of a merchant in the city of Avila in Spain. Her father was the son of converted Jews, while her mother's family was Old Christian. Old Christians were those who had lived under Islamic rule in medieval Spain. Teresa never had formal schooling but she learned to read and write, practicing both skills voraciously throughout her life. One of ten children, she lost her mother when she was thirteen, and her subsequent misbehavior landed Teresa in a convent school. There she read the letters of St. Jerome and underwent a conversion experience. Despite her father's opposition, she decided to become a nun, entering a Carmelite convent in 1535, and taking her vows two years later. The convent she entered at the time was not a model of religious observance, having a widespread reputation for lax discipline. Inadequate funds forced many of the nuns to spend part of each year visiting their families. To make ends meet, too, the sisters admitted into their orders women from wealthy families in the vicinity, some of whom lacked a sense of vocation. Many of the women in the convent entertained men and indulged a taste for luxurious living. Teresa seems to have initially

done the same, but as she grew older she became more serious about her pursuit of the religious life.

**VOICES AND VISIONS.** Around the time Teresa was forty she became ill and suffered from paralysis. She also began to experience visions and voices from God which told her she would be damned if she did not repent of her worldly ways. Her priests thought these were really demonic spirits and suggested that she be exorcized. One of her confessors suggested that she record her visions and experiences, and through the resulting enormous written record she convinced her detractors that her visions were divine. In the wake of these mystical experiences, Teresa became convinced of the necessity for reforming local women's convents. In 1562, she left her own convent and founded a new one at Avila, to which she drew a group of like-minded nuns. As a sign of their commitment to live an ascetic and disciplined life, the women became Discalced Carmelites, that is, they refused to wear shoes. In addition, Teresa worked to establish a standard of absolute egalitarianism within the order. No woman could presume that she was superior to any other because of birth or wealth. Teresa also admitted converted Jews and others who would have been ignored by the traditional orders. The establishment of the new monastery in Avila offended a significant portion of the local population. Some doubted the divinity of Teresa's visions, and others were reluctant to contribute to the foundation of another religious institution given the glut of monks, nuns, and priests. Gradually, Teresa obtained royal favor and in the final twenty years of her life she founded another seventeen convents. These Discalced Carmelites lived a disciplined life in intense seclusion, and they counted among their numbers many women who gained a reputation for saintliness. In 1580, the pope granted her order official recognition.

**WRITINGS.** Teresa was an important figure in the reform of monasticism and the church in sixteenth-century Spain. Her influence lived on as well in the numerous writings she completed during her career as a religious reformer. Many of these texts were explicitly mystical and showed her reading of texts from the medieval past. They were notable, too, for the ways in which Teresa stressed that a mystic must conform to the teachings of the church. Teresa herself was charged with heresy at least six times in her life, although she was never formally tried before the Inquisition. She knew firsthand how dangerous it could be for a woman to speak her mind. In her writings she adopts complex strategies to present her message so that she can protect herself from long-term prohibitions against women preaching and teaching in the church. The most famous of her works

included the *Book of Her Life*, completed around 1565 but later revised, the *Way of Perfection* (1566) and *The Interior Castle* (1577). These form an unprecedented spiritual biography that takes Teresa's readers on a tour of her innermost thoughts, dreams, and aspirations. One task that she set for herself in the years after her visions was to accomplish the re-conversion of Protestants through her prayers. In one of her more vivid visions described in these works, she tells her readers of her ecstasy in 1559. In this mystical event, she saw an angel, who pierced her side with an arrow that was flaming with divine love. The experience left her "afame with the love of God." During the seventeenth century the Roman architect and sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini immortalized Teresa's ecstasy in a famous work he completed in the Church of Sta. Maria della Vittoria in Rome. By Bernini's time, Teresa was an official saint of the Catholic Church, having been raised to that status in 1622.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Religion*

- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536)—This work originally began as a short French text outlining Calvin's teachings on Reformed Christianity. It underwent many changes and revisions, so that by Calvin's death it was an imposing volume that was widely circulated among Reformed Protestants. Today, it still ranks as one of Protestantism's most important texts and has made Calvin "the Protestant Aquinas."
- Catherine of Genoa, *Treatise on Purgatory* (1551)—This work recounted Catherine's vivid visions of purgatory, and was widely circulated in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It helped to establish in many people's minds an image of purgatory, that realm of the afterlife where Christians suffered for their sins.
- Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue of Divine Providence* (c. 1378)—This was one of the most important mystical texts of the later Middle Ages.
- Desiderius Erasmus, *Translation of the New Testament* (1516)—Erasmus' new Latin translation also included



an authoritative edition of the Bible in Greek. This work was widely used by scholars in the sixteenth century to translate the Bible into other European languages. Luther relied upon it as he translated the New Testament into German, as did William Tyndale for his English translation.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* (c. 1521)—Written as Loyola convalesced from a battle wound, the *Exercises* outlined a detailed plan for harnessing one's mind and body to conquer sin. The exercises were practiced first by Jesuits, but the practice also spread among the Catholic laity in sixteenth-century Europe. These meditations and prayers were performed in retreat over the course of a month.

St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul* (sixteenth century)—This is a masterpiece of sixteenth-century Spanish mysticism.

Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian* (1520)—This was the most widely distributed of the three influential treatises Luther published in 1520. Together with the *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* and *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, these works outlined a plan for the reform of the church as well as a new theology of salvation and the church.

St. Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle* (1577)—This work describes the saint's visionary life and Christian spirituality.

chapter 8  
eight

THEATER

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	312	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS <i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	315	<i>Everyman</i> (excerpt from the popular morality play). . . . .	320
TOPICS		<i>Setting the Stage</i> (prologue to Machiavelli's comedic play <i>The Mandrake Root</i> ). . . . .	325
Theater in the Later Middle Ages . . . . .	316	<i>Cimador: Clown of Commedia dell'Arte</i> (letter from Aretino describing a clown). . . . .	326
The Renaissance Theater in Italy . . . . .	323	<i>The Making of Illusion</i> (excerpt from Serlio's treatise discussing illusions in theater design) . . . . .	329
The Renaissance Theater in Northern Europe . . . . .	331	<i>Reformation Drama</i> (excerpt from dramatic text by Sachs defending Protestantism) . . . . .	333
The Commercial Theater in England . . . . .	337	<i>Influences from Aristotle</i> (excerpt from Aristotle's <i>Poetics</i> ) . . . . .	336
Renaissance Theater in Spain . . . . .	345	<i>A Lewd Play</i> (order from the queen's Privy Council to apprehend participants of an offensive play) . . . . .	338
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>Faustus' Lament</i> (excerpt from Marlowe's play <i>A Tragical History of Dr. Faustus</i> ) . . . . .	343
Ludovico Ariosto . . . . .	350	Seville's Theater . . . . .	347
Alexandre Hardy . . . . .	351		
Christopher Marlowe . . . . .	352		
William Shakespeare . . . . .	353		
Torquato Tasso . . . . .	355		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	356		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Theater*

- c. 1300 The Italians Lovato Lovati and Nicolò di Trevet produce commentaries on ancient tragedies by the Roman Seneca.
  - 1315 Albertino Mussato writes the first Renaissance tragedy, *Ecerinis*, based upon the style of the ancient Roman Seneca. The work is intended to be read, rather than staged, and relates the life of the thirteenth-century Italian despot, Ezzelino da Romano.
  - 1339 The Paris Goldsmith's Guild begins performing a cycle of mystery plays annually.
  - 1376 The first records establish the performance of a mystery play in the English city of York. Over the next century, the annual performance will grow to be one of the most impressive in England.
  - 1384 A mystery cycle begins to be performed in the city of London.
  - 1400 Mystery and Passion cycles grow more popular throughout Northern Europe.
  - 1402 The king of France grants a monopoly to the Confraternity of the Passion to perform mystery plays in the city of Paris.
  - 1429 Nicholas of Cusa, the humanist scholar and cardinal, recovers twelve comedies written by the ancient Roman Plautus.
  - 1440 The French mystery playwright Eustache Marcadé dies.
  - 1444 The humanist Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini writes a Latin school comedy *Chrysis* in the style of Plautus.
  - c. 1450 Arnoul Gréban writes his *Mysteries of the Passion*, in Paris. The work consists of over 35,000 lines of verse and must be performed over four days.
  - 1470 The first edition of the plays of the ancient Roman playwright Terence is printed. It will be followed two years later by a printed edition of the comedies of Plautus.
  - 1494 Hans Sachs, Germany's greatest Renaissance poet and most prolific playwright, is born at Nuremberg.
  - c. 1495 The morality play *Everyman* is first performed in the Netherlands.
  - c. 1501 Jean Michel, author of French mystery plays, dies.
  - 1508 Lodovico Ariosto completes his play *The Coffer Comedy*, one of the first Erudite Comedies to be written in the Italian language.
  - c. 1515 The artist Raphael designs stage sets for theatrical productions at Rome.
  - 1516 The poet John Skelton, once tutor to King Henry VIII, produces his play *Magnificence*, a morality play that tries to convince the king to give up his lavish ways.
  - 1517 The Protestant Reformation begins in Germany. Eventually, the movement will discourage the medieval mystery cycles in favor of supporting new kinds of polemical theater that attack the pope and the Roman Church. Extreme Protestants, such as the Calvinists of Switzerland, France, and England, will lobby for restrictions against the theater.
  - c. 1518 Niccolò Machiavelli completes his comedy *The Mandrake* in a lively Tuscan dialect.
- Hans Sachs begins to write plays in Germany. In the course of his long life, his many dramas will come to support Martin Luther and the Reformation.

- c. 1525 Alessandro de' Pazzi translates Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Cyclops* as well as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* into Italian.
- 1531 The Intronati, a group of university-educated comics, begin performing at Siena.
- 1545 The first surviving document records the foundation of a troupe of Commedia dell'Arte players at Padua.
- An installment of Sebastian Serlio's *Architettura* includes illustrations and descriptions of a temporary theater inspired by ancient Roman designs.
- 1548 A theater is built in the former townhouse of the dukes of Burgundy, the Hôtel de Bourgogne, in Paris.
- Mystery plays are forbidden by the city's parliament.
- c. 1550 The Jesuits begin to stage Latin school dramas at their secondary schools throughout Europe.
- 1562 The political morality play, *Gorboduc*, is performed at the English court before Queen Elizabeth I. The play encourages her to resolve the problem of her succession.
- The Wars of Religion begin in France.
- 1563 The Council of Trent concludes; over the coming generations reformers will try to curb the "lewd excesses" of the theater in Catholic Europe.
- 1564 William Shakespeare is born in Stratford-upon-Avon.
- Christopher Marlowe is born at Cambridge.
- 1566 Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, the first English play to imitate classical Roman comedy, is printed.
- 1569 The last performance of the York Mystery Cycle occurs.
- 1571 The first Italian Commedia dell'Arte troupe leaves on a tour of Northern Europe.
- 1573 Torquato Tasso's pastoral drama *Aminta* is performed in the Este court of the duchy of Ferrara.
- 1575 The English city of Chester curtails its annual mystery play.
- 1576 Blackfriars Theater, an exclusive London theater, is founded in the city in a chamber once used by parliament.
- James Burbage builds a commercial theater, known simply as The Theater, just outside London.
- 1579 The commercial theater Corral de la Cruz opens at Madrid in Spain.
- 1583 A group of twelve actors is selected from the London theaters to serve as players at court. They become known as "Queen Elizabeth's Men."
- 1587 Christopher Marlowe's innovative drama, *Tamburlaine* is performed in London at the theater of James Burbage.
- 1588 The Olympian Theater is completed in Vicenza by Vincenzo Scamozzi after plans laid down by his mentor, the famous architect Palladio.
- 1589 Giovanni Battista Guarini writes his *The Faithful Shepherd*. The work combines the conventions of Renaissance pastoral with a new genre of tragicomedy. It will inspire similar plays throughout seventeenth-century Europe.
- 1592 The Rose Theatre is rebuilt in London after a fire.
- Christopher Marlowe's masterpiece of historical theater, *Edward II*, is staged.
- 1595 Construction begins on the Swan Theater in London; it will be the only English sixteenth-century theater from which

sketches survive, allowing later scholars to reconstruct its plans.

- 1598 The first opera, *Dafne* (Daphne), is produced at Florence in the household of the silk merchant Jacopo Corsi. The work sets to music a play that is inspired by Renaissance pastoral.
- 1599 William Shakespeare's company takes up residence at the Globe Theater in London. Over the next decade the playwright will write most of his finest works.
- 1600 The Accessi, a Commedia dell'Arte troupe, performs at the marriage of Marie de' Medici to Henry IV of France.

## OVERVIEW *of Theater*

**RELIGIOUS ROOTS.** In the Middle Ages drama developed first in the church and consisted of short plays staged on important feast days in the liturgical calendar. By 1500, these dramatic traditions had inspired huge mystery cycles that were often mounted by the guilds and other corporate bodies in Europe's cities. The scope of the mystery cycles was often enormous, with the cycles sometimes taking from several days to weeks to perform. By this time, too, morality plays were also popular. These dramas treated Christian themes from an allegorical perspective, their characters named after the virtues and vices. In the sixteenth century religious drama underwent a transformation, first under the influences of the Protestant Reformation, and later by the Counter Reformation in those parts of the continent that remained loyal to the church at Rome. As a result of these religious developments, the great medieval mystery cycles gradually disappeared in most of the continent, as both Protestants and Catholics developed new forms to teach the principles of their movements. In Catholic Europe, the Jesuits began to rely on the theater around 1550 to teach Latin to students in their secondary schools. Over the next century Jesuit drama grew, and the order staged many spectacular productions that often made use of professional stage equipment and which even came to integrate elements of ballet and opera. In Protestant Europe, by contrast, polemical dramas attacked the papacy and Catholic beliefs in order to popularize the teaching of the Reformation's principles among the people.

**SPECTACLE.** Another area in which the theater had long played an important role in medieval Europe was in the staging of royal spectacles. Here the ceremonies of royal entry, through which a king received ceremonial admission to his major cities, were one area that witnessed a huge development in the Renaissance. In 1300 these ceremonies had been relatively small in scale, and had involved a procession of civic leaders who met the king at the town's gates. Gradually, the rites grew more elaborate, and living tableaux and other street dramas

became part of the festivities. By 1500 the forces of humanism transformed the entries yet again, and these rituals became spectacles replete with ancient triumphal imagery, first in Italy and then somewhat later in Northern Europe. The entry ceremonies staged in France and other Northern European cities celebrated the king as a force for national unity, and processions filled with costumed characters and choreographed productions became highly theatrical celebrations of the growing cult of royalty. In addition, new fashions at court, including massive theme banquets and other entertainments, created a new demand for short dramatic interludes. By 1550 most courts of significant size required troupes of professional players and designers to stage these elaborate productions.

**HUMANISM.** Humanist interest in drama developed even in the fourteenth century when Italian scholars first turned to study the ancient Roman tragedies of Seneca. Seneca, however, treated tragedy as a primarily literary form, suitable for private and small group reading, rather than as a theatrical genre. His influence produced numerous "closet dramas" in the Renaissance, plays intended to be read rather than performed. It was not until 1541 that a tragedy was actually staged in Italy, but these dramas soon caught on and became popular elsewhere in Europe. In the fifteenth century humanists also turned to study the classical comedies of Plautus and Terence, and in Italy these studies helped to produce a new genre of "erudite comedies" written in contemporary Italian but based upon ancient models. In the course of the sixteenth century the impact of these humanist discoveries broadened greatly the types of dramas staged throughout Europe. In its purest forms, humanist dramas influenced the styles of theater supported by Europe's courts. Here the elaborate plays constructed according to classical models appealed to the tastes of cultivated nobles and courtiers. Elsewhere, though, humanist dramatic innovations made their way in diluted form into plays intended for a more general audience.

**COMMERCIALISM.** A second factor that revolutionized drama in sixteenth-century Europe was the growth of professionalism in the theater. By the mid-sixteenth century troupes of *Commedia dell'Arte* players had exploded on the Italian scene, and soon they popularized their art form in towns and cities throughout Europe. The *Commedia* appealed to rich and poor, educated and uneducated audiences alike. As a theatrical phenomenon, its importance was far greater than the mere comic relief the *Commedia* provided. The troupes in Italy soon inspired local imitators in all European countries, and these new groups became the first truly professional

acting ensembles. The new professionalism coincided with the disappearance of the older religious mystery cycles, and the professional stage began to replace the traditional forms of drama. The new rise of a commercial theater was most evident in London. Here by 1600, thousands of city dwellers viewed the new professional performances each day. But in Spain and France, vigorous national theaters had also begun to emerge by this time. An air of danger and immorality often surrounded the new commercial theaters. Religious moralists, both Protestant and Catholic, attacked actors' immorality and the secular themes treated in plays as subversive. Town officials, too, found the disorderly crowds that congregated in the theaters troubling. Yet in those places where the new commercial theaters came gradually to find a home, royal licensing permitted their productions. Popular demand, too, made the new theaters financially successful, and these commercial forces had, by the dawn of the seventeenth century, produced a new caste of professional playwrights who churned out hundreds of plays. In these dramas authors frequently made use of the innovations of Renaissance humanist dramas. But at the same time, since the theater was a paying proposition, they carefully geared their plays to a broad audience. The results helped to produce native traditions of theater that shaped the experience of Europeans for centuries to come.

## TOPICS *in Theater*

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### THEATER IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

**RELIGION AND STATE.** Medieval drama was religious in nature. Liturgical dramas had long been performed in Europe's churches on the most popular and solemn religious occasions of the year, and many of these religious plays continued to be performed throughout the continent until the seventeenth century. At the same time new dramatic developments became evident in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Europe. At court, traditional jousts and tournaments grew more elaborate as their functions became more clearly a theatrical celebration of noble prowess. In towns and cities throughout the continent enormous mystery cycles staged by local guilds and confraternities appeared, too. Royal entries, a long-standing ceremony that welcomed a monarch to one of his cities, similarly expanded, taking on new elements of drama and theater. While all these forms traced

their roots to medieval precedents, their imposing expansion during the early Renaissance demonstrates the increasing role that ritual played in European society at the time. Out of this fondness for ritual grew some of the new dramatic forms that inspired the even greater developments in the Renaissance theater that occurred during the sixteenth century.

**MYSTERY CYCLES.** Each year most major European cities held a summer festival that included a trade fair combined with religious festivities. In most towns the guilds of merchants and artisans staged these fairs, which grew to become important expressions of urban pride and religious devotion. In the fourteenth century the guilds often celebrated their fairs with religious processions that included floats decorated with scenes from the Bible. Typically, each guild was responsible for mounting a different scene, and the scenes ranged from the Garden of Eden, through major events in the Old Testament, and culminated with the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Subjects drawn from the life of the Virgin Mary were also popular. Over time, these pageant wagons grew more elaborate as guilds competed to outdo each other. The guilds hired carpenters, sculptors, and local painters to decorate the floats, and many placed costumed mimes atop them that acted out the events of their float's theme. Soon, spoken dramas became part of the celebrations in many cities, and actors performed short scenes along the parade route or at the conclusion of the procession in an important town square. Thus religious processions like these provided the foundation upon which one of the greatest developments of late-medieval drama—the mystery cycles—appeared. These cycles, like the festivals themselves, also became venerable objects of civic pride, and they grew in many places to enormous lengths. In the city of York in England, 48 separate dramas were performed in the annual mystery cycle during a single day. The action of these dramas consumed so much time that the theatrical performance was begun at 4:30 in the morning. At London, the town staged a mystery cycle that required anywhere between three and seven days to perform, while in Paris the town's annual cycle was 35,000 verses long and required 220 actors to stage. Although these great late-medieval cycles were enormous, and their rehearsals sometimes stretched throughout the entire year, the tendency was for ever larger and grander mystery plays to develop. By the sixteenth century, for example, some towns staged daily performances that stretched over an entire month, thus entertaining those who came to the now greatly extended market fairs each day during the annual festivities.

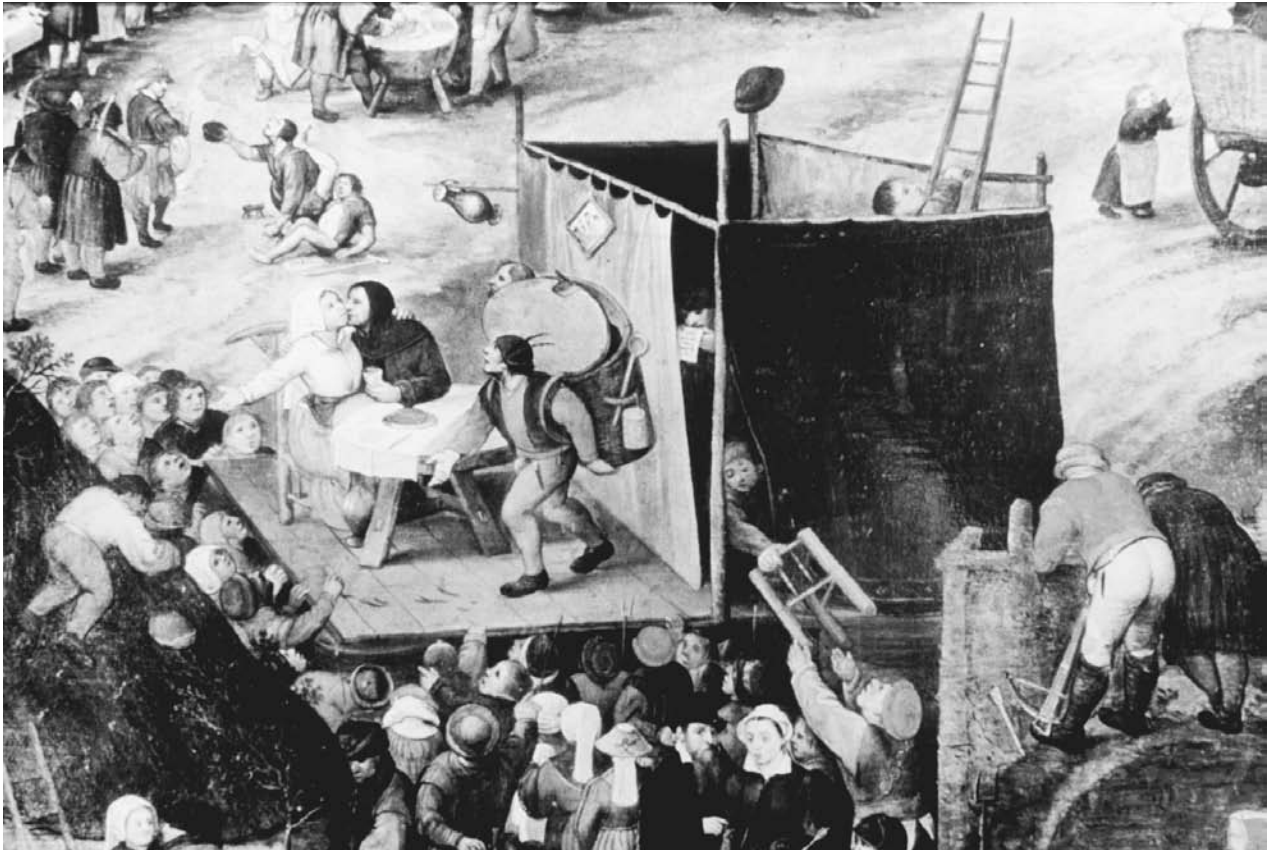


An engraving of a pageant wagon on which theatrical performances were staged in the Renaissance. FOLGER SHAKESPEAREAN LIBRARY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

**THEMES.** Relatively few of the texts for these mystery cycles survive, and those that did survive come mostly from French and English cities. But the popularity of these theatrical performances was great throughout Europe, and the texts that still exist suggest that common themes pervaded most of the plays. The subject of the plays was the salvation of humankind, and the individual scenes wove the tale of human redemption out of the events recorded in the scriptures and the traditions of the church. Most cycles began in Eden with

the creation of Adam and Eve, and proceeded to recount the events in the Garden in a vivid way, with Lucifer being embarrassed and made to slither on the ground and Adam and Eve being expelled from Eden in a brutally realistic fashion. The subsequent scenes ranged far and wide over the events of the Old Testament, showing the process by which God eventually came to identify the Jews as his chosen people and then to make salvation a possibility for all humankind in the sacrifice of Christ. Usually, the cycles concluded with Christ's Passion,





Detail from *Players at a Village Fête* by Peter Balten. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

Resurrection, and Second Coming. The action was often violent, particularly in the scenes of Christ's torture and Passion, where bloody realism and illusionistic techniques served to entertain the crowds. In scenes like the beheading of John the Baptist or the martyrdom of a saint, the actors went to great lengths to create special effects to enhance the action. Trick limbs, fake heads, and animal guts were often part of these illusions. Although not every play's actions and verses fit with the fine discrimination of the church's theology, the flavor of the cycles was undeniably orthodox. To emphasize the interconnections between the individual scenes and the great culmination in Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, the writers often inserted commentators into the drama who spoke between the scenes. Most mystery cycles similarly opened with a prologue and a conclusion. Prefiguration and recurrent motifs also became devices to tie the entire structure of the cycle together. While blood and gore were a part of the cycles, comic episodes inserted between the greater dramas provided a measure of relief from the generally serious tone of the action.

**STAGING.** The staging practices used in the mystery cycles evidenced a great variety throughout Europe. Gen-

erally, though, the cycles were not acted upon a single stage, but a scene or a number of scenes were performed in front of a set referred to as a mansion. These mansions were sometimes elaborately constructed, or at other times minimalist and severe. Three different ways of using these mansions seem to have been popular, although local variations were common. In the English cycles pageant wagons carried the mansions around the city to sites where the actors performed their part of the drama several times during the day. The mystery cycle performed annually at York seems to have been the most complicated of these moving dramas, requiring about 50 pageant wagons annually to stage the drama and teams of six to eight men to pull these throughout the town. In other places horses pulled the wagons. While the size of many of these wagons appears to have been generally small, some accounts survive of pageant wagons with elaborate scenery and which carried more than twenty actors. Staging in this way must have been a logistical and scheduling challenge. At York, for instance, there were anywhere from a dozen to sixteen different staging areas scattered throughout the city in various years. To keep local citizens and visitors informed of where the

dramas were to occur, the town placed banners in the squares and streets at the various sites. The second style of staging that flourished at the time placed the different mansions in the round in a city square or open area. This style of presentation seems to have been popular in German-speaking Europe, and in parts of England, too, where round amphitheaters were sometimes built to stage the dramas. Finally, the most popular method seems to have been to build a central platform, with the scenic mansions arranged beside each other in succession on the platform. This method of staging the plays was most popular in France, but also appeared in Spain, Italy, Germany, and in some English towns. In this platform style of staging, towns often built bleachers so that the audience could be elevated to an appropriate height to view the action. Boxes placed atop these bleachers could accommodate local dignitaries and important visitors. The size of these great platform stages differed depending upon the number and complexity of a play's individual mansions, but most platform stages were between 100 to 150 feet long and about thirty feet in depth. Staging in this way had several advantages because it allowed for acting to occur in several different mansions at once. Souls in limbo could be depicted writhing in torment, for instance, while in Heaven another actor pleaded for God's mercy. Thus the presence of multiple stage sets placed several scenes before the audience simultaneously and produced a highly visual art that was not dissimilar to the effects of the modern cinema.

**END OF THE MYSTERY CYCLES.** In Northern Europe the Reformation of the sixteenth century discouraged the mounting of the great mystery cycles. The teachings of many of the plays conflicted with the new religious ideas of Protestantism. Many, but not all, the cycles had traditionally been performed in connection with a town's celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi, which had first been approved by the pope at the beginning of the thirteenth century in connection with a series of visions that a Flemish nun had experienced of the Eucharist. Corpus Christi, meaning literally the "body of Christ," celebrated the Eucharist as the key force of Christian salvation, and the day's processions carried a consecrated wafer throughout the town as a kind of blessing to urban space. In many parts of Europe the processions of Corpus Christi grew to enormous heights of popularity at the end of the Middle Ages, and festivities—including the performing of mystery plays—surrounded these events. Protestantism generally found such outpourings of devotion directed toward the Eucharist idolatrous. For the reformers, salvation was a free gift of God's grace, produced not by participating in the

Eucharist, but through faith. In France during the Wars of Religion that raged in the country between 1562 and 1598, Calvinist sympathies ran high, eventually attracting about a third of the country to the movement. Here Corpus Christi often became an occasion for bloody riots as Protestants and Catholics staged riots in protest. Many mystery cycles consequently disappeared, the guilds now unwilling to underwrite the productions any longer. In England and those parts of Europe where Protestantism became the officially sanctioned religion, reformers curtailed mystery cycles. Elsewhere in Catholic Europe the mysteries sometimes survived, but they now came to be known as Passion Plays. These new forms, descendants of the late-medieval mystery cycles, were particularly popular in the rural areas of Central Europe, the most famous being the Passion Play at Oberammergau in the Bavarian Alps. Every ten years since 1634, the play has commemorated the town's deliverance from an outbreak of the plague.

**MORALITY PLAYS.** The mystery cycles aimed to teach their viewers and participants a history of human salvation by drawing on the traditional accounts of the scriptures and events in the history of the church. Their overall structure followed the lines of Judeo-Christian history, which had begun in Eden, and was one day in the future to end with the Second Coming of Christ. Another kind of drama, which was widely popular throughout the fifteenth century, was the morality play. Morality plays were highly allegorical productions in which virtues and vices were the central characters. Unlike the mysteries or other liturgical forms of drama, they did not have to be performed at a certain time of year. They seem, in fact, to have been popular at all times and were performed by troupes of amateur actors, groups that were increasingly popular at the end of the Middle Ages. The morality plays portrayed a battle between the forces of good and evil, that is, between God and the devil, and they showed their central characters facing great moral dilemmas, often illustrating the disasters that attended those who followed the paths of the Vices and the Seven Deadly Sins. By contrast to the mystery cycles, which retained a relatively static form year after year, the genre of morality plays showed great change and development over time. Playwrights experimented with both shorter and longer forms of drama, and these new dramas were of several different types. Religious morality plays were often almost as long as the mystery cycles themselves. At York, a town with a famous mystery cycle, a new Paternoster play written in the later Middle Ages alternated its performance with the city's long-standing mystery cycle. The York Paternoster play, like the traditional

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***EVERYMAN**

**INTRODUCTION:** The play *Everyman* was one of the many popular morality plays staged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Originally an interlude in the longer play, *The Castle of Perseverance*, it was being performed independently by the late fifteenth century. The drama begins with God lamenting the state of fallen humankind and announcing his plans to chasten the character Everyman with the figure of Death.

I perceive here in my majesty,  
 How that all creatures be to me unkind,  
 Living without dread in worldly prosperity,  
 Of ghostly sight the people be so blind,  
 Drowned in sin, they know me not for their God.  
 In worldly riches is all their mind,  
 They fear not my righteousness, the sharp rod;  
 My love that I showed when I for them died  
 They forget clean, and shedding of my blood red;  
 I hanged between two, it cannot be denied;  
 To get them life I suffered to be dead;  
 I healed their feet, with thorns hurt was my head.  
 I could do no more than I did, truly;  
 And now I see the people do clean forsake me.  
 They use the seven deadly sins damnable;  
 As pride, covetousness, wrath and lechery,

Now in the world be made commendable:  
 And thus they leave of angels the heavenly company.  
 Every man liveth so after his own pleasure,  
 And yet of their life they be nothing sure.  
 I see the more that I them forbear  
 The worse they be from year to year;  
 All that liveth appeareth fast.  
 Therefore I will, in all the haste,  
 Have a reckoning of every man's person;  
 For, and I leave the people thus alone  
 In their life and wicked tempests,  
 Verily they will become much worse than beasts;  
 For now one would by envy another up eat;  
 Charity they all do clean forget.  
 I hoped well that every man  
 In my glory should make his mansion,  
 And thereto I had them all elect;  
 But now I see, like traitors deject,  
 They thank me not for the pleasure that I to them meant,  
 Not yet for their being that I them have lent.  
 I proffered the people great multitude of mercy,  
 And few there be that asketh it heartily;  
 They be so cumbered with worldly riches,  
 That needs on them I must do justice,  
 On every man living, without fear.  
 Where art thou, Death, thou mighty messenger?

**SOURCE:** Anonymous, *Everyman* (London: Rycharde Pynson, 1526): 4–6. Spelling modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

mystery cycles, had performances atop moving wagons dispatched to different points in the city. In the morality play at York, the requests that Christ makes in the Lord's Prayer waged battle against the Seven Deadly Sins. In another typical example of the fifteenth-century morality play, *The Castle of Perseverance*, Lust and Folly tempt the figure of Youth. The action shows Youth transported to a castle that is held by the Virtues against the besieging Vices. *The Castle* was a long play of more than 3,500 lines, and a central part of the action—the approach of Death—actually became the independent play, *Everyman*, the most famous of the surviving late-medieval morality plays. In it, Everyman is struck at once by the fickleness and impermanence of all human relations. He places his faith in the figures Fellowship, Kindred, and Goods—characters that represent friendship, family, and material possessions—only to find that each of these desert him as the play progresses. Along the way to the play's conclusions, Everyman tries to embrace the figure of Good Deeds, but even this proves insufficient to survive in the world, although it does encourage him

to call upon the figure of Knowledge, who leads him to the sacrament of penance. As he approaches his final comforting realization, he is also accompanied by the figures of Strength, the Wits, and Beauty, though even they leave him in the end as he comes to prepare for death and his welcoming into Heaven. Thus in this way *Everyman* stylized the Christian's internal battle against doubt, temptation, and worldliness as an external, highly allegorized pilgrimage. In later centuries the moralistic novels of the seventeenth century imitated its forms, particularly in John Bunyan's great *Pilgrim's Progress*.

**COMIC AND POLITICAL MORALITIES.** The allegorical structure of the morality play was also adaptable to other circumstances, and gave birth to comic and political forms. In the comic morality play *Mankind* from about 1470, the world is depicted as chaotic and disordered—so much so, in fact, that the play serves as a satirical commentary upon the more standard conventions of traditional morality plays. The conflict between the play's central characters Mercy, the Vices, and the Devil remained in the background of *Mankind*, and instead

the actors performed a series of songs, dialogues, and dances intended merely to entertain those in attendance. In these, the figures of the Vices stole the show with their witty repartee and lively use of song and dance. Around the end of the fifteenth century a final form of the morality play became popular: the political morality play. Performed before kings and princes, the plays intended to teach them the virtues necessary for good rule. Just as in the religious morality plays, these political versions showed the figure of the king beset by threats to public order and buffeted between the wise advice of ministers and dangerous sycophants. Early in the reign of Henry VIII about 1516, the poet John Skelton wrote and produced his *Magnificence* before the king. Skelton had been Henry's tutor as a young man, and he intended his drama to encourage his now mature student to abandon his overly extravagant ways, including his involvement in a series of continental wars that threatened the financial well-being of the state. The central character Magnificence represented the king, and in the action the figure of Fancy brings him to ruin by making him abandon Measure. Adversity and Poverty strip him of his worldly goods before Mischief and Despair lead him to the verge of Suicide, but Goodhope arrives and wrests Magnificence's sword from him. At the play's conclusion Redress arrives to lead the king back to Perseverance. Political moralities like *Magnificence* continued to be popular throughout the sixteenth century, particularly in England and Scotland. In 1562, for instance, the lawyers of the Inner Temple in London staged a political morality that aimed to encourage Queen Elizabeth to settle the matter of the succession. Their play, *Gorboduc*, was originally performed in the lawyers' own hall, but later the players staged a performance before the queen in her London palace at Whitehall. The action of *Gorboduc* showed the tragic consequences of an ancient British king's decision to divide his kingdom between his two sons, and it relied on the traditional conventions of the morality play.

**ROYAL ENTRIES.** The occasions of royal entries into cities also included street theater, living tableaux, and musical performances. Royal entries were a form of royal spectacle that traced their origins to the Middle Ages. At first they had been quite simple and had involved the processions of a town's major officials, prominent burghers, and its guilds, all of which met the king and his entourage and accompanied them into the city. By 1400, a town's guilds mounted pageants similar to those that occurred alongside religious processions to celebrate the entry. The scope of these pageants grew steadily throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. By

1500, for example, a king and his courtiers might pause as many as twenty times along a processional route lined with elaborate pageant wagons, triumphal arches, and other kinds of gateways. As the architectural and artistic Renaissance of the sixteenth century spread to the kingdoms of Northern Europe and Spain, these festivals included a greater wealth of decorative and thematic detail drawn from Antiquity. In the fifteenth century, though, their elements were usually traditionally medieval and Christian in flavor. The role of the royal entry was largely ceremonial, but towns still used these occasions to remind their monarchs of their hopes and demands. In 1440, the city of Bruges in the Duchy of Burgundy (now a town in modern Belgium) relied on the entry of their duke to gain pardon for a recent revolt staged in their town. The town fathers processed to meet the ruler with bared heads and feet to show their humility before his authority; as the duke processed with them to enter the city, the local officials had the prince stop before a series of tableaux that reenacted examples of ancient kings who had shown mercy to their rebellious subjects. On other occasions, the royal entry was an occasion for a town to remind the ruler of the traditional laws and local customs that limited the monarch's authority in their city. Great drama rarely arose from these circumstances, but the impact of the royal entry was felt in other areas of the theatrical arts. During the fifteenth century the scenery used for the royal entries grew increasingly elaborate. Castles, pavilions, arcades, arches, and complex façades were among the scenic devices used to suggest times and places, and these rode atop the pageant wagons traditionally used in processions. Of all the major scenery forms, the castle was the most important in the fifteenth century since it suggested the traditional powers of the monarch to subdue his enemies and defend his realm. To enhance the staging of the tableaux before these sets, towns sometimes adopted the use of revolving stages, elevators, and other machinery that enhanced the action. In the sixteenth century, many of the innovations in set design and stage machinery that had developed out of the royal entries made their way into the new commercial theaters. Royal entry sets were particularly important, too, in inspiring the popularity of the proscenium arch in the sixteenth century.

**TOURNAMENT DRAMAS.** By the later Middle Ages the conventions that governed tournaments had largely become conventionalized and dramatic in nature. While in the past, these occasions had provided knights an opportunity to demonstrate their prowess through jousts and other military feats, the weapons used in the late-medieval tournaments had been blunted, and a series of

rules limited the danger inherent in these displays. At the same time the dramatic and symbolic nature of the tournament grew. Pageantry came increasingly to characterize the late-medieval tournament, and while the combat at these events still titillated the audience, it now tended to pale in comparison to the processions, parades, dances, and poetry that occurred alongside them. The late-medieval tournament usually commenced with a dramatic entry. Spectacle governed these entries, as in a London tournament in 1490 where a total of sixty ladies each led a knight into the arena tethered by a chain. The use of pageant wagons, too, gained favor with the crowd, and the knights who participated relied on fantastic costumes to attract attention from the audience. In the more elaborate late-medieval tournaments a storyline governed the action, and the traditional feats of prowess became embedded into this narrative. In many places the design of the tournament field was similar to a large round amphitheater, and tournaments took place in actual Roman amphitheaters where they survived. In England, the tournaments' popularity among the Tudor monarchs of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries necessitated that the tournament fields be lined with a series of pavilions with elaborate boxes for members of the court, the monarch, and his family. This pattern of building galleries inspired the designers of later Elizabethan theaters, who built several galleries above the stage and floor level pit to accommodate higher paying and ranking patrons. Although the popularity of jousts and tournaments persisted throughout the Renaissance, its dangers came to be ever more circumscribed. In 1559 King Henry II of France died as the result of a tournament accident, and a series of new regulations in France and elsewhere tried to limit the inherent dangers in these events even further.

**BANQUETING AND MASQUES.** Tournaments were public events, staged in the open air before crowds of nobles and peasants alike. As such, they had a political role in demonstrating the strength and power of the aristocratic classes. In the later Middle Ages drama also found its way into the private life of the court. Medieval banquets at court or in a substantial noble household were long affairs that included many courses. Between these courses it became customary to introduce dramatic interludes, known in Italian as *intermezzi*. European princes sometimes chose a theme for the entire banquet, and these various *intermezzi* thus became linked together in a kind of narrative. One of the most famous occasions that relied upon a narrative occurred at the Feast of the Pheasant in 1453 at the Duke of Burgundy's court. The Duke of Burgundy's nephew, the Duke of Cleves,

threw this banquet as the conclusion to a several-week period of tournaments and entertainments staged for the noble members of the Order of the Golden Fleece. Distressed by the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, he used the occasion to try to enlist support from the Fleece for a new crusade to retake the Holy Land. He had the hall decorated with spectacular caves and forests, and the food lowered to the table with mechanical devices that looked like triumphal carriages. Small scenes and tableaux entertained those at the feast as a way to encourage the men of the order to pledge their support to the crusade. While many apparently did, their enthusiasm seems to have faded relatively quickly after the event since the military campaign was never undertaken. Another entertainment at court, the masque, was just beginning to appear in the later Middle Ages. Masques grew out of the popular medieval custom of mumming, a custom particularly widespread in England. In these performances masked villagers, known as mummers, visited the manor houses of local lords, entertaining the household with short pantomimes, dances, and games. Originally, mumming served as a fund-raiser for local relief efforts in the village, but by the late fourteenth century a variant of the custom, the masque, was quickly developing in the royal court. In 1377, a group of about 130 masked Londoners visited a dance held by King Richard II. Dressed in elaborate costumes that suggested powerful figures in the church and state, these masked entertainers stayed to dance alongside the royal courtiers. Like most court entertainments, these early masques grew more elaborate at the end of the Middle Ages, and the official entry of the king's herald often preceded them, in order to set out an elaborate pretext for the evening's entertainment. Noblemen donned masks to present short dramas that they themselves had prepared, and professional actors, singers, and dancers lent these affairs greater finesse, as did special stage sets constructed about the hall. This combination of amateur and professional court entertainments remained popular throughout the Renaissance, inspiring the elaborate masked balls that became customary in royal courts and noble households in the seventeenth century.

**TRANSFORMATIONS.** The later Middle Ages was a time of great innovation in the theater. Several new forms—the mystery cycles and morality plays—grew out of the traditional liturgical dramas of the earlier Middle Ages and came to maturity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The mystery cycles were noteworthy for their dramatic realism, impressive scenery, and narrative complexity, while many of the morality plays of the period were, by contrast, masterpieces of religious allegory.

The other venues in which dramatic forms developed in the era—royal entry tableaux, tournaments, and the early masque—tended toward spectacle. The inclusion of games, songs, and dance in these forms points to the eclectic nature of entertainments favored in Europe's courts. Here the appearance of narrative structures to explain the action as well as the development of new kinds of scenery and theaters inspired later generations.

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SEE ALSO *Dance: Theatrical Dance*

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### THE RENAISSANCE THEATER IN ITALY

**HUMANISM.** In Italy humanism was the dominant intellectual movement of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and its methods affected most areas of cultural life. The early humanists Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) had been fascinated by the genres and literary style of Latin Antiquity. They envisioned a revival of culture based upon ancient literary models. As the humanist movement developed, it acquired a new sophistication about the role and uses of language. This sophistication gave birth in the fifteenth century to philology, a new discipline that studied the historical and contextual uses of languages in ancient documents. Philology developed rigorously scientific methods that by the second half of the fifteenth century allowed scholars to establish the authenticity of ancient texts. At about the same time, humanism also supported a revival of the study of ancient rhetoric as well as the Greek language. As this snapshot suggests, humanism was from its first a literary, rather than a philosophical, movement. There was no humanist manifesto or creed, but a general conviction that the development of men and women who were critical readers and thinkers as well as elegant writers might ennoble society. This same conviction prompted the humanists to study ancient forms of drama. Their efforts produced a classical revival of the masterpieces of Antiquity, even as they eventually inspired Renaissance playwrights to imitate the ancient genres. In tragedy, however, Italian

dramatists long remained slaves to ancient models. Although many Renaissance Italians wrote Greek and Roman styled tragedies, no masterpiece in this genre appeared until the eighteenth century. Italian scholarship of the ancient classics gave rise to works that today are only of historical interest. At the same time Italian humanist scholarship traveled to the rest of Europe, and in Renaissance England, France, and Spain, great tragic dramas did appear. In comedy, by contrast, Renaissance Italians evidenced greater success, producing a long string of learned or erudite comedies that also inspired playwrights throughout Europe.

**REVIVAL OF ANTIQUITY.** The rediscovery of the comedies and tragedies of the ancient world gave birth to new editions of the works of Sophocles, Euripides, and the Roman playwrights Seneca, Terence, and Plautus. Seneca, the ancient author of Rome's greatest tragedies, was the first ancient playwright to attract the humanists' attentions. Already in the fourteenth century scholars had turned to study his tragedies. The comic playwright Plautus was the next great classical figure to undergo a revival. In 1429, the humanist Nicholas of Cusa rediscovered twelve plays by Plautus, and in the years that followed, Italy's growing ranks of literary scholars pored over these documents. By the second half of the fifteenth century, the printing press permitted scholars to print editions of the classical plays. A collected edition of the surviving works of Terence appeared in 1470, followed two years later by the works of Plautus. These printed editions allowed hundreds of identical texts to circulate among scholars and authors simultaneously, thus inspiring readers to try their own hand at imitating the ancient forms. The new editions also prompted Italy's wealthy patrons and nobility to commission translations of the works into Italian and to undertake productions of the plays. By contrast, the study of Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes proceeded more slowly since, in the fifteenth century, Greek dramas could only be read by the most erudite of scholars. By 1525, this situation had begun to change when three of the most famous Greek tragedies, Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and his *Cyclops* as well as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, had translations in Italian. Translations of major Greek dramas appeared throughout the sixteenth century, producing calls for the revival of Greek theater, as well as a more general interest in classical dramatic conventions.

**TRAGEDY.** Humanist interest in ancient tragedy developed early, as Italian scholars examined the ancient tragedies of Seneca. Around 1300, the early humanists Lovati Lovato and Nicholas di Trevet produced

commentaries on Seneca's tragedies. The critical interest in Seneca was not accidental. Seneca was a Stoic, a member of the ancient philosophical sect that taught that the human passions were the source of evil. Stoicism embraced a world-renouncing creed that was not dissimilar to the Christian philosophy of many medieval figures, nor was it unattractive to the early humanists. Petrarch saw in Stoicism's teachings an effective way to manage one's relations with the world. On balance, the renewed popularity of Senecan tragedy, however, had a dampening effect on the revival of the form as a theatrical drama. Seneca treated tragedy largely as a literary genre, and today most scholars believe that he was, even in Antiquity, a writer of "closet dramas," that is of plays intended to be read rather than performed. In their attempts to understand this writer's works, the early Renaissance humanists also relied on medieval theorists such as the sixth-century philosopher Isidore of Seville or the thirteenth-century poet Dante Alighieri—both of whom had treated ancient tragedy largely as a kind of poetry that dealt with the vile deeds and justified downfall of immoral rulers. Isidore and Dante's attitudes toward the form thus downplayed the richly variegated philosophical, psychological, and visual elements that lay within ancient tragic forms. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Italy's humanists largely agreed with these traditional assessments. The writers of the earliest Renaissance tragedies imitated the literary style of Seneca even as they discounted the genre's theatrical potential. In 1315, Albertino Mussato was among the first to compose a tragedy in the ancient style. In his *Ecerinis* Mussato drew his plot from recent historical events, recounting the wicked deeds and downfall of Ezzelino da Romano, a thirteenth-century Italian despot. Like all Italian writers of tragedies until the mid-sixteenth century, Mussato downplayed the theatrical elements of his story, and instead developed the work's great literary potential. He wrote his drama not for the stage but for a small group of readers who were to recite the play. This notion—that tragedy was best consumed by a small circle of cultivated readers rather than on stage—survived for many generations. It persisted even in the sixteenth century when printed editions of tragedies replaced manuscript versions of these plays. Even the rising popularity of Greek tragedy in the sixteenth century did little to dampen the enthusiasm for "closet dramas" read in private or in small reading circles. In 1515, for example, the humanist Gian Giorgio Trissino became the first Italian to write a play using the conventions of ancient Greek tragedy. His *Sofonisha* employed the ancient Greek elements of chorus, song, and spectacle, and he relied on the solemn unities characteristic of these ancient works.

But like most Italian Renaissance tragedies, *Sofonisha* was read in small groups long before it was performed on the stage. The play went through six printings—a sign of its popularity—but it was not staged until 1562. Another popular tragic drama of the time, Giovanni Rucellai's *Rosmunda* similarly claimed a large readership, but was not performed until the eighteenth century.

**STAGED TRAGEDIES.** Despite the relatively arid way in which tragedy was consumed during much of the Renaissance, the form retained great popularity as literary entertainment. By the sixteenth century, though, a growing understanding of the conventions of the ancient theater inspired a new realization of the dramatic potential that lay within the genre. Here the rediscovery of an uncorrupted version of Aristotle's *Poetics* was a particularly decisive development. In this ancient treatise on poetry and the dramatic forms, Aristotle showed how tragedy possessed great power to appeal to the human passions. As knowledge of the *Poetics* spread it produced changes in the ways in which playwrights wrote tragedies. Authors addressed their works more and more to the audience for these dramas, and they stressed the visual elements of their dramas. In his *Poetics* written in 1529, the playwright Trissino noted that the first, and consequently one of the most important, elements of a tragedy is its scenery because this might excite pleasure in the audience. A new curiosity, evident in Trissino's statements as well as continuing attempts to track down ancient dramas, inspired the first performance of a Renaissance tragedy in 1541, Giambattista Cinzio Giraldi's *Orbecche*. The great success of this production inspired noble patrons throughout Italy to commission authors to write new tragedies intended from the first to be staged rather than merely read. These included Pietro Aretino's *Orazia* (1546), Guglielmo Dolce's *Marianna* (1565), and Orsatto Giustiniani's *Edipo* (1585). While tragedy never became as popular as other Renaissance dramatic forms—most notably comedy—it still managed to acquire a significant following. Its themes, which were grave and often foreboding, meant that tragedy was a theatrical form that appealed to the relatively educated few. And since tragedies usually treated the lives of noble figures, their staging requirements were costly and elaborate. In the absence of a professional theater dedicated to tragic productions, these costs could only be borne by the occasional noble patron who commissioned such works. While these factors limited tragedy's appeal, significant productions were nevertheless undertaken toward the end of the sixteenth century. At the same time, the knowledge Italian scholars had amassed about the performance standards and structures of ancient tragedies

was transmitted throughout Europe; and in late Renaissance Spain, England, and France, tragic theater found a more congenial home.

**ERUDITE COMEDY.** The study of ancient comedy and its conventions first developed in the fifteenth century, somewhat later than the initial revival of tragedy. From the first, though, renewed interest in ancient comedy generated theatrical productions, and in turn, the staging of the ancient dramas inspired the new Italian genre of *Erudite Comedy*. These learned comedies influenced dramas written elsewhere in sixteenth-century Europe. The revival of knowledge about ancient comedy began in 1429 when the humanist Nicholas of Cusa rediscovered a dozen previously unknown works by the ancient Roman playwright Plautus. The circulation of these comedies soon produced Italian imitations like the *Chrysis* of the humanist scholar Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, written in 1444. At the same time a fashion developed for the works of Plautus. At Ferrara, for instance, the dukes staged both Latin and Italian translations of the ancient playwright's works from the 1570s onward. These performances inspired the great poet Lodovico Ariosto (1474–1533) to compose several widely admired Italian comedies in the first decade of the sixteenth century. In Florence, the development of a genre of theatrical comedies took a somewhat different path. There the great humanist Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494) revived the works of the ancient comic playwright Terence by editing the author's accomplished drama *Andria*. Florentine authors of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries also studied ancient Greek comedies, and discussed these in a sort of salon patronized by the Rucellai family at the time. After his exile from the Florentine political world, Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) began writing political theory and histories as well as comedies to support himself. Of all three kinds of writing the statesman undertook, comedy proved to be the most lucrative. In his dramas he put to work the theoretical and practical literary knowledge he had acquired from living in Florence during the heyday of the comic revival. He produced several plays, of which *The Mandrake Root* (1517) was his most popular and influential. In ways reminiscent of some of the tales of the *Decameron*, it retold the story of an old braggart who is cuckolded by a clever young man.

**CHARACTERISTICS.** The new plays modeled on the examples of Terence and Plautus were called *erudita*, meaning erudite or learned, because their structures imitated those of ancient Rome. Although the contours of these dramas relied upon some ancient conventions, erudite comedy grew to become far more than a merely im-

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**SETTING THE STAGE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Niccolò Machiavelli, author of the famous book, *The Prince*, was also a writer of several popular Renaissance comedies. *The Mandrake Root* was his most successful play. Actors frequently worked on small stages with cramped scenery that inadequately suggested the spaces in which their dramas took place. The Prologue to the *Mandrake*, shows how playwrights sometimes aided in the process of setting the scene.

God bless you, gracious audience,  
Since we know that your graciousness  
Depends upon our pleasing you.  
May your silence let our troupe commence  
To Play for you, with some finesse,  
A recent case that's something new.  
The stage set we've convoked you to,  
As you shall presently be shown  
Is that dear Florence which you call your own.  
Tomorrow Rome or some other setting  
Will tickle you till your sides are splitting.

This entrance, on my right-hand side,  
Is the door to the house of a doctor of law  
Who's learned from Boethius what law he could  
And that street there, you've no doubt espied,  
Is called Lovers' Lane, where, as you know  
He who stumbles falls for good.  
You shortly will have understood,  
When you have seen the cloak he flaunts,  
What sort of monk or abbot haunts  
That church there in the other part,  
If you don't leave too near the start.

**SOURCE:** Niccolò Machiavelli, "Prologue to *The Mandrake*," in *The Comedies of Machiavelli*. Ed. and trans. David Sices and James B. Atkinson (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1985): 157.

itative form. In several cases playwrights wrote these comedies in verse. But most often they relied on a prose written in the vigorous Tuscan dialect in use throughout northern and central Italy at the time. The dramas often used local dialects or words that were foreign in origin to underscore a character's nature as a simpleton or a foreigner. Most of the comedies followed the five-act format of ancient Roman models. They took place in an Italian street scene populated with wealthy patricians, their servants, and their clients. Courtesans, pimps, innkeepers, peddlers, and soldiers were also frequent



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CIMADOR: CLOWN OF COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The great Italian poet and dramatist Pietro Aretino included the following description of Cimador, a Commedia dell'Arte clown, in a letter to a friend.

Nanna:

Ha! ha! ha! I'm still laughing about one they called the son of Giampolo, a Venetian I think, who imitated an assortment of voices while concealed behind a door. He did a porter well enough for anyone from Bergamo to have given him the palm. When the porter enquired of an old woman about a lady, in imitating the old woman he would say, "And what do you want from my lady?" And in reply said to her, "I should like to speak with her," and in just the way such a rascal would do he added, "Madonna, Oh! Madonna, I'm dying, and I can feel my lung bubbling like washed tripe." He could complain like a porter in the most perfect way in the world, and when he began to fondle her he joked away with the sort of re-

marks sure to spoil her Lent and make her break her fast. Then in the midst of this game who should appear but her senile old husband, who at the sight of the porter made an uproar that sounded like a peasant who finds his cherry tree being robbed—and the porter replied "Oh sir! Sir! Ah ha!" and laughed and gestured like an idiot. "Oh, go your way!" said the old man, "You're a drunken ass!" Then having got the servant woman to remove his boots, he would tell his wife a garbled tale about *Sofi* and the Turk, and made everyone collapse with laughter as, farting all the while, he would swear never again to eat food that gave him the wind. When he had been put to bed, and was snoring away in his sleep, this same buffoon became the porter again, and after much laughing and crying with the lady began to shake her fur [...] you'd have howled listening to the noise they made too-ing and fro-ing together, the vulgar remarks of the porter nicely counterpointing the lady's cries of "Do it to me!"

**SOURCE:** Pietro Aretino, *I Ragionamenti*, in *The Commedia dell'Arte: A Documentary History*. Eds. Kenneth Richards and Laura Richards (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990): 24–25.

characters in the plays, showing the taste for real-life situations rather than the fantasy settings that had often been used in earlier medieval forms of comedy. One important development in the history of erudite comedy was the foundation of the *Intronati* at Siena around 1531. A group of university-educated intellectuals and wits, the *Intronati* extended the boundaries of comedy by bringing romance plots into the genre. Eventually, their innovations attracted a broad readership throughout Europe, and inspired many similar works, including Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Beyond the many plots they developed from medieval romances, the *Intronati* also made use of stories from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, favoring those tales in which highly intelligent and heroic women get the better of weaker male characters. News of their innovations spread quickly throughout Italy, and new groups in Florence, Padua, Rome, and other cities soon imitated them.

**COUNTER REFORMATION.** The great comic tradition that was built up in Italy between the late fifteenth and mid-sixteenth century also was affected by the religious controversies of the time. As the Counter-Reformation aimed for reform of both the church and society, the forms of erudite comedy grew increasingly more serious and high-minded in tone. In the second half of the sixteenth century, a new form known as *commedia grave* treated more serious themes. While these

new plays mixed pathos and humor, the *commedia grave* more generally inspired yet a third genre known as tragicomedy toward the end of the sixteenth century. In contrast to ancient and erudite comedies, the messages of tragicomedies were more essentially Christian in nature. In plays like *Il Pastor Fido* (The Faithful Shepherd), the writer Battista Guarini, an early master of tragicomedy, showed the central character facing the sufferings of the world, yet still achieving ultimate redemption through the powers of Divine Providence. This new strain of drama played more to the tastes of the Counter Reformation for high-minded themes that might uplift viewers and teach moral values.

**COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE.** The audience for the comic art form known as *Commedia dell'Arte* (a name invented after the Renaissance to describe this phenomenon) was broader and more popular than that of erudite comedy. There were at the same time many connections between the two forms. Members of the professional *Commedia dell'Arte* troupes frequently attended erudite comedies in search of inspiration. But in contrast to erudite comedy, the *Commedia dell'Arte* was largely an improvised art form. The transmissions between erudite comedies and the *Commedia*, too, usually worked only in a single direction, since the authors of the more learned comedies generally avoided the slapstick humor and crowd-pleasing effects that were the



Eighteenth-century engraving of Commedia dell'Arte performers wearing traditional costumes. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

stock-in-trade of the *Commedia*. There were, however, a few notable cases in which learned writers borrowed characters and gestures from the more popular form. The *Commedia dell'Arte* began to appear in the mid-sixteenth century. At Padua, a contract survives from an eight-man troupe that joined together for the purpose of traveling and acting out comedies. By the 1560s these roving comic troupes were common throughout Italy, and many hastily erected temporary stages in town squares to entertain urban people. At the conclusion of these shows, the performers collected donations from the crowd. Other troupes developed a noble and distinguished clientele, and instead of giving spontaneous street performances, they provided entertainment at the wedding feasts and banquets of princes and wealthy townspeople. There were no scripts for most *Commedia dell'Arte* performances, and the action was spontaneous and quick. Acting in this way required troupe members to develop a great spirit of teamwork, to have a sense of comic timing, and to acquire an enormous reservoir of jokes and stories. The actors seem to have read widely and to have attended the theater regularly in search of inspiration. Most scenarios usually included a central

couple that were attractive lovers and well accomplished in the rhetorical forms of the Tuscan dialect. In addition, several characters that played maids to these figures were common features of most troupes. These characters provided the essential comic twist by confounding and commenting upon their master and mistress' love interest. Men usually undertook these roles and they played them unmasked. Beyond the lovers and servants, most troupes had a host of stock characters, many of who were older and who were usually depicted using masks. There was often a doctor from Bologna, a Venetian grandee, as well as groups of clowns and buffoons. Other figures that marched across the *Commedia's* stages included gypsies, drunkards, Turks, executioners, and innkeepers. Since most of the troupes were small, actors doubled-up on roles to achieve this great variety of characters.

**TRAVELS.** As the sixteenth century progressed, the most distinguished Italian troupes entertained in courts and cities throughout Europe. By the 1570s, *Commedia* troupes were also making their own journeys to France, Spain, England, and Poland. The popularity of the form,

both among city people and the nobility, was undeniably great. By the end of the century, for example, Italian *Commedia dell'Arte* troupes performed at some of the most important weddings throughout the continent, including that of Marie de' Medici to Henry IV of France in 1600. The comic form survived into the seventeenth century, when it continued to compete successfully against the many new kinds of theater that were common throughout Europe. The popularity of the art inspired some *Commedia* actors to publish their monologues and dialogues in their retirement, and these editions affected later written comedy. Although the Counter Reformation generally found the off-color, even lewd, overtones of the *Commedia* distasteful, the art form's audience was so large and the troupes so vital to local economies that it was never effectively suppressed.

**THE PASTORAL.** The Renaissance dramatic genre of the pastoral arose from roots in poetry and became a highly original theatrical form that long outlived the Renaissance. In the theater, as in literary pastorals, these plays were set in rustic locales and their characters—shepherds, shepherdesses, and sometimes nymphs—met in cool shade or by clear brooks to sing, dance, and socialize. The happy consequences of faithful love were a frequent theme. The genre, produced by urban people, arose from a nostalgic longing for the simpler pleasures of rural life. The literary roots of pastoral drama stretched back into both Antiquity and the Middle Ages. In the fourteenth century the poets Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio all wrote poems that imitated the rustic eclogues of Vergil. Although they mastered the ancient form, each used the style to convey allegorical truths. Over time, though, the pastoral poetry of the Renaissance became less allegorical in tone. At the end of the fifteenth century, for instance, the accomplished Florentine humanist Angelo Poliziano was just one of several Italian authors to try his hand at writing poetic pastorals. Poliziano enriched the genre by working the conventions and storylines of the medieval romance into the traditionally bucolic pastoral form. During the sixteenth century the increasingly sophisticated knowledge of Greek theater also left its mark on pastoral theater. The Greeks had developed “satyr plays” as a genre of theater distinct from tragedy and comedy. Usually, these dramas had been performed as lighter interludes during the staging of long tragedies. The translation of Euripides' play, *Cyclops*, in 1525—the only completely extant example of a Greek satyr play—proved to be the final impetus to the development of a distinctly Renaissance genre of pastoral theater. *Cyclops*, like most of the ancient satyr plays, had been populated with drunken satyrs, subhuman creatures

who were believed to live in the Greek countryside. The drama recounted their lustful exploits and mocked the traditional conventions of mythological stories. It is from the word “satyr” that the modern word “satire” takes its origins. In 1545, Giambattista Cinzio Giraldi completed his *Egle*, the most successful imitation of Euripides' satyr play to appear during the Renaissance. As pastoral theater came of age in the second half of the sixteenth century, it made use of these ancient Greek and Roman models as well as the conventions of medieval romances. Among the greatest Italian dramatists to write pastoral plays was Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), whose *Aminta* became the most influential drama of this type. It was first performed in 1573 at the court of the dukes of Ferrara by the Gelosi troupe, a popular professional theatrical group who also regularly performed *Commedia dell'Arte* productions for distinguished clients. Afterwards the influence of Tasso's work spread throughout Europe and inspired dramatists in England, France, and Spain, including Ben Jonson, William Shakespeare, Lope de Vega, and Cervantes. Another influential work in the pastoral vein was Giovanni Battista Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (1580) or *The Faithful Shepherd*, a pastoral play that also helped create the new theatrical genre of tragicomedy. Like Tasso's *Aminta*, Guarini's play became popular in courts throughout Europe and inspired John Fletcher's own version of *The Faithful Shepherd* in England. By the early seventeenth century the pastoral play had appeared everywhere in Europe, inspiring a tradition of pastoral visual art and music that survived for several centuries.

**THE OPERA.** A final theatrical form, the opera, was just beginning to emerge in the last years of the Renaissance, and was shaped by the developing taste for pastoral drama as well as the conventions of classical Greek theater. Opera's earliest origins lay in the city of Florence, the cultural center from which many innovations issued in the Renaissance. The first dramas to be set to music were performed in the palaces of the city's wealthy merchants and in the Medici court. Thereafter, as opera spread throughout Europe, it remained a form of court entertainment for many years. *Dafne* has long claimed the title of Europe's first opera; it was performed in the Florentine palace of Jacopo Corsi, a local silk merchant, in 1598. Jacopo Peri (1561–1633) wrote the libretto for *Dafne*, which was set to music by Ottavio Rinuccini (1562–1621). Unfortunately, the score of this work has not survived, although Rinuccini and Peri soon collaborated on a second work, *Euridice*, which was performed before the Medici court in Florence in 1600. The music from this opera does survive, and the score shows that

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE MAKING OF ILLUSION**

**INTRODUCTION:** Sebastiano Serlio was a highly respected architect, who, in the normal course of his duties, designed theatrical productions for his aristocratic patrons. In his treatise on architecture, a section of which was published at Paris in 1545, Serlio treated the ways that a designer could make any and all kinds of illusions.

Now let us speak of some other things which bring great delight to the spectator. For these times when the actors are not on the scene, the architect will have ready some processions of small figures, of an appropriate size, cut of heavy cardboard and painted. These are fastened to a strip of wood and pulled across the scene at some arch, in a swallow-tail runway. In the same way can be shown musicians playing instruments or singing, and some one behind the scene will supply the music softly. At other times a troop of people passing over, some on foot, some on horseback, with the muffled sound of voices and drums and trumpets, will greatly please the spectators.

To make a planet or other heavenly body pass through the air, it is painted well on cardboard and cut

out. Then far back in the scene, at the last houses, a soft iron wire is stretched across the scene with small rings attached to the back of the cardboard figure, which may be drawn slowly across, by a dark thread. But all must be so far back that neither the thread nor the wire can be seen.

Thunder, lightning, and thunderbolts will be needed on occasion. Thunder is made by rolling a large stone ball on the floor above the hall used for the theatre. Lightning is made by some one in a high place behind the scenes holding a box of powdered resin. The top of the box is full of holes and in the center is a lighted candle. When the box is raised, the powder is thrown out and set on fire by the candle. A thunderbolt is made by letting down a rocket or ray ornamented with sparkling gold on a wire stretched at the back of the scene. Before the thunder has stopped rumbling, the tail of the rocket is discharged, setting fire to the thunderbolt and producing an excellent effect.

But if I were to discuss all the things I know about stage setting, I would never be done; therefore I shall say no more.

**SOURCE:** Sebastiano Serlio in *The Renaissance Stage. Documents of Serlio, Sabbattini and Furtenbach*. Ed. Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1958): 35–36.

the libretto dominated the performance, with words sung in simple recitative. There were as yet no arias or grand musical flourishes. Instead Peri and Rinuccini, like the composers of other early operas, were affected by the late sixteenth-century discussions of the Florentine Camerata, a group of scholars that had coalesced as an informal academy in the city to investigate ancient Greek music. Although little evidence existed to suggest the performance practices of the classical period, the group believed that the music of that time had possessed a great power to ennoble its listeners because it was monodic, that is, it consisted of a single melodic line. The Camerata also idealized ancient Greek music because they perceived that its performers had given greater weight to the texts they had sung. The members of this Florentine group often discounted contemporary music, particularly the popularity of the Renaissance madrigal, because of these forms' polyphony, that is, the presence of many different melodies superimposed atop each other. Polyphony, they charged, confused listeners and lacked any power to spur its audience to virtuous living. For these reasons, the recitative style—the simple recitation of text set to music—dominated the early operas performed in and around Florence. The recitative

opera, though, was short-lived. Already in 1607, Claudio Monteverdi introduced the more intensive form of arias into his work *Orfeo* in order to underscore the most important parts of the libretto. The reliance on arias and the somewhat later return of polyphony to the opera moved the art form away from the severity its pioneers had intended, a severity they believed might recreate the grandeur of the original Greek drama.

**THEATERS.** Except for the survival of ancient Roman amphitheaters, few permanent theaters existed anywhere in medieval Europe. During the sixteenth century the building of permanent theaters increased, first in Italy and later in Spain and England. Still, there were far more temporary theaters in the period than there were permanent ones—usually set up in the halls and courtyards of public buildings or in the palaces and villas of the nobility. In one part of his *Architettura*, which was published in 1545, Sebastiano Serlio treated the subject of theater design and included illustrations for the construction of a temporary theater similar to one he had already built in Italy. At that time Renaissance artists and architects also functioned as designers of sets, stages, and theaters for their noble patrons. Leonardo da Vinci,



Stage of the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, Italy. © DENNIS MARSICO/CORBIS.

Baldassare Peruzzi, Raphael, and Andrea del Sarto were just a few of the many distinguished artists who undertook these tasks for their noble and princely patrons. Serlio's design for a temporary theater attempted to compress as much of the architecture of an ancient Roman theater as he could into the background of his stage. This formal architectural screen had five doorways that opened on to a central acting space. Prompted by the popularity of the comedies of Plautus and Terence, this style of production was popular in the temporary theaters erected in Rome and other cities throughout Italy at the time, particularly those built for noble households. Serlio designed a temporary structure that might be assembled and taken down as needed, yet several permanent sixteenth-century theaters in Italy made use of some of his elements. These included the Venetian architect Vincenzo Scamozzi's design for the Teatro Olimpico at Sabbioneta (which was built around 1588) and a similar structure at Piacenza from 1592. A more complete attempt to recreate the designs of an ancient Roman theater also occurred at Vicenza, where the Olympian Theater was constructed according to plans originally set down by the great architect Andrea Palladio. This structure transformed Serlio's pattern by adding stepped-up amphitheater seating. Palladio also placed a two-story portico of columns on the stage, which he decorated with classical statuary. Beyond the five entrances that punctuated his façade, deep perspective vistas of Italian city scenes were later added to fill the spaces behind Palladio's original screens. These created the illusion of great depth in the theater, despite the fact that the stage was relatively shallow.

**INFLUENCE.** The culture of humanism, with its taste for all things ancient, deeply affected the development of the Italian theater during the Renaissance. Although older styles of religious dramas did not disappear in Italy during the period, the theater of ancient Greece and Rome inspired a new taste for secular themes and subjects. An initial fascination with the works of Seneca, Plautus, and Terence gave rise to new genres of recited tragedy and erudite comedies written in the Italian language. Somewhat later, the revival of Greek drama exerted an influence on the tragedies of the period. Still, the dramatists of Renaissance Italy were not slavish in their devotion to classical genres. While inspired by the enormous achievements of the classical world, they also created new forms like the opera, the pastoral, and the tragicomedy. Although some of the elements of these new genres were classical in inspiration, Renaissance playwrights developed them in ways that were uniquely contemporary in expression. Finally, a vigorous popular theater that was secular in spirit developed in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, an art form that spread rapidly throughout the peninsula in the mid-sixteenth century. This street theater, like many of Italy's theatrical innovations, traveled widely in Europe, thus enriching the continent's national theaters in the final years of the Renaissance and in the generations that followed.

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SEE ALSO *Dance: Theatrical Dance; Literature: Early Renaissance Literature; Music: Sixteenth-Century Achievements in Secular Music*

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## THE RENAISSANCE THEATER IN NORTHERN EUROPE

**TRENDS.** At the dawn of the sixteenth century, humanism gradually gained popularity among educated townspeople and court circles in Northern Europe. At court, the fashion for Antiquity left its mark on spectacles and in the dramatic interludes that were regularly performed at banquets and other entertainments, as they had already done several generations earlier in Italy. At the same time religious mystery plays continued, but the impact of the Protestant Reformation discouraged their staging. In Germany the falloff in production of the mystery cycles that Protestantism caused encouraged development of other dramatic forms, including village farces and polemical plays designed to popularize either Protestant or Catholic sympathies. The traditional *Fastnachtspiele*, or Shrove Tuesday plays staged before the onset of Lent, continued under both Lutheran and Catholic auspices and became a new vehicle for moralistic teaching. A new feature of the sixteenth-century theater in Northern Europe was its increasing professionalism. As in Italy, the mid-sixteenth century in the north of the continent saw the rise of small traveling theatrical troupes who made their way through the country to stage short farces and comic interludes. In the largest cities of the region such as Paris and London, the increasingly professional nature of the theater came to inspire new permanent theaters with repertory companies that aimed to entertain a broad swath of the urban population. In Paris, the commercial theater took on a new importance as the religious mystery cycles were forbidden by an edict of the city's parliament in 1548. In England, the mystery cycles survived somewhat longer, but their popularity waned under the new teachings of the Reformation. The foundation of the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris in 1548

and the slightly later appearance of professional theaters in London satisfied the demands of city people for entertainment. The commercial theaters also quickened the development of a reservoir of national dramatic literature in these countries that was aimed at a truly popular urban audience. In both England and France the Golden Age of national theater lay ahead in the early seventeenth century, but a number of admirable plays appeared even in the years before 1600. In the productions that were mounted for these new commercial theaters, playwrights used the knowledge of Antiquity they had acquired from Renaissance sources. At the same time, commercial pressures caused them to address their plays to as broad an audience as possible. As a consequence, the imitation of Antiquity that dominated much of sixteenth-century Italian drama was not as extensive in the new commercial theaters of London and Paris. Playwrights tailored their productions to fit popular tastes, and the evidence of rising attendance shows that in both countries they proved more than astute in satisfying audience demands.

**ENTRIES.** The medieval custom of staging elaborate royal entries into cities throughout a monarch's realm continued unabated in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Northern Europe. The taste for spectacle, imposing processions, and solemn rituals connected with these ceremonies grew and reflected the tastes of the Renaissance for the ancient world. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the burgeoning knowledge of ancient history in Italy inspired new entries there that were staged in imitation of the imperial triumphs of ancient Rome. In 1326, the despot Castruccio Castracane entered his subject town of Lucca like a Roman emperor driving a chariot and prisoners through the streets. A century later, the trend to style the entrance of Italian rulers into their towns as Roman triumphs had grown even more complex. Italian Renaissance entries now often elaborately melded Christian and ancient imagery together, such as in the entrance of Borso D'Este into the town of Reggio around 1450. A figure dressed like the town's patron saint bore the keys of the city atop a heavenly cloud. Angels and cherubs claimed the keys and presented them to Borso. A pageant wagon crowned by an empty throne approached to bear the duke into the town, while figures representing the classical virtues showed the benefits that accrued from the duke's rule. The procession concluded in front of the town's cathedral, where Borso d'Este reviewed again the classical and Christian characters that had marched in the procession from atop a golden throne. Finally three angels swooped down from a nearby building and presented the duke with a palm

of victory. Spectacles like these grew increasingly commonplace in Italy toward the end of the fifteenth century, their popularity fueled, in part, by the poetry of Petrarch. In his poetic *Triumphs*, the fourteenth-century humanist had celebrated the myths and victorious imagery of ancient Rome in a series of poems that showed the conquests of the figure of Love by the figures of Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and Eternity. The poems were popular, and by 1500 they inspired a number of artistic portrayals that, in turn, shaped the taste for the entry's pageantry.

**NORTHERN EUROPEAN CHANGES.** As the fashion for antique imagery spread to Northern Europe after 1500, royal entries were transformed into events similar to those being undertaken at the time in Italy. While the taste for the new classically styled triumphal entries was theatrical, it produced subtle, yet important shifts, particularly in France, that underscored the new grand role that kings expected to play in the governing of their realms. In the fifteenth century monarchs had paused along the route of the entry to observe symbolic tableaux and to listen to short dramatic interludes staged by local townspeople. These short dramas had often been pointed, with messages that underscored local liberties and the limits of royal authority over the town. For cities that had recently evidenced signs of a rebellious spirit, the tableaux and short dramas had often been used to remind the king to practice justice tempered with clemency. As the taste for classical spectacle grew more elaborate after 1500, these dramatic elements were crowded out of the entry in favor of processions that took on ever more the nature of a juggernaut. The key symbol of the new entries celebrated in sixteenth-century Northern Europe was the triumphal arches or, in many cases, a series of triumphal arches through which marched a panoply of elaborately decorated pageant wagons, Roman gladiators and centurions, bound captives, and classically clad figures of the Virtues. The scope of the celebrations that surrounded the entry itself grew similarly grand, with ancillary spectacles and entertainments surrounding the festivities and lengthening the time needed to undertake a royal entry to days, and in some cases, weeks. In these later Renaissance entries, particularly those that occurred around the mid-sixteenth century in France, traditional religious imagery was downplayed in favor of new classical symbols. Slightly later, chivalric elements played an important role as well in the spectacles. The new style of entry developed most definitely in France, and entries elsewhere did not always take on the same level of fantastic elaboration. In England, the rituals continued to be relatively small and tra-

ditional until the accession of the Stuart kings in the early seventeenth century. But in most places the tendency to eliminate medieval street theater from the festivities developed, and for the entry to become a mute, yet imposing testimony to the central authority of the monarch.

**RELIGIOUS DRAMA.** Religious dramas along the lines of the great mystery and morality plays of the later Middle Ages survived in Renaissance Europe. In France, an edict of the Parliament of Paris forbade the performance of the great mystery cycles in the city in 1548. The action was precipitated both by Protestant attacks upon the theological errors the cycles contained and because of a growing sentiment among Catholics that the plays were an inappropriate vehicle for conveying religious truths. Despite the moves in Paris against the plays, mysteries continued to be performed in some parts of the country. As new forms of drama competed against these cycles, though, the mystery cycles' audience became increasingly circumscribed to the poor and largely uneducated rural population. In Germany, the fate of the mystery cycles, there known as Passion Plays, was largely similar. Although these great productions lasted in Catholic regions into the seventeenth century, they disappeared in the new Protestant territories. By the mid-seventeenth century Passion Plays had increasingly become a kind of Catholic "folk art," confined to largely rural regions throughout the countryside. In England, no state action was taken against the mystery cycles until the years of Elizabeth I's reign (r. 1558–1603). It is difficult to gauge just exactly when most of the plays ceased to be performed in England, given the sketchy nature of the documentation. In the northern English town of York, the great medieval cycle was last performed in 1569, and abandoned the following year after an abortive rebellion by pro-Catholic earls in the region. Chester's play was performed until 1575. By this time, though, the evidence suggests that many of the cycles had already disappeared.

**POLEMICAL DRAMA AND LENT.** At the same time, new kinds of religious drama proliferated in Northern Europe. In Protestant Germany, the traditional vehicle of the interlude, a short dramatic sketch performed at banquets and other entertainments, became ripe for polemical condemnation of the Catholic Church. Short Protestant interludes performed on feast days in the cities attempted to popularize the Reformation and to teach its new doctrines to the people. These Protestant polemical plays were quite long-lived, surviving in some Lutheran regions into the mid-seventeenth century. Protestants imitated the custom in England, where sim-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***REFORMATION DRAMA**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Protestant Reformation in Germany produced hundreds of short dramatic interludes designed to popularize the new teachings among the people. Some of these were performed, while others circulated as dialogues in cheap pamphlets. The greatest of sixteenth-century German dramatists was Hans Sachs (1494–1576). In his *A Pleasing Disputation between a Christian Shoemaker and a Popish Parson* he defended Protestant teachings. Like some other German Reformation dramas, this text was translated into English. In England, as in Germany, texts like these inspired a vogue for polemical dramas that supported the Reformation. The emphasis of the following passage upon Christianity as a system of moral ethics is found in many of Sachs's works.

**Shoemaker:** When you do sincerely and purely teach God's Word, then men are bound to hear you, even as Christ himself. But when you preach your own imagination ... then ought no man to give ear to you. For all that is not planted of God shall the Heavenly Father pluck up by the roots.

**Parson:** Are the Councils then the teaching of men?

**Shoemaker:** If a man should say the truth, the Councils have done great damage in Christendom ...

**Parson:** What hurt or damage have they done, I pray thee heartily?

**Shoemaker:** First through their commandments, which as you yourself know are innumerable and unmeasurable, and these they have confirmed through many excommunications ... Such people, Paul has declared, would in the latter times depart from the faith with their commandments and give heed to error and devilish doctrine ...

**Parson:** What then are the right and true works of the Christian Man?

**Shoemaker:** Christ says: All that thou would have men to do unto you, do even the same unto them and that is the fulfillment of the whole law and prophets. And he doth teach us to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to harbor the harborless, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, and to comfort the prisoner.

**Parson:** Are these the only works of the Christian man?

**Shoemaker:** Yea. A true and faithful Christian man who is born of the water and the Spirit ... serves God alone in spirit and in truth, and he serves his neighbor also, which is the whole sum of a Christian life.

**SOURCE:** Hans Sachs, *A Goodly Dysputacion Between a Christen Shomaker, and a Popysse Parson*. Trans. Anthony Scoloker (London, 1548): 14–15. Text modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

ilar kinds of sketches promoted the Reformation among urban populations. The religious issues of the time also left their mark on the traditional *Fastnachtspiel* or “Shrove Tuesday Plays,” which had long heralded the onset of Lent. Journeymen members of the guilds, who were enjoined to be celibate and forbidden to marry, had originated this form of drama. In Nuremberg, where the genre became particularly popular, the plays became a way for guildsmen to let off steam in the revelries that occurred before Lent. Filled with lewd language and salacious imagery, the *Fastnachtspiel* turned the normal sexual and moral conventions of urban life upside down. By the mid-sixteenth century, the moralizing of Nuremberg's Protestant reformers had clearly exerted an influence upon these productions. In the many Shrovetide plays that he wrote to be performed in his hometown, the accomplished poet Hans Sachs (1494–1576) transformed traditional carnival lewdness into mild horseplay, and he used his short dramas to teach proper bourgeois values.

**JESUIT DRAMA.** The origins of another kind of religious theater, the Jesuit school play, lay in the fifteenth-century revival of ancient drama that had occurred in Italy. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, university professors there had begun to stage Latin revivals of the ancient comedies of Terence and Plautus in order to perfect students' use of classical Latin. In the secondary schools that the Jesuit Order founded throughout Europe in the mid-sixteenth century they relied on a standardized curriculum, closely modeled on humanist examples. As a consequence, they adopted the custom of staging Latin school dramas. The first performance of a school play seems to have occurred at the Jesuits' first institution at Messina in Sicily during 1551. By 1555, the first Jesuit play had been produced in Vienna, and by 1560, many schools the order now ran in Germany and Northern Europe staged these dramas. In its early stage of development the Jesuit Theater produced classical and biblical stories with ennobling content. Popular themes included the stories of Hercules, Saul, and David. Gradually,



however, the Jesuits adopted stories in which female heroines like Judith, Esther, and St. Catherine were the central characters. The choice of these materials forced the order to relax the prohibition against young boys playing female parts. Latin remained the dominant language used in the plays for most of the sixteenth century. The first example of a non-Latin Jesuit play, *Christus Judex*, originated in Spain, but schools in Italy and Germany soon had translations. Over time, the Jesuit productions grew more elaborate. Around 1600, the Jesuit dramas already had large casts of characters, and in the course of the following century operatic arias, *intermezzi*, and even ballet became components of the productions. Similarly, their staging became more elaborate, with lighting effects, costumes, and scenery machinery adopted from those used on the professional stage.

**FRENCH THEATER.** Although the tone of most medieval mystery plays was often solemn, short farces had sometimes served as relieving interludes within these dramas, the performance of which sometimes stretched across several days. As in Germany, comic carnival plays, too, provided a safety valve through which people prepared for the self-denial and rigorous disciplines of Lent. Between 1450 and 1600, these traditional comic forms became the basis for the establishment of a popular theater in France. Broad segments of the French urban population, rich and poor, educated and uneducated alike attended productions staged in this popular theater. In contrast to other forms of drama, then, the subjects treated in these plays by necessity had to have broad appeal and general intelligibility. The comic farce was thus one of the most common staged dramas in the French popular theater of the time. Its characters were, by and large, drawn from daily life. A parade of ordinary family members, scheming servants, priests, and tradespeople marched through these plays. In contrast to the morality plays still popular at the time, which had characters with names like Avarice, Hope, and Charity, the farce aimed to represent real-life situations, albeit with a comic twist. French farces were usually written in eight-syllable (octosyllabic) verses. Their plots attacked gullibility, misplaced trust and idealism, and human faithlessness in ways akin to comic traditions stemming from the days of Chaucer and Boccaccio. The stories were often predictable, as characters became embroiled in cases of mistaken identity or tangled in webs that grew from deceit or seemingly harmless lies. In some cases the line of plot development was relatively thin, and witty verbal games dominated the action.

**FAMOUS PLAYS.** The two most famous farces to survive from this period are still performed today: *Le Cu-*

*vier*, or *The Tub* (c. 1500) and *Master Peter Pathelin*, (c. 1460). In *The Tub*, a shrewish wife dominates her husband and keeps him busy with a long list of chores. While he is thus occupied, his wife falls into the tub and cannot get out. The husband checks to see if helping his wife out of the tub is included on his list of duties. It is not, and so the play concludes with his proposition to help her, so long as he becomes master of the house, a Renaissance happy ending that reinstated male dominance. In *Master Peter Pathelin*, the play's hero is a shady legal type who tricks a local merchant out of cloth by offering to pay for it later. When the merchant arrives at his house to collect the payment, Pathelin has taken to his bed in a feigned and hilarious delirium that lasts for weeks. Later a local shepherd who works for the same merchant comes to Pathelin, asking him to protect him from his employer—the very same merchant Pathelin has already tricked—because he has eaten the flock he was supposed to be guarding. Pathelin advises him to say merely “Baa” to any questions that are asked of him. In court, the merchant becomes confused about the two crimes in which he is a victim, and a comic scene ensues before the judge. As a result Pathelin is momentarily victorious in defending the young shepherd, but when he tries to collect his fee, the shepherd merely responds with a “Baa.” Among the many popular farces staged at the time, *Pathelin* stands out because of its sophisticated plays on words, its comic timing, and plot development. The play is almost twice as long as any other farce produced in fifteenth- or sixteenth-century France, yet the author manages to sustain the protracted schemes of Pathelin over this enlarged scale. Plays like *Pathelin* acquired a broad audience in France and earned the respect of both intellectuals and ordinary people. Several translations of French farces into English played a role in shaping later comedies.

**FRENCH LEARNED COMEDY.** By the second half of the sixteenth century the effects of humanism grew more visible in French theater. The play *Eugène* has long been seen as the first truly “Renaissance” comedy to appear in the country, meaning that its author Étienne Jodelle made use of the classical conventions of Roman comic form by dividing his play into five acts. Jodelle was a member of the Pleiades, a group of authors who labored to revive classical poetic and dramatic forms in France in the mid-sixteenth century. The group took its name from the major constellation, which according to Greek myth, had been formed from the remains of seven prominent Greek poets. The sixteenth-century Pleiades’ fashioning after the famous constellation expressed their hope to revive classical forms in French literature. Like Jodelle’s *Eugène*,

many early efforts of this group still relied on elements of traditional French poetry and drama. *Eugène*, for instance, is composed in the octosyllabic verse typical of the older farces, rather than the prose typical of comedies of the Latin revival. Its plot also combines some elements of the traditional farce with newer dimensions drawn from the more recently rediscovered comedies of Terence and Plautus. Like the ancient forms, it makes use of power struggles and sexuality in a more direct way than the traditional farces. The play's conclusion is also morally ambiguous since the central love interest is adulterous and the conflict is resolved in the couple's favor at the drama's conclusion. Despite these innovations inspired by ancient comedy, the play's characters, language, and Parisian setting are undeniably French.

**OTHER COMEDIES.** The bourgeois world that Jodelle created in his *Eugène* was the favored setting of other humanist-influenced comedies written in the years that followed. These dramas adopted the five-act structure typical of ancient Roman comedies, but until 1573 none was written in prose, each retaining the octosyllabic verse that seems to have been much prized by French writers and audiences alike. In some cases the new comedies took their plots directly from earlier works of Terence and Plautus. The theme of the adulterous spouse who manages one or several affairs simultaneously was a popular one, and the characters that populated these dramas were largely those who might appear in upper-class urban life. Doctors, lawyers, military officers, and both helpful and scheming servants were common figures in the play. In the wake of Antoine de Baïf's *The Braggart* (1567), a series of plays appeared in which the central character or characters were boasting and rambunctious fools. De Baïf was a member of the Pleiades group, and he based his play on Plautus's *Miles gloriosus*. Although he did not surpass his source, his drama is almost as appealing as the original. Another theme popular in the humanist comedies of the time was impersonation, and the central heroes' disguises as peasants, fatherly figures, and so forth became the linchpin around which the plot revolved. Another sign of innovation at the time was the revival of Greek comedy. In his *Cloud-cuckoo City*, Pierre Le Loyer relied on the ancient Greek Aristophane's *Clouds* to create a comedy that was more informally structured than previous examples. His work also made use of verses of varying forms. A final milestone in the development of humanist comedy in France was the publication of Pierre de Larivey's first set of six comedies in 1579. These works were very similar to Italian comedies of the period, although their language was a lively French. Despite certain similarities in plot, the hu-

manist comedies of the later sixteenth century in France display considerable variety. Although their characters are often selected from a stock repertory, French humanist playwrights drew their characters so that their foibles and strengths elicit the admiration of readers and audiences alike. Not all of these dramas found life on the stage, however, since many were likely exercises in language and the application of new dramatic theory. But later playwrights seem to have read and learned from them, and the quality of their drama still retains a great freshness and vitality.

**FRENCH TRAGEDY.** While French humanists wrote many comedies, their output of tragedy was even more extensive. In many of these works dramatists imitated the conventions of the ancient tragedies of Euripides and Seneca. Some French humanists relied on the dramatic form to propagandize for their Catholic or Protestant sympathies, as in the Calvinist Théodore De Bèze's play *Abraham's Sacrifice* from 1550. Others, like Étienne Jodelle, used the forms of classical tragedy to enlarge French literature. Jodelle crowded his *Cleopatra in Prison* (c. 1552) with verses of varying lengths and a wealth of rhetorical flourishes designed to expand the literary possibility of the language. Others viewed the writing of tragedies more as an intellectual exercise befitting to men of letters. A few French tragedies drew their subjects from the Bible, but the vast majority treated classical themes. While some adapted Greek themes, most were Roman in nature. The greatest French writer of tragedies from the second half of the sixteenth century was Robert Garnier, who published seven tragedies between 1568 and 1583. They relied on the classical forms of the genre, including the use of a chorus, monologues, and dialogues. All of Garnier's plays treated classical themes, although the author saw the political rivalries and wars that his dramas recounted to be applicable to the contemporary situation of France. During the Wars of Religion that raged in the country between 1562 and 1598, staged tragedy became a vehicle for commenting upon and lamenting the country's civil conflicts. French tragedies from the period are filled with much pathos as well as moralistic pronouncements about the danger of tyrannicide, political ambitions, and human desires. Like the similar dramas written in Italy at the same time, they are largely concerned with rhetoric and ethics, and they appear to modern scholars to be more a form of literature than staged drama. The number of plays read as social commentary by an elite audience probably outweighed the number performed on the stage.

**IMPLICATIONS.** In the second half of the sixteenth century French dramatists began to mold classical comedy

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***INFLUENCES FROM ARISTOTLE**

**INTRODUCTION:** At the end of the fifteenth century, scholars began to rediscover Aristotle's *Poetics*, a treatise on dramatic and poetic theory that had been known in the Middle Ages only in extremely corrupt versions. At this time new editions of the work were published, and knowledge of Aristotle's ideas about drama began to spread relatively quickly throughout Europe. Nowhere were they to have more profound effect than in France. Here during the Wars of Religion, dramatists began to rely on Aristotle's tragic theory to create works that lamented upon the course of contemporary politics via the mirror of classical tragedy. Aristotle's influence persisted, and in the seventeenth century a wave of neoclassical tragedies, best exemplified in the works of Corneille and Racine, was produced for the French court. In contrast to the ancient theories of the Roman Seneca, which had stressed the literary dimension of tragedy, Aristotle dealt with the form as a theatrical genre able to move and inspire the human passions.

We have already spoken of the constituent parts to be used as ingredients of tragedy. The separable members into which it is quantitatively divided are these: Prologue, Episode, Exode, Choral Song, the last being divided into Parode and Stasimon. These are common to all tragedies; songs sung by actors on the stage and "commoi" are peculiar to certain plays.

A prologue is the whole of that part of a tragedy which precedes the entrance of the chorus. An episode is the whole of that part of a tragedy which falls between whole choral songs. An exode is the whole of that part of

a tragedy which is not followed by a song of the chorus. A parode is the whole of the first utterance of the chorus. A stasimon is a choral song without anapaests or trochaics. A commos is a song of lament shared by the chorus and the actors on the stage.

The constituent parts to be used as ingredients of tragedy have been described above; these are the separable members into which it is quantitatively divided.

Following upon what has been said above we should next state what ought to be aimed at and what avoided in the construction of a plot, and the means by which the object of tragedy may be achieved. Since then the structure of the best tragedy should be not simple but complex and one that represents incidents arousing fear and pity—for that is peculiar to this form of art—it is obvious to begin with that one should not show worthy men passing from good fortune to bad. That does not arouse fear or pity but shocks our feelings. Nor again wicked people passing from bad fortune to good. That is the most untragic of all, having none of the requisite qualities, since it does not satisfy our feelings or arouse pity or fear. Nor again the passing of a thoroughly bad man from good fortune to bad fortune. Such a structure might satisfy our feelings but it arouses neither pity nor fear, the one being for the man who does not deserve his misfortune and the other for the man who is like ourselves—pity for the undeserved misfortune, fear for the man like ourselves—so that the result will arouse neither pity nor fear.

**SOURCE:** Aristotle, *The Poetics*. Trans. W. H. Fyfe (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960): 43, 45.

and tragedy into forms suitable for their own native expression. While they wrote many new plays in these genres, relatively few of the works inspired by Renaissance humanism had audiences outside the royal court and noble households, beyond those intended for use as school exercises. For most of the sixteenth century, the French theater continued to be dominated by royal spectacles and court entertainments and street performances of farces, morality plays, and other popular forms of drama that could be performed in towns and cities throughout the country on hurriedly constructed makeshift stages.

**HÔTEL DE BOURGOGNE.** The Parisian theater was an exception. Paris was the largest city in sixteenth-century Europe and developed one of the continent's first professional stages. In 1548, the Confraternity of

the Passion built a theater on the second floor of a townhouse that had once belonged to the Dukes of Burgundy. In 1402, the French king had awarded the Confraternity, an organization that grew out of the city's guilds, a monopoly over the performance of all religious dramas in the city. Their new hall was long and narrow (45 feet wide by 108 feet deep). The platform stage was only 35 feet deep and 25 feet wide with a secondary stage above its main floor. The theater's pit was for standing spectators, while above, ranks of boxes filled the sides. At the rear stepped up benches faced the stage. With this scheme the Hôtel probably accommodated an audience of more than a thousand spectators. The construction of the confraternity's new theater coincided with the Parisian parliament's decision to outlaw the traditional mystery cycles in the city. As a result, the confraternity became a troupe of actors who staged secular dramas and

farces far different from the mysteries and passions for which they had originally been chartered. These plays were performed before paying audiences with as much spectacle as could fit onto the facility's small stage. The confraternity's theater relied on the medieval style of simultaneous staging, with five or six different sets displayed on the stage at the same time. During the 1550s the theater was successful, but with the ills of the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598) audiences at the house shrank. By the 1590s the guild began to rent out their space to other French and foreign troupes; the confraternity's continued monopoly over theatrical production in Paris forced other professional troupes to negotiate with the guild to perform in the city. The problem of negotiation coupled with the climate engendered by the civil conflicts of the Wars of Religion doomed most foreign or French troupes to failure. This situation began to change around 1600, as the company of Valleran le Conte visited the theater annually. Le Conte developed a highly profitable relationship with the playwright Alexandre Hardy (c. 1575–1632), who in his relatively short life wrote hundreds of comedies, tragedies, tragicomedies, and pastorals. His plays were notable for their coarse language, sexual suggestiveness, and violence, as well as their short scenes and sudden plot twists. Like the medieval spectacles of the mysteries, limbs were severed, eyes plucked out, and characters beheaded. The results proved to be crowd pleasing, and the Hôtel de Bourgogne finally attracted a reliable clientele. Eventually, Valleran's troupe, known as the "Royal Comedians," took up permanent residence at the Bourgogne, and Alexandre Hardy became, from 1611, the group's official dramatist. By the mid-seventeenth century, the continuing monopoly of the Confraternity of the Passion over theatrical productions in Paris angered many playwrights. Dramatists attacked the Confraternity, a one-time religious organization that was now a force over the secular stage, as a symbol of archaic decadence. In their great masterpieces, the seventeenth-century masters of the French stage—Corneille, Racine, and Molière—also aimed to distance the French drama from the blood and gore of the days of Hardy and Valleran at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

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## THE COMMERCIAL THEATER IN ENGLAND

**FROM PARTICIPANTS TO AUDIENCE.** As religious sensibilities changed in sixteenth-century England, styles of participation in drama altered. In the later Middle Ages many English men and women had taken part in the mounting of the great mystery cycles, but as these plays came gradually to be abandoned, and later to be suppressed, the vigorous traditions of community participation in drama disappeared. Where once English men and women had been active participants in staging local theater, they now became a receptive audience for plays that were performed by professional troupes of actors. London, far and away the largest city of the realm, became the great center in which a national theater emerged at the end of the sixteenth century. The playwrights who wrote for the new commercial theaters in London were, by and large, highly educated men. They possessed the advantages of humanist education, with its attention to the ancient dramas of Greece and Rome. From their boyhood days, most of these figures had likely participated in the classical dramas regularly staged in secondary schools throughout the country. At the same time, London's commercial theaters were always paying propositions, and those who wrote for them needed to take account of the educational level and middlebrow tastes of urban people. London's theater survived on the penny admissions paid by the city's day laborers, shopkeepers, and servant class. Thus the thorough imitation of Antiquity that was to be found in dramas staged in urbane courts throughout Europe never played a role in the public theater of England. Late Tudor drama had no wealthy patrons to underwrite production, so it had to appeal to an audience that was truly broad. This called for fast-moving, adventurous productions filled with elements of spectacle, song, and even occasional outbursts of violence. The evidence of attendance at these dramas as well as the steady proliferation of new theaters in the capital point to the growing popularity of the theater during the later years of Elizabeth I's reign. This popularity steadily mounted under the early Stuart kings in the seventeenth century.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A LEWD PLAY**

**INTRODUCTION:** In August of 1597, a play performed at the new Swan Theater in London caused a great uproar and excited the wrath of the queen's Privy Council. Exactly what was in the play *The Isle of the Dogs* has remained a mystery, since all copies were seized and destroyed. Its authors, Thomas Nashe and Ben Jonson, were soon forced to leave town. The following order of the Council shows that it was frequently dangerous to write plays in late sixteenth-century London.

Upon information given us of a lewd play that was played in one of the playhouses on the Bank-side, containing very seditious and slanderous matter, we caused some of the players to be apprehended and committed to prison, whereof one of them was not only an actor but a maker of the said play. [That was Ben Jonson.]

For as much as it is thought meet that the rest of the players or actors in that matter shall be apprehended to receive such punishment as their lewd and mutinous behaviour doth deserve, these shall be therefore to require you to examine those of the players that are committed, whose names are known to you. Mr. Topcliffe, what is become of the rest of their fellows that either had their parts in the devising of that seditious matter, or that were actors or players in the same; what copies they have given forth of the said play and to who, and such other points as you shall think meet to be demanded of them, wherein you shall require them to deal truly as they will look to receive any favour.

We pray you also to peruse such papers as were found in Nashe his lodgings which Ferrys, a Messenger of the Chamber, shall deliver unto you, and to certify us the examination you take ...

**SOURCE:** "The Privy Council Orders the Arrest of the Other Members of the Company and the Other Co-Author, Thomas Nashe, for Interrogation, 15 August 1597," in *English Professional Theatre, 1530–1660*. Ed. Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, William Ingram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 102.

**LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS.** Yet before the professional theater could flourish, certain legal considerations and controversies had to be resolved. As elsewhere in Europe, city governments in England feared the itinerant troupes of players and entertainers who increasingly set up shop in the streets and market squares. Vagrancy, per-

ceived as a great social ill at the time, caused urban governments in many places to look upon the spontaneous performances of street players as a form of beggary, since troupes regularly "passed the hat" to underwrite their expenses. They also perceived such spontaneous productions as a threat to public order because actors or plays might express dangerous political or religious sentiments that could foment rebellion. In London, like many cities throughout Europe, local officials might have preferred to legislate the theater out of existence altogether, if the actions of Parliament and the queen had not intervened. In 1572, an act of Parliament specifically exempted "players" from the list of people considered vagrants, so long as they worked in noble households or were employed by other persons of high degree. Two years later, Elizabeth granted one of her court favorites, the Earl of Leicester, a royal license that allowed his own players to perform in the city of London, so long as the royal censor, known as the Master of the Revels, first observed the troupe's plays. While London's officials tried to countermand the queen's will, Leicester's troupe set up shop in the town in 1574 and began performing regularly on weekdays.

**LONDON THEATERS.** Despite royal sanction the players still faced the determined opposition of London's leadership, and two years later the troupe's leader, James Burbage, decided to build a company outside London's city walls in the northern suburb of Shoreditch. Here in the area known as the Liberties of London, the troupe might be free from interference from the city's officials. Long tradition had identified these fringe suburbs as areas of license, sexual immorality, and disease. The city's lazarettes, the place of isolation for those with leprosy and other contagious diseases, had long been located there, as were many brothels. Initially, then, the move to the Liberties bolstered the shady reputation of theaters in many Londoners' eyes, and the theaters were widely condemned—perhaps nowhere more vigorously than in the sermons of the city's Puritan preachers. At the same time, the sense of danger and the forbidden proved to be a popular draw for those in search of excitement. Burbage had grasped that the freewill gifts of his audiences were never going to provide sufficient income for the new scale of his enterprise, and so he introduced the paid admission. For just a few pennies, Londoners could indulge their longing for spectacle and drama to relieve the tedium of daily existence. Burbage called his new structure simply the Theater, and the design he chose was for a simple polygonal structure with three tiers of galleries that surrounded the stage. Later in 1598, as the lease on the land on which the Theater was



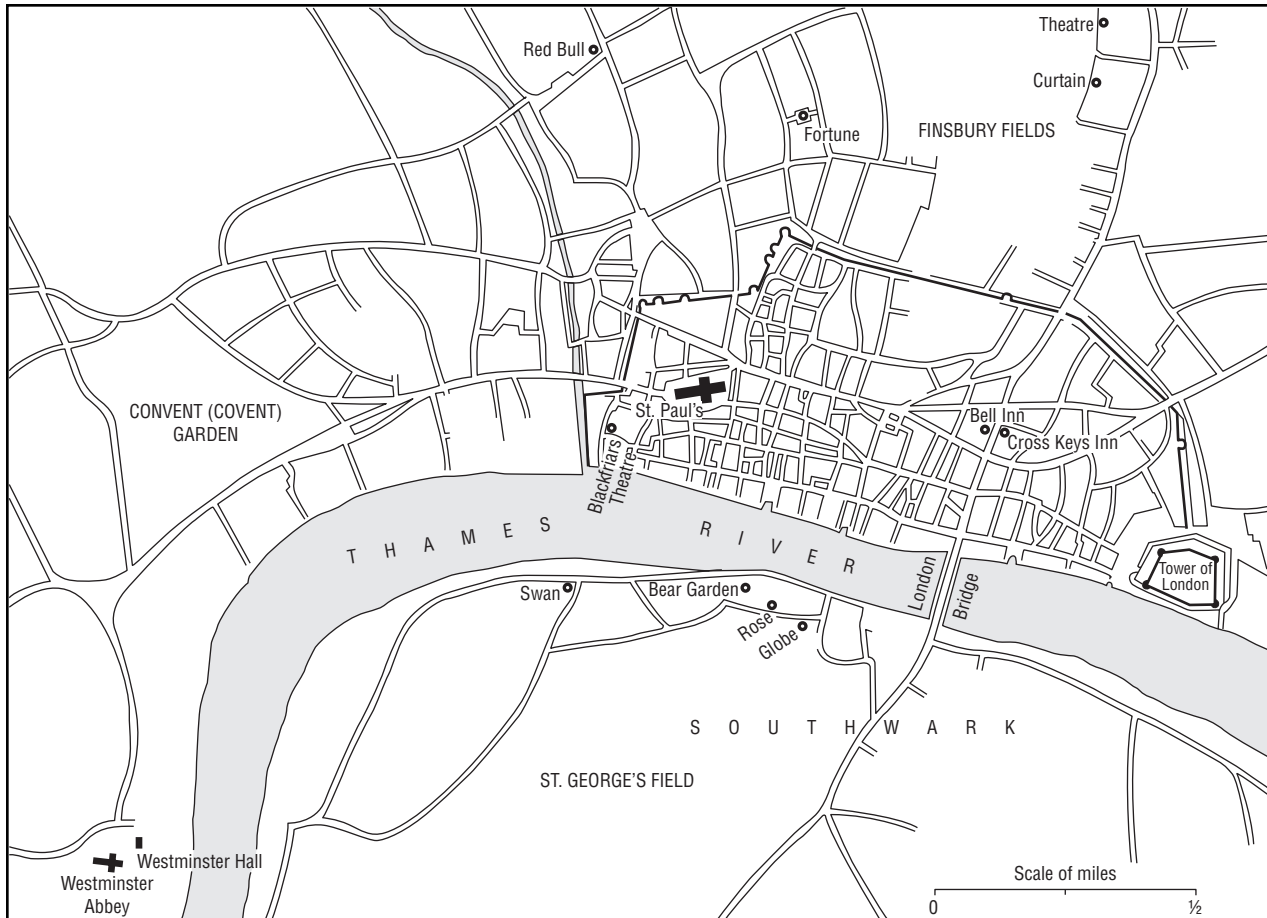
Sixteenth-century London. The location of the Globe Theatre is shown, together with a nearby bear-baiting pit that competed for patrons. THE ART ARCHIVE/BRITISH LIBRARY.

built expired, the company had the building dismantled. They carted the timbers across the Thames and constructed the new Globe Theater, the site that in the seventeenth century was to see some of Shakespeare's greatest triumphs. But in the months and years that immediately followed the building of Burbage's original Theater in Shoreditch, other acting troupes copied the structure, and soon Leiceister's original company had considerable competition. A few months after Burbage's house had opened in Shoreditch, a rival company erected another theater known as the Curtain in the same area. A few years later, two financiers, Philip Henslowe and John Cholmley, built the Rose at Bankside, on the southern shores of the River Thames. With the construction of the Rose, a small theatrical district began to grow in Bankside. By the end of the century the Swan and the rebuilt Theater of James Burbage (now the Globe) had also taken up residence there. Finally, to the north of the city, the Fortune was the last of the great sixteenth century houses to be constructed. But even it was to be followed in the seventeenth century by a series of new theaters constructed like a ring around the city.

**RESTRICTIONS ON ACTORS.** English law prohibited women from appearing on the stage, thus making it necessary for female roles to be portrayed by men. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries boy troupes were popular in the city as well. One of these, the "Children of Pauls," was a group of young boys originally drawn from the ranks of choristers at St. Paul's Cathedral. Another troupe, the Children of the Royal Chapel, served the Tudor court as choristers and performers. A series of able playwrights wrote for both boy

companies, and by the end of the 1570s these troupes were competing successfully against the adult companies in London's new commercial theaters. The Children of the Royal Chapel, sometimes called merely the Chapel Boys, had by this time actually blazed a trail in occupying a theater within the city walls in London. At Blackfriars monastery, an institution whose religious mission had been abolished by the Tudor monarch Henry VIII, the boys' impresario Richard Farrant decided to convert a series of rooms into an indoor theater. The City of London opposed his designs, but since the boys were royal choristers and Blackfriars' monastery possessed liberty from the City of London's control, town officials were unable to stop his plans.

**CONTROVERSY.** At the end of the 1580s the star of the adult troupes moved in the ascendant. Between 1587 and his death in 1593, the great playwright Christopher Marlowe wrote a series of widely admired tragedies that were generally unsuited to being performed by boys. Marlowe relied on the commanding skills of the actor Edward Alleyn, a figure who was larger than life, to play his Faustus and other major roles. At the same time opinion in London also turned against the boys, as the managers of the troupes involved themselves in religious controversy. Puritanism, a fervid religious opponent of the theater, was at the time coming to influence the city's ministers and officials, despite the growing opposition to the movement on the part of the queen and court. In the Marprelate Controversy of 1588–1589, the archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift attempted to silence this Puritan opposition by a strict application of his authority to censor the press. Widespread indignation



Map of London showing the location of Elizabethan-era theaters. CREATED BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. GALE.

inspired pamphleteers to publish furtively a series of satirical tracts under the name “Martin Marprelate,” and these, in turn, soon inspired many Londoners to withhold their tithes. As the controversy mounted, the leaders of the boy’s troupes supported the archbishop’s position, and as a result, public sentiment turned against them. Both the Children of the Royal Chapel and the Boys of Pauls spent the next decade largely touring the countryside, staging their plays for provincials throughout England. By 1599, the situation had cooled off, and the Boys of Pauls returned, to be followed a few months later by the Children of the Royal Chapel. They took up residence in private theaters, the Chapel troupe returning to its former space at Blackfriars. Eventually, there were eight of these private theaters in London and, like the boys’ troupes themselves, these theaters appealed to a more cultivated clientele. They were fully enclosed, protected from the elements, and lit with candles. For these luxuries the private theaters charged anywhere from three to six times the admission fees of the much larger public theaters on the city’s outskirts. In the early sev-

enteenth century they performed the most up-to-date repertory in London. Blackfriars was always the most successful and exclusive of the private theaters, and in the first decade of the seventeenth century, the Children of the Royal Chapel scored a number of successes in the productions they staged there. At this time, the troupe developed a particularly fruitful relationship with the comic author Ben Jonson. He seems actually to have preferred to write for boy troupes, perhaps because, unlike other playwrights of the time, he was jealous of his texts. The troupes’ impresarios tightly managed the actors, thus allowing Jonson to preserve the integrity of the dramas he had written. Buoyed by the success of Jonson’s light, satirical fare, the Children of the Royal Chapel staged a string of early seventeenth-century successes.

**PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.** The early theaters were not always profitable. They were ordered closed during times of epidemic and plays were not permitted during certain seasons of the year, including the 40 days of Lent and periods of royal mourning. An outbreak of





a new fashion for fast-paced dramas made Lyly's ornate verse and stately prose seem old fashioned.

**MARLOWE.** The greatest of the university-educated playwrights of the time was Christopher Marlowe, who had been born the son of a Cambridge shoemaker and later attended the university in his hometown. The queen's minister Thomas Walsingham recruited Marlowe as an undergraduate to spy for England. He traveled to France where he uncovered evidence of plots being staged against England's monarch. Returning to Cambridge, he received the MA in 1587, but only after a row with his college's administrators, because Marlowe refused to take holy orders, a condition of the scholarly stipend he had received to this point. He settled in London, sharing rooms with the playwright Thomas Kyd and making acquaintances with powerful friends at court, including Sir Philip Sydney and Sir Walter Raleigh. In the very same year that he arrived in the city, he startled London viewers and actors with his innova-

tive play, *Tamburlaine the Great*, the first English drama to be written in blank verse, a form of unrhymed poetry that was immediately hailed for its great strength of expression. He followed the successes of *Tamburlaine* with *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward II*, and *Doctor Faustus*, all three tragedies. Although the last play is among his most famous, many critics consider *Edward II* (1592) to be his most accomplished work. In it, he relates the story of an ill-fated homosexual king murdered by his powerful barons in a plain, but powerful style. Before Marlowe's time, the writing of historical plays had been a relatively crude dramatic genre. In *Edward* he elevated the historical play to a point of high art, one that was to be extended even further in the early seventeenth century by the great histories of Shakespeare. Of the three masterpieces that Marlowe wrote in the final years of his short life, *Dr. Faustus* has been much revived in the twentieth century. It was the most religious of Marlowe's creations, with its personification of the battle between good and evil and its powerful condemnations of the overweening pride of humankind. In 1593, Marlowe came under suspicion of heresy; he appeared in court to answer charges that he had uttered "atheistic" statements. On his way he was killed at the home of Eleanor Bull, apparently in a quarrel, although mystery has long surrounded the precise circumstances. It appears plausible that the playwright's espionage activities doomed him to an act of official assassination.

**OTHER PLAYWRIGHTS.** Other members of the circle of university-educated playwrights in London—George Peele, Robert Greene, and Thomas Nashe—each produced interesting works that shaped the tastes of lesser dramatists. After graduating from Oxford, George Peele came to London where he at first staged civic pageants and wrote ceremonial verses for the court. After writing several works of middling quality, Peele completed *The Old Wives Tale*. The work satirized contemporary dramatic genres and displayed a warm-hearted comedic style. Thomas Nashe, a Cambridge-educated playwright, seems to have been altogether more tempestuous. Seemingly expelled from Cambridge before he took the MA, he came to London around 1587 and began to collaborate with Marlowe on the writing of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Several years later he established his literary reputation with the publication of a short pamphlet, *Pierce Penniless*, that told the story of a writer so hard up for cash that he sells his soul to the devil—a fate that Nashe seems to have shared. Several other Nashe pamphlets attacked great figures in the Elizabethan world, and from time to time he fell afoul of the authorities. In 1597, he collaborated

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***FAUSTUS' LAMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:** Christopher Marlowe's play, *A Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, made use of a tale that had recently circulated in Germany about an alchemist who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for magical power and wisdom. Marlowe elevated the original simple story by adding elements of classical tragedy, including the following concluding monologue by Faustus just before he is led off by the devil. For Marlowe, Faustus became symptomatic of humankind's pride and its ambitions of mastering Creation. The play, like Marlowe's earlier and popular work, *Tamburlaine the Great*, helped to establish blank or unrhymed verse's popularity upon the Elizabethan stage.

Ah Faustus,  
 Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,  
 And then thou must be damned perpetually.  
 Stand still you ever moving spheres of heaven  
 That time may cease, and midnight never come.  
 Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make  
 Perpetual day, or let this hour be but a year,  
 A month, a week, a natural day,  
 That Faustus may repent, and save his soul,  
 O lente lente curite noctis equi:  
 The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,  
 The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned.  
 Oh, I'll leap up to my God. Who pulls me down?  
 See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament,  
 One drop would save my soul, half a drop, ah my Christ.  
 Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ,  
 Yet will I call on him, oh spare me Lucifer!  
 Where is it now? 'tis gone:  
 And see where God stretches out his arm,  
 And bends his ireful brows:  
 Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,  
 And hide me from the heavy wrath of God.  
 No, no, then will I headlong run into the earth:  
 Earth gape, O no, it will not harbour me.  
 You stars that reigned at my nativity,  
 whose influence hath allotted death and hell,  
 Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist,

Into the entrails of yon' laboring cloud,  
 That when you vomit forth into the air,  
 My limbs may issue from your smoky mouths,  
 So that my soul may but ascend to heaven.  
 Ah, half the hour is past.

[The clock strikes the half hour]

'Twill all be past anon.  
 Oh God, if thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,  
 Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransomed me,  
 Impose some end to my incessant pain,  
 Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,  
 A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd.  
 O no end is limited to damned souls,  
 Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?  
 Or, why is this immortal that thou hast?  
 Ah Pythagoras' metempsychosis were that true,  
 This soul should fly from me, and I be changed  
 Unto some brutish beast. All beasts are happy, for when  
     they die  
 Their souls are soon dissolved in elements,  
 But mine must live still to be plagued in hell.  
 Curst be the parents that engendered me.  
 No Faustus, curse thy self, curse Lucifer,  
 That hath deprived thee of the joys of heaven.

[The clock strikes twelve.]

O it strikes, it strikes, now body turn to air,  
 Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.  
 Oh soul, be changed into little water drops,  
 And fall into the Ocean, ne'er be found.

[The devils enter]

My God, my God, look not so fierce on me.  
 Adders, and Serpents, let me breathe a while.  
 Ugly hell, gape not, come not Lucifer,  
 I'll burn my books, ah Mephistopheles!

[Faustus exits with the devil.]

**SOURCE:** Christopher Marlowe, *A Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* (London, 1604): fol. F2-F3. Spelling and punctuation modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

with the playwright Ben Jonson in writing *The Isle of the Dogs*, a drama produced at the Swan Theater which caused such an uproar, the Queen's Privy Council issued an order for the destruction of all London's theaters. Although the destruction never took place, the theaters remained closed for several months, and the scandal forced Nashe to flee town. The reason for such a violent reaction has long remained a mystery, since the government

immediately seized and destroyed all copies of the text. The author Thomas Kyd (1558–1594) is today remembered for a single masterpiece, *The Spanish Tragedy*, first produced around 1589. Unlike his roommate Marlowe, Kyd was not university-educated although he had received primary and secondary schooling in London. He had studied Seneca's tragic forms, and he adapted these as the structure for his famous tragedy. While the work



Christopher Marlowe. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

is a masterpiece in its own right, it has long been seen as the model for Shakespeare's even greater and far better known seventeenth-century tragedies. Long standing but unproven theories have speculated that Kyd also wrote a version of the story of *Hamlet* that has since been lost, but which influenced Shakespeare in the writing of his play. He died in 1594 after having been implicated in heresy together with his roommate Marlowe. Kyd had been tortured to give evidence against Marlowe, and never seems to have recovered fully from his wounds.

**JONSON.** Another great playwright who was perfecting his craft as the century drew to a close was Ben Jonson (1572–1637). Jonson went on to write a series of brilliant comedies in the years between 1605 and 1614. This achievement came after a long period of apprenticeship, in which he followed a variety of careers and became embroiled in several controversies. After receiving a brilliant education at the public school in Westminster under the direction of the English humanist William Camden, he served for a time as a bricklayer with his stepfather. He then became a mercenary who fought in Flanders, before going to London to try his fortunes as an actor. In 1597, he worked with Thomas Nashe on the ill-fated play, *The Isle of the Dogs*, the work

that for a time threatened to extinguish the London theater altogether. A year later he became embroiled in another court trial after killing a fellow actor in a duel, and he narrowly escaped execution by pleading that he was a member of the clergy. The independent streak that Jonson continued to display throughout his life might easily have snuffed out the life of a lesser soul. Many Tudor playwrights died in brawls or fell afoul of royal and civic authorities, but Jonson survived to write a series of fine works, most of which date from the period between 1605 and 1614. King James I frequently recruited him to produce formal masques for the court.

**SHAKESPEARE.** England's greatest poet and playwright is also in many respects the country's most enigmatic and least known. Unlike the university wits that stormed onto the new commercial stage in London in the late sixteenth century, Shakespeare did not possess a higher education. Little is known about his early life, in part, because the author seems to have lacked the desire for self-promotion typical of the more flamboyant figures like Marlowe, Kyd, and Nashe. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, the son of a prosperous local glove maker and one of the town's councillors. He likely attended a local school, but he may not have completed his education. His father's business soon went bad, and the future playwright seems to have entered into a hasty marriage with Anne Hathaway in 1582, just as he turned eighteen. Six months later the couple had a daughter, who later married a prosperous local physician. The marriage also produced twins in 1585, one of whom died at age eleven, the other surviving to live a long life. Between the births of these children and 1592, nothing is known of Shakespeare's life. He may have left Stratford to tour with a troupe of London actors, as some have argued. But in 1592, the first notice of Shakespeare as a writer establishes that he was already well known on the London scene. The university wit Robert Greene referred to Shakespeare in one of his own plays as an "upstart crow" and hinted that the author had plagiarized some of his verses from other dramas.

**PLAYWRIGHT.** Other evidence suggests that at this time Shakespeare served a kind of apprenticeship alongside professional playwrights in the city, and scholars have identified a long list of plays in which the author may have played a role. But since many of the texts used in late sixteenth-century theaters were the products of players, troupes, and groups of authors, it is impossible to identify Shakespeare's contributions with any kind of certainty. In 1594, Shakespeare bought into the company of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a popular troupe in the city. How he earned or received the capital to do

so has never been established, but some evidence suggests that the powerful Earl of Southampton was his patron at the time. By 1594, Shakespeare had already completed three of his famous comedies: *The Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Other works from this early period included his famous *Richard III* and *Titus Andronicus*. In this period Shakespeare lived close to the Theater, which was still on its original site in Shoreditch, and in the years between 1594 and 1598 he continued to write plays, usually at the rate of about two each year. *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Romeo and Juliet* are among the best known dramas from this period of Shakespeare's first maturity. As the uproar over the production of *The Isle of the Dogs* threatened London's theaters with permanent closure, Shakespeare began to invest in other businesses, including a brewery. Even though the crisis the play occasioned eventually subsided, the playwright's fears of the uncertainties of theatrical life seem to have persisted. He later bought several properties to secure his future. Besides threats of closure, the examples of many of his fellow playwrights who fell victim to charges of heresy and sedition no doubt deepened his concern. In 1599, the Lord Chamberlain's Men moved into the new Globe Theater in Bankside, a building constructed from the remains of Burbage's original Theater in Shoreditch. In the first decade of the troupe's residency at the facility Shakespeare produced his greatest works. These included his finest comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*; his great Roman historical plays and tragedies, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*; and the tragedies *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*. By 1613, this extraordinary period of creativity and productivity was largely at an end. In that year the Globe Theater burned down, and the author seems to have retired from any further involvement with his company. It has never been determined whether Shakespeare spent the last years of his life in London or in Stratford.

**TUDOR ROOTS OF STUART ACHIEVEMENT.** The enormous achievement of Shakespeare, an achievement that belongs more to the seventeenth than the sixteenth century, can easily obscure the other craftsman-like, accomplished, and even brilliant playwrights who plied their craft in the Elizabethan period. While much drama in this period was little more than crowd-pleasing and soon forgotten after its initial performances, many playwrights produced truly great works in Elizabethan London. Had Shakespeare never written his later plays, the achievements of Thomas Kyd or Christopher Marlowe might now loom as large as *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*. The

plays of the late sixteenth century garnered the attention of the urban population and forged an art form that was distinctly middlebrow, aimed as it was at a broad, truly popular audience. Within forms that audiences found pleasing, many of England's most learned playwrights still managed to elevate their dramas and at the same time make their moral, political, and intellectual pronouncements intelligible to a wide swath of the urban population. In this way, learned authors played an important role as transmitters, both of the knowledge contained in older medieval traditions as well as that drawn from the newer humanist learning of the Renaissance.

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#### RENAISSANCE THEATER IN SPAIN

**TRENDS.** The theater of Renaissance Spain was similar in many ways to the rest of Europe, although it displayed a number of innovative developments. Religious dramas, much like the great mystery cycles of France, England, and Germany, had been important in Iberia in the later Middle Ages. Since Muslim forces had held much of Spain during the Middle Ages, these religious dramas had developed earliest in Catalonia, the northeastern region of the country and the first to expel the influences of Islam. As the Reconquest of the peninsula proceeded, religious dramas developed in those places recaptured from the Muslims. In the absence of a widespread Reformation in the sixteenth century, many of these dramas survived into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and some even into modern times. During the sixteenth century, the Feast of Corpus Christi, long the most important time for theatrical spectacles and dramas, continued to be a force in local religion. While evidencing these conservative elements, new religious forms of drama came to flourish as well, some inspired by the Counter-Reformation. As they did elsewhere in Europe, the Jesuits used school drama in

Spain to perfect their students' Latin, although over time the Jesuit Theater produced plays in Spanish as well. The adoption of Spanish was not so much an innovative element of the sixteenth-century Jesuits, but a bow to long-standing tastes. Latin had not been used extensively in the Spanish religious dramas that flourished in the peninsula during the later Middle Ages. Instead the vernacular or local languages had long been the preferred medium of expression. At court and church festivals in the sixteenth century a genre of *Autos sacramentales*, or religious plays on various themes, came increasingly to be dominated by professional playwrights and producers. A final important trend in the Renaissance theater in Spain, as elsewhere in Europe, was the growth of troupes of itinerant professionals, the first evidence of which comes to us from the 1540s. Both Italian *Commedia dell'Arte* groups and native professionals toured the peninsula in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As in England and other parts of Europe, these groups often raised the ire of local authorities that complained that the itinerants were little more than thieves and tricksters. Spanish troupes displayed from the very start a love not only of drama but also of dance and song, and the street performances that were common in Iberia were eclectic, mixing elements of all the dramatic arts. While feared as a source of disorder, these very same performers integrated their dancing and theatrics into the celebration of local religious festivals at the request of church and civic officials.

**COURT.** Politically, modern Spain was a country that was still very much in the process of being created in the sixteenth century. While the two largest kingdoms in Iberia—Castile and Aragon—had been joined in the late fifteenth century by the dynastic marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, Spain was ruled for much of the sixteenth century as two separate kingdoms, each with their own law code, customs, and civic liberties respected by the Habsburg dynasty. Both Charles V (r. 1516–1558) and Philip II (r. 1556–1598) presided uneasily over powerful noble families who were jealous of their ancient rights. In addition, strong traditions of civic liberty in Spain further limited the authority of these rulers in the towns. Even though Charles V was the grandson of Ferdinand of Aragon, he had been raised in the Burgundian lands in the Netherlands, long one of the most elaborate and spectacular courts in Europe. Although he introduced some elements of Burgundian spectacle into Spanish court life, Charles tread carefully, aware of the envy that these displays might produce in his great nobles and urban patricians. And while Philip II was a great lover and patron of the visual arts

and literature, he found elaborate court spectacle distasteful. For a large part of his reign he isolated himself in the Escorial, a combination monastery, church, and royal palace built outside Madrid as a memorial to his father. In these circumstances the dramatic and imposing forms of court life popular in France and other great sixteenth-century courts—royal entries and spectacles, masques, and elaborate banquets—generally played little role in sixteenth-century Spain. The tenor of Habsburg court life in Spain remained altogether more restrained throughout the sixteenth century.

**HUMANIST ELEMENTS.** Juan del Encina (c. 1468–c. 1530) was the first Spaniard to integrate humanist elements into his dramas and literary creations. Born the son of a shoemaker, he had been christened Juan de Fremoselle, but later changed his last name to Encina. Educated in law at the University of Salamanca, he entered the service of the powerful Duke of Alba in 1492, where he was appointed the master of revels, a position responsible for ensuring that the duke had a steady stream of musical, dramatic, and poetic entertainments. He held this position until 1500, and during these years he wrote fourteen verse plays and more than sixty songs, the lion's share of his literary and dramatic output. His most important achievement lay in the drama, in which he made use of the Renaissance revival of Vergilian eclogue to create religious plays that were pastoral in their imagery. The first of these were only a few hundred lines long, but he gradually expanded the dramas to more than several thousand lines of verse. Over time, they acquired a surer skill and artistry. Although they did little to inspire the great dramatists of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, they introduced Renaissance forms into Spain and were notable for their conflicted imagery. On the one hand they displayed Encina's deeply Christian sentiments, and on the other, they showed the realities of a court that had a fondness for the erotic and pagan elements of Renaissance classicism. Encina tried to harmonize these two elements into a refined style, and toward the end of his time with Alba he succeeded in producing works of great elegance. The finesse of these later works came after he had made several trips to Rome, and in these plays he adopted a more forthright eroticism. The most experimental of the fourteen dramas was *Plácida and Victoriano*, which was actually staged in Rome during 1513. That work included parodies on the rituals of the church, invocations of pagan deities, and daringly erotic interludes. In the course of the sixteenth century, however, the rapid development of Spanish literature made his bucolic verses seem outdated, and his frank eroticism put his plays on the *Index of Prohibited Books* in 1559. Even in his own

## SEVILLE'S Theater

*Authorities suspected social criticism in the entertainments of musicians and acting troupes who traveled from city to city, easily escaping prosecution for blasphemy or libel. Always outsiders, these traveling musicians and players were commonly suspected of theft and prostitution. In addition, they often relied on unwritten lines and impromptu exchanges with the audience, difficult evidence for prosecutors attempting to prove blasphemy. These travelers resembled the vagabonds that city officials distrusted so intensely, except that actors were very clever in persuading their audiences. They delighted their street audiences with ribald imitations of nobles and churchmen. Their bawdy songs poked fun at authority and at those who had money. Townspeople might consider them immoral, but they always gathered an eager, happy audience for their unauthorized street performances.*

Drama, music, and dance were usually performed by traveling companies, but all three were also an integral part of religious liturgy. The mixture of theater and religion reached its zenith with the founding of the Jesuits' houses in Seville. Many Jesuits used theater and drama to teach virtue and dramatize the life of Jesus and the saints. Students who were taught in the Jesuits' schools became stars in the acting companies in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Spain. ...

Although drama was presented on the streets and in the plazas of Seville, the city also had three famous theaters in the early modern period. The Corral de Doña Elvira, which was built in the sixteenth century, was a patio for performances, covered and surrounded by theater boxes and a gallery in back. The city council decided to build the Coliseo in the early seventeenth century so that it could control the performances and profits of the theater. The first Coliseo, finished in 1607, was a modest wooden building. It was replaced by a second Coliseo that was built much more lavishly in 1614. Rich marble and paintings by Diego de Esquivel and Gonzalez de Campos decorated the theater, and a handsome crest of

the city council dominated the entry. This Coliseo burned in 1620 and was rebuilt in greater splendor in 1641. After fire destroyed the Coliseo once more in 1659, the city council lacked funds to rebuild it. It agreed to permit Laura de Herrera and her company to use the Coliseo rent-free for the next forty years in exchange for her financing the reconstruction of the theater. ...

The audience seemed to be as responsible for the scandalous reputation of the theater as the actors were, and the city government's efforts to control the audience failed. Custom dictated that men and women be separated in theaters, but separation had not been enforced. In 1627 a city council member declared that permitting women to sit with men in city theaters had resulted in many "offenses to God." He proposed that the city government require men and women not only to sit in separate sections in the theaters, but also to enter through different doors. These regulations only promoted more scandals, like the uproar in 1654 when one man sneaked into the women's section in La Montería and lifted skirts and "touched legs." Although he was imprisoned and then exiled from the city for two years, the women's gallery (called the *cazuela*, or stewing pan) remained one of the rowdiest sections of the theaters.

People came to the theater for fun and celebration. Customarily they brought fruit and cucumbers, and they pelted the actors who displeased them. They also used rattles, whistles, and metal keys to register their approval and disapproval as noisily as possible. In 1643 an audience in La Montería was outraged when the comedy they had come to see was censored by the Inquisition and replaced by a less offensive comedy. The city chronicler who reported the incident said that "lower and popular" people filled the audience on this feast day. Shouting in protest, they jumped up and began breaking the chairs and benches. They threw the pieces around the theater and tore up all the costumes and scenery they could find. The actors, according to the chronicle, fled from "the rabble."

**SOURCE:** Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Crime and Society in Early Modern Seville* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1980): 151–155.

lifetime Encina disavowed his embrace of pagan eroticism; in 1500, he left the Duke of Alba to pursue a clerical career. Ironically, later Golden Age dramatists revived his elegant Spanish style in the seventeenth century to suggest the unsophisticated nature of peasant speech.

**TORRES NAHARRO.** Slightly later in 1517, Bartolomé de Torres Naharro (c. 1485–after 1520) pub-

lished a collection of poems and nine plays entitled *Propalladia* or *The First Fruits of Pallas*. These plays made use of the firsthand knowledge of humanism and politics he had acquired while living in Italy. The *Propalladia* plays were notable not only for their classical forms but for the work's Prologue which articulated the first dramatic theory in Spain. Torres Naharro argued that there were only two types of dramas: one based on

actual events and the other on imaginary but still believable forms of fiction. Unlike many dramatic theorists at the time who maintained that drama was primarily a literary art, Torres Naharro insisted that plays needed to be performed so that all their elements could be appreciated and comprehended. Among the best known of the *Propalladia* plays is the *Himenea*, a work that deals with the theme of feminine honor; critics have long seen it as a precursor to the many seventeenth-century Spanish plays treating the same theme. In the work *Himenea*'s brother, a marquis, threatens his sister with death for compromising the family's reputation, but the last-minute arrival of her lover and his reasoned arguments stay the marquis's hand. Two of Torres Naharro's *Propalladia* dramas are satires. One, the *Comedia tinellaria*, treats the less than pious behavior of the servants of a cardinal, and the other the *Comedia soldadesca* satirizes a pope's attempts to raise an army. This latter play was a thinly veiled commentary on Julius II (r. 1503–1513), who was known as the "Warrior Pope" since he marched into battle with his troops. In his relatively brief pontificate Julius aimed to expand the secular territory controlled by the papacy and, in so doing, he embroiled the Papal States in a variety of international intrigues. His policies engendered opposition from Europe's two great powers, France and Spain. Thus while Torres Naharro's choice of theme might appear a daring one at first glance, his satirical jabs at the papacy actually fit with Spain's international aims as an opponent of papal expansionism. These plays introduced a sure understanding of the dramatic structures of the ancient Roman playwrights Terence and Plautus into Spain. At the same time their author also made use of native literary traditions. His works, for instance, evidence an indebtedness to the *Celestina*, a popular novel written in prose dialogue around 1500. The *Celestina*'s author had intended the work to be read out loud rather than staged, and its dramatic, sometimes highly emotional style finds its way into Torres Naharro's plays. Spanish playwrights imitated this lively style in the following decades, although no figure seems to have developed the same finesse or to have acquired a following as large as Torres Naharro in the decades that immediately followed the *Propalladia*. Instead court spectacles staged in the palaces of the country's grand nobles and religious dramas were the dominant theatrical forms of the mid-sixteenth century.

**PROFESSIONAL THEATERS.** If the mid-sixteenth century produced little in the way of drama that was innovative, it saw at the same time the rise of commercial theaters in Spain's largest cities. In Italy, the ducal courts

had largely supported the construction of both temporary and permanent theaters. In France and England, these endeavors had been from their first inception more commercial in nature. At Paris, the late-medieval guild of amateur actors, the Confraternity of the Passion, possessed a royal monopoly over dramatic performances in the city—a right that they were willing to share with other traveling troupes in exchange for money payments. The pattern in England was again slightly different, with the crown granting license patents to companies that fell under the cloak of patronage from nobles and other distinguished subjects of the realm. Spain's commercial theaters evidenced yet a third pattern of development, since from the first they were supported by the charitable confraternities or brotherhoods that ran urban hospitals. These brotherhoods ran the theaters as commercial ventures to support their charitable activities. These theaters first began to appear in Madrid, not long after the city had been chosen as the center of royal government in 1561. Until this time Madrid had been a relatively sleepy provincial town, perched on the high central plain of Spain. After Philip II's decision to build his royal palace, the Escorial, outside the city and to move the offices of royal administration to the town, a period of explosive growth began. By 1600, the population had more than tripled, and twenty years later these numbers were almost seven times the city's size in 1560. This expansion in population produced a corresponding rise in the number of professional theaters located within the city. The first of Madrid's *corrales*—known as such because they were at first merely closed-in yards or "corrals"—was built in 1579. The second came in 1582, and by 1630 there were seven theaters in the city, making Madrid second only to London in the vibrancy of its dramatic life. Each of these theaters contained a large yard surrounded by a U-shaped gallery of boxes arranged in tiers facing the stage. The most visible and desirable of these boxes frequently rented for more than twenty times the admission to the pit-like floor. With this arrangement of space the average Madrid theater could accommodate about 2,000 spectators, about a third smaller than the largest theaters in London at the time but nevertheless an enormous auditorium given Madrid's size (about 130,000 inhabitants in 1620). At their inception these structures were merely functional, quickly erected in yards that surrounded the confraternal hospitals. Over time, however, as the new professional theaters spread to other Spanish cities, more sophisticated designs emerged. By the end of the sixteenth century theaters had been built in every large Spanish town, and although plays were widely popular, the theater was also controversial. As elsewhere in Europe, the new professional the-

aters inspired attacks from Christian moralists, and the Council of Castile, the body charged with regulating actors, granted licenses to only a small number of troupes. Censorship was strict, and a royal official viewed each play before it could be shown to the public. But in Spain, in contrast to most places in Europe at the time, there was no prohibition on women actors. The regulations governing their roles were relatively liberal, allowing them to even dress as men when their parts called for it.

**RISE OF GOLDEN AGE.** The early years of the new Renaissance professional theater produced no dramatist of distinction, but the rising popularity of the institution attracted a number of great playwrights to the stage after 1600. The seventeenth century in Spanish art and culture has long been known as the Golden Age. This great flowering of the arts came at a time when Spain's international political influence and its national economy were in decline. By 1600, in fact, the great period of Spanish expansion was at an end. Thus the great flowering of Spain's high culture developed, as in High Renaissance Rome, at a time of increasing political tensions and an ever more precarious domestic situation. New immigrants flooded Spain's growing cities, fleeing an increasingly impoverished countryside. In the newly swollen cities, an all-too modern cycle of structural poverty and crime developed. In this new environment the theater provided a welcome and often relatively cheap release from some of the more harrowing aspects of urban life. As in England, the culture of humanism had made its impact on Spain during the Renaissance. Yet in the new commercial realities of Spanish cities, where numbers were increased by thousands of new immigrants from the countryside annually, Golden Age dramatists were never able to adopt Renaissance forms in a pure way. Instead they had to please crowds with dramas that were relatively quick moving and geared to middlebrow tastes. The five-act style of comedy that had been favored in ducal courts in Italy because of its roots in Terence and Plautus did not prevail in Spain. In the summer, performances began in Madrid's corral theaters at 4 p.m.; in the winter when sunlight was more limited they commenced two hours earlier. With these practical considerations in mind there was no place for the elaborate five-act comedies of Renaissance Italy, which had frequently been extended to great lengths through the staging of interludes and other spectacles between the acts. The demands of the new theater were instead for crowd-pleasing, fast-paced action that would leave the audience craving for more.

**EMERGING FORMS.** Miguel de Cervantes and the other great figures of the early Golden Age thus attempted to adapt classical forms to native traditions and

Spanish realities. In the plays that he wrote around 1600 Cervantes relied on a four-act structure, and he drew a clear distinction between tragic and comic forms. One of his earliest successes, *Numancia*, dealt with a tragic event from Spain's ancient past, the destruction of the Celtic Iberian city of Numantia in the second century B.C.E. The play has since seen many revivals at crisis points in Spanish history, as, for instance, during the Napoleonic Wars of the early nineteenth century and in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) of the twentieth. It did not produce a wide circle of admirers, though, when first staged in the early seventeenth century. By 1615, shortly before his death, Cervantes tried to adapt to a new style, shifting the directions of his theatrical writing to conform to a quicker paced three-act comic formula. By then, the author's taste for grand themes, carefully and subtly elaborated, had marked many of his earlier plays as outdated. He published eight of his plays in the new three-act formula, a formula that owed its existence to the rising popularity of works by Lope Felix de Vega Carpio (1562–1635). In his plays Lope drew no distinction between comic and tragic forms, dividing each of his plays into a three-act production—a factor that made them relatively easy to stage in the emerging commercial houses. He also relied on quick action coupled with witty, octosyllabic verses—traits that were very different from Cervantes' Renaissance sensibilities, with their tendency toward the gradual elaboration of grand themes. Into his new three-act formula Lope poured historical, religious, and mythological themes, and at the height of his popularity he completed a new play every few weeks. In his lifetime he may have written as many as 1,800 dramas, and the more than 300 of these that survive today show that he had a tremendous talent for creating engaging and appealing works. Still, despite this enormous productivity, great variety exists in his enormous opus—so much variety, in fact, that scholars are still finding hidden treasure in his works today. Lope often started with a scenario drawn from his reading of history, an incident from Spain's past, from the lives of the saints, or from mythology. To each of his creations he brought a fresh perspective, so that even plays that seem to share similar themes are, upon closer inspection, very different from one another. When he died in 1635, his funeral became an event of public mourning in Madrid. By that time, though, his example had inspired many other authors in Spain to undertake writing for the stage. By 1632, for instance, one commentator listed almost eighty contemporary playwrights active in Castile alone. Some of these figures were as prolific as Lope de Vega, and as a result thousands of plays survive from seventeenth-century Spain.



**TOWARD THE FUTURE.** The enormous outburst of dramatic creativity that appeared in both Spain and England as the Renaissance faded into the new Baroque sensibilities rested on a firm foundation of native tradition and classical models. Like much of the theater of England in the years immediately following 1600, Spain produced many excellent, mediocre, and bad dramas at the same time. The enormous popularity of the new commercial theater reveals important changes that were at work in European society. In place of the community plays staged in the Middle Ages, the tendency appeared for drama to be mounted more and more by a paid cast of professional actors whose primary job was to entertain. Although seventeenth-century society remained vastly poor by modern standards, the increasing division of labor that was appearing in these societies, coupled with rapid urbanization, produced a public with more leisure time, more disposable cash, and a discriminating taste for the drama, indeed for all entertainments. The results of this transformation, rooted in subtle shifts of taste and larger economic realities, helped sustain the theater as one of Europe's most important art forms into modern times.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Theater*

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### LUDOVICO ARIOSTO

1474–1533

*Poet*

*Dramatist*

**LIFE.** Humanist studies shaped this future poet's early life. Born the son of a count and a scholar, Ariosto received instruction from the humanist Luca Ripa before attending the University of Ferrara in northern Italy. Like many future poets and literary figures, Ariosto originally planned for a career in law, but during his student years he continued to embrace humanist studies, delivering the annual address that commenced the starting of

the university's academic year in 1495. By 1500 Ariosto's father's death brought new responsibilities to the young philosopher, who was now responsible for the other members of his family. To deal with the financial responsibilities, he joined the court of Cardinal Ippolito D'Este, a prominent high-ranking church official and a member of the ruling house at Ferrara. In this capacity he fulfilled a variety of roles, among them conducting diplomatic journeys to other courts in Italy. Ariosto stayed with the cardinal until 1517, when he was dismissed for refusing to follow his employer on a trip to Hungary. The poet soon found employment with the cardinal's brother, Alfonso I, who was then ruler of the duchy of Ferrara. Although Ariosto frequently complained about his employment with the D'Este family, he maintained good relations with Ippolito and Alfonso's sister, Isabella D'Este, one of the most cultivated court ladies of the Renaissance. Isabella D'Este, herself a duchess of Mantua, was one of Ariosto's trusted correspondents, and he kept her informed of the progress on his major epic poem, the *Orlando furioso*, or *Mad Roland*. In Alfonso's employment Ariosto was given a position as a remote official in a mountainous region between Ferrara and Florence. Although he dispensed these duties admirably, he disliked life outside the city, and he eventually returned to Ferrara. To further his career, Ariosto had earlier taken holy orders, but in 1528 he secretly married Alessandra Benucci and the two indulged their love for literature during Ariosto's final years. Shortly before his death Ariosto also prepared a final edition of his *Orlando* for publication, lengthening the work to its present state.

**DRAMA.** By the end of the fifteenth century Ferrara enjoyed an enviable reputation as the most cultivated court in Italy. As a humanistically educated figure, Ariosto was able to read Greek and Latin, and his dramatic works and poetry bear the influence of that early training. At the same time the author was a path breaker who adopted influences not just from the classical past but also from medieval romances and epics and even from the language of the contemporary street. Much of the tone of what he wrote was satirical, and he directed his wit gently against the confines of contemporary court life. To each project he brought a cultivated, yet imaginative perspective. His works did not slavishly imitate Antiquity. Instead he creatively reworked his inspirations into new forms that, in turn, inspired their own imitators. In the generation before Ariosto came to maturity the court at Ferrara had emerged as one center in which the ancient Roman comedies of Plautus and Terence were enthusiastically studied. Since the 1470s the D'Este

family had supported the revival of classical comedy by undertaking an annual festival in which the dramas of Plautus and Terence were performed. To underscore their court's great learning, the comedies were usually performed in their classical Latin, with a separate production staged in Italian translation following the original. Ariosto may have acted in one of these productions during the 1490s, but by 1510, he had produced two works that made use of the conventions of the ancient dramatic form: *The Coffer Comedy* and *The Pretenders*. These plays proved to be influential in establishing Italian erudite comedy, a new genre in which Roman dramatic forms inspired plays about daily life in contemporary times. In the preface to the printed version of *The Pretenders* Ariosto explained his own ideas about the imitation of classical models. He stressed an idea that was popular at the time among Italy's artists and authors, that is, that the imitation of classical models provided a secure form in which one's own native creativity could flourish. This imitation, he warned, should not strive merely to recreate Roman drama. Instead contemporary playwrights should evidence a creativity similar to that of the ancient Romans when they adapted Greek forms for use in their own theater.

**IMPACT.** In their day Ariosto's comedies were an important force in establishing the new theatrical forms of erudite comedy in Italy. Later writers in Northern Europe and Spain also made use of them for material for plays in their own language. Shakespeare adapted some scenes of *The Pretenders* in his comedy *The Taming of the Shrew*. Ariosto published several of his comedies in both prose and verse versions, and thus his works inspired writers anxious to develop comedy in both forms. While the comedies were important in sixteenth-century Italy, the author's *Orlando furioso* was an even more inspiring work of fiction. A long epic poem that treated the exploits of Roland, a figure in the early medieval court of Charlemagne, was set against the backdrop of Christian-Muslim conflict, a theme that seemed strikingly contemporary to sixteenth-century Europeans as they waged battle against the expansion of the Turks in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. The *Furioso* continued to inspire poets, playwrights, and musicians until the nineteenth century. Among the artists who relied upon its vast scope were Lope de Vega in seventeenth-century Spain and the composer Georg Frederick Handel and the painter Fragonard in eighteenth-century England and France, respectively.

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## ALEXANDRE HARDY

c. 1575–1632

### Playwright

**LIFE.** Little is known about the circumstances of the French playwright Alexandre Hardy's early life or education. He was born sometime around 1575, but later attempts by theater historians to construct his biography must be looked at cautiously, since few documents survive that allow us to construct his life. Like the Golden Age Spanish playwright, Lope de Vega, Hardy was similarly prolific, although his crowd-pleasing style has more similarities to the popular commercial theater of the Renaissance than to the greater finesse achieved during the great age of achievement that developed in French theater by the mid-seventeenth century. In a long career Hardy claimed to have written more than 600 plays. Unfortunately, only 34 of these survive, a sampling that allows us to gauge his talents, which most critics have insisted lay in his lyrical poetic style. Hardy's plots, by contrast, were often problematic, although his plays had a wide appeal.

At the time Hardy wrote for the Parisian stage, the medieval Confraternity of the Passion still controlled Paris's chief theater, the Hôtel de Bourgogne. In 1402 the French crown had given the Confraternity a monopoly to stage religious plays in Paris. The organization developed as a guild of amateur actors until 1548, when the local Parliament or town council outlawed the staging of the traditional religious mystery cycles. In the same year, though, the confraternity remodeled a hall inside the former residence of the Dukes of Burgundy in the city, the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and began to stage farces and other light entertainments before a paid audience. The group also rented out their facility to other troupes, and because they still possessed a medieval monopoly, anyone hoping to stage a drama in Paris had to do so under their auspices. In effect, the Confraternity thus became the chief royal censors, charged with inspecting the material that was to be performed before Parisian subjects. The theater in the Hotel de Bourgogne flourished for a while, but during the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598), civil disruption in France exacted a toll on its popularity. Most tragedies written during this period

served as a kind of literary commentary on the bleak course of the wars and never made it to the stage. Light comedies continued to be written and produced, but the 1570s and 1580s produced scores of plays that have long since been forgotten. Around 1600, Alexandre Hardy, working in tandem with Valleran Le Conte, advanced the development of a popular, commercial theater in France. In 1599 Le Conte brought his company of players to the city from the provinces for a three-month term at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Hardy may have already been connected to the group as an actor or writer at this time, or his connections may have developed somewhat later. But over the next thirty years he wrote for Le Conte's company a series of immensely popular successes. Like many theaters at the time, the Hôtel de Bourgogne was a scene of raucous and bawdy humor and of audiences that might erupt into fistfights at any time. By keeping his audience in rapt attention, Hardy ensured that the fighting was on the stage rather than in the theater's pit. His plays were action packed, with many short scenes and frequent plot twists. They were also graphic and visually spectacular in a way similar to the medieval mysteries. Arms were severed, eyes plucked out, and nothing seems to have been left to the imagination. In addition, his works called for spectacular special effects, all of which garnered for the Le Conte troupe a wide audience in the city of Paris. Hardy drew his subjects from classical Antiquity or from later historical events, and he displayed a fondness for making these events into tragedies and tragicomedies. These dramas show that he must have possessed a smattering of humanist education, but, unlike later French playwrights of the seventeenth century, he did not imitate Aristotle's classical definitions of tragedy. Instead he thrust the action of his dramas forward through a true dramatic sense of how a play should unfold. While Hardy's plays are not important in the modern French repertoire, his career nevertheless advanced the history of the French stage. When Hardy arrived on the scene in Paris around 1600, the French theater was dominated by short farces, interludes, and other genres that were largely traditional. Tragedy had, by and large, made little impact on French drama, outside of the Senecan-styled tragedies that were read by a learned audience. Hardy relied on the form and created an audience for staged tragedies, and in so doing he created commercial successes. He also seems to have been the first French playwright to earn his living exclusively from the theater. Although his plays certainly lacked the finesse and elegance of the later French masters Racine, Corneille, or Molière, it is difficult to imagine how these playwrights could have achieved their successes without the audience that Hardy created for them.

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## CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

1564–1593

### *Playwright*

**EARLY LIFE.** Marlowe grew up in Cambridge, the home of England's famous university. His father was a local shoemaker who had settled there after traveling about the country as an itinerant worker, and the young Marlowe was educated as befitted the family's rise in status. At fifteen he received a scholarship set aside for poor children at a secondary school, and a few years later he entered Corpus Christi College at the university. Under the terms of his scholarship Marlowe could receive four years of support, but he could extend this term another three years by promising to enter the clergy, which he did. At the end of his seven years at Cambridge, he took the MA degree, but only after a row in the university caused by his decision to abandon the priesthood. During his later years at Cambridge, Marlowe was also absent for long periods, having been recruited to serve as an agent of the queen by her powerful minister Thomas Walsingham. Walsingham sent Marlowe to the French city of Rheims to investigate rumors of plots being hatched there against Elizabeth. Later these duties undertaken for the queen excited rumors that Marlowe had converted to Roman Catholicism while in France. At the time of the dispute about the awarding of his degree in 1587, however, several members of the Privy Council wrote to the officials at Cambridge to assure them of Marlowe's orthodox Protestant beliefs.

**LONDON.** Marlowe's first literary endeavor had been a translation of the love poetry of Ovid into English pentameter couplets, a work that he already had undertaken during his days at Cambridge. As he took up residence in London, this capable but sometimes stilted verse can be seen at work in the first play upon which Marlowe worked, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. In the city Marlowe came into contact with the University Wits, a group of educated and urbane men who were then beginning to write for the London stage. He seems to have worked on *Dido* with one of the wits, Thomas Nashe, and at the

time, he lived with another playwright, Thomas Kyd, author of the wildly popular play *The Spanish Tragedy*. Marlowe's first great success was *Tamburlaine the Great*, a play written late in 1587 and staged early in the next year by the Lord Admiral's Men. In *Tamburlaine* the author demonstrated the powers of simple unrhymed or blank verse. The commanding presence of the Tudor actor Edward Alleyn in the central role also enhanced performances of the play. *Tamburlaine*, however, was a morally ambiguous play by the standards of the time. Most Tudor drama up to this point had sought to defend queen, country, and conventional mores as orthodoxies that needed to be upheld at any cost. The central character in Marlowe's work, Tamburlaine, is a peasant rebel who, while doomed to failure, seizes power and founds his own religion. This attack on authority returned to haunt Marlowe at the very end of his life. But in 1588, the drama inspired a number of imitative plays; encouraged by his success Marlowe explored blank verse's potential and other innovative possibilities in his subsequent dramas. These included *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1589), which drew upon some elements of Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*; his bleak *Edward II*, which greatly opened up the possibilities of the genre of the historical play (c. 1592); and *Dr. Faustus* (c. 1588–1592).

**LAST YEAR.** During the last year of his short life, Marlowe experienced a series of adventures, and these may have ultimately contributed to his murder on 30 May 1593. In 1592 an outbreak of plague in the city closed London's theaters for a long period. Like other playwrights, including Shakespeare, Marlowe tried to support himself during the closure by writing poetry for noble patrons. Unsuccessful, he traveled to the Netherlands where he lived in the house of a counterfeiting goldsmith. Marlowe and the goldsmith found themselves denounced to the local English governor in the Netherlands, Elizabeth's agent Robert Sidney, for their part in the counterfeiting scheme, and the two accused each other of intending to defect to Roman Catholicism. During testimony given to Sidney, Marlowe admitted to being an intimate of two high-ranking English Catholics, rivals to Elizabeth I's throne. Although he escaped condemnation and returned to London, he soon fell afoul of the law and the queen's council again. First arrested for disrupting the public peace by London magistrates, he then faced even more serious charges that he was involved in a plot being hatched both by Catholics and atheists to murder the queen. On 18 May 1593, he was arrested and brought before the Privy Council on charges of espionage and blasphemy; although he posted bail, he reported each day before the queen's officials. When

Queen Elizabeth heard evidence of Marlowe's atheistic pronouncements, she commanded that he be prosecuted to the maximum extent allowed by the law, in effect a death sentence. Marlowe was never able to defend himself against these charges. On his way to court, he died after being stabbed in the eye. The murder of Christopher Marlowe has long remained a mystery. The inquest held a few days later concluded that Marlowe's killer, Ingram Frizer, had acted in self-defense following a quarrel over money. But the playwright's long-term involvement in espionage has long made it plausible that Marlowe was murdered because he fell afoul of certain factions in Elizabeth I's court or because of his intimate knowledge of royal affairs. After Marlowe's death London's playwrights celebrated his poetic genius, and his influence lived on in further explorations of blank verse in later plays. At the same time the city's Puritan ministers continued to attack Marlowe's ideas and dramas as blasphemous and as a sign of the decadence and corruption that the public theater bred in urban society.

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## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564–1616

*Poet*

*Playwright*

**EARLY LIFE.** Myth and conjecture surround the life of England's greatest poet. Shakespeare's date of birth is relatively certain since he was baptized in the parish church in Stratford-upon-Avon on 26 April 1564, and was thus born in the same year as the innovative Tudor dramatist Christopher Marlowe. Shakespeare's father was a prosperous local glove maker who fell on hard times around 1577. Despite this hardship the young Shakespeare probably attended a "petty" or elementary school, followed by a term at the King's New School in Stratford, where he received a Latin education. Typically, a child entered a school like King's at the age of seven and faced long hours of instruction each day. The

student generally devoted himself to the study of Latin from around six or seven in the morning until five in the afternoon. In this traditional curriculum students read Ovid, Terence, Plautus, and Vergil. It was from these relatively modest beginnings that Shakespeare began to cull his encyclopedic knowledge of the ancients, although, unlike the University Wit playwrights popular in late sixteenth-century London, Shakespeare never attended university. Instead he entered into a hastily arranged marriage with Anne Hathaway, who gave birth to a daughter Susanna six months after the couple exchanged their vows. In the years following his marriage Shakespeare scrambled to find some way to support his growing family. While no documents exist to establish his participation, it has long seemed plausible that he first entered a traveling troupe of actors sometime after 1585. No mention of him, either as an actor or playwright, survives until 1592, when the dramatist Robert Greene attacked Shakespeare as an “upstart crow” in one of his own plays. Greene’s accusations allow us to determine that Shakespeare was by then already a rising star in the London theater.

**QUESTIONS OF AUTHORSHIP.** Shakespeare’s explosion onto the London theater scene has puzzled historians ever since the eighteenth century, and some have long doubted that the William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon could actually have written the plays long ascribed to him. A variety of theories still circulate that try to link these plays with other great literary figures of the age. Usually it is suggested that while Shakespeare was an actor upon the London stage, some high-ranking noble who wished to see his dramas performed used Shakespeare’s name. This subterfuge, so-called Anti-Stratfordians have long alleged, was necessary because English nobility considered the stage to be a disreputable career. In all Anti-Stratfordian theories one key issue revolves around the playwright’s education, since many have long doubted that a figure such as Shakespeare, who lacked a university education, could have written these brilliant dramas, filled as they are with rich classical allusions, knowledge of contemporary science, and a love of history. Among the many Tudor nobles who have been put forward as possible authors for the plays are Sir Francis Bacon, the earl of Southampton; Anthony Bacon; and Edward de Vere, the earl of Oxford. While some experts have espoused these theories, the majority of contemporary scholars discount them. Although many playwrights in sixteenth-century London were university-educated, that was not universally the case. At the time, university training in England largely served those desiring to undertake careers in the church, and it did not

necessarily provide the background in literary studies necessary to write great plays. Shakespeare’s early training in his grammar and Latin schools, coupled with his own voluminous reading in the classics, could have provided him with a sufficient education.

**CAREER.** The plays of Shakespeare’s early maturity show rich influences from the Roman stage, particularly in his early comedies produced during the 1590s. In time, he acquired a more independent voice, gradually perfecting the history play to a high point of finesse. The first signs of this brilliant transformation can be seen in his *Richard III* (c. 1594). Here he narrated the conflicts of the fifteenth-century War of the Roses through the figure of Richard III, portraying Richard’s inept leadership and savagery within a general environment of political disorder and quarreling. Until Marlowe’s day, the Tudor history play had often represented a confused jumble of chronicle-styled scenes. In his *Edward II* (c. 1589), Marlowe had first expanded the genre by adding elements of classical tragedy. Shakespeare raised the history play to high art. He followed the initial success of *Richard III* with a brilliant cycle of plays narrating the life of Henry V, and somewhat later by the great Roman historical tragedies of *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Although Shakespeare’s writing was already highly polished from the first performances of his plays, he continued to develop and refine these skills, particularly in the period between 1599 and 1610. In these years he produced his greatest works, including the comedies, *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing* and the tragedies, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. But there were many other successes that might be added to this list, successes that made Shakespeare a relatively prosperous man in his later years. Around 1611, he seems to have entered into a period of retirement from which he emerged briefly in 1613 to write with John Fletcher the play *Henry VIII*, treating the life of the famous Tudor king. In 1616 he died at the age of fifty-three.

**INFLUENCE.** The impact of Shakespeare’s plays on the development of the English language can hardly be overestimated. Next to the translations of the Bible into English and the *Book of Common Prayer*, Shakespeare shares a unique place in the history of English. His influence over subsequent literature was similarly enormous. Milton, Keats, Wordsworth, the American Herman Melville, and the Russian Leo Tolstoy are just a few of the scores of authors whose works betray influences from Shakespeare. At the same time, the playwright’s impact on the theater was similarly profound, as operas, ballets, and other theatrical works have continued to be inspired by his plays into modern times.

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## TORQUATO TASSO

1544–1595

*Poet**Playwright*

The last major literary genius the Italian Renaissance produced was Torquato Tasso (1544–1595). His life and work show the influence that the increasingly puritanical tastes of the Counter Reformation produced upon literary fashions in the second half of the sixteenth century. Tasso was born in Sorrento near the city of Naples in southern Italy, where his father Bernardo served as a courtier to the Baron of Salerno. Bernardo was forced to leave that position when he opposed the establishment of the Inquisition in nearby Naples. During the 1550s, Torquato traveled with his father, who had to take a series of insecure court positions in northern and central Italy to support the family. While on these travels, Tasso acquired an excellent education, but he also became familiar with the uncertainties that could plague a courtier's life if he failed to please his prince. In 1560, he entered the University of Padua, where his father wanted him to pursue a legal career that would free him from the need to secure literary patronage. Young Tasso, though, preferred poetry and philosophy to the law, and in these years, he began some of the poems that would eventually establish his fame. He began the chief of these works, *Jerusalemme liberata* or *Jerusalem Delivered*, at this time, although he did not finish it until many years later. Tasso conceived the poem as a chivalric epic similar to those of Ariosto, Boiardo, and Pulci. Its tastes, though, were more moral and religiously profound than these earlier works. While Tasso did not completely abandon the complex plot twists, eroticism, or adventurism of the chivalric romance, he sublimated these features to the higher themes of love and heroic valor.

**TRIALS.** Completing *Jerusalem Delivered*, though, proved to be a lifelong, tortuous task. After leaving the university, Tasso received patronage from a wealthy and

influential cardinal at Ferrara. He had few duties except to write and amuse the cardinal's court in the city of Ferrara. In this environment Tasso circulated his poems, realizing that his works might cause offense in the heightened moral climate of the day. Over time, Tasso grew suspicious of his critics, and he feared being denounced to the Inquisition. He confessed his wrongdoings to the body when he had not even been summoned. Eventually, he stabbed a household servant whom he suspected of spying on him and then fled Ferrara. He left behind his manuscripts for *Jerusalem Delivered* and spent several years wandering through Italy. Later he returned to Ferrara where he denounced his former patrons, who imprisoned him, believing him to be mad. After seven years spent in an asylum, Tasso finally regained his freedom, his sanity, and his writings. His exaggerated, often paranoid fears of being persecuted by the Inquisition colored *Jerusalem Delivered*, and Tasso practiced a thorough self-censorship to avoid giving offense. Nevertheless, he still raised the chivalric tale he told to the level of high art.

**DRAMAS.** *Jerusalem Delivered* was Tasso's masterpiece, and was quickly recognized as such. Translations of it appeared in France, England, and Spain relatively quickly, and the work became an important source for later dramas. By 1591, the epic poem had been translated into English, and Shakespeare may be among the many artists who adapted scenes from the work in his *Cymbeline*. In his capacity as a court artist at Ferrara, though, Tasso was responsible for composing intermezzi and other dramatic entertainments for the court. Many of these were short and soon forgotten, although the writer still managed to keep up an enormous output. Two of his dramas were more influential: his *Aminta*, (1573) and *King Torrismondo* (1578). *Torrismondo* was a tragedy, inspired by a work of Sophocles that warned of the consequences of illicit love. *Aminta*, by contrast, was a pastoral play and soon became the most influential drama of its kind in the later Renaissance. The play relates the story of a young shepherd poet, Aminta, and his love for the natural but chaste Silvia. Both the setting and the characters are highly idealized, and the play's beautiful love poetry was widely read and copied. The highly respected Gelosi troupe first performed the play at a country villa outside Ferrara in 1573. The play's popularity was, like *Jerusalem Delivered*, immediate, and inspired the writing of at least 200 similar pastorals by the end of the sixteenth century in Italy. Its influence stretched beyond Italy to embrace all European countries, and its conventions and language have been discovered in several later works by William Shakespeare,

including *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In France and Spain imitators of Tasso's *Aminta* similarly garnered a wide audience for Renaissance pastoral.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Theater*

Aristotle, *Poetics* (350 B.C.E.)—Known only in fragmentary and corrupt versions until the late fifteenth century, the *Poetics* inspired a revolution in drama in Renaissance Europe. Aristotle outlined the classical forms used to stage plays in Greek, treated their underlying logic, and stressed that the drama was a living art form that needed to be performed in order to influence human passions.

*Everyman* (c. 1495)—Originally a dramatic interlude within the much longer morality play, *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Everyman* became one of the most popular of sixteenth-century plays. It relies on allegorical conventions to chart the progress of an everyday soul through the trials of this world and to final religious consolation. The first surviving manuscripts of the play were written in Dutch, but the text was popular and translated into many languages. It is still performed today.

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Mandrake Root* (1517)—A popular comedy in early sixteenth-century Florence, Machiavelli's *Mandrake Root* helped to establish the conventions of erudite comedy in Italy.

Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus* (c. 1490)—This play was a great Tudor theatrical classic based upon a tale that had originated in late sixteenth-century Germany and which was widely distributed in various translations throughout Europe. Marlowe's realization of the theme—a tale in which a Renaissance alchemist sells his soul to the devil in exchange for wisdom—was among the most successful. It relied on the author's vigorous style of blank verse, and resulted in many subsequent adaptations in opera and theater.

Seneca, *Tragedies* (c. 65 C.E.)—The Renaissance knew of these ancient tragedies as early as the fourteenth century. Seneca's dramatic theory stressed that the tragic form was best treated as a literary genre. As a result, tragedies written in the Renaissance were long "closet dramas," intended to be read rather than performed in public.

Sebastiano Serlio, *Architecture* (1545)—This was a major work by an influential architect that shaped sixteenth-century theater design. Serlio wrote his *Architecture* throughout his life, and the final sections were not published until 1578, long after his death. The 1545 edition published at Paris, however, treated the subject of theater design, and Serlio's treatment of the construction of stages and theaters stressed adapting models from ancient times.

William Shakespeare, *Plays* (c. 1592–1613)—The author's voluminous output still continues to inspire modern readers and audiences everywhere, not only in England but in translations that are staged around the world. The dramas are a gold mine for anyone hoping to recover the history of the most popular commercial theater in Renaissance Europe.

Nicholas Udall, *Ralph Roister Doister* (c. 1534)—This was the first English comedy to make use of the revived knowledge of the ancient Roman dramas of Terence and Plautus. Udall, headmaster of the elite public school at Eton, intended the comedy for performance among his students.

chapter nine

VISUAL ARTS

Philip M. Soergel

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	358	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS <i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	361	<i>Contracts</i> (Ghirlandaio's contracts show constraints placed on artists by patrons). . . . .	365
TOPICS		<i>On Painting</i> (Alberti defines standards of technique for artists) . . . . .	368
The Early Renaissance in Italy . . . . .	363	<i>Italian Admirers</i> (Fazio praises Jan van Eyck). . . . .	380
The Early Renaissance In Northern Europe . . . . .	376	<i>Strange Fantasies</i> (Van Mander comments on Bosch's work) . . . . .	382
The High Renaissance in Italy . . . . .	386	<i>Artistic Precocity</i> (Vasari praises Leonardo da Vinci) . . . . .	387
The High and Later Renaissance in Venice. . . . .	398	<i>Espionage and Intrigue</i> (Vasari discusses controversy between Raphael and Michelangelo). . . . .	394
Late Renaissance and Mannerist Painting in Italy . . . . .	405	<i>An Art Critic</i> (Aretino praises Titian's work) . . . . .	399
The Arts in Sixteenth-Century Northern Europe . . . . .	412	<i>Counter Reformation</i> (Paleotti attempts to reform religious art) . . . . .	404
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		<i>The Natural Offense</i> (Vasari comments on <i>The Last Judgment</i> by Michelangelo) . . . . .	406
Albrecht Dürer . . . . .	420	<i>Mourning a Friend</i> (Ercole mourns his friend Giulio Romano) . . . . .	409
Giotto . . . . .	422	<i>Reflections on Dürer</i> (Camerarius gives a personal description of Albrecht Dürer). . . . .	413
Hans Holbein. . . . .	422	<i>Master of Nature</i> (Van Mander admires the work of Pieter Bruegel) . . . . .	418
Leonardo da Vinci . . . . .	424		
Michelangelo . . . . .	425		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	426		



## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Visual Arts*

- c. 1302 The Gothic artist Cimabue dies.
- c. 1305 Giotto completes his frescoes in the Arena Chapel at Padua.
- 1319 The great Sienese painter Duccio dies.
- 1333 Duccio's pupil, Simone Martine, completes his *Annunciation*.
- 1334 The painter Giotto is appointed to oversee work on the cathedral at Florence. When completed, the church will be the largest in Europe.
- 1337 Giotto dies.
- c. 1338 Ambrogio Lorenzetti paints his frescoes *Allegory of Good Government* in the town hall at Siena.  
  
In France, Jean Pucelle produces manuscript illuminations influenced by the naturalism of Italian artists.
- c. 1350 Work stops on the cathedral of Florence.
- 1381 The sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti is born.
- 1400 The devout painter Fra Angelico, the "Angelic Brother," is born in Florence.
- 1401 The great painter Masaccio is born.
- 1419 A competition is held for bronze doors for the Baptistery of the Cathedral at Florence. Among the seven contestants are Lorenzo Ghiberti and Filippo Brunelleschi; Ghiberti wins the competition.
- 1421 Gentile da Fabriano, a painter trained in the traditions of northeastern Italy and northern Europe, arrives in Florence.
- 1424 Ghiberti completes 28 bronze panels for the north doors of the Baptistery at Florence. One year later he begins a second set of doors, which will be named the *Gates of Paradise* by Michelangelo.
- 1428 Masaccio completes his *Trinity* for the Church of Sta. Maria Novella in Florence.
- 1430 Donatello casts his bronze *David with the Head of Goliath* for the Medici family at Florence.
- 1431 The sculptor Lucca della Robbia begins a musicians' balcony for the Cathedral of Florence that makes use of compositional and stylistic techniques drawn from ancient Rome.
- c. 1435 Jan van Eyck completes his *Arnolfini Wedding*, a wedding portrait of an Italian merchant and his bride at Bruges that is notable for its extreme realism.  
  
Alberti writes *On Painting*, a work that codifies the use of single-point perspective for Renaissance artists.
- c. 1445 Paolo Uccello makes brilliant use of Alberti's perspective in a group of frescoes for the Church of Sta. Maria Novella in Florence.  
  
The sculptor Rossellino designs a classical tomb for the humanist Leonardo Bruni at Florence.
- 1450 A Jubilee is celebrated at Rome. Among those in attendance is Roger van der Weyden, a Flemish painter who will take Italian artistic insights back to his post as court painter at Brussels, at the time in the Duchy of Burgundy.
- 1452 Ghiberti's bronze *Gates of Paradise* are finished in Florence.  
  
Leonardo da Vinci is born at Anchiano near Vinci.

- c. 1453 Piero della Francesca completes a series of frescoes for the Church of San Francesco in Arezzo.
- The sculptor Donatello is at work on his emotional *Mary Magdalene*.
- 1464 Leon Battista Alberti completes his *On the Statue*, a work that analyzes classical proportions.
- c. 1470 Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary, begins to import Italian Renaissance art and to foster the development of a Renaissance artistic culture in his kingdom.
- 1475 Michelangelo is born at Caprese, a small Tuscan village. His father, an official of the Florentine government, moves the family back to Florence when Michelangelo is six-months old.
- 1478 Botticelli completes his *Primavera* or *Birth of Spring* at Florence, a painting that shows the growing fondness for secular and classical themes among the cultured elite of the city.
- c. 1480 The painter Domenico Ghirlandaio ranks among the most successful of painters for Florence's wealthy banking and patrician families. Michelangelo will eventually become an apprentice in his studio.
- 1483 The painter Raphael is born at Urbino.
- Leonardo da Vinci leaves Florence to work for the Duke of Milan. In that year he completes his *Madonna of the Rocks*, now in the Louvre in Paris.
- 1496 Michelangelo arrives in Rome for the first time. During this first period in the church's capital he will complete his *Pietà*.
- 1498 Leonardo da Vinci finishes his *Last Supper* for the refectory of the monastery of Sta. Maria delle Grazie in Milan.
- The German Albrecht Dürer is at work painting his early *Self-Portraits*.
- 1500 Pope Alexander VI declares a Jubilee at Rome; numerous artistic projects are undertaken as a result of these celebrations.
- c. 1503 Leonardo da Vinci is at work on his *Mona Lisa*.
- 1504 Michelangelo completes his famous *David* at Florence. The work is carved from a long unused piece of marble that contained a large flaw, and is received as a masterpiece.
- c. 1505 The painter Hieronymus Bosch is active in the Netherlands.
- 1506 Pope Julius II decides to rebuild St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and has workmen begin the demolition of the ancient structure upon the site. Julius will enthusiastically support many artistic projects until his death in 1513.
- 1508 Raphael arrives in Rome to begin work on frescoes for the papal apartments in the Vatican.
- Michelangelo begins the ceiling frescoes for the Sistine Chapel.
- 1511 Albrecht Dürer integrates lessons he has learned from his journey to Italy in his panel painting, *Adoration of the Virgin* completed for a chapel in a home for the elderly in his native Nuremberg.
- 1512 Matthias Grünewald begins his *Isenheim Altarpiece*, one of the most moving and emotional series of pictures of the Renaissance.
- 1513 Giovanni de Medici is elected Pope Leo X; he will spend lavishly on artistic projects.
- 1514 Albrecht Dürer engraves his famous *Saint Jerome in his Study*.
- 1518 Raphael designs the richly decorated Villa Madama at Rome, a pleasure palace that will be much imitated throughout sixteenth-century Europe.

- The painter Titian completes his monumental *Assumption of the Virgin* for the Church of the Frari in Venice.
- The painter Pontormo paints his *Joseph in Egypt*, a work that reflects the new style that will become known as “Mannerism.”
- 1519 Leonardo da Vinci dies at the court of King Francis I in France.
- Michelangelo begins a series of sculptures for the Medici family tomb in the Church of San Lorenzo at Florence.
- 1520 Raphael dies at Rome.
- 1527 Imperial forces of Charles V sack Rome.
- 1528 Albrecht Dürer composes a manual for artists on classical proportions.
- Jacopo Pontormo completes his expressive and emotional *Entombment of Christ* for the Capponi family chapel in Florence.
- 1535 Michelangelo begins work on the *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel.
- 1536 The German portraitist Hans Holbein is given an apartment within the royal palace in London to record the lives of the Tudor court and produce art for King Henry VIII’s enjoyment.
- 1538 The Venetian painter Titian completes his famous *Venus of Urbino*, a luxuriant nude.
- 1540 Parmigianino’s *Madonna of the Long Neck* expresses the growing Mannerist taste for elegant and obscure depictions of traditional religious themes.
- 1547 Michelangelo is appointed the chief builder of the new St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, the largest artistic and architectural project of the sixteenth century.
- 1550 Giorgio Vasari publishes his large collection of biographies entitled *The Lives of the Artists*.
- 1555 Gian Pietro Carafa is elected Pope Paul IV at Rome, and begins to introduce strict counter-reforming measures in the church’s capital.
- 1560 Annibale Carracci, one of the founders of the early Baroque style, is born.
- 1563 The Council of Trent concludes; one of its final sets of decrees addresses the use of religious art. The church fathers at Trent demand that religious art be clear and present a forceful defense of Catholic principles.
- 1564 Michelangelo dies at Rome.
- c. 1565 The Dutch painter Pieter Bruegel paints a number of charming peasant scenes.
- 1573 The Venetian painter Veronese is called before the Inquisition because of the luxurious style of his *Last Supper*.
- 1576 Titian, the greatest of Venice’s sixteenth-century painters, dies.
- El Greco arrives in Spain after training in Venice.
- 1586 El Greco paints his dark and expressive *The Burial of Count Orgaz* in Toledo, Spain.
- c. 1593 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio begins to produce strikingly original paintings at Rome that will form one of the foundations for the new Baroque style.

## OVERVIEW *of Visual Arts*

**IMPLICATIONS.** The Renaissance was a time of unprecedented achievement in the visual arts and in no other area of culture was change so readily evident. In 1300 European painters and sculptors composed their works using symbols and styles that had flourished for several centuries. While much of the art they produced was of great beauty, the imitation of nature was not a high priority for most medieval artists. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a new set of visual sensibilities prompted patrons to demand, and artists to produce, works that represented the world in a new, boldly naturalistic way. This revolution in visual perception began first in Italy, but soon appeared in Northern Europe as well. This episode in European history forms an important chapter in what the great nineteenth-century historian Jacob Burckhardt once called the Renaissance's "discovery of man and the natural world." Alongside these developments arose a new set of assumptions about the role that the artist should play in society. In the Middle Ages, artists were considered craftsmen who worked in the guild system. These attitudes died slowly, and artists usually remained guild members throughout the Renaissance. By 1500, though, figures like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti in Italy and Albrecht Dürer in Germany were insisting that the artist was fueled with an extraordinary, divinely inspired creativity. Some patrons agreed. In the sixteenth century the most successful of Europe's greatest artists lived like princes and presided over large and successful studios of assistants charged with setting their masters' stamp upon the works they created.

**THE EARLY RENAISSANCE.** In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries artistic styles changed dramatically and quickly in Italy, the center of the early Renaissance. Around 1300, the dominant styles in Italian painting favored Byzantium (the Eastern survivor of the Roman Empire) and its traditions of icon painting. The conventions of icon painting expressed symbolic, rather than realistic, representations of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and

the saints. Brilliant colors and intricate precious metal work were also important features of icon painting. During the course of the thirteenth century changes in church ritual gave a new prominence to large altarpiece paintings. These decorated altarpieces, placed directly behind the altar, became more prominent as church law came to require priests to say the Mass standing before, rather than behind the altar. As a result, the size and importance accorded to altarpieces grew throughout the thirteenth century. In Italy, the undisputed master of late thirteenth-century painting was the Florentine painter Cimabue, who strove to achieve a greater naturalism and who tried to introduce depth and solidity into his works—something that had not traditionally been important to the Byzantine-influenced painters of medieval Italy. Cimabue's efforts to introduce a new naturalism into painting were soon eclipsed by Giotto di Bondone, the undisputed genius of fourteenth-century Italian painting. Although Giotto had been trained in the Byzantine manner and many elements of his style remained faithful to those traditions, he surpassed Cimabue's first tentative attempts to introduce weight, solidity, and perspective into his paintings. Giotto's frescoes, in particular, displayed human emotions and attempted to place the human form within spaces that appeared three-dimensional. During the fourteenth century some painters followed his lead, although the Byzantine manner of painting popular in Italy merged also with new influences to forge a new style often referred to as International Gothic. Artists working from this perspective produced paintings and sculptures notable for their religious intensity and stylized, rather than naturalistic presentation.

**FIFTEENTH-CENTURY FLORENCE.** In the first half of the fifteenth century the efforts of the sculptors Lorenzo Ghiberti and Donatello as well as the painter Masaccio produced dramatic changes in the visual arts in the city of Florence. A competition to create new doors for the Baptistery of Florence's cathedral was the catalyst for the development of a new, more naturalistic style. The winner of that competition, Lorenzo Ghiberti, spent most of the rest of his life completing the doors, and in the process he developed a new naturalistic style, influenced by the art of classical antiquity and the humanist culture of Florence. In the world of painting the short-lived genius Masaccio continued along the realistic lines that Giotto had developed in the early Renaissance, but, in addition, he mastered the art of single-point perspective. The frescoes that he completed in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence shortly before his death served as a textbook for subsequent Florentine artists anxious to develop a more realistic depiction of space. In the

generations that followed Masaccio's death, Florence witnessed the growth of a circle of native artists notable for their finesse and technical brilliance. Although the town emerged as the leading artistic center of fifteenth-century Italy, artists elsewhere also began to adopt the perspective and naturalistic style typical of the Florentine Renaissance. By 1500, an artistic circle in Venice, led by Giovanni Bellini, made great strides in the use of oil paints, a departure from the traditional Italian methods of tempera. The new medium, imported from Northern Europe but enhanced in Venice, allowed for a more brilliant rendering of light as well as finer gradations of color. The use of oils revolutionized painting in Venice and eventually throughout Italy in the sixteenth century.

#### **THE EARLY RENAISSANCE IN NORTHERN EUROPE.**

The first tentative movement toward naturalism and a greater freedom of artistic expression occurred in France during the mid-fourteenth century, led by the accomplished manuscript illuminator Jean Pucelle. Most French artists, though, did not widely imitate his example, but instead remained faithful to the canons of International Gothic, a style characterized by a sinuous elegance of line, elaborate folding draperies, and the use of overt symbols. Around 1400, leadership in artistic innovation passed to artists in the Netherlands and Flanders (modern Holland and Belgium). Many of these figures worked in the courts of the Duke of Burgundy or of Duke John of Berry in France. At the end of the fourteenth century, Flanders (a province of modern Belgium) became the dynastic property of Burgundy, and in this region, a burgeoning art market developed. The area's wealthy trading cities fueled this development. Of the many masters that appeared at this time, Jan van Eyck developed a realistic naturalism characterized by the veiled use of symbols. Van Eyck's works contained deeper meanings that the artist conveyed with items seemingly drawn from everyday life. The artist's almost photographic ability to capture reality inspired several generations of Netherlandish artists. The fifteenth century was a time of artistic brilliance in the Low Countries, and the advances that Flemish and Dutch artists made in recreating the natural world had imitators throughout Northern Europe. Around 1500, though, a variety of new styles emerged throughout the region. In Germany, artists strove to integrate Low Country realism with insights they acquired from Italian examples, while in France various native styles were infused with inspiration drawn from other European traditions. By 1500, the stage had been set for a truly widespread flowering of the visual arts in the many artistic centers of Northern Europe.

**THE HIGH RENAISSANCE IN ITALY.** As the fifteenth century drew to a close in Italy, three great masters—Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Raphael Sanzio—came to maturity. The works of these three masters helped to forge the conventions long associated with the art of the High Renaissance. Of the three, Leonardo da Vinci was the oldest and the first to develop a new stylistic direction. A restless personality, da Vinci continually experimented with his art and was at the same time a scholar of nature, architecture, and design. His idealization of the human form and his attempts to render the inward personality of his subjects inspired subsequent artists, even though many of his compositions remained unfinished at his death. The second of the High Renaissance masters, Michelangelo Buonarroti, had a long and varied career as a sculptor, architect, and painter. By disposition, he saw himself primarily as a sculptor and his art was influenced by the Neoplatonic ideas popular in Florence at the time. A member of the Medici circle, Michelangelo strove to present an idealized vision of the human form, although he relied on heavily muscled, monumental figures that resembled classical nudes. He was led, like Leonardo da Vinci, to study human anatomy through the dissection of corpses, and in his sculptures and subsequent paintings he displayed an anatomically correct knowledge of the human form. Called to Rome to work for Pope Julius II, Michelangelo's Roman works—including his masterpiece, the ceiling frescoes of the Sistine Chapel—were major landmarks in the history of world art. Works like these also exercised a formative influence on the subsequent art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The third and youngest of the three masters, Raphael Sanzio, evidenced a completely different character from the restless perfectionist Leonardo da Vinci or the turbulent Michelangelo. Serenity and balance are characteristics of his paintings, and in the many compositions that this short-lived master completed in the city of Rome, he helped to establish a standard of painterly perfection to which many later artists strove.

#### **THE HIGH AND LATER RENAISSANCE IN VENICE.**

In Venice, a different pattern of artistic development and stylistic preferences helped to produce an art that was markedly different from that of central Italy or Rome. During most of the fifteenth century the city had been an artistic backwater. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, however, the artists Giovanni Bellini and Giorgione established a distinctive Venetian school of painting. High Renaissance tendencies, too, soon influenced art in the city, and in the course of the sixteenth century Venice became one of Europe's artistic capitals. Its

major painters—Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese—set new standards in the use of oils on canvas. Their rich use of color, landscape, and urbane settings had imitators throughout Italy and Europe.

**MANNERISM AND LATE RENAISSANCE ART IN ITALY.** In Florence and Rome, the 1510s saw the culmination of High Renaissance style. By the end of the decade, the art of the late Raphael and of Michelangelo was developing in ways that inspired the new movement known as Mannerism. In contrast to the symmetry of High Renaissance artists, Mannerists preferred intricate compositional interlacing of figures that dispersed the characters in their works to the edges of the painting. Many Mannerist artists found inspiration in the heavily muscled figures of Michelangelo and the late Raphael. Most preferred to elongate and attenuate the human form in order to create elegant, sinuous lines. A tendency to favor difficult and obscure themes and iconography is also evident in their work.

**THE VISUAL ARTS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY NORTHERN EUROPE.** In the first half of the sixteenth century the torch of artistic innovation in Northern Europe passed to Germany. Albrecht Dürer developed the graphic arts to a high degree of perfection even as he laid the foundations for a native style of painting. This style made use of techniques the artist had discovered while on his journeys in the Netherlands and Italy. At the same time Dürer helped to create a definite German style, characterized by rich landscapes, florid line, and a keen observation of nature. Hans Holbein, Albrecht Altdorfer, Lucas Cranach, and a lineage of accomplished artists also contributed to the brilliant renaissance of the visual arts in Germany. In the Netherlands, the traditions of Flemish realism continued in the early sixteenth century, although the region's artistic capital began to shift from Bruges and other centers to the once neglected town of Antwerp. These changes, aided by the economic shifts that were at work in the region, eventually re-invigorated the Netherlandish tradition. At Antwerp, a new group of masters adapted the artistic insights of Italian masters, including mannerist painters, to the production of religious art, portraiture, and landscape painting.

**CONCLUSIONS.** The period between 1300 and 1600 witnessed unprecedented changes in artistic styles and innovation in the presentation of nature, space, and the human form. The pattern of these developments was not always linear; older styles frequently survived alongside newer ones, although the direction that European art took in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries inexorably

favored artistic realism and the imitation of life models. In the sixteenth century the Mannerist movement struck a somewhat different chord, with its emphasis on the development of a “stylish style.” These new sensibilities favored images that embodied contemporary notions of elegance and intellectual sophistication. As the sixteenth century progressed, religious currents, too, affected artistic production. Northern European masters found the market for their religious altarpieces threatened by new Protestant sensibilities that often attacked religious art as idolatrous. Portraiture, landscape painting, and other genres gradually replaced the huge demand that had existed in Northern Europe for elaborate religious altarpiece paintings. By contrast, the Roman Catholic Church retained a vital place for religious art, but as the sixteenth century drew to a close, the religious leaders of the Counter-Reformation were at work trying to reform that art. They insisted that the meaning of religious paintings should be clearly intelligible to the unlearned masses and that paintings and sculpture should try to capture and harness the human emotions in order to deepen the people's piety. The new style that resulted from these notions became known as Baroque, and would be heir to the rich pictorial tradition that had flourished during the Renaissance.

## TOPICS in Visual Arts

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### THE EARLY RENAISSANCE IN ITALY

**ENVIRONMENT.** It was in Italy that the artistic values we associate with the Renaissance first began to appear. These values included a new emphasis on naturalistic depiction, on human proportions and human scale in art, and on the rational presentation of observed spaces. During the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries artists in Northern Italy, particularly in Tuscany, devoted themselves to problems of perspective. Eventually, they mastered techniques that allowed them to reproduce spaces that appeared to have real depth on two-dimensional surfaces. This innovation, known as linear perspective, was not to be perfected until the mid-fifteenth century in the paintings of the Florentine artist Masaccio. Thereafter the humanistically trained artist Leon Battista Alberti codified the methods that Masaccio had used and circulated them in his theoretical treatise *On Painting*, which he wrote during the 1430s. The breakthroughs that fifteenth-century Italian artists made

in the depiction of space built upon the work of several generations of artists and sculptors who had gone before. Another vital feature of the Renaissance in the visual arts was a renewed attention to the style and conventions of ancient art. As the homeland of the ancient Roman Empire in Western Europe, Italy possessed many venerable ancient monuments, and traditions of classicizing art and architecture had persisted in the region during the Middle Ages. Fifteenth-century artists, however, began to study more systematically and rigorously the works of classical Antiquity, and they self-consciously tried to revive its harmonious and balanced proportions. Renaissance painters may never have been wedded to classical styles and idioms to the same degree as humanists and literary figures, but the example of antique painting and sculpture provided potent examples of a human-centered art that shaped their stylistic values. As in many other areas of Renaissance cultural achievement, it was Florence that served as the incubator for many of these innovations, although other cities throughout Tuscany—including Siena, Pisa, Perugia, and Arezzo—produced artists whose works both shaped and reflected the styles of the period.

**PATRONAGE.** Renaissance art, however, was not created for an open market, but for wealthy and powerful patrons and religious institutions that commissioned it. In the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance most artists were members of guilds in the cities in which they worked and were considered craftsmen. Throughout Italy the precise guilds to which painters and sculptors belonged differed, but these trade associations limited the supply of master craftsmen and thereby indirectly supported the prices artists could charge for their commissions. In Florence, craftsmen artists satisfied the demands of the town's churches, monasteries, confraternities, as well as its large class of wealthy bankers, merchants, and patricians. Thus the taste of patrons often determined matters of artistic style and content. Histories of art have long stressed Italy's importance as the artistic center of Renaissance Europe. Great art and sculpture were produced everywhere in the period, but Italian artists vastly outproduced artists elsewhere in Europe. As the wealthiest region during most of the Renaissance, Italy's merchants, nobles, and church institutions commissioned an enormous amount of art during the Renaissance. Many forces helped to produce this burgeoning market, including the desire of Italy's princes, local governments, and wealthy citizens to display their wealth and power. Patrons relied upon painting and sculpture to express political ideals, to indulge their tastes for fine craftsmanship, and to immortalize themselves

and their families. The deepening piety of the era, too, stimulated the production of much religious art.

**IMPORTANCE OF IMAGES.** In a world of widespread illiteracy, images took on a special importance. For the illiterate, religious images served as a vital textbook that instructed in the teachings and history of Christianity and the church. For both the learned and unlearned, images conveyed political and religious ideas, and were often tools of propaganda. To express these political positions or religious truths, artists relied upon iconography—a system of symbols that conveyed certain commonly accepted meanings. During the Renaissance the language of iconography expanded greatly, in large part because of the revival of knowledge about ancient religions, philosophy, and mythology. Iconography became an increasingly complex way of communicating meaning, since artists could employ symbols drawn from Christian, Roman, and Greek past as well as from other more obscure traditions. Not every observer understood the sometimes-obscure meanings that artists included in their works. Most contemporaries, though, had some familiarity with the depictions of prominent religious subjects as well as the meanings behind certain artistic conventions and symbols that artists used in their paintings. In the cities preachers often treated the famous historical events of the Bible and the history of the church, recalling to their audience visual images of these incidents. These sermons show us that the visual senses of the inhabitants of a Renaissance city were highly sophisticated. While a large proportion of the population could not read, their knowledge of iconographical symbols was quite broad. The Renaissance painter was expected, then, to visualize the stories that he depicted in ways that fit with people's visual assumptions. Certain conventions of depiction governed the artists' rendition of biblical themes, incidents from the history of the church, or the lives of the saints. Painters did not traverse this sea of artistic creation without guides, however, for there were many iconographical handbooks that prescribed how certain religious themes and subjects should be depicted. For ancient mythological themes, for example, one of the most important guides was Giovanni Boccaccio's *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, a multi-volume work used throughout the Renaissance by artists interested in painting mythological themes. Boccaccio's *Genealogy* presents us with a vital example of how the new humanistic culture of the Renaissance shaped the visual arts. Fueled by the insights that humanist writers made in their study of pagan Antiquity, artists gave a visual shape to the concerns of Renaissance humanists. More generally, though, most painting in the fifteenth-century

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CONTRACTS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The painter Domenico Ghirlandaio was one of the most commercially successful artists working in Florence during the second half of the fifteenth century. He ran a large studio where many apprentices learned their craft. Experience had probably taught Ghirlandaio to be careful about his contracts with his patrons, but these contracts show that painters also worked to a large degree at their patron's whims. The following agreement for the creation of a painting—*The Adoration of the Magi*—between the artist and the prior (the church official) in charge of Florence's Orphanage of the Innocents shows the confines in which fifteenth-century artists worked.

Be it known and manifest to whoever sees or reads this document that, at the request of the reverend Messer Francesco di Giovanni Tesori, presently Prior of the Spedale degli Innocenti at Florence [the Orphanage of the Innocents] and of Domenico di Tomaso di Curado [Ghirlandaio], painter, I, Fra Bernardo di Francesco of Florence, Jesuate Brother, have drawn up this document with my own hand as agreement contract and commission for an altar panel to go in the church of the abovesaid Spedale degli Innocenti with the agreements and stipulations stated below, namely:

That this day 23 October 1485 the said Francesco commits and entrusts to the said Domenico the painting of a panel which the said Francesco has had made and has provided; the which panel the said Domenico is to make good, that is, pay for; and he is to colour and paint the said panel all with his own hand in the manner shown in a drawing on paper with those figures and in that manner

shown in it, in every particular according to what I, Fra Bernardo, think best; not departing from the manner and composition of the said drawing; and he must colour the panel at his own expense with good colours and with powdered gold on such ornaments as demand it, with any other expense incurred on the same panel, and the blue must be ultramarine of the value about four florins the ounce; and he must have made and delivered completed the said panel within thirty months from today; and he must receive as the price of the panel as here described (made at his, that is, the said Domenico's expense throughout) 115 large florins if it seems to me, the abovesaid Fra Bernardo, that it is worth it; and I can go to whoever I think best for an opinion on its value or workmanship, and if it does not seem to me worth the stated price, he shall receive as much less as I, Fra Bernardo, think right; and he must within the terms of the agreement paint the predella of the said panel as I, Fra Bernardo, think good; and he shall receive payment as follows—the said Messer Francesco must give the abovesaid Domenico three large florins every month, starting from 1 November 1485 and continuing after as is stated, every month three large florins. ...

And if Domenico has not delivered the panel within the abovesaid period of time, he will be liable to a penalty of fifteen large florins; and correspondingly if Messer Francesco does not keep to the abovesaid monthly payments he will be liable to a penalty of the whole amount, that is, once the panel is finished he will have to pay complete and in full the balance of the sum due.

**SOURCE:** "Contract between Domenico Ghirlandaio and Francesco di Giovanni Tesori for *The Adoration of the Magi*," in Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972): 6.

Italian world remained Christian in nature, and when rendering religious themes, an artist was expected to convey his subject in a way that was appealing to viewers and which did not distort the subject being portrayed.

**CONTRACTS.** Artists undertook very little painting or sculpture without firm contracts from their patrons. The most successful of Renaissance artists ran studios in which they trained young assistants. They assigned their young apprentices to decorate furniture, paint devotional icons, and undertake other smaller projects. Artists' workshops often sold these creations in much the same way as modern art galleries deal in paintings or sculptures. For the most part, though, artists completed a painting or a sculpture for a client or patron who contracted for a specific work. Hundreds of contracts sur-

vive from Renaissance Italy and these show us that the era's wealthy consumers of art were sophisticated consumers who were actively involved in determining the appearance of these creations. Contracts often stipulated that artists use specific pigments in executing their work, and sometimes these stipulations were quite specific as to the precise amount of the painting's surface that various colors should cover. To satisfy their clients, artists usually presented mockup sketches of the proposed finished product. Painters of recognized skill commanded higher prices for their compositions and certain kinds of painting were more expensive than others. Landscape backgrounds, for instance, resulted in extra charges, and the inclusion of these backgrounds was usually stipulated in the original contract commissioning the work. The



vast majority of Renaissance painting and sculpture was undertaken to satisfy the demands of patrons who contracted for specific works, although some princes employed resident artists who received monthly salaries and moved from project to project at their employer's will.

**STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT.** The great flowering of Renaissance art that occurred in fifteenth-century Florence and other Italian centers built upon late-medieval traditions. During the early fourteenth century Italian artists had grown increasingly innovative. These changes had occurred within a tradition of painting that had long been influenced by the example of Byzantium, the Eastern Mediterranean survivor of the ancient Roman Empire. The painting of religious icons—devotional images of the Virgin Mary and saints—were important foci of popular piety within the Eastern Orthodox Church. The icon painter depicted his subject using hierarchical proportions: Mary and the saints were presented larger than the other figures that surrounded them. The conventions of Byzantine art were also highly stylized and symbolic as well. During the thirteenth century changes in the teachings and practice of the Roman Church had favored the development of new kinds of art. At this time church law required that the priest stand in front of the altar while celebrating the Eucharist during Mass. This opened up the possibility of decorating the area behind the altar with large panel paintings. In Italy, panel paintings became common during the second half of the thirteenth century, and while they were first produced in the prevailing Byzantine style, artists soon experimented with new ways of conveying their subjects. Among the many unidentifiable and shadowy artists of the time, Cenni di Pepi or Cimabue (c. 1240–c. 1302) was considered the greatest master. Although trained in the Byzantine style, Cimabue endowed his figures with greater weight and solidity than the Greek tradition allowed. He also painted using an intuitive perspective and he was the first Italian artist to develop a technique for rendering *chiaroscuro*, that is, light and dark shading. In the coming decades several Italian artists developed these techniques even further.

**GIOTTO.** Although Cimabue experimented, he remained a master in the Byzantine tradition. The first painter who definitively broke with that tradition was the Florentine Giotto di Bondone (c. 1267–1337). Giotto earned recognition for his originality and achievement even in his own times. In his *Divine Comedy*, completed around 1321, the poet Dante celebrated Giotto for surpassing the art of Cimabue. And in his chronicles completed around 1338 the Florentine historian Giovanni Villani listed Giotto as one of the great citizens of

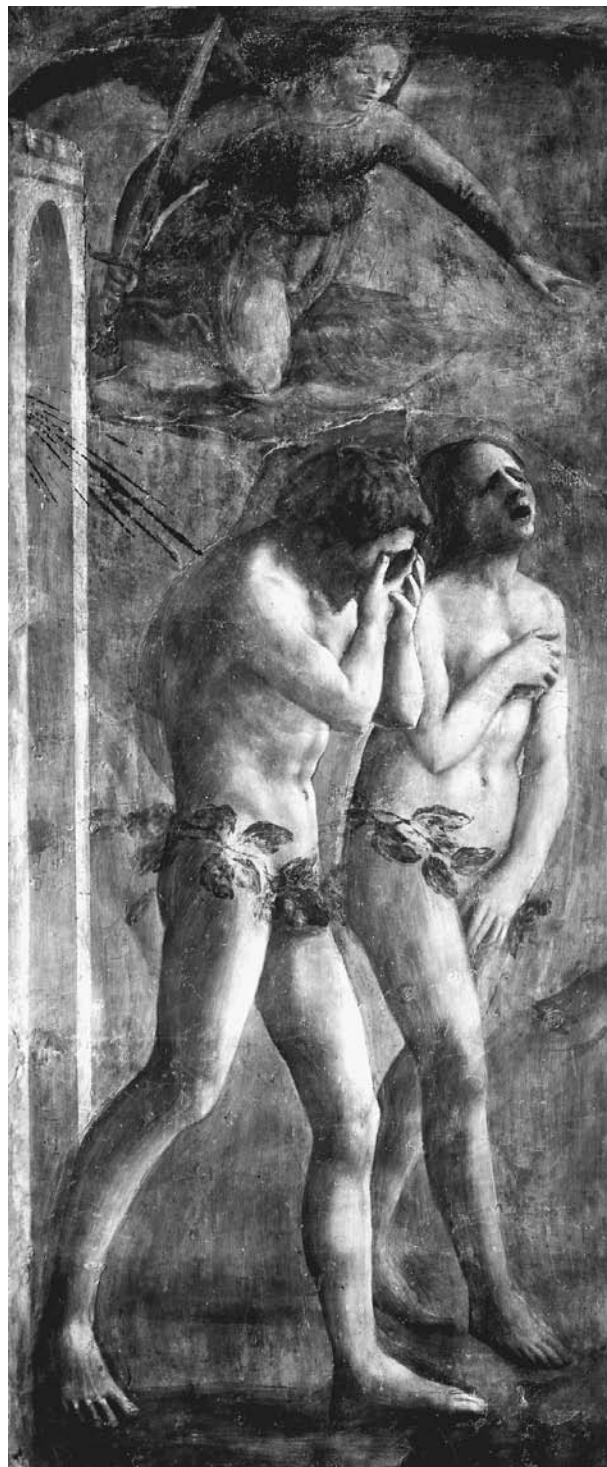
the town. Although Giotto remained tied to medieval styles of painting in many ways, there can be little doubt about the innovative elements of his style. When his works are compared against the greatest artists of his own period, Giotto's unique contribution becomes evident. In his *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, which he completed around 1310 for the Church of All Saints in Florence, Giotto gave his figures weight and solidity. The work is a panel painting that uses the tempera method favored by central Italian artists throughout the Renaissance. In this medium pigments are suspended in egg yolks, showcasing brilliant colors and a paint capable of producing fine distinctions of line. Giotto used the tempera method to introduce light and dark spaces in his work so that the figures in the composition appeared to be three-dimensional. At the same time, however, Giotto continued to place his subjects within architectural spaces and design motifs that were medieval in nature. His work presented the Virgin and Child sitting on a throne framed with Gothic trefoil arches, and his use of proportion still relied upon scales that were medieval in nature. He painted the Virgin much larger than the angels and saints that surrounded them. His composition, in other words, was hardly naturalistic, since he relied upon proportions that expressed qualitative judgments and that were not naturalistic.

**FRESCOES.** While the greatest of Giotto's altarpiece paintings contained elements that both harked backward and looked forward, it was in his frescoes that the artist developed a more complete naturalism. The most famous of several fresco cycles Giotto completed was in the Arena Chapel in the northern Italian town of Padua. The subject for this cycle was the lives of the Virgin and Christ, and Giotto painted these frescoes around 1305. Fresco was a technique that had flourished in Italy since ancient times. At the outset of a project the artist prepared the wall with a layer of rough plaster upon which he sketched a mockup of the final composition. Then each day the artist added a finish coat of plaster to a section of the wall and painted that portion of the composition while the surface was still wet. In this way the colors were permanently fused into the wall. In the Arena Chapel frescoes Giotto demonstrated his love of nature and human emotions. Instead of the Byzantine-styled compositional techniques that were popular at the time, Giotto infused his subjects with movement. His hand gestures tell the stories from the New Testament in a way that is lively and true to life. Often within the same panel Giotto tells several parts of a story, giving his work a narrative completeness not found in other paintings of the time. His characters, too, are unique for the level of

emotional depth they express. In his painting of the *Lamentation* the disciples and female followers of Christ express their suffering over the death of Christ through gestural language and facial expressions in a way that is intended to elicit a response from viewers. Even the angels who fly above the dead Christ display their profound suffering.

**PAINTING AFTER THE BLACK DEATH.** In his great fresco cycles Giotto painted with psychological insight, endowing his figures with emotions and depth. He abandoned as well the traditions of Byzantine stylization and instead tried to capture nature more faithfully. Some of his contemporaries imitated his example, while others who remained faithful to Byzantine traditions rejected it. In Siena, the brothers Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti developed a naturalism similar to Giotto's, helping to establish Siennese painting as a leading artistic force throughout mid-fourteenth-century Europe. In an enormous fresco completed for the interior of the town hall of Siena entitled *Allegory of Good Government*, Ambrogio Lorenzetti catalogued the life of his city with intricate detail and a faithful attention to nature. The Black Death, though, cut short the naturalistic explorations of the Lorenzetti brothers. Both brothers died in 1348 as the plague struck their city. As a result of that catastrophe, painting in Florence, Siena, and other Italian cities seems to have grown more conservative, finding in the traditions of stylized art a vehicle for displaying intense religious emotions. The style that flourished at this time is often called International Gothic, because it was common throughout much of Europe at the time. In Italy, confraternities and religious institutions commissioned many works in this manner during the second half of the fourteenth century. Intricate lines, rhythmically folded draperies, and an intense emotionalism characterized the works of International Gothic artists. In Central Italy, the most famous of these artists were Andrea di Cione, known as Orcagna (1308–1368); Francesco Traini (active 1321–1363); and Giovanni da Milano (active from 1346–1366). The last of these figures created the first Pietà, an image of the dead Christ, which was designed to elicit an observer's devotion and compassion. The work inspired many artists' subsequent efforts, including the famous Pietà of Michelangelo Buonarroti. New developments in fifteenth-century Italy, however, soon superseded the emotionalism and fervent religiosity typical of the International Gothic style.

**MASACCIO.** During the first half of the fifteenth century Florence was a great center of artistic innovation in Central Italy. Among the many remarkable artists who practiced there during this period of intense activity,



*The Expulsion from Eden* by Masaccio. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

Tommaso di Giovanni (1401–1428), better known as Masaccio, was among the most important. Despite his short life Masaccio exerted a profound influence on Florentine painting, in large part through a series of frescoes he painted during 1425 in the Brancacci family

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ON PAINTING**

**INTRODUCTION:** The humanist Leon Battista Alberti was also a practicing artist and architect who considered the nature of art in several theoretical treatises. In his *On Painting*, Alberti defined painting according to the standards that were typical in Florence. He placed a strong emphasis on *disegno*, the draftsman's drawing of a picture, which was then colored in through the use of paints, the core of most Florentine artists' techniques. Alberti also emphasized the necessity of a painter applying the techniques of perspective and geometry to his works, and he stressed that learning in literature was essential to the artist's craft. The adoption of his program by artists in Italy was one factor that aided in the rise of the artist's status that began to occur in the later fifteenth century.

I would say the business of a painter is this: to draw with lines and dye with colors, on whatever panel or wall is given the likenesses of the visible surfaces of any body, so that viewed from a certain distance and central position their bodies seem to be in relief and very similar. The end of painting: to acquire favor, good will, and praise for the artist, rather than wealth. And the artists will achieve this when their painting holds the mind and eye of those who look at it ...

But it would please me that the painter, to grasp all these things, should be a good man and versed in literature. Everyone knows how a man's goodness helps more than his industry or skill in acquiring good will from the citizens, and no one doubts that the good will of many

people greatly helps the artist to praise as well as earnings. It often happens that the rich, moved more by good will to a person than by wonder at someone's art, sooner give work to a modest and good person, casting aside that other painter who may be better in art but not so good in his ways. Therefore it is good for the artist to show himself well behaved, and especially polite and good-natured. Thus he will get good will, a firm help against poverty and earn excellent aid toward the mastery of his art.

I like a painter to be as learned as he can be in all the liberal arts, but primarily I desire him to know geometry. I like the saying of Pamphilus, an ancient, most noble painter, with whom the noble youths began to learn of painting. He held that no painter could paint well if he did not know a great deal of geometry. My rudiments, which explain the perfected self-contained art of painting, will be easily understood by a geometrician, but one who is ignorant of geometry will understand neither those nor any other method in painting. So I maintain that a painter has to undertake geometry. And for their mutual delight he will make himself one with poets and orators, for they have many graces in common with the painter and a plenteous knowledge of many things. So they will greatly assist in the fine composing of narrative pictures, whose whole praise consists in the invention, which often has such an effect, that we see a fine invention is pleasing alone without painting. ...

**SOURCE:** Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. 1. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1957): 215–216.

chapel in the Church of Sta. Maria del Carmine. Their subject—the life and works of St. Peter—is told in several scenes, the most famous being *The Tribute Money*. The subject for this painting is taken from Matthew 17:24–27, the story of a miracle Christ worked in paying tribute to the Romans. In that fresco the apostles are gathered around Christ, who directs Peter to retrieve coins from the mouth of a fish and present them to the Roman tax collector. Like Giotto before him, Masaccio endows the subjects he paints in this fresco with volume and weight, but his mastery of the skills of linear perspective and lighting is now more secure. Masaccio illuminates his frescoes with light that comes from a single source, throwing the actors in these dramas into light and dark so that they appear to inhabit real space. The naturalism of Masaccio's portrayal, the volume and weight with which he endowed his subjects, as well as his use of perspective had many imitators in other Re-

naissance artists, including Michelangelo and Raphael who both studied and copied his Brancacci frescoes in the fifteenth century.

**Ghiberti.** At roughly the same time as Masaccio was completing his frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, the art of sculpture was also undergoing a profound transformation in Florence. Throughout Tuscany, sculpture had had a long and venerable medieval tradition, having grown up in close connection with the building of the region's major churches and cathedrals. Around 1400, a number of sculptors of distinction were at work throughout the region, including Niccolo and Giovanni Pisano and Jacopo della Quercia. The first sculptor to develop a uniquely Renaissance style, though, was Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378–1455). In 1401, Ghiberti won Florence's competition for new bronze doors for its Cathedral baptistery, a competition that had drawn entries from the city's most distinguished artists. Ghiberti spent much of

the remainder of his life designing and executing these doors. He completed his first set of doors in 1424, and immediately received the commission to complete a second set for the Baptistery's eastern portal. He worked on these panels for another two decades. When finished, these eastern doors depicted ten scenes from the Old Testament and they were heavily influenced by the revival of classical Antiquity that was underway in Florence at the time. The doors themselves were more than eighteen feet tall, and in the bronzes Ghiberti created for them he relied upon the shallow technique of bas-relief. He depicted these scenes in a lively way, making use of the classical proportions and architectural details that had recently become important markers of Renaissance style. In addition, Ghiberti relied upon the painterly techniques of linear perspective to give these scenes depth. Even at the time of their creation, the doors gained recognition as a supreme sculptural achievement, and in the sixteenth century the sculptor Michelangelo gave the doors the name by which they have been known ever since. He remarked that Ghiberti's creation was suitable to guard the gates of heaven, thus dubbing them "The Gates of Paradise."

**SCULPTURE.** Two other remarkable sculptors practiced in early and mid-fifteenth-century Florence: Donatello (1386–1466) and Luca della Robbia (1399–1482). Donatello had been trained in the workshop of Lorenzo Ghiberti, where he mastered the art of carving narrative reliefs. As a master sculptor, however, Donatello's prime achievements were in the creation of freestanding statues, which he carved in stone or cast in bronze, although he did not limit himself to practicing a single kind of art. Like his close friend, Brunelleschi, Donatello indulged a passion for the arts of Antiquity, and together the two figures explored the classical monuments of Rome and Central Italy. He measured these works' proportions and applied this knowledge to his own work, thus creating statues notable for their harmonious balance. Until the time of Michelangelo, no other Italian sculptor created such noble sculptures as Donatello's *St. George*, his *David* or his massive equestrian figure, *Gattamelata*. A similar classicism is to be found in the best works of Luca della Robbia, especially in the *Cantoria* or "Musicians' gallery" he created for the Cathedral of Florence during the 1430s. In that work della Robbia relied upon his knowledge of ancient Roman sarcophagi to create a masterpiece of classicism. During the remainder of his life, though, della Robbia's reputation rested on his creation of terra-cotta reliefs, which he glazed and fired according to a secret process. These reliefs proved particularly suitable as decorations for the



*David* by Donatello. © DAVID LEES/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

classically styled palaces and churches that were being constructed throughout fifteenth-century Florence.

**ALBERTI.** The arts of sculpture and painting were also affected by the studies of Leon Battista Alberti (1405–1472), one of the great universal geniuses of the Renaissance. Alberti was the illegitimate son of a merchant who had been exiled from Florence. He received a humanist education, although his father died as he came to maturity, and Alberti's relatives laid claim to his inheritance. Forced to work for a living, Alberti entered the papal chancery at Rome, before returning to Florence once the exile pronounced against his family had been lifted. In Florence, Alberti became associated with the humanist circle that had grown up in the town, as well as with the city's growing circle of artists. Even before coming to Florence, the humanist had already befriended Masaccio and Brunelleschi, and once in the town, he extended this circle of friends. A painter, sculptor, musician, poet, philosopher, mathematician, and architect, Alberti also set himself the task of codifying theoretical knowledge about the various arts. His *On the Art of Painting*, first completed in Latin in 1435 and translated into Italian a year later, codified the problem of linear perspective in a way that was easy for later artists to master. In addition, his treatise *On Sculpture* informed



*The Annunciation* by Fra Angelico. © ARTE & IMMAGINI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

sculptors about the proportions of antique art and, like his other works on architecture and painting, set out a general theory behind the practice of this art. In this way Alberti's work began the process of raising the status of the artist beyond the realm of the craftsman. Since he knew both humanist scholars and artists, Alberti brought together the various artistic and intellectual circles of Florence. His treatises also attempted to establish a scientific basis for the study of the arts, even as they revived classical knowledge about their practice. In this way Alberti's works were essential to later artists who argued that the techniques they practiced in their trade were both ancient and difficult to master.

**PAINTING IN MID-FIFTEENTH-CENTURY FLORENCE.** In the first half of the fifteenth century the insights of Masaccio, Brunelleschi, and Alberti provided artists with techniques to present their compositions with depth, solidity, and harmonious proportion. In Florence and elsewhere in Central Italy, artists quickly learned these lessons. In the generation following Masaccio's death, many artists appeared in Florence to serve the

city's religious institutions and wealthy patrons. These included Fra Angelico (c. 1400–1455), Fra Filippo Lippi (c. 1406–1469), Paolo Uccello (1397–1475), Domenico Veneziano (1410–1461), and Andrea Castagno (c. 1417–1457). Of these, Fra Angelico was among the most prolific. Although he had been trained as a painter, he entered the Dominican Order when still a young man. Eventually, he rose to become the prior of Florence's Monastery of San Marco, although throughout his life he continued to produce both panel paintings and frescoes throughout the city. These included a series of frescoes he painted in the cells of his own monastery. While some critics denigrated him as a conservative painter, Fra Angelico was, in truth, a considerable innovator, who had assimilated the legacy of Masaccio and Giotto and used their work as a vehicle for developing an art of great religious intensity. His landscapes were among the most sophisticated of the time, and throughout his works he relied on color and light to create paintings that were models of serene beauty. The art of Fra Filippo Lippi (c. 1406–1469), another Florentine monk, shows a similar



*The Annunciation* by Fra Filippo Lippi. CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

grace and refinement. In contrast to the saintly Fra Angelico, Lippi was a more restless figure who was eventually defrocked because of his sexual escapades. Like most Florentine painters working in the wake of Masaccio, Lippi was fascinated by perspective, but he also relied on elegant flowing lines in his paintings. His envisioning of the Christ child, too, as a chubby cherub has long endeared viewers to his art. Lippi became the favorite painter of the Medici family, and his pupil, Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510), kept alive this tradition of elegance and delicacy in the second half of the fifteenth century. A different direction is discernible in the works of Paolo Uccello, an artist who originally served as an apprentice to the great sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti, before developing an intense fascination with perspective in painting. During the 1430s and 1440s Uccello painted a number of frescoes and panel paintings that presented imaginative solutions to problems of depth in his paintings. Among these, his *Deluge* and *Battle of San Romano* are arranged so completely according to the laws of linear perspective that viewers often find them disturbing. Two other accomplished painters, Andrea Castagno and Domenico Veneziano, were long thought to have nourished a violent enmity toward each other. According to

a legend retold in the works of the biographer Giorgio Vasari, Castagno was to have murdered Veneziano. Subsequent research has shown that Veneziano outlived Castagno by four years. Whether the two were enemies cannot be established with certainty, although both presented Florence's mid-century artistic culture with different, yet strikingly new artistic insights. In his paintings Veneziano relied on brilliant sunlike lighting and intense colors to present human figures that appeared much like polished marble. Castagno, by contrast, populated his compositions with earthy, muscled characters and endowed these figures with greater movement. His art reveals a more restless temperament than that usually seen in the works of the more serene masters of mid-fifteenth-century Florence.

**PAINTING OUTSIDE FLORENCE.** Florence may have been the primary center of artistic innovation during much of the fifteenth century, but great artists were active everywhere in Italy. One of the most accomplished figures of the period was Piero della Francesca (1420–1492), who lived largely in isolation in provincial centers for most of his life. It has not been until modern times that Piero's achievement has been truly appreciated. During 1439 Piero served as an assistant to



*The Nativity of Jesus Christ* by Fra Angelico. CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

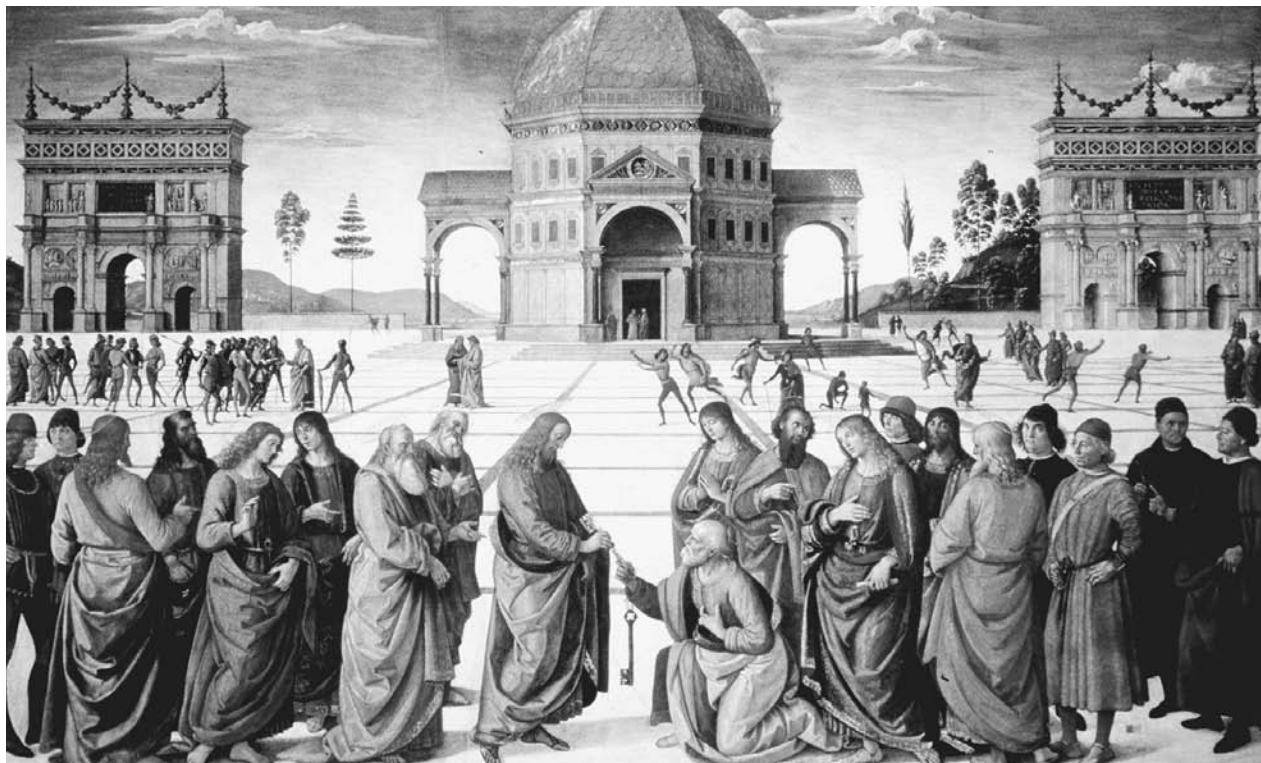
Domenico Veneziano in Florence, where he observed the advances that had occurred in depiction by figures like Masaccio, Castagno, Fra Angelico, and Veneziano. Returning to his native town, Borgo San Sepolcro, Piero spent the rest of his life undertaking commissions there and in Arezzo and Urbino. Piero integrated his Florentine lessons to create compositions that made use of the solid forms typical of the paintings of Masaccio and Castagno, while at the same time building upon the experiments in color and light typical of the works of Fra Angelico, Lippi, and Veneziano. His style is best exemplified in a series of frescoes he completed for the Church of St. Francis in Arezzo or in his *Resurrection* fresco completed for the town hall of Borgo San Sepolcro. In both paintings a calm and motionless air suffuses the composition, which Piero envisions with geometric regularity and simplicity. Throughout he relies upon colors that are cool and luminous, making the effect of these compositions all the more grand. Piero endowed his subjects with a monumental character, but the artist Pietro Perugino from Perugia in the region known as Umbria was, by contrast, a painter of definite grace and charm. Perugino gave his subjects a gentle majesty and he was among the best fifteenth-century masters of the atmospheric painting technique known as *sfumato*. In his *Christ Giving the Keys to St. Peter*, a fresco painted for the Sistine Chapel in Rome, Perugino presented the



The fifteenth-century fresco cycle *Legend of the True Cross* by Piero della Francesca, Church of San Francesco in Arezzo, Italy. ALINARI-ART REFERENCE/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

scene of Christ granting power over the church to St. Peter before a symbolic landscape—a domed church that suggests the Cathedral of Florence and Roman triumphal arches. While Peter kneels to accept the keys in the foreground, the background of the painting opens into an immense courtyard with enveloping hills in the distance, all of which is seen through the filmy atmosphere.

**NORTHERN ITALY.** Piero della Francesca and Perugino worked in regions that were relatively close to Florence. Further afield in Northern Italy artists proved more reluctant to abandon native styles in favor of Renaissance naturalism. A few notable exceptions were Andrea Mantegna, Antonello da Messina, and Giovanni Bellini. Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506) worked at Padua and for the Gonzaga family in Mantua. In his student days in Padua Mantegna had been affected by the great



*The Consigning of the Keys* fresco by Perugino and Luca da Signorelli for the Sistine Chapel, Rome. AP/WIDE WORLD. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Florentine sculptor Donatello who had been undertaking a commission in the city. In a series of frescoes he completed during the 1450s for the Eremites in Padua, Mantegna showed his mastery of Florentine perspective. His painting *Saint James Led to Execution* relied on illusionistic devices so that the bottom portions of the fresco appeared to disappear as onlookers approached the work. In his later career as a court painter for the Gonzaga lords at Mantua, Mantegna painted a series of frescoes for the *Camera degli Sposi* or “Bridal Chamber” of the family’s palace. While Mantegna’s early paintings were often noted for their marble-like aloofness, here the artist shows a more playful streak. Besides including a number of scenes that include portraits of members of the family and local dignitaries, the Bridal Chamber’s ceiling includes a trick painting in which members of the local court and cherubs appear to be looking down upon the room. Another innovator, Antonello da Messina (c. 1430–1479), was a Sicilian who had worked in the Netherlands before taking up residence in Venice. There Messina introduced the technique of oil painting to the conservative and somewhat old-fashioned circle of Venetian artists, helping to set the stage for the great age of Venetian oil painting that dawned in the sixteenth century. At the end of the fifteenth century Venice be-

gan to shed its reputation as an artistic backwater by providing a home to an increasingly large number of artists. Among these figures, the most accomplished certainly was Giovanni Bellini (1430–1516). In his *Transfiguration of Christ* Bellini relied on the newly imported technique of oil painting to envision the New Testament scene. He set his composition in a lush landscape of alpine foothills that was unprecedented in Italian art to this time. The painting’s completion when the artist was around 50 years old shows that Bellini continued to retain his lead as one of the most innovative of fifteenth-century North Italian painters.

**SECULAR THEMES.** More than eighty percent of all fifteenth-century artistic commissions were religious in nature. The prominence of the church, religious institutions, and private families as commissioners of religious art meant that all artists needed to be fully versed in the stories of the Old and New Testaments and in the lives of the saints—the most prominent themes treated in religious art. Still as the fifteenth century progressed secular themes became more popular among patrons. In Florence and other Italian centers, the prominence of the intellectual movement of humanism helped to stimulate a taste for subjects drawn from Roman and Greek mythology. Sandro Botticelli ranks among the





*Camera degli Sposi* (detail of the ceiling) by Andrea Mantegna. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

greatest of artists to paint secular themes in the fifteenth century. Two of his works—the *Birth of Spring* and the *Birth of Venus*—illustrate the growing importance of secular themes among the cultivated elite of a Renaissance city like Florence. Members of the Medici family commissioned both works, and the philosophical movement known as Neoplatonism that was then popular among Florence’s intellectuals influenced their subject matter. The first, the *Birth of Spring*, is an allegory that may symbolize the return of learning to Florence under Medicean patronage, although disputes about its precise meaning have continued until modern times. The second, the *Birth of Venus*, has also been variously interpreted. The graceful Venus may actually represent the figure *Humanitas*, a patron of learning and the arts. Or as some have argued, she may have been conceived as a kind of talisman that could bring Venus’s favorable influence to the spot where the image was placed, a belief

that Neoplatonism helped to encourage among later fifteenth-century intellectuals.

**PORTRAITURE.** Another kind of secular art—the portrait—also grew in importance throughout the fifteenth century. The first portraits appeared in religious paintings, as prominent patrons often paid artists to insert themselves into the religious subjects they painted. This practice persisted throughout the Renaissance. The late fifteenth-century Florentine painter Botticelli, for example, used it in his famous painting of the *Adoration of the Magi*. Here he painted the images of prominent members of the Medici family and citizens of Florence into the story of the wisemen’s worship of the infant Christ. Even as this custom persisted, Renaissance patrons demanded independent pictures and sculptures of themselves from the era’s artists. The earliest independent portrait paintings, commissioned in the mid-fifteenth century, were often stiff and bore resemblance



*Agony in the Garden* by Giovanni Bellini. © NATIONAL GALLERY COLLECTION. BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

to antique portrait busts. Usually painters showed their subjects in profile view. Family members sometimes commissioned these portraits to commemorate a family member who was already dead, or who was of considerable age at the time. One of the oldest surviving portraits from the early fifteenth century—a picture of the Florentine gentleman Matteo Olivieri—depicted the subject as a young man, even though he was at the time of very advanced years. Portrait paintings like these were intended to preserve a positive memory of the subject after death. Over time, portraiture grew more imaginative and portraits fulfilled a broader variety of functions. Around 1480, the successful Florentine artist Domenico Ghirlandaio painted a more realistic portrait known as *An Old Man and a Young Boy* (now in the Louvre, Paris). The painting shows the elderly man, probably the boy's grandfather, sick and diseased with a growth on his forehead. Nevertheless, the senior stares tenderly into the eyes of the youth. Like earlier portraits, this picture may have been based upon a deathbed drawing of the old man, but Ghirlandaio and his patrons no longer found it necessary to give the old man eternal youth. Instead the artist depicted the man as he really was in his final days, while endowing the man with an inner strength and gentleness that makes the viewer look past his de-

formity. In the background a river landscape adds visual interest to the picture, a symbol suggesting the passage of time. Landscape backgrounds like these were becoming increasingly important in portraits at the time. Around 1500 Leonardo da Vinci developed the use of landscape to a high degree of sophistication. At the same time da Vinci perfected the portrait as a vehicle that expressed something about the subject's own individual nature. The artist worked in an environment in which portraits were coming to play ever more roles in elite society. These paintings were now important tools of noble and princely matchmaking. Ambassadors charged with conducting marriage negotiations usually carried with them small portraits or painted miniatures of the princes and princesses on whose behalf they acted.

**RISE STATUS OF THE ARTIST.** During the course of the fifteenth century the innovations that occurred in painting and sculpture in the Italian Renaissance city-states helped to confer a greater status upon artists than previously. While still considered mostly craftsmen throughout Europe, the presence of a humanist-sponsored artistic culture in Florence and other Italian Renaissance cities endowed artists with a new, more vital position in urban society. Humanist-trained intellectuals like Leon Battista Alberti mingled with artists, practiced



*Allegory of Spring* by Botticelli. CORBIS-BETTMANN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

architecture, sculpture, and painting themselves, and wrote theoretical treatises about the arts that helped elevate their status. Artists, too, mixed in the circles that surrounded great patron families like the Medici. By the end of the fifteenth century artists were not yet considered the equals of scholars and poets, but their position had risen in society. At this time Leonardo da Vinci stressed in his *Notebooks* the superiority of his knowledge as a painter because it came from experience rather than books. These claims were unthinkable without the steady rise in the artist's status that had occurred during the fifteenth century. During the sixteenth century this trend in Italy continued, particularly as a result of the careers of towering figures like Leonardo, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Raphael Sanzio.

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## THE EARLY RENAISSANCE IN NORTHERN EUROPE

**DYNASTIC CONNECTIONS.** In Northern Europe, the Renaissance, with its emphasis on literary studies and

the revival of classical Antiquity, made few inroads before the late fifteenth century. Although the literary works of Petrarch, Boccaccio, and other humanists penetrated beyond Italy's borders, there were only few and scattered attempts to imitate the urbane Latin style championed by the early Renaissance humanists in Northern Europe. In the world of architecture Northern Europeans similarly continued to build on the medieval Gothic style during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, only hastily adopting the classicism typical of Italian Renaissance architecture in the sixteenth century. The history of the visual arts, by contrast, presents a different picture than other areas of cultural achievement. Although there were few attempts to adopt the classical proportions and ancient trappings that became important in Italian Renaissance painting and sculpture, a new naturalism nevertheless became evident in the art of fourteenth-century Northern Europe. This naturalism first found expression in the art of the French painter Jean Pucelle (active between 1320 and 1350) and the circle that surrounded him in Paris, before spreading to other parts of Northern Europe. It was in the opulent court of the Duchy of Burgundy that naturalism took root to produce its greatest artistic achievements. This curious state had been formed over the previous centuries through a series of marriage alliances, inheritances, and gifts. In 1363, the Duchy's ruling family died out, and because of feudal claims, the territory became the possession of the king of France, who bestowed it upon his youngest son, Philip the Bold. Within a short time Philip succeeded in extending Burgundy's territories to include all of Flanders (modern Belgium), most of Holland, and large parts of eastern France. By 1400, his territory rivaled and now threatened France. Philip chose Dijon to become the center of his state, and the duke called many artists there to create rich trappings for his court. At the same time Philip the Bold's brother, John of Berry, established a similarly opulent court in central France. Both Philip the Bold and John of Berry found their artistic masters not in France but in the Low Countries (modern Belgium and Holland), as leadership in innovation in the visual arts passed to this region in the late fourteenth century. During the following century Philip the Bold's grandson, Philip the Good, continued the tradition of Burgundian artistic patronage. He reigned in Burgundy from 1419 until 1467, and in 1430, transferred the capital of his domain to Brussels. The city now became home to the most luxurious court in Europe. The development of the Low Countries' wealthy trading cities—Bruges, Ghent, and Antwerp—supported the brilliant spectacle of Burgundian court life. In these cities, too, a rich market in art, comparable to that which

was developing in Renaissance Italy, also appeared under the patronage of nobles and wealthy merchants. In painting, a vivid realism and the use of rich oil colors were two distinctive attributes of the early Renaissance in the Low Countries. But while painting matured in the Burgundian Low Countries, the fate of the Duchy of Burgundy itself darkened. In 1477 the death of Philip the Good's son and successor Charles the Bold in battle against France resulted in the carving up of the once great duchy, its possessions within France reverting to the French crown while those in the Low Countries became the property of the Hapsburg dynasty. In the Netherlands, however, the artistic marketplace that had developed during the fifteenth century survived into the sixteenth century, and Low Countries masters continued to rival their Italian counterparts in productivity and inventiveness.

**JEAN PUCELLE.** Among the first artists in Northern Europe to be aware of the artistic innovations occurring in Italy was Jean Pucelle, who was active between the 1320s and around 1350. Little is known about Pucelle's life, although for a time his large studio dominated artistic life in and around the city of Paris. Pucelle was a manuscript illuminator who enjoyed the patronage of the French crown. As a result, he commanded high prices for his works. The illustrations that he created for manuscripts show that he had probably traveled extensively when still young in Italy and the Low Countries. In the works he completed between 1320 and about 1350, Pucelle joined the spatial sense of Italian painters like Giotto and Duccio to the rich colorism that was typical of the art of the Netherlands. He moved to enclose his human subjects within a stage-like frame, in the same manner as Giotto and Duccio had done before him. In this way he suggested the three-dimensionality of space in his works. At the same time many conservative elements persisted in the works of Pucelle and his studio, and painters in Paris were not quick to imitate Pucelle's colorism or his naturalism in the second half of the fourteenth century. The dominant style, often referred to as the International Style, remained popular in France and in many Northern European courts as well. In contrast to the naturalism and spatial experiments of figures like Pucelle, International Style artists produced works in a stylized and elegant fashion, with flowing movements of drapery and a rich symbolic imagery. Contacts between France and Italy continued throughout the second half of the fourteenth century, though, as Italian masters visited French cathedrals and witnessed the majesty of the country's Gothic architecture firsthand. Italian artists, too, worked at the papal court in Avignon. The truly

revolutionary developments in Northern Renaissance art, however, did not come from imitation of Italian examples, but from native developments in style that were occurring among artists in the Low Countries.

**CLAUS SLUTER.** One of these revolutionary figures was the sculptor Claus Sluter, who was active between 1380 and about 1405. Sluter was from the Netherlands, a native of the Dutch city Haarlem near Amsterdam. Around 1385, Sluter immigrated to Dijon, capital of the rich Duchy of Burgundy, where he became an assistant sculptor at a monastery that Philip the Bold was constructing outside the city. Another Netherlandish sculptor, Jean de Marville, had already planned many of the sculptural works at this site, the Chartreuse de Champmol, and Sluter merely executed those plans. Between 1395 and 1403, Sluter carved his own masterpiece *The Well of Moses*, a large sculptural fountain that originally culminated in a gigantic crucifix. In comparison to the sculptural conventions common in Northern Europe at the time, Sluter's *Well* was a truly revolutionary work. In it, the artist gave primacy to the human form, and carved the figures that adorned the well in a dramatic, natural style. Sluter dispensed with the Gothic canopies that had long been used to encase Northern European sculptures, and instead presented his creations as lifelike individuals projecting out from the sculptural plane on which he carved them. His work also showed that he was a thoughtful and observant student both of human nature and the effects of time. His figures display a variety of psychological states, even as Sluter carved into their faces the wrinkles produced by time.

**DIJON.** In the years that Claus Sluter was at work at Dijon's Chartreuse de Champmol, the city emerged as one of the great centers of Northern European art. In 1384, Duke Philip the Bold had expanded his Burgundian territories to include wealthy Flanders (most of modern Belgium) and then used his increased revenues from the large and prosperous towns of this region to decorate his new capital at Dijon. The monastery Chartreuse de Champmol was a chief beneficiary of Philip's largesse, as the duke used the site to display his new wealth. One of the undeniable masterpieces created at the Chartreuse at this time was the altarpiece of the *Annunciation and Visitation* by Melchior Broederlam. The artist was a native of Ypres (now in modern Belgium) and he painted the work around 1400. Like other Flemish artists of the period, Broederlam favored a realistic attitude toward nature, rather than the stylized grace that was common among French artists at the time. His work on the altarpiece of the *Annunciation and Visitation* also displays influences from fourteenth-century

Italian art, particularly in its use of the craggy rock shapes that dot the landscape backgrounds. These seem to be drawn from firsthand knowledge of Giotto and his follower Duccio. Other works by Broederlam have never come to light, and his masterpiece did not produce any immediate change in the patterns of painting at Dijon or elsewhere in France. A decade or so after its completion, several works seemed to draw influences from Broederlam's famous altarpiece, but the artist's work represents largely a dead end in the history of Northern European art.

**THE LIMBOURG BROTHERS.** The creative impulses that were at work in the Burgundian court of Philip the Bold around 1400 were soon to be matched in the court of Philip's brother, John, the Duke of Berry. Around 1400, the duke engaged the services of the Limbourg brothers, Paul, Herman, and John. Natives of the city of Nijmegen in modern Holland, all three brothers died before they were barely thirty years old. In their short lives they managed to complete some of the most brilliant manuscript illuminations in European history. One of the earliest works that survive from the brothers' hand is a Bible from around 1410. In this work the Limbourg brothers sketched their illustrations and then used washes of color to define the characters in these drawings. Over the next few years, however, their technique was perfected, while their style and sense of color deepened. The late perfection of their work can be seen in the *Très Riches Heures* or *Very Rich Hours* manuscript undertaken for the Duke of Berry after 1413. The *Very Rich Hours* was a book of hours, a collection of prayers prescribed to be said at certain times of the day and throughout the year. During the fifteenth century the popularity of praying the hours, a custom originally adopted from monks and nuns, became increasingly widespread among lay people. A great range in quality of books of hours existed at the time, but those created for the nobility often included rich ornamentation and evocative visual images meant to enhance their user's piety and enjoyment. The Duke of Berry's *Very Rich Hours* ranks among the most beautiful of all the works of this kind that survive. In it, the Limbourg brothers gave a primary place to the monthly calendars that outlined the prayers. The illustrations the Limbourg brothers completed for these calendars richly catalogued the life of the Duke of Berry's court and of peasants on his estates. Like other Netherlandish painters the Limbourgs relied upon the realism that was the trademark of their countrymen's art as well as a brilliant sense of color. While these works influenced other masters at work in and around the Duke of Berry's court, they did not produce a complete shift in the patterns of painting

avored in France. The taste for stylized elegance and iconographical symbols that had long been favored by French painters persisted after these artists' untimely deaths, which may have occurred in the same epidemic that killed their patron, the Duke of Berry, in 1416. The *Very Rich Hours* was left tragically unfinished and was never used by the Duke of Berry who had commissioned it.

**PANEL PAINTING.** Illuminated manuscripts like the *Very Rich Hours* were consumed only by aristocratic patrons and those with whom their owners shared a glimpse of their rich works. By contrast, altarpiece paintings were public monuments, displayed in the open spaces of churches where people of all ages and social classes could view them. The fifteenth-century Netherlands witnessed a dramatic increase in the production of altarpieces. Their numbers grew from the 1420s, so that by the end of the century thousands of churches throughout the region possessed panel paintings treating religious themes. Many of these works were of middling quality, but some rose to the level of high art. During the fifteenth century the Netherlands produced several generations of artists who painted altarpiece paintings of rare quality. These works were executed using the new technique of oil painting, a medium that Netherlandish artists did not create, but perfected for novel use in their altarpieces. Most everywhere else in fifteenth-century Europe, artists relied on tempera painting. In this medium pigments were suspended in a mixture of egg yolk and water. Since the pigments could be easily dissolved with water, artists relied on varnishes to protect their colors from moisture. But in order for tempera colors to stand up to the effect of these varnishes, artists had to use brilliant, gem-like tones. Oil painting, by contrast, offered artists a greater range and depth of color. To create oil colors, artists in the Netherlands perfected a technique that suspended their pigments in hard resins that were then diluted with oil. On the panels he painted, the artist first applied a rough coat of gesso, a plaster-like substance, over which he drew a sketch of the work to be painted. Then he applied oil paints over this sketch. To enhance the paintings, the artist painted glazes over the work. These glazes were a mixture of oil, turpentine, and colors and they gave the painting a luminous effect. Finally, the artist also applied varnishes that were mixed again with colors to protect the work. In this way the painted surface took on an almost magical ability to refract light, thus conveying a broader range and depth of color than possible in the tempera medium.

**CAMPIN.** Mystery often shrouds the lives and careers of the earliest panel painters from the Low Coun-

tries (modern Holland and Belgium). Such is the case with Robert Campin (c. 1378–1444), a figure who is believed to have taught the accomplished Flemish artist Rogier van der Weyden, and who is now often credited with having painted many works long attributed to the so-called “Master of Flémalle.” Great disagreement rages over the precise works that Campin painted, and some scholars have even attributed many of these to the young Rogier van der Weyden. Still documentary evidence establishes Campin’s existence and further proves that this artist enjoyed a reputation in the early fifteenth century as the most accomplished master of the city of Tournai (now in Belgium). Other details about the painter’s life are sketchy. From what can be established, it is obvious that Campin’s works made a definitive break with the traditional style of International Gothic painting favored throughout Europe around 1400. International Gothic was particularly popular in the courts of Northern Europe. It was decorative and elegant, with its intricate visual rhythms gently shaped by the flowing and folding lines of the draperies, clothing, and other matter that artists placed in their compositions. By contrast, Robert Campin and his followers broke from these traditions to create a native kind of Netherlandish painting. In place of the stylized elegance favored by International Gothic artists, Campin, Rogier van der Weyden, and Jan van Eyck forged a style notable both for its realism and its use of veiled symbols. This new trend can be seen in a small *Nativity* Robert Campin painted for a monastery near Dijon, possibly the famous Chartreuse de Champmol. It is also to be seen in the famous *Mérode* altarpiece long attributed to the Master of Flémalle, but now increasingly thought by experts to be Campin’s work. The *Mérode* altarpiece is now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. In this work the artist faithfully catalogued a host of details that appeared to be drawn from everyday life, but which were in reality iconographical signs with religious meaning. One panel of the altarpiece treats the subject of the *Annunciation* and shows the Virgin sitting before a table on which a vase of lilies are present, a sign of her purity. A smoking candle, a sign of the Incarnation of Christ, lies beside this vase. To the left of the central panel, the donors of the altarpiece kneel in an enclosed garden, a sign of Mary’s virginity. In ways like these Campin packed his works with symbols taken from the realities of everyday life.

**VAN EYCK.** The greatest master of the new Flemish realism was Jan van Eyck (c. 1385–1441). Like Campin, many of the details about van Eyck’s life are sketchy, and many of his works, particularly those completed early in his career, are disputed. According to a sixteenth-century

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ITALIAN ADMIRERS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Italian humanist Bartolommeo Fazio wrote a collection of *Lives of Illustrious Men* in 1456 in which he granted a surprisingly important place to artists. Among those he praised were the Netherlandish painters Jan van Eyck (here referred to as Jan of Gaul) and Rogier van der Weyden. Fazio lists van Eyck's virtues in the following excerpt and considers his key accomplishments. He stresses, in particular, the artist's ability to endow his objects with the appearances of reality.

Jan of Gaul has been judged the leading painter of our time. He was not unlettered, particularly in geometry, and such arts as contribute to the enrichment of painting, and he is thought for this reason to have discovered many things about the properties of colors recorded by the ancients and learned by him from reading Pliny and other authors. His is a remarkable picture in the private apartments of King Alfonso [Fazio's patron] in which there is a Virgin Mary notable for its grace and modesty, with an Angel Gabriel, of exceptional beauty and with hair surpassing reality, announcing that the Son of God will be born of her; and a John the Baptist that declares the wonderful sanctity and austerity of his life, and Jerome like a living being in a library done with rare art: for if you move away from it a little it seems that it recedes inward and that it has complete books laid open in it, while if you go near it is evident that there is only a summary of these. On the outer side of the same picture is painted Battista Lomellini, whose property it was—you would

judge he lacked only a voice—and the woman whom he loved, of outstanding beauty, and she too is portrayed exactly as she was. Between them, as if through a chink in the wall, falls a ray of sun that you would take to be real sunlight. His is a circular representation of the world, which he painted for Philip, Prince of the Belgians, and it thought that no work has been done more perfectly in our time; you may distinguish in it not only the places and the lie of continents, but also, by measurement, the distance between places. There are also fine paintings of his in the possession of that distinguished man. Ottaviano della Carda: women of uncommon beauty emerging from the bath, the more intimate parts of the body being with excellent modestly veiled in fine linen, and of one of them he has shown only the face and breast but has then represented the hind parts of her body in a mirror painted on the wall opposite, so that you may see her back as well as her breast. In the same picture, there is a lantern in the bath chamber, just like one lit, and an old woman seemingly sweating, a puppy lapping up water, and also horses, minute figures of men, mountains, groves, hamlets, and castles carried out with such skill you would believe one was fifty miles distant from another. But almost nothing is more wonderful in this work than the mirror painted in the picture, in which you see whatever is represented as in a real mirror. He is said to have done many other works, but of these I have been able to obtain no complete knowledge.

**SOURCE:** Bartolommeo Fazio, *Lives of Illustrious Men*, in *Northern Renaissance Art, 1400–1600: Sources and Documents*. Ed. Wolfgang Stechow (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966): 4–5.

tradition, the painter was born in Maaseyck in northeast modern Belgium. Documentary evidence establishes that he entered the service of John of Bavaria, a count of Holland, sometime after 1422, and that he decorated the count's palace at The Hague. With the death of John of Bavaria in 1425, he took an honorary appointment in the court of Philip the Good of Burgundy, a position he retained until his death. He traveled to Italy where he most likely observed the revolutionary paintings of Masaccio in Florence and by 1430 he had settled in Bruges where he started to sign and date his works. Van Eyck carried Flemish realism to its highest point of development in both religious and secular paintings. The human subjects and objects that he catalogued appear to be actually real, his observation and recreation of nature being flawless. Like Campin, van Eyck also wed a copious use of veiled symbols to his paintings, as can be seen in one of van Eyck's most famous works, the *Arnolfini*

*Wedding*. As a sacrament of the medieval church, the marriage ritual was fraught with religious meaning. Marriage was at the same time the only legitimate avenue for bearing and raising children. In his *Arnolfini Wedding* van Eyck aimed to present an accurate vision of the real world, even as he included a number of symbols drawn from everyday life to convey both the religious and sexual meanings behind marriage. The painting depicts the union of Giovanni Arnolfini and Jeanne Cenami, both Italians living in Bruges at the time. To signify that this is a wedding portrait, van Eyck shows the couple clasping hands, a traditional symbol of betrothal, while Giovanni Arnolfini raises his right hand, as if making an oath. In the foreground of the picture van Eyck places a scampering dog, the animal a traditional symbol of fidelity, while the off-cast shoes show that the wedding chamber is a holy site. At the windows fruit is ripening, a sign of fertility, while in the chandelier a single candle

burns, signifying the nuptial candle that was traditionally the last to be extinguished on a couple's wedding night. Behind the couple a carved image of St. Margaret, patron saint of childbearing, decorates the back of a chair. The mirror, which van Eyck inserted at the rear of the room, had long been used as a symbol of the Virgin Mary, and around its circular frame the artist painted ten scenes from the passion of Christ. Van Eyck's mastery of realistic detail is remarkable. In the mirror's reflection can be seen the backs of the wedding couple and a man who stands before them, a figure that may be Jan van Eyck himself. Van Eyck brought this same realism to other portraits as the genre became more important in the Netherlands during the fifteenth century. His *Man in a Red Turban*, painted around 1433 and now in the National Gallery in London, was the first painting in which the subject is presented in a frontal pose, that is, looking at the observer. Van Eyck painted his subject, which may be the artist himself, with a calm and controlled gaze, a gaze that nevertheless suggests something of the subject's individual personality. In this way van Eyck's portraits anticipate the great achievements that Flemish artists like Rembrandt made in portraiture during the seventeenth century.

**ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN.** Painting continued to flourish in the Low Countries after van Eyck's death in 1441. While no artist matched the brilliance of his realistic mastery of nature, painters of indisputable genius flourished in the region throughout the fifteenth century. Rogier van der Weyden (c. 1400–1464) was the greatest artist of the generation that followed in van Eyck's footsteps. In place of the earlier artist's placid emphasis on light and color, van der Weyden's religious panel paintings were altogether more emotional and tempestuous. In his early career the artist abandoned the realistic landscapes and surroundings popular with other Netherlandish artists. At the same time he nevertheless continued to paint his human subjects realistically. Van der Weyden lit his works with a brilliant, sometimes harsh light that threw his subjects' wrinkles and flaws into greater relief. The artist's tendency to develop a dramatic and intense art increased throughout his career, and his works grew more monumental following a visit to Italy during the Jubilee year of 1450. From the Italians, too, van der Weyden drew inspiration for the lyrical landscapes he used in his later works. In these paintings, the human form seems to dominate the landscape in the same way that was common among Italian artists of the time.

**SECOND GENERATION.** A spirit gentler than Rogier's pervades the art of the two greatest Netherlandish



*Arnolfini Wedding* by Jan van Eyck. THE ART ARCHIVE/EILEEN TWEEDY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

painters, Dirc Bouts (c. 1415–1475) and Hugo van der Goes (c. 1440–1482) of the second half of the fifteenth century. Both artists continued in the traditions of Flemish realism established by Campin, van Eyck, and van der Weyden. Bouts achieved great notoriety as a portrait painter in the city of Louvain near Brussels. While he painted his early religious works very much in the style of Rogier van der Weyden, Bouts eventually developed his own idiom. This style was less dramatic and more emotionally impassive than Rogier. It has been described as almost primitively naïve. After his death, his sons carried on his workshop, keeping alive his style until the end of the century. Hugo van der Goes, who settled in Ghent, has often been described as the greatest Netherlandish painter of the second half of the century. Little is known about the artist's early life. At 27 he became a member of Ghent's painters' guild, eventually rising to become an official in that organization. The number of van der Goes' works is comparatively small—owing, it seems, to the artist's periodic bouts with depression and his short life. In addition, van der Goes did not sign his works and so it has often been difficult to establish the



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***STRANGE FANTASIES**

**INTRODUCTION:** Carel van Mander (1548–1606) is often called the “Northern Vasari.” Like his Italian predecessor, van Mander was the first to treat the lives of artists systematically in a collection of biographies. But unlike Vasari, van Mander was also a theorist who wrote treatises on the more general nature of art and aesthetics. In his life of Hieronymus Bosch, van Mander finds the artist’s work filled with strange fantasies.

Manifold and strange are the inclinations, artistic habits, and works of the painters; and each became the better master in the field to which Nature drew and guided his desire. Who can relate all the wondrous and strange fantasies which Jeronimus Bos conceived in his mind and expressed with his brush, of spooks and monsters of Hell, often less pleasant than gruesome to look at? He was born at Hertogenbosch, but I have not been able to establish the dates of his life and death except that it must have been at a very early period. Nonetheless, in his draperies and fabrics his manner differed greatly from the old-fashioned one with its manifold creases and folds. His manner of painting was firm, very skillful, and handsome; his works were often done in one process yet remain in beautiful condition without alterations. Also, like many other old masters, he had the habit of drawing his design upon the white ground of the panel and covering it with a trans-

parent flesh-colored priming, often allowing the ground to remain effective. One finds some of his works in Amsterdam. Somewhere I saw his *Flight into Egypt* in which Joseph, in the foreground, asks a peasant the way and Mary rides a donkey; in the distance is a strange rock in an odd setting; it is fashioned into an inn which is visited by some strange figures who have a big bear dance for money, and everything is wondrous and droll to look at. Also by him, [in a house] near De Waal, is a representation of how the patriarchs are redeemed from Hell and how Judas, who thinks he can escape with the others, is pulled up by a rope and hanged. It is amazing how much absurd devilry can here be seen; also how cleverly and naturally he rendered flames, conflagrations, smoke, and fumes ... At Haarlem, in the house of the art-loving Joan Dietringh, I saw several of his pictures; among these were a disputation with several heretics. He had all their books, together with his own, put in a fire; he whose book did not burn should be in the right, and one can see the saint’s book flying out of the fire. In this picture, the fiery flames as well as the smoking pieces of wood, burnt and covered with ashes, were painted very cleverly. The saint and his companion looked very solemn, and the others had funny and strange faces.

**SOURCE:** Carel van Mander, *Life of Hieronymus Bosch, in Northern Renaissance Art, 1400–1600: Sources and Documents*. Trans. Wolfgang Stechow (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966): 20–21.

authenticity of many paintings long attributed to him. One undisputed masterpiece which can be securely fixed as Hugo’s own is the famous *Portinari Altarpiece*, now in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Tomasso Portinari, an Italian merchant, commissioned this painting for the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. The painting exercised an important influence among Italian artists, who were inspired by the artist’s subtle mastery of the oil painting technique. In the *Portinari Altarpiece*, van der Goes also handled the painting’s subject, the adoration of the shepherds at the birth of Christ, with a fine discrimination of psychological detail.

**MEMLINC.** In the second half of the fifteenth century the once great port of Bruges in Flanders entered a period of economic decline. Once the greatest trading center of the Low Countries, the town’s river, the Zwin, began to silt up the city’s excellent harbor. Few signs of the decline that eventually gripped Bruges, however, are evident in the sumptuous art of Hans Memlinc, the city’s greatest late fifteenth-century painter. Memlinc combined influences from all the great Flemish painters of

the century, including the compositional style of Jan van Eyck and the luxurious details typical of the works of Hugo van der Goes and Dirc Bouts. The greatest influence upon Memlinc, however, seems to have been Rogier van der Weyden, as he modeled many of his human figures and compositions on those of this earlier accomplished artist. Memlinc had a prolific career, painting mostly for Bruges’ wealthy religious houses. His many works, which still can be seen in the city today, exhibit a narrative charm and beauty that few artists of the period achieved. Also a superb technical craftsman, Memlinc completed a reliquary in 1489, the *Shrine of St. Ursula*, that was less than three-feet high. Despite this diminutive scale, the artist decorated this casket with a series of paintings that are noteworthy for their astonishing detail, successful decoration, and narrative unity.

**HIERONYMUS BOSCH.** The fifteenth century was an age of extraordinary achievement in Netherlandish painting. Fueled by the commercial wealth of the region’s cities, the artists of Flanders explored issues of light, space, and color to depict the human form and the



*Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEO DEL PRADO MADRID.

landscape in ways that were strikingly realistic. They developed a keen sense of iconography, subtly veiling the use of symbols in their works. A craftsman's precision also characterized the many altarpieces, religious paintings, and portraits they produced. While this lineage of distinguished artists learned from each other, they each displayed an individual temperament in their works that differed subtly from one another. As the fifteenth century came to a close in the Netherlands, Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516) painted a series of fantastic works that were noteworthy both for their striking originality and individuality of expression. Little is known about this mysterious figure, and tracking the course of his development as an artist is difficult because, of the many works attributed to him, only seven are signed. Bosch was apparently born and worked mostly in the southern Dutch town of 's-Hertogenbosch. Both his father and grandfather appeared to have been painters. If the chronologies that have been constructed of Bosch's works are correct, his earliest paintings were awkward in design and execution. Over time, however, he showed a growing certainty of technique and an increasingly complex iconography. As Bosch's career developed, he created works that gave expression to his own inexhaustible imagination.

**GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS.** This fertile personal vision is most evident in the artist's mature paintings like the triptych, *The Garden of Delights*, apparently completed sometime between 1505 and 1510. The sub-

ject of this three-fold panel painting is a moralistic sermon on the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man. In the first panel on the left, God appears to Adam and Eve to present them with the garden, a place which the artist populates with a broad array of animal life, some of it only dimly known to Europeans around 1500. He includes images of giraffes, elephants, and countless species of unusual birds. Not all is bliss in this paradise, however, as Bosch suggests the forces that will render the Fall inevitable: a serpent winds itself around a tree, while a cat captures a mouse for its dinner. In the center panel, Bosch depicts the state of humankind after the expulsion from Eden's paradise. In it, the human race has come to follow Satan, who will lead them to the perdition that waits in the final panel, a vivid pictorial description of Hell. In both works, Bosch presents the human form as pale and weak, that is, as incapable of stemming the tide of lust to which it has fallen prey. The singularity of the artist's imagery still manages to amaze viewers five centuries after its creation. In the center panel treating the state of fallen humankind, Bosch sets the images in a landscape with rocky outcroppings and a lake. In the center of the lake a huge egg-like structure appears as a kind of monster from which dolphin-like creatures appear to sprout. Throughout the rest of the panel Bosch presents thinly veiled erotic imagery. His humans frolic, ride livestock, emerge from egg-like structures, and caress strawberries and other fruits, each activity a play on phrases used in many European languages to connote sexual

intercourse. In the final panel, Bosch concludes this sermon on the consequences of erotic attraction: his inferno is a place of mechanical precision lit only by the firelight that serves to punish humankind. The artist does not include a traditional picture of Satan as a beguiling or fearsome demon, but instead shows him as a monstrous being, his body again a broken egg out of which and into human beings crawl like wretched rats. Bosch may have intended the *Garden of Delights* to condemn human sexuality, eroticism, and luxury as the vices that brought damnation. His audiences over the past centuries, however, have more often come to enjoy, and even be titillated by the fertility and seductiveness of his imagination. In the final years of the artist's life, Bosch's development as an artist continued. In place of distanced erotic visions set in meadows or hellish visions set in dimly lit infernos, the artist presented his human figures in close-up position, as in his *Christ Carrying the Cross*, a work completed shortly before Bosch's death in 1516. Still here Bosch returned to the same themes he had moralized about throughout his career: the battle between good and evil. He presented Christ as the archetype of good, surrounded by tightly packed human figures with ghoulish faces.

**PAINTING IN EARLY FIFTEENTH-CENTURY GERMANY.** The realism developed by Netherlandish artists affected painting produced elsewhere in Europe in the fifteenth century. While artists of great individuality were common in the Netherlands throughout the entire fifteenth century, the early fifteenth century in Germany produced few masters with such fertile imagination and pictorial skill. There were, however, several exceptions. At Cologne, Stefan Lochner (c. 1415–c. 1451) produced a number of charming works, which, although they adopted some of the compositional innovations of Netherlandish art, remained wedded to many medieval conventions. Lochner had learned these techniques, apparently firsthand from Robert Campin. In his *Presentation in the Temple*, completed around 1447, the artist relied on the perspective techniques perfected by Netherlandish artists. But while he set his work within a seemingly three-dimensional space signified by the work's floor, he did not make use of the interior spaces or landscapes common to the Netherlandish art of the time. Instead Lochner painted the background of his work in goldleaf, a medieval technique meant to suggest the glories of Heaven. He also adopted the medieval practice of relying upon several different sets of proportions in his work so that its most important figures appeared far larger than less important ones. Lochner was an artist of great charm. The *Presentation* includes a small procession of choir boys who are arranged according to their

size and who are led by the youngest and seemingly most endearing figure of the artist's imagination. By contrast, Konrad Witz (c. 1400–c. 1445) was born in the German southwest but eventually moved to Basel in Switzerland, and probably died there after a relatively short, but prosperous career as a painter in the city. Witz dealt with perspectival problems in his paintings, developing techniques for rendering both interior and exterior spaces so that they appeared to be real. In this regard he was not always successful, but his attempts show the curiosity common among fifteenth-century artists with mastering space and the depiction of the natural world. One of the artist's most successful works, the *Miraculous Draught of Fish*, is a painting that relates a fishing miracle performed by Christ and recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Witz set this narrative within a glorious subalpine landscape and played the red tones of Christ and the apostles' robes off against rich greens in the surrounding landscape. Despite his short life, Witz seems to have had a prolific career. Unfortunately, sixteenth-century Protestants destroyed many of his works in their staged attacks of iconoclasm on Basel's churches during the Reformation.

**LATER FIFTEENTH-CENTURY GERMANY.** A greater freedom from Netherlandish models began to appear in certain German centers in the second half of the fifteenth century. The artist Michael Pacher (c. 1435–1498), a native of Bruneck in Tyrol (then, as now, in Austria), was one figure who exemplified this new originality in German art. Pacher was a wood sculptor who carved in the notoriously difficult medium of limewood. Limewood was a species of the linden tree known for its great hardness. His limewood altarpieces were similar in many respects to those of the great German late Gothic sculptors Tilman Riemenschneider (c. 1455–1531) and Veit Stoss (c. 1455–1533). All three men carved numerous wood altarpieces across southern Germany and Central Europe in the late fifteenth century, and Riemenschneider and Stoss continued this tradition after Pacher's death. The figures in a typical limewood altarpiece were carved as separate sculptures and then were placed within a kind of stage-like box. Perhaps because of his background in this kind of sculpture, Michael Pacher experimented with problems of perspective in his paintings. While he continued to make use of northern techniques of realism, Pacher traveled to Italy, visiting Padua and Venice. In Italy, he became a close associate of Andrea Mantegna, an artist who was also interested in problems of perspective. He applied the lessons that he learned in Italy in his subsequent works, but perhaps nowhere more brilliantly than in his *Pope Sixtus II Taking Leave of Saint Lawrence*, a panel from an altarpiece painted in

the 1460s. In this work, Pacher's perspective, solid human forms, and even the flows of drapery seem to be very much influenced by his Italian associate Mantegna. At the same time he handles the play of light and color in his works in much the same way as other Northern European artists influenced by Netherlandish examples.

**PRINTING.** Copper engraving was one area in which German artists excelled in the second half of the fifteenth century. Artists elsewhere in Europe practiced engraving at this time, but it was in Germany that this particular art form reached its high point of development during the Renaissance. In the second half of the fifteenth century Martin Schongauer (c. 1450–1491) helped to lay the foundations for these later achievements. Schongauer developed techniques upon which sixteenth-century engravers like Albrecht Dürer relied. The artist was born and practiced in Colmar in Alsace (a predominantly German-speaking region now in France). He was an accomplished painter whose works were within the traditions of Netherlandish realism and were heavily influenced by Rogier van der Weyden. As an engraver, however, Schongauer excelled. He relied on hatching, stippling, and all sorts of techniques to produce a subtle range of coloration and detailing in his printed works.

**PAINTING IN FRANCE.** The first half of the fifteenth century was a time of crisis in France, as the Hundred Years' War moved to its conclusion. The French monarchy, badly bruised by these conflicts, also faced challenges to the east from its powerful cousins, the Dukes of Burgundy. Since much art was produced in Northern Europe within the confines of royal and noble courts, France's international problems had a dampening effect on artistic patronage in the first half of the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the country still produced artists of sensitivity and some sophistication, but styles of painting differed enormously throughout the country. The International Gothic, with its stylized, swaying draperies, continued to be popular in many parts of France throughout the fifteenth century, while in the north of the country the examples of Flemish and Dutch artists created a preference for the realism and coloristic techniques of Netherlandish artists. Elsewhere other native traditions flourished. If France did not experience the kind of artistic Renaissance that the Low Countries did during the fifteenth century, the country still produced a number of artists of merit. The greatest of the country's fifteenth-century painters was Jean Fouquet (c. 1420–c. 1481), a native of the central French city of Tours. Fouquet worked for Charles VII, the king whose throne had been saved by the visionary Joan of Arc. While undertaking commissions for religious panel

paintings, Fouquet also continued to practice the art of manuscript illumination, a medium that had been abandoned by the foremost painters of Italy and the Netherlands by this time. During the 1450s he completed a set of sixty brilliant miniatures for a *Book of Hours* for the king's finance minister, Etienne Chevalier, a patron whom he had already immortalized in a portrait included in a panel painting now known as the *Melun Diptych*. Fouquet was unusual among French artists because he had traveled to Italy, where he likely derived some inspiration from Fra Angelico and other Florentine artists. In general, though, his painting remained true to native French traditions. Late in life, the French monarchy awarded Fouquet the title of "Royal Painter," but the evidence suggests that he had long been the leading painter at court before the conferring of this title. In the southern French region of Provence, Duke René of Anjou supported a brilliant court in the city of Aix that produced several accomplished artists. These included the unknown master who painted the *Annunciation of Aix* sometime around 1445. This "Master of the Annunciation of Aix," as he has come to be known, drew inspiration from the works of Jan van Eyck, although his realism and his use of color and of light and shade are not as sophisticated as that of contemporary Netherlandish artists. At the same time his works show a great simplicity and forcefulness of expression. The greatest panel painter at work in southern France in the fifteenth century was Enguerrand Quarton or Charonton (c. 1410–1466). This artist worked in and around the city of Avignon, producing a celebrated *Pietà* around 1460 that is noteworthy for its somber and haunting qualities. At the same time Quarton could also be an exuberant artist, as in the *Coronation of the Virgin* he completed for a hospital in Avignon. The stipulations of this work's contracts survive and show that the prior of the hospital heavily defined its appearance. He required Quarton to use a number of medieval stylistic traits, including a gold background and differing scales for the various subjects depicted in the work. The resulting project, though, rises to the level of great art because of its stunning detail and use of color.

**TOWARD THE FUTURE.** The chief development in Northern European art in the fifteenth century had been centered in the cities of Flanders. These had begun with the attempts of Robert Campin and his followers to represent the world realistically. In the art of Jan van Eyck and his followers a Flemish tradition of painting developed that rejected the stylized grace and overt iconographical symbols once common among the Gothic painters of the fourteenth century. In place of these older

artistic canons, Flemish artists advocated a use of veiled symbols, so that the deeper religious icons of their paintings appeared as the objects of everyday life. These insights had imitators in many places in Northern Europe, although in some centers the traditions of the International Gothic survived throughout the century. By 1500, new artists and new artistic centers challenged the dominance of the Netherlandish style, and made way for a more widespread Renaissance in Northern European art.

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## THE HIGH RENAISSANCE IN ITALY

**ACHIEVEMENT.** At the end of the fifteenth century most of the goals toward which Italian painters and sculptors had long been striving had been achieved. As a result, Italian artists produced works that represented nature and the human form more faithfully than in previous centuries. In painting, the lineage of accomplishments from the time of Cimabue and Giotto to Masaccio had established techniques for rendering space in ways that appeared three-dimensional. And in Florence and elsewhere throughout Italy fifteenth-century artists had continued to master the techniques of *chiaroscuro* (the painting of light and shade that gave solidity and weight to pictures) and *sfumato* (the rendering of atmosphere). In sculpture, the fifteenth century had been one of undeniable achievement, from Ghiberti's doors of the Baptistery at Florence to the bronze and stone carvings of Donatello, Lucca della Robbia, and others. The early Renaissance had also witnessed a revival of knowledge about the art of classical Antiquity, as Brunelleschi, Alberti, and others had studied and begun to apply the proportions and conventions of ancient Roman art. Now at the end of the fifteenth century the results of this research and of the techniques generations of artists had perfected gave rise to a great flowering of art known as the High Renaissance. This period, which lasted until about 1520,

was a brief, but undeniably profound period of artistic achievement. Three great artistic geniuses dominated the style of the High Renaissance: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Raphael Sanzio. Each earned recognition during his lifetime as an enormously gifted creator, whose works were sought after by kings, princes, and popes. As a result of the achievements of the period, the status of the artist continued to rise in Italian society, and the ability to create art came to be seen among intellectuals as a divinely inspired attribute. The High Renaissance in art coincided with the popularity of Neoplatonic philosophy in Florence, Rome, and the other humanist centers throughout Italy. Neoplatonism taught that creativity was a sign of humankind's creation in God's likeness. The Neoplatonic philosophers Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola originally identified this spark of divine creativity with literary achievements, particularly with poetry. But the artists of the High Renaissance came to be influenced by these ideas. Michelangelo, a student of Neoplatonism in his youth, was particularly quick to point to his achievements in sculpture and painting as the products of divine inspiration. Many patrons agreed, and the notion of the artist as a figure filled with an almost superhuman ability to create became one of the underlying themes of the age.

**POLITICAL DISUNITY.** The High Renaissance, the period of Italy's greatest artistic achievement and productivity, coincided with tensions on the peninsula's political scene. During the course of the fifteenth century despots dominated many of Italy's small states, while the larger powers in the peninsula conquered many smaller territories. By 1500, five great powers—Milan, Florence, the papacy, Venice, and Naples—overshadowed the smaller territories throughout Italy. Constantly shifting alliances and treacherous diplomatic dealings became the rule between these great states, none of which was powerful enough to subdue the others. This lack of political unity, as well as diplomatic treachery, left open the door for outside invasion. In 1494, France became the first major European power to seek conquests in Italy, and this French invasion touched off a long series of conflicts that became known as the Italian Wars (1494–1530). Eventually every major European power became involved in these wars, as European dynasties tried to press ancient feudal claims to rule parts of Italy. Thus Italy's period of greatest cultural achievement occurred simultaneously with a dismal period of warfare.

**LEONARDO DA VINCI.** Born the earliest of the three giants, Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) was a remarkable and unusual man. Unlike other artists of the time,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ARTISTIC PRECOCITY**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his famous *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, the biographer Giorgio Vasari stressed the inventiveness and skill that Leonardo da Vinci displayed from an early age.

Truly admirable, indeed, and divinely endowed was Leonardo da Vinci; this artist was the son of Ser Piero da Vinci; he would without doubt have made great progress in learning and knowledge of the sciences, had he not been so versatile and changeful, but the instability of his character caused him to undertake many things which having commenced he afterwards abandoned. In arithmetic, for example, he made such rapid progress in the short time during which he gave his attention to it, that he often confounded the master who was teaching him, by the perpetual doubts he started, and by the difficulty of the questions he proposed. He also commenced the study of music, and resolved to acquire the art of playing the lute, when, being by nature of an exalted imagination and full of the most graceful vivacity, he sang to that instrument most divinely, improvising at once the verses and the music ...

Leonardo, with his profound intelligence of art, commenced various undertakings, many of which he never completed, because it appeared to him that the

hand could never give its due perfection to the object or purpose which he had in his thoughts, or beheld in his imagination; seeing that in his mind he frequently formed the idea of some difficult enterprise, so subtle and so wonderful that, by means of hands, however excellent or able, the full reality could never be worthily executed and entirely realized. His conceptions were varied to infinity; philosophizing over natural objects; among others, he set himself to investigate the properties of plants, to make observations on the heavenly bodies, to follow the movements of the planets, the variations of the moon, and the course of the sun.

Having been placed then by Ser Piero in his childhood with Andrea Verrocchio, as we have said, to learn the art of the painter, that master was engaged on a picture the subject of which was San Giovanni baptizing Jesus Christ; in this Leonardo painted an angel holding some vestments; and although he was but a youth, he completed that figure in such a manner that the angel of Leonardo was much better than the portion executed by his master, which caused the latter never to touch colours more, so much was he displeased to find that a mere child could do more than himself.

**SOURCE:** Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of Seventy of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Vol. 2. Trans. and Eds. E. H., E. W. Blashfield, and A. A. Hopkins (New York: Scribner, 1902): 371 and 376.

da Vinci completely rejected ancient Roman models for his art and instead painted in a natural style. He was born the son of a notary and a peasant woman. Eventually, his father built a prosperous career, and in his youth da Vinci became an apprentice to the Florentine artist Verrocchio. He earned early recognition as a painter, but da Vinci's restless genius led him to practice sculpture, architecture, in addition to his studies in mechanics and design. While none of the artist's buildings was ever constructed, he was widely recognized as a master of invention and problem solving. The lifelong *Notebooks* that he kept included designs for an amazing number of machines, including an early vision of the helicopter. At times da Vinci worked as a military engineer, designing battlements and siege machines for his clients, which included the despot Cesare Borgia, the dukes of Milan, and the Republic of Florence. Although he was a man of little formal schooling, da Vinci embodied the Renaissance concept of the "universal man." Besides these many achievements, the artist also wrote music, experimented in physics, and was a student of botany, geography, optics, anatomy, and geology.

**EARLY WORKS.** After completing his training in Florence, da Vinci's first independent commission seems to have been the *Adoration of the Magi*, a composition undertaken for a monastery for Florence. This work, like many of Leonardo's, was left unfinished when the artist left for Milan two years later, but it shows a highly adventurous use of organizational techniques. In the foreground of the panel the Virgin and three kings worship the Christ child, while around them a great circular group of onlookers forms an arch in the background. In this, the first of his mature masterpieces, Leonardo displays his fascination with facial expressions and with balance and harmony. In 1483, the artist traveled to Milan to paint his *Virgin of the Rocks* for a local confraternity, a work long admired for the sweetness of expression on its subjects' faces. It shows the Virgin Mary raising her hand to protect the Christ child, who confers a blessing on the kneeling figure of the infant John the Baptist. An angel, otherworldly in its extreme beauty, points to John the Baptist. The entire drama appears before a mysterious crag-filled landscape that is illuminated by two different sources of light, one in the distance and another



*Self-Portrait* by Leonardo da Vinci. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

that throws an ethereal glimmer upon the faces of the subjects in the foreground. While at work in Milan, Leonardo offered his services to Lodovico Sforza, a despot who had recently seized control of the Duchy of Milan. Sforza sat at the head of a cultivated court, and da Vinci fulfilled many roles within the ducal household. He decorated the Sforza apartments, provided stage sets and costumes for many theatrical productions, and painted portraits of members of the court. During this period the artist completed a number of his most famous portraits, including the *Portrait of a Lady with an Ermine*, the *Portrait of a Musician*, and the *Portrait of a Woman in Profile*. The largest and most important project of these years in Milan, though, was his *Last Supper*, a commission undertaken for the refectory or dining hall of the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie. Leonardo da Vinci's plan for the picture was innovative. He divided the group of twelve disciples into four groups of three and through the eyes of these characters and their subtle gestures and facial expressions he endowed these ac-



*Madonna of the Rocks* by Leonardo da Vinci. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

tors with a kind of superhuman grandeur. Through a skillful use of perspective, too, the artist expanded the space of the refectory illusionistically so that the room appeared to be much larger. Da Vinci's *Last Supper* set a new idealized standard for artists hoping to visualize religious themes. Sadly, the artist also experimented with the use of a new technique of painting and the work began to decay almost as soon as it was finished. Over the centuries it has been badly treated as well at the hands of restorers. Still some of the work's grace and beauty has survived over the years. The invasion of Milan at the hands of the French and the expulsion of Lodovico Sforza, however, cut Leonardo's time in the city short, and in 1499 the artist fled first to Venice and later returned to Florence.

**FLORENCE AND LATER YEARS.** Upon his return to the city where he had been trained, da Vinci was offered a number of commissions, although at first he completed only studies for these projects. In 1502, the notorious general and despot Cesare Borgia, illegitimate son of Pope Alexander VI, offered Leonardo employment as an architect and engineer. At the request of his patron da Vinci traveled through central Italy, making plans for



*Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci. THE GRANGER COLLECTION LTD. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

siege engines, model cities, and battlements. He returned to Florence in 1503, and received a commission to paint a fresco for the Chamber of the Republic, a meeting room in Florence's Palazzo Vecchio or town hall. The subject was the *Battle of Anghiara*, a fifteenth-century Florentine military triumph. Again Leonardo relied on experimental methods, and the commission had to be abandoned prior to its completion. Around this time the artist also painted his most famous work, the *Mona Lisa*, a portrait of the wife of a wealthy Florentine. As a portraitist, da Vinci produced notable works. In contrast to the rigid profile portraits of many fifteenth-century artists, da Vinci painted his subjects in relaxed positions. The *Mona Lisa* sits calmly before a rich and mysterious landscape, one in which the artist has made great use of the technique of *sfumato* or atmospheric painting. The *Mona Lisa* is one of the only surviving later works from da Vinci's hand. He did not complete most of the painting projects he began in the years after 1508. Two notable exceptions were the artist's *Saint John the Baptist*, which da Vinci completed during his second residency in Milan between 1508 and 1513, and his *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, a work begun in 1508, but not finished until many years later when the artist was in Rome. In these later years Leonardo devoted himself to scientific studies rather than to painting, the record of which are to be found in his voluminous *Notebooks*. In 1516, King Francis I invited him to France to work at the French court. He received a country château and a

wide range of projects to complete, including set designs for courtly theatrical productions and plans for a new royal palace. But like so many of the projects he undertook, this last project was never completed.

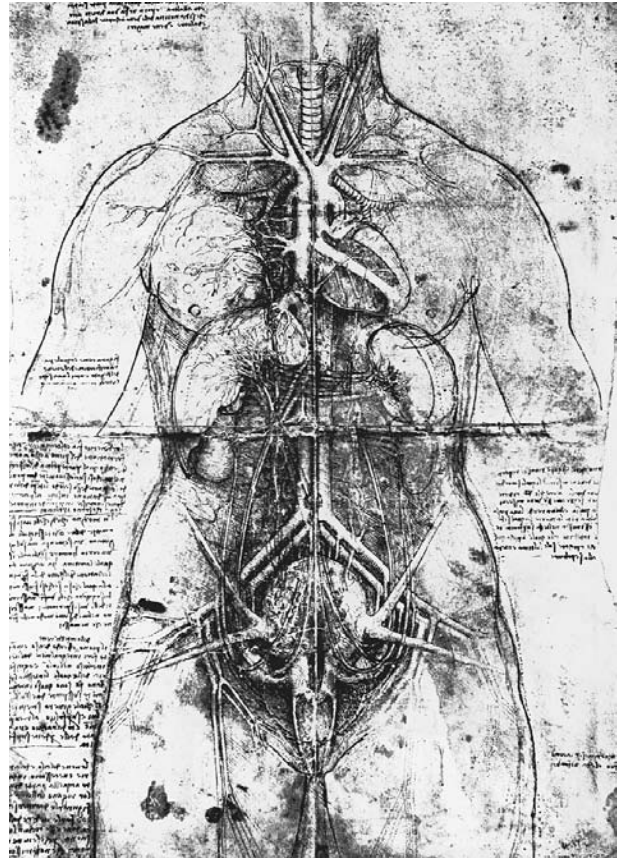
**SIGNIFICANCE.** Da Vinci was never satisfied with being merely an artistic craftsman. In contrast to the artists of the fifteenth century he presented himself as an individual on an intensely personal quest for self-expression in his art. Even art, though, was an insufficient taskmaster for Leonardo, who followed many professions simultaneously. This is evident in his *Notebooks*. Leonardo considered himself a painter, and he argued that painting was a science because it proceeded from empirical observation and was based upon the mathematical laws of perspective. At the same time he worked as an engineer, a designer, a writer, a draftsman, builder, anatomist, and contemplative theologian. He was particularly well versed in the arts of war (including the construction of siege machines, defensive battlements, and so forth), and he earned far more from these skills than he did from his art. In his *Notebooks* Leonardo frequently argues that he is not a learned man in the ways of the humanists or scholastics, but that his experience makes him superior to those who have much book learning. His statements often attack the pretentiousness of scholars. Instead he argues that painters practice skills that are superior to other crafts because they rely upon their eyes and are masters of observation. This aspect of Leonardo's thought—the value of empirical





*Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY PICTURE COLLECTION.

observation—always shows through in his paintings. He realized that the eyes took in images through a haze produced by dust and humidity in the air, and he relied on *sfumato* (the painting of filmy atmosphere) to demonstrate this in his work. Da Vinci also painted the horizons in his pictures so that they sloped—recognition that the earth was round. Leonardo often remarked in his writings that mortal beauty was ephemeral. While it faded and disappeared, the artist's contribution was to make beauty eternal: "A beautiful object that is mortal passes away, but not so with art." Further, art is a window on the human soul that stirs the senses and provides human beings with a vision of eternal beauty. In contrast to the devotion that scholars evidenced to texts in the Renaissance, da Vinci's emphasis on observation and experimentation was an innovation. While contemporary humanists advocated literary studies and rhetoric as the best way to establish truth, da Vinci insisted instead that the eyes were the most important arbiters of proof. His attitude was forward looking. It had more in common with the Empiricism of seventeenth-century



"Anatomical Study" by Leonardo da Vinci. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

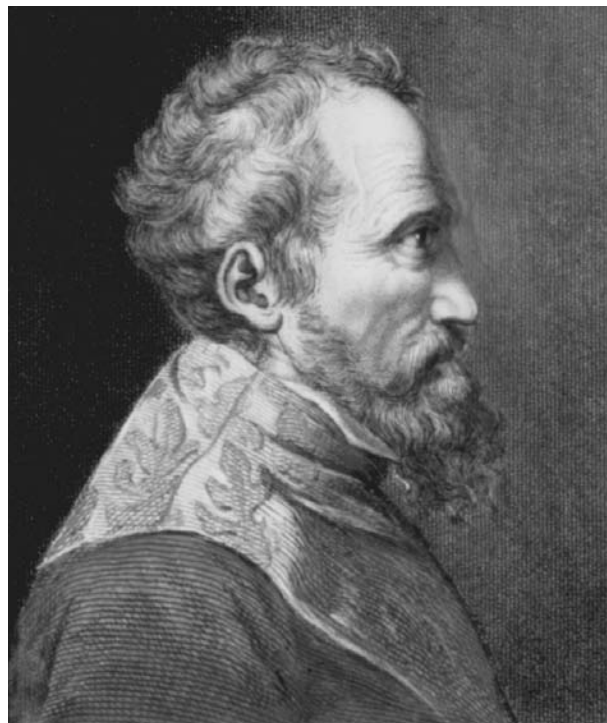
scientists like Descartes, Bacon, and Newton, than it did with the textual attitudes toward truth that were embraced by fifteenth-century intellectuals.

**MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI.** The second undisputed genius of the High Renaissance in Italy was Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564). Like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo also strove to develop himself as a "universal man" of the Renaissance. He was interested in a vast array of fields and became an expert on human anatomy and engineering, besides practicing the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture. Michelangelo also became a poet whose sonnets are notable for their intensity and beauty of expression. His personality, though, differed strikingly from Leonardo da Vinci. Where Leonardo was passionately interested in nature and rarely discussed God or religious issues in his writings, Michelangelo was intensely religious and received inspiration from a deep sense of his own personal unworthiness and of his sinful nature. In his art Michelangelo often sought to give expression to his search for divine love. Both men left many of their compositions unfinished at their deaths. For Leonardo, his reluctance

to finish projects was a by-product of his perfectionism and his realization that his completed compositions rarely matched the ideal beauty of his internal vision. Michelangelo, on the other hand, was driven by a powerful desire to create, and he often neglected his own health and appetites to devote more time to work on his commissions. His patrons frequently moved him from project to project, which prevented him from finishing works he had already begun.

**EARLY LIFE.** Michelangelo was born the son of a minor Florentine official who was stationed at Caprese, a small Tuscan town subject to Florence. When he was only a few months old, Michelangelo returned to Florence with his family following the completion of his father's term of office. They settled in the small suburb of Settignano, just outside the city, and here Michelangelo learned his first lessons in stone carving when he was just a boy. When he was thirteen, he became an apprentice to the Florentine artist Domenico Ghirlandaio, who ran a large and successful studio. Later he studied sculpture with Bertoldo di Giovanni, a local sculptor who had been a student of the great artist Donatello. Michelangelo never completed the terms of his apprenticeship, but thanks to his father's good offices he gained entrance to the Medici family circle, where he studied the family's large collection of ancient sculptures. Within the Medici circle he also became associated with Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and other Florentine humanists. At this time Neoplatonism was the intellectual vogue of the city, and during the two years that Michelangelo spent as a member of the Medici household between 1490 and 1492, he received the foundations of a humanist training. Although he never became fluent in Latin, his time with the Medici familiarized him with the major intellectual disputes and issues of the age. He also acquired his love for the verse of Dante and Petrarch, and throughout his life, Michelangelo continued to write sonnets and other verse, despite his punishing load of artistic commissions. The desire for social status and distinction also motivated Michelangelo. Throughout his life he was convinced that his family was descended from an ancient line of Italian nobility. Michelangelo adopted the dress and behavior of a nobleman, and through his artistic successes he tried to enhance his family's social position.

**SCULPTURE.** The artist's first stunning successes came in the field of sculpture, and throughout his life, Michelangelo felt most at home in this medium. His first masterpiece was the *Pietà*, an image of the dead Christ resting upon the lap of his mother. Michelangelo created the statue for the French cardinal Jean Villiers dur-



Michelangelo in profile. CORBIS-BETTMANN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

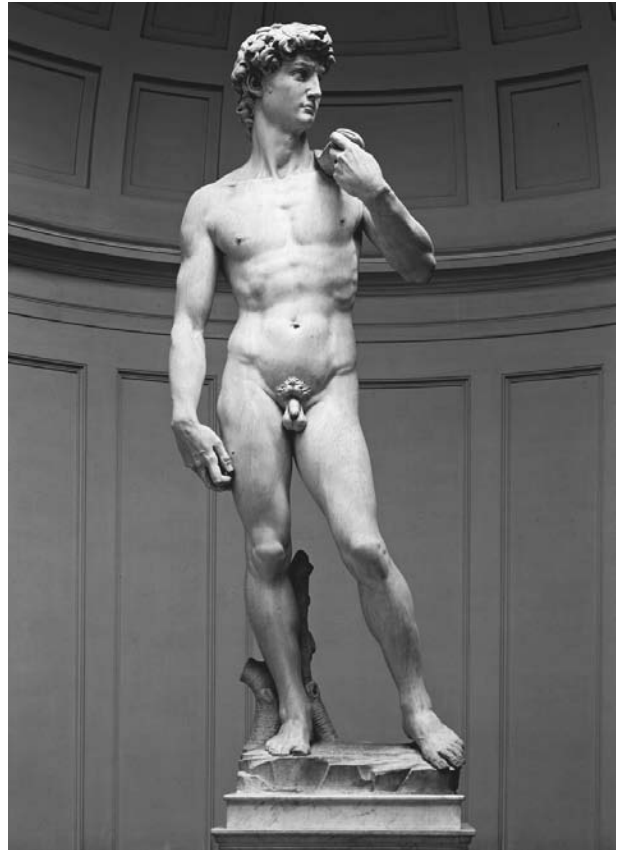
ing his first period of residence in Rome (1496–1501). Michelangelo carved the *Pietà* from a single block of marble, and the work was immediately recognized for its extreme delicacy and accomplished technique. In his subsequent sculptures Michelangelo adopted a more powerful and heroic style, as for example in his famous *David* completed in 1504. For almost a century the Old Testament figure of David had been a symbol of the Republic of Florence. The imagery of the biblical story of the tiny David victorious against Goliath had been seen as a metaphor of Italian politics. Florence, a small state, had flourished in an Italy dominated by Goliaths. Many Florentine artists had created works that immortalized the youthful figure as a symbol of their city. Michelangelo's work, too, had its own fascinating history. The marble out of which it was crafted had been quarried in the 1460s for the sculptor Donatello and had been partially worked. Following Donatello's death, though, it had lain unused for more than forty years. Most sculptors insisted that the block of stone had a flaw that rendered it unusable. After examining it Michelangelo devised a plan for carving a figure from the stone. In comparison with the serene and youthful *David* that Donatello had cast in bronze in the first half of the fifteenth century, Michelangelo's biblical colossus is no longer a child, but a youthful, heavily muscled



*Pietà* by Michelangelo. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

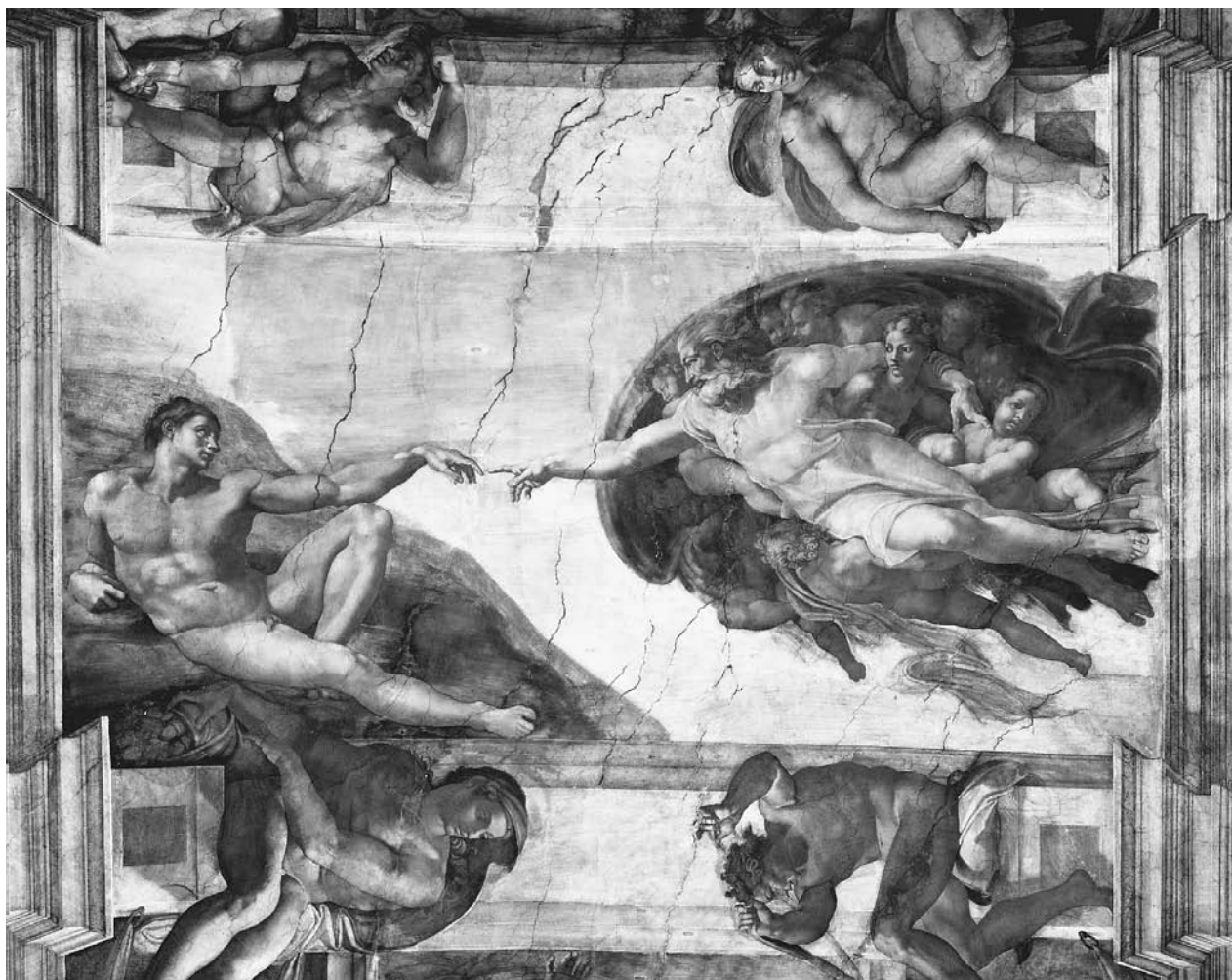
adolescent with oversized hands and feet. He stands assured, yet alert with every sinew and muscle in his body ready to do battle. A close examination of the statue shows that it is the product of the artist's studies of anatomy since the muscles and veins of the work are closely modeled upon human models. The work was originally intended for a prominent position atop the Palazzo Vecchio, the town hall, in Florence and was accordingly more than fourteen feet high. It was immediately hailed as a masterpiece, the greatest freestanding sculpture completed since Antiquity. As a consequence Florence's town fathers gave it a position of honor in front of the town hall so that it could be admired more closely. In the nineteenth century the city placed a copy there and moved the original indoors to the Galleria dell' Accademia, a museum of Tuscan sculpture.

**JULIUS II.** Both the *Pietà* and the *David* established Michelangelo's reputation as an artistic genius, and from this point until his death he received numerous commissions, both in Florence and Rome, the two developing centers of High Renaissance style. In 1505, Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513) called Michelangelo to Rome to undertake a massive project, the building of an enormous tomb. This project consumed the artist's attention



*David* by Michelangelo. SCALA/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

off and on for over forty years and was complicated by the complex relationship between pope and artist, both of whom were extremely strong-minded personalities. As it was originally conceived in 1505, the tomb was to include more than 40 statues, although when finished four decades later, only three statues were completed. In 1505, Michelangelo set to work on the project immediately. He left Rome to supervise personally the quarrying of the marble for the project. Soon after his departure, Julius' ardor for the tomb cooled, and when Michelangelo returned some months later, the pope had turned to his plans to rebuild St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, a building that was at the time more than a thousand years old. Displeased with the pope's plans to abandon the tomb project, Michelangelo left Rome for Bologna; the two reconciled months later, after the artist asked the pope's forgiveness. Julius lured him back to Rome, and in 1508, he gave Michelangelo the contract for perhaps his most famous work: the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Until this point, most of the artist's most important commissions had been sculptures. The Sistine ceiling was a project to which the artist was by training



*Creation of Adam* fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. SCALA/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

and inclination ill-suited. But like so many other projects that Michelangelo undertook, he rose to the occasion once he had set his mind to the task.

**SISTINE CHAPEL.** The Sistine Chapel, named after Pope Sixtus IV who had it built between 1473–1484, was the private chapel of the popes, and has long been the place in which the College of Cardinals elects new popes. Soon after its completion the artists Domenico Ghirlandaio, Cosimo Roselli, Perugino, and Sandro Botticelli decorated the chapel's sidewalls. In the early sixteenth century the ceiling, which was more than 60 feet high, was still bare plaster. To undertake this project, Michelangelo planned a grand design that mixed decorative elements from Antiquity and the Bible. The major scenes in the center of the ceiling are from Genesis and are framed with alternating images of the ancient Cumaean sibyls and the Old Testament prophets. The narrative Michelangelo created begins with the

Creation of the World and of Man and Woman and progresses through the events in the Garden of Eden. The program culminates with the story of the Flood. Michelangelo painted these scenes in reverse order, and after completing the first two scenes he adjusted the scale on which he painted them to take account of the enormous size of the room. As he progressed, his compositions grew simpler and more monumental so that they could be viewed more easily from the floor. The artist also filled the later images with dramatic and swirling elements to suggest movement. Painted over a span of less than four years, the result was one of the wonders of the age, a creation that since the sixteenth century has never ceased to instill admiration in its observers. In Michelangelo's time his Sistine Chapel frescoes were a perennial source of inspiration for other artists, who relied upon the work for elements of design in similar decorative cycles and who tried to imitate the heroic and

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ESPIONAGE AND INTRIGUE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Creative differences between Michelangelo and his patron, Pope Julius II, often erupted into colossal misunderstandings. Such was the case during the time in which Michelangelo worked on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. During one of their disagreements, Michelangelo fled Rome and returned to Florence. According to the biographer Vasari, the architect Donato Bramante used this occasion to show Michelangelo's work secretly to Raphael. Vasari thus explained a change that occurred in Raphael's later style, as the artist added more drama and monumentality to his work. These attributes, Vasari alleged, came directly from the artist's imitation of Michelangelo.

Raphael had at this time acquired much fame in Rome, but although he had the graceful manner which was held by every one to be most beautiful, and saw continually before his eyes the numerous antiquities to be found in that city, and which he studied continually, he had, nevertheless, not yet given to his figures that grandeur and majesty which he always did impart to them from that time forward. For it happened at the period to which we now refer, that Michelangelo, as we shall fur-

thermore set forth in his life, had made such clamours in the Sistine Chapel, and given the Pope such alarms, that he was compelled to take flight and sought refuge in Florence. Whereupon Bramante, having the key of the chapel, and being the friend of Raphael, permitted him to see it, to the end that he might understand Michelangelo's modes of proceeding. The sight thus afforded to him caused Raphael instantly to paint anew the figure of the prophet Isaiah, which he had executed in the Church of Sant'Agostino, above the Sant'Anna of Andrea Sansovino, although he had entirely finished it; and in this work he profited to so great an extent by what he had seen in the works of Michelangelo, that his manner was thereby inexpressibly ameliorated and enlarged, receiving thenceforth an obvious increase of majesty.

But when Michelangelo afterwards saw the work of Raphael, he thought as was the truth that Bramante had committed the wrong to himself of which we have here spoken, for the purpose of serving Raphael, and enhancing the glory of that master's name.

**SOURCE:** Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of Seventy of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Vol. 3. Trans. and Ed. E. H., E. W. Blashfield, and A. A. Hopkins. (New York: Scribner, 1896): 161–162.

idealized forms that he created on the ceiling. A long-term campaign of restoration undertaken during the 1980s returned the paintings to their sixteenth-century brilliance and allowed observers to view the works minus centuries of accumulated dirt and soot. This restoration also revealed that Michelangelo used a vibrant, and sometimes even garish color palette to create the frescoes. These dramatic colors were yet another feature that Michelangelo's imitators focused on when trying to imitate the style of this great sixteenth-century master.

**LEGACY.** In the wake of the Sistine Chapel ceiling Michelangelo returned for a time to his first love, sculpture. In 1515 he completed the grand *Moses*, a work in his ongoing tomb project for the now deceased Pope Julius II. Here, as in the Sistine frescoes, Michelangelo presented a higher vision of reality, an image of the biblical prophet that is distinguished by his fierce power and the statue's vigorous and piercing gaze. Like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo's High Renaissance style presented an idealized and higher vision of reality. Yet unlike the often placid and cerebral quality of da Vinci's art, Michelangelo's works suggested movement, heroism, and dramatic intensity, qualities that his contemporaries widely emulated. The longest-lived of all the

great High Renaissance masters, Michelangelo experimented with new styles in the years after 1520. His later art, significantly different from his early sixteenth-century works, helped to supplant the idealized artistic synthesis of the High Renaissance, and to give rise to yet a new creative artistic movement known as Mannerism.

**RAPHAEL SANZIO.** In place of the serenity of da Vinci or the intense heroism of Michelangelo, the third great master of the High Renaissance, Raffaello Sanzio (1483–1520) (or Raphael, as he is known in English) gave expression to a harmonious and balanced vision in the High Renaissance. Raphael was born in the northern Italian town of Urbino, the son of a painter. Initially trained by his father, the young Raphael became a member of the studio of the Central Italian artist Perugino at Perugia. Always able to adapt and learn from other artists, Raphael soon mastered Perugino's sweet and lyrical style with such excellence that contemporaries were frequently unable to distinguish whether a work from Perugino's studio came from the hand of the master or of his student. As his reputation grew, he received commissions from the duke of his native Urbino before moving on to Florence around 1504. There Raphael studied the High Renaissance style of Leonardo and



*School of Athens* by Raphael. ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Michelangelo, who were both in Florence at the time. Both these elder artists were now highly successful figures who served the city of Florence and other princely patrons. The price of their commissions had outstripped the means of most wealthy Florentines. Raphael soon filled a gap in the local art market by producing works in the High Renaissance style for the town's merchants and noble families. During his three years in Florence the artist successfully executed a large number of commissions, including his famous *Madonna of the Meadows*. That work shows the influence that Raphael derived from Leonardo. Its composition is dominated by a pyramidal grouping of Madonna, Christ child, and John the Baptist in a way similar to Leonardo's *Madonna and St. Anne*. At the same time Raphael's work has none of the mysterious *chiaroscuro* of Leonardo's. It shines with brilliant, gemlike colors. Nor does Raphael reveal much interest here in anatomical studies, a chief concern of both Leonardo and Michelangelo. Instead the artist

demonstrates a love of harmony and balance through his counter-poising of oval and circular shapes throughout the picture.

**ROME.** In 1508 Raphael traveled to Rome to work for Pope Julius II. The artist remained there for the rest of his life, painting commissions for the popes and members of the church's government. The first project that the artist undertook in Rome was a series of frescoes for the papal apartments, which happened to coincide with Michelangelo's work on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. As Raphael worked on his frescoes in the nearby apartments, his compositions acquired a more monumental scale suitable to the grand environment in which he was working. The *School of Athens* is typical of the refinement and monumental character of these works. In this work Raphael depicts the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle as well as members of the intellectual elite of Greece. To link the past and present he depicted many of these figures as contemporary members on the



*The Transfiguration* by Raphael. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Roman scene, so that his Plato is a portrait of Leonardo da Vinci and his ancient Heraclitus of Michelangelo. The entire composition is set, too, before an architectural backdrop that bears resemblance to the plans for the new St. Peter's Basilica that was just beginning to take shape around the time that Raphael painted his work. For the recognized successes that he achieved in frescoing the papal apartments Raphael was richly rewarded with other commissions. During the five years before his premature death in 1520, the artist served as architect on a number of projects under construction in Rome at the time, including the new St. Peter's Basilica. He also served Pope Leo X, a member of the Medici family, as a supervisor of Roman antiquities. He completed a major decorative cycle for the Villa Farnesina, a palace that overhung the Tiber River in Rome and which was being built by Agostino Chigi, then the pope's banker. For this project Raphael and his assistants painted a large number of rooms in a style that imitated classical Roman frescoes. The subject matter of the Farnesina frescoes was entirely

drawn from pagan Antiquity, and unlike many earlier uses of pagan mythology, they were devoid of Christian moralizing. One of the most famous paintings that Raphael completed for this project was the *Galatea*, in which the ancient pagan figure rides on the waves atop a scallop shell, while cupids try to stir her passion for the Cyclops by shooting love arrows at her. In this painting Raphael shows the influences that he derived from observing the art of Michelangelo. The figures in the fresco writhe with a greater heroic tension and movement than in the more placid works of just a few years before. They are now heavily muscled, and their bodies resemble the marble-like creations of Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling frescoes. In these and other works in the Villa Farnesina Raphael brought the synthesis between classical Antiquity and High Renaissance style to its highest level of achievement. In one of his last great masterpieces of painting, the *Transfiguration*, (1517) Raphael adapted his mixture of classical grace and harmony to a Christian theme. Contemporaries seem to have admired this late



*Galatea* by Raphael. © ARALDO DE LUCA/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

work above the many that the artist produced in Rome. At Raphael's funeral in 1520, it was displayed alongside the funeral bier.

**INFLUENCE.** Although his life was short, Raphael continued to cast a long influence over Italian art in the later sixteenth century. During his brief time in Rome the artist had maintained a large studio, in which he had trained a number of painters who were to keep his style alive throughout the peninsula in the decades following his death. In the seventeenth century, too, European academies lauded Raphael's art as the most appropriate style for study and emulation, particularly in France. Raphael's subsequent influence on "academic" art was one cause for the decline of the artist's reputation in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Raphael became connected in the mind of many artistic connoisseurs with the dull repetition and monotony that was frequently

the fate of art produced in the early-modern and modern academies. In truth, Raphael's creations were never repetitive and he evidenced a highly innovative approach to his compositions throughout his career. If his compositions sometimes lack the emotional intensity or intellectual depth of Michelangelo or da Vinci, it must be remembered that the artist died before even reaching the age of forty.

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## THE HIGH AND LATER RENAISSANCE IN VENICE

**PECULIARITIES.** In Venice and Northern Italy a High Renaissance style developed that was notably different from that of Florence and Rome. Venice, an artistic backwater for most of the fifteenth century, gradually took a leading position in producing artists of merit during the sixteenth century. A fundamental difference of technique separated Venetian artists from those of Central Italy. In the latter region, the principle of *disegno* or “design” dominated the style of painting. In their compositions artists sketched their subjects with the precision of a draftsman before adding colors to their panels. The results produced artistic creations with sinuous lines and clear compositional logic. By contrast, Venetian artists from the time of Bellini developed a painterly tradition in which they built their compositions up through the use of color. In place of the precision and dominant lines of Central Italian style, the impression produced by much Venetian art was filmy and indistinct since its compositional logic arose from the juxtaposition of contrasting colors, rather than from the fine lines of a draftsman’s design. Venice’s painters also became masters of the medium of oil painting, a method originally imported toward the end of the fifteenth century from Northern Europe. Venetian masters perfected new resins that allowed them to paint on canvas rather than panels, an innovation that gave their coloristic techniques greater depth and luminosity. This great flowering of painterly technique developed at a time of political stress in the Venetian Republic. In the early sixteenth century the city faced a crisis. Forces from throughout Italy and Europe massed against the state and temporarily cut the city off from its possessions on the Italian mainland. Venice’s political problems persisted, and by the 1520s, its influence in Italy and the Mediterranean was in decline. Economically, Venice remained rich, a great trading center strategically positioned between the east and west. Still, during the course of the sixteenth century her economic and strategic importance diminished in the face of the rise of the great northern European trading



*The Tempest* by Giorgione. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

centers in the Low Countries (modern Belgium and Holland). Despite these stresses, however, the sixteenth century was a Golden Age for the city. In literature, art, and architecture, Venice’s greatest figures produced works that influenced European styles over the coming centuries.

**GIORGIONE.** Giorgione da Castelfranco (1475–1510) was among the first Venetian painters to develop a distinctly High Renaissance style. Little is known about Giorgione’s career, and few surviving documents exist to date his compositions. These works show influences from the great fifteenth-century Venetian painter Bellini, but Giorgione introduced a greater monumentality into his paintings, and, like High Renaissance artists elsewhere in Italy, he strove to present his subjects on a higher idealized plane. Giorgione, too, developed the painting of landscape in his works to a point where it acquired independent interest. He set both his religious and secular works against seemingly magical appearing backgrounds, and the artist’s most famous work, *The Tempest*, has long been credited with granting landscape paintings independence from religious or mythological themes. Here Giorgione made landscape the subject of the picture itself. In the foreground the artist presents a soldier who looks upon a mostly nude woman who is nursing a child. The real interest at work

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN ART CRITIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** After a number of early scandals, Pietro Aretino took up residence in the city of Venice, where he gradually established himself as an arbiter of local tastes. In his many letters, which he published while still living, Aretino held forth on all sorts of subjects. In the following letter to his close friend Titian, the writer compares a recent sunset—a work of God—to the landscapes of his dear friend. Throughout the short letter Aretino extravagantly praises his friend's ability to create and to immortalize what in nature is only a fleeting display.

Signor compare, having, contrary to my custom, dined alone, or rather in the company of the discomforts of that quartan fever which never lets me enjoy the taste of food any longer, I walked up from the table sated with the same despair with which I had sat down to it. And then, leaning my arms, my chest, and almost my whole body against the window sill, I started to look at the admirable spectacle made by the innumerable barges which, laden with foreigners as well as natives, entertained not only the onlookers but the Grand Canal itself, that entertainer of all who plough its waves. And as soon as it offered the diversion of two gondolas with famous gondoliers having a race, it was a great pleasure to watch the crowd of people who had stopped, to look at the regatta on the Rialto Bridge, on the Riva dei Camerlinghi, in the Fish Market, on the landing-stage of Saint-Sophia, and in the Casa da Mosto. When these crowds had gone on their way with joyful applauses, then, like a man bored with himself who does not know what to do with his mind or his thoughts, I turned my eyes towards the

sky; this had never since God's creation shown such a beautiful picture of shadows and light. And it was such as those who envy you, because they cannot approach you, would like to render. You should see, by means of my description, first the buildings which, although of real stone, seemed made of some unreal material. And then, imagine the sky, which I perceived in some places pure and bright in others dim and livid. Think also how I marveled at the clouds of condensed humidity; in the principal view they were partly close to the roofs of the buildings, partly receding far back [to the left], for the right hand side was all veiled with a darkish gray. I was really amazed by the various colors which they showed; the closest were burning with the flames of the sun's fire; and the farthest were red with a less burning vermilion. Oh, with what beautiful strokes the brushes of Nature pushed the azure into the distance, setting it back from the buildings the same way that Titian does in his landscapes! In some places there appeared a green-blue and in others a blue-green which really seemed as if mixed by the errant fancies of nature, master of the masters. With lights and shadows she hollowed and swelled whatever she wanted to swell and hollow; so that I, who know that your brush is the very soul of her soul, burst out three or four times with: "Oh, Titian, where are you now?"

On my honor, if you had painted what I described, you would amaze people as I was amazed, but while watching what I have described to you, I had to fill my soul with it since the splendor of a painting of this kind was not to last.

**SOURCE:** Pietro Aretino, "Letter to Titian" in *Italian Art, 1500–1600: Sources and Documents*. Ed. Robert Klein and Henri Zerner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966): 54–55.

in the picture is the force of nature. In the background an approaching storm makes the landscape come alive, casting patches of light and dark on the stream and cityscape that stretch toward the horizon. Again the beauty of the *Tempest* presents us with evidence of that discovery of the natural world that was common to the visual artists of the Renaissance. Through this work Giorgione granted a new independent importance to the observation of nature since the human figures do little more than establish proportion for the fascinating vision of the natural world that he presents in the rest of the picture.

**TITIAN.** The greatest painter of sixteenth-century Venice was Tiziano Vecellio (c. 1490–1576), who has long been known in English as Titian. The artist came to Venice from the remote Alpine town of Pieve di

Cadore, where he had been born to an important aristocratic family. Legend long taught that Titian had lived to be 100 years old, but more recent research has now fixed his birth date much later than originally presumed. While the artist lived to a venerable age, he likely died at some point between 85 and 90 years of age. Trained originally in the studios of several Venetian painters, Titian's major influences were his teacher Giovanni Bellini and later his close associate Giorgione. When the latter artist died around 1510, Titian undertook to complete a number of his compositions. Giorgione's lyrical influence upon Titian's style can be seen in one of the artist's first masterpieces, *Sacred and Profane Love*, completed sometime around 1516. Like Giorgione's *The Tempest*, the actual subject matter of this piece has never been identified, although it may be an allegory that symbol-



*Assumption of the Virgin* by Titian. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

izes the passage of a woman from maiden virginity into a life of erotic love. Two women, appearing to be twins, sit on an ancient sarcophagus, which is in reality a fountain. One of the figures is clothed and gloved and touches a black bowl with her left hand, while holding a bunch of roses in the other. To her right an almost completely nude figure holds up a lamp, while between the two women, a cupid stirs the water of the fountain, and water pours from a golden bowl perched on the sarcophagus to fall upon a white rose bush. The background mirrors the difference between the two women. Behind the clothed figure the landscape rises and is crowned by a fortress set in a dark landscape. On the other side of the painting in the space behind the naked figure the view opens into a vast panorama bathed in light and dominated by a hunter's pursuit of a hare and a village crowned with a church spire. *Sacred and Profane Love*

was the first in a distinguished line of masterworks produced by the artist during the 1510s and 1520s. These works were portraits or they treated mythological and religious themes. One of the most undeniably important works of this period was the artist's *Assumption of the Virgin*, a massive work completed for the Church of Santa Maria dei Frari in Venice around 1518. In that work the Virgin rises from a group of writhing apostles and is supported upon her path to God the Father by groups of struggling child angels. Titian heightened the drama of the work through the use of strong dramatic colors set against a neutral background, as well as by the enormous size of the panel. The work towers more than 22 feet high above the central altar of the Church of the Frari.

**MIDDLE AND LATER YEARS.** In 1530 Titian lost his wife, and a change in his artistic vision became evident. During the 1530s his use of color grew more restrained. In place of the dramatic juxtaposing of colors that had dominated many of his early works, Titian now drew his palette from related, rather than contrasting colors. This change can be seen in the famous *Venus of Urbino* which the artist completed around 1538. This work is the most famous of several Venuses that Titian painted in these years. In it, the ample form of a woman lies reclining on her bed, while a servant rummages through a chest in the background. An inlaid marble floor and wall hangings grant the scene an atmosphere of cultivated ease, which is further reinforced by the use of rich golds, greens, and brownish reds. Works like these were widely admired by the Italian nobility of the period, and helped to grant the artist a great renown throughout Italy and Europe in these years. He became court painter to the emperor Charles V, and his portraits of popes, kings, princes, and other nobles served to catalogue the lives of the most important figures of the day. In 1545 Titian left Venice on his only journey to the city of Rome, then the acknowledged artistic center of Europe. The monumental works of Michelangelo, including his Sistine Chapel frescoes and *Last Judgment* with their heavily muscled figures, greatly influenced Titian as did the works of Antiquity that had come to light in the previous decades. In the artist's later years he strove to develop a more dramatic and expressive style characterized by broad brushstrokes and a brilliant use of colors. Among the most outstanding of many images painted in this period are the *Rape of Europa* (1562) and the *Crowning with Thorns* (c. 1570). In the *Rape of Europa* Titian brought dramatic swirling brushstrokes to bear on the subject, a rape performed by the god Jupiter in the



*Sacred and Profane Love* by Titian. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

disguise of a white bull. Throughout the canvas the impression that he produced was filmy and indistinct and did not recur until the eighteenth-century landscapes of the French painter Watteau. In a similar vein the *Crowning of Thorns* suggested the dramatic, intense suffering of Christ through its use of thick masses of paint and torrents of broad strokes. Here, however, the overall effect was of a somber and dramatic composition, rather than of the fanciful spirit of the *Rape of Europa*. Through works like this Titian dominated the development of a distinctive sixteenth-century Venetian tradition of painting. Together with his close friends—the architect Jacopo Sansovino and the poet Pietro Aretino—Titian influenced the artistic and cultural life of his adopted city. The three figures became known as the “Triumvirate” and were admired as arbiters of local tastes and fashion. Titian also maintained a large studio in the city where he trained a number of pupils and supervised works produced under his direction. Through these enormous efforts the artist grew wealthy and became a princely figure among the many painters of northern Italy at the time.

**TINTORETTO.** Although Titian remained the dominant force in developing a distinctly Venetian Renaissance style in the first half of the sixteenth century, he faced competition after 1550 from two other great masters, Tintoretto (1518–1594) and Veronese (1528–1588). Each of these artists developed unique styles that differed greatly from each other and from Titian. Tintoretto, whose given name was actually Jacopo Robusti, has long been known by his nickname, which means literally “little dyer,” a reference to his origins as the son of a cloth dyer. Of all the great Venetian artists of the sixteenth

century, Tintoretto was the only painter who was actually a native of Venice. Although he occasionally painted works for patrons and projects outside Venice, most of his paintings today are to be found in the churches and public buildings of his hometown. Little reliable information exists about his early training. A legend has long alleged that Tintoretto studied with Titian, but was expelled from his studio when the elder artist grew jealous of his talent. His early style, however, suggests that the artist was not Titian’s student, but received his training in the workshops of other minor and more conservative Venetian artists. By 1539, Titian is noted in the records of the city as an independent master, and in 1548, the artist completed his first acknowledged masterpiece, a canvas painting of *Saint Mark Freeing a Christian Slave*. Tintoretto undertook the work for a confraternity dedicated to St. Mark. The subject of the painting arose from a legend about a Christian slave who fled his home in France to travel to Alexandria to see the relics of St. Mark. Upon his return, his master condemned him to have his eyes plucked out and his legs broken. St. Mark, however, miraculously appeared from Heaven to free the captive. Tintoretto executed this story with great drama by placing a dramatically foreshortened figure of St. Mark suspended in mid-air about to break the captive’s bonds. The saint’s body projects out from the picture plane so that his feet attract the eyes of the viewer. Elsewhere throughout the canvas the swirling motions of the figures create a dramatic sense of movement, a sense that is reinforced by Tintoretto’s quick brushstrokes and bold use of color. Many of the characters, including the figure of St. Mark, are merely suggested through the use of rapid brushstrokes set against the priming colors of the



*The Venus of Urbino* by Titian. ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

work's background. In this way Tintoretto astutely used light and dark to suggest his figures and to bring great energy to his canvases.

**LATER CAREER.** Tintoretto was by temperament dramatically different from Titian. Titian had established himself as a kind of prince among the artists of the city, eventually leading a life of financial ease and refinement. Tintoretto, on the other hand, was enormously prolific but less desirous of worldly position. He was also religiously devout and painted many of his religious subjects for the local confraternities of the city, often accepting payment only for the costs of his paint and canvas. One of these projects, the walls of the Scuola di San Rocco, eventually consumed an enormous amount of his time. This organization was a religious confraternity dedicated to St. Roch, a patron against the plague, which performed charitable works throughout the city. For 25 years, Tintoretto labored to finish more than fifty paintings to decorate the organization's meeting rooms in the city. Eventually the artist accepted only a small salary for completing the works, and when

finished they ranked among one of the great artistic projects of the Renaissance. The works formed an artistic monument as important in Venice as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes were in Rome. These works allow us to trace Tintoretto's artistic development over a course of more than two decades. Among the more famous of these images is the artist's *Crucifixion*, a gigantic work more than 40 feet long. Here Tintoretto relied on light and dark spaces to create a gripping rendering of the tortures of Christ. In it, the onlookers at the scene on Calvary seem to be caught up in an event that they can scarcely comprehend, and which they certainly cannot control. Through his rendering of the religious immediacy of the moment, Tintoretto helped to pave a way in his *Crucifixion* and his later works for the development of a distinctly Counter-Reformation style of art. This Counter-Reformation style was intended to be clearly intelligible to its observers. It aimed, in addition, to harness the power of the observer's emotions in order to deepen his or her own piety.

**IMPORTANCE.** Although Tintoretto died impoverished the large studio that he had built in Venice continued as a family workshop run by his son Domenico. In a city dominated by a guild structure of production, Tintoretto's workshop lived on after his death to influence artistic styles in the city. It was the artist's bold and defining brushwork, though, that attracted imitations from many later artists. Tintoretto had promoted his own painting as a union between the forces of Michelangelo's strong design and the coloristic tradition of Venice and Titian. Subsequent generations, though, have not always been charitable to Tintoretto's art. In the nineteenth century the great English art historian and critic John Ruskin pronounced that Tintoretto had painted his works with a broom. Like Titian and other Venetian artists, Tintoretto ran a large studio that supplied Venice with many religious paintings, and not all the works produced in this workshop were of the same high quality. Yet in paintings like the *Crucifixion* or *St. Mark Freeing a Christian Slave* Tintoretto's artistic vision rises to a level comparable to the greatest works of the High and Later Renaissance.

**VERONESE.** The third genius of sixteenth-century Venetian painting was Paolo Caliari (1528–1588), who was known as Veronese because he was a native of the mainland Italian city of Verona. Veronese's paintings were more outrightly opulent than Tintoretto's, filled as they were with signs of luxury. They were also marked by a controlled brushwork and a brilliant compositional presentation. Today Veronese's reputation results chiefly from his painting of gorgeous banqueting scenes like the *Wedding Feast at Cana*, a canvas painting that he completed for the refectory or dining room of the Monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore at Venice. The son of a family involved in the stonemasonry trade, Veronese apparently discovered the canons of classical architecture through his acquaintanceship with the architect Michele Sammicheli. His lush banqueting scenes are set against the background of the opulent classically styled architecture that was then becoming popular in and around Venice. The elegant works of the painter Parmigianino also influenced these presentations. While Tintoretto's work gave expression to the growing spiritual forces of the Counter Reformation, Veronese fell under suspicion from Venice's Inquisition. One of his most famous paintings, a *Last Supper* painted for the refectory of the Dominican monastery of Saints John and Paul in Venice during 1573, resulted in the painter's summons to appear before the Inquisition. Besides filling the canvas with the Apostles and Christ, Veronese had included jesters, German soldiers, dwarfs, and dogs. The emerg-



*Resurrection* by Tintoretto. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

ing Counter Reformation spirit bred distaste among the clergy for such artistic license, and the Inquisition commanded Veronese to paint over these ahistorical figures. The artist responded, however, by merely changing the name of his work to the *Feast in the House of Levi*, a biblical subject more in keeping with the work's luxury. Besides his painting of banqueting scenes, Veronese executed commissions for Venice's city government. Among his most important compositions was a ceiling for the Library of St. Mark, for which he won a citywide competition in 1557. The judges, Titian and the architect Jacopo Sansovino, chose Veronese's work—an allegorical depiction of *Music*—over the submissions of seven other talented Venetian painters. In his later life the artist also decorated the Halls of the College and the Grand Council, two important meeting rooms in the city's ducal palace. Veronese maintained a large studio staffed by members of his family, including his brother

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***COUNTER REFORMATION**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Council of Trent (1545–1563) insisted that the meaning of religious art should be clear, and it entrusted the supervision of religious art to the church's bishops. In the later sixteenth century, Gabriele Paleotti, the bishop of Bologna, devoted his attentions to the reform of religious art according to the tenets set out by the council. In one of his works, he outlined the necessity for a painting's meaning to be clearly understood by observers. When he talked about pictures with "obscure and difficult meanings," Paleotti probably had in mind those composed by Italian Mannerists as well as luxurious Venetian artists like Paolo Veronese.

One of the main praises that we give to a writer or a practitioner of any liberal art is that he knows how to explain his ideas clearly, and that even if his subject is lofty and difficult, he knows how to make it plain and intelligible to all by his easy discourse. We can state the same of the painter in general, all the more because his works are used mostly as books for the illiterate, to whom we must always speak openly and clearly. Since many people do not pay attention to this, it happens every day that in all sorts of places, and most of all in churches, one sees paintings so obscure and ambiguous, that while they should, by illuminating the intelligence, both incite devotion and sting the heart, in fact they confuse the mind, pull it in a thousand directions, and keep it busy sorting out what each figure is, not without loss of devotion. Thus whatever good intention that has been brought to the church is wasted, and often one subject is taken for another; so much so that instead of being instructed, one remains confused and deceived.

To obviate such a great ill, one must look carefully for the roots of that error, which we shall find comes from one of three things; either the painter or the patron that commissions the work lacks will, or knowledge or ability; and in this we take an example from the writers, in so far as their art is on this point comparable to the painters' ...

But such obscurity can also come from or be increased by the restriction of the space where the painting is located, as the space would not actually contain the multitude of things that should be represented, unless mixed and pressed together; on the other hand, the restriction shrinks the drawing, which by nature would require a larger field, as is the case of a painter who had painted a running horse with the bit in its mouth on a tiny panel; when the patron who had commissioned the work complained that the painter had added the bit, he answered that in such a tiny space it had been necessary to put the bit in the animal's mouth lest it should burst out.

We do not, however, deny that an excellent artist could express whatever he wants effectively in a minute space, as we read of one ... who made a picture of Alexander hunting on horseback and wounding a beast, no larger than a fingernail; nevertheless, his face inspired terror and the horse itself, refusing to stop, seemed to be in motion by the strength of art. And Pliny tells of other astonishing examples. But we mention this only as a notable exception, because it can not be accomplished by everybody, and because a proportionate space makes things more successful.

**SOURCE:** Gabriele Paleotti, "Pictures with Obscure and Difficult Meaning," in *Italian Art, 1500–1600: Sources and Documents*. Eds. Robert Klein and Henri Zerner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966): 125, 128–129.

and two of his sons. Upon the artist's death in 1588, this family workshop continued to produce art for the city's wealthy patrons. Scholarly opinion long dismissed Veronese's work as merely luxurious and opulent. More recently, however, judgments of the artist's achievement have taken a more positive turn, stressing the artist's skill in the use of color, his deepening use of light and dark coloration in his later years, and his iconographical sophistication.

**IMPLICATIONS.** The Venetian tradition of painting in the High Renaissance demonstrated a different path from the design-dominated schools of Central Italian and Roman art at the same time. The use of oils and the rich colorism that they helped Venetian artists create fostered a luxuriant and sensual art different from the in-

tellectual, sinuous forms of artists to the south. In contrast to the achievements of the High Renaissance in Rome, Venice's sixteenth-century painting has sometimes been dismissed as mere pictorial opulence. Closer study has shown, though, that a depth of compositional and iconographical sophistication is to be found among Venice's great artists similar to that shown in other Italian Renaissance traditions of painting.

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## LATE RENAISSANCE AND MANNERIST PAINTING IN ITALY

**TERMINOLOGY.** While the High Renaissance was a time of brilliant artistic achievement, the idealized and harmonious style that it bred soon fell into disfavor, particularly in Central Italy and Rome. After 1520, artists began experimenting with new conventions. This new style, often referred to as Mannerism, found its origins in the works of the late Raphael and of Michelangelo's middle and old age. The term "Mannerism" was coined in the seventeenth century to describe those who followed in the patterns established by these two artistic geniuses. By that time scholars used the word Mannerism as a criticism of the artificiality and distortion they observed in the art of the later sixteenth century. These unfavorable assessments of Mannerism persisted even into the twentieth century as critics considered the movement to be an artistic crisis that destroyed the beauty of the High Renaissance synthesis. That synthesis had emphasized classical proportions, ideal beauty, harmony, and serenity. By contrast, critics charged Mannerist art with

being artificial, overly emotional, vividly coloristic, effete, and contorted. Newer artistic tastes in the twentieth century, however, have led to a positive reassessment of late Renaissance Mannerism. Scholars have shown that the word *maniera*, upon which later critics based their critical term "Mannerism," merely meant "stylish" in the sixteenth century. Thus Mannerism has more recently been treated as a "stylish style," which prized the very same values that later critics found distasteful. Sixteenth-century Mannerism, an artistic movement that influenced art in Rome, Florence, and much of Central Italy, has now been shown to derive from certain assumptions about elegance and beauty that differed from those of the High Renaissance. In place of older assessments of the period as one of artistic decline, Mannerism has now come to be positively assessed as a rich era of creative individual artistic expression.

**INSPIRATIONS.** Many of the stylistic tendencies of the later Mannerist artists derived from the works of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes and the late Raphael, particularly his "Fire in the Borgo" frescoes for the Vatican apartments (painted between 1514 and 1517). In these compositions Michelangelo and Raphael artfully arranged their human figures, placing them in positions that were elegant, beautiful, and which demonstrated the physical possibilities of the human form. They painted these figures heavily muscled and set within spaces defined by vivid colors. In these ways they helped extend the boundaries of artistic style. A second source



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE NATURAL OFFENSE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Of Michelangelo's many achievements, the *Last Judgment* frescoes on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel were among the most influential. They were also among his most controversial. Conservative tastes found the work's nudity offensive, as Vasari relates in his *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. Eventually much of the painting's nudity was covered over, but even in its altered style, the willful, highly creative style that Michelangelo revealed in the painting became an important source for Mannerist artists.

Michelangelo had brought three-fourths of the work to completion, when Pope Paul went to see it; and Messer Biagio da Cesena, the master of the ceremonies, a very punctilious man, being in the Chapel with the Pontiff, was asked what he thought of the performance. To this he replied, that it was a very improper thing to paint so many nude forms, all showing their nakedness in that shameless fashion, in so highly honoured a placing; adding that such pictures were better suited to a bath-room, or a road-side wine-shop, than to a Pope. Displeased by these remarks, Michelangelo resolved to be avenged; and Messer Biagio had no sooner departed than our artist drew his portrait from memory, without requiring a further sitting, and placed him in Hell under the figure of Minos, with a great serpent wound round his limbs, and standing in the midst of a troop of devils; nor

did the entreaties of Messer Biagio to the Pope and Michelangelo, that this portrait might be removed; suffice to prevail on the master to consent; it was left as first depicted, a memorial of that event, and may still be seen ...

Truly fortunate may that man be esteemed, and happy are his recollections, who has been privileged to behold this wonder of our age. Thrice blessed and fortunate art thou, O Paul III, since God has permitted that under thy protection was sheltered that renown which the pens of writers shall give to his memory and thine own! How highly are thy merits enhanced by his art! A great happiness, moreover, has most assuredly been his birth for the artists of our time, since by the hand of Michelangelo has been removed the veil of all those difficulties which had previously concealed the features of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture; seeing that in his works he has given the solution of every difficulty in each one of those arts.

At this work Michelangelo laboured eight years. He gave it to public view on Christmas-day (as I think in the year 1541). This he did to the amazement and delight...of the whole world. For myself, I, who was at Venice that year, and went to Rome to see it, was utterly astounded thereby.

**SOURCE:** Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of Seventy of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Vol. 4. Trans. and Eds. E. H., E. W. Blashfield, and A. A. Hopkins (New York: Scribner, 1896): 139–140; 145–146.

of Mannerist inspiration derived from the works that Michelangelo completed during his residency in the city of Florence between 1516 and 1534. During these years Michelangelo's art grew more turbulent and willful, as he became ever more involved in the construction of the Medici family tombs and the Laurentian Library. Like most of Michelangelo's projects, the Medici tombs were never completely finished in the way in which they had initially been planned. For this commission Michelangelo relied upon the traditional language of Brunelleschi's architecture to form a backdrop to the tombs. The sculptures that Michelangelo carved for the tombs departed from the harmonious classicism he had used in his earlier works. The nudes that adorn the tomb were heavily muscled, artificially elongated, and arranged in contorted positions. Michelangelo also completed two statues of the Medici family sons, Lorenzo and Giuliano, for the tombs. Although these figures were seated, the artist carved them, too, in a highly idealized, elongated, and elegant style in an effort, he admitted, to immortalize

them. The project for the Medici family tomb consumed much of Michelangelo's time during this period in Florence. It required the artist to hire and supervise the work of more than 300 workers and demonstrated Michelangelo's keen organizational skills. The Medici family fortunes, however, waxed and waned in Florence during the 1520s, and between 1527 and 1530, the family was expelled from the town. During this period work ceased on the tomb and the library. When the family returned to power in 1530, Michelangelo continued with these projects, but with less enthusiasm than before. Gradually, he began to spend more of his time in Rome, and by 1534, he had abandoned Florence completely in favor of the church's capital.

**LAST JUDGMENT.** The Rome of the 1530s was a very different place than it had been during the High Renaissance. In 1527, imperial forces of the army of Charles V had sacked the town, and the city's economy and cultural life had fallen into decline. The election of Paul III, a reform-minded pope, however, signaled the

beginning of a renewal. Paul commissioned Michelangelo to complete a number of projects in the city, the first and perhaps most important being the *Last Judgment* fresco for the Sistine Chapel. To paint this massive fresco, which lies on the end wall of the chapel behind the High Altar, Michelangelo had to destroy part of his ceiling frescoes completed just twenty years before. The resulting composition bears little resemblance to those earlier frescoes. In place of the serene and idealized figures of the ceiling, the *Last Judgment* on the end wall appears as a swirling mass of human figures that circulates around the central Christ figure. Everything is set against a blue background and the earth is only suggested as the scene of this drama at the very bottom of the composition. None of the traditional trappings of a Last Judgment scene are to be found in Michelangelo's vision. Christ does not sit on a throne doling out rewards and punishment to the righteous and impious, but instead hovers at the top of this swirling humanity with his right arm extended in condemnation. He is a gigantic, commanding figure, whose scale is greater than any other actor on the wall. Throughout the painting Michelangelo also relied upon an interesting scale. The figures arising from their graves at the bottom of the painting are about one-half the size of the saints and blessed that surround Christ himself, while at the top of the painting the angels who carry Christ's cross and column heavenward are again portrayed in the smaller scale used at the bottom of the wall. In this way the entire work takes upon the appearance of several swirling circles, filled with fascinating figures that cannot be comprehended in a single viewing. Originally, Michelangelo painted all the male figures in the work nude, but the developing religious senses of the Counter Reformation eventually prompted the church to summon one of the artist's students to paint draperies over the figures. Even these did little to diminish the sheer power of the human forms Michelangelo created.

**LATER WORKS OF MICHELANGELO.** Shortly after completing the *Last Judgment*, the artist set to work on two other large frescoes, this time for the Pauline Chapel in the Vatican. Since the chapel has long been a private place of worship used by the popes and their entourage, Michelangelo's paintings there are far less familiar. The subject for these frescoes, *The Conversion of Paul* and the *Crucifixion of St. Peter* are treated in ways that are an outgrowth of the *Last Judgment*. Here Michelangelo used similarly elongated human forms and turbulent compositions placed before the sparest of backgrounds. Yet in contrast to the *Last Judgment*, a quiet, meditative strain runs through both paintings, one which is reflective of



*The Last Judgment* fresco in the Sistine Chapel, Rome. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

the deeply religious impulses that Michelangelo embraced late in his life. Concerns with his approaching death and his ultimate salvation are also reflected in the late unfinished work, the *Rondanini Pietà*, a sculpture Michelangelo worked on between 1554 and his death in 1564. Like the earlier, more famous *Pietà*, this late work projects a quiet beauty, even in its incomplete state. Instead of supporting the dead Christ across his mother's lap, as in the earlier composition, Michelangelo planned to have the Virgin Mary support the body of her son while standing. During these last years of his life, though, Michelangelo's work as supervisor of the construction of the new St. Peter's Basilica and his poor health frequently stalled his progress on the statue. His execution of the *Rondanini Pietà* dissatisfied him and at several points he destroyed the composition so that he could begin key parts again. Sadly, there may not have been enough marble left to complete the sculpture, but even unfinished, the work suggests the religious intensity and depth of feeling of the aged artist.

**PAINTING IN FLORENCE AND CENTRAL ITALY.** In Florence and Central Italy a number of artists of genius practiced throughout the sixteenth century. Some of these kept alive High Renaissance traditions of idealized beauty and serenity. Others experimented with the new



*Joseph with Jacob in Egypt* by Pontormo. © NATIONAL GALLERY COLLECTION; BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON/CORBIS.

aesthetic concerns of Mannerism, with its emphasis on elegance, individual creativity, and distortion, and its preference as well for difficult and sometimes incomprehensible themes and iconography. Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530) was one of the most prominent of artists in the first of these two groups. His *Madonna of the Harpies*, painted in 1517, is typical of his style. Here he idealized the faces of his subjects and suffused his composition with the calm imperturbable beauty typical of Raphael and da Vinci at the height of their powers. By contrast, one of del Sarto's most accomplished pupils, Jacopo Pontormo (1494–1557), experimented with the more willful and personal dimensions of Mannerism. In 1518, Pontormo painted his *Joseph in Egypt*, a work that

relied upon new compositional techniques. In this work he painted three scenes from the life of Joseph on a single canvas, an innovation that abolished the unity and ready comprehensibility preferred by High Renaissance artists. Through the use of a staircase, a raised dais, and other architectural props Pontormo divided the painting into three spaces, which nevertheless appear strangely linked together as an artistic, rather than a narrative unity. The scenes that are retold—Pharaoh's dream, the rediscovery of Pharaoh's cup in Benjamin's sack of grain, and the reconciliation of Joseph with his brothers—are relegated to various parts of the canvas, while statues that appear to be living gesture to the observer to take note of the important events the artist is narrating. Through-

out the work the dramatic use of light and dark, too, creates a mood very different from the works of Pontormo's teacher, Andrea del Sarto. Pontormo's painting continued to be influenced by his friend Michelangelo, as seen in his somewhat later *Entombment*, painted for the Church of Santa Maria Felicità in Florence between 1525 and 1528. Like Michelangelo's later work on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, the artist only suggests the earth as the stage for his drama; his attention falls instead on the variety of human forms that accompany the dead Christ to be placed in his tomb. The languid body of the corpse harkens back to the dead Christ of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, while the twisted web of figures that accompany this cortège face inward, outward, and sideways. In this way the artist dissolved the typical stage-like setting long used by Renaissance artists and instead provided his observers with a scene captured in the moment. His dramatic use of color, which relied upon electric oranges, pinks, and even chartreuse, similarly departed from the gemlike conventions of the time. And finally, his use of elongated human forms was also typical among Mannerist artists as well.

**ROSSO FIORENTINO.** Pontormo's paintings pointed to a new willful creativity that helped to dissolve the conventions prized by artists in the first decades of the century. Another Florentine artist, Rosso Fiorentino (1495–1540) created works that were even more personally expressive. Among contemporaries, Rosso earned wide recognition for his emotionalism and individuality. In his early works, the artist combined influences from Michelangelo with insights he had gained from studying Northern European engravings to create a number of highly sophisticated paintings. One of the masterpieces of this early phase of Rosso's career, his *Descent from the Cross*, is a work whose dramatic colors are lit as if by a bolt of lightning. No landscape interest distracts from the central event that Rosso retells, but instead the artist places his actors before a slate blue sky. In place of the pyramidal compositional structures often favored by Renaissance and High Renaissance artists, he creates a gigantic figure eight out of the characters in his panel. The men who remove Christ from the cross struggle with the corpse's dead weight, a body the artist renders in a sickening green. Below, a woman looks out at those who observe the scene, as if to implicate all onlookers in the guilt for the crime that has just been committed. On the other side of the panel a grief-stricken apostle tears at his hair, while between these two figures, a woman struggles to support one of the ladders on which the men above are working. Charged with a brilliant emotional intensity, Rosso Fiorentino's *Descent from the Cross* pro-

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### MOURNING A FRIEND

**INTRODUCTION:** During the 1540s, the Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga served as a regent to his nephews, who were by birth lords of the city of Mantua. Over time, the severely moral Gonzaga befriended the court artist, Giulio Romano, a figure who had long been a fixture in the family's household. The relationship was unusual given the social divide that separated artists from nobles. In 1546, Romano died, and Ercole wrote to his brother lamenting the death of his trusted friend.

We lost our Giulio Romano with so much displeasure that in truth it seems to me that I have lost my right hand. I did not want to inform you of this at once, as I thought that the later you would hear of such a great loss, the less it would affect you, especially since you are taking your water cure. Like those who from evil try always to extract some good, I try and convince myself that the death of this rare man will at least have succeeded in taking away my appetite for building, for silverware, for paintings, etc., for in fact I would not have the heart to do any of these things without the design of this beautiful mind; therefore, when these few are done, whose designs I have with me, I think I shall bury with him all my desires as I have said. God give him peace; which I hope well is certain, for I have known him as an honest man and pure toward the world, and I hope also toward God. I cannot have enough of talking about him with tears in my eyes, yet I must end, since it has pleased Him who governs all to end his life.

**SOURCE:** Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga, "Letter to his Brother Ferrante, November 7, 1546," in *Italian Art, 1500–1600: Sources and Documents*. Eds. Robert Klein and Henri Zerner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966): 49–50.

vides its observers with a catalogue of the effects of grief upon the human psyche. As he shows, the sense of personal loss produces variety of psychological states ranging from anguish, to quiet suffering, and even to the nervous and uncomfortable leer that Rosso paints upon the face of Joseph of Arimathea.

**ROME AND FRANCE.** In 1523, Rosso left Florence for Rome, where he fell under the influence to an even greater degree of the art of Michelangelo, particularly the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes. Under the great artist's influence, Rosso developed a more elegant and reserved



*An Allegory with Venus and Cupid* by Agnolo Bronzino, c. 1540. NATIONAL GALLERY COLLECTION; BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON/CORBIS.

style, with less of the emotionalism typical of his earlier *Descent from the Cross*. In 1527, the sack of Rome forced him to flee the city, and he worked in several Central Italian towns until 1530, when he accepted the invitation of King Francis I to paint in France. Among the more important works he completed there was the Galerie of François I in the Palace of Fontainebleau. In this chamber Rosso worked with the Italian artist Primaticcio to create a highly ornamental and decorative style that influenced other Northern European designers.

**ROMANO.** A more whimsical side of the Mannerist movement can be seen in the work of Giulio Romano (1499–1546), an artist who served the Gonzaga lords in Mantua. Trained by Raphael in Rome, Romano entered the service of the Gonzaga lords in 1524 and remained there for the rest of his life. Among his most unusual Mannerist works was the Palace of the Te, a country villa set in an idyllic meadow on the outskirts of the city of Mantua. In the massive facade of this work Romano violated classical canons of design and proportion. The villa's rustic appearance, though, soon fades as the observer moves inside. In the palace Romano designed a series of opulent rooms that were fit to entertain the

Hapsburg emperor Charles V and other dignitaries. Romano decorated the rooms of the Te with illusionistic frescoes, their allegorical subjects drawn from ancient mythology. In one of the most famous of these salons, Romano depicted the story of the *Fall of the Giants*. Here the artist demonstrated his mastery of perspective and foreshortening so that the toppling columns he painted on the chamber's walls appear to be moving. Indeed the room's walls seem about to crash in upon those inside the space. Admired by the Gonzaga lords, Romano took on many decorative projects until his untimely death in 1546.

**BRONZINO.** The Florentine artist who was to carry the style of his teacher, Jacopo Pontormo, and of Rosso Fiorentino, into the second half of the sixteenth century was Agnolo Tori, who was known as Bronzino (1503–1572). Like Fiorentino and Pontormo, Bronzino developed the Mannerist tendency to disperse his figures to the edge of the surfaces he painted, rather than to arrange them in High Renaissance fashion symmetrically in the center. This trait can be seen in the panel he painted entitled *An Allegory with Venus and Cupid*, a work which is made up of an interlacing of its characters. In the right rear background of the painting, the figure of Father Time, lifts back a drapery from before the couple to expose Cupid's sensuous fondling of Venus. Bronzino made use of the heavily muscled figures that Michelangelo had introduced into sixteenth-century Italian art. The foreground figures of Venus, Cupid, and a little boy who is pelting the couple with roses appear as if they were polished marble. Masks litter the foreground, as do Venus's doves. Behind the lovers, an ugly woman, Envy tears her hair, while a beautiful girl offers a honeycomb to the couple with her left hand which is curiously attached to her right arm. Following the lines of this charming figure's body we find that her form ends with a lion's legs and a griffin's tail. Bronzino's allegory, complex and some might even say contrived, provided a kind of intellectual enjoyment to his sophisticated Renaissance audience, which gloried in complex iconographical themes. In the sixteenth century the Renaissance writer Baldasar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* had recommended books of emblems for the enjoyment of the cultivated urbane figures who worked and lived in Italian courts. Emblems were a kind of reverse jigsaw puzzle in which men and women tried to decode a message by reading the iconographical clues. Bronzino's *Allegory* arose from a similar set of sensibilities and a similar sense of fun. From the time of its completion around 1546, the work has continued to confound its admirers with its use of complex and ob-

scure symbols. Bronzino was also a portrait painter of merit, who applied the same brilliance of finished surfaces, cool detachment, and rich colorism to the mostly aristocratic figures he painted. Among the most famous of his portraits, that of Eleonore of Toledo, now in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, ranks among his most accomplished creations. In it, Eleonore is shown against a brilliant blue background with the complex luxury of her gown competing for visual interest against the human subject herself.

#### HIGH RENAISSANCE AND MANNERISM IN PARMA.

In the city of Parma in Northern Italy an important school of painting developed after 1500. It was led at first by the High Renaissance master Antonio Allegri (1494–1534), who was known as Correggio after the place of his birth. During his short life the artist became one of the most important masters in Northern Italy, developing a flowing style characterized by movement and a skillful use of light. Although the artist lived past the date at which Mannerism began to make inroads into Northern Italy, Correggio never made use of the raw emotional intensity of painters like Rosso Fiorentino or Jacopo Pontormo. Instead his works are characterized by a warmth and tenderness of expression. Correggio's best frescoes, including those completed for the interior of the dome of the Cathedral of Parma, make use of movement and drama in a way similar to later Baroque artists of the seventeenth century. With the artist's premature death in 1534, leadership of Parma's school of painters passed to his younger contemporary Francesco Mazzola (1503–1540), who was known as Parmigianino. Unlike Correggio, Parmigianino traveled to Rome to absorb High Renaissance principles firsthand. There he also became familiar with the tenets of the developing Mannerist style. In 1524, Parmigianino painted his *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, a work which shows the artist's taste for the stylish distortion favored by Mannerist artists. His most famous work *The Madonna of the Long Neck*, painted between 1534 and 1540, demonstrates a similar tendency to elongate and attenuate the human form. In this elegant painting, the artist depicts the Virgin Mary as if she were an earthly queen, complete with an aristocratic long neck. Bejeweled and holding a languid Christ child on her lap, she appears as the very picture of refinement and taste. The Christ child himself is shown with the body of a four- or five-year old, the long lines of his form mirror the attenuated shape of the Virgin. To the left, a group of idealized children gather around the mother and child, while the most forward of these presents an amphora to the Virgin. To the right in the background a prophet appears unrolling



*Madonna of the Long Neck* by Parmigianino. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

a scroll. Although he is near to the central figures of the painting, Parmigianino has painted the prophet to look as if he is far away. Over the years the *Madonna of the Long Neck* came under a great deal of critical scrutiny as to the meaning of the iconographical details the artist included. No satisfactory explanation has ever been discovered for these, leading many to conclude that perhaps Parmigianino, like other Mannerist artists, intended his work to be curious and enigmatic.

**IMPLICATIONS.** The Mannerist movement dominated Florence, Rome, and much of Central Italy by the mid-sixteenth century. Mannerist painters moved to dissolve the harmonious, symmetrical, and serene beauty that had been prized by artists of the High Renaissance. In its place they developed an art that was often emotionally expressive, contorted, and characterized by an intricacy of compositional arrangements. Some Mannerist artists like Parmigianino and Bronzino favored

elegance and abstruse and difficult iconographical constructions in their works. Others like Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino favored a style that was more emotionally expressive, and which demonstrated their artistic willfulness and individuality. By the end of the sixteenth century a new set of stylistic tastes, prompted in part by the religious changes of the Counter Reformation, began to outlaw the Mannerist taste for luxury and for subjects that were difficult to understand. By 1600 the rise of this new dramatic style of painting, which eventually became known as the Baroque, expressed a different set of values. In place of the Mannerist taste for an elegant art, the practitioners of the Baroque favored monumentality, idealization, dramatic movement, and clear intelligibility.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The Later Renaissance in Italy; Religion: The Council of Trent*

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## THE ARTS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY NORTHERN EUROPE

**ACHIEVEMENT.** During the fifteenth century Netherlandish artists had dominated Northern European painting. A distinguished lineage of painters, particularly in the wealthy city of Flanders, had perfected the medium of oil painting, developed a highly realistic art, and produced scores of altarpieces, religious panel paintings, and portraits. Netherlandish art had often affected painters in regions far from Flanders and Holland, and a lineage of fine painters continued the tradition of achievement in the sixteenth century. After 1500, though, artistic leadership in Northern Europe passed to Germany, a region that had been somewhat of an artis-

tic backwater in the previous century. This great flowering of German art occurred at roughly the same time that the High Renaissance was shaping artistic values in Italy. The German artists of the first half of the sixteenth century learned both from Netherlandish and Italian examples, while developing their own native traditions. Although they were expert in practicing the new medium of oil painting, German artists did not rely on the kind of free and dramatic brushwork that was typical of many Venetian and Italian artists at the time. Their work, moreover, never concentrated on the beauty of the human body in the same way that Italian artists did. The nude human form, in particular, often looks somewhat uncomfortable in the works of sixteenth-century German artists. And while these German painters studied the traditions of classical Antiquity, they did not usually fill their works with the trappings of ancient Greece or Rome, as Italian masters at the same time did. German painting and engraving relied instead on finely drawn and sinuous lines to create great dramatic effect. This great flowering of artistic activity in Germany developed suddenly after 1500, and faded just as quickly after 1550. In the first half of the sixteenth century the High Renaissance in Germany produced a number of masters, including Albrecht Dürer, Albrecht Altdorfer, Matthias Grünewald, Lucas Cranach, and Hans Holbein. By 1550, however, great figures like these ceased to appear, and the achievement of the German Renaissance drew to a close rather quickly. Even as it faded, new centers of artistic innovation appeared in other Northern European centers, making the sixteenth century an era of undeniable achievement in the visual arts throughout the continent.

**ALBRECHT DÜRER.** The greatest artist of the High Renaissance in Northern Europe was Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), a native of the central German city of Nuremberg. Like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti, Dürer kept journals that provide a glimpse of his ideas about art. These writings show that Dürer had a high sense of his calling as a creator and an artistic innovator. He was the first Northern European artist to write about art as something more than a mere craft, and his writings reveal that he had a unique sense of his own individuality. The artist was the son of a local goldsmith, and his father had emigrated from Hungary to Nuremberg. Even before the young Albrecht had been apprenticed he displayed a natural artistic ability. This ability can be seen in the *Self-Portrait*, a drawing Dürer completed when he was only 13. The artist followed this first *Self-Portrait* with a series of other such works completed before he was thirty. Even at this tender age, Dürer

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***REFLECTIONS ON DÜRER**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Nuremberg scholar Joachim Camerarius included this personal description of Albrecht Dürer in the foreword to a Latin translation of the artist's *Four Books of Human Proportions*, published in 1532. The work thus appeared shortly after the artist's death, and Camerarius' description is noteworthy for the depth of personal details it includes.

Nature bestowed on him a body remarkable in build and stature and worthy of the noble mind it contained; that in this, too, Nature's Justice, extolled by Hippocrates, might not be forgotten—Justice, which, while it assigns a grotesque form to the ape's grotesque soul, is wont also to clothe the noble mind in bodies worthy of them. His head reminded one of a thoroughbred, his eyes were flashing his nose was nobly formed ... His neck was rather long, his chest broad, his body not too stout, his thighs muscular, his legs firm and steady. But his fingers—you would vow you had never seen anything more elegant.

His conversation was marked by so much sweetness and wit that nothing displeased his hearers so much as the end of it. Letters, it is true, he had not cultivated, but the great sciences of Physics and Mathematics, which are perpetuated by letters, he had almost entirely mastered. He not only understood principles and knew how to apply them in practice, but he was able to set them forth in words. This is proved by his Geometrical treatises which, as far as I can see, leave nothing to be desired within the scope judged appropriate by him. An ardent zeal impelled him toward the attainment of all virtue in conduct and life, the display of which caused him to be deservedly held a most excellent man. Yet he was not of a melancholy severity nor of a repulsive gravity; nay, whatever conduced to pleasantness and cheerfulness, and was not inconsistent with honor and rectitude, he cultivated all his life and approved even in his old age, as is shown by what is left of his writings on Gymnastic and Music ...

**SOURCE:** Joachim Camerarius, Foreword to *Four Books of Human Proportions* by Albrecht Dürer, in *Northern Renaissance Art, 1400–1600*. Trans. and ed. Wolfgang Stechow (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966): 123–124.

already shows an astonishing clarity of observation, technical finesse, and individuality of expression, all of which reveal him to have been a natural prodigy. Dürer perfected these gifts, first in the workshop of the Nuremberg engraver, Michael Wolgemut, and then in several years spent traveling after 1490. He returned to Nuremberg in 1494, but soon left on a journey to Italy. On those travels, he visited Mantua and Padua before settling in for a longer time in Venice. Ten years later, Dürer returned to Venice and for a time his art emulated the painterly style of the Venetian artists Giorgione and Bellini. By temperament and training Dürer was always an engraver, and since the art of engraving placed a high premium on the skills of drawing, the artist came in his maturity to develop his use of line, rather than the painterly deployment of color.

**ENGRAVINGS.** While Dürer was an accomplished painter, his greatest works are engravings and woodcuts. This latter medium required artists to draw their designs onto blocks of wood and then to cut away everything but the lines of their drawing. It was a time-consuming method that required a steady hand. Up until this time, most woodcuts had fairly simple designs with the drawing merely providing the outward lines of the forms and objects that the artist was portraying. Dürer developed the technique so that he included lines for shading and

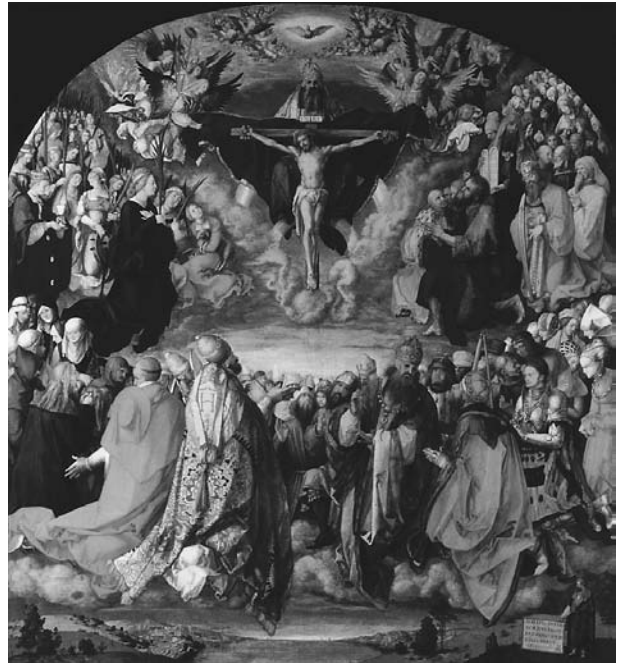
rendering patches of light and dark. These new refinements can be seen in his woodcuts of the *Apocalypse*, a series of fifteen works based upon the biblical book of *Revelation*. Dürer completed these prints during 1498 and sold the works together as a set. The works display the artist's powerful hand and his subtle sense of shading. Dürer continued to develop his skills as a printer throughout his life, mastering new techniques to enhance the process of copper engraving. As a result, he extended the boundaries of what was achievable in this medium beyond those that had already been established by Martin Schongauer in the late fifteenth century. Dürer made full use of the possibilities of the medium, applying straight and curved hatching, stippling, and cross-hatching to create forms within his engravings that appeared sculptural. He lit his works with a light that seems inspired by fifteenth-century Netherlandish traditions. At the same time he applied the techniques of perspective common to the Italian art of the period. During 1514, the artist produced three prints generally accepted as the highest expression of his achievement in the graphic arts. These include his *St. Jerome in His Study*; his *Melancholia I*, a work that muses about the solitary pursuits of the artist; and *The Knight*. The grandeur of these prints helped to found a great tradition of graphic arts that was practiced by many accomplished German artists in the following decades and centuries.





*Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* by Albrecht Dürer. © BURSTEIN COLLECTION/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

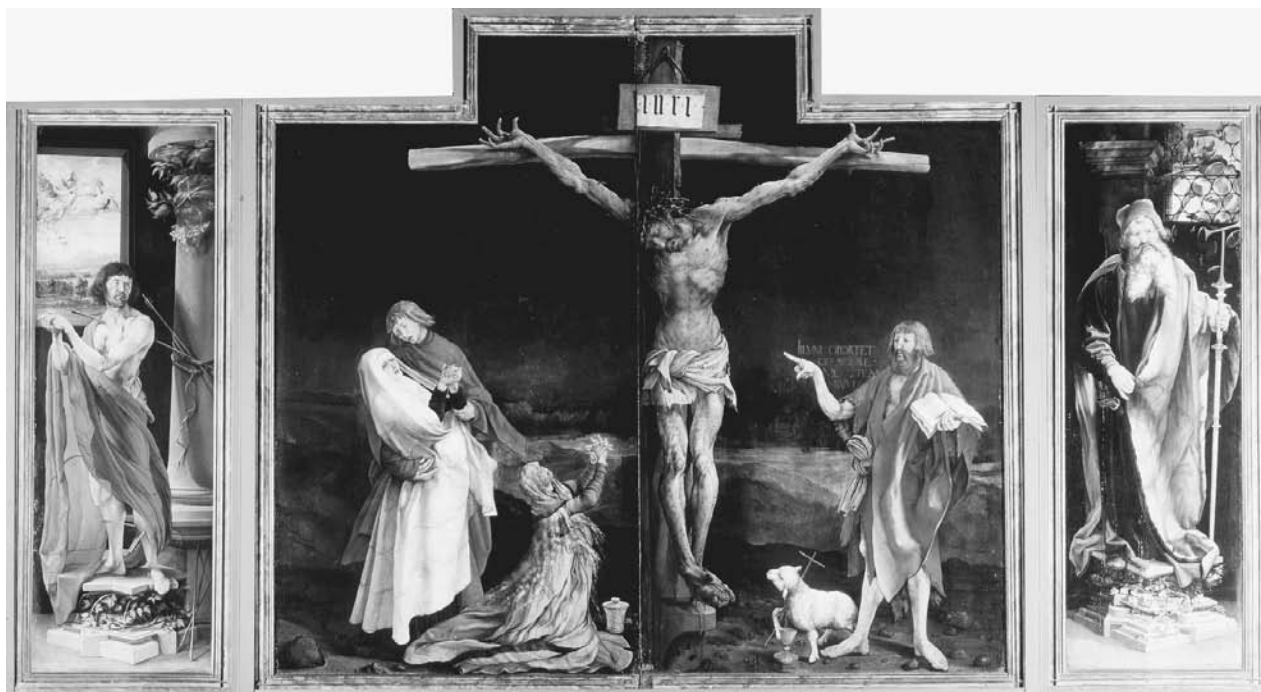
**PAINTING.** Dürer’s achievements in woodcuts and copper engravings marked him as an artist of the highest order. In painting, he rarely achieved the level of finesse common to his graphic art, although Dürer was immensely prolific, and in some cases he succeeded in endowing his paintings with the same depth and finesse typical of his prints. One of these works is the artist’s *Adoration of the Trinity*, completed in 1511 for a chapel in Dürer’s hometown of Nuremberg. The painting shows a vision of heaven in which God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the dove of the Holy Spirit are worshipped by a throng of onlookers, including popes, kings, princes, and ranks of human admirers. Rich colors—reds, greens, blues, and yellows—combine here with Dürer’s typically florid use of line and his expert compositional skills. The work presents a traditionally medieval conception of the communion of saints and the Augustinian notion of the *City of God*. About a decade following its completion, though, Dürer became one of the first Northern European artists to accept the premises of the Protestant Reformation. In his writings the artist paid homage to Luther as the “Christian man” who had helped relieve



*The Adoration of the Trinity* by Albrecht Dürer, oil on wooden panel, 1511. © FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

him of “many anxieties.” Ironically, it was the Protestant Reformation that ultimately moved to confine greatly the role of the visual arts in Northern European religious life. The Reformation, in other words, served to dampen the great artistic flowering the Renaissance had created in Germany. Dürer, though, accepted the doctrines of the new movement. In 1526, one year after Nuremberg had adopted the new religious teachings, the artist presented his famous panel paintings of the *Four Apostles* to the Nuremberg city council. While there was nothing explicitly Protestant about the style of the work, the choice of the four apostles—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—highlighted the artist’s new faith in the scriptures. Dürer seems as well to have intended his gift to encourage the city’s rulers to remain steadfast in their commitment to the Reformation.

**PORTRAITS.** Another area in which the artist excelled was in the production of portraits of German notables and wealthy patrons. The artist completed several portraits of important princes and dignitaries as engravings, and these were widely circulated at the time. At home in Nuremberg he also painted a number of portraits for the town’s wealthy burghers. Dürer and Hans Holbein were the two greatest portraitists at work in Northern Europe at the time. A Holbein portrait was usually a dramatic tour de force, filled with opulent trappings that lent majesty to the noble and princely figures he immortal-



Isenheim altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald. THE ART ARCHIVE. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ized. Dürer, on the other hand, strove to present an accurate image of his subjects while at the same time providing his viewers with some deeper psychological insight about the person's internal character. Dürer practiced portraiture increasingly in his final years, perhaps because of the poor state of his health, which seems to have been damaged by a malarial fever he contracted while visiting the Netherlands in 1520–1521. In these years he also wrote theoretical treatises on art, battle fortifications, and human proportions. The artist's fame continued to grow after his death, and his prints had many collectors throughout Germany. During the years between 1570 and 1620, the artist's style inspired a "Dürer Renaissance" among engravers who imitated the artist's dramatic engravings. In subsequent centuries Dürer continued to be celebrated as Germany's greatest artist, and this reputation sometimes prevented a realistic assessment of the other great figures that contributed to the German Renaissance. More recently, these artists' reputations have been reassessed, while Albrecht Dürer's role in the country's artistic flowering has not diminished.

**MATTHIAS GRÜNEWALD.** Little is known about the training and early work of Matthias Grünewald (c. 1475–1528), a German painter who was likely born in the city of Würzburg on the Main River in central Germany. In 1510 he joined the archbishop of Mainz's court at Aschaffenburg, where he served as a painter and superintendent of public works. Soon after that appointment

Grünewald won a commission to paint an altarpiece for the monastery church of St. Anthony at Isenheim in Alsace (now in eastern France). This great work is one of the strangest and most macabre pieces produced during the German Renaissance. Grünewald created the Isenheim altarpiece as a carved work that had two sets of wings and which could consequently be displayed with three different views. Although the work has long since been disassembled, when it was originally closed the altarpiece showed a gruesome Crucifixion, in which rigor mortis has already set in on the body of the dead Christ. The Savior's flesh is a mass of pockmarks and on his legs are visible the scourge marks from his recent tortures. The Isenheim monastery ran a hospital that cared for those suffering from leprosy and the plague, a fact that helps to explain Grünewald's gruesome depictions of Christ's skin. Below, Mary Magdalene, John the Beloved, the Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist witness the harrowing tortures of the Savior, while a Paschal lamb accompanies the figure of the Baptist, a symbol that recalls both Christ's divine and human natures. The entire scene is set before a dark landscape, the nighttime sky lit only by patches of a deep greenish color. When the first set of the altarpiece's wings were opened, this gruesome horror of the *Crucifixion* is transformed into scenes of joy that recount the Annunciation, the early life of Christ, and his Resurrection. In place of the somber and often disturbing colors of the closed altar-

piece, Grünewald here adopts a palette of vivid reds, golds, and blues. The culmination of these three scenes, the Resurrection, is an awe-inspiring work in which Christ seems to have surged dramatically from the tomb and now floats above the soldiers stationed there to guard his dead body. In this panel the wounds of Christ's skin have been transformed into rubies while his hair and beard are now pure gold. The ascending Christ appears before a vivid halo of red, gold, and green. With the altarpiece in its third position, the work revealed a sculptural central panel in which a seated St. Anthony was flanked by Saints Augustine and Jerome. On each side Grünewald painted scenes from the life of St. Anthony, the patron of the Isenheim Church. One theme that ran throughout the work was of disease and suffering, and the possibility of both medical and spiritual intervention to overcome these earthly trials. St. Anthony, long a patron of the sick, is presented in the final Isenheim setting as a refuge against the otherwise unstoppable forces of disease. The artist's grim vision of illness coupled with his reassurances of the possibility of either an earthly or a heavenly cure were intended as consolation for those being treated at Isenheim.

**OTHER WORKS.** The Isenheim altarpiece was Matthias Grünewald's indisputable masterpiece. Relatively few of the artist's other works survive, but these show a similarly dramatic temperament. In 1526, Grünewald left his post in Catholic Aschaffenburg, perhaps because of his sympathies for the developing Lutheran movement. Shortly after Grünewald's death, Luther's close associate, Philip Melancthon, listed the artist just behind Albrecht Dürer in a ranking he compiled of major German painters, one measure of the enthusiasm with which the sixteenth-century audience received the artist's tempestuous vision. In the intervening centuries, though, the memory of Grünewald's works faded, and the artist was left largely to twentieth-century connoisseurs to rediscover.

**THE DANUBE SCHOOL.** At the same time as Dürer and Grünewald were active in Central Germany, a prolific school of artists was coalescing to the southeast along the Danube River. The Danube School of painters flourished in Germany between 1500 and 1530 in the towns and cities that lay between the city of Regensburg and Vienna along this major river artery. In this region a number of venerable and wealthy monasteries commissioned many lavish altarpieces from these masters. Among the greatest practitioners of the Danube school was Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553), who came to the region from the neighboring German province of Franconia in 1500. Cranach took up residence in the

city of Vienna where he began to acquire skills as a notable portrait painter. In 1505, he left the Danube region for Saxony, where he became court painter to the elector Friedrich the Wise, who later protected the Reformer Martin Luther. In Cranach's maturity he was won over to the Protestant cause, became a friend of Luther, and used his art to propagandize for the Reformation. The artist ran a notable studio in which he trained a number of pupils, including his two sons. Of the many artists associated with his workshop, though, only his son Lucas Cranach the Younger was to have a notable career. Another great figure of the Danube School was Albrecht Altdorfer (c. 1480–1538). Altdorfer was a native of the Danubian city of Regensburg and he worked there throughout his life. The influence of Cranach and Dürer is detectible in Altdorfer's early work, but over time he acquired an altogether more personal and dramatic style. He also evidenced an interest, early among Northern European artists, in the painting of landscape. In works like his *Battle of Alexander and Darius on the Issis* Altdorfer relied on dramatic lighting effects to bring alive the lakes, mountains, and rivers in which he set this famous battle from Antiquity. Similarly, in his many religious paintings Altdorfer achieved a great harmony between his human subjects and their surrounding natural environment. Other artists who were active in the Danube School included Jorg Breu and Wolf Huber, who shared Altdorfer's and Cranach's fascination with landscape. Both figures set many of their works within the dramatic vistas that were a common feature of this river valley region.

**HANS HOLBEIN.** The final great figure of German Renaissance painting was Hans Holbein the Younger (c. 1497–1543), one of the greatest portraitists ever in the European tradition. The artist was born in Augsburg and his father, brother, and uncle were all painters. Like Dürer, Holbein traveled widely as a young man, arriving in Basel in Switzerland in 1515. There he met and became friends with the great Dutch humanist Erasmus, who asked the young Holbein to illustrate his satirical farce, *The Praise of Folly*. Throughout his career the artist also made illustrations for other famous books, including Luther's translation of the Bible. One of his most successful sets of prints was a series of 41 illustrations retelling the story of the *Dance of Death*. Holbein stayed in Basel for almost a decade, but in 1524 he left the town for France in search of work. At this time Basel had become riddled with factional strife resulting from the Reformation, and the market for religious art was quickly drying up. In France he worked for John, the Duke of Berry, but soon returned to Basel. In the meantime the situa-

tion had grown increasingly worse there, and so in 1526, Holbein left the city again, this time to travel to the Netherlands and England. In England, he presented a letter of introduction from Erasmus to Sir Thomas More, a close associate of the Dutch humanist. Holbein painted More's family, and a portrait of the humanist and More opened doors for the artist among the prominent patrons of the island. Richly rewarded for his portraits, Holbein returned to Basel, where he set up his shop again, this time staying until 1532 when he returned permanently to England. Eventually, Holbein became court painter, undertaking more than 100 full-size and miniature portraits for the English crown and nobility. These works display the hallmarks of Holbein's mature style: a sure and certain use of line and brilliant, gemlike colors. Among the many English portraits the artist created, his *Portrait of Henry VIII* from around 1540 is one of the most accomplished and famous. One of a series of portraits the painter completed of the king, the work shows the notorious monarch in a fully frontal pose in which Holbein enhances the visual interest of the monarch through his intricate rendering of the king's dress. Though this impressive garment provides a suitably royal frame, Holbein still manages to endow the king's visage with a steely will and frightening intensity. The artist's linear skill and his ability to render infinite detail is also to be seen in his famous portrait of two French ambassadors. Surrounded by curiosities and the attributes of cultivated court life, the artist paints each item in the room using a perfect and minutely rendered perspective.

**PAINTING IN THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY NETHERLANDS.** During the sixteenth century the Netherlands continued to produce a number of accomplished painters. At first these figures followed in the tradition laid out by Jan van Eyck and other fifteenth-century masters. But over the course of the sixteenth century Netherlandish painting was to be reinvigorated by the journeys of Low Country artists to Italy and by a shift in the centers of artistic productions. The city of Antwerp, long a site with only a negligible circle of artists, gradually became the leading center in pioneering new forms in the visual arts. The town benefited from the decline of nearby Bruges as its harbor silted up and traders moved east to Antwerp. Among the accomplished artists who worked there in the sixteenth century were Quentin Metsys (also spelled Massys) (c. 1465–1530), Jan Gossart (c. 1478–1532), and Joachim Patinir (active 1515–1524). Metsys settled in Antwerp in 1491, where he painted a number of portraits and religious works. Deeply pious sentiments and the use of finely drawn lines characterized his religious paintings, while over time Metsys de-



Portrait of King Henry VIII of England by Hans Holbein. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

veloped the portrait as a vehicle for great individuality of expression. By contrast, Joachim Patinir created wild and fanciful landscapes to serve as the backgrounds of his religious paintings. He filled these with jagged rocks, perfectly conceived villages, and other details that showed that these were not real, but imaginary realms drawn from the artist's own conception of what constituted the glory of Creation. The final figure, Jan Gossart, brought the lessons that he learned on a journey to Italy back to Antwerp, and over the next decades he worked to integrate Italian techniques and attitudes into his works. At first his allegiances remained firmly tied to Netherlandish traditions. Over time, however, he painted more as a "Romanist," adopting the proportions and classical iconography typical of Italian Renaissance art. Gossart won the praise of the famous Italian art historian and biographer, Giorgio Vasari, who noted that

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MASTER OF NATURE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Carel van Mander, the great sixteenth-century biographer of Northern Renaissance artists, admired the work of Pieter Bruegel for its clear observation of nature. Van Mander believed that Bruegel was primarily a rustic peasant, largely unschooled, who painted the life of peasants sympathetically because he himself had been born a member of the class. More recent research has shown that the currents of humanism deeply affected Bruegel, and he was in conversation with many of the most sophisticated intellectuals in the Netherlands. His paintings of peasants were not mere visual journalism, but were filled with philosophical musings about the tie of all human beings to the earth and the natural cycles that governed all existence.

In a wonderful manner Nature found and seized the man who in his turn was destined to seize her magnificently, when in an obscure village in Brabant she chose from among the peasants, as the delineator of peasants, the witty and gifted Pieter Breughel, and made of him a painter to the lasting glory of our Netherlands. He was born not far from Breda in a village named Breughel, a name he took for himself and handed on to his descendants. He learned his craft from Pieter Koeck van Aelst, whose daughter he later married. When he lived with Koeck she was a little girl whom he often carried about in his arms. On leaving Koeck, he went to work with Jeronn Kock, and then he traveled to France and thence to Italy. He did much work in the manner of Jeronn van den Bosch and produced many spookish scenes and drolleries,

and for this reason many called him Pieter the Droll. There are few works by his hand which the observer can contemplate solemnly and with a straight face. However stiff, morose, or surly he may be, he cannot help chuckling or at any rate smiling. On his journeys Breughel did many views from nature so that it was said of him, when he traveled through the Alps, that he had swallowed all the mountains and rocks and spat them out again, after his return, on to his canvases and panels, so closely was he able to follow nature here and in her other works. He settled down in Antwerp and there entered the painters' guild in the year of our Lord 1551. He did a great deal of work for a merchant, Hans Franckert, a noble and upright man, who found pleasure in Breughel's company and met him every day. With this Franckert, Breughel often went out into the country to see the peasants at their fairs and weddings. Disguised as peasants they brought gifts like the other guests, claiming relationship or kinship with the bride or groom. Here Breughel delighted in observing the droll behavior of the peasants, how they ate, drank, danced, capered, or made love, all of which he was well able to reproduce cleverly, and pleasantly in water colors or oils, being equally skilled in both processes. He represented the peasants—men and women of the Camping and elsewhere—naturally, as they really were, betraying their boorishness in the way they walked, danced, stood still, or moved ...

**SOURCE:** Carel van Mander *Life of Pieter Breugel*, in *Northern Renaissance Art, 1400–1600: Sources and Documents*. Trans. and Ed. W. Stechow (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966): 38–39.

he was the first Northerner to paint the nude body with the beauty of the Italian style.

**BRUEGEL.** The greatest Netherlandish painter of the sixteenth century was Pieter Bruegel (c. 1525–1569). Although Bruegel's life is shrouded in obscurity, he did sign and date his paintings, a fact that permits the reconstruction of the development of his art. These show a transformation from early landscapes which were conceived and executed according to the traditions of Flemish realism to later works which were more Italian in character. Bruegel traveled in Italy between 1551 and 1555, and while on the way there, he kept a visual record of his journeys. His drawings of the Alps rank as some of the best landscapes ever sketched by a European artist. While in Italy, the beauty of the southern Italian landscape inspired his *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, a work that retold the story of the ancient figure who flew

too close to the sun. The story traditionally had been used to condemn pride and too great ambition. In Bruegel's hands, however, he elevated the story into a moralizing sermon that instead exulted the toil of earthbound peasants. In the foreground one such figure plows the soil, while behind him a shepherd tends his sheep. Neither takes notice of Icarus himself, who is barely visible, a floundering form upon the sea. In this work the typically harmonious balance the artist struck between the more monumental traditions of Italian art and the landscape conventions of the Netherlands became visible. Upon Bruegel's return to the Netherlands he settled in Antwerp where he often worked for a local printer, Hieronymus Cock, the town's most distinguished engraver. Bruegel produced designs for Cock, even as he also painted a number of works in the tradition of Hieronymus Bosch, an artist who was undergoing a surge of popularity at the time. The artist increasingly painted

landscapes, particularly after his move to Brussels in 1563. Bruegel elevated landscape painting into moral sermons, reflecting the long Flemish tradition of seeing religious and moral significance in simple everyday things. Such is the case in Bruegel's *Harvesters*, a work that celebrates the simple toil of peasants and the human tie to the soil as a consoling inevitability. In these late landscape creations the artist endowed his peasants with a deep humanity while placing them within a grand landscape. No Netherlandish artist who followed Bruegel ever again achieved this great harmony.

**PAINTING IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE.** In comparison to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the sixteenth century produced few great native artists in France. For much of the 1500s the French court imported its artists from Italy. Leonardo da Vinci spent the last years of his life working in France; somewhat later the Italian mannerist Rosso Fiorentino and Francesco Primaticcio popularized their style in the country through their work in royal palaces. Native artists, though, did flourish as portraitists. The French artists Jean Clouet (c. 1485–1541) and his son François Clouet (1510–1572) served the crown for many years in this capacity. The origins of this family of painters lay originally in Flanders and they infused their works with the conventions of Netherlandish realism. Holbein probably saw the portraits that Jean Clouet had completed for the king of France while visiting the country on one of his European journeys since something of their stiff formalism and opulent grandeur also appear in his portraits of the English royal family. By contrast, Jean's son, François was more affected by Italian examples than his father; his works seem to be influenced by the contemporary portraits of the Florentine Mannerist Bronzino. If great native painters were relatively few in sixteenth-century France, the country did produce two sculptors of merit, Jean Goujon (c. 1510–1568) and Germain Pilon (c. 1535–1590). Goujon completed most of his sculptures within the contexts of architectural projects, the five surviving reliefs he created for the *Fountain of the Innocents* in Paris being among his masterpieces. These works show a dramatic adoption of Italian Mannerism, with its elongated forms, supple drapery, and elegant refinement. At the same time the grace of these figures points forward to trends that French artists developed later during the Rococo period of the eighteenth century. By contrast, Germain Pilon's sculptures were altogether more powerful. While originally influenced by Italian mannerism, Pilon developed a style that was more realistic and natural. The artist excelled in both bronze and marble and was a particular favorite of the French



*The Trinity* by El Greco. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

kings. He worked on the tombs of several French kings and completed sculptures for the royal palaces of the Louvre and Fontainebleau.

**SPAIN.** Despite its great colonial empire and wealth, Spain produced few painters and sculptors during the sixteenth century. The country imported most of its artists from abroad. The greatest of these figures was the brilliant El Greco (1541–1614), which means literally, “the Greek.” The artist, whose real name was Domenikos Theotokopoulos, was a native of the island of Crete in the Eastern Mediterranean, which at that time was a colony of Venice. When he was about 20, El Greco settled in Venice, where he had an active career painting works for the local Greek community. The dramatic and fluid brushwork of the Venetian artist Tintoretto

strongly influenced the development of El Greco's style, as did a visit to Rome somewhat later during 1570. There he admired the sculptural forms of Michelangelo, an influence which is evident in his painting of the *Pietà*, completed soon after his arrival in Rome. There he came into contact with a group of Spaniards who encouraged him to immigrate to Toledo in 1577. In Spain he developed his own inimitable style, characterized by extremely elongated human forms, wildly vivid, even garish colors, and unusual compositional groupings. These tendencies grew more pronounced as El Greco matured, and late in life, the artist developed an intensely mystical and personal style. One of the first masterpieces of El Greco's Spanish maturity was *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, which he completed in 1586. The subject of the painting was the interment of a saintly medieval nobleman. This burial is attended by ranks of Spanish aristocrats and important church dignitaries. Above this scene Orgaz's soul rises to heaven to be met by the Virgin Mary, Christ, and ranks of saints. In this work El Greco has already begun to elongate his human figures, a tendency that increased over time. During the artist's late years his art also grew more feverishly intense, as can be seen in his view of *Toledo* and his famous *Resurrection*, both completed after 1600.

**CONCLUSIONS.** The period between 1300 and 1600 was one of amazing achievement in the visual arts throughout Europe. Change was constant throughout these centuries, and artistic styles frequently overlapped, with medieval styled works continuing to appear at the same time the newer more naturalistic styles of the Renaissance flourished. The primary achievements of Renaissance artists lay in their observation of the world, their discovery of nature and its complexities, and their ability to produce space and the human body realistically. Renaissance artists also considered new themes in their art. Sometimes they drew these subjects from pagan Antiquity; at other times they recorded the lives of their fellow countrymen in genre paintings and portraits. The growth and development of portraiture over the period points to the appearance of a new kind of individualism, as both painters and their patrons strove to immortalize the outward appearance and inward spirit of the personality. During the sixteenth century religious issues made the visual arts increasingly subjects of controversy. In Northern Europe the Protestant Reformation moved to limit the uses of religious art, while in Italy and other Catholic regions the Counter-Reformation aimed to reform painting and sculpture. Counter-Reformation artists gave expression to the church's demand for an art that was clearly intelligible and which

stirred the faithful to pious living. In time the new style they fashioned gave rise to the seventeenth-century Baroque, a style that drew upon the achievement, innovations, and sheer inventiveness that Renaissance artists had demonstrated over the previous centuries.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Visual Arts*

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### ALBRECHT DÜRER

1471–1528

*Painter*

*Graphic artist*

**EARLY LIFE.** Albrecht Dürer was born in Nuremberg to a large family. His father had migrated to Germany from Hungary, and had by the time of the younger Dürer's birth established himself as a successful goldsmith in this prosperous German city. Dürer's father expected him to carry on in the family's trade, but early in life the child demonstrated great skill as a draftsman, and the son soon became an apprentice to the local artist Michael Wolgemut, a painter and book illustrator. In 1490 Dürer completed his apprenticeship, and he undertook a series of journeys through Germany and Switzerland during which he made acquaintances in the printing trade and befriended a number of artists. Along the way he supported himself by occasionally un-

dertaking printing projects. Upon his return to Nuremberg in 1494, he married the daughter of a wealthy artisan, but an outbreak of the plague several months later encouraged the artist to leave the city, this time for Venice. Along the way Dürer kept both a written and visual record of his journeys. The drawings he completed on this trip were some of the first independent landscapes in European history. When the artist returned to his native city, he began to publish prints. The first undeniable masterpiece, his woodcut *Apocalypse* series, appeared as a book published in a joint venture with his godfather, the accomplished Nuremberg printer Anton Koberger. In these woodcuts Dürer relied on amazingly precise techniques to invoke the horrors of the biblical prophecies concerning the end of the world. During this early stage of the artist's career he also painted, designed stained glass, and undertook a number of decorative projects. His theoretical interests in art and aesthetics also grew, and the artist kept written records of his thinking on these subjects. From his youth, the artist had also painted and drawn self-portraits. In 1500, he completed the last of these portraits, one that shows the artist staring at the viewer in a Christ-like pose. While Dürer portrayed himself as serene, a restless temperament seemed always to lie beneath his calm exterior. By 1505, for instance, the artist's love of travel and adventure caused him to set out on a second journey to Italy.

**VENICE.** When Dürer arrived in Venice for the second time, his reputation preceded him. Although several Venetian artists befriended the German, Dürer wrote home to a friend in Nuremberg that he was the constant victim of Italian jealousy. The artist admired the higher status and social standing of Italian painters and he longed to see artists treated similarly in Germany. In Venice Dürer won a commission for an altarpiece, the *Madonna of the Rose Garlands*, from a confraternity of German merchants who lived in the city. Criticism from Italians about his skill in painting caused the artist to devote considerable time and attention to this picture, which showed the influence of the great Venetian artist Bellini on its completion. Soon after finishing the work, though, Dürer returned home and entered into another very productive period. He demonstrated his mastery of the lessons he had learned in Italy by painting life-size nudes of Adam and Eve as well as his altarpiece panel the *Adoration of the Trinity*. These works demonstrated the artist's mastery of the skills of the painter, while at the same time his skills in graphic arts, particularly in the copper engraving process, improved tremendously. Throughout the 1510s the artist released a number of

new series of engravings, including his famous *Melancholia I*, *The Knight*, and *St. Jerome in His Study*. Professional recognition also mounted in this period, which culminated in Dürer's receiving a lifetime pension from the German emperor.

**LATER YEARS.** In 1520 the artist embarked with his wife on his final travels, a visit to the Low Countries. Dürer ostensibly set off on this journey to make certain that the new emperor, Charles V, would not revoke his pension. But he indulged his taste for art and spent months exploring the Netherlands. As he had done in the past, Dürer supported himself and his wife on these journeys by selling his prints and undertaking occasional commissions along the way. Unfortunately, during one of his many side trips, he developed a fever, which may have been malaria, and he returned to Nuremberg with weakened health. Because of his frailty, the artist spent the last years of his life painting portraits of local dignitaries and writing about art. Earlier, Dürer had begun a painter's manual, similar to those written by many Italian artists. He now took the opportunity to work on this manual, as well as several other works on proportions and civil engineering. Although pioneering in their scope, the publication of several of these works after the artist's death did not have an immediate effect on German artists. Instead it was the example of Dürer's engravings that survived to stimulate graphic art production in Germany during the following generations. Like many German artists at the time, Dürer also followed the religious debates that were erupting in his native country at the time. Humanism had deeply colored the artist's outlook in the previous decades, and he aligned himself with the Lutheran cause. In 1526, Dürer painted his two panels of the *Four Apostles* to be hung in Nuremberg's town hall. Although there was little that was specifically Lutheran about these works, his choice of subject—the apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—was an expression of his hope that the town would continue to follow the Reformation's biblical path in religious matters.

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**GIOTTO**

c. 1267–1337

*Painter**Architect*

**SIGNIFICANCE.** Even during his lifetime, this Tuscan artist was credited with innovations that created a new style in Italian art. Giotto is mentioned in the works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio as a figure of the highest importance. In the fifteenth century Lorenzo Ghiberti, the Florentine sculptor, enhanced Giotto's reputation further in his writings, and in the sixteenth, Giorgio Vasari stated a version of the Giotto legend that would persist for centuries. He admired Giotto for his lifelike style of painting, for abandoning the traditions of Gothic stylization, and for his rise from humble beginnings to a position of eminence among all European artists. In truth, however, not every feature of this "Giotto legend" was accurate, nor can every feature—such as his humble birth—be verified by documentary sources. Like many figures of the fourteenth century, many aspects of Giotto's life are shrouded in some mystery. In modern times, too, the artist's style has been re-interpreted and Giotto has been seen less as a figure of the early Renaissance than of the late Gothic. At the same time Giotto's revolutionary introduction of a greater naturalism into his works continues to be seen as one element of his work that fifteenth-century artists like Masaccio would build upon.

**CAREER.** Giotto was born in the village of Vespignano near Florence, and may have been apprenticed to Cimabue. His own art, though, took quite different turn from this master. In place of the stylized depiction of the human figure that was common in Italian art at the time, Giotto painted his characters, particularly in his frescoes, in real-life poses. In one of his most famous series of works painted around 1300 in the Arena Chapel in Padua, Giotto tried intuitively to paint his surfaces as if they had depth and perspective. Sometimes his efforts in this vein were not completely successful, and at times he varied the use of depth in his constructions, so that some of the scenes appear to have a very shallow space, while others take on a greater relief. The artist's observations of emotions and gestures, however, are perhaps even more significant than his spatial experimentation. Giotto endowed his figures with body movements and facial expressions that suggested pain, joy, and suffering, and he modulated the use of these emotions to the particular circumstances narrated in the chapel's many individual scenes. Among the other achievements attributed to his hand are the famous frescoes in the Upper Church of St. Francis in Assisi as well as those completed in the 1320s

for the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels in the Church of Santa Croce in Florence. Giotto was also a master of panel painting, and a number of these works survive, either from his own hand or from that of his studio in the city of Florence. By 1334, Giotto's reputation as an artist of great individual expression had been established, and the city of Florence appointed the artist to oversee construction of the cathedral. Giotto died three years later and long before this monument was completed. A drawing for the cathedral's famous tower or *Campanile* survives from around 1334 at the time at which Giotto assumed administration of the building's construction. The work has long been attributed to Giotto, and if this attribution is correct the drawing shows that the artist was astute in his understanding of structural engineering.

**IMPLICATIONS.** Giotto helped to establish a tradition of greater naturalism in Italian painting that survived his death. His chief followers, Bernardo Daddi and Taddeo Gaddi, continued in the tradition of realistic painting introduced by the master, even if their art did not rise to the same high level. Giotto's innovations had admirers outside Italy, including Northern European masters. Elsewhere in Central Italy the traditions of Byzantine stylization persisted, and, following the Black Death, the tastes of Florence's patrons and artists turned to favor "International Gothic" art. In contrast to the more lifelike observations of Giotto, these artists relied on sinuous lines, intricate drapery folds, and a mysterious emotionalism that conveyed the intense religious fervor of the age. In the first quarter of the fifteenth century the short-lived genius Masaccio would return to the perfecting of naturalism and perspective in painting—two values that had been anticipated in the works of the fourteenth-century master Giotto.

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**HANS HOLBEIN**

1497–1543

*Painter**Engraver*

**EARLY LIFE.** The younger Hans Holbein was the son of a prominent Augsburg artist who was a contem-

porary of Albrecht Dürer. The son trained initially with his father, but left around 1515 to become an apprentice in the studio of Hans Herbster, a Basel artist. Here he developed his skills as a book illustrator and also became closely associated with the town's circle of humanists. One of the lifelong friends he made at Basel was Desiderius Erasmus, who charged Holbein with illustrating his famous satire *The Praise of Folly*. The accomplished illustrations that Holbein created for this best-selling intellectual farce brought the artist to the attention of Johannes Froben, a Basel printer and then one of the most important publishers of humanist texts in Europe. In 1516, Holbein became a designer in Froben's shop. During this period in Basel Holbein also painted panel paintings, which are evidence of his father's influence on his style. His manner was at the same time more monumental and balanced. In this early stage of his career Holbein also painted his *Dead Christ*, a work that displays the same sharp clarity and realism the artist developed later in his portraits.

**REFORMATION.** The Reformation gathered support in Basel during the early 1520s, and as in many other towns in Switzerland, supporters of the new movement aimed to curb the uses of religious art. Eventually, these new sensibilities resulted in violent attacks upon statues and altarpieces. During these early years of the Reformation the new movement caused a decline in many artists' fortunes. The Reformers found distasteful the elaborate altarpiece paintings that had been frequently commissioned in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and a falloff in the production of new works of this kind soon became evident in the 1520s. This situation restricted the possibilities for a young artist like Hans Holbein, and while he remained in Basel he began to turn to portraiture to support himself. During 1523 and 1524 he painted several portraits of his friend Erasmus. The local market, however, failed to provide sufficient support, and so in 1524, he traveled to France, where he painted works for John, the Duke of Berry. A brief return to Basel in 1526 produced two works on mythological themes, but the climate in the city had now grown increasingly intolerant of painters. Again Holbein left Basel, this time for the Netherlands, and eventually England. On this journey he carried letters of introduction from Basel's prominent citizens, including one from his friend Erasmus. While he stopped in Antwerp for a time, he soon moved on to England, where he presented his letter from Erasmus to the English humanist Sir Thomas More, a close friend of Erasmus. More commissioned the artist to paint a portrait of his family, and from this panel Holbein also painted his famous portrait of More during 1527. Soon the artist was at work producing a

number of portraits of prominent English men and women, and he returned to Basel in 1529, enriched by his stay in England. At home he purchased two houses in the city, and set up his shop once again.

**SECOND SOJOURN IN ENGLAND.** Basel's artistic climate, though, had not improved in the intervening years, and so in 1532, Holbein returned to England for a second time. Basel's town council had attempted to keep Holbein in Switzerland by offering the artist a pension, but since there was little work in the city and the town's atmosphere was disturbed by Reformation controversy, he set off. He never returned, although his wife stayed behind, the beneficiary of a Basel municipal pension. In England, Holbein found a more congenial atmosphere, soon painting his famous portrait *The Ambassadors*, a painting of two French royal emissaries at work in London at the time. The work shows the ambassadors with all of the attributes of the humanistically trained intellectual. A lute, globe, and other items scattered on the table behind the men demonstrate their breadth of learning. One unusual feature of the painting is an elongated and distorted skull that appears in the foreground before the men, a manneristic detail in an otherwise extremely realistic work. This realism, which approached the level of Jan van Eyck and other Netherlandish painters of the fifteenth century, was consistent in the remaining ninety portraits that Holbein produced in England before his death from the plague in 1543. During these later years the artist rose to the position of court painter to Henry VIII. He was responsible for painting portraits of the royal family and other important members of the English court, but the king also kept him busy decorating the royal apartments with murals and in producing engravings and small miniatures. In a small and remote country like England, the job of the royal portrait painter was an important one, since in the sixteenth century royal ambassadors frequently arranged dynastic marriages. These officials took with them portraits of the royal and noble children for whom they arranged strategic marriage alliances. Accuracy and realism, two areas in which the artist excelled, were necessary in the genre. In addition, Holbein endowed those he painted, even the youngest royal children, with a sense of commanding majesty. His portraits set a standard that would influence later artists, as portraiture became an increasingly important art form in Northern Europe in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Portraiture, too, was at this time to become an increasingly vital source of support to artists, particularly those who worked in Protestant countries, as the demand for religious images shrank in the wake of the Reformation.

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## LEONARDO DA VINCI

1452–1519

*Painter*  
*Engineer*

**UNIVERSAL MAN.** Although largely unschooled in an institutional sense, Leonardo da Vinci ranks as one of the most accomplished figures in European history. He practiced the arts of painting, sculpture, and drawing to a high level of perfection. At the same time he also found employment as an architect, a civil and military engineer, and even a theatrical designer. In his private *Notebooks* he kept a record of his many theoretical explorations of subjects in mechanics, physics, anatomy, geometry, and mathematics. While the artist's output of paintings was comparatively small, his emphasis on physical idealization, landscape painting, and proportion helped to establish the standards of High Renaissance style after 1500. Because of the range of his pursuits, Leonardo has long been accepted as one of the highest expressions of the Renaissance concept of the "universal man."

**EARLY CAREER.** Da Vinci was born at Anchiano, a small village near Vinci, the illegitimate son of the notary Piero da Vinci and a peasant girl. As a child he displayed precocious talent in drawing, and as he reached maturity he became an apprentice to the Florentine painter Andrea del Verrocchio, in whose studio he developed his skills as a painter and eventually became the artist's chief assistant. By 1472, Leonardo joined the painter's guild at Florence, although he seems to have remained an employee of Verrocchio until at least 1476. During this early period da Vinci painted his famous portrait of *Ginevra de' Benci* (now in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.) and worked on his *Adoration of the Magi*, a painting he never finished. In 1483 the painter settled in Milan where he received several commissions and eventually worked for Ludovico Sforza, the city's ruling duke. The most important project that da Vinci undertook during his years in the city was his *Last Supper*, a mural painting for the refectory or dining room of the Monastery of Santa Maria

delle Grazie. He painted this work—one of the most famous in the European tradition—with an experimental technique he developed, and unfortunately the work began to decay immediately. The *Last Supper* continued to be damaged by restoration projects conducted over the centuries, although a preservation campaign completed in 1999 did much to remove the tampering of later artists. In the work, da Vinci relied on a careful balancing of groups of disciples around Christ. In addition, his use of perspective seems to set the work off in a higher plane, as does the brilliant idealization of the artist's painting of the figures' faces and hands. In 1499, two years after completing the *Last Supper*, the artist returned to Florence following the seizure of Milan by French forces. He remained there for two years, and although he received several commissions for paintings, he seems to have completed little work during this time. In 1502, the artist accepted employment with Cesare Borgia, the son of the reigning pope, Alexander VI. At the time Borgia was conducting campaigns of conquest in Central and Northern Italy, and Leonardo became the despot's architect and military engineer. Leonardo soon returned to Florence, where he began a number of works. The most important project of this period in Florence, though, was the *Mona Lisa*, a portrait of the wife of a high-ranking Florentine government official. Most of the other works that da Vinci commenced during these years in Florence were left incomplete at his death or have since been lost.

**LATER YEARS.** The artist's later years were spent in Milan, Rome, and finally France. During this time Leonardo painted less, but devoted himself increasingly to his scientific studies. Mechanics and anatomy, which had been lifelong interests, now absorbed more of the artist's attentions. Leonardo had been called to Milan in 1508 to work for the French rulers who governed the city at the time. His inventions came to the notice of Pope Leo X, who called the artist to Rome. In 1516, though, King Francis I asked the artist to accept a pension and to settle in France. Francis gave da Vinci a manor house in Amboise and allowed him to continue his scientific studies. Shortly after his arrival in France, the artist suffered a stroke that damaged the right side of his body. He made only a partial recovery, but continued to work on his *Notebooks* and scientific experiments until his death in 1519.

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## MICHELANGELO

1475–1564

*Painter*

*Sculptor*

*Architect*

**EARLY LIFE.** Michelangelo was born in the small town of Caprese in rural Tuscany, the son of a Florentine official then serving a short term of office in the countryside. Soon after the child's birth the family moved back to Florence, where Michelangelo attended Latin school until he was thirteen. Becoming an apprentice to the successful Florentine painter, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Michelangelo advanced far enough in his craft to join the large entourage of artists, poets, and scholars who surrounded Lorenzo de' Medici, who was the de facto ruler of Florence at the time. In the Medici household Michelangelo received a rudimentary exposure to humanism and Latin literature. Although he never became a scholar, he did spend two years within the Medici household (1490–1492), an experience that exposed him to the world of learning that flourished in Florence at the time.

**FIRST WORKS.** The death of Lorenzo de' Medici, Michelangelo's patron, left the artist without support, and in 1494 Florence expelled the Medici family altogether. Michelangelo followed the Medici faction to Bologna where he lived for a time with a wealthy family before returning to Florence. Still without a patron, Michelangelo traveled to Rome in 1496 with letters of recommendation from a member of the Medici family. Here the ancient monuments of the city seem to have inspired the sculptor, and he quickly carved his *Bacchus*, a work that imitated the style of Antiquity and which many contemporaries believed could not have been carved by a contemporary artist. Emboldened by his success, the artist carved his *Pietà*, a work commissioned by the French Cardinal Jean Villiers. The fame of that work securely established the artist's reputation, and he would never again want for commissions and wealthy patrons.

**ASTONISHING PRODUCTIVITY.** The early decades of the sixteenth century were a time of remarkable productivity for the artist. In 1501 Michelangelo returned to Florence where he carved the famous *David*, a work immediately revered as a masterpiece. To honor this

achievement, the town gave the colossal nude a position of honor in front of the city's town hall. In 1505, Michelangelo returned to Rome, where he had been summoned by Pope Julius II to work on the pope's tomb. Difficulties and disagreements vexed this project, which took almost forty years to complete. Despite those hardships Michelangelo managed to complete the ceiling and sidewall frescoes of the Sistine Chapel between 1508 and 1512. These frescoes, recently cleaned and restored during the 1980s, allow us to trace Michelangelo's stylistic development in this crucial period of his life. In these years the artist left behind the painting style of the fifteenth-century Renaissance in which he had been trained in Ghirlandaio's studio. In the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes, for instance, he came over time to develop a new more dramatic and monumental style, characterized by tension and heavily muscled figures. Somewhat later, around 1520, the artist began to develop his skills as an architect. The Medici family commissioned Michelangelo to design a set of tombs in the New Sacristy of the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence. Michelangelo now brought to his sculpture the same heavily muscled and tense style he had used in the later panels of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. During the 1520s, the artist developed his aesthetic ideas even further, displaying a highly individualistic, even willful side in his designs for the Laurentian Library he designed at Florence. This work, notable for its violations of the acceptable classical canons of design popular at the time, formed one of the foundations for the development of mannerist architecture.

**LATER WORKS.** As Michelangelo matured, his work continued to evolve. This evolution can be seen in his *Last Judgment* frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. That work, a great swirling mass of figures located behind the high altar of the chapel, was finished in 1541. The *Last Judgment* carried Michelangelo's search for a dramatic and highly personal style to its logical conclusion, although the artist continued to rely on this idiom in two frescoes he painted soon afterward in the Pauline Chapel in the Vatican. By 1546 Michelangelo had been appointed chief architect for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica. Over the years the skills that Michelangelo had acquired in his many sculptural and architectural projects meant that he was an efficient manager, both of teams of workmen and of finances. His astute management of the Vatican project corrected errors in the work's construction up to this point and firmly placed the artist's stamp upon the building's future. Although St. Peter's would not be completed for another hundred years, it remains one of the artist's finest creations. Michelangelo combined his

attention to projects at the Vatican with other commissions completed in the city of Rome. These included his design for the Capitoline Hill (the Campidoglio) and his transformation of the ancient Baths of Diocletian into the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli. At the same time as Michelangelo involved himself in these projects, he also underwent a deepening of his own religious life. Affected by the religious movements of the age, he expressed the depths of his religious faith in his later years through poetry and sculpture. His friendship with Vittoria Colonna, a pious and admirable Roman noblewoman, kept him abreast of the great religious and spiritual debates that were occurring at the time. With his death in 1564 at the age of 89, Michelangelo had lived almost twice as long as the average sixteenth-century man. The styles that he had developed during his life continued to affect artists in the following generations.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Visual Arts*

- Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura* (On Painting, 1435)—This treatise on the art of painting was written by one of Florence's most distinguished fifteenth-century humanists. Alberti revives classical ideas about proportion and beauty and he outlines a method by which painters can make their pictures appear to have depth.
- Benvenuto Cellini, *Autobiography* (1562)—This swashbuckling and adventurous memoir was not published until 1728. The author was an accomplished, but admittedly second-rank sculptor and painter (that is, when compared to the great figures of the sixteenth century). Sometimes he indulges in a taste for braggadocio. At other points, though, he is remarkably humble. Like Leonardo da Vinci, he continually denies that he is a

learned man, but his use of motifs and episodes drawn from earlier literary traditions show that he had at least received a passably good education. Cellini, moreover, winds a good yarn of a story.

Albrecht Dürer, *Writings* (1528)—Like Leonardo da Vinci's *Notebooks*, this collection of the works of the great German artist are filled with intellectual and philosophical insights. While he was more able to complete his projects than Leonardo da Vinci, Dürer's writings reveal a similar psyche, one troubled by perfectionism and anxiety.

Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks* (1519)—This collection of Leonardo's studies and thoughts on various matters makes for fascinating reading. The works were first collected during the sixteenth century, and most found their way into the Ambrosian Library in Milan. Other works from da Vinci's hand, though, have continued to come to light and to confound our notions about this complex genius.

Carel van Mander, *Lives of the Dutch and Flemish Painters* (1604)—This collection of lives written by a seventeenth-century art theorist provides us with some of the richest evidence concerning the social world in which the Netherlandish artists flourished. Van Mander has long been known as the "Dutch Vasari," in comparison to his more famous Italian counterpart. Like Vasari, his accounts must sometimes be read cautiously because they are filled with rumors and legends.

Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Letters* (1490–1564)—The critical edition of all letters by and to the famous artist fills six volumes. Michelangelo's own letters have been translated into English, and they record the joys, agonies, and tedium of a life spent in artistic pursuits during the High and Later Renaissance.

Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Artists* (1550)—This is one of the first attempts to write a history of art from a biographical perspective. Vasari was himself a painter and he treats Italian artists from the time of Giotto until Michelangelo. He is frequently opinionated and his work gave rise to a number of legends about various artists. He stresses that the development of Italian art occurred as an organic process. According to Vasari, the visual arts first began to bud in Italy in the time of Giotto. Later, the bud turned to a bloom in the years after Masaccio, before coming to full flower in the time of Leonardo and Michelangelo. This seductive notion cast a long influence over later art histories. At the same time the work is indispensable because of the many interesting episodes it recounts from the lives of artists.



## GLOSSARY

**Academy of Poetry and Music:** An institution founded in 1570 by the poet Jean de Baïf that established classical literary and aesthetic forms in French literature and music. The Academy was especially influential in the development of early *ballets de cour*.

**Act of Supremacy:** The act of Parliament that established King Henry VIII as the head of the Church in England in 1534, permitting his divorce from Catherine of Aragon.

**Allemande:** Popular sixteenth-century dance step, derived from the fifteenth-century *bassedance*. The word *allemande* is French for “German” and may indicate the dance’s origins.

**Alumbrado:** Term for sixteenth-century Spanish mystics suspected of harboring heretical views.

**Anabaptist Movement:** A religious movement that practiced a “second baptism” for adult members, and believed in establishing a Christian community separate from the world. Their participation in the Revolution of the Münster Prophets in 1533 and 1534 resulted in widespread persecution.

**Ancient Theology:** Philosophy that argued that a pre-Christian but divine wisdom was to be found in all the world’s religions. Developed by Renaissance Platonists, it had its origins in the Latin *prisca theologica*.

**Anglicanism:** The English form of Protestantism.

**Anthem:** A native musical composition that flourished in late-Renaissance England; anthems relied on mostly-

English lyrics and were generally written without elaborate harmonies in order to heighten the audience’s understanding of the texts.

**Anticlericalism:** Sentiment that is critical of the special rights and privileges of the clergy.

**Aristotelianism:** A philosophy that has its inspiration in the ancient Greek thinker Aristotle. Aristotelians typically placed a high emphasis on the importance of matter and thus are often called materialists. Aristotelian elements were to be found in medieval scholasticism, but during the Renaissance a revival of Aristotle’s works also led some thinkers, most notably Pomponazzi, to deny the immortality of the soul.

**Ars nova:** Literally, the “new art,” a style in early fourteenth-century French music that emphasized greater freedom of rhythm and harmony and that eventually came to be adapted elsewhere in fourteenth-century Europe. It led eventually to the development of a new “international style” of musical composition.

**Art of Dying:** Popular theme in Renaissance literature, which outlined how to prepare oneself for a good death.

**Autos sacramentales:** Religious plays popular in early sixteenth-century Spain; literally “sacramental acts.”

**Avignon Papacy:** The period between 1309–1378 when the Roman pope ruled from the French-speaking city of Avignon. The Avignon Papacy became synonymous with luxury and corruption, and this period was sometimes referred to as the “Babylonian Captivity,” a phrase that likened the Israelites’ imprisonment in ancient

Babylon to the church's at the hand of the French king. In truth, the French king did not control the popes at Avignon as thoroughly as once thought, and the period gave rise to many innovations in papal government that strengthened the church's financial position. The Avignon Papacy was to have ended with the return to Rome in 1378, but a splinter of cardinals in the French city elected their own rival pope, thus giving rise to the Great Schism (1378–1415).

**Ballade:** A lively medieval French song frequently used to accompany dancing. The form spread throughout Europe as a result of the internationalization of musical styles that occurred during the Renaissance.

**Ballet de Cour:** French court entertainment combining a story line with poetry, dancing, music, and other theatrical elements. Ballets de cour were first performed in the late sixteenth century, and survived into the Baroque period, at which time they inspired innovations in French opera and the ballet.

**Baptism:** One of the seven sacraments of the medieval church, baptism was performed on infant children to wash away the stain of original sin. In the Reformation, infant baptism was one of two sacraments retained by most Protestants. The Anabaptists, however, replaced the practice with a rite performed on adults.

**Barrel vault:** A rounded vault used in Renaissance churches that had its origins in the ancient Roman arch. It became popular through the architectural theory of Leon Battista Alberti and was used in Renaissance churches of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including the famous Il Gesù at Rome.

**Bassedance:** A processional dance popular in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Burgundy.

**Bembismo:** A literary movement popular in early sixteenth-century Italy that imitated the difficult and artful syntax and stylistic elements of the works of Pietro Bembo.

**Black Death:** A massive epidemic of bubonic plague that began to spread throughout Europe late in 1347 and did not recede completely until 1351. During these years the plague reduced the continent's population by as much as a third. This sudden decline in population had massive effects on the economy of Renaissance Europe, sponsoring a rise in wages and inflation as two of its more prominent effects in the fifteenth century. After the first outbreak of the disease, the bubonic plague continued to recur in Europe until the late seventeenth century.

**Boethius:** An early-medieval philosopher who was active in Visigothic Spain. Boethius communicated much ancient knowledge to the Middle Ages, and his philosophical

classic, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, continued to be read throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

**Bonfire of the Vanities:** The custom of throwing cards, dice, and frivolous clothing into huge public bonfires to demonstrate a commitment to lead a more serious and moral life; generally followed the preaching missions of fifteenth-century religious figures like St. Bernard of Siena or St. John of Capistrano.

**Book of Common Prayer:** The book of English services first sanctioned for use in the Church of England by Edward VI (r. 1547–1553). Later done away with under the rule of Edward's half-sister Mary I, the Book of Common Prayer re-surfaced during the reign of Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603). The work had a massive impact on the development of English literary style in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

**Book of Hours:** A collection of prayers used in late-medieval and Renaissance private devotion, often elaborately decorated and commissioned by the wealthiest aristocrats of the time. The greatest of these works, like the *Very Rich Hours* of the duke of Berry, are masterpieces of Northern Renaissance art.

**Braccio:** An Italian unit of measurement for cloth, roughly about 20 inches long.

**Branle:** A lively dance popular in France in the early sixteenth century. In England, the form was often known as the "brawl." Many variations on the dance flourished in the 1500s, and some often contained elaborate "pantomimes" that imitated folk customs.

**Brethren and Sisters of the Common Life:** A lay religious movement popular in the Netherlands and the Rhineland in the fifteenth century. The Brethren of the Common Life valued education in the Christian classics, and affected the growth of Christian humanism in Northern Europe through their network of secondary schools. The Sisters of the Common Life's foundation actually preceded that of the Brethren.

**Bubonic Plague:** See Black Death.

**Bull:** A papal letter that defined issues of church doctrine and practice. The term comes from *bull*, meaning "stamp" or "seal," and had its origins in the practice of sealing these letters with a round lead seal.

**Burgundy:** One of the most powerful states of fifteenth-century Europe, located north and east of the kingdom of France. Burgundy's rise to prominence began as France struggled in the Hundred Years' War. Eventually, the dukes of Burgundy controlled large areas of eastern France as well as the rich cities of the Netherlands and Flanders. The elaborate court life of the

- duchy affected styles in dance, music, and art in much of northern Europe, even after control of the vast Burgundian lands was divided between the Habsburgs and the Valois dynasty of France following Charles the Bold's death in 1477.
- Byzantium:** The Eastern Mediterranean descendant of the ancient Roman Empire. Byzantium's capital and last remaining territories fell to Turkish control in 1453. The crisis that preceded Byzantium's collapse led to the importation of many priceless ancient texts into fifteenth-century Italy.
- Cabalism:** An occult or magical philosophy practiced in medieval Judaism that was embraced by Renaissance intellectuals, particularly by Platonists in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.
- Calvinism:** The form of Reformed Christianity that traces its origins to John Calvin (1509–1564) and the city of Geneva where he worked. Calvinism became a vast international movement in the late sixteenth century, and was a popular religious ideology among the Puritans, English Protestants who eventually founded New World settlements in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
- Cambridge Wits:** A group of late sixteenth-century London playwrights that had received their university education at the University of Cambridge. The most famous of the wits was Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593).
- Camerata:** A loose organization of Florentine intellectuals in the late sixteenth century who studied ancient music and poetry. It was influential in the development of early opera.
- Campanile:** The Italian word for “bell tower.” Campaniles were popular additions that accompanied late-medieval and Renaissance building projects, the most famous being that at Florence as well as the Leaning Tower of Pisa.
- Canon:** Meaning “law” or “rule.” A late-medieval and Renaissance form of musical counterpoint in which the first singer sets out the theme that is to be imitated by other voices, who are expected to follow according to the laws set down by the composer.
- Canon law:** The body of law used in the medieval and Renaissance church.
- Cantus firmus:** A plainsong melody originally sung in unison. With the rise of polyphonic musical composition in the Renaissance, cantus firmus melodies gave structure and unity to settings of the Mass.
- Capuchins:** A reformed order of Franciscans founded in 1529 that became a force for Catholic reform in the later sixteenth century.
- Carols:** Songs originally used in the Middle Ages to accompany dances. During the Renaissance, English composers embraced innovations in the writing of carols that made the genre a distinctly national kind of musical form.
- Cassoni:** Meaning “casket.” Richly, decorated *cassoni* carried the dowry payments of wealthy women through the streets of Italian Renaissance cities in the days before the celebration of a wedding.
- Catholic Reformation:** A broad movement within the Roman Catholic Church of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that gave rise to many efforts to deepen piety.
- Chaconne:** A sixteenth-century dance of Spanish origin that may have its roots in New World dances. The chaconne was notable for its sexual overtones.
- Chanson:** French for “song.” Between the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries French styles of song composition were adopted in many places throughout Europe. In the mid-sixteenth century the rise of the genre of Parisian chansons attempted to revive a native French style in a genre that had by that time become international in nature.
- Chantrist:** A priest charged with repeating the Mass for the benefit of the souls of the dead.
- Château:** French for “castle.” In the sixteenth century châteaux acquired a more domestic and less fortified appearance.
- Chiarentina:** A lively Italian dance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, consisting of an elaborate choreography of hops, skips, and jumps.
- Chiaroscuro:** An Italian painting term used to describe the rendering of light and dark shading on a panel or canvas so the composition takes on an appearance of volume.
- Chivalry:** A medieval code of conduct that stressed military valor, honor, and personal loyalty as signs of distinction for knights and nobles.
- Choir:** The part of a church behind or surrounding the High Altar.
- Chopines:** A Renaissance form of woman's shoe constructed with high platform soles made out of wood or cork.
- Chorale:** A German hymn popular in Lutheran churches that made use of pre-existing or newly composed melodies.
- Choreography:** The compositional arrangement and flow of steps in a dance.



**Chorography:** A discipline that mixed geography, history, and descriptions of customs and which was popular especially among the humanists of sixteenth-century Germany.

**Chromaticism:** Music that makes use of close and dissonant harmonies. In the sixteenth century chromaticism's rise was associated with the revival of classical Greek forms of musical composition.

**Church of St. John Lateran:** The pope's church within the city of Rome, at which he presides as bishop of that city. Several important church councils were held during the Middle Ages and Renaissance in this church.

**Ciceronianism:** A sixteenth-century literary movement, popular especially in Italy, that tried to revive the elegant Latin style of rhetoric associated with the ancient Roman orator Cicero (d. 43 B.C.E.).

**Civic humanism:** A form of humanism particularly widespread in Florence and other Italian cities that discussed the arts of good government and the ethical qualifications necessary to participate in public life.

**Codicology:** The study of variant forms of a literary text in order to establish the original and authoritative version.

**Codpiece:** A pouch, flap, or bag that concealed the opening between the legs of men's breeches in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

**College of Cardinals:** The body of high officials in the Roman Church charged with the election of new popes.

**Commedia dell'Arte:** An improvised form of comedy originally performed as street theater in sixteenth-century Italy that mixed short sketches, pantomimes, dances, and music.

**Conciliarism:** A political philosophy that emerged in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries as a result of the crisis of the Great Schism in which rival popes ruled the church from Rome and Avignon. The conciliarists advocated a church council to resolve the crisis, something realized finally at the Council of Constance (1413–1417). In the aftermath of that meeting, many conciliarists continued to argue that the church needed a permanent assembly to approve or disapprove of the actions of the pope. By the end of the fifteenth century conciliar opposition to papal power, though, had grown increasingly weak.

**Confession:** A written statement of faith that played an important role in defining religious positions during the Protestant and Catholic Reformations.

**Confirmation:** One of the seven sacraments of the medieval church, which marked official entrance into the life of

the church. Confirmation was typically received as a child stood on the verge of adulthood at twelve or thirteen. Although Protestants denied the sacramental nature of confirmation, most retained some version of the ritual in their church reforms.

**Confraternities:** Brotherhoods and sisterhoods of lay people and clergy that met for prayers and to perform pious good works. Some confraternities adopted penitential rituals like flagellation (self-whipping) and the wearing of hair shirts to deepen their piety. The pious ideals of most of these organizations were closely modeled on the disciplines of monastic life.

**Converso:** A Christian convert from Judaism in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spain.

**Corinthian Order:** The most elegant and decorative of the architectural orders of antiquity. The capitals or peaks of Corinthian columns are decorated with acanthus leaves.

**Council of Constance:** The church council that met in the southern German city of Constance between 1413–1417 and resolved the crisis of authority in the church known as the Great Schism. The council also condemned the heresy of the Bohemian heretic John Huss.

**Council of Trent:** A council of the Roman Catholic Church that convened in the northern Italian city of Trent during three sessions in the years between 1545–1563. The council defined Catholic teaching and religious practices as well as answered Protestant criticisms of the church. Its definitions of Catholic doctrine largely stood until the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s.

**Counter Reformation:** A phrase originally used to describe the attempts of Catholic reformers to negate and condemn the criticisms of Protestantism. It has increasingly been replaced with Catholic Reformation, a phrase that highlights the many positive as well as negative dimensions of renewal in the church between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

**Counterpoint:** The construction of two or more melodic lines in a musical composition to create an overall harmonic structure.

**Depravity:** A teaching concerning sin that was enthusiastically embraced by sixteenth-century Protestant reformers. Their emphasis on human depravity stressed that human beings were utterly controlled by their desire to sin, and thus had no free will to act or participate in their salvation.

**Dialogue:** A popular humanist literary form that records the discussion of religious or philosophical issues among two or more people in a lively conversational format.

**Diet of Worms:** The meeting of the German parliament in 1521 in the city of Worms at which Martin Luther was called to answer charges of heresy. Luther was condemned to death as a result of the questioning he underwent, but was subsequently spirited away and protected by the elector Frederick the Wise.

**Diptych:** A work of religious art painted on two hinged panels and usually intended to serve as an altarpiece.

**Dominicans:** An order of friars or itinerant preachers founded in 1215 by St. Dominic (1170–1221). The Dominicans became vital on the education scene of later medieval and Renaissance Europe and were often charged with inspecting regions for heresy. In the sixteenth century many members of the order were powerful opponents of the teaching of Martin Luther.

**Donation of Constantine:** A document allegedly written by the ancient Roman emperor Constantine I that ceded control over western Europe to the pope. In the Middle Ages the Donation of Constantine was one of the foundations for the growth of papal power. In 1440, Lorenzo Valla revealed the document as an eighth-century forgery.

**Doric Order:** The simplest of the architectural orders derived from the buildings of antiquity in which the capitals are squared.

**Doublet:** A close-fitting jacket usually worn under a robe by men during the Renaissance.

**Dowry:** A woman's share of her father's inheritance that is conferred to her husband's control at the time of her marriage.

**Dualism:** Any philosophical teaching that includes a strong contrast between the realms of the spirit or soul and that of the physical universe or body.

**Eclogue:** A rustic form of verse that evoked country themes and was popular among Renaissance poets. The form has its origins in the works of the ancient Latin poet Vergil.

**Edict of Nantes:** A proclamation of King Henri IV of France in 1598 that granted a limited degree of toleration to French Protestants.

**English Peasants' War:** A rebellion staged in 1381 in protest of the archbishop of Canterbury's plans to introduce a new universal poll tax in England. An angry mob killed the archbishop, who was serving at the time as a royal minister.

**Engraving:** The cutting of designs and pictures in a wood or copper plate. German Renaissance masters at the end of

the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries brought a high level of technical skill to the art form.

**Entablature:** An upper section of a wall that is usually decorated and supported by a row of columns.

**Epic:** A long narrative poem that retells the exploits of a hero or group of heroes.

**Epicureanism:** An ancient philosophy promoted by Epicurus that embraced intellectual pleasure as the highest principle of life. In the mid-fifteenth century the Italian philosopher Lorenzo Valla developed a Christian form of Epicureanism by insisting that the religion's answers to the intellectual problems of existence were the most profound and capable of creating the greatest peace of mind.

**Erudite Comedy:** A form of learned comedy inspired by the ancient works of the Latin playwrights Terence and Plautus. Erudite comedies were particularly popular in Italy, from where their five-act structure spread throughout Europe in the later sixteenth century to affect the works of figures as diverse as William Shakespeare in England and Lope de Vega in Spain.

**Eucharist:** One of the seven sacraments of the medieval church, also known as Holy Communion. According to medieval theology, the body and blood of Christ were made physically present in the rite through priestly ministrations. This doctrine, known as transubstantiation, was rejected by all Protestants, who nevertheless retained the Eucharist as one of the central rituals of their churches.

**Evangelical:** Any religious position that places a strong emphasis on the Christian gospels, usually associated with the followers of Martin Luther, who emphasized the doctrine of justification by faith. Also used in Italy to refer to followers of groups like the Oratory of Divine Love, that emphasized the role of divine grace and human unworthiness in their teachings about salvation.

**Extreme Unction:** One of the seven sacraments of the medieval church that involved the anointing of the sick and dying in preparation for death. Also known as Last Rites, Extreme Unction was rejected as a sacrament by sixteenth-century Protestants.

**Farce:** A short and light comedy popular in sixteenth-century France.

**Farthingale:** A wide support of hoops that swelled out the hips of skirts worn by wealthy and aristocratic women in the sixteenth century. In Spain, where these hoop-skirt contraptions originated in the fifteenth century, farthingales were known as *verdugado*.

**Feast of Corpus Christi:** A religious celebration held to commemorate the Eucharist and the Christian community as the Body of Christ. Corpus Christi was usually observed in June, and its celebration often included mystery play cycles in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Protestants, especially Calvinists, eliminated the Feast from their religious life, and in France, the annual celebrations of the event often erupted into riots and precipitated religious murders.

**Franciscans:** An order of friars or preachers who followed the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226). The Franciscans were particularly important on the urban scene, and in the fifteenth century members of the order like St. Bernard of Siena promoted an uncompromising morality that aimed to reduce splendor in dress and consumption.

**Fresco:** A medium of painting images on walls while the plaster was still wet, so that the pigments became fused with the wall surface itself. From the Italian word for “fresh.”

**Galliard:** A lively dance usually consisting of five steps that were combined in many different patterns. The galliard was particularly popular in sixteenth-century court societies.

**Gesso:** A thin coat of whitewash or plaster applied to a panel or canvas to prepare it for painting.

**Golden Mean:** A teaching of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle from his *Nicomachean Ethics* that argued that human beings should avoid extremes in thoughts and physical actions.

**Great Schism:** The split in the Western church occasioned by the return of the papacy to its ancient capital in Rome in 1378. At Avignon, where the papacy had resided between 1309–1378, a rival remnant of cardinals elected their own pope, whose successors continued to compete for allegiance with Rome until 1415. The Council of Constance relied on conciliar teachings to heal the schism by deposing both popes and appointing a new head of the church.

**Greek Cross:** A style of church construction in which all four radiating wings of a building are of equal length.

**Heresy:** An opinion or teaching that is contrary to the official or “orthodox” views of the church.

**Hermeticism:** A body of medieval and Renaissance philosophy texts that traced its origins to the legendary ancient Egyptian author Hermes Trismegistus (meaning literally, “Thrice Great Hermes”). Hermeticism embraced occult practices like astrology and alchemy (the art of

transforming matter), and was popularized in particular through the work of Renaissance Platonists.

**Holy Orders:** One of the seven sacraments of the medieval church that involved the taking of priestly or monastic vows. These vows set off the clergy as a separate caste in society and granted them certain rights and privileges, while at the same time requiring that priests, monks, and nuns observe celibacy and other restrictions. Protestants rejected the sacramental nature of Holy Orders.

**Holy Roman Empire:** The vast confederated set of states in central Europe that traced its origins to the early medieval empire of Charlemagne. At the beginning of the Renaissance the Holy Roman Empire consisted of some 300 individual states, city-states, and territories. Although it still claimed control over portions of northern Italy at this time, its effective power there was, by the time of the Renaissance, largely a fiction. The government structure of the Holy Roman Empire consisted of an emperor who was chosen by seven electors and a diet or parliament to which the various states sent delegates. By the sixteenth century long-standing traditions of local control had made the empire relatively weak as an international force in Europe, especially when compared to the great centralized monarchies that lay farther west in France, Iberia, and England.

**Homophonic:** An adjective used to describe any musical form that makes use of a single melodic line.

**Huguenots:** Sixteenth-century French Protestants who were persecuted for their faith. The term may have its origins in the followers of Besançon Hugues, who led a revolt of French-speaking Swiss in 1532. Members of this movement swore an oath (*aignos*), possibly giving birth to the word “Huguenot.”

**Humanism:** A nineteenth-century word coined to describe those who practiced the *studia humanitatis* or “humane studies” in the Renaissance. The disciplines recommended by humanists differed from place to place and over time, but usually included a strong emphasis on rhetoric, grammar, moral philosophy, history, and literature.

**Hussitism:** Followers of the teachings of John Huss in Bohemia. The Hussites rejected many key orthodox teachings of the medieval church and more importantly celebrated the Eucharist by allowing the laity to receive wine and bread, a departure from medieval practice. Although several crusades were mounted to try to suppress the movement, Rome granted concessions to some of its more moderate followers, thus giving rise to a national church in parts of Bohemia (the modern Czech Republic) with religious practices different from Rome.

**Icon:** A religious image constructed according to styles that flourished in the Eastern or Byzantine Empire, and popularly used for private devotions in Western Europe.

**Iconoclasm:** The destruction of religious images and statues. Some radical forms of Protestantism sponsored iconoclastic outbreaks from time to time in sixteenth-century Europe, perceiving the use of religious images as a form of idolatry.

**Iconography:** The use of symbols and images in art to convey philosophical and religious truths.

**Il Gesù:** The home church of the Jesuit Order in Rome. The Gesù was constructed in the second half of the sixteenth century, and its style, which included an impressive barrel vault, was used in many famous churches of the Jesuit Order throughout Europe.

**Index of Prohibited Books:** A list of books forbidden to Catholics as dangerous to church truth. While there were numerous such indexes that circulated throughout Europe during the sixteenth century, the Index eventually became a defined office in the church, charged with inspecting the contents of books at Rome.

**Indulgences:** A remission of the punishments or penances that were imposed by a priest in the sacrament of confession. Indulgences were awarded for many pious activities in the Middle Ages and Renaissance and usually stipulated that those who received them were to receive so many days off their time in purgatory following their deaths. The belief in indulgences prompted Luther to write his *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517.

**Intermedi:** Interludes that consisted of music, dancing, or short dramas that were mounted in the theatrical productions of sixteenth-century Italy.

**International Gothic:** A style in sculpture and painting that was particularly popular throughout Europe around 1400. Some of its features included elegant drapery, gold-leafed backgrounds, and an exaggerated sway in the depiction of the human form.

**Intonaco:** In Italy, a rough plaster sometimes used to finish the façades of palazzi and churches.

**Intronati:** A group of university-educated comics that flourished in the sixteenth-century city of Siena, and that influenced styles of theatricals elsewhere in Italy.

**Ionic Order:** One of the architectural orders of antiquity widely used by Renaissance designers. Ionic columns are especially notable for the spiral volutes that adorn their capitals.

**Italian Wars:** A series of wars waged in Italy by France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire between 1494 and 1559.

**Jacquerie:** A French peasant revolt that occurred in 1358 and whose cause lay in part in the economic dislocations the Black Death (1347–1351) produced in Europe at the time.

**Jesuit Drama:** Latin school plays embraced by the Jesuit Order as a way of teaching proper language usage to the students in their secondary schools. By the end of the Renaissance these Jesuit dramas had grown increasingly more complex, and had come to rely on many art forms simultaneously, including rich music, stage design, and dance.

**Jesuits:** An order of priests founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1534 that became a major force in Catholic renewal in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Jesuits were also notable for their educational and missionary efforts. By the later sixteenth century Jesuit missionaries were active in the Far East and in the New World.

**Justification by Faith:** The doctrine first formulated by Martin Luther and adopted by most Protestants that taught that human beings could not aid in or earn their salvation through works. Salvation was instead a free gift of grace that made the sinner appear “just” in God’s eyes.

**Keep:** The most heavily defended part of a medieval or Renaissance castle.

**Latin Cross:** In church architecture, the term “Latin Cross” is used to describe a church in which one of the arms, the nave, is longer than the other three.

**Lieder:** Native German songs that began to be written down at the end of the fifteenth century and circulated in the sixteenth through printed music. The popularity of Lieder gradually gave way to madrigals in German-speaking Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century.

**Limewood Sculptors:** An accomplished group of wood sculptors that were active in southern Germany in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Most prominent among these figures were Tilman Riemenschneider and Veit Stoss.

**Linear Perspective:** A system for rendering three-dimensional space and volume on a two-dimensional picture plane. This system was perfected in the early fifteenth century in Florence through the efforts of the painter Masaccio and the architect Brunelleschi. Slightly later the humanist and artist Leon Battista Alberti publicized these techniques in a treatise on painting, spreading their knowledge quickly among fifteenth-century artists.

**Lollards:** Followers of John Wycliffe in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England, who advocated a simplified piety based in biblical teachings.

**Lute song:** A genre of musical compositions popular in late sixteenth-century England that set fine poetic lyrics to music with lute accompaniments.

**Lutheranism:** The religious system that developed out of the teachings of Martin Luther (1483–1546).

**Machiavellianism:** The view that politics functions in a realm in which normal moral considerations play no role. Machiavellianism was traced to Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* and almost always criticized for its amorality in the later Renaissance.

**Madrigal:** Medieval form of Italian song, transformed in the High and Late Renaissance into a complex polyphonic creation. In these works composers set to music some of the best verse of the Italian Renaissance. Published and circulated in printed editions, Italian madrigals also inspired national fashions for the form in England, France, Germany, and Spain in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

**Mannerism:** An artistic style that flourished in Florence, Rome, and central Italy in the mid- to late sixteenth century. It found its inspiration in the works of the mature and late Michelangelo, and was characterized by artful elongation and distortion as well as a penchant for difficult themes.

**Martyrology:** Literary work that commemorates the ultimate sacrifices of Christians. In the overheated confessional disputes of the late sixteenth century, both Protestant and Catholics produced many martyrologies in an attempt to demonstrate the potency of their religious truths.

**Masque:** A form of courtly entertainment first imported into England in 1512 by King Henry VIII. Throughout the sixteenth century court masques grew increasingly more complex and costly, culminating in the great productions of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones in the first decades of the seventeenth century.

**Mass:** The central religious rite of the medieval church, believed to be a sacrifice beneficial to the living and the dead. The latter part of the Mass consists of the Eucharist or Holy Communion.

**Mennonites:** Followers of the religious reformer Menno Simons (d. 1559) from Frisia in Holland. The Mennonite Church derived from Anabaptist teachings, including simplicity of life and worship and the rejection of the custom of taking oaths and bearing arms.

**Metaphysics:** Literally, those subjects that go “beyond physics.” In philosophy, the branch of metaphysics was concerned with all those things that could not be seen or perceived with the senses, and Renaissance metaphysicians were often fascinated by the occult.

**Modern Devotion:** The pattern of religious and devotional life popularized by the Brethren and Sisters of the Common Life in the fifteenth-century Netherlands and Rhineland. In particular, the modern devotion promoted prayer, biblical study, an inward contrite heart, and the concept of the “imitation of Christ.”

**Modes:** The scale system of medieval and Renaissance music, of which there were eight. Some of these resembled the keys used in music after the seventeenth century. Other modes had a very different sound quality than in the modern system of tonality.

**Monody:** Music in which a single sound produced either by an instrument or the human voice was intended to imitate the simplicity of ancient Greek music.

**Monstrance:** A vessel used for displaying a consecrated wafer used in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

**Morality Play:** An allegorical theatrical production popular particularly in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

**Moresco:** A whirling dance performed in Italy, Spain, and elsewhere in Renaissance Europe, thought to imitate the dances of the Islamic Moors.

**Motet:** A polyphonic musical composition in which the various vocal parts originally sang contrasting texts. Motets were some of the most widely performed sacred music of the Renaissance, and the form witnessed rich elaboration over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the Roman Catholic Church motet writing survived into modern times.

**Mystery Play:** A medieval religious drama often staged by guilds or confraternities whose themes treated the life, death, and sacrifice of Christ. In particular, the Feast of Corpus Christi was one important occasion in the fifteenth century usually commemorated by the performance of one of these plays.

**Mysticism:** A term that refers to any set of religious teachings that tried to foster a direct, unmediated communion between God and the sinner in the medieval and Renaissance world. Mysticism was enormously varied and included affective, speculative, and Platonic forms.

**Natural Philosophy:** The branch of matter in the philosophical curriculum of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance that was concerned with nature and matter.

**Naturalism:** The term used to describe the attempt to relate the natural world faithfully in art, using the testimony of the eyes as one's guide.

**Nave:** The main or longer wing of a church built in the Latin Cross-style of construction.

- Nominalism:** A theory propounded by the fourteenth-century philosopher William of Ockham that denied that there were universal essences or realities. Instead Ockham taught that concepts were the result of the consequences of human speech, as people created nouns or names to describe those things they commonly observed in the world.
- Novella:** Any of a genre of short tales or fables that was popular in Renaissance Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Among the most famous collections of *novella* was Giovanni Boccaccio's masterpiece, *The Decameron*.
- Octave:** A musical interval or harmony in which the upper or lower tones are separated by eight tones.
- Oculus:** A circular window often built into domes to admit light into a structure.
- Orthodoxy:** The established or conventional teachings of the church.
- Palazzo:** The Italian word for "palace," used to refer to any kind of substantial urban building. During the Renaissance the construction of domestic palaces expanded enormously in towns like Florence and Venice.
- Palladianism:** An architectural style that imitates the works of Andrea Palladio, the sixteenth-century northern Italian architect who developed a classical language notable for its great elegance, light, and delicacy.
- Pastoral:** Literary work set in the countryside and frequently involving conversations between shepherds, nymphs, and satyrs. Pastorals were particularly popular throughout Europe at the end of the Renaissance.
- Patrilineal Inheritance:** The legal custom of passing the bulk of a father's estate to male heirs.
- Pavan:** A stately court dance that flourished in sixteenth-century Europe. Of Italian origin, the dance consisted of only two small steps, followed by a double step. The name "Pavan" may derive from the Spanish word for a peacock's tail, or from the dance's origins in the city of Padua.
- Peace of Augsburg:** The treaty that ended religious hostilities between Protestant and Catholic rulers in 1555. Its provisions allowed princes to choose the religion their subjects were to follow.
- Peasants' War:** A rebellion of peasants that began in the German provinces of Swabia and Franconia and came to encompass many areas of the Holy Roman Empire during 1524–1525. Its manifesto, the Twelve Articles, demanded the establishment of "godly preaching" in the countryside as well as the abolition of recently revived feudal dues and taxes. The war was bitterly suppressed, an event that Luther sanctioned in the spring of 1525.
- Penance:** One of the seven sacraments of the medieval church, also known as confession. The word "penance" also refers to the specific acts that are given to Christians as punishment for sin after confession to a priest. Sixteenth-century Protestants rejected penance as a sacrament.
- Petrarchism:** In literature, the effort to imitate the style of Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374), an effort that was particularly strong among some writers in early sixteenth-century Italy.
- Philology:** The study of words and literature in their historical context which reveals changes language has undergone over time.
- Pietà:** Literally, "Pity." Any depiction of the dead Christ being mourned. Among the most famous is Michelangelo's High-Renaissance masterpiece of the same name.
- Pietra Serena:** A blue-gray stone typically used to ornament the interiors of buildings in Florence and surrounding Tuscany. The contrast between *pietra serena* and white plaster became a design principle in the early Renaissance works of Filippo Brunelleschi, and the use of this decorative style survived in the region until the nineteenth century.
- Plainsong:** A style of unison chanting used in the medieval and Renaissance church.
- Platonism:** A philosophy that develops out of the key ideas of the ancient figure Plato. Revivals of Platonism have occurred throughout Western history. In medieval Europe, the efforts of the scholastic philosophers popularized realism, a philosophy derived in part from his works. Later the Renaissance Platonists of the late fifteenth century studied the philosopher's works more vigorously, giving rise to attempts to harmonize Platonism with Christianity, like Marsilio Ficino's at Florence.
- Pleiades:** A group of French poets who in the second half of the sixteenth century tried to imitate the literary style of ancient Greece.
- Politiques:** A body of political philosophers in late sixteenth-century France who argued that allegiance to the king and his state should take precedence over the attempt of Protestants and Catholics to establish religious uniformity.
- Polyglot Bible:** Editions of the Bible that contained several different ancient versions printed side by side. These

allowed scholars to study several different versions of the text at once. The most famous of several printed Polyglot Bibles produced in Renaissance Europe arose from the University of Alcalà in the early sixteenth century, and was known as the Complutensian Polyglot.

**Polyphony:** A style of musical composition in which two or more voices are arranged around each other in complementary fashion.

**Poulaine:** A pointed-toe shoe popular in Burgundy, France, and other court cultures in the fifteenth century. Poulaines had no heels and were usually made from felt. In dance, they extended the line of the foot, making a dancer appear more elegant. Very much in fashion at the end of the fifteenth century, they were to be replaced with new heeled and soled shoes in the sixteenth century.

**Predestination:** The belief that God determines a person's salvation or damnation before one is even born.

**Privy Council:** The private council of the monarch in England, which met regularly to advise the king or queen on royal policies.

**Protestantism:** A term that originates from a protest staged during the Imperial Diet at Augsburg in 1529. Originally coined to describe the followers of Martin Luther, it very quickly began to be used for anyone who rejected the power of the pope and the teachings of the Roman Church.

**Quadrivium:** The four mathematical arts of the liberal arts curriculum: arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

**Radical Reformation:** A third wing of the Reformation that developed more extreme teachings than Lutheranism and Calvinism. Radical Reformers frequently evidenced a concern for separating their churches from society's wickedness, for purifying it of all medieval traditions, and with imitating the life of the ancient church.

**Real Presence:** The notion that in the performance of the Eucharist, Christ's presence comes to reside in the bread and wine of the service.

**Realism:** The philosophical school of thought that teaches that the mind understands what the senses present to it because it recognizes these things from higher universal concepts.

**Recusants:** English Catholics who practiced their religion in secret for fear of persecution at the hands of Protestant authorities.

**Reformed Christianity:** The second major branch of the Reformation to develop, originating in the Zürich of

Zwingli and the Geneva of John Calvin. Those who practiced Reformed Christianity focused on purifying the church of customs and practices that had no scriptural foundation. Worship was more severe and unadorned than in the Lutheran or Anglican tradition, although the Puritans, followers in the Reformed tradition, came to agitate for these kinds of reforms in the Church of England.

**Relief:** A mode of sculpture in which human forms, landscape, and other pictorial devices are carved into a surface plane of stone or marble or forged in bronze or other metals.

**Reliquary:** A vessel created to house the bones, teeth, or other remains of a saint.

**Reuchlin Affair:** A dispute that raged in Germany in the first two decades that involved the famous Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin. His efforts to extend knowledge of Hebrew among scholars were opposed by the recent Jewish convert Johann Pfefferkorn, prompting more than ten years of debate and bitter dispute over the issue of Jewish books.

**Revolt of the Ciompi:** A rebellion begun in 1378 by the wool carders at Florence and joined by other minor guild members in the city. They demanded their own guilds by which they might oppose the high-handed tactics of the great masters who dominated these institutions. After six weeks in power the Ciompi were defeated.

**Rhetoric:** The art of speaking and writing gracefully in order to convince others of one's position. Humanists very much prized this skill.

**Romance:** A verse or prose genre that was often based on legend and in which the code of chivalry usually played a strong role.

**Rondeau:** A melodic song that originated in medieval France that made use of a two-part refrain.

**Royal Entries:** A ceremony popular in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance in which kings entered the major cities of their realm. Entries grew to be increasingly imposing occasions for showing off royal power.

**Rustication:** The intentional use of rough-hewn stone in a wall.

**Sacraments:** Ceremonies in the medieval church believed to result in the transfer of divine grace to those who participated in them and to work a benefit upon the soul of the Christian. In the medieval church there were seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Eucharist, Holy Orders, Marriage, and Extreme Unction. Protes-

tants generally reduced the number of sacraments from seven to two.

**Sarabande:** A dance of Spanish origin that became wildly popular in Iberian cities at the end of the sixteenth century, prompting attempts on the part of state and urban officials to prohibit it. The sarabande was feared in its early history as lewd and sexually lascivious, although it soon made its way into courtly society in the seventeenth century, where it became a staid and stately dance.

**Schleitheim Confession:** The statement of religious belief set down in the Swiss village of Schleitheim in 1527 that encapsulated the teachings of the young Anabaptist faith. The confession expressed a Christianity that was rooted in community, which did away with the elaborate ritual of the medieval church, and which was intended to isolate the Anabaptists from the wickedness of the world.

**Schmalkaldic League:** A league of Protestant cities and territories active in Germany in the 1540s and 1550s in opposing the plans of the emperor to enforce a single religion on Germany. The name derives from the small town of Schmalkalden, where the league was first founded.

**Scholasticism:** A medieval philosophical movement that long dominated education in Europe's universities. The scholastics used a rational method of argument to arrive at truth and were consequently masters of the arts of logic.

**Scotism:** One form of scholasticism that traces its origins to the ideas of John Duns Scotus, a Scottish philosopher who died in 1308. Scotus emphasized philosophical realism and the importance of the human will, and he tried to harmonize the conflicting teachings of Aristotle and Plato. Scotism was particularly popular in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century universities, and its founder was known as the "subtle doctor."

**Seven Liberal Arts:** The secondary educational curriculum that usually provided preparation to enter a university. The arts were divided into the literary disciplines (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) known as the trivium, and four mathematical arts (arithmetic, music, astronomy, and geometry) known as the quadrivium.

**Sfumato:** An Italian word that describes the painting of atmosphere.

**Shrove Tuesday Plays:** Plays performed on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. These works, known in German as *Fastnachtspiele* were particularly popular in that country, where they were often staged by young apprentices and journeymen as a form of release before the beginning of Lent. They often made use of raucous and bawdy humor

in the later Middle Ages. During the Reformation the sexual humor was toned down as writers like Hans Sachs, the Meistersinger of Nuremberg, transformed the Shrove Tuesday plays into vehicles for promoting Lutheran morality.

**Slashing:** The custom of making cuts in the layers of Renaissance clothing so that the elaborate undergarments showed through.

**Sonnet:** A poem of fourteen lines that was Italian in origin and perfected first in the great sonnets of Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374). During the Renaissance the form, usually written in an iambic pentameter rhyme scheme, was adopted in many European languages, including English. The sonnets of William Shakespeare are some of the highest expressions of this short form.

**Sprezzatura:** Meaning "effortless" or done "with graceful ease." The concept of *sprezzatura* is frequently mentioned in much Italian writing on painting, sculpture, and literature. The ability to do difficult things so that they appeared easy was widely admired at the time, and was also celebrated in works like Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* as a necessary skill of the astute courtier.

**Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire:** Laws enacted by Parliament in England that limited the power of the church. In 1351 the Statute of Provisors claimed for the king the right to appoint bishops and archbishops, while the somewhat later Statute of Praemunire (1353) forbade English subjects from appealing to Rome in legal cases.

**Sumptuary Laws:** Laws common throughout Europe in the Renaissance that were designed to regulate the expense of clothes and the displays surrounding celebrations of weddings and the observance of funerals.

**Tempera:** A method of painting commonly employed in medieval and Renaissance Italy in which pigments were suspended in egg whites before being applied to panels.

**Theatines:** An order of priests established by Gaetano da Thiene in 1524 with the express purpose of raising the standard of clerical morality and fighting heresy.

**Theocracy:** A government in which clerical figures share power with state officials. John Calvin's Geneva is commonly identified as one of the theocracies of the sixteenth century.

**Thomism:** The rationalistic philosophical method perfected by St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), a scholastic theologian. Thomas made use of the philosophical concept of realism, a teaching that posits that the human mind comprehends what is presented to it by the senses



because it recognizes these concepts from higher universals.

**Tragicomedy:** A literary and theatrical genre that began to emerge in Italy in the late sixteenth century that merged both tragic and comic elements. Often these tales were enacted in pastoral settings.

**Transubstantiation:** The orthodox teaching of the medieval church that the bread and wine used in the Eucharist are transformed into the physical body and blood of Christ. All Protestants rejected this teaching in the sixteenth century.

**Triptych:** A religious image or statue that is carved or painted on three panels that are hinged together.

**Trivium:** The three language disciplines of the liberal arts curriculum: rhetoric, logic, and grammar.

**Trousseau:** The gifts of clothing and household items that families made to their daughters as they entered marriage. Prospective husbands were often expected to counter these gifts with the presentation of an almost equally lavish counter-rousseau.

**Twelve Articles:** The manifesto adopted by the rebels of the German Peasants' War in 1524–1525. These demanded the establishment of “godly preaching” in villages and the abolition of recently enacted feudal dues and taxes.

**Ursulines:** A teaching order of nuns founded in Italy in the 1530s that exerted a significant influence on Catholic reform efforts in the later sixteenth century.

**Vatican:** The headquarters of the pope's government just outside the medieval and Renaissance town walls of the city of Rome. The word is often used to refer more generally to papal government.

**Vernacular:** The language that is native to a particular region, such as French to France, and German to Germany.

**Virelais:** A lively French song popular in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance as an accompaniment to dances. The virelais form included a refrain that preceded and followed the work's two interior verses.

**Virginalists:** A group of English composers who composed keyboard variations at the end of the sixteenth century. Most notable among the Virginalists was William Byrd.

**Volta:** A sixteenth-century Italian dance in which couples moved around the floor in a tight embrace and at regular intervals the man raised the woman from the floor.

**Vulgate:** The ancient Latin translation of the Bible completed by St. Jerome and authorized for use in the medieval church. Erasmus and other humanists criticized the Vulgate's inadequacies in the sixteenth century.

**Weser Renaissance:** A flowering of great architectural distinction that occurred in late sixteenth-century Germany along and in the vicinity of the Weser River valley.

**Woodcut:** A print that was made by incising drawings or letters into wooden blocks. Although woodcutting continued to be used as a printing medium for pictures in the sixteenth century, it gradually came to be replaced by the process of copper engraving.

**Zwinglianism:** The religious teachings that trace their origins to the works of Ulrich Zwingli and the extreme reforms he made in church practice in the city of Zürich during the 1520s. Zwingli is less remembered today than in the sixteenth century because his influence over Reformed Christianity was gradually superseded by that of John Calvin.



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## MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES

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### GENERAL

Christian Classics Ethereal Library (<http://www.ccel.org>)—One of the oldest online databases of “public access” texts, this website is now a venerable mainstay of the academic community. Located at Wheaton College in Illinois it provides highly readable online versions of major classics in the Christian tradition. Its collection is particularly rich in works treating the Renaissance centuries.

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (<http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/>)—Maintained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), this website has the complete texts of the bard’s plays and sonnets.

Folger Shakespeare Library ([http://www.folger.edu/Home\\_02B.html](http://www.folger.edu/Home_02B.html))—Long one of the most venerable resources for the study of William Shakespeare and his time, the Folger Library’s website provides wonderful online exhibits and a plethora of information for those that want to study Renaissance English literature.

*Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* (1984)—Episodes Four and Five of this PBS series explore the interplay between Judaism and Christianity in Renaissance and early-modern Europe and stress, in particular, the role that Jewish knowledge and philosophy played on the development of European intellectual life.

*In Search of Shakespeare* (2003)—This four-part PBS series narrated by historian Michael Wood explores the world of late-sixteenth-century England and its greatest poet, William Shakespeare.

Luminarium (<http://www.luminarium.org/lumina.htm>)—This unique anthology of English literary sources from the medieval, Renaissance, and early-modern periods includes online texts of most of the major playwrights of Elizabethan England, or links to where they may be found on the Internet.

*A Man for All Seasons* (1966)—Although it is not altogether historically reliable, this sympathetic portrait of Sir Thomas More recreates the dangers and excitement of life in Tudor times. Rated G.

*The Medici: Godfathers of the Renaissance* (2003)—This Lion Television documentary details the relationships between the famous Florentine family and the art, culture, and philosophy of the Renaissance. It highlights the development of Niccolò Machiavelli’s political philosophy as well as other elements of Florence’s learned culture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

*The Western Tradition* (1989)—Episodes 23 to 27 of this 52-part series explore the history of late-medieval and Renaissance Europe. The series is beautifully illustrated and consists of lectures given by noted UCLA historian Eugen Weber.

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### ARCHITECTURE

archINFORM (<http://www.archinform.net/>)—This international database contains information about major architectural monuments from the European past. The website allows for searching, and includes photographs and brief summaries of the significance of each monument.



*Civilisation* (1969)—Although its production values are now somewhat dated, Kenneth Clark's series still manages to present an enormous amount of information about the culture of the Renaissance. Episodes four to six treat the history of the period.

*Florence: Birthplace of the Renaissance* (1992)—This documentary explores the importance of Florence's early Renaissance art and architecture.

*Michelangelo: Matter and Spirit* (1992)—This film explores the multi-faceted career of the great Renaissance genius as a sculptor, painter, and architect.

*Palladio* (1996)—Produced by Increase Video, this documentary explores the architecture of the great northern Italian designer Andrea Palladio.

Renaissance and Baroque Architecture (<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/dic/colls/arh102/>)—This website features an online collection of images of Renaissance and Baroque architectural monuments from the University of Virginia's Library.

The Vatican (<http://www.vatican.va/>)—The website of the Vatican includes information on the rich architectural and artistic collections of Roman Catholicism's capital.

Vitruvio.ch (<http://www.vitruvio.ch/>)—This database of major architectural monuments is particularly strong in listings from early-modern Europe. The website includes photographs, brief bibliographies, and other information about the monuments. It also provides for searching of major architects and the buildings they designed.

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## DANCE

European Dance Information Research Directory (<http://www.c3.hu/~dienesbu/>)—This website is a major European clearinghouse for specialists and students interested in the history of dance. The directory includes a country-by-country listing of institutes and performing groups.

*Dancetime! 500 Years of Social Dance* (2001)—The first volume in this series treats the history of European dance from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

*The Diamond of Ferrara: Music from the Court of Ercole I* (2001)—This recording features music from the famous Renaissance court, where the famous Domenico da Piacenza was dancing master and a court composer. It is recorded on the Dorian label.

*Early Dance, Part I* (1995)—This video covers the history of dance from the Greeks through the Renaissance. It is

narrated by Hal Bersohn, and demonstrates the pavan, galliard, saltarella, canarie, and volta—all popular Renaissance dances.

*How to Dance Through Time* (2000)—Volume III in this six-part video series teaches the social dances of the Renaissance era, and focuses on the social history of the art in the era.

*Il ballarino: The Art of Renaissance Dance* (1990)—Compiled and narrated by noted dance historian Julia Sutton, this video explores the art of dancing during the Renaissance. Its focus is primarily on the popular Italian dances of the sixteenth century, and the presentation includes a demonstration of how to perform the necessary steps.

The Institute for Historical Dance Practice (<http://www.historicaldance.com/>)—This Belgian institute is dedicated to research concerning the performance of Renaissance and Baroque dance. Its website includes many informative links as well as information on European dancing from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

*Negri: Le gratie d'Amore* (2000)—Early music performing group Ensemble La Folia performs music for dances in Cesare Negri's manual *The Grace of Love*. Recorded on the Dynamic label.

*Thoinot Arbeau, Orchesography* (1993)—The New York Renaissance Band performs music for Thoinot Arbeau's famous Renaissance dance manual. Recorded on the Arabesque Recordings label.

Western Social Dance: An Overview of the Collection (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diessay0.html>)—This Library of Congress website reviews the dance instruction manuals published in Europe since the Renaissance. Of particular interest are the video clips of dance steps practiced during the Baroque period.

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## FASHION

Bata Shoe Museum (<http://www.batashoemuseum.ca/>)—This collection of this Canadian museum includes footwear from the Renaissance.

Early Modern Resources: Dress and Fashion (<http://www.earlymodernweb.org.uk/emdress.htm>)—This website provides links to any number of sites exploring the importance of the regulation of dress and the conventions that governed fashion in Renaissance Europe.

*Elizabeth* (1998)—Although the historical veracity of this film by Shekhar Kapur is gravely suspect, the costume and set design is outstanding. Rated R.

The Elizabethan Costuming Page (<http://costume.dm.net/>)—This website explores the role of dress in Elizabethan England.

*Romeo and Juliet* (1968)—Another production from veteran Italian producer Franco Zeffirelli which, though not completely historically accurate, still manages to capture the fashions of early Renaissance Italy. Rated PG.

*Shakespeare in Love* (1998)—While not an historically accurate portrayal of the life of Shakespeare, the costuming of this light-hearted work manages to capture the excesses of Elizabethan London. Rated R.

*The Taming of the Shrew* (1967)—This production from famed Italian director Franco Zeffirelli stars Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Although not completely historically accurate, it manages to capture the visual dimensions and fashions of life in a sixteenth-century Italian city quite admirably. Rated PG.

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## LITERATURE

*Decameron* (1970)—This film from innovative Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini manages to capture the good fun and bawdy sexual humor of Boccaccio's great fourteenth-century classic. Rated R.

The Decameron Web ([http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb/](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/))—This website offers a look at Boccaccio's time and his great masterpiece. It includes a complete English translation and commentary as well as a variety of information designed to enhance the reader's understanding of the *Decameron*.

Electronic Text Center (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/french.html>)—The University of Virginia's online center for electronic texts provides a special link to online versions of the French classics.

Project Gutenberg (<http://promo.net/pg/>)—The collections of the oldest online repository of e-texts are particularly rich in literature from the Renaissance period.

Renascence Editions (<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/ren.htm>)—This website maintained at the University of Oregon includes handsome online editions of major classics written in English between the fifteenth and late eighteenth centuries.

*The Story of English* (1986)—This nine-part PBS series is hosted by Robert McNeill and traces the evolution of the language with particular emphasis on the age of Shakespeare.

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## MUSIC

*The Best of the Renaissance* (1999)—This album is a moderately priced two-volume introduction to the music of the period. Available on the Philips label.

Classicalnet (<http://www.classical.net>)—An invaluable source for composers' biographies and information about the developments of musical forms and styles, this website also includes thousands of reviews, many by noted authorities, on current recordings of classical music.

*The Cradle of the Renaissance. Italian Music from the Time of Leonardo da Vinci* (1995)—Recorded by the early music group Sirinu, this CD includes a broad range of compositions from composers active in Italy during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The recording is available on the Hyperion label.

Early Music Directory (<http://www.earlymusic.org.uk>)—This British website aims to be a clearinghouse of information on groups currently performing Renaissance music worldwide.

*Early Venetian Lute Music* (2000)—Available on the budget Naxos label, this recording of Venetian music for the lute introduces the most popular domestic instrument of the Renaissance. It features lutist Christopher Wilson.

*The Essential Tallis Scholars. The First Thirty Years* (1995)—This album is a retrospective collection of this venerable group of Renaissance music scholars' best recordings. Available on the Gimell label.

Here of a Sunday Morning (<http://www.hoasm.org>)—Maintained by noted early music enthusiast Chris Whent, producer for WBAI-New York, this website includes invaluable information about medieval and Renaissance composers and their music.

*Josquin: Motets and Chansons* (1983)—This album is a brilliant introduction to the music of Josquin des Prez, the figure who was celebrated as a musical equivalent to Michelangelo during the High Renaissance. The disc features the notable early music group, the Hillard Ensemble, and is available on the Virgin label.

*Spem in Alium* (1994)—Another one of the many fine recordings of Renaissance music by the Tallis scholars, this CD features the forty-voice motet, "Spem in alium," a tour de force of early music that points to the complexity and sophistication of Renaissance polyphony and counterpoint. Available on the Gimell label.

The Tallis Scholars Website (<http://www.gimell.com/index.html>)—The website of this respected Renaissance vocal consort includes information about their tours as well as their scholarship on the music of the period.

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**PHILOSOPHY**

American Philosophical Association (<http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/index.html>)—The APA's website contains a listing of philosophical texts available on the Internet.

The Great Books (<http://www.anova.org/gb.html>)—Sponsored by the Access Foundation, this website provides links to many of the best philosophical texts available on the Internet.

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/>)—This online resource of articles contains well written and thoughtful discussions of major philosophers throughout history.

Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy (<http://www.lmu.edu/smrp/>)—The links page of this academic society is particularly valuable in outlining the best resources concerning the history of philosophy on the web.

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**RELIGION**

*Anne of the Thousand Days* (1969)—Although its lush sets and production values reveal more of a Hollywood mentality than that of sixteenth-century England, this film's dramatization of the circumstances leading to England's split from Rome still manages to capture the issues of the day.

Church and Reformation ([http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/state/church\\_reformation/index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/state/church_reformation/index.shtml))—This BBC website includes a wealth of information about the course of the Reformation in England, as well as multimedia clips that offer tours of some of the most important churches in Britain.

*Elizabeth R* (1971)—This dramatization of the life of the great English queen stars Glenda Jackson in the title role. Nine hours in length, the series manages to capture most of the major dilemmas regarding religion that occurred during Elizabeth's reign.

English Literature and Religion (<http://www.english.umd.edu/englfac/WPeterson/ELR/elr.htm>)—This website at the University of Maryland includes a database bibliography of more than 8,500 works treating the history of religion in England. It also includes links to online versions of major religious texts, including the various versions of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*.

*Luther* (2003)—Starring Joseph Fiennes in the title role, this film explores the key events in the great sixteenth-century reformer's life. Rated PG-13.

*Martin Luther* (2001)—This two-hour PBS documentary explores the life and times of the famous Reformation leader. It includes interviews with modern Luther scholars, and is available from PBS in VHS and DVD formats.

Medieval Sourcebook: The Renaissance (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook1x.html>)—This collection of complete sources and excerpts from Renaissance documents includes many which bear on the history of the church and religion in the Renaissance and Reformation.

Project Wittenberg (<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html>)—This website offers online translations of many of Martin Luther's most influential works.

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**THEATER**

Association for Classical Hispanic Theater (<http://www.trinity.edu/org/comedia/index.html>)—This academic association's website provides online translations of many *comedias*, Spanish dramas of the Golden Age.

*Dr. Faustus* (1968)—This film has its origins in a version of Christopher Marlowe's *Faustus* that Richard Burton staged at Oxford University in 1968. Burton reprised his role as Faustus in the movie version filmed one year later, and his then-wife Elizabeth Taylor is featured in cameo roles. Members of the Oxford Dramatic Society also act in the film.

Electronic Text Center (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/shakespeare/>)—Located at the University of Virginia, this website offers links to the works of Shakespeare that are available online, as well as other major Renaissance dramatists.

Medieval and Renaissance Drama Society (<http://acs2.byu.edu/~hurlbut/mrds/>)—This academic society's website includes back issues of their journal treating the history of the theater and drama in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

*The Renaissance Stage: The Idea and Image of Antiquity* (1990)—This excellent documentary explores the attempts of Italian Renaissance stage and theatrical designers to recreate the theater of antiquity. Available through Films for Humanities in Princeton, New Jersey.

*Richard III* (1956)—Starring Sir Laurence Olivier, this adaptation of the great Shakespeare history play is still unmatched for the quality of its dramatic intensity. Not rated.

*Shakespeare and the Globe* (1985)—Produced by the University of California at Berkeley's public television station,

this documentary explores the London stage of Shakespeare's time.

Société d'Histoire du Théâtre (<http://www.sht.asso.fr/>)—This French academic society's website includes issues of their journal treating the history of the theater in France.

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## VISUAL ARTS

*Albrecht Dürer: Image of a Master* (1994)—This video explores the great Northern Renaissance artist's role in spreading knowledge of Italian art among his colleagues and his influence on shaping the artistic revival in sixteenth-century Germany.

Alte Pinakothek, Munich ([http://www.pinakothek.de/alte-pinakothek/index\\_en.php?](http://www.pinakothek.de/alte-pinakothek/index_en.php?))—One of Germany's most respected museums, this museum now has an easy-to-use website that features a clickable index of all artists and their works in its large collection.

*Art of the Western World* (1989)—Produced by WNET, New York, with funding from the Annenberg/CPB Project, this nine-part series treats the history of Western art from antiquity to modern times. Episodes three and four deal with the early and High Renaissance.

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (<http://www.uffizi.firenze.it/>)—This famous museum of Florentine and Italian Renaissance art also has a wonderful website that even includes a virtual tour of the museum.

*Giotto: The Arena Chapel* (1994)—This documentary explores the proto-Renaissance style of this great artist as displayed in Padua's Arena Chapel.

The Louvre, Paris (<http://www.louvre.fr/louvre.htm>)—A handsome website from one of the world's greatest art museums, this site features a virtual tour of the highlights of the collection as well as a history of the museum itself.

*The Louvre: The Visit* (1998)—This documentary provides a guided private tour through the wealth of this great museum's collections.

Metropolitan Museum, New York (<http://www.metmuseum.org/>)—Certainly one of the finest of the world's museums, the Met's website is also a clear standout. Images of all its 2,200 paintings are accessible from its webpages.

The National Gallery, London (<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/>)—This London museum has a collection rich in the works of the Renaissance.

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (<http://www.nga.gov/>)—The website of this Washington museum includes a virtual tour of its fine collections, which are particularly rich in Italian Renaissance works.

*Piero della Francesca* (1993)—This video explores one of this great early Renaissance artist's most enigmatic works, his *Flagellation*, and tries to unlock its secrets.

*Renaissance: A Fresh Look at the Evolution of Western Art* (2000)—Six one-hour segments explore the history of art in the Renaissance. Shot on location throughout Europe, this series takes its viewers directly to the places in which the great masterpieces of the age were created. It also features commentary from the noted critic Graham Dixon.

The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg ([http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html\\_En/index.html](http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html_En/index.html))—The collection of this, perhaps the largest museum in the world, includes 120 rooms displaying Western European art, with a particularly strong emphasis on the Italian and northern European Renaissances. The website of this vast museum can only show the highlights of this enormous collection.

The Vatican Museum, Rome (<http://www.vatican.va/museums/>)—The Vatican Museum's collections are particularly rich in Renaissance art, and the attractive website of this venerable institution offers a glimpse of this great wealth.



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ARTS & HUMANITIES  
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The Age of the Baroque  
and Enlightenment  
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*Philip M. Soergel, Editor*

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# CONTENTS

ABOUT THE BOOK . . . . .	ix	François de Cuvilliés . . . . .	63
CONTRIBUTORS . . . . .	xi	Louis XIV . . . . .	64
ERA OVERVIEW . . . . .	xiii	Christopher Wren . . . . .	66
CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD EVENTS . . . . .	xix	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	68
CHAPTER 1: ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN		CHAPTER 2: DANCE	
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	70
OVERVIEW . . . . .	5	OVERVIEW . . . . .	74
TOPICS IN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN		TOPICS IN DANCE	
The Renaissance Inheritance and Catholic Renewal . . . . .	7	Social Dance in the Baroque . . . . .	76
The Rise of the Baroque Style In Italy . . . . .	11	Dance in Court Spectacle . . . . .	81
The Achievements of Gianlorenzo Bernini . . . . .	13	The Rise of the Ballet in France . . . . .	83
The Tempestuous and Fanciful Baroque . . . . .	14	The Ballet Elsewhere in Europe . . . . .	88
Architecture in France in the Seventeenth Century . . . . .	17	Social Dance in the Eighteenth Century . . . . .	91
Different Directions in England . . . . .	29	The Enlightenment and Ballet . . . . .	94
Classicism and City Planning in the Netherlands . . . . .	34	Ballet in an Age of Revolution . . . . .	98
The Baroque in Central Europe . . . . .	36	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
The Rococo in the Eighteenth Century . . . . .	44	Gasparo Angiolini . . . . .	100
The Development of Neoclassicism . . . . .	49	Marie-Ann de Cupis de Camargo . . . . .	101
Revivals and Romanticism . . . . .	57	Jean-Georges Noverre . . . . .	102
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		Gaetano Vestris . . . . .	103
Robert Adam . . . . .	60	John Weaver . . . . .	105
Francesco Borromini . . . . .	62	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	106
		CHAPTER 3: FASHION	
		IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	108
		OVERVIEW . . . . .	111
		TOPICS IN FASHION	
		The Regulation of Consumption . . . . .	113

Fashion Trends in the Early Seventeenth Century . . . . . 116  
 The Rise of the Netherlands . . . . . 117  
 The Age of Louis XIV . . . . . 119  
 Fashion Beyond the Court . . . . . 125  
 The High Tide of French Fashion . . . . . 128  
 Reaction to the Rococo . . . . . 133  
 Fashion During the French Revolution . . . . . 138

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Marie-Jeanne Bécu du Barry . . . . . 142  
 Josephine Bonaparte . . . . . 143  
 Françoise d’Aubigné Maintenon . . . . . 144  
 Marie-Antoinette . . . . . 144  
 Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson Pompadour . . . . . 146

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 147

CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . . 150

OVERVIEW . . . . . 154

TOPICS IN LITERATURE

English Literature in the Early Seventeenth Century . . . . . 156  
 French Literature in the Seventeenth Century . . . . . 162  
 Baroque Literature in Germany . . . . . 168  
 Restoration Literature in England . . . . . 172  
 English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century . . . . . 178  
 The Origins of the Novel in England . . . . . 182  
 The Novel and Mid-Eighteenth-Century English Literature . . . . . 185  
 French Literature during the Enlightenment . . . . . 189  
 The Enlightenment in Germany . . . . . 195

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Daniel Defoe . . . . . 199  
 John Donne . . . . . 200  
 Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen . . . . . 201  
 Samuel Richardson . . . . . 202  
 Marie de Rabutin-Chantal Sévigné . . . . . 204

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 205

CHAPTER 5: MUSIC

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . . 208

OVERVIEW . . . . . 211

TOPICS IN MUSIC

Origins and Elements of the Baroque Style . . . . . 214

Performers, Performances, and Audiences . . . . . 218  
 Italian Opera in the Seventeenth Century . . . . . 223  
 Opera in France . . . . . 226  
 Opera in the Early Eighteenth-Century World . . . . . 231  
 Oratorio and Cantata . . . . . 238  
 Baroque Instruments . . . . . 242  
 Baroque Keyboard Music . . . . . 246  
 Baroque Music for Instrumental Ensembles . . . . . 248  
 Music During the Rococo . . . . . 251  
 The Reform of Opera . . . . . 255  
 The Rise of Classicism and Romanticism . . . . . 258

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

Johann Sebastian Bach . . . . . 266  
 George Frideric Handel . . . . . 268  
 Josef Haydn . . . . . 269  
 Jean-Baptiste Lully . . . . . 271  
 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart . . . . . 272  
 Antonio Vivaldi . . . . . 273

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 274

CHAPTER 6: PHILOSOPHY

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . . 278

OVERVIEW . . . . . 281

TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY

Baroque Philosophical Roots . . . . . 283  
 The Scientific Revolution and Philosophical Rationalism . . . . . 288  
 Empiricism . . . . . 296  
 The Enlightenment . . . . . 304  
 The Enlightenment in France . . . . . 306  
 The Enlightenment Elsewhere in Europe . . . . . 311  
 Political Philosophy . . . . . 315

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

René Descartes . . . . . 319  
 David Hume . . . . . 321  
 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz . . . . . 322  
 John Locke . . . . . 323  
 Baron de Montesquieu . . . . . 325

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 326

CHAPTER 7: RELIGION

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . . 330

OVERVIEW . . . . . 334

TOPICS IN RELIGION

The State Church in Early-Modern Europe . . . . . 336  
 The Thirty Years’ War and Its Aftermath . . . . . 341

The English Civil Wars . . . . .	344	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
The Restoration Settlement in England . . . . .	348	Aphra Behn . . . . .	448
Catholic Culture in the Age of the		Pedro Calderón de la Barca . . . . .	449
Baroque . . . . .	352	Pierre Corneille . . . . .	451
Protestant Culture in the Seventeenth		Nell Gwyn . . . . .	452
Century . . . . .	355	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	452
Free Will Versus Predestination in the		CHAPTER 9: VISUAL ARTS	
Dutch Republic . . . . .	358	IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	456
Jansenism and the Jesuits in France . . . . .	361	OVERVIEW . . . . .	459
Magic and Witchcraft . . . . .	366	TOPICS IN VISUAL ARTS	
Pietism . . . . .	371	The Renaissance Legacy . . . . .	462
Christianity, Science, and the		The Counter Reformation's Impact on Art . . . . .	464
Enlightenment . . . . .	377	Elements of the Baroque Style . . . . .	466
Christianity in the Revolutionary Era . . . . .	382	Realism and Emotional Expressivity . . . . .	470
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		The Caravaggisti . . . . .	473
Jacobus Arminius . . . . .	385	Sculpture in Italy . . . . .	476
Cornelius Jansen . . . . .	386	The Baroque Matures in Italy . . . . .	481
William Laud . . . . .	387	Baroque Classicism in France . . . . .	483
John Wesley . . . . .	388	Painting in the Low Countries . . . . .	488
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	389	Spanish Painting in the Seventeenth	
CHAPTER 8: THEATER		Century . . . . .	498
IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	394	The Rococo . . . . .	501
OVERVIEW . . . . .	398	The Decorative Arts in Eighteenth-	
TOPICS IN THEATER		Century Europe . . . . .	504
The Commercial Theater in Early		Neoclassicism . . . . .	507
Seventeenth-Century England . . . . .	401	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	
Court Spectacle in Stuart England . . . . .	410	Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio . . . . .	513
Theater in Golden-Age Spain . . . . .	411	Jacques-Louis David . . . . .	515
The French Stage at the Beginning of the		Artemisia Gentileschi . . . . .	516
Baroque . . . . .	414	Rembrandt van Rijn . . . . .	517
Neoclassicism in Seventeenth-Century		Peter Paul Rubens . . . . .	518
Paris . . . . .	416	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	520
The Legacy of Corneille, Racine, and		GLOSSARY . . . . .	521
Molière . . . . .	418	FURTHER REFERENCES . . . . .	529
Theater and Stagecraft in Italy . . . . .	422	MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES . . . . .	541
Restoration Drama in England . . . . .	425	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	547
The Hanoverian Theater . . . . .	431	INDEX . . . . .	549
Central Europe Comes of Age . . . . .	436		
The French Enlightenment and Drama . . . . .	439		
The Rise of Revolutionary Sentiment in			
France and Its Impact on the Theater . . . . .	444		



## ABOUT THE BOOK

**SEEING HISTORY FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE.** An education in history involves more than facts concerning the rise and fall of kings, the conquest of lands, and the major battles fought between nations. While these events are pivotal to the study of any time period, the cultural aspects are of equal value in understanding the development of societies. Various forms of literature, the philosophical ideas developed, and even the type of clothes worn in a particular era provide important clues about the values of a society, and when these arts and humanities are studied in conjunction with political and historical events a more complete picture of that society is revealed. This inter-disciplinary approach to studying history is at the heart of the *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* project. Patterned in its organization after the successful *American Decades*, *American Eras*, and *World Eras* products, this reference work aims to expose the reader to an in-depth perspective on a particular era in history through the study of nine different arts and humanities topics:

- Architecture and Design
- Dance
- Fashion
- Literature
- Music
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Theater
- Visual Arts

Although treated in separate chapters, the connections between these topics are highlighted both in the text and through the use of “See Also” references to give the reader a broad perspective on the culture of the time period. Readers can learn about the impact of religion on literature; explore the close relationships between dance, music, and theater; and see parallel movements in architecture and visual arts. The development of each of these fields is discussed within the context of important historical events so that the reader can see history from a different angle. This angle is unique to this reference work. Most history books about a particular time period only give a passing glance to the arts and humanities in an effort to give the broadest historical treatment possible. Those reference books that do cover the arts and humanities tend to cover only one of them, generally across multiple time periods, making it difficult to draw connections between disciplines and limiting the perspective of the discipline’s impact on a specific era. In *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* each of the nine disciplines is given substantial treatment in individual chapters, and the focus on one era ensures that the analysis will be thorough.

**AUDIENCE AND ORGANIZATION.** *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* is designed to meet the needs of both the beginning and the advanced history student. The material is written by subject experts and covers a vast array of concepts and masterworks, yet these concepts are built “from the ground up” so that a reader with little or no background in history can follow them. Technical terms and other definitions appear both in the

text and in the glossary, and the background of historical events is also provided. The organization of the volume facilitates learning at all levels by presenting information in a variety of ways. Each chapter is organized according to the following structure:

- Chronology covering the important events in that discipline during that era
- Brief overview of the development of that discipline at the time
- Topics that highlight the movements, schools of thought, and masterworks that characterize the discipline during that era
- Biographies of significant people in that discipline
- Documentary sources contemporary to the time period

This structure facilitates comparative analysis, both between disciplines and also between volumes of *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*, each of which covers a different era. In addition, readers can access additional research opportunities by looking at the “Further References” and “Media and Online Sources” that appear at the back of the volume. While every effort was made to include only those online sources that are connected to institutions such as museums and universities, the web-

sites are subject to change and may become obsolete in the future.

**PRIMARY DOCUMENTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.** In an effort to provide the most in-depth perspective possible, *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras* also includes numerous primary documents from the time period, offering a first-hand account of the culture from the people who lived in it. Letters, poems, essays, epitaphs, and songs are just some of the multitude of document types included in this volume, all of which illuminate some aspect of the discipline being discussed. The text is further enhanced by 150 illustrations, maps, and line drawings that bring a visual dimension to the learning experience.

**CONTACT INFORMATION.** The editors welcome your comments and suggestions for enhancing and improving *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*. Please mail comments or suggestions to:

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## ERA OVERVIEW

**ONE PERIOD, MANY DESCRIPTIONS.** The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have long been described as the culmination of the “early-modern world,” a designation that calls attention to the period’s role in forming the institutions, economies, and societies that we associate with the modern West. The rise of science and technology, the birth of industrial capitalism, and the appearance of new political theories that eventually inspired the French and American Revolutionaries were just a few of the many important developments in the years that anticipated the consumer-oriented, mass democracies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe. At the same time the early-modern period was a curious amalgam of the old and the new, and for this reason historians have coined numerous terms and phrases in the hopes of describing its many conflicting features. Many scholars have long referred to both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as “Europe of the Old Regime,” a phrase that draws attention to the widespread religious intolerance, economic inequities, aristocratic dominance, and political absolutism that were realities in the period. The challenge of finding a suitable terminology to describe these centuries has also led historians to separate the seventeenth century from the eighteenth that followed it. The earlier century, for example, has often been treated in ways that call attention to its many religious conflicts, its authoritarian political systems, and the generally dismal tenor of life. It has been described, for instance, as the Age of Absolutism, the Age of Religious Wars, or the Age of Confessions. Some historians have treated this same period as the “Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,” or a time that was

“in search of stability.” In more poetic terms, too, it has even been dubbed the “Iron Century.” The eighteenth century, though, generally fares considerably better in such summations, for it has most often been called the “Age of Reason,” or the “Century of Light.” The fundamental disparity of these terms points to an underlying fact about the two centuries. Although many common threads link them, both periods have their own distinctive character, but a character that is hard to sum up in the description of a few words. This book primarily treats artistic and intellectual developments in these two centuries, and consequently the text engages in discussion of political, social, and economic changes only when they are necessary to illuminate cultural developments. Consequently, we have avoided those labels that call attention to political, religious, or social issues in the period, and have instead decided to opt for the title, “The Age of Baroque and Enlightenment,” a title that calls attention to the two pervasive cultural movements of the age, movements that had far-reaching effects on intellectual life and the arts.

**THE ORIGINS OF THE BAROQUE.** Like the term “Gothic,” the word “Baroque” was originally a pejorative term used to condemn the arts of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Europe. The word may derive from a Portuguese word *barroco* that had long been used to describe pearls that were rough and heavily encrusted with sediment. Or its origins might lie in the Italian *baroco*, a term that referred to a thorny problem in logic. Its use can be first traced to the 1730s, when it began to be used almost simultaneously to describe both music

and architecture that were heavily ornamented or overly complex. In the first century and a half after the word “Baroque” entered into European languages, it was universally applied in a negative way, a term of derision that attacked the prevalence of ornate decoration in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The origins of these judgments lay in the new spirit of neoclassicism, a more restrained movement in art and architecture that began to flourish in the mid-eighteenth century. It was not until 1888 that the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin rehabilitated the word “Baroque,” treating the art and architecture of these years not as a period of decline and tasteless ornamentation, but as an age with many dynamic and positive attributes. In his *Renaissance and Baroque* he described the elements of the Baroque style. Importantly, he showed that the Baroque was not a debased or degraded form of High Renaissance art, as many had long imagined it, but was instead the product of a new aesthetic sensibility that was daring and creative. The chief elements of this Baroque style, Wölfflin argued, derived from an underlying spirit of creativity, a *Zeitgeist*, meaning literally a “spirit of the age,” that had shaped the arts in Baroque Europe as definitely as a Gothic or Renaissance spirit had molded those of the periods that preceded it. Since the late nineteenth century, historians have generally discarded arguments like Wölfflin’s that make use of the concept of a *Zeitgeist*, an amorphous spirit that could be said to pervade and shape artistic production in a period. Instead they have searched for the causes of an era’s style in the social, cultural, and political realities of that time. But while the notion of a Baroque *Zeitgeist* may now be discredited, Wölfflin’s work has continued to be important since it helped to sanction the notion of the Baroque era as a discrete time period in Europe’s cultural life. Since the late nineteenth century, in other words, the notion of a Baroque era that flourished in Europe between 1600 and 1750 has only rarely been called into question, and historians have come to speak of art, architecture, and music in this period as displaying both great variety and certain common underlying characteristics.

**RISE OF THE BAROQUE STYLE IN THE VISUAL ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE.** In art and architecture the rise of the Baroque style can be traced to the city of Rome, and to forces that were at work there around 1600. One of the most important sources of inspiration for sponsoring this new style in the visual arts and architecture was the Catholic Reformation and its search for an art that might provide a clear and forceful statement of religious truth and at the same time stir the emotions of the faithful. Although Baroque artists were often

united in their aims of fulfilling these demands, the directions their creativity took them were still extremely varied. In Roman painting, the Baroque embraced the classical naturalism of figures like Annibale Carracci, the gritty realism of Michelangelo da Caravaggio, and the sweeping and swirling complexities of Pietro da Cortona. Somewhat later in Northern Europe, the divergent paths of the visual arts similarly produced the monumentally dramatic paintings of Rubens, and the quiet intimacy and inwardness of Rembrandt and other Dutch painters. In architecture, too, the developing style admitted both the more classically inspired works of Gianlorenzo Bernini alongside the tempestuous and willful designs of Francesco Borromini. Despite such disparities, certain common features can be seen in the new architectural monuments of the age. These included a new sense of movement in buildings, a flow that was created through curved lines and spaces that frequently invited admirers to walk around these structures. Baroque buildings were often created on a massive scale that was intended to awe the viewer; yet despite their size, a coherent unity was achieved in the best of these structures by massing many complex decorative elements to grant them a sense of dramatic climax. This new architectural language was often imposing, larger than life, and it came to be preferred by many seventeenth-century kings and princes since it gave expression to their pretensions and desires to exercise absolute authority over their states. Yet as Baroque architecture made its way from Italy to Northern Europe it also developed numerous regional variations, and frequently encountered resistance from native forces that resisted its attractions. In France, an enduring classicism inherited from the Renaissance—exemplified in Louis XIV’s Palace of Versailles and other famous monuments he built in Paris around the time—discouraged the adoption of many elements of Italian Baroque style. In Catholic Germany and Austria, the Baroque style was accepted late, in large part because of the widespread devastation that occurred in the region as a result of the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648). When those troubles receded, though, the Baroque was enthusiastically accepted, particularly in Catholic central Europe, where it was often molded into a fanciful and exuberant style that frequently outdid in ornament earlier Roman monuments. Although Protestant states in Germany eventually adopted Baroque architecture for palaces and some churches, England and the Netherlands—countries heavily influenced by sixteenth-century Calvinism and the rise of a new commercial ethic—proved relatively resistant to the new style’s imposing monumentality. Despite a few efforts to imitate the new Baroque fashion, a Palladian-influenced classicism adopted at the

end of the Renaissance persisted in England and the Netherlands, and an enduring faithfulness to this style eventually provided a welcoming atmosphere for the more restrained neoclassical architecture that emerged in the mid-eighteenth century. Thus the very multiplicity of architectural styles that co-existed in Baroque-era Europe points up a critical fact of the age: the increasingly diverse and heterogeneous character of the continent's various regions and national cultures. If the enormous, human-dwarfing palace of Schönbrunn just outside Vienna is a typical embodiment of Baroque Catholic absolutism, the new Town Hall of seventeenth-century Protestant Amsterdam displays an entirely different aesthetic, but an aesthetic that was nevertheless an equally important component of the Baroque era. Fashioned on a human scale and built for a society that prized commerce, republican government, and comfort as its everyday values, Amsterdam's Town Hall seems today to invite participation in public life, while the enormous spaces of Schönbrunn and Versailles at the same time express a desire to overawe the subject. By the later seventeenth century the increasingly divergent paths that religious, social, and economic changes had produced in Europe were making such contrasts between absolutist states and the new commercial and urbanized societies of places like Amsterdam, with its large class of middle-class merchants, more obvious.

**THE BAROQUE IN MUSIC.** In music, the production of the first operas in Florence around 1600, and somewhat later in other Italian cities, has similarly been seen as a “defining moment” in fashioning Baroque music. In contrast to the polyphonic music popular in the late Renaissance in which many musical lines were simultaneously sung or played, the new operas, cantatas, and oratorios of the emerging Baroque style often favored the solo voice. Baroque music was influenced by the Renaissance past all the same. Opera, one of the most popular of the Baroque arts, arose from the attempt of late-Renaissance humanists to recreate the dramatic intensity and power of ancient tragedies, which these scholars believed had been entirely sung. The rise of the new art at the end of the Renaissance also helped to sponsor the use of the *basso continuo*, or “figured bass” style of composition, an innovation that became one of the defining features of Baroque music. In this technique a composer wrote out the melody line and the lowest note of the accompanying bass. Through notated figures entered above the bass tone, the accompanying ensemble, keyboard, or lute player, derived the other notes that accompanied the melody in chords. This use of *basso continuo* first flourished in opera, but soon it was almost

universally adapted in the ensemble instrumental music of the Baroque era. And although operas began primarily as an elite pastime in Italy's courts, they soon escaped from those rarefied circles to become one of the era's most popular urban entertainments. New commercial opera houses appeared, first in Italy, but relatively quickly in northern Europe. But just as was the case in the visual arts and architecture, not every country was seduced by the new Italian medium. England resisted Italian opera until very late, although attempts were made by native composers like Henry Purcell to nourish the development of a native form. Somewhat later, Georg Frideric Handel presented successful Italian operas in London, but after laboring for more than twenty years to establish the art form as a permanent force on the city's scene, he gave up. London's rise to become one of the world's great capitals of the art was to be postponed until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In France, Italian opera was similarly resisted, despite the attempts of Louis XIV's Italian-born minister Cardinal Mazarin to nourish its development in the 1650s. With his death in 1661, Italian opera withered on the vine in France, until another Italian-born but French-influenced composer, Jean-Baptiste Lully, fashioned a native French form of the art in the 1670s that was widely admired at court. This new French form eventually spread to other parts of Europe, where it competed against Italian opera, although it was never successful in overtaking the latter. In most places, particularly in central Europe, Italian opera remained the clear leader throughout the eighteenth century, so much so that Mozart and other late eighteenth-century composers continued to write more works in Italian than in their native languages.

**OTHER MUSICAL FORMS.** Opera was perhaps the most quintessentially Baroque form of music since, like the era's architecture, it satisfied a taste for imposing, monumental drama, and in its fondness for spectacular arias it nourished the age's fascination with complex patterns of ornamentation and elaboration. At the same time, the musical genres and styles of the Baroque were as varied as those evidenced in architecture and the visual arts. Great regional and national variations developed in Baroque-era music, most notably between the patterns of music composed and in the performance practices used in Italy and in France. But everywhere, native schools of musical composition and performance flourished, so much so that the performance practices of northern Germany were often very different from those of the south and from Austria. While operas, oratorios, and cantatas satisfied the taste for vocal music that made use of tuneful, ornamented melodies, the old polyphonic

music of the Renaissance did not die out. The polyphonic tradition, sometimes called the “old style” (*stile antiche*), persisted, and inspired some of the greatest musical writing of the age, including the fugues and polyphonic chorales of Johann Sebastian Bach, works that might be seen as the finest expression, and in many ways the culmination, of the lingering tradition of Renaissance polyphony. In music the Baroque era thus saw the persistence of the old, as well as the rise of the new, and it was these two factors working in tandem that inspired the great vitality of the art in this age.

**THE LITERARY BAROQUE.** While scholars have long seen certain parallels between the visual arts, architecture, and music of the era between 1600 and 1750, it remains considerably more difficult to classify European literature of this period as “Baroque.” In literature, the expansion and stylistic developments of the national languages continued apace in the seventeenth century. In most places, the triumph of native literature over the neo-Latin poetry and prose of the later Renaissance had already been assured by 1600. At the same time the styles and rhetoric that flourished in England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain were so various and divergent that a common classification of them as “Baroque” often seems meaningless. In every country the seventeenth century saw the vigorous publication of devotional texts as well as newer forms of secular verse, fiction, and journalism; the steady increase in these secular genres continued in the eighteenth century. While some attempts have been made to classify certain writers of the era—figures like Martin von Opitz in Germany, Giambattista Marino in Italy, or John Donne in England—as “Baroque poets,” the lack of a common thread of style that was shared by these figures, and between them and other writers of the era, has discouraged the effort to establish a notion of a European “Baroque literature.” In France, classicism, an effort to establish clear and distinct rules for the writing of prose and poetry based upon the models of the ancients, dominated many authors’ styles. In England, the later seventeenth century saw the appearance of the Augustan style, a clear, lucid, and relatively unadorned form of expression that continued to flourish throughout most of the eighteenth century. Thus the dynamics of literary production in much of Europe ran counter to the Baroque aesthetic sensibility, with its fondness for ornamentation, drama, and complexity.

**THE ROLE OF SCIENCE.** The façades of Baroque palaces or churches may have presented to their viewers a vision of a secure, unchanging, and assured worldview, yet behind such structures, profound forces of change

were transforming life and thought in early-modern Europe all the same. The great questions of the age asked philosophers and intellectuals to harmonize the received wisdom of Christianity and ancient learning with the newer insights derived from the developing Scientific Revolution. Copernicanism, with its powerful model of a sun-centered universe, was just one of the many challenges that the new science posed to Western thinkers in the seventeenth century. The rise of the new discipline often proceeded in fits and starts. Copernican theory, for instance, found its first great exponent in the figure of Galileo Galilei, who fashioned proofs for the sun-centered solar system through the revolutionary act of experimentation: he peered through the lens of a telescope. But the astronomer’s condemnation by the Inquisition in 1633 stunted the acceptance of Copernicanism for almost another two generations. When Isaac Newton returned to the problem, and provided a set of proofs for the laws of gravity and centrifugal motion in his *Principia* (1687), the heliocentric theory came rather quickly to be favored in intellectual circles throughout Europe. Newton, like Galileo before him, saw no contest between his Christian beliefs and his bold new portrait of a universe held together by a balance of opposing, mechanistic forces. But those that followed him were soon to see the cracks that Newton’s brave, new world was revealing in the traditional, Christianized view of the cosmos. For the first time in European history, it had become possible to envision the world as a product of purely automatic forces rather than as a system held together by the efforts of a beneficent deity. Could this new view of the physical universe be harmonized with the long-standing Christian notion that the earth and the stars had been fashioned for the purpose of enacting a human drama of sin and redemption? This and similar questions prompted philosophers and religious thinkers to reassess the traditional Christian worldview. And in turn, these questions inspired the development of new religious movements like Deism, which taught that God could be known through His works in nature, and that although he had fashioned the universe’s system, He had now left humankind to enjoy and manage His Creation. For most of the eighteenth century most philosophers and intellectuals still tried to find ways to harmonize Christianity with the new scientific discoveries, although science had now, for the first time in human history, opened up the possibility of atheism as an intellectually respectable option to religious belief. Although denying the existence of God remained a minority position among intellectuals throughout the eighteenth century, the new mechanical view of the universe nourished a secular spirit all the same, a spirit in which the traditional

structures, doctrines, and religious practices of Europe's churches could seem increasingly irrelevant to the educated. As a result, society and politics now were examined in many cases without the traditional lenses of Christian theology. It is no coincidence that the age that saw the publication of Newton's *Principia* also produced John Locke's powerful new vision of politics freed from traditional Christian moral considerations. Instead of concentrating on the state of human nature as wickedly depraved by sin, Locke expressed a newfound faith in the fundamental goodness of the individual, in the virtues of human freedom, and in the values of hard work—ideas that placed him, despite his professed Christian orthodoxy, firmly in opposition to the traditional church. His views concerning human psychology and of the politics human beings might produce in a society where greater freedom could flourish were very different from those that had long been nourished by the Christian notion of Original Sin, a force that theologians had persistently argued doomed all efforts to improve society. Locke's ideas proved to be every bit as revolutionary as Newton's, although he was just one of the first of a number of figures that championed the new notion of human perfectibility.

**CHANGING NATURE OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SOCIETY.** Yet other changes underway in eighteenth-century society stretched far beyond the confines of circles of philosophers and scientists like Newton and Locke, and these transformations helped to create an audience for the developing ideas of the Enlightenment, the great European-wide intellectual movement that aimed at the reform of society along the lines promoted by human reason. Throughout the eighteenth century Europe's economy continued the rapid expansion that had begun in the final quarter of the seventeenth, and although this growth occurred unevenly across the

Continent, it produced rapid urbanization almost everywhere. Vast numbers of the poor were to be found in the swelling cities of the era, but Europe's commercial success and its incipient industrialization was creating a larger middle class than ever before, many of whom lived off invested capital and thus possessed significant leisure to pursue their interests. Alongside the new pleasure gardens, variety theaters, and other amusements that Europe's cities now had on offer, reading and the intellectual discussions it fostered played a greater role in urban society than ever before. In this new urban landscape the coffeehouse was one of the most universally popular features, particularly among those who possessed leisure to enjoy reading and discussion. Informed men poured into the new coffeehouses, where they gathered to read the latest news and commentary upon the issues of the day, and to discuss their ideas while they smoked tobacco and drank Europe's newest exotic beverage import. In London, Paris, and other cities throughout the continent, journals and newspapers appealed to this new social set and the traffic in ideas—witnessed in the rise of journalism as a profession—had now become a commodity in an increasingly consumer-oriented age. These transformations left their imprint on the literature of the period. The emergence of new groups of “middle class” readers, for instance, forged an audience for the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers, the great public intellectuals of the day, even as they nourished a new taste for the everyday concerns of the “bourgeois” dramas and novels of the period. The rise of this audience also influenced the fashions and art of the era, helping to sponsor the popularity of Neoclassical domestic architecture, interior design, decorative arts, and clothes that expressed the developing sensibilities of the age for clarity, restraint, and a relief from the authoritarian formalism of the Baroque age.



# CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD EVENTS

*By Philip M. Soergel*

1598 In France, Henri IV promulgates the Edict of Nantes, a decree granting French Calvinists or Huguenots a limited degree of religious toleration.

Philip II, who ruled over vast territories in the New and Old Worlds, dies in Spain.

1600 The British East India Company is chartered to undertake trade with the Far East.

In Japan, the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu defeats Itshida Mtsunari at the Battle of Sekigahara, preparing the way three years later for the rise of his own Tokugawa Shogunate, the beginning of the so-called Edo period in Japanese history.

1602 The Dutch East India Company is established in the Netherlands, with six offices in the country's major trading cities.

The English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold is the first European to discover Cape Cod in North America.

The English explorer James Lancaster sails into Achin harbor with the English East India Company's fleet on the island of Sumatra.

1603 In England, Elizabeth I dies and is succeeded by James VI of Scotland. A mem-

ber of the Stuart dynasty, he will rule England as James I.

The first performance of Kabuki theater occurs in Japan.

In the Ottoman Empire, Ahmed I succeeds Mehmed III. Ahmed will conduct unsuccessful campaigns in Eastern Europe, and eventually retire to a life of pleasure, a path that will prove detrimental to the empire's presence on the international scene.

1604 Guru Arjan sets down the Sikh religion's scriptures.

French settlers establish their first successful colony at Acadia in North America, as well as a settlement in Guiana on the northern coast of South America.

The Spanish explorer Luis Vaez de Torres becomes the first European to sail through the Torres Strait, the gulf of water that separates modern New Guinea from Australia.

1605 In England, the Gunpowder Plot is uncovered. This alleged Catholic plan aimed to blow up the Houses of Parliament in Westminster when the king and members were present. Anti-Catholic sentiment

- grows in England as a result of the foiled plot.
- Polish troops occupy Moscow. For the next seven years, Poland will try to determine the course of events in Russia.
- 1606 The Treaty of Zsitva-Torok ends the war between the Ottoman Empire and the Austrian Habsburgs.
- 1607 The Jamestown settlement is established in Virginia. Although the first years of the colony will be difficult, the settlement will manage to survive.
- England's Popham Colony is established in what is present-day Maine; it fails after one year.
- 1608 The first telescope is invented by Hans Lippershey, a maker of lenses from the Netherlands.
- The first official representative of the English crown arrives at Surat, in the western Indian territory of Gujarat.
- Samuel Champlain founds Quebec, the oldest still-existing European settlement in North America.
- 1609 The Italian astronomer Galileo performs the first observations of the revolution of the planets with the aid of a telescope.
- The English explorer Henry Hudson is the first European to sail into Delaware Bay.
- 1610 The Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci dies in China, after having translated many ancient European classics into Chinese.
- In France, the Catholic fanatic Ravaillac assassinates Henri IV, hoping to set off a reaction against the crown's policy of toleration of the Protestant Huguenots. Instead, Henri's wife, Marie de' Medici, assumes power as regent, and France's state successfully weathers this crisis.
- 1611 In Japan, the Emperor Go-Yozei abdicates in favor of Go-Mizunoo. During Go-Yozei's reign, the first presses using movable type were brought to the country.
- The Authorized Version of the Bible, popularly known as the King's James Version, appears in England.
- 1612 In Russia, the gentry rebel against Polish rule, touching off a civil war that will end one year later with the election of Michael Romanov as czar. He will establish the Romanov dynasty that will endure until the 1917 Revolution.
- 1614 The Native American Pocahontas marries the Virginia settler John Rolfe, establishing a generation-long peace between English settlers and natives in the colony.
- In France, the Estates General, the country's parliament, meets for the last time until the onset of the Revolution in 1789. In the coming decades, France's kings will successfully establish their absolute authority over the political life of the country.
- 1615 The Japanese shogun issues the Boku Shohatto, a code of conduct aimed at regulating the behavior of the country's aristocrats.
- 1616 Nurhachi becomes leader of the Manchus and begins a series of invasions into China; within five years, he will control much of the northeastern part of the country.
- 1618 The Thirty Years' War begins in Central Europe. The conflict is produced by the still lingering religious controversies of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and the devastation that the war brings will soon lay waste to much of Germany.
- Aurangzeb, last of India's great Mogul emperors, assumes the throne. His reign will be noteworthy for its intolerance of Hinduism.
- 1619 In colonial Virginia, the House of Burgesses, colonial North America's first representative assembly, meets for the first time.

- The first slaves appear in England's New World colonies.
- England establishes its first colonial outpost in India.
- 1620 The Pilgrims establish Plymouth Colony in North America. By the end of the first winter, almost half of all the English settlers there will have died.
- Protestant defeat at the Battle of White Mountain outside Prague paves the way for the re-catholicization of Bohemia by the Habsburgs.
- 1622 One-third of all English settlers are killed in the "Jamestown Massacre" in Virginia.
- The French explorer Étienne Brûlé is the first European to visit Lake Superior.
- 1623 Murat IV is installed as the Ottoman emperor following a palace coup that displaces Osman II. In the early years of his reign, his mother will dominate government, but in 1630, Murat will seize control and begin a campaign against governmental corruption.
- England establishes a colony on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts.
- In Baghdad, the Turkish tribe of the Safavids regains control of the city and surrounding region.
- 1624 The Dutch establish a trading colony on the island of Taiwan at Kaohsiung.
- 1625 The Dutch trading center of "New Amsterdam" is chartered on the site of the future city of New York.
- 1626 Spain establishes a trading colony on the island of Taiwan.
- 1628 Salem Colony is founded north of what is the modern city of Boston. One year later, the Massachusetts Bay Colony will found the city of Boston.
- In England, William Harvey publishes his findings confirming the circulation of blood.
- 1629 Woman performers are banned from the Kabuki theater in Japan on moral grounds.
- 1632 In India, the Mogul Emperor Shahjahan begins the construction of the Taj Mahal as a memorial to his deceased wife, Mumtaz Mahal.
- The Caribbean islands of Antiqua and Barbuda are first colonized by the English.
- 1633 Galileo is forced to recant his support for the heliocentric theory of Nicholas Copernicus after an inquiry conducted by the Inquisition.
- Ethiopian leader Negus Fasilidas expels foreign missionaries from that African country.
- 1634 In France, the first meetings of the French Academy, an institution organized by Cardinal Richelieu with the intentions of standardizing literary French, are held in Paris.
- King Ladislaus IV of Poland defeats the Russian army at the Battle of Smolensk.
- The first English settlers arrive in the new colony of Maryland under the leadership of Lord Baltimore.
- 1635 The Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique are first settled by the French.
- 1636 The Puritans establish Harvard College at Cambridge near Boston.
- 1637 France sends its first missionaries to the Ivory Coast in Africa.
- 1638 The Ottoman Emperor Murat IV captures Baghdad from the Safavids; as a result of the treaty concluding these hostilities the boundaries between Iran and the Ottoman Empire (modern Turkey) are firmly fixed.
- Spanish explorer Pedro Texeira sails up the Amazon River and travels as far as Quito, Ecuador.
- English sailors shipwrecked in Central America found the settlement of Belize.



- The first settlers arrive in New Sweden, the modern state of Delaware.
- The Dutch found a trading colony on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean.
- 1639 The Japanese shogunate closes the borders of the country to all outsiders, the most extreme measure taken yet to protect Japan from Western missionaries and traders. Only the Dutch are allowed to remain in the country.
- In Scotland, Archbishop William Laud's plans to establish an episcopal governmental structure over the Church of Scotland precipitate the Bishop's War.
- Russian forces cross the Urals, continuing their campaign of conquest to the Pacific Ocean at Okhotsk.
- The colony of Connecticut adopts its first written constitution.
- 1640 The Ottoman Emperor Murat IV dies and is succeeded by his brother Ibrahim the Mad. Ibrahim suffers from depression and is overshadowed by his mother for a time. Eventually he rallies, though, to conduct unsuccessful wars against the Republic of Venice.
- The first book is printed in colonial North America at Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- In England, Charles I calls the "Short Parliament," a meeting that lasts only a month. After realizing the dire state of his finances, though, he reconvenes Parliament in the same year. This "Long Parliament" will eventually sit for almost two decades, and its members will sentence the king to his death in 1649.
- 1641 Dutch traders establish a colony at Dejima in Japan.
- In the same year, Dutch forces also seize the colony of Malacca in modern Malaysia from Portugal.
- 1642 The Dutch explorer Abel Tasman and his crew are the first Europeans to see the islands of New Zealand and Tasmania.
- In France, Blaise Pascal invents the "Pascaline," history's first adding machine.
- French settlers found the city of Montreal in Canada.
- 1644 In China, the Manchus overthrow the Ming Dynasty and establish the new Qing lineage, a government that will make major colonial expansions into Central Asia.
- In Japan, Miyamoto Musashi, one of Japan's greatest samurai swordsman, dies. In the year proceeding his death, Musashi retired and lived as a hermit, writing the classic text, *The Book of Five Rings*, a meditation on his career and philosophy.
- 1645 The Chinese rebel Li Zicheng dies, either from assassination or suicide. Li Zicheng led a rebellion that helped to bring down the Ming Dynasty, but with the rise of the Manchus to power, his forces were defeated.
- The Maunder Minimum, a solar phenomenon later discovered by the astronomer E.W. Maunder, begins. During the seventy years following 1645, sunspots became extremely rare, depressing the world's temperature even further during this time in the "Mini-Ice Age," the coldest period in recorded history that lasted from the fifteenth to the early eighteenth century.
- In England, Parliament outlaws use of the Book of Common Prayer in the country's national church.
- 1648 The Peace of Westphalia is signed in Münster, Germany, bringing to a close the Thirty Years' War. The terms of the Peace recognize Calvinism as a legal religion, but uphold the principle that Germany's territorial rulers may define the religion of their subjects. The separate Treaty of Münster signed at the same time by the Netherlands and Spain finally recognizes Dutch independence and ends 80 years of war between the two powers.
- In Paris, the Fronde, a rebellion waged by French nobles and prominent urban fac-

tions, begins. Although the movement is eventually suppressed, it will color the young king Louis XIV's attitudes toward the aristocracy.

Mehmed IV ascends the throne as Ottoman Sultan. During his reign, he will concentrate most of his efforts on hunting.

In Paris, the rebellion of the Fronde begins among the nobility and members of the city's Parlement or representative body. The rebellion will last for almost five years, and will, on one occasion, force the king and his family to leave the city.

- 1649 In England, Stuart King Charles I is executed by Parliament. In the years that follow, the country will be ruled by a Puritan Commonwealth, over which the Protector Oliver Cromwell will eventually assert forceful control.

- 1651 The English political theorist Thomas Hobbes publishes his *Leviathan*, a work that supports a strong ruler as an antidote to the aggressive nature of humankind.

The English scientist William Harvey lays the foundations for modern embryology through his *Essays on the Generation of Animals*.

The Battle of Beresteczko is fought in the Ukraine between native forces and the Poles. It is perhaps the largest battle ever waged in the seventeenth century. Although the Poles are massively outnumbered by Ukrainian forces, they manage to win when the Ukrainian's allies, the Tatars, abandon the battlefield.

- 1652 The Dutch East India Company establishes a center for resupplying their ships near the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa.

The English colony of Rhode Island becomes the first in North America to outlaw slavery.

The first Anglo-Dutch War begins between England and the Netherlands when

Parliament passes measures outlawing the importation of goods into the country except in ships that are English-owned. This trade dispute precipitates tensions between the Dutch and English that will worsen over the coming decades.

Young boy performers are banned from the Kabuki theater in Japan on moral grounds. From this point onward, this form of theater will become male-dominated and will develop into a highly stylized and artificial form of drama.

- 1654 The rebel Bohdan Chmielnicki leads a revolt against Polish forces in Ukraine. To assure their territory's security, the revolt's leaders sign a treaty with Moscow that will eventually lead to their region's annexation into the Russian Empire.

- 1655 Emperor Go Sai ascends the throne in Japan.

New Sweden (modern Delaware) is seized by Dutch forces.

- 1656 Masuria, a region in modern northeastern Poland, is laid waste by marauding hordes of Poles and Tatars. This attack is one of the worst blows during the "Deluge," a period of troubles in Poland in which the country came to be devastated by a series of external invasions. As a result, the region's population declined by as much as a third.

- 1660 The "Long Parliament" is disbanded in England and the Stuart heir Charles II is restored to the throne.

- 1661 King Charles II of England marries Catherine Braganza of Portugal. As part of Catherine's dowry, she brings the colonies of Bombay and Tangiers, which become English colonies.

The Dutch abandon their colony on Taiwan, after the Qing dynasty invade the island.

- 1662 Charles II founds the Royal Society in England; this institution will be a major

- force in popularizing the Scientific Revolution among the country's intellectuals.
- In China, Emperor K'ang Hsi assumes the throne at the age of eight. The fourth in the line of Manchu emperors, he will eventually become a great statesman, scholar, and warrior.
- 1663 Queen Nzinga of Ndongo and Matamba, territories in southwestern Africa, dies. During her long life, she had attempted to limit the depredations of the slave trade in her lands by negotiating treaties with the Portuguese, converting to Christianity, and, when necessary, conducting skillful military campaigns against the traders.
- 1664 The Netherlands surrenders New Amsterdam (modern New York) as well as other New World colonies to the English.
- 1665 The last outbreak of the plague in Western Europe strikes London. One year later, much of the city will be destroyed by the Great Fire.
- Portuguese forces kill King Garcia II of the African state of Kongo (modern Angola), ending that country's independence.
- 1667 Poland gives up control of Smolensk, Kiev, and Ukraine to Muscovy. From this date forward, these possessions will become integral parts of the Russian empire.
- 1668 The English East India Company takes control of the port of Bombay in India.
- 1669 In India, the Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb bans Hinduism and burns several temples, inciting a rebellion.
- Famine in the northeastern Indian state of Bengal claims as many as three million lives.
- 1670 King Charles II charters the Hudson Bay Company to undertake trade with native Americans in Canada in all those regions where the rivers flowed into the great bay.
- England assumes control over the island of Jamaica in the Caribbean.
- 1672 Forces of Louis XIV's France invade the United Dutch Provinces, touching off the "Dutch War."
- The future Peter the Great, czar of Russia, is born.
- Charles II issues the Royal Declaration of Indulgence in England, granting toleration to Catholics and Protestant Dissenters. The measure is opposed by Parliament, and the king is eventually forced to negate it.
- Simon Dezhnev, a Russian cosack and explorer who was the first to navigate the Bering Strait, dies.
- 1673 In Japan, the Kabuki actor Sannjuro Ichikawa invents the Arigato style, which features the central character of masculine, superhuman war god.
- Father Marquette and Louis Joliet explore the Mississippi River in North America.
- The Mitsui family founds a banking and trading house in Japan.
- 1674 Jan Sobieski is elected to serve as King John III of Poland after having waged successful battles against the Ottoman Empire.
- Father Marquette founds a mission on the banks of Lake Michigan at the site of the future city of Chicago.
- 1676 The Danish Astronomer Ole Romer conducts the first measurements of the speed of light.
- Feodor III becomes czar of Russia. Sickly and childless, he will rule for the next six years largely from his bed.
- 1677 In England, Elias Ashmole makes a gift of manuscripts and books to the University of Oxford that will become the Ashmolean Library, one of the world's great research institutions.
- The Dutch scientist Anton van Leuwenhoek observes human sperm under a microscope for the first time.

- 1679 In North America, the French priest Louis Hennepin discovers Niagara Falls while sailing on the Great Lakes.
- The French inventor Denis Papin creates the first “pressure cooker,” a discovery that will be useful as later European scientists try to capture the power of steam.
- 1680 King Sivaji, ruler of the Maratha kingdom in western India, dies after a life spent conducting wars against the Mogul rulers of the subcontinent.
- The first Portuguese governor is appointed to control the trading colony of Macau in China.
- 1681 Charles II gives a grant of land to William Penn to develop as a colony; it will later become known as Pennsylvania, “Penn’s Woods.”
- France seizes the city of Strasbourg in Germany.
- 1682 The Palace of Versailles outside Paris is officially named the home of France’s government.
- Peter the Great and his brother Ivan V become co-rulers of Russia.
- Ihara Saikaku publishes *The Life of An Amorous Man*, a work that initiates a new genre of fiction that treats the concerns of commoners.
- 1683 The city of Vienna is besieged by an enormous force of the Ottoman Empire. Three months later, the siege is broken when reinforcing Polish, German, and Austrian troops arrive, and sent the Ottoman forces packing. The victory marks a turning point in the war, as Austria begins to repel the Turks from Eastern Europe.
- 1684 After the assassination of his chief minister, Hotta Masatoshi, the Shogun Sunayoshi’s government flounders. Sunayoshi’s impractical pronouncements and laws create grave hardships for the Japanese people.
- China grants the English East India Company the right to establish a trading colony at Canton.
- 1685 Louis XIV of France revokes his country’s Edict of Nantes, forcing Protestant subjects to convert to Catholicism or go into exile.
- In Germany, a change of succession in the Rhineland Palatinate forces the conversion of this important territory from Calvinism to Catholicism. Just as in France, many German Calvinists will immigrate over the coming years to northern Germany, England, and North America.
- 1687 Isaac Newton’s *Principia* appears. It explains the concepts of gravity and centrifugal force, thus resolving the controversy that has long raged about Copernicus’ heliocentric theory.
- The French explorer Robert La Salle is killed by his own men while searching for the source of the Mississippi River in North America.
- 1688 The Catholic James II is forced from the English throne; one year later, Parliament will call his daughter Mary and her husband William from Holland to serve as co-regents in the so-called Glorious Revolution.
- Louis XIV declares war on Holland and invades the Holy Roman Empire, hoping to conquer the Rhineland for France.
- The one-time pirate turned English explorer William Dampier is the first European to discover Christmas Island in the Pacific.
- In Japan, the Genroku Era, a period of great achievement in the arts and popular culture, begins.
- 1690 The Battle of the Boyne occurs in Ireland between supporters of James II, the deposed Stuart King, and his son-in-law, William III, who is now king of England.

- The Ottoman sultan Suleiman II is killed in battle against Habsburg forces while trying to retake Hungary.
- 1692 In colonial Massachusetts, the Salem Witch Trials begin, a generation after such persecutions have stopped in Europe.
- 1693 The College of William and Mary, the second English institution of higher education to be established in North America, is founded at Williamsburg in Virginia.
- The Ottoman emperor Mehmed IV dies. He was responsible for waging a number of costly, and ultimately unsuccessful campaigns to extend Ottoman authority into Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.
- The Academy of Hard-Working Fellows, an organization dedicated to scientific study, is founded in Slovenia.
- 1695 Mustafa II becomes the sultan of the Ottoman Empire, beginning an eight-year reign that will end in his being deposed by his brother.
- 1696 Peter the Great becomes the sole czar of Russia following the death of his brother, and co-regent Ivan V. Peter will embark on an ambitious plan of Westernization.
- John III of Poland dies after a generally successful reign in which he helped to reclaim some of the country's former glory through military successes.
- 1697 The Ottoman emperor Mustafa II attempts to turn back the advance of the Austrian Habsburgs in Eastern Europe by trying to recapture Hungary. Two years later, he recognizes defeat when he cedes control over both Hungary and Transylvania to Austria.
- Spain conquers Tayassal, the last independent native state in Central America.
- 1698 In Russia, Peter the Great imposes a tax on men who wear beards.
- The English inventor Thomas Savery patents a steam engine capable of pumping water out of mines.
- Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu of Moldavia and Wallachia names the city of Bucarest his capital in what is now modern Romania.
- Arabs wrest control of the city of Mombasa, in what is now southeast Kenya, from the Portuguese.
- 1699 The first French settlement is founded on the Mississippi River in North America at Biloxi.
- The Treaty of Karlowitz concludes hostilities between Austrian and Ottoman forces, bringing to an end Ottoman incursions into Eastern Europe.
- In India, the tenth Sikh master, Guru Gobind Singh, establishes the rite of Amrit, a baptism for followers of the religion, a radical sect that practices complete social equality among its members.
- After a gruesome 33-month siege, the Portuguese Fort Jesus at Mombasa is surrendered to the Sultan of Oman. Within the next two years, the Portuguese presence on the east coast of Africa will disappear.
- 1700 The Great Northern War breaks out when Russia, Denmark, Poland, and Saxony declare war and invade Sweden. In the Battle of Narva in the same year, King Charles XII of Sweden will defeat the forces of Peter the Great of Russia.
- 1701 The death of the Spanish king Charles II without an heir touches off the War of the Spanish Succession. One of the first truly international wars in which trade and merchant interests come to dominate, it eventually involves most major European powers, and is fought, not only in Europe, but in the North American colonies, too.
- The French colony of Detroit is founded in what is modern-day Michigan.

- The Hanoverian Queen Anne succeeds to the throne of England, and Parliament passes the Act of Succession stipulated that the English monarch must be a Protestant.
- Yale College is founded at New Haven, Connecticut.
- 1702 In Japan, 47 ronin, samurai warriors, commit suicide after avenging the unjustified ritual suicide forced upon their leader. The event will come to sum up the epitome of the samurai's code of bushido or loyalty.
- 1703 In Russia, Peter the Great founds the city of St. Petersburg; his ambitions are to open up Russian life and culture to influences from Western Europe, and the city will eventually become one of the most beautiful in European Russia.
- In the Ottoman Empire, Ahmed III rises to power following the abdication of his brother, Mustafa. Ahmed cultivates good relations with England as a counter to the encircling threat that he feels from Russia.
- 1704 Native Americans invade the settlement of Deerfield, Massachusetts, killing its inhabitants.
- In Japan, the Genroku Era, known for the brilliance of its popular culture, draws to a close.
- The British Duke of Marlborough wins the battle of Blenheim and seizes the Rock of Gibraltar from the Spanish.
- 1705 The British astronomer William Halley predicts the return of the famous comet that has since that time born his name.
- 1706 The American patriot and revolutionary Benjamin Franklin is born in Boston.
- The great philosopher Pierre Bayle, who was a source of inspiration for the subsequent Enlightenment, dies in exile from France at Rotterdam.
- 1707 The Act of Union joins Scotland and England into the United Kingdom.
- 1708 In the Polish province of Masuria as much as one third of the population die in an outbreak of the bubonic plague.
- The city of Kandahar in modern Afghanistan is conquered by the Afghan leader Mir Wais.
- In China, Jesuit missionaries complete the first accurate map of the country.
- 1709 Czar Peter the Great of Russia defeats Sweden at the Battle of Poltava, bringing the Scandinavian country's period of international greatness to an end.
- 1712 Peter the Great moves his capital to his newly created city of St. Petersburg.
- 1713 The Treaty of Utrecht ends the War of the Spanish Succession and the legitimacy of the Bourbon monarchy in Spain is upheld. Spain cedes the Netherlands to the control of the Austrian Habsburgs, while several New World colonies of France in Canada are transferred to Great Britain.
- 1714 The Elector of Hanover ascends to the English throne as George I; during much of the Hanoverian period that follows the Whig party will control English Parliament, and will continue to advocate a thoroughly constitutional monarchy.
- Chikamatsu Monzaemon, known as Japan's Shakespeare, dies.
- France receives the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean from the Dutch.
- 1715 King Louis XIV of France dies, ending a 72-year reign. He is succeeded by his grandson Louis XV. Philippe d'Orléans, the boy's uncle, serves as regent for the five-year old king.
- The future Peter II, the grandson of Peter the Great, is born in Russia.
- 1716 The first dictionary of the Han form of the Chinese language appears under the

- title, *The Kangxi Dictionary*; it is named for the Qing Emperor Kangxi.
- In Japan, the Kyoho reforms begin. These measures are designed to make the shogunate more financially responsible by accommodating commercial enterprises within a traditional Confucian ethic.
- 1717 Portuguese colonists began to settle near the modern city of Montevideo in Uruguay.
- The future Marie-Theresa of Austria is born.
- 1718 The Treaty of Passarowitz is signed between Austria, Venice, and the Ottoman Empire. Venice loses certain possessions in the eastern Mediterranean, while Turkey cedes parts of Bosnia and Serbia to Austria.
- In London, James Puckle receives a patent for the first machine gun.
- Blackbeard the pirate is killed in a naval battle with the English off the coast of colonial Virginia.
- 1719 In England, the South Sea Company's stock climbs to new unprecedented heights. The company has been charged with developing trade with South America, and the price of its stock rises to hitherto unheard of heights. Within a few years, though, the South Sea bubble will have burst, and its shares will be worthless.
- In Paris, the Scottish financier John Law develops a similarly popular scheme for the development of the Mississippi territories. Law succeeds in enriching a number of Parisian aristocrats and members of the bourgeoisie before the city's investors sour on the plan.
- 1722 Hyder Ali, an Islamic warrior who will prove to be the most successful challenger of British authority in India, is born.
- The French settlers begin to colonize Mauritius.
- 1724 The Treaty of Constantinople partitions Turkey, with Russia and the Ottoman Empire dividing the territory.
- 1725 The first reported case of a European scalping Indians is recorded in the New Hampshire colony in North America.
- 1726 Spain establishes the city of Montevideo in Uruguay in an effort to discourage Portuguese settlers from colonizing the region.
- 1727 The Hanoverian King George I dies and is succeeded by his son, George II, who will rule until 1760.
- The Czarina Catherine I dies in Russia.
- The first coffee plantation is founded in Brazil.
- 1729 Portuguese forces briefly occupy the city of Mombasa again before losing it to Arab forces.
- Diamonds are discovered in Brazil.
- 1730 In Turkey, Mahmud I becomes sultan of the Ottoman Empire. His reign, which will last until 1754, will be marked by frequent wars with Russia over Persia.
- 1732 James Oglethorpe establishes the colony of Georgia in colonial North America with the intention of providing refuge to debtors.
- 1734 After a long siege Russian troops succeed in taking possession of the port of Danzig on the Baltic.
- In colonial North America, the Great Awakening, a religious revival that had begun the previous year in the town of Northampton, Massachusetts, is spreading through the colonies.
- Frederick Augustus II, the Elector of Saxony, is named King of Poland with the support of Russian and Austrian troops that are in attendance.
- 1735 Nadir Shah, the advisor to the Persian Safavid ruler, defeats forces of the Otto-

- man Empire and captures Tiflis, modern Tbilisi, in Georgia.
- 1736 Nadir Shah deposes the last of the Safavid rulers of Iran and installs himself as shah. The properties of rubber are discovered in Peru.
- 1739 Nadir Shah of Iran invades India, capturing Delhi and Lahore and carting off vast treasures from the country. In the years that follow he extends Iran's boundaries to their largest extent. The Great Northern War breaks out when Russia, Denmark, Poland, and Saxony declare war and invade Sweden. In the Battle of Narva in the same year, King Charles XII of Sweden will defeat the forces of Peter the Great of Russia.
- 1740 The War of the Austrian Succession begins when Maria Theresa becomes Empress of Austria. King Frederick II, refusing to recognize her claim to the throne, seizes Silesia, thus precipitating the eight-year war between Austria and Prussia. Within a year, all of Europe's most important powers will become involved in the conflict.
- 1743 The English King George II defeats French forces at the Battle of Dettingen, a crucial engagement in the War of the Austrian Succession.
- 1745 Francis I is elected Holy Roman Emperor through the offices of his wife, the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria. British forces of King George II defeat the French on Cape Breton Island and seize Fort Louisbourg. It will be returned to France at the conclusion of the War of the Austrian Succession in exchange for holdings France seized in Madras, India.
- 1746 The brutal battle of Culloden ends the Jacobite Rebellions in Scotland. In the years that follow, England begins repressive measures to suppress the clan system in the Scottish highlands. In colonial North America, the College of New Jersey is founded by Presbyterians.
- It will eventually become known as Princeton University.
- The Mazrui dynasty at Mombasa, in what is now modern Kenya, establishes its independence from the Sultan of Oman.
- 1748 The Treaty of Aix-le-Chapelle concludes the War of the Austrian Succession. The provisions recognize Maria Theresa's right to her Austrian lands, but she is forced to cede certain Italian territories. Prussia is allowed to retain Silesia.
- 1753 French settlers begin to move into the Ohio River Valley in North America. Their presence will help to produce the French and Indian War that begins one year later.
- 1755 A massive earthquake strikes Lisbon, Portugal. In North America, General Braddock is unsuccessful in wresting Fort Duquesne near present-day Pittsburgh from the French. A massive smallpox epidemic in southern Africa almost completely obliterates the Khoisan people.
- 1756 The Seven Years' War breaks out and eventually gives births to two alliances: Prussia, England, and Hanover waged war against France, Sweden, Russia, and Austria. It is sometimes called the first "world war," because it is fought extensively in Europe's colonial outposts as well as on the continent. The Nawab of Bengal seizes Calcutta from the British East India Company and imprisons 146 people in an airless room. By the next morning, most are said to be dead. The exploitation of the story throughout the English-speaking world is used in the coming years to portray Indians as base and tyrannical. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is born in Salzburg, Austria.
- 1757 Robert Clive commands forces of the British East India Company to victory



- over Nawab of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey.
- Frederick the Great of Prussia defeats French and Austrian forces at the Battle of Rossbach during the Seven Years' War that pits Austria and France against Prussia and England.
- 1759 The British General Wolfe captures the French Canadian cities of Montreal and Quebec during the French and Indian War. Later in the same year, he and his French adversary, General Montcalm, will die as a result of wounds they received in battle.
- The first life insurance company is established in Philadelphia in North America.
- 1760 King George III begins a sixty-year reign in England with decisive victories over the French and Austrians in the Seven Years' War.
- 1761 The British capture Pondicherry in India from the French, continuing their rise to power in the subcontinent.
- 1762 The Empress Go-Sakuramachi rises to power in Japan. She will be the last empress to rule in the country, abdicating in favor of her nephew in 1771.
- In Russia, the German-born Catherine the Great assumes control of the government; although her reign will be marked by notorious sexual scandals, it will see the unprecedented flowering of Russian learning and culture as well.
- 1766 Britain's Parliament repeals the Stamp Act in the American colonies, after colonists, incited in part by Benjamin Franklin's propaganda against the act, protest and "tar and feather" the Crown's officials.
- Burmese forces invade the Ayutthaya kingdom in modern Thailand, laying waste to its capital.
- The Treaty of Paris cedes all of French Canada to Great Britain, a development that will permanently cripple the country's efforts to colonize in North America.
- 1767 Catherine the Great convenes the Legislation Commission in Russia to reform the country's legal codes.
- 1768 Captain Cook sets sails for the South Pacific, eventually exploring New Zealand and parts of Australia.
- 1769 A massive famine wreaks devastation on the population of the Indian state of Bengal.
- 1770 British troops kill five American colonists in the Boston Massacre, an event that will enflame already brittle relationships between England and Massachusetts settlers.
- Marie-Antoinette of Austria marries the Dauphin Louis, the heir to the throne of France, at Versailles.
- Captain James Cook lays claim to eastern Australia as a colony for the British.
- 1771 The Swedish pharmacist Karl Wilhelm Scheele discovers oxygen. His discovery is confirmed three years later by another experiment conducted by Joseph Priestley in England.
- 1773 A rebellion of cossacks in the Russian army is brutally suppressed.
- The British Parliament passes the Tea Act, granting the East India Company the exclusive right to export tea to the North American colonies, a measure that soon irritates colonists.
- The Mamluk Sultan Ali Bey, who successfully challenged the power of the Ottoman Turks and who established his own sultanate in Egypt for a time, dies in Cairo after losing his power.
- 1774 The First Continental Congress is convened at Philadelphia to discuss worsening relations with Great Britain.
- The British East India Company appoints Warren Hastings the first Governor General of India.
- Peasant revolts break out in many parts of Russia and, as the revolutionaries

- march toward Moscow, they are brutally crushed by government troops.
- 1776 The Declaration of Independence is signed by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia; in the next few months open warfare breaks out in the colonies.
- The Spanish Franciscan Father Palou founds a mission at what will later become San Francisco, California.
- The British economist Adam Smith publishes his *The Wealth of Nations*, a work arguing against government intervention in the economy.
- 1778 The English explorer Captain James Cook explores several of the Hawaiian Islands, naming them the Sandwich Islands.
- In France, the Enlightenment thinker Voltaire dies.
- 1779 The world's first iron bridge is constructed across the Severn River in England.
- Boer settlers clash with the Xhosa in what is today South Africa.
- 1780 Francis Scott Key, who will grow up to write the words to the "Star-Spangled Banner," is born.
- Empress Maria Theresa dies in Austria and is succeeded by her son Joseph II, who desires to reform Austrian society along the lines advocated by Enlightenment thinkers.
- 1781 Los Angeles is founded as "El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora La Reina de Los Angeles de Porciuncula (City of the Queen of the Angels) by 44 Spanish settlers.
- General Cornwallis surrenders his English forces after the Battle of Yorktown in Virginia.
- 1783 The Treaty of Versailles draws an end to hostilities between the British and Americans. Britain recognizes the independence of its thirteen colonies, and many European countries soon grant diplomatic recognition.
- Russia annexes the Crimea and begins to develop a major port there at Sevastopol. One year later the Ottoman Turks will recognize Russian sovereignty in the region.
- 1784 American patriot Benjamin Franklin invents bifocals.
- In Japan, a famine rages that may produce as many as 300,000 deaths.
- Revolution in Transylvania prompts the Austrian emperor Joseph II to suspend the Hungarian constitution in the region.
- Ann Lee, a leader in the American Shaker movement, dies.
- In England, John Wesley draws up a charter for Methodist churches.
- 1785 The United States adopts the dollar as its monetary unit, becoming the first state to use a decimal coinage in history.
- In France, the exposing of the Affair of the Necklace, a scheme hatched by several con men and women, tarnishes the reputation of Queen Marie-Antoinette.
- 1787 Delegates meet at Philadelphia to fashion a new constitution for the United States.
- Catherine the Great of Russia declares war on the Ottoman Empire.
- 1788 The British name New South Wales a penal colony and begin deportations of convicted felons there.
- The English King George III suffers from one of two bouts with insanity brought on by porphyria, an enzymatic disorder. The second will begin in 1811 and last until his death in 1820.
- Fire ravages the French settlement of New Orleans, destroying more than 850 buildings.
- 1789 The storming of the Bastille begins a militant phase of the French Revolution in Paris.

- 1790 The National Assembly of France passes the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, abolishing centuries-old clerical privileges and tax exemptions and subjecting priests, monks, and nuns to the same laws as lay people. When thousands of the clergy refuse to swear allegiance to the national government in the years that follow, many are persecuted and even executed.
- 1791 The United States Mint is established.
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart dies in Vienna.
- The Metric System is developed in France and replaces the medieval systems of weights and measures long used in the country.
- 1792 Russia is rebuffed when it tries to establish trade relations with Japan.
- 1793 The radical Jacobins unleash the Reign of Terror against “counter-revolutionaries” in Paris.
- King Louis XVI is sentenced to death by a one-vote majority in the National Convention. The deciding vote is cast by the aristocrat, Philippe d’Orléans, now known as the revolutionary Philippe d’Egalité, Philip Equality. Ten months later, Louis’ wife and France’s queen, Marie-Antoinette, will follow her husband to the guillotine.
- 1794 Eli Whitney receives a United States patent for his invention of the cotton gin.
- In France, Maximilien Robespierre falls from grace as a leader of the revolution. After inspiring the executions of 17,000 Frenchmen and women during the terror, he himself is put to death.
- 1795 Conservatives in the National Convention seize control over the course of developments in the Revolution in France; eventually, they establish the government of the Directorate, which brings a retreat from the bloodletting of previous years.
- Russia, Austria, and Prussia partition Poland and annex its territories into their own states.
- British forces seize the Cape Colony in Africa from the Dutch.
- The Scottish explorer Mungo Park sets out to discover the source of the Niger River in Africa.
- 1799 Napoleon Bonaparte effectively stages a coup against the French government of the Directorate. As a result, he will eventually rise over the coming years to the position of Emperor of the French.
- The fourth Qing Emperor Qianlong dies in China three years after abdicating in favor of his son.

1  
chapter one

# ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	2	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	5	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>Charles Borromeo on Church Design</i> (excerpt from Borromeo's doctrine advising church architects) . . . . .	9
The Renaissance Inheritance and Catholic Renewal . . . . .	7	<i>The Prince of Designers</i> (excerpt from Baldinucci's biography of Gianlorenzo Bernini) . . . . .	10
The Rise of the Baroque Style In Italy. . . . .	11	<i>Vile Architecture</i> (Bellori's attack on architectural innovation) . . . . .	16
The Achievements of Gianlorenzo Bernini. . . . .	13	<i>A Royal Builder</i> (excerpt from text by Goubert concerning Louis XIV's architectural projects) . . . . .	19
The Tempestuous and Fanciful Baroque . . . . .	14	<i>The Beautiful and the Ugly</i> (excerpt from Saint-Simon's memoirs attacking court life at Versailles) . . . . .	23
Architecture in France in the Seventeenth Century. . . . .	17	<i>The Three Principles of Magnificent Building</i> (excerpt from Gerbier's manual on architectural construction) . . . . .	30
Different Directions in England . . . . .	29	<i>In Praise of St. Paul's</i> (poetry encouraging the effort to rebuild St. Paul's Cathedral) . . . . .	31
Classicism and City Planning in the Netherlands . . . . .	34	The Sacred Landscape . . . . .	37
The Baroque in Central Europe . . . . .	36	Shifting Family Values . . . . .	45
The Rococo in the Eighteenth Century. . . . .	44	<i>At Home with the Queen</i> (excerpt from Campan's memoirs concerning the queen's home life) . . . . .	52
The Development of Neoclassicism. . . . .	49	<i>The Chinese Fashion</i> (excerpt from Chambers' work advising the use of Chinese style and fashion) . . . . .	58
Revivals and Romanticism . . . . .	57		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Robert Adam . . . . .	60		
Francesco Borromini . . . . .	62		
François de Cuvilliers . . . . .	63		
Louis XIV . . . . .	64		
Christopher Wren. . . . .	66		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	68		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Architecture and Design*

- 1603 Carlo Maderno's influential façade for the Church of Santa Susanna is completed at Rome.
- 1606 Work begins on the façade of St. Peter's Basilica at Rome along designs completed by Carlo Maderno.
- 1622 Inigo Jones's Banqueting House is finished in Whitehall, London. The severe Palladianism of the building will continue to influence London's Baroque architecture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
- 1631 Construction begins at Venice on the Church of Santa Maria della Salute, designed by Baldassare Longhena.
- 1635 Work commences on François Mansart's designs for the Orléans Wing at the Château of Blois in France.
- 1638 Francesco Borromini designs his innovative Church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, or St. Charles of the Four Fountains.
- 1640 Inigo Jones's recently completed Queens House at Greenwich sets a new standard for classical architecture in England.
- 1642 Work begins on the Church of Sant'Ivo della Sapienza at Rome, designed by Francesco Borromini.
- 1652 Gianlorenzo Bernini's Cornaro Chapel is completed in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.
- 1653 The Church of Sant'Agnese is begun in the Piazza Navona in Rome, according to the designs of Francesco Borromini.
- 1656 Work begins on Gianlorenzo Bernini's designs for the Colonnade of St. Peter's at the Vatican. When completed, the massive space this structure encloses will be capable of accommodating crowds of hundreds of thousands of people.
- 1657 Nicholas Fouquet, a commoner who rose to serve as finance minister to King Louis XIV, commences construction of his lavish Château of Vaux-le-Vicomte.
- 1663 The Church of the Theatines, a structure heavily influenced by the Roman Baroque, is begun in the city of Munich in Germany.
- 1666 The Great Fire destroys most of the city of London, the core of the ancient medieval city. During the coming decades Sir Christopher Wren and other English architects will design many churches and public buildings for an ambitious plan of rebuilding.
- 1667 Guarino Guarini's completes his designs for the Chapel of the Holy Shroud within the Cathedral of Turin, and building commences. The work will include an intricate and imaginative interlacing of arches that create an imaginative web.
- Work begins on a new classically-inspired façade, designed by Claude Perrault and Louis Le Vau, for the Palace of the Louvre in Paris.
- 1669 King Louis XIV decides to move his court from Paris to his hunting lodge at Versailles. Work begins on transforming this humble structure into the grandest palace in Europe.
- 1675 Building commences on the new Cathedral of St. Paul's in London. When completed in 1710, it will be the largest church in England and one of the largest in Europe.
- 1676 In Paris, construction of the Church of the Invalids begins on the grounds of a military hospital. The church will be completed according to designs set down by Jules Hardouin-Mansart, and its gilded

- dome will be a recognizable landmark on the Parisian cityscape for centuries to follow.
- 1679 Construction begins on Guarini's lavish façade for the Palazzo Carignano at Turin.
- 1687 Louis XIV begins construction on the Grand Trianon, a weekend retreat constructed to replace a small porcelain decorated pavilion on the grounds of the Palace of Versailles. The new palace is designed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart.
- c. 1700 The taste for elegant palaces that imitate the design of the Château of Versailles, begins to spread throughout Europe.
- 1702 Construction begins on Jakob Prandtauer's imposing designs for the Benedictine Abbey of Melk in Austria.
- 1705 The Neoclassical Greenwich Hospital, designed by Sir Christopher Wren, is completed in England.
- Work commences on John Vanbrugh's plans for the Baroque Blenheim Palace near Woodstock in England.
- c. 1710 The Rococo architect Daniel Pöppelmann designs Baroque structures for the electors of Saxony's capital at Dresden.
- 1716 Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach designs the Karlskirche or Charles Church at Vienna.
- 1719 In Würzburg, capital of an important German diocese, Balthasar Neumann designs a new lavish residence for the town's bishops.
- 1722 The Upper Palace of the Belvedere is begun at Vienna according to the plans of Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt. The garden will be one of the most sumptuous in Europe.
- 1725 The Spanish Steps are completed in Rome, an attractive promenade that connects major thoroughfares in the city and links the Church of Trinità dei Monti with the Piazza di Spagna. The Steps are designed and their construction supervised by the architect Francesco de Sanctis.
- 1726 James Gibbs' classical Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields is completed in what later becomes known as Trafalgar Square in London.
- 1733 In Munich, the architect Egid Quirin Asam begins construction on the Church of St. John Nepomuk. Asam and his brother pay for the structure, which will eventually be completed in the highly ornate style of the Rococo.
- 1736 Filippo Juvara, designer of a number of innovative and elegant buildings in and around the Italian city of Turin, dies.
- 1738 Archeological excavations of the ancient Greek city of Herculaneum commence in southern Italy. Excavations will follow at Paestum and Pompei, ancient towns in the same region and will foster a fashion for a purer classicism throughout Europe.
- 1739 James Gibbs designs the circular, domed Radcliffe Library at Oxford University.
- 1743 The Frauenkirche or Church of Our Lady is completed in Dresden, one of the grandest Rococo churches in Europe and one of the largest Protestant structures on the continent.
- 1745 At Potsdam outside Berlin the building of the Rococo pleasure palace, Sansouci (meaning "without a care"), begins on the grounds of the Prussian king's principal country palace.
- 1752 The fantastically ornate and elegant Cuvilliés Theater is completed for the kings of Bavaria in Munich. After this date the fashion for the ornate and fantastically decorated Rococo style will begin to fade in favor of greater naturalism and classical detail.
- 1757 The building of the Panthéon begins at Paris according to designs set down by Germain Soufflot. The church is intended

to commemorate King Louis XV's recovery from serious illness, but will eventually become a shrine to the great thinkers, artists, and authors of France.

- 1762 Robert Adam designs a series of classical rooms for Syon House outside London that will have great impact on interior design throughout Europe and America.

The Trevi Fountain is finished in the city of Rome.

- 1763 The Place Louis XV is laid out in Paris according to designs of Ange-Jacques Gabriel. The site will eventually become the Place de la Concorde which will serve as the place of execution of many French aristocrats and priests during the French Revolution.

- 1768 Louis XV begins building a small retreat, the Petit Trianon, on the ground of Versailles for his mistress, Madame du Pom-

padour. Eventually, the relaxed atmosphere the small structure affords will make it one of Queen Marie-Antoinette's favorite retreats.

- c. 1780 The English taste for the "picturesque" in garden designs has become popular throughout Europe, prompting a new fashion for seemingly naturalistic garden settings with architectural focal points. In reality, these more casual surroundings are intricately planned and executed by European designers.

- 1789 The naturalistic but grand English Garden is laid out in Munich. When completed in the early nineteenth century, the massive park will include elements of Neo-classical and oriental architecture and will provide a space that mimics the countryside within the city.

Work begins on the classical Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.

## OVERVIEW

### *of Architecture and Design*

**RELIGIOUS RENEWAL.** The rise of the Baroque style in architecture had intricate connections to the religious dilemmas and problems of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. Few great projects of church construction had been undertaken in sixteenth-century Europe, the one notable exception being the reconstruction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Chronic money shortages as well as the religious controversies of the sixteenth century diverted the attentions of the Papacy and other high-ranking officials of the church away from many of the grand projects begun during the High Renaissance. As the seventeenth century approached, however, a revival of spirit became evident in the Roman Catholic Church. This Catholic Reformation saw the foundation of many new religious orders like the Jesuits, Theatines, and Capuchins, who worked for religious renewal. During the half-century following 1570, these groups led a dramatic resurgence in Catholic piety. The new orders demanded religious architecture that focused worshippers' attentions on the sacraments and key elements of Catholic worship, that appealed to the senses, and that was an enhancement to parishioners' religious lives. One of the first churches to reflect these new spiritual values was the Gesù, the home church of the new Jesuit order in Rome. Although its interior decoration did not initially make use of the techniques that Baroque designers developed, its physical layout mirrored the style of church construction that became common during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This structure's enormous size and massive barrel vault provided broad expanses of wall and ceiling space on which painters presented images that celebrated and defended Catholic truth. Inside the Gesù the focus of worshippers was drawn to the High Altar and the pulpit, the two sources of religious authority Catholic Reformers promoted as vital to the faith. As a number of new churches appeared on the Roman horizon around 1600, many made use of this plan's coherent and unified design. These structures were even more ornate and imposing than their original source of inspiration.

**ELEMENTS OF THE BAROQUE STYLE.** Whereas High Renaissance architects favored rational and intellectually conceived spaces, the architects of the early Baroque violated many canons of classicism. They placed broken pediments as frames for windows and doorways, a departure from the classically-inspired canons of the Renaissance. Similarly, other decorative elements they used on their façades and in their interiors stepped outside the traditional canons of Renaissance classical design. Baroque architects also massed their decorative elements to create dramatic focal points and an impression of climax in their buildings. This attempt to harness a worshipper's gaze often began at a church's door and continued along the path that led to the church's altar. From the very start, the Baroque presented Europeans with a variety of faces. Imaginative designers like Francesco Borromini and Guarino Guarini relied on complex geometrical patterns in their structures, patterns that were more imaginative and complex than the static and serene symmetries of High Renaissance design. Their bold works inspired departures from classicism in many parts of Europe, and at the same time they were rejected in other regions as being too radical. A second face of the Italian Baroque was evident in the more conservative works of figures like Carlo Maderno and Gianlorenzo Bernini. In Rome, these architects created grand interiors that awed the city's many pilgrims with symbols of the Roman Catholic Church's power. Maderno, Bernini, and other Baroque designers also set themselves to the task of transforming Rome's cityscape. They laid out impressive squares and broad avenues, and created monuments and fountains that provided Rome with attractive focal points. Their emphasis on grand urban planning and design had numerous imitators in Northern Europe as Baroque design became an international style favored throughout the continent.

**RISE OF ABSOLUTISM.** Features of the political landscape of seventeenth-century Europe also favored the rise of the Baroque. The seventeenth-century witnessed a dramatic increase in the power of kings and princes over their subjects. The new theories of absolutism stressed that a king was the sole source of political authority in his realm, as monarchs in France, England, Spain, and in scores of smaller principalities throughout the continent grew anxious to assert their authority over their subjects and to wrest power from their nobilities. Often the elaborate pretensions of seventeenth-century kings to power were more illusory than real, yet in a large and prosperous country like France, the rise of a more centralized state with power focused in the hands of the king and his ministers is undeniable.



In this climate, one in which kings and princes were desirous to present an image of their muscle, Baroque architecture provided an important visual language for a monarch's self-representation. The most dramatic example of the ways in which the Baroque enhanced the power and reputation of a king was the Palace of Versailles outside Paris. Originally built as a hunting lodge, this modest structure had grown to become the very centerpiece of royal government by the late seventeenth century, an expensive stage for the spectacles of royal power. An elaborate protocol and etiquette governed every aspect of the nobility's lives at Versailles and many flocked there to be near the king. An unwieldy formality prevailed, not only in social life, but also in the grand architectural spaces that Louis's designers built in the palace and its gardens. Versailles' reputation for formality and grand monumentality spread quickly throughout Europe, as scores of smaller and less powerful courts throughout the continent imitated its style.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF CITIES.** While the designs of country and suburban palaces celebrated the rituals of state and court, the Baroque period also witnessed an unprecedented growth in Europe's cities. Many of the fastest growing cities were located in the northwestern part of the continent, particularly in the Netherlands, where rapidly expanding commerce and colonial ventures quickly transformed the region into the most urbanized part of Europe. Both London and Paris witnessed dramatic growth, as did many of Spain's cities at the time, but the most advanced of the many urban renewal and expansion projects undertaken in the seventeenth century occurred in Amsterdam, the population of which increased fourfold during the seventeenth century to top 200,000 by 1700. In support of the town council's decision to open up new areas for settlement in 1612, workers dug three grand canals to provision the city, and residential and commercial quarters were separated from other parts of the town dedicated to crafts and industry. While other cities emulated Amsterdam's careful planning, fast-growing towns like London and Paris took a more random approach. In these cities new, planned squares, filled with attractive brick and stone edifices, gradually replaced the half-timbered, wooden houses that had long been the primary feature of the urban landscape. One catalyst for change in London was the city's Great Fire in 1666 that destroyed the vast majority of the city's houses and churches. Sir Christopher Wren's ambitious plans to rebuild London as a city of broad streets and classical buildings could not be achieved. The expense of his designs, as well as long-standing traditions and laws guarding private property, ensured that most

of London continued to be a tangled web of dark streets and alleyways. Despite its lack of planning, London's late seventeenth-century growth was enormous. By 1700, it had emerged as Europe's largest metropolis.

**THE ROCOCO.** With the death of Louis XIV in 1715, a new decorative style, eventually called the Rococo, began to dramatically change the houses of nobles and the wealthy in France. Long judged a merely decorative and sometimes even corrupt period in the history of art and architecture, the Rococo's history has more recently been re-assessed. The movement arose at a time of rapid change in Western history. The tastes of Louis XIV's age had long shown a propensity, on the one hand, for a symmetrical, austere, and commanding classicism, and on the other, for interior spaces created to serve the rituals of France's secular religion of royalty. In the years immediately following the monarch's death many noble families returned to Paris from Versailles to build townhouses or to redecorate their ancient homes within the city. New fashions for extensive but delicate gilt ornamentation and for elaborately sculpted plaster were two of the most distinctive elements of the early Rococo. Designers of the period produced some of the first cabinets, small drawing rooms that were spaces of relative privacy in a world that to this point had provided little opportunity for intimate gatherings. The rise of the Rococo proceeded apace with the development of salons in France, gatherings of elites and intellectuals that eventually became a major vehicle for the dissemination of Enlightenment thinking. The Rococo opened up new vistas, then, in providing spaces that were suitable for the elevated discussions that occurred within the small galleries and drawing rooms of eighteenth-century Paris. As the movement traveled beyond France, its influence spread to interior design and decoration elsewhere in Europe, but most particularly in Germany and Austria. Here Rococo designers like François Cuvilliés, a French emigré, and native architects like Dominikus Zimmermann and Johann Michael Fischer unlocked more of the movement's architectural potentials. In a series of works created during the 1730s and 1740s these figures created striking spaces, less angular and hard-edged than those of the Baroque, into which they poured an exuberant, even festive wealth of ornamentation. The culmination of their efforts bore fruit in a number of churches long recognized in Germany as *Gesamtkunstwerke*, masterworks that combined architecture, painting, sculpture, and other decorative arts so that their creative fusion was greater than their constituent parts.

**NEOCLASSICISM AND ROMANTICISM.** During the mid-eighteenth century new waves of interest in the

architecture of ancient Rome and Greece attracted the attention of Europe's most sophisticated designers and patrons. In Italy, archeological excavations were uncovering a more historically accurate picture of the architecture of the ancient world. A key figure in this revival was the Italian designer, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who throughout his career did much to promote antique architecture. His etchings of Roman and Greek monuments demonstrated an understanding of the ways in which ancient peoples had built their structures, and Piranesi's strikingly beautiful, yet idealized vision of ancient architecture captured the imagination of patrons and architects alike to spark the neoclassical movement in the mid-eighteenth century. This movement also fit neatly with the ideas of Enlightenment philosophers, and their advocacy of a new social order based around principles of human freedom. These thinkers perceived the virtues of the ancient Roman Republic or the Greek polis as an antidote to the corruption and decadence they saw around them. Not surprisingly, too, many Enlightenment philosophers celebrated England as the greatest political culture of the age, sensing in its limited monarchy a model for political reforms that should be adopted throughout Europe. Neoclassicism found a ready home in this island country, where an early eighteenth-century revival of Palladian classicism began to give way to the more austere vision of neoclassicists after 1750. In France, the movement likewise mingled with the pre-existing taste for classical architecture, producing the designs of figures like Soufflot and Gabriel, which were notable for their great restraint in ornament and decoration. Neoclassicism, though, was just one of a series of revival styles that became popular throughout Europe, as new waves of fashion attempted to recreate the architectural visions of previous ages. Gothic architecture, too, witnessed a surge in popularity. The romantic impulses of the period can perhaps nowhere be more brilliantly witnessed than in the garden and landscape architecture of the later eighteenth century. A new fashion for naturalistic English gardens spread quickly throughout Europe, as designers and patrons desired to emulate the freedom and seemingly unplanned character of the English country landscape. At the same time they poured into these spaces artificial lakes and rapids, Chinese pavilions, ancient ruins, Gothic chapels, and other structures that provided "picturesque" focal points for connoisseurs as they moved through their gardens. Ironically, the fashion for the English garden revealed some of the underlying contradictions and ironies of the age, as eighteenth-century men and women enjoyed spaces that were models of both human freedom and restraint.

**FROM BAROQUE TO CLASSICISM.** European design during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continually drew from the great designers of the Renaissance as well as new innovations in form and aesthetics pioneered by the great contemporary figures of the age. Successive waves of classicism gradually revived a more historically accurate picture of the architecture of previous ages. At the end of the eighteenth century innovations in design championed a new informality that departed from the formalistic architecture that had prevailed throughout much of the Continent since the early seventeenth century. The underlying impulses of this movement were consonant with the waves of dramatic change that convulsed Europe following the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.

## TOPICS *in Architecture and Design*

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### THE RENAISSANCE INHERITANCE AND CATHOLIC RENEWAL

**TERMS.** In Italy, architecture and urban planning began to move in a grander direction in the years around 1600. Since the eighteenth century this style has been known as the "Baroque," a word that comes to us from the Portuguese *baroco*. Originally, this term referred to pearls that were rough and heavily encrusted with sediment. When the neoclassicists of the eighteenth century adopted the word to describe the architecture of the period that preceded their own, they did so to criticize the imposing grandeur and often heavily ornamented style that had been popular throughout Europe in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They found this style decadent and corrupt; in its place, they longed to develop a purer classicism with simpler and more harmonious features. The label the neoclassicists applied to the period stuck, although today it retains little of its negative connotations. While the word "Baroque" still sometimes disapprovingly suggests an art, architecture, or literature that is overly complex, stylized, or contrived, modern historians of art and architecture have come to realize that the designs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries possessed considerable variety and vitality. Today, in other words, the architecture of the Baroque has been restored to its important place in the history of Western culture, and the designs of the architects and urban planners of this period have come to be valued on their own terms as well

as for their important role in shaping modern notions about cities and urban planning.

**ORIGINS OF BAROQUE ARCHITECTURE.** In sixteenth-century Italy, two important styles of building—High Renaissance classicism and the more willful and artful designs of later Renaissance Mannerism—rose to prominence. High Renaissance classicism first began to emerge in Milan, Florence, and Rome in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and its design elements had been articulated most forcefully in the works of Donato Bramante (1444–1514). Bramante’s design principles stressed restraint in ornament, harmonious proportions derived from an intellectually conceived program, and monumental scale. The period of the High Renaissance was short, lasting only for about three decades following 1490. While these years saw the construction of a number of important structures in northern and central Italy, political and financial realities frequently dogged High Renaissance projects, as did issues of sheer technical complexity and scale. Many of the great designs of the period were too large to be completed without armies of laborers and artisans, and, given the political, financial, and religious instabilities of the time, their sponsors soon shelved or abandoned them even before they moved beyond their initial stages. The largest and most important of building projects undertaken at the time were in and around Rome. At the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513) signaled his determination to transform Rome into a grand capital of all Christendom. During the Middle Ages the city had grown into a tangled web of dark, winding streets filled with mud huts and brick tenements. Julius wanted to redesign Rome, to transform it into a city of squares, impressive churches, and imposing public buildings that made use of developing architectural ideas. While few of his projects fulfilled his lofty vision, he set the agenda that would dominate architecture in Rome for the century that followed by demolishing the ancient St. Peter’s Basilica, a structure that had stood since the fourth century on the Vatican Hill outside the city. He chose Bramante to serve as the chief designer for the church’s rebuilding, and although neither figure lived to see the project carried forward beyond its initial stages, Bramante and Julius fixed the scale and proportions of the church by constructing four great piers to support its planned dome. In the century that followed, the greatest architects of the age, including Michelangelo, Carlo Maderno, and Gianlorenzo Bernini, perfected and enhanced Bramante’s plans. At times, political realities, religious crises, financial problems, and sheer technical complexity stalled the project. And in an

indirect way, the construction of the new St. Peter’s Basilica even contributed to the rise of the Protestant Reformation, since Julius’s successor, the Medici Pope Leo X (r. 1513–1521), resorted to corrupt and unscrupulous sales of indulgences in order to carry on construction of the new building. The marketing of these indulgences prompted Martin Luther to attack the church in his famous *Ninety-Five Theses*, one of the documents that precipitated the rise of religious controversies throughout Europe. Those disputes, as well as the Sack of Rome at the hands of German armies in 1527, cooled for a time the artistic and architectural ambitions of those within the church’s capital. Despite the controversial nature of the project and the problems that stalled its completion, the construction of the building dominated architectural achievements in Rome until the mid-seventeenth century.

**MANNERIST COMPLEXITIES.** In the relatively brief period of the High Renaissance, designers like Bramante favored a language of restrained and imposing classicism and they planned buildings and urban squares that might have impressed their viewers by their austere noble proportions and sheer monumental scale. As the High Renaissance began to fade, a new fashion for buildings that were less classical in spirit developed. Historians call this style “Mannerism” and the word has long been used to refer to developments both in architecture and the visual arts. Many Mannerist artists followed the lead of the willful and highly personal style that Michelangelo developed during his middle age. During the 1510s and 1520s, he had spent much of his time working for the Medici family in Florence, designing the family’s mausoleum in the Church of San Lorenzo in that city, as well as the Laurentian Library at the same site. While his architecture in this period made use of classical design elements, the artist played imaginatively with these features to create spaces that made use of repetition and a seemingly strange juxtaposition of objects. Michelangelo later rejected his own highly personal style when he became overseer of the construction of the new St. Peter’s in the mid-sixteenth century. At this time his designs returned to the more thoroughly classical style of the High Renaissance. Yet his works in and around Florence inspired a taste for Mannerist design continued by architects like Giorgio Vasari, Giulio Romano, and Bartolommeo Ammanati. These figures continued to violate the norms of High Renaissance classicism in favor of designs that were elegant, willful, and often artificial. In contrast to the severity and monumentality of the High Renaissance, these Mannerist architects favored the repetition of purely decorative elements and played

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CHARLES BORROMEO ON CHURCH DESIGN**

**INTRODUCTION:** The influence of St. Charles Borromeo, a leading figure in spreading the doctrines of the Catholic Reformation, touched almost every area of religious life in Catholic Europe during the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His advice to architects—that they abandon the central style of church construction much favored in the Renaissance—was not always heeded. But the seventeenth century did return to favor the traditional Latin cross he recommended. Among the most notable of the many churches that were to be finished in the shape of a Latin cross was St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, where the Renaissance plans for a central style structure were abandoned to fit with the increasingly conservative tastes of Catholic Reformers.

There are a great many different designs, and the bishop will have to consult a competent architect to select the form wisely in accordance with the nature of the site and the dimensions of the building. Nevertheless, the cruciform plan is preferable for such an edifice, since it can be traced back almost to apostolic times, as is plainly seen in the buildings of the major holy basilicas of Rome. As far as round edifices are concerned, the type of plan was used for pagan temples and is less customary among Christian people.

Every church, therefore, and especially the one whose structure needs an imposing appearance, ought to be

built in the form of a cross; of this form there are many variations; the oblong form is frequently used, the others are less usual. We ought to preserve, therefore, wherever possible, that form which resembles an oblong or Latin cross in construction of cathedral, collegiate or parochial churches.

This cruciform type of church, whether it will have only one nave, or three or five naves as they say, can consist not only of manifold proportions and designs but also again of this one feature, that is beyond the entrance to the high chapel, on two more chapels built on either side, which extended like two arms ought to project to the whole of their length beyond the width of the church and should be fairly prominent externally in proportions to the general architecture of the church.

The architect should see that in the religious decoration of the façade, according to the proportions of the ecclesiastical structure and the size of the edifice, not only that nothing profane be seen, but also that only that which is suitable to the sanctity of the place be represented in as splendid a manner as the means at his disposal will afford.

**SOURCE:** Evelyn Carole Voelker, "Charles Borromeo's *Instructiones Fabricae et Suppellectilis Ecclesiasticae*, 1577. A Translation with Commentary and Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., University of Syracuse, 1977): 51–52 and 63; in *Baroque and Rococo: Art and Culture*. Ed. Vernon Hyde Minor (London: Laurence King, 1999): 78.

with the language of classical architecture, remolding it to create new and unexpected features that appeared on their façades and in their interiors. While the High Renaissance style never completely died out in Italy, Mannerism came to compete against it, particularly in Florence and other Central Italian towns. Both styles—Mannerism and High Renaissance classicism—became a wellspring of inspiration to later Baroque architects as they created a number of new buildings in Rome at the end of the sixteenth century.

**ROME RESURGENT.** Elements of Baroque style first began in the many churches under construction in Rome during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Following Rome's Sack in 1527, few great churches had been built in the city, a result not only of the depression that the attack caused, but also of the Protestant Reformation, which had criticized the costly outlays on church building that had occurred in the later Middle Ages. Toward the end of the century, though, a broad and ever-deepening movement within Catholicism gathered

strength. Known as the Catholic Reformation, this movement matured in Italy sooner than in other parts of the continent, in part because of the peninsula's central position within Roman Catholicism. The Catholic Reformation inspired a number of new religious orders, groups like the Jesuits, Theatines, Capuchins, and the female order of teaching nuns known as the Ursulines. These groups dedicated themselves to renewal in the church, and as they became officially recognized, many began to build new churches in Rome to commemorate their newly acquired status as official orders within Catholicism. As they set up institutions elsewhere in Italy and throughout Europe, groups like the Jesuits also commissioned scores of new churches throughout the continent. The stimulus that the new orders thus gave to church construction soon inspired elites in Rome and in Catholic cities throughout the continent to patronize church building projects, too. As a result, many medieval and Renaissance churches came to be rebuilt or remodeled in the new style, one that favored

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE PRINCE OF DESIGNERS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Gianlorenzo Bernini ruled over the artistic life of Rome for much of the seventeenth century. A figure similar to the great Renaissance men of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he was simultaneously a sculptor, painter, architect, musician, and dramatist. His artistic vision, while more conservative than Filippo Borromini's, mingled exquisite craftsmanship with a new dynamism that had not been characteristic of the Renaissance. Like Michelangelo and Raphael, the scope of Bernini's achievements was widely recognized during his lifetime. Shortly after the artist's death, Filippo Baldinucci published a biography from sources that Bernini himself had compiled while living. Baldinucci's work continually stressed that the designer's star had never fallen from favor in seventeenth-century Rome. In truth, the architect's undertakings at St. Peter's were widely credited during his lifetime with weakening the integrity of Michelangelo's grand dome, and for a short while, Bernini did fall afoul of the papacy. Of the many creative figures active in seventeenth-century Rome, though, his influence over the Baroque style was incomparable.

The sun had not yet set upon the day which was the first of Cardinal Chigi in the Highest Pontificate, when he summoned Bernini to him. With expressions of affectionate regard, he encouraged Bernini to undertake the great and lofty plans that he, the Pope, had conceived of for the greater embellishment of the Temple of God, the glory of the pontifical office, and the decoration of Rome.

This was the beginning of a new and still greater confidence that during this entire pontificate was never to be ended. The Pope wished Bernini with him every day mingling with the number of learned men he gathered around his table after dinner. His Holiness used to say that he was astonished in these discussions how Bernini, alone, was able to grasp by sheer intelligence what the others scarcely grasped after long study.

The Pope named him his own architect and the architect of the Papal Chamber, a thing which had never before happened to Bernini because each former pope had had his own family architect on whom he wished to confer the post. This practice was not observed by popes after Alexander VII because of the respect they had for Bernini's singular ability, so that he retained the office as long as he lived.

... Bernini, with a monthly provision of 260 *scudi* from the Pope, began to build the Portico of St. Peter, which in due time he completed. For the plan of this magnificent building he determined to make use of an oval form, deviating in this from the plan of Michelangelo. This was done in order to bring it nearer to the Vatican Palace and thus to obstruct less the view of the Piazza from that part of the palace built by Sixtus V with the wing connecting with the Scala Regia. The Scala Regia is also a wonderful work of Bernini and the most difficult he ever executed, for it required him to support on piles the Scala Regia and the Paolina Chapel, which lay directly over the stairs, and also to make the walls of both rest on the vault of the stairs. Furthermore, he knew how to bring by means of a charming perspective of steps, columns, architraves, cornices, and arches, the width of the beginning of the stairway most beautifully into harmony with the narrowness at its end. Bernini used to say that this stairway was the least bad thing he had done, when one considered what the stairway looked like before. The supporting of these walls was the boldest thing he had ever attempted, and if, before he applied himself to the task, he had read that another had done it, he would not have believed it.

**SOURCE:** Filippo Baldinucci, "The Life of Cavalier Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini," (1682) in *Michelangelo and the Mannerists; The Baroque and the Eighteenth Century*. Vol. II of *A Documentary History of Art*. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1957): 117–119.

elaborate adornment, display, and imaginative new shapes and decorative elements. Through this style, architects aimed to impress worshippers with an image of the church as a powerful celestial and earthly institution—to capture the imagination, in other words, and lift a worshiper's mind towards Heaven. Much Baroque church architecture was thus monumental in spirit, and even when the scale of religious architecture was small, architects aimed to create spaces that might inspire and awe viewers.

**CATHOLIC REFORM.** The developing ethos of the Catholic Reformation also stressed the importance of the sacraments—particularly the Eucharist—as central

elements of Catholic life. The movement embraced effective preaching as an important goal of the priesthood, while at the same time teaching that an individual's participation in the process of working out salvation was necessary. Catholic reformers vehemently rejected one of the central tenets of Protestant teaching—that salvation was a free gift of God's grace—and instead taught that a diligent participation in the life of the church as well as frequent good works paved the road to Heaven. Architects tried to give visual expression to these teachings as well. One of the first places that the effects of Catholic reform can be seen is in the Gesù, the home church of

the Jesuit Order in Rome. Il Gesù was a massive, barrel-vaulted church completed in the city during the later sixteenth century, and later Baroque designers imitated many of its design features. The church's plan provided for broad expanses of ceiling and wall space, ideal surfaces on which seventeenth-century painters and sculptors could celebrate the richness and variety of the church's history and its teachings. At the same time the sight lines of Il Gesù led inexorably to the church's choir, the place in which the Eucharist was commemorated at the High Altar. The complex of side aisle chapels that had long existed in many medieval structures was thus downplayed at the Gesù and in the many buildings that imitated its plan. Instead the attention of worshippers who visited these places was focused on the altar and the pulpit, the sites from which the sacraments and preaching issued. Following the example of the Gesù, early Baroque architects labored to lend drama and a climactic force to their creations. Many of their constructions frequently suggested movement, underscored by the massing of decorative details at a church's door and along the path to the structure's culminating altar. Thus in contrast to the serene and often static character of High and Late Renaissance buildings, Baroque architecture was, from its very inception, dynamic—an architecture, in other words, that embraced movement.

**INFLUENCE ON THE CITYSCAPE.** As Rome revived from the flagging morale with which it had been afflicted in the mid-sixteenth century, the city began a host of new grand public works projects. These projects began under the reign of the “building” pope, Sixtus V (1585–1590). The enthusiasm with which Sixtus approached the reconstruction of Rome encouraged the church's major officials as well as Rome's noble families to pursue new projects as well. This program of rebuilding intensified after 1600, as one of Sixtus's successors, Pope Paul V (r. 1605–1621), brought new sources of water to the capital by restoring the ancient Roman aqueducts that had once supplied the city. Rome now had a guaranteed, sufficient supply of water that lasted for a century. To celebrate the achievement in providing fresh water, Paul began to build a series of new fountains throughout the city to call attention to this achievement. Thus he helped to create one of the most attractive features of modern Rome: its many fountains set within attractive city squares. Paul commissioned plans for many new churches to minister to the throngs of pilgrims returning to Rome at the time. His architects planned broad avenues to link the city's major pilgrimage churches, and they set ancient artifacts like obelisks as focal points within squares throughout the city. In the years follow-

ing Paul's pontificate, the resurgence evident in Rome did not diminish. Instead, by the mid-seventeenth century Rome gained even more construction sites. As a result, it became a city populated with an almost incomprehensible number of jewels of Baroque architecture. These monuments included many new and remodeled churches, impressive private palaces, civic buildings, and new quarters for the church's bureaucracies. In this process of expansion and refurbishment, Rome emerged as a model for other European capitals, and rulers throughout the continent soon evidenced a desire to imitate elements of the city's revitalization.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: The Renaissance Legacy; Religion: Catholic Culture in the Age of the Baroque*

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## THE RISE OF THE BAROQUE STYLE IN ITALY

**QUALITIES OF ROMAN BAROQUE.** The buildings constructed as a result of the Baroque architectural revival displayed both great variety as well as certain common traits. The first architect to express many of the features of the new style was Carlo Maderno (1556–1629). In the façade he designed for the Church of Santa Susanna in Rome (1597–1603), he imitated many of the design elements from the earlier Jesuit Church of the Gesù, while giving these a completely new interpretation. Both structures were two-stories high, decorated with a profusion of columns or pilasters, and were crowned with central pediments. Maderno, however, massed his decorative detailing on the façade of Santa Susanna in such a way as to accentuate the central door of the church. He set the sides of the façade back to make the doorway to the church appear to protrude outwards, a welcoming effect to worshippers as they approached the structure. To enhance this impression, Maderno used double columns on both sides of the



Baldachino of St. Peter's Basilica, Rome. © DAVID LEES/CORBIS.

door while placing single rounded columns at the central bay's sides and barely visible squared pilasters at the façade's corners. In the earlier Church of il Gesù, the designer had finished the structure with a rounded arch that contained within it a triangular-shaped pediment, an awkward device that Maderno avoided at Santa Susanna. Instead he crowned the building with a simple gabled pediment, and he repeated this triangular shape above the door as well. These details made the structure's sight lines all seem to converge on the church's portal. Maderno's designs for Santa Susanna's façade included a wealth of decorative detailing, yet curiously this ornamentation never seems to be out of control. Rather, these decorative elements appear to enhance the critical design features of the structure. This search for ways to mass ornament and decoration to create dramatic effects and to suggest movement soon became a central quest of other Baroque architects working in the city.

**ST. PETER'S.** Even before he completed the façade for Santa Susanna, Maderno became chief architect for St. Peter's, a position that had been held by the sixteenth-century cultural giants Donato Bramante and Michelangelo Buonarroti. Bramante had originally designed the church in the shape of a Greek cross, that is, as a structure in which the four radiating arms were of equal length. His plans intended to crown the Vatican hill, the

site of St. Peter's martyrdom and tomb, with a monumental domed temple that was thoroughly classical in spirit. Subsequent architects abandoned many features of his designs, although Michelangelo revived and reinstated the crucial features of Bramante's plans. Workers finished the construction of the dome during the pontificate of Sixtus V. Michelangelo's designs, while reinstating the spirit of Bramante's original plans, also treated the dome and the church like a gigantic sculptural mass. Today this feature of his work can only be appreciated from the rear, that is, from the Vatican Gardens, a place that few tourists ever see. The masking of his achievement occurred for several reasons, all of which served the demands of the Catholic Reformation that was underway during the seventeenth century. Although the construction of St. Peter's was well advanced by the time of Maderno's appointment in 1605, Pope Paul V (r. 1605–1621) was anxious to cover all the ground at the site that had originally lain within the ancient basilica, and thus he commissioned the architect to extend the church's nave. In this way the shape of the church conformed to the more traditional pattern of a Latin cross, a style recommended by influential reformers like St. Charles Borromeo. This considerable expansion, however, was incompatible with Michelangelo's immense dome, since it obliterated views as worshippers approached the church toward its main entrances. The resulting compromise, however, increased the scale of the church to truly monumental proportions and made St. Peter's undoubtedly the largest church in Christendom for many centuries to come. In the façade he designed for the building, Maderno again massed design elements, as at Santa Susanna, to make the center doorway the focal point and he emphasized the entrance again with a triangular pediment. But the addition of an upper story to the façade was another departure from the original plans set down by sixteenth-century architects, and one again that was not in keeping with the spirit of the original plans. It further obliterated views of the massive dome. Religious rituals like papal blessings, though, necessitated a *loggia*, or gallery, from which the pope might appear before the crowds who gathered in the square below, and so Maderno obliged by adding an upper story onto his façade. His plans also called for two bell towers to flank the façade at both ends, structures that might have relieved the horizontal emphasis of the structure as it stands today. These towers, though, were not immediately built. Somewhat later, Gianlorenzo Bernini, one of Maderno's successors at the site, commenced their construction, although he extended their height even further. When the first of the bell towers was built, its foundations soon proved inadequate. Fearing that it

might collapse, Bernini had the tower torn down, and the project was soon completely abandoned. Thus, since the seventeenth century the façade of St. Peter's has stood as a compromise, one that, although imposing and grand, is not completely in keeping with its original plans. If the exterior of St. Peter's presents a not altogether satisfying appearance, Maderno's interior decoration remains an unsurpassed example of Baroque ornamentation. With the extension of the church, the architect faced the task of decorating a vast expanse of vaulting overhead as well as the massive columns and piers that supported the structure. In the additions he designed for the church, Maderno opened up broad vistas from his nave by using enormous arches. These arches provided views into the side aisles, which he decorated with broken pediments set atop columns of richly colored marble. To deal with the enormous expanse of vaulted ceiling, Maderno designed an elegant pattern of gilded coffering. Later architects at St. Peter's added to his decoration. Most notable among these additions were those of Gianlorenzo Bernini, who guided the design team that completed the massive bronze and gilt *baldachino*, a canopy that soars almost 140 feet over the church's high altar. Bernini also paneled the columns of the church's main aisle in richly colored marbles, and he placed many sculptures as decorative elements throughout the church. Yet the dominant decorative spirit within St. Peter's is Maderno's, and the use he made there of richly colored marbles mingled with much gilded ornamentation had numerous imitators in other architects of the period.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Catholic Culture in the Age of the Baroque*; *Visual Arts: Elements of the Baroque Style*

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## THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF GIANLORENZO BERNINI

**DOMINATED SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ART.** While Maderno's designs proved to be influential in shaping the direction of the Baroque style, it was Gianlorenzo

Bernini who dominated artistic and architectural developments in Rome for much of the seventeenth century. Bernini was in many ways similar to the great "universal men" of the Renaissance. An accomplished sculptor, architect, and painter, he also wrote for the theater and composed music. By his mid-twenties he had produced a string of sculptural masterpieces, and was beginning to undertake architectural commissions for Pope Urban VIII (r. 1623–1644). These included the famous baldachino and sculptural decorations for St. Peter's as well as a series of tombs for Roman notables, and a large number of stunning fountains located throughout the city. A student of urban design, Bernini's sculptural fountains ennobled many Roman squares and gave the city numerous attractive focal points. In this way he achieved one of the visions that Renaissance designers had longed for: the creation of handsome monuments set in attractive public squares where city dwellers might meet and congregate.

**ST. PETER'S COURTYARD.** While Bernini decorated the city as a grand canvas, his most important architectural achievement was the courtyard he created in front of St. Peter's Basilica, an enormous public space capable of holding crowds of hundreds of thousands of people, yet made inviting by its enveloping colonnades. He ingeniously designed the shape of these structures to hide less attractive buildings within the papal complex. Unlike many more highly decorated colonnades at the time, Bernini's design was far simpler, calling for four rows of simple Doric columns progressing out from the basilica, first in a straight line and then bowing to form a circular shape. In all, there are 300 columns in this massive structure. They enclose a square with two large circular fountains at the sides and an Egyptian obelisk in the center. Atop the colonnade's simple, unbroken entablature Bernini placed a large number of statues of the saints of the church. While massive and severely unadorned, the colonnade nevertheless suggests the "arms of mother church," Bernini's own phrase to describe the space he wished to create.

**PARISIAN INTERLUDE.** As a result of achievements on this truly massive scale, King Louis XIV recruited the architect to plan his remodeling of the medieval and Renaissance palace of the Louvre in Paris. A jumble of conflicting wings and buildings had collected at this site from the Middle Ages onward, and Louis initially believed that Bernini was the architect who might bring order out of this architectural chaos. When he first arrived in Paris, he pronounced the Louvre beyond redemption, and argued that it should be torn down. Over time, though, he became convinced that the façade of



the enormous palace might be rebuilt to give the structure unity and coherence. One of his designs for the structure was highly imaginative and included a curved façade, although Bernini eventually altered that design to reflect the more severe and classical tastes of the king and court. While he participated in the ceremony to lay the new foundation stone for the remodeling of the palace, his plans were rejected immediately after his departure from Paris. Back in Rome after only five months abroad, Bernini continued to sculpt, to design, and to supervise many projects until his death at the age of eighty. He remains one of the most prolific artists of the seventeenth century, and as an architect he was especially important for his grand contributions to urban planning and design. His plans for buildings are fewer in number than other great architects of the day and included only three small church projects built in Rome. Yet these structures demonstrated imaginative uses of the more fluid shapes Baroque architects championed at the time.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Sculpture in Italy*

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## THE TEMPESTUOUS AND FANCIFUL BAROQUE

**BORROMINI.** An altogether more tempestuous spirit and highly imaginative genius animated the architectural visions of Francesco Borromini (1599–1667), the architect of a number of churches in and around Rome in the mid-seventeenth century. Unlike the amiable Bernini, Borromini was a loner who was quick to take offense and who eventually ended his life in suicide. While his competitor Bernini reveled in interiors filled with opulent displays of gold, colored marbles, and sculpture, Borromini's designs usually called for stark white, highlighted only by touches of gilt. Into these spaces he poured strange symmetries, curving walls and entablatures, and concave pediments—in short, shapes that had never been seen before in such close juxtaposition. Trained as a sculptor like Michelangelo and Bernini, he obsessed over small details in his designs,

treating buildings as if they were sculptural forms. His plans almost always reveal his sophisticated knowledge of geometry. One of the best examples of his unusual architecture is the small Church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, a structure in which Borromini used many intersecting elliptical shapes. Inside, these shapes give the viewer the impression that the church is alive because of the constantly shifting dynamic flow of its curved lines. A more mature and larger work resulted from Borromini's designs for the Church of Sant'Ivo, a domed structure unlike any built up to this time in Europe. Borromini built the church at the end of a long courtyard for a school that later became the University of Rome; from the outside, the structure's dome and cupola appear as if they were a *ziggurat*, an ancient stepped pyramid dating from Mesopotamian times. These designs had become known in Europe during the sixteenth century, but only Borromini ventured to make such bold use of this shape. The footprint of the church is in the form of a six-pointed star, although, inside, Borromini's alterations to this shape quickly become apparent. Rather than ending in the angular shapes of a triangle, three alternating points of the star are rounded into semi-circular niches, a motif repeated even more forcefully in the dome above. Thus, as one stands inside the church in any direction the shapes constantly oscillate against each other, and the form that is behind one is exactly the opposite of that which is in front. This highly intellectual architecture had many admirers, particularly in a seventeenth-century world fascinated by the properties of mathematics and geometry. Yet Borromini's works also evidenced a playful and unexpected side, too. In the Church of Sant'Agnese he designed in the Piazza Navona in Rome, the architect made the façade appear as if it was a traditional church with side aisles and a nave. He strengthened this illusion by the placement of towers at both ends of the façade. Once inside, however, the viewer finds that the shape of the church is an ellipse that runs parallel, rather than perpendicular, to the square outside. The façade at Sant'Agnese, too, manages to complete Michelangelo's vision for unobstructed views of a church's dome. Flanked by its corner towers, the dome of the church soars above and is framed by high towers, thus accomplishing what the papacy's revisions in the design of St. Peter's destroyed at the great basilica. Here, as in most of his structures, Borromini also played with the traditional language of architecture to create a space notable for its decorative imaginativeness as well as its undeniable beauty. While he was not the only Italian Baroque architect to have a profound effect in Northern Europe, his works were especially revered in Germany and Austria, and knowledge of his achievements even-



The façade of the Church of S. Agnese, Rome. ALINARI-ART REFERENCE/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

tually inspired a climate of experimentation and innovation in these regions.

**RICCHINO AND LONGHENA.** The development of a dynamic Baroque architecture soon occurred in other places throughout Italy. At roughly the same time that Bernini and Borromini began their careers in Rome, several figures—working primarily in Venice and Milan—began employing design techniques similar to those taking shape in Rome. At Milan, Francesco Maria Ricchino (1583–1658) experimented with combinations of rectangles and octagons within the Church of San Giuseppe. Designed in the early seventeenth century, the structure broke away from reigning conventions to include a central-style interior composed of two octagons. The resulting structure bore great resemblance to the curving, undulating lines that Borromini developed at roughly the same time in Rome. Ricchino, once dubbed “the most imaginative” of seventeenth-century Baroque architects, inspired a native school of Baroque architec-

ture in Milan that developed roughly contemporaneous with the more familiar and famous Roman style. Slightly later in Venice, the designer Baldassare Longhena (1598–1658) made similar experiments with the Baroque style in the Church of Santa Maria delle Salute, a structure prominently placed at the end of the city’s Grand Canal. Begun in 1631, the church was intended to commemorate the cessation of a recent outbreak of the plague in the city. The building was constructed in the central style, that is, it radiated outward as an octagon from a single point at its center, a form of construction generally disfavored by ecclesiastical leaders at the time. Inside, the interior was fairly typical of churches built at the time, yet on its exterior Longhena massed 125 decorative sculptures, rounded volutes, or scroll-shaped decorations, that served as buttresses, and other ornamental elements so that the entire structure took on the effect of a gigantic sculptural confection. It remains one of the most fanciful churches on the Venetian scene to

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***VILE ARCHITECTURE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The imaginative spaces and shapes of Italian Baroque architecture did not please everyone. Writing in 1672, the Roman art historian Giovanni Pietro Bellori attacked the newfangled ideas of seventeenth-century architects, ideas that deformed the noble artistic synthesis accomplished by the ancients and recreated by High Renaissance masters. Bellori dedicated his work to Louis XIV's chief minister Colbert, who actively supported classicism in that country by encouraging the king to found the Royal Academy in 1671.

As for architecture, we say that the architect ought to conceive a noble *Idea* and to establish an understanding that may serve him as law and reason; since his inventions will consist of order, arrangement, measure, and eurythmy of whole and parts. But in respect to the decoration and ornaments of the orders, he may be certain to find the *Idea* established and based on the examples of the ancients, who as a result of long study established this art, the Greeks gave it its scope and best proportions, which are confirmed by the most learned centuries and by the consensus of a succession of learned men, and which became the laws of an admirable *Idea* and a final beauty. This beauty, being one only in each species, cannot be altered without being destroyed. Hence those who with novelty transform it, regrettably deform it; for ugliness stands close to beauty, as the vices touch the virtues. Such an evil we observe unfortunately at the fall of the

Roman Empire, with which all the good Arts decayed, and architecture more than any other; the barbarous builders disdained the models and the *Ideas* of the Greeks and Romans and the most beautiful monuments of antiquity, and for many centuries frantically erected so many and such various fantastic phantasies of orders that they rendered it monstrous with the ugliest disorder. Bramante, Raphael, Baldassare [Peruzzi], Giulio Romano, and finally Michelangelo labored to restore it from its heroic ruins to its former *Idea* and look, by selecting the most elegant forms of the antique edifices.

But today instead of receiving thanks these very wise men like the ancients are ungratefully vilified, almost as if, without genius and without inventions, they had copied one from the other. On the other hand, everyone gets in his head, all by himself, a new *Idea* and travesty of architecture in his own mode, and displays it in public squares and upon the façades: they certainly are men void of any knowledge that belongs to the architect, whose name they assume in vain. So much so that they madly deform buildings and even towns and monuments with angles, breaks and distortions of lines; they tear apart bases, capitals, and columns by the introduction of bric-a-brac of stucco, scraps, and disproportions; and this while Vitruvius condemns similar novelties and puts before us the best examples.

**SOURCE:** Giovanni Pietro Bellori in *Michelangelo and the Mannerists; The Baroque and the Eighteenth Century*. Vol. II of *A Documentary History of Art*. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1958): 104–105.

this day, providing the city with one of its most unforgettable and dramatic views, and one that is strategically placed in an important crossroads at the city's center. It is, in other words, an effective, grand note of drama and whimsy at Venice's core.

**GUARINO GUARINI.** In a somewhat different vein the architecture of Guarino Guarini (1624–1683) made use of elements drawn from Borromini, although he deployed these to a completely different effect. A member of the Catholic reform order of the Theatines, Guarini spent his youth in Rome, where he became aware of the experiments with new forms and styles being conducted by Maderno, Borromini, and Bernini. As he came to maturity, he became one of the great traveling architects of the seventeenth century, designing buildings in Sicily, Paris, and at Lisbon, as well as completing from a distance designs for churches at Munich and Prague. Later he moved to Turin, where he planned many buildings, most of which unfortunately have been destroyed since

that time. A few examples of his work do survive, however. Although in some regards his use of curved shapes and unusual juxtapositions of geometric figures was similar to Borromini's and shows his influence, Guarini became even more obsessed with geometric patterns in his work. Much of this inspiration he derived from the knowledge he acquired of Islamic architecture while working in Sicily and Spain. In addition, late Gothic or Flamboyant architecture with its highly decorative vaulting provided another source of inspiration. In the designs for two domes he created in Turin, for example, he made use of intricate webs of triangles. For the Chapel of the Holy Shroud in Turin's cathedral, Guarini created a complex pattern of ever-shifting hexagons that move up the dome and frame its culminating *oculus*, a window which is in itself made up of a kaleidoscope of circles, semi-circles, and triangles. This pattern refracts and throws the light that enters the chapel in a way no less spectacular than in the greatest of Gothic cathedrals.

Guarini's creations were, above all, intellectual exercises in the deployment of geometric figures to create spaces that strike their observers as suave, elegant, and highly intellectual. In their wealth of decorative ornamentation and flamboyant detailing, Guarini's works anticipate the elegance of the Rococo style of the eighteenth century.

**DIFFUSION OF THE BAROQUE STYLE BEYOND ITALY.** Through the travels of figures like Gianlorenzo Bernini and Guarino Guarini, the accomplishments of Italian seventeenth-century design came to be known throughout continental Europe. The popularity of engraved architectural etchings and theoretical treatises written by Italians also spread knowledge of the innovations underway in the peninsula, as did the travels of European designers in Italy, too. Throughout the continent, many of the features of Italian design inspired similar experiments with space, ornament, and monumental scale. The Baroque, as it developed elsewhere in Europe, was not just slavishly copied or imitated from Italian examples. The breakthroughs of figures like Bernini and Borromini were instead assimilated to varying degrees within native styles. One of the chief accomplishments of Roman Baroque architects in the first half of the seventeenth century had been to create a dynamic architecture that suggested movement—movement bolder than the passive, static, and intellectualized spaces favored by the designers of the High Renaissance and Mannerist periods. Baroque buildings invited viewers to enjoy their complexities from multiple angles. The asymmetrical lines and the curving spaces of their interiors demanded that viewers walk about these structures to explore the many facets of their interiors. All of these elements, though, were carefully calculated to produce a climactic impression, an impression that often bespoke of power and authority. In the many churches that sprouted on the cityscapes of Rome and other Italian cities, this element of power had been carefully harnessed to support the resurgence of religion underway as a result of the Catholic Reformation. Elsewhere, the use of the new dynamic and monumental techniques of Baroque architecture found their way into an almost innumerable number of urban palaces, country villas and châteaux, as well as churches and civic buildings. For their abilities to command the environment and to suggest control, buildings constructed in the Baroque fashion quickly became the preferred style for seventeenth-century kings and princes desiring to present an image that coincided with their absolutist political rhetoric and theories.

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## ARCHITECTURE IN FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

**A CENTURY OF GREATNESS.** The later sixteenth century had been a time of great troubles in France, with religious and civil wars threatening on many occasions to tear the country apart. The accession of Henri IV (r. 1589–1610) paved a way for an era of greater peace and stability. Henri's conversion to Catholicism in 1593, and the granting of a limited degree of religious toleration to French Protestants through the Edict of Nantes (1598) were both controversial measures at the time. Yet both royal actions provided a foundation for France's relative domestic peace and stability in the seventeenth century. Although Henri IV was to die the victim of an assassin's dagger in 1610, France weathered this crisis and did not return to the chaotic civil conflict of the kind that had raged in the sixteenth century. As a result, the seventeenth century saw a period of unprecedented growth in royal power and authority, a growth reflected in the architecture of the period. The new political goals and ideology of the age have frequently been called absolutism, meaning that the king was the sole source of political authority in the realm. In practical terms, this meant that seventeenth-century French kings aimed to strengthen their power by reforming the government's finances and administration, by weakening the local control of the country's nobles, and by enlarging French territory and the country's role on the international scene through military engagements. The emerging Baroque style in architecture provided an ideal way in which to express the enhanced power of France's royal government, and for much of the seventeenth century it was the city of Paris that benefited architecturally from the wealth and resources that France's new stability afforded. In Paris, the seventeenth-century French monarchy



Place des Vosges, Paris. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

supported a number of new projects that made use of the developing tenets of Baroque design. At the same time the Baroque in Paris re-interpreted the dramatically imaginative and irregular spaces Italian designers favored so that monuments built in Paris during the seventeenth century displayed a more severely classical, if no less monumental imprint.

**PARIS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.** In 1600 Paris was one of continental Europe's largest cities. Although the developments that most tourists associate today with Paris—the city of attractive squares, public monuments, and grand boulevards—were largely creations of the nineteenth century, Paris was still one of Europe's fastest growing seventeenth-century cities, and one that was beginning to be shaped by the techniques of urban planning. At the time, new districts and suburbs were continually being opened up for settlement, and many projects undertaken in these areas anticipated, if on a smaller scale, the grand Paris of modern times. A growing willingness, too, to attack and surmount the problems that nature presented is evident in many of the projects undertaken during the Baroque period. Two districts—the Marais and the Île Saint-Louis—show the appetite that existed for land for development close to

the heart of the city. Though they were less-than-ideal sites, their proximity to the medieval core of Paris made them prime locations for townhouses for the city's nobles and wealthy burghers. The Marais—meaning literally “swamp” or “marshland”—lay directly east of Paris's early medieval walls. During the Middle Ages, the Knights Templar and several other religious orders had drained the area of its swamps, and set up religious houses in the district. Eventually, the area was brought within the town's walls, and Paris's Jews were allowed to settle there. In the fourteenth century, two royal residences were built at the north and south edges of the district, making the Marais a center of artistic and cultural life in the later Middle Ages. By the late sixteenth century, though, much of the Marais was still susceptible to flooding, and its previous medieval and Renaissance glory had languished as the court had again taken up residence in the Louvre. Henri IV decided to reinvigorate the area, and he devised a plan to construct Paris's first purpose-built square, the Place Royale, later known as the Place des Vosges. Plans for the area had already been set down during the time of Catherine de' Medici in the 1560s but, given the turbulence of the later sixteenth century in France, they had not been

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A ROYAL BUILDER**

**INTRODUCTION:** During the early years of Louis XIV's reign the king was constantly involved with new architectural projects as a way of enhancing his own kingly status. Later, the king decided to shower most of his attentions on the Palace of Versailles. But in the years just after he emerged from his minority, he concentrated more on quantity than quality.

However, the young king had not as yet made any definite choice of his favourite place. He was building, enlarging and making alternations nearly everywhere, even in Paris which he had never liked since the Fronde. It was his firm belief that glory and reputation were also to be gained by magnificent buildings. In January 1664 he made his Intendant of Finance, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Superintendent of Buildings as well. But as early as 1661, he had already acquired the unrivalled team of men who had built Vaux for Fouquet: Le Nôtre, Le Vau, Lebrun, the 'engineers' of the waterworks and even the orange trees. Very soon he had repairs, enlargements and new buildings going on practically everywhere: at Fontainebleau, Vincennes, Chambord and Saint-Germain with its marvellous terrace. With the Pope's permission he brought Bernini from Rome to complete the Louvre in the Italian style but then changed his mind and chose Claude Perrault

whose colonnade was begun in 1667. Also in Paris, the *portes* Saint-Denis and Saint-Martin, the Collège Mazarin, the Observatory and the Invalides were gradually taking shape. Versailles to begin with had been turned from a hunting lodge into a park and pleasure gardens. Groves, a labyrinth, grottos, a lake and waterways, the first ornamental and allegorical statues, the first fleets of boats and the first menageries were all designed by Le Nôtre. The house itself was scarcely touched. Le Vau, who wanted to pull it down, was obliged to be satisfied with padding it out a little while one of the earliest follies in the shape of a Chinese pavilion, the porcelain Trianon, was built at a little distance. In 1670, much against Colbert's wishes, Louis decided to move in. In 1671 it was decided to transform the neighbouring hamlet into a royal town. But Le Vau was dead, leaving countless plans behind him, and others were to build the Versailles of the king's mature years. Le Nôtre, too, redesigned his park.

Like Colbert and the learned Chapelain, Louis considered that buildings alone were not enough for his glory. All the arts, letters and sciences must come together, as in the time of Augustus, to glorify his person and his reign, and all naturally, in perfect order and obedience.

**SOURCE:** Pierre Goubert, *Louis XIV and Twenty Million Frenchmen*. Trans. Anne Carter (New York: Random House, 1970): 80–81.

undertaken. In 1603, Henri began to sell plots to buyers who agreed to construct their houses along the predetermined designs for the site. The result produced one of Europe's most dignified and attractive city squares, a site that has changed little since the seventeenth century. The houses of the Place des Vosges were constructed from stucco and brick. Facing inward toward the square, the buildings were united by a single continuous colonnaded arcade with the projecting stories of the houses that lay above providing shelter from the elements. On both sides of the square, two taller and larger houses were reserved for the king's and queen's use, while the other houses cannot be distinguished from one another, except by looking at the lines of the mansard, or steeply pitched, roofs. Elaborate festivities commemorated the inauguration of the site in 1612, and the square quickly became a favorite for nobles and wealthy burghers who served the court. By the mid-seventeenth century, Henri IV's foresight had reinvented the Marais as the center of Parisian life and culture. In the mid- to late century one of its more famous residents was Madame de Sevigné,

a noblewoman and author of a voluminous correspondence with her daughter, one of the most revealing records of upper-class French life at the time.

**THE ÎLE SAINT-LOUIS.** Only a few years after the death of Henri IV, his wife, the regent Marie de' Medici, undertook a similarly ambitious project on a long-neglected island adjacent to the Marais in the Seine. At the time, the island was known as the Île Notre Dame, since it had once belonged to the canons of Notre Dame and lay directly beside the city's cathedral on the Île de la Cité, the heart of medieval Paris. The Île Notre Dame had long served as pasture land and a place where Paris's washerwomen beat clothes on the river shores. The island's dubious notoriety had also been sustained by its venerable status as a dueling ground. Low lying, the area was regularly subjected to flooding, and a channel dug through it in the fourteenth century cut one side of it off from the other. It was, in fact, a poor site for a residential quarter, although the aplomb with which these problems were solved suggests some of the ingenuity and determination with which Baroque architects and urban



Exterior view of the Luxembourg Palace, Paris. PHILIP M. SOERTEL.

planners aimed to conquer nature. In 1614, the crown awarded the island to a partnership consisting of several military engineers and financiers hired to supervise the filling in of the channel and its development as a residential quarter. The group's finances were always shaky, and a portion of those who had bought land on the island eventually took over the project's control, ensuring that, by 1650, the channel between the two parts of the island had been filled in and that a series of quays 32 feet high now kept the river at bay. On this safe surface above the Seine, grand rows of townhouses began to take shape, while a bridge conveniently connected the island with the Marais that lay to the north. On this small site—less than 120,000 square feet—towering townhouses became an undeniable testimony to Paris's wealth and the seventeenth-century's will to surmount nature. The arrangement of these houses, too, points to a changing sensibility among Paris's upper class about the River Seine, a changing sensibility that has defined Parisian life since the seventeenth century. For centuries, the river's role in Paris had been either lamentable or utilitarian. On the one hand, the Seine had been a highway for provisioning the city; on the other, it had been an ever present cause of misfortunes made palpable in perpet-

ual dampness, flooding, and disease. Now on the safe promontory that the island's quays provided, the prominent designers Le Vau, Mansart, and Le Brun built elegant houses for the city's wealthy that looked outwards toward the river. Nature, tamed in the way it had been in the middle of the Seine, now served as an enhancement to real estate.

**OTHER PARISIAN VENTURES.** Attentions similar to those showered on the development of the Marais and the Île Saint-Louis focused elsewhere throughout the city of Paris in the seventeenth century. During the reign of Louis XIII (r. 1610–1643) many of these projects continued along the lines of the Mannerist style that had been popular in late sixteenth-century France, including the construction of the Luxembourg Palace (b. 1615), just outside the Latin Quarter on the Left Bank of the Seine. The palace became home to the Queen Mother Marie de' Medici. Its style, however, was largely traditional and there was as yet little of the elegant garden that eventually so enhanced the palace's rather small scale. Another project of Louis XIII's reign imitated the style of early Baroque newly ascending to popularity in Rome: the construction of the Chapel of the Sorbonne, the university's church designed by the architect Jacques Lemercier and



Chapel of the Sorbonne, Paris. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

begun in 1635. This domed structure largely copied the Church of San Carlo ai Catinari, completed in Rome in 1620. Cardinal Richelieu, Louis' powerful minister, ensured that this building could be properly seen from its street angle by demolishing a group of medieval buildings that had stood on the site. In flavor, though, the building remains a conservative imitation of the grand Italian style, and nowhere in Paris does one find the kind of daring uses of dramatic and unusual shapes and spaces like those that prevailed in the architecture of Borromini and Guarini in Italy. Instead, the native French Baroque architects of the time looked conservatively to late Renaissance models or to those of the early Baroque, rather than to more innovative designs. Although more conservative in spirit, the buildings of the period nevertheless embraced a monumental scale similar to those being constructed in Italy at the time. Examples of this monumentality can be seen in the new additions and remodeling undertaken at the Palace of the Louvre. This grand structure, the largest urban palace in Europe, was almost continually in a state of repair, refurbishment, and remodeling until the nineteenth century. Renaissance alterations at the site had included the destruction

of the medieval tower of the original castle, and the construction of two new wings according to designs set down by Pierre Lescot. These structures were the first truly Renaissance designs in the city of Paris. Slightly later in the sixteenth century, Catherine de' Medici took up residence in the Louvre and began to construct a second enormous building, the Palace of the Tuileries, to the west of the original Louvre complex. Although a mob eventually burnt down that palace during the Revolt of the Paris Commune in 1871, a long Gallery constructed during the reign of Henri IV joined both the Tuileries and Louvre together. Louis XIII and Louis XIV continued to add to the palace, with Louis XIII beginning the construction of the massive *Cour Carrée*, the square courtyard that was four times larger than the original internal courtyard of the Renaissance palace. This enormous project consumed the efforts of the architect Jacques LeMercier for many years before finally being completed under the direction of Louis Le Vau. By the 1660s, and the reign of Louis XIV, the only major project left at the Louvre included the construction of a new façade for the palace's East Wing, an important part of the entire venture since it faced eastward toward the city of Paris.





East façade, Palace of the Louvre, Paris. GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE, NY.

To complete this project, Louis first imported the Roman architect Bernini, who drew several plans for the site—plans that, if they had been undertaken, might have completely altered the Renaissance appearance of the structure. Not entirely convinced of the wisdom of Bernini’s designs, the king’s ministers solicited plans from French designers, too, and soon after Bernini’s return to Rome, the king selected designs drawn up by the architect Louis Le Vau and Claude Perrault, a physician, scientist, and scholar, as well as a writer on architectural theory.

**THE FOUNDATIONS OF FRENCH CLASSICISM.** The project for the East Wing of the Louvre was of major significance in setting design standards that prevailed in public buildings in France for much of the rest of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While massive in its proportions, the façade’s arcade of paired columns rising above a story of simple arched windows suggests a thorough knowledge of Roman temple architecture. The only break in the entablature running across the entire

façade is in the single pediment that stands in the center, while at both ends of the structure simple pavilions with three windows, the center one arched in a Palladian manner, complete the structure. The serene and majestic face of the building became a premiere example of French “good taste” in construction. Shortly after the building’s completion in 1670, Louis XIV’s minister, Colbert, made the bold move of establishing the Royal Academy of Architecture in France, an academic body charged with meeting regularly to discuss and set the canons for public buildings. This body rejected the extravagantly ornamental forms favored by architects like Guarini and Borromini, and instead insisted that the canons of French architecture that had prevailed since the Renaissance should be safeguarded. Usually, the body supported “French restraint” in building as superior to Italian Baroque innovations. In particular, the academy rejected broken pediments and other Italian innovations, and instead insisted on the use of a harmonious and rationally understandable classicism inspired by Antiquity.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE UGLY**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Duc de Saint-Simon (1675–1755) was one of the most trenchant observers of the court life of Louis XIV's reign. In his *Memoirs*, which fill more than 25 thick volumes, he commented on almost every aspect of the life of the nobility, often calling attention to the way that squalor existed side-by-side at court with imposing grandeur. His comments here attack Louis' poor choice of Versailles' site, the violence the king wreaked on nature in his gardens, and the bad taste on display everywhere at the château.

He liked splendour, magnificence, and profusion in everything: you pleased him if you shone through the brilliancy of your houses, your clothes, your table, your equipages.

As for the King himself, nobody ever approached his magnificence. His buildings, who could number them? At the same time, who was there who did not deplore the pride, the caprice, the bad taste seen in them? St. Germain, a lovely spot, with a marvellous view, rich

forest, terraces, gardens, and water he abandoned for Versailles; the dullest and most ungrateful of all places, without prospect, without wood, without water, without soil; for the ground is all shifting sand or swamp, the air accordingly bad.

But he liked to subjugate nature by art and money. He built at Versailles, on, on, without any general design, the beautiful and the ugly, the vast and the mean, all jumbled together. His own apartments and those of the Queen, are inconvenient to the last degree, dull, close, stinking. The gardens astonish by their magnificence, but cause regret by their bad taste. You are introduced to the freshness of the shade only by a vast torrid zone, at the end of which there is nothing for you but to mount or descend; and with the hill, which is very short, terminate the gardens. The violence everywhere done to nature repels and wearies us despite ourselves. The abundance of water, forced up and gathered together from all parts, is rendered green, thick, muddy; it disseminates humidity, unhealthy and evident; and an odour still more so.

**SOURCE:** Duc de Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, in *Louis XIV*. Ed. H. G. Judge (London: Longmans, 1965): 48.

It generally supported the use of the steep French, or mansard, roof as generally well adapted to the country's northern climate. In addition, the French Academy's influence penetrated into the building industry itself, as it became a body charged with establishing standards for construction and for the materials used in buildings as well as for stipulating correct building practices.

**FROM VAUX-LE-VICOMTE TO VERSAILLES.** The foundation of the Royal Academy of Architecture in Paris established the canons of French classicism as normative in public building projects undertaken in the country during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At the same time, the construction of private residences and country châteaux displayed considerable variety as well as a taste for extravagance. One of the most significant of the many country retreats built in this period was the Château of Vaux-le-Vicomte, constructed for Louis XIV's chief minister of finance, Nicholas Fouquet. This massive project, perhaps the most comprehensively successful of the many French country châteaux completed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was a collaborative project undertaken by the architect Louis Le Vau, the interior designer Charles Le Brun, and the garden designer André Le Nôtre. Although Vaux-le-Vicomte's extravagance eventually spelled disaster for Fouquet, the structure was important in that it was one

of the first highly successful integrations of outdoor landscaping, architecture, and interior design. Seen from its gardens, Vaux embodies many qualities of elegance, particularly its domed central salon adapted from Italian Baroque architecture of the period. Less exuberant than similar palaces constructed in Italy at the time, the structure and its gardens, nevertheless, were the envy of French nobles at the time. Shortly after completing the structure in 1661, its owner, Fouquet, entertained the king and the court at a lavish celebration, which included impressive fireworks and even a specially commissioned comedy written by Molière. Even before the king arrived, however, Fouquet's undoing had been planned. Convinced that Fouquet had long embezzled from the royal treasury, Louis accepted his minister's hospitality before imprisoning Fouquet for life two weeks later. The king seized Fouquet's pride, the Château at Vaux-le-Vicomte, as well as his other possessions. The extravagant displays that he had seen while in Vaux-le-Vicomte steeled Louis' resolve to punish the extravagant upstart. While at Vaux, though, Louis was so impressed with the quality of the château's garden, its interior decoration, and façades that he recruited the team of designers—Le Vau, Le Brun, and Le Nôtre—to join his service. Within a few years, these three collaborated on the greatest project of the age: the Palace of Versailles.



Garden Façade, Palace of Versailles. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

**A ROYAL HUNTING LODGE.** The building that became known as the wonder of the age, Versailles, began as a simple hunting lodge, constructed for the pleasure of Louis XIV's father in 1624. Its rise to prominence as the seat of the French monarchy began in the 1660s for a variety of reasons, not least of which was the restiveness of the country's nobility, which had recently been evidenced in the *Fronde* of 1648–1653. This series of rebellions of French nobles and parliamentarians occurred in and around the city of Paris during Louis XIV's minority. Since he had acceded to the throne when he was only five years old, Louis' government had been largely presided over by his mother, Anne of Austria, and her chief minister, the Italian Cardinal Mazarin. Their actions to strengthen the power of the crown and set royal finances on a firmer footing angered the Parlement of Paris, which rose up in revolt in 1548 and 1549. Slightly later, a faction of nobles rebelled, too, raising an army against the crown and succeeding in driving the king, the Queen Regent, and Cardinal Mazarin from Paris. For a time the city fell under blockade, but the successful quashing of the rebellion actually enhanced royal authority. Although Louis had been only ten years

old when these disturbances began, he never seemed to forget his humiliation at the hands of the country's nobles, and his later decision to move his government to Versailles, away from the Parisian nobles, was in large part inspired by the embarrassment of the *fronde*. With the death of his chief minister Mazarin in 1661, Louis resolved to rule alone, and, particularly, to bring into submission the French nobility. When he first began to visit his father's small hunting lodge at Versailles in the 1660s, though, Louis considered it no more than a place of diversion. To make the site more suitable to royal entertainment, the king enlisted Le Nôtre to design lavish gardens there for court festivities. A few years later, in 1668, Louis decided to extend the small château that stood at the site, adding three large wings constructed from stone rather than the original brick and stucco. With these additions, he completely dwarfed the rather modest structure that had originally stood at the site. In truth, Versailles was always a poor choice for the construction of Louis' ambitious designs. The land was marshy and had to be extensively drained. An inadequate supply of fresh water meant that a complex system of pumps had to be built to bring water miles from the



Gardens at the Palace of Versailles. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

Seine to the château in order to feed its 1,400 fountains as well as its enormous canal. The palace that Louis built had an unyielding symmetry and logic, and this made Versailles a cold and drafty place, where opposing windows and cold marble floors produced many a chill and pain in the joints. Equally unwieldy was the complex and highly contrived court etiquette that developed for the courtiers who attended the king there. Every move of the court and the king had to be choreographed according to an unbending etiquette that lasted long after Louis had died. The king intended these intense displays of court ritual to tame his nobles, to make them into obedient subjects. Curiously, perhaps the only one that Louis showed deference to at Versailles was his father: he carefully preserved his father's original hunting lodge as the core of the château, continuing to build around it for the rest of his life, even though its style was greatly at odds with the Italianate palace that sprang up around it.

**THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT.** The Roman Baroque style of the period heavily influenced the interiors of this palace, although in subsequent alterations, parts of Versailles took on a more classical flavor. The huge structure and its surrounding gardens always remained a hodge-

podge of conflicting elements and styles, yet they all curiously adhered to each other by virtue of the palace's overwhelming grandeur and scale. At the center of this structure there was one constant: the king's bedroom, where his rising and going to bed became one of the central rituals of the state. At the height of the society Louis created there, more than 10,000 courtiers were often in attendance at court. During the late seventeenth century, Versailles was almost constantly under construction. Within a decade of the major expansions begun in 1668, a second set of alterations began, this time with the purpose of moving the court and royal government permanently to Versailles. Thus, between 1677 and the transfer of government to Versailles in 1682 a small city sprang up around the palace to serve the king and his courtiers. The king's architect, Jules Hardouin-Mansart supervised this second expansion, which included two gigantic wings built at the north and south of the structure. These radiated off at perpendicular angles from the U-shaped block that now stood at the center, and they brought the total width of the palace's front façade to more than 600 yards. Seen from this angle, Versailles remains a not-altogether pleasing construction, although one that



Exterior view of the Marble Court, Palace of Versailles, France. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

nevertheless continues to amaze and confound visitors by its sheer size. It is from the gardens, however, where the palace's design clearly shines. The geometric patterns created by the gardens' many walks and broad avenues and the placement of the fountains and more than 4,000 pieces of sculpture combine to make the palace's enormous garden façade appear strikingly beautiful, even delicate, against the sky. As in the palace proper, the central placement of the king's bedroom and the daily path of the sun from east to west were the major principles around which the gardens were organized. Known as the "Sun King," Louis ensured that this motif of the sun recurred in many other places at Versailles.

**OTHER CONSTRUCTIONS.** As Louis and his court settled in Versailles as a permanent residence in the 1680s, even the king began to tire of the elaborate protocol and uncomfortable spaces of his creation. In 1687, he commissioned his chief architect, Jules Hardouin-Mansart, to build a smaller palace at the far edges of Versailles' garden, where a small village known as Trianon had once stood. This "Marble Trianon" replaced a small Chinese pavilion constructed at the site in the 1670s. Louis intended the Grand Trianon, as it later became known, to be a private retreat, where he might bring ladies from the court for private suppers. The gardens

were more informal and the scale of the small palace less forbidding than the great château. Unlike the many-storied creation of Versailles, the Trianon had a single story of family bedrooms and drawing rooms. When completed, the palace had two large wings separated by a marble colonnade. As Louis mended his wayward marital habits later in life, the Trianon took on more the nature of a family house in which the king, his children, and wife might escape the pressures of court life. In these later years the king also constructed Versailles' sumptuous royal chapel, an oval two-storied construction where the king heard Mass from the balcony above. The lines of this high building can be seen today towering above the town façade of Versailles, and even at the time of its construction the chapel was criticized for destroying the view of the palace from the front courtyard. Inside, however, was one of Hardouin-Mansart's most beautiful and restrained creations. Below, a colonnade of Roman-style arches are decorated with simple, yet elegant reliefs, while, above, on the second-story balcony, plain white Corinthian columns support a broad entablature that runs around the structure's oval shape. Simple arched windows emit a striking light into the chapel, whose ceiling is decorated with gilt and murals. The royal chapel was the first freestanding church to be built upon the



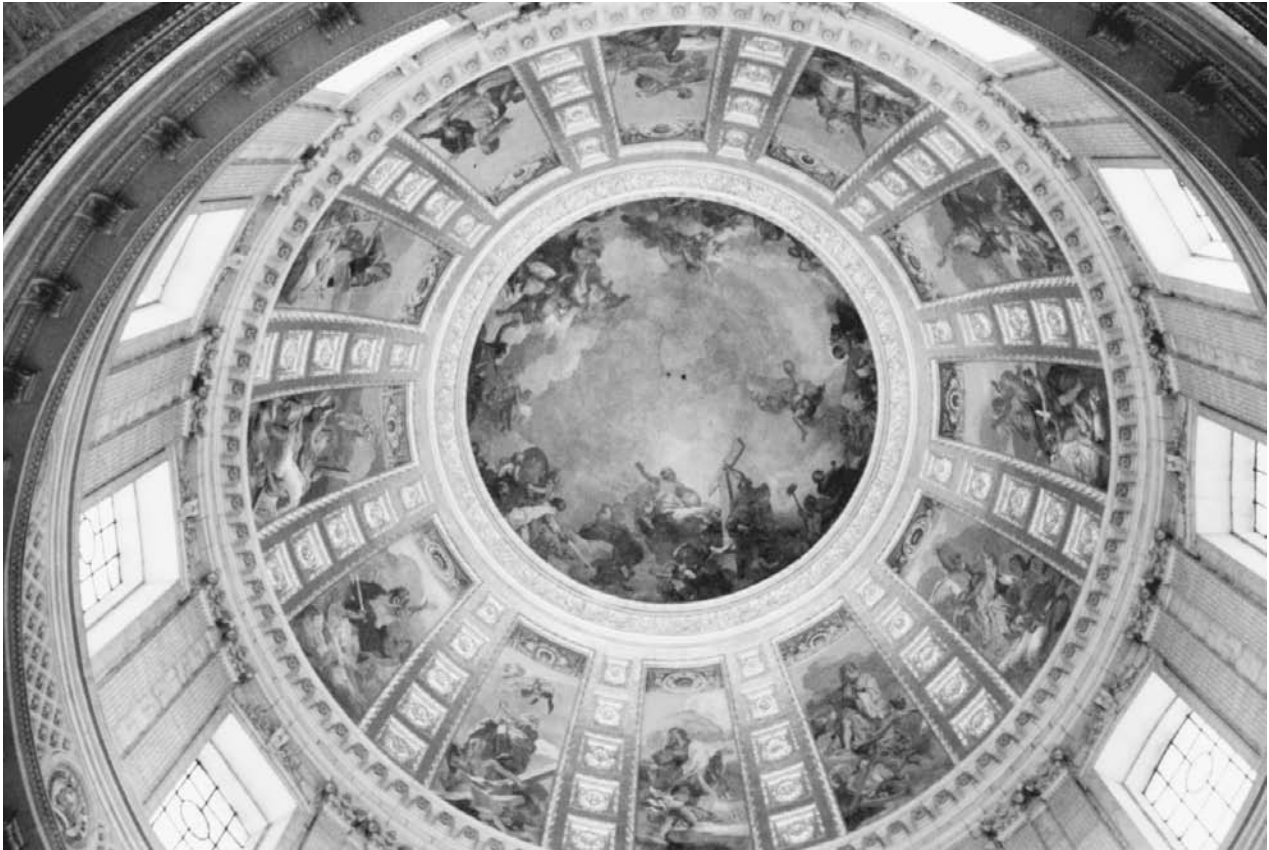
Church of the Invalids (Les Invalides), Paris. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

grounds at Versailles, although five smaller chapels had preceded it. It was completed only in 1710, five years before the king's death. Its light and airy spaces reflect the developing tastes that made Rococo architecture so widely popular among nobles and wealthy city dwellers in France in the early eighteenth century. Still, the overwhelming feeling that the chapel presents is of a restrained classicism, one that since the mid-seventeenth century French architects had been anxious to develop as a native style. Louis reputedly built the structure to satisfy his second wife, the commoner Madame de Maintenon, whose piety was well recognized at the time, and who helped wean Louis away from his self-indulgent nature. Nevertheless, the structure is fully consonant with the aims of Versailles, which were, in large part, to create spaces befitting of a monarch with grand pretensions and a love for the adulation of his subjects. The daily hearing of Mass that occurred within the space was in and of itself one of Versailles' most important rituals.

**ASSESSMENT.** Even in his own day, Louis XIV's Versailles was often criticized as a palatial stable, and it was attacked for its bad taste and lack of comforts. Yet despite the frequent aesthetic judgments that have been

made against the structure from the seventeenth century onward, it is difficult to overestimate Versailles' influence on the palace architecture of Europe during the early eighteenth century. In Germany and central Europe, in particular, where scores of territorial princes competed against one another for political advantage and glory, Versailles came to be widely imitated. A host of smaller Versailles, in other words, soon popped up on the European landscape. The widespread emulation of the French model involved more than just creating public spaces and gardens that imitated Versailles, for courtly taste adopted the elaborate etiquette and rituals that prevailed in the French palace, too. Versailles, in other words, embodied the absolutist and courtly aspirations of the age.

**PARISIAN DEVELOPMENTS.** The king's and court's move to Versailles, some fifteen miles southwest of the center of Paris, consumed an inordinate amount of France's state treasury at the time. As a result, few great architectural projects could be completed in France's largest city in the later seventeenth century, although there were several important exceptions. In 1670, Louis founded the Hospital of the Invalids, a home for France's war veterans. Over the years, this complex grew in the



Interior view of the dome of the Church of the Invalids (Les Invalides), Paris. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

western part of the city to accommodate more than 4,000 veterans. A handsome addition to the complex was the construction of its massive, domed church, designed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart and begun in 1687. At Les Invalides, as it has long been known, Hardouin-Mansart used a design detail, the cut-off ceiling, adopted from the repertory of his uncle François Mansart. In the interior of the high dome, in other words, he included an inner dome that was much lower than the external structure, yet cut off at the top to allow views to the much higher structure above. The result creates an impression of soaring height and a dramatic vista from the floor of the church below. The exterior of this structure, too, makes use of the severe classicism that French designers favored at the time. The project of Les Invalides, taken up in the west of Paris and on the Left rather than the Right Bank of the Seine, also signaled an important shift in the city's population. As the court congregated more and more outside the city at Versailles, the wealthy and cultivated elites that remained began to move from the Marais and other districts on the edge of Paris' medieval core westward, particularly into the regions around St. Germain-des-Près, an ancient abbey that had

once stood on the western fringes of the city. At the end of the seventeenth century the area began to be filled with handsome townhouses. Further south of the heart of medieval and Renaissance Paris, new suburbs began to spring up on the Left Bank, too. This shift in residential development in the city continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, making the Left Bank one of the most desirable locations for residences in the city, while leaving the former residential areas of the Right Bank open more and more to commercial development. One final important project begun during the late seventeenth century was the construction of the Place Vendôme, under the direction of the royal architect Hardouin-Mansart. This planned square stood at the time on the Right Bank north and west of the Louvre, in an as yet little settled area. The square had been planned as early as 1685 to accommodate a group of public buildings, but the project stalled because of lack of funds. Eventually, Hardouin-Mansart laid out the square and began to build a series of classical façades, but a royal shortage of funds forced the king to sell the entire project to the city of Paris. At this point, the project languished until the 1720s, when the French king's

Scottish financier, John Law, succeeded in precipitating a real-estate boom in and around the square through the skillful sale of stock in its development. From Law's time, the classically inspired square has managed to remain one of the most stylish areas of Paris.

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### DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS IN ENGLAND

**MODEST MEANS.** In comparison to France, England had always been a relatively poor country, where the rituals of court and government had long been celebrated on a far more economical scale. The country's population—about four million in 1600—was only one quarter of that of France. Although the grandeur of the Tudor court might appear considerable to modern observers, Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) was notoriously tight-fisted by the standards of her era. With the accession of James I (r. 1603–1625) and the rise of the Stuart dynasty upon her death, greater luxury and opulence did come into fashion in the circles that surrounded the crown. Still James' wealth was considerably more limited than that of the French king. He may have desired to present an elegant face to the outside world, and he did try to do so, but the shortage of funds was an endemic problem and one that always threatened the monarch's efforts to create architectural monuments on a grand scale. Still, in the years of his reign several important projects, designed mostly by the talented architect Inigo Jones, laid the foundation for English classicism, a style that was persistently revived over the following two centuries and molded to fit the changing tastes of the time. Jones's style was considerably more restrained than the Italian Baroque and less monumental in scale than the French classicism of the time. He imitated many elements of the sixteenth-century architecture of the northern Italian, Andrea Palladio (1508–1580). During his long career Palladio had created a number of important public buildings and country villas, as well as several influential churches in the Venetian Republic. His ideas for a relatively unadorned architecture that nevertheless made use of elegant, often sinuous lines had been communicated

in Northern Europe through the publication of his important architectural treatises. Nowhere, however, did these ideas take root more forcefully and pervasively than in England.

**INIGO JONES.** Born in 1573 in London, Jones had few of the advantages of the great gentlemen architects that came after him in England. Despite his humble situation as the son of a clothmaker, he managed to travel to the continent in 1603, his visit perhaps financed by a nobleman. Somewhat later he returned again to Italy where he made a detailed study of ancient Roman architecture. Largely self-taught, he rose in the court circles of Stuart England, and together with Ben Jonson he staged some of the most elaborate court masques of the early seventeenth century. These entertainments required great skill in staging as well as a thorough knowledge of design. Under both James I and his successor Charles I, Inigo Jones received a number of commissions for large-scale houses and he began work on the Queen's House in Greenwich outside London during 1616. Slightly later, Jones received the commission for the Banqueting House in Whitehall. Both structures survive and demonstrate the architect's thorough mastery of Palladian design principles. They are two of the first buildings to integrate the High Renaissance style in England, although by the standards of the time they might have looked rather severe and small in scale to continental observers. The Queen's House—intended for James I's wife, Anne of Denmark—was built on the grounds of the royal palace at Greenwich, although that larger palace has since been destroyed. Jones ingeniously devised the Queen's House to provide a bridge over a local road that cut the royal park in two. To solve this problem he built an H-shaped structure with two wings joined at the upper story by a bridge (the crossbar in the H). Later this design feature was covered up when the road was redirected and the center portion filled in. The ground floor of the structure was constructed from rusticated stone, with simple squared pediments as the only decoration above the windows. On the second floor, Jones used smoother masonry, yet repeated the same simple windows. A balustrade finished the structure. The entire mood of the Queen's House is somber, yet elegant, and thoroughly Palladian in its elements. The appearance of the Banqueting House, by contrast, is less severe, and the structure makes use of a greater range of decorative details. Although its interior is a single block, the structure appears from the street as a three-story structure with a rusticated ground floor. The first floor that rises above has alternating circular and triangular-pedimented windows and its columns are of the Ionic order, while on the floor



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF  
MAGNIFICENT BUILDING**

**INTRODUCTION:** The art and architectural theorists of the Baroque era frequently engaged in heated disputes about the precise style that was most aesthetically pleasing to the eye. French theorists, in particular, were anxious to weigh their own developing architectural traditions against those of the Italians, very often finding their own classicism superior to the innovation and experimentation of southern European designers. In England and the Netherlands, the shape of much writing about architecture was decidedly more practical. Rather than treating aesthetics, Balthazar Gerbier (1592?–1667), a Flemish architect and diplomat who settled in London in 1617, showed his readers how to garner the maximum architectural effect economically. Gerbier's *A Brief Discourse Concerning the Three Principles of Magnificent Building* set out solidity, conveniency (or convenience), and ornament as the chief principles that should govern a patron's choices in building. In a highly practical vein Gerbier also informed his readers about the best possible building practices to use, and he showed them how to safeguard themselves from the tricks of cost-cutting artisans and laborers. In this passage he treats the proper mixture of mortar to make cement.

The Romans are very curious in their tempering of mortar, and in the laying it as thin as they possibly can to prevent the sinking and bending of their walls, which the laying of their mortar too thick doth cause; and experience doth show, that when some walls are taken down in England, half of the substance is sand and dust.

The Romans (as likewise the Greeks before them) did not make use of their lime at the same time it was flaked, but for six months' time did suffer it to putrify, and so putrified composed a cement which joined with stone (or brick) made an inseparable union, and such work as I have seen iron tools break on the old mortars of the amphitheatres at Verona and Rome.

Their manner of preparing lime is to lay it in cisterns, the one higher than the other, that the water (after it has been so stirred as it is well mixed and thoroughly liquid) may drain from one cistern to the other, and after six months' time (the lime having evacuated its putrefaction) remains purified, and then they mix two parts lime with one part of sand, and makes that strong and perfect mortar, which if practiced in England, would make a wondrous strong union, especially if the clay makers did bend the clay as it ought to be, the English clay being better than the Italian, nay the best in the world.

They are very careful in making large and deep foundations, and to let the walls raised on the foundations rest and settle a good while before they proceed to the second story.

Some of our carpenters have learned to lay boards loose for a time, the Italians and other nations are not sparing therein. They nail them as if for good and all, but rip or take them up again, to fit them for the second time.

As I said before, no building is begun before a mature resolve on [decision is made based upon] a model of the entire design; the builder having made choice of his surveyor, and committed to him all the care and guidance of the work, never changeth on the various opinions of other men, for they are unlimited, because every man's conceits are answerable to his profession and particular occasion.

A sovereign or any other landlord is then guided by natural principles, as well as by his own resolve, taken on a long considered model, because they know by experience how sudden changes are able to cause monstrous effects.

**SOURCE:** Sir Balthazar Gerbier, *A Brief Discourse Concerning the Three Principles of Magnificent Building: Solidity, Conveniency, and Ornament* (London: n.p., 1664): 19–22. Text modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

above Jones used the Corinthian order and squared pedimented windows. To finish the structure, he created a decorative garland frieze and a simple balustrade. At the time of the building's construction in London in the early 1620s, nothing this classical in spirit had ever been seen before on the streets of England's capital. While Jones received many commissions during his long career, none of his subsequent work ever matched the influence of these two projects, although one of his most important achievements was his design of Covent Garden in London beginning in 1631. This was, like the Place des

Vosges in Paris and several earlier examples in Italy, a purpose-built square, the first in London. It derived many of its features from the earlier Parisian example. It was to be followed in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by many other handsome squares, most of them built in the western part of the city. In those years, Jones's architectural examples also inspired a string of designers who were even more accomplished in applying Palladian classicism to the English environment.

**REBUILDING LONDON.** The greatest of Baroque English architects was Sir Christopher Wren (1632–1723),

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***IN PRAISE OF ST. PAUL'S**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1677 the massive rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral was just getting underway following the building's devastation in the Great Fire of 1666. The following poem, published in London, celebrated the effort to rebuild the church, an effort it compared to the great architectural achievements of the ancients and of the Roman Renaissance. Something of the excitement that the unprecedented building produced on the London scene can be gleaned from the poem's elaborate rhetorical flourishes.

What Miracle of Art will grow from hence,  
And challenge through the World a Parallel,  
When the bare Model only for Expense,  
And real Value does so far excel?

But something more Majestic than even this  
May we with solid reason expect,  
Where to the Work, a *C H A R L E S* auspicious is:  
A help so great can have no small effect.

Hereafter, how will every Generation  
Bless that dear name, when from Records they know  
This City's Beauty, Glory of the Nation,  
To th' pious greatness of his soul they owe.

Nor shall Posterity forget the least  
Of those, who such a Monument shall raise;  
For when from their surviving Work they rest,  
Eternal Fame shall mention their due Praise.

What did I say——only, eternal Fame?  
Better Records are to such merit given;  
Angels shall write with their own quills, each name  
In the everlasting Registers of Heaven.

While in the front of those deserving men,  
As the Conductor of this beauteous Frame,  
Stands *England's Archimedes*, Learned *Wren*,  
Who builds in *Paul's* a Trophy to his Name.

Earth's Cabinet of Rarities, famed *Rome*,  
Shall now no more alone possess what's rare;  
Since *British* Architecture dares presume  
To vie with the most celebrated there.

*Britain*, who, though perhaps, the last she be  
To imitate what's great in Foreign Parts,  
Yet when she that hath done, we always see  
Th' Inventors she excels in their own Arts.

Ah happy Englishmen! if we could know  
Our happiness, and our too active fears  
Of being wretched, did not make us so!  
What cause of grief, other than this appears?

*France*, and the neighboring *Europe*, flame in War,  
Seeking by Arms each others rest t' invade;  
But while they burn and bleed, we only, are  
Rich in an envied peace, and Foreign Trade.

While there, nor Church, nor Sanctuary can  
Shield the rich Merchant from the armed rout,  
Nor Virgin from the Lust of furious man.  
Our Island one Asylum seems, throughout

Sacred and Civil Structures there decrease,  
And while to Arms their lofty heads submit,  
We are employed in the best Works of Peace,  
And erect Temples to the God of it.

Rise noblest Work, rise above Envy's eye,  
Never in thy own Ruins more to lie,  
Till the whole world finds but one obsequy.

Rise to that noted height that Spain, and France,  
Nay, Italy, may by their confluence  
To our North Wonder, thy great Name advance.

And, what's to Protestants of better sense,  
Make them confess our English Church expense,  
And Beauty, equals their Magnificence.

**SOURCE:** James Wright, *Ecclesia Restaurata: A Votive Poem to the Rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral* (London: Henry Brome, 1677): 4–6. Text modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

a figure who left a major imprint on London after the city's catastrophic fire of 1666. Wren was the son of an eminent clergyman who eventually became the Dean of Windsor, the site of England's largest royal castle. Thus, the young Wren moved in powerful circles from an early age; his playmates were members of the royal family, and by virtue of his superior education, he matured into something of a Renaissance man. He attended Wadham College, Oxford, at the age of sixteen, where he worked under a brilliant anatomist and conducted some of the

first experiments in the use of opiates as anesthesia. When he completed the Master of Arts degree, he received a prestigious fellowship to All Souls College, also at Oxford, a position he held for the next twenty years and which allowed him to pursue his research interests in astronomy. While still a fellow, he also accepted an academic appointment at Gresham College in London, where he gave regular lectures in Latin and English. While in London, he and a close friend founded the Royal Society for the Promotion of Natural Knowledge,



Chapel and cloisters of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, designed by Sir Christopher Wren and built in 1677. © PHILIPPA LEWIS/CORBIS.

the institution that remained England's premiere national academy for scientific research. Appointed to a prestigious professorship at Oxford in 1661, Wren began to dabble in architecture after his uncle, the bishop of Ely, asked him to design a chapel for Pembroke College, Cambridge. Several small commissions followed, but his rise to prominence began soon after the Great Fire of 1666 destroyed more than two-thirds of the City of London, including the medieval core. Within a few weeks of this catastrophe, Wren presented the king with comprehensive plans for rebuilding London. As a result of Wren's travels in Europe, he longed to remake London into a city filled with monuments in the French classical and Italian Renaissance styles. The king and court admired his plans, but decided they were too costly to ever be completed. Wren wanted to demolish much of what was left in London and fill the rebuilt city with grand avenues and broad squares. Charles II instead appointed him to the post of Surveyor General, a position he held for half a century. Like Paris, London had outgrown its medieval core by the seventeenth century, although the area destroyed in the fire had been the center of commerce and of civic and religious life. Eighty-nine

of London's almost 100 churches had been destroyed in the fire. Wren's plans for rebuilding included designs for only 51 churches. Thus, his architectural renewal had a long-lasting effect on the city's spiritual life, since his design resulted in an ambitious, but very controversial program of parish consolidation. Today, only a portion of the handsome churches Wren created survive; many were lost in bombing raids during the Second World War while others have been destroyed by terrorist attacks since the 1970s. Still, enough of Wren's achievement survives to point to the vibrancy of his architectural style, as well as its ready adaptability to many different kinds of circumstances.

**WREN'S STYLE.** The architect's crowning achievement was his plan for the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral, a structure that imitates the massive proportions of the Baroque, yet in most respects owes much to the High Renaissance designers Bramante and Palladio. Initial plans had called merely for the repair of the surviving Gothic church at the site. Wren soon realized that the destruction was too considerable to be repaired, and so he planned a central-style church to be constructed in the form of a Greek cross. The canons of St. Paul's, however,

reacted bitterly to the design as impractical for the demands of worship. Wren responded by adopting the more traditional Latin cross as the basic shape. The final structure demonstrated his encyclopedic knowledge of the major buildings constructed during the previous century in continental Europe. While much of the flavor of the building derives from the High Renaissance, the building's dramatic sense of energy seems more a feature of the Baroque. This emphasis on drama can be seen in the two-storied portico that Wren designed for the building's west façade. Here he grouped paired columns together, as in Perrault and Le Vau's east wing of the Louvre. As at that structure, he included a central pediment as a culmination point, although he placed this pediment between two bell towers that borrowed from the Roman architect Borromini's plans for the Church of Sant' Agnese in Rome. The dome that rises to be seen through this portico is more than 35 stories high, and its design again shows much indebtedness to continental models, especially to those pioneered by Michelangelo and Bramante. The dome's drum is encircled with a colonnade in the manner of Bramante's High Renaissance Tempietto at Rome (constructed in 1502), while the shape of the structure that rises above it is pure Michelangelo. In short, the building long appeared to many observers as the perfect integration of many Renaissance and Baroque design elements, and for this reason it influenced many other structures in Britain and throughout the English-speaking world. It was the only truly monumental Protestant church to be constructed in Northern Europe during the seventeenth century, although, inside, some of the weaknesses of the union between Protestant theology and monumental church architecture become apparent. Queen Victoria, for instance, dubbed the interior dreary, and many have agreed. In comparison with similar Catholic churches of this magnitude, the absence of gilt and of decoration—rejected by Protestants as too ostentatious and wasteful—makes the interior appear severe. These problems became accentuated over the decades, since the inferior-quality stone of the massive building required that the church interior be painted to hide its flaws. Rather quickly over time, the pristine white walls of the church grew gray with soot, a grime that is only now beginning to be removed by a painstaking process of restoration. Still, the details of Wren's interior show a faithful integration of the Corinthian order as well as other classical design elements. In the long Gothic space of the church, though, these elements prove to be inadequate to sustain the visual interest of most viewers.

**OTHER PROJECTS.** There are a number of other masterpieces among the fifty other churches that Sir



Dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, London. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

Christopher Wren created to replace those burned in the London fire of 1666. At St. Mary Le Bow, for instance, Wren used the church's pre-existing foundation, as he often did in the rush to complete these structures. Since these medieval foundations were of varying height and width, he sometimes imaginatively deployed these irregular spaces in his creations. At Mary Le Bow, he designed his first great steeple, which again made use of the medieval belfry's foundations. Palladian-arched windows adorn the first upper level of the belfry, which is decorated with classical pilasters. Above a round, colonnaded temple, similar to Bramante's famous Tempietto in Rome, supports a smaller second colonnaded structure from which rises a final obelisk as a steeple. Wren's fertile mixing of Renaissance, Baroque, and classical elements as in the Church of St. Mary Le Bow, was for many years one of the most distinctive features of the London skyline. Before the advent of the twentieth-century glass and steel skyscraper, the forest of steeples with which Wren endowed London was one of the city's most recognizable elements. These steeples, too, were widely copied wherever English settlers moved, finding their way into the town squares of villages throughout

North America and in places as distant as Australia and New Zealand.

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### CLASSICISM AND CITY PLANNING IN THE NETHERLANDS

**RESTRAINED GRANDEUR.** As in England, a severe classicism free from a great deal of ornamentation was typical of most Dutch architecture in the seventeenth century. As a trading empire, the country's merchants were in frequent contact with the world that lay beyond their canals, dikes, and interior seas. Dutch traders and architects were frequent visitors to Italy, France, and England, although they generally shunned the elaborately ornamented spaces of the Roman Baroque as well as the severe grandeur of the court culture of nearer Versailles. During this Golden Age in the country's history, a fondness for classical design, much of it influenced by the relative severity of figures like Inigo Jones and Andrea Palladio, prevailed. The country's ethos—shaped by Calvinism and the sixteenth-century fight for independence from Catholic Spain—meant that the seventeenth century was not a great age in Dutch history for the construction of churches. As a rule, Dutch Protestants merely took over Catholic churches from the later Middle Ages, often whitewashing over the structure's murals and removing their sculptures. As population increased in the country's cities during the seventeenth century, new churches, often built in a style known today as "Dutch Palladianism," were constructed, but Calvinism, with its radical distaste for religious art and decoration, assured that many of these structures had only simple interiors. Dutch artists of the time like Vermeer and Saenredam documented the severe interiors that were common in the country's churches. Cleansed of their "idolatrous" religious art, these structures presented a severe face, with simple white walls and austere

but massive spaces as their defining characteristics. Often the only ornamental elements that survived in these churches were their Gothic vaulting or their more modern carved and handsome pulpits, this later feature suggesting the primary importance given to the scriptures, the Word of God, in the new reformed faith.

**DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE.** By contrast, the Dutch displayed a more decorative taste in their civic buildings and houses, drawing on a repertory of Palladian decorating elements on the handsome exteriors of these structures. In the seventeenth century most Dutch houses were built from brick, rather than stone, although stone façades tended to increase as Dutch prosperity climbed during the century. Unlike Italy, where merchant princes had long built great urban palaces, Dutch houses were considerably more modest. Large tenement buildings that housed several families were also uncommon. Instead, the Dutch house was a place in which a single family or extended family lived. Most were quite small and were built in a way similar to modern "row houses." In Amsterdam and other cities near the water, they faced onto a canal, the main arteries for commercial deliveries at the time. They were usually about 25 to 30 feet wide and four to six stories high with decorated gables that faced toward the street or canal. This design allowed the maximum number of merchants access to a city's thoroughfares, but it also shaped and limited the domestic spaces inside. Most houses were only one or two rooms wide, although they were considerably deeper, stretching back from the street or canal. The Dutch house of the time was often used for both business and domestic pursuits, with cellars and attics functioning as commercial storehouses. Great families sometimes joined two or more of these smaller houses into a single space. Grand mansions built over several city lots were not as common in the Netherlands as they later became, although Amsterdam did acquire quite a number of these structures in the later seventeenth century.

**CITY PLANNING.** Between 1600 and 1700, Amsterdam's population increased fourfold. Although its growth was the most dramatic in the region, rapid increase was the rule in most parts of the country. The Dutch's success in their sixteenth-century war of independence against the Habsburgs had left the country free to develop as a commercial center. To the south in Flanders and France, and to the east in Central Europe, religious repression continued to be the rule through most of the seventeenth century. In the Netherlands, by contrast, relative tolerance became the rule. Although the law officially prohibited Catholicism and some other religions, in practice Dutch local officials permitted a

considerable degree of religious freedom. As a result, Jewish settlers from throughout Europe streamed into the country, as did Mennonites, Anabaptists, French Huguenots, Catholics from Flanders, Germany, and France, and even Orthodox Christians from Greece and the Near East. The Netherlands had long been a country that was exceptional by European standards; much of its land was low-lying, large parts of it were even below sea level, and for centuries, the country had been claiming territory from the water through the skillful draining of marshes and the construction of dikes. This tradition of public engineering continued in the seventeenth century, yet at the same time a new method of urban planning was taking shape in the country's cities. To accommodate the influx of new settlers in Amsterdam, the town council devised the Three Canals Plan in 1612 to increase the city's size and manage its growth. In essence, the plan expanded the town walls to enclose four times more space than they had previously, and called for three new canals to provide merchants and artisans with an outlet to the sea. Tough new restrictions drew a distinction between areas where "noisy" industries and crafts might be pursued and other parts of the town intended for residences and quieter commercial transactions. They divided the undeveloped land with mathematical precision into lots that were each 25 feet wide, and carved the new water thoroughfares with geometric regularity so that all roads led inexorably to the town's center. Handsome townhouses soon appeared in the new quarters, with prominent families streaming into these districts to take advantage of the relative peace and quiet. They decorated the new town walls with impressive gates at the major entrances and exits to the city, and along this string of walls, massive new fortifications protected the city from attack. Thus, in comparison to the relatively piecemeal plans for urban development then in use in London and Paris at the time, the Dutch model of urban planning was notable for its thoroughness and rationality.

**PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE.** During the Baroque period, Dutch burghers, that is city dwellers, continued to build imposing town halls, a tradition that stretched back through the Renaissance to the later Middle Ages. Of the many civic projects undertaken during the Netherlands' seventeenth-century Golden Age, the greatest was the construction of a new town hall in Amsterdam to replace an older medieval building that had served this purpose. When the burghers of the city began this project in 1648, they had merely desired to expand their pre-existing civic offices. In the initial phases of remodeling, however, the medieval structure at the site burnt

down. Thus Jacob van Campen, the new building's architect, had a blank slate with which to work. The structure that he created survives today as an imposing testimony to the wealth of the time. The hall covered an entire city block, almost 300 feet wide and more than 230 feet deep. Above a ground floor, Campen designed two high-ceilinged stories, so that the entire structure, minus its enormous cupola, soared to a height of more than 100 feet. The central portion of this building projected outward towards the surrounding square and culminated in a pediment. Inside, an enormous Great Hall made use of the full potential of the building's grand height. Like Inigo Jones' Banqueting Hall in early seventeenth-century London, this hall was a single monumental block of space, one of the largest public halls built during the Baroque. While it employed more restraint in its decoration than the exuberant ostentation typical of Italian buildings at the time, the massive scale of the structure makes it a building of undeniable grandeur.

**HIDDEN CHURCHES.** Another feature of seventeenth-century Dutch life presents a curious adaptation to the continuing religious controversies of the period. While the Netherlands was an island of relative religious toleration in the seventeenth-century world, the law still officially forbade the practice of Catholicism. As a result, large numbers of "private" churches sprang up in the country's cities, usually accommodated in the attics of townhouses. The degree of toleration granted to these institutions fluctuated over time and from place to place, although in most places bribes and even a system of fines meant that Catholics enjoyed relative freedom to practice in these private churches. Many of Holland's secret churches spanned the attics of several houses, and their artistic decoration was often quite flamboyant. The nobles, wealthy merchants, and foreign Catholic traders who patronized these institutions saw to it that these private chapels had elaborate murals, frescoes, and gilt ornament similar to the ostentation common in the continent's leading Baroque churches. In spite of their status as a subculture within the predominantly Calvinist cities of the region, the number of these secret churches was often considerable. Amsterdam had about twenty, Leiden eight. The potency of the Baroque interiors that survive from this period demonstrate the appeal that this style had for Catholics who existed in a state of relative isolation from the broader world of Roman religion.

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## THE BAROQUE IN CENTRAL EUROPE

**WARFARE AND EXTERNAL THREATS.** In comparison to the relative peace and stability of the Netherlands, the seventeenth century in Central and Eastern Europe was a time of great tribulation. Religious disputes marred the first half of the century, as the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) raged in much of Central Europe. This great conflict involved almost every major European power, although Germany and parts of Bohemia were its primary battlegrounds. The Thirty Years' War produced widespread poverty, famine, and disease, and resulted in the depopulation of large areas of the countryside. As internal religious strife receded in Germany, the region began a slow process of recovery. To the east, however, in the Habsburg lands of Austria and Hungary, a renewed threat to security arose in the later seventeenth century. During the 1660s, the Ottoman Empire reinforced its positions in Hungary and renewed its drive up the Danube into Austria, laying siege to Vienna in 1683. Eventually, the Habsburgs succeeded in expelling Ottoman forces from their homelands, but not without expending considerable financial and military resources. As a result of these protracted religious crises and external threats, fewer great architectural projects were undertaken in the region than in Italy or Western Europe during the seventeenth century. As stability returned, though, the way was paved for an enormous building boom throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF REVIVAL.** While the warfare that had afflicted much of Germany and Central Europe left the economies of many areas depressed, devastation also brought new opportunities for renewal and rebuilding. In 1622, for example, the town of Mannheim in southwestern Germany had been destroyed as a result of the conflicts of the Thirty Years' War. It was soon rebuilt, although French forces destroyed it yet again in 1689. As the local prince prepared to reconstruct his capital, he adopted a comprehensive plan influenced by the ideas of Baroque architects and town planners. His new city included broad avenues, handsome squares, harmonious buildings, and a grid system for its streets that was similar to that which was later to be adopted in New York City. During the Second World War, most of the town was destroyed in bombing raids, only to be rebuilt again largely in a functional modern style. Even now, though, Mannheim's street system largely continues to

adhere to the original Baroque grid pattern laid out in the late seventeenth century. Very few modern observers find the overall effect of the town as it now stands satisfying when compared against the city of handsome squares and palaces that existed for more than two centuries as a monument to the intelligence and sophistication of Baroque planners. At the same time, it is important to note that the ideas of those designers reflected certain notions about power, and Baroque architecture has often rightly been treated as a tool of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rulers anxious to establish greater authority over their subjects. At Mannheim, these intentions produced relatively happy results. Elsewhere in Central Europe the Baroque became a tool for establishing cultural and religious uniformity with mixed results. In the wake of the Thirty Years' War, the Austrian Habsburgs established hegemony over the Czech citizens of Prague. Since the fifteenth century the inhabitants of the city had provided a safe haven for many reform movements critical of the Roman church. As the Habsburg dynasty moved to establish its authority over the city, they labored as well to re-establish Roman Catholicism as the sole religion in the region. Habsburg church and state authorities remodeled Prague's churches, transforming the town's once spare and severe Protestant-styled churches into models of Baroque display and ornamentation. Authorities expelled those townspeople who continued to practice Protestantism and seized their properties, often selling their houses for a fraction of their worth to new German-speaking settlers. This plan of resettlement thus paved the way for large portions of Prague to be rebuilt in the new ornate fashions of the Baroque. Thus in Prague the Baroque became synonymous in the minds of native Czech inhabitants with the establishment of Austrian political hegemony and Catholic religious authority.

**CHURCHES.** Where affections for Roman Catholicism ran deeper in Central and Eastern Europe, they soon gave birth to an unprecedented boom in the construction of new churches and religious institutions. In Italy, the rise of the Baroque had been accompanied by the construction of scores of new religious edifices, testimonies to the renewal of a spirit of self-assurance typical of the Catholic Reformation. In Central Europe, the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War similarly left Catholic rulers and their subjects re-invigorated. As the economy revived and stability returned, numerous church building projects were begun. While the more ornate and imaginative styles pioneered in Rome and Northern Italy had begun to spread in Central Europe quite early, the trials of the Thirty Years' War had stalled

## THE Sacred Landscape

*The period following the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War was followed by an unprecedented construction and remodeling boom in Catholic churches throughout southern Germany and Austria. Inspections of local churches in the wake of the conflict made obvious the deficiencies in church architecture. But the boom in remodeling and reconstruction arose from a surge in the people's piety, since many of these projects were initially financed by a broad segment of the Catholic population. As this surge in popular religiosity intensified, the Catholic elite also supported many projects aimed to beautify churches throughout the countryside after 1700.*

Many churches needed new furnishings in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War. All the visitations conducted in the 1650s, and even the 1660s, focused on the need to use resources to replace utensils, pictures, and statues lost and stolen during the war. The recovery from the war was followed by a wave of redecorating and redesigning which began in the last two decades of the seventeenth century.

In many ways, developments inside churches and chapels mirrored the development of the sacral landscape itself. As the number of churches and sacred sites increased after 1650, so too did the number of altars, the quantity and quality of furnishings, the number of statues and paintings, and the general density of decorations in the churches. The effect of denser furnishings was also to provide a greater variety of settings for religious practice.

The Catholic population, church patrons, and secular authorities all supported the adornment of churches. The driving force appears to have been the village community,

especially in the late seventeenth century. In 1669 the *Gemeinde* [community council] of Schönau in the Black Forest rebuilt the interior of the chapel at Schönenbuch, removing St. Blasien as the patron and replacing him with St. John the Baptist, probably to the displeasure of the local lord, the Abbey of St. Blasien. In 1683 the *Gemeinde* of Mindersdorf asked its parsimonious lords, the Teutonic Knights in Mainau, for help in paying for new bells for the parish church. The Knights were never enthusiastic about such expenditures and the Mindersdorfer had to engage in the typical long process of appeal, especially to the bishop, to try to squeeze some money out of the parish patron. Such disputes had been the pattern since the sixteenth century, and probably before. While parish patrons often had some obligation to pay for the upkeep of parish church, village communities frequently were the only ones willing to pay for the decoration of chapels.

Beginning around 1700, however, many parish patrons, especially the monasteries, became active, and even enthusiastic, about decorating village churches and chapels. Not surprisingly, of course, abbots and abbesses preferred dramatic projects such as the construction of the new shrines at Steinhausen and Birnau. At the same time, however, the constant need to refurbish parish churches and local chapels provided further opportunities to patronize the arts. Although ecclesiastic patrons always sought to avoid new financial obligations, in the eighteenth century they often responded positively to requests for new decorations. The cooperation between villagers and church institutions reflects the unity of rural Catholicism, as well as the desire for self-promotion and religious representation that characterized the world of the Catholic elite.

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**SOURCE:** Marc Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 78–79.

the fashion's general acceptance. In 1614, for instance, the archbishops of Passau had begun the reconstruction of their Cathedral at Salzburg along plans set down by early Italian Baroque designers. Undertaken to replace a basilica that had been destroyed by fire at the end of the sixteenth century, the town's new Baroque-styled Cathedral was consecrated in 1628. As warfare worsened in the region, the style of Salzburg's new Cathedral was not to be immediately imitated. In the second half of the seventeenth century, though, many Catholic patrons, bishops, and monasteries began to rebuild their churches in the grand Baroque style and the Baroque architectural language. At its very core, the elaborate and sumptuous interiors of the Baroque church were a counterattack on

Protestant sensibilities, which stressed restraint and a relatively unadorned style as most befitting to Christian worship. As the Baroque spread in Central Europe, it demonstrated considerable variety, although certain constants continued to recur in most of the movement's churches. As in Italy, a taste for dramatic spaces developed in which all parts of the structure were subordinate to the greater goal of achieving a climactic impression. Rich ornamentation and gilt, curved shapes, broken pediments, and other elements that were not strictly classical in origin prevailed. In place of the relatively restrained vocabulary of decoration that was present in England, the Netherlands, and Protestant Germany, the Italian and native architects who practiced in Central Europe



frequently created spaces that were colorful and enlivened by a festive spirit. Their free flowing, dramatic shapes owe a great deal to the innovative designs of figures like Guarini and Borromini, and generally the Baroque architecture of the region derived more inspiration from Italian rather than French examples.

**MAJOR PROJECTS.** Among the most important church monuments of the early Baroque in Central Europe were the new Cathedral at Passau (begun after a fire destroyed the existing structure in 1662), the Church of the Theatine Order in Munich (begun in 1663), and the Cathedral at Fulda (begun in 1704). Great Baroque churches multiplied even more profusely throughout Central Europe during the first half of the eighteenth century. The numbers of new projects undertaken at the time still manages to astound modern visitors to the region. In the century that followed 1650, almost all of the Catholic parish churches in southern Germany, Austria, and Switzerland were either rebuilt or redecorated in the Baroque style. As a result of this architectural renewal, central features of the Catholic Reformation's teachings—particularly of the Jesuits and other counter-reforming orders—were given architectural expression. Since the mid-sixteenth century these orders had argued that religious worship should take place within sacred spaces that captivated the human imagination and prepared the soul for union with God in the sacraments. Visibly, the Baroque churches of Central Europe attempted to achieve this aim with spaces that merged architecture, painting, and all the visual and decorative arts in ways that inspired the soul to undertake the pursuit of Christian perfection.

**PILGRIMAGE CHURCHES.** Another popular feature of the church architecture of the age was the construction of both great and small pilgrimage churches. During the sixteenth century, Protestants had attacked the medieval custom of making pilgrimages to the graves, relics, and religious images long associated with the saints. In the later seventeenth century this custom experienced a renewal in the Catholic regions of Central Europe, eventually becoming an important element of the religious identity of the period. During the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, hundreds of pilgrimage churches were consequently erected or remodeled throughout Central Europe. Many of these places were quite small, but the greatest often had monasteries attached to them, and their pilgrimages became significant sources of income to the surrounding economy. In southern Germany, *Vierzehnheiligen*, the *Wieskirche*, and *Altötting* were among the largest pilgrimage centers. At each, masterpieces of Baroque architecture were created to deepen

the piety of the pilgrims who visited these sites. Similar great churches were constructed in Austria in places like *Maria Zell* and *Maria Plain* and in Switzerland at *Einsiedeln*. These pilgrimage churches often provided large interior spaces and imposing central squares at which the faithful might congregate for religious rituals and worship. Notes of charm and whimsy were also present in the hundreds of edifices constructed at the time. In 1716, the Benedictine monks of *Weltenburg Abbey*, a site located along a narrow, cliff-bound stretch of the Danube River in Bavaria, commissioned the famous architects, *Cosmas and Aegidius Asam*, to remodel their church in the Baroque style. The Asam brothers created a fantastic interior that presented pilgrims with the illusion of being caught up in the heavens. The visual techniques of the building even extended to the confessional boxes, which were sculpted out of plaster to appear as if they were clouds. This playful note recurred in many places in southern Germany during the Baroque period, and as the stylistic movement endured, architects made use of a great range of decorative sophistication and creativity.

**PALACES AND CITIES.** As greater stability returned to the region, numerous country villas and palaces also began to be constructed in the Baroque style throughout Central Europe. If Baroque church architecture was popular primarily in Catholic regions as a counterattack on Protestant sensibilities, both Protestant and Catholic rulers proved to be enthusiastic builders of palaces in the Baroque style. The political realities of Central Europe bred a climate ripe for the construction of innumerable palaces and country retreats. For centuries, the political heart of the region had been the Holy Roman Empire, a multi-lingual, multicultural, but nevertheless weak confederation of about 350 separate principalities, free cities, and territories ruled by officials of the Roman Catholic Church. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, political disintegration had made the empire into ever more of a fictional power, as the largest territories became more like autonomous states and the emperor ever more an honorific figurehead. By the later seventeenth century any pretensions of his power to rule over this unwieldy set of states had largely been destroyed, especially by the specter of the internecine destruction that had raged during the *Thirty Years' War*. In the now largely independent territories that made up the Holy Roman Empire, rulers increasingly adopted the trappings of absolutist rule, ignoring or disbanding the representative assemblies that had long served to limit their power. At the same time, these princes became anxious to surround themselves with the kinds of sumptuous displays and ostentation that were common in far wealthier



Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna. © DAVE BARTRUFF.

and more powerful states like France. Scores of grand palaces, hunting lodges, and country villas thus sprang up on the landscape as an enduring testimony to this political reality. When compared against the standard of late seventeenth-century Versailles, many of these structures were quite modest, although given the large number of territories in the region, Central Europe today is populated with a far larger number of Baroque monuments than other continental regions. What is equally remarkable about the Baroque style here is the ambitious plans it inspired to remake many of the region's cities. As imposing country palaces and urban residences for the nobility grew in popularity, however, other minor noble families and wealthy merchants imitated the style, and thus the fashion for imposing Baroque buildings soon spread to influence the appearance of entire towns. Prague, Salzburg, Vienna, and Passau managed largely to preserve much of their Baroque core against the devastation of the Second World War. Other not-so-fortunate cities such as Warsaw, Dresden, and Berlin had to reconstruct many of their monuments. Even the depredations of World War II, which destroyed the majority of the historical centers of these towns, have proven insuf-

ficient since then to erase the imprint Baroque designers left on these places. In Warsaw, the Baroque core of the city was lovingly reconstructed over a number of years following its destruction in World War II. In Berlin and Dresden, the campaign to restore the monuments of the Baroque continues even in contemporary times, and the absence of many major buildings from the Baroque era is still felt by many people in these cities as a palpable loss. Perhaps in no place except Rome, then, has the Baroque style's effects on urban life continued to cast such a long shadow as in Central Europe.

**AUSTRIAN ARCHITECTS.** The numerous monuments produced in Germany, Austria, Bohemia, and Poland resulted from a talented group of designers who came on the scene rather quickly after 1700. While Italian and French architects were imported to design some of these structures, native designers produced most of them. In Austria the most important architects included Johann Fischer von Erlach (1656–1723), Jakob Prandtauer (1658–1726), and Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt (1668–1743). Von Erlach even received a minor noble title from the Habsburg emperor for his efforts to beautify Vienna and to create stunning palaces for the

royal family and nobility. His major commissions included the massive *Karlskirche* in Vienna, a structure that was a charming, but rather unusual mixture of architectural design elements that ranged across periods from Antiquity to the Baroque. Another important set of structures Fischer von Erlach created was the complex of buildings at the Belvedere Gardens on the outskirts of Vienna. He undertook these commissions for Prince Eugene of Savoy, a war hero from Austria's campaigns against the Turks, and the charming summer palaces and garden architecture that von Erlach created there were often imitated in later years. By contrast, the most important works that Jakob Prandtauer undertook were several imperial abbeys built along the Danube River. Among these, the lofty grandeur of Cloister Melk is the most impressive, sitting as it does perched high on a dramatic outcropping of rocks above the river. Prandtauer adapted his plans for Melk—which included a series of ceremonial rooms intended for imperial visits—to other powerful churches and religious institutions in the region. The grandest project of the age, though, proved to be the continual construction and rebuilding of the Schönbrunn Palace outside Vienna. A country house had been located at this site since the fourteenth century and had been remodeled in 1548. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, the estate came into Habsburg possession and the family began to rebuild it to serve as a retreat and hunting lodge. A grander structure was built at this place, in what are now suburbs of Vienna, in the mid-seventeenth century, although Turkish forces destroyed that structure in the siege of the city that took place in 1683. By 1700, the Habsburgs had reconstructed much of the building on an even more monumental scale, although the extensive plans made for the site by the architect Johann Fischer von Erlach were never undertaken in their entirety because they were too costly. Finally, in 1742, the family decided to extend the palace once more, destroying parts of the von Erlach design in the process. Over the next five years the building expanded at such a rate as to be the equivalent of the Versailles. During the Empress Maria Theresa's long reign, it eventually became the center of government, an enormous structure whose more than 1,400 rooms rivaled the French palace. While Maria Theresa's most important residence, it was only one of an impressive collection of palaces, villas, and country retreats that the monarchy used at the time.

**GERMAN DESIGNERS.** Similar patterns of profligate ostentation were also the rule among the greatest German princes of the age. Throughout this region an even larger number of Baroque architects practiced their

trade. The country's major Baroque designers included Georg Bähr (1666–1738), Daniel Pöppelmann (1662–1736), Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff (1699–1759), Andreas Schlüter (1659(?)–1759), and Balthasar Neumann (1687–1743). Bähr, Pöppelmann, and von Knobelsdorff were all active in Dresden during the first half of the eighteenth century, where they served the ambitions of the electors of Saxony, who were anxious to transform their capital into a model of Baroque elegance. It was during this period that Dresden began its rise to prominence as an artistic center that eventually earned the town the reputation for being the “Florence on the Elbe.” One of the most unusual projects begun during this time was the building of the *Frauenkirche*, or the Church of Our Lady, a massive domed structure that once stood at the center of the city, and which is presently being rebuilt with a painstaking attention to detail. Although Dresden was Lutheran, and Lutheran church architecture usually avoided sumptuous display, Georg Bähr created an enormous structure with a grand interior. By contrast, most of the monuments that Daniel Pöppelmann left behind were of a secular nature. For many years he reigned as the chief architect in and around the city, where he produced such famous landmarks as the Zwinger Palace, a masterpiece of the high Baroque and Rococo style. As Dresden developed into a town of incomparable Baroque elegance, the designers Andreas Schlüter and Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff transformed the Hohenzollern capital Berlin and its surrounding countryside with the design of similar monumental creations. Von Knobelsdorff is chiefly responsible for the Hohenzollern dynasty's masterpiece, the Palace of Sansouci, a pleasure villa constructed at Potsdam, Berlin's suburban counterpart to Versailles and Schönbrunn. To construct this and other monuments in and around Potsdam, an entire population of stoneworkers and artisans had to be settled in the town. The enormous façade of the Palace of Sansouci, a pleasure structure more than 300 meters long, recalled the Grand Trianon in the gardens of Versailles, although by the time of its construction its confectionary of decorative details and greater plasticity of line and form had departed far from the relative restraint of the French example. Numerous Baroque buildings were also under construction in the city of Berlin at the time, and those that survived the Second World War suggest the elegance of the Baroque city. Major features of Berlin's cityscape that date from this period included Von Knobelsdorff's designs for the Opera as well as many of the other impressive monuments that lined the city's elegant core avenue *Unter den Linden*. To the south, in Catholic Bavaria, the Wittelsbach rulers continually remodeled



Palace of Sansouci, Potsdam, Germany. © BOB KRIST/CORBIS.

their Munich palace, the Residence, and created broad and handsome squares to beautify the city. Outside the city at Nymphenburg and Schleissheim they created a series of country retreats, some on a smaller scale than Versailles, Sansouci, or Schönbrunn, while others like the New Palace at Schleissheim were said to rival these creations. This brief snapshot of major Baroque palaces cannot begin to suggest the scores of even smaller projects undertaken throughout Germany at the time. While minor nobles might not hope to compete in grandeur with the Wittelsbachs, Habsburgs, and Hohenzollern, most princes equipped with even modest resources tried to surround themselves with the elegant and ornate trappings of Baroque structures. Perhaps the greatest architectural figure of the German Baroque was Johann Balthasar Neumann, a designer who worked for many years in southern Germany, primarily in the diocesan capital of Würzburg. There he built a number of structures, including his masterpiece, the Residence, an urban palace for the town's prince bishops, which contained the largest and most sumptuous staircase ever built during the period. Although the palace itself was not the grandest of Germany's Baroque creations, the

entire complex is, nevertheless, one of the era's most attractive and completely realized. Its appealing qualities arise from its integration of new French design and decorative elements drawn from the developing Rococo movement with a thorough understanding of the massive and monumental possibilities of the Italian Baroque. Neumann's career opened up new vistas in the Baroque in Germany, and in his relatively long career he produced many buildings notable for their sinuous, undulating lines and their dramatic uses of light. These spaces seem to breathe, and as a consequence they reflect an appealing organic dynamism. Among his best works was the pilgrimage church of *Vierzehnheiligen* (constructed between 1743 and 1772), although Neumann created a number of handsome churches throughout southern Germany. He was also notable for his urban planning efforts at Würzburg, efforts that helped to transform the city into one of the more completely harmonious Baroque cities in the empire. As in his buildings, Neumann planned broad and curving streets and squares, and he created a number of ingenious regulations that encouraged building in the ornamented Baroque style. At his behest, for example, the town granted tax ex-



Grand staircase of the Residence, Würzburg, Germany. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.



Zwinger Palace, Dresden, Germany. © MASSIMO LISTRI/CORBIS.

emptions of twelve years to anyone who added a Baroque façade to their house or business. Measures like these also contributed to Neumann's own trade, and in his years at Würzburg he obliged the town's burghers with a number of buildings.

**BAROQUE VARIETY AND UNITY.** As it left Italy, the Baroque style came to be invigorated by national traditions and to be molded to the religious and political demands of the states of Northern Europe. Great variety characterized the national styles of architecture, with England and the Netherlands generally avoiding the sumptuous and ornate decorative dimensions of the movement in favor of a more restrained classical vocabulary. In France, a grander and more ornate form of that same classicism continued to hold sway throughout most of the seventeenth century, particularly in the public buildings constructed in and around Paris. In Central Europe, though, the plastic forms and decorative impulses of the Baroque that had first developed in

Italy came to full fruition, producing monuments that astounded their viewers with their complexity, free-flowing lines, and festive spirit. One feature, though, that was shared by architects in all regions of Europe in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was a new attention to details of urban planning, as purpose-built squares, broader avenues, and handsome public buildings came to be prized as expressions of a civic ethos as well as the state's power to accomplish change on the urban landscape. If Baroque architects and their patrons thus dedicated themselves to the task of making over many European towns and cities, they were also no less determined to create elaborate pleasure palaces and retreats set in idyllic, yet highly formalized gardens on the outskirts of Europe's growing cities. This tension between ideal visions of rural and urban existence was one of the defining characteristics of the age, and continued to endure long after the Baroque style had faded in favor of new influences.

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## THE ROCOCO IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

**FRENCH ORIGINS.** In the years immediately following the death of King Louis XIV, design in France began to take on an entirely new feeling. On the one hand, public buildings continued to be constructed using the classically influenced designs that French architects and royal patrons had favored since the early seventeenth century. On the other, domestic spaces quickly became more elegant. This style is known in English by the Italian word that described it, “Rococo,” although the French word *rocaille* had the same meaning. It referred to “rockwork,” or plaster sculpted to appear as if it was stone. Since the sixteenth century, these techniques had been employed to create fanciful grottoes from stucco in the gardens of palaces and country villas. Around 1700, though, *rocaille* techniques began to move indoors, and French plasterers made extensive use of the techniques in palaces and townhouses. *Rocaille* now referred to delicate scrolling patterns of stucco in swirls and arabesques, designs that were reproduced over and over again on walls, ceilings, and wood paneling during the first half of the eighteenth century. These patterns first appeared at Versailles and in other royal residences around 1700, and in a decade or two, *rocaille* became fashionable in the decoration of homes in Paris.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROCOCO.** The fashion for plaster decoration sculpted in the new fanciful shapes that *rocaille* techniques offered was just one of several changes in taste and fashion that occurred in France soon after the death of King Louis XIV in 1715. As one of the movement’s most important decorative devices, the term *rocaille* summed up the entire decorative impulses of the age. Outside of France, this period in architectural and decorative design has been referred to by its Italian equivalent *rococo* since the eighteenth century. The rise of the new style reveals a rather sudden shift in aesthetic values, a shift inspired by important changes underway in French elite

society. The vast interior spaces of the seventeenth-century Palace of Versailles had favored dark and sonorous colors and the use of paneling crafted from dramatic polychromed marbles. The palette of the Rococo was altogether lighter, favoring white or ivory walls decorated with low-lying reliefs trimmed with gilt. Subtle shades of pastels figured prominently in the paintings that were hung in these rooms, or which were executed as frescoes on the walls. A fashion for mirrors intensified the bright light in these spaces, also. In sum, the feeling of a Rococo interior was considerably gayer and less forbidding than that of seventeenth-century spaces. The scale of these rooms, too, was often smaller, given more to quiet, intimate gatherings than the formal reception areas of the earlier period.

**PARIS.** It was in Paris that these new fashions took hold most quickly, and there the new elements of interior design decorated many salons in the mid-eighteenth century. The development of the Rococo came at a time when Paris regained an important status in the early years of Louis XV’s reign. In the years between 1715 and 1722, the young king centered his government, not at Versailles, but in France’s largest city, as the regent, Philippe d’Orléans, preferred the town to the country. This brief re-establishment of government in Paris did much to stimulate a flurry of interior decoration and building, as nobles who had taken up residence in Louis XIV’s seat of power at Versailles returned to the capital to be closer to the court. Instead of the elaborate angular and symmetrical formality of Louis XIV’s age, the Rococo designers of Paris in these years produced rooms that were models of restrained and decorative delicacy. Much of this elegance, though, could not be seen by the general public since the façades of many fine townhouses built at the time continued to use the classical forms that had been popular in Paris since the seventeenth century. The Rococo fashion was an almost exclusively upper-class phenomenon, one that by 1735 had become the reigning style of interior decoration. In that year, Germain Boffrand created two striking rooms in the interior of the Hôtel de Soubise in Paris: the Oval Salon and the Salon of the Princess. These spaces survive today and demonstrate many of the central features of the style as it moved to a high point of development. In place of the angular symmetry that had prevailed during the time of Louis XIV, Boffrand’s rooms feature a creative and curving asymmetry. Delicate, low relief ornament cover the walls, yet these surfaces are not nearly so heavily encrusted with decoration as the Baroque interiors that preceded them. Instead great patches of white show through Boffrand’s scheme of elaborate swirling, gilt patterns. Through the repetition of vertical lines used throughout

## SHIFTING Family Values

With the death of Louis XIV in 1715 and the removal of the court to Paris during Philippe d'Orléans' regency ... the building of magnificent but nonetheless discreet town houses or *hôtels* in Paris announced a shift in the values of French domestic architecture. This shift, in turn, opened up opportunities of painters to represent these interiors in ways that took advantage of the social meanings of greater intimacy and familiarity.

Before the bottom fell out of his fiscal schemes, John Law (1671–1729), a Scottish monetary reformer in the employ of Philippe d'Orléans, helped to earn many Parisians instant wealth, which sent them on buying sprees the like of which had not previously been set outside of the royal family. Philippe had hoped to reduce the enormous public debt incurred during the later years of the reign of Louis XIV, and initially Law's plans worked. He supervised the founding of a bank that would issue notes, replacing scarce gold and silver currency, and paper money was issued in large quantities. Before the paper currency lost most of its value, Law's strategy had a significant impact on building activity in Paris. Suddenly, it seemed, many had the means to build or renovate existing structures, and furnish them with paintings, marble busts, and the beautiful cabinetry, sofas and chairs produced by the craftsmen who had once been in the employ of Louis XIV.

Jacques-François Blondel (1705–1774), Louis XV's architect, became a spokesman for how domestic architecture should look and function in eighteenth-century France. Blondel claimed to be a follower of Vitruvius, the first-century Roman architect and theorist, in endorsing what Blondel called "commodity, firmness, and delight." The idea of commodity means not just the useful and convenient, but also the commodious or comfortable. Although a building should hold true to sturdy traditions of architecture ("firmness") and display the aesthetics of the age ("delight"), it must also be comfortable. Comfort was hardly a quality sought by Louis XIV and his architects. Nor, as we have seen, was it of primary importance to the prosperous salon society of early to mid-eighteenth-century Paris.

Blondel understood that the French nobility needed homes that would have a grand room for ceremonial purposes, a reception room that was smaller yet still public, and private *appartements* for the members of the family. The Rococo *hôtel* was constructed for a family, a husband, wife, and children. Domestic servants were kept in separate rooms (often above the low-ceilinged bedrooms) or in their own apartments. Therefore, the private spaces—even the salon, which was both a reception room and a place for banquets—were built on a scale that would easily accommodate but not overwhelm the nuclear (rather than extended) family and their occasional guests.

**SOURCE:** Vernon Hyde Minor, *Baroque and Rococo. Art and Culture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 1999): 342–343.

these spaces the designer called attention to these rooms' high, decorative ceilings, even as he used windows to catch and refract the light off the many gilt surfaces. The result produced a jewel box effect. While Boffrand's rooms still rank among the greatest achievements of the fashion, numerous upper-class townhouses in Paris and throughout France were being remodeled as tastes changed. While most of these spaces were not nearly so elaborate as those at the Hôtel de Soubise, typical Rococo rooms came to be paneled with wood painted white or ivory and decorated with the typical patterns of gilded plaster. Elaborate stucco decoration also figured prominently, with many plaster decorative reliefs being used prominently at the boundary between ceilings and walls.

**THE ROCOCO CONQUERS VERSAILLES.** Even at Versailles, a palace once filled with imposing and dark interiors, the royal family remodeled many rooms to fit with the changing fashion. In the years after 1722, Louis XV reestablished government in the seventeenth-century palace, although by the 1730s he had grown tired of the

forbidding decoration of many of Versailles' rooms. In 1735, Louis XV decided to redesign his private apartments within the palace. He chose the lighter Rococo fashion to replace the dark decoration that had previously filled these rooms, and he divided his apartments into several smaller cabinets that included a bedchamber, clock room, private office, and bathroom, eschewing the elaborate bedchamber of his great-grandfather, Louis XIV. But once his new accommodations were completed, Louis XV did not return to that uncomfortable bedchamber. He favored instead the smaller scale of his new, more private surroundings. The king thus evidenced the same desire for intimate settings as did the elites of Paris and other French cities.

**SALONS.** The rise of the Rococo style of decoration coincided with the development of the salon as an institution of French culture. In the first half of the eighteenth century these cultured meetings of elites and intellectuals became increasingly important in the social life of Paris. While the salon eventually played a key role in





Interior of the Residence Theater, Munich. © ADAM WOOLFITT/CORBIS.

the rise of the Enlightenment and later of the French Revolution, it was, at its base, a place where large groups of cultivated individuals who prized wit and speech, the social graces, and connoisseurship of art and music could gather. By 1750, a large city like Paris had about 800 salons that met regularly to discuss issues of civic, philosophical, or artistic importance. The craze for decoration in the Rococo, then, was one consequence of the emergence of these salons, as wealthy families competed against one another to create spaces worthy of the lofty discussions that occurred within their homes. In these new social groups members of the nobility mingled alongside merchants and students in the new private spaces that Rococo architecture offered. Women often presided over the discussions that took place in these salons, a sign of the rising status they acquired at the time as leaders of intellectual discussion as well as arbiters of domestic taste and consumption. The undeniably feminine character of much of the Rococo derived in large part from the new role that wealthy women played as consumers of art and the refined accessories of domestic living. The movement's designs also embraced a taste for the foreign, even as they made use of motifs that were

rustic and surprisingly mundane. For exotic inspiration, designers turned to the Near and Far East, adopting decorative details from elements of Chinese and Arabic design. At other times they reached out to idealize rural life, filling their rooms with scenes of landscapes, hunts, or country life. Fabric printed with these scenes became popular at the time, much of which had still to be imported into France from other countries at mid-century. To avoid squandering the country's resources, Louis XV chartered a royal factory for producing the popular cloth in 1762 at Jouy-en-Josas, a small village near Versailles. The village name contributed to the modern term "Toile du Jouy" or just merely "toile" to indicate a kind of fabric filled with narrative scenes of daily life.

**THE STYLE SPREADS.** The primarily decorative dimension that the Rococo took in France is undeniable. As a result, architectural historians have long debated whether the Rococo merits any consideration as an "architectural" period at all. Outside France, though, the Rococo developed a more pronounced architectural dimension, particularly in Germany and Austria. By contrast, the style was unpopular in England, where except for a small number of rooms decorated in this fashion,



Schloss Nymphenburg in Munich, Germany. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

the Rococo's influence remained limited. In Rome, architects and designers remained impervious to the fashion's popularity and continued to produce buildings and monuments that used the grand, imposing proportions of the Baroque. Elsewhere in Italy, small pockets of Rococo-influenced architecture were to be found, most notably in the capital of the duchy of Savoy, Turin, and in Naples, Italy's largest city at the time. Thus of all the places to which the Rococo traveled outside France, it was in Central Europe, particularly in Germany and Austria, where the movement produced its greatest landmarks. In that region, the Rococo developed, not just as an interior fashion, but as an architectural phenomenon as well. A key figure in encouraging the popularity of the style in this region was François de Cuvilliés (1695–1768), a French-speaking designer whose family originally hailed from Flanders. Cuvilliés came to work in the city of Munich through an extraordinary set of circumstances. In 1711, he became a court dwarf in the service of the Bavarian duke Maximilian II Emmanuel while that prince served out a term of exile from his native country. Several years later, Cuvilliés returned with the duke to Munich, where he eventually received an education in the court. By 1720, the duke's official

designer was schooling him in architecture. He soon left for Paris, where he stayed for five years to finish his studies. Thus Cuvilliés was a student in Paris during the early years of Rococo's rise to popularity among aristocrats and the wealthy. When he returned to Munich in 1725, he attained a position of prominence among the many accomplished designers practicing in southern Germany at the time. During his long career his most celebrated accomplishments included a series of pleasure villas constructed for the Bavarian dukes in the gardens of the Nymphenburg Palace outside Munich, rooms designed in the suburban palace at Schleissheim, and the Residence Theater in Munich. This last structure, carefully rebuilt after its devastation in the Second World War, is known affectionately today in Munich merely as the "Cuvilliés." The theater is ornate and decorative in the extreme since the architect relied on ornamental features to make obvious the distinctions between the various levels of aristocrats who visited the theater. He massed the greatest decorative details, for instance, on the ducal box and first balcony that surrounded it, which was reserved for the highest levels of society. In the balconies above, these decorations diminished with each level. While his design was highly decorative, Cuvilliés



Church of the Wies, Germany. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

was an astute student of theatrical design and provided a space that was an excellent venue for good drama. It continues even now to serve its original purpose as home to many theatrical productions in Munich.

**CUVILLIÉS' INFLUENCE.** As a student, Cuvilliés had acquired a firsthand knowledge of the ways in which Parisian plasterers produced their stunning *rocaille* effects. In the years that he served as court architect in Munich, his influence ensured that these techniques became a fixture of architecture in Bavaria and southern Germany. By mid-century designers used the new skills to stunning effect in their creation of buildings that appear like sculptural masses constructed out of the fluid shapes that *rocaille* techniques afforded. At this time, architects in southern Germany also made use of the Rococo's possibilities for creating churches that were brilliantly filled with light. Thus, the Rococo in the region developed into far more than a fashion for domestic interior design. Throughout Central Europe, many buildings originally begun in the Baroque style, like the Zwinger Palace in Dresden or the Residence in Würzburg, acquired Rococo detailing. The Rococo achieved its most pronounced developments as an inde-

pendent architectural movement, however, in Bavaria and the German south.

**MAJOR DESIGNERS.** The use of light, the creation of festive interiors, and the predominance of sinuous lines encrusted with ornament were central features of the new style, and these played a particularly dynamic role in the works of Germany's two most accomplished Rococo designers: Dominikus Zimmermann (1685–1766) and Johann Michael Fischer (1712–1766). Zimmermann's greatest work is his Church of the Wies (meaning "meadow"), outside of the village of Steingaden in the Bavarian Alps. Begun in 1743 for a nearby monastery, this church housed a miraculous image of the flagellation of Christ, to which a pilgrimage had developed. Zimmermann developed the nave of the church as an elongated oval supported by eight columns that melded into the structure's ceiling in a riot of encrusted decoration. The Corinthian columns of some of these supports take on the effect of jewelry, sculpted as they are out of plaster and decorated with touches of gilt. Above, in the space where a cornice or entablature might normally separate the walls of the church from the ceiling, Zimmermann created a fluid space decorated with stucco and gilt

encrustations so that it is difficult for the eye to tell where the walls end and the ceiling begins. Light floods into the space through the broad and elongated windows. The sinuous treatment of lines continues in the exterior, where the architect used long, flowing detailing to set off the windows. Modest, refined decoration also seems to drip from the building's pilasters and upper surfaces.

**OTTOBEUREN.** Like Zimmermann, Johann Michael Fischer already had a reputation as an accomplished architect when he began to create spaces using the Rococo style. He had designed a number of Catholic churches in Bavaria and throughout southern Germany since the late 1720s. In his mature work, though, he began to adapt the new style to a series of monastic churches he created during the 1740s. The largest and most famous of these was Ottobeuren in the small town of the same name in the German southwest. Previous architects had already established the monumental size of this structure and they had fixed its shape as a Greek cross. Fischer revolutionized their design by building two huge towers on the church's exterior and setting a convex central portion between them. These two towers frame the elaborately decorated gable that runs above the central entrance to the church. Columns set on both sides of the entrance further enhance the strongly vertical lines of the exterior. Inside, Fischer made the most of the Greek cross space by setting huge windows in the enormous walls and allowing light to fill the structure. The central piers that support that structure's main dome are decorated with colored faux marble pilasters so that they appear even larger than they really are. Throughout the interior Fischer left broad patches of walls, spaces later decorated with paintings by Johann and Franz Zeiler and sculptures by Johann Joseph Christian. These decorative elements skillfully enhanced the monumental lines developed by Fischer in the structure. As a result, Ottobeuren stands as one of the premier monuments of the German Rococo, an archetype for what Germans have long called a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a masterpiece in which the imaginative fusion of all the arts work toward a single, greater goal.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE ROCOCO.** Great works of Rococo architecture like the Wies or the monastic church at Ottobeuren seem today to sum up the imaginative possibilities as well as the limitations of Rococo as an architectural and stylistic movement. In these structures, decoration combined with skillful architectural design to create works of incomparable beauty and greatness. In the hands of lesser lights, though, the fashion for encrustation led to many considerably less imaginative spaces. Fashion had sustained the rise of the Rococo since its beginnings in early eighteenth-century Paris. As the

second half of the eighteenth century approached, and as Rococo design moved to its final stage of ornate elaboration, fashions just as quickly began to change. In the second half of the eighteenth century Neoclassical spaces, often serene and severe, revolutionized domestic, church, and public architecture throughout Europe just as quickly as the Rococo had changed fashions in the first half of the century.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: The Rococo*

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEOCLASSICISM

**REACTION AGAINST THE ROCOCO.** Even as fanciful patterns of Rococo decoration and architectural creation achieved great popularity in many wealthy circles throughout Europe, people began to react negatively toward the style. By 1750, many architects and patrons viewed the movement as corrupt and decadent, and began to embrace a broad, Neoclassical revival in place of the Rococo. The forces that inspired Neoclassicism arose from numerous intellectual, economic, and social sources. By the second half of the eighteenth century, though, a rising fascination with Antiquity is undeniable throughout Europe. One force that helped to create this fascination was the phenomenon of the Grand Tour, a circuit that intellectuals and wealthy cultivated men and women often made through Europe's main capitals. The Grand Tour was particularly popular among English elites, and during the eighteenth century it became an event that was seen as necessary to complete one's education. Many people published accounts of their tours, and as later cultural pilgrims imitated the tours of others who had gone before, the Grand Tour became increasingly formalized as a social convention. Of course, elites from throughout Europe had long visited the continent's major capitals, and since the Renaissance they had been especially anxious to make the journey to Italy. Whereas earlier generations of intellectuals had frequently wanted



*The Arch of Septimus Severus* by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, an example of the eighteenth-century Neoclassical fascination with antiquity. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

to witness firsthand the cultural achievements of Renaissance humanists and artists, however, refined society in the eighteenth century desired to see firsthand the power and austere beauty of the ancient ruins in Rome as well as other antique sites. For many, the city of Rome was the high point and often the culmination of the Grand Tour for its wealth of ancient monuments. Literary and historical works that celebrated the achievements of Antiquity had whetted tourists' appetites for these sights. In the English-speaking world the greatest of these works was Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, first published in 1788; but, as elsewhere in Europe, Gibbon's superb statement of eighteenth-century classical history had long been preceded by a number of other works that treated life in the ancient world. At its foundation, this fascination with all things classical arose from a deeply felt desire to imitate the cultural greatness of Rome and Greece.

**STUDY OF ANTIQUITY.** One important result of this fascination was the rise of archeology as a new discipline at the time. As a result of scholarly attention, the artifacts and buildings of the ancient world were subjected to a new, more detailed examination. A key figure in popularizing the achievements of ancient builders was

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778). During a forty-year career spent mostly in Rome, he fostered close contacts with many European architects and patrons who visited the city. Piranesi acquired an unparalleled understanding of ancient architecture through the studies he undertook at archeological digs in Italy, and he spread this knowledge through a series of skilled and undeniably beautiful etchings of ancient monuments. Later in his career he also shaped the course of European architecture by publishing a series of polemical works that advocated an eclectic and practical adoption of ancient designs. Piranesi's voluminous and archeologically informed knowledge of the ancient world placed him in a uniquely powerful position to influence the Neoclassical revival. In his written works, for instance, he argued that ancient design had been practical, adopting influences and practices from throughout the Mediterranean to fit the changing needs and circumstances of people. Such arguments shifted the terms of the debates that had long raged about ancient architecture. Piranesi rejected longstanding questions about whether the architecture of the Greeks had been superior to that of the Romans. Instead he celebrated the ancient monuments that existed in Italy from the time of the Etruscans as practical and well suited

to the needs of each culture's own time. Implicit within this defense of classical architecture, though, was a criticism of the highly ornamental and decorative styles of building that flourished in many places in Europe at the time. In this way his writings and etchings undermined the popularity of Baroque and Rococo styles of ornamentation. Fascinated by the images he presented of historically accurate ancient buildings, patrons and designers began to emulate the simpler, less adorned styles of Antiquity.

**NEOCLASSICISM IN FRANCE.** During the high tide of the Rococo's popularity in Paris, townhouses and public buildings in the city had continued to be constructed with restrained façades, and many of the elements of these structures had their origins in the classicism of the Renaissance. In the later years of Louis XV's reign, an increased severity and gravity became the rule in many of the royal projects undertaken in Paris as the new, more historically informed Neoclassicism spread through Europe. The reigning architects of the second half of the eighteenth century were Germain Soufflot (1713–1780) and Ange-Jacques Gabriel (1698–1782). Soufflot was originally from Lyons, France's second largest city, where he designed a number of country houses and public buildings before moving to Paris in the 1750s. In 1755, work began on his designs for the Church of Ste.-Geneviève (now known as the Panthéon), although numerous problems plagued this church's completion and the structure remained unfinished until 1790. This building commemorated Louis XV's recovery from an illness after he made a vow to the saint. Constructed on a hill overlooking the Left Bank of the Seine, the church commands the site by virtue of its enormous classical dome. The structure's classicizing tendencies bear greater resemblance to the architecture of the High Renaissance than they do to the exuberant and more decorative style of the seventeenth-century French Baroque. Throughout the church Soufflot deployed the sophistication he had acquired in classical design while a student in Rome. The exterior and interior surfaces of the church are largely unadorned and its porticos might have appeared on public buildings constructed in the Roman forum. By contrast, Ange-Jacques Gabriel (1698–1782) was a French-trained architect who became the palace architect at Versailles. During his tenure he completed many works of reorganization at the château for Louis XV, a monarch obsessed with achieving greater privacy in the mammoth spaces of the palace. While constantly involved in projects of remodeling at Versailles, Fontainebleau, and other royal residences, Gabriel also designed several buildings that were notable for their use of the new, more



The Panthéon, Paris. © SETBOUN/CORBIS.

severe Neoclassicism. In Paris, Gabriel designed two new public buildings that faced the Place Louis XV (now the Place de la Concorde), then just west of the Tuileries Palace. While consonant with the façades that had been constructed for the nearby Louvre in the seventeenth century, Gabriel included details more in keeping with ancient than Baroque architecture. His colonnades, for instance, are comprised of rows of single, rather than paired columns, and the culminating pavilions of these buildings are each crowned with a pediment, rather than the elongated and solitary structure that stretched over the east façade of the Louvre.

**PETIT TRIANON.** At about the same time Gabriel was completing plans for the buildings of the Place Louis XV, he was also creating his great masterpiece, the Petit Trianon at Versailles. He built this small retreat on the fringes of the garden of the Grand Trianon, the much larger haven that Louis XIV had built to escape Versailles' formality. This was one of the most notable buildings of the eighteenth century because its scale and layout very much resembled that of modern houses. In this relatively

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AT HOME WITH THE QUEEN**

**INTRODUCTION:** The fashion for intimate interiors in the first half of the eighteenth century gave rise in later years to an intensified demand for small, private spaces that provided a focus for family life. Many members of the royal family and the court rejected life at Versailles in favor of newer and smaller-scaled residences. These houses were nevertheless decorated with sumptuous interiors, but at the same time they offered natural gardens and interiors constructed on a human scale. In the later years of her short reign as queen of France, Marie-Antoinette all but abandoned the great Palace of Versailles, and instead took up residence with her children in the Petit Trianon at the far reaches of the château's gardens. The queen's isolation attracted great controversy as rumors circulated that orgiastic parties occurred there. After the queen's execution, Madame Campan, a member of her aristocratic inner circle, tried to put to rest these rumors by reminiscing in her memoirs about Marie-Antoinette's intensely private family life in the small spaces of the Petit Trianon.

The king, always attentive to the comfort of his family, gave Mesdames, his aunts the use of Château de Bellevue, and afterwards purchased the Princess de Guéméné's house at the entrance to Paris for Elisabeth [Louis XVI's sister]. The Comtesse de Provence bought a small house at Montreuil; Monsieur already had Brunoy;

the Comtesse d'Artois built Bagatelle; Versailles became, in the estimation of all the royal family, the least agreeable of residences. They only fancied themselves at home in the plainest houses, surrounded by English gardens, where they better enjoyed the beauties of nature. The taste for cascades and statues was entirely past.

The Queen occasionally remained a whole month at Petit Trianon, and had established there all the ways of life in a château. She entered the sitting-room without driving the ladies from their pianoforte or embroidery. The gentlemen continued their billiards or backgammon without suffering her presence to interrupt them. There was but little room in the small Château of Trianon. Madame Elisabeth accompanied the Queen there, but the ladies of honour and ladies of the palace had no establishment at Trianon. When invited by the Queen, they came from Versailles to dinner. The King and Princes came regularly to sup. A white gown, a gauze kerchief, and a straw hat were the uniform dress of the Princesses. Examining all the manufactories of the hamlet, seeing the cows milked, and fishing in the lake delighted the Queen; and every year she showed increased aversion to the pompous excursions to Marly [a country retreat originally built by Louis XIV].

**SOURCE:** Jeanne Louise Henriette Campan, *Mémoires of Madam Campan*. Vol. 1 (Paris and Boston: Grolier Society, 1890): 266–268.

small house, Gabriel improved upon the Rococo's techniques for providing families with greater privacy. Built as a hideaway for the king and his mistress Madame de Pompadour, the building's small scale and perfection of decoration made it a fitting tribute to Pompadour, who avidly supported the Neoclassical style's development in France. With her banishment from court and the death of Louis XV, the property became a favorite retreat of Queen Marie-Antoinette, who found the structure's informality more attractive than the vast and cold spaces of nearby Versailles. The queen likely admired the structure because its use of space was completely different than most of the royal residences of the time. In his design Gabriel combined all the functions and spaces necessary for a nuclear family to live in relative quiet and seclusion. On the ground floor he located the kitchens and other facilities necessary to support the family, who lived above. On that upper story the bedchambers and bathrooms were segregated to one side, while the more sober drawing and dining rooms were found at the opposite end. All rooms offered attractive vistas into the

gardens below. Relying on this logic of seclusion and privacy, a logic that had now intensified even from the time of Rococo interiors, Gabriel created a space that Marie-Antoinette prized because it afforded her the opportunity to control how much access visitors had to her inner sanctum. The house, for instance, was too small to provide accommodations for her ladies-in-waiting, who had to return to their rooms in nearby Versailles at the end of their visits with her.

**NEOCLASSICISM IN ENGLAND.** While Italian and French contributions to the classical revival were considerable, it was in England that the new style developed most decidedly. During the course of the eighteenth century, England exercised a powerful influence over intellectual life and fashions throughout Europe. The country acquired a role similar to that which France had played in the seventeenth century. In continental Europe the philosophers of the Enlightenment celebrated the genius of English constitutional government, seeing in it a system that provided greater freedom and that consequently fostered human ingenuity and creativity. Under the



The Petit Trianon villa north of the Palace of Versailles gardens. © ADAM WOOLFITT/CORBIS.

Hanoverian kings, limited monarchs who came to England from Germany, the country entered an era of undeniable prosperity. London became Europe's largest city, and England's trade contacts stretched to the furthest reaches of the globe. Although the groundwork for these transformations had been laid in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rapid growth and change characterized the eighteenth century. The period became known for its many cultural achievements. In art, literature, and architecture, it is often called England's Augustan Age, a term that calls attention to the undeniable greatness of works produced at this time, but also to their self-conscious emulation of ancient Rome.

**CLASSICAL INFLUENCES.** England offered one of Europe's most receptive climates for the development of Neoclassicism for a variety of reasons. Its Baroque architecture, crafted by figures like Christopher Wren and John Vanbrugh, had included many important classical elements, while the suave elegance of the Rococo had made few inroads into English palaces and houses. Thus, as English designers tried to recapture an archeologically correct classicism in the second half of the eighteenth century they had less ground to cover than many of their

continental counterparts. The country's economic growth created a ready class of consumers, aristocrats, gentlemen farmers, merchants, and—as the century progressed—new industrialists who were anxious to surround themselves with stylish buildings. The most visible testimonies to England's economic expansion at the time were in the countryside and in London. In rural England a boom in the construction of country homes hit soon after 1700. As new fortunes multiplied, and as older money became enriched by investment in the new ventures the age offered, England became a land filled with hundreds of country estates. At the same time, London acquired ever more the character of a metropolis. During the early eighteenth century, a characteristic pattern of development emerged in the city, particularly on its western fringes. In Piccadilly, Mayfair, Marylebone, and other once outlying suburbs, handsome new squares filled in with rows of attractive and harmonious Georgian townhouses became a noted feature. In this regard the aristocratic architect Robert Boyle, the third earl of Burlington, did much to impress a Palladian identity on the city in the eighteenth century. Born in 1694, he made his Grand Tour in 1714, returning home with over 870 pieces of luggage filled





Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, England. © ROYALTY-FREE/CORBIS.

with Roman antiquities, drawings from the hands of Palladio, and other souvenirs of his journey. While in northern Italy, the grace of Palladian architecture captivated him, and back in London he decided to use the style in the construction of Burlington House in affluent Piccadilly. In the years that followed, he trained himself as an architect, acquiring a following among the country's aristocracy. He constructed his own country seat at Chiswick House, just outside London, during the 1720s, and made use of Palladio's own famous plans for the Villa Rotonda, near Vicenza in northern Italy. He crowned the simple, yet cubicle mass with a dome, and the structure did much to popularize Palladian architecture among English aristocrats. Elements of its design were frequently copied in the English-speaking world, most notably by Thomas Jefferson who used the designs of both Villa Rotonda and Chiswick House to inform his Monticello on the American frontier. Burlington's architecture, like that of James Gibbs and other architects then active on the scene in London, was important in establishing a taste for classicism. Although the buildings produced in this first wave of Palladian classicism were not highly original, they had the great advantage

of creating undeniably attractive public thoroughfares and squares. The Palladian Revival of the early eighteenth century also laid the groundwork for the more thoroughly classical architecture that became popular throughout Britain in the second half of the century.

**CHANGE IN DIRECTION.** The significance of the changes in English architecture during the eighteenth century can be gauged by comparing the monuments constructed around 1700 with those built just a few decades later. Blenheim Palace, begun in 1705, was the largest Baroque house ever built in England. This enormous structure at Woodstock just outside Oxford was constructed at great taxpayer expense to honor the Duke of Marlborough, John Churchill, for his recent military victories. Blenheim was to be both a country seat for Marlborough and a national monument at the same time that was worthy of the country's growing international reputation. Unfortunately, the public purse was not able to withstand the weight of Marlborough's ambition, requiring the duke to underwrite the building's completion. When Blenheim was finally finished, the building and its courtyards stretched over seven acres and the cost had reached almost £300,000, an astonishing figure at a



Engraving of Sir John Vanbrugh. CORBIS-BETTMANN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

time when most English families survived on less than £100 per year. Designed by the Baroque architect John Vanbrugh, Blenheim's exteriors and interiors made use of classical elements, but there is scarcely anything "classical" about the palace's feel. The massive facade, almost 500 feet wide, can scarcely be taken in in a single view. Its enormous colonnades dwarf the human form, and reveal the typically Baroque tendency to overawe viewers. In scale, Blenheim is similar to the great country palaces of the Habsburgs and the Bavarian Wittelsbachs, but its effect offers little of the charm of those palatial country retreats. It is a monument to ambition, both national and personal, and its Baroque, stage-like settings disregard all thoughts of attractive scale or comfort. Even at the time that Blenheim Palace was being completed in the 1720s, its era was already passing, and the designs seemed to the practicing architects at the time to be passé. Few of Blenheim's features found imitation in the decades that followed. Instead, the Palladian revival fueled the construction of more modest structures, built on a human scale, that, like their French Rococo counterparts, did much to offer families and their guests intimate spaces for domestic life and entertaining. The interiors of these structures might have seemed severe



Lansdowne Room, designed by Robert Adam. © PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART/CORBIS.

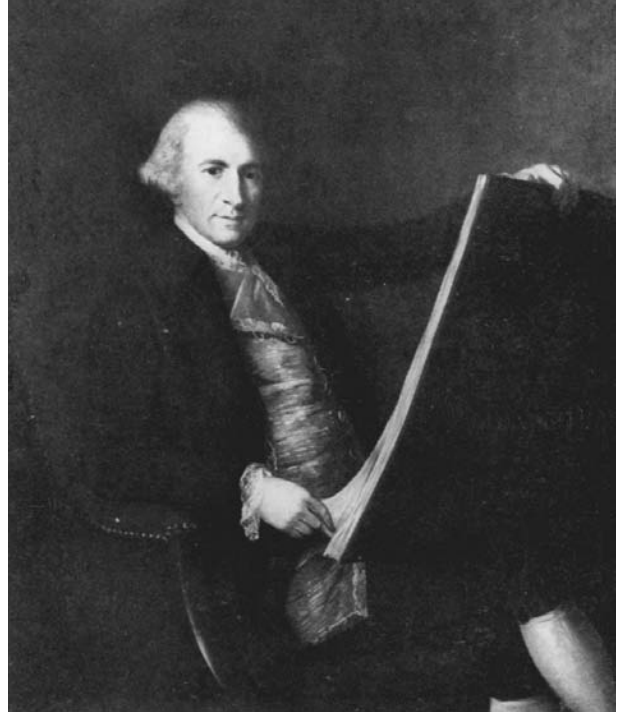
and unadorned to continental European visitors at the time, yet their undeniable elegance continues to captivate even today. The Palladian style's quick rise to popularity, too, is evident in the ways in which it was quickly adapted to transform, not only London and the English countryside, but growing towns like Philadelphia, New York, Edinburgh, and Dublin.

**ROBERT ADAM.** While Palladian-styled homes continued to be popular in England and the colonies, new waves of a more historically accurate Neoclassicism swept through the English-speaking world after 1750. Key figures in establishing the popularity of this style were Robert Adam (1728–1792) and William Chambers (1723–1796), the two greatest British architects of the later eighteenth century. Adam was a Scot who made his Grand Tour in 1754 and on his return set up shop as an architect in London. A cosmopolitanite, he was in touch with the best French and Italian architects of his day, and he applied his firsthand knowledge of the excavations underway in Italy to interiors and exteriors he created in England. When his younger brother James completed his Grand Tour in 1763, he joined his brother's firm in London, and the two established a successful partnership, catering to aristocratic and wealthy British clients. His remodelings and interior design work



Portrait of Sir William Chambers. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

undertaken in country houses was particularly noteworthy, and in these he brilliantly used color and a chaste decoration. One of his masterpieces was a series of rooms he remodeled in Syon House, just outside London. The entrance hall he constructed there demonstrated his understanding of how Roman houses might have looked. He set about this space a series of brilliant copies of ancient sculptures. In fact, Adam's interiors were notable for their great restraint, while those of ancient Rome had been filled with decoration. Yet Adam's austerity captured the imagination of the age, and it was the vision that many continued to associate with Antiquity, a vision of spare white walls and reserved decoration. Although William Chambers (1723–1796) came from a Scottish family, he grew up in England and completed his Tour in 1749–1750. On that circuit he first undertook studies in Paris before moving on to Rome, where he came in contact with Giovanni Battista Piranesi. For a time he seems even to have lived in the Italian architect's studio. He set himself up in business in London just a few years before Adam, and soon received commissions from the crown. During the 1760s Chambers and Adam became the sole two architects within the Office of Works, the English body charged with completing commissions for the king. From this vantage point, both Chambers and Adam held an unusual degree of influence over building



Portrait of Robert Adam. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

in England, not only for the government, but for wealthy aristocrats and merchants also. Like Adam, Chambers's remodeling work and designs for new London townhouses and country villas were widely popular among aristocrats and the wealthy. An important theorist, he edited *Vitruvius Britannicus*, a mostly Palladian architectural handbook that had served as a textbook for the first wave of English classical designers of the early century. Chambers set down the plans for Kew Gardens, a pleasure garden popular with Londoners in the late eighteenth century, and for Somerset House, a classically inspired building purposely built to house various public records' offices. The structure still stands today as a repository and spans a large space between the River Thames and the Strand. Chambers's structures, like Adam's, were notable for their great restraint and severity of detailing.

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SEE ALSO *Visual Arts: Neoclassicism*



Kenwood House, Hampstead Heath, London. PHILIP M. SOERGEL.

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## REVIVALS AND ROMANTICISM

**NOSTALGIA AND THE FASHION FOR THE EXOTIC.** Even as Neoclassicism continued to increase in popularity in England, France, Italy, and other parts of the continent, a new wave of romantic architecture appeared. As a movement, Romanticism arose from sources of sentiment similar to those of Neoclassicism. Its appeal lay, in part, in a longing, even nostalgia, for times that were simpler and more virtuous. Much the same impulse had fueled the revival of classical architecture in England and many parts of continental Europe, as designers, patrons, and intellectuals had sensed that a world of austere and elegant simplicity was to be found in Antiquity. Research into the precise nature of classical art and architecture since the eighteenth century has shown that many of the ideas of these Neoclassicists were incorrect. The pristine white, unadorned spaces present in many eighteenth-century Neoclassical designs were not an accurate reflection of antique tastes. Ancient buildings, in fact, had been decorated with a riot of color and ornament. Yet the affection that many Neoclassicists felt for the world of Antiquity was inspired all the same by a sense of the

vigor and simplicity they felt had been present in the ancient world. This same longing to reproduce the visual qualities of past, more virtuous ages fueled a revival of Gothic architecture in Europe from the early 1740s. One of the most notable of the many Gothic houses constructed in England at the time was Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill, which he began outside London in Middlesex in 1748. Walpole was the son of Britain's longest-serving prime minister, a writer, and an amateur authority on numerous subjects, including medieval chivalry. In order to complete this rambling, fanciful structure, he required help from some architects, who supplemented his designs. The craze for Gothic spaces was widespread enough to produce at least one textbook in English that informed readers how they might build their own house in this style. In Germany, too, architectural manuals of the time almost always debated the question of the relative merits of medieval and ancient architecture. Like Neoclassical structures, the taste for the Gothic was not always historically correct, with elements of the era's churches being freely adapted onto homes whose scale was far grander than those of the Middle Ages.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE CHINESE FASHION**

**INTRODUCTION:** William Chambers was one of the great architects of the neoclassical revival in England. He and Robert Adam served together for many years as royal architects, and both designed a large number of neoclassical townhouses and country estates. The taste for classical design did not prevent the architects of the time from indulging a fashion for other more exotic structures. Many neoclassical designers also produced buildings in the Chinese and Gothic styles. In 1757, Chambers published in both French and English his *Designs for Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils*. The work was of major importance in sustaining the popularity of things Chinese throughout Europe. Although Chambers was quick to point out the inferiority of Chinese architecture when compared to European antiquity, he nevertheless recommended the Chinese style as a way of adding visual interest to large houses and gardens. His emphasis on the way in which Chinese architecture might add picturesque interest to a large garden was a typical feature of late eighteenth-century design.

These which I now offer to the publick are done from sketches and measures taken by me at Canton some years ago, chiefly to satisfy my own curiosity. It was not my design to publish them; nor would they now appear, were it not in compliance with the desire of several lovers of the arts, who thought them worthy the perusal of the publick, and that they might be of use in putting a stop to the extravagancies that daily appear under the name of Chinese, though most of them are mere inventions, the rest copies from lame representations found on porcelain and paper-hangings.

Whatever is really Chinese has at least the merit of being original: these people seldom or never copy or imitate the inventions of other nations. All our most authentick relations agree in this point, and observe that their form of government, language, character, dress, and almost every other particular belonging to them, have continued without change for thousands of years; but their architecture

has this farther advantage that there is a remarkable affinity between it and that of the antients, which is the more surprising as there is not the least probability that the one was borrowed from the other.

In both the antique and Chinese architecture the general form of almost every composition has a tendency to the pyramidal figure: In both, columns are employed for support; and in both, these columns have diminution and bases, some of which bear a near resemblance to each other; fretwork, so common in the building of the antients, is likewise very frequent in those of the Chinese ... There is likewise a great affinity between the antient utensils and those of the Chinese; both being composed of similar parts combined in the same manner.

Though I am publishing a work of Chinese Architecture, let it not be suspected that my intention is to promote a taste so much inferiour to the antique, and so very unfit for our climate: but a particular so interesting as the architecture of one of the most extraordinary nations in the universe cannot be a matter of indifference to a true lover of the arts, and an architect should by no means be ignorant of so singular a stile of building: at least the knowledge is curious, and on particular occasions may likewise be useful; as he may sometimes be obliged to make Chinese compositions, and at others it may be judicious in him to do so. For though, generally speaking, Chinese architecture does not suit European purposes; yet in extensive parks and gardens, where a great variety of scenes are required, or in immense palaces, containing a numerous series of apartments, I do not see the impropriety of finishing some of the inferiour ones in the Chinese taste. Variety is always delightful; and novelty, attending with nothing inconsistent or disagreeable, sometimes takes place of beauty.

**SOURCE:** Sir William Chambers, *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* (London: 1757) in *Michelangelo and the Mannerists; The Baroque and the Eighteenth Century*. Vol. II of *A Documentary History of Art*. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1958): 295–296.

**ENGLISH GARDENS.** Another sign of the eighteenth century's yearning for simplicity can be seen in garden architecture. By the second half of the century the grounds that surrounded many country houses throughout Europe were being remodeled to take account of a new fashion for natural settings. In many places these more relaxed spaces became known as "English gardens." The primary feature of an English garden was a bucolic, easy flow of brooks, forests, and meadows, rather than the hard edges of clipped hedges and foun-

tains. The taste for gardens constructed in an English style revealed the spread of Enlightenment ideas, which celebrated England's constitution at the time as the most natural, free, and virtuous in Europe. The English garden, eighteenth-century philosophers told their readers, was a cultural embodiment of the country's genius, for in its confines nature was not tortured and made to conform to human artifice, but allowed to proceed on its own course. The English Garden in Munich, laid out in 1789 by the American-born physicist Benjamin



Le Hameau (The Hamlet). © ADAM WOOLFITT/CORBIS.

Thomson, is the largest and most famous of these many landscapes. Thomson's political views—he supported the Crown during the American Revolution—forced his emigration to Europe, where he practiced a number of professions in the years that followed. At Munich, his plans for the English Garden made use of an enormous space, a block almost one and a half miles square. Into it, he poured streams with rapids, meadows, Chinese pavilions and antique temples to create a pleasurable space on the city's outskirts. Although not quite the naturalistic setting that philosophers had intended, the garden survives today as one of Munich's most treasured spaces.

**THE PICTURESQUE.** The English Garden in Munich reveals a great deal of the underlying irony of the late eighteenth century's attitudes toward nature and design. On the one hand, nature was believed to function best when allowed to follow its own course. Nature was most appealing when it was unadorned, spare, and untouched by human artifice. On the other hand, patrons and designers could not escape the human tendency to embellish. As at Munich, gardens constructed after the new English taste were often decorated with numerous pavilions designed to appear as buildings from other cultures

and eras. Carefully placed Greek, Roman, and Gothic ruins gave the landscape the appearance, not of a natural setting, but of having long been settled and tamed by human inhabitants. Chinese and Japanese tearooms, too, were set down in these gardens at places where they might add maximum effect, while streams, rapids, and lakes were carefully sculpted to appear as if they were not the product of the human hand. While seemingly embracing nature as virtuous, then, the eighteenth-century English Garden was one of the most highly artificial of constructions. Sustaining its popularity was a new fashion for spaces that were "picturesque," a word that was, in fact, coined at the time to describe this phenomenon of carefully constructing gardens in a naturalistic way with vistas that offered a maximum of visual interest. Along a trek laid out by a garden's designers, the landscape presented to connoisseurs numerous views that appeared as if they might have been painted. During the 1770s and 1780s the French queen Marie-Antoinette created one of the most notable of these gardens around the Petit Trianon at Versailles. The walks that led through the garden included focal points of grottoes, a Belvedere, a Tempe of Love, and eventually a medieval French hamlet. This last addition was begun in 1783 and completed two years later to include a village of

twelve farmhouses and outbuildings, carefully constructed to appear as if they were of a venerable age. The artifice of Marie-Antoinette's *Hameau* was complete, including as it did real flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, a pond and fishery, and a group of seeming peasants who were imported to live there. The central focal point of this village was the Queen's cottage, a structure that appeared from the outside as a substantial peasant's house, but which indoors was decorated with the extreme refinement typical of aristocratic houses of the time. Here Marie-Antoinette fled the cares of court to indulge her taste for a simpler, less artificial life. Ironically, this *Hameau* was perhaps the eighteenth-century's most man-made illusion, and the queen had little time to enjoy it. Its completion in 1785 came only several years before the beginning of the French Revolution that eventually toppled the monarchy.

**CONCLUSION.** During the eighteenth century new architectural movements swept across Europe as the tastes of architects and patrons began to change. Although late Baroque and Rococo styles continued to survive in some places, new waves of Neoclassicism and other revival styles vied for the attention of designers and their patrons. The Neoclassical revival that began in Europe at mid-century made use of new insights drawn from archeological excavations in Italy. This Neoclassicism developed most vigorously in those countries in which a strongly classical bent to design had been most evident during the Baroque era. In England, for instance, Neoclassicism followed a widespread Palladian revival that had already begun to transform the appearance of London and other British cities in the early eighteenth century. In France, the long-standing taste for classically inspired façades provided a foundation on which the taste for the more thoroughly ancient elements of Soufflot's and Gabriel's designs developed. Central Europe proved more resistant to the new stylistic tendencies and the Rococo tended to survive longer there than in the West. In Munich, Berlin, Vienna, and other capitals in the region, new churches, private houses, and public monuments began to appear in the Neoclassical style during the later decades of the century. Neoclassicism expressed the longing of the eighteenth century to escape the confines of contemporary history and to foster a more virtuous society, something to which the great upheavals of the French Revolution aspired as well. The histories and literary works of the age celebrated Rome and Greece for the vigor of their cultural achievements as well as for the austerity and elegant economy of their artistic vision. New revival styles throughout the eighteenth century also made use of similar feelings of nostalgia for bygone eras. A taste

for the exotic, an affection that had long been embraced by Baroque and Rococo designers, persisted in the continued popularity of structures that made use of elements of Eastern and Near Eastern design. In both England and the continent, Gothic Revival style appeared at around the same time as Neoclassicism, and its rise demonstrates the importance that Romantic sentiments and longings had on the architectural scene at the end of the eighteenth century. Perhaps nowhere is the influence of this Romanticism more evident than in the gardens of the later century that consisted of Chinese pagodas, ancient temples, and Roman and Gothic ruins set within a landscape that appeared as if it had been untouched by human hands. At the same time a careful progression of "picturesque" views provided a backdrop for the musings of those who made their way through these highly artificial, yet seemingly natural spaces. Thus while the eighteenth century desired to escape its history, and to rewrite its culture in a way that abandoned the Baroque tendency toward elaborate adornment, human artifice returned nevertheless to produce designs that were no less artificial than those of the ages that had come before.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Architecture and Design*

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### ROBERT ADAM

1728–1792

*Interior Designer*  
*Architect*

**SCOTTISH UPBRINGING.** Robert Adam, the man who revolutionized English classical design in the course of the eighteenth century, was born into a family of educated Scots in Edinburgh in 1728. Adam's father was also a successful architect, and the young Adam mastered the skills of this trade early in life, joining his father's firm for a time in the years immediately after he finished university. When his father died in 1748, Adam continued the practice with his brother John, and together they undertook many successful commissions throughout Scotland. These included buildings constructed in the then-popular Gothic Revival style as well as forts and other military fortifications intended to quell recent uprisings in the country. With his fortune strengthened, Adam embarked on his Grand Tour in 1754, making a circuit similar to other cultivated British gentlemen of the age. His journey lasted four years, a large portion of which he spent in Italy. In Rome, he came into contact with the discoveries that were being made about ancient architecture from excavations underway in Pompeii and Herculaneum, the ill-fated towns destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E. In 1758, Adam returned to Britain from his journeys and settled in London, where he soon became a fashionable designer of interiors and structures for the English aristocracy and gentry.

**CHANGING TASTES.** Commissions came slowly at first for Adam in London, although his business quickly improved with his election to the Royal Academy in 1761 and his selection, together with his rival William Chambers, to serve as co-architect of the King's Works. By 1763, his practice was successful enough to accommodate his two brothers, who joined the firm in London. During the years between his arrival in the capital and 1765, Adam mastered the Neoclassical style, and in his later life he seldom designed buildings in the Gothic Revival style that he had practiced in his youth. One of his chief achievements from the early years in London was the completion of the remodeling of Syon House, a Tudor-era convent located outside London. Over the previous generations, this building had been remodeled to increase its comfort as a private house. Adam, however, cleared away many of the previous additions, and in their place designed classical rooms notable for their severity and restraint. He laid out these spaces in an unusual configuration of patterns drawn from his knowledge of Roman baths, and he made use of dramatic contrasts of color. The impressive designs he realized at Syon House earned him great acclaim and Adam received many new commissions for remodeling and new structures at the end of the 1760s. Chief among the many country houses he designed at this time were Osterley

Park in Middlesex, and Kenwood House, a brilliant little gem of Neoclassical architecture located on Hampstead Heath on the fringes of London. Osterley Park was a pre-existing Tudor house that Adam redesigned to fit with the Neoclassical fashion. To do so, he built a dramatic classical portico around the structure's courtyard, raising the vertical lines of the house to a new, more dramatic height and decorating the rooms with a series of motifs drawn from Antiquity. These included coffered Roman ceilings, apses, pilasters, and even ancient grotesques. One of the most distinctive elements of his remodeling at Osterley Park was his inclusion of an Etruscan dressing room. The Roman architect Piranesi had done much to popularize the style of the ancient Etruscans—the civilization that had preceded the Roman Empire in Italy—and Adam's use of the style is among the finest eighteenth-century adaptations to survive. At Kenwood House, he created a small-scale classical country house that made use of new techniques in the execution of stucco. He decorated the garden façade of this structure with pilasters crafted from a recently discovered technology that allowed for greater delicacy of execution. The vaulted library of Kenwood has often been hailed as one of Adam's most beautiful creations. With its gentle palette of blue offset by white columns and touches of gilt, it manages to achieve a delicacy and sophistication unknown to the age except in its finest porcelains.

**OTHER COMMISSIONS.** Even as Adam left his imprint on the country landscape of Britain, he was busy remodeling and redesigning urban houses in London. His commissions for these projects rose quickly around 1770, and a number of examples of the innovations that he made in interior design still survive in London. London houses presented a special challenge to an architect. Instead of the vast spaces that many country houses afforded, the typical London townhouse sat on a narrow lot and stretched back from the street. The grand entertaining that became increasingly common during the London season in the eighteenth century demanded interiors that were handsome and well proportioned. Adam's created spaces were models of refined elegance in these houses, relying on attenuated lines to grant his drawing rooms a feeling of greater spaciousness when expansion was impossible. Besides his work for the king, Adam also undertook the design of many public-planning projects, laying out squares in London and other British cities. His innovative plans for the expansion of the town of Bath, a major resort city at the time, were not to be followed, nor was a proposal that he presented for the reconstruction of the Portuguese capital of Lisbon following the city's destruction in a devastating earthquake



in 1755. Adam generated the majority of his revenues from residential projects, a sign of the increasing importance that the eighteenth century accorded domestic architecture.

**IMPACT.** As one of the king's directors of the Royal Works, Adam had special responsibility over royal projects in Scotland. In addition to his success in England, the architect continued to produce numerous designs for houses and urban projects in Scotland. Most notably, his influence can be seen today in the city of Edinburgh, where Adam designed many structures and decorated many interiors in the New Town, Edinburgh's massive eighteenth-century expansion project. Adam was also an important figure because of his methods of creating architectural designs. Like a modern architectural firm, his London practice employed numerous draftsmen and assistants who executed ideas set down by Adam and his brothers. In this way the Adam style proved to be easily reproducible and adaptable to many different architectural situations. The architect's firm also played the role of a general contractor, as Adam and his associates kept employed a regular group of craftsman who were familiar with his work and were thus able to execute the office's plans quickly and with a minimum of retooling. In all these ways, Adam modernized the practice of construction in eighteenth-century England and he set patterns for architectural practice that persisted in the English-speaking world until modern times.

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## FRANCESCO BORROMINI

1599–1667

*Architect*

**A TEMPESTUOUS SPIRIT.** Born Francesco Castelli, this northern Italian eventually took his mother's name Borromini to distinguish himself from the many other members of his family who were active throughout Italy in the building trades. As a child he served an apprenticeship as a mason in Milan before moving to Rome in 1619 when he was twenty. Through family connections he succeeded in being hired onto the largest project in the city at the time, the construction of the mammoth façade of St. Peter's Basilica, which had been designed

by his relative Carlo Maderno. Given to frequent bouts of melancholy, the mason Borromini spent much of his free time in mastering the art of drawing, and he appears to have copied many of the works of Michelangelo in his efforts to improve his ability as an artist. His work paid off when, within a few years of his arrival in Rome, his qualifications as a draftsman had resulted in his promotion from mason to an architect working in Maderno's office at the Vatican. During the 1620s one of the projects in which he participated was Bernini's construction of the massive Baldachino, or canopy, to cover the High Altar of the church. His participation in this and other major work underway at St. Peter's assured his rise to prominence, and he was asked to collaborate on a number of other projects being built around Rome at the time.

**INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONS.** Borromini's first independently produced design was for a monastery and church for the Trinitarian Order in Rome. This early masterpiece, the Church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (or St. Charles of the Four Fountains), was notable for several reasons. The Trinitarian order was one of the poorer religious groups to take up residence in Rome during the renewed spiritual fervor of the Catholic Reformation, and they had few funds to build an impressive complex. Working within these constraints, Borromini nevertheless provided the order with a structure that made a noble impression on seventeenth-century Rome. It was also a highly unconventional structure. To this day, architectural scholars continue to debate the sources for Borromini's unusual design, which seems to make use of the superimpositions of the forms of a cross, an oval, and an octagon into the same small space. Into this tightly-defined area, Borromini poured decorative shapes of semi-circular apses, ovals, and columns, combined in such a way to present an impression of dramatic expansion and contraction. In the years that followed, he built upon the initial breakthroughs that he had at San Carlo to create a number of structures notable for their violations of classical architectural design principles. In this process he created a dramatically new and powerful kind of design that continued to stir controversy throughout the Baroque period. While his works were emulated in Rome, and his style eventually melded to the conventions of Roman Baroque, his architecture was alternately admired or rejected in other parts of Europe. In England, France, and the Netherlands, architects utilized little of Borromini's style, while in Central Europe and Spain, his influence was widespread.

**ST. IVO AND ST. AGNESE.** The highly geometric use of space that Borromini developed in his mature creations is brilliantly displayed at St. Ivo, a church built to serve

as the chapel for a school that eventually became the University of Rome. An unusually shaped leftover space had been reserved for the structure, and Borromini turned what might have been an artistic deficit into a great asset. He filled the space with one of the most unusual domes ever seen in Rome at the time. Unlike the domes in fashion since the High Renaissance, the structure that the architect designed to crown this church did not rest on a drum, but rested instead on the unusually shaped structure of the building itself. The sources of inspiration for his design continue to be debated, but in effect the building's floor plan resembles a six pointed star, three points of which have been cut off and the remaining alternating angles transformed into concave semi-circles. In any direction the viewer faces inside the structure, he or she sees a shape that is exactly the opposite of that which is behind. In this way one must look up to the dome above, where the pattern is repeated, to understand the plan in all its complexity. Borromini followed the undeniably strange, but nevertheless beautiful construction of St. Ivo with a series of commissions undertaken for the popes, including the Church of Sant' Agnese in the Piazza Navona. Great difficulties plagued this last project, which was undertaken initially to serve as a family mausoleum for the reigning pope. By the time the architect arrived at the site, ten feet of the church's foundations had already been built. Borromini developed an ambitious and complex design, the most innovative parts of which were rejected by his papal patron. The church as it now stands, though, continues to present a series of imaginative solutions to the problems that arose from its small site. Here, too, Borromini managed to present Rome with a smaller version of what Michelangelo had intended with his designs for St. Peter's. Flanked on either side by two towers and a concave façade, his dome manages to soar above the church and to be seen. At St. Peter's, by contrast, the expansions that the papacy demanded in the structure's original size obscured Michelangelo's grand dome to those who approached its main entrance.

**LATER DIFFICULTIES.** Borromini's unusually complex ideas as well as his temperament eventually resulted in his dismissal from the project at Sant' Agnese. Other commissions followed, but the architect's designs were always controversial. Widely admired in his youth for his good looks and refined manners, Borromini grew more introverted and melancholic as he matured. In his final years he was said to have preferred his own solitude to the company of friends and associates. He grew suspicious and withdrawn, although he continued to have many advocates who passionately defended his art in his

final years and even after his suicide. Largely self-taught, he managed to acquire more than a passing familiarity with philosophical and theological problems, and he appears to have been a disciple of the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca. His library included more than 1,000 books, a truly enormous collection for a man of his income and schooling. Yet, like Michelangelo and Caravaggio, his status as a commoner often left him ill at ease in the great social circles in which he traveled. In the generations following his death his imaginative architectural solutions to design problems allowed his reputation to soar in some quarters, even as his violation of the classical tenets of design continued to condemn his vision to attacks and criticism. Since the late nineteenth century scholarship has universally tended to revere the enormity of Borromini's imagination.

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## FRANÇOIS DE CUVILLIÉS

1695–1768

*Architect*  
*Interior Designer*

**EARLY LIFE.** Born at Hainault near Brussels in 1695, François de Cuvilliés entered into the service of Duke Maximilian II Emmanuel of Bavaria as a court dwarf when he was eleven. At the time, the duke was in exile from his duchy, but when he returned to Munich in 1714, he brought Cuvilliés with him. Over the years that followed, Maximilian looked after his servant's education, apprenticing him eventually to serve as a draftsman to his court architect. With Maximilian's financial support, Cuvilliés left Munich for Paris in 1720, and during the next four years he completed his architectural studies there. At the time that Cuvilliés was a student in the city, the early Rococo style was becoming fashionable in France. The young architect studied under Jean François Blondel, one of the most important of the early French Rococo designers. In Paris, he also studied the techniques of French *rocaille* or "rockwork" plaster, and on his return to Bavaria he began to use them in his architectural creations. His first project was at the Wittelsbach's country palace, *Schloss Schleissheim*. Pleased with his creativity, Duke Maximilian granted Cuvilliés a position within his court architect's office. Somewhat later, under Maximilian's successor, Carl

Albert, Cuvilliés began to receive a series of more important commissions.

**MATURE STYLE.** In Cuvilliés' greatest works he outshined the merely decorative conventions of Rococo style and surpassed the many competent designers who practiced in the style in France. Some of his work has been destroyed since the eighteenth century, but two of the greatest of his creations—the Amalienburg in the gardens of Schloss Nymphenburg and the Residence Theater in Munich—survive. The Amalienburg was a small pleasure villa built between 1734 and 1739. From the outside the structure appears as a model of courtly refinement. Once inside, though, its extreme ornateness becomes quickly evident. Like many Rococo structures, the rapidly floating and swirling spaces of stuccowork at the boundary between the ceilings and walls make it difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins. While filled with decorative detailing, the relatively limited palette of pale colors provides a sophisticated, rather than merely ornate, air to the rooms. The Residence Theater in Munich is, by contrast, a riot of sumptuous ornament. Built in 1751–1752, the palette of bright red, gold, and white has splashes of ornament to demarcate the social hierarchy of the nobles and courtiers who attended the productions staged there. The Wittelsbach box and the balconies that surround it have the most decoration, while on the levels above simpler ornamentation becomes the rule. While ornate in the extreme, Cuvilliés' theater was also a very practical environment in which to perform plays, and it was adaptable to other uses as well. The theater was originally equipped with a mechanism that allowed the sloping floor of its auditorium to be lowered into a flat position so that court balls could be held there. Of the many theaters built during the Baroque and Rococo periods, it remains one of the favored spots for the performance of period dramas and operas.

**INFLUENCE ON DESIGN.** The Amalienburg and Residence Theater are only two of the many structures that Cuvilliés worked on during his long career in Bavaria. In 1740, his patron at the time, Duke Carl Albert, rose to the office of Holy Roman Emperor, and at that time the architect received the largely honorific title of “Imperial Architect.” While the empire was largely a fictional power by this time, Cuvilliés' position close to its heart still won him many commissions outside Bavaria. These included plans for numerous additions to Schloss Wilhelmstal near Kassel, the country palace Seraing for the bishop of Liège in modern Belgium, and a palace for the aristocratic Fugger family. In addition, he completed plans for the Residence at Würzburg as well as an urban

plan for the city of Dresden, which acquired its delicate late Baroque and Rococo character at the time. The architect was also an enthusiastic collaborator, and during his career he worked with Johann Baptist Zimmerman and other southern German architects, helping to spread knowledge of the decorative techniques he had acquired while a student in Paris. In 1738, Cuvilliés began another project that firmly established his influence among other architects practicing throughout Europe. In that year he began to produce a series of bound engravings illustrating the proper ways to ornament and decorate buildings and furniture. When completed in 1755, this project totalled 55 books of engravings published in three separate series. These works had wide circulation throughout the continent, and even influenced later Rococo decoration as well as the construction of furniture. Cabinetmakers, for instance, enthusiastically studied Cuvilliés' designs for inspiration as they created sophisticated works for their aristocratic clients.

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## LOUIS XIV

1638–1715

*King of France*

**A FIVE-YEAR-OLD KING.** Born the only child of King Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, Louis succeeded to the throne when he was only five years old. He spent his early years, then, in a long period of regency in which his mother and Cardinal Mazarin wielded power in France. The experience of the *Fronde*, a series of rebellions staged by members of the Parlement of Paris and French nobles that occurred between 1648 and 1653, left a lasting impression on the king. At one point in these disturbances Louis and his mother had to flee the capital, an insult that the king never forgot and that continued to color his relationships with many members of the nobility years later. In 1661, Louis finally assumed his royal powers, and shortly thereafter, his confidante and chief minister Cardinal Mazarin died. As a result, the king took his royal duties more seriously. The key features of his policies as they developed in the following years aimed to focus all political authority in France firmly in the hands of the king and his ministers, to assault the lingering power of the nobility and local assemblies throughout France, and to accrue glory for

the state through wars waged against other powers in Europe. The legacy of Louis XIV's reign thus established royal authority on a firmer footing than it had been previously, even as it bred financial and administrative corruption and other problems that lingered long after Louis' death.

**ART AND ARCHITECTURE.** The visual arts and building were also key to the king's plans to enlarge royal power. Over the course of Louis' reign the arts played a central role in the monarch's efforts at self-promotion, even as his lavish commissions and expenditures on art, jewelry, and buildings became increasingly symptomatic of the king's tendency toward indulgence. In the prosperous years of the 1660s and 1670s, Louis managed to satisfy both his tastes for lavish consumption and display and his appetite for foreign wars. As the seventeenth century drew to a close, however, the increasing military burdens that Louis' international intrigues placed on France required the king to curb his expenditures on art and building. The lion's share of Louis' great architectural achievements thus date from the first half of his reign, the period of France's greatest prosperity. During these years royal bureaucracy defined and executed Louis' commissions. A series of ministers, including Jean-Baptiste Colbert and later the architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart, held the position of Superintendent of Fortifications, Art, and Royal Manufactories, the chief post entrusted with supervising all aspects of the king's commissions of furniture, tapestries, buildings, and forts. Two other positions, the King's First Artist and the King's First Architect, were entrusted with defining a suitable style for the monarch's consumption, while within the royal household a number of other posts oversaw entertainment and supervised the running of Louis' various palaces. Beyond these institutions concentrated in the monarch's household, the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture and the Royal Academy of Architecture defined the training of artists as well as the theory of art and architecture that prevailed during the king's long reign. These heavily encrusted layers of bureaucracy and royal administration make it difficult to discern the precise contours of Louis XIV's own artistic and architectural tastes. His mother and Cardinal Mazarin, formative influences on the young monarch, were sophisticated admirers of art, but the king sometimes confided in his ministers later in life that the press of royal duties had prevented him from becoming a true connoisseur. The styles favored in the court in the commissioning of buildings and the visual arts demonstrated an undeniable propensity for projects that were sumptuous and served the monarch's grand pretensions.

**MAJOR ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTS.** The early period of Louis' reign saw most of the king's efforts as a builder concentrated in the city of Paris. Chief among the projects undertaken at the time was the completion of the remodeling of the Palace of the Louvre, a project that had preoccupied many French kings since the early sixteenth century. Francis I, a great connoisseur of art and architecture, had originally desired to transform this defensive fortress that lay outside Paris' walls into a stylish palace, and the work on this transformation had continued for much of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the reign of Louis XIII much had been done to bring a sense of order to the tangled web of confused wings that Francis, Catherine de' Medici, and Henri IV had built at the site, and the project of constructing the huge palace continued during the early years of Louis XIV's reign. The culmination of this work consisted in the commissioning of the East Wing, the structure's most important façade, since it faced toward the city of Paris. While Louis XIV's ministers originally imported the accomplished Italian architect Bernini to guide the project, they eventually decided to follow a native design apparently set down by Claude Perrault and Louis Le Vau, figures later key in the establishment of the Royal Academy of Architecture. The style chosen for the work, a severe but monumental classicism, defined French public buildings over the course of the century that followed.

**VERSAILLES.** The most imposing project that the king undertook continually throughout his reign was the construction of the new royal palace at Versailles. As at the Louvre, Louis followed the time-honored principle among French kings of adding on to an existing structure—in this case, a hunting lodge his father had built at this site about twelve miles southwest of Paris. During the 1660s Louis began to concentrate more of his architectural attentions at this palace, an area that was always unsuitable for the construction of a grand country estate due to the marshy land and lack of a secure source of water. To solve the latter problem, Louis' architects designed a complex set of machinery to pump water from the Seine, which lay miles away, to feed Versailles' gardens and palace. In the 1660s the designer Le Nôtre began to expand the gardens to meet Louis' demands for a place suitable for staging royal spectacles, while the royal architect, Louis Le Vau, greatly expanded the small hunting lodge beginning in 1668. Le Vau added three new wings to surround the original building, although the character of Versailles' original hunting lodge—constructed from brick, stucco, and stone—was carefully preserved at the center. The expansion of

the gardens continued throughout the late seventeenth century, and one of the key elements there was the construction of the Grand Canal, an enormous reservoir, the perimeter of which is more than four miles long. Here mock sea battles and entertainments were sometimes staged. Beginning in 1678, another round of additions greatly expanded the palace to provide sufficient housing for royal ministers and government officials. In 1682, Louis transferred his government to the site, making Versailles his official residence, a role it served for the monarchy almost continually until the French Revolution. In embracing this site outside Paris Louis aimed to exercise greater control over his fractious nobility. To entice noble courtiers to take up residence at his splendid new court, he awarded freedom from bankruptcy prosecution to those who lived at Versailles, sparking a building boom in the small town. Such plans, though, enticed only about 3,000 of France's 200,000 nobles to live there. Still, all roads to the government—to the awarding of contracts and key positions in the government—more and more led to the palace. Nobles who desired preferment from the crown increasingly had to journey to Versailles. The system of etiquette and protocol that developed in this highly artificial court also played a key role in taming the once rebellious French nobility.

**INFLUENCE OF VERSAILLES.** Although it was just one of many royal residences that Louis maintained during his long reign, Versailles became a potent symbol of absolute monarchy in the seventeenth century. Kings and princes throughout Europe often tried to imitate the palace's elaborate courtly etiquette and imposing grandeur. Comfort was of little importance in the grand palaces that became increasingly common in Europe during the Baroque period, and Versailles was perhaps one of the most forbidding and draughty of the many architectural creations of the age. Its scale, too, meant that the royal family and courtiers who took up residence there spent a great deal of their lives in a palace that was continually under construction. But while hardly approaching modern standards of comfort, the château still manages to astound its visitors with the grand pretensions of its builder.

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## CHRISTOPHER WREN

1632–1723

*Architect*  
*Scientist*

**A CULTIVATED UPBRINGING.** At an early age Christopher Wren moved in elevated social circles. When the young Wren was still a boy, his father became the Dean of Windsor. Windsor was the site of England's largest royal castle, and the young Wren had royal playmates there. He attended Westminster School in London for five years, and then was tutored privately before entering Wadham College, Oxford. At Wadham, Wren's interests focused on the sciences, and he conducted some of the first experiments that used opiates as anesthesia. By 1651, he had graduated with a Master's degree and he received an appointment as a Fellow of All Souls College, also at Oxford. This position allowed him to pursue his research interests in astronomy and the physical sciences with relative freedom. In 1657, Wren accepted a post as a professor of astronomy at Gresham College, London, and in 1660, he and some close associates founded the Royal Society, an institution that survives in Britain today as the most important organ of scientific research in the country.

**THE TURN TO ARCHITECTURE.** Christopher Wren was a brilliant mathematician and astronomer, who in his own day was considered the greatest scientist in England, although the somewhat later accomplishments of John Newton have tended to obscure the scientific reputation of Wren. In 1663, Wren began to dabble in architecture when his uncle, the bishop of Ely, asked him to design a new chapel for Pembroke College, Cambridge. When he finished that project two years later, Wren departed England for Paris, where he stayed for nine months. Wren had timed his visit to France to make contact with Gianlorenzo Bernini, who was in Paris at the time working on designs for the Louvre. He also made the acquaintance of Mansart, the most successful French designer of the day, and he studied the classically influenced buildings of Paris. Wren did not travel in continental Europe beyond Paris, and the voluminous knowledge that he acquired of Italian Renaissance and Baroque architecture came largely secondhand from engravings. His reading and short sojourn in Paris, though, evidently equipped him for the profession that he adopted in the wake of London's Great Fire of 1666.

**RESHAPING LONDON.** On 2 September, a great conflagration began in the medieval center of London.

Before the fire was extinguished several days later more than 430 acres and 13,000 houses had been devastated. Sensing the opportunity for rebuilding the city on a grander and safer footing, Christopher Wren set himself to the task of fashioning a plan for London's rebuilding. The substantial reputation he had already earned from his scientific endeavors meant that he had the ear of King Charles II, who admired Wren's plans, but who did not have the money to finance them. Instead of pursuing such a grandiose rebuilding of the city—a rebuilding which might have required the king and government to wage war on the venerable English concept of private property—Charles appointed Wren to serve as Surveyor General of the King's Works. From this vantage point, the budding architect left an indelible imprint on the public buildings of London. Eighty-nine churches had been destroyed in the city's fire; Wren's plan included designs for reconstructing only 51 of these structures. The first four of these buildings were hastily rebuilt following the blaze, but the remaining churches were more carefully reconstructed with designs that Wren and his assistant Robert Hooke crafted. Wren did not lavish the same degree of attention on every church in Central London. Some, like St. Mary Le Bow and St. Clement Danes, are clearly superior designs, but the indelible imprint of his style remains fixed in the characteristic steeples that he crafted for the group as a whole. Before the advent of the modern skyscraper, Wren's forest of London church steeples was one of the most distinguishable features of the cityscape. Besides the wealth of imaginative decorative detailing that the architect included on his church exteriors, his plans for these churches were handsome and highly practical. As the son of a clergyman and a family that long had ties to the Anglican Church, Wren well understood the necessities of space for providing a suitable environment for Protestant worship. In a position paper he shared with the government concerning his plans for rebuilding, Wren made it clear that a church must always be laid out with suitable sight lines and acoustical features that allowed worshippers to see and hear the service. Galleries and balconies skillfully placed above the side aisles of the main floor amplified the seating capacities of his constructions. Characteristically, his structures were usually outfitted with clear glass windows, making a bright light shining upon white or off-white walls one of their defining attributes. Many of the church sites in Central London had been small and irregularly shaped, hemmed in by other plots of private property. In these confined spaces Wren often used the pre-existing medieval foundations of the church to create classically inspired spaces. His amazing inventiveness solved many thorny architec-

tural problems, yet the demands of providing a suitable space for worship were a constant feature his designs tried to address.

**ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.** Wren's undeniable masterpiece was his plan for the reconstruction of St. Paul's Cathedral, a project that proceeded slowly and engendered some controversy. Initially, the plan had called only for repairing the medieval Gothic church that had stood at this site, but as the project went forward it soon became evident that a completely new structure was needed. Disagreements with the cathedral's canons about the church's precise shape further delayed the rebuilding, as did a shortage of funds. By the time the project went forward, Wren had been forced to make a number of concessions. He had longed to rebuild St. Paul's as a central-style church in the manner of Bramante's and Michelangelo's High Renaissance designs. But just as the papacy and its officials at Rome had altered these plans to the shape of a Latin cross, the diocese of London resisted such design innovations. Wren conceded and rebuilt the structure with the shape it had in the Middle Ages. While traditional in this respect, Wren brilliantly demonstrated his knowledge of both Renaissance and Baroque architecture on the church's exterior. For his massive dome, he found inspiration in Bramante's 1502 Tempietto at Rome. The entrance façade of the church quoted from the recently completed East Wing of the Palace of the Louvre in Paris, while the towers that flanked the central portico came from Borromini's plans for the Church of Sant' Agnese in Rome. Inside, the church may not be as successful a creation as St. Peter's in Rome, but its underlying design elements fit with Wren's philosophy of providing a space suitable to the spare and relatively austere demands of Protestant services. Although the London skyscrapers that now surround it dwarf St. Paul's, it remains perhaps the most noble and appealing building ever to have been constructed in the city. The cathedral, together with Wren's other handsome London churches, established a taste for classical architecture in England that long outlived the great seventeenth-century scientist and architect.

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Colen Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715)—A multi-volume collection of engraved illustrations of classically influenced architecture built in England since the sixteenth century. Campbell was the editor of this hugely successful publishing venture, and his influential introduction to the first volume attacked the overly ornate Baroque style and instead advocated greater simplicity in building based upon the early seventeenth-century Palladianism of Inigo Jones.

Paul de Fréart, *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's Visit to France* (1665)—A diary account written by Paul de Fréart relating the details of the Roman Baroque architect's five-month visit to Paris during 1665. Louis XIV appointed de Fréart as an aide to the artist while he lived in France. The work provides a view onto the world of high stakes architectural creation at the height of the Baroque.

Guarino Guarini, *Architettura civile* (1737)—This collection of the great Italian architect's theoretical writings was collected and published years after his death. It shows the architect's concern with elaborate decorative vaulting techniques and sets out his theory that great buildings must, above all, appeal to the senses.

William Halfpenny, *The Country Gentlemen's Pocket Companion* (1752)—One of 22 practical architectural manuals written by this author in the mid-eighteenth century. It included plans for building houses and garden structures and showed its readers how to make architecture an expression of gentlemanly "good taste." Halfpenny also treated the subject of siting buildings in the landscape

so that they took advantage of vistas and other natural features. His other works treated subjects as diverse as the building of structures in the Gothic style as well as the proper way to construct a Chinese pagoda. Taken as a group, Halfpenny's widely distributed "how-to" books inspired the fashion for "picturesque" gardens and structures that became a prevailing fashion in the English architecture of the later eighteenth century. His works were also particularly important in the American colonies where their practical, no-nonsense instructions fed the fashion for neoclassicism.

Louis XIV, *The Way to Present the Gardens of Versailles* (1689–1705)—A manuscript written by the great French king himself in six different editions over a period of sixteen years. Louis constantly revised the work to take account of his ongoing building in Versailles' park, although his guide continually advised how best to approach the various monuments, fountains, and sculptures that lay in the great gardens of the palace complex. Thus, Louis' guide provides an unparalleled introduction to the Sun King's own aims in laying out his grand gardens.

Andrea Palladio, *Four Books on Architecture* (1570)—This definitive statement of the Renaissance architect's theories and style continued to be avidly read throughout the Baroque period. It was also translated into other European languages and laid the foundation for the Neoclassical revival of the eighteenth century.

Claude Perrault, *Ordonnance for the Five Kinds of Columns after the Ancients* (1688)—This guide to the five architectural orders of Antiquity was particularly important in establishing the canons of French classicism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The author, a physician, was a major figure in the establishment of the Royal Academy in France, and has long been credited as the driving force behind the creation of the classical façade for the East Wing of the Louvre.

Duc de Saint-Simon, *Memoires* (1691–1755)—These voluminous journals and reminiscences of daily life in Versailles and among the French nobility provided an unparalleled account of court life and a window on the greatest palace of the age. The duke also freely offered his opinions concerning the lavish display and bad taste he sensed was rampant in Louis XIV's court.

chapter *2*

DANCE

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	70	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	74	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>Embarrassed Before the King</i> (excerpt from Rouvroy's memoirs concerning dance at court) . . . . .	78
Social Dance in the Baroque . . . . .	76	<i>Dancing Revives at Court</i> (letter from Charlotte Elizabeth describing a masked ball) . . . . .	80
Dance in Court Spectacle . . . . .	81	<i>The Masque of Queenes</i> (prologue to Jones and Jonson's <i>The Masque of Queenes</i> ) . . . . .	82
The Rise of the Ballet in France . . . . .	83	<i>The Importance of Dancing</i> (excerpt from Lully and Molière's play <i>The Bourgeois Gentleman</i> ) . . . . .	85
The Ballet Elsewhere in Europe . . . . .	88	<i>Athletics, Not Dance</i> (Grimm attacks the use of ballet in opera) . . . . .	88
Social Dance in the Eighteenth Century . . . . .	91	<i>Of Mimes and Pantomimes</i> (excerpt from Weaver's work encouraging the revival of pantomime) . . . . .	89
The Enlightenment and Ballet . . . . .	94	<i>Hijinks at a Ball</i> (excerpt from Casanova's journals) . . . . .	93
Ballet in an Age of Revolution . . . . .	98	<i>Criticism of Dance</i> (introduction to Diderot's <i>The Natural Son</i> , criticizing ballet) . . . . .	94
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Gasparo Angiolini . . . . .	100		
Marie-Ann de Cupis de Camargo . . . . .	101		
Jean-Georges Noverre . . . . .	102		
Gaetano Vestris . . . . .	103		
John Weaver . . . . .	105		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	106		



## IMPORTANT EVENTS

### *in Dance*

- 1600 Fabritio Caroso's *The Nobility of Ladies* is printed at Venice. The work treats the rules dancers must master for success on the ballroom floor and includes a number of choreographies for popular dances of the day. It will be re-issued in a second edition in 1605.

The marriage of King Henri IV to Marie de Medici is celebrated at Florence. As part of the festivities an opera is performed with a series of interludes or *intermedi* mounted between the acts. These *intermedi* require more than 100 performers and 1,000 men to control the elaborate stage machinery. Dance figures prominently throughout the production.

- 1602 Cesare Negri publishes the second of his dance manuals at Venice entitled *The Grace of Love*. Negri's work will be re-published two years later in a new edition and, with Caroso's *The Nobility of Ladies*, will dominate ballroom dancing styles in courtly societies in Italy and elsewhere in Europe for the first third of the seventeenth century.
- 1605 Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* is performed in London at court. The work is the first to be produced through Jonson's partnership with the architect Inigo Jones. Over the next 25 years the two will produce almost thirty such productions, making use of imaginative scenery, dance, music, and poetry grouped loosely around a theme.
- 1610 King Henri IV is assassinated in Paris and his nine-year-old son, Louis XIII, assumes

the throne under the regency of his mother, Marie de Medici. During Louis' long reign he will expand the crown's patronage of the *ballet de cour*, a form of spectacle performed at court that mixed dance, music, and poetry around a loose theme. The *ballets* are staged and performed by members of the court and the king and queen. Royal patronage of the late-Renaissance form will continue during the first half of Louis' son and successor's reign.

- 1617 Ben Jonson introduces the continental custom of performing an *antimasque* as an interlude in his court masques. In contrast to the elevated themes that were common to the English masques, the anti-masques were notable for their burlesque humor and their improvised dances which were performed by professional troupes of comedians and dancers, usually before the masque's conclusion.

- 1623 François de Lauze's *Apology for Dance* is printed in France, heralding the development of a new style. The work includes instructions for new steps as well as movements of the upper body. It also is the first dance manual to include a description of the *plié* and *elevé*, two stretching exercises used to this day that also became important elements of Baroque dance.

- 1634 King Charles I of England demands that the Inns of Court produce the masque entitled "The Triumph of Peace" at a cost of £21,000. Hundreds of musicians and dancers participate.

- c. 1635 The *courante* and *sarabande* reign as two of the most popular courtly dances of the mid-seventeenth century.

- 1640 In Spain, Juan de Esquivel Navarro's *Sober Discourse on the Art of Dancing* is published. Like de Lauze's earlier treatise, it outlines a greater range of movements that will become popular in the social and professional dancing of the Baroque period.

- 1650 Pierre Beauchamp, an accomplished dancer, is appointed to supervise dances and the *ballets de cour* performed in the royal court of France. Beauchamp is credited with creating the five classic positions used in ballet, although he may have only codified existing practices of his day.
- 1651 John Playford publishes *The English Dancing Master* in England. The work will become important in spreading knowledge of English country dances throughout Europe, particularly in France, where country dancing known as *contredanses* will become the fashion by the end of the century.
- 1653 Louis XIV appoints Jean-Baptiste Lully as his court composer. One of Lully's chief duties will be to compose music for the many *ballets de cour* performed in the French court.
- 1660 Charles II is restored as king of England; French dancers begin to make their way to England to perform professionally for the court.
- 1661 The Royal Academy of Dance is founded in France. Like other French academies, this institution will establish standards that will aid in the professionalization of dance as an art form.
- 1668 The Royal Academy of Music, later to become known merely as the Opera, is founded in France. This institution will have widespread influence on the development of French music, opera, and ballet.
- 1670 King Louis XIV gives up dancing in court spectacles and productions. During the coming decades his refusal to participate in the French *ballets de cour* inadvertently aids the rise of professionally performed ballets at court.
- Molière's play *The Bourgeois Gentleman* is first performed for the king at Versailles. Like many of the dramatist's plays written around this time, the plot makes frequent use of dance.
- 1672 The first professional ballet dance troupe, led by Pierre Beauchamp, is founded at Paris. The troupe will perform at the Opera in the city and for the king at Versailles.
- 1681 The first women dancers join the ballet troupe of the Opera in Paris and dance in Lully's production of the *Triumph of Love*.
- 1687 The death of the influential court composer Jean-Baptiste Lully allows dancers and choreographers greater independence from opera in the French theater. In place of dance's former use as a mere *divertissement* or diversion inserted between the acts of opera, new opera ballets, or merely "ballets" for short, quickly begin to be performed. The plots of these ballets are still revealed via singing, but the trend is to an ever greater dominance of dance in the production.
- 1688 The *Marriage of the Great Cathos* is performed at Versailles. André Philidor wrote the music and Jean Favier choreographed the work's dance. Although within the traditional genre of *ballets de cour*, the work displayed a heightened intermingling of dance, plot, and music.
- 1697 André Lorin's *Book of Country Dances Presented to the King* appears in France. Lorin's work is the first to include schematic diagrams of how the different figures should be created on the ballroom floor.
- 1700 Raoul-Auger Feuillet publishes his *Choreography*. The work is the first to make use of a system of notation for laying down the various steps used in a dance. Because of its clear method of presenting the various dances it outlines, it is enthusiastically received throughout Europe and translated into English, Spanish, and Italian, thus helping to spread knowledge of French practices throughout eighteenth-century Europe.
- 1704 The Opera's ballet troupe in Paris numbers 21 members, including ten women and eleven men.

- 1706 John Weaver translates Feuillet's *Choreography* from French into English, publishing it in the same year as *Orchesography*. In its English edition it will become one of the most widely distributed books on dance of the eighteenth century. Weaver's translation will subsequently be re-translated into German in 1717.
- c. 1710 In England, the dance choreographies of Mister Isaac are popular among members of the court. These dances are printed in short, easy-to-understand versions that make use of the new practices of dance notation.
- 1713 A school for training adult dancers is founded at the Opera in Paris.
- 1717 John Weaver's choreographed pantomime *The Loves of Mars and Venus* is first performed in London. During the coming decades Weaver will experiment with *ballet d'action*, ballets without words in which the story is entirely told through dance and mimed gestures.
- 1720 The young King Louis XV dances in a *ballet de cour* staged at court. This will be the last time that the king and amateur members of the court perform in one of these spectacles. By this time, theatrical dances at court have become increasingly the preserve of professionals.
- 1725 Pierre Rameau's *The Dancing Master* is published in France. The work describes a number of steps and is one of the greatest sources of information on eighteenth-century dance. In a second book published around the same time Rameau tries to improve upon the system of dance notation first pioneered by Feuillet around 1700.
- 1728 John Essex translates Pierre Rameau's *The Dancing Master* into English.
- 1734 The French ballerina and choreographer Marie Sallé performs a radically new version of the ancient legend of Pygmalion at London. Sallé chooses to dance without the traditionally confining corset used by women and without the masks that dancers commonly donned at the time.
- c. 1735 The minuet reigns as the most popular courtly dance of the mid-eighteenth century. It is a couple's dance performed to music written in triple time. In various altered forms the dance will survive into the twentieth century.
- 1748 The important dance theorist Pierre Rameau dies in France.
- c. 1750 In France, the Royal Opera's dance troupe now numbers eighteen men and twenty-four women professionals.
- The operas of the composer Jean-Philippe Rameau grant a heightened importance to ballet, and the dances inserted into these works often rival the sung drama for dramatic effect.
- 1753 The dance master Jean-Georges Noverre arrives in Paris and displeases audiences there with his unconventional productions of pantomime ballets. He moves on to Stuttgart in Germany, where he develops new *ballets d'action* in a more conducive atmosphere.
- 1754 Louis de Cohusac publishes his *Ancient and Modern Dance* in France. The work advocates greater dramatic expressiveness, and its impact is to be felt in many new works of dance drama that appear in the coming years.
- 1758 Gasparo Angiolini is appointed to direct the ballet at Vienna. During his tenure he will produce many *ballets d'action* (dance dramas that reenact a story line) in imitation of the dances of the ancient Greeks.
- c. 1760 In court circles in France a new fondness for country dances performed in squares develops. The fashion will eventually supersede the popularity of the elaborate and complex couple's dances that had been popular in the first half of the century.

- 1763 The Opera burns in Paris and will not be reopened for seven years. The company performs in the meantime in the Tuileries Palace nearby.
- Jean-Georges Noverre experiences a great success at Stuttgart with the production of *Medée et Jason*. The work will be widely performed throughout Europe.
- 1767 Jean-Georges Noverre assumes the position of court ballet master at Vienna. His duties include the supervision of dance in Vienna's two court theaters. There he stages a number of successful works of *ballet d'action*.
- 1770 The Paris Opera re-opens with a performance of Rameau's 1749 work, *Zoroastre*. In the coming years newer forms of *ballets d'action* will gain greater popularity in this important theater, an institution that by this time had become one of the most staid in Europe. A number of other theaters flourish in Paris at the same time that make vivid use of the new narrative dance styles.
- 1776 Jean-Georges Noverre receives the position of dance master at the Paris Opera. His experimental *ballets d'action* will fail to please Parisians, forcing his resignation a few years later.
- 1779 In Paris a ballet school is founded at the Opera for the training of children in dance techniques.
- 1781 Fire breaks out in the Paris Opera at the Palais Royale during a ballet production. Disaster is narrowly averted. In the same year the Opera moves to new quarters in a specially built theater. Far from the center of town, the poor roads leading to it will mean that audiences dwindle during periods of poor weather.
- 1789 Revolutionary crowds force the closure of the Opera on 12 July, two days before the storming of the Bastille.
- 1790 Louis XVI's financial difficulties cause him to abandon his patronage of the Opera in Paris. Administration of the institution is handed over to the city of Paris.
- 1792 Ballet productions at the Paris Opera reflect the new revolutionary sentiments of the Parisian populace. Many aristocratic patrons of dance have by now fled the country or will soon be executed.
- 1793 Financial necessity and the Revolution in France force Jean-Georges Noverre to spend two seasons working as a choreographer in London. His productions are warmly received.
- A number of dancers and choreographers in France fall under suspicion in the new Revolutionary order. Their ties to the aristocrats of the Old Regime often mark them as counter-revolutionaries.

## OVERVIEW of Dance

**INHERITANCE.** By the beginning of the Baroque era considerable development had already occurred in the art of dance throughout Europe, and dance was both a form of social entertainment and an art that was widely used to accompany theatrical productions. The staging of balls was a common diversion at European courts and among the wealthy societies of the Continent's cities. At the same time dance played a vital role in the many spectacles that were staged at Renaissance courts. During the sixteenth century these festivities had grown ever more complex, and kings and princes had come to hire an increasing number of professionals to dance and perform acrobatics in them. In larger courts dance masters were frequently hired to stage these spectacles, and the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had produced a number of new manuals of dance theory. While much of the information contained in these treatises was practical in nature, Renaissance dance theorists also searched through the corpus of antique writers in search of ideas to support their art's rising status. From Aristotle, they acquired the notion that graceful deportment and the measured, careful performance of steps were a representation of the Golden Mean; moderation in one's outward appearance, in other words, played a vital role in demonstrating one's virtue and one's mastery of the body. The rise of Platonism as a philosophy during the later Renaissance also left its mark on dance during the sixteenth century. Since Plato's philosophy taught that a higher realm of ideals governed the human mind as well as life on earth, dance was re-interpreted at this time as an expression of the movements of planets and of the celestial harmony that prevailed in the Heavens. A key component of Renaissance Platonism's ideas toward dance celebrated the art as a "school for love," seeing in the ideal motions of couples on the dance floor an experience that might teach men and women the arts of refined and compatible living.

**TOWARD THE BAROQUE.** No immediate changes in dance theory or in dances themselves are evident in

the period around 1600 as styles in art and architecture in Europe began to change from those of the late Renaissance to the early Baroque. Dance continued to play the role that it had for the previous two centuries in courtly entertainment and spectacles, although the rise of the opera in the last decades of the sixteenth century was to be a decisive development for the subsequent transformation in dance that occurred during the seventeenth century. The Opera, a form of art that mixed sung recitatives with arias, had originally begun to emerge out of the discussions of the Florentine Camerata in the 1570s. The members of this group desired to revive the performance practices and theatrical genres that had existed in ancient Greece. From their studies of the ancient dramatists, they discovered that ancient tragedies and other dramatic forms had been delivered in a declamatory style of chant, and the new art of recitative, in which singers proclaimed their texts on rising and falling notes, was an attempt to recapture this lost art. Musical theorists of the time, too, came to realize that ancient tragedy had mixed dance, song, and other forms of music, and so in the developing operas of early Baroque Italy, dance eventually played a vital role. Another venue for theatrical dance in both Renaissance and Baroque Italy was the *intermedio*, an interlude that occurred between the various acts in a comedy or tragedy. The performance of songs and elaborate dances was a common feature of these *intermedi*. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, scores of performers were necessary to stage the most sophisticated of these diversionary entertainments in Italian court productions. In France, England, and elsewhere in Europe similar types of dance entertainments had appeared in the sixteenth century, and many of these were, as in Italy, also touched by the new scholarship of the Renaissance and the early Baroque. In late sixteenth-century France, for example, the *ballets de cour*, an elaborate type of royal entertainment, appeared that mixed song, dance, poetry, and pantomime together, while in England the masques, a form of court pageant introduced by the Tudor monarch Henry VIII, underwent a dramatic expansion and elaboration under the new Stuart kings. Both the masques and the *ballets de cour* treated loose themes or myths that served to link the various dances, songs, and tableaux together, but they were not usually integrated dramas that presented a single plot or story line. Rather loose ties and motifs served to bring together the hours of dancing and songs that these productions presented. Masques and *ballets de cour*, too, were ephemeral productions, that is, they were performed once to satisfy a desire for spectacle and entertainment. Once staged, they were not revived, although music and dances from one

production were sometimes adapted to later productions. The performers in these theatricals, too, were largely drawn from the members of the court, although professional dancers and acrobats sometimes were hired to augment their participation. In France, the Bourbon kings Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV danced in these spectacles, usually performing in the concluding ballet that drew the evening's entertainment to a close. While the Puritans were largely to outlaw masques in England during the period of the Commonwealth (1640–1660), the *ballets de cour* survived in France, and had become by the late seventeenth century a popular art form in royal circles.

**IDEALS OF GRACE.** Baroque forms of *intermedi*, masques, and *ballets de cour* made use of the popular social dances of the day, including forms like the *sarabande*, *courante*, *passepied*, and in their later forms the popular minuet. While new dances were created for these productions that were performed by solo dancers as well as couples, the dance masters who created these special dances did so using a repertory of steps that was well known to the amateur performers who participated in them. In France and England, masques and *ballets de cour* had originally been staged in large halls rather than on a proscenium stage. Thus the emphasis of those who choreographed was on creating elaborate figural compositions. Dancers frequently moved through a series of steps that inscribed certain signs and symbols on the dance floor. In France, bleachers placed around the room allowed those who watched the performance to read these signs and to relate them to the evening's overarching themes. The dances of the Baroque were also performed in clothing that greatly restricted and reduced the possibilities of free movement. The emphasis of choreographers and dancers was thus on refined footwork, while the upper body was kept largely stationary and highly controlled. This idea of deportment was considered a fundamental social grace, and courtiers who were not able to master the refined movements of the dance floor faced ostracism and mockery.

**THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV.** During the later seventeenth century France emerged as the dominant absolutist monarchy in Europe, and trends at its court of Versailles were widely copied and imitated throughout Europe. In these years the country proved to be the major source of inspiration for new dance forms, as well. An example of the country's fertility in the arena of dance can be seen in the rise of the *contredanse* throughout Europe. Originally, these "country dances" had been performed in England. By the mid-seventeenth century the French aristocracy's appetite for new kinds of dance brought them into French ballrooms where French tastes

refined the simple square dance into an elegant expression of cultivated living. Reinterpreted through the lens of French culture, then, the contredanse spread throughout Europe, becoming by 1700 one of the most popular forms of dance throughout the Continent. Another example of France's influence on European patterns of dancing can be seen in the foundation of the Royal Academy of Dance and the Royal Academy of Music, both of which were founded in the second half of the seventeenth century. The absolutist ambitions of Louis XIV affected many areas of life and arts in seventeenth-century France. Louis and his ministers, for instance, divided up all the arts—visual, plastic, dramatic, and literary—into new academies that were charged with setting standards in their various disciplines and with training those who were gifted in a particular art form. The Royal Academy of Dance was founded in 1661, and its thirteen professional dance masters trained dancers and produced ballets for the entertainment of the court. Its role came increasingly to be subsumed into the Royal Academy of Music, an institution founded in 1672 and placed under the direction of the court composer Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687). The Royal Academy of Music soon became known merely as the Opera, the chief institution in France for staging this art form. By this time Lully had already collaborated with many dramatists to produce music for comedy-ballets and other light productions that mixed song, dance, and drama. During the later years of his life, though, Lully satisfied the growing tastes of the king and his circle for more serious and elevated entertainments. In a series of thirteen tragedies he produced before his death, Lully forged a union between music, dance, and song that was hailed by contemporaries as a brilliant expression of French culture. These productions made frequent use of complex ballets, and to stage them the Opera formed a professional troupe of dancers. While membership was originally open only to men, women soon joined the troupe's ranks. In the decades after Lully's death, his operas as well as new productions in his mold continued to be staged by the company. The rising popularity of ballet in these productions meant that more and more time had to be devoted to dance in the operas of the early eighteenth century. In many cases the ballets that punctuated the evening were joined only by the loosest ties to the main operatic dramas' plots, but in the hands of figures like Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) the union of dance and song achieved a great degree of artistic finesse and unity.

**PROFESSIONALISM SPREADS.** The successful development of a courtly operatic theater and ballet in Paris

soon was imitated elsewhere in Europe. During the eighteenth century Vienna, Stockholm, Dresden, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, and Berlin were just a few of the many European cities in which similar institutions emerged. The foundation of a city opera company at Hamburg in 1679 was another important development. This opera company was paid for and administered by the town's government, rather than by a royal court. While Hamburg became a force in North Germany for the development of opera and dance, other towns did not immediately follow suit and imitate Hamburg's example. Opera and ballet remained in much of northern Europe a phenomenon largely nourished and paid for by monarchs and aristocrats. In the course of their development the new operas formed professional ballet troupes, which were invigorated with the French examples of Lully, but also by trends in Italy. There, a different pattern of adaptation had arisen between the tastes for opera and ballet. During the eighteenth century dance masters from Italy and France toured Europe and accepted posts in the new institutions. The rising affection for professional dance can be seen in the steadily increasing numbers of performers that were hired in many opera houses. To stage the diversionary ballets that were increasingly used in operatic productions, many opera houses founded schools which, like the Paris Opera's academy, existed to ensure a steady stream of talent. Great dancers achieved celebrity throughout Europe, and the cultivated urban audiences closely followed their careers. In France, the prima ballerinas Madame de Camargo and Marie Sallé became fashion trendsetters, responsible for new styles in hair, shoes, and hats.

**DEVELOPMENT OF BALLETS D'ACTION.** Dancing also acquired an increasing theoretical sophistication. Figures like Camargo and Sallé mingled with the most prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment, and new dance authors like Jean-Georges Noverre and Gasparo Angiolini considered the deeper meanings of dance and the aesthetics that should govern its performance. Noverre and Angiolini responded to the criticisms that French Enlightenment thinkers made of the contemporary art. In the mid-eighteenth century, for instance, the French *philosophes* frequently observed that contemporary dance was badly in need of reform. Figures like Voltaire and Diderot observed that the art had degraded into nothing more than a form of gymnastic athleticism. To remedy this situation, dance masters like Noverre and Angiolini insisted that dance had great dramatic force and that it should be merged with pantomime to produce new narrative ballets, works that soon became known as *ballets d'action*. By the 1750s and 1760s the

centers for much of this innovation in dance had moved from France eastward into Germany and Austria, where the opera ballets at Stuttgart and Vienna were producing some of the most daring forms of the new pantomime ballets. Although these departures were originally resisted at the Paris Opera, even that venerable company began to produce works in the new genre by the 1770s. In this way ballet acquired a new force and independence by virtue of its abilities to narrate stories and to lend these stories even greater emotional depth than might have been possible with words.

**THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.** The political upheavals and transformations that began in France in 1789 had far-reaching effects on the practice of both opera and ballet. Throughout Europe, opera had long been an art form that had flourished in close connection to the hereditary aristocracy and royal governments. In the fiscal crisis that had preceded the rise of the Revolution in France, King Louis XVI was forced at first to scale back his support for the Paris Opera and its ballet, and then, eventually to curtail his expenditures on the company altogether. The ballet was transferred to the control of the city of Paris, but the popularity of the company's productions continued to ensure its survival. In the course of the French Revolution, too, political leaders sensed in the ballet a force of support and promotion for their republican pretensions. As the new government solidified its hold over Paris and the country, many new festivals were proclaimed and celebrated with the commissioning of ballets and elaborate celebratory dances. Performed to the strains of revolutionary hymns, these productions ensured professional dancers of a new audience, as opera and ballet were cut off from their patronage links to the now increasingly proscribed nobility. The relatively new form of *ballet d'action* also provided a ready medium with which to praise the democratic principles of the political movement. In this way ballet was assured of a continued audience, despite the enormous political upheavals that occurred in France and throughout Europe at the end of the eighteenth century.

## TOPICS *in Dance*

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### SOCIAL DANCE IN THE BAROQUE

**RENAISSANCE INHERITANCE.** No immediate change in styles of dance or in attitudes to the art are perceptible between the late Renaissance and the early Baroque



Engraving of a masked ball held at the Court Theater in Bonn, Germany, in the eighteenth century. Such entertainments were popular in court society throughout the Baroque period. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

periods. The seventeenth century inherited from the Renaissance a widespread perception of dance as a necessary social grace, a sign of distinction that accomplished men and women needed to master to participate in society. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Europe's first works of dance theory had appeared. While these treatises outlined the necessary steps and skills that a good dancer had to master, they also reached back to Antiquity in search of theories that might support dance's general popularity in courtly society. In Aristotle, Europe's dance theorists had located part of the rationality for dance's aesthetic appeal, arguing that the art displayed the mind's ability to subject the body to its disciplines. The popularity of Platonic thought during the later Renaissance also left its marks on artistic theory, as dance came to be treated in many literary works, conduct manuals, and aesthetic treatises as an expression of the concept of Platonic ideals. The philosophy of Plato taught that a higher, heavenly

realm of universal concepts or ideals governed life on earth, and thus dance represented in the works of its most vigorous advocates, an expression of the harmony that prevailed in a higher realm. In his poem, "Orchestra," first published in 1594, the English author Sir John Davies celebrated dance for its ability to express the well-ordered relationships that prevailed in the heavens, and Davies saw in the highly choreographed revolutions of the planets the origins of human dance. His extravagant praise of dance as "love's proper exercise" found many echoes in the world of the late Renaissance and the Baroque. Dance was a motif found in the plays of Shakespeare and other writers and was often used to express the ideals of sociability, civility, and love. Similarly, dance figured prominently in the many conduct manuals of the age. These recommended the art as a necessary accompaniment to courtship, seeing in the ideal movements of the dance floor skills that might teach the art of love.



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***EMBARRASSED BEFORE THE KING**

**INTRODUCTION:** Louis de Rouvroy, the Duke of Saint Simon (1675–1755), wrote one of the most voluminous memoirs of life at the court of Versailles, totaling sixteen large volumes in its modern edition. In the following excerpt he describes the embarrassment that occurred when a young nobleman was not up to the challenge of dancing at a court ball.

On Shrove Tuesday, there was a grand toilette of the Duchesse de Chartres, to which the King and all the Court came; and in the evening a grand ball, similar to that which had just taken place, except that the new Duchesse de Chartres was led out by the Duc de Bourgogne. Everyone wore the same dress, and had the same partner as before.

I cannot pass over in silence a very ridiculous adventure which occurred at both of these balls. A son of Montbron, no more made to dance at Court than his father was to be chevalier of the order (to which, however, he was promoted in 1688), was among the company. He had been asked if he danced well; and he had replied with a confidence which made every one hope that the contrary was the case. Every one was satisfied. From the very first bow, he became confused, and he lost step at

once. He tried to divert attention from his mistake by affected attitudes, and carrying his arms high; but this made him only more ridiculous, and excited bursts of laughter, which, in despite of the respect due to the person of the King (who likewise had great difficulty to hinder himself from laughing), degenerated at length into regular hooting. On the morrow, instead of flying the Court or holding his tongue, he excused himself by saying that the presence of the King had disconcerted him; and promised marvels for the ball which was to follow. He was one of my friends, and I felt for him, I should even have warned him against a second attempt, if the very indifferent success I had met with had not made me fear that my advice would be taken in ill part. As soon as he began to dance at the second ball, those who were near stood up, those who were far off climbed wherever they could get a sight; and the shouts of laughter were mingled with clapping of hands. Every one, even the King himself, laughed heartily, and most of us quite loud, so that I do not think any one was ever treated so before. Montbron disappeared immediately afterwards, and did not show himself again for a long time. It was a pity he exposed himself to this defeat, for he was an honourable and brave man.

**SOURCE:** Louis de Rouvroy, *The Memoirs of the Duke of Saint Simon on the Reign of Louis XIV and the Regency*. Vol 1. Trans. Bayle St. John (Philadelphia: Gebbie and Co., 1890): 19–20.

**IMPORTANT SOCIAL SKILL.** For nobles and the wealthy in Europe's cities, dancing was thus an essential social skill and the mastery of the most popular social dances of the day was necessary for participation in elite society. In his voluminous memoirs of life in the court of Versailles, for example, the Duc de Saint Simon related the story of a provincial noble who was so unfamiliar with the dances of court that he was jeered off the dance floor. Dance was so important in noble circles that the great aristocratic households of Europe frequently employed dance masters to teach the young members of the household these skills. These masters also coached adults in new dances, even as they choreographed dances for special occasions. Dance masters often fulfilled a variety of other roles in royal and noble households, too. They planned spectacles, designed stage sets and interiors, and they sometimes taught horseback riding, gymnastics, and deportment. Europe's most successful dance masters wrote texts on their art, and the second half of the sixteenth century saw a number of these appear that continued to dominate dancing styles during the decades of the early Baroque. In the mid-seventeenth century

new patterns of dancing helped to produce another spate of new dance manuals published in Italy, France, Spain, and England. In this way knowledge of new steps and dances popular in one part of Europe was able to spread rather quickly throughout the continent. Travelers, too, carried knowledge of the latest dance fashions, so that despite regional variations, the patterns of social dancing practiced in Europe's courts and "high societies" was relatively homogenous by the seventeenth century. In the continent's cities, dance schools were another avenue that disseminated knowledge of the art, and these trained the sons and daughters of successful merchants, men of commerce, and bankers in the latest steps. In Catholic Europe, the Jesuit schools also provided instruction in dancing to their male students, since dance was thought to be an essential skill for courtship. In England and other places in which the rigorous Christian doctrines of Calvinism held sway, moralists and preachers attacked dancing, and in some places dancing was officially prohibited. Yet even during the years of the Puritan Commonwealth in England (1649–1660), dancing instruction continued in the country's elite public schools.

**PATTERNS OF SOCIAL DANCING.** While many dances were common throughout Europe, there was still great variety in the kinds of dances that were performed. Dances, in other words, existed to express all kinds of emotional states and for all tastes and occasions. A ball opened with a number of dignified processional dances, including *pavans* and *branles*. A series of couples dances usually followed in which only one couple at a time danced. Rank governed the progression of these dances, with the highest-ranking members present dancing before those of lesser status. For most of the seventeenth century the most popular of these couples dances was the *courante*, but toward the end of the century, the minuet began to supplant its popularity. Other dances popular at the time included the *bourrée*, *gavotte*, and *passepied*. In all these dances the emphasis was on sprightly, yet contained and disciplined footwork and on the repetition of rigorously defined steps with subtle modulations. Generally, seventeenth-century dances kept the upper body rigid and erect and the arms and hands remained contained, their movements stylized. Besides the dignified character of dances like the minuet and *courante*, a number of more theatrical and dramatic dances were performed. These included the *sarabande*, *chaconne*, and *gigue* (in English known as the jig), dances that had an air of exoticism about them. The *sarabande*, for instance, was believed to have been a dance alternately of South American or Saracen Turkish origins, and was originally wildly energetic. While it grew more staid and dignified as it entered aristocratic society, the rhythmic schemes of its music still featured lively syncopated motifs that were frequently repeated. In addition to these standard dances performed in elite societies throughout most of Europe, balls often featured special dances that were choreographed for the occasion. These specially created dances were often intended to display the skill of a single couple and they were consequently highly complex, calling for sophisticated amateurs to memorize a number of steps and their progression in the days and weeks that preceded a ball.

**DANCE MUSIC.** The dances of aristocratic society in seventeenth-century Europe were largely international in flavor, although subject to regional variations. Greater variety characterized the music played to accompany dances throughout Europe. In France, violins and violin variants were most often used at balls, the most famous French ensemble being the “24 Violins of the King,” an ensemble of strings employed at court to entertain at royal balls. In Italy, collections of dance music published for the lute were particularly popular, while

in Spain the guitar often predominated. Dancing masters often doubled as violinists, lutenists, and guitar players, and if a great deal of music has survived from the period, it must also be remembered that much of the dance music intended to accompany balls was heavily improvised and has consequently not survived. Of that which survives, numerous printed collections of dance music exist for solo instruments, and vocal pieces, too, sometimes accompanied dancing, although far less frequently than instrumental music. Dance suites—that is, instrumental music composed for small ensembles that recreated the rhythms familiar to social dancers—became enormously popular throughout the seventeenth century, and survive from every European region. The music recorded in this way, however, was intended primarily to be heard and did not accompany balls.

**RISE OF FRENCH STYLE.** As in other areas of cultural life, the example of French aristocratic and court society came to dominate the dancing practices of much of Europe during the course of the seventeenth century. This taste for French dancing was particularly strong in the second half of the century, as Versailles became a model for courtly practices almost everywhere in Europe. One consequence of this dominance was the rise and spread of “country dances,” forms of figure dancing that were originally English in origin but which were transformed by French taste into the *contredanses* that became popular in Europe around 1700. In the 1650s, the English dancing master John Playford began to publish a series of short books entitled *The English Dancing Master* that informed their readers about how to perform “country dances.” In style, these dances were amazingly simple, their repertory consisting of no more than a few steps. Their appeal rather consisted in the intricate figures that four or more couples made on the dance floor as they progressed through the country dance’s figures. As knowledge of these dances spread to France, they had an enthusiastic reception in elite societies, but were soon transformed by French taste for more intricate and refined footwork. From the foothold that country dancing gained in France, however, the style soon spread throughout Europe, producing regional variations of “country dancing” almost everywhere on the continent. In one of the ironies of cultural history, Marie-Antoinette, for instance, brought to the French court of Versailles an Austrian version of “country dancing” that flourished in her native Vienna in the second half of the eighteenth century. This style, though, owed its origins to the taste for country dancing that French culture had helped to plant throughout Europe at the end of the seventeenth century.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***DANCING REVIVES AT COURT**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1683, King Louis XIV's wife died, and in the period of mourning after her death the king fell under the spell of Madame de Montespan, originally a governess to members of the royal household. Over time, her strict, uncompromising moral influence resulted in a decline in dancing at court. While great balls continued to occur on state occasions, the incessant round of dances and masquerades that had been common at court in previous decades was curtailed. By the 1690s the young duchess Charlotte Elizabeth, wife of Louis's nephew, had captivated the king, and he allowed a greater degree of frivolity for her amusement. In one of her letters she happily described a recent masked ball that occurred at Marly, a small royal retreat not far from Versailles.

I must tell you about the masked ball at Marly. On Thursday the King and all the rest of us had supper at nine o'clock, and afterwards we went to the ball, which began at ten o'clock. At eleven o'clock the masks arrived. We saw a lady as tall and broad as a tower enter the ballroom. It was the Duc de Valentinois, son of Monsieur de Monaco, who is very tall. This lady had a cloak which fell right to her feet. When she reached the middle of the room, she opened her mantle and out sprang figures from Italian comedies. Harlequin, Scaramouche, Polichinello, the Doctor, Brighella, and a peasant, who all began to dance very well. Monsieur de Brionne was Harlequin, the Comte d'Ayen, Scaramouche, my son, Polichinello, the Duc de Bourgogne was the Doctor, La Vallière was Brighella, and Prince Camille was the peasant ...

The Dauphin arrived with another party, all very quaintly dressed, and they changed their costumes three or four times. This band consisted of the Princesse de Conti, Mademoiselle de Lislebonne, Madame de Chatillon,

and the Duc de Villeroy. The Duc d'Anjou and the Duc de Berri and their households composed the third group of masks; the Duchesse de Bourgogne and her ladies the fourth; and Madame de Chartres, Madame la Duchesse, Mademoiselle d'Armagnac, the Duchesse de Villeroy, Mademoiselle de Tourbes, who is a daughter of the Marechal d'Estrées, and Mademoiselle de Melun, the fifth. The ball lasted until a quarter to two o'clock ... On Friday all the ladies were elegantly attired in dressing-gowns. The Duchesse de Bourgogne wore a beautiful fancy costume, being gaily dressed up in Spanish fashion with a little cap ... Madame de Mongon was dressed in ancient fashion, Madame d'Ayen in a costume such as goddesses wear in plays. The Comtesse d'Estrées was dressed in ancient French style and Madame Dangeau in ancient German style. At half-past seven or eight o'clock masks came and danced the opening scene of an opera with guitars. These were my son, the Comte d'Ayen, Prince Camille, and La Vallière in ridiculous men's clothes; the Dauphin, Monsieur d'Antin, and Monsieur de Brionne as ladies, with dressing gowns, head-dresses, shawls, and towers of yellow hair much higher than are usually worn. These three gentlemen are almost as tall as each other. They wore quite small black and red masks with patches, and they danced with high kicking steps. D'Antin exerted himself so violently that he bumped in Monsieur de Brionne, who fell on his behind at the Queen of England's feet. You can imagine what a shout of laughter there was. Shortly afterwards, my favourite, the Duc de Berri, went to disguise himself as "Baron de la Crasse" and came back and performed a very comical dance by himself.

**SOURCE:** Gertrude S. Stevenson, ed. and trans., *Letters of Madame*, in *Dance and Music of Court and Theater. Selected Writings of Wendy Hilton* by Wendy Hilton (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1996): 17–18.

**FOLK DANCE.** Although historians have long supposed that many of the courtly dances performed in European courts derived from folk dances, the popular origins of ballroom forms cannot be established given the surviving documents. It is, nevertheless, logical to conclude that many dances popular in seventeenth-century Europe had origins in the customs of village life and of urban societies. The precise nature and extent to which folk dancing served to invigorate the elite ballroom, though, may always be a matter of conjecture. Many of the best-documented dances of the seventeenth century had, even then, legendary associations, associations that cannot be documented and that may mask their true historical origins. The French dance known as

the *passepied*, for instance, was believed to derive from the folk dances of Brittany; the *bourrée*, another dance popular in cultivated ballrooms, was thought to come from the peasant dances of the Auvergne, a region of southern France. The origins of some dances are better known. During the sixteenth century a dance known as the *sarabande* became controversial in Spanish cities. Notable for its overt sexuality, the sarabande had by the early seventeenth century found its way into ballrooms everywhere throughout Europe. Originally seen as wild and licentious, its performance grew far more staid, and it became one of the standards of masked balls in the first half of the seventeenth century. While Protestant and Catholic moralists sometimes turned a disapproving

eye on dancing generally, they usually reserved their greatest criticisms for folk dances practiced in the countryside. Moralists condemned the tight embraces of these dances, as well as the occasions for dance themselves, as events that led to immorality and fornication. During the seventeenth century religious attempts to reform the morality of village life persisted in many parts of Europe. At this time Calvinist divines were usually among the most vigorous in condemning the dances of rural societies as well as those of the urban poor and middling classes. While Calvinists were widely recognized for their uncompromising attitudes toward dance, Catholic and Protestant divines could and did react vigorously to folk dancing in particular times and places.

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SEE ALSO *Music: Origins and Elements of the Baroque Style; Theater: The Commercial Theater in Early Seventeenth-Century England*

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#### DANCE IN COURT SPECTACLE

**INTERMEDI AND THE BALLETS DE COUR.** Besides dance's role as a cultivated social pastime, the art had long played a role in the theatrical spectacles staged by kings and princes as well. In Italy, elaborately choreographed dances formed the heart of the many *intermedi*, or short interludes, that were staged between the acts of dramas and operas. In France, dance played a central role in royal fêtes and spectacles, and in the staging of *ballets de cours*. This form of courtly entertainment had appeared at the end of the sixteenth century, and it differed from the royal fêtes still popular at the time by virtue of its adoption of a more unified plot line. The *ballet de cour* made use of a printed libretto that was circulated among the audience, and its long performances included songs, musical interludes, dances, and poetry that treated a mythological theme or story. Its primary purpose was

to glorify the figure of the monarch, but at the same time, the *ballets de cour* also made use of the knowledge recently unearthed by Renaissance humanism concerning ancient dance, music, and poetry. Like the Italian opera with its accompanying *intermedi*, these French productions mixed dance, music, and poetry in an attempt to recreate the theater of the ancient world, but most particularly of the Greeks. In both the Italian and French forms popular at the time, however, spectacle predominated, and productions made use of lavish costumes and sets as well as the most sophisticated stage machinery available in the period. In 1600 at Florence, for example, an opera was staged to mark the wedding of King Henri IV of France to Marie de Medici. In between the staging of the musical drama, a series of impressive *intermedi* or interludes diverted the attention of the audience while scene and costume changes were being made in the central drama. More than 100 dancers were required to produce these diversions, but a force of 1,000 stagehands was necessary to run the elaborate stage machinery necessary to raise and lower the stage, position the scenery, and man the many illusionary devices used in the productions. In France, the massive staging of the *ballets de cours* relied on similarly vast quantities of dancers, stagehands, and machinery to present spectacles that glorified the monarch.

**MASQUES.** The English equivalent of the French *ballet de cour* or the Italian *intermedi* was the masque. The origins of the masques stretched back to the time of Henry VIII, who, in 1512, had staged the first of these productions at court in imitation of continental entertainments popular at the time. Native traditions of wearing masks and of mumming, an early form of pantomime, also merged into English masques as well. Throughout the Tudor period masques increased in popularity and complexity at court, and they were usually staged with their disguised participants presenting a series of dances and pantomimes in the banqueting hall of royal palaces. The Stuart king, James I, who ascended to England's throne in 1603, was a great admirer of the masques, and he stepped up the support the royal court gave to these productions. Inigo Jones's famous Banqueting House, which still stands in London's Whitehall section today, was constructed in part to provide a suitably grand venue in which to perform the masques. While in the earlier Tudor period masques had been performed with scenery that was wheeled into these halls atop carts, the Stuart masque came to be staged more and more on a fixed stage. The most lavish productions were presented as royal entertainments, although the Inns of Court in London, the guild of lawyers active in

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE MASQUE OF QUEENES**

**INTRODUCTION:** Steadily increasing complexity and rising costs characterized the masques staged at the Elizabethan and Stuart courts. Under James I and Charles I, the theatrical partnership of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones produced almost thirty of these productions. The third in this fruitful collaboration, *The Masque of Queenes*, was staged for the court in 1609. It included an anti-masque, a kind of bizarre or grotesque theatrical that preceded the masque proper. This custom of staging anti-masques had recently come to England from the Continent. Jonson's prologue to the printed version of the masque suggests some of the sumptuousness of the staging and costuming. Productions like this typically were augmented with several hours of dancing as well, making the event a long and imposing affair.

It increasing, now, to the third time of my being used in these Services to her Majesty's personal Presentations, with the Ladies whom she pleases to honor; it was my first and special regard, to see that the nobility of the Invention should be answerable to the dignity of their Persons. For which reason I chose the Argument to be, *A celebration of honorable and true Fame*, bred out of Virtue: observing that Rule (a) of the best Artist, to suffer no object of delight to pass without his mixture of Profit and Example. And because her Majesty (best knowing, that a principal part of life, in these Spectacles, lay in their variety) had commanded me to think on some *Dance*, or *Show*, that might precede hers, and have the place of a foil or false *Masque*: I was careful to decline, not only

from others, but mine own Steps in that kind, since the (b) last Year, I had an *Anti-masque* of Boys: and therefore now, devised, that twelve Women, in the habit of *Hags*, or *Witches*, sustaining the Persons of *Ignorance*, *Suspicion*, *Credulity*, &c. the Opposites to good *Fame*, should fill that part; not as a *Masque*, but a *Spectacle* of strangeness, producing multiplicity of *Gesture*, and not unaptly sorting with the current, and whole fall of the *Device*.

His Majesty, then, being set, and the whole Company in full expectation, the part of the *Scene* which first presented itself, was an ugly *Hell*: which flaming beneath, smoked unto the top of the Roof. And in respect all evils are, *Morally*, said to come from *Hell*; as also from that observation of *Torrentius* upon *Horace* his *Canidia*, ... These *Witches*, with a kind of hollow and infernal Music, came forth from thence. First one, then two, and three, and more, till their number increased to Eleven; all differently attired: some with Rats on their Head; some on their Shoulders; others with Ointment Pots at their Girdles; all with Spindles, Timbrels, Rattles, or other *beneficial* Instruments, making a confused noise, with strange Gestures. The *Device* of their Attire was Master *Jones* his, with the Invention, and *Architecture* of the whole *Scene*, and *Machine*. Only, I prescribed them their *Properties* of Vipers, Snakes, Bones, Herbs, Roots, and other Ensigns of their *Magic*, out of the Authority of ancient and late Writers, wherein the Faults are mine, if there be any found; and for that cause I confessed them.

**SOURCE:** Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Queenes*. (London: n.p., 1609). Text modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

the capital, also staged their own masques in the first half of the seventeenth century.

**MASQUES OF JONSON AND JONES.** The most refined of all seventeenth-century English masques were those produced by the theatrical team of Ben Jonson and the stage designer and architect Inigo Jones. Jones's and Jonson's partnership lasted almost 25 years, during which they produced almost thirty productions. Eventually, though, the two fell out, and while Jones continued to produce masques for the Stuart court, Jonson no longer lent his hand to the staging of these productions. While their co-operation lasted, the two provided a steady stream of entertainment for King James I (r. 1603–1625) and Charles I (r. 1625–1648). The Jonson-Jones masques did a great deal to develop the tastes in England for continental patterns of staging and production. The architect Jones, for example, adopted the elaborate style of staging typical of French and Italian

spectacles of the time, while Jonson eventually adopted the continental custom of interspersing scenes of anti-masques—that is, scenes of grotesque humor and ribaldry—alongside the more elevated themes of the masque proper. The heart of the masque was, as in the Italian *intermedi* or the French *ballet de cour*, the series of dances that either loosely or more forcefully conveyed the theatrical's chosen text or story line. In Ben Jonson's hands, the masque's poetic underpinnings may have been elevated to a point of high art, but in most of these spectacles the high point was always the series of dances that were generally peppered throughout the productions. Sometimes these series of dances lasted more than four or five hours. In contrast to the couple's dances that were popular in court society, the dances of the masques—as those of the French fêtes or *ballets de cour*—were figure dances. In the complex choreographies they created for these productions dancing masters created geometric fig-

ures, letters, and other symbols by skillfully arranging dancers, and these figured creations helped to convey some of the underlying themes and messages of the masque proper. Sophisticated amateur dancers within the court performed most of these dances, a fact that frequently elicited criticisms from English Puritan divines of the day. At the same time as masques grew more sophisticated, and as the comedy and ribaldry of anti-masques became ever more fixed within the masque structure itself, professional athletes, gymnasts, comedians, and dancers participated in these productions. The use of professional performers was just one factor that caused an enormous increase in the cost of masques in early seventeenth-century England. The importation of elaborate stage machinery and the steadily rising costs of costuming the many participants in these productions were two other factors that contributed to these increases as well. By the mid-century these costs were often enormous and produced a growing chorus of criticism. At that time William Prynne, a Puritan lawyer, published his *Histriomatrix*, a work condemning the licentiousness and sumptuous display of Charles I's court entertainments. Charles responded quickly and fiercely. He required the Inns of Court, the association of lawyers in London, to stage a production of the masque *The Triumph of Peace* to demonstrate their allegiance to the crown. The production lasted for hours and was preceded by an equally long procession through London's streets. More than 100 musicians and an almost equal number of dancers performed in the spectacle, which cost the prodigious sum of £21,000, the equivalent of more than several million pounds today. These costs had to be borne by the Inns of Court. In this way Charles used the masques as a political tool to quash opposition, but it was a policy that soon backfired on him.

**PURITAN SUPPRESSION OF THE MASQUES.** There can be little doubt that the princely sums expended on the masques was one factor that aided in their suppression during England's Puritan Commonwealth (1649–1660). Yet Puritan distaste for these productions ran deeper than just a mere distaste for sumptuous display and profligate waste. The Puritans opposed dancing and the theater as well, and so the masque stood condemned on multiple grounds. With the execution of King Charles I in 1649, the court masque ceased to exist, although during the period of the Commonwealth masque-like productions continued to be mounted throughout England, most notably in the country's secondary schools where the masque was still considered a suitable vehicle for teaching knowledge of classical mythology and literature. In London and other towns,

some of the techniques of staging masques survived in new plays that were termed "moral representations." With the Restoration of the monarchy that occurred in 1660, the court masque was not revived, and the techniques of staging and dance that these theatricals had once nourished came increasingly to be accommodated as dramatic interludes within plays and operas.

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SEE ALSO *Theater: Court Spectacle in Stuart England*

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## THE RISE OF THE BALLET IN FRANCE

**TRENDS.** Several undeniable trends are evident in the history of dance in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century France. First, dances performed in the theater became increasingly the preserve of professional dancers and, second, dance began to acquire enhanced status as an art form on par with poetry, music, and drama. At the same time, the modern institution of the ballet emerged in close connection with the opera. Ballet troupes, for example, were most often connected to opera houses, and ballets played a key role within the action of operas or as a diversionary entertainment within theatrical and musical productions. This pattern developed in Paris at the end of the seventeenth century as the ballet's rise to prominence as an art form occurred in close connection with the city's main opera house. In 1672, Louis XIV chartered the Royal Academy of Music, a production company that throughout its long history came to be known most frequently merely as the Opera, since its operatic productions were a primary source of its revenue and fame. Within a few years the king also gave the Academy's director, the composer Jean-Baptiste Lully, the use of a theater in the Palais Royale, a popular theatrical and commercial development near the Louvre. For most of the Old Regime—that is, until the French Revolution's onset in 1789—the Opera remained at this location. During its



Engraving of Louis XIV, the "Sun King," in a ballet outfit. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

first fifty years of existence, the Opera premiered more than 100 productions, despite chronic bouts of financial instability and a space that was less-than-ideal for the performance of opera or the ballet. Because of the lavishness of its productions, tickets to the Opera cost twice what they did in other contemporary theaters in Paris. Dance figured prominently in most of the operas staged there, and Lully soon founded a permanent dance troupe within the opera to support his grand musical creations. The first director of this troupe was Pierre Beauchamp, an accomplished dancer and choreographer, who came to have an enormous influence upon the development of professional dance throughout Europe. He served as personal dance instructor to Louis XIV, and in his work with the Opera he codified the five positions that are still used by ballet dancers to this day. He also developed a system for notating dances, although Raoul-Auger Feuillet later revised his system. Beauchamp's tenure at the Opera began in 1680 and ended at Lully's death in 1687. He continued to choreograph dances, particularly for the Jesuit colleges in France. In his role as a director of the Académie Royale de Danse (the Royal Academy of Dance), he also came to have a profound impact on professional dance in France.

**PROFESSIONAL DANCERS.** Another impetus to the development of the Opera's professional dance troupe was Louis XIV's retirement from dancing after 1670. The king had long been an avid dancer, and had regularly performed in the many *ballets de cour* that were mounted at the French court. As he matured, Louis gave up the art, and his courtiers followed suit. Professionals were thus needed to mount the extravagant theatricals that were still popular at court. The early history of the Opera's ballet company suggests that many of its dancers performed both in musical productions in Paris and for the king and his court at Versailles. The dancers who performed in the troupe were initially all men, and they also performed for the king at the court and some choreographed productions staged elsewhere. Women entered the troupe quite early. The first female performer, Madame de Lafontaine (1655–1738), appeared at the Opera in 1681 in a production of Lully's opera *The Triumph of Love*. As amateur performers, women had long been active in court productions, although they had usually appeared in scenes with other women, or they had relied on masques to hide their true identities. Madame Lafontaine's appearance thus set an important historical precedent, and female dancers soon made inroads into the troupe. By 1704, men were still dancing many female roles in the productions of the troupe, although women were now employed in the company in roughly equal numbers. Within a decade, their numbers had surpassed male dancers, and the Opera emerged as the site for a ballet and singing school. In this early stage of its history the Paris Opera's ballet school seems to have cultivated technical proficiency in its dancers rather than dramatic skills. In the course of the eighteenth century, however, the theatrical and dramatic demands of ballets rose, necessitating the training of performers with a greater acting sense. Several key developments in the late seventeenth century aided in dance's rise to the status of a profession in France. The standardization of the system of five dancing positions may have only served to fix with greater accuracy what had already become standard practice among dancers, but as ballet acquired a greater precision, it also developed an increasing sophistication in its notational systems. Dance notation allowed for a progression of precise steps to be charted out, showing their progression across the floor, so that each time a dance was performed it was executed in a roughly similar way. Dances that were written down in this way were more long-lasting than those that were taught by a dancing master or choreographer to his students for each new circumstance. In this way the impact of a choreographer's work was more permanent, and dances that were performed in one place could also be reproduced else-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE IMPORTANCE OF DANCING**

**INTRODUCTION:** In the 1660s and early 1670s the great French playwright Molière collaborated with the composer Jean-Baptiste Lully to produce a series of comedy-ballets that mixed dancing, text, and song. The greatest of these was *The Bourgeois Gentleman* or sometimes called in English *The Shopkeeper Turned Gentleman*, a play that treated a humble man's rise to social distinction. In this scene from near the beginning of the play, the shopkeeper, Mr. Jourdain, announces his intentions to employ a fencing master and a professor of philosophy to teach him the skills necessary for life in society. His music and dance masters assure him that dance and music are all that he needs, because in these two arts is hidden all the secrets of the world.

**Mr. Jourdain:** I will learn it, then; but I hardly know how I shall find time for it; for, besides the fencing master who teaches me, I have engaged a professor of philosophy, who is to begin this morning.

**Music Master:** Philosophy is something, no doubt; but music, Sir, music. ...

**Dancing Master:** Music and dancing, Sir; in music and dancing we have all that we need.

**Music Master:** There is nothing so useful in a state as music.

**Dancing Master:** There is nothing so necessary to men as dancing.

**Music Master:** Without music no kingdom can exist.

**Dancing Master:** Without dancing a man can do nothing.

**Music Master:** All the disorders, all the wars that happen in the world, are caused by nothing but the want of music.

**Dancing Master:** All the sorrows and troubles of mankind, all the fatal misfortunes which fill the pages of history, the blunders of statesmen, the failures of great captains, all these come from the want of a knowledge of dancing.

**Mr. Jourdain:** How is that?

**Music Master:** Does not war arise from a want of concord between them?

**Mr. Jourdain:** True.

**Music Master:** And if all men learnt music, would not this be the means of keeping them in better harmony, and of seeing universal peace reign in the world?

**Mr. Jourdain:** You are quite right.

**Dancing Master:** When a man has committed some fault, either in the management of his family affairs, or in the government of a state, or in the command of an army, do we not say, "So-and-so has made a false step in such an affair"?

**Mr. Jourdain:** Yes, we do say so.

**Dancing Master:** And from whence can proceed the false step if it is not from ignorance of the art of dancing?

**Mr. Jourdain:** This is true, and you are both right.

**Dancing Master:** This will give you an idea of the excellence and importance of dancing and music.

**Mr. Jourdain:** I understand it now.

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**SOURCE:** Molière, *The Shopkeeper Turned Gentleman*, Act I, Scene II, in *The Dramatic Works of Molière*. Trans. Charles Wall (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1900–1901).

where through the circulation of manuscripts and printed dance notations.

**NOTATIONAL SYSTEMS.** The first dance notational systems to provide diagrams of how specific dances were to be performed appeared in France around 1700. In 1697 André Lorin published his *Book of Country Dances Presented to the King*, a work that helped to feed the popularity of the English country dance among the French aristocracy. In it, he included a series of sketches that showed precisely how the country dances' figures were to be performed. At around the same time Raoul-Auger Feuillet developed a slightly different system that pro-

vided for a greater specificity of detail. His notation, in other words, showed how dancers were to place their arms and feet and how the specific movements corresponded to the music. Like Lorin, Feuillet deployed his method in printed works that codified country dances. At the same time, his notational system seems to have been readily adopted at the Paris Opera, since a number of dances survive from this era that were set down using his system. These dances combined many different steps in elaborate patterns, although at this time, the men and women who danced these steps usually did so in unison. The energetic leaps and bounds typical of the





Engraving of French ballet performers. MARY EVANS/EXPLORER/DEVAUX.

contemporary ballet were largely impossible in this early era of the art's development. Heavy costumes, heeled shoes, masks, and other paraphernalia limited the movements of dancers. Dancing on toe-point, a readily recognizable attribute of the modern ballet, was largely impossible, although some steps were performed on partial toes. Instead the emphasis in the theatrical ballets was on elaborate and ornate patterned movements. These dances were often quite difficult for men and women performers alike, but the greatest demonstrations of technical proficiency were usually reserved for the solo dances of male, rather than female, performers.

**BALLET AS AN ACCOMPANIMENT TO OPERA.** The operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully dominated the musical life of late seventeenth-century Paris and of the royal court at Versailles. Lully had a long history of using dance in his musical productions. During the 1660s he cooperated with France's great comic playwright, Molière, to produce a series of "comedy-ballets" in which dances were interspersed between the spoken scenes of the drama. The last and greatest of these was *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, which was produced in 1670. His greatest achievements, though, were in the production of operas

known as *tragédies en musique*, or lyric tragedies. These works became especially popular with the king in the later years of Louis XIV's reign, as he adopted a new serious moral tone. Between 1673 and his death in 1687, Lully composed thirteen of these tragic operas, all of which show careful attention to the integration of dance into the drama's action. He apparently worked quite closely with his librettist, Phillippe Quinault, to ensure that dance was an accompaniment and enhancement to the sung drama. Although dance was still considered a *divertissement*, a diversion to the main plot of his operas, Lully's operas were long remembered after his death as a particularly "French" art form, in part because of their persistent attempts to integrate dance, poetry, music, and singing into a greater whole. Even in the eighteenth century great choreographers anxious to develop the ballet as an independent medium looked to the operas of Lully for support in their efforts, and French writers treating aesthetics were also quick to point to the composer's art as an expression of the country's genius. Still, the connection between dance and drama upon which he relied was largely implicit, and was consonant with much of the artistic theory of his time. In the works of artistic theoreticians of the late seventeenth century, dance was

extolled for its ability to represent through mimed gestures what might have been represented in words. There was little sympathy, in other words, for the views that were to develop later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that dancing's representation might in certain situations *exceed* by virtue of its appeal to the emotions and senses the power of spoken words.

**BALLET IN OPERA AFTER LULLY.** Lully's example in the operatic world remained influential long after his death in 1687, although changes began to occur soon after that time in the use of dance within the opera house. By the end of the century Houdar de Lamotte and André Campra had created a new kind of performance known as the opera-ballet that granted a greater importance to dance. In these productions singing still conveyed the essentials of the story line, although the role of dancing was expanded beyond a mere diversion and brought into the central flow of the opera's story line. Many new production experiments occurred in Paris around this time, producing works that were termed "heroic ballets" or "ballet comedies," all of which expanded the roles given to dancers. Thus dance escaped the longstanding role that it had played in the *divertissements* between scenes and acts, and mixed with the action of the drama proper. One of the most popular examples of this new style of production was André Campra's *The Venetian Feast* (*Les fêtes vénétiennes*) of 1710, a work that was frequently revived in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Like most of the new operas produced around this time, *The Venetian Feast* had several self-contained acts that were grouped around a central theme, in this case the foibles and complications of love. Dancers entered into the action by playing the roles of gypsies, clowns, gamblers, and gondoliers in the exotic setting of the city of the lagoons. Like most operas of this kind, the singing conveyed the drama, but dancers took a greatly expanded role. This was also the case in the many tragedies that were produced during the early eighteenth century. Lully's tragic works had by this time become an esteemed part of the French operatic canon. His operas were continually revived in the eighteenth century, but their productions were packed over time with more and more ballets. Other composers created music for these dances, or music was adapted from other Lully compositions. These pieces accompanied the numerous new dance interludes that were injected into these venerable operas. The steadily increasing role that dance played in these operas contributed to the expansion of the Opera's troupe in the first half of the century. While the troupe had consisted of about twenty men and women in 1700, its ranks had risen to more than thirty by 1738 and to 42 in 1750.

**DANCE MOVES TOWARD DRAMA.** As dance became an important force within the opera, a tension soon developed between the demands of technical brilliance and dramatic representation. In a private performance staged for aristocrats in 1714, two accomplished dancers from the Paris Opera first performed the concluding scene of a tragedy by Corneille completely in pantomime. In France, this experiment was not imitated for many years, although developments underway in England staged by the accomplished dance master and teacher John Weaver eventually influenced French ballet as well as dance troupes elsewhere in Europe. In 1703 Weaver produced a short dance work, *The Tavern Billk-ers*, entirely in pantomime. He continued these experiments in dramatic dance, staging a pantomime ballet in 1717 at the Drury Lane theater near Covent Garden entitled *The Loves of Mars, Venus, and Vulcan*. Until Enlightenment sensibilities began to transform the French theater in the mid-eighteenth century, however, these innovations were not immediately imitated in France. In the operas of the composer Jean-Philippe Rameau, Lully's successor as the dean of French music in the early eighteenth century, *divertissement* dances did sometimes take on a more complete role as miniature dramas within the structure of an opera. Rameau's 1736 opera *The Gallant Indies* (*Les indes galantes*) included a concluding *divertissement* that was actually a small, completely self-contained ballet, consisting of its own narrative that was conveyed through the use of dance and pantomime. Rameau's willingness to grant dance a greater role in some of his operatic productions seems, in part, to have derived from his partnership with Louis de Cahusac, the librettist he used for several of his operas. In 1754, Cahusac published a work on the history and theory of dance that aimed to promote the art's ability to express a greater range of emotions. Although Rameau was open to the greater integration of dance into his operatic narratives, most of the uses to which he deployed dance in his production still remained within the conservative mold of the Opera at the time. He did not, in other words, rely on dance to convey central details of plot or story line.

**PROFESSIONAL DANCE ELSEWHERE IN PARIS.** More imaginative and theatrical uses of dance to depict narratives occurred at other theaters in the city of Paris during the early eighteenth century. The Opéra-Comique (literally "Comic Opera"), a Parisian company formed of vaudevillian entertainers in 1714, performed pantomime ballets as early as the 1720s. Catering to a popular rather than elite audience, the origins of the "comic operas" this company produced lay in the *com-media dell'arte*, fair entertainments, and other forms of

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ATHLETICS, NOT DANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The system of training athletic dancers who were virtuosi of their craft was very much alive at the Paris Opera in 1750. While the many ballets staged and interwoven through operas at the time had great appeal to many in the audience, they were attacked by Enlightenment *philosophes*. In an entry he wrote for the *Encyclopédie* Baron Grimm likened the contemporary practice of ballet within the Opera to a school in which mediocre students of athletics performed their moves in front of a crowd.

The best dancers, however, are reserved to show off as soloists of pas de deux; for important moments, they form pas de trois, quatre or cinq or six, after which the corps du ballet had stopped moving in order to make way for the masters to regroup, and finish the ballet. For all of these different divertissements, the composer furnishes chaconnes, loures, sarabands, minuets, passepieds, gavottes, rigaudons and contradances. If once in a while there is a moment of action, or a dramatic idea, it is a pas de deux or trois that executes it and then the corps du ballet immediately begins its insipid dances. The only real difference between one ballet and another is the way the tailor costumes the ballet, whether it be in yellow, white, green, red, following the principles and etiquette of fashion. Thus the ballet in French opera is only an academy of dance, where in public view, mediocre people exercise, make figures break apart and reform into groups and where the great dancers show us their most difficult moves by making noble, gracious and wise positions or poses.

**SOURCE:** Baron Grimm, "Poème Lyrique," *Encyclopédie*, in *Dance in the Shadow of the Guillotine*. Trans. Judith Chazin-Bennahum (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988): 16.

street theater that had been widely enjoyed throughout Europe since the Renaissance. Not all the productions that this troupe performed were comedies by any means, but the forms of drama, dancing, and music that the group cultivated had a broader appeal than the classically-inspired tragedies performed at the Opera at the same time. Another similar group active around the same time, the Comédie-Italienne, produced more than fifty pantomime ballets from 1738 until it merged with the Opéra-Comique in 1757.

**IMPLICATIONS.** During the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries a greater range of ballet forms began to appear in connection with the performance of operas in Paris. New notational systems as well as the codification of ballet positions provided the foundation upon which ballet developed as an art form performed by professional dancers. The center of much of this transformation lay in the Royal Academy of Music, the institution that fondly became known in Parisian aristocratic and upper-class societies as the Opera. While the Opera granted dance a new importance as a diversionary entertainment within musical dramas, it proved resistant to the development of completely independent forms of ballet. The limits of the Opera's championship of dance as an art form able to convey narrative drama were demonstrated in its revivals of the popular operas of Lully as well as the productions of Rameau in the early and mid-eighteenth century. At the same time new forms of narrative pantomime ballet flourished in more popular venues in the city. These more popular forms told a story, and eventually the tendency to narrate an event or incident combined with the steps and techniques used in the more refined opera ballet to provide the foundation around which the modern ballet was to coalesce.

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**THE BALLET ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE**

**ITALY.** Dance was a vital component in the operas produced in Italy in the seventeenth century. In Venice, the home of Italy's first professional opera house, professional productions featured dance from the mid-seventeenth century on. The relationship between these ballets and the plot of the opera was usually loose, however, with composers and librettists devoting far less attention to creating situations in their works in which dances might arise out of the plot. The typical Venetian opera of the seventeenth century featured three acts, and dances were usually concentrated at the end of the first

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***OF MIMES AND PANTOMIMES**

**INTRODUCTION:** The English dance master John Weaver envisioned the revival of ancient pantomime as a way to reinvigorate the eighteenth-century ballet. In his *Essay towards an History of Dancing* (1712) he treated the subject of the pantomime, outlining its adaptability to modern dance.

After the Romans, by the introduction of the Asiatic luxury with the conquest of that country, had sunk into effeminacy and lost all the manly taste of the great arts as well as arms, the stage (which too often in its ruin has forerun that of the country) sunk into ridiculous representations, so that the poet's part grew the least considerable of it. The pompous passage of a Triumph, rope dance, and twenty other foolish amusements, carried away the people's affections and took up the representation, so that the admirable effects of tragedy and the agreeable diversions of comedy were lost in noise and show. Then arose a new set of men called mimes and pantomimes to restore that imitation without words which was lost among them. The stupidity of the people was not moved with the conception that in a manner confounds credibility, yet the testimonies of eyewitnesses are too strong to suffer us to doubt of the matter of fact, but the accounts are so strange, that they almost exceed the belief of our times, where nothing like it is performed by any of our French pretenders to dancing. Nay, even some of our best actors are so little acquainted with this mimicry, or imitation, that they appear insipid and dull to any spectator who has any notion of the characters which they represent.

The mimes and pantomimes, though dancers, had their names from acting, that is, from imitation; copying

all the force of the passions merely by the motions of the body to that degree as to draw tears from the audience at their representations. It is true that with the Dancing, the music sung a sort of opera's or songs on the same subject, which the dancer performed, yet what was chiefly minded, and carried away the esteem and applause of the audience, was the action of the pantomimes when they performed without the help of music, vocal or instrumental.

The actions and gestures of these mimes and pantomimes, though adapted to the pleasure of the spectator, were never thought a general qualification fit for persons of quality, or gentlemen, from thence to derive a graceful motion, mien, or handsome assurance in conversation. It is true that many of the Roman young nobility were very fond of them and attempted to learn their art till there was a law made that no pantomime should enter a patrician's house. It is likewise true that Augustus Caesar gave Laberus, though a mimick, a golden ring, which used to be the honorary present of soldiers that had served their country in the war, as we gather from Pliny and others ...

The pantomimes, as I said before, were imitators of all things, as the name imports, and performed all by gesture, and the action of hands, legs, and feet, without making use of the tongue in uttering their thoughts, and in this performance the hands and fingers were much made use of, and expressed perhaps a large share of the performance. Aristotle says that they imitated by number alone without harmony, for they imitated the manners, passions and actions by the numerous variety of gesticulation.

**SOURCE:** John Weaver, *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1712): 118–121. Text modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

and second of these divisions. A key figure in shaping the character of these dances in Venice was Giovanni Battista Balbi, an impresario (much like a modern producer) who designed productions in Venice and choreographed their dances between 1636 and 1657. Balbi played a key role in the spread of Italian opera throughout Europe. Anne of Austria, the mother of King Louis XIV, summoned him to Paris in the 1640s, where he staged several productions that had a great impact on French ballet and opera. In the dances that he staged at Venice, he gave certain kinds of roles to dancers to perform. Many Italian operas of the time adopted pastoral themes, meaning that a procession of forest nymphs and shepherds frequently appeared on the stage—roles that

dancers might easily perform. Balbi's productions, in particular, made use of exotic characters and even incorporated live animals into their fanciful productions. He also staged fantastic dream sequences as dances as well. Other roles commonly given to dancers in Balbi's time included demons and soldiers. While tragedy dominated many of the Paris Opera's productions, comedy played a greater role in Italian opera. Many roles for clowns, buffoons, and jesters were worked into productions—roles that were also ideal for dancers. As a new art form, the opera in Italy underwent rapid development in the course of the seventeenth century. While dances and ballets frequently peppered many of the productions of the mid- and late-seventeenth century, the

reforms fostered by the Arcadian Academy at Rome after 1695 tended to relegate dancing more and more to the intervals between acts. The Arcadian theorists wanted to eliminate much of the comic buffoonery that existed in the Italian operas of their day, and instead introduce serious or pastoral themes that treated Arcadian figures and heroes, in imitation of the earliest operas that had been performed around 1600. Under the influence of these reforms, ballet began to be used in many Italian operas at the turn of the eighteenth century like a French *divertissement*. Dances, in other words, became diversionary entertainments staged between the scenes of the opera. Few documentary sources survive from the Italian theaters of the seventeenth century. Unlike France where systems of notation developed to record the precise steps used in dances, Italian choreographers did not develop a system to set down their creations. Scattered accounts of dances are all that survive to provide us with a glimpse of many of the Italian opera's ballets. These suggest that the ballet in Italy was a vehicle for demonstrating greater gymnastic ability and athletic prowess than in the relatively refined forms that flourished in Paris at the same time.

**ENGLAND.** The Restoration of the Stuart Monarchy in England in 1660 played a vital role in the history of dance in that country. Charles II (r. 1660–1685) was a great lover of the theater, and a steady stream of French dancers, theatrical producers, and choreographers traveled to England in search of employment in the wake of his return to the throne. One of these was Robert Cambert, a French composer who is often credited as being one of the “fathers” of French opera. Cambert came to England in 1673 to serve as music master in the household of Louise de Queroualle, a French noblewoman who was also the Duchess of Portsmouth. Louis XIV had arranged his appointment there, and at the time the Duchess was the Stuart king Charles II's favorite mistress. Cambert established a Royal Academy of Music similar to the French institution that was just beginning to take shape in Paris at the time, but the fledgling institution soon failed. England, in contrast to France and many other European countries, remained without a royal opera house until the twentieth century, though operas were frequently staged in the many professional theaters there. Cambert's work in England—especially his staging of two of his operas, *Ariane* and *Pomone*—helped to establish a taste for French opera in the country as well as for French dancing. Several other imported entertainments followed as well. During the last quarter of the century French ballet thus came to mix with native traditions in England, especially with the tradition

of the masque. The result produced a new short-lived genre known as “semi-opera,” the most famous of which was Henry Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* of 1692. These productions made use of the ballet practices common to the French operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully, while drawing on traditions of production that had been common in the Stuart Masques and other theatricals. Even as opera began to flourish as a site for ballet in England, dancing acquired a greater role in the professional theater of the period as diversionary entertainments between the acts of drama. The presence of a number of prominent, professional English dancers in London around 1700 reveals the rising appetite of Britons for professional ballets of a type similar to those that were already flourishing in France and Italy. Among these figures, the choreographer and dancer John Weaver was the most prominent. Weaver translated Feuillet's *Chorégraphie*, publishing it as *Orchesography* in 1706. His work in this vein did a great deal to establish Feuillet's system of notation in England and to spread patterns of French ballet in the country. Hester Santlow Booth, one of the first female professional dancers in England, was also a fixture of the theatrical life of the period. She debuted at the Drury Lane Theater near Covent Garden in 1706, and until her retirement in 1733 she continued to dance in many theatrical productions, particularly those choreographed by John Weaver.

**ELSEWHERE IN NORTHERN EUROPE.** The popularity of French and Italian forms of dancing spread to many other parts of Central and Northern Europe in the later years of the seventeenth century. After suffering great devastation during the Thirty Years' War, Central Europe's theatrical and musical traditions began to revive in the later seventeenth century. At Hamburg, Germany's first public opera house was opened in 1678, and a little more than a decade later, in 1689, Lully's *Acis and Galatée* was staged there. The fashion for the French-style ballet soon developed in the town's productions, and the choreographers at work there derived much of their inspiration from Lully's uses of dance. Austria was the second great center of opera production in seventeenth-century Central Europe. The Habsburg Emperor Leopold I first began to support the production of these “musical dramas” as early as the 1650s, staging a number of Italian productions at his court in Vienna, while in mountainous Innsbruck, a Venetian-styled opera house was first constructed in 1654, the first such theater to exist north of the Alps. Under Habsburg patronage, the opera flourished for a time in both towns, although Vienna's dominance in the Austrian operatic world emerged largely as a result of Habsburg patronage. Similar court operas de-

veloped around this time in Munich, Dresden, and Hannover, while in Scandinavia, Stockholm became home to a vigorous tradition of opera and ballet performance.

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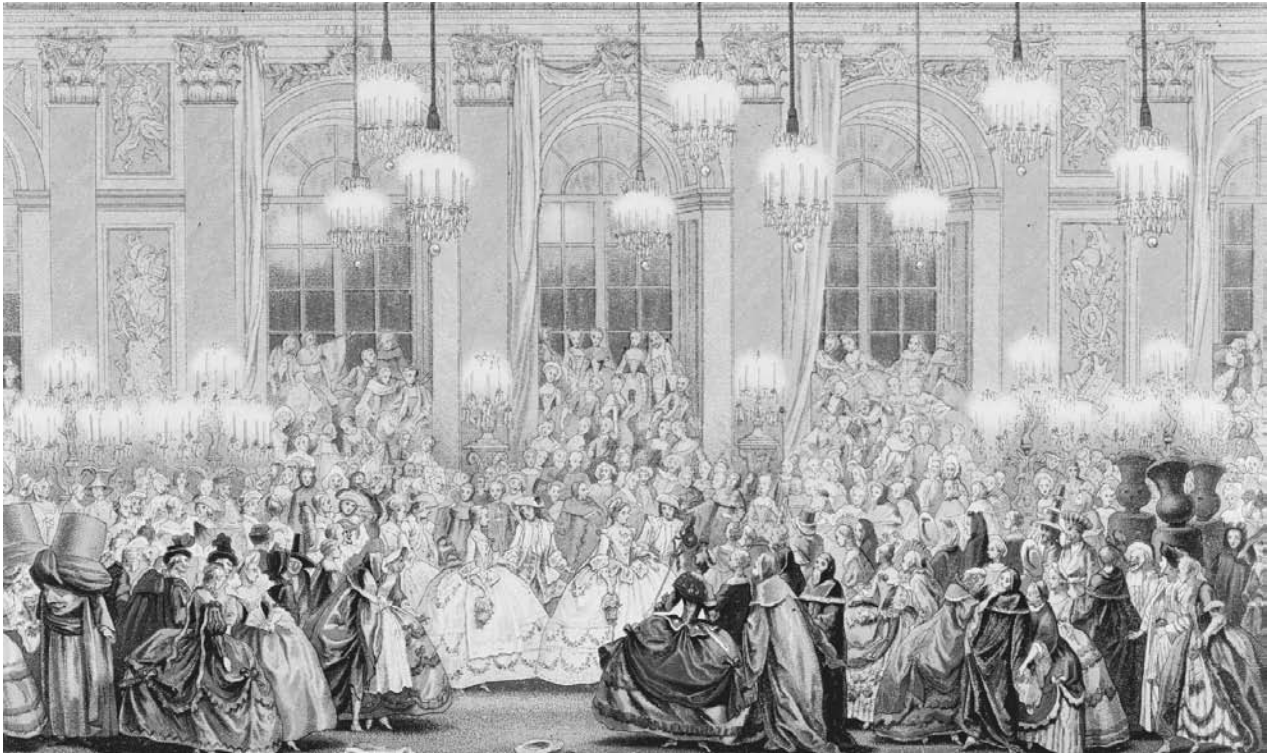
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### SOCIAL DANCE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

**FRENCH DOMINANCE.** At the beginning of the eighteenth century French patterns of social dances remained common in the courts and elite societies of continental Europe. The stately minuet was the dominant couple's dance practiced at this time; its measured and careful use of the body was believed to reflect one's grace and deportment. At the same time, the straightforward patterns of French *contredanses* or "country dances" also had a general appeal throughout cultivated circles. Knowledge of these dances had spread quickly throughout Europe in the later seventeenth century through the publication of dance manuals, as well as the adoption of Feuillet's system of notation for dances. Dance also remained a vital social skill, practiced by nobles and the wealthy throughout the continent. As the eighteenth century progressed, though, a rising standard of living and increased numbers of leisure hours for many in Europe's burgeoning cities meant that middling ranks of people began to learn the steps that previously had been confined to elite circles. Dance halls began to appear in Europe's cities, while theaters and opera houses held "masked balls" as popular forms of entertainment. The general popularity of dancing can also be seen by the rise of many forms of classical music in the period that were closely modeled on the dances of the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries. The eighteenth century saw spread of the practice of subscription concerts, paid performances to which middle- and upper-class men and women bought advance tickets. In the symphonies, string quartets, concertos, and other compositions that were played at these events dance rhythms and music figured prominently. In the typical Viennese symphony that appeared at this time, exemplified in the great works of figures like Franz Josef Haydn or Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the minuet appeared as the third movement, while *rondos*, another popular form of dance music at the time, frequently figured prominently in many works' concluding movements. Dance's influence thus pervaded many other cultural spheres outside the European ballroom.

**NEW FORMS.** As the century progressed, new kinds of dances became popular throughout Europe. The popularity of the contredanse continued everywhere and evolved into altered and more complex forms. Originally English in origin, the contredanse had been transformed in the second half of the seventeenth century by its widespread acceptance in French aristocratic society. Like many French cultural products, its new, more refined features spread back to England as well as into central and southern Europe. In Austria and Germany, it was embraced enthusiastically, and many new variant forms developed. By the second half of the seventeenth century, for example, the *contredanse allemande* or "German country dance" had become the rage in Paris, its popularity spread, in part, by the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). During this conflict, the dance manual writers of the period noted, French troops had become familiar with the German forms, which included difficult patterns of hand holding and under-the-arm passes. The new form thus came to France's capital where it was enthusiastically adopted. Another force that helped to popularize the *contredanse allemande* was the marriage of Marie-Antoinette to Louis XVI. The country dances of Austria thus came to be danced at Versailles and in other aristocratic circles as a homage to Marie-Antoinette's native country. Most of the contredanses were written in double meter (that is, 2/4, 4/4, or 6/8 time). Toward the middle of the eighteenth century, though, three new dances spread quickly throughout Europe that were set to triple meter (3/4 time). The three were known as the *Dreher*, *Schleifer*, and *Ländler*, and were all of southern German and Austrian origins. In contrast to the stately dances that had developed as a result of the spread of French courtly practices, these new forms were rapid dances in which couples whirled about each other. The *Ländler*, for example, was increasingly known after 1780 by a new name, the *Waltzer*, the German word for



A masked ball at the Palace of Versailles around 1720. THE ART ARCHIVE.



Engraving of a May Ball held at the Palace of Versailles in 1762. THE ART ARCHIVE/BIBLIOTHÈQUE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***HIJINKS AT A BALL**

**INTRODUCTION:** The great eighteenth-century lover Giacomo Casanova (1725–1798) began his life as a cleric, but was soon expelled from his monastery for his lewd conduct. The following excerpt from his journals shows the revelry that often occurred at balls. Masquerading was a common custom of the time, and men and women sometimes wore each other's clothing as an amusement. In trying to switch clothes with the young Juliette, Casanova hoped he might obtain her sexual favors. He was disappointed, but the event only caused him to refine his dance and seductive techniques in the period after his rebuff.

While the after-supper minuets were being danced Juliette took me apart, and said, "Take me to your bedroom; I have just got an amusing idea."

My room was on the third story; I shewed her the way. The moment we entered she bolted the door, much to my surprise. "I wish you," she said, "to dress me up in your ecclesiastical clothes, and I will disguise you as a woman with my own things. We will go down and dance together. Come, let us first dress our hair."

Feeling sure of something pleasant to come, and delighted with such an unusual adventure, I lose no time in arranging her hair, and I let her afterwards dress mine. She applies rouge and a few beauty spots to my face; I humour her in everything, and to prove her satisfaction, she gives me with the best of grace a very loving kiss, on condition that I do not ask for anything else. ...

I place upon my bed a shirt, an abbé's neckband, a pair of drawers, black silk stockings—in fact, a complete fit-out. Coming near the bed, Juliette drops her skirt, and cleverly gets into the drawers, which were not a bad fit, but when she comes to the breeches there is some difficulty; the waistband is too narrow, and the only remedy is to rip it behind or to cut it, if necessary. I undertake to make everything right, and, as I sit on the foot of my bed, she places herself in front of me, with her back towards me. I begin my work, but she thinks that I want to

see too much, that I am not skilful enough, and that my fingers wander in unnecessary places; she gets fidgety, leaves me, tears the breeches, and manages in her own way. Then I help her to put her shoes on, and I pass the shirt over her head, but as I am disposing the ruffle and the neck-band, she complains of my hands being too curious; and in truth, her bosom was rather scanty. She calls me a knave and rascal, but I take no notice of her. ...

Our disguise being complete, we went together to the dancing-hall, where the enthusiastic applause of the guests soon restored our good temper. Everybody gave me credit for a piece of fortune which I had not enjoyed, but I was not ill-pleased with the rumour, and went on dancing with the false abbé, who was only too charming. Juliette treated me so well during the night that I construed her manners towards me into some sort of repentance, and I almost regretted what had taken place between us; it was a momentary weakness for which I was sorely punished.

At the end of the quadrille all the men thought they had a right to take liberties with the abbé, and I became myself rather free with the young girls, who would have been afraid of exposing themselves to ridicule had they offered any opposition to my caresses.

M. Querini was foolish enough to enquire from me whether I had kept on my breeches, and as I answered that I had been compelled to lend them to Juliette, he looked very unhappy, sat down in a corner of the room, and refused to dance.

Every one of the guests soon remarked that I had on a woman's chemise, and nobody entertained a doubt of the sacrifice having been consummated, with the exception of Nanette and Marton, who could not imagine the possibility of my being unfaithful to them. Juliette perceived that she had been guilty of great imprudence, but it was too late to remedy the evil.

**SOURCE:** Giacomo Casanova, *The Complete Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, 1725–1798*. Vol. 1. Trans. Arthur Machen (1894; reprint, New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1959): 124–127.

turning around or twirling. The medical wisdom of the later eighteenth century rejected such dances as unhealthy since they might cause dizziness and disorientation, and moralists, too, decried these fashions as suspect. Yet the popularity of these straightforward, energetic forms persisted, and by the end of the century the waltz, as it had now become known, had emerged as a popular dance almost everywhere in Europe.

**OTHER FORMS.** While many common dances were performed in Europe's cities and aristocratic courts, regional dances continued to play an important role in the social life of many areas. In Central and Eastern Europe, the *polonaise* was a processional dance of Polish origin. By the mid-eighteenth century it was danced throughout the German-speaking world as well. Another Polish dance, the *mazurka*, was just beginning to spread



through Central Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. In Austria and Hungary, the *verbunko*, a dance of gypsy origin, came to be performed in the region's cities after 1765. In Spain, two new dances—the *fandango* and *seguidilla*—gained popularity before spreading to other European regions. At the same time, composers of the eighteenth century frequently inserted Turkish-styled dances into their operas. Both the choreographies and music for these pieces were widely Europeanized, although certain steps marked them as exotic. Few social dances seem to survive that made use of this idiom, and the Turkish style seems to have flourished more in the theater than in the ballroom.

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## THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND BALLET

**PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS.** The movement known as the Enlightenment had an ever-deepening effect on theatrical dance during the course of the eighteenth century. Throughout the eighteenth century the thinkers of this broad, international movement argued that ancient superstitions and outmoded customs should be eliminated, and that reason should play a major role in reforming society. Their works were particularly important for all forms of literature and theater at the time because in France the leaders of the movement known as *philosophes* devoted special attention to the arts. In 1751, one of the greatest Enlightenment projects, the publication of the *Encyclopédie*, began in Paris. This project was directed by the philosophes Denis Diderot (1713–1784) and Jean le Rond d'Alibert (1717–1783). The two commissioned other like-minded progressive social figures to write the 72,000 entries contained in their project. Although the work was not completed for more than twenty years, its 28 volumes were released as they were compiled, and many of the subjects treated in it touched upon themes in music, dance, and the theater. With articles by such luminaries as Voltaire, Rousseau, and many other French philosophes, the *Encyclopédie* profoundly influenced the ideas and tastes of educated French men and women in the second half of the eighteenth century. In their entries on dance and ballet as well as those on the theater generally, the philosophes supported the development of art forms that gave meaningful expression to hu-

### a PRIMARY SOURCE document

#### CRITICISM OF DANCE

**INTRODUCTION:** In France the Enlightenment thinkers criticized the conventions of the ballet of their time. The *philosophes* who shaped public opinion argued that the dances that were practiced in the opera ballets of the day did not serve to further the plot, but were instead mere gymnastics inserted to demonstrate the prowess of certain dancers. These sentiments were circulated widely in France and Europe through the publication of the *Encyclopédie*, a massive compendium of Enlightenment thinking that commenced publication in 1751. Diderot was one of the editors of this project, and a few years after it began, he himself criticized contemporary ballet in a play he wrote entitled *The Natural Son*. In the Introduction to the printed version he made this lament about the dance of his day.

The dance? The dance still awaits a man of genius; because one seldom finds it used as a genre of imitation, the dance one sees is terrible everywhere. The dance should be to pantomime as poetry is to prose, or more precisely as natural speech is to song. It is a measured pantomime.

I would like someone to tell me what all these dances performed today represent—the minuet, the passe-pied, the rigaudon, the allemande, the sara-bande—where one follows a traced path. This dancer performs with an infinite grace; I see in each movement his facility, his grace, and his nobility, but what does he imitate? This is not the art of song, but the art of jumping.

A dance is a poem. This poem must have its own way of representing itself. It is an imitation presented in movements, that depends upon the cooperation of the poet, the painter, the composer, and the art of pantomime. The dance has its own subject which can be divided into acts and scenes. Each scene has a recitative improvised or obligatory, and its ariette.

**SOURCE:** Denis Diderot, "Entretiens sur 'Le Fils Naturel,'" in *Diderot's Writings on Theatre*. Ed. F. C. Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936): 97–98. Translated and reprinted in Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreography and Narrative. Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1996): 17–18.

man thoughts, ideas, and feelings, and they disregarded merely decorative or ornamental forms of art. The aesthetic ideas of their movement generally advocated greater

naturalism in place of the contrived sophistication and majesty that had been such an important feature of Baroque aesthetics. The ideas of Enlightenment thinkers came to fruition in the second half of the eighteenth century in the emergence of new forms of ballet that attempted to convey meaning, drama, and the human emotions, eventually giving birth to a new genre known as the *ballet d'action*, a dance containing an entire integrated story line. The rise of the new form soon met resistance, although Enlightenment arbiters of tastes like the philosophes weighed in mightily on the side of these new art forms. In his play *Le fils naturel* (*The Natural Son*) (1756), the philosophe Diderot had decried the current state of ballet in his country, a state he argued derived from the inability of dancers to understand that theirs was an imitative, and not merely decorative, art. Dance, he observed, should play a role similar to poetry as an art form that heightened the expression of the human emotions. To do so, Diderot and other Enlighteners argued it should adopt the techniques of traditional pantomime and jettison the elaborate trappings customary in the Baroque theater. By the 1770s the taste of Europe's urban audiences shifted in favor of this position, and new danced dramas became a fixture in many European capitals.

**NEW DIRECTIONS.** At the same time, powerful changes were also underway in the day-to-day world of the ballet. As the art form achieved a new maturity, great new stars emerged whose careers and performances were avidly followed by the audiences of the day. As a result the quickly developing art form also began to acquire a greater independence from its long tutelage to opera. A new technical finesse emerged among the dancers of the eighteenth century, a development that was often at odds with the Enlightenment's advocacy of greater naturalism and sophisticated uses of drama. These competing demands—brilliance in execution and dramatic representation—often warred against each other, and the greatest French ballet performers and choreographers of the period sometimes left Paris in search of environments that were more amenable to their own artistic ideas. In this way the innovations and achievements of the French theater in the realm of dance came to be established in many of the opera houses of Europe.

**RISE OF BALLET STARS.** The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries had produced a number of notable dancers, but their careers and reputations were soon eclipsed by many new stars. Louis Dupré (1697–1774), a dancer who first debuted at the Paris Opera in 1714, continued to perform there until his sixties. In 1743, he became director of the Opera's school, and in this position he trained many of the great dancers



Portrait of the ballerina Marie Sallé. THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

of the later eighteenth century. Dupré was responsible for expanding the virtuosity of performance, and his gracefulness and physique were widely admired. Two ballerinas of the period, Marie-Anne Cupis de Camargo (1710–1770; Paris Opera debut 1726) and Marie Sallé (1707–1756; Paris Opera debut 1727) were noteworthy for expanding the repertoire of steps and leaps practiced by women and for reforming the conventions that governed female performance. Camargo was apparently the first ballerina to practice two leaps, the *pas battu* and the *entrechat*, previously reserved for men, an achievement that caused the philosophe Voltaire to observe that she was the “first woman to dance like a man.” She was also the first woman ballerina to dance in slippers rather than heeled shoes, and she shortened the length of her skirt so that she could perform more difficult steps. Such departures earned Camargo both censure and adulation, although the path that she blazed was one that many prima ballerinas followed in the next decades. In contrast to Camargo's athleticism, Marie Sallé's dancing was noteworthy for its great subtlety and refinement. She, too, was something of a reformer and a renegade, however, and her agility engendered jealousy in the Paris Ballet. Although she was a student at the Paris Opera



Portrait of the ballerina Marie Camargo. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE DES BEAUX ARTS NANTES/DAGLI ORTI.

for a number of years, she did not make her debut as a star until she was twenty. In the intervening years, she divided her time between performing in London and Paris, first appearing in the English capital in a performance of *Love's Last Shift* in 1725. The performance that she staged there in 1734 of *Pygmalion* was also notable for its revolutionary costuming and great naturalness. Sallé discarded the cumbersome costumes and masks that ballerinas had worn to this point, and instead appeared with her hair let down and in a simple muslin shift. The performance was recognized for its innovative appeal from the start, and her production of *Pygmalion* ran for several months. Sallé's learning, ingenuity, and intellect also distinguished her among the dancers of her day; she was one of the first great ballerinas to associate with men and women of letters. In this way her own art and that of ballet writ large figured as topics discussed in the brilliant French salon culture of the period.

**DIFFERENTIATION OF STYLES.** Like opera, which developed several different kinds of genres that were suitable to performers who specialized in particular kinds of roles, ballet's dance styles became increasingly delineated and differentiated in the course of the eighteenth century according to three distinct dancing styles: grotesque or comic, noble or serious, and *demi-caractère* (the counterpart of character roles in acting). While many of the burgeoning caste of professional performers danced all three kinds of roles, some began to specialize in one of these particular forms; as time progressed, the ballet schools in France came to identify dancers for one of these three kinds of genres based upon their physique. Louis Dupré, for instance, was recognized for his great ability in dancing noble roles, although he still performed as other kinds of characters. As the eighteenth century progressed, many more dancers came to specialize in comic, grotesque, or character roles to feed the French

audience's rising appetite for virtuosity and technical brilliance.

**NOVERRE.** Perhaps the most influential performer and choreographer of the entire eighteenth century was Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810), a reformer who was controversial in his own day but who helped to transform the character of ballet in the second half of the eighteenth century. Noverre was born in Paris and trained at the Opera's ballet school under Louis Dupré. In his long life Noverre became an iconoclast, dedicated to destroying what he felt were outmoded and antiquated forms of the ballet. He was also a crusader for a new type of art, helping to create a new genre of dramatic dances known as the *ballet d'action*, works that are similar to the “classical” ballets of the nineteenth century by virtue of their enactment of a story. Noverre, in other words, took up the Enlightenment's call to create new forms of ballet that conveyed greater meaning and emotional depth. While he did not create the genre of *ballet d'action* single-handedly, he was so vital to its development that he has long been accorded the title “Father of the Ballet.” For inspiration, Noverre turned to the pantomime ballets that had been performed in London and Paris with increasing frequency in the first half of the eighteenth century, particularly those of the English dance master John Weaver. The ideas of Louis Cahusac—another advocate for the inclusion of greater drama within ballets—were important, as well. Noverre also admired the many pantomime ballets that had been performed at the Comédie-Italienne in Paris between 1738 and 1756. Noverre fused these elements together in his works, and in a long and varied career he attempted to establish a philosophical underpinning to the *ballet d'action* that was consonant with the Enlightenment's demands for a more meaningful art. He was both a dancer and choreographer, and at times he worked in Paris, London, Stuttgart, Vienna, Milan, and Lyons. While he often produced the typical dance *divertissements* used in operas of the day, his passion was for the *ballet d'action*, the first of which he staged in Lyons in 1751. This work, a pantomime ballet, was not enthusiastically received, and Noverre moved to Stuttgart, a less staid environment, a few years later. At the same time, he published *Letters on Dance*, a work that advocated his dramatic theories and showed the influence of Enlightenment thinking as well. Its widespread circulation established him as the foremost dance theorist of the day and as an important writer more generally on the subject of aesthetics. In the *Letters* Noverre argued that dancers should abandon the elaborate costumes and trappings that hid their expressions from the audience, and that they should become adept, not only



Portrait of Jean-Georges Noverre. BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

at the repertoire of steps that comprised their art, but in the skills of pantomime that might allow them to convey the human emotions and to tell a story. In the early 1760s he brought these ideas to bear while at the Paris Opera, but they were resisted, and Noverre left again for more congenial appointments elsewhere in Europe. Over time, his call for a more naturalistic art that was able to convey drama and emotional content was heard in the French capital as it was in many places during the second half of the eighteenth century. In Paris, the Opera's ballet eventually adopted principles more closely akin to those of Noverre, and in 1776, he was recalled there to choreograph productions once again.

**VIENNA.** While Paris had long been the cradle of the ballet's development, Noverre's career shows that new centers of dance were emerging as important sites for innovation during the mid- and later eighteenth century. Besides Stuttgart, the site for some of Noverre's most innovative productions, Vienna was also home to a flourishing dance culture in the 1750s and 1760s. At the same time that Noverre was advocating the development of a more meaningful form of ballet, the Italian dancer and choreographer Gasparo Angiolini (1731–1803) was also conducting experiments in *ballets d'action* in Austria. At Vienna, Angiolini staged a number of ballets in the city in partnership with Christoph Willibald von Gluck,

Vienna's then-reigning court composer. In contrast to Noverre's calls for greater naturalism and for an art that was consonant with the emerging philosophies of the Enlightenment, Angiolini intended to revive the dance of Antiquity, hoping to stage complete dramas upon the principles that had been set down by the ancient Greeks. Like Noverre, Angiolini also produced diversionary entertainments to be inserted within operas and dramas, but his true allegiance was to dramatic forms of dance. He staged a number of *ballets d'action* on pastoral and mythological themes. One of his most daring productions was *Don Juan*, a work that provided great dramatic force since it ended with the central character being carried off to the torments of Hell at the ballet's conclusion. In this production Gluck's music suggested the terror that gripped Don Juan at this climactic moment. Gluck was a natural partner for Angiolini's ambitions since he had recently come to produce a series of "reform operas," works that aimed to present a broader range of human emotions and which attempted to integrate musical forms of expression more closely to the texts being sung. In his collaboration with Angiolini, then, Gluck provided music that augmented and heightened the danced pantomimes that conveyed a story. This new sophistication in creating a fusion between music and dancing suggested to the Viennese audience some of the possibilities that lay within the emerging *ballet d'action's* integration of the two art forms. Elsewhere in Europe the music for the new pantomime ballets was usually adopted from pre-existing pieces that did not fit so closely with the choice of dramatic story line, and the results were not always as appealing to audiences. While both Noverre and Angiolini labored to establish the new tenets of the *ballet d'action*, the two shared a number of differences. In contrast to Noverre's difficult and challenging intellectualism, Angiolini's ideas about the new art form were more straightforward and less complex. As a result, the two waged a long and sometimes bitter rivalry, but in tandem their efforts helped establish the new dramatic ballets within many key European dance centers of the day.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: The Enlightenment in France*

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## BALLET IN AN AGE OF REVOLUTION

**DESTRUCTION AND CHANGE.** The onset of Revolution in France in 1789 produced profound changes in the production of all the arts. Both opera and ballet had flourished in Paris in tandem with the Opera, a royal institution that had long been nourished by the court's patronage. As the Revolution approached, bankruptcy loomed as the only way out of an engulfing royal financial crisis. In the first few years of the Revolution the special privileges of the clergy and nobility as well as many of the ancient prerogatives of the monarch were abolished in a series of progressively tightening measures directed at all forms of ancient privilege. At first, a new constitutional monarchy was fashioned, but King Louis XVI's attempt to escape from France with his queen in June of 1791 turned the tide of opinion against such an option, leading to the abolishment of the monarchy and the establishment of a new republican government. As a result of these swiftly moving events, Louis XVI's patronage of the arts at first rapidly diminished as he was forced to cut costs to fit with his dramatically straitened circumstances, and then dried up altogether. As the new republican government moved to establish its control over all elements of the state, a pervasive Reign of Terror ensued in which anyone suspected of monarchical sympathies might fall prey to persecution and execution. Many of the institutions that had long nourished ballet and opera thus faced great trials during the Terror, since their longstanding ties to aristocratic society marked them as bastions of privilege. An older musical and dramatic culture, sustained by aristocratic sensibilities, quickly disappeared in Paris and other French cities, and the political leaders of the Revolution advocated art that might express the democratic principles and revolutionary ideals that lay at the heart of their movement. Such principles were aptly suited to the rising form of the *ballet d'action*, since its narrative dances provided one way of presenting stories that fit neatly with the new revolutionary impulses. While ballet did not disappear as a diversion within the operas of the time, its place as an independent art form became firmly established by the end of the eighteenth century in Paris as the revolutionary government embraced it to defend republicanism.



Engraving of the Summer dance held in the French revolutionary month of Thermidor in the late eighteenth century. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE CARNAVALET PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

**CHANGES IN BALLET.** Despite the monumental changes that were occurring in French society at the time, the Paris Opera continued to flourish in the tumult of Revolution. As aristocrats disappeared from the ranks of its audience, new spectators appeared from among the middle classes. While financial shortfalls were typical at the institution during the early days of Revolution, they subsided somewhat after the city of Paris assumed its control. At first, the ballets and operas staged there continued in much the same pattern as they had over the previous two decades. Many ballets, in other words, were performed that relied on ancient mythological or heroic themes. As the fervor of republican sentiment grew in Paris in the years after 1790 and the Revolution grew more radical, the commune—that is, the city’s own municipal government—demanded that the company stage new revolutionary dance dramas. The Opera’s ballet performers were also enlisted to dance in productions held in other Parisian theaters. During the Reign of Terror between 1792 and 1794, the revolutionary government commissioned many new ballets and dances to mark key events in the Revolution. The establishment of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the execution of King Louis XVI were two events that were celebrated with the staging of elaborate dances. Dance dramas commemorated important events in the Revolution’s history, but they also marked some of the momentous changes that the revolutionary assembly at-

tempted to implement in France. The Worship of the Supreme Being, a state-sanctioned deistic religion opposed to traditional Christianity, became mandatory throughout France in May 1794. Within a month a massive festival was mounted to commemorate the new change, and an elaborate series of dances that involved hundreds of participants was staged in the open air. Dance commemorated the Revolution even as the Paris Commune and the national assembly’s Committee of Public Safety exerted a tightening grip on the kinds of operas, ballets, and plays that were performed in the city. The Committee of Public Safety, for example, decreed that from henceforth no aristocrats should figure as characters in any theatrical productions. In this way art conformed to revolutionary demands, and the Committee dispatched police officials and soldiers to supervise ballet and operatic productions. These years of the Terror were particularly difficult for many artists, especially ballet dancers and opera singers who had long enjoyed the patronage and largesse of the nobility. A number of key French dancers left France during this period, many taking up residence and performing in London at the time. Jean-Georges Noverre, Auguste Vestris, and Jean Dauberval were just a few of the many Parisian dancers who took refuge in England. For those who stayed in France, participation in the new revolutionary ballets, with their story lines that defended liberty and republican government, provided one way of averting the

regime's suspicions and avoiding imprisonment and the guillotine. In the heightened atmosphere of persecution that revolutionary demands produced, there was consequently no shortage of volunteers to dance in the Revolution's ballet spectacles.

**GROWTH OF TROUPES.** Despite fiscal crises and revolutionary upheaval, the ballet flourished in Paris during the years of the Revolution. Old patronage networks that had been supported by the aristocracy had disappeared, but dance's new role as a promoter of republican ideals at festivals guaranteed its lavish support even while the new regime faced chronic shortages of funds and supplies. Elsewhere in Europe, the final decades of the eighteenth century were times of great expansion in ballet troupes as well. In Italy, most major opera houses employed around forty dancers at this time, while in distant Stockholm their ranks numbered around seventy. By 1770, the Paris Opera's own troupe had risen to more than ninety performers, and although the chronic fiscal crisis of the 1780s may have caused these numbers to shrink somewhat, the elaborate spectacles staged with professional dancers from the Opera point to its continuing vitality. By the end of the eighteenth century, the purpose of these urban troupes was in most places twofold; the ballet troupes of the time still performed *divertissements*, entr'actes, and concluding ballets within operas as they had done for almost two centuries, but they also performed pantomime ballets or *ballets d'action*. Ballet's long apprenticeship to opera had not completely ended by the year 1800, but the art form had achieved a striking degree of independence during the course of the previous century. One sign of this new reality, and a harbinger of even greater innovations to come, occurred at the very end of the eighteenth century as the Italian dancer and choreographer Salvatore Vigano instituted drastic reforms in costuming and footwear to the dance troupe at the Venetian Opera. Vigano introduced light and loose-fitting Neoclassical dress, and he required his dancers to wear either sandals or slippers. His emancipation of dancers from much of the elegant trappings in which eighteenth-century aristocratic society had long placed them opened up the way for the striking innovations in dance technique that occurred in the nineteenth century.

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SEE ALSO *Theater: The Rise of Revolutionary Sentiment in France and Its Impact on the Theater*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Dance*

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### GASPARO ANGIOLINI

1731–1803

*Dancer*

*Choreographer*

**BEGINNINGS.** Gasparo Angiolini was born at Florence and began his career as a dancer at Lucca in 1747. Like most of the prominent dancers of his time, he made his debut when he was just a teenager, and his early success brought him soon to Venice, the home of Italy's oldest opera house. He performed there during several seasons, but in his early career he was also associated with the ballets at Spoleto, Turin, and again at Lucca. By his early twenties he had risen through the ranks of these companies and was recognized as a choreographer. After a brief stint in Rome, he made his way to Vienna, where he danced with Maria Teresa Fogliazzi. At the time the notorious eighteenth-century lover Casanova was pursuing Fogliazzi, but Angiolini successfully won her hand in marriage. Following successes in Vienna the two returned to Italy, where they were the lead dancers at Turin. When Franz Hilverding, ballet master of the French theater in Vienna, left to direct the Tsar's ballet in Russia, Angiolini replaced him. Despite several early setbacks, the most productive and creative part of his career soon began in the Austrian capital.

**BALLET D'ACTION.** Angiolini's rise to fame in Vienna coincided with the development of the new genre of dance known as the *ballet d'action*, danced dramas in which performers used gestures and pantomime to convey a story. The first productions that he staged for the Viennese opera were largely traditional diversionary pieces common to the time. In 1761, though, the French theater in Vienna hired an assistant who took over these tasks, and Angiolini was now free to devote himself to the creation of major dance dramas. In two of these, *Don Juan* and *Sémiramis*, the ballet master tried to apply ancient ideas about dance and pantomime. At this early stage in his development as a producer of dance dramas,

Angiolini collaborated with Willibald Christoph von Gluck, the Viennese court composer whose music and operas set new standards for dramatic and expressive powers. Later Angiolini was to write much of the music for his ballets himself, but his early production of *Don Juan*—a theme already highly familiar to the Viennese audience—was noteworthy for its dramatic conclusion. Audiences found the final scene in which Don Juan was carried off to Hell to be a revelation. It showed how dance's power might be combined with music to create a heightened sense of urgency and drama, a sense more profound than in a mere spoken drama. The collaboration with Gluck was a happy one, although Angiolini always preferred his latter ballets in which he had complete control over music, dance, and story line.

**MOVE TO ST. PETERSBURG.** In 1765 the Habsburg emperor died, and a long period of mourning began throughout Austria. Typically during these periods all theaters were closed, and so Angiolini faced a protracted period of unemployment. Around this time his predecessor in Vienna, Hilverding left his position in St. Petersburg, and Angiolini replaced him. His time in Russia saw the creation of new ballets as well as the staging of ones that he had already pioneered in Vienna. After leaving Russia a few years later, he worked in Venice, Padua, and Milan. It was in this last city that Angiolini wrote his *Gasparo Angiolini's Letter to Mr. Noverre Concerning the Ballet Pantomime*, actually a pamphlet that attacked Noverre for his claims of originality in staging *ballets d'action*. Angiolini demonstrated that the artistic genre had been first developed by his own predecessor, Franz Hilverding, at Vienna. Angiolini also criticized Noverre for an insufficient attention to technique as well as a relative ignorance of music. The rivalry proved long lasting, although the two were by this time among the most prominent ballet masters in Europe. In 1774, they swapped posts. Angiolini took Noverre's position at Vienna, and Noverre assumed the Italian's at Milan. Other trips to St. Petersburg followed, where Angiolini staged productions and became involved with the city's developing ballet school. By 1780, though, Angiolini had returned to Milan, and his base of operation remained in the city for the rest of his life.

**HIGH POINT AND RETIREMENT.** Between 1780 and 1782, Angiolini's career achieved its high point while he was at work staging ballets for La Scala, the opera in Milan. By this time the choreographer was composing all of his own music. While he was widely hailed at the time for his compositional powers, the few scattered scores that survive show that Angiolini was a composer with considerable deficits. His lively staging, with elab-

orate machinery and sumptuous costumes, was notable among the many grand productions of the later eighteenth century. The master's importance, though, continues to be recognized in his revival of pantomime techniques and his advocacy of danced dramas. While Angiolini sometimes wrote dance theory, he was not as lively an author as Jean-Georges Noverre, and thus his relative modern obscurity can be credited to his less certain rhetorical powers.

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### MARIE-ANN DE CUPIS DE CAMARGO

1710–1771

*Ballerina*

**BEGINNINGS.** One of two great prima ballerinas in mid-eighteenth-century France, Marie-Ann de Cupis de Camargo was born at Brussels to a family of mixed Franco-Flemish and Spanish heritage. In her youth she studied with Francoise Prevost, the greatest ballerina in Paris at the time, and in 1720, she was engaged at the Brussels ballet. Her Paris debut occurred in a production of *Les caractères de la danse* in 1726, and her performance was so brilliant that it excited the jealousy of her teacher, who refused to work with her anymore. She next studied with Blondy and Dumoulin, two other masters of the time. Between the time of her debut and retirement in 1751, she performed in almost eighty ballets in Paris. A fierce rivalry developed between Marie Camargo and Marie Sallé, the other great ballerina of the period. Voltaire, the greatest philosophe of the age, noted that Camargo's style was quick and brilliant, while Sallé's was more lyrical and expressive. Camargo's technical facility was apparently enormous, and she was the first woman to perform several demanding leaps, including the *cabriole*, *pas battu*, and *entrechats*—steps that had previously been reserved for men. Madame Camargo has also long been credited with establishing the ballerina's normative position with feet pointed at a 90 degree angle to the body. Eventually, she shortened her skirts, an innovation that allowed her to perform even more demanding footwork, and which opened up new technical arenas for ballerinas who followed.



**SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE.** Throughout her career her performances were often associated with the operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully, the late seventeenth-century composer who had largely fixed the canons of the genre in France. As revivals of these works were mounted, however, additional dances were added to the productions to show off the skills of dancers like Camargo and Sallé. In one production a male dancer failed to appear on cue, and Camargo scored a great success by dancing in his place a fantastically improvised ballet. Camargo's prowess on the theatrical stage allowed her admittance into some of the most cultured spheres of mid-eighteenth-century Parisian society. She became a darling of the "salon" set, and her hairstyles, shoes, and hats were widely copied by upper-class Parisian women. French chefs of the period named a number of dishes after her, including such delicacies as Soufflé à la Camargo and Filet de Boeuf Camargo. Prominent French artists painted her portrait on several occasions, and her reputation survived long after her death. During the nineteenth century, for example, two operas were written about her life, and in 1930, the Camargo Society of London, a dancing troupe, was named after her. Despite her widespread fame—a fame achieved after just a few years of performing in the Paris Opera—Camargo retired in 1734 to become the mistress of the Count of Clermont. Seven years later, though, she returned to Paris and continued to perform in the Opera ballet until 1751, at which time the king granted her a state pension for the remainder of her life. Besides her long-term association with Clermont, she did not marry.

**SIGNIFICANCE.** Like her rival Sallé, Camargo's career opened up new possibilities for ballerinas who followed her. A trailblazer in the realm of technique, Camargo's dancing set a new standard of technical excellence. During the Baroque, rising standards of performance in both the opera and the ballet helped to create an audience that avidly followed and tracked the best singers and dancers of the day. The split in opinion that occurred in Paris over the relative merits of Camargo and Sallé was typical of the tenor of the times, as audiences devoted the kind of attention to these celebrities that modern people do to sports stars and popular musicians.

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## JEAN-GEORGES NOVERRE

1727–1810

*Dancer*

*Choreographer*

**EARLY TRAVELS.** Born the son of a Swiss soldier and a Parisian woman, Jean-Georges Noverre, the man who was destined to transform the ballet, studied dance in Paris from an early age. At first a student of the noted master Marcel, he later studied with Louis Dupré, at the time the first dancer in the Paris Opera's troupe. He made his debut with the Opera ballet around 1743 in a production that Dupré directed of the burlesque ballet *Le Coq de Village* (The Village Rooster). In the same year he danced for the royal court at the Palace of Fontainebleau, outside Paris. In these early years of his career he came in contact with the great naturalism of the female dancer Marie Sallé as well as with the expressive music of Jean-Philippe Rameau. These two influences left their mark on Noverre's career as he labored to develop ballet as a form of drama. In the years that followed his Paris debut, Noverre left Paris for Berlin, where he performed in a number of productions. By 1747, he was back in France, where he may have taken a short post in the city of Marseilles before moving on to Strasbourg.

**EARLY BALLETS.** In Strasbourg in 1749, Noverre made the acquaintance of the actress and dancer Marie-Louise Saveur, whom he married. A year later, he was called to dance at Lyons, France's second-largest city, where he partnered with Marie Camargo, France's great female dance virtuoso. In 1751, he staged his first pantomime ballet there, a production of *The Judgment of Paris*. In his subsequent engagements as choreographer and dancer in the next few years at Strasbourg and Paris he did not continue to stage pantomime ballets, but instead confined his work to more traditional ballets filled with complex figural patterns and the virtuosic displays typical of the time. His productions were noteworthy, however, for their complex stage scenery and costuming. Because of his failure to garner a permanent position at the Paris Opera, Noverre left France for London in 1755. Here he worked with the prominent man of letters and impresario David Garrick at the Drury Lane Theater near Covent Garden. At the time, relations between France and England had turned sour, and an upswell in anti-French sentiment condemned Noverre's production of *The Chinese Feast* to failure. The crowds who attended this production even erupted in a riot after one performance. Unable to earn a living in England, Noverre returned to Lyons, where he began to work on his book, *Letters on Dance and Ballet*. Published in 1759, the book

was an immediate success and it did a great deal to enhance his reputation throughout Europe.

**LETTERS ON DANCE.** Noverre's letters on dance developed ideas that France's Enlightenment thinkers were promoting about the nature of the arts. The *philosophes*, as they were known, stressed that art was far more than a mere adornment or ornament to life. The arts possessed the power to ennoble humankind by presenting to the race an image of beauty as well as the range of human emotions. The thinking of the Enlighteners stressed the ability of the various arts to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings in ways that were unfettered by courtly conventions and elaborate rules. Around the time that Noverre was writing his book on dance, the famous Enlightenment dramatist and encyclopedist Diderot produced his play *The Natural Son*. In that work he decried the merely decorative and ornamental nature of the ballet in his time, and he expressed the fervent hope that a master might come along who could show the art a way out of its decadence. It was Noverre who took on this task in his *Letters*, and in the remainder of his career he devoted himself to transforming the ballet into a dramatic, rather than merely athletic, art.

**MOVE TO STUTTGART.** While France's Enlightenment thinkers and literati found his *Letters on Dance* a compelling work, Noverre's colleagues in French opera houses were not won over. After working at the Opera for only a short time as a choreographer, he made his way to the court of the Württemberg dukes at Stuttgart, which was then home to a more experimental dance culture than in either Paris or Lyons. Here he produced about twenty ballets before the company he directed was disbanded in 1767. At that time he secured his most important position—ballet master to the Habsburgs at Vienna—where he staged almost forty ballets in eight years. His productivity in Vienna was enormous, and his most important ballets date from this period. The resources of the Habsburg imperial court were considerable, and their musical culture was among the finest in Europe. Noverre staged his ballets to music by Gluck and several other Viennese masters, including Josef Starzer and Franz Aspelmayr. As a result of these performances, his reputation as a choreographer spread throughout Europe. Despite rivalries with other dance masters—most notably the Italian Gasparo Angiolini—and brief periods of unemployment, Noverre continued to be in demand as a choreographer throughout the continent for most of the rest of his life. In 1776, for example, he finally achieved the position he had long desired as ballet-master at the Paris Opera. Although he remained in this position until 1781, the Parisian audience was not re-

ceptive to his artistic vision, and he accepted a semi-retirement from the company in 1779. Many complained of his choices of themes as well as his refusal to stage ballets that were a part of a larger opera. Noverre, ever convinced of the cause of his art, took some of his productions to London, and over the course of the following years, he staged ballets and *divertissements* in England and Lyons. He retired, but in the 1790s the inflation of the French Revolution forced him to return to choreography. At the height of the Terror he fled to London and produced a number of productions; when his fortunes improved, he returned to France, where he spent the rest of his life in retirement.

**INFLUENCE.** Noverre's artistic ideas contained in his *Letters on Dance and Ballet* were undeniably his most important contribution to the theory and practice of dance. He advocated an art freed from the merely ornamental and subjected to new dramatic discipline and emotional expression. Many other ballet masters of the period openly advocated reforms similar to those of Noverre, and some of their own innovations preceded this French master's. Noverre's widely published book, however, established a place for its author in posterity, so that he has long been wrongly credited with single-handedly transforming the ballet into a form of dramatic art. Noverre's own theatrical career was checkered with many failures and a few successes. The high point of his activity occurred in Vienna during the late 1760s and 1770s. After this time, the choreographer never matched the success he had experienced in this environment, although his intellectual influence on dance persisted by virtue of his widely read *Letters*.

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#### GAETANO VESTRIS

1729–1808

*Dancer*  
*Choreographer*

**A DISTINGUISHED FAMILY.** Gaetano Vestris was born into a family notable for its dancers and musicians.

His elder sister Teresa Vestris (1726–1808) was a prominent dancer at the Paris Opera during the 1750s, before becoming a courtesan. Gaetano's younger brother Angiolo also became a dancer, performing in Paris and then later in Stuttgart in the pantomime ballets that Jean-Georges Noverre produced there. In total, nine members of the family were connected with the Opera in Paris or distinguished themselves in the field of dance or music during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus like the Bach family, who provided church and court musicians for the German principalities throughout the eighteenth century, the Vestris family was a major force on the Parisian musical and dance scene. Gaetano himself trained at the Paris Opera and performed there between 1749 and 1780. His career thus coincided with the rise of the *ballet d'action*, and he became the leading dancer of the mid-century. After retiring from performance, he continued to teach in Paris, training the male dancers who carried forward French innovations in ballet into the nineteenth century. Thus like Louis Dupré, who dominated dance in Paris in the first half of the eighteenth century, Vestris's long career assured his influence over professional dance for years following his death.

**TRADITION AND INNOVATION.** The Vestris family had emigrated from Florence to France around 1740, and certain members seemed already to be well acquainted with Italian traditions of miming. The daughter Teresa was the first to make her way as a ballerina, performing in the Esterhazy Ballet in Hungary before moving on to Dresden and her later Paris debut. In Paris, she used her influence to obtain for her brothers Gaetano and Angiolo instruction at the Opera's school. As a student there, Gaetano studied with Louis Dupré, the greatest dancer and teacher of the first half of the eighteenth century. He acquired the traditional skills necessary to a ballet performer of the time. These included a ready athleticism, knowledge and mastery of all the steps and leaps that formed the ballet's vocabulary of movements, and a thorough understanding of how these were to be combined with the musical forms that had since Lully's time accompanied the opera ballet in France.

**CHOREOGRAPHER.** Although Vestris's training had been largely traditional, he performed in the new pantomime ballets that became popular after 1750. In addition, as a teacher and choreographer he adapted himself to the changes in technique that were quickly transforming the ballet. His tenure as ballet master at Paris coincided with a bleak period in the institution's history, and historical assessments have not always been kind to his choreography. Vestris tried to strike a balance in the

works that he created for the Opera between the new and the old. While his productions have sometimes been discounted as too traditional, it must be remembered that this was a low period in many ways in the Opera's history. In 1763, the Opera's theater in the Palais Royale burned down, and for seven years, the company was temporarily located in the Tuileries Palace nearby. A new theater reopened at the same site north and east of the Louvre in 1770, but it was as cramped and inadequate as the one it had replaced. When it was damaged in a fire in 1781, plans were made to house the Opera and ballet in new, grander surroundings. Besides the problems of space at the time, artistic differences about the direction the Opera's dances should take were numerous. In creating new ballets, then, Vestris appears to have tried to strike a compromising chord, a chord that seemed to please few. In these years, though, he continued to dance and impress audiences with his athletic prowess, developing a reputation as the best living exemplar of the "noble style" in French dancing. By the early 1770s, Gaetano was in his early forties, and he sometimes deferred performing to allow his son, Auguste, to dance his roles. Auguste was even more definite about adopting the reforms that were circulating in the dance world of his day. While previous dancers had sometimes given up the masks and elaborate costuming to perform more complex roles, Auguste abandoned them completely. He was thus able to perform with such freedom of movement and to execute such a range of steps that the longstanding custom of decking dancers out in an array of trappings soon disappeared. Around 1780, both Gaetano Vestris and his son Auguste undertook a tour to London, where their ballets caused a sensation. Both Vestris's returned to Paris in triumph, and at his retirement from dancing a few years later in 1782, Gaetano was celebrated as a French national hero. He received a state pension as a result of his distinguished career.

**TROUBLES IN THE REVOLUTION.** Like many other dancers who had flourished in the aristocratic society of eighteenth-century France, Gaetano Vestris's fortunes fell on hard times during the early years of the French Revolution. As a result of the fiscal crisis, the new republican government cut off his state pension, and for a time, Vestris fell under suspicion of monarchical sentiments. He traveled again to London, where he became ballet master to the King's Theatre. In 1793, though, he returned to Paris, and the republican government restored his pension to him. During the 1790s his son, Auguste Vestris, as well as several of the students that Gaetano had trained, continued to dominate ballet performance in Paris.

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## JOHN WEAVER

1673–1760

*Dance Master*

**DANCER AND WRITER.** England's great early eighteenth-century dancer was born the son of a dance master, and attended school at Shrewsbury for a time before settling in Oxford with his father. There his father ran a studio of dance, and John Weaver picked up his techniques there before heading to London around 1700 to make his way as a theatrical dancer. In 1703, Weaver staged his first ballet, *The Tavern Bilkers*. Somewhat later, the dancer was to praise his early production as the first "Entertainment that appeared on the English stage, where the Representation and Story was carried on by Dancing, Action and Motion only." Scant information survives about the production, so it is difficult to tell whether *The Tavern Bilkers* was actually England's first pantomime ballet. Weaver must have been an accomplished dancer and choreographer even at this date, because Mister Isaac, the greatest dance master in London at the time, soon befriended him. Under his encouragement, Weaver translated Feuillet's *Choreography*, an important French dance manual of the time. He published his version as *Orchesography* in 1706. Around the same time he also published six of Mister Isaac's dances, which he set down using the new Beauchamp-Feuillet style of notation.

**THEORY.** Sometime around 1707 or 1708, Weaver returned to Shrewsbury, where he settled with his family. The town served as his home base for the rest of his life, although he did return to London on several occasions to stage productions. Back in his childhood home, Weaver soon devoted himself to dance history and theory. Under the prodding of the dramatist and man of letters Sir Richard Steele, the dance master began to write

a history of dance. This work of scholarship, *An Essay Towards a History of Dancing* (1712), treated at great length the development of dance in Antiquity, but concluded that a new kind of art needed to flourish in contemporary times. Weaver supported dance that would display human manners and emotions and convey a story line. Thus his work anticipated the great achievements of pantomime ballet and *ballets d'action* that were to follow in the mid- and later eighteenth century. In 1717, he returned to London where he was engaged to produce the pantomime ballet, *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, at the Drury Lane Theater, the site where many of eighteenth-century London's experiments in dance were produced. Weaver styled his *Loves* as a work made in "imitation of the pantomimes of the ancient Greeks and Romans," and his attempt to revive these ancient arts fit neatly with much of the eighteenth-century Neoclassical spirit in Britain. While Weaver was generally admiring of ancient practices, his own pantomimes did not slavishly imitate antique art. In his theoretical writings on Greek and Roman pantomime, he stressed that the ancients had used a single actor to portray many different characters. By contrast, Weaver himself relied on many professional dancers to stage his production of the *Loves*.

**SUCCESSSES.** Weaver followed the success of his first pantomime ballet with another work, *Orpheus and Eurydice*. Around this time he began to study the anatomy of the human body with a special emphasis on how the musculature supported movement. In 1721 he published a work entitled *Mechanical and Anatomical Lectures upon Dancing*, the first study of the science of human movement. Two other pantomime ballets were to follow: the first, *Perseus and Andromeda*, was staged at Drury Lane in 1728, while the final work, *The Judgment of Paris*, was performed during 1733. In this last work, Weaver included much pantomime, but he also reintegrated songs and music into his drama, a return to some of the conventions of ballet that remained in force at the time. After the *Judgment of Paris*, Weaver did not return to produce ballets in London. He remained at Shrewsbury, where he continued to serve as a dance master.

**IMPORTANCE.** Although Weaver was a visionary in the field of dance, his ideas were not to be taken up by subsequent masters for several decades. When these new experiments in dramatic ballet arose, they appeared in the court theaters of the German- and French-speaking world, rather than in Weaver's England. In his own time, his productions were noteworthy but not widely successful. Neither were they widely imitated because the impresarios of the period concentrated their attentions on other works that were more commercially viable.

Lacking the rich budget of a court theater, where subsidies made experimentation possible, Weaver's vision of pantomime ballet largely withered on the vine. His literary importance as a commentator on dance and as a force that helped to establish Feuillet notation throughout Europe has ensured the survival of his reputation in posterity.

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- Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreography and Narrative. Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1996).
- Richard Ralph, *The Life and Works of John Weaver* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1988).
- Marian H. Winter, *Pre-Romantic Ballet* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1974).
- Jean-Georges Noverre, *Letters on Dancing and Ballets* (1754)—One of the most influential dancing treatises of all time, this collection of observations on dance reinterpreted the art form according to the theories of the Enlightenment. Noverre stressed that dance must strive to be a representation of the human emotions, that it should adapt a greater naturalism, and that it should abandon the cumbersome costumes and masks typical of the day. Noverre's theories, which attacked the mere technical virtuosity of many contemporary dancers, were controversial, but eventually prevailed in the ballet.
- John Playford, *The English Dancing Master* (1651)—This collection of English country dances was widely available in the later seventeenth century. Through Playford, knowledge of country dances spread to France, where these figure dances were refined and made into an essential part of the ballroom repertoire of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
- John Weaver, trans., *Orchesography* (1706)—This famous translation of Feuillet's *Choreography* spread knowledge of French dance notational techniques in England. It also established fashion for many French trends. Weaver's translation went through several editions, and was, in turn, re-translated into German, helping to spread knowledge throughout Europe of the Feuillet system.
- John Weaver, ed., *A Collection of Ball-Dances Performed at Court* (1706)—The Stuart kings' dancing master, Mister Isaac (1640–1720), originally compiled this collection of ballroom dances. It provides unparalleled information about the precise kinds of steps that were performed in the English ballroom around 1700. Weaver, the most prominent English choreographer of the early eighteenth century, edited it and oversaw its publication.
- John Essex, trans., *The Dancing Master* (1728)—This translation of Pierre Rameau's dance treatise provided performers in England with knowledge of the latest trends in French dance. Rameau was one of the most important theorists of dance in eighteenth-century France. He explained the precise placement of hands and feet besides cataloguing an enormous number of steps.

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Dance*

chapter **3** three

# FASHION

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	108	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	147
OVERVIEW . . . . .	111	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
TOPICS		<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
The Regulation of Consumption . . . . .	113	<i>Of the Finest Gold</i> (letter from Madame de Sévigné concerning new fashion). . . . .	120
Fashion Trends in the Early Seventeenth Century. . . . .	116	<i>Grand Preparation for a Royal Wedding</i> (entry by Saint-Simon regarding dress for a royal wedding) . . . . .	122
The Rise of the Netherlands. . . . .	117	<i>Clothing Queen Marie-Antoinette</i> (excerpt from Campan's memoirs) . . . . .	123
The Age of Louis XIV. . . . .	119	<i>A Theft of Fine Linen</i> (entry by Rousseau concerning a robbery) . . . . .	127
Fashion Beyond the Court. . . . .	125	<i>A Morning Gown</i> (excerpt from Richardson's novel <i>Clarissa</i> ) . . . . .	130
The High Tide of French Fashion . . . . .	128	<i>Keeping Abreast of Style</i> (excerpts from letters by Sheridan concerning fashion) . . . . .	134
Reaction to the Rococo . . . . .	133	<i>The Politics of Color</i> (excerpt from Hyde's memoirs concerning fashion and politics). . . . .	139
Fashion During the French Revolution . . . . .	138		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Marie-Jeanne Bécu du Barry. . . . .	142		
Josephine Bonaparte . . . . .	143		
Françoise d'Aubigné Maintenon . . . . .	144		
Marie-Antoinette . . . . .	144		
Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson Pompadour . . . . .	146		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Fashion*

- c. 1600 In Spain, a fondness for somber colors and restrained but opulent decoration reigns. Elsewhere in Europe these elements of Spanish design often meld with native traditions to produce imaginative, but sometimes distorted and bizarre regional variations.
- 1603 Elizabeth I of England dies. As part of the inventory taken of her goods, scores of opulent dresses are noted in her private collection, most of which come into the possession of her successor James I's wife, Anne of Denmark.
- 1604 A bill is introduced in the English Parliament that abolishes all sumptuary laws in the country. When James I tries repeatedly to proclaim sumptuary legislation himself, his measures are struck down by Parliament.
- c. 1620 The dominance of Spanish fashions begins to fade in court societies throughout Europe.  
  
The popularity of *ruffs*, starched collars pleated into elaborate folds, wanes in Northern Europe.
- c. 1625 Dutch fashions become popular in urban and court circles. The Dutch favor less restrictive styles that are more comfortable, as well as garments made of wool. Their clothes are often richly decorated with lace.
- 1630 Men's hairstyles showcase long locks that are artfully arranged.
- 1642 Marie de' Medici, once queen of France and one of the most fashionable women in Europe, dies impoverished and exiled from her adopted country.
- 1643 Louis XIV assumes the throne in France as a five-year-old child. As an adult, the king will dominate men's style in aristocratic societies throughout Europe.
- c. 1660 French fashion begins to become popular at courts throughout Europe.
- c. 1665 The *justaucorps*, a long outer coat that stretches to the knees, begins to be worn at the French court atop a shorter waistcoat and britches. In tandem, this three-piece wardrobe will govern men's styles in much of Europe over the next century and will form the basis for the modern "three-piece" suit.
- c. 1670 Wigs become popular as a hairstyle for men, as Louis XIV in France and Charles II in England don the new fake hair.
- 1682 The Palace of Versailles becomes the official home of the French court and the center of state government. During his years at the château, Louis XIV makes the ceremony of his rising and dressing, known as the *levée*, into a grand centerpiece of Versailles' system of etiquette, requiring more than 100 noblemen to attend the king at this ceremonial dressing.
- 1683 Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's powerful chief minister, dies. During the previous decades Colbert has followed the economic policies of mercantilism, establishing France's preeminence in certain key industries, including the making of lace and other fine fabrics necessary to clothing.
- c. 1700 In England, the popularity of male wigs, or *perukes*, reaches its high point. Different professions and types of gentlemen begin to wear wigs that distinguish their stations in life, and the taste for these hairpieces gives rise to fashions that are fanciful and increasingly artificial.

- 1709 Louis XIV suffers disastrous defeats in international wars. The resulting financial weakness in France prompts the court to pursue a new austerity in dress.
- 1715 In France, King Louis XIV dies and is succeeded by his young great grandson, Louis XV. Because Louis XV is a minor, his uncle Philippe, the Duke of Orléans, rules, and, during this period known as the Regency, a new more opulent and lighter style in dress and interior decoration flourishes.
- c. 1730 The *robe à la française* becomes one of the most popular styles of fashion for women throughout Europe. The gown is fashioned on women's negligées and fits tight at the bodice, but allows contrasting or identical underskirts to show through, artfully arranged over a series of hoops or paniers so that they fall into bell shapes.
- 1746 Madame de Pompadour becomes the official court mistress of Louis XV. During the years in which she fills this position, Pompadour establish many styles in France and throughout Europe, including *pompoms*—a play on Pompadour's name—which are an arrangement of fur or feather balls that are placed atop or at the side of women's heads.
- c. 1750 The popularity of the elegant Rococo style in France helps to inspire fashions in dress that are made up of elaborate flounces and ruffles.
- 1760 Louis XV purchases several factories and merges them into a single company that is charged with the responsibility of producing high-quality cottons for the French domestic market. Its popular printed cottons become known as *toile du Jouy* after the company's location at Jouy near Versailles, and the fabrics featuring exotic motifs or scenes of everyday life are used for everything from ladies' dresses to upholstery.
- 1764 Madame de Pompadour, King Louis XV's mistress and a fashion trendsetter throughout Europe, dies.
- c. 1770 The production of affordable cottons in English factories helps to inspire the popularity of new fashions crafted from these materials throughout Europe.
- 1774 Louis XVI begins his reign as the king of France, during which his queen, Marie-Antoinette, will set new standards in lavish dress. As the French Revolution approaches, the queen and her court adopt the more free-flowing and informal styles popular in England at the time.
- 1775 In Paris, the fashion book, *Monument of the Physical and Moral Costume at the End of the Eighteenth Century*, is published for the first time. The work accurately reflects French aristocratic styles of the period and spawns imitators, including the first fashion magazines.
- 1778 The Parisian publishers Jean Esnaut and Michel Rapilly commence distribution of their *Gallerie des modes et costumes français* (Gallery of French Style and Costumes), which are collections of fashion plates intended to keep consumers up to date on the latest styles.
- 1783 Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, a middle-class French portrait painter, produces a portrait of Queen Marie-Antoinette wearing a chemise, a simple dress of white muslin gathered at the neck with a drawstring and tied at the waist with a sash. The style is an important departure for a French queen, whose style of dress has long been dictated by unbending court etiquette, and is controversial at court, even while reflecting the growing popularity of English informal styles among the aristocracy in France.
- 1785 The first fashion magazine is published in Paris under the title *Les Cabinet des modes* (The Cabinet of Style). It will soon change its name to *Le Magasin du modes nouvelles françaises et anglaises* (The Magazine of New French and English Styles) to take account of the widespread popularity of more informal English fashions in France.



- 1786 The Affair of the Necklace captivates French society. This court intrigue, involving the alleged sale of an ostentatious diamond necklace to Queen Marie-Antoinette, becomes an occasion for attacking the court's lavish consumption.
- 1789 The royal prison of the Bastille is stormed in Paris. In the wake of this event the government requires citizens to wear revolutionary cockades on their hats or lapels, which are emblems constructed of ribbons of white, red, and blue.
- 1793 The *Sans Culottes* (meaning "without breeches") come to the forefront of the Revolution as a powerful working-class group supporting the radical Jacobin cause in the French Revolution. The movement is comprised of small Parisian shopkeepers, artisans, and poor workers, who wear trousers rather than the knee breeches, thereby popularizing the wearing of trousers among those dedicated to the cause of revolutionary democracy in France.
- 1795 The government of the Directory is set up in France and begins to restore order to the country following the Reign of Terror. During the several years of the Directory's rule, Neoclassical women's fashions will become the rage in Paris and other French cities and will eventually spread throughout Europe. These fashions, at once feminine, practical, and relatively inexpensive, mark the end to the costly aristocratic opulence of the eighteenth century.

## OVERVIEW *of Fashion*

**FASHION: THE PRESERVE OF THE ARISTOCRACY.** For most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries participation in the world of fashion was limited to wealthy aristocrats who lived in royal courts. While wealthy merchants and members of the gentry sometimes imitated the clothing worn by nobles, very few were able to dress in the lavish way that the nobility did. Even if they could have afforded the expense of such clothing, the vast majority of the European population could not have worn the luxurious styles due to long-standing moral prohibitions against lavish consumption as well as sumptuary laws (laws that forbade certain kinds of consumption and tried to limit the amount that people spent on their clothing). England was the first country to do away with sumptuary laws; the English Parliament repealed all sumptuary legislation in 1604 because of a legal wrangle with the Stuart King James I (r. 1603–1625). Although there were numerous subsequent attempts to enact new sumptuary laws in England, the ongoing competition between Crown and Parliament meant that prohibitions against certain kind of dress disappeared in England far earlier than elsewhere in Europe. The absence of written laws did not lead to widespread consumption of extravagant clothing, however, as the popularity of Puritanism as a religious creed discouraged lavish consumption of clothing. While large segments of the population shunned luxurious dress, high-ranking members of the nobility continued to wear extravagant costumes. Elsewhere in Europe, the austere teachings of many Protestant and Catholic religious groups and the persistence of sumptuary laws similarly discouraged extravagant consumption among broad sectors of the population. Usually, though, items that were prohibited to be worn by the populace at large were freely permitted to many members of the nobility. In this way clothing served as one of the most visible and potent markers of social status.

**THE SHIFTING STYLES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.** Despite long-standing religious and economic prohibitions condemning the world of style, fashions

changed nonetheless, albeit only every three to four decades during the seventeenth century. Every major European capital and royal court was filled with a cadre of elites that possessed the resources to indulge changing tastes. Around 1600, the reigning fashion throughout Europe favored styles that were originally Spanish in origin, with ruffs (high starched and pleated collars), farthingales (hooped contraptions that extended the line of women's hips, often to enormous widths), and capes being among the most popular items adopted from the repertoire of sixteenth-century Spanish dress. Spanish clothing had usually been rather austere, with Spanish aristocrats favoring exquisite tailoring and subdued colors instead of opulent display. As these fashions were adopted throughout Europe in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, they were often distorted by local tastes. The farthingale, the hoop-like contraption on which women of the time arranged their skirts, was one case in point. Originally an early sixteenth-century Spanish style, it was avidly adopted in courtly societies throughout northern Europe, and in this process its contours became greatly exaggerated. By the early seventeenth century farthingales sometimes reached a width of four feet before beginning to shrink and, by 1620, disappearing altogether. The ruff presented a similar case in point. A relatively restrained Spanish item of dress in the sixteenth century, it was avidly adopted in many places by 1600 and taken to new extremes of width and complexity before fading into fashion oblivion by the end of the first quarter of the new century. Both the love of Spanish style and the tendency to exaggerate these innovations present us with two tendencies that were often to be repeated in the world of European fashion during the Baroque period. First, aristocratic and wealthy Europeans from throughout the continent often found inspiration for their clothing in the patterns of dress favored in the then-dominant power. As Spain declined in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, the rise of the Dutch Republic with its trading empire throughout Europe provided a new and ready source of emulation. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the torch of European fashion passed to France, where the absolutist system set up by King Louis XIV created the raw materials of an industry that was to dominate European style even into modern times. The rise of England as Europe's dominant eighteenth-century power brought with it a new host of styles that were avidly imitated throughout Europe and which came to be adopted, refined, and exploited by the fashion industry in France.

**A TENDENCY TOWARD DISTORTION.** The second tendency that European fashions exemplified throughout the early-modern period was a tendency to exaggerate

innovations, often to a point at which styles became highly contorted and even bizarre. Here the wig presents a case in point. Hairpieces had been used in the Renaissance to make women's tresses fuller, despite long-standing Christian prohibitions against the custom. In the second half of the seventeenth-century wigs gradually became a prized item of male dress, particularly after King Louis XIV began to wear them to compensate for his receding hairline. From France, the fashion for wigs spread throughout continental Europe and to England, and by the early eighteenth century male wigs had become increasingly artificial. Now the wig was not just a compensation for the middle-age loss of hair, but a fashion accessory very much like a woman's hat. Male coiffures sometimes rose to incredible heights, and male wigs that were powdered silver, pink, blue, or lavender became all the rage. By 1750, though, this trend had largely spent itself, and men in England and France began to renounce the wig altogether. Similar trends are notable in women's fashions. Elaborately coifed hair and wigs rose to enormous heights and hips were widened to great widths with paniers throughout the first half of the eighteenth century before these styles faded. Fashion extremes inevitably bred reactions, with the rise of simpler styles that renounced previous trends sustaining fashion's continuous changes and innovations.

**ROCOCO AND REACTION.** During the eighteenth century rising wealth produced new previously unheard-of levels of consumption in almost every corner of Europe. Long-standing state and religious prohibitions against lavish consumption relaxed, producing styles of undeniable opulence and display. Nowhere were the forces of this new consumerism more evident than in France, where the austerity of the later years of Louis XIV's reign gave way by the mid-eighteenth century to an era of unprecedented aristocratic extravagance. This world of French Rococo fashion continues in many people's minds to conjure up an image of eighteenth-century style. Elaborate women's dresses that consumed scores of yards of costly taffetas, brocades, and other luxury fabrics and exquisitely embroidered men's outfits were two of the hallmarks of the age. The extravagance of these costumes was still well beyond the reach of all but a tiny minority of French men and women. Yet even though the middle and lower classes lagged behind aristocratic standards of consumption, new standards in style were being set across the social spectrum. As the eighteenth century matured, the inspiration for new clothing styles came, not only from French aristocratic society, but from England. Britain stood at the vanguard of the economic developments that were transforming eighteenth-century Europe, and by 1750, taste in the English-speaking world

had come to be dominated by a new middle-class sensibility that prized utility, practicality, and understatement, in contrast to the Rococo fashions popular elsewhere in Europe. From Philadelphia to Edinburgh and London to Dublin, members of the English-speaking world were developing styles notable for their ready adaptability to all sorts of occupations and ways of living. For men, the frock coat combined with the vest or waistcoat and breeches to become the uniform of shopkeepers, merchants, gentlemen, and even the aristocracy. For women, undeniably feminine yet simple and elegant dresses constructed of cotton and muslin provided an alternative to the increasingly artificial fashions that emanated from aristocratic France. The new sensibilities of the Enlightenment, the great international philosophical movement that argued for an extension of human liberty and the triumph of reason, accelerated the acceptance of English fashions throughout Europe. The fashion for things "English" came in many places to be adopted as a way of showing one's support for the greater liberty that many Europeans sensed lay in the English way of life. By the 1770s and 1780s, the more informal English styles had made significant inroads throughout Europe, and even in France, where they were initially resisted, they had begun to replace the aristocratic artifice of Rococo dress. By the early 1780s, even France's queen Marie Antoinette had begun to adopt English styles as day wear, helping to popularize these fashions. Adopted by the French middle and upper classes, many English styles were to survive and to persist throughout Europe in the nineteenth century.

**THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.** Clothing had long played a critical role in early-modern Europe as a marker of social status, and thus with the coming of the French Revolution in 1789, political changes soon came to be reflected in dress as well. In the years that followed the outbreak of the Revolution, middle- and upper-class clothing in France continued to reflect the taste for English designs that had flourished in Europe during the 1770s and 1780s. The Revolution, in fact, intensified the commitment to English styles, particularly among the French middle classes. English patterns of dress symbolized more than ever before one's attachment to the principles of the Enlightenment and to the cause of political liberty. By the early 1790s the leaders of the French Revolution were denouncing the highly artificial and opulent clothing worn by the aristocracy during the Old Regime as a detestable symbol of privilege as well as a form of despotism over the body. Women's corsets, hoops, and tight-fitting bodices became symbols of the dangers of royal absolutism for, as Revolutionary leaders cautioned, these styles constricted the body's movements even as absolute monarchs limited their subjects' politi-

cal freedoms. At the same time, the leaders of the Revolution feared luxury and stylish indulgence, and they urged citizens to adopt ways of dressing that were practical and comfortable, and which made use of economical, monochromatic fabrics. During the high tide of revolutionary sentiments, though, other more radical groups agitated for even more extreme changes in society, and they relied on their clothing to make statements about their support for democratic reforms and the abolition of all social privileges based upon rank, birth, or office. As a result, certain items of dress quickly became highly charged symbols of one's support for, or rejection of, Revolutionary principles. During the first months of the Revolution the revolutionary cockade (an emblem constructed of red, white, and blue) had become an obligatory item of dress in Paris. But clothing fashioned from combinations of red, white, and blue persisted in the early years of the Revolution to express one's support for political change. Soon groups like the *Sans Culottes*, with their outfits consisting of long trousers, tri-colored vests, and the *bonnet rouge* or "red cap," were impressing their demands for greater reform on French society, partly by wearing clothes that were of lower-class origin. The abolition of all sumptuary laws in France in 1793 also marked a key change. During the reigns of the Bourbon monarchs Louis XV and Louis XVI, these laws had rarely been enforced, but now the Revolution embraced the freedom of men and women to choose their dress based upon their own personal preferences. Many used this freedom to experiment with new styles, and by the end of the eighteenth century, a world of fashion was emerging in which semi-annual changes in clothes were avidly followed by large groups of the population. These frequent changes in dress were now tracked and broadcasted throughout the European world through fashion magazines that were printed weekly and bi-weekly. Thus the political changes of the French Revolution helped to give birth to the world of fashion that most modern people recognize, a world in which changes in dress are frequent and occur throughout a far broader portion of the populace than in the aristocratic societies of the Old Regime.

## TOPICS in Fashion

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### THE REGULATION OF CONSUMPTION

**THE LONG TRADITION.** In both medieval and early-modern Europe a web of laws tightly controlled clothing and the consumption of luxury goods. As a

body, these sumptuary regulations—laws intended to control dress and extravagant feasting and celebrations—were one of the largest and most universal sets of regulations in European states, although the specifics of restrictions differed greatly from place to place and over time. Generally, though, sumptuary law fell into two broad categories. First, city and state officials tried to limit the amounts their subjects spent on clothing by stipulating that certain garments might not contain more than a certain amount of fabric, lace, or trim, or by limiting the total sum that might be spent on any one garment. These types of regulations were often very specific, and as such, they were consequently subject to many attempts to circumvent their intentions. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, for instance, restrictions on the amount of cloth a woman's skirt might contain fed the popularity of *chopines*, which were large stilt-like shoes whose platform soles at times reached heights of twelve to eighteen inches. Perched on these lofty pedestals, late-Renaissance women required more cloth in their dresses so that their skirts reached the ground, another demand of propriety. Thus, as in this case, new fashions often bred a continued outpouring of restrictions, as Italian governments legislated against the chopines even as they had once turned to consider the widths of women's skirts. The second broad type of sumptuary legislation aimed to confine the consumption of certain expensive items of dress to members of the aristocracy. These measures were particularly widespread in the kingdoms of Western Europe. In France and England, for instance, the consumption of costly furs like ermine or of rare feathers was generally reserved only to those who were of noble birth. In this way clothing styles tended to buttress the established social order, to serve as marks of social distinction, and to encourage attempts to get around the regulations. Restrictions of one kind against consumption, then, tended to inspire attempts to control consumption with ever more specific laws, as state and city officials constantly labored to defend against what they perceived were attempts to flout their authority. In most countries, though, the punishments meted out to those who violated sumptuary legislation were comparatively mild when compared against those reserved for theft and other crimes. A system of fines was most frequently used to compel those who violated the laws to comply.

**MORAL AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES.** The tradition of controlling and limiting consumption in Western Europe stretched back into the early Middle Ages and even had its precedents in Antiquity. The high tide of sumptuary legislation in Europe, though, occurred

between the fourteenth and early eighteenth centuries at a time when Western industry, commerce, and society were all growing more diverse, and when industry presented consumers with more choices of rich cloth than ever before. At the beginning of this period, problems related to overpopulation, famine, and the Black Death of 1347–1351 winnowed away at Europe's population. Subsequent recurrences of the plague and outbreaks of other epidemics meant that by 1450 there were forty percent fewer people in the continent than there had been in 1300. It was not until about 1620 that the European population again reached its pre-plague levels. In every European region, this massive decrease in population produced long-term inflation, as labor became a commodity that was relatively dearer than previously. Inflation, in turn, made it more difficult for young couples to marry, since the cost of establishing a household was now considerably greater than before. The first rise in the adoption of new sumptuary laws that occurred during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries responded to these realities, as town officials in Italy and elsewhere in Europe tried to limit consumption—particularly of expensive clothing—as a way of keeping household costs low. From the first, these heightened efforts were sanctioned and supported by the religious orders of the day, and the Franciscans and Dominicans, in particular, rode to a high tide of popularity by condemning the wasteful vanities of contemporary society. Women's dress figured most prominently in the sermons of these friars, and fashion was, it was generally agreed, primarily a woman's problem. These judgments were not merely a form of clerical misogyny directed against women, but arose from the peculiar facts that surrounded clothing in both the late-medieval and early-modern world. Cloth was an expensive but necessary commodity, and the establishment of any new household required enormous supplies of linens, bolts of fabric, and other supplies. In Renaissance Italy, the surviving marriage contracts show that families were often incredibly attentive to the precise needs of their children, and the families of prospective brides and grooms competed against each other to display their ability to provide for their offspring. In the weeks immediately before and after a marriage took place, brides and grooms exchanged a series of gifts, the most important of which were the dowry payment made from the bride's father to the prospective husband and the *trousseau*, or women's clothes given by the groom to the prospective bride. The dowry payment substituted for a woman's share in her father's inheritance, and although it was not equal to the sum that a son received when his father died, it was nevertheless a substantial share of a family's wealth. As fewer young men and

women were able to marry in the period between the late fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, the cost of dowries steadily rose to encourage young men to contract marriages. Yet the rising costs of dowries brought with it other attendant problems, as the other marriage gifts that couples exchanged before their wedding—particularly the *trousseau*—also rose in magnificence alongside the increase in dowries. In Florence and other cities it became customary for prospective husbands to spend as much as a third of the sum that they received in a woman's dowry to shower their future wives with a *trousseau* and other rich gifts before the marriage. It was these customs—customs over which women had little control—that tended to identify fashion and consumption as primarily a problem generated by women.

**PSYCHOLOGY OF LIMITED WEALTH.** In modern times our own economic assumptions have come to differ radically from those of the late-medieval and early-modern world. In the modern world consumer purchasing is taken to be a sign of the health of any economy, and consumer spending is almost universally interpreted as a positive good that aids everyone's economic well-being. The purchase of clothing, luxury household goods, and other consumables is tracked in modern economies as a key indicator of economic health, since it reveals the disposable income that people possess at a given moment. In the late-medieval and early-modern world, by contrast, the total wealth of any society was believed to be scarce and limited, and was linked in the minds of political theorists and the state's officials to the supply of gold and silver coinage that existed within a country. This psychology of limited wealth gave rise to the many efforts of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century kings and princes to limit imports and to foster national industries that might discourage consumption of goods made abroad. While cloth and the other raw materials required in items of dress were produced everywhere in Europe, key centers of luxury production were located in Italy and in the Low Countries (modern Holland and Belgium). The flavor of much economic regulation at the time was protectionist, encouraging products that were produced domestically while discouraging the consumption of luxury items. Since many of the luxurious silks, taffetas, and expensive trims that decorated Baroque dress came from relatively few areas throughout the Continent, the efforts to limit consumption were often motivated by attempts to prevent imports. Paradoxically, these efforts often stimulated demand, making lace, golden cloth, and other fabulously expensive items have all the allure of forbidden fruit. These contradictions were observed even at the

time; the late sixteenth-century philosopher and essayist Michel de Montaigne pointed out that prohibitions against the wearing of velvet and gold braid did little more than “give prestige to these things and ... increase everyone’s desire to enjoy them ....” Then, as now, attempts to prohibit certain items of clothing produced unexpected results, often encouraging the very same perceived vices as the regulation was intended to curtail.

**INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS IN SUMPTUARY RESTRICTIONS.** If medieval Franciscans and Dominicans had labored to destroy the taste for frills and lace, Calvinists and French Jansenists took up the attack on luxury as a vice in the seventeenth century. Christian morality remained an important feature of sumptuary restrictions at the time, but economic arguments were increasingly being used to justify these regulations. The seventeenth century saw a rash of new sumptuary laws throughout Europe, except in England. By this time the market economy and the trade in cloth and other items of apparel was a significant force in the economy of almost every European region. This rising tide of commercialism, though, was not greeted with universal enthusiasm, and almost everywhere kings and princes responded with a host of regulations designed to keep demand for certain luxurious items in check. Gradually, the old Christian moral arguments used to condemn waste in clothing became less important. In Continental Europe, dress codes now functioned to reinforce social hierarchy, and regulations became minutely concerned with outlining just what items of dress were permitted to each social class. The dominant economic theory of the seventeenth century—mercantilism—pointed to the development of a notion of a “national economy,” and protectionist arguments about defending a country’s money supply now assumed a greater importance in defending sumptuary law than traditional Christian moral arguments condemning extravagance. The aim of most laws enacted at the time was to prevent imports, rather than to enforce a sober moral vision. By the eighteenth century the increasing penetration of the cloth industry and market economies throughout Europe, and a shift in economic arguments toward new theories that celebrated consumption, was to make the old order of controlling luxury increasingly difficult to maintain. In almost every country throughout Europe sumptuary restrictions gradually disappeared, or their enforcement was relaxed at this time, a recognition of the vital role that consumption now played in the economic household.

**ENGLAND.** In England, by contrast, sumptuary law disappeared a century earlier than in other parts of Eu-

rope. The country’s controls on clothing were abolished in 1604 when Parliament repealed the previous royal proclamations of Elizabeth I. During her reign the queen had frequently pronounced sumptuary proclamations that, like their French counterparts, attempted to enforce a vision of social hierarchy by limiting certain items of luxurious dress to members of the nobility or other high-ranking classes in society. The Stuart King James I who succeeded Elizabeth in 1603 wished to continue to legislate his subjects’ clothing in this way, too, but in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, legislation enacted through royal proclamations had grown increasingly controversial in England. The English Parliament attempted to protect its prerogatives as the legislative power within the state by arguing that all regulation should originate under its supervision. In England, sumptuary legislation thus floundered on the disputes between Crown and Parliament that became increasingly common in the first half of the seventeenth century. Numerous new attempts to regulate dress at this time ultimately failed because of the constant wrangling that occurred between king and Parliament concerning the nature of their own powers and prerogatives. As these disputes came increasingly to take on the nature of a religious crisis between Puritanism and Anglicanism, disputes bristled in the country about clothing and the excesses of contemporary dress. The Puritans, in fact, supported a sober and restrained style, in contrast to the aristocratic Cavalier party that stood behind the Crown. Puritan settlers took the traditional regulations of sumptuary law to New England, where a host of restrictions on dress appeared in the seventeenth century. Yet in England itself restrictions on clothing disappeared, not because they were unpopular in and of themselves, but because of disagreements about how they should be formulated and enacted in the English state.

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## FASHION TRENDS IN THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

**SPANISH DOMINANCE.** During the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the styles of Spain dominated throughout Europe. In the long reign of Philip II (r. 1556–1598) the country was undoubtedly the most powerful in the continent, enriched as it was through its New World colonies and vast European holdings. Despite financial and military setbacks in the second half of the sixteenth century, Spain dominated European affairs, and its manners and clothing were widely imitated by aristocrats and wealthy city people from Austria and Hungary in Central Europe to the Netherlands and France in the west. While Spanish style achieved a general acceptance throughout much of Europe in the later sixteenth century, its influence did not persist past the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth. Thus the great age of Spanish fashion in Europe coincided roughly with the period of the country's international prominence. After 1620, Spain's defeats in wars against its rebellious subjects in the Netherlands and its disastrous involvements in the religious and political intrigues of the Thirty Years' War in Central Europe left the country impoverished and in an increasingly weakened state on the international scene. Yet in the years that Spain's dominance over European affairs persisted, Europe's aristocrats and merchants tended to conform to the styles of the Spanish court and its royal officials, who came to be widely admired throughout Europe for the elegance yet severity of their deportment and the somber dignity of their clothing.

**ELEMENTS OF SPANISH STYLE.** In discussing the influence of Spain at this point in European fashion, a distinction must first be made between the styles of Spain itself and the ways in which they were interpreted and refashioned elsewhere in Europe. Spanish clothing was widely known and respected in Europe around 1600 for the skill displayed in its tailoring and the magnificence of its materials. Wealthy and aristocratic Spaniards favored dark and somber colors that set off their jewels and other elements of decorative trim. Elsewhere in Europe, the restraint evident in Spanish fashion was frequently jettisoned, and helped to inspire fashions that were more purely decorative. Indeed the period between 1580 and 1620 saw some of the most elaborate costumes appear in court societies throughout Europe, and these were notable for their exaggerated lines and sheer artifice. During the sixteenth century several Spanish innovations in dress had spread throughout Europe, including the farthingale, the cape, and the ruff. The far-



Portrait of Marie de' Medici, Queen of France by Peter Paul Rubens. © FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS.

thingale was known in Spanish as the *verdugado*, and had first appeared as an element of women's dress in the country around 1500. The farthingale was a stiffened underskirt frequently outfitted with wood or whalebone hoops that made a woman's skirt stand out and fall into a cone-shaped pattern. Elsewhere in Europe this pattern inspired considerable innovations, as in France where farthingales appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century that were constructed in a simple drum rather than cone shape. By the end of the sixteenth century such skirts had often become very wide, as can be seen in many of the late portraits of the English Queen Elizabeth. To accentuate the lines of these English farthingales, it became common to tie a bum roll around a woman's waist so that the skirt stood out even further from the farthingale's structure. The ruff was a second popular Spanish style of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and one that, like the farthingale, was open to an almost infinite variety of elaboration and reinterpretation. In Spain, these fashions for the neck were actually quite restrained, but with the introduction of starch throughout Europe in the later sixteenth century, they became quite large and complex everywhere else. The craze for the ruff's elaborate sculpted ripples and

cartwheel patterns reached its high point in the early years of the seventeenth century, but its popularity faded by about 1620. By contrast, the taste for cloaks or Spanish capes proved to be more enduring. The fashion for these loose-fitting outer garments had spread throughout Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century, and had showed considerable variety in length and cut. Cloaks were worn over both shoulders or artfully draped over just one. In Spain, capes had usually been constructed out of heavy and dignified cloth, but elsewhere in Europe, they, like other elements of Spanish dress, became elaborately decorated. The cloak had a perennial appeal as well. It persisted as a man's style throughout Europe for much of the seventeenth century, but was replaced in the 1670s by the French *justaucorps*, a long fitted jacket worn over a shorter vest. In the eighteenth century, though, capes made a comeback, particularly as an element of evening attire.

**CHARACTER OF THE SPANISH STYLE.** Like much of the clothing of the later Renaissance, the Spanish styles of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that were popular among wealthy and aristocratic Europeans were notably complex, elaborate, and uncomfortable. The act of dressing itself was a complicated task for the wealthy, and the aid of servants was frequently necessary to apply many layers of clothing. In contrast to the modern world in which Westerners usually wear only under and outer garments, early-modern Europeans wore many separate items of dress that combined to create a complete ensemble. Women's outfits consisted of a farthingale, petticoats, corset, outer skirts, a bodice, sleeves, a stomacher (a decorative V- or U-shaped garment that was worn over the bodice), a ruff, and from time to time, other elements like the cape or the bum roll. Men's garments were also multi-layered, and consisted of stockings, hose or britches for each leg, undershirts, an outer doublet, a ruff, and a cape. Both men and women often wore corsets. In the period mind, beauty was not natural, but an achievement of human art. Clothing may have covered the human form, in other words, but it also attempted to improve upon it, changing the contours of the hips, the torso, and so on, so that the figure took on shapes that were not natural, but highly contrived and decorative. After 1620, many of these more artificial elements of style softened somewhat before fashions grew even more formal and contrived in the court dress of the later seventeenth century.

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## THE RISE OF THE NETHERLANDS

**A VICTORIOUS REBELLION.** Since the 1560s the counties of the Low Countries (modern Belgium and Holland) had been waging a war of independence against Spain. To protect Spanish authority in the region, Philip II had fortified his positions in the region that is today Belgium. At Antwerp, he had created a bastion of Spanish and Catholic authority, and the religious intolerance that became customary there eventually resulted in the migration of many Protestants and Jews from the southern Netherlands into the free counties of the north. The largest of the counties that comprised the United Dutch Provinces was Calvinist Holland, where the revolt against Spanish authority produced a burgeoning population and an increase in trade. In Amsterdam, the policies of relative religious tolerance fueled the economy's swift development during the seventeenth century, while at Antwerp to the south, trade and commerce stagnated. In this period, the southern Netherlands remained a center of elite learning and culture, while Holland became the center of a thriving trade empire. In this way Dutch influence spread throughout Europe through the region's many trading contacts with other important financial centers on the Continent.

**CHARACTER OF DUTCH CULTURE AND COSTUME.** Although a hereditary nobility existed in the United Dutch Provinces, the character of life throughout the region was shaped by its cities, where merchant and commercial activity dominated. The Dutch church was Calvinist, and despite the presence of numerous religious minorities in the region's cities, Calvinism shaped the ethos of the country. In dress, religious convictions came to be expressed in a fondness for dark colors and a less ornate and decorated style. In this regard Dutch clothing came paradoxically to imitate the somber fashions of Spain that had been prevalent in that country during the previous centuries. These styles had generally grown more elaborate and ornate as they had been accepted elsewhere in Europe, but now the rise of Dutch influence throughout Northern Europe in particular promoted an increasingly conservative and less artificial style. In contrast to the clothing worn in the previous generation, the fashions Dutch traders and merchants favored were less constricting and confining and more



comfortable. Corsets, farthingales, and other examples of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century artifice were now abandoned in favor of outfits that granted their wearers greater freedom.

**DECORATION.** Two of the most characteristic decorative items of the time were the ruff and lace. Lace, the product of an industry that had thrived in the Netherlands since the Middle Ages, was almost always confined in Dutch fashions to the wrists and neck. During the seventeenth century Dutch traders conducted a busy trade in lace, which was primarily woven by peasant and poor city women in the towns of Flanders in the southern Netherlands. In contrast to the strongly geometric patterns of the later Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, this Belgian lace became increasingly ornate after 1600, first incorporating floral patterns into its designs and then elaborate, running scrollwork patterns by the mid-seventeenth century. Somewhat later, small freestanding ornaments came to be inserted into the open weave of the fabric at regular intervals. The techniques used to produce these highly prized designs relied on a combination of methods that were both native to the region and which were imported from Italy. During the Middle Ages Belgian lacemakers had developed their art by weaving together threads from scores of bobbins assembled on a frame with hundreds of pins rising from its surface. The character of this work was fine, but angular in its orientation since the threads were woven around numerous pegs. In Venice and other Italian centers of lace weaving, producers had long relied on the needle to create designs that were more freely flowing. By the seventeenth century Belgian lace weavers had developed ways of combining both types of art, thus producing work that was highly prized throughout Europe for its great delicacy and imaginative designs. The trade in lace thus became a major source of revenue, as the bolts of fabric from the towns of the Southern Netherlands constituted major imports in England, France, and elsewhere on the continent. At the same time, the trim was notoriously expensive, and prompted efforts to copy the work. In France, for example, King Louis XIV's chief minister Colbert imported Venetian weavers and issued a royal grant to underwrite the establishment of a state industry in lace weaving in 1665. At Alençon, Rheims, and a number of other centers of production throughout France, he charged weavers with copying the most intricate patterns of Belgian and Venetian weavers, while at the same time prohibiting the import of any more of the trim. His efforts gradually bore fruit; by the end of the seventeenth century, lace produced in France—particularly at Alençon—had acquired a repu-

tation comparable to its Italian and Flemish sources of inspiration. Colbert's successful protectionist efforts to establish a native French industry were not duplicated elsewhere in Europe, where lace production failed to get off the ground as little more than a homespun pastime until the nineteenth century allowed for its production by machine looms. To stem the tide of Dutch lace imports, most states tried to limit demand for the finery. In this regard the restriction placed upon lace consumption in the mid-seventeenth century by the Puritan officials of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was typical: lace was forbidden to all but the wealthiest members of society. In this way its cachet as a sign of social distinction only rose in most people's estimation.

**WOOL.** Since the Middle Ages the traders of the Netherlands had been actively engaged in the marketing of woolen cloth, and the commerce in this valuable commodity had helped to transform the European landscape. Wool from England and Spain had long been the most coveted form of the material throughout Europe, and the increased demand for fabric necessitated that more and more arable land in these regions be given over to the raising of sheep in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In England, wool was a vital part of the economy and had spawned a number of acts of enclosure in the country's parliament. In these laws the previously common lands of many towns and villages were turned over to producers, and the bitter controversies that these dispossessions caused was still a bitter memory in the country during the seventeenth century. The Puritan settlers who came to colonial North America, for instance, desired to protect the common lands of their villages in part because of their memories of the depredations that the wool industry had worked on England during the previous generations. The Dutch continued to trade in wool throughout the seventeenth century, yet at the same time the country's traders began to tailor their own clothing from the fabric, an innovation in a world where the wealthy had long favored silks and velvet. To this time, woolen cloth had been used for garments primarily by the lower classes who wove their own homespun or purchased cheap grades of the cloth. In wealthy urban and aristocratic circles, wool's use had been largely confined to stockings, undergarments, hats, and felt slippers. Yet wool was an imminently practical fabric, especially the worsted wools that became popular at the end of the Middle Ages. This new type of woolen cloth, named for the sheep-raising village of Worstead in Norfolk, England, was woven from the shearings of long-haired sheep and combed to produce a soft fabric that was surprisingly waterproof, resistant to wrinkling, and immensely

durable. The taste that Dutch merchants helped to inspire for garments fashioned from worsteds persisted into the eighteenth century before linens and eventually cottons surpassed their popularity. The new fashion for woolen garments also sustained the production of woolen cloth in England, the United Dutch Provinces' most active trading partner in the seventeenth century. By 1700 as much as two-thirds of the value of all British exports may have derived from the woolen industry, and outer clothing fashioned from wool had become a venerable staple in the wardrobes of Europeans.

**LOCKS, LACE, AND LEATHER.** Dutch elements of style spread easily through Europe because of the commercial contacts of this small but important trading region. The freer-flowing garments the Dutch favored were soon imitated throughout much of Northern Europe. Like the Spanish style that had preceded its rise, Dutch style was popular largely because of its ready adaptability to different circumstances. On the one hand, Dutch clothing styles provided a practical form of day wear for merchants, bankers, and other members of the urban middle classes in Northern European cities. The emphasis on a new informality and on comfort, as opposed to artifice, was enthusiastically embraced in Europe's cities, and the clothes that were favored there came to be relatively unadorned, even severe. Among aristocrats, though, elements of Dutch style continued to combine with a fondness for decoration, giving rise to courtly ways of dressing that favored generous amounts of lace and other trim by the mid-seventeenth century. By the 1630s, aristocratic dress in much of Europe had produced a style with a notable fondness for "locks, lace, and leather." This way of dressing can be seen in the many portraits of King Charles I of England and his Cavalier supporters, many of which were completed by the great Flemish artist Anthony Van Dyck in the 1630s. In one of these, *Charles I From Three Different Angles* (1636), the king's two profiles and frontal view are depicted sporting the elaborately curled long hair and lace collars that were then the aristocratic fashion of the day. Another portrait from the same year, *Charles I at the Hunt* shows all the elements then in vogue in noblemen's fashions, including a rakishly worn felt hat, an outer jacket or doublet worn over a lace shirt, and knee-length britches that met leather boots. The effect that such costumes produced was refined and elegant while at the same time allowing for greater comfort and freedom of movement than the fashions of the later Renaissance. In this way, then, the elements of Dutch style came to be combined with aristocratic tastes for luxurious opulence, and the fashions of the Netherlands, like those of Spain

before them, came to be transformed in ways that were very different from their original source.

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## THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV

**FRENCH CIVILIZATION.** During the long reign of Louis XIV (1643–1715) France dominated affairs throughout Europe. Louis XIV assumed the throne when he was only five years old, and instability, revolt, and other troubles plagued his early years as king. During his minority his mother, Anne of Austria, and his chief minister Cardinal Mazarin dominated royal policy and administration. In the years following Mazarin's death in 1661, though, Louis came into his own, announcing his intentions to rule without the aid of his ministers. Over the next half century he devoted himself to his own glorification and that of France as the most powerful state in Europe. Although he planned to rule alone, Louis nevertheless relied on a series of ministers to place his stamp on royal policy and administration. The first years of his independence were notable for rising standards of luxury at court, increased patronage of the arts, and a consequent brilliant flowering of French high culture. In such figures as Jean-Baptiste Molière (1623–1673) and Jean Racine (1639–1699) in the theater and Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) in the musical world, French taste set the standards for Europe. While influencing the rest of the continent, French arts and learning were, in turn, affected by the absolutist political doctrines practiced by the king and his chief ministers. Music, literature, painting, and architecture all flowed from the royal academies that Louis XIV founded, or which he expanded. These institutions controlled the production of works of art and the training of those artists who worked at court. They promoted tenets of design that were frequently raised to the level of rules that were inflexible and bound French artists to emulate classical principles. At the same time, the crafts and industrial production served as tools of royal government, as Louis XIV and his most influential minister Colbert nourished native French industries. The reigning economic theory of the age was mercantilism, a philosophy that linked a nation's wealth to its money supply and which tried to foster

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***OF THE FINEST GOLD**

**INTRODUCTION:** Madame de Sévigné was one of the great letter writers of the seventeenth century. Most of the beautiful correspondence she wrote was sent to her daughter, Madame de Grignan, a noblewoman who lived away from Paris and the court. Her mother kept her informed on many things, including the latest fashions and fabrics available in the capital. In this excerpt she describes how the latest style of “transparents” was introduced into court society through a gift made to Madame de Montespan, Louis XIV’s then-reigning mistress.

**SOURCE:** Madame de Sévigné, *Selected Letters*. Trans. Leonard Tancock (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1982): 214–215.

exports while limiting imports as a drain on national resources. The rise of mercantilist theory points to the importance of a “national economy” in seventeenth-century Europe. Louis XIV’s ministers and officials carefully developed native industries in the production of lace, fabric, jewelry, and other consumables that might compete successfully against items that had long been imported from elsewhere in Europe. Although other centers of design and production continued to be important in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, the royal industries that Louis founded influenced styles throughout the continent, a testimony to the success of the royal policies that the king and his ministers practiced. By 1700, the idea of fashion in Europe was increasingly synonymous with the trends set by the French court and by wealthy aristocrats and members of the bourgeoisie who lived in and around Paris. As a result of these developments Paris emerged as the center of European fashions, a role that it has continued to play until contemporary times.

**ZENITH AND DECLINE OF LOUIS XIV’S POWER.** The centralized and absolutist policies of Louis XIV meant that the royal government in France dominated and controlled the country’s economy and industries. At first, particularly under the leadership of Louis XIV’s powerful minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683), these economic policies produced brilliant results. Later, in less capable hands, many of France’s state industries underwent a period of stagnation before being renewed under Louis XV in the mid-eighteenth century. By the 1680s, though, most elements of Louis XIV’s regulation of the French economy were in place. The state supervised everything from lace making to road building. At the same time Louis’ grand pretensions and, in particular, his penchant for waging costly international wars intended to foster French preeminence meant that his state always rested on feet of clay. His desire to control his subjects’ religious beliefs and economic activity proved increasingly problematic as well. In 1685, the king revoked the Edict of Nantes. Since 1598, the terms of this

royal edict had guaranteed a degree of religious toleration to French Huguenots, Protestants who held to the ideas of John Calvin. Under the influence of his pious second wife, the commoner Madame de Maintenon, the king's attitudes toward divergent religious ideas had grown increasingly inflexible. In the years following the Revocation, French Huguenots were forced to convert to Catholicism or leave the country. The migration of Huguenots to England, Germany, Holland, and colonial America proved detrimental to France's economic life, since many of them were important artisans and commercial figures. Yet the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was only one of many measures that pointed to an increasingly rigid and high-handed royal administration. With the death of his chief minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert in 1683, Louis had been forced to rely on figures that were considerably less adept and who drew him into costly international wars. By the final years of his reign the advances that French industry and commerce had made paled in comparison to a mounting royal debt, corruption in public life, and an increasingly unpopular, yet nevertheless ambitious and grand, royal court. Although the king had been idolized and glorified throughout much of his life as the very epicenter of French life and culture, he ended his days as a widely unpopular figure.

**CHARACTER OF COURT LIFE.** Despite the long-term trends of Louis' reign, it is difficult to overestimate the importance that France's court life exercised on the imagination of Europeans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During his reign France's royal court became the major force in setting styles and fashions throughout European aristocratic society as nobles from throughout the continent imitated the elaborate etiquette that was practiced in France and adopted innovations in art and dress that had been pioneered in and around Paris. The stage on which many of these trends were set throughout Louis' reign was Versailles, the magnificent royal château that was located just outside Paris. During the 1660s Louis had begun to shower his attentions on this former royal hunting retreat, using it as a place for hunts, celebrations, and spectacles. In 1678, the king decided to expand the palace to truly grand proportions, and in 1682, he moved his government permanently there. At Versailles every element of daily life and court ceremonial was carefully choreographed and governed according to a formidable set of rules. These tactics were in large part a response to the series of rebellions known as the *fronde* that had occurred in and around Paris in 1648 and 1653. At one point in these revolts the underage king and his mother, Anne of Austria, had been forced to flee the capital and had even hid



Portrait of Louis XIV, king of France. © ARTE & IMMAGINI SRL/CORBIS.

out for a time in a stable to avoid the angry crowds and rebellious aristocrats of Paris. To insure that he was never again subjected to such humiliation, Louis defined life in his court circle in ways that domesticated his nobles, transforming them into decorous but powerless courtiers. As was everything else in the life of the court, dress came to be dominated and defined by the figure of Louis XIV and his family. Certain costumes were prescribed for certain occasions, and among the small noble faction that surrounded the king during his reign, expenditures on clothing were truly profligate, often reaching standards of expenditure that were more than 100 times those of simple shopkeepers and artisans in the city of Paris. The number of aristocrats that attended the king at Versailles was relatively small, however, and the Parisian nobles who rarely attended court functions were far less lavish in their expenditures on clothing. Despite being confined to a relatively small portion of the aristocracy, the brilliant patterns of consumption at Versailles prompted criticism of the French nobility and aristocracy in general.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***GRAND PREPARATION FOR A ROYAL WEDDING**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Duc de Saint-Simon was one of the most brilliant diarists of Louis XIV's and Louis XV's court. In the following entry he recounts the preparations for Louis XIV's grandson, the Duke of Bourgogne's marriage to Princess Marie Adelaide of Savoy. The marriage occurred in 1697 during the period of austerity encouraged by the king's pious second wife, Madame de Maintenon. Despite the financial problems of the latter years of his reign, Louis decided to celebrate the marriage with great fanfare, causing everyone at court to try to outdo each other in the clothes they purchased for the wedding. Saint-Simon relates that there were scarcely enough tailors and workmen to finish the outfits, and one noblewoman even resorted to kidnapping workers from another job. The Duc de Saint-Simon and his wife ended up spending 20,000 *livres* on their outfits alone, enough to have fed many peasant families for several years.

The King continued to be delighted with the princess, who fully merited his affection by her extraordinary precociousness, her charm, intelligence, and response to his advances. He determined to lose no time after her twelfth birthday, which fell on 7 December, a Saturday, before celebrating the wedding. He let it be known that he would like the Court to be resplendent and himself ordered some fine clothes, although for years past he had dressed with the utmost simplicity. That was enough for everyone, excepting priests and lawyers, to disregard their purses, or even their rank. There was hot competition in splendour and originality, with scarcely enough gold and silver lace to go round and the merchants' booths emptied in a very few days; in a word, unbridled extravagance reigned throughout the Court and Paris, for crowds went to watch the great spectacle. The thing was carried to such a pitch that the King regretted ever having made the

suggestion, saying that he failed to understand how husbands could be so foolish as to ruin themselves for their wives' clothes, or, he might have added, for their own. But he had slacked the reins; there was no time to remedy matters, and I almost believe that he was glad of it, for he loved rich materials and ingenious craftsmanship, and greatly enjoyed seeing all the fine clothes, praising the most magnificent and the best contrived. He had made his little protest on principle, but was enchanted to find that no one had heeded him.

This was not the last time that he so acted. He passionately loved to see every kind of splendour at his Court, especially on State occasions, and anyone who had listened to his protests would have found themselves sadly out of favour. Indeed, amidst so much folly there was no chance for prudence; many different costumes were needed, and Mme de Saint-Simon and I spent twenty thousand *livres* between us. There was a dearth of tailors and dressmakers to make up the fine garments. Mme la Duchesse took it into her head to send archers to kidnap those working for the Duc de Rohan, but the King learned of it and was not pleased; he made her return them immediately. It is worth noting that the Duc de Rohan was a man whom he actively disliked and never scrupled to pretend otherwise. He did something else that was particularly chivalrous, and showed how much he wished everyone to be smart. He personally selected a design for some embroidery to give to the princess. The embroiderer said that he would put everything else on one side so as to finish it. The King would not allow that; he told him most explicitly to finish all that he had on hand, and only then work on his order, and he added that if it were not finished in time the princess would do without it.

**SOURCE:** Louis de Rouvroy, the Duc de Saint-Simon, *Memoirs: A Shortened Version*. Vol I. Trans. Lucy Norton (London: Prion Books Ltd., 1999): 96–97.

**COURT DRESS.** As he did in most other areas of court life, Louis XIV established rules and standards for the dress of his courtiers. Royal directives concerning clothing were quite specific. For instance, at each of the royal palaces and retreats that the court visited a different kind of court costume was prescribed. At the small palace of the Trianon at the far edges of the gardens of Versailles, men were expected to wear red embroidered with gold, while at the royal hunting lodge of Rambouillet, those who accompanied the king on hunts had to don blue outfits made of heavy fabric that were again embroidered in gold. As in most royal courts, the ceremony of presentation was an occasion that demanded a different kind of finery from the other balls, ceremonies,

and festivities the court celebrated. No one might expect to move about in the court circles that surrounded the king without being formally presented to Louis XIV and the queen. For these ceremonies, women were expected to wear a dress with a tight-fitting bodice supported by a whalebone corset. Their dresses were required to have a long train and an opulent skirt, while the neckline had to be oval shaped and their sleeves short and decorated with profusions of lace. Most women's dresses on this occasion were made out of black cloth to underscore the solemnity of meeting the king and queen, although women who were in mourning sometimes wore white to emphasize the difference between their own personal tragedies and the public ritual of presentation. Men's

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document*

### CLOTHING QUEEN MARIE-ANTOINETTE

**INTRODUCTION:** At Versailles, an unbending court etiquette defined almost every aspect of daily life. In the years following the French Revolution, Madame Campan, one of Marie-Antoinette's closest ladies in waiting, published her memoirs and described the often tiresome round of activities at court that were prescribed by royal protocol. Her description of the process of dressing the queen each day runs many pages, from which this excerpt describing the choosing of the queen's clothes is drawn.

The tirewoman had under her order a principal under-tirewoman, charged with the care and preservation of all the Queen's dresses; two women to fold and press such articles as required it; two valets, and a porter of the wardrobe. The latter brought every morning into the Queen's apartments baskets covered with taffety, containing all that she was to wear during the day, and large cloths of green taffety covering the robes and the full dresses. The valet of the wardrobe on duty presented every morning a large book to the first *femme de chambre*, containing patterns of the gowns, full dresses, undresses, etc. Every pattern was marked, to show to which sort it belonged. The first *femme de chambre* presented this book to the Queen on her awaking, with a pincushion; her Majesty stuck pins in those articles which she chose for the day,—one for the dress, one for the afternoon undress, and one for the full evening dress for card or supper parties in the private apartments. The book was then taken back to the wardrobe, and all that was wanted for the day was soon after brought in in large taffety wrappers. The wardrobe woman, who had the care of the linen, in her turn brought in a covered basket containing two or three chemises and handkerchiefs. The morning basket was called *prêt du jour*. In the evening she brought in one containing the nightgown and night-

cap, and the stockings for the next morning; this basket was called *prêt de la nuit*. They were in the department of the lady of honour, the tirewoman having nothing to do with the linen. Nothing was put in order or taken care of by the Queen's women. As soon as the toilet was over, the valets and porter belonging to the wardrobe were called in, and they carried all away in a heap, in the taffety wrappers, to the tirewoman's wardrobe, where all were folded up again, hung up, examined, and cleaned with so much regularity and care that even the cast-off clothes scarcely looked as if they had been worn. The tirewoman's wardrobe consisted of three large rooms surrounded with closets, some furnished with drawers and others with shelves; there were also large tables in each of these rooms, on which the gowns and dresses were spread out and folded up.

For the winter the Queen had generally twelve full dresses, twelve undresses called fancy dresses, and twelve rich hoop petticoats for the card and supper parties in the smaller apartments.

She had as many for the summer; those for the spring served likewise for the autumn. All these dresses were discarded at the end of each season, unless, indeed, she retained some that she particularly liked. I am not speaking of muslin or cambric gowns, or others of the same kind—they were lately introduced; but such as these were not renewed at each returning season, they were kept several years. The chief women were charged with the care and examination of the diamonds; this important duty was formerly confided to the tirewoman, but for many years had been included in the business of the first *femmes de chambre*.

**SOURCE:** Madame Campan, *Memoirs of the Court of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France*. (Boston: Grolier Society, 1890): 156–158.

dress was even more highly prescribed on these occasions, although it was not as costly as women's. For men, the ceremony of presentation stretched over three days. On the first day, men were presented to the king in an elegantly embroidered *justaucorps*—a close-fitting, long coat that covered a man's britches and often had highly decorated long sleeves. This style had developed around 1670, and the justaucorps was usually worn over an interior vestcoat. These three pieces—justaucorps, vestcoat, and britches—formed the basis for the modern three-piece men's suit, but at the time the rise of this new fashion replaced a taste for elaborate britches known as *rheingraves* that had a wide leg and were decorated

with elaborate lace flounces. With the new fashion for the justaucorps, French legwear gradually grew more restrained, and ornament came to be concentrated on the outer coat. On the second day of a man's presentation at court, he was expected to undertake a hunt with the king during which he had to wear a vest and britches of red cloth and an outer coat of grey cloth. Finally, on the third day, men were presented to the king's family, and were expected to wear another outfit that was less grand than that of the initial presentation to the king.

**DRESS AT OTHER COURT OCCASIONS.** Court life demanded specialized clothing for a number of occasions. Besides royal hunts and ceremonies of presentation,



Illustration of eighteenth-century English gentlemen's dress. BETTMANN/CORBIS.

life in Louis XIV's court witnessed a steady progression of banquets, balls, diplomatic receptions, and theatrical and operatic performances that required sumptuous clothing. The ceremonies of the king's and queen's rising—known as the *levée*—and of their *coucher*—that is, their retiring in the evenings—also became central features of Versailles' daily schedule. Daily mass, too, was another occasion that called for finery. During the seventeenth century the cost of clothing a courtier for these occasions rose to new, unprecedented heights, but even this level of expenditure was to be vastly outdone by the excesses of the eighteenth century that followed. Dress and gambling were the two greatest expenses of those several thousand nobles who attended the king at Versailles. For courtiers, a typical day in the life of Versailles began with the *levée*. Louis XIV divided his ceremony of waking up and dressing into two parts, which became known as the *petit levée* and the *grand levée*. At the *petit levée* the king was washed, shaved, and dressed by his most trusted courtiers, and he said his daily prayers before being presented to a larger circle in the *grand levée* that followed. About 100 nobles attended these events each day, and it became a great honor to be asked to assist the king on these occasions. Daily mass, the hunt,

and a tour through the gardens were other events that filled the day, but it was in the evening that court festivities really got underway. Beginning about six o'clock courtiers were entertained with plays, operas, several suppers, a ball, and gambling that stretched deep into the early morning hours. During all this time only members of the royal family were allowed to sit down; nobles who broke with this key rule of etiquette were dismissed from court. After catching a short nap in the early morning hours, the aristocrats who attended the king were expected to be elegantly dressed and coiffed again to begin the new day by eight the next morning. This daily round of decorous, often frivolous activities was known to have physically, morally, and financially exhausted many nobles. Some fled court life rather than take part in the endless cycle. But for those who preferred royal offices and who desired to be at the center of power conforming to Versailles' routines was a necessary evil in obtaining the king's favor. At the same time the monotonous hum of royal social activity was not always constant. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, increasingly bleak financial realities, the king's growing piety, as well as his advancing age meant that the cycle of Versailles' social events grew more subdued. Still, taking part in the

rituals of state within the palace proved even then to be a daunting and expensive affair. While minor innovations were made in court dress during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the patterns that Louis XIV stipulated for both men and women persisted until the French Revolution in 1789. The Revolution swept away such patterns of dress and abolished the royal court, although the restoration of the monarchy in the nineteenth century brought with it new prescriptions for court attire. By contrast in England, court apparel came to be defined and influenced in large part by French examples in the eighteenth century, but these patterns of dress at court presentations were amazingly long-lived. Until the 1950s, those presented to the English king and queen were required to dress with many elements of clothing that had largely been set down in the 1700s.

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### FASHION BEYOND THE COURT

**CLOTHING SOCIETY AT LARGE.** The fashions of the court of Versailles are among the best known in Europe during the seventeenth century, in large part because of the wealth of testimony that has been left behind in art and documents of the period. Outside these exalted circles, though, consumption of clothing was considerably less grand, even among those nobles who did not frequent Versailles or who went there only occasionally. Cloth was an expensive commodity, although it was one of the most universally produced items throughout Europe. For most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the production of cloth was not mechanized as it was in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, but produced through a series of steps that have been described as a “putting out” system. Historians have described these techniques of production as “proto-Industrialization.” In this system cloth merchants known as mercers, rather than entrepreneurs or investors, parceled out various parts of the production process to families. Raw wool was purchased and then given over in succession to carders, spinners, and dyers, who prepared the thread for weaving. Once the cloth had been produced by various categories of weavers, the fabric was again turned over to others who were responsible for finishing it and return-

ing it to the great cloth merchants who sold it. While these techniques provided for certain economies of scale that had been lacking in ancient and medieval methods of production, cloth was still an expensive commodity. Thus one of the most obvious distinctions in the early-modern world between rich and poor was in the amounts of fabric their clothes consumed. Female servants, by and large, did not wear floor-length skirts, but ones that reached only to the mid-calves or ankles. Male shopkeepers and workers did not wear the elegant embroidered justaucorps tailored from silk and other expensive fabrics, but instead wore chemises or shirts, vests, and jackets constructed of far less expensive cloth. Even a comparatively wealthy bourgeois woman did not waste fabric in trains and elaborate skirts that were common among the wealthiest aristocrats.

**HOUSEHOLD INVENTORIES IN PARIS.** Another picture of consumption patterns can be gleaned from the inventories compiled of household goods at death. These inventories were undertaken in order to levy inheritance taxes, and so some families may have eluded taxation by giving away part of the deceased’s wardrobe before the inspector arrived. Still in a great city like Paris a number of these documents survive and their profusion has allowed historians to gauge consumption patterns in the city around 1700. At this time about three percent of the city’s half million people were members of the nobility. Great diversity characterized these aristocrats, and many divided their time between the city, their country estates, and Versailles. Those with modest incomes consumed clothing in ways that were little different from prosperous artisans and merchants. But in wealth and splendor the value of the aristocracy’s clothing as a group far outstripped even that of the wealthiest merchants in the capital, although the Parisian nobility, as opposed to those who resided at Versailles on a full-time basis, spent comparatively little of their wealth on clothes and jewels. Studies of the death inventories reveal that the average Parisian noble wardrobe, together with its jewels, was valued at around five to six percent of the family’s total wealth. At the same time, the deep social divisions that existed in early-modern society become evident when the values of the wealthiest of the nobility’s wardrobes are compared against those of modest workers and shopkeepers. The greatest noble families spent as much as 200-300 times more to clothe and adorn themselves as workers with modest incomes did. Thus sumptuous wealth and extravagant consumption existed side-by-side in Paris with relative economy, even privation. The consumption habits of Parisian aristocrats stand out in even greater relief when it is remembered that studies of death



inventories fail to take account of the substantial portion of the population who were vagrants and paupers, and thus were not subjected to inheritance tax. No group in the city was thus able to compete in splendor with the nobility, and although Parisian aristocrats may have been considerably more modest in purchasing clothes than those who surrounded the king on a daily basis, their standard of wealth vastly surpassed any other group in the city.

#### CLOTHING OF THE URBAN WORKING CLASSES.

The clothing of those who worked for a living in Europe's largest cities—artisans, shopkeepers, and day laborers—still showed great variety, and even the better off and poorer members of the working classes often tried to emulate, albeit on a far more modest scale, the clothes of wealthy aristocrats. Female domestic servants sometimes received the castoff clothing of their mistresses, which served as partial payment for their labor. These women sometimes remade these clothes to suit their own circumstances, reusing the vast quantities of material that had once been consumed in trains and elaborate skirts to fashion new garments. Like those men and women who served as tailors, milliners, and in the other industries related to the aristocratic clothing trade, the servants of the wealthy were often far better dressed than the poor day laborers or those in the humblest trades. Yet even at the bottom of the social spectrum, the poorest of French working women who were known as *grisettes* displayed a concern about their clothes. The term *grisette* had its origins in the simple gray woolen cloth out of which these women's dresses were usually cut. In literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries *grisettes* were frequently charged with having exaggerated romantic sensibilities, for falling prey to unscrupulous men, and for sliding into the world of prostitution that existed just below their class. At the same time *grisettes*, it was often observed, had a single outfit reserved, much like modern "Sunday best," for special occasions. While these outfits were usually made from materials that were far cheaper than the clothes of upper-class women, they often imitated the kinds of fashions worn in aristocratic circles. Such outfits provided a release from the drab functionality of everyday dress. The *grisette's* custom of wearing these outfits at public events on holidays and special occasions points to the increasing importance that clothing had in the eighteenth-century world as a marker of social distinction for all urban people. A poor working-class woman, anxious to better her social circumstances, saw clothing as an avenue to advancement, and as she dressed for public events after the working day, she aimed to project an

image of higher social standing to attract suitors. At the same time, her efforts marked her, in the minds of those from higher classes, as an upstart, and spawned criticism and ostracism.

**THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY.** At almost all layers of society, clothing was in constant circulation. Jackets, shirts, and linens were passed on as prized possessions to sons and daughters. Clothes were also used to settle bills with merchants, as part of the annual pay given to servants, or they were frequently sold or exchanged with secondhand dealers once they had outlived their usefulness. Even the wealthiest aristocrats often rented the outfits and jewels they required to attend court functions or to be seen at fashionable weddings and other social events. At Versailles and other royal palaces, the dictates of Louis XIV allowed all Frenchmen free entrance, provided they possessed the required hats and clothes. Such decrees stimulated the growth of rental merchants, who established themselves at the gates of Versailles and other royal palaces to rent the required dress to those who wished to gain entrance. In Paris, by contrast, more than a third of the population may have been employed in all facets of the clothing industry, that is, from the finishing and sale of cloth to the making of fashion accessories like wigs. At the apex of the Parisian clothing industry stood the mercers (purveyors of fabric), drapers, tailors, and wigmakers, many of whom set up shops in the area around the Palais Royal in the center of the city and in other fashionable quarters in town. Tailoring was a profession that required a great deal of training, and consequently tailors commanded large fees for the production of their made-to-order clothing. Beneath the shops of the greatest tailors, milliners, and wigmakers, though, was a diverse network of cheaper clothiers, secondhand dealers, and other producers. Cobblers, fan-makers, glovemakers, milliners, and furriers were just a few of the many professions that made up the clothing industry, although many of the city's population consumed clothes that were bought secondhand, or that were cheaply made at home or by seamstresses, rather than by the artisan tailors who catered to the wealthy.

**THE RISE OF LINEN.** One change during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that made a big impact on consumption habits was the increasing use of linen. Linen, a fine cloth made of threads woven from flax, had been in use to dress beds and to produce underwear for the wealthiest Europeans since the Middle Ages. After 1700, however, linen's use grew enormously throughout society, and the linen industry emerged as an important part of the European fashion world. Linen became a sign of social distinction as well as a marker of

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A THEFT OF FINE LINEN**

**INTRODUCTION:** As he matured, the French Enlightenment thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau came to realize the futility of trying to keep up with contemporary styles. He gave up all attempts to emulate the wealthy bourgeoisie and aristocracy, with their frequently changing clothing patterns and instead practiced a relative economy. Of all the elements needed by a gentlemen in the eighteenth century, clean linen was one of the most important, and despite Rousseau's relative economy, he continued to keep a wardrobe that contained 42 linen shirts. One Christmas Eve, though, his collection was stolen, and thus Rousseau was deprived of the last element of a gentleman's wardrobe.

However austere my sumptuary reform might be, I did not at first extend it to my linen, which was fine and in great quantity, the remainder of my stock when at Venice, and to which I was particularly attached. I had made it so much an object of cleanliness, that it became one of luxury, which was rather expensive. Some person, however, did me the favor to deliver me from this servitude. On Christmas Eve, whilst the women-folk were at vespers, and I was at the spiritual concert, the door of a

garret, in which all our linen was hung up after being washed, was broken open. Everything was stolen; and amongst other things, forty-two of my shirts, of very fine linen, and which were the principal part of my stock. By the manner in which the neighbors described a man whom they had seen come out of the hotel with several parcels whilst we were all absent, Thérèse and myself suspected her brother, whom we knew to be a worthless man. The mother strongly endeavored to remove this suspicion, but so many circumstances concurred to prove it to be well founded, that, notwithstanding all she could say, our opinions remained still the same: I dared not make a strict search for fear of finding more than I wished to do. The brother never returned to the place where I lived, and, at length, was no more heard of by any of us. I was much grieved Thérèse and myself should be connected with such a family, and I exhorted her more than ever to shake off so dangerous a yoke. This adventure cured me of my inclination for fine linen, and since that time all I have had has been very common, and more suitable to the rest of my dress.

**SOURCE:** Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Trans. William Conyngham Mallory (New York: Tudor Publishing, 1928): 561–562.

one's personal standards of cleanliness. If eighteenth-century Europeans still did not change their linen undershirts, chemises, and underwear every day as most modern people do, it was important in urban society to present an image of freshly starched collars, sleeves, and wristbands. Dirty linen became increasingly synonymous with slovenly behavior and sexual disorder. Armies of laundresses were needed to care for the sheets, shirts, napkins, and tablecloths of urban households, and in the countryside, thousands of linen weavers churned out various levels of finery in the cloth. In his *Confessions* the French Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) related his misfortune in suffering the theft of his linen shirts one Christmas Eve. While the family was at religious observances, someone stole 42 of the garments from the philosopher's home. By this time in the philosopher's life, he wrote, he had already come to realize the vanity of style, and the theft freed him from his last remaining tie to middle-class respectability. Although Rousseau's comments were, in part, a condemnation of the reigning fashion for linen, many Europeans seem to have shared his youthful consumption habits, and with the spread of industrialized production techniques in the later eighteenth century,

the fashion for linen became even more deeply entrenched into European society.

**THIEVERY.** Jean-Jacques Rousseau's experience with his linen demonstrates another trend that was common to the age: theft of clothing. Since clothing was a necessary, yet expensive commodity it was subject to frequent theft. In fact, one recurring literary motif of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature portrayed the sellers of used clothing—a key industry in all European cities—as dealers of stolen goods. In reality, the evidence suggests that these poor shopkeepers and peddlers were generally honest business people whose activities were well supervised by the police. In Paris, most used-clothing sellers were women, and, in fact, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they seemed to have played a key role in identifying to the police groups of criminals who were stealing clothes and trading in them on a black market. In Paris, the trial records from the eighteenth century reveal a steadily increasing number of complaints of clothing thievery. This type of theft seems to have been practiced mostly in Paris' poorer quarters, as the poor robbed the poor. Yet in the later decades of the century, the victims of many of these thefts came from the wealthy aristocracy and bourgeoisie

of the city; evidently thieves were becoming more brazen and selective in the choice of items that they stole. This evidence thus points to the importance that new standards of consumerism were producing in a country like France, as even the poor desired to possess and trade in the items prized by upper-class society.

**DRESS BEYOND THE CITY.** Although the clothing styles worn in the continent's cities are better documented than those of the surrounding countryside, the vast majority of Europeans in the eighteenth century were peasants who were relatively unaffected by the fashions generated in urban society. In some regions the percentage of people that lived on the land was more than eighty or ninety percent of the total population. While in some areas close to large cities country men and women emulated some dimensions of the urban world, much of Europe still lived in relative isolation from those styles. It is consequently inappropriate to use the words "fashion" or "style" to describe the clothing worn by the large and diverse class of Europe's peasants. The wealthiest members of this class certainly possessed resources comparable to artisans and tradespeople in the cities. Yet almost everywhere, most peasants were relatively unconcerned with emulating the styles they saw when they brought their wares to urban markets. The clothes these men and women wore were most influenced by necessity, and their patterns of dressing changed only very slowly over time. The fabric used for peasant clothes were homespun or cheaply purchased woolens, linens, and sometimes even cloth woven from hemp, the raw material for rope. Although there was considerable regional variation in the clothes that peasant men and women wore, common items of dress were nevertheless shared across much of the European peasantry. Costly dyes used in urban clothes were not common in the fabrics used in peasants' outfits. Instead, men's clothing were most often brown, grey, and black, while women's outfits expanded on these basics with occasional flares of blue, yellow, and red. The shoe, an invention of the late fifteenth century, was common in the countryside, although in many parts of Europe peasants continued to wear wooden clogs or wooden soled leather footwear known in French as *sabots*. Peasant women did not wear corsets or *paniers*, the elaborate hoop contraptions used to extend the line of a woman's hips. Instead, an almost universal outfit consisted of a calf- or shin-length skirt gathered at the waist. Over the top of this garment, women wore an apron that sometimes included a bib that covered their fitted undershirts and bodices. Lace caps were a common form of headgear, while scarves were often worn around the shoulders, the ends of which

were sometimes tucked into the bodice. Almost everywhere, men wore a form of britches and a vestcoat overtop a linen, wool, or cotton shirt. Generally, decoration and embellishment were spare on peasants' clothes, a sign of these garments' function as a creation of necessity, rather than of style.

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### THE HIGH TIDE OF FRENCH FASHION

**FRENCH INFLUENCE ON EUROPE.** During the second half of the seventeenth century France had emerged as the pre-eminent state in Europe under the rule of Louis XIV. Although the king's reign was plagued with problems, particularly in the years after 1700, France's hold over the cultural imagination of Europe in the eighteenth century remained strong. During the eighteenth century, Paris, one of Europe's true metropolitan cities, continued to be the center of the fashion industry. Parisian fashions were avidly followed elsewhere in Europe, and the dress of the eighteenth century acquired a feature that it has possessed until present times: its frequent changeability and constant alteration to suit stylish society's sense of the times. It was not until the later years of the eighteenth century that the notion of an "annual fashion season" really took off and became a feature of urban societies throughout Europe. But throughout the century the forces that made fashion an infinitely alterable landscape—subject to subtle modulations of whims, fancy, and tastes each season—were gathering steam in Paris. In the early years of the eighteenth century, French fashion dolls outfitted in the latest examples of court and city dresses were sent out from Paris to merchants and royal courts throughout Europe. These dolls were displayed in shop windows and kept women abreast of the latest trends in France. Later in the century, the fashion magazine replaced these dolls, performing much the same task of keeping women up to date on changes in style. The fashion magazine thus provided a cheaper and more convenient way to inform women of the latest changes in taste, and allowed for the circulation of fashion knowledge among an even broader range of society. Through these marketing innovations France secured a position in the world of European dress that it continues to hold even in contemporary times.



Mid-eighteenth-century women's fashions. BETTMANN/CORBIS.

#### NEW LIGHTER AND MORE DECORATIVE STYLES.

The French fashions that eventually conquered Europe were not the elaborate and imposing ceremonial dress typical of Louis XIV's Versailles, but a new sort of clothing that reflected the changing tastes of the eighteenth century. In the years following the death of Louis XIV, the tastes of wealthy Parisians began to change rather quickly. The new king, Louis XV, was the great-grandson of the Sun King, and when he acceded to the throne he was only five years old. His uncle Philippe, the Duke of Orléans, served as his regent. In the later years of Louis XIV's reign, the king's increasingly rigid piety and France's involvement in costly and draining international wars had given a tone of gravity to the times. Although the French state was heavily indebted at the time of Louis XIV's death, the Regent Philippe favored styles and fashions that were lighter and less grave than those of Louis XIV's era. Despite France's problems, the early years of Louis XV's reign were notable for the appearance of a new "Regency Style," a style actively supported by the Duke of Orléans. Philippe moved France's government from Versailles back to Paris, where a glittering aristocratic society was just beginning to develop the salons and other social institutions that were to discuss the ideas of the Enlightenment. In the houses of the wealthiest Parisian nobles a new fashion emerged

for rooms that were filled with light and with splashes of gold. The art used to fill these spaces suggested scenes of everyday enjoyment, that is, of popular pastimes undertaken in parks, at fairs, or in the countryside. New fabrics made use of patterns inspired by Chinese or Arabic designs that gave an exotically foreign taste to the interiors of the time. Thus the Regency fashions that flourished in France during the later 1710s and 1720s laid the foundations for the elegant, yet light and sprightly features of Rococo style that by the mid-eighteenth century defined upper-class tastes.

**THE TRIUMPH OF THE ROCOCO AT COURT.** Although these new standards of taste were rather quickly adopted in Paris, the dress of the court was at first barely touched by them. The prescriptions of Louis XIV on dress in court circles continued to be respected, particularly at formal state occasions. But by the 1730s and 1740s the winds of change in clothing styles were having their effect even there. Although Louis XV moved the government back to Versailles and relied on the elaborately formal etiquette of his great-grandfather's time, he carved out a private world for himself, his mistresses, and family in the grand palace that reflected the lighter, less serious tastes of the era. In the 1730s he redecorated an apartment of private rooms in the palace in the new less ponderous fashions of the day. He relaxed the ob-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A MORNING GOWN**

**INTRODUCTION:** Eighteenth-century men and women of fashion were avid consumers, and men were every bit as well informed about the latest fashions for women as their female counterparts. In the following excerpt from Samuel Richardson's novel, *Clarissa*, the male character Lovelace describes the attire of his love in the most minute detail

Thou hast heard me also describe the wavy ringlets of her shining hair, needing neither art nor powder; of itself an ornament, defying all other ornaments; wantoning in and about a neck that is beautiful beyond description.

Her head-dress was a Brussels-lace mob, peculiarly adapted to the charming air and turn of her features. A sky-blue ribband illustrated that. —But altho' the weather was somewhat sharp, she had not on either hat or hood; for, besides that she loves to use herself hardily (by which means, and by a temperance truly exemplary, she is allowed to have given high health and vigour to an originally tender constitution), she seems to have intended to shew me, that she was determin'd not to stand to her appointment. O Jack! that such a sweet girl should be a rogue!

Her morning-gown was a pale primrose-colour'd paduasoy: The cuffs and robings curiously embroider'd by the fingers of this ever-charming Arachne, in a running pattern of violets, and their leaves; the light in the flowers silver; gold in the leaves. A pair of diamond snaps in her ears. A white handkerchief, wrought by the same inimitable fingers, concealed—O Belford! what still more inimitable beauties did it not conceal! —And I saw, all the way we rode, the bounding heart; by its throbbing motions I saw it! dancing beneath the charming umbrage.

Her ruffles were the same as her mob. Her apron a flower'd lawn. Her coat white satten, quilted: Blue satten her shoes, braided with the same colour, without lace; for what need has the prettiest foot in the world of ornament? Neat buckles in them: And on her charming arms a pair of black velvet glove-like muffs, of her own invention; for she makes and gives fashions as she pleases. Her hands, velvet of themselves, thus uncover'd, the freer to be grasp'd by those of her adorer.

I have told thee what were *my* transports, when the undrawn bolt presented to me my long-expected goddess. —Her emotions were more sweetly feminine, after the first moments; for then the fire of her starry eyes began to sink into a less-dazzling languor. She trembled: Nor knew she how to support the agitations of a heart she had never found so ungovernable. She was even fainting, when I clasp'd her in my supporting arms. What a precious moment That! How near, how sweetly near, the throbbing partners!

By her dress, I saw, as I observ'd before, how unprepar'd she was for a journey; and not doubting her intention once more to disappoint me, I would have drawn her after me. Then began a contention the most vehement that ever I had with lady. It would pain thy friendly heart to be told the infinite trouble I had with her. I begg'd, I pray'd; on my knees I begg'd and pray'd her, yet in vain, to answer her own appointment: And had I not happily provided for such a struggle, knowing whom I had to deal with, I had certainly failed in my design; and as certainly would have accompanied her in, without thee and thy brethren: And who knows what might have been the consequence?

**SOURCE:** Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*. Vol. III. (1748; reprint, Stratford Upon Avon: Basil Blackwell Oxford, 1930): 28–29.

servance of sumptuary regulations in France, helping to sponsor an era of magnificent display and seeming abundance. During his long reign, women at court and in Paris's wealthy aristocratic circles played a new role as arbiters of fashion. The expenditures of aristocratic women on clothing were by this time about twice that of men, and the greatest women of Louis XV's court—including his most powerful and enduring mistress, Madame de Pompadour—defined the fashions of the era, giving rise to an era of Rococo indulgence and opulence that now seems in most modern people's minds to be synonymous with the style of the entire eighteenth century.

**ROCOCO WOMEN'S FASHIONS.** The chief innovation of the period in women's dress was the garment that

became known throughout Europe as the *robe à la française*, a gown that was worn over a bodice decorated with a stomacher (a decorative V- or U-shaped garment) and outfitted with hoops or paniers that supported its skirt. The gown was parted in the middle to form a V-shaped opening that allowed contrasting or identical underskirts to show through, thus creating an impression of an abundance of cloth and material. In the 1740s, these styles were often decorated with a profusion of bows, lace, elaborate braidwork patterns, or embroidery, and the sleeves of the gown were cut to make elaborate flounces at the elbows that were usually decorated with lace. While trains were common in the early years of the *robe à la française's* appearance, they tended to be ever more re-



Portrait of Madame de Pompadour wearing a robe à la française. HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS.

stricted to court circles, where the train was an obligatory element of dress. During the 1740s and 1750s the hoops or paniers of these skirts grew progressively wider. The fashion soon became popular among wealthy and aristocratic women almost everywhere in Europe, spawning regional variations. In England and Scotland, for example, women had abandoned the broad hoops typical of French gowns of this type by the 1750s, and instead favored only small side hoops at the hips or no hoops at all. The resulting innovation made their skirts trail elegantly behind them on the ground as they walked. The *robe à la française* became one of the most popular upper-class fashions throughout Europe, and it reflected the reigning taste for costly silks, brocades, and floral patterned fine cloth of the day. Many of the fabrics used in these costly creations also reflected the taste for Chinese and Arabic motifs, and during the 1760s and 1770s, the rising popularity of cotton meant that the garment came to be made out of this fabric as well. At court, more elaborate dresses constructed of taffeta, brocade, and other expensive fabrics remained the rule, but cotton offered the advantage of quicker production times, and thus a cheaper price tag, bringing the elegance of the *robe à la française* into the reach of a broader number of women in society. Many of the new



Eighteenth-century French court gown. © HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS.

cotton fabrics used at this time for dresses were printed, rather than woven from colored thread, thus greatly simplifying their production. Of all the cotton manufactories that turned out cloth used in these elaborate aristocratic fashions the most famous was the French factory at Jouy, near Versailles, an institution that gave its name to the *toile du Jouy* fabric popular in the second half of the eighteenth century. Louis XV had acquired this industry in 1760 at the instigation of his one-time mistress Madame de Pompadour. For many years, Madame de Pompadour and her circle at Versailles had disregarded royal regulations against the wearing of richly printed fabrics, fabrics long acquired from foreign sources. Pompadour's daring fashion innovations were thus a force that encouraged Louis XV in his plans to found a national industry for the production of printed cloth. The Jouy factory turned out a succession of prints that were filled with exotic Chinese, Arabic, and Indian motifs as well as scenes of everyday life. Since their appearance, these prints have become known in most European languages merely as *toile*. The influence of the fabric stretched throughout Europe and the many high-quality cotton prints produced there were avidly copied elsewhere.



Eighteenth-century French caricature showing a woman weighed down by her wig. BETTMANN/CORBIS.

#### MEN'S WEAR IN THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

For most of the eighteenth century the three-piece ensemble that included a justaucorps, vestcoat, and breeches remained the dominant pattern of male dress in French aristocratic society and came to be adopted throughout many parts of Europe. This style had first appeared during the late 1660s at Versailles and in Paris, and it continued to be elaborated upon in the eighteenth century. By 1700, the justaucorps worn at court occasions had become increasingly tight fitting, and was now embroidered at its front opening with gold and silver thread or with lace made from these precious metals. Floral patterns eventually gave way on the justaucorps to more restrained patterns of embellishment, while the interior vestcoat tended to become ever more elaborate in its decoration. It was not uncommon for the decoration on these jackets and vestcoats to cost a great deal more than the velvets, silks, and taffetas out of which they were constructed. The colors used in the most elaborate of these male costumes in the first half of the eighteenth century now appear quite garish to modern eyes. Such dress, though, was worn in the evening, when the glow of candlelight softened the ef-

fect and refracted the light brilliantly off the bright metal surfaces and precious gemstones that were used to decorate the buttons. In England and the Dutch Republic, patterns of male dressing were far more restrained than in France or Germany. The Protestant ethos of these countries made the elaborate display typical of Continental dress seem too opulent for daily wear. English men were said to prefer browns, dark grays, blacks, and blues, and although aristocratic men donned costumes for ceremonial occasions at court that were almost as grand as those of their Continental counterparts, men's costumes were, on the whole, restrained in England when compared to France. Men generally avoided a great profusion of decoration on the clothes they wore on the streets of London or Amsterdam. In contrast to the many different kinds of women's dresses that were popular throughout Europe and the many variations that existed in women's wear for different occasions, men's fashions were relatively standardized in much of Western Europe by the eighteenth century. The three pieces that comprised men's primary wardrobe—breeches, vestcoat, and justaucorps—were common to men of affairs and commerce almost everywhere, and were only distinguished by the wealth of their fabrics and decoration.

**THE WIG.** While the custom of wearing wigs had been common in the ancient world, it had generally died out in medieval Europe where religious leaders taught that false hair was a sinful indulgence. During the sixteenth century, though, the elaborate styles of hair worn in Renaissance cities saw the popularity of hairpieces grow among women. Queen Elizabeth had more than eighty of these to dress her hair in the elaborate hairdos of the period, while her cousin, the ill-fated Mary Queen of Scots, was also known for her great quantities of false hair. During the seventeenth century wigs had first become common as menswear at the French court of Louis XIII (r. 1610–1643). For the first years of his reign, his son and successor Louis XIV avoided wearing wigs since he was generally proud of his full head of hair. Still the custom grew among Louis's courtiers, many of whom relied on wigs to imitate the young king. The years of the mid-seventeenth century saw wigs make their way into the fashions of the age, since the tastes of the era favored long male locks that were elaborately dressed into curls. When Louis XIV began to go bald around 1670, he, too, succumbed to the fashion for wearing wigs, and false hair among French men became all the rage. King Charles II and his court established the practice in later seventeenth-century England, and by 1700, the wig was required menswear in English cities, reaching the zenith of its popularity in the first few years of the new century. As wigs became a common fashion accessory for men, their shapes

and forms altered. Originally intended to serve as a replacement for men's hair, the wig functioned more and more like an element of fashion. The colors favored grew increasingly fantastic, first evidencing a flair for grey and white, later for such colors as pink, blue, and lavender. In England and elsewhere in Europe, the styles of wigs men wore also reflected their station in life, with men of the law generally favoring a different kind of *peruke*, as they were then known, than merchants or country gentlemen. Although wigs continued to be worn by men after the first two decades of the eighteenth century, they were gradually confined more and more to ceremonial occasions and to circles of the nobility. Women, by contrast, retained a fondness for false hair much longer than men, although even among women a new fashion for more naturalistic hairstyles developed in the last decades of the eighteenth century. During the Rococo period, women's hairstyles frequently grew to enormous heights. Women's wigs were sometimes outfitted with replicas of model ships, dressed with turbans in imitation of Arabic styles, or with pompoms constructed of fur and feathers (a style inspired by Louis XV's mistress Madame de Pompadour), and with other excesses that were frequently mocked and caricatured even at the time. Urban legends grew about women whose wigs had harbored nests of vermin, and the doors of carriages grew higher to accommodate the styles. Stories of court women who had to hold their heads outside carriages to avoid spoiling their hairdos were common. These styles came to a high tide of popularity in the 1760s and 1770s before beginning to wane. In the years that followed, a taste for more naturalistic, less artificial hair fashions grew, so that by the 1780s women in portraits were seen sporting rather simple lace caps or restrained hats placed atop free-flowing, seemingly natural hair.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The Rococo in the Eighteenth Century*

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#### REACTION TO THE ROCOCO

**CHANGING TASTES.** During the 1770s fashion began to change in Europe rather quickly. By this time the



Engraving after a painting by Louis Joseph Watteau showing fashionable French dress around 1785. THE ART ARCHIVE/BIBLIOTHÈQUE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

tendency toward opulent decoration and to fanciful and fantastic clothing seemed to many to have been spent. While richly decorated women's dresses and men's suits remained popular in some court circles for a time, new and simpler styles first began to appear in England and then to spread to Continental Europe. English fashions, although profoundly influenced by the French throughout the eighteenth century, had long evidenced a fondness for simpler and less artificial lines than those popular in France. French innovations, such as the use of elaborate paniers or hoop skirts, had been widely popular in the country among women, but had given rise to native innovations. By the 1750s, English women began to abandon the paniers altogether or merely to favor hip pads that widened this area of the body. They also began to wear dresses in which the cloth was gathered and elegantly arranged to flow toward a woman's back. The reigning fashion common among upper class and aristocratic women in England became known throughout Europe as a *robe à la anglaise*, or "English robe." It was simpler than its more elaborate French counterpart, but no less feminine. Where the *robe à la française* had been open at the front to reveal a woman's corset, bodice, and



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***KEEPING ABEAST OF STYLE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Before the advent of fashion magazines at the very end of the eighteenth century, much knowledge about the latest trends circulated in the letters that aristocratic and wealthy women wrote each other. The following excerpts from Betsy Sheridan, an English gentlewoman, were written to her sister, who lived in provincial Dublin to try to keep her abreast of the latest changes in fashion.

1785. Tunbridge Wells.—Now for Article of fashions. I like your habit very much. I hope you wear no powder, all who have fine hair go without and if you have not quite enough 'tis but buying a few curls. ... My Habit tis what they call Pitch colour—a sort of blackist green not beautiful but the most stilish now worn. Dark blues are very general—indeed all dark colours are fashionable. Cambric frills and white waistcoat. Rather large yellow buttons.

Washing gown of all kinds are the ton. ... As a Dress gown I have brought down a Robe à la Turque—violet colour—the peticoat and vest white—Tiffany, gauze and pale yellow ribbons—with that a sash and buckle under the Robe. Gauze gowns and clear muslin gowns are very much worn in full dress. ... Miss Belsay has taken a particular fancy to every article of dress she has seen me

wear and frequently applies for patterns, this I most readily comply with.

1786. London—However you may tell her as a friend gradually to reduce her Stuffing as Rumps are quite out in France and are decreasing here but can not be quite given up till the weather grows warmer. The handkerchiefs are not so much puff'd out ... the hair loose—curls without pins and the toupée as if it was curled and a comb run thro' it. Aprons very general, chiefly tucked. Most fashionable collours dark green, pale straw collour, and a very bright purple.

1788. Hats are also worn, like riding hats. The Hair universally dress'd very loose in small curls. ... As to gowns—all kinds—Chemises, Round gowns, with flounce or not. Great coats made very open before to shew the peticoat. ... I must add to my chapter of Fashions that fur Muffs (very large) and Tippetts are universal.

1789. Wednesday they all sup here and there is to be quite a crowd so I make up a new dyed sattin Gown for the occasion. We are to have the Prince, Duke of York, Mrs. Fitzherbert, all the fine people. ... We are all busy making our gowns and aprons for tomorrow Evening so I must leave off.

**SOURCE:** Betsy Sheridan, *Letter from Sheridan's Sister to her Sister in Dublin*, in *The Cut of Women's Clothes, 1600–1930*. Ed. Norah Waugh (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1968): 125–126.

petticoats, the English version fit more snugly, and was all of one piece. The classic formulation of such robes was far simpler than the elaborate concoctions that had been popular in France during the height of the Rococo period. Typically, a *robe à la anglaise's* skirts were gathered at the back and allowed to fall in folds. A colored sash often held these folds in place and was worn high, just below the bust line. A new fondness for cotton muslins and for dresses made from white cloth and other lighter colors as well as the new cotton fabrics replaced the once great affection for expensive taffetas, silks, velvets, and brocades. English women also began to wear simple fichus—that is, scarves made of transparent material—around their shoulders, one of the defining elements of the “English style.” The new fashion spread quickly among aristocratic woman in Continental Europe, although France at first resisted the greater naturalism of these dresses. Despite the resistance offered by members of the French court and aristocracy, these fashions had begun to make inroads there by the 1770s.

**IMPACT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT.** The new styles of the era were, in part, inspired by the impact of Enlightenment thinking in Europe. In France, one of the most important literary vehicles for conveying the new values of this movement was the *Encyclopédie*, a massive, multi-volume project begun by the French Enlightenment thinkers Denis Diderot (1713–1784) and Jean D'Alembert (1713–1787). Published in 28 separate volumes during the years between 1751 and 1772, the *Encyclopédie* was not widely read by all French men and women, although it was avidly consumed by the upper echelons of society. The enormous work did not convey a single point of view, but Diderot and D'Alembert enlisted authors whose opinions often fit closely with their own. Fashion was one subject touched upon in hundreds of entries, with the *Encyclopédie* offering opinions on the history and usage of scores of items of clothing as well as giving advice generally on elements of good taste, manners, and etiquette. As the primary guiding spirits behind this enterprise, Diderot and D'Alembert championed the cause of social utility in clothing, customs,



Late eighteenth-century women's fashions. LEONARD DE SELVA/CORBIS.

and consumption. They believed, in other words, that society's customs and even its clothing should be judged according to whether they were truly useful. Thus in contrast to the guiding spirit of opulence and decoration that had prevailed in the Rococo style, the Enlightenment championed an aesthetic that stressed naturalness over artificiality. Of course, the ideas of philosophical thinkers like Diderot and those he enlisted to write for the *Encyclopédie* did not immediately shape the clothes that were worn in aristocratic society. But the criticism of the artificiality of the eighteenth-century style laid the



Portrait of Marie-Antoinette, Queen of France by Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE DU CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES/DAGLI ORTI.

foundation for a new taste that cultivated greater simplicity and utility over mere decorativeness.

**THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH TASTES.** For much of the eighteenth century, close contacts between England and France had invigorated the world of fashion in both countries. While English aristocrats and wealthy Londoners generally avoided the extremes of opulence of the French Rococo style, they had nevertheless adapted those fashions to their own purposes, and both men and women of the upper classes had kept abreast of the changes in style that emanated from Paris. At the English royal court the styles of prescribed dress closely resembled those worn at Versailles and in other French royal palaces by the mid-eighteenth century. Yet in their great rural estates, England's aristocrats generally favored clothes that were more rustic and natural than those worn by the wealthiest French nobles of the period. The fondness for hunting and other outdoor pursuits gave rise to the creation of the riding habit, a close-fitting coat and britches worn by both men and women. These rustic fashions, the Baroque equivalent of modern "sportswear," were constructed of simpler, more practical fabrics like wool and cotton than the



Court dress worn for the queen's birthday in England, 1798.

© GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS.

sumptuous silks, taffetas, and velvets worn by the French upper classes at the time. Although these styles were initially resisted in France, they had begun to make inroads there in the 1770s, and by the following decade were widely popular among the country's aristocrats. In the years immediately preceding the French Revolution, Queen Marie-Antoinette and members of her circle at court often indulged their love of English informality by choosing dresses that reflected the more natural and comfortable styles preferred in Britain. In 1783, the queen allowed one of her favorite portraitists, Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun, to paint her wearing this kind of dress. When the portrait was displayed that year at the Royal Academy's annual salon, it caused a great controversy; members of Parisian society complained that the queen had allowed herself to be painted in nothing more than a chemise, the equivalent of the modern slip. Vigée-LeBrun's picture was soon withdrawn from the exhibition, but the furor that it caused helped to popularize

the simple yet feminine style in French society. These dresses were usually modeled on the chemise and were sewn in a simple cylindrical tube shape. Equipped with a drawstring at the neck, they were worn gathered at the waist with a sash. Thus in place of the artifice of hoops, trains, and ruffled sleeves that had long served to delineate members of the court, the queen and members of the French aristocracy sided with the cause of English informality. Marie Antoinette and members of her circle indulged their affection for these comfortable styles at the queen's retreat, the Petit Trianon, a small palace at the edge of the grounds of the Versailles, much to the consternation of many of the traditionalists at court. When the party returned to the royal chateau to participate in the grand receptions of state, though, the tradition of court dress with its rigid and unbending rules continued to hold sway at Versailles.

**MEN'S DRESS.** The increasing divide between French elegance and English informality and practicality were perhaps even more notable in men's dress than in women's. In France, men in the 1770s continued to wear elaborately trimmed outer and vest coats that were tailored to show off rich fabrics of silk and other costly fabrics. By the 1780s, though, English styles were present among members of the aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie in France. By this time, the more informal and comfortable frock coat had become the norm of middle class and aristocratic dress in England as both day and evening wear. The frock coat had originally been an element of hunting clothing worn by gentlemen and aristocrats in the countryside. Throughout the eighteenth century its cut had grown simpler, and in place of elaborate cuffs and side pleats, English men favored garments that were elegantly tailored, yet devoid of decoration. By 1750 the fashion for the frock coat had spread almost everywhere in the English speaking world and was common attire for men of commerce and political affairs, country gentry, and even New World colonists. In England, the combination of frock coat, waistcoat, and breeches was worn everywhere except at court, and the elaborately cuffed sleeves had disappeared in favor of simple slits at the wrists. Decorated side pleats had also been replaced by a short skirt on the jacket that was held in place by slightly stiffening the fabric. The most common element of design in the frock coats of the time was their relatively small, turned-down collars. Instead of the elaborate lace flounces that had once been worn under these garments, English men now favored undecorated linen shirts and a shorter waistcoat that was of a complementary but lighter color from the dark fabrics usually used to tailor the frock coat. Simple tan breeches

completed the outfit. In keeping with this more informal fashion, men wore their hair naturally or lightly powdered, and the wig soon fell out of use altogether except by members of certain professions and among domestic servants, particularly footmen. While French men resisted these styles for several decades, they had gained a foothold amongst the aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie by 1780, and in the years that followed the frock coat and breeches became even more popular. Emulation of English dress was stimulated by the dictates of fashion, but at the same time the fondness for things “English” represented an important triumph of Enlightenment thinking in France. For most of the eighteenth century, Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau had celebrated the customs and mores of the island country for their modernity and freedom. Now, as the French Revolution approached, English styles became one way in which France’s aristocrats and bourgeoisie expressed their fondness for the concept of greater liberty.

**THE FASHION PRESS.** The taste for the new informal styles that emanated from England was fed throughout Europe by the increased production of fashion plates: engravings of men and women dressed in the most stylish clothing of the day. By the 1770s fashion plates had begun to replace the dressed mannequin dolls that had long been sent out annually from the major dress and tailoring shops in Paris to courts and shops throughout Europe. The custom of illustrating clothing in engravings had long existed, although not until the later eighteenth century did publishers and designers begin to exploit the possibilities of the press for satisfying an appetite for news of the fashionable world. During the sixteenth century German engravers and printers began to publish large collections of engravings known as *Trachtenbücher*, or “costume books.” The purpose of these volumes had been to illustrate the various types of dress worn by members of society’s different orders and professions. As the custom of producing these costume books spread throughout Europe, these books served by and large to satisfy an anthropological interest. Costume books, for instance, had often informed their readers of the kinds of clothing that were worn in societies throughout the world, satisfying an innate human curiosity about the exotic customs and manners of other peoples. In the later decades of the eighteenth century French artists, designers, and printers began to sense the commercial possibilities that lay within the medium. They now used it to satisfy readers’ desires to learn about the latest styles worn by the country’s aristocracy. In 1775, one of the most brilliant and beautiful of all the



French fashion plate from 1778, showing a couple promenading through the Palais-Royale, Paris. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

costume books appeared under the title *Le Monument du costume physique et moral de la fin du dix-huitième siècle* (Monument of the Physical and Moral Costume at the End of the Eighteenth Century). The accomplished artist Jean-Michel Moreau (1741–1814) drew many of the designs for the plates that illustrated the work, while the novelist Restif de la Bretonne (1734–1806) wrote the accompanying text. Today, the work’s illustrations continue to be widely admired, and their influence on fashion journalism has long been recognized. In capturing the styles and dress of the period, Moreau and the other artists who contributed to the series did not pose men and women lifelessly, but instead, like modern photojournalists, they showed a young man and woman of fashion going about their social duties on the Parisian scene. The work’s prints thus captured its imaginary characters in the fashionable world in settings that were by and large natural.

**FASHION MAGAZINES.** In the years that followed the success of the *Monument* other printers in Paris responded by commissioning series of fashion engravings

from other prominent artists and distributing them in small collections. By 1778, two Parisian publishers, Jean Esnaut and Michel Rapilly, commenced the distribution of their *Gallerie des modes et costumes français* (Gallery of French Style and Costumes). Over the next decade Esnaut and Rapilly produced some seventy different collections of fashion plates that they released every few months. Each collection contained six colored engravings of costumes currently being worn on the Parisian scene. The popularity of the *Gallery* prompted many leading artists of the day to draw illustrations for these collections and thus high art and popular tastes for style combined to make the new fashion plates an immediate success. The *Gallery's* appeal soon prompted other imitators, and by the later 1780s France had a number of regularly published fashion magazines or journals. The first of these, *Les Cabinet des modes* (The Cabinet of Style) commenced publication in 1785, but soon changed its name to *Le Magazine du modes nouvelles françaises et anglaises* (The Magazine of New French and English Styles) one year later to take account of the widespread popularity of more informal English dress. The periodical appeared every two weeks, complete with several fashion plates and articles that informed readers about the latest changes in dress. Despite the aristocratic tone of the magazine, publication continued even during the first years of the French Revolution, and in 1790, the journal became known merely as *Le Journal de la mode et la goût* (The Journal of Style and Taste). When the *Journal* ceased publication in 1793, other fashion magazines continued to proliferate on the scene, some appearing at intervals as often as every five days. By this time styles began to change so quickly that Paris's new ranks of fashion journalists and illustrators faced a serious challenge in keeping up with the pace of style.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The Development of Neoclassicism*

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## FASHION DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

**UPHEAVAL.** The years following the Revolution in France in 1789 brought massive upheaval and changes in French society, which, in turn, produced profound changes in dress and fashion. Clothing had long served in France as one of the most visible markers of social privilege and aristocratic status, so it is hardly surprising, then, that fashion was deeply affected by the course of revolutionary changes. The royal court's dress had long been prescribed by an unbending etiquette that had originally been fashioned by Louis XIV, author of the absolutist system of government that had transformed the country into Europe's greatest seventeenth-century power. During the eighteenth century this system had grown increasingly unwieldy, corrupt, and outmoded, and the privileges of aristocracy and the court seemed in the eyes of many to be an evil that needed to be rooted out if the country was to move forward. In the first years of the Revolution many aristocrats and wealthy French bourgeoisie agreed with this conclusion, and the initial phases of political change in the Revolution were marked by relative unanimity concerning the abolition of ancient noble privileges, clerical status, and distinctions of rank. A swiftly changing political scene, however, marked the clergy, the aristocracy, and those who served them as forces of counter-revolution among those who advocated more radical changes in government and society. During the Reign of Terror that began in 1792, thousands of French nobles, priests, and those who sympathized with them were guillotined. In the midst of these troubles, clothing played an important symbolic function, as men and women relied upon it to express their political convictions; dress became alternately a way to support or to condemn revolutionary change. The aristocratic fashions of the eighteenth century were seen as an evil that needed to be suppressed, and the Revolution moved to condemn those elements of dress that embodied traditional aristocratic society. Expensive silks, taffetas, velvets, and other costly elements of clothing were prohibited as France's new government tried to dictate a new order in which fraternity, rather than privilege, might be realized.

**CLOTHING AS SYMBOLS.** From the earliest days of the Revolution elements of dress played a vital role in the political movement's identity. In the wake of the Storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789, the government of the city of Paris decreed that all citizens in the capital must wear a tricolor cockade, a round emblem constructed of ribbons displaying the city's colors of red and blue as well as the monarchy's standard white. Even

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE POLITICS OF COLOR**

**INTRODUCTION:** In early-modern Europe clothing played a vital role in identifying the status of particular groups in society. With the coming of the French Revolution the symbolic role of clothing continued, and men and women relied on their outfits to make statements about their support or rejection of the principles of the era. Color became a particularly important vehicle for showing one's political sympathy. In the following excerpt from *The Secret Memoirs of Princess Lamballe*, the editor, Catherine Hyde, the Marquise de Gouvion Broglie describes problems she had with an outfit she wore to the Opera, as well as the surly attitude of French soldiers when she refused to show she was wearing the revolutionary tricolor—red, white, and blue. The writer was an Englishwoman, married to a French nobleman, and part of the inner circle that surrounded Queen Marie-Antoinette.

The reader will not, I trust, be dissatisfied at reposing for a moment from the sad story of the Princesse de Lamballe to hear some ridiculous circumstances which occurred to me individually; and which, though they form no part of the history, are sufficiently illustrative of the temper of the times.

I had been sent to England to put some letters into the post office for the Prince de Conde, and had just returned. The fashion then in England was a black dress, Spanish hat, and yellow satin lining, with three ostrich feathers forming the Prince of Wales's crest, and bearing his inscription, "*Ich dien*, I serve." (This crest and motto date as far back, I believe, as the time of Edward, the Black Prince.) I also brought with me a white satin cloak, trimmed with white fur.

In this dress, I went to the French opera. Scarcely was I seated in the box, when I heard shouts of, "En bas les couleurs de d'empereur! En bas!"

I was very busy talking to a person in the box, and, having been accustomed to hear and see partial riots in the pit, I paid no attention; never dreaming that my poor hat and feathers, and cloak, were the cause of the commotion, till an officer in the national guard very politely knocked at the door of the box, and told me I must either take them off or leave the theatre.

There is nothing I more dislike than being thought particular, or disposed to attract attention by dress. The moment, therefore, I found myself thus unintentionally the object of a whole theatre's disturbance, in the first impulse of indignation, I impetuously caught off the cloak

and hat, and flung them into the pit, at the very faces of the rioters.

The theatre instantly rang with applause. The obnoxious articles were carefully folded up and taken to the officer of the guard, who, when I left the box, at the end of the opera, brought them to me and offered to assist me in putting them on; but I refused them with true cavalier-like loftiness, and entered my carriage without either hat or cloak.

There were many of the audience collected round the carriage at the time, who, witnessing my rejection of the insulted colours, again loudly cheered me; but insisted on the officer's placing the hat and cloak in the carriage, which drove off amidst the most violent acclamations.

Another day, as I was going to walk in the Tuileries (which I generally did after riding on horseback), the guards crossed their bayonets at the gate and forbade my entering. I asked them why. They told me no one was allowed to walk there without the national ribbon.

Now, I always had one of these national ribbons about me, from the time they were first worn; but I kept it in the inside of my riding-habit; and on that day, in particular, my supply was unusually ample, for I had on a new riding-habit, the petticoat of which was so very long and heavy that I bought a large quantity to tie round my waist, and fasten up the dress, to prevent it from falling about my feet.

However, I was determined to plague the guards for their impudence. My English beau, who was as pale as death, and knew I had the ribbon, kept pinching my arm, and whispering, "Show it, show it; zounds, madame, show it! We shall be sent to prison! show it! show it!" But I took care to keep my interrupters in parley till a sufficient mob was collected, and then I produced my colours.

The soldiers were consequently most gloriously hissed, and would have been maltreated by the mob, and sent to the guard-house by their officer, but for my intercession; on which I was again applauded all through the gardens as *La Brave Anglaise*. But my, beau declared he would never go out with me again: unless I wore the ribbon on the outside of my hat, which I never did and never would do.

**SOURCE:** Catherine Hyde, Marquise de Gouvion Broglie in *The Secret Memoirs of Princess Lamballe* by Marie Thérèse Louise de Savoie Carignan, Princesse de Lamballe. (Washington, D.C.: M. Walter Dunne, 1901): 219–221.



Patriotic men's and women's dress of the French Revolution.  
THE ART ARCHIVE.

Louis XVI bowed to this pressure, and when he was reconciled to the city of Paris following the famous attack on the royal prison of the Bastille, he and his family donned the revolutionary cockade to demonstrate their support for political change. The demand that Parisians wear the cockade of red, white, and blue became an immediately popular symbol of support for the Revolution, and spawned new fashions for clothing in the tricolor. Women wore skirts made from tri-colored fabrics or shoes with buckles of revolutionary cockades; men wore red coats, white stockings, and blue britches to express their support for political change. Yet not all Parisians bowed to such fashions, and those who supported the upholding of tradition, aristocratic privilege, and monarchical power sometimes wore pure white, the color of the Bourbon monarchy. In the highly charged political atmosphere of the early 1790s, however, such acts of defiance could result in arrest and persecution, so most Parisians accommodated themselves to the new requirements. The sudden changes in fashion also deeply affected the clothing industry in Paris. Many of those who had served aristocratic society in previous decades now found themselves without customers, as nobles and wealthy Parisians fled the city. Rose Bertin, once a prominent milliner and a designer of the queen's dresses, even supported herself by selling cockades and other concoctions sporting the revolutionary colors. Bertin and other members of the town's clothing trade now indulged revolutionary tastes to make ends meet.



*Portrait of the Dauphin Louis Joseph and his sister Thérèse* by Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE DU CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES/DAGLI ORTI.

**IN SEARCH OF A NEW STYLE.** While the color of clothing and of accessories like the cockade played an important symbolic role in the early years of the Revolution, no immediate change in the style or cut of clothes occurred at this time. Instead most members of the bourgeoisie (the French middle and upper-middle classes) as well as many aristocrats that initially supported the Revolution instead wore the English informal fashions that had begun to gain popularity in France during the 1770s and 1780s. In place of the taffetas, velvets, and silks that were now prohibited as symbols of the old order and of aristocratic privilege, women's dresses were made of cotton and linen, usually all of a single color, and men's frock coats and britches were constructed of wool, and their shirts of linen and cotton. The triumph of the new style can be vividly seen in many of the portraits that Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), France's great Neoclassical painter, and other revolutionary-era artists completed during the early years of the new order. In his 1795 portrait of his brother-in-law, Pierre Sériziat, David painted the sitter as if he was an English country gentleman, complete with tan britches, a dark outer coat, and a vest and shirt of white. To complete the allusion to the "English style," the artist showed his brother-in-

law sporting a top hat and riding crop. A similar affection for the standards of English informality can be seen in the painting that David completed of his sister, Madame Sériziat, in the same year. The artist showed the subject clad in the chemise, the simple tube-like dress gathered at the neck with a drawstring and here tied with a green sash at the waist. Instead of the elaborate coiffures typical of the world of the pre-revolutionary Old Regime, Madame Sériziat is shown with natural hair placed under a lace cap and a simple, yet elegant straw hat decorated again with green ribbon and bows. The child at her side wears much the same outfit. It was such dress that came to be increasingly the norm among those members of the bourgeoisie who supported the Revolution's changes, as the course of fashion came even to be debated in the new national academies and societies of the time. During 1793 and 1794, the Société Populaire et Républicaine des Arts, the institution that replaced France's Royal Academy of Arts, debated the question of clothing in a revolutionary age. David, one of its most prominent members, took part in these discussions, which lasted over four months, and his portraits of his sister and brother-in-law were presented at the institution's salon in 1795, in part to demonstrate the society's prescriptions for the reform of fashion. In its deliberations the Société concluded that clothing should be hygienic, should not advertise its wearer's rank or status, and should allow for free movement of the body. In particular, the institution enjoined women not to contort their bodies into shapes through the wearing of corsets, paniers, or other devices, since these were styles that flourished under political despotism and which had largely restricted women's freedom to move. The body should not be concealed or contorted by clothes, but rather enhanced by it. Thus in searching for ways to realize these dictates, French fashion adopted the English style, a form of dress that ironically had been embraced in the 1770s and 1780s by the French aristocracy. These fashions now expressed the Revolution's longing for freedom.

**OTHER VOICES.** As the reigning artist of his day, Jacques-Louis David tried to steer a path of moderation through the increasingly turbulent political world of Revolutionary fashion. Appointed minister of arts by the government in 1794, David received a commission to design the uniforms to be worn by France's judges, municipal officials, and civil servants, a controversial duty at a time when radicals within the Revolution were advocating for the abolition of any distinction of rank or privilege. The uniforms that David designed for the new order thus tried to take account of the need for the

French state's civil servants to be distinguished from one another, while at the same time stressing their equality before the law. Despite his best efforts, David's decisions were controversial, and by the mid-1790s, dress and fashion had emerged as important ways for French men and women to express their political viewpoints. During the height of the Reign of Terror—that is during the dismal years between 1792 and 1794 when many thousands were put to death for “counter-revolutionary” sentiments—groups like the *Sans Culottes* advocated for a more complete reform of French government and society. The *Sans Culottes* (meaning “without britches”) were drawn largely from the ranks of Parisian shopkeepers, artisans, and poor workers in the city, groups that had long worn trousers rather than the stylish knee britches of aristocratic and bourgeois society. The group's uniform consisted of long trousers, a short-skirted coat known as the *carmagnole*, a tri-colored vest, and a *bonnet rouge* (or “red cap”), and their clothing became synonymous with their agitation for radical democratic reforms. This trend towards the politicization of clothing met a counter-trend in the mid-1790s, however, as greater peace and stability returned to France under the government of the Directory; groups of male *incroyables* (literally “unbelievables”) and female *merveilleuses* (“the marvels”) appeared on the Parisian scene whose clothing mocked the trends of the previous years. The female *merveilleuses* displayed daring amounts of cleavage or wore sheer dresses that exposed large portions of their legs underneath the sheerest of fabrics. Their dress thus mocked the Revolution's dictates that women's clothes should provide for greater freedom of movement by carrying them to a logical conclusion. The *incroyables*, by contrast, were dandies that distorted the new fashions the Revolution had helped sponsor, poking fun at the taste for English informality by sporting elaborately grand lapels, striped trousers, and bizarre “dog-eared” hairstyles. While the Revolution had hoped to found a new society in which all social distinctions of dress were outlawed, the *incroyables* and *merveilleuses* hoped for a time in which men and women might distinguish themselves purely for the imaginativeness of their clothing. Although their presence on the Parisian scene was relatively brief, both groups pointed to the emergence of a new consumer culture of fashion, one that now stretched far beyond the confines of aristocratic society, and which would in the following generations encompass an ever-larger portion of the European world. In the daring innovations of *incroyables* and *merveilleuses* we can see the genesis of the infinitely changeable and swiftly altering modern world of fashion. Since that time cosmopolitan Europeans have struggled to keep up with that world's seasonal dictates.



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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Fashion*

### MARIE-JEANNE BÉCU DU BARRY

1743–1793

*Royal Mistress*

**A SHOP GIRL.** The last of King Louis XV's notorious mistresses, the Countess du Barry, was born into a poor family and received a convent education before becoming a worker in a Parisian dress shop. There she developed her sense of style and came to the attention of a nobleman from Gascony, the Count du Barry. She soon became his lover and began to circulate in Parisian society, serving in turn as mistress to a number of French noblemen. Eventually she came to the notice of King Louis XV and became his lover in 1768. Since the death of Madame de Pompadour in 1764, Louis had not appointed any mistress to the office of *maitresse en titre*, the court honor reserved for the mistress of the king. Marie-Jeanne Bécu was a commoner, and one from an unusually low social background. To secure her rise at Versailles, the Count of Barry arranged a marriage of convenience between her and his brother, and with the noble title that she thus attained, du Barry was soon appointed *maitresse en titre*. In this position du Barry wielded tremendous influence with the king, although she rarely dabbled in politics. Shortly after coming to court she was drawn into a court intrigue that brought down one of the king's most powerful ministers. The results proved disastrous, and du Barry confined her interests ever more to patronizing the arts. She was particularly interested in the development of the art of porcelain manufacturing in France, and encouraged the king to invest in the industry, then located at Sèvres, not far from Versailles. A generous patron of the arts, she allowed her portrait to be painted on many occasions, and commissioned artwork for her country house at Louveciennes from the greatest artists of the day. The chateau

at Louveciennes was a gift from Louis XV, but du Barry set about decorating it in the reigning French fashions of the mid-eighteenth century, asking the court architect Angès-Jacques Gabriel to remodel it, and later the French designer Claude Nicholas Ledoux to build a pleasure pavilion there similar to the Petit Trianon at Versailles. Ledoux's pavilion became one of the first important monuments of the Neoclassical style in France.

**INDIFFERENCE TO FASHION.** Madame du Barry influenced French fashions during her relatively brief reign as the king's mistress primarily through indifference. In contrast to Pompadour, du Barry was little concerned about her appearance. Her dresses were relatively simple and her hairstyles less artificial and contrived than those of other women of the court, and thus du Barry helped, perhaps unwittingly, to strengthen the tendency toward greater informality at Versailles. In the years after 1770, the king's mistress was drawn into intrigues and disagreements with the Dauphine Marie-Antoinette, the future queen of France. Although Louis XV continued to support her in her role as *maitresse en titre*, she was soon banished from the court at his death in 1774. For two years she was forced to live in a convent before being given her freedom. She returned to her estates at Louveciennes and lived quietly there until the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789. At the height of the Reign of Terror du Barry made several trips to London apparently to bring funds to French nobles who had fled there. Eventually she was imprisoned as a counter-revolutionary and guillotined in December of 1793. Less benevolent and popular than Madame de Pompadour, Louis XV's longest-reigning mistress, du Barry became a symbol of the corruption of Old Regime aristocratic society during the Revolution. In that society itself, though, she had long been viewed by many aristocrats as a *parvenu*, a lower class upstart. That she was a woman of undeniable taste, though, has long been established by the scope of her collections and patronage of the arts. Her influence on the world of fashion in France was also felt in her favoring of styles that were less contrived and more naturalistic than those common during the height of the Rococo period.

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## JOSEPHINE BONAPARTE

1763–1814

*Empress of France*  
*Socialite*

**COLONIAL UPBRINGING.** The woman who was destined to become Empress of the French spent her early life and adolescence on the French island of Martinique in the Caribbean. Her father was from a poor aristocratic family, and he served there in the navy. When she was sixteen Josephine married Alexandre, the Viscount of Beauharnais, and moved to Paris, where she stayed for several years. Her husband was pretentious and often offended by Josephine's colonial manners. As a result, he did not present her at court, and despite the fact that the couple had two children, they were soon separated. Josephine returned to her island home of Martinique only to be driven back to Paris by a slave revolt in 1790. Conditions in Paris were not much better as the city was then in the throes of Revolution. Now older and more mature, she became a fixture of high society parties, but faced a threat in 1794 when her husband Beauharnais was executed as a counter-revolutionary. She survived a harrowing imprisonment and continued her rise to the top of the fashionable world of Revolutionary France. After her husband's death she faced financial crises, although she managed to gain a modicum of economic stability through her associations with men as well as several business dealings. Around this time she met Napoleon Bonaparte, then a rising officer in the French army. Almost immediately he was smitten with her, although she long remained indifferent to him. Sensing that the match might be advantageous, though, Josephine agreed to marry him in a civil ceremony in 1796.

**FASHIONABLE SOCIETY.** Although now married to Napoleon, Josephine continued her climb in Parisian high society. In the early years of their marriage Bonaparte was often away from the capital, and although he frequently wrote to his wife, she rarely answered his letters. She was widely rumored to have had a number of affairs in these years, and by 1798 Bonaparte was considering divorcing her. Her family convinced him to remain married to her, and he returned to Paris and paid off the large debts she had accumulated. In the next few years Bonaparte's rise to power and eventually to the office of emperor of the French drew the couple closer together. In 1804, they renewed their wedding vows, but this time in a religious, rather than civil ceremony. Initially, Josephine relied on her husband's position and her newfound status as empress to make favorable matches

for her two children in European noble houses. But her extravagant consumption of clothing, art, and furniture continued to be a sore spot, as was her inability to bear children, and by 1810, Bonaparte had their union dissolved. He was able to have their marriage annulled since no priest had officially presided at their 1804 religious marriage. Josephine was given a pension and retired to her country house at Malmaison. There she continued to entertain French high society on a grand scale, paid for by the funds she received from her former husband. When Bonaparte was forced to abdicate a few years later, she was protected by the Czar of Russia, although she died not long afterward, having reigned for almost two decades over Parisian society at a turbulent point in its history.

**FASHION AND ARTISTIC PATRONAGE.** Josephine was certainly not a woman of formidable intellectual powers. Throughout her life she labored to overcome her provincial upbringing, and in this she was largely successful. She possessed a single-minded determination to succeed in high society, and her sense of taste in clothing and art was an undeniable ally in the achievement of her goals. She was also widely admired for her good nature. In art, her patronage was particularly vital to the development of the Empire style, a fashion that was notable for its classical elements, which in many ways continued the direction of Classicism that had been popular during the last years of the Old Regime. Her fashion sense in the choice of clothes was recognized to be impeccable, and Josephine wore the Neoclassical fashions that were just beginning to become the rage in late 1790s Paris. Like Marie Antoinette before her, she had a fondness for the chemise, the white or light-colored dresses modeled on nightshirts and undergarments that were usually made out of simple muslin or cotton. In contrast to the chemises that had been popular in France in the years immediately preceding the Revolution, Josephine wore the style with a high waist, helping to establish the fashion that since her day has become known as the "empire" waistline.

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## FRANÇOISE D'AUBIGNÉ MAINTENON

1635–1719

### *Royal Mistress*

**AN UNFORTUNATE EARLY LIFE.** Born while her father was in debtor's prison, the early life of Françoise d'Aubigné Maintenon was filled with trials. Following her father's release in 1645, the family emigrated to a French possession in the Caribbean, where her father planned to take up a position as a royal governor. They discovered the post was unavailable upon their arrival, however, and so her father returned to France; his death there left his family abandoned in the West Indies. The young Françoise returned to France and was entrusted to the care of an aunt with whom she lived for several years. When she was sixteen, her aunt sent her to live with the author Paul Scarron, and a few years later the couple married, despite a 25-year age difference. Françoise seems to have had little attraction for her husband, although she did care for him until his death in 1660.

**MAINTENON'S RISE AT COURT.** The death of her husband left Françoise penniless, and so she entered a convent, although she continued to direct her deceased husband's salon, an important group of highly literate men and women on the Parisian scene during the later seventeenth century. Through the ministrations of members of the salon, she eventually received a pension from Anne of Austria, the king's mother. In 1668, she began to care for and educate the bastard children of her friend, the royal mistress Madame de Montespan. Since King Louis XIV had fathered Montespan's children, he valued Françoise's discretion and rewarded her financially. In 1675, he gave her the noble title Marquise de Maintenon, and she became a lady-in-waiting to the Dauphine, the wife of the heir apparent of France. As a result, she ceased to serve as governess to the royal bastards, and instead embarked upon a career in court society. As her estimation rose in the king's eyes, she faced the jealousy of her former friend, Madame de Montespan, and she may have eventually supplanted her as the royal mistress. When the queen died in 1683, Louis may have secretly married Maintenon in the same year, although this marriage may not have taken place until 1697. Maintenon was never named "Queen of France" because of her first marriage, common birth, and the deference that Louis XIV continued to show to his first wife and their children. Yet as the consort of the reigning king, she exerted a powerful influence over the life of the court. Intensely pious, she began to steer Louis away from the life of indulgence and frivolity that he had led to this point. In place of the many lavish court entertainments that had

been mounted in the previous decades, Maintenon favored quieter pursuits. And in general she was responsible for toning down the lavish excesses of fashion and dress that had flourished in Versailles and other royal palaces in the previous generation. Her portrait by Pierre Mignard suggests the fervent piety that she tried to instill in members of the royal family and at court, and as she aged, the images of Maintenon suggest the increasing gravity of her dress. In these years, too, she also took up her occupation as a teacher yet again, patronizing a local orphanage and sometimes teaching the orphans that lived there. In 1715 at the death of her husband Louis XIV, she retired to the convent of Saint Cyr, the institution that controlled the school she had long supported, and spent the remaining few years of her life in seclusion, mourning the death of her husband. Maintenon was not a woman of fashion. Her deep piety marked a very different strain of behavior from that which was then in fashion when she came to power at the French court. Through her religious zeal, she exerted a significant influence over the fashion of her times, weaning the French court away for a time from the lavish extravagances of the early years of Louis XIV's reign.

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## MARIE-ANTOINETTE

1755–1793

### *Queen of France*

**DESTINED FOR GREATNESS.** The woman destined to become the queen of France was born the eleventh child of the Holy Roman Emperor and Maria Theresa of Austria. Indulged as a child, she had few of the skills necessary to serve as a queen when she wed the future Louis XVI in 1770. Poorly educated and brought up in the royal palaces of Austria where court etiquette was generally relaxed and informal, she was unprepared for the severe and unbending world of Versailles. When she arrived at the royal palace in 1770, she was initially admired for her great beauty, but in the months and years that followed she was drawn into court intrigues and be-

came the subject of gossip. Her marriage, too, was initially unsuccessful since a physical infirmity prevented her husband Louis from consummating the match for several years before he submitted to surgery to correct the problem. Spurned in these early years in France by her husband, she carved out a life of gay frivolity at court. These years, too, were marked by feuds with Madame du Barry, Louis XV's last mistress and the head of a powerful court party that generally disliked the Austrian princess. When her husband succeeded his grandfather as king in 1774, Marie-Antoinette was to see Madame du Barry and many of her party exiled from Versailles.

**GROWING RESPECT.** During the 1770s respect for Marie-Antoinette grew, both at court and in France generally. As queen, she curtailed her attendance at balls and parties and concentrated more on her duties as wife of the head of state. In the decade before the outbreak of the French Revolution, she bore the king four children, but a daughter died in childbirth, and her sons suffered from a genetic disability that proved to be crippling. Since her arrival in France, Marie-Antoinette had chafed under the unyielding rituals of Versailles. A daughter of Austria, she had grown up in a very different kind of world from that of France's courtly etiquette. When she had arrived at the borders of France as a young girl, she was, as all queens were, ceremonially stripped of her clothes and redressed in the official outfit of the French court. During her years as a princess at Versailles, her dress and demeanor were determined by the standards that Louis XIV had established, and which were by and large upheld by Louis XV. Thus as she rose to become queen, Marie-Antoinette wished to exert greater determination over her clothes and manners. Ladies in waiting had long dressed the queen in clothes selected by the royal entourage. Dressing the queen had traditionally been one of Versailles' most important daily events, with attendance at these ceremonies one of the markers of where one stood in the court's measures of status. Marie-Antoinette largely abandoned such practices, allowing the celebration of such rituals only on important ceremonial occasions. Instead each day she had her ladies in waiting and maids bring her catalogues of the royal wardrobe and she stuck pins beside the items of dress she wished to wear that day. Such departures from custom angered some in the court, although a devoted following of confidantes surrounded the queen. Widely recognized as good-hearted and loyal, she was at the same time attacked for being impetuous and arbitrary. As her relationship with her husband matured, Louis XVI granted her use of the Petit Trianon, the small and very private palace at the edge of the Gardens of Versailles.

Here she entertained her closest friends and led a more informal life. These private entertainments at the Trianon became a subject of court gossip, and slanders of the queen were not uncommon in the Parisian press even in the early years of her reign. She had the reputation of being a profligate spender, although her expenditures, while enormous, were not unusual when compared against other members of the royal family. Her departures from courtly etiquette, such as her decision to meet with her dressmaker, jeweler, and other royal suppliers personally, generated attacks, too. But although she was often criticized during the 1780s for her wanton sexuality, Marie-Antoinette seems only to have entertained one serious infatuation in her short life, that is, for the Swedish nobleman Count Axel von Fersen. The two may have had a sexual relationship, but they nourished a spiritual affection for one another that lasted through Marie-Antoinette's life.

**A VICTIM OF FASHION.** Given her penchant for informality, Marie-Antoinette was drawn to the English styles of clothing that were in the 1780s beginning to be popular in France. In 1783, she allowed her favorite portrait painter, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, to paint her in a simple white dress similar to those popular in England at the time. The portrait was displayed at that year's annual Salon of the Royal Academy of Arts. The furor that it caused resulted in the removal of the painting from the exhibition, and Marie-Antoinette's decision to allow herself to be painted without the customary court dress was widely attacked as imprudent. Criticism of the queen grew in the following years, particularly as a result of the Affair of the Necklace of 1785–1786. During this scandal the queen was charged with having secretly purchased an enormously expensive diamond necklace through the intermediary of the Cardinal de Rohan, an important prince of the church, with whom she was also alleged to have had a sexual affair. Although the accusations were completely false and the Affair of the Necklace was, in fact, a plot organized to defraud the monarchy of the jewelry's purchase price, the charges made against Marie-Antoinette as a result of the affair seemed credible to many French people. The queen's long-standing reputation for extravagance caused her to be labeled in the popular press as "Madame Deficit," and in the years that followed, despite her efforts, she continued to be widely vilified.

**DURING THE REVOLUTION.** During the Revolution Marie-Antoinette's relationship with her husband deepened, and in the tumultuous changes that occurred following 1789, she frequently counseled him to stand firm against demands for reform. Her participation in the

failed plot to escape Paris during 1791 as well as her correspondence with those who opposed the Revolution brought her under increasing suspicion, and she was confined to prison, at first with Louis XVI and other members of her family. Later she was placed in solitary confinement for a period of ten months before her trial commenced on 14 October 1793. She was guillotined two days following her sentence, wearing a simple white dress very far removed from the elaborate courtly dress she had worn for much of her life as queen.

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## JEANNE-ANTOINETTE POISSON POMPADOUR

1721–1764

*Royal Mistress*

**TRAINED FOR A CULTIVATED LIFE.** The girl that was to mature into France's most important eighteenth-century royal mistress, Jean-Antoinette Poisson, grew up the daughter of a financier, at the time a profession notorious for its shady business dealings. Her father was exiled from France for a time when the young Jean-Antoinette was only four years old for taking part in a shady venture, but once he recovered his position he brought his daughter up to take her place in Parisian society. Interested even at this early age in art and literature, she associated with such important literary figures as Voltaire before she married Normant d'Etioles. She soon had a daughter with d'Etioles, but also felt herself increasingly drawn toward court circles at Versailles. In 1744, when Louis XV's mistress died, she came to the king's attention. She was soon established at court as the *maitresse en titre*, that is, the official royal mistress. She separated legally from her husband and received the title Marquise de Pompadour from the king. For the next twenty years, her influence shaped Versailles' society.

**THE KING'S SECRETARY.** Judgments about Madame de Pompadour's role in government have fluctuated since the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, for example, many historians judged her a wicked and cunning figure who dominated her lover, Louis XV. French historians, in particular, were anxious to treat the

Bourbon monarchs of the eighteenth century as weak, dissolute, and corrupt figures in order to justify the Revolution that occurred after 1789. More recent reassessments of Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour have shown that the king was a far abler monarch than once assumed. Shy and retiring, he acted through his mistress Madame de Pompadour, but she did not form royal policy. Instead the king decided on matters of state and acted through the more dynamic Pompadour, who was often able to win over many French nobles to the king's position. As royal mistress she became the king's private secretary. At first she was installed in a few small rooms high in the Palace of Versailles, but she soon set about ingratiating herself to members of the royal family and even to the king's wife, Marie-Antoinette. In this way her influence grew, and she eventually moved to grander lodgings within the chateau. By this time, Louis XV had moved on to other mistresses, although the connection between the two remained close until Pompadour's death in 1764. During the later years of her life she became an essential fixture in the court, influencing the awarding of royal contracts, offices, and favors.

**FASHION AND ARTISTIC PATRONAGE.** Madame de Pompadour was a woman of impeccable artistic tastes with a keen eye for fashion. At the time in which she rose to influence over court society, royal sumptuary regulation was still in force, although Louis XV's enforcement of these laws was lax. In her choice of fabrics and other items of dress Pompadour frequently violated sumptuary law and encouraged other members of the court to do the same. Her dresses were among the most luxurious ever crafted in the eighteenth century, and she sat frequently for portraitists to record them. For many years she was the most important figure of fashion in France, giving rise to the style of high-piled hair that still today bears the name "Pompadour." She also inspired the wearing of "pompoms," ball-like concoctions of feathers that were worn atop the head in place of hats. Her influence also reinvigorated France's cloth industry. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the fabric industry in France had entered on hard times, and Pompadour used her influence with the king to re-establish production throughout the country. Printed fabrics, rich brocades, and other elegant cloth had been prohibited, in part, because these fabrics often needed to be imported from abroad. Madame de Pompadour thus encouraged Louis XV to buy royal manufactories for the production of these luxury cloths, the most famous of which was the industrial centered at Jouy near Versailles. The printed fabrics that were produced there became known as *toile du Jouy* and were widely prized throughout France. Their

exotic motifs with design elements drawn from Chinese or Arabic art as well as their scenes of everyday life were imitated throughout Europe. Pompadour also used her influence with the king to have her brother named director of the king's works, and together with the king and her brother, she promoted the classical style prized in France in the mid-eighteenth century. Under her influence, the small palace of the Petit Trianon was begun at Versailles, and her brother also laid out the Place Louis XV, now known as the Place de la Concorde in Paris. A noble design, its regal and austere lines became the backdrop for the execution of thousands of French men and women in the Revolution, in what was ironically, a grand repudiation of the culture of aristocratic privilege upon which Madame de Pompadour had risen.

**LATER YEARS.** Although her literary and artistic patronage was largely successful, the king's favorite mistress dabbled more and more in politics in her later years, eventually to disastrous effect. Her party at court supported France's involvement in the Seven Years' War, a conflict that resulted in the loss of many of France's colonial possessions. In the wake of the war, powerful figures at court blamed Pompadour for the king's policy decisions, and the final years of her life were thus spent in relative seclusion in her apartments in Versailles. She contracted an illness, most likely lung cancer, and died in 1764 at the age of 42. Despite the relative cloud that had hung over her at the time of her death, the king mourned the passing of his favorite mistress and she was lauded by literary figures and French thinkers of the time as a force of kindness and justice at Versailles.

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- Jeanne-Louise-Henriette de Campan, *Memoirs of Madame Campan* (1823)—The author of this collection of reminiscences long served as a member of Queen Marie-Antoinette's private circle. Her memoirs provide an unparalleled insight into the court and the world of aristocratic fashion during the final years of the Old Regime.
- Louis de Rouvroy, Duke of Saint-Simon, *Memoirs* (1691–1723)—This extraordinary collection of reminiscences is particularly insightful about the world of fashion and style in the time of Louis XIV. Saint-Simon's work is also one of the greatest personal journals of the early-modern age.
- Marie de Rabutin Chantal, Marquise de Sévigné, *Letters of Madame de Sévigné* (c. 1660–1696)—This collection of more than 1,500 letters was written by one of the greatest female writers of the age. Madame de Sévigné kept her correspondents up-to-date on the latest happenings in French aristocratic society, sometimes informing them about shifts in fashion.
- Restif de la Bretonne, *Monument du costume physique et moral de la fin du dix-huitième siècle* (Monument of Physical and Moral Costume at the End of the Eighteenth Century; 1775)—This exquisite collection of fashion plates shows the progress of a young Parisian dandy and his female companion through the activities of daily life in Old Regime France. The *Monument* was a highly influential work in establishing the canons of fashion journalism.
- Betsy Sheridan, *Letters and Journal* (1784–1790)—This collection of diary entries and letters was written by Betsy Sheridan, a member of a prominent Anglo-Irish family. Mrs. Sheridan kept her correspondents up-to-date on the latest changes in fashion emanating from London and Paris.

# 4 chapter four

## LITERATURE

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	150	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	154	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>For Whom the Bell Tolls</i> (excerpt from Donne's <i>Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions</i> ) . . . . .	161
English Literature in the Early Seventeenth Century . . . . .	156	<i>A Thinking Reed</i> (excerpt from Pascal's <i>Pensées</i> ) . . . . .	166
French Literature in the Seventeenth Century . . . . .	162	<i>Communion With God</i> (excerpt from Böhme's <i>The Way to Christ</i> ) . . . . .	171
Baroque Literature in Germany . . . . .	168	<i>From Harmony to Harmony</i> (Dryden's ode for Saint Cecilia's Day) . . . . .	173
Restoration Literature in England . . . . .	172	<i>Grace Abounding</i> (excerpt from Bunyan's autobiography concerning Puritanism and salvation) . . . . .	175
English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century . . . . .	178	<i>A Vast and Charming World</i> (excerpt from Behn's <i>Oroonoko</i> describing a tropical environment) . . . . .	177
The Origins of the Novel in England . . . . .	182	<i>A School for Pickpockets</i> (excerpt from Defoe's novel describing a female pickpocket) . . . . .	183
The Novel and Mid-Eighteenth-Century English Literature . . . . .	185	<i>The Grand Lottery of Time</i> (Fielding discusses his personal narrative style) . . . . .	188
French Literature during the Enlightenment . . . . .	189	<i>An End to Misery</i> (excerpt from Abbé Prévost's novel concerning love and death) . . . . .	193
The Enlightenment in Germany . . . . .	195	<i>The Unity of Religions</i> (excerpt from Lessing's <i>Nathan the Wise</i> promoting tolerance of religions) . . . . .	197
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Daniel Defoe . . . . .	199		
John Donne . . . . .	200		
Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen . . . . .	201		
Samuel Richardson . . . . .	202		
Marie de Rabutin-Chantal Sévigné . . . . .	204		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	205		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Literature*

- 1599 Edmund Spenser, author of *The Faerie Queene*—an heroic work praising Protestantism and an ideal of chaste marriage—dies. The poet’s brilliance will continue to produce many admirers and imitators during the early Stuart period.
- 1605 In Spain, Miguel de Cervantes finishes his masterpiece, the picaresque novel *Don Quixote*.
- François de Malherbe is appointed court poet in France. His disciplined use of twelve-syllable Alexandrian verse will help to establish its popularity among seventeenth-century French writers.
- Shakespeare publishes his *Sonnets* in London, a collection of poetry that will continue to inspire writers for centuries to come.
- 1611 In England, the Authorized Version of the Bible appears. Over the coming decades, the work will come to have a great impact on the development of the English language and its literature, and will become known affectionately as the “King James’ Version” among English-speaking Protestants.
- John Donne publishes his *Anniversaries* in London, the only collection of his accomplished poems that is to appear in print during his lifetime.
- 1614 Sir Walter Raleigh completes his epic *History of the World*, a work that has taken him seven years to finish while a prisoner in the Tower of London on false charges of treason to James I’s government.
- 1616 William Shakespeare dies at his home in Stratford-Upon-Avon, England.
- Miguel de Cervantes, the great Spanish novelist and dramatist, dies in Spain.
- Ben Jonson is named Poet Laureate of England.
- 1617 Theodore-Agrippa d’Aubigné completes his satirical novel *The Adventures of the Baron de Faeneste* in France. Once a supporter of the French king Henri IV, d’Aubigné will soon become an opponent of his son Louis XIII’s government and will be persecuted as a result.
- 1620 Thomas Campion, a great Elizabethan poet and lyricist, dies in England.
- 1623 Jakob Böhme completes *The Great Mystery*, a work that makes use of late-medieval and sixteenth-century German mystical writings and which will help to establish the religious movement of Pietism later in the century. Böhme’s mysterious prose will also inspire many seventeenth-century German authors in search of a style in which to compose their vernacular works.
- 1624 Martin Opitz publishes his *Book of German Poetics*, a work that aims to create a cultivated German style through imitation of the rhetorical works of the later Italian Renaissance. This and other works by the accomplished author will have an enormous impact on German writers of the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.
- 1627 Honoré d’Urfé completes his *L’Astrée*, a pastoral work inspired by the conventions of late sixteenth-century Italian literature.
- 1639 The great German poet Martin Opitz dies.
- 1649 In January, King Charles I of England is executed after a parliamentary trial, initiating the period of the Puritan Commonwealth. Over the coming decade literary enterprises in England will be very



- much shaped by the country's dominant Puritan reformers.
- 1655 Cyrano de Bergerac, an accomplished master of French Baroque prose, dies after a brilliant career as a political and scientific literary figure.
- 1656 In France, the last of Blaise Pascal's *Provincial Letters* are published. These satirical works poke fun at the Jesuits, particularly at their legalistic notions about morality, and become widely imitated works, helping to shape the French prose of the age.
- 1659 In France, Paul Scarron completes *The Comic Novel*. The work is daring for the time because it pokes fun at heroic literary traditions.
- 1660 Charles II is restored to the throne in England, sparking a bold new literature of dissent from oppressed Puritans. Supporters of the crown will also produce a number of brilliant works over the next 25 years of Charles' reign, an era that becomes known as the Restoration.
- In London, the man of affairs, Samuel Pepys, begins keeping his famous diary, a work that provides unparalleled insight into Restoration-era events and manners as well as considerable psychological insight into the author's own character.
- 1665 The publication of François de la Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* commences a distinguished lineage of French works that consider virtue in a genre of writing that debates the merits and makeup of the "honest man."
- 1667 John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, an epic poem of redemption, is first published. The still-extant contract of Milton's negotiations with his printer is the first such English document to survive from the period.
- 1669 Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen completes his masterpiece, *The Adventures of Simplicissimus*, in Germany.
- 1670 Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* or *Thoughts* are published posthumously for the first time in France. These reminiscences and short reflections are noted for the beauty and eloquence of the prose, as well as their revelation of the author's belief in justification by faith, a position that he could not articulate publicly while living.
- 1677 Aphra Behn, Restoration England's first professional female playwright, completes her popular play *The Rover*, a work that helps to establish her career as a successful literary figure on the London scene. Until her death in 1689, she will be one of the most prolific dramatists and poets on the English scene.
- 1678 John Bunyan writes *Pilgrim's Progress*, his masterful statement of his Puritan beliefs and a work that will continue to serve as a source of literary invention and creativity in England over the coming centuries.
- Madame de La Fayette completes *The Princess of Cleves* in France. From the hand of one of the two great female literary figures of seventeenth-century France, the work is notable for its understated yet beautiful style.
- 1681 Richard Baxter publishes his *Breviate of the Life of Margaret Baxter*, one of the great seventeenth-century spiritual biographies, which treats the life of his wife and provides a depth of psychological insight into the world of marriage and family life of the time.
- 1688 Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* is published in London; the work relies on the author's own experiences while a visitor in the Caribbean. It is noteworthy for its frank sexuality as well as its championship of the nobility of native peoples.
- The "Battle between the Ancients and Moderns" begins in France with the publication of Charles Perrault's *Parallels of the Ancients and Moderns*. Over the next two decades French writers will debate the relative superiority of ancient versus modern literature, and eventually writers from

- other parts of the continent, including England, will enter into the debate.
- 1694 George Fox's autobiographical *Journal* is first published at London. The work tells of the Quaker's persecution at the hands of intolerant state authorities as well as his quest for God; it is among the most important seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographies.
- 1700 John Dryden completes his *Fables, Ancient and Modern* in the year of his death. The work is a collection of translations of ancient and medieval fables and ranks among as one of his most important literary creations.
- 1704 The Anglo-Irish writer Jonathan Swift's *Battle of the Books* defends those who have argued that modern literature is not the equal of the ancients.
- 1711 Alexander Pope publishes his "Essay on Criticism," a poem that attempts to create harmony among supporters of ancient and modern literature. The work establishes its author as one of the brilliant literary figures of early eighteenth-century England.
- Joseph Addison founds *The Spectator*, an important literary magazine on the London scene.
- 1715 Alain-René Lesage's picaresque novel, *History of Gils Bas*, is first published in France.
- 1716 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu publishes her *Court Poems*, a collection of works redolent with references to the ancients. The author's status as a member of the English aristocracy and as a figure of great erudition helps to establish her as a literary force in England.
- 1719 Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is first published. It will rank as one of the great adventure stories of the century.
- 1721 The Baron de Montesquieu finishes his *Persian Letters*, one of the first great works of the French Enlightenment. The work argues for tolerance and the acceptance of pluralistic opinions in society.
- 1722 Defoe publishes *The History and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*, a work that will have an important influence on the development of the eighteenth-century novel.
- 1726 Jonathan Swift's political satire *Gulliver's Travels* appears in London.
- The French playwright and literary figure Voltaire begins a two-year exile in London. His residency there will inspire the *Philosophical Letters* he publishes in 1734, a work that praises the greater liberty of English society as compared to that of contemporary France.
- 1731 Antoine-François Prevost's novel *Manon Lescaut* appears in Paris. The work's tragic heroine will continue to inspire dramatic and musical creation over the next 150 years.
- 1740 Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, often cited as the first true English novel, is published at London.
- 1749 Henry Fielding's masterpiece *Tom Jones* is printed. The work is a novel written as a comic epic and quickly becomes one of the most admired pieces of English fiction of the day.
- 1751 Denis Diderot commences the massive project of the *Encyclopédie* in Paris. When completed some two decades later, the work's many volumes will treat numerous issues in contemporary aesthetics and literature.
- 1755 Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* is first published in London, the most comprehensive dictionary of the language to this time.
- 1759 Voltaire's satirical *Candide* is first published. The work's savage mockery pokes fun at the philosophical optimism of the German philosopher Leibniz and argues

- instead that human beings must shape their own destiny and mold society to suit the demands of freedom.
- 1761 Jean-Jacques Rousseau completes *Julie, or the New Héloïse*, a story that makes use of the medieval incident of Abelard and Heloise's ill-fated romance but which is set in the world of eighteenth-century France. The work's partially autobiographical strains initially cause its author some embarrassment.
- 1765 Samuel Johnson edits and publishes *The Works of William Shakespeare*. His attention to Shakespeare's works is only one sign of a growing sense among contemporary literary figures of the formative role of the bard's works on English literature and the theater.
- 1766 Oliver Goldsmith's masterpiece *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a work of gentle humor that treats the life of an impoverished clergyman, is printed in London. It will become one of the most successful of later eighteenth-century British novels.
- 1776 Edward Gibbon's massive work, *A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, appears. Its anticlerical strains credit Rome's late antique troubles with the rise of Christianity.
- 1777 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* helps to establish the *Sturm und Drang* ("Storm and Stress") movement among writers in Germany. The work's vivid portrayal of the psychological torments attendant upon unrequited love make it a best-selling work in the generation that follows, both at home in Germany and also abroad.
- 1782 In France, Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses* (Dangerous Liaisons) paints a picture of aristocratic sexual depravity and decadence that quickly makes it a best-seller.
- 1791 The Marquise de Sade's *Justine* is published. The work's cruel imagery will help to establish the term "sadism" in modern European languages.

## OVERVIEW *of Literature*

**THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: AN AGE OF GENIUS.** It is difficult to summarize the achievements of European literature in the Baroque and classical eras, because they are at one and the same time enormous and yet enormously varied. From the benefit of hindsight, though, the years following 1600 witnessed some fundamental changes that were to shape the greatest literature of the age. The examples of Italy, long the inspiration for the Renaissance's greatest literary innovations, declined in importance as a source of emulation for Europeans in the Baroque era. Although great literature continued to be produced in Italy, much of the efforts of Italian authors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries found an outlet in new artistic forms like the opera, where authors were kept busily employed writing libretti for the country's insatiable appetites for musical dramas. The years around 1600 were for Spain a Golden Age, and in the decades that followed one Renaissance form of literature popular in that country, the picaresque novel, came to be widely read and imitated throughout Europe. Although Spain's dominance over European fashion was profound in the early seventeenth century, it proved to be short-lived. By the 1640s the country's costly involvements in international wars—much of it motivated by the zeal to re-impose Catholic uniformity on Europe—had led to bankruptcy and a retreat from the international scene. By the second half of the seventeenth century, Spain's artistic and literary influence in Europe was decidedly on the wane. In a larger sense, though, the country's involvement in religious controversies was symptomatic of the era, and in the seventeenth century many European authors became involved in the working out of religious and moral dilemmas that the sixteenth-century Reformation and Counter-Reformation had produced. In every country in Northern Europe, religious debates produced a flood of tracts and pamphlets, as well as more enduring poetry and prose that spoke to the doctrinal dilemmas of the age. In England, the controversies between Puritans and Anglicans

produced the great but enigmatic poetry and devotional texts of figures like the Anglican John Donne and the highly entertaining sermons of the Puritan Jeremy Taylor. In France, the dispute between Jansenists and Jesuits was similarly creative, inspiring a flood of devotional works by which each side tried to sway readers to the rectitude of their position. Among the great literary products this competition produced was Blaise Pascal's immortal *Provincial Letters* (1757), a work that satirically and successfully mocked the legalistic hairsplitting of the Jesuits, and which by virtue of the brilliance of the prose it presented, survived to influence later generations of writers. In Germany, a similar dynamic is evident. Although most of the writers that contributed to the country's first "national" literature were Protestants, German presses continued to churn out a host of devotional and polemical literature that spoke to the religious sensibilities of the age.

**THE IMPACT OF DRAMA.** Literary endeavor was only rarely a life's work in seventeenth-century Europe. The great works that survive from the period were not written in pursuit of royalties, as in the modern world, but rather to present an author's point of view, to entertain, or to satisfy the demands of aristocratic patrons. Many who wrote in the period did not publish their works; their literary creations, in other words, often circulated among friends and associates in manuscript form. Often, it was only after an author's death that editions of his or her major works were printed. The stipulations of copyright were just beginning to be worked out in the period, and as a result, publishing a successful work of poetry or prose did not assure one's fortunes. Still, the press was steadily becoming a medium for presenting one's ideas and literary accomplishments, but it nevertheless competed against the far more important role that the theater had as a source of support for authors. In England, Spain, and somewhat later in France, the theater was the most lucrative way in which authors might employ their talents. Writing for the stage offered authors the possibility of benefiting from a popular production, since in most cases theatrical companies divided the profits from a successful play with their writers. Such a situation was well suited to provide a career path for men of relatively humble status to ascend the social ladder. In seventeenth-century London, for instance, William Shakespeare was just one of several successful playwrights who sprang from modest origins. Later in the century, the largely "self-taught" Puritan John Bunyan used his literary talents to promote his dissenting views and as a significant source of income. But while the seventeenth century presents numerous cases of such

seemingly “self-made” men, literary achievement continued to be strongly linked to social class and the educational benefits it often provided. In both France and England, seventeenth-century royal courts supported many “literary wits,” figures that often made their way in these enclaves by virtue of their connections and the ability to write a passable verse. From the Renaissance, Europe’s cultured courts had inherited a high sense of the mission of the poet, and court life offered a number of occasions that called for the poet’s skills to lend literary immortality, depth, and grandeur to its rituals.

**NATIONAL STYLES AND ANCIENTS AND MODERNS.** Another feature of the age left its mark on the developing national literatures of the period: the debates over the rhetoric and style that was best suited to a particular language. By the seventeenth century most of Europe’s various languages already possessed centuries of literary usage. During the Renaissance, however, the revival of a pure style of classical Latin, known as Neo-Latin, had enriched Europeans’ knowledge of the subtle and complex skills that ancient rhetoric offered. In France, England, and many parts of Europe the reception of humanism—the learning promoted by the Italian Renaissance—had spurred new debates concerning the style and rhetoric that was best suited, not only to Latin writing, but to that in the native, or vernacular language. These debates persisted in the seventeenth century, but they soon expanded, providing the foundation for the establishment of the French Academy in 1634, and the various literary societies that were common throughout Central Europe. England lacked such organized institutions, yet at the same time, the crown’s persistent appointment of poet laureates, and its support of literary circles at court, tended all the same to sanction certain kinds of rhetoric and style above others. In France, the discussions of the French Academy, as well as certain literary salons in and around Paris, played a profound role in shaping seventeenth-century French Classicism, a severe yet grand style of writing that was most brilliantly displayed in the verse tragedies of Corneille and Racine, but which left a more general impact on the poetry and prose of the period, too. In Germany, the many literary societies that emulated the country’s “Fruit-Bringing Society” led to a literary ferment that failed to produce a single all-encompassing style, but which led to considerable discussion and creativity. Toward the end of the seventeenth century in England, it was the clear and lucid prose and poetry of John Dryden and his circle that predominated among intellectuals throughout the country. This form of expression, often referred to as “Augustan,” was notable for

its lucid, formal, and relatively unadorned style, and it persisted into the eighteenth century. Considerations about style inevitably led to questions about the relative superiority of contemporary literature when compared against the testimony of the “ancients.” Bristling debates often erupted in early-modern states between those who argued that the poetry and prose of ancient Greece and Rome was the only suitable model for emulation, and those who argued that contemporary literary efforts might match and even surpass the culture of Antiquity. This debate, a part of the intellectual landscape of Europe since the early Renaissance, continued to erupt episodically in early-modern Europe. One of its last episodes occurred in France at the end of the seventeenth century within the developing French Academy, and the dispute between French authors soon spread to England and other parts of Europe. In this late embodiment of the debate, many figures argued that literatures and languages evolved and changed over time, and that the literature of the present had been enlarged by the steady accretions that had occurred over the ages. Although such insights did little to quiet the contemporary disputes between “ancients” and “moderns,” they provided a bridge to the developing ideas of the Enlightenment. In the eighteenth century that followed, many literary figures advanced new theories for the criticism of literature, and in this way the long-standing tutelage of the ancients that had often been such an important force in fashioning writer’s works tended to become less and less important.

**MULTIPLICATION OF GENRES.** Despite efforts to develop consistent national styles, Europe’s rhetoricians never succeeded in establishing a single, unified literary vision. Indeed, as relative peace and prosperity emerged in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century, a host of new genres of literature became popular. Early forms of the novel—a prolonged, largely invented world of literary fiction—soon became popular in almost all parts of the continent. Spiritual autobiographies, a genre as old as St. Augustine’s fifth-century *Confessions*, became popular reading, and diary and letter writing expanded steadily as well. Both the changing views of the natural world promoted by the Scientific Revolution and of the political order expounded in the works of philosophers like John Locke also produced a flood of new kinds of social commentary and criticism, as writers turned to examine their societies along lines promoted by the seemingly “scientific” models of the age. And finally, a new kind of literary endeavor, journalism, had steadily matured in the course of the seventeenth century. By 1700, it was poised to play an increasingly important role in

politics and in the establishing of literary tastes and trends. It was in London, Europe's largest eighteenth-century city, where the forces that sustained this new varied literary marketplace can be seen first exerting their pressures on the public world. Although the city's presses had been tightly controlled during the seventeenth century by the Stuart kings, the laws upholding the traditional organs of censorship lapsed in England in 1695, and were not renewed. In the years that followed, London's Fleet Street became home to Europe's most vigorous center of journalism, and the development of the city's newspapers fed a popular appetite for knowledge of recent events and for commentary on the course of politics. Many of the figures that took advantage of the new commercial possibilities the press offered still continued to fall afoul of British law. Daniel Defoe, for instance, was imprisoned on several occasions for the fiery tracts he printed attacking government policies. But the profits to be made in journalism were too attractive for many to pass up, and the daring that the city's newspaper men often evidenced soon made it difficult for Parliament and the Crown to contain the vigorous debate London's new journalistic culture inspired.

**RISE OF THE NOVEL.** One of the most distinctive literary genres that emerged from this new culture of information was the eighteenth-century novel, a form of fiction that was in many ways distinct from the older forms of the novel that had circulated in seventeenth-century Europe. Those seventeenth-century forms had often been *romans à clef*, in which classical stories had been peopled with prominent characters drawn from contemporary life. The popularity of this thinly-veiled form of satirical examination had, in fact, been sustained by a category of aristocratic readers anxious to see how far an author might go in holding up a mirror to present circumstances. Another form, the picaresque novel that had originally appeared in sixteenth-century Spain, had featured lowborn heroes and had followed these characters through a series of exploits and adventures in which they exposed the hypocrisy and venality of aristocratic society. But in early eighteenth-century England, the journalist Daniel Defoe pioneered a new category of seemingly realistic fiction in his *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxana*. To construct these realistic stories about life in exotic circumstances, Defoe drew upon older genres, including the spiritual autobiographies and confessional narratives that had been popular in later seventeenth-century England. At the same time, he relied upon a new taste for eroticism and a curiosity about "how the other half lived" to create a genre of fiction that steadily grew in popularity. His initial experimen-

tations with the genre laid the groundwork for the great novels of Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding at mid-century, works that had a deep influence, not only in England, but also throughout Europe. As the new form of realistic or, as it is sometimes called, "bourgeois" fiction made its way through the European continent, it often gave voice to the disputes and dilemmas of the Enlightenment. In this process, the novel was raised from a once "light" and even disreputable form of fiction, into an elevated vehicle for discussing the great moral and philosophical problems of the age, a development that paved the way for the great age of Romantic nineteenth-century fiction that was to follow.

## TOPICS *in Literature*

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### ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

**A CENTURY OF GREATNESS.** At the beginning of the sixteenth century as the New Learning of the Renaissance made inroads into England, few signs were present of the enormous flowering that was soon to occur in the country's language and literature. For much of the later Middle Ages, England had remained one of Europe's more isolated backwaters, and its language, although raised to a level of high art in the late-medieval works of Chaucer and other authors, was still quite different from the rich and malleable literary forms that were to be deployed by Shakespeare and his Elizabethan contemporaries. During the course of the sixteenth century the world of international politics as well as the circumstances of religion helped to propel England into the ranks of important European powers. If the country's status flagged distinctly behind Habsburg Spain, Elizabeth I still managed to challenge that power by besting the Spanish Armada in 1588, as well as her rival Philip II. And while English power on the international scene may not have approached that of France under the Valois and Bourbon monarchies, the Elizabethan age still witnessed relative peace and security at the same time as France, the Netherlands, and other parts of Europe were suffering religious wars. During this era of relative stability England's theater and its literature witnessed unprecedented development, development that continued in the years following Elizabeth's death in 1603 despite the worsening political and religious climate in the country. The Elizabethan era witnessed the plays of Christo-

pher Marlowe (1564–1593), William Shakespeare (1564–1616), Thomas Kyd (1558–1594), and a distinguished lineage of lesser lights that cultivated a broad audience for the theater in England. It witnessed the creation of *The Faerie Queene* of Edmund Spenser (c. 1552–1599) and the works of a number of poets of high achievement. The period also nourished the development of many poets and playwrights, like Ben Jonson (1572–1637), whose careers lay more in the Stuart age that followed it, than in the reign of Elizabeth I. And although the accession of James I, the Stuart king of Scotland, to the English throne in 1603 brought an end to the relative domestic tranquility of Elizabeth's later years, there was no sudden decrease in the outpouring of literature in the early seventeenth century. The reign of James I, for example, continued to be an era of uninterrupted and steady achievement, even if disputes over religion soon bubbled up and combined with angry debates over the respective rights and prerogatives of Parliament and the Crown. The first signs of the new tensions occurred soon after the arrival of James I (r. 1603–1625) in England. As James journeyed from Scotland to London he was presented with the Millenary Petition, a series of requests for greater reforms in the Church of England, from English Puritans. Yet in the conference he convened to consider these requests at Hampton Court Palace several months later, the king rejected most of these demands, thus laying the foundations for the beginning of an alienation between the king and his Puritan subjects that grew worse over time. The unearthing of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, an abortive plan allegedly masterminded by Catholics to blow up the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, brought determined persecution of the country's Catholic minority, too. In the years that followed, James and his son and successor Charles I (r. 1625–1649) wrangled persistently with the country's ruling elites, insisting upon, but never effectively establishing, their ability to levy taxes without parliamentary consent and to rule like Continental absolutist monarchs. Despite these troubles—troubles that ultimately led to the outbreak of the English Civil Wars of the 1640s and to Charles I's execution in 1649—the early Stuart period was a time of continued literary achievement. These accomplishments can be seen in the vitality of the London stage as well as in the poetry and prose of the era.

**THE AUTHORIZED VERSION OF THE BIBLE.** One distinctive note of relative unanimity in the otherwise troubled waters of religion and politics in the early Stuart era involved the preparation and acceptance of a new translation of the Bible into English, a work that was

completed with the publication of the so-called Authorized Version of 1611. This text, long known in North America merely as the King James Version, was the culmination of efforts the king had sanctioned at the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, the body of church and political figures convened to consider the Puritans' Millenary Petition, as well as other issues in the Church of England. The resulting text became perhaps the single most important work of English prose, helping to establish a cadence and metaphorical sensibility that made deep inroads into the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and which persisted in the centuries beyond. Although Puritans had supported the idea of a new English Bible, James I soon granted the program his enthusiastic aid. To complete this enormous task, 54 translators were eventually asked to serve on six different translation teams, two centered in London and another two each at the universities of Cambridge and Oxford. Each team compiled its translations and then subsequently submitted them to a central oversight committee for approval. In completing their work, the translators of the Authorized Version did not create an entirely new translation, but instead relied on many of the earlier English Bibles published in the sixteenth century. They consulted, in other words, the "Bishops' Bible," an edition of the book that had been first printed for England's churches in 1568, and which was subsequently made compulsory throughout the Church of England. At the same time they relied on the so-called Geneva Bible of 1560, a work very much favored by Puritans because of the explicit Calvinist-inspired commentary that ran alongside the text. Two other sources were the somewhat earlier translations of Miles Coverdale, as well as that of William Tyndale. Tyndale's early sixteenth-century translation, while incomplete, showed great erudition in its rendering of the text into English, and its influence continued to be decisive in many cases in the Authorized Version, although the Geneva Bible's influence was also vital. Royal edict expressly forbade the translators from including any of the Geneva version's Calvinist commentary, a sign that James, like Elizabeth before him, intended to steer the Church of England on a middle course between more radical forms of Protestantism and Catholicism.

**SUCCESS OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE.** The resulting text may not have pleased all quarters in the embattled Church of England when it appeared in 1611, and many Puritan congregations continued to rely on the Geneva Bible for years to come. But the translation pleased enough of the fractious Church of England that it soon became the common version of the Bible in the

country's churches. Although titled an "Authorized Version," no royal edict ever required its usage. Still, it became the accepted version of the Bible, not only in England, but in Scotland as well, a country with a very different kind of reformed church and an English language very different from the southern portion of the island. In this way King James's version provided important ties of continuity between these various parts of the English-speaking world, and as England became a colonial power, the text was carried to the far corners of the world. In this process it helped to forge a common literary heritage among peoples that might otherwise have been vastly separated by linguistic differences. And although the Authorized Version eventually was replaced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by a series of revisions, it continued to define the ways in which most English-speaking peoples perceive the Bible as a sacred text. For this reason, the King James version continues to be embraced even now as the authoritative translation of the Bible by many conservative Protestant sects in England, America, and throughout the world.

**RELIGIOUS LITERATURE AND SERMONS.** If the King James version of the Bible struck a chord of unusual unanimity in the divided England of the early seventeenth century, other disputes of the era concerning religion soon became the stuff from which new literary forms were crafted. The seventeenth-century English church produced an enormous outpouring of printed sermons and devotional literature, written both by Puritans of all stripes and by Anglicans committed to its middle path between Catholicism and Protestantism. To publish a printed book in Elizabethan and Stuart England, the state required that texts be submitted to the Stationer's Guild, a medieval institution charged since the mid-sixteenth century with the task of administering an apparatus of inspection and censorship. Of course, authors and printers sometimes printed works without submitting them to these official channels, but the penalties for refusing to do so were great. In 1620, half of all works recorded in the Stationers' Guild's records were religious in nature, and this portion consisted of polemical tracts defending one's doctrine or point of view about reforms in the church, devotional books, and sermons. One issue that divided Puritans from committed Anglicans—that is, avid supporters of the Church of England's settlement—centered on the preaching of sermons. For many Puritan divines, preaching was an obligation that was to be conducted extemporaneously so that the minister might reveal the Word of God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Printed prayers, like those of the church's *Book of Common Prayer*, as well as the

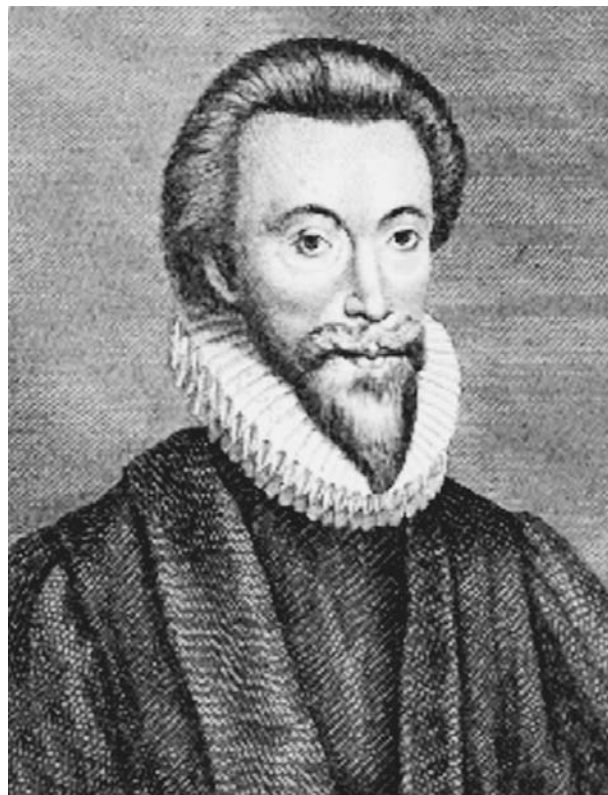
written sermons used by committed Church of England ministers, assaulted the sensibilities of determined Puritans, since they seemed an attempt to hem in and limit the very power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Committed Puritans who relied on an extemporaneous delivery in church, though, were often careful to record their words following their sermons and to prepare printed editions of their texts. The competition between Anglicans and Puritans, moreover, sustained a constant outpouring of devotional works as both Puritans and committed Anglicans aimed to convince readers of the correctness of their respective positions concerning the church and the Christian life. On the Puritan side, men like Richard Baxter (1615–1691) composed fine devotional texts, best-sellers like his *The Saint's Everlasting Rest* (1650), which were consumed in numerous editions. And while Puritan churchmen like Baxter attacked supporters of the Church of England as promoters of an arid, spiritless formalism, the evidence suggests that they were not such easy targets.

**ANGLICAN DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE.** Throughout the seventeenth century committed Anglicans produced a steady flow of religious and devotional literature that aimed to inspire "holiness" among readers. The Anglican attitude toward Christian piety, although quite different from the highly defined and often theologically sophisticated and systematic treatments of Puritan divines, was no less firmly Christian in its outlook. Committed Anglicans sought to present images of the Christian life and its cycle of sin, forgiveness, death, and resurrection in ways that stirred the faithful to repentance and amendment of their lives. In the hands of its most urgent supporters, men like Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645) who became an enthusiastic persecutor of Puritans in the reign of Charles I, such calls to holiness earned for Anglicanism an enduring image of intolerance. Yet the Church of England also nourished many authors in the early seventeenth century that ably defended its positions, and who created an enduring literature of religious devotion that has continued to elicit admiration across the centuries. Among these figures, the works of Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), Henry Vaughan (1621–1695), and Thomas Traherne (1637–1674) provided majestic, yet profound defenses of the principles of Anglicanism at a troubled point in the church's history. Although these figures' works are rarely read today outside the ranks of literary specialists, the period also produced John Donne (1573–1631) and George Herbert (1593–1633), who are still considered as authors and poets of the first rank, and who used their eloquence to defend the Anglican settlement. Donne has long had



a perennial appeal, in part, because his works encapsulated the religious and philosophical dilemmas of his age in ways that elevated these concerns into timeless meditations on the human spirit and its discontents.

**DONNE.** The circumstances of Donne's life were redolent with the disputes and controversies that the Reformation continued to inspire in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. Born into a prominent Catholic family, he was schooled at home by Catholic teachers before entering Oxford and perhaps somewhat later Cambridge. Prevented from taking a degree because of his Catholicism, he seems to have traveled for a time throughout Europe before renouncing his faith and becoming a member of the Church of England in 1593. His religious zeal in these early years, though, was overshadowed by a taste for adventure, and in the late 1590s Donne even sailed on several voyages with the adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh. He participated in the sack Raleigh's forces staged of Cadiz harbor in Spain in 1596 and he traveled the following year with the same force to the Azores in search of Spanish booty. Returning home from these adventures, he began to rise in the world of politics as a private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, an important man of state affairs in Elizabethan England. Eventually, he was elected to Parliament through Egerton's graces, but in 1601 a disastrous secret marriage to Ann More, Egerton's wife's niece, cut short his political career. He was imprisoned for a time, and spent the years that followed trying unsuccessfully to rehabilitate his reputation. His clandestine, unsanctioned marriage made him unsuited for public political life, and for almost fifteen years he and his wife lived off the patronage of friends and associates. Eventually, James I suggested he undertake a career in the church rather than in public affairs, and in 1615 he was ordained a priest and received a clerical appointment from the king. James forced Cambridge University to grant Donne a Doctor of Divinity degree, and with these credentials in hand, he began to acquire a series of positions in the church in London. Eventually, he rose to become dean of St. Paul's cathedral, and in that capacity he became one of the most influential preachers of the seventeenth century. His style both in his poetry—which he wrote almost exclusively for private amusement rather than public consumption—and in his sermons was notable for abandoning the “soft, melting phrases” preferred by Elizabethan authors. In place of that elegant and light style, Donne preferred a dramatic, deeply intellectual language that was often filled with forceful turns of phrase that lamented and yet gloried in the death and resurrection of the human spirit. As a preacher, his abilities to create metaphors



Engraving of John Donne. CORBIS-BETTMANN/NEWSPHOTOS, INC. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

and turn phrases that encapsulated the spiritual dilemmas of the era earned him an enormous following among Londoners, and at the same time exemplified the possibilities that might exist in Anglican piety. For generations, the intensely intellectual, philosophical, and metaphysical cast of Donne's writing has been summed up in his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), the author's own considerable reflections on his sickness and attendant death. That work, filled with an astute understanding of the many shades of fear and longing that attend approaching death, includes the immortal refrains “No man is an island” and “never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.” Yet in the body of poetry and sermons that Donne left behind, and which was edited and published by his son after his death, the author's works present a diverse range of prose and poetry, much of it difficult to understand, yet rewarding to those that have tried to plumb its considerable intellectual range and depth. Donne's example soon inspired a number of poets and authors that followed.

**THE METAPHYSICAL POETS.** In the late eighteenth century Samuel Johnson coined the phrase “metaphysical poets” to describe John Donne and a school of

poets that had imitated that poet's difficult, yet forceful style. Others had already noted a "metaphysical" strain in Donne's work and in the poetry of early seventeenth-century England, a strain that had become less popular during the Restoration era of the later century, as authors had come to favor a clearer, less mysterious style. In truth, none of the figures that have been described as "metaphysical poets" in the early seventeenth century—including George Herbert (1593–1633), Richard Crashaw, (1613–1649), and Henry Vaughan (1621–1695), among others—were properly concerned with the subject of metaphysics, at that time a branch of natural philosophy that treated the underlying or hidden properties of things observed in the natural world. Nor do many of the poets sometimes connected to this so-called Metaphysical School seem to share much, beyond the use of certain literary conceits and a taste for ironic and often highly paradoxical treatments of their subjects. Yet the notion of an early seventeenth-century group of Metaphysical poets has endured, in part, because of the serious, religious themes treated in many of these figures' works—themes that differed dramatically from the secular, often worldly poetry written at the time by a group equally long identified as the "Cavaliers." In the works of the foremost practitioners of the "metaphysical style"—Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan—certain underlying structural similarities do seem to exist. One of these similarities is in their frequent recourse to emblematic modes of expression. Emblems were symbolic pictures that often contained a motto. They had first appeared in the Renaissance as a popular pastime, and books of emblems had figured prominently in courtly and aristocratic culture since at least the early sixteenth century. In Baldassare Castiglione's classic work, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), for instance, the cultivated circle whose conversations are recorded in the work spend their evenings unraveling the mysteries encapsulated in emblems. In the decades that followed, emblems appeared throughout Europe on many elements of material culture. Artists inserted them into fresco cycles, or they became popular symbols incised onto jewelry. Sometimes they were even reproduced on dinnerware, so that cultivated, humanistically educated men and women might decode their meanings between the courses at banquets. Even as they grew more popular, though, the sensibilities that surrounded their consumption underwent changes—changes that were, in part, sponsored by St. Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* and other sixteenth-century works that advocated a thorough and disciplined contemplation on visual stimuli in the "mind's eye" to enhance one's personal meditations. Emblems, once the

preserve of a cultivated society anxious to demonstrate its knowledge of iconography and literary traditions, now came to circulate in books that were prized by devout Catholics, Puritans, and Anglicans alike as an aid to religious devotion. In books of emblems the emblem itself now came to be represented with three components: a motto that encapsulated the emblem's meaning, a symbolic picture that represented it, and a poem that commented upon its deeper significances. Works like these were self-consciously difficult, and they called upon the viewer's senses to decode the hidden underlying meanings that lay in the emblem's symbolic language. They both required and rewarded those who used their wits and erudition to unlock their many encoded significances. This same highly visual and symbolic sense is to be found in the difficult poems of Donne and his friend, George Herbert, and it also played a role in Herbert's admirers, Richard Crashaw and Henry Vaughan. While the concerns of these so-called "metaphysical poets" differed, and their style was extremely varied, there were thus certain common links in their works that were rooted in the devotional climate of their age.

**THE CAVALIERS.** Different sensibilities of style and content can be seen in a second, albeit equally artificial group of poets from the early Stuart period who have by long tradition been identified as the Cavaliers. Generally, this term was applied to all those who supported Charles I during the Civil Wars of the 1640s. Yet in literature it has long been granted to the poetry of figures like Thomas Carew (1594/1595–1640), Richard Lovelace (1618–1657/1658), Sir John Suckling (1609–1642), Robert Herrick (1591–1674), and Edmund Waller (1606–1687). The first three of these figures were courtiers in Charles I's circle, and did not live to see the Restoration of the monarchy under Charles II. Edmund Waller and Robert Herrick, by contrast, lived through the Civil Wars and came to see their fortunes rise again during the Restoration. Thomas Carew, the elder statesman of the group, served Charles I in the Bishops' War of 1639, an engagement precipitated by the Crown's disastrous plan to establish bishops in Presbyterian Scotland. One year later, Carew's career as a royalist was cut short by death, perhaps occasioned by the exertions of his military endeavors. In contrast to the seriousness and high moral tone observed in many of the "metaphysicals," Carew's poems were altogether lighter and less problematic, and like other Cavalier poets, they often reveal an easy attitude toward sex and morality. Although he wrote a poem in praise of John Donne, his own style seems to have owed more to the witticisms of Ben Jonson, an English Renaissance poet and dramatist, than to

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The great poet John Donne was also recognized as one of the most accomplished preachers of seventeenth-century England. His sermons often dealt with the mysteries of death, suffering, and Christian redemption. In contrast to the doctrinally tinged messages of Puritans at the same time, Donne and other Anglicans attempted to stir their audiences to repentance and holiness of life through presenting powerful images, as he does in this famous passage from his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, texts that were originally delivered in his office as Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

PERCHANCE he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me, and see my state, may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that. The church is Catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that body which is my head too, and ingrafted into that body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated; God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scat-

tered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another. As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all; but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness. There was a contention as far as a suit (in which both piety and dignity, religion and estimation, were mingled), which of the religious orders should ring to prayers first in the morning; and it was determined, that they should ring first that rose earliest. If we understand aright the dignity of this bell that tolls for our evening prayer, we would be glad to make it ours by rising early, in that application, that it might be ours as well as his, whose indeed it is. The bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit again, yet from that minute that that occasion wrought upon him, he is united to God. Who casts not up his eye to the sun when it rises? but who takes off his eye from a comet when that breaks out? Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world?

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.

**SOURCE:** John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (London: Thomas Jones, 1624): 410–416. Spelling modernized by Philip Soergel.

the serious moral tone promoted at the time by Anglican holiness. Above all the members in the group, he seems to have been an excellent literary craftsman with an often-meticulous attention to detail in his poems, a quality for which another Cavalier, Sir John Suckling, criticized him as if he were a pedant. Of the remaining figures, Edmund Waller was long among the most admired, and his poems continued to elicit admiration from critics throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The great John Dryden (1631–1700) credited Waller's poetry with ushering in England's "Augustan Age," and among the specific qualities that he admired in it was a great "sweetness." Today, the sophisticated simplicity of his works continues to be much admired, although unfortunately only among specialists in English literature; Waller has long since ceased to be a household name. Born to a wealthy family, he increased his fortune by several skillful marriages, and when he en-

tered Parliament in the 1620s, he was originally a member of the opposition. During the 1630s, he switched sides to become a royalist, but when he led an unsuccessful plot to seize London from Puritan forces in 1643, he was banished for a time from the country before being reconciled to the Puritan Commonwealth and rising to prominence again under Charles II after 1660. By contrast, Robert Herrick was the only member of the "Cavaliers" that never served at court. Granted a rural living in the Church of England as a reward for military service to the Crown, he lived out his days away from London, in considerably quieter circumstances—that is, as a country parson in a remote corner of Devon in the southwest of England. Although he originally detested the countryside, he came to admire the rural folkways of his parishioners, in part, because he abhorred the ways in which Puritans were attempting to suppress country people's traditional customs. His works were like all of

those of the so-called Cavalier group: witty, graceful, sophisticated, and laced with a touch of “devil-may-care.”

#### MILTON AND THE PURITAN COMMONWEALTH.

The execution of Charles I by Parliament in January of 1649 signaled a sudden end to the Cavaliers' musings, and although certain poets like Waller and Herrick continued to write in this vein following the restoration of the monarchy, the decisive Puritan victory quieted such voices for a time. During the Puritan Commonwealth, many Royalist supporters were forced to flee England before returning, or like Herrick, to exist on the gifts of their friends before taking up the life they had enjoyed during the war. During the Puritan Commonwealth devotional works, religious polemics, and sensational prophecies continued to pour from England's presses, although there was little market in the heated religious climate of the 1650s for the kind of gracious and elegant poetry once championed by Cavalier society. One of the figures that continued to fuel the anxious political debates of the period was John Milton (1608–1674), who early in life had trained to be a Puritan minister, but until the 1640s had spent much of his time studying and perfecting his skills as a poet. During the Civil Wars Milton first became embroiled in the battle between Puritans and Royalists when he published a number of pamphlets attacking the episcopacy. With the establishment of the Commonwealth, he continued his activities as a propagandist for the Puritan cause, although he also served as a secretary to the Council of State. Increasingly blind, he nevertheless continued to support the cause, publishing one tract so vehement in defending the Puritan cause that it was burnt in ceremonial bonfires in several French cities. As the Commonwealth began to flounder in the months following the death of its Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, Milton tried to rally support for the increasingly unpopular government, again by serving as a pamphleteer. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, though, he was forced into hiding, eventually arrested, and after a short imprisonment, he was fined and released. His political career now in ruins, Milton retired to his home in London where he began to write his masterpieces, *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Paradise Regained* (1671). Both works still rank among some of the most challenging reading in the English language, filled as they are with a complex syntax, abstruse vocabulary, numerous difficult classical allusions, and a complicated epic style. Despite their Puritan religious orthodoxy, the two monumental poems present Milton's breadth of learning and the complexities of his opinion. In *Paradise Lost* the author tells the story of man's fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, and presents one of

the most sympathetic portraits of Satan ever recorded in the Western tradition. Milton treats him in the manner of a tragic hero, whose fatal flaw lies in the perversions of sin. Although the story of the Fall recorded in Genesis was well known to Milton's readers, and had long been given a host of literary treatments, the poems still manage to possess considerable originality and breadth of imagination. It is for this reason that their author has long been lauded as the English poet whose powers rank second only to William Shakespeare. Yet the crowning achievements of Milton's career as a literary figure were intricately embroiled in the harsh political realities of the seventeenth-century state. Had it not been for Milton's banishment from public life because of his complicity in the Puritan Commonwealth, his great life work might never have been completed.

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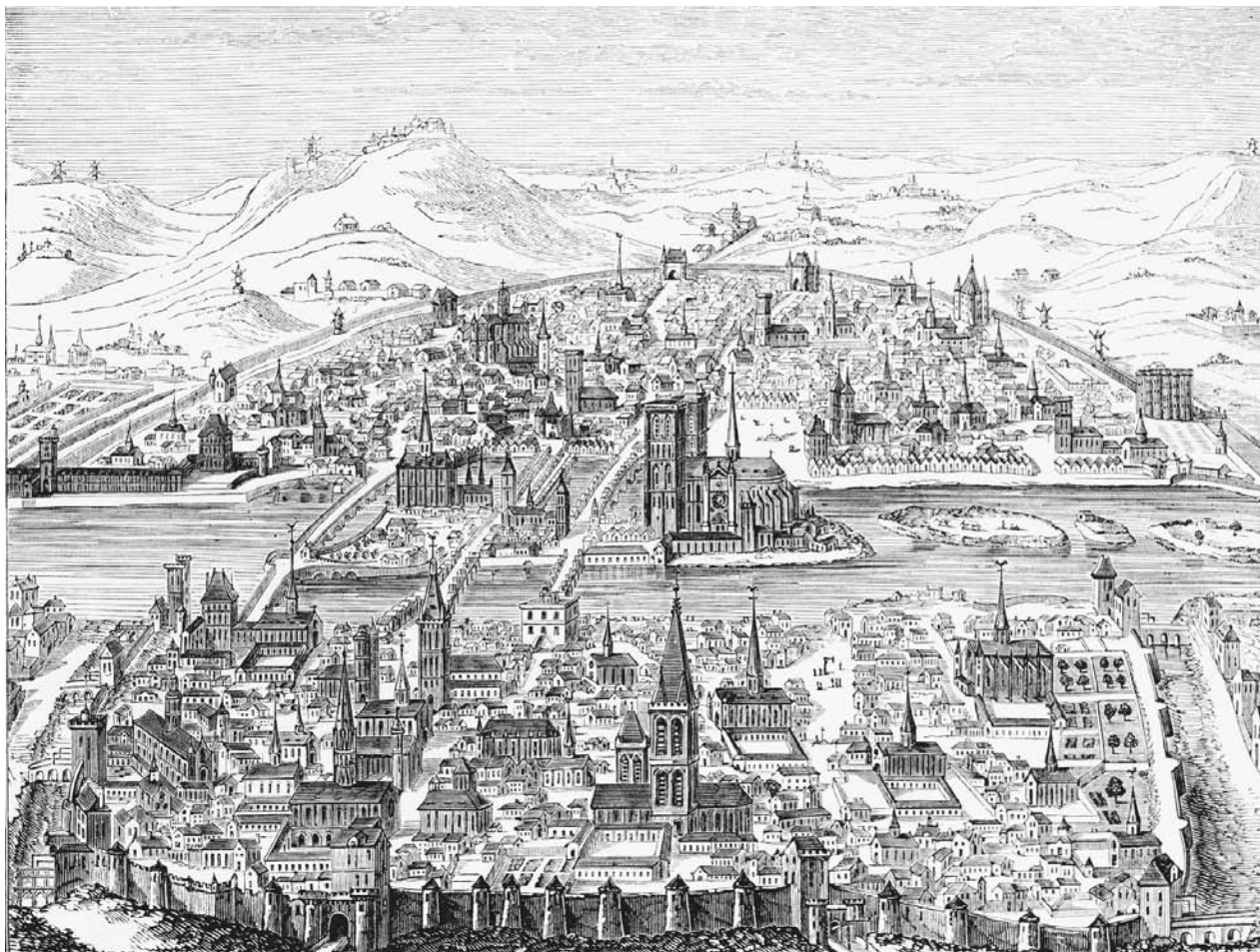
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SEE ALSO *Religion: The English Civil Wars*

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#### FRENCH LITERATURE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

**INCREASING REFINEMENT.** In France, the beginning of the seventeenth century marked a distinctive break from the legacy of warfare and domestic religious violence that had punctuated the concluding forty years of the sixteenth century. To achieve this respite, Henri IV had converted from Protestantism to Catholicism in 1595, and three years later he promulgated the Edict of



Engraving of Paris in 1607. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

Nantes, the royal decree that granted a limited religious toleration to the country's Huguenots (French Protestants). Religious controversy did not disappear from France's internal politics. In 1610, Henri was assassinated by a Catholic religious zealot, but the peace that he fashioned proved to be longstanding, lasting until Louis XIV revoked the edict in 1685, and forced French Protestants either to convert to Catholicism or to emigrate from the country. In the roughly three generations between these two dates, the distinctive patterns of French absolutism came to influence society and culture throughout the country. During these years royal patronage of the arts was organized around academies, the descendants of which have often persisted in France until modern times. Literary culture was greatly affected by the foundation of the *Académie Française*, an institution that Cardinal Richelieu organized in the 1630s to establish standards of usage and rhetoric in the language. It soon became a powerful organ for shaping literary French and the drama in the country, yet its rise to

prominence had been prepared by an increasing refinement of rhetoric championed at court and among learned elites in France from the late sixteenth century.

**D'URFÉ AND MALHERBE.** In the works of Honoré D'Urfé (1567–1625) and François de Malherbe (1555–1628) this quest for an elegant style can be seen. D'Urfé was from southern France, near Lyons, where his family's château had long served as a center of elite culture and learning. In his youth, Honoré received a humanist-influenced education from the Jesuits, and after living through the dismal years of the Wars of Religion, he devoted his energies to the composition of a monumental work of pastoral fiction, *L'Astrée*. The pastoral was a literary tradition that had become increasingly popular in Spain and Italy in the later Renaissance; it often treated the conversations and innocent activities of shepherds and shepherdesses and was usually set in a beautiful and idyllic environment. The pastoral form inspired paintings, poetry, and prose, and works like this were also among the first texts to be set to music in early

operas. In his search for a new style, D'Urfé came to be affected by these earlier usages of the pastoral, although he greatly expanded the scope of his fiction to encompass an enormous length and presentation of detail. His title derived from the ancient goddess of justice, Astraea, who, mythology taught, was the last of all the deities to abandon earth at the conclusion of the Golden Age. In writing his work, D'Urfé chose this figure to underscore the return to peace, prosperity, and justice he and other French aristocrats hoped might follow Henri IV's Edict of Nantes. *L'Astrée* was published in five separate volumes in the years between 1607 and 1627; eventually it grew to be a 5,000-page epic. Although his plot was often artificial, his elegant style and psychological insight hinted at the great literary resurgence that was soon to begin in France. At the same time, *L'Astrée* did not inspire other pastoral works, although its influence could be seen in a new longing for a sophisticated and beautiful style. François de Malherbe was one of the most important French authors to satisfy this growing desire, through his many classically inspired poems. Malherbe was a provincial, a native of Normandy, who eventually rose to become Henri IV's resident poet. Fueled with a powerful sense of what was correct in language, as well as a desire to purge courtly writing and conversation of colloquialism and dialect, Malherbe's own poems were widely imitated by members of the court and by Parisian educated society. He gathered around him a group of disciples, and imparted to them his personal vision of how French poetry should be written. In the year before his death he published an edition of his poetry, *Collection of the Most Beautiful Verses of Messieurs de Malherbe*, that made his teaching evident to his readers. His works would scarcely be called great art today, but they did rely on a vastly simplified vocabulary that was austere and classically inspired, even as he used the metrical Alexandrine verse, which consisted of a line of twelve syllables. Prompted by Malherbe's influence, other authors began to adopt Alexandrine verse, and it soon became the dominant form for French poetry used in the country's many seventeenth-century dramatic tragedies. Malherbe demonstrated the possibilities that reposed in this verse style; prompted by the forceful example of his advocacy of his own art, he helped to establish a grand and austere literary classicism.

**FRENCH ACADEMY.** Malherbe died before the foundation of the French Academy in 1634. Conceived by Richelieu, the academy was charged with the task of standardizing literary French. Soon after its foundation, though, its members were drawn into a controversy over Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid*. Richelieu and others had found

the play morally troubling, although audiences admired Corneille's elevated verse. In an effort to put the controversy to rest, Richelieu referred the play to the members of the *Académie Française*, who agreed with Richelieu that the play's plot was wanting, even though they argued that it was filled with much good poetry. This was one of the few times, though, that the academy intervened in a matter of taste or moral judgment. Its charge was instead to work for the standardization of the French language, and to this end it began work on a comprehensive dictionary of the French language that was finally published in 1694. The number of scholars and literary figures who gained admittance into the French Academy was soon limited to forty members, who became known as "the immortals." Quite a large percentage of these figures also wrote literary criticism and theory in the course of the seventeenth century, much of which supported the development of French classicism. Claude Favre de Vaugelas (1585–1650), for instance, wrote an important text, *Remarks on the French Language* (1647), which recorded the forms of French used in aristocratic and polite societies. Vaugelas had understood that the forms of spoken and written languages changed over time as a reaction to changing circumstances. Yet Cardinal Richelieu and the most conservative members of the French Academy desired to establish an unchanging style, and so the observance of Vaugelas' rules could, in the hands of mediocre stylists, lead to much slavish imitation. Vaugelas' work, in other words, soon became known as the "bible of usage." Two other works produced by members of the Academy were also influential in supporting the rise of French literary classicism: the *Poétique* (Poetics) of La Mesnardière (1639) and Abbé d'Aubignac's *Pratique du théâtre* (Practice of Theater; 1657). Both advocated the use of classical forms and verse, but their influence was generally superseded by that of Jean Chapelain (1595–1674), a member of the Academy who played much the same role that Malherbe had in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. It was Chapelain who was asked to write the Academy's equivocating pronouncements about Corneille's play *Le Cid*. But generally, Chapelain played the role of literary arbiter in court circles from the 1630s onward, much as Malherbe had done a generation earlier. More accepting of deviations from his own rules than Malherbe, Chapelain nevertheless constructed many theories that were fundamental in the development of classicism. He promoted these views in articles, short tracts, and through his voluminous correspondence. Under the influence of Louis XIV's chief minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Chapelain was eventually entrusted with naming those French authors that should be honored with royal

pensions, and in the practice of his office he engendered significant hatred from many literary figures. His own verse was far from magnificent, but as a literary arbiter he had few equals in mid-seventeenth-century France.

**THE NOVEL.** The elevated discussions of the Academy and its attempts to foster an austere classicism in French literature did not, at the same time, dampen enthusiasm for creative fiction. French readers of the mid-century evidenced a pronounced taste for novels, and the variety of texts that the country's authors produced is remarkable. Like D'Urfé's *L'Astrée*, many works of French fiction at the time were long and complex, but in the course of the seventeenth century they evidenced a preference for ancient rather than pastoral themes, or for comic, picaresque subjects. Among the many novelists the country produced at the time, Madeleine de Scudéry (1607–1701) was among the most widely read. Scudéry was the younger sister of a prominent French dramatist, who moved to Paris when she was quite young and soon captivated the city's most prominent literary salon, the circle surrounding the figure of the Marquise de Rambouillet. When Scudéry was 35, she published her first novel, *Ibrahim or the Illustrious Bassa* (1642). Other contributions followed, and her novels often grew to enormous lengths. Scudéry was a master of the genre of the roman à clef, a form in which the ancient characters that are depicted are in reality thinly-disguised references to men of affairs and prominent socialites in one's own day. Part of the excitement that reposed in Scudéry's fictions thus rested on the attempt to unearth or decode just who was being depicted as whom, and while many members of French polite society admired her work, she was criticized by others at the same time. By contrast, Cyrano de Bergerac's two novels, *A Comic History of the States and Empires of the Moon* and *A Comic History of the States and Empires of the Sun* were only published after his death. They tell of imaginary journeys to the moon and sun, and anticipate the quite later development of science fiction. Their purpose was to poke fun at religion and de Bergerac's contemporaries' reliance on traditional wisdom, rather than the insights offered by the new science. In place of such conservatism, de Bergerac advocated a kind of freewheeling materialism, a philosophy that he had derived from his own study of mathematics and the libertine or anti-absolutist political theory of the age. Where de Bergerac's works were literally set in another world, those of Paul Scarron (1610–1660) were very much located in contemporary, this-worldly circumstances. Scarron was a major figure in the French theater of the time, producing a series of comedies that were popular before the arrival of Cor-

neille, Molière, and Racine on the Paris scene. In his three-volume *The Comic Novel* (1651–1659) Scarron parodied the lives of the members of a theatrical troupe in a way that was very much influenced by the picaresque novel tradition of sixteenth-century Spain. Those works' central characters were often vagrants or members of society's downtrodden, and authors used the form to spin fantastic webs of adventure. Scarron's comic works reveal a lighter side of French seventeenth-century literature than that being written by the elegant arbiters of taste in the French Academy. His wife, Françoise d'Aubigné, also played a major role in the aristocratic world of the seventeenth century, eventually becoming in the years following her husband's death the king's mistress and then secret wife. This position placed the pious Madame de Maintenon, as she became known at court, in a unique vantage point to influence the king's tastes in drama and literature.

**THE HONEST MAN.** Another genre of French literature that played an increasingly important role in the second half of the century treated the qualities men should display to participate in the life of court and aristocratic society generally. These works examining the "honest man" became particularly vital in the years following the Fronde, a series of revolts of nobles and Parisian councillors that had erupted in the years between 1648 and 1653. Eventually, these rebellions were brutally repressed, but not without producing significant fear among those in the royal government. At the time at which they began, the young king Louis XIV was only five years old. During the course of these disturbances Louis and his mother, Anne of Austria, were forced to flee the capital. In their exile from Paris, they even slept in a stable, and so the Fronde's disturbances left a lifelong impression on the king. In the years that followed, Louis XIV and his officials worked to domesticate the French nobility, eventually building the palace of Versailles and developing an intricate courtly etiquette that became a powerful means of disarming the class. They also sought to redirect the once bellicose spirit of the old French "nobility of the sword," those who descended from the medieval warrior nobles of the Middle Ages. Louis' government, in other words, championed an aristocratic ideal based on the concept of service to the king, rather than the demonstration of military prowess. In this regard the new genre of works about the qualities of the "honest man" reflects these changing realities. Works that treated the qualities of the "honest man" usually celebrated the virtues that were prized in the new "nobility of the robe," those who from the sixteenth century had received their noble titles as a reward for serving the king.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A THINKING REED**

**INTRODUCTION:** Blaise Pascal was one of France's great seventeenth-century literary stylists. An heir to the tradition of Montaigne, he nevertheless found that author's moral relativism troubling, even as he realized that the ideas of the developing Scientific Revolution represented a real challenge to traditional Christianity. Pascal spoke as an insider; he was a brilliant mathematician and helped to develop many of the mathematical techniques upon which later scientific thinkers relied. Always sickly, he underwent a "second birth" in 1654, and thereafter resolved to dedicate himself to the propagation of religious belief. In this regard he came to defend the positions of the Jansenists, France's Augustinian religious party, in his famous *Provincial Letters*, satires of the Jesuits that were filled with a biting wit that soon made these works bestsellers. They came to have a profound effect on literary French in the later seventeenth century. His *Pensées* were a record of his deepest thoughts. Maintained throughout his life, they were published by his admirers after his death. They reveal one of the keenest and most discriminating minds in the Western tradition and a limpid and elegant literary style.

What is the Ego?

Suppose a man puts himself at a window to see those who pass by. If I pass by, can I say that he placed himself there to see me? No; for he does not think of me in particular. But does he who loves someone on account of beauty really love that person? No; for the small-pox,

which will kill beauty without killing the person, will cause him to love her no more.

And if one loves me for my judgment, memory, he does not love *me*, for I can lose these qualities without losing myself. Where then is this Ego, if it be neither in the body nor in the soul? And how love the body or the soul, except for these qualities which do not constitute *me*, since they are perishable? For it is impossible and would be unjust to love the soul of a person in the abstract and whatever qualities might be therein. We never then love a person, but only qualities.

Let us, then, jeer no more at those who are honoured on account of rank and office; for we love a person only on account of borrowed qualities....

Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed. The entire universe need not arm itself to crush him. A vapour, a drop of water suffices to kill him. But, if the universe were to crush him, man would still be more noble than that which killed him, because he knows that he dies and the advantage which the universe has over him; the universe knows nothing of this.

All our dignity consists, then, in thought. By it we must elevate ourselves, and not by space and time which we cannot fill. Let us endeavour, then, to think well; this is the principle of morality.

**SOURCE:** Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*. Trans. W. F. Trotter (New York: Collier, 1910): 112–113, 120.

The honest man was expected, like the behaviors recommended in earlier Renaissance conduct books, to master the arts of fine living, good conversation, and social refinement. François de La Rochefoucauld (1613–1680) was one of the earlier figures that wrote a book in this vein. He had been a leader in the Fronde, but in the years that followed its disastrous conclusion, he devoted himself to a literary career, eventually publishing in 1665 his famous *Maximes*, which were short epigrams on matters of morality and truth. In these writings he celebrated self-preservation and self-interest as the only true source for moral action. Less suspicious and distrustful attitudes are to be found in other authors that turned to these themes, including Antoine Gombaud's *On True Honesty*, which celebrated the cult of "honest living" with its refinement and social graces as the true "art of living." In a similar vein one of the most famous of those who helped to define the "honest man" was Charles Saint-Évremond (1613/1614–1703). Like the sixteenth-century essayist

Montaigne, Saint-Évremond's counsels included an emphasis on epicurean enjoyment of the good things the world had to offer, even as he similarly pleaded for religious toleration.

**LA FAYETTE AND SÉVIGNÉ.** Two of the greatest prose masters of seventeenth-century French were women: Madame de La Fayette (1634–1693) and Madame de Sévigné (1626–1696). Both were aristocrats who were prominent in the salon life of later seventeenth-century Paris. Madame de La Fayette was a friend of the noble François de la Rochefoucauld, and together the two of them formed a literary circle that encouraged a restrained and commanding classical style. La Fayette became an author, and her masterpiece, *The Princess of Cleves* (1678), was first published anonymously. It is generally recognized as the finest French historical novel of the time. Set in the mid-sixteenth century, its plot revolves around the efforts of a young aristocratic wife



to suppress her passion for another man. The illicit couple's love remains unrequited, a fact that provided La Fayette with a springboard for examining the passions and their psychological effects, a central preoccupation of many of the French authors of the age. By contrast, Madame de Sévigné did not devote her efforts to the writing of fiction. Instead she compiled a voluminous correspondence that is one of the remarkable literary artifacts of the age. A member of fashionable Parisian society for most of her life, she became an astute letter writer after her beloved daughter's marriage. In the years following their separation the two exchanged almost 1,700 letters. They are generally informal and newsy, but they show a keen and discerning mind that was aware of all the best literary canons of the day. Although they are not formal in the manner of much Baroque state and diplomatic correspondence, they were nevertheless carefully crafted with a fine eye and ear for eliciting the best responses of those that read them. Above all, they show modern readers a letter writer who must also have been an astute conversationalist since, much like the conventions of salon speech, they ramble elegantly from one topic to another.

**RELIGIOUS WRITING.** In the final decades of the seventeenth century, new moral influences at Versailles' court led to a resurgence of religious and moralistic writing. Indeed much of French writing in the seventeenth century had been religious in tone, as elsewhere in Europe. The seventeenth century had opened with the great devotional works of François de Sales (1567–1622) and others who argued for a reform in the church and the amendment of individual lives. At mid-century the controversies between Jesuits and Jansenists had resulted in a steady outpouring of polemical tracts and satirical works like Blaise Pascal's famous *Provincial Letters*. Yet after 1680 a change in the tone in the literary circles surrounding King Louis XIV is also evident. In these years the king increasingly fell under the influence of his mistress, and later wife, Madame de Maintenon, an uncompromising moralist long credited with encouraging Louis to revoke the Edict of Nantes and to take other actions to uphold French Catholicism. At court, once gay theatrical comedies disappeared in favor of the new serious and "morally uplifting" operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully. Balls and other festivities disappeared, and many at court dedicated themselves to the devotional life. Among the great writers who took up this charge to moral perfection, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704) had perhaps the broadest influence. Eventually, he rose to become a bishop, but in his mid-life he was also one of the ablest preachers in France, and in the years he



*Portrait of Madame de Sévigné (1662)* by Claude Lefebvre. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

spent preaching in Paris, he exercised a hold over his audience's imaginations similar to that of the great John Donne in England. In his later years as an important churchman, Bossuet intervened in a number of controversies, a fact that has often continued to mar his reputation. In his literary works, though, he produced a body of work that has consistently been lauded for its elevated style and good taste.

**ANCIENTS AND MODERNS.** At the end of the seventeenth century one debate that began in and around the French Academy was to spread far beyond France's borders. Disputes similar to this seventeenth-century battle between the "ancients" and the "moderns" had occurred throughout Europe since the Renaissance, with literary figures and critics weighing the relative merits of "contemporary" or "modern" literature when judged against the testimony of Antiquity. In France the debate that flared up on these themes at the end of the seventeenth century—the so-called "Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns"—did not produce any decisive victory for either side. In this controversy, figures like Nicolas Boileau (1636–1711) supported imitation of the works of ancient authors as the only true path to sure and certain literary excellence. To these essentially conservative sentiments, Charles Perrault (1628–1703)

answered with his *Parallels of the Ancients and Moderns* (1688–1697), a work that assured its readers that as human history progressed the mind of man expanded and grew. Thus Perrault argued contemporary literature might even surpass that of the ancient world. These two entries in the battle encouraged incessant pamphleteering by other French literary figures. One consequence of this otherwise pointless intellectual battle was important for the future. In downplaying the received canons of ancient literature, Perrault and his party provided an idea that was to be fruitfully expanded upon by eighteenth-century Enlightenment authors: their notion of progress and the steady expansion of the human mind. Thus this dispute over the relative merits of ancients and moderns helped to prepare the way for the Enlightenment's rich and innovative literary climate, a climate that argued that works written on contemporary, realistic and even "middle-class" themes might be as morally instructive and purposeful as the elevated concerns of ancient mythology and poetry.

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SEE ALSO *Theater: Neoclassicism in Seventeenth-Century Paris*

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## BAROQUE LITERATURE IN GERMANY

**POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICT.** Unlike France and England, which were unified states ruled by monarchs, Germany remained a loose confederation of more than 300 semi-autonomous states in the early-modern era. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation had cut deep fissures into the political system of the re-

gion during the sixteenth century, and controversies over religion persisted in the early seventeenth century. Both Protestants and Catholics longed for a day in which a single, unitary faith might be reestablished in the country, and the tensions that competition between these confessions produced eventually boiled over in the dismal conflict known as the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). That clash, waged in several major stages during its seemingly unending history, ultimately did little to resolve the longstanding problems that had made religion the central issue in German society since the 1520s. At its conclusion, Calvinism, once an illegal religion in the country, was permitted, but the principle *cujus regio, eius religio* or "he who rules, his religion," was upheld, leaving the rulers of Germany's individual states free to determine the religions of their subjects. The war thus helped to confirm the political disunity of the Germans until the nineteenth century, and its legal formulations enhanced the tendency already present in politics for territorial rulers to become more and more like absolutist princes. In the generations following its conclusion, many German rulers looked westward toward France, and the cultural brilliance of Versailles provided a consistent source for their emulation. At the same time the outcome of the Thirty Years' War also strengthened the positions of the largest states in the empire—Austria, Brandenburg, the Rhineland Palatinate, Baden-Württemberg, and Bavaria—over and against the smaller ones. Although the number of Germany's independent territories remained large throughout the period, the individual policies of many states now came to be overshadowed by the political aims and maneuvers of the most powerful territories in the region, a situation that anticipated the great dominance that Prussia and Austria achieved in German politics during the eighteenth century. In England, these religious tensions, and eventual civil war, had done little to dampen the development of vigorous literary debates. So, too, in Germany, the seventeenth century produced a wealth of new religious literature, poetry, and fiction. But while some of these writings spoke to the dismal political and religious realities of the period, others were relatively unaffected by the problems of the age. And despite the Thirty Years' War's devastations, Germany's national literature continued to develop apace throughout the century.

**GERMAN LANGUAGE.** Against the backdrop of political squabbling, Germany's language was also undergoing many significant changes. Linguistic diversity had always been a major fact of German life, with many different dialects being spoken throughout the country. At the end of the Middle Ages, several attempts had been

made to foster a more unified written language, first at the court of Charles IV in Prague during the so-called “Golden Age” in the mid-fourteenth century, and later under the Habsburg emperors of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when a chancery or legal form of the language had been developed and its use pioneered throughout the country. These literary forms of German were distinctly different from the modes of expression that the country’s sixteenth-century religious reformers and religious pamphleteers used in the Reformation, even as the Middle English of Chaucer is distinctly foreign when compared against the language used in Elizabethan times. The quest for a common literary form of German continued throughout the sixteenth century, but it came increasingly to be dominated, not by the flow of religious polemic, but by the course of discussion in the country’s universities. By the end of the sixteenth century Germany’s intellectuals continued to be trained in Latin-speaking universities, although the Latin they used had itself undergone great transformations in the course of the sixteenth century. Throughout the Middle Ages the Latin used in the church and universities had been transformed, so that by 1400 it had become a distinctly different language from that which had been spoken and written in ancient Rome. In the course of the fifteenth century, Italian humanists had revived the language’s ancient grammatical structures and style, and this Neo-Latin eventually spread throughout Europe. In the sixteenth century great Neo-Latin stylists like Desiderius Erasmus and Michel de Montaigne were able to speak and write a form of the language that mirrored the ancient language, and their efforts were widely imitated among later sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century intellectuals. In Germany, those who received a university education continued to produce poetry and prose in Latin, rather than in their native languages in the seventeenth century. Yet their very experiments with the study of Neo-Latin helped to enrich the usages and style of German. As many began to compose in their native tongue, they decried the paucity of vocabulary and literary devices to convey their subtle arguments. And so, in the course of the seventeenth century, Germany’s greatest literary figures set themselves to the task of developing a native literary mode of expression that could rival the sophistication they sensed existed in the Neo-Latin idiom.

**THE “FRUIT-BRINGING” SOCIETY.** The “Fruit-Bringing” Society (in German, *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*) was perhaps the most important of the many experiments in which German authors tried to create a literary form of German equal to that of other languages,

particularly Neo-Latin. Founded in 1617 under the patronage of Prince Ludwig of Anhalt-Köthen, its aim was to imitate the great academies that had been founded in Florence and other Renaissance centers in the century and half before. Its membership was distinctly aristocratic from the first, and its purpose had several interrelated aims. First, the “Fruit-Bringing” Society desired to cultivate an elegant literary form of German that would make use of the best rhetorical skills. Beyond this, its members longed to purify their language of usages that were not Germanic in origin and to create a pattern of verse writing that was appropriate to the sound and syntax of their language. The efforts of the “Fruit-Bringing” Society were soon aided by the publication of the poems of Martin Opitz, the first great literary figure of the German Baroque era. In 1624, Opitz published his *Book of German Poetry*, a work that established standards that were to persist in German verse writing over the coming century. Opitz’s poems demonstrated the great clarity that could be achieved in German poetry that relied on clear rhyme schemes. He recommended, for instance, the Alexandrine or twelve-syllable line for the writing of epics and the use of iambic pentameter for sonnets. But his work also included examples of how the best poems of writers in other languages might be successfully rendered into German, and this part of his focus soon inspired poets to undertake a host of new translations. Opitz also recommended the office of the poet to his readers as one of “divine” significance. Poetry, he argued, derived from divine inspiration, and thus it contained within its lines an encoded or “hidden” theology. It was the poet’s task, therefore, not merely to represent reality, but to present an image of what might or should be. The poet, in other words, should make the beautiful appear even more so, even as he castigated ugliness in terms more grotesque than it was in actuality. For his own efforts in the art, the German emperor named him Poet Laureate in 1625, and two years later, raised Opitz and his descendants to noble status. In 1629, he was named a member of the “Fruit-Bringing Society,” but by this time numerous other “literary societies” were already forming in Germany’s major cities. Usually composed of members of the aristocracy, these societies pursued the same end as the original “Fruit-Bringing Society”: to foster an elegant German literary style that would be the equal of other languages. In the years that followed, numerous poets throughout the German-speaking world took up the task that Martin Opitz had set down for them. They eagerly translated prose and poetic works from other languages into German, even as they experimented with applying the insights that they attained from these endeavors to fashioning a new literary idiom.

**THE BAROQUE STYLE MATURES.** The impact of Opitz and Germany's new literary societies did not produce a single unified style in the later seventeenth century, but instead a multiplicity of paths that points to the essential creativity of the period. Generally, the forces that led to the development of a "High Baroque" literary style, though, were Protestant, and were most in evidence in the Lutheran cities of the country. One stylistic direction was taken by the Protestants Georg Philipp Harsdörffer (1607–1658), Philipp von Zesen (1619–1689), and Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664). Harsdörffer was a native Nuremberger who traveled widely throughout Europe in his youth and eventually joined the "Fruit-Bringing Society." In 1644, he helped to write the *Pegnitz Pastoral*, a collection of poems intended to inaugurate the new "Order of the Flowers on the Pegnitz," the "Pegnitz" being the river that runs through the center of Nuremberg. That society came to be an important literary force in the second half of the seventeenth century. The fondness for an elaborate musical style was also echoed in the literary society, "The German-Minded Brotherhood," that Philipp von Zesen founded in 1643 at Hamburg. Unusual for his time, Zesen was able to support himself solely through his poetry and other literary activities. He translated French works and wrote *The Adriatic Rosemund*, one of the first great novels in the German language to deal with the theme of love and the role of religious differences in keeping a couple apart, soon to be a perennial theme. Like Martin Opitz, Philipp von Zesen was eventually raised to noble status for these efforts. The final figure, Andreas Gryphius, is today recognized as one of the greatest literary figures in the history of the German language. Unlike Zesen or Harsdörffer, Gryphius grew up in relative isolation from the great literary societies of the day. He was a Lutheran who was born in the east in Silesia; after studying in the Netherlands, he eventually became an attorney. Although his verse shares the same tendency toward literary flower as Zesen and Harsdörffer, it rises above the merely decorative through its persistent lament about harsh fortune. Gryphius's life was spent in the regions that were devastated by the Thirty Years' War, and in his poetry he continually expresses sentiments and themes that speak to its destruction. All life is transitory, filled with vanity. Human existence is governed by an unalterable fate, to which the only appropriate human response is to remain steadfast and courageous and to hold onto one's faith. Constancy and fortitude, two popular Baroque themes that were often personified as goddesses, constantly recur in Gryphius' somber works.

**GRIMMELSHAUSEN.** By the second half of the seventeenth century, Germany's vigorous literary climate, with its numerous literary societies, had produced not only a number of native poets, but many translations of prose works from French, Italian, and Spanish. One figure that was affected by this literary resurgence was Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen (c. 1621–1678), an author that had an almost "larger-than-life" existence. Grimmelshausen was an outsider on the literary scene. He was not an aristocrat or a university-educated wit in the manner of many of those that participated in Germany's new literary societies. He grew up in humbler circumstances, and his literary endeavors were not recognized until centuries later because he published his greatest work, the novel *The Adventures of Simplicissimus* (1688–1689), anonymously. It was not until the nineteenth century that his authorship was firmly established. Born a Lutheran, he was captured at the age of fourteen in the conflicts of the Thirty Years' War. Later he served in the Catholic forces of the imperial army before becoming a caretaker for a noble. In that capacity he ran an inn, sold horses, and was even a tax collector. When it came to light that he had embezzled funds, he was forced from these positions. Later he became an assistant to a physician, helping to manage his interests, before returning to tavern keeping and even becoming a bailiff in his final years. At this time, too, he converted from Lutheranism to Catholicism. Through all these constant shifts in profession, Grimmelshausen had continued to write, and he had published several satires in the late 1650s. His great masterpiece, though, was *The Adventures of Simplicissimus*, a work that was widely translated and became a best-seller in many parts of Europe. *Simplicissimus* is modeled on the Spanish picaresque novels of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The central character of the same name is, as in those earlier works, a lowborn child who becomes a vagrant through the chaos unleashed by the Thirty Years' War. The work was filled with coarse, black humor as well as an eye for creating memorable characters. Of the many works written in seventeenth-century Germany, it is the only prose work that is still widely read today, a testimony to the universality of its author's vision and his critique of the barbarities of war.

**BÖHME.** Perhaps the most influential writer of the seventeenth century in Germany was unaffected by the great debates over the direction that the language's style should take. Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), a Lutheran, had, like Andreas Gryphius, been born in the eastern empire, near the town of Görlitz. In 1594 or 1595, Böhme moved to Görlitz where he became a shoemaker,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***COMMUNION WITH GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:** The works of the German mystic Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) attracted numerous adherents, not only in Germany, but throughout Europe. They came to have a perennial appeal among German authors because of the way in which they described the soul's relationship with God. Their influence spread, too, far beyond Germany, where they came to influence later seventeenth-century religious writers like the Quaker George Fox. In Germany, too, the ideas of Böhme also influenced the literary monuments of Pietism, the great religious movement within Lutheranism that tried to deepen ordinary Christians' internal faith. Pietism came to shape the course of religious developments in eighteenth-century Germany, but, through its numerous educational institutions, it also nourished a disproportionate number of the country's authors.

When Man will go about Repentance, and with his prayers turn to God, before he begins to pray, he must consider his own mind, that it is wholly and altogether turned away from God, that it is become faithless to God, that it is only bent upon this temporal, frail, and earthly life, bearing no sincere love towards God and his neighbor, and also that it wholly lusts and walks contrary to the commandments of God, seeking itself only, in the temporal and transitory lusts of the flesh.

Secondly, he must consider that all this is an enmity against God, which Satan hath raised and stirred up in him, by his deceit in our first parents, for which abomination's sake we die the death and must undergo corruption with our bodies.

Thirdly, he must consider the three horrible chains wherewith our soul is fast bound during the time of this earthly life: the first is the severe anger of God, the abyss, and dark world, which is the center and creaturely life of the soul. The second, is the desire of the devil against the soul, whereby he continually sifts and tempts it, and without intermission strives to throw it from the truth of God into vanity, viz. into pride, covetousness, envy and anger,

and with his desire blows up and kindles those evil properties in the soul, whereby the will of the soul turns away from God and enters into [it]self. The third and most hurtful chain, wherewith the poor soul is tied, is the corrupt and altogether vain, earthly and mortal flesh and blood, full of evil desires and inclinations. ...

Fourthly, he must earnestly consider that wrathful death waits upon him every hour and moment, and will lay hold on him in his sins, in his garment of a swine keeper, and throw him into the pit of hell, as a forsworn person and breaker of faith, who ought to be kept in the dark dungeon of death to the judgment of God.

Fifthly, he must consider the earnest and severe judgment of God, where he shall be presented living with his abominations before the judgment; and all those whom he hath here offended and injured with words and works, and caused to do evil ...

Sixthly, he must consider that the ungodly loses his noble image (God having created him for his Image) and [becomes] instead like a deformed monster, like a hellish worm or ugly beast, wherein he is God's enemy and against heaven and all holy Angels and men, and that his communion is forever with the devil's and hellish worms in the horrible darkness.

Seventhly, he must earnestly consider the eternal punishment and torment of the damned, that in eternal horror they shall suffer torments in their abominations, which they have committed here, and may never see the land of the saints in all eternity, nor get any ease or refreshment ...

All this, man must earnestly and seriously consider, and remember that God that created him in such a fair and glorious image, in his own likeness in which he himself will dwell that he hath created him in his praise for man's own eternal joy and glory, viz., that he might dwell with the holy Angels, and children of God in great joy, power, and glory ...

**SOURCE:** Jakob Böhme, *The Way to Christ* (London: H. Blunden, 1647): 1–5. Spelling modernized by Philip Soergel.

and in the months that followed his arrival he had a profound religious conversion experience, an experience prompted by the local preacher. He later reported that in the space of a few minutes he had received certainty of his salvation. These mystical experiences did not prompt a great outpouring of devotional prose at first. He produced a few minor tracts broadcasting his mystical insights, but Böhme was largely unschooled, and so he set himself to studying the “major” authors of the

Christian tradition, the mystics of the German past, as well as certain sixteenth-century authors like the physician Paracelsus, whose ideas tended toward the abstruse and metaphysical. Shortly before his death, Böhme published the results of his studies in a number of works that seems to have consumed all his efforts during the last five years of his life. He may have been aided in these efforts by the gifts of friends that freed him from his occupation as a cobbler. But between 1619 and 1624 he

produced thirty tracts and books that were to have a profound effect on the generations that followed. Böhme's theology promoted God as a great abyss, a profound nothingness that was, at the same time, the ground of all being. Out of these depths, a creative force struggles to be set free, but as it does great problems arise in the world because of the human spirit's opposition to the divinity. Böhme himself claimed to be a prophet, and during his own life he attracted a following. In the decades following his death, his ideas traveled, inspiring groups of "Boehmites" in the Netherlands and other German regions. His ideas were also read in England where they affected the Quakers, even as they also were avidly read and studied by the Lutheran Pietists in the later seventeenth century in Germany. Later, Immanuel Kant and Georg William Friedrich Hegel also read his works and incorporated some of his psychological insights into their philosophies. Thereafter, the deeply mystical strains of his ideas continued to return to influence later German thinkers, among them Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Schopenhauer.

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#### RESTORATION LITERATURE IN ENGLAND

**THE CAVALIERS' RESURGENCE.** The reestablishment of the monarchy that occurred in 1660 had profound implications for English literature. In the years following the execution of Charles I many of the figures that had surrounded the royal court had been forced into exile or hiding, but with the restoration of the throne to Charles' son, Charles II, royal and aristocratic patronage networks were quickly revived. The new king hoped to follow a tolerant path, although the Cavalier party

that soon dominated Parliament clearly had other plans. In the first few years of Charles' reign, the passage of a series of draconian measures—measures that eventually became known as the Clarendon Code—subjected Puritans, Presbyterians, and other English dissenters to a steady barrage of persecution, a reality that led to the great literary inventions of John Bunyan, George Fox, and other dissenting authors. At the same time, the royal court quickly moved to revive the theater in London, and although the plays that were performed there in the quarter century of Charles' reign were staged before audiences considerably smaller than those of the Elizabethan and early Stuart era, the Restoration stage still managed to produce a number of playwrights of considerable merit. Like the Cavalier poets that had preceded the Civil Wars, these playwrights expressed a propensity for light themes. Few of the playwrights that had been active in the early Stuart period survived to write for the stage under Charles II. The great dramatists of the period—men like William Davenant, John Dryden, William Congreve, Sir John Vanbrugh, and the woman Aphra Behn—now entertained London's aristocratic and wealthy merchant society with a steady stream of "comedy of manners," works that poked fun at the foibles and conventions of aristocratic society. Many of the figures that wrote for the stage were also poets and authors of considerable merit, although since the late seventeenth century the reputation of the Restoration stage for sexual license and ribaldry has tended to overshadow their non-dramatic writing. While poetry continued to be a popular genre, the later Stuart period also saw the first emergence of a number of new genres that became even more important in the eighteenth century that followed. During the Restoration period the first newspapers emerged in London and other English cities, and although their circulation was initially quite small, they eventually provided a source of employment for many writers in the years following 1700 as political journalism became an increasingly important part of London's literary scene. A deepening interest in history, biography, and autobiography can also be seen in the period, both in the printing of new works and in the keeping of numerous private journals. The most famous of these, Samuel Pepys' *Diary*, dating from the 1660s, provides an unparalleled view on the London scene. Finally, fictional works began in this era to attract the attentions both of authors and readers. The word "novel," in fact, began to appear to describe works treating forbidden romances and intrigues. By the end of the seventeenth century the expanding audiences for such fictions prepared the way for the great works of Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***FROM HARMONY TO HARMONY**

**INTRODUCTION:** John Dryden, the greatest English poet of the Restoration era, fulfilled a number of roles in an England living through a tumultuous period. He was a literary critic, a translator, and the nation's Poet Laureate. His poems were often intended to be consumed publicly, as this ode for St. Cecilia's Day. St. Cecilia was the patron saint of music, and the following poem that Dryden crafted to celebrate her annual feast was set to music at the time by the Italian composer, Giovanni Baptista Draghi. In the eighteenth century, Georg Frideric Handel returned to the text, giving it an immortal musical setting. The poem displays Dryden's sense of good taste and style, as well as the assured, sometimes monumental flourishes that were typical of the great poetry of England's Augustan Age. It also demonstrates the enduring fascination of European culture with the notion that musical harmony underlay all the relationships in the universe.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,  
This universal frame began;  
When nature underneath a heap  
of jarring atoms lay,  
And could not heave her head,  
The tuneful voice was heard from high,  
'Arise, ye more than dead!'  
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,  
In order to their stations leap,  
And Music's power obey,  
From harmony to harmony, from heavenly harmony,  
This universal frame began:  
From harmony to harmony  
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,  
The diapason closing full in Man.

What passion cannot Music raise and quell?  
When Jubal struck the chorded shell,  
His listening brethren stood around,  
And, wondering, on their faces fell  
To worship that celestial sound:  
Less than a God they thought there could not dwell  
Within the hollow of that shell,  
That spoke so sweetly, and so well.

What passion cannot Music raise and quell?

The trumpet's loud clangour  
Excites us to arms,

With shrill notes of anger,  
And mortal alarms.  
The double double double beat  
Of the thundering drum  
Cries Hark! the foes come;  
Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat!

The soft complaining flute,  
in dying notes, discovers  
The woes of hopeless lovers,  
Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling lute.

Sharp violins proclaim  
Their jealous pangs and desperation,  
Fury, frantic indignation,  
Depths of pains, and height of passion,  
For the fair, disdainful dame.

But O, what art can teach,  
What human voice can reach  
The sacred organ's praise?  
Notes inspiring holy love,  
Notes that wing their heavenly ways  
To mend the choirs above.

Orpheus could lead the savage race;  
And trees unrooted left their place,  
Sequacious of the lyre:  
But bright Cecilia rais'd the wonder higher:  
When to her organ vocal breath was given,  
An angel heard, and straight appear'd  
Mistaking Earth for Heaven.

**Grand Chorus.**

*As from the power of sacred lays  
The spheres began to move,  
And sung the great Creator's praise  
To all the Blest above;  
So when the last and dreadful hour  
This crumbling pageant shall devour,  
The trumpet shall be heard on high,  
The dead shall live, the living die,  
And Music shall untune the sky!*

**SOURCE:** John Dryden, "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day," (1687), reprinted in M. H. Abrams, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York: Norton, 1993), 1827–1829. Arthur Quiller-Couch, ed. 1919. *The Oxford Book of English Verse*: 1250–1900.

many others that entertained eighteenth-century readers. In all these ways, then, the Restoration era displays the development of a progressively more diverse literary marketplace.

**JOHN DRYDEN.** The greatest literary figure of the Restoration was John Dryden (1631–1700), an author who is largely recognized today on the basis of his plays and poetry. In his own time, though, Dryden exercised

a significant influence over many different styles of writing in late seventeenth-century England. He was initially a playwright, but he soon circulated in high political circles and received several positions in Charles II's court, work that took him in his mid-career away from writing for the theater. In 1668, Charles named Dryden England's Poet Laureate and the following year, Royal Historian. In these years of courtly activity, he continued to write, but he concentrated his efforts on literary criticism, and his works on aesthetics helped to define the English tastes of the age. Around 1680, Dryden also became embroiled in politics, and he wrote a number of polemics in the years that followed for the emerging Tory party. In these years the Tories were coalescing as a distinct group that opposed the plans of some in Parliament to exclude James, the Catholic brother of King Charles II, from the succession. At Charles' death in 1685, James did succeed to the throne for a time, and Dryden's career continued to flourish. But the king's expulsion from the country in 1688 and the calling of his daughter Mary and her husband William from Holland to serve as monarchs in 1689 discredited him. A few years earlier, Dryden himself had converted to Catholicism, and as a result of the change in monarchs, he now lost his court offices. To support himself, he returned to write for the stage, producing some of his finest work in the years after the Glorious Revolution. Eventually, though, he tired of writing for the theater, and in the final years of his life he devoted himself to translating a number of small works from Latin into English. He also translated Vergil, Chaucer, and Boccaccio into the English of his day. His great crowning achievement of these years was the publication of his *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700), which was completed and published in the year of his death. Dryden's translations were not scholarly in the modern sense, but were instead quite freely executed. They amplified and exaggerated certain elements of the original texts he rendered to fit with his own and contemporary tastes, a defining feature of Dryden's own aesthetics and those of his time. During his career as a playwright, for example, the author had made frequent use of plays and plots drawn from the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods. His adaptation of these plays was never slavishly devoted to the original, but was intended to amplify certain important elements he felt were undeveloped in an earlier author's dramatic portrayal. So, too, in his translations Dryden intended to pay homage to his sources by rendering older stories to fit the tastes and idiom of contemporary times. These later works of translation were, in fact, quite popular and they helped to define knowledge of many about classical texts in the eighteenth century that followed.

**RESTORATION STYLE.** The changes evident in Dryden's own poetic and prose style were in many ways emblematic of those that English style generally was undergoing in the Restoration era. In contrast to the early Stuart era, which had favored a literary style that was complex and artful, Dryden's poetry and prose became altogether plainer and seemingly artless. He worked throughout his career to perfect a style of poetry suitable for public consumption. In his plays there is little of the kind of introspective quality typical of the greatest works of Shakespeare. Instead he concentrated on creating a grand and noble form of expression that seemed to make use of the best elements of Latin style, transferring them into the idiom of English. His prose was easy to read, clear, and logical and seems even today to reflect human speech. This lack of artifice was actually a highly studied quality and a notable feature of the "Augustan Age" of literature that his own poetry, prose, and works of criticism helped to inspire. In his dramas can be witnessed this same persistent change from an early dramatic language that was grand but somewhat artificial to greater naturalness and lucidity. As the first English writer to devote significant attention to writing literary criticism, he helped to fashion a new climate that took literary production seriously. Through his efforts, writing became an endeavor that was subjected to the same kind of scrutiny that was being directed at politics and the natural world at the time.

**JOHN BUNYAN.** Dryden's life and poetry had been fashioned by the political demands of the Restoration era, and except for two notable poems that praised the authority of the church as a public good, he did not verge into the private devotional realms that had proven so fruitful a source of literary invention for Anglicans and Puritans in the early Stuart era. As England's Poet Laureate for much of the Restoration era, he prudently avoided such tempestuous waters. Yet elsewhere the continuing controversies of religion were still producing great literary works. Among the many devotional writers of the later Stuart era, John Bunyan (1628–1688) was to cast a long shadow over English readers. His great masterpiece *Pilgrim's Progress* continued to be seen as obligatory reading until the late nineteenth century, and only fell out of fashion in the twentieth. An allegory, it is filled with an enormous number of motifs, motifs like "Vanity Fair" and the "Slough of Despond," that were long alluded to by later writers. Bunyan himself was largely unschooled, a status that he tended to wear as a badge of honor. He was from a small village in Bedfordshire, and served in his youth in the Parliamentary armies. When he returned to his village following the war, he seems to have undergone a conversion experi-



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### GRACE ABOUNDING

**INTRODUCTION:** Seventeenth-century religious figures came to write numerous autobiographies. Of the many texts like this printed in England, John Bunyan's own account of his quest for certainty of his salvation, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, was one of the most influential. It came, in time, not only to inspire other religious writers, but novelists like Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson who treated far more secular themes. Written in the first person, it is a tempestuous document, filled with many twists and turns, as Bunyan alternately received some assurance and consolation, and then would be cast down with doubt. Modern people often assumed that seventeenth-century Puritans like Bunyan were often charged with a profound sense that they were part of the elect, and as a result that they dedicated themselves to demonstrating the fruits of their election. Bunyan's text, though, shows us that doubt and a deep sense of personal unworthiness was often a result of the Puritans' espousal of John Calvin's doctrine of election. The following passage forms the conclusion of Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

1. Of all the temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being of God, and the truth of His gospel, is the worst, and the worst to be borne; when this temptation comes, it takes away my girdle from me, and removeth the foundations from under me. Oh, I have often thought of that word, "Have your loins girt about with truth"; and of that, "When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

2. Sometimes, when, after sin committed, I have looked for sore chastisement from the hand of God, the very next that I have had from Him hath been the discovery of His grace. Sometimes, when I have been comforted, I have called myself a fool for my so sinking under trouble. And then, again, when I have been cast down, I thought I was not wise to give such way to comfort. With such strength and weight have both these been upon me.

3. I have wondered much at this one thing, that though God doth visit my soul with never so blessed a discovery of Himself, yet I have found again, that such hours have attended me afterwards, that I have been in my spirit so filled with darkness, that I could not so much as once conceive what that God and that comfort was with which I have been refreshed.

4. I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under, and yet at another time the whole Bible hath been to me as dry as a stick; or rather, my heart hath been so dead and dry unto it, that I could not conceive the least dram of refreshment, though I have looked it all over.

5. Of all tears, they are the best that are made by the blood of Christ; and of all joy, that is the sweetest that is mixed with mourning over Christ. Oh! it is a goodly thing to be on our knees, with Christ in our arms, before God. I hope I know something of these things.

6. I find to this day seven abominations in my heart: (1) Inclinations to unbelief. (2) Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth. (3) A leaning to the works of the law. (4) Wanderings and coldness in prayer. (5) To forget to watch for that I pray for. (6) Apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have. (7) I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves, "When I would do good, evil is present with me."

7. These things I continually see and feel, and am afflicted and oppressed with; yet the wisdom of God doth order them for my good. (1) They make me abhor myself. (2) They keep me from trusting my heart. (3) They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness. (4) They show me the necessity of flying to Jesus. (5) They press me to pray unto God. (6) They show me the need I have to watch and be sober. (7) And provoke me to look to God, through Christ, to help me, and carry me through this world. Amen.

**SOURCE:** John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (London: George Larkin, 1666): 94.

ence, and at the beginning of the Restoration era he was arrested for preaching publicly without license. For the next twelve years, he was imprisoned at Bedford, where he devoted his time alternately to writing and to making lace to support his family. During his prison years, he wrote and published *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), his own spiritual autobiography that told of the gradual certainty he had received of his own salvation as well as several other minor works.

**PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.** Released from prison under a general amnesty given by Charles II to religious dissenters in 1672, Bunyan quickly became a popular preacher in Bedford, where he was appointed pastor of the local non-conformist church. He was briefly imprisoned again in 1676 for six months, but in 1678 he published his *Pilgrim's Progress*, a work that became an immediate success. It was reprinted ten times in the decade following its first publication, and the work

helped grant its author a national reputation. From this point forward he had many contacts throughout England, and he continued to be a successful author until his death in 1688. To modern readers, *Pilgrim's Progress* cannot but help to seem artificial and contrived, since allegory is a literary genre little used in contemporary times. Yet for those who attempt to plumb the depths of Bunyan's work, it can yield considerable psychological insight. The story relates the journey of Christian and his friends Hopeful and Faithful as they wend their way to the Celestial City. Along the way they suffer numerous setbacks, not only from the reprobate and damned, but from those that seem on the surface to be fellow travelers, that is, members of the Calvinist "elect." Yet despite these enormous trials, the pilgrims arrive at their final destination, and along the way they have been freed of doubt and their other earthly burdens. In this way Bunyan's work dealt in a poetic fashion with one of the key dilemmas implicit in Calvinist and Puritan thought: how certainty of salvation could be combined with the doctrines of predestination and election. Even at a time when Puritanism had, by and large, been discredited as a political creed, Bunyan's work soon became a devotional classic, and in 1680 he wrote a sequel, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, a work that relates the dismal alternative, that is, the condemnation and ultimate damnation that falls on one who is not a member of the elect. It was not nearly as successful as its predecessor, although it does present a vivid portrayal of evil. In the later years of his life, the author continued to write, and a number of unpublished manuscripts were found in his possession at his death in 1688, a few months before the Catholic King James II was deposed. These were published posthumously in a folio edition in 1690, but the breadth and depth of Bunyan's opus came to be overshadowed in the years that followed by his two chief masterworks, *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

**SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND DIARY WRITING.** Bunyan's popular spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding* was only one of many such texts to appear in the later seventeenth century. Among other similar works that appeared at the time the *Journal* of George Fox (1624–1691) was also a particularly influential text. In this work, this early Quaker recorded his successful spiritual quest for certainty of salvation and he narrated the early history of his persecuted movement. Although not published until 1694, Fox's fashioning of his narrative shows that as a religious leader he was well aware of the value of autobiography for developing his movement. It also reveals a carefully calibrated history of the move-

ment to elicit the maximum degree of admiration for the Quakers from his readers. In it, Fox alleged that he and other Quakers had been committed to the principles of peace and pacifism from their earliest days, when, in reality, these teachings did not become central to the movement until the early Restoration years. The work's influence helped to establish an identity for later Quakers, but it also inspired a host of imitations. From Fox to the *Journals* of John Wesley in the late eighteenth century, English writers presented their deepest, most inward thoughts to their readers and to volunteer the circumstances surrounding their religious conversions to satisfy their audience's taste for devotional narratives. In a very real sense, such accounts played a similar role in Protestant England to the lives of the saints that were read in other Catholic regions of Europe. But not all the lives and autobiographies that appeared in the period were religious in nature. Diary writing generally was a popular pastime, and not every journal that was kept at the time reveals a spiritual nature as tender as that of Bunyan or Fox. One of the most extraordinary of the England's diarists to record their life experiences at this time was Samuel Pepys (1633–1703), who kept daily records of the events of his life in Restoration London during the 1660s. Aptly described as one of the "best bedside" books in the English language, Pepys' diary totals over six hefty volumes in its modern edition. It is never boring reading, filled as it is with recollections of the smallest details of living in a major European city at this pivotal point in history. Pepys frequently records his distaste with the lax ethical standards evidenced by Charles II and his court, but he was alternately fascinated and repulsed by their behavior. Capable of overlooking moral failings in those he found possessed of fundamental goodness, Pepys found the lazy and the dull-witted detestable. At the same time, he was a disciplined ascetic, devoted to his business, who liked to kick up his heels almost every night and enjoy London's pubs and theaters. His record of life in an extraordinary decade of royal renewal remains one of the greatest journals ever written in the English language, even as it continues to provide historians with an indispensable mine of facts. Some of its descriptions, like its recounting of the devastation wrought by the Great Fire of London in 1666, have long provided insight into one of the most crucial events in London's history. Like the Duc de Saint-Simon's roughly contemporaneous records of life in the Palace of Versailles, it is one of the great testimonies to the tenor of seventeenth-century life, the product of a society that realized that its own thoughts and feelings about the great events that were being witnessed at the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A VAST AND CHARMING WORLD**

**INTRODUCTION:** Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, a short work of fiction partially derived from the time its author spent in the colony of Surinam, contains many charming passages of description. They seem more worthy of a travel book than a work treating the inhuman excesses of the slave trade. In one of these passages Behn treats the beauty and exoticism of her surroundings. Her remarks are one of the first occurrences in Western literature of what has remained a perennial theme among Northern European authors until the present time: the tantalizing effect of the tropics.

My stay was to be short in that country; because my father died at sea, and never arrived to possess the honor designed him (which was Lieutenant-General of six and thirty islands, besides the Continent of Surinam) nor the advantages he hoped to reap by them: so that though we were obliged to continue on our voyage, we did not intend to stay upon the place. Though, in a word, I must say thus much of it; that certainly had his late Majesty, of sacred memory, but seen and known what a vast and charming world he had been master of in that continent, he would never have parted so easily with it to the Dutch. 'Tis a continent whose vast extent was never yet known, and may contain more noble earth than all the universe beside; for, they say, it reaches from east to west one way as far as China, and another to Peru: it affords all things both for beauty and use; 'tis there eternal spring, always the very months of April, May, and June; the shades are perpetual, the trees bearing at once all degrees of leaves and fruit, from blooming buds to ripe autumn: groves of oranges, lemons, citrons, figs, nutmegs, and noble aromatics continually bearing their fragrances. The trees appearing all like nosegays adorned with flowers of different kinds; some are all white, some purple, some scarlet, some blue, some yellow; bearing at the same time ripe fruit, and blooming young, or producing every day new. The very wood of all these trees has an intrinsic value above common timber; for they are, when cut, of different colors, glorious to behold, and bear a price considerable, to inlay withal. Besides this, they yield rich balm and gums; so that we make our candles of such an aromatic substance as does not only give a sufficient light, but, as they burn, they cast their perfumes all

about. Cedar is the common firing, and all the houses are built with it. The very meat we eat, when set on the table, if it be native, I mean of the country, perfumes the whole room; especially a little beast called an armadillo, a thing which I can liken to nothing so well as a rhinoceros; 'tis all in white armor, so jointed that it moves as well in it as if it had nothing on: this beast is about the bigness of a pig of six weeks old. But it were endless to give an account of all the divers wonderful and strange things that country affords, and which we took a very great delight to go in search of; though those adventures are oftentimes fatal, and at least dangerous: but while we had Caesar in our company on these designs, we feared no harm, nor suffered any.

As soon as I came into the country, the best house in it was presented me, called St. John's Hill. It stood on a vast rock of white marble, at the foot of which the river ran a vast depth down, and not to be descended on that side; the little waves, still dashing and washing the foot of this rock, made the softest murmurs and purlings in the world; and the opposite bank was adorned with such vast quantities of different flowers eternally blowing, and every day and hour new, fenced behind 'em with lofty trees of a thousand rare forms and colors, that the prospect was the most ravishing that sands can create. On the edge of this white rock, towards the river, was a walk or grove of orange- and lemon-trees, about half the length of the Mall here; flowery and fruit-bearing branches met at the top, and hindered the sun, whose rays are very fierce there, from entering a beam into the grove; and the cool air that came from the river made it not only fit to entertain people in, at all the hottest hours of the day, but refreshed the sweet blossoms, and made it always sweet and charming; and sure, the whole globe of the world cannot show so delightful a place as this grove was. Not all the gardens of boasted Italy can produce a shade to outvie this, which nature had joined with art to render so exceeding fine; and 'tis a marvel to see how such vast trees, as big as English oaks, could take footing on so solid a rock, and in so little earth as covered that rock: but all things by nature there are rare, delightful, and wonderful.

**SOURCE:** Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (London: Will Canning, 1688): 148–154. Spelling modernized by Philip Soergel.

time might one day come to be prized by those who followed.

**THE ROLE OF FICTION.** Another feature of the late seventeenth-century literary world points to the steadily multiplying genres that captivated the age: its fascina-

tion for fictions, fictions that alleged to be true. In the eighteenth century this appetite for fiction gave rise to the novel, a long narrative that recounted a completely imagined universe that was avidly consumed by the reading public. Seventeenth-century fictions were often

considerably humbler in their aims. One of the most interesting examples that survives from the period is Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, a tragic tale set in the Caribbean colony of Surinam. Behn was notably the first woman in England to support herself through writing for the theater, but her background and education remain a matter of mystery today. Certainly, like Bunyan, she did not have access to the world of high intellectual ideas like contemporary graduates of the universities at Cambridge and Oxford did. But the plays and tales she spun were not without literary merit, and not without knowledge of the world. Like Shakespeare, she seems to have been largely self-taught. She could read and apparently speak French, and her plays were sophisticated enough to keep cultivated London society entertained. But it was in her *Oroonoko*, a seemingly autobiographical tale that appears to relate her own experiences as a traveler in 1660s Surinam, that her skills as an impassioned storyteller shines. *Oroonoko* is not a great work of fiction, although its frequently overwrought descriptions of an enslaved African prince and his beautiful lover and bride Imoinda do manage to elicit a degree of pathos in its readers. The work is filled with echoes of other discourses that fascinated Europeans in the centuries that followed. The African slave prince is celebrated in ways that seem to anticipate Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "noble savage," one of the most important literary motifs of the Enlightenment. In truth, however, Behn's depiction is largely drawn from ancient Roman literary narratives, something again that points to the broad reading that she must have accomplished before stepping onto the London scene in the late seventeenth century. In *Oroonoko* Behn also presents one of the first images of northern European society transfixed by the climate and flora of the southern climates, a theme that has continued to play a role in European literature until contemporary times. Behn's readership may not have been prepared for the elaborate and lengthy novels that were to entertain eighteenth-century English society, but clearly a taste was developing in this world for stories that appeared to present a faithful view of the world, but which nevertheless carried their readers away into alternative times and places. Behn's *Oroonoko* was, in other words, an early example of "literary escapism."

**THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LITERARY WORLD.** A frank, frequently overt sexuality was one of the hallmarks, not only of Behn's fictional world, but of the Restoration era in which her fictions appeared. In the disputes that occurred over the English succession during the 1680s, the underlying tensions that had existed in society between a worldly and

seemingly amoral court and a country that still possessed many Puritan values continued to seethe just below the surface of society. In the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the English Parliament effectively dismissed the last of the Stuart kings, the Catholic James II, and invited his daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange to assume the roles of dual monarchs. Sensing that the sources of discontent with the later Stuarts ran deeper than just issues about religious toleration or confessional allegiances, Mary and her co-regent soon exerted a conservative influence over the London stage and the capital's literary world. In this new age the sexual license that had flourished in the London theater and in the fictions of figures like Behn came rather quickly to appear old-fashioned, out-of-synch with the new tenor of the times. Yet the austere, grand rhetoric and English style that had been crafted for the Restoration era by such astute stylists as Dryden and other luminaries of the later Stuart era lived on, and in the eighteenth century they produced a brilliant age of prose fiction.

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## ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

**CHANGING ATTITUDES.** At the end of the seventeenth century changes in attitudes in England began to pave the way for the development of political journalism on the one hand and for the rise of the novel-reading society of the eighteenth century on the other. The forces that produced these changes were interrelated, but complex. In the final quarter of the seventeenth century Isaac Newton and other leaders of the Scientific Revolution pioneered the notion of a mechanical universe that was governed by unalterable laws

and which was held together by the attraction and repulsion of gravity. In the writings of political philosophers like John Locke (1632–1704), this notion of a world governed by fundamental natural laws and by the balance of opposing forces within the commonwealth soon influenced political philosophy. Through his many writings on politics, Locke explored issues concerning good and bad government, trying to unlock the keys that produced the greatest happiness, prosperity, and liberty in states. Although Locke had been born into a Puritan family, his works displayed little of the distrust for human nature that had long been characteristic of the Calvinist tradition. Instead he argued that the mind was at birth a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate upon which good and bad experiences left their residue. His political writings which argued for limited government and a degree of religious toleration for dissenting Protestants came to be an important force in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, that bloodless political transformation that deposed King James II and replaced him with the co-regents William and Mary. Locke's works continued to be avidly read throughout the eighteenth century, and their arguments for limited government were avidly discussed by numerous political philosophers, not only in England, but in Continental Europe and the American colonies. The defenses that Locke fashioned for governments that protected citizens' property rights and their individual freedoms inspired the philosophies of the European Enlightenment, a movement that aimed to institute an "Age of Reason." And in America much of Locke's political philosophy came to be reflected in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. In England, the ideas of Newton, Locke, and other early Enlightenment thinkers soon produced great political ferment and discussion, leading to the rise of a society that hungered for newspapers and journalistic commentary, an industry that provided an outlet for some of the most creative minds of the period.

**THE RISE OF JOURNALISM.** London's first newspaper had appeared in the 1660s in tandem with the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy, but that paper, the *Gazette*, had functioned largely as a government organ of information. Parliament's passage of the Licensing Act in 1662 prohibited all publishing unless texts were submitted for licensing before being printed, a provision that, in fact, militated against the development of other newspapers because by the time that a journal might have wended its way through a maze of censors, its news would have been old. In 1695 the Licensing Act lapsed, and there was generally little will in Parliament to renew its provisions because, by this time, the Stationer's Guild

that controlled the licensing process was widely seen as corrupt. It notoriously used its privileges merely to wrest as much money in fees as it could from printers and authors. But while the practice of licensing texts disappeared in England, government censorship did not. In the years that followed, the English government continued to subject the press to restrictions, but through different means. It often prosecuted those that published offending texts through the law of Seditious Libel. This change helps to explain the great flowering of political journalism and the English press generally that occurred in London in the years after 1700. Unlike the earlier licensing requirements, prosecutions for Seditious Libel occurred only after an author and printer had published an offending text. In the days, even months before government forces mobilized to punish offenders, thousands of texts could be profitably sold. Thus both printers and authors began to take their chances, testing the limits of the system, and often profitably making use of the very fact that an author's previous works had been banned. Such was the case with Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), the most famous of eighteenth-century journalists who prospered under the new system. Defoe had already achieved considerable success on the London scene by poking fun both at religious dissenters who occasionally conformed to the Church of England's laws so that they might hold government offices and at High Church Anglicans, who vigorously argued that strong measures be taken to punish dissenters. In 1702, he stepped a bit too far, though, in the direction of mocking the High Church party. In December of that year he published a satirical tract, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*, a work that appeared to many to be an actual pamphlet written by a High Church Anglican. Defoe argued that the best way to deal with dissenters was to hang them all. Some of his language appeared to draw upon the works of Henry Sacheverell, then the ruling bishop of Oxford and a noted extremist in defense of the Church of England's prerogatives. A furor soon erupted; some argued that the tract was, in fact, genuine, while others recognized it as a satire and tried to unearth who had written it. When the author's identity came to light, his opponents cried for blood for having "put one over on his readers," and a summons was issued for Defoe's arrest. By this time, though, Defoe had already gone into hiding, although he was later caught, tried, and convicted, and on three occasions he was pilloried before regaining his freedom. For a time, his personal finances lay in ruin as a result of his political misfortunes.

**MULTIPLICATION OF NEWSPAPERS.** Defoe's case reveals the great dangers that lay in London's develop-

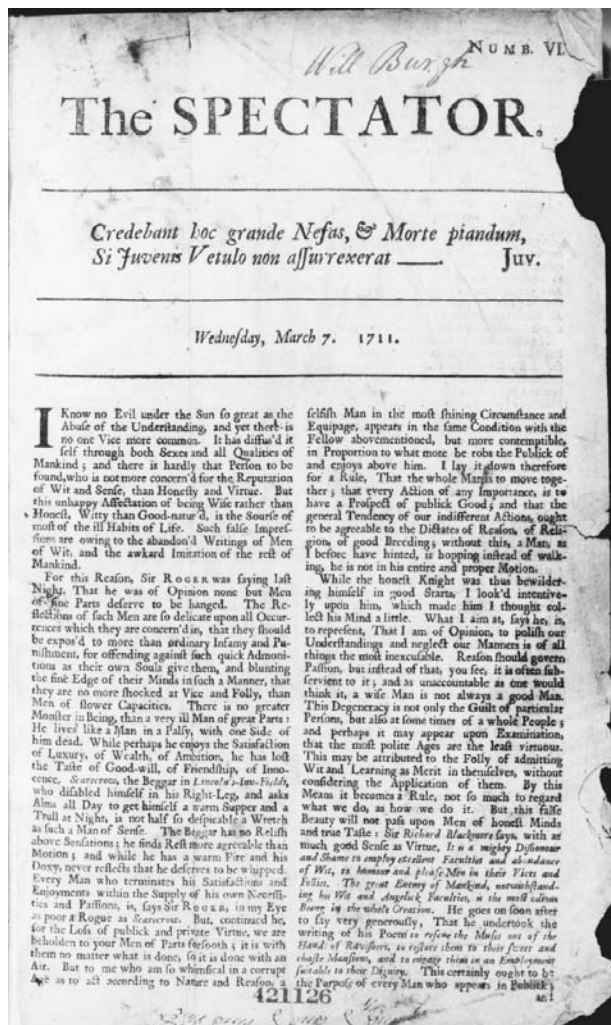


Engraving of Alexander Pope. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

ing world of political journalism. Just as writing for the theater could be dangerous in Elizabethan or early Stuart times, the annals of eighteenth-century journalism are filled with cases of those who, like Defoe, fell afoul of the law. But while these decisive punishments sometimes made journalists personally more cautious in the years after they had occurred, they did little to discourage others from following in their footsteps. England's developing political journalism could be a lucrative career. The early eighteenth century was a time of relative political instability in the country, with frequent changes in government during the reign of Queen Anne (1702–1714), and the political disputes of these years consequently created a market for news about politics. Other celebrated cases similar to Defoe's also nourished a market for newspapers, political tracts, and commentary on contemporary developments. Where London had a handful of newspapers in 1700, this number continued to grow in the first half of the century, and many new journals came to be centered in the city's Fleet Street, long the heart of English newspaper publication. With the establishment of regular coach services up and down the length of Britain in the early eighteenth century, London newspapers came also to be transported to far-flung points of the island, inspiring the foundation of journals and papers in other provincial cities that reprinted the "news" recently arrived from the capital together with information about local events. In London,

the vigorous climate of political journalism nourished some of the greatest writers of the age. Among the many distinguished authors who wrote for London's newspapers and journals were the poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744); the churchman and satirist Jonathan Swift (1667–1745); and the playwright and poet John Gay (1685–1732).

**ALEXANDER POPE.** Although he suffered great physical and emotional hardships throughout his life, Alexander Pope was able to rise above these challenges to become, like John Dryden, the defining poet of his age. Born to mature Catholic parents, he grew up in London before his family moved to Hammersmith, then a village west of the city. His father had been a wealthy merchant of linen, who was forced to retire from his profession by the passage of anti-Catholic laws during the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Despite that deprivation, the family remained prosperous, and when Pope was just twelve his father purchased an imposing estate and land in the forests outside London. Although he attended a school open to Catholic boys for a time, he was soon expelled for writing a satirical verse about another student, and priests provided much of his subsequent education. When he was still a child, Pope developed an infection of the bone that left him crippled in adulthood. As a result, he never grew past the height of four feet, six inches, and much of his life was spent wracked with pain. Eventually, he needed to wear braces in order to stand upright. Both his debility and his Catholicism became defining features of his character, with his life assuming the character of an almost heroic struggle to achieve recognition. During the 1710s, Pope spent some time writing for the London journal, *The Spectator*, a literary magazine that was edited by the great essayists Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. Unlike the other London periodicals of the day, *The Spectator* generally steered clear of partisan politics, although its outlook was seen by many as mildly Whig—that is, favoring the authority of Parliament over the monarch. The journal was fashioned as if it was written by a fictional society known as the "Spectator Club," and in this format those who contributed poetry or prose to the periodical were free to write on any subject they chose, so long as they made their contributions fit with the fiction. From the time of the publication of these early pieces, Pope acquired the reputation for being the greatest English poet of his day, the heir to Dryden. Although he spoke on political issues from time to time, he was more concerned with developing a theory of aesthetics in his poetry and essays. Ugly things repulsed Pope, and he was consequently a lover of all the arts, visual as well as literary. He was



*The Spectator*, one of London's most popular eighteenth-century periodicals. SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

not only a practicing poet, but a capable amateur painter as well. His published works promoted the idea that the poet's mission was to inspire his audience with an ideal of what might be accomplished in an orderly, well-run society that prized beauty. As a consequence of these aesthetic ideals, Pope was a harsh taskmaster over his own writing; he frequently subjected his poems to revision, thus there are variant versions of many of the poems.

**SWIFT.** Similar formalistic sensibilities are to be found in the life of Jonathan Swift, a satirist and poet who was for a time a close associate of Pope and Defoe. The three were members of the Scriblerus Club, a group of Tory wits that met in London during 1713 and 1714. These meetings left their imprint on the style of many of those involved in them. Biting satire came to be one of the common stocks in trade of those who were asso-



Portrait of Jonathan Swift. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

ciated with the Scriblerus Club, although Swift had honed his skills in this regard long before that venture. Born and raised as an Anglo-Irishman, he was educated at Trinity College in Dublin for a time, but was a haphazard student. Eventually, he received a "special degree" and became a tutor in the household of the Surrey gentleman, Sir William Temple. He took an M.A. from Oxford in 1692, and accepted a position in the Irish Protestant church near Belfast, but he soon returned to Temple's service when he became disenchanted with the grinding poverty of his situation. In Temple's service he began to write satire and literary criticism, including *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*. This last work entered into the then common debate in England and France about the relative merits of ancient versus modern literature. Prudently, Swift sided with his patron, Sir William Temple, who had defended the ancients over the efforts of contemporaries. *A Tale of a Tub*, by contrast, was a biting satire that mocked recent corruptions in religious practices in the figures of three brothers who represent Catholics, Protestants, and Anglicans. Each figure dramatically misreads their father's will, a device that stands for the Bible. In this way Swift relied on a fable to condemn in a lively and exuberant fashion the recent errors of all the Christian faiths. But while Swift could

admit that his own Anglican tradition had sometimes erred, he continued throughout his life to evidence the religious views of a Tory—he always supported a High Church policy. He believed that the Church of England should continue to enjoy a privileged position among all the religious institutions of the country, and that laws against dissenters and Catholics should be upheld. In his political leanings, though, Swift often favored the Parliamentary dominance championed by the Whigs. The accession of the German Hanoverian king George I (r. 1714–1727), though, meant that the Tories were soon thrown from power, and because of his religious leanings and his participation in the Scriblerus Club, Swift never again wielded political influence. Instead he became a member of the loyal opposition, writing pamphlets that criticized the Whigs' corrupt exercise of power under George I and George II, and perfecting the art of political satire to the highest level it was perhaps ever to achieve. Among the works that he published in these later years of his life, two in particular stand out for their brilliance: *Gulliver's Travels*, which was published anonymously in 1726; and *A Modest Proposal*. The by-now familiar plot and charming narrative that Swift spins in *Gulliver's Travels* has long obscured the work's biting political attack on the Whig Party and its indictment of many British institutions of his day, including the Royal Society. In *A Modest Proposal* Swift continued to batter the government through a satirical tract that alleged to be a kind of government paper outlining a plan to raise Irish children for food. Although Swift continued to have a wide readership during his lifetime, the ribaldry and frank sexuality that is present in many of his works, including *Gulliver's Travels*, meant that they increasingly fell out of favor. As he aged, too, Swift was often accused of insanity, adding to the flagging popularity of his works. By the Victorian era, his great masterpiece, *Gulliver's Travels*, had been transformed in heavily sanitized editions into a classic intended to be read, not by adults, but by children. In this way knowledge of the topical political commentary Swift had inserted into the work fell out of English readers' view, and the work became merely a good yarn of adventure.

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## THE ORIGINS OF THE NOVEL IN ENGLAND

**NEW GENRE, NEW TIMES.** The relatively rapid rise of the novel as a popular reading form in eighteenth-century England has long elicited interest from historians and literary critics. Of course, these were not by any measures the first “fictions” to enjoy a wide readership, but the eighteenth-century novel came to be distinguished from its forbearers—works like Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*—both by its length and its efforts to create an entirely imagined universe. Its development as a modern literary form occurred in the relatively brief space of two generations, the years, that is, between 1720 and 1780. Its development points to many changes in eighteenth-century society, including increasing disposable income among the middle classes to spend on books and greater leisure time in which to enjoy them. Its appearance, too, points to the increasingly secular spirit of eighteenth-century society, as readers exchanged the devotional literature of the past for fictions, fictions that the Christian moralists of the age often condemned as morally suspect and light-headed. Since many of those that consumed the new novels were women, too, the rise of this literary form also reveals rising educational standards during the period. The novel was an undeniably secular form of entertainment when compared against the devotional works and spiritual biographies and autobiographies that had been popular in the seventeenth century. But while secular in its outlook, the ways in which eighteenth-century authors crafted their stories were not devoid of moral or religious purposes. Eighteenth-century England was still a country very much shaped by its Puritan past, and in the novel's plots authors often told stories about downtrodden women and libertine men, tales that had just enough of a whiff of danger about them to titillate, and yet reinforce traditional values.

**DEFOE.** Historians and literary critics have often identified a series of three works that Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) published in the years around 1720 as decisive in fashioning the English novel: *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *The History and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722), and *The Fortunate Mistress, or Roxana* (1724). Defoe came to this fictional form late in life, and he did not create these works out of entirely new cloth. Before completing his *Robinson Crusoe*, for instance, he had already written



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A SCHOOL FOR PICKPOCKETS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Daniel Defoe's early novels made use of the first-person narrative derived, in large part, from his familiarity with Puritan spiritual autobiographies. In this passage from his *The History and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*, the dark heroine describes the way in which she came to be a pickpocket on London's streets.

Some time after this, as I was at work, and very melancholy, she begins to ask me what the matter was, as she was used to do. I told her my heart was heavy; I had little work, and nothing to live on, and knew not what course to take. She laughed, and told me I must go out again and try my fortune; it might be that I might meet with another piece of plate. 'O mother!' says I, 'that is a trade I have no skill in, and if I should be taken I am undone at once.' Says she, 'I could help you to a School-Mistress that shall make you as dexterous as herself.' I trembled at that proposal, for hitherto I had had no confederates, nor any acquaintance among that tribe. But she conquered all my modesty, and all my fears; and in a little time, by the help of this confederate, I grew as impudent a thief, and as dexterous as ever Moll Cutpurse was, though, if fame does not belie her, not half so handsome.

The comrade she helped me to dealt in three sorts of craft, viz. shoplifting, stealing of shop-books and pocket-books, and taking off gold watches from the ladies' sides; and this last she did so dexterously that no woman ever arrived to the performance of that art so as to do it like her. I liked the first and the last of these things very well, and I attended her some time

in the practice, just as a deputy attends a midwife, without any pay.

At length she put me to practice. She had shown me her art, and I had several times unhooked a watch from her own side with great dexterity. At last she showed me a prize, and this was a young lady big with child, who had a charming watch. The thing was to be done as she came out of church. She goes on one side of the lady, and pretends, just as she came to the steps, to fall, and fell against the lady with so much violence as put her into a great fright, and both cried out terribly. In the very moment that she jostled the lady, I had hold of the watch, and holding it the right way, the start she gave drew the hook out, and she never felt it. I made off immediately, and left my schoolmistress to come out of her pretended fright gradually, and the lady too; and presently the watch was missed. 'Ay,' says my comrade, 'then it was those rogues that thrust me down, I warrant ye; I wonder the gentlewoman did not miss her watch before, then we might have taken them.'

She humour'd the thing so well that nobody suspected her, and I was got home a full hour before her. This was my first adventure in company. The watch was indeed a very fine one, and had a great many trinkets about it, and my governess allowed us £20 for it, of which I had half. And thus I was entered a complete thief, hardened to the pitch above all the reflections of conscience or modesty, and to a degree which I must acknowledge I never thought possible in me.

**SOURCE:** Daniel Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (London: 1722; New York: Quality Paperback, 1996): 222–223.

more than 400 other works of political commentary, fiction, and satire. These three works were consequently only a miniscule output of their author's entire body of work. His tremendous production is the result of his creation of the literary equivalent of a cottage industry. Like Peter Paul Rubens, the seventeenth-century painter who presided over an enormous studio that churned out many paintings under his name, Defoe seems to have employed "ghost" writers, including his two sons, in order to complete the massive amounts of prose he was called upon to write for newspapers, journals, and the press in the 1710s and 1720s. In the years between 1709 and 1714, he developed his skills as a propagandist for the Tory Party, then the ruling faction in Parliament. As Queen Anne's death approached, many Tories supported a return to Stuart rather than Hanoverian rule, but with

the accession of the German George I (r. 1714–1727) to serve as England's monarch, these plans were quickly discredited. Defoe and some of his associates now were persecuted for their role in popularizing the Tory program in print. Defoe was convicted of Seditious Libel, and in the months that followed he seems to have become a kind of literary spy for the Whigs, who paid him to continue to work for Tory publications so that he might "tone down" the rhetoric they used against the new Hanoverian government. By 1715, Defoe was editing one Tory newspaper while simultaneously producing another that was Whig in its orientation. For these efforts he was widely attacked, but he was enormously successful all the same. He made annually around 1,200 pounds from his journalism alone, a sum that was about 25 times the average wage of a shopkeeper or artisan in

the country. Because of his acerbic wit, his texts were assured of a wide audience, and he was paid handsomely for them, but as a result, he also dabbled in other business deals, and in these he failed to show the same skill as in his journalism so that by the end of his life his finances were in shambles.

**CASTAWAYS AND CRIMINALS.** Defoe's skill in developing a market for his fiction can be seen in his *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, as well as in *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*. In truth, it must be admitted that Defoe was not really trying to develop these texts as "novels"; they were extensions of his long-term use of satire and of the "pretend narratives" he had long written to make points in his journalism. A central concern of Defoe's political writings had been his criticism of public corruption and of the private morality evidenced by men of affairs in the political world of his time. In *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* the author continued to speak to these issues, while nevertheless constructing an entirely fictionalized world. The sources for such an imaginative approach were many. Defoe appears to have modeled his story on the "real-life" adventures of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor who had been rescued from shipwreck and who had returned to Britain in 1709. But Defoe also relied on a number of travel narratives, history, diaries, works of political philosophy, and theology as well. The most important genre that inspired his narrative, however, was the Puritan confession or spiritual autobiography. Chief among the many works that left its residue in *Robinson Crusoe* was John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, a text that he was well familiar with as a result of his Presbyterian upbringing. The tale that he spins subsequently transposes the theme that Bunyan and other Puritan devotional writers had often treated: the attempt of the individual to achieve salvation in a hostile environment. Defoe imagined this hostile environment, not as "worldly" Restoration England or corrupt Hanoverian Britain, but rather as a desert island. The central character, Crusoe, is abandoned there as a direct result of his defiance of his parents' wishes and his embarking on a life of adventure, a plot derived from the story of the disobedience of Adam and Eve and the Fall of Man. The tale is thus filled with a high moral purpose, but also has the appeal of an adventure story. A similar combination of moral commentary and adventure are to be found in Defoe's two other masterpieces, *The History and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders* and *The Fortunate Mistress, or Roxana*, although both these stories are highly tinged with eroticism as well. In *Moll Flanders*, Defoe relied on the by-then conventional nar-

rative of personal religious conversion. The central character, Moll Flanders—a name that was then redolent of prostitution—is born to a thief in prison and is eventually forced to survive on her wits as a fallen woman. Through a series of alternate fortunes and misfortunes, she eventually is able to put her shady past behind her, and she announces at the end of the work her intentions to live a new, morally upright life. To this point, though, the highly ironic cast in which Defoe has cast Moll's adventures leads the reader to conclude that perhaps she will not be so penitent as she claims.

**LIFE AMONG THE GREAT AND GOOD.** In *Roxana*, Defoe continued in a similar vein, although instead of setting his tale in the lower reaches of London society, he recounted the adventures of a great Restoration-era courtesan who circulates in high society. For its middle-class readers, part of the appeal of *Roxana* lay in its attack on aristocratic decadence and lasciviousness, qualities that they saw as standing in marked contrast to the thrift and hard work of English commercial society. The central character is forced to survive on the largesse of her lovers following her husband's abandonment and her subsequent bankruptcy. The narrative recounts Roxana's attempts to store up enough treasure through her subsequent line of distinguished paramours so that she may never be subjected to such embarrassments again. But in a way that was new, Defoe also describes Roxana's growing psychological turmoil and her eventual mental breakdown as a consequence of her constant realization that the path on which she has embarked leads only to personal damnation. Where Moll Flanders is eventually redeemed, or at least seems to be redeemed, from her life of crime, Roxana's criminal use of sex ultimately destroys her. Both works are extraordinary texts that can be profitably subjected to a number of different readings. On the one hand, they appear to uphold a traditional Christian morality, but they do so in a way that plays on the sexually voyeuristic appetites of readers. In both books, outright sexual perversions play a central role in the plot. In one of her misfortunes, for instance, Moll Flanders falls unwittingly into a marriage and incest with her brother. Roxana presents her maid Amy to sleep with her own lover so that she might give him a son, an incident that recalls the story of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 16. Like her husband who has abandoned her, Roxana, in turn, abandons her own numerous children, and at one point even overexerts herself in hopes that she might miscarry. In these and other ways, both stories present a great deal of social commentary about the role that English law and society play in fostering such feminine crimes. Free



Portrait of Daniel Defoe. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

women, Defoe decries at points in both narratives, are enslaved by laws that dissolve their status into their husbands when they marry. English society, rather than educating its daughters in useful occupations that might provide them income to survive, instead schools them to make use of their sexuality. Prostitution is, Defoe argues, the logical consequence of the economic and social realities of the day, a daring statement at a time when moralists continued to insist that it arose strictly from personal sinfulness. Yet Defoe also keenly realized that his audience was fascinated by the ideas of Locke and other early Enlightenment thinkers that saw crime, not as the consequence of a primordial mark of Cain, but as the outcome of societies that were badly organized. In this way he developed his novels as exercises in social commentary. Although it must be admitted at the same time that these books' "high" moral aims were frequently at odds with their hints of the pornographic and the merely purient.

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## THE NOVEL AND MID-EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

**RICHARDSON.** Although the autobiographical style that Defoe had used in his early novels continued to be used throughout the eighteenth century, a number of other authors soon expanded the repertory of techniques that could be called upon to structure the novel. Among these, Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) was the most influential in fashioning a mature novel style that was soon to be imitated by a number of writers. His career was unusual for a writer. Born into relatively humble circumstances, he was educated for the clergy before becoming a printer's apprentice out of financial necessity. In the years that followed he became a successful printer in his own right, and eventually turned to writing as a pastime. His first novel, *Pamela* (1740), appeared when he was already 51. Rather than relying on the autobiographical narrative that Daniel Defoe had popularized, *Pamela* is written in the form of a correspondence between its main characters. Richardson's own voice serves as the editor who compiles and arranges these letters, filling his audience in on the details that they need to know to understand their exchanges. Like Defoe, he structured his work to be both an entertaining diversion and a morally instructive tale, but although it was soon a hugely popular success, not everyone was so convinced that its themes were uplifting. The central character, Pamela, is a maid who rises to marry her master. Some criticized such a plot as seeming to sanction class commingling to its readers, while others found some of the novel's episodes—including one in which one character watches Pamela undress—immoral. In the years that followed, numerous parodies, including the almost equally famous *Shamela* (1741) of Henry Fielding, appeared from English presses. Richardson took the criticisms of his work to heart, and a few years later he completed his masterpiece, *Clarissa*, a work that was published in two halves during 1747 and 1748. The themes of this work were darker, and the book today retains the curious distinction of being the longest novel ever written in the English language. The novel recounts the trials of a young heiress at the hands of an immoral aristocrat, Lovelace, who eventually succeeds in seizing the woman,



Illustration of the characters Pamela and Mrs. Jervis from Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS.

drugging her, and raping her in a brothel. Following the rape, Clarissa resolves to die, and the remainder of the story deals with the way in which she makes her funeral preparations. The story itself was not remarkable. Richardson apparently pieced together a tale from plots and themes that had been popular in English literature since the Restoration, even as he also relied on the works of a number of female writers that were popular in the early eighteenth century, including Penelope Aubin, Eliza Haywood, and Mary Delarivière Manley. Yet while its story was not extraordinary, the psychological insight that Richardson brought to this material, and the pathos with which he treated it, soon made it a sensation. Even before the novel had been completely published, a number of literary luminaries in England began to write to the author to plead that Clarissa's life be spared. The work established Richardson's reputation as a fictional writer of the highest rank, and his works and their epistolary style were widely copied. Eventually, his influence helped to establish a new genre known as the sentiment-

tal novel, which explored the emotions and their effects on characters.

**FIELDING.** The career of Henry Fielding followed a course different from that of the artisan Richardson. Born into a gentry family, he had grown up in an apparently well-off household, although there had been tensions about money which were exacerbated by his father's poor management of the family's resources. His mother had married for love, and her own family always found the match with Fielding's father inappropriate. Despite these troubles Henry Fielding received the best education possible. He attended the prestigious public school Eton before going off to study at the University of Leyden in Holland. In his twenties Fielding enjoyed a successful career writing for the London stage, but like many playwrights he faced a crisis when the government passed the Stage Licensing Act in 1737, a measure designed to censor and contain the theater, which had recently grown as a vehicle for expressing discontent. The Licensing Act prohibited drama in all venues in London

that lacked a royal patent, effectively placing a damper on the capital's great theater scene. As a result, Fielding saw the commercial possibilities that the stage offered dry up rather quickly. To continue to earn a living, he studied the law and eventually entered the bar. Although he was successful in his new career and eventually rose to the rank of judge, he continued to write, anonymously publishing his *Shamela*, a spoof on Richardson's *Pamela* as early as 1741. In that work Richardson's virtuous Pamela is transformed into the social-climbing servant Shamela who tricks her master, Mr. Booby, into marrying her. In 1742 Fielding wrote his first novel, *Joseph Andrews*, a work that continues where his spoof *Shamela* left off. Shamela is now the hopeless snob, Mrs. Booby, and Joseph Andrews is her lowborn brother. The novel opens with a hilarious scene of seduction in which Joseph refuses to surrender his virginity outside the bounds of marriage, and the resulting comic spectacle that Fielding relates ranks among one of the most entertaining in eighteenth-century English fiction. Fielding's skills as a storyteller continued to grow, and in 1749 he produced his great masterpiece, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*. This rollicking story in which Jones makes his way in the world through a series of mishaps and romances is lighthearted and often erotic, but not without an infusion of moral purpose. At the novel's conclusion, the hero renounces his wayward past, marries, and settles down into a more prudent life. *Tom Jones*, in contrast to the darker *Clarissa* of Richardson, is a work of high comedy, but together the two stories rank as the finest novels of the period.

**OTHER NOVELISTS.** Although Fielding and Richardson were by far the greatest fictional authors of the period, the vogue for the novel inspired a host of other writers. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the novel had gradually replaced the theater as a source of literary innovation and entertainment for many English men and women. The commercial possibilities this kind of publication offered were great, for even in London and other provincial centers with a theater, an author still wrote for a relatively limited audience. Yet the readership for English novels might exist anywhere where English was spoken, thus providing an almost limitless audience for writers, who now became expert in appealing to their readers, and who made use of the financial possibilities that authorship offered. Although there were many great, near-great, and mediocre writers who wrote novels during this time, the works of Tobias Smollett and Laurence Sterne deserve special mention. In his many novels, Tobias Smollett (1721–1771) evidenced a taste for portraying characters that were amus-



Drawing of Henry Fielding. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

ingly exaggerated and grotesque. His tales were told in the first person and were greatly influenced by the picaresque tradition that had first developed in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain. In those novels the central character was often lowborn and survives by his wits rather than hard work. Smollett made use of this tradition of characterization, but he modulated it to suit the current taste of English readers for a fiction that was realistic. The resulting mix of colorful characters, satire, and often righteous social commentary can best be seen in Smollett's novels *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748); *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751); and perhaps his best novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). By contrast, a considerably more somber spirit hangs over the great creation of Laurence Sterne (1713–1768), *Tristram Shandy*, which was published in nine volumes during the years 1759–1767. Sterne's novel was a self-consciously experimental one, and its tone grows darker in its later volumes, a fact that has often led literary critics to question whether its author's approaching death occasioned this change. The novel is innovative because its narrator, Mr. Yorick, spends little time telling his readers about his own life and instead devotes himself to discussing his family and surroundings. Sterne was very much influenced by John Locke and his notions about human psychology, particularly

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE GRAND LOTTERY OF TIME**

**INTRODUCTION:** At the beginning of the second book of his *The History of Tom Jones*, the author Henry Fielding gave the following apology for his method of narration. He calls attention to the differences between his own methods of writing a personal history of a life, and the methods of historians. The passage illustrates the charming, rambling style of the mid-eighteenth-century English novel. But more importantly, it hints at some of the essential freedom that its authors felt lay in the new form, a literary genre that was unfettered by the rules and conventions of older styles of writing. As he observes, as he himself is one of the founders of a new genre, he can do as he pleases.

THO' we have properly enough entitled this our work, a history, and not a life, nor an apology for a life, as is more in fashion; yet we intend in it rather to pursue the method of those writers, who profess to disclose the revolutions of countries, than to imitate the painful and voluminous historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much paper with the detail of months and years in which nothing remarkable happened, as he employs upon those notable eras when the greatest scenes have been transacted on the human stage. ...

Now it is our purpose, in the ensuing pages, to pursue a contrary method. When any extraordinary scene presents itself (as we trust will often be the case), we shall spare no pains nor paper to open it at large to our reader; but if whole years should pass without producing anything worthy his notice, we shall not be afraid of a chasm in our history; but shall hasten on to matters of consequence, and leave such periods of time totally unobserved.

These are indeed to be considered as blanks in the grand lottery of time. We therefore, who are the registers of that lottery, shall imitate those sagacious persons who deal in that which is drawn at Guildhall, and who never trouble the public with the many blanks they dispose of; but when a great prize happens to be drawn, the newspapers are presently filled with it, and the world is sure to be informed at whose office it was sold: indeed, commonly two or three different offices lay claim to the honour of having disposed of it; by which, I suppose, the adventurers are given to understand that certain brokers are in the secrets of Fortune, and indeed of her cabinet council.

My reader then is not to be surprised, if, in the course of this work, he shall find some chapters very short, and others altogether as long; some that contain only the time of a single day, and others that comprise years; in a word, if my history sometimes seems to stand still, and sometimes to fly. For all which I shall not look on myself as accountable to any court of critical jurisdiction whatever: for as I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein. And these laws, my readers, whom I consider as my subjects, are bound to believe in and to obey; with which that they may readily and cheerfully comply, I do hereby assure them that I shall principally regard their ease and advantage in all such institutions, for I do not, like a *jure divino* tyrant, imagine that they are my slaves, or my commodity. I am, indeed, set over them for their own good only, and was created for their use, and not they for mine. Nor do I doubt, while I make their interest the great rule of my writings, they will unanimously concur in supporting my dignity, and in rendering me all the honour I shall deserve or desire.

**SOURCE:** Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones* (London: 1749; reprint New York: Modern Library, 2002): 75–78.

the idea that the mind was a “blank slate” upon which experience left its residue. In *Tristram Shandy*, then, he self-consciously attempted to develop these psychological insights by creating one of the first truly in-depth character studies in the English novel. The result is a stunning tour de force in literary experimentation, perhaps unequalled until the novels of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf in the twentieth century.

**SAMUEL JOHNSON.** While novels continued to attract the attention of English readers as one of the fashions of the age, the greatest literary personality of the eighteenth century was not a novelist, but a literary critic

and poet. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), known affectionately as Dr. Johnson to generations of English readers, began life in humble surroundings in a Midlands town before embarking on a remarkable life. He attended Oxford for only little more than a year, where the depth of his learning in the Classics impressed his tutors. He became a teacher at a grammar school, but left soon afterward when he found the environment stifling. Eventually he married well, and with his wife’s money he set up his own school. One of his students, David Garrick, was destined to become the greatest actor in eighteenth-century England, but Johnson’s school failed, and he and his pupil departed for London in 1737. Soon, he was

writing for the *Gentlemen's Magazine*, a popular literary and political journal. Although he was prolific and achieved some successes, his first decade in London was difficult. He did not, despite the aid of Alexander Pope, attract patrons, and he struggled to establish a reputation. In these years he formulated his plans for a comprehensive dictionary of the English language, a work that was begun in the late 1740s and published in its first edition in 1755. Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* was not the first such reference work to appear in England, although it was the most comprehensive to date. It provided its readers with etymologies, definitions, and examples of how words had been used at different points in the history of the language. It quickly became an indispensable source of information for writers and educated society, and it was also a source of significant pride to its author, who reminded his friends that he had compiled his dictionary in only nine years, while a similar reference work for French had required a team of writers forty years to complete. In 1750, Johnson had begun writing for *The Rambler*, and his columns in that periodical as well as *The Adventurer* had already brought him significant acclaim. He began in 1756 to serve as editor of the *Literary Magazine*, and in that capacity his critical reviews helped shape literary tastes. Around this time, he also turned his attention to the works of William Shakespeare, planning and then in 1765 publishing the first critical edition of the bard's opus. Even before that great publication, the government had awarded him with an annual pension, which freed him from the necessity of his journalistic endeavors. In the same year of the first publication of his Shakespeare edition, he received an honorary doctorate from Trinity College in Dublin, a degree that was followed a decade later by another from Oxford.

**A FORCE WITH WHICH TO BE RECKONED.** Besides his literary endeavors, Johnson was famous for the role that he played in establishing The Club, an organization that he and his friend, the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, formed in 1764. Nine members drawn from the world of politics, literature, and the arts were among the founding members of this organization, which quickly became an important force on the London scene in the later eighteenth century. Eventually, it became known as The Literary Club and it provided a significant outlet for Johnson's personable nature. His house in the center of London near Chancery Lane also became a significant social and literary hub, and in the years following his wife's death Johnson frequently invited literary men and women to stay with him there. Some in these later years of his life saw Johnson as a kind of literary dictator, who could establish or discredit the career of a budding author in a

phrase or two. Yet he was a perceptive critic and was widely regarded for the common sense and good judgment that he exercised when commenting upon other authors' works. Johnson's life, his interest in everything from the Latin Classics to manufacturing processes, points to the increasingly outward-looking culture of metropolitan London in the Georgian era. Johnson arrived in London at a time when it was already the largest city in Europe, a great metropolis that attracted traders and literary figures from across the continent. Yet in those years, despite the city's precocious journalistic culture and its heated printed debates, London lacked the equivalent of the sophisticated salons that played such an important role in the diffusion of the ideas of the Enlightenment in France. Johnson's influence over the literary society of the later eighteenth century helped to develop similar centers of refined discussion throughout London society, as debating the relative literary merits of contemporary authors' works became increasingly a pastime of the city's cultivated society.

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## FRENCH LITERATURE DURING THE ENLIGHTENMENT

**PRECURSORS.** As in other parts of Europe, the Enlightenment in France had been preceded by the publication of a number of works that were critical of the

Roman Catholic Church, traditional Christianity, and received wisdom in general. Although the French court had come to be affected powerfully by a renewed sense of piety in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, these years had also seen the publication of a number of works that were to be widely read in the eighteenth century, and to form the basis for the Enlightenment's attempts to establish an "Age of Reason." Newton's ideas of a world held together by the opposing forces of gravity and John Locke's teachings concerning the necessity of liberty in civil societies came to be almost as important in eighteenth-century France as they were in England and America. Yet France also produced its own scientists and political theorists in this period, intellectuals that challenged the wisdom of past ages. Among these, Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757) and Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) were two of the most important thinkers of the years around 1700, and their ideas formed one of the foundations of the Enlightenment in France as it gathered strength in the years following Louis XIV's death in 1715. Fontenelle was a scientist and a productive author who tried to make the implications of the latest scientific experiments available to a more general readership. He published widely on all kinds of topics, from the Classics to political theory and science, eventually winning a place for himself among the immortals of the French Academy. His most influential work, *A Plurality of Worlds* (1688), promoted the notion of the Copernican heliocentric or sun-centered universe. Although Copernicus had advanced this notion as early as 1543, and Galileo had elaborated upon his theory in the early seventeenth century, the Catholic Church's condemnation of the notion of a sun-centered universe had helped to dampen its rise to prominence, even among intellectuals in France in the later seventeenth century. Much of Fontenelle's scientific theorizing in the *Plurality of Worlds* was clearly wrong, and was soon disproven by the publication of Isaac Newton's *Principia* in 1689. Yet Fontenelle wrote vigorously and convincingly for the Copernican theory, and helped as a result to establish its acceptance in the country's intellectual society. Pierre Bayle, by contrast, singled out the entire edifice of Roman Catholicism for his most vigorous attacks. A Protestant, he was forced to emigrate from France as a result of Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which had previously granted a degree of toleration to France's Protestant population. Bayle helped to establish the tradition of French writers publishing in exile that was to play an important role in the eighteenth century. His and his successors' works were often printed in London, Amsterdam, or in Switzerland before being smuggled into France, where they were avidly read by

French intellectuals. In his works Bayle attacked the fanaticism of the traditional Catholic Church, but he was at the same time critical of the developing rationalistic strains of thought found in many European thinkers. His works were important, especially his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697), because they celebrated toleration and championed a society of pluralistic views. His vision was not realized in late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century France, although the thinkers of the Enlightenment were to champion many of the same causes that Bayle had.

**MONTESQUIEU.** The concerns that Bayle and Fontenelle had expressed soon were taken up by many others, including the Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755), the first great thinker the French Enlightenment produced. Montesquieu entrusted his business interests to his wife, who was an astute manager, so that he could devote himself to study, writing, and his position in the Parliament of Bordeaux, an important court and administrative institution. In 1721, Montesquieu's first great work, *The Persian Letters*, appeared and soon prompted considerable debate. It was styled as a series of letters written between two Persian travelers during a visit to France. It mocked French civilization and customs by holding them up to the lens of supposed outsiders. In these letters Montesquieu ranged far and wide, and no one in France seems to have escaped the penetrating gaze of his considerable intelligence. The work attacked the absolutist system of government set up by Louis XIV, the Catholic Church, and all the country's social classes. In its allegorical portrait of a race of Troglodytes, it set forth a cogent discussion of Thomas Hobbes' seventeenth-century notion of the state of nature. Fueled by his success in prompting intellectual ferment, Montesquieu soon left his provincial home in Bordeaux and made his way to Paris, where he circulated in high court circles. In these years in Paris, he came into contact with several English aristocrats, and from his discussions with them, he, like other Enlightenment figures, came to admire the flexibility and greater freedom of England's political system. Eventually, he traveled to England to witness firsthand the country's government at work. In the years following his return to France, Montesquieu began his great classic, *The Spirit of the Laws*, a work that was largely complete by 1743, but not published until 1748, when he had deliberated over his arguments for a number of years and considerably refined them. In its final printed form it was almost 1,100 pages long. The originality of Montesquieu's vision as a political theorist can be seen in the ways in which he takes up subjects that were common among political writers at the time.



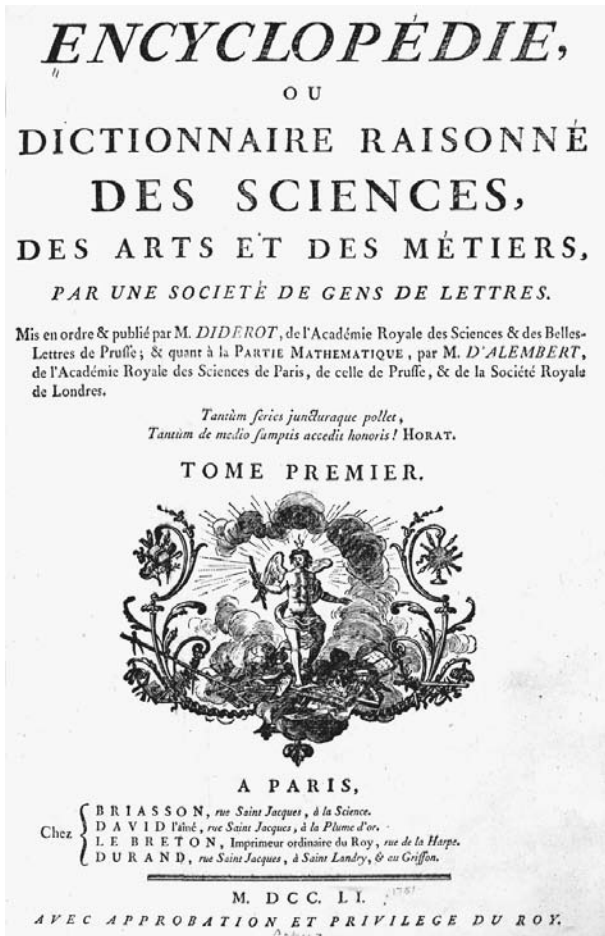
Instead of insisting, as past theorists had, that governments should be divided for purposes of examination into aristocracies, monarchies, and democracies, Montesquieu instead treated the spirit that he believed produced each kind of political system. Republics, he argued, arose from a spirit of human virtue; monarchies from a spirit of honor; while despotisms were the product of fear. A second feature of the work proved to be of major importance in the later political history of France and the United States: Montesquieu's notion of the separation of powers. He argued that it was not enough for a government merely to separate functions, but that the legislative, judicial, and administrative duties in a state should be confided to completely separate groups that acted autonomously of each other. In this way his political theory anticipated the political innovations of the U.S. Constitution and the French Revolution. Although Montesquieu shied away from controversy, the implications of his work were widely recognized and attacked at the time. In the Sorbonne, Paris' distinguished university, they were condemned, and the French clergy widely attacked his conclusions as well. In 1751, his *Spirit of the Laws* was placed on the Catholic Index of Prohibited Books.

**VOLTAIRE.** The greatest author of the French Enlightenment was François-Marie Arouet (1694–1774), who was always known by his pen name Voltaire. He began his career as a secretary before turning to writing, although troubles soon plagued his career. For his early plays, tragedies in the tradition of Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine, he was pronounced the great successor to seventeenth-century classicism. But when he fell afoul of members of the court, he was banished for a time from France. In these years he lived in London and came to admire the greater liberty of English life. When he returned to France, he published his reminiscences of his time among the English as *The Philosophical Letters* (1734), a work filled with keen insights and irony about the differences between French and English societies. In religious matters, Voltaire always professed to be a deist, that is, a follower of the naturalistic religion that had been popular in England among some intellectuals at the end of the seventeenth century. His criticisms of French life, manners, and religion eventually made his life in Paris uncomfortable and, turning his back on France, he traveled for a time to Prussia, where he was offered a position in the court of Frederick II. There intrigues followed him, and eventually he left Germany, only to be captured and imprisoned for a time by Frederick's forces before regaining his liberty. The remainder of his life he spent in Switzerland and at a château he owned on the French

border at Ferney. Controversies continued even there, although Voltaire established a salon wherever he went that frequently was sought out by the best minds of Europe at the time. He was also an avid correspondent who kept in touch with many other Enlightenment figures. Besides his plays, Voltaire's greatest literary achievement was his short fictional satire, *Candide* (1759), a work that viciously attacked the philosophical optimism of Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, an early German Enlightenment thinker. Leibniz had taught that nature showed a gradual evolution and improvement towards the most perfect forms. Voltaire, by contrast, argued that such complacency was a fundamentally wrong-headed attitude toward the world. Life presented everyone with sheer random events as well as inexplicable evils that every human being should strive to correct. The characters in his *Candide* start with an essentially optimistic view of the world, a view from which they are soon disenchanted by the stunning series of tribulations they experience. The work presented Voltaire's alternative to Leibniz's philosophical optimism. In it, he argued that human society could be changed for the better, but only if, as in the work's conclusion, everyone tended to "cultivating their garden."

**DIDEROT AND THE ENCYCLOPÉDIE.** Voltaire's fame spread far and wide throughout eighteenth-century Europe, in large part because of his popular plays but also because of his voluminous correspondence and his literary works. Denis Diderot (1713–1784) did not enjoy such an exalted reputation among France's Enlightenment philosophers and authors, but he came nevertheless to exert a significant influence over literary and artistic tastes in the country in the second half of the eighteenth century, primarily through his role as editor of the *Encyclopédie*. Diderot's publisher had intended this project to be merely a translation of the *Cyclopaedia* written by Ephraim Chambers and published in England in 1728. In his capacity as editor, though, Diderot soon vastly expanded the work, and together with his co-editor, Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (1717–1783), the pair made the publication into a major organ for promoting the ideals of the Enlightenment. The radical character of some of its articles, which were solicited from like-minded figures, soon led the government to censor parts of the publication. Despite such efforts and the work's 25-year production schedule, the *Encyclopédie* was eventually completed, a significant work that helped to establish many of the new teachings about art, literature, and politics among its broad, cultivated readership in France and Europe.

**THE FRENCH NOVEL.** While political philosophy and works of social and literary criticism attracted some



Title page of the *Encyclopédie*, the major Enlightenment reference work edited by Denis Diderot. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

of the finest minds of the French Enlightenment, the period was also a great one in the development of the novel. An important genre of *roman de mœurs* or “moralistic novels” developed throughout the period. In this regard, the works of Alain René Lesage (1667–1747) were widely influential. After producing several works that were influenced by Spanish novel traditions, Lesage began to publish his *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (The Adventures of Gil Blas of Santillane) in 1715. When the final installment was completed in 1735, it was a work unlike any other written to that time in French. The story followed its hero, Gil Blas, through a series of positions as a valet. Unlike the picaresque novels of Spain, the story is less tragic and brooding. It tells of Blas’ adventures, crimes, and amours, before recounting his marriage and retirement from a life of exploits. More tragic, but no less popular was *Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (History of the Knight des Grieux and of Manon Lescaut), the best known of the novels of the Abbé Prévost (1697–1763). It tells the story of a no-

bleman who falls in love with a courtesan. As a result, he falls into a seamy life to support his passion. In this widely read novel, realism combines with the taste for romance. The result produces a work that stood far above most of the novels written at the time. The tale follows the couple’s fateful romance to its final destination, colonial Louisiana, where Manon dies. The overwrought but realistic description of her death was irresistible fare for operatic and ballet composers, as it was for eighteenth-century readers. Several composers relied on the story in the nineteenth century for operas and ballets. In contrast to Prévost’s hard-edged realism, the novelist and playwright Pierre Marivaux (1688–1763) preferred plots that allowed him ample room to explore human psychology and his characters’ thoughts. His two most accomplished works in this strain were *The Life of Marianne*, published between 1731 and 1741, and *The Fortunate Peasant*, published between 1734 and 1735. In both works Marivaux showed that he was a master of analyzing feelings and their effects on the human character. His works are now seen as anticipating the popular “novels of sentiment” that became common in both England and France in the second half of the eighteenth century.

**RIISING LITERARY QUALITY.** Despite its great popularity, novels were considered slightly disreputable forms of literature in France—that is, until some of the country’s greatest authors began to write them. Although they had long been consumed in France’s elite society, fiction generally was associated in the elite mind with the lower classes and country folk. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thousands of cheap fictions were sold in France’s villages through *colporteurs*, itinerant peddlers who carried with them everything from bows to buttons to escapist fiction. The figures of the *colporteurs*, immortalized in François Boucher’s eighteenth-century painting *The Galant Colporteur*, had helped to create a whiff of disreputability for the novel in French high society, even though the evidence suggests that many in high society read these texts. But the traditional concerns of French classicism, with its efforts to create a national literature that was immortal and timeless, continued to discourage efforts to see the novel as a literary form that might rise to the status of high art. In the later eighteenth century, though, this situation changed rather quickly. In the articles he wrote for the *Encyclopédie*, for example, Denis Diderot celebrated realistic bourgeois fiction as a vehicle for inculcating moral values, and he pointed to the English novelist Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* as an appropriate source for authors to emulate. Diderot eventually tried his hand at writing such an “elevated” novel, but the resulting product, *Jacques, the Fatalist*, did not appear in print un-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN END TO MISERY**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Abbé Prévost, a clergyman, was also one of France's most successful eighteenth-century novelists. His *Manon Lescaut* (1731), a sentimental and overwrought piece of fiction, was widely popular in its day. It tells the story of a young aristocrat who takes up with a courtesan, to disastrous effect. Both he and his lover are eventually destroyed by their passion, although her death on the Louisiana frontier is certainly the grimmer punishment. In the following passage, Prévost plays upon his readers' desire for sentiment. The work's influence on other arts was longstanding, perhaps because of this death scene, which was widely depicted in several nineteenth-century operas and plays.

We had thus tranquilly passed the night. I had fondly imagined that my beloved mistress was in a profound sleep, and I hardly dared to breathe lest I should disturb her. As day broke, I observed that her hands were cold and trembling; I pressed them to my bosom in the hope of restoring animation. This movement roused her attention, and making an effort to grasp my hand, she said, in a feeble voice, that she thought her last moments had arrived.

I, at first, took this for a passing weakness, or the ordinary language of distress; and I answered with the usual consolations that love prompted. But her incessant sighs, her silence, and inattention to my enquiries, the convulsed grasp of her hands, in which she retained mine, soon convinced me that the crowning end of all my miseries was approaching.

Do not now expect me to attempt a description of my feelings, or to repeat her dying expressions. I lost her—I received the purest assurances of her love even at the very instant that her spirit fled. I have not nerve to say more upon this fatal and disastrous event.

My spirit was not destined to accompany Manon's. Doubtless, Heaven did not as yet consider me sufficiently punished, and therefore ordained that I should continue to drag on a languid and joyless existence. I willingly renounced every hope of leading a happy one.

I remained for twenty-four hours without taking my lips from the still beauteous countenance and hands of my adored Manon. My intention was to await my own death in that position; but at the beginning of the second day, I reflected that, after I was gone, she must of necessity become the prey of wild beasts. I then determined to bury her, and wait my own doom upon her grave. I was already, indeed, so near my end from the combined effect of long fasting and grief, that it was with the greatest difficulty I could support myself standing. I was obliged to have recourse to the liquors which I had brought with me, and these restored sufficient strength to enable me to set about my last sad office. From the sandy nature of the soil there was little trouble in opening the ground. I broke my sword and used it for the purpose; but my bare hands were of greater service. I dug a deep grave, and there deposited the idol of my heart, after having wrapt around her my clothes to prevent the sand from touching her. I kissed her ten thousand times with all the ardour of the most glowing love, before I laid her in this melancholy bed. I sat for some time upon the bank intently gazing on her, and could not command fortitude enough to close the grave over her. At length, feeling that my strength was giving way, and apprehensive of its being entirely exhausted before the completion of my task, I committed to the earth all that it had ever contained most perfect and peerless. I then lay myself with my face down upon the grave, and closing my eyes with the determination never again to open them, I invoked the mercy of Heaven, and ardently prayed for death.

**SOURCE:** Abbé Prévost, *History of Manon Lescaut and of the Chevalier des Grieux* (Paris and New York: Société des Beaux Arts, 1915): 186–187.

til 1796. A generation earlier, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), perhaps the greatest political and social theorist of the Enlightenment, had already taken up Diderot's call for a morally uplifting fiction. He was the first French philosopher to embrace the novel form as a serious vehicle for treating moral and philosophical issues. But he would not be the last. Until modern times, the novel in France has retained a centrality in philosophical discussions that it lacks in many other cultures. The great twentieth-century philosophers, Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, continued to write novels, as their Enlightenment and nineteenth-century

forebears had. Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1762) stands at the beginning of this trend. Today, it hardly appears as a great work of art. It is long, overly sentimental, and often dry, but eighteenth-century readers loved it all the same. They seemed to have found in the work a precise description of a world they recognized, combined with a moral commentary they thought was appealing. Rousseau himself seems to have labored over *Julie*, working on the novel for about five years before its publication. The subject he chose was modeled after the medieval romance between Abelard and Heloise, an event that ended tragically with Abelard's castration and

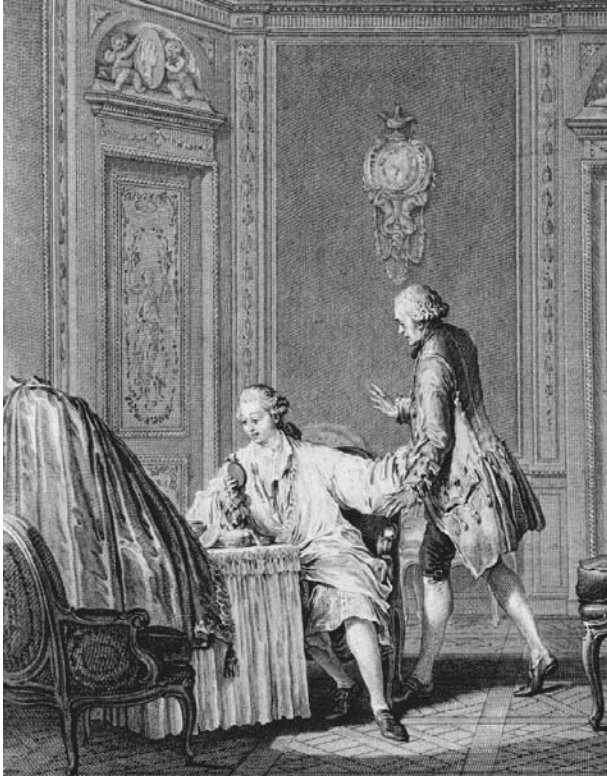


Illustration to Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS.

both lovers' entrance into convents. In Rousseau's updated retelling of the story, Julie instead dies, but before she does, she composes a letter to her lover that asks him to accept her death and their unresolved passion. The novel thus set up an interesting interplay between erotic attachment, sexual desire, and its ultimate renunciation in death. The effect of this ending galvanized Rousseau's reputation as a novelist of the highest merit, particularly among his female readers. In this work, Rousseau had intended to accomplish for the French novel what Samuel Richardson had done for the English genre through his *Clarissa*. In the wake of his *Julie*, Rousseau was barraged with letters from his fans, particularly his female fans, a testimony to the way in which he modulated his storytelling to the sentiments of his time.

**LATER EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVELS.** Two other novelists produced works in the later eighteenth century that stirred similar emotions, and which continued to experiment with ways of presenting moral and intellectual dilemmas to their readers. In 1782, Pierre Choderlos de Laclos' *Les liaisons dangereuses* (Dangerous Liaisons) caused an excitement similar to Rousseau's *Julie*. The work has stood the test of time better than the earlier philosopher's fiction, and it remains an extraordinary

piece of literature today. In fashioning his story Choderlos de Laclos (1741–1803) was also influenced by Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, a tale of a corrupt aristocrat who brutally rapes the heroine when she refuses to submit to his will. By contrast, the central story line of *Les liaisons dangereuses* involves, not a rape, but the gradual, entirely calculated seduction of a virtuous woman, who proves unable to resist the protestations of love of the anti-hero, Valmont. In the end it is the wicked Valmont who is consumed by his deceit, although the transforming experience of love that he undergoes with his heroine redeems him, so that even in his death he is restored to a state of moral goodness. But before this sublime transformation occurs, the work's complex plot twists reveal love among the "high and mighty" as nothing more than a cynical game, untouched by true passion, a diversionary amusement shaped by the desire for possessions and reputation. Choderlos de Laclos' brutal and contemptuous portrait of the dissolution of French high society remains unparalleled for its descriptions of aristocratic decadence. Its publication seven years before the outbreak of the French Revolution, when mounting criticism of France's idle aristocrats was steadily rising, helps to explain the sensation it caused, but the work transcends the problems of its own era and is one of the great Western depictions of hypocrisy and trickery. Evil of a different kind is also to be found in the works of the last great French novelist of the eighteenth century, the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814). His descriptions of sexual pleasure mingled with pain, particularly in his *Justine*, helped coin the word "sadism." The work is a "black novel," recounting the lives of two sisters, Justine and Juliette, the first virtuous, the second wicked. The religious Justine sees good in everyone, but is taken in by a libertine who gains her trust before subjecting her to his perversions. Like Rousseau's *Julie* and Choderlos de Laclos' *Les liaisons dangereuses*, the story line is also shaped by a reading of Richardson's *Clarissa* and the many "novels of sentiment" popular in late eighteenth-century Europe. The themes that Sade developed here—sexual desire, misplaced trust, and depraved wickedness—had frequently been treated in many other works, but certainly not with the degree of candor or overt sexuality as in Sade's fictions. The perversions he related in *Justine* as well as in many of the other writings he undertook while imprisoned for his own sexual deviations were, in large part, drawn from his own repertory of experiences.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: The Enlightenment in France; Theater: The French Enlightenment and Drama*

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## THE ENLIGHTENMENT IN GERMANY

**CHANGING TIMES.** In the seventeenth century German literature had often reflected the troubled religious landscape of the age, and the literary landscape was profoundly affected by the disputes of the era. In those years Protestant writers like Andreas Gryphius and Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen had been largely responsible for the creation of a national literature in Germany, a literature which, despite touches of humor and the picaresque, had often concentrated on creating new modes of expression for a language that authors desired to endow with the grandeur of classical rhetoric. Great variety had characterized the verse poetry and prose produced in this era, as many writers had experimented with new rhetorical forms and genres, a literary innovation that Germany's budding "literary societies" supported. Yet the tenor of much of the underlying moral, religious, and philosophical foundations of this literature had remained conservative. While religion continued to be a central preoccupation of German life in the early eighteenth century, new pious movements led in directions different from the highly theological and doctrinal spirit of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. At the end of the seventeenth century, the German Pietists had supported the development of a new spirit within Lutheranism. Leaders of this movement—men like Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke—advocated a religion that spoke to the heart rather than the mind. While Lutheran Pietism remained intensely orthodox in the theology that it espoused, it nevertheless supported a practical spirit, evidenced in the foundation of orphanages and schools as well as the formations of "circles" of lay people that met regularly for prayer and study. As its influence spread in the eighteenth century, Pietism affected many Protestant coun-

tries in Northern Europe, eventually helping to inspire the growth of Wesleyanism in England and the Americas. It also fostered the expansion of literacy through the foundations of hundreds of schools, particularly in northern Germany where its influences were most widely felt. Pietism also came to be an intensely literary movement, with its major leaders and advocates frequently publishing devotional works, spiritual autobiographies, and journals similar to those that were common in England and other European regions. Among the literary monuments of the movement Johann Philip Arndt's *True Christianity* (1610), an early work later claimed by the Pietists as one of their sources of inspiration, and Philipp Jakob Spener's *Pia Desideria* (Pious Desires; 1675) became important texts of the movement, and were much emulated by later writers. Francke's influence, too, was notable in his foundation at Halle of a scriptural study institute that trained many in the techniques of Pietist biblical study and commentary. But the movement's impact on the ideas of the eighteenth century was profound, stretching throughout Protestant Europe, and eventually coming even to influence many Catholic devotional writers as well.

**LEIBNIZ.** While Pietism supported a "heart-felt" devotion rather than a hard-edged doctrinal religion, its teachings were nevertheless firmly located within the traditions of Lutheran orthodoxy fostered by the Reformation. Other sources of disaffection, though, were just beginning to appear in Germany around 1700, sources that eventually questioned the traditional role that Christianity had played in the country's public life. These forces can be seen at work in the career and writing of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), a figure that had been born into a devout Lutheran family. Leibniz's lifelong pursuit of a philosophical alternative to Christianity eventually called that edifice of belief into question. When he entered the University of Leipzig in 1661 as a law student, he soon became familiar with the entire range of scientific thinkers that were producing a reassessment of European ideas at the time, including Galileo, Thomas Hobbes, René Descartes, and Francis Bacon. In the years that followed, Leibniz developed an intensely metaphysical philosophy that attempted to harmonize this new learning with his own hunger for truth. Eventually, this quest resulted in a strikingly original philosophy. Leibniz spent the early part of his career without employment, although he eventually won positions at court. Of the many positions he filled, one as the librarian of the Duke August Library in Wolfenbüttel was particularly important. Wolfenbüttel was home to one of Europe's most distinguished library collections, and there Leibniz was able to read widely, indulging his in-

terests, which ranged across philosophy, the Classics, mathematics, history, and even physics and mechanics. From his tenure at Wolfenbüttel throughout the eighteenth century that followed, the position of librarian at this venerable institution was persistently awarded to some of Germany's greatest literary figures. Eventually, the puzzling philosophy that Leibniz developed based upon his broad reading and his concept of monads, which were independent things he thought composed the real world, proved to be a significant intellectual riddle to untangle. But his lifelong search for philosophical truth, a truth that was independent of the received wisdom of traditional religion, inspired other major German thinkers in the Enlightenment. For these reasons, he has often been dubbed the "Father" of the German Enlightenment.

**IMPACT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.** Leibniz had envisioned a world free from the constraints of traditional Christian theology, and although his ideas attracted adherents among other philosophers and authors in eighteenth-century Germany, they were controversial all the same. Additional ferment and inspiration for new German literary forms also appeared in the eighteenth century from English literary works that came to be known in the country from the early eighteenth century onward. In these years German intellectuals avidly read the writings of Daniel Defoe, Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift, and a number of others. The trend continued throughout the eighteenth century. Later German writers were highly influenced by the works of Samuel Richardson and the literary criticism of Samuel Johnson and others that issued from England in the mid-eighteenth century. The political writings of the French and British Enlightenment were another source of inspiration. Translations of many of these works were produced in Germany relatively quickly, making English fiction and European political writings accessible to many in German society. Among the figures that attempted to apply the insights that they had culled from English Augustan literature, Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766) and Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803) were particularly important in fashioning new literary forms, both in the theater and in poetry. At Leipzig, Gottsched worked to establish new canons in the theater of his day, and he helped to formulate rules for judging the quality and content of literature. His rules were highly restrictive, but in the circle that he founded in the city, the discussion of them nevertheless produced a creative movement in the history of the country's drama and literature. His followers, for instance, were quick to fashion new, less restrictive canons and to do so, they

studied and imitated the works of John Milton and other English writers. Klopstock was one of these writers and he made his greatest mark on German literature through his poem, *The Messiah*, which was published between 1749 and 1773. When the first three cantos of that work appeared in 1749, they caused great excitement. They were modeled on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and like that earlier text relied on unrhymed hexameter for their structure. Emotionally sophisticated, they helped to establish their author as one of the leading poets of his age.

**LESSING.** Perhaps the greatest literary figure of the mid-century in Germany was Gotthold Ephraim von Lessing (1729–1781), a critic of considerable powers who also wrote drama, prose, and poetry. In 1770, he accepted the same position that Leibniz had two generations earlier as librarian at Wolfenbüttel. But even before this period, he had amassed a reputation as a literary artist of significant innovation. In his plays Lessing helped to develop a "middle-class" drama that spoke to the concerns of Germany's increasingly bourgeois urban society. He produced a number of sparkling comedies before his writing took a more overtly philosophical tone. His work, in other words, came to celebrate the search for rational truth and for a tolerant society, unhindered by religious fanaticism that was typical of many Enlightenment authors. These dimensions of his work eventually spurred controversy. His dramatic poem, *Nathan the Wise* (1779), which intimated that three great world religions—Islam, Christianity, and Judaism—were essentially similar in their ethics, sparked controversy. His pleas for tolerance, particularly of Germany's Jews, were also unusual for their time. But despite criticism of his work, particularly its downplaying of traditional Christian truth, Lessing remained until his death fundamentally assured in his faith in humanity and its ability to perfect itself.

**GOETHE.** A more tempestuous note is to be found in the life, career, and writing of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), one of the founders of the "Sturm und Drang" literary style. The values of the "Sturm und Drang" (meaning literally "Storm and Stress") movement fascinated many authors in the final third of the eighteenth century. Writers who adopted this style abandoned the influence of Augustan-era England, with its imperturbable and graciously elegant lyric poetry and prose, and they searched instead for an idiom that was altogether more turbulent, emotional, and personal. Similar movements also influenced the visual arts and music at this time in Germany, helping to provide a bridge between the Classicism that was generally favored in the mid- and later eighteenth century and the Ro-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE UNITY OF RELIGIONS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's dramatic poem, *Nathan the Wise* prompted controversy when it first appeared in 1779. It was a verse drama, intended to be read or staged, and its action was set in Jerusalem of the twelfth-century Crusades. It narrated a series of exchanges between Christians, Muslims, and Jews. In the following excerpt of dialogue between Nathan, the Christian, and Saladin, the Muslim, can be seen part of the reason for the controversy. Nathan's parable relates the way in which three world religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—proceeded as a gift from God. The parable upheld Lessing's teaching that the ethical importance of each of these sets of teachings was essentially similar, and fit with the Enlightenment's championship of tolerance. The piece shows how the Enlightenment's values of religious tolerance came to shape literary texts, even in conservative Germany, where Pietism and the generally strong support that the state granted to the region's state churches tended to uphold the importance of traditional Christianity.

**Nathan:** There lived a man in a far Eastern clime  
In hoar antiquity, who from the hand  
Of his most dear beloved received a ring  
Of priceless estimate. An opal 'twas  
Which spilt a hundred lovely radiances  
And had a magic power, that whoso wore it,  
Trusting therein, found grace with God and  
man.  
What wonder therefore that this man o' the  
East  
Let it not from his finger, and took pains  
To keep it to his household for all time.  
Thus he bequeathed the jewel to the son  
Of all his sons he loved best, and provided  
That he in turn bequeath it to the son  
What was to him the dearest; evermore  
The best-beloved, without respect of birth,  
By right o' the ring alone should be the head,  
The house's prince. You understand me,  
Sultan.

**Saladin:** I understand: continue!

**Nathan:** Well this ring,  
From son to son descending, came at last  
Unto a father of three sons, who all  
To him, all three, were dutiful alike,  
And whom, all three, in natural consequence,  
He loved alike. Only from time to time  
Now this; now that one; now the third, as each  
Might be alone with him, the other twain  
Not sharing his o'erflowing heart, appeared  
Worthiest the ring; and then, piously weak,  
He promised it to each. And so things went  
Long as they could. But dying hour drawn near  
Brought the good father to perplexity,  
It pained him, the two sons, trusting his word,  
Should thus be wounded. What was he to do?  
Quickly he sends for an artificer,  
To make him on the model of his ring  
Two others, bidding spare no cost nor pains  
To make them in all points identical;  
And this the artist did. When they are brought  
Even the father scarcely can distinguish  
His pattern-ring. So, full of joy, he calls  
His sons, and each one to him separately;  
And gives to each son separately his blessing,

**Saladin:** I hear, I hear—Only  
bring you the tale  
to speedy end. Is't done?

**Nathan:** The tale is finished.  
For what still follows, any man may guess.  
Scarce was the father dead, but each one  
comes  
And shows his ring and each one claims to be  
True prince o' the house. Vainly they search,  
strive, argue,  
The true ring was not proved or provable—  
Almost as hard to prove as to us now  
What the true creed is.

**SOURCE:** Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön, Nathan the Wise, and Minna von Barnhelm*. Trans. W. A. Steel (London: J. M. Dent, 1930): 166–167.

mantic Movement that developed around 1800. Goethe was one of the last great universal geniuses that European society was to produce. He was interested in every dimension of human experience and the natural world, and he became a poet, art critic, naturalist, educational reformer, philosopher, playwright, and novelist. His writings rank even today as among the greatest achievements of world literature. His scientific studies, in fact,

fill a fourteen-volume edition, and to this must be added an enormous amount of other writings, all composed in one of the most thoroughly fluent and engaging prose styles imaginable. His life straddled the great literary achievements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in his consistent development, Goethe proved ever capable of reacting to changing times and changing questions. Born into the German middle class, he consis-

tently praised bourgeois culture for its production of history's greatest cultural embodiments. Educated in the sophisticated atmosphere of eighteenth-century Leipzig, he left Germany in 1765 on what was intended to be a grand tour. Stopping in Strasbourg, he wanted to study law for a time before going on to Paris and other European cities. In Strasbourg, though, he was so captivated by the sight of the city's Gothic cathedral that he came to realize the poverty of Leipzig's culture of sophistication. From this time he devoted himself to promoting the integrity of the "Gothic ideal." In Strasbourg, he also made contact with Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), one of Germany's foremost poets. His discussions with Herder convinced him of the poet's great role in expressing emotions and fashioning a primitive language that spoke to the human soul. From this point, his poetry, prose, and dramas thus began to acquire the characteristic mix of emotions, strains, and pressure typical of the *Sturm und Drang*. Goethe had not created this style, but he was its most famous proponent, even as he later experimented with other literary movements. As a *Sturm und Drang* writer, though, his most significant achievement was the publication of his novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), a work that in many people's minds became emblematic of the values of the entire *Sturm und Drang* movement, and which exerted a powerful influence over the development of literary Romanticism. The contents of *Werther*, the story of a young man's unrequited love for a woman who is promised to another, was partially autobiographical. Yet Goethe fashioned his retelling of the tale in such a way as to elicit great pathos and enormous response from his readers. The tale's tragic ending—young artistic Werther commits suicide as a victim of his love—spoke to readers who had to this point been schooled in the belief that art should mirror high ideals and present a larger-than-life heroism. Goethe showed them that the emotions might be a powerful barrier to achieving such a vision. His story thus played on the wellsprings of emotion that lay just beneath the imperceptible classical veneer of eighteenth-century middle-class and aristocratic societies. The novel produced an immediate sensation, not only in Germany, but throughout Europe, where it became one of the great literary success stories of the later eighteenth century. Its plot and style were widely imitated, and its popularity persisted into the nineteenth century, when it was dramatized, made the subject of ballets, and set to music in several operas.

**IMPLICATIONS.** In Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* can be seen many of the forces that were shap-

ing European literature as the eighteenth century drew to a close. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European writers had experimented with various literary forms and genres to give expression to their underlying religious, moral, and philosophical beliefs. In the seventeenth century, these attempts had produced great spiritual autobiographies and personal narratives, in which the Christian dramas of the Fall of humanity and its eventual redemption had been given a highly personal, individualistic cast. Poets like John Milton in England and Andreas Gryphius in Germany had similarly devoted themselves to relating the traditional concerns of the classical and Christian worldviews in ways that spoke to their generations of readers. Such works had greatly expanded the literary possibilities of the French, German, and English languages. In France, they had produced a great age of drama, poetry, and prose, in which the greatest writers of the period had developed a distinctly classical idiom. In Germany, such efforts resulted in the emergence of a forceful, varied, yet florid prose and poetic style. And in England, the literary Baroque of figures like John Donne and Milton, with their emphasis on encapsulating difficult meanings, gradually gave way to an Augustan form of expression, notable in John Dryden and others for its detached beauty. In the decades that followed 1700, the quest to present philosophical truths and for a literature that represented the changing realities of the time had begun to produce a fundamental shift, evidenced in the writings of many eighteenth-century authors. Now prose fiction and philosophical writing gave expression to many of the new ideas of the developing Enlightenment. That movement was the recognized heir to the mechanistic views of the universe promoted by Isaac Newton, the theories of natural law and psychology of John Locke, and the questioning and inquisitive spirit of figures like Pierre Bayle, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, and Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle. As the Enlightenment endeavored to reform society into one based on the tenets of human reason, authors searched for new literary modes of expression that might give voice to the concerns of their age. Although the novels of Daniel Defoe or Samuel Richardson still continued to be profoundly affected by traditional Christian moral concerns, they were prized, not only in England, but also throughout Europe for the way in which they gave expression to the concerns of an expanding and urban "middle class" society. In *Moll Flanders*, for instance, Defoe presented to his readers a seemingly realistic portrait of life without the middle-class comforts of Augustan London. And in his *Clarissa*, Richardson warned his readers of the enormous powers of the emotions,



helping to inspire a genre of “sentimental” novels in his native England, but also in France and Germany. The quest for a realistic fiction that might embody and examine the emotions and problems that accrued from living in the new civil societies of the age persisted throughout the later eighteenth century. Yet in Goethe and in the troubled spirit of his hero, Werther, can be seen at the same time the very same forces that eventually shattered the eighteenth-century confidence in human reason and its ability to perfect society. With Goethe, European readers were faced with a fundamentally new paradigm, a paradigm that led to the great Romantic literary experiments that fascinated nineteenth-century Europe.

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SEE ALSO *Philosophy: The Enlightenment Elsewhere in Europe; Religion: Pietism*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Literature*

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### DANIEL DEFOE

1660–1731

*Journalist*  
*Novelist*

**FROM A DISSENTING FAMILY.** In his relatively long life, Daniel Defoe had an enormous influence on journalism and the early English novel. He had been born Daniel Foe in rather humble circles. His father was a London butcher, and although he was fairly prosperous, his status as a dissenter prevented his son from attend-

ing university. He was sent instead to a school for non-conformists, those who refused to conform to the rites of the Anglican Church. He seems to have intended to follow a career as a minister, but by 23 he was married and working as a hosier. By this time, he had already traveled extensively in Continental Europe. In the constitutional controversies that developed in England in the 1680s, Defoe supported the Glorious Revolution settlement, and eventually he joined William III's army as it approached London. His career as a writer, though, did not begin until his late thirties when he published *An Essay upon Projects* (1697). It was followed by *The True-Born Englishman* in 1701, a satire that poked fun at those who argued that the English monarch had necessarily to be born an Englishman. In this same year Defoe courageously stood up to Parliament on the day after it had imprisoned five English gentlemen for presenting a petition demanding greater defense preparations for the impending likelihood of a European war. Angered by Parliament's high-handedness, Defoe wrote his *Legion's Memorial* and marched into the House of Commons where he presented it to the leadership. It reminded them that Parliament had no more right to imprison Englishmen for speaking their minds than a king did. Defoe's document produced its desired effect when the petitioners were soon released.

**CAREER AS A JOURNALIST.** Such political engagements emboldened Defoe, and in 1702 he published a tract, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*, that mocked the Tory position against Nonconformists. In it, he humorously poked fun at “High Churchmen,” those who argued that the best path to take with Dissenters was to uphold laws that limited their freedom. The text of Defoe's tract alleged to have been written by one such High Churchman, and argued that all dissenters should be put to death. For a time, some believed that the tract was genuine, but when it was discovered to be a forgery Defoe's printer was imprisoned and Defoe himself was forced into hiding. Eventually caught, his punishment included a heavy fine, imprisonment, and three sessions in the pillory. During his imprisonment, however, Defoe wrote his *Hymn to the Pillory*, which was sold to those who identified with his plight. In the years that followed, Defoe became more cautious in attacking the government, although he fell afoul of the law again in 1712 for several pamphlets he published, and again in 1715 when he was convicted of libelling an English aristocrat.

**LITERARY ACHIEVEMENTS.** Despite his checkered career as a journalist, Defoe was an extremely gifted writer. Throughout his lifetime he produced at least 250 books, tracts, pamphlets, and journals. Many were writ-

ten anonymously or under pseudonyms, such as his publication of *The Prophecies of Isaac Bickerstaff*, a series of works that began to appear in 1619. During the reign of Queen Anne (1702–1714), he alone wrote and edited his *Review*, a popular political journal of the day. It appeared at first as a weekly, but by the end of the queen's reign, it was being published three times each week. Despite his legal troubles, Defoe continued to produce the work, even while imprisoned. For these efforts, Defoe earned enormous sums of money, although his poor business sense resulted in much of his fortune being squandered on misconceived projects. Although his work as a journalist brought him fame, he is today best remembered for the series of three early English novels he published between 1719 and 1724: *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moll Flanders* (1722), and *Roxana* (1724). This kind of fiction was a significant departure for Defoe, who had spent much of his life penning political journalism. Yet Defoe had often published under pseudonyms and crafted fake narratives in his attempts to damn the political programs of his opponents. In his later fictional works, he relied on these skills, but also on his knowledge of the seventeenth-century spiritual autobiography and confessional narrative, works like John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. Defoe argued that his fictions had highly moral purposes, but at the same time they seemed to satisfy the salacious and prurient interests of their audience. Although the content of *Robinson Crusoe* is rather tame, *Moll Flanders* takes its readers on a tour through London's seamiest sections, and along the way records a number of sexual crimes, including incest. *Roxana*, by contrast, is set in high society, but the lazy and indolent high society of England's Restoration period, and it reveals Defoe's distaste for the lascivious excesses of the later Stuart years. In all three works Defoe combined his enormous skills as a storyteller with his ability to catalogue and describe realities in ways that were fascinating to his readers. His fictions, in other words, benefited from the same curiosity that his journalistic career had. For these reasons, he is often called the "Father of the English Novel."

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## JOHN DONNE

1572–1631

Poet

Priest

**CATHOLIC UPBRINGING.** Of all the forces that shaped the life and writing of John Donne, his Catholic upbringing was certainly the most important. His family traced their origins back to Wales, although his father was a successful ironmonger in London, who died when the young John was still a baby. Donne's mother married a Catholic physician, and the family saw that Catholic tutors initially schooled the young boy at home. When he was eleven, he entered Hertford Hall at Oxford University, an institution that Catholics often attended at the time. Later, he may have also attended Cambridge, although his Catholicism prevented him from receiving a degree. In the years following his education, Donne played the "man about town" on the London scene. He was not known for leading a wild and dissolute life, but instead for being a careful dresser who enjoyed the company of prominent London ladies. In these years he studied law at the Inns of Court, the medieval guild charged with representing clients in the royal courts and the center of legal education in the English capital. In 1593, he renounced his Catholicism not, as some formerly claimed, in a calculated maneuver to receive important professional positions, but after careful study of the differences between the teachings of Catholicism and Anglicanism. He continued to remain at odds with some groups in the Church of England; he was never drawn toward Puritanism, but instead envisioned Anglicanism's benefits as consisting of a compromise between the hard-edged doctrinal religions of radical Protestants and Catholics.

#### ADVENTURE AND AN UNFORTUNATE MARRIAGE.

In the mid-1590s, Donne embarked on a short period of adventure in the company of Sir Walter Raleigh and his "Sea Dogs." In the years following the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, these sailors continued their efforts to discourage Spanish trade by conducting raids against the country's ports and trading outposts. Donne accompanied Raleigh on at least two missions, first to storm the port of Cadiz in Spain in 1596, and one year later to track down Spanish galleons laden with New World gold in the Azores. He soon retired from these exploits and, returning to London, he accepted a position as a secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, an important royal official. In 1601, Egerton saw to it that Donne was elected to Parliament from a district he controlled in the north of England. Donne's patron became displeased

with his young charge, however, when he discovered that Donne had secretly married his wife's niece, Ann More. For contracting the illegal marriage (More had been a minor), Egerton had Donne imprisoned for a time. Eventually, he was released, and although the union with More survived, he was politically disgraced. During the years that followed, he continually tried to rehabilitate himself, but was always unsuccessful. He and More survived on the gifts and patronage of friends. Finally, in 1615, Donne took a suggestion of King James I to heart and he entered the church. James also saw to it that Cambridge University awarded Donne his degree, and he gave him a position as a chaplain. In the years that followed, Donne also received other appointments in the Church of England, eventually rising to serve as dean of the Cathedral of St. Paul's in London, one of the most important ecclesiastical positions in the English capital. In this capacity, Donne became one of the country's most famous preachers and he helped to establish a following for his particular brand of Anglican spirituality. That religion was opposed to what it perceived as "doctrinal hairsplitting" among the Puritans; churchmen like Donne instead promoted an ideal of Christian holiness. They counseled their audiences to search their lives to unearth sins, amend their paths, and concentrate their attentions on the great Christian drama of redemption.

**WORKS.** Donne had been a poet since his earliest years on the London scene, and in the period of his disgrace he had written works for his patrons. He did not publish these, apparently preferring to remain aloof from the public world of poetry that was at the time dominated by figures like William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and other playwrights anxious to turn a profit. In his years as dean of the St. Paul's Cathedral, he continued to write poetry, and at his death his son John collected and published his works. Even before his death, his style was credited with producing changes in English poetry. In contrast to the melodic lines favored by poets of the Elizabethan years, Donne's verse was recognized for its forceful style that bristled with intellectual insights. His poems were difficult to understand, yet filled with rewarding conceits and metaphors for those that struggled to excavate their meanings. In this regard they have remained a significant source of inspiration for later writers of English, although works like his *Holy Sonnets* (1609–1611) still prove vexing to literary critics. These works were undertaken during a period of illness. Like most of Donne's greatest literary endeavors, they display a fascination with death and the life that lies beyond the grave. In his popular sermons delivered at St. Paul's he continued to call his audience to meditate on these themes. One of his greatest literary achievements were the *Devotions Upon*

*Emergent Occasions* he published in 1624. That book contains his celebrated Meditation XVII, where Donne develops his famous observations on the themes "No man is an island" and "never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee." Such rhetoric was a significant force in attracting greater devotion to the Church of England on London's scene in the 1620s, although the country's religious divisions grew wider in the years following Donne's death in 1631. His reputation as a poet and a devotional writer continued to be considerable, although by the eighteenth century critics like Samuel Johnson had less regard for the puzzling and quixotic nature of his poetry. Johnson identified Donne as the source of inspiration for a school of "metaphysical poets" in early seventeenth-century England. Although modern literary critics have come to discount this notion of a school, they have continued to see Donne's influence as important in fashioning one direction followed by other early Stuart poets and writers of prose.

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### HANS JACOB CHRISTOFFEL VON GRIMMELSHAUSEN

c. 1621–1676

*Novelist*

**EARLY YEARS.** Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's early life coincided with one of Germany's most dismal epics: the Thirty Years' War. He was born to Protestant parents, but as a child he was kidnapped by invading armies and impressed into service in one of the armies that was then making its way through the country. Later, he joined the Catholic forces of the emperor before serving as an assistant to Count Reinhard von Schauenberg. When the war finally concluded, Schauenberg's family gave him a position as a caretaker on their lands. In turn, he served the family as a tax collector, innkeeper, and bailiff. When it came to light that he had

been stealing from them, though, the Schauenbergs quickly dismissed him. In the next few years, Grimmelshausen became an assistant to a physician, and he also found work as a tavern keeper and again as a bailiff. Even while he was a soldier in the imperial army, though, Grimmelshausen had begun to write. In 1658 and 1660, he published his first works, two short satirical texts, but his fame rests ultimately on his great masterpiece, *The Adventures of Simplicissimus*, the first part of which appeared in 1668. It was followed by a second part and a continuation entitled *Courage, the Adventuress* one year later. It was an immediate success, one of the first best-selling pieces of fiction to appear in the German language. It brought Grimmelshausen no fame, however, since it was published anonymously, and his authorship was not established definitively until the nineteenth century.

**BLACK HUMOR.** Unlike Germany's great seventeenth-century poets, Grimmelshausen had not benefited from a university education. While he was largely unfamiliar with the structures of Neo-Latin rhetoric, he still managed to spin a considerable yarn of adventure. His work is the product of a great deal of reading, particularly in the picaresque novel tradition that had developed in late sixteenth-century Spain. His hero, Simplicissimus, is a vagrant, a naive peasant that passes from one unfortunate incident to the next. In the world that Grimmelshausen creates, soldiers routinely torture, maim, and murder civilians, and although Germany's peasants often strike back, they generally are unable to stop the carnage. Many of the gruesome accounts that Grimmelshausen related were apparently autobiographical; the account of Simplicissimus's capture by forces that had plundered his village is just one of the many examples of the parallels between this fictional world and real life. While the events he relates are gruesome and often obscene, the moral of the story was no less troubling: the only solution to humankind's cruelties lay in renunciation of the world. Simplicissimus becomes, at the conclusion of the tale, a hermit, but along the way to this transformation, his actions have confounded the mighty and embarrassed the learned. *The Adventures of Simplicissimus* is one of the best examples of the cross fertilization that occurred between literary genres in early-modern Europe. Its inspiration was to be found in the picaresque novels of Renaissance Spain, yet transposed into a new literary environment, Grimmelshausen was able to transform that form into high art, filled with hilarity and rich observation.

**IMPLICATIONS.** Much of the literature that survives from the seventeenth century is religious in nature. In poetics, German writers began at this time to experiment

with new ways of forging lyrics that made use of the sound possibilities of the German language. In these efforts they searched through the classics and adapted the Neo-Latin rhetoric that had fascinated sixteenth-century authors. In so doing, they found new ways of elevating their language into a flexible mode of expression. The world of Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, however, lay far from the elevated literary societies anxious to raise the literary standard in German. Like Shakespeare, Grimmelshausen sprang from humbler roots, although his broad reading and his life experiences marked him as someone who had a message to impart. Although great poetry and religious works appeared in Germany's cataclysmic seventeenth century, Grimmelshausen's *The Adventures of Simplicissimus* is today the only work that still claims a general readership from the period. Its greatness and continuing appeal arises, in large part, from the universal nature of its author's observations on human nature and its shortcomings. In this regard, its appeal spoke to the developing "bourgeois" society in Germany's societies, and although he had few imitators in the seventeenth century Grimmelshausen's work continued to produce imitators in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century worlds.

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#### SAMUEL RICHARDSON

1689–1761

*Printer*  
*Novelist*

**EARLY YEARS.** As a novelist, Samuel Richardson was catapulted to celebrity in England when he was already in his fifties. From the publication of *Pamela* in 1740, until his death 21 years later, his activities are widely known. Considerably less information is available concerning the earlier years of his life. It is known that he was born in rural Derby, although his family was from London. His father was a joiner, and soon returned with his family to the capital. The young Richardson apparently received little schooling, although he seems to have

been a voracious reader as a child. Although his parents might have preferred to send him into the church, they did not have the resources to tend to his education, and Richardson was apprenticed to a printer in London when he was seventeen. He completed his apprenticeship and was enrolled in the Stationer's Company, the guild of London printers, in 1715. By 1721, he had begun his own business, having married the daughter of his one-time employer. Like most London printers in the era, he produced a vast array of publications, printing books, journals, handbills, and other kinds of material for those who were willing to pay his fees. He seems soon, however, to have become a prominent member of the capital's printing establishment. In 1723, for instance, he became the printer entrusted with producing the *True Briton*, a Tory publication. A few years later he became an officer in the Stationer's Company.

**A STRING OF TRAGEDIES.** Although these were years of professional advancement, they were marked by great personal tragedies. In the years between his marriage in 1721 and the early 1730s, he lost all six of his children as well as his wife, a fact that he credited later in life with producing a tendency toward nervous disorders. In 1733, Richardson's tide of bad luck apparently turned, however; he remarried, this time to another printer's daughter, and the couple had four girls that survived. In the same year as his second marriage, Richardson printed his first book, *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*, a conduct book. In these years his prosperity grew, largely because he won several lucrative government printing contracts. He purchased a country house just outside London, and seems to have had more leisure time. As a result, he began to write more in the later years of the 1730s. One project, which he began in 1739, was his first novel, *Pamela*. Most of the novels written in England to this time had made use of the autobiographical first-person narrative pioneered by Daniel Defoe around 1720. Richardson abandoned this form, which had been based on seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographies and confessions, and in *Pamela* he pioneered the "epistolary style," in which the action is told through a series of letters. Richardson was drawn to this form, in part, by some of his printer friends who had recommended that he write on the problems of daily life. Out of these experiments, he began to compose a series of letters that he eventually published as *Letters to Particular Friends*. But at the same time as he was composing these works, he also began to experiment with using letters to tell a story. When he turned to write *Pamela* in earnest, it took him only a matter of months to complete the enormous book. The story tells of a serving maid who preserves her virtue despite the advances of a young nobleman in the

house in which she is employed. As a result of her basic goodness, she is rewarded at the end of the novel by her advantageous marriage. The admiration the work inspired was almost instantaneous. From throughout Britain readers praised its celebration of sexual virtue. But soon more critical appraisals of the novel attacked its implications, particularly its celebration of marriage across the classes. Within a short time, Henry Fielding, for instance, satirized the story in his *Shamela*, a work that transformed the heroine *Pamela* into a snob and upstart anxious to make her way up the social ladder.

**CLARISSA.** In the years that followed, Richardson took the criticisms voiced against his *Pamela* to heart, and attempted to fashion a second novel that would be unassailable on moral grounds. The result was *Clarissa*, the longest novel ever to appear in the English language. The first two volumes of the work appeared in 1747 and were a critical success. In the months that followed, Richardson was barraged by correspondents anxious to know the conclusion of his work. Some, who sensed that the plot was drifting toward the heroine Clarissa's ultimate death, even pleaded with Richardson to spare her life. In 1748, Richardson published the final five volumes of the work. The completed novel told a tale of aristocratic trickery and deceit in which the despicable yet attractive Lovelace doggedly pursues Clarissa. Eventually, he lures her to a London bawdy house, where he drugs her and brutally rapes her. As a result, Clarissa resolves to die and makes elaborate preparations for her funeral. The work produced widespread admiration, although some criticized the tale's amorality. In the decades that followed, though, it inspired a string of "sentimental novels," with plots fashioned on Richardson's, with its emphasis on the powerful effect that the emotions might have on the human psyche. It was soon translated into Dutch, French, and German, and in these countries it also inspired many subsequent works. During the years that followed the publication of *Clarissa*, Richardson continued to write, publishing *Sir Charles Grandison* in 1753 and 1754. While the work was successful, it also inspired criticism because of its length and boring plot. A year later he also produced *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments ... in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison*; in this work he attempted to distill the moral wisdom that he believed his works contained. In the later years of his life, Richardson continued to edit his works, and he was something of a fixture in London's literary scene, becoming a close associate in these years of Samuel Johnson and other luminaries in the capital's worlds of art and literature. His chief achievement, though, remains his *Clarissa*, a work that is not without flaws, but which

established a form for the English novel that allowed writers to develop characters and psychological portraits in a grand fashion.

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### MARIE DE RABUTIN-CHANTAL SÉVIGNÉ

1626–1696

*Letter Writer*

**A PRIVILEGED LIFE.** Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, otherwise known to history as Madame de Sévigné, was born into an old Burgundian noble family. Orphaned at six years old, she was raised by her uncle, Philippe de Coulanges. Tutored rather than schooled, like other aristocratic girls of her time, she had a string of impressive teachers, including Jean Chapelain, one of the founding members of the French Academy. At the age of eighteen she was married to Henri de Sévigné, who introduced her to court society as well as to a prominent literary circle in Paris that met in the Hôtel de Rambouillet. The Hôtel was the home of Catherine de Vivonne, a French noblewoman, who in 1610 had first been introduced to the French court of Henri IV. Disgusted by the roughhewn manners she saw on display in the royal circle, Catherine de Vivonne, the Marquise of Rambouillet, had built her own lavish townhouse in Paris not far from the Louvre. There she continued to hold court in the mid-seventeenth century. The values of the women who circulated in this society prized “preciosity,” a word that since the seventeenth century has come to have a negative connotation. At that time, however, Rambouillet and her circle used it to imply grace and refinement. The novelist Madeleine de Scudéry was a member of the Rambouillet literary circle, as were other prominent writers of the time. The group also left its mark on the young Madame de Sévigné, and her later vigorous correspondence owed much to her exposure to Rambouillet’s circle.

**MARITAL PROBLEMS AND WIDOWHOOD.** Although he was from a respected noble family, Henri de

Sévigné squandered his wife’s money, and in 1651 he died as a result of an injury sustained in a duel. The couple had two children, whom Madame de Sévigné continued to raise, while also participating in society in and around Paris. A number of French noblemen courted her in the first years of her widowhood, although Sévigné decided not to remarry. While leading an active social life, she was also devoted to her children, but especially so to her daughter, Françoise Marguerite. When her daughter married in 1669, she left Paris to accompany her husband, a royal official, to Provence. The resulting loneliness prompted Sévigné to become one of history’s most avid correspondents. Over the next years she exchanged almost 1,700 letters with her daughter, most of which were written in the first decade following their separation. In 1677, Sévigné took a lease on the Hôtel Carnavalet, a townhouse in the Marais district of Paris, and she remained there until her death. That house, now a museum of French domestic life, became one center of Parisian society, as Sévigné entertained her female friends there: the aristocratic novelist Madame de La Fayette, Madame de la Rochefoucauld, and Madame de Pomponne. In these years, Louis XIV’s court was increasingly abandoning Paris for other royal châteaux in the countryside. At first, the king took up residence at St. Germain, but in the 1670s he expanded Versailles from a humble hunting lodge into a great palace, eventually making it the seat of his government in 1682. The retreat of the royal court from Paris produced great changes in the city’s high society, generating an antagonism that persisted between Paris and the royal court until the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. Although Madame de Sévigné longed to circulate in the rarefied air of Louis’ circle in these years, she only rarely did so. One of Madame’s cousins had been imprisoned for a time in the Bastille, and her own friendships with those critical of the government marked her as inappropriate for life at Versailles. At two times in her life, though, Madame de Sévigné stepped out of the shell imposed upon her by familial and friendly connections. When her daughter came out in society, she was invited to the court’s balls, and her mother was allowed to attend. Later, Louis XIV came under the influence of Sévigné’s old friend, Madame de Maintenon, and she was invited on one occasion to a special court theatrical performance and allowed to sit with the king and his party. Otherwise, her life was lived out largely absent from the great court dramas being enacted at Versailles. Sévigné had a pious disposition that had been shaped by seventeenth-century Jansenism, and when she faced death, her friend the Count de Grignan observed that she did so with “dignity and submission.”

**IMPORTANCE.** Unlike some other female members of the French nobility of the time, Madame de Sévigné never published literary works, although she circulated in a highly literate society and was acquainted with the best authors of the age. The chief testimony to her mind and her style is her letters, which are an extraordinary documentary history, not only of her life as a mother and socialite, but also of her considerable skills as a literary stylist. Her letters reveal her sunny disposition, and are punctuated by frequent notes of humor and wit. Unlike the rule-bound French classical prose and poetry of the age, Sévigné was a natural writer, without artifice or the heavy burdens of rules. Her correspondence consequently reads like a modern document, as fresh today as it was in the seventeenth century.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Literature*

- John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666)—Written while its author was imprisoned for preaching without a license, this spiritual autobiography was tremendously influential among seventeenth-century Puritans, and in the eighteenth century it helped to inspire the early English novel.
- Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, *Les liaisons dangereuses* (Dangerous Liaisons; 1782)—This epistolary novel recounting corruption and sexual gamesmanship among the high and mighty fed pre-revolutionary France's taste for tales about aristocratic decadence.
- Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* (1722)—Often cited as one of the first novels, this text spins a rollicking good yarn about an eighteenth-century foundling turned prostitute and her many adventures.
- John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624)—These exhortations and meditations upon death show the English author at his finest. Together with his *Divine Poems* (1601–1615), they are a testimony to the strength of the Anglican tradition of spirituality in the seventeenth century and its impact on the English language.
- Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (1749)—This masterpiece of the early novel combines epic, romance, and comedy into an inimitable brew of good fun.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774)—This tale of unrequited love and its suicidal consequences caused a sensation when it was published. It is the best example of the German *Sturm und Drang* style.
- Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *The Adventures of Simplicissimus* (1668)—Written in the picaresque novel form that had first been developed in sixteenth-century Spain, this early German novel provides insight into the conditions in the country during the Thirty Years' War. It was a widely successful book in its day, and still ranks as one of the chief contributions of fiction in the seventeenth century.
- Gotthold Wilhelm Ephraim von Lessing, *Nathan the Wise* (1779)—Written as a dramatic poem, this work recounts the dealings of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in twelfth-century Palestine. Its argument—that the ethical teachings of these three world religions are similar—produced great controversy.
- John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667)—This epic poem about the Creation, Temptation, and Fall of the human race is challenging, but rewards its readers with some of the finest religious lyric in the English language.
- Blaise Pascal, *Provincial Letters* (1656)—Written to defend his fellow Jansenists from the charge of religious heresy, this set of satirical letters had a widespread impact on the fashioning of literary French in the seventeenth century.
- Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (1747–1748)—The second of this author's epistolary novels, it ranks as one of the great literary achievements of the eighteenth century. Its tragic story of a woman who is wronged and resolves to die was an immediate success.
- Madame de Sévigné, *Letters* (1671–1696)—This collection of extraordinary letters provides unparalleled insight into French aristocratic life during the later seventeenth century. Most of her letters were written to her daughter, and reveal the terrible loneliness she suffered when separated by the girl's marriage.
- Voltaire, *Candide* (1759)—On its surface this adventure story seems pure fun, but underneath its amusing exterior it is a condemnation of the philosophical optimism of the Enlightenment.

# 5 chapter five

## MUSIC

*Ann E. Moyer and Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	208	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	211	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>In Defense of New Music</i> (excerpt from Scacchi's <i>A Brief Discourse on New Music</i> ) . . . . .	217
Origins and Elements of the Baroque		<i>The Composer as Schoolmaster</i> (a contract for employment signed by Bach). . . . .	221
Style . . . . .	214	<i>Lully's Caution</i> (excerpt from text by Hawkins concerning Jean-Baptiste Lully) . . . . .	228
Performers, Performances, and Audiences. . . . .	218	<i>Music as a Science</i> (excerpt from Rameau's <i>Treatise on Harmony</i> ). . . . .	230
Italian Opera in the Seventeenth Century . . . . .	223	<i>Rushed Compositions</i> (excerpt from Goldoni's <i>Commedie</i> describing Antonio Vivaldi) . . . . .	234
Opera in France . . . . .	226	<i>The Opera Scene in Naples</i> (excerpts from letters by Sharp from his Grand Tour of Europe) . . . . .	236
Opera in the Early Eighteenth-Century		<i>On the Glories and Limits of the Keyboard</i> (excerpt from text by C. P. E. Bach discussing the keyboard) . . . . .	247
World . . . . .	231	<i>The Appeal to the Sentiments</i> (excerpt from Mattheson's <i>The Complete Chapel Master</i> ) . . . . .	252
Oratorio and Cantata . . . . .	238	<i>Gluck: An Intimate Portrait of a Composer</i> (excerpt from text by Burney giving an intimate portrait of Christoph Willibald von Gluck) . . . . .	256
Baroque Instruments . . . . .	242	<i>The Stunted Development of English Music</i> (excerpt from Burney's <i>General History of Music</i> ) . . . . .	257
Baroque Keyboard Music. . . . .	246	<i>A Miracle of Music</i> (excerpt from a letter by Barrington praising Mozart) . . . . .	260
Baroque Music for Instrumental			
Ensembles . . . . .	248		
Music During the Rococo . . . . .	251		
The Reform of Opera . . . . .	255		
The Rise of Classicism and Romanticism. . . . .	258		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Johann Sebastian Bach. . . . .	266		
George Frideric Handel . . . . .	268		
Josef Haydn . . . . .	269		
Jean-Baptiste Lully . . . . .	271		
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart . . . . .	272		
Antonio Vivaldi . . . . .	273		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	274		



## IMPORTANT EVENTS

### *in Music*

- 1598 *Dafne*, one of the first operas, is performed at Florence.
- Landgrave Moritz of Hessen-Kassel hears 14-year-old Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672) sing at his family’s inn and brings him to Kassel for training, thus beginning the musical career of one of Germany’s greatest Baroque composers.
- 1605 Italian composer Claudio Monteverdi publishes his *Fifth Book of Madrigals*. In the introduction he distinguishes the older musical styles of writing for voices in counterpoint as the “first practice”; the “second practice,” in which the text dominates and sets the rules for the music, marks the new style of Baroque music.
- 1608 The organist and composer Girolamo Frescobaldi, a native of Ferrara, is named organist of the Cappella Giulia of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.
- Claudio Monteverdi is appointed director of music at San Marco in Venice.
- 1618 The Thirty Years’ War begins in the Holy Roman Empire. This extended era of violence hampers the development of musical culture in Central Europe and disrupts the lives and careers of a number of musicians and composers.
- 1621 Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, noted Dutch organist and composer of fantasias, dies in Amsterdam.
- 1627 Scholar Marin Mersenne (1588–1648) publishes his *Treatise on Universal Harmony*
- in Paris, advancing the study of music theory and acoustics.
- 1637 A Roman opera troupe brings opera to Venice and introduces public performances with *Andromeda* by Benedetto Ferrari (librettist) and Francesco Manelli (composer) at the Teatro San Cassiano, which the audience paid to attend.
- The North German organist and composer Dieterich Buxtehude is born.
- 1640 Composer Pietro della Valle refers to one of his musical works composed for the Chiesa Nuova in Rome as an “oratorio,” the first known use of the name for this important genre.
- c. 1644 Antonio Stradivari, one of the world’s greatest violin makers, is born into a family of instrument makers in Cremona, Italy.
- 1646 Jean-Baptiste Lully moves from Florence to Paris, soon to rise to pre-eminence in French music.
- 1653 Louis XIV of France performs in the court ballet, *Ballet de la Nuit*, as the Rising Sun; he praises and supports both music and ballet.
- 1672 Jean-Baptiste Lully becomes director of the Royal Academy of Music, with exclusive rights over operatic production in France.
- c. 1680 The first examples appear of a new form of composition for orchestral groups. The concerto will usually showcase a solo instrumentalist against an orchestral accompaniment.
- 1681 Violinist and composer Arcangelo Corelli publishes his first set of trio sonatas, among the great chamber works of the era.
- The composer Georg Philipp Telemann is born in Magdeburg, Germany.
- c. 1683 John Blow (1648–1708), teacher to English composer Henry Purcell, writes *Venus and Adonis*, a variation on the tradition of

- mounting “masques” in aristocratic society in England. The work is conceived very much like an opera, one of few such English works of the era.
- 1685 Composer Johann Sebastian Bach is born in Eisenach, Germany.
- Messiah* composer George Frideric Handel is born in Halle, Germany.
- Italian composer Domenico Scarlatti is born in Naples.
- 1692 Henry Purcell writes his most famous ode for St. Cecilia’s Day, *Hail, Bright Cecilia*.
- 1693 The composer Francois Couperin (1668–1733) is appointed organist to King Louis XIV of France.
- Johann Adolf Hasse, the great composer of Italian-style opera seria, is born near Hamburg, Germany.
- 1700 Poet and theologian Erdmann Neumeister (1671–1756) introduces a type of religious poetry to be set to music, calling it a cantata.
- 1702 George Philipp Telemann founds Leipzig’s Collegium Musicum.
- 1703 *Four Seasons* composer Antonio Vivaldi begins his tenure at the Pio Ospedale della Pietà in Venice, an orphanage for girls whose regular concerts inspired many of his compositions. He will remain there until his death in 1740.
- 1709 Italian composer Giuseppe Torelli (1658–1709) publishes a set of violin concertos that use the three-movement form that will become standard among eighteenth-century composers.
- 1710 Musical instrument maker Johann Christoph Denner of Nuremberg lists for sale a new variation on an old instrument, the clarinet.
- 1711 Italian archaeologist Scipione Maffei publishes a description of the Florentine
- Bartolomeo Cristofori’s new invention, now known as the piano.
- 1714 The elector of Hanover, Handel’s patron, is crowned George I of England.
- 1717 Handel writes his *Water Music* suites for a procession by barge of George I on the River Thames.
- 1720 Farinelli (Carlo Broschi), the great Italian castrato singer, makes his debut in Naples at age fifteen in a performance of Porpora’s *Angelica e Medoro*, with libretto by Pietro Metastasio.
- 1722 French operatist Jean-Philippe Rameau publishes his first work of music theory, *Treatise on Harmony*, in which he presents his theories of harmony and chord progression.
- The famous German composer Johann Sebastian Bach publishes Book I of *The Well-Tempered Keyboard*.
- Johann Mattheson begins publishing *Critica Musica*, the first German periodical on music.
- 1723 Johann Sebastian Bach moves to the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, with the task of supervising the school, rehearsing the choirs, and producing compositions.
- 1725 Austrian composer Johann Joseph Fux (1660–1741) publishes his *Gradus ad Parnassum*, which becomes a highly influential manual of composition in general and counterpoint in particular.
- Antonio Vivaldi writes his set of concertos now called *The Four Seasons*.
- 1728 *The Beggar’s Opera*, a ballad opera by John Gay (1685–1732), is performed in London. Its success leads to continued innovation in the English theater, while at the same time making French and Italian operas less popular.
- 1733 Italian operatist Giovanni Battista Pergolesi’s intermezzo, *La Serva Padrona*, is first performed in Naples.

- 1738 John Sebastian Bach's son, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, moves to the court of crown prince Frederick of Prussia in Berlin.
- 1740 Frederick II or Frederick the Great is crowned king of Prussia.
- 1741 Johann Stamitz (1717–1757), composer and violinist, is appointed to the Palatine Court at Mannheim. Under his leadership, the court will become a showpiece for orchestral music throughout Europe.
- 1742 Handel's *Messiah* is performed for the first time at Easter in Dublin.
- 1749 Carlo Goldoni (1707–1793), the Italian playwright and librettist, begins his collaboration with composer Baldassare Galuppi that will lead to major changes in Italian *opera buffa*.
- 1750 Johann Sebastian Bach dies in Leipzig.
- 1751 Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert publish the first volume of the *Encyclopédie*, a work that will be of major importance in defining aesthetics and style in the second half of the eighteenth century.
- 1752 Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773) publishes his treatise, *On Playing the Flute*.
- 1756 Prodigious composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is born.
- 1762 Gluck's innovative opera *Orphée et Euridice* is performed in Paris.
- Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach publishes the complete version of his *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*.
- Johann Christian Bach (1735–1782) moves to London.
- 1776 English music historian Charles Burney publishes *A General History of Music*.
- Sir John Hawkins publishes *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*.
- 1778 La Scala Opera House opens in Milan. It will become one of the most important venues for premiering Italian operas.
- 1782 Composer and theorist Heinrich Christoph Koch (1749–1816) publishes the first part of his treatise, *Introductory Essay on Composition*.
- 1786 *The Marriage of Figaro*, with music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte, is first performed in Vienna.
- 1789 The French Revolution begins. The Revolution will destroy patronage networks that nourished musical culture throughout the Baroque era.
- 1791 Mozart dies in Vienna.
- Josef Haydn begins his first London symphonies. They will soon be celebrated at their premiere in England's capitals as one of the great achievements of symphonic music.

## OVERVIEW *of Music*

**A PERIOD OF GREATNESS.** During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries European music underwent a series of dramatic changes. The beginnings of these transformations can be traced to a climate of experimentation that appeared in the later Renaissance, a time in which humanist intellectuals and musicians desired to revive the emotional power and force that they sensed had existed in the music of Antiquity. The experiments in new musical styles these figures helped to inspire produced the phenomenon of modern “classical” music—a repertory of serious works that are studied by well-trained musicians and which continue to be played before audiences. Opera and the tradition of public concert-going both trace their origins to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The modern orchestra—a collection of diverse, but complementary families of instruments—underwent a long period of maturation in these years as well. The development of the orchestra inspired new creativity in the writing of instrumental music, producing musical forms like the symphony and the concerto. Other instrumental ensembles, like the string quartet, nourished the development of smaller and more intimate forms of chamber music, forms that continue to have many admirers today. When modern listeners enjoy the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they find a sound that at once seems more familiar to them than the music of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. The sense that this era’s music is at once more “modern” than that of earlier periods derives from the fact that much of the music written in this time has similar harmonic structures and uses a system of tonality or keys that continues to be dominant in Western music in the contemporary world. But the modern ear also feels at home in the world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of the musical forms that composers used in these years to organize their compositions. These diverse musical genres—which stretched from the popular *aria da capo* form used in the opera to the stately and sophisticated outlines of the late eighteenth-century symphony—have continued to in-

spire music written in the last two centuries. Many of these forms provide Western classical music with its enduring appeal, an appeal that stems from this music’s ready intelligibility, intellectual sophistication, and harmonic and inventive beauty.

**ORIGINS OF THE BAROQUE.** The forces that first produced a distinctive Baroque style began to appear in Italy in the years around 1600. The elements of the Baroque sound developed from the experiments of composers, musicians, and men of letters, many of whom were deeply affected by the culture of Renaissance humanism and its love of classical Antiquity. In Florence and other Italian cities groups of performers and intellectuals pioneered ways in which contemporary music might shape the human emotions, a power these figures realized had frequently been celebrated in ancient authors. Their experiments soon gave birth to a new musical style that became known as a “new” or “second” musical practice, in opposition to music of the “first practice”—music that derived from older Renaissance conventions. Music of this “second practice” was monodic; it consisted of a single melodic line set against a complementary accompaniment (often called the thorough bass or a basso continuo) that did not compete with the words that performers sung, but rather enhanced the emotional expression of the chosen text. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries music of this “second practice” continued to co-exist alongside older Renaissance traditions. Thus the term “Baroque music” generally refers to music from around 1600 until about 1750 that stemmed from either of these two practices. The “first practice,” or the established tradition of Renaissance music, was mainly polyphonic in nature. A composition was made up of several musical lines or voices that sounded simultaneously but moved independently; with each line fairly similar in its importance to the overall sound of the composition. These voices would come together harmonically at key points in the work, called a cadence. The art of writing in this style was called counterpoint, since the composer’s task involved placing one note against another. Contrapuntal style continued to develop during the Baroque era and it remained important well into the nineteenth century. At the same time, music of the “second practice” took vocal music as its standard. Inventors of this “second practice” helped to shape the early opera, an art form whose appearance around 1600 has often been said to mark the beginning of the Baroque period.

**THE RISE OF OPERA.** The form that we know today as opera first began to coalesce out of the experiments of late Renaissance musicians and composers to emulate

the power of ancient music and drama. The first operas were staged in Florence in the years around 1600, but soon the genre spread to other cities, including Mantua and Rome. At first an elite form of courtly entertainment, the opera soon began to acquire many admirers outside the narrow confines of aristocratic society. In 1637, the first public theater for the performance of opera was founded at Venice, and within a few years the city had become home to a number of opera theaters. Like the courtly entertainments of the previous generations, these new public opera houses staged productions that included a healthy dose of spectacle. Lavish production standards, costly stage machinery, and other elements common to the theatrical world of the time soon found their way into the overheated commercial atmosphere of Italy's public opera houses, and helped to sustain opera's rising popularity. To make their performances pay, the troupes that performed in these houses often took their productions on tour, helping to establish a taste for opera in many Italian cities, and by the mid-seventeenth century, in many places in Northern Europe as well. Opera was at once the quintessential example of Baroque musical tastes. It elevated vocal music by supporting new high standards of solo performance and it expressed the Baroque age's preoccupation with emotional states and with music's power to shape one's internal spiritual experience. But as it traveled to new places in Europe, opera often acquired regional features. In France, for instance, Italian opera was initially resisted. But soon, Jean-Baptiste Lully, an Italian by birth but French in his tastes, adapted the form for French courtly audiences. To satisfy his audiences, he included a healthy dose of ballet in his works and relied on texts that fit with the country's elevated dramatic traditions. As opera spread elsewhere in Europe, other regional variations developed, but by the eighteenth century, the art form was still dominated by Italian customs and traditions. Although not the source of every musical innovation of the Baroque period, the world of opera supplied the Baroque musical world with many of its popular musical forms and conventions. In France, the dance suites and ballets that accompanied operas helped to fix the confines and conventions of Baroque instrumental musical forms like the suite and the French overture. In Italy, the *sinfonia*, an overture form consisting of parts that were played fast, then slow, and then fast, left its mark on the early development of the symphony. The writing for the human voice that opera pioneered also affected music written for instruments, as composers of music for the violin, flute, and other solo instruments frequently adapted the conventions of vocal music from the operatic world to instrumental forms. They drew on

popular operatic forms like the *air*, or aria, to give shape to compositions written for woodwinds and strings.

**RHETORICAL SENSIBILITY.** Whatever its geographic origin, a great deal of Baroque music shared a rhetorical sensibility. Music of this period often displayed certain common traits of expression that were based originally in speech and drama. For many musicians and theorists throughout the Baroque period, vocal music was the highest expression of art. When many composers purported to write music in general it is often clear that in fact they had vocal music in mind. They agreed that a good musical setting for a text was one that respected the character of the language; that matched musical accents with those of the words; that followed the language's natural cadence; and that amplified the emotional content of the idea being expressed. Instrumental music of the Baroque era often shows a similar sensibility, with musical phrases constructed in ways reminiscent of verbal ones and voices that answered one another in a conversational sort of way. While speech was a very important model in Baroque music, other human activities were significant as well, most notably dance. Dance was such a central feature to much of court life, especially in France, that the patterns and rhythms of the dances of this era found their way into far more music than was ever intended for actual dancing.

**COMPOSERS AND AUDIENCE.** While the opera house represented a new commercial venue for musical performance, many of the settings in which Baroque music was performed remained unchanged from previous centuries. Churches, for example, were important sites for hearing major new compositions. The choirmaster or organist at a major church was a position of prominence and importance for a composer, and the hiring for these positions was very competitive. Johann Sebastian Bach and many other composers held church positions that required them to serve not only as composer but also as organist, choir director, and even schoolmaster. The confessional differences established during the Reformation remained in place, so that the religious music in Calvinist regions (where organ music itself might be frowned upon) differed distinctly from Catholic areas that kept Latin masses. Lutheran regions developed and kept their own traditions of hymn singing as well. Other sorts of performances, however, differed little between religious factions, such as court music. Major nobles, inspired especially by the examples of prominent royal patrons like Louis XIV of France (r. 1643–1715) or Frederick the Great of Prussia (r. 1740–1786), kept composers in full-time residence at their courts along with staffs of musicians. Given the increasingly high levels of

education and social standing among composers of the era, many came to chafe under the restrictions of this kind of employment. Often court musicians were treated little better than domestic servants. When Johann Sebastian Bach tried to leave one court position he held early in his career to take another, his employer responded by having him jailed for a month. Similar cases of high-handed and arbitrary treatment of musicians by noble patrons abound in the annals of the age. The most successful composers—men like George Frideric Handel, Josef Haydn, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart—found ways of gradually freeing themselves from the restrictions of their court positions. At the same time, court employment provided composers with both a secure salary and a high profile, and these positions continued to be highly sought after by musicians throughout the period. Other commercial venues besides the opera house were just beginning to appear for musicians during the eighteenth century. The selling of subscriptions to concerts of instrumental music, a practice that first appeared in London at the end of the seventeenth century, soon spread to more and more European cities in the course of the eighteenth. But for most performers, playing in an orchestral ensemble for public performances did not provide a steady source of income, as it does for many of the best musicians in the modern world. By contrast, much music was still performed by amateurs, and amateur musicianship, in fact, seems to have expanded dramatically during the Baroque era. This change provided a steady source of income for Europe's best composers. As Europe's ranks of amateur musicians swelled throughout the era, astute composers like Antonio Vivaldi, Handel, and Georg Philipp Telemann produced a steady stream of works that were intended, not only for students learning to sing or play instruments, but for amateurs who performed at home for themselves and their friends. An ever-expanding music publishing industry supported this appetite for music intended for amateur performers, even as it helped to spread knowledge throughout the continent of the latest changes in styles and innovations in musical genres and to sustain many composers.

**THE AGE OF GREAT COMPOSERS.** By the early eighteenth century, the various styles, genres, and career paths of the Baroque era were all clearly established, and in the course of the decades that followed, a number of composers rose to prominence that became masters of all the existing styles and forms of composition. George Frideric Handel (1685–1759), who moved from Germany to England, established himself as a fixture in the musical landscape of his adopted country. He serves as

one of the most famous examples of the ways in which the great Baroque composers practiced their art. He is best known as a vocal composer, with a long list of notable operas, oratorios, anthems, and other vocal works large and small to his name; he also excelled as an instrumental composer. His works included various compositions for the new combination of strings and winds that was taking shape in the development of the orchestra. His contemporary, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), enjoyed a distinguished reputation during his life, but an even greater one some time after his death. He too wrote vocal music, at times producing a cantata each week. But he also produced music in nearly every form that was common in the period, with the notable exception of opera. Yet Handel and Bach are only two of the most famous examples of great Baroque virtuosi. In Italy, Antonio Vivaldi, known in his own day as the “red priest,” produced some 500 concertos during his lifetime, as well as a cavalcade of highly successful operas, and works for the church, the keyboard, and small instrumental ensembles. Baroque audiences and patrons demanded a constant stream of “new” music, and the sheer output of Europe's composers in this era still manages to astound even musical specialists of the period. To satisfy the demands of musical commerce and patronage, composers were expected to work quickly, sometimes to produce an entire opera or oratorio in the space of only a few weeks. Certainly given these conditions not all music of the era was of a high standard, yet numerous great masterpieces continue to survive from these years in the modern repertory.

**CHANGES IN THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.** In mid-eighteenth century Italy, and somewhat later in Northern Europe, new tastes began to produce changes in musical styles. Increasingly, composers began to experiment with both old and new idioms in ways that led to subtle or dramatic changes in music. At this time, for instance, Johann Sebastian Bach devoted significant attention to reviving the older musical practices of strict counterpoint. Although his attention in his later works to these traditional features of Baroque music has often been treated as a sign of his “old-fashioned” nature, the innovations and insights that he brought to these older styles was, in fact, one sign of the changing tastes of the mid-eighteenth century. By 1750, these changes meant that the Baroque period had largely drawn to a close. In the years that followed, Europe's composers split off in a number of distinctly different directions. Some developed a courtly style, a musical language that became truly international after 1750, and which has often been called the “Galant Style.” This new way of composing

compositions emphasized elegance and a light touch, and found a ready entrance into many aristocratic circles where Rococo fashions in architecture and the visual arts were also popular at the time. Other composers, like Bach's accomplished son, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, developed a "Sensitive Style" that was intended to evoke a range of human emotions. Still others grew interested in the abilities of orchestral groups to produce a wide range of variations in loudness and softness (dynamic range) as well as tone color. The court of Mannheim in the German southwest became widely known in this era for its famous orchestra. Mannheim was one important center that favored music that made use of the new broad range of dynamic contrasts the orchestra now offered, and although it was a relatively small court, the compositions of its many accomplished composers exerted a significant influence over musical tastes throughout Europe. The features described by modern scholars as "classical" that soon appeared in this period also found appeal with many composer of the age. This classical style favored careful melodic lines, broken-chord bass (in opposition to the longstanding Baroque use of basso continuo) and attention to balance and symmetry in musical composition. Josef Haydn (1732–1809), after experimenting with the Galant and Sensitive styles, adopted this musical language, and his massive output of compositions created new standards of elegance, balance, and proportion in the music of the later eighteenth century. His efforts also helped to establish the symphony as one of the dominant musical forms of the age. The way that Haydn led was soon elaborated upon and perfected in the works of Mozart, who brought the Classicism of the later eighteenth century to its highest point of expression. Haydn, Mozart, and the other composers who favored this "Viennese Classicism," as it has since become known, helped to forge a new international musical language that became accepted in many parts of Europe in the final years of the century.

**END OF AN ERA.** The equipose (a state of equilibrium) that is brilliantly displayed in the great symphonies and concertos of the late eighteenth century, though, was to prove short-lived. Political and social changes touched off by the French Revolution after 1789 left their marks on the musical culture of the late eighteenth-century, disrupting in many parts of Europe the patronage of the nobility that had long been a significant spur to musical creativity. In Vienna and other European musical centers many composers began to experiment with new sounds and styles. These trends can be seen in the works that composers such as Ludwig van Beethoven wrote during the 1790s. Schooled for a time by Haydn,

Beethoven soon broke free from the classical musical language of the age to exploit a great range of sounds and effects that the orchestra and the now popular piano offered. In contrast to the composers of the Baroque era, Beethoven's career also displays a key change in musical sensibilities at the very end of the eighteenth century. For generations, vocal music had been the standard by which music in Europe had been judged, and vocal music had served as a continual source of inspiration for many forms of instrumental music. Although figures like Beethoven wrote vocal music, it was their instrumental compositions that exerted a powerful hold over the imagination of the developing Romantic audience. The increasing importance of instrumental music arose from new ways of thinking about art, ways that held that human emotions could be best represented in music that was free from the longstanding tie to words and the human voice. Music, these new sensibilities taught, represented a realm of pure abstraction, a realm that might evoke the world of the spirit more effectively than poetic texts and the performance of a singer. The appearance of these ideas, and the forceful examples of composers like Beethoven who exploited them, helped to dissolve the classical era's aesthetic and to produce yet another major change in Europe's musical style around 1800.

## TOPICS *in Music*

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### ORIGINS AND ELEMENTS OF THE BAROQUE STYLE

**DATING THE BAROQUE.** In music, the period of the Baroque has long been dated between 1600 and 1750, chronological boundaries that are arbitrary, but nevertheless useful in conceiving of the changes that occurred in Western music in the early-modern world. At the beginning of this period, new models of composition began to appear in Italy that were informed by the experiments of composers like Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), Jacopo Peri (1561–1633), and Giulio Caccini (1555–1618) as well as by the discoveries of Renaissance humanists concerning the drama and music of the ancient world. These innovations produced new harmonic structures, compositional techniques, and genres like opera. While music informed by earlier Renaissance models persisted throughout Europe, the innovations of the early Baroque also spread outward from Italy. As these new styles were studied and accepted

elsewhere in Europe, the new Baroque styles of composition and performance mixed with native traditions, producing regional variations that were very different from Italian models. Thus two characteristics are at once notable when considering the history of music during the Baroque. First, Europe's musical languages became increasingly differentiated along national and regional lines during the Baroque years. Second, the music that was consumed by aristocratic and urban elites was transformed by the development of new musical genres, new instruments, and new performance practices. It was during these years that many new musical forms appeared, forms that European composers have continued to rely upon until the present. In vocal music, the rise of opera was also accompanied by the appearance of the oratorio and the cantata. Developments in instrumental music were no less innovative. New musical genres like the sonata, the suite, and the concerto have their origins in the Baroque, as do instruments like the oboe, the violin, and the transverse flute. During these years many of the customs of modern performance developed as well. At the beginning of the period, much of music was still firmly under the control and patronage of the church and the aristocracy. Religious music remained vital throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as did aristocratic patronage for musical composition and performance. At the same time the rise of opera houses in the early Baroque and the emergence of the subscription concert at the very end of the period provided new venues for performance, venues in which Europe's growing class of bourgeoisie were able to indulge their tastes for music. Domestic performances by amateurs were important throughout the era, and traditions of amateur musicianship became even more important over time.

**THE RENAISSANCE AND THE REVIVAL OF ANCIENT MUSIC.** Many of the Baroque period's features emerged as a result of a climate of experimentation that can be traced to Italy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This new climate of innovation owed a great deal to the intellectual life of the later Renaissance and to its steadily intensifying search to understand Antiquity. During the years after 1550 musical theorists and historians working in several Italian cities had become increasingly fascinated with examining ancient writings on music in order to revive some of its performance practices. From the texts of ancient authors like Plato and Quintilian, Renaissance intellectuals understood the high regard in which the ancients held music. The art was credited with possessing the power to transform the soul and to shape the human emotions, and many legends contained in ancient texts granted music an enor-

mous ability to perform feats of transformation on the human personality. An oft-quoted legend, for instance, credited one of Alexander the Great's important victories to the effects of a stirring tune played right before battle. As they reflected on the music of their own age, many later Renaissance thinkers judged their own art wanting since they found it had little power to shape the emotions in the ways in which the ancient art had done. The efforts that soon developed to recreate ancient music, though, were always piecemeal and incomplete, since no actual compositions had survived from Greece or Rome. While Renaissance artists were able to examine the many artifacts that survived from the ancient world, no such reliable body of evidence survived as a guide for composers interested in recreating ancient music. Knowledge of the tuning systems, instruments, and ancient musical modes was similarly fragmentary. Thus as they tried to recreate ancient sounds, most composers of the time were forced to adapt the incomplete knowledge that they had of antique music to forms that already existed in their own day. In this way the expanding, but nevertheless imperfect knowledge that intellectuals possessed of the ancient art shaped the performance practices and compositional styles of the later Renaissance and early Baroque. It was in Florence, a city in which a number of musicians and men of letters studied ancient Greek musical treatises, where the attempt to understand the role music had played in ancient drama developed most decisively. There a picture began to emerge in the later sixteenth century of a musical tradition that was very different from that of the sixteenth-century world.

**FLORENCE AND EARLY OPERA.** The development of opera best demonstrates the transition between Renaissance and Baroque music. The Florentines who studied musical drama in Antiquity became interested in creating their own dramas in ways that recalled, without attempting directly to copy, the features they had come to admire in ancient Greek drama. Key figures in this group were the Florentine aristocrats Count Giovanni de Bardi (1534–1612) and Jacopo Corsi (1561–1602), both humanist-trained intellectuals who were close to the court of the Medici Grand Dukes, Florence's ruling family. Bardi patronized a number of musicians, and his house was often filled with scholars. Later the cultivated circle Bardi helped to create at Florence was to become known as the Camerata, although at the time in which its discussions occurred the group was an informal one that deliberated upon a broad range of issues, including music, drama, literature, and even astrology, a popular fascination of Renaissance intellectuals. During the 1570s the discussion of the Bardi group were enriched



through Vincenzo Galilei's correspondence with Girolamo Mei (1519–1594), then Italy's greatest authority on ancient Greek music. From this correspondence, Florence's intellectuals derived much of their theories about ancient music and the ways in which it had been used in Greek drama. The conclusions that they drew from this scholarship helped to inform, not just the practices of the early opera, but Baroque music generally. Florence's theorists argued that the lines of ancient drama had been sung and not simply spoken, and that the choruses of these works had included dance or stylized movements that accompanied the sung lines. In addition, they realized that unlike the polyphonic music that was so popular in their own day, ancient Greek music had been monodic—that is, Greek music had used only a single melodic line. Thus the Florentines introduced a new style of singing that they called *stile recitativo* or “recitative style.” In this style, the singer sang a line made up of standard musical pitches, but in a very simple melodic line intended to imitate the inflections and rhythms of speech. A bass line and a few simple chords accompanied the singer.

**EXPERIMENTS IN EARLY OPERA.** Following several small-scale attempts to perfect the new art of recitative as a vehicle for setting poetry to music, Jacopo Corsi commissioned an entire drama in the style, *Dafne*, which was performed in Corsi's palace in 1598. Corsi, a generation younger than Bardi, had recently risen to a position of prominence in Florence's musical world, and as one of the city's most important patrons, he desired to use his position, not just to discuss musical theory, but also to put into practice some of the insights gained from recent scholarship on ancient Greek drama and music. He was himself a composer, but his influence proved to be most lasting through the patronage he gave to other musicians and composers as well as his efforts to encourage Florence's Medici dukes to support the development of a new kind of musical drama. Among those he supported were Jacopo Peri (1561–1633) and Giulio Caccini (1551–1618). Peri was a singer and composer who wrote the music for *Dafne* in 1598, the work that has long been called the “first opera.” Caccini, on the other hand, was also a composer who helped to spread knowledge throughout Italy of the basso continuo style of accompaniment through his popular collections of printed songs. Through Corsi's encouragement several other sung dramas were also staged in Florence in the years immediately preceding 1600, some in his own house, but most in the Medici family residence, the Pitti Palace. Many of these first efforts in the developing genre of opera took their story lines from ancient dramas, myths,

and historical events. The story of Orpheus, whose singing was said to charm wild animals and his efforts to rescue his beloved Eurydice from the underworld, was one popular subject. Chief among these path-breaking treatments of the myth was Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in 1607, which was first performed in Mantua, and is often revived today. The theme of Orpheus fit with one of the chief aims of musical theorists and composers of the time: their efforts to revive ancient music's power to speak to and influence the emotions, a key aim that was also to be shared by many Baroque composers. These early operatic experiments were, by and large, paid for by Italy's nobles and performed before their courts. The Medici court in Florence proved to be among the most avid supporters of the new art, but aristocratic households at Mantua and Rome were also important centers of early opera production. In this early period of opera's development the art form was largely an expensive entertainment mounted in these courtly households to impress guests. Elaborate sets, lavish costumes, special effects, and a generally high level of theatricality and spectacle soon became hallmarks of the early operatic productions.

**MONTEVERDI AND THE “SECOND PRACTICE.”** Even as opera was continuing to develop as a new musical genre in the years around 1600, new compositional techniques were transforming vocal music and its relationship to the text. Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) was chief among the figures that contributed to this new climate of innovation. Monteverdi was one of the greatest musicians of the late Renaissance in Italy, but he also made important contributions to the new Baroque style. As a consequence, it has long proved difficult to classify this visionary artist. Whether he is best considered as a composer of the late Renaissance or of the early Baroque continues to be debated today, although it is clear that Monteverdi made major contributions to the music of both periods. Monteverdi and those who championed his new compositional techniques wanted to focus the listener's attention clearly on the singer's words and the feelings they expressed. To do this, they simplified the style of composition, and helped to codify the new techniques that were developing at the time. They minimized counterpoint and wrote instead a single musical line for the singer, along with a bass line and enough notes in between to accompany the voice but not compete with it. Often they wrote out only the bass or lowest part of this accompaniment, and simply indicated with numbers the harmonies above that line for the accompanists to add as they saw fit; they began to call this practice “figured bass.” Since this bass line also ran continuously

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***IN DEFENSE OF NEW MUSIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** The violinist Marco Scacchi was born in Viterbo around 1600, and by 1621, had been appointed as a musician in the court at Warsaw. Today, he is best known for his defense of new music, which he published as *A Brief Discourse on New Music* (1649). In it, he compares the explorations made by the new musicians to those of Christopher Columbus's exploration of the New World. While remembered today largely for his role in this controversy, Scacchi was a remarkably original musical theorist as well.

Let them say, pray, if Columbus had not sought with his intellect to pass the Pillars of Hercules through navigation, would he have discovered a New World? And yet, it is known to all, that when he put forward his sublime thought with demonstrative reasons he was thought mad, and all this arose because those to whom he reported his undertaking did not yet have the capacity for that which he was demonstrating, and yet in the present century the human race owes him so great a debt as a New World is worth. So now I say of the modern music, that if someone had proposed to our predecessors how one can operate the art of music in a manner different from that which they taught us, they would have deemed him a man of little knowledge. But this cannot be denied in the present age, for the hearing judges it as that from which music has received, and daily receives, greater perfection. Wherefore I say that just as Columbus made apparent in his field that which the first inventors of navigation were not able to investigate, so our modern music makes heard today that which our first masters did not hear, and still less was it granted them to investigate

that which modern musicians have discovered to express the oration. ...

The old music consists of one practice only, and almost one same style of using the consonances and dissonances. But the modern consists of two practices and three styles, that is, the style of the church, of the chamber and of the theatre. Of the practices, the first is *Ut Harmonia sit Domina orationis* ['that the harmony is the mistress of the oration'], and the second, *ut Oratio sit Domina harmoniae* ['that the oration is the mistress of the harmony' ...]. And each of these three styles contains within itself very great variations, novelties and inventions of not ordinary consideration. And it must be noted that the moderns understand this new music—in terms of style and of using the consonances and dissonances differently from the first practice—to be that which turns on the perfection of the *melodia* [the combination of oration, harmony and rhythm], and for this reason it is called second practice, different from the first, prompted by these words of Plato: *Nonne est Musica, quae circa perfectionem melodiae versatur?* [*Gorgias* 449D ... 'Is it not music which turns on the perfection of the *melodia*?']. Wherefore modern compositions are defended to the satisfaction of the reason and of the sense: to the satisfaction of the reason because it relies on the consonances and dissonances [as defined by] mathematics, and on the command of the oration, principle mistress of the art, considered in the perfection of the *melodia*, as Plato teaches us in the [f. 12v] third book of the Republic [39D] and therefore is called second practice; and to the satisfaction of the sense, because of the mixture of oration commanding rhythm and harmony subservient to it.

**SOURCE:** Marco Scacchi, "Breve discorso sopra la musica moderna," in *Polemics on the 'Musica Moderna.'* Trans. Tim Carter (1649; reprint, Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 1993): 37, 59–60.

throughout the piece, it was also described by many as "basso continuo," or "thorough bass." In order to express emotion, these composers were willing to let their works move through harmonies usually considered jarring, if that seemed to them to help express the line of text they were setting to music. In an early publication of a book of madrigals in 1605, Monteverdi referred to this style of composing as a new practice, or a "second practice." Two years later, his brother and fellow musician Giulio Cesare Monteverdi (1573–1630), explained in print that in this new practice, the text is mistress of the harmony. Other composers soon followed suit, continuing to develop this new practice. The new style then spread gradually across Europe. Other regions strove to hire Italian musicians, and Italian styles, composers, and

performers dominated Europe in the Baroque era that followed. It is the birth of the new or "second practice," that is seen as the starting point of the Baroque era.

**THE "FIRST PRACTICE" SURVIVES.** While music written in the "second practice" gained in popularity throughout the seventeenth century, older Renaissance styles of composing also continued to exist side-by-side with the new methods. This older style, or the "first practice" that was continuous with Renaissance musical practice, was contrapuntal, with a number of distinct lines or voices sounding together at the same time. It continued to look back to the great composers of the middle sixteenth century for inspiration, especially to the writings of the Roman composer Pierluigi Palestrina (1525/6–1594) because of his skill at making these

independent voices blend well together. Throughout the Baroque era composers continued to write complex works of counterpoint, works that require and reward careful listening. Thus this “first practice” needs to be understood as a central part of Baroque music. Perhaps the most noted advocate of this older style of composition was Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), who wrote many works of counterpoint toward the end of the Baroque era. Counterpoint was an essential musical language to many composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it even outlived the Baroque. The tradition of the “first practice” survived even into the nineteenth century when figures like Ludwig van Beethoven and Felix Mendelssohn studied techniques of counterpoint and used them in their composing. The “first practice” was so fundamental to the music of the Baroque era that musical theorists of the later Baroque eventually abandoned the distinction that had once seemed essential between music composed in the “first” or “second” practices. Instead they classified compositions according to the setting and environment in which the music was to be performed. Hence, music was sorted into categories such as church music, chamber music, and theater music.

**HARMONIES MAJOR AND MINOR.** Whether written in the new style or the old, the first practice or the second, music in the Baroque era came more and more to use major and minor keys, rather than the system of modes used in earlier music. A key uses an eight-note scale (do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do). “Do” is the “home” note; the fourth and fifth steps (fa and sol) also help give shape to the piece. Harmonies are built using triads, or chords of three notes, made up of notes that are a fifth and a third above the foundation notes. Major scales differ from minor ones especially by the pitch used for “mi.” This system of scales and triads is still in use today, so Baroque music sounds more familiar to modern listeners than does the music of earlier times. Music written in modes, by contrast, may seem foreign to modern ears. The ways that instruments were tuned, especially keyboard instruments, also helped to determine which keys sound best. A number of tuning systems came to be used throughout Europe during the Baroque period. Some favored the use of a few keys, such as G and C; music played in those keys would sound better in tune than if it were played with our modern tuning systems, but music in other keys would sound worse. One of these tuning systems was called “well tempering,” which allowed a keyboard to play in a wide range of keys. Johann Sebastian Bach, who was very interested in the construction and tuning of keyboard instruments of all types,

wrote a set of pieces, called *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. The work included pieces in all 24 keys used in composition and thus brilliantly showed off the advantages of the new tuning system.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THESE CHANGES.** By the mid-seventeenth century the innovations of Italian composers like Monteverdi had begun to forge a distinctive Baroque sound characterized by the basso continuo, monody (music consisting of a single melodic line), and the use of harmonic keys. These innovations had developed, in large part, as a result of the late Renaissance’s fascination with ancient drama and the attempt to recover the emotional power that scholars, composers, and musicians felt reposed in ancient music. At the same time the contrapuntal techniques of the Renaissance continued to survive throughout Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and were to inform much composition in the Baroque. The persistence of both styles proved to be one of the enduring characteristics of music throughout the period.

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SEE ALSO *Dance: Social Dance in the Baroque; Visual Arts: The Renaissance Legacy; Visual Arts: Elements of the Baroque Style*

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#### PERFORMERS, PERFORMANCES, AND AUDIENCES

**COMPOSERS AND PERFORMERS.** During the Baroque era Europeans heard music in a number of types of settings, and the music they heard might be produced by a number of different kinds of people. While unwritten popular or folk music existed in abundance, the formal music of the period, which includes most of the musical compositions that survive, was written down by a composer, who was generally not the same person who performed the music. Most composers and professional performers came from one level or another of the middling classes; many of them received specialized training in music at schools known as conservatories. Further, many professional musicians came from families of musicians who passed on their trade. The descendants of

Johann Sebastian Bach provide us with one of the most prolific examples of a family in which many members made their livelihoods from serving as court and church musicians. The Bach family, by the birth of Johann Sebastian Bach, had already produced more than a dozen family members who pursued careers as professional musicians. Johann Sebastian Bach's own children kept this legacy alive, and their descendants continued to work as performers and composers into the nineteenth century. Fathers might train both sons and daughters for a life in musical service, as the Mozart family demonstrated. While women faced greater obstacles to pursuing a life as a professional musician, the church did provide employment for many female musicians. Often female vocalists were married to organists and composers, and they sometimes served in churches or at courts alongside their husbands. Both composers and performers might hold any of a number of types of positions during their career, including simply doing freelance work for a single performance. If they held a long-term position, they were often employed by people of higher social status. That is, musicians would be part of the staff of a court headed by a noble family, or they might be members of the staff of a major church. Therefore, Baroque composers wrote most of their major works because that work was commissioned by their employers for a special occasion, and not simply because the composer felt creative, as one might expect of artistic production today. Operas, for instance, were highly commercial works, composed under contract in a great hurry. The modern world is full of recorded music, so it is worth remembering that every performance of any kind during the Baroque era required a human presence. Thus paid musicians were present at more public and social occasions than is now the case; and those who wanted to listen to music in their private leisure time hired musicians if they were very wealthy, attended particular performances such as religious services or the theater, or produced the music themselves, perhaps with friends.

**MUSIC AT COURT.** During the seventeenth century, political developments in continental Europe heightened the power of the central ruler in many European states, and centralized authority in royal courts. The model for many of these centralizations of power was the French court of Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715). His opulent court, founded at Versailles outside Paris, served as an ideal by the late seventeenth century and was imitated by many princely courts throughout Europe. These courts were often important sources of employment for musicians in those regions where cities were relatively few and small, particularly in Central Europe. In Germany, for example,

a rich musical life developed throughout the countryside as princes and nobles competed against each other to develop court cultures that displayed their wealth and taste. Entering into the service of a prince as a court musician or a *Kapellmeister* (“Chapel Master”) provided relative security. This last category of employment frequently included many duties, such as overseeing the prince's chapel choir and instrumental musicians, composing music for both sacred and secular occasions, and providing entertainment at court functions. Such positions usually provided a salary, a residence, and other allowances for one's upkeep. While some nobles and princes had little interest in music, many others had extensive musical educations. Some were very skilled amateur performers and composers who often tended to their court musical establishments with particular care. The small court of Cöthen in central Germany is a good example of the ways in which court orchestras sometimes grew. Cöthen was a relatively modest court by German standards that had no court musicians until 1707, when its young Prince Leopold convinced his mother, then the regent, to appoint three professionals. As Leopold matured and traveled throughout Europe in the years that followed, he gained a musical education; when he returned home in 1714, Leopold took over the reins of Cöthen's government. He used his newfound power to found an orchestra that had eighteen musicians by 1716. In these years Leopold took advantage of the disbanding of the court orchestra at Berlin, inviting its *Kapellmeister* and many of its musicians to take positions in his newly expanded musical establishment. In 1717, this director resigned, and Leopold appointed Johann Sebastian Bach as his new *Kapellmeister*. At Cöthen, the young composer flourished for more than four years in an environment in which performance quality and the ensemble's professionalism were both of a high standard. He was expected to provide music for Leopold's church services and court entertainments, and he seems to have developed a close relationship with his amateur employer. He even accompanied the prince with a small ensemble on a trip to the spa town of Carlsbad. Yet the circumstances that surrounded Bach's departure from Cöthen also reveal a darker dimension of court musical life. In 1721, Leopold married his cousin, Friderica, who had little interest in music, and in the months following the wedding the prince's ardor for his musical establishment waned. Soon Johann Sebastian Bach left Cöthen for another, more attractive position. While employment as a *Kapellmeister* was generally secure, it was still subject to the vagaries of a princely patron's tastes, his continuing devotion, and the health of his purse.



View of Cöthen, where Johann Sebastian Bach held a position as court music director. THE ART ARCHIVE/BACH HOUSE, EISENACH/DAGLI ORTI.

**THE CHURCH.** The Church was also another venerable source of employment for professional musicians and composers in the Baroque world. Music was common in all the churches of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, although the Protestant Reformation had affected the use of music, producing very different kinds of musical forms in Protestant Europe than those that flourished in Catholic countries. By the seventeenth century the kind of music that was heard in churches varied according to religious confessions. In Catholic churches priests regularly chanted the mass and other liturgical services. Catholics might hear an organ as part of religious services, and on special occasions, more elaborate performances with choirs and other instruments. Lutherans kept the basic order of the traditional mass in the local language in their churches, adding hymns or chorales sung by the whole congregation and led by a choir. The scope of Lutheran service music was often quite impressive, and in the largest churches of Germany, organs and other instruments often accompanied the singing of choir and

congregation. By contrast, the religious reforms of Calvinists generally downplayed ritual and shunned too great a reliance on religious music in church services. Calvinists focused instead on psalms sung to simple tunes that kept attention on the text. Yet even though religious considerations continued to shape the music that was performed in church, neither a noble interested in hiring a musician for his court chapel, nor a city church making an appointment to one of its important musical positions, typically hired only those who shared their religious beliefs. A Protestant noble might well hire a Catholic composer or vice versa, but the composer would write music to suit the religious observance of his patron rather than himself. Thus the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries present us with numerous examples of Catholic composers who created music intended for performance in Protestant churches, as well as the reverse. For example George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) had a position early in his career as organist at the Calvinist cathedral in Halle, although he was a Lutheran. A few years later he moved to

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE COMPOSER AS SCHOOLMASTER**

**INTRODUCTION:** The career of a composer might include a number of different types of gainful employment, including organist, choirmaster, and courtier. Each kind of position brought unique advantages and unique burdens. When Johann Sebastian Bach accepted his position at the Thomasschule in Leipzig, he undertook responsibility not only for rehearsing the choirs and composing music for them to sing, but also many other tasks particular to the running of a school. Here is the agreement Bach signed, accepting his new responsibilities.

Their worships, the Council of this town of Leipzig, having accepted me to be Cantor of the School of St. Thomas, they have required of me an agreement as to certain points, namely:

1. That I should set a bright and good example to the boys by a sober and secluded life, attend school, diligently and faithfully instruct the boys.
2. And bring the music in the two chief churches of this town into good repute to the best of my ability.
3. Show all respect and obedience to their worships the Council, and defend and promote their honor and reputation to the utmost, and in all places; also, if a member of the Council requires the boys for a musical performance, unhesitatingly to obey, and besides this, never allow them to travel into the country for funerals or weddings without the foreknowledge and consent of the burgomaster in office, and the governors of the school.
4. Give due obedience to the inspectors and governors of the school in all they command in the name of the Worshipful Council.
5. Admit no boys into the school who have not already the elements of music or who have no aptitude for

being instructed therein, nor without the knowledge and leave of the inspectors and governors.

6. To the end that the churches may not be at unnecessary expense I should diligently instruct the boys not merely in vocal but in instrumental music.
7. To the end that good order may prevail in those churches I should so arrange the music that it may not last too long, and also in such wise as that it may not be operatic, but incite the hearers to devotion.
8. Supply good scholars to the New Church.
9. Treat the boys kindly and considerately, or, if they will not obey, punish such in moderation or report them to the authority.
10. Faithfully carry out instruction in the school and whatever else it is my duty to do.
11. And what I am unable to teach myself I am to cause to be taught by some other competent person without cost or help from their worships the Council, or from the school.
12. That I should not quit the town without leave from the burgomaster in office.
13. Should follow the funeral processions with the boys, as is customary, as often as possible.
14. And take no office under the University without the consent of their worships.

And to all this I hereby pledge myself, and faithfully to fulfill all this as is here set down, under pain of losing my place if I act against it, in witness of which I have signed this duplicate bond, and sealed it with my seal.

*Johann Sebastian Bach  
Given in Leipzig, May 5, 1723*

**SOURCE:** Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*. Trans. C. Bell and J. A. Fuller-Maitland, III (London, 1885): 301–302.

Rome and wrote oratorios for Catholic performances there; whereas in England, where he spent most of his professional career, Handel wrote oratorios and other works to be presented in Anglican churches.

**AMATEUR MUSICIANSHIP.** The music most people heard in their own homes was music that they produced themselves. The ability to sing or to play for oneself and one's friends had long been seen as a mark of a lady or a gentleman. Many musical instruments were quite expensive, such as the lute or keyboard instruments, so

owning one was a mark of some prosperity. A few of Europe's greatest political leaders, such as Frederick the Great of Prussia (r. 1740–1786), were well known for their devotion to music. Though Frederick could and did hire professional performers and composers, he became a skilled performer and gave concerts at court for his own enjoyment, just as the youthful King Louis XIV of France had once publicly showed off his skills as a dancer in ballets. One undeniable trend throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the rise of musicianship among the middle classes. In these decades



Such opera halls soon were built in other parts of Europe, first in France, and then in the German-speaking world. Outside Italy, though, many of these institutions could not flourish commercially without princely support, and although these halls were open to a paying public, they generally had a wealthy clientele. One exception to this trend, however, was the Theater am Gänsemarkt in Hamburg. Unlike the royal opera houses of Paris, Vienna, or Stockholm, the Hamburg theater was founded as a commercial venture by a group of local citizens that desired to promote the writing of operas in German, an innovation at a time when most of the operas performed in the German-speaking world were composed in Italian. By 1700, operas performed before paying audiences were an established feature of the musical life of many large European cities. In the next decades, paid public performances of instrumental music appeared in many European cities as well. London seems to have been in the vanguard of those eighteenth-century cities that developed a vigorous concert-going tradition. At the end of the seventeenth century a number of amateur musical societies in the English capital began to offer concerts before paying audiences, and by the early eighteenth century the best of these groups were selling weekly subscriptions. The price of these subscription tickets was high in order to attract an exclusive crowd. Within a few years the most successful of these groups had taken up residence in concert halls, where they performed throughout the season. George Frideric Handel proved to be one major force on the development of these ensembles, and his sense of his audience's expectations helped to raise the professional standards of these concerts. Performing in one of London's instrumental ensembles was still not a full-time occupation, as it is in the modern symphony orchestra. But these new public performances provided professional musicians with a way to augment their income. Pleasing the public, not only a few noble patrons, thus became important to the careers of more and more musicians. Although London's concert scene was among the most precocious in Europe, public performances and concert halls were by the mid-eighteenth century becoming a fixture in many European cities.

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## ITALIAN OPERA IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

**ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT.** The musical dramas known as “operas” today trace their origins to the experiments concerned with recreating the drama of the ancients that occurred in Florence in the late sixteenth century as well as to older forms of *intermedi* and *intermezzi*—musical interludes that were performed as short works between the acts of comedies and dramas or within other larger musical entertainments. By the final years of the sixteenth century, these kinds of works were themselves becoming the center of theatrical performances, and they quickly became a new staple of lavish entertainment and spectacle. Florence was the site of the first “opera” performance in 1598, but similar musical dramas were being staged in Rome and Mantua within a few years. Several stages have been observed in the history of seventeenth-century Italian opera. In the earliest period between 1600 and 1635, opera remained the preserve of Italian court nobility, and it flourished in the cultivated humanists circles that were common in the great aristocratic households throughout the peninsula. A new phase began in 1637, however, with the founding of Venice's Teatro S. Cassiano, the first public opera house that catered to an urban clientele. At this time opera was referred to as *dramma per musica*, or “drama in music.” By 1650, the new opera house styles of productions common at Venice had become increasingly common elsewhere in Italy, and the art form spread north to France and other cultural centers throughout Europe in the decades that immediately followed. During these years opera became increasingly laden with lavish spectacle, and regional centers of production began to display many tendencies adapted from their own local theatrical traditions. Finally, as the seventeenth century came to a close, a reforming impulse began to affect the genre. These reforms emanated from France and the Arcadian Academy of Rome and they advocated greater purity and simplicity in the genre, an elimination of comedy and spectacle, and a concentration on ancient myths and pastoral themes. Despite the intentions of French composers like Jean-Baptiste Lully or the Italian Arcadian reformers, opera remained a popular form of entertainment, and the taste for lavish productions never



completely disappeared from the genre. This brief snapshot, though, does not suggest the wealth of creativity that existed in the genre in seventeenth-century Italy as a new and enduring art form appeared within the brief space of a generation or two. To understand the great range of operatic productions that existed in seventeenth-century Italy, we must consider some of the most important milestones in operatic production.

**MONTEVERDI'S OPERAS.** In 1607, Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo* had set a new standard for operatic production. For his subject Monteverdi and his librettist Alessandro Striggio had chosen the ancient myth of Orpheus, the god who was able to shape the outcome of history through his musical powers. Monteverdi's earliest opera did not break completely from the tradition of staged *intermedi* that were still popular in his day. These musical interludes had long been staged between the acts of Italian dramas or they had been inserted into court spectacles intended for the entertainment of honored guests. But in his *Orfeo* Monteverdi made use of the new types of music that were to become increasingly important to composers of operas and instrumental music during the Baroque era. His work was composed of a mixture of recitative, arias, choruses, and instrumental music, and the drama was preceded by a prologue that made use of a toccata theme played by the orchestra's trumpets, an innovation that laid the foundation for the overtures that were later to become common at the beginning of operas. In contrast to the virtuosic skill that was necessary to perform many arias written later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the arias of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* were relatively simple, conceived in much the same way that Giulio Caccini had advocated in his *Le nuove musiche*. In *Orfeo* Monteverdi's arias make modest demands upon the singer, and they present the poetic text in a relatively simple and straightforward way. The composer conceived of his arias as songs that set to music in a verse style each of the strophes or stanzas of the poetic text. Each stanza of the aria was preceded by a *ritornello*, a refrain or instrumental passage played by the orchestra. The composer quickly followed the success of this work with another production, *Arianna*, in 1608, a work that was even more widely admired at the time than *Orfeo*. Unfortunately, only small portions of *Arianna*'s music have survived, and thus, *Orfeo* came over time to be the more influential composition. Published in its entirety in 1610, it was widely studied by Italian composers in the first decades of the seventeenth century and helped to shape many later productions. For his part, Monteverdi continued to write operas for another 35 years, most of them based on antique themes, legends,

and ancient historical incidents. In 1642, though, he produced another definitive masterpiece, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (The Coronation of Poppea). Written when the composer was 75 years old, the work brilliantly displayed the maturation of Monteverdi's style. It treated a famous incident in ancient history: the success of the aggressive Poppea in supplanting Nero's wife Octavia and her subsequent rise to become empress of Rome. Throughout the work Monteverdi relied on recitative to propel the action forward, but he also made use of musical imagery to draw his characters. The ancient Roman philosopher Seneca, Nero's tutor, is portrayed using musical lines that are calmer and serene, while Nero himself is portrayed as a nervous soprano. At the time his character was played by a *castrato*, an adult male singer that had been castrated before reaching sexual maturity. Monteverdi's use of the castrato was thus an early instance of a practice that was to become increasingly popular in the later Baroque operas of Italy. Throughout *The Coronation of Poppea* Monteverdi succeeded in rendering the brilliant libretto that the poet Gian Francesco Busenello had written for the work into a seamless dramatic spectacle. *The Coronation of Poppea* thus helped to establish a new standard for the integration of music and text, although few of the later Italian composers of the later seventeenth century were to approach its masterful blending of drama and music.

**FROM COURT TO THEATER.** By the time Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* was performed in Venice, opera had already begun to emerge from its early history as a humanistic court entertainment nurtured in Italian courts. The earliest operas had often been lavish and expensive spectacles performed before invited guests or at the marriage festivities of important nobles. In 1637, however, the patrician Tron family in Venice experimented with allowing a Roman troupe of operatic performers to mount a production in a theater they owned in the city. The performances were staged before a paying audience, and the success of this and other productions soon convinced other theater owners in Venice to convert their theaters into opera houses. By the early 1640s, Venice had four theaters that regularly performed operas during the six-week season surrounding Carnival. The number of opera houses in the city continued to grow, and by the end of the century musical drama had become a big business in Venice. To mount these productions, the families that owned the city's theaters often approached a new category of showman known as the impresario who was charged with gathering the singing talent and the stage-design know-how to pull off such complex productions. At other times the family theaters

entered into commercial ventures with troupes that rented their facilities, staging a season of operas there. As Venice's commercial opera grew in importance, the complexity of orchestrations, costuming, and staging rose. In the early years of the 1640s, productions had often been relatively cheaply produced, and had had few of the expensive stage sets and theatrical machinery that had been common in the court operas of the previous decades. Claudio Monteverdi had written three operas for the Venetian houses during the years immediately preceding his death in 1643, and these works, together with those of his student Francesco Cavalli (1602–1676) helped to establish the conventions of later seventeenth-century Venetian productions. Between 1639 and 1669, Cavalli wrote more than forty operas for the city's theaters; the most successful of these works was his *Giasone* (Jason), which was first performed in 1649. The work was typical of many of the commercial operas of the period. It included many subplots, lavish staging, the frequent use of dance, and scenes of comic relief set amidst a story that was of a generally serious moral tone. Cavalli's chief competitor in writing for the Venetian operatic scene was Piero Antonio Cesti (1623–1669), who wrote more than 100 operas in his brief life, only a small portion of which have survived.

**TRANSFORMATIONS ON THE VENETIAN STAGE.** As the competition heated up between the city's opera houses, lavish spectacle and the intermingling of comic and serious elements that Cavalli and Cesti displayed in their works became increasingly common. The quality of singing also became more important to audiences, and operas now filled up with arias that were written to showcase performers' talents. In contrast to the relatively straightforward songs that had been inserted into the art form in the early years, the aria now emerged as a central focal point of the genre. They grew longer and more complex, and eventually reflected the taste for the *da capo* style, (a form that used the musical scheme "ABA"). As these changes were occurring, critics of the Venetian stage attacked the reliance on improbable plot twists and the intermingling of comic and tragic impulses in these productions, elements that seem to have been widely popular. In the final quarter of the seventeenth century two events transformed the operatic stage in Venice. First, in 1674 one of the city's houses, the Teatro S. Moisè, slashed its ticket prices, forcing other theaters in the city to follow suit. This move dramatically expanded yet again the audience for opera in the city, while at the same time, placing most of the theaters on a tighter shoestring that limited the money available for spectacle and opulence. At about the same time, Venice's Grimani

family opened a new theater, the Teatro Grimano a San Giovanna Grisostomo, that charged high ticket prices in exchange for operas with lavish production standards. Thus as the seventeenth century drew to a close, Venice's opera houses had become divided into two classes: those that served a broad popular audience and a small minority of houses that catered to the expensive tastes of the city's patricians and wealthy merchants.

**OPERA SPREADS.** As Venetian opera emerged as an important force on the Italian cultural landscape, its customs and production methods spread first throughout Italy and then beyond the peninsula to Northern Europe. A key element in the diffusion of Venetian opera to other regions was the touring companies that impresarios gathered to perform operas in various cities throughout Italy. Of these early producers Benedetto Ferrari (c. 1603–1681) was instrumental in setting a standard that later impresarios followed. Ferrari himself was a librettist, composer, and musician, who had mounted the first opera productions with a touring troupe at Venice in 1637. During the 1640s he toured with a company that made major stops in Bologna, Modena, Genoa, and Milan, and a decade later he staged the first operatic productions before the imperial court in the Holy Roman Empire. By this time touring companies had already established a foothold for opera in Naples, then a territory that was a Spanish possession, and by 1651, the popularity of the genre there had given birth to an opera house similar to those of Venice in the city. By the end of the seventeenth century Naples was Italy's second capital of opera production. In France, the first productions of the new Italian operas occurred in the years between 1644 and 1652, and the familiarity of the audience with the new Italian innovations soon gave birth to attempts to produce a native art form that was independent of southern examples. Elsewhere the new art form penetrated European regions unevenly. Spain and England remained relatively untouched by the new Italian genre during the seventeenth century, while in Germany, Italian opera inspired a genre that imitated Italian forms for almost a century. As opera established a permanent commercial presence in Venice, throughout Italy, and somewhat later throughout Europe in the years of the mid-seventeenth century, the artistic possibilities of the genre expanded opera's range of dramatic expressiveness and artistic techniques.

**ARCADIAN REFORMS.** Still, not everyone approved of the lavish taste for spectacle and the confused mixture of plots and subplots that sometimes found their way onto the new opera stages of Europe. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, critics at Venice and from throughout Europe began to attack as absurd the

crowd-pleasing productions that had grown increasingly common in previous decades. The foundation of the Teatro Grimano a San Giovanni Grisostomo at Venice in 1677 was one development that pointed to the increasing impatience of elites with the popular confectations they believed were all too common in the city's opera house. The theater's express purpose had been to elevate production standards in the city and to appeal to a more educated clientele. In France, initial experimentation with the production of *dramma per musica* soon gave way to criticism and spawned an attempt to create an operatic style more in keeping with the traditions of the country's drama. These criticisms did not go unnoticed throughout Italy, and in 1690 the foundation of the Arcadian Academy at Rome aimed to reform the country's poetry and drama. In its efforts, the Arcadian Academy imitated the Académie Française that had been founded by Louis XIII's prime minister, Cardinal Richelieu, in 1634. Richelieu's organization had served to establish stylistic canons for the reform of French drama along classical lines. Similarly, the Arcadian reformers advocated a return to classical restraint in opera and drama and they encouraged librettists to make use of pastoral themes and heroic tales from Antiquity. While not all writers of text for the opera championed the movement's aims, the Academy had a broad influence on the operatic world in Italy in the several decades following 1690. A number of librettists, including Apostolo Zeno and Pietro Metastasio, began to produce texts for operas along the lines advocated by the Arcadian reformers. The effect of these reforms eventually shaped the *opera seria*, or serious opera, of the eighteenth century. Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725) and Giovanni Bononcini (1670–1747) were among the most important composers of the early eighteenth century to set this new style of classical poetry to music. Thus while the reforms of the Arcadian Academy had not succeeded in transforming opera into a more restrained and coherent art form by the end of the seventeenth century, the forces were gathering strength for an important reform of opera in the eighteenth century.

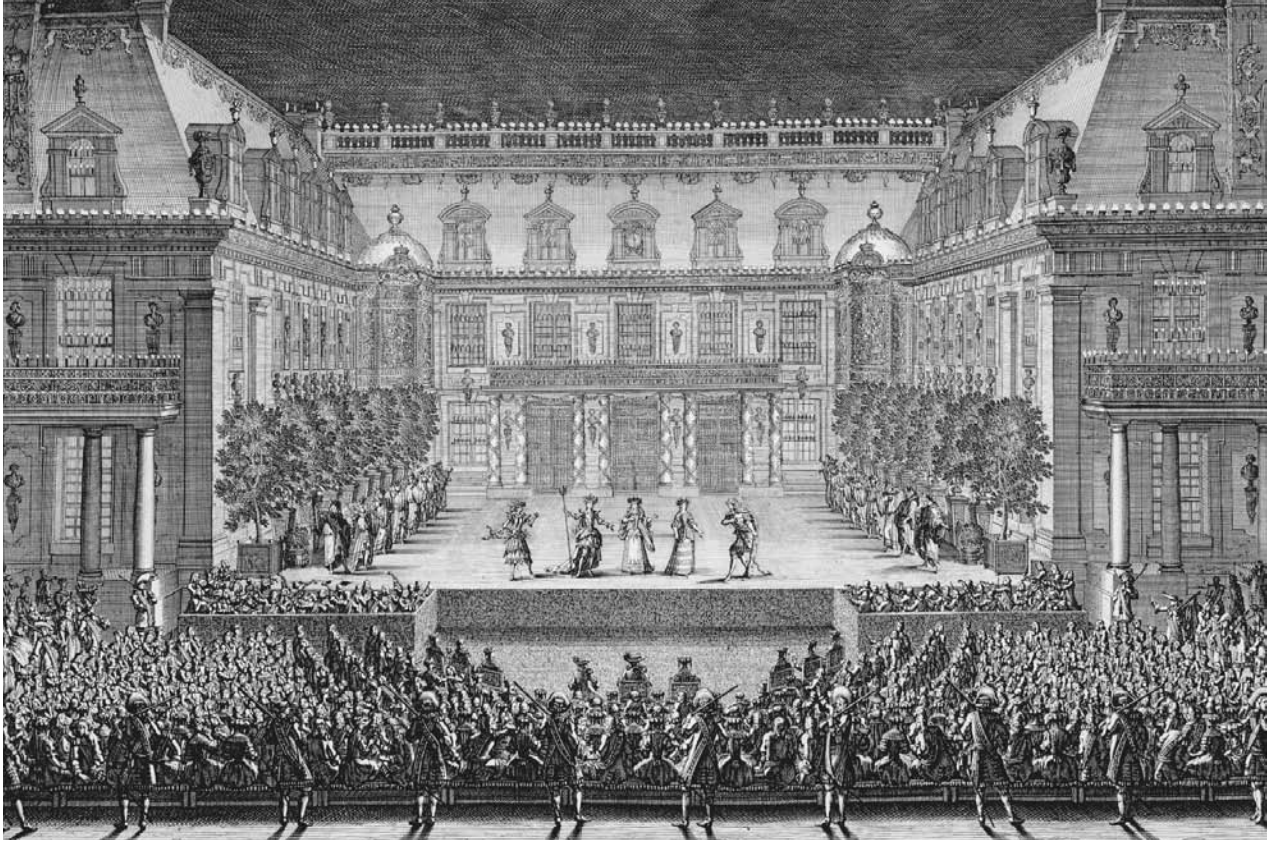
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## OPERA IN FRANCE

**FROM ITALY TO FRANCE.** During the first half of the seventeenth century conditions in France improved after the violence that had been widespread in the country during the French Wars of Religion (1562–1698). A tentative stability returned to the country, and the state's economy and its political and cultural institutions revived. Under the control of powerful ministers like Cardinal Richelieu, Cardinal Mazarin, and Jean Baptiste Colbert, France's royal government played a key role in administering the country's economy and in shaping developments in the arts. Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642) had been a particularly vigorous supporter of the development of French drama, but his successor Cardinal Mazarin was Italian-born and nourished Italian art forms at the French court, a controversial policy that did little to endear him to many of the French nobility. Between 1645 and his death in 1661, he commissioned Italian troupes to stage a number of operas at the French court. Mazarin had been named chief minister of France just before the death of Louis XIII in 1643, and during the long minority of Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715) he played a vital role in shaping French state policies. Mazarin raised money for his elaborate productions of Italian operas by means of new taxes, and this did little to promote a love of Italian opera among the French. During the series of rebellions known as the Fronde, Mazarin's support of Italian opera was widely criticized in Paris as one cause of the state's fiscal weakness, and for a time, the Cardinal, the Queen Mother, and Louis XIV were forced from the capital into exile. Mazarin's Italian artists, including many who had participated in the operas staged at court, were also threatened with imprisonment, and many fled Paris. Eventually, Mazarin succeeded in quelling the Fronde, and as he returned to a position of security, he continued to nourish the development of opera in Paris. Yet while his efforts to support the new art form continued until his death in 1661, they were always controversial. While some admired the music of the new Italian art form, many rejected it because its conventions ran counter to the styles of performances that were then fashionable in the French aristocratic society. The French court already enjoyed drama, particularly elevated tragedies of the kind that Pierre Corneille (1606–1684) was writing at the time. A popular song form of this era in French court production was the *air de cour*. These airs were written in verses or strophes, and used a lute or another instrument as accompaniment. *Airs de cour* figured commonly in France's most elaborate court entertainment, the *ballet de cour*, a lavish spectacle that mixed dancing, poetry, and music to present loose narratives



A performance of Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Alceste* held at the Marble Court at the Palace of Versailles in 1674. THE ART ARCHIVE/  
BIBLIOTHÈQUE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

drawn from antique legends and myth. These ballets featured elaborate costumes and sets that made use of the most up-to-date theatrical machinery of the time. Their music and choreography was highly developed by the early years of Louis XIV's reign, and the king himself and many of his nobles danced in these productions. Louis XIV grew up to be an excellent dancer, and he enjoyed his roles on stage. His title of the "Sun King" developed, in fact, from the role he played as Apollo, the Sun God, in the 1653 production of the *Ballet de la nuit* (The Ballet of the Night).

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EARLY OPERA IN FRANCE.** Since the late sixteenth century ballet had been a central preoccupation of the French court, and so it is not surprising to see that the earliest productions of Italian operas Mazarin patronized included a more notable role for dancing than had been the case in Italy. Three-act Italian operas were stretched to five to make room for generous interludes of dancing between the acts. In his efforts to try to nourish the development of the genre in Paris, Mazarin also imported several set designers and theatrical architects, and he spent enormous sums on

stage machinery to produce spectacles he hoped might capture the imagination of the French court. As his power grew during the 1650s, he spent ever more lavishly on his efforts to promote Italian opera in France. Shortly before his death in 1661, Mazarin secured the services of Francesco Cavalli, then Venice's greatest composer of operas, to write an opera to commemorate the marriage of Louis XIV to the Spanish princess. Cavalli came to Paris for two years, and Mazarin brought the Italian stage designer Gaspare Vigarini to Paris to build an elaborate theatre with the most up-to-date stage machinery. But neither the theater nor Cavalli's opera was completed in time to celebrate the king's marriage. Another of Cavalli's Venetian operas was substituted at the last minute, and was performed in a makeshift hall in the Palace of the Louvre. When two years later both the new theater and Cavalli's commission, *Ercole amante*, were completed, Cardinal Mazarin was already dead, and little interest seems to have existed in the production of the work. *Ercole* was staged nonetheless because enormous sums had already been laid out for its production. Performed in Cardinal Mazarin's vast new theater, the Italians complained that Vigarini's stage machinery had



Drawing of Jean-Baptiste Lully. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

been tampered with, while the audience found the theater's acoustics wanting and were unable to hear the music. The focal point of the lavish production was its ballets, staged by Jean-Baptiste Lully, a rising star in the French court. Together with Cavalli's musical drama, the production of *Ercole amante* lasted more than six hours, and those who commented upon it at the time focused more attention on the work's dances than they did on its drama. The work thus proved to be the last of the Italian operas staged in France. Francesco Cavalli returned to Italy, resolved never more to write for the theater, a resolution he soon broke upon his return to Venice. In Paris, the experience seems, too, to have soured French composers from any more experiments with the genre. It would not be for another decade that the king's composer and musical superintendent, Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) turned to compose opera, and although an Italian by birth, Lully was to mold the original Italian art form to suit French tastes.

**LULLY'S OPERA.** Although Lully had originally been born and raised in Italy, he had come to France early in life to serve as a dancer and violinist in the home of a relative of the king. Lully had been forced to flee Paris in 1652 during the Fronde, but when he returned his reputation grew, and he was soon given a position at court. During the 1650s he choreographed and wrote music for the *ballets de cour* and on occasion even danced beside the king. By 1661, he had been appointed super-

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**LULLY'S CAUTION**

**INTRODUCTION:** Jean-Baptiste Lully was one of the most prolific composers of the seventeenth century. His many operas defined the art long after his death, with later composers often defending their creations by recourse to Lully's example. In this excerpt from Sir John Hawkins *A General History of the Science of Music* (1776), the author related this comic anecdote about Lully, theatrical to the very end, and the fate of one of his creations.

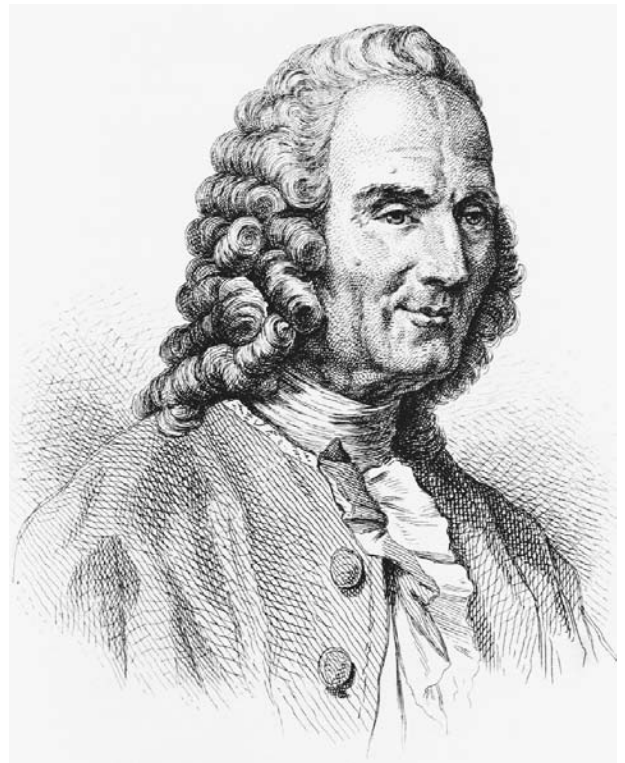
A story is related of a conversation between Lully and his confessor in his last illness, which proves the archness of the one, and the folly of the other, to this purpose: for some years before the accident that occasioned his illness, Lully had been closely engaged in composing for the opera; the priest took occasion from hence to insinuate, that unless, as a testimony of his sincere repentance for all the errors of his past life he would throw the last of his compositions into the fire, he must expect no absolution. Lully at first would have excused himself, but after some opposition he acquiesced; and pointing to a drawer wherein the draft of *Achilles and Polixene* lay, it was taken out and burnt, and the confessor went away satisfied. Lully grew better, and was thought to be out of danger. One of the young princes, who loved Lully and his works, came to see him; and "What, Baptiste," says he to him, "have you thrown your opera into the fire? You were a fool for giving credit thus to a dreaming Jansenist, and burning good music." "Hush, hush, my Lord," answered Lully in a whisper, "I knew very well what I was about, I have a fair copy of it." Unhappily this ill-timed pleasure was followed by a relapse.

**SOURCE:** Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*. Vol. 2. (1776; reprint, with an introduction by Charles Cudworth, New York: Dover, 1963): 648.

intendent of the court's music and a court composer. Other honors followed, but in the years immediately following Mazarin's death and the ill-fated productions of Cavalli's operas at Paris, Lully dedicated himself largely to providing light entertainments for the court. Until 1671, he collaborated with the great French playwright Molière on a number of comedy ballets, a French genre that mixed dialogue, dance, and song. In 1672, Lully purchased a royal monopoly to produce operas in Paris, and he founded the Royal Academy of Music, an

institution that became known over the next century merely as the Opera, and which until the French Revolution possessed the sole right to produce French operas in Paris. Over the next fifteen years, Lully produced a series of beautiful operas that molded the Italian form to native French traditions of drama, music, and dance. His works came at a time when the tone of the French court was growing more serious, as Louis XIV abandoned his youthful frivolity under the influence of his pious second wife, Madame de Maintenon. Lully developed a style of recitative that adapted its Italian features to the traditions of French theater and drama. His solo songs resembled the airs de cour that had been popular in the ballets de cours. His operas featured ornate costumes, sets, and stage machinery, as well as many ballets and other dances. Most of them told stories based on mythological subjects, as can be seen in the titles of such works as *Proserpine*, *Psyché*, and *Alceste*. Others were based on medieval and Renaissance courtly romances, such as *Roland* and *Amadis*. They used a five-act format, a style derived from Aristotle's discussion of the ideal dramatic form. In contrast to the many plots and subplots typical of Italian *dramma per musica* of the time, Lully chose his librettos carefully, favoring works by the accomplished French poet Philippe Quinault. The productions he mounted were tragedies that conformed to the French canons of dramatic performance outlined in the laws of the unities. These rules were derived from sixteenth-century French humanist interpretations of Aristotle and had been established as canonical in the spoken tragedies favored by the Académie Française since the 1630s. These rules stipulated that all action in a drama should be confined to treating a single plot that occurred in one place and time. Like French tragedies of the seventeenth century, Lully's operas were thus conceived of as edifying and morally uplifting dramas, although many of their heroes referred in some way to Louis XIV, and thus served a role as royal propaganda. Lully also developed the form for the overture that introduced and began the opera. By the time of his death in 1687, the great composer's considerable operatic production had left France with a set of works that was largely to be considered "canonical" over the course of the next hundred years.

**FRENCH OPERA AFTER LULLY.** Lully's monopoly on opera production during his lifetime kept rivals at bay, and kept Paris as France's operatic center. After his death, several composers carried on Lully's traditions. Chief among his immediate successors was Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704), a composer who slipped into a centuries-long obscurity soon after his death. Charpentier's works have recently been revived, studied, and



Engraving of Jean-Philippe Rameau. © CORBIS.

performed. His *Medée* has now been restored to its rightful place as a masterpiece of the French genre. Influenced by Lully's pattern of composition, Charpentier's *Medée* and two other operas he wrote for the Royal Academy have been seen as having their own individual voice, and providing a rich font of compositional invention. As in Lully's time, most of the plots of French opera still came from Greco-Roman Antiquity, though some were based on tales from medieval or contemporary literature and the Bible. In their emphasis on classical themes and on the avoidance of subplots, Lully and his successors' works influenced the Arcadian reforms that were underway in Italy in the years around 1700. Those efforts, centered in the Arcadian Academy of Rome, argued for a reform of Italian opera to remove subplots, comedy, and other crowd-pleasing innovations that aesthetic theorists judged were not in keeping with the serious moral tone they argued should pervade the genre. Although many French operas of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries displayed a fondness for tragic stories, elaborate dance and ballet were more frequently incorporated into these productions than elsewhere in Europe. At the same time other dramatic musical genres persisted, and like Lully's famous early collaborations with the playwright Molière in the production of comédie-ballets, later French composers wrote many

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***MUSIC AS A SCIENCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Jean-Philippe Rameau first rose to prominence on the musical scene in France as a musical theorist, before becoming the country's greatest composer since Jean-Baptiste Lully. His operas were widely hailed as the successor to Lully's late seventeenth-century masterpieces. In his musical theory Rameau continued to outline principles that had been discussed since the Renaissance: music's foundation as the science of sound and its relationship to mathematics. The arguments built upon these principles led to his reputation as one of the most influential music theorists in the Western tradition.

However much progress music may have made until our time, it appears that the more sensitive the ear has become to the marvelous effects of this art, the less inquisitive the mind has been about its true principles. One might say that reason has lost its rights while experience has acquired a certain authority.

The surviving writings of the Ancients show us clearly that reason alone enabled them to discover most of the properties of music. Although experience still obliges us to accept the greater part of their rules, we neglect today all the advantages to be derived from the use of reason in favor of purely practical experience.

Even if experience can enlighten us concerning the different properties of music, it alone cannot lead us to

discover the principle behind these properties with the precision appropriate to reason. Conclusions drawn from experience are often false, or at least leave us with doubts that only reason can dispel. How, for example, could we prove that our music is more perfect than that of the Ancients, since it no longer appears to produce the same effects they attributed to theirs? Should we answer that the more things become familiar the less they cause surprise, and that the admiration which they can originally inspire degenerates imperceptibly as we accustom ourselves to them, until what we admired becomes at last merely diverting? This would at best imply the equality of our music and not its superiority. But if through the exposition of an evident principle, from which we then draw just and certain conclusions, we can show that our music has attained the last degree of perfection and that the Ancients were far from this perfection, ... we shall know where we stand. We shall better appreciate the force of the preceding claim. Knowing thus the scope of the art, we shall devote ourselves to it more willingly. Persons of taste and outstanding ability in this field will no longer fear a lack of the knowledge necessary for success. In short, the light of reason, dispelling the doubts into which experience can plunge us at any moment, will be the most certain guarantee of success that we can expect in this art.

If modern musicians (i.e., since Zarlino) had attempted to justify their practices, as did the Ancients, they would certainly have put an end to prejudices [of others] unfavor-

works that combined singing, dancing, costumes, and a plot, but with lighter themes. These works, known as opéra-ballets and comédie-ballets, persisted throughout the eighteenth century.

**JEAN-PHILIPPE RAMEAU.** While a number of competent composers continued to write for the Parisian Opera in the generation or two after Lully's death, none attracted the attention or controversy that Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) did. Rameau reinvigorated the French tradition of opera and his works helped to sustain its popularity until the later eighteenth century. The composer began writing for the stage relatively late in life, after he had already had a successful career as a music theorist. Despite his late start, he left behind an enormous opus of works in many different genres. While Lully's works for the operatic stage had been largely tragedies, and had eventually discarded all comic elements, Rameau wrote tragedies, lyric comedies, operatic ballets, and heroic pastoral dramas. His works made use of some of the by-now canonical traditions of Lully—that is, they

combined brilliant poetry and delicately created recitative with dance and choruses. But Rameau employed a broader range of themes than Lully, and his work reveals a generally lighter dramatic touch. He also adopted the most popular Italian innovations of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to the French stage. Among those influences he derived from Italian opera was the use of the da capo style of aria—that is, one in which the aria followed an “ABA” organization scheme. In other regards, too, Rameau tried to blend the best of new Italian opera with French style, and he fashioned carefully composed recitatives and arias that conveyed the character's emotions. French audiences cared greatly about their opera and operatic traditions, and not everyone approved of Rameau's innovations. These included a larger and more diverse orchestra; bold, new harmonies and dissonances; expressive rhythms; and richer orchestrations than those of the generally restrained operas of Lully and his followers. A whole party of critics declared itself supporters of Lully, and rejected Rameau's new works as

able to them; this might even have led them to give up those prejudices with which they themselves are still obsessed and of which they have great difficulty ridding themselves. Experience is too kind to them. It seduces them, so to speak, making them neglect to study the beauties which it enables them to discover daily. Their knowledge, then, is theirs alone; they do not have the gift of communicating it. Because they do not perceive this at all, they are often more astonished that others do not understand them than they are at their own inability to make themselves understood. This reproach is a bit strong, I admit, but I set it forth, deserving it perhaps myself despite all my efforts. In any case, I wish this reproach could produce on others the effect that it has had on me. It is chiefly to restore the noble emulation that once flourished that I have ventured to share with the public my new researches in an art to which I have sought to give all its natural simplicity; the mind may thus understand its properties as easily as the ear perceives them.

No one man can exhaust material as profound as this. It is almost inevitable that he will forget something, despite all his pains; but at least his new discoveries, added to those which have already appeared on the same subject, represent so many more paths cleared for those able to go further.

Music is a science which should have definite rules; these rules should be drawn from an evident principle;

and this principle cannot really be known to us without the aid of mathematics. Notwithstanding all the experience I may have acquired in music from being associated with it for so long, I must confess that only with the aid of mathematics did my ideas become clear and did light replace a certain obscurity of which I was unaware before. Though I did not know how to distinguish the principle from the rules, the principle soon offered itself to me in a manner convincing in its simplicity. I then recognized that the consequences it revealed constituted so many rules following from this principle. The true sense of these rules, their proper application, their relationships, their sequence (the simplest always introducing the less simple, and so on by degrees), and finally the choice of terms: all this, I say, of which I was ignorant before, developed in my mind with clarity and precision. I could not help thinking that it would be desirable (as someone said to me one day while I was applauding the perfection of our modern music) for the knowledge of musicians of this century to equal the beauties of their compositions. It is not enough to feel the effects of a science or an art. One must also conceptualize these effects in order to render them intelligible. That is the end to which I have principally applied myself in the body of this work, which I have divided into four books.

**SOURCE:** Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Treatise on Harmony*. Trans. Philip Gossett (New York: Dover, 1971): xxxiii–xxxv.

discordant, sentimental, and emotionally overwrought. Others praised Rameau and his new, thoughtful writing. Still others criticized any and all efforts to bring Italian styles into French music, arguing that French styles were far superior and could only be damaged by foreign imports. In this way French opera remained an arena both for great entertainment and for serious commentary and criticism about the very concept of cultural identity in France throughout the eighteenth century.

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SEE ALSO *Dance: The Rise of the Ballet in France*

#### OPERA IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WORLD

**EXPANSION.** Perhaps the most notable feature of opera in the eighteenth century was its rapid spread throughout the European world. In the course of the seventeenth century, opera had been a performance phenomenon in Italy, in France, and in about twenty courts and cities throughout Central Europe. During the eighteenth century, opera houses were founded in some fifty additional cities and courts. Opera spread to the far corners of Europe, with new houses appearing in Spain, Portugal, Scandinavia, England, and Moscow. The expansion, though, was most pronounced in Central Europe, particularly in the Holy Roman Empire, a





Interior of the Teatro Regio in Turin, Italy, on the night of its inauguration. This theater was one of the many new opera houses founded in the eighteenth century. **ART RESOURCE.**

region of the continent that had long been divided into many small states. Here rulers of both large and small territories found in opera an appealing art form to compete for cultural glory. As the eighteenth century progressed, the operatic world in Central Europe adapted itself to the demands of the Enlightenment, the great international philosophical movement that championed human reason and the abandonment of the fanaticism and superstition of the European past. Works that glorified the principles of this philosophical movement came to be performed in many of the new houses. At the same time the operatic world of the eighteenth century was extremely varied, and many of the new houses were court theaters that were heavily subsidized by princes. In these venues works with traditional themes drawn from Antiquity, legend, and history were performed alongside lighter fare that offered a more purely entertaining value.

**ITALIAN OPERA IN CENTRAL EUROPE.** Although some of the theaters imitated the French styles of production pioneered by Lully, the opera houses in Central Europe, by and large, followed Italian examples. Italian impresarios brought their productions to the cities and courts of the region, and composers and librettists from the peninsula were lured to Vienna, Berlin, and Dresden with long-term contracts. In the century and a

half following 1650, the German-speaking lands of the region provided a steady source of employment for Italian composers and musicians. During the seventeenth century Antonio Cesti (1623–1669), Antonio Draghi (c. 1635–1700), Marc’Antonio Ziani (1653–1715), and Antonio Bertali (1605–1669) were just a few of the Italians who found permanent employment at Vienna’s court opera house. In the eighteenth century Antonio Caldara (1670–1736) and the now famous Antonio Salieri (1750–1825) were just a few of the many figures that carried on the Italian tradition in the German-speaking world at this time. Vienna was by no means unusual, and for most of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries operas written by native German speakers were a rarity. As the eighteenth century progressed, more German-born composers began writing operas, although many of these figures were trained to do so in Italy. While there were occasional attempts to compose operas in German, most artists chose librettos that were written in Italian. One exception to this rule, however, was Hamburg’s Theater am Gänsemarkt, a theater founded by members of Hamburg’s merchant and commercial classes in 1678 with the express purpose of nurturing operas in German. Many of the works performed there, nevertheless, made use of librettos that had been translated from Italian. Hamburg’s Theater did have a major impact on the training of German composers to write opera, and it counted George Frideric Handel among the distinguished ranks of German artists who had written works for its stage.

**VARIETY OF OPERA HOUSES.** Great variety characterized the conditions of European opera houses in the eighteenth century, and a range of houses, from the modest to the luxuriant and palatial, was a fact of the age. The major houses of Venice and Naples sat at the apex of this world, as well as the great court theaters of Vienna, Paris, Berlin, and Dresden. These court operas were generally unable to survive without generous financial support from their royal patrons. Beneath these great theaters were a number of smaller court theaters and commercial houses. This last category was a thoroughly commercial affair charged by its investors with making a profit. These commercial theaters consequently economized on many productions, staging operas with scenery and costumes that were considerably more modest than those produced in the great houses of Venice, Naples, and Vienna. Theaters like this often shared productions with other houses, and scenery, costumes, and singers were carted around to perform a work in many different locations. Generally, the eighteenth-century season was made up of far more “new” operas than it was of re-



Interior of La Scala opera house in Milan, Italy. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

vivals of older works, since the idea of an operatic repertory had not yet developed at this time and audiences craved novelty. Only in France were the operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully systematically revived from generation to generation. It was far more normal throughout the rest of Europe for an opera to be written for a season, to be performed several times, and after being repeated a season or two later, to be largely forgotten. This fact of eighteenth-century production continues even now to lure modern performers and opera directors into musical archives in search of the discarded gems of the eighteenth century.

**ITALIAN DOMINANCE.** Many of the singers, composers, and librettists who worked in Europe's opera houses first mastered their craft in the two great centers of Italian opera of the time: Venice and Naples. Venice's rise to leadership in the operatic world had begun already in the 1640s, and the city continued to shape operatic tastes well into the eighteenth century. By that time, though, Naples was not far behind as a discriminating center of new productions, and in the course of the eighteenth century it would, in most connoisseurs'

minds, surpass Venice for its innovation. Operas written and performed in these Italian cities began to develop standard features. Not content with hearing a simple basso continuo supporting much of the recitatives, audiences began to expect to hear more from the orchestra during the course of an evening. The musical entertainment, in fact, became the center of attention, far more so than the plots of the stories themselves, which might on their own seem far fetched. In both cities people flocked to hear star soloists, and to hear them sing arias written especially to show off their star qualities. Traveling troupes often carried Italian opera, especially those from Venice and Naples, to the rest of Europe. These tours nourished the composition of Italian operas in places far beyond the peninsula in the course of the eighteenth century. At this time many European courts and urban opera houses began hiring Italian composers and librettists to remain in residence and write operas and librettos for them; thus, before long, an "Italian opera" might well be written anywhere in Europe. In planning a production, an impresario looked first, if he could, for

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***RUSHED COMPOSITIONS**

**INTRODUCTION:** In modern times composers have often labored over their operatic productions for years before allowing the public to see a glimpse of their works. This was not the case in the Baroque world, where operas were produced quickly to satisfy an almost insatiable appetite for the art form. The librettist Carlo Goldoni provides us this glimpse on how Antonio Vivaldi worked as he describes an incident in which the great Venetian composer had him re-write the entire text of an aria while he waited.

That year, for the Ascension opera, the composer was the priest Vivaldi. ... This most famous violinist, this man famous for his sonatas, especially for those known as the *Four Seasons*, also composed operas; and although the really knowledgeable people say that he was weak on counterpoint and that he handled his basses badly, he made the parts sound well, and most of the time his operas were successful.

...Vivaldi was very concerned to find a poet who would arrange, or disarrange, the play to his taste, by adapting, more or less, several arias that his pupil had sung on other occasions; since I was the person to whom this task fell, I introduced myself to the composer on the orders of the *cavaliere padrone* [Grimani]. He received me quite coldly. He took me for a beginner and he was quite right; and not finding me very well up in the business of mutilating plays, one could see that he very much wanted to send me packing.

He [Vivaldi] knew the success my *Belisario* had had, he knew how successful my *intermezzi* had been; but the

adaptation of a play was something that he regarded as difficult, and which required a special talent, according to him. I then remembered those rules that had driven me mad in Milan when my *Amalasueta* was read, and I too wanted to leave; but my situation and the fear of making a bad impression on His Excellency Grimani, as well as the hope of being given the direction of the magnificent theatre of S. Giovanni Grisostomo [*sic*], induced me to feign and almost to ask [him] to try me out. He looked at me with a compassionate smile and took up a little book:

"Here," he said, "is the play that has to be adapted, Apostolo Zeno's *Griselda*. The work is very fine. The part for the prima donna could not be better. But certain changes are necessary ... If Your Lordship knew the rules ... Useless. You cannot know them. Here, for example, after this tender scene, there is a cantabile aria. But since Signora Anna does not ... does not ... like this sort of aria (in other words she was incapable of singing it), one needs here an action aria ... that reveals passion, but not pathos, and is not cantabile."

"I understand," I replied. "I will endeavour to satisfy you. Give me the libretto."

"But I need it for myself," replied Vivaldi. "When will you return it?"

"Immediately," I replied. "Give me a sheet of paper and a pen."

"What! Your Lordship imagines that an opera aria is like an intermezzo aria!"

**SOURCE:** Carlo Goldoni, *Commedie*, Vol. 13, (1761), in Alan Kendall, *Vivaldi*. (London: Chappell, 1978): 77–79.

his main singers. Then he would seek out a good libretto, perhaps one that had done well in another city—one that was well known elsewhere, and hence was in demand. Many musical scores belonged to the individual composer or impresario who first wrote or produced it and hence could not easily be copied so often a new one would be written on the spot by a local composer, using a pre-existing libretto. One of the most accomplished libretto writers of the eighteenth century was Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782), who worked for more than fifty years in Vienna at the Hapsburg court opera. He tried to construct believable plots that were instructive as well as entertaining, and that conformed to the best principles of good drama. As much in demand as his libretti were, it was nonetheless common practice to edit them as local producers saw fit, adding or dropping

arias, cutting a recitative here or adding one there, as seemed appropriate to the local production. The search for new material meant that many composers frequently scrambled to satisfy the demands of the companies for which they worked. Tales abound of composers left to work through the night, beset with demands from singers and impresario alike, finishing the music at the very last minute. Handel, for example, wrote the entire opera *Tamerlano* in less than three weeks in 1724. According to legend, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart did not complete the overture for his masterpiece *Don Giovanni* until the night before its first performance. In this overheated world, often governed by commercial demands and a taste for new stories set in lush and sometimes exotic surroundings, many composers frequently reused material from one opera to the next. The greatest stars of the

opera world were itinerant, moving about the continent from place to place to make the most of the financial possibilities their skills offered. Singers were also expected to embellish the lines of a composer's arias in order to show off their technique and musical personality. Thus an older aria, or its melodies, might have a very different effect when reused in a new production and sung by a different singer.

**RISING TECHNICAL DEMANDS.** During the eighteenth century schools that specialized in training operatic singers appeared in Venice, Naples, and other Italian cities. Specialized training over many years was becoming increasingly necessary to support the technical demands that composers now made on singers; singers seem happily to have risen to these challenges in order to win adulation from their audiences. In Italy, a major preoccupation of technical training often involved the teaching of the methods that later became known as *bel canto*, or “beautiful singing.” In the years since the eighteenth century considerable dispute has raged among singers and music historians about the precise techniques that Italian singing teachers used in the eighteenth century. The evidence suggests that they spent a great deal of time perfecting a singer's *legato*—the ability to sing a passage in a perfectly smooth manner. Attention was also directed at the initial stages of instruction to the singer's ability to produce the *mesa di voce*—a sustained tone that began softly and then built to a crescendo before diminishing once again. This exercise built incredible strength and self-control. In subsequent stages greater attention was concentrated on the upper registers, and the voice was expected to be kept light and agile so that it could perform brilliantly in coloratura passages—in the many florid embellishments of trills, roulades, cadences, and other vocal embellishments by which singers showed off their abilities on the opera stage. This training and its techniques were well suited to the opera houses of the period, which were generally small and intimate. Even the largest European houses, for instance, rarely accommodated more than about 800–900 patrons. Projecting the singing voice in these small spaces was not as much of a problem to eighteenth-century singers as it would become later. By the mid-nineteenth century, as opera houses were quickly doubling or tripling in size and orchestras were swelling to include an hitherto undreamed of number of instruments, new kinds of techniques became popular to ensure that a singer's voice carried throughout the hall.

**BRILLIANT CAREERS.** Both men and women were expected to master the cornerstones of Italian singing methods, and the commentators of the period frequently reserved their most exuberant praise for male sopranos,

that is, the castrati that were fixtures of the Italian opera world of the time. Of these figures, no one ever surpassed, by virtue of technique or achievements, the great Neapolitan male soprano Carlo Broschi (1705–1782), who was widely known as Farinelli. Accounts of Farinelli's art suggest the great technical prowess that Italian eighteenth-century methods ensured. The German composer Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773), who had personally heard him, left one of the best accounts of his technique. Quantz stressed that Farinelli's voice was perfectly modulated, able to execute the most technically difficult passages, and highly agile throughout the entire range of his voice. In the early stages of his career, Quantz observed, the singer's range extended already from the A below middle-C to the D above high-C. Later, Farinelli acquired even lower tones, but was able to continue to reach the high notes with complete surety. Because of his enormous range, composers typically provided him with different kinds of arias in the operas in which he starred. One was almost always written in the range of a contralto, while several others showed off his abilities in the higher registers of a coloratura soprano. Farinelli, and other castrati singers like him, became European-wide sensations. In the years following his Neapolitan debut, the singer toured Italy extensively before conquering the continent and then eventually making his London debut in 1734 in the company of George Frideric Handel's chief rival, Nicola Porpora (1686–1786), Farinelli's former teacher. Although Handel had negotiated with the artist, he had, much to his chagrin, been unsuccessful in securing Farinelli's services, and in the three-year period in which Farinelli sang for Porpora, the singer helped to establish the company of Handel's rival as a major competitor on the London scene. In 1737, the English capital's love affair with the male soprano came to an abrupt end. Farinelli broke his contract and fled to Spain, where he accepted a position as a singer in the royal household. Having heard of his amazing vocal qualities, the Spanish queen sought the singer's services as a way of treating the severe depression of her husband, King Philip V. As a condition of his contract at the Spanish court, Farinelli had to sing a number of arias to the king each night before he went to bed, a duty the castrato executed faithfully for the nine years before Philip's death in 1746. For these and other services to the crown, Farinelli was knighted, and when he retired from Spain to his hometown of Bologna in 1759, he continued to live a comfortable existence for the rest of his life. In these years he received visits and letters from Europe's greatest composers and political figures, including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Christoph Willibald von Gluck, and the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE OPERA SCENE IN NAPLES**

**INTRODUCTION:** Like many other eighteenth-century Englishmen, Samuel Sharp took the Grand Tour, a long circuit through Europe's major cultural capitals that usually culminated in Italy. His tour occurred in 1765 and 1766, and when he returned to England he published the letters he had sent home along the way. This excerpt from one of them describes the various opera houses at Naples and their performances.

Naples, Nov. 1765

Sir,

A stranger, upon his arrival in so large and celebrated a city as Naples, generally makes the publick spectacles his first pursuit. These consist of the King's Theatre, where the serious Opera is performed, and of two smaller theatres, called Teatro Nuovo, and the Teatro dei Fiorentini, where they exhibit burlettas [i.e. comic operas] only. There is also a little dirty kind of a play-house, where they perform a comedy every night, though the Drama has so little encouragement at Naples, that their comedies are seldom frequented by any of the gentry.

The King's Theatre, upon the first view, is, perhaps, almost as remarkable an object as any a man sees in his travels: I not only speak from my own feeling, but the declaration of every foreigner here. The amazing extent of the stage, with the prodigious circumference of the boxes, and height of the ceiling, produce a marvellous effect on the mind, for a few moments; but the instant the Opera opens, a spectator laments this striking sight. He immediately perceives this structure does not gratify the ear, how much soever it may the eye. The voices are drowned in this immensity of space, and even the orchestra itself, though a numerous band, lies under a disadvantage: It is true, some of the first singers may be heard, yet, upon the whole, it must be admitted, that the house is better contrived to see, than to hear an Opera.

There are some who contend, that the singers might be very well heard if the audience was more silent; but it is so much the fashion at Naples, and, indeed, through all Italy, to consider the Opera as a place of rendezvous and

visiting that they do not seem in the least to attend to the musick, but laugh and talk through the whole performance, without any restraint; and, it may be imagined, that an assembly of so many hundreds conversing together so loudly, must entirely cover the voices of the singers.

Notwithstanding the amazing noisiness of the audience, during the whole performance of the Opera, the moment the dances begin, there is a universal silence, which continues so long as the dances continue. Witty people, therefore, never fail to tell me, the Neapolitans go to see, not to hear, an Opera. A stranger, who has a little compassion in his breast, feels for the poor singers, who are treated with so much indifference and contempt: He almost wonders that they can submit to so gross an affront; and I find, by their own confession, that however accustomed they be to it, the mortification is always dreadful, and they are eager to declare how happy they are when they sing in a country where more attention is paid to their talents.

The Neapolitan quality rarely dine or sup with one another, and many of them hardly ever visit, but at the Opera; on this account they seldom absent themselves, though the Opera be played three nights successively, and it be the same Opera, without any change, during ten or twelve weeks. It is customary for Gentlemen to run about from box to box, betwixt the acts, and even in the midst of the performance; but the Ladies, after they are seated, never quit their box the whole evening. It is the fashion to make appointments for such and such nights. A Lady receives visitors in her box one night, and they remain with her the whole Opera; another night she returns the visit in the same manner. In the intervals of the acts, principally betwixt the first and second, the proprietor of the box regales her company with iced fruits and sweet meats.

Besides the indulgence of a loud conversation, they sometimes form themselves into card parties; but, I believe, this custom does not prevail so much at present as it did formerly, for I have never seen more than two or three boxes so occupied in the same night.

**SOURCE:** Samuel Sharp, *Letters from Italy*. 3rd ed. (London, 1767): 77–79, 82–84, 92–93, in *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*. Eds. Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin (New York: Schirmer, 1984): 231–234.

**FIERCE COMPETITION.** In a world in which technical brilliance was prized over the opera's ability to dramatize, changes were sure to occur in the character of the opera. By the eighteenth century operas were filling up with arias, and singers were known to fight in rehearsals about who among them had the best ones.

The best singers were able to demand that composers and librettists re-write works to improve their parts. As these singers traveled around Europe, they often brought with them "suitcase arias," works that they had performed in other productions and which had often been written personally for them by a composer to show

off their special talents. The most powerful singers were able to bargain to have these arias inserted into a production in a new city, a practice that conflicted greatly with a composer's vision of how his work should unfold since arias that often had little to do with the dramatic needs of one production came to be interpolated into a work with very different intentions. In the late eighteenth century Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart satirized these operatic conventions and poked fun at the backbiting, competition, and intrigue that existed in the backstage world of the opera, a world that he knew only too well. At one hilarious point in his one-act opera, *Der Schauspieldirektor* (The Impresario) two of the theater's female singers engage in a hysterical dispute over which of them is the theater's "prima donna" or "first singer." Mozart's brilliant satire summed up his impatience with opera's star system and its egos, but the historical evidence of the time suggests that the situation that he mocked was only too real. At the same time, the world of fierce competition that undeniably existed in the theaters of eighteenth-century Europe provided one source of entertainment for the committed opera fan. Following the personalities of the operatic stage was, then, even as it is now, a preoccupation of those who loved the art form.

**ARIA DA CAPO AND OPERA SERIA.** By the mid-eighteenth century the aria had increasingly become a vehicle for singers anxious to demonstrate their skills. In many cases, particularly in the serious operas that experts began in the later eighteenth century to term *opera seria*, these arias were written in the da capo format, that is, with an organizational scheme of "ABA." At the opening of the aria, in other words, a performer sang a theme (the A section). This theme was usually repeated before the singer presented a second theme (the B section) and then returned to repeat the first section, usually twice, before a final cadence or series of cadenzas drew the work to a conclusion. The phrase "da capo," meaning "from the head" or "from the top," referred to the recapitulation or repeating of the theme that occurred at the aria's conclusion. There were other types of organizational schemes used in the arias of the day. Some arias, notably the cavata or its shorter variation, the cavatina, were written in the form "AB," rather than "ABA," meaning that they lacked a final recapitulation. But the rise of the da capo form to popularity and obligatory use in opera seria or "serious opera" had become one of the conventions of the genre by the mid-eighteenth century. The opera seria was, in fact, a form that had experienced a long gestation. Its origins lay in the realities of the operatic world of Venice and other Italian cities at the end of the seventeenth century. Dis-



Portrait of Carlo Broschi or Farinelli, one of the eighteenth century's most famous castrati. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

pleased with the crowd-pleasing spectacles that had become common in Venice's houses, the patrician Grimani family had founded the Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo in 1677 to cater to an elite clientele that craved works with high standards of production and literary and dramatic values. Within a few years, the writings of the members of the Arcadian Academy at Rome insisted that Italian opera needed to be rescued from the spectacle and comic burlesque into which much of the genre had fallen. Like Jean-Baptiste Lully and other French composers of the day, these Italian figures were concerned that opera be preserved as a tragic dramatic genre that would treat themes drawn from ancient myths, tales about heroes, and pastoral subjects. Many of the ideas of the Arcadian reforms were put into practice at the Grimani's Teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo before they spread elsewhere in the operatic world. By 1720, the opera seria was firmly ensconced as a genre in many Italian opera houses. Soon it spread throughout Europe, where by virtue of its elevated themes, it became particularly popular in the great court theaters. Here stories about ancient heroes or gods could be either subtly or overtly modulated to praise the enlightened but despotic princes of the age. In the libretti for

these dramas, cultivated poets like Pietro Metastasio frequently concentrated on the internal emotional turmoil of the central characters. Arias written in the da capo format provided one readily adaptable way to dramatize the torment that a work's hero or heroine experienced, with the middle B section providing a dramatic contrast to the enveloping A theme. Still, producing an opera seria, a form that was composed of numerous arias, required considerable skill on the part of a composer. It was common in the course of an evening of opera seria for performers to move through 25 arias on the path to the work's resolution or tragic ending. And so composers developed many variations on the form and relied upon it in tandem with other types of arias. At the same time the da capo form of aria was also favored by singers, many of whom dramatically embellished the A theme's recapitulation, and who relied on these works' concluding cadenzas to display their vocal firepower.

**OPERA BUFFA.** The most serious operas had serious subjects, mainly stories from myth and history. Yet by the eighteenth century, the opera-going public was broad enough that many audiences preferred light entertainment to enlightening and uplifting tales. Thus while librettists such as Metastasio succeeded in making "opera seria" a genuinely grand and serious matter, others helped fill a niche for lighter fare. If serious opera had its literary champion in the great poet Metastasio, the Italian comic dramatist Carlo Goldoni (1707–1793) proved to be a shaping force in the history of lighter operas throughout Europe. Goldoni wrote both for the spoken stage and the opera house, producing eighty libretti for light operas that were widely set to music in the eighteenth century. Feeling that Italian comedy had fallen into decline through the stock improvisations of contemporary *commedia dell'arte* performers, Goldoni labored to rescue the genre. But if opera seria largely served as a commentary on the internal world of personal emotions, the libretti that Goldoni crafted for comic operas commented on problems that were inherently social in nature. His plots were classic comedies of manners that included generous helpings of cases of mistaken identity, mismatched lovers, and rival suitors, all with an edge of moral purpose in that they parodied the social conventions of the age. If Goldoni made a major impact on the genre of opera buffa's lyricism, it was Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736) who helped to shape much of this eighteenth-century genre's musical conventions. This short-lived composer wrote two works that have long been accepted as among the first comic operas, *Lo frate 'nnamorato* (The Brother in

Love), first produced at Naples in 1732; and *La Serva padrona* (The Maid as Mistress), staged one year later in the same city. Both works became tremendously successful, although the second enjoyed a particularly long life and was widely imitated throughout Europe. In truth, *La Serva padrona* was not an opera at all, but a light entertainment or intermezzo that had been commissioned to be staged during the intermission of one of the composer's opera seria. In the years following Pergolesi's death, both the libretto and music for *La Serva padrona* were performed in more than sixty opera houses throughout Europe. In Paris in the years after 1752, the work's staging by a troupe of Italian *buffo* performers—that is, comic singers or "buffoons"—excited controversy, producing ranks of admirers and detractors that commented upon its light farce in newspapers and short tracts. Thereafter, its French champions began to use the work's musical and poetic conventions to fashion shorter kinds of *opéras comique* (comic operas). Elsewhere in Europe, Pergolesi's light confection inspired the works that became known as opera buffa. The form proved to be beloved and particularly long-lived, as nineteenth-century composers like Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848) and Giochino Rossini (1792–1868) continued to satisfy audience's cravings for this light fare well into the nineteenth century.

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## ORATORIO AND CANTATA

**THE RISE OF THE ORATORIO.** The oratorio rose to prominence as a genre of religious vocal music performed outside of churches; the name came from houses of prayer built for devotional groups in Rome, in which these early works were performed. An oratorio is dramatic like an opera, and the form developed at nearly the same time as opera. One of the very earliest musical dramas, Emilio de' Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione di Anima et di Corpo* in 1600, seems in many ways as much like an oratorio as an opera. An oratorio's story line is normally religious, while that of opera normally is not. Another

difference is the absence of acting; the singers in an oratorio do not act out their parts on a stage, so they do not usually use costumes or sets. Rather, they simply stand and sing, as do the rest of the chorus, and a narrator describes the action. Oratorios began to serve as substitutes for opera during Lent in Italian cities. Opera seemed too flamboyant for the penitential season; the religious subject matter of oratorios seemed more appropriate, yet audiences could still enjoy attending a performance that featured musical styles similar to opera. Giacomo Carissimi (1605–1704) was an important early composer of oratorios in Rome, helping to establish the genre's characteristic features. Like operas, oratorios relied on a mixture of recitative, arias, and choruses, with recitative usually being used to narrate events and arias to highlight particularly important parts of the biblical stories on which the libretti were based. Choruses were usually more prominent in Carissimi's oratorios than in operas, and such was true of the genre as it continued to develop in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Oratorios relied on all the musical styles popular in Italy at the time, but as the form spread to France and composers like Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704) began to write them, they used styles developed from French opera as well. By the later seventeenth century, the German-speaking regions of Central Europe were adding the oratorio to their own long-standing traditions of presenting religious plays during Holy Week and Easter as well as at Christmas and other religious holidays. The oratorio became a particularly important form of music in Protestant as well as Catholic regions of the Holy Roman Empire, and Hamburg, a Lutheran city in northern Germany, became an especially important center for oratorios.

**HANDEL AND THE ENGLISH ORATORIO.** Thanks to the presence of the German composer George Frideric Handel (1685–1759), the oratorio also became a popular form of religious music in eighteenth-century England. Handel had worked in Hamburg when he was a young composer and in 1707 he had traveled to Rome. Although he was a Lutheran, he had composed two oratorios there in the Catholic style between 1707 and 1708. Returning to northern Europe in 1710, Handel spent most of the next thirty years as a composer of operas, musical dramas, and other choral works for the city's churches and royal court. In these years he made only sporadic efforts to develop the composition of oratorios for English audiences. Toward the end of the 1730s Handel returned to the form, and he eventually developed it into a new genre that differed significantly from its Italian or continental European sources of in-



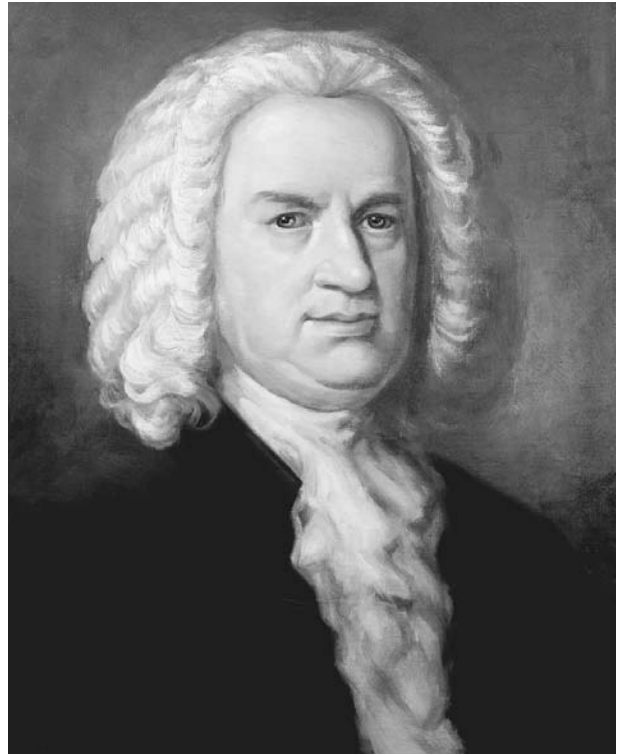
George Frideric Handel. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

spiration. In 1741, he presented two of his works in the genre, *Samson* and his great masterpiece *Messiah*, at concerts in Dublin. They were enormous successes, and were soon performed in London. Although the *Messiah* is the most widely known of these works, it was also the most atypical of Handel's oratorio compositions because it relies on a libretto that is not dramatic. There are, in other words, no major events that are narrated in the work. Instead Handel chose a text for the *Messiah* that had been arranged by Charles Jennens from the Old Testament prophets and certain passages in the English Book of Common Prayer. The manner in which the work presents its message—that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy—was a departure from many of the oratorios of the past. The work does not, in other words, concentrate on the activities of Jesus' life or on his Passion, but on the way in which his mission fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament. Despite this subtle and essentially non-dramatic approach, Handel's *Messiah* still manages to treat the important events of Christ's ministry through allusions to those events in the words of the Old Testament Prophets. In Handel's other English oratorios, his approach was more fundamentally



dramatic—that is, he served to narrate a biblical story—and his works were, like their Italian counterparts, essentially substitutes for operas. They adopt as their subjects incidents from the Old Testament and the books of the Apocrypha, which their librettists gave a theatrical cast that was often influenced by their understanding of Greek drama. Most of Handel's seventeen oratorios are preceded by an overture that is usually written in the French style. In this form a lively fugue usually follows a stately introduction. One of the most distinctive and beloved features of Handel's oratorios is their choruses, which display considerable vitality and variety. Some, like the famous "Hallelujah Chorus" from the *Messiah*, are conceived as mixtures of massive and strong chords with generous doses of counterpoint. Some are conceived of as fugues; others are influenced by the long-standing traditions of madrigal and motet writing, and are complex exercises in polyphony. And still others present a melody set against simple, and sometimes even haunting, harmonies. Handel's example helped to establish a distinctively English form of oratorio that persisted in the country throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**THE CANTATA.** The cantata was also developed in Rome and spread from there to the rest of Europe. Like the oratorio, it was sung but not staged, but it used any sort of theme and any number of voices, from one to many; for example, a secular cantata for two voices might use a man and a woman and have a romantic theme. A cantata also resembled an opera in that it combined arias with sections of recitative, and might in fact seem rather like a scene from an opera that simply stood on its own. Cantatas also became very popular in German Protestant regions as church music, particularly within the Lutheran Church. These sacred cantatas, or chorale cantatas, were often built around a familiar hymn or chorale. References might be made to the chorale throughout the cantata, and the chorus sang it at the conclusion in its traditional four-part harmony. The demand for cantatas from composers, many of whom served as church organists, was particularly great during the years of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and enormous numbers of cantatas were written at this time. Georg Philipp Telemann (1686–1767), for example, seems to have written as many as 1,700 cantatas during his life, of which 1,400 survive today in printed and handwritten versions. Telemann was atypical, but his output illustrates the almost insatiable appetite for cantatas in the Lutheran church during the first half of the eighteenth century. Many of Telemann's cantatas were composed while he was musical director of the court of Saxe-Eisenach, and in the cities



Portrait of Johann Sebastian Bach. ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

of Frankfurt and Hamburg. It was a common requirement of these positions that composers like Telemann regularly compose a new cycle of cantatas for the church year, which were then revived and performed at later dates. These cycles demanded at least sixty independent compositions for the weeks of the year, and the other feasts that were commemorated with music in the church. During Telemann's time in Eisenach, he was expected to finish a cycle of cantatas and church music for the city's churches once every two years. In Frankfurt, the town demanded that he produce a new cycle every three years. But in Hamburg, where the composer spent the years between 1721 and his death in 1767, he was expected to provide two cantatas for each Sunday as well as a concluding chorus or aria for the service. Despite this punishing schedule, a schedule that was also crowded with the demands of directing the city's opera and its choral school, Telemann proved more than able to produce the necessary music. During these years he also managed to write 35 operas and other works for the city's theater and to take on commissions for occasional music for Hamburg's wealthy citizens and nobles elsewhere in Germany. Telemann, who was ever open to the commercial possibilities his talents offered, was able in Hamburg to publish several of his cantata cycles, a rel-



St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, where Johann Sebastian Bach was musical director. © RICHARD KLUNE/CORBIS.



A concert in Germany around 1730. THE ART ARCHIVE/SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF MUSIC VIENNA/DAGLI ORTI.

ative novelty at the time. The composer's cantatas were widely performed throughout the Lutheran churches of Germany, and by the second half of the eighteenth century, they were among the most commonly sung works in the German Lutheran church.

#### THE CANTATAS OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH.

While he did not outdo Telemann in quantity, the cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach rank among the most widely revered composition of the Baroque period. The great German composer wrote cantatas throughout his entire life in every court and church position in which he served. Bach's cantatas used both sacred and secular texts, although far fewer of his secular cantatas have survived than his sacred ones. Of the works written for the celebration of Sunday and holiday services, it is estimated that forty percent have not survived. Like other composers of the day, Bach reused much material, sometimes adapting melodies and arias composed from his early days in Weimar and Cöthen to the needs of his position in Leipzig. It was in this last city where Bach spent the greater part of his creative career. His position as organist of the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig and city musical director was one of the most respected musical positions in Germany, and in it, Bach was expected to provide new music for the choirs of the city's major churches.

At the small Calvinist court of Cöthen where Bach had been immediately before beginning his tenure in Leipzig, the role of service music in the court chapel had been relatively limited. As Bach began his tenure in the new position in 1723, he evidenced enormous ambitions to develop a new kind of sacred music for the celebration of weekly services. During his first year at Leipzig he completed a cycle for the liturgical year consisting of sixty cantatas. Given the press of time and his other duties as music master at St. Thomas's boarding school, Bach was forced in these early years to rely heavily on compositions he had already written in other positions. Despite these pressures, the first cycle that he composed in 1723–1724 includes an enormous amount of new material, and was conceived of as a “double” cycle—that is, it included two cantatas for each Sunday, one for before and one for after the sermon. He followed this first series of cantatas with a second cycle written in 1724–1725, a third between 1725–1727, and a fourth between 1728–1729. A fifth cycle was likely written over many years during the 1730s, although only fragments of these cantatas survive. Unlike the cantatas written in Central Europe to this time, Bach's works were truly innovative and designed with an intellectual program that was coherent and readily intelligible. He relied on



Engraving of eighteenth-century Leipzig. BETTMANN/CORBIS.

similar organizational schemes in many of these works, often alternating choruses with recitatives followed by arias and in many cases including a French overture to precede the entire work. In the earliest Leipzig works he relied upon texts of previously developed cycles that included a large amount of sacred poetry. Later he relied more firmly on the biblical texts from the lectionary of the particular Sunday. Many of the Leipzig cantatas, too, can be distinguished by opening movements, which are often conceived in a grand and stately style with rich orchestral accompaniment. These works, too, often conclude with a chorale or hymn sung by the entire choir. In his Leipzig years, Bach also wrote cantatas on secular themes and subjects, although the press of his church obligations there meant that he produced fewer of these kinds of works in this position than he had at earlier times in his career. Of the secular cantatas written during this period one of the most famous is his “Coffee Cantata,” a comical work about a girl who loved drinking coffee. As in Bach’s other works, the “Coffee Cantata” displays a wealth of fertile invention.

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SEE ALSO *Religion: Protestant Culture in the Seventeenth Century*

#### BAROQUE INSTRUMENTS

**IDIOMATIC COMPOSITION.** Baroque composers often wrote music for particular instruments, taking into

account their special sounds and qualities—that is, their tonal and harmonic possibilities, their distinctive voice, and range of pitches—to produce works that often have been described as “idiomatic.” Composers became increasingly prescriptive about the instruments upon which their music should be played. Hence, the music of the Baroque era differed fundamentally from the medieval and Renaissance periods that had preceded it. In those earlier eras the choice of particular instruments had largely been left up to musicians themselves, who were free to choose from all the available possibilities to perform a particular piece. Many Baroque composers, by contrast, became especially famous for their writing for specific instruments. Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757), for example, was widely known for his compositions for the harpsichord. Scarlatti himself was a virtuoso keyboard player, and his published works for the harpsichord became widely used exercises for students. These works showed off the full range of tonal possibilities and effects that could be gleaned from the best playing on the instrument, and they influenced many later composers’ works for the harpsichord. What Scarlatti helped to accomplish for the harpsichord, Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707) and Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) came to do for the pipe organ, creating works that have remained since their time among the most brilliant and accomplished compositions for that instrument. Numerous examples might be cited of new repertory that came into being during the Baroque, which was written for the specific abilities woodwind and string instruments now offered.

**KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS.** By the seventeenth century composers had a number of different kinds of keyboard instruments to choose from when they wrote their works, and each of these had its own distinctive characteristics. The chief keyboard instruments of the Baroque were the organ, harpsichord, clavichord, and at the end of the period, the pianoforte. Although the organ is played by virtue of a keyboard, its sounds are produced by wind rushing through pipes. Among keyboard instruments it is unique in its ability to sustain a particular tone so long as the organist holds down a particular key. The organ can also make a wide variety of sounds, depending upon the construction of its pipes. Baroque organs steadily grew in size and complexity and they came to offer the possibility of playing an independent musical line with the feet on a pedalboard. Use of the pedals was particularly advanced in the Baroque period in northern Germany, and this region of Europe had developed a number of organ virtuosos, including Buxtehude and Bach, by the early eighteenth century. Often



Organ in the apartments of Madame Adelaide in the Palace of Versailles. THE ART ARCHIVE/DAGLI ORTI.

a town’s pipe organ was, like its clock or glockenspiel, a matter of intense pride, and the instrument was added onto, remodeled, and modernized to fit the changing tastes of the era. Figures like Bach supplemented their incomes by evaluating the organs of other churches, and suggesting to town and parish councils ways in which the instrument might be improved. Massive pipe organs, though, were hardly household instruments, although smaller scaled units were sometimes found in wealthy homes and the palaces of the nobility. By and large, the chief domestic keyboard instruments of the era were the clavichord and harpsichord, which produced their sounds by striking or plucking strings. Musicians and composers often used the clavichord, considerably smaller and less expensive than the harpsichord, as a practice instrument. It is a difficult instrument to play since it requires strength and dexterity of hand, and produces a much quieter sound than a modern piano. Later Baroque musicians often relied upon it to build technical strengths that they could then apply to harpsichord and pianoforte playing. Unlike the harpsichord, the instrument provided a considerable dynamic range, and when struck vigorously it produced a much louder tone. Few Baroque composers, though, exploited the instrument’s strengths, with the exception of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788), one of Johann Sebastian’s sons, who wrote a number of works for the clavichord in the later eighteenth century. The harpsichord was more popular with composers, and since the mid-seventeenth century this instrument had been undergoing constant technical innovations. At that time the harpsichord had become popular as an instrument for solo performance and for accompanying singers. It was favored in part because its



Pianoforte of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

sound was not unlike that of the lute, which in both the Renaissance and early Baroque periods was the most common domestic instrument in use throughout Europe. Like the lute, many keys could be struck on the harpsichord simultaneously to play chords, and for this reason the instrument played a key role in many of the orchestras and ensembles of the Baroque era. The harpsichord, like the organ, provided a ready source of continuous accompaniment to other instruments. It was also widely used in the theaters of the time as the instrument favored to accompany operatic recitatives. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, its limited dynamic range—that is, its inability to play loud and soft—meant that it was to become increasingly replaced by the fortepiano once such dynamic range became a prominent feature of composition and performance. A relative newcomer among the keyboard instruments of Europe, the fortepiano was invented in the early years of the eighteenth century.

Rather than its strings being plucked, they were struck by hammers, and a player was thus able to produce great dynamic contrasts. It was for this reason that that instrument was originally known as the *clavicembalo col piano e forte*, or a “loud and soft harpsichord.” Few Baroque-era composers explicitly stipulated the pianoforte’s use in their compositions, since its popularity did not gain ground until the second half of the eighteenth century.

**STRING INSTRUMENTS.** The violin, along with its related stringed instruments played with bows, rose to great prominence during the Baroque era, in part because its sound has so much in common with the human voice, and composers of the era valued vocal singing highly. Some composers became especially well known as composers for the violin and other stringed instruments, such as Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) and Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741). The violin had begun to appear in Europe

in the fifteenth century, about the same time as the family of instruments known as viols had developed. Violins were distinguished from viols by the fact that they were held at the chin, while the viols were usually held in the lap or between the legs. While both viols and violins persisted throughout the Baroque period, members of the viol family like the viola da gamba were generally unable to compete with violins in dynamic range, and by the mid-eighteenth century they had begun to fade in popularity. Today the violin family consists of the violin, the slightly larger and lower-pitched viola, the cello, and the double bass. While these instruments are related to those of the Baroque period, violins differed regionally in Europe during the era, and there was considerable change and development over time in construction techniques throughout the period. Most pieces written for string ensembles concentrated on lines written for the violin and the viola. The undeniable rise in the violin's popularity in the seventeenth century can be seen in the appearance of a number of centers of violin production throughout Europe. By the early seventeenth century the Italian towns of Cremona and Brescia were already famous for their violins, and Cremona was eventually to produce the two makers, Antonio Stradivarius (c. 1644–1737) and Giuseppe Guarneri (1698–1744), by which quality standards have been judged in modern times. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, many other makers and regions were known for the quality of their violins. The instruments of Jacob Stainer (1617–1683), a producer from the Tyrol in Austria, were widely admired throughout Europe, as were those produced at Mirecourt and Paris in France. Regional variations in musical composition and practices tended more and more to produce differences in the style of violin playing throughout Europe. By the end of the seventeenth century, for example, there was a recognizable “French style” of violin playing that was characterized by greater control over bowing and precision in rhythm and the use of ornamentations, a style that derived from the use of the violin in France to accompany operas and ballets and in the playing of the French overtures. By contrast, the Italian style of composition for the violin concentrated on showing off a player's virtuosity through brilliant passages of ornaments, runs, and trills.

**WOODWINDS.** Wind instruments had a variety of uses. Some, like horns and trumpets, were often used outdoors for fanfares, processions, hunting, and military occasions. They were more often used in groups, and seldom served as solo instruments. On the other hand, some woodwinds became so popular that instrument makers helped adapt and change them in order to make

them better solo instruments, though woodwinds continued to serve in ensemble performances as well. By the later seventeenth century, the flute and the oboe had begun to compete with the violin as solo instruments that could be as expressive as a singer. During the Baroque period flutes were produced in two different varieties: the recorder and the transverse flute. Recorders are played by blowing air through a hole in their end, while the transverse flute is held sideways. Until about 1740, composers wrote music for both instruments, although after this date the transverse flute came to be favored almost everywhere. Instrument makers worked to extend their range of pitch, similar to the changes in the era's keyboard instruments; they also sought to improve the quality of sound throughout that range, so that the new baroque flutes and oboes could play two octaves and more. The king of Prussia, Frederick II (the Great; r. 1740–1786) was known for his excellent skills in playing the flute. In 1740, Frederick invited the noted flautist and composer Johann Joachim Quantz to Prussia to serve as his court composer. Quantz supplied a generous outpouring of compositions making use of the transverse flute, Frederick's own instrument. He was also a noted flute maker, and he produced a number of flutes for the king and for use in the royal household. A number of other eighteenth-century composers wrote works for solo flute or oboe, such as sonatas, much as they wrote for the violin, among them Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (who worked for Frederick the Great for a number of years) and Georg Philipp Telemann. As the concerto form developed in the later Baroque and classical eras, the flute and the oboe moved into solo roles here as well, to be joined at the end of the century by the newest woodwind, the clarinet. The clarinet has a similar pitch range to the flute and oboe, but both its particular sound and its great dynamic range made it appealing to composers in the later eighteenth century, and it soon became a standard musical instrument both for ensembles and for solo performance.

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## BAROQUE KEYBOARD MUSIC

**A MUSIC FOR PROFESSIONALS.** For much of the Baroque period keyboard instruments like the organ and harpsichord were the preserve of professional musicians. Organs and harpsichords were expensive instruments that were not readily available to many amateurs. The organ was, by and large, an instrument used in churches, while the harpsichord, although sometimes present in the homes of wealthy merchants and city dwellers, figured most prominently in the musical establishments of Europe's courts. Most often, professional keyboard players served as church organists, although some were also employed at court as harpsichordists. In these roles professional keyboard players were expected to accompany singers, other instruments, small ensembles and orchestras, as well as choirs and congregations. These tasks required the keyboard player to be able to improvise chords and basso continuo accompaniment and to be able to provide improvised interludes and preludes during the services of the church. Training on the keyboard thus stressed thorough knowledge of the basso continuo, improvisational techniques, and counterpoint. Printed music for the keyboard was extremely expensive in the Baroque era, more expensive than other kinds of published music since the multiple lines of keyboard music had to be printed by relying on an expensive engraving technique. As a result, most keyboard players kept a personal library of handwritten musical manuscripts that they added to throughout their lives. Many of these pieces they had composed themselves as exercises in improvisational and contrapuntal techniques. Although the keyboard music, particularly the organ music, of the Baroque today ranks as one of the period's most readily recognizable sounds, solo music written for the harpsichord or the organ was rarely performed during the period in public. The thousands of toccatas, fugues, preludes, and inventions that survive were more an intellectual kind of music intended to train organists and harpsichordists in the skills that were necessary for them in their professional capacities.

**ITALIAN KEYBOARD TRADITIONS AND THE ART OF THE FUGUE.** During the early seventeenth century several forms of keyboard music appeared in Italy that influenced the compositions of later Baroque composers for these instruments. Chief among those who concentrated on writing for the keyboard was Girolamo Fres-

cobaldi (1583–1643), who served as organist at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome after 1600. Frescobaldi was to have almost as great an impact on writing for the organ and other keyboard instruments in the later Baroque period as Claudio Monteverdi did on the era's vocal music. Like Monteverdi, though, Frescobaldi's compositions remained an amalgam of older Renaissance styles with those of the developing Baroque. He wrote many works for keyboard soloists that were intended to sound like improvisations and which also included stylistic elements of late-Renaissance polyphony. These include fantasias, toccatas, and variations, or, as Frescobaldi termed them, "partitas." All three of these forms had precedents in earlier Renaissance music, although Frescobaldi's genius opened up new horizons in their use. The word "toccata" comes from the Italian for "touch," and works of this sort had developed in the sixteenth century to display a performer's virtuosity on the lute or at the keyboard. It became common, in part through Frescobaldi's published works for the organ, to pair these free, seemingly improvised pieces with a contrasting one in which the counterpoint was carefully worked out following strict rules. Frescobaldi used many terms to describe these contrapuntal movements, although in English they have come to be known as "fugues," since the great German composers, including Johann Sebastian Bach, used that term to describe them. Thus in many later Baroque organ works we find a number of two-part works with names like "prelude and fugue," or "passacaglia and fugue." A fugue was a polyphonic work written in counterpoint that followed very strict rules. It had a set number of voices (often two, three, or four) and was based on a piece of melody called a theme. One voice began by playing through the theme; then, one by one, the new voices entered by stating the same theme while the others continued in counterpoint. Composers played with the theme in fugues by speeding it up, slowing it down, turning it upside down or backwards, putting it in one voice or another, and fitting the other voices with care, until the voices all come together in the conclusion. Listening to a fugue, like writing one, is something of a game and a challenge. Johann Sebastian Bach, one of the greatest composers of organ music in the Western tradition, excelled in their production, and he wrote fugues to be played on the organ and the harpsichord. Later in life, he also composed his instructional book, *The Art of the Fugue*, which developed the arts of counterpoint and polyphony to a very high level of intellectualism. In that work Bach explored the tonal possibilities the fugue form had to offer, including forms that had two and three themes and counter-fugues in which the themes gradually diminished and disappeared.

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**ON THE GLORIES AND LIMITS OF THE KEYBOARD**

**INTRODUCTION:** The development of many new instruments in the eighteenth century resulted in an increasing number of texts that treated proper performance techniques as well as the limitations and benefits that these new technologies opened up. C. P. E. Bach, the most illustrious of Johann Sebastian's sons, provided this treatment of the limitations and advantages of the keyboard instruments of his own time.

Keyboard instruments have many merits, but are beset by just as many difficulties. Were it necessary, their excellence would be easy to prove, for in them are combined all the individual features of many other instruments. Full harmony, which requires three, four, or more other instruments, can be expressed by the keyboard alone. And there are many similar advantages. At the same time, who is not aware of the many demands that are made upon it; how it is considered insufficient for the keyboardist merely to discharge the normal task of every executant, namely, to play in accordance with the rules of good performance compositions written for his instrument? How, beyond this, he must be able to improvise fantasias in all styles, to work out extemporaneously any requested setting after the strictest rules of harmony and melody; how he must be at home in all keys and transpose instantly and faultlessly; and play everything at sight whether designed for his instrument or not; how he must have at his com-

mand a comprehensive knowledge of thorough bass which he must play with discrimination, often departing from the notation, sometimes in many voices, again in few, strictly as well as in the galant manner, from both excessive and insufficient symbols, or unfigured and incorrectly figured basses; how he must often extract this thorough bass from large scores with unfigured or even pausing basses (when other voices serve as harmonic fundament) and with it reinforce the ensemble; and who knows how many other things? All this must be done competently, often on an unfamiliar instrument which has not been tested to determine whether it is good or bad, whether it is playable or not, in which latter case extenuation is but rarely granted. On the contrary, it can be expected that, normally, improvisations will be solicited without anyone's being concerned whether the performer is in the proper mood, and if he is not, without any effort being made to create or maintain the proper disposition by providing a good instrument.

Notwithstanding these demands, the keyboard has always found its admirers, as well it might. Its difficulties are not enough to discourage the study of an instrument whose superior charms are ample compensation for attendant time and trouble. Moreover, not all amateurs feel obliged to fulfill all of the requirements. They satisfy as many of them as they care to or as their innate talents permit.

**SOURCE:** Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. Trans. William J. Mitchell (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949): 27–29.

**FRENCH KEYBOARD MUSIC.** In France, the tradition of organ building was well developed by the later seventeenth century, and inspired a distinctive school of organ composition in which compositions for the instrument were often inserted into the celebration of the mass. In contrast to the organs of Italy that featured a clear and smooth sound, French organs were generally larger and outfitted with a wide variety of pipes, many of which imitated the distinctive possibilities and colors of the woodwinds. As a result, French composers for the organ like Nicholas Lebègue (1631–1702) and Nicolas de Grigny (1672–1703) made use of these rich possibilities in the music they composed for the mass. A far larger repertory of French harpsichord music survives, however, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Much of this music was based upon the dances that were used in French courtly society and the theater, and by the early eighteenth century, the popularity of this kind of music had produced a distinctively French form, the

dance suite, a set of dances that was played on the harpsichord in a specific order. In the years that followed, France produced two composers of genius in the field of harpsichord music: François Couperin (1668–1733) and Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764). Today Couperin is sometimes compared to the great nineteenth-century composer and pianist Frédéric Chopin. The comparison is meant to draw attention to the ways in which both figures understood their instrument and its possibilities. Although Couperin wrote both for the organ and the harpsichord, his pieces for the latter instrument show a distinctive mastery of the harpsichord's special tonal possibilities. Many of the pieces that he wrote for the instrument are short dances, their rhythms and melodies reminiscent of the gigues, courantes, and sarabandes that were played in French ballrooms at the time. Despite their small scale and relatively short duration, the composer still manages to endow these pieces with an appealing complexity that draws the listeners' ears to their



constantly changing subtle melodies, rhythmic schemes, and rich harmonies. Jean-Philippe Rameau, a musical theorist, became a successful composer of operas and ballets in his middle age, but also wrote music for the harpsichord throughout his life. Like Couperin, he made use of the organizational scheme of the dance suite, but his works were characterized by greater virtuosity. He drew inspiration from the brilliant passagework that was popular in the Italian music of the time. Rapid scales, arpeggios, and leaps characterize the most adventurous of Rameau's works for the harpsichord, devices that might have shocked the more restrained Couperin. He was credited with introducing a technique for rapid hand-crossing at the keyboard, a technique that since then has become known as "Rameau hand-crossing." While many of his pieces are extremely difficult and filled with brilliantly complex passages, Rameau was no less careful than Couperin to notate precisely all the embellishments that players of his pieces should make. Thus as most French composers of the time, neither musician left to chance or the musicians' taste their piece's ornamentation. This tendency of French music stood in marked contrast to the Italian music of the period, in which singers and players were both given considerable freedom to improvise and ornament their musical performances as they saw fit.

**THEME AND VARIATION.** A final musical form, theme and variation, played an important role in the keyboard music of the Baroque period. The theme itself consisted of a melody and accompanying bass line; sometimes the melody was that of a well-known song. The work began with a single rendition of the theme and was then followed by any number of sections that altered it, sometimes ingenuously "hiding" the melody in the bass or another voice so that a listener was forced to "hunt" for it. Each section consisted of a repetition or statement of the theme, but with modifications that kept the theme's basic structure while showing off the skills and talents of both composer and performer. While variations on themes had played an important role in demonstrating musical virtuosity since the sixteenth century, eighteenth-century composers in particular reveled in the form. Of the innumerable examples of this genre that were produced at the time, one of the most famous is Johann Sebastian Bach's "Goldberg Variations," which the composer published in 1741 after visiting with his former student Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, court harpsichordist at Dresden. Like many of his compositions, Bach's "Goldberg Variations" are conceived of as a massive intellectual project and are arranged according to several different organizational schemes. By contrast, the harpsichord theme and variations of George Frideric

Handel, written when the composer was young, display a considerably more playful side. Theme and variation, a form that could alternately be serious or mischievous, survived long after Bach's time. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Franz Josef Haydn, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart were just a few of the many composers of the classical era that continued to write variations in the later eighteenth century.

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## BAROQUE MUSIC FOR INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLES

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORCHESTRA.** The Baroque era saw the survival of older ideas about the constitution of ensembles alongside newer departures. In France and Italy, the groups of players commonly used to accompany court dances at the beginning of the seventeenth century were string bands; that is, they were composed of groups of violins and viols at different pitches. This notion of a consort, inherited from the Renaissance, continued to be popular throughout much of Europe well into the eighteenth century, but it co-existed alongside newer kinds of ensembles, ensembles that, like the modern orchestra, were composed of families of several different kinds of instruments. In France, the number of performers in the *Violins du Roi* ("Violins of the King"), a court ensemble used to accompany dances and ballets, was fixed at 24 by 1618; this string band continued to perform at royal events until it was abolished in 1761. In the later seventeenth century the French composer, Jean-Baptiste Lully, relied on these professionals to provide accompaniment when his operas and ballets were performed at court. When he required a particularly large sound to produce dramatic effects, such as in his overtures, Lully augmented the 24 members of the *Violins du Roi* with the eighteen members of the king's *Petite Bande*, another string consort in the royal household. The result produced a 42-member orchestra, an extraordinarily large ensemble by seventeenth-century standards. The sonority of Lully's experiments with a large string consort, as well as the discipline and uniform performance practices of his players, were much admired by visitors to Paris, and helped to popularize the growth of larger string en-

sembles in other parts of Europe. Nowhere, though, did such string bands grow to more than about two-dozen members during the later seventeenth century. In the German courts of Central Europe, the much smaller resources of the region's principalities meant that courtly string ensembles often had only four to six members. Rarely were more than twelve string players employed in the largest aristocratic households of the region. Vivaldi's instrumental ensembles in early eighteenth-century Venice might number between 20 to 24 strings, and included a harpsichord charged with playing the continuo, that is the chords and harmonies that underlay and supported the melodies and other lines played by the strings. While Vivaldi's ensemble was fairly typical of that used in many early Baroque "orchestras," other sounds were tempting composers to add new families of instruments to their performance ensembles. In this way, many late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century performing ensembles were beginning to acquire more of the features of a modern orchestra. Already in the 1660s, the French composer Lully was sometimes augmenting the large string ensemble used to accompany his operas and court spectacles with other kinds of instruments, including woodwinds, brass, and even timpani players recruited from the king's cavalry. At first, Lully employed these players using the rationale of Renaissance consort playing. Woodwinds and horns, in other words, were integrated into court productions, but they played their parts separately at times different from when the strings played. By 1674, though, the composer had begun to integrate these instrumental voices more thoroughly into the overtures and other incidental music of his operas. Still, in deference to his singers, Lully continued to use only string accompaniment during the action of the opera, so as not to overpower the performers, and these players usually plucked their instruments rather than bowing them. Visitors to Paris were impressed by the sounds that Lully's larger orchestra produced, and in the years following his experiments, larger and more varied ensembles began to appear in many cities throughout Europe.

#### EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS.

By the mid-eighteenth century the development of mixed ensembles, ensembles that a modern ear would recognize as being similar to an orchestra, had already become popular in many places throughout Europe. At this time the growth of large ensemble playing was most advanced in Italy and France, although the custom of combining numerous families of contrasting instruments was quickly becoming popular in German-speaking Europe as well as in England. These new ensembles included strings, but also flutes, recorders, oboes, horns, and bassoons, and a new novelty, the "double bass;" al-

though the latter was initially used primarily as a curiosity; it has since gained an essential place in the musical literature of the orchestra since the eighteenth century. The rise of these new small orchestras soon came to have many implications, both in performance practice and repertory. Unlike the older Renaissance system of using consorts of similar instruments that performed separately, the new orchestras were integrated organizations in which the individual families of instruments sat together and each had their own leader. To balance the sound produced in the halls in which they performed, violins were usually divided and stationed on both sides of the group, with violas, cellos, and basses taking their seats in their respective sections. Two oboe players were common in most of these ensembles, and since the oboes did not usually play simultaneously with the flutes, many orchestras included players who were proficient in both instruments and could thus take on double roles. Bassoon, horns, and a harpsichordist who played the continuo were also obligatory features of the new Baroque orchestras; timpani and trumpets were also used, although not as frequently. This orchestral makeup was particularly popular by the mid-eighteenth century in the presentation of operas written in Italian, and it became increasingly common for composers to orchestrate instrumental music with it in mind. The development of such a large and diverse group of players also heightened the importance of the conductor, and a new emphasis on discipline and high performance standards emerged in these ensembles. The range of sound that these groups were capable of producing also inspired a flood of compositions that took advantage of the possibilities of sound and volume that such large groups offered. For inspiration for these works, composers turned both to older forms of suites and overtures and to newer genres of concertos and sonatas. Thus during the period in which the modern orchestra was experiencing its long gestation, a creative ferment was also occurring as composers and conductors experimented with ways to make best use of the new sound possibilities their enlarged ensembles offered.

**FRENCH OVERTURE AND ITALIAN SINFONIA.** The origins of the French overture, a popular Baroque orchestral form, lay in the ballets and operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully and other French composers active in the mid-seventeenth century. Lully had largely fixed the canons of this form by 1660, having adapted older kinds of entrance music to serve as a prologue for several of his ballets and operas. In these works he first set out a stately theme with tempos that were slow, even grave. Contemporaries described this aspect of the overtures as "majestic" or "heroic." Another feature of the first section included the use of dotted rhythms, that is, rhythms

in which longer “dotted” notes are set against a much shorter note or a succession of short notes. A fast section, reminiscent of a fugue, followed this stately first part. Usually, these themes were introduced quickly, and sometimes the composer abandoned the fugue to return in the second section to music that was more homophonic, that is, in which the ensemble’s various melodies more or less move at the same pace and to the same effect. Often a brief restatement of the first part’s theme was recurred in a cadence at the very end of the overture as a way of drawing the entire piece to conclusion. In the years following 1660, the style was widely adopted in France by most composers as the obligatory form for fashioning a musical prologue to ballets and operas. It quickly spread throughout Europe, becoming particularly fashionable in Germany. George Frideric Handel often made use of it in his operas, as did Bach who used it as the form for overtures for many of his orchestral suites. In the early eighteenth century, a new Italian form of overture, the *sinfonia*, was increasingly competing against the popularity of the French overture. In a *sinfonia*, a fast section was followed by a slow one before another rapid section concluded the overture. This form of prologue became particularly popular in eighteenth-century Italian operas, and gradually eclipsed the once-widespread popularity of the French overture. By the 1740s far fewer French overtures were being written than *sinfonias*, although late eighteenth-century composers sometimes revived its use. As late as 1791, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote the overture to his famous opera *Die Zauberflöte* using the form of the French overture.

**THE SUITE.** Many Baroque composers wrote works in several genres that were made up of multiple sections, each one like a separate composition, that were intended to be performed together at one sitting, one after the next. One example can be seen in the many dance suites that were often constructed out of individual movements, each of which made use of the rhythms and characteristics of the ballroom dances popular at the time. During the Baroque period, hundreds of such dance suites were written for solo instruments such as the lute or harpsichord, for smaller ensembles, and for the larger orchestral groups that were becoming popular. The form and length of each dance, or movement, in a suite depended on the steps of the original dance itself. Suites such as these had already begun to appear during the late Renaissance, and had often followed a specific order. By the middle and later Baroque era, a dance suite often contained a standard set of dances: *allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande*, and *gigue*. An *allemande* is duple, and moderate in pace, while a *minuet* is in three. A *courante* uses triple time and is livelier. *Sarabandes* are slower and more

sensual, allowing for more development of a melodic line. A *gigue* is lively. Also common in dance suites was the *rondeau*; a *rondeau* has a basic tune to which it returns several times after an intervening passage, rather like the chorus to a song. *Gavottes*, *chaconnes*, *minuets*, and *branles* were also dances that often figured in the suites. Handel’s *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks* are two still-famous compositions that make use of the dance suite form. The *Water Music* was written for a royal barge trip up the Thames River in the summer of 1717, and was first performed on the water by fifty musicians traveling in a barge alongside the king. By contrast, the *Music for the Royal Fireworks* represents a late Baroque elaboration of the original idea of the dance suite, and it includes one of the most brilliant French overtures of the Baroque repertory. In this piece, Handel elaborated upon the earlier form to include a kind of battling duet between the ensemble’s trumpets. The premiere version of Handel’s *Fireworks* music was originally scored for a woodwind band and was later revised to downplay wind instruments and include a role for strings. Even the revised form in which the music is heard today is noteworthy for the many brilliant, high passages that it includes for trumpets.

**THE SONATA.** Both the sonata and the concerto are forms whose importance lasted far beyond the Baroque era. They were both Italian forms introduced into both secular and religious music in the early seventeenth century. Originally, both terms were used as simple names for instrumental music, but eventually they developed into very specific forms. Early Baroque sonatas and concertos were scored for a basso continuo (a harpsichord or another instrument that played the bass line) and one or more instruments. These early examples relied on any compositional form for the individual movements. Such descriptions are indeed vague, but the original meaning of the word “sonata” (from “sounded”) referred simply to any piece of music that was written for instruments, rather than performed by singers. Thus early Baroque compositions given the name “sonata” might have nearly any form. Before long, however, composers also began to use the term to describe groups of pieces of varying tempos like the popular dance suites of the time. As the sonata became more popular, it gradually acquired a standard shape so that by the eighteenth century, it was a group of three pieces, or movements—two faster ones with a slower movement in the middle. All sonatas, though, continued to be written for instruments. An amazing variety of instrumental pairings flourished in the sonatas of the early eighteenth century. Particularly popular was the *trio sonata*, which included independent melodic lines for two high-voiced instruments like the

violin set against the bass lines of a continuo, which might be played by a harpsichord or more than one lower pitched instrument. For most of the seventeenth century sonatas were written primarily by Italian composers, many of who became aware of the commercial possibilities that existed in their publication. Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) and Tomasso Albinoni (1671–1751) were two of the Italian composers that continued this tradition into the eighteenth century. By that time, however, the sonata had been avidly adopted and imitated by Austrian and German composers and the genre was also becoming increasingly popular in France, a region that had initially resisted it. Thousands of sonatas were now published or circulated in manuscript form, and the genre was one of the most common staples of the instrumental music of the period. In the classical period after 1750, the term “sonata form” also appeared to describe a specific movement, usually the first movement, within a symphony or concerto. At the same time instrumental sonatas for one or more instruments retained their popularity, surviving as an important form of chamber music into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

**THE CONCERTO.** A similar line of development can also be seen in the history of the Baroque concerto, a term that was initially used in a vague and indistinct way, but which eventually described a standardized musical genre. The phrase from the first referred to a concert of instruments together. Many Baroque concertos, especially later ones, consisted of three movements, like sonatas, although the concerto became a standard form only later during the classical and Romantic periods. In a given movement, passages featuring solo performers or groups of performers alternated with those scored for the ensemble. Concertos were often performed at courts, where large numbers of musicians could be kept on staff, and they became prominent during the later Baroque era. Antonio Vivaldi was perhaps the single greatest force in popularizing the concerto format in the early eighteenth century. He wrote more than 500 of them; they circulated throughout Europe, and their popularity helped to standardize many of the conventions of the genre in the eighteenth century. Like other Italian musical forms of the period, Vivaldi’s concertos placed great emphasis on brilliant passagework that showed off a player’s virtuosity. The composer also developed the already existing tendency of Italian composers to insert a *ritornello*—that is, a repeating refrain into his movements—so that the soloist and ensemble appear as if they are speaking back and forth to one another. Almost half of Vivaldi’s enormous output of concertos was written for the violin; he wrote most of the others for the cello, flute, oboe, and bassoon. A number of these works

were written as double concertos, that is, for two solo instruments with similar sounds. While Baroque concertos, like those of Vivaldi, increasingly highlighted the virtuosity and distinctive musical idiom of a particular instrument, another less popular form of concerto, the concerto grosso (meaning, “great concerto”), still remained popular. In these compositions the playing of a large group of instrumentalists was contrasted against passages of a small ensemble. Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) had developed this form in the seventeenth century, and both George Frideric Handel and Johann Sebastian Bach made use of it in the eighteenth century. Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos*, presented to the Margrave of Brandenburg in 1721 in hopes of attaining a position in his court, are perhaps the greatest surviving example of the concerto grosso from the Baroque.

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## MUSIC DURING THE ROCOCO

**CHANGING TASTES.** In the years following the death of Louis XIV, new fashions among the French aristocracy emerged. In architecture and the visual arts, a new appetite for lighter, less ponderous spaces and interiors soon became evident in the years of the French Regency (1715–1723), and continued to spread during the later epoch known as the Rococo. A new emphasis on privacy and intimacy and on refined social graces came to be embodied in the development of salons, which were cultivated meetings of intellectuals, in Paris and other French cities. In these circles distaste grew for elaborate late Baroque styles, including the period’s interior design, art, architecture, and even its music, theater, and opera, now criticized as contrived and pompous. To many listeners, the elaborate counterpoint of late Baroque music, its intricate passagework, and rich ornamentation seemed increasingly outmoded. In several important musical centers new styles of musical composition began to emerge in the mid-seventeenth century. These new movements

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE APPEAL TO THE SENTIMENTS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The vocalist Johann Mattheson (1681–1764) was something of a child prodigy. He composed his first music at age nine and became a widely hailed soprano in the opera at Hamburg by the time he was fifteen. As an adult, he wrote *The Complete Chapel Master*, a guide to the musical profession that was highly prized among German performers and composers. His consideration of the ways in which music appeals to the senses contributed to a discussion that had occurred in the West since antiquity: the role that music might play in altering the emotions and creating more virtuous human beings.

The most important and outstanding part of the science of sound is the part that examines the effects of well-disposed sounds on the emotions and the soul. This, as may be readily seen, is material that is as far-reaching as it is useful. To the musical practitioner it is of even more importance than to the theoretician, despite its primary concern with observation. Of much assistance here is the doctrine of the temperaments and emotions, concerning which Descartes is particularly worthy of study, since he has done much in music. This doctrine teaches us to make a distinction between the minds of the listeners and the sounding forces that have an effect on them.

What the passions are, how many there are, how they may be moved, whether they should be eliminated or admitted and cultivated, appear to be questions belonging to the field of the philosopher rather than the musician. The latter must know, however, that the sentiments are the true material of virtue, and that virtue is nought but a well-ordered and wisely moderate sentiment. Those affects, on the other hand, which are our strongest ones, are not the best and should lie clipped or held by the reins. This is an aspect of morality which the musician must master in order to represent virtue and evil with his music and to arouse in the listener love for the former and hatred for the latter. For it is the true purpose of music to be, above all else, a moral lesson.

Those who are learned in the natural sciences know how our emotions function physically, as it were. It would be advantageous to the composer to have a little knowledge of this subject. Since, for example, joy is an expansion of our vital spirits, it follows sensibly and naturally that this affect is best expressed by large and expanded intervals. Sadness, on the other hand, is a contraction of those same subtle parts of our bodies. It is, therefore, easy to see that the narrowest intervals are the most suitable. Love is a diffusion of the spirits. Thus, to express this passion in composing, it is best to use intervals of that nature. Hope is an elevation of the spirit; despair, on the other hand, a casting down of the same. These are subjects that can well be represented by sound, especially when other circumstances (tempo in particular) contribute their share. In such a manner one can term a concrete picture of all the emotions and try to compose accordingly.

Pride, haughtiness, arrogance, etc., all have their respective proper musical color as well. Here the composer relies primarily on boldness and pompousness, he thus has the opportunity to write all sorts of fine-sounding musical figures that demand special seriousness and bombastic movement. They must never be too quick or tailing, but always ascending. The opposite of this sentiment lies in humility, patience, etc., treated in music by abject-sounding passages without anything that might be elevating. The latter passions, however, agree with the former in that none of them allow for humor and playfulness.

Music, although its main purpose is to please and to be graceful, must sometimes provide dissonances and harsh-sounding passages. To some extent and with the suitable means, it must provide not only unpleasant and disagreeable things, but even frightening and horrible ones. The spirit occasionally derives some peculiar pleasure even from these.

**SOURCE:** Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), in *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*. Ed. Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin (New York: Schirmer, 1984): 217–218.

were both international and regional in nature. Many new styles emanated from Italy before being adopted elsewhere in the courts and chief musical centers of the continent. Elsewhere, particularly in northern Germany, other new patterns of composition emerged that held a more limited regional appeal and which were different from the prevailing Italian tastes of the age. The sum of all these new stylistic movements eventually led to the abandonment of many of the Baroque era's compositional techniques and laid the groundwork for the emer-

gence of the classical style that dominated musical composition in the later eighteenth century.

**THE GALANT STYLE.** The name for one of the new styles that captivated eighteenth-century composers and audiences alike, *style gallant*, is French, although many of its original sources of inspiration derived from Italian composers of the mid-eighteenth century. It became one of the most international of musical languages in Europe at the end of the Baroque period. As it was used in France at the time, the word *galant* implied a fashionable atten-

tion to current trends and the ways of court societies. A galant man was someone who was well aware of contemporary aristocratic fashions, who knew how to dress well, and how to act in civilized society. Composers who adopted this new suave and urbane style abandoned the complex counterpoint and chromatic harmonies of the high and later Baroque era in favor of clear melodies with an accompanying bass, elegant phrasing, graceful ornamentation, and small musical turns of wit and charm. These figures also tried to combine the undeniable melodic interest that was to be found in Italian musical styles of the time with the restrained elegance of French ones. Because of its lightness and charm, the new style was particularly suited to secular music, and as a result its greatest development was in the operas and instrumental music of the mid-eighteenth century. Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736) was among those who provided a source of inspiration for those composers who wished to write in the new Galant Style. Although he died very young, Pergolesi's comic one-act opera, *La Serva padrona*, produced in Naples in 1733, was frequently restaged throughout Europe during the rest of the eighteenth century. A brief work, it was often mounted as an intermission entertainment, and its simpler but polished musical textures helped to establish a taste for elegant melodic arias in the opera world. In instrumental music, the taste for refined yet less complex works also had an immediate appeal in many musical circles, where the works of Johann Sebastian Bach and other late Baroque composers was now seen as overly complex and “unnatural.” It is interesting to note, though, that the fashion for the far simpler and less virtuosic compositions of the Galant Style appeared at a time when amateur musicianship was increasing dramatically throughout Europe. The works of the new style appealed to this audience, in part, because of their relatively light performance demands and their straightforward use of melody.

**GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN.** One of the most fertile exponents of the new Galant Style was Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767), who was considered by many in his day to be the greatest living German composer. A contemporary of Bach and Handel, his music was often considered more appealing and accessible in the eighteenth century than works by his now more famous competitors. Telemann, like Antonio Vivaldi, ranked among the most prolific of all Baroque composers. During a relatively long life, Telemann composed scores of instrumental works, three dozen operas, more than one hundred orchestral suites, another hundred concertos, and more than 1,500 sacred cantatas and pieces of religious music. Telemann was not a virtuoso performer like Handel and Bach. Yet he

exerted considerable influence over musical tastes in Germany and beyond, particularly after his appointment as musical director in the city of Hamburg. That appointment offered him the opportunity to direct the city's opera, one of the most important in the country at the time. Telemann also wrote much of his music for the expanding amateur market, selling his publications of relatively simple and readily performable instrumental and ensemble music through subscriptions. The evidence of these editions shows his steadily increasing reputation throughout Europe. When in 1733, the composer made available his *Musique de Table* (in German, *Tafelmusik*; English: *Table Music*), more than a fourth of all subscriptions were bought by musicians outside Germany. The best of the composer's many works manage to capture the changing tastes of the age and at times display his considerable skills as a composer; many more were competent works that appealed briefly to the fashions of his time. In 1737, Telemann made a journey to Paris, where he stayed for eight months and came in contact with the developing musical tastes of the Galant Style. In the years following his return to Hamburg he produced a number of works that helped to popularize the Galant fashion in German-speaking Europe and elsewhere. These included his six Paris string quartets, published in 1738 and sold by subscription. Unlike the highly structured and developed genre of the string quartet of the later eighteenth century, these works were perceived much like the instrumental suites popular throughout the Baroque era, although they were written for a smaller ensemble. Yet to this longstanding genre, Telemann brought a new sense of rhythmic invention and a gaiety and grace derived from his Parisian experiences as well as livelier strains of melodic invention from his knowledge of Italian operatic and instrumental writing of the period. Like music of the Baroque period, Telemann's quartets show a persistent attempt to appeal to the emotions and to manipulate listeners' moods. Yet it is interesting to note that he became increasingly definite about the precise moods that these Galant pieces were to evoke. Each piece commences with a description of the emotion that its playing should evoke, including such terms as “gay,” “graceful,” and “distraught.”

**THE SENSITIVE STYLE.** In the decade following Telemann's forays into the Galant idiom, many northern German composers experimented with the style, eventually producing a regional variation that was to have an important impact on the development of later instrumental and vocal music. These composers wanted to make the Galant Style even more emotionally expressive. They believed that a good composition should express a constant change of mood; its emotions should flicker like



The composer Christoph Willibald von Gluck at the Spinnet.  
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a candle whose flame is pushed by breezes one way, then another. They wrote the melodies of their compositions in short phrases full of nuance, and were especially interested in varying the loudness and softness, or dynamics, of a performance. This variant of the Galant Style became known as the *empfindsamer Stil* or “Sensitive Style.” Among its greatest exponents was Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788), the great Johann Sebastian’s second son. Emanuel Bach, as he was widely known, was one of four of Bach’s sons who became composers, and all of these experimented with the new Galant Style. Emanuel’s works, though, were particularly important to the development of later eighteenth-century chamber music and the symphony, the most distinctive contribution of the classical period to orchestral music. Much of Emanuel Bach’s career was spent working at the court of Frederick the Great of Prussia, where he was little appreciated and severely underpaid. In 1767, when his godfather Georg Philipp Telemann died in Hamburg, Emanuel replaced him in the important position of musical director of the city. Here he spent the last years of his life, and developed a distinctive musical language that was to have an important effect on other composers of the time. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach notated his compositions with particular care, using dynamic indicators like “p” and “pp” (piano and pianissimo, or soft and

softer) or “f” and “ff” (forte and fortissimo, loud and louder) that were only just making an appearance in music composition and publishing at the time. In so doing, he helped to establish dynamic markings as an important tool of the composer’s trade. His works abandoned the complex contrapuntal techniques that his father had favored. His father is said to have supported these developments, recommending the works of certain Galant composers to him as appropriate sources for him to emulate. At the same time Emanuel Bach’s works made use of the complex and expressive harmonies and rhythmic sophistication that earlier Baroque composers had developed. His opus remains a highly personal expression of the forces that were available to composers as the Baroque was fading in favor of new, less intricate musical forms of expression.

**STURM UND DRANG.** In the years after 1750, new literary movements in Germany, Austria, and other regions of Europe began to favor dramatic expressions of emotion, both on stage and in fiction. This movement was to become known in the German-speaking world as *Sturm und Drang*, or “Storm and Stress.” Artists, particularly writers, began to see these tumultuous emotional states as a necessary precursor to creativity. The developing sensibilities of the movement were to come to full flower in the nineteenth-century Romantic movement, which embraced the notion that little great artistic creation occurred without suffering. The German literary figures that embraced *Sturm und Drang* drew their ideas from many Enlightenment philosophers, particularly Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1788) and his new celebration of nature as the basis for artistic creation. They also were avid readers of Denis Diderot (1712–1784) and his *Encyclopédie*. The articles of that voluminous work offered literary, musical, and artistic criticism on an incredibly broad range of subjects, and although it did not present a single point of view, many of its aesthetic critics attacked Baroque standards of taste as outmoded, contrived, and artificial. Of all the *Sturm und Drang* authors who were active in the German-speaking world, no one surpassed the creativity and influence of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe over the movement’s aesthetics. Two of his works—his play *Götz von Berchlingingen* in 1773, and his novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther) in 1774—featured heroic figures that suffered great torment. In the case of *Werther*, the hero ends up committing suicide because of his unrequited love for a married woman. Goethe’s novel was to have a profound and lasting impact on German culture; it continued to be read by many nineteenth-century Romantics, and to inspire theatrical and operatic adaptations.

Around the same time that Goethe's important *Sturm und Drang* works were appearing, composers sought to do similar things with music. The first signs of this *Sturm und Drang* musical style can be seen in the operas and ballets of the period, where composers like Christoph Willibald von Gluck (1714–1787) created works that aimed to observe the effects of a broad range of emotional states. Gluck's ballet *Don Juan*, first performed at Vienna in 1761, inspired many late eighteenth-century imitations. The work's spectacular and horrific conclusion served as one source for Mozart's famous finale to his opera *Don Giovanni* in 1787. Quick, dramatic changes; use of percussion; unaccompanied, emotional lines for singers; and rapid dynamic contrasts appear in the operatic productions inspired by *Sturm und Drang* as well. Composers in all the new styles that were becoming popular at the time thus preferred musical instruments that could articulate these phrases, and especially produce the dynamic contrasts, that their music demanded. In the realm of purely instrumental music, music for larger groups of players added or subtracted players as needed for a passage. Many composers became at this time very interested in the piano, or as they called it then, the *fortepiano* or *pianoforte*, because of its dynamic range. Of the many composers that experimented with these new concerns with volume and contrast, Josef Haydn (1732–1809) has been seen as one who developed a distinctive style that has often been called "Sturm und Drang." Elements in his symphonic and vocal compositions in the years between 1768 and 1772, in particular, point to the influence of the literary and theatrical movement upon his works at this time.

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## THE REFORM OF OPERA

**THE RISING STATUS OF THE COMPOSER.** The experiments with new dramatically expressive kinds of music that the Galant and Sensitive styles fostered, and which were also found in the *Sturm und Drang*'s movement's influence upon music, soon had an important effect on the operatic world of the eighteenth century.

Opera was the place in which drama and the emotions had long found one of their most profound platforms for expression, and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a distinguished lineage of brilliant composers, including Jean-Baptiste Lully, Jean-Philippe Rameau, and George Frideric Handel, had developed the form in ways that heightened music's ability to give dramatic expression to the subtlest shades of human emotion. In the century after 1650, though, few operas were performed in precisely the ways their composers had originally envisioned them. Opera was a business that, by and large, served audience tastes. Lully and the Arcadian reformers of Italy had envisioned forms of opera in the late seventeenth century that might rise to the level of the art of tragic antique plays. But the operatic world was driven by financial forces and by impresarios and singers who often were at odds with such elite ideals. Even in the serious operas of the period, artistic unity had frequently been sacrificed to singers' demands to display their virtuosity before adoring crowds. Arias piled on top of one another in performances so that the various members of a cast might have a chance to show off their particular skills. After each, torrents of applause or, in more unfortunate circumstances, boos rained down upon the singers on the stage, thus suspending the action, often for long intervals before the drama could proceed once again. In this increasingly heated and competitive climate, singers traveled with their own arias, which they demanded be frequently inserted into the action of the particular piece they were performing in, often injuring a work's story line. By the 1760s, some composers had grown increasingly impatient with such conventions, and they now longed to create an art that would have greater dramatic integrity. By the end of the century the effects of a gifted lineage of artists transformed opera, weaning it away from its once common performance practices and creating a new genre that might stand beside the theater for the quality of drama it offered. The effect of these transformations was to raise the status of composers as the defining figure in an opera's creation. This process was long, and continued after 1800 as singers and impresarios battled to see that their ideas and contributions played a role on the operatic stage. But in the operas of figures like Christoph Willibald Gluck and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the groundwork was being laid for a distinctly modern conception of opera as a creation of a solitary musical genius, a creation that makes visible the composer's artistic vision.

**THE "REFORM" OPERAS OF GLUCK.** The forces that were to revolutionize opera in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries first became evident to contemporaries in the "reform" operas of Christoph



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***GLUCK: AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT OF A COMPOSER**

**INTRODUCTION:** The accomplished English musician and composer, Charles Burney, is best known today for his *General History of Music*, a work that provides invaluable insight into the performance practices and customs of musicians and composers of the time. His account of an encounter with the German-Bohemian composer, Christoph Willibald von Gluck (1714–1787) in Gluck's household at Vienna gives us an unparalleled glimpse into the life of one of the greatest musicians of the eighteenth century.

He is very well housed there; has a pretty garden, and a great number of neat, and elegantly furnished rooms. He has no children; madame Gluck, and his niece, who lives with him, came to receive us at the door, as well as the veteran composer himself. He is much pitted with small-pox, and very coarse in figure and look, but was soon got into good humour; and he talked, sung, and played, madame Thun observed, more than ever she knew him at any one time.

He began, upon a very bad harpsichord, by accompanying his niece, who is but thirteen years old, in two of the capital scenes of his own famous opera of *Alceste*. She has a powerful and well-toned voice, and sung with infinite taste, feeling, expression, and even execution. After these two scenes from *Alceste*, she sung several others, by different composers, and in different styles, particularly by Traetta. ... When she had done, her uncle was prevailed upon to sing himself; and, with as little voice as possible, he contrived to entertain, and even delight the company, in a very high degree; for, with the richness of accompaniment, the energy and vehemence of his manner in the *Allegros*, and his judicious expression in the slow movements, he so well compensated for the want of voice that it was a defect which was soon entirely forgotten.

He was so good-humoured as to perform almost his whole opera *Alceste*; many admirable things in a still later opera of his, called *Paride ed Elena*; and in a French opera, from Racine's *Iphigeni*, which he has just composed. This last, though he had not as yet committed a note of it to paper, was so well digested in his head, and his retention is so wonderful, that he sung it nearly from the beginning to the end, with as much readiness as if he had a fair score before him.

His invention is, I believe, unequalled by any other composer who now lives, or has ever existed, particularly in dramatic painting, and theatrical effects. He studies a poem a long time before he thinks of setting it. He considers well the relation which each part bears to the whole; the general cast of each character, and aspires more at satisfying the mind, than flattering the ear. This is not only being a friend to poetry, but a poet himself; and if he had language sufficient, of any other kind than that of sound, in which to express his ideas, I am certain he would be a great poet: as it is, music, in his hands, is a most copious, nervous, elegant, and expressive language. It seldom happens that a single air of his operas can be taken out of its niche, and sung singly, with much effect; the whole is a chain, of which a detached single link is but of small importance.

If it be possible for the partizans of *old French music* to hear any other than that of Lulli and Rameau, with pleasure, it must be M. Gluck's *Iphigenie*, in which he has so far accommodated himself to the national taste, style, and language, as frequently to imitate and adopt them. The chief obstacles to his fame, perhaps, among his contracted judges, but which will be most acceptable to others, is that there is frequently *melody*, and always *measure*, in his music, though set to *French words*, and for a *serious French opera*.

**SOURCE:** Charles Burney, *An Eighteenth-Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and the Netherlands, Dr. Burney's Musical Tours in Europe*. Vol. 2. Ed. Percy A. Scholes (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1959): 90–91.

Willibald von Gluck. Gluck's ideas for the reform of the genre were hardly revolutionary, since many Italian dramatists, librettists, and composers in the decades before Gluck began to stage his productions in Vienna had advocated similar reforms. Rather Gluck was the first to display the potential that might exist in an operatic art form in which drama and music were more closely integrated. One key figure in shaping Gluck's ideas had been Pietro Metastasio, the accomplished librettist and poet who had long been a fixture of the Viennese court theater. Metastasio's librettos, written mostly for the

opera seria productions popular in that city from the mid-eighteenth century onward, had employed elevated verse and had displayed their author's unusually keen dramatic sense. In the hands of impresarios, singers, and composers, though, his dramatic vision had often been subverted to take account of the realities of the opera house and its audiences. Metastasio had criticized these tendencies, arguing that the opera was filling up with arias that were little more than "symphonies for voices." Ironically, the poet's vision for an opera that might have greater dramatic unity was shared by his great enemy,

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE STUNTED DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH MUSIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries music experts recognized that there were great differences in national styles of composition and performance. At the beginning of the Baroque, Italy's dominance in musical composition was widely recognized. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, though, a distinctive French style was evidenced in the patterns of composers like Jean-Baptiste Lully, and this style spread throughout the continent to compete with Italian dominance. Before the twentieth century the achievements of English composers were comparatively slight, although the short-lived Henry Purcell did a great deal to foster a taste for new musical compositions at the end of the seventeenth century. In his famous *General History of Music* (1789) the eighteenth-century music historian Charles Burney outlined the history of early Baroque music in England, placing special emphasis on Purcell. Like other commentators Burney was careful to relate English style to continental models, and he laid part of the blame for England's failure to produce a vigorous climate of musical composition on the short lives of its composers.

Indeed, Music was manifestly on the decline, in England, during the seventeenth century, till it was revived and invigorated by Purcell, whose genius, though less cultivated and polished, was equal to that of the greatest masters on the continent. And though his dramatic style and recitative were formed in a great measure on French models, there is a latent power and force in his expression of English words, whatever be the subject, that will make an unprejudiced native of this island feel, more than all the elegance, grace, and refinement of modern Music less happily applied, can do. And this pleasure is communicated to us, not by the symmetry or rhythm of modern melody, but by his having fortified, lengthened, and tuned, the true accents of our mother-tongue: those notes of passion, which an inhabitant of this island would breathe, in such situations as the words he has to set, describe. And these indigenous expressions of passion Purcell had the power to enforce by the energy of modulation, which, on some occasions, was bold, affecting, and sublime.

These remarks are addressed to none but Englishmen: for the expression of words can be felt only by the natives of any country, who seldom extend their admiration of foreign vocal Music, farther than to the general effect of its melody and harmony on the ear: nor has it any other advantage over *instrumental*, than that of being executed by the human voice, like *Solfeggi*. And if the Italians themselves did not come hither to give us the true expression of their songs we should never discover it by study and practice.

It has been extremely unfortunate for our national taste and our national honour, that Orlando Gibbons, Pelham Humphrey, and Henry Purcell, our three best composers during the last century, were not blessed with sufficient longevity for their genius to expand in all its branches, or to form a school, which would have enabled us to proceed in the cultivation of Music without foreign assistance.

Orlando Gibbons died 1625, at forty-four.

Pelham Humphrey died 1674, at twenty-seven.

And Henry Purcell died 1695, at thirty-seven!

If these admirable composers had been blest with long life, we might have had a Music of our own, at least as good as that of France or Germany; which, without the assistance of the Italians, has long been admired and preferred to all other by the natives at large, though their princes have usually foreigners in their service. As it is, we have no school for composition, no well-digested method of study, nor, indeed, models of our own. Instrumental Music, therefore, has never gained much by our own abilities; for though some natives of England have had hands sufficient to execute the productions of the greatest masters on the continent, they have produced but little of their own that has been much esteemed.

**SOURCE:** Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*. Vol. 2 (1789; reprint with critical and historical notes by Frank Mercer, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935): 404–405.

Ranieri Calzabigi (1714–1795), who worked as Gluck's librettist during the 1760s. Calzabigi's libretti were characterized by a direct and forceful use of language rather than the elevated poetry common to Metastasio's. In 1762, the team produced its first opera, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, a work that broke new ground in the integration of text and music and which set new dramatic standards that other composers would soon try to imitate. In *Orfeo* Gluck returned to the tale that had long

spawned creativity in the operatic world, but he did so in a way that brought new insights to bear on how the tale should best be dramatized. Drawing much of his inspiration from French operatic traditions, he tried to integrate the chorus, spectacle, and dance into *Orfeo* and his subsequent productions. His compositional techniques blurred the gap that had long separated arias from spoken recitative. Further, in all respects of his production Gluck tried to balance the demands of the music

against the drama. In particular, Gluck banished the incessant ritornellos, or orchestral refrains, that had grown common in the Italian opera of his day. Instead he aimed for a seamless dramatic portrayal, in which music and words marched hand in hand to a common goal. The success of *Orfeo* in the 1760s and 1770s was followed by a number of similar works, most of which successfully achieved Gluck's reform-minded aims.

**OTHER CHANGES IN OPERA.** Although today Gluck is sometimes single-handedly portrayed as the great reformer of eighteenth-century opera, he was only one of several figures whose influence was transforming the genre at the time. In Stuttgart, another center of innovation, the Italian composer Nicoló Jommelli (1714–1774) was experimenting with similar changes in operatic production. And throughout Europe, the opera was acquiring a greatly expanded repertory of themes and plots. At this time the novel was acquiring great popularity as a literary form almost everywhere in Europe, providing a body of literature upon which librettists could draw for dramatizations. In addition, the theater itself was experiencing the birth of the form often referred to as “bourgeois drama,” that is, works that treated themes from the everyday life of the European middle classes. In the decades between 1760 and the 1790s, these themes began to make their way into the operatic world as well. Among the works that made use of the fashion for “middle-class” themes were two of the greatest operas of the age: Mozart's *Le nozze di figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro) in 1786 and his *Così fan tutte* (The School for Lovers) in 1790.

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## THE RISE OF CLASSICISM AND ROMANTICISM

**DEFINING THE PERIOD.** The music of the later eighteenth century has often been described as “classical,” a term that is problematic for several reasons. Like the composers of the later Renaissance and the early Baroque, the great commanding figures of this classical era, Josef Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and the youthful Ludwig

van Beethoven, did not imitate the music of classical Antiquity since little ancient music survived for them to emulate. Rather the use of the term “classical” to describe their music developed in the nineteenth century among those who saw in these composers a musical language that expressed harmony, balance, and an idealized sense of beauty, values that were at the time seen to be very different from the more emotional and rebellious spirit found in the works of the early Romantics, the movement that was long seen as replacing the “classical” style after 1800. The term “classical,” in this sense, thus came to summarize the differences between the music of this brief era and the Baroque period that preceded it, as well as the Romantic era that soon followed it. Such an easy generalization has proven difficult to sustain on closer inspection, since more recent research has shown that many European composers in the later eighteenth century did not completely abandon the techniques and forms that Baroque composers had long relied upon. Nor did all adopt the elegant simplicity and balanced poise typical of the works of Mozart or Haydn. This classical style was common only among certain groups of composers, particularly those that lived and worked in and around the Austrian capital of Vienna at the end of the eighteenth century, and among artists who imitated their musical idiom throughout Europe. The designation of this period as “classical” proves similarly problematic, since even in the works of the two supreme examples of the classical style—Haydn and Mozart—elements are present that herald the more tempestuous Romanticism of the early nineteenth century. As a result, the term “classical” has in recent years come to be associated only with a particular kind of musical style popular among the Viennese composers and their imitators throughout Europe for a relatively brief period in the late eighteenth century.

**THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AND THE NOTION OF MUSICAL “CLASSICS.”** The use of the term “classical” proves problematic, too, on other grounds. During the eighteenth century the modern phenomenon of a musical public for serious music emerged. Around 1700, those who attended concerts and operas, or who listened to music in church, expected to hear music that was new. Major public events at this time called for original music; those compositions might still be played for a few years, but new ones would soon replace them as listeners expected with popular music. In the opera houses of the time, too, few works survived in the repertory of most companies for more than a few years. Throughout the eighteenth century an important change was occurring in the ways in which people thought about and listened to music. First in England, then in other parts of Europe, many people came to value the great composers of the early eighteenth century and sought



The Esterházy Palace near Fertod, Hungary. © VITTORIANO RASTELLI/CORBIS.

to continue to perform their works. The English society called the “Concert of Antient Music,” founded in London in 1776, devoted itself to organizing concerts of earlier music, and in 1789, thirty years after Handel’s death, they organized a festival to commemorate his music. This attitude toward music was similar in many ways to the reverence that was developing in eighteenth-century England for the works of Shakespeare, which were now hailed as literary embodiments of the genius of the English language. Like Handel’s music, Shakespeare’s works were quickly becoming a body of texts that was seen as canonical, literary classics that should be continually revived, performed, and celebrated in festivals. In the musical world this enthusiasm for older music soon spread elsewhere, as groups in Germany and other parts of Europe revived the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and other composers of the Baroque era. The advocates of these revivals believed that the music of these composers was not only beautiful, but also serious and learned. Its performance might uplift listeners, in contrast to popular songs of their day that they condemned as immoral and bawdy. The new conventions of these revival movements taught that the music of earlier times deserved special attention and that it should be listened to in silence and respect. As a result of these early

efforts at revival, the notion of “classical music” as a serious art form was created. An assumption of the concert-going public as it developed at the end of the eighteenth century was that public performances of serious music should include not only new compositions, but also those composed many years earlier, including as far back as the later Baroque era.

**EUROPE’S MUSICAL CENTERS.** Since the eighteenth century fans of European serious music have relied upon the term “classical” in two ways; they have used it to refer to the entire body of composed music written in the Western tradition that merits serious listening in every era, even as they have also employed the word to describe the short period at the end of the eighteenth century that was dominated by the elegant, simple, and balanced works of figures like Haydn and Mozart. Both figures developed a specific musical language that has often been called “Viennese classicism.” It is undeniable that the works of these composers were avidly studied and imitated throughout Europe, sponsoring the development of “Viennese classical” schools of composers as far away as Finland. Yet Vienna was only one of many important musical centers in late eighteenth-century Europe. Lon-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A MIRACLE OF MUSIC**

**INTRODUCTION:** Just as painting and sculpture had taken center stage in the Renaissance, the extraordinary musical achievements of the eighteenth century led many commentators to wax poetic about the great strides being made in the art of music in their own day. An example of this can be seen in the English lawyer and antiquarian Daines Barrington's letter to the Royal Society in London during 1769, in which he described the prodigious feats of the young Mozart.

Sir,

If I was to send you a well attested account of a boy who measured seven feet in height, when he was not more than eight years of age, it might be considered as not undeserving the notice of the Royal Society. The instance which I now desire you will communicate to that learned body, of as early an exertion of most extraordinary musical talents, seems perhaps equally to claim their attention.

Joannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart, was born at Saltzbourg, on the 17th [really the 27th] of January, 1756. I have been informed by a most able musician and composer that he frequently saw him at Vienna, when he was little more than four years old.

By this time he not only was capable of executing lessons on his favourite instrument, the harpsichord, but

composed in an easy stile and taste, which were much approved of.

His extraordinary musical talents soon reached the ears of the present empress dowager, who used to place him upon her knees whilst he played on the harpsichord.

This notice taken of him by so great a personage, together with a certain consciousness of his most singular abilities, had much emboldened the little musician. Being therefore the next year at one of the German courts, where the elector encouraged him, by saying, that he had nothing to fear from his august presence, little Mozart immediately sat down with great confidence to his harpsichord, informing his highness that he had played before the empress.

At seven years of age his father carried him to Paris, where he so distinguished himself by his compositions that an engraving was made of him.

The father and sister who are introduced in this print are excessively like their portraits, as is also little Mozart, who is stiled "Compositeur et Maitre de Musique, age de sept ans."

After the name of the engraver, follows the date, which is in 1764: Mozart was therefore at this time in the eighth year of his age.

Upon leaving Paris, he came over to England, where he continued more than a year. As during this time I was witness of his most extraordinary abilities as a musician, both at some publick concerts, and likewise by having been

don and Paris, for example, had more vigorous and well-established traditions of public concert going than Vienna did, and both Haydn and Mozart were concerned throughout their careers to see that their music was played and known in these and other cities. Today the works of Haydn and Mozart have become so widely known that they have become in many people's minds synonymous with the entire concept of a late "eighteenth-century" sound. The enormous popularity of these works, though, tends to obscure the unprecedented compositional activity and experimentation that was occurring in many places throughout Europe in this period. The small city of Mannheim, for instance, was the capital of the southwestern German state of the Rhineland Palatinate, and despite its size was one of the great centers of musical innovation at the time. Mozart, Haydn, and other great Viennese composers kept abreast of the musical developments that occurred there, and they wrote works for the great virtuosi that were members of the city's fa-

mous orchestra. The city's composers, recognized already in the late eighteenth-century as a "Mannheim School," developed a musical idiom different from Viennese classicism. Among the most famous members of this group, Johann Stamitz (1717–1757) and his son Carl Stamitz (1734–1801), made use of rapid dynamic changes and contrasting themes, elements that showed off the brilliant playing of the Mannheim orchestra. Both Gluck and Haydn hailed another Mannheim-trained composer, Johann Martin Kraus (1756–1792), as a musical genius. Trained at Mannheim and active in Paris and Stockholm, Kraus's reputation has since the eighteenth century been eclipsed by his almost exact contemporary, Mozart. Beyond Vienna and Mannheim, Paris and a number of Italian cities nurtured composers and musicians that developed international reputations at this time.

**HAYDN.** By the final years of the eighteenth century, Vienna was already eclipsing these other centers, in large

alone with him for a considerable time at his father's house; I send you the following account, amazing and incredible almost as it may appear.

I carried him a manuscript duet, which was composed by an English gentleman to some favourite words in Metastasio's opera of *Demofonte*.

The whole score was in five parts, viz. accompaniments for a first and second violin, the two vocal parts, and a bass.

My intention in carrying with me this manuscript composition was to have an irrefragable proof of his abilities, as a player at sight, it being absolutely impossible that he could have ever seen the music before.

The score was no sooner put upon his desk, than he began to play the symphony [i.e., the orchestral introduction] in a most masterly manner, as well as in the time and stile which corresponded with the intention of the composer.

I mention this circumstance, because the greatest masters often fail in these particulars on the first trial.

The symphony ended, he took the upper [vocal] part, leaving the under one to his father.

His voice in the tone of it was thin and infantine, but nothing could exceed the masterly manner in which he sung.

His father, who took the under part in this duet, was once or twice out, though the passages were not more

difficult than those in the upper one; on which occasions the son looked back with some anger pointing out to him his mistakes, and setting him right.

He not only however did complete justice to the duet, by singing his own part in the truest taste, and with the greatest precision; he also threw in the accompaniments of the two violins, wherever they were most necessary, and produced the best effects.

It is well known that none but the most capital musicians are capable of accompanying in this superior stile. ...

Witness as I was myself of most of these extraordinary facts, I must own that I could not help suspecting his father imposed with regard to the real age of the boy, though he had not only a most childish appearance, but likewise had all the actions of that stage of life.

For example, whilst he was playing to me, a favourite cat came in, upon which he immediately left his harpsichord, nor could we bring him back for a considerable time.

He would also sometimes run about the room with a stick between his legs by way of a horse.

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**SOURCE:** Daines Barrington, "Account of a Very Remarkable Young Musician," in *Mozart: Die Documente seines Lebens*. Ed. O. E. Deutsch (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1961): 86–90. Reproduced in *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*. Eds. Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin (New York: Schirmer, 1984): 308–310.

part because of the productivity of its most famous composers, Josef Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and at the very end of the century, Ludwig van Beethoven, a citizen of the German city Bonn who took up residence in the city and studied for a time with Haydn. Vienna had many other musical figures of merit as well, some of who attracted international attention at the end of the eighteenth century. These included Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739–1799), a composer of a number of opera and symphonies; Johann Albrechtsberger (1736–1809), a composer of sacred and keyboard music who often wrote fugues; and Joseph Eybler (1765–1846), a protégé of the great Haydn. Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Mozart's pupil, also came to maturity during the era of Viennese classicism, and continued to write music that reflected its values during the early nineteenth century. It was Josef Haydn, however, that helped to establish the conventions of many of the genres of orchestral and instrumental music in which the Viennese masters wrote.

These forms have continued to dominate much serious music until modern times. Haydn's influence was especially important in the development of the symphony, the string quartet, the sonata, and the piano trio. Born in humble circumstances, he was initially trained as a choirboy. Left without resources at the age of seventeen he followed a musical career. He began schooling himself in composition, largely by reading the major works of musical theory and by studying the scores of other major composers, including Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. Soon he became an accompanist in the study of Nicola Porpora, one of the leading opera impresarios of the age and the voice teacher of such great singers as Farinelli and Caffarelli. Porpora offered whatever guidance he could as Haydn began to perfect his compositions, but Haydn developed a musical language that was distinctly his own even in his early years. During the 1750s and 1760s, the composer experimented with the latest styles, writing compositions in ways that made use of the tech-



Engraving of Franz Joseph Haydn. © HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS.

niques of the Galant and Sensitive Styles, and experimenting with ways to express *Sturm und Drang* emotions in his music toward the end of this period. The longest portion of the great composer's career was spent at the Esterházy court, one of the wealthiest and most cultivated aristocratic circles in Central Europe. The Esterházy employed one of the largest orchestras of the day, and within five years of Haydn's appointment in 1761, he had risen to become the director of this enviable musical establishment. He remained in this position full-time until 1790, although his duties often brought him to Vienna. In the Esterházy household, Haydn was required to produce music in all the genres then popular, and although he initially had some problems in getting along with the count, he gradually acquired great independence and through the publication of his works in Austria and abroad, he acquired a sizable fortune.

**HAYDN'S WORKS AND HIS IMPACT ON THE SONATA FORM.** Haydn was enormously prolific, although in the generations after his death a number of works were falsely attributed to him. Today his considerable output of new compositions is recognized to include 104 symphonies, 68 string quartets, 29 trios, 14 masses, and 20 operas. Haydn authored a number of concertos, piano

sonatas, and a host of smaller compositions as well. Although he produced masterpieces in almost every genre, it is for the glories contained in his symphonies and string quartets that he has most often been celebrated. Although Haydn did not create the symphony, he perfected its form and composed a body of symphonies that has consistently served as a source of inspiration to later composers. Among these, the Paris Symphonies (Numbers 82–87) are generally recognized as the first set of masterpieces of Haydn's mature style. They were commissioned for performance at a Masonic lodge in that city during 1785–1786, and they were enthusiastically accepted from their first hearing. Haydn's set of London symphonies (Numbers 93–104), completed while the composer was a resident of the English capital, represent his crowning achievement in the genre, and they continue to be among the most commonly played eighteenth-century orchestral works. Through his many compositional efforts, Haydn also helped to establish the popularity of the sonata form, a form that was increasingly used to organize the first movement of piano sonatas, concertos, and symphonies. The development of this form helped give composers standards to guide their work and ways to show off their skills and creative imagination. It gave members of the audience a sense of what to listen for, so that they could both enjoy the work and appreciate the ways a composer played with the form. Once it took its basic shape, composers used sonata form throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. A movement in sonata form has two main parts. In the first part, called the "exposition," the composer first introduces a main musical theme in the work's main key, then a second theme in a related key. The second main part has two sections. The first of these is called the "development" because the composer plays with, or develops, the themes from the first section in a number of ways. In the second section, the "recapitulation," the composer goes back to the main themes again in ways that recall the exposition, though now the work stays in its main key. Some movements in sonata form may simply end with a cadence, a set of concluding chords, while others may add a coda, or concluding segment. This format is fairly simple and allows for a great deal of variation and creativity. Although he was not the only composer to make use of the form, Haydn's brilliant use of sonata form has consistently provided inspiration to composers since the eighteenth century who have relied upon it.

**THE STRING QUARTET.** At the end of the eighteenth century strings continued to hold the highest respect among musical instruments, second only to the voice in overall status. Groups of stringed instruments ranging in size (and therefore in pitch, from low to high) playing together had been common since the Renais-



Manuscript score of one of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's symphonies. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

sance. In the mid-eighteenth century, composers varied some of the works they had been writing for violins and continuo. They began to prefer a stringed instrument, usually the cello, for the lowest or continuo part, and to include a middle part for the viola. In this way the harpsichord, which had often served to play the continuo part, gradually disappeared from these ensembles, in favor of a new grouping that consisted only of strings. The resulting group of four voices—two violins, a viola, and a cello—became a standard group for composers and performers, known as the string quartet. Haydn's enormous output for these string ensembles helped to popularize the form of the string quartet, and to standardize the genre's form even more definitively than his orchestral works influenced the later writing of symphonies. Through his efforts the string quartet was largely established as a form that consisted of four movements, usually of fast opening and concluding pieces surrounding

two interior movements. One of these interior pieces was usually written as a slow movement, while the other was often a minuet. In his 68 quartets, the composer's continuous adaptation to the changing styles and tastes of the late eighteenth century become brilliantly apparent, as does the depth of his creative and lyrical genius. These works, like the composer's famous Paris and London symphonies, demonstrate the sense of balance, proportion, and idealized beauty, as well as the intellectual coherence and ready intelligibility that have often been noted as key features of the musical language of the Viennese classical era. During his brief life, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart also composed 26 string quartets of incomparable beauty, although it still remains today largely a matter of taste which composer's works an individual listener prefers. Mozart freely admitted his great indebtedness to Haydn in perfecting his use of the form when he published his homage to the great mas-





Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

ter, the “Six Haydn Quartets” in 1785. Both composers’ quartets rank among the greatest achievements in the Western musical tradition, and long provided a fertile source of inspiration for the great masterful contributions that nineteenth-century composers like Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms continued to make to the genre.

**MOZART.** While Haydn’s great genius has long been recognized, his accomplishments have paled in the popular imagination to those of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, a figure who was recognized in his own lifetime in Austria and beyond as a divinely-inspired prodigy. Haydn wrote masterful compositions in many genres, but influenced later compositions primarily through his symphonies and string quartets. He also struggled with composition, laboring over his pieces until he got all the details just right. Mozart, by contrast, amassed a catalogue of works during his brief life that included masterpieces in every musical genre common in the later eighteenth century. He was, in other words, a great universal genius, as capable of setting church music and opera as he was of producing major works for the orchestra or the small ensemble. Unlike Haydn, he was reported not to have labored at all over his compositions, but to have



Engraving of *The Young Mozart Composing under the Watchful Eye of His Father*. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

produced them while carrying on conversations with his family and friends. Trained by his father to assume the role of a musical director within the confines of a traditional court, the Archbishopric of Salzburg, Mozart made many significant contributions to church music early in his career, and continued to write sacred music throughout his life. His output of sacred music included fourteen masses; two oratorios and several sacred musical dramas; and 22 motets, besides his incomplete but masterful *Requiem*, one of only several masterpieces he worked on during the final months of his life. He produced fifteen operas, notably his great masterworks, *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1786 and *Don Giovanni* in 1787, as well as several other musical dramas, like *Così fan tutte*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, and *Idomeneo* that continue to inspire enormous admiration today. He wrote 56 symphonies and 23 piano concertos, as well as a host of incidental and dance music for orchestra, small ensembles, and keyboard. Such a brief description barely scratches the surface of Mozart’s art and fails to do justice to the many small gems that the faithful listener can discover among his opus. It is impossible to summarize in brief the scope of such an achievement, an achievement that was compressed into the brief space of only 35



Interior of the Mozart family's house in Salzburg, Austria. © WOLFGANG KAEHLER/CORBIS.

years, although generations have consistently called attention to the composer's melodic invention, his rich harmonies and textures, his sense of elegant beauty, and his formal proportions. His achievement has long been accepted as the finest expression of the Viennese classical era. And yet, in the later stages of his career, particularly in the final years of his life, the composer also experimented with a new musical language that was to come to full flower only later in the Romantic era. His late works anticipated the more tempestuous Romantic musical language that Beethoven and other Viennese composers were to develop in the early nineteenth century.

**THE RISE OF ROMANTICISM.** In the final years of the eighteenth century, composers in Vienna and other European musical centers began to experiment with new sounds and styles, making use of a broader range of possibilities that the new large orchestras of the time offered. They also exploited the widespread popularity of small, intimate chamber ensembles like the string quartet. In Vienna and other European musical centers many composers began to experiment with new sounds and styles, and music began to change very quickly. These changes can be seen in the career of Ludwig van Beethoven, who studied with Haydn in Vienna in 1792. Although he was schooled

in the graceful elegance and rationality of Viennese classicism, Beethoven soon began to experiment with ways to enlarge that style's possibilities. Beethoven's career also coincided with an important change in the taste of European audiences and composers. By the end of the eighteenth century instrumental music was attracting more and more attention, a departure from sensibilities of the Renaissance and Baroque eras, which had held vocal music in highest esteem. The increasing importance of instrumental music was a result of new thinking about the arts. In particular, the literary movement known as Romanticism began to have its effect on the world of music as well as the other arts. Its advocates valued feelings and emotion over words and reason. Many of them argued that instrumental music, with its abstraction from both words and pictures, was the noblest and highest form of human expression. While early Romantic composers like Beethoven and Franz Schubert kept the basic rules of harmony and composition they inherited from the eighteenth century, they often departed from those rules or subtly modulated them to express their innermost feelings, and so to uplift the spirit of the audience. Thus advocates of Romanticism broke the connection between melody and word, the rhetorical pattern of thought that had inspired



View of the city of Salzburg. TRAVELSITE/COLASANTI.

many of the musical innovations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although it is usually true to say that the boundaries of decades or centuries are too artificial to mark the ends of artistic movements, it is reasonable to say that the years around 1800 marked an important change in European music. From this time forward a new Romanticism was to surpass in importance the long-standing sensibilities of the Baroque and classical eras.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Music*

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### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

1685–1750

*Composer*  
*Organist*

**EARLY YEARS.** Johann Sebastian Bach, the greatest master of counterpoint and polyphony, was undoubt-

edly one of the greatest musical minds of the Western tradition. Unlike many composers who traveled extensively through Europe, Bach remained in the central and northern regions of the Holy Roman Empire for his whole life. He was born in Eisenach in central Germany, the eighth child of a family of musicians; both his parents died when he was nine, so he was sent to live for a few years with an older brother, an organist. Later he served as a choirboy. He excelled as an organist, and also played the violin. In 1703, he moved to the city of Arnstadt where he accepted his first professional post as an organist. His time there was not entirely happy. He did not get along well with the local musicians and criticized their lack of skill; he received four weeks of leave to travel to Lübeck so that he could listen to the great Baroque organist Dietrich Buxtehude, but he ended up staying away from his post for four months. Back in Arnstadt, locals complained that his music was too complicated for them to sing. It seems likely that Bach was developing musical ideas too complex for the abilities of the local performers. Bach was happy to accept another position as organist in Mühlhausen three years later; an early cantata, *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (Christ Lay in the Bonds of Death), as well as a guest performance as organist, helped him win this new post. He began to write more choral church music as well as organ compositions, including a number of cantatas. He also married his first wife, Maria Barbara. Soon Bach moved again, to a much more prominent position as organist for the duke of Weimar, and a few years later he was named the duke's concertmaster. At Weimar he had the first six of his twenty children, including the future composer Carl Philip Emanuel Bach. His friend, the composer Georg Philipp Telemann, who was even more famous in his lifetime than Bach, was the boy's godfather. Many of Bach's organ compositions date from this period, though he seems to have written few cantatas while at Weimar.

**FROM CÖTHEN TO LEIPZIG.** In 1717, Bach was offered a position as *Kapellmeister* (chapel master) at the court of Prince Leopold at Cöthen. Out of personal animosity against the prince, the duke of Weimar refused to allow Bach to leave and even imprisoned him for a month, but Bach finally managed to move. Leopold loved music and played several instruments. Here Bach wrote mainly chamber and orchestral music, including his famous set of Brandenburg concertos. While traveling with the prince in 1720, Bach received the news that his wife had died. He considered leaving Cöthen, though the next year he married a singer at the court, Anna Magdalena Wilcke. Bach continued to consider

positions elsewhere, and found one at the church of St. Thomas in Leipzig, as cantor at its school and as music director for the city. Bach moved there in 1723 and remained there the rest of his life. The school supplied singers for four churches, and Bach was kept busy rehearsing them, conducting at least some of their performances, teaching students, and especially writing music for these groups to perform. During some of this time he wrote as much as one cantata every week, in addition to composing music for special occasions such as weddings, plus works for particular religious holidays. One major achievement of the first years in Leipzig was his composition of the famous *St Matthew Passion* in 1727 for performance during Holy Week. Bach was never happy with the non-musical tasks that the local schoolmasters often expected him to perform, which led to a number of disputes and a good deal of friction. A new director and some renovations helped improve matters, though only temporarily. Bach continued to keep his eyes open for new positions, or for secondary appointments to offer professional respite as well as financial support for his large family. He taught private students, tested organs in Leipzig and the surrounding area, and worked to make the best deals possible on the publication of his compositions.

**NEW INTERESTS.** In 1729 Bach took over another group, the city's Collegium Musicum. This was a voluntary society composed of university students and professionals. The group gave weekly concerts in Leipzig, particularly at a local coffeehouse, which provided the subject for his "Coffee Cantata." The collegium gave Bach another venue and skilled musicians with whom to work, a place to perform secular compositions, and a forum for guest performances by visiting friends and colleagues. Bach ran the group for about ten years. During these years he also began work on a Mass (known as the Mass in B Minor), which he completed over ten years later. In 1733 he sent two sections, the Kyrie and Gloria, to the court of the elector of Saxony in Dresden. He was hoping to win the title of court composer; he was finally successful in 1736. His connections with Dresden became more important over time, especially since later directors of the Thomasschule had less interest in music.

**LATER YEARS.** As Bach's older sons developed their own careers and accepted important appointments, his ties outside of Leipzig expanded still further. Carl Philip Emanuel Bach moved to the court of Prince Frederick, soon to become Frederick II (Frederick the Great), king of Prussia, at Berlin in 1738, and his father made several visits there. Frederick was an avid amateur musician

and excelled as a performer on the flute. In 1747 Frederick invited Bach to court to examine some of its new fortepianos and to perform. He also gave Bach a musical theme and asked him to improvise counterpoint upon it. Bach obliged, then promised to write a more substantial and effective composition when he returned home. The work he sent back to Frederick is now known as the *Musical Offering*, a set of thirteen pieces based on the theme and including an important part for the flute, the king's own instrument. During his later years, Bach joined a scholarly music society, the Society of Musical Sciences, and worked on revising a compendium called the *Art of Fugue* which remained unfinished at his death. His health began to fail, and cataracts affected his vision. An operation to repair his sight was unsuccessful, and he died shortly thereafter. His unpublished works were scattered among family members, and many of them were lost. Although his interest in the older "first practice" of contrapuntal Baroque music was no longer in fashion by the time of his death, his work remained highly regarded, and composers such as Mozart continued to study his works. The interest in the music of earlier times that had established itself in England eventually spread to Germany, and by the early nineteenth century interest in Bach was beginning to revive. Scholars and publishers did their best to collect, edit, and publish his works, and musical societies sponsored concerts and festivals in his honor and marking the centennials of many of his important works.

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## GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

1685–1759

*Composer*  
*Organist*

**FROM HALLE TO ITALY.** One of England's greatest composers, George Frideric Handel was German by birth and upbringing. Born in Halle in the German ter-

ritory of Saxony, he studied law as well as music. After a year as an organist at the Calvinist cathedral church, Handel left Halle for Hamburg with its opera house and greater possibilities. In Hamburg he played in the orchestra and wrote his first opera, *Almira*, in 1705. Here Handel already showed the mix of national styles he would continue to use in his later writings. The next year he traveled to Italy. Throughout the eighteenth century and into the next, northern European composers felt the need to spend time in Italy to study current Italian musical trends and to establish their reputations. Handel was no exception, and his efforts proved successful. He spent time in a number of cities, including Florence, Rome, Naples, and Venice. In Rome, a center especially of religious choral music, he wrote a number of motets, cantatas, and an oratorio. In Venice, his opera *Agrippina* was a great success. Handel met and befriended many of the Italian composers of his generation.

**ENGLISH CAREER.** When he returned north, he worked for a while as chapel master to the elector of Hanover, who was next in line to succeed to the English throne. The court granted him leaves of absence so that he could accept invitations to London. There he produced another opera, *Rinaldo*, again to great acclaim, and eventually Queen Anne awarded him an annual stipend. Upon her death in 1714 the crown passed to the elector of Hanover, who was crowned as George I. Except for a few visits to continental Europe, Handel spent the rest of his career in England. In 1727 he became a British citizen. Handel's long English career highlights many of the trends in the country's musical scene during those years. At times he worked directly for the king; he wrote the suites known as the *Water Music*, for example, for a royal procession by barge along the Thames River in the summer of 1717, a procession intended to give the new and foreign king greater visibility among his subjects. By 1719 he was working for a new private company called the Royal Academy of Music, formed to produce Italian-style opera in London, and he wrote a number of operas for them. The company survived ten years before having financial trouble, at which time Handel himself went into partnership with a colleague to carry on the project. A rival house competed with him, sometimes producing Handel's own operas. These professional rivalries, plus the problems of attracting the London public to performances of Italian operas when they could not understand the language of the libretto, limited the possibilities for Italian opera in England. Nonetheless, Handel continued to write successful operas even after his production ventures failed.

**ORATORIOS.** One solution to Handel's problems in popularizing Italian opera in England came in the form of the oratorio, a musical genre that Handel made distinctly his own. Handel, who had studied and written oratorios in Rome, revised an earlier composition into the oratorio *Esther* in 1732. With his oratorio *Saul*, Handel overcame the language problems of Italian-style opera by using an English text, and found a solid audience that he could continue to develop. Handel helped build up a tradition of performing oratorios, with their Biblical subjects, during the penitential season of Lent. He also played organ concertos at these performances. *Saul* was followed by *Israel in Egypt*. In answer to a request for a new work for a charity performance in Dublin for Easter in 1742, Handel wrote his oratorio *Messiah*, a work that was a resounding success from its first performances. Its Dublin debut was soon followed by London performances the following year, in which the work excited universal acclaim. Handel followed this commercial success with more oratorios, as well as his famous *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, written in 1748.

**A MIX OF STYLES.** Although English was only an adopted language to Handel, his vocal compositions captured English words and cadences so naturally that they can be seen to embody the Baroque era's preoccupation with textual expression as one of music's greatest goals. His writing for chorus is especially memorable, often alternating between homophonic sections and polyphony, and takes advantage of the natural ranges and strengths of vocal parts. Yet his instrumental music is also impressive. The Italian style dominates in most of his writings, but he made use of other regional and national styles as well. The French overture form, first developed by Jean-Baptiste Lully, and the precision and restraint of French court music generally figured prominently in many of Handel's works. Like many of his contemporaries, Handel was known for his ability to compose music quickly. The listening public wanted new works for major occasions, and Handel obliged, even if it meant borrowing heavily from earlier works. He was known for incorporating musical ideas from the works of others, reworking them into parts of his own compositions. Contemporaries viewed this practice more the way film directors do now, as a sort of "homage" to the other composer, rather than as a type of plagiarism.

**LATER LIFE AND REPUTATION.** Late in life, Handel's health began to fail. He had already suffered several strokes, but was able to recover and return to work. By the 1750s, however, his eyesight also began to fail. He continued to compose via dictation and to perform extemporaneously and from memory. By the time of his

death, he had become a great English institution, and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey with an imposing funeral. In 1784 Handel was honored with a commemorative festival by the Concert of Antient Music, an event that was attended by the royal family. This festival helped to solidify his important role in England's musical life, and inspired a fashion for works from earlier periods. Handel's posthumous reputation and its celebration in England were key features in the development of the notion of a European classical tradition of great music that deserved to be performed long after it was written.

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## JOSEF HAYDN

1732–1809

*Composer*

**EARLY YEARS.** Josef Haydn's long life and career spanned the transition from the late Baroque to the Romantic era. Born into a modest family of artisans, his relatives were nonetheless musical. A local schoolteacher offered the young Haydn the opportunity to attend school, and within a few years he had been invited to become a choirboy at St. Stephan's Cathedral in Vienna, a post he accepted at the age of seven. Once his voice changed and he was forced to leave the choir, he spent several years as a freelance teacher, studying composition on his own, including the works of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. Mutual friends put him in contact with the composer Nicola Porpora, who hired him as an accompanist for his voice students, helped him with composition, and introduced him to prominent musicians and patrons. His "Missa brevis in F" dates from these early years, although many other works from this period do not survive.

**THE ESTERHÁZY COURT.** For a time Haydn secured employment in the household of Count Karl Morzin in Vienna and Bohemia. The year 1761 marked an important change, when he was offered a position in the court of Prince Paul Anton Esterházy, the head of a very powerful Hungarian family. Soon Paul Anton was succeeded by his brother Nicholas. The Esterházy's main

estate was at Eisenstadt, just south of Vienna, with a second home near Lake Neusiedl in Hungary, known as Esterháza. Nicholas was to build this home into a spectacular palace complete with two theaters and two music rooms. Haydn was put in charge of both musicians and compositions; he would remain many years with the court, and built his international reputation from this role as a court musician. He was required to compose at the prince's request, and the court retained rights to his works. By 1766 Haydn was also in charge of church music. He wrote a number of masses, among them his "Great" and "Little Organ Masses," and his noted "Stabat Mater" of 1767. He continued to visit Vienna often, and there eventually met and befriended the much younger composer Mozart.

**INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION.** The court featured frequent musical performances. During the 1760s, Haydn wrote over 25 symphonies for concerts there. Over time the Esterházy's began to favor opera and musical theater over instrumental music, requiring more works than any single composer could provide. Haydn's operas, successful in their day, are seldom performed now, primarily because their libretti are not always up to the high standards of music that Haydn composed for them. By the late 1770s, Haydn seems to have been spending more time as an impresario, producing performances of the works of many others, than as composer of his own operatic works. He was able to renegotiate his agreement about rights to compositions and was now allowed to accept commissions from other patrons as well as to publish his works. Haydn's compositions were among the first publications of a new Viennese music press, Artaria. He quickly grew accustomed to the profitable and treacherous world of international music publishing. He tried to maximize his own profits in each country with a separate printing privilege, and also wrote more compositions specifically for the publishing market. These publishing ventures further extended his fame and the popularity of his works. He continued to receive a number of important international commissions. In 1784, for instance, the French Count d'Ogny asked him to write six symphonies for public performance in Paris, a commission that produced the famous Paris Symphonies. His services were also demanded to set a series of instrumental pieces on the theme of Christ's "Seven Last Words" for a Holy Week service in Cádiz in Spain. Despite the reputation of the performances at the Esterházy court, Prince Nicholas's son and successor Anton disbanded the court's orchestra in 1791. Haydn retained a pension but was free from his duties. He traveled to London, conducting and composing new works, including his famous London

Symphonies. Hearing the works of Handel in England influenced the composition of his most famous oratorio, *The Creation*. The work has three parts; the first two treat the six days of creation itself, and the third focuses on Adam and Eve. When Prince Anton died in 1794, his successor Nicholas II invited Haydn back to the Esterházy court, which now resided primarily in Vienna. Haydn returned, by now widely celebrated as an international composer, and wrote an annual mass for the prince as well as works of his own choosing. He remained in Vienna until his death in 1809.

**IMPORTANCE.** Haydn is often referred to as the "father of the symphony" both because he wrote so many of them (104 in all), and because he was so influential in developing and establishing the form. His instrumentation usually depends on that of the group for which he wrote the work. His early symphonies used strings (the number available ranged from around 10 to 25), continuo, two oboes, and two horns. Some of these early symphonies were written in the three-movement style of the early *sinfonia*, that is fast-slow-fast. Yet before long he settled on the four-movement pattern that later became the norm: *allegro*, *andante*, *minuet/trio*, and *allegro*. He used sonata form for first movements, though less rigorously than later writers did. Bold contrasts of dynamics and changes of mood characterize many of the symphonies he wrote around 1770, often referred to as his "Sturm und Drang" period. Somewhat later, by the time he was receiving international commissions, he came to expect more from his audiences and performers alike. The later symphonies included a broad range of instruments and made greater demands, in other words, on both the listener and their performers. His London Symphonies included parts for clarinets, and both woodwind and brass parts had a more independent set of sounds. He selected themes that were fairly simple and could be broken apart and developed, and used a great harmonic range. In his later works, Haydn used the symphony as the arena for developing and presenting a composer's most creative ideas, and for serious, active listening and enjoyment on the part of the audience. These came to be the standards that were to prevail in European serious music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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## JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY

1632–1687

*Composer*

**ITALIAN ORIGINS.** Lully, who came to epitomize both the French Baroque musical style and its musical scene, was born Giovanni Battista Lulli in Florence, the son of a miller. He began his musical studies there but moved to Paris as a tutor of Italian to Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, the cousin of Louis XIV, in 1646. There he continued to study music and ballet, and rose quickly to the top of the musical profession. He was appointed composer of instrumental music to the king in 1652. The king, an excellent dancer, was known to appear on stage himself, and Lully's close relationship with Louis helped his career considerably. Lully was a violinist, and was put in charge of a group of sixteen players, the *petits violons* (the "small violins"). He wrote an early surviving work for this group, the masquerade, *La galanterie du temps*. Lully worked on their performance practice and discipline so successfully that by 1666, he also conducted the esteemed ensemble, the *24 violons du Roi* ("The Twenty-Four Violins of the King"), at performances of the court ballets. In 1662 he married Madeleine, daughter of the court composer Michel Lambert, and became a French subject.

**OPERATIC COMPOSER.** Lully's fame as a composer grew. His compositions would come to include several main types: ballets, *comédies-ballets*, operas, and sacred music. From 1664–1671 he worked with the great French playwright Molière in writing a number of *comédies-ballets*, among them *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (The Bourgeois Gentleman) and *Les amants magnifiques* (The Magnificent Lovers). The *comédie-ballet* was a French genre that combined spoken or sung dialogue and dance. In writing the vocal music for these works, Lully worked to fit the music to the French language and its literary traditions, and he wrote some very popular arias. He developed a recitative style that he continued to use in his operas. Here the continuo supported the voice more than was normal in Italian recitative, while the lines themselves might vary in length. Lully

insisted that the singers follow his notations exactly, unlike Italian styles that allowed freer interpretation by the performer. In 1672 Lully took an opportunity to purchase a royal privilege on academies for performing operas in France, and so he became director of the Royal Academy of Music. As he moved to write and produce operas, Lully continued to work very closely with his librettists, who were among France's most capable writers. Together composer and librettist developed plots in five acts, conforming to the ancient standards of writers like Aristotle. Lully also demanded effectively written lines that might be set attractively to music. The subjects of his operas came either from ancient mythology or modern romances.

**INNOVATIONS AND LATER CAREER.** Lully probably did not invent the form known as the French overture, but he did a great deal to popularize it by using it early and often in his dramatic works and elsewhere. He introduced new dances to the court ballet, such as the minuet. French operas typically included ballets, so Lully continued to write dance music even when he had become France's great operatic composer. Lully's career had blossomed thanks to the king's support, but he also found himself caught in some bitter and colorful rivalries with other composers and writers, one of whom he sued for having tried to poison him so that he could assume Lully's operatic privilege. His equally colorful private life also earned some disfavor with Louis XIV when late in his career he was accused of having seduced one of the king's pageboys. Although damaged by the incident personally, it seems to have had little effect on his professional standing. In addition to his music for the stage, Lully also composed a number of important works of religious music for combined voice and instruments, among them a *Miserere* and a *Te Deum*. It was his performance of the latter work that caused his fatal injury. In his role as conductor, he beat time (as was then traditional) by striking the floor with a large cane. The point pierced his toe; the toe became gangrenous, and Lully died after refusing its amputation. Although Lully had purchased the exclusive right to produce opera in France from the king, his skill as a composer and producer ensured his fame and the popularity of his works. Lully's innovations set the standards for those who followed him in French music, and his works were frequently revived in France throughout the eighteenth century. Lully's role in fashioning the second major regional style of the Baroque era, the French style, is indisputable as well. He helped establish performance practices, standards concerning ornamentation and embellishments, and musical forms like the French overture, and he ensured as well



the central role of dance and dance music in both operatic and instrumental music in France.

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## WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

1756–1791

*Composer*  
*Musician*

**EARLY GENIUS.** Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's father described him as "the miracle which God let be born in Salzburg." Leopold Mozart, a well-educated musician, devoted great energies to nurturing and promoting the talents of his son, whose musical genius manifested itself very early. Playing the harpsichord at the age of four and composing by the time he was five, Wolfgang quickly became a star attraction. His father took him on a three-year European performing tour, with his older sister Maria Anna that began when he was only seven. He excelled as an organist and violinist as well as at the harpsichord, and later would turn to the piano. The tour helped expose Mozart to the musical styles in all parts of Europe, and so aided the development of his own style as a composer. In 1764 at the age of eight, he performed before King Louis XV of France, and traveled with his father to London, where he composed his first symphonies, and published a set of violin sonatas. In London he also met Johann Christian Bach, the youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach. After the family's return to Salzburg in 1766, Mozart made several trips to Vienna where he met the composer Josef Haydn. His father also took him to Italy in 1770, both to perform and to study. They returned once again to Salzburg, where both father and son held positions at court. Young Mozart continued to compose and develop his reputation as a composer, but increasingly he felt constrained by the provincial at-

mosphere of Salzburg. He was unsuccessful, though, in winning a major position elsewhere, and so, he continued to make trips from Salzburg. Eventually, his requests for leave from his court position resulted in his dismissal, and in 1777 Mozart left on an extended tour of Germany and France with his mother. His mother died, though, not long after his arrival in Paris, and since Mozart was unsuccessful in securing a position in France, he returned again to Salzburg, where he once again received a contract from the Archbishop's court.

**VIENNA.** In 1781, after a stormy period in the employment of the archbishop, Mozart moved to Vienna to work independently as a freelance composer and performer. He found success quickly with the opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. The work has a German text and is written in the *Singspiel*, meaning it includes both arias, duets, and ensemble work together with spoken dialogue. Here Mozart evoked its Turkish setting not only with sets and costumes, but also with exotic-sounding instruments, such as the clarinet, and a range of percussion, and music intended to evoke Turkish styles. At about the same time he married Constanze Weber, and his relationship grew strained with his father, who had approved neither of the young Mozart's move or his marriage. A visit home in 1783 helped improve relations, and upon his return to Vienna Mozart enjoyed some of his greatest successes. He began to collaborate with the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte, a partnership that resulted in *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1786, *Don Giovanni* in 1787, and *Così fan tutte* in 1790. *Don Giovanni*, often accepted as the greatest musical achievement among the composer's twelve operas, balances the humor of its hero's romantic appeal and wandering eye with the eerie and dramatic spectacle of the statue of a wronged man coming to life and dragging him down to a well-deserved hellish damnation. *Così fan tutte* seems, on its surface, to be a mere light comedy, featuring devoted ladies whose sweethearts wager over whether they can be lured away to another lover in their absence. The story, with its confusion of identities and humor, accommodated some of Mozart's most charming writing. The conclusion, which muses on human weakness and begs for tolerance of mutual frailty, reveals the real depth of da Ponte's libretto as well as the thought behind Mozart's music. Despite his successes, Mozart had continued to seek financial stability, which he achieved with a court appointment in 1787. Mozart had always rebelled against a common tendency at courts to view musicians and composers as little more than skilled servants. He felt that he and his colleagues should be able to live affluently and to move freely in all kinds of society. His abil-

ity to manage money, though, did not keep pace with such pretensions, and so he and Constanze suffered chronically from financial troubles. The steady income of the new court position helped the composer to manage those troubles, although it did not end them.

**LAST YEAR AND BEYOND.** During the last year of Mozart's life, he completed another opera seria, *La clemenza di Tito*, as well as *The Magic Flute*. The latter opera is in German and with some spoken dialogue, but the plot has added themes not only from folk tales but also from the ideas of the Freemasons. Mozart had become a member of this society, and wrote a number of pieces for performances at its meetings. The opera's main figures, Tamino and Pamina, win both love and enlightenment amid a colorful and memorable collection of characters and dazzling arias that are graceful, amusing, or frightening as called for by the story line. In 1791 he began work on the famous *Requiem* Mass, which was commissioned anonymously by Count von Walsegg-Stuppach as a memorial to his wife. Mozart became ill with a fever and died before completing it. As was customary for persons of his station in Vienna at the time, he had a small funeral and was buried in a multiple grave. Constanze had his students and collaborators, Joseph Eybler and Franz Xaver Süssmayr, finish his *Requiem*. In the years that followed publishers began to put together collections of his works, while Constanze remarried and her second husband wrote a biography of Mozart.

**IMPORTANCE.** Mozart's enormous talents as a composer were more than a match for the continuously changing musical styles of the late eighteenth century. He did not invent new genres or forms, or create an entirely new style of composition. Rather, he used the new styles and forms that had already emerged in European music after 1750, making them his own and molding them into vehicles that were particularly expressive of his genius. His earliest writings relied not only on regional south German and Austrian styles but on Italian ones as well. An interest in counterpoint and careful, technical composition developed fairly early and remained with him. In Vienna, he discovered the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and he studied and arranged some of his compositions. Throughout his brief life he composed music in many different genres, so in each of these some similar developments of his talents and interests are evident. His melodies balance a sense of natural progression with surprise and innovation. His string quartets, especially those produced after his encounters with Haydn, seem to have mastered the ideal of four equal musical voices in dialogue or conversation with one another. His symphonies are demanding of the performers, feature complex devel-

opment of carefully worked themes, and combine the drama of recent styles with the complexities of counterpoint. His music became more complex over time, and a number of his later works gained a reputation among his contemporaries as being rewarding but difficult and challenging to listen to.

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## ANTONIO VIVALDI

1678–1741

*Composer*  
*Violinist*

**THE RED PRIEST.** Vivaldi was both a prolific composer and a noted violinist. His father was a violinist at the ducal chapel of San Marco in Venice, and Antonio began his musical education at home. He was ordained a priest, though chronic respiratory problems (probably asthma) kept him from many clerical duties; due to his red hair he acquired the nickname *il prete rosso*, meaning “the red priest.” In 1703 he accepted a position as violin teacher at a girls' orphanage and founding home in Venice, the *Pio Ospedale della Pietà*. These orphanages provided musical training as part of their educational mission; the girls gave regular concerts, which attracted large audiences and garnered the institution an international reputation. Vivaldi was eventually promoted to concertmaster, and despite many years of travel during his career, he continued his association with the institution until 1740.

**CONCERTOS.** The frequent concerts at the *Ospedale* required a constant supply of new compositions, as audiences expected to hear new works. In 1723, for example, the institution asked Vivaldi to produce two concertos for them each month. Vivaldi continued to comply, and grew quite proud of his ability to compose not only well but quickly; he boasted that he could compose a concerto in all its parts faster than a copyist could transcribe

them. About 500 of his concertos survive. Vivaldi wrote them for a number of different solo instruments and combinations that reflect not only the popularity of various instruments, but also the variety of players over the years at the Ospedale. Nearly half are for a solo violin and orchestral strings. He also wrote for other solo instruments, such as flute, cello, oboe, and even mandolin. Others are double concertos for two soloists. Some use three soloists in the form of a concerto grosso, or in other combinations. Most of these works are in three movements, fast-slow-fast. Many fast movements use a form called *ritornello*, in which the larger orchestral group of strings plays a thematic section that returns several times in various keys, and alternates with freer sections for the soloist or soloists. This form allows for virtuoso writing and provides passages through which the soloist can display his or her skill. Often the soloist is allowed an improvisatory section near the final cadence of the movement, and because of its location such passages are called cadenzas. The slow movements of Vivaldi's concertos feature aria-like melodies. Vivaldi named many of his concertos. The names might refer to any number of features about the work, such as the original soloist, the person to whom it was dedicated, some technical aspect about the composition that was especially prominent, or a theme or subject that the music described, for example "Storm at Sea" or "The Hunt." For his famous "Four Seasons" concertos, he wrote a sonnet on the subject of each one and published them together with the compositions.

**LATER LIFE.** As he matured, Vivaldi also began to write operas, where his flair for the dramatic can also be seen. Some 21 works survive in whole or in part, though he wrote many more. At first, he produced them in Venice, but by 1718, he was invited to Mantua to present his current production. In the 1720s, he also spent several years in Rome, before returning to Venice, where he continued to produce operas and write instrumental compositions. But by the 1730s, he was traveling further afield. His last trip was to Vienna, where he died in 1741. Although he had made enormous sums of money during his lifetime, he spent just as extravagantly, and was given a pauper's burial in Vienna. Vivaldi's works were extremely popular for most of his career. Both the volume of his compositions and their high quality made them very influential. He published his works with care, dedicating them to prominent patrons and choosing presses with high-quality printing and good distribution. Etienne Roger of Amsterdam published his set of violin concertos, *L'estro armonico*, in 1711, dedicated to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. This choice both acknowledged

the interest of northern Europeans in Italian composers, and helped to continue to expand that market. His work influenced other major composers; Johann Sebastian Bach transcribed some of his works for the keyboard, and many other northern composers studied them with great interest. Vivaldi helped to standardize the writing of concertos, and to popularize the combination of virtuoso soloist with orchestra. Especially to those in northern Europe, he seemed to embody the best of Italian style in the later Baroque era. Some, however, were more impressed by his abilities as a fiery performer. The composers in the Galant and Sensitive styles that followed the later Baroque period singled out Vivaldi, criticizing him for having continued to write in an archaic style. They desired to separate themselves from elements of Vivaldi's style, including what they felt were an overemphasis on sheer virtuosity, display, and overly contrived passage-work. Unlike other figures the Galant and Sensitive composers of the mid- and later eighteenth century criticized, Vivaldi had largely abandoned the contrapuntal style of Baroque composers. His influence on Bach later inspired a renewed interest in his works after his death, and his instrumental writings in particular continue to enjoy frequent performance and great popularity.

#### SOURCES

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- Michael Talbot, *Venetian Music in the Age of Vivaldi* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 1999).
- , *Vivaldi* (London: Dent, 1978).

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Music*

- Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (1753–1762)—This treatise was the most important works concerning performance practice on the keyboard instruments written during the eighteenth century. Emanuel Bach, a great performer and a composer in his own right, provides even now a wealth of information to music historians anxious to understand the music of the later Baroque.
- Charles Burney, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Abate Metastasio*—Pietro Metastasio, (1698–1782) was one of the greatest librettists of the eighteenth century. He

composed the words for more than 25 operas as well as for a huge number of other sacred and secular works. Burney's edition helped to spread knowledge of the poet's achievements throughout Europe, Scandinavia, and Russia. Since then, more than 400 different composers have set Metastasio's texts to music.

Charles Burney, *Musical Tours in Europe* (1771–1773)—The great English music historian compiled this collection of observations on two tours undertaken through the Continent during 1771 and 1773. They provide an unparalleled insight into the ways in which music and its performers entered into the society of late eighteenth-century Europe.

Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (1776)—Hawkins wrote his music history after more than sixteen years of research in the British Museum in London. While warmly received at its publication, the work soon attracted controversy and intrigue. Supporters of Charles Burney, England's other ranking musicologist, subjected Hawkins' work to attacks in the British press. Over time, its erudition and importance has raised the work to one of the great monuments of music history and theory.

Franz Joseph Haydn, *Collected Correspondence and London Notebooks* (c. 1765(?)–1792)—This compilation of the composer's letters also includes selections from his London journals, kept while Haydn was writing his famous London Symphonies, one of the milestones in orchestral composition.

Johann Georg Leopold Mozart, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing* (1756)—Written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's father, this little book offers a win-

dow on the performance styles and techniques in which the young prodigy would have been trained in his childhood.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Letters* (1756–1791)—The correspondence of the greatest musician of the eighteenth century inform us not only about the nature of musical society at the time but about the character of this undeniable genius.

Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute* (1752)—Written by one of the greatest German court musicians of the eighteenth century, this book's eighteen chapters treat far more than the art of playing the flute. Quantz's work is, in fact, a treasure trove concerning all the performance practices of the time and was widely read by all amateur musicians who hoped to improve their skills.

Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Theoretical Writings* (1722–1764)—Inspired by the principles of the Scientific Revolution, this French theorist hoped to grant a "scientific" foundation to music. Rameau's ideas provided one of the most influential theoretical foundations for the development of the eighteenth-century art, even as they contributed to a discussion of music's intellectual underpinning that had been occurring in Europe since the Renaissance.

Heinrich Schütz, *Letters and Documents* (c. 1670)—This collection catalogues the life of the first great Baroque composer of Germany. Schütz's career was long and illustrious and much of it coincided with a time of great trial, the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), in German history. Despite these tribulations the composer placed his stamp on the formation of Baroque style in Central Europe.

chapter six

PHILOSOPHY

Andrew E. Barnes

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	278	SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS	
OVERVIEW . . . . .	281	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
TOPICS		<i>Starting Afresh</i> (preface to Bacon's <i>Novum Organum</i> ) . . . . .	286
Baroque Philosophical Roots . . . . .	283	<i>Simple Substances, Complex Theory</i> (excerpt from Leibniz's <i>The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings</i> ). . . . .	294
The Scientific Revolution and Philosophical Rationalism . . . . .	288	<i>A Blank Slate</i> (excerpt from Locke's <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> ) . . . . .	299
Empiricism . . . . .	296	<i>The Sources of Knowledge</i> (excerpt from Berkeley's <i>Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge</i> ) . . . . .	301
The Enlightenment . . . . .	304	<i>The Impossibility of Miracles</i> (excerpt from Hume's <i>Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> ) . . . . .	303
The Enlightenment in France . . . . .	306	<i>The End of the Nose</i> (excerpt from Voltaire's <i>Philosophical Dictionary</i> ). . . . .	308
The Enlightenment Elsewhere in Europe . . . . .	311	<i>Good Government</i> (excerpt from book three of Rousseau's <i>Social Contract</i> ). . . . .	309
Political Philosophy . . . . .	315	<i>Nasty, Brutish, and Short</i> (excerpt from Hobbes' <i>Leviathan</i> ) . . . . .	316
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
René Descartes . . . . .	319		
David Hume . . . . .	321		
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz . . . . .	322		
John Locke . . . . .	323		
Baron de Montesquieu . . . . .	325		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	326		

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Philosophy*

- 1596 René Descartes, who will try to raise philosophy into a science, is born near Tours, France.
- 1601 The French thinker Pierre Charron publishes his *De la sagesse* (On Wisdom), a work that argues, like Montaigne's Renaissance essays, that absolute knowledge of God cannot be established from human reason. It is an example of the skepticism in philosophy prevalent in early seventeenth-century Europe.
- 1609 The German astronomer Johannes Kepler publishes his *Astronomia Nova*. The work modifies Copernicus's heliocentric or sun-centered theory of the universe by showing that the planets move in elliptical, rather than circular orbits.
- 1610 Galileo's *The Starry Messenger* is published. The work tells of his recent observations of the heavens made with the aid of a telescope.
- 1620 Sir Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* (The New Organon) defends inductive reasoning and empirical observation against the methods of traditional scholasticism. One year later Bacon will be exiled from his positions at the English court and forced to retire; from this vantage point he continues to conduct experiments and to write on scientific matters.
- 1625 The Dutch legal theorist and humanistic philosopher Hugo Grotius completes his *Three Books on the Law of War and Peace*, one of the first seventeenth-century treatises to rely on the concept of "natural law" to explain relationships between human beings. The work will influence the later writings of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.
- 1633 The Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei is condemned to house arrest for the rest of his life for his defense of a sun-centered universe.
- 1637 René Descartes' *Discourse on Method* defends reason as the basis for progress and expansion of human knowledge.
- 1641 Descartes' *Meditations on the First Philosophy* appears. It includes the famous dictum, "I think, therefore I am."
- 1645 Baron Herbert of Cherbury's *The Layman's Religion* defends innate knowledge of God derived from nature. Later in the century, Cherbury's works will inspire English Deists to develop a religion that blends scientific and natural knowledge with traditional Christianity.
- 1651 Thomas Hobbes publishes *Leviathan*, a work that relies on a dismal view of human psychology to support the strong central authority of a sovereign over his subjects.
- 1655 Pierre Gassendi, a philosopher who has worked to revive Epicurean and skeptical ideas, dies.
- 1656 Baruch Spinoza is excommunicated by his Amsterdam synagogue.
- 1660 In England, Charles II is restored to the throne, and two years later he charts the Royal Society, an institution that will have great impact on British science and philosophy in the centuries to come.
- 1666 The French Academy of Sciences is founded in Paris.
- 1677 Spinoza dies in Holland, and his treatise *Ethics* is published by friends in the months following his death.

- 1679 The political philosopher Thomas Hobbes dies.
- 1680 The Cartesian philosopher Nicholas Malebranche publishes his *Treatise of Nature and Grace* to harmonize the notion of a benevolent God with the presence of evil in the world. The work also attempts to defend his previously published ideas, which conservatives find theologically unorthodox.
- 1687 Isaac Newton's *Principia* establishes a mathematical foundation for the theory of gravity.
- 1690 John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* is published for the first time in England. The work sets out its author's philosophy of limited government.
- 1696 John Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious* defends early Deist principles that God can be ascertained through the natural world.
- 1702 Pierre Bayle's vast *Historical and Critical Dictionary* is published for the first time. Although its author differs in many respects from later Enlightenment philosophers, his critical and searching intelligence will often be identified as one of the movement's sources of inspiration.
- 1714 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's *Monadologia* appears. The work outlines its author's complex metaphysical philosophy that everything in nature is comprised of irreducible things called monads.
- 1722 The Baron de Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* holds a mirror up to European society, criticizing its government and conventions and sparking debates that lead to the deepening influence of the Enlightenment in France.
- 1734 George Berkeley is appointed Anglican bishop of Cloyne in Ireland. From this vantage point, he will try to stop the erosion in Christian belief in Great Britain.
- Voltaire publishes his *Philosophical Letters*, observations on English customs and government gleaned while in exile there in the late 1720s.
- 1748 David Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* denies the possibility of supernatural events since they would be violations of natural laws.
- The Baron de Montesquieu publishes *The Spirit of Laws*, a treatise that illuminates the contrasting governments of states by examining their climate, history, and culture. The work sets forth a notion of the separation of the powers that will be influential in the later French and American revolutions.
- 1751 Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert begin compilation of their massive *Encyclopédie*, a milestone of the French Enlightenment. When completed almost thirty years later, it will number 28 volumes of articles and illustrations.
- 1754 Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's *Treatise on Sensations* defends Lockian empiricism in France.
- 1762 Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* defends constitutional government by strengthening a theory of the state of nature that is more pessimistic than his previous assessments.
- 1776 Thomas Paine's political tract, *Common Sense*, defends the developing American Revolution's campaign against Great Britain.
- 1781 Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* demonstrates that reality is ultimately unknowable on strictly rationalistic grounds.
- 1786 Moses Mendelssohn, a lifelong promoter of secularization and Enlightenment among the Jews of Central Europe, dies.
- 1787 The English historian and philosopher Edward Gibbon completes his monumental *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a work that traces Rome's collapse to the rise of Christianity.

1789 Paul-Henri Thiry, more commonly known as the Baron d'Holbach, dies. He was an enthusiastic promoter of atheism.

In France, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* assures many civil rights, achieving the goals of many French Enlightenment philosophers.

1792 Jeremy Bentham, an English utilitarian philosopher and social critic, is naturalized as a French citizen.

1793 The Reign of Terror, an effort on the part of radical leaders of the French Revolution to eliminate opposition, begins in Paris.



## OVERVIEW *of Philosophy*

**THE LONG VIEW.** In assessing the changes that occurred in philosophy in the Baroque period it is helpful to take a long view so that the depth and significance of the discipline's early-modern transformations stand out when contrasted against the traditional role that philosophy had long played in Europe's schools and universities. In the Middle Ages philosophy had developed in tandem with Europe's secondary schools and universities, the primary venues for higher education. To undertake advanced training in a university, students first completed a course of study in the liberal arts. The arts themselves were divided into two branches known as the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*. The trivium consisted of the areas of study that would today be called the "language arts" and included instruction in grammar, rhetoric (style), and dialectic (reasoned argumentation). In the quadrivium, by contrast, were consigned all those branches of knowledge that were mathematical in nature: arithmetic, music (because it was the science of sound and proportional harmony), geometry, and astronomy. Mastering these disciplines required a student to read, and frequently commit to memory, a number of already existing ancient and medieval texts that had treated these disciplines. Although today many of the texts that these students read would be considered philosophical in nature, philosophical study, in and of itself, was never an independent course of study either in the medieval secondary schools or in the university. Once students had completed this liberal arts course they enrolled in a university, where they entered into a faculty of law, medicine, or theology, the primary branches of study that existed in most medieval and Renaissance institutions. In these various faculties, students continued to study the works of ancient philosophers and medieval authorities that had written works that had implications for their discipline. In these three faculties, medieval academicians frequently wrote texts that expanded the body of knowledge, and which touched upon issues that can be identified as "philosophical." Great medieval theo-

logians like Thomas Aquinas, for instance, ventured into subjects like epistemology, the science of establishing the truth of one's observations. Medical authorities considered questions about natural philosophy, a branch of ancient philosophy that was concerned with matter, even as ancient ethical questions continued to be treated by theologians and legal authorities as well. In this way, philosophy was an important handmaiden to the three main disciplines that co-existed within the medieval university, and students were forced to undertake study of many philosophical texts as part of the routine undertaking of mastering their profession. Yet philosophy as a branch of study pursued for its own ends and purposes did not exist in medieval Europe.

**RENAISSANCE HUMANISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS.** In the three centuries following 1300, educated Europeans' understanding of the entire body of ancient philosophical works deepened through the impact of humanism. This intellectual movement—born in Italian cities—first arose independent of Europe's universities and cathedral schools, the primary venue in which higher education occurred during both the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The humanists' stated aims of returning to the sources (*ad fontes*) were not as new as might be supposed. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for instance, theologians, physicians, and legal authorities working in Europe's universities had already begun to recover knowledge of Aristotle and other ancient philosophers' writings, a renewal that was often fed through contacts with Islamic and Jewish scholars. But as humanist scholars took on the task of understanding the entire body of ancient philosophical and scientific knowledge, they were concerned with examining these texts, not only for the insights that they might offer in theological, medical, or legal study, but for the moral and ethical insights they might offer for negotiating life in the new, more highly urbanized societies of their day. Humanists pioneered new techniques for studying texts—techniques like philology, which allowed students to explore the changes that had occurred in the uses of words and language over time. And they also established disciplined techniques for determining the veracity and authenticity of the many variant versions of ancient works that existed in Europe at the time. Still, humanist intellectuals were often very conservative in their ideas and methods. Like their medieval forbearers, they usually accepted the notion that the body of ancient philosophical and scientific works was a corpus of texts that might be profitably studied for the truths it contained on a number of subjects. They had, in other words, a fundamentally textual notion about truth. Instead of

subjecting the ideas that they found in many works to detailed examination, questioning, and experimentation, they often tried to harmonize the readily apparent incongruities that they found in these works, thus building new, ever-more complex intellectual systems. As humanists' studies of ancient texts revealed the enormous complexity of Antiquity's ideas about the body, for example, long-cherished theories of Galen and his four humors were combined, rejected, or replaced with new medical theories drawn from Platonic, Aristotelian, and other ancient sources, inspiring movements like sixteenth-century Paracelsianism with its challenging new intellectual formulations. The aim of humanist study, as it had often been in the medieval university, was the weighing of traditional authorities and the finding of a path of harmonization and synthesis through this evidence. Although they had initially resisted the new intellectual tools and knowledge humanism provided, most European universities had by the early sixteenth century come to accommodate this New Learning within their curricula. By the end of the sixteenth century, humanism and the by-then traditional methods of Aristotelian scholasticism persisted side-by-side in Europe's universities, and despite the great fissures that the Reformation and Counter Reformation had produced in Europe, the university training of intellectuals continued to be almost everywhere a conservative amalgam drawn from late-medieval exchanges between humanism and medieval scholastic methods. Philosophy, in this system, was still not an independent course of study or discipline, but was instead a tool that was in every country and university expected to uphold the fundamentally traditional and conservative demands of the Christian worldview.

**EARLY-MODERN CHANGES.** In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this situation changed rather quickly, and philosophy as an intellectual discipline in and of itself began to emerge from the long role it had played as a handmaiden to theology, medicine, and the law. Three important transformations can be seen throughout the period. First, philosophy was persistently separated from theology as a series of thinkers in the period questioned the received wisdom their societies accepted from traditional Christian, medieval, and ancient authorities. Second, as it acquired a new independence from the longstanding concerns with supporting received opinion, philosophy moved closer and closer to modern science. And finally, as a new independent discipline of intellectual inquiry, philosophy flourished, not primarily in Europe's schools and universities where a conservative worldview inherited from

the medieval and Renaissance past made the new speculations seem dangerous. Rather this new discipline came to be a pastime practiced by a new professional intelligentsia that was concerned with influencing public opinion.

**THE ATTACK ON RECEIVED WISDOM.** During both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, churchmen had insisted that all philosophical speculation reconcile itself to the truths of Christian faith. And although Protestant and Catholic leaders continued to try to uphold religious orthodoxy in the seventeenth century, they soon lost their ability to dictate the boundaries of permissible thought to those outside the clergy. As a result, intellectuals with increasingly secular, rather than religious views, began to jettison the long-standing effort to reconcile their thoughts with the teachings of the Christian churches. State authorities continued to monitor the materials being published, and some "freethinkers" or "libertines," as they were called, were incarcerated, and in some extreme instances, put to death. But across the seventeenth century, philosophers paid less and less attention to Christian sensibilities. For truth, philosophers turned instead to the Scientific Revolution. In the seventeenth century the Scientific Revolution was most associated with achievements in two areas, both involving applied mathematics. The invention of new instruments such as the telescope and the microscope, both of which represented the application of geometry to optics, allowed for the accumulation of far superior data concerning the natural world than most educated people had previously thought was possible. New mathematically derived theorems, such as Johannes Kepler's laws of planetary motion, and ultimately Isaac Newton's theory of gravity, helped make sense of the new data. Philosophers were enthralled with this new scientific wisdom and with the methods of scientists generally. The achievements of the latter, it was said, allowed "moderns" to see much further than the "ancients." In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, humanists had often led the assault on scholasticism and the monopoly on thought that churchmen alleged they maintained. Now seventeenth-century scientists assumed the leadership in this attack.

**THE IMPACT OF THE PRESS.** In this process the venues in which philosophical combat were waged also changed. In medieval Europe, universities and their lectures halls provided the only forums for the discussion of philosophical ideas. But in the early-modern period, universities were often closed off from the new scientific and philosophical debates because their intellectual discourse continued to be dominated by the demands of Christian theology. Seventeenth-century philosophers,

though, were heir to the invention of the printing press, a relatively new medium that humanists and reformers had already relied upon in the sixteenth century to promote their ideas. As they engaged in battle with traditional university scholasticism, scientists adopted the same tactics that Erasmus, Luther, and a host of others had used profitably in the sixteenth century. They took their ideas to the press, where they could sway a far larger group of readers without having to jockey for a place in a university lecture hall. The new role that the press attained as a vehicle for promoting the scientific and philosophical ideas of the time meant that by the eighteenth century universities had become marginal in many places to the process of intellectual discourse. The proliferation of newspapers and journals, combined with the emergence of a cultural tradition of learned debate in salons and coffeehouses, produced across Europe an extended community of reading, thinking individuals who collectively made up “public opinion.” Intellectuals now appealed to this new court of “public opinion,” and those intellectuals who dominated in the new commonwealth of printed letters were publicists as much as they were thinkers. The new intellectual figure of the eighteenth century was most brilliantly embodied in the figures of the French *philosophes*, men like Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau, who were brilliantly capable of shaping public attitudes and ideas because of their brilliant writing. These figures made their living by promoting their ideas to as large an audience as possible. And while governments did not always obey the dictates of the new court of “public opinion,” they certainly kept track of its ideas and demands. The philosophers of Enlightenment thus indirectly influenced government actions by their successful attempts to mold public opinion.

**THE RISE OF SCIENCE AND SHIFTING TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY.** The important role that philosophy played in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century societies can be seen in the many shifts that occurred in the discipline’s discourse over the period. Science was at the heart of many of these disputes, as the philosophers of the period considered the role that the new natural knowledge played as a source of truth independent of the once traditional certainties of religion. The rise of science produced new philosophical movements like Deism, an English invention that eventually was espoused by many of the intellectuals of the French Enlightenment. Deism reconciled a belief in the existence of God with the new insights scientific inquiry had produced. It taught that the fundamental order and harmony revealed in the universe pointed to the existence of a higher being, yet at the same time it abandoned the

traditional theological teachings of Christianity. God may have created the universe, but in the world of the late seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Deist, he was now a far-off figure that had left man to his own devices to shape the world as man saw fit. Elsewhere the rise of the new science in the seventeenth century prompted bristling debates about the relative superiority of scientific and religious truth, even as it led to new attempts to chart the contours of society with methods similar to those the scientists had used to unlock gravity and the distant reaches of the solar system. By the middle of the eighteenth century, this intellectual ferment had helped to produce the Enlightenment, a cultural movement that celebrated the triumph of rationalism over what its proponents identified as the superstitions of the past. Although linked by certain affinities of topics, the movement was very different in the various national states in which it flourished. It had a profound impact, however, upon the birth of the modern notion of political philosophy, and the theories that still guide the modern disciplines of sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics can be traced to debates that originated during this era.

## TOPICS *in Philosophy*

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### BAROQUE PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS

**PROTESTANT VS. CATHOLIC SCIENCE.** During the twentieth century historians often debated the question of the relationship between religion and the rise of science. Following the lead of the sociologist Max Weber, who had argued that there was a positive connection between Protestantism and the rise of capitalism in Europe, one group of historians made the case that Protestant culture was far more encouraging of scientific research than was Catholic culture. The problem with their case was that while England and Holland—the two examples most often cited in support of the argument—were Protestant, these were also states where the power of the state church was seriously constrained by the government. In Protestant states where the church and government shared the same cultural and religious agenda, such as the German Protestant states of the Central European Holy Roman Empire, scientific research was as absent as it was in Catholic states. An inability on the part of the state church to repress scientific research appears to have been more important than any positive encouragement given to science by Protestant churchmen.

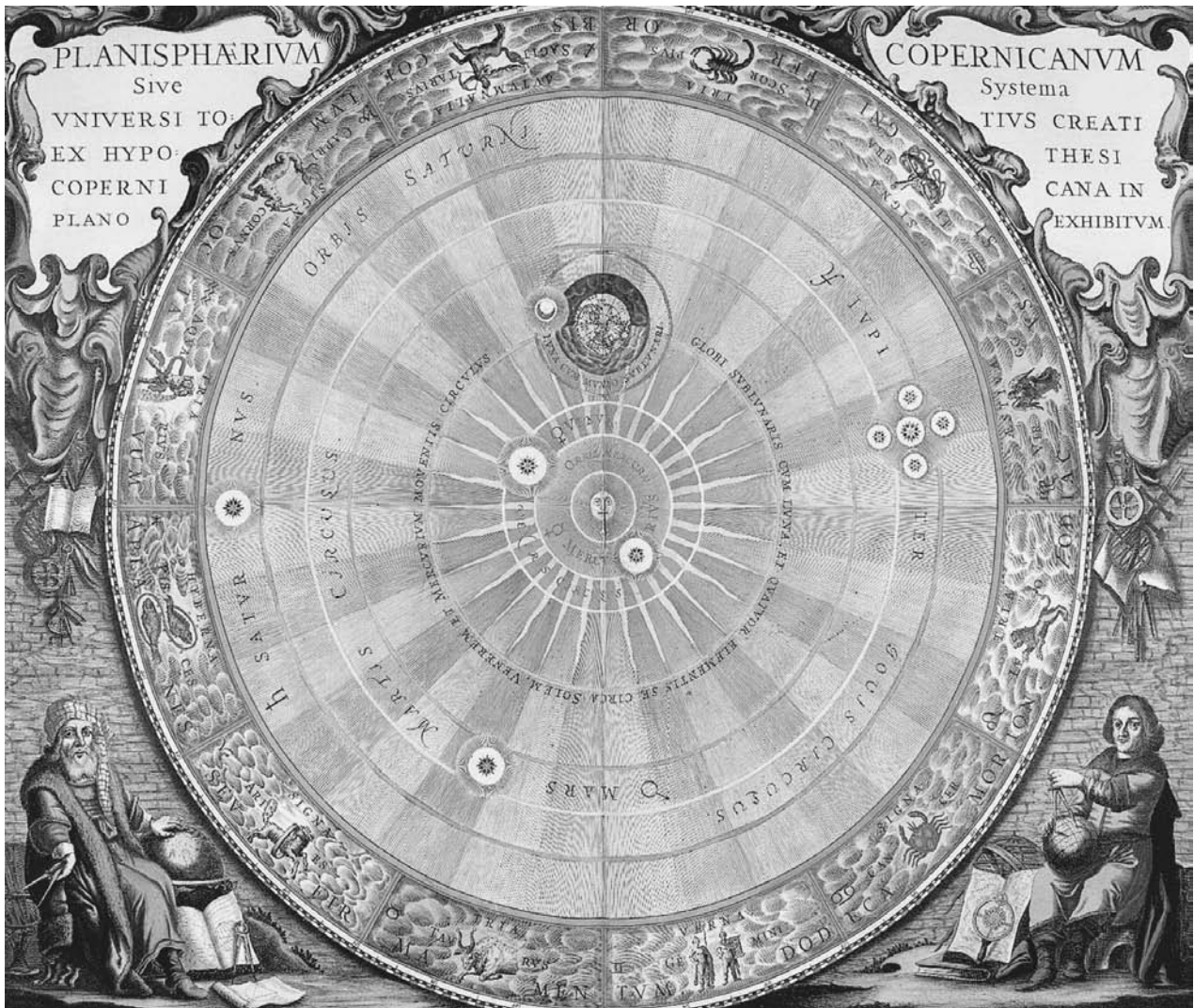


Illustration of the Copernican world system. © STEFANO BIANCHETTI/CORBIS.

**THE CRIME OF GALILEO.** The story of Galileo has often been used to suggest that Catholicism was more hostile to science than Protestantism was. Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), known as the great Italian “natural philosopher,” was a scientist who was forced by the Roman Inquisition to recant his arguments in support of the Copernican thesis that the earth revolves around the sun. Yet as Catholic apologists for the Inquisition have pointed out, Galileo was arguing for more than just the Copernican thesis, the notion that the sun rather than the earth was the center of the universe. His work presented a challenge to the church because he was promoting the notion that scientific pursuits should be free from moral and religious scrutiny. No seventeenth-century Christian church was, in fact, willing to grant that science should have such independence. Galileo’s

case for the autonomy of science, though, has long made him the starting point for any discussion of philosophy in the age of the Baroque. Galileo followed a string of Renaissance humanists who saw the “book of Nature” as an alternative to the teachings of medieval scholasticism. Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639), one of Galileo’s contemporaries, went so far as to contrast the arid emptiness of traditional medieval scholasticism with its Aristotelian science, with nature as the true “living book of God.” Galileo, though, was the first scientist to lend the weight of his achievements and observation to his argument. Although he was already well known for his discoveries of the physical properties of motion, Galileo had begun in 1609 to channel his considerable research talents into proving that the Copernican thesis was correct. After lifelong study, Nicolaus Copernicus published his

heliocentric theory in 1543, the same year in which he died. Like most Renaissance astronomers, his work was not based upon scientific observation or experimentation, but on his knowledge of texts, combined with his own subtle theorizing. Although his theory had circulated relatively freely in the sixteenth century, it did not become controversial until Galileo decided to confirm its observations with the use of a telescope. Galileo had read about this new invention, and he figured out how to build one himself. Then he wrote *The Starry Messenger* (1610) based upon the observations he made with it. Churchmen were fascinated with Galileo's new instrument; however, they did not follow him in his conclusion that the evidence it revealed refuted the Ptolemaic thesis that the sun revolved around the earth. In 1616, Galileo was called before the Inquisition and told to stop teaching that the Copernican thesis was true. He agreed, but then continued to try to convince churchmen and other intellectuals of the error of their ways. In 1623 he published another book, *The Assayer*, ostensibly a report of his observations on comets, but in fact an attack on the Ptolemaic thesis. Finally in 1632 he published his masterpiece, *Dialogue on the Two World Systems*, in which—in the context of a hypothetical debate between three learned men—he ridiculed the Ptolemaic thesis. It was the arguments in this *Dialogue* that the Inquisition forced Galileo to recant one year later.

**GALILEO'S PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE.** Galileo was the first thinker to insist that at the heart of the opposition between science and traditional scholastic Aristotelianism was a distinction between numbers and words. As Galileo observed in the *Assayer*, Philosophy (science) is written in "mathematical language and its characters are triangles, circles and other geometrical figures." Galileo rejected the insistence by Scholastics that science involved the constant reinterpretation of every newly discovered attribute of the physical world according to the explanations first offered by the ancient Greeks. For him, it had to be accepted that these new things could not be explained by the old teachings. In the *Assayer* he related the story of one of his Aristotelian colleagues who refused to look through his telescope for fear of seeing things he could not reconcile with his ideas, Galileo's point being that it was only through such ignorance that old beliefs might be maintained. Yet Galileo did not propose to replace the old speculations with new ones. For him, science was not about what might be speculated and then justified; it was about what could be seen and then demonstrated. Like Francis Bacon, Galileo argued for an inductive method of investigation that built from observation to theory and then through

experiment to validation of theory. But in a way that was different from Bacon, Galileo's method required that those rationalizations be expressed in mathematics. If a scientific theory is true, he reasoned, it can be demonstrated mathematically; if it cannot be demonstrated mathematically, it is not true. It is from this perspective that Galileo sought to free science from the oversight of religious authorities. Science, he argued, was about the physical world and, as such, its proofs had nothing to do with religion. In a letter addressed to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany, Galileo argued that it is wrong to use the Bible as a guide to the natural world. In seeking to condemn the Copernican thesis, he complained, his enemies cited passages in the Bible where it states that the sun moves, and the earth stands still. But it is wrong to take the Bible literally, he argued, because the words of the Bible have layers of meaning, and the literal, obvious layer is there essentially to keep the common people, who are "rude and unlearned" happy. According to Galileo, the Bible and Nature, "proceed alike from the Divine Word, the former as the dictate of the Holy Spirit, the latter as the obedient executrix of God's commands." God's commands are the physical laws of the universe. Science, which could be defined as the effort to discover those laws, was thus only another form of Christian worship. Galileo argued, then, that the Copernican thesis was no challenge to the Bible's authority because it reflected a truer understanding of God's laws than did the traditional geocentric, or "earth-centered" theory. Its embrace signaled true Christian piety. But churchmen remained unmoved by Galileo's arguments. Defenders of the Catholic Church have long pointed out that, at the time Galileo was writing, there was no definitive proof of the validity of the Copernican thesis, and that the experiments that Galileo thought granted such proof have since been proven faulty. The issue in Galileo's censure, though, was not the quality of his science. The issue was whether or not an agency claiming moral authority, such as the Catholic Church, had the right to declare scientific investigation immoral. Galileo argued that it did not, but because he was a devout Catholic, he eventually acquiesced and submitted to the church's condemnation of his argument. Those who followed him, however, saw him as a martyr for the truth.

**FRANCIS BACON AND THE RISE OF EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE IN ENGLAND.** Galileo's fate actually compared favorably with that of the other individual responsible for making the case for science to early seventeenth-century audiences. After a life in its own way as illustrious as Galileo's, Francis Bacon (1561–1626)

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***STARTING AFRESH**

**INTRODUCTION:** Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* has often been called the "manifesto" for the Scientific Revolution. In truth, that movement's origins were far more complex. But in his preface to the work, Bacon outlined his method. His emphasis on looking past received wisdom and setting natural inquiry on a firm footing of observation seem as modern today as they were refreshing to scientific minds in the seventeenth century.

Those who have taken upon them to lay down the law of nature as a thing already searched out and understood, whether they have spoken in simple assurance or professional affectation, have therein done philosophy and the sciences great injury. For as they have been successful in inducing belief, so they have been effective in quenching and stopping inquiry; and have done more harm by spoiling and putting an end to other men's efforts than good by their own. Those on the other hand who have taken a contrary course, and asserted that absolutely nothing can be known—whether it were from hatred of the ancient sophists, or from uncertainty and fluctuation of mind, or even from a kind of fullness of learning, that they fell upon this opinion,—have certainly advanced reasons for it that are not to be despised; but yet they have neither started from true principles nor rested in the just conclusion, zeal and affectation having carried them much too far. The more ancient of the Greeks (whose writings are lost) took up with better judgment a position between these two extremes,—between the presumption of pronouncing on everything, and the despair of comprehending anything; and though frequently and bitterly complaining of the difficulty of inquiry and the obscurity of things, and like impatient horses champing at the bit, they did not the less follow up their

object and engage with Nature, thinking (it seems) that this very question,—viz., whether or not anything can be known,—was to be settled not by arguing, but by trying. And yet they too, trusting entirely to the force of their understanding, applied no rule, but made everything turn upon hard thinking and perpetual working and exercise of the mind.

Now my method, though hard to practice, is easy to explain; and it is this. I propose to establish progressive stages of certainty. The evidence of the sense, helped and guarded by a certain process of correction, I retain. But the mental operation which follows the act of sense I for the most part reject; and instead of it I open and lay out a new and certain path for the mind to proceed in, starting directly from the simple sensuous perception. The necessity of this was felt, no doubt, by those who attributed so much importance to logic, showing thereby that they were in search of helps for the understanding, and had no confidence in the native and spontaneous process of the mind. But this remedy comes too late to do any good, when the mind is already, through the daily intercourse and conversation of life, occupied with unsound doctrines and beset on all sides by vain imaginations. And therefore that art of Logic, coming (as I said) too late to the rescue, and no way able to set matters right again, has had the effect of fixing errors rather than disclosing truth. There remains but one course for the recovery of a sound and healthy condition,—namely, that the entire work of the understanding be commenced afresh, and the mind itself be from the very outset not left to take its own course, but guided at every step; and the business be done as if by machinery.

**SOURCE:** Francis Bacon, Preface to *Novum Organum*, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*. Vol. 4. Eds. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (London: Longmans, 1875): 39–40.

found himself equally humiliated and condemned. Under James I of England, Bacon had a political career that saw him rise to the office of Lord Chancellor of England with a seat in the English House of Lords, only to lose it all after a conviction for taking bribes. Exiled from any association with the royal court in 1621, Bacon spent the last five years of his life studying science and philosophy and initiating vast writing projects he never completed. Bacon's assault on scholastic Aristotelianism came from a different direction than that of Galileo. Both Bacon and Galileo followed the Italian philosopher Bernardino Telesio (1508–1588) in emphasizing that knowledge of nature, and therefore science, comes via sensory acquisition. Yet, while the five senses provided

comparatively surer guides to the truth than the methods of intellectual conjecture preferred by the Scholastics, the senses are still prone to error. For Galileo, mathematical demonstration was the only fail-proof guide to the truth. For Bacon it was experimental demonstration. Bacon rejected an idea that would become the basis for the cognitive theories of his later countryman John Locke—the idea that the human mind is a "tabula rasa," a blank page waiting to be filled with knowledge via sensory experience—and postulated that the human mind was prone toward four sorts of problems in its reception of data. Bacon labeled these sorts of problems "idols" to suggest, following the ancient Epicurean meaning of that term, factors that promote de-

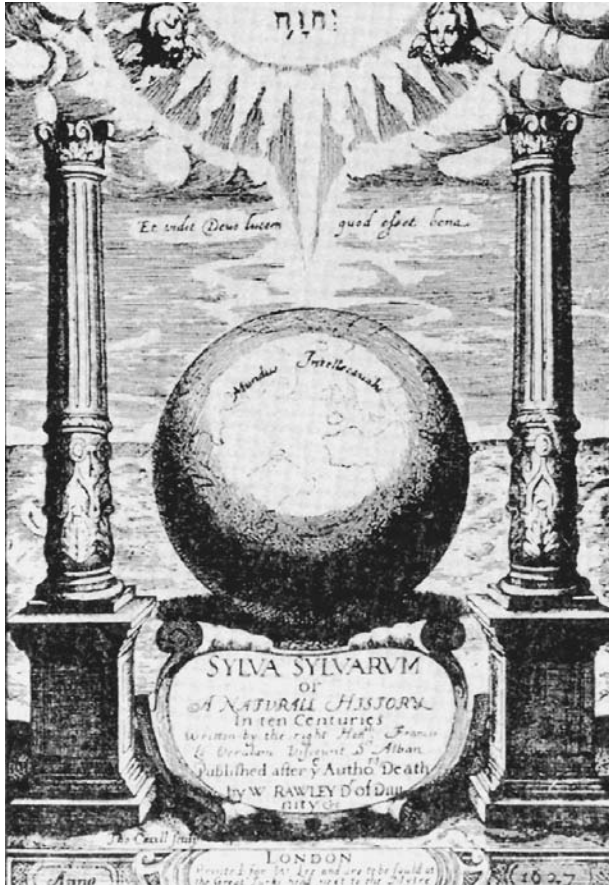
ception. As Bacon put it, these idols created “enchanted” or “crooked” mirrors that change and pervert reality. The first of these, “Idols of the Tribe,” arose from features of human nature that clouded measured assessment of data, such as faulty or impaired senses or an instinct toward lumping versus one toward splitting. “Idols of the Cave” were the prejudices of individuals that obscured reasoned evaluation, such as a preference for one idea over another. “Idols of the Marketplace” had to do with the obstacles language places in the way of understanding. Here Bacon had in mind the fact that many of the qualitative terms that human beings use to describe phenomena in the physical world are, in fact, inadequate, incomplete, or overly general. Bacon cautioned against terms such as “moist” and “dry”—which were frequently used by natural philosophers of the period—for they lacked a precise character and therefore could not further scientific investigation. Bacon labeled the last sort of idols “Idols of the Theater” to denote the constructed, fictionalized character of intellectual theories. The pursuit of evidence to support theories, he argued, corrupted the evaluation of the results of experiments. Bacon advanced these arguments in his *Novum Organum* (New Organon; 1620), a work that has sometimes been called a “manifesto for the Scientific Revolution.” It set out his new method of inductive investigation as a way to minimize the impact of the idols he identified. As Bacon saw it, the old deductive method used by Aristotelian scholasticism throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance jumped from the identification of particulars to the formation of general principles, and only then built up the theories that linked the particular to the general. It completed all these steps without any empirical validation. The absence of independent verification meant that the idols he had identified literally shaped what was accepted as true. His new method insisted upon a slow ascent from particulars through theories that were independently validated through observation to general principles. Key to his method is the idea that knowledge is derived via trial and error; experiments that fail to produce or generate an independent theory, he argued, should be discarded. Theories that could not be proven false had to be accepted as true.

**BACON’S IDEA OF PROGRESS.** For most of the twentieth century, historians emphasized the degree to which Bacon’s inductive method had little to do with how scientists actually think. William Harvey, a contemporary of Bacon and the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, once quipped that Bacon pursued scientific research “like a Lord Chancellor,” meaning that like a government official Bacon sought to mandate scien-



Portrait of Sir Francis Bacon. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

tific discoveries as opposed to accepting the leaps of imagination and deduction that so often lie behind scientific breakthroughs. Historians have built on this criticism, pointing out that a researcher following Bacon’s method would discover him/herself in an endless loop of validating only minutely different experiments, and more importantly that Bacon’s neglect of mathematics was a fatal flaw from which his method could not recover. More recent studies have sought to rehabilitate Bacon as a scientific forerunner, pointing out the inspiration, if not insight, he provided to many of the men who did participate in the Scientific Revolution. There is now also some appreciation of Bacon’s role in the creation of the empirical methods favored by social scientists, especially his arguments that experiments should be designed to disprove rather than prove a theory. While Bacon’s role in the actual production of science is the subject of debate and revision, his legacy as the first great advocate of science has always been acknowledged. It was Bacon who first made the case that knowledge is power and that the acquisition of knowledge enables states to become great. Significantly, what Bacon had in mind when he used the term “knowledge” was not “metaphysics,” that is, ideas that explain the hidden or unseen



Frontispiece to Sir Francis Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum*. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

sources of life and the universe. It was instead “physics,” by which he had in mind a modern notion of nature and the technologies that can be used to exploit it. Bacon has also been correctly identified as the father of the “idea of progress,” the idea that life on earth can be made better through advancements in technology.

**THE GREAT INSTAURATION.** The literary character of Bacon’s writings allowed them to serve the scientific cause far more effectively than any piece of scientific research he did. In 1620 Bacon announced his plans to write a “Great Instauration,” a six-part proposal for the effective establishment of civilization on a scientific footing. Bacon only completed the first two parts of his proposal: *The Advancement of Learning* (1623) and the *New Organon* (1620). After Bacon’s untimely death in 1626, two of his other works were published together: the *Sylva Sylvarum* and the *New Atlantis* (1627). In the two parts of the Great Instauration he completed, Bacon presented his argument via a series of aphorisms, that is, pithy, witty, three- or four-sentence observations. The *Sylva Sylvarum* contained 100 “experiments,” actually conjec-

tural explanations of various natural phenomena such as the cause of hiccups. The *New Atlantis*, perhaps the first piece of science fiction ever published, offered a utopian vision of a perfect society where, under the protective gaze of a wise ruler, a research institute called Solomon House continuously churned out inventions to make the lives of its citizens better. These four works were the most widely read of Bacon’s works. None of them provided any scientific information of merit, yet the absence of scientific content is what allowed them to be appropriated by generations of intellectuals seeking justification for programs of cultural reform. Thus in the 1660s the founders of the Royal Academy of Science in England saw themselves as realizing the ideas Bacon put forth in his *New Atlantis*, while in the eighteenth century, the editors of the French Enlightenment *Encyclopédie* signaled their identification with Bacon’s Great Instauration by placing his name on the first page of the first volume of their great work.

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## THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION AND PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALISM

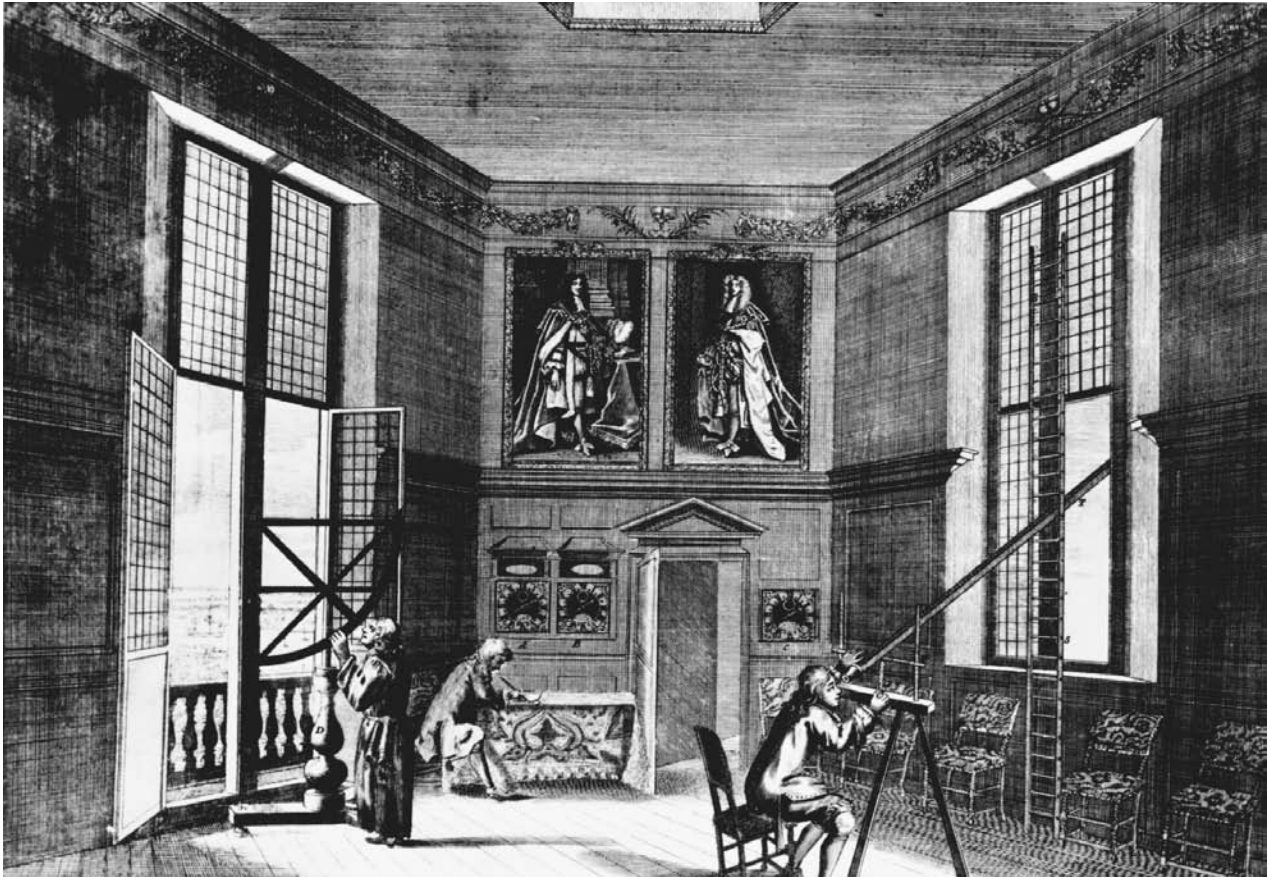
**ISAAC NEWTON AND THE CONFIRMATION OF THE CASE FOR SCIENCE.** Isaac Newton (1642–1727) was the first universally recognized scientific genius. In



his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy), better known as the *Principia* (1687), he provided the mathematical demonstration necessary to prove his theory of gravity, and in doing so also lent irrefutable support to the Copernican thesis that the earth revolved around the sun. Beyond the *Principia*, Newton was also the discoverer (along with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz) of differential calculus, as well as the physical properties of light. He also invented the reflecting telescope. It was Newton who opened up the universe to scientific investigation by insisting that the physical laws that operate on Earth must also operate everywhere else, and that to discover what works on Earth is to discover what works in the universe. In making and announcing these discoveries Newton supplied the final push that turned European civilization toward the acceptance of science, not religion, as the basis of truth and knowledge. The contest between science and religion had been fiercely fought to a stalemate in the decades before Newton, with the defenders of religion, safe behind university walls, content to simply ignore the scientific challenge. The problem hindering the scientific assault was that advocates of science could not agree upon their own argument. The Copernican thesis was the cutting edge of the case being made for science, yet there was no consensus among the advocates of science that it was correct. Many of the arguments that Galileo advanced in favor of the thesis had been deeply flawed, and it is telling that Bacon chose to ignore the thesis in making his case for science. At the heart of the problem was an inability to explain scientifically the phenomenon that the accumulation of the data had revealed: the fact that the planets revolved around the sun in an elliptical rather than purely circular orbit. Newton's theory of gravity solved these problems by advancing the notion that the sun's pull on a planet was strongest when the planet was closest to it, and weakest when the planet was furthest away. His corollary development of the idea of centrifugal force—that at all times the pull of the sun on a planet was balanced by the pull of all other planets—definitively explained the phenomenon for which scientists had long been searching for an explanation. Newton's theory forced even churchmen to accept the veracity of the Copernican thesis. As Alexander Pope observed in a famous couplet from his "Epitaph intended for Sir Isaac Newton," "Nature and nature's laws lay hid in night; God said "Let Newton be!" and all was light." Contemporary Europeans embraced Newton—much as later twentieth-century Americans would celebrate Albert Einstein—as proof of the notion that through reasoned analysis it was possible to know nature, and, through nature, God. In his *Lettres*

*philosophiques* (Philosophical Letters; 1734) Voltaire wrote with the aim of convincing Continental Europeans to follow the British cultural lead. Four of the twenty-four letters in the volume were devoted to explaining the work of Newton. Newton was a devout Christian who, it has been observed, wrote several million words of theology. Newton was also so deeply enamored of alchemy that the British economist John Maynard Keynes, who collected many of Newton's alchemical works, once characterized Newton as "the last of the magicians." Yet Voltaire correctly perceived that in the battle between science and religion, Newton was the ultimate weapon to defend science, and Voltaire passed on this awareness of the importance of Newton's discoveries to other Enlightenment thinkers. While the editors of the French Enlightenment *Encyclopédie* may have pointed out their indebtedness to Francis Bacon for their inspiration, Newton's new mechanistic universe was the justification for their work. His idea of a world held together by mathematical regularity, and by the opposing and counterbalancing forces of gravity and centrifugal force played a role in much of Enlightenment thought; this scientific model became, in other words, one of the dominant metaphors of the age, and its influence found its way into political theory, social criticism, and even the aesthetic writing of the period.

**OPTICS AND THE SEARCH FOR A GEOMETRIC GOD.** It was not coincidental that Galileo built his case for the Copernican thesis on the evidence he derived from his telescopic observations, or that when Bacon wanted to convey the idea of the cognitive blinders that inhibit human comprehension he adopted the metaphor of distorting mirrors. The seventeenth century was captivated by optics and all technology that derived from the use of glass lenses, much in the same way that the modern world is obsessed with the possibilities that computers offer. Glass lenses, like modern computer chips, are made from silicon. In both instances it is not silicon itself, but the way it has been mathematically configured that creates its utility for humans. The important role that mathematics played in grinding the lenses that were used in telescopes and microscopes inspired numerous attempts at the time to unearth a "geometric God." Seventeenth-century scientists still took as their departure point the premise that a supreme being had created the universe, and thus intellectuals thought that the geometric theorems that their technologies relied upon might be investigated to reveal the "secret" harmonies, proportions, and mathematical relationships God had used in His Creation. In this way geometry also became an important path of study for seventeenth-century

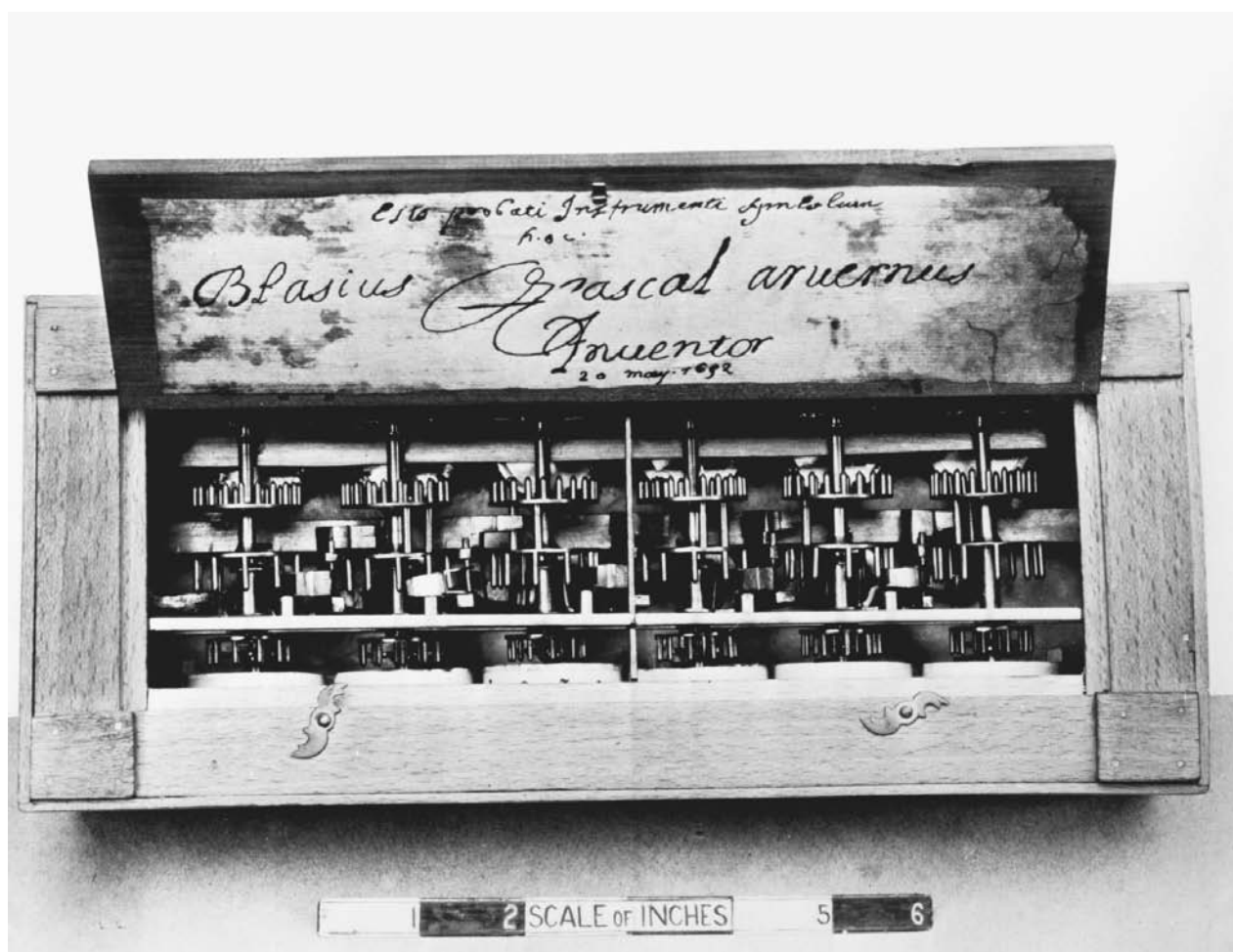


Engraving of astronomers in the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, England. The new astronomy of the seventeenth century led philosophers to challenge received wisdom. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

philosophers, for, like scientists, they were convinced that it might reveal something about the attributes of the mind of God.

**RATIONALISM AND MATHEMATICS.** The chief exponents of the school of seventeenth-century philosophy known as rationalism were all in some way involved in the application of mathematical principles to technological problems. Both René Descartes (1596–1650) and Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), the first two proponents of rationalism, had, in fact, made their living through lens grinding at one point or another in their careers. Rationalists like Descartes and Spinoza took as their starting point the notion that philosophy might follow a path to truth similar to that of mathematics, which derived its powerful theorems from axioms. In this way, rationalist philosophers became concerned with developing a way of working out the many logical implications of axiomatic statements concerning the nature of existence. To explain their method, one must first have a clear idea of how axioms and theorems function in mathematics. In geometry, for example, it is an axiom

that a triangle is a two-dimensional figure or polygon composed by the intersection of three straight lines. All the theorems that have to do with different types of triangles follow from this axiom. In this sense, it can be said that these theorems are innate—that is, inherent in the axiom—and that it is the task of the mathematician to explicate them by logical deduction. Rationalists approached the study of God from this same perspective. Their goal was to demonstrate that God was the ultimate axiom from which all other axioms are logically derived. As a philosophical perspective, rationalism’s origins were ancient, and could be traced back to the ancient Greek mathematician Pythagoras, who noted the mathematical correspondences that occur in nature and concluded as a result that “all is number.” What was new in its reappearance in the seventeenth century was its application to the Christian intellectual tradition. To that point Christian thought took as a given that knowledge of God was revealed through the Bible or through visions and miracles. But rationalism rejected such revelation as a source of divine knowledge, and taught instead that true knowledge of God was innate within humans



"The Pascaline," an automatic calculating machine invented by the mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal. Seventeenth-century rationalists believed that mathematical principles could be used to solve philosophical problems. CORBIS-BETTMANN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

and could be deduced by the application of its rigorous intellectual method. Because they rejected the traditional role that divine revelation had long played in religious teaching, though, many rationalists were attacked as free thinkers and atheists.

**RENÉ DESCARTES.** The work of René Descartes has often been cited as the beginning of modern philosophy. At the time that Descartes began writing, skepticism had a pervasive influence over philosophical debate in Europe. Skepticism rejected the possibility of philosophical certainty. Its proponents argued that human beings were incapable of knowing truth and that they could only instead affirm through faith their own beliefs. Descartes sought to demonstrate that by following his rationalistic method, truth could be ascertained and known. His case for philosophical certainty was the starting point for every discussion of the topic during the Baroque and Enlightenment eras. Descartes was a first-rate mathematician,

though his impact is mostly forgotten today. He pioneered the methods followed in analytic geometry, which has to do with the utilization of algebraic procedures to resolve geometric problems and vice-versa. It was Descartes also who introduced the practice still followed in algebra of assigning the letters *a*, *b*, *c*, etc., to known quantities, and the letters *x*, *y*, *z*, etc., to unknown quantities. Descartes' religious sensibilities are the subject of some debate, and the stance taken in this debate dictates one's interpretation of his work. One school of biographers has long emphasized the depths of Descartes' Catholic faith, while another has charged that his display of religiosity was merely intended to ward off possible criticism. Untangling Descartes' religious convictions remains a perilous enterprise. By upbringing, he was a Catholic, and he went to great lengths in his work to show that he was not of a similar mind to Galileo. When he learned that the Roman Church had condemned



Engraving of René Descartes. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Galileo's works, he even withdrew a manuscript from his publisher in which he had supported the Copernican thesis. Still other evidence of his insincerity must be admitted. Although a Catholic, for instance, Descartes chose to spend a large portion of his adult life living in Protestant Holland, where he was free to pursue his philosophical work without being forced to practice his religion. Yet Descartes presented his philosophy all the same as a scientific case for the existence of God. Those who see his faith as real appreciated his work as a heartfelt if unsuccessful effort to use mathematics to confirm religion. Those who see his faith as insincere have treated his work as a camouflaged expression of atheism. Whatever the position taken on his religious sensibilities, all commentators agree that Descartes was sincere in his belief that mathematics and the rationalism it might foster provided an antidote to philosophical skepticism, the teaching that ultimate truths could not be established. In his *Discourse on Method* (1637), Descartes mapped out his objections to existing philosophical approaches. In his *Meditations on the First Philosophy: In Which the Existence of God and the Distinction Between Mind and Body are Demonstrated* (1641), by far his most influential work, he built his case against philosophical skepticism. In this work Descartes presents his most famous argument against doubt in the immortal words "cogito ergo sum" or "I think, therefore I am." For Descartes, when he used

the word "cogito" ("I think"), he had in mind a "clear and distinct" idea whose truth was self-evident in the way the truth of a mathematical axiom is self-evident. Importantly, one ramification of Descartes' notion was that it drew an absolute dichotomy between mind and body. Mind had to do exclusively with cognition, with thought. Body had nothing at all to do with thought. Thus, the mind could learn nothing of truth from the body, that is, through sensory perception and experience. The mind could only draw upon itself, upon the ideas that were innate within it. As a result the proof that Descartes fashioned for the existence of God stressed that since the human mind possessed an idea of perfection that idea must come from someone else. That someone else must be perfect, and since only God is perfect, He must have placed the idea of perfection in the human mind as proof of His existence.

**SPINOZA.** Descartes' ideas resonated among the intellectuals of his era, who were searching to find a way to prove God's existence through a seemingly scientific and ironclad rationalistic approach. While many intellectuals agreed with his starting point, some took exception to the path he suggested. Of those, the most important figure to articulate an alternative path to Descartes' rationalism was the Dutch Jewish thinker Baruch or Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677). Spinoza's case against Descartes derived from two observations. First, Spinoza insisted that Descartes had not pushed his ideas to their logical conclusions, and that second, humankind's spiritual freedom might be attained only if the logical conclusions of Descartes' system were embraced. Descartes, it must be remembered, often backed away from public presentations of arguments that might result in his censure from orthodox forces. By contrast, Spinoza's fate provides a powerful example of the consequences of making plain the theological implications that were inherent in a rationalist philosophical approach. As a young man Spinoza had been condemned and expelled from the Jewish community of Amsterdam. At this point he changed his name from Baruch to Benedict. Although a small group of thinkers recognized his achievements at the time of his death, for the most part Spinoza was reviled within the broader European intellectual community as an atheist. Modern commentators have emphasized that the characterization of Spinoza as an atheist is unfair. He had a strong faith in the Judeo-Christian deity; he just conceptualized that deity in a way that was distasteful to contemporary Jews and Christians. Key to Spinoza's argument for the reality of God was his pantheism, an idea he developed in his *Ethics*, a work completed in 1675 but not published until after

his death in 1677. Spinoza modeled the *Ethics* on the ancient *Elements of Geometry* of Euclid, and in it, he sought to demonstrate that all that exists in the universe is God. While Descartes had postulated a dichotomy between mind and body, Spinoza rejected that dichotomy and argued instead that mind and body are parallel expressions of the same thing. The human mind, in other words, has within it an impression of the tree that is physically before its eyes. The tree itself exists as an “extension,” a term that Descartes used to describe the physical and mathematical concreteness of things, but it exists all the same as a concept in the mind. In this sense mind and body are parts of the very same substance of which all existence is composed, and Spinoza identified that substance as God. In this way everything in the world is thus composed and contained within the deity.

**THE CONTROVERSY OVER SPINOZA.** The tragedy for Spinoza was that this argument could be interpreted in various contradictory ways. It could be taken, for instance, as an affirmation of an immanent deity who might be worshipped through his attributes, or it could be interpreted as a rationale for an atheistic materialism. Since God exists in all things, in other words, Spinoza could be seen as reducing God’s importance to a superfluous detail. It was this latter interpretation of his work that dominated among the many contemporaries that attacked his ideas in the later seventeenth century. It has always been something of a puzzle as to why Spinoza was expelled from the Jewish community of Amsterdam so early in his life, but it remains plausible that perhaps this thinker’s early precocious arguments against a providential God and the immortality of the soul may have had something to do with his excommunication. For Spinoza, beliefs in God’s providence and the human soul’s immortality were only ideas designed to make the deity appealing to humans. They stood in the way of the appreciation of God’s human-dwarfing immensity, and it was only by appreciating this enormity that Spinoza believed humankind might find a path to spiritual freedom. In this regard his ideas concerning the human passions followed a similar logic. The passions made human beings and their affairs seem more important than they actually were when judged against the infinitude of God. Freeing oneself from the human passions was thus for Spinoza the only way to see God, and seeing God was the only way to ultimate freedom.

**GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNIZ.** The last contributor of new ideas to the rationalist school of philosophy was Leibniz (1646–1716). The son of a professor, Leibniz earned a law degree by the age of twenty. Somewhat later he began a career in the employ of German princes,



Engraving of the German Enlightenment philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

primarily the dukes of Hanover, serving among other things as a librarian, a diplomat, an engineer, and an educational reformer. Along the way Leibniz gained fame for his mathematical genius. Historians grant the honor of the discovery of differential calculus to Isaac Newton, but recognize that Leibniz made the discovery independent of the former. Leibniz also sought to reconcile rationalism with German Protestantism. Descartes had postulated an opposition between mind and body. Leibniz dismissed this opposition by rejecting the notion that the body had some reality beyond the mind. He also argued that time and space, the substance in which the body was captured for Descartes, was illusory. Leibniz reversed the philosophical inclination to define being as static or passive existence. For him, to be was to do, doing being equated with thinking. He could thus treat mind and body as the active and passive, immaterial and material parts of a whole. The idea that matter was composed of atoms was just then beginning to take hold in scientific discourse. Since he rejected the idea that matter has any existence outside the mind, Leibniz developed as an alternative to the idea of the atom, the idea of the monad. The idea of monads can be discerned evolving in Leibniz’s work, reaching fruition in his

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***SIMPLE SUBSTANCES, COMPLEX THEORY**

**INTRODUCTION:** As the debate over the nature of knowledge heightened in Europe around 1700, thinkers came upon new ways of defining epistemology, the science of mental knowledge. One response was George Berkeley's radical idealism, that is, the notion that the mind and senses shaped all knowledge of the outside world, and without perception, nothing existed. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz came to a different conclusion. To explain how the mind apprehended and comprehended the world, he relied on the concept of monads, a concept he himself invented. A monad was, as he observed, "nothing but a simple substance, which enters into compounds." The theory of knowledge that such a theory produced was complex, as this excerpt shows; it did not win many adherents.

1. The Monad, of which we shall here speak, is nothing but a simple substance, which enters into compounds. By 'simple' is meant "without parts." (Theod. 10)
2. And there must be simple substances, since there are compounds; for a compound is nothing but a collection or aggregatum of simple things.
3. Now where there are no parts, there can be neither extension nor form [figure] nor divisibility. These Monads are the real atoms of nature and, in a word, the elements of things.
4. No dissolution of these elements need be feared, and there is no conceivable way in which a simple substance can be destroyed by natural means. (Theod. 89)
5. For the same reason there is no conceivable way in which a simple substance can come into being by natural means, since it cannot be formed by the combination of parts [composition].
6. Thus it may be said that a Monad can only come into being or come to an end all at once; that is to say, it can come into being only by creation and come to an end only by annihilation, while that which is compound comes into being or comes to an end by parts.
7. Further, there is no way of explaining how a Monad can be altered in quality or internally changed by any

other created thing; since it is impossible to change the place of anything in it or to conceive in it any internal motion which could be produced, directed, increased or diminished therein, although all this is possible in the case of compounds, in which there are changes among the parts. The Monads have no windows, through which anything could come in or go out. Accidents cannot separate themselves from substances nor go about outside of them, as the 'sensible species' of the Scholastics used to do. Thus neither substance nor accident can come into a Monad from outside.

8. Yet the Monads must have some qualities, otherwise they would not even be existing things. And if simple substances did not differ in quality, there would be absolutely no means of perceiving any change in things. For what is in the compound can come only from the simple elements it contains, and the Monads, if they had no qualities, would be indistinguishable from one another, since they do not differ in quantity. Consequently, space being a plenum, each part of space would always receive, in any motion, exactly the equivalent of what it already had, and no one state of things would be discernible from another.
9. Indeed, each Monad must be different from every other. For in nature there are never two beings which are perfectly alike and in which it is not possible to find an internal difference, or at least a difference founded upon an intrinsic quality [denomination].
10. I assume also as admitted that every created being, and consequently the created Monad, is subject to change, and further that this change is continuous in each.
11. It follows from what has just been said, that the natural changes of the Monads come from an internal principle, since an external cause can have no influence upon their inner being. (Theod. 396, 400)
12. But, besides the principle of the change, there must be a particular series of changes [un detail de ce qui change], which constitutes, so to speak, the specific nature and variety of the simple substances.

**SOURCE:** Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Robert Latta (London: Oxford University Press, 1898; reprinted 1951): 217–223.

*Monadologia* (Monadology; 1714), published two years before his death. Monads were the irreducible, indivisible, and metaphysical "things" that made up the world.

As Leibniz characterized them, monads were complete concepts; they were self-contained and autonomous. Leibniz was extrapolating from mathematical reasoning

here. What he had in mind was a sentence such as “A is equal to A,” a statement that would obviously remain true whatever the moment, whatever the situation. As Leibniz envisioned it, the set of valid predicates for each of these monads were some part immaterial, some part material in a hierarchical progression that stretched from the least active monads, such as those that took on the appearance of stone in the real world, to the most active, such as those that as a collectivity generated the appearance of the most sentient humans. The creator of all these monads was God, who remained the apex of the geometric pyramid favored by the rationalists, but who was now understood to be the monad for whom all other monads were predicates. Because he rejected the reality of material existence, Leibniz rejected the idea of causality, the idea that one thing in the material world caused another. Rather, he insisted that the predicates that exist for a given subject exist as a network of explanation from which it is possible to deduce the connection between events. For example, if one of the predicates for John is that he drives a car, and another of the predicates is that he is a careless driver, it is possible to deduce what Leibniz identified as the “sufficient reason” why John has a car accident. Applying this notion of sufficient reason to the world in which he lived, Leibniz argued that there was a rational explanation for all that occurred. It is in this sense that it is possible to extract from Leibniz’s ideas the notion that we live in “the best of all possible worlds,” the idea for which the French playwright Voltaire lampooned Leibniz in the figure of Doctor Pangloss, a central character in his satire *Candide*.

**NICHOLAS MALEBRANCHE.** Malebranche (1638–1715) was slightly senior in age to Leibniz, and his writings had their intellectual impact earlier than those of Leibniz. Like Leibniz, he was concerned with reconciling rationalism with Christianity, though in his case the Christianity in question was French Catholicism. He is often left out of discussions on Baroque philosophy because his contemporaries recognized him more as a disciple of Descartes than as the originator of new ideas. Yet in his role as a defender and reformer of the teachings of his master, he was perhaps the most influential of the rationalists after Descartes. Spinoza and Leibniz both used Descartes as the departure point for the development of their own systems of thought. Neither of these systems ever replaced that of Descartes as the definitive notion of rationalism. Malebranche rethought Descartes’ ideas in light of the criticisms that had been directed at them in the last part of the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, when rival philosophers talked about rationalism, what they inevitably had in

mind was Descartes as amended by Malebranche. Malebranche’s life and career followed a pattern that recurred often in early-modern French intellectual life. Born with a deformed spine and a sickly constitution, he preferred a life of seclusion and scholarship early on. In 1664 he was ordained a priest, though he never took on any pastoral duties. In the same year, after failed efforts to become a historian, then a biblical scholar, he discovered the writings of Descartes. Descartes’ words caused his heart to “palpitate,” and he spent the rest of his life studying and explaining Descartes’ thoughts. Malebranche’s major work on Descartes, *De la Recherche de la Verite* (The Search After Truth) appeared in three volumes published in 1674 and 1675. In this work he advanced two ideas that shaped the understanding of Cartesianism. First was the notion of “vision in God,” the idea that all mental images or ideas exist only in God, and that at his discretion God allows man to see these things. Descartes had argued that ideas were innate within the human mind without working out how those ideas got there or how they were accessed on a moment-to-moment basis. For Descartes, it was sufficient to argue that God implanted ideas in the human mind at the moment of creation. Malebranche went beyond this and, fusing the ideas of Descartes with those of Saint Augustine, presented an image of an omnipresent God who continuously interacts with the human mind. Seemingly anticipating the assault on rationalist assumptions that was soon to come from empiricists, Malebranche rejected the argument that ideas came into the mind directly through the senses. The senses can reveal pain and pleasure. They cannot reveal what is causing pain or pleasure. Knowledge of what is outside the mind can only enter the mind through the representations placed there by God. What is perceived when one looks at a tree is not the tree as it really is, but the representation of the tree placed there by God. The second idea associated with Malebranche is “occasionalism,” the argument that God is the ultimate cause of every action. To get a sense of what Malebranche was striving to express here, think of a soccer game where in the closing minutes a player gives the ball a kick that sends the ball through the goal for a winning score. As Malebranche would explain it, the player in question would be the occasional or incidental cause of the winning kick. The real source of the kick was God, who used the player as an instrument of his will.

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## EMPIRICISM

**PIERRE BAYLE.** Not every seventeenth-century intellectual engaged in scientific research embraced rationalism. Some rejected it as presuming to use mathematics to do something mathematics could not do, that is, validate the existence of God. Of these, the most important was Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), the French genius whose Jansenist convictions prompted him to affirm that God is only knowable through the insights he offers as gifts of grace to individual humans. Those trained in the traditional concerns of humanism, with its emphasis on creating a philosophy that might inspire virtue, similarly failed to concede the high road to the rationalists. Many thinkers who could be placed in this category adopted a skeptical posture that questioned the value of any knowledge of human affairs derived from scientific methods of reasoning. Of these, the most influential was Pierre Bayle (1647–1706). Bayle was born and raised as a French Huguenot, those that followed the teachings of John Calvin. For a brief period he converted to Catholicism, although his re-conversion to Calvinism necessitated his flight from France. Ultimately, he settled as a free man in Rotterdam, but he did so with the knowledge that the French government had imprisoned his brothers as punishment for his writings. They would eventually die in jail. Even in Rotterdam, clerical authorities attacked Bayle for the apparent atheism articulated in his writings. The trials and tribulations Bayle experienced because of his religious views made him a bitter opponent of any and all dogmas—proclamations of truth—whether they be religious, scientific, or otherwise. As Voltaire later characterized him with some hyperbole, Bayle had the finest mind for the “art of reasoning”—that is, critical analysis—of any intellectual “who ever wrote.” Bayle slowly examined any claim of truth and worked through its arguments to show the doubts about it every rational person had to recognize. One example of Bayle’s method was his discussion of “identity.” Since Descartes had based his proof of existence on consciousness, early-modern thinkers debated

whether identity was continuous—whether a person has the same consciousness today that he or she had five days ago or five years ago. To a “learned theologian” who affirmed that consciousness is retained, Bayle posed the questions: “How do you know that, this morning, God did not let your soul fall back into nothing?” and “How do you know that God did not create another soul with the same modifications?” As Bayle concluded, “That new soul is the one you have now. Convince me to the contrary.” Bayle’s influence over philosophy stemmed from his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Historical and Critical Dictionary; 1702), a vast compendium of more than nine million words that was an international best-seller throughout much of eighteenth century. The articles in the dictionary were fairly straightforward. It was in his footnotes, though, that Bayle got into trouble. These were filled with the same relentless skepticism and questioning spirit that took no assumptions for granted that were found in all of Bayle’s writings. While he insisted that he was a believing Christian, he nevertheless compiled a significant body of works that were questioned, even in his own lifetime, as a challenge to his own religion. Recent scholarship may have become more supportive of the idea that Bayle’s confessions of faith were sincere, yet eighteenth-century philosophers who followed him were convinced of his questioning spirit and his use of human reason to undermine Christian teachings. Bayle’s work was particularly important for its impact on rationalistic arguments. His writings successfully assaulted the rationalists’ assumptions that mathematical reasoning could bring certainty to questions about human existence. In this way his work cleared the ground for the coming of empiricism, a school of philosophy that championed human observation and the insights it might offer.

**EPICUREANISM.** By the second half of the seventeenth century, philosophical thinking in Europe had come to an impasse. Outside of clerical circles the traditional methods of university scholasticism had almost no appeal. Humanism, too, with its emphasis on ancient textual and literary study, was incapable of making sense of the ongoing discoveries that were occurring in science and beyond Europe’s boundaries in the journeys of exploration. Much of the new knowledge that was being amassed at the time, too, derived from new technologies like the telescope that extended the power of the human senses. For all these reasons, rationalism, with its rejection of the possibility of learning new things through the senses, left many people, but especially scientists, cold. In the works of Bayle can be seen some of the tensions of the age, and some scholars have long pointed to his



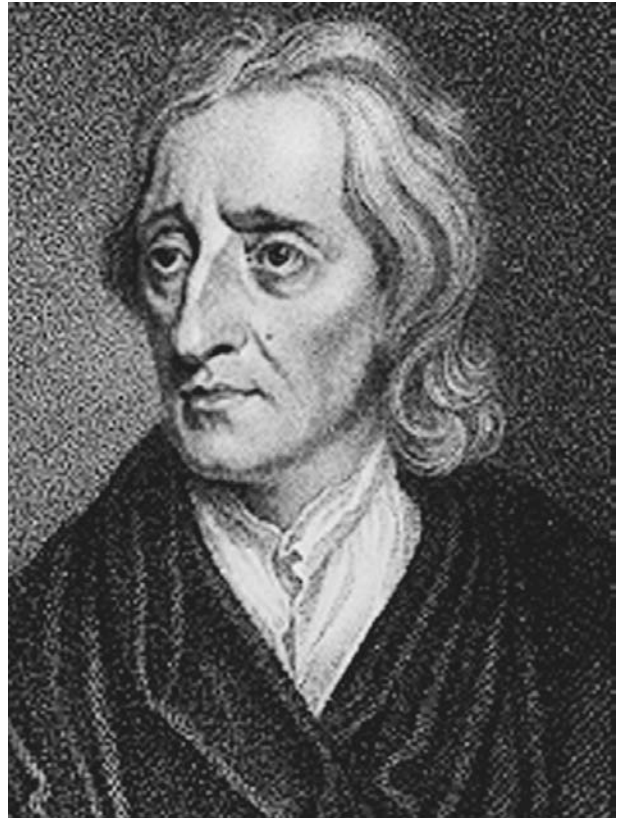
work as a prime example of a resurgence of skepticism in the era. At the same time, the rapid rise of empiricism, a movement that, in fact, grew from Bayle's very questioning cast of mind, cautions against an interpretation that points to a widespread resurgence of skepticism. It would be wrong to present the second half of the seventeenth century as waiting in anticipation of empiricism. Since modern philosophers continue to live in an intellectual universe where empiricist assumptions predominate and because they can look back and see this universe being born in the second half of the seventeenth century, it is useful to appreciate how empiricism fit with the European cultural sensibilities that were emerging in the seventeenth century in ways that no philosophical tradition has before, or since, been able to match. The key assumption of empiricism is the idea that knowledge comes through sensory experience. In contrast to rationalism's affirmation of innate ideas, empiricism insists that a reality exists outside and beyond the human mind, and that it is through the senses that humans gain an understanding of this reality. Like rationalism, empiricism's roots can be traced back to ancient Greek thought, specifically to the ideas of the Greek philosopher Epicurus (361–270 B.C.E.). Two of his conclusions were especially important to the later history of European empiricism. First, Epicurus recognized that the universe was made up of matter. From Democritus (460–370 B.C.E.) he derived a conception of the universe as a void or vacuum populated by atoms, which both figures understood to be irreducible, microscopic bits of matter. These atoms combined to create the macroscopic entities perceivable in the world. Epicurus added to Democritus the ideas that atoms have weight and thus naturally move in a downward direction, and that when atoms come together to form macroscopic entities, they coalesce in recognizable patterns that grant those entities discernible qualities such as the sweetness of honey or the whiteness of snow. It is worth stressing that the materialism implicit in Epicurus' notion of the universe also proved attractive to later seventeenth-century European thinkers. But Epicurus rejected the existence of a spiritual world. As noted before, many commentators recognize Francis Bacon's ideas as the source from which early-modern European scientists drew inspiration. This argument is true in the sense that Bacon's ideas provided a rationalization of scientific investigation upon which both scientists and the public could agree. On the epistemological level, however—that is, the level of the theory of knowledge—it was Epicurus who provided scientists with direction. His materialism, though, was an obstacle to the reconciliation of his ideas with Christianity. Many of the charges of atheism leveled at early-

modern scientists and philosophers can be traced back to their use of the ideas of Epicurus. The second idea of importance from Epicurus is that human understanding comes via the senses. The patterns in which atoms configured themselves grant them qualities discernible only through the five senses. Epicurus affirmed that the senses never lied. Any confusion concerning sensory input takes place in the human mind. Thus the way to knowledge is through using the senses to correct the mind.

**GASSENDI AND BOYLE.** For most of the twentieth century scholars recognized John Locke as the initiator of the empiricist movement. Over the past few decades, however, the significance of the ideas of Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655) and Robert Boyle (1627–1691) as shapers of Locke's thought has been increasingly appreciated. Gassendi suffered from physical infirmities like his contemporary Malebranche, and like Malebranche opted to enter the priesthood, though he never ministered a parish. Gassendi was the first person to record the orbital progression of a planet (Mercury), and thus provide evidence in support of Johannes Kepler's laws of planetary motion. He was also the first scientist to identify and name the Aurora Borealis. It is perhaps revealing of the degree to which mathematics had taken over the debate concerning astronomy that in 1645, when Gassendi was honored for his achievements, he received a chair in mathematics at the College Royal of France. Gassendi was recognized as a scientist in his own day. History has remembered him, however, first and foremost as the individual who reintroduced Western civilization to the thought of Epicurus. Gassendi was one of the men invited to write comments on the first edition of Descartes' *Meditations*. Gassendi took exception to Descartes' appropriation of the methods of geometry and their application to the human quest for truth. For him, Descartes' "cogito ergo sum" proved nothing. Rejecting Descartes' claim that the pathway to truth traveled through the layers of the mind, Gassendi turned to the writings of Epicurus for proof that truth was something humans could only approximate. According to Gassendi, truth was reached through an inherently opposing process by which the senses acted against the mind to misinterpret the knowledge to which they were exposed. Gassendi believed in a "voluntarist" versus an "intellectualist" God, in other words, a God who does not just make laws but who actively shapes and reshapes those laws as he sees fit. From this perspective, Gassendi attacked Descartes' argument that mathematical forms such as triangles are eternal. As Gassendi understood it, if triangles were eternal, they would then stand as something external to God and his creation, a possibility

Gassendi totally rejected. Triangles, therefore, must be part of the world God created. And as Gassendi cautioned, “Don’t tell me if God destroyed it or established it otherwise, it would no longer be a Triangle.” From this direction, Gassendi saw the atoms of Epicurus as serving God’s command, and he sought to Christianize Epicurus, that is, to insert the Christian God as the animus or spirit in the materialistic universe that Epicurus had originally articulated. Thus whatever laws dictated the ways in which atoms came together, those laws had to be regarded as works in progress by God, who could and did, rework them over time according to his will. Gassendi’s ideas were eagerly embraced in England by Robert Boyle, best remembered as the discoverer of the law that bears his name that summarizes the relationship between pressure and the volume of gases. A point of contention among seventeenth-century scientists was whether the universe consisted of a vacuum—a void—or a plenum—a filled space. Seeking to avoid a stand on the issue, Boyle labeled the irreducible bits of matter that make up the world “corpuscles,” not atoms. But his corpuscles, like Gassendi’s atoms, were God’s building blocks. And while few people read Boyle for his corpuscular theory, the fact that Boyle explained his innumerable experiments based upon his corpuscular theory helped to diffuse his ideas among a broad readership.

**JOHN LOCKE.** Among the young men who helped Boyle with his many experiments was an aspiring medical student named John Locke (1632–1704). Although his skills as a medic were what brought Locke to the attention of his eventual patron, Lord Shaftesbury, Locke spent very little of his adult life practicing medicine. Eventually, his medical research provided him with qualifications for entering into the Royal Academy of Science, but Locke spent most of his time engaged in politics. Shaftesbury was a leader of the Whig party, which for most of the 1680s stood in opposition to King Charles II and his brother, who eventually took the throne as James II. Having failed in his effort to have the English Parliament exclude James from the succession to the English throne, Shaftesbury escaped England for exile in Holland in 1682, where he died less than a year later. As a close associate of Shaftesbury, Locke also felt it prudent to follow him into exile, and he remained in Holland until the Glorious Revolution of 1688 forced James from the throne. During the 1680s, while he was on the run from agents of the English crown, Locke composed *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), the source text from which modern philosophical empiricism developed. In the Epistle or “Letter” that



Engraving of John Locke. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Locke provided as a prologue to this work, Locke treated his philosophy as deriving from the “scientific” ideas of figures like Boyle and Newton, the “master builders” he argued that had left “lasting monuments” for “posterity.” His ideas were also shaped by the nature of the political-philosophical discourse that had occurred in England to this time. Although Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651) remained fresh in the memory of English readers in Locke’s day, this later philosopher came to far more optimistic conclusions than his predecessor had concerning the nature of humankind in a primitive state. His view of human psychology discarded the essential distrust and pessimism that had characterized Hobbes’s earlier work. Locke portrayed his own work as an “under-laborer,” inferior to the great achievements of Boyle and Newton. He was content, he wrote, to help “clear the ground” of some of the “rubbish that lies in the way of knowledge.” In making this statement Locke expressed a sensibility that remains alive in the modern social sciences: the idea that the methods of investigation and analysis developed in the study of nature can be less loftily but still usefully applied to the task of clearing up some of the confusion or “rubbish” concerning humans and their behavior.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A BLANK SLATE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* of 1690, John Locke discounted the notion of innate ideas, and set forth the idea that the mind was a “blank slate,” or *tabula rasa*, at birth, upon which experience wrote its teachings. The idea was to become tremendously influential during the Enlightenment and to spark a great eighteenth-century inquiry into the nature of empirical knowledge.

For, first, it is evident, that all children and idiots have not the least apprehension or thought of them [innate ideas]. And the want of that is enough to destroy that universal assent which must needs be the necessary concomitant of all innate truths: it seeming to me near a contradiction to say, that there are truths imprinted on the soul, which it perceives or understands not: imprinting, if it signify anything, being nothing else but the making certain truths to be perceived. For to imprint anything on the mind without the mind’s perceiving it, seems to me hardly intelligible. If therefore children and idiots have souls, have minds, with those impressions upon them, they must unavoidably perceive them, and necessarily know and assent to these truths; which since they do not, it is evident that there are no such impressions. For if they are not notions naturally imprinted, how can they be innate? and if they are notions imprinted, how can they be unknown? To say a notion is imprinted on the mind, and yet at the same time to say, that the mind is ignorant of it, and never yet took notice of it, is to make this impression nothing. No proposition can be said to be in the mind which it never yet knew, which it was never yet conscious of. For if any one may, then, by the same reason, all propositions that are true, and the mind is capable ever of assenting to, may be said to be in the mind, and to be imprinted: since, if any one can be said to be in the mind, which it never yet knew, it must be only be-

cause it is capable of knowing it; and so the mind is of all truths it ever shall know. Nay, thus truths may be imprinted on the mind which it never did, nor ever shall know; for a man may live long, and die at last in ignorance of many truths which his mind was capable of knowing, and that with certainty. So that if the capacity of knowing be the natural impression contended for, all the truths a man ever comes to know will, by this account, be every one of them innate; and this great point will amount to no more, but only to a very improper way of speaking; which, whilst it pretends to assert the contrary, says nothing different from those who deny innate principles. For nobody, I think, ever denied that the mind was capable of knowing several truths. The capacity, they say, is innate; the knowledge acquired. But then to what end such contest for certain innate maxims? If truths can be imprinted on the understanding without being perceived, I can see no difference there can be between any truths the mind is capable of knowing in respect of their original: they must all be innate or all adventitious: in vain shall a man go about to distinguish them. He therefore that talks of innate notions in the understanding, cannot (if he intend thereby any distinct sort of truths) mean such truths to be in the understanding as it never perceived, and is yet wholly ignorant of. For if these words “to be in the understanding” have any propriety, they signify to be understood. So that to be in the understanding, and not to be understood; to be in the mind and never to be perceived, is all one as to say anything is and is not in the mind or understanding. If therefore these two propositions, “Whatsoever is, is,” and “It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be,” are by nature imprinted, children cannot be ignorant of them: infants, and all that have souls, must necessarily have them in their understandings, know the truth of them, and assent to it.

**SOURCE:** John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Thomas Basset, 1690): 5–6.

**SCOPE OF LOCKE’S ESSAY.** The *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is divided into four books. In the first book, Locke runs through the arguments for the existence of innate ideas in order to disprove them; he calls attention to the fact that children are not born knowing the rules of logic. The second book of the *Essay* is the most important, for it is here that Locke presents the empiricist model of human cognition still embraced today. Locke argues that all knowledge comes through ideas, ideas being defined as the “objects” about which humans think. Introducing a metaphor still much in use, Locke pictured the human mind as a “blank page” that

is filled through experience. There are two sorts of experience: “sensory,” involving the acquisition of knowledge from the outside world, and “reflective,” involving the manipulation within the mind of ideas already present. Likewise, there are two sorts of ideas: simple ideas having to do with the outside world that can only be received through the senses, and complex ideas that are the products of the mind’s treatment and refinement of simple ideas. While humans cannot know the “essence” of things, they can come to an approximate understanding of them. Through the senses, humans can gain an idea of the primary qualities of things—their shapes,

their sizes—and also the secondary qualities of things—their smell, their taste, etc. Through reflection humans can then build complex notions about things humans can then test against further sensory experiences.

**BERKELEY AND THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF EMPIRICISM.** Although his ideas were sometimes perceived as an attack on the traditional Orthodox notion of the pervasiveness of Original Sin, Locke himself was a devout Christian who passed away while being read to from the Bible. Theologians attacked his *Essay*, but much of the venom of their criticism arose, not so much from Locke's work, but from the way in which his ideas were being used. In 1696, John Toland (1670–1722) published his *Christianity Not Mystrious*. Toland based many of his observations on the empiricist arguments in Locke's *Essay*, and used its reasoning to demonstrate that there was no validity at all in traditional revealed religion. Locke himself attempted to disown such a reading, but Edward Stillingfleet, the bishop of Worcester, argued after reading the *Essay* that it was a fair extrapolation. In a series of letters published between 1696 and 1702, Locke and Stillingfleet engaged in a polemic over whether the *Essay* undermined Christian faith. The point of contention was the distinction Locke insisted existed between knowledge, for which the criterion of truth had to be certainty, and faith, which by definition for Locke could only be accepted as probable. The demarcation of knowledge as something that could be only understood as true or untrue was the innovation for which Locke was being challenged. Locke was separating the understanding of the natural world and its societies from the understanding of God. As a result, he argued that the understanding of the world could be arrived at only by following empiricist procedures, while the understanding of God could never be arrived at with certainty following empiricist procedures. It was exactly upon this last point that George Berkeley (1685–1753), Anglican bishop of Cloyne in Ireland, also challenged Locke. Following Gassendi's reading of Epicurus, Locke had granted the material world a charter of independence from the spiritual world. The material world, Locke argued, could only be approached from a materialist perspective, an argument Berkeley rejected. Instead Berkeley denied the existence of a material world altogether, and denied the existence of any concrete realities outside the mind that human beings might attain some level of certainty in understanding. Whatever was out there existed solely as ideas and nothing more as they were brought within the compass of human understanding. Berkeley modified Descartes' "Cogito ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am") to read, "Esse est percipi" ("to be is to per-

ceive"), his point being that the one certainty humans can have is that the act of being empirical—the act of receiving information through the senses—is the validation of their conscious existence. Berkeley was a man of considerable intellectual powers. He had sufficient command of mathematics, in fact, to expose errors in Newton's calculus. It is thus significant that he turned away from science and back toward religion. His career both before and after his appointment as bishop of Cloyne can be characterized by his concern to stop what he took to be the erosion of collective belief. He identified philosophical materialism as the source of that erosion, and sought to make the case against its integrity. Berkeley's empiricism thus represented a break with the empiricism of his predecessors in that instead of attempting to free the scientific study of the physical universe from the oversight of theologians, he sought to demonstrate that whatever insights scientists gleaned about the physical universe were gifts from God. They were, in other words, signs of God's benevolence similar to the gifts the divinity had also given humankind through his revelation. In his youthful writings Berkeley had emphasized that insights about the physical universe came through the senses; now in his latter works, he articulated a Neo-Platonic position that allowed for some ideas to be innate in the human mind. Berkeley's efforts at Christianizing empiricism thus ended with a negation of the empiricist elements in his philosophy.

**CONDILLAC AND SENSATIONISM.** British empiricism had a powerful impact on intellectual thought everywhere in eighteenth-century Europe, but only one thinker on the continent made an original contribution to the empiricist school of thought. In 1688, William Molyneux, secretary to the Royal Irish Academy, sent a philosophical problem to John Locke that Molyneux hoped Locke would try his hand in solving. Suppose, Molyneux's problem began, a man born blind was trained to recognize a sphere and a cube by touch. Suppose then that this individual was granted sight. Would the individual then be able to identify a sphere and a cube by sight correctly without touching them? Locke concluded that the answer was "No." Later, when he took up the same problem, Berkeley reached the same conclusion. Both men saw this problem as turning on the issue of depth perception, and concluded, albeit with different justifications, that the circle and square that would confront the untrained eye would not immediately be recognized as a sphere and cube. Depth perception was not innate. The French empiricist Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–1780), writing after Locke and Berkeley, suggested that Molyneux's problem was

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* the Anglo-Irish bishop George Berkeley examined the empirical basis of human understanding. Berkeley keenly sensed some of the problems inherent in John Locke's notion of the mind as a *tabula rasa*. In his *Treatise* he outlined a thorough-going idealism—all reality is defined in the mind working in tandem with the senses. But such a commonsensical idea also had its quizzical features in Berkeley's thought. He suggested that if objects were not perceived, then they did not exist.

25. All our ideas, sensations, notions, or the things which we perceive, by whatsoever names they may be distinguished, are visibly inactive—there is nothing of power or agency included in them. So that one idea or object of thought cannot produce or make any alteration in another. To be satisfied of the truth of this, there is nothing else requisite but a bare observation of our ideas. For, since they and every part of them exist only in the mind, it follows that there is nothing in them but what is perceived: but whoever shall attend to his ideas, whether of sense or reflexion, will not perceive in them any power or activity; there is, therefore, no such thing contained in them. A little attention will discover to us that the very being of an idea implies passiveness and inertness in it, insomuch that it is impossible for an idea to do anything, or, strictly speaking, to be the cause of anything: neither can it be the resemblance or pattern of any active being, as is evident from sect. 8. Whence it plainly follows that extension, figure, and motion cannot be the cause of our sensations. To say, therefore, that these are the effects of

powers resulting from the configuration, number, motion, and size of corpuscles, must certainly be false.

26. We perceive a continual succession of ideas, some are anew excited, others are changed or totally disappear. There is therefore some cause of these ideas, whereon they depend, and which produces and changes them. That this cause cannot be any quality or idea or combination of ideas, is clear from the preceding section. I must therefore be a substance; but it has been shewn that there is no corporeal or material substance: it remains therefore that the cause of ideas is an incorporeal active substance or Spirit. ...

28. I find I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as oft as I think fit. It is no more than willing, and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy; and by the same power it is obliterated and makes way for another. This making and unmaking of ideas doth very properly denominate the mind active. Thus much is certain and grounded on experience; but when we think of unthinking agents or of exciting ideas exclusive of volition, we only amuse ourselves with words.

29. But, whatever power I may have over my own thoughts, I find the ideas actually perceived by Sense have not a like dependence on my will. When in broad daylight I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether I shall see or no, or to determine what particular objects shall present themselves to my view; and so likewise as to the hearing and other senses; the ideas imprinted on them are not creatures of my will. There is therefore some other Will or Spirit that produces them.

**SOURCE:** George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), in *The Works of George Berkeley*. Vol. 1. Ed. A. C. Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910): 51–53.

not about depth perception, but about the connections between the senses and the mind, and that Locke and Berkeley did not go far enough in their conclusions. To Condillac's mind, the question of depth perception took for granted that the mind was aware that there is a world outside the body where there are some things that are closer and some things that are further away. How did the mind, Condillac pondered, first come to realize that a world existed outside itself? Like Malebranche and Gassendi, Condillac was a sickly child who turned to scholarship and then to the priesthood. Condillac lived a much more varied life than either of these men, however. As a young man, he was part of an intellectual circle that included Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot. And for ten years of his life he served as the

private tutor of the duke of Parma, the grandson of Louis XV (r. 1715–1774). Condillac's brand of empiricism has been labeled "sensationalism." Sensationalism moved beyond other forms of empiricism in insisting that all attributes of consciousness are the products of the senses. Whereas Locke's idea of empiricism maintained that ideas were derived from experiences, it took for granted that the mental processes through which experiences were turned into ideas were themselves innate. Condillac argued, by contrast, that mental processes were themselves the results of experience. In his *Treatise on Sensations* (1754) Condillac went Molyneux one better and asked his readers to imagine what would happen if an inanimate statue came to consciousness, acquiring the five senses either in isolation or in various sequences. As

Condillac saw it, the consciousness of the statue—that is, what it would know itself to be—would be a function of the combination of senses available to it. Condillac saw the human mind as passive and immobile. All it could do was react to the sensations, the impulses of data that flowed into it from the senses. Gradually, it learned to manipulate the data, to compare and contrast the latter, to arrange the latter in patterns, these acts signaling the acquisition of the mental processes earlier empiricists took as innate. As for the question of how the human mind first realized that a world existed outside itself, according to Condillac that discovery was a product of the sense of touch. Only after a human has touched an external object is it brought home to the mind that something exists that is not an extension of it.

#### HUME AND THE SECULARIZATION OF EMPIRICISM.

Meanwhile, back in Britain, Condillac's contemporary David Hume (1711–1776) was pushing empiricism in yet another direction. Like Locke, Hume was a thinker whose ideas have continued to influence the discussion of a number of topics. In the twentieth century Hume was celebrated by the philosophical naturalists, thinkers who argued that while science does not supply all the answers, its methods of investigation remain the best starting point for deriving answers. They recognized Hume as their distant forebear, an identification for which there is some justification. Hume saw himself as applying the “experimental method of reasoning” demonstrated by Newton to the “science of human nature.” At the same time he has been seen as an important force that kept alive philosophical skepticism. Just as Hume reinforced the dichotomy Locke postulated between knowledge of the material world and belief in God, so Hume used Bayle's skepticism as a scalpel to slice away at the arguments through which the discussion of the physical universe had long been kept within a Christian intellectual framework. Whether Hume saw skepticism as an end in itself or merely as a tool to clear the way for his scientific philosophy remains an open question. Hume, though, more than any other figure in the empiricist movement, led the charge to secularize, that is, strip away the religious dimension from Europe's philosophical discourse. While he took up this mission in almost all his writings, the subject of all his thinking can be gleaned in his *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–1740). Hume complained about the lack of public approval his treatise generated, remembering it later as having “fell dead-born from the press.” So he spent the rest of his career re-packaging the ideas in the *Treatise*, and nowhere did he do so more effectively than in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748). Hume recognized the twofold distinction



Engraving of the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

that Locke had argued existed between sensory inputs and the mental representations they triggered. Hume labeled the former “impressions,” the latter “ideas.” Hume's first insight is that ideas are only “copies” of impressions. His second insight is what has been called his “liveliness” thesis: the notion that what separates ideas from impressions is the vividness of the copies. To use a modern analogy, if an image is photocopied, and then the photocopy is photocopied, each successive image will have less and less of the detail of the original. The difficulty with understanding Hume often resulted from his attacking and dismissing the “useless” ideas that he was trying to replace with his own theories. His attacks on traditional received wisdom, in other words, can be so vitriolic and entertaining that they sometimes cloud over what he had to say that was new. Using his two insights, Hume argued that all knowledge should be scrutinized to determine its factual versus its fictional character. The question concerning every idea that must be asked is “from what impression did it derive.” If the source of the impression cannot be determined, Hume contends, it has no empirical validity. Hume skewered ideas concerning faith, miracles, and the supernatural because they possessed no empirical validation. Having dismissed the possibility of any spiritual basis for morality, Hume sought to establish

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* David Hume examined the long-standing claims of religion to be verified by miracles. He concluded that since miracles were violations of nature, and since experience taught that natural laws could not be violated, miracles were, in fact, impossible. His cool and detached reasoning displays one direction that Enlightenment philosophy took in the eighteenth century as it strove to prune away long-held superstitions.

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation; And as a uniform experience

amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle ...

The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention), 'That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish; and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains after deducting the inferior.' When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion.

In the foregoing reasoning we have supposed, that the testimony, upon which a miracle is founded, may possibly amount to an entire proof, and that the falsehood of that testimony would be a real prodigy: But it is easy to shew, that we have been a great deal too liberal in our concession, and that there never was a miraculous event established on so full an evidence.

**SOURCE:** David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co, 1926): 120–122.

an Epicurean notion of human ethical conduct: the pursuit of pleasure versus the avoidance of pain should be, he argued, the yardstick against which all human actions are judged. In this way, he helped to set the stage for philosophical utilitarianism in the nineteenth century.

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## THE ENLIGHTENMENT

**THE BIG PICTURE.** The Enlightenment was a broad and international movement in eighteenth-century Europe that aimed at placing science and knowledge derived through scientific methods of investigation at the heart of culture and civilization. It took its name from the idea that it represented: a process of bringing “the light of reason” to areas of darkness in human understanding. “Dare to know” was the banner call of the movement proclaimed by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Contemporaries understood this call as an invitation to hunt down and root out every instance of ignorance that continued to stand in the way of human progress. In many instances, certainly in most Catholic lands, religion in general and the state church in particular were identified as the prime sources of such ignorance. As such, the Enlightenment often took on a definite anti-religious cast in these regions. In terms of real people and real events this means that the Enlightenment can be seen as the sum of a series of organized efforts on the part of secular intellectuals to institute their ideas, usually as alternatives to those of the church. The Enlightenment was historically important in large part because these efforts proved to be successful over the long term. Enlightenment ideas, and the secular intellectuals who promoted these ideas, triumphed over existing social and cultural notions, most of which had long been dominated by traditional Christian orthodoxy. And while the idea that there was a positive value to cultural reforms based on science has not gone unchallenged in the modern era, those notions, born in the Enlightenment, have continued to be dominant in the West until contemporary times.

**FOR GOOD OR FOR EVIL.** Such a description of the Enlightenment, though, presents only the few points on which there is broad agreement among scholars. Everything else about the culture and philosophy of the movement has continued to remain disputed. In recent decades, the most agitated of these debates has been over the question of the social and cultural costs of the Enlightenment. Inspired primarily by the writings of the French thinker Michel Foucault (1926–1984), some scholars have argued that the Enlightenment simply substituted one sort of darkness with another. Science, they argue, became a justification for racism, sexism, and an entire host of other kinds of exploitation, just like religion had before it. Such criticism has not gone unchallenged, and others have countered that scientific investigation has, in fact, been a force for progress. While these figures readily admit that bad science has often been a dehumanizing force in the West, they have

pointed out that its relentless pursuit of correct knowledge has been an overall positive force in the European tradition. Another debate, a debate that grew up in the Enlightenment itself, has also touched upon the moral consequences and costs of the movement itself. Critics approaching this problem from a religious perspective have pointed to the Enlightenment as the source for the rise of “secular humanism” and a moral relativism that it inspired. Champions of Enlightenment values, on the other hand, have pointed to Western society’s traditionally repressive and intolerant nature before the eighteenth century. In this view, the Enlightenment has been seen as a force that helped to bring to an end centuries of religious hypocrisy in which only lip service had been paid to moral values. The Enlightenment may have fostered a moral relativism, they conclude, but it also allowed societies to recognize that humans are by nature different, and that they can be made to seem the same only through coercion.

**PUBLIC OPINION.** In recent years scholars have pushed their investigations of the origins of the Enlightenment backwards into the seventeenth century. They have begun to speak of the ideas of intellectuals like John Locke as the first wave of enlightened thought. The motivation behind this tendency is a desire to associate the Enlightenment with the development of empiricism. This desire has been prompted in large part by another trend of scholarship on the Enlightenment itself: a tendency to interpret that movement as an international phenomenon that followed very distinct paths in Europe’s individual states. In this regard, the French Enlightenment has now been revealed to have been very different from its German and English cousins. But if the Enlightenment was different everywhere, then what can be said about it as a general historical phenomenon? When the Enlightenment is viewed as an outgrowth of empiricism, its common features become more obvious, although there is no direct and simple equation between empiricism and the later development of Enlightenment. While it is true that many Enlightenment thinkers were empiricists, and that empiricism was the philosophical foundation for most of the new intellectual disciplines that emerged during the Enlightenment, it is also true that the thoughts of many of the movement’s thinkers deny easy categorization as “empirical.” One of the links between these figures, though, was their willingness to affirm the existence of something that modern scholars call “public opinion,” and their tendency to appeal to this new social arena of judgment for justification for the various sorts of reforms they advocated. Everywhere in eighteenth-century Europe, social reformers framed their ideas by reference to public welfare





Engraving of an eighteenth-century English coffeehouse. BETTMANN/CORBIS.

or the common good, even as they branded those that opposed their ideas as “special interests” that were corrupt, intolerant, and fanatical. This common development is the best starting point for a discussion of the Enlightenment as a general phenomenon.

**THE READING REVOLUTION.** Behind the birth of “public opinion” was another cultural and social revolution that must be understood, a “reading revolution” that created new groups of readers and writers. In medieval Europe the “Republic of Letters”—the body of those that had used the written word to circulate their ideas—had an undeniably clerical cast. In the Renaissance, more and more lay people had acquired the ability to read and write, and they had begun communicating their ideas through the printed page. By the eighteenth century the vast majority of readers and writers were now lay people rather than clerics. This steady expansion in the number of society’s readers inspired new genres of reading material, even as it also created new modes by which information

and news spread in society. The eighteenth-century reading public was now vast, but also complex and differentiated along lines of social class, education, and taste. To entertain and inform these various groups of readers, older types of printed communications, like the news broadsheet or the polemical pamphlet, now underwent a steady evolution, while at the same time new forms of reading matter, like the newspaper and the journal, developed. To supply the articles, stories, and thought pieces that went into these publications, a new occupation—that of the professional writer or “man of letters”—emerged. From individuals who made their living writing and publishing their own local newspaper, to internationally famous writers whose books were immediately translated into other languages, these individuals all made their living by saying in print what this new group of readers wanted to hear.

**THE COFFEEHOUSE.** In the largest sense, these new groups of readers constituted the public opinion to

which Enlightenment thinkers appealed, but much eighteenth-century writing was geared, not to all readers generally, but to a new category of bourgeois readers, in particular. This class became a common fixture of the economic landscape in most European countries around 1700. By this date, rising economic prosperity had forged a new middle class that often lived off the interest that their investments provided. With plenty of free time on their hands, members of this group spent their days in a new type of commercial establishment, the café or coffeehouse. There they sipped cups of the new beverages, coffee and tea, which were sweetened by sugar, the new wonder condiment, and smoked pipes filled with “sot weed” or tobacco. These new venues had begun to appear in London in the years around 1650, and within two generations they had spread to most European cities. In English, they were often called “penny universities,” because for a mere penny men could be admitted into a society where others shared their concerns. For this modest cost of admission, men were able to read from an assortment of books, newspapers, and journals coffeehouses made available to their patrons. The idea of leisure time reading is key here because it helps explain the second social development that amplified the impact of Enlightenment thought. In the eighteenth century talking became a pastime in many of the ways it remains today. Enlightenment-era thinkers were conscious of themselves as having come up with not just new ideas, but new ways of communicating those ideas. The “art” of conversation—conversation that connoted the exchange of information via polite discourse—was the subject of essays and discussions. The concern was to find ways to move beyond the social hierarchy that had constrained oral communication in the past. The ideal was to create situations where individuals, no matter their social rank, could exchange ideas as intellectual equals. In the twenty-first century both radio and television offer a myriad of talk shows aimed at informing the public of news and ideas while also providing their listeners with a particular “spin” on news and ideas. The origins of this incessant commentary stretch back to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment world of the coffeehouse. In that world the art of conversation was practiced, and leisure reading provided a steady inspiration for the enrichment of discussion. In this way, the goal of much of the writing that appeared in the Enlightenment was to elicit conversation. The letter of one frustrated exile from the Paris salons to a friend voiced a sentiment shared by all those who were participating in the new world of the Enlightenment: “Reading alone, with no one to talk to, to discuss things with or be witty with, to listen to or to listen to me, is impossible.” Enlightenment

thinkers framed what they had to say in ways they hoped would get people talking, and the measure of success of a piece of writing was its power as a conversation starter. Many of the men whose ideas inspired the coffeehouse chatter of the eighteenth century may not have spent much time themselves in the new cafés, but their eminence as “great” writers derived in large part because their works became the subject of the new kinds of debate that the Enlightenment helped to sanction. And while “public opinion” did not reside solely in the coffeehouse, it still constituted an important element of the audiences that Enlightenment thinkers hoped to influence.

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## THE ENLIGHTENMENT IN FRANCE

**THE ROLE OF PARIS.** Paris was the home of the Enlightenment, and most discussions of the Enlightenment are actually discussions of its unfolding there. The French Enlightenment was characterized by the emergence of a group of thinkers, the *philosophes*, whose writings sought to give the Enlightenment everywhere both a rationale and an agenda. These philosophes met regularly in the afternoons at the homes of well-heeled patrons, where they would discuss events and ideas over elegant meals. These salons were the envy of European intellectual circles. The defining achievement of the French Enlightenment was the publication of the *Encyclopédie*, a multi-volume compendium of all useful knowledge that was to kick-start European civilization in the direction of progress. The philosophes were “men of letters,” which, as Voltaire explained, meant that they were not scholars but explorers of all knowledge. This idea helps explain why so few of the philosophes offered original contributions to philosophy. Their ambition was not to come up with anything new in the way of ideas, but to put what was known to work in ways helpful to humankind. The archetype of the philosophe was Voltaire, who with some success tried his hand at almost every genre of writing. Philosophically, Voltaire



Meeting at the salon of Madame Geoffrin (1755). REUNION DES MUSEES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE, NY.

had little to say, but he did perform an important service for the Enlightenment through his efforts to introduce Continental intellectuals to English institutions and ideas. Exiled from Paris, Voltaire spent the years between 1726 and 1729 in London where he studied the writings of John Locke and attended the funeral of Isaac Newton. Later, Voltaire published a series of essays in the forms of letters, the *Letters on the English*, or, as it is also called, the *Philosophical Letters* (1734). These made the case that governments and societies on the Continent should imitate English examples. Still later, Voltaire wrote a study of the ideas of Newton and together with his mistress, Madame de Chatelet, he published a French translation of Newton's *Principia*. Because of his penchant for insulting powerful people, Voltaire actually spent very little of his adult life in Paris, and thus he partook little of the city's salon life. There were several different levels of these weekly dinner parties, almost all directed by women. But at the height of the Enlightenment during the 1760s four salons sat atop the social and intellectual pyramid in the city: two run by men and two by women. On Mondays, Madame

Geoffrin invited artists to her home to dine, while on Wednesdays she entertained writers. Tuesdays belonged to the philosophe Claude Adrien Helvetius (1715–1771). Thursdays and Sundays were the occasions for the salons held by another philosophe, the Baron D'Holbach (1723–1789), while Fridays were the days set aside for dinner at Madame Neckar's. Very few great intellectual moments may have taken place at these salons, but they did much to glamorize and romanticize the lives of intellectuals.

**THE ENCYCLOPÉDIE.** The men who wrote the *Encyclopédie* often congregated at Madame Geoffrin's house. This great project to summarize all science and wisdom in a single set of volumes was perhaps the greatest intellectual achievement of the French Enlightenment. Encyclopedic compendiums were certainly not new in the eighteenth century. Pierre Bayle's massive critical dictionary from around 1700, with its nine million words of text, had been just one of the many works that inspired the great French project that began in 1751. Originally, this new *Encyclopédie* had begun merely as a work to translate the *Cyclopaedia, or an Universal Dictio-*

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE END OF THE NOSE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Voltaire intended his *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764) to be a questioning work that would subject many cherished beliefs to close scrutiny. In it, he also exhibited a keen, and sometimes ironic sense of detachment. In the following entry on the “Limits of the Human Mind,” he styles part of his short essay on Montaigne, the mildly skeptical figure of the later French Renaissance. To Montaigne’s own question, “What do I know?,” Voltaire answers trenchantly: the limits of human knowledge lay at the end of the nose, that is, at the point where the eye’s gaze falls upon the world. He thus celebrates empirical observation, rather than metaphysical theorizing, as the true end of human intelligence.

Someone asked Newton one day why he walked when he wanted to, and how his arm and his hand moved at his will. He answered manfully that he had no idea. “But at least,” his interlocutor said to him, “you who understand so well the gravitation of the planets will tell me why they turn in one direction rather than in another!” And he again confessed that he had no idea.

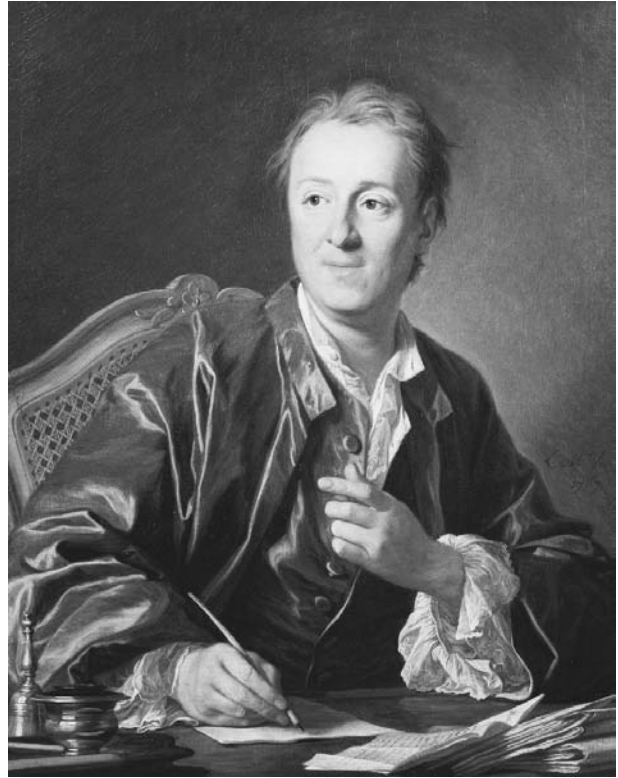
Those who taught that the ocean was salt for fear that it might become putrid, and that the tides were made to bring our ships into port (The Abbé Pluche in “The Spectacle of Nature”), were somewhat ashamed when the reply was made to them that the Mediterranean has ports and no ebb. Musschenbroeck himself fell into this inadvertence.

Has anyone ever been able to say precisely how a log is changed on the hearth into burning carbon, and by what mechanism lime is kindled by fresh water? Is the first principle of the movement of the heart in animals properly understood? does one know clearly how generation is accomplished? has one guessed what gives us sensations, ideas, memory? We do not understand the essence of matter any more than the children who touch its surface.

Who will teach us by what mechanism this grain of wheat that we throw into the ground rises again to produce a pipe laden with an ear of corn, and how the same soil produces an apple at the top of this tree, and a chestnut on its neighbour? Many teachers have said—“What do I not know?” Montaigne used to say—“What do I know?”

Ruthlessly trenchant fellow, wordy pedagogue, meddlesome theorist, you seek the limits of your mind. They are at the end of your nose.

**SOURCE:** Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*. Trans. H. I. Woolf (1764; New York: Knopf, 1924): 194.



Portrait of Denis Diderot, one of the editors of the *Encyclopédie*. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

*nary of Arts and Sciences* (1728) by Ephraim Chambers. Eventually, the two editors of the French project, though, discarded the idea of a mere translation and began a massive work of compilation. What made the *Encyclopédie* a clear standout among the many such compendia published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was that it was not written by experts, but by the philosophes. Eventually, the finished product totaled 28 volumes, as well as several supplements. Although such a large work did not present a single point of view, the editors Denis Diderot and Jean d’Alembert often chose like-minded intellectuals, and thus the tone of much of the writing was often distinctly anti-clerical and anti-religious, even as the text advocated reforms along the lines such Enlighteners favored. The text, too, was not aimed at a specialist, but a generalist reader, and thus it had a great impact in fashioning taste in later eighteenth-century Europe. The ultimate message of the project, though, was that which Francis Bacon had first expressed: human life could be made better through knowledge. By 1789, some 25,000 sets were in circulation across Europe, and the *Encyclopédie* had become one of the Enlightenment’s great publishing success stories.

**JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU.** Of the many individuals who wrote during the French Enlightenment, one

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***GOOD GOVERNMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:** In book three of his *Social Contract* (1762), Jean-Jacques Rousseau explored the sources behind good government. In contrast to his earlier writing, Rousseau abandoned his faith in human goodness in the state of nature, even as he argued that governments must represent the general will of those that were governed, rather than the particular interests of a ruler or an aristocracy. The work scandalized many Europeans, even as it inspired many of the leaders of the French Revolution a generation later. It was subjected to censorship, although Rousseau was not punished. At the time he was already living in exile from his native France.

The question “What absolutely is the best government?” is unanswerable as well as indeterminate; or rather, there are as many good answers as there are possible combinations in the absolute and relative situations of all nations.

But if it is asked by what sign we may know that a given people is well or ill governed, that is another matter, and the question, being one of fact, admits of an answer.

It is not, however, answered, because everyone wants to answer it in his own way. Subjects extol public tranquility, citizens individual liberty; the one class prefers security of possessions, the other that of person; the one regards as the best government that which is most severe, the other maintains that the mildest is the best; the one wants crimes punished, the other wants them prevented; the one wants the State to be feared by its neighbours, the other prefers that it should be ignored; the one is content if money circulates, the other demands that the people shall have bread. Even if an agreement were come to on these and similar points, should we have got any further? As moral qualities do not admit of exact measurement, agreement about the mark does not mean agreement about the valuation.

For my part, I am continually astonished that a mark so simple is not recognised, or that men are of so bad faith as not to admit it. What is the end of political asso-

ciation? The preservation and prosperity of its members. And what is the surest mark of their preservation and prosperity? Their numbers and population. Seek then nowhere else this mark that is in dispute. The rest being equal, the government under which, without external aids, without naturalisation or colonies, the citizens increase and multiply most, is beyond question the best. The government under which a people wanes and diminishes is the worst. Calculators, it is left for you to count, to measure, to compare.

As the particular will acts constantly in opposition to the general will, the government continually exerts itself against the Sovereignty. The greater this exertion becomes, the more the constitution changes; and, as there is in this case no other corporate will to create an equilibrium by resisting the will of the prince, sooner or later the prince must inevitably suppress the Sovereign and break the social treaty. This is the unavoidable and inherent defect which, from the very birth of the body politic, tends ceaselessly to destroy it, as age and death end by destroying the human body.

There are two general courses by which government degenerates: i.e., when it undergoes contraction, or when the State is dissolved.

Government undergoes contraction when it passes from the many to the few, that is, from democracy to aristocracy, and from aristocracy to royalty. To do so is its natural propensity. If it took the backward course from the few to the many, it could be said that it was relaxed; but this inverse sequence is impossible.

Indeed, governments never change their form except when their energy is exhausted and leaves them too weak to keep what they have. If a government at once extended its sphere and relaxed its stringency, its force would become absolutely nil, and it would persist still less. It is therefore necessary to wind up the spring and tighten the hold as it gives way: or else the State it sustains will come to grief.

**SOURCE:** Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*. Trans. G. D. H. Cole (New York: Dutton, 1950): 82–86.

man stands out for the originality and force of his ideas. The work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) defies compartmentalization. There is some debate among scholars in fact over the question of whether he should be considered an exponent of the Enlightenment or a harbinger of the Romantic Age that followed it. Rousseau himself was a deeply enigmatic figure, one that

seemed to march to a different drumbeat set by demons. The one thing known about his early life is that he was born in Geneva. The rest of the information about his youth has to culled from his autobiographical *Confessions* (1782–1789), written just before he died, which paints a Romantic picture of a young roustabout introduced to life, learning, and love by an older woman.



*The Tennis Court Oath* (1789) by Jacques-Louis David. The oath, one of the precipitating events of the French Revolution, asserted the sovereignty of the people over that of the king, a fundamental idea in the philosophy of Rousseau. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE CARNAVALET PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

What is known for certain is that in 1742 Rousseau arrived in Paris hoping to make a name for himself as a musical theorist. He quickly became a friend of Denis Diderot and the circle of men writing the *Encyclopédie*; Rousseau wrote most of the articles in that work having to do with music. The first flashes of Rousseau's brilliance came in his debate with Jean-Philippe Rameau, the most powerful authority on music in France. The official topic of the debate was the relative merits of French versus Italian opera; below the surface the subject was really the superiority of rationality to emotion. In the context of this debate Rousseau put forward the idea that artistic creativity should take precedence over the forms in which it is expressed. In 1750 Rousseau won first prize in an essay contest sponsored by the Academy of Dijon for his *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, in which he made the case that civilization has a corrupting influence on humankind. In 1755 Rousseau submitted another essay to the competition sponsored by the same academy, and his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* also won first prize. More importantly, it established him as a philosopher of merit. Taking up where the earlier essay had left off, this sec-

ond *Discourse* argued for the existence of two types of inequality: natural inequality, which has to do with the fact that one man is stronger or smarter than another, and artificial inequality, which was the inequality imposed between individuals by society. As Rousseau explained it, man in the state of nature was solitary but happy. The need to procreate turned the solitary individual toward village life and prompted the evolution toward civilization. Each step forward in the evolution of society, however, alienated the solitary individual from himself, the crucial step being the invention of private property, which triggered the development of law and government to protect the claims of owners, a development that ensured the continuation of artificial inequality over generations. "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains" is actually the opening line to *The Social Contract* (1762), the book Rousseau wrote to prescribe the way out of the situation described in *The Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*. As he outlined there, society must make explicit the pact or social contract that is implicit in communal living to find a way to salvation. Each society, each community has to be looked upon in the same way that an individual is examined—as the articu-

lator of a specific will. To the extent to which the members of a society can shape and share that will, then those members will come to know liberty because they will have control over their own destinies.

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SEE ALSO *Dance: The Enlightenment and Ballet; Literature: French Literature during the Enlightenment; Theater: The French Enlightenment in Drama*

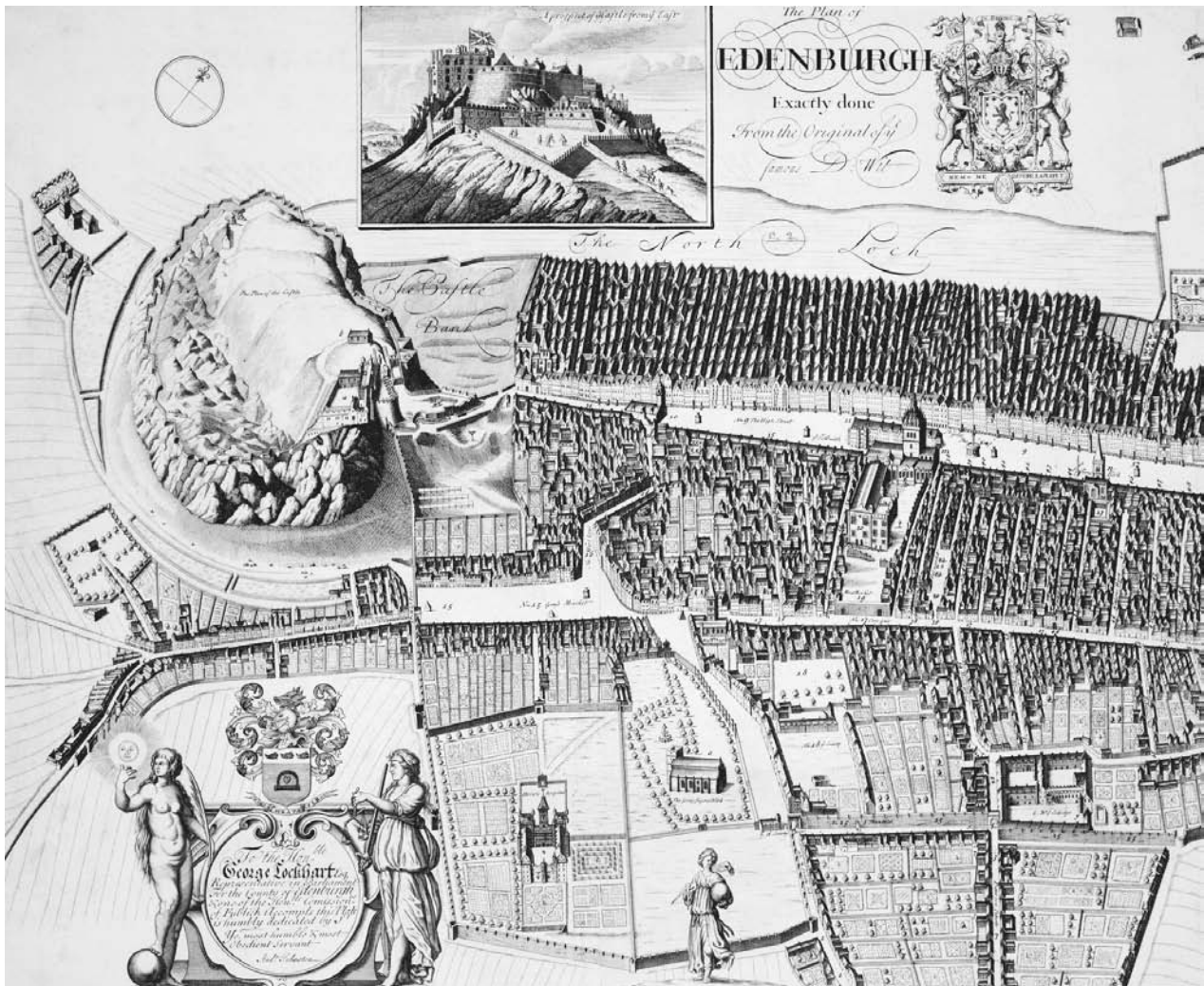
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## THE ENLIGHTENMENT ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE

**BRITAIN.** The English and Scottish Enlightenments might be looked upon as complementary halves of a whole. English thinkers supplied very little philosophical importance to the Enlightenment, being mostly concerned with the development and application of technological and scientific ideas. Scottish thinkers, by contrast, made some of the most original and lasting contributions to philosophy in the eighteenth century. Unlike France, where the *philosophes* developed Paris into a center of literary ferment and glittering social life, the Enlightenment in England had no center, produced very little literature of note, and spawned a very different social venue for the exchange of ideas. Through their written works, the French Enlighteners hoped to encourage their country's government to adopt social reforms. In England, by contrast, Enlightenment thought concentrated on what could be done in the private sector to bring about progress. In France the Enlightenment was in the hands of "men of letters." In England it was busi-

nessmen, industrialists and agricultural entrepreneurs who saw themselves as leading the charge toward the future. Significantly, English thinkers were always in the hunt for new things, "new things" being understood to mean innovations whose value could be measured by their impact on the profit margin, and the commercial cast of much eighteenth-century English political and social writing is undeniable when compared against the French philosophes. The one gathering that might pass as a salon in England was the Literary Club that the painter Joshua Reynolds organized in the 1760s in London around his friend Samuel Johnson. Otherwise, those interested in discussing progress and the future came together in scientific associations and literary and philosophical societies. These met on a weekly basis, with a lecture or demonstration serving as the starting point for conversation. The best known of the English associations was the Lunar Society of Birmingham, founded by the industrialist Matthew Boulton (1728–1809), famous then for the success of his tool and die factory but better known in history for supplying the capital that allowed James Watt to develop the steam engine. The Lunar Society met only on nights when the moon was full, so that there would be sufficient light for members to make their way home.

**SCOTLAND.** In France and England, the Enlightenment did not have much connection with the universities. In both states the universities remained the territory of the clergy, the group of thinkers most antithetical to Enlightenment thought. This was not the case in Scotland where, with the notable exception of David Hume (1711–1776) who was suspected of being an atheist, most of the leading thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment held positions in the university. Glasgow was the university most open to Enlightenment thought. Adam Smith (1723–1790), the great eighteenth-century economic theorist, held a chair in Moral Philosophy there. Smith's tenure was followed by Thomas Reid (1710–1796), founder of the "Common Sense" school of Scottish philosophy, which challenged the skepticism of Hume. They argued that what humans need to know is obvious to them as common sense. Another Enlightenment figure that taught at Glasgow was the chemist Joseph Black (1728–1799), famous for first identifying the properties of carbon dioxide. During the 1780s, Edinburgh began to replace Glasgow as a center of Enlightenment thinking, especially after the founding of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1783. Much like the scientific societies in England, the Royal Society provided a venue in which visiting speakers could lecture and discuss their ideas with members. In this way, the



Engraved plan for Edinburgh's New Town, a mid-eighteenth-century settlement outside the city's medieval walls that became home to a number of Enlightenment philosophers. © HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS.

society brought the culture of the Enlightenment in Scotland into alignment with that in England.

**THE ENLIGHTENMENT IN GERMANY.** In both France and Britain the Enlightenment took place outside of government circles. In Germanic lands, by contrast, the *Aufklärung*, as the Enlightenment was known, became a reform movement that was, in fact, sponsored and directed by rulers. The reformist ideas of the French philosophes were not taken all that seriously by the government at Versailles, but in royal palaces in Berlin and Vienna, the capitals respectively of the kingdoms of Prussia and Austria, these ideas became the basis for the first serious efforts at social reform. In Berlin the Enlightenment occasioned a great outpouring of writings on culture and religion by German intellectuals. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), whose impact on philosophy was not equaled by any of his contemporaries, was a product of

the Prussian Enlightenment. Still the Enlightenment in the Holy Roman Empire was made most vividly evident to ordinary Germans through the efforts of territorial rulers to modernize their societies through the application of ideas that emerged in France. The idea that the Enlightenment should be implemented from the top downward was the first and most important French idea embraced by the Germans. Voltaire had argued for it, and wrote a history of Louis XIV entitled *Le siècle de Louis XIV* (The Century of Louis XIV; 1751) to demonstrate the glory that might be acquired by a ruler who took the initiative to reform his realm. The notion first attracted an audience in Potsdam, where the summer palace of Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, was located. Frederick tried to expose the Prussian ruling class to the new ideas that were developing in France. In 1744, he revived the Berlin Academy of Science, which had



been established by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in 1700, but which had fallen into neglect. At the suggestion of Voltaire, Frederick invited the French mathematician Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis (1698–1759) to serve as president of the Academy, and when Maupertuis stepped down, Frederick unsuccessfully sought to have Jean d’Alembert, one of the two original editors of the *Encyclopédie*, take the position. During Frederick’s reign the publications of the Academy were all in French, but as an institution it still opened doors for German intellectuals. The most striking example of its fulfillment of this function came in 1763 when the Jewish intellectual Moses Mendelssohn won an Academy-sponsored essay contest on the nature of metaphysics. Frederick the Great was the first and greatest example of what historians have labeled an “enlightened despot,” meaning a ruler who exercised absolute control over his state but who used this authority with a mind to improving the lives of his subjects. Perhaps the best illustrations of these instincts were Frederick’s decree establishing religious toleration in his lands and his reforms of the Prussian judicial system. The second great eighteenth-century ruler to sponsor similar reforms was Joseph II of Austria (1741–1790), the eldest son of the empress Maria Theresa. He ruled with his mother from 1765 to 1780, and by himself from 1780 to 1790. Unlike Frederick the Great, Joseph imported French ideas, but he did not bother to bring French philosophes to his court. His most important reforms involved the state’s relationships with the Catholic Church. He closed many monasteries and turned their revenues toward the founding of hospitals and other social welfare institutions. He sought to reform education also, on the one hand freeing the University of Vienna from clerical control, and on the other establishing a system of state-maintained seminaries for the training of priests. He granted freedom of worship to Protestants and Jews, and attempted to free the serfs. Although his ambitions for Austria were great, his enlightened reforms led to revolts across Austria and Hungary, and Joseph died a broken man.

**IMMANUEL KANT.** The greatest philosopher of the German Enlightenment was undoubtedly Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), a thinker whose ideas have long puzzled and perplexed his readers but who made a major contribution to the emergence of psychology as a discipline in the modern world. As a philosopher living in the early-modern era, Kant treated many issues that are now the preserve of psychologists. The topics that early-modern philosophers often treated—particularly their return over and over again to the subject of human epistemology and cognition—have now been explained scientifically, that is by cognitive research that has been

validated by a stream of experiments. Early-modern philosophers lacked the ability to perform such tests, but even more importantly, they lacked the mindset that would seek to adjudicate a dispute by reference to quantitative data. They thought of explaining thinking only in terms of the logical analysis of thought. Or, to put the point in the terms that Kant would put it, they attempted to use a tool—in this case, the human mind—to explain the functioning of that tool. What made the work of Kant so important for the future was his insistence that instead of allowing the constraints to the operation of human consciousness to serve as obstacles to an understanding of such consciousness, it is better to identify those constraints and to seek to determine how they shape human consciousness. In this way Kant reconciled the major differences between rationalism and empiricism, and moved philosophical discussion to a new stage. Kant was the greatest Enlightenment figure to go against the grain of the ideals set down by the French philosophes. He was born in the Prussian city of Königsberg, and over the course of his eighty years never traveled more than sixty miles from it. He was reputedly so punctual in his habits that the town clock was set according to his daily routine. After many years of working as a private tutor for noble families, Kant was awarded a professorship at the University of Königsberg only in 1771. There he completed his most important work, including his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). In the text Kant shows how the dialectical opposition posed by the rationalists and empiricists could be resolved through a new synthesis. The substance of Kant’s critique of the ideas of these two groups of philosophers treated what their questions about human thinking revealed about the character of thought. Take, for example, the question of the nature of the existence of time and space, of “extension” as René Descartes had formulated it. It is impossible for any human to grasp any phenomenon without mentally fixing that phenomenon in space and time. The rationalists identified time and space as innate features of human consciousness, while the empiricists saw them as developing as a result of experience. Kant argued that both approaches assumed that the mind was passive in its reception of phenomena, but he asserted that, in fact, the mind is an active participant in the framing of phenomena, and that time and space are transcendent categories that exist at a precognitive level. In other words, time and space are best understood, not as innate or learned phenomena, but as part of the very character of the mind as a tool. Said a third way, like the teeth of a saw or the tip of a screwdriver, time and space are attributes that help give the mind its identity as a tool. The mind has other characteristics, such as the

capacity to distinguish quality and quantity, features that aid its capacities to frame mentally the phenomena it engages. Understanding the mind, and what it brought to the process of understanding thus became for Kant the very goal of philosophy itself, although in the time since he wrote, his ideas have tended to become more and more the preserve of cognitive psychologists rather than philosophers.

**PHILOSOPHY AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT.** The lifespan of the Enlightenment is one of those topics upon which there is no consensus among historians. Older treatments of the subject were content to have the Enlightenment end just in time for the start of the French Revolution. More recently, as a result of the influence of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, many have come to see the Enlightenment as synonymous with the entire sweep of modern culture. Thus some have now depicted the Enlightenment as a thriving historical reality that has only in the later twentieth century been called into question by “Post-Modern” theory. Both these arguments for a “short” and a “long” Enlightenment associate the movement primarily with the rise and decline of the philosophes centered in Paris. While granting the importance of the Enlightenment as it happened in other locales, historians almost always come back to the salons of Paris. At the same time it must be admitted that the philosophes had very little to say in the great eighteenth-century philosophical debates that captivated Europe’s intellectuals. In the heyday of the French Enlightenment, in the middle of the eighteenth century, very little philosophy emerged from Paris. Instead it was the ideas of figures like Hume and Kant, with their emphasis on problems of consciousness, that were to become the most relevant contributions to existing debates within philosophy. And while the ideas that Rousseau promoted in Paris in the 1750s and 1760s were a significant departure in philosophy that were to become more important in the decades that followed, those ideas had not been formulated in the Parisian milieu. Rousseau, in fact, was an émigré who developed his thought in relative isolation before coming to Paris. It seems fair to conclude, then, that the Enlightenment, as defined by historians, and philosophy were two ships that passed in the night. Such a conclusion, though, prompts three questions. The first is “What connections existed between the Enlightenment and philosophical discourse?” Primarily, the Enlightenment development of a culture of coffeehouses and salons broadened the audience for philosophical thought, although very few of the new “bourgeois” readers seems to have read Hume and Kant directly. Instead they learned of these debates through the writings of others who popularized their ideas, just as Sigmund

Freud and Albert Einstein came to be known to most twentieth-century readers, not firsthand, but through the works of others who summarized their conclusions. A second question that arises is “Did the Enlightenment have any essential impact on the development of philosophy?” A better, though counterfactual, version of this question would be, “Would Hume and Kant have written their works even if the Enlightenment had not occurred?” The answer here must be yes, given the evidence of the ideas that went into the work of these two men. Even though the Enlightenment helped to popularize serious philosophy, it should be kept in mind that serious philosophy was propelled forward by an impetus only tangentially related to the concerns of the Enlightenment. A third question is “Did the Enlightenment have any lasting legacy on the development of philosophy?” Another way of putting this question would be, “Did the Enlightenment contribute anything to the mix that produced Rousseau’s new departure?” Here also the answer must be yes. This answer requires some brief explanation. As much as Rousseau was a forerunner of Romanticism, he was equally a forerunner of the type of public figure readers demanded by the end of the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment’s constant discussion of how society might be improved focused intellectual attention on the question of the role of government in directing society. The philosophes left the task of forcing the government to fulfill its obligation to lead to those in power. Rousseau made it squarely the task of the participants in civil society to hold government to its duties. As he argued, the path forward to liberty ran through collective effort. Rousseau synthesized the public reaction to the movement for political reform, a game at which French Enlightenment philosophes had been playing over the previous decades, and forge it into a new paradigm of political action. In that sense he was an ancestor to Tom Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and the other Americans who interpreted the Enlightenment primarily in terms of politics.

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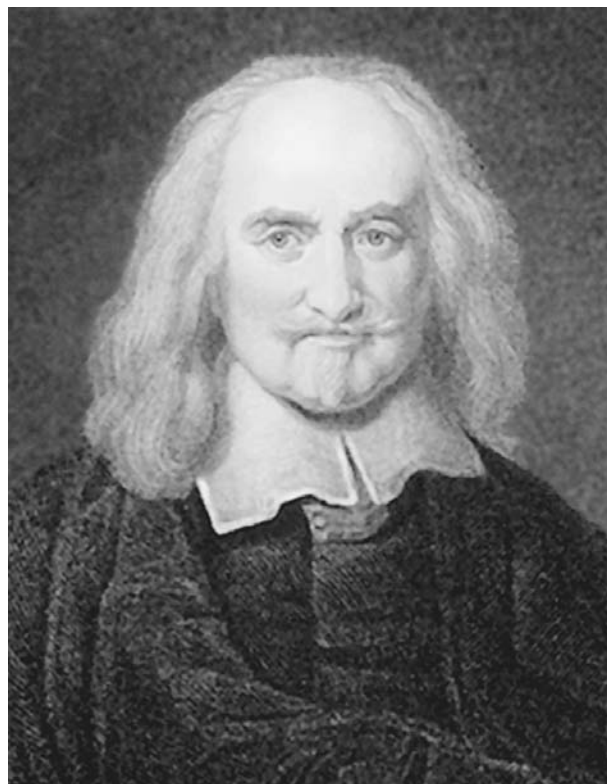
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## POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

**ABSOLUTISM.** In Europe, political philosophy had come into its prime during the sixteenth century, prompted by the great political, military, and religious events of the period which inspired numerous treatises aimed at resolving the problems confronting rulers. The most significant problems rulers faced in the era arose from resistance to the state's ever-growing demand for revenue. By the sixteenth century the "Military Revolution" sparked by the introduction of guns and cannons was well underway. Princes either had to keep up with the latest military technology or risk becoming a victim of it. The only way to keep up with technological innovation was with money, and the only way to get money was through taxes. Raising taxes, however, angered taxpayers and risked rebellion. Princes thus faced a dilemma. They might tempt neighboring states by ignoring defense but keep their subjects happy. Or they could frighten off their neighbors but make their subjects unhappy through the imposition of unpopular taxes. Most chose the latter course, but in doing so, their subjects began to respond with increasing vehemence that kings were violating longstanding contractual notions of government. The religious problems of the age further complicated relationships between princes and their people, and religious turmoil often provided a further justification for rebellion. If the prince was Catholic and the subject Protestant, the argument went, the subject had a right to defend his "true" religion against the encroachments of the state.

**DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS.** As a response to both kinds of arguments—those that opposed new taxes and those that sought to defend "true religion"—royal apologists of the day began to promote the doctrine of the "divine right of kings." Princes were, in the words of the English king James I (r. 1603–1625), "God's lieutenants on Earth." As such, subjects owed the same obedience to their king as they owed to God. Yet merely identifying a "divinely instituted" right to rule did not answer the bristling dilemmas that were raging all the same about just when and how a king might exercise his authority. To justify the increasingly enlarged view of royal power,



Engraving of Thomas Hobbes. ARCHIVE PHOTOS, INC. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

sixteenth-century political theorists had turned to examine issues about sovereignty. They had argued that since the king had the final say in formulating laws, he, in fact, stood above the law, and was consequently the "absolute" authority in the nation. As James I again observed, "Kings were the authors and makers of the laws, and not the laws of the Kings." By the early seventeenth century, ideas of divine right, which asserted that the prince derived his authority from God, combined with these ideas of absolutism, thus producing new theories of divine right absolutism. In his *True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), James I first gave expression to its key tenets. Sir Robert Filmer (1588–1653), an apologist for the absolutist ambitions of James and his descendants, wrote his *Patriarcha* (1680) to give such theories biblical support, although during the period of rising Puritan ascendancy in England he did not dare to publish his thoughts. *Patriarcha* appeared only after Filmer's death and the Restoration of the Stuarts to the English throne. Like many previous works, Filmer treated the state as a "family writ large," and the king as its father. But then he went on to trace a line of descent of princely fathers that started with Adam and ended with Charles I, the reigning monarch in England when he was writing. The greatest developer of such

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***NASTY, BRUTISH, AND SHORT**

**INTRODUCTION:** Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* was the greatest work of political philosophy produced in seventeenth-century England. Hobbes' insights arose from a particularly dim view of humankind, and they caused him to support an authoritarian state that might rise above human egotism (the Leviathan mentioned in the work's title). In the famous passage below, he summarizes his view of human nature.

Again, men have no pleasure (but on the contrary a great deal of grief) in keeping company where there is no power able to overawe them all. For every man looketh that his companion should value him at the same rate he sets upon himself, and upon all signs of contempt or undervaluing naturally endeavours, as far as he dares (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage; and from others, by the example.

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.

The first maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons or by reflection in their kindred,

their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is peace.

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

**SOURCE:** Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651): 61–62.

theories of divine right absolutism was Bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704), perhaps the most influential churchman in France during the first half of Louis XIV's reign. As he argues in his posthumously published *Statecraft Drawn from the Very Words of the Holy Scripture* (1707) the person of the king is "sacred," and to attack him in any way is "sacrilege." It is through rulers, Bossuet explains, that God "exercises his empire." The power of the prince, he concludes, is "absolute," although he recommends that kings exercise this authority with humility. Against the enormous power of a prince, the people's only power exists in their own innocence.

**LEVIATHAN.** In *Leviathan* (1651), the work generally recognized as the first great text of modern political science, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) set out to make a case for absolutism that did not build upon such religious notions. Like his younger contemporary John

Locke, Hobbes gained the patronage of a great aristocratic family very early in his career, and was drawn into politics from that family's vantage point. The Cooper family that employed Locke had republican sympathies, and Locke wrote in defense of constitutionalism. The Cavendish family that maintained Hobbes was royalist, and Hobbes' political writings all make the case for monarchy. As tutor to the second and third earls of Devonshire, Hobbes spent a good deal of his life traveling the Continent. During these tours he added to his outstanding command of Greek and Latin—the abilities that first brought him to the attention of the Cavendish family—an expertise in geometry and optics. These interests helped shape Hobbes' approach to writing about politics, furnishing him with a concern to establish first principles from which other arguments might be deduced. While Hobbes had this rationalist instinct, he

may also be viewed as an empiricist before the fact. Hobbes was among the first writers to advance a mechanistic explanation for the operations of the human mind, mapping the path sensations travel through thoughts to actions. In 1640, sensing the coming outbreak of civil war in England, Hobbes resettled in Paris, where, with the situation in England clearly in mind, he turned to writing about politics. Among the works he completed during his eleven-year stay in France the *Leviathan* (1651) stands out from the others, not for the uniqueness of its ideas—all Hobbes' political writings defend royal absolutism—but for the completeness of its case. Hobbes begins there with a discussion of human psychological motivations, focusing on the desire for pleasure and the fear of death as powerful stimuli in producing human actions. Hobbes then proceeds to discuss how different political systems accommodate these forces before he turns to consider the “state of nature” that exists wherever and whenever there is no common consent for a form of government. In such a state, where everyone acts out of pure self-interest, every human being will be at war, and because of this, human life will be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” In this state of nature, human desires and motivations cannot possibly produce positive outcomes. Thus human society needs government to help human beings realize their own ambitions. Hobbes rejects, in other words, the idea that some human beings have been born with a “divine right” to rule over others. There are differences in strength and intelligence among individuals, but every individual has the capacity to kill every other. Hobbes' point is that government is by definition a result of mutual agreement. Behind every form of government there is at least an implicit compact or covenant that acknowledges the rights individuals give over in exchange for government protection. But the question that lingers for Hobbes is which form of government is the best? He concludes that in a state ruled by a constitution, there will always be disagreement over whose interpretation of the constitution takes priority. Thus in constitutional states an inescapable tendency toward war will exist. The best form of government is rather an absolutist monarchy where the ability of one individual to serve and protect the polity is not compromised by the self-interest of any other individual or group in the state.

**ENGLISH CONSTITUTIONALISM.** Hobbes attempted to put the argument in favor of absolutism on a “scientific” footing. In his *Two Treatises on Government* (1689), Locke made a similar effort for constitutionalism. Locke's two treatises are not just important as foundation texts of political science, however. They played a crucial role in restructuring the political debate in England after the Glo-



Title page from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651).  
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rious Revolution of 1688. In seventeenth-century England the constitutional structures favored by the middle and laboring classes were different from that supported by the rich and powerful. Eventually, it was the constitutionalism this latter group supported that won the day, and Locke's arguments in his *Two Treatises* was used to justify this development. “When Adam delved and Eve spanned, Who was then a gentleman?” was the pithy phrase that had once been the rallying cry of English peasants during Wat Tyler's Rebellion in the 1380s. The phrase had reappeared around 1600, a fact that points to the challenges to the political status quo that were being mounted in England by the lower classes. Puritanism had helped to create a high level of literacy in England and had provided many ordinary people with the intellectual skills to participate in the great debate over absolutism versus constitutionalism. While the pamphlets written and read by ordinary folk made use of religious arguments, they also used historical arguments based in the “myth of the Norman Yoke.” This notion alleged that monarchy

in England had only dated from the eleventh-century Norman Conquest. William the Conqueror, in other words, had done away with the simple democracy that had reigned in the country's Anglo-Saxon past, and had subjected English people to a tyranny of aristocracy and monarchy. During the English Civil Wars the Levelers, a movement of ordinary folk, tried to re-establish a democratic republic in the island. The Levelers captured a good deal of sympathy and support in the lower echelons of the New Model Army, the Puritan force that eventually defeated Royalists. As the English Civil Wars were drawing to a close in 1647, the Putney Debates took place. These were a series of debates that pitted the New Model Army's rank-and-file soldiers, who represented the "people" of England, against their superiors, who defended the interests of England's political and economic elite. During the course of the debates one soldier expressed the hope that "all inhabitants that have not lost their birthright should have an equal voice in Elections." To this, General Ireton, who represented the New Model Army's officers responded that only those who had a "permanent fixed interest in the country should be allowed to vote." Here Ireton was reaffirming the traditional practice that stipulated that only those men who paid an annual tax of 40 shillings should enjoy the franchise. Few of the Levelers were convinced, and it was only after violent repression that their movement fell apart.

**LOCKE'S RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR DEMOCRACY.** Although the Leveler movement was eventually suppressed, the sentiments that its adherents expressed did not die out in later seventeenth-century England. In his *Two Treatises*, Locke addressed the lingering view that property qualification was a tool of oppression that had its origins in the "Norman Yoke." In Locke's constitutional theory he developed a notion of the state of nature that was very different from that of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. He argued that individuals extract from the environment valuable things by virtue of their hard work. Property arises from these efforts, and should therefore be protected by the state, along with life and liberty, as a fundamental, natural right. Government, he reasoned, came into existence through the efforts of property holders, who organized themselves under some form of authority to protect their interests. Thus Locke concluded there had never been a time when everyone had "an equal voice in Elections." Rather, from its very first existence, government had been concerned to protect the property of those with a "fixed permanent interest" in a state. Such arguments proved immensely popular in late seventeenth-century England, where the political instability caused by problems of the Stuart succession bred fears of a resurgent radicalism among the

country's political elites. Locke's constitutional ideas as expressed in the *Two Treatises* became cherished ideas among the aristocracy and gentry, people of vast interests in land. But they were also embraced by the growing class of merchants and commercial men, who were anxious to protect the wealth they were acquiring.

**THE SPIRIT OF THE LAWS.** At the end of the eighteenth century Europeans looked across the Atlantic and saw in the nascent state created out of Britain's former North American colonies a living testament to their own political ideas. It was obvious to all who had read Locke, for example, that the rights declared to be inalienable in the American *Declaration of Independence*—those that allowed for the search for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"—had been inspired from Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (with the anti-democratic word "property" changed to the less offensive "pursuit of happiness"). Those who had read Jean-Jacques Rousseau could recognize that the very way in which the political nation was conceptualized by the former colonists referred back to Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. It took a bit more learning, however, to appreciate that the boldest application of European political thought was to be discovered in the American Constitution, which articulated a principle first found in the Baron de Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748): the idea that the power to rule must always be shared among competing governmental offices. Montesquieu's ideas are as fundamental to understanding the political philosophy of the eighteenth century as Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) is to comprehending the age's economic theory. Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755), was an outstanding example of France's *noblesse de robe*, a category of bureaucratic nobles that received their titles for the services of administration they offered the crown. Montesquieu was trained as a lawyer, and then inherited the position of president of the Parlement of Bourdeaux, a regional court based in that city. He served in that capacity for eleven years before his fame as a writer made him a celebrity. That fame arose largely on the basis of his *Persian Letters*, a scathingly satirical critique of European society revealed through the imaginary letters of two Persian travelers in Europe. The profits generated from that work allowed Montesquieu to sell his office in the Parlement of Bordeaux and to concentrate on his writing. Montesquieu brought the sensibilities of a working bureaucrat to the task of explaining how government works. Thus the point he seeks to drive home in *The Spirit of the Laws* is that the greatest danger confronting any government arises from the threat of despotism. He understands despotism as being the logical result of al-

lowing all discretionary authority to fall into the hands of any one official. The way to keep despotism in check, Montesquieu thus outlines in *The Spirit*, is to balance the discretionary power in the hands of one official with that of other officials in other parts of the government. In Montesquieu's view, the goal of government is not to protect property, as it was for Locke, but to maintain liberty, and he understands liberty to mean the freedom to do those things that do not harm others. It is a given, according to Montesquieu, that those who are endowed with power will ultimately abuse their authority and harm others. And so the best government is one that limits the opportunities for officials to exercise discretionary powers in this way. He identifies three different sources of government power that arise from decision-making powers in the executive, legislative, and judicial functions of governing. In the best government those who exercise any one of these functions will necessarily have to compete for authority against the other two offices, and thus this "balance of power" will cancel out the tendency for any one official to use his power indiscriminately.

**IMPLICATIONS.** The sophistication of Montesquieu's analysis reminds modern scholars of the impact that Europe's political theorists had in fashioning modern systems of democratic and constitutional rule. From the Renaissance, Europe's seventeenth-century political theorists had inherited a curiosity about the arts of government and the state of affairs that had existed in primitive societies. Political theory, too, had been catapulted into the center of Europe's intellectual discussions by the rise of divine right absolutism in many states around 1600, a controversial development that had produced both apologists and critics of the rising authority of monarchs and the state. While many royal apologists argued that such conditions were "natural" and divinely established, others like Thomas Hobbes built trenchant defenses for strong governmental authority by examining the "state of nature" that existed before governments arose. Although Hobbes supported strong monarchical authority, he also shifted the boundaries of discussions of political theory by basing his conclusions on seemingly scientific analysis, rather than biblical or religious precedents. His *Leviathan* ranks as one of the great intellectual contributions of the Age of Absolutism. Yet its chief arguments in favor of absolutism were soon superseded by the clamor of others like Locke, who argued in a more optimistic vein for greater political participation across the spectrum of a state's inhabitants. Those who followed Locke fashioned new ways of examining the powers of the state in an effort to try to unlock the secrets they hoped might allow good government and hu-

man liberty to co-exist. Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, then, stands as one mature expression of this attempt to fashion government that conforms to the needs of human society. That society, as the political philosophers of the Enlightenment were often convinced, was composed of a humankind that was fractious and wont to exercise despotic tyranny, but which was all the same charged with the intellectual powers and restraint necessary to exercise self-rule.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Philosophy*

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### RENÉ DESCARTES

1596–1650

*Philosopher*

**FATHER OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY.** Because he was the first major seventeenth-century thinker to challenge the dominance of traditional Aristotelian scholasticism, René Descartes has long been called the "father of modern philosophy." Descartes' father was a member of the minor nobility, and although the region in which he was brought up was largely Protestant, his family was Catholic. In his youth he attended a Jesuit school in La Flèche, where he learned his Aristotle from the traditional scholastic texts that had long been in use. The curriculum of the Jesuit schools was also open to the influences of humanism, and Descartes would have been exposed to great literary works as a result of his education there. The training given there was intended to school young men to take up professions in the service of the state, although Descartes continued to the University of Poitiers, where he took a legal degree in 1616.

He soon departed for Holland, where he studied military architecture and mathematics, and for almost a decade following 1619 Descartes traveled extensively throughout Europe studying, as he later wrote, the book of nature.

**REASON.** In these years Descartes developed his method, which relied on deductive reasoning to adduce universal philosophical principles. He believed that the substance of his method might fruitfully be applied to all human endeavors, including the sciences. In this period of his life Descartes also was influenced by the Rosicrucian movement, an underground brotherhood of philosophers and Renaissance magi (practitioners of learned magic) that promoted the idea of a special wisdom. Like many followers of this abstruse movement, Descartes refused to marry and spent much of his time in seclusion. He also moved frequently, occupying in one two-decade period of his life eighteen separate residences. Much of Rosicrucian teaching, however, was mystical and often focused on magical and alchemical practices, something that Descartes eventually downplayed in favor of his rationalist philosophy. In 1620, he was enrolled in the Catholic army of the duke of Bavaria, although no evidence exists that Descartes was ever personally engaged in warfare. In 1628, when he returned to France he became rather quickly involved in a controversy when he claimed to be able to establish certainty in scientific endeavors. For his part in this controversy, the powerful reforming churchman Cardinal de Bérulle approached Descartes to try to recruit him in service of the Catholic cause. A few months later, though, the philosopher left France for the Netherlands, where he remained for most of the rest of his life. His own diverse religious and philosophical background likely prompted his move there. Born a Roman Catholic, he had grown up in a Protestant region, and later he had apparently dabbled in the ideas of Rosicrucianism before rejecting many of the movement's tenets. A champion of religious tolerance, Descartes seems to have found the relative openness of Dutch society to conflicting religious opinions a more congenial atmosphere than France.

**PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS.** Descartes continued to divide his time in his first few years in the Netherlands between his public profession as a military architect and his private concerns with philosophy. He traveled to Germany and Denmark to view fortifications, siege machines, and other implements of war, even as he spent meditative hours in his study writing his *Meditations*. In 1633, he prepared to publish *The World*, a work defending the Copernican theory, but he withdrew it from the printer when he learned that Galileo had been re-

cently condemned for supporting the same ideas. His first major work to appear, then, was the *Discourse on Method* (1637), a work that set forth his idea that reason was innate within the human mind, and that everyone could be consequently trained to discern truth from falsehood. Importantly, Descartes wrote the *Discourse* in French rather than Latin, so that it might reach as broad an audience as possible. In the next years he published texts on optics, geometry, and meteorology before publishing his *Meditations on the First Philosophy* in 1641. Unlike his earlier *Discourse*, the *Meditations* were written in Latin, and addressed to the professors of the University of the Sorbonne in Paris. The work was revolutionary in that Descartes discounted all received wisdom, and instead insisted that philosophers must strive to prove their truths with certainty. To do so, Descartes argued that they must rely on the selfsame logical skills as were to be found in the world of mathematics. The *Meditations* also set forth and explained Descartes' famous dictum, *Cogito ergo sum*, or "I think, therefore I am." As he explained, the presence of clear and forceful ideas in the human mind pointed to the presence of an innate reason, a reason that must have been placed there by God. In this way Descartes' philosophy found a way out of the circle of philosophical skepticism that was common among some European intellectuals at the time. These skeptics argue that absolute philosophical truths could not be established with certainty, and had instead to be accepted on faith.

**LATER YEARS AND IMPLICATIONS.** Descartes continued to promote his rationalistic philosophy through a number of other published treatises that appeared in the decade before his death. He also returned to France on several occasions, and in the final years of his life he journeyed to Sweden in response to an invitation from Queen Christina. In the months in Sweden, his health deteriorated, in part from the punishing schedule that the queen imposed upon the philosopher. Anxious to learn the secrets of his rationalism, Christina made Descartes give her philosophy lessons every morning at five o'clock. He was also asked to develop military statutes for the country's army, and one day when delivering a draft of his proposals in the early morning air he caught pneumonia. He died a few days later. In the decades that followed, Descartes' philosophy attracted both supporters and detractors. Many of his works were on the Catholic Index of Prohibited Books by the 1660s. Questions had always swirled around his own religious convictions while he was alive, but by this time the Catholic Church had seen his clear defense of human reason as a serious challenge to orthodox teachings, which had by necessity to be supported by the testimony



of divine revelation. Despite the censoring of his works, Descartes' remains were transferred to Paris where they were placed within a prominent Catholic church in the city. In the years that followed his death, his philosophical works attracted thinkers like Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who used them as a springboard to develop rationalistic philosophies that were even more radical than Descartes' own sources of inspiration. At the same time, thinkers like Pierre Gassendi and John Locke were to work to fashion an alternative to rationalism that emphasized the importance of human beings' empirical observation, rather than of an innate reason implanted at the mind at birth. Thus, although many of Descartes' ideas were jettisoned in the decades following his death, the very creativity his career inspired is testimony to his place as the "father of modern philosophy."

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## DAVID HUME

1711–1776

*Philosopher*

**UPBRINGING.** Hume grew up in the countryside of southern Scotland, not far from the English border, where his father, a minor lord, had an estate. His father died when he was three. Hume entered the University of Edinburgh when he was twelve and finished there about three years later, a course of study that was considered normal at the time. Although he was encouraged to study law after taking his degree, he soon put aside any ambitions for becoming an attorney. Instead he began to read voraciously, so voraciously that by the age of eighteen he suffered a nervous breakdown. After recovering, he worked in a merchant's office in Bristol in England for a time, but eventually set off to live in France for three years. While there, he wrote his *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–1740), an enormous work that sets out the full scope of Hume's ideas and philosophy. Divided into three books, it treats issues in epistemology (the science of establishing certainty of knowledge), the passions and their relationship to human reason, and

moral philosophy. Later in life, Hume tried to disown the treatise, remarking that it was juvenile. But although it is longwinded and sometimes contrived and overly complex, it has continued to be read by philosophers, particularly for its first book on epistemology. In that section Hume advances a number of refinements in empirical philosophy, the dominant philosophical movement in England since the time of John Locke. The work was poorly received, but in the years that followed Hume began to achieve greater success.

**CHARGES OF HERESY.** In the mid-eighteenth century Edinburgh was quickly developing into one of the most important English-speaking centers of the Enlightenment. Sometimes referred to as the "Athens of the North," the city was undergoing a building boom and a general rise in its wealth and fortunes. At the same time Edinburgh was also a major center of Presbyterianism and of Scotland's national church. The tone of discourse in Edinburgh's university may have been enlightened, but Scotland was still a conservative country where Calvinist orthodoxy mattered. In 1744, Hume allowed his name to go forward for consideration of a chair in philosophy at Edinburgh's university. Conservatives attacked him as an atheist and materialist, and when he did not receive the appointment Hume left the city. For several years he wandered from job to job, becoming a tutor to a marquess and an assistant to a general. In this latter capacity he eventually traveled to Vienna as part of an ambassadorial mission. While these years distracted him from his philosophical pursuits, they were financially profitable, and Hume soon possessed the resources he needed to indulge his taste for study. In 1748, the wandering years came to an end, and Hume now began to publish a series of works that earned him a wide reputation. The first of these was eventually to become known as *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, a work that set out his famous attack on miracles. That section of the work, which soon earned Hume an even broader reputation for being an atheist, argued that since miracles were violations of nature and since experience taught that natural laws were never violated, miracles were an impossibility. In 1752, Hume applied for a second professorship, this time at the University of Glasgow, but he was rejected there also. In the year that followed, he became a librarian in Edinburgh, and used his institution's collection to write a *History of England*, a work that appeared in six volumes between 1754 and 1762. He also continued to write philosophy, including two works that treated his views on religion: his *Natural History of Religion* (1757) and his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (published posthumously in 1779). The second text could not be printed, because certain of its

denunciations of traditional religious doctrines excited controversy when Hume circulated the texts, and legal threats were made against Hume's publisher.

**LATER TRAVELS.** Despite the excitement and denunciations that Hume's attacks on religion precipitated, his reputation remained high in many quarters, and his general affability meant that he had many friends. In 1763, he was invited to accompany an English ambassadorial delegation to Paris, and on this trip he made the acquaintance of a number of French Enlightenment philosophers. Returning to Britain, he continued to nourish his contacts with other European philosophers, and when his friend Jean-Jacques Rousseau was expelled from his exile in Geneva in 1766, Hume invited him to England and saw to it that he was granted government support. A few years later, though, Rousseau grew suspicious of the English, and of Hume, in particular. He publicly attacked his former friend, accusing him of trying to ruin him. Hume took his case to the press, and was, in the public's mind, vindicated. In his later years, he returned to Edinburgh, where he spent his time reworking and editing earlier works and circulating in the city's intellectual high society.

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## GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNIZ

1646–1715

*Philosopher*

**PIOUS UPBRINGING.** Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was the son of a Lutheran pastor at Leipzig. Born at the very end of the devastation wrought by the Thirty Years' War, he was schooled outside the home, but seems to have found more inspiration for his learning in his father's large library. When he was fifteen he entered the University at Leipzig as a legal student, although learning about the new scientific breakthroughs that were becoming increasingly common in seventeenth-century Europe soon captivated him. He studied the works of René Descartes, Galileo, Francis Bacon, and Thomas Hobbes anxiously and began to develop a plan to har-

monize their works with the philosophies of Aristotle and other great minds from Antiquity. In 1663, he completed and defended his bachelor's thesis, *On the Principle of the Individual*, a work that contained already one of the ideas that was to grow in his thought. Leibniz reasoned there that the individual was not to be understood merely by his material entity alone, or by intellectual forms, but by the entire scope of his being. A few years later in his *De arte combinatoria*, he argued that all logic and human reasoning might be reduced to a combination of symbols, a theory that has sometimes been interpreted as anticipating the development of the computer in the modern world.

**DEPARTURE FROM LEIPZIG.** Although by 1666 Leibniz had completed the requisite course of study for the awarding of the doctoral degree in law, he was refused because he was too young to receive the degree. So he left Leipzig and never returned to his native city. He traveled first to Nuremberg's university city of Altdorf and took the doctoral degree, and was offered a professorship. He accepted instead a position with a local statesman, Johann Christian, Freiherr von Boyneburg, who introduced him at the court of the archbishop-elect of Mainz. He immediately found a place in the archbishop's service, who was worried at the time about the rise of Louis XIV to the west. To forestall a French invasion of the German-speaking territories, the elector hoped to divert Louis's attentions by involving him in a plan to stage a missionary expedition to Egypt. Leibniz offered his services to the elector by writing his *Catholic Demonstrations*, a work that developed a complex new theory about the soul's position in the body, and which expressed for the first time Leibniz's notion of "sufficient reason." He developed both of these concepts further in his mature philosophy, eventually producing his notion of the metaphysics of the soul known as "monadology" and the principle that nothing occurred in the world without a reason. In his years in the employment of the elector, he also examined certain problems in optics and physics, a common endeavor of the philosophers of the age. In 1672, Leibniz was sent on an ambassadorial mission to Paris and there he came in contact with Antoine Arnauld, leader of the Jansenist religious movement in the city. The deaths of his patrons the elector of Mainz and the Freiherr von Boyneburg left him for a time without employment, although bequests made to him in their wills left him free to pursue his studies without financial constraints. During 1673, he developed a computing machine which he took on his first visit to London in the same year, presenting it to the members of the Royal Society.

**LIFE AT THE HANOVERIAN COURT.** In the years following his journey to England, Leibniz continued his studies, and by 1675 he had come upon the breakthroughs that allowed him to advance the new mathematical discipline of integral and differential calculus. Isaac Newton had been at work on these problems in England, too, and the two figures came to relatively the same conclusions almost simultaneously. Although Newton has long been credited with pioneering this new science, it has long been recognized that Leibniz developed the same fundamental concepts in relative isolation from him. The following year Leibniz's experiments continued, and he pioneered the mechanical science of dynamics, a theory of movement based around the principles of kinetic energy. With his funds depleted by his period of independent study, he accepted a position at the court of Braunschweig-Lüneberg in 1676. Although this was a small territory in the German-speaking empire, it had recently become more important. In 1665, its ruler, Johann Frederick, had become duke of Hanover. At first, he was entrusted with the librarianship of the duke's enormous library, an institution that in the early-modern world was sometimes described as one of the "eight wonders" of the world. There, he continued to read voraciously, but he soon rose to a position of trust, being admitted into the duke's council. In the duchy Leibniz worked vigorously to establish a place for himself and his ideas. He formulated numerous plans to make the small duchy a model of technological and rationalist efficiency. When he was appointed to oversee the duke's famous library at Wolfenbüttel, he introduced the first catalogue and shelving system ever in a European library. He developed new kinds of windmills, water pumps, and hydraulic machinery, even as he advanced plans for the establishment of academies and schools. For a time, he even practiced mining engineering, an important industry in and around the Harz Mountains where the duchy was situated. All the while, Leibniz continued as well with his philosophical and mathematical work, although his ideas were beginning to become increasingly hostile to Descartes and his rationalism.

**MONADOLGY.** Leibniz's indefatigable efforts in the employment of the Hanoverian dukes led him into numerous new discoveries, which he increasingly broadcasted through the publication of articles in scholarly and scientific journals by the 1690s. He made numerous plans for the foundation of scientific academies similar to the Royal Society in England, and in 1700 Sophia Charlotte, the first queen of Prussia and a daughter of his Hanoverian employer, responded to Leibniz's plans by founding the German Academy of Sciences in Berlin. Although

Leibniz's mind ranged far and wide in these years over many intellectual dilemmas, his chief fascination of the later years of his life was in developing a philosophy based around his concept of monads. In contrast to the "atomistic" views of matter that were developing at the time in many parts of Europe, Leibniz's complex and sometimes baffling metaphysics contained in his late work, *Monadology* (1714), promoted the notion that matter itself was indivisible and that reality was an illusion. As Leibniz characterized them, monads were complete concepts that were entirely self-contained and independent; he characterized monads as moving in a steady hierarchy from those that were least active, like stones, to those that were most active, like the human organism. Because Leibniz considered reality to be illusory, he jettisoned the idea of causation, and instead substituted his concept of "sufficient reason." Applying this notion of sufficient reason to the world in which he lived, Leibniz argued that there was a rational explanation for everything that occurred. It is in this sense that it is possible to extract from Leibniz's ideas the notion that we live in "the best of all possible worlds," because as he argued everything in the world had been created by God with a purpose. It was for expressing this fundamentally optimistic idea that the later French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire lampooned Leibniz in his *Candide* (1759).

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## JOHN LOCKE

1632–1704

*Political philosopher*

**EARLY YEARS.** Although John Locke was born in a quiet corner of the English county of Somerset, his youth was shaped by the calamitous events of the English Civil Wars. His father was a solicitor who served in the Parliamentary Army. In 1652, during the chaotic years of the Puritan Commonwealth, Locke entered Oxford, where he appears to have been a diffident student. He was drawn at the time to the exciting ideas of René

Descartes, but the traditionalism of the English university of his day meant that Oxford's curriculum was still largely taught in the mold of Aristotelian scholasticism of previous centuries. As a result, Locke drifted, although he indulged his curiosity by undertaking medical and scientific studies outside his course of study, an endeavor that paved the way for his eventual election to the Royal Society in 1668. He may have considered a clerical career, but in 1659 he began to serve as a tutor in his college at Oxford. Despite this honor, Locke did not take an Oxford degree until 1674, when he was finally awarded a Bachelor of Medicine. In 1661, his father died, and Locke now had a small inheritance that provided him with the resources to continue his studies. In the years that followed he also made the acquaintance of Lord Ashley, who was later to become the earl of Shaftesbury and Locke's primary patron. By 1665, Locke had given up his post as a tutor at Oxford, and he began service on an ambassadorial mission to Germany. Although he might have continued in this career, he returned to scientific study and reading of philosophy. During these years he also worked with his close friends Robert Boyle and Thomas Sydenham on a number of scientific experiments.

**SHAFTESBURY.** Locke's association in these years with Lord Ashley also deepened, primarily as a result of a successful operation Locke performed to remove a liver cyst in 1668. Locke became a member of Ashley's household in London, where he fulfilled a number of roles, eventually advising him on matters of all kinds. As Ashley rose to become the earl of Shaftesbury in 1672, his political visibility increased. He was soon appointed Lord Chancellor, although his unpopular politics soon led to his downfall. Shaftesbury supported a strong Parliament as a counter to royal authority, a Protestant succession, and the economic expansion of England's colonies, all programs that were not favored by Charles II or his Royalist circle. Locke's association with Shaftesbury in these years largely freed him from the responsibilities of working, and he continued to devote a great deal of his time in the late 1660s and early 1670s to his private studies. He was also an enthusiastic participant in the activities of the Royal Society, an affiliation that kept him up to date on the most recent scientific advances that were occurring in the country. Eventually, Locke found that London's damp air worsened his asthma, and he returned to Oxford in 1675; a few months later, he set off on a four-year journey to France, where he lived for most of this period in Montpellier and Paris. In his years in France, Locke made the acquaintance of Pierre Gassendi, who at the time was developing a Christianized form of Epicureanism that might be a counter to René Descartes'

rationalism. Eventually, his work provided one of the foundations for Locke's own empirical philosophy.

**RETURN TO ENGLAND AND EXILE.** When Locke returned to England, he found that the political situation in the country had deteriorated as a result of the controversies over the succession. James, the duke of York, had in recent years made public his Catholicism, and the quarrels over the possibility of a Catholic king had resulted in the earl of Shaftesbury's imprisonment. Eventually, he was rehabilitated, but not without spending a year in the Tower of London. Shaftesbury's fortunes rose again, only to take a meteoric plunge in 1681, when he was unsuccessful in mediating the various conflicts between England's parliamentary factions. He was tried but set free, and soon fled the country for exile in Holland, dying there two years later. Because of his close association with Shaftesbury, Locke followed him into exile, and he remained there until the Glorious Revolution (1688) removed the Catholic James II from the throne and installed his daughter Mary and her husband William as co-regents.

**WRITINGS.** While in Holland, Locke had time to complete a number of important works that established his reputation as England's foremost political theorist. Before leaving Holland in 1689, Locke published his *Letter Concerning Toleration*, a work that argued for religious toleration of England's Protestant dissenters. He did not advocate the extension of toleration to Catholics or to Jews, although his program for Protestant non-conformists was essentially established in the early years of William and Mary's reign. Even as the *Letter Concerning Toleration* was appearing, though, Locke was preparing the way for his return to England, and in February 1689 he crossed in the same vessel that brought William and Mary to the country. In the years that followed he continued to publish a number of works that contributed to the political and intellectual ferment of the early Enlightenment in England. Later, their influence spread to Continental Europe, where in France particularly they encouraged the development of a vigorous tradition of political philosophy. In 1690, his *Two Treatises on Government* appeared. It set out a theory of limited constitutional monarchy—a theory that was, in large part, being realized in England at the time because of Parliament's triumph in the Glorious Revolution. Around this same time his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* also appeared. In this, perhaps his most famous work, Locke outlined his theories concerning human knowledge and psychology by recourse to his theory of the mind as a "blank slate" at birth upon which experience writes impressions. His later years were spent

in a kind of quiet country isolation at Oates, where he was the guest of an English noblewoman, Lady Masham. Although he had largely retired from public involvement, his ideas were causing considerable ferment at the time, inspiring Deists like John Toland in his *Christianity Not Mysterious* to apply Locke's psychological insights to fashion a non-doctrinal religion. Locke, though, remained fundamentally orthodox and conservative in his own religious opinions. In the decades that followed continued debate of Locke's theories gave rise to a large school of English empirical philosophers, and some of these figures, men like George Berkeley and David Hume, refined Locke's initial observations. Locke continued to remain required reading, though, for any Englishman anxious to protect parliamentary prerogatives in the eighteenth century. His influence continued to resonate throughout the Enlightenment, helping to inspire the revolutionary developments and political settlements formulated during the French and American Revolutions.

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## BARON DE MONTESQUIEU

1689–1755

*Political philosopher*

**ARISTOCRATIC BIRTH.** Charles-Louis de Secondant, more familiarly known to history as the Baron de Montesquieu, was from an old military family in France that had been granted a noble title in the sixteenth century for its loyalty to the crown. Montesquieu's father had a relatively small fortune, although his mother's dowry brought great wealth to the family. Like many noble children, the young boy received much of his initial education in the home before going off to attend school at age eleven. When he was fourteen he enrolled in the University of Bordeaux, and he became a lawyer in 1708. In hopes of attaining more experience in his profession he soon moved to Paris, although when his father died five years later, he returned again to Bordeaux to manage the family's estates. Soon he married Jeanne

de Lartigue, the daughter of a wealthy local Protestant, and her dowry brought Montesquieu the wealth that he needed to sustain his private studies. Although he continued to practice his profession as a lawyer, he turned over the management of his financial concerns to his wife, who appears to have been an astute businesswoman. She also gave Montesquieu two daughters and a son. In 1716, his fortunes were increased even further when he inherited the estates of his uncle, who died without a direct heir. He also secured an important position in the local Parlement of Bordeaux, a regional administrative court. Montesquieu now resolved to undertake major studies of Roman law, as well as to increase his understanding of science. He enrolled in the Academy of Bordeaux, the local body of scientific thinkers, in order to enhance his understanding of physics, geology, and biology, an influence that became evident in his later works of political philosophy.

**CHANGING FASHIONS.** Louis XIV, the chief designer of France's late seventeenth-century absolutist state system, had died in 1715, and his successor, Louis XV, had been at this time only five years old. In the intervening period of his regency, his uncle Philippe, the duke of Orléans, assumed chief power over the government of France. The period of Philippe's exercise of power was noted for a rather quick and dramatic change in fashions in Paris and throughout France. In architecture and art, a new Rococo style, lighter and less ponderous, began to replace the affection for the dark and somber tones of the Baroque. And in the theater and letters, the period began to see increasing ferment, and the emergence of many political salons in and around Paris. Montesquieu's first great work, *The Persian Letters* (1722), came as a surprise to the early Enlightenment culture that was just beginning to emerge in France as a result of these changes. In the vehicle of letters allegedly written by Persian travelers to Europe, Montesquieu undertook to criticize European institutions. The work poked fun at France's obsession with social class, its religious fanaticism and superstition, and its decadent sexual mores. It proved to be Montesquieu's entrée in the years that followed into the highest circles of intellectual discussion in the country. He now abandoned Bordeaux for the capital, and in the next few years, circulated in court circles. Eventually, life in Paris drained his financial resources, and Montesquieu, increasingly bored with his position in the Parlement of Bordeaux, sold his office. In the capital he was also making the acquaintance of prominent English aristocrats who lived in the city at the time, including the Viscount Bolingbroke, once a leading Tory politician in England and the duke of

Berwick. By 1728, though, Montesquieu had apparently grown tired of the high life in Paris, and he resolved to embark on a major continental tour, something that he had not done in his youth. He set off first to Vienna, then to Hungary, and somewhat later to Italy. In each place he indulged his vast interests, making the acquaintance of the Austrian general, Prince Eugene of Savoy, in Vienna; visiting mines and examining their use of technology in Hungary; and in Italy, developing his love of art. Eventually, he returned to Northern Europe, journeying through Germany, to Holland, and finally to England. In this his last stop, he was presented at court and circulated in the highest aristocratic circles, in part because of his friendships previously forged in Paris.

**LITERARY CAREER.** Although he had continued to indulge his taste for society along the route of his Grand Tour, the Baron de Montesquieu took a more serious tone following his return to France in 1731. He decided to pursue his writing as a career, and in 1734 he published *Reflections on the Causes of the Grandeur and Declension of the Romans*, a work that was his first foray into political philosophy. His taste for this kind of theory soon deepened, and Montesquieu embarked on a detailed program of study, intending to unearth the reasons for the greatness of some states and the relative weakness of others. He read voraciously, but also kept as many as six private secretaries busy on this endeavor, dictating to them his notes and using them to conduct his preliminary research. Much of the work for this project Montesquieu completed at his country home in Bordeaux, yet he continued to visit Paris in the 1730s and 1740s, circulating in its world of salons, reading in the king's library, and attending the meetings of the French Academy, to which he had been elected a member in 1728. By 1740, the outlines of his massive work of political philosophy had grown clearer, and Montesquieu set down to write his *Spirit of the Laws*, a work that eventually totaled almost 1,100 printed pages. The *Spirit* demonstrated a thorough comprehension of all the political philosophy that had been written to Montesquieu's time throughout Europe, yet it did not identify with any one particular set of assumptions. Some of his ideas have clearly not withstood the test of time. The *Spirit* argued, for instance, that climate was a major determinant of political systems. Yet he also subjected political systems to a searching eye, and his summaries of the differences in spirit that produce despotic, monarchical, and democratic political systems displays a wide reading and knowledge of history. Perhaps one of the most important influences that the work had was in its theory of the separation of powers. Montesquieu argued

that not only should the administrative, legislative, and judicial functions of a government be kept isolated from each other, but that these duties should be divided up between different groups that exercise their authority autonomously. In this regard, this part of his theory came to be widely discussed and applied in the French and American Revolutions.

**LATER YEARS.** Although Montesquieu continued to write in his later years, these works did not capture the imagination of his times the way that the *Spirit of the Laws* did. In the last years of his life, he continued to circulate in Parisian intellectual society, and he now found the circle of the Enlightenment much enlarged throughout the country and Europe. He corresponded with philosophers and political thinkers in England and throughout Continental Europe, and was widely admired for his kind and friendly manner.

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- Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1702)—This enormous work totals over nine million words, and was a significant force in giving rise to the questioning spirit of the early Enlightenment. Its enormous scope was only outdone by the *Encyclopédie* of the French Enlightenment.
- George Berkeley, *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710)—A major work of English empiri-

- cism, this text includes the famous observation “to be is to be perceived” (*esse is percipi*).
- Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Treatise on Sensation* (1754)—This important work of Continental eighteenth-century empiricism explored the effect that the senses have on producing human ideas.
- René Descartes, *Meditations on the First Philosophy: In Which the Existence of God and the Distinction Between Mind and Body are Demonstrated* (1641)—By far Descartes most important work, this treatise includes his famous rationalist dictum *Cogito ergo sum*, “I think, therefore I am.”
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)—Although few modern political philosophers have agreed with its dismal assessment of the state of nature—that is, the character of society before political institutions—Hobbes’ work still ranks as the heftiest work of political theory to appear in seventeenth-century England.
- David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748)—Although it may not be his finest, this text is certainly David Hume’s most famous philosophical work. In it, he argues that everything that does not fit with empirically established truth should be discounted as falsehood.
- John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)—This major work of political theory helped to inspire many of the subsequent explorations of human societies and their institutions during the Enlightenment. Locke’s empiricism argues that the mind is at birth a “blank slate” upon which experience leaves its writing.
- Baron de Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws* (1748)—The product of a lifelong consideration of political institutions and history, this work produced major controversy in mid-eighteenth-century France. Its argument for a thorough separation of powers and personnel in government was later to be influential in the French and American revolutions.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762)—One of the most influential works from one of the most significant authors of the Enlightenment, this treatise outlines how human societies might regain their freedom from the aristocratic and monarchical systems into which governments had fallen over the centuries.
- Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics* (1677)—Published after his death, this product of lifelong philosophical speculation embraced a thoroughgoing pantheism and discounted traditional revealed notions of religion. As a result it produced immediate and longstanding controversy.
- Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters* (1734)—Produced after its author’s return to France from exile in England, this set of ruminations recommended that Continental Europe emulate the virtues of English society and especially its political and scientific institutions.

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chapter seven

## RELIGION

*Andrew E. Barnes*

<p>IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . . 330</p> <p>OVERVIEW . . . . . 334</p> <p>TOPICS</p> <p>The State Church in Early-Modern Europe . . . . . 336</p> <p>The Thirty Years' War and Its Aftermath . . . . . 341</p> <p>The English Civil Wars . . . . . 344</p> <p>The Restoration Settlement in England . . . . . 348</p> <p>Catholic Culture in the Age of the Baroque . . . . . 352</p> <p>Protestant Culture in the Seventeenth Century . . . . . 355</p> <p>Free Will Versus Predestination in the Dutch Republic . . . . . 358</p> <p>Jansenism and the Jesuits in France . . . . . 361</p> <p>Magic and Witchcraft . . . . . 366</p> <p>Pietism . . . . . 371</p> <p>Christianity, Science, and the Enlightenment . . . . . 377</p> <p>Christianity in the Revolutionary Era . . . . . 382</p> <p>SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE</p> <p>Jacobus Arminius . . . . . 385</p> <p>Cornelius Jansen . . . . . 386</p> <p>William Laud . . . . . 387</p> <p>John Wesley . . . . . 388</p> <p>DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . . 389</p> <p>SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS</p> <p><i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i></p> <p><i>A Landmark of Christian Devotional Literature</i> (excerpt from Bunyan's <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i>). . . . . 349</p>	<p><i>Religious Diversity as a Strength</i> (excerpt from the sixth of Voltaire's Letters on England) . . . . . 351</p> <p><i>Opposing Tyranny</i> (excerpt from Duplessis- Mornay's <i>Vindicia Contra Tyrannos</i>) . . . . . 357</p> <p><i>Report on the State of Dutch Calvinist Churches</i> (excerpts from documents reporting conditions of Calvinist churches) . . . . . 359</p> <p><i>A Witch's Trial</i> (record of the trial of Marie Cornu) . . . . . 368</p> <p><i>A Plea for Belief in Witchcraft</i> (excerpt from Glanvill's <i>Sadducism Triumphant</i>) . . . . . 369</p> <p><i>The First Bible Studies</i> (excerpt from Spener's <i>Pious Desires</i> outlining methods for Bible study) . . . . . 373</p> <p><i>An Early Itinerant Preacher</i> (excerpt from Wesley's <i>Journals</i>) . . . . . 376</p> <p><i>Galileo in the Crossfire Between Science and Religion</i> (excerpt from Galileo's letter to Christina of Lorraine concerning heliocentrism). . . . . 377</p> <p><i>Christianity Not Mysterious</i> (excerpt from Toland's text commenting on religious authority) . . . . . 379</p> <p><i>An Enlightenment Examination of an Old Testament Miracle</i> (excerpt from Reimarus' <i>Fragments</i>). . . . . 381</p> <p><i>An Enlightenment Attack on Christianity</i> (excerpt from the Baron d'Holbach's <i>Common Sense</i> praising Atheism). . . . . 382</p>
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## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Religion*

- 1598 The Edict of Nantes establishes a limited degree of religious toleration for Calvinist Huguenots in France.
- 1606 Jacob Arminius, a Dutch Calvinist theologian, rejects predestination and upholds free will in an address to his faculty at the University of Leiden. His ideas are considered heretical but his position, later known as Arminianism, begins to attract disciples.
- 1610 King Henri IV of France is murdered by the fanatical Catholic Ravailiac because of his policy of tolerance towards French Protestants. Henri's wife, Marie de' Medici will assume the throne over the coming years as regent.
- 1611 James I issues the Authorized Version of the Bible in English for use in the Churches of England and Scotland. The Bible will become known as the "King James Version."
- 1618 The Thirty Years' War begins in Central Europe. The conflict will be the bloodiest of all the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
- 1619 The Synod of Dordrecht meets in Holland to discuss the issues of predestination and free will. The meetings are attended by Calvinist theologians from throughout Europe, and the Synod's condemnation of free will is widely adopted throughout Calvinist churches.
- 1620 The Battle of White Mountain, staged on a hill outside Prague, destroys Czech Protestantism, and opens the door for the re-catholicization of Bohemia under the Austrian Habsburgs.
- The Puritan Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock in North America with the goal of establishing a society in which freedom of religion is an ideal.
- 1622 Pope Gregory XV creates the "Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith" at Rome, an organization that is charged with overseeing Catholic missions both in Europe and in the rest of the world.
- 1624 In the German diocesan capital of Bamberg, Bishop Gottfried Johann Georg II begins a persecution of supposed witches that will rage over the next three years and leave hundreds of inhabitants of the region dead.
- 1625 King Christian IV of Denmark invades Germany under the pretext of aiding Protestantism but in the hopes of expanding his territory. Four years later his expansionist campaign will be rebuffed and Denmark will no longer rank among the great European powers.
- 1630 Puritans establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony with its center in Boston.
- 1633 In England, Charles I names William Laud as archbishop of Canterbury. From this position, Laud will begin to persecute Puritans.
- 1640 The Dutch Catholic theologian Cornelius Jansen's *Augustinus* is published two years following the author's death. The work defends the theology of Augustine, and soon invigorates a devotional movement in France that supports Augustinianism against the perceived Pelagianism of the Jesuits.
- In England the "Long Parliament" comes to power. Its Puritan measures will eventually result in the outbreak of civil war with the king and, following Parliament's victory, the country will be ruled as a Commonwealth under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell.

- 1642 The Puritan-dominated Long Parliament orders the closure of London's theaters because of their "godless immorality."
- 1645 William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, is executed at London by Parliament. Over the previous decades his policies of persecution and his support of high church ritual had angered the Puritan party.
- 1648 The Treaty of Westphalia is signed at Münster in Germany, ending the dismal conflicts of the Thirty Years' War. The treaty recognizes Calvinism's legality but reasserts the sixteenth-century principle that German rulers have the right to choose which religion will be followed in their states.
- 1649 King Charles I is executed in England following a long period of civil war between Puritans and Cavaliers (supporters of the Crown).
- 1650 An English judge uses the term "Quaker" to describe George Fox and his followers. Fox is at the time on trial for his religious beliefs.
- 1653 Pope Innocent X condemns the teachings of Cornelius Jansen because they violate a papal prohibition against discussing the precise nature of free will and predestination and veer dangerously close to the extreme teachings of Calvinism concerning salvation.
- 1656 Blaise Pascal, a brilliant French mathematician and a Jansenist, begins to publish his *Provincial Letters*, a work that satirically attacks the lax morality of the Jesuits.
- 1660 The Stuart Prince of Wales is restored to the English throne as Charles II.
- 1662 Charles II issues a new *Book of Common Prayer* for the English church that is modeled in many respects upon that of Elizabeth I's reign.
- 1666 Philip Jakob Spener becomes head of the Lutheran church at Frankfurt am Main in Germany. He begins to found "schools of piety," small prayer and study groups. In the coming century this pattern of Pietist renewal in the church will spread to many places throughout Europe.
- 1678 In England the Puritan minister John Bunyan publishes his soon-to-be classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*.
- 1681 Charles II grants William Penn a large tract of land in colonial North America, on which he will found the colony of Pennsylvania as a haven for Quakers and other religious dissenters.
- 1682 The Four Gallican Articles are formulated at a meeting of bishops and royal officials held in France. The document will guide church and state relations between the French king and the pope for many years, but will also produce controversies when future popes refuse to affirm Louis XIV's appointments to Catholic posts in the country.
- 1685 King Louis XIV revokes the terms of the Edict of Nantes in France, forcing French Calvinists known as Huguenots either to convert to Catholicism or leave the country.
- In Germany, a new dynasty assumes power in the Palatinate, an important state in the German southwest; working in tandem over the coming years with France, it begins to re-catholicize its Protestant territory, thus prompting many Calvinists in the region to emigrate. Many take up residence in the new English colony of Pennsylvania, a haven for dissenters of all kinds.
- James II, a Catholic, ascends the English throne. Over the coming years, his pro-Catholic policies will irritate Parliament, eventually resulting in his exile from the country in 1688.
- 1688 In England, Parliament invites William of Orange and his wife Queen Mary, the daughter of the Catholic King James II, to assume the throne of England, thus accomplishing the country's Glorious

- Revolution, a change in dynasty that ensures Protestantism in the country without bloodshed.
- 1689 John Locke publishes *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, arguing for the granting of religious tolerance to Protestant dissenters.
- 1690 The Parliamentary Act of Toleration ensures religious tolerance for English Protestant dissenters to worship, so long as they do so in licensed meeting houses.
- 1692 Witch trials begin in Salem in the North American colony of Massachusetts, eventually resulting in the execution of nineteen people. By this time, the witch craze has largely ceased in Europe.
- 1695 The German Pietist August Hermann Francke founds an orphanage and school at Halle for the training of the young. The schools of the Halle Pietists will, at their high point of development, serve 2,200 students and will become a major force on the educational horizon of northern Germany.
- 1696 In England, John Toland publishes his *Christianity Not Mysterious*, a work that argues that the Christian ethical revelations of the scripture can be understood through the intellect, and do not require a “leap of faith.” The work will become an important manifesto for the Deist movement among intellectuals.
- 1701 Parliament’s passage of the Act of Settlement in England ensures the monarchy’s future Protestant succession.
- 1705 Philip Jacob Spener, the key thinker in the development of the German Pietist movement, dies.
- 1711 The Tory Party in Parliament passes the “Act of Occasional Conformity” to outlaw the common practice of English dissenters occasionally taking communion in the Church of England so that they can be eligible to hold public office. These measures will be repealed eight years later.
- 1714 The Tories in England’s Parliament secure the passage of the “Schism Act,” which aims to close those religious schools run by the country’s dissenting churches. The Act will be repealed soon after Queen Anne’s death.
- 1727 Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf invites a remnant of the Bohemian Brethren, a Protestant group, to take up residence on his estates in Saxony. Over the coming years Zinzendorf will use his alliance with the group to found a Protestant ecumenical movement that spreads the teachings of Pietism throughout Europe.
- 1731 Anton von Firmian, archbishop of Salzburg, signs the Expulsion Pact, ordering that his territory’s more than 20,000 professing Lutherans either convert to Catholicism or emigrate. Most refuse to convert and many take up residence in the English North American colony of Georgia.
- 1738 The Aldersgate Society is founded in London. Composed of members of the Moravian church and many English Pietists, the group will have a profound influence on the early development of Methodism in England.
- The popular Calvinist revival preacher George Whitefield encourages John Wesley to begin to preach to the “unchurched” in England.
- 1741 Count Zinzendorf arrives in colonial North America where he establishes several congregations of the Moravian church. His actions anger populations of German Lutherans.
- 1743 In England, John Wesley publishes rules for the Methodist Societies that are steadily growing throughout the country.
- 1748 The Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume denies the possibility of miracles in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.
- 1751 In France the first volume of the *Encyclopédie* is published. The work will assert

- a powerful influence on later eighteenth-century tastes, and its arguments for the development of a rational religion will eventually help to inspire the anticlericalism of the French Revolution.
- 1753 In Austria, Prince Kaunitz is appointed as one of the crown's chief ministers. In the forty years of his tenure, he will help to craft a number of measures designed to curb the power of the Roman church in the state.
- 1766 The first Methodist society is founded at New York in colonial North America.
- 1782 The Austrian King and Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II begins to abolish "superfluous" monasteries in Austria.
- 1783 Joseph II threatens to abolish the Catholic church in his state and to put a national church in its place while on a visit to Rome.
- 1790 In France, the National Assembly passes the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, abolishing the office of bishops and venerable clerical privileges and subjecting priests and monks to taxation.
- 1791 The remains of the French Enlightenment philosopher and deist Voltaire are moved to the Panthéon in Paris, a church once built by Louis XV to honor Saint Geneviève, but now a monument to the great geniuses of French literature and philosophy.
- 1792 In England, the Methodist Church now includes more than 66,000 members.
- 1793 In France, the National Convention outlaws the worship of the Christian God.
- 1794 In Paris, the Cult of the Supreme Being is pronounced.
- 1803 Church property throughout much of continental Europe is secularized, that is, it is transferred to state ownership as a result of reforms promulgated by the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

## OVERVIEW *of Religion*

**THE LONG VIEW.** From the broad perspective of historical evolution, the history of religion in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is best appreciated as a long era of questioning, reappraisal, and transition. In the fourth century, Constantine the Great had converted the Roman Empire to Christianity, and from that date forward governments in Europe had supported the religion's claim to be the sole foundation for all culture, learning, and civilization. The sixteenth-century Protestant and Catholic Reformations had not challenged these underlying assumptions, but they had opened up the experience of Europeans to an ever-broader range of religious ideas and practices, which came to be subtly or profoundly affected by the decisions of states to sanction one set of religious beliefs and rituals against another. In the Age of the Baroque that began after 1600, new forces soon appeared that were to transform fundamentally Christianity's relationship to European culture. The rise of science provided educated men and women with new ways to explain the nature of the physical world without relying on the venerable mix of Christian theological and ancient philosophical ideas that had long explained matter and the universe. New political ideas, too, opened up the possibility of examining the nature of the state and its relationship to its subjects in ways that lay outside traditional Christian moral concerns. And in much of Europe, the ever-quickenning tide of business and commerce created undreamed of wealth and eventually brought with it a consumer society that made Christianity's traditionally ascetic and world-renouncing teachings appear to many as outdated. As a result of these and other forces, the Christian religion was forced to compete against new forces that challenged its long-established authority. These changes did not occur overnight, and although the hegemony of religion came increasingly to be subjected to confrontations from new scientific ideas, political philosophies, and economic practices, Christianity's claims were still widely respected in many quarters of Europe at the end of the eighteenth

century. Nevertheless, we can see both subtle and major alterations occurring in the roles that Christianity played in European society over the course of these two centuries. In short, religion's authority meant one thing at the beginning of the Age of Baroque, and quite another a century later at the onset of the Enlightenment, and still quite a different thing as the French Revolution approached in 1789. By that date, religion was for some but one ideology, a set of intellectually defined beliefs that existed in a world that was now awash with more compelling scientific, philosophical, and political ideas, a state of affairs that would have seemed strange and foreign to the men and women of the early seventeenth century.

**THE STATE CHURCHES.** Perhaps the most important religious development in the early modern world was the rise of the state church, a change that brought with it massive alterations in the ways in which people related to the clergy and Christian teaching. In 1500, all Europeans had been, by virtue of birth and baptism, members of the Roman church, an institution that was international in scope and which affected everyone's daily lives through its sacraments and rituals. To be sure, not every European had been devout; many had been strikingly indifferent to the disciplines that the Christian religion demanded of its adherents. But at the same time the concept of "Europe" was in people's minds largely synonymous with the notion of Christendom, a great international world made up of all Latin Christianity. Although a striking variety of opinions about Christianity's teachings had always flourished in Europe, upholding the unity of the church had long been seen to be fundamental to the health of society and secular governments. Religious heresy, it was often assumed, bred political disruption and disunity in its wake. At the same time European princes from the fourteenth century onward had become increasingly jealous of the revenues of the church, and of the powers that the pope and other high-ranking officials wielded within their kingdoms. A series of measures adopted in England, France, and other European states from this time forward had often tried to limit the power of Rome as well as that of bishops and archbishops. This trend toward state control over the church was to increase as a result of the controversies of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. In the course of the sixteenth century as the Protestant Reformation gathered strength, the ideas of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and a host of other figures came to question and eventually jettison the old notion of Christian unity. And in the century after 1550, the proliferation of new Protestant and

Catholic reform movements touched off a series of costly and miserable religious wars that threatened to destroy all public order. It was not just religion that was at stake in these wars, but the integrity of the state to govern and control its subjects. As the conflicts worsened over time, they inspired ever-greater attempts to define the beliefs of subjects. While religious wars sometimes gave birth to limited degrees of religious toleration, as in the Edict of Nantes (1598) in France, more often they bred attempts to establish a single unitary faith, one that was now defined by kings and princes and which they labored to establish in their lands with new standards of discipline and mechanisms of control. In this process the secular state came to play a far greater role in its subjects' beliefs and everyday religious practices than it had previously.

#### **ORTHODOXY, CONFORMITY, AND PERSECUTION.**

The Ages of the Baroque and the Enlightenment overlapped with what has been called the "Age of Confessions," a period generally agreed to have occurred between 1550 and 1700. The term "Confessions" refers to the many written definitions of faith that were set down in print and circulated at this time in Europe's states. In these statements theologians tried to answer the claims of their religious opponents and set out in an orderly fashion just what beliefs were normative in their own church. Kings and princes sanctioned these attempts to define the religion of their realms, and they supported efforts to establish doctrinal purity and religious uniformity by requiring church attendance, censoring the book trade and the theater, and making catechism or the instruction of youth in their religion's tenets a legal requirement. Yet the very attempt to define Christianity with literate formula also bred its own problems, as theologians and state officials came to devote their attentions to defining with ever-greater precision theological concepts. These were now not just elements of Christian theology but important attributes of state policy. In contrast to the late-medieval world, where religion was often perceived as a set of rituals that people practiced in order to display their devotion, the religion of the seventeenth-century world was thus increasingly subjected to the written word, as theologians and princes tried with increasing discrimination to define just what it was acceptable to believe. Their efforts bred ever more definite attempts to indoctrinate the laity in those teachings the state accepted as normative. Issues that hinged around age-old debates concerning predestination and human free will came to dominate much of the theological debate of the time, and to prompt theologians to craft fine distinctions concerning their teach-

ings concerning salvation. Of course, these attempts to establish uniformity and define religious orthodoxy did not go unquestioned, and in many places the seventeenth century produced even more religious differences and competing positions than had the sixteenth before it. But for those who doubted the teachings of the new state-sanctioned cults, they were faced with a dilemma. They might bow to the power of the state; they might keep their own ideas secret; or they could immigrate to a place that offered a more congenial environment for their opinions. Those were, by and large, the alternatives offered to most Europeans in the seventeenth-century world.

**WITCHCRAFT AND THE SUPERNATURAL.** While seventeenth-century state churches aimed to root out those who refused to conform to their beliefs, these institutions were even more determined to eliminate witchcraft and magic. In the century following 1550 the witch craze reached its height in Europe, its trajectory corresponding neatly with the Age of Confessions. In these years European states became obsessed with the idea that Satan was mounting a conspiracy to subvert Christianity and destroy the world. Such beliefs gave rise to brutal efforts in both Catholic and Protestant states to unearth and execute his minions, the witches. While the hunt to extirpate witches was one of the most dismal elements of life in early-modern Europe, its viciousness was short-lived. With the rise of the Scientific Revolution in the second half of the seventeenth century, beliefs in the supernatural began to wane among literate men and women and state officials. While belief in magic and the supernatural remained vital to many, particularly in the countryside, they were increasingly being driven underground.

**THE RISE OF PIOUS SPIRITUALITY.** Even as Europe became an incubator for heightened intolerance and conformity in the seventeenth century, new forces were just beginning to become perceptible beneath the surface of the religious landscape that were eventually to transform the fundamental nature of Christianity. Beginning in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, waves of Pietist thinkers began to advocate a fundamental spiritual reformation of Christianity that would promote a deeper and more personal religion. This movement first became evident in Germany, where figures like Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705) expressed distaste for the state-sanctioned religious orthodoxies that largely defined Lutheran Christianity at the time. Instead these figures reached into the past, finding in the religious mysticism of the later Middle Ages inspiration for their efforts to renew the spiritual life of the church. The new

Pietism was infectious, and its support of a rich and internal spiritual world found adherents in almost every European country, whether Protestant or Catholic. Not every group that flourished as a result of these growing sentiments was a threat to orthodoxy. Many were willing to assent to the theological teachings their states demanded, while others like the Quakers in England or the Moravians in Central Europe challenged key Christian teachings and became dissenters. As the eighteenth century progressed, the increasingly differentiated shape of public religious opinion was one factor that bred greater religious toleration. If the period gave rise to Deism—a broad intellectual movement to rationalize Christian beliefs—it also produced Methodism and a host of new Christian revivalist movements. These movements built upon the sentiments of Pietism and other spiritual movements of the late seventeenth century. The camp meeting appeared in those same societies where cultivated intellectuals aimed to curb the influence of Christian teachings, as intense piety crested side-by-side with religious disaffection. Thus the new churches and devotional movements that were born of eighteenth-century revivalism were to prove more than adequate wellsprings of Christian piety and they were eventually to lead a widespread renewal of the faith in the century that followed. Movements like Methodism, in other words, helped to create the modern Christian church as most people now know it, with its characteristic divisions into many privately supported houses of worship.

#### SCIENCE, ENLIGHTENMENT, AND REVOLUTION.

As the history of Deism illustrates, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment did not challenge Christianity so much as prompt its evolution in new directions. Science, deism taught, demonstrated both the ingenuity of the Christian God and the fact that he did not intervene in human affairs. Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire embraced such a view and envisioned a reformed Christianity that might establish the religion's ethical teachings, while jettisoning its age-old glorification of miracles and superstition. Other Enlightenment thinkers, though, read the achievements of the Scientific Revolution as a sign that European governments and societies should abandon the Christian past altogether. They advocated secularism, that is, a reconstruction of European culture and civilization without recourse to traditional Christian thought, morality, and values. The high tide of their sentiments was to give birth to the French Revolution's 1793 attempt to "de-christianize" society and to establish a worship of the Supreme Being and human reason in place of traditional Christianity.

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### THE STATE CHURCH IN EARLY-MODERN EUROPE

**ORIGINS.** By far the most important development in the history of European Christianity during the early modern age was the emergence of the state church. A series of measures pioneered in France, England, and Spain during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had anticipated its development. For much of the Middle Ages the Papacy in Rome had considered local churches as provinces in a Christian Empire under its control. The rising power of kings at the end of the period, though, brought Rome increasingly into conflict with the growing power of the secular state, and in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, national governments had begun to usurp authority the Pope had once claimed to exercise. In England, the Statute of Provisors (1351) attempted to limit the pope's authority to make appointments to English church offices, while the Statute of Praemunire passed two years later tried to prohibit the king's subjects from appealing their cases in the Roman church's courts by insisting that all such cases had to be submitted to the crown for approval before being referred to the papal judicial system. In France, the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438) and the Concordat of Bologna (1516) limited the pope's powers over the church in that country in ways that were similar, but even more thorough than in England. But it was in Spain where a truly national church began to develop at the end of the fifteenth century. As a result of their marriage, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castille came to govern over a large part of the Iberian Peninsula, a European region with a wealthy and powerful church establishment. By 1485, the couple was already secure enough in their control of the Spanish church to found their own version of the Inquisition and they charged the office with eradicating the secret practice of Judaism and Islam among the *conversos*, those they had forced to convert to Christianity. This Spanish Inquisition, as it later came to be known over time, was staffed with members of the clergy, but it answered directly to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella and not to the pope at Rome. It became in the sixteenth century a powerful weapon in the fight against heresy, and helps, in part, to explain the relatively limited appeal that Protestantism had in the country.

**PROTESTANT INFLUENCES.** During the sixteenth century the reforms advocated by Protestant leaders came



Danish seventeenth-century altarpiece celebrating the career of the German reformer Martin Luther. THE ART ARCHIVE/NATIONAL-MUSEET COPENHAGEN DENMARK/DAGLI ORTI.

alternately to support and discourage the increasing trend toward state control of religious institutions. In his *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520) Martin Luther recommended that the German princes take up the cause of reforming the churches within their own territory, since he judged the contemporary clergy too entrenched and reactionary to oversee the job of eradicating abuses and corruption. In the first generations of the Protestant Reformation, Luther's appeal to state authority proved to be one of the attractive features of the developing Lutheran church, as German princes and kings in Scandinavia accepted the movement's evangelical teachings, in part, because of the greater degree of control that it afforded over their clergy and the church's wealth. In 1527, for example, Philip of Hesse became the first German prince outside Saxony to introduce a Lutheran-styled reform in his lands. Philip set a standard that was often repeated in Protestant countries during the years that followed. He dissolved the

monasteries and convents within his territory and sold off their possessions, reaping the benefits of the sale for his own government. His example was soon to be imitated in Scandinavia, and most decidedly in England where the Dissolution of the Monasteries during 1535 and 1536 resulted in a huge windfall for Henry VIII's treasury. Henry's move against the monasteries was merely the last in a series of measures resulting from his desire to secure a divorce from Catherine of Aragon and the legacy of that famous dispute was to establish his effective control over almost every aspect of the church's life in England. But if Protestant kings and princes often freely interfered and tinkered with the church, the attitude of Reformation theologians was not always as accepting of state control as Luther's had been. In Swiss Geneva, the French religious reformer John Calvin advocated for a very different pattern of church-state relations. Calvin insisted that the church's ministers and officials meeting in synods had the right to define church



practices and teachings, and that the state was responsible for enforcing the decrees and decisions of religious leaders. Calvin's ideas served as the basis for a great international movement, today known as Calvinism, which spread throughout Europe in the century after 1550. But it was only in Scotland where the movement came to fashion the national Presbyterian church that Calvinism became accepted as the basis for a state church. Elsewhere Calvinists succeeded only on a much smaller scale: their influence dominated in Holland, a country that was a loose confederation of cities and rural provinces; in the Swiss cantons, which were also ruled by urban governments; and in a few German principalities. Even in these small territories, princes often significantly altered Calvin's notions concerning the need for a Consistory, a committee of churchmen and lay elders, to regulate all issues having to do with church and state. The type of church control implemented in these small territories thus frequently came to mirror more that of Philip of Hesse than of the original Genevan model. In England and France, Calvinist disciples agitated for the establishment of their positions in England and France, but rulers in those countries long resisted their pleas. Thus while Calvinism was to remain a significant minority movement—the most significant minority movement in seventeenth-century Europe—its ideas about political authority and the relationship between church and state always proved to be stumbling blocks to its establishment as a national religion.

**CATHOLIC INFLUENCES.** It seems at first a paradox that the greatest impetus to the development of the state church came, not from within Protestantism, but from forces at work within the Roman Catholic church, an institution that had long resisted attempts to encroach upon its prerogatives. During the sixteenth century the rise of competing Protestant churches throughout Northern Europe had been a significant blow to the Roman church's prestige and authority. As a result the very multiplication of new churches throughout Europe meant that those who supported reform from inside the Catholic church were forced to rely on state power as never before to ensure that the task of internal reform was carried forward. In the years between 1545 and 1563 members of the church's hierarchy had met at Trent on the border of northern Italy to consider issues of church reform. Prompted by the attacks of Protestants the prescriptions they formulated at this Council of Trent resisted Protestant innovations but at the same time attempted to answer Protestant charges by supporting the elimination of abuses and corruption in the church and by fostering a new discipline among the clergy. At the council's con-

clusion, the church possessed a series of decrees that were a definitive rejoinder to Protestant teaching, but the church's officialdom also faced a dilemma. In order for the decrees to be established in the various countries of Europe that remained faithful to Rome, the Council's prescriptions had to be adopted and promulgated by kings and princes. Thus in the wake of the Council of Trent, Rome was forced to rely as never before on Europe's remaining Catholic princes, who came to promulgate the decrees and who also supported the establishment of Trent's program through rich financial subsidies. In this way the very complexity of the sixteenth-century religious situation helped to breed a new enhanced state control over the entire apparatus of the church's administrative and spiritual bureaucracy. In the years that followed Trent, the Catholic church was, in effect, to become ever more a department of state within those Western European kingdoms that retained their allegiance to the pope.

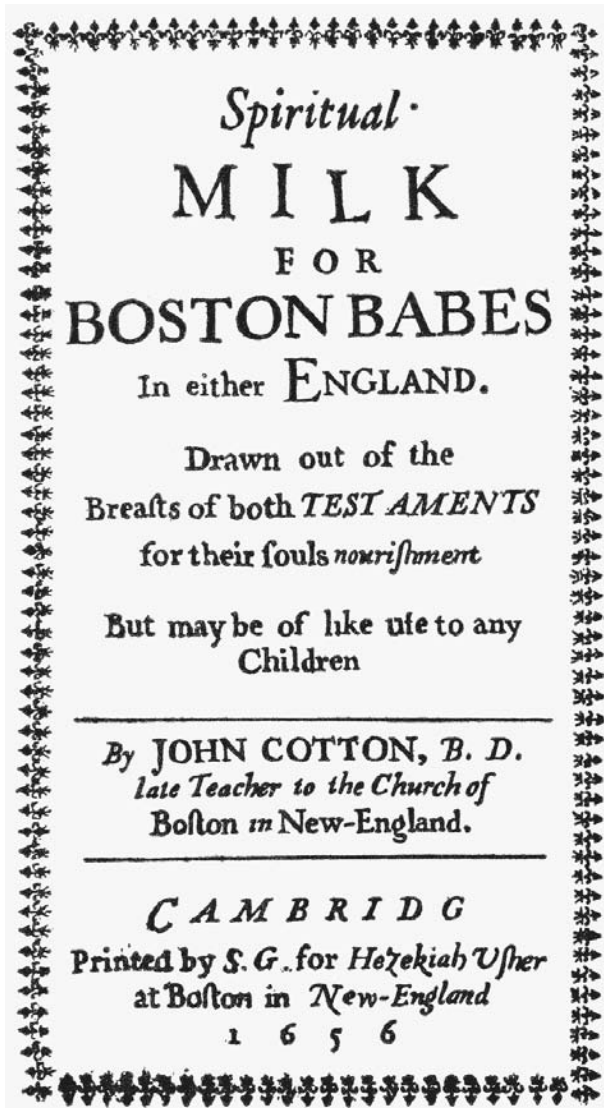
**CHARACTER OF THE STATE CHURCH.** By 1600, the legacy of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and the ambitions of kings and princes meant that the development of the state church was well advanced in every major European state. These new institutions were officially sanctioned and publicly supported, but in most cases they retained the parish structure that had flourished in the medieval church. A parish was a geographical unit with boundaries, and every individual who lived within those boundaries was expected to worship within the parish's church. In the Roman church and the Church of England (often referred to merely as the Anglican church), parish priests administered the church and celebrated the sacraments. These priests were often called "curates," because they practiced the "cure of souls." In larger parishes, a curate might also have a vicar or a vice curate who assisted him. Catholic and Anglican priests were customarily addressed with the title "Father," while in Lutheran kingdoms and territories ministers served the congregation, rather than priests. The term "minister" had its origins in the reforms of sixteenth-century Protestant leaders like Martin Luther, who insisted that a special category of clergy was unnecessary to intercede between humankind and God. In Lutheran churches ministers were not considered a special legal caste, governed by their own laws and privileges. Instead the same laws that bound everyone in the state were also binding on Protestant ministers, although a great deal of prestige was still attached to being a member of the clergy and oftentimes the distinctions between a Lutheran minister and a Catholic or Anglican priest were minimal. Lutheran ministers were ad-

dressed as “Pastor” (*Pfarrer* in German). By contrast, Calvinist churches did not retain a parochial structure, but instead divided the faithful into congregations according to the place where they worshipped and not according to where people lived. Ministers or pastors were in charge of Calvinist congregations. To men and women of the time, the most visible difference between all the Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic church revolved around the issue of clerical celibacy. All Protestant churches allowed their clergy to marry, while Roman priests were expected to renounce all sexual activity. While these requirements were an ancient feature of Latin Christianity, priestly celibacy had often been lightly observed in many places in Europe throughout the Middle Ages. Many priests had kept concubines, and had merely paid annual fines to their bishops for breaking the church’s laws. As a result of the reforms of the Council of Trent, clerical celibacy was becoming more strictly enforced in seventeenth-century Europe, although even then there were some regions in which concubinage (the keeping of mistresses) was common. By 1700, observance of clerical celibacy had grown to be the norm in Catholic lands, and concubinage had become very rare, a mark of the success of the program of the Catholic Reformation.

**ENFORCING MORALITY.** State churches served as the eyes and ears of the royal government. Priests and ministers kept records of births and deaths, as well as immigration into and emigration out of the communities under their supervision. It was among their responsibilities to note down the names of all individuals who did not appear at church services on Sunday morning. They also investigated and reported any deviant social or cultural activity. Priests and ministers passed on this information to state authorities, who sometimes, as in witchcraft investigations, interrogated entire villages based upon the information they received from the clergy. A key innovation of the new state churches that flourished in Europe at the time was the increased use of the Visitation, a type of inspection that had been more rarely practiced by bishops in the Middle Ages. The Visitation first became an element of state policy during the early years of the Lutheran Reformation in Saxony and Hesse, the two earliest states to convert their church establishments to Lutheran teaching. To assess the level of religious knowledge among their peoples, the Saxon and Hessian Visitors were charged with examining villagers and ministers. To do so, they were armed with a standard questionnaire with which they interrogated those in the countryside. While clerical officials conducted the visitations, the reports that these forays

in the countryside generated were given to princes and state officials, who formulated plans and responses to the generally low level of religious discipline and knowledge that these Visitations often revealed. Weekly catechism for the young was usually the most common prescription that arose from the Visitation and this practice of conducting schooling sessions in church doctrine came to be adopted, not only in Lutheran states, but in Catholic and Calvinist ones as well. In the Duchy of Bavaria, a large and powerful state within the Holy Roman Empire, these initiatives gave birth already in the 1570s to an institution known as the Clerical Council, a permanent body of the state that met regularly for more than 200 years in the Duchy’s capital of Munich before being abolished. The Clerical Council regularly received reports about those who held dangerous religious opinions, about priests who were ineffective and poorly trained, and about parishes in which the level of religious knowledge seemed to be low. They responded by disciplining, reassigning, or removing ineffective priests and by requiring that efforts at indoctrinating the laity be redoubled in particular parishes. Eventually, they designed an ingenious system in which priests gave out certificates to those who made their confessions, and then, each year lay people were responsible for presenting these tickets to state officials when they paid their taxes. The Bavarian Clerical Council was one of the earliest state offices to appear in Northern Europe that was charged with inspecting religion at the local level in ways that were similar to the Inquisition in Spain and Italy.

**ALLEGIANCE TO THE STATE.** The state churches that flourished in seventeenth-century Europe also played a major role in fostering new wellsprings of affection for national governments. At the local level, the minister or priest often served as the “king’s man,” a spokesman for the government. In the days before the development of radio, television, newspapers, or the Internet, it was consequently assumed that one of the duties of the clergy was to communicate to their parishioners news from the outside world as well as the king’s proclamations and edicts. Patriotism is an anachronistic term when applied to the early-modern era. To the extent to which loyalty existed, it usually involved attachment to a ruler or a community, not a land or state. Early modern priests and ministers still can be credited, however, with building in the communities they served a nascent sense of patriotism for the state through the sermons they gave and the devotional activities they organized. Thousands of sermons survive from the period in which priests and ministers intoned the necessity of



Title page of John Cotton's *Spiritual Milk and Boston Babes in Either England*, a text published at Boston in 1646 that was intended to teach young children the truths of Puritan Christianity. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

obedience to the reigning prince as a Christian virtue. In a more positive vein, the religious ideas of the period celebrated the benevolent, but effective king as “the father” of the national household. Just as an effective head of a house bred respect for his authority by chiding and chastening his recalcitrant children, so, too, was it the responsibility of the prince to discipline and supervise the activities of his subjects. Thus in this way, religious notions of authority tended ever more to sanction and buttress the rising power of kings and princes in the early-modern world.

**THE ROLE OF PRINT AND EDUCATION.** In the early-modern state church the practice of religious rituals

also came to be more firmly fixed than previously. The seventeenth century was the great age of what the historian John Bossy has labeled “typographical tyranny.” During this century state churches first gained the power to insist that congregations strictly observe the liturgy, the body of rites prescribed for public worship, as set in type in books of liturgical order such as the Roman Catholic missal, the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, and the Presbyterian *Book of Common Order*. In every state, on a given Sunday, every congregation across the land was quite literally on the same page in terms of the devotions it was performing. While the subjection of religious worship to this kind of formalism assaults modern sensibilities, the new typographical tyranny had its positive side: it was a boon to the spread of literacy. In order to make sure that members of congregations could read what was on the page, churches became committed to teaching members to read, if not necessarily to write. Universal public education systems did not exist in Europe until the nineteenth century. But even before this time, what schooling that did flourish did so largely under the supervision of churchmen. Typically, the priest or minister, or, in large churches, his assistant, would hold school for a few hours each day for local youth. The education in these schools was quite rudimentary. Its primary goal was to equip students with sufficient skill to read simple devotional works and most importantly to master their catechism, a manual that summarized the beliefs of a given creed. Only the brightest and usually the wealthiest students went on to grammar schools, and the “colleges” or secondary schools that were similar in many respects to modern American high schools. These schools were rarely maintained by the state church, but were “private” institutions funded by fees and maintained by churchmen who had no public responsibilities. In Catholicism, these secondary schools were often the preserve of the Jesuits, the most influential of the many religious orders that emerged from the Catholic Reformation. In Protestant lands many of the schools that first appeared during the Middle Ages to train clerics survived the Reformation to see new life as the training ground for lay people. This was the case with the English public schools. These institutions had originally been founded in the later Middle Ages under the auspices of the church and had been called “public” because the education occurred outside the homes of the nobility and gentry who sent their sons there. These “public schools” had long trained clergy for careers in the church, but in the seventeenth century institutions like Eton, Harrow, and Rugby became the training ground for more and more members of the elite anxious to participate in government.

**THE STATE CHURCH AND COMPETITION.** The priests and ministers in charge of state churches did a good deal of what today would be recognized as the state's work. In return they acquired an enormous amount of cultural power and influence. While churches became the eyes, the ears, and the voice of government, the state church's clergy regularly appealed to and encouraged their governments to beat back forces of religious competition. The state clergy made sure, in other words, that the government penalized those who, for whatever reason, chose not to attend the state church. Minority or "dissenting" churches existed in many parts of Europe, but usually these churches' members were granted only limited rights to worship, and these awards of limited religious toleration usually restricted dissenters' civil rights and fostered either subtle or overt patterns of religious persecution. The state clergy often vigorously lobbied for such injunctions, and they tried to protect their own religion's favored position against attempts to grant religious freedom to dissenters. Adherents of outlawed Christian movements, such as Anabaptists (those who rejected the validity of infant baptism, and thus practiced re-baptism as an adult as a necessary condition for participating in the church) were almost never allowed even a limited right to worship. Almost everywhere, Anabaptism was a crime punishable by death.

**PROBLEMS OF ESTABLISHED RELIGIONS.** While a tool of state domination and control, the established church in early-modern Europe satisfied the devotional and spiritual needs of the majority of Christians. Over time, however, as Europe's society and economy grew more complex and variegated, these institutions proved incapable of accommodating the increasingly diverse religious opinions that multiplied in society. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many parts of Europe were undergoing rapid urbanization and a transformation to a capitalist economy that would eventually spell the death knell for the old feudal order. In these cities commerce and merchant industries fostered new and increasingly divergent religious landscapes. On the one hand the new commercial economy often bred a dour and austere sense of discipline in many of the new "men of commerce," as Dutch traders, French artisans, or English industrialists came to evidence an almost "monkish" devotion to their pursuit of worldly wealth. Certainly, their seriousness did not preclude religious belief; in fact, it sent many in these groups in search of new forms of devotion that were more personally relevant in the context of their rapidly changing lives. For others, the new commercial economy, with the possibilities that it opened up for high standards of consump-

tion and leisure time made the traditional ideas of both Protestantism and Catholicism more and more irrelevant. Thus as the seventeenth century drew to a close, the state churches of Europe appeared to be increasingly assaulted from two directions. On the one hand, many felt that their religious and ritualistic formalism was inadequate and they searched for new religious movements that offered a more personal and internal spirituality. From the opposing direction, Europe's state-sanctioned religious establishments came as well to seem increasingly irrelevant to those who were less concerned with "storing up treasures in Heaven" than they were with enjoying them in the here and now. Among those who persisted as devout believers, the demand arose for a more vital and enthusiastic religious experience, a demand that was to give rise as a persistent chorus. And at the same time non-believers chafed to be free of the obligations of church attendance, catechism, and the other, often minimal requirements that the state church imposed upon its subjects. This dynamic—born of an increasingly pluralistic society in which religious beliefs were expressed in terms of personal relevance—was to make the state church seem more and more an outmoded relic of the European past as the eighteenth century progressed.

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## THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

**THE AGE OF RELIGIOUS WARS.** As the development of the state church came to affect the lives of more and more Europeans in the seventeenth century, religious issues continued at the same time to dominate events in the political arena. In the century following 1550, Europe was convulsed by a series of religious wars

in which the lingering issues the Protestant and Catholic Reformations had raised prompted debate, civil strife, and military conflict. The Age of Religious Wars, the term that is often used to describe this period, is in many ways a misnomer. It implies that over a number of years Western European princes sustained organized military action to resolve the religious issues of the era. While military engagements caused a portion of the bloodletting in Europe in this century, the breakdown of public order—evidenced in the sporadic but deadly outbreak of religious violence in towns and villages—frequently proved to be far deadlier than military conflicts. Similarly, troop movements, rather than battles, killed far more peasants than soldiers, since as armies moved through the countryside they commandeered grain and other foodstuffs from local inhabitants, often leaving villages to starve in their wake. Armies, too, brought disease with them, touching off outbreaks of plague and other epidemics that proved to be more devastating than the casualties inflicted in battles. In the years between 1550 and 1600, these clashes were largely centered in France and the Netherlands and took on much of the character of civil wars. But the last and greatest of the religious wars, the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) occurred in Central Europe, and its primary battleground was the loose confederation of states known as the Holy Roman Empire. Although it began as a localized dispute, the Thirty Years' War came soon to assume the character of a great international conflict, eventually involving France, Spain, the Scandinavian powers—indeed almost every major European state. Notable for its brutality, the length of its sieges, and the widespread depopulation and devastation that it wreaked on large portions of Central Europe, the war was a dismal climax to the great controversies that the Protestant and Catholic Reformations had bred in Europe since the early sixteenth century. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) that drew the fighting to a close offered little new in the way of solutions to religious problems, but instead merely reiterated sixteenth-century precedents that upheld the right of a ruler to define the religion of his state. If any good thus came out of this massive bloodletting—the deadliest conflict in European history until the total wars of the twentieth century—it was by and large to discredit the arena of battle as a suitable forum for resolving religious differences. In the years that followed 1648, Europeans were to continue to fight one another, but it was increasingly to be territorial disputes, trade, and colonialism that inspired international wars, rather than religious issues.

**CAUSES OF THE WAR.** The causes of the Thirty Years' War were complex and lay in the long stalemate

that had developed between Protestant and Catholic forces in the Holy Roman Empire following the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. At that time both Lutherans and Catholics had drawn a truce that upheld the legality of Lutheran teaching in the empire, so long as evangelical reforms were established through the actions of a prince or town council. The formula upon which the Peace of Augsburg had been based was *cujus regio, eius religio*, meaning roughly “He who rules, his religion.” Like many of the truces drawn in the religious conflicts of the sixteenth century, no one ever really expected the Peace of Augsburg’s solution to the Reformation crisis to stand. Like the Edict of Nantes (1598), which granted limited toleration to French Protestants some four decades later, it was thought of as a truce, a cessation in the conflict that Catholics and Protestants anxiously desired so that they might recover from the bloodletting of the previous generation. Most princes fully expected that at some time in the future a single religion would be re-established in the empire, but they were assured throughout much of the later sixteenth century that that moment was not about to come soon. By 1600 the majority of German princes and towns were Lutheran, while the emperor—always a member of the Austrian Habsburg dynasty—was Catholic. The election of a Catholic emperor was, in fact, assured by the very contours of the empire’s constitution. Only seven electors within the German parliament, or Diet, possessed a say in electing a new emperor, and at this time four of the seven were Catholic. Thus religious issues in Germany had come to a stalemate: the emperor and the majority of the German electors were Catholic, but in the German territories and cities Lutheranism dominated. Both sides recognized that any attempt to establish their position as the “official” state religion was doomed to failure because of the very nature of the political landscape. Although this situation prevailed until the early seventeenth century, the religious complexion of the German lands was already beginning to change in the later sixteenth century as some states adopted Calvinist religious reforms. According to the terms of the Peace of Augsburg, Calvinism was an unrecognized, and therefore illegal, religion. Despite its prohibition, though, a number of powerful states adopted Calvinist church ordinances, including the Palatinate, Hesse, Nassau, and Anhalt. The Palatinate, in particular, was a wealthy state in the German Southwest that was in frequent contact with Calvinists elsewhere in Europe, particularly with the Huguenots in France. The Palatinate’s ruler was also one of the Diet’s seven electors, and in 1613, he was joined in his decision to practice Calvinism by the elector of Brandenburg-Prussia, a ruler of one of the largest territories in the

German northeast. Thus two of the three Protestant electors within the imperial Diet were now Calvinist, a situation that rankled the empire's Lutherans, and which raised Catholic concerns as well.

**RESURGENCE OF CATHOLICISM.** In the generation following the conclusion of the Council of Trent in 1563, Catholicism had begun as well to revive throughout Germany. The center for much of this renewal was the large and powerful Duchy of Bavaria in the southeast, where Duke Albrecht V (1550–1579) pioneered a state-directed pattern of Catholic reform that was to be copied in other Catholic territories throughout the empire. Princes like Albrecht were concerned to transform their states into model Catholic territories, but they also hoped to work a widespread re-catholicization of the empire itself. Their efforts laid the foundation for a renewed spirit in the Catholic leadership and inspired some state leaders to convert to Catholicism, touching off a renewal of spirit in the Catholic cause that was well underway by the second decade of the seventeenth century. By this time, the spokesman for the revival was the Austrian figure, Archduke Ferdinand. In 1617, Ferdinand secured his election as king of Bohemia, then, as now, a region with a Czech rather than German population. In his new office Ferdinand set about reforming the religion of his new subjects, outlawing the religious toleration that had recently been assured in the state and laying the foundation for the region's re-catholicization. His efforts soon inspired resistance, and only several months after coming to power, his nobles revolted, capturing Ferdinand's two most powerful Catholic ministers in Hradcany Castle at Prague and throwing them out the window. The men survived their fall, but this "defenestration of Prague," which occurred on 23 May 1618, touched off the entire complex series of events that soon made war inevitable. Emboldened by their show of resistance, Bohemia's nobles deposed their Catholic king and in his place elected the Calvinist, Elector Frederick III of the Palatinate. Thus their measures called into question the entire balance of power in the empire, since Bohemia was a territory that possessed an electoral vote in the German Diet, and if Frederick's claim to the throne had been upheld, Protestants would have possessed a majority of the seven votes. Instead the following year when the ailing Emperor Mathias died, the Protestant electors universally agreed that Ferdinand should be elected to replace him. But rather than exercising generosity to his Protestant compatriots, the new emperor raised an army that marched on Prague, defeating its Protestant nobles at the Battle of White Mountain just outside the city in 1620. With this victory Habsburg control over the ter-

ritory was assured, thus touching off an ambitious program to reestablish Catholicism in Bohemia in the years that followed.

#### **DANISH, SWEDISH, AND INTERNATIONAL PHASES.**

Although Ferdinand's victory in Bohemia might have ended the conflict, his buoying of the Catholic cause inspired the Lutheran King Christian IV of Denmark to enter the wars in 1625 in order to rally Protestant forces in the northern part of the empire. A series of stunning Danish defeats, though, caused the country to withdraw from Germany in 1629. In the months that followed, Denmark's archrival Sweden was drawn into the conflict as well, to serve as supporter of the Protestant cause. The entry of Sweden, a major European military power at the time, soon widened the conflict. Poland, Spain, the United Dutch Provinces, and eventually France came to participate in the wars, with Catholic France fighting on the side of Protestant forces in order to oppose its rival Spain. The worst years of the conflict occurred in the mid-1630s, when heavy fighting, famine, disease, and the pillaging of armies wreaked a heavy toll on large parts of Germany. In the German Southwest, the large and wealthy Lutheran territory of Württemberg saw its population decline by more than 75 percent. In many places the mortality rate soared to a level more than 30 percent higher than the birth rate. Travelers who visited the region at the time, like the English physician William Harvey who would later go on to discover the circulation of the blood, remarked that Germany was a country very much without a population. While attempts to halt the destruction continued throughout the later 1630s, the war was to grind on for another decade until a general peace conference was convened in the northern German town of Münster. The treaty that resulted from these deliberations, the Peace of Westphalia, accomplished little when compared against the massive destruction that had been wrought. The principle of *cujus regio, eius religio* was upheld, meaning that German princes were free to define the religion practiced in their territory. Calvinism, previously left out of the settlement of the Peace of Augsburg of 1555 was now recognized as a legal religion, and other developments that had long been established facts, like the independence of the Dutch Republic or of the Swiss Cantons, finally received legal recognition. The costs that the war had exacted in deaths, in human misery, and in a general cheapening of life throughout much of Central Europe scarcely justified such slight achievements. Yet on the positive side Continental Europeans were never again to stage such an enormous battle over religious issues. The specter of the Thirty Years' War, in which initial

religious zeal was quickly turned to baldly political ends, meant that the impulses that had fed religious conflicts had by 1648 largely come to be spent.

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## THE ENGLISH CIVIL WARS

**RISE PURITAN DISSATISFACTION.** Before the specter of religious conflict completely disappeared from Europe altogether, one final conflict, the English Civil Wars, was to answer questions that had long raged over the course that the state church should take in that island country. Since the later years of the reign of Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) English Puritans had been agitating for change in the rituals and doctrines of the Church of England. The Reformation settlement in England had been crafted, not by theological directives formulated by a Reformation leader like Martin Luther or John Calvin, but in response to political realities. Henry VIII had been pulled into the realm of Protestant states only gradually as a result of the circumstances arising from his famous divorce from Catherine of Aragon, but other than dissolving England's monasteries and taking a few tentative steps toward reforming the church establishment, Henry had left much of England's religion untouched. Under the reign of his son Edward VI (r. 1547–1552), the first English *Book of Common Prayer* had come into circulation, but it was carefully fashioned as a translation of the Sarum rite, a version of the Mass that had originated in England's Salisbury Cathedral and which had been in wide circulation throughout the country in the later Middle Ages. Although he was personally Protestant in his own religious ideas and he did invite a number of continental reformers to come to England—most notably the Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer (1491–1551)—few definitive steps were taken to foster Reformation teachings throughout England until the year of Edward's death. At that time a new austere and definitively Protestant *Book of Common Prayer* was printed, but the king's

premature demise prevented it from being circulated throughout the country. By contrast, Edward's successor, Mary Tudor (r. 1552–1558) tried valiantly to restore Catholicism in the island, putting to death more than 300 Protestants, and beginning tentative steps to re-establish English monasteries. But her early death, too, prevented these measures from being carried through. And while her half-sister Elizabeth I was a Protestant, she promised at the outset of her reign to make “no windows into men's souls.” The church she thus fashioned continued to be a halfway house between outright Protestantism and traditional medieval practices. In 1559 she issued a new edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* more traditional in outlook than her brother Edward's second work, but more Protestant in its teachings than the first edition of 1549. And although she was to persecute some Catholics in the course of her reign, she generally tolerated a broad range of opinion, so long as she did not sense that it was a threat to her authority. The solutions that she crafted worked well for most of her reign, but by the 1580s and 1590s the Puritan movement had gathered increasing strength in Parliament. Puritanism, a theological and devotional movement that aimed to do away with vestiges of the Roman church's practices, had largely been inspired by the teachings of John Calvin (1509–1564) and the Scottish divine John Knox (1508–1572). The most extreme of English Puritans desired the abolition of the episcopate, and the substitution of a Presbyterian style of church government—something that Elizabeth and her successors steadfastly refused to do. In the Church of England, as elsewhere in Europe, the power of bishops served to buttress and support the power of the state. Both the Tudor and Stuart monarchs realized that to do away with these powerful links between state and church might subject the crown to powerful centrifugal forces it could not control. Not every Puritan, though, supported such radical measures. Others were content with more piecemeal measures to remove “popish” abuses and superstitions from the English prayer book and to curtail the elaborate ritualism of the state church.

**JAMES I.** Elizabeth resisted such innovations, and although she was largely able to forestall the growing Puritan demands of her later reign, she left the dilemmas that Puritanism raised as a legacy to her successors, James I (r. 1603–1625) and Charles I (r. 1625–1649), neither of whom evidenced the queen's same skill for managing the English Parliament. A central feature of Elizabeth's success had been her decision to call Parliament relatively infrequently, and to conduct a royal administration notable for its great economy. Despite these

measures she had left the crown heavily indebted at her death, and royal finances continued to worsen during the first decade of James I's reign. James soon learned, like Elizabeth before him, of the dangers of calling the English Parliament, who regularly required concessions in exchange for new taxes. In the first years of James's reign he came face-to-face with the religious issues that had also troubled the later years of Elizabeth's rule. As he made his way from Scotland to London, he was presented with the "Millenary Petition," supposedly signed by 1,000 English Puritans who desired a purified English church. News of these efforts soon reached the country's Catholics, a few of whom began to hatch a plan to tunnel under the houses of Parliament in Westminster and blow them up while the king was speaking there. This Gunpowder Plot, planned for November 1605, came to the attention of officials and, when thwarted, did a great deal to destroy the hopes of those who longed for a re-establishment of Catholicism as the state religion of England.

**THE SITUATION WORSENS.** Although James I may have been drawn to some of the theological conclusions of Calvinism, he had regularly battled with Scottish Presbyterians while king of Scotland. That experience continued to condition his reign as king of England. When he called a conference at Hampton Court palace outside London in 1604 to converse with Puritans, he was faced with the demand that he abolish the episcopate in England. His response, "No bishop, No king," alienated many in the movement. Still James did accede to their request for a new authorized translation of the Bible, the version that has since become known as the King James Version since its issuance in 1611. Yet in the years that followed, James instructed officials in the Church of England to reverse Elizabethan policies toward Dissenters, those who refused to attend Anglican services. Elizabeth had been relatively tolerant of those who refused to attend, but in the following years James's ecclesiastical establishment levied heavy punishments on those who refused to participate. Puritan dissatisfaction with his regime also grew when in 1618 James made clear his animus against the movement's custom of "keeping the sabbath." At that time he issued a proclamation that decided between a group of Puritans and Catholic-sympathizing members of the gentry. James's declaration made it legal to dance on Sundays, to go about "vaulting and leaping," to set up "May-poles," and to drink "Whitsun ales." James insisted further that the declaration be read from every pulpit in the land, but when the Puritan outcry was too great, he backed off from his plans.

**WORSENING FISCAL AND POLITICAL CRISES.** In the years that followed his initial encounters with the English Parliament, James decided, like Elizabeth before him, that it was better not to call the representative body to meeting. Still he was faced with an ever-increasing shortfall of funds, and during the second decade of his reign, he made up this shortfall through the sale of offices and the awarding of royal monopolies to trade in certain commodities. Elizabeth, too, had practiced such a policy, although her greater popularity had tended to stanch criticisms. James, by contrast, was not a popular figure. At the same time, he continued to uphold the Church of England while prudently promising persecution for Catholics who practiced their religion openly, a popular policy. In the final years of his reign, any goodwill that he had amassed through such policies was spent. In these years criticism mounted because of his tendency to fall prey to young favorites like George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, with whom James apparently nourished a long-term sexual obsession. In 1521, James secretly sent off his son and heir Charles with his favorite Buckingham to Madrid to arrange a marriage with the Spanish Infanta. When the scheme came to light it caused a scandal and had to be abandoned since an alliance with Spain had been particularly unpopular in England since the Spanish Armada of 1588. In that failed offensive Spain had launched an invasion force against the island with the intention of accomplishing its reconversion to Catholicism, and since that date most in England had turned a wary eye toward Spain. With the Spanish marriage discredited for his son Charles, James considered other possible marriage alliances. But his decision to wed his heir to Henrietta Maria, the sister of Louis XIII of France, was hardly a prudent choice. France, too, was a Catholic country that had long nourished a rivalry with England. Thus the last years of James's reign came to be particularly uncomfortable, especially when the dire financial situation of his government required the calling of Parliament to set England's finances aright. He now faced a chorus of criticism, particularly from his Puritan opponents who desired widespread reforms in exchange for new taxes.

**CHARLES I.** If James left his son a dangerously unstable situation, Charles I soon offended just about every faction in England. Quarrelsome and high-handed by nature, he came to alienate even his supporters. Early in his reign he dissolved two meetings of Parliament when members insisted that the king's ministers should be answerable to the body. By 1628 when he called his third meeting, he was forced to sign the Petition of Right, a document that outlawed many of his previous



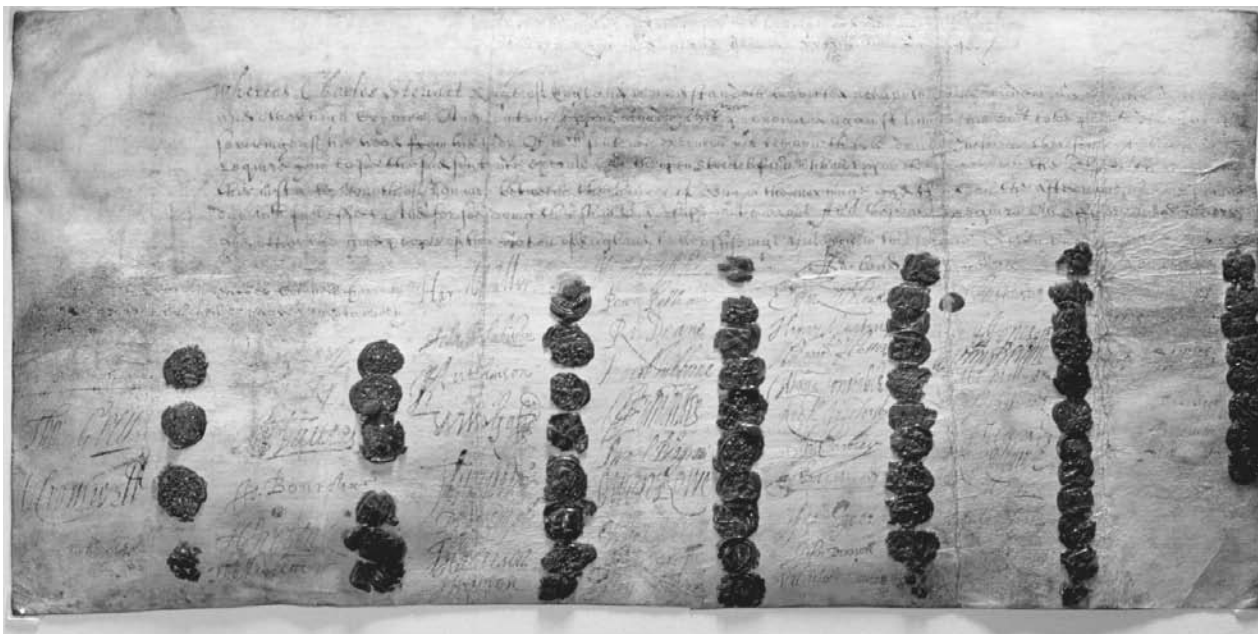


Archbishop William Laud. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

revenue-raising schemes. Chastened by the defiance of Parliament, he resolved not to call the body again, and between 1629 and 1640 he ruled largely without any representative assembly, a decision that forced the king to rely on the sale of offices and other monopolistic practices that had long excited the outrage of Parliamentarians against him and his father James. At the same time, Charles's religious policies offended the sensibilities of many in England, who feared that his High Church formalism and support of pomp and ritual was a precursor to a restoration of Catholicism in the island. This strain of criticism only worsened, particularly after Charles installed William Laud (1573–1645) in 1633 as archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the church of England's establishment. Laud soon persecuted members of the Puritan party, including the popular London attorney William Prynne. Prynne, an avid opponent of the theater and a critic of the lax standards of morals evidenced at court, had for several years conducted a pamphlet campaign against the High Church party. Laud had Prynne seized and tried, but when Prynne began a term of imprisonment in 1633, he continued to write from his jail cell, having his works smuggled out of prison to be published and circulated secretly. King Charles and Laud continued to move Prynne about the country, hoping that they would find a spot secluded enough that he would be unable to work his intrigues. But in 1637 as

the prisoner continued to defy their orders, they had him seized, his earlobes shorn off and both his cheeks branded with the letters "SL" for "seditious libeller." Prynne, ever the showman, promoted his marks as "Stigmata Laudis," meaning literally, "the marks of Laud." Laud's other measures did little to quiet fears that a restoration of Catholicism was imminent in England and Scotland. He refused to engage in dialogue with Puritans and openly tried to offend the party. Between 1634 and 1637, the archbishop ordered Visitations of all English and Scottish dioceses, which turned up evidence of widespread Puritan practices. To counteract this threat, Laud insisted that observance of his policies was synonymous with loyalty to the king. Among the particularly despised measures he enacted were a revival of James I's measures against the "keeping of the Sabbath," a measure that now excited even more outrage in the 1630s than it had in 1618. Laud's measures re-installed the force of James I's proclamation allowing Sunday games and the opening of public houses. These measures were explained to the country in the so-called *Book of Sports* that King Charles issued in 1633. Laud's other directives sought to redecorate English churches with costly furnishings; in the past generations many of these churches had been white-washed as Puritan ideas were in the ascendant. While his measures were popular among some quarters, they were greeted as "godless popery" among the Puritans, who generally were more organized in their opposition to state policies than moderates or the High Church party that supported such initiatives. By 1639, his efforts to establish an Anglican-style worship in Scotland produced the brief, but vicious "Bishop's War" in that country, a precursor to the great civil conflicts that were soon to come to England.

**THE LONG PARLIAMENT.** Matters of church and state were to clash in the years after 1640, when Charles I was forced once again to call Parliament in an effort to alleviate his chronic shortage of revenues. The first meeting that the king convened in the spring of the year, however, lasted only three weeks, when negotiations on both sides broke down and the king dismissed them. A few months later, though, Charles's financial situation had grown even more perilous and he summoned a second Parliament. This body was to become known as the Long Parliament because it continued to sit in some form or other until 1660. It eventually sentenced Archbishop Laud, Charles I, and other royalist supporters to death. In the months that followed its first deliberations, tensions between the Parliament and the king rose, thus necessitating Charles' departure from London in 1642. He raised an army, but in the capital the Puritan oppo-



Death warrant of King Charles I of England, dated 29 January 1649, and bearing the seals of the members of Parliament that signed it. © ADAM WOOLFITT/CORBIS.

sition began to exact its vengeance upon Charles's religious policy. Measures were enacted that did away with the office of the bishop and established a style of Presbyterian church government similar to that in Scotland. Late in 1644, the archbishop of Canterbury was imprisoned on a bill of attainder, a Parliamentary writ, and he was tried, convicted, and executed soon afterward. By this time forces of Parliament and the king were already skirmishing on battlefields in the north and west of England. In 1645, though, the conflict took a new direction when Parliament raised the New Model Army, an exemplary fighting force. In the months that followed, the leadership of the New Model army, particularly Oliver Cromwell, began to exert its influence over the religious situation. The king took up residence in Oxford not far from London, while the New Model Army laid siege to his outpost. Charles escaped for a time, but in 1647, the Scottish forces that controlled the retreat where he was hiding handed him over to Parliament. Yet again he escaped, and continued to lead a number of intrigues against the government. Finally, in August of 1648 the king was recaptured, tried, and on 30 January 1649, he was put to death. Thus the bitter rivalries over religious policies and political power that had characterized much of the reign of both of the Stuart kings seemed to come to an end. Until 1653, England continued to be ruled by the Long Parliament, but increasing disagreements and dissension in that body prepared the way for the rise of the Puritan leader and New Model Army hero Oliver

Cromwell, who served as Lord Protectorate of the English Commonwealth until his death in 1658. Social and religious unrest persisted under Cromwell's government, with ever more diverse groups of dissenters multiplying throughout the country. Some of the most famous groups that multiplied at the time were the Quakers (who recognized the lordship of the Holy Spirit and rejected Christian laws), the Levellers (who advocated the elimination of all elements of rank and social privilege), the Diggers (who supported the abolition of private property), the Ranters (who rejected all forms of religious ritual), and the Fifth Monarchy Men (an apocalyptic group who argued for the abolition of taxes). Most of these groups actively worked against the regime and, coupled with the actions of Puritan fanatics, the increasingly tangled religious and political situation came more and more to discredit the Commonwealth's rule. In truth it must be admitted the Cromwell showed the wisdom of an enlightened despot in dealing with English society at a very troublesome period. Despite his Puritan religious convictions, Cromwell was a friend to George Fox, founder of the Quakers, and he protected Quakers from outbreaks of sporadic violence. At the same time the tide of Puritan extremism and religious radicalism that rose in the years of the Protectorate, and which began to spiral out of control, meant that his regime eventually came to be painted with the same broad brush of despotism that had once tarnished Charles I. And in the two years following his death in



George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends. © ARCHIVE PHOTOS, INC. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

1658, the vacuum of authority in England meant that even the generals of Cromwell's New Model Army began to realize that a return to the monarchy was preferable than the contemporary drift of affairs. Thus the way was prepared for the Restoration that occurred in 1660, an event that paved the way for the re-establishment of Anglicanism in England but at the same time did little to resolve the lingering issues of religious dissent in the country.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: English Literature in the Early Seventeenth Century*

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## THE RESTORATION SETTLEMENT IN ENGLAND

**THE KING RETURNS.** In 1660, Charles II (r. 1660–1685), son of the beheaded Charles I, was invited to return to England to claim his throne, and as part of the settlement that “restored” the monarchy, the Church of England was again established throughout the country. The legislation that in the Puritan years had established a Presbyterian style of church government was rescinded and English bishops were given back control over their dioceses. As part of the Restoration Settlement, those surviving members of the Long Parliament (1640–1660) were officially dismissed, and in their place a new body that became known as the “Cavalier” Parliament was summoned. Over the next few years it considered many questions about religion. In many of its pronouncements the Cavalier Parliament sought to turn back the clock as much as possible and re-establish the Church of England so that it resembled the church that had existed in the 1630s. Thus in 1662, a revised *Book of Common Prayer*, similar to that of Elizabeth I's reign, was reissued and made mandatory throughout England. As a result Puritans were forced to consider whether they could in good conscience remain in the Church of England, and deep splits emerged in the movement between those who accepted the restored prayer book, and those who rejected it. For those who rejected it, they were increasingly isolated into the same ranks of dissenters and sectarian groups that had flourished with such vigor and been so problematic to their movement during the period of Cromwell's Protectorate. All those who now rejected the national church—whether they were Puritan, Quaker, Baptist, or from any of a number of other dissenting groups—now came to be known as Nonconformists. This designation developed as a result of the “Act of Uniformity” of 1662 that restored the *Book of Common Prayer* to its hallowed place in the Church of England. Anyone who refused to conform to the requirements of the act—which included swearing allegiance to the monarch and taking communion according to the prayer book's ritual—was now considered a Nonconformist. In tandem, the stipulations of this measure and the Corporation Act that had preceded it one year earlier deprived Nonconformists of any role in English government, the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A LANDMARK OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE**

**INTRODUCTION:** During the seventeenth century, Protestant societies in northern Europe witnessed an explosion of literary achievement. Prompted by the quiet introspection that Protestantism advocated, preachers, ministers, and lay Protestants began to produce devotional writings of unparalleled beauty and depth. John Bunyan (1628–1688), a Puritan who had fought in the English Civil Wars on the side of Parliament, was one of these great literary figures. With the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy, he was imprisoned for his religious dissent, but later freed. During his imprisonment he wrote his masterpiece, *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was first published in 1678. It became an immediate success. The work tells of the progress of the character Pilgrim through the trials of this world and his eventual reception into Heaven. In the present passage Bunyan styles the world as "Vanity Fair," the realm of the devil. Thus he repeats a central message Protestantism had propounded since the earliest days of the Reformation: that the human realm is controlled by Satan, and as the Christian travels through this depravity he can only be redeemed through God's grace. In recounting the woes of the world, or "Vanity Fair," Bunyan is careful to include England among the few countries that have stood up to the Devil's henchman, the pope, but he nevertheless insists that even the Protestant countries of Europe are controlled by Satan's minions. *Pilgrim's Progress* had an enormous impact on English literature, and in the nineteenth century, the great novelist William Makepeace Thackeray alluded to "Vanity Fair" in his famous novel of the same name.

Then I saw in my Dream, that when they were got out of the Wilderness, they presently saw a Town before them, and the name of that town is *Vanity*; and at the Town there is a fair kept, called *Vanity-Fair*. It is kept all the year long; it beareth the name of *Vanity-Fair*, because the Town where it is kept is lighter than *Vanity*, and also because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is *Vanity*. As is the saying of the wise, "*All that cometh is vanity.*"

This Fair is no new-erected business, but a thing of ancient standing. I will show you the original of it.

Almost five thousand years ago, there were Pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, as these two honest persons are: and *Beelzebub*, *Apollyon*, and *Legion*, with their Companions, perceiving by the path that the Pilgrims made, that their way to the City lay through this *Town of Vanity*, they contrived here to set up a Fair; a Fair wherein should be sold *all sorts of Vanity*, and that it should last all the year long. Therefore, at this Fair are all such Merchandize sold as Houses, Lands, Trades, Places, Honors, Preferments, Titles, Countries, Kingdoms, Lusts, Pleasures; and Delights of all sorts, as Harlots, Wives, Husbands, Children, Masters, Servants, Lives, Blood, Bodies, Souls, Silver, Gold, Pearls, Precious Stones, and what not.

And moreover, at this Fair there is at all times to be seen Jugglings, Cheats, Games, Plays, Fools, Apes, Knaves, and Rogues, and that of every kind.

Here are to be seen, too, and that for nothing, Thefts, Murders, Adulteries, False-swearers, and that of a blood-red colour.

And, as in other Fairs of less moment, there are the several rows and Streets under their proper names, where such and such Wares are vended; so here, likewise, you have the proper places, Rows, Streets, (viz. Countries and Kingdoms,) where the Wares of this Fair are soonest to be found. Here is the *Britain Row*, the *French Row*, the *Italian Row*, the *Spanish Row*, the *German Row*, where several sorts of Vanities are to be sold. But, as in other Fairs, some one commodity is as the chief of all the Fair; so the Ware of Rome and her Merchandise is greatly promoted in this Fair; only our English nation, with some others, have taken a dislike thereat.

**SOURCE:** John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*. (London: Nathanael Ponder, 1681): 147–150.

church, and the universities. This legislation thus had a devastating effect on Nonconformists, as more than 1,900 clergymen refused to take the required oath and to receive communion according to the Anglican rite, and were ejected from their positions.

**THE CLARENDON CODE.** To make sure that these Nonconformist clergy did not begin to lead churches that would compete with the Church of England, the Cavalier Parliament passed two more statutes. The Conventicle Act (1664) prohibited all Nonconformist religious services, outlawing all religious assemblies of more

than five unrelated adults in which the *Book of Common Prayer* was not followed. Despite these measures Nonconformists continued to practice their religion, but as dissenters they came to be increasingly reliant on their neighbors, who often decided not to report their offenses, or on the tolerance of local authorities that might refuse to uphold the laws. To try to eliminate Nonconformism, Parliament pioneered new measures. In the Five Mile Act of 1665 the body aimed to sever any connection between Puritan preachers and their former congregations. This measure prohibited clergymen who

had been removed from a church for nonconformity from preaching anywhere within five miles of that church. And in the Second Conventicle Act of 1670 they adopted a page from the handbook of the medieval Inquisition. They lured Englishmen and women into informing on Nonconformists by promising them a share of the profits that accrued from the confiscation of dissenters' estates as well as those of anyone who was convicted of aiding them. In sum these measures came to be known collectively as the Clarendon Code, after the Earl of Clarendon, then Charles II's first minister, who had formulated them.

**CHARLES II'S OPPOSITION.** The chief opposition to the religious policies of the Cavalier Parliament came not from the ranks of defeated Nonconformists, but from King Charles II. How deep Charles' Catholic convictions ran has remained a subject of debate among historians for generations, but he does appear to have been determined to bring about some degree of toleration for Catholics, and in exchange for this, he was willing to offer some degree of toleration to Nonconformists. In 1660, before he was invited to return to England, Charles had issued a "Declaration" from his residence in the Dutch city of Breda, an outline of the agenda he might follow if restored to the monarchy. There he set out freedom of religion for "tender consciences" as one of the measures he would pursue. Throughout his reign he continued to return to Parliament regularly with a request for a general amnesty for Protestant dissenters as well as Catholics, but the body always turned down these measures. In 1672 Charles felt strongly enough on the matter to pronounce his own Declaration of Indulgence that rescinded the penal laws against Nonconformists, including Catholics. This Declaration of Indulgence allowed Catholics to worship privately at home, while insisting that Protestant Nonconformists acquire a license to hold public worship services. One notable beneficiary of Charles' initiative was the writer and Nonconformist minister John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, the most profound and influential religious parable ever written in English. In 1672, Bunyan had already been in jail for twelve years for holding a service that was not in conformity with the rites of the Church of England. He was set free and permitted to purchase a license to preach. He then took over duties as the pastor of the separatist or Independent Church of Bedford. While the Declaration of Indulgence helped some Protestants like Bunyan, it was throughout the country as a ploy allowing for the outright practice of Catholicism, a suspicion that was confirmed for many in 1673 when the king's brother and heir, the future James II, publicly declared

himself a Catholic. When Parliament met again that same year, it declared that only it had the right to "suspend" penal statutes that touched on religious issues. Around the country attacks on Catholics increased, and so Charles II, correctly reading the political climate, canceled his Declaration. The most significant consequence of Charles' initiative was that from this point forward, various Protestant groups throughout England began to see that they had a common cause in keeping England free of Catholicism. In 1673, these perceptions were not yet strong enough to wipe away the great animosity that still existed between the Nonconformists and Anglicans, but they were to grow over the following decades. Besides moving against Charles II's toleration measures, the Parliament of 1673 also passed the Test Act, a law that required every individual holding government office to pass the test of receiving communion according to the Anglican rite. Another measure put forward in Parliament at this time, but never passed, sought to draw a distinction between Catholics and Protestant Dissenters by granting the latter limited toleration, while continuing to forbid the practices of the former.

**THE SUCCESSION.** From the moment he announced his decision to practice as a Catholic in 1673, James' religion became the central dispute in English politics. As a result of the Test Act, the future king had been deprived of a number of his political offices and in the last years of Charles' reign, Protestant fears about the prospective king reached historic proportions. Rising anxieties were capped by the "Popish Plot" of 1678, when two schemers announced that they had come across information about a plot concocted by some Jesuits to assassinate the king, foment rebellion in Ireland, and place a Catholic on the English throne. The identity of this Catholic claimant was not revealed, but there was little doubt in most people's minds that it was James. This "Popish Plot" has since been revealed as a complete fabrication, but that did not stop Parliament from embracing the story, and 35 people from being executed for complicity in the plot. In the aftermath of the Popish Plot, a movement began in the English Parliament to "exclude" James from the succession to the throne. England's first political parties, in fact, coalesced around this very issue. The "Whig" party developed at this time from its support of the exclusion of James from the succession. To garner popular support for their program, the Whigs announced that they were in favor of rights for Protestant dissenters. At about the same time the "Tory" party emerged to support James's right to the throne. For the Tories, the Whigs' attempts to exclude James evoked the specter of the Puritan Civil Wars and the

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AS A STRENGTH**

**INTRODUCTION:** The French Enlightenment thinker Voltaire spent several years in England while exiled from France. When he returned to his native country, he published a series of letters on his experiences abroad. These letters helped to establish the Enlightenment's deep and abiding affection for English institutions and customs. In the sixth of these *Letters on England* Voltaire commented on the religious diversity of the country and he identified this plurality of religions as one of England's great strengths.

The Anglican religion only extends to England and Ireland. Presbyterianism is the dominant religion in Scotland. This Presbyterianism is nothing more than pure Calvinism as it was established in France and survives in Geneva. As the priests in this sect receive very small stipends from their churches, and so cannot live in the same luxury as bishops, they have taken the natural course of decrying honours they cannot attain.

Although the Episcopal and Presbyterian sects are the two dominant ones in Great Britain, all the others are perfectly acceptable and live quite harmoniously together,

whilst most of their preachers hate each other with almost as much cordiality as a Jansenist damns a Jesuit.

Go into the London Stock Exchange—a more respectable place than many a court—and you will see representatives from all nations gathered together for the utility of men. Here Jew, Mohammedan and Christian deal with each other as though they were all of the same faith, and only apply the word infidel to people who go bankrupt. Here the Presbyterian trusts the Anabaptist and the Anglican accepts a promise from the Quaker. On leaving these peaceful and free assemblies some go to the Synagogue and others for a drink, this one goes to be baptized in a great bath in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, that one has his son's foreskin cut and has some Hebrew words he doesn't understand mumbled over the child, others go to their church and await the inspiration of God with their hats on, and everybody is happy.

If there were only one religion in England there would be danger of despotism, if there were two they would cut each other's throats, but there are thirty, and they live in peace and happiness.

**SOURCE:** Voltaire, *Letters on England*. Trans. Leonard Tancock (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1980): 40–41.

Commonwealth. The fear of revolution proved to be much greater among English elites than the fear of Catholicism. Charles was able to defeat the Whigs and those bills they put forward calling for exclusion of his brother from the throne. But for the first time in English history, a political group had sought the support of the Dissenters. In the years that followed those who hoped to shepherd their plans through Parliament were to realize the powerful support they might amass by playing to the issues that religious dissent posed.

**A CATHOLIC KING.** Charles II died in 1685, professing Catholicism on his deathbed. A nation of Protestants watched anxiously as the Catholic James II was crowned king. It became obvious that James was not willing to let things be, pushing whenever and wherever he could to grant legal rights to Catholics, and in the process, Protestant dissenters. After the disaster of the Declaration of the Indulgence, Charles' ministers had followed a strategy of focusing the attentions of Parliament and the nation on the past as well as on the presumed future dangers that Protestant dissenters posed. James reversed this strategy, and sought to make the case to Protestant dissenters that it was in their best interest to join forces with the Catholics. In line with this strategy,

he proposed in 1687 a new version of the Declaration of Indulgence, but this, like almost all of James's initiatives, served only to rally opposition against him. His efforts aimed to drive a wedge between Anglicans and Dissenters and prompted the Anglican clergy's protests. They insisted that they did not condemn the king's Declaration from "any want of tenderness" toward the Dissenters, but that they opposed it because they believed James did not have the authority to issue it. Despite this show of opposition, the Declaration was allowed to stand, since at the time, James was in his fifties and without an heir. Most members of England's political elite fully expected that the throne would soon pass to one of the king's Protestant daughters. Soon, though, it was announced that James's second wife, an Italian and Catholic, was expecting, and the thought of a Catholic heir was now too much for the English elite. In 1688, representatives of Parliament invited James's daughter Mary and her husband William, who was the stadtholder of Holland, to take the English throne. James escaped England and found safe haven at the court of Louis XIV in France. Back in England, the Convention Parliament that was called to sit in 1689 passed a Toleration Act. This act permitted Protestant dissenters the right to their own churches and ministers. Dissenters still were not allowed

civil rights, but they were no longer persecuted for their faith. Thus the long battles between Puritans, Anglicans, and Papists in England drew to a close.

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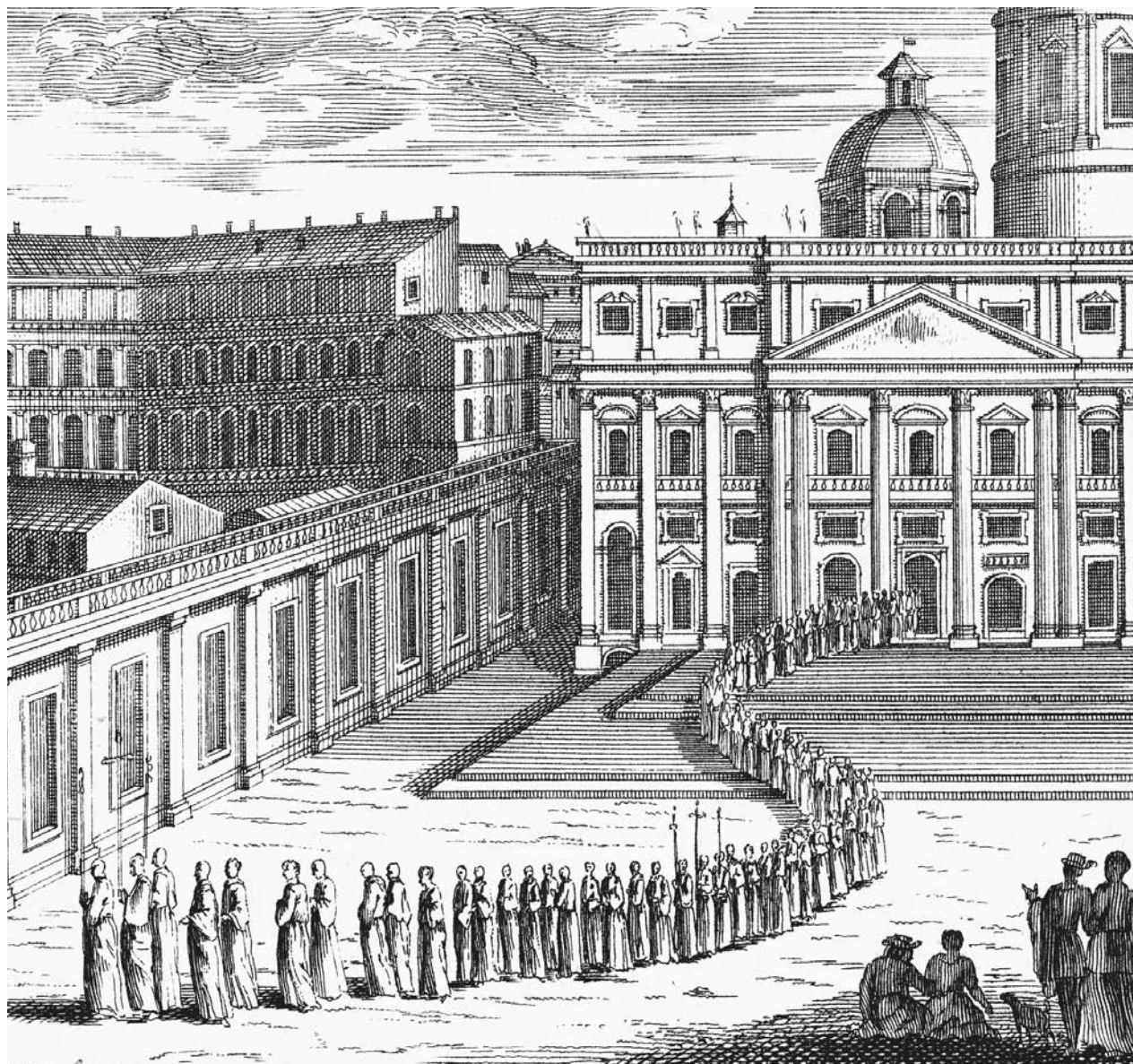
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### CATHOLIC CULTURE IN THE AGE OF THE BAROQUE

**THE RISE OF EVANGELICAL FERVOR.** During the later sixteenth century both Protestant and Catholic reformers had begun to redouble their efforts to indoctrinate their laity in the tenets of their religions, and by the first decades of the Baroque era, rising evangelical fervor was evident in the efforts of devout Calvinist, Lutheran, and Catholic writers, artists, and theologians. One key element of these new forces was that all tried to win over those who were relatively uncommitted to the cause of a particular religion so that they would take up its standard. From the first, the new propaganda that resulted from these efforts was composed of both positive and negative strains. On the one hand, the new European devout aimed to indoctrinate people against competing religious positions, and so they frequently condemned the ideas of their opponents, not just as wrong headed, but as a dangerous and subversive disease, or in their own words “heretical poison.” On the other, the Protestant and Catholic devout sponsored new forms of art, architecture, and literature that were designed to propagate a positive image of their religion’s teachings. Certainly, the negative efforts to “evangelize” Europe’s population were most evident in the decades leading up to the Peace of Westphalia, that is, the period of the most intensive fighting in the continent over the issues the Protestant and Catholic Reformations generated. In these years a flood of polemical tracts, plays, and printed broadsides appeared condemning the ideas and actions of competitors. At the same time positive assessments of the strengths of each religion were also being generated

that left their mark on the visual arts, architecture, and literature of the age. As religious tensions gradually subsided in the years following the Peace of Westphalia, the heightened fervor evident in the early seventeenth century tended to lessen. At the same time the legacy of a Europe divided into opposing religious camps persisted, leaving its mark on the culture of Protestant and Catholic regions. One result of this continuing trend was that by 1700, one’s identity and behavior were, in large part, shaped by whether one had grown up in a Lutheran, Calvinist, or Catholic state, for in each of these a different kind of culture now flourished.

**ROME TRIUMPHANT.** In the seventeenth century Roman Catholicism emerged triumphant in much of Europe, winning back lands, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, where Calvinism and Lutheranism had acquired many adherents during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This trend continued in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as a number of princes in Germany and Central Europe re-converted to Catholicism, thus bringing their lands into the Roman orbit. While Scandinavia, much of Germany, parts of Switzerland, the United Dutch Provinces, England, and Scotland remained Protestant, the majority of Europe was now Catholic. Within this vast and diverse religious sphere, one of the most distinctive features of cultural and intellectual life was a cosmopolitan internationalism. As Rome began to revive as a great cultural center in the seventeenth century, artists and architects from throughout the Catholic world made their way to the ancient city, and the new patterns of Baroque painting and church building spread relatively quickly throughout Catholic regions. The traffic between Rome and the provinces of the Catholic world, though, also moved in the opposite direction. While Catholic artists like Peter Paul Rubens studied in Rome and returned to their own regions to promote the new dramatic intensity common to Baroque paintings, Italian artists were highly prized in Catholic courts and cities throughout Europe. The interconnectivity of the Catholic world in the seventeenth century thus became one of its most distinctive features. Throughout most of the seventeenth century Rome and Italian cities like Venice dominated style and fashions in art throughout the Catholic world, but gradually new centers emerged—particularly in France and Spain—that were to produce movements that spread quickly. The Jesuit order, with its systems of schools and seminaries in every reach of the Catholic continent, was also among the many important forces that nourished cultural connections and exchanges between different regions in this large world.



A Catholic religious procession in seventeenth-century Rome. MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.

**THE AESTHETICS OF CATHOLIC DEVOTION.** By far, the dominant aesthetic Baroque Catholicism favored was one in which the senses of sight and touch predominated and in which the Catholic devout concentrated on the symbols of the faith. Since the rise of the Catholic Reformation in the sixteenth century, devotional writers like St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order, and St. Teresa of Avila, a Spanish mystic, had recommended the necessity of establishing mental discipline in prayer. In contrast to the relatively unregulated world of benedictions and meditations of the later Middle Ages, the Jesuit order, in particular, developed the idea of a spiritual retreat. By relying on St. Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*

they created the idea of a period of isolation in which the disciple could meditate and harness the imagination to avoid sin once he or she returned to society. In these sessions the participant learned how to parse out the hidden meanings behind things and events, and to rely on the senses of hearing, touch, and sight to draw closer to God. Catholics eagerly embraced the new devotions that flourished in this and similar veins in the seventeenth century, all of which emphasized in some way the powers of meditation. One devotion that flourished at this time was to the "Agonizing Death of Jesus Christ." Sponsored again by the Jesuits, it appeared in the mid-seventeenth century and quickly spread. By the end of





Front view of the Church of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, a site that remained an important pilgrimage in early-modern Europe. CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the seventeenth century there were chapels dedicated to the devotion in parishes everywhere throughout Catholic Europe. The devotion centered around weekly or monthly periods of meditation during which participants contemplated how Christ died so as to prepare them for a “good” death. Like other new devotions, the devotion to the “Agonizing Death of Jesus Christ” was propagated through thin printed books that laid out the liturgy that was to be followed weekly. These texts demanded that the group spend a certain designated amount of time each week meditating on common themes before performing other good works. These good works, in turn, reinforced one of the symbolic themes that the group had meditated on in the days and weeks before.

**ART AND ARCHITECTURE.** The contours of much of Catholic devotional life in the seventeenth-century thus emphasized the importance of mental discipline and the use of the senses, particularly vision, to approach God. The importance of forming mental pictures of events like the Agonies of Christ helped to foster a climate in which artistic images and architecture played a vital role, for these arts were seen as helping to sustain

and deepen one’s devotion. It is hardly surprising, then, that the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were great ages of church building and religious art in the Catholic world. The sheer number of church building and remodeling projects that were begun in these years still manages to astound the modern observer. In Catholic cities and parishes throughout the Continent, construction crews were in almost constant motion to refurbish older churches and build new monuments intended to satisfy and sustain the visual and sensual piety of the Catholic faithful. While the Jesuits and other religious orders commissioned and paid for a great deal of this art, the remodeling of parish churches was a task undertaken and financed at the local level by parishioners. Thus the sheer number of monuments points, in part, to the widespread popularity of Catholic Baroque piety. In Central Europe, the great resurgence in artistic production and church architectural projects was postponed for a generation or two longer than in Italy, Spain, and France because of the depression the Thirty Years’ War produced. But when this resurgence began in the decades following the Peace of Westphalia (1648) it soon transformed the religious landscape of the region. In much of Central Europe, particularly in southern Germany, Catholics continued to live side-by-side with Protestant populations, and the building of dramatic Baroque churches thus became a direct counterattack on the sensibilities of Protestants, who worshipped in surroundings that were far more restrained, even dour. Throughout the region most churches were either reconstructed or refurbished in the Baroque style in the generations following the Thirty Years’ War. While many projects were commissioned and paid for by religious orders, far more were financed at the local level. In this way the typical parish church in the region acquired the notable features of the Baroque: a sense of dramatic climax, a sumptuous and ornate ornamentation, and a plethora of religious images that expressed the rising popularity of modes of piety that aimed at mental discipline.

**RITUAL AND DISPLAY.** Another feature of Baroque piety that has long been noted by scholars was the rising affection for pilgrimages, processions, and other rituals that displayed and defended elements of Catholic teaching. During the sixteenth century the Protestant reformers had generally shared distaste for much of the ritual formalism of the medieval church, and they had often attacked displays of piety like processions and pilgrimages as vain and useless. As the Catholic resurgence began to heat up in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century, pilgrimage shrines began again to attract thousands of pilgrims in the Catholic world. While many

made the journey to great European centers of pilgrimage, like Rome or Santiago di Compostella in Spain, by far the most important centers of such devotion were local ones. Every Catholic region in Europe came in these years to possess a large number of local shrines: some quite large and attracting pilgrims from throughout the state, others considerably smaller and having only a regional following. One interesting feature of many of these seventeenth-century shrines was their attempts to copy and imitate developments from other parts of the Catholic world. In the sixteenth century one of the most popular devotions throughout Europe had been the pilgrimage to the Holy House at Loreto in northern Italy, a shrine that since the later Middle Ages had alleged to possess the dwelling in which Mary, Joseph, and the young Jesus had lived. During the mid-sixteenth century the Jesuit Peter Canisius had popularized this devotion throughout Europe by publishing the Laurentian Litany, a collection of prayers that had been found in the house and that alleged to have been written by the Virgin Mary. The popularity of the Litany sustained the Italian shrine as a place of popular devotion, but it also bred numerous "copies" of the Loreto chapel and its house throughout Europe, as pilgrims visited the site and wished to have a similar place of devotion nearby. Loreto was just one of many similar devotions that spread throughout the continent in this way, as Catholics in one region copied religious images, shrines, and other elements of Catholic devotion that had proven to be beneficial elsewhere. Journeys to these new centers of devotion were often undertaken in processions, with entire parishes making the trip to a local shrine on some mutually agreed day, usually in the summer months. But processions on saints' days or on major church feasts staged at home in the village, as well as other rituals like the blessing of animals and fields were common events throughout the Baroque Catholic world, too.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The Renaissance Inheritance and Catholic Renewal; Architecture: The Rise of the Baroque Style in Italy; Visual Arts: The Counter Reformation's Impact on Art*

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## PROTESTANT CULTURE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

**PROTESTANT AESTHETICS.** While significant differences continued to exist between Calvinists, Lutherans, and Anglicans, Protestant notions about art and culture differed vastly from their Catholic counterparts. Protestants generally placed a higher emphasis on the word and the sense of hearing than they did on visual stimuli. These developments resulted, in part, from the Protestant churches' elevation of the sermon, scripture reading, and the study of devotional works over and against the rich ritual life of the late-medieval Church. Of all the Protestant religions, only Lutheranism kept some place, although in a drastically reduced form, for the commissioning of religious art in churches. In the Calvinist churches of Switzerland, Scotland, and the Netherlands, the frescoes of the Middle Ages were destroyed with coats of whitewash. Stained glass, sculptures, indeed all art that tried to represent the biblical story or the history of the church was removed. A similar situation prevailed throughout much of England, where Puritan influence dominated from the late sixteenth century onward. Archbishop Laud's reintroduction of rood screens in English churches in the 1630s was one exception to this general trend. These traditional screens had been richly decorated, covered with wood sculptures and had obscured the High Altar from the congregations' view. The general furor that Laud's actions caused meant that rood screens were to be definitively eliminated in the wake of the English Civil Wars. They survive today only as a rarity in English churches. Thus in place of the rich ritualistic and intensely visual experience that the church had fostered in the Middle Ages and which expanded during the Catholic Baroque, Protestant worshippers were presented with a situation that was undoubtedly severe. Yet at the same time it was not without its own aesthetics. Great churches were built in Protestant Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the wake of the Great Fire of London in 1666, Sir Christopher Wren, a prominent mathematician and scientist, turned his attentions to architecture



Sir Christopher Wren, interior of the church of St. Stephen Walbrook, London. © JOHN HESELTINE/CORBIS.

and planned an ambitious rebuilding of the city. Wren's own father had been a clergyman who had served the monarchy in the enviable position of Dean of Windsor, that is, he had been the administrator of one of the most important royal chapels in England. He understood that Protestant services called for interiors in which good acoustics allowed parishioners to hear the sermon and appreciate the service music. He rebuilt London's churches with clean sight lines, bathed them in light, and endowed these churches with spaces that provided a clear and unobstructed appreciation of the sermon, the central focal point of religious worship in these years. Wren's masterpiece, the great Cathedral of St. Paul's, was the largest church ever constructed in Protestant Europe and a truly noble building. If its interior today seems strangely unadorned—or in the words of Queen Victoria “dreary”—its aesthetic restraint attempted to remain faithful to one of the Reformation's central teachings: that the word of God, rather than human representations, should predominate in the life of the church. In many places where the new Protestant teachings were adopted, they gave birth to attempts like those of Wren. That is, Protestant architects labored to find ways to endow congregations with spaces of sufficient dignity that nevertheless held true to Reformation teachings.

**THE SERMON.** Still no one could argue that Protestantism's greatest achievements lay in the realms of art or architecture. Instead the monuments of the era were concentrated in literature, in sermons, and devotional works. The seventeenth century witnessed a great flowering of the sermon in both English and in German,

with this literary form reaching a level of complexity and sophistication from which it has consistently fallen since then. It became a common custom for devout Protestants to attend sermons almost every day of the week which were as much performed as they were spoken. Since they invariably involved disputes with other preachers, they resembled intellectual sporting contests. In Germany, the fashion for oratory gave birth to the custom in Lutheranism for elaborate funeral sermons, a genre that ministers in the church used to supplement their otherwise meager incomes. Governments regulated the fees that German ministers might charge to deliver a sermon at the funeral of a loved one, but the greatest of these literary productions were printed and circulated to mourners in the weeks after the funeral. They were collected and read in the months and years that followed. The most expensive kind of funeral sermon provided its listeners not only with a detailed exposition of biblical texts but also with a *Lebenslauf*, a summary of the deceased's life, which in many ways resembled a modern eulogy. Lutheran ministers used these short biographies moralistically to point out the pious virtues that the deceased had exhibited during his or her life. The surviving printed texts, of which more than 100,000 printed examples exist from the seventeenth century, points to the widespread popularity of sermons as a kind of entertainment, even if that entertainment occurred in the otherwise dark hours of a funeral.

**HYMN SINGING.** If the visual arts played a relatively minor role in Protestant churches during the seventeenth century, the era did witness an enormous flowering of religious music in those countries that adopted Reformation teachings. In German Lutheranism the age of the Baroque was also a great age of hymn writing, with thousands of hymns being written and regularly performed. In the course of the seventeenth century, these tunes, which were known then as chorales, grew steadily more complex in performance. Polyphony, orchestral accompaniments, and organ interludes were added to their performance in church, preparing the way for the still widely performed cantatas and chorales of figures like Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750). At the same time Calvinists rejected hymn singing and removed all instrumental music from religious ceremonies as a vestige of “popish” religion. To their minds, Christians only legitimately came together in order to pray and to listen to learned disputation on the Word of God. Although they might have wished that religious music completely disappear from the church, Calvinist ministers generally conceded some ground to its widespread popularity. They allowed the singing of the psalms set to simple tunes that were

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***OPPOSING TYRANNY**

**INTRODUCTION:** Although the numbers of Calvinists in Europe remained small throughout the seventeenth century, their impact was far greater than the size of the movement. In later sixteenth-century French Calvinism, a theory of resistance to the state had already developed. In his *Vindicia contra tyrannos* (1579), Phillippe Duplessis-Mornay (1549–1623) had argued that the movement might oppose the actions of the king when royal authority violated true religion. Seventeenth-century Calvinists, as well as political theorists like John Locke, relied on the argument to counter the absolutist pretensions of kings. Duplessis-Mornay's work was reprinted in England during 1689 and used to justify the recent exile of the Catholic King James II (r. 1685–1688). This excerpt is from its later seventeenth-century English translations.

There was much danger to commit the custody of the church to one man alone, and therefore God did recommend, and put it in trust "to all the people." The king being raised to so slippery a place might easily be corrupted; for fear lest the church should stumble with him, God would have the people also to be respondents for it. In the covenant of which we speak, God, or (in His place) the High Priest are stipulators, the king and all the people, to wit, Israel, do jointly and voluntarily assume, promise, and oblige themselves for one and the same thing. The High Priest demands if they promise that the people shall be the people of God that God shall always have His

temple, His church amongst them, where He shall be purely served. The king is respondent, so also are the people (the whole body of the people representing, as it were, the office and place of one man) not severally, but jointly, as the words themselves make clear, being incontinent, and not by intermission or distance of time, the one after the other ...

It is then lawful for Israel to resist the king, who would overthrow the law of God and abolish His church; and not only so, but also they ought to know that in neglecting to perform this duty, they make themselves culpable of the same crime, and shall bear the like punishment with their king.

If their assaults be verbal, their defence must be likewise verbal; if the sword be drawn against them, they may also take arms, and fight either with tongue or hand, as occasion is: yea, if they be assailed by surprisals, they may make use both of ambuscades and countermines, there being no rule in lawful war that directs them for the manner, whether it be by open assailing their enemy, or by close surprising; provided always that they carefully distinguish between advantageous stratagem, and perfidious treason, which is always unlawful. ...

**SOURCE:** Phillippe Duplessis-Mornay, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos: A Defence of Liberty Against Tyranny or of the Lawful Power of the Prince over the People and of the People over the Prince*. Trans. Hubert Languet (London: Richard Baldwin, 1689; reprint, London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1924).

sung in unison. In the Church of England, Anglicans allowed music at both ends of the spectrum. In the simplest services influenced by Puritan sensibilities little or no music was performed. But at court and in London's greatest churches, elaborate service music often accompanied the celebration of worship.

**DIARIES.** The periods of quiet and introspection that seventeenth-century Protestantism afforded helped to inspire a new genre: the diary. The diary was particularly popular among Calvinists, whose church services and devotions were spare in the extreme and demanded that the faithful spend a great deal of time looking inward to examine their own consciences. Among Calvinists, diary writing fulfilled a role similar to that which it had played for figures like Saint Augustine. In his *Confessions* Augustine had pondered his spiritual autobiography, setting down his deepest and most inward thoughts to encourage readers to avoid his mistakes and to emulate whatever virtues he had achieved. By contrast, many Calvinist diaries were private affairs in which the writer

recapped his thoughts on a daily basis, setting down the spiritual trials he had faced and trying to see the hand of God in the events that he experienced that day. These diaries in turn became the source materials for the spiritual autobiographies that began to be published during this era. Aimed at inspiring others along the path of righteousness, these autobiographies narrated in minute detail the struggles of their authors with faith and its obligations. Modern sensibilities cannot grasp the spiritual edification Protestants received from these "play-by-play" accounts of another Christian's life. But over and over again, Protestants in the era recounted the "godly" inspiration that they derived from these accounts, contrasting this inspiration against the "popish" rituals of Catholics.

**IMPACT OF CALVINISM.** If the Jesuits dominated seventeenth-century Catholic piety, it was Calvinism that exercised the greatest force over the religion of seventeenth-century Protestants. While the number of territories in Europe that accepted Calvinism was quite

small and Calvinists found themselves at odds with kings and princes, the movement exerted an influence far greater than mere numbers suggest. Generally, Calvinism was a creed popular among the middling ranks of people in the city, those with incomes far above the poverty level, but who otherwise possessed little political power. In the countryside, the gentry and members of the minor nobility were often drawn to Calvinism. Even in Germany, where Calvinist influence was relatively minor, the appearance of Calvinist states prompted Lutherans to develop ways of imitating Calvinist piety for their parishioners to avoid disaffection. Peasants and urban workers were generally not drawn to the movement. At the same time, the men and women who embraced Calvinism were disciplined and focused, and thus the movement had an impact on society far greater than its numbers would suggest. The social character of Calvinism gave Protestantism a rebellious character on the international scene. Everywhere during the Age of the Baroque international Protestantism was the voice of political opposition, the voice of political challenge. It was a French Calvinist, Phillippe Duplessis-Mornay (1549–1623), who wrote the first political treatise that maintained subjects' rights to rebel. It was from Calvinists like Duplessis-Mornay that key seventeenth-century political theories were to be derived. In his *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* or *A Defense of Liberty against Tyrants* (1579) he argued that rulers entered into a contract with their subjects, and if a ruler did not live up to his contractual obligations then subjects might rebel. It was ideas like these that proved so troublesome to seventeenth-century kings, while at the same time these very Calvinist impulses helped to give birth to the ideas of figures like John Locke (1632–1704), who insisted that the contractual nature of government legitimated subjects' rights to rebel. Fueled with ideas like those of Duplessis-Mornay, Calvinist-inspired Puritans proved to be more than willing to sign the death warrant of King Charles I in England, and their criticisms of arbitrary government were only to grow in the decades that followed. The serious, sometimes dour piety of their most articulate leaders tended to spill out from their movement, helping to shape the religion and politics in all Protestant states at the time.

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SEE ALSO *Music: Oratorio and Cantata*

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## FREE WILL VERSUS PREDESTINATION IN THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

**A COMMON PROBLEM.** The establishment of state churches brought with it conflict and controversy among churchmen over official church doctrine. An issue that dominated the life of more than one church at the time was the question of the role of free will versus predestination in salvation. Proponents of free will insisted that individuals actively participated in their own salvation. Proponents of predestination argued on the contrary that salvation was a free gift from God and that individuals could do nothing to warrant it. Of concern for the promoters of free will was the responsibility of individual Christians for their salvation. If salvation came only from God, supporters of free will argued, then a Christian was under no obligation to live a righteous life. For their part, promoters of predestination countered that their doctrine was a logical one given the sovereignty of God over everything in Creation. To say that human beings had the capacity to earn salvation was heretical to them because it suggested that men and women had the power to dictate to God. This issue had been of major importance since the early years of the Reformation, and indeed it was an ancient dilemma in the history of the church, having produced bitter controversies in the later Roman Empire between St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, and the Pelagians who were followers of the free will theologian Pelagius in the fifth century. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other Protestant reformers had all upheld the Augustinian teaching of predestination and had outlawed any notion that works played a part in salvation. Yet the doctrine of predestination was a troubling one, and Protestant theologians continued to grapple with it in the seventeenth century, sometimes developing positions that were more akin to the notion of moral cooperation the Catholic church taught, i.e. the notion that Christians needed to participate in their salvation and perfect their faith through works. On the other side of the confessional divide, the issue was also of importance to Catholics, and in the seventeenth century many reached back to Augustine, finding in his doctrine of

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***REPORT ON THE STATE OF DUTCH CALVINIST CHURCHES**

**INTRODUCTION:** In both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries church and state officials relied on visitations, or inspection trips, to discern the level of religious knowledge and the condition of their local churches. In the early seventeenth-century United Provinces—that is, the modern Netherlands—these inspections revealed a low level of participation in many of the region's churches. Jakob Arminius and others who adopted his "free-will" point of view were responding to this situation, hoping to open up the Dutch church to greater numbers of people who felt alienated from the doctrines of Calvinism. As these documents make clear in the case of a visitation held in the city of Utrecht in 1606, many Dutch men and women were more drawn to the teachings and practices of Roman Catholicism than they were to Calvinism.

*Rhenen.* The minister there reported the reasonable condition of his church, though he complained that the services on Sunday were impeded by the buying and selling at the market, which was held then. Many of the children were not baptised in the church and since no one afterwards had any knowledge of the same baptism, great confusion might arise later. He also complained that some sort of private school was held in the monastery to the detriment of the Christian religion. He declared that he had not presented these complaints in order to invoke the help of their noble lordships, the States, but only to demonstrate the present condition of the church there, since he intended to seek such [assistance] from his own magistracy, who had also given him an undertaking to

remedy [matters] (which has also happened with other towns). ...

*Montfoort.* The Minister reported the sorry state of the church there as a result of the manifold activities conducted by the Roman Church there; that there is still no organized church; that he administers the Supper twice a year, has few communicants, to wit only thirty in number; that previously 300 would attend (sometimes 500 or 600 on feast-days), but now only 100 because a certain priest, called *Heer* Hinderick, coming there from Utrecht, impedes the progress of the Gospel by holding mass, preaching baptising etc.; that the magistrate looks after poor relief, the school is middling: though the schoolmaster is of the Reformed religion, he uses books of all sorts.

*Amerongen.* The minister reported that his church was in a dismal state because (although a fair number attended, often between 100 and 150) there are few, indeed no communicants; that the church also, as regards its external condition, suffered from having been very badly ruined as a result of destruction inflicted by soldiers who had marched through. [He] complained that the congregation also leaves the church when baptism is administered before the public prayer and general blessing; that the superstitions associated with St Cunerus's Day are very detrimental to the religion; that the sexton only comes to church now and then; that he cannot lead the singing and also refuses to give any undertaking to do so; also believes that the schoolmaster teaches from books of all sorts, whatever comes to hand.

**SOURCE:** Alistair Duke, Gillian Lewis, and Andrew Pettegree, *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1610: A Collection of Documents*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992): 196–197.

predestination an antidote to the teachings of the Jesuits and other orders of the Catholic Reformation who they felt had made the doctrines of human salvation too easy by overemphasizing human participation.

**ARMINIANS VERSUS GOMARISTS.** The first seventeenth-century confrontations about the nature of free will took place in the Calvinist churches of the Dutch Republic. On doctrinal issues, the Dutch Calvinist church, like all Calvinist churches, followed the lead of the church of Geneva, the church founded by John Calvin (1509–1564) himself. More than any other Protestant reformer, Calvin had made Augustine's teachings on predestination central to his theology and he had insisted upon a rigorous interpretation of the ancient theologian. For Calvin, it was essential for the Christian to understand that before the world itself existed, God had

chosen the souls that would see salvation, and also those that would be damned. There was nothing that any human being might do to alter these facts. What made Geneva unique among sixteenth-century European political entities was that it was ruled by a theocracy. The Consistory, the governing council of the Calvinist church of Geneva, was composed of both churchmen and lay elders. In meetings of the Consistory, churchmen had pride of place, and in general in Geneva temporal matters gave way to ecclesiastical concerns, not the other way around. But the exclusionary, anti-evangelical nature of the Calvinist message put off many Dutch Protestants. Likewise many lay Protestants took exception to the division between church and state advocated by the followers of Geneva. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, these groups found their spokesperson in Jacob Harmenszoon, who was known as Jacobus



Jacobus Arminius. MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.

Arminius (1559–1609). Arminius was a theologian who taught at Amsterdam and Leiden. Arminius turned Calvin’s formulation of the doctrine of predestination around, insisting that if God had created men and women to sin, a logical extension of Calvin’s teachings on predestination, then God himself would have been the author of sin. Arminius sought to open up Dutch Protestantism to the idea of a broader, more inclusive church. He modified Genevan teaching on predestination by insisting that while salvation is a gift from God, that God only had foreknowledge of whether an individual would accept or reject his gift. He did not, in other words, determine that choice. Thus, in granting individuals the ability to embrace or ignore salvation, Arminius affirmed that individuals had free will. Arminius died in 1609, but the movement that coalesced around his ideas persisted, winning many adherents including Jan van Oldenbarneveldt (1547–1619), the civil leader of the Dutch Republic, and Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), perhaps the greatest legal scholar of the entire seventeenth century in Europe. Oldenbarneveldt and Grotius had been involved in negotiating the terms of peace with Spain, an effort that had drawn to them the enmity of Maurice of Nassau (1567–1625), military leader of the Republic. In 1610 Oldenbarneveldt, Grotius, and others published a “Remonstrance,” a public defense of their views, and from that time onward

supporters of the Arminian position became known as “Remonstrants.”

**THE OPPOSITION’S RESPONSE.** To the opposition, the party led by Oldenbarneveldt and Grotius was a group of heretical Pelagians. Their ideas, in other words, marked a resurgence similar to those the great Augustine had condemned centuries before. The “Contra-Remonstrants,” as the members of the opposing party were sometimes known, found their leader in the figure of Francisus Gomarus (1563–1641), so that they have often been called “Gomarists.” On their side they enlisted the support of the powerful political leader Maurice of Nassau (1567–1625). Gomarus and Maurice upheld Calvinist principles of doctrine and church governance inherited from Geneva. Whether Maurice’s defense of predestination and the authority of the church was prompted by spiritual concerns or by his desire for revenge against some Remonstrants has always been an open question. But he was a widely respected figure, and in July 1618 he used his army to suppress the Arminian party, arresting all public officials throughout the Dutch Republic who were known as Remonstrants, including Oldenbarneveldt and Grotius, and replacing them with Gomarists. As a result, the States General, the governing body of the Dutch Republic, was now purged of Arminians and it called for a synod, a general meeting of officials of the Dutch church, to decide the issue. The Synod of Dordrecht or Dordt met from November 1618 to May 1619. It was significant in that Calvinists from around Europe attended. Completely controlled by the Gomarists, the synod condemned Arminius’ teachings as heresy and reaffirmed the teachings of the Genevan church, including those concerned with the separation of church and state. Maurice had Oldenbarneveldt convicted of treason and beheaded just after the conclusion of the synod. With the help of his wife, Grotius escaped from prison and went to live in Paris, where he entered the service of Sweden’s king as an ambassador. Over the coming years Arminians were persecuted in the Dutch Republic or forced into exile. After Maurice’s death in 1625, his brother and successor Frederick Henry pronounced a general amnesty. An Arminian church has continued to exist since that time in the Dutch Republic, but its influence on the national church ended with the Synod of Dordrecht.

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## JANSENISM AND THE JESUITS IN FRANCE

**CHARACTER OF THE JANSENIST MOVEMENT.** The issue of free will and predestination also played a key role in the series of disputes that occurred between the Jansenists, followers of the Flemish Catholic theologian Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638) and members of the Jesuit order. In the Dutch Republic those who dissented from official church teachings had done so with the aim of broadening the national church, that is, they had desired to make it more inclusive and palatable to the laity by adopting the “free will” position. In France, by contrast, the dissenting Jansenists wished to narrow the possibilities of belief within the national church. In the Dutch Republic the plea had been for the national church to break free from the constraints of Calvinism’s Augustinian position. But in France, the Jansenists aimed to embrace Augustinianism. The group was comprised of a self-consciously selected cadre of aristocratic elites and cultivated intellectuals centered around the prominent women’s religious convent at Port Royal, on the southern fringes of Paris. From their homes in this section of the city, the Jansenists aimed to create a religious utopia, peopled with Catholics who held true to the teachings of Saint Augustine. Ultimately, this dream was brutally snuffed out when in 1709 Louis XIV sent troops to raze the abbey and remove every trace of its existence from the site. Yet while the dream was alive, Jansenism inspired French intellectual and artistic culture. The movement changed and developed over the course of the seventeenth century as it came to accommodate different groups of dissenters. In its original form, though, it aimed to undermine and destroy what its members felt was the Pelagianism of the Jesuit order.

**INFLUENCE OF THE JESUITS IN FRANCE.** In the first half of the seventeenth century, the French Catholic church was very much under the influence of the Jesuit religious order and its widely popular evangelization efforts. The Jesuit strategy was enormously successful in these years, but in the minds of many devout Catholics, Jesuit success came at the expense of key doctrines of the church. While opposition to the order arose for numerous reasons, the most controversial aspect of the Jesuits’ work in the country had to do with their teaching concerning the sacraments of Confession and Communion. Since the thirteenth century the Roman church has required every believer to perform annually the confession

of sins followed by the taking of communion. Although some devout Catholics participated in these sacraments more often than annually, most did not, and the requirement helped to give birth to the notion of “Easter Duties” among Catholics. The Jesuits desired to make the performance of Confession and the taking of Communion less of a psychological ordeal than it had been previously. They recommended frequent Confession and Communion, so that the sinner was not forced to recollect back over the course of the entire year to unearth his or her shortcomings. At the same time they applied concepts inherited from their founder St. Ignatius Loyola to teach that sin resulted from lapses in mental discipline. As spiritual advisers in the seventeenth century, the order frequently counseled the laity that lapses of sin were not tragic, but that they might be rectified by reapplying an even greater amount of mental discipline in the future. To their opponents, this approach to sin came with its own logical and theological problems. Sins, they argued, were not just mental lapses, but transgressions against God’s laws and the teachings of the church. The Jesuits’ critics thus accused the order of rationalizing away the spiritual and social consequences of sin so as to free the faithful from the stress of recognizing the magnitude of their wrongdoing. An even more important problem for Catholic theologians was the order’s blatant disregard for the idea of predestination, a key traditional teaching of the church. In the Roman Catholic Church, as in the Protestant, predestination was considered an orthodox belief, although Catholics differed from Protestants in teaching on the matter since they insisted that those who were among the elect needed to make up for their sins by performing good works. The Jesuits went far beyond other Catholic movements of the day in characterizing the effort at mental discipline as, in and of itself, a pious good work that led to salvation, a belief that smacked to many of Pelagianism, the ancient heretical notion that human beings in effect saved themselves. In the early seventeenth century, Jesuit teachings concerning the sacraments and salvation were already exciting considerable controversy, yet each time prominent theologians and officials of the church complained to Rome, they were rebuffed. Powerful forces stood in defense of the Society of Jesus, and in 1611 Pope Paul V had declared any further discussion of the Jesuit teachings concerning predestination and salvation off limits. As he declared, both the Jesuit interpretation of predestination and that of their chief opponents were orthodox, and in the future the two sides were to refrain from accusing each other of heresy.

**CORNELIUS JANSEN.** Here matters were to rest until 1640, when the works of Cornelius Jansen came to



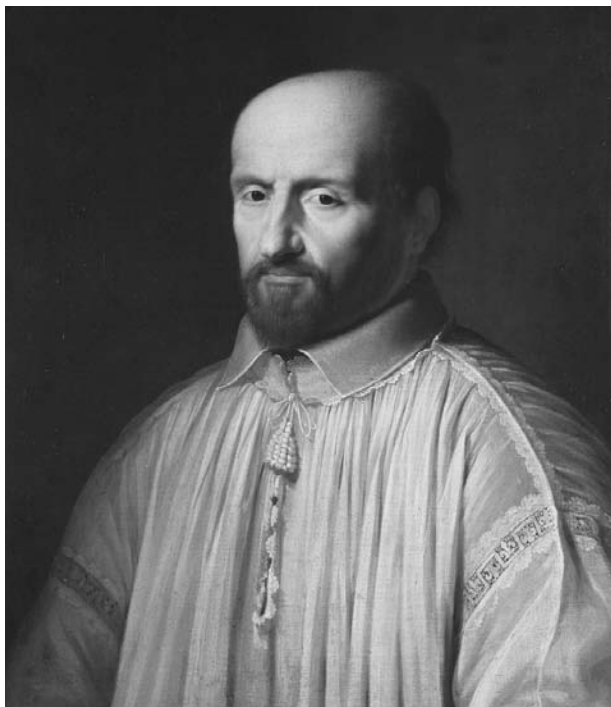


Engraving of Cornelius Jansen. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

be published. Jansen was an unusual figure to engender a theological revolution, for his entire life had been spent as a conscientious church official. In his youth he had been trained at the University of Louvain, a center of anti-Jesuit teaching and then he filled a variety of administrative posts in the church, dying in 1638 when he was the bishop of Ypres in what is now Belgium. Despite his position within the church establishment, he spent much of his spare time composing what he hoped was to be the ultimate proof of the Jesuits' heresies. Concerned with the papal order forbidding discussion of Jesuit teaching, and with what the Jesuits would do with his writings if they became public before he was finished, Jansen had a printing press installed in the episcopal palace in Ypres so that he would not have to send copy out to have it set in press. Jansen did not complete his magnum opus until 1638, shortly before his death from the plague, and he left it to two of his assistants to see the work through final publication. The Jesuits heard about Jansen's work and sought to suppress it. But two years after Jansen's death his *Augustinus* nonetheless appeared. The work was composed in three books. In the first Jansen outlined the ideas of the heretical Pelagians and semi-Pelagians of the ancient church. In the second book, he presented the case for St. Augustine's teachings concerning predestination while arguing that the notion

of the freedom of the will was illusory. Like Augustine before him, and John Calvin in the sixteenth century, Jansen insisted that human beings' wills were enslaved to their sinful nature, and could hardly be considered to be free to choose salvation or damnation. In the third and final book, Jansen defended the concept of predestination by showing that it was not an illogical belief. He argued that God's power was so great that he might lead the will of the elect to salvation without the elect having any idea that they were being led. It was only in the work's appendix that Jansen compared the contemporary Jesuits to the ancient Pelagians. Jansen had taken the defense of predestination to an extreme, and because of the papal order forbidding discussion of the Jesuits' teachings concerning salvation, he left himself and anyone who read his book open to the charge of being "crypto-Calvinists." As the work soon became popular among the Jesuits' opponents, the Society responded by accusing Jansen's adherents of heresy.

**SPREAD OF JANSENISM IN FRANCE.** During his university days Jansen had made the acquaintance of a young French noble named Jean Duvergier de Hauranne (1581–1643), who has become known to history as the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, for the church office he held. The relationship between these two figures was lifelong and close, and their correspondence allows us to reconstruct the development of Jansen's ideas concerning Augustinian theology. By the 1630s Saint-Cyran had become one of France's greatest spiritual and devotional leaders, and he began to mount an attack on Jesuit teachings, primarily by developing an intensely austere devotional movement, which would only later become known as "Jansenism." Jansen had been concerned primarily with the Jesuits' theology, but Saint-Cyran had been trained in a Jesuit college as a youth and he understood that the problems with Jesuit teaching ran far deeper than just theological ideas. He thus labored to develop a piety that might counter the widely successful program of the Jesuits, with its emphasis on reassuring sinners and developing the practice of mental discipline. His austere devotions tried to eliminate any elements of psychological reassurance, and instead to build a Christian life that was a continual and prolonged cycle of penance and contemplation on one's wrongdoings. Where the Jesuits counseled frequent confession and the taking of communion so that eliminating sin became a routine affair, Saint-Cyran argued that the devout should prolong the cycle of penance that preceded taking communion as long as possible so that the sinner might concentrate on internal self-examination and ascetic rituals. In this way they might be adequately prepared to take communion.



Portrait of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

Where the Jesuits' critics charged that the order cheapened the cycle of sin and forgiveness, Saint-Cyran and his developing movement in France aimed to make penance itself into a way of life. The teachings soon became widely admired for the austere discipline they inspired.

**THE ARNAULD FAMILY.** Before Saint-Cyran, the battle against the Jesuits had taken place primarily on an intellectual and academic plane. Saint-Cyran opened up a second front, providing Catholics who opposed the Jesuits with a devotional alternative. Three generations of one family, the Arnaulds, helped Saint-Cyran cement his religious ideas into a program for reform of the French Catholic Church. The Arnaulds had long been associated with the fight against the Jesuits. Antoine Arnauld (1569–1619), the patriarch of the family, was a lawyer who had successfully argued a case for the University of Paris against the Jesuits before King Henri IV, this case being, as it was joked in the seventeenth century, “the original sin of the Arnaulds.” Antoine and his wife Catherine had twenty children, ten of whom survived to adulthood. Six of the ten were girls that became nuns in the abbey at Port Royal; two of them, Jacqueline Marie-Angélique Arnauld (1591–1661) and Jeanne-Catherine Agnès Arnauld (1593–1671), served as the monastery's most famous abbesses. One son, Robert Arnauld D'Andilly (1589–1674) eventually became a lobbyist for the Jansenist cause at French court. A second



Portrait of the Jansenist abbess Jacqueline Marie-Angélique Arnauld, known simply as “Mère Angélique.” MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.

son, Henri Arnauld (1597–1692), became the bishop of Angers and the most stalwart defender of the Jansenist cause among the clergy. A third son, Antoine Arnauld or “Arnauld le Grand” (1612–1694), as he is known in French history, introduced Saint-Cyran's devotional ideals to the broader French public through his book, *On Frequent Communion* (1643), one of the first works of theology to be written and published in French. *On Frequent Communion* attacked the Jesuit custom of encouraging frequent communion, and instead argued for a life engaged in penance preparatory to relatively infrequent communion. Three grandsons of the family—Antoine Le Maistre, Isaac-Louis Le Maistre de Sacy, and Le Maistre de Sacy—became “solitaires,” or hermits who took over a country monastery that their aunt Marie-Angélique had deserted when she moved her convent to Port Royal in Paris. These three specialized in schooling, creating in their *Petits Ecoles*, or Little Schools, a celebrated alternative to Jesuit education. Saint-Cyran served as the spiritual guide to the entire Arnauld family, and channeled their considerable individual talents in the directions he thought best helped the cause. He began offering spiritual advice to Robert Arnauld D'Andilly in 1620, and through him he was introduced to Jacqueline Marie-Angélique, who was already known at the time as Mère Angélique, and was a woman of unconquerable

will who was determined to reform the relaxed life in her convent. When her sister published a tract in 1633, the monastery of Port Royal fell under suspicion of heresy, and Saint-Cyran sprang to its defense. From this date his relationship with Mère Angélique and Port Royal grew closer, and by 1636 Saint-Cyran had become the confessor and spiritual director of the institution. By this time, too, Saint-Cyran had already convinced Antoine Le Maistre, Mère Angélique's nephew, to become a hermit, and to devote himself to founding the "Little Schools."

**THE MOVEMENT ATTRACTS SUSPICION.** Cardinal Richelieu, chief minister of Louis XIII, realized the influence Saint-Cyran was having on the Arnauld family and, through the Arnaulds, on some of the best and brightest young minds in France. Saint-Cyran and Richelieu, in fact, had been good friends during their youth, so Richelieu sought to neutralize his old friend with the offer of a bishopric. When Saint-Cyran refused in 1638, Richelieu had him confined at the royal prison in Vincennes. Saint-Cyran remained there until Richelieu's death in 1643. Weakened by his five years of incarceration, he died a few weeks after being released. But even Saint-Cyran's imprisonment did not stop Port Royal from becoming a magnet for bright young Catholics serious about their devotional life. Jacqueline Pascal, sister of the famous mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), joined the nuns and her brother came to visit her in the convent frequently and was thus drawn into these circles. In 1653 Blaise had a religious conversion, a "night of fire" as he described it in his *Pensées* or *Thoughts*. He began to live in the countryside near the group's male hermitage as a result. Likewise, the painter Philippe de Champagne (1602–1674), who was ironically best known for his portrait of Cardinal Richelieu, came to share the group's convictions, and settled like Pascal near Le Maistre's hermits. Jean Racine (1639–1699), the great French dramatist and playwright of the day, also received his formal education in this group's "Little Schools." Later in life, Racine repudiated his past in order to build a career at court, but before his death in 1699 he requested to be buried in the cemetery near to the school he had attended in his youth.

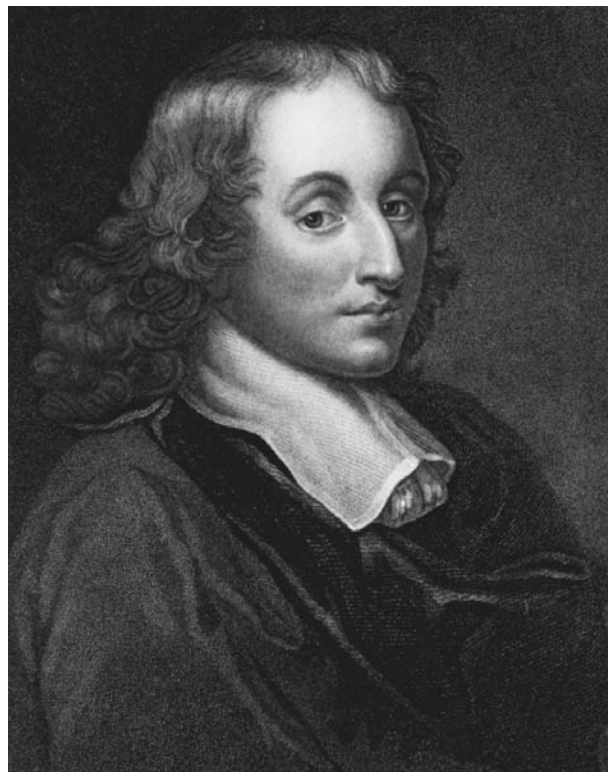
**PAPAL CONDEMNATION AND ROYAL SUPPRESSION.** In France, Saint-Cyran's anti-Jesuit movement developed among French elites without any direct inspiration from Cornelius Jansen. Only through Saint-Cyran did Jansen help shape the French protest against the Jesuits, and Saint-Cyran's ideas were not so much derived from those of Jansen as nurtured by the two men's friendship and shared values. Nevertheless, the publication of the

*Augustinus* gave the Jesuits a target to hang on the back of their enemies, and from the time of that volume's first appearance, the movement in France became increasingly identified with Jansen's ideas and was consequently placed on the defensive. The *Augustinus* had appeared in September 1640, and by August of the following year, the Holy Office in Rome had already condemned it and prohibited Catholics from reading it. By June 1642, the actions of the Holy Office had been reinforced by the Papal bull, *In eminenti*, which likewise condemned the book and placed it off limits to Catholics. These pronouncements from Rome did nothing to stifle an ever more agitated debate about the ideas in the book in France, since papal decrees had no force in the country unless they were affirmed and promulgated by the king. Claiming that the *Augustinus*, not its ideas, had been condemned, Saint-Cyran's group, now openly referred to as Jansenists, continued to make their case, thus raising the ire of the Jesuits and the royal government. The matter was studied throughout the 1640s, and theologians in the service of the king picked apart the Jansenists' argument. They identified five propositions in the *Augustinus* they felt were heretical and sent the propositions to Rome for papal condemnation. A second papal decree of 1653 *Cum occasione* condemned the five propositions. Though this was a major defeat, the Jansenists refused to give up. Their leader at the time, Antoine Arnauld, counseled his followers to recognize that the five propositions were, in fact, heretical. Then in a piece of hair-splitting that bespoke his training in the law, he advised them to maintain that the five propositions could not be found in the *Augustinus* at all. While Jansenists satisfied themselves that they were free to continue to study and teach the *Augustinus*, their political support within France began to deteriorate. The royal government made clear its disapproval of the group, and insults and acts of persecution against them mounted.

**PROVINCIAL LETTERS.** Then, just when it looked as if all was lost, the brilliance of the group's polemicists, particularly Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), helped to create a widespread resurgence. Following his conversion, Pascal had sworn only to use his pen to defend the Jansenist cause. In 1656 Arnauld enlisted him to make the Jansenist case in a fashion that would appeal to the larger Catholic community. Pascal responded with the *Provincial Letters*, a series of nineteen letters, written in collaboration with Antoine Arnauld and Antoine Le Maistre, and published under a pseudonym over the course of the period 1656–1657. The letters alleged to be a description of actual Jesuit pastoral practices. In a satirical tone and in a style so elegant they shaped French prose writing for

decades, the letters skewered the Jesuits, going so far as to suggest that the Jesuits rationalized away murder for the convenience of their followers. The *Provincial Letters* were a resounding success. By the publication of the fifth letter, the press run had risen to 6,000 copies, an exceptionally large number at the time. In 1657 the complete editions of the *Provincial Letters* were published, helping to divert pressure away from the Jansenists and placing the Jesuits on the defensive. Written in French and invoking a French sense of ecclesiastical ethics, the *Provincial Letters* were also important in associating the Jansenist cause with Gallicanism, the concern among French Catholics for the independence of their church from Rome. From the 1660s onward, the term “Jansenist” came to be associated with other causes, causes that were now related to the growing distaste for the Jesuit order and the effort to produce a Catholicism in France that was in large part free of Roman influence. The *Provincial Letters* allowed for these developments.

**SUPPRESSION AND REBIRTH.** Although Antoine Arnauld had used sophisticated legal arguments to insist that the Jansenists were free to read and study the *Augustinus*, the actions of the royal government and the papacy increasingly placed that work off limits during the 1650s. In 1657, Cardinal Mazarin, then France’s chief minister, called an Assembly of the Clergy to compose a formula of faith based upon recent papal pronouncements, and he required members of the French clergy to sign it. Jansenists, however, refused, and although the state and church persisted in their demands, the Jansenists’ cause came to be aided by the complex nature of negotiations between Louis XIV and the papacy over the direction France’s suppression of the movement should take. Matters ground to a halt until Pope Clement IX formulated a compromise in 1669. He permitted Jansenists to sign the royal government’s formula of faith with the understanding that they might still maintain that the heretical propositions were not in the document, but that they would cease to argue about it for the good of the church. This Peace of Clement IX signaled the end of the first era of French Jansenism. When the battle over Jansenism flared up again in France during the first decade of the eighteenth century, the issue that predominated in the debate was not the presence of heretical doctrines in the writings of Jansen, but the ideas of the theologian Quesnel, who took over leadership of the Jansenists after Henri Arnauld died in 1692. Quesnel and the Jansenists who followed continued to see themselves as Augustinians fighting the influence of Jesuits. But the point of conflict for them was the issue of the rights of national churches vis-à-vis papal authority. In the eighteenth cen-



Blaise Pascal. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

ture Jansenism became an international movement as ecclesiastical nationalists in other states looked to French theologians for inspiration and arguments. The movement experienced its greatest victory in 1763, when by papal decree the Jesuit order was dissolved. But despite this victory, Jansenism never again coalesced as a movement with the force that it had in and around Paris in the mid-seventeenth century. That movement had presented the French church with a positive model for a Catholicism that was very different from that of the Jesuits and the reigning spirit of the Catholic Reformation.

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## MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT

**POPULAR MAGIC.** In early-modern Europe state churches identified enemies among the missionaries of rival Christian churches, even as they also singled out promoters and participants of popular magic as targets. Early-modern Europeans, like their medieval ancestors, retained a strong belief in supernatural planes of existence that bounded the natural and visible world. Popular magic focused on the spirits who were believed to exist in these supernatural planes, and on how these spirits could be manipulated to serve the needs of humans. Knowing the denizens of the supernatural as well as how to invoke them and what they could do for you was the stated expertise of “wise men” and “cunning women.” These were just two names for what anthropologists today call shamans, that is, diviners and healers who provided their clients with help and healing based upon the claim to expertise in accessing the supernatural world. Early-modern Europeans did not turn to shamans in every emergency. Shamans were usually called upon in those circumstances where the supernatural aid the church offered through prayers and recourse to the saints was judged either inadequate or inappropriate. In other words, when early-modern folk had need of a love or fertility potion, their first recourse was not to their priest or minister, but to the local shaman. By the same token, if witchcraft was suspected as the cause of an illness, Christian prayer was not deemed a strong enough counter-measure; a shaman was needed to cast a counter spell. The bodies of knowledge popular magic drew upon often reflected oral traditions from a host of pre-Christian religious traditions. By the early-modern period Christian supernatural entities had also been pressed into service to help humans with their problems. Angels, as well as demons, might be invoked to help find lost or stolen property. Saints, most especially the Virgin Mary, were beseeched for cures. Thus peasants trying to protect themselves from the vagaries of poor harvests, disease, infertility, and natural disasters had access to a rich supernatural world peopled with many different entities, all of whom might offer aid in particular circumstances. The church had long cast a jaundiced eye on these popular beliefs, having for centuries taught that it was appropriate to seek help through prayer to the saints, angels, and God himself. Europe’s shamans, on the other hand, had no qualms about approaching any and all kinds of spiritual forces. They might even appeal to

Satan himself in trying to resolve a thorny issue. Thus priests and ministers perceived shamans and the long-standing traditions of popular magic as sources of competition as well as a dangerous traffic with the evil spirits that peopled the supernatural order. They sought to have “wise men” and “cunning women” arrested and tried for these crimes as witches. During the first half of the seventeenth century religious and state officials stepped up their campaign against shamanism, helping to send longstanding traditions of popular magic into a decline. Magical beliefs and practices were now forced increasingly underground, where they were prized by some and feared by others. Popular magic’s decline, then, was in part a result of the witch hunt, which had by the mid-seventeenth century made it extremely dangerous to practice any form of magic for fear of being identified as a witch.

**LEARNED MAGIC.** Popular magic stood in contrast to learned magic, a very different set of teachings that had similarly flourished for centuries. In early-modern Europe learned magic rarely involved the invocation of spirits, but rather it assumed that certain hidden connections existed between observable phenomena on earth and unseen phenomena in the universe, and that it was possible to discover these connections and exploit them to one’s advantage. These assumptions are best demonstrated in astrology, perhaps the most avidly pursued branch of learned magic. The premise of astrology is that heavenly bodies determine the fortunes of humans on earth. Through the study of the heavenly bodies it is therefore possible for an individual both to anticipate and to take advantage of the events that will occur in the future. Astrology was a branch of learned magic that was widely practiced by medical personnel, since it was seen as bolstering the effectiveness of medicines and other types of cures that needed to be given at times when the stars’ positions were most propitious for healing. Learned forms of magic like astrology progressed through the detailed study of texts. Its practitioners started from the intellectual assumption that scholars in the ancient world had discovered most if not all of the hidden connections between things, and that the task of contemporary scholars was thus to rediscover what the ancients had already known. Beginning in the twelfth century a flow of magical treatises from ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, preserved through the centuries by Muslim scholars, had begun to make its way into Western Europe. The reception of these texts gave rise to a new sort of intellectual figure, the *magus* (the plural form being known as “magi”), or the master of ancient magical knowledge. The status of the magus

was given a powerful boost by the Renaissance fascination with Platonism, which stressed the notion that things on earth were simply the signs for universal or higher heavenly forms that were beyond human comprehension. By the seventeenth century learned magic, like art and architecture, had gained patronage in many European courts and in the humanist circles in cities. Many of the first and second generations of thinkers we associate today with the Scientific Revolution were influenced by Europe's long traditions of learned magical speculation. Alchemy was the branch of these endeavors that drew the greatest support from princely and wealthy patrons throughout the continent. Students of alchemy started from the premise that minerals, like everything else on earth, were living things grown from seeds, and that different types of minerals were simply variants of the same mineral at different stages in the life cycle. If cultivated to their mature forms in an environment free of pollutants, alchemists reasoned, minerals might take on their noblest character, a form that alchemists saw as the element gold. Thus the aims of learned magic like alchemy were to learn how nature might be manipulated and bent to one's advantage, rather than to communicate with spirits to intercede in everyday problems.

**MAGIC IN EUROPE'S VILLAGES.** Accusations of witchcraft, by contrast, largely occurred in Europe's villages, far from the rarefied discussions of learned magic that intellectuals conducted in courts and cities. The distinction between magic and witchcraft in the minds of early-modern villagers is hard for the modern mind to grasp. For them, magic attempted to access and to influence the supernatural world. As such, for all of the moralizing of the churchmen, it was widely perceived in village society as a force that was never completely evil. Witchcraft, on the other hand, was feared as the use of the supernatural to prey upon one's neighbors, and was consequently the worst evil on earth. While plenty of individuals boasted of their ability to perform magic, no one admitted willingly to being a witch. Witchcraft was always imputed to individuals, and implicit in the charge was the idea that the witch was an "enemy of the human race," scheming to wreak havoc upon individuals and communities. While most Europeans did not believe that the use of magic was, in and of itself, criminal, they were largely agreed that witchcraft was an evil that needed to be utterly extirpated. It was normal, in other words, for townspeople and villagers to hate each other and sometimes to rely on magic to try to get back at one another. A successful piece of black magic aimed at an enemy probably did not upset many villagers, but what early seventeenth-century people feared were unexplained, ex-



Engraving *Arrivee Au Sabat (Witches' Sabbath)* by J. Aliame after a drawing by David Teniers. © CHRISTEL GERSTENBERG/CORBIS.

cessive acts of vengeance. Such acts were signs of an individual out to hurt others. Modern readers of witch trial materials are appalled by the ease with which medieval and early-modern European villagers identified, tortured, and burned one or two of their number as the source of everything that had recently gone wrong in their village. Modern people, however, miss the reasoning that ran behind these trials. For early-modern communities, witches were social predators. They were an evil besetting the land, an evil that needed to be rooted out so that health might be restored to the community. The evidence of these trials suggests that an image of the witch—usually someone who was marginal to the community at large and who was widely feared and hated—prevailed as a powerful stereotype that prompted accusations and persecutions at the local level.

**THE DIABOLIC PACT.** When European villagers identified one of their own as a witch, their accusations were generally taken seriously by secular officials anxious to prosecute such charges. During the later Middle Ages the Inquisition, a formal office within the church charged with investigating heresy, had fed the persecution of witches by inspiring elaborate new theories of diabolism, that is, the science of demons. The Inquisition fashioned a view of witchcraft very different from that of village

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A WITCH'S TRIAL**

**INTRODUCTION:** The seventeenth-century witch hunts left behind many trial records that allow modern historians to reconstruct the belief in witches as well as the patterns of its persecution. In the account of the present case, the French woman Marie Cornu was accused of working a number of *maléfices* (evil deeds) against her husbands and neighbors. The records of her trial are typical of many such accounts.

**SOURCE:** "The Trial of Marie Cornu," in *Witchcraft in Europe, 400–1700*. Ed. Alan Kors and Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001): 346–347.

society. In place of the notion that witches were merely anti-social and predatory, the theories of witchcraft promoted by the Inquisition in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries taught that witches were those who had allied themselves with Satan and were now seeking to destroy Christian society. By the seventeenth century this notion of a diabolic pact had achieved a general acceptance, not only among many churchmen, but among state officials who now rejected the divide that existed in the popular mind between benign magic and maleficent witchcraft. For these learned elites, there was no neutral way to manipulate magic. All power over the supernatural world derived either from God or from Satan, and every human being who used magic thus entered into a pact with the devil. The terms of witches' covenants with Satan demanded that they wage war against every aspect of Christian society. In the three centuries following 1400 C.E. an estimated 100,000 Europeans were tried, con-

victed, and put to death for the crime of witchcraft. The most vicious years of this persecution occurred in the century following 1550, that is, at the time when many secular officials became convinced, as had churchmen before them, of the Satanic nature of witchcraft and the dangers that it presented to their societies. Relying on elaborate theories of diabolism and witchcraft, secular and religious authorities persecuted witches in these years with increasing frequency, and the image of the witch as an ally of Satan came to traumatize the seventeenth-century world.

**NATURE OF THE WITCH HUNT.** The typical witchcraft trial was a local affair and was precipitated when one or several accusations against someone "everyone knew was a witch" were brought before secular officials. In questioning, secular judges began to ask these individuals to name their accomplices, and under torture, the accused often spewed forth as many names as were

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A PLEA FOR BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT**

**INTRODUCTION:** By the later eighteenth century, belief in demons, witches, and in a supernatural world was definitely on the wane among intellectuals in Europe. The possibility of demonic influence on the earth, however, still troubled some highly educated thinkers. Joseph Glanvill (1636–1680), one of England’s greatest seventeenth-century scholars, and his friend Henry More (1614–1687) were two of these who worried about this decline. Both conducted an active correspondence in which they informed each other about the most recent trials and tribulations worked on the world by demons and witches. In his later years, Glanvill published many of these accounts, together with impassioned pleas to his intellectual readers that they maintain their faith in the spirit world. His fullest expression of these ideas came in *Sadducismus Triumphatus* (Sadducism Triumphant), a work that compared the decline in witchcraft beliefs to the ancient Jewish sect known as the Sadducees that Jesus had encountered in the New Testament. In this work Glanvill included the following endorsement of the reality of witchcraft made by his friend, Dr. Henry More.

And forasmuch as such coarse-grained Philosophers, as those Hobbians [followers of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)] and Spinozians, [followers of the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677)], and the rest of that Rabble, slight Religion and the Scriptures, because there is such express mention of Spirits and Angels in them, things that their dull Souls are so inclinable to conceit to be impossible—I look upon it as a special piece of Providence, that there are ever and anon such fresh Examples of Apparitions and Witchcraft as may rub up and awaken their benumbed and lethargic Minds into a suspicion at least, if not assurance

that there are other intelligent Beings beside those that are clad in heavy Earth or Clay, in this I say, methinks the divine Providence does plainly outwit the Powers of the dark Kingdom, permitting wicked men and women, and vagrant Spirits of that Kingdom to make Leagues or Covenants one with another, the Confession of Witches against their own Lives being so palpable an Evidence, besides the miraculous Feats they play, that there are bad Spirits, which will necessarily open a door to the belief that there are good ones, and lastly that there is a God.

Wherefore let the small Philosophick Sir-Fopplings of this present Age deride them as much as they will, those that lay out their pains in committing to writing certain well attested Stories of Witches and Apparitions, do real service to true Religion and sound Philosophy, and the most effectual and accommodate to the confound of Infidelity and Atheism, even in the Judgment of the Atheists themselves, who are as much afraid of the truth of those Stories as an Ape is of a Whip, and therefore force themselves with might and main to disbelieve them, by reason of the dreadful consequence of them as to themselves. The wicked fear where no fear is, but God is in the Generation of the Righteous, and he that fears God and has his Faith in Jesus Christ, need not fear how many Devils there be, nor be afraid of himself or of his Immortality, and therefore it is nothing but a foul dark Conscience within, or a very gross and dull constitution of Blood that makes Men so averse from these truths.

**SOURCE:** “Dr. H. M. [Henry More] his Letter with the Postscript to Mr. J. G.” [Joseph Glanvill],” in Joseph Glanvill, *Sadducismus Triumphatus, or Full and plain evidence concerning witches and apparitions*. (London: S. Lowndes, 1689): 26–27. Text modernized by author.

needed to bring their suffering to an end. Judges then issued writs to have those accused arrested and tortured. In this way the size, length, and geographic scope of the trials grew. The high tide of these persecutions was also a time of civil war and sectarian conflict, of bad harvests, and of economic privation across Europe. The anxieties these problems generated thus helped to feed the efforts of judges and officials, many of whom argued that the collective misfortunes of contemporary society might be traced to cells of witches. The panic took different shapes in different areas. Germany was infamous for “chain reaction” trials. Judges received a list of names from one individual, and these individuals, in turn, generated their own new lists of accused under torture. These individuals then named others. Such trials might go on for years, claiming hundreds of lives. In Ellwangen

in the German southwest, for example, more than 400 people met their deaths this way in the years between 1611–1618. In Bamberg, the capital of a bishopric in central Germany, more than 300 were executed for witchcraft between 1624 and 1631. In France, a series of cases involved nuns who were accused of being possessed by Satan and of appearing in the forms of priests. The best known of these, which took place at the Ursuline monastery at Loudon during 1636, became the subject of a famous novel, *The Devils of Loudon*, by Aldous Huxley in the twentieth century. In England, the panic prompted towns and villages to seek the services of professional “witchfinders,” who traveled from place to place identifying witches for their neighbors to burn. Matthew Hopkins (d. 1647?) was the most famous of these. Sweden was the site for a relatively late (1660s–1670s) but



notorious trial in which the testimony of children about a mythical place known as Blakulla led to the execution of hundreds of individuals. In Blakulla, the children were alleged to have seen their friends and their friends' parents dancing and making merry with demons. In the midst of one of these panics, it was extremely dangerous to question the legitimacy of the threat. The assumption was that only a witch would try to dissuade the authorities from further interrogations. But when the accusations began to reach into the higher echelons of society, judges became a bit more scrupulous about the evidence they accepted to bring trials against those accused. As wives of mayors and other important officials came to be tarnished with accusations of practicing witchcraft, judges usually applied scrutiny to the evidence and in this way a particular witch-hunt ceased. In most places this process usually only took several weeks, and once a hunt had come to be discredited even those that had already been accused and condemned were often released.

**THE DECLINE OF THE WITCH TRIALS.** Witch trials continued through the 1670s, but by the 1680s they were beginning to be abandoned by royal governments throughout Europe. While recent historical research has emphasized the importance of the intellectual repudiation of witchcraft among governing elites, there is no consensus among historians about what caused this repudiation. Four interrelated changes in beliefs, however, clearly contributed. First, by the second half of the seventeenth century, the doom and gloom that had contributed to social anxiety and panic during the first half of the century had given way to intellectual optimism. Intellectuals began to express faith in the human ability to understand and control nature. In part this newfound faith was based on scientific breakthroughs such as Newton's discovery of the law of gravity, but it also arose from the technological and economic advances of the time that were then making Europe into the most prosperous region on earth. The results of this optimism were a turning away from the fear that had gripped governments and communities concerning the imminence of Satan's rule over the earth. Second, there was a general and growing skepticism on the part of many thinking people about the existence of any sort of supernatural world, heaven and hell included. During the 1680s some writers like Joseph Glanvill (1636–1680) made vain attempts to try to keep the belief in witches and demons alive. In his *Sadducismus Triumphatus* he warned that a Christian could not give up the belief in magic and witchcraft without relinquishing faith in God. But such arguments were increasingly out-of-date in a world in which intellectuals were looking with suspicion upon the

traditional notion that an invisible or supernatural plane of existence intersected with the earthly world in which human beings lived. Third, the Christian churches throughout Europe began to alter their ideas concerning witchcraft. Over the course of the seventeenth century a number of Protestant and Catholic churchmen dismissed the reality of witchcraft and the theory of a satanic conspiracy. This skepticism grew over time, even as an increasing number of church leaders throughout Europe called attention to the deceit, greed, and corruption of the trials and to the fact that many innocent people were being put to death by false accusations. A fourth shift in belief was the turn by governments toward secularism. By the 1660s, there was a growing reluctance on the part of authorities to embrace any explanation of social and political problems built upon religious beliefs. No longer did governments accept that famine or the plague was a reflection of God's wrath or the devil's ambitions. Instead, officials now assumed that there was a rational explanation for every problem and that these causes might be solved with rational solutions. So the response to famine, they argued, should be the importation of grain, while the appropriate response to plague was quarantine. The elite abandonment of belief in the reality of witchcraft was not mirrored within the popular classes. Rural communities continued to seek relief from social anxieties by identifying and burning witches, but when they made accusations, villagers found their initiatives blocked by government authorities that now cast a skeptical eye on such prosecutions. Thus, by the eighteenth century belief in magic and witchcraft had become one of the boundaries that distinguished high and low culture in Europe. Intellectuals now mocked folk culture for its belief in witches, demons, and spirits, beliefs that had once been shared by learned and unlearned alike. The rich and luxuriant spiritual world of Europe that had given rise to the witch trials' blood-letting became reflective of an older archaic world of superstitious belief.

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## PIETISM

**BACKGROUND.** The transformation of churches into departments of state affected the religious experiences these institutions offered. The standardization of liturgy, the use of worship time for government business, the preoccupation of clergy with the services demanded of them by the state all contributed to emptying devotional activities of most of their enthusiasm and passion. This development was especially pronounced in the state churches of Lutheran Germany. Luther's idea of a church composed of a priesthood of all believers evolved into a collection of churches where the divisions between clergy and lay were almost as rigid as those in Catholicism. Medieval parish clergy had been noteworthy for their low level of education and lack of pastoral formation. To address this problem Luther (as did other Protestant and Catholic reformers) mandated that Lutheran clergy be trained in seminaries. Seminary training improved the educational level of the Lutheran clergy, but pastoral formation remained a problem. Parish clergy saw themselves as officeholders, and their main preoccupation was grabbing a bigger office, which in this case meant larger and more lucrative parishes. Education became identified in this way as the avenue to preferment: clergymen seeking to climb the ladder of success through theological treatises and published sermons. These pieces of writing could go to bizarre lengths in their efforts to show erudition; one sermon from the mid-seventeenth century focused on the biblical injunctions to keep one's hair neat and groomed. For lay parishioners, church life in this world was a weekly formality offering little spiritual reward. Church buildings were closed except for during times of public worship, and there simply was no idea of Christian outreach, that is, spiritual counseling and evangelism. The one outlet for emotional expression was hymn singing, and one measure of the Christian hunger for soul-satisfying religion was the growth in the size of hymnals across the seventeenth century. For example, the Dresden hymnal of 1622 had 276 hymns, while that of 1673 had 1,505; the Lüneberg hymnal of 1635 had 355 hymns, while that of 1695 had 2,055. Hymnals grew so large because their publishing was outside of the control of the clergy, thus hymn singing was free to reflect lay taste and sensibilities. The same dynamics were at work with devotional literature. While

clergymen busied themselves writing arid tomes, publishers busied themselves translating and publishing devotional literature from elsewhere, especially Puritan England.

**ARNDT.** The most influential devotional work, however, was homegrown. Over the period 1605–1609, Johann Arndt, a controversial minister who spent his career moving from church to church, published his four-volume work, *True Christianity*. In much the same way that Saint-Cyran would call early modern Catholics back to a medieval ideal of the Christian penitent, so Arndt called early-modern Lutherans back to a medieval ideal of the Christian mystic. Arndt put an emphasis on the Christian life lived outside and beyond the parish church. His volumes were uneven collections of excerpts from the great mystics of the past, the excerpts chosen to show contemporary Christians they might recover the warmth and spirituality missing in church life through meditation. Arndt's writings generated much condemnation from Lutheran church officials, yet they were a popular success; between 1605 and 1740 there were 95 German editions of his work, as well as published translations in Bohemian, Dutch, Swedish, and Latin.

**SPENER.** Arndt's writings supported the development of an alternate religious experience to that taking place in the parish church. Phillip Jakob Spener (1635–1705) took Arndt's ideas and transformed them into the spiritual foundation for church reform. Spener's most important writing was his *Pia Desideria* or *Pious Desires* (1675), an outline for church reform he originally published as a preface to a posthumous edition of some of Arndt's sermons. In the *Pia Desideria* Spener reinforced Arndt's emphasis on the importance of meditation to devotion, but he indicted government officials and clergymen for their soulless management of the church. In particular, he called attention to the clergy's trend for self-aggrandizement at the expense of their flocks. He enjoined the laity to take the promotion of faith into its own hands. Spener looked back to Luther's original message and identified in it the still unachieved demand of the Reformation for a "priesthood of all believers." Spener understood Luther's idea, in other words, to be a call for Christian evangelism that might emerge from the Lutheran laity and be directed at fellow Lutherans. Even before the publication of the *Pia Desideria*, Spener was putting his ideas into practice. In 1666, he was awarded a major position in the Lutheran church in the city of Frankfurt, and by 1669 he had begun to exhort Lutherans at Frankfurt to replace their Sunday afternoons of drinking and card playing with Arndt-inspired discussions of devotional ideas. The next



Print of Philipp Jakob Spener, one of the founders of Lutheran Pietism. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

year a group of laymen in the city took up his challenge, approaching Spener and asking him to direct their weekly meetings of meditation and Christian fellowship. He agreed and thus was born the *collegia pietatis* or “schools of piety” that became the signature of Spener’s movement for church reform. Conceived of as *ecclesio-lae in ecclesia*, or “little churches inside the church,” these meetings, or conventicles as they were labeled in contemporary discourse, were to become the building blocks of Pietism’s church life. Participants found in them both the spiritual direction and rewards that they sensed were lacking in official church activities. Participants in the *collegia pietatis* soon became known as Pietists, and it was from them that the movement took its name. While class meetings were an immediate success among the Lutheran laity, these organizations and Spener soon became the objects of censure from the church establishment. Spener was accused of using class meetings to spread Donatism, an ancient heretical belief that taught that the state of a clergyman’s soul determined the purity of the services he performed. In truth, many class meetings did in their enthusiasm come to condemn the laxity and lack of zeal of many of the clergy, a fact from which the charge of Donatism arose. To counter these tendencies, Spener wrote several treatises supporting the clerical establish-

ment. They had little effect, however, and, tired of the debate and controversy, in 1686 Spener accepted a position to serve as court chaplain for the elector of Saxony. The move only brought more conflict and opposition. Spener chastised the elector for public drunkenness publicly from his pulpit, a move to which the elector took exception. More important, Spener’s presence in Saxony prompted students at the University of Leipzig, the local university, to revolt against their professors and to go out into the city where they set up class meetings among workers and ordinary citizens. These actions motivated the clerical establishment in Saxony to suppress Spener’s movement. By 1691, though, the elector of Brandenburg invited Spener to his new capital city of Berlin. At the time the elector was eager to compete for spiritual leadership of the Lutheran church against Saxony, long home to the religion’s most important educational institutions. To cement his claim to leadership, the elector of Brandenburg had recently founded a new university at Halle, and he asked Spener to join the theological faculty. The Pietist spent the rest of his life at Halle, making it the center of the Pietist movement in Germany.

**FRANCKE.** Just as Spener translated Arndt’s devotional ideals into a program for church reform, so August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) turned Spener’s program for church reform into an institutional reality. Francke had been one of the leaders of the student revolt at the University of Leipzig, the event that had helped to precipitate Spener’s leaving Saxony. Leipzig, like other Lutheran universities of the time, focused its theological curriculum on the study of Aristotle, rather than on training in the Bible. In the years in which Spener had been in Leipzig, he encouraged the establishment of a *Collegium philobiblicum* at Leipzig. The *Collegium* was essentially a bible study movement in which older students helped younger ones to make up the deficiencies in their knowledge of the Bible. Francke turned this movement into a protest against the university’s concentration on Aristotle, convincing 300 students to sell their philosophy texts and turn instead to the study of the apostle Paul. While still a student, Francke visited Spener and during one of these visits he underwent a conversion experience to Pietism. After Spener settled at the University of Halle, he arranged for Francke to join the faculty. Francke’s realization of Spener’s reform program did not alter the institutional structure of the Lutheran church as much as demonstrate how good works—that is, charity—could be effectively added to Lutheran devotional life. While serving as a faculty member, Francke simultaneously served as a pastor at a nearby church. Based upon his working sense of the real needs of a con-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE FIRST BIBLE STUDIES**

**INTRODUCTION:** In his *Pia Desideria*, or *Pious Desires*, the German Lutheran theologian Philipp Jakob Spener set out methods through which small groups of his co-religionists might deepen their faith. His prescriptions helped to fashion Pietism, the movement that spread out from Germany in the early eighteenth century and that eventually influenced such British groups as John Wesley's Methodists. In the current passage he describes a pattern of Bible or class study that is similar to that still practiced by many Protestant groups today.

It should therefore be considered whether the church would not be well advised to introduce the people to Scripture in still other ways than through the customary sermons on the appointed lessons.

This might be done, first of all, by diligent reading of the Holy Scriptures, especially of the New Testament. ...

Then a second thing would be desirable in order to encourage people to read privately, namely, that where the practice can be introduced the books of the Bible be read one after another, at specified times in the public service, without further comment (unless one wished to add brief summaries). This would be intended for the edification of all, but especially of those who cannot read

at all, or cannot read easily or well, or of those who do not own a copy of the Bible.

For a third thing it would perhaps not be inexpedient (and I set this down for further and more mature reflection) to reintroduce the ancient and apostolic kind of church meetings. In addition to our customary services with preaching, other assemblies would also be held in the manner in which Paul describes them in I Corinthians 14:26–40. One person would not rise to preach (although this practice would be continued at other times), but others who have been blessed with gifts and knowledge would also speak and present their pious opinions on the proposed subject to the judgment of the rest, doing all this in such a way as to avoid disorder and strife. This might conveniently be done by having several ministers (in places where a number of them live in a town) meet together or by having several members of a congregation who have a fair knowledge of God or desire to increase their knowledge meet under the leadership of a minister, take up the Holy Scriptures, read aloud from them, and fraternally discuss each verse in order to discover its simple meaning and whatever may be useful for the edification of all. Anybody who is not satisfied with his understanding of a matter should be permitted to express his doubts and seek further explanation.

**SOURCE:** Philipp Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria*. Trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964): 88–89.

gregation, he sought to equip future ministers with the pastoral skills needed to bring about spiritual renewal both in themselves and their parishioners. His teaching, while important, paled in significance compared to his charity work. At Halle, Francke developed a host of institutions that revolutionized the Lutheran approach to social services. He erected a three-tiered school system: the first tier being a free school popularly known as the “ragged school” for the children of the poor, the second tier being a day school for the fee-paying children of local bourgeoisie, and the third tier being an exclusive boarding school for the children of the Brandenburg nobility. On top of this, Francke maintained an orphanage. At the time of Francke’s death in 1727, there were 2,200 students in the three schools and 134 children in the orphanage. In addition to the schools, Francke established teacher-training courses aimed at providing teachers for the countryside. He also founded a Bible Institute for the production and publication of inexpensive editions of the scriptures. To pay for his many enterprises, Francke developed a network of donors and supporters that stretched across Protestant Europe, and

even into the German communities in the New World. And to these charitable donations he added the profits from his pioneering marketing of bottled medicines produced in his institute’s dispensary. Francke’s efforts at Christian outreach did not stop with German Lutherans. He provided and trained the first Lutheran missionaries to be sent to India, and during the eighteenth century, Halle sent some sixty missionaries to Asia. Francke’s enterprises at Halle represented the high watermark of Pietism as a reform movement within German Lutheranism.

**ZINZENDORF.** Francke gave concrete expression to the Lutheran desire for faith to mean more than just church attendance, but at the same time, the movement was notable in that it did not challenge the position or authority of the state church. For all the complaints of the Lutheran establishment, Pietists never sought to create another church or replace the existing one, even though the Lutheran church’s structure remained an obstacle to the Pietist celebration of the Christian spirit. In the next stage of its development under the direction

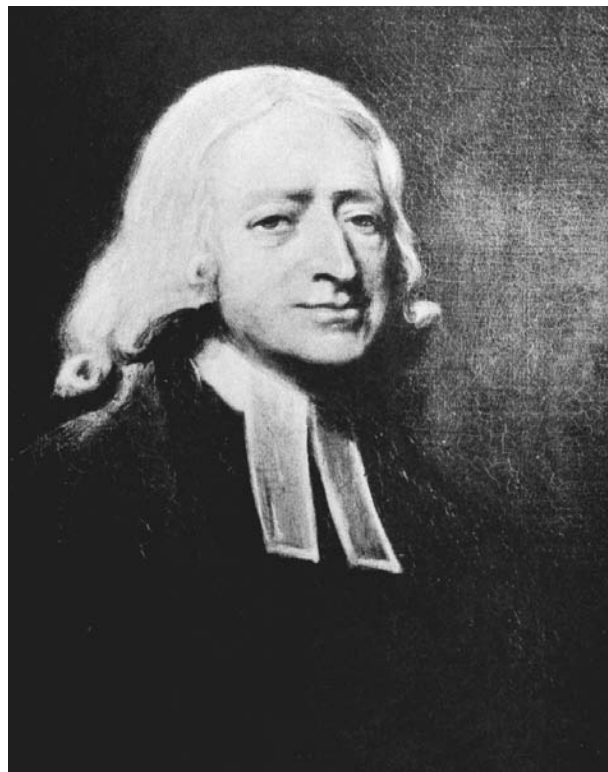
of Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), Pietism broke free of this restraint. Zinzendorf was among the students who studied at the Paedagogium, Francke's school for the offspring of the nobility. The school prepared students for government service, and, like his classmates, Zinzendorf had originally secured government employment following graduation. During his studies at Halle the nobleman had been struck by Pietism's religious message, and when he inherited family estates, he left government service to follow his religious calling. Soon Zinzendorf allowed religious refugees to settle on his lands. The most important of these refugees were members of the *Unitas Fratrum*, or "Brethren of the Unity," a Bohemian religious group that traced its ancestry back to the fifteenth-century religious leader and heretic John Hus (1369–1415), but which also had a significant number of German-speaking adherents. In the wake of the re-catholicization of Bohemia that occurred during the Thirty Years' War, the *Unitas Fratrum* was declared a heretical movement. The group faced intense persecution, barely surviving as an underground movement. Once granted lands on Zinzendorf's estates, however, the *Unitas Fratrum* prospered again, attracting members. Most of these members were German speakers from Moravia, thus the group also became known as the Moravian church or the Moravian Brethren. Zinzendorf found himself progressively drawn into the affairs of the Moravians. At Herrnhut, the center of their German community on Zinzendorf's lands, the Moravians began to push for the establishment of a separate Moravian church. Zinzendorf, however, was determined to keep them within the limits of Lutheran orthodoxy, insisting that structures such as class meetings allowed the Moravians the freedom to seek the emotional experiences they found lacking in Lutheranism. Zinzendorf also sought to channel the energies of the Moravians in the direction of missions, and Moravian evangelists were sent out on missions as far away as the West Indies, Greenland, and Georgia in North America. Zinzendorf's efforts, though, did not placate the Moravians, who continued to petition government authorities for recognition as a separate church. Yet the innovative ways in which Zinzendorf made use of small groups or conventicles to allow for the expression of "heart religion" appealed to many Protestants, who began to flock to Moravian circles. In Germany, Lutheran state churches were now threatened by the Moravians' rapid rise in popularity, and officials complained to their governments. Austria, which controlled the territories from whence most of the Moravians had migrated, likewise complained to the government in Saxony, where Herrnhut was located. In 1736 the Saxon government banished Zinzendorf from

his lands, and he began a period of wandering during which he traveled through Europe and North America, preaching and establishing Moravian communities. His banishment was rescinded in 1747, but bankrupt from the costs associated with maintaining the Moravian church, Zinzendorf spent most of his remaining years preaching and writing abroad, primarily in England, where he lived from 1749–1755. Zinzendorf returned to Herrnhut in 1755, and died there five years later. Meanwhile the efforts on the part of the Moravians to have themselves recognized as a separate church bore fruit. In 1742 the government of Prussia granted their Moravian church full autonomy. In 1749, the English Parliament recognized the Moravian church as "an ancient Protestant Episcopal church." But in Saxony, the original German heartland of the movement, the Moravians had to be content to accept the Lutheran Augsburg Confession, in exchange for which they became a separate wing of the state church.

**JOHN WESLEY.** It took more than a century for the tension between enthusiasm and orthodoxy in German Lutheranism to give rise to a new church. In England a similar tension existed within the Anglican church, and thanks to the spark provided by the Moravians, it took only a few generations for the tensions between Pietism and religious orthodoxy to produce a new kind of church in England. The key figure in the establishment of the Methodist Church in England was John Wesley (1703–1791), who underwent a profound conversion experience in 1738 as a result of his contact with Moravian missionaries. Even before this time, Wesley had been actively preaching the gospel, but it was only after his conversion that he preached a message others seemed eager to follow. Wesley had been born the son of an Anglican priest, and both he and his brother Charles had attended Oxford with the intention of following in their father's footsteps. While at Oxford the Wesleys established a little organization known as the "Holy Club" which, like the Pietist class meetings Wesley would later admire and emulate, provided a vehicle for small groups to share spiritual experiences. Members of the Holy Club were roundly ridiculed by their contemporaries at Oxford, who called them "Methodists," a term of derision. Out of frustration in 1735 the Wesleys left to serve as missionaries in Georgia. Their efforts in Georgia were an embarrassing failure, but their tour was significant in that they made contact with the Moravians. Back in London in 1738, the Wesleys discovered a new direction for their ministry, again through the example and influence of the Moravians. As he recorded in his diary, it was while attending a Moravian meeting that John felt his heart

“strangely warmed” and knew that he had found the message he would preach for the rest of his days. The Wesleys were sufficiently moved by their experiences with the Moravians that they contemplated joining the Brethren. A trip to Germany to meet Zinzendorf, however, convinced them of the need to create their own movement. Still, the Wesleys adapted from the Moravians the key Pietist precepts that Christian devotions are best experienced in small groups and that these devotions must produce an emotional transformation within the Christian. Preaching this message in England was not easy. The Anglican establishment was no friendlier to Pietism than the Lutheran state churches had been in Germany. John Wesley went from parish church to parish church, requesting permission to preach before the congregation. Again and again he was turned down. Soon Wesley adopted the expedient of preaching, not in churches, but in open fields and town halls. Here he excelled, sometimes drawing thousands of listeners to his sermons, although the crowds were not always friendly; rocks and stones were sometimes thrown at his head. But most of his audiences were emotionally engaged, and the sense that Christianity could be about feelings, could be about emotions, gradually came to be accepted within English Protestantism. John Wesley cannot be granted sole credit for introducing the idea of the outdoor revival as a forum of Christian devotion in England. Credit for this development has to be shared with his good friend and competitor George Whitefield (1714–1770). Wesley and Whitefield met during their student days, when Whitefield joined the “Holy Club.” Theological differences forced the two men to go their separate ways; Whitefield was a Calvinist, while Wesley was an Arminian. Whitefield is generally credited with being the greatest English preacher of his time, though few of his sermons have survived. Still, his open-air preaching, in tandem with that of Wesley, revolutionized Christian worship in England, providing thousands with a spiritually satisfying alternative to the dry formalism of parish devotional life.

**METHODISM.** John Wesley took the insights of the Pietists and applied them to the development of his movement. In his preaching and ministry Wesley targeted the poor and working classes—groups to his mind ignored by the Church of England. Raised by an Anglican priest to be an Anglican priest, Wesley’s intention was to stay within the Church of England. With this ambition in mind, Wesley adapted the institution of the class meeting, which he relabeled the “band,” to the tasks associated with evangelizing the poor and working classes within the context of the Anglican church. For Wesley,



Portrait of John Wesley. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Christian salvation was the result of an active embrace of the obligations of faith and devotion. The duty of the “band” was to oversee the actions of church members to make sure that they fulfilled those obligations. Wesley issued “tickets” to church members that granted them three months of access to church services and activities. Every three months the actions and behavior of each member was assessed, and the tickets could be revoked for such things as swearing, fighting, drunkenness, and wife beating. Wesley went further and made these conventicles, or small group meetings, into the vehicle for positive development. To discipline church members to what was for many of them the new experience of participation in church upkeep, Wesley divided members into “classes” of twelve under a “class leader.” Each member of a class was expected to put a penny each week toward church maintenance, the class leader being in charge of collection. Few members of the Anglican clergy followed Wesley out into the field. Thus in the beginning Wesley’s movement suffered from a lack of ordained clergy. Wesley treated this dearth as an opportunity, opening up to lay people many positions reserved in the Anglican church for clerics. Laymen did much of the preaching that took place in the context of the “bands.” Laymen were similarly called upon to serve as “stewards” to take care of church property, teachers in Methodists

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN EARLY ITINERANT PREACHER**

**INTRODUCTION:** Influenced by the powerful example of the Moravians, John Wesley underwent a conversion experience and began to develop small groups of dedicated laymen within the Church of England, the nucleus that eventually formed the Methodist Church. Wesley was indefatigable in his efforts to spread the gospel, as his *Journals* make clear. His career helped to establish the patterns that modern Christians now associate with the itinerant revival preacher. Much like the twentieth-century evangelists Billy Sunday or Billy Graham, Wesley preached the gospel before thousands, many of whom proved willing to amend their lives and begin to follow the path outlined in Methodism. In the current passage he describes the difficulties that he had in adapting himself to this life, trained as he was to be a priest in the staid and formalistic Church of England. Wesley quickly overcame whatever reticence he felt, and began to preach to thousands.

Saturday, March 10, 1739: During my stay here, I was fully employed between our own society in Fetter Lane, and many others ... so that I had no thought of leaving London, when I received, after several others, a letter from Mr. Whitefield, and another from Mr. Stewart, entreating me, in the most pressing manner, to come to Bristol without delay ...

Wednesday, March 28, 1739: My journey was proposed to our society in Fetter Lane. But my brother Charles would scarce bear the mention of it. ... Our other brethren, however, continuing the dispute, without any probability of their coming to one conclusion, we at length all agree to decide it by lot. And by this it was determined I should go. ... In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to

this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in the church. ...

Wednesday, April 4, 1739: At Baptist Mills (a sort of suburb or village about half a mile from Bristol) I offered the grace of God to about fifteen hundred persons from these words, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely."

In the evening three women agreed to meet together weekly with the same intention as those at London, viz., "to confess their faults one to another, and pray one for another, that they may be healed." At eight four young men agreed to meet, in pursuance of the same design. How dare any man deny this to be a means of grace, ordained by God? Unless he will affirm that St. James's Epistle is an epistle of straw. ...

Saturday, April 14, 1739: I preached at the poor-house. Three or four hundred were within, and more than twice that number without; to whom I explained those comfortable words, "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

Tuesday, April 17, 1739: At five in the afternoon I was at a little society in the Back Lane. The room in which we were was propped beneath, but the weight of people made the floor give way; so that in the beginning of the expounding, the post which propped it fell down with a great noise. But the floor sunk no farther; so that, after a little surprise at first, they quietly attended to the things that were spoken.

**SOURCE:** John Wesley, *John Wesley's Journal*. Ed. Nehemiah Curnock (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951): 65–67.

schools, and visitors of the sick. To supervise his growing movement, Wesley initially made the rounds by visiting each group in turn. When the movement grew too large for this, he established annual "Conferences" at which first preachers, and then other lay officials, met to discuss issues of church governance. To address the need for central direction, Wesley divided the local churches into "circuits" over which traveling preachers had jurisdiction. Later, superintendents were placed over the circuits. To educate lay officials to both the duties of their offices and the expectations of them as Christians, Wesley took another page from the German Pietist book, sponsoring the writing and publication of devotional literature developed specifically for his people. As

much as possible Wesley sought to use the Anglican liturgy in his church services though, again reflecting the Pietist influence, he left space in his services for spontaneous outpourings of faith. Methodist church services also made extensive use of hymns; over the course of his career as his brother's right-hand man, Charles Wesley wrote almost 8,000 of them. Though the Anglican establishment constantly rebuffed his movement, John Wesley was determined to keep his groups within the confines of the Church of England. Still, when confronted with the reality of Anglican opposition, Wesley affirmed the independence of his movement. In 1784, after the conclusion of the American War of Independence, there was a need for Methodist ministers in North America. Wesley

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***GALILEO IN THE CROSSFIRE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

**INTRODUCTION:** One of the most famous of all the disputes between science and religion in the early-modern world involved Galileo's proofs for the heliocentric theory, the notion that the sun is at the center of the universe and that planets revolve around it. Galileo's work in this regard brought him before the Inquisition in Italy, and he was eventually forced to deny his ideas. Before that condemnation, the scientist wrote to Christina of Lorraine, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, explaining his views and arguing that theologians should stay out of scientific matters, for which, he argued, they had little preparation. One year later, the Inquisition used his words in the proceedings mounted against him.

**SOURCE:** Galileo, "Letter to Christina of Lorraine," in *The Seventeenth Century*. Ed. Andrew Lossky (New York: The Free Press, 1967): 89.

asked the bishop of London to ordain them. The bishop refused. Wesley was not a bishop and had no authority to ordain; yet in this instance he presumed the right to ordain the men in question, thus cementing Methodism's increasing independence from Anglicanism. Wesley died in 1791, and only four years later the Methodist movement had broken free of the Church of England and established itself as a separate church.

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**CHRISTIANITY, SCIENCE, AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT**

**THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION.** The seventeenth century was the moment when opposition to Christianity's cultural authority came to be located, not so much among scientists, but among intellectuals who championed science as an alternative to Christianity. Here "science" must be understood broadly as the new knowledge that resulted from scientific investigation, from technological advance, and from the empirical collection of data about new peoples and places. For anti-Christian intellectuals, science, technology, and empiricism (the observation and charting of the causes of natural phenomena) proved the Bible's inadequacy to explain the world and confirmed that Christian intellectuals were disconnected from reality. The jabs of these intellectuals, however, did only minor injury to the Christian cause. It was church



authorities that held Christianity up to ridicule by persecuting those scientists whose ideas they perceived as a threat and by insisting that the new science was a challenge to Christian authority. Many scientists—Galileo and Newton for example—remained practicing Christians. At the same time, many church authorities condemned science as heresy. The most spectacular demonstration of this process was the decision by the Catholic church to condemn the heliocentric theory, the theory that the earth and planets revolve around the sun. The Catholic church justified this decision with the argument that the Bible taught that the Lord had made the sun stop in the sky. Thus Christian orthodoxy necessarily had to affirm the geocentric argument, the theory that the sun and planets revolve around the earth. It was from this position that the Catholic church rationalized the conviction of the aged scientist Galileo (1564–1642) for heresy. Galileo was forced to recant his scientific findings and to proclaim publicly that the earth in fact remains stationary while the skies revolve around it. And yet, as Galileo is reported to have muttered under his breath after his public humiliation, “the earth does move.” The trial of Galileo did not stop scientific investigation, but it did embarrass Christian intellectuals. The irony is that a good many Christian intellectuals actually embraced the new knowledge and sought to celebrate science as proof of the truth of Christianity. Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, had insisted upon seeing the world as a “mirror” of God’s greatness. The sort of arguments that began to appear in the seventeenth century emerged from the same inspiration, but went in a different direction. Fixated on the mathematical and mechanical attributes of the world that was revealed in scientific investigation, Christian writers insisted that the symmetry and the efficiency of Nature could not be coincidental; these things must be the designs of a divine hand. Thus everything from the webs of spiders to the law of gravity to human emotions was argued to be evidence for the existence of the Christian God. The intellectuals that promoted these sensibilities, though, rarely advanced into the upper echelons of Europe’s state churches. Instead most of the men chosen to lead these institutions had an animus against science and they asserted that faith transcended scientific reality. As such, during the age of the Baroque and Enlightenment, Christianity never made its peace with science.

**DEISM IN ENGLAND.** In England, one group of Christian thinkers took the rationality of Nature as more than just evidence of the existence of the Christian deity; they took it as an indication of the character of the deity as well. Rejecting the image of the Christ-

ian god as an entity who constantly intervened in the natural world to reward his followers and punish his detractors, these thinkers celebrated an idea of the deity who was content to let the world He put in place operate according to the principles He had established. These Deists, as opponents labeled them, did not embrace a uniform set of beliefs. What united Deists were the targets of their attacks. Deists rejected the possibility of miracles, since miracles involved the suspension of the laws of nature and God himself had established the laws of nature, and therefore, would not suspend them. Secondly, Deists took aim at the clergy, whom they indicted for fostering superstitions as religion. For Deists, churchmen were little better than shamans; both groups hoodwinked a gullible public with lies about their ability to manipulate the supernatural, a concept they insisted did not exist since the entire natural order was subjected to the laws the Deity had established at Creation. Most Deists advocated morality as religion’s most positive force. Living right and doing unto others as you would have them do unto you were the commandments Deists recognized as coming from God. In England, the great age of Deist thought occurred during the later years of the seventeenth century and the early years of the eighteenth when, in the relatively free climate created by the ascension of William and Mary and the passage of the Act of Toleration, Deists could publish their views with the anticipation that they were to spark controversy, but not excite government censure.

**MAJOR DEISTS.** Of the many thinkers during Deism’s great age, five are worthy of note. John Toland (1670–1722) was the first Deist to attract public notice. In his *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696) Toland argued that whatever is “repugnant” to the human mind as irrational should not be believed. He had in mind the many miracles that had traditionally been used to justify and support Christianity. Anthony Ashley Cooper (1671–1713), the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, did not consider himself a Deist, yet his work was most closely identified with the term by thinkers on the continent. Shaftesbury’s work went in the opposite direction from the work of most Deists, away from challenging the “superstitions” manufactured by “priests” toward identifying the actions implied in living a moral religious life. Still, in his *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708) Shaftesbury found occasion to lambaste any and all forms of religious fervor as blasphemous. In his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712) Samuel Clarke, who was chaplain to Queen Anne, demonstrated that the doctrine of the Trinity could not be found in the New Testament. For his efforts, a conventicle of the Anglican clergy forced a public apology from him. Anthony Collins (1676–1729)

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CHRISTIANITY NOT MYSTERIOUS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Irish-born Deist John Toland (1670–1722) had been raised Catholic, but converted to Protestantism at the age of sixteen. In his *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696) Toland labored to reconcile Christian teaching with the new rationalism propounded by figures like John Locke. His central insistence that the realm of nature might reveal God rationally came to be accepted by other Deists, but also attracted charges of pantheism from more Orthodox quarters. In the current passage he makes one of the charges that was to garner criticism from the Church of England's clergy: that the mysteries of Christianity and its doctrines were created by the clergy so that they might have control over the explication of the Scriptures.

After having said so much of reason, I need not [laboriously] show what it is to be contrary to it; ... what is evidently repugnant to clear and distinct ideas, or to our common notions is contrary to reason. I go on therefore to prove the doctrines of the Gospel, if it be the Word of God, cannot be so. But if it be objected that very few maintain they are, I reply that no Christian I know of now (for we shall not disturb the ashes of the dead) expressly says reason and the gospel are contrary to one another. But ... very many affirm, that though the doctrines of the latter cannot in themselves be contradictory to the principles of the former, as proceeding both from God, yet that according to our conceptions of them, they may seem directly to clash; and that though we cannot reconcile them by reason of our corrupt and limited understandings, yet that from the authority of divine revelation, we

are bound to believe and acquiesce in them; or as the fathers taught them to speak, to adore what we cannot comprehend. ...

In short, this doctrine is the known refuge of some men, when they are at a loss in explaining any passage of the word of God. Lest they should appear to others less knowing than they would be thought, they make nothing of fathering that upon the secret counsels of the Almighty, or the nature of the thing, which is indeed the effect of inaccurate reasoning, unskilfulness in the tongues, or ignorance of history. But more commonly it is the consequence of early impressions, which they dare seldom afterwards correct by more free and riper thoughts. So desiring to be teachers of the Law, and understanding neither what they say, nor those things which they affirm ... they obtrude upon us for doctrines, the commandments of men. ... And truly well they may; for if we once admit this principle, I know not what we can deny that is told us in the name of the Lord. This doctrine, I must remark it too, does highly concern us of the laity; for however it came to be first established, the clergy (always excepting such as deserve it) have not been since wanting to themselves, but improved it so far as not only to make the plainest, but the most trifling things in the world mysterious, that we might constantly depend upon them for the explication. And, nevertheless they must not, if they could, explain them to us without ruining their own design, let them never so fairly pretend it. But, overlooking all observations proper for this place, let us enter upon the immediate examen of the opinion it self.

**SOURCE:** John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (London: n.p., 1696): 23–27. Text modernized by author.

set his sights on disproving the “forgeries” of the clergy. In *An Historical and Critical Essay on the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England* (1724) he set out to invalidate the Church of England's claim of authority to resolve issues of faith. In *A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, written in the same year, he worked out a chronology to demonstrate that Jesus could not have been the Messiah of the Old Testament prophecies. The final Deist figure that made a major mark on the religious ideas of the eighteenth century was Matthew Tindal (1653(?)–1733), who published a book in 1733 that has since become known as the Deist “Bible.” The work, *Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* rejected the notion of Christianity as a “revealed” religion. All that was right and moral in Christianity, Tindal argued, might be reasoned from the laws of na-

ture without recourse to Scripture and the fabulous stories it contained.

**THE SPREAD OF DEISM.** Deism in England has been pictured as a thinking man's recreation. It emerged simultaneously with the rise of the coffeehouse, where Englishmen frequently met to converse, smoke, and consume enormous amounts of the exotic new brew. Deist writers thus wrote in a style that was accessible and appealing to the coffeehouse crowd. Deism was not an organized force, but an amorphous and sometimes stylish philosophical and religious preoccupation of the time, but one that Orthodox churchmen in England took quite seriously and which they frequently decried. Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, for example, prompted more than 150 learned rebuttals. Of the many Orthodox responses to Deism that appeared at the time,

the most important was that of the Anglican Bishop Joseph Butler (1692–1752), who in *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736) pointed out that Nature, which the Deists characterized as the embodiment of rationality, was as full of irrationalities and ambiguities as the Scriptures and, like the Scriptures, required faith to be comprehended. More influential among intellectuals outside the church were the various arguments advanced by the philosopher David Hume (1711–1776). Hume understood a point that apparently escaped most of the Deists: that skepticism can be turned back upon the arguments of skeptics. Hume asserted, in other words, that there was no way to prove logically that Nature provided any necessary clues to the intent or character of its Creator. Following the theological wisdom of the day, Deists affirmed that the first religion of humankind had been monotheism, a natural creed that had been subverted and corrupted by the clergy. Hume countered such arguments by insisting that the first humans had been polytheistic, and by showing that the monotheism Deism celebrated was, in fact, a later corruption of primitive polytheism. As a result of these and other critiques, interest in Deism began to wane in England in the 1730s, and the successful attacks of Butler and Hume meant that the movement was not revived later in the eighteenth century. Yet while Deism's importance declined to a position of relative insignificance in England, English Deist ideas sparked imitations that were more permanent in France and Germany. It is not surprising that continental thinkers imitated ideas that had been discarded in England. In that country churchmen had tried to use their influence with government to suppress the ideas of the movement, but to little avail, and secular-minded intellectuals in England had come to express their notions relatively free from clerical condemnation. Such relative freedom existed in France only later in the eighteenth century when the royal government relaxed its censorship. On the continent also, conservative Christian movements like Jansenism in France and Pietism in Germany guaranteed that secular-minded intellectuals had to develop some defense against the arguments of these movements' enthusiasts, and Deism thus provided a welcome alternative to the emotionalism of Pietism or the austere religiosity of Jansenism. In France, thanks to the popularity of things English, major English Deist thinkers were translated into French and published. Many of the *philosophes*, the intellectuals of the French Enlightenment, identified themselves as Deists. The philosopher Voltaire characterized God as "the great geometrician, the architect of the universe, the prime mover." And it was through these thinkers that Ameri-

can intellectuals like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson came to be exposed to Deist ideas. In the second half of the eighteenth century German Christians also assimilated and reproduced the by-then abandoned English ideas concerning the design of Nature as proof of God's existence. But it was only late in the eighteenth century, and then cautiously, that they began to consider Deism's others aims, such as the abolition of a doctrinal Christianity. In Germany, writers like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) led this avant-garde movement. Lessing was the son of a Lutheran clergyman. During the years 1774–1778, he edited and published a selection of writings he entitled *Fragments*. These were excerpts from an "apology" for "rational worshippers of God"—a shorthand for Deists. Hermann Samuel Reimarus had originally written this defense of Deist principles, but he had been too fearful of persecution to publish his treatise while alive. The firestorm of criticism that Lessing's publication of the *Fragments* ignited validated Reimarus' fears. To defend himself, Lessing wrote *The Education of the Human Race* between 1777 and 1780, a treatise in which he argued that it was now permissible for humankind to leave revealed religion behind and progress forward to a rational understanding of faith. Lessing's most effective response to his critics, though, was his play *Nathan the Wise* (1779), a story that argued that the human pursuit of knowledge transcended religion.

**CHRISTIANITY AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT.** The Enlightenment as an intellectual movement was anti-Christian, but the nature and character of anti-Christian sentiment differed in different lands. The Enlightenment aimed to open up every aspect of life on earth to intellectual scrutiny and rational analysis. Taking the Scientific Revolution as an example of what the human mind could do when it applied itself, promoters of the Enlightenment promised that further dramatic discoveries were waiting to be made in the study of Nature and in the study of society, culture, and the arts. Enlightenment thinkers postulated an opposition between "religious" and "rational" modes of thought. Religious thought was superstitious and credulous. It was the darkness to which rationalism was the light. Texts by Enlightenment thinkers typically portrayed Christian churchmen as conservative and reactionary, and Christian churches as backward and intellectually stifling. Their attacks on religion were motivated by more than just a perspective that religious thinking violated human reason, however. Enlightenment thinkers were asserting that the nature of rational human knowledge was, in and of itself, different from that which Christian doctrine and theology had taught for centuries. The Enlightenment was a declaration of

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN ENLIGHTENMENT EXAMINATION OF AN OLD TESTAMENT MIRACLE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Although Deism remained in fashion among English intellectuals for only a short while, the movement affected the Enlightenment in France and Germany during the later eighteenth century. German Enlightenment philosophers faced a generally more conservative public that resisted any attempts to modernize Christianity. In 1777, though, the philosopher and playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) published the *Fragments of Nikolaus Reimarus*. These were philosophical musings that had been greatly influenced by deism. The furor they caused forced Lessing to defend himself from the charge of heresy in several subsequent works.

If we look at ... the miracle of the passage through the Red Sea, its inner contradiction, its impossibility, is quite palpable. Six hundred thousand Israelites of military age leave Egypt, armed, and in battle order. They have with them their wives and their children and a good deal of rabble that had joined them. Now, we must count for each man of military age, four others at least; partly women, partly children, partly the aged, partly servants. The number of the emigrants, therefore, in proportion to those of military age, must be at least 3,000,000 souls. They take with them all their sheep and oxen, that is to say a large number of cattle. If we count only 300,000 heads of households, and give each of them one cow or ox, that would add up to 300,000 oxen and cows, and

600,000 sheep and goats. In addition, we must count on at least 1,000 wagon loads of hay or fodder; to say nothing of the many other wagons containing the golden and silver vessels which they had purloined, and piles of baggage and tents needed for such an enormous army—even if we count only 5,000 wagons, which is one wagon to sixty persons. At least they arrived at the Red Sea, and put down their camp near its shore. Pharaoh followed them, with 600 selected wagons and all the wagons left in Egypt, in addition to all the cavalry and infantry, and, as it was nightfall, he settled down not far from them. Josephus estimates this army at 50,000 cavalymen and 200,000 infantry. It cannot have been small, for it was planning to confront any army of 600,000. But let us only count half of this—namely 25,000 cavalymen, and 100,000 infantry, plus the wagons. During the night, the column of cloud and fire places itself between the Israelites and the Egyptians; God then sends a strong easterly wind which through the whole night pushes away the sea and makes the ground dry. Then the Israelites enter, dry of foot, and the Egyptians follow them, so that the former have crossed while the latter are in the middle of the sea. In the watch of the morning, God looks down upon the army of the Egyptians, allows the water to return so that it is restored to its full flood, and thus all the Egyptians drown, and not a one remains. It is this that the Biblical narrative partly tells us explicitly, partly compels us to infer.

**SOURCE:** Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Fragments*, in *Deism: An Anthology*. Ed. Peter Gay (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1968): 160–161.

independence for secularism, a proclamation of self-emancipation for those who wanted to investigate any and all subjects, free from considerations of religious truth and without fear of clerical reprisals. For centuries, Christian theologians and officialdom had characterized knowledge according to whether it aided or hindered human salvation. The thinkers of the Enlightenment abandoned such judgments. For them, knowledge was to be judged good if it served to validate experiences and phenomena that had been observed in the real world. In the course of the eighteenth century the Enlightenment took different paths and moved in very different directions in various European regions. It is the French Enlightenment that is best known and studied, and it was a movement that was vehemently anti-clerical. France was also the only Catholic land in which the Enlightenment grew deep roots. The French Catholic clergy provided the philosophes with examples to ridicule and condemn. France was also the one state where atheists

made a point of publicly rejecting their belief in the Christian God. According to a long-standing anecdote, David Hume came face-to-face with this unprecedented rejection of Christianity while serving as a member of the British diplomatic corps in Paris. One evening at a dinner party hosted by the Enlightenment philosophe Paul Henry Thiry, the Baron d'Holbach (1723–1789), Hume remarked that he had never met an atheist. The Baron lamented Hume's bad luck, but then assured him that he was surrounded then by at least seventeen of them. The Deism of Voltaire, rather than the atheism of d'Holbach, is probably more reflective of the disposition of the French philosophes and their followers toward Christianity. Like Voltaire, most French who participated in the Enlightenment did not reject Christianity outright as much as they attacked the Catholic clergy and the cultural authority the church claimed. By contrast, Enlightenment thinkers in Britain had little to say on the subject of religion. Certainly David Hume

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN ENLIGHTENMENT ATTACK ON CHRISTIANITY**

**INTRODUCTION:** Paul Henri Thiry, the Baron d'Holbach (1723–1789), was one of the French Enlightenment's most controversial figures. He vigorously attacked the Christian tradition and all religions as nothing more than edifices "in the air." In this excerpt from his *Common Sense*, published in 1772, d'Holbach praised atheism as the only sensible and rational choice for thinking men and women.

In a word, whoever will deign to consult common sense upon religious opinions, and bestow in this inquiry the attention that is commonly given to objects, we presume interesting, will easily perceive, that these opinions have no foundation; that all religion is an edifice in the air; that theology is only the ignorance of natural causes reduced to system; that it is a long tissue of chimeras and contradictions. That it represents, in every country, to the different nations of the earth, only romances void of probability, the hero of which is himself composed of qualities impossible to combine; that his name, exciting in all hearts respect and fear, is only a vague word, which

men have continually in their mouths, without being able to affix to it ideas or qualities, which are not contradicted by facts, or evidently inconsistent with one another.

The idea of this being, of whom we have no idea, or rather, the word by which he is designated, would be an indifferent thing, did it not cause innumerable ravages in the world. Prepossessed with the opinion, that this phantom is an interesting reality, men, instead of concluding wisely from its incomprehensibility, that they are not bound to regard it; on the contrary infer, that they cannot sufficiently meditate upon it, that they must contemplate it without ceasing, reason upon it without end, and never lose sight of it. Their invincible ignorance, in this respect, far from discouraging them, irritates their curiosity; instead of putting them upon guard against their imagination, this ignorance renders them decisive, dogmatical, imperious, and even exasperates them against all, who oppose doubts to the reveries, which their brains have begotten.

**SOURCE:** Baron d'Holbach, *Common Sense*, in *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*. Ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1995): 141.

made it the target of a good deal of his skeptical speculation. But the political economist Adam Smith was far more typical of the British Enlightenment, and Smith, as demonstrated in his classic, *The Wealth of Nations*, was concerned to identify the "natural" motivations for human behaviors. His focus, in other words, did not challenge alternative Christian explanations of human behaviors as much as ignore them. In Germany, the difficulties of thinkers like Lessing illustrate that one challenge of the Enlightenment in this region proved to be in getting any rationalist critique of Christianity into print. Yet it was in German-speaking Europe, more so than anywhere else in Continental Europe, that rulers looked to the works of Enlightenment thinkers popular elsewhere in Europe for hints at ways in which they might reform their state's churches. Prompted by the critiques of clerical authority that were common in the works of thinkers like Voltaire, Frederick the Great of Prussia and Joseph II of Austria both moved to reform the churches in their lands according to Enlightenment principles.

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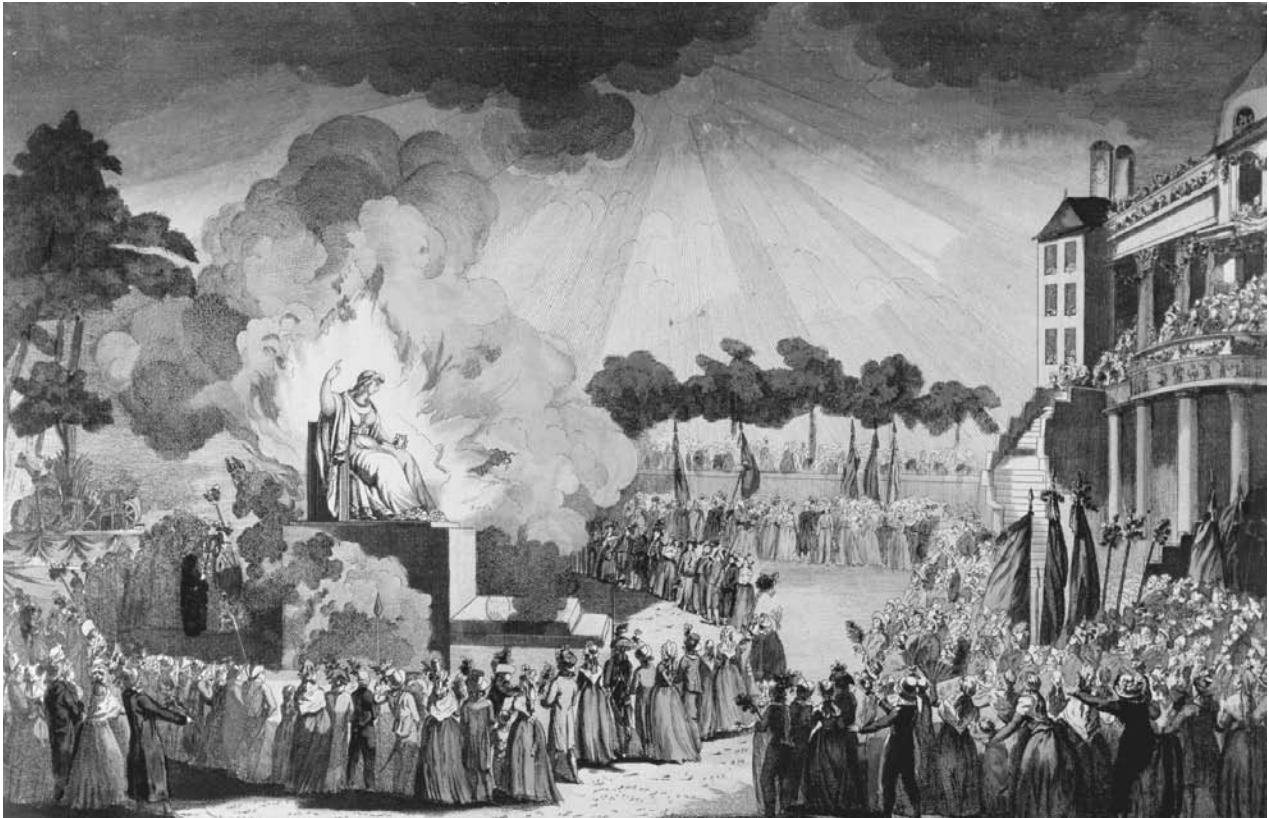
**CHRISTIANITY IN THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA**

**CHRISTIANITY AND ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM.** Frederick the Great (r. 1740–1786) of Prussia and Joseph II (r. 1765–1790) of Austria were among Europe's two most successful enlightened despots. They were rulers who applied the rationalistic and scientific approaches to their governments recommended by Enlightenment thinkers. Since the rise of the Enlightenment in the early eighteenth century, intellectuals had attacked the church as a bastion of privilege and irrational superstition. In both Prussia and Austria Frederick and Joseph pushed through reforms in the churches during the second half of the eighteenth century. Their attacks on the power and authority of the state church were not motivated by a desire to suppress Christianity, but to fit its practice into their rationalized schemes of government. By the second half of the eighteenth century most Protestant countries in Europe provided *de facto* forms of religious toleration, and although legal

codes did not always recognize freedom of religion, minority faiths practiced their religion in these places relatively freely. England had led the way in this regard since it had allowed dissenting forms of Protestantism to flourish from the 1690s and had also provided a space for the expansion and evolution of Methodism. The migration of Irish Catholics into the country in the eighteenth century added a new dimension to England's already pluralistic but mostly Protestant religious landscape, and the presence of Catholic workers in the country's thriving industrial factories by the later eighteenth century prompted government officials to relax their persecution of Catholicism. In 1753, the English Parliament also passed a Jewish Naturalization Act, though popular anti-Semitism later forced its repeal. These kinds of measures were quickly imitated elsewhere in Europe. In Prussia, Frederick the Great went even further than the English, and in his revision of the Prussian legal code, the *Allgemeine Landrecht*, published a year after his death, Prussia granted legally recognized religious toleration to all subjects in the country. For the first time in the history of Europe, citizenship was separated from religious considerations. While Prussian innovations in this regard were great, it was in Joseph II's Austria that the Enlightenment made its most spectacular mark. Since the grim days of the Thirty Years' War, Habsburg policies in Central Europe had freely used force to convert Protestant subjects to Catholicism. In 1781 Joseph II reversed more than 150 years of policy and declared that while public worship was to remain an exclusive right of the Catholic church, Protestant minorities might now practice their faith privately. Joseph also considered issues that were of importance for traditional Catholicism, and the measures he fostered were intended to strengthen local religious practice. He created more than 500 new parishes throughout his lands to accommodate recent population growth. Like most rulers influenced by Enlightenment ideas, Joseph aimed to curtail monasticism, which by this time was seen by most intellectuals as a wasteful, even parasitical, occupation. Governments concluded that religious orders should be eliminated and their wealth dedicated to the sorts of social improvements recommended by Enlightenment thinkers. In France during the 1760s, a royal commission closed 426 religious houses. In Sicily, a number of monasteries stayed open only by honoring the government's request that they provide free schooling for the poor. But Joseph II outdid these examples and closed between 700 and 750 monasteries in his lands. The enormous sum that the Crown netted from the sale of these institutions' properties funded Joseph's new parishes as well as new medical training facilities in Vienna. The Jesuit order suffered the most under these

measures, since they had been singled out by many Enlightenment thinkers as the most manipulative of the Roman church's many groups of clerics. Already in 1758, Portugal had begun to pressure the Papacy to suppress the order, and an ever-growing chorus from other Catholic governments joined the call for the Jesuit's dissolution. In 1773, the Papacy surrendered to these demands and dissolved the Society of Jesus, the institution that had long played such a vital role in the missionizing efforts of Roman Catholicism. The Jesuits were to rise anew from this embarrassment several generations later, but never again was the order to play the key role in shaping political and governmental policies that it had in the early-modern world.

**THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND DECHRISTIANIZATION.** Eighteenth-century enlightened despots like Frederick the Great or Joseph II had sought only to reform their state churches along lines advocated by Enlightenment philosophers. But the revolutionaries who came to power in the years following the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 frequently tried to destroy the church altogether. The French revolutionaries, in particular, have often been accused of taking the rationalism of the Enlightenment to its logical conclusions. These political leaders were not trying to accomplish some pre-existing political agenda, but were caught in reacting to the moment. Like many of the events of the revolutionary years that followed 1789, they were carried away by the course of events. The same pressure of revolutionary events that prompted France's revolutionaries to execute their king and queen also led them to disestablish the Catholic church. Several generations ago, historians coined the term "dechristianization" to describe the pervasive intellectual sentiments in France in the years leading up to the Revolution. Many scholars argued that there was a discernible decline in the practice of the Christian faith in these years among intellectuals. Unfortunately, the measures that were used to demonstrate this decline were problematic. Just as in England and other parts of the Continent, Christian sensibilities were changing in France on the eve of the French Revolution, but they were not disappearing. French Catholics, in fact, were not initially opposed to the Revolution, and members of the clergy formed the majority of delegates in the National Assembly, the revolutionary body that voted first to nationalize church lands and later to dissolve monasteries. But conflicts soon arose between the Revolution and Catholics concerning the Civil Constitution of 1790. This document made the church into a department of state, and significantly, required churchmen to swear an oath of loyalty to the



The Statue of Atheism is destroyed and replaced by that of Wisdom at the French Revolution Festival of the Supreme Being on 8 July 1794. BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY.

new government as state employees. The papacy, however, refused to permit the clergy to swear the oath, and churchmen were thus forced to decide whether their loyalties lay with the Revolution or with Rome. About half of France's clergy, including some initially sympathetic to the Revolution, refused to swear, and were soon persecuted as traitors. Devout Catholics soon rose to defend these "refractory" priests, creating an underground religious movement in France in which traditional Catholic rites were practiced in violation of the Revolution's dictates. This underground became the nucleus of opposition to the new government and thus condemned Catholicism in the minds of many revolutionaries as a reactionary force. As the movement's leaders saw it, the only way for France and the Revolution to go forward was to destroy any connection with the country's Catholic past, and thus a decided policy of active dechristianization took shape. Catholicism was jettisoned as the official faith of the French Republic; the government appropriated and sold churches and their furnishings. And in one of the most curious moves, the Revolution's leaders even abandoned the traditional Christian week and calendar. In 1793, "Year One" of

the Revolution, the week was reorganized into ten days known as "decadi" and the months were given new revolutionary names. Even more important than these measures were the Revolution's efforts to replace Christianity with the practice of a new Cult of Reason, a mixture of ideas and values drawn from science and history. To counter what he took to be the atheism implicit in this Cult of Reason, Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794), the leader of the Revolution at the time, commandeered Paris' Cathedral of Notre Dame and staged an extraordinary ceremony during which he paid homage to a "Supreme Being," a projection of his own Deist sensibilities. The Cult of the Supreme Being did not catch on, nor did the Cult of Reason, and Catholicism continued to be practiced in France, albeit out of public view, until the historic relationship between France and Rome was reestablished by Napoleon in 1801.

**TOWARD THE FUTURE.** The French Revolution's spectacular attempts to escape the Christian past arose in part from the very controversial nature that the state church and its institutionalized religion had long played in early-modern Europe. While generally accepted and established as a force of state domination throughout

Europe for most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the state church was an institution that had never worn well on the sensibilities of many Europeans. As Europe had grown more religiously pluralistic in the course of these years, the established church had come to seem to both serious Christians and the religiously indifferent ever more like a relic of a distant past. But while France's revolutionaries hoped to build a new state divorced from traditional religious considerations, their deism and atheism proved to be largely out-of-step with a nation that still revered Christian teaching. In the century that followed, Christianity made a dramatic resurgence, not only in France, but also throughout Europe. The new realities of this revival meant that religion was forced to compete, as were any of a number of ideologies, for the hearts and minds of Europeans. The traditional systems of compulsion, intolerance, and indoctrination that had held such force in the states of early-modern Europe were now to have little impact in a world in which Europeans were free to believe or disbelieve as they chose.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Religion*

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### JACOBUS ARMINIUS

1560–1609

*Theologian*

**YOUTH IN A TEMPESTUOUS TIME.** Jacob Harmenszoon, who later became known as the theologian Jacobus Arminius, was born in the town of Oudewater, near Leiden in the Netherlands. His father worked in the metal trades, either as a blacksmith or a forger of armor, but he died when Jacob was still a child. Throughout the child's youth the Netherlands were plagued with civil and religious wars, a result of the Dutch movement for independence from Spain. Following Jacob's father's death, a family friend, Jacob Aemilius, took the young

boy under his wing and paid for his primary and secondary education. When Aemilius died around the time Jacob Harmenszoon was fifteen, a Dutch-born professor at the University of Marburg in Germany, Rudolf Snellius, assumed the responsibility for Harmenszoon's education. Snellius paid Jacob Harmenszoon's fees at the University of Leiden, and in 1576, when the young student entered, he began to use the name "Arminius." After completing his studies there, Arminius won the support of the city of Amsterdam to study in Geneva, then the center of Calvinist theological education in Europe. Although usually temperate and mild-mannered, Arminius attracted controversy shortly after he arrived in Geneva when he defended the French mathematician, rhetorician, and Calvinist convert Peter Ramus, a figure he had admired since his school days in Leiden. During the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres of 1572, Ramus was martyred, and in the decades that followed his works were widely reprinted and his fame spread throughout Europe. Ramus's Calvinist ideas were feared by some because he argued for a complete reorganization of universities and the elimination of Aristotelianism from the curriculum. At Geneva, Arminius's defense of Ramus seems to have ruffled some feathers, and in 1583, the young theologian left town to study in Basel. After some success there, he returned to Geneva where he seems to have ingratiated himself with Theodore Beza, then the leading theologian and successor of John Calvin in the city. In 1586, Arminius completed his studies in Geneva. He made a short trip to Italy and then returned to his native Netherlands, where he took a position as a minister in one of the churches of Amsterdam. He married and served for a time on the town council before being called in 1603 to a professorship at his alma mater, the University of Leiden.

**CONTROVERSY.** For most of his life Arminius seems to have lived the life of a quiet parson. But in his final years as a professor, the scholar became a lightning rod for controversy. Although he had originally believed in the Calvinist concept of predestination, he came to have doubts, and when he expressed them he became embroiled in a theological dispute that eventually erupted into a major controversy throughout the Dutch Calvinist church. Arminius rejected the teaching of "double predestination" that Calvin and other Genevan theologians had propounded. In this view, God not only had foreknowledge of who would and would not accept or reject his offer of salvation, he actively elected or chose those to receive his grace. Arminius rejected such a view and taught instead that God may have had foreknowledge of whether one was to be saved, but this knowledge did not



determine a human being's choice. One was free to accept God's offer of salvation or to reject it. In this way, Arminius's theology championed free will, a concept roundly rejected by Calvinist theologians of the day. At Leiden, Arminius's colleague Franciscus Gomarus led the charge against his views, developing a counter-party to the Arminians that became known as the Gomarists. Although he died only six years after accepting the post as professor of theology at Leiden, he attracted a significant following, and in the years following Arminius's death his concept of free will was taken up by a significant portion of the university's faculty and students, and was even embraced by Hugo Grotius, the greatest legal mind of the early seventeenth century. One year following his death, they issued the *Remonstrances*, a work that systematically defended his teachings and argued that they should be accepted by the Calvinist church in the Netherlands. From this time, the Arminian party in the Netherlands became known as Remonstrants. During the 1610s, the controversy continued to brew over Arminius's free-will theology, but in 1618, the Synod of Dordt, a meeting of the Dutch church's ministers and theologians roundly condemned his views as heretical. While a splinter group survived that adhered to his teachings, Dutch Calvinist orthodoxy continued to follow the vein of thinking on predestination that had first been set down by John Calvin in the sixteenth century. Arminius's views survived, however, and became even more significant in the eighteenth century, when they were adopted by John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church.

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## CORNELIUS JANSEN

1585–1638

*Bishop  
Theologian*

**EDUCATION AND THEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES.** In 1602, Cornelius Jansen entered the University of Louvain, then in the southern Netherlands (today modern Belgium). From his earliest student days he was affected by the teaching of his professor, Jacques Janson, who taught a form of theology that had been developed in the later sixteenth century by the Flemish theologian,

Michel de Bay. De Bay's works taught that humankind was utterly wicked and could not hope to achieve salvation without an infusion of God's grace. In addition, his theology stressed divine election, the idea that God chose a small number of sinners to receive his gift of grace. Such teaching was part of the traditional orthodoxy of Roman Catholicism and stretched back to the writings of the ancient bishop and theologian St. Augustine (345–430). In the overheated world of Reformation and Counter-Reformation polemic, however, the Catholic church had come at the time to favor theories of salvation that stressed human participation. Although no papal pronouncements had outlawed ancient Augustinian teachings concerning the necessity of election and divine grace, the counter-reforming Jesuit order, in particular, favored teachings that stressed free will and voluntarism, the notion that human beings might choose or reject God's salvation. Many disputes had raged between the Jesuits and those who held to a more traditional Augustinianism, but in 1611, Pope Paul V had declared further discussions of these questions off limits. His pronouncement on the matter had stressed that the teachings of both the Jesuits and those who upheld the ideas of Augustine were orthodox. Although Jansen seems to have held to the Augustinian position throughout his life, he was cautious never to be drawn publicly into this dispute.

**PARIS.** After completing his studies at Louvain, Cornelius Jansen went on to the University of Paris, and there he met his lifelong friend, Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, who later became known as the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. The two decided to work to reform theology, a field of study they believed had become populated with errors and which had sunk into a dry and arid intellectualism. Under Duvergier de Hauranne's influence, Jansen became the head of a seminary in the family's hometown of Bayonne, and in the period between 1612 and 1614, both friends devoted themselves to the study of the works of the early church. Returning to Louvain a few years later, Jansen took over a seminary there, directing the theological study of a number of candidates for the priesthood. At this time, he devoted himself more thoroughly to the study of Augustine, and was said to have read the ancient Father's work at least ten times over the next few years. Through his study he became convinced that the contemporary teaching of the Jesuits were heretical and that they mirrored those of the ancient Pelagians, who had argued that human beings had the freedom to save themselves by choosing or rejecting God's gift of grace. Soon Jansen began to work on his monumental opus, the *Augustinus*, a work he intended

to defend the ancient teachings of Augustine and to condemn the Pelagianism of the contemporary Jesuit order. Powerful forces were arrayed in support of the Jesuits, though, and so Jansen worked for many years on his project secretly.

**SUCCESS IN THE CHURCH.** Despite the unconventional nature of Jansen's religious ideas, he continued to rise in the church. His career was aided by the fact that he wrote several popular tracts critical of Protestantism. By 1635, he was appointed rector of the University of Louvain, and the following year, he was chosen bishop of Ypres. In this capacity he had a printing press installed in the bishop's palace so that he might supervise a secret printing of the *Augustinus*. Unfortunately, Jansen died only a few years later, in 1638, when an outbreak of plague struck Ypres. The publication of his famous book was undertaken by several of his friends, and in 1640, the *Augustinus* finally appeared. The character of the work was dense and learned, and it examined a number of technical points of Augustinian and Pelagian theology. It is hard to imagine now that it became a highly controversial work, but its violation of the papal decree forbidding discussion of the concepts of free will, predestination, and election meant that it was soon the center of a controversy. In France, the followers of Jansen's one-time friend, the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, saw in the work a theological underpinning for their disciplined and austere devotional movement, and they soon became known as "Jansenists." In this way, Jansen's severe Augustinian theology came to be identified with their reform movement, a movement that the Jesuits charged as being little more than a form of "crypto" or secret Calvinism within contemporary France.

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## WILLIAM LAUD

1573–1645

*Anglican Archbishop*

**EARLY CAREER.** Born to prosperous parents in 1573, William Laud attended Oxford and pursued a

career in the church and the university until his middle age. In 1608, Laud entered the service of the bishop of Rochester and from this point onward he received a number of church offices. As a priest in a royal chapel, he was noticed by James I, and soon became the confidant of the king's close friend, George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham. He also served as Buckingham's priest. In these years his influence at court steadily rose, and his opposition to Puritanism came to be reflected increasingly in James I's policies. Following the king's death, his rise continued during the reign of Charles I. By 1627, he had been appointed to the privy council, the king's private administrative body, and soon he rose to become the bishop of London. In this capacity he pursued a policy directly aimed at countering Puritanism. He aimed to limit the use of sermons in Anglican worship, to reinstate communion rails, and to require forms of vestments like the surplice that fit with his formalism. He also enforced a strict adherence to the prescriptions of the *Book of Common Prayer*. In his years as London's bishop, though, he had not yet acquired the completely uncompromising nature that was to prove fatal in the years ahead. Realizing the strength of his opposition, he sometimes temporized and allowed Puritan elements of worship and piety to exist in the capital.

**ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.** In 1633, Laud became archbishop of Canterbury, and from this point onward he exercised the dominant voice at court concerning religious matters. In the next few years he ordered that all English diocese undertake a Visitation—that is, an official inspection—to determine the state of church property and religious knowledge. He aimed successive measures to combat Puritanism, legislating against sermons, opposing the Puritan custom of Sabbath-keeping, censoring the press, and even undertaking a very public battle against the Puritan propagandist William Prynne. Prynne, an outspoken opponent of religious formalism and ceremony and an avowed opponent of the theater, had published an enormous work critical of the king, the queen, and Laud's religious policy. As part of his punishment, Laud insisted that Prynne be maimed. Actions like these further alienated Puritans and moderates alike, and Laud found few ready allies, even in those court circles that were friendly to his ambitions. At the same time, Laud undertook to solve certain problems of church finance and raise the level of benefices, that is, the incomes that Anglican priests relied upon to support themselves. During the previous generations the economic ills of the church had grown to grave proportions, and although his efforts were well intentioned, they attracted criticism as proof

of his rapaciousness. By 1639, Laud's and King Charles's plans to make the English *Book of Common Prayer* obligatory in Presbyterian Scotland precipitated the "Bishop's War," as English troops were sent to the country to try to enforce the book's liturgy against widespread and frequently violent resistance.

**CIVIL WAR AND CONDEMNATION.** The convening of Parliament in 1640, a body that had not met since 1629, brought issues with Laud's control of the church to the boiling point in England as well. By 1643, King Charles had left the capital to rally an army in support of his cause. Soon Parliament moved against Laud, accusing him of high treason in 1644. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London before finally being tried before the body in proceedings that were managed by his one-time opponent, William Prynne. Although the House of Lords resisted attempts to sentence Laud for a time, the Commons eventually succeeded in obtaining his death sentence, and on 10 January 1645, Laud was beheaded. Since that time, the ill-fated archbishop has only rarely been seen as a sympathetic figure. His attempts to establish a rigorous formalism in the Church of England arose from his own deeply felt piety. He saw elaborate ritual, in other words, as the only fitting vehicle for the common worship of God. Like the Puritans, his own religious convictions were serious, uncompromising, and arose from reasoned thought, but they proved to be out-of-step with the more austere Protestant sentiments of many English men and women at the time.

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## JOHN WESLEY

1703–1791

*Anglican clergyman*

**UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION.** John Wesley was born the son of an Anglican priest who had once been a member of a non-conforming sect. The fifteenth of

nineteen children, his family's household was heroically run on slim resources by his mother, Susanna, a figure that John was later to immortalize as a paragon of Christian piety. In 1720, he entered Oxford and when he completed his degree several years later, he decided to pursue a career in the church. After assisting his father in his parish, he eventually was ordained in 1728. In these years he also had a fellowship at Oxford, and in 1729, he returned there to fulfill the requirements of that grant. John, his brother Charles, and several others formed the "Holy Club," a group that soon was mocked by other members of the Oxford community as "Methodists." John soon assumed the lead in the "Holy Club" and under his direction it steadily grew. Its members followed a pious regimen that included frequent partaking of communion as well as fasting, disciplines that had long fallen out of favor in Protestant England. Soon, the group also began to undertake social work, visiting prisoners in the local jail and aiding them in their efforts at rehabilitation. Eventually, they added ministries to the poor in the surrounding region and founded a school that aimed to teach the poor to read.

**MINISTRY IN NORTH AMERICA.** In 1735, John Wesley was asked to undertake a mission to the colonists and Indians of North America under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, an Anglican missionary society. It was while he was on board the ship to Georgia that he made the acquaintance of a group of pious Moravians and was impressed by their demeanor and selflessness. His own efforts in the colonies, though, proved largely disastrous. At the time, Wesley's own religious convictions included a heavy dose of Anglican formalism, and his uncompromising ways irritated the locals. The unsuccessful courtship of a local woman proved his undoing, and by 1737, Wesley had returned to England. In London, he soon fell under the influence of the Moravians, who encouraged him to read Martin Luther and other classics from their tradition. He soon began attending the meetings of the Aldersgate Society, a group of Pietists that included many Moravians, but which fell under the supervision of the Church of England. At one of these meetings in 1738, he underwent a profound conversion experience, an experience prompted by Luther's commentary on the New Testament book of Romans. He became convinced of the reality of his faith and later reported that his heart was "strangely warmed" by the experience.

**FAITH ALONE.** In the months and years that followed Wesley's conversion he dedicated himself to preaching the gospel of "faith alone," the initial Reformation insight of Martin Luther that had produced

revolutionary religious changes in the sixteenth-century world. He traveled widely throughout England, visiting many religious groups and laboring to deepen their piety. One technique that he widely deployed was the adoption of the Moravian system of “bands,” these were small groups of Christians of the same sex and station in life who might counsel and encourage one another in the pursuit of perfection. At first, Wesley tried to work through the established channels of the Church of England, but resistance to his efforts proved to be so great that he began to set up his own network of Methodist societies, taking the name of derision that had once been used against him at Oxford as an emblem of pride. To promote these societies, Wesley had to travel far and wide and he became one of the most successful itinerant preachers in the history of Christianity. Hundreds, even thousands, sometimes flocked to hear his sermons, and since he was largely barred from preaching in Anglican churches, he spoke in fields, streets, indeed anywhere where an audience might be assembled, giving rise to the development known as “field preaching.” During his long life it is estimated that he may have traveled more than a quarter of a million miles and preached as many as 40,000 sermons. Both he and his brother Charles were also avid hymn writers, and while John’s output did not match his brother’s almost 8,000 hymns, he was nevertheless prolific. Wesley’s example inspired many imitators, and numerous lay people took up the charge of preaching the gospel. In this way the English Methodist societies helped to establish one of the central aims that the Pietist movements had shared since the early eighteenth century: the desire to promote a true priesthood of all believers. Wesley’s lay missionaries found their way to the North American colonies, and where he himself had been largely unsuccessful there, his Methodist Societies attracted huge numbers of Americans. During the American Revolution many of his preachers returned to England, and at the conclusion of the hostilities, Wesley faced many demands for ministers from his societies in the new United States. The bishop of London refused to ordain Methodist ministers to serve there, and so Wesley ordained the ministers himself. Such an action was not strictly legal according to the laws of the Church of England, but Wesley responded to criticism by pointing out that the Methodist Societies had always been independent of the Church of England.

**FROM METHODIST SOCIETIES TO THE METHODIST CHURCH.** In the final years of Wesley’s life the increasing division between the Methodist Societies and the Church of England grew even more evident.

John Wesley, however, remained faithful in his mission as a priest of the Anglican church until his death in 1791. In the years immediately following, though, the Methodist Societies separated from the Church of England to form the Methodist church. From this vantage point, they continued to grow in the nineteenth century. Today there are some 300,000 Methodists in the United Kingdom, but worldwide the Methodist church numbers almost 70 million members and is thus almost as large as the Anglican Communion out of which it grew. In the United States the Methodist church is more than ten times larger than the Episcopal church, the descendant of the colonial Church of England. The sheer scale of Methodism success as a Pietist movement thus is ample proof of John Wesley’s unique Christian vision for a church that might incorporate the message of salvation by faith, personal spirituality, and mechanisms for lay involvement.

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## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES *in Religion*

Antoine Arnauld, *On Frequent Communion* (1643)—This devotional work introduced the ideas of Cornelius Jansen and the Abbé de Saint-Cyran to a broader audience in seventeenth-century France and became one of the defining texts of the Jansenist movement in the country.

Johann Arndt, *True Christianity* (1605–1609)—This early seventeenth-century statement of devotional principles and practices became one of the primary sources of inspiration for the Pietist movement. In it, Arndt rejects the dull formalism of the Protestant church of his time and instead argues for the importance of meditation.

*The Authorized Version of the Bible* (1611)—This translation of the Scriptures has long been known simply as the “King James’ Version,” since its publication was approved

during the reign of the first Stuart king of England. The work is notable for the loftiness of its prose and for the profound influence it had on the development of seventeenth-century literary English.

Jakob Boehme, *Of True Repentance* (1622)—This mature statement of the author's faith became an important text in later seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Pietism. The author aimed to stir his readers to a true reformation of life and to instill the Lutheran church with an internal spirituality that might deepen the reform of doctrine that had occurred during the sixteenth-century Reformation.

John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678)—Written while its author was imprisoned for his religious dissent during 1675, this work is the greatest spiritual allegory in English. It has remained a perennial classic, read by kings and princes and humble folk alike. It tells of the spiritual progress of a simple pilgrim, facing the trials of despondency, slough, and a host of other vices, yet emerging triumphant from these trials through the help of divine grace.

Charles I, king of England, *The Book of Sports* (1677)—Through this work Archbishop Laud and the Stuart king reinstated James I's 1618 proclamation allowing Sunday sport. The short book caused a furor by sanctioning recreation on the Puritan Sabbath. Like his father, Charles explained in the text that Sunday pastimes provided a release for the populace, avoiding the far greater evils the king sensed lay in their inactivity.

Samuel Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712)—This treatise demonstrated that the New Testament revealed nothing about the key Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. As a result of its publication, the Deist Clarke was forced to answer charges of heresy from an Anglican conventicle that met to condemn his ideas.

George Fox, *Autobiography* (1694)—Compiled from the author's journals after his death, this work is one of the great spiritual autobiographies of the Western tradition. It also provides a wealth of insight into the founding of the Society of Friends, the Quakers, the movement of which Fox was the leader. The work includes a testimonial from William Penn, the Quaker founder of the English colony of Pennsylvania.

Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (1681)—As the witch hunt drew to a close, this English theologian's work warned that the belief in witches and demons could not be relinquished without also giving up one's faith in God. The ideas of Glanvill proved to be increasingly outdated in a world in which intellectuals were quickly jettisoning the concept of the supernatural.

Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte-Guyon, *Life of Madame Guyon* (1712)—One of the great early-modern spiritual autobiographies, Madame Guyon's life tells of her mystical quest for union with God. The author was a member of the French Quietist movement that bore some similarities to English Quakerism. The Quietists sought to "wait upon the Spirit of the Lord," even at the expense of neglecting their own personal salvation. Madame Guyon, like other Quietists, fell afoul of the French state and was imprisoned for more than eight years. She spent her final years under house arrest.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *The Education of the Human Race* (1780)—This treatise caused great controversy in Germany because of its argument that it was now permissible for the human race to leave revealed religion behind and progress forward to a rational understanding of faith.

John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667)—In this epic poem one of the greatest English poets of all time defended his Puritan religious beliefs. The work was published during the early years of the Restoration period, when Puritanism faced increasing persecution from Parliament and the Church of England.

Blaise Pascal, *Provincial Letters* (1656)—These fictional and highly satirical letters between a Jesuit and his overseer or "provincial" helped to revive the Jansenist movement in France during the second half of the seventeenth century. Their biting humor made them immediately popular and helped to tarnish the Jesuits with the reputation of being champions of intolerance.

Philip Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (1675)—In this key work of Lutheran Pietism, the author stressed the importance of meditation as a part of Christian devotion and criticized Germany's government officials and clergy for their dry and arid management of the church.

Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (1733)—This work has since the eighteenth century become known as the Deist "Bible." In it, Tindal rejected the notion of Christianity as a "revealed" religion and instead promoted the idea that everything that was moral in Christianity might be reasoned from the laws of nature alone. The book prompted more than 150 rebuttals in the years that followed its publication.

John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696)—One of the most important works of the early Deist movement in England, this book argued that whatever is "repugnant" to the human mind as reasonable should not be believed. Toland had in mind the many miracles that had traditionally been used to justify and support Christianity.

John Wesley, *Journal* (1735–1790)—The founder of the Methodists began this record of his spiritual quest in 1735, before his great conversion experience. He continued to keep his reflections up to date until the year

before his death. The work provides an unparalleled view into the world of eighteenth-century Pietism as well as the opposition that these Christians faced to their message from more Orthodox quarters.

chapter 8  
eight

THEATER

*Philip M. Soergel*

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	394	Pierre Corneille . . . . .	451
OVERVIEW . . . . .	398	Nell Gwyn . . . . .	452
TOPICS		DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	452
The Commercial Theater in Early		SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY	
Seventeenth-Century England . . . . .	401	DOCUMENTS	
Court Spectacle in Stuart England . . . . .	410	<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>	
Theater in Golden-Age Spain . . . . .	411	<i>A Royal Investigation</i> (report to King James I	
The French Stage at the Beginning of the		regarding an offensive play) . . . . .	408
Baroque . . . . .	414	<i>Parliament Closes the Theaters</i> (ordinance	
Neoclassicism in Seventeenth-Century Paris . . . . .	416	issued by a Puritan Parliament that all	
The Legacy of Corneille, Racine, and		theaters in London be closed). . . . .	409
Molière . . . . .	418	<i>An Offensive Comedy</i> (excerpt from Molière's	
Theater and Stagecraft in Italy . . . . .	422	play, <i>Tartuffe</i> , which offended clergy) . . . . .	421
Restoration Drama in England . . . . .	425	<i>Tense Moments at the Theater</i> (entry in the	
The Hanoverian Theater . . . . .	431	diary of Pepys concerning a play that	
Central Europe Comes of Age . . . . .	436	may have been offensive) . . . . .	427
The French Enlightenment and Drama . . . . .	439	<i>Observations on Mrs. Siddons</i> (a review by	
The Rise of Revolutionary Sentiment in		Hunt of the acting of Sarah Siddons) . . . . .	435
France and Its Impact on the Theater . . . . .	444	<i>English Drama and German Tastes</i> (excerpt	
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE		from a letter by Lessing commenting on	
Aphra Behn . . . . .	448	German theater) . . . . .	438
Pedro Calderón de la Barca . . . . .	449	<i>Voltaire on Comedy</i> (excerpt from Voltaire's	
		<i>Philosophical Letters</i> ) . . . . .	442

## IMPORTANT EVENTS *in Theater*

- 1598 The Chamberlain's Men, the acting troupe of which William Shakespeare is an important member, takes up residence in the Globe Theatre in London.

King Philip II dies in Spain. During the reigns of his successors, Philip III (r. 1598–1621) and Philip IV (r. 1621–1665), a Golden Age of literature and theater will develop in the country.

- 1600 Pedro Calderón de la Barca, who will become one of Spain's greatest playwrights, is born in Spain.

- 1603 Queen Elizabeth I dies in England and is succeeded by King James of Scotland, who will continue to defend the theater against Puritan detractors who claim it is immoral.

The London acting troupe, the Chamberlain's Men, is taken under royal patronage and becomes the "King's Men."

- 1605 Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones stage the first of their many masques for the Stuart court, *The Masque of Blackness*. It is widely admired for the ingenuity of its costumes and stage design.

- 1606 Pierre Corneille, one of France's greatest playwrights, is born at Rouen.

Ben Jonson is brought before the London Consistory, a religious court of the Church of England, and forced to defend himself against charges that he is irreligious.

- 1611 William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the last of the great playwright's dramas, is first performed in London.

- 1616 William Shakespeare dies at his home in Stratford-upon-Avon.

- 1618 The Thirty Years' War breaks out in Central Europe. This conflict's devastation will have a dampening effect on the theater and other forms of cultural life in the region during much of the seventeenth century.

- 1622 The great comic dramatist Jean-Baptiste Molière is born at Paris.

- 1623 The first folio edition of Shakespeare's collected plays is published in London.

- 1635 Lope de Vega, author of some 1,800 plays and one of the greatest of all Spanish playwrights, dies at Madrid.

- 1637 Corneille's *Le Cid* is performed in Paris and causes controversy for its suggestion that romantic passion might be a human emotion as important as familial duty. Over the coming years, the popularity of this playwright's tragedies will establish inflexible canons for the genre in France and inspire a great age of tragic drama.

Ben Jonson, who was the greatest Jacobean playwright after Shakespeare, dies in London.

- 1639 Jean Racine, perhaps France's greatest seventeenth-century dramatist, is born.

- 1640 Aphra Behn, the first English woman to earn a living by writing for the stage, is born.

- 1642 London's theaters are closed as civil war breaks out in England between Puritans and Royalists.

- 1643 Jean-Baptiste Molière becomes a member of the *Illustre-Théâtre*, a dramatic troupe in Paris.



- 1647 The English Parliament reiterates its decrees against the theater, now promising swift punishment to anyone who performs or watches a drama.
- 1648 The Peace of Westphalia concludes the Thirty Years' War. In the second half of the seventeenth century, theater and the other arts will begin to revive in Central Europe.
- The Puritan government in England repeats its ban on all theatrical performances. Despite these prohibitions an "underground" theater continues to flourish. Performances of itinerant "drolls," or comics, as well as dramas staged in the homes of England's nobles become particularly popular.
- 1658 Molière's play *The Amorous Doctor* is performed before King Louis XIV to great success. The author's star will soon rise at court, and in his later years, Molière will produce a number of successful comedies for the king.
- 1660 The Stuart monarchy is restored to power in England; a great age of theater will soon begin in the period known as the Restoration (1660–1688). For the first time in the country's history, women will be allowed to perform in theatrical productions.
- 1662 Molière's play *School for Wives* is performed for the first time in Paris and causes a scandal because of the author's amorality and willingness to satirize any and all situations.
- 1663 The Drury Lane Theatre opens in London under a royal charter from Charles II.
- 1664 Molière's play *Tartuffe* is performed for the first time, and engenders the wrath of France's clergy because of its attacks on clerical hypocrisy. The play is suppressed and thus begins a long period in which Molière is persecuted by the clergy.
- 1666 Nell Gwyn, the daughter of a madam, reigns as the greatest actress on the London stage. She will rise to become King Charles II's mistress.
- The Great Fire destroys the vast majority of London's houses, commercial buildings, and public theaters.
- 1671 Aphra Behn's first play, *The Forced Marriage*, is staged in London.
- 1677 John Dryden's *All For Love* is staged in London. The work is a tragedy, a form not generally favored in the comedy-loving period of the Restoration.
- 1680 Louis XIV combines several theatrical companies to form the Comédie-Française in Paris. This venerable institution will become a Parisian dramatic landmark during the coming century.
- 1687 The actress and courtesan Nell Gwyn dies in London, and is buried at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.
- 1688 The Glorious Revolution sends the Stuart King James II into exile, and brings King William of Holland and Queen Mary, James's daughter, to power. The great age of Restoration drama soon draws to a close under the less supportive atmosphere of these rulers.
- 1689 The female playwright Aphra Behn dies in London.
- 1698 Jeremy Collier publishes *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, a work that criticizes the conventions of the Restoration theater that had flourished in the reigns of the later Stuart kings.
- 1700 John Dryden, the greatest poet and playwright of the Restoration era, dies.
- 1711 Georg Frideric Handel's first English opera, *Rinaldo*, is performed at the King's Theatre in Haymarket, London.

- c. 1716 The first playhouse is established in British North America at Williamsburg.
- 1726 François-Marie Arouet, better known to history as Voltaire, is forced to spend more than two years in exile in London after having challenged a high-ranking noble to a duel. While there, he comes to admire the dramas of Shakespeare and of English playwrights in general.
- 1728 John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* is first performed in London. The work uses spoken drama and musical ballads to communicate its action, and is the precursor to many modern British and American musicals.
- 1729 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a great German playwright and poet, is born in Saxony. Lessing's lively and realistic plays will help to develop the German theater, weaning it away from its long service to French and Italian models.
- 1730 The North American colonies' second playhouse is established at Charleston, South Carolina. In the coming years several theaters will also be established in New York.
- 1731 In London, George Lillo's *The London Merchant* deals with middle-class life, reflecting the mid-eighteenth century taste for bourgeois dramas.
- 1732 Voltaire completes his *Zaïre* and the play is performed in Paris. An heir to the tradition of French seventeenth-century classicism, Voltaire will expand the boundaries of traditional French genres by dealing with moralistic themes and exotic historical events that have not typically been treated by playwrights to this time.
- 1733 The great actor Charles Macklin makes his debut at the Drury Lane Theatre in London in the play *The Recruiting Officer*.
- 1737 The Licensing Act, an order of Parliament, is passed. The act is intended to establish more effective censorship over the London stage and to discourage the establishment of new theaters.
- 1743 Fernando Galli Bibiena, a noted Italian stage designer whose complex and imaginative stagings of productions influenced the Baroque theater throughout Europe, dies in Italy.
- 1746 Carlo Galli Bibiena, son of the great Fernando Galli Bibiena, moves to Germany. Over the next four decades he will travel throughout much of Europe, helping to popularize Italian stage design and settings throughout the continent.
- 1747 After approaching bankruptcy, the Drury Lane Theatre reopens under the capable direction of David Garrick.
- 1751 The publication of the *Encyclopédie* begins in Paris under the editorship of Denis Diderot and Jean D'Alembert. The work will exercise a powerful influence on taste in drama and the arts in the second half of the eighteenth century, not only in Paris, but also throughout Europe.
- 1755 Lessing's play *Miss Sarah Sampson* is first performed in Germany. In this work Lessing tries to develop a uniquely German kind of tragedy that is not influenced by French examples.
- 1757 Denis Diderot's play *The Natural Son* is produced at Paris. In this work Diderot attempts to put into practice his theory of dramatic realism.
- 1769 Jacques-Angé Gabriel designs and supervises the building of a court theater for King Louis XV at Versailles.
- David Garrick stages a jubilee celebration of the works of William Shakespeare in the dramatist's hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 1773 Oliver Goldsmith's brilliant comedy *She Stoops to Conquer* is first performed in London. The work is one of the only English plays from the eighteenth century still performed in modern times.

- 1776 The famous Teatro alla Scala is erected in Milan, Italy. The theater can accommodate 2,000 people and crowds flock to the site to see La Scala's operas, then the most popular kind of theatrical production in Italy.
- 1782 The great English actress Sarah Siddons scores her first major London success in a production of *The Fatal Marriage* at the Drury Lane Theatre.
- 1789 The great actor Charles Macklin retires from the stage in England.
- 1791 The city of Paris, once a theatrical backwater, now has more than 30 playhouses.

## OVERVIEW *of Theater*

**RISE OF PROFESSIONAL THEATER.** In the history of drama and the theater, the seventeenth century marked the gradual acceptance and solidification of trends that had begun in the later Renaissance. In the later Middle Ages most dramas had been religious in nature, and had often been performed in conjunction with the celebration of major church feasts and holidays. During the sixteenth century religious drama had come to be rejected in much of Northern Europe, as Protestants and reform-minded Catholics found the teachings and license of these productions increasingly unacceptable. The great rambling mystery plays of the later Middle Ages, which had often been staged over many days and weeks, were by the second half of the sixteenth century prohibited in both England and France. In the Protestant regions of Germany, too, the traditional dramas had ceased to be performed, and were now being replaced by a polemical theater that defended the cause of the Reformation. Only in Spain and in the Catholic regions of Central Europe were religious dramas similar to those of the later Middle Ages to survive with a measure of vitality in the seventeenth century. But as religious drama faded from the scene, a new professional theater, licensed by state governments and often heavily censored, was just beginning to take the place of the largely amateur and religiously-oriented productions that had provided popular entertainment in the later Middle Ages. Here audiences paid modest admission fees to see plays that dealt largely with secular themes, moral dilemmas, and historical subjects. The growth of this new commercial theater was by 1600 most advanced in England and Spain, where ranks of newly minted playwrights churned out a steady stream of comedies and tragedies intended to entertain a broad audience that stretched from the urban poor and middling classes to the educated elite. While not all the new works that were performed in London, Madrid, or Seville—the home of Europe’s most precocious early seventeenth-century theaters—were of a high quality, the age gave birth to a number of authors

of genius, including William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and Ben Jonson (1572–1635) in England; and Lope de Vega (1562–1635) and Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681) in Spain. The breadth of the new audience these figures addressed now seems remarkable. In London, for example, it is estimated that as much as ten percent of the city’s population was in the theaters on any of the six weekdays on which performances were permitted. Many patrons attended the theater more than once each week, since the cost of admission to the pit, that is, the ground floor of London’s theaters, was only a penny or two, the cheapest form of leisure entertainment available in the capital.

**DEVELOPMENTS IN FRANCE.** While the growth of a commercial stage was well advanced in London and the Spanish cities by the early seventeenth century, the emergence of a professional theater in France continued to lag behind these centers at the same time. As a result of the Wars of Religion (1562–1598), France entered the seventeenth century with a beleaguered economy and an embattled government and domestic scene that still faced considerable threats from religious disunity and civil conflict. During the first decade of the seventeenth century the measures of King Henri IV (r. 1594–1610) succeeded in re-establishing a modicum of order and stability throughout much of France, and a professional theater began to flourish in Paris. At the same time, royal monopolies awarded in the later Middle Ages to the Confraternity of the Passion, a group of young artisans who were junior members of the city’s guild, still allowed for only one theater in the capital. When the confraternity’s religious dramas were outlawed in 1548, the group began to stage farces and other secular fare at their theater in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, a relatively small indoor house that could accommodate far fewer patrons than the great outdoor arenas of London or Madrid. During the first decades of the seventeenth century the theater in the Hôtel de Bourgogne began to prosper, particularly so with the crowd-pleasing and often violent, bawdy works that the playwright Alexandre Hardy (c. 1569–1632 or 1633) created for the troupe that resided there. The size of the theatrical audience in Paris was always modest when compared against the age of Shakespeare in London or of Lope de Vega in Spain, although the influence that the Parisian stage exerted over European drama generally was far greater than the mere size suggests. Between 1630 and 1680 France produced several playwrights of great genius, and its classically inspired theater was widely imitated throughout Europe. It was Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), Louis XIII’s chief minister, who first devoted significant attention to develop-

ing the theater in Paris. Eventually, Richelieu imported theatrical architects and stage designers from Italy, spawning a revolution in theater design in France that included such elements as moveable stage scenery and the small, horseshoe-shaped court theater; the intimate interiors of these enclosed spaces were notable for their improved capacities to carry the sound of actors' voices as well as their greatly enhanced sight lines. As French courtly culture came increasingly to be imitated throughout much of Northern Europe in later seventeenth-century states, the styles of theaters that were built in many European courts imitated these French and Italian examples. Richelieu was also an avid fan of the drama itself and he believed in the theater's power, not only to ennoble its audiences, but to support the absolute authority of the state. In the 1630s he patronized a group of French playwrights that followed this "party line," and although he died in 1642, his efforts were to be continued by those ministers who followed him.

**CHARACTER OF THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH STAGE.** Among the most important of the figures that Richelieu supported was Pierre Corneille (1606–1684), a dramatist who perfected the use of the laws of unities that were then being discussed among French literary theorists and playwrights. The laws of unities were a set of canons derived from Italian humanist studies of Aristotle and they taught that all action in a play needed to be confined to a single plot that occurred on a single day in a single place. The theater that such notions fostered in France was austere and restrained, and not every dramatist that tried writing works in this style succeeded. In the careers of Pierre Corneille, Jean Racine (1639–1699), and Jean-Baptiste Molière (1622–1673), the French theater produced three figures that were more than equal to the challenge. The tragedies of Corneille and Racine and the brilliant but farcical comedies of Molière thus helped to fix the notion of classical unities in French drama as normative, and the rules, although sometimes questioned, survived in the French theater for much of the rest of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While the brilliant works that France's triumvirate of masters produced had a wide impact on theatrical developments throughout Europe, the French theater of the seventeenth century was not a popular success, but an institution by and large patronized by the aristocracy. French drama was not a naturalistic mirror of the world, but a highly stylized and rigid theater where all action was conveyed through beautiful, but inflexible patterns of verse. The verse favored by most French playwrights was the twelve-syllable Alexandrine form, noted for the noble quality of the sounds it produced. Simi-

larly, the members of a French dramatic troupe were not expected to "act" their parts like modern actors, but to declaim or recite their verses in ways that heightened the audiences' understanding of the intellectual meanings of the lines. While such methods appealed to an audience that craved literary entertainment, they had little popular appeal. As the theater blossomed in Paris in the years between 1630 and 1680, no theatrical troupe in the city survived without rich grants from the crown; when King Louis' early love of the theater began to fade after 1680, the brilliant achievements of the age of Corneille, Racine, and Molière faded also. By 1700, only one theatrical troupe, the royally licensed Comédie-Française, still entertained Parisian audiences. The toll of France's involvement in international wars, the king's own increasing piety, and the rising popularity of opera in Paris resulted in a constriction of the brief, but brilliant episode of greatness that the French theater had experienced in the half century following 1630.

**THE CLOSING OF THE THEATERS IN ENGLAND.** Even as a new age of theatrical achievement gathered strength in France, developments were moving in an opposite direction in England. Since Elizabethan times, the stunning rise of the English theater on the London scene had proven worrisome to the country's small but growing faction of Puritans. Puritanism, a reform movement derived largely from the ideas of the French Protestant leader John Calvin, upheld a sobriety in life and aimed to rid the Church of England of all vestiges of Catholicism. Puritan ministers and writers well understood that the origins of drama lay in the religious theater that had been so common throughout the late-medieval church, and during the first decades of the seventeenth century, their distaste for the stage steadily increased, even as theater grew to be a more popular pastime in England's capital. By 1630 Puritan leaders were increasingly coming to loggerheads with a crown that avidly supported the development of the theater and which used lavish spectacles, filled with many theatrical elements, as forms of political propaganda. A little more than a decade later as the Puritan movement came to dominate England's Parliament, Puritans responded by ordering the closing of all London's theaters. Except for a few loopholes in Puritan regulations that allowed some private dramas to be staged in houses and schools, the theater largely disappeared from English life during the long years of the civil wars that followed. And in the Commonwealth period that followed the execution of Charles I in 1649, most of those who had been active on London's stage in the previous generation either fled the country or took up new occupations. Thus when Charles I's son, Charles II, returned to resume

the throne in 1660 and allowed the reopening of stages in London, the theater had to be largely created anew.

**THE RESTORATION.** In the first few years of the English Restoration period (1660–1688) the newly licensed theatrical troupes in London performed works drawn from the earlier English repertory, adapting them to the contemporary demands and tastes of audiences. In time, though, the Restoration stage acquired its own new dramatists, many of whom were courtiers and sophisticated amateurs well aware of the light style of Molière that was flourishing in France at the same time. Both the court and London playwrights came in these years to favor similar light comedies, but where the French Molière’s works were merely suggestive or “naughty,” Restoration tastes in England frequently evidenced an appetite for the bawdy, that is, for broad sexual humor. In time a new genre of “comedy of manners” developed in which the exploits and foibles of aristocratic society were mocked and satirized without ultimately being questioned. While many of those who wrote for the Restoration stage evidenced a sophisticated wit and a great mastery over the English language, only the works of John Dryden (1631–1700) have continued to be consistently studied since the time of the Restoration, although contemporary and ongoing research continues to unearth gems of comedy and tragedy that were written and performed in the period and then were soon forgotten. In at least one crucial aspect the legacy of the Restoration stage represented a loss for England. Prompted by the popularity of the new French- and Italian-styled theater buildings, the comedies of the period now came to be performed exclusively in smaller enclosed spaces, making the cost of admission beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest members of London’s elite. Unlike the richly variegated audience that had existed for plays in both the Tudor and Stuart times, the theater of Restoration England was in many ways more similar to the institution that was flourishing at the same time in France: sophisticated fare performed before small, wealthy audiences. At the same time, Charles II’s reestablishment of the theater departed from previous customs by allowing women to perform for the first time in England’s history. Actresses like Nell Gwyn (1650–1687) captivated London’s high society, and Gwyn herself capitalized upon her position to become the mistress to the king. Gwyn’s actual theatrical career was short, but other women made the theater a lifelong profession; the personal lives of some did little to dispel the notion that the theater was immoral among those who opposed the institution. It was during the Restoration period, too, that the first female playwright, Aphra Behn

(1640–1689), wrote professionally for the stage. Although Behn’s controversial career did not immediately inspire droves of women to imitate her example, she nevertheless opened a door through which other women were to follow in the next decades.

**RISE OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS DRAMA.** The exile of Charles II’s successor, James II, had far-reaching implications for the stage in England, although these implications were slow to be realized. James himself was a Catholic convert, and although he had upheld the Church of England’s position in the country, he also set himself squarely behind the cause of Catholic toleration in England, introducing measures that irritated the country’s Anglican nobles. In 1688, these powerful figures forced James into exile and invited his daughter Mary, a Protestant, and her husband the Dutch prince William of Orange to assume the throne. During the Restoration period (the reigns of Charles II and James II), bold sexual humor and coarse language had flourished on the London stage, but during the reigns of William and Mary and their successors, the Hanoverian monarchs, the theater grew more staid and conservative. Although the Puritan party had largely been discredited in England during the struggles of the English Civil Wars and Commonwealth, moralists in Britain continued to decry the lax morality of the theater. After 1700, a growing number of playwrights produced works on themes that upheld conventional morality. This trend continued throughout the eighteenth century in London as new measures to confine and censor the theater continued. As a result of the Licensing Act of 1737, for example, all new plays had to be submitted to the government for approval before being performed, and dramas were confined to only a few theaters in the capital. For a time, such measures, which were intended to combat criticism of the government, discouraged great authors from writing for the theater. By the mid-eighteenth century, an increasing number of playwrights had begun to write novels rather than dramas, as a new market in fiction steadily expanded throughout the country. The government’s attempts to stamp out unsanctioned theaters, which were popping up throughout the capital, produced some unexpected results. Licensing requirements fed the development of England’s “music hall” theaters—cheap venues for the production of song, dance, and short dramatic skits. And although the government attempted to censor content and limit the growth of the London theater, England’s Hanoverian kings at the same time chartered a number of royal companies in the country’s provincial cities. In this way, theater flourished, not just in London, but throughout England, Scotland,

Wales, and Ireland. The emergence of these provincial theaters provided a training ground, a recognized career path for actors and actresses interested in developing their craft before venturing to London, the still undisputed center of drama in England. The eighteenth century, it has often been said, was a great age of the novel, and not of drama. While few of the English plays written at the time stand up beside those of Shakespeare, Jonson, or Dryden, the period saw the birth of the phenomenon of the great actor. Figures like David Garrick, Charles Macklin, and Sarah Siddons captivated the imagination of the age, and attracted an ever-larger audience to the theater. While the quality of the contemporary plays that were being written may have been of a lesser standard, revivals of Shakespeare and other great English classics became in this period a permanent part of the theatrical scene, and audiences enjoyed the new high standard of naturalistic acting that the greatest of the eighteenth century's actors cultivated.

#### THE BOURGEOIS DRAMA ON THE CONTINENT.

Theater in France may have fallen on a fallow period during the later years of Louis XIV's reign, but in the years that followed his death, the stage underwent a dramatic resurgence. During the first half of the reign of Louis XV (r. 1715–1774), the controversial Voltaire (1694–1778) dominated French developments in tragedy. Voltaire's verse style continued in the paths laid down by Corneille and Racine, and while he upheld the laws of the unities, he treated a greater range of exotic subjects, celebrating the role that human reason should play in society and calling into question traditional Christian morality. Subject to frequent imprisonment and eventually to exile from Paris, his controversial career emboldened other French Enlightenment thinkers to build upon his example. By mid-century an increasing number of Enlightenment philosophers in France were advocating the development of a new theater that might treat real-life situations and the concerns of the bourgeoisie, which now comprised a large portion of the audience in Parisian productions as well as those in the French provinces. Chief among the exponents of this new realistic theater was Denis Diderot (1713–1784), a playwright and critical theorist who exerted a profound influence on the second half of the eighteenth century in France, not so much by his heavy-handed dramas, but by his editorship of the *Encyclopédie*, the massive, multi-volume project of Enlightenment thinkers that shaped tastes in the arts at the time. The Enlightenment's advocacy of a middle-class, or bourgeois, drama spread elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Germany where the great playwright Gotthold Ephraim

Lessing (1729–1781) used the new form to cultivate the development of a national theater. In France itself, a number of dramatists tried their hand at the new form in comedies and tragedies, but no one succeeded in producing a greater sensation with the new style than Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais (1732–1799) with his wildly funny satires, *The Barber of Seville* (1775) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (1784). These dramas' mocking satire of aristocratic privilege, the church, and many of the institutions of eighteenth-century life exposed the revolutionary potential that might lie in theater to effect social change. Thus the ideas of the Enlightenment, with their emphasis on reform according to the dictates of human reason, addressed the rising demands of the middle classes for an art that was both relevant and entertaining. During the French Revolution that soon followed, the Enlightenment's championship of greater liberty produced massive changes in the theater of the late eighteenth century.

## TOPICS in Theater

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### THE COMMERCIAL THEATER IN EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

**THE RELIGIOUS LEGACY.** In the final quarter of the sixteenth century commercial theater experienced a sudden rise in popularity in England's capital of London. The new theaters were run by professionals, an unprecedented development in the country, since all of the elaborate medieval religious dramas had been staged by amateur actors. By 1600, Londoners and visitors to the capital could take their pick of a number of daily performances, staged in both outdoor public playhouses as well as in new "private theaters" that catered to a more elite clientele. Although England's new commercial theaters staged plays that made use of religious symbols and imagery to convey their ideas, the themes treated in the many plays staged in the capital's theaters were secular, a fact that arose from the country's religious Reformation. Around 1500, the most popular dramatic performance in England had been the great mystery cycles, performed in conjunction with the celebration of religious holidays, as well as the morality plays, which also treated religious themes. Growing criticism of these forms of drama in the first half of the sixteenth century from religious reformers had eventually resulted in the suppression of religious drama by the mid-sixteenth

century. In the years that followed, the theater became a vehicle for religious propaganda, sometimes with undesirable results as audiences sometimes rioted in the wake of a particularly vigorous play that did not align with their own religious convictions. As a consequence, regulations enacted in 1590 stipulated that plays must not treat religious subjects or controversies. Such requirements were also a concession to the many Puritans who lived in and around London at the time who found the theater morally degenerate and its staging of biblical and religious themes particularly objectionable. Puritanism, a form of Protestantism inspired in England by the ideas of the French Reformer John Calvin, rejected theater for a number of reasons. First, the Puritans knew well that the origins of drama lay in the great mystery cycles that had been performed in conjunction with church festivals in the later Middle Ages. Thus they attacked the theater as an art form whose origins lay in “popery,” the term the Puritans used to discredit all cultural features of medieval religion. Further, the Puritans advocated a sober and godly attitude toward everything in life and they came to detest the light comedies and other fare performed on London’s stages as an affront to Christian living. A certain disreputability accrued to the theater as well, since to skirt London’s regulations troupes often built their theaters at the edges of the city in quarters that were known to be haunts of thieves and prostitutes. Thus although Elizabeth I and her Stuart successors were to tolerate it, and in many cases to support its development, the theater remained controversial nonetheless in seventeenth-century England.

**LEGACY OF THE RENAISSANCE.** When compared to the types of theater that flourished in many other parts of Europe, England’s brand of entertainment was unusual for a number of reasons. During the fifteenth century the cultivated Renaissance courts of Italy had tried to revive ancient drama, and a number of authors had begun to fashion their plays according to the five-act structure that had flourished in the comedies of the Latin writers Plautus and Terence. In the most sophisticated circles, study of the ancient masters had given rise to vigorous attempts to recreate the ancient theater, and playhouses modeled on ancient examples had been just one of the consequences of the new fascination with Antiquity. By the mid-sixteenth century the elite fascination with antique drama produced in Italy and somewhat later in France a number of experiments in writing and staging tragedies based on Greek models. The appeal of many of the plays that resulted from these experiments had always been quite limited since the complex allusions with which they were filled and the structures upon

which they were based were not fixed in native dramatic traditions but in historical cultures that were, by and large, foreign to most audiences. Thus these experiments in reviving ancient comedy and tragedy—which were largely influenced by the culture of Renaissance humanism—rarely flourished outside court circles and small groups of cultivated elites. England’s relative isolation from these currents of theatrical production, as well as the financial realities of the London stage—which depended on ticket sales rather than royal patronage for financial stability—meant that the influences it derived from the culture of the Renaissance were always relatively slight. The greatest of England’s Elizabethan and seventeenth-century dramatists were, to be sure, men of learning, and many were certainly aware of the experiments in dramatic productions that had occurred over the previous generations in Continental Europe. Yet the plays that they wrote in great profusion in the final decades of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had to be pitched to a “middle-brow” audience. Thus rather than treating obscure subjects drawn from classical Antiquity or adopting the strict conventions of classical drama, England’s playwrights chose themes that were well known to their audiences, or they wrote about subjects in ways that had a more universal appeal. This tendency can be seen in the great works of the eminent playwrights Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) and William Shakespeare (1564–1616). Marlowe was one of the best educated of the late Tudor-era dramatists. He had taken the bachelor’s and master’s degrees at the University of Cambridge before embarking on his career as a writer for the London stage. In his great tragedy *Tamburlaine the Great*, Marlowe pioneered the use of blank, or unrhymed verse, a departure from the conventions of the day that relied on elaborate rhyme schemes. The use of blank verse allowed Marlowe’s characters to speak with great naturalness and propelled the action of his drama forward in ways that held his audiences spellbound. In his slightly later *Dr. Faustus*, the dramatist treated elevated themes—the personal nature of evil, the quest for worldly success, and the damning consequences of pride—yet he did so in a way that could be understood by both the educated and uneducated classes. For instance, he relied on the traditional conventions of the late-medieval morality play rather than the more foreign structures of Greek tragedy. In this way his audiences found familiar signposts in his dramas that allowed them to follow themes and incidents that were nonetheless presented with considerable sophistication.

**LEGAL REALITIES.** Despite his ability to stage elevated themes and complex incidents in ways that did



not sacrifice intellectual depth, Christopher Marlowe's career as a writer for the London stage also exemplified the dangers that existed in this choice of profession. In the years immediately preceding his death, Marlow repeatedly answered charges of immorality and religious heresy, and his death in a barroom brawl was most likely a planned execution, brought on by his unpopular religious opinions as well as his prominence on the London theatrical scene. The sudden rise of the English commercial theater—a phenomenon made possible only in 1574 by the crown's decision to allow public, week-day performances in London—was undoubtedly popular, but controversial all the same. In the city of London, public officials feared the theater as a forum that might foment rebellion and immorality, and the town's growing cadre of Puritan ministers also detested the stage as a violation of Old Testament prohibitions against idolatry. The town's first public playhouses thus were situated, not inside the area of the city controlled by London's town government, but in fringe zones known as the "Liberties," where the municipal government held no authority. It was in these areas that dubious trades, prostitution, and other morally suspect enterprises had long flourished, and as the theater took up residence in these zones, it did little to dispel the dubious notoriety that already accrued to the entire dramatic enterprise. And while the crown tolerated London's stages, and even supported their cause against the municipal government, the monarchy promised censorship and persecution to those playwrights and actors who skirted too close to the edge of what was permissible. A distinguished lineage of playwrights in Tudor and Stuart times fell afoul of the law, including Ben Jonson (1572–1637), Thomas Nashe (1567–1601), Thomas Middleton (1580–1627), and Philip Massinger (1583–1640). Ben Jonson, the greatest London dramatist in the years after Shakespeare's retirement from writing for the theater, was imprisoned on a number of occasions; his association with the ill-fated production of *The Isle of the Dogs* (1597) landed Jonson in jail, and London's theaters were subsequently closed for a number of months. While Jonson was later released for his role in the "seditious" play, his partner in the enterprise, Thomas Nashe, fled to the Continent and died in exile. The whims of royal fancy and displeasure, which continued to blow hot and cold during the reign of the Stuarts, made play writing and acting hazardous, and the profession was often financially untenable. Once successful on the London stage, William Shakespeare invested in a brewery and other country enterprises to ensure that he had a safe and sustained income. He likely did so to prevent the very same problems suffered by his fellow professionals Jonson and

Nashe, and to protect himself against any future theatrical closures.

**OTHER PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.** By the time of James I's accession as king of England in 1603, the city of London's major commercial theaters were well established landmarks on the capital's scene, and despite sporadic problems with censorship and the imprisonment of playwrights, theater was flourishing quite vigorously. The first of London's commercial playhouses had been built in 1576 by a partnership of John Brayne and the actor James Burbage and was called merely the "Theater." Located in suburban Whitechapel, its stage consisted of three galleries superimposed on top of each other, an attempt to imitate the ancient Roman styles of stages that were becoming better known throughout Europe at the time as a result of humanistic research. Besides its covered stage, however, the Theater, like most of London's public playhouses, was exposed to the open air. Performances were thus held during daylight hours. The success of the Theater was soon followed by a string of new playhouses, including the Curtain founded one year later on a site close by the Theater, the Rose, the Swan, and finally, the famous Globe, a theater that was, in fact, moved from an earlier location north of the river Thames. These last three institutions were built, not to the northeast of the city of London in Whitechapel, but on the south bank of the River Thames, establishing a small theater district that persisted there for a number of years. At this early stage in the theater's development in England, men and young boys performed all roles since women were not allowed on the stage. London had several "boy troupes" at this time which were particularly popular among the audiences who visited London's "private theaters"—more expensive venues that were enclosed to the elements and consequently provided a smaller and more intimate setting for drama. These stages were candlelit, and thus performances could be held at night. There were eight of these private theaters in London before Puritan measures enacted in 1642 forced all the capital's theaters to close. The evidence suggests that, despite their higher price of admission, the private theaters became more popular and profitable than the large open-air public facilities throughout the reign of James I and Charles I. Although their patrons may have initially been drawn from higher echelons of society, the private theaters of London in this period were anything but luxurious. Poorly ventilated, and filled with bleacher-style seating, they afforded each patron a space only about eighteen inches wide on which to sit. The presence of hundreds of patrons in these cramped spaces, too, must have been particularly uncomfortable in the

summer months when the atmosphere within the private theaters was quite close and the ventilation inadequate. Despite these hardships, many seem to have preferred the smaller houses, and the old arena-styled theaters became associated in many people's minds with lower-class disorderliness. Like most theatrical venues in Europe, all of London's theaters at the time continued to be subject to periodic closures when epidemics struck or during periods of royal mourning.

**TROUPES AND PLAYWRIGHTS.** The new theaters were thoroughly commercial ventures, although many of the troupes augmented their incomes by performing at court. Actors founded some of the city's playhouses after receiving backing from an investor. In this type of arrangement, the profits of the venture were split between commercial backers and the actors of the troupe. In other arrangements the troupe owned its own props and venue, and the profits of a production were split between the troupe members. And in still a third kind of arrangement, many troupes took up residence in theaters that were owned by others, splitting the profits of their productions between the house and the performers. Licensing regulations in effect in England since the 1570s insisted that a troupe of actors had to be supervised by and affiliated with a member of the nobility, and the titles that acting troupes adopted thus honored their noble patrons. The patron of the Chamberlain's Men, the troupe of which Shakespeare was a member, was Queen Elizabeth's Lord Chamberlain Henry Carey. When the company came under the patronage of King James I in 1603, the troupe renamed itself the King's Men. In this way the titles of many troupes changed over time. Perhaps no company ever changed its name so frequently as that which began as the Lord Howard's Men around 1576. As Lord Howard was elevated to the position of Lord Admiral, the company became the "Lord Admiral's Men." But later in the early seventeenth century as the group came under different patrons, it became known as "Nottingham's Men," "Prince Henry's Men," and "Palsgrave's Men." Many of these troupes retained their own playwrights, who crafted the dramas and sometimes doubled as actors in the troupe itself. In this regard William Shakespeare's path to becoming a successful playwright was not unusual. He began as an actor in the company before beginning to write plays for the Chamberlain's Men around 1590. Thereafter, his success elevated him in the company until he had become its director in the early seventeenth century. While great milestones of English literature survive from the Tudor and Stuart period, most of the dramas that were produced at this time were considered ephemeral, that

is, they were staged for a time and then put aside. The popularity of the theater meant that audiences craved new works, and playwrights often obliged by dramatizing incidents that had recently occurred in London and around Europe. The great works of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare continue to fascinate audiences today with the depths of their psychological insight and their examination of characters' strengths and weaknesses, although it must be remembered that few of the hundreds of plays performed in London at this time rose to this level of greatness. Many were topical works, hurriedly written to take advantage of the interests of the day and then discarded when fashions shifted. London troupes were also jealous of their properties. Plays were not usually printed until well after they had been performed so that other troupes working in the capital could not pirate their productions. Such was the secrecy surrounding the script that most actors did not even receive an entire copy of the play they were performing, but were only given their own lines with appropriate cues so that they could not sell the play to another troupe. While plagiarism and artistic theft was a consistent problem between theaters, playwrights who wrote for the London scene were enthusiastic theatergoers, and they visited the plays written by their rivals for other houses. In his early days as a playwright, even William Shakespeare received accusations that he had plagiarized the works of other London writers. In truth, the practice of imitating successful works was as common then as it is among film producers in the modern world. Playwrights and troupes longed to exploit the themes and plots that had already proven to be successful with audiences, and over time plays treating similar themes and subjects were produced until the appetite for them was exhausted.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.** Despite commercial considerations and censorship, the achievements of early seventeenth-century drama in England still manages to astound modern observers. During the first years of the reign of James I (r. 1603–1625), the writing of William Shakespeare and a group of other accomplished playwrights reached a new level of maturity and finesse. During the 1590s, Shakespeare's plays had most often treated historical or comic themes, but in the first part of the seventeenth century, he conducted a number of experiments in genres that undermined and extended the traditional confines of popular Elizabethan forms, producing works that refashioned comedy, tragedy, and romance. The first signs of the author's growing mastery over his craft came in the series of "problem" plays that he produced just after 1600. In these works—*Measure for Measure*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Troilus and*

*Cressida*—Shakespeare extended the boundaries of comedy by resolving his works in unexpected ways that undermined the neat moralistic formulas the genre had traditionally served. Characters in these dramas are forgiven their foibles and shortcomings even when they do not deserve to be forgiven, or the heroes of these dramas achieve success despite significant moral failings and personality flaws. Shakespeare continued in this vein of experimentation in the series of tragedies and historical dramas in the years that followed. In his *Othello* (1603), for instance, the author explored the psychological consequences of racism. The central character, Othello, is a Moor (a black African) who is married to a much younger and white Desdemona. When driven mad by the adulterous accusations brought against her by his treacherous friend, Iago, Othello murders her, and then realizes afterward that he must live with the consequences of his rush to judgment. Thus Othello is a fatally flawed tragic figure, but his flaw is curiously inexplicable given his status as the very model of propriety and good judgment prior to his rash act of murder. His willingness to believe the false accusations of Iago, though, results from his doubt about his interracial marriage. Iago, in other words, has been able to play upon Othello's own fears that a black man's marriage to a white woman is unnatural. In his *King Lear* (c. 1605), Shakespeare continued to examine his characters with great psychological insight. Like Othello, Lear is a flawed character who has unjustly banished his daughter Cordelia from his presence, but who is subsequently driven insane by the even greater injustice and monumental ingratitude of his two remaining daughters, Goneril and Regan. In his mad ravings he contemplates the nature of justice and the order of the universe, observations that are made more chillingly forceful because a seeming madman utters them. In the final of these late tragedies, *Macbeth*, Shakespeare explored the consequences of incivility, and, as in both *Othello* and *King Lear*, he brought major insights to bear on the dark emotions that produce enormous crimes.

**HISTORICAL PLAYS AND LATER COMEDIES.** Even as the great dramatist was at work on these masterpieces, he continued to produce historical plays and a series of brilliant romances. In contrast to the histories of comparatively recent English kings he had produced during the 1590s, the author turned to ancient Roman and Greek figures in the seventeenth century, finding in the relative obscurity and distance of Antiquity a vehicle for producing some of his great late masterworks, including his *Antony and Cleopatra* (c. 1606), perhaps his greatest historical work. Shakespeare produced some of

his most insightful portraits of kingship and political power, not by concentrating on the kings of the near English past, but by examining the more remote universe of Antiquity. In this way the playwright circumvented the draconian censorship that James I's officials sometimes practiced in the theater. While these later ancient historical plays show a development of Shakespeare's art to a level of dramatic ease and fluency—a level that most critics agree has never been surpassed—the later comedies of this period also show a similar experimental spirit. These plays—*The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*—are alternately termed “romances” or “comedies.” All three works are full of various kinds of entertainments, complex plots, and subplots, and their meanings have proven difficult to ascertain over the years. This favoring of a complex and highly sophisticated art may likely have been caused by commercial factors. In 1608, Shakespeare's troupe, the King's Men, took up winter quarters in the Blackfriars Theatre, a private theater located in an ancient London monastery that had been dissolved during the Reformation. The audience who frequented the Blackfriars was likely better educated and craved the elaborate concoctions that Shakespeare supplied them with in the years between 1608 and his retirement from the troupe after 1611. These productions were filled with dancing, singing, and “masques” that imitated the customs of courtly society, and their complex allusions and sophisticated poetry are very different from the world of the author's youth. Some critics have detected a strain of increasing self-doubt and critical self-examination in these works, a strain they have connected with the approach of the author's old age. Yet in 1611, when Shakespeare went into semi-retirement from his troupe, he was not yet fifty, and with his fortunes relatively established, he seems to have hoped to play the role of a country gentleman in his native Stratford-Upon-Avon. Although he probably returned to assist on one or several occasions, his increasing isolation meant that his company, the King's Men, turned to his associate John Fletcher for dramas. Fletcher ruled for many years as one of the most prolific of Jacobean playwrights, although the quality of authors who wrote for the stage in these years was generally very high.

**BEN JONSON.** While many of the details concerning the life of William Shakespeare continue to be debated, scholars are on far firmer ground in exploring the life and career of Ben Jonson (1572–1637), the figure who is today considered the second towering genius of the early seventeenth-century English stage. Jonson was probably a native Londoner, although his family hailed

originally from Scotland. Educated at Westminster School and later for a time at St. John's College in Cambridge, he first pursued a career as a bricklayer before becoming an English soldier in forces that were then helping the Dutch achieve their independence from Spain. When he returned to England, he became an actor, performing as a character in the Tudor dramatist Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. This was one of the most popular plays of the late Elizabethan period, and it was frequently revived in the decades that followed. Jonson eventually wrote additional dialogue for the play, as he seems to have done for other works performed during the 1590s. By 1594, Jonson was successful enough to marry, and he seems to have worked as an actor in several London theaters, although he eventually joined the troupe known as "Pembroke's Men." In 1597, he wrote his first play for the group, and soon afterwards he took part in the ill-fated *The Isle of Dogs*, the production that landed him in jail. The play was considered so seditious at the time that all copies of it were seized and destroyed, and thus historians have long debated about what its contents must have included. The title refers to an island situated in the Thames just across from the former site of the royal palace at Greenwich, but the drama itself apparently mocked the intrigues of court. Jonson was imprisoned for several months, and when

the London theaters reopened in 1598, he achieved his first great success with the play *Every Man in His Humour*, a sophisticated comedy set in the urban world. It made use of the notion of the then-reigning scientific theory of the "four humors," the forces that were believed to govern health and the human psyche. During 1598, Jonson again fell afoul of the law when he killed a fellow actor. While in prison for this offense, the playwright repented and converted to Catholicism, a decision that dogged him for the rest of his life. Upon his release, Jonson returned to write for the theater, but by 1603, he had again fallen under suspicion, this time for Catholicism and also for the treason that members of Elizabeth I's Privy Council felt littered his recent play *Sejanus His Fall*. In the years that followed, Jonson labored to rehabilitate himself with King James I. At the same time suspicions continued to hover around him, and he was frequently detained for questioning because of his Catholic beliefs and the fear that he was secretly practicing his religion. He was imprisoned again in 1605, this time for a play that seemed to mock the manners of James I and his Scottish nobles, but he soon attained his release. During the crisis of the Gunpowder Plot in the same year—a foiled scheme to blow up the Houses of Parliament in Westminster—Jonson again fell under suspicion, although he acquitted himself by giving evidence against the conspirators.

**JONSON'S RISING SUCCESS.** Despite lingering suspicions about his loyalties, Jonson's career flourished in the years after 1605. In that year he began producing masques for the Stuart court in partnership with the accomplished designer and architect Inigo Jones (1573–1652). These imaginative productions were widely admired, and the partnership spread across several decades before the two parted company. In 1605, he also wrote perhaps his most biting and satirical comedy *Volpone*, a work that showed little of his associate Shakespeare's propensity for happy endings. *Volpone* bristles with the firsthand knowledge that he had acquired of the corruption that reposed in royal courts. Prudently, though, Jonson set the play in Republican Venice, but the deceit and trickery that he related might just as easily have occurred in the Stuart halls of power. In 1610, James I enacted a series of new measures directed at English Recusants, that is, those that espoused and practiced the Catholic religion, and in the wake of these measures, Jonson renounced his Catholicism and returned to the Church of England. Successes continued, and in the years that followed, the great playwright entertained ever-greater notions of his success as a scholar. For his efforts in entertaining the king, and his

achievements in the theater, he was granted a royal pension in 1616, the same year that William Shakespeare died. With Shakespeare's death, Jonson reaped even greater praise as England's greatest living writer. A folio edition of his work appeared in 1616, and by 1619, he was granted an honorary degree from the University of Oxford. This increasing fame, though, exacted a toll on his writing, and between 1616 and 1626 he produced no major works, although he did continue to produce masques for the court. One year following James I's death, Jonson produced his first play in a decade, *The Staple of News*, a work that, like several of the playwright's earlier pieces, satirized the growing tendency for trust to be generated in the business world and society merely by deceit and fast talking. The play was topical, since it was staged merely a year after the death of James I and seemed to mock the controversial Stuart practice of granting monopolies to trade in certain industries as well as problems in the new King Charles I's court. A few years following its production, Jonson suffered a stroke, although he was granted an office as London city historian soon afterwards. The king increased his pension, and he continued to write, completing an additional three comedies before his death in 1637. None of these, though, matched the success of his earlier works.

**OTHER PLAYWRIGHTS.** Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare were the great geniuses of early seventeenth-century English theater. Critics have long debated about the relative merits of each figure's works, some advocating that Jonson's plays show a greater range of learning and depth of examination than do those of the more famous Shakespeare. Certainly, Jonson was a more varied artist than Shakespeare. In addition to the dramas and poetry that he wrote, he also made significant contributions to English prose, and his interests were more wide-ranging and philosophical in nature than those of Shakespeare. It remains, however, a matter of taste as to which artist one prefers, and even if these two admittedly brilliant figures had never lived, the theatrical writing of the reign of King James I and Charles I might still appear particularly brilliant. Of the many capable dramatists who wrote in this period, Thomas Middleton (c. 1580–1627), Thomas Heywood (1573–1641), Thomas Dekker (c. 1570–1632), Francis Beaumont (c. 1584–1616), and John Fletcher (1579–1625) rank among the most prolific and accomplished, and they kept audiences entertained with a considerable outpouring of high-quality works. Thomas Middleton, for example, excelled in the genre of "city comedy" that was then very much in vogue. These witty and sophisticated comedies concentrated on the problems of court and

city life. Middleton achieved dubious notoriety for one of these productions, *A Game at Chess* (1624), a biting satire that mocked the attempt by James I's son, Charles, to conclude a marital alliance with Spain. In particular, the work's most penetrating barbs were reserved for the then-serving Spanish ambassador to England. The work caused a sensation in London, earning an extraordinary sum of £1,000 in its nine consecutive days of performances, and inducing crowds to stand in long lines to purchase tickets. Middleton and his troupe recognized that the production was going to cause controversy, and they carefully timed their staging of *A Game at Chess* to coincide with the royal court's absence from London. But James I soon learned of the production and banned all future performances. In performing the work, Middleton and his actors played on popular anti-Spanish sentiment that had seethed below the surface of English society since the late sixteenth century. At the same time, the writer's attempts to capitalize on these sentiments helped to shape royal policy, as Charles turned eventually to France, and not to Spain, in search of a royal bride. This work also affected other plays, as most playwrights became more guarded, practicing self-censorship in the wake of the famous suppression. Middleton may be best known for his part in this famous scandal, but more recently, the structure of his poetry has been studied with the aid of digital technology. This research has shown that he collaborated with a number of early seventeenth-century authors and that the stamp of his prose is considerable in some of Shakespeare's works, including *Macbeth*. Such research reminds us that the concept of "authorship" was very different in the seventeenth-century world, and that many plays that we have long thought of as the works of a solitary genius like Shakespeare were actually hammered together from the efforts of more than one author. Thomas Dekker and Thomas Heywood were two such figures who produced their own works, but who also collaborated with a number of other playwrights. Heywood claimed to have written or have participated in the writing of more than 200 plays. Unfortunately, only a small portion of them—about thirty—survive. Thomas Dekker's stamp appears in about 50 works from the period, and the author was notable among playwrights of the time for his populist perspective as well as for the openly Puritan position he took in some of his plays. In contrast to the common stamp evident in Thomas Dekker's works, the theatrical writing team of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher produced many dramas that focused on the values of the nobility and gentry. Their works were long thought to be merely an apology for the Stuart's political theory of the "divine right of kings." More recent

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A ROYAL INVESTIGATION**

**INTRODUCTION:** The staging of Thomas Middleton's play, *A Game at Chess*, was notable for the great furor it caused in London when performed in August of 1624. The play mocked the royal family and high-ranking officials, so the company known as the King's Players had timed their performance of it to occur when King James I was out of town. Word of the spectacle, however, soon came to the king, and he suppressed the performances of it. He also demanded that his officials conduct an investigation, the progress of which is reported in the following letter. A key point in the investigation hinged on just why the royal censor, the Master of Revels as he was known, had allowed the play to be performed in the first place.

... According to His Majesty's pleasure signified to this Board by your letter of the 12th of August touching the suppressing of a scandalous comedy, acting by the King's Players, we have called before us some of the principal actors and demanded of them by what licence and authority they have presumed to act the same: in answer whereunto they produced a book, being an original and perfect copy thereof (as they affirmed) seen and allowed by Sir Henry Herbert, Knight, Master of the Revels, under his own hand, and subscribed in the last page of the said book. We, demanding further whether there were no other parts or passages represented on the stage than those expressly contained in the book, they confidently protested they added or varied from the same nothing at all.

The poet, they tell us, is one Middleton who, shifting out of the way, and not attending the Board with the rest

as we expected we have given Warrant to a messenger for the apprehending of him.

To those that were before us we gave sound and sharp reproof, making them sensible of His Majesty's high displeasure therein, giving them straight charge and command that they presume not to act the said comedy any more, nor that they suffer any play or enterlude whatsoever to be acted by them, or any of their company, until His Majesty's pleasure be further known ...

As for our certifying to His Majesty (as was intimated by your letter) what passages in the said comedy we should find to be offensive and scandalous, we have thought it our duties for His Majesty's clearer information to send herewithal the book itself, subscribed as aforesaid by the Master of the Revels, that so, either yourself, or some other whom His Majesty shall appoint to peruse the same, may see the passages themselves out of the original, and call Sir Henry Herbert before you to know a reason of his licensing thereof who (as we are given to understand) is now attending at court.

So, having done as much as we conceived agreeable with our duties in conformity with His Majesty's royal commandments, and that which we hope shall give him full satisfaction, we shall continue our humble prayers to Almighty God for his health and safety.

**SOURCE:** "A Letter from the Privy Council to the King's secretary reporting on the performances of *A Game at Chess*, 21 August 1624," in *English Professional Theatre, 1530–1660*. Ed. Glynne Wickham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 127–128.

inspection, though, has shown that they worked a fairly sophisticated analysis of the concepts of kingship into their plays, and that they were even suspected of treason at one point in their careers for depicting the assassination of a monarch. After Beaumont's death in 1616, Fletcher continued to produce a number of works with other Jacobean-era authors.

**THE CLOSING OF THE THEATERS.** During the first quarter of the seventeenth century the popularity of the theater had been great in London. In the 1630s, however, the capital's theatrical landscape began to alter. At this time Puritans began to redouble their long-standing efforts to eradicate theatrical performances, and they engaged the Crown in a number of disputes over the religious policies the country should pursue. In 1633, William Prynne, a prominent Puritan lawyer in London, published one of the most vociferous of the movement's

many attacks on the theater, his *Histrio Mastix*. The almost 1,000 pages of this volume derided the stage and criticized the Crown for its support of the "popish" rituals of the theater. Although Prynne was soon imprisoned for his words, his example emboldened others, and the rising tide of Puritan sentiments in and around London meant that by the 1640 attendance was falling at London's theaters and the quality of their productions was in decline. In the years that followed, few great playwrights continued to write for the London stage, and when Puritan forces gained control of Parliament in the early 1640s, they soon outlawed the theater altogether. Their first measures of 1642 forced the capital's theaters to close, but clandestine performances continued to be mounted, prompting Parliament to pass an even tougher measure against all forms of drama in 1647. Those who participated in or who watched any performance were

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***PARLIAMENT CLOSES THE THEATERS**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1642, a Puritan-controlled Parliament issued an ordinance that ordered all stages closed in London on moral grounds. Although these measures were relatively clear, players continued to ignore them on occasion. In 1647, Parliament reiterated its demands that theaters be closed in England's capital, and in no uncertain terms it outlawed all attempts to evade the statute. The act notably termed those who defied it (i.e., actors who continued to perform) "rogues" and insisted that they and those who watched them would face swift punishments for defiance.

Whereas the Acts of Stage-Plays, Interludes, and common Plays, condemned by ancient Heathens, and much less to be tolerated amongst Professors of the Christian Religion, is the occasion of many and sundry great vices and disorders, tending to the high provocation of God's wrath and displeasure, which lies heavy upon this Kingdom, and to the disturbance of the peace thereof; in regard whereof the same hath been prohibited by Ordinance of this present Parliament, and yet is presumed to be practiced by divers in contempt thereof. Therefore for the better suppression of the said Stage-Plays, Interludes, and common Players, It is Ordered and Ordained by the Lords and Commons in this present Parliament Assembled, and by Authority of the same, That all Stage-Players, and Players of Interludes, and common Plays, are hereby declared to be, and are, and shall be taken to be Rogues, and punishable within the Statutes of the thirty-ninth year of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the seventh year of the Reign of King James, and liable unto the pains and penalties therein contained, and proceeded against according to the said Statutes, whether they be wanderers or no, and notwithstanding any license whatsoever from the King or any person or persons to that purpose.

It is further Ordered and Ordained by the Authority aforesaid, That the Lord Mayor, Justices of the peace, and

Sheriffs of the City of London and Westminster, and of the Counties of Middlesex and Surrey, or any two or more of them, shall, and may, and are hereby authorized and required to pull down and demolish, or cause or procure to be pulled down and demolished all Stage-Galleries, Seats, and Boxes, erected or used, or which shall be erected and used for the acting, or playing, or seeing acted or played, such Stage-Plays, Interludes, and Plays aforesaid, within the said City of London and Liberties thereof, and other places within their respective jurisdictions; and all such common Players, and Actors of such Plays and Interludes, as upon view of them, or any one of them, or by Oath of two Witnesses (which they are hereby authorized to administer) shall be proved before them, or any two of them to have Acted, or played such Plays and Interludes as aforesaid at any time hereafter, or within the space of two Months before the time of the said Conviction, by their Warrant or Warrants under their hands and seals, to cause to be apprehended, and openly and publicly whipped in some Market Town within their several Jurisdictions during the time of the said Market, and also to cause such Offender and Offenders to enter into Recognizance, or Recognizances, with two sufficient Sureties never to Act or play any Plays or Interludes any more, and shall return in the said Recognizance, or Recognizances, into the Sizes or Sessions to be then next be-holden for the said Counties and Cities respectively; and to commit to the common Jail any such person and persons as aforesaid, as shall refuse to be bound, and find such Sureties as aforesaid, until he or they shall so become bound. And in case any such person or persons so Convicted of the said offence, shall after again offend in the same kind, that then the said person or persons so offending, shall be, and is hereby Declared to be, and be taken as an incorrigible Rogue, and shall be punished and dealt with as an incorrigible Rogue ought to be by the said Statutes.

**SOURCE:** Houses of Parliament, *An Ordinance For, The utter suppression and abolishing of all Stage-Playes and Interludes* (London: John Wright, 1647): 1–3. Text modernized by Philip M. Soergel.

now threatened with stiff penalties. The course of the English civil wars made these measures possible. In 1642, King Charles I had abandoned London altogether, as the capital had become too dangerous a place in which to reside. He retreated to the west of England and there raised a force that engaged with Puritan forces on battlefields throughout the British Isles. By 1647, royalist forces were in retreat, although the king continued to scheme against the rising power of Parliament. In August of 1648, Charles was finally captured, tried,

and executed, thus giving rise to the period of the Puritan Commonwealth, which lasted until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. During this period the theater largely ceased to exist in England, and when Charles I's son, Charles II, returned to England and soon restored the theater, very few of the great playwrights that had flourished on the London scene in the first half of the seventeenth century were still alive. Only two notable playwrights from Charles I's age—James Shirley (1596–1666) and William Davenant (1606–1668)—

were to live to see the stage revived during the Restoration of the monarchy that occurred after 1660. In those years, though, a new tradition, perhaps less brilliant but no less prolific, developed in London, and restored the commercial theater to its eminent position as a noteworthy art form in early-modern England.

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SEE ALSO *Dance: Social Dance in the Baroque; Music: Origins and Elements of the Baroque Style*

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### COURT SPECTACLE IN STUART ENGLAND

**RISING SPLENDOR.** Under the Stuart kings James I and Charles I the celebration of court entertainments and spectacles rose dramatically. The Tudor queen Elizabeth I had always been relatively restrained in the staging of court spectacles when compared to the grandiose continental standards of France, Italy, and Germany. To keep royal finances in check, Elizabeth had practiced a strict economy, and while the scale of the Tudor court was grand, it paled in comparison with that of France or of her later Stuart cousins. During the first years of James I's reign, the court's expenditure on clothing, food, and entertainment rose dramatically. James and Charles both admired masques, a complex entertainment that emphasized dancing and that had been introduced into England by Henry VIII in the early sixteenth century. The masques continued to be celebrated throughout the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), particularly at Twelfth Night (that is, Epiphany, the final celebration of Christmas) and on Shrove Tuesday just before the beginning of Lent. Masques combined singing, poetry, and dancing, and they employed both members of the court as well as professional dancers, players, and acrobats. The core of these productions always lay in the masked dances that littered them, and oftentimes the choreographed figure dances that occurred in the staging of a masque lasted several hours. The masque was thus a hybrid theatrical

spectacle, and one that Elizabeth I's successor, James I, transformed into a major tool of royal glorification. His spectacles served important propagandistic purposes, both domestically and abroad, as the masques staged at court increasingly supported James's theory of the divine right of kings. In James's reign, the number of such productions rose steadily. In Tudor times the masques had been used primarily as a diversionary entertainment at Christmas and before the onset of Lent, but now they were performed at the conclusion of marital alliances, at royal births, and at the signing of treaties. Gaining entrance to one of the spectacular productions mounted at court was a highly sought honor among the foreign dignitaries who lived in England during James's reign. The texts and scenarios of many of these productions still survive, but the literary and dramatic impact of these spectacles always paled in comparison to their theatrical values. Inigo Jones, chief architect to both James I and Charles I, designed the scenery for many productions, and his great Banqueting Hall, constructed between 1619 and 1622 near Whitehall Palace in London, was built to provide a suitably grand venue in which to stage the court masques. To entertain his royal patrons, Jones kept abreast of the latest advances in theatrical machinery that had been developed in recent times in France and Italy, importing the tools of his trade from abroad or building anew machines from continental designs. Besides the many high-quality masques that Ben Jonson wrote and Inigo Jones staged for the court, a number of other Stuart playwrights also were commissioned to produce masques, including Thomas Middleton, George Chapman, and Francis Beaumont. As the tide of lavish productions rose in England during the first quarter of the seventeenth century, many playwrights, including Shakespeare, inserted smaller theatrical masques into their own plays. Thus in this way the fashion of the court for spectacle exerted an influence over the commercial theater.

**THE MASQUE UNDER CHARLES I.** The scale of royal productions of masques continued to rise during the reign of James I's son, Charles I (r. 1625–1649). Charles's wife, Henrietta Maria, was a daughter of King Henri IV and Queen Marie de' Medici of France, and as such she brought with her to the English court a taste for dance and elaborate spectacles. During the first few years of Charles's reign, a taste for new French styles of dance flourished in the court masques, and the cost and scale of these productions increased to new, unheard-of levels. At the same time, Puritan dissatisfaction with Charles's religious policies as well as those of his archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, steadily mounted.



One of the most outspoken of these critics was William Prynne, who detested the lavish ceremonialism of the Church of England's rituals and was also a vociferous opponent of the theater generally and of court spectacle especially. Prynne's pamphleteering against these "popish," or Roman Catholic, influences began soon after Charles I's accession, and by 1527 he was already being tried for sedition. Trained in the law, Prynne beat these first charges on a technicality, but from 1630 onward he was under almost constant threat by the royal government for his opinions and publications. He continued to write, however, and in his *Histrion Mastix* (1633) he attacked the contemporary theater, dancing, and the court of Charles I as well as the king's wife, Queen Henrietta Maria. By any standard, Prynne's more than 1,000-page attack on theatrical spectacle was extreme, since it accused any woman who took part in dances and theatrical productions of whorishness. It was a daring charge since Prynne well knew that Henrietta Maria was an avid lover of both the theater and the dance. Yet Puritan distaste for these arts ran deep, and Prynne's onslaught against the stage continued even during the seven years he was imprisoned, and his determination encouraged others to speak out against the theater as well. Beside imprisoning Prynne, Charles I's reaction to the *Histrion Mastix* was swift and determined. Prynne had been a member of Lincoln's Inn, one of the four guilds of lawyers who practiced in London's courts. Charles immediately demanded that London's law guilds provide him with a suitably grand theatrical to demonstrate their loyalty to the crown. The members of the law guilds thus were required to stage *The Triumph of Peace*, a production that cost them more than £21,000 to mount—a prodigious sum when most Englanders survived on less than £100 per year. The production of this masque and the many hours of processions and pageantry that preceded it in the streets of London set new standards for profligate royal display and did little to heal the growing enmity between the Crown and Puritan Londoners. Thus the theater played a role in the rising sentiment that was to produce the Puritan Revolution in England, and ultimately result in King Charles I's execution in 1649.

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SEE ALSO *Dance: Dance in Court Spectacle*

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## THEATER IN GOLDEN-AGE SPAIN

**A CENTURY OF GREATNESS.** Although Spain suffered military and economic setbacks in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this same period was one of brilliance in the arts and literature in the country. By 1600, the cities of Spain had already developed a vigorous theater that was in many ways even more vital than that of London. The origins of Spanish theater can be traced to the late-medieval dramas that were performed on solemn religious occasions. Like England, the Feast of Corpus Christi in late spring was an important occasion that was often celebrated with the staging of imposing religious dramas. Unlike many parts of Europe where Protestantism gradually restricted religious drama, such productions remained a vital part of urban piety in the seventeenth century, inspiring a new genre of *auto sacramentals*, or sacramental plays, that aimed to teach the Spanish the tenets of Counter-Reformation Catholicism. In particular, these sacramental plays focused on the theology of the Eucharist, and their series of scenes often demonstrated the biblical events that had produced the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as well as the rise of Christianity. Even as such religious theater remained a growing tradition in Spain's Golden Age, popular secular drama was undergoing a dramatic expansion, although its roots also lay in the religious institutions of the country. In the second half of the sixteenth century religious confraternities—brotherhoods of lay and clerical members—began to stage performances of secular dramas and comedies for paying audiences. Many of these brotherhoods cared for the sick and dying, and the profits of their dramatic performances were used to underwrite their charitable efforts. The typical Spanish theater of the time was known as a *corral*, a word that referred to the walled-in courtyards in which plays were performed. At one end of these corrals a raised stage provided the setting on which the dramas were performed. Usually these stages were two stories high, with an upper gallery that was decorated to suggest towers, houses, and other elements of urban architecture. The first two of these theaters—the *Corral de la Cruz* and the *Corral del Principe*—were constructed as makeshift affairs in the newly named Spanish capital of Madrid. Others developed there and at Seville, and by 1600, these two cities were home to the most vigorous theater life in Spain,

although other theatrical troupes thrived elsewhere in the country. By 1630, Madrid had seven theaters that accommodated crowds of around 2,000 people in each for daytime performances. As theatergoing became an increasingly popular pastime for Spaniards, the country's *corrales*—that is, its open-air playhouses—were often remodeled and roofed over to acquire a greater sense of permanence. Wealthy merchants and aristocratic patrons rented boxes in the galleries that stretched above the stage, while the poor were relegated to the ground from which they looked up at the stage. The staging used in these productions was still quite rudimentary since painted scenery and other elements of stage machinery did not become popular in Spain until later in the seventeenth century. The relatively modest production values aside, an incredible number of plays were written and performed in the period. No one has ever been able to ascertain the total number of dramas produced in this period, but estimates of the number of plays written in seventeenth-century Spain range from between 10,000 and 30,000. A list of Spanish playwrights compiled by a commentator in 1632, for instance, noted more than eighty authors then active in the province of Castile alone, and the most prolific of these figures produced hundreds of works during their lifetimes.

**LINKS TO RENAISSANCE ITALY.** Because of close ties in trade, culture, and language, Italy's influence upon Spain in the sixteenth century had been great. Renaissance humanism, with its emphasis on the study of classical Antiquity, had made many inroads in the country. As the new forms of secular drama became popular in Spanish society toward the end of the century, playwrights experimented with ways to adopt classical forms to the developing professional stage. In Italy, however, the comedies and tragedies of the Renaissance had frequently been performed in courts, where long hours might be devoted to watching elaborate stage productions that were frequently punctuated with imposing interludes known as *intermedi*. Comedies modeled on ancient examples had usually consisted of five acts, and when the full complement of accompanying interludes was figured into an Italian production, these plays might last for as long as six hours. The *corrales* of the Spanish Golden Age had no such luxury. Performed in the open air, dramas were required by law to be completed one hour before night fell. Thus a taste developed for shorter, three-act dramas known as *comedias*. Short verse preludes often preceded the beginning of the first act to set the mood for what followed. In between acts, comic skits or dances were usually performed. While the roots of the word *comedia* are similar to the English "comedy," the

Spanish used the term to refer to any drama—serious, tragic, or comic—that was performed in verse. Much of the quality of poetic writing displayed in these plays was of a high artistic standard. Like the writing of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson, Spanish seventeenth-century playwrights labored mightily to please an audience that seems to have appreciated language in all its complex and difficult forms. The effect of many of these works is thus musical in nature since authors altered the verse structure throughout their works, relying on one rhyme and syllabic structure in a scene to suggest a certain mood and then changing it to fit another in other portions of the play. Commoners were frequently depicted using simpler, native rhyme structures, while noble characters were often portrayed with more complex meters drawn from Italian Renaissance examples.

**CHARACTER OF THE COMEDIAS.** In place of thorough character development and psychological exploration, Spanish audiences in the seventeenth century seem to have preferred fast-moving action. Cases of mistaken identity, deceptions, and disguised characters abound in the plays from the era, and dramas were often punctuated with duels and other violence. The precise subjects of the dramas were drawn from other literary forms like short stories, medieval and Renaissance epics and romances, from history, and from the classics, but in many of these works the theme of honor figured prominently. Spanish playwrights did not consider this abstract human quality to be something associated merely with aristocratic status or wealth. Instead the tone of most dramas was highly moralistic, insisting that everyone in the social structure—from the highest noble grandee to the lowest peasant—shared a human dignity and a mission to fulfill, but this precise duty was peculiar to a character's specific station. Along the way to the conclusion of the *comedias*, characters' honor is frequently called into question and subjected to a test. But almost always, the conventional morality of the plays ensures that the wicked are punished and the good rewarded. For this reason the Spanish theater of the Golden Age has long been viewed as a force of social control and conformity. Unlike England where playwrights were constantly testing the boundaries of royal censorship, Spanish dramatists were often content to uphold the established social order, and seem to have infrequently cast a penetrating, critical gaze on established social realities. Instead their high-quality productions were notable for the artistry of their words and meter. At the same time, the enormous output of writers at this time reveal that in many works authors did examine critically elements of the Spanish character, making all easy generalizations about the lack

of social criticism in the Golden Age theater difficult to maintain. The continuing discovery of new works that have been forgotten for centuries means that the sheer variety and complexity of themes treated at this time will continue to be debated for many years to come.

**LOPE DE VEGA.** Of the many competent and even accomplished seventeenth-century dramatists active in Madrid, Seville, and other theatrical centers in Spain, two figures stand out as particularly brilliant: Felix Lope de Vega Carpio (1562–1635) and Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681). Lope de Vega was the son of an embroiderer; despite his humble origins, he learned to read and cultivated a rudimentary understanding of humanism through his broad exposure to noble circles in Madrid. By the 1580s he was already writing works for the stage in that city, but by the later part of the decade he was named in a libel case for verses he wrote against a local noblewoman who rebuffed his advances. Sent into exile from Madrid for eight years, he eventually overcame his legal troubles and returned to the capital. He ingratiated himself with several members of the nobility, lived in their houses, and served as a secretary to a duke until 1605. Lope also began to experiment with new dramatic forms, eventually establishing the *comedia* style that dominated the Spanish stage for much of the seventeenth century. A gifted writer of lyric poetry, the dramatist perfected his work during these years and thus began one of the most brilliant outpourings of dramas in history. Although the precise number of his plays cannot be definitely established, one of his admirers noted shortly after Lope's death that he had written at least 1,800 dramatic works. Of these, more than 300 survive today that appear to be definitely from his hand, while another almost 200 have long been attributed to him. Thus Lope seems to have written at least 500 *comedias* intended for the professional stage in Madrid, but he also wrote shorter dramatic works, as well as an enormous amount of poetry. Many of his most important dramatic works treated events from Spain's history, but the author was also well known for his comedies, which often included figures of wise peasants and servants as prominent characters. For his dramatization of the life and death of the ill-fated Mary Queen of Scots, Lope de Vega was awarded an honorary doctoral degree from the pope in 1627. While his enormous productivity continued throughout his life, numerous trials continued to punctuate his personal life. A string of mistresses brought the playwright a number of children, but the difficulties associated with these liaisons spurred him to take up the religious life around 1610. But after toying with several religious orders, Lope de Vega began another romance



Engraving of Spanish playwright Felix Lope de Vega. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

and gave up all thoughts of becoming a member of a religious order. Somewhat later, he lost a treasured mistress, and two beloved children died under trying circumstances—circumstances that Lope de Vega commented upon in his poetry. When he died in 1635, his larger-than-life romantic exploits as well as his enormous productivity had already made him a hero in and around Madrid, and his death was mourned as a national tragedy in Spain.

**PEDRO CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA.** Pedro Calderón de la Barca, by contrast, was born into the minor nobility of Madrid and received his early education from the Jesuits. He intended to become a lawyer, but he eventually turned to writing plays in his twenties while serving the Constable of Castile. Like Lope de Vega, Calderón produced a number of sparkling comedies, writing the majority of his 120 works before he was in his mid-forties. Among the most famous of these, *El médico de su honra* (The Surgeon of His Honor) and *El pintor de su deshonor* (The Painter of His Own Dishonor) held up a mirror to Spanish society, examining its pre-occupations with honor. In other works Calderón defended Catholicism and gently mocked the inequities

that noble privilege produced. While he flourished as a writer for Madrid's professional troupes until about 1640, Spain's worsening political crisis eventually led him to abandon his career as a professional dramatist. During the 1640s, revolts in Portugal and Catalonia resulted in the closure of Spanish theaters, and Calderón entered a religious order. In this new role, he authored Madrid's religious plays, or *autos sacramentales*, which were performed in conjunction with the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi and other major religious festivals. He also wrote plays and directed productions for the crown. Besides providing the dramas for these events, he continued to rework his own plays and to edit and rewrite those of others. His efforts helped finally to perfect the three-act *comedia* structure that Lope de Vega and others like Tirso de Molina (1584–1648) had developed. He is credited with developing the form to a high art that possessed considerable intellectual integrity as well as sensual poetry, but although the theater did not disappear in Spain, no author of similar genius arose to take his place following his death in 1681.

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### THE FRENCH STAGE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BAROQUE

**CRISIS AND RECOVERY.** The later sixteenth century in France had been punctuated by religious wars and economic and political instability. With the accession of Henri IV (r. 1594–1610) and his promulgation of the Edict of Nantes—a royal decree that granted a limited degree of religious toleration to French Calvinists—a new tenuous stability began to develop in the country. Although Henri IV was assassinated in 1610, France did not sink into civil war again as might have been expected. Instead under the regency of Henri's wife Marie de' Medici and the rule of her son, Louis XIII (r. 1610–1643), the country's political systems and economy gathered renewed strength and the way was prepared for France's rise to European dominance in the second half of the seventeenth century. Developments in the professional theater were very much affected by these trends as well. In 1600, Paris, which was by far

the country's largest city, possessed a theater that was little developed when compared against the high standards of professionalism being developed in England and Spain at the time. A half-century later, a new generation of playwrights was producing quality tragedies and comedies that were eventually to shape drama, not only in France, but throughout Europe as well. While the sudden rise of several generations of playwrights that included such geniuses as Pierre Corneille (1606–1684), Jean-Baptiste Molière (1622–1673), and Jean Racine (1639–1699), may appear meteoric, their successes nevertheless stemmed from the traditions of theater that had flourished in France before them.

**THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY THEATER.** At the beginning of the sixteenth century, a variety of genres of drama were popular in France and were being performed by mostly amateur troupes of actors in the country's cities. As in other parts of Europe at the time, the popularity of religious drama was still strong, and mystery plays performed on important feast days often consumed the efforts of scores of actors in France's cities. Allegorical morality plays were also popular throughout the country, while for lighter fare, French audiences enjoyed silly farces and satirical dramas known as *soities*. In the second half of the century, however, the impact of humanism began to manifest itself in the writing of new kinds of comedies, tragicomedies, and tragedies inspired by the works of Antiquity. In comedy, the impact of the five-act form of the ancient writers Terence and Plautus began to produce subtle modulations around 1550 in French farces and comedies, as a group known as the Pleiades tried to adopt classical forms to the country's theater. This group took its name from the celestial constellation that, according to Greek mythology, had been formed out of the remains of seven prominent poets. The most prominent of these figures, Joachim du Bellay (c. 1522–1560) and Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585), had studied classical forms with the intention of raising the standards of French drama to compete with the brilliance they saw in Italian humanist theater of the time. While many of the dramatic structures of ancient comedy came to be applied to the works of the Pleiades, much of the writing of the group continued to be faithful to French traditions of farce common in the later Middle Ages. As a group, the Pleiades still favored the octosyllabic, or eight-syllable, verse writing that had been commonly used in the writings of French comic farces to this date. They did not, in other words, emulate the use of prose that was common among Italian humanist dramatists of the day. At the same time many writers adopted plots that were drawn directly from Antiquity,

from the works of Terence and Plautus. Plays treating adulterous husbands and wives, scheming family members, and lovelorn students derived many of their plots from Antiquity, while continuing to be set in the urban world of the time. At about the same time that these experiments in new forms of comedy were appearing, French humanists also turned to the tragedies of Latin Antiquity for inspiration as well. Like Italian tragedies of the day, the many French tragedies that date from the second half of the sixteenth century evidenced the use of ancient canons of dramatic writing. A renewed interest in the Roman tragedies of Seneca and in the Greek works of Euripides was important in prompting French writers to emulate the ancient five-act structures of classical tragedy as well as to develop a role for the chorus. At the same time, many of the tragedies written in this period were not performed, but were primarily “closet dramas” intended to be read by educated elites. In this way ancient stories about figures like Julius Caesar, Medea, or Cleopatra often became a vehicle for commenting upon the grave circumstances of the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598). Writers saw in these ancient episodes events that might provide virtuous moral lessons for their contemporary readers, who were suffering through a time of uncertainty and political instability.

**THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE PASSION.** The sixteenth century also saw the rise of a nascent professional theater in Paris around the institution known as the Confraternity of the Passion. In 1402, this organization, which was comprised of young amateur performers who were usually apprentices and journeymen in Paris guilds, had been granted a royal monopoly over all dramatic productions in the city. This monopoly was to be upheld well into the seventeenth century before being formally abolished by Louis XIV, who began to charter new theaters in the city. For much of the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance the Confraternity of the Passion had been responsible for the annual staging of the city’s mystery plays, religious dramas that accompanied the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi and other important religious holidays throughout the year. During the sixteenth century the Confraternity came under increasing criticism for the liberties that it took in producing religious dramas. Churchmen attacked the organization for including spurious material in their productions. French Protestants, in particular, detested the group’s productions, fearing that the theater provided an entree into idolatry and immorality. By 1548, the Parlement of Paris, the local governing body, forbade the group from performing religious dramas in the city. At the same time, the Confraternity of the Passion

retained its rights to use the Hôtel de Bourgogne, a palatial residence that the group owned in the city. Deprived of their ability to perform religious dramas, the members of the Confraternity began to perform light farces and other kinds of secular fare in the Hôtel’s theater, a large room outfitted with a simple two-story stage and bleachers. Over the following decades, though, the group gradually abandoned acting altogether and began to lease out their theater to professional troupes that performed their repertory there. Until 1600, no troupe, however, was able to achieve any modicum of financial success performing in the theater; at that time the company of Valleran le Conte set up shop in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and its successful exploitation of the space as well as its populist-tinged dramas began to develop a professional theater in early seventeenth-century Paris. Le Conte had a highly successful relationship with the playwright Alexandre Hardy (c. 1575–1632), who in his relatively short life wrote hundreds of comedies, tragedies, tragicomedies, and pastorals. Unlike the cultivated dramas that Renaissance humanists were writing at the time, Hardy’s works relied on a realistic mixture of coarse language, sexuality, and outright violence. His dramas were fast-paced and designed to please a broad spectrum of Paris’ populace, filled as they were with a progression of short scenes and sudden plot turns. While highly cultivated French writers of the time labored to revive classical drama, Hardy gave his audiences a steady stream of crowd-pleasing sensations. Limbs were severed in duels, eyes were plucked out, and characters were beheaded in the many plays that he wrote for the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Eventually, Valleran’s troupe took up permanent residence in the facility and hired Hardy from 1611 as their official playwright. The productions of the Conte de Valleran’s troupe and Hardy were to have an undeniably important impact on French theater. While the quality of the dramas they produced may not have been particularly memorable, the sustained professionalism and high production values of their efforts helped to popularize theater in Paris.

**OTHER GROUPS.** Although the Hôtel de Bourgogne’s monopoly over theatrical productions in Paris was not formally revoked until 1676, the growth of urban sprawl in Paris affected the theater there, just as it did in London at about the same time. In the English capital, Puritan ministers and city officials in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London feared the disorder that accompanied the theaters. While many objected to drama, they also detested the theaters as the haunts of criminals and prostitutes. To skate the regulations of the city of London’s officialdom, theater owners

in London had thus located their large public theaters in the areas known as the Liberties, places on the outskirts of the city where municipal regulations held no force. While the professional stage was not nearly so highly developed in Paris in 1600 as it was in London at the same time, Paris' growing urban sprawl provided a similar opportunity for professional troupes that were anxious to perform in the capital's vicinity. Around this date plays began to be performed at the fairs that were held in the suburban districts of Saint-Germain and Saint-Laurent in the spring and summer months. Thus these new temporary theaters developed alongside the monopolistic Hôtel de Bourgogne and flourished as venues for short dramas, dances, and song at the fairs on Paris' outskirts. In this way the dominance of the Confraternity of the Passion's control over the Parisian theater was gradually challenged. And as the royal government, too, acquired a taste for the theater in the 1630s and 1640s, new troupes were allowed to perform within the city's walls.

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## NEOCLASSICISM IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PARIS

**A CENTURY OF GREATNESS.** In 1600, no great playwrights comparable to the English Shakespeare or Jonson or the Spanish Lope de Vega or Calderón were active in France. Thirty years later, though, a great age of dramatic writing was just beginning to unfold in the country. As a result of the efforts of Pierre Corneille (1606–1684), Jean-Baptiste Molière (1622–1673), and Jean Racine (1639–1699), the theater played a major role in the country's aristocratic society, and its tastes and fashions influenced drama in many parts of Europe. As this new style of theater rose to popularity in mid-seventeenth-century Paris, it did so primarily in opposition to the salacious, crowd-pleasing spectacles that Alexandre Hardy and others had long provided the

Parisian audience. In contrast to the great popularity of the theater in Tudor and early Stuart England, or in Golden-Age Spain, the masterpieces that France's great seventeenth-century dramatists produced were aimed at a considerably narrower audience of courtiers and wealthy, educated Parisians. Elite tastes thus defined the new tragedies and comedies that flourished in the period, and the royal government was, in large part, responsible for the great flowering of the stage in Paris in the half-century that followed 1630. Louis XIII's chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), carefully tended to the development of the theater, allowing new troupes of actors to take up residence in Paris, besides those that had traditionally resided at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. His efforts to develop a national stage that catered to aristocratic tastes coincided with the early career of Pierre Corneille, a writer of genius whose works may have had a limited appeal but nevertheless achieved a devoted following in Parisian high society. In painting, sculpture, and architecture, France's seventeenth-century theorists and artists became concerned to develop styles notable for their classicism, and they frequently turned to the works of High Renaissance masters like Michelangelo and Raphael for inspiration. So, too, in the theater the classical heritage in France produced plays that were very different from the histories, tragedies, and comedies of England or Spain. In both these countries, the commercial and popular nature of the theater had produced a flurry of works that frequently violated the canons that Renaissance writers of comedy and tragedy had advocated for the governing of drama. In his many vivid historical plays, for instance, William Shakespeare had ranged across decades, presenting incidents that frequently occurred years apart. To satisfy audiences in early seventeenth-century Spain, Lope de Vega and other writers of *comedias* tailored their works to appeal to a broad spectrum of urban society, and like those produced in England, their fast-paced dramas showed little indebtedness to the culture of Renaissance humanism. By contrast, the great outpouring of theatrical writing that occurred in seventeenth-century France proceeded from theoretical assumptions and certain intellectual premises that were traceable to the fascination with Antiquity, a fascination that played a large role in shaping all the arts in the country during the course of the seventeenth century.

**THE CLASSICAL UNITIES.** In contrast to the many theaters that were flourishing at the time in London or Madrid, Paris never acquired more than three principal playhouses during the seventeenth century. These houses were considerably smaller than many of the theaters of

London or Madrid. And while plays were performed in the English and Spanish capitals on weekdays, a theatrical troupe was only allowed to perform three times a week in Paris, thus limiting the commercial possibilities of the French stage. No Parisian theater was thus able to survive without the patronage of the king, and as a result court tastes defined French drama far more extensively than in other places. During the reign of Louis XIII (r. 1610–1643), it was Cardinal Richelieu, the king's chief minister, who helped to define the conventions of the French stage. During the 1630s he became an avid supporter of the theater, establishing a group of five playwrights who became known as "The Society of Five Authors." He regularly commissioned works from these dramatists, and one of the members of this group was Pierre Corneille, the figure who subsequently revolutionized French drama. At the time Richelieu was just beginning to patronize the theater, French drama critics and scholars were advocating the adoption of the notion of classical unities in theatrical writing. The notion of the unities traced its origins to sixteenth-century Italian commentators on Aristotle and ancient drama. From the mid-sixteenth century onward, the ideas of Aristotle had played an increasingly important role in defining taste in the arts in Italy, as scholars turned to the Greek philosopher's *Poetics* for inspiration in their attempt to reform the arts. Although their reading of Aristotle has long been shown to be problematic, Italian theorists derived a theory from the *Poetics* that stressed that all action in a drama should share unity of time, place, and action. In practice, these rules of the classical unities meant that all the action of a play should occur in the same place on the same day between sunrise and sunset, and that authors should not stray into subplots but should carefully outline all the implications of a single story. As French dramatists developed their craft in the mid-seventeenth century, the classical unities played a major defining role in shaping their writing. Fascination with these rules produced a number of stunning works that were undeniably great literary achievements. At the same time, the restrained classicism of the French theater and the strict subjection of drama to an oft-unbending set of rules held relatively less popular appeal than the great commercial successes typical of the English or Spanish stages. Where several thousand spectators had often crowded into London and Madrid's theaters to see a particularly popular play, at the high watermark of the theater's success in seventeenth-century Paris average attendance at the theater was around 400, and the most popular productions never drew more than 1,000 spectators. Most plays were only

performed about a dozen times, while the greatest had no more than 30 to 40 performances.

**THE THEATERS.** Specialization was the rule among the five troupes that performed in the theaters of seventeenth-century Paris, with certain troupes performing tragedies and others specializing in lighter comedies. While the Confraternity of the Passion's monopoly over dramatic performances in the city was not abolished officially until 1676, new venues for theater had begun to flourish in the city long before that date. Besides the theater at the Hôtel de Bourgogne—home to the Comedians of the King—two new theaters developed in the mid-seventeenth century. In 1629, Cardinal Richelieu encouraged a company directed by the great actor Guillaume du Gilberts, who was also known as Montdory, to perform in the city, and Montdory's troupe soon scored a success with a production of Corneille's first comedy *Mélie* (1630). A few years later, Montdory's troupe renovated an indoor tennis court in the Marais, then a fashionable residential district in the city, for the performance of plays. By 1641, the last of Paris's seventeenth-century theaters began to take shape. It was built in the private residence of Cardinal Richelieu. The new theater made use of Italian innovations like the proscenium arch as well as other elements of stage machinery that to this time had been little known in France. When Richelieu died in 1642, his new state-of-the-art theater came into royal hands and became known as the Palais Royal, a venue that saw many great successes not only in drama, but also in opera and ballet. It remained a center for the performance of all three arts during the reign of Louis XIV and Louis XV. In the 1640s, Richelieu's successor as chief royal minister, Cardinal Mazarin, whose affections for the theater were considerably less developed than Richelieu's, did bring the great Italian stage designer Giacomo Torelli to Paris. Torelli remodeled the original theater to allow for easier changes of scenery, and he staged several productions in the theater that made use of these Italian innovations. Most often, though, scene changes were kept to a minimum in French theater. Given the prevailing rules about unities, most comedies had a set that suggested a single chamber usually outfitted with multiple doors. Tragedies were often performed in front of backdrops that suggested a royal palace or public setting. While the dramas staged in Paris's public theaters were notable for their spare production values, royal spectacles undertaken in Paris and Versailles at the same time were often quite elaborate and made use of complicated stage machinery. In 1660, for example, Louis XIV imported the Italian stage designer Gaspare Vigarani to supervise the building of the *Salles des*

*Machines* within the palace of the Louvre. This room was to this time the largest theater ever built in Europe and was more than 225 feet long. Its enormous stage, however, consumed more than half this space. The purpose of a grand theater like this was to stage royal spectacles—in this case, the festivities that were to celebrate Louis's impending marriage. Because of the highly literary nature of the art of theater in seventeenth-century France, the use of such spectacle and elaborate stage machinery was generally avoided in dramatic productions. The French theater of the seventeenth century was anything but naturalistic. Acting troupes and their playwrights did not strive for realism. Poetic lines were declaimed, that is, they were recited with an elaborate elocutionary style intended to heighten their effect. As each player recited his lines, he stepped forward to the front of the stage to deliver them, then moved back to allow another actor to speak his response. Such conventions were intended to heighten the dramatic effects of the words being spoken, but generally the style of performance suggests the great importance the theater attained in France as a vehicle for communicating an art that was perceived primarily as a literary form.

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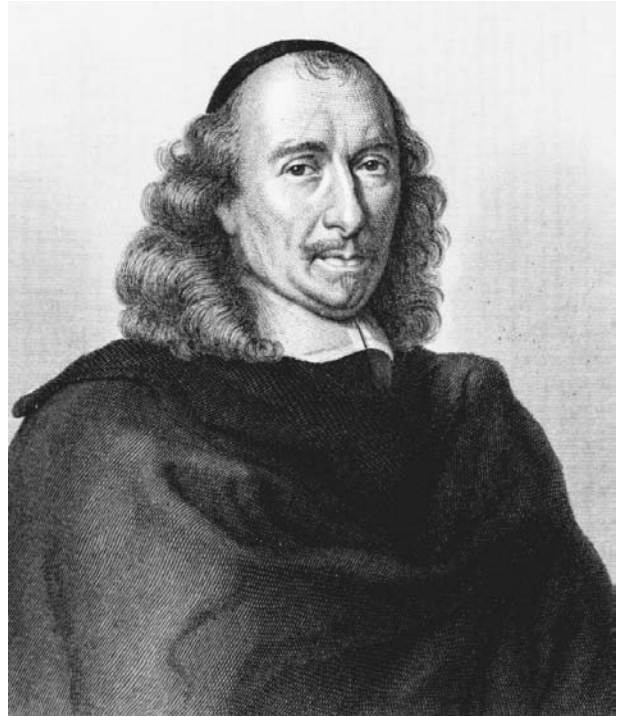
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SEE ALSO *Literature: French Literature in the Seventeenth Century*

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### THE LEGACY OF CORNEILLE, RACINE, AND MOLIÈRE

**TRAGEDY.** It was in tragedy that two of the three great dramatists of seventeenth-century France—Pierre Corneille (1606–1684) and Jean Racine (1639–1699)—excelled. Corneille was the son of a prominent Norman lawyer who was eventually ennobled by the king. Like the comic genius Molière, he was educated by the Jesuits, the great counter-reforming religious order that established an impressive network of schools throughout Catholic Europe during the later sixteenth century. Drama played a key role in Jesuit education, and instruction in the theater was seen as a way of inculcating



Engraving of playwright Pierre Corneille. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

classical values. Although the Jesuit theater produced no lasting monuments of drama, the order experimented with all the latest production techniques, eventually adding dance and music to their productions so that many of the Jesuit school plays resembled operas more than drama. Corneille's art did not follow these paths; instead he became a great writer of tragedy and tragicomedy, a hybrid form that merged both comic and tragic elements. Finishing his education, he received a license to practice law and soon won a position as an administrator of royal forests and waterways, a position that he held well into his forties, while he continued to develop his career as a playwright. When he was just twenty he completed his first play, the comedy *Mélite*, which was performed at Rouen in 1629 and then staged in Paris. It caused great excitement and Corneille quickly became established in the 1630s as one of the chief authors for the Paris stage, receiving a number of commissions for plays from the king's minister Richelieu. His art continued to break new ground, but in 1636, the performance of his tragicomedy, *Le Cid*, caused controversy. While his previous plays had experimented with the laws of classical unities and with classical ways of expressing the emotions in a restrained fashion, Corneille broke from this path in *Le Cid*. Audiences were stunned by his representation of strong emotions and by the tale's plot, which involved a pair of star-crossed lovers kept



apart by a feud between their families that eventually resulted in the hero killing his lover's father. Corneille's tragedy thus highlighted the moral dilemma that arose from the questions of the relative importance of family honor or love, but Corneille did not neatly resolve this dilemma. Instead, his work insisted that either path—love or duty—might have been the correct one for the heroine to take. Several pamphlets soon appeared in Paris attacking his work as morally defective, and Richelieu himself found his young playwright's ending troubling. He submitted the play to the Académie Française, the Parisian academy Richelieu had recently founded and charged with establishing standards in French literature. The critics of the Academy found the play filled with much glorious poetry, but ultimately morally questionable, and so Richelieu suppressed its performance. Corneille eventually reworked his masterpiece, transforming it into a more thoroughly tragic piece, and in the plays that followed his *Cid* he became more conservative in his choice of subject material. Although it was feared when it first appeared, *Le Cid* has survived as one of the great literary landmarks of seventeenth-century French. Its encapsulation of the dilemmas of love and family duty and its glorious use of Alexandrine verse—a stately and extremely formal twelve-syllabic line—remains one of the great statements about the effect of the passions in the Western tradition.

**RACINE.** In the years that followed, Corneille continued to write plays, although none of his tragedies was to be as ground breaking and controversial as *Le Cid*. He chose safer historical themes, usually setting his plays in ancient Rome and developing plots that set up dilemmas about patriotism, Christianity, and family honor. Avoiding controversy, Corneille's works often celebrated the deeds of kindly despotic kings in suppressing chaos or they celebrated the triumph of Christian morality over the human passions of romantic love, jealousy, and hate. Working in this vein, the quality of his plays gradually declined. By the 1660s, his place as France's greatest tragedian was ever more being subsumed by Jean Racine (1639–1699). Racine had been orphaned at a young age, and received his education in a convent school that was at the time heavily influenced by the pious Jansenist movement. The Jansenists, in contrast to the piety advocated by the Jesuit Order, fostered a deep sense of sinfulness and of humankind's inability to participate in their own salvation. Although Louis XIV eventually suppressed the movement because he feared it was a form of crypto-Protestantism, the fervent piety the Jansenists advocated left its stamp on the young Racine, as did the Jansenists' affection for classical literature. Racine even-



Engraving of French playwright Jean Racine. © MICHAEL NICHOLSON/CORBIS.

ually studied the law, but as he matured he sought royal patronage for his writing. He sent Louis XIV's chief minister Cardinal Mazarin a sonnet that praised his efforts in concluding a treaty with the Spanish, but received no royal appointment. Next, he tried to obtain a position in the church, but was again unsuccessful, and so he returned to Paris to try his hand at writing dramas. This course angered his Jansenist teachers, who found the theater to be a poor choice for someone of his pious nature who was possessed with gifts as a scholar. But in 1665, the young Racine's fortunes were assured with his production of *Alexandre le grand*, a play that meditated on the tragic shortcomings of the ancient conqueror Alexander the Great. His subsequent plays developed the Alexandrine verse that Corneille had immortalized in his tragedies, developing its possibilities to a high point of perfection. These works included *Andromaque* (1667), *Britannicus* (1669), *Bérenice* (1670), and his masterpiece *Phèdre* (1677). In these and other works Racine often set up his tragic dilemmas as conflicts between love, duty, and honor. When at the height of his powers as a dramatist, it is interesting to note that Racine's own sense of duty, and perhaps his piety, won out. At the age of only 37 he retired from the stage, and in the last quarter



Engraving of playwright Jean-Baptiste Molière. © MICHAEL NICHOLSON/CORBIS.

century of his life he wrote only two biblical dramas that were performed in girls' schools. Even though his retirement robbed the French stage of the possibility of a number of great works of tragedy, his considerable output in his early years provided a storehouse of plays that stand as some of the greatest poetry in the French language.

**MOLIÈRE.** At the same time as the great tragedies of Corneille and Racine were fascinating audiences in Paris, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, better known to history as Molière (1623–1673), was developing standards in comedy that were not to be equaled in the country for generations. Of the three great dramatic geniuses seventeenth-century France produced, Molière is today the most universally recognized. His works continue to be performed in France and throughout the world, and their mixture of slapstick humor, wit, and sophisticated urbanity is still widely admired. If Corneille and Racine rank as important figures in the development of literary French, Molière was at once a man who was at home in the theater from an early age. When he was just 21 he formed a troupe of actors at Paris, but Molière quickly went bankrupt. To support themselves, the band of actors left the city and spent twelve years traveling through the

French provinces. In this long apprenticeship as a playwright, Molière discovered firsthand just what kept audiences entertained, and when he returned to Paris, he was poised to make a major mark on the theater of the city. In 1658, King Louis XIV was in attendance at a performance of his comedy *The Affected Young Ladies*. From that date his importance as a writer of comedies for the Paris stage as well as entertainments for the king steadily rose. Louis XIV gave the playwright and his troupe use of the theater in the Palais Royal three days each week, and eventually conferred a small office in the royal household on the writer. Molière's royal favor irritated the clergy, powerful officials in Paris, and the other troupes that performed in the capital, and he claimed that he had to publish his plays so that these other companies did not pirate his works. Like Corneille, he had the benefit of a Jesuit education, with its exposure to the classics, but his family origins were considerably humbler, and without a family fortune or another profession to fall back upon like Corneille and Racine, he frequently had to scramble to produce his theatrical ventures. His plays satisfied the court's desire for light entertainments, and often had little in the way of literary pretensions. In most of these works he aimed to please rather than to educate or elevate his audience. At the same time his sense of comic timing, his undeniably keen observations of human nature, and the gentle mockery he directed at all categories of seventeenth-century people still manages to captivate modern audiences. Yet in Molière's own time his art was not always assessed as positively as it is today. His *Tartuffe* (1664) caused an immediate scandal among the clergy, who objected to the biting sarcasm the author directed against their hypocrisy. They succeeded in banning its performance for five years, and continued to harass the author for much of the rest of his life.

**MOLIÈRE'S LATER TROUBLES AND THE DECLINE OF THE THEATER.** The playwright refused to be worn down by these scandals. Instead he immediately responded by producing a new version of *Don Juan* in which the notorious Spanish lover meets his hellish fate, but only after entertaining the audience with his wit and amorous antics over the course of an evening. In the years that followed, Molière was frequently unable to find suitable plays for his company to perform, so he responded by taking on the task of writing a number of works for them. In the years between their return to Paris in 1658 and his death in 1673, he wrote about a third of the 95 plays his company produced. Although the king favored him, he still faced great trials in making a success of his company. In 1666, Louis' mother, Anne

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***AN OFFENSIVE COMEDY**

**INTRODUCTION:** The great French dramatist Molière's comedy *Tartuffe* caused a furor when it first appeared in 1664 because of its mockery of clerical hypocrisy. The French clergy responded quickly by suppressing its performances. The following speech from a main character in the play, Cleante, is a biting example of what so offended the religious establishment.

I'm not the sole expounder of the doctrine,  
 And wisdom shall not die with me, good brother  
 But this I know, though it be all my knowledge,  
 That there's a difference 'twixt false and true.  
 And as I find no kind of hero more  
 To be admired than men of true religion,  
 Nothing more noble or more beautiful  
 Than is the holy zeal of true devoutness;  
 Just so I think there's naught more odious  
 Than whited sepulchres of outward unction,  
 Those bare-faced charlatans, those hireling zealots,  
 Whose sacrilegious, treacherous pretence  
 Deceives at will, and with impunity  
 Makes mockery of all that men hold sacred;  
 Men who, enslaved to selfish interests,  
 Make trade and merchandise of godliness,  
 And try to purchase influence and office  
 With false eye-rollings and affected raptures;  
 Those men, I say, who with uncommon zeal  
 Seek their own fortunes on the road to heaven;  
 Who, skilled in prayer, have always much to ask,  
 And live at court to preach retirement;  
 Who reconcile religion with their vices,  
 Are quick to anger, vengeful, faithless, tricky,  
 And, to destroy a man, will have the boldness

To call their private grudge the cause of heaven;  
 All the more dangerous, since in their anger  
 They use against us weapons men revere,  
 And since they make the world applaud their passion,  
 And seek to stab us with a sacred sword.  
 There are too many of this canting kind.  
 Still, the sincere are easy to distinguish;  
 And many splendid patterns may be found,  
 In our own time, before our very eyes.  
 Look at Ariston, Periandre, Oronte,  
 Alcidamas, Clitandre, and Polydore;  
 No one denies their claim to true religion;  
 Yet they're no braggadocios of virtue,  
 They do not make insufferable display,  
 And their religion's human, tractable;  
 They are not always judging all our actions,  
 They'd think such judgment savoured of presumption;  
 And, leaving pride of words to other men,  
 'Tis by their deeds alone they censure ours.  
 Evil appearances find little credit  
 With them; they even incline to think the best  
 Of others. No caballers, no intriguers,  
 They mind the business of their own right living.  
 They don't attack a sinner tooth and nail,  
 For sin's the only object of their hatred;  
 Nor are they over-zealous to attempt  
 Far more in heaven's behalf than heaven would have 'em.  
 That is my kind of man, that is true living,  
 That is the pattern we should set ourselves.  
 Your fellow was not fashioned on this model;  
 You're quite sincere in boasting of his zeal;  
 But you're deceived, I think, by false pretences.

**SOURCE:** Jean-Baptiste Molière, *Tartuffe, or The Hypocrite*.  
 Trans. Curtis Hidden Page (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons,  
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of Austria died, and Paris's theaters were closed for more than two months as a time of national mourning. To make up for this great loss in revenue, Molière wrote five new works for his company to be performed after the playhouses reopened, even though he himself was in failing health. This tremendous output continued even though the author was also called upon to write a number of other entertainments for the royal court. The quality of these later works remained high, despite his health, but on 14 February 1673, Molière finally collapsed on stage while acting in one of his own plays. He died soon afterward. Because his death came so suddenly, the playwright and actor had not been able to take the Last Rites of the church. Thus he was unable to repent of the sinfulness that was believed to be inherent in the

profession of acting. As a result he was buried without fanfare, and in the months that followed his troupe struggled to survive. Eventually, it merged with the company that performed in the Théâtre Marais to become the Théâtre Guénégaud; in 1680, this group merged again with the troupe that continued to perform at the Hôtel de Bourgogne to form the Comédie-Française, which was the only surviving theatrical troupe in Paris performing French-language productions at the end of the seventeenth century. While the Comédie-Française survived and still exists as the oldest national theater in Europe, the merger of the various troupes that had performed in the city in the years between 1630 and 1680 points to a decline in the popularity of drama as an entertainment at this time. In the years after 1680

Louis XIV fell increasingly under the influence of his second wife, Madame de Maintenon, who nourished his piety, and he gave up his former taste for dramatic entertainments. In these years, the king became involved in a series of costly international wars as well, and was unable to maintain the lavish standards of royal patronage in the theater. The court in these years began to favor the opera rather than the drama. With the deaths of Molière in 1673 and Corneille in 1684 as well as Racine's premature retirement, no figure of similar genius appeared in Paris to continue the great experiments in drama these writers had nourished in earlier years.

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## THEATER AND STAGECRAFT IN ITALY

**INNOVATIONS OF THE LATE RENAISSANCE.** The theatrical traditions of Italy had long played a role in shaping developments in theater far beyond the borders of the country. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Italian humanists had studied the dramatic literature and theater of Antiquity. In time, their efforts produced a great flowering of contemporary play writing in Italy, as writers as diverse as Niccolò Machiavelli and Torquato Tasso relied on ancient dramatic canons to shape their sixteenth-century dramas. A taste for comedies written in the style of the ancient Roman writers Plautus and Terence developed in the sophisticated courts of the peninsula, giving rise to new attempts to understand ancient theater in all its complexity. As the sixteenth century progressed, scholars and playwrights turned to tragedy and to the study of the pronouncement of Aristotle and other philosophers on aesthetics. There were few production values in many of these first attempts to revive ancient theater, and actors often performed before the barest of backdrops that merely suggested a place. Over time, painted scenery—often designed by accomplished artists—replaced these rudimentary elements, and as the sixteenth century progressed, architects and scholars became more concerned with recreating the look and feel of ancient theaters. The most famous of these efforts was Andrea Palladio's de-

sign for the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza in northern Italy, a theater that still stands today. Palladio and his disciple, Vincenzo Scamozzi who eventually completed the project, created a structure that in many ways seems familiar to modern viewers, although the scenery with which the stage is outfitted was permanent and not moveable. It consisted of a two-story gallery, punctuated with doorways and archways. To the rear of this structure, street scenes were recreated in perspective so that the entire structure seems to recede to a vanishing point at the horizon. The ingenuity of this concept continued throughout the designs for the auditorium, where Palladio arranged curved, stepped-up bleachers in an ellipse around the stage, thus making it possible for all those in the audience to have at least a partial view of the action that was occurring before them. Palladio and Scamozzi's theater was completed in 1585, and it soon touched off a number of other experiments to find the perfect venue in which to perform the spectacles, dramas, operas, and ballets that were common entertainments in Italy's court. Of the many theaters constructed at this time, the one that had the broadest influence throughout Europe was the Teatro Farnese, a private theater constructed for the influential Farnese family in a palace outside the city of Parma in northern Italy during 1618–1619. Like the Teatro Olimpico, the Farnese had a proscenium arch stage, but one that now allowed for scene changes. The auditorium was also amazingly versatile, in part because a large arena separated the stage from the bleachers where the audience sat. This arena, which was similar to the orchestra level of many modern theaters, could be flooded to a level of two feet or, when dry, it served as a large stage for ballets, equestrian shows, balls, and diplomatic receptions. Because of its ability to be used in a variety of ways, many elements of the Farnese's design were duplicated in the court theaters that kings and princes constructed throughout Europe in the seventeenth century. The multiple uses of the orchestra-level floor was one particularly appealing feature of the Farnese's design, since throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries court theaters continued to be used for ballets, balls, and other artistic productions in addition to their roles as venues for drama and opera.

**A TASTE FOR SPECTACLE.** The urbane and sophisticated court culture of the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods included a penchant for elaborate spectacles that glorified local princes and their dynasties. Throughout the sixteenth century the splendor of these events steadily grew, as Italy's noble houses competed against each other to mount ever more imposing testimonies to their wealth and prestige. Around 1500, ma-

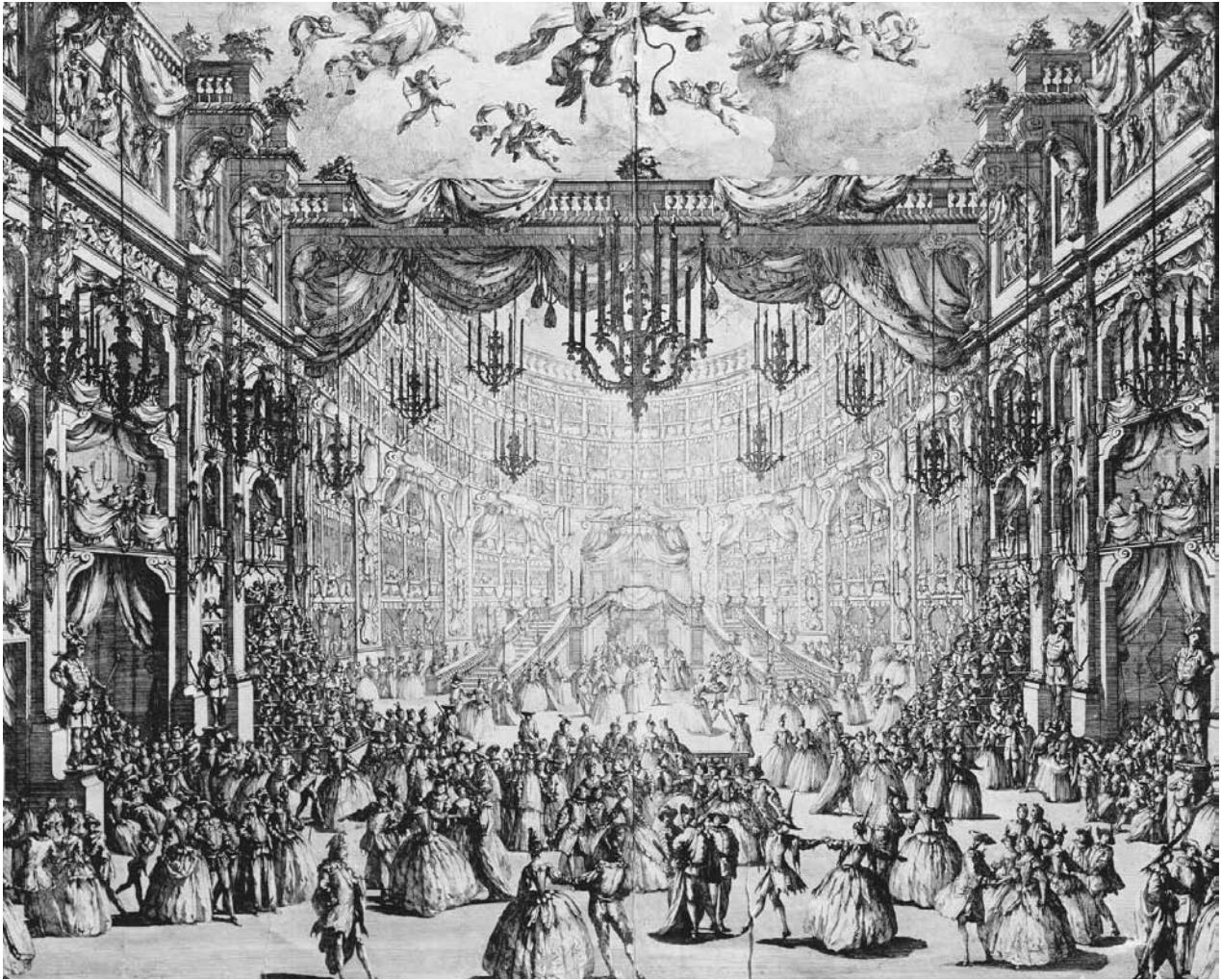


Interior of the Teatro Farnese in Parma, Italy. © RUGGERO VANNI/CORBIS.

major architects and artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael Sanzio, Donato Bramante, and Michelangelo Buonarroti were already being commissioned to design scenery, costumes, and stage machinery for use in these festivities. Italy continued to provide Europe with a wealth of innovations in stagecraft throughout the Baroque period, and designers who had learned their craft in the peninsula's court theaters became a prized commodity in theaters throughout Europe until the end of the eighteenth century. Giacomo Torelli and the members of the Bibiena family were among the most prominent of the many accomplished production designers Italy produced, and the designs of these figures shaped tastes from Paris to Moscow. Giacomo Torelli (1608–1678) was a Venetian who began his career as a designer of theaters in that city before he devoted himself to solving problems of scenery changes. The designer pioneered a mechanism by which the scenery might be changed in a single operation. He attached the backdrops of his productions to rails that ran under the stage with a set of ropes and hung these drops from poles running above the stage. With the turn of a mechanism backstage, the entire set was quickly taken away and replaced by another. Until this innovation, the backdrops that had been used in the theater had merely suggested a time

and place in which the action was to have taken place. With the new method, scenes could be changed quickly and relatively effortlessly, and in the productions that Torelli designed after his innovation, he defined more precisely the places in which the play's action occurred. His productions thus fed a new taste for realism that was growing in the Italian theater and throughout Europe generally at the end of the seventeenth century.

**THE BIBIENA FAMILY.** This group of amazingly fertile artists became a dynasty of stage designers that influenced tastes in theatrical productions everywhere in eighteenth-century Europe. The family's rise to prominence began with Fernando Bibiena (1657–1743), who was the son of a painter from the city of Bologna. Fernando trained as an architect and painter before being appointed as a court artist in the ducal court at Parma. There he developed into a theatrical designer, relying on his knowledge of illusionistic painting to create sets that appeared more real than those that had previously been popular. Until this time, the backdrops used in most stage productions had sight lines that converged to a single vanishing point to simulate the recession of the horizon. Those who designed these scenic backdrops for court theaters were expected to take into account the



Stage design by Bibiena for an eighteenth-century ball. THE ART ARCHIVE/BIBLIOTECA COMUNALE IESI/DAGLI ORTI.

precise place in which the reigning prince sat in the auditorium, so that from his vantage point, the scenery appeared pleasing and correct to his eyes. Such techniques were commonly used in designs not only for the theater, but in Baroque garden and palace architecture as well. Fernando Bibiena, however, did away with such conventions, and instead relied upon his skills as an illusionistic painter to create spaces that appeared real to spectators on both sides of the theater, rather than just from the center. This innovation known as “scenes from angles” (*scena per angola*) made use of two horizontal vanishing points on both sides of the stage backdrop rather than in the center as designers had previously done. Fernando received aid in his efforts from several of his brothers, and a number of his sons carried on this tradition well into the eighteenth century in court theaters throughout the continent. Bibiena’s sons, in particular, developed sumptuous production values, very

often staging scores of operas. As their fame spread and they received commissions and distinguished appointments throughout Europe, their designs were avidly imitated even in places where they never worked.

**COMMEDIA DELL’ARTE.** During the seventeenth century the sudden and meteoric rise of the opera in many Italian courts and cities threatened to eclipse the popularity of all other forms of theater. While spoken plays continued to be written and performed, it was the new musical dramas, with their complex and acrobatic ballets and other interludes, that attracted the greatest noble patronage throughout Italy. In some centers, notably Rome, plays continued to be performed alongside the new operas. But in the great developing centers of opera—cities like Venice, Milan, and Naples—opera dominated the theater. One older form of comedy inherited from the late Renaissance, the *commedia dell’arte*, still managed to sustain its popularity against the

sudden rise of the opera. The commedia's forms had largely been fixed by the end of the sixteenth century. These productions made use of a stock cast of characters that included a Venetian merchant, a Bolognese lawyer, two elderly men, one or several pairs of lovers, a retinue of servants, and four masked characters. Other conventions governed the commedia's performance. The lovers, for instance, always spoke in the distinguished Tuscan dialect—the language spoken in and around the city of Florence—while the servants spoke rougher colloquial Italian dialects drawn from less distinguished regions. The commedia had originally developed from the street and traveling troupes that were common in late Renaissance Italy, but even by the late sixteenth century the art form had already acquired a broad audience. Commedia troupes, for instance, performed at noble weddings, and they frequently provided entertainment at court. During the seventeenth century more than 35 of the troupes performed throughout the peninsula, and these numbers steadily mounted in the early eighteenth century. The commedia also spread far beyond Italy, and its influence was particularly vigorous in seventeenth-century France, where its conventions affected the comic writing of Molière and gave birth to the Comédie-Italienne, a troupe of comic performers that staged works in its traditions. The commedia was by and large an improvised art form that nevertheless had specific characters that needed to be recreated anew in each performance. By the mid-eighteenth century commentators on the art criticized the commedia's decline into mere slapstick humor and its overt physicality and violence as a departure from the medium's early intentions. In 1750, the Italian dramatist and librettist Carlo Goldoni (1707–1793) announced his intention to reform the commedia dell'arte when he published a collection of sixteenth-century comedies at Venice. Goldoni relied on many of the conventions of the by-now well-established art, but at the same time he attempted to mold its comedy into a new form that was more credible and realistic. In place of the formerly improved art form, though, the new genre that he fashioned was a literary art form, with its plays being written down and performed from a text. His example of a comic theater that was based in real-life situations was immediately popular and produced a spate of similar comedies in Venice and eventually throughout Italy in the mid- and later eighteenth century.

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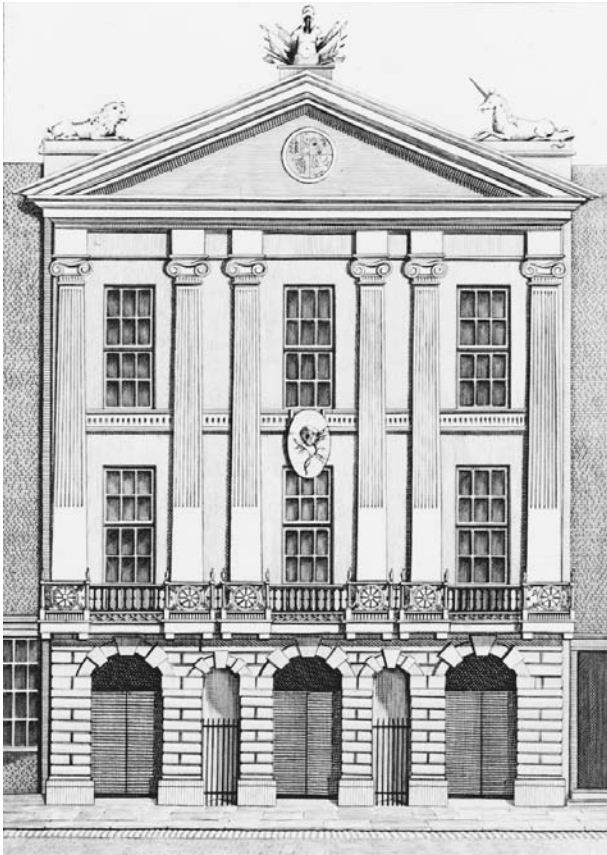
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## RESTORATION DRAMA IN ENGLAND

### DRAMA DURING THE PURITAN COMMONWEALTH.

Despite a decree of the Parliament in 1642 that outlawed dramatic performances, the stage did not completely disappear from English life during the English Civil Wars and the subsequent Commonwealth. In the years between 1640 and 1660, English Puritans tried to refashion many elements of English life, government, and politics. Since the time of Queen Elizabeth I, the Puritans had battled against the theater, and the movement's most outspoken critics of the stage had long judged London's playhouses to be haunts of Satan. Puritan opposition to the theater arose, in part, from an astute understanding of the role that the medieval church had played in the development of drama, and the many figures that attacked the theater in the period realized that the custom of staging plays had arisen from the mystery and morality plays that had been common in the country before the rise of the Reformation. At the same time, Puritans shared an abiding distrust for all ritualized and theatrical displays, and they believed that evil lay at the heart of the pomp and magnificence of the stage as well as in the elaborate rituals of kingship and the Church of England. But while the parliamentary ordinances enacted in 1642 against the theater were clear, several loopholes in the law still allowed some minor forms of drama to flourish. During the period of the Puritan Commonwealth (1649–1660), it became a common custom for England's great noble families—many of whom had sided with the royalist cause—to stage plays and operas in their homes. Some of these productions were actually staged by professionals and performed for paying audiences. Short dramas, too, were sometimes performed furtively at fairs or in small towns on holidays; and the rise of drolls or traveling wits that toured the country entertaining crowds with short skits was yet another way in which theater survived in England during the 1650s. In the country's great public schools, institutions that had served to educate sons of nobles and gentlemen since the later Middle Ages, dramas continued to be used, as they were in Catholic Europe, to teach Latin and Greek as well as to expose students to ancient rhetoric and style. At the same time, while regulations against the theater were sometimes ignored, circumvented, or relaxed by the government during the Puritan period, the age was



The exterior of the Drury Lane Theater, London. MARY EVANS  
PICTURE LIBRARY.

nevertheless a definitive break from the vigorous tradition of public drama that had flourished in England since the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I had each thrown their support squarely behind the theater and had opposed Puritan efforts to rid the country of drama. As a result, most of London's actors, playwrights, and theater owners had been royalist supporters during the Civil War, and when their side was defeated, many were consequently forced into exile. Many of those who stayed in England took up other occupations. Very few who were active on the London stage in the years before 1642 lived to see the Restoration of the monarchy and the revival of the theater after 1660. Thus when Charles II returned to assume the throne in that year and permitted theatrical performances, the London theater by and large had to be created anew.

**THE NEW THEATRES.** During his exile from England, Charles I had been a guest of the royal court of France, and thus he had witnessed firsthand the cultivated courtly entertainments that were common in Paris at the time. One of his first measures upon returning to

England was to license two acting troupes. The first became known as the King's Men and was directed by Sir Thomas Killigrew (1612–1683). Killigrew was a member of a royalist family from Cornwall, and had grown up in the court of Charles I. In the king's service he had played something of the role of a court wit and had published two tragicomedies before the closure of London's theaters. When the English Civil Wars had driven the Stuarts from England, Killigrew had remained loyal to the Stuart prince Charles and had followed him into exile. Charles granted the second license for a dramatic company to Sir William Davenant (1606–1668), a supporter who had received permission to found a theater shortly before the 1642 parliamentary measures that abolished the stage in London. Davenant had a colorful life. He may have been the godson of William Shakespeare, although court gossip in the seventeenth century sometimes alleged that he was the great playwright's illegitimate child. During the Civil Wars Davenant had served King Charles I by running supply ships from the continent to England, and in 1649, the king's widow had sent him on a mission to Maryland, expecting him to serve as governor. His ship was intercepted by Puritan forces, and he was imprisoned for five years. Shortly after his release he secured permission from Oliver Cromwell's Puritan government to stage a production of an early opera in the private home of an English noble. The performances were mounted before a paying audience, and thus circumvented Parliament's prohibitions against theatrical performances. When Charles II granted Davenant a license to start a theater, controversy soon erupted among other contenders for the honor. Sir William Herbert, another contender, sued in London's courts, charging that Davenant had been a Puritan sympathizer, and that he had used his influence with Oliver Cromwell's government to circumvent Puritan regulations against the stage. Despite these challenges, Charles' decision was upheld, and Davenant's company became known as the "Duke of York's Men." Killigrew and Davenant were both aware of the advantages that a smaller, French-styled theater offered, and so they established their theaters, not in the large outdoor arenas that had been popular in London at the turn of the seventeenth century, but in smaller more intimate settings. Like the Parisian theaters of the period, both Killigrew and Davenant initially converted indoor tennis courts into playhouses, before building new structures in which to perform. In 1663, Killigrew's company moved to a new theater specially constructed in Drury Lane near Covent Garden. Although this structure was eventually destroyed and replaced by several later structures, a theater still stands on the same spot in London today. Dav-



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***TENSE MOMENTS AT THE THEATER**

**INTRODUCTION:** The English diarist Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) left one of the great records of life in the Restoration age. He attended the theater almost daily and recorded his thoughts about almost every play performed in London during the 1660s. In the entry he goes about his business during the day, attends the theater, and then goes back to work in the evening—a fairly typical pattern. The present entry from 20 February 1668, is notable because he remarks how that evening’s play was intended to criticize the immorality of King Charles II, who was in attendance. Charles II, though, was fairly tolerant, and what might have caused the government to close a theater in an earlier period was now allowed to proceed relatively unhindered. It is interesting to note that Pepys refers to Nell (Nell Gwyn) speaking the prologue of the offending play, *The Duke of Lerma*. She herself was soon to become one of the king’s mistresses.

Up, and to the office a while, and thence to White Hall by coach with Mr. Batelier with me, whom I took up in the street. I thence by water to Westminster Hall, and there with Lord Brouncker, Sir T. Harvy, Sir J. Minnes, did wait all the morning to speak to members about our business, thinking our business of tickets would come before the House to-day, but we did alter our minds about the

petition to the House, sending in the paper to them. But the truth is we were in a great hurry, but it fell out that they were most of the morning upon the business of not prosecuting the first victory; which they have voted one of the greatest miscarriages of the whole war, though they cannot lay the fault anywhere yet, because Harman is not come home. This kept them all the morning, which I was glad of. So down to the Hall, where my wife by agreement stayed for me at Mrs. Michell’s, and there was Mercer and the girl, and I took them to Wilkinson’s the cook’s in King Street (where I find the master of the house hath been dead for some time), and there dined, and thence by one o’clock to the King’s house: a new play, “The Duke of Lerma,” of Sir Robert Howard’s: where the King and Court was; and Knepp and Nell spoke the prologue most excellently, especially Knepp, who spoke beyond any creature I ever heard. The play designed to reproach our King with his mistresses, that I was troubled for it, and expected it should be interrupted; but it ended all well, which salved all. The play a well-writ and good play, only its design I did not like of reproaching the King, but altogether a very good and most serious play. Thence home, and there a little to the office, and so home to supper, where Mercer with us, and sang, and then to bed.

**SOURCE:** Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*. Vol. 2. Ed. Henry B. Wheatley (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1896): 330–331.

enant’s company, the Duke’s Men, moved from facility to facility throughout the 1660s, but by 1673 they had taken up residence in a theater designed for them in Dorset Gardens by the great architect Sir Christopher Wren. Both houses seem to have combined some of the latest French innovations in the theater with older English traditions. Although the stages were framed with a proscenium arch in the manner of Continental theaters, the stages curved and jutted outward so that players might act in close proximity to the audiences, as they had done in Elizabethan times. Changeable scenery was used, although each company had a relatively small supply of sets that suggested interiors and exteriors. Productions, in other words, were not designed anew, but relied on sets taken from the company’s repertory of stock sets.

**CHANGING TASTES.** Despite the Restoration of the monarchy Puritan sentiments continued to flourish in late seventeenth-century London, and the theater consequently retained an “air of the forbidden” for many in the capital. The period’s audience, while large, was drawn from more elite and cultivated circles than in Eliz-

abethan or early Stuart times. In the first few years many of London’s productions were adapted from earlier Tudor and Stuart plays, but soon the Restoration stage acquired its own stock of playwrights. While every genre of dramatic writing—from tragedy and history plays to glittering comedies—had flourished in the era of Shakespeare and Jonson, Restoration playwrights most often satisfied their cultivated and witty patrons with a long succession of satirical comedies of manners. This new genre made use of gossip, witty conversation, double entendre, and sardonic wit to mock the foibles and shortcomings of all classes of English men and women, but it especially focused on the problems of high society. Molière was one very great influence on the comedy of manners, although the English genre outdid the French comedy of the time with its overt sexual humor. And like the moral ambiguity that lay at the heart of many of the works of Molière, many English playwrights of the time were unconcerned with drawing moralistic lessons from the events around which they based their comedies. George Etherege (c. 1635–c. 1692) helped to establish the conventions of comedy of manners with his 1664 production of *The Comical Revenge, or Love in a*

*Tub*, which treated the exploits of the man of society Sir Frederick Frolick. At this point Etherege's dramas drew their style from older traditions, relying on verse rather than prose in their dialogue. In his *She Would, if She Could* (1668), Etherege jettisoned the traditional verse and instead adopted a more naturalistic prose style, something that he perfected in his last work, *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676). For these efforts the king knighted him in 1680. Like many of the Restoration dramatists, Etherege was a brilliant amateur. The writing of plays, in other words, was only one of many pastimes and avocations for this man of letters, who also served as an ambassador for the king. William Wycherley (1640–1716) was another figure who, like many of England's late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century dramatists, combined a life of pleasure and educated pastimes with writing for the stage. Wycherley vacillated throughout his life between Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Puritanism. While he was being educated in France as a young man, he converted to Roman Catholicism, but fell under Puritan influence when he returned to England. He came to the attention of Charles II's court, and he took up a life as a wit in its circles, writing a succession of plays that mocked the hypocrisy and foibles of aristocratic society. These works reveal the internal tensions that Wycherley's accommodation to

court produced. In 1680, he renounced his life of pleasure when he fell under the spell of the Puritan Countess of Drogheda, and the couple married. The countess soon died, however, and a dispute over her will left Wycherley penniless. King James II eventually rescued him from debtor's prison, awarding him a lifelong pension. By the time he died in 1716, he had reverted to Roman Catholicism once again.

**JOHN DRYDEN.** While he wrote brilliant comedies of manners, the greatest playwright of the period, John Dryden (1631–1700), is today best remembered for his tragedies, a type of play that was relatively undeveloped by Restoration dramatists. Dryden's family had sided with Parliament in the struggles against King Charles I, and in his early life, the future playwright attended the prominent Westminster School before obtaining a Bachelor of Arts from Trinity College in Cambridge. His first play, *The Wild Gallant*, was produced in 1663, and although it was notable for its bawdy language, it was not a great success. The following year he participated with Sir Robert Howard in writing the tragedy *The Indian Queen*, but it was not until he wrote a sequel to this play, *The Indian Emperour* (1665), that he scored his first definitive hit. Other successes followed, and by 1668 Thomas Killigrew retained the author to write plays to be performed solely by his company, the King's Men. The works he produced in these first years working with the King's Men were mostly comic farces and burlesques that featured a central hero's trials and tribulations set in exotic locales and filled with much blustering, on-stage fighting, and larger-than-life antics. In 1672, he began to move away from this genre of heroic plays with his lively and witty comedy *Marriage a la Mode*, an urbane work in the comedy of manners vein. Perhaps his greatest achievement of these first years in the theater, though, was his tragedy, *All For Love* (1677), a play based on William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, which Dryden wrote in unrhymed or blank verse. In the following year the author severed his long-standing association with the "King's Men," which had fallen on hard times as a result of poor management, and he offered his services to their competitors, the "Duke of York's Men." During the 1680s the author concentrated more and more on his poetry, even as he also became embroiled in political controversy. A key issue of these years revolved around the question of the royal succession. Charles II's brother James was a Catholic, who supported greater religious toleration, not only for Roman Catholics, but for all dissenters generally. Although he stood in line to inherit the throne, an increasingly vocal faction in Parliament known as the Whigs favored the

king's bastard son, the Duke of Monmouth. For his part in defending the opposing Tory party's views, Charles II named Dryden poet laureate, but when James did succeed to the throne and was soon forced into exile, Dryden lost the position to his Whig opponent, the playwright and poet Thomas Shadwell. Deprived of the income his royal pension provided, the poet returned to the theater in the final years of his life. His plays alternately succeeded and failed, and he began to write the dramatic librettos for some of Henry Purcell's operas in these years, too. At this time in his life, Dryden continued to write literary criticism and to translate classical works into English. When he died in 1700, he was considered the grand old man of English letters and he was buried in Westminster Abbey. Unlike many of the literary figures of the late seventeenth century, Dryden's reputation has consistently remained high over the centuries, and his works—although not of the high literary caliber of Shakespeare or Jonson—have continued to be studied, while the efforts of other Restoration dramatists have fallen in and out of favor or largely been ignored by subsequent generations.

**WOMEN AND THE RESTORATION THEATRE.** While the quality of many Restoration dramatists continues to be debated, the theater of this era was innovative in allowing women roles as actresses, stage managers, and playwrights. Charles II's reestablishment of the theater in the years after 1660 lifted the traditional bans against female performers, and in the years after 1660 the first female actresses began to attract considerable attention on the London scene. The great Nell Gwyn (1650–1687) was among the first to leave her mark on the English stage. Born the daughter of a bankrupt father and a mother who was a madam, Gwyn grew up tending bar in her mother's establishment. Later she sold oranges in the theater and became the lover of a prominent actor, which paved the way for her debut in 1665. During the years that followed, Gwyn reigned as the supreme actress of the Drury Lane Theater, notable for her abilities in comic roles. By 1669 she had come to the attention of Charles II and she soon became his mistress. The king provided well for Nell. She retired from the stage and lived in an elegant house Charles provided. Known for her extravagance, she played a key role at court by virtue of the elaborate parties she held. When the king died in 1685, Gwyn was heavily indebted, but Charles's brother James II settled her obligations and awarded her the enormous pension of £1,500 a year. She did not have long to enjoy her newfound stability. Apparently the victim of a stroke, she died in 1687. Her career was extraordinary among the women who made their way into

the theater in the later seventeenth century, and did much to earn the reputation that actresses were little more than prostitutes and courtesans. Gwyn's chief allure on the stage had consisted in her physical attributes as well as her sense of comic timing, but her actual dramatic career had been quite brief. Elizabeth Barry, who was the ward of the troupe director William Davenant, made her debut on the London stage in the late 1670s and continued to perform there until 1707. She was said to be a highly dramatic actress, widely admired for her tragic roles. Through her association with Davenant, she met John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, and the two were lovers for many years. The notoriety these famous women attracted helped to fix the dubious reputation that actresses had in the minds of many at the time, but not every woman connected with the theater moved in such illustrious and rarefied circles. In her youth Anne Bracegirdle (1671–1748) had been the ward of the actor and theatrical manager Thomas Betterton, who taught her acting and put her in his productions when she was only six years old. William Congreve and Nicholas Rowe wrote parts especially for her, and she probably secretly married Congreve. Widely admired for her piety and virtuous character, Bracegirdle, like Barry, retired in 1707, although she lived for an additional forty years. After her death in 1748 she was buried



Engraving of Aphra Behn, the first professional woman playwright in seventeenth-century England. © MICHAEL NICHOLSON/CORBIS.

in Westminster Abbey, a testimony to the high regard in which she continued to be held. Barry and Bracegirdle's retirement from the stage prepared the way for Anne Oldfield (1683–1730) to reign supreme as the queen of London's theaters.

#### FEMALE PLAYWRIGHTS AND STAGE MANAGERS.

Women participated in the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theater in London as playwrights and stage managers as well. During the 1670s and 1680s Aphra Behn (1640–1689) entertained audiences in the capital with a string of witty comedies of manners, thus becoming the first English-speaking woman to earn her livelihood by writing. Behn's life had all the components of high drama. Born in the countryside in Kent in southeast England, she traveled as a teenager to the Caribbean where she lived for a time in Dutch Guiana. This environment may have fostered her distaste for the commercial Dutch that peppers her later writing. She was apparently forced into an arranged and unhappy marriage from which her husband's death soon freed her. Coming to the attention of the royal court because of her intelligence and humor, Charles II entrusted her with the task of spying in the Netherlands. She was imprisoned for debts for a time when she returned to England,

and thus turned to writing to support herself. Her first play, *The Forced Marriage*, was a drama that attacked the conventions of arranged marriage. She followed this play with other serious works, but then turned to comedy. She scored a great success with *The Rover*, a two-part play staged in 1677 and 1681. The play still ranks as one of her most important contributions, although her fiction, including the colonial novel *Oroonoko*, tends to be more widely admired than her plays. She nevertheless established herself on the London stage as a powerful force. At the same time, her unconventional career subjected her to a great deal of criticism, and scandal circulated around her private life. Her career prepared the way for at least two other female dramatists—Susanna Centlivre (1667–1723) and Charlotte Charke (1713–c. 1760)—to follow her example in the eighteenth century. Both women were actresses who eventually turned to play writing, while Behn herself never performed on the stage. Nineteen works survive from Susanna Centlivre, mostly from the first two decades of the eighteenth century, but the author may have written a number of works far earlier under the pen name S. Carroll. Although her career has largely been forgotten today and her works did not rank as great art, they do nevertheless display a broad reading in French and Spanish theatrical traditions as well as those of the English masters. Charlotte Charke, by contrast, only wrote three plays during her tumultuous and scandal-ridden life, but she left behind a memoir of her time in the English theater, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (1755), that still makes for fascinating reading. The daughter of the accomplished actor and stage manager Colley Cibber, Charke's strong personality and unconventional behavior alienated her from her family. When her theatrical career soured, she took to dressing in male clothing and to working in men's professions. Eventually, she took up with another woman and the two traveled together as husband and wife, with Charke imitating the man. The careers of those women who served as stage managers in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England were more conventional than Charke's. Most gained a role in the theater through their husbands. Lady Henrietta Maria Davenant, the wife of the troupe manager and actor William Davenant, assumed control of her husband's troupe, the Duke's Men, following his death in 1668, eventually leading to successes and merging it with the failing King's Men, the other major London troupe of the day. This newly formed company worked under the direction of the actor Thomas Betterton (1635–1710), who had married the successful actress Mary Saunderson (d. 1712). Together the Bettertons shaped tastes in the London theater, and they also trained many promi-

ment actors and actresses, including the important actress Anne Bracegirdle.

**SCOPE OF THE RESTORATION THEATER.** Although the re-establishment of the English monarchy resulted in a great revival of the theater in later seventeenth-century London, the scale of the Restoration theater was by any standard far more modest than the great age of William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson that had preceded it. Audiences, although present in the Restoration playhouses, had shrunk, due in large part to the influence of Puritanism and other radical religious teachings that attacked the theater. These groups continued to have plenty of fodder for their criticisms in the amoral and often bawdy productions that were mounted in London under the reign of the later Stuart monarchs Charles II and James II. Nevertheless, royal favor was strongly behind the theater, although the receipts of the two London troupes, the Duke's Men and the King's Men, seem to have dwindled during the 1680s. Eventually, the King's Men was threatened with bankruptcy, and the two troupes concluded a merger and set up residence in the Drury Lane Theater in Covent Garden. Thus for a time, only one theater entertained London's audiences, a sign of the relatively limited appeal that many of the theatrical productions had in late seventeenth-century London. Where a vibrant popular theatrical tradition had flourished in Elizabethan and early Stuart England, the theater now served to entertain the sons of aristocrats and their stylish circles. The theater continued to cause controversy, and in the minds of many English men and women the Stuarts' support of the institution was consonant with their Catholic sympathies. When James II was forced into exile in 1688, tastes in the capital began to change rather quickly. The following year Parliament called the Dutch king William of Orange and his wife Queen Mary, who was James II's daughter, to assume the English throne, thus cementing the Whig party's control over the monarchy, an event that has long been referred to as England's Glorious Revolution. While William and Mary did not close London's theaters, they were less tolerant and permissive of the kind of bawdy humor and license that had prevailed under the later Stuarts. Thus as the eighteenth century approached, new standards that were more overtly moralistic governed taste on the London stage, and these mores left their imprint on the drama of the time.

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## THE HANOVERIAN THEATER

**DEATH OF DRYDEN.** From the perspective of hindsight the death of John Dryden in London in 1700 has often been seen as marking a pivotal change in the course of the English theater. While the passing of this influential playwright certainly affected English theater, moods were changing in England even before the great Dryden's death. In 1698, for instance, the fiery preacher Jeremy Collier published a bitter critique of the English stage entitled *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, a work in which he indicted the convention of Restoration drama. Collier attacked the rough language, indecent situations, and sense of license that had flourished under the later Stuart kings, and in particular, he singled out the works of George Etherege, Thomas Wycherly, and John Dryden for some of his bitterest attacks. Certainly Restoration tastes did not disappear overnight, and plays of the kind that had been performed in England over the previous four decades were staged in London during the first decades of the eighteenth century. Yet, at the same time, the resurgence of old puritanical attitudes, evident in the attacks of Collier, influenced dramatic writers of the time. A new sense of restraint sometimes referred to by historians of drama as "neoclassicism" began to flourish alongside the works of Sir John Vanbrugh (1664–1726) and others who remained faithful to Restoration traditions. None of the writers of the early eighteenth century rose to the level of Dryden's mastery over the English language and over verse. The tendency for amateurs to write for the stage continued alongside a generation of playwrights that were also actors and troupe managers in the by-now established tradition of figures like Shakespeare and Jonson. John Vanbrugh, who survived until the end of the first quarter of the century, was a figure who continued in the mold of amateur playwrights that had developed in the Restoration period. A member of Stuart court circles, he was a wit who entertained aristocrats with his charming mastery of the English language. He was also a cultivated amateur who not only wrote sparkling bawdy comedies for the London stage, but also

served as an architect to the country's nobles. His most famous buildings established a taste in England for elaborate and imposing Baroque structures, and among his most famous works were the imposing domed Castle Howard built in Yorkshire and Blenheim Palace, just outside Oxford. At the other end of the spectrum, the early eighteenth century produced the figure of Colley Cibber, the son of an accomplished sculptor, who made his way into the theater as an actor at the Drury Lane Theater around 1690. When his income from this profession proved inadequate to support his family, Cibber began to write and produce plays. Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* marked an important shift in comedy away from the light and seemingly amoral fare that had flourished in the previous years. It helped to found the new genre of "sentimental comedies" that dominated the English stage over the next century. The tone of the work was moralistic in contrast to those of the Restoration period and, in the years that followed, Cibber exerted a powerful influence over the London theater.

**IMPRESARIOS.** The father of the incendiary transvestite Charlotte Charke, Cibber became one of three managers of the Drury Lane Theatre around 1710 and, following the death of Queen Anne in 1714, he began to write political plays that supported the Whig party. For these efforts he was named England's Poet Laureate in 1730. Arrogant and difficult, he became a lightning rod for criticism, but his life illustrates the rise of a type that was to be an increasingly common figure in the eighteenth-century theater: the impresario, that is the showman who exerted powerful influence on tastes by controlling what, when, and where plays, operas, and ballets were produced. These larger-than-life figures that dominated the eighteenth-century stage were common, not only in England, but everywhere in Europe. Many controlled all aspects of production, presiding over the theaters they managed with what now seems like an indomitable will and dictatorial spirit. Of the many actors and troupe managers who filled this role, David Garrick (1717–1779) was the most famous English example. The son of an army captain, he first rose to prominence on the London stage as an actor, performing first in unlicensed theaters in the city and then rising to debut at the esteemed Drury Lane Theater. Garrick's new style of acting favored realistic portrayal rather than the artificial and rhetorical style then in use by most actors. After touring Ireland and directing a theater there, he assumed control over the Drury Lane when the institution fell on hard times. His astute sense of what audiences wanted revived the theater, so much so that when Garrick sold his share in the venture he earned the

princely sum of £35,000 for his stake. Garrick's choice of plays to be performed at the Drury Lane relied on by-then classical works drawn from the English tradition as well as new sentimental comedies popular at the time. In addition, the actor's own portrayal of Shakespearean roles and his staging of the first "Shakespeare Festival" in the bard's hometown of Stratford-Upon-Avon helped to raise the reputation of the great dramatist to the level of admiration he has enjoyed since the eighteenth century. Never again were Shakespeare's works to fall in and out of favor, for Garrick's astute productions of the poet's works—although not completely historically or textually correct by modern standards—helped to establish an abiding affection for the dramatist's achievement. At the time, England was quickly emerging as the dominant commercial and trading power of the Western world, and Garrick's influence even spread to the country's colonies. Although he never visited India, the great manager prepared the prompt books of Richard Sheridan's popular play *School for Scandal*, which were carried to India and used in the first Western production in Calcutta. While widely admired, particularly in aristocratic circles, his career as a theatrical producer was not without its setbacks. Not every production he staged in his tenure at the Drury Lane—which lasted for almost three decades following his assumption of its management in 1747—was a success. But in the cumulative effects of his productions, he shaped the experience of a generation of London theatergoers.

**RESTRICTIONS ON THE THEATER.** In the mid-eighteenth century one controversy dampened the development of the theater in London. In 1736, Henry Fielding's play, *Historical Register, For the Year 1736*, was staged at the Haymarket Theatre in the city; like Thomas Middleton's *A Game At Chess* of the previous century, it caused a sensation because of Fielding's open mockery of the prime minister Robert Walpole. Walpole responded by pushing a new measure through Parliament known as Walpole's Licensing Act in 1737. Under this law, all new dramatic productions were required to be submitted to the government for approval before being performed. In addition, the act stipulated that no productions could be performed outside the two then-existing theaters. The act produced unexpected consequences. At first it drove competent, even brilliant authors like Henry Fielding from writing for the theater for a number of years, and many of these figures turned to writing novels and other fiction, rather than drama. Thus began the great age of the English novel to which Fielding himself and other luminaries like Samuel Richardson were to contribute. They followed in the



Print *David Garrick as Richard III* (1746) by William Hogarth. MICHAEL NICHOLSON/CORBIS.

paths that figures like Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift had already trod in the decades immediately preceding the passage of the Licensing Act. The publishing of novels, in fact, became a more profitable and a less risky venture than play writing since there was now no assurance that the government might license one's works to be performed. The government's restrictions aimed to limit the performances of drama to the two royally chartered theaters that existed in London at the time, but all sorts of ingenious schemes developed to steer managers and actors around these requirements. Short dramas, skits, and other kinds of burlesques already popular in the capital at the time began to be performed in taverns and other ad hoc theaters. This music hall theater soon grew to be wildly popular, prompting the government to pass another measure directed at these institutions in 1751. The measures were ineffective since tavern owners merely formed private clubs with minimal admission requirements in order to entertain their clientele. Thus government measures actually helped speed the development of the English music hall, and by the nineteenth century there were hundreds of these institutions in the

capital. For a time in the mid-eighteenth century, though, government regulations did make it harder for serious actors to find work. As the two licensed theaters in London became the only outlet for drama, securing roles in dramatic plays became a far more difficult proposition for actors. At the same time, the crown was in these years actively chartering a number of theaters in the towns and cities in the British provinces, a development that provided work for London's actors, many of whom came to spend time, particularly in their early years, touring these cities. By the second half of the eighteenth century, working in a provincial company or touring with a traveling troupe had become a recognizable way for an actor to acquire the skills that were necessary to find role on the now more highly competitive London stage. Thus in an oblique way, the Licensing Act helped to raise the skills of those who performed in the city.

**THE ACTOR AS STAR.** If the quality of dramatic writing declined in the years immediately following the Licensing Act, the damage that government regulation inflicted on the theater was neither permanent or long-



*Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Music* by Sir Joshua Reynolds.  
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lasting. Still, in contrast to the rich tradition of the Tudor and early Stuart stage or the Restoration Theatre, eighteenth-century England produced relatively fewer plays that have remained in the repertory until modern times. A few, such as Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) or Richard Sheridan's *School for Scandal* (1777) are still performed, but far more were ephemeral productions that were staged for a while and then quickly forgotten. Even as the quality of drama declined, though, the figure of the actor or actress became far more important on the London theater scene. David Garrick, the actor turned theatrical manager who guided the Drury Theatre to great financial success, was only one of many figures who acquired a star-like status at the time. Even as he fulfilled numerous roles in the theater, he continued to act in productions, often producing great excitement when he returned to the stage. Even before Garrick's fortunes had risen, Charles Macklin (1690/1699–1797) had already cultivated a similar ca-

reer, although his personal life was far more turbulent than the gregarious Garrick. After an early career in the provinces, Macklin began to perform in London around 1725, and his career attracted great excitement over the coming decades. He played Shakespeare's famous character of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* with an altogether new twist. Instead of relying on the broad humor of the part, he transformed it into a tragic role. At the same time, Macklin's larger-than-life temper was always a problem. In 1735 he killed another actor when the two fought over a wig in the theater's Green Room. Although he was tried for manslaughter, he was never sentenced. For the rest of his life he was almost constantly involved in battles with other actors and legal cases, but his popularity as an actor was little diminished by these problems. By virtue of his incredibly long career, Macklin left an indelible imprint on the acting styles of the eighteenth century, but his success on the stage combined with his larger-than-life antics also garnered him celebrity status. Sarah Kemble Siddons (1755–1831), the greatest tragic actor of her generation, shared a similarly exalted position among the many competent, even accomplished performers of her time. The daughter of a theatrical family, she grew up touring the English provincial theaters and stepped onto the stage when she was just a child. When she threatened to marry another actor, her parents sent her off to become a servant in a noble household. They planned on her marrying a gentleman farmer, but Sarah eventually prevailed upon her parents and wed William Siddons while continuing to pursue a theatrical career. She came to the attention of David Garrick and was engaged for a performance at the Drury Lane Theatre, but when she failed to captivate audiences she returned for five years to provincial theaters. Several years later she returned to London, this time in a revival at the Drury Lane of Thomas Southerne's *Fatal Marriage*. The production was a huge success, and for the next thirty years she reigned as the unquestioned tragic actress of her generation. She also led a cultivated life as queen of the London stage until her retirement in 1812. Well educated by her parents, she was able to rise in London society. She is best remembered today from the portrait that Sir Joshua Reynolds painted of her entitled *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse*, although the artist painted the actress on other occasions, as did Thomas Gainsborough.

#### ROLE OF THE STAGE IN HANOVERIAN SOCIETY.

Despite government attempts to restrict its performance and a decline in the quality of play writing, the theater in eighteenth-century England continued to play an important role in society. In fact, the evidence suggests that



*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***OBSERVATIONS ON MRS. SIDDONS**

**INTRODUCTION:** If the eighteenth-century English stage produced few works that continued to be performed in the modern world, it was an age notable for the emergence of great actors, whose careers were avidly followed in London and other theatrical capitals throughout Europe. One of the greatest of these figures was Sarah Siddons, who ruled over the English stage as the queen of tragedy. Leigh Hunt, a noted English critic of the day, made these observations about the acting of Siddons.

To write a criticism on Mrs. Siddons is to write a panegyric, and a panegyric of a very peculiar sort, for the praise will be true. Like her elder brother, she has a marked and noble countenance and a figure more dignified than graceful, and she is like him in all his good qualities, but not any of his bad ones. If Mr. Kemble studiously meditates a step or an attitude in the midst of passion, Mrs. Siddons never thinks about either, and therefore is always natural because on occasions of great feeling it is the passions should influence the actions. Attitudes are not to be studied, as old Havard [William Havard (1710–1778), actor] used to study them, between six looking glasses: feel the passion, and the action will follow. I know it has been denied that actors sympathise with the feelings they represent, and among other critics Dr. Johnson is supposed to have denied it. ... It appears to me that the countenance cannot express a single passion perfectly unless the passion is first felt. It is easy to grin representations of joy and to pull down the muscles

of the countenance as an imitation of sorrow, but a keen observer of human nature and its effects will easily detect the cheat. There are nerves and muscles requisite to expression that will not answer the will on common occasions. But to represent a passion with truth, every nerve and muscle should be in its proper action, or the representation becomes weak and confused: melancholy is mistaken for grief and pleasure for delight. It is from this feebleness of emotion so many dull actors endeavour to supply passion with vehemence of action and voice, as jugglers are talkative and bustling to beguile scrutiny. I have somewhere heard that Mrs. Siddons has talked of the real agitation which the performance of some of her characters has made her feel.

To see the bewildered melancholy of Lady Macbeth wailing in her sleep, or the widow's mute stare of perfected misery by the corpse of the gamester Beverly, two of the sublimest pieces of acting on the English stage, would argue this point better than a thousand critics. Mrs. Siddons has the air of never being the actress; she seems unconscious that there is a motley crowd called a pit waiting to applaud her or that there are a dozen fiddlers waiting for her exit. This is always one of the marks of a great actor. The player who amuses himself by looking at the audience for admiration may be assured he never gets any. ...

**SOURCE:** Leigh Hunt, *Dramatic Essays*. Ed. W. Archer and R. W. Lowe (London: Walter Scott, 1894): 11–14. Reprinted in David Thomas, ed., *Restoration and Georgian England, 1660–1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 347–348.

the London stage in these years gradually acquired the popular audience that it had lacked during much of the Restoration period. An expanding economy in and around the city of London as well as increasing time for leisure meant that the audience that packed the city's few eighteenth-century theaters came from a broader range of society. The royal patronage that had been so key to the revival of the theater in the Restoration period was largely absent in London during the eighteenth century. The Hanoverian kings who ruled in the country during the period were not great supporters of the arts; instead they lived quietly, spending much of their time outside the capital in rural palaces and castles. The scope of royal patronage was altogether humbler in the England of the day than it was in France at the same time. Under these circumstances the English stage was a "paying proposition," but one that seems to have been enormously popular at the time. The emergence of provincial theaters in

cities in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland also provided a training ground for actors and actresses to hone their craft. If the quality of many of the dramas performed in the period has not withstood the test of time, the celebrity status that performers achieved in this era has remained a fixture of the modern drama to the present day.

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## CENTRAL EUROPE COMES OF AGE

**SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY THEATER.** In Central Europe the great and prolonged crisis of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) left this region desolate and economically depressed for much of the seventeenth century. This prolonged conflict eventually involved almost every European power, although the small states of the Holy Roman Empire were the primary battlefield for a conflict that grew to internecine proportions and which brought famine, disease, and depopulation in its wake. As a result of this devastation, the development of a secular, professionalized theater similar to that which had appeared in England, Spain, and France in the seventeenth century was delayed for several generations. At the same time, the performance of religious drama remained very much alive in seventeenth-century Central Europe. The Jesuit dramas performed in the order's schools followed much the same path of development that these productions took elsewhere in Catholic Europe. Reformation and Counter-Reformation polemical dramas, which satirized the positions of religious opponents or glorified the triumphs of Protestants or Catholics, was another dramatic tradition inherited from the sixteenth century that was very much alive in Central Europe generally, and in Catholic Germany and Austria in particular. Passion plays, the rural counterpart to the imposing Jesuit school dramas, also began to flourish in these years. The most famous of these productions is now the Oberammergau Passion Play, which was first staged in 1634 and has been staged at decade intervals since that time, but quite a few of the imposing, many-days long productions began to be performed in the seventeenth century. The Passion Play inherited much from the tradition of late-medieval mystery cycles, the imposing, often weeks-long productions that accompanied fairs or major religious holidays in the fifteenth century. At the same time, both the Jesuit drama and the Passion Play relied on newer staging techniques and a more compact and less rambling plot that often defended Catholic truth in line with the demands of the Counter-Reformation. Musical interludes, choral singing, and even choreographed dances were just a few of the other features that found their way into these plays. There was certainly a huge divide that separated the cultivated Jesuit school dramas from the rural Passion Play. Over time, the works of the Jesuit theater came, in fact, to more closely resemble operas than dramas. At the same time, both forms of theater—one popular, the other urbane—largely arose from the religious controversies

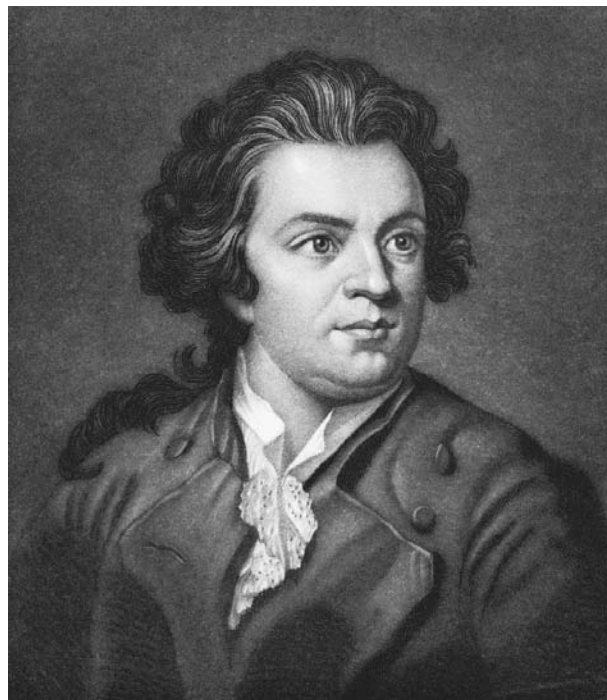
of the period, and as these disputes grew less vicious toward the end of the seventeenth century, the works were performed less frequently.

**ANDREAS GRYPHIUS.** Despite the bleak condition of much of Germany's cultural life in the seventeenth century, every now and then there were notable bright spots on the horizon. Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664), the greatest German poet of the seventeenth century, was one of these. He had been a refugee as a child, having been forced to flee his native town in Silesia during the Thirty Years' War. As he moved from place to place he acquired a remarkably good education. Eventually, he received the patronage of a noble, who recognized his literary talents and financed his travels through Europe for several years. Returning to Silesia in 1647, he became a government official, and from this relative security he began to write a series of tragic masterpieces infused with a pessimistic, yet grand tone. Affected by ancient Stoicism, Gryphius' works treated Christian and heroic themes, intoning the necessity of martyrdom to defend religious principles and truths. The sense of resolute destiny is less pronounced in three comedies the poet wrote in the later years of his life, but a somber mood pervades most of the great author's verse and drama.

**THE SMALL STATE.** The rural character of much of Central Europe had a profound effect on theatrical traditions in the region. No city in Central Europe at the time was of a comparable size to the great urban centers of Western or Mediterranean Europe; to this day, most of the German-speaking peoples of Central Europe continue to live in towns that are much smaller than the great metropolises of France, the Netherlands, and England. While Germany may have had relatively few cities of any great size, it did have princely courts in great profusion. During the seventeenth century, the political disintegration of Central Europe accelerated, in large part as a consequence of the Thirty Years' War. The power of the Holy Roman Empire, the loose confederation of states in the region, became ever more fictional. At the same time in the individual states and territories of the empire, princes became ever more concerned with increasing their power and authority over their subjects in ways that were similar to the absolutist political innovations common to France and other great European states at the time. The support of the arts, music, drama, and literature became a hallmark of many of these princes' policies, since great achievements in the arts and humanities added luster to their reputations and international prestige. As the problems of the seventeenth century began to fade, scores of German princes began to support the development of court theaters on a pre-

viously unknown scale, importing Italian and French architects to build new elegant structures to serve as venues for the opera, the ballet and, to a lesser extent, drama. Thus if Germany failed to develop a single metropolitan capital similar to London or Paris, the circumstances of its court life brought about the flourishing of “high culture” in every corner of the country. This phenomenon was a direct result of the political situation that was bred in the German *Kleinstaat* or “small state,” and the tendency to support the arts generously at the local level has persisted in the country until modern times. Even today, there is scarcely any town of middling size in Central Europe that is without its own opera and dramatic theater. Many of these institutions trace their origins back to the early-modern princes that founded them.

**COURT THEATERS AND TRAVELING TROUPES.** The economic realities of these small principalities meant that very few rulers could support performing groups on the same scale as Louis XIV and other great kings at the time. While a few of the German states like Austria and Brandenburg Prussia were of considerable size and wealth, most had far more limited economic resources. Despite their more modest resources, many German princes specialized in supporting the arts. One of the first positions that the great composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) took after completing his education was as music master at the court of Cöthen, where a music-loving prince generally provided the resources Bach needed for his composition to flourish. Within a few years, though, his patron’s tastes had changed, and his prince cut back on the music master’s budgets. Bach soon moved on, finding work in other more congenial pastures. Similar patterns of patronage also affected the theater for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While some princes favored the drama, most devoted their attentions to the opera and the ballet, the two most popular performing arts at the time. And while many courts had their own theater, it was most often given over to the performance of these arts, rather than to the production of plays. By contrast, in Germany’s towns and cities dramas appear to have been popular, and from the early seventeenth century troupes of traveling performers are well recorded throughout the country. Audiences in German cities avidly supported the performances of Italian *Commedia dell’arte* troupes as well as the dramas staged by a number of English groups that toured the country. By the mid-seventeenth century many German-speaking actors had joined these English groups, and over time, they took over these companies altogether. But a traveling theater was ill suited to high standards of production, given the realities of German cultural life. The



Portrait of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

country was badly divided by religious divisions, and troupes that traveled in both Protestant and Catholic areas needed to have different plays at hand to entertain audiences that were living under quite different social, political, and religious circumstances. At the same time, the great linguistic divisions in the country meant that dialogue needed to be carefully tailored to take account of the vast differences that separated north from south and east from west. Under these circumstances it was not uncommon for a troupe of traveling players to have as many as 100 plays in their repertoire, a situation that was not well suited to developing a great dramatic art.

**EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CHANGES.** Toward the middle of the eighteenth century the drama began to develop in Germany in new ways as a talented group of writers produced works that spoke, not to the tastes of the court, but to the country’s developing cities. The fashion of these new plays was shaped by bourgeois sensibilities, rather than by aristocratic pretensions. In this regard the theater of the time has long been termed “middle-class drama,” since it was aimed not at court circles, but at well-to-do city dwellers who now had greater leisure time and disposable income to attend the theater. The rise of this new “middle-class” theater was not just a German phenomenon, but occurred in almost every country in Europe around the same time. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), the first German author

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***ENGLISH DRAMA AND GERMAN TASTES**

**INTRODUCTION:** The emergence of a national theater in Germany in the mid- and later eighteenth century was a subject that produced a great deal of debate among intellectuals in the country. While French models of theater had been popular in the court theaters of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the new “middle-class” or bourgeois writers of later years looked for inspiration to the English and the new breed of French dramatists of the Enlightenment. Of these playwrights, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was the leader. In a letter he describes the stunting influence that the imitation of French playwrights Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine had had on the development of the German drama, and instead insisted on imitating the greatness of Shakespeare.

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**SOURCE:** Gotthold Lessing, *Briefe, die neueste Litteratur betreffen* (*Letters Concerning the Most Recent Literature*), in *German and Dutch Theatre, 1600–1848*. Ed. George W. Brandt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 195–196.

to follow this path, was the son of a prominent Lutheran theologian, and although he never renounced his faith, he used his works to satirize religious hypocrisy and to mock those who blindly repeated received wisdom. Affected by the ideas of the Enlightenment, he had also read the works of many philosophers, and like the French playwright and encyclopedist Denis Diderot he aimed to capture “real-life” situations. In opposition to those who argued that the German theater should imitate the great but artificial tragedies of French figures like Racine and Corneille, Lessing supported a drama that was naturalistic. He began his career by producing several successful works for the Leipzig stage before his parents called him home and encouraged him to enroll in medical school. Although he eventually took his degree, he

returned to play writing soon afterwards, moving first to Berlin where he came into contact with an impressive circle of intellectuals. Over time, he served as an advisor to a group of private theatregoers in the city of Hamburg, who had decided in 1765 to found a theater in their town, the first such public venture in Central Europe. When this scheme soured in 1770, Lessing moved on to become court librarian in the relatively small state of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. Despite its small size the state possessed in the small town of Wolfenbüttel one of the most impressive libraries in all Europe, and although Lessing was quite unhappy there, he used the time to write for the theater and to publish theoretical works on the drama. One of his most important plays, *Nathan the Wise* (1779), dates from these years, and argued in a dar-

ing fashion that the ethical impact of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam was largely similar. While *Nathan the Wise* was a profoundly serious work, many of Lessing's most notable plays were comedies, including the popular *Minna von Barnhelm*, a work that treats the concept of honor. The author's tragedy *Miss Sara Sampson*, too, is today considered among his most appealing works. It was Lessing's self-expressed intention throughout his life to establish a "national theater" in the German language. It was an ambitious goal, given the long tradition of regional particularity, political division, and linguistic differences that separated the German states from each other. At the same time, the playwright's ambitions were to be largely realized in the coming generation. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, an enormously talented group of dramatists, which included figures like Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), took up the challenge that Lessing had identified.

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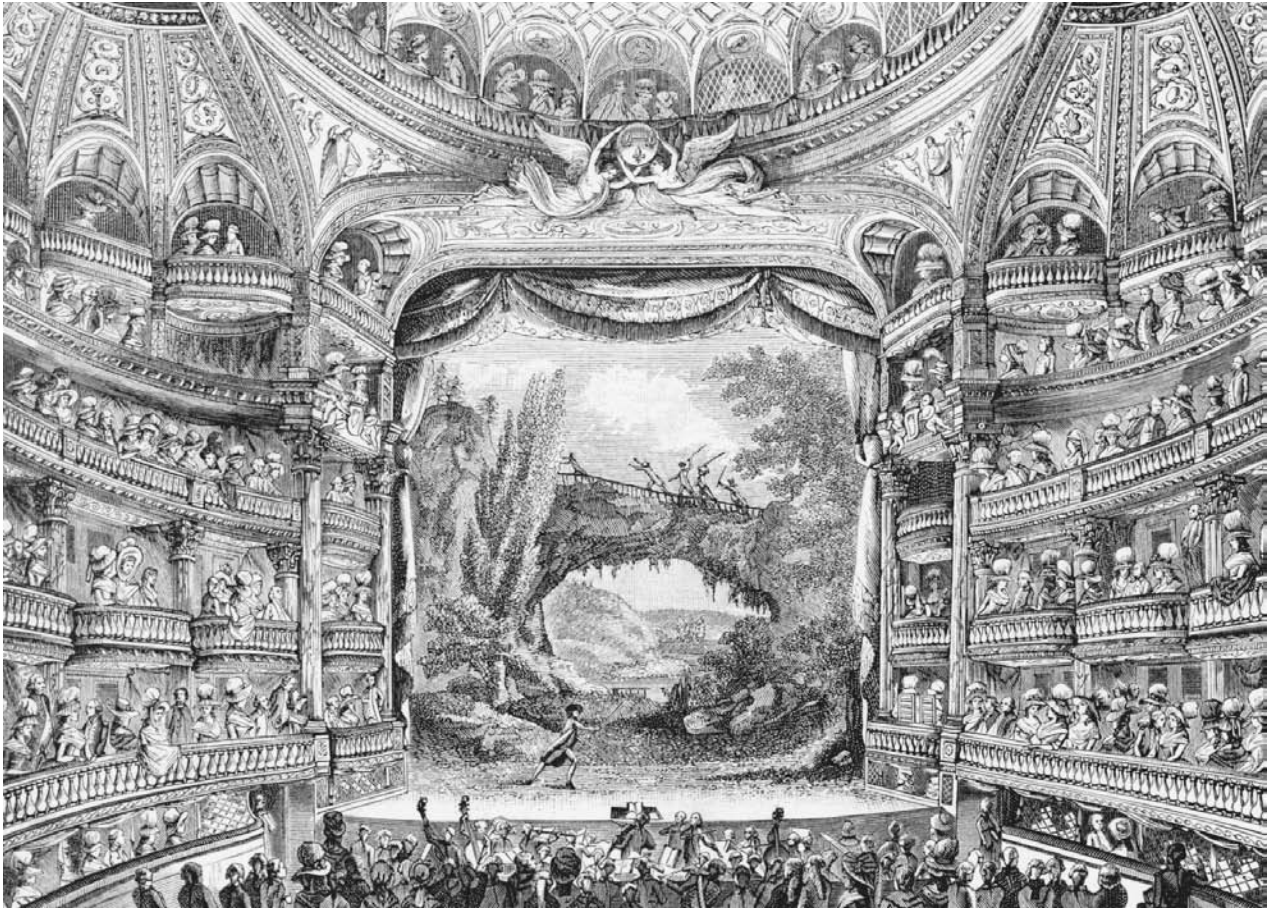
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## THE FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT AND DRAMA

**DECLINE OF THE THEATER.** During most of the seventeenth century the theater in Paris had a relatively limited appeal, drawing its audience primarily from aristocratic and upper-class circles that were centered around the court. Often provincial theaters located in such cities as Lyons and Rouen had proven more innovative than the troupes of Paris, producing the plays that made their way to the capital after they had been successful in these smaller cities. While the years from 1630 to about 1680 had seen a great theater thrive in Paris, the size of the city's audience had always been relatively small when compared to the huge audiences for commercial productions that existed in early seventeenth-century London or Golden-Age Spain. The tragedies of Corneille and Racine or the comedies of Molière had been

great critical successes, and had been widely read and imitated throughout Europe, but keeping Paris's theaters afloat was always a risky financial venture. No theatrical troupe survived without the king's patronage, and even a gifted dramatist like Molière who received substantial support frequently had to struggle to make his productions clear a profit. While a number of sparkling successes had been staged in the years before 1680, royal patronage for the theater in the final two decades of the century actually shrank as Louis XIV became involved in a series of costly European wars and as the king fell under the influence of his pious second wife, Madame de Maintenon. One sign of the increasing disfavor in which the king held the theater was his expulsion in 1697 of the Comédie-Italienne, a troupe of Commedia dell'arte performers that had performed for a generation in the capital. Louis found the group's broad, sexual humor distasteful, and the troupe was not allowed to return to Paris until 1716, the year following the king's death. As the audience for the theater shrank, Paris for a time had only one public performing troupe, the Comédie-Française, which had been forged by the merger of Molière's troupe and two others.

**REVIVAL AND GROWTH.** This bleak state of affairs soon began to change in the years after 1715, as the theater entered upon a century of unprecedented expansion in Paris. By the end of the eighteenth century, the city had almost thirty theaters, making it the undisputed dramatic capital of Europe. A complex combination of factors produced the rise of this professional and commercial stage in Paris, but the expansionary trend became evident in the years immediately following Louis XIV's death. The king's successor, Louis XV, was only five years old when he assumed the throne, and thus his uncle Philip of Orléans served as his regent. Philip disliked the imposing spaces and lofty grandeur of Versailles, and between the years 1715 and 1723 he set up government in Paris rather than Versailles. As aristocrats streamed back to the city from the now abandoned royal retreat, they demanded entertainment that fit the changing tastes of the age. Drama, the opera, ballet, and the visual arts were all enriched by this brief period of Louis XV's regency, and when the king returned to set up government at Versailles several years later, many French nobles did not return to the country palace. Instead they stayed in Paris and prolonged the city's artistic revitalization. At the same time, the dramatic growth that the French theater witnessed in the course of the eighteenth century cannot be credited to aristocratic patronage alone. For the first time in France's history, a significant class of bourgeois patrons began to enter the ranks of



Performance at the Théâtre Française, Paris, in 1789. THE GRANGER COLLECTION.

theatergoers; they found in the drama, not only a source of leisure entertainment, but an elevated art form that appealed to their desire to be educated in the issues of the day. The ideas of the Enlightenment were to affect this new class of aristocratic and bourgeois patrons. Although the Enlightenment was an international movement, it attracted some of its largest numbers of adherents in France, particularly in Paris and the country's other major cities. In small circles known as salons the devotees of the movement discussed the necessity of change in France's social structure, even as they hoped to foster greater tolerance, liberty, and reason in everyday affairs. The theater was soon to be affected by these trends. The apex of the growing theatrical world in Paris was the Comédie-Française, the national theater that Louis XIV had chartered at the end of the seventeenth century and whose acting troupes were formed out of the merger of previously disparate groups in the city. This institution, a descendant of which still survives today, continued to produce elevated dramas in the tradition of Corneille and Racine. As a national institution

supported by the crown, the Comédie-Française often proved to be resistant to the winds of change that were beginning to sweep through France in the eighteenth century. But even in this aristocratic bastion of privilege, forces were at work that were questioning France's religious, social, and political order, and the works of Voltaire and other playwrights inspired by the Enlightenment came to be performed in the venerable institution. Beyond the Comédie-Française, an increasingly variegated theatrical scene began to take shape in the capital, and many far less prestigious venues for drama developed, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century as a broader audience for entertainment emerged in Paris.

**VOLTAIRE.** The greatest, and frequently most controversial, French dramatist of the time was François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778) who has always been known by his pen name Voltaire. Despite being educated by the Jesuits like Molière and Corneille before him, Voltaire came to criticize organized religion; and although he mistrusted the French king Louis XV because he himself

had been persecuted by him, he was fundamentally a royalist who believed in enlightened despotism as a way to progress. When he had completed his education and served for a time as a diplomat, he made his way into Parisian society, establishing himself with his cultivated sense of satire. Exiled from Paris and then briefly imprisoned by the regent, the Duke of Orléans, on the suspicion of libel, he was released after a year, and produced his first great work *Oedipe* in 1717. In the wake of the success of *Oedipe* he was hailed as the successor to Racine and Corneille. Although he came to the attention of the royal court and for a time was admitted into high circles, he soon found himself in opposition to the regent again when he fell for a second time under the suspicion of libel and was taken into custody, placed in the Bastille, and then exiled from Paris. In the 1720s he rehabilitated himself with the Duke of Orléans and received a government pension. He became a spy for the crown, but once Orléans was dead, he soon fell from grace again by insulting a high-ranking noble in 1725. Again, he was imprisoned in the Bastille, beaten up, and promptly escorted to the port of Calais in northwestern France. From there, he made his way to England, where he spent more than two years in exile. English society and English theater captivated Voltaire, and he admired the greater freedom of life in the country and became in these years an admirer of Shakespeare, whom he credited with having a kind of barbarous energy. Upon his return to France, he began to try subtly to imitate the style of Shakespeare in his tragedies. These first few plays were not successful, but by 1732 Voltaire had scored a hit in the production of his *Zaïre*. In the years that followed, the playwright continued to write tragedies for the Comédie-Française, but he also turned to history and philosophy. Voltaire also rehabilitated himself at court, particularly with Louis XV's mistress Madame de Pompadour, although the king and many of his courtiers continued to distrust him. After making an indiscreet remark one evening at a party in which members of the court were in attendance, Voltaire was forced into hiding in 1747. The disfavor in which he was now held, the recent failures of some of his plays, and most importantly, the death of his long-term mistress Madame du Châtelet in 1749 left the artist exhausted and disoriented. According to his accounts, he seemed to suffer the equivalent of a nervous breakdown. To recover his composure, Voltaire accepted the invitation of his friend Frederick the Great to visit Prussia and he left for Berlin in 1750. Here initial enchantment between Frederick and Voltaire soon gave way to increasing disaffection. He quarreled with members of the Prussian nobility, was sued by a banker, and touched off controversy by pub-



Portrait of the French playwright and Enlightenment thinker Voltaire. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

lishing a poem attacking the president of the Prussian Academy of Sciences. The French dramatist tried to flee the country in 1753, but he was captured by Frederick's forces and imprisoned for a time before being allowed to continue. In the meantime he had received word from Louis XV that he was not to return to Paris and so after a year spent in the city of Colmar, he took refuge in Switzerland at Geneva.

**VOLTAIRE'S LATER YEARS.** Voltaire was at first hailed in Switzerland for his wit and sophistication as well as for the salon that he set up in his country retreat. Members of Swiss society streamed there to hear his views on religion and politics. Gradually, he excited controversy, particularly when he expressed doubts on key elements of Christian religious orthodoxy. By 1758, the situation had grown so uncomfortable in Switzerland that Voltaire was forced to flee, this time back to France, where he bought a country villa at Ferney directly on the French-Swiss border. Long experience had taught Voltaire that his ideas were inevitably going to be controversial, and in purchasing the house at Ferney he desired to be close to Switzerland for a quick escape across the border if he learned that the king's men were approaching. In these final twenty years of his life, Voltaire

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***VOLTAIRE ON COMEDY**

**INTRODUCTION:** The French dramatist and Enlightenment thinker Voltaire (1694–1788) spent several years in England while in exile from his native France. There he became acquainted with a number of playwrights. While Voltaire admired the English stage's energy, he nevertheless detested its "barbarous" violation of the rules of drama. At the same time he came to be influenced by its conventions, some of which found their way into his later works. In his *Philosophical Letters*, Voltaire discussed the current English stage. While he believed that writers of tragedy were too deeply influenced by Shakespearean models, he admired English comic dramatists and discussed those who wrote for the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century stage.

The late Mr. Congreve raised the glory of comedy to a greater height than any English writer before or since his time. He wrote only a few plays, but they are all excellent in their kind. The laws of the drama are strictly observed in them; they abound with characters all which are shadowed with the utmost delicacy, and we don't meet with so much as one low or coarse jest. The language is everywhere that of men of honour, but their actions are those of knaves—a proof that he was perfectly well acquainted with human nature, and frequented what we call polite company. He was infirm and come to the verge of life when I knew him. Mr. Congreve had one defect, which was his entertaining too mean an idea of his first profession (that of a writer), though it was to this he owed his fame and fortune. He spoke of his works as of trifles that were beneath him; and hinted to me, in our first conversation, that I should visit him upon no other footing than that of a gentleman who led a life of plainness and simplicity. I answered, that had he been so unfortunate as to be a mere gentleman, I should never have

come to see him; and I was very much disgusted at so unseasonable a piece of vanity.

Mr. Congreve's comedies are the most witty and regular, those of Sir John Vanbrugh most gay and humorous, and those of Mr. Wycherley have the greatest force and spirit. It may be proper to observe that these fine geniuses never spoke disadvantageously of Molière; and that none but the contemptible writers among the English have endeavoured to lessen the character of that great comic poet. Such Italian musicians as despise Lully are themselves persons of no character or ability; but a Buononcini esteems that great artist, and does justice to his merit.

The English have some other good comic writers living, such as Sir Richard Steele and Mr. Cibber, who is an excellent player, and also Poet Laureate—a title which, how ridiculous soever it may be thought, is yet worth a thousand crowns a year (besides some considerable privileges) to the person who enjoys it. Our illustrious Corneille had not so much.

To conclude. Don't desire me to descend to particulars with regard to these English comedies, which I am so fond of applauding; nor to give you a single smart saying or humorous stroke from Wycherley or Congreve. We don't laugh in reading a translation. If you have a mind to understand the English comedy, the only way to do this will be for you to go to England, to spend three years in London, to make yourself master of the English tongue, and to frequent the playhouse every night. I receive but little pleasure from the perusal of Aristophanes and Plautus, and for this reason because I am neither a Greek nor a Roman. The delicacy of the humour, the allusion, the *à propos*—all these are lost to a foreigner.

**SOURCE:** Voltaire, *Letters on the English*. Vol. 34 of *The Harvard Classics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1909–1914): 139–140.

continued to write, and his correspondents grew to include an ever-larger number of European intellectuals. His house at Ferney also played a key role in furthering the ideas of the Enlightenment. There Voltaire set up a kind of intellectual court, and he was visited by many of the greatest thinkers and political figures of the age. Rich and secure from his writing as well as questionable business deals he had conducted earlier in his life, Voltaire finally achieved the peace and tranquility at Ferney that he had long desired. Although even then the irascible author continued to quarrel with the local peasants and religious leaders of the province. The themes of his work in these years persisted along the lines that he had long

outlined: religious tolerance, the rule of human reason, and the establishment of a more humane and just society. Finally in the year in which he died, he was allowed to return to Paris, where a performance of his play *Irène* caused a sensation. Exhausted from the warm reception he received in the French capital, he soon grew ill and died on 30 May 1778.

**DIDEROT AND MIDDLE-CLASS DRAMA.** Despite the dubious notoriety that Voltaire achieved in many circles throughout his life, the author was recognized at the time as one of the great prose stylists and verse dramatists of the French language. Born at the time when the style of Racine tragedy held sway over the the-



ater in Paris, he never abandoned this form of drama in the works he completed for the theater. Although Voltaire exercised a powerful hold over the development of the Enlightenment in France, his dramatic ideas increasingly seemed old-fashioned to later generations of French dramatists. Admired and respected for the depth of his commitment to rational thought, Voltaire's plays, with their faithfulness to older forms of verse tragedy, seemed by the 1750s to be increasingly dated. The greatest exponent of a new kind of theater at this time was Denis Diderot (1713–1784). While Voltaire had often fashioned his dramas from ancient myths, classical history, and exotic tales, Diderot argued that the theater should represent bourgeois values and seek to present a realistic mirror of everyday life. Only two of his plays, *The Illegitimate Son* (1757) and *The Father of the Family* (1758), achieved anything above a level of moderate success, and they are rarely even read today. Diderot believed that the theater should not only hold up a mirror to bourgeois society, but that it might play a powerful role in teaching people the views of the Enlightenment. Thus some heavy-handed philosophizing often found its way into his works. While the quality of his dramas may not have been high, the playwright made a powerful impact on eighteenth-century taste by virtue of his role as the editor of the *Encyclopédie*, the massive multi-volume project of Enlightenment thinkers in France that was published between the 1750s and 1770s. As one of the editors of this project, Diderot chose writers to write entries about the theater whose views approximated his own. Besides his role in shaping the *Encyclopédie's* views on theater, he also continued in his later years to publish works on the theory of drama and acting. His opinions about acting, in particular, were influential, and tended to favor the naturalistic portrayal that was beginning to become the fashion at the time. This style of acting sought to represent the passions and emotions faithfully, in contrast to the artificial style of elaborately declaiming the text in the fashion that had held sway in seventeenth-century France. While his own works of drama may not have been so inspiring, he played a key role in establishing the “middle-class” drama of the later eighteenth century throughout Europe. In particular, his influence on the great German playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was profound. In the years that followed his pronouncements on the subject, a more bourgeois set of sensibilities flourished in the French theater. The studied artificiality, grand gestures, and elevated verse that had once dominated the great works of Racine and his followers seemed increasingly outdated as a new theater that treated everyday life emerged.

**BEAUMARCHAIS.** The rise of bourgeois sentiments, and the problems that they might engender in an absolutist state like France, can be brilliantly witnessed in the works and career of Pierre Beaumarchais (1732–1799), who was the author of two brilliant comedies that long provided other artists with inspiration. The first of these, *The Barber of Seville*, was first staged in 1775, after having been prohibited for two years because of its anti-aristocratic tone. It was not an immediate success, since although a comedy, it was laden with heavy allusions to the author's own recent legal troubles. Beaumarchais revised the play—shortening it—and staged it once again. This time the comedy was a definitive success since it treated more neatly the comic exploits of a Spanish nobleman's servant. Through his wit, the servant is continually able to outsmart his lord, and thus Beaumarchais began to score success by criticizing the privileges of aristocrats. Despite his political stance, the author was very much a part of the “in-circle” of court and cultivated society in Paris. For a time he served on diplomatic missions in England, and was in part responsible for France's support of the American colonies during the Revolutionary War. Within a few years of *The Barber of Seville* Beaumarchais had written its even more famous sequel, *The Marriage of Figaro*, a work that immediately touched off a firestorm of controversy and which languished for many years without being performed. Although the light gaffs and jabs that the work makes against aristocratic privilege scarcely seem to raise an eyebrow today, the mood in France had changed dramatically from the time of the author's *Barber of Seville*. Reform programs aimed at curbing the powers and privileges of the nobility were now an imminent threat to France's large class of nobles. In order to secure the performance of his play, Beaumarchais was forced to intrigue at court so that he might secure a license for its staging, which was only granted after years of deliberation and a private performance before the royal court. When the play was finally performed before audiences in Paris, it caused a sensation and ran for a total of 75 performances, a huge number at the time. It attracted criticism from some as “godless” and “immoral,” while at the same time acquiring many admirers. Beaumarchais long kept his silence against the attacks of his critics, but when he did finally respond to the accusation that his play was immoral, he was hastily imprisoned for a time in the Bastille. Such measures, though, did little to halt the play's rising popularity, not only in France, but throughout Europe as well. It is a testimony to how well Beaumarchais captured the brittle spirit of the times that in Austria the brilliant composer Mozart set to transforming the work into an opera only a little more than a year after it had been performed

and published in Paris. Admiration for Beaumarchais' wit and earthy wisdom persisted, so much so that the Italian composer Gioacchino Rossini used the dramatist's earlier *Barber of Seville* as late as 1816 to serve as the basis for the libretto of his famous opera of the same name. Despite Beaumarchais' attacks on aristocratic privilege, he himself was part of the court circle that was swept away by the tide of the French Revolution. The artist was imprisoned for a time during the 1790s because of his own aristocratic connections, but eventually released through the ministrations of a former lover. His dramatic efforts, although light-hearted and written in a spirit of satirical good fun, helped to realize the theater of bourgeois values in France that had been envisioned by such Enlightenment thinkers as Diderot.

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SEE ALSO *Literature: French Literature during the Enlightenment; Philosophy: The Enlightenment in France*

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### THE RISE OF REVOLUTIONARY SENTIMENT IN FRANCE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE THEATER

**THEATER AND PUBLIC OPINION.** The sensation that Beaumarchais caused with his *Marriage of Figaro* was hardly the first or the last time the Parisian theater was to be the center of controversy. Yet his work was ultimately tolerated and performed in the Comédie-Française, the very heart of the theatrical establishment in France, which had been licensed and lavishly sup-

ported by the crown for more than a century at the time of *Figaro's* performance. During the high tide of the Enlightenment the Comédie-Française had frequently fulfilled a dual role. The theater was a medium for shaping public opinion and at the same time it was a barometer of those sentiments that allowed the crown to measure the popular mood. During the 1770s and 1780s criticism of France's entrenched social order, of the privileges of its clerics and nobles, and of the ineptitude of its royal government steadily rose. Although the country was one of the most prosperous and productive in Europe, the system of royal government that Louis XIV had developed in the later seventeenth century had been notable for its corruption and inefficient centralization. Louis' successor, his great-grandson Louis XV, had done little to lessen the sclerosis that lay at the heart of French government, and his involvement in numerous international wars had left the royal administration perilously drained of funds. When his grandson Louis XVI succeeded him in 1774, he was at first forced to embark on an ambitious program of reform, having no other choice but to increase the financial efficiency of his government. By the early 1780s, however, the plans of his reforming chief minister Jacques Necker were increasingly blocked by special interests. Rather than opposing those bastions of privilege that were preventing improvement in government, Louis capitulated to the enemies of Necker, and in the years following his dismissal, royal policy drifted, ever subject to increasing criticism. At first these great political trials played little role in the theatrical life of Paris' three official theaters: the Comédie-Française, Comédie-Italienne, and the Opera. Each institution had been founded with the express purpose of nourishing the theatrical arts of drama, ballet, and opera in France—a powerful mission at a time when French kings desired to use these media as tools for promoting national glory. In all three theaters ties to the court meant that the material performed in them was expected to uphold the values of the crown and the Catholic Church. Since the early eighteenth century onward, though, Voltaire and other playwrights had begun to produce dramas at the Comédie-Française that challenged these values either subtly or overtly. When a play excited too much controversy or seemed to challenge accepted mores or state policies too vigorously, it was often suppressed. As the tide of criticism of France's government and entrenched social order rose, however, patrons demanded new dramas that captured the political pulse of the age. The wild success of Beaumarchais' *Marriage of Figaro* thus demonstrates the appetite that existed just below the surface of French society for an art that addressed the major social topics of the day.

**THE PARTERRE AND PUBLIC OPINION.** At the same time, the theater began to be an important way to measure public opinion. As the audience for dramas expanded in Paris in the course of the eighteenth century, new classes of people began to fill the Comédie-Française's *parterre*, or ground floor. Admission to this section was far cheaper than in the balconies above where wealthy members of the Parisian aristocracy or bourgeoisie sat; while the cost of admission was still beyond the means of most of the laboring classes in the city, the *parterre* became the preserve of shopkeepers and skilled artisans—the middling and lower ranks of the bourgeoisie, that is the French middle classes. In the second half of the eighteenth century playwrights like Beaumarchais increasingly took up the challenge set by Enlightenment thinkers like Diderot, who had argued that the theater should favor contemporary themes and that its subjects should be portrayed realistically in ways that educated audiences about social issues. Beaumarchais's *Marriage of Figaro* was one such production, but there were others; in the 1770s and 1780s, audience response to these dramas was frequently the talk of Paris since the theatergoers of the *parterre* used the relative anonymity of the crowd to express vigorous reactions to the dramas they saw. The evidence suggests that in these years the *parterre* became increasingly opinionated, pronouncing its tastes on the acting styles of performers, booing or catcalling when something displeased them, and expressing support when the sentiments of the dramatist mirrored their own. Of course, this system was open to manipulation. Actors, stage managers, and dramatists often tried to pack the *parterre* with *clagues*—that is, groups that were favorable to them—in order to ensure positive reviews from the crowd. Mounds of free tickets were often given away in attempts to manipulate audience's responses, so that the Comédie-Française became a venue in which two dramas were paradoxically being presented side by side: one on the stage, the other in the auditorium itself. At the same time, the sensation that a work like Beaumarchais' *Marriage of Figaro* produced in the mid-1780s points to the importance that the theater had attained in French society for presenting viewpoints on contemporary social issues and for testing the waters of public opinion. In that drama, the wealthy bourgeois Beaumarchais used his position of relative security at court to rail against aristocratic privilege, to mock the church and clergy, and to celebrate the homespun virtues of the working classes. Both the court and the Comédie-Française had debated about whether the play should be performed for years before finally giving in to widespread pressure to stage it. The favorable reactions the drama received from the *parterre* and the drama's unpre-

cedented run were but another proof positive of the widespread desire for reform, while the joyous reaction the *parterre*'s crowds expressed at *Figaro*'s performances ultimately protected the play from censure. The genie, in other words, had escaped from the bottle, and the French theater had emerged as a powerful vehicle both for shaping and expressing the public's sentiments.

**RISE OF NEW THEATERS.** In these same years new theaters were also emerging on the scene in Paris, institutions that were even more potentially volatile than the relatively conservative, state-supported Comédie-Française. Since Louis XIV's day, laws had forbidden dramas from being staged in Paris in any other venue except the officially recognized and licensed state theaters. As in England, though, attempts to regulate and confine the stage had always left some loopholes. In Paris, short dramas, for example, had long been tolerated in connection with the great suburban fairs that were celebrated on the city's fringes during the summer months. Actors and playwrights had used these events to supplement their incomes by participating in the carnival shows. A definite shift in the course of Paris's theatrical history occurred in 1759 when Jean-Baptiste Nicolet, a promoter of fair acts and short dramas, obtained permission to rent a building in the city's Temple district and to use it as a theater for variety acts. At the time, the Boulevard Temple was a hotbed of Parisian public life, a haunt visited by Enlightenment thinkers, prostitutes, and a broad swath of the city's society. Nicolet was a showman, not a politician, but to please his crowds he soon set about testing the boundaries of royal regulations forbidding the performance of dramas outside the state's theaters. Into his succession of vaudeville acts he built short dialogues that gradually grew longer until the management of the Comédie-Française began to complain to the authorities. Nicolet was questioned, imprisoned for a time, and fined, but then allowed to go about his business. After his release he grew more careful, but he continued to test the regulations. His example emboldened others, and by the end of the 1760s the Boulevard Temple and its surrounding area was populated with a number of variety theaters. Royal and municipal authorities at this time seemed to have thought of these institutions as little more than a nuisance, since the production values of most of these "boulevard theaters," as they became known, were crude and the theaters tended to cater to rowdy audiences. The typical Parisian boulevard theater at this time was thus similar to the emerging English music hall. Both, in other words, rose as a result of the practices of censorship, but each identified its audiences in the poorer segments of society who, because of their income levels,

were not able to attend the more expensive theaters in London and Paris. The Comédie-Française, with its older, more experienced, and well-trained troupe of actors, remained the venue *par excellence* for drama in the capital around 1770. The management of the three state theaters in Paris (that is, the Opera, the Comédie-Française, and the Comédie-Italienne) may have frequently complained to the authorities, but few educated Parisians thought that the boulevard theaters were going to replace or seriously threaten the dominance of these more venerable institutions.

**THE TRIUMPH OF THE VARIÉTÉS.** By the late 1770s, though, this situation had changed dramatically. At least two of the boulevard theaters, the *Variétés* and the *Associés*, had begun performing pirated versions of works that belonged to the Comédie-Française's repertory—a definite violation of the law. While the *Associés*' productions were thought to be crude and lacking in finesse, those of the *Variétés* were considerably more polished and were now attracting audiences from the Parisian upper classes. In 1781, a controversy over the building of new theaters for the state institutions brought to a head the long-standing enmity between the boulevard theaters and the Comédie-Française. In that year the theater used by the Paris Opera at the Palais-Royal burned, and Philip II, the Duke of Orléans, who owned the complex, began to build a new grand replacement for the company that might attract even more patrons to his burgeoning commercial development that adjoined the theater. The Palais-Royal was then the hub of street and café life in the city, buoyed by its ideal location in the very heart of ancient Paris, not far from the Cathedral of Notre Dame and the Palace of the Louvre. Philip spent an enormous sum constructing the new theater, but intrigues at court soon turned against him, and the duke's cousin, Louis XVI, decided to house the Opera, not in Philip's grand new theater, but in a far cheaper building that was hastily constructed at the far northern fringes of town along the Boulevard Saint-Martin. While Louis' decision may have pleased his courtiers, it rankled his cousin Philip as well as many of Paris' elite who were now forced to travel a far greater distance into an unfashionable quarter of town to attend the Opera. As a result, attendance at the new musical theater quickly declined, while Philip eventually scored a huge success with his grand new theater. The king's decision to relocate the Opera had left the duke holding a valuable piece of real estate, and to fill his expensive venture, he invited the *Variétés*, the most artistically successful of the boulevard theaters, to rent his space. With their new state-of-the-art theater in one of the most fashionable locations in the city, the *Variétés*

soon prospered and competed vigorously with the Comédie-Française, an institution that throughout the 1780s seemed to many of Paris's intellectuals to appear increasingly worn and tired. Even the installation of new stage lighting in 1784 and the controversial production of *The Marriage of Figaro* soon afterward did little to stem the relative decline of the venerable institution against the vanguard of the *Variétés*. As the decade progressed and the monarchy grew more unpopular, the Comédie-Française's status as a royal institution made it appear to many in Paris as a bastion of aristocratic reaction in a sea of change. The theater's relatively conservative choice of repertory as well as its managers' constant complaints to the king for redress against the boulevard theaters' violations of its monopoly did little to dispel such an opinion. For his part, Louis XVI's attentions were clearly diverted elsewhere in these years by the host of problems his government faced, and so he refused to uphold the Comédie-Française's rights. Thus the *Variétés* continued to challenge royal authority over drama.

**THE BOULEVARD THEATERS GROW MORE RADICAL.** The relocation of the *Variétés*, while an important event in helping to challenge royal control of the theater, was not, in and of itself, a factor in the growth of revolutionary sentiments in 1780s France. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, French actors and dramatists who achieved success on the Parisian stage had often been the most enthusiastic supporters of royal power. The example of figures like Voltaire, who had frequently been censored and imprisoned for his unpopular opinions, had inspired great caution in the theatrical community, and even Voltaire—though he questioned aspects of the exercise of royal authority in France—had been an enthusiastic supporter of despotic government. As the *Variétés* moved to its newfound highly respectable home around 1785, it tended to voice the same conservative political sentiments that had long flourished in the state theaters. At the same time, other forces were at work in the boulevard theaters, those institutions that remained along the streets and avenues of the capital that catered to a less elevated clientele. During the 1780s a radical press began to explode on the Parisian scene that was filled with satires and attacks on the monarchy. Queen Marie-Antoinette figured prominently in many of these works, some of which were boldly printed with their place of publication as “Peking,” a joke intended to mock the inability of the French government to censor them. In these years the Austrian-born queen was singled out for the most violent abuse and accused of all kinds of sexual outrages,

from voracious lesbianism to orgiastic sex rituals, even as the popular press also heaped abuse on the king, his ministers, and the clergy. France's radical press was always more vicious in its criticisms than were the boulevard theaters that lined the cities' streets. After all, pamphlets could be published anonymously and it was difficult for the authorities to unearth just where, when, and by whom an offending work had been printed. The theater, by contrast, occurred in a public space, where police could seize an actor or easily trace the identity of the author of an offensive dramatic skit or the composer of a song. But as criticism of the crown mounted generally in the 1780s, Paris's neighborhood authorities seem to have grown increasingly lax about supervising the boulevard theaters, in part because they often approved of the anti-monarchical and anti-governmental sentiments that were being uttered in them.

**THE REVOLUTION PROCEEDS.** As the state of the government drifted perilously close to bankruptcy at the end of the 1780s, Louis XVI responded by calling a meeting of the Estates General, France's parliament, a body that had not been summoned since 1615. In the course of 1789 hopes for reform without drastic alterations to the government's constitution faded, and members of the third estate, or the commons, formed a new National Assembly. They formulated a new constitution for France that eliminated many noble and clerical privileges. The king swore allegiance to these documents, but as a result of the impending bankruptcy of his regime, he now faced greatly straitened circumstances. One result of these financial crises was that Louis XVI was forced to abandon patronage of Paris's royal theaters, and the city's government assumed control of the administration and supervision of these institutions. In 1791, the National Assembly deprived the Comédie-Française, Opera, and Comédie-Italienne of their monopolies, abandoning all pretenses that these were the only theaters legally sanctioned to perform in Paris. A key consequence of these measures was to make available to all the great repertory of French plays that had long been licensed as the sole preserve of the Comédie-Française. Since the 1770s the boulevard theaters had been encroaching upon this material by performing these plays in edited forms or by staging them under different titles, but now the new revolutionary government erased the long-standing privileges of the Comédie-Française, allowing the vast storehouse of works by Voltaire, Racine, Corneille, Molière, and all playwrights who were deceased to be performed by anyone who wished to stage a production. For a time the abolition of the old monopolies wreaked havoc on the Comédie-Française,

which searched for both new and old material to perform that might be suitable given the greatly altered political realities of the times. Disagreements within the troupe eventually caused an irreconcilable breach, and the company split in two. In their separate houses the two remnants of the Comédie had varied success, and even from their greatly reduced position, both houses continued to dominate the elite theater of the day. Most critics of the period agreed that the great French classics were best performed in the astute hands of the troupes that had grown out of the Comédie-Française. At the same time, scores of new theaters arose to compete with the older houses. Where they had been nine boulevard theaters in 1789, an additional twenty were founded by 1795. Not all of these new theaters succeeded, but everywhere in Paris the stage came to be increasingly subjected to heightened competition.

**THE REVOLUTION GROWS MORE RADICAL.** The National Assembly's decision in 1791 to eliminate the long-standing monopolies on the performance of opera, drama, and ballet in France soon were followed by new measures to control and censor the theater. As the Revolution progressed, the threats that it posed to royal authority grew more grave, and in June of 1791, Louis XVI and his family tried to flee the country to rally support from outside France to overthrow these threats. Caught at Varennes, Louis and Marie-Antoinette were brought back to Paris, where they now became virtual prisoners of the Revolution. In the months that followed calls for the abolition of the monarchy steadily rose, and the campaign of Republicans to rid the country of counter-revolutionary forces gave birth to the Reign of Terror. As a result, the National Assembly and Parisian city government began to sanction spectacles and dramas that glorified the cause of republicanism. Propagandistic plays that supported the Revolution became more common, but throughout most of the Revolution it was the classic French repertory as well as light contemporary comedies that continued to provide the most common fare in most of Paris' theaters. Theatrical managers, in fact, preferred these works because they were not controversial, and in the overheated political climate of the day they sensed that avoiding controversy was a good thing. By 1793, at the height of the Terror, the government took decisive measures to censor and control the theaters. The Directorate, the controlling committee within the National Assembly, stipulated that the theater must serve patriotic ends—that is, that it must defend and promote the Revolution and the cause of republican government. Thus for a time these directives altered the course of theater in Paris by prompting the writing and staging of

works that were overtly republican in nature. Yet even during the height of the Terror, when as many as 17,000 people were executed for counter-revolutionary deeds and sentiments, some of the most frequently performed works were those of Corneille, Molière, Voltaire, and Racine—works that by this time had achieved a “classic” status in French similar to Shakespeare’s opus in English. These, it could be argued, met the Revolution’s demands since they were masterpieces of the French language. During this dark period, many actors and playwrights who had served the monarchy fell under suspicion. Some fled to England or more congenial spots on the Continent. Others met their fate on the guillotine. But despite the suspicion that surrounded some actors and playwrights, there seems never to have been any shortage of performers willing to take their place. As greater stability and tranquility returned to the city at the end of the 1790s under the rule of the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, Paris now had more theaters than ever before in its history, and the city entered the nineteenth century as the undisputed European capital of both literary drama and popular vaudeville. Napoleon was to try, like the Bourbon kings before him, to restrain and censor the theater, introducing licensing and other censoring requirements in 1799 similar to those common under the Bourbon kings. But the sheer scale of the Parisian theatrical establishment made the institution increasingly difficult for state authorities to control. Thus the disputes and dilemmas that had become common in France in the last decades of the eighteenth century paved the way for the mass culture of theatrical entertainment that was to satisfy both popular and elite tastes in nineteenth-century Europe.

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## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Theater*

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### APHRA BEHN

1640–1689

*Playwright*

**CLOUDED ORIGINS.** The early years of Aphra Behn, the first Englishwoman to support herself by writing, are shrouded in some mystery. She was probably born in the village of Wye in the southeastern English county of Kent in 1640, but the identity of her parents is still not definitely known. Either when she was a teenager or slightly later in her early twenties she traveled to Surinam on the coast of South America. At the time, Surinam was an English trading colony, although it was later transferred to the Dutch. The experiences that Behn had while she was there formed the basis for her later novel, *Oroonoko* (1688). When she returned to London around 1664, she married Mr. Behn, a trader in the city whose family origins were Dutch and German. Her husband probably died about a year later, and in the years that followed she began to circulate in court circles where she was prized for her wit. Sometime around 1667, Aphra Behn went to Antwerp on a spy mission for Charles II; at this time, she amassed numerous debts in the king’s service, and when she returned to England, she was imprisoned for them. She secured her release, but the king did not come to her aid. To pull herself out of her financial troubles, she began to write for the London stage, producing her first play, *The Forced Marriage*, in 1670. The play was staged by the Duke’s Men and was a great success. In seventeenth-century England, it was generally customary for playwrights to receive box office proceeds for every third night that a play was performed. Since the theatergoing public in Restoration times was smaller than in Tudor or early Stuart times, most plays were staged for only a few nights. Behn’s *The Forced Marriage* had six performances and its author consequently received the production’s proceeds for two nights, a large sum that might keep a playwright sustained over months and even years.

**SUCCESS AND FAILURE.** In 1671, the company for which Behn wrote, the Duke's Men, moved into a handsome new theater designed for them by Sir Christopher Wren, and the author began to write plays at the rate of about one each year. Some of these (*The Rover* [1677] and *The Second Part of the Rover*) were successful, while a few others floundered and the author did not even receive one night's proceeds. Except for one tragedy and a tragicomedy, all her works were in the genre of "comedy of manners" that the Restoration theater favored. In particular, she often railed against the custom of arranged murders common in her day. Behn seems also to have been an astute judge of public tastes. In 1670, the wildly popular actress Nell Gwyn had retired from the stage after becoming the king's mistress; in 1677, Behn wrote the female lead in the comedy of manners play *The Rover* in an attempt to lure Gwyn out of her retirement and back to the stage. The actress obliged, helping to make the play a great hit. The following year, Behn wrote another work, *Sir Patient Fancy*, to include a role for the famous actress, and to honor her the playwright dedicated to Gwyn the publication of her work, *The Feigned Courtesans* in 1679. In these years Aphra Behn acquired her own dubious notoriety since her works were often filled with the bawdy humor and suggestions of sexual license that were favored at the time on London's stage. By the 1680s Behn's reputation as a dramatist of light comedies was well recognized, and her output of works was steadily increasing. Of all the Restoration dramatists, she ranked second only to John Dryden for the sheer number of her works. She produced three works, and another two in 1682. The last of these, *Like Father Like Son*, failed so miserably that the text was never published. In the prologue, too, she had included remarks that the censors found offensive, and she was arrested. While the outcome of her interrogation is not known, she was probably merely given a warning. But the incident, in tandem with the changing theatrical scene in London, seems to have discouraged Behn from writing for the theater for several years. Between 1682 and 1685, she apparently produced no works for the London stage. In the years leading up to her arrest, too, the company for which she wrote, the Duke's Men, entered on hard times, and by 1682 was forced to merge with The King's Men in order to survive. Behn's flagging productivity, then, may have been caused by these internal problems within London's theatrical companies. Whatever the reason, the author eventually returned to write for the theater, but only produced two more works for it in 1686 and 1687. Little is known about the circumstances of her early death in 1689, but she was immediately buried in Westmin-

ster Abbey, a sign of the high esteem in which she was held. This prestige and reputation persisted in many quarters, and two new plays were published after her death. Behn's plays were filled with sexual wit and bawdy humor, as were most of the works of Restoration playwrights. At the same time, reigning double standards meant that women were expected to exemplify higher moral standards than men. As a result, in the years following her death Aphra Behn had a dubious reputation for being a woman of loose morals and in the more restrained and conservative theatrical climate that developed in London after 1700, her works were rarely performed. Her career as a playwright, though, inspired a number of other women in the eighteenth century to imitate her example.

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## PEDRO CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA

1600–1681

*Actor*

**DESTINED FOR THE CHURCH.** Pedro Calderón de la Barca grew up in a strict household, an experience that left its mark on his later plays, many of which treat characters who disobey their dictatorial fathers. He was trained to take up a life in the church, but by his early twenties he was writing dramas for the court and serving in a noble household. Soon he became part of the small inner circle of confidantes to King Philip IV (r. 1621–1665), and he was eventually to be knighted in 1636. In these years his plays were performed, not only at court, but in the public theaters that were then popular in Madrid, Spain's capital. With the death of Felix Lope de Vega in 1635, Calderón came to be recognized as the greatest living Spanish dramatist. In 1640, he took up a military career when rebellion broke out among King Philip's Catalanese subjects, but when he was injured in the conflict, he retired from military service. In the years that followed he sired an illegitimate child, but a few years later decided to enter the priesthood. In 1651, he announced that he would write no longer for the stage. Although he largely held to this vow, refusing to write for the public theaters in Madrid, he did author plays for private performance in Spain's

royal court. For the remaining thirty years of his life he also authored each year *autos sacramentales*, or religious plays, for Madrid's celebrations of the Feast of Corpus Christi. In these years he also served as the priest to the king.

**CHARACTER OF HIS WORKS.** Calderón's career coincided with massive changes in Spain's political and cultural life. At the time of his birth Spain had recently suffered setbacks as a result of its conflicts with England and its prolonged involvements in the Dutch revolts. At the same time, the country possessed strong reserves of wealth and of intellectual life that continued to make it one of the most cultivated centers of learning in Europe. The Spanish public theater, which had begun to grow in Madrid and other cities throughout Iberia, had developed the form of the *comedia* in the first three decades of the seventeenth century into a high art form. At first, there was little difference between the dramas that were performed in the many *corrales* in towns like Madrid or Seville and those that entertained Spain's cultivated aristocrats, and the troupes that had performed in these theaters had often staged their productions before the king and court. The source of Spain's political and economic weaknesses were becoming increasingly evident in these years, however, as the monarchy failed to hold on to Holland and the other northern Dutch provinces and as it faced increasing resistance in Iberia itself. In 1640, Spain's theaters were closed when revolts in Catalonia and Portugal threatened public order. Even as Spain's domestic life grew more disordered and its economy more sluggish, Philip IV and his successors sponsored the development of an elite courtly theater for their own amusement. The *corrales* that had flourished in Madrid and other centers had been little more than ad hoc affairs remodeled out of existing courtyards that surrounded Spain's major monasteries. The country's religious confraternities had used public theaters as fund-raising opportunities to support their charitable endeavors. In 1533, though, Philip IV's new Madrid palace, the *Buen Retiro*, was completed, and among the new amenities it featured was a theater that made use of recent Italian innovations. The *Buen Retiro* provided for changes in scenery and other staging elements that raised the quality of court productions to the level of Baroque art. Calderón's decision to pursue a religious career, and his refusal to write for the public stage, then, must be evaluated against his subsequent activities at court. For in the years that followed his taking of priestly vows, the dramatist continued to write dramatic works for the court, and to contribute to the experimentation that was occurring at

the *Buen Retiro* in the development of a Spanish form of opera. In 1648, he wrote the first of his *zarzuelas*, a native Spanish art form that mixed spoken dialogue with songs in a two-act format. He followed up these experiments with the *zarzuela* format with other experimental works, and a few years later collaborated in the staging of the first Spanish opera. Like the drama that was being written at roughly the same time by Corneille and Racine in the French court, the works that Calderón prepared for the court were not realistic, but highly artificial. His dramatic productions, for instance, were not intended to be a naturalistic mirror of the world, but presented a highly formalized artistic vision of reality that might cause audiences to pause and ponder their underlying meanings.

**DRAMATIC IMPACT.** Much of the theater of seventeenth-century Spain had revolved around the question of honor, and in inane and silly comedies playwrights had often developed a formula in which the Spanish honor code was questioned, but yet emerged triumphant. In contrast to this trend, Calderón's art was subtler, and his reputation even at the time was considerably greater than the many craftsman-like dramatists that Spain produced. His most important works rise to the level of high art. In plays like *Life is a Dream*, Calderón explored perennial questions about the nature of free will and predestination, and he made major statements—as profound as those of William Shakespeare—about the nature of reality and the human psyche. In other works, like *The Painter of His Own Dishonor* and *The Surgeon of His Honor*, he relied on traditional formats like the comedy of intrigues, a venerable format in which various plots and subplots are hatched leading to a final climactic sequence of humorous events. At the same time he deployed the genre to reveal the inanity of certain Spanish customs, including practices like the isolation of young women. At other times, Calderón laid bare some of the underlying problems with the country's rigid code of honor. In sum, his works present testimony to an incredibly fertile mind that was fueled by a profound understanding of human capabilities and shortcomings.

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**PIERRE CORNEILLE**

1606–1684

*French dramatist*

**EARLY SUCCESS.** Pierre Corneille, the man who forged a reputation in French theater similar to Shakespeare in England, was born to an affluent family in Normandy and given an education in the classics by the Jesuits in his native Rouen. Eventually he took a law degree and entered into the king's service as an administrator of the royal forests and rivers. He continued to hold this post until his middle age, but in his early twenties he began to write dramas, the first of which was performed in Paris in 1530. The play, *Mélite*, became a hit on the Parisian stage, and Corneille continued to write dramas. Most of these early works were comedies, and in the years that followed the playwright came to the attention of Cardinal Richelieu, King Louis XIII's chief minister. Richelieu named the young playwright to his "Society of Five Authors," a group of dramatists from whom he regularly commissioned dramas for the Parisian scene. The cardinal stipulated which themes the authors were to take up and he even outlined their plots, and the members of the society were expected to write the drama collaboratively. Corneille chafed under such restrictions, although the theory of the classical unities that the group followed left its mark on his work. At the time, French literary theorists and dramatists were concerned about how the classical unities might be applied to the theater to foster literary greatness in the drama. The notion of the laws of unity had developed in Italy during the late Renaissance from a mistaken understanding of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Those playwrights who subjected their works to these canons were expected to confine their action to a single place on a single day and they were not to wander into subplots. Under Richelieu's powerful patronage, major dramatists in France began to subject their plays to these rules. At the same time, the unities imposed grave challenges on any playwright hoping to entertain an audience over the course of an evening. In his *Le Cid* (1637) Corneille resolved these challenges brilliantly, creating a tragedy that was immediately hailed as masterful and decried as morally defective. The subject for the drama was drawn from Spanish literature, and involved a romance between offspring of feuding families. In the first version of his dramatization, Corneille resolved this struggle in favor of the lovers, who marry despite the fact that the hero has killed the girl's father. Richelieu found the work offensive, and he instructed the Académie Française, an institution he had recently founded to fos-

ter greatness in French literature, to examine it. The members of the Académie diplomatically responded that the work was filled with much great poetry, but that its ending was unsuitable. The play as it stood was thus suppressed.

**INCREASING CONSERVATISM.** In the years that followed Corneille continued to write for the theater, at first under Richelieu's patronage, and then later under that of Cardinal Mazarin, Louis XIII and Louis XIV's chief minister. He married, and his brother Thomas, who also wrote for the theater, married Corneille's wife's sister. In the following years both brothers achieved great success in the theater, although Pierre Corneille's works have stood the test of time better than those of Thomas Corneille. While he continued to write tragedies, an increasingly conservative bent is discernible in these later works, one that after *Le Cid* rarely questioned social mores or standards. Many of his dramas, in other words, included subtexts that supported the absolutist monarchy and the Catholic religion, the two pillars of French society at the time. By 1643, the four finest of his tragedies were complete; these included *Le Cid* (1637), *Horace* (1640), *Cinna* (1641), and *Polyeucte* (1643). As his career as a playwright became more successful, he eventually moved from Rouen to Paris where he was admitted to the Académie Française. The failure of one of his plays in 1651 prompted Corneille to abandon writing for the theater for a number of years, although he continued to write poetry and to translate works into French. In 1659, he returned to drama and wrote plays until 1674, but his retirement from the theater in that year was prompted by the growing popularity of his rival, Jean Racine. For the remaining years of his life, Corneille wrote verse and lived to see some of his earlier dramas revived. While the quality of his dramas may not have risen to the high standard of Racine, he nevertheless helped to establish the canons by which the French stage was to flourish over the next century. His emphasis on drama as a literary force filled with beautiful poetry, often written in the twelve-syllable Alexandrine form, as well as his emphasis on the ennobling quality of tragedy were notions to which French playwrights returned time and again in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

**SOURCES**George Couton, *Corneille* (Paris: Hatier, 1958).R. C. Knight, *Corneille's Tragedies: The Role of the Unexpected* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Cardiff Press, 1991).P. J. Yarrow, *Corneille* (London: Macmillan, 1963).

**NELL GWYN**

1650–1687

*Actress*

**AN UNFORTUNATE UPBRINGING.** When she was just a child, Eleanor Gwyn lost her father, who likely died in a debtor's prison. The future great actress of the Restoration stage therefore grew up under the care of her mother, who ran a house of prostitution near Covent Garden, then in the western end of the city of London. In her childhood years she was a barmaid in her mother's establishment before becoming a fruit seller at the nearby Drury Lane Theater. She came to the attention of the theater's major actor, Charles Hart, and although only fifteen at the time she became his lover. Hart saw to it that she was given roles in productions and she continued in the company until 1669 when she became pregnant by the king. She returned to the theater for one production after the birth, but then soon retired to devote herself to her love, King Charles II. In the years that she had performed at the Drury Lane Theater, Gwyn premiered a number of roles in plays by John Dryden and James Howard. Although she acted in dramas, it was in comic roles that her talents were most evident. Observers noted that she had a quick and ready wit, and although illiterate, was able to charm even the most educated by the intelligence of her conversation. She was also considered to be an excellent singer and dancer, and she was admired for her abilities to recite the poetic prologues and epilogues that were common in the theater of the day. In her retirement the king granted her a house, where she entertained Charles and members of the aristocracy. She was twice coaxed back onto the stage during the 1670s, the first time to play the female lead in Aphra Behn's comedy of manners, *The Rover* (1677) and again in a role in the author's *Sir Patient Fancy* a year later. These productions were staged, not at her former establishment the Drury Lane Theater, but at the Dorset Gardens, the house belonging to the troupe known as "The King's Men."

**AN EXTRAVAGANT LIFE.** In the years after she became the king's lover, she devoted almost all of her energies to entertaining Charles and members of his court and to tending to her mother and children. Since she had the royal ear, she frequently became involved in intrigues at court, although she seems never to have tried to interfere in politics. Charles richly rewarded her with a generous allowance and a handsome house in the St. James' section of London so that she could be near the palace. He elevated the two sons she bore him to the nobility. With her newfound wealth, Gwyn provided a

house for her mother in fashionable Chelsea, but her mother died in an accident in 1679 brought on by a bout of drunkenness. Despite the king's great largesse, Gwyn spent prodigiously and when Charles died in 1685, she was in danger of being sent to debtor's prison. Charles had commanded his brother King James II to look after "poor Nelly," and he quickly came to her rescue, dispensing with her debts and granting her a generous royal pension. For her part, the actress seems to have always been faithful to the king and to his memory; Charles, on the other hand, may have had two illegitimate children with Gwyn, but he produced a dozen more with other women, mostly from the nobility. Gwyn was the first great female "star" of the London stage, and her career both promoted and reinforced the notion that actresses were little more than prostitutes and courtesans. At the same time, Gwyn came to be widely admired throughout London because of her generosity of spirit, sense of fun, and ready wit. In this regard she stood in marked contrast to all of Charles II's other mistresses, many of whom were subjected to boos and catcalls as they moved about the streets of London. In particular, Charles' French mistress, the aristocratic and Catholic Louise de K eroualle, the Duchess of Portsmouth, was particularly unpopular, and one day when Gwyn's carriage was moving through London's streets, the crowd mistook her for her French Catholic rival. Gwyn was said to have peered out of the carriage and shouted, "I am the Protestant whore!" It was this self-effacing quality that made the commoner Gwyn beloved among Londoners, and which made her death in 1687 following a stroke an event that elicited mourning from many of the capital's subjects.

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Charlotte Charke, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (1775)—In this memoir, the inimitable Char-

lotte Charke, an actress of the eighteenth-century London stage, tells of her exploits, which include a prolonged period of transvestism and the impersonation of a husband. Charke was the daughter of the noted actor, playwright, and English poet laureate Colley Cibber, and her adventures on the stage and off provide an unparalleled window onto the social history of the English stage in the eighteenth century.

Pierre Corneille, *Plays* (1630–1677)—Corneille’s tragedies and comedies helped to establish a distinctive French art form characterized by formal verse and introspective concentration on the trials, triumphs, and failures of his heroes and heroines. Many translations are available in English.

Denis Diderot, *Discussion of the “Illegitimate Son”* (1757)—In this essay the great French Enlightenment thinker sets forth his ideas on the theater and reacts to his recent bourgeois drama, *The Natural Son*.

John Dryden, *Of Dramatic Poesie* (1668)—In this work the great Restoration dramatist defends the traditions of English drama against those of seventeenth-century French Neoclassicism and other European trends.

Ben Jonson, *The Works of Ben Jonson* (1616)—Although he relied on the same glorious verse forms and vocabulary as Shakespeare, Jonson developed a new genre of contemporary satirical comedy that was notable for its biting wit. His plays, *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*,

and *Volpone*, rank among the most accomplished of his prolific output.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755)—This play was the first “bourgeois” drama to appear in Germany. It is a tragedy, based in part on Lessing’s reading of English works about middle-class virtues, including the novels of Samuel Richardson. It was to have a profound effect on the development of a middle-class theater in Germany.

Jean-Baptiste Poqueline, or Molière, *Tartuffe or the Imposter* (1664)—The greatest comedy from one of France’s premier dramatists, this play was to have a profound effect on the theater of the English Restoration.

Jean Racine, *Plays* (1633)—The author of this rich corpus of dramas perfected the verse form of tragedy first pioneered by Pierre Corneille. The works make use of the Alexandrine, or twelve-syllable, verse format and were notable for the influence they cast over many later French playwrights.

William Shakespeare, *Works* (1590–1616)—The works of perhaps the greatest dramatist of all time are available in many modern editions, some of which provide helpful annotation to illuminate their Elizabethan language.

Voltaire, *Irène* (1778)—In the year of his death the poet and dramatist was invited back to Paris to view a production of this play at the Comédie-Française. The excitement of his reception eventually resulted in the Enlightenment thinker’s death.

chapter nine

VISUAL ARTS

Philip M. Soergel

IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	456	<i>New Discoveries</i> (letter from Carracci describing his passion for the work of Corregio) . . . . .	467
OVERVIEW . . . . .	459	<i>A Dish Cooked with New Condiments</i> (excerpt from Carducho's <i>Dialogues on Painting</i> ) . . . . .	474
TOPICS		<i>The Four Rivers</i> (excerpt from Baldinucci's biography of Gianlorenzo Bernini) . . . . .	478
The Renaissance Legacy . . . . .	462	<i>Teresa's Transverberation</i> (excerpt from Saint Teresa of Avila's autobiography) . . . . .	480
The Counter Reformation's Impact on Art . . . . .	464	<i>Poussin's Greek Modes</i> (excerpt from a letter by Poussin describing his theories about art) . . . . .	485
Elements of the Baroque Style . . . . .	466	<i>Expression and the Passions</i> (address by Charles Le Brun to the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture) . . . . .	486
Realism and Emotional Expressivity . . . . .	470	<i>The Acquisitive Spirit</i> (letter from Rubens bargaining with an ambassador for antiques) . . . . .	491
The Caravaggisti . . . . .	473	<i>Contractual Arrangements</i> (contract by which Rembrandt became employed by his wife and son) . . . . .	496
Sculpture in Italy . . . . .	476	<i>The Service of God</i> (excerpt from Pacheco's <i>The Art of Painting</i> ) . . . . .	499
The Baroque Matures in Italy . . . . .	481	<i>Dimpled Behinds and Extravagance</i> (excerpt from Diderot's review of the Royal Academy's annual art show) . . . . .	502
Baroque Classicism in France . . . . .	483	<i>Imitation or Idealization?</i> (excerpt from Reynolds' <i>Seven Discourses on Art</i> ) . . . . .	511
Painting in the Low Countries . . . . .	488	<i>The Abolition of the Academy</i> (excerpt from Jacques-Louis David's speech to the National Convention) . . . . .	512
Spanish Painting in the Seventeenth Century . . . . .	498		
The Rococo . . . . .	501		
The Decorative Arts in Eighteenth-Century Europe . . . . .	504		
Neoclassicism . . . . .	507		
SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE			
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio . . . . .	513		
Jacques-Louis David . . . . .	515		
Artemisia Gentileschi . . . . .	516		
Rembrandt van Rijn . . . . .	517		
Peter Paul Rubens . . . . .	518		
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES . . . . .	520		
SIDEBARS AND PRIMARY DOCUMENTS			
<i>Primary sources are listed in italics</i>			

## IMPORTANT EVENTS in Visual Arts

1597 The Bolognese painter Annibale Carracci begins his ceiling frescoes at the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, a key work in inspiring a new monumental and heroic style of history painting during the Baroque era.

1600 The Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi, better known as Caravaggio, completes the *Calling of St. Matthew* for the Contarelli Chapel at the Church of S. Luigi dei Francesi. The work is widely admired for its realistic capturing of a crucial moment.

1606 Rembrandt van Rijn, the greatest Dutch painter of the seventeenth century, is born in the city of Leiden in the Netherlands.

1613 Claude Lorrain, who will become France's greatest Baroque landscape painter, arrives in Rome to begin studying painting.

1618 The Thirty Years' War begins in Central Europe. The conflict will bring widespread devastation and disrupt noble patronage of the arts.

1621 The Italian painter Francesco Barbieri, better known as Guercino, begins his ceiling painting at Rome entitled *Aurora*.

Peter Paul Rubens, the greatest Flemish artist of the Baroque period, begins painting a series of monumental paintings for Marie de' Medici's residence, the Luxembourg Palace in Paris.

1623 The Italian Gianlorenzo Bernini sculpts his *David*, a work of dramatic tension that

typifies the Baroque's taste for dynamic movement.

1625 The Italian artist Artemisia Gentileschi paints her famous *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*.

c. 1628 The French painter Nicholas Poussin completes his classically-inspired *The Inspiration of the Poet*.

c. 1630 The French artist Georges de la Tour paints his *Newborn*, an unprecedented work illuminated by the light of a candle.

1632 Jan Vermeer, who will become a great painter of scenes of everyday Dutch life, is born in the Netherlands.

1633 Bernini completes the huge canopy, or baldachino, that covers the high altar in the Church of St. Peter's at Rome.

1635 The great Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck paints *Charles I at the Hunt*, a work that is now in the Louvre in Paris.

c. 1636 Peter Paul Rubens completes his wildly energetic *Peasants Dancing*.

1639 The Italian fresco painter Pietro da Cortona finishes his monumental ceiling fresco in the Barberini Palace at Rome entitled *The Triumph of the Barberini*.

1640 Peter Paul Rubens dies after a long and productive career.

1641 Anthony van Dyck dies after a distinguished career in service to courts throughout Europe.

1642 The Italian painter Guido Reni, an important exponent of the early Bolognese style of Baroque painting, dies.

Rembrandt van Rijn paints his masterpiece *The Night Watch*.

1648 The Peace of Westphalia draws the Thirty Years' War to a close in Central Europe. Over the next century a resurgence in church building and remodeling will leave

its mark on many of the Roman Catholic churches of the region, most of which will be elaborately decorated with murals and ceiling frescoes in the Baroque style.

The Royal Academy of Art is founded in Paris by Charles Le Brun.

- 1651 The sculptor Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers* is completed in Piazza Navona at Rome. At the same time, the artist is at work on his famous Cornaro Chapel where he will immortalize Saint Theresa of Avila's life with his *Ecstasy of St. Theresa*.
- 1652 Artemisia Gentileschi, one of the first female artists to influence painting styles throughout Europe, dies at Naples.
- 1656 The Spaniard Diego Velázquez completes his *Las Meninas*, a group portrait of Spanish ladies in waiting and members of the Spanish royal family. The work is unprecedented for its great originality.
- 1662 At the suggestion of his minister Colbert, Louis XIV purchases the Gobelins factory at Paris to weave tapestries and produce decorative arts. Colbert hopes to wean French consumers away from consuming foreign imports. During the next three decades the Gobelins scheme will train a number of workers in the techniques of crafts that have until this time been unknown in France.
- 1665 The French classical painter Nicholas Poussin dies at Rome.
- The Dutch painter Jan Vermeer completes his *Girl with Yellow Turban*.
- 1666 The accomplished Italian painter Guercino dies at Bologna after a distinguished career.
- The French sculptor François Giraudon is given the commission for a monumental fountain of *Apollo Tended by the Nymphs* for the Gardens at Versailles.
- 1667 Rembrandt paints the last of his evocative *Self-Portraits*.
- 1669 Gianlorenzo Bernini begins terracotta studies for a monumental equestrian statue of Louis XIV that is never completed.
- 1671 Bernini begins construction of a tomb for Pope Alexander VII in the Basilica of St. Peter's at Rome.
- 1680 Bernini dies at Rome at the age of 82.
- 1685 The Hall of Mirrors is completed at Versailles and includes thirty ceiling paintings executed in a Baroque classical style by the artist Charles Le Brun and his studio.
- 1702 In England, Queen Anne ascends the throne. During her reign a great age in furniture and cabinet making will develop in England, setting simple, yet elegant design standards that spread throughout Northern Europe.
- 1710 The royal chapel is consecrated at Versailles near Paris with elegant ceiling frescoes by the French artist Antoine Coypel.
- 1715 The young boy Louis XV ascends the throne of France. During his long reign the Rococo decorative style will flourish and eventually be superseded by a new fondness for classicism.
- 1727 Thomas Gainsborough, destined to become one of England's greatest portraitists, is born.
- 1730 Josiah Wedgwood, founder of the great china company that bears his name and a major innovator in the manufacture of porcelain, is born at Burslem, Stoke, in England.
- 1732 The Trevi Fountain is begun at Rome. When complete thirty years later it will include an enormous mass of statues from the hands of four great eighteenth-century Italian artists.

- 1733 Cosmas and Egidius Asam complete their masterpiece, the Church of St. John Nepomuk at Munich. The church is notable for its integrated use of painted decoration and architecture.
- 1738 Germain Boffrand's Salon of the Princess is finished in the Hôtel de Soubise in Paris. The room reflects the reigning decorative spirit of the Rococo.
- In Bavaria, François Cuvilliés begins assembling collections of Rococo decorative motifs. He publishes these and they begin to exert an important influence on the decorative arts.
- 1740 François Boucher paints the Rococo work, *The Triumph of Venus*, a painting now in the National Museum in Stockholm.
- 1741 Angelica Kauffmann, a woman destined to become one of Britain's premier portraitists, is born in Switzerland.
- 1747 The Venetian artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi settles in Rome. During the remaining decades of his life he will create about 2,000 engravings of ancient buildings and monuments that will be widely circulated throughout Europe and will help to inspire a new taste for Neoclassicism.
- 1750 The Italian painter Giovanni Battista Tiepolo begins his fresco decorations at the Residence in Würzburg, Germany.
- 1757 Louis XV and his mistress Madame de Pompadour found the Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory not far from Versailles. The aim is to reduce France's consumption of foreign porcelain and the factory has a tremendous influence on establishing tastes in the decorative arts during the later eighteenth century.
- 1763 Josiah Wedgwood patents his Queen's Ware, a beautiful cream-colored pottery born of his experiments in manufacturing.
- 1764 The English satirical painter Hogarth dies in London.
- 1765 The French painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard completes the painting *The Bathers*.
- 1767 The English architect Robert Adam begins construction of the Library at Kenwood House, his great decorative masterpiece. In the years that follow, the designer exerts a profound influence by popularizing the Neoclassical style throughout the English-speaking world.
- 1770 John Singleton Copley, North America's greatest colonial artist, finishes his famous portrait of the Boston silversmith Paul Revere.
- 1775 The Royal Copenhagen porcelain factory is founded in Denmark.
- 1784 The English portraitist Thomas Gainsborough paints his famous *Portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse*.
- The French artist Jacques-Louis David completes his *Oath of the Horatii*, a work that treats a legend from ancient Rome and expresses the political mood of the country.
- 1788 Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun, one of France's foremost portraitists, paints the last of her portraits of Queen Marie-Antoinette.
- 1792 Sir Joshua Reynolds, one of England's greatest eighteenth-century masters, dies.
- 1793 Jacques-Louis David immortalizes the assassination of the famous French Revolutionary Marat with his *Death of Marat*. In the same year the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture is abolished in Paris.

## OVERVIEW *of Visual Arts*

**A LEGACY OF TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT.** Increasing technical mastery and experimentation in the visual arts had characterized the three centuries that preceded the rise of the Baroque style around 1600. During the Renaissance, artists had gradually perfected a number of techniques that allowed them to portray the natural world in ways that appeared more realistic than ever before. They had also studied the art of Antiquity, and by 1500 many Italian artists, in particular, worked in a fashion that was heavily influenced by their understanding of a classical harmony and proportion. New media, like oil paints, came to allow later Renaissance artists to portray the world in ways that were strikingly realistic. Thus as the Baroque age approached, Western painters and sculptors inherited several centuries of rising mastery over their craft. This trend provided them with the tools to portray nature and the human with a variety of techniques that increased art's verisimilitude, that is, its ability to mirror the natural world. During the brief period of the High Renaissance, roughly from 1490 to 1520, artists working in Rome and Florence had developed a classical language notable for its finesse, harmonious beauty, and monumental scale. For much of the rest of the sixteenth century, many artists in Italy and Northern Europe experimented with a less serene vision. In Italy, the new style was known as Mannerism, and it produced a highly intellectual and often self-consciously elegant art. In contrast to the standards of balanced and proportional design that High Renaissance masters had favored, Mannerist artists presented the human body in contorted poses with elongated forms. They dispersed the figures in their compositions to the edges of their panels and canvases, subverting the Renaissance tendency to create groupings of figures at the center of a picture. At the same time, the Mannerists evidenced a fashion for difficult to understand symbols and themes. The new style flourished most decidedly in Italy's courts, although the migrations of Italian artists into Northern Europe, and the journeys of artists from the Netherlands,

Flanders, Germany, and Holland to Italy, helped popularize Mannerism elsewhere in Europe. Above all, this movement prized artistic creation as an artificial phenomenon, as Mannerist artists came to reject the long-standing Renaissance trend toward naturalism. Instead Mannerist artists and their patrons favored creations that were more beautiful and elegant than nature really was.

**CRISIS AND RENEWAL.** The sixteenth century, although a time of brilliant cultural achievements in all the arts, was also a troubled era in the arenas of politics, religion, and society. The Protestant Reformation was to tear asunder the more than one thousand years of Christian unity in Western Europe and to initiate more than a century of religious conflict and wars. The church response to this crisis was at first piecemeal but as the sixteenth century progressed, a broad Catholic Reformation gathered increasing strength. At the Council of Trent (1545–1563), Catholic leaders met to answer Protestant charges, and their response was to define the course of Catholicism until modern times. In the final days of the meeting, the church fathers considered the issue of religious art and the role that it should play in the life of the faithful. In contrast to many Protestant leaders who had aimed to curb its uses, the Catholic leadership reaffirmed religious art's powerful role as a textbook for the illiterate. At the same time, Trent's decrees insisted that bishops should carefully supervise the works displayed in churches to insure that they were readily intelligible to the masses. The Council did not formulate clear guidelines concerning what kinds of art were appropriate for use in the Roman Catholic Church, and its pronouncements on the matter were hurriedly crafted. But in the years that followed, two Catholic reformers and bishops, Charles Borromeo of Milan and Gabrielle Paleotti of Bologna, were to work for the reform of religious art in Italy and Europe. The writings of both figures were to have a major impact on the development of early Baroque art. In their writings on the subject, each figure took a slightly different tactic concerning religious art. Milan's bishop, Charles Borromeo (1538–1610), insisted that religious art must have a clear message and serve to educate people in the tenets of the faith. Beyond this, he stressed that paintings and sculpture should stir the emotions, moving the faithful to repentance. As bishop of Bologna and an influential member of the church's hierarchy, Gabrielle Paleotti (1522–1597) was to patronize a group of artists who led a reaction against Mannerism. He found this art overly intellectual and thus too difficult for the average Christian to understand. He insisted instead that religious art's meanings should be more thoroughly didactic, and the styles he favored were more nat-



uralistic and realistic than those generally in fashion in late sixteenth-century Italy. Although he patronized artists who shared his vision, Paleotti grew increasingly pessimistic in the later years of his life about the possibility of a true artistic reform. In the years immediately following his death, though, several artists working in Rome were to lay the groundwork for a new style, helping to fashion a visual language that in some ways mirrored Paleotti's pronouncements concerning art.

**THE EMERGENCE OF THE BAROQUE STYLE.** In the years around 1600, this extraordinary group of artists created a number of works that were to help to define the new Baroque style. No single path was evident in these works, but instead the art of the developing Baroque evidenced a great variety from the first. In the monumental ceiling frescoes of Annibale Carracci (1560–1609), for example, the new style took a highly dramatic and dynamic turn. Carracci's works were heavily influenced by the tense and muscled figures Michelangelo used to populate the Sistine Chapel ceiling and by the art of the Parman painter Correggio (1494–1534), a figure who had been widely overlooked by Mannerist artists during the sixteenth century. In his ceiling frescoes at the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, Carracci attempted to wed the fine draftsmanship that had been typical of Florentine and Central Italian Renaissance masters to the rich use of colors that had flourished in Northern Italy in such figures as Titian, Veronese, and Correggio. In place of the static, harmonious, and highly intellectual compositional strategies of Renaissance and Mannerist artists, Carracci's works suggested swift, dramatic movements and were notable for their appeal to the emotions. A drama of a somewhat different kind was typical of the art of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610). Instead of presenting images of idealized beauty like Carracci, Caravaggio painted from life models, immortalizing the typical faces and gestures of the contemporary Roman street. The artist also relied on dramatic contrasts of light and dark in his paintings, using these to capture the excitement of the precise, crystallized moment in which a miracle or religious conversion occurred. In his famous painting of the *Conversion of St. Paul* (1601), for instance, he showed the exact moment when the apostle was thrown from his horse and blinded by a light from Heaven. Inspired by this unprecedented artistic insight, many Roman painters came to imitate his example, and in the first half of the seventeenth century, centers of Caravaggesque painting soon developed throughout Italy.

**PAINTING IN NORTHERN EUROPE.** The experiments of figures like Carracci and Caravaggio in Italy

were also to inspire several generations of painters in Northern Europe, many of whom came to study in Rome in the first half of the seventeenth century. Among the figures that made the journey to the ancient capital were Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641), Georges de la Tour (1593–1653), Claude Lorrain (1604 or 1605–1682), and Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665). While a few of these masters ended up staying in Italy, most were to return to Northern Europe, where they were to produce stunning masterpieces that forged elements of their own native traditions with the dramatic intensity and monumental style that was becoming ever more pronounced in the Italian Baroque. Of the many masters who were affected by the example of Italian masters, Peter Paul Rubens was to rank among the greatest creative figures of the seventeenth century. Rubens, a Catholic convert from Antwerp, seems to have been initially affected by the art of the High Renaissance as well as the enormous scale typical of Carracci's works and the dramatic immediacy and lighting techniques of Caravaggio and his followers. Returning to his native city, Rubens made these elements his own, forging a style that appealed to the deeply pious churchmen and patrons in his native city. He soon won continental acclaim. Developing a highly successful studio, Rubens was to fill the halls of courtly palaces from Spain to Germany with enormous canvases that displayed a swift brushwork that suggested a hitherto unseen dramatic intensity and sense of movement. Despite Rubens' success in Catholic Antwerp, the artistic excitement his career inspired did not long outlast his death in 1640. Flanders, a region battered by the religious and economic changes of the era, was to fall into a profound and prolonged depression, as artistic innovation shifted northward to the now independent provinces of the northern Low Countries. In Holland, the largest of the counties in the new confederation known as the United Provinces, a commercial market in art was emerging in which art dealers purchased and traded in the works of many masters. Here art was becoming a venerable investment for the first time in European history. Holland and the other members of the United Provinces were Calvinist, and as such, artists working there were to produce few great religious works. During the late sixteenth century, most Dutch churches had been whitewashed and their religious paintings and sculptures had been removed. While some Dutch painters like Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) were to paint religious works for private consumption and for Catholic patrons elsewhere in Europe, most of the Dutch masters produced portraits, landscapes, and genre scenes of everyday life. Great variety characterized these works' styles, ranging from the

free, expressive brushwork and psychological insight of Rembrandt to the spiritualism and faithful realism of Jan Vermeer.

**BERNINI AND CORTONA.** As Holland's market in painting was heating up, the Baroque style continued to develop in Italy, entering upon a new phase of complexity and dramatic intensity by the mid-seventeenth century that art historians have long called the "High Baroque." The two greatest artists of this stylistic phase were Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), a universal genius similar to Michelangelo or Leonardo da Vinci, and the painter Pietro da Cortona (1597–1669). Bernini was a master of all the artistic media, but above all an architect and sculptor. With the election of his patron, the Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, as Pope Urban VIII in 1623, he began to rise to a favored position among all the artists of the city. From this vantage point, he left an indelible stamp on Rome's cityscape, designing numerous fountains and other public monuments that were to transform the town. The dramatic proportion and energy of these monuments was to be widely imitated, not only in Italy, but also throughout Europe during the remainder of the Baroque period. At the same time that Bernini was completing his many architectural and sculptural commissions, the great Northern Italian artist Pietro da Cortona was completing a series of works that were to inspire many artists over the coming centuries. Cortona's most imaginative creation was a new kind of ceiling fresco in which various scenes were combined into an entire complex whole that stretched across the broad spaces soaring above Baroque palaces. Like Bernini's sculptural creations, Cortona's style of ceiling frescoes found their way to many places beyond Rome, inspiring numerous imitators. Until the eighteenth century, no one came to surpass Cortona's sense of scale, complexity, dramatic energy, or ornamental beauty.

**ROCOCO AND NEOCLASSICISM.** The visual language that Baroque and High Baroque masters created dominated painting and sculpture in much of Europe until the early eighteenth century. The style was particularly popular among the many absolutist kings and princes of the era, since the new style's complexity, moralistic themes, and monumental scale could be infinitely adapted to rulers wishing to impress their subjects with images of their power and authority. Around 1700, though, a new, lighter fashion, eventually to be called Rococo, began to appear in France before spreading to other parts of the Continent. The Rococo resulted from a number of complex changes underway in French aristocratic society. In contrast to the grand receptions characteristic of the Baroque court, cultivated Parisian society

now came to favor small, intimate gatherings held in exquisitely decorated salons. Patrons commissioned works that treated everyday pleasures for these bright spaces. Artists like Antoine Watteau (1684–1721), François Boucher (1703–1770), and Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) epitomized the Rococo's search for an art that was deliberately elegant, light, and beautiful. All three masters were prolific draftsmen and the circulation of engraved copies of their works helped popularize the highly ornamental Rococo style throughout Europe. The imprint of these three artists, too, was to leave its mark on the decorative arts, as the patterns and drawings of each came to find their way onto everything from upholstery fabric to porcelains. Although the Rococo's rise and advance throughout Europe was rapid, it was also uneven. Italy and England proved relatively impermeable to the movement's decorative impulses, while Central Europe and Spain enthusiastically welcomed the new fashions.

**NEOCLASSICISM.** While the Rococo's spread throughout aristocratic societies in Europe had been swift, a new fashion for Neoclassicism would supplant its influences in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Rococo had arisen from a number of complex social changes that were transforming life in eighteenth-century Europe. So, too, Neoclassicism arose from a similarly multifaceted mixture of social and intellectual forces. During the 1730s and 1740s, the first systematic archeological excavations of ancient towns began at Pompeii and Herculaneum in southern Italy. These digs were to uncover a dramatically different picture of the art and architecture of Roman Antiquity than that which had been popular throughout Europe since the Renaissance. Through the undeniably beautiful engravings of artists like Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), an appreciation for the standards of ancient design grew among contemporary artists and their patrons. By this time Rome had become the ultimate destination of the Grand Tour, an artistic and cultural pilgrimage that the sons and daughters of wealthy aristocrats, merchants, and gentlemen made as the culmination of their education. In Rome, these tourists came to collect ancient sculpture and decorative arts according to the growing fashion of the time, as well as to patronize the many classically influenced artists working there. Returning home, they continued to indulge their love of Antiquity, a fashion that also fit with the developing intellectual currents of the Enlightenment. In France, England, and Central Europe, the philosophers of this movement recommended the austere severity of ancient art, with its clear, readily intelligible principles of design, as most befitting to societies

that were striving to reform themselves according to the demands of human reason. Neoclassicism thus became synonymous in the imagination of the age with the attempt to clear away superstitions and to foster a more logical social order. The style was to leave its largest imprint on historical paintings, a genre that had flourished throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the works of figures like Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), a new genre of moralistic history painting came to narrate ancient themes in ways that were a commentary on the ills of contemporary life. In the decades after 1760, Neoclassicism's influence came to reshape portraiture, sculpture, and the decorative arts. Yet like the rise of the Rococo, the pervasiveness of Neoclassicism was short-lived, as the faith the movement placed in human reason came to be questioned in response to the cataclysmic events of the French Revolution. Elements of Neoclassicism survived into the first decades of the nineteenth century, but a new fashion for a sentimental and emotional art, a movement that became known as Romanticism, was already beginning to become evident in the final years of the eighteenth century.

## TOPICS *in Visual Arts*

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### THE RENAISSANCE LEGACY

**TECHNICAL BRILLIANCE.** During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, painters and sculptors working in Italy and the Low Countries (modern Belgium and Holland) had perfected a number of techniques that allowed them to render nature and the human form more successfully than ever before. Chief among these developments had been the early fifteenth-century discovery of techniques of linear perspective. In the years following 1400 in Florence, the painter Masaccio and the sculptors Ghiberti and Brunelleschi had perfected a set of geometric rules for rendering three-dimensional space on a two-dimension picture plane. Somewhat later, the humanist and artist Leon Battista Alberti set these rules down in a treatise entitled *On the Art of Painting*. As this work circulated, artists came to master these techniques, and painting and sculpture throughout Italy took on a sense of depth and solidity as a result. While experimentation in perspective dominated the works of Italian artists, Flemish painters were developing new techniques in oil painting that allowed them to paint human beings and matter in a strikingly realistic way, us-

ing rich palettes of vibrant hues. By 1500, this school of Flemish realism had perfected their observations of the natural world to such a high point that even today these works continue to present observers with images that seem to reach an almost photographic standard for their faithfulness to detail. As Flemish masters developed their realistic techniques, art in Italy entered a new phase of development at the end of the fifteenth century with the rise of the High Renaissance style. This brief, but brilliant period was to witness the achievements of three great masters: Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), and Raphael Sanzio (1483–1520). These High Renaissance masters were to forge a style notable for its naturalism, its faithfulness to classical design standards, and its harmonious and idealized sense of proportion and beauty. While this great era of artistic achievement flourished, though, Italy's political situations grew ever more chaotic and troubled, and the High Renaissance vision of order and harmony came to be short-lived. By 1520, both Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael had died, and Michelangelo had begun to experiment with an altogether more tempestuous and turbulent style. By the time of the Sack of Rome in 1527, the artistic vision of the High Renaissance, with its emphasis on order, harmony, and balance, had begun to fade in favor of a new Mannerism. This new movement was notable from the first for its vivid palette, for its elongated and sinuous lines, as well as for its intellectualism, elegance, and purposeful violation of the rules of High Renaissance classicism.

**MANNERIST COMPLEXITY.** Not every center of Italian art proved susceptible to this Mannerist vision. In Venice and much of northern Italy, artists and patrons were largely resistant to the new design trends. Here the serene vision of High Renaissance classicism continued to shape visual expression throughout much of the sixteenth century. In Parma, the short-lived painter Antonio Correggio (1494–1534) produced a series of creations that made use of the High Renaissance sense of monumentality, although he endowed his works with a greater dramatic energy and sense of movement than was typical of the early years of the sixteenth century. His art, largely ignored throughout most of the sixteenth century, was to inspire the masters of the early Baroque, particularly Annibale Carracci. In Florence and Rome, though, it was the new Mannerist vision that predominated, and here a number of artists produced works that willfully played with and extended artistic possibilities by violating Renaissance standards of classicism. Instead of harmonious and staid symmetry typical of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Mannerist artists

dispersed the figures in their paintings to the four corners of their pictures and created intricate, interwoven groups of human forms. They elongated the body, presenting it in lithe and elegant poses. Mannerist painters favored a heavily muscled, contorted vision of the human body under a new dramatic pressure that suggested energy. In other works, these artists presented the human figure—noblemen and aristocratic ladies, wealthy merchants, or the Virgin and the Christian saints—with a serene detachment. Parmigianino's *Madonna of the Long Neck* (begun in 1534) was typical of a strain of extreme elegance widespread among the Mannerist artists of the day. The venerable subject of the Virgin and Christ child had never been treated in medieval and Renaissance paintings in quite the way that Parmigianino imagined it. He stretched the Virgin's body and neck, perching the small, but extremely beautiful head of Mary atop an enormously lengthened form. Mary appears more like an aristocratic woman than as a traditional devotional figure; her hair is elegantly coifed and dressed with pearls. Similarly, the Christ child was shown, not as if he was an infant, but as if he had the body of a stripling, that is, a child eight or ten years old. Around this central composition, Parmigianino inserted a number of other characters whose precise relationship to the religious theme of the painting is not easily discernible. These figures were not positioned in the middle of the composition, as they might have been in a work of the High Renaissance. Rather, in the left foreground of the painting, Parmigianino placed a group of beautiful, angelic admirers. One of these figures presents an amphora, a large vase-like vessel, to the Virgin. To the right, the picture plane recedes into a deep space, where a prophet is shown unrolling a scroll. Merely decorative elements (a classical column that does not support a portico and a pulled back drapery) suggest that this is not a natural scene, but a posed and highly elegant reinterpretation of a traditional religious theme. The tendencies that the artist displays here, to distort and elongate the human body and to present traditional religious themes laden with a set of complex and not easily comprehensible symbols, were typically Mannerist elements.

**INFLUENCE OF MICHELANGELO.** For inspiration, many Mannerist artists also turned to the works of Michelangelo. The origins of the term Mannerism derived from the Italian words *a la maniera* (meaning "in the manner of"), used in the sixteenth century to refer to artists that imitated the great Michelangelo, who was recognized even at the time as the great Olympian genius of the day. Many agreed that his works had surpassed the examples of classical Antiquity, and conse-

quently, his creations were widely studied and imitated. In the later frescoes that he undertook in the Sistine Chapel at Rome around 1511 and 1512, the artist began to experiment with new compositional techniques. He presented the human body heavily muscled and placed under a dramatic tension that suggested heroic vigor and movement. In the years that followed Michelangelo left Rome and returned to Florence, where he continued to experiment and perfect this style. He also completed several architectural projects in Florence that were to have a widespread impact on buildings in the later sixteenth century. As Michelangelo matured, his artistic vision also became highly personal, even idiosyncratic, and his treatment of the human body reflected these changes. His forms grew more dramatic and elegantly elongated. The imitation of his style among Mannerist artists working in Rome and Central Italy became a recognizable feature of the artistic culture of the age.

**FASHION FOR DIFFICULT THEMES.** Another recognizable trend of the period was its fondness for difficult themes and complex iconographies. In the cultivated courtly circles that increasingly dominated the sixteenth-century Italian scene, a taste for allegory and literary references was reflected in patrons' choices of themes. Of the many abstruse and difficult-to-understand works that were painted at the time, perhaps none has ever surpassed Angelo Bronzino's *Exposure of Luxury*, a work that was once called *Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time*. Painted around 1545 for the Medici duke in Florence, the image brilliantly captures the Mannerist movement's taste for exotic and puzzling subjects. At the top of the picture Father Time pulls back a curtain to reveal Cupid fondling Venus. The lovers are pelted with flowers by a *putto*, or cherub. In the background of the painting these subjects' alter egos, Envy and Fraud, appear. Envy tears her hair, while the beautiful figure of Fraud presents a honeycomb with her left hand. If we follow the lines of her body, however, we see that her form culminates in a griffin's tail. Discarded masks litter one side of the panel, while a dove, the symbol of Venus, trills and coos in the foreground. The allegorical meanings of this work have long been debated, even as they likely were by those who admired the painting in the cultivated circles that surrounded the Medici dukes. Mannerist paintings like Bronzino's were, in fact, similar to other widely practiced games and pastimes of the Italian courts. A fashion for emblems was one of the hallmarks of this kind of highly sophisticated society. Emblems were complex amalgamations of symbols that conveyed an allegorical meaning and they were printed in books, used on architectural decorations, and even painted onto dinner-

ware. They were the crossword puzzles of the age, since the symbols they presented were intended to stymie and perplex intellectuals, forcing them to comb through their memories to unlock the symbolic meanings that were hidden in these pictures. So, too, works like Bronzino's *Exposure of Luxury* were entertainment for an increasingly refined and educated circle of cultivated elites.

**SHIFTS IN THE LATER SIXTEENTH CENTURY.** By the later sixteenth century tastes began to shift away from the elaborate, sometimes contrived iconography and extreme refinement typical of the late phases of Mannerist art. While many Mannerist innovations continued to inform the world of the early Baroque period, the religious proscriptions of the Counter Reformation demanded a public art that was clear, forceful, and readily intelligible to viewers. Exotic iconographical confections like Bronzino's *Exposure of Luxury* continued to be commissioned for private consumption during the late sixteenth century, but the Mannerist propensity for veiled references and difficult themes was increasingly judged inappropriate for the arena of the church. The developing religious sensibilities of the Catholic Reformation sought out an art that was capable of inspiring the faithful to repentance and Christian perfection and at the same time able to defend the Catholic faith against Protestant criticisms. The first evidence of this renewal, however, arose in the architecture of the period. During the final decades of the sixteenth century, Michelangelo's great High Renaissance dome was to be completed at St. Peter's, and the Jesuit Order was to astound Rome with its monumental church, Il Gesù, providing the foundation upon which the early Baroque style in architecture was to develop. In the many churches that were to be built or remodeled as the Catholic renewal gathered steam in Rome, broad expanses were being prepared for the display of religious paintings and sculpture. Around 1600, an extraordinary group of painters came to flourish in Rome who developed a new visual language that was uniquely suited to the emerging demands of the Catholic Reformation.

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## THE COUNTER REFORMATION'S IMPACT ON ART

**REACTION TO MANNERISM.** The stylistic changes evident in the visual arts at the beginning of the Baroque period can in part be traced to historical developments that occurred in the wake of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), the church council that was to define the character of Roman Catholicism and its teachings until modern times. The Council's purpose was to debate and to answer the attacks Protestants had made against the church and to reform abuses in church practices and administration. During the final days of the session, the church's fathers met to discuss issues surrounding the invocation of relics and the use of statues and images in religious worship. Because the deliberations were hampered by time considerations, many questions were left unresolved at Trent, although the Council's decrees insisted on the value of religious art, a position that rejected the criticisms levied by some radical Protestant factions of the day that paintings and statues violated Old Testament prohibitions against "graven images." By contrast, the fathers at Trent reiterated the Catholic Church's long-standing support for religious art. Its purposes, they intoned, should be didactic, that is, it should serve to educate the unlettered masses in the truths of the church. While the Council insisted that bishops had a duty to eliminate works whose message was unclear or indistinct, their decrees provided few guidelines for establishing acceptable religious art. In the years that followed, the subject of religious art came to be debated vigorously throughout Italy, largely through the efforts of two Italian bishops: Charles Borromeo (1538–1584) of Milan and Gabrielle Paleotti (1522–1597) of Bologna. Both figures were widely influential in establishing guidelines for the creation of religious art, even as they came to vigorously oppose many designs and themes favored by Mannerist artists and their patrons. Borromeo, a major figure in many aspects of Catholic reform, published his treatise *Instructions for Builders and Decorators of Churches*, in 1577, and its 33 chapters considered such subjects as the proper church layout, design, and furnishings necessary for Christian worship. In one chapter, he discussed the ways in which artists should treat sacred themes. Borromeo argued that religious art should present its themes in a clear, readily intelligible way so that art might instruct viewers in Catholic teaching and encourage the faithful to repent. This work also pre-

scribed a system of fines for painters and sculptors who violated these guidelines.

#### **BORROMEIO'S INFLUENCE ON RELIGIOUS ART.**

While Borromeo aimed to censor religious art by outlawing the Mannerist tendency to veil meanings, the bishop was at the same time an enthusiastic promoter of religious images. The *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius Loyola had very much shaped his own piety. In that work, the founder of the Jesuit Order had recommended that the faithful place before their mind's eye images of the Passion and the feats of the saints so that they might flee sin. Among the contemporary artists Borromeo admired were Jacopo Bassano, Antonio Campi, and the great Venetian Titian, and his private collection of images included several works by these masters. In public commissions for the Cathedral of Milan, Borromeo favored works by Antonio and Giulio Campi, brothers who were members of a prominent family of artists from nearby Cremona. Their works exemplified Borromeo's principles by being readily intelligible and treating their subjects in clear and forceful ways. The messages of their works were set off with artistic features that enhanced their emotional appeal. As the sixteenth century drew to a close, other artists came to study Borromeo's writings as well, and in this way, the circle of artistic innovators who were capable of expressing the new principles of Catholic reform broadened.

**GABRIELLE PALEOTTI.** Another force in the reform of religious art at the end of the sixteenth century was Cardinal Gabrielle Paleotti (1522–1597). Born in Bologna, Paleotti received a doctorate in canon law by the time he was 23, and eventually made his way to Rome, where he rose to become the judge of the *Sacra Rota*, a key court of appeals within the Vatican government. He was raised to the rank of a cardinal in 1565 and a year later was made bishop of Bologna. While much of his career was spent furthering the cause of church reform, he became fascinated with the subject of religious art in particular. Toward the end of the 1570s, he dedicated himself to writing a massive theological treatise on the correct uses of painting and sculpture within Catholicism. A friend of Borromeo, he took as his departure point the Milanese bishop's earlier work on church building and decoration, but he intended his *Discourses* to be a far more thorough examination of all the issues surrounding religious art. Like Borromeo, he insisted that religious art's messages must be clear and forcefully conveyed, but at the same time he recommended a return to the naturalism of the Renaissance and the fostering of a spirit of historical realism in painting. Paleotti was never able to complete his theological

work on painting and sculpture, but even in its incomplete form his treatise was to have a major impact in defining the religious art of the later sixteenth century. At Bologna, his work encouraged a number of artists to abandon Mannerist conventions and to develop a clearer and more forceful presentational style in their religious works. Among the most prominent artists to study Paleotti's recommendations and to adopt them in their work were Annibale, Lodovico, and Agostino Carracci, key figures in expressing many of the design tenets that subsequently flourished during the early Baroque. Yet during the 1580s and 1590s, Paleotti's generally humane and moderate proposals for artistic reform went unheeded in the larger Italian artistic world. By the 1590s, the cardinal had returned to Rome to take up administrative duties within the church. Surveying the artistic scene in the church's capital, he grew increasingly pessimistic about the direction contemporary religious art was taking. During these years, he proposed that the church establish an office to censor religious images, an office that would be similar to the Index of Prohibited Books, an institution that, since 1559, had been charged with supervising and censoring book publication in Catholic countries. The plan was not adopted, and Paleotti died several years later. In the years immediately following his death, though, some of Paleotti's prescriptions for a historically accurate and naturalistic art came to fruition in the works of artists at Rome. At the same time, a new fashion for propagandistic works became evident, as leaders of the Catholic Reformation came to commission works that celebrated the triumph of the church in a grand and monumental fashion.

**THE ROMAN JUBILEE OF 1600.** Something of the sense of triumphal resurgence that was developing at Rome can be gleaned from the preparations that occurred in Rome to mark the Jubilee year 1600. Jubilee years had long been celebrated in the church's history to mark the passage of every quarter century, but during the sixteenth century, the rise of Protestantism had discouraged such events. To mark a departure from the recent dismal past, Pope Clement VIII planned to make the Jubilee Year 1600 into a major occasion that might promote the renewal that was underway in the church. During the Jubilee more than three million pilgrims visited the city to admire the many monuments that Clement and his immediate successors had built in preceding years. Among these were the Dome of St. Peter's, the Jesuit's Church of Il Gesù, major renovations to the Church of St. John Lateran, as well as a number of public monuments and squares. As the expectation for this event grew, many of Rome's religious institutions and

church officials came to commission a number of religious works from painters and sculptors. The works of the greatest of these artists came to express a new dramatic tension, a sense of movement, and realism that responded to the Catholic Reformation's demands for a clear and forceful art that might stir the hearts of the faithful. In this way Rome was to shape the development of the early Baroque style in the visual arts in a way that was similar to the role that it was acquiring as Europe's major center of architectural design.

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### ELEMENTS OF THE BAROQUE STYLE

**INTERRELATED TRENDS.** During the final quarter of the sixteenth century, the first gleanings of the paths that the seventeenth-century Baroque style was to take became evident in Bologna, the episcopal city administered by the Catholic reformer Gabrielle Paleotti. The leaders of this Bolognese school, Lodovico, Annibale, and Agostino Carracci, came to fashion a new kind of art that was in many ways opposed to the intellectual formalism and sophistication of the Mannerists. Their new style responded to the Catholic Reformation's demands for religious works that were clear and readily intelligible and which spoke to the hearts of the faithful. By virtue of the many students that the Carracci taught in Bologna, this new style emerged as a recognizable school of painting by the end of the century. Still great variety persisted on the Italian artistic scene, as many Mannerist masters continued to find a receptive audience willing to support them with commissions. With the arrival of Annibale Carracci in Rome in the late 1590s, though, Italy's foremost artistic center was presented with an artist who self-

consciously aimed to revive many High Renaissance design principles. His works advocated a return to the naturalism and to the sense of order and harmonious balance that had marked the early sixteenth-century works of Michelangelo, Raphael, and Correggio. At the same time, a new dramatic sense of movement and even an ecstatic religious piety played a role in his work. Its appeal to the emotions, in other words, was far more profound than the intellectualism of the High Renaissance style. The efforts of Annibale Carracci and his Bolognese students who followed him to Rome were particularly important in establishing one feature of the visual arts in the Baroque: its attempt to harness emotions by impressing viewers with a sense of drama and a climactic whole that was greater than its parts. The Bolognese vision was only one part of the complex stylistic changes that were underway in Rome at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. In these years the formidable talent Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio was carving out a different path in the Baroque's development. Caravaggio's works were notable for their realism. In contrast to the careful preliminary studies and drawings that Annibale Carracci and the Bolognese school made before painting, Caravaggio worked directly from life models, using this technique to capture the immediacy of the moments he narrated in his works. He clothed his models in contemporary costumes and relied on dramatic lighting to bathe his figures in contrasts of light and dark. As the examples of Caravaggio, the Carracci, and other Bolognese painters came to be appreciated on the Roman artistic scene, others came to experiment with the techniques these figures had demonstrated. Some known as "Caravaggisti" followed the path of Caravaggio's gritty realism, while others came to reflect the more classically inspired Bolognese values. Still others aimed to fuse both kinds of artistic visions. In general, though, none of the trends that are evident in the early Baroque in Rome—a return to High Renaissance classicism, the appearance of a sense of dynamic movement in paintings and sculptures, and the taste for portraying subjects in a way that was intensely realistic—was mutually exclusive. We frequently see artists in the first generations of the Baroque experimenting with all three of these elements to produce new kinds of artistic expression that spoke to the religious, social, and intellectual demands of their times.

**THE CARRACCI.** The city of Bologna was the northernmost outpost of the Papal States in Italy, the lands that the pope controlled as his own territory in the peninsula. During the 1580s, the brothers Annibale and Agostino Carracci and their cousin Lodovico Carracci

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***NEW DISCOVERIES**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Baroque painters who came to maturity in the early seventeenth century were indefatigable students of art, traveling throughout Italy in search of inspiration. Most came to detest many Mannerist currents of art, and instead sought out older inspiration in Michelangelo or in other noted artists of the Renaissance. The great figure of Antonio da Correggio (1494–1534) was one of the artists that Annibale Carracci admired. Despite his short life, this artist left behind a number of important frescoes in and around the city of Parma. In 1580, Carracci wrote a letter to his cousin back in Bologna shortly after he had arrived in the city. He described his excitement at witnessing this great and relatively overlooked master's works. As Carracci developed his style he drew major inspiration from the swiftly moving forms of Correggio's High Renaissance art.

I do not know how many things I have seen this morning except the altarpiece showing St. Jerome and St. Catherine, and the painting of the Madonna with the Bowl on the Flight into Egypt. By Heaven, I would not want to exchange any of them for the *St. Cecelia*! Say yourself if the grace of St. Catherine who bows her head with such charm over the foot of that beautiful Christ Child is not more beautiful than Mary Magdalen? And that beautiful old man, St. Jerome, has he not more

grandeur and also more tenderness than has the *St. Paul* of Raphael, which at first seemed a miracle to me and now seems a completely wooden thing, hard and sharp? Moreover, can one not say so much that even your Parmegianino has to put up with these remarks, for I know now that he has attempted to imitate the grace in the pictures of this great man, but he is still far from having obtained it. The *putti* of Correggio breathe, live and laugh with such grace and truth that one must laugh and be gay with them.

I am writing my brother that it is absolutely necessary for him to come here, where he will see things which we never would have believed possible. For the love of God urge him to dispatch quickly those two tasks in order to come here at once. I shall assure him that we shall live together in peace. There will be no quarrelling between us. I shall let him say anything he wants and shall busy myself with sketching. Also I do not fear that he will not do the same and abandon talking and sophistry, all of which is a waste of time. I have also told him that I shall try to be at his service, and when I have come to be known somewhat I shall inquire and look for opportunities.

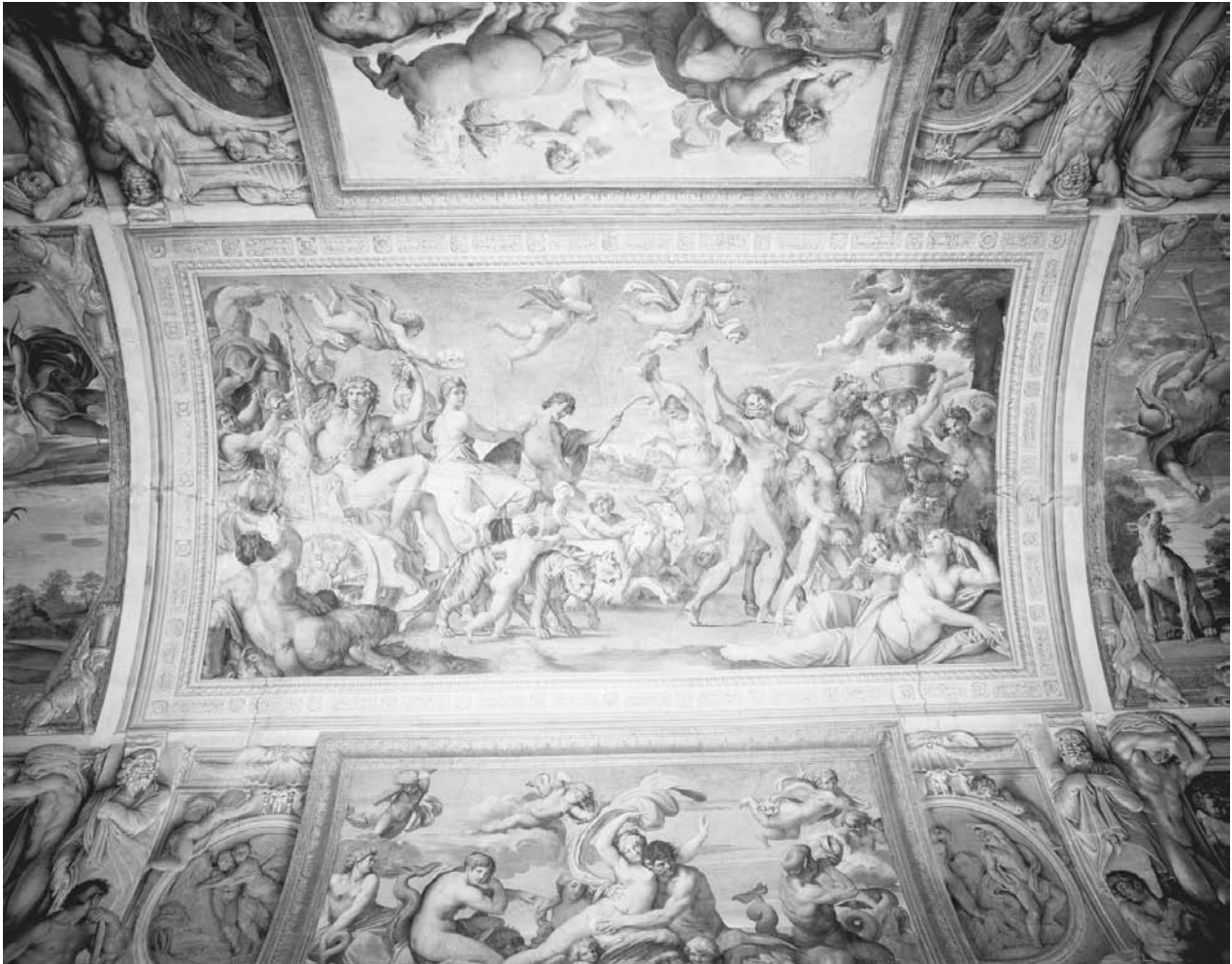
**SOURCE:** Annibale Carracci in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday Books, 1958): 72–73.

had established a successful studio in Bologna that experimented with ways to revive High Renaissance classicism. They soon acquired a number of students, and their efforts, along with those of a number of other Bolognese artists, came to shift artistic commissions in Central Italy away from the then-dominant Mannerist movement. Of the three, it was Lodovico Carracci (1555–1619) who had the most pretensions of being a scholar, although Annibale was to carve out a niche as the most successful painter. Lodovico was the eldest of the three, and except for a brief visit to Rome and some travels in his youth, he spent almost all his career in provincial Bologna. While Lodovico tried to return to the High Renaissance classicism and naturalism, some Mannerist influences survived in his work. He was particularly drawn to the color of Venetian painting, and like all three Carracci, he greatly admired the works of Correggio (1489–1534), a painter from Parma, whose monumental ceiling frescoes in that city's cathedral were to inspire several generations of Baroque painters. Influential on the local scene in Bologna, Lodovico Carracci came to leave an even greater imprint on the art of the

age through his influence on his younger cousins as well as several of his students, the most important of these being Guido Reni, a prolific seventeenth-century master. Lodovico's early experiments in reviving a more naturalistic and classical style of depiction were soon superseded by his cousins Annibale and Agostino, although Lodovico helped set the mold for the Carracci's later success, in his efforts to join the Florentine tradition of draftsmanship (*disegno*) with Venetian and northern Italian coloristic techniques (*colore*). For much of the sixteenth century, artists and theorists had debated which of these two traditions was superior. Venetian and northern Italian artists, for instance, had long been recognized for the sophistication of their colors and their attempts to suggest mass and depth through the building up of rich layers of oils on canvases and panels. By contrast, the Florentine tradition of drawing a picture from studies and according to a rationally conceived program was seen as a very different tradition. The Carracci's famous studio at Bologna attempted to forge a union between these two distinctive traditions.

**ANNIBALE CARRACCI AND THE PALAZZO FARNESE CEILING.** The greatest of these three masters was Annibale





*Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne*, ceiling fresco in the Palazzo Farnese, Rome, by Annibale Carracci. © MASSIMO LISTRI/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

(1560–1609), who may have studied painting early on with his cousin Lodovico, but who was also influenced by the currents of Mannerism in Bologna during his youth. Even in his youthful works Annibale displayed an imaginative fusion between the many different painterly styles current in Central and Northern Italy. Like Lodovico, he was fascinated by the Florentine tradition of draftsman-like design, but equally captivated by the rich coloristic techniques of Venetian art. His works early on displayed a more thorough naturalism than that present in the artificial and highly elegant world of Mannerism, and he acquired many admirers, including Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, at the time a high-ranking member of the church's government. In 1595, Annibale came to Rome at Odoardo's insistence. Odoardo commissioned Annibale to paint a large gallery in the cardinal's palace. The work was one of the first defining masterpieces of the Baroque, and a composi-

tion that was widely admired soon after its completion in 1600. Carracci's creation was at the time seen to be of equal importance to Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling or the papal apartment frescoes that Raphael had executed at roughly the same time. Over the centuries such extravagant assessments of the Farnese Gallery have faded, yet it is nevertheless a brilliant achievement. The subject of the eleven major frescoes that Carracci painted in the hall was the loves of the pagan gods. Although the theme appears pre-Christian on its surface, the work actually manages to praise Christian virtues through the use of a number of hidden symbols and deeper meanings. Its use of an intellectually conceived program was to be a typical feature of Baroque ceilings, as was its use of many veiled and hidden meanings. At the same time, the work is accessible through its triumphant imagery, monumental scale, and impressive sense of dynamic movement. Stylistically, the ceiling made use of ideal-

ized human forms that were similar in feeling to those of the great Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescoes. To organize the design, Annibale Carracci divided the hall's barrel or rounded vault into a number of different images, each of which he framed with illusionistic devices so that they appeared to be set in individual frames. Between many of these, he placed classical nudes, again painted to appear as if they were sculptures and seeming to serve the role of *caryatids*, ancient statues that supported the porticos of temples. In its total effect the entire ceiling takes on the impression of being like the artistic gallery of a cultivated collector, filled as it is with images that suggest a collection of ancient art and sculptures. Throughout the work, Carracci also managed to wed the venerable traditions of draftsmanship to a Northern Italian sense of color. As a result of his example, he breathed new life into the fresco form, creating a style of composition that was to be widely imitated over the next two centuries in any number of monumental ceiling cycles executed by artists, both in Italy and abroad.

**OTHER BOLOGNESE PAINTERS IN ROME.** During the early years of the seventeenth century, a number of other painters from the Carracci studio made their way from Bologna to Rome, including Guido Reni (1575–1642), Domenichino (1581–1641), and Francesco Barbieri, better known as Guercino (1591–1666). Reni and Domenichino had trained in the studios of Agostino and Lodovico Carracci, while Guercino arrived there as a young painter and came to be influenced by their example. While the influence of the Carracci's style is evident in all their works, each of these figures developed a slightly different direction in their art. In 1601, Guido Reni was called to Rome by the papacy, and although he remained active there over the next decade and a half, he divided his time between the church's capital and Bologna. Often in disagreement with his papal patron, he was threatened for a time with arrest for his disrespect for papal authority. At home in Bologna, he developed a large and successful studio that executed many religious paintings in the new style for churches in Central and Northern Italy. About 250 of his works survive today, suggesting the fertility of his artistic imagination and the diligence with which he developed his studio. Reni painted a number of images of the Virgin Mary that were widely copied. Commercially, he was the most successful of the many painters who flourished in Italy at the time, and he was widely admired for his ability to present the religious sentiment of ecstasy in a way that appeared almost breathless. Personally, he was deeply religious, like many of the artists of the Bolognese school, but at the same time he avoided praise and seems to have suffered from a conflicted sexual nature. It was his tendency to present religious sentiments in his work in ways that suggested the ethereal, which caused nineteenth-century art historians to discount his work as overly sentimental. His paintings have more recently been reassessed, and his impact on the artistic culture of the time has come to be better understood. By contrast, Domenichino's work was more thoroughly classical in spirit and organization. The artist produced a number of works on mythological and ancient themes, notable for the use of heroic figures set in landscapes that appear classical in origin. Domenichino's portrayal of the human emotions was more turbulent and less idealized than Reni's, a fact for which many artistic academicians criticized him in the later seventeenth century. Even during his life he had to defend himself against the charge that his works were derivative, since he frequently assembled many of his figures and landscapes from his knowledge of previous works of art. The long-lived figure of Guercino (a nickname that means "squinty-eyed") was also successful on the scene in Rome, where he caused a sensation with his creation of a ceiling fresco treating the myth of *Aurora* in a garden outbuilding at the Villa Ludovisi. Through his mastery of illusionistic techniques, he carried the lines of the room's structural architecture upward onto the ceiling and filled the vault with a narrow channel marked out by these false illusionary structures. Through this space *Aurora's* chariot careens with *putti* (small angelic figures), doves, and clouds being separated and dispersed in its wake. His style here, as it was elsewhere, was highly refined and given to luxurious display. Somewhat later, Guercino retired to his native Cento near Bologna, where he continued to preside over a successful studio. During the early 1530s, Queen Marie de' Medici of France considered hiring him for a time as her court painter but was unable to do so when she was forced into exile because of disputes with her son King Louis XIII. Although he traveled to complete commissions, Guercino continued to live in Cento until his death in 1666 at the age of seventy-five.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BOLOGNESE SCHOOL.** The rise of a distinctive school of painting at Bologna came to have profound effects on the art of seventeenth-century Italy. The distinctive mix of naturalism, classical styling, and coloristic techniques that these Bolognese painters crafted was to begin to leave its mark on the city of Rome's artistic scene around 1600. The rise of other competing visions of the Baroque did not dampen the enthusiasm for the Bolognese masters, although they

came to be favored in some courts and cities while disregarded elsewhere. In the figure of Caravaggio (1573–1610), a second, even more dramatic vision of the new style developed. This altogether more turbulent and dynamic art came to appear on the Roman scene about the same time as Annibale Carracci was painting his famous frescoes in the Gallery of the Farnese Palace in Rome. Like the Carracci, Caravaggio's work was to attract many disciples, who saw in his strikingly realistic paintings, with their strong contrasts of light and shade, a suitable vehicle for conveying the religious themes of the age. These followers of Caravaggio were to become known as the "Caravaggeschi," a distinctive school of followers who imitated the lead of their inspiration, just as the Bolognese painters came to closely model their compositions on those of Lodovico, Annibale, and Agostino Carracci. This division of the painterly world in seventeenth-century Italy into rival camps is one of the distinctive features of the age. At the same time, it is possible to see that artists working in Rome came to derive inspiration from both schools of painting.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The Rise of the Baroque Style in Italy; Music: Origins and Elements of the Baroque Style*

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#### REALISM AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVITY

**CARAVAGGIO.** Michelangelo Merisi (1573–1610), who became known as "Caravaggio" after his family's native town, was a truly revolutionary painter. During the seventeenth century his influence spread throughout Italy and eventually Europe. Despite his short life, a school of painters in Italy known alternately as the "Caravaggeschi" or "Caravaggisti" carried on his legacy of dramatic realism. Elsewhere in Europe, many artists came to be affected by his art, including the great Rembrandt and Rubens. The young Michelangelo's father

was an official in the household of one of the Sforza, the ducal family that controlled Milan and surrounding Lombardy. In Caravaggio's youth the family seems to have moved back and forth frequently between their small, native village and the great city of Milan. When he was in his early twenties, he sold his share in the family's inheritance and left Lombardy, probably arriving in Rome around 1592. Early sources suggest that Caravaggio was a renegade and that he was involved in frequent brawls and quarrels. Even later, when his star had risen in Rome, he was often frequently caught up in court cases and a participant in brawls and eventually fled the city after killing a man in an argument. In temperament, the surviving sources paint a picture of a melancholic and incendiary spirit, prone to quick flashes of temper, but also to deep fits of depression. Upon his arrival in Rome, he was forced to take whatever positions he could find. He worked, for instance, in the household of a church official, churning out stock devotional images for use in his household. Then, he came to paint heads for a painter's studio, mastering the techniques of portraying the face so well that he was able to produce several works in a day. In these jobs, he was paid by the piece, although other painters soon recognized his skills and he rose to become a painter of half-length portraits in the then-reigning Mannerist style. After being kicked by a horse, he was forced to seek hospitalization in the ward of Santa Maria della Consolazione, and during the months of his convalescence, he produced a number of pictures for this institution. With his health restored, Caravaggio played a more independent role in the artistic life in Rome. For a time he lived in the household of Monsignor Fantigno Petrigiani, a church official, and in this period his art began to take on a greater self-assurance. Next he seems to have been patronized by the Cavaliere D'Arpino, one of the reigning Mannerist painters in Rome. Around 1595, he painted a large number of pictures that show the influence of Northern Italian examples on his art. Among the most famous of these are the *Fortune Teller*, *The Cardsharps*, and *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. These canvases reveal a fascination with the properties of light, a feature that Caravaggio developed into a hallmark of his style. Their delicate and lyrical style, though, reveals little of the intense realism that Caravaggio was to develop as he matured over the next few years.

**INCREASING STYLISTIC ASSURANCE.** Caravaggio's increasing technical mastery and individualistic style came, in large part, as a result of his association with the Cardinal del Monte. By the mid-1590s, Caravag-

gio's art was attracting increasing attention in the Roman artistic scene, and the cardinal asked the artist to become a member of his household. At the time, del Monte was the Tuscan ambassador to the papal court, and he lived in one of the Medici family's palaces in Rome. Refined as a connoisseur of art and skilled as a musician, scientist and mathematician, del Monte's household was one of the most sophisticated in Rome at the time. The young Caravaggio was paid to paint pictures, and during his years there, he seems to have produced at least ten works for the cardinal. It was under the cardinal's influence, too, that the artist received the commission to execute a series of paintings for the Contarelli Chapel in the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi. The theme was the Life of St. Matthew, and Caravaggio painted three canvases for the chapel, the greatest of which was his *Calling of St. Matthew*. This subject had long been treated using the passage in Matthew 9 as a guide: "And as Jesus passed forth ... he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, 'Follow me.' And he arose and followed him." In his rendering of this story, Caravaggio endowed the deceptively simple lines of the narrative with an understanding of the social dynamic in which Matthew's life-changing decision occurred. The gritty realism with which he immortalized the scene had never yet been seen in the world of Italian painting. Most previous treatments had sanitized the story, making it appear heroic through idealization. Caravaggio instead embraced the real meaning of the account, and in so doing he endowed Matthew's life-changing miracle with a sense of religious immediacy and drama that painters had not achieved to this point. Matthew, in fact, had been a Jewish publican (a collector of Roman tolls and taxes), an occupation that was detested in ancient Judea. In Caravaggio's rendition, he is shown sitting at a table in the tavern receiving payment from his minions. The boys and men that surround him are drawn with the typical local faces that Caravaggio had observed while a minor portraitist in Rome. The clothing and setting are typically Roman as well. In the background a window's panes are covered with the grimy oilcloth used in common people's homes and public houses. Light does not flow into the room from this source, however, but from above Christ's head. It cascades across the canvas to illuminate the faces of Matthew and his circle, throwing them into a harsh light that sets off patches of illumination against dramatic darkness. To the right, the head of Christ is barely visible behind the form of St. Peter, the savior's first disciple. With his outstretched arm, Christ motions to Matthew, just after he has spoken the words, "Follow



Engraving of Caravaggio from his self-portrait. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

me." Matthew turns his index finger toward his breast, as if to ask, "Me?" In this way Caravaggio was able to capture the pivotal moment of Matthew's life-changing conversion, the leap of faith that marked his transformation from a lover of worldly wealth to a follower of Christ. The realism that his image suggested achieved the kind of pious demands that figures like St. Charles Borromeo and Gabrielle Paleotti had argued in previous decades should invigorate the religious art of the Catholic Reformation.

**LATER ACHIEVEMENTS.** In the decade that followed the completion of the *Calling of St. Matthew*, Caravaggio painted a number of works notable for their dramatic intensity as well as for their sometimes coarse, even seamy presentation of religious themes. His success at the Contarelli Chapel was soon surpassed by the *Conversion of St. Paul*. As in the *Calling of Matthew*, the artist concentrated on the critical moment of conversion. Saul's transformation from a persecutor of Christians to the apostle Paul had often been treated in Renaissance art, and it remained a popular theme for painters in the Counter Reformation as well. In many previous treatments of the theme, Christ had been shown descending from the heavens surrounded by clouds and cherubs to speak the famous words, "Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou me?" By contrast, Caravag-

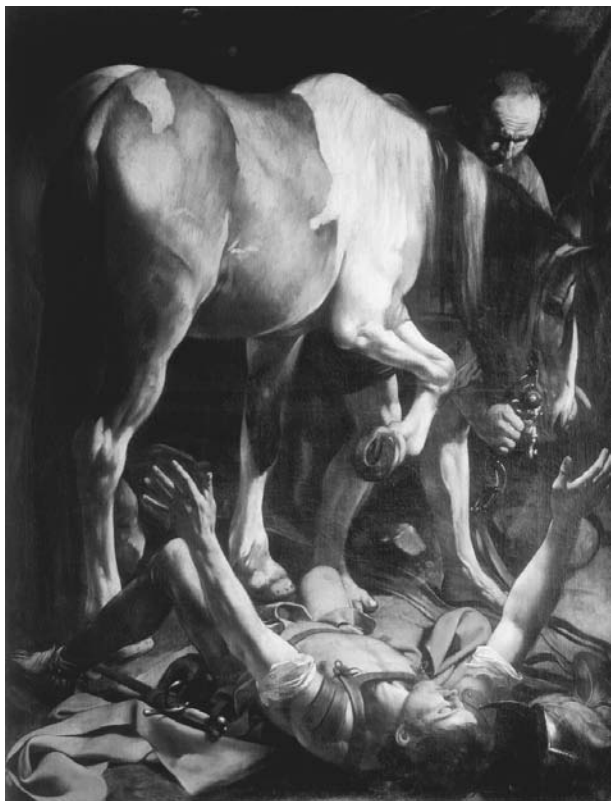


*The Calling of St. Matthew* by Caravaggio. © ARALDO DE LUCA/CORBIS.

gio dispensed with these saccharine trappings, and instead captured the instant at which Saul was thrown from his horse on the road to Damascus. He lies prostrate on the ground before us, his body dramatically foreshortened and appearing to project out from the picture plane into the viewer's space. In the background his horse has not even put down his front leg after rearing under the shock of the blinding light that has fallen from heaven. Saul throws out his arms toward the source of that light in the sky, while in the background his aged servant merely looks on, puzzled by his master's reactions. Engulfed in the darkness, the servant, in other words, has no clue to the great miracle that is occurring at this moment within Saul's soul. In this way Caravaggio depicted the event as a fully internal event, but one that occurred within the setting and trappings of everyday life. Beyond the ethereal light that streams into the canvas from the upper right to bathe Saul, no suggestion of the divine presence is made. Similar innovation marked several of Caravaggio's later paintings treating the life of the Virgin Mary. As the Mother of God, painters and their patrons had long taken great care to present Mary in ways that might spark reverence and admiration. Such a trend for idealized images of the Virgin continued in the seventeenth century and inspired the many ethereal presentations of artists like Guido Reni and his imitators. During 1604, Caravaggio painted an image of the *Madonna of Loreto* for the Church of San Agostino near the Piazza Navona in Rome. The previous winter, he had spent time in north-

ern Italy, not far from the shrine of the Holy House of Loreto, a place believed to house the actual childhood home of the boy Jesus. Returning to Rome, Caravaggio painted an image of the Virgin standing in her doorway like an Italian housewife, being admired by two pilgrims. Instead of idealizing Mary, Caravaggio painted his model faithfully, complete with dirt under her nails. Again, as in the *Conversion of St. Paul*, Caravaggio intended such homely portrayals to call attention to the way in which God worked through humble agents and to heighten his viewers' piety with the realization that those involved in the sacred dramas of scriptures had been ordinary men and women. Yet some felt at the time that his tendency to make the sacred profane was troubling, and the *Madonna of Loreto* immediately caused a controversy because of its homely portrayal of Mary. Similar criticisms were made, too, of the artist's *Death of the Virgin*, a painting that is now in the Louvre Museum in Paris. Typically, most artists had treated Mary's triumphant Assumption into Heaven, rather than focusing on the final hours of her life and death. Caravaggio, by contrast, showed the Virgin sick and bloated, just after the final throes of her suffering and with her bare legs outstretched as if in rigor mortis. When the painting was presented to the Roman monks who had commissioned it, they rejected it. Such a reaction to Caravaggio's work had become increasingly common at the time. But even as churchmen came to reject his works for public display, others clamored to purchase them for their private collections. In the case of the *Death of the Virgin*, many criticized the painting specifically for showing the Virgin's legs undraped, as well as for the artist's choice of a notorious local prostitute to serve as the model. Others attacked it for being too realistic, since there was no hint of Mary's triumphant journey to heaven. Instead the apostles and women who attended the woman seem struck by a grief so profound that there is no hope for release. Such works caused Caravaggio's art to be reviled, even as it was widely imitated by many later figures.

**INCREASING TROUBLES.** Even during the high-tide of his success, Caravaggio's personal troubles were multiplying. Between 1600 and 1606, the artist had been accused of assault on an almost annual basis. In these years, he and his associate Orazio Gentileschi were also accused of libel, and a notorious case brought by the highly successful artist Giovanni Baglione granted the artist a dubious celebrity. In 1606, Caravaggio killed a man in a brawl that occurred after a tennis match, and he was forced to flee Rome for southern Italy. He traveled to Naples, then to Malta, and in these



*Conversion of St. Paul*, Cerasi Chapel, Church of Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, by Caravaggio. © ARALDO DE LUCA/CORBIS.

final years he continued to receive commissions. Wounded again in a fight, he spent several months convalescing at Naples before deciding to sail to Rome in 1610 after several intercessions gave him the impression that he might be pardoned if he returned there. As his boat was about to set sail, he was mistaken for another criminal, caught, and arrested. Although released a few days later, he developed pneumonia and died soon afterward.

**INFLUENCE.** Despite his short and stormy life, Caravaggio's output of paintings was enormous and his works were avidly traded in by artistic connoisseurs even in the early seventeenth century. The artist's travels in his later years from Rome to Naples to Malta left examples of his art in southern Italy, at that time a province of Habsburg Spain. From this vantage point they came to be studied by Italian and Spanish masters, and their highly dramatic imagery was widely imitated. Many Northern European artists who traveled in Italy were very much influenced by Caravaggio's example. Those who imitated Caravaggio's way of painting, in particular, adapted his use of *chiaroscuro* (the painting of light against dark spaces) to suggest drama. They also longed

to perfect his strikingly realistic style. In his technique, Caravaggio was an innovator, and throughout his later life he tried vigorously to guard the secrets of his working methods. Renaissance painters had usually made detailed studies for their compositions before beginning to work on their canvases and panels. Caravaggio, by contrast, painted without preparatory studies using live models. To achieve his effects of *chiaroscuro* he placed his models in a darkened room lit only with strong lighting placed high above their heads. His patron, the Cardinal del Monte, was very much interested in the science of optics, and reports survive that suggest that Caravaggio may have used lenses to project the outlines of his models and their setting onto his canvases. The attempt to capture nature faithfully was to be one of the preoccupations of the seventeenth century, and Caravaggio's example of a rough and dramatic realism was to inspire many who followed him.

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## THE CARAVAGGISTI

**CARAVAGGIO'S FOLLOWERS IN ROME.** During the final years of his life and for about two decades following his death, Caravaggio's example was avidly imitated by a number of painters at Rome. This trend developed in the years immediately following 1600, as the successes of the artist's works in the Cerasi and Contarelli chapels were recognized. The dark and brooding elements of his style soon appeared in a number of works by other artists, including those of Giovanni Baglione (1566–1643), Orazio Gentileschi (1576–1639), Tomasso Salini (1575–1625), and Bartolommeo Manfredi (1582–1622). While he lived, Caravaggio detested this trend, and he tried to protect the secrets of his working methods. Two of the earliest imitators, Giovanni Baglione (1566–1643) and Tomasso Salini (1575–1625), became his sworn enemies. In 1603, Baglione sued Caravaggio and his friend Orazio Gentileschi, charging them with libel. He believed that the two were responsible for writing verses

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***A DISH COOKED WITH NEW CONDIMENTS**

**INTRODUCTION:** The painter Vincencio Carducho (1578–1637) was born in Florence, but soon moved to Spain where he eventually worked with his brother painting in the Escorial, Philip II's mammoth palace outside Madrid. Despite his Italian origins, the artist was schooled in the Spanish court and considered himself a Spaniard rather than an Italian. His *Dialogues on Painting* were one major contribution to art theory in seventeenth-century Spain. They were written in the form of a conversation between master and student. In the following excerpt, Carducho considers the art of the great Caravaggio and criticizes the widespread tendency of the time to imitate the artist. Carducho argues that, in the hands of lesser lights, Caravaggio's style soon degenerated into a pale reflection of the great master's art and that the rise of the Caravaggian style might soon destroy the careful traditions that painters had developed in previous centuries.

In our times, during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII, Michelangelo Caravaggio rose in Rome. His new dish is cooked with such condiments, with so much flavor, appetite, and relish that he has surpassed everybody with such choice tid-bits and a license so great that I am afraid the others will suffer apoplexy in their true principles, because most painters follow him as if they were famished. They do not stop to reflect on the fire of his talent which

is so forceful, nor whether they are able to digest such an impetuous, unheard of and incompatible technique, nor whether they possess Caravaggio's nimbleness of painting without preparation. Did anyone ever paint, and with as much success as this monster of genius and talent, almost without rules, without theory, without learning and meditation, solely by the power of his genius and the model in front of him which he simply copied so admirably? I heard a zealot of our profession say that the appearance of this man meant a foreboding of ruin and an end of painting, and how at the close of this visible world the Antichrist, pretending to be the real Christ, with false and strange miracles and monstrous deeds would carry with him to damnation a very large number of people by his [the Antichrist's] works which seemed so admirable (although they were in themselves deceptive, false and without truth or permanence).

Thus this Anti-Michelangelo [that is: Caravaggio] with his showy and external copying of nature, his admirable technique and liveliness has been able to persuade such a large number of all kinds of people that his is good painting and that his theory and practice are right, that they have turned their backs on the true manner of perpetuating themselves and on true knowledge in this matter.

**SOURCE:** Vincencio Carducho, *Diálogos de la pintura*, in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Books, 1958): 209–210.

that accused him of being a plagiarist. Baglione's techniques were very different from those of Caravaggio and remained true to the Central Italian tradition of making major preparatory studies before beginning to paint. At the same time, his works did copy Caravaggio's dramatic *chiaroscuro* and he did try to cultivate the great master's sense of realism. While he later developed a style notably independent from Caravaggio, his works around the time of the famous libel case were, in fact, highly derived from Caravaggio's style. Baglione's close friend, Tomasso Salini, was also affected by the popularity of Caravaggism evident in Rome in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, although Salini's art continued to make use of many Mannerist design principles. While he derived inspiration from Caravaggio, Salini also became the artist's sworn enemy, in part because of the role that he came to play as a witness for Baglione in the 1603 legal case.

**MANFREDI AND GENTILESCHI.** Perhaps the two greatest Caravaggisti active in Rome at this time were

Bartolommeo Manfredi and Orazio Gentileschi. Both managed to run successful studios and both were given a number of commissions, although their works followed two different paths. Manfredi treated many of the same themes in his paintings that Caravaggio had immortalized in his early career, including tavern scenes, concerts, and other genre paintings of daily life. At the same time, Manfredi was a successful painter of religious themes, although he rarely accepted public commissions. He was, in other words, primarily a painter patronized by wealthy Romans and churchmen, who bought his works to display in their private collections. His style was notable for its coarse realism, and his critics attacked it as vulgar. By contrast, Orazio Gentileschi's paintings derived a similar inspiration from Caravaggio, although this artist generally sanitized his works of the earthy, often lower class dimensions evident in the great master's immortal creations. During the artist's long years in Rome, he painted a number of religious and secular themes illuminated with the dramatic light typical of the earlier master. He usually

arranged the figures in his compositions close to the foreground and cast a white light from the right across them. While he attempted to capture Caravaggio's realism, his works sometimes showed a naïveté concerning anatomy. In contrast to the homely quality of Manfredi, Gentileschi's works abounded in rich brocades, tapestries, and other elegant trappings of aristocratic life. The artist managed to have a successful career in Rome, not only as a painter, but also as a decorator. He was responsible, in fact, for many of the decorative mosaic designs that adorn the interior of St. Peter's dome at the Vatican. Later in life, he left the city, and after travels to Genoa and Paris, he ended up as a painter in the court of Charles I in England.

**DECLINE OF CARAVAGGISM AT ROME.** While the movement reigned at Rome during the 1610s and early 1620s, its influence lessened after 1623. In that year, Cardinal Maffeo Barberini was elected Pope Urban VIII, and he was to reign until 1644. During his relatively long pontificate, he and his family were to commission a number of monuments and artistic works in Rome notable for their grand, triumphal style, rather than for their gritty realism. It was during the Barberini pontificate, for instance, that much of the interior decoration of the new St. Peter's Basilica was completed. The artist who spoke most vigorously to these new demands was Gianlorenzo Bernini, and his own design principles, revealed in the sculptures and architecture that he crafted for his Roman patrons, were to take a very different course from the brooding spirit of Caravaggio and his followers.

**CARAVAGGISM IN NAPLES.** It was in Italy's largest city, Naples, that Caravaggism exerted its greatest influence over artistic culture in the seventeenth century. Caravaggio had fled to Naples in 1607 after having killed a man in a brawl, and in southern Italy he had executed a number of commissions, often for some of the most influential families in the region. In Naples, he continued to experiment with new design techniques. In some of his paintings, he softened the intense realism typical of his most famous Roman pictures, although he continued to concentrate his attentions on a small number of figures placed in the extreme foreground of his pictures. The works that he produced soon acquired many admirers among the artists in Naples, and three Caravaggisti—Giovanni Battista Caracciolo (c. 1570–1637), Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652), and Artemisia Gentileschi (1597–1652)—continued his experiments in realism there after his death in 1610. The style of Caravaggesque painting they helped to create in the city flourished in Naples far longer than in the rest

of Italy. All three artists demonstrated a taste for violent themes that were often gruesomely portrayed and which relied on elements of Caravaggio's *chiaroscuro*. The eldest of these figures, Caracciolo began to make his mark on the Neapolitan artistic scene around age thirty. During the early 1600s, his works show a steadily increasing sophistication of technique, enlivened toward 1610 by the experience of having seen Caravaggio's Neapolitan works. After a visit to Rome in 1614, his works acquired a greater finesse and certainty of technique, and during subsequent visits to Genoa, Rome, and Florence, he also came into contact with the idealized works of the Carracci school. In the years that followed he tried to forge a new style that united the insights that he had culled from this very different tradition to his longer standing Caravaggism. At the same time, Caracciolo was an avid painter of frescoes, a medium that few of the Caravaggisti practiced, and he left behind a legacy of numerous ceiling frescoes in Naples notable for their grand and heroic style. While many of the Caravaggisti were attacked even in the seventeenth century for their highly derivative and imitative style, Caracciolo managed to transform the great master's realism and lighting effects into a vehicle for presenting his own subtle psychological insights. The second member of the Neapolitan Caravaggisti, Jusepe de Ribera, was not an Italian, but a Spaniard. Born the son of a cobbler, he trained in Spain as a painter before moving to Rome around 1613. There he received a few commissions, and he forged a close relationship with the Utrecht Caravaggisti, a group of painters from the Dutch city of Utrecht that were active on the Roman scene at the time. These included Hendrick ter Brugghen, Dirck van Baburen, and Gerrit van Honthorst. In contrast to the life-painting the Roman Caravaggisti practiced at this time, precise draftsmanship and brushwork characterized the works of the Utrecht Caravaggisti, something that can be seen in the works of Ribera at this time, too. By 1616, Ribera had moved on to Naples, which was controlled then by the kingdom of Spain. Here he was to achieve great success as both a painter and engraver, completing many commissions for the Spanish officials and nobles that were flocking to southern Italy at the time. He continued to execute many works using the contrasting darks and lights of Caravaggism, but during the 1620s and 1630s he developed a second style, notable for greater lightness as well as swift and expressive brush strokes. By 1630, his reputation as a painter of the first rank had been established, and in that year Diego Velázquez visited him in Naples, and came to find inspiration in elements of Ribera's style. Thus the Caravaggism that was



so widespread in Naples was to leave its mark on the greatest painter of seventeenth-century Spain.

**ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI.** Perhaps the most fascinating of all the followers of Caravaggio to emerge in seventeenth-century Italy was Artemisia Gentileschi, the daughter of the Roman painter Orazio Gentileschi. Trained by her father, she came to be the first female painter in European history to be celebrated throughout the Continent for the depth of her artistic insight. Unlike other female professional painters of the time she did not confine her work merely to still lifes and small devotional pictures, but instead took on large historical themes, which she came to endow with considerable depth of feeling. A precocious talent, she was painting in her father's studio by the time she was a teenager. Around this time Agostino Tassi, one of her painting teachers, raped her, and her father soon sued. As a result of the publicity the trial generated, Artemisia was quickly married off to a Florentine, and the couple moved immediately to Florence. It was in the period directly after her marriage that she painted one of her undeniable masterpieces, *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, a subject that Caravaggio had also treated. In this story from the Apocrypha, Judith triumphs over the Assyrian conqueror Holofernes and saves Judea by getting the general drunk in his tent. She then proceeds to behead him. Gentileschi's portrayal of the account is gruesomely realistic, so realistic that many people still find the picture difficult to view. Generations of connoisseurs, too, have seen in her account a psychological depth and rage arising from her unfortunate mishandling at the hands of men. Artemisia remained in Florence for a number of years and was admitted into the city's prestigious Academy of Design, the association of prominent painters in the city. She apparently developed a successful career in the city as a portraitist, although few examples of her works in this genre have survived over the centuries. By 1630, she had likely separated from her husband and had taken up residence in Naples. Her early works had often flouted convention by treating subjects that required her to paint female nudes. In Naples, though, her art took a more conservative turn, with the artist often painting religious subjects for Spanish patrons who lived and worked in the city. A trip to England to visit her ailing father in 1638 came to last three years, during which Artemisia finished some of the projects on which he had been at work during the final years of his life. She then returned to Naples, where she continued to support herself as a painter in the Caravaggistic tradition until her death in 1652. Widely admired and yet controversial in her time, she was one of the artists chiefly responsible for carrying Caravaggio's realism as well as

his insights concerning light and shading to Florence and Northern Europe.

**IMPACT OF CARAVAGGISM.** The impact of Caravaggio's artistic vision came to spread, not only throughout Italy, but everywhere in Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century. Groups of Dutch artists, like the Utrecht Caravaggisti, were to bring with them the insights that they had obtained while observers on the Roman scene. At home, their dark and brooding musings on grim situations were admired for a time, before new movements arose to supplant their popularity. Still, the techniques that these Italian travelers had acquired while in Rome and other centers were not lost, but continued to affect painters like Van Dyck, Rubens, and Rembrandt in the years to come. In France and Spain, many artists came to be influenced by the fashion for Caravaggism as well. While the popularity of the movement persisted in few centers past 1650, Caravaggesque naturalism dramatically enriched the vocabulary of techniques available to artists in the later seventeenth century.

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#### SCULPTURE IN ITALY

**GIANLORENZO BERNINI.** The figure of Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) came to dominate the Baroque style in mid-seventeenth-century Italy. Although he is recognized today primarily as a sculptor, Bernini was a multitalented genius the likes of which had not been seen in Italy since the days of the High Renaissance. Trained as a sculptor in his father's Roman studio, he completed



*David* by Gianlorenzo Bernini. © GIANNI DAGLI ORTI/CORBIS.

his first sculptures by the time he was eleven years old. At this early age, he produced a small sculpture noticeable for its naturalness and delicacy for the Cardinal Scipione Borghese. While he continued to practice the art of sculpture his entire life, he also acquired great skills as a playwright, painter, draftsman, and composer. By the time he was twenty he had acquired a second prominent patron in the figure of Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, who eventually rose to become Pope Urban VIII (r. 1622–1644). Both Cardinal Borghese and Barberini managed to keep the young sculptor employed with a number of commissions. Even in this early period of his youth, Bernini produced a number of masterpieces that were hailed as unprecedented since the time of Michelangelo. Two of these early works, the *David* (1623) and *Apollo and Daphne* (1624), continued to shape the training of sculptors well into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In contrast to Michelangelo's self-contained and assured *David*, Bernini's sculpture treating the same subject immortalized dramatic tension and movement. As in Caravaggio's painting, Bernini strives here to capture the moment: the exact instant when the young David is just about to propel the stone from his slingshot. The pose that Bernini captured in this marble was derived from one of the ancient figures contained in Annibale Carracci's ceiling at the Palazzo Farnese, but



"The Ganges," *Fountain of the Four Rivers* by Gianlorenzo Bernini. © MIMMO JODICE/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the expression on the *David's* face was the artist's own. Oft-repeated anecdotes from the time told that Bernini spent a great deal of time looking at his own reflection in a mirror to capture the details of this strained expression, and that the future pope, Maffeo Barberini, even held the mirror for the artist several times while he was at work. A more fanciful creation can be seen in the young artist's *Apollo and Daphne*, completed one year after the *David*. Again, Bernini chose a climactic moment in the ancient myth: the point at which Daphne calls upon her own father for help and is turned into a laurel tree. As Bernini captures the legend, Daphne's hands and legs have already begun to be transformed into the tree, while behind the beautiful figure of Apollo rushes futilely to try to catch his love. These two sculptures helped proclaim the young artist's genius, and in the years to come he was to receive a cavalcade of commissions from his early patron Barberini, now Pope Urban VIII.

**WORK AT ST. PETER'S.** Even more than the work of the architect Carlo Maderno, Bernini's accomplishments in the interior and exterior of St. Peter's Basilica were to shape the experience of millions of visitors to the mammoth church for centuries to come. His first massive achievement there was the construction of the baldachino, a canopy almost ten stories above the high altar. Built between 1624 and 1633, the structure actually required the labor of a number of artists, although Bernini proved to be the guiding spirit behind its cre-

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE FOUR RIVERS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Although the artist Gianlorenzo Bernini dominated the Roman artistic scene for a number of years, he did fall out of favor for a short period in the later 1640s, after the death of his long-time patron Pope Urban VIII. Urban's successor, Innocent X, cast a critical eye on the artist when two bell towers Bernini had designed for the façade of St. Peter's had to be torn down when it became clear that they were structurally unsound. In his *Life of Cavaliere Gianlorenzo Bernini*, the first biography of the artist, the Florentine Filippo Baldinucci (1624–1696) wrote of these problems, but also of how the artist redeemed himself through his ingenious creation of the plans for the Fountain of the Four Rivers in the Piazza Navona, one of the most charming monuments undertaken in Baroque Rome.

So strong was the sinister influence which the rivals of Bernini exercised on the mind of Innocent X that when he planned to set up in the Piazza Navona the great obelisk brought to Rome by the Emperor Antonino Caracalla, which had been buried for a long time at Capo di Bove, for the adornment of a magnificent fountain, the Pope had designs made by the leading architects of Rome without giving an order for one to Bernini. But how eloquently does true ability plead for its possessor, and how effectively does it speak for itself! Prince Niccolò Lodovisio, whose wife was a niece of the Pope and who was at that same time an influential friend of Bernini, persuaded

the latter to prepare a model. In it Bernini represented the four principal rivers of the world, the Nile for Africa, the Danube for Europe, the Ganges for Asia, and the Rio della Plata for America, with a mass of broken rocks that supported the enormous obelisk. Bernini made the model and the Prince arranged for it to be carried to the Casa Pamfili in the Piazza Navona and secretly installed there in a room through which the Pope, who was to dine there on a certain day, had to pass as he left the table. On that day, which was the day of the Annunciation, after the procession, the Pope appeared and when the meal was finished he went with Cardinal Pamfili and Donna Olimpia, his sister-in-law, through that room and, on seeing such a noble creation and the sketch for such a vast monument, stopped almost in ecstasy. Being a Prince of the keenest judgment and the loftiest ideas, after admiring and praising it for more than half an hour, he burst forth in the presence of the entire privy council, with the following words: "This is a trick of Prince Lodovisio. It will be necessary to employ Bernini in spite of those who do not wish it, for he who desires not to use Bernini's designs must take not to see them." He sent for Bernini immediately. With a thousand demonstrations of esteem and affection and in a majestic way, almost excusing himself, he explained the reasons and causes why Bernini had not been employed until that time. He gave Bernini the commission to make the fountain according to the model.

**SOURCE:** Filippo Baldinucci, *The Life of Cavaliere Gianlorenzo Bernini in A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Books, 1958): 116–117.

ation. The most distinctive features of the baldachino are the four huge twisted spirals that serve to support the massive horizontal upper story and crown-like top above. Bernini adapted this design from descriptions of columns that had been in the original Constantinian basilica that had stood at the site until the early sixteenth century. These columns, in turn, were connected to the ancient Hebrew temple erected in Jerusalem during Solomonic times. Although the work is enormous, Bernini's baldachino proves to be one of the only structures within St. Peter's that is capable of suggesting the church's enormous scale. From the rear of the church the canopy appears small, yet as one approaches it and can grasp its massive proportions set against the even larger dome above, the true size of St. Peter's becomes evident. Throughout the interior of the building, too, Bernini oversaw a massive sculptural program that decorated the church's walls, holy water stoups, and massive piers and columns with statuary. Most of these statues are about one and a half times life size, but their

scale is dwarfed within the confines of Christianity's largest church. As Bernini's labors progressed at the basilica, he also planned to build two massive bell towers on the other side of St. Peter's façade, though these structures eventually proved to be structurally unsound and had to be torn down. As a result his reputation as an artist, architect, and designer suffered for a brief time under the pontificate of Urban VIII's successor, Innocent X (r. 1644–1655). The artist's imprint on the church's exterior is most notable today through his design of the enormous square that lies outside the church's nave, as well as the statues he designed for this square's massive, encompassing colonnade (a forest of columns that is roofed over to provide protection from the elements). Three hundred simple Doric columns populate this curving colonnade, while on either side of the enclosed space Bernini placed two handsome bronze fountains. Atop the colonnade the statues Bernini designed portray the major saints of the church. In the center of the square he placed an ancient Egyptian

obelisk, a monument that signified the church's conversion of the heathen peoples and its subsuming of their cultures into Christianity. He imagined the entire structure, with its enfolding arms, as signifying Mother Church's embrace of the faithful, and despite its colossal size the square does manage to grant a sense of integrity and welcome to the massive structure that stands in its background. Generally, Bernini's decorative program at St. Peter's managed to endow the severe monumentality of the church with a sense of movement and dramatic climax, key features of the artistic sensibilities of both the visual arts and architecture in the Baroque. (See Architecture: The Rise of the Baroque in Italy)

**BERNINI'S DECORATIVE PROGRAMS ELSEWHERE IN ROME.** Although Bernini fell out of papal favor early in the pontificate of Innocent X, he soon came to be reinstated as the dominant artist of seventeenth-century Rome. For most of the century, he was the man that popes called upon to execute their ambitious plans. Scarcely a corner of the city escaped his touch. Since the Renaissance, Italian artists and architects had frequently envisioned handsome squares, broad avenues, and other urban monuments that might serve as focal points for urban life. Few of these grand plans had been executed, but in the seventeenth century Rome's popes redoubled efforts to endow their city with these grand monuments. As a result, Rome emerged as the model for the early-modern capital, and its handsome public spaces were to be imitated throughout the Continent. Bernini proved in every way to be equal to the challenge of creating noble public spaces. Throughout the city, he designed sculptures and fountains, and he placed ancient monuments within new frames that set off their noble features. The little obelisk that he placed in the square near the Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva was typical of one direction in which Bernini's decorative and humorous art flowed. He set the ancient monument atop the back of a fancifully sculpted elephant, suggesting the mode of transport that the artifact had likely taken on its way to Rome. Elsewhere his designs for urban squares were more dignified. Perhaps his most definitive achievement on the urban scene was the construction of the Fountain of the Four Rivers in the Piazza Navona. This long and narrow rectangular square had been the site of a Roman stadium, a staging point for chariot races in the ancient city. The monument was Bernini's first major commission undertaken for Pope Innocent X, after the setback that he had suffered as a result of St. Peter's ill-fated bell towers. Innocent stipulated that the square be decorated with a fountain as well as an ancient Egyptian obelisk that had been brought to Rome centuries before. Since the late six-



*The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* by Gianlorenzo Bernini. © MASSIMO LISTRI/CORBIS.

teenth century, the increase of the city's water supply had been an essential component of papal policy; ancient aqueducts had been repaired and new water sources developed. As these achievements occurred, successive popes came to celebrate Rome's new, secure sources of fresh water by commissioning fountains like Bernini's *Four Rivers*. The Roman fountain was above all a utilitarian object, for without running water in houses, this was how people received their water. Bernini's structure, though, came to outshine the many handsome, but largely utilitarian structures that had been built in the city to this point. Relying on his enormous ingenuity, Bernini built the obelisk into his fountain design, placing it atop a mountain of fake rock that appeared to be a natural pile of stone, but which in reality was carefully cut to refract light dramatically off its surfaces. At each of the four corners under the obelisk he designed a massive sculpture that personified the qualities of four of the world's most important rivers, including the Danube, Ganges, Nile, and the South American Plate. He encircled the sculptures with carved flora and fauna suggestive of the river's region and he relied on playful jets to dispense the fountain's water in dramatic spurts, dribbles, and jets of water. In this way

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***TERESA'S TRANSVERBERATION**

**INTRODUCTION:** The sixteenth-century Catholic saint, Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), was one of the Christian tradition's greatest mystical writers. In her autobiography she described the many visions she had experienced, including that of the *transverberation*, a visitation by an angel who pricked her with a burning spear that left her alive with the love of God. This was the subject of Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, one of the most vividly emotional of all the Baroque's religious works. Teresa's life, like St. Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, was widely read by the seventeenth-century devout, and the emphasis that both figures placed on the importance of forming a mental picture of the events of the Bible and the history of the church were a major impetus for the era's constant outpouring of new images and sculptures.

Our Lord was pleased that I should have at times a vision of his kind: I saw an angel close by me, on my left side, in bodily form. This I am not accustomed to see, unless very rarely. Though I have visions of angels frequently, yet I see them only by an intellectual vision, such as I have spoken of before. It was our Lord's will that in this vision I should see the angel in this wise. He was not large, but small of stature, and most beautiful—his face burning, as if he were one of the highest angels, who seem to be all of fire: they must be those whom we call cherubim. Their names they never tell me; but I see very well that there is in heaven so great a difference between one angel and another, and between these and the others, that I cannot explain it.

I saw in his hand a long spear of gold, and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared

to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great, that it made me moan; and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it. The soul is satisfied now with nothing less than God. The pain is not bodily, but spiritual; though the body has its share in it, even a large one. It is a caressing of love so sweet which now takes place between the soul and God, that I pray God of His goodness to make him experience it who may think that I am lying.

During the days that this lasted, I went about as if beside myself. I wished to see, or speak with, no one, but only to cherish my pain, which was to me a greater bliss than all created things could give me.

I was in this state from time to time, whenever it was our Lord's pleasure to throw me into those deep trances, which I could not prevent even when I was in the company of others, and which, to my deep vexation, came to be publicly known. Since then, I do not feel that pain so much, but only that which I spoke of before—I do not remember the chapter—which is in many ways very different from it, and of greater worth. On the other hand, when this pain, of which I am now speaking, begins, our Lord seems to lay hold of the soul, and to throw it into a trance, so that there is no time for me to have any sense of pain or suffering, because fruition ensues at once. May He be blessed forever, who hath bestowed such great graces on one who has responded so ill to blessings so great!

**SOURCE:** *The Life of St. Teresa of Avila* (London: Thomas Baker, 1904): 255–257.

Bernini's fountain transformed an object that might have been a merely useful object on the Roman scene into a widely revered and playful monument.

**THE CORNARO CHAPEL.** Of Bernini's many Roman creations, the one that the artist himself most admired was his design for the Cornaro Chapel in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, a work he executed between 1645 and 1652. The chapel's subject, *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* immortalizes a famous incident in the life of this Spanish Counter-Reformation saint. In his plans for the chapel, Bernini designed a complete stage-like setting that reproduced the saint's miraculous visitation by an angelic messenger. During this incident, known alternately as her "Ecstasy" or "Transverberation," the angel pricked her with a burning arrow that

left her alive with the love of God. Although the event had been painful, St. Teresa described it as so fulfilling and sweet that she never wanted it to end. To suggest this mixture of mingled pain and joy, Bernini relied on his already well-established language of flowing lines and polished drapery. The folds of St. Teresa's habit fall into elegant shapes that suggest movement and the inner turmoil and sweetness of her experience. The artist placed this sculpture, too, within an architectural frame that projects outward toward the viewer's space. Above, the pediment that crowns this group is broken and again moves outward toward the viewer. At either side he placed what appear to be theatrical boxes into which he put sculptures of members of the Cornaro family. Thus the patrons appear as witnesses to St. Teresa's great drama, and although sculpted in stone, they have before

them a perpetual image of the great Spanish saint's mysterious visitation. Since the onset of the Catholic Reformation in the sixteenth century, reformers like St. Ignatius of Loyola had recommended that the faithful practice daily meditations in which they kept before their eyes images of Christ's Passion as well as key events in the life of the Virgin and the saints. Bernini himself practiced similar pious regimens based, not upon St. Ignatius Loyola, but upon the devotions contained in Thomas à Kempis' late-medieval devotional classic, *The Imitation of Christ*. In his *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, he showed the Cornaro family also taking part in this kind of visual meditation: they sit in a theatrical setting, as if pondering the miracle of Teresa's Transverberation, consuming it as one might a play. In this way Bernini's chapel made use of the widespread tendency to elevate images into a method for avoiding sin. To endow his entire creation with greater force, Bernini surrounded his entire chapel with richly colored marbles and touches of gilt, while in the space above he had painted a fresco that suggested the heavens. In its rich use of color, its dramatic sculptural imagery, and theatricality, Bernini's *Ecstasy* has long served as an emblematic image of the Catholic Reformation. It achieved, in other words, that dramatic mix of intense emotionalism and clear religious content that Catholic reformers had long recommended as the highest aims of religious art. While highly successful and often imitated, Bernini's Cornaro Chapel has more recently been invoked as the first of many complete artistic environments, a setting in which sculpture, painting, architecture, and the decorative arts all merge to provide a complete sensory experience to those who visit it.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The Achievements of Gianlorenzo Bernini*

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## THE BAROQUE MATURES IN ITALY

**PIETRO DA CORTONA.** Bernini, the great commanding figure of the seventeenth-century Baroque in Rome, was accomplished in almost all of the media available to a professional in his time. During his long life

he came to dominate the development of public architecture and sculpture in the city, and although he may have painted as many as 150 paintings for his private pleasure, his influence was most definitive in the fountains, sculptures, and architectural commissions he undertook for the papacy. His great authority in artistic matters in the mid- and late seventeenth century, though, did not extend to the world of painting. Here the guiding figure that was to transform the experimentations of the Carracci and Caravaggio into a distinctively mature High Baroque style was Pietro Berrettini da Cortona (1599–1669). Born the son of a stonemason in the Tuscan town of Cortona, he was originally trained in his father's shop as a sculptor and stonecutter, a traditional avenue that often led into the practice of architecture. In painting, he was trained by a provincial artist in Cortona who had close ties to Florentine masters then active in Rome. When his teacher migrated to Rome in 1612, Cortona soon followed. Although he received many commissions during the years that followed, these demonstrate little of the finesse that appeared in his work after 1630. At that time, his art emerged as a mature synthesis fashioned out of the insights of the Bolognese painters of the previous generation, including the Carracci, Guido Reni, and Domenichino. At the same time, Cortona longed to unite the traditional concerns of Raphael, Michelangelo, and other Florentine High Renaissance masters with *disegno* or draftsmanship, with the rich coloristic tradition of Titian and the Venetians. His works around this period took on a greater finesse and surety of execution and were notable for their classical design, rich palette, and dramatic sense of movement and urgency. As a result of his rising status among the artists working in Rome at mid-century, he was given a number of important commissions, particularly from members of the Barberini family, whose son Maffeo then ruled as Pope Urban VIII.

**PALAZZO BARBERINI.** In 1633 Francesco Barberini commissioned Cortona to paint the ceiling of the Grand Salon of his palace in Rome, a massive project that became the artist's definitive masterpiece. The poet Francesco Bracciolini defined the iconography for this work, which was an allegorical treatment of Divine Providence. When completed six years later, the work astounded the Roman artistic world, and it set standards that later artists strove to attain during the remainder of the century. As an achievement it was not to be surpassed until the great frescoes that Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770) created in the eighteenth century. Until Cortona's time, a ceiling as vast as that in the Barberini

Palace had usually been covered in smaller frescoes framed with illusionary architecture or frames to appear as if they were individual wall paintings transposed onto the ceiling. Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel Ceiling, completed between 1508 and 1512, consists of a series of narrative scenes that relate the biblical history from the Creation of Man to the Flood. Annibale Carracci's great achievement in the Palazzo Farnese, a cornerstone of the early Baroque style, had similarly been divided up into a series of individual works, unified by seeming to be a great artistic collection of antiquities and discrete works of art. It had, in other words, been unified as if it was a connoisseur's cabinet of pictures and sculptures housed in the Farnese's barrel vault. One of the reasons for working in this manner, known at the time as *quadri riportati* or "framed pictures," lay in the technical problems of the fresco medium. To undertake a commission of this monumental nature, artists were forced to divide up a fresco into many different sections, each corresponding to a day's work. In true fresco, for instance, plaster is applied to the wall and a section painted while the surface is still damp. In this way the pigments are fused into the surface and become a permanent part of the wall. It is consequently difficult, when working on a large surface such as the Palazzo Barberini's Grand Salon, to treat the entire area as a single composition, unless one has executed a brilliant series of plans. Of course, artists before Cortona had experimented with ways to unify a large ceiling painting as a single work of fresco. During the 1590s, the brothers Cherubino and Alessandro Alberti had painted a single fresco on the ceiling of the Salon of Clement in the Vatican Palace. And in his single ceiling fresco of *Aurora*, completed around 1615, the great artist Guercino had created a single fresco, but he had framed his work with illusionary paintings of architecture that projected upwards the lines of the room below. In this way the actual space the figural painting of *Aurora* took up on Guercino's ceiling was quite small. In the Grand Salon of the Barberini Palace, Cortona took a new, unprecedented tactic. He originally planned to create his work in a way similar to the Palazzo Farnese frescoes of Annibale Carracci, yet as his designs progressed he abandoned such a scheme. The final work appears at first glance as if it is a single gigantic fresco, but it is actually five scenes forged into a single compositional unity through a series of complex devices. The result is a breathtaking tour de force that manages to captivate viewers by its density. Out of this swirling mass of figures, an amazing comprehensive design is readily intelligible; at the same time, this unity invites viewers to decode the ceiling's many symbolic and allegorical messages. Like many grand Baroque projects, Cortona be-

gan with a literary program, one that was devised from the works of the poet Francesco Bracciolini. The shape of the ceiling is a coved, rather than barrel vault, meaning that it slants upwards on all four sides of the rectangular room. In these coves, Cortona painted mythological scenes that serve as allegories glorifying the great achievements of Pope Urban VIII, the most distinguished member of the Barberini clan at the time. Above, in the central space of the ceiling, the virtuous attributes of the Barberini family are immortalized, and the reign of the family's son as pope is celebrated as a sign of the gifts of God's providence. While its allegory sometimes appears contrived and overly difficult to understand, the entire composition holds an amazing degree of sensual force. On stepping into the room, in other words, it appears as if the very heavens have been opened up onto the space, and the rich colors of the ceiling present a kaleidoscopic effect that invites an observer merely to bask in the work as a purely ethereal confection.

**CORTONA'S OTHER WORKS.** Success at the Barberini Palace established Cortona as an artist of the highest rank in Rome, and he received a number of commissions as a result. Among the most important projects that he completed in the final years of his life was a series of decorations for the Grand Duke's apartment in the Pitti Palace in Florence. This particular commission was fraught with problems and setbacks, and although the artist began working there in 1642, he was still returning periodically to Florence to paint in the 1660s, and some rooms remained unfinished at his death. The press of his success at Rome insured that he, like Bernini, was always kept busy there with many projects, and his artistic example helped to establish the grand manner, drama, and dense compositional techniques that many Baroque artists came to favor in the second half of the seventeenth century.

**OTHER ARTISTS IN ROME.** At the same time, Cortona was only one of a large number of successful artists at Rome. Other figures who flourished during his lifetime included Andrea Sacchi (1599–1661), who also completed decorative frescoes in the Barberini Palace; Battista Gaulli who was known as Baciccio (1639–1709), and who decorated the huge barrel vault of the Jesuit's Church of Il Gesù; and Carlo Maratta (1625–1713), who painted a number of public religious pictures and ceilings in churches throughout the city. Maratta and Gaulli were a generation younger than Cortona and Scacchi, and they carried the High Baroque style into the early eighteenth century. During the later seventeenth century the fashion for Baroque ceiling frescoes increased everywhere throughout Rome, and many of the city's palaces and

churches were decorated by the city's extraordinarily fertile group of artists. Two of the greatest practitioners in the medium on the Roman scene were Andrea Pozzo and Luca Giordano. Pozzo's fresco, *The Entrance of St. Ignatius into Paradise*, completed in 1694 in the nave of the Church of St. Ignatius, was very much influenced by the early example of Guercino's *Aurora*. While hardly great art, his work is the most impressive example of the attempt to create an illusionary architectural framework for a ceiling fresco. The complete artifice of classical architecture that appears to surge upward from St. Ignatius's walls amazes and astounds viewers. Populated with a dense agglomeration of figures, however, Pozzo's fresco fails to sustain the visual interest of those of Guercino or Cortona. The art of Luca Giordano (1634–1705), a Neapolitan painter who studied with the great master Ribera in Naples, was quite different. The Caravaggism, not only of Ribera, but also of the accomplished Neapolitan painter Giovanni Lanfranco (1582–1647), influenced Giordano. He traveled to Rome where he acquired an understanding of the compositional techniques of Cortona as well. Then he embarked on a life of constant travel, spending time in Florence and a number of Italian centers before settling in Spain for a decade. He left behind him a trail of accomplished works that helped create a fashion for the grand manner of the Roman Baroque throughout the Italian and the Iberian peninsulas. An enormously prolific artist, he was discounted in the decades after his death as facile and lacking in depth. More recently, his art has been extensively re-evaluated, and in his light forms, gorgeous, brilliant coloration, and suggestions of swift movement, art historians have come to see echoes of the Rococo movement that was to flourish in the early eighteenth century.

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## BAROQUE CLASSICISM IN FRANCE

**THE RECEPTION OF THE ITALIAN STYLE.** The later sixteenth century had been a time of great turmoil in

France. Between 1562 and 1598, a series of religious wars had erupted, leaving the country's political institutions, economy, and society badly battered. In the years after 1600, however, a tenuous stability returned to the country under King Henri IV (r. 1594–1610). Although Henri was eventually assassinated, civil war did not return to France, and during the long reign of Henri's son, Louis XIII (r. 1610–1643), a steady recovery in the country's fortunes continued. In the early years of his reign, Louis' mother, Marie de' Medici, served as regent. A connoisseur of the arts, she came to invite the great Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens to court, and she supported a number of native artists as well. In the first quarter of the seventeenth century, too, many of the artists who were to contribute to the country's great flowering of the arts in the second half of the seventeenth century migrated southward to Italy, particularly to Rome. There they learned of the new styles of Caravaggio and the Carracci. Among these figures, Georges de la Tour (1593–1652), Nicholas Poussin (1593 or 1594–1665), and Claude Lorrain (1600–1682) were to build upon Italian examples, Northern European traditions, and their own native styles to fashion a resurgence of the arts in France. Each of these figures was shaped most definitively by their experience of the Roman Baroque. Georges de la Tour spent time there as a young man, while Poussin and Lorrain eventually emigrated to the city and remained there for the rest of their lives.

**GEORGES DE LA TOUR.** La Tour's career presents us with one case of the vagaries of reputation across the ages. He was an artist of considerable renown in his own times, but he soon fell out of favor after his death, and his place in seventeenth-century painting has only recently been restored. After a provincial upbringing in the province of Lorraine in the east of France, he traveled extensively in the Low Countries (modern Belgium and Holland) as well as in Italy. He arrived in Rome as the ferment of Caravaggio's new realism was erupting on the artistic scene. While affected by these currents, particularly in his use of *chiaroscuro*, La Tour was a strikingly original artist. As other Catholic artists of the time, he often painted religious subjects as if they occurred in his own time and place. Today, one of his most famous paintings is the *Newborn* (c. 1630), a canvas that shows his tendency to convey religious subjects realistically. The picture shows a mother inspecting her child by the light of a candle held by a midwife. Although the reverential feeling of the work suggests that it is a picture of the Virgin Mary and Christ child, no religious symbol, halo, or any other sign supports this assumption. Rather than the light emanating from the infant Jesus as in much traditional imagery,





*The Newborn* by Georges de la Tour. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE DES BEAUX ARTS RENNES/DAGLI ORTI.

La Tour makes the illumination reflect across the picture surface to form patches of light and dark. Instead of the miraculous otherworldly light with which Caravaggio often cast on religious subjects like the Conversion of St. Paul, La Tour makes this light come from the natural source of a candle. Although we can surmise that the intensely reverential spirit of the work means that the subject is the Birth of Christ, La Tour seems to make here a statement about the wonder that accompanies all human birth. Most of the forty other images that can be attributed to the artist are, like this painting, executed on a small scale, a fact that suggests that La Tour carved out a niche for himself in the French provinces as a painter who worked for private patrons, rather than religious institutions. Of these works most treat religious subjects or are genre pieces, i.e., they treat subjects in everyday life. It is not always easy to tell into which category one of La

Tour's paintings falls, since he almost never included haloes or other recognizable religious symbols when he treated the saints or some other religious subject. He avoided placing the figures in his compositions in unnatural or stylized poses, as the Mannerist artists before him had done, and at the same time he did not display the dynamic sense of movement typical of Rubens and other Baroque painters of the time. He seems to have painted from life models, and he captured their natural poses in full- or half-length views. In most of his compositions, a quiet and still observation of human nature and human forms dominates, rather than the turbulent psychological realism of Caravaggio and the Caravaggeschi. His art does not recall the intensely sweeping motion of works like those from the hands of Cortona and his disciples. While he derived certain influences from all these great artists, La Tour's work is highly original

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***POUSSIN'S GREEK MODES**

**INTRODUCTION:** As a French painter living in Rome, Nicholas Poussin (1594–1665) was deeply affected by the High Renaissance classicism of figures like Michelangelo as well as the grandeur of ancient Roman monuments. As a painter of historical themes, Poussin, too, formulated several consistent theories around which he built his art. In one set of writings, he developed the notion that painting should emulate the ancient Greek musical modes, an idea that he outlines in this letter to one of his patrons.

Our wise ancient Greeks, inventors of all beautiful things, found several Modes by means of which they produced marvellous effects.

This word "Mode" means actually the rule or the measure and form, which serves us in our productions. This rule constrains us not to exaggerate by making us act in all things with a certain restraint and moderation; and, consequently, this restraint and moderation is nothing more than a certain determined manner or order, and includes the procedure by which the object is preserved in its essence.

The Modes of the ancients were a combination of several things put together; from their variety was born a

certain difference of Mode whereby one was able to understand that each one of them retained in itself a subtle variation; particularly when all the things which entered into combination were put together in such a proportion that it was made possible to arouse the soul of the spectator to various passions. Hence the fact that the ancient sages attributed to each style its own effects. Because of this they called the Dorian Mode stable, grave, and severe, and applied it to subjects which are grave and severe and full of wisdom.

And proceeding thence to pleasant and joyous things, they used the Phrygian Mode, in which there are more minute modulations than in any other mode, and a more clear-cut aspect. These two styles and no others were praised and approved of by Plato and Aristotle, who deemed the others superfluous, they considered this [Phrygian Mode] intense, vehement, violent, and very severe, and capable of astonishing people.

I hope, before another year is out, to paint a subject in this Phrygian Mode. The subject of frightful wars lends itself to this manner.

**SOURCE:** Nicolas Poussin, "Letter to Chantelou, November 24, 1647," in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Books, 1958): 155–156.

and suggests the great variety that existed in seventeenth-century European painting.

**POUSSIN.** Perhaps the two greatest painters to appear in seventeenth-century France were Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorrain (1600–1682), both of whom eventually settled in Rome. Like La Tour, both were also provincials; Poussin was from Normandy, while Lorrain was from the eastern French province of the same name. Poussin became perhaps the greatest painter of classical themes in the Western tradition. Unlike the heavily muscled classical images produced by Michelangelo in the sixteenth century or the swift-moving dynamism of Annibale Carracci, Poussin's works exude a quiet intellectualism. He did not labor to reproduce decisive moments from the scenes he painted as Caravaggio had done, but instead tried to retell ancient myths and legends faithfully, creating images that suggested their entire sweep and texture. While he also painted many religious scenes, he is best known for works on antique themes. An important artistic theorist as well, Poussin developed his own theory of aesthetics. He insisted that an artist must first have a clear understanding of the theme or story that he wanted to communicate before planning his composition. At the same time, an artist must execute his work

so that it appears unlabored and natural. As his career progressed, the artist refined his aesthetics, and he tried to paint according to the system of modes once used in Greek music, perceiving in these abstract systems of tone an underlying sense of beauty that might communicate his ideas clearly to his audience. In his *Rape of the Sabines*, painted just after 1635, he relied on the Phrygian mode's organizing principles to create a work notable for its abstract principles of organization, in which the eye is carried around the canvas in a wheel-like rotation. Similarly, in his great masterpiece from around the same time, *The Dance to the Music of Time*, he explicitly relies on music to give life to the subject. Here the eternal cyclical rotation of the powers of poverty, labor, wealth, and pleasure are conceptualized in terms of being a great dance operating throughout history. In this, one of the greatest of his many pictures, the typical features of Poussin's design are clear, particularly his emphasis on creating an art notable for its balance of color, lighting, and forms. Unlike the dramatic and highly dynamic art popular in Rome at the time, Poussin's vision was altogether quieter and more cerebral. That he flourished in the same city remains a testimony to Baroque Rome's great and tolerant community of connoisseurs.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***EXPRESSION AND THE PASSIONS**

**INTRODUCTION:** A central dilemma of French painting in the seventeenth century revolved around how to capture the human emotions in a way that was still suitably grand and appropriate to the idealized format that large paintings provided. French artists and theorists debated just how much emotion was suitable in paintings, and the ways in which different emotions should be portrayed. The figure of Charles Le Brun (1619–1690) dominated art commissioned for the monarchy for much of the century, having been named by Louis XIII “Royal Painter” in 1638. He also served Louis’ son, Louis XIV, and played a dominant role in the development of the French academies, the decoration of Versailles, as well as the Gobelins manufactory scheme. In this address to the members of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, he tries to define the relationship between human expressions and the interior passions or emotions. His remarks are interesting because of the almost clinical way in which he observes the various emotions’ effects on the body.

Sirs:

At the last assembly you approved the plan which I adopted to discuss *expression* with you. It is therefore necessary first to know in what it consists.

Expression, in my opinion, is a naive and natural resemblance [true to nature] of the things which are to be represented. It is necessary and appears in all aspects of painting and a picture could not be perfect without expression. It is expression that marks the true character of each thing; by means of it is the nature of bodies discerned, the figures seem to have movement and all that is pretense appears to be truth.

Expression is present in color as well as in drawing; and it must also be present in the representation of landscapes and in the arrangement of figures.

It is this, Sirs, that I have tried to call to your attention in past lectures. Today I shall try to make you see that expression is also a part that shows the emotion of the soul and makes visible the effects of passion.

So many learned persons have discussed the passions that one can only say what they have already written. There I should not repeat their opinion on this subject

were it not that, in order to explain better what concerns our art, it seems necessary to me to touch upon several things for the benefit of young students of painting. This I will try to do as briefly as I can.

In the first place, passion is an emotion of the soul, which lies in the sensitive part [of the body]. It pursues what the soul thinks is good for it, or flees what it thinks bad for it; ordinarily whatever causes passion in the soul evokes action in the body.

Since, then, it is true that most of the passions of the soul produce bodily action, we should know which actions of the body express the passions and what those actions are ...

It would not therefore be inappropriate to say something of the nature of these passions in order to understand them better ... We shall begin with *admiration*.

Admiration is a surprise which causes the soul to consider attentively the objects which seem to it rare and extraordinary. This surprise is so powerful that it sometimes impels the spirit toward the site of the impression of the object and causes it to be so occupied in considering that impression that there are no more spirits passing into the muscles, so that the body becomes motionless as a statue ...

*Anger.* When anger takes possession of the soul, he who experiences this emotion has red and inflamed eyes, a wandering and sparkling pupil, both eyebrows now lowered, now raised, the forehead deeply creased, creases between the eyes, wide-open nostrils, lips pressed tightly together, and the lower lip pushed up over the upper, leaving the corners of the mouth a little open to form a cruel and disdainful laugh. He seems to grind his teeth, his mouth fills with saliva, his face is swollen, pale in spots and inflamed in others, the veins of his temples and forehead and neck are swollen and protruding, his hair bristling, and one who experiences this passion seems more to blow himself up rather than to breathe because the heart is oppressed by the abundance of blood which comes to its aid.

**SOURCE:** Charles Le Brun, “Concerning Expression In General and In Particular” (1667), in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Books, 1958): 161–163.

**CLAUDE LORRAIN.** If Poussin was a great painter of historical themes, Claude Lorrain became the greatest French landscape artist of the seventeenth century. Poussin set his works in settings notable for their classical architecture, but his artistic vision always fell upon the human figure, and his choice of scale was determined

to set off their forms and accentuate their actions. By contrast, Claude Lorrain included human forms in his many canvases, but almost always to establish the grandeur of the landscapes that he painted around them. These grand views of countryside and cityscapes were not forbidding or uninhabitable, but they were certainly immense in the



*Louis XIV, King of France, Armed on Land and Sea*, Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, France, by Charles Le Brun. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSEE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE AUXERRE/GIANNI DAGLI ORTI. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

prospects they offered to their viewers. These views are always idealized; they present, in other words, nature more inviting and beautiful than it is in actuality. In his *Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca*, completed around 1648, Lorrain retells the ancient biblical story in a countryside that resembles the area around Rome and the river that runs through the center of the image looks very much like the Tiber. Along the left of the painting an idealized classical portico and several other buildings allow the viewer to interpret the mammoth recession of space that occurs in the background, as does a large tree to the right. In the narrow but deep cavern of space that Lorrain carves out of this picture plane, the river rolls to the horizon as if it were the Mediterranean Sea, and once at its destination it disappears into the gorgeous yellowish glow of a late afternoon sun. The image points to a central underlying feature of Lorrain's art: its use of light as a way to grant unity and compositional integrity to his landscapes. Lorrain was not, to be sure, the inventor of the landscape form. It had begun to emerge in Venetian

painting during the early sixteenth century. But his works opened up the genre's possibilities and the beauty with which he painted these scenes meant that he acquired many patrons. The Roman aristocracy came to commission many works from him in the more than forty years that he lived in their city. Unlike most artists, his mature style did not alter over time and he remained committed to the genre of ideal landscape into his old age.

**THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV.** The arts in France came to be dramatically affected by the reign of Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715). Louis came to power as a young boy, and in his youth his mother, Anne of Austria, served as regent. Anne was a great connoisseur of the arts, and in 1648 supported the foundation of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris. During the 1660s Louis assumed the reins of government and a series of regulations attempted to regularize the teaching practices of this institution. Like most of the academies founded under Louis XIV, the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture was concerned with establishing canons of

classicism in the visual arts. Louis XIV was not a great connoisseur of art as his mother and her chief minister Cardinal Mazarin had been. Yet like many educated French men and women of the period he idealized the classical art of the Italian Renaissance, seeing in the art of Michelangelo and Raphael a high standard of excellence that students needed to study. The program of the Royal Academy was designed around instruction in the art of ancient Rome and Greece as well as these masters of the Renaissance. History painting, too, played a special role in the institution's goals, since no master was allowed to gain entrance into the Academy without having proved himself in this genre. To further these goals, Louis founded the French Academy in Rome, a place to which young painters and sculptors could travel in order to attain firsthand exposure to the great art of the ancient city. A state grant supported this institution, which was required to stage annual exhibitions of all its students. To create a market for the French Academy's instruction, moreover, the king granted the institution a monopoly over the teaching of life drawing. Thus if a student wanted to master the techniques of drawing with life models, he was forced to enroll in the Academy in Paris. To grant the institution greater cachet, Louis also insisted that he would award no commissions to any artist who was not a member. The king's state interventions in the art world were unprecedented in seventeenth-century Europe, and were not immediately imitated elsewhere. By the eighteenth century, however, a series of foundations of national academies elsewhere in Europe came to be closely modeled on the French example, and in this way, the European state acquired an important role in the training and support of artists. During Louis's time, however, royal support of the arts was evidenced primarily in a flurry of building. In architecture, the reign of the Sun King was a period of undeniable greatness that began with the completion of the East Façade of the Louvre in Paris. A number of designers, including François Mansart, Louis Le Vau, Claude Perrault, and Jules Hardouin-Mansart, developed a style notable for its Baroque monumentality and rigorous classicism. Louis XIV's age also became synonymous with the building of Versailles, an enormous project that displayed the king's grandiose ambitions. At Versailles the king favored Charles Le Brun (1609–1690), the most important member of the Royal Academy at the time. Le Brun's decoration of the Hall of Mirrors, the King's Bedroom, and other public spaces in the palace provided a suitably grand backdrop for the Sun King's pretensions. Somewhat later, Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659–1743) rose to prominence as the king's favorite, and Rigaud excelled primarily as a portraitist. He created the contours of a severe and grand royal portrai-

ture that persisted throughout most of the eighteenth century. In sculpture, the dominant artist of the time was Antoine Coysevox (1640–1720), who created a number of busts and equestrian treatments for Versailles. Louis XIV's taste frequently ran toward the decorative, and during his reign the support that he gave to French industries was decisive in their development. Most prominent among Louis' actions in this regard was his acquisition of the Gobelins factory in Paris in 1661. He placed the factory under the direction of his minister Colbert, who further entrusted many of the details of its development to Charles Le Brun. Louis recruited a number of foreign craftsmen to come and teach the workers at the Gobelins the techniques of their trade. The Gobelins thus became a workshop for the creation of paintings, sculptures, tapestries, and furniture for all the royal households. It also played a key role in founding a number of decorative arts and complex trades in the country that had not previously been known to French masters. Gobelins-produced goods were not sold to the general public, but instead were produced directly for the consumption of the king and court. While this scheme flourished under Le Brun's direction, it fell into decline after the death of Colbert. The institution has survived, however, primarily as a tapestry factory until modern times. While commercially the scheme might be considered a failure, it played a tremendous role in extending knowledge of techniques in the decorative arts in and around the city of Paris.

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## PAINTING IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

### THE MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE INHERITANCE.

The Low Countries consisted of the area that today comprises modern Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a sophisticated culture of artistic consumption emerged in this area, particularly in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking province that was at this time the dominant commercial center of the southern Netherlands. The development of Flemish painting had gone hand in hand with the meteoric rise of the Duchy of Burgundy to prominence in the region, as well as with the rapid urbanization of the area. As a commercial region, the inhabitants of the Low

Countries had been open to influences from throughout Europe, but cultural contacts were always closest with France and the commercial centers in Italy, the Flemish cities' most important trading partners. At the end of the fifteenth century, the Netherlands fell under the control of the Habsburgs, and as a result of the far-reaching marital policies of the dynasty, the region soon came within the orbit of Habsburg Spain. This relationship was always an uneasy one. By 1600, the inhabitants of the Low Countries were waging a brutal war of independence against Spain, the consequences of which were the eventual liberation of the northern Dutch counties from Habsburg control. The southern portion of the Netherlands, of which Flanders was the largest and wealthiest province, was to remain under Spanish domination. As war spread throughout the region, the wars became far more than a movement for political independence, acquiring the character of a widespread religious conflict. In the north, the severely puritanical doctrines of Calvinism dominated in the cities of the county of Holland, while Spanish control in the south buttressed Catholicism and persecuted the many Protestants and Jews who had once flourished in the area's cities. With the recognition of Dutch independence in the early seventeenth century, the culture of the northern and southern Netherlands began to diverge rather quickly and definitively. Although both regions still shared many common features of language and customs, the southern Netherlands (what is now Belgium) became a fervently Catholic bastion in which education and the arts were avidly supported by the Spanish nobility and its courts. In the north, in what is now modern Holland, a different course prevailed. It was now a predominantly Calvinist country, though minorities of Catholics, Jews, and many other religions came to be tolerated there in the course of the seventeenth century. In particular, numerous Jewish, Anabaptist, and Calvinist émigrés streamed there from Antwerp and other southern Netherlandish towns. As a result of the unprecedented climate of religious toleration that prevailed there, Holland witnessed incredible population growth and rising wealth. Further south, the ancient cities of Bruges and Ghent languished. Once-dynamic Antwerp, too, entered upon a long period of decline when its harbor was closed in 1648 as a consequence of the Peace of Westphalia. These divergences in religion, culture, and economic life came to affect the still vigorous market for painting that thrived in both regions throughout the seventeenth century.

**FLEMISH PAINTING.** The southern Netherlands, which has by long-standing, but incorrect practice been identified as "Flanders," had a long and distinguished tra-

dition of achievements in the visual arts. During the fifteenth century, a string of masters beginning with Jan Van Eyck and Lucas van der Weyden had developed a tradition of Flemish realism that rivaled the great experiments in naturalism that were underway in Italy at the same time. Flemish innovations in oil painting were avidly studied and copied elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Venice and northern Italy, where the new techniques were quickly taken up in the course of the sixteenth century. An avid market for altarpieces, private devotional images, and portraits persisted in the region at the dawn of the Baroque era, and the craftsman-like tradition of painting born in the later Middle Ages flourished. Around 1600, though, the figure of Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) burst upon this scene. A figure as important in Northern Europe as Michelangelo had been in Italy during the sixteenth century, his artistic vision was to transform painting in the Low Countries and throughout northern Europe. Enormously prolific and fueled with a visionary's genius, his influence spread far beyond Antwerp, the city in which he spent most of his productive life. His art gave expression to certain key Baroque visual values, including the swift and dynamic sense of movement as well as the dramatic monumentality that many of the artists of the time longed to perfect. Rubens also built upon the values of the High Renaissance, merging insights from the art of its masters with his northern European love of realistic portrayal and landscape. Employing his understanding of the Italian masters as well as his own native traditions, Rubens provided an example emulated by Flemish and Dutch painters in the great century of artistic achievement that his career initiated.

**RUBENS' LIFE AND EARLY WORK.** Peter Paul Rubens was born, not in Flanders, but in Germany, where his Protestant family had taken refuge during the Wars of Religion in their native country. At age eleven he came to Antwerp, where he converted to Catholicism and entered Latin school to gain a thorough grounding in the Classics. Destined for a career as a diplomat, he was sent to serve as a page in the court of a nearby countess. At this time he also began to draw, and instead of pursuing his career as a diplomat—a profession he returned to later in life—he entered the painters' guild at Antwerp. Through his connections in Antwerp he won an appointment as a court painter to Vincenzo Gonzaga, the duke of Mantua. Although given a number of tasks in the ducal household, he was left largely free for a number of years to tour Italy. On these journeys he sharpened his understanding of the art of the High Renaissance, something he had known only via engravings to this point. By 1602, he had made his way to Rome, where

he received a series of three commissions from the Church of Santa Croce. At this time his art was very much influenced by the grand style of the Venetians, with its emphasis on gorgeous color and monumental scale. In Rome, however, he garnered a firsthand knowledge of many of the works of Raphael and Michelangelo, before being sent on a diplomatic mission to Spain the following year. When he returned to Italy, he worked for a time in Genoa, before returning to Rome. During this second trip, he studied more closely the works of Annibale Carracci, an important influence in his work that led him to develop a grand and swift sense of movement in his later works. In 1608, Rubens returned to Antwerp where he received a number of requests for paintings from the city's linen merchants and guild officers. He undertook many of these commissions for public settings. His famous *Descent from the Cross* (1612–1614) was completed for the city's Cathedral, and still hangs there today. This flurry of image commissioning was a move that at the time bore political and religious significance. In previous generations, Antwerp had been a religiously mixed city in which Catholics, Calvinists, and Anabaptists had all vied for advantage. During 1566, an outbreak of violent iconoclasm had resulted in the destruction of a good deal of religious art. Ten years later, mutineering Spanish soldiers had sacked the city, and in 1585 Spanish forces laid siege to the town, and it fell to Philip II. Soon after, Dutch forces had blockaded the Scheldt, Antwerp's link to the sea. In the aftermath of this long period of disorder, the town's population fell dramatically, decreasing from a high of around 100,000 in the mid-sixteenth century to around 40,000 in 1590. As a result of Antwerp's increasing instability, its Calvinists, Anabaptists, and a large number of its merchants migrated northward into Holland, or to Germany and France. Peter Paul Rubens' family had, in fact, been among these refugees. By 1610, however, Antwerp's Catholic future seemed assured, and those Catholic merchants and patricians who remained in the city now came to celebrate the triumph of their faith with a number of works of religious art intended to rehabilitate and refurbish churches that had fallen into disrepair in the previous two generations. Both Calvinists and Anabaptists opposed the use of religious images in churches as a violation of the Ten Commandments' prohibition of "graven images." To demonstrate Catholicism's greater receptivity and tolerance of religious art a flurry of new works were to be placed in the city's churches. Through his knowledge of the most recent innovations in Italian art, Rubens soon became the painter favored at Antwerp to give expression to the sense of Catholic resurgence.

**RUBENS' HIGH BAROQUE STYLE.** Rubens himself had been a member of an old and distinguished Antwerp family, and by virtue of his education and his travels in Italy, he soon emerged as the dominant artist on the local scene. In part, the early years back in his native Antwerp were filled with problems of readjusting to life in the conservative Catholic climate of his home city. The developing spirit of the Catholic Reformation called for the messages of religious art to be simple and forcefully portrayed. In Antwerp, however, patrons and religious institutions sometimes used these demands to cajole Rubens to return to the traditional, and to his mind, outmoded conventions of late-medieval art. They demanded, in other words, symbols and iconography that were clearly intelligible to the masses, so that meanings of his works were not misconstrued. In Italy, though, Rubens had been captivated by the art of Caravaggio, Annibale Carracci, and the Caravaggisti. Both Caravaggio and his followers had longed to present religious themes within settings that appeared like those of everyday life, while the heroic and idealized art of Carracci favored heavily muscled images of the human form, often naked or partially nude. During the 1610s, Rubens experimented with bringing these elements together in a way that might not offend local sensibilities, although the heroic dimensions he derived from Carracci and other Roman painters of the time were to gradually dominate his art. At the same time he strove to capture the drama inherent in Caravaggio's use of *chiaroscuro*, that is, the contrast of light and dark passages on the canvas. During these years the artist also took on many diplomatic missions for the provinces of the southern Low Countries, and in this capacity he moved freely in aristocratic circles. Always a man of learning and refinement, Rubens was forced to develop an almost industrial-like production system to complete the many commissions he received. His patrons insisted that his works be large, since many were intended for display in cathedral churches, monasteries, and other institutional settings. At the same time, the fashion for the age tended in all things toward the monumental. To cover these enormous panels and canvases, Rubens relied on an army of assistants who painted in the designs that he had sketched first. In many instances, he only returned to these works for the finishing brush strokes. Such a technique might seem merely facile today, yet as a method it worked brilliantly under the great artist's direction. Rubens was, in fact, a polymath, a master of many different arts and branches of knowledge. Visitors to his studio noted that someone might be reading a Latin history to the artist from one corner, while elsewhere he conducted a conversation with an intellectual in another.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE ACQUISITIVE SPIRIT**

**INTRODUCTION:** During the seventeenth century a definite commercial market in art and antiques began to emerge in Europe. Of all the centers of this new industry, it was in the Netherlands where the newly commercialized consumption of art was most precocious. Artists themselves took advantage of the new trend to deal in art as an investment. The two greatest artists in the region during the seventeenth century—Peter Paul Rubens and Rembrandt van Rhijn—both had enormous art collections. Rembrandt's collecting habits eventually destroyed his financial well being, while Rubens appears to have been a considerably more astute collector. In this letter he sent to the English ambassador to Holland in 1618, he sets in motion the process that will allow him to exchange some of his own canvases for Dudley's antiques. The letter shows what a shrewd and somewhat cagey bargainer Rubens was.

Most Excellent Sir:

By the advice of my agent, I have learnt that Your Excellency is much inclined to make some bargain with me about your antiques; and it has made me hope well of this business, to see that you go earnestly about it, having named to him the exact price that they cost you: in regard to this, I wish wholly to confide on your knightly word. I am also willing to believe you purchased them with perfect judgment and prudence; although persons of distinction are wont usually, in buying and selling, to have some disadvantage, because many persons are willing to calculate the price of the goods by the rank of the purchase, to which manner of proceeding I am most averse. Your Excellency may be well assured I shall put prices on my pictures, such as I should do were I treating for their

sale in ready money; and in this I beg you will be pleased to confide on the word of an honest man. I have at present in my house the very flower of my pictorial stock, particularly some pictures which I have retained for my own enjoyment; nay, I have some re-purchased for more than I had sold them to others; but the whole shall be at the service of Your Excellency, because brief negotiations please me; each party giving and receiving his property at once; and, to speak the truth, I am so overwhelmed with works and commissions, both public and private, that for some years, I cannot dispose of myself. Nevertheless, in case we shall agree, as I anticipate, I will not fail to finish as soon as possible all those pictures that are not yet entirely completed, though named in the herewith annexed list, and those that are finished I would send immediately to Your Excellency. In short, if your Excellency will make up your mind to place the same reliance in me that I do in you, the thing is done. I am content to give Your Excellency of the pictures by my hand, enumerated below, to the value of six thousand florins, of the price current in ready money, for the whole of those antiques that are in Your Excellency's house, of which I have not yet seen the list, nor do I even know the number, but in everything I trust your word. Those pictures which are finished I will consign immediately to Your Excellence, and for the others that remain in my hand to finish, I will name good security to Your Excellency and will finish them as soon as possible. Meanwhile I submit myself to whatever Your Excellency shall conclude with Mr. Francis Pieterssen, my agent, and will await your determination, with recommending myself, in all sincerity to the good graces of Your Excellency, and with reverence I kiss your hands ...

**SOURCE:** Peter Paul Rubens, "Letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, April 1618," in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth Gilmore Holt (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Books, 1958): 190–191.

Before him he might be working on a canvas, while at the same time dictating a letter to his secretary. This enormously fertile mind and sense of energy shines through in almost all of his works.

**SPIRIT OF HIS WORK.** Although Rubens' early development and training had been in the tradition of Flemish realism that had flourished in the region since the fifteenth century, the spirit of his work is anything but Flemish in inspiration. It was his fortune to be able to forge together the currents of Italian art that had flourished in the peninsula's various centers over the previous generations. At the same time, he took these to a new level of synthesis and monumentality that spoke to the emerging tastes of Baroque patrons and rulers in Northern Europe. One of his most important commis-

sions was for a series of paintings to decorate Queen Marie de' Medici's Luxembourg Palace in Paris. There were in all 21 of these massive canvases completed between 1621 and 1625 for the queen, who had served as regent for her son Louis XIII since 1610. In point of fact, Marie de' Medici's life had been marked by numerous failures punctuated with occasional political successes. Rubens perceived this enormous project, though, in ways that made use of his enormous classical learning. Throughout Marie is shown being protected by the Olympian gods. Of these works, one of the most polished is his *Henri IV Receiving the Portrait of Maria de' Medici*, a canvas almost 10' by 13' in dimension. Below, the figure of Henri IV is shown at the right inspecting an image of his future bride, Marie de' Medici, presented





Henry IV Receiving the Portrait of Marie de Medici (c. 1622) by Peter Paul Rubens. ART RESOURCE.

to him by two angelic messengers. Behind the king, the goddess Minerva advises the aging king to accept Marie as his second wife, while above, Jupiter and Juno look down on the scene with the promise to bless the union. A gorgeously painted peacock, the goddess Juno's iconographic attribute, is set off against a tumultuous cloud-filled sky, while below, a limitless landscape stretches off to the horizon. Other gems abounded in Rubens' pictorial cycle, and the relationship that he developed with the queen as a result was long-standing. She desired to commission him to paint a second series that was to glorify, not her own life, but that of her deceased husband. But when problems over the payment of Rubens' fee for the first 21 canvases arose, he refused. When her son assumed the throne and relations between mother and son soured, Marie de' Medici was forced into exile. She sought out Rubens and lived with him for a time, a testimony to the close bond that had been forged by their professional association.

**VAN DYCK.** Peter Paul Rubens taught many students and had a number of apprentices in his Antwerp studio during his relatively long life. Many of these figures came to produce any number of craftsman-like works following his death, which kept alive, if albeit in

a less vivid way, the great artist's vision for a time. Of all the figures who came in contact with the master, Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641) was the only member of Rubens' workshop to achieve universal acclaim and a broad European reputation. He did so despite his relatively short life. Like Rubens, Van Dyck moved in the cultivated and urbane circle of humanistically educated intellectuals that flourished in Antwerp in the early seventeenth century. He was very much affected by the Stoicism of the great philosopher of his time, Justus Lipsius, while many of his paintings, like those of Rubens, displayed a remarkable Catholic piety. Yet unlike his teacher, Van Dyck's talents shone most brilliantly when he was at work on small devotional pieces and portraits, rather than great public altarpieces and historical themes, although in this last genre he did make many significant contributions. Rubens had painted portraits only reluctantly, although toward the end of his career he came to undertake far more of these commissions. For most of his life, he had preferred the grand manner necessary to complete the enormous commissions his aristocratic and royal patrons stipulated. By contrast, Van Dyck reveled in portraiture and in his journeys through his native land, England, and Italy, he received numerous commissions for them. The differences in temperament between the student and his master are most evident when their portraits are compared. Rubens surrounded his subjects with the trappings of aristocratic grandeur and he came to endow their expressions and demeanor with attributes that suggested their intellect and dignity. Van Dyck, by contrast, preferred to present his subjects in landscapes or other more informal settings and he endowed them with aristocratic ease and self-assurance. An air of refinement, even delicacy permeates his most successful works. One of the most famous of these, *Charles I at the Hunt*, was painted around 1635, just after the artist had returned to London for what was to turn out to be a four-year residence shortly before the end of his life. The king stands atop a small hill, his arm extended with a walking stick planted on the ground as if to stake his claim to the hunting ground that stretches around him. Behind him a page tends to his horse while a tree shades the entire scene. Charles is shown without any of the typical attributes of royalty and his flowing locks and rakishly cocked hat suggest his reputation as the "Cavalier King," while at the same time pointing to his own well-recognized tendency toward indulgence and effeminacy. It is a curious pose for a royal who claimed, as Charles did, to rule by divine right. It portrays the Renaissance ideal of *sprezzatura* or "graceful ease" that Baldassare Castiglione and writers of English conduct books had come to recommend as valuable attributes for those

wishing to be successful at court. When compared to the dignified and imposing images of Louis XIV that were soon to express the French king's pretensions for absolute rule, Van Dyck's *Charles I at the Hunt* is a peculiar expression of royal power. Yet the artist's visual language was widely admired by the Italian and English aristocrats he painted, and he repeated the formula many times during his short career.

**THE DECLINE OF FLEMISH PAINTING.** Following the death of Rubens in 1640 and Van Dyck one year later, the leading Flemish artist was Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678). Both Rubens and Van Dyck had been recognized for their great achievements during their lifetime, both having been knighted in several of the courts in which they worked. By contrast, Jordaens only came to receive court commissions from small states in northern Europe after the deaths of Van Dyck and Rubens, and his art was completely ignored in France, England, Spain, and Italy. He came to carve out a niche for himself in a far less refined circle than that in which Van Dyck had moved. While he achieved great moments of compositional clarity and excitement in his art during the years immediately following Rubens' death, his works tended to fall into formulaic compositional strategies in his old age. He converted to Calvinism in 1656, and after this date was granted some commissions from territorial princes in Germany and from the house of Orange. The parochialism of his career, though, was symptomatic of the changes that were underway in Flanders, as that region was becoming steadily impoverished as a result of the great shifts that had occurred in trade, politics, and religious life throughout the Low Countries. Jordaens was not the last of a distinguished tradition of Flemish painters; the region's cities continued to produce a number of venerable artists throughout the later seventeenth century. Yet, like Jordaens, none of these figures was to attract the European-wide reputation, nor to display the same high level of imaginative genius of Rubens and Van Dyck.

**PAINTING IN THE NORTHERN NETHERLANDS.** To the north, in the provinces that had successfully waged war against Spanish rule, a great age of cultural and financial success was just beginning to unfold. Although war with Spain had broken out again in 1621, the threat from the Habsburgs steadily receded. By the time that the United Provinces' independence was formally recognized in 1648, Amsterdam and the other large cities of Holland, the largest of the country's seven provinces, had long enjoyed their independence and were by then Europe's premier trading centers. Here banking, shipping, industrial production, and new types of financial



*Charles I at the Hunt* (1635) by Anthony van Dyck. MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY.

services, like insurance and stock trading, were beginning to shape an undeniably modern economy. The relative tolerance of these towns meant that Anabaptists, Jews, Greek Orthodox, and a host of other religious groups streamed to the region. Art came to play a very different role in this new economy, since Calvinism prohibited religious art in churches. As a result, the great Dutch masters came to concentrate on landscape painting, portraits, and other genres that were of a mostly secular nature. Commissions from aristocrats and wealthy merchants were important to the many figures that painted in the Netherlands during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet at the same time, an unprecedented phenomenon is evident in seventeenth-century Holland: the emergence of a public marketplace in art. To sustain themselves financially, Dutch artists came to sell their works to dealers who catered to these towns' many rich and middling ranks of merchants. Towns regulated these markets, but the evidence suggests that art came to enter into the commercial life of Holland and the other Dutch provinces in some very interesting ways. It was now a commodity with a value, and collecting and selling the works of a major master was one way that many increased their income. Art objects, too, were used



Self-Portrait by Rembrandt. © CORBIS-BETTMANN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

to insure loans and to pay off obligations. A certain risk was present in this new market, as many who dabbled in it were to discover. The vagaries of taste and oversupply sometimes drove down the price of major works. Rembrandt, the greatest master Holland produced in the seventeenth century, was a prolific painter, but at the same time an avid collector and dealer in others' works. His expenditures in this regard led to bankruptcy, when he was unable to recoup his investments. Concern for the quality of great masterpieces came to breed some of the first legal cases concerning artistic forgery, as the high esteem in which certain artists were held became a bankable commodity. All this meant that the arts acquired a greater prestige in this newly urbanized society, and consequently, many more artists were trained and took up the profession than previously. The Netherlands at this time produced a host of small masters, many completely unknown today, others of high quality and reputation. Artists, too, came to specialize, with some producing images only of boats and harbor scenes, while others treated garden landscapes, drinking scenes, battles, and so forth. Paradoxically, as more and more artists competed against each other, the prices they could command for their works fell. By the mid-seventeenth century Amsterdam

and other major Dutch cities faced an oversupply of paintings that drove the prices of art downward.

**REMBRANDT.** Rembrandt van Rhijn was born to a miller at Leiden, and was one of the younger of ten children. Although he came from a relatively humble set of circumstances, he attended Latin school in Leiden before entering its university at the age of fourteen. There he acquired the ambition to become a painter, and soon became the pupil of a local master, before setting off to Amsterdam to study for six months in 1624. The precise development of his art in these early years is difficult to gauge, although by 1625, he was back in Leiden, where his works soon began to be purchased by art dealers. It is notable that unlike Rubens and many of the great northern European masters of the time, Rembrandt never spent any time in Italy as a student or in later years. He was a genius produced exclusively on the local Dutch scene, and what knowledge he had of the art of the Renaissance and of Baroque Italy largely came to him through engraved copies. Even at an early date in his career, the distinctive features of his style were evident. He understood the distinctive coloristic possibilities of oil paints and he applied them in thick, built up passages known as *impasto*. At many points he was to experiment with the new techniques that other artists of the time were developing. At times, for instance, his works made use of Caravaggesque *chiaroscuro* to create drama and suggest turbulence. Yet in this and other regards, Rembrandt displayed a singular artistic vision that he developed through these techniques into his own inimitable visual language. The working techniques that Rembrandt developed in these early years were also notable, and show the increasing penetration of capitalist values into the Dutch art market. Rembrandt, for instance, forged an alliance with the artist Jan Lievens. Together, they hired life models, posed them, and painted their own individual visions of the same subject, thus cutting in half their expenses in producing a painting. Rembrandt turned his back on his early success in Leiden in 1631 and moved to nearby Amsterdam, the city that was quickly acquiring an identity as Holland's metropolis. He came to work for an art dealer, who found commissions for him as a portrait painter, and he soon married. In a few years he had developed a busy studio that served the thriving art market. His dealer, Hendrick van Uylenberg, catered to a large and diverse clientele, and he offered these consumers something in every conceivable price range. To satisfy this demand, Rembrandt developed a large studio, where painters copied his own and other Italian works popular at the time or in which they produced small scale works, or *tronies*. A *tronie* was a



*The Night Watch or The Militia Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq* by Rembrandt. © ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS.

particularly popular Dutch genre in which a portrait was undertaken of a sitter in an historical or mythological role. Rembrandt himself reserved his own attentions in the 1630s primarily for commissioned portraits, although he did paint a number of biblical scenes as well as traditional Catholic religious art commissioned by churches and religious institutions abroad. During this period he had little time to indulge his love of engraving, although later he was to realize the commercial possibilities inherent in this medium, since a single etching might be sold through dealers to hundreds of customers.

**THE NIGHT WATCH.** By 1642, Rembrandt's success was assured on the Amsterdam scene. In that year he devoted almost all his energies to finishing the great military portrait that has since become known as the *Night Watch*. The name is actually a misnomer. In the decades after it was painted, a heavy layer of varnish was applied

to the painting. When restorers removed this layer in 1975, they found that it had been painted to appear as if the scene was occurring in complete daylight. Political power in Dutch cities was frequently exercised in corporate bodies, and as a result the phenomenon of "group portraits" quickly developed in the seventeenth century to immortalize those councils, committees, and institutions that guided civic life. The *Night Watch* is one such portrait. It treats the civic militia that was charged with the defense of Amsterdam. Unlike most previous treatments of a group, Rembrandt's highly imaginative portrait set a new standard for such works. In the central foreground of the painting, Rembrandt depicted the figure of Captain Cocq, while around him he placed an amazingly active hubbub of drummers, standard bearers, and militia members. Thus in the confusion that inherently attends all military endeavors, Rembrandt found a

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Despite the high esteem in which painters were held in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, the new art market was an uncertain place. Rembrandt van Rhijn invested heavily in antiquities and art throughout most of his life, but in the mid-1650s his profligate spending caught up with him, and he was forced to declare bankruptcy. For a time he was imprisoned before regaining his freedom. Within a few years, Rembrandt's common-law wife Hendrickje Stoffels and his son Titus had worked out an arrangement through which the great artist became their employee. In this way he was able to circumvent his creditors and continue to paint, creating a way out of the family's financial crisis. The following agreement dated December 15, 1660, makes explicit the nature of the partnership between Titus and Hendrickje Stoffels.

On December 15, 1660, Titus, assisted by his father, [Rembrandt van Rhijn] and Hendrickje Stoffels, who is of age and is assisted by a guardian chosen by her for the purpose, declare that they agree to carry on a certain company and business, started two years before them, in paintings, pictures on paper, engravings, and woodcuts, the printings of these curiosities, and all pertaining thereto, until six years after the death of the aforementioned Rembrandt van Rhijn, under the following conditions:

Firstly, that Titus van Rhijn and Hendrickje Stoffels will carry on their housekeeping and all pertaining thereto at their joint expense, and having jointly paid for all their chattels, furniture, paintings, works of art, curiosities, tools, and the like, and also the rent and taxes, that they will continue to do so. Further, both parties have each

brought all they possess into the partnership, and Titus van Rhijn in particular has brought his baptismal gifts, his savings, his personal earnings, and other belongings he still possesses. All that either party earns in the future is to be held in common. According to this company's proceedings, each is to receive half of the profits and bear half of the losses; they shall remain true to one another in everything and as much as possible shall procure and increase the company's profit.

But as they require some help in their business, and as no one is more capable than the aforementioned Rembrandt van Rhijn, the contracting parties agree that he shall live with them and receive free board and lodging and be excused of housekeeping matters and rent on condition that he will, as much as possible, promote their interests and try to make profits for the company; to this he agrees and promises.

The aforementioned Rembrandt van Rhijn will, however, have no share in the business, nor has he any concern with the household effects, furniture, art, curiosities, tools and all that pertains to them, or whatsoever in days and years to come shall be in the house. So the contracting parties will have complete possession and are authorized against those who would make a case against the aforementioned Rembrandt van Rhijn. Therefore he will give all he has, or henceforth may acquire, to the contracting parties, now as well as then, and then as well as now, without having either the slightest claim, action, or title, or reserving anything under any pretext.

**SOURCE:** "Agreement Between Titus Van Rhijn and Hendrickje Stoffels," in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Books, 1958): 204–206.

narrative purpose for the group portrait. Although legends have insisted through the centuries that Rembrandt's picture was not well received, it was, in fact, an immediate success. In the rising sophistication of Amsterdam as an artistic center, few seemed to have cared that the artist's swift-moving composition seemed to obscure the faces of some of those in the company. They admired instead the ingenuity with which Rembrandt had solved the problem of developing a seemingly natural setting in which to capture the militia.

**LATER SETBACKS.** Rembrandt's enormous successes at Amsterdam were soon to be followed by a series of setbacks during the final two decades of his life. Financially secure, the artist had begun to sink ever more of his wealth into the purchase of art and antiquities. These purchases cemented the artist's claim to gentlemanly status, some-

thing that he seems to have long desired. Although he used many of his acquisitions to help formulate his own artistic creations, he came at the same time to speculate widely in the art market, and to increasingly disastrous effect. In 1656, he declared bankruptcy, and his collection was largely liquidated to pay debts. This crisis came at a time when values on the art market in Amsterdam were suffering and many pieces in his vast collection were sold for a fraction of their worth. His house was soon sold off as well, and the artist and his children moved to a much more modest residence. In the years that followed, the artist was able to continue to paint under an unusual legal arrangement. His son and common-law wife formed a partnership while Rembrandt himself became their employee. This protected Rembrandt's creations from being seized to pay off his debts. A large number of commis-

sions undertaken at this time point to his continuing popularity in Amsterdam, and his fortunes rose once again. Another tactic that helped in the family's recovery of their fortunes was Rembrandt's decision to return to the medium of engraving. In these later years, despite the continuing press of commitments and financial and legal problems, Rembrandt also continued to paint his self-portrait, as he had done throughout his career. At his death he had completed almost seventy of these, as well as hundreds of drawings of himself, and many etchings. These provide a record of his maturation as an artist, even as they afford almost endless psychological insights into the master. In his religious and historical composition, too, a profound spiritual piety also came to manifest itself ever more vividly in his works in later life.

**OTHER MASTERS.** The brilliant period of Dutch painting in the seventeenth century produced what today appears as almost an endless cavalcade of landscapes, genre paintings, and portraits. In contrast to the monumental nature of many of Rembrandt's and Ruben's creations, much of the scale of Dutch painting was modest, geared to fit into relatively small Dutch townhouses. To treat all the distinguished Dutch artists who appeared at this time falls beyond the scope of the present volume. Among the most notable, though, are Jan Steen (1625/26–1679), Pieter Saenredam (1597–1665), Frans Hals (c. 1585–1666), and Jan Vermeer (1632–1675). Steen was particularly noted for his depictions of Dutch domestic life, showing crowded interiors filled with rollicking families. Amidst this hubbub, Steen included moralistic details that were intended to remind the viewers of his paintings of the transitory nature of human life. His fruit lies rotting on the table, a reminder of the consequences that comes from the overindulgence that his subjects are often engaged in. In Dutch, his art was to inspire the phrase "A Jan Steen household" to suggest domestic disorder. By contrast, Pieter Saenredam completed a number of realistic views of Dutch churches and civic halls. His works were incredibly carefully produced and although his output was rather small, his depictions show a striking attention to highly intellectual compositional techniques. Specializing in portraiture, Frans Hals was almost the equal of the great Rembrandt. Although his art does not contain the same depth of interior insight as the great master, his works range over the full scale of human emotions, from the genial, to the pensive, to the demonic. Perhaps the greatest of these "little masters" was Jan Vermeer, a painter who in his own time had little reputation for greatness, but who today points to the undeniable grandeur of Dutch seventeenth-century painting. Like Jan Van Eyck and earlier Flemish painters of



*Girl With Yellow Turban* by Jan Vermeer. © FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

the fifteenth century, Vermeer had the ability to endow everyday human actions with quiet nobility. His experiments in light and realism appear startling today for their almost photographic clarity, yet at the same time they seem to convey a mystical intensity about the precious character of human life. To achieve his subtle optical effects, Vermeer most likely relied on a camera obscura, through which he peered in order to render the world more effectively. His output was small, perhaps no more than 60 paintings in all during his lifetime. Of these, only 35 survive today. Extensive research conducted on these works has shown that Vermeer frequently reworked and repainted his compositions, thus explaining his relatively small output. In contrast to many of the most prolific artists of the period, Vermeer probably produced only two to three works a year, in contrast to many of the "little masters" who painted hundreds, even thousands of works in their lifetimes. Yet what survives from Vermeer's hand points to the incredible sophistication of his artistic techniques as well as the variety of painterly visions that came to exist fruitfully side-by-side in the seventeenth-century Low Countries.

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## SPANISH PAINTING IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

**A CENTURY OF ACHIEVEMENT.** For most of the sixteenth century Spain was the dominant power in Europe, and its colonial empire insured that in the seventeenth the country retained an enormous importance on the European scene. At the same time Spain's wealth always rested on uncertain grounds. Despite huge influxes of capital from the New World colonies, Philip II (r. 1555–1598) was forced to declare bankruptcy twice during the second half of the sixteenth century, when the costs of his involvements in international wars perilously drained the state's treasury. Although engaged in costly wars in the Netherlands and faced with economic problems that were to increase over time, the first half of the seventeenth century was a period of cultural brilliance throughout Spain. The years after 1600 witnessed an enormous flowering of Spanish theater, literature, and the visual arts. While all forms of the visual arts—painting, sculpture, and engraving—flourished at the time, it was in painting that the Spanish made their most definitive contributions to European art. Here Spanish painters were at first indebted to the examples of Italy. Throughout the sixteenth century, the country's colonial and commercial outposts in the peninsula had kept Spanish painters abreast of the latest trends in painting. During the later sixteenth century the example of Venetian art, particularly of Titian, had captivated artists like Francisco Ribalta (1565–1628). Philip II had been an admirer of the great Venetian artist, and had had his portrait painted by him, and by the early seventeenth century Spain's royal collections contained a number of Venetian masterpieces. Most Spanish artists like Ribalta, though, had not come to learn of Venetian art by traveling to Venice or through studying the royal collections. They learned of these works through the many copies of Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto's works that circulated in the country. The great painter El Greco (c. 1541–1614), a Greek who had trained in Venice, also

exposed Spanish painters to the Venetian tradition. In 1577, the artist settled permanently in Toledo and produced a number of deeply religious works that inspired later Spanish artists. During the late sixteenth century Italian Mannerism had also played a role in shaping the art of Spain, but in the early seventeenth century it was primarily the example of Caravaggio that most influenced the rising generation of native artists who were to define tastes in the country for most of the rest of the seventeenth century. Three figures—Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652), Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664), and Diego Velázquez (1599–1660)—were to found a highly original Spanish school of painting, notable at first for its indebtedness to Caravaggian models, but increasingly independent from this Italian tutelage over time. Although Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652) was initially trained in the studio of the Spanish painter Francisco Ribalta, he soon made his way to Italy and never returned to Spain. In Rome he soon was affected by the popularity of Caravaggism, before moving on to Naples, a Spanish outpost. He spent most of his life working there, exploring the possibilities that lay within Caravaggio's and the Caravaggisti's techniques of realism, psychological immediacy, and *chiaroscuro*. Although his example was to shape the early art of Diego Velázquez, he was like Poussin and Lorrain as one of the émigré artists whose contributions belong more appropriately to the history of Italian, rather than Spanish, art. By contrast, Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664) and Diego Velázquez (1599–1660) trained exclusively in Spain, and developed successful careers there painting for the royal court, religious institutions, and the country's nobility.

**FRANCISCO DE ZURBARÁN.** Born in a provincial, mountainous region in southern Spain, Zurbarán came to settle in Seville at the age of fifteen, where he apprenticed himself to a local master. At the time, Diego Velázquez and a number of other artists who were to develop successful careers were also students in the city, and Zurbarán likely made their acquaintances at this time. He also seems to have become familiar with techniques for creating polychromed sculpture, an art form very much in fashion in Seville at the time. These works, carved from wood or stone, were painted with bright colors, and in Zurbarán's later paintings the treatment of many of his figures appears to be drawn from the genre of Spanish polychromed statues. With his apprenticeship completed, he returned to his native region, settling in Lierena, marrying, and setting up a studio in that town. About a decade later, he received a number of commissions from monasteries in Seville, and in 1629 the town council asked him to settle there. He did, and

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE SERVICE OF GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:** The painter Francisco Pacheco (1564–1654) was a learned man as well as the teacher and father-in-law of Spain's greatest seventeenth-century artist, Diego Velázquez. Although he was fully aware of all the trends popular in the art world of his day, Pacheco spent most of his life completing commissions for Spain's powerful religious institutions. His statements in his theoretical work, *The Art of Painting*, show the effects of the deep Catholic piety for which Spain was famous in the seventeenth century.

*The Aim of Painting is the Service of God.* When dealing with the purpose of painting (as we have set out to do), it is necessary to make use of a distinction by the Church fathers which will clarify the matter: they say, one purpose is that of the work and another that of the worker. Following this teaching, I say that one aim is that of the painter and another that of painting. The object of the painter, merely as a craftsman, probably is by means of his art to gain wealth, fame or credit, to give enjoyment or to do a service to somebody else, or to work for his own pastime or for similar reasons. The purpose of painting (ordinarily) is probably to depict, through imitation, a certain object with all possible valor and propriety. This is called by some the soul of painting because it makes the painting seem alive, so that the beauty and va-

riety of the colors and the other embellishments are merely accessories. ... Considering, however, the object of the painter as a Christian craftsman (and it is he with whom we are here concerned), he might have two purposes, one main aim and the other one a secondary or consequent one. The latter, less important, purpose might be to ply his craft for gain or fame or for other reasons (as I have stated above), but which ought to be controlled by the proper circumstances, place, time and form, in such a way that nobody should be able to accuse him of exercising his talent reprehensibly or of working against the highest purpose. The main purpose will be—through the study and toil of this profession and being in the state of grace—to reach bliss and beatitude, because a Christian, born for holy things, is not satisfied in his actions to have his eyes set so low that he strives only for human reward and secular comfort. On the contrary, raising his eyes heavenward he is after a different aim, much greater and more exquisite, committed to eternal things. St. Paul often warned the serfs and all other men that when ministering to others they should remember that they did it chiefly for the sake of God. He said: "You who are slaves obey your masters on earth not out of duty or reflection but as servants of Christ who know that everyone will receive his reward from the Lord in accordance with his actions."

**SOURCE:** Francisco Pacheco, *El arte de la pintura*, in *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. II. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Books, 1958): 214–216.

from this point his commissions in the city steadily rose. The impact of Caravaggio on his style is evident from the first paintings that can be attributed to him. Like Velázquez, he had likely studied copies of the master's work while a student in Seville. Yet he went beyond this example to create highly spiritual and meditative paintings. Like other seventeenth-century masters working in Catholic societies, Zurbarán satisfied an almost insatiable appetite for devotional images, an appetite that had been bred by the Catholic Reformation and devotional classics like St. Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. He was also prized as a painter of still-lives and portraits. The images he created for Seville's monasteries, as well as the commissions he undertook in the 1630s for the royal court at Madrid, show a developing artistic sophistication. In the earliest works, for instance, rather naive treatments of the human form occur, while over time the artist acquired a surer skill in organizing his compositions. The intense piety of his works can best be seen in his paintings of the saints in meditation, works that he frequently provided to his monastic and aristocratic pa-

trons. Although his career flourished throughout the 1630s, the years after 1640 were troubled ones for the Spanish economy. To support his studio in Seville, the artist sold paintings to monasteries in the Americas. This traffic was particularly great in the years between 1648 and 1650, when the recession was worsened in Seville by an outbreak of plague. During these years Zurbarán's studio made large shipments to Mexico and the Andes where these works established a native Catholic Baroque style in Spain's colonies. During the 1650s Spain's economic fortunes rebounded somewhat, and by 1658 the artist had left Seville to work in the Spanish capital, Madrid. There he made contact with his old friend, Diego Velázquez, who may have helped him to compete successfully for commissions. In these later years of his life he seems primarily to have concentrated on producing devotional images for family and monastic chapels.

**DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ.** The undeniable giant of seventeenth-century Spanish painting, and one of the greatest European painters, was Diego Velázquez. Raised





*Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez. ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

in Seville, he also trained there as an artist. Precocious at a young age, he entered into service at the royal court in 1523, becoming the principal painter to Philip IV (r. 1621–1665). He was to remain a member of the royal household until his death and was to be responsible for painting an astonishing number of portraits, notable for their great compositional originality and for their quick and expressive brushwork. Although he initially worked for members of the Spanish nobility in Madrid, the conditions of his court appointment soon made such private commissions impossible to execute. Velázquez was always very concerned with social rank and prestige, and tried throughout his life to establish that his family was of noble origins. Working solely at the command and whims of the king bolstered these claims in seventeenth-century Spain, where private commissions undertaken for solely monetary purposes were perceived to be crassly commercial. Velázquez soon put aside all thoughts of enrichment from his art and conformed to the necessity of producing works for the king's pleasure. Besides his training in Seville, his painting came to be affected by the visit of Peter Paul Rubens to Madrid in 1628, who came there on one of his diplomatic journeys undertaken for the provinces of the southern Low Countries. In addition, Velázquez acquired new influences in his art from two trips he took to Italy, the first from 1629–1631 and the second from 1649–1651. On the first of these jour-

neys, he traveled initially to Parma, Florence, and Venice, before heading on to Rome. He was particularly impressed with the art of the Venetians, having found already in the colorism and swift brushwork of Rubens a reason for admiring this tradition. At the same time, his Italian journeys brought him into contact with the Baroque style that was developing in Rome, even as he ended his journey in Naples, where the experiments of the Caravaggisti were to leave their impression on his later work. With these experiences in mind, he returned to Spain, and during the 1630s he was to integrate the many influences that he had come in contact with over the years. Although he continued to paint a large number of portraits for the royal family, he also undertook more historical and mythological themes at this time. Among these images, the *Surrender of Breda* is today one of the most famous. The painting memorializes a recent victory in Spain's ongoing wars against the Dutch. Velázquez had never traveled in northern Europe, and thus had no idea what the area around the Breda battlefield had looked like. To complete his vision of the concluding surrender ceremony, he relied on engravings and written accounts of the event. Yet despite his relative ignorance, the picture manages to rise to the level of realism that one might expect in journalism, rather than painting. Throughout the canvas the artist relies on a rapid, yet sure brushwork. At the right side of the painting, he shows the Spanish army standing elegant and self-assured, while to the left, the battle-worn and defeated Dutch forces appear considerably less confident. In the center, the commander of the Spanish forces leans downward to grasp and comfort his Dutch opponent, a gesture that suggests nobility of spirit, a quality with which Velázquez endowed the entire composition.

**THE MAIDS OF HONOR.** Of the many masterpieces the artist painted for the Spanish court, his mature *Las Meninas*, or the *Maids of Honor*, ranks as one of the most accomplished works of all time. The painting is, in fact, not an image of the court's ladies-in-waiting, but a portrait of the royal family. During the nineteenth century it acquired its present title, and at this time artists interpreted the puzzling picture much as if it had been a candid snapshot of the court captured within Velázquez's studio. The painting shows the young princess Margarita Maria surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting, while in the background to the left, the artist inserts himself at his easel painting a huge canvas. A mirror in the back of the room reflects back the image of the Spanish king and queen, showing that in reality, the portrait that Velázquez is engaged in painting is not of the young Spanish princess, but is, in fact, one of the king and queen themselves. The royal cou-

ple thus takes on a quixotic presence in the canvas, since they are at one and the same time viewing the actions in the room that Velázquez is painting and also serving as the artist's models. The precise meaning that the artist intended to portray through this brilliant compositional strategy has long been debated. Most likely, he was making a claim for the high intellectual nobility of the painter's art, and at the same time he was likely musing about the pervasive nature of royal power within the milieu in which he worked. Generations of connoisseurs and art historians have tried to unlock all the meanings that repose in the amazing canvas, but the work still continues to provide an almost inexhaustible number of interpretations. It has often been pronounced the "greatest painting of all time" by virtue of its nearly perfect compositional makeup, its mixture of light, color, and texture, as well as its numerous intellectual insights. Such assessments are always a matter of taste, but *Las Meninas* certainly does point to the high degree of finesse with which Velázquez had mastered his art. His successes were well recognized at the time, and in 1658 King Philip IV finally rewarded him with the knighthood that he had so long desired. Thus in the final years of his life, the artist took on a number of important ceremonial functions within the Spanish Habsburg's court, including the staging of the betrothal ceremonies between the Princess Maria Theresa and the young King Louis XIV of France. Velázquez's lifelong craving for the stamp of aristocratic approval is a potent reminder of the social confines in which seventeenth-century artists lived and worked.

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## THE ROCOCO

**CHANGING TASTES.** During the first decades of the eighteenth century, a new decorative style emerged in the visual arts in France, and soon spread to many other parts of Europe. Characterized by a lighter spirit, swirling lines, and a propensity for everyday themes of enjoyment, this style was to become known as the Rococo or *Rocaille*. The word derived from a plasterer's term to describe this craft's technique of imitating the forms of

rocks and boulders. Since the late Renaissance, plasterers had been employed throughout Europe creating fanciful grottoes in the gardens of the nobility. Around 1700, though, the techniques that the craft used to build up plaster came to be used in the interiors of royal residences and Parisian townhouses, and walls that were heavily encrusted with plaster designs suddenly became all the rage in France. These *rocaille* techniques later lent their name to the entire period of the early eighteenth century; like Baroque, the Rococo, or in French *Rocaille*, period became synonymous with heavily encrusted, even decadent decoration in the minds of the Neoclassical artists and authors of the later eighteenth century. In truth, the art of the early eighteenth century remained as varied as at any other time in European history, yet a shift in taste is undeniable in France during the last decades of the seventeenth century and in the early years of the eighteenth. The Baroque art favored throughout much of Louis XIV's reign displayed a haughty grandeur, evident in its monumental scale, mythological and historical themes, as well as its formal lines. As the century of the Sun King drew to a close, a new fondness for more informal paintings and sculptures flourished. While Versailles and other royal residences indulged the new tastes, it was in the homes of Paris's wealthy elites that this fondness for a sensual art that depicted the joys of everyday life developed most strongly. Although the new lighter art had begun to flourish in the final years of the reign of Louis XIV, its popularity increased dramatically in the years immediately following his death. The new king, Louis XV, was only five years old when he assumed the throne, and during the regency of his uncle, Philippe II, the duke of Orléans, the style made great inroads in Paris. The rise of the Rococo coincided with changes in French society, as quiet intimate gatherings became the norm, rather than the imposing formal receptions of the Baroque era. In Parisian architecture of the time, a new fashion developed for smaller, human-scaled rooms, in which families entertained small circles of friends. It was in these intimate salons that many of the gatherings of Enlightenment intellectuals and their disciples took place. In these rooms, richly decorative paintings treating the joys and entertainments of everyday living became common decorations, as French aristocratic society indulged a penchant for amusement and pleasure.

**WATTEAU.** The painter most notable for developing a distinctively Rococo style in painting was Antoine Watteau (1684–1721), who despite his short life shaped tastes in eighteenth-century France. He was born at Valenciennes, a town on the French-Flemish border, but otherwise not many details about his early life are known.

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***DIMPLED BEHINDS AND EXTRAVAGANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Enlightenment thinker Denis Diderot influenced tastes in France during the second half of the eighteenth century through the publication of the *Encyclopédie*, a major reference work, as well as his many writings on art. In 1763, Diderot reviewed the Royal Academy's annual *Salon*, an art show that had long been staged by the students and faculty of the institution to display their most recent creations. His scathing remarks on a painting by the artist François Boucher were important in helping to destroy the Rococo style.

**SOURCE:** Denis Diderot in *Neoclassicism and Romanticism, 1750–1850*. Vol. I. Ed. Lorenz Eitner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970): 56–57.

Around 1702, he came to Paris, and he began to move in a group of Flemish artists that painted in the capital at the time. He seems to have studied the art of Rubens and the Venetian masters, and the tradition of the Low Countries artists of the seventeenth century was particularly important in his development, too. During the late seventeenth century a taste for decoration in the Chinese style had begun to spread throughout Europe, and in this regard France was no exception. One of Watteau's early endeavors in Paris was to create *chinoiseries*, decorative designs that suggested Chinese themes. After 1704, the artist became associated with Claude Gillot, an engraver, illustrator, and painter who created elegant images of groups of satyrs and comedians. Gillot's work appears to have been important in shaping Watteau's own art during the 1710s, as the artist first produced a number of images of *commedia dell'arte* players, and then proceeded to develop a new style of *fête galantes*. The subject of these works was the fashionable pastimes of Paris' wealthy and aristocratic society, and in the years between 1714 and 1717 the artist painted a number of

*fête galantes*. In some of these he posed his own fellow artists as if they were members of aristocratic society, while in others he painted aristocrats donning the clothing of peasants or of *commedia dell'arte* characters, two entertainments that were often practiced by aristocrats of the day in the countryside around Paris. Over the centuries, many have judged Watteau's work to be merely "pretty," yet a closer examination shows that he included subtle details intended to suggest deeper meanings. His landscapes are highly idealized, more beautiful than nature in reality is, but the statues that surround his characters or the musical instruments that his actors play convey a highly restrained language of emotion. The origins of this kind of art lay in the Dutch and Flemish genre paintings of the seventeenth century, although in Watteau's hands he elevated the genre of everyday entertainment and amusement into a cultivated, highly elegant art form.

**BOUCHER AND FRAGONARD.** It was François Boucher (1703–1770) and Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806)



*The Swing* (1767) by Jean-Honoré Fragonard. THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE DU LOUVRE PARIS/DAGLI ORTI.

who were to carry forward this elegant and refined style into the mid- and later eighteenth century. Boucher played a role as a designer, draftsman, and painter, and by virtue of his relatively long life, he came to leave a definite imprint on all the arts in eighteenth-century France. His art treated pastoral themes, but from the new dimension of sensuality that the Rococo enjoyed so limitlessly. His pictures were filled with images of the ancient gods, shepherds, lovers, and other rustics and they often suggested a frank and open sexuality. Their ready intelligibility and free decorative quality made Boucher's art a commodity that was readily adaptable to everything from porcelain to *toile du jouty*, a kind of cloth popular at the time that featured images of rural scenes. Boucher was an excellent draftsman; he was alleged to have made more than 10,000 drawings in his life. His style was light and free, and he was the first who tried to bring this draftsman's spirit into the art of painting. Although he was prolific throughout his life, Enlightenment thinkers like Diderot came to criticize his art in the second half of the century for its overt prettiness as well as the artist's propensity to show bare bottoms. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, by contrast, was an amazingly adaptable artist whose career long outlasted the popularity of Rococo decoration and design. Today, Fragonard is remembered best for images like *The Swing*, a picture showing an elegantly dressed aristocratic woman in free flight above two admirers. The artist's output was far more varied than this piece of Rococo elegance suggests. After an early career as a painter of historical themes, the genre advocated as the epitome of artistic expression by the Royal Academy in Paris, he came to paint genre scenes like *The Swing*. Later he concentrated increasingly on landscapes, especially after he won the French *Prix de Rome*, the Royal Academy's prize that underwrote a period of study in the ancient city. Like Boucher, Fragonard's reputation has long labored under the critique that he was merely a pretty artist. More recently, his work has come to be reassessed, and the depth of the artist's compositional and drafting skills have been more fully realized. As the founder of a family of artists who designed for the French decorative arts industry, Fragonard's influence was to last long after his death.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The Rococo in the Eighteenth Century*

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## THE DECORATIVE ARTS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

**THE GROWTH OF INDUSTRY.** In the eighteenth century the decorative arts—here understood as the production of upholstered furniture, cabinetmaking, and such household items as porcelains—experienced profound transformations. At the time, rising standards of living as well as declining costs of production brought more consumer goods to a broader spectrum of the population than at any time previously in human history. While this rise in consumption was to continue unabated in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century West, many of the design techniques and production methods that developed in the eighteenth-century world have continued to be followed in these industries until modern times. The modern assembly line has added a new dimension to the venerable techniques that cabinetmakers, porcelain manufacturers, and upholsterers pioneered during the course of the eighteenth century. Yet successful eighteenth-century producers might still recognize many of the processes that were pioneered and adopted in these industries in their own time. The rise in consumer goods was to affect tastes and habits in new and unexpected ways, insuring that the European gentry and middle classes were now able to emulate some of the refinement of aristocratic society. At the same time, the standards of consumption unleashed then have also continued to plague the West through the environmental damage that arises from a consumer society. However the rise of new consumer goods is assessed—as a positive element that brought with it rising standards of living, or as a negative phenomenon that bred a “keeping up with the Joneses mentality” and thus poisoned air and water—the ingenuity with which eighteenth-century decorative artists solved problems of production still ranks as a major development of the era. Consumer goods, often decorated with pictures and motifs from the hands of esteemed artists, brought elements of good design within the reach of broad strata of Europe's population.

**PORCELAINS.** In the later Renaissance, a fashion had developed in courts and wealthy urban society for maiolica dinnerware, a ceramic or earthenware product

that was decorated with intricate patterns and then glazed with tin before being fired. Perfected in Italy, the process had soon been copied in many places in Europe. In the great houses of Europe, nobles had sometimes commissioned noted painters to design the patterns that decorated these dinner services, but as the new products became available at the end of the sixteenth century in many European cities, they were increasingly stamped with stock patterns hastily applied by workers in factories. At the dawn of the seventeenth century, Portuguese and then Dutch traders began to import Chinese porcelains into Europe. These wares were widely prized for their workmanship, and they were at first incredibly expensive because of their greater strength and durability than simple earthenware. They were soon copied in factories in the Netherlands, most notably at Delft, where the typical blue and white “Delftware” that imitated Chinese designs soon became a commercial success. Its popularity increased dramatically at mid-century because the outbreak of civil war in China temporarily cut off the flow of porcelains to Europe. At the same time, the dominant economic theory that reigned in much of Europe in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was mercantilism. Mercantilist theory taught that for a country to prosper it had to limit imports and foster its own native industries in order to be self-sufficient. In this way, a country’s own reserves of gold and silver were preserved. By 1700, most European kings and princes worried that the dependence on foreign imports of items like Chinese porcelains, silks, and other decorative items might bankrupt their states, and a flurry of schemes appeared throughout the continent that were designed to increase native production of these materials. Louis XIV’s purchase of the Gobelins manufactory in Paris was only the most visible of these attempts. Through the efforts of his chief minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the king purchased this key industry, which had long woven tapestries and other fabrics for French aristocrats and wealthy city dwellers. Acquired in 1662, the factory flourished for the next two decades, becoming a center for the development of the decorative arts in and around Paris. Its output was not limited to tapestries, but under Louis’ chief painter, Charles Le Brun, it educated many French craftsmen in decorative techniques used in furniture production, upholstery, cabinetmaking, and stonecutting. By the end of the century, the scheme had foundered, and the Gobelins confined its aims only to the production of tapestries. It nevertheless had by this date played a key role in advancing the skills of many French craftsmen, who continued to ply the trades they had learned in the eighteenth century. Around 1700, Europeans were still importing lavish amounts of Chinese



Meissen Ware soup tureen, footed with squared handles, eighteenth century. © ARTE & IMMAGINI SRL/CORBIS.

porcelains and other goods from Asia, all of which fed a taste for oriental decoration. But in the years that followed, new forms of porcelain manufacturing were to be developed in Europe that competed more effectively against imports from East Asia. Kings and princes founded most of the new schemes, while a few were privately financed.

**MEISSEN.** It was in the Saxon town of Meissen, not far from Dresden, that many of the technical problems that had hindered the development of a native porcelain industry in Europe were to be solved. Between 1700 and about 1750, the Saxon princes supported the development of this industry with great enthusiasm, carefully guarding the advances they made in the craft as state secrets. Around 1700, the Saxon court employed two notable alchemists, specialists in chemical compounds who frequently worked in the mining industry, to assist their efforts. Because of their knowledge of smelting and refining techniques, these specialists conducted a number of experiments concerning the vitrification of different mixtures of clay. By 1710, they had perfected a process for creating “hard-paste” porcelain. In this process, the specific mixture of clay resists melting to a very high temperature, and as a result, the materials with which the work is glazed are fused and become one with the fired clay itself. By 1710, the new Meissen factory was producing porcelain that was the equal, and in some cases

even superior to the East Asian variety. At first, the decorators at Meissen imitated designs that were available on silver and gold plate, but by 1720 a new designer at the factory was imitating Chinese designs, as well as developing the characteristic European flower patterns that have since figured on much porcelain. At Meissen, designs adapted from the works of such artists as Antoine Watteau, François Boucher, and native German artists became common, too. Much of the porcelain produced at the Saxon factory was not intended for public consumption, but was intended for display in the household of the Saxon Duke Friedrich-Augustus. His collection was so extensive that in 1717 he acquired a palace in the city of Dresden just to display his porcelains. Significant innovation and experimentation followed; Meissen figurines were being produced by the 1730s, and by the end of that decade the characteristic pattern known as “Blue Onion” had been produced. Over the coming years, it would compete successfully against Chinese wares and inspire numerous European imitators.

**KNOWLEDGE SPREADS.** Duke Friedrich-Augustus had tried to keep his discovery of “hard-paste” porcelain secret, but knowledge of the innovations that developed in his factory quickly spread to many other European centers. Soon one of his scientists established his own manufactory near Venice with Italian backers. Other factories soon followed in the region, but by 1750 the secrets mastered at Meissen had given rise to porcelain manufactories in Paris, Hamburg, Naples, Vienna, and Munich. By 1775, the famous “Royal Copenhagen” factory, too, carried the techniques of “hard-paste” porcelain into Scandinavia. Many of these early industries were state supported, and some, like Nymphenburg, were not commercially successful, although they produced a high quality product that tended to affect design techniques elsewhere. Similarly, the Sèvres factory near Versailles was a royal workshop created when Louis XV purchased a previously private factory in the region. Between 1756 and the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, the industry produced a number of stunning pieces, notable for their decorative Rococo qualities. The wares of the Sèvres factory relied on a “soft-paste” clay formula, in which the glazed objects were fired at lower temperatures than those executed using Meissen’s techniques. As a result, “soft-paste” products were more porous than “hard-paste” varieties, but they were ivory colored, and presented more muted colors when decorated. Thus they came to be as prized as the wares produced at Meissen. Like Nymphenburg, the experiments undertaken at the royal factory at Sèvres were artistically and technically successful. Yet most of the wares produced there found

their way into the royal collections or onto the tables of wealthy aristocrats. The factory, in other words, was not a commercial, but rather an artistic success.

**FURTHER PRODUCTION ENHANCEMENTS.** Most of the porcelains produced in continental European factories in the first half of the eighteenth century were high quality, hand-produced products, requiring a painstaking attention to detail on the part of decorators. In England, new techniques of creating “bone china” had been discovered by 1750. In this method, the burned ash of animal bones was added to the clay. The resulting porcelain was harder than “soft-paste” porcelain, but not as hard as Meissen or other “hard-paste” varieties. By contrast, the great advantage of this new “bone china” was that it was more translucent and delicate than many of the porcelains then in production. The English porcelain industry by and large prospered without royal support. During the 1750s, Josiah Wedgwood and his partner Thomas Whieldon conducted a series of experiments that greatly reduced the costs of producing porcelain, while preserving a high quality product. At this early stage in the company’s development, the porcelain was created, fired, and then sent out to be stamped with a design. Soon, Wedgwood and Whieldon perfected a new brilliant green glaze, the likes of which had not been seen before, and which could serve its own decorative purposes. In the years that followed, Wedgwood separated from Whieldon, and developed a new kind of earthenware product that could be used for ornamental items as well as for dinnerware. It had a creamy color and was able to withstand sudden changes in temperature without breaking. When Queen Charlotte purchased a set of the new product, it quickly became known as “Queen’s Ware.” Several years later, when Josiah Wedgwood supplied the queen with a beautifully executed tea service, she granted the potter the right to advertise himself as a supplier to the crown. From this point, the industrialist’s fortunes were secured, and his Queen’s Ware became one of Britain’s most successful exports. To satisfy the demand from his customers, Wedgwood had to mechanize and further refine his production techniques. New lines of china followed, the most successful of these being the Jasper Ware that began production in the 1770s. The designs of Jasper Ware remain synonymous in many modern people’s minds with the Wedgwood Company. Its great possibilities for decoration arose from the fact that it was formed and covered with a white glaze and then bas-relief decoration was applied in a variety of colors. Using this technique, Wedgwood was able to produce high quality, imitation cameo patterns, vases, and other decorative items. The rise to popularity of

Jasper Ware in England and throughout Europe coincided with the new Neoclassical fashions popular in the later eighteenth century. Wedgwood himself judged that his finest achievement was his successful copy of the Portland Vase, a beautiful Roman work from the first century C.E. that had found its way to England. Wedgwood executed his first copy around 1789, and one year later he began mass-producing the works and supplying them to those who had previously subscribed to the edition. In this way his production and marketing techniques anticipated the “limited editions” that were to become increasingly important among decorative arts collectors in the modern world. By this time Wedgwood’s porcelain factory had already become highly mechanized. Engines now turned the lathes that produced the pottery, and sophisticated thermostats kept the temperature within the kilns constant to avoid over- or under-firing the pottery. In this way, Wedgwood’s scientific experiments had laid the foundation for a product notable for its consistency. For these innovations, the potter was named a Fellow of Britain’s Royal Society in 1783.

**THE FACTORY MODEL.** Although many of his works may not have been as beautiful or exquisitely crafted as those of the Sèvres or Meissen factories, Wedgwood’s wares were more affordably priced, consistently produced, and appealed to contemporary tastes. His greatest achievements, like his Jasper Ware copies of ancient Roman vases, were eventually to be imitated by the great French and German porcelain factories. Elsewhere, the kinds of techniques that Josiah Wedgwood mastered to improve the production of porcelains were being adapted to other industries as well. Certainly, Britain was the leader in this industrialization of the decorative arts, and the country displayed an almost insatiable appetite to find ways of producing high quality consumer goods more cheaply and reliably than before. In the British Isles, new techniques allowed for the mass production of such items as flocked wallpapers, silverplate, and ormolu, a kind of decorative bronzework sometimes gilded to appear as if it was solid gold. These new items allowed the English gentry to decorate their homes in ways that imitated, albeit at considerably less cost, the costly brocades, damasks, and illusionary frescoes that had once lined aristocratic walls. These goods allowed merchants and members of the minor gentry to sip their tea in china cups, after filling them from imposing plated tea services, much like the aristocracy. And through the importing of cheaply gilded chair frames and other component parts from overseas, handsome furniture, too, came into the reach of these classes. While England stood at the

forefront of this new “consumer revolution,” everywhere in Europe a quickening appetite for goods was prompting producers to find ways to cheapen their costs, while retaining the generally high outward quality and appearance of goods. Mass production thus entered into the European economy to produce both monumental and subtle modulations in the ways in which people lived.

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## NEOCLASSICISM

**SHIFTING VALUES.** The Rococo movement that had developed in France and spread to other parts of Europe in the first half of the eighteenth century had reflected changes in the cultivated societies of patrons who commissioned art. The affection for lighter forms of depiction and for themes that treated pleasure and entertainment developed from a growing distaste for the imposing, monumental, and highly dramatic forms of the seventeenth-century Baroque. After 1750, styles in the visual arts changed rather quickly again as Neoclassicism influenced the artistic world. Neoclassicism, a movement that had musical, literary, and artistic dimensions, was inspired from the first by the advances that were underway in the eighteenth century in the study of Antiquity. During the 1730s and 1740s, the first systematic archeological excavations of ancient Roman towns began in Italy. At places like Pompeii and Herculaneum in southern Italy, artists viewed the frescoes and other interior decorative elements of Roman and Greek houses and public buildings. Figures like Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) sketched these ruins and published engravings that were widely circulated throughout Europe, helping to feed the changing taste for classical images and design. Yet the undeniable shifts that occurred in mid-eighteenth century taste might not have occurred if cultivated consumers had not been prepared for them through the works of Enlightenment



philosophers. In their philosophical and literary works, these figures had extolled the virtues of ancient Rome and Greece, and they had argued that in Antiquity society had functioned in ways that were more attuned to the demands of rationality. Thus Neoclassicism, with its more austere lines and its readily intelligible standards of design, expressed the fervent desire of intellectuals and artistic patrons to create a new kind of society based upon the dictates of human reason. At the same time, the affectionate glance that Europeans cast upon the ancient world was frequently characterized by an almost religious reverence. Thus, although its admirers craved a revival of Antiquity that might express their faith in rationality and its attributes of clarity, harmony, and austerity, Neoclassicism was above all an emotional movement that inspired powerful sentimental love for all things ancient among its supporters, and as such, it carried within it the seeds of the Romanticism that began to supplant it as the dominant style in the arts at the end of the century.

**BEGINNINGS OF NEOCLASSICISM.** It was in Rome where the new spirit first began to take hold. Elites and artists from throughout Europe had long journeyed to the ancient city to complete their educations, and during the course of the eighteenth century Rome had persisted in importance as the ultimate destination of the Grand Tour. At the time, this circuit through Europe's major cultural capitals was becoming increasingly conventionalized. A Tour undertaken by members of the aristocracy, the landed gentry, or members of the wealthy commercial class in Europe's cities frequently lasted for two or even three years. On these journeys, wealthy patrons stocked their art collections, buying both contemporary and ancient works to line the halls of their homes. In Britain and elsewhere throughout Europe, a fashion for printed accounts of one's Grand Tour had grown throughout the eighteenth century. Tourists returning from their journeys published their journals, which recorded their impressions as well as the many fascinating sites that they had seen along the way. This taste for literary accounts of the Grand Tour came to be self-sustaining, as each new generation hoped to outdo the insights of the generation before. By the mid-eighteenth century, both wealthy patrons and artists became aware of the increased knowledge of the ancient world that archeological excavations were producing. As a result of the digs underway in Rome, Pompeii, Herculaneum and other Mediterranean sites, the connoisseur or artist no longer needed to comprehend Antiquity through the lens of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Renaissance. Through the many prints available for sale in Rome as

well as the presence of nearby excavations, an intelligent tourist might witness ancient art and architecture firsthand. A rising appreciation of the classical world's design principles soon developed. Among the many forces that helped popularize the Neoclassical resurgence throughout Europe was the French Royal Academy in Rome. A talented group of architects, painters, and sculptors who lived and worked in Rome during the 1740s and 1750s were to carry the knowledge that they had acquired of Antiquity throughout Europe as they accepted positions in courts and worked as architects and designers in the second half of the eighteenth century. The presence in Rome of talented and accomplished students from every corner of the Continent also helped feed the Neoclassical appetite. Robert Adam, the great British architect and interior designer, was in Rome at the time that Giovanni Battista Piranesi's famous engravings of ancient monuments were being published and were helping to develop tastes for the noble architecture of Rome and Greece. By the end of the century, the distinguished list of Roman pilgrims included figures as diverse as the French painters Hubert Robert and Jacques-Louis David as well as the country's leading architect, Jean-Germain Soufflot; the noted German art historian and esthetic theorist, Johann Winckelmann; the Venetian sculptor Antonio Canova; and the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. Rome was thus the incubator of Neoclassicism, but the movement was broad and international in scope, with successive generations of artists, patrons, and scholars finding inspiration there before returning to their native lands to create forms of visual art that expressed the new fondness for Antiquity.

**THE SEARCH FOR A CLASSICAL LANGUAGE IN THE VISUAL ARTS.** From the first, most Neoclassical artists and their patrons looked with disdain upon the light and breezy styles of painting that had flourished in Europe during the Rococo period. Johann Winckelmann, the greatest theoretician of the new movement, came to exercise a profound influence on the ideas of both patrons and artists at the time with the publication of his works on ancient aesthetics. Winckelmann was a major figure, not only in the Neoclassical movement, but in the entire sweep of art history. Before his time, connoisseurs had often thought of the word "style" in terms of an individual artist's own way of expressing himself. Winckelmann, however, pioneered the use of the term to describe the entire underlying sense of beauty and compositional organization that was present in a chronological period. Thus it became possible to discuss the art of classical Antiquity in terms of being a coherent body of theory about aesthetics, that is the science of beauty, and

for Winckelmann, a disciple of classicism, the art of the ancient world represented the great high point of all world civilizations. Thus if contemporary artists were to emulate this achievement they might succeed in realizing, and perhaps even surpassing, the glories of the ancient world. Winckelmann thus championed imitation in his works as the supreme form of flattering the ancient styles. But he insisted that slavishly copying Antiquity was a dead end that could not lift art out of the merely decorative paths it had fallen into during the Rococo. The historical circumstances of the ancient past had been very different from those of the eighteenth century, and he cautioned that classical models needed to be adapted, rather than merely copied. Thus throughout the 1750s and 1760s, painters and sculptors searched for a new language that might express their reverence for the more austere, harmonious, and balanced design principles they admired in classicism.

**HISTORICAL THEMES.** It was in a revival of history painting that Neoclassicism's impact was to become clearly evident. The fashion for a genre of idealized works, their themes adapted from ancient history and mythology, first appeared at Rome, but it was to find its greatest exponent in the works of Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), France's greatest history painter since Poussin. David was initially to draw more of his inspiration from the works of the great French master than he was from the painting of Antiquity. During the 1780s he created a series of monumental historical paintings that spoke to the rising affection for Antiquity as well as the political situation in France. Louis XVI was then struggling to avoid bankruptcy, while criticism of the state and the extravagance of its rulers and aristocrats steadily mounted. Two masterpieces from the period spoke directly to these crises: *Belisarius Begging for Alms* (1781) and *The Oath of the Horatii* (1784). In the first, David depicted the ancient story of Belisarius, a general in the Roman army, who was arbitrarily banished from the halls of power in the Byzantine Empire after the Emperor Justinian had him tried on trumped-up charges of corruption. The story had recently become popular in France through the publication in 1767 of Jean-François Marmontel's novel *Bélisaire*. It survived into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a popular theme, even prompting the great Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti to write an opera based upon it. For many in David's time, the incident had a special importance because it pointed to the damage that an arbitrary and high-handed ruler might wreak on the individual. David's painting of the theme emphasizes the great pathos of the general Belisarius, as he is forced to beg to survive. The artist's



Portrait of Jacques-Louis David. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

rendering of the tale achieves a kind of drama similar to Poussin by capturing the moment at which Belisarius is recognized by former associates, and they become aware of the depths to which he has fallen through the emperor's injustice. In compositional style and feeling, this work resembles very much the great achievements of the seventeenth-century master. The work's dramatic rendering of the moral in its historical theme granted the artist great authority in 1780s France, as criticism of the injustices that a corrupt state fostered were on the rise. As a painter, David stood outside the academic establishment of the French Royal Academy at the time, yet despite his status as an outsider, his art was enthusiastically received in Paris.

**THE OATH OF THE HORATII.** Three years after the completion of the *Belisarius*, David was to present another striking moralistic painting to the Parisian audience: his *Oath of the Horatii*. By this time David's mastery of the Neoclassical language was more secure, and the painting ranks as one of the great masterpieces of the late eighteenth century. It shows a classical subject, the oath that three brothers make to their father before they go off to fight for Rome. The theme thus presented a moral very different from that of the corruption that the artist had stressed in his *Belisarius Begging*



*The Death of Marat* (1793) by Jacques-Louis David. CORBIS-BETTSMANN. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

*for Alms.* Here the individual must subjugate his own aims and well-being to the greater service of the state. The patriotism that the work reflects was a theme widely discussed during the crises that France was experiencing at the time, as Enlightenment philosophers and French patriots recommended self-sacrifice as a way to alleviate the country's fiscal and social dilemmas. With the display of this work, David's reputation as the greatest painter in France was assured, and he acquired numerous students in his studio. His career reached its high point in 1793, when he painted *The Death of Marat*, an image that became a force for the French revolutionaries' identity. The subject was the assassination of one of the Revolution's leaders in his bath. David immortalized the event with a carefully executed vision of heroism amidst pathos. The revolutionary assembly commissioned David to paint an account of the event one day after the famous assassination had taken place, and the painting was publicly displayed to impress the image of counter-revolutionary terror upon the minds of Parisians. In effect, the work displays a number of religious qualities, and is comparable to images of the dead Christ long popular throughout Europe. Through the success of this and other images that David executed in defense of the Revolution, his influence persisted into the nineteenth century. The readily comprehensible intelligence of his rendering of historical themes survived

into the nineteenth century through the many artists he had trained.

**OTHER GENRES.** Although Neoclassicism's effects are most easily visible in historical painting, the movement's design tenets also came to affect portraiture and other artistic forms that treated everyday themes. David and other French Neoclassical artists made major contributions, not only to historical painting, but to the art of portraiture. Instead of the highly elegant confections popular among the artists of the Rococo, these neoclassical images were notable for their greater naturalness and relaxed atmosphere. The new style of portraiture came to affect even the images of the royal family, long resistant to change and innovation. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), the wife of a Parisian art dealer who rose to great prominence in the 1780s, painted some of the most striking and beautiful examples of this new, more naturalistic style. Despite Vigée-Lebrun's humble origins, she painted thirty portraits of Marie-Antoinette, many showing an increasing informality as the taste for less restricting and ornamental clothing—a taste fostered by Neoclassicism—influenced the highly formal French court. Some at court complained that her portraits lacked the suitable royal bearing and gravity that had long been seen as essential components of images of the king and queen. But Marie-Antoinette admired the artist and supported her nonetheless. Because of her proximity to the crown, Vigée-Lebrun fled France for twelve years during the Revolution, although she returned and carried forward her career well into the mid-nineteenth century. In England, the two greatest exponents of Neoclassical portraiture were Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) and Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788). These two rival artists influenced painting in England for much of the eighteenth century. Of the two, Reynolds's influence was greater in portraiture. The artist increased the range of poses he used to render his subjects, adopting new compositional principles drawn from the art of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century as well as from antique sculpture. Reynolds came from an urbane background; his father had been an academic at Oxford. Highly educated, he influenced British painting through his role as director of London's Royal Academy. There he shaped the education of many of the country's artists, and as elsewhere in Europe, his tastes fostered a concern for the classical heritage. By contrast, Thomas Gainsborough sprang from much humbler roots: his father was a bankrupt cloth manufacturer. He spent most of his life in provincial surroundings painting landscapes, historical paintings, and portraits for the rural gentry and aristocracy. He moved to London only around the time he

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***IMITATION OR IDEALIZATION?**

**INTRODUCTION:** The rise of Neoclassicism in the second half of the eighteenth century produced a renewed interest in the subject of imitation. How should artists strive to emulate the art of antiquity as well as the great works of the European tradition? And more fundamentally, should they represent nature realistically or idealistically? Numerous artists and art historians addressed this issue. Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) was, by virtue of his learning and achievements, the greatest British painter of the age. In his *Seven Discourses on Art* the artist considered how painters should imitate the natural world. In place of realism, Reynolds recommended to students that they seek to present an idealized view of the world, one that might surpass the blemishes that exist in Creation.

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**SOURCE:** Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art*, in *Neoclassicism and Romanticism, 1750–1850*. Ed. Lorenz Eitner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970): 37–38.

turned fifty years old. Rumors have long circulated that Gainsborough was poorly educated, but more recent research has shown that he was intellectually voracious and that in his art he derived influences from an enormous variety of sources. In his career he avidly followed and integrated Neoclassical influences into his work. Toward the end of his life, in particular, he developed a visual

language that was influenced by Neoclassicism's embrace of nature and of rustic settings.

**SCULPTURE.** Throughout the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the art of sculpture had continued to be practiced by a number of craftsman-like figures. After Bernini, though, no great genius appeared who was to develop a European-wide reputation. In France, for

*a PRIMARY SOURCE document***THE ABOLITION OF THE ACADEMY**

**INTRODUCTION:** Despite his own success on the Parisian art scene, the neoclassical painter Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) always chafed under the conventions of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. In the years following the outbreak of the French Revolution he and other artists who were won over to the side of republicanism worked for the institution's abolition. On 8 August 1793, they achieved their objective when the National Convention abolished the institution. Jacques-Louis David spoke to the assembly, and was effective in convincing the delegates to act. An excerpt from his speech follows.

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**SOURCE:** Jacques-Louis David, "Speech before the National Convention, August 8, 1793," in *Enlightenment/Revolution*. Vol. I of *Neoclassicism and Romanticism, 1750–1850*. Ed. Lorenz Eitner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970): 116–117.

example, the Gardens of the Palace of Versailles had been decorated with more than 1,400 sculptural fountains in the late seventeenth century. These had been designed and executed by an army of sculptors and stonecutters. In the first half of the eighteenth century, a competent group of craftsman-like artists continued to work at the palace and in Paris, including Jean-Louis Lemoyne and his brother Jean-Baptiste. The latter's son, again named Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne (1704–1778), was one of the first French sculptors to adopt the new Neoclassicism to his art, creating in the 1760s a series of classically-inspired portrait busts of several French aristocrats. One of Lemoyne's students, Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741–1828), was to carry the new Neoclassical idiom to a high point of development in France, creating not only classically-inspired portrait busts, but sculptural groupings based upon ancient themes. The history of sculpture in

Italy was remarkably similar to that of France. Any number of competent programs continued to be undertaken in the decades following the death of Gianlorenzo Bernini, the great genius who dominated the art for much of the Baroque period. Great sculptural commissions continued to be executed throughout the eighteenth century. In Rome, the largest of these was the colossal Trevi Fountain, a project that required the thirty years after 1732 to complete. Its chief designer and executor, Pietro Bracci (1700–1773), was a competent, well-trained artist, and today the work continues to rank as one of the chief tourist attractions of Rome. The Neoclassical revival, however, bred a renewed interest in ancient sculpture, and in the figure of Antonio Canova (1757–1822) the movement produced an artist who ranked alongside Bernini in greatness. His works featured simpler design and clean lines, in contrast to the

Rococo fondness for florid elaboration. They also displayed the naturalistic and sometimes even severe presentation Neoclassicism advocated. During his long career, Canova was very much in demand as a portraitist with clients throughout Italy. Later in his career, he enjoyed a reputation as the greatest living European artist, and his skills as a portraitist in the Neoclassical tradition were sought out by many throughout Europe.

**DECLINE OF NEOCLASSICISM.** Although elements of the Neoclassical style survived into the nineteenth century, the cataclysmic events of the French Revolution called into question the faith in human reason that lay at the heart of the movement. During the 1790s, French Revolutionary leaders adopted the visual embodiments of Neoclassicism to express the ideals of their movement, including its faith in the perfectability of human society and the necessity of developing a set of social mores that were derived from nature, rather than tradition. The enormous bloodletting that occurred during the years following 1789, however, discredited the Enlightenment's worship of human reason in the minds of many. By the 1790s, in literature, music, and somewhat later in the visual arts a more tempestuous, less harmonious set of ideals and objectives that became known as Romanticism began to flourish. Besides the political problems of the late eighteenth century, rapid industrialization, burgeoning cities and economic problems were helping to destroy the Enlightenment's onetime faith in rationality. The new movement favored an open expression of human feelings and emotions, as well as privacy and inwardness, rather than a balanced and harmonious idealization of mankind's potentialities. At its foundation, though, the Neoclassical movement evidenced a nostalgic longing for the past, and the artists and patrons of the movement hoped to put aside the history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They longed to build a society, based not in the arbitrary symmetries of the Baroque or in its fondness for imposing monumentality, but on the principles of the natural world. As the movement progressed, the painters and sculptors of Neoclassicism evidenced an ever-greater attention to nature, endowing their subjects with an idealized beauty that suggested the idyllic harmony that might exist in a society untouched by the corruptions of their own age. The fondness for an informal treatment of nature was thus just one of the features that Neoclassicism shared with Romanticism. And while the new romantic spirit contrasted its own exertions in favor of the human emotions and an inward world of sentiment, the features that joined the two periods—Neoclassicism and Romanticism—were closer than their opposing rhetoric leads us on the surface to believe.

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SEE ALSO *Architecture: The Development of Neoclassicism*

## SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE *in Visual Arts*

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### MICHELANGELO MERISI DA CARAVAGGIO

1571–1610

*Painter*

**A STORMY YOUTH IN LOMBARDY.** The figure who was to revolutionize early Italian Baroque painting, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, was born near Milan in 1571. His father served as an official in the household of one of the Sforza, the dynasty that had long controlled the great Northern Italian city and its surrounding countryside, Lombardy. Many of the early details of the young Caravaggio's life are shrouded in uncertainty, but it is clear that by 1584 he was living in Milan, where he was apprenticed to a painter. When his father died some years later, Michelangelo Merisi sold his claim to his inheritance and moved to Rome, arriving there in 1592. The earliest biographers of the painter point to certain legal problems that may have prompted Caravaggio to leave Lombardy. One points to quarrels in which the artist may have been engaged, while another suggests that he was imprisoned shortly before his departure. No contemporary documents survive to establish whether these accounts are true, but Caravaggio's later tendency to become involved in scandals, brawls, and to assault his fellow artists suggests that the artist may have fled Milan with a cloud over his head.

**ROME.** The artist's first years in Rome were apparently filled with trials. He lived in the household of a churchman, where he did menial chores. Next, he worked

for several local artists, who produced paintings for the local market. Michelangelo Merisi painted heads on their canvases and he was paid by the piece. Sometime in these early years in the church's capital, the artist came to the attention of the Cavaliere D'Arpino, a prominent member of Roman society and a Mannerist painter. Caravaggio lived in the Cavaliere's household, a fact that suggests that the artist's talents were beginning to be recognized. Just what works the artist created under the influence of this successful Roman artist cannot be determined, but he probably painted still-life details onto the Cavaliere's works, or completed various works that this established artist then sold under his own name, a common custom of the time. This period of Merisi's life drew to a close, though, when he was kicked by a horse and forced to enter a local hospital in order to recover. With his health regained, the artist returned to work in Rome, soon finding lodging in the household of another official, the Monsignor Fantino Petrucci. It was during this period in Petrucci's house that Caravaggio's fortunes started to rise. The paintings he completed during this time show the artist's rising mastery over his medium, and this trend was to continue in the late 1590s as the artist came to the notice of a local connoisseur, the Cardinal del Monte. Del Monte was something of a polymath, that is, he was a master of all kinds of scientific and artistic endeavors, and after purchasing some of the artist's pictures, he invited Caravaggio to live in his house. The cardinal was at the time serving as the Tuscan ambassador to the Vatican, and his household was among the most sophisticated in the city. As a result of his time there, the young Caravaggio became known to the city's cultivated elite, and from this time forward, his fortunes were assured.

**THE CONTARELLI AND CERASI CHAPELS.** It was under del Monte's influence that Caravaggio was to receive the two greatest commissions of his career. In the first of these, the Contarelli family chapel in the Church of San Luis dei Francesi, the artist was to immortalize the life of St. Matthew in three works, the greatest of which was his *The Calling of St. Matthew*. The painting showed Christ entering an inn, where Matthew is counting the proceeds of his tax collection with a group of associates. Here Caravaggio painted from life and the models that he chose, dressed in contemporary Roman attire, mirrored the contemporary street. Christ is shaded in darkness and strong contrasts of light and dark characterize the painting, while a high light source, suggesting the miraculous nature of the incident, falls from the upper right hand side of the painting. The artist captures the moment when Christ has spoken the fateful

words, "Follow me," and Matthew has placed his hand at his breast as if to ask "Me?" In this way Caravaggio's dramatic, yet realistic portrayal heightens the miraculous nature of the incident. Through his portrayal of the event, Caravaggio makes Matthew's abandonment of his profession as a publican, or tax collector, stand out in greater relief, because the full consequences of his denial of the gritty actuality of his trade become evident to observers. It was just this kind of realism that the Catholic reforming Bishop Gabrielle Paleotti had recommended to artists as an antidote to the highly intellectualized and obscure meanings that had governed much Mannerist taste of the late sixteenth century. Caravaggio was to continue in this vein with perhaps his greatest masterpiece, the *Conversion of St. Paul*, a work completed several years later for the Cerasi family chapel at the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo. Here he captured the moment that a blinding light from heaven has just struck Saul, and he has been thrown from his horse in a catatonic fit. In the background Saul's servant looks on in incomprehension, while Paul's body lies prone, his arms outstretched toward the light source that again falls from above.

**SUCCESS AND LATER TROUBLES.** Caravaggio's triumphs in the Cerasi and Contarelli chapels established him as one of the greatest artists of his day and a group of "Caravaggisti," or imitators of his style, soon emerged who experimented with his light and dark contrasts (*chiaroscuro*) and dramatic realism. New commissions followed, but during the first decade of the seventeenth century many of his works came to be rejected by the religious institutions in Rome that commissioned them. This trend, however, scarcely affected the artist's reputation, since every time a monastery or church rejected his commission, a connoisseur appeared to purchase the work. Despite his success, these years were also plagued with legal troubles, as the artist accused others of plagiarizing his work, and he became embroiled in a libel suit. Accusations of assault, too, swirled around Caravaggio, and in 1606 he killed Ranuccio Tommasoni in a dispute following a tennis match. Forced to flee Rome, he went to Naples, receiving a number of commissions there and throughout southern Italy. His reputation had been little diminished by the controversies that swirled around his career, and the examples that he left behind in southern Italy inspired the development of a school of Caravaggeschi there that long outlasted his life. After travels in Malta and throughout southern Italy, he returned to Naples and prepared to journey to Rome. He had learned that he was to be pardoned for the Tommasoni murder, but when he boarded a boat for the city he was mistaken for another criminal and taken prisoner.

The mistake was realized, but in the meantime Caravaggio had contracted a fever and he died several days later. Despite his untimely death, the example of gritty realism that his works provided, with their models drawn directly from life, was to outlive him. Although his reputation was to suffer over the centuries, the genius of his achievement has in recent times been recognized. He has, in other words, been restored to his rightful place as one of the formative influences in the development of the Baroque, and his impact on artists of the period has come to be fully realized.

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## JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID

1748–1825

*Painter*

**BEGINNINGS.** The artist who was to revolutionize French painting in the later eighteenth century was born into a prosperous family that had long distinguished themselves as craftsmen and architects in Paris. The young David was related to the prominent painter François Boucher, and although his family wished David to be apprenticed to him, the elderly Boucher refused. Jacques-Louis came to learn his craft in the studio of Joseph-Marie Vien instead, and somewhat later he enrolled as a student at the Royal Academy. Each year, the institution held a competition for its prestigious Prix de Rome, an award that underwrote study in the ancient city, but David was to be rejected for the honor on three occasions, and as a result of the last rejection, he attempted suicide. On the fourth attempt, he finally won the prize and set off to Rome, but in the years that followed he came to harbor a vicious resentment of the artistic establishment in France. He arrived in Rome in 1775, and at the time was little impressed with the art of Antiquity. He struggled to find a way of reconciling his own interests as a painter with the growing popularity of the Neoclassical movement. But on this first journey to Rome, he seems to have spent more time studying the art of seventeenth-century Baroque painters than he did in the observation of antiquities. In particular, the art of the Italian master Guido Reni, as well as the historical paintings of the great French artist Nicholas

Poussin, interested him. These works caused him to reject the highly ornamental character of Rococo and instead strive to create works that were an idealized representation of the natural world. After completing several commissions in Rome, he returned to France in 1780 with the intention of becoming a member of the Royal Academy.

**RISING FAME.** As an institution affiliated with the crown, the Royal Academy had a long and venerable tradition of training artists, as well as establishing standards for those who worked for the king. When Louis XIV had founded the Academy in the second half of the seventeenth century, a special place had been given to the genre of historical painting, which French masters believed was the most difficult of all genres to capture in a suitably grand manner. To be accepted into the Academy, a painter had to demonstrate his abilities as an historical painter by undertaking a particularly difficult theme. To pass this test, Jacques-Louis David was to paint the subject of *Belisarius Begging for Alms*, a subject that had a special significance in the early 1780s. By this time the glory years of Louis XIV's reign were long gone, and France's government had by and large been bankrupted by a series of international wars. Its contemporary funding of the American Revolution, too, was another sore spot at the time, as royal finances seemed to be on an ever more perilous course. For decades, the thinkers of the French Enlightenment, the *philosophes*, had criticized the corruption of the monarchy and the arbitrary and capricious laws that governed the nation. The subject of *Belisarius* thus spoke to these dilemmas, for the story was about a prestigious ancient Byzantine general who had been destroyed through the corruption of the Emperor Justinian's state. Forced from the halls of power, he had been made to beg. Jacques-Louis David relied on his knowledge of Nicholas Poussin in the great work that he completed in 1781 to capture the moment when Belisarius is recognized by some of his former imperial associates. The painting has a simplicity and directness that was frequently missing in the academic art of the period, and the artist began to acquire a large stable of students, whom he was to keep busy on many large-scale projects over the coming years. Although *Belisarius* was a great painting, David's mastery over the genre of historical painting continued to grow, as can be seen in the *Oath of the Horatii*, a work completed in 1784. In the earlier *Belisarius*, David had intended to caution his viewers about the consequences of state corruption, while in this later canvas he presented a moral tale about the necessity of subverting one's individuality for the greater needs of the state. The painting depicts



the moment at which the three sons of the ancient Latin poet swear allegiance to their father before heading off to fight for Rome.

**DAVID AS REVOLUTIONARY.** With the onset of the French Revolution in 1789, the artist faced challenges as well as opportunities. Although he had long since been accepted into the Royal Academy, he had always bristled under its traditions and conventions, and with the rise of revolutionary sentiment he came to devote himself to the institution's abolition, an event that he and other artists were finally to achieve in 1793. He was not initially active as a revolutionary himself, but by 1790 he had joined the radical Jacobin club, and he soon painted the *Oath of the Tennis Court*, an image that immortalized the vow that members of the Third Estate had taken the year previously at Versailles after having been locked out of their assembly room. David's most influential Revolutionary picture, though, was his *Death of Marat*, a work that was immediately commissioned in the days that followed this revolutionary leader's assassination by Charlotte Corday in 1793. The work was publicly displayed and exercised a tremendously important emotional impact on the course of the Revolution during the height of terror. Often described as a "secular Pieta," David's *Death of Marat* remains one of the most powerful images of the Revolution. During these years, too, the artist played a major role by staging a number of revolutionary spectacles, and at the height of the Terror he was to provide history with a famous image of Queen Marie-Antoinette sketched on the tumbrel by which she approached the guillotine. As the Jacobins fell from favor, though, the artist was imprisoned on two separate occasions before being allowed to resume his life as an artist. As greater calm and stability returned to France, David's fortunes revived. He resumed his career as a painter and teacher, although some of his students now found his Neoclassicism out of touch with contemporary realities. He continued to receive many commissions, until the return of the Bourbon monarchy in 1815 forced him into exile in Belgium. He remained there for the rest of his life, continuing to paint the historical pictures and portraits for which he had long been famous.

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## ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI

1592–c. 1652

*Painter*

**AN ARTISTIC BACKGROUND.** The young Artemisia Gentileschi, perhaps the first woman in Western history to exercise an influence as an artist over men in her field, grew up in Rome, where her precocious artistic development was to be shaped by her father, Orazio. The elder Gentileschi was also an artist, and who, although he was of an older generation, came to bear the characteristic imprint of Caravaggio in the first decades of the seventeenth century. His daughter was recognized as a prodigy early in her life, and she received most of her training in his studio. The great figure of Caravaggio, who dominated the artistic scene in Rome during the early seventeenth century, had worked by painting directly from live models, rather than through the painstaking process of preparatory studies that had flourished during the Italian Renaissance. The Gentileschi, too, adopted these techniques and their works show that they roughly sketched out the contours of the models they painted before rather quickly beginning to paint them. Such a method had inherent pitfalls, as seen in some of the works of Artemisia's father, where the rendering of arms and hands sometimes appears clumsy. But artists in the early Baroque were frequently concerned with capturing the immediacy of the moment, and the works of both Orazio and his daughter, though lacking sometimes in the finesse of High Renaissance masters, were more dramatic and realistic than those of sixteenth-century painters. In her youth Artemisia painted in her father's studio, and by the time she was nineteen she and her father were collaborating on the completion of commissions. Around this time her father hired the painter Agostino Tassi to refine her techniques in the painting of perspective. The artist, however, took advantage of his position and raped the young Artemisia. Incensed, her father sued in the Roman courts, an ordeal that subjected his daughter to the thumbscrews to ensure the veracity of her account of what had transpired. Because of the dubious notoriety the case achieved, Orazio soon arranged for the marriage of his daughter to a Florentine, Pietro Stiattesi, and the young couple headed off to Florence, where Artemisia continued to develop her skills as an artist.

**ARTISTIC SUCCESS.** In the years after her rape, Artemisia Gentileschi frequently painted the subject of *Judith and Holofernes*, an incident recorded in the Old Testament apocrypha. In this story, Judith saved the Jewish people by first seducing and then murdering the Assyrian general Holofernes. Gentileschi's treatment of the theme relied on the techniques of Caravaggian realism, and in her most vivid paintings of the subject, the anger that she directed at Holofernes is palpably real. It is still difficult today, even in an age that is relatively immune to the presentation of violence, for many to view Gentileschi's works on this subject. As a young married woman in Florence, Artemisia experienced a number of successes. She was the first woman ever to be admitted to the Florentine Academy of Design, the premier artistic association in a city that had long distinguished itself in the arts. In these years her art acquired a surer mastery, but her marriage seems eventually to have foundered. She left Florence and set up her studio in Naples, a city then ruled by the Spanish and which was falling under the sway of an intensely pious Catholicism. There Gentileschi changed her style, abandoning the daring spirit she had evidenced in her early years to satisfy a more conservative taste.

**TRAVELS TO ENGLAND.** Despite the more conservative bent that her artistic compositions took in Italy, Artemisia continued to be a successful artist in Naples. Her brother, Francesco, who was also an artist, came to take examples of her art with him as he traveled in Europe's courts. In 1638, Artemisia traveled to England to visit her father, now a court painter to King Charles I. There she found him in ailing health, and she assisted him in the completion of a number of works for the English crown. Although Orazio Gentileschi was to die a year after her arrival in London, Artemisia stayed in England for another two years, probably completing works that Orazio had begun. Her last years are shrouded in some mystery, but the evidence shows that she did return to Naples, where she continued to paint until her death sometime around 1652 or 1653. Despite the many trials and problems that she experienced throughout her career, her own painted works suggest that she was a major influence in the Italian art world of the early seventeenth century. When she arrived in Florence after 1610, artists began to imitate the Caravaggian style she had absorbed in Rome during her youth. Elsewhere her paintings were responsible for stirring a more thorough understanding of the great early seventeenth-century master, particularly in Genoa and Naples. By virtue of her gender, Gentileschi experienced numerous trials, but at the same time she was able to surmount these to ex-

ercise a major formative influence on the art of her generation.

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## REMBRANDT VAN RHIJN

1606–1669

*Painter*

*Draftsman*

*Engraver*

**THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE.** The career of the great Dutch master Rembrandt coincided with the rise of Holland as Europe's most formidable commercial power. The artist lived during a great era of achievement in painting, but of all the masters that Holland was to produce in the seventeenth century, Rembrandt was universally acclaimed, even in his own time, as the supreme commanding figure. He came to acquire a reputation even in his own lifetime as an artist comparable to the great High Renaissance masters Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. This achievement was all the more remarkable because of the artist's relatively humble origins. Unlike his great Flemish contemporary and patrician, Peter Paul Rubens, Rembrandt was the son of a miller from Leiden. He was, however, precocious and received Latin schooling before entering university. He never completed his degree, but instead apprenticed himself to a painter before going off to obtain additional training in Amsterdam. Of the greatest Northern European artists, he was one of the first to be completely schooled in his craft in his native country, for he never visited Italy and seems not to have traveled far from his native Netherlands during his life.

**STYLISTIC MATURITY.** Following the completion of his training at Amsterdam, the artist returned to Leiden and set up a studio there around 1626. In these early years, Rembrandt relied on engravings and his voluminous knowledge of the ways in which other painters had rendered subjects to create works that were already imaginative for their fusion of many different ideas and compositional techniques. At this time he also made contact with Hendrick van Uylenburgh, a successful art dealer in Amsterdam, who for many years was to sell the artist's works and to secure commissions for him. At Leiden,

Rembrandt shared a studio with the artist Jan Lievens, and the two developed an unusual relationship. They hired and posed models, each undertaking to paint his own version of the same subject at the same time, though they never seem to have worked on a canvas together. In the commercially overheated art market that was developing in the Netherlands at the time, such an arrangement had the advantage of cutting costs in half. By 1631, Rembrandt's career was already well established and he decided to move from Leiden to Amsterdam, which was then, as now, the busiest commercial center in the region. He took up residence at first in Hendrick van Uylenburgh's house, having invested money in the art dealer's business shortly before coming to Amsterdam. His reputation continued to grow, and he soon married Uylenburgh's niece Saskia, a love match that was to prove happy until his wife's death in 1640. The artist's fortunes rose, and eventually Rembrandt and his growing family were able to purchase a townhouse, an expensive commodity in the competitive Dutch economy of the day. During these early years in Amsterdam, the typical Rembrandt style became ever more pronounced, with the artist developing swift and bold brushwork that made use of built-up passages of paint known as *impasto*.

**RISING SUCCESS.** By the early 1640s, Rembrandt's success as an artist on the Amsterdam scene was assured, and shortly afterwards he was to paint one of the monumental works for which he has long been known, the so-called *Night Watch*. This painting is a group portrait of Captain Banning Cocq and his local militia regiment who were charged with defending Amsterdam. Long believed to have been painted by the master using night lighting, the art world was shocked in 1975 when the painting was cleaned. After removing layers of varnish that had been applied to the enormous canvas, it was revealed that Rembrandt had painted the picture using stark daylight. The work was notable at the time and widely admired for Rembrandt's ability to render the large company in a way that appeared completely natural. The artist arranged the members of the militia as if they had just been called to arms, and the swift movement and cacophony that his work suggests was widely admired at the time, even though some of those who appear in the work are partially obscured by the outbreak of the work's melee.

**LATER TROUBLES.** Even as Rembrandt's reputation continued to increase, problems in the artist's personal life worsened. In the years following the death of his wife, Rembrandt became personally involved with his son's nursemaid, a widow, and then dismissed her when another woman came into his life. In the furor that soon erupted, Rembrandt was forced to grant the widow an annuity. As

the enmity between the two worsened, Rembrandt was to have the woman confined to a prison for defamation. Despite these personal problems, the artist's productivity remained prolific, and in these years he began to purchase extraordinary amounts of art. Commercial dealing in art, antiquities, and engravings was a popular pastime of the wealthy merchants of Amsterdam, and although Rembrandt seems to have wanted to indulge his own artistic interests as a collector and practicing artist, he also came to speculate on the art market as an investment. Another spur to his enormous collecting habits was his life-long search for acceptance and social respectability, since his enormous holdings conferred a status as a gentleman, something he had long craved. During the 1650s, his purchases grew to truly profligate levels, and he acquired a number of debts to sustain his collecting and speculation. By 1656, he was forced to declare bankruptcy, and was even imprisoned for a time before securing his release. Over the next few years, his possessions were auctioned off at a fraction of their cost, the market in art having become depressed. In the years that followed, the artist was allowed to enter into a commercial agreement with his family by which he became, in effect, their employee. This arrangement proved fruitful, allowing the artist to regain some of his former status. Besides completing a number of commissions in his final years, he also returned to engraving, a medium he had long enjoyed but had not had much time to practice during the 1640s and 1650s. In this late period, he came to realize the great commercial potential that his skills as an engraver provided. By the time of his death, the artist had apparently reinstated much of his fortune, since three locked storerooms filled high with art were found in his home after his funeral.

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#### PETER PAUL RUBENS

1577–1640

*Painter*  
*Diplomat*  
*Draftsman*

**CULTIVATED UPBRINGING.** Peter Paul Rubens, the greatest seventeenth-century Flemish artist, came from

an important family in the port city of Antwerp. His father, however, was a Protestant and at the time of Peter Paul's birth, the family was living in exile in Germany. Rubens spent the first nine years of his life in Cologne and the small town of Siegen, before his father died and his mother returned with the family to Antwerp. At the time of the family's arrival there, war between the Netherlands' provinces and Spain was underway, and the family soon converted to Catholicism, since Antwerp was quickly becoming a bastion of Spanish power in the region. Antwerp, which had for much of the sixteenth century been one of Northern Europe's most important centers of trade, was just beginning to enter into a period of decline. Eventually, the Dutch provinces to the north were to cut off the city's access to the sea. But in Rubens' youth and for most of his life, the town still retained an aura of being one of the most brilliant humanistic centers in Europe. The artist was exposed to some of the greatest thinkers of the age, including the ideas of the philosopher Justus Lipsius as well as the intensely pious thinkers of the Catholic Reformation. As a member of the ruling class at Antwerp, he was schooled in the Classics and prepared for a life as a scholar and diplomat. He came to learn four languages (Dutch, French, Italian, and Latin) and was conversant in most of the philosophical, scientific, and theological issues of the day. He undertook artistic instruction, and in 1598 he was admitted into the city's painter's guild. By 1600, he had decided to travel to Italy, where he accepted employment as an artist in the court of the Gonzaga dukes at Mantua.

**ITALIAN INSIGHTS.** Rubens' Mantuan patron was very often away from his court, and thus the artist had relative freedom to travel throughout Italy, studying the art of the High Renaissance as well as the innovations that the peninsula's Baroque painters were making at the time. Mantua, too, had long had a distinguished history as a center of Renaissance art, and from there Rubens was to travel first in northern Italy, visiting Venice and then eventually making his way to Rome. In the ancient city, Rubens came to study the works of Michelangelo, and their heavily muscled forms were to leave a definite impression on his later works. In addition to the High Renaissance masters, Rubens also came to study classical sculpture. Returning to Mantua, Rubens' patron asked him to travel to Spain in 1603 on a diplomatic mission. While there, he painted several works that were to influence the development of later Spanish artists, most notably Velázquez. Eventually, he returned to Italy, where he stayed for another few years, traveling again to Rome and working for a time in Genoa. During this sec-

ond visit to the church's capital, he may have also seen the masterpieces of Caravaggio and Carracci that had recently been completed, although no direct evidence ties the artist to these works.

**RETURN TO ANTWERP.** Although Rome was the greatest artistic center of the age, Rubens was to return to his native Antwerp in 1608. There he was to undertake a number of religious commissions for churches in the city. During the previous decades, Antwerp's religious institutions had suffered attacks by Calvinists and Anabaptists interested in purging the town of its religious art. As the city's Catholic future seemed assured, Antwerp's citizens and religious institutions began to commission numerous altarpieces and religious paintings to restore luster to their religious buildings. Rubens responded to these demands by creating a style notable for its sense of drama, monumental scale, and swift brush strokes that suggested movement and emotional spirituality. By the 1620s, he presided over a large studio where numerous assistants executed works based upon his plans. Many of the paintings that today bear his name were only "finished" by the great master, but the artist's conception still manages to shine through even the most mundane of the works his studio turned out. Intensely restless and intellectually voracious, visitors to the artist's studio were often astonished at the way in which the artist conducted four or five tasks simultaneously. As a classically trained scholar and a member of the Antwerp elite, the artist moved relatively freely in courts throughout Europe. He painted works for King Charles I of England and for Philip III and Philip IV of Spain. All three of these kings conferred noble titles on Rubens. His most monumental courtly undertakings, though, were the series of enormous canvases he painted for Marie de' Medici of France. These paintings glorified the queen-regent's life in canvases that were larger than life. She so admired these works that she tried to convince Rubens to undertake a second cycle that might treat the life of her deceased husband, Henry IV. But Rubens, ever shrewd financially, refused because of previous problems with payments. The relationship between the artist and queen continued over the years to be cordial, and when Marie de' Medici was forced into exile in the 1630s, she spent time living as a member of Rubens' household. By this time, Rubens' fortunes were assured, and he now spent a great deal of his leisure at his two country estates. Highly intelligent and driven to work, the artist was also a family man whose two marriages were happy ones, as evidenced in the loving portraits that the artist made of both his wives.

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Denis Diderot, *Essay on Painting* (1765)—One of the Enlightenment’s most important thinker’s musings about the nature of good art. The work is particularly critical of Rococo conventions popular at the time, and argues that good art must not violate the standards of humankind’s common sense.

Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, *The Art of Painting* (1667)—Although a painter, Du Fresnoy is best remembered for this influential treatise on aesthetics in which he argues that beauty must be the prime consideration of any painter hoping to produce profound art.

Charles Le Brun, *Concerning Expression in General and in Particular* (1667)—Originally given as lectures at the

Royal Academy in Paris, Charles Le Brun’s considerations of the way in which artists should render their subject came to have a major role in defining “good art” in late seventeenth-century France.

Francesco Pacheco, *The Art of Painting* (1649)—The author of this treatise on painting is better remembered today as an artistic theorist, than for his own works of art. This treatise ranks as perhaps the greatest Spanish contribution to the theory of art.

Roger de Piles, *The Principles of Painting* (1708)—A small manual written by one of France’s most important Baroque art theorists. It summarizes in a practical way the skills necessary for an artist to produce the historical paintings common in France at the time.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses* (1769–1790)—These fifteen lectures were given at the Royal Academy in London in the late eighteenth century. England’s academy was a relative latecomer on the European scene, and the immensely talented Sir Joshua Reynolds came to have a formative influence upon it, in part through his writings and lectures.

Johann Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art* (1764)—In this work, this formidable eighteenth-century art theorist argued that an underlying style could be identified in epochal periods. Many of his stylistic judgments about ancient art have been pervasive until modern times, especially the favorable light in which he cast the art of classical Greece when compared against the subsequent Hellenistic Age.

———, *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Art in Painting and Sculpture* (1755)—This work established Winckelmann’s reputation as the leading theorist of Neoclassicism in mid-eighteenth-century Europe.



## GLOSSARY

**Absolutism:** A political system and theory of government practiced in many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European states in which the king or prince was envisioned as the sole authority from which all power issued in the land.

**Act of Uniformity:** A measure enacted by the English Parliament in 1662 requiring the use of the Book of Common Prayer in all churches in England.

**Alexandrine Verse:** A verse consisting of lines twelve syllables long that was popular in the French classical poetry and dramatic tragedies of the seventeenth century.

**Allemande:** A stately dance in duple time that was originally believed to be German in origin. After fading from popularity in the ballroom, its rhythms continued to appear in the many dance suites composers wrote during the Baroque era.

**Anglicanism:** The doctrines, ritual, and faith promoted by the Church of England and its offshoots throughout the world.

**Aria:** Italian for “air.” Originally, a song within the early opera, the aria underwent steady development in the Baroque period to become lengthy and developed solos that displayed the skills of a particular singer. The most popular form was the aria da capo, which used an ABA format. Here an initial theme (A) was contrasted against a second or interior section (B), before the first theme (A) was repeated.

**Aristotelianism:** A philosophy developing out of the teachings of the ancient philosopher Aristotle that places a

strong emphasis on matter, the physical universe, and the logical examination of ethical issues. Aristotelian scholasticism, a method of analyzing problems from this philosophical perspective, was particularly widespread in the universities of medieval and early-modern Europe.

**Arminianism:** A theology promoted by the Dutch Calvinist Jacob Harmenzoon who was known as “Arminius,” that taught that human beings could accept or reject God’s gift of salvation. It was declared heretical at the Synod of Dordrecht (or Dordt) in Holland in 1616.

**Augustan Age:** A term used to describe English life and literature from the late seventeenth century until about 1780. John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Samuel Johnson were all key figures in developing the Augustan Age literary style, which was notable for a lucidity and restrained elegance that was judged to be a recreation of the literary greatness of the time of Caesar Augustus (first century B.C.E.) in Latin antiquity.

**Augustinianism:** Any Christian theology that traces its roots back to Augustine of Hippo, the fifth-century theologian that placed a strong emphasis on sinfulness and humankind’s helplessness in the process of salvation. Jansenism, the seventeenth-century theology prominent in France, was one early-modern example.

**Authorized Version of the Bible:** The translation of the Bible undertaken in early-seventeenth-century England at the command of King James I. In North America, the Authorized Version is commonly called the “King James Version.”

**Autos Sacramentales:** A religious play performed in late-medieval and early-modern Spain on important feast days of the church.

**Ballet d'Action:** An eighteenth-century dance that narrates a story. Ballets d'Action were the forerunners of nineteenth-century theatrical or classical ballets.

**Ballet de Cours:** An elaborate entertainment staged in the French court from the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century that combined dance, song, and poetry to narrate a story that often glorified the reigning monarch.

**Basso Continuo:** Meaning “continuous bass,” this method of writing and performing the accompanying chords to music was common in the Baroque era. Composers usually stipulated the bottom-most note of the bass accompaniment and then through numbers or figures they showed the other notes that should be played with it, in this way, forming a continuous accompaniment that underpinned the melody. In performance, such practices could be modulated so that the accompaniment might be performed on the harpsichord, the organ, or by a mixture of instruments.

**Battle of the Ancients and Moderns:** A controversy that arose in the French Academy at the end of the seventeenth century over the relative merits of ancient and contemporary literature. The dispute produced a number of heated polemics, and spread to England and other parts of Continental Europe, where it prompted reassessment of the role of ancient literature in shaping and defining contemporary writing.

**Book of Common Prayer:** The printed order of services authorized for use in the Church of England. The first *Book of Common Prayer* appeared in 1549 in the reign of King Edward VI, and was followed by revised editions in 1552, 1559, and in 1662, at the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy.

**Boulevard Theaters:** Any of a number of theaters that lined the avenues of northern Paris in the years leading up to the French Revolution. Although officially illegal according to the terms of royal decrees, they came to be tolerated, and eventually to perform pirated versions of the great French classical repertory.

**Cadenza:** A brilliant solo passage reserved for a singer or instrumentalist to display their skills, usually before the conclusion of an aria or of a movement within a concerto.

**Camera Obscura:** An early forerunner of the modern camera, this apparatus allowed light to travel through a lens and be reflected by a mirror on a solid surface. The camera

obscura was frequently used by scientists and painters in the seventeenth century.

**Cantata:** A musical form that developed in Rome in the early seventeenth century that shared certain similarities with early opera. Cantatas could be on any theme or subject, although its narration was provided solely through music. Unlike opera, that is, it was not acted, but merely sung. Among the most famous cantatas in the Western repertory are those of Johann Sebastian Bach, particularly his sacred cantatas that use themes based in German chorale tunes.

**Caravaggisti:** A group of seventeenth-century Italian and northern European painters that tried to imitate the dramatic lighting techniques and gritty realism displayed in the works of Michelangelo Caravaggio (1573–1610).

**Cartesianism:** The philosophy that developed from the works of the seventeenth-century French thinker René Descartes. Its teachings emphasized a duality between the mind and body and developed the notion that rational human thought shaped all knowledge of the world.

**Catholic Reformation:** The resurgence that began in the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century, and which continued in many parts of Europe until the eighteenth. The Catholic Reformation witnessed the rise of many new religious orders, expansive missionary efforts in North and South America and the Far East, and the development of the Baroque style in art and architecture. It was accompanied as well by a popular resurgence in everyday Catholic piety among the peoples of Europe.

**Cavalier Poets:** A group of poets popular in England, particularly in the reign of Charles I. They treated everyday themes, often with a comical and light twist, in contrast to the elaborate conceits and emblematic symbols found in the “metaphysical” authors of the same period.

**Clarendon Code:** A series of measures passed in Parliament during the first years of Charles II's reign (1660–1685) that were intended to strengthen the position of the Church of England and discourage dissenters.

**Comedia:** The term used to describe the three-act plays performed in seventeenth-century Spain, whether they were comedies, dramas, or tragedies.

**Comédie-Française:** The state theater of France established in Paris by Louis XIV in 1680.

**Comedy of Manners:** A genre of plays that was particularly popular in the English Restoration. Comedies of manners satirized the foibles and conventions of life in aris-

ocratic society, and were favored by the elite audiences common in the period.

**Commedia dell'Arte:** A form of improvisational comedy that flourished in Italy from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Eventually, Commedia dell'Arte troupes became popular performers in cities throughout Europe.

**Commonwealth:** The term used to describe the system of parliamentary government that ruled England between the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the Restoration of Charles II in 1660.

**Concerto:** A work in which the playing of a solo instrument or group of instruments is contrasted against that of the accompanying ensemble. In the Baroque period, this form of instrumental music underwent a steady development, particularly in the works of the Italian composer Vivaldi, who wrote hundreds of these compositions.

**Concerto Grosso:** Meaning “great concerto.” A popular form of instrumental music that featured alternating passages played by a small ensemble and a larger group. Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos* are among the most famous examples of the form.

**Conduct Book:** Any of a genre of books that attempted to prescribe the behavior in someone of a particular class or profession. Conduct books were particularly popular reading for early-modern aristocrats and members of the gentry and commercial classes.

**Confession:** A written statement of a particular Christian religion’s doctrinal beliefs.

**Confraternity of the Passion:** A medieval religious organization originally composed of apprentices from the city of Paris’ guilds that staged religious dramas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. When religious plays were outlawed in Paris in 1548, the Confraternity continued to retain its monopoly over the staging of dramas in the city, and its theater in the Hôtel de Bourgogne became Paris’ first commercial theater.

**Consistory:** A committee of the local clergy and laymen that often considered cases of moral and doctrinal infractions among early-modern Calvinists.

**Constitutionalism:** A political theory that advocates the operation of government through a set of written or clearly defined principles that outline the sharing of power between the various bodies that comprise a state’s government.

**Contredanse:** A form of dancing first popular in early-modern England in which dancers were arranged in

lines, circles, or squares and moved through a series of figures. Contredanse became widely popular in aristocratic France and Germany, where the rules of these dances became more formalized and complex in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

**Copernicanism:** The theory that traces its roots to the sixteenth-century astronomer Nicholas Copernicus in which the sun, rather than the earth, was seen as the center of the universe.

**Corral Theaters:** The style of theatrical construction that developed in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Spain. Corrales or “corrals” were courtyards enclosed on all sides by other buildings, and in the theaters that were built in these courtyards, rows and boxes of seats surrounded the stage on three sides.

**Council of Trent:** The church council convened in the northern Italian city of Trent between 1545 and 1563 to consider the charges brought against Catholicism by the Protestant Reformers. The Council formulated standards for the reform of the church, particularly its clergy, and outlined theological teachings that formed the basis for modern Roman Catholicism until the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

**Counterpoint:** In music, the juxtaposition of one or more melodic lines that are played together and thus create a single, overarching texture.

**Courante:** A lively dance written in triple time that often formed one of the movements within the Baroque dance suite.

**Dance Suite:** A Baroque instrumental composition that made use of the structures and rhythms of popular Renaissance and early-modern dances that were played as a series of individual movements. Although the dance suites of the Baroque era were highly varied, the most popular forms alternated slow and majestic dances like the allemande and sarabande against fast and lively rhythms like those of the courante and gigue.

**Dechristianization:** A largely discredited historical theory that argued that a widespread secularization and decline of traditional Christianity preceded the rise of the French Revolution in 1789.

**Deism:** A religious movement that developed in late seventeenth-century England. It discounted traditional theology and revelation and taught that God could be known through His works in nature. While its influence faded rather quickly in England, its teachings were also espoused by many of the thinkers of the French Enlightenment.



**Diggers:** Members of groups of agrarian radicals in England that advocated the common ownership of land during the English Civil Wars and Commonwealth.

**Dissenters:** Members of religious groups that opposed the Church of England in the seventeenth century.

**Divine Right of Kings:** The theory, particularly prevalent in seventeenth-century Europe, that kings are divinely chosen for their duties, and that their subjects thus owe them submission, even as they owe obedience to God.

**Empiricism:** A philosophy that denies the role of innate ideas and instead argues that the mind's interpretation of reality is based on sense experience and observation.

**Encyclopédie:** The great publishing project of the French Enlightenment edited by Denis Diderot and Roger d'Alembert. Begun in 1751, the project took more than 25 years to complete and when finished it included seventeen volumes of text and another eight volumes of illustrations. Its underlying arguments promoted the ideas of the Enlightenment and often attacked religion and received wisdom.

**English Garden:** Any of a number of gardens created in eighteenth-century Europe that made use of the more informal principles of organization current in contemporary Britain at the time, such as the famous English Garden of Munich begun in 1789.

**Enlightened Despotism:** A style of government adopted by a number of absolutist rulers in central Europe. These figures advocated reforms based on the rule of reason that were in harmony with Enlightenment principles.

**Epicureanism:** A philosophy based upon the ancient Greek thinker Epicurus that taught that pleasure and the desire to avoid pain were major human motivations. As a result, Epicurus tried to direct the human love of pleasure toward intellectual achievement. Epicureanism also promoted an atomistic view of matter, and was revived in seventeenth-century Europe by Pierre Gassendi (1590–1655).

**Epistolary Novel:** A genre of eighteenth-century fiction in which the action is told through letters, either those of a central character or through the exchange between a group of characters.

**Extension:** A philosophical principle of René Descartes that describes the physical and mathematical concreteness of matter in the world.

**Fête Galantes:** A genre of painting particularly popular in eighteenth-century France that depicted a celebration held in the outdoors.

**French Academy:** A royally chartered institution established by Cardinal Richelieu in 1635 with the intention of standardizing the French language. The Academy's first French dictionary was published in 1694, and has been revised continually since then.

**French Overture:** A form of instrumental music popular in the Baroque era that often began with a stately theme before proceeding into a faster section in which dotted, or lively, rhythms predominated. Toward the end of the piece the first slower theme often reappeared, and was summarized in a grand manner that led to the work's ultimate conclusion. The form was particularly popular as a form of overture to operas.

**Fruit Bringing Society:** A society founded in 1617 in the territory of Anhalt-Cöthen with the purpose of raising the literary standards of contemporary German. Its name in German was *Die Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*.

**Galant Style:** A musical style that flourished in mid-eighteenth-century Europe that featured less complex melodies and which downplayed complex counterpoint. It was notable for its suave and refined characters.

**Geocentrism:** The theory that the earth is the center of the universe.

**Gigue:** A piece of lively dance music in which two themes are usually contrasted. Gigues were often used as one of the movements within Baroque dance suites. The English word for this form is "jig."

**Gothic Revival:** A resurgence of often romantic and fanciful architecture in mid-eighteenth-century England that harked back to the later Middle Ages.

**Gunpowder Plot:** A Catholic plan unearthed in November of 1605 to blow up the Houses of Parliament in London when the king and members were in attendance. The exposing of the plot made Catholicism widely unpopular in the country.

**Hampton Court Conference:** A conference convened at the royal palace of the same name in 1604 to debate the provisions outlined in the Puritans' Millenary Petition. Although James I refused to adopt most of those provisions, he did undertake a new translation of the Bible, as Puritans had advocated. The Authorized Version of 1611 was thus one of Hampton Court's chief achievements.

**Heliocentric Theory:** The theory advocated by Copernicus, Galileo, and many other seventeenth-century scientists that the sun was the center of the universe. Investigation of the theory led to Isaac Newton's discovery of the laws of gravity and centrifugal force.

**High Church:** A phrase used to describe the sensibilities of those in the Church of England that supported a strict performance of the Book of Common Prayer's rituals and who advocated maintaining its position in the land as the official church. Often the High Church party desired to uphold laws against nonconformists.

**Humanism:** An educational movement that developed in Renaissance Europe based around the *studia humanitatis* (humane studies), the precursor to the modern notion of the humanities. Humanists advocated the acquisition of a thorough knowledge of antiquity, its history, moral philosophy, and ethics, even as they supported rhetoric and study in the language arts as the disciplines most capable of ennobling humankind.

**Iambic Pentameter:** One of the meters particularly popular in early-modern English poetry. It consists of an unrhymed line made up of five feet—that is a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. Besides its famous use in William Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, it was also widely employed by seventeenth-century German poets.

**Impasto:** In painting, any thick application of paint that makes the surface stand out in relief. The Dutch artist Rembrandt was especially known for the use of impasto passages.

**Impresario:** Prominent theatrical and operatic producers whose organization of public performances earned them widespread acclaim.

**Intermedi:** A dance or musical interlude between the acts of Italian dramas. Intermedi first appeared during the Renaissance and grew progressively more complex during the sixteenth century. They were often laden with spectacle, and as a result came to shape the production standards of early operas.

**Jansenism:** A theology popular in seventeenth-century France that traced its origins to the *Augustinus* of the Dutch theologian Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638). Jansenists stressed predestination and the necessity of an infusion of divine grace for salvation. Eventually declared heretical and persecuted by France's royal government, they had an important impact on French society through their foundation of schools and their opposition to the Jesuit Order.

**Justaucorps:** A tight-fitting coat that became popular at the French court in the 1670s. It was usually worn atop an interior waistcoat or vest and breeches, and was thus the eventual inspiration for the modern "three-piece" suit.

**Levellers:** A political party active during the English Civil Wars and Puritan Commonwealth that sought the establishment of a more egalitarian society. Their ideas were

more popular and moderate than the Diggers, who advocated the abolition of private property.

**Licensing Act (1737):** A measure of the British Parliament that outlawed theatrical performances except those staged in theaters with a royal patent or license.

**Licensing Act of 1662:** This Act of Parliament charged the Stationers' Guild in London with examining the texts of books and granting licenses to publish. It was intended to stamp out opposition to the government. Eventually, the legislation bred great criticism of the guild for its high-handed and corrupt practices, and the act was allowed to lapse in 1695.

**Literary Club:** Originally called merely "the Club," this literary institution in later eighteenth-century London was founded by the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds and Samuel Johnson with the aim of discussing aesthetics and the principles of good writing. Its membership eventually included many of the great authors who lived in and around the capital.

**Loggia:** A covered walkway or arcade whose sides are open and whose roof is often supported by columns.

**Mannerism:** A late Renaissance stylistic movement that continued to attract adherents in the early seventeenth century. Its style imitated the willful and tempestuous creations of the later Michelangelo, and were often characterized by elongated, elegant, or distorted treatments of the human form.

**Masques:** A popular court entertainment in Tudor and Stuart England. Masques frequently featured songs, lengthy dances, and elaborate costumes and tableaux. Under the Stuarts, these entertainments grew to enormous lengths and their extravagant costs were a source of criticism to the government.

**Meissen:** The center of the Saxon porcelain industry, where in the early eighteenth century, the techniques of creating "hard-paste" porcelain were discovered. Meissen, too, is often used to describe the porcelain created in the town.

**Mercantilism:** The economic theory dominant in much of seventeenth-century Europe that held that states must preserve their supply of money by limiting imports and maximizing exports.

**Metaphysical Poets:** A group of poets in early seventeenth-century England that made use of elaborate conceits and a difficult style. John Donne and George Herbert were chief among the "Metaphysicals."

**Millenary Petition:** A petition formulated by English Puritans and presented to James I as he made his way from

Scotland to London to assume the English throne in 1603. The Millenary Petition requested reforms in the governance and ritual of the Church of England, and took its name from the fact that a thousand petitioners were said to have signed it.

**Minuet:** A dance that was French in origin and popular in the eighteenth-century ballroom. It was written in triple time, and it was often used in the Baroque dance suite. Later, it often figured prominently as the third movement of the classical-era symphony.

**Neoclassicism:** An artistic and architectural movement popular in mid-seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe that was inspired by archeological excavations in Italy and Greece and which aimed to adopt classical forms to the needs of contemporary society.

**Neo-Latin:** The form of classically-inspired Latin revived by later fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanists, and brought to a high point of expression in the work of figures like Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536).

**Neoplatonism:** The philosophy that derived from Renaissance humanism's study of the works of Plato and his followers. Neoplatonism, or Renaissance Platonism as it is also called, became popular among intellectuals around 1500 through the research of Marsiglio Ficino (1433–1499) and other Platonic philosophers. These thinkers developed a difficult, and often metaphysical, philosophy that made use of learned magic, and which taught that there was an "ancient theology" shared by all religions. The movement's influence persisted in the early seventeenth century, and some thinkers influenced by this movement like Francis Bacon helped lay the foundations for the Scientific Revolution.

**New Model Army:** The most disciplined and effective of the fighting forces that Parliament raised during the 1640s English Civil Wars. Oliver Cromwell came to prominence as a general in this fighting force.

**Nonconformist:** A word that appeared during the Restoration period in England to describe those who would not "conform" to the attendance or communion requirements of the Church of England.

**Opera Buffo:** A form of comic opera popular, particularly in the later eighteenth century throughout Europe.

**Opera Seria:** One of the serious forms of musical drama that flourished in eighteenth-century Europe. Opera seria usually drew their subjects from classical or heroic themes.

**Oratorios:** A dramatic musical form that originally developed for performance during the Lenten season, when operas

were thought too worldly to be performed. Oratorios, like cantatas, convey their stories through music alone, and often consist of a mixture of arias, recitatives, and choruses. Among the most famous of oratorios are the brilliant works of Georg Frederic Handel, particularly his *Messiah*.

**Palladianism:** A classical style of architecture that flourished in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which was influenced by the great Venetian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio.

**Passion Play:** A religious play, often of considerable length. Passion plays were popular in the Catholic towns and villages of central Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the most prominent of these, the Oberammergau Passion Play, is still performed in modern times.

**Pastoral Literature:** A genre of literature that developed in late Renaissance Italy that was particularly popular there and in Spain. Pastoral works featured conversations between shepherds, shepherdesses, nymphs, and satyrs in idyllic country settings. In the early history of opera many pastorals were set to music.

**Peace of Westphalia:** The treaty that ended hostilities in the Thirty Years' War, the great conflict that laid waste to much of central Europe between 1618 and 1648. The stipulations of the treaty recognized the legality of Calvinism, but reiterated the sixteenth-century principle, "He who rules, his religion," meaning that Germany's territorial rulers were once again free to define the religion of their subjects.

**Pelagianism:** A theology associated with the fifth-century monk Pelagius that denied the pervasive character of Original Sin and taught that human beings might save themselves by living sinless lives. In the seventeenth century, the French Jansenists attacked the Jesuits for teaching doctrines they alleged were derived from Pelagius.

**Philosophes:** The term used to describe the chief intellectuals and writers of the French Enlightenment. They were men of letters, not professional scholars or academicians, who desired to put the ideas of the Enlightenment, and its quest for the reform of society along reasoned ground before their readers to spur discussion.

**Picaresque Novel:** A genre of novel that developed in sixteenth-century Spain that featured a low-born hero and his adventures. Picaresque fiction often brilliantly mocked the social foibles and eccentricities of aristocracy and society's various orders. The genre was popular everywhere in early-modern Europe, prompting imitators

of this brand of Spanish fiction in France, England, and Germany.

**Pietism:** A religious movement that began in late seventeenth-century Lutheran Germany. The pietists advocated a “second Reformation” that would sponsor a sincere and heart-felt religion. Their influence came to be felt through educational institutions and their writings, which left their impact on religious thinkers in both Catholic and Protestant countries in the eighteenth century.

**Polyphony:** Music composed of many tones or “voices” that are played simultaneously to produce a single coherent texture.

**Popish Plot:** A fictional plot concocted in 1678 by the Anglican clergyman Titus Oates who alleged that the Jesuits were planning on assassinating King Charles II and installing his brother, the Catholic James, duke of York, as his successor. Although later revealed as a hoax, it gave rise to a general panic in which a number of English Catholics were tried and executed.

**Port Royal:** The Parisian convent that became a center of Jansenist teaching in the seventeenth century.

**Puritanism:** The religious ideology promoted by English followers of John Calvin and the Calvinists. The Puritans argued that the English Reformation had not gone far enough in establishing Protestant teachings and that the Church of England needed to be purified of its Roman elements.

**Restoration:** The re-establishment of the Stuart dynasty as rulers in England in 1660. The phrase “Restoration Period” is often used to refer to the period of the rule of the later Stuarts, Charles II and James II, and consequently occurs between the years 1660 and 1688.

**Rococo:** In architecture and the visual arts a highly decorative style that developed at the end of the Baroque era. The style took its name from the French word *rocaille*, which referred to rocklike plasterwork that frequently figured prominently on the ceilings and walls of Rococo interiors.

**Roman à Clef:** An early genre of novel in which prominent contemporary figures were depicted as ancient characters. Such fictions were particularly popular in seventeenth-century France, where Madame de Scudéry was one important author.

**Romanticism:** The movement that succeeded neoclassicism in the visual arts and literature at the end of eighteenth century. The romantic sensibility favored an exploration of the emotions and the power of nature, in contrast to

the restrained and intellectually coherent values promoted in the classical period.

**Rondeau:** A sprightly dance form that has a repeating tune that is returned to several times, much like the refrain in a song. Rondeau figured prominently in the Baroque dance suites, and in classical-era symphonies it was often used as the concluding movement.

**Royal Academy of Dance (Académie royale de danse):** An institution chartered by Louis XIV in 1661 to foster the development of the art of dance in France. In time, the Academy maintained a school that trained many eighteenth-century ballet dancers.

**Royal Academy of Music (Académie royale de musique):** This institution, which became known merely as the Opera, was chartered by Louis XIV in 1669 to perform light musical entertainments. When Jean-Baptiste Lully assumed its directorship in 1672, it played a major role in promoting opera in France, and it continued to be an important musical force in the country until the Revolution.

**Ruff:** An elaborate collar in which pleats or ruffles are concocted out of starched white fabric or lace. The style, inherited from the late Renaissance, continued to be popular until the 1620s in many parts of Europe, before fading from the fashion scene.

**Salon:** A term that has at least three specific meanings in French culture. First, it described the small intimate public rooms of eighteenth-century palaces and townhouses. Second it refers to the important social gatherings that occurred in these spaces, gatherings that became venues for discussing and popularizing the ideas of the Enlightenment in France’s elite society. Third, it was the title given to the annual exhibition held by the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in France, an institution chartered by the king in 1648 for the advancement of the visual arts.

**Scholasticism:** A medieval academic method that placed great emphasis on the weighing of evidence from previous authorities. The scholastic method taught its students how to harmonize and respond to the conflicting opinions of ancient and medieval authorities concerning theological, legal, and medical issues. The method continued to live on in early-modern Europe, although it was widely criticized by seventeenth-century philosophers and eighteenth-century Enlightenmenters.

**Scriblerus Club:** A gathering of literary figures that occurred weekly in London during 1713–1714. Among those who attended were Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Daniel Defoe, and Alexander Pope. The club’s discussions left their imprint on the witty satires that these

figures published in the years following its dissolution, although since the members were Tories their meetings were curtailed with the rise of a Whig government in 1714.

**Secularization:** The process by which worldly, civic, or non-religious values gradually became more important in Europe than religious motivations or teachings. Secularization was often seen as an essential goal by some of the prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment.

**Sensitive Style (*empfindsamer Stil*):** A variant of the Galant Style in music that was particularly popular in northern Germany in the mid-eighteenth century. It aimed to express constant changes in mood and emotion. Its most famous exponent was Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

**Sinfonia:** Originally an Italian word that merely described the playing of various tones or instruments at once. By the early eighteenth century, the Italian *sinfonia* was developing into a recognized genre of instrumental music, usually intended for large ensembles. Its characteristic structure of either three themes or independent movements were played fast-slow-fast, in contrast to the French overture, which began with a slow and stately theme followed by a fast one. In time, *sinfonias* surpassed the French overture as a genre for operatic overtures, in large part, because of the great popularity of Italian opera in eighteenth-century Europe. From this vantage point, they contributed to the development of the classical-era symphony.

**Skepticism:** A philosophical movement particularly popular among some late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century intellectuals that taught that absolute truth could never be established and that some ideas had consequently to be accepted on faith.

**Sonata:** A vast genre of early-modern instrumental music that featured one instrument or a group of instruments. Gradually, sonatas came to have three movements, usually a slow interior, songlike piece was preceded and followed by two other compositions that were fast.

**Sonata Form:** A musical form that is often used to organize the first movement of the classical-era symphony. It consists of three parts: an exposition that sets out one or several contrasting themes; a development in which those themes are explored; and a recapitulation, in which the themes are restated. Sometimes a coda, meaning “tail,” concludes the piece. Sonata form became one of the most universally used musical organizational forms of European composers.

**Spiritual Exercises:** A devotional classic written by the Jesuit founder St. Ignatius of Loyola in the sixteenth century. The work’s influence was felt in Baroque Catholic culture through its emphasis on meditations that were fueled by a powerful visualization of the dramas recorded in the scriptures.

**Stationers’ Guild:** A medieval London guild that came to be entrusted in the sixteenth century with the office of censoring the press in England. It continued to fulfill this function until 1695, and in the eighteenth century it became the major organ for the awarding of copyright in Great Britain.

**Sturm und Drang:** Meaning literally “Storm and Stress,” this German literary movement explored the force of the emotions, and provided a bridge to the developing sensibilities of the romantic movement. Its tempestuous and excitable style was also imitated by many of the musical composers of the era.

**Sumptuary Laws:** Legislation aimed at limiting consumption in clothes and in the celebration of marriages and funerals.

**Symphony:** An extended work for the orchestra that underwent a long period of development in the Baroque and classical eras. In the works of Josef Haydn the development of the classical symphony reached a high level of development, and consisted of four movements, opening and concluding pieces that were played fast and which framed a second aria-like composition, and a third movement written in a lively dance idiom. Despite the canonical status of Haydn’s great symphonies today, though, the form was still undergoing major development at the end of the eighteenth century, although it was to become the most important genre of orchestral music for “serious” composers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

**Tabula Rasa:** Meaning “blank slate.” In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke argued that this was the character of the mind before sense experience left its impressions upon it.

**Tronie:** A popular genre of painting in the seventeenth-century Netherlands in which patrons chose to be depicted wearing the costumes of ancient heroes, military figures, or emperors.

**United Provinces:** The confederation of counties that developed in the northern Netherlands in the period after they established their effective independence from Spanish Habsburg rule.



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## MEDIA AND ONLINE SOURCES

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### GENERAL

*Art of the Western World* (1989)—Produced by WNET, New York, with funding from the Annenberg/CPB Project, this nine-part series treats the history of Western art from antiquity to modern times. Episodes five and six deal with the Baroque, Rococo, and neoclassicism.

*Blaise Pascal* (1971)—This film from famed Italian director Roberto Rossellini highlights the major events in the life of the great seventeenth-century mathematician and Jansenist supporter. Not rated, originally made for television.

Christian Classics Ethereal Library (<http://www.ccel.org>)—One of the oldest online databases of “public access” texts, this website is now a venerable mainstay of the academic community. Located at Wheaton College in Illinois it provides highly readable online versions of major classics in the Christian tradition. Its collection is particularly rich in works treating the early-modern centuries.

Project Gutenberg (<http://promo.net/pg/>)—This major online library of public domain texts is particularly rich in literature from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and includes many texts from the great philosophers of the Western tradition.

*The Story of English* (1986)—This nine-part PBS series explores the development of English from a tribal language to its dominant position in the world. The series places particular emphasis on the age of Shakespeare and the seventeenth century.

*Versailles: The Visit* (1999)—A comprehensive tour of the greatest Baroque palace of all conducted by the director of the Versailles’ museums.

Voltaire Foundation (<http://www.voltaire.ox.ac.uk/>)—Located at Oxford University, this well-established scholarly society’s website is a major source of information about the famous French philosopher, his work, and his times.

*The Western Tradition* (1989)—This massive 52-part historical series was originally produced by WGBH, Boston. It is noteworthy for its intelligent commentary by noted historian Eugen Weber, as well as its historical art illustrations. Episodes 31–35 treat the Baroque and Enlightenment periods.

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### ARCHITECTURE

Archinform (<http://www.archinform.net/>)—An international database of major architectural monuments from the European past. The website allows for searching, and includes photographs and brief summaries of the significance of each monument.

*Bernini, Architect: The Great Problem Solver* (1997)—This thirty-minute video from the “Masterpieces in Video” series summarizes the great Baroque artist’s achievements as a builder in Rome.

*Borromini: His Extraordinary Architecture* (1996)—This thirty-minute video from the “Masterpieces in Video” series treats the great Roman architect’s singular artistic vision and his major monuments in Rome.

Chateau de Versailles (<http://www.chateauversailles.fr/>)—The official website of Versailles provides a handsome virtual tour of Europe's largest Baroque palace as well as its gardens. This work of architecture is considered so important that it has been designated a "World Heritage" site, meaning it has been certified by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) as being so essential to the human heritage that it must be protected, not just by an individual state, but by all the peoples of the earth.

Great Buildings Online (<http://www.artifice.com/gbc.html>)—A commercial database of architectural images that provides multiple search engines for locating images and information about major monuments.

Renaissance and Baroque Architecture (<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/dic/colls/arh102/>)—An online collection of images of Renaissance and Baroque architectural monuments from the University of Virginia's Library.

*Rome Revisited: The Renewal of Splendor* (1995)—This video from the "Masterpieces in Video" series focuses especially on the renewal of Rome by Renaissance and Baroque architects.

Schloss Schönbrunn (<http://www.schoenbrunn.at/de/publicdir/>)—The website of Schönbrunn, the second-largest palace of Baroque Europe, provides a great deal of information on this building outside Vienna. This work of architecture is considered so important that it has been designated a "World Heritage" site, meaning it has been certified by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) as being so essential to the human heritage that it must be protected, not just by an individual state, but by all the peoples of the earth.

Triumph of the Baroque (<http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2000/baroque/splash.htm>)—An online exhibition from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., summarizing the major achievements of the Baroque era in architecture and the arts.

Vitruvio.ch (<http://www.vitruvio.ch/>)—A database of major architectural monuments that is particularly strong in listings from early-modern Europe. The website includes photographs, brief bibliographies, and other information about the monuments. It also provides for searching of major architects and the buildings they designed.

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## DANCE

*Danse royale: Music of the French Baroque Court and Theater*—This compilation recording includes ballet music from France's Golden Age. Many of the pieces

here are rarely recorded. Available on the Dorian label as recording number 90272.

*Introduction to Baroque Dance*—A two-part video series produced by Paige Whitley-Bauguess, a noted choreographer, instructing students in the steps of dances from the Baroque era. It is available for purchase online at <http://www.baroque-dance.com/>.

*How to Dance Through Time*—Volume IV in this six-part video series teaches the social dance of the Baroque era, including the minuet, allemande, and contredanse. Available for purchase from the Dance Through Time society online at <http://www.dancethrough-time.org/home.html>.

John Eliot Gardner and the English Baroque Soloists, *Don Juan*—Christoph Willibald von Gluck's ballet music for Gasparo Angiolini's ballet d'action is performed by one of the finest contemporary baroque ensembles. Available on the Elektra/Asylum label as recording number 89233.

Kevin Mallon and the Arcadia Baroque Ensemble, *Ballet Music for the Sun King*—This audio recording features ballet music from the operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully. Available on the Naxos label as recording number 554003.

Teatro alla Scala, Milan (<http://lascala.milano.it/eng/homepage.htm>)—For more than 200 years the famous Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Italy, has been home to one of the world's great opera companies. Its ballet, too, has a long and distinguished history. The company's website includes insight into its venerable traditions.

Western Social Dance: An Overview of the Collection (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diessay0.html>)—This Library of Congress website reviews the dance instruction manuals published in Europe since the Renaissance. Of particular interest are the video clips of dance steps practiced during the Baroque period.

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## FASHION

*The Affair of the Necklace* (2001)—Loosely based on the story of Jeanne de la Motte-Valois, a woman who loses her claim to her title and property after she is orphaned. She schemes to regain her royal status in a series of events surrounding the "affair of the necklace," which is said to be one of the contributing factors of the French Revolution. The film's images of late eighteenth-century aristocratic style are particularly good. Its relating of the circumstances of the famous affair of the diamond necklace, though, is less than convincing. Rated R.

The Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City (<http://www.metmuseum.org/>)—The collections of this great museum are particularly rich in costumes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The museum's website has a link to its costume department, the Costume Institute ([http://www.metmuseum.org/Works\\_of\\_Art/department.asp?dep=8](http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/department.asp?dep=8)).

Museum of Costume, Bath, England (<http://www.museumofcostume.co.uk/>)—This museum of costume collections is particularly rich in eighteenth-century clothing, the period in which Bath was England's most fashionable resort. Its website provides a guide to its holdings as well as many special exhibitions mounted by the institution.

*La Nuit de Varennes* (The Night of Varennes, 1982)—This French period drama relates the circumstances surrounding the flight of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette from Paris in 1791. The film recreates French styles of the period in a way that is historically accurate. Rated R.

*The Rise of Louis XIV* (1966)—Produced by noted director Roberto Rossellini, this film catalogues Louis XIV's increasingly absolutist policies and shows the role that clothing played in the king's attempts to control his nobles. Rated G.

*Vatel* (2000)—Directed by Rolland Joffé and starring Gerard Depardieu and Uma Thurman, this film recreates the occasion of royal visit by Louis XIV to an important noble house. Its evocation of French costumes from the Age of the Baroque are particularly rich. Rated PG-13.

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## LITERATURE

The ARTFL Project (<http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL/>)—Located at the University of Chicago, this cooperative project between American and French scholars is making available the great French literary classics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

*Clarissa* (1992)—Although not without flaws, this PBS adaptation of the 1747–1748 Samuel Richardson novel has been the only attempt to dramatize the great English novel.

*Cyrano de Bergerac* (1990)—Starring Gerard Depardieu, this adaptation of the life of the famous seventeenth-century French author concentrates on de Bergerac's ability to use his skills in letter writing to woo his young love. Rated PG.

*Dangerous Liaisons* (1988)—Starring Glenn Close, this great adaptation of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos' great eighteenth-century novel of aristocratic trickery and

deceit never fails to capture the imagination and to entertain the eye. Rated R.

*The History and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders* (1996)—Originally produced for Masterpiece Theater, this adaptation of Defoe's early novel does justice to the work's wit and satire.

Luminarium (<http://www.luminarium.org/lumina.htm>)—This unique anthology of English literary sources emphasizes the many accomplished authors of the early seventeenth century.

The Milton Society (<http://www.urich.edu/~creamer/milton/>)—The online presence of a venerable society is dedicated to the study of the English poet John Milton.

*Tom Jones* (1963)—Starring Albert Finney in the title role, this film from Tony Richardson captures the good fun of the original 1749 novel. Unrated.

*Valmont* (1989)—This second adaptation of Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses* was largely overshadowed by the more famous *Dangerous Liaisons* released one year before. It manages to treat certain themes left untouched by its more famous predecessor; the films stars Annette Bening and Colin Firth. Rated R.

The Voltaire Foundation (<http://www.voltaire.ox.ac.uk/>)—Located at Oxford University in England, this scholarly website provides up-to-date information on the great French Enlightenment author.

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## MUSIC

Classicalnet (<http://www.classical.net>)—This invaluable source for composers' biographies and information about the developments of musical forms and styles also includes thousands of reviews, many by noted authorities, on current recordings of classical music.

*Complete Bach Edition* (2000)—Produced on the Hänssler label, this set of 172 CDs is a milestone recording of all the surviving compositions of the great German master.

*Complete Mozart Edition* (1990–1992)—Produced by the recording industry giant Philips, this recorded edition of the great eighteenth-century composer's works totals 180 discs. Although minor criticisms have been made of the quality of some of its recordings, it remains the definitive source for recordings of Mozart's works.

*Farinelli* (1995)—This Belgian film chronicles the life of the greatest eighteenth-century castrato, Carlo Broschi, who was better known as Farinelli. Rated R.

George Frideric Handel (<http://www.gfhandel.org>)—This attractive site includes an up-to-date bibliography of the works of the famous German composer who had an important impact on England, his adopted country.

*Haydn Piano Trios, Complete* (1997)—Recorded in the 1970s by the Beaux Arts Trio, this recording presents some of the most beautiful chamber music of the eighteenth century. It shows Haydn's styles developing from an early attachment to Galant and *Sturm und Drang* to the early romantic.

*Haydn Symphonies, Complete* (1987–2001)—In this milestone recording of the composer's 104 symphonies, the Austro-Hungarian Orchestra is conducted by Adam Fischer. The work is released under the Brilliant Classics label.

J. S. Bach Homepage (<http://www.jsbach.org>)—Among other attributes of this website is a copy of the complete listing of Bach's works.

*The Magic Flute* (1975)—This film from the great Swedish director Ingmar Bergman presents a lively performance of Mozart's great fantasy classic, *The Magic Flute*. Rated G.

The Mozart Project (<http://www.mozartproject.org>)—Besides its inclusion of a complete biography for the great composer, this website contains many essays on Mozart's music.

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## PHILOSOPHY

*Blaise Pascal* (1972)—This film, directed by famed Italian neo-realist Roberto Rossellini, portrays the intellectual and spiritual ferment that produced the ideas of the French philosopher and mathematician.

*Civilisation* (1969)—Edited by the art and cultural historian Kenneth Clark, this exploration of Western culture also includes much analysis of changing philosophical ideas.

*Danton* (1983)—Starring Roger Planchon and Gerard Depardieu, this film is set in Paris during the Reign of Terror, and portrays the consequences of the French Revolution's efforts to establish an Age of Reason advocated in the works of the Enlightenment. Rated PG.

Episteme.com (<http://www.epistemelinks.com/>)—This website is an online guide to philosophy resources available on the Internet.

*Hume* (1987)—Professor Bryan Magee and Hume expert John Passmore explore the life and ideas of the greatest philosopher of the Scottish Enlightenment.

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/>)—A venerable resource for articles concerning the major thinkers in the Western tradition.

*Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Retreat to Romanticism* (1991)—Although only a half-hour program, this English documentary manages to capture the most important aspects of the great French philosopher's career, including his friendship with the Scottish empiricist David Hume.

*Locke and Berkeley* (1987)—This BBC production features Professor Bryan Magee and Oxford philosopher Michael Ayers and treats the formulation and implications of the two great English empiricist philosophers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>)—This website is a source of indispensable information concerning the philosophers of early-modern Europe.

*Spinoza and Leibniz* (1987)—Philosopher Anthony Quinton and Professor Bryan Magee treat the implications of two of the most important seventeenth-century rationalist philosophers in this video.

*Voltaire and Jefferson: The Sage of Ferney and the Man from Monticello*—This film treats Thomas Jefferson's lifelong admiration for Voltaire and his works. Filmed at Monticello and at Voltaire's estate at Ferney in southern France, it manages to capture the spirit of one of the most important associations of the Enlightenment.

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## RELIGION

*Day of Wrath* (1943)—An early Danish depiction of an early-modern witch trial brought against an adulterous wife from director Carl Theodor Dreyer. Rated PG-13.

*The Devils* (1971)—This film, directed by Ken Russell, is based upon the playwright John Whiting's theatrical adaptation of Aldous Huxley's 1952 novel of the same name. The subject is the 1634 case of a witch trial at Loudon in France, and the film adaptation is one of the most chilling works dealing with persecution and intolerance ever to be made. Rated R.

English Literature and Religion (<http://www.english.umd.edu/englfac/WPeterson/ELR/elr.htm>)—This website at the University of Maryland includes a database bibliography of more than 8,500 works treating the history of religion in England. It also includes links to online versions of major religious texts, including the various versions of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*.

Internet Modern History Sourcebook: Enlightenment (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook10>)

.html)—A voluminous collection of complete sources and excerpts from contemporary documents and writings that highlights the relationship between the Enlightenment and eighteenth-century religion.

Jesuits and the Sciences (<http://www.luc.edu/libraries/science/jesuits/index.html>)—This Loyola University site highlights the Jesuits' considerable contributions to the history of science, with particular emphasis on their early-modern involvement in the Scientific Revolution.

*The Last Valley* (1970)—Director James Clavell's recreation of the Holy Roman Empire during the Thirty Years' War has a frightening depiction of a witch trial and its aftermath. Rated PG.

*Matthew Hopkins, Witchfinder General* (1968)—A historic drama of the life of England's most famous professional witch hunter. Soon after this movie appeared, it inspired an entire genre of films treating witchcraft and magic, many of far lesser quality than this work. Unrated. Violence and sexual content.

Methodist Archives and Research Centre (<http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/data1/dg/text/method.html>)—Located at the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester in England, this archive of the Methodist movement provides invaluable documents concerning the early history of the movement. Its website also includes exhibits and links to other websites treating the history of Methodism and eighteenth-century England.

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## THEATER

The Aphra Behn Society Homepage (<http://prometheus.cc.emory.edu/behn/>)—The website of this academic society includes links to synopses of the great female playwright's life and analyses of her works. It also includes bibliographical information about recent studies of the dramatist.

Comédie-Française (<http://www.comedie-francaise.fr/indexes/index.php>)—This website informs about the contemporary productions of the oldest national theater in Europe, and also includes a brief section on the company's history.

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (<http://tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/>)—A venerable website from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that includes all the texts of the great bard's plays. The site includes a set of links available to Shakespeare's works and criticism of them on the Internet.

*Molière* (1978)—Produced by noted French director Ariane Mnouchkine, this dramatization of the life of the famous

seventeenth-century playwright is notable for its historical veracity. Unrated.

*Much Ado About Nothing* (1993)—Directed by Kenneth Branagh and starring Branagh and Emma Thompson, this adaptation of Shakespeare's late comedy is here set in eighteenth-century Italy, but the verse and spirit are that of the early seventeenth century. Rated PG-13.

Renaissance Editions (<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/ren.htm>)—This website at the University of Oregon includes handsome electronic editions of seventeenth-century English works, including the masques of Ben Jonson, the plays of William Shakespeare, William Congreve, and a number of others, as well as a host of Continental sources first translated into English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

*Restoration Stage: From Tennis Court to Playhouse* (1993)—Written and produced by David Thomas for the University of Warwick's *Ancient Theatre and its Legacy* series, this film traces the conversion of London tennis courts into theaters during the reign of Charles II. The documentary then explores the ways in which the architects Sir Christopher Wren and Sir John Vanbrugh designed new playhouses for the London troupes in the later seventeenth century.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (<http://www.shakespeares-globe.org/>)—A site that informs about the current repertory of the Globe Theatre in London and this theater's attempts to recreate the drama of early seventeenth-century London in the twenty-first century world. There is also a virtual tour of the theater as well as an online exhibit treating the project's history and the history of the theater in the time of Shakespeare.

*The Shakespeare Mystery* (1989)—This *PBS-Frontline* documentary explores the controversy that surrounds the true identity of William Shakespeare.

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## VISUAL ARTS

The Louvre, Paris (<http://www.louvre.fr/louvre.htm>)—A handsome website from one of the world's greatest art museums. The site features a virtual tour of the highlights of the collection as well as a history of the museum itself.

The Louvre: The Visit (1998)—A guided private tour through the wealth of the Louvre's collections.

The National Gallery, London (<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/>)—Another collection rich in the works of the Baroque and neoclassical periods.

The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (<http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/>)—The collections of this famous museum are a treasure trove of the “little” and “great masters” of the Dutch Golden Age. In addition, the museum’s collections are strong in almost all periods of Western art before the twentieth century.

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp (<http://museum.antwerpen.be/kmska/>)—The website of this major

Flemish museum highlights the major works in its collections, including its more than twenty paintings from Peter Paul Rubens.

The Vatican Museums, Rome (<http://www.vatican.va/museums/>)—The Vatican Museum’s collections are particularly rich in Baroque art, and the attractive website of this revered institution offers a glimpse of this great wealth.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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